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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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State Govt has plan in place to bring home students stranded outside

**AARON RAI
GANGTOK, 22 APR:**

Additional Secretary, GP Upadhyaya today said that the state government is planning to bring back students studying outside the state when travel becomes possible. This was discussed in a high level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister, PS Tamang on 21 Apr and another meeting was scheduled to be held today chaired by the Education Minister, and attended by Vice Chancellors of Universities, school principals, and other officials.

Mr Upadhyaya informed that the government plans to coordinate with



students outside the state and when travel becomes possible, they will be brought back in a staggered manner so that they can undergo proper health check-up and quarantine process.

"We will identify quarantine facilities

where the returning students can be kept. We will make a database of such students who are stranded outside the state. We cannot bring back everyone in one go because it will be difficult to manage health screening and

quarantine that way, so we will stagger it. For instance, we might bring home around 200 students per day," said Mr Upadhyaya.

He informed that once students reach Bagdogra, the government is planning to send SNT buses to get them.

There are around 1500-1600 students from Sikkim studying outside and they have greatly benefitted from the Rs 5000 that was deposited in their accounts from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, he added.

Regarding students from outside who were studying in schools and colleges of Sikkim, the ACS said that there are around 6000 such students who had returned home due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. These students will be able to return only after the schools and colleges reopen and till then, the colleges and schools will remain in touch with them and offer online classes, said Mr Upadhyaya.

Support flower growers, get flowers home delivered



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 APR:**

The officials of Horticulture Department started the marketing of cut and potted flowers directly sourced from farmers' field from Krishi Bhawan Complex through direct sales as well as through home delivery by "Mitho" today, a press release informs.

The initiative has been taken to support our floriculture farmers' livelihood as well as to facilitate our customers to get these precious

flowers at their doorsteps in this hour of lockdown due to COVID-19.

"The first day's response was overwhelming and we are continuing with the process in a bigger way to assist our farmers from tomorrow onwards," the release states.

There are varieties of flowers available for sales for which our officers may be contacted at 9434117687, 9593444413, 9434137409. "Mitho" may be also be contacted at 7908272850 for home delivery.

Sub-Divisional administration Dentam meets PDS distributors and other stake holders

GYALSHING, 22 APR (IPR): A Meeting with the PDS Distributors, vegetable vendors and ration shop owners was held in SDM Office premises, chaired by SDM Dentam, NK Karki along with BDO Dentam, Bijay Subba; RO/AD Dentam, DR Bista and SHO Dentam. The main agenda of the meeting were as follows:

1. Hoarding of essential commodities
2. Black marketing
3. Maintaining social distance at shops
4. Mandatorily wearing of face marks in the public places
5. In view of the approaching monsoon they were asked to

stock up the essential commodities which may last upto 3 months

5. Drivers who go to Siliguri for procurement of essential commodities must remain at the "TRANSIT CAMP" located at Sisney and Kyongsa for West Sikkim.

6. Everyone was asked to download Aarogya Setu application in their mobile phones

7. Those retailers found over pricing of essential commodities at this hour of crisis will be booked under relevant sections of law

8. They were advised to bring the goods especially in trucks which are identified by the



District administration 9. Any drivers who refuses or over charges for carriage will also be

booked under relevant sections of law.

The meeting was conducted with proper

social distancing and safety protocol as informed by RO/AD Dentam.

Two arrested for 'mocking police' in TikTok video

MUMBAI, APR 22 (PTI): Two young men were arrested and a boy detained for allegedly making a TikTok video mocking the police in

Mumbai's Antop Hill area on Wednesday, an official said.

The video was shot in front of a police van, he said. A case was

registered against three persons under IPC sections 188 (defying lawful order of a government servant), 270

(malignant act likely to spread disease) and 500 (defamation), the police official said.

Sahil Sardar (18) and Raj Nirman (19)

were arrested for making the video and a boy who helped them was detained and later handed over to his parents, the official said.

Death toll due to COVID-19 touches 640; cases rise to 19,984

NEW DELHI, APR 22 (PTI): The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 640 and the number of cases to 19,984 in the country on Wednesday, according to the Union health ministry.

The number of active COVID-19 cases is 15,474, while 3,869 people have been cured and discharged, and one patient has migrated, the ministry said.

The total number of cases includes 77 foreign nationals.

A total of 37 deaths were reported since Tuesday evening -- 19 from Maharashtra, 13 from Gujarat, three from West Bengal and one each from Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand.

Of the 640 deaths, Maharashtra tops the

tally with 251 fatalities, followed by Gujarat at 90, Madhya Pradesh at 76, Delhi at 47, Rajasthan at 25, Telengana at 23 and Andhra Pradesh at 22. The death toll has reached 20 in Uttar Pradesh while Tamil Nadu has reported 18 deaths and Karantaka has registered 17 fatalities due to COVID-19.

Punjab has registered 16 deaths while West Bengal has reported 15 fatalities so far.

The disease has claimed five lives in Jammu and Kashmir, while Kerala, Jharkhand and Haryana have recorded three COVID-19 deaths each.

Bihar has reported two deaths, while Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and

Assam have reported one fatality each, according to the ministry data.

However, a PTI tally of the figures reported by various states as on Tuesday evening showed at least 646 deaths in the country.

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

According to the health ministry's data updated in the morning, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country are from Maharashtra at 5,218, followed by Gujarat at 2,178, Delhi at 2,156,

Rajasthan at 1,659, Tamil Nadu at 1,596 and Madhya Pradesh at 1,552.

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 1,294 in Uttar Pradesh, 928 in Telangana and 757 in Andhra Pradesh.

The number of cases has risen to 427 in Kerala, 423 in West Bengal, 418 in Karnataka, 380 in Jammu and Kashmir, 254 in Haryana and 245 in Punjab.

Bihar has reported 126 coronavirus cases, while Odisha has 79 such cases.

Forty-six people have been infected with the virus in Uttarakhand followed by Jharkhand with 45 cases.

Chhattisgarh has 36 while Assam has registered 35 infections so far.

Chandigarh has 27 COVID-19 cases, Ladakh 18, while 16 cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Meghalaya has reported 12 cases, while Goa and Puducherry have seven COVID-19 patients each.

Manipur and Tripura have two cases each, while Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported a case each.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website.

It also mentioned that one case of Jharkhand has been reassigned to Bihar after reconciliation.

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AYUSH reiterates immunity-boosting measures for self-care during COVID 19 crises

NEW DELH, 22 APR [PIB]: Ministry of AYUSH has issued an advisory on various immunity enhancing steps from the time tested approaches of Ayurveda. The advisory is reiterated again in these testing times to support the efforts of all as a measure towards enhancing ones immunity.

The advisory issued on 31 Mar, 2020, covered the following five broad areas:

1. The backdrop against which the advisory is issued:

In the wake of the Covid 19 outbreak, entire mankind across the globe is suffering. Enhancing the body's natural defence system (immunity) plays an important role in maintaining optimum health.

We all know that prevention is better than cure. While there is no medicine for COVID-19 as of now, it will be good to take preventive measures which boost our immunity in these times.

Ayurveda, being the science of life, propagates the gifts of nature in maintaining healthy and happy living. Ayurveda's extensive knowledge base on preventive care, derives from the concepts of "Dinacharya" -

daily regimes and "Ritucharya" - seasonal regimes to maintain healthy life. It is mainly a plant-based science. The simplicity of awareness about oneself and the harmony each individual can achieve by uplifting and maintaining his or her immunity is emphasized across Ayurveda's classical scriptures.

Ministry of AYUSH recommends some self-care guidelines (given in subsequent sections below) for preventive health measures and boosting immunity with special reference to respiratory health. These are supported by Ayurvedic literature and scientific publications.

2. General Measures for enhancing immunity:

(i) Drink warm water throughout the day.

(ii) Daily practice of Yogasana, Pranayama and meditation for at least 30 minutes as advised by Ministry of AYUSH

(iii) Spices like Haldi (Turmeric), Jeera (Cumin), Dhaniya (Coriander) and Lahsun (Garlic) are recommended in cooking.

3. Ayurvedic Immunity Promoting Measures:

(i) Take Chyavanprash 10gm (1tsf) in the morning. Diabetics should take sugar free Chyavanprash.

(ii) Drink herbal tea / decoction (Kadha) made from Tulsi (Basil), Dalchini (Cinnamon), Kalimirch (Black pepper), Shunthi (Dry Ginger) and Munakka (Raisin) - once or twice a day. Add jaggery (natural sugar) and / or fresh lemon juice to your taste, if needed.

(iii) Golden Milk- Half tea spoon Haldi (turmeric) powder in 150 ml hot milk - once or twice a day.

4. Simple Ayurvedic Procedures

(i) Nasal application - Apply sesame oil / coconut oil or Ghee in both the nostrils (PratimarshNasya) in morning and evening.

(ii) Oil pulling therapy- Take 1 table spoon sesame or coconut oil in mouth. Do not drink, Swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit it off followed by warm water rinse. This can be done once or twice a day.

5. Procedures during dry cough / sore throat

(i) Steam inhalation with fresh Pudina (Mint) leaves or Ajwain (Caraway seeds) can be

practiced once in a day.

(ii) Lavang (Clove) powder mixed with natural sugar / honey can be taken 2-3 times a day in case of cough or throat irritation.

(iii) These measures generally treat normal dry cough and sore throat. However, it is best to consult doctors if these symptoms persist.

Following the AYUSH ministry initiative many state governments also followed up with healthcare advice on traditional medicine solutions to enhance immunity and disease-resistance, which are particularly relevant against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the above advisory, the Ministry of AYUSH has also proposed to include AYUSH solutions in the District level Contingency Plans being drawn up to contain Covid -19 in all the districts across the country. The Ministry has also put together the draft guidelines for practitioners of different AYUSH systems in the wake of Covid-19, which is expected to be published shortly, after vetting by public health experts.

