



**'BATWOMAN' SHOCKER: RUBY ROSE
EXITS CW DRAMA AHEAD OF SEASON 2**

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**PEOPLE WITH SUBSTANCE USE DIS-
ORDERS FACE GREATER CHALLENGES
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Viral Research and Diagnostic Lab to be inaugurated, awaits ICMR accreditation

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

The much awaited Viral Research and Diagnostic Lab is all set for inauguration here at STNM Hospital, Socheygang. Chief Minister, PS Tamang will officially inaugurate the viral lab on Thursday morning.

The State has been sending samples so far for RT-PCR testing to North Bengal Medical College while COVID-19 screening tests using Truenat machines were being conducted at STNM Hospital.

In his daily health bulletin this evening, Director General-cum-Secretary of Health Department, Dr PT Bhutia stated that the State's Viral Research and Diagnostic Lab at STNM Hospital will be inaugurated by the CM on Thursday.

The department has already sent videos of the lab to the Indian Council of Medical Research



[ICMR] for the approval and the state can start RT-PCR testing after getting accreditation from ICMR, said Dr Bhutia.

He expressed that the lab would be a new asset for the state as it can conduct many other tests in case of any viral outbreak in the future.

Dr Bhutia mentioned

that the lab has been set up as per the guidelines of ICMR and is a big achievement for the people of Sikkim and the state government.

Referring to criticism that some states have set up COVID-19 testing lab in eight days' time, he clarified that these states

could do so in a few days as they already had viral labs and COVID-19 testing lab was just a component in that lab.

He mentioned that few reports have been received about people in facility and home quarantines not getting check-up from doctors.

On the same, he clarified that people in facility quarantines are not patients but normal people and they have been put into quarantine facility as a preventive measure.

However, he informed that doctors have been going to the quarantine centres

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GMC directs sellers not to overcharge on cigarettes

Wholesellers, distributors, retailers shift blame

**AARON RAI
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

Cigarette prices along with prices of some other commodities have soared of late with many sellers over-charging on the pretext of the lockdown and the resultant shortage it has caused. This tendency towards usurious profiteering is especially acute when it comes to cigarettes, with the nicotine craving of consumers being leveraged for arbitrary pricing.

Speaking to Summit Times, distributors and wholesalers said that



they are selling cigarettes at the prescribed price and price hike, if any, is not because of them. On the other hand, retailers argue that wholesalers and distributors sell them cigarettes at higher rates so they have to do

the same. The retailers also said that the distributors only give them "kuchha" bills.

A packet of Flake cigarette that costs Rs 60 is now being sold anywhere between Rs 80-100

turn to pg 02

Austerity measures will help save Rs 600 crores, says Addl Chief Secy

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department, Vijay Bhushan Pathak, today said that the austerity measures recently announced by the State Government will help save more than Rs 600 crore from revenue expenditure.

Speaking to Summit Times, Mr Pathak said that the overall impact of

the lockdown on the fiscal position of Sikkim can be assessed only at the end of the fiscal year. At this juncture, in cumulative the State's fiscal position is stable, he added.

Sikkim's economic stability is dependent upon funds from the Centre which is estimated at Rs.3042.62 crore for this fiscal year and the State's own tax and non-tax revenue of Rs.1952.57 crore, said Mr Pathak.

On top of these, Sikkim will get 2% of the 20 lakh crore economic package announced by the Government of India on the fulfillment of certain criteria, he stated.

He said that 0.50% of the 2% economic package will be provided in the initial period and rest 1.50% will be released on the fulfillment of criteria laid down under 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.

'Thundering' sound creates flutter in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, MAY 20 (PTI):

A loud 'thundering' sound in several parts of Bengaluru on Wednesday afternoon triggered panic among the residents, while officials ruled out the possibility of it being an earthquake.

The sound was heard across the city from Kempegowda International Airport off Devanahalli in the north to Kengeri and Electronic City in the South.

Many people feared it could be a mild tremor as doors and windows shook after the noise.

However, the Commissioner of Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority Manoj Rajan ruled out the possibility of any earthquake and said it needed to be investigated.

"We have 12 seismic monitoring centres in Karnataka but none have reported any seismic activity," Rajan told PTI.

Founder director of Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre V S Prakash suspected that the sound could be due to the usage of explosives for mining activities.

"Based on my experience as the KSNDMC director for 16 years, I can say that it was due to the resumption of mining of granite in and around Bengaluru," Prakash opined in a video message.

The other two possible reasons, according to him, were the usage of explosion caused due to some petroleum product and land subsidence because of excessive usage of underground water.

turn to pg 02

Rare butterfly sighted in Dzongu



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA
DZONGU, 20 MAY:**

Neptis manasa Moore, [1858] - Pale Hockeystick Sailer one of the rarest butterflies has been sighted in Dzongu, North Sikkim for the first time. According to a report by

the ifoundbutterflies organization, this butterfly was recorded in Arunachal in the year 2015 and in Bhutan in 2016.

This new find has proved that Dzongu is the land of Thamblyok (Butterflies).

Recently, "Neurosig-

ma siva sive: Sylhet Panther", a new butterfly was recorded in Sikkim on 08 May, 2020. It is a rare butterfly and its wingspan is 80-100mm. Found at an altitude of 1030m, Lingza, Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim.

Cyclone 'Amphan' makes landfall, 2 die in Bengal

KOLKATA, MAY 20 (PTI): Extremely severe cyclonic storm Amphan' made a landfall at Digha in West Bengal on Wednesday, leaving a trail of destruction which led to the death of two persons in the state.

The cyclone with wind speed of 160-170 kmph, gusting to 190 kmph coupled with heavy rain hit the Digha coast in East Medinipur district around 2.30 pm, officials said.

Two women were killed in Howrah district and Minakhan area of North 24 Parganas district due to uprooting of trees, an official said.

The landfall process would continue for four hours, bringing in its

wake heavy rain and triggering three-five metres of tidal waves, the MeT department said.

The cyclone barreled through coastal districts of West Bengal, unleashing copious rain and windstorm, blowing away thatched houses, uprooting trees, electric poles and swamping low lying towns and villages, officials said.

The cyclone's impact was felt in Kolkata as a medium to heavy rainfall was recorded, and several trees and electric poles were uprooted, causing power cut and road blockade in many areas.

Continuous downpour since the early hours of Wednesday led to waterlogging in some

streets and low-lying areas of the metropolis.

The cyclone is likely to weaken and move through Nadia and Murshidabad districts as a cyclonic storm and then into Bangladesh as a deep depression on Thursday morning, the meteorological department said.

Despite losing its force since Tuesday, the storm that was earlier categorised as super cyclone' still had enough strength to ravage large parts of coastal Bengal with the Sunderbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, being badly hit.

The cyclone is still on and will continue for a few more hours. We are

turn to pg 02



सत्यमेव जयते

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
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सत्यमेव जयते

PUBLIC INFORMATION

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) Coveralls for COVID-19 for use of healthcare professionals is now available for procurement by Private Hospitals.

In the past 60 days, India has developed more than 500 PPE Coverall Manufacturers with a production capacity exceeding 4 lakh pieces per day. There was no PPE Coverall production in the country until 20th March, 2020.

Eight Laboratories in the Country have been authorized to test PPE Coveralls for COVID-19 and issue Unique Certification Codes (UCC) Certificates.

List of UCC Certificates is available on the weblink on Ministry of Textiles website texmin.nic.in. Buyers are advised to verify the UCC Certificates prior to procurement.

The UCCs are issued by the Testing Organisations based on the proto-type samples submitted by the respective Manufacturers. However, this does not guarantee the quality of materials during the supply process. Buyers are advised to test random samples from the supplied lot from any approved laboratory to ascertain quality.

The information on UCCs are dynamically updated on the website. Buyers are advised to visit Ministry of Textiles website texmin.nic.in for all relevant information on PPE Coveralls.

Website: www.texmin.nic.in

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Tsai says China must 'coexist' with a democratic Taiwan

Beijing must find a way to live peacefully alongside a democratic Taiwan that will never accept Chinese rule, President Tsai Ing-wen said Wednesday in an inauguration speech that also celebrated the island's successful fight against the coronavirus.

Voters handed Tsai a second term with a landslide win in January, a vocal rebuke of Beijing's ongoing campaign to isolate the island.

Tsai is loathed by Beijing because she views Taiwan as a de facto sovereign state and not part of a "one China".

Since she first came to office in 2016, China has rebuffed offers of talks and ramped up economic, military and diplomatic pressure on the island.

Beijing views Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to seize it by force if necessary.

It envisages a "one country, two systems" model that -- like nearby Hong Kong -- would allow Taiwan to keep some freedoms while submitting to Chinese mainland rule.

But Tsai made clear during her inauguration speech that the concept was a non-starter.

"We will not accept the Beijing authorities' use of 'one country, two systems' to downgrade Taiwan and undermine the cross-strait status quo," she said. "We stand fast by this principle."

Tsai renewed her offer of talks with Beijing and called on President Xi Jinping to work with her to lower tensions.

"Both sides have a duty to find a way to co-exist over the long term and prevent the intensification of antagonism and differences," she added.

Taiwan -- officially the Republic of China -- has been ruled separately from the mainland since 1949 after the Nationalists lost a civil war to the Communists and fled to the island to set up a rival government.

For decades, Taiwan's leaders -- and many voters -- saw themselves as the true representatives for all of China, even as the vast majority of nations switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing.

But as the island moved from an autocracy to a democracy from the 1990s, a distinct Taiwanese identity has emerged with many no longer seeking any kind of reunification with China.

That has caused growing alarm in Beijing, which says any formal declaration of independence by Taiwan would cross a red line.

- Virus response -

Analysts said Tsai's speech was conciliatory.

"She is telling China that her position has remained the same -- she will not provoke but she rejects any policy that downgrades Taiwan and 'you can talk to me if you are willing'," Fan Shih-ping, a political scientist at National Taiwan Normal University, told AFP.

"She is also assuring the US that she won't be rash and won't become a troublemaker," he added.

Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi provides support to Singtam hospital

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:

Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi, Singtam completed a week-long voluntary service to the District Hospital Singtam as support to the administration in its fight against COVID-19, a press release informs.

As part of the service, NBB volunteers requested people to sanitize their hands compulsorily while entering the hospital and follow social distance norms during the registration process as per the guidelines of the administration. The volunteers provided masks, hand wash, hand sanitizer along with counseling to the individuals who did not follow rules and guidelines while entering the hospital.

NBB also provided one month ration to mi-



grant labours identified by the DMS who needed support at this hour.

DMS, Dr Tempo Gyaltzen, DHS appreciated the effort of the NGO for providing volunteers

and creating awareness at such a time which eases the pressure on the administration and helps them focus on other important things.

President, NBB,

Binod Pradhan, specially thanked Dr Tshering Laden (CMO East), Dr Tempo Gyaltzen (DMS), Somnath Pandey (Sr MSO), Doctors, Nurse and staff of DHS for their

encouragement and such opportunities where the members of NBB offered support to the Hospital and also promised to provide support whenever required.

77 returnees complete 14-day quarantine in South Sikkim



NAMCHI, 20 MAY (IPR): A total number of 77 people belonging to various parts of South Sikkim completed their mandatory 14 day quarantine period from ICHAE, Chemchey today.

It may be mentioned here that these people had been staying in facility quarantine as part of a mandatory procedure for people travelling interstate as per the protocol issued by the State Government. After completing this institutional quarantine, they shall further undergo 14 days

of home quarantine as a precautionary measure.

