



MATT DAMON SAYS HIS IRELAND LOCKDOWN FEELS LIKE 'A FAIRYTALE'

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'I THOUGHT I COULD WAIT THIS OUT': FEARING CORONAVIRUS, PATIENTS ARE DELAYING HOSPITAL VISITS, PUTTING HEALTH AND LIVES AT RISK

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'GULABO SITABO' SET FOR JUNE 12 WORLD PREMIERE ON AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

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Vol 05 | Issue 125 | Gangtok | Friday | 15 May 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

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Soldier missing following avalanche in north Sikkim

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): An Indian Army soldier went missing while another sustained serious injuries on Thursday following an avalanche in the mountainous Lughak La region of north Sikkim, officials said.

The two personnel were part of a 17-member group which came under the avalanche, they said.

"A snow clearance party came under a sudden snow slide in north Sikkim. All soldiers have been evacuated safely but for one soldier who is still missing," a senior Army official said.

"One of the soldiers sustained serious injuries and is undergoing medical treatment. Intense search is underway to locate the missing soldier," he said.

Dharavi's journey to becoming Mumbai's COVID-19 hotspot

MUMBAI, MAY 14 (PTI): Among the most populated and congested areas of Mumbai, Dharavi may have had a delayed entry into the COVID-19 health crisis, but with over 1,000 cases, it has certainly found itself in a precarious position.

In less than 45 days, Asia's largest slum has recorded 1,028 cases and 40 deaths, indicating the extent and intensity with which the virus has spread there.

With 66 fresh cases detected on Wednesday, Dharavi's COVID-19 tally crossed the 1,000 mark.

It has just been 43 days since the city's most congested ward detected its first case at Dr Baliga Nagar on April 1, setting the alarm bells ringing for the city's administration.

The progression was, however, slow in the area and it took a little over a fortnight for Dharavi to add 100 cases to its tally and by May 3, it crossed the 500 mark.

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Flight home stumbles in Rangpo for 200 migrant workers

RAYMOND LEPCHA
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:

Around 200 migrant workers were found crowded together near Mining Ground, Rangpo, late Thursday evening. They had travelled from various parts of the state hoping to cross the border to return to their home states but a miscommunication left them stranded at Rangpo.

Some of them said that they had arranged vehicles to pick them up from the West Bengal side of the border. Since the checkpoint closes at 4pm

RT-PCR testing machine reaches Bagdogra; relaxations for lockdown 4.0 announced

GANGTOK, 14 MAY [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) chaired a high level meeting today to take stock of the ongoing Covid-19 situation and deliberate on the roadmap ahead.

The meeting had the presence and participation of Speaker and Deputy Speaker SLA, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, MP Lok Sabha, Advisors, Chief Secretary, DGP, Zilla Adhyakshas and Upadhyakshas, Mayor and Deputy Mayor GMC, all Heads of Departments, and senior officers of the Government.

At the outset, Chief Secretary S.C Gupta presented an overview of the Covid-19 situation in the State till date.

He highlighted the steps taken by the State to facilitate



the return of Sikkimese people stranded in different parts of the country. He also shared about the steps taken by the State Government to ensure safe evacuation of migrant workers stranded in Sikkim to their respective home states.

He presented the statistics of the number of people willing to return to the State, and the people who have chosen

to leave Sikkim for their home states.

He informed that the people of Sikkim have done reasonably well in abiding by the guidelines issued by the State Government from time to time. He called for continued support from the people in the days to come. He also informed the house about the latest regulations enforced by

the State Government to ensure that established norms are not violated.

The Chief Secretary shared the good news that the RTPCR Machine is reaching Bagdogra today by a Special Indian Airforce Flight. He said that the new Viral Laboratory at Covid-19 Dedicated STNM Hospital will be functional in a few days.

The Chief Secretary touched upon the roadmap being envisaged by the State Government in view of reviving the economy of the State, duly following all the medical norms and protocol.

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang lauded the effort of the State Administration, Covid-19 Frontline Workers and the people of Sikkim for their

relentless effort to tackle the crisis situation. While welcoming the esteemed delegates present in the meeting, the Chief Minister invited suggestions from the public representatives and officers.

After thorough deliberation and suggestions from Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Advisors, and Heads of Departments, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang emphasized that this meeting holds utmost importance as the State stands on the threshold of the completion of the third phase of lock-down and the uncertainties that lie ahead.

The Chief Minister stated that the call of the Prime Minister of a self-reliant India offers an opportunity to the State of Sikkim to realize its true potential. He said that the time has come for the youth of Sikkim to embrace skilled work and make the most of the available opportunities. He said that the youth of the State have the innate ability to accomplish any task, and fill the vacuum created by the

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Cops begin enforcing public safety regulations

SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:

Even as Sikkim continues to have no COVID-19 cases, around 700 people here have already been penalized for violating social-distancing norms which Sikkim Police is enforcing vigorously.

Sikkim Police DIG [Range], ST Bhutia, has urged people to strictly comply with regulations of the Sikkim Public Health and Safety (COVID-19) Regulation, 2020. These regulations, he explained, are preventive measures to contain COVID-19 in the State.

Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department, it may be recalled, had issued a notification on 10 May on the Sikkim Public Health and Safety (COVID-19) Regulation, 2020. The regulation has made the wearing of face cover or masks in all public

places and work places and maintaining of social distancing norms compulsory. The regulation also prohibits spitting in public places.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, the DIG Range informed that first-time violations will attract a fine of Rs 300 and this will treble for the second offence and that "repeat-offenders" will be dealt under section 51 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Responding to media queries, he informed that since regulations came into effect, Sikkim Police has already challaned around 300 people in East District, around 250 in South District and around 50 in North District.

He added that most of the fines were imposed for not wearing face masks in public places,

SDF suggestions on how Sikkim should use its share of economic relief package

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:

Sikkim Democratic Front spokesperson, MK Subba, today thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for announcing an economic package aimed at resuscitating the economy. The Centre, it may be recalled, is claiming to have put together a Rs 20 lakh crore economic package.

Mr Subba suggested that the State government utilize this economic package to provide relief to people working at the grassroots level.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Subba stated that the PM has shown "political courage" in allocating the economic relief pack-



age and claimed that Sikkim would get around Rs 30,000 crore as its share of the economic package. This amount, he stressed, should be used to provide relief and compensation to the people working in the grassroots.

Mr Subba suggested that the state government provide a Rs 1 lakh grant each farmer as compensation and provide Rs 10,000 per month and compensation from the month of March to persons in marginalized

groups, homestays and small businesses.

He further suggested that the government allocate Rs 5,000 crore to compensate losses suffered by the bigger industries in the State.

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Arunachal not to demand special trains for returnees: CM

ITANAGAR, MAY 14 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday said his government will not demand special trains to facilitate the return of the people from the state stranded in different parts of the country.

The decision was taken to avoid rush at screening and quarantine facilities which the state presently has, Khandu told reporters here.

The chief minister said the state government has instead decided to opt for staggered evacuation in batches.

He said the decision was also taken to ensure the safety of stranded persons

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Issues and Crisis of Meat in Sikkim

JIWAN RAI

There is a subtle division that meat consumption creates in human society, sometimes even within a family. Our religious beliefs and ethnic traditions determine our meat consumption. Then there are health issues which have an impact on our dietary choices. However, beyond these issues, there is a malicious attitude that makes the meat-related division sharper. There is a thinking promoted by some radicalized minds that racial, cultural, ethnic or even individual superiority is based upon our convictions about meat eating.

Many sanctimonious fellow-Indians have been scolding Chinese people for eating everything, including bats, which they claim caused the eruption of the

COVID-19 infection. There is a sense of superiority in such angry anti-China statements which is simply this – we do not eat all kinds of meats and therefore we

and judgmental individuals, the Sikkimese in general could care less about who is eating what meat. Simply put, we do not look at the facial features, religious

VIEWPOINT

are superior humans. The restriction of certain meats within certain groups itself is not essentially divisive but it is the hatred against or even blatant condemnation of those who eat those meats which is more than antagonistic. It splits us right in the heart.

However Sikkim's social attitude is different. We have evolved into a highly tolerant society in terms of religious beliefs and meat consumption based on religious dietary restrictions. Except for a few odd intolerant

denominations or ethnic identities of those who queue up at the butcheries. We are not nosy enough to sniff out people's kitchens. That is such a great Sikkimese trait simply because it goes a long way towards ironing out a lot of creases produced by inbuilt communal sensibilities. Mind you, communalism is in our gene in Sikkimese culture. Our social harmony is a beautiful reality but it is precariously resting on our delicately balanced ethnic sensibilities. This is so apparent when politicians

accentuate the surnames of the people that they want to attack and defend. But, having said that, our mutual respect for our food choices determined by religious conviction and ethnicity is a tremendous plus point.

I am not suggesting even for a moment that we must encourage individuals to trespass their religious teachings or traditional boundaries and promote a meat eating culture. What we must admit is that there is nothing superior about eating meat. Nor is there is anything superior about veganism. The health related issues are debatable. Scientific findings keep changing from time to time. For those who are sure that eating meat decreases health, please keep in mind that most red meat eating

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Dharavi's journey ...

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's data till May 6, the doubling rate of COVID-19 cases in Dharavi was six days and majority of the patients were in the age group of 31 to 40 years.

Located at the north end of the island city, Dharavi has a population of around 6.5 lakh and is spread over 2.5 sq km area.

With a population density of 2,27,136 persons per sq km, Dharavi is a sort of ticking time bomb for the civic administration, which is working on a war footing to contain the pandemic, a health expert said.

According to BMC sources, the civic body has been supplying essentials and medicine in 213 containment zones, which have reported coronavirus cases.

Raju Korde, president of Dharavi Punarvikas Samiti said lack of proper sanitation facilities and crowded housing conditions were primary reasons for the spread in the area.

"Dharavi has small congested houses and narrow lanes.

Hence, even if the BMC creates containment zones, it's impossible to follow the norms of social distancing," Korde said.

Volunteers from the organisation were distributing sanitisers and immunity boosting homeopathy medicines to residents, he said.

According to civic officials, Dharavi has around 225 community toilets, 100 public toilets and 125 toilets built by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority.

"As hundreds of people use common toilets in the area, the risk of coronavirus spread is high, which is why these lavatories have to be cleaned regularly," said a BMC officer.

Dharavi has nine municipal dispensaries, 50 private clinics apart from fever clinics.

Altogether 47,500 people from the high-risk zones and 1.25 lakh residents of containment zones of Dharavi have been screened so far, according to BMC data.

As per the data, around 4 lakh Dharavi residents have been screened with the help of 24 private practitioners.

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Issues and...

countries have a higher life expectancy and better medal tallies at the Olympics. I am not suggesting that this proves that meat is the cause of their long life expectancy and better athleticism. But it simply infers that, even without veganism, we can achieve certain health related feats.

This brings us to the most relevant issue of the time which is the meat crisis that will eventually hit us harder than we can imagine. Some radical Vegans (the upper case 'V' is intended because they preach Veganism as an ideology) are vindictively saying "I am so happy for the sake of the chickens, fish, pigs, goats and sundry animals. Their lives have been spared during the lockdown". The gloating of vegans over meat eaters implies two things. One, veganism is more 'religious' and morally superior. But since the very idea of 'religiosity' is as diverse as the religions themselves, such a claim is simply subjective and controversial. Two, veganism is more pro-life as it spares the lives of other creatures. But don't we kill pests or many animals during 'animal testing' of our new drugs? We kill millions of other creatures for our survival or so-called advancement in hundreds of different ways. How is that better than killing animals for food? This is a circuitous debate and all we do in the process is chase our own tail.

The most valid issue right now is, how are we going to supply meat to people who need it. What happened in Goshkhana Dara, Chandmari can happen again. I am not justifying people's impatience but it is not quite right to condemn them downright either. When there is such a short supply of meat, what will people do?

Sikkim's meat crisis during the pandemic scenario is tricky. Our broiler chicken supply is tapering off. Our egg supply is over. We have virtually no source for fish production except some small trout fish farms. The pork, mutton and sheep supply may continue for some time but in a much more constricted manner. I have no idea about the beef supply source. The fate of hundreds of agri-entrepreneurs who run poultries, piggeries, etc. looks doomed. It is time for the authorities to give a thought to meat related issues.