South begins week-long sanitization drive



NAMCHI, 22 APR (IPR):

In the wake of COVID-19 outbreak, South District Administration in co-ordination with Sikkim Organic Pest Control Sales and Services initiated a week-long sanitization drive throughout the district starting from Namchi, today.

This drive commenced from the premises of South District Administrative Centre and covered District and Sessions Court Complex, Fire and Emergency Services Department, Mayal Lang Children's Home, Manjusha Short Stay and culminated

at Juvenile Observation Home.

Throughout the cleaning process, the organic and local ingredients of disinfectants made of citronella essential oil, phenyl, extra herbal medicines and other secret supplements has been extensively used.

In addition, this drive is aimed to provide sanitization in bazar areas as well as in the workplace and offices of SDM, BDO, Health Centres including District Hospitals, Central and Primary Health Centres, Police Stations and its Out Posts, Food Godowns, Old Age and

Children Homes, ration shops and places where public gatherings are most likely to occur.

It may be mentioned here that similar sanitization drive in collaboration with the DAC, Gangtok, East was also conducted by Sikkim Organic Pest Control Sales and Services from 3rd to 21st april. This free of cost drive has been energetically and enthusiastically spearheaded by Managing Director, Suraj Gurung under the guidance of Pankaj Sharma (Chief Consultant) and Ganesh Chettri (Senior Consultant).

Team of officials meets Gyalshing shop owners

GYALSHING, 22 APR (IPR):

The Additional District Collector West, Karma L Lepcha and Tushar G Nihhare along with DCSO West and SHO Gyalshing called a meeting with the shop owners of the GMC area to evaluate their stocks and communicate proper instructions for the lockdown.

The ADCs along with the respective officials visited the shops and asked them to keep sufficient stocks. Tushar G Nihhare also informed the shop owners that they should have

sufficient stocks to last 3 months.

He also instructed the whole sellers of essential commodities to keep their warehouses stocked with the commodities owing to the rainy season approaching and the situation of lockdown. He urged them to take matter seriously and stock their respective warehouses within the next few days.

He also urged them that their drivers who visit Siliguri to get the essential commodities need to follow the COVID



19 safety protocol and must not return to their families but go to the 'Transit Camps' which has been facilitated for their safety with fooding and lodging facilities.

He informed that under the West District 2 Transit Camps have been set up for the safety and possible precaution measure to ensure the safety of all. Further, only identified trucks and

drivers will be allowed to ply from Gyalshing to Siliguri and other Sub-divisions.

A similar exercise was done by the SDM Soreng, Himmat Rai for the Soreng Sub-Division.

the lockdown is being extended till May 3.

Before the lockdown was announced on March 24, Modi had interacted with the chief ministers on March 20 to discuss ways and means to check the spread of coronavirus.

PM to hold video conference with CMs on April 27

NEW DELHI, APR 22 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with chief ministers via video conferencing on April 27 morning on the way ahead in the fight against coronavirus,

official sources said on Wednesday.

This will be the third video conference of the prime minister with the chief ministers after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

In the last interaction

on April 11, several chief ministers had recommended extension of the 21-day lockdown by two weeks, which was slated to end on April 14 earlier.

On April 14, the prime minister announced that

the lockdown is being extended till May 3.

Before the lockdown was announced on March 24, Modi had interacted with the chief ministers on March 20 to discuss ways and means to check the spread of coronavirus.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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Going Virtual In Teaching Learning

SURAJ KUMAR SHARMA

It has been more than two months since the first case of COVID-19 was detected in a student in Kerala who had returned from a university in Wuhan China. Since then, the disease has been spreading like a wild fire to every nook and corner of the country. It is a great sigh of relief that not a single case has been reported from our state and all doubtful cases turned negative after due testing at designated lab. The sudden outbreak of this unknown threat had bought almost everything in standstill raging from business to economy, travel and tourism to agriculture.

Amdist the worst hit, school and students are one of the major victims of the ongoing pandemic. More than 1.5 billion students or more than 90% of the world's learners are stuck at home due to the school closures in about 190 countries, according to UNESCO estimates (CNN 22 Apr, 2020). After the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic by World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March and much before the announcement of Junta Curfew and lockdown by honorable Prime Minister, Narendra Modi the Education Department of Government of Sikkim has announced closure of all educational institution across the state on 16 March as a precautionary measure. Since then, the officials and educators including heads of schools and teachers had been scrambling to put online learning classes in a bid to facilitate learning remotely.

There has been a paradigm shift in the way we act a look at the teaching learning process. This lockdown has also provided an opportunity to our teachers to showcase their talent as well as bound others to adopt new technology as an alternative for dedicated classroom teaching-learning. Teachers across the state has been adopting different conventional and non-conventional technology and media at their best to provide uninterrupted teaching facility to the students ranging from creating subject wise WhatsApp group to Facebook page exclusively dedicated for teaching a particular subjects. Others are creating video lessons and uploading it in their YouTube channels. Some teachers having expertise in using technology and social media has started conducting live classroom through zoom and other related apps. Sharing of ideas and knowledge has never been so popular and open as it is today. In some remote places having poor internet connectivity, teachers have also resorted to deliver their instructions and lessons through phones and simple text message. On a lighter note, teaching has never been such easy.

Education Department is also leaving no stone unturned to provide support and guidance to the schools and teachers at this time of crisis. Sikkim Edutech App has been developed by the department in association with Netspeq Solution to make school completely e-governed.

Department has also started broadcasting radio lessons w.e.f. 16 April through All India Radio Gangtok for students of Class VI-VIII for every subject except languages under Ghar Mai Basau; Ghar Mai Padhau (Stay at Home; Study at Home) initiative. The students can also talk to the expert and ask questions after the programme. Similarly, lessons are telecast through local cable television channel Samvaad Television for mathematics and Science of Class VI-VIII. All these concerted effort have might have made some effect.

But there is a flipside of this very rosy picture particularly for rural and remote areas. There are many hindrances to these alternatives devised and initiated- the digital divide being the major one. In many places, the vast segment of people lack the basic tools needed for connectivity- be it a device of reliable internet connectivity. So much so that many children who once walked miles to the nearest school, now have to be contended with the lack of digital access in this lockdown. Of course keeping in view these aspects, education department of Government of Sikkim has started radio and television programme but even this could help a little as most of the people today don't have radio sets which have been replaced by LED TV sets and mobile phones. Also, most of the houses use DTH services most of which does not have the channel used to telecast the

audio-video lessons. The benefits of these services can be taken by those who have radio and television sets with cable connection and better internet connectivity. Despite these hindrances, students and parents have been supportive towards this new method of learning. Those who do not have the access of any of the above digital services are also trying to be part of the virtual classroom through convergence.

Other days, most of our time spent on phone was mostly restricted to browsing through facebook, instagram and chatting through WhatsApp and sometime using YouTube for leisure. We never bothered to think about getting acquainted with the different techniques that would have helped us in knowing and understanding conducting and organising learning classes. As a matter of fact, even I have started using the Zoom app just days before current lockdown to undergo one online teacher training course from a private institute in Chennai. Even sometime, teachers are advised not to take mobile phones to classrooms considering it as a distraction to the teaching learning process.

Nevertheless, all the stakeholders of education are working towards creating an environment so that learning would never stop. But, this situation has made us think of the need of digital literacy to be provided to all especially, teachers and students in our schools so that it can be used during any such hard times in the future.

and appealed to the State government to take a closer look at their plight.

The release states that as per government instructions, owners of taxi vehicles have been barred from receiving free ration putting a strain on their daily life.

It is added that the owners of vehicles have been bearing the brunt of the new Motor Vehicle Act which was enforced in Sikkim and have paid massive fines in the recent past. The release further states that most of the vehicle owners have taken bank loans and there was no clarity on their EMIs.

The party adds that almost all taxi owners and drivers are dependent on tourism which has completely

shut down pushing them into a debt trap.

This, the party adds, that because of this situation, a great percentage of the Sikkimese society was under severe financial stress and facing problems just to meet their daily expenses.

"Therefore, the HSP would appeal to the Govt. of Sikkim to take a closer look at their plight and announce measures which will give them relief from the financial strains, as well as problems faced regarding food, they are facing due to the closure of all economic activity by which they were managing their lives during this closure due to the pandemic," the release appeals.

~ SummitTIMES ~
CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

Sikkim Aakraman provides food to frontline workers

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 APR:**

Sikkim Aakraman Football Club is not only a local favourite on the field but the club has also impressed people with its social activities time and again. The premier division club of the State has again come forward to help people in this time of crisis by providing food to frontline workers in and around Gangtok.

Sikkim Aakraman FC has been providing food to officials and personnel of Sikkim Police, IRB, Home Guard and Traffic Police along with GMC workers from Bojoghari to Setipool. Initially, the club was providing food to patients and their attendees at STNM Hospital, Socheygang starting from 05 April but now it is providing food to frontline workers on duty at different points in and around Gangtok.

Speaking to SummitTIMES, Sikkim



Aakraman FC president, Jigme Singey Rinzing Wangchuk said that the club has been providing food to 500 individuals on daily basis since 05 April. The club has been providing food to frontline workers on duty at different points along the highway from Tashi View Point to Setipool, he informed further adding that the

club is also providing food to patients of STNM hospital and their attendees.

Mr Wangchuk informed that around 25 members of the club along with 10 kitchen staff have been deployed at different areas to provide food on daily basis.

The initiative was started with

contributions raised from members of the club but now family members and well-wishers have been coming forward to support the initiative by providing us ration and other necessary items.

"The main objective of our initiative is to support the government in preventing COVID-19 in the State. If everyone supports the efforts

and decision of the government then Sikkim can remain coronavirus free," he expressed.