The entire exercise was overseen by District Collector (South), Ragul K in the company of SDM (HQ) cum Nodal Officer (Quarantine Centre), Chiran Rizal and Deputy Director of ICHAE cum Incharge, Kazi Sherpa and Dr. Chewang Palmo Chingapa alongside a team of medical officials and support staff.

In the course of the 77 people, it was ensured that they were proper-

ly checked by the medical team posted there and they were also duly briefed about the importance of hand hygiene, social distancing and other preventive measures.

Addressing the returnees, DC South advised them to strictly adhere to the guidelines of home quarantine for the next 14 days. During the address, he also stated that necessary commodities will be delivered to them during their period of home quarantine so as to avoid social distancing breach.

Pragati SHG distributes masks and sanitizers



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:

Pragati Self Help Group (SHG) of Water Garden 32 No, East Sikkim distributed masks and sanitizers to the public of Lower Martam village, especially for senior citizens. SHG members have thanked Torrent Pharmaceutical Company for providing masks and sanitiz-

ers for the villagers.

The also cleared the drains in the locality in view of the possible danger that effects of Amphan cyclone could bring on 21 May, 2020.

During the first phase of the lockdown, Pragati SHG had served meals to stranded labourers which was appreciated by the public of the area.

Gram Panchayat distributes masks at Wok Omchu



NAMCHI, 20 MAY [IPR]: The Gram Panchayat members of Wok Omchu Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU) distributed masks, soaps and disinfectants to the public of the area on

Tuesday. The drive had the participation of Panchayat President, Issac Lepcha of Wok Omchu GPU under Sikkim block alongside Panchayat members of the said GPU.

UPSC to decide date for civil services prelims on June 5

NEW DELHI, MAY 20 (PTI): The date for this year's civil services preliminary examination is likely to be decided on June 5, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has said.

The test, which was scheduled to be held on May 31, has been deferred due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

A revised programme of examinations, including the civil services preliminary 2020, will be uploaded on June 5, the UPSC said on Wednesday.

The civil services examination is held annually in three stages prelims, main and interview -- by the commission to select officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

Lakhs of aspirants take the examination every year to be part of the coveted civil services.

As many as 796 vacancies were announced by the commission to be filled through the civil services examination



2020. A decision regarding deferring of the preliminary examination was taken on May 4 during a meeting by the UPSC to review the situation after the second-phase of the nationwide lockdown was announced.

"Taking notice of the extension of restrictions, the commission decided that it will not be possible to resume examinations and interview in the present, it had said in a communique.

The civil services (preliminary) examination, 2020, scheduled to be held on May 31, therefore, stands deferred, the communique had said.

"Since this examination also serves as the screening test for the Indian Forest Service Examination, the schedule

for the Indian Forest Service Examination is also deferred," it had said.

As and when dates are decided for the deferred tests/examinations, it will be ensured that candidates are given a notice of at least 30 days, the UPSC had said.

The commission has already deferred personality test for remaining candidates for the civil services examination, 2019; notification for the Indian Economic Service/Indian Statistical Service examination, 2020; notification for the Combined Medical Services Examination, 2020; notification for the Central Armed Police Forces Examination, 2020 and the NDA & Naval Academy Examination, 2020, it said.

'Thundering' sound...

The Bengaluru police commissioner Bhaskar Rao said there was no damage reported anywhere.

He said he too came to know from media about the sound heard from the Airport to Hebbagodi here.

However, there were no calls to the police control room regarding any damage.

"We have also asked the Air Force Control Room to check if it was a jet or supersonic sound.

Bengaluru police are awaiting confirmation from the Air Force," Rao said in a statement.

The Indian Air Force later clarified that no training command aircraft was flying in the area.

"However, ASTE and HAL could have been undertaking their routine test flying, which necessitates going supersonic at times.

These are done well beyond the city limits in specified sectors," the IAF said.

It stated further that considering the atmospheric conditions and reduced noise levels in the city during these times, the aircraft sound may become clearly audible even if it happened way out from the city.

The Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre also clarified that the activity reported in the state capital was not due to an earthquake.

In a tweet, it said the seismometers did not capture any ground vibration as generally happens during a mild tremor. The activity is purely a loud unknown noise, it added.

GMC directs...

while a packet of Gold Flake premium that costs Rs 95 is being sold for Rs 105-120.

Wholesellers also mentioned that there was some shortage some days ago but they were being sold at the prescribed rate.

Following complaints, GMC officials have been visiting different areas falling under its jurisdiction to check over-pricing. Some shops in GMC area have already been challaned by GMC officials for over charging.

GMC Bazaar Officer, Yogen Tamang met distributors, wholesalers and retailers for cigarettes here on Wednesday and directed them not to overcharge any customers.

GMC received few reports of black-marketing of cigarettes taking advantage of the lockdown so GMC conducted inspection and some shops have been challaned for overcharging in GMC area, he informed.

Mr Tamang appealed to customers not to pay more than maximum retail price for any item and ask for the bill for all purchased items. He further appealed to customers to report any case of overcharging to GMC or the police.

Cyclone 'Amphan'...

assessing the situation, a senior state official said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is camping at state secretariat Nabanna since Tuesday night, reviewed the situation and gave necessary instructions to her officials.

West Bengal has so far shifted more than 3 lakh people to safer places.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has distributed more than 2 lakh masks among the evacuees, and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits have been handed out to the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel who have been deployed in the vulnerable areas, a senior official said.

North 24 Parganas and East Midnapore districts are two COVID-19 hotspots with a large number of positive cases reported.

The state has put the coastal districts of East Midnapore, North and South 24 Parganas, including the Sundarbans on high alert, Disaster Management Minister Javed Khan said.

A team of Indian Navy divers has been stationed at Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district with specialised equipment and can be rushed for rescue missions as and when required, a defence spokesman said.

The cyclone, officials fear, will cause large-scale damage to crops and plantations, and disrupt electricity and communication lines.

The Eastern Railway (ER) has cancelled the departure of Howrah-New Delhi AC Special Express train scheduled for Wednesday. The New Delhi-Howrah AC Special Express on Thursday has also been cancelled, railway officials said.

Cargo and evacuation flight operations at the Kolkata airport have been suspended till 5 am of Thursday due to the cyclonic storm, airport officials said.

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Viral Research...

every morning and enquiring about every patient with the centre in-charge and visiting those who have any complaints. He also urged people to maintain social distancing in the quarantine facilities.

Dr Bhutia mentioned that the state is receiving large numbers of returnees in a dedicated train coming from Bangalore on 21 May. It is going to be a big challenge for the state to receive such big numbers but all arrangements have been made and new screening centers have been set up to receive them, he informed.

He also thanked District Collectors for making all required arrangements to receive them.

EPF relief to address pandemic disruptions

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

Various measures have been announced from time to time to provide relief to the employers and employees of the establishments covered under the EPF & MP Act, 1952 distressed by Lockdown to prevent spread of COVID-19 and other disruptions due to Pandemic, a press release informs.

The reduction in statutory rate of contributions from 12% to 10% for wage months May, June, and July for all class of establishments covered under the EPF & MP Act, 1952 announced on 13 May by the Central Govt as part of Atma-Nirbhar Bharat package

was notified on 18 May.

The above reduction of rate of contribution is not applicable to establishments like Central and State Public Sector enterprises or any other establishment owned or controlled by or under control of the Central Govt. or State Govt, it is further clarified. These establishments shall continue to contribute @ 12% of basic wages and dearness allowances.

The reduced rate is also not applicable for PMGKY beneficiaries, since the entire employees EPF contributions (12% of wages) and employers' EPF & EPS contribution (12% of wages), totalling 24% of the monthly wages is being contributed by the Central Govt.

Governor hands financial grants to SHGs



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad today handed over financial grants and equipment to representatives of four organizations which were sanctioned during various engagements of the Governor with these organisations, a Raj Bhavan press release informs.

The assistance include five computer sets with peripherals and fifty classroom furniture sets to Vidhya Bharati, Sikkim, Financial grants to Salghari Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Pragati Self Help Group from Poklok Kamrang

South Sikkim and Kamaldeep Self Help Group, Singbel under Tumin Lingee Constituency to carry out their activities and initiatives.

The Governor also conveyed his blessings and good wishes to the organisations for their social and economic activities.

US should end reliance on China: Haley



BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, MAY 20 (PTI): The coronavirus pandemic has underscored the need for the United States to move away from its reliance on communist China, Indian American Republican politician Nikki Haley said on Tuesday.

While Beijing has abused the free market in order to destroy it, America must harness the free market to protect our freedom and national security, Haley, a former Governor of South Carolina and US Ambassador to the United Nations said in an op-ed on Medium.

The United States, she said, should start by setting up stronger guardrails to prevent China from exploiting America's economic openness and punish it for its predatory actions.

It involves pushing back against Beijing's manipulation of international forums like the World Trade Organization. It means ensuring that our most important security-related industries from essential medicines to semiconductors have American-friendly supply chains, instead of depending on an authoritarian rival state, she wrote.

Americans, she wrote, have always understood that national security is the foundation of economic security.

As we strive to come

through the coronavirus crisis stronger and safer, we must courageously and creatively act to protect our people from Chinese communist duplicity and aggression, she added.

Haley suggested that the US should adopt an approach similar to the Cold War times, when it crafted new policies to check Soviet military technological progress, which included export control and trade promotion.

Now, it's time to take a similar approach with Communist China. The coronavirus pandemic has shown just how dependent we are on that country for vital medical supplies, from specific drugs to much-needed personal protective equipment. This crisis is as dangerous as the coronavirus itself, and addressing it should be one of our top priorities, she wrote.

The US Ambassador to the United Nations said the country's reliance on China for medical supplies was clear from the early stages of the pandemic as people rushed to purchase masks, gloves and hospitals tried to stock up on everything they needed, resulting in shortages.

China, which controls nearly half of all US-imported personal protective equipment, was hoarding material

for itself while banning companies from exporting their products, she alleged.

All of this leaves us less safe and jeopardises American lives in a time of crisis, Haley said, alleging it's part of the strategic plan of China's communist rulers.

Beijing has long had its sights on capturing the world's most important supply chains to give it an edge over America and the free world, Haley wrote.

She said to accomplish this goal, the Chinese Communist Party used its state-led economic model to manipulate the market to its advantage, often illegally. Among other things, China has subsidised competitors to US companies and ordered the theft of their trade secrets and intellectual property, she claimed.

She further said in near future, China is especially focused on controlling the cutting-edge industries of 5G, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and robotics.

The Chinese communists envision an authoritarian world where they call the shots and command an unbeatable technological edge. They're working overtime to make that vision a reality. This is where America must respond and lead, she said.

World Bank-funded JTFRP to restart in Jammu next week

JAMMU, MAY 20 (PTI): The work on World Bank-funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP) will restart next week in the Jammu region, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

JK Economic Reconstruction Agency (JKERA) Chief Executive Officer Syed Abid Raheed Shah said the resumption of work would instill hope and play a crucial role in creating employment opportunities.

Shah, also the CEO of the project, asked engineers and contractors to resume work while strictly adhering to the coronavirus guidelines issued by the government for the construction sector.

Chairing a meeting to chalk out the modalities, he directed the project manager to depute the staff for execution and monitoring of these works. The contractors were asked to mobilize men and machinery immediately at the construction sites, an official spokesman said.

"The works be executed in a systemic manner and each project activity be planned in such a manner so as to ensure that work on all the projects are completed within the agreed upon timelines, Shah said.