Flight home...

"When they arrived and were too late to cross the border, we told them to return," the DC explained, adding that eventually a building was being opened at ITI to house them overnight.

Meanwhile, one of the workers said that they were told that they just had to reach Rangpo where they would have to show their Aadhaar cards and be able to leave.

Another said that he had arranged a vehicle to take them home and that a vehicle with West Bengal registration was waiting for them across the border. However, they were not allowed to go.

"We were provided khichdi and some chewra in the afternoon at Rangpo but haven't eating anything since. We will have to sleep out in the open here," said one worker. At that time, they had not learned of any arrangement being made for them by the state administration.

Some of the workers hailing from West Bengal appealed to their Chief Minister to help them and also urged the Sikkim government to help them reach home.

Minister distributes laptops to SHGs of North district

MANGAN, 14 MAY [IPR]: Minister for Rural Development Department, Sangha, Cooperation and Ecclesiastical Department, Sonam Lama distributed laptop to the Self Help Groups of North District, today under Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission.

Minister, Sonam Lama was accompanied by the Chung Kipu Lepcha, incharge/Dzongu, Secretary, Rural Development Department, C. S. Rao, Commissioner-cum-Chief Executive Officer, Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission, Senthil Kr. District Collector, North Tenzing T. Kaleon.

In total 383 Laptops have been distributed among Self Help Groups and Village Administrative Assistant (Panchayat Secretary) of all four blocks of the district. In Mangan the distribution of laptop was carried out at NDZP Bhawan where 115 numbers of laptops were given away to the Self Help Groups and Vil-



lage Administrative Assistant of Mangan block. Similarly, 140 numbers of laptops were distributed in Passingdang/Dzongu Block 105 numbers of laptops in Kabi Block and 23 numbers of laptop in Chungthang block.

Minister Sonam Lama in his speech at NDZP Bhawan expressed his happiness to be a part of such programme and stated that main objective behind the laptop distribution is to aug-

ment the digital working culture through digital tools and to communicate on the internet by the members of the self-help group of the state.

He hoped that all self-help groups will make better use of so received laptop by promoting their business online and showcase their talents to the world. He further assured to provide all kind of assistance to the progressive self-help groups from the government.

Talking on COVID-19 pandemic he complemented the people of the district for following all guidelines of the government during lockdown and he has appealed to the people to continue the guidelines and protocol of social distancing.

It may be added here that whole distribution of laptop were carried out with duly maintaining the social distancing in all four blocks of the districts.

HC asks Govt to respond within a week on DB Katwal 's writ petition

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:**

General secretary, Sikkim Democratic Front, DB Katwal has filed a writ petition in the High Court of Sikkim seeking the court's intervention and directions for arranging necessary transporta-

tion facilities for stranded Sikkimese which includes the petitioner.

After hearing the petition online, Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, today passed directions to issue notice to the state government to respond within a week. The peti-

tioner, who has not registered himself online on the registration portal, has also been asked to register online.

The petitioner is in New Delhi since March 20 just before the nation went on national lockdown.

Corona-virus-free Manipur reports fresh case

Imphal, May 14 (PTI): A fresh COVID-19 case was detected in Manipur on Thursday, three weeks after the state was declared coronavirus-free.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) here said the person who tested positive for the disease had recently returned from Mumbai by road in a hired vehicle along with five others. The 33-year-old man, who hails from Imphal East district, was kept in a quarantine centre here after reaching Manipur on Wednesday. He tested positive and the reports of his sample tests came in Thursday evening, the hospital authority said. The man has been kept in the isolation ward of the JNIMS, an official at the facility said.

He had gone to Mumbai for the treatment of his father who is suffering from cancer. His mother, who too had accompanied them, had succumbed to coronavirus there, the man's family members said.

Jharkhand bearing transport fares of migrant workers: CM

RANCHI, MAY 14 (PTI): Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Thursday said the state government was bearing the transport costs of migrant workers and would bring back all the labourers stranded outside the state in a "systematic manner".

Jharkhand was making all efforts to bring back 6.85 lakh migrants held up across the country due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the chief minister said.

Taking to Twitter, Soren said, "The state government is bearing the fares of all the labourers and will con-



tinue to do so. "The state government is making all endeavours to bring back the 6.85 lakh stranded Jharkhand residents in (a) systematic manner by coordinating with the Railways and the central government as soon as possible."

The chief minister also urged the opposition leaders to urge the Union government to earmark more trains for opera-

tions in Jharkhand.

Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 11 for allowing plying of Shramik Special trains to bring back migrants, Soren had said, "But only 21-22 trains have so far come with only 50,000 to 55,000 people returning. Nearly seven lakh people from the state are residing in different parts of the country.

Arunachal not ...

who are currently residing in the state as many among them are under quarantine.

"It does not mean that we are not ready to bring them back. We will do so depending upon the quarantine facilities available here.

"I have already spoken to the Assam government to help us in this regard to which they have agreed," Khandu said.

Requests have made to the Assam home commissioner and the Railways to add additional bogies on the special trains hired by the Assam government, which would be specifically for Arunachalees, he said.

"The deputy resident commissioners of Guwahati and Dibrugarh have been given enough manpower and expertise to help our people with their onward journey to Arunachal Pradesh once they reach Assam.

"Those who desire to return to the state will be soon informed about the train services," Khandu said while appealing to people to avoid using bus services

SDF suggestions...

While contending that tourism provides employment to around two lakh people, he demanded that the State government allocate Rs 5,000 crore to provide relief to people in the tourism sector.

Mr Subba reiterated the demand of the party to provide Rs 1 crore insurance and double salary to frontline warriors from the month of March.

He added that the State Government also provide interest-free loans along with loan moratoriums not only from SBS but other nationalized banks and financial institutions as well.

He also demanded that that the State provide

for returning as it involved several risks.

As per the official count, around 2,400 stranded people have so far returned to the state.

Meanwhile, special arrangements were made by the Arunachal Pradesh government to ferry returnees to the state after they arrived in a special train at Banipur station in neighbouring Assam from New Delhi at 7 am on Thursday.

Several teams headed by officers from Arunachal Pradesh received the passengers and after preliminary screening, the returnees were taken away to quarantine centres in their respective districts in buses, taxis and government vehicles.

Passengers from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Charaideo, Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh were among the 442 people who travelled in the train.

However, the exact number of passengers from Arunachal Pradesh was not known.

a Rs 10,000 allowance to Sikkimese stranded outside the State and also extend them access to interest-free loans and support. A similar allowance has also been demanded for college and university students as well as practicing and junior lawyers.

Reiterating the continuing delay in setting up a COVID-19 testing lab, he also demanded that proper arrangements be made for the disposal of face masks and personal protective equipment.

The press conference was also addressed by SDF spokesperson, JB Darnal and Ashit Rai.

Economic Revival...

exodus of skilled workers to their respective States.

The Chief Minister announced the good news that the State Viral Laboratory is on the verge of completion and the RTPCR machine is reaching the State today by a Special Indian Airforce Flight.

The Chief Minister suggested some relaxation measures that could be adopted to help revive the economy gradually. He announced that restaurants and fast food outlets will be allowed to operate with reasonable restrictions, all shops to remain open from 8am to 5pm, inter-district movement of vehicles to be eased, and offices to operate with 30% manpower.

He also suggested ways to accommodate all the people who are stranded in other parts of the country and are returning back. He reiterated that the State Government will go out of its way to evacuate all the people of Sikkim who are willing to return to the State.

The Chief Minister also stated that the State Government is working out a mechanism to grant relief package to drivers and other affected category of people.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister formally announced the constitution of the 'Economic Revival Committee'. He announced that the Committee will comprise of the following:

Chairman - Sonam Tshering Venchungpa, MLA, Martam Rumtek.

Member - C.L. Denzongpa, Financial and Economic Advisor to the Government of Sikkim.

Member - Dr. Mahendra P. Lama, Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of Sikkim.

Member - Karma R. Bonpo, District Collector, West. Member Secretary- V.B. Pathak, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department, cum Development Commissioner, Government of Sikkim.

The Chief Minister said that the State Government will give utmost priority to the Health and Education sector, and will bring about drastic reforms. He emphasized on the importance of the IT sector and the need for the people to adapt to digitalization and IT-enabled services. He said that the IT will have a big role in bringing about reforms in the education sector.

Speaking about reforms in the health sector, he suggested that a Dialysis Unit each should be set up in all the sub-divisions for public convenience, and adequate manpower should be trained.

The Chief Minister informed that the call for 'Each One Help One' has been taken positively by the people. He mentioned the name of a few people and Organisations who have come forward to offer their help in this time of crisis.

The Chief Minister also shared complete details of the Financial support lend by individuals and organisations towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to combat Covid-19. He also shared the total expenditure till date and the balance amount. The Chief Minister expressed his sincere thanks to all the individuals and organisations who have come out to help the Government in this time of crisis.

In conclusion, the Chief Minister thanked the Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Advisors, and Officers for their valuable suggestions in the meeting, and said that the Government will take a decision in the best interest of the people of Sikkim. He urged everyone to continue working with the same zeal to ensure that the State remains free from Covid-19.

KUTSE SHEGU

The kutse Shegu of Late Bhaichung Bhutia of Upper Chandmari below Enchey Monastery

TV. Tower "Vinakay Mission Hostel" who left for his heavenly abode on 2nd April 2020 falls on 20th May 2020. Due to the current COVID 19 situation and social distancing norms, the bereaved family would like

to request all the family, friends and well wishers to pray for the departed soul in their own homes.



Chungden Bhutia (Wife)

6294475441

N.T Bhutia (Father-in-law)

9775821266

Tashi Tshering Bhutia (Brother)

9609850653/8918590228

Laden Bhutia (Sister in law)

9593785714/8918059921

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Reduced milk production due to shortage of feed: Minister

GANGTOK, 14 MAY (IPR): Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services, IPR and Printing & Stationery Departments, Lok Nath Sharma, participated in an E-Conclave organized by Sudarshan News Channel from Gangtok today. The interview was broadcast live at 11:30 am.

Speaking in his 30-minute long TV interview, Minister LN Sharma congratulated the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and expressed gratitude on behalf of the Chief Minister of Sikkim and its people for the declaration of Economic Package and outlined expectations of the farmers and poor people to be self reliant through special financial support from the Union Government.

The package will have greater impact in economic growth and beneficial to boost farmers in Poultry, Piggery, Fisheries, Goatery, dairy farming, Agriculture, Horticulture, Floriculture and other sectors, he added.

He also highlighted on various activities being taken up by the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services and numerous challenges, circumstances and huge loss borne by the farm-



ers during lockdown period. He underlined a dire need of the situation to produce indigenous raw materials in the own state of Sikkim to process feed for livestock to fill the shortages in supply from neighboring border state of West Bengal and outside the country as well.

Replying to a question in context of reduction in quantity of milk production, Mr Sharma said that farmers came across numerous challenges due to crisis of feed that used to come from outside the State. He also spoke on the State's potential in dairy farming and informed that the State Govt. has declared financial incentives of Rs. 8 per

liter to encourage the farmers to enhance their production.

Further he shared about the newly initiated programme of Evening Milk Collection by Sikkim Milk Union to increase the quantity in supply of milk during the lockdown period.

He also shared about the initiatives taken up by the State govt. for processing and marketing of the organic produce and expressed concern over low productivity as one of the challenges in transformational stage of soil at present.

He informed about the intervention made by the State govt. to reopen closed factories in West Bengal to ensure supply of essential feed

for the poultry farming in Sikkim.

Additionally, he urged the Union Govt. to ensure smooth operation of feed mill and factories and also the transportation of essential feed during COVID 19 crisis.

He also touched upon huge potential of the State in fisheries farming and mentioned exemplary output acquired by the farmers of Shribadam and Uttarey in West Sikkim and further emphasized on ongoing planning of the State govt. to strengthen the fisheries sector with the support of the Union Govt.

He also touched upon financial loss borne by the State in Tourism sector and challenges being faced by the manpower

and daily wage workers who were depended on tourism, industrial sector, hotels to earn their livelihood.

Minister Sharma also mentioned various notable initiatives of the State govt. including ban on issue of Inner Line Permit, closedown of three checkpost in border area and health screening started before detection of any positive case in India, to make Sikkim COVID-19 Free State till date.