He also thanked and congratulated different organizations working in this time of crisis.

The Club has thanked its members, Jordan Namgyal, Sang Dorjee, Sonam Gyaltzen Tenzing, Zangyal Dorjee, Sonam Gelek, Dup Phintso Bhutia, Nitesh Kharga, Tenzing Gyurme Bhutia, Anant Milan Tamang, Binay Pradhan, Ziktoo Dadul Bhutia, Kenzo Topgay, Karma Tshering Nadikpa and Karma Phintso.

The team has been providing food, breakfast, snacks and tea to more than 250 police personnel, traffic personnel, GMC workers & Safai Karmacharis. He further added that the club has also provided these food items to around 275 attendants of patients in STNM Socheygang.

High level team inspects proposed storage facilities



RANGPO, 22 APR (IPR):

The State Government is striving with vigorous efforts to apply all preventive measures to save the state from COVID-19 amidst global crisis. In a strenuous effort made today, a high level team of Cabinet Ministers of the State Government carried out field inspections in Rangpo and its peripheries to identify a warehouse to store the essential commodities to be brought from outside the state.

The high level team comprised of Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, BS Panth, Minister for Food & Civil Supplies & Urban Development, Arun Upreti, Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma,

Minister for Energy and Power, MN Sherpa, and Minister Building & Housing and Transport, Sanjit Kharel. They were accompanied in the joint inspection by Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order), Akshay Sachdeva, District Collector South, Ragul K, Managing Director SIMFED, Pawan Awasthi, SP South and concerned officials.

At the outset, the inspection team visited Thalthaley, South Sikkim to take stock of the proposed warehouse and its logistics and feasibility. Thereafter, a brief meeting was held at the Tourism Centre, Rangpo to identify an appropriate location for the storage of buffer stock of essential commodities, as a need to break the chain of transmission of Corona Virus through commodities.

Thereafter, the team visited ITI complex at Mining and inspected the vacant space proposed for storage and quarantine facility. Later, the inspection team visited Cold Storage of Sikkim State Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd. (SIMFED) at Majhitar/ Rangpo. MD SIMFED, Pawan Awasthi informed that the Cold Storage Centre has capacity to store 1500-2000 Metric Tons of commodities.

Speaking to the media, Minister IPR, Lok Nath Sharma informed that the visiting team will submit a report to the Chief Minister and further, the State Government will decide to identify the appropriate warehouse for the storage of essential commodities at the earliest.

Assam man walks, hitch-hikes from Gujarat amid lockdown

GUWAHATI, APR 22 (PTI): Jadav Gogoi, a migrant labourer from Assam working in Gujarat, has successfully completed a 2,900-km journey for reaching his home town in Nagaon district amid the nationwide lockdown, partly by walking and at times hitchhiking.

Starting his journey on March 27, Gogoi reached his home district in central Assam on April 20 night after passing through Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal.

The authorities in the district are, however, not sure about the origin of Gogoi's journey as he has not spoken about it clearly.

"When the police

team found him near the entry point of our district, we immediately called an ambulance for his treatment.

"As he was coming from outside, he was sent to a quarantine facility as per the guidelines," Nagaon Superintendent of Police Gaurav Abhijit Dilip told PTI.

He said that the police team could speak to him only for a few minutes and Gogoi, who hails from Puranigudam area of the district, could not tell properly where he was coming from.

"Our first priority was to treat him. We were more concerned about his well-being. After he is released from the quarantine facility,

we will ask him about the details," the SP said.

Doctors attending him at the Nagaon civil hospital said, his condition is stable but he is weak due to the long journey on foot.

In a video clip doing rounds in social media, Gogoi claimed that he had reached Bihar taking rides in trucks, but then decided to walk to Assam as he could not find any vehicle coming towards the Northeast.

Talking about the journey, he said, he started with Rs 4,000 cash in hand that he had earned by working in a factory, but he was robbed of his money and mobile phone on the way.

Gogoi, in his late 40's, could contact his

family from Bihar after borrowing a phone from a person and informed his brother-in-law about reaching Bihar.

Then for several days, there was no contact and this led to concern among his family members.

After reaching Barpeta district in Assam, Gogoi again contacted his brother-in-law on April 13 and said that he would be reaching home in the next few days.

The news of Gogoi travelling from the country's western state to the eastern state, separated by a distance of about 2,900 kilometre, has created sensation at

a time when lakhs of such migrant labourers are attempting to reach their homes across the country.

In the process of doing so, many could reach their homes, but some lost their lives mid-way on the roads.

Meanwhile, the Assam government on Monday deposited Rs 2,000 each under a special scheme to the accounts of 86,000 persons, who are stranded across the country, due to the ongoing 40-day lockdown to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Assam Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna had said, around 45,000 migrant labourers from Assam are stranded in various states.

IMA calls off proposed protests after meeting with Shah

NEW DELHI, APR 22 (PTI): The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has called off its proposed 'White alert' and 'Black day' protests scheduled on April 22 and 23 following a meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah through video conference on Wednesday. The doctors' body has been demanding that the Centre bring a law to protect healthcare workers from rising attacks at a time when they are battling COVID-19.

According to a statement by the IMA, the Home Minister lauded the medical community

for their work.

He said the safety and security of doctors and other health care workers was his great concern, the doctors' body said.

"He (Union Home Minister) also assured IMA of a Central Law against violence. He appealed on behalf of the Prime Minister to defer the symbolic protest.

"In view of the assurances given from the highest authorities of the government, the IMA calls of the protest. White Alert on April 22 and Black Day on April 23 stand cancelled. We thank all our members for their unprecedented

solidarity and support," the doctors' body said in a statement.

Amid rising incidents of violence against healthcare workers on the frontline of the fight against COVID-19, the IMA had called for a nation-wide 'White Alert', asking doctors and hospitals across the country to light candles on Wednesday as a protest against such attacks.

The doctors' body had also warned that they will observe 'Black Day' if no action is taken by the government and doctors in the country will work with black badges on April 23.

"The IMA has maintained utmost restraint and patience in spite of extreme provocations. Doctors have been abused, beaten up, denied entry and residence. Obstruction to cremation is the last straw that IMA can bear.

"If dignity is denied even in death, our patience and restraint lose their value, it said.

We demand a special central law against violence on doctors, nurses, health care workers and hospitals by an ordinance," the IMA had said on Tuesday.

Several incidents of violence against medical professionals have been

reported from different parts of the country during the coronavirus outbreak.

In Chennai, an orthopaedic surgeon had to bury his associate, a neurosurgeon who died of COVID-19, in the middle of the night using his bare hands and a shovel at a crematorium with the help of just two hospital wardboys after the undertakers fled when a mob, protesting the interment, attacked them.

The windscreens of the ambulance, in which the body of the neurosurgeon was brought to the crematorium on Sunday night, were smashed.

peacefully protest against a decision by a government, it added.

Apart from the MP and former DGP, signatories of the memorandum are Lakshminanda Bora, Arup Kumar Dutta, Biren Singha, Noni Borpujari, Prashanta Rajguru, Nitya Bora, Munin Bayan, Pares Malakar and Akhil Ranjan Dutta.

The KMSS had alleged the state government was digging out old cases against Gogoi in a vindictive manner despite the Special NIA Court giving him bail.

Prominent citizens urge Assam CM to release Akhil Gogoi

GUWAHATI, APR 22 (PTI): Prominent citizens of Assam, including Rajya Sabha MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan and former DGP Harekrishna Deka, on Wednesday met Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and urged him to release peasant leader Akhil Gogoi following the Supreme Court's directives to decongest jails to stop the spread of COVID-19.

A memorandum signed by noted litterateurs, journalists, artists, educationists, and others pointed out

that after the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader Gogoi was granted bail by the Special NIA court, he was re-arrested in other cases across the state.

"The Supreme Court has directed to release inmates on health grounds to prevent infection of coronavirus. After staying in jail for more than four months, the deteriorating health condition of Gogoi is a matter of concern," it said.

The government should "not imbibe


enmity" only because Gogoi "exposed corruption" in the system, and hence he should be released soon, they said in the memorandum.

In the midst of intense anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests, Gogoi was arrested on December 12 last year from Jorhat as a "preventive measure" in view of the deteriorating law and order situation in the state and his colleagues were taken into custody the next day. Later, he was handed

over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which could not submit a charge sheet within the stipulated 90 days, following which he was granted bail.

The appeal to the chief minister further said, "It is an injustice to keep Gogoi and his colleagues in jail for so long. Neither he nor his colleagues ever challenged the country's Constitution or sovereignty."




Every citizen of the nation has the right to democratically and



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever Difficulty in breathing Dry Cough Severe acute respiratory syndrome Pneumonia - like symptoms 	Precautions to Prevent nCoV <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.
Treatment <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. 	

If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104

District surveillance Officer

EAST : 7029372100

WEST : 9593297809

NORTH : 9641957468

SOUTH : 7407691463

New STNM

AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

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Monitor and Evaluate, Then Hold Accountable

There will be fewer complaints and less resentment

Monitoring & Evaluation have always been part of governance. The least paid-attention-to part, but a part nevertheless. Their presence is token and piecemeal, extended by pick and choose when it should have been institutionalized and extended at all levels. Occasionally, one hears of moves underway to elevate this aspect of administration to the hierarchal prominence it deserves – right at the top – but nothing really moves beyond the talk of such things. M&E, however, should be prioritised. It is high time, especially now when those who control the release of funds and opportunities are demanding achievement records in black & white and funds have been scarce because utilization certificates have been inconsistent.

Too many doles, projects, funding and sponsorship have been invested in Sikkim without a scientific, unbiased or transparent appraisal of how far the buck travels in the State or what this investment has achieved.