JTFRP is executing works worth Rs 166 crore on the upgradation of seven vital road projects and three bridges in Jammu division.

Cleanliness drive at Melli Dara



MELLI, 20 MAY [IPR]: The panchayats of Melli Dara Gram Panchayat Unit carried out a sanitisation drive in and around Melli Dara PHSC and Gram Vikas Kendra today. During the course of the

program, the Panchayats also handed over essential kits to the frontline workers in the area who have been providing their relentless service ever since the beginning of lockdown.

Thane: 110 more test positive for coronavirus

THANE, MAY 20 (PTI): The number of coronavirus cases in Thane in Maharashtra mounted to 1,463 with 110 more people testing positive for the viral infection on Wednesday, officials said.

A total of 10 deaths were reported in Thane district and 235 new cases, taking the overall case

count to 4,404 and the fatalities to 138, a municipal corporation official said. The death toll in Thane is 54, he said.

With 33 new cases, the number of the patients in Bhiwandi in the district rose to 77. In Palghar district, the number of new cases went up to 404 with 18 fresh deaths.

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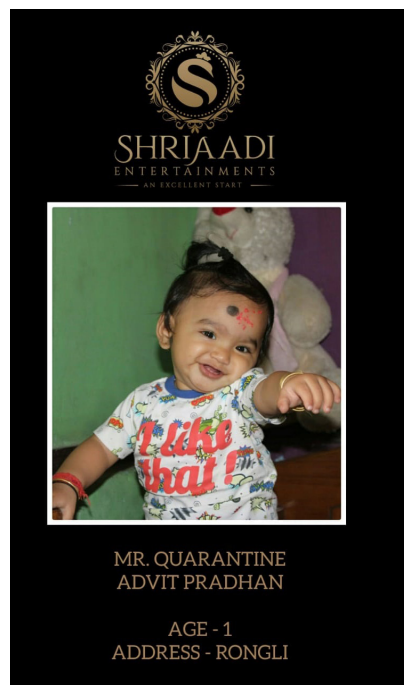
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ADVIT PRADHAN

AGE - 1
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MISS QUARANTINE
NEYVE LAMA

AGE - 8
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Kidz Qurantine Contest 2020 concludes

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY**

Kidz Quarantine Contest 2020, organized by Shriaadi Entertainments has come to an end with its top winners. Neyve Lama of Melli, South Sikkim won the title Miss Quarantine, while Advit Pradhan of Rongli, East Sikkim won the Mr Quarantine title. Both the winners were provided with certificates and cash prizes of Rs 1000 each.

24 new cases in Kerala, COVID-19 tally touches 666

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 20 (PTI): In a steep spike in COVID-19 cases in Kerala, 24 people were infected on Wednesday, taking the infection tally to 666, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

At least 74,000 people are under observation, 533 in various hospitals, including 156 admitted today.

Of the positive cases, all but one are returnees-- 12 from abroad and 11 from other states-- eight from Maharashtra, where 39,297 rpt 39,297 coronavirus positive cases have been registered,

and three from neighbouring Tamil Nadu, where the cumulative tally has crossed 12,000, the chief minister said.

One person from Kannur had been infected through contact.

The total number of people who have been infected by the virus so far has touched 666, while the active cases stood at 161, Vijayan told reporters. Five people have recovered and have been discharged from hospitals today.

While Palakkad reported seven cases, Malappuram four and Kannur three, Path-

namthitta, Thiruvananthapuram and Thirissur reported two each. Kasaragod, Kozhikode, Alappuzha and Ernakulam recorded a solitary case each, Vijayan said.

With the flow of people from abroad and other states seeing a steady increase to Kerala, the government has made temporary appointments of around 6,700 health personnel to tackle the contagion, he said.

At least 74,000 people are under observation, 533 in various hospitals, including 156 admitted on Wednesday.

Man arrested for selling fake tokens for railway journey

BHOPAL, MAY 20 (PTI): A 32-year-old man was arrested here on Wednesday for allegedly duping migrant workers and others seeking to travel to Bihar by selling them fake tokens for special trains.

Wearing a personal protection equipment (PPE) kit, Rajesh Rai, the accused, posed as a railway officer, police said.

"He has been arrested for selling fake tokens for a Bihar-bound train at the Habibganj railway station," said City Super-

intendent of Police (CSP) Bhopendra Singh.

Rai wore a PPE kit so that people should not suspect him, the senior police officer told PTI.

An engineering student from Bihar lodged a complaint against him, Singh said.

The student and his friends, stranded in Bhopal during lockdown, went to the Habibganj railway station on Tuesday to board a special train, he said.

Rai allegedly offered them 'tokens for jour-

ney' for Rs 1,000 apiece and they paid him, the CSP said. But when they entered the station, the train had already left. After inquiring with railway officials, they realized that they had been duped.

Rai was arrested on Wednesday under IPC sections 170 (impersonating a public servant), 420 (cheating), 167 (framing an incorrect document with intent to cause injury) and 468 (forgery) and further probe was on.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

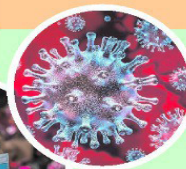
- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Treatment

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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



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**

Build Infrastructure to Soften Borders Instead

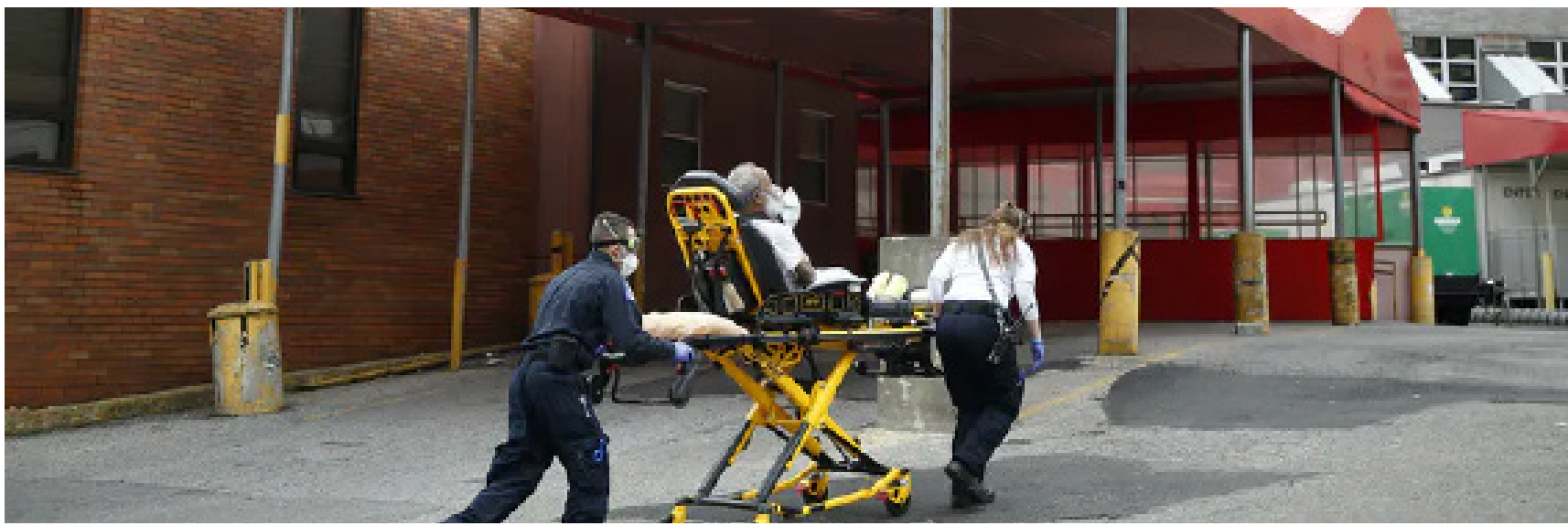
Contemplate roads to open borders, not just 'secure' them

Despite the many pandemic stories that need to be told, national media is also making time to seed some more apprehension with reports of border altercations between Indian and Chinese soldiers, some incidents supposedly playing out in North Sikkim as well. Ask any fauji at the borders and they will confirm that such face-offs are common and rarely lead to anything more serious than a brawl. That said, tension on the borders is a real thing and one that needs to be addressed, preferably resolved so that scare resources can be deployed elsewhere. Unfortunately, the policy makers remain stuck in knee-jerk involvement, waking up to issues when a situation develops and not delivering any longterm engagements. For instance, the Union Home Minister will call a meeting with CMs of border states when tensions rise. One such meeting was held in Sikkim barely two years ago. About relations between China and India, the Minister had said that there were only “perceptual differences” and that on ground, the two countries shared a good and healthy equation. We shall take that with a pinch of salt and move on. The focus of the meeting with states along the China border was infrastructure, with the Minister announcing that infrastructure development was high on the Centre’s priority list. This is a marked change from previous dispensations which believed that border infrastructure was best left under-developed so that the “enemy” did not receive a strategic advantage if they occupied it. This was clearly a misguided approach because all that bad roads to the borders achieve are inconveniences for our own forces and people. And China has rubbed this in by developing durable infrastructure on their side and is even planning to reach railways to borders where we do not even have reliable roads.

While the commitment to improve infrastructure in border areas is a welcome move, what is not very welcome is the still security-driven approach which is pushing this agenda. While security cannot be ignored, focusing solely on this aspect ignores other possibilities and approaches. It also ignores the fact that the entire border with China – from J&K to Arunachal – is also an ecologically sensitive zone, which, until the borders hardened, were thinly populated. When the Home Minister calls for fast-tracking of land acquisition and environmental clearances for whatever Delhi has planned by way of infrastructure development, he is adding to the stress which the sheer number of army personnel already stationed in these eco-sensitive zones are already suffering. The Centre would be displaying a more sensitive approach if it instead commissioned a study on how the requirements of the environment and the border people could be best safeguarded while also securing the borders better. When the Minister speaks with worry about migration of people away from the border villages, he should also consider the possibility that they migrating because they are being crowded out of not only their lands but also lifestyles by the nation’s security concerns.

The decision to prioritise infrastructure development in border areas was not a very difficult course-correction to undertake because the earlier policy was obviously ill-conceived; what will be a major change in approach will be to empathise with the border people and build a security programme in consultation with them, by respecting their traditional wisdom and trusting them more.

Hard borders have proven to be neither effective nor even practical. Why not explore the possibility of softening the borders to make them more secure? Border roads can be deployed to open borders, if not through to China, then at least up to the border for lay people. The roads need not differentiate whether they carry soldiers with weapons or tourists with cameras. If enough tourists take selfies at the border, claims that the border lies anywhere else will be shot down by Facebook and Instagram posts alone and bilateral meetings will not be required to resolve such confusions. With better roads, the need to deploy army and border personnel round-the-clock at these inhospitable locations will also end. The forces can be withdrawn to better appointed barracks and despatched occasionally to patrol the forward areas. This will scale down hostility and also keep the forces better engaged and in better health than their current deployment at inhospitable heights. Cross-border environmental upkeep collaborations could also be explored and earnestly pursued. These alone could go a long way towards softening the border while also securing them more sustainably.



People with substance use disorders face greater challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

MELISSA CYDERS, KEVIN L. LADD & MELISSA S. FRY
theconversation.com

The closures of businesses and states throughout the U.S. due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been stressful, costly and challenging for many.

But the restrictions do not affect everyone equally. Particularly vulnerable are those with substance use disorders. With schedules disrupted, medical and psychological care curtailed and support networks shut down, the COVID-19 pandemic may jeopardize their recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic comes on the coattails of the U.S. opioid epidemic. Between 1998 and 2018, about 450,000 people died from opioid overdose.