In his concluding remarks, the Minister urged the Union Ministry to sanction part of economic package for the benefit and welfare of the farmers and financial subsidies to motivate and encourage them towards farming.

Sikkim participates in video conference on Van Dhan Vikas Yojana

GANGTOK, 14 MAY (IPR): A Chief Minister level Video Conference to access progress made in the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (PMVDY) was held on 12 May, 2020, under the chairmanship of Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Minister of Nagaland & Manipur and Ministers-in-charge from 24 other states including Sikkim. Minister Department of Science & Technology, Karma Loday Bhutia represented Sikkim and he was accompanied by Secretary, KC Lepcha, Department of Science and Technology and others senior officials of the department.

Discussion on progress made by various states towards the imple-

mentation of the scheme and exploring the possibilities of benefiting the 1.5 Million tribal population of the country were the primary agenda of the discussion. Issues pretending to immediate fallout of COVID-19 pandemic, long term strategies, interventions, and exploring alternative source of livelihoods for Tribal were also discussed.

Minister, Karma Loday Bhutia thanked the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for conserving the scheme for the Tribal in India and for sanctioning 80 Van Dhan Vikash Kendras to Sikkim. He highlighted the various problem associated with the lunching of the scheme in Sikkim and attributed it to sudden COVID-19 lockdown.

An invitation was

submitted to the Union Minister for gracing the lunching the Van Dhan scheme in Sikkim. Apart from this, he also submitted several other proposals to the Minister incharge of Tribal Affairs having special reference to the state of Sikkim.

In response, Arjun Munda congratulated and appreciated the effort made by Government of Sikkim in efficiently managing COVID-19 pandemic and progress made by Sikkim towards the implementation of the scheme.

He further express his willingness to grace the lunching of Van Dhan Scheme in Sikkim after the lifting of lockdown and look into the various proposal submitted by the minister incharge from Sikkim.

Investor wealth plunges Rs 1.99 lakh cr as mkts plummet

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): Investor wealth eroded by Rs 1,99,619.9 crore on Thursday due to the weakness in equity market, with the BSE Sensex plummeting 886 points.

The 30-share index settled 885.72 points or 2.77 per cent lower at 31,122.89 amid weak global cues and investors' tepid response towards the stimulus package.

Led by the weak sentiment, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies tumbled Rs 1,99,619.9 crore to Rs 1,22,68,099.91 crore.

"The rise in COVID-19 cases and lack of clarity over the impact of stimulus packages were weigh-

ing on the sentiment. Besides, weakness in the global markets further dented the sentiment," Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd said. Global markets tanked following the World Health Organization's comments that the novel coronavirus "may never go away".

US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell has warned of a "highly uncertain" outlook for the world's top economy.

"The markets traded negative today on account of negative global cues and were circumspect regarding the implementation and the effectiveness of the stimu-

lus package announced by the government," Geojit Financial Services Head of Research Vinod Nair said.

"The government has made it clear that the measures will be announced in tranches and not in one go. Investors are still looking for measures to boost the demand and not just inject liquidity, which so far has been the focus from the government," he added.

Among indices, the BSE IT, energy, tech, finance, metal, bankex, oil and gas, power and realty lost up to 3.60 per cent, while healthcare, FMCG and capital goods indices closed with modest gains.

SU groups continue condemnation of research scholar's arrest for Facebook appeal

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:

Condemnation of a Sikkim University research scholar's arrest after his Facebook post about the condition of a government quarantine facility in Pakyong continue to pour in. The scholar, Lalit Pokhrel, has since been released on bail, and support for him has been unanimous from organisations belonging to his university. Today, the Sikkim University Non-Teaching Staff Association also condemned the police action, pointing out that all that Mr Pokhrel had done was "request" the higher authorities to resolve issues and to provide requisite facilities.

A SUNTSA press release issued by its president, Dorjee Sherpa, while recognising the efforts of the State Government to keep Sikkim COVID-19 free, stresses that Mr Pokhrel's Face-

book post "contained no such language that could come under the purview of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and was not a violation of use of the fundamental right on Freedom of Speech and Expression under article 19(1)(a). His statement ".....We all believe in you all. Hope for the best sooner..." says it all."

SUNTSA has demanded that all charges levelled against Mr Pokhrel be dropped immediately "so that in future the people of Sikkim are not thrown into a quandary when they see anything wrong happening in front of their eyes. Such incidences discourage the general public to raise their voices against genuine concerns."

The release has also requested Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] and MP Indra Hang Subba to intervene in the matter and "restore the faith of public on the administration."

4 lakh migrants ferried out of Gujarat in trains so far

AHMEDABAD, MAY 14 (PTI): More than 300 Shramik Special trains from Gujarat have ferried around 4 lakh migrant workers to their home states amid the lockdown so far, accounting for 40 per cent of transportation of such people in the country, said officials on Thursday. With this, out of the total 10 lakh migrants sent back to their respective native places through Shramik Special trains across the country so far, as many as four lakh were from Gujarat alone, they said.

Till Wednesday night,

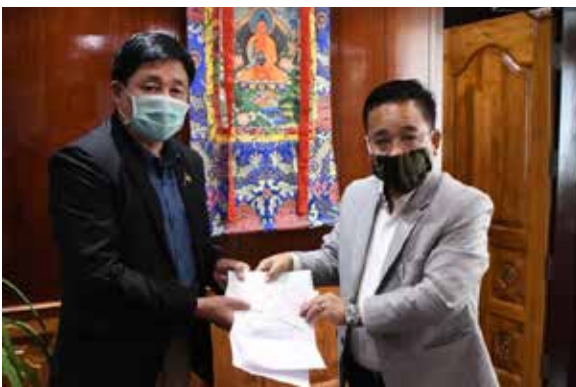
301 trains carrying around four lakh migrant workers and their family members had departed from different cities of Gujarat, said Secretary in the Chief Minister's Office, Ashwani Kumar.

"Around 10 lakh migrants were sent back to their native places by trains across India till Wednesday. Among these, four lakh were from Gujarat alone.

"We are also hopeful that migrant workers would come back to Gujarat soon to resume their work," said Kumar in a video message.

North health-workers contribute Rs 79,500 towards CM Relief Fund

MANGAN, 14 MAY [IPR]: Minister for Roads & Bridges, Samdup Lepcha, handed over a cheque of Rs 79,500 to Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] contributed by the staff of health fraternity of District Hospital, Mangan, PHC and PHSC of North district towards the Chief Minister Relief Fund to support the government's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Chief Minister thanked everyone for their kind gesture and generous contribution.

Global trade fell 3% in first quarter of 2020 due to COVID-19: UN

YOSHITA SINGH

UNITED NATIONS, MAY 14 (PTI): The coronavirus pandemic has led to a three per cent drop in global trade in the first quarter of 2020 and this downturn is expected to accelerate in the next quarter to project a whopping quarter-on-quarter decline of 27 per cent, the UN trade body has warned.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in a report that the drop in global trade was accompanied by marked decreases in commodity prices, which have fallen precipitously since December last year.

The report is a product of cooperation between the international statistics community and national statistical offices and systems around the world, coordinated by UNCTAD.

"Everywhere governments are pressed to make post-COVID-19 recovery decisions with long-lasting consequences," said UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi.

The coronavirus pandemic cut global trade values by 3 per cent in the first quarter of this year, according to the latest data published in the joint report by 36 international organisations.

The downturn is expected to accelerate in the second quarter, with global trade projected to record a quarter-on-quarter decline of 27 per cent, said the report compiled by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA).

UNCTAD's free market commodity price index (FMCPPI), which measures the price movements of primary com-

modities exported by developing economies, lost 1.2 per cent of its value in January, 8.5 per cent in February and a whopping 20.4 per cent in March, it said.

Plummeting fuel prices were the main driver of the steep decline, plunging 33.2 per cent in March, while prices of minerals, ores, metals, food and agricultural raw materials tumbled by less than 4 per cent.

The more than 20 per cent fall in commodity prices in March was a record in the history of the FMCPPI. By comparison, during the global financial crisis of 2008, the maximum month-on-month decrease was 18.6 per cent.

At that time, the descent lasted six months. Worryingly, the duration and overall strength of the current downward trend in commodity prices and global trade remain uncertain.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic sent international commerce into a tailspin, global merchandise trade volumes and values were showing modest signs of recovery since late 2019.

"In this time of crisis, we are putting out the facts as we know them today. We'll continue monitoring the global trade landscape as it evolves," said UNCTAD's chief statistician, Steve MacFeely.


The UN forecast on Wednesday that the global economy will contract sharply by 3.2 per cent as the COVID-19 pandemic paralyses the world, sharply restricting economic activities, increasing uncertainties and unleashing a recession unseen since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

SHUTTER SHOT

Sikkim has proven itself to be the state of divinity and peace always and ever. Shriaadi Entertainments have come forward with a creative PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST to enhance the talent of photography in ourselves. The contest is also with an objective to set an example in the society of how a LOCKDOWN can be PRODUCTIVE!




For further details Like and Follow page Shriaadi Entertainments in Facebook and Instagram.

Contact: +91-8145203427/+91-7586096313



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms | <p>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing. |
| <p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. | <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">    </div> <p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7028372100</p> <p>WEST : 9583297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p> |
| <p>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM</p> | |

State Day

Sikkim as a part of India

Tomorrow, 16 May, is State Day, the day marking 45 years of Sikkim as a part of the Indian Union, time then for a quick recap of events which led to the first State Day back in 1975.

The decade of the Seventies began in Sikkim with a groundswell of aspirations for democracy and a heightened political consciousness among the people. This was not the first time that such sentiments coursed through Sikkim, and similar moments had arrived in the previous decades as well. However, like with most historic occasions, several things had to come together at the right moment for Sikkim to make history and set on course a new destiny.

The right combination of popular leaders, a supportive Delhi and a weakened palace led to the signing of the Tripartite Agreement of 08 May, 1973, with the Government of India, leader of the political parties of Sikkim and the Chogyal as signatories. Nar Bahadur Khatriwada, feted with the Sikkim Ratna on State Day some years back, was a successful youth leader of the movement for democracy in Sikkim and will be able to better explain the passion which inspired the Sikkimese at the time. He will hopefully do that some day, but for now, suffice to say that at the root of the upsurge was a general belief that the elections to the State Council in 1973 were rigged by the palace. Soon, there was anarchy on the streets, police stations even in remote Sikkim were being attacked and the Chogyal invited the Indian Political Officer to take over the administration. The Tripartite Agreement envisaged the Chogyal as a constitutional head, and set things up for the establishment of democracy, rule of law, fundamental rights, independent judiciary and universal adult franchise. As much as this set in place the parity formula for the first Assembly, a system which did not survive when the next election came along, adult suffrage was also a major victory for the subjects, and when the Sikkimese were given their first chance to vote in a democratic environment [in April 1974], the voters gravitated towards the person they saw as the leader of democratic movement in Sikkim – Lhendup Dorji Kazi, whose Sikkim Congress cornered 31 of the 32 Assembly seats.

The Tripartite Agreement, however, did not hold for long. Its provisions were being ignored and sidestepped within a year, or so the elected representatives believed. On 10 April, 1975, the Sikkim Assembly met for an emergency session and agreed that the Chogyal was violating the provisions of the Agreement and abolished the institution of the Chogyal and resolved to become a constituent unit of India. The Statement of Objects and Reasons appended to the 38th Amendment Bill of 1975 [which subsequently became Article 371F of the Constitution] records that the Sikkim Assembly, on 10 April, 1975, "...inter alia, noted the persistent harmful activities of the Chogyal which aimed at undermining the responsible democratic Government set up..." The Assembly then submitted its Resolution to the people for approval.

What Sikkim today calls the "Referendum" is referred to as "a special opinion poll" conducted by the Government of Sikkim. This "Opinion Poll" was held within four days of the Assembly's resolution and 61,133 of Sikkim's approximately 97,000 voters shared their opinion – 59,637 in favour of the Resolution and 1,496 against it and this high turnout and the presence of Indian paramilitary forces in Sikkim continue to feed speculations about the veracity of this "opinion poll". Be that as it may, the verdict of the people was communicated to India on 15 April and the then Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers were in Delhi the very next day. On 19 April, the amendment to the Constitution was moved and Sikkim became a full-fledged State of India on 16 May, 1975.