Frankly speaking, monitoring & evaluation is a simple science. Projects get drafted, funds get allocated, the release of payment requires numerous NOCs and clearance certificates to endorse that the work was done – that’s monitoring. People look at roads carpeted a few months ago disintegrate with the first showers – that’s evaluation.

So, when the government spends precious funds training its officers on monitoring and evaluation, it is expected that they bring something more to the table than the thumb rule by which people have been monitoring and evaluating already.

What is it that ‘training’ can deliver that one does not already know?

Definitely the science to be able to monitor and evaluate so well that when things go wrong, the figures align themselves in a way that a shortlist of those responsible for the bungle is ready even before the Vigilance Police wakes up.

That said, M&E exercises can be carried out endlessly without delivering any results unless the most important follow-up to the monitoring & evaluation process – accountability - is codified. And one does not speak of fixing criminal culpability and corruption charges on failed or compromised projects here. The M&E exercise should lead to pulling up lethargic officials who contributed to failed projects, those who compromise the impact of good initiatives with their poor delivery and those who routinely fail to see the larger picture. These can be departmental action leading to a red-inked ACR or a compulsory enrolment into re-learning school so long as action is seen to have been taken after the ‘culprit’ has been correctly identified.

That would be true monitoring and evaluation because it would be delivering accountability. Such follow-up will also ensure that people do not have a reason to grow too resentful, because that is a common condition among the lay people who see expansive promises get processed with shallow intentions, and then tall claims being made without even a token gesture to evaluate or hold agencies to account.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Coronavirus closes in on Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh’s cramped, unprepared camps

SALEH AHMED
THECONVERSATION.COM

Coronavirus is spreading quickly in densely populated Bangladesh, despite a nationwide shutdown put in place a month ago.

This preventive measure has proven challenging to implement due to lack of awareness of the coronavirus and the absence of a social safety net. Extreme poverty also forces many Bangladeshis to keep working and looking for food despite the risks. Bangladesh had 2,948 confirmed COVID-19 cases as of April 20.

The disease has not yet spread into the refugee camps that house the Rohingya Muslims who fled ethnic violence in Myanmar in 2017, according to a recent update from the humanitarian organizations that work in the camps. But an outbreak in the overcrowded camps is almost certain to come eventually – and when it does, experts say, the damage could be severe.

CRISIS RESPONSE IN THE CAMPS

Even in normal times people in refugee camps often struggle to survive, living as they do with minimal resources, food and housing. I saw this grim reality with my own eyes when I visited the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh – my home country – in 2017 and 2018.

Many of the Rohingya I met in the Kutupalong and Balukhali camps had seen family members murdered and tortured. Most had experienced or borne witness to rape and had their houses burned down.

The Myanmar military’s violent 2017 assault on this Muslim minority was later declared a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing” by the United Nations.

The nearly 1 million traumatized Rohingya who migrated to neighboring Bangladesh now live in cramped, makeshift housing in the country’s southeast, near the border with Myanmar. In the camp areas, the basic hygiene that is essential for preventing the spread of the disease is simply impossible.

On average, four to five Rohingyas live together in a one-room hut, which is often constructed of tarpaulin sheets and bamboo sticks. Their floors, where

they sleep on plastic cloth or paper, are usually muddy. Water supply, sanitation and sewage facilities are terribly inadequate.

The camps, which have an average density of 103,600 people per square mile – far denser than Manhattan – are a breeding ground for disease. Since 2017 cholera, chicken pox and diphtheria have broken out in the camp areas.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES
The Bangladesh government, national aid groups and international agencies, including the United Nations, are trying to equip the refugee camps for the coming COVID-19 pandemic.

Nearly 6,000 hand-washing stations have been installed since March, and some 9,000 shared bathing facilities and toilets disinfected. Half a million bars of soap have gone out at the distribution centers where residents get their food and household supplies, according to humanitarian groups that work in the camps.

Aid organizations are also starting to get face masks to residents. Some 10,000 cloth face coverings have been sewn so far.

Despite these efforts, soaps, face masks and hand sanitizer remain out of reach for many Rohingya.

To ensure that the refugees understand the threat of COVID-19 and know how to protect against it, the World Health Organization recently conducted a training on infection control for staff in all clinics and facilities serving in Rohingya camp areas. Personal hygiene conversations are already happening along with soap distribution.

Soon more than 1,400 trained health work volunteers will be doing education and outreach with refugees in the camps regarding the need for hand-washing, social distancing and other preventive measures.

FAITH AND HEALTH

But reports from the camp suggest that some Rohingya are ignoring this advice, relying instead on the traditional medicines and spiritual guidance of folk healers. Back in Myanmar, the Rohingya were politically and geographically marginalized. Most would have had little to no experience with public



health prior to arrival at the camp.

Effectively engaging a marginalized community like the Rohingya in a coronavirus response will require camp authorities to deliver information in a locally relevant, culturally sensitive fashion.

History suggests that means working more closely with refugees themselves, as well as with local religious leaders and folk healers. During the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, faith leaders played a critical part in reaching one of the most hard-to-reach Pygmy communities.

Even if widely embraced, social distancing will prove difficult in the refugee camps. To get food, people must go to central distribution areas. Bathrooms are often shared. Poverty effectively prevents commerce from closing down entirely.

For now, fear about the coming COVID-19 outbreak is spreading among the Rohingya. One night in late March, when people in the camps were sleepless with anxiety, Time magazine reports, prayers were chanted at midnight as imams and the faithful sought God’s protection.

WORKING URGENTLY

With very limited resources, the humanitarian agencies and local government are working together

closely to address urgent shortages in the camps.

Bangladesh’s refugee relief and repatriation commissioner, Mahbub Alam Talukder, says there are “sufficient” coronavirus testing kits for Rohingya camps. Efforts are underway to ready up to 1,900 hospital beds across Cox’s Bazar, the Bangladeshi port city that is home to about 2 million locals and 1 million Rohingya refugees.

As of April 6, however, Save the Children – one of the aid organizations serving the camps – reported that the city had not a single ventilator. In all of Bangladesh, there are just 1,169 intensive care beds with ventilators, according to the Dhaka Tribune newspaper – roughly one for every 93,000 people.

“It is difficult for Bangladesh to meet the expected surge in demand for ventilators,” said Dr. Shamim Jahan, Bangladesh deputy director for Save the Children, in a press release.

Jahan is calling for international assistance to “avert a humanitarian disaster” in the refugee camps, “[N]o single country can confront COVID-19 alone.”

[the writer is Assistant Professor, School of Public Service, Boise State University]

The five criteria low income countries must have in place for lockdowns to work

SAM JONES, EVA-MARIA EGGER & RICARDO SANTOS

THECONVERSATION.COM

As the COVID-19 virus has spread across the globe, developing countries are starting to enact many of the same policies used in China, Europe and North America to contain the virus. But are these policies appropriate in low income contexts? To help think about this we propose a simple index of lockdown readiness which identifies the share of households that could feasibly shelter at home for a prolonged period of time.

Using Mozambique as a case study, our lockdown readiness index suggests a need for more inventive adaptation of public health policies, not blind adoption from elsewhere.

Many countries have introduced lockdown measures, including home isolation, as a response to the global pandemic. Such policies were originally adopted by China and, over the past months, have been replicated by governments in the global North.

The aim of home isolation is to maintain a maximum of social distancing to reduce contacts with non-family members to an absolute minimum. But this assumes families actually can stay isolated with relative ease. In the global North, for example, an underlying assumption is that many people can work remotely via the internet and phone.

But what are the conditions that make it feasible to shelter at home?

Applying the index to Mozambique our main takeaway is that a strict or full lockdown would be very difficult for a large share of households in Mozambique, including those in urban areas. It is not only that household conditions are often unsuited to a lockdown. Many people simply could not afford to stay at home.

Without a broad-based safety net in place, which could temporarily substitute for lost income opportunities or put enough food on the table, a strict lockdown could quickly degenerate into social unrest.

ASSUMPTIONS OF LOCKDOWN

To make things simple, we consider the following five minimum criteria for a lockdown (often available in household surveys or census data):

- access to safe drinking water in the home;
- adequate sanitation in the home;
- a source of reliable energy;
- access to information or communications technology; and
- having a permanent source of income or savings.

If the first three criteria are not met, then almost all household members will need to make multiple daily trips outside the home to places where other people congregate. These include communal taps or ablution facilities.

But even if these basic household conditions are in place, this does not put food on the table. Families living from hand to mouth would still struggle to stay in lockdown. And as noted in other contexts, disobedience or social unrest can quickly follow if a lockdown drives people into despair.

As the decision to put an entire country or region in lockdown carries not only large economic costs but also social risks, policy makers need to consider whether such a policy is feasible. One way of doing so is through a lockdown readiness index. Using the above criteria, we constructed one for Mozambique.

READINESS REFLECTS INEQUALITY
Based on the 10% sample of Mozambique’s 2017 housing and population census we consider the following five variables. Three are the same as in the first list – access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and electricity in the household. The other two we adapted to: having a phone in the household; and someone in the household having regular (formal) employment.

We define a household as “fully ready” if all five conditions are met and as “partially ready” if the first three of the five conditions are met – that is, they have the basic services to remain at home.

According to our index, it would only be immediately feasible to lock down around 6% of all

Mozambican households, corresponding to 16% of Mozambique’s urban households and just 1% of rural ones.

Overall, 13% of households would be partially ready, meaning they have access to basic services but probably not sufficient income or savings. In urban settlements, only a third of households (33%) are ready in terms of basic services. So, for them, a lockdown might be feasible for a short period of time but some additional social safety provisions would need to be enacted, such as cash or food transfers.