Progress was being made until COVID-19 appeared. Those of us who work in the field of substance use disorders became concerned for those in recovery as the pandemic spread and social distancing was put in place. Social connection and support are key parts of recovery. Without them, relapse is more likely. When people with opioid use disorder relapse, there’s more involved than a loss of sobriety, ruinous as that is. Often there is a loss of life.

Right now, our team, including the three of us – an associate professor of psychology at IUPUI, an associate professor of sociology at Indiana University Southeast and a psychology professor at Indiana University South Bend – are trying to understand how people with substance use disorders are managing their recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between March and April 2020, we spoke with 45 adults ages 28 to 73, half of whom have opioid use disorder. The other half have a combination of other substance and/or alcohol use disorders. Their stories reflect many challenges, but also some silver linings; they also suggest ways we can do better.

STRESS, CRAVINGS, HOPELESSNESS

The interviewees rated their chances of infection from COVID-19 at 63%. That’s more than double the rating from members of the general community (about 30%). The higher numbers may reflect reality; nearly two-thirds (63%) of our participants report preexisting conditions (such as chronic respiratory illnesses) in themselves or someone in their household. This places them at

higher risk for COVID-related complications.

Evidence also suggests that people with substance use disorders are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness or incarceration, two more risk factors for higher COVID-related complications and death.

Adding to the problem: Diagnosing COVID-19 in people who use substances is not always straightforward. Withdrawal may worsen or mimic COVID-19 symptoms. In turn, a COVID-19 infection may aggravate the breathing impacts of opioids, benzodiazepines and alcohol.

We were not surprised that 78% of our sample reported higher stress than before the pandemic, due primarily to increases in job or family responsibilities (42%) and job losses or reductions (30%). These changes in routine, coupled with unstructured free time, make recovery more difficult for them. The added stress contributes to feelings of loneliness, frustration and hopelessness.

Stress can exacerbate substance cravings and contributes to relapse. About 20% of the sample reported increases in cravings, and 17% reported using substances since the pandemic’s start. This may foreshadow an increase in relapse rates as the pandemic continues and in its aftermath.

LESS ACCESS TO SUPPORT

Study participants report closures of recovery houses, suspensions of in-person support meetings and premature dismissals from treatment centers. Restricting these critical supports creates significant challenges for maintaining sobriety. The majority of respondents indicated they are now attending support meetings online or by phone; a small percentage no longer attend meetings due to cancellations, perceived reductions of support or because meeting forums feel “chaotic” and “not the same.” Those who have lost the communal support of meetings are at substantial risk of relapse.

Overdose reversal medications save lives from opioid overdose. However, some localities are reporting decreased use of overdose reversal medications by first responders to limit COVID-19 transmission.

Many with opioid use disorder rely on lifesaving opioid replacement medications. These treatments often require regular urine monitoring; this is to make sure the medications are not being diverted. But those once-routine visits are now restricted

due to COVID-19. Fortunately, the government has developed new guidelines to ease restrictions and enable continued treatment using these replacement medications despite limited monitoring.

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Those struggling with drug and alcohol use are showing great resilience in the face of the pandemic; 83% of our sample have maintained sobriety. Many of our respondents say isolation is an opportunity to better connect with friends, family and support group members. Some say they now have more time for journaling, praying, cooking and spending time outside. One individual highlighted the new ability to attend more meetings via online formats. Thus, although these are challenging times, as one participant noted, “[My treatment facility] and Alcoholics Anonymous have prepared me very well for this time.”

What can we do to help those in recovery? Yale University’s Program in Addiction Medicine offers guidelines for treatment during the pandemic. Flexibility is key. Options include reducing monitoring requirements, which would allow extended take-home doses of opioid replacement medications. Still, individuals should be prepared for limited access to syringe exchange programs, and providers should heighten awareness of blood-borne diseases caused by sharing or reusing needles.

Based on our conversations, interpersonal connections remain at the core of recovery. Online meetings are far from universally helpful. Though it may seem old-school, phone calls, physical letters or other personalized contacts may have significant roles to play in maintaining support networks.

Individuals and groups looking for ways to contribute might contact local agencies to coordinate donations of letters, masks or other tokens of encouragement for distribution among clients. To ensure their sustained sobriety, we must support people in recovery who need access to health care, stable housing and community. And then it is our responsibility to remain mindful of those needs after the pandemic becomes a memory.

[Melissa Cyders is Associate Professor of Psychology, IUPUI; Kevin L. Ladd is Professor, Indiana University; Melissa S. Fry is Director, Applied Research and Education Center & Associate Professor of Sociology, Indiana University]

School buildings need more space to safely reopen

SAMANTHA KEPPLER &
KAREN SMILOWITZ
theconversation.com

When COVID-19 first arose, the battle cry was “flatten the curve.” As states make plans to reopen, get ready for another important strategy: “de-densify.”

Simply put, to make it safer to go to schools, restaurants and other places where people have to go in big groups, these places will have to become less crowded than they used to be.

It may help to think of the density of a building as a fraction. You’ll find the right fraction by calculating the number of total people inside – the numerator – divided by the walkable floor area – the denominator. There are two ways to make that building less crowded. Either decrease the numerator by reducing the number of people inside the space or increase the denominator by expanding the physical space available.

To flatten the curve, most U.S. schools reduced the numerator to zero when about 51 million children stopped attending school in person. Over 100,000 schools are now closed through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

There’s no agreement yet on what it will take to get classrooms safely humming again. To observe the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation that everyone remain 6 feet apart, another government agency has suggested that schools aim for a density

of 1 student per 113 square feet. Anecdotal evidence suggests classroom density was around 1 student per 20-30 square feet before the pandemic.

How can schools find or create more space?

INCREASING SCHOOL SPACE

We are operations researchers who study educational logistics problems such as school bus transportation and making decisions with tight budgets.

There are widespread public health concerns about whether it will be safe to reopen schools after what would have been the usual summer break. Information changes daily. For example, there are reports of a new illness striking children that appears to be related to COVID-19.

Still, schools need to plan to reopen, perhaps in time for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

There’s more to it than figuring out how to maintain enough distance between students when they’re sitting at their desks. Schools also have to decide how to handle everyday situations such as kids playing basketball in the school gym, eating in the cafeteria or sitting together in the auditorium for a school assembly.

Students need to be able to safely enter and exit buildings without bumping into each other. They’ll need to have the room needed to pass one another in hallways. Districts may need to purchase and distribute masks and other personal protec-

tive equipment to teachers, janitorial staff, students and others.

Students will need to keep the sharing of calculators and technology to a minimum and make a frequent habit of wiping down all devices. They’ll have to wash their hands more often and for longer periods of time. The frequency and intensity of cleaning and sanitizing floors, walls, tables and other surfaces will need to increase as well.

To make this easier, one general approach under consideration is to reduce the number of students in school buildings at one time.

Some states, like Indiana and Ohio, are considering a mix of remote and in-person instruction, with students alternating what they do day by day.

A related strategy is staggering attendance during the same school day. Some students would attend in the morning and some in the afternoon. Halving the number of kids present would make it easier for schools to follow through with CDC guidelines to reduce congestion in classrooms, hallways and cafeterias.

FINDING NEW SPACE

Some education leaders have proposed considering another strategy: finding new space.

Splitting students in different classes or grades across multiple locations lowers the building density. This can be done by moving half of a school’s students and teachers to another location. Students who attend at each location could be more spread out than if they were all in just one place.

One way to do this is to keep high

school instruction fully remote in the fall, and teach younger students in vacated high school buildings.

Our research suggests there is another strategy to find new space for schools.

For years, public, charter, and private schools have shared space with community organizations such as churches and community centers that accommodate programs running before or after official school hours.

Schools could use YMCAs, public libraries or community centers to expand the space they have available. If schools split attendance between their main school site and those other sites, then most students at all grade levels in a district could potentially have an in-person option when schools reopen.

DIFFERENT STROKES

In the end, the best approach will be depend on what’s right for specific schools and their local communities.

Operations researchers have helped find solutions since the 1960s. For example, they assisted with school desegregation in the 1960s and 1970s. More recently, they aided high schools that shifted their start times to let students get more sleep.

Today, operations researchers can help local school systems face the threat of COVID-19.

[Samantha Keppler is Assistant Professor of Technology and Operations, Stephen M. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan; Karen Smilowitz is James N. and Margie M. Krebs Professor in Industrial Engineering and Management Sci-

Book recounts 36-day Maha polls drama

NEW DELHI, MAY 20 (PTI): The 2019 elections have now become an integral part of Maharashtra's political history and a new book provides a fly-on-the-wall account of the 36-day drama.

Journalist Kamlesh Sutar says "36 Days: A Political Chronicle of Ambition, Deception, Trust and Betrayal" is his ode to the politics of Maharashtra as he wanted to document the most riveting phase of the state's politics.

Even though the BJP emerged as the single largest party winning 105 seats in the assembly elections, pre-poll partner Shiv Sena walked out of the alliance as there was no consensus over sharing the chief ministerial post.

The Shiv Sena then entered into an unlikely tie-up with the NCP and the Congress and formed the government. Uddhav Thackeray took oath as chief minister on



November 28, 2019. The passage of power from the BJP to the Shiv Sena via the Congress and the NCP and from Manohar Joshi to Uddhav Thackeray via Narayan Rane was not easy, the book says.

"Uddhav's political journey has always amused everyone who has watched his slow and steady ascendance. From being written off on his debut to rising to

the most powerful seat of power in the state, Uddhav's journey has been no less than that of a Bollywood potboiler," it says.

Many consider Uddhav's entry into politics as accidental, but those who have watched him closely say his is a well-planned and excellently executed political journey, it adds.

According to the author, during the Shiv Se-

na's heyday in the 1990s, no one would have expected the shy Uddhav to reach these heights in politics.

"Uddhav, who completed his diploma from the Sir JJ School of Arts, was always inclined towards photography, especially wildlife. At some point, he owned a display advertising business. Moreover, while Balasaheb's other sons,

Bindumadhav and Jaidev, were seen in the public domain, they were not actively into politics.

"With his three sons relatively detached from active politics, it was Bal Thackeray's brother Shrikant's son Raj who stepped into his uncle's footsteps," the book, published by Rupa, says. Sutar says Uddhav's uncomplicated, middle-class Marathi mannos image and the stamp of a complete family man always gave him an upper edge.

"To say that Uddhav was a reluctant politician would be widely off the mark. He was as ambitious as Raj, but he was never flamboyant about his ambitions. He knew his shortcomings very well. He knew he was seen as the complete opposite of the extroverted Balasaheb, but he very intelligently built his political brand and image around the same soft-spoken image," he writes.

Cong condemns BJP, Yogi over migrant buses issue

NEW DELHI, MAY 20 (PTI): The Congress on Wednesday condemned what it termed was "shameless" politics of the BJP and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the issue of providing buses for ferrying migrants to the state.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi alleged the "Ajay Bisht government" is creating hurdles in the Congress help reaching migrants in terms of buses for ferrying them home as they walk on the roads without food and water in the summer heat of May.

He accused the UP government of being insensitive towards the plight of migrants and said the buses offered by the Congress would remain at the state borders till 4 pm Wednesday.

"I beseech with folded hands. If the Adityanath government cannot help the migrants, let Priyanka ji and the Congress party help them.

