



DISINFECTING NAMCHI

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CAN'T SLEEP AND FEELING ANXIOUS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS? YOU'RE NOT ALONE

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YESTERYEAR STAR NIMMI PASSES AWAY

pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SOUTH DISTRICT CONTROL ROOM FOR COVID-19

The District Control Room for COVID-19, has already been set up at Namchi in South District. Any person can contact the Control Room land line number on 03595-263722 or mobile number 94744 44429 as an alternative number in emergency or for information regarding essential commodities and COVID-19. Apart from this 104 is the toll free helpline number for COVID-19 for the State of Sikkim.

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Khaling checks on students quarantined at SICUN

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

Political Secretary to the CM, Jacob Khaling, accompanied by the area MLA [Namcheybong], EM Prasad Sharma, today visited the SICUN facility at Assam Lingzey where 54 scholarship students returning to the State from outside have been quarantined. These students, it may be recalled, went through a harrowing experience on the night of 24 March when a mob of villagers chased their motorcade away convinced that the students were bringing Novel Coronavirus to their village. The matter was resolved a day later and the students brought to the quarantine facility established for them in the SICUN building.

The SKM leaders, a press release informs, visited the students on the directions of the Chief Minister, and checked whether they were being attended to well.

The 54 students, comprising of 32 boys and 22 girls, at SICUN are under the special supervision of Dr Siddhant Basnett, the release informs, along with Senior Nurse Chandra Kala Das, MPHWS Sandesh Limboo and Keshar Bhandari on duty.

Similarly SICUN Chief Executive Officer Karma Galek and Executive Director Phadong Bhutia are also deployed providing special care to the students, the release adds.

Director HRDD (Scholarship), ST Bhutia, is also deployed as Nodal Officer for this special case while Station In-charge Prabhakar Billa along with Deputy Director HRDD are also been deployed there to look after the students quarantined there, the release details.

Given the experience of 24 March, a detachment of 20 IRBn jawans have also been posted there for security led by Major MB Subba and employees from HRDD stationed for Kitchen and sanitation chores, the release further details.

The release informs that Mr Khaling interacted with officers deployed there and with the students and also handed over sanitizers and masks and checked the stock of materials provided.

Counseling is being provided to the students and Mr Khaling informs that they are not sick but will be kept in quarantine for the prescribed duration of time.



Later in the afternoon, Mr Khaling also visited the Central Health Store at Tadong.

Mr Khaling, accompanied by Rhenock MLA Bishnu Kr. Khatiwada then proceeded to visit Rangpo Check Post where everything was

found well.

The latest technology screening machine has been introduced at the check post, the release informs.

“Under the guidance of CM PS Tamang [Golay], screening has been adopted from the very beginning

[59 days now] and Sikkim has not received any COVID-19 cases so far and if we follow such guidelines and strict screening and awareness it's sure we can remain untouched by the deadly virus,” the release quotes Mr Khaling as conveying.

State has adequate stock of essential commodities, Depts reassures

SANDEEP PRASAD GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

There is no shortage of food and other essential commodities in East district, with the godowns here holding enough stock to last at least another two months, informs Dakman Subba, District Civil Supplies Officer, East.

FCI godowns in the state have 80,000 Metric Tonnes of foodgrains, including wheat, of which 10,070 MTs is available for East district, he details.

Sikkim has nine food godowns, of which the two godowns [urban and rural] in Gangtok have 2,050 Quintal and 1,800 Quintal stock, Ranipool has 1,450 qtl, Singtam 2,570 qtls, Rangpo 350 qtls, Pakyong 750 qtls, Rhenock 400 qtls, Rongli 500 qtls and Makha 200 qtls in stock.



In view of the current situation, East District has already completed the PDS distribution for March, and, Mr Subba informs, if the situation demands, the Department is prepared to distribute the PDS for April in advance.

He has also appealed to the people not to panic and reiterated that adequate stock has been maintained and that the State will not allow any shortage.

Meanwhile, the department has also made arrangements in Siliguri

to ensure adequate supplies of vegetables.

The Department, it is informed, has already issued more than 30 permits to fair price shops across the district to ferry required essential commodities from Siliguri.

2,332 under quarantine in Sikkim; No COVID-19 cases thus far

TSHERING EDEN GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

Sikkim currently has 2,332 persons under quarantine while test results are awaited for four persons, a report in Sikkim Chronicle informs. No one has tested positive for the virus in Sikkim till now even as some samples were sent for COVID-19 testing in recent weeks.

The 2,332 people have been put under

quarantine as a precautionary measure because they have all returned to the State from outside, it is informed.

These are all cases of home quarantining and only the four patients for whom COVID-19 tests have been prescribed are currently in hospital.