Looking across different regions of the country, the degree of readiness reflects levels of inequality found also in national poverty assessments. In the northern regions less than half the households show even partial readiness for a lockdown, while the south is the least deprived and thus most “ready” region. Yet, even in the capital city, Maputo, located in the south, less than 40% of the households are fully ready for a lockdown.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES
Rather than blindly replicating policies from higher income contexts, we recommend practical alternatives to a complete or general household lockdown.

While this must be designed locally, ideally with community engagement, part of such a package must involve extensive testing and tracking to identify virus hotspots, as in Vietnam, as well as extensive prevention measures. And even if a lighter form of lockdown must be enforced, large-scale social protection programmes (such as cash transfers) and basic service expansion (such as mobile drinking water stations) would be required to avoid an even greater catastrophe.

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WB says it will abide by Centre's orders on lockdown

NEW DELHI, APR 22 (PTI): The West Bengal government has said "it is not a fact" that there was no cooperation with the Central team deputed to assess the COVID-19 situation in the state and gave an assurance that it will abide by all Union government orders on lockdown.

The assurance came hours after the Centre accused the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government of obstructing a Central team deputed to assess the coronavirus ground situation.

In a letter to Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, West Bengal Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said it was not a fact that the two Inter Ministerial Central Teams (IMCTs) have not been provided with any cooperation by the state government since he had two meetings with one team and also was in touch with the other.

"This is to convey my highest assurances for the implementation of the orders of central government issued under the Disaster Management Act as well as the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court," the state chief secretary told the union home secretary.

A home ministry spokesperson welcomed the West Bengal government's assurance

of cooperation to the two visiting teams.

The West Bengal chief secretary sent the letter Tuesday night, hours after the central government had directed the state government not to obstruct working of the two central teams.

The Centre had also accused the West Bengal government of not cooperating with the central teams and also said that the state government was specifically restraining the teams from interacting with health workers and touring the affected areas.

The West Bengal chief secretary wrote: "It is not a fact that the IMCT has not been provided with any cooperation by the state government".

"In fact the teams had arrived without any prior consultation with us and, therefore, there was neither such opportunity to provide any logistic support as envisaged in the order dated April 19 nor the team asked for any help," he said.

The chief secretary said the team, visiting Kolkata and nearby districts, went to the BSF guest house in Kolkata and the team, which is visiting Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, went to the SSB guest house in Siliguri on their own.

"In this connection, this is to inform that



the IMCT in Kolkata led by Apurva Chandra met me in my office on April 20 and had an interaction about the implementation of lockdown measures and other efforts of the state government to contain and combat COVID-19.

"I am also in touch with Vineet Joshi of IMCT at Siliguri and have apprised him about the steps taken by the state government along with sharing of our reports on mail," Sinha said.

He also said that he had another meeting with the team in Kolkata on April 21 at their place of stay at the BSF mess, Kolkata and shared the up to date reports.

"They are visiting different parts of the city to make an on the spot assessment of the implementation of the lockdown measures" the chief secretary said.

Sinha also referred to his telephonic

discussions with Bhalla on April 21 and highlighted "the proactive steps taken by the state government for effective implementation of lockdown measures to contain the spread of COVID-19".

A total of six IMCTs have been deputed to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal to review the implementation of the lockdown measures after making on-spot assessment of the situation prevailing in identified select districts.

Two of these teams have been sent to West Bengal -- one team to Kolkata, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and East Medinipur and the other team to Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Kalimpong.

The first team was led by Chandra while the second team was led by Joshi, both additional

secretary rank officers in the central government.

The teams comprise public health specialists and officers of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), whose expertise can be leveraged by the state government for management of COVID-19 pandemic.

The teams were deputed under the authority conferred on the Central Government under Section 35 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 which states that "...the central government shall take all such measures as it deems necessary or expedient for the purpose of Disaster Management".

Bhalla, in his Tuesday's letter, also quoted a recent Supreme Court observation that the state governments

will faithfully comply with the directives and orders issued by the Union of India in letter and spirit in the interest of public safety.

The said observations of the Apex Court, the home secretary said, must be treated as directions and faithfully complied with.

The home ministry had on Monday said COVID-19 situation is "especially serious" in Mumbai, Pune, Indore, Jaipur, Kolkata and a few other places in West Bengal, and violation of lockdown measures risk the spread of the novel Coronavirus.

West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress, however, dubbed the visit of the central teams as "adventure tourism" and asked why such delegations were not sent to states with much higher numbers of infections and hotspots.

TMC MPs Derek O'Brien and Sudip Bandyopadhyay Tuesday claimed that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was informed about the teams' visit three hours after their arrival in the state, which they said was unacceptable.

Assam hikes fuel prices

GUWAHATI, APR 22 (PTI): Assam has increased fuel prices steeply to cover "some of the losses" incurred due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, Finance and Health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday.

The price of petrol increased from Rs 71.61 to Rs 77.46 per litre and of diesel from Rs 65.07 to Rs 70.50 per litre.

The revised rates will be effective from April 22 midnight.

Sarma told a press conference that the increase in fuel prices is a temporary measure and "the pain has to be borne by all."

"Once the coronavirus ends, we will review it again."

The state government was losing revenue as fuel purchase by consumers had come

down drastically and "we had to increase the prices to cover some of the losses", Sarma said.

"We will be doubly hit as international prices have come down and our royalty from OIL India and ONGC will also come down drastically. Besides, fuel sale in the state has almost been negligible."

"Earlier our monthly dues as royalty was Rs 166 crore but now we will get around Rs 50 crore and so we are trying to protect our revenue by hiking the prices," he said.

Assam government had issued a notification on Tuesday increasing the rates of tax on diesel by "23.66 paise in the rupee or Rs 17.45 per litre whichever is higher" and in the case of petrol and motor spirits by "32.66 paise in the rupee or Rs 22.63 per litre, whichever is higher".

Assam govt to get journalists tested for COVID-19

GUWAHATI, APR 22 (PTI): The Assam government will conduct COVID-19 tests for journalists in the state on April 25, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday. Journalists are facing professional hazards and, therefore, "we have decided to carry out tests for them free of cost", Sarma told a press conference here.

"Those who want to

get themselves tested can come to the Guwahati Medical College Hospital on April 25", the minister said.

All protocols related to COVID-19 will be maintained, he added.

Scribes in Assam had appealed to the state government to conduct coronavirus tests, after many mediapersons recently tested positive in Mumbai and Chennai.

Railways offers to supply 2.6 lakh meals daily to states

NEW DELHI, APR 22 (PTI): Railways has offered to supply 2.6 lakh meals daily from its various kitchens to all those districts which are willing to pick up cooked meals and distribute among the needy, the ministry said on Wednesday.

This has been communicated to district authorities all over the country, it said.

"Details of zone-wise kitchen in charges have also been communicated to the states. The offer of 2.6 lakh meals per day is based on the kitchen capacities of the earmarked initial locations. If the need

arises, more such locations can be ramped up to boost the supply. These meals will be available at just cost basis at Rs 15 a meal. Payments settlement can be done by the state governments at a later stage," it said.

Clarifying about the amount, railway officials said states will be charged if they want railways to cook additional meals for them.

IRCTC has agreed to ramp up the number of cooked meals as per demand.

Nearly one lakh free hot cooked meals are already being distributed by Indian

Railways daily.

The IRCTC kitchens gearing up to serve the needy persons in case of demand include Gaya, Deen Dayal (Mugalsarai), Rajinder Nagar (Patna), Samastipur, Dhanbad, Hajipur, Katihar, Guwahati, Ranchi, Balasore, Tatanagar and Howrah in East Zone; and New Delhi and Prayagraj in North Zone.

Vijayawada, Khurda Road, Visakhapatnam and Raipur in South Central Zone; Bangalore, Hubli, Tiruchirappalli, Katpadi, Ch Engalpa Ttu and Madurai in South Zone; and Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Pune and Bhusaval in West Zone are also gearing up.

UP police station turns marriage venue

ARUNAV SINHA LUCKNOW, APR 22 (PTI): For Anil and Jyoti, the nationwide coronavirus lockdown will be permanently etched in their minds and also find a place in their photo albums as the couple entered into wedlock in police station premises in UP's Chandauli district. Anil, a resident of Mahuji village in Chandauli district, and Jyoti, a resident of Ghazipur district, tied the knot in the presence of cops at the Shiva temple located inside the complex of Dheena police station in Chandauli on April 20.

SHO of Dheena police station, Rajesh Kumar, told PTI, "It was a marriage with limited means and five persons each from the groom's side and from the bridegroom's side were present during the ceremony which took place on April 20 at the Shiva temple located in the

Dheena police station compound."

Kumar recalled that Anil had helped the police during a boat tragedy, which had taken place in February, by saving lives of a number of passengers who were travelling in the boat.

His role was lauded by senior officials of the police and district administration.

"Anil's marriage with Jyoti was already fixed for April 20. However, the imposition of the nationwide lockdown and its subsequent extension made him worried. He then contacted us and sought a solution."

"Anil was told that since lockdown is in place, more than five persons are not allowed as a part of any marriage party or are allowed to gather at a particular spot," the SHO said.

"Anil then asked us whether his marriage could be solemnised

in the Shiva temple inside the police station compound, and told us that only five persons from the groom's side and as many from the bride's side will participate. On this condition, we gave our nod," Kumar said.

He said that selection of the unique marriage venue was done barely a couple of days before the wedding.

Senior police officials including the Additional Superintendent of Police, Circle Officer and in-charge of a police outpost were present during the marriage "The event, though with limited means, was solemnised amidst chanting of Vedic mantras, while strictly adhering to social distancing norms. Unlike normal time-taking elaborate rituals in Hindu marriages, this marriage was relatively shorter," he added.

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SummitTIMES

Cricket Australia finding temporary jobs for laid off staff at supermarket

MELBOURNE, APR 22 (PTI): Cricket Australia has approached supermarket giant and one of its sponsors Woolworths to help with temporary jobs for its staff laid off until the end of June due to a financial crunch caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Cricket Australia is currently not eligible for the federal government's JobKeeper support program having lost no major revenue streams from cancelled matches.