"It is still not too late and I beseech with folded hands, like Priyanka ji said, if you're so concerned about politics, please put your name or party banner (on buses) but at least use the help we are providing," he told reporters at a virtual press conference in his attack on the BJP and Adityanath.

Singhvi said there are such deprivation and devastation among the migrants and still the Yogi government was "not allowing" the help to reach them. "I condemn

this and the nation condemns this. It is shameless politics amidst crisis and devastation," he said.

The way the "Ajay Bisht government is not only doing nothing but not even allowing anyone to do something" for migrants leaves one astounded, he alleged.

The UP government instead is creating hurdles and obstructing those trying to help migrants, the Congress spokesperson alleged.

"Will they stand up and explain to the nation? For last six days, especially the last two days and even as we speak, about 500 buses are standing at UP borders. How is it that you will not allow to ferry migrants of UP and Bihar. This is the cheapest form of politics," he said.

Singhvi said the Adityanath government is giving lectures on cooperative federalism and is doing such "cheap politics" at the same time.

The Congress and the UP government are locked in an exchange of letters on the issue of running buses to ferry migrants home.

The Congress has lined up buses along the UP border and is seeking permission for plying them.

The Yogi government has allowed the plying of buses but put some conditions and also accused the Congress of giving false information about buses, some of which have turned out to be two-wheelers and three-wheelers.

IIT-KGP to set up centre of excellence on medical device



KOLKATA, MAY 20 (PTI): The IIT Kharagpur is going to set up a 'Centre of Excellence on Medical Device and Diagnostics' to foster innovation of affordable and indigenous medical devices and diagnostics in priority areas.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has accepted a proposal by the IIT-KGP to set up the facility and earmarked Rs 20 crore for it, according to a statement issued by the institute.

"We thank the ICMR for entrusting us with this responsibility...We had a rewarding experience in engaging with the ICMR through a pilot, ICMR-IIT Kharag-

pur MedTech internship programme, earlier and that drew great interest among engineering and medical students," IIT Kharagpur Director Prof V K Tewari said.

The centre of excellence will aim to develop marketable technologies within a time frame and use this experience to achieve longer-term goals to address challenging problems in the field of medical devices and diagnostics.

Following a call by the ICMR in January, the IIT Kharagpur proposed to build the facility which will have thrust areas encompassing artificial intelligence in

healthcare, medical devices for screening and diagnostics in healthcare, medical implants, and bio-sensors in healthcare, the spokesperson said.

A super-speciality hospital of the IIT Kharagpur is also coming up.

"Recently we heard that people residing in nearby areas of West Bengal and neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Odisha are feeling hopeful that the burden of accessing healthcare facilities on patients and their families would be reduced with the upcoming superspecialty hospital of IIT Kharagpur," Tewari said.

Migrant worker from Assam commits suicide in Surat

SURAT, MAY 20 (PTI): A 20-year-old migrant labourer from Assam, who had lost his job due to the COVID-19-enforced lockdown, allegedly committed suicide at a slum in Gujarat's Surat city on Wednesday, police said.

Sunil Rijajagan Maheli was found hanging from the ceiling of his tenement in the Bhestan locality in the morning,

inspector D K Patel of Pandesara police station said. "The deceased, who was living with other Assamese labourers, had lost his job and had stayed behind even as others left for their home state," the official said.

An investigations was underway to ascertain the exact reason for the extreme step, but prima facie it appears he was

depressed after being out of job due to the lockdown and unable to go back to his native place, he added.

Lakhs of migrant labourers, who lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown, have been returning to their home states by any means possible and several such workers have lost their lives in their attempt to reach their native places.

6 people killed as truck rams pickup van in UP's Etawah

ETAWAH, MAY 20 (PTI): Six people were killed and one was injured when a pickup van was hit by a speeding truck at the Bakewar vegetable market here, police said on Wednesday.

"The accident took place around 10 pm on Tuesday at the Bakewar sabji mandi (vegetable

market)," Senior Superintendent of Police, Etawah, Akash Tomar said.

The deceased have been identified as Rajesh Yadav (42), Raju Porwal (30), Jagdish Kushwaha (30), Jagdish Kushwaha (28), Mahesh Kushwaha (40) and driver Brijesh Kushwaha (35), he said. Uttar Pradesh Chief Min-

ister Yogi Adityanath has expressed grief over the accident and issued a directive to give Rs 2 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured person, an government official said.

He has also directed that the injured be given adequate treatment, the official added.

Budget session of Meghalaya Assembly resumes



SHILLONG, MAY 20 (PTI): The budget session of the Meghalaya Assembly resumed on Wednesday after it was suspended in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three-day re-assembled budget session started amid the COVID-19-induced lockdown, with wearing of masks made mandatory for all, including the chief minister, ministers and MLAs. All the legislators had to undergo a thermal screening and sanitise their hands before they were allowed to enter the House.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma announced in the Assembly that a Rs-5,000 financial relief would be provided to the active quarantine centres set up by communities in the state.

"A one-time grant of Rs 5,000 will be awarded to the active community quarantine centres

through the Chief Minister's Relief Fund," he said while replying to a zero-hour notice.

According to the chief minister, a total of 7,050 people from Meghalaya, who were stranded in different parts of the country, have returned to the state.

Sangma said his government will try to bring back all the citizens of the north-eastern state, who are stranded in various parts of the country, within two weeks. He informed that the state government has decided to carry out both the Rapid Diagnostic Test and the RT-PCR test for COVID-19 on all the returnees.

The chief minister said the state government is encouraging the returnees to go for home quarantine and added that the administration is flexible when it comes to encouraging people to set up quarantine centres

at the community and village levels. Earlier, opposition Congress MLA M Syiem demanded that the state government set up more institutional quarantine centres as over 10,000 people stranded across the country are set to return home.

He also demanded that the government provide funds to support the communities that have set up quarantine centres at their villages across the state.

Syiem also said the quarantine period be increased from 14 days to 28 days to curb the spread of COVID-19.

There is only one active COVID-19 case in Meghalaya as of now. One person, who returned from Chennai recently, has tested positive for coronavirus. The state had reported 14 COVID-19 cases, of which 12 patients have recovered and one has died.

Chennai returnee tests positive for COVID-19 in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, MAY 20 (PTI): A man, who returned from Chennai, has tested positive for COVID-19 in Meghalaya, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has said.

The Chennai returnee coronavirus patient has been admitted at a COVID-19 hospital in the Garo Hills, the CM said.

With the new case, the number of COVID-19 cases in the state has risen to 14 but the Chennai returnee is the only active case in the state at present as 12 people have recovered

from coronavirus and one has died.

"One of the persons from Garo Hills, who came back from Chennai in the second batch has tested positive for COVID-19, the person is asymptomatic and has been in institutional quarantine in Tura. We are monitoring the situation," the chief minister tweeted on Tuesday night.

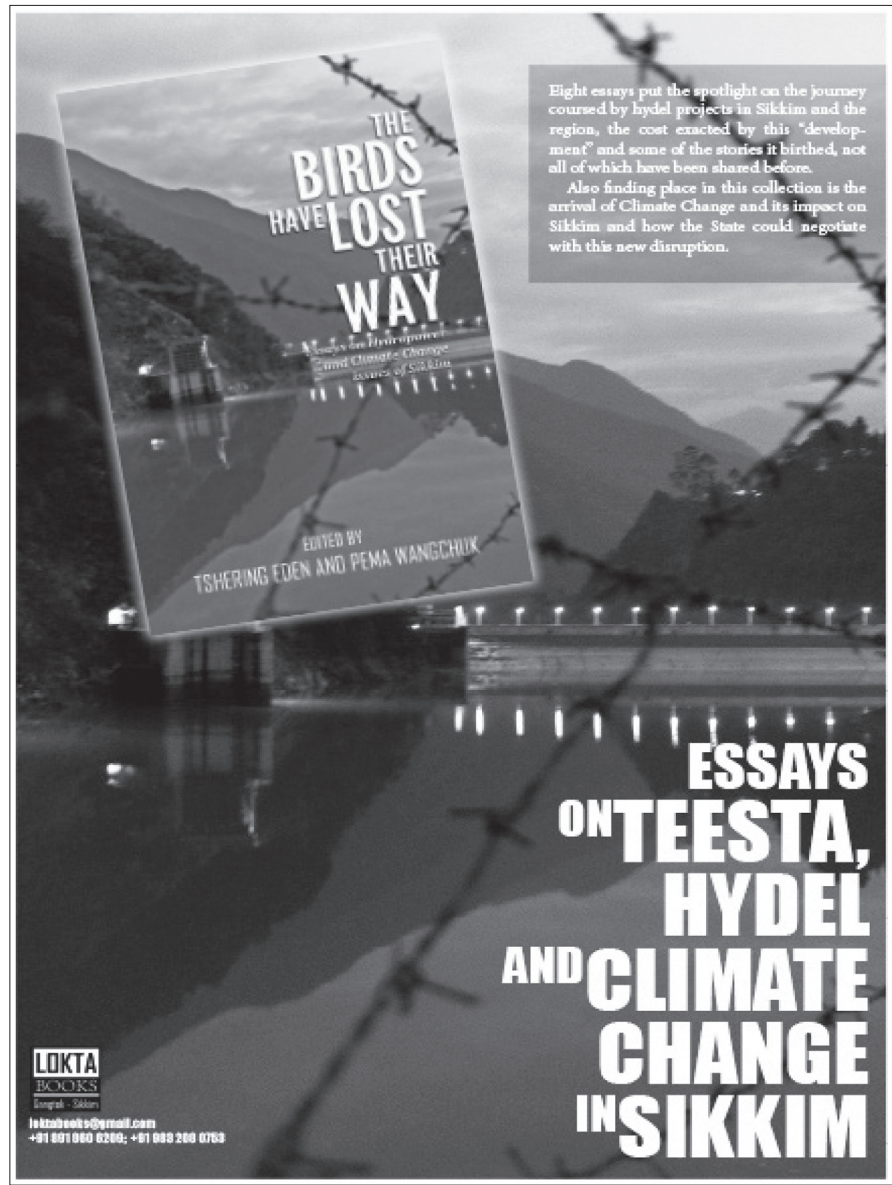
"We should not panic ... but need to handle this with utmost care and responsibility. We need to take care of elderly people and people with

comorbid conditions. Asymptomatic and young people are recovering from this by observing isolation," he added.

Meanwhile, two persons who attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi have arrived here, according to district officials.

Both have been sent for home quarantine after medical screening, the official said.

The duo had travelled by bus from Delhi till Guwahati and from there, they boarded another bus arranged by the state government, he said.



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Sandesh Jhingan leaves Kerala Blasters

KOCHI, MAY 20 (PTI): National football team defensive lynchpin Sandesh Jhingan on Wednesday left Kerala Blasters after spending six years with the Indian Super League club.

Jhingan, who has earned 36 caps for India since making his debut in 2015, and the Blasters mutually agreed to part ways ahead of the upcoming ISL season, according to club sources.

"Yes, Sandesh is no longer with the club. It was under mutual agreement," the source told PTI.

The 26-year-old Jhingan has been like a rock at the centre of Blasters' defence since the club's inception in 2014, helping them reach the ISL final twice (2014 and 2016).

The Chandigarh-born Jhingan, a hugely popular figure for the Blasters' fans, has made 76 appearances for the club.

He, however, missed the whole of the 2019-20 ISL season due to an injury. Without Jhingan, the Blasters finished seventh out of 10 teams.

Kerala Blasters have appointed Mohun Bagan's I-League winning coach Kibu Vicuna for the upcoming season.