With the passage of the Act, Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union, the institution of the Chogyal was formally abolished and provisions of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, Tripartite Agreement and the Government of India Act, 1974 were made inoperative. Sikkim's identity within India was to be decided by provisions of Article 371F.

Article 371F is a powerful tool providing Sikkim with its special status within the Indian Union. Unfortunately, it has also become just convenient dodge to rake up the past. The Act was inserted into the Constitution to guide Sikkim's future, not nail it down to the past. One reason why it is not taken as seriously as it should is because Sikkim has been unable to remind Delhi what the Act is all about. Delhi, of course, with larger states to keep happy, rarely does its homework and bulldozes all over Sikkim. What people need to appreciate is that Article 371F has none of the incongruities of Article 370 and boasts near watertight provisions which allow Sikkim to remain unique while also wholly a part of India. It is a progressive Act and that is how it should be used, not as a political slogan to confuse people or to whip up nostalgia for an imagined utopia.

'I thought I could wait this out': Fearing coronavirus, patients are delaying hospital visits, putting health and lives at risk

ARIF R. SARWARI & CHRISTOPHER GOODE
theconversation.com

"Where have all the patients gone?" That's what doctors in our West Virginia University hospitals began asking as the coronavirus pandemic spread.

We were prepared for a rise in COVID-19 patients, but we didn't expect the sharp decline we saw in everyday cases. Our emergency department visits fell by half in early April, a time when we would normally see growth as flu season overlaps with an increase in trauma as the weather improves. Inpatient stays fell by nearly two-thirds during the same time period.

Did the population of a state that ranks in the bottom of most health indicators suddenly get better? Did their lung disease, heart disease and vascular disease improve?

In the emergency room, we heard the real reason: "I thought I could wait this out," patients told us.

In hospitals across the U.S. and Europe, people fearing contracting COVID-19 have been choosing not to seek the emergency treatment they need. One survey conducted in April found that nearly a third of U.S. adults had delayed medical care or avoided seeking care because they were concerned about getting COVID-19.

A study in Spain found a 40% drop in the number of patients undergoing emergency cardiac catheterization for a dangerous type of heart attack known as STEMI between the late February and mid-March. A similar study in the U.S. found a 38% drop in heart catheterization for STEMI cases from January to March. Children's vaccinations also dropped off significantly, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, raising new concerns after last year's measles outbreak.

This has certainly been our experience as physicians and faculty at the West Virginia University School of Medicine. The patients we saw in the

emergency room in April were a lot sicker, and the proportion of emergency room patients who needed hospitalization increased.

THE COSTS OF DELAYING EMERGENCY CARE

Delaying treatment for acute and chronic conditions comes at a cost, both human and financial.

A patient with appendicitis who gets treatment early will usually undergo laparoscopic surgery, using small incisions and a camera, and can go home two days later. If the same patient waits too long, however, and a pocket of infection known as an abscess forms, that means more complex surgery. We will have to insert a tube for several days to drain the abscess, and the patient will be hospitalized longer, in addition to going on antibiotics. In the worst case, the appendix could burst and lead to diffuse peritonitis and sepsis, a medical emergency with severe abdominal pain and low blood pressure.

Similarly, if a diabetic with a foot infection that is early in the stages of cellulitis, a painful localized skin infection, waits a week to two longer than usual, there's a greater chance the infection has reached the bone, becoming an osteomyelitis that could require amputation.

The ultimate cost for delaying treatment can be loss of life. Data from the CDC shows the U.S. had 66,000 more deaths than expected from January through the end of April, with only about half of those linked to COVID-19.

In some cases, clinics are trying to balance the risks. For example, many clinics are delaying preventative care such as cancer screenings because of the risk of COVID-19. One U.S. study found an abrupt drop in preventative cancer screenings of between 86% and 94% through April. Treatments for cancer patients are continuing, with hospitals taking extra precautions to protect patients while their immune systems are compromised.

THE HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE IS CHANGING

COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon, nor will heart attacks, strokes or appendicitis.

If you feel you need to see your doctor, go. If you feel you need to go to the emergency department, call 911. It's better than the pain and costs that can come with delay.

Your experiences during hospital visits going forward will definitely be different for a while. People arriving for hospital care that doesn't require staying overnight should expect some kind of screening process to make sure that they are not ill with COVID-19. The health care system will encourage social distancing at check-ins, as well as in the waiting rooms, and everyone will be wearing face masks.

As a patient, you might not be allowed to have visitors, but you will receive the health care that you need.

While these certainly unprecedented times have upended our care processes, they also offer patients and health care systems new opportunities.

When we talk to our patients, many of them appreciate the opportunity for virtual visits, especially those at highest risk for complications from COVID-19 infection. The ability to establish virtual urgent care as well as offer many clinical services through virtual visits is here to stay.

The past few weeks have seen very significant changes at all points of patient entry into a hospital or clinic. However, clinical medicine's fundamental principle of primum non nocere, "first do no harm," prevails, and we remain committed to making sure that patients that need care get it on time and do not have to delay their visits or ignore their symptoms.

[Arif R. Sarwari is Chair, Department of Medicine. Associate Professor Infectious Diseases, West Virginia University; Christopher Goode is Emergency medicine physician, chair of Emergency Medicine, West Virginia University]



Coronavirus Vaccine: reasons to be optimistic

ZANIA STAMATAKI
theconversation.com

The first coronaviruses known to infect humans were discovered more than half a century ago – so why are there no vaccines against these viruses? Should we be optimistic that an effective vaccine will be developed now?

SARS-CoV-2, the recently discovered coronavirus that causes COVID-19, is similar enough to other coronaviruses, so scientists make predictions about how our immune system might deal with it. But its novelty warrants its own careful study. Similar to Sars and Mers that cause severe acute respiratory syndrome, the novel coronavirus has emerged from animals and can cause damage to the lungs and sometimes other organs.

Why don't we have a vaccine against other human coronaviruses? The emergence of Sars and Mers, in 2002 and 2012 respectively, were either quashed relatively quickly or affected small numbers of people. Despite the interest from keen virologists, there was no economic incentive to develop a vaccine for these diseases as they posed a small threat at the time. Virologists with an interest in coronaviruses were struggling to secure funding for their research.

In contrast, COVID-19 has caused huge disruption around the world. As a result, at least 90 vaccines are under development, with some already in human trials.

HOW A VACCINE WORKS

A vaccine gives our body a harmless flavour of the virus, alerting the immune response to generate an-

tibodies and/or cellular immunity (T cells) ready to fight the infection. The idea is that we can then deploy a ready-made defence system next time we encounter the virus, and this spares us from severe symptoms. We know that most people who have recovered from COVID-19 have detectable antibodies in their blood.

We don't know if these antibodies are fully protective, but a vaccine still has the potential to elicit powerful neutralising antibodies and scientists will evaluate these following vaccination. Researchers will also look for potent T cell responses in the blood of vaccinated people. These measurements will help scientists predict the efficacy of the vaccine, and will be available before a vaccine is approved.

The best way to evaluate a vaccine, of course, is to judge how well it protects people from infection. But exposing vulnerable groups to the virus is far too risky, so most vaccines will be tested in younger people with no underlying health problems. There are ethical considerations for deliberately infecting a healthy person with a potentially dangerous virus for a vaccine trial, and these need to be considered carefully.

In the course of a pandemic, a vaccinated volunteer may become infected with the novel coronavirus, especially if they are a healthcare worker. It will take time to gather data on protection following infection and compare them to people that received a placebo vaccine.

VACCINE CHALLENGES

The ideal vaccine should protect everyone and cause lifelong defences with a single dose. It would be quick

to produce, affordable, easy to administer (nasal or oral administration) and wouldn't need refrigeration, so non-specialists can distribute it to hard-to-reach parts of the world. In reality, we don't fully understand how to produce a vaccine that induces long-lived protective immunity for different viruses. For some infections, we need to administer booster vaccinations.

Ageing comes with a tired immune system that struggles to respond to vaccination, and this is also the case for people with weakened immune systems, so it is difficult to protect the most vulnerable. Therefore, vaccination programmes that protect over 80% of the population can reduce the incidence of virus spreading and protect the vulnerable by proxy, through herd immunity. Currently, the percentage of people who may have had COVID-19 in different parts of the world varies, but this is hard to estimate because of test availability.

Scientists test and confirm a vaccine's safety before it is approved. We appreciate that in some viral infections, existing antibodies from an earlier infection with the same type of virus can cause more severe disease. However, there is no strong evidence for any adverse effects of antibodies for SARS-CoV-2 infection.

WITHIN REACH

Here are some reasons to be optimistic. One, this virus can be cured. Unlike some viruses such as HIV that embed their genome in our own and make fresh copies of themselves after immune elimination, we know that SARS-CoV-2 is unable to persist in this way.

Two, most infected patients develop antibodies and there is evidence of virus-specific T cell responses. Although we don't know if these responses are protective yet, these are precisely the responses that can lead to immunological memory, the cornerstone of vaccination. Vaccine products will be refined and enriched to induce more potent immune responses than natural infection.

Three, coronaviruses mutate slower than viruses such as influenza, and we know from Sars and Mers that antibodies can persist for at least one to two years following recovery. This is good news for an effective vaccine that may not require updating for quite some time.

There are more reasons to be upbeat. Scientists are testing several approaches so there is a higher probability of success, and pharmaceutical companies have been engaged early, scaling up production and working out logistics for distribution even before there is evidence the vaccine will work. This is worth the investment because resources can be quickly repurposed for the most promising vaccines following the first clinical trials.

A coronavirus vaccine is within our reach, and it is our best hope to stem transmission and generate herd immunity to protect the most vulnerable. Taking away its hosts for replication, we can eradicate this virus from the human population just as vaccination previously eradicated smallpox.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Viral Immunology, University of Birmingham]

Coronavirus stages comeback in Goa; 8 new cases found

PANAJI, MAY 14 (PTI): After being free of COVID-19 for more than a month, Goa has recorded eight fresh cases, one of them a member of a ship's crew, over the last two days, said Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Thursday.

Rane said a person who was working on a ship was found positive for the infection during a rapid test on Thursday and his sample has been sent to a lab for confirmatory test.

This comes after samples of seven people, five of them members of one family, tested positive for the disease. One of the patient is a one-year-old girl.

Rane said the crew member arrived in the state on Thursday after being quarantined in Mumbai for 14 days.

He tweeted Goan seafarer who was quarantined in Mumbai for 14 days arrived in Goa this morning after testing negative in Mumbai.

"Upon his arrival, he was tested via our TrueNat (rapid) testing and his initial sample has reported positive.

However, his sample has been sent for a confirmatory test at the virology lab in GMC (Goa Medical College).

"In additions, details of the driver who brought the seafarer to the state, have been forwarded to the Govt of Maharashtra for necessary action, he said in another tweet.

Seven people had tested positive on Wednesday.

The seven people, including three females, have been shifted to a hospital dedicated for the treatment of COVID-19 patients, Rane said.

The seven patients include five members of a family of Goan origin and their driver who had travelled to the coastal state from Mumbai, a senior health department official said.

A one-year-old girl is among the five family members who have tested positive for coronavirus, he said.

The seventh person who tested positive is a truck driver who recently arrived from Gujarat for delivering goods, the official said.

The last case of COVID-19 in Goa was reported on April 3. On May 1, Goa was declared a green zone after all the seven COVID-19 patients previously found in the state recovered from the disease.

Circus industry readies for final curtain call

MANISH SAIN

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): Trapeze performers flying high, jugglers throwing swords in the air, acrobats jumping through hoops of fire and clowns, dressed to the hilt, hamming it up... artistry under the big top is set for a permanent fadeout with circus owners writing epitaphs for their industry.

With wild animals being banned in 1998, demonetisation in 2016 and the steady inroad of movies and TV shows through satellite television and online platforms, the death knells have been coming for a while. Now, the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 could signal the final finis, say owners.

Struggling to pay their troupes with no audience and no hope of getting them in the ring anytime soon, this could really be the end of the traditional circus, the stuff of childhood memories made of candyfloss, sawdust and the feeling of going "wow" in wonder and laughing out loud, all at the same time, as the eyes scanned the heights above and the action in the ring below.