"I wrote to Brad Banducci the CEO of Woolworths given that Woolworths is among organisations that need more staff at the moment," CA chief executive Kevin Roberts was quoted as saying by 'SEN Radio' here.

"Our people and culture team are also working with other organisations who are in the habit of placing people in organisations and industries that have a temporary need for more people."

Roberts also said that a home international season played without crowds would hit their revenues.

"Our revenue from ticket sales you could put a ring around 40-50 million Australian dollars depending on the season. So that is significant obviously, and something that goes into our planning.

"So we're doing those things proactively...as much as we hate making those sorts of decisions we had to make last week.

"The other side of that coin is certainly



that we're supporting our people and looking for even temporary opportunities for them to be involved and earning income elsewhere when their income is reduced from cricket," he explained.

The staff kept on job are working on 20 per cent of their usual salaries but CA's executives remain on 80 per cent of their usual base rates of pay.

Roberts defended the decision saying that it had simply been a matter of judging how much work was able to be done while placing the business on hold and paying employees accordingly.

"It's what activities are being paused and what's the skeleton staff we require for the activities that continue and that leads you to a temporary solution, which is the national coaches being part-time through this period," Roberts said.

The state associations and the cricketers association (ACA) had reservations about CA's measures around coronavirus,

but Roberts said he had support from majority of stakeholders.

"We know that you won't have 100 per cent of people and 100 per cent of stakeholders happy at any particular time. But the reality is that the vast majority of our people, our members, our stakeholders are very comfortable with how we're working through this," he said.

"I think it's just the reality of the situation versus what is sometimes reported, given that stories of harmony don't necessarily sell.

"We're working through things in an open and really orderly way with all of those organisations. It's all about focusing on, in cricket parlance, the next ball," he added.

Shakib to auction 2019 WC bat to raise COVID-19 fund



DHAKA, APR 22 (PTI): Star Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has decided to auction the bat he used during the 2019 ODI World Cup to help raise money for the fight against deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Shakib, who is currently serving a two-year ban from all forms of cricket -- one of which is suspended -- for not reporting corrupt approaches, is the second Bangladeshi cricketer after wicket-keeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim to auction a personal cricketing gear to raise money for the cause.

"I had said before that I want to put up a bat for auction. I have decided to auction the bat I used in the 2019 World Cup. It's a favourite bat of mine," Shakib said during a Facebook live session.

The 33-year-old all-rounder had a hugely successful World Cup in England last year, scoring 606 runs in eight matches at an average of 86.57, which included two centuries and five fifties.

Besides, he also picked up 11 wickets in the tournament and became the only cricketer to score 600 plus runs and scalp 10 wickets in a single edition of the World Cup.

"I had a good World cup with the bat and ball. There were some good performances especially with the bat. I had used a single bat throughout the World Cup and even used tapes on it to get through games," Shakib said.

"It's not that this bat has only been used at the World Cup. I have scored over 1500 runs with this bat and had used it prior to the tournament and after it as well.

"Although I like the bat a lot but I have decided to put it up for auction with the thought that maybe it can leave some contribution to forming a fund during the ongoing coronavirus crisis."

The money raised from the auction will go to the Shakib Al Hasan foundation.

"This is a very special bat to me, but my people are even more special to me," Shakib said.

Fans sue MLB, teams over ticket money, ask for class action

LOS ANGELES, APR 22 (AP): A pair of fans in New York sued Major League Baseball, Commissioner Rob Manfred and the 30 teams, asking for their money back for tickets and for certification of class-action status.

The lawsuit was filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles by Matthew Ajzenman, who said he bought a partial season plan for more than 20 Mets games; and Susan Terry-Bazer, who said she purchased six tickets for a May 9 game at Yankee Stadium against Boston.

"Baseball fans are stuck with expensive and unusable tickets for unplayable games in the midst of this economic crisis, the lawsuit said.

"Under the pretext of 'postponing' games, at the directive of MLB, teams and ticket merchants are refusing to issue refunds for



games which are not going to be played as scheduled -- if ever."

Ajzenman said his Mets plan cost 1,730 and he made a first payment to the team of about 317 last year. Terry-Bazer said she paid 926 to Ticketmaster

and planned to take her grandson to the Red Sox-Yankees game.

Ticketmaster, Stubhub, Live Nation and Last Minute Transactions are among the defendants. The caption on the first page included Tampa Bay

Devil Rays Ltd. Devil was dropped from the team's nickname after the 2007 season.

"The defendants continue to retain enormous profits from tickets sold for the 2020 MLB season at the expense of fans' financial

hardship, the suit said.

Fans asked for full restitution, an accounting of all MLB tickets sold for the 2020 season (including season tickets, single game purchases, and public seat licenses), a declaratory judgment that defendants' conduct

of continuing to sell tickets for the 2020 MLB regular season violates California law, as well as a disgorgement of profits from tickets sold during the 2020 MLB season.

They allege violations of California's Consumer Legal Remedies Act and Unfair Competition Law and of civil conspiracy.

Opening day on March 26 was pushed back until mid-May at the earliest after a national emergency was declared due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

MLB said it is awaiting government and medical direction, and it does not know when the season can begin.

The league and the players' union have discussed the possibility of playing at neutral sites or in empty ballparks, but no decisions have been made.

MLB, the Mets and Yankees did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Vijender, Manoj help raise funds for ailing Dingko Singh

NEW DELHI, APR 22 (PTI): Seasoned Indian boxers Vijender Singh and Manoj Kumar have stepped forward to raise funds for Asian Games gold-winning former pugilist Dingko Singh, who is battling liver cancer and will be flown to the national capital on April 25 for radiation therapy.

The duo and some other boxers and coaches have connected over a WhatsApp group to raise over Rs 1 lakh, transferred directly to Dingko's account

through online payment modes.

"We have a whatsapp group, 'hum mein hai dum', Manoj posted about Dingko on it. We got his bank details and all of us have been chipping in with whatever we can manage," Vijender, who now plies his trade in the professional circuit, told PTI.

The "mission" started on Tuesday evening once Dingko's bank details were established. The contributions have ranged from Rs 1,000 to Rs 25,000 so far and are

still coming in.

"...we have raised over Rs 1 lakh, the money is continuing to go to his account. I put in Rs 25,000, likewise, everyone else has been giving what they can. Somebody gave 11,000, some other put in Rs 5,000," Vijender, India's first and only male boxer to have won an Olympic medal, said.

"Dingko is a hero, an icon for us. We had to come forward because every boxer deserves that his community

comes to his aid at the hour of need," he added.

Dingko was due to be in Delhi a fortnight back for therapy but he could not make the trip from his home in Imphal due to the lockdown to contain the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic.

However, given the seriousness of his condition, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has arranged for him to be flown here for treatment on an air ambulance.

Manoj, who has two



CWG medals to his credit, said he saw it as his duty to be there for a fellow pugilist.

"It was our duty. No

matter how small the contribution, every bit of it counts in the end. As fellow boxers, we have to be there for him," he said.

We were in good rhythm, will get even better: Simranjeet

BENGALURU, APR 22 (PTI): Indian men's hockey team was already in good shape and will now strive to become an ever better side, striker Simranjeet Singh said on Wednesday, promising to utilise the time in hand due to postponement of the Tokyo Olympics.

Simranjeet said the eight-time champions have got

more time to analyse their game.

"It's disappointing that the Olympics have been postponed to next year. We have been in fantastic rhythm since last year and the team was building up well for the Olympics. But, the well-being of the people is more important than anything else and the best decision has

been taken," he said.

"We should certainly utilise the next year to become an even better side. We will ensure that we work harder and produce great results on the field."

Members of the Indian men's hockey team are stuck at the SAI centre in Bengaluru due to the nationwide lockdown, imposed

to contain the spread of COVID-19.

"I miss home and it would have been great to stay with family during this time, but then I wouldn't have been able to use the facilities here," said Simranjeet.

"It surely is a tough time for all of us. We have to stay positive and hope that the situation resolves soon. I have been

mostly watching a lot of videos from our previous matches.

"It has given me a chance to patiently go through the footage and note down key aspects that I need to work on, once we can get back on the pitch," said the 23-year-old forward from Punjab.

With outdoor training not possible during the lockdown, Simranjeet said his focus is on maintaining his

fitness.

"It's wonderful to be staying at the SAI campus at the moment. We are given fitness schedules by our scientific advisor Robin Arkell and all of us carry out exercises in our rooms.

"Maintaining fitness is the key for any sportsperson and therefore we put a lot of emphasis on it," he said.

Two buried alive while quarrying coal in Chhattisgarh

KORBA, APR 22 (PTI): Two persons, including a woman, died after they were buried alive in sand while illegally quarrying coal on a riverbed in Chhattisgarh's Korba district on Wednesday, police said.

The incident took place in the wee hours on the Hasdeo river bed under Kotwali police station limits of Korba, one of the mineral rich districts of the state and known for its coal reserves.

People residing in localities close to the Hasdeo river illegally extract coal from the riverbed and adjoining areas, a police official said.

As per preliminary information, on Wednesday, Purani Basti area residents Laxmin Manjhi (35) and Shival Manjhi (21) went to the riverbed, dug a pit there and went inside it to extract coal.

The sand around suddenly caved in and they got trapped inside, the official said.

Other people present at the spot tried to rescue them but could not succeed, he said.

On getting information about the incident, a police team rushed to the spot and retrieved the bodies with the help of locals, the official said, adding that a case was registered in connection with the incident.