Slovenia's football league to restart on June 5

LJUBLJANA, MAY 20 (AFP): Slovenia's Football Association (NZS) has announced that top flight matches will resume on June 5 after a two-month interruption caused by the coronavirus epidemic.

"The NZS expects all the measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 will be put in place before the competition resumes," the NZS said in a statement, without specifying if first league matches will be played behind close doors.

It added a detailed calendar of the remaining matches will be published next week.

The Slovenian federation interrupted the league on March 12 as the country of two million moved into a coronavirus lockdown.

At that point 25 rounds out of 36 in the season had been played.

Currently Ljubljana's Olimpija is at the top of the league table with 50 points, ahead of Celje and Aluminij who have 45 points apiece.

The NZS also announced that the cup competition will resume in June with the final to be held behind closed doors on June 24.

Slovenia declared last week the epidemic in the country was over and has gradually been lifting the associated restrictions.

So far 104 people have died out of the more than 1,400 who have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Slovenia.

Premiership players fear some clubs could go bust by Christmas

ROBERT KITZON

LONDON, 20 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]: Premiership players are calling for clearer leadership from rugby's top administrators amid fears some clubs could go bust by Christmas, prompting widespread job losses. There are also concerns surrounding player welfare despite a provisional agreement that at-risk employees, or anyone with vulnerable family members, can sit out matches if they wish.

With Premiership club owners discussing whether to proceed with plans to restart the league behind closed doors in early July, the Rugby Players' Association's chief executive, Damian Hopley, said many of his members are worried about their own futures and the wider outlook for their sport. "We've been on calls to some clubs where there is a very genuine concern the club might not last the year based on the current financial projections," he revealed.

"Job security has to be the number one concern. We've been talking to players up and down the country and some clubs are in a far more stable financial position than others. We don't want to have a sport where there are only six clubs left at Christmas."

With some owners desperate to slash costs and others lobbying for the salary cap and marquee player allowance to remain at existing lev-



els, there is concern in dressing-rooms that divisions and contrasting priorities could make it harder to reach a clear consensus. "Within the investor group there is a difference of opinion as to the future direction of travel," said Hopley.

"From the players' perspective there has to be alignment about what they want to do. "We've had one club owner come out and say he wants to retain the salary cap, we've got others who want to reduce it quite significantly. If the financial problems in rugby are the end product of

a sausage-waving contest, the players shouldn't be responsible for that. We've got this extraordinary scenario where the top players are earning stratospheric money and the squeezed middle are getting contract renewals at 20-30% below what they're currently on. We need to have some very robust and transparent discussions with the league about where to go from here."

Players at the majority of Premiership clubs have been required to take wage cuts until training or matches resume but the arrangements have

varied from team to team. While Hopley believes his members "have to be credited massively" for trying to help out in a crisis, it would appear further significant wage reductions will be contested.

"Everyone recognises that the world is a very different place to three months ago but the most important thing a player has is his contract," Hopley said. "Any suggested changes need to be done properly and a robust process followed. There also needs to be real leadership around formulating a plan for the next five years

that everyone can buy into. It is absolutely essential just to restore some of the credibility that rugby has undoubtedly lost in the last six months."

A collective bargaining agreement would be the RPA's preferred long-term option but navigating the current crisis remains the union's overriding priority. "These are young men and women with a very limited career span who have to optimise their earnings while they can," said Hopley. "We have to find a solution and, for the RPA, that's retaining as many jobs as possible

in the Premiership, protecting their contracts as much as possible and, ultimately, keeping rugby clubs in business. How can we navigate our way through what is going to be a tricky 18-24 months? The horror stories coming out of the United States and the travel industry, you can't ignore those and say sport isn't going to be affected."

A stakeholder meeting on Thursday is set to clarify arrangements for training and matches played at bio-secure venues, assuming the government gives the go-ahead and it is deemed to be economically viable and sufficiently safe to complete the season. "What's really important is that the players have confidence in their training facilities and don't feel they're being put into a difficult position," said Hopley, all too aware of the possible pitfalls.

"The fear we have of someone contracting the virus and, worst-case scenario, passing it on to a vulnerable family member - with all the human issues and potential liability that go with that - is front and centre. It's not just about the players; there are other vulnerable categories, including the coaches, that need to be addressed. If the season is abandoned so be it but everyone's preference is to get it up and running and completed, subject to health and safety guidelines."

Joint ACB check at Chenani Hydel project in Udhampur

JAMMU, MAY 20 (PTI): The Anti-Corruption Bureau on Wednesday conducted a joint surprise check at the Chenani Hydel Project in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir to probe alleged irregularities there, an agency spokesman said.

The action followed a complaint received at the ACB Jammu office against some senior officers of Power Development Corporation, Udhampur, including Executive Engineer B S Jaggi; Director, Finance, Upinder Jit Singh; Assistant Executive Engineering Gurdev

Sodhi and Chief Pay and Accounts Officer (CPAO) Rajni Gupta, he said.

It has been alleged in the complaint that a fraud has been committed in the Generation Division worth Rs 25 lakhs, the spokesman said.

A joint team comprising officers of the Engineering Wing of ACB Jammu and those of the J&K Power Development Corporation Limited, Jammu, conducted a spot inspection at the Chenani Hydel Electric Power Project, he said.

The record pertaining to the complaint was scrutinized. The team also

examined the various purchases made by the officers on exorbitant rates, the spokesman said.

He said there were allegations against the then Director, Finance, who had allegedly managed his posting for a long period in Power Development Corporation and remained instrumental in purchases on alleged exorbitant rates.

The allegations regarding irregularity in maintenance of 33 KV line is also under enquiry and the team is investigating this aspect also, the spokesman said.

Lawyer helping migrants accuses cops of harassment

MUMBAI, MAY 20 (PTI): Lawyer Afroz Shah, whose beach clean-up initiative has won praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accused the city police on Wednesday of abusing and harassing him for giving lift to a few migrant workers.

He was suspending his work after the bitter experience at Tilak Nagar police station late Tuesday night, he said.

The Mumbai-based lawyer who is known for organizing a drive to keep the Versova beach in the city clean was lauded by Modi in one of his 'Mann Ki Baat' addresses in 2018.

"I have been helping migrant workers, which includes providing them food. I have taken a travel pass from the police to distribute food to migrant workers who are walking towards Nashik from Mumbai," he told PTI. "I was on my way

back from Kasara when I saw a group of migrant workers headed for Byculla railway station at Mulund toll plaza. They asked me for help and I gave them a lift in my vehicle," Shah said.

"Another group requested me to drop them from Byculla railway station to Ghatkopar. But we were stopped at Ghatkopar by local police who accused of me violating lockdown guidelines," he said.

"I was surprised because I had the travel pass and I was simply dropping them at Ghatkopar railway station. They unnecessarily abused me...I told them about my work and showed my identity card but they did not budge," Shah said.

"They took us to Tilak Nagar police station, wasted our time and finally after two hours dropped us at the same

spot where they had stopped us.

"It was highly demoralising and depressing," he added.

"I was surprised to find out that despite my credentials and legal pass to travel, they demonstrated utter disregard. I had large vessels in my vehicle to show as proof that I have been distributing food for migrant workers. But they did not believe me and went on abusing," he said.

Shah also tweeted about the experience.

"Harassed for 2 hours by Tilak nagar police. Taken to the police stations. Let off by saying please leave.

Suspending all my activities to help the poorest of the poor," he said.

"Sorry migrants - the system doesn't allow me to work for you. Broken heart. Broken soul. I cry and I am in pain," he tweeted.

BCCI unlikely to recruit CFO for time being

KUSHAN SARKAR

NEW DELHI, MAY 20 (PTI): The Indian cricket board is unlikely to hire a new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in near future even though Santosh Rangnekar resigned from the post six months back.

While BCCI CEO Rahul Johri was asked to take back his resignation and continue till the end of his tenure (2021), it is learnt that the top brass feels there is no immediate requirement of a CFO as the treasurer is their point person.

"The BCCI is unlikely to recruit a CFO any time soon. If you read the new constitution carefully, there is a mandatory provision for a Chief Executive Officer but there is no mention that you need to have a CFO," a senior BCCI official privy to the development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

It was Committee of



Administrators (CoA) which had recruited Rangnekar and the move was seen as a deliberate ploy to undermine the then treasurer's authority. Once the BCCI had the democratic set up back in place and powers of treasurer restored, the post of CFO became redundant.

It is unlikely that in the current situation when sporting bodies are under financial stress,

the BCCI would employ another high-salaried executive. "The current treasurer Arun Dhimal is hands on and if he needs help, the CEO at times can double up and do the job of CFO if need be."

With BCCI's apparel sponsorship deal with sports giants Nike ending soon, the Board will soon float tender for fresh sponsorship.

During a recent apex council meeting, it was de-

cided that a RFP (Request For Proposal) or tender will be floated soon to decide on the next apparel sponsors. Those in the know of things said that in the current economic climate, the BCCI would find it difficult to grab a whopping deal.

The BCCI also believes that a transparent tender process would give them a chance to have a good deal instead of a renegotiation.

Using disinfectants on match balls is under consideration: Kountouris

MELBOURNE, MAY 20 (PTI): Cricket Australia will seek the ICC's permission to use disinfectants on match balls to understand if it can help reduce the health risk to players as the game gears up for a new normal amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cricket Australia's Sports Science and Sports Medicine Manager Alex Kountouris said they have drawn up a set of overall guidelines for players to safely return to training though competitive cricket is likely to be played only later this year.

With the ICC's Cricket Committee proposing a ban on players using saliva to shine the ball, Kountouris said testing will soon commence on whether disinfecting the ball during a match will also be an effective way to minimise the health risks.

"Disinfecting the ball is a consideration," Koumtoris was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au. ...we'd

have to speak to the ICC and get permission, there's a lot of things (to consider). And whether it's effective or not. The ball being leather, it's harder to disinfect because it's got little nooks and crevasses.

"...we don't know how infected the ball is going to get and we don't know if it's going to be allowed. But it's absolutely a consideration. Everything is on the table at the moment, everything is being considered."

Kountouris said since other nations, like England, are expected to play before Australia, they can comprehend the results of the measures being taken before implementing them in Australia.

"From an Australian cricket perspective, other countries are probably going to play before us," he said.

"We've got a chance to work with the ICC and other countries to see what they come up with and how it works for them. We'll

obviously take whatever steps we need to do to make sure we lower the risk."

As of now, Kountouris is educating Australia's professional cricketers on the new training guidelines, saying it will be "a steep learning curve" to quit habits developed over many years.

Players will be required to use their own ball at training, minimise the amount of equipment that is shared, and regularly sanitise all equipment that is used.

"It's going to be a tough habit to break. Some people are used to licking their fingers before they grab the ball, they're used to shining the ball. It's going to be a steep learning curve and hopefully we've got some time to practice that sort of stuff.

"Yep, there's going to be mistakes at some point and we haven't worked out how we're going to deal with those mistakes and what the outcome will be," he added.

Biden on Trump hits: 'I don't want to get down in the mud'

WASHINGTON, MAY 20 (AP): Joe Biden on Tuesday night deflected questions about President Donald Trump's allegations of improper behaviour during the Obama administration and other conspiracy theories pushed by his top allies, saying, I don't want to get down in the mud with these guys.

Speaking at a Yahoo News virtual town hall, Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said Trump is trying to distract voters from his inadequate response to the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 90,000 Americans.

Trump has said the virus will disappear like a miracle.