As for preparedness, Health Department Secretary, PT

Bhutia, informs that there are five ventilators ready at STNM Hospital with 56 more available if needed. There are 20 beds prepared for nCov patients at the moment with 20 more being prepared.

At the Central Referral Hospital, there are 05 ventilators with 20 beds dedicated to possible nCov patients.

There are two ventilators and 10 beds at

the Army Hospital in Gangtok as well.

In West Sikkim's Ayush Hospital at Gyalshing, there are 05 beds set aside for nCov patients.

According to the Health Secretary, the departmental personnel in the State are equipped with necessary protective gear and reports have also come in today that more stock has been ordered.

Lepcha assoc calls for calm and collaborations

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

The Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum [Sikkim Lepcha Association] executive committee has called for calm, solidarity and collaborations to break the Novel Coronavirus chain.

In a communiqué circulated today and received by SummitTimes through IPR Deptt, the association, while high-

lighting the nCov situation and the challenge it presents, has called on all to follow the instructions and directives being issued by the State Government.

“Let us stay back home, build social distancing, maintain personal hygiene in containing the virus, lets us also refrained from following and sharing fake news through social medias

on Covid-19. It becomes our moral duty to inform health authorities and other designated officials on our recent visits to other states and also to the neighboring countries before sitting down for self quarantine process,” the communiqué states.

The association has also thanked the Chief Minister and his team for taking up immediate

measures for Novel Coronavirus preparedness in the state.

RMRT has also appreciated the service of the doctors, nurses and all healthcare professionals, District authorities of all four districts, Police department and GMC in the challenge being faced by the State and also thanked journalists for their work in disseminating information.

Take the Covid-19 Fight More Seriously

JIWAN RAI

India is, perhaps, one of the few countries in the world which tends to use a skewed sense of humour to cover denial. We are doing it again. We are staring at the most feared exponential growth of the Covid-19 infection and yet we do not want to take it seriously. We became the global butt of a joke by unleashing all our Indian energy in beating thali, tali and spewing gali to those who refused to follow suit. There is a battle that is fought with literal action and there is a battle that is fought with symbolic gestures. And the coronavirus battle demands real action. We have read this fearful analysis – in India the first 50 cases were found in forty days. Then in about just five days we had 100 cases, in another three days we crossed the 150 mark and it took us just two more days to reach 200 cases. That's how the mathematics rolls out. Our trajectories are not going to be different from those of other Covid-19 worst hit countries. Experts are warning that India

could be heading to a shocking explosion of cases soon. By the end of May, we could have nearly ten lakh confirmed cases. If we assume a 3.4 per cent fatality rate calculated by the World Health Organization, we could be losing 30,000 lives to this deadly virus. Other predictions are even more alarming.

What makes our case really worrisome is the public negligence which has several underlying reasons.

Korona Go Mentality: Superstition is one dominant reason. Many Indians across the religious spectrum think that some nebulously cloudy religious rituals can protect them. I have seen a bunch of Hindu priests shouting 'Go Corona Go' and advertising gau mutra. I have seen Christian pastors eerily rebuking the virus to "go away". My shock deepened when India's legendary film star Amitabh Bachchan tweeted his now legendary line, "Clapping shankh vibrations reduce/destroy virus potency. Moon passing to new 'nakshatra' Revati. Cumulative vibration betters blood circulation". He deleted it after receiving

flak. But doesn't it reveal the mindset of so many here?

Kanika Kapoor Mentality: People across India think that socio-economic privilege can somehow provide medical protection. Kanika Kapoor is an example but before completely villainizing her and excusing ourselves, remember that she is just the tip of the iceberg. Usually we Indians like to publicize our foreign tours. However, suddenly, numerous Indians hid their travel history and went around spreading the virus they imported. Many in Sikkim must be doing the same.

Kismet Ka Khel Mentality: Fatalism is a resort many Indians use when faced with crisis. A huge chunk of our population doesn't show any interest in learning about the current pandemic, much less doing their bit in the collective fight against it. They coldly say, "Kismet will decide for individuals. If death comes no one can refuse to go, no matter what we do to prevent it".

Knowledge Deficit: Many do not know some of the most significant

facts about the Covid-19 virus for various reasons such as lack of education, lack of interest, lack of awareness programs, lack of someone to teach them, vulnerability to fake information and so on.

Kiddish Mentality: Funnily enough, there is no dearth of people who are more enthusiastic about counting how many people listened to Modiji's call to beat taali and thali than they are concerned about the pandemic itself. This is no time to gauge the PM's popularity graph.

Public negligence apart, there are several other issues that we need to take into consideration to generate seriousness amongst us. The UP CM, Yogi himself, was busily flouting the national lockdown call in the name of some religious program.