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Congress set to pass \$483B virus aid as Trump eyes next deal

WASHINGTON, APR 22 (AP): Congress is sprinting to approve the next coronavirus aid package, a 483 billion deal backed by the White House to replenish a small-business payroll fund and pump more money into hospitals and testing programs. President Donald Trump is urging swift passage this week. The Senate approved the bill Tuesday and the House planned a vote on Thursday.

The bipartisan bill, Washington's fourth in response to the crisis, is not expected to be the last as lawmakers take unprecedented steps to confront the virus and prop up communities nationwide amid the health crisis.

Most of the funding, 331 billion, would go to boost a small-business payroll loan program that ran out of money last week. There would be 100 billion for health care, with 75 billion to hospitals and 25 billion to boost testing for the virus, a key step in building the confidence required to reopen state economies. There is 60 billion for a small-business loans and grants.

What started as a Trump administration effort with Republicans to

bolster the government's small-business Paycheck Protection Program quickly doubled in size, second only to the nearly 2 trillion coronavirus rescue package that became law last month.

As negotiations dragged on, Democratic demands for additional funds for hospitals and virus testing in the states became more pressing, and eventually gained support from Republicans.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the bill was made better and broader by the effort from Democrats.

Of the 25 billion for increased testing efforts, at least 11 billion goes to state and tribal governments to detect and track new infections. The rest will help fund federal research into new coronavirus testing options.

Currently, the U.S. has tested roughly 4 million people for the virus, or just over 1% of its population, according to the Covid Tracking Project website.

While the White House says the U.S. has enough testing to begin easing social distancing measures, most experts say capacity needs to increase at least

threefold, if not more.

As announced Tuesday, the centerpiece of the deal remains the small-business payroll program. It provides forgivable loans so shops can continue paying workers while businesses remain closed for social distancing and stay-at-home orders.

Launched just weeks ago, the paycheck program quickly reached its lending limit after approving nearly 1.7 million loans. That left thousands of small businesses in limbo as they sought help.

Controversies dogged its rocky roll-out and Democrats highlighted the number of smaller and minority-owned shops missing out on the aid. A number of publicly traded, big-name corporations also received loans, drawing complaints and Trump's vow that some will be asked to return the money.

As part of the new agreement, 60 billion or so has been set aside for and divided equally among smaller banks and community lenders, a nod to neighborhoods and rural areas underserved by banks.

This is a significant package, said Senate

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., ahead of Tuesday's vote.

The Senate swiftly approved it by consent late Tuesday, despite opposition from key conservatives, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah.

The House has asked lawmakers, who have been at home with Congress all but shuttered, to return Thursday for a roll-call vote.

Missing from the package, however, was extra funding for state and local governments staring down budget holes and desperate to avert furloughs and layoffs of workers needed to keep communities running.

Trump said he was open to including in a subsequent virus aid package fiscal relief for state and local government Democrats had wanted such funding for the current bill along with infrastructure projects.

At the White House, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin outlined the contours of the next bill, which he said should include the president's long-promised effort to rebuild roads, bridges and, especially as Americans stay home,

broadband.

But facing Republican unease over the White House's deal-making with Democrats, McConnell indicated he is unwilling to engage in another round of negotiations on his own, without calling senators back for a full vote.

He welcomed the White House plans to start reopening the economy, and signaled similar for Congress.

Unless we get our economy up and running again, there's not any way we can spend enough to continue to prop up the country," McConnell said.

The House planned to vote on a proposal to allow proxy voting during the pandemic, a first for Congress, which has required in-person business essentially since its founding.

The House must show the American people that we continue to work hard on their behalf, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., wrote to colleagues.

Many lawmakers are wary of boarding airplanes to Washington and crowding back into cramped offices and meeting spaces. But the landmark rules change met with objections from conservative Republicans.

Coronavirus second wave may be even worse: US health chief



A second wave of the novel coronavirus in the US could be even more destructive because it will likely collide with the beginning of flu season, one of the country's top health officials said Tuesday.

Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), called on Americans to use the coming months to prepare -- and get their flu shots.

"There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through," he was quoted as saying in an interview with the Washington Post published late

Tuesday.

"We're going to have the flu epidemic and the coronavirus epidemic at the same time," he said.

The US has recorded more than 800,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University, with 44,845 deaths -- the most reported of any country.

Billions of people around the world have been ordered to stay at home in recent months as governments try to prevent the highly contagious coronavirus from overwhelming healthcare systems.

The US, like other countries, has scrambled to secure

enough ventilators and personal protection equipment for medical staff while the death toll mounts.

Redfield said the virus arrived in the US just as regular flu season -- which itself can strain healthcare systems -- was waning.

If the two diseases had peaked at the same time, he told the Post, "it could have been really, really, really difficult" for health systems to cope.

Getting a flu shot ahead of next flu season, he said, "may allow there to be a hospital bed available for your mother or grandmother that may get coronavirus".

Trump threatens to terminate trade deal if China does not honour it citing coronavirus crisis

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, APR 22 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has threatened to terminate the trade deal with China if Beijing did not honour its provisions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic that originated in the country.

While China has reported 82,788 novel coronavirus cases, including 4,632 fatalities, the US registered over 824,600 cases and more than 45,290 deaths -- the highest in the world.

China and the US in January signed Phase-1 of the trade deal as the world's two top economic powers move forward to end their bitter tit-for-tat two-year tariff war that had rattled markets and weighed on the global economy.

The deal, which calls on China to buy USD 200 billion worth of US products, is set to move ahead as planned. However, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in a report said China could invoke a clause in the agreement that allows for fresh trade consultations between the two countries "in the event of a natural disaster or other unforeseeable



event".

"If that happens, we'll do a termination and we'll do what I can do better than anybody," Trump told reporters on Tuesday during his daily White House press conference on coronavirus.

The president was responding to a question as to how confident he is that the Chinese are not going to invoke the natural disaster clause mentioned in the trade deal.

"There is nobody ever been tougher on China than me," Trump said, reiterating that China had been ripping the US

off for years till he was elected as the president.

"Take a look, USD 200 billion, USD 300 billion, USD 400 billion, USD 500 billion a year. How did they ever let a thing like this happen? Now, if you look at this last year, the deficit went way down to the world," he said.

Trump launched the trade war with China in 2018, demanding Beijing to reduce the massive trade deficit, which was USD 375.6 billion in 2017.

The two countries so far have imposed additional tariffs on nearly USD half trillion worth of goods. The

US has imposed tariffs on more than USD 360 billions of Chinese goods, and China has retaliated with tariffs on over USD 110 billions of American products.

"Now it's much different. But a lot of things are happening. Great things were happening except all of these sudden out of nowhere came the invisible enemy. We think we know where it came from, and we'll be talking about that probably a lot, but came the invisible enemy. There's nobody tougher than me on China," Trump said.

BANGKOK, APR 22 (AP): Japanese officials said Wednesday that 33 crew members on a docked cruise ship tested positive for the coronavirus in one day of testing after the first case from the ship was reported.

The Italian-operated Costa Atlantica has been docked in Nagasaki since late January for repairs and maintenance by Mitsubishi Heavy Industry. The ship carries 623 crew members, including a Japanese translator, but it was empty of passengers during the work.

The outbreak

surfaced Tuesday when the first crew member, identified only as a foreign national, tested positive for the virus.

None of those infected had serious symptoms and all are isolated in single rooms on the ship, officials said.

Mitsubishi officials said no crew members had left the ship since mid-March. Before then, crew members had been allowed to come and go from ship to shore if they passed temperature checks and had not recently traveled to high-risk countries such as China and Italy.

Nagasaki officials are investigating how and



where the crew members contracted the virus.

The outbreak on the ship adds to concerns about testing and hospital capacity in Nagasaki, where only 102 beds are available.

All of Japan is under a coronavirus state of emergency as cases rise in the world's oldest

population and third-largest economy.

Japan has about 11,500 cases of infection, with 280 deaths. Those numbers are separate from an earlier outbreak on another cruise ship carrying more than 3,700 passengers and crew, where 712 of them were infected.

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Hong Kong reshuffles Cabinet, appoints 5 new ministers

HONG KONG, APR 22 (AP): Hong Kong on Wednesday appointed five new principal officials in a Cabinet reshuffle, with new appointments for the ministers overseeing mainland affairs, civil service, financial services and home affairs, as well as innovation and technology.

The reshuffle, approved by the central Chinese government in Beijing and announced by China's

State Council, came on recommendations by Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam. I have started to map out the strategies for rebooting Hong Kong after the pandemic, Lam said at a news conference, referring to the coronavirus.

A major goal of this reshuffle is to help Hong Kong to get out of this difficult situation as soon as possible. Hong Kong has confirmed 1,030 cases of the coronavirus, including

four deaths.

On Tuesday, it announced a second two-week extension on social distancing measures that include a ban on public gatherings of more than four people as well as keeping entertainment venues closed.

Based on the new appointments, Director of Immigration Eric Tsang will replace Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Patrick

Nip. The reshuffle comes as Nip apologized Monday for the mistakes, confusion and misunderstanding caused by conflicting statements from the government on whether the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office and Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong are restricted from interfering in the semi-autonomous territory's internal affairs according to the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution.

'Venom 2' gets official title, new release date



LOS ANGELES, APR 22 (PTI): The sequel to Tom Hardy-starrer "Venom", has been titled "Venom: Let There Be Carnage".

Hardy will be back as journalist Eddie Brock, who unites with an alien symbiote to form Venom.

Actor-director Andy Serkis is aboard the much-awaited project as the director, taking over from Ruben Fleischer who helmed the first part.

The studio, Sony Pictures, also gave a new release date to the film. It will now bow out in the US on June 25, 2021, instead of its earlier date of October 1, 2021.

The shift in release date comes a day after Warner Bros decided to postpone Matt Reeves' "The Batman" to October 1, 2021 in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The film's title makes it official that Woody Harrelson's Cletus

Kasady aka Carnage, who made a last-minute cameo in "Venom", will be the main villain in the sequel.