Broadly dubbing his allegations Obamagate, Trump has pointed to the legal case of his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, suggesting that the unmasking of Flynn's name as part of legal US surveillance of foreign targets was criminal and motivated by partisan politics. There



is no evidence of that, and Trump's accusations misrepresent the facts of the case.

Unmasking of people in surveillance reports is a routine, legal activity in government the Trump administration made 10,012 such requests in 2019.

But they don't often become public, and in the Flynn case, Trump supporters point to it as evidence that Obama loyalists were out to undermine Trump from the

start. The president himself has called it the biggest political crime and scandal in the history of the USA.

This is his pattern. Diversion, diversion, diversion, diversion," Biden said Tuesday.

"The greatest crime? I mean, my Lord. Trump's cries of scandal come as the president and many top Republicans have used increasingly harsh rhetoric against Biden hoping to foment doubt in voters' minds as elec-

tion season beings to heat up. On Wednesday, a Senate committee led by Wisconsin Republican Ron Johnson will vote on whether to issue a subpoena as part of an investigation into Biden's son Hunter and his work for a Ukrainian natural gas company that grew out of Trump's impeachment earlier this year.

Over the weekend, Trump's two adult sons appeared to spread baseless, online conspiracy theories suggesting other

criminal activity by Biden. Asked about that Tuesday, Biden called online posts about the matter sick. "People know me. The good news is the bad news. They know me. They know my faults, they know my talents, Biden said.

Pointing to his decades in the Senate and eight years as vice president, he continued, "It's hard to lay on me some of the things that are just totally out of sync with anything in my whole life that anyone has ever said about me."

Also Tuesday, Biden was asked about Trump's firing of Steve Linick as the State Department's inspector general.

Some Republicans have defended the move, arguing that it was within the president's rights, but Biden and other Democrats say it is part of a larger White House effort to undermine government oversight.

Biden promised not to fire any inspector general should he be elected, saying those positions were designed to make government honest.

Brazil virus deaths surge as pandemic bites in Latin America

Brazil recorded its highest number of coronavirus deaths in a day as Latin America began to feel the full force of the pandemic, while the World Health Organization agreed to investigate its response to the crisis.

With infections rapidly approaching five million, deaths topping 320,000 and the global economy devastated, there are fears that the worst is yet to come for the poorer parts of the world as they desperately try to contain the spread of the virus.

There was an alarming surge on Tuesday in Brazil as daily COVID-19 deaths crossed 1,000 for the first time, but far-right President Jair Bolsonaro remains bitterly opposed to lockdowns, having described them as unnecessary over a "little flu".

"Our country is going from bad to worse, it is getting worse," said retiree Gilberto Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro. "We have an inefficient government, and the people also do not obey the rules of the pandemic."

Infections in Brazil -- already the third-highest globally -- were climbing by the thousands, with the outbreak in the world's sixth-largest country expected to accelerate until early June.

The coronavirus surge in Latin America has forced some areas to suspend their plans to loosen restrictions, with Argentina's second city Cordoba rolling back plans to ease a lockdown because of a spike in infections.

There have been warnings about the impact of the pandemic on the least privileged communities, and World Bank chief David Malpass said Tuesday that up to 60 million people could be "pushed into extreme poverty".

In a worrying illustration of the mounting economic pressure, Chile -- which is also suffering from a sharp rise in cases -- deployed soldiers on the outskirts of its locked-down capital Santiago after clashes with protesters angry about food shortages and job losses.

"They don't have jobs, they are locked up in their house, they can't go out to look for work,"

"But we must take difficult decisions to see our business through these unprecedented times."

Steve Turner, a senior official at British union Unite, accused Rolls of "shameful opportunism".

"The news that Rolls Royce is preparing to throw thousands of skilled, loyal, world-class workers, their families and communities under the bus during the worst public health crisis since 1918 is shameful opportunism," he said in a statement.

Paul Everitt, chief executive of UK aerospace trade body ADS, meanwhile said that Britain's government needed to take "urgent action" to "minimise the impact on jobs and manufacturing capability in the long-term".

Following its announcement, Rolls-Royce saw its share price slide by 2.5 percent to 261 pence in morning deals.

London's benchmark FTSE 100 index was down 0.1 percent overall. "In a positive economy job layoffs will often send shares higher since it lowers wage costs," said Jasper Lawler, head of research at London Capital Group.

"In such a hard economy for air travel to which Rolls Royce is closely tied, the job losses just spell out the difficulties."



said Jorge, an unemployed carpenter. "They are forcing the Chilean, the worker, to go out and steal."

On the other side of the world, authorities were scrambling to move people to safety while also trying to prevent the spread of the coronavirus as the fiercest cyclone in decades in the Bay of Bengal bore down on millions of people in eastern India and Bangladesh.

- 'Permanent damage' -

The grim numbers from Latin America came as the World Health Organization agreed to launch an independent investigation into its handling of the outbreak after scathing attacks from the United States, which is locked in a feud with Beijing over the pandemic.

President Donald Trump has threatened to permanently cut US funding to the WHO, accusing the UN body of being a "puppet of China" and helping Beijing cover up the initial outbreak.

China has furiously denied the allegation, saying the US is making such claims to "shirk responsibility and bargain over its international obligations to the WHO".

Russia has denounced Trump's threat, and the European Union has also backed the WHO, saying it was "not the time for finger pointing".

The row has threatened efforts to coordinate a global response to the pandemic, but the American president has dug in and continued to target China and the WHO as he faces intense domestic pressure to find a way out of the crisis.

The United States is the worst-hit country in the world, with nearly 92,000 COVID-19 deaths and over 1.5 million cas-

es, and many are wearying of the social distancing measures that have hammered the world's biggest economy and left tens of millions unemployed.

Trump is keen to see an end to confinement measures in the US with the presidential election due in November, and his Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin warned the American economy risks suffering "permanent damage" the longer the lockdown continues.

- Dramatic CO2 drop -

Since first emerging in central China late last year, the virus has transformed life and business around the world with its impact felt in multiple ways, from once-busy city centers falling silent to significant environmental changes.

Researchers reported Tuesday that global carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are set to drop by up to seven percent in 2020 because of the pandemic, the sharpest decline since World War II.

But the dramatic drop would still "make barely a dent in the ongoing build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere", said Richard Betts, head of climate impacts research at Britain's Met Office Hadley Centre.

And as Asia started to assess the damage caused by the pandemic, some countries have realised there have been some unforeseen benefits, despite the larger economic destruction.

Vietnam has seen a drop in crime during its nationwide isolation, Hong Kong has hailed an early end to its annual flu season, and now Thailand -- notorious for its high number of road fatalities -- has seen a marked improvement in safety.

'Super cyclone' barrels towards Bangladesh, India

Several million people sheltered and prayed on Wednesday as one of the fiercest cyclones in decades roared towards Bangladesh and eastern India, with forecasts of a potentially devastating and deadly storm surge.

A few hours ahead of the predicted arrival of Amphan, the Bangladeshi Red Crescent reported the first death, after one its volunteers drowned while moving villagers to shelter when strong winds capsize a boat.

Authorities have scrambled to evacuate low lying areas in the storm's projected trail of destruction, but their task is complicated by the need to follow precautions to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

"At least 50 people took shelter in my concrete-built house," said Abdur Rahim, a Bangladeshi shrimp farmer on the edge of the Sundarbans mangrove forest that is expected to bear the full brunt.

"There is panic. The women are worried," he told AFP. "A few months ago Cyclone Bulbul smashed our village, destroying at least 100 homes. We hope Allah will save us this time."

Amphan is only the second "super cyclone" to form over the Bay of Bengal since records began, and the first since 1999. At midday (0630 GMT) the vast vortex -- visible from space -- was 125 kilometres (80 miles) offshore and forecast to slam into the coast in the afternoon or evening.

Gusts of 185 kilometres per hour (115 miles per hour) were predicted when it does, the equivalent of a Category Three hurricane, with a storm surge of several metres, forecasters said.

Such walls of water can cascade several kilometres inland, and are

often the main killers in any cyclone, typhoon or hurricane.

The Indian met office warned of possible flying objects, "extensive" damage to communications and power lines, and trees being ripped out of the ground by the wind.

Kolkata was battered by heavy rain and the muddy Hooghly river was rising under dark skies, while in the coastal resort of Digha, large waves were pounding the shore.

"There is strong wind and it's raining. Scores of trees and electric poles have been uprooted," hotel owner Partha Tripathi told AFP by phone.

- Regular victims - Bangladesh's low-lying coast, home to 30 million people, and India's east are regularly battered by cyclones that have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in recent decades.

The eastern Indian state of Odisha was hit by a super cyclone that left nearly 10,000 dead in 1999, eight years after a typhoon, tornadoes and flooding killed 139,000 in Bangladesh. In 1970, Cyclone Bhola killed half a million.

While the storms' frequency and intensity have increased -- a phenomenon blamed partly on climate change -- deaths have fallen thanks to faster evacuations, better technology and more shelters.

But Bangladesh authorities still fear that Amphan will be the most powerful storm front since Cyclone Sidr killed about 3,500 people and causing billions of dollars in damage in 2007.

Enamur Rahman, Bangladesh's junior minister for disaster management and relief, told AFP that 2.4 million people and over half a million livestock had been brought to some 15,000 shelters.

Rolls-Royce cuts 9,000 jobs as airlines turn off engines



Rolls-Royce, the British maker of plane engines, said Wednesday it will cut at least 9,000 jobs and slash costs elsewhere, as the coronavirus hammers the aviation sector.

"This is not a crisis of our making. But it is the crisis that we face and we must deal with it," chief executive Warren East said in a statement announcing that Rolls would cut nearly one-fifth of its global workforce.

"Our airline customers and airframe partners are having to adapt and so must we."

Unions said they expected most of the cuts to occur in the UK, while analysts said the knock-on effect for supply chains meant many more people working across the aerospace industry were set to lose their jobs.

- 17% of staff - Rolls said it expected "the loss of at least 9,000 roles" from a global workforce of 52,000 and would also cut "expenditure across plant and property, capital and other indirect cost areas".

The measures is expected to hand the company annual savings of more than £1.3 billion (\$1.6 billion, 1.4 billion euros).

The restructuring will cost Rolls about £800 million. Rolls said

the restructuring would predominantly affect its civil aerospace business.

"Our defence business, based in the UK and US, has been robust during the pandemic, with an unchanged outlook, and does not need to reduce headcount," it added.

Rolls has already spent the past two years cutting thousands of management roles following weak demand for its power systems used by the marine industry.

"The restructuring announced... (in) June 2018 will transition into this wider proposed reorganisation," Rolls said Wednesday.

"Focused predominantly on reducing the complexity of our support and management functions, the programme has substantially delivered on its objectives."

- 'Terrible prospect' - The new cult comes as global air travel remains virtually non-existent, even though governments have begun to ease their lockdowns.

With planes grounded worldwide, airlines are slashing thousands of jobs and Rolls has followed suit.

"Being told that there is no longer a job for you is a terrible prospect," East added on Wednesday.

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CUTE PHOTO OPP! Actress, Chishell Stause took a selfie with her dog in Los Angeles.

Ruby Rose announces exit from 'Batwoman' after just one season

Los Angeles, May 20 (PTI): Ruby Rose is leaving The CW network's "Batwoman" series after just one season.

The shock announcement comes just days after the show wrapped its first season. It was renewed for season two in January this year.