"How long can we survive?" asked a despairing K M Sanjeev, co-owner of Great Bombay Circus, which celebrates 100 years this year.

His troupe has been stuck in the Tamil Nadu town of Mannargudi for the last two months and the overheads are mounting.

"The rental, electricity, salaries, food, medical supplies, it all costs about Rs 80,000-90,000 per day. Some local politicians and NGOs have helped us with food and ration, but how long can we survive like this without the government's support," San-



jeev told PTI over the phone.

The camp at Mannargudi houses about 300 people, including 150 artistes, support staff and their families.

From 300 circus companies a few decades ago, barely 10 or 11 survive, the insiders said.

The Great Bombay Circus and other such companies will vanish if the government doesn't step in, Sanjeev added.

"In countries such as the US and Russia, governments are very supportive of such forms of entertainment. But in India you have to go through a lot of channels to get a circus live, to get a lot of permissions.

"Though we have been innovating, it is just a matter of time that the industry will vanish if no help comes, he said.

Ashok Shankar, son of M V Shankaran, founder of Gemini Circus and Jumbo Circus, agreed and said the turning point of the industry came

with animals being banned.

"I think India did it very prematurely. If you look at countries like the US and Russia, they still have animals.

"It has been 30 years and I still don't understand it. Everything was going so well and overnight everything changed. That was the biggest thing. With that, money generation started going down," he said, adding that restrictions could have been imposed.

In 1998, the Central government banned bears, monkeys, tigers, panthers, and lions to be used as performing animals. In 2013, elephants were also officially banned from circuses.

Three years later, in November 2016, the government announced the demonetisation exercise. In 2017, business declined further and several companies shut down, including the 65-year-old Gemini Circus.

Remembering the grand days of the past, Shankar said

Gemini Circus had hosted the likes of Edwina Mountbatten, Dalai Lama, Jawaharlal Nehru and even Martin Luther King Jr. It was also the circus company in Raj Kapoor's 70s film "Mera Naam Joker".

"Nehru recommended the circus to King and asked him to go watch the show. Nehru, who had been all over the world, was so fond of Gemini. It shows that Gemini was at par with circuses all over the world.

"From there to here, what a deterioration!" the co-partner of Jumbo circus said.

The immediate question, Shankar said, is how to sustain the circus business.

"Either we wind up now, because after six months there will be no circus anymore. We have to look for contributions. On our own, we can't manage this. It is impossible," he said.

While lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a Rs 20 lakh crore package to resurrect the economy, Shankar said the circus industry needs

to be given immediate attention.

"The prime minister has taken bold initiative in resurrecting the more important aspects of the economy. A crisis of this magnitude has never been seen earlier.

"Circuses haven't been considered at all. We pray that a struggling industry be given immediate attention to save this popular mass entertainment from extinction," he said.

His father MV Shankaran founded Jumbo Circus in 1977, and there are two branches of it still operating with about 300 artistes and support staff employed. Both the units are based in Kerala, one in Kottakal and the other in Kayamkulam.

Rambo Circus, another major circus company, came into existence in 1991 with the merger of Great Oriental Circus, The Victoria, and The Arena, is also struggling to stay in business.

"We were somehow man-

aging, then this unfortunate crisis came on," said Sujit Dilip, the Mumbai-based owner.

The advent of entertainment at the switch of a button had anyway made things difficult, even in villages, he said.

"Earlier, we got good business in villages but now nobody comes to see the circus as there are no animals. Whatever we get is in the cities, that is about 35 per cent of the business we used to get 10 years back," Dilip said.

Dilip was hoping to pull in new audiences with "immersive technology" but now echoes the pessimism of Sanjeev and Shankar.

"We had all the R&D completed and were going to experiment with it in the summer with air conditioning and a full fledged premium show. Unfortunately, this crisis came and we lost a lot of money in R&D also. Due to the coronavirus crisis, everything is lost now.

"We have to survive for five, six months more. We are just asking for government help. Any kind of help they can give... they can take it back from us. Once everything is normal we can repay it," Dilip suggested.

A ticket to watch live action under the big top costs less than going to the movies. Tickets for a show at the Rambo Circus, for instance, goes from Rs 100-500 in cities and Rs 80-300 in small places.

The Great Bombay Circus and Jumbo Circus price their tickets between Rs 100-300.

The future is uncertain and bleak. With no signs of an immediate turnaround in their fortunes and the COVID-19 pandemic still to abate, the owners, the artistes and their families are bracing themselves for what might be a final curtain call.

Guv seeks info on KMC administrators from Mamata, again

KOLKATA, MAY 14 (PTI):

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday deplored Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's "non-responsive" approach to the Raj Bhavan, and said he was still awaiting information he had sought a week ago on the appointment of administrators to run the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC).

He said such an approach was "unfortunate" and "contrary to the constitutional norms".

Dhankhar had on May 7 invoked Article 167 of the Constitution to seek information from the chief minister about the appointment of the KMC board of administrators headed by state minister Firhad Hakim, who was also the city mayor before the tenure of the regular board of the corpo-

ration expired.

Article 167 of the Constitution lays down the duties of the chief minister to furnish information to the governor.

"Your continued non-responsive stance when it comes to the performance of 'duties' under Constitution towards the Governor in terms of Article 167 is unfortunate and contrary to your oath under Article 164 and against the essence and spirit of the Constitution and surely cannot be countenanced," he wrote in a letter to Banerjee.

The administrators were appointed on May 6 to run the day-to-day affairs of the corporation in view of the postponement of the civic elections due to COVID-19-led lockdown.

It is for the first time in its history that

the KMC is being governed by a panel of administrators. The tenure of the Trinamool Congress-run board of the civic body expired on May 7.

In his letter, Dhankhar said he had sought information, among others, on the entire decision making process that culminated in the promulgation of the May 6 notification by which the KMC board of administrators was appointed.

"I still await the information sought vide my communication dated May 7, 2020 sent to you after the Chief Secretary, West Bengal, had failed to make available the information sought from him on May 6, 2020 [sic]," he said in the letter.

There are various representations, including those from opposition parties, re-

garding the appointment of the board of administrators, the governor said.

The governor said the representations described it as death knell of Constitutional prescriptions.

"While you are obliged to act in accordance with the Constitution as the Chief Minister, I as the Governor has to preserve and protect it," he said.

Dhankhar urged Banerjee to perform her "duty" under Article 167 of the Constitution and provide all information sought by him.

Over the past two months, the state government and the Raj Bhavan have frequently engaged in acrimonious exchanges over the Banerjee dispensation's handling of the COVID-19 situation and the lockdown to stem its spread.

100th train carrying migrants departs from Punjab

LUDHIANA, MAY 14 (PTI):

The 100th special train ferrying nearly 1,200 migrants from Punjab to their native states departed from here on Thursday, an official said.

Till date, more than 1.35 lakh migrants stuck in Punjab due to the coronavirus lockdown have been sent to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar,

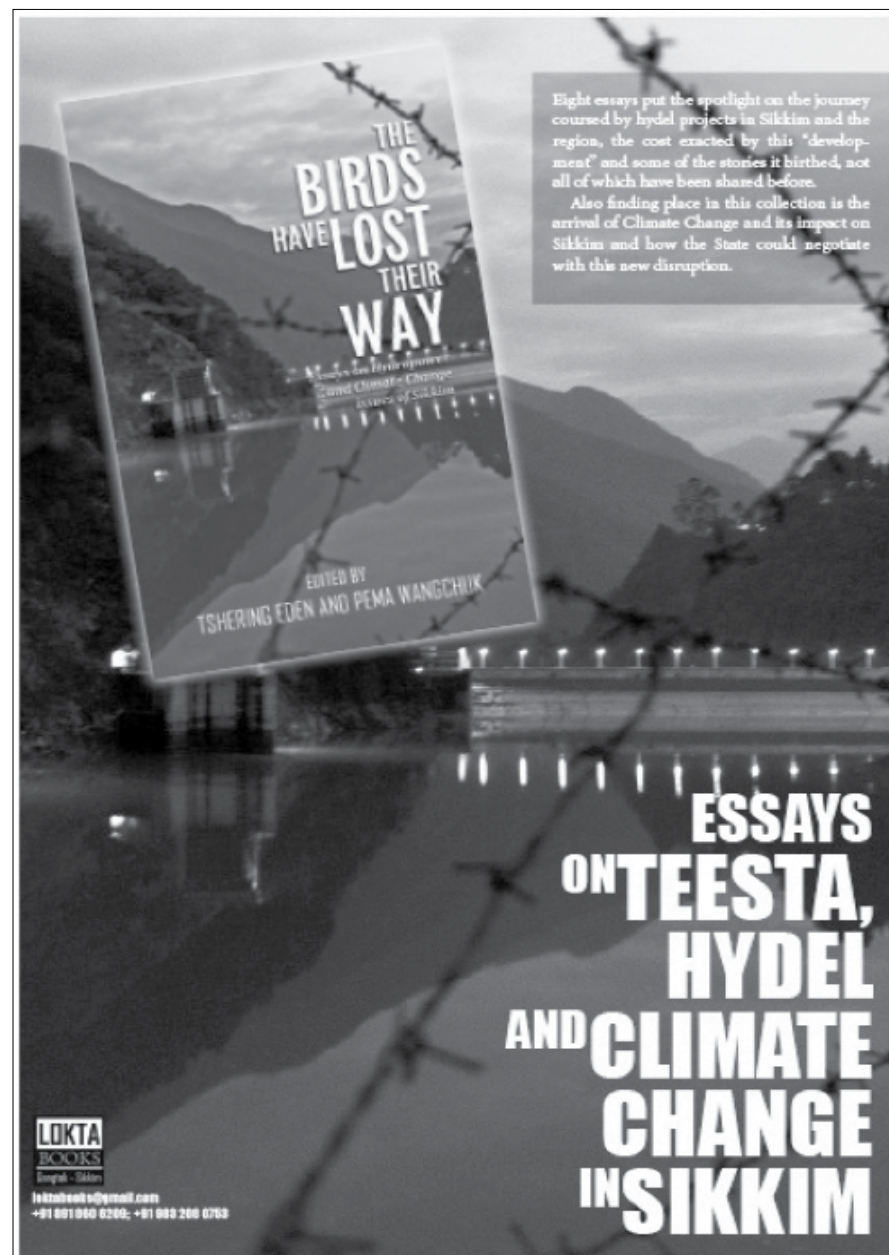
Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

The first special train carrying migrants had departed from Jalandhar on May 5, he said.

The Mau-bound train that left the Ludhiana Railway Station on Thursday was the 100th special train from Pun-

jab and 39th from Ludhiana, the official said.

Principal Secretary, Public Works Department, Vikas Pratap, informed that the trains are departing from Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Patiala, Ajitgarh (Mohali), Amritsar, Ferozepur, Sirhand and Bathinda on a daily basis and each train carries nearly 1,200 migrants.



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Nepal's COVID-19 cases climb to 246

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, MAY 14 (PTI): A six-year-old girl was among the three new coronavirus cases reported in Nepal during the last 48 hours, taking the total number of COVID-19 infections in the country to 246, the health ministry said on Thursday.

Besides the 6-year-old girl from Kapila-

vastu district, other COVID-19 patients include a 32-year-old man from Kathmandu and a 49-year-old man from Nawalarasi district. The new cases were recorded in the last 48 hours, health officials said.

So far, 22,664 people have been tested for the COVID-19.

With the emergence of new cases, the author-

ities have halted vehicles entering Kathmandu from outside districts.

Meanwhile, the local authorities have sealed the Birgunj Municipality situated on the Nepal-India border as dozens of coronavirus cases were reported from the area over the past few days.

Nepal's Province No. 2 and Province No. 5, which have borders with

India, have the highest number of confirmed cases. Province No. 2 has 99, while Province No. 5 has 95 coronavirus cases. However, Province No. 1, also bordering India, has 35 cases. Province No. 3 and 4 have respectively 10 and 2 COVID-19 cases.

Province No. 6 situated in North-west Nepal has not reported any case.