"Venom" was a global hit for Sony when it released in 2018. Despite the mixed reviews it received, the film made a splash at the box office, earning over USD 850 million in worldwide gross.

The film also featured Michelle Williams and Riz Ahmed in pivotal characters.

Trevor Noah's honest reaction to being stuck indoors will be felt by introverts everywhere

For many people who are currently social distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic, the thought of going outside and doing normal things again — going shopping, say, or heading for a meal out — is something to be longed for.

But not everyone. Some people, like Trevor Noah, are only too happy to stay indoors.

"I'll be honest man, I feel like I'm made for social distancing," Noah tells Stephen Colbert in the clip above. "Some of my friends are going crazy, you know, because they miss being outdoors. I don't miss outdoors. I don't miss going to the movies, I don't miss going to restaurants, I don't miss going to the clubs...I don't miss anything, I'm not going to lie to you."

The Daily Show host goes on to clarify that while he does miss people



being able to live a normal life, he feels like he, personally, was made for life under social distancing.

"This is how I wish I could live life: being forced to stay indoors, and not being made to feel guilty every time I don't want to leave 'cuz it's a beautiful

day," Noah says. "Because people always do that: 'It's so beautiful, why don't you go outside.' And I'm like 'Yeah, I want to be inside.' And now I have to be inside."

Introverts and indoor people everywhere will surely relate.

Feel a lot better than I sound: Val Kilmer post battle with cancer

LOS ANGELES, APR 22 (PTI): Veteran actor Val Kilmer has opened up about his battle with throat cancer that has significantly altered his voice.

The 60-year-old actor is best known for featuring in some of the most critically-acclaimed films of '80s and '90s, such as "Top Gun", "Tombstone" and "The Doors".

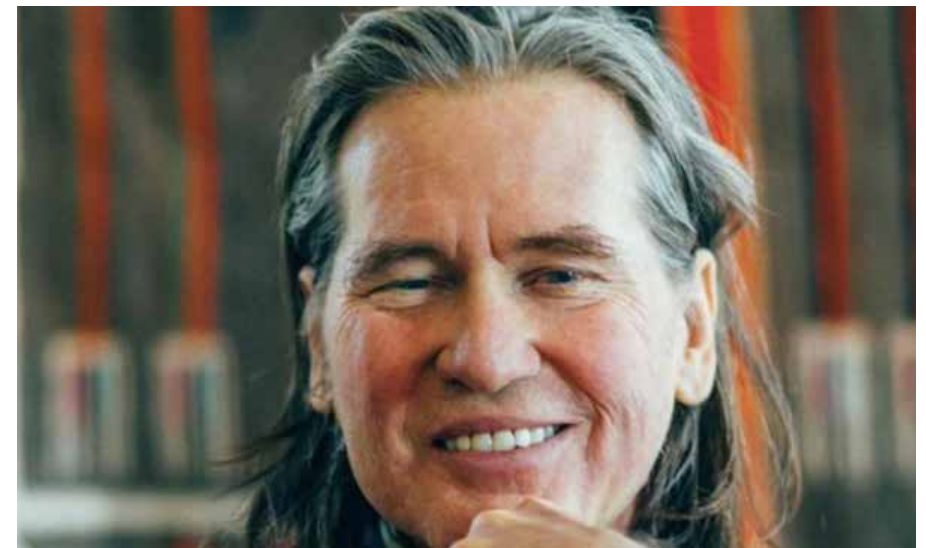
Kilmer was diagnosed with throat cancer in 2015 and for its treatment, he had to undergo a treatment that reduced his voice to a rasp.

He talked about his battle during an interview with Good Morning America while promoting his memoir "I'm Your Huckleberry".

"I feel a lot better than I sound, but I feel wonderful. I was diagnosed with throat cancer, which healed very quickly.

"This is a tracheotomy to help me breathe, because the glands in my throat swelled up as well," Kilmer said.

When asked what he missed most about his old voice, the actor said, "That I had one! And that I didn't laugh like a pirate."



The title of Kilmer's memoir is inspired by a dialogue from his 1993 hit "Tombstone".

During the interview, the actor discussed the book, in which he also covers his romances with famous celebrities like Cher, Michelle Pfeiffer and Cindy Crawford.

"I'm very shy. I've tried to live a quiet life out in New Mexico despite all my

famous girlfriends of the past.

"You have to be committed with a woman that's as dynamic and as committed to their work as someone like Cindy Crawford who was the number one model on the planet at the time," he said.

On the work front, Kilmer will be making an appearance "Top Gun" sequel, "Maverick".



ON THE GO! The reality TV star, Hannah Ann Sluss heads out for a run during this sunny day in Los Angeles.

Lionsgate developing 'Hunger Games' prequel movie with Francis Lawrence

LOS ANGELES, APR 22 (PTI): Lionsgate is planning a prequel film to its hit dystopian franchise "The Hunger Games".

The film will be based on a new book by author Suzanne Collins, whose three "Hunger Games" novels were adapted by the studio into four-part film series starring Jennifer Lawrence.

Titled "The Ballad of Songbirds And Snakes", the book is set in the same universe. It will release on May 19, reported Deadline.

Francis Lawrence, who helmed three movies in the franchise, will direct the prequel with Collins penning the film treatment.

Michael Arndt, the Oscar-winning screenwriter of "Little Miss Sunshine", will adapt the screenplay.

The prequel movie will focus on Coriolanus Snow at age 18, years before he would become the tyrannical President of Panem.

"Young Coriolanus is handsome and charming, and though the Snow family has fallen on hard times, he sees a chance for a change in his fortunes when he is chosen to be



a mentor for the Tenth Hunger Games only to have his elation dashed when he is assigned to mentor the girl tribute from impoverished District 12," read the official logline.

Veteran actor Donald Sutherland had portrayed Snow in the earlier four movies -- "The Hunger Games" (2012), "Catching Fire" (2013), "Mockingjay: Part I" (2014) and "Mockingjay: Part II" (2015).

The films, which collected close USD 3 billion at the global box office, also featured Liam Hemsworth, Josh Hutcherson, Woody Harrelson and Elizabeth Banks.

The prequel will be produced by Nina Jacobson and Brad Simpson. Collins will serve as executive producer.

what they were talking about. Some of you could be feeling the collaborative spirit even when it comes to your professional/creative life. Who would you like to co-create magick with? Now is the time to reach out with a proposal.

Cancer: You have the innate ability to heal people simply by being present to them. But in order to tap into this magical gift, you must learn to be present to yourself first. No matter how much the thought of saying no makes your heart bleed, do it. Draw the line. Prioritise yourself. As Dr Brene Brown puts it, "Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves even when we risk disappointing others."

Leo: The thing about boxes is that they curb your movement instead of letting you flow. Be present to the cosmic currents, Leo. Allow them to take you where you are supposed to go. You are stepping into a new phase of your life, one that is synonymous with freedom. Your past will flash in front of you as it always does when you're ready to move on. Acknowledge who you were in those moments. Give thanks for the soul lesson that brought you to this point in your existence. But know that you're no longer

defined by the old story.

Virgo: When you find yourself at the scene of crime, which you are likely to, carefully extricate yourself from the sticky situation. 'Disengagement' is your word for the day, Virgo. The ability to zoom out will help you realise how everybody is merely acting from a space of triggers. Those who are awaiting the outcome of something are being asked to exercise patience. What you deserve and desire will come to you in due course of time. Follow the path of least resistance.

Libra: Consider this as a test of your willpower, Libra. You've been here before. Ergo, this is not the first time you've had to deal with the given situation. What is the recurring pattern drawing your attention towards? Is there a past wound that needs to be healed and released with love? Avoidance is never a good way out. The time to break free from the cycle has come. Today, you may also find yourself re-examining the customs and beliefs of your ancestors. You don't have to adhere to the rules that don't resonate with you. Write a script that is in alignment with your highest good.

Scorpio:

Nothing is inherently good or bad, Scorpio. It is our perception that colours our reality. Even though the situation you're being faced with is a seemingly dark one, Spirit is encouraging you to look at it from your third eye and understand what it is trying to reveal to you. The truth will sting but it will always liberate you. Take a moment to acknowledge the soul lesson before you move on.

Sagittarius: No more playing rookie, Sagittarius. You are stepping into the next big phase of your life, one that requires you to be the most empowered version of yourself. Reclaim the reins. Let go of the fear and befriending courage. Trust that Spirit is helping you manifest your wildest dreams right now and in this moment. Your protective side is also coming to the fore today. Stand up for your tribe, archer. Lead by example and inspire others to tap into their reservoir of strength.

Capricorn: Let's talk about toxic positivity, Capricorn. We want everything to look like rainbows and unicorns without having to walk through the thorns. The truth is, duality is a way of life. The darkness coexists with the light. So accept

the human experience in its multifaceted glory, without judging what's coming up or attaching a story. As for your shadows, know that they hold the secret to deep transformation.

Aquarius: The Universe is asking you to take a bird's eye view of your situation, especially if you're getting caught up in the small stuff. This will help you disengage from the drama and act in alignment with your highest good. Be mindful of the language you use at this point. Given that those around you are acting from a space of triggers, your words could be misconstrued. Waiting on the outcome of something? Here's a Nicholas Spark quote that will help you let go of the anxiety: "If it comes, let it come. If it stays, let it stay. If it goes, let it go."

Pisces: We are a part of a benevolent Universe, Pisces, where no prayer goes unanswered. All you have to do is set a pure intention. How the guidance will come through, however, is something neither of us can control. So, become cognisant of the cosmic cues. Know that the chirping of the birds and the movement of the wind, all have a message for you. The real question is: how awake will you choose to be in the midst of these miracles?