In a statement, obtained by Collider, the 34-year-old actor said the decision to exit the series was a "difficult" one. "This was not a decision I made lightly as I have the utmost respect for the cast, crew and everyone involved with the show in both Vancouver and in Los Angeles," Rose said.

The actor, however, chose not to reveal the reasons behind her exit.

She expressed her gratitude to producers Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter and Caroline Dries for "this incredible opportunity."

Rose was cast as the titular DC superhero in 2018 and she made her debut The CW's annual DC crossover event of its shows -- "The Flash", "Arrow", "Legends of Tomorrow" and "Supergirl" -- later that year.

The CW, Warner Bros. TV and Berlanti Productions thanked the Australian actor for "her contributions to the success of our first season and wish her all the best".

It's exciting: Arnold Schwarzenegger reacts to daughter Katherine's pregnancy



LOS ANGELES, MAR 20 (PTI): Hollywood veteran Arnold Schwarzenegger has opened about his daughter, author Katherine Schwarzenegger who is expecting her first child with actor Chris Pratt, and he says he is looking forward to becoming a grandparent.

The news of Pratt and Katherine Schwarzenegger's pregnancy broke last month. The couple tied the knot in June 2019 after dating for over a year.

The "Terminator" star revealed that the baby is due "sometime this summer" during Monday's at-home episode of "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon".

"That is really exciting news that Katherine now, you know be pregnant and have a baby... And, inevitably, I'm really looking forward to playing around with whatever it is, she or he, and have some fun," he said.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, 72, said his future grandchild comes will have an impres-

sive lineage. His former wife, journalist Maria Shriver is the daughter of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, a philanthropist and a member of the Kennedy family.

"I think this is kind of a unique experience. But I was just thinking about the gene pool. I mean, think about this for a second: It is part Kennedy and part you know, there's three gene pools here. You can do Kennedy, Schwarzenegger and Pratt," he said.

"I mean, we can do anything. We can go and solve the Cuban Missile Crisis, we can go and kill Predators with our bare hands and we go and train dinosaurs. I mean, think about this. That is a lot of power here," he added.

However, the Austrian-born American actor quipped the baby doesn't inherit his accent.

"Worst thing is if this kid ends up, you know, with my accent. That's what we don't want," he joked.

Daniel Radcliffe finds Rupert Grint's baby news 'super weird'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 20 (PTI): Actor Daniel Radcliffe says he felt "super weird" when he found out that his "Harry Potter" co-star Rupert Grint became a father recently.

Grint welcomed a baby girl with actor-girlfriend Georgia Groome early this month. Radcliffe, who along with Grint and Emma Watson achieved global popularity as

child actors from "Harry Potter" films, said the news hit him that he and his co-actors were growing up.

"I texted him the other day and said I was so happy for him and it's very very cool. It's also like super weird, for me, to think that we are all at the age where we are all having children, but we definitely are," the 30-year-old actor

said on "Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen".

He also joked how their trio, including Emma Watson, were "terrible yardsticks for how old people are".

"It's weird for all of us. I remember when I turned 30 I remember a lot of people in my life were really depressed to find out that they're lapped," Radcliffe quipped.

'Batwoman' Shocker: Ruby Rose Exits CW Drama Ahead of Season 2

Producer Warner Bros. TV says the role will be recast when the show returns in 2021.

In a major surprise, Ruby Rose has departed the lead role on The CW's Batwoman after a single season. Producer Warner Bros. TV says the role will be recast.

The announcement Tuesday — two days after the show's season finale — leaves the series without a lead actress for the time being. A timeline for a new actress to take over the historic role has yet to be determined. Batwoman was renewed for a second season in January, along with 12 other scripted series on The CW, and was set to anchor the network's Sunday night starting in early 2021.

Batwoman made TV history as the first scripted live-action TV series to feature a lesbian superhero at the top of the call sheet. It was important to the production and openly gay producers Greg Berlanti and showrunner Caroline Dries that the part went to a member of the LGBTQ community.

Both Rose and producers Warner Bros. TV and Berlanti Productions praised one another in statements announcing her departure.

"I have made the very difficult decision to not return to Batwoman next season," said Rose. "This was not a decision I made lightly as I have the utmost respect for the cast, crew and everyone involved with the show in both Vancouver and in Los Angeles. I am beyond appreciative to Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter and Caroline Dries for not only giving me this incredible opportunity, but for welcoming me into the DC universe they have so beautifully created. Thank you Peter Roth and Mark Pedowitz and the teams at Warner Bros. and The CW who put so much into the show and always believed in me. Thank you to everyone who made season one a success — I am truly grateful."

The CW, Warner Bros. TV and Berlanti Productions said jointly, "Warner Bros. Television, The CW and Berlanti Productions thank Ruby for her contributions to the success of our first season and wish her all the best. The studio and network are firmly committed to

Batwoman's second season and long-term future, and we — along with the show's talented creative team — look forward to sharing its new direction, including the casting of a new lead actress and member of the LGBTQ community, in the coming months."

Rose faced immediate backlash on social media after she was cast and would eventu-



ally quit Twitter, although she remains active on Instagram.

Like dozens of other series, Batwoman was forced to end its season early due to the coronavirus pandemic. The drama finished 20 of a planned 22 episodes, with Sunday's installment serving as the season finale. Sources tell The Hollywood Reporter that episode was Rose's last with the show, but it's unclear if a transition to a new lead would have been set up in the two episodes that weren't completed.

Rose starred on the series as Kate Kane, a cousin of Bruce Wayne's who takes on the mantle of Batwoman. The character debuted in December 2018 during The CW's annual crossover event for its DC Comics shows before getting her own series. Vampire Diaries veteran Dries created the show and executive produces with Berlanti, his producing partner Schechter and Geoff Johns.

Sia reveals she adopted teen boys who were aging out of foster care

(CNN)The singer who doesn't like to show the world her face is giving us a glimpse of her heart.

In an interview with SiriusXM's "The Morning Mash Up," which aired on Tuesday, Sia shared that she grew her family last year.

"I actually adopted two sons last year," she said. "They were both 18."

The singer explained that the 19-year-olds were aging out of the foster care system and expressed her love for her new sons.

She also said they are both struggling with being quarantined in the midst of the worldwide pandemic.

"They are both finding it pretty difficult, one more so than the other," Sia said. "But they're both doing things that are like really good for them right now. That are really helpful. They're really



doing a lot of educational stuff that's good for them."

In a GQ profile about Diplo that published in February, Sia mentioned that she was a mom.

She also shared that much of her relationship with the famed music maker "is just being spent trying not to have sex so that we wouldn't ruin our business relationship, because he's

super-duper hot."

"This year I wrote him a text, and I said, 'Hey, listen, you're like one of five people that I'm sexually attracted to, and now that I've decided to be single for the rest of my life and I just adopted a son, I don't have time for a relationship.... If you're interested in some no-strings sex, then hit me up,'" Sia told the publication.

ARIES:

This is a time of inner illumination, Aries. You're being able to look beyond the drama that is the physical realm and find a sense of calm within. Stay connected to your higher self. Set a time aside for meditation. Overheard at the cosmic conference: it's going to be a wild ride. Your dreams and visions are about to get trippier too (no substances needed). Pay attention to what they are bringing your awareness to. Tip: This is a time of inner illumination.

TAURUS:

What if your overactive imagination is the real villain in the story? This, right here, is your best life. Don't let fear and anxiety convince you otherwise. Taureans in love (especially if they're quarantined together) will find themselves triggered by the most insignificant of things. Again, ask yourself: is it them or your own anger and irritability? Tip: Be kind, gentle, and passionate towards the other.

GEMINI:

Social media tells us so much, yet it reveals so little of what truly matters. Look beyond the illusion, Gemini. If you are triggered by their content, it's because you are buying into the lie they are putting out there. Instead of snooping around to uncover the facts, talk about what's on your mind. Ask the other person direct questions. This is the best way to find the answers you are looking for in the most respectable manner. Tip: Look beyond the illusion created by social media.

CANCER:

"Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting. Dance

in your blood. Dance when you're perfectly free." Rumi's words beautifully describe your relationship with movement therapy. So put on some music and allow yourself to flow with the rhythm of the Universe. Watch the emotions that come up without attaching a story to them. Tip: Just dance.

LEO:

You've been seeing the signs for a while now—loud and clear. What's keeping you from taking the next step, Leo? Your guides want you to know that they are aligning you with the chosen path—the life you have always dreamed of. The recurring numbers (222, 555 etc), the book you chance upon in your library, the song on the radio, are all pointing you in the same direction. Silence your mind and listen to your higher wisdom. Tip: Your guides are coming through with the messages you need at this moment.

VIRGO:

Life in the physical realm of existence is synonymous with suffering. Pain lives in our DNA. Trauma lives in our DNA. But not all of our patterns are a sum total of our own experiences. Some of them have been handed down to us by our parents and their parents. Today, you're being encouraged to reflect upon the ancestral patterns you are carrying in your bones, whether it's the fear of shining too bright, or experiencing the abundance you truly deserve. This story may have served you in the past but it no longer deserves a place in your present. Tip: The cards are pointing towards ancestral healing.

LIBRA:

Social media is often a lie. Don't buy into the illusion that

somebody is doing better than you, making more money or acquiring the kind of fame and recognition that you believe you never will in this lifetime. Besides, snooping around has never been your style. Today, you're being asked to acknowledge your victories and know that you are exactly where you are supposed to be. The only thing that you need to strive towards is being better than your past self.

Tip: Honour and acknowledge your own journey, both the highs and the lows have brought you to this point in your existence.

SCORPIO:

Hello and welcome to retrograde season (that's Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, and Pluto for you)! So what happens when planets appear to move backwards? Themes from the past re-emerge to remind us of that which is unhealed within. Be warned: the temptation to go back to old ways (and toxic people) will be strong. Stay woke. Look at your situation through the lens of awareness. Tip: Move forward, not backwards.

SAGITTARIUS:

It's never too late to get a bob, change your style, make your passion your profession, learn reiki or unveil your masterpiece. If you're in the mood for all kinds of risks, you have your stars to blame, Sagittarius. We feel inspired to say something we already have: it's never too late! Remember, your age is nothing more than a number. You are allowed to start over when your soul feels ready. So follow your heart knowing that you have nothing to apologise for. Tip: You're in the mood to make some drastic changes, starting with your hair.

CAPRICORN:

"I'm beautiful in my way, 'cause God makes no mistakes, I'm on the right track, baby, I was born this way!" Lady Gaga is a big mood in the Capricorn HQ. You're learning to look at yourself through the lens of love and forgive yourself for all the times you didn't meet your expectations. Trust that this self-acceptance will lead to inner alchemy. Remember, people love having opinions about the lives of others. Tip: Baby, you were born this way!

AQUARIUS:

To understand the virtues of kindness and compassion in theory and to practice them in each moment are two very different things, Aquarius. Today, you're being asked to take a good look in the mirror and ask yourself the question: do I always practice what I preach or fall prey to the illusions created by my ego-self? Baba Ram Dass's words to awaken your higher wisdom: "Treat everyone you meet like God in drag." Tip: Practice kindness even when it's hard to.

PISCES:

There are times in our lives when we push and push but to no avail. The pathway refuses to reveal itself and assistance is nowhere near in sight. And then there are times when minimal efforts lead to maximum results. What if we said the latter applies to where you are? Watch the doors that were once shut magically open up as people you know little about become a catalyst for positive change. The Universe is aligning you with the life you have always dreamt of. Sit back, relax, and allow things to flow. Tip: You're about to witness a major miracle.