Socially-distanced buses and elbow bumps: German football’s new world

BERLIN, MAY 14 (AFP): Players arriving in several sparsely-populated team buses, substitutes wearing masks and goal celebrations limited to elbow bumps -- when German football returns to the pitch this week-end, it will have to follow a draconian set of guidelines.

The German Football League (DFL) presented political leaders with a 51-page document of guidelines to earn the right for the Bundesliga to become the first of Europe’s big five leagues to resume action.

The matches will be surrounded by extraordinary measures to protect players and officials from infection by coronavirus.

And the weighty text underlines that “all of the measures are conditional on the fact that they do not divert indispensable resources from the fight against COVID-19 for the rest of the population”.

- TESTING AND QUARANTINE -

The central pillar of the DFL’s plan is the mass testing of players, coaches and backroom staff. They are tested at least twice a week and once on the eve of matches. Any that test positive for the virus are separated from the rest of the team.

The decision to quarantine teams rests with the authorities in each of Germany’s federal states, which explains why the entire team of second-division Dynamo Dres-



den was placed in quarantine after two players were found to have coronavirus but Borussia Moenchengladbach, in a different state, continued to train after cases were found among their squad.

- EMPTY STADIUMS -

Only around 300 people will be allowed into the stadium on match-days. They are divided into three zones to avoid any contact between each group.

Only players, match officials, first aid personnel and a small group of photographers are allowed on the pitch.

In the otherwise empty stands there will be just a handful of reporters and TV camera operators.

Outside the stadium itself is the third category of personnel including

security guards. It is the police’s job to prevent supporters gathering outside the stadiums.

- TEAM ARRIVALS -

The teams will arrive in several coaches to ensure each occupant is sitting 1.5 metres (five feet) apart. Everyone in the vehicles must wear masks.

The social distancing rules must also be respected in the changing rooms. When the players come onto the pitch, handshakes are banned, there will be no team photos or handshakes and no team pennants will be exchanged.

- ON THE PITCH -

Players and the match officials do not need to wear masks, but everyone else on the pitchside does, including substitutes on the bench. The match balls will be dis-

infected regularly during the action.

Players have been told that physical contact should only be made as a result of play during the match and embracing or high-fives to celebrate goals is to be strictly avoided. “Contact with elbows or feet is preferred,” the document states.

The DFL urges players to show “exemplary behaviour”.

- MEDIA COVERAGE -

Eight pages of the health document detail the measures that the TV teams must take to avoid contact, including erecting plastic screens between interviewer and interviewee.

Just 10 journalists will be admitted to each match. There will be no press conferences and the mixed zone where re-

porters can normally ask players questions, will be closed.

- HOLED UP IN HOTELS -

Wherever possible, visiting teams must book an entire hotel or, at the very least, an entire floor. The hotel has to be disinfected before the players arrive.

Players are banned from the hotel’s weights room and must respect the required distance from their teammates even at mealtimes.

- PRIVATE LIVES -

At home, players must live in near-quarantine conditions, without seeing their neighbours or friends. The same rules apply to all of a player’s family members. The players are not even permitted to do the family’s shopping.

Akhtar accuses ICC of bias after being trolled by apex body

KARACHI, MAY 14 (PTI): The flamboyant Shoaib Akhtar has accused the ICC of “throwing neutrality out of window” after being trolled by the apex body for claiming that he can even now dismiss Australian run-machine Steve Smith in a jiffy.

The International Cricket Council used a series of images featuring basketball star Michael Jordan to troll Akhtar after he claimed that he can get Smith out on the fourth delivery after three “hurting” bouncers.

In the ICC’s first picture Jordan looks down at something. In the next image, it is revealed as Akhtar’s tweet, and third one shows the legendary basketball player laughing.

Akhtar, 44, tweeted on Wednesday that he was not amused by the ICC response.

“A symbolic tweet, how ICC has thrown neutrality out of the window. Basically this is how the state of affairs are run there,” Akhtar tweeted.

One of the fastest bowlers the game has seen, Akhtar posted an old video of himself and captioned it: “Dear @icc, find a new meme or emoji. Sorry i couldn't find any, only found some real videos.”



Earlier, Akhtar had taken to social media to respond to a poll on ESPNcricinfo that pitted some of the best in the business from the previous era with bowlers and batsmen from the modern-day.

Responding to the post that had pitted Akhtar against Smith, the Pakistani said, “Even today, 3 hurting bouncers and i can dismiss @stevesmith49 on the 4th ball. Lol.”

The cricketer has been caught up in several controversies since his retirement from the game.

Akhtar represented Pakistan in 46 Tests, 163

One-Day Internationals (ODIs) and 15 Twenty20 Internationals while taking 178 wickets, 247 wickets and 19 wickets respectively in each format.

The former pacer, who has been served a defamation notice by the legal counsel of the Pakistan Cricket Board, Tafazzul Rizvi, told the media that his lawyer had sent the reply to the notice.

“He has rejected Rizvi’s notice and its contents. Like I said I am going to fight this case till the end because I have done nothing wrong by highlighting the weak areas in the PCB working.

Carlos Sainz to race for Ferrari from 2021 as Daniel Ricciardo heads for McLaren

LONDON, 14 MAY [THE-Guardian]: Carlos Sainz will race for Ferrari in 2021 as the replacement for the four-times world champion Sebastian Vettel. Sainz’s seat at McLaren will be filled by Renault’s Daniel Ricciardo.

The 25-year-old Sainz has been at McLaren since last year, after moving from Renault, and Ferrari will be the Spaniard’s fourth team after his 2015 debut with the Italy-based Toro Rosso. He will drive alongside Charles Leclerc.

The Ferrari team principal, Mattia Binotto, said: “With five seasons already behind him, Carlos has proved to be very talented and has shown that he has the technical ability and the right attributes to make him an ideal fit with our family.”

Ricciardo has signed a “multi-year agreement” with McLaren and will leave Renault to race alongside Lando Norris. The McLaren team principal, Andreas Seidl, said: “Daniel is a proven race-winner and his experience, commitment and energy will be a valuable addition to McLaren and our mission to return to the front of the field.”

Ricciardo tweeted: “I am so grateful for my time with Renault and the way I was accepted into the team. But we aren’t done and I can’t wait to get back on the grid this year. My next chapter isn’t here yet, so let’s finish this one strong. Merci.”

The 30-year-old Australian surprisingly left Red Bull, a team with whom he had won seven

races in five F1 seasons between 2004 and 2018, to sign a two-year contract with Renault. The first season was fraught with difficulty and Ricciardo failed to make a podium. It seems he has now decided McLaren, who will switch to Mercedes engines next year, are the better bet for his long-term prospects.

Seidl said: “With Daniel and Lando as teammates, I believe we have two racers who will continue to excite our fans and help the team grow.”

The McLaren chief executive, Zak Brown, said: “Signing Daniel is another step forward in our long-term plan and will bring an exciting new dimension to the team, alongside Lando. This is good news for our team, partners and of course our fans.”

Misbah defends axing of senior pacers from central contracts list

KARACHI, MAY 14 (PTI): Pakistan’s head coach-cum-chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq has defended the axing of senior pacers Wahab Riaz, Mohammad Aamir and Hasan Ali from the new central contracts list.

Facing criticism from some quarters for the move to drop many senior players from the contracts list, Misbah clarified that the three would still be considered for selection.

Hasan, clearly upset by his omission, sent out a cryptic tweet but then deleted it quickly.

Misbah insisted that the right decision had been taken keeping in mind past performances and the coming workload of the national team.

He said Hasan was dropped simply because of his injury problems since the World Cup.

“The selectors have made the tough decisions to leave out Aamir, Hasan and Wahab but considering Hasan missed most of the season due to an injury and Aamir and Wahab decided to focus on white-ball cricket, this was the right move,” Misbah said in a press release issued by the Pakistan Cricket Board.

“However, Aamir and Wahab are experienced bowlers and they remain in contention as we believe they can still contribute to the Pakistan cricket team and also mentor our young battery of fast bowlers,” he added.

Hasan was ruled

out of the home Tests against Sri Lanka last year after scans revealed multiple cortical rib fractures, involving the ninth rib on the right side and eighth and ninth ribs on the left side.

Many believe that Wahab and Aamir have been punished by the board for deciding to quit red ball cricket last year in order to extend their careers in white ball formats.

Misbah said, “The philosophy and criteria for this merit-based central contract list was simple and straightforward: the selectors reviewed player performances in the past 12 months and then looked ahead to our team requirements in the forthcoming 12 months.

Ronaldinho closing in on 70 days detention in Paraguay

Asuncion, May 14 (AFP): Brazilian great Ronaldinho’s lawyers are hoping the former world player of the year will be allowed to go home after more than two months of detention in Paraguay over a forged passport.

“We’re hoping to convince the prosecution to allow Ronaldinho and his brother to return to their country. We can do nothing but wait for the investigation to end,” a defense source told AFP.

Former Barcelona, AC Milan and Paris Saint-Germain star Ronaldinho and his brother, Robert de Assis Moreira, are facing up to five years in jail if convicted.

The brothers spent more than a month behind bars after they were accused of entering Paraguay in possession of false passports.

The 2005 Ballon d’Or winner and his brother posted bail of 1.6 million and have been under house arrest at the plush Palmaroga Hotel in the historic centre of the Paraguayan capital Asuncion since April 7.

The public prosecutor has six months to investigate the case, and has ordered the arrest of 18 in connection with it.

“There is not one single serious proof that incriminates him,” Rogelio Delgado, president of Paraguay’s footballers union told AFP.

“Although he has a luxury prison, it’s very

unfair that he’s still being detained,” added Delgado, a former Paraguay international.

The 40-year-old Ronaldinho has been keeping a low profile since being released from behind bars, not least because of coronavirus lockdown measures.

“I was completely caught off guard when I found out that these passports were not valid,” Ronaldinho told Paraguayan newspaper ABC last month in his only public statement since his release.

Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was crucial in Brazil’s 2002 World Cup win.

He and sibling Robert -- who is also his business manager -- initially encountered no problems after arriving in Asuncion from neighboring Brazil on March 4.

However, shortly after their arrival, the pair were taken into police custody when investigators raided their hotel following discovery that their passports were fake.

Ronaldinho, given a rock star’s welcome to Asuncion by around 2,000 children and teenagers, said the documents had been given to him by sponsors of a charity working with disadvantaged children.

The investigation has since expanded into a case of possible money laundering.

UK government issues guidance on safe sports training



LONDON, MAY 14 (AFP): The British government has issued guidance on how elite sportsmen and women can safely return to training, paving the way for the potential relaunch of top-level action.

Professional sport, currently on hold due to the coronavirus, can return behind closed doors in England from June 1.

Under step one of the guidance, athletes, players and coaches can return to training premises for “organised individual programme training”.

That can include individual training or groups of individual athletes training in the same facility but adhering to social-distancing rules.

Step two would allow “social clustering”, with athletes and staff able to come into closer contact, for example tackling, sparring and sharing equipment. A move to the second stage would only take place once the government had given the go-ahead.

The guidance also states that each sport should have a COVID-19

medical officer.

“Enabling athletes to get match-fit is an important milestone towards restarting competitive sport behind closed doors -- but we have not given a green light yet,” said Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

“We are clear that this can only happen on the advice of medical experts and when it is safe to do so.”

Many football clubs are already carrying out individual sessions for players and are hoping for a return to group training as early as next week, with the Premier League aiming to resume its season by playing games by mid-June.

Restrictions on golf and tennis were eased in England on Wednesday, with the public allowed to play with one member of another household.

However, the clamour of sports authorities to return to action has been met with some resistance from professional athletes, worried that their health is being put at risk. England inter-

national footballers Raheem Sterling and Danny Rose raised their concerns earlier this week.

The Premier League held talks on Wednesday with unions representing players and managers.

“The choice to return to training is also a personal one,” said chief executive of UK Sport Sally Munday.

“Every sport is different and everyone’s personal circumstances are different and whilst clearly there are many who are keen to return to training as soon as possible, there are those who will have genuine concerns or personal circumstances that make this challenging.”

England’s Rugby Football Union said it would have further talks with players and staff before resuming training.

“There is still significant work to do and discussions to be had with players and staff before any form of training can resume,” the RFU said in a statement.

“Their welfare will be at the heart of our decisions.

Typhoon forces risky evacuations in virus-hit Philippines

A powerful typhoon hit the central Philippines Thursday, forcing a complicated and risky evacuation for tens of thousands of people, many of them heading to cramped shelters without proper safety gear to guard against the coronavirus.

Typhoon Vongfong sheared roofs from houses, uprooted coconut trees and dumped heavy rain as it made landfall on the island of Samar, sending locals to emergency shelters.

Because of the twin threat of the storm and the virus, evacuation centres in the central Philippines said they will only accept half their capacity and evacuees will have to wear facemasks.

Hundreds of thousands live in coastal areas and flimsy homes near where the storm blasted ashore, and tens of millions more on the storm's forecast path that runs near the capital Manila.

"We are trapped in a nightmare situation where we face the threat of the storm as well as COVID," evacuee Mary Ann Encinares said at a shelter, where she and her children had fashioned masks out of handkerchiefs and rubber bands.

The surge of people and limited space mean authorities have asked big churches in the area to accept people fleeing the typhoon, which is the first of the season.

"We will be overwhelmed so we're expanding our evacuation to include churches," said Cedric Daep, disaster chief in central Albay province.

Some towns had also converted their evacuation centres into sites to deal with coronavirus patients, forcing them to consider using schools shuttered by the pandemic.

"The problem there is how do you address the issue of social distancing inside the classrooms?," asked Ben Evardone, governor of the central province Eastern Samar.

- Double disasters -

Vongfong is packing gusts up to 190 kilometres (120 miles) an hour as well as drenching rains that could cause flooding and landslides, the national weather agency said.

Areas in the typhoon's path are under varying levels of virus quarantine, yet many people are staying at home to avoid infection. The Philippines has reported 790 deaths and 11,876 cases of the virus, though the number is believed to be higher due to limited testing.

It is not unheard of for disasters to overlap in the Philippines, and some 22,000 people were evacuated from the slopes of the active Mayon volcano ahead of the typhoon's arrival.

Heavy rains in the past have sent landslides of debris cascading down the volcano and onto the communities below, burying and killing those in the way.

Amazon could be next virus hot zone: scientist

The next pandemic could come from the Amazon rainforest, warns Brazilian ecologist David Lapola, who says human encroachment on animals' habitats -- a likely culprit in the coronavirus outbreak -- is soaring there because of rampant deforestation.

Researchers say the urbanization of once-wild areas contributes to the emergence of zoonotic diseases -- those that pass from animals to humans.

That includes the new coronavirus, which scientists believe originated in bats before passing to humans in China's rapidly urbanizing Hubei province, probably via a third species.

Lapola, 38, who studies how human activity will reshape the future ecosystems of tropical forests, says the same processes are in play in the Amazon.

"The Amazon is a huge reservoir of viruses," he told AFP in an interview.

"We'd better not try our luck."

The world's biggest rainforest is disappearing at an alarming rate.

Last year, in far-right



President Jair Bolsonaro's first year in office, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon surged 85 percent, to more than 10,000 square kilometers (3,900 square miles) -- an area nearly the size of Lebanon.

The trend is continuing this year. From January to April, 1,202 square kilometers were wiped out, setting

a new record for the first four months of the year, according to data based on satellite images from Brazil's National Space Research Institute (INPE).

That is bad news, not just for the planet but for human health, said Lapola, who holds a PhD in earth system modeling from the Max Planck Institutes in Germany and works

at the University of Campinas in Brazil.

"When you create ecological disequilibrium... that's when a virus can jump" from animals to humans, he said.

- HIV, Ebola, dengue -

Similar patterns can be seen with HIV, Ebola and dengue fever -- "all viruses that emerged or spread on a huge scale because of ecological

imbalances," he said.

So far, most such outbreaks have been concentrated in South Asia and Africa, often linked to certain species of bats.

But the Amazon's immense biodiversity could make the region "the world's biggest coronavirus pool," he said -- referring to coronaviruses in general, not the one

behind the current pandemic.

"That's one more reason not to use the Amazon irrationally, like we're doing now," he said.

And one more reason to be alarmed by the surge in deforestation by illegal farmers, miners and loggers, he added.

Bolsonaro, a climate-change skeptic who wants to open protected indigenous lands to mining and agriculture, deployed the army to the Amazon this week to fight deforestation, in a rare protective move.

But Lapola said he would rather see the government reinforce the existing environmental agency, IBAMA, which has faced staffing and budget cuts under Bolsonaro.

"I hope under the next administration we'll pay more attention to protecting what may be the planet's greatest biological treasure," Lapola said.

"We need to reinvent the relationship between our society and the rainforest."

Otherwise, the world faces more outbreaks -- "a very complex process that is difficult to predict," he said.

"We'd better just play it safe."

From opera to bread line: Italy's surge in the 'new poor'

Within 10 minutes, all the food was gone.

For years, the Ronda della Solidarietà (Solidarity Patrol) charity has served up free dinners twice a week for Rome's needy, passed out at twilight in the shadow of the city's ancient ruins.

But as Italy begins to feel the effects of its most punishing economic crisis since World War II, triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, the number of those in need has shot up.

On one recent evening, a large crowd pressed forward for the 130 bags of food handed out by volunteers, watched over by Red Cross workers.

An undercurrent of desperation hung in the air despite the setting sun and idyllic backdrop, and some people left disappointed, arriving too late for a bag of their own.

Among the crowd were new faces unaccustomed to asking for help. One, who gave her name as Anna, said she had travelled across town for the food.

Unable to work as a cleaner during Italy's two-month lockdown, she has skimped on meals to pay rent on her shared apartment.

"I come here from time to time now when it's hard," she said in a barely audible voice. "I'm ashamed about it, though."

Anna is just one among a new class of poor that has developed seemingly overnight in a country that, even before the epidemic struck in late February, was struggling with a sickly economy, over nine-percent unemployment and vast inequality.

Another one million people will now require food assistance, bringing the total number to 3.7 million Italians, the main agricultural lobby Coldiretti estimated last month, calling them Italy's "new poor".

- Double punishment -

The problem is global. Earlier this month, the charity Oxfam estimated that half a billion people around the world could be driven into poverty by the virus crisis.

Elsewhere in Europe, Spain plans to roll out a basic income to combat new poverty, while in Britain, nearly one million people -- 10 times the average -- applied during two weeks of April for the government's main form of state aid.

In the United States, tens of millions of people have lost their jobs.

But to many in Italy, economic hardship feels like a double punishment.

More than 30,000 people have

died from COVID-19 -- one of the highest tolls on the planet -- while Italians have displayed notable solidarity during the crisis.

La Repubblica daily has estimated that 11.5 million Italians, half the official workforce, have stopped receiving income and started applying for aid.

Last month, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development forecast that 27 percent of Italians could fall into poverty were they to forgo three months of income, in a report based on 2018 data.

- 'Affects your dignity' -

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who has spoken of the "acute suffering" of many Italians, in March set aside 400 million euros (\$430 million) just for food stamps.

"We don't want to leave anyone behind, left to fend for themselves," Conte said in a televised address in March.

But many have been.

Among those swelling bread lines across the country are former cooks, cleaners or shop assistants who lost their jobs after a nationwide quarantine was imposed more than two months ago.

Some never had fixed employment but got by working odd jobs, or in the informal economy. Others were professionals.

Declining savings rates mean the vast majority of Italians don't have a nest egg to fall back on.

"I'm mortified," said Maria Loprore, 65, who worked for 30 years at Milan's La Scala, latterly in the cloakroom, before the internationally renowned opera ceased activity in February.

Before the pandemic struck, Loprore volunteered with a church organisation to help the homeless.

"Now I've found myself in the same situation as these people who need help," she said.

In Milan's former industrial zone of Lambrate, Loprore seeks aid from a charity supermarket operated by Catholic social organisation Caritas.

The charity, which operates nationwide and says requests for help are up 114 percent, issues cards with "points" to use for items like oil and sugar, tuna and tinned tomatoes, pasta or laundry soap. With her widow's pension going towards rent, Loprore relied on her La Scala salary for food, with 60 euros a month going towards medicine.

While she misses the little luxuries she once allowed herself, whether bubble bath or a new T-shirt, what's hardest now to manage is her sense of pride.

"I've always said, 'Gosh, how do they feel?'" Loprore told AFP,

speaking about the people she helped as a volunteer.

"And it's the same pain, now I'm feeling it. It affects your dignity as a human being."

- 'People are desperate' -

Also shopping at the Caritas market on a recent afternoon was Antonio DiGregorio, 64, who was laid off a year ago as a cook but managed to make ends meet transporting seniors and the disabled to appointments.

"I don't get to the end of the month. Even at the middle of the month there's nothing," said DiGregorio, who supports a nine-year-old daughter on the monthly 400 euros he receives under Italy's welfare system for its poorest.

The so-called citizen's income was considered revolutionary when introduced more than a year ago by the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, although it differs little from unemployment benefit schemes in many European countries.

Currently about one million families qualify for it, receiving up to 6,000 euros a year, but the government is considering reforms that would expand the number of eligible people.

DiGregorio's biggest worry now is increased competition for jobs given the droves of unemployed.

But the wider social impact also concerns him.

Already, he says, he has seen people shopping in Milan grocery stores rushing for the door without paying, a phenomenon also reported in Italy's south.

Businesses "have to start up again because if we're stuck another month, we'll have civil war," DiGregorio warned.

"People are desperate."

- 'No one's throwing anything away' -

Before the coronavirus crisis, Italy had about 1.8 million households, or about five million individuals, living in absolute poverty, unable to cover basic necessities, according to national statistics bureau Istat, based on 2018 data.

Most of the poor are in the south. Poverty also falls disproportionately on immigrants, 30 percent of whom live in absolute poverty, Istat found.

Some nine million people are considered in "relative poverty", with incomes 50 percent or more below the national median. Before the lockdown, the Nonna Roma association helped 300 Roman families with food and other necessities.

The number of requests has now swelled to nearly 4,000, its president, Alberto Campailla, told AFP.

Facemasks, silence and social distancing as pro golf resumes in S. Korea

Birdsong and the rattle of the ball dropping into the cup -- accompanied by camera shutters -- were the only sounds to be heard as professional women's golf entered the post-coronavirus era on a closed South Korean course Thursday.

Spectators were barred from the Lakewood Country Club as the KLPGA Championship got under way in Yangju, northeast of Seoul, with a host of social distancing measures in place to guard against infection.

South Korea is a power in the women's game, providing four of the current world top 10, three of whom are taking part in the normally low-profile domestic tournament.

It is the first high-level women's golf to be played since the US-based LPGA suspended its season in February, and with sports fans around the world starved of live action rights have been sold to broadcasters in countries including the US, Canada and Australia.

"Interest is very high since this is the first golf tour in the world amid the pandemic," the KLPGA said in a statement.

World number three and double major winner Park Sung-hyun, sixth-ranked Kim Sei-young -- a nine-time winner on the LPGA Tour -- and number 10 Lee Jeong-eun are part of a 150-strong field chasing the \$180,000 winner's cheque from a tournament purse of \$2.5 million, the highest in the event's 42-year history.

Players are advised to keep two metres apart on the course and minimise physical contact, while touching the pin without gloves is prohibited.

They have to wear masks before and after their rounds, but can choose whether or not to do so during play, with most deciding to remain uncovered Thursday. But with no spectators the course was devoid of oohs and aahs, or even applause, on Thursday.

- 'Usually a lot of fans show up' -

Playing without fans was a "pity", the sixth-ranked Kim said after her pre-tournament practice.

"Usually a lot of fans show up, more here in Korea than in the US," she said. "But I'm thankful for just even being able to play."

Apart from the host broadcaster, media cov-

erage on the course is restricted to the first and 10th tees, with personnel required to wear face masks throughout.

Everyone entering the course had their temperature checked and had to provide their personal information.

And players have to eat their meals alone to maintain social distancing, with no caddies or family members allowed to sit at the same table in the lounge.

"At lunch all the golfers had to face the same direction while eating" without chatting, Park Sung-hyun said Wednesday. "All of this was quite new." The tournament comes after South Korea -- which endured one of the worst early outbreaks of the disease outside mainland China but has brought it under control with a widespread "trace, test and treat" programme -- saw professional football and baseball resume last week, also behind closed doors.

Only four LPGA Tour events have been completed this year -- the last in Adelaide on February 16 -- and the tour has outlined plans to resume in mid-July in Michigan.

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MUSCLE MAN! Dnacer, Derek Hough showed off his biceps while picking up a salad from Sweetgreen in Sherman Oaks, California.

'The New Mutants' gets new August release date

LOS ANGELES, MAY 14 (PTI): "The New Mutants", the horror-tinged "X-Men" spin-off, is slated to be released in theatres on August 28, Disney has announced.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the much-awaited film was earlier scheduled for a spring release but was taken off the calendar due to the coronavirus pandemic. Disney inherited the film upon acquiring 20th Century Fox.

Directed by Josh Boone, the film follows a group of young mutants trapped in a secret facility. It features Maisie Williams, Anya Taylor-Joy, Charlie Heaton, Alice Braga and Blu Hunt. "The New Mutants", based on the comic of the same name, was the first "X-Men" spin-off and released in 1982.

The movie has had a tumultuous journey to release which led to intense speculation that it would skip theatres and go directly to streaming, which wasn't the case.

Russell Crowe to star in thriller 'American Son'



LOS ANGELES, MAY 14 (PTI): Hollywood star Russell Crowe is set to play a mobster in "American Son", a new thriller set at Paramount Pictures. The film is based on the 2009 critically acclaimed French movie "A Prophet", reported Variety.

Andrew "Rapman" Onwubolu, best known for crime drama "Blue Story", is attached to direct from a screenplay by Dennis Lehane. "American Son" revolves around a man, who, after falling under the control of a ruthless mobster (Crowe) while in prison, builds a multi-racial crime syndicate, takes down his mentor, and earns a place for his crew alongside the Italian and Russian mafias. The studio is yet to cast

the protagonist, but according to insiders the studio will start scouting talent for the role soon.

H Moritz and Toby Jaffe will serve as producers via Original Film.

The original film, directed by Jacques Audiard, follows an Arab man (played by Tahar Rahim), who is sent to a French prison, where he becomes a mafia kingpin.

"A Prophet" won the grand prix at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. It was also nominated for best foreign-language film at the 2010 Oscars.

Crowe will next be seen in "Unhinged", which will mark the first movie to return to theatres since the coronavirus pandemic. It is slated to debut on July 1.

'Gulabo Sitabo' set for June 12 world premiere on Amazon Prime Video

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): It's official. Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana starrer "Gulabo Sitabo" is heading for a direct digital release on Amazon Prime Video, the makers announced on Thursday.

Directed by Shoojit Sircar, the Lucknow-set satire will start streaming from June 12 worldwide.

"Gulabo Sitabo" is a quirky tale of two slimy scheming foxes -- a landlord and tenant -- in a game of one upmanship.

A Rising Sun Films Production, the movie was ready for an April release but owing to the coronavirus-induced shutdown the filmmakers decided to take the digital route.

Sircar said he is happy that the film, penned by frequent collaborator Juhi Chaturvedi, will finally release.

"I am happy that finally I can put forward my film as quickly as possible. As soon as the story was baked, I wanted to serve it. These are unforeseen circumstances, we all have to go through it," the director told PTI in an interview.

The film is the first direct digital release for Sircar.

"I have never experimented on a digital platform so this is the first time that we are releasing a film straight on a streamer. It's quite exciting as digital is going to be the future," he added.

The director has previously directed Bachchan in "Piku" (2015), alongside Deepika Padukone and Irrfan Khan, and the megastar said the dramedy is a "must watch for families at home".

"I had a wonderful time working with my very talented co-star Ayushmann Khurrana. Even though we are constantly bantering in the film, it has been a pleasure working with him for the first time.

"This family entertainer has the power to cut across geographic boundaries and we are pleased to bring 'Gulabo Sitabo' to audiences across the globe," Bachchan said in a statement.

"Gulabo Sitabo" also reunites Khurrana with Sircar after the 2012 hit "Vicky Donor", which was the actor's debut in Bollywood.

Khurrana said this is a "special film" for him for many reasons.

"It made me reunite with my mentor Shoojit da after 'Vicky Donor'. Whatever I'm today is because of him and I'm happy that he made me a part of his vision again. 'Gulabo Sitabo' also sees me share the screen space with Mr Amitabh Bachchan for the first time and it's a huge moment, it's a dream come true for me," he said.

Sircar said while some films may take the "same route" of streamers dur-

ing the COVID-19 pandemic, theatrical experience is here to stay.

Both cinema halls and digital platforms will continue to coexist, he added. "Experience of watching 'Gulabo Sitabo' on Amazon will be no less than watching the film in theatres. I saw 'Roma', which directly released on a streamer in 2018, and then watched 'The Bicycle Thief' and 'Pathar Panchali', and that gave me that much a cinematic kick when I saw these films on a digital platform."

Producer Ronnie Lahiri said the film was earlier scheduled to be released last year, but was postponed as they wanted to go on floors with Sircar's next directorial, "Sardar Udham Singh" biopic with actor Vicky Kaushal.

As the team focuses on one project at a time, "Gulabo Sitabo" had to wait for a release window, he said.

"We were ready now but unfortunately this whole situation happened. With any difficult scenario, there is always another route forward that one has to find. The idea is to adapt to the situation. There is always a matter of

us, the bigger love is when people see the film," Lahiri said.

Calling "Gulabo Sitabo" as "one of my most important" films, Sircar said releasing the movie straight on digital was motivated "purely by choice".

"When I was offered and asked by Ronnie for the digital release, it was purely by choice (that we went for it) at this moment. I have a fresh novelty to the film. I have lived with the story for two-three years. When I make a film, I always feel it should reach to the audience as soon as possible," he explained.

Vijay Subramaniam, director and head, content, Amazon Prime Video, India, said they are happy to exclusively premiere one of the most anticipated films of the year "Gulabo Sitabo" on the streamer.

"The global release of 'Gulabo Sitabo' on Prime Video, in over 200 countries and territories, will ensure maximum reach and visibility for the film not just in India but around the world," added Gaurav Gandhi, director and country general manager, Amazon Prime Video India.



Matt Damon says his Ireland lockdown feels like 'a fairytale'

Actor, who is staying near Dublin, says country's leader Leo Varadkar is a 'badass' and he worries about lack of Covid-19 testing in US.

Matt Damon says lockdown in Ireland feels like a fairytale, that the country's taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, is a "badass" and that he worries about returning to the United States because of inadequate testing for coronavirus.

The actor has been staying with his family in Dalkey, a seaside village of south Dublin, since March after filming in Ireland for The Last Duel, directed by Ridley Scott, was shut down.

Local radio station Spin 1038 scooped Irish media by nabbing an interview that must have brought smiles

to Ireland's tourism agency.

"It feels like a fairytale. When I first came in, people were saying, 'Well, Bono

whole family; I'm with my kids and we have teachers with us because we were planning on missing school for about eight weeks.

"We've got what nobody else has, which is live human beings teaching our kids, so we feel guilty. We've got this set-up in this incredible place. It's absolutely gorgeous. Even in the 2km lockdown, we've got trees, and woods and ocean. I can't think of any place you'd rather be in a 2km radius of."

Damon called Varadkar "a badass" for returning to medical work during the pandemic. He said he was a "little worried" about returning to the US. "We don't have adequate testing, so there's going to be another surge it looks like back home."



lives over there, Enya lives over there," said Damon. "It's been incredible. This is one of the most beautiful places we've ever been. Obviously what's going on in the world is horrible, but I've got my

ARIES: Don't apologise for your past self. Don't apologise for your present self. Don't apologise for your future self. Don't apologise period. Yes, you are allowed to take up 'too much' space. You are allowed to be a magician in a world of muggles. Truth is, people will be threatened by the transformation you are undergoing, but their insecurities have nothing to do with you and everything to do with them.

Tip: Allow yourself to take up too much space.

TAURUS:

What are the threads that bind you together? Shared experiences of joy and victory or the wounds and scars of the past? Trauma bonding is real, Taurus, and it's not the foundation you want to build your relationship on. Some amount of distance will prove to be healthy at this point. It will give you perspective on your relationship and help you understand all the ways in which you are being codependent here. Relying on your support system is key. A friend who knows you inside out could help recognise the unhealthy patterns and find the courage you need to break out. Tip: Recognise how and where you are being codependent.

GEMINI:

Pleasure: the one thing we simultaneously desire and distrust. You're being asked to examine your relationship with what makes you feel good. If you find yourself confronted with guilt and shame, you know there is some shadow work that needs to be done. The old script may have served you in the past, Gemini, but it no longer applies to the new you that is ready to be born. Acknowledge the soul lessons taught to you by these experiences as you commit to bringing about inner transformation.

Tip: You deserve pleasure. You deserve to make space for all the things that make you feel good.

CANCER:

If it has been on your mind for this long, it's clearly bothering you, Cancer. Instead of playing victim here, reclaim your power. Start a conversation about all the things that make you feel uncomfortable. You deserve to be seen and heard, just like everybody else. On a lighter note, the cards are asking you to revel in the soul ties that nurture you. Is there a friend (or potential lover) that's been on your mind? Now is the perfect time to give them a call. Tip: Address what's making you feel uncomfortable.

LEO:

You may find yourself more fascinated by the complex workings of the subconscious mind than ever before. The dreams, visions, and recurring symbols all have a message for you, if only you allow yourself to listen. More often than not, our first instinct holds the key to unravelling this guidance. It's when our conscious mind kicks in that we find ourselves questioning what Spirit is communicating with us. Tip: You're in the mood to deep dive into the subconscious.

VIRGO:

Instead of blaming others for where you are, you're being asked to take a look at your reflection. There's a good chance you are being the toxic person in this relationship. Understand all the ways in which you are trying to control the other person or manipulating the situation to make yourself feel better. Love is not conditional and if it is, it will keep you bound to the earthly realm. Embracing the virtues of compassion, on the other hand, will help create a slice of paradise exactly where you are.

Tip: Unconditional love.

LIBRA:

It's true that there are some things that are destined. A part of your karmic contract that is revealed to you over a period of time. But don't discredit the role of free will: the power you possess to shift the energy, move the blocks, and bring about monumental change.

Tip: Stop playing tragedy queen, Libra.

SCORPIO:

Spirituality is not merely about who you are praying to in front of your altar or the mantras you are chanting in your sacred space. It's about your soul essence, about who you are when nobody's looking and the energy you are taking into the world with you. You're being asked to become conscious of your thoughts, words, and actions, especially when interacting with other people. Rise above your triggers, Scorpio

Tip: Become mindful of your thoughts, words, and actions.

Sagittarius:

You've never been one to play by the rulebook. So why start now? What your partner is proposing is way out of your comfort zone, but that doesn't mean you won't find it pleasurable. Venture into unknown territories with a safe word in place (although you won't be using it too much). Remember for a relationship to thrive, it must satisfy the both of you on every level: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Tip: You're in the mood to venture into unknown territories with your partner.

CAPRICORN:

Let's get down to the basics: how do you perceive yourself, Cap-

ricorn? Would you say your relationship with yourself is a healthy one? Clichéd as it is, self-love sets the tone for everything in our lives. What we invite into our experience and our relationship with the outside world is a reflection of this. An inner dialogue is the need of the hour, one that will help you call your power back to you. PS: The time to stop settling for less than what you deserve, in every area of your life, is now.

Tip: An inner dialogue is the need of the hour.

AQUARIUS:

In her bestseller Big Magic, Elizabeth Gilbert wrote, "So this, I believe, is the central question upon which all creative living hinges: do you have the courage to bring forth the treasures that are hidden within you?" Food for thought, Aquarius. Spirit is reminding you that you are gifted in more ways than one. Spend some time this week discovering latent talents and polishing existing skills. It's time for you to stop hiding your magic. Remember, you don't have to be perfect. You just have to be you.

Tip: Uncover the jewels hidden within you.

PISCES:

The cards are urging you to examine your motivation behind the given action. Are you driven by fame, money and power or do you believe in creating from a space of joy and love? Come back to the basics, Pisces. Stepping away from what you have been creating will provide you with much needed perspective. The path of meditation and mindfulness will assist you in looking deeper. Word for the wise: Tune the world out and make time to commune with your higher self.

Tip: Stepping away from what you have been creating will give you perspective.