The India government is constrained by its healthcare infrastructure. Our health care system was already overstretched much before the pandemic hit. In 2017, we had a ratio of merely 0.5 beds per 1,000 Indians. An article

published by News 18 India says, "The number of hospital beds per 1,000 people in India is only 0.7, compared to 6.5 in France, 11.5 in South Korea, 4.2 in China, 3.4 in Italy, 2.9 in the UK, 2.8 in the US, and 1.5 in Iran." Our ICU beds across the country are about 70,000 which is dreadfully inadequate. Even the mighty USA looks so feeble in front of this pandemic. Our Prime Minister has been quick to take some great decisions including the 21 day national total lockdown. However, his government has not been doing well in ramping up testing. How India is doing in terms of ramping up critical care is not known as of now – but beware, we will soon know.

Experts are warning that India could be heading to a shocking explosion of cases soon. By the end of May, we could have nearly ten lakh confirmed cases. If we assume a 3.4 per cent fatality rate calculated by the World Health Organization, we could be losing 30,000 lives to this deadly virus. Other predictions are even more alarming."

Finance Minister announces Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package underprivileged to fight Corona Virus

NEW DELHI, 26 MAR [PIB]: The Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister, Niramla Sitharaman announced Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against Coronavirus today. While addressing the press conference here, Sitharaman said "Today's measures are intended at reaching out to the poorest of the poor, with food and money in hands, so that they do not face difficulties in buying essential supplies and meeting essential needs."

The Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Anurag Singh Thakur was also present besides Secretary, Atanu Chakraborty, Department of Economic Affairs and Secretary, Debashish Panda, Department of Financial Services. Following are the components of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: —

PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN PACKAGE

I. Insurance scheme

for health workers fighting COVID-19 in Government Hospitals and Health Care Centres

- Safai karamcharis, ward-boys, nurses, ASHA workers, paramedics, technicians, doctors and specialists and other health workers would be covered by a Special insurance Scheme.

- Any health professional, who while treating Covid-19 patients, meet with some accident, then he/she would be compensated with an amount of Rs 50 lakh under the scheme.

- All government health centres, wellness centres and hospitals of Centre as well as States would be covered under this scheme approximately 22 lakh health workers would be provided insurance cover to fight this pandemic.

II. PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana

- Government of India would not allow anybody, especially any poor family, to suffer on account of non-availability of foodgrains due to disruption in the next three months.

- 80 crore individuals, i.e, roughly two-thirds of India's population would be covered under this scheme.

- Each one of them would be provided double of their current entitlement over next three months.

- This additionality would be free of cost.

Pulses:

- To ensure adequate availability of protein to all the above mentioned individuals, 1 kg per family, would be provided pulses according to regional preferences for next three months.

- These pulses would be provided free of cost by the Government of India.

III. Under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana,

Benefit to farmers:

- The first instalment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 itself under the PM KISAN Yojana.

- It would cover 8.7 crore farmers

IV. Cash transfers Under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana:

Help to Poor:

- A total of 20.40 crores PMJDY women account-holders would be given an ex-gratia of Rs 500 per month for next three months.

Gas cylinders:

- Under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, gas cylinders, free of cost, would be provided to 8 crore poor families for the next three months.

Help to low wage earners in organised sectors:

- Wage-earners below Rs 15,000 per month in businesses having less than 100 workers are at risk of losing their employment.

- Under this package, government proposes to pay 24 percent of their monthly wages into their PF accounts for next three months.

- This would prevent disruption in their employment.

Support for senior citizens (above 60 years), widows and Divyang:

- There are around 3 crore aged widows and people in Divyang category who are vulnerable due to economic disruption

caused by COVID-19.

- Government will give them Rs 1,000 to tide over difficulties during next three months.

MNREGA

- Under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, MNREGA wages would be increased by Rs 20 with effect from 1 April, 2020. Wage increase under MNREGA will provide an additional Rs 2,000 benefit annually to a worker.

- This will benefit approximately 13.62 crore families.

V. Self-Help groups:

- Women organised through 63 lakhs Self Help Groups (SHGs) support 6.85 crore households.

a) Limit of collateral free lending would be increased from Rs 10 to Rs 20 lakhs.

VI. Other components of PM Garib Kalyan package

Organised sector:

- Employees' Provident Fund Regulations will be amended to include Pandemic as the reason to allow non-refundable advance of 75 percent of the amount or three months of the wage

es, whichever is lower, from their accounts.

- Families of four crore workers registered under EPF can take benefit of this window.

Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Fund:

- Welfare Fund for Building and Other Constructions Workers has been created under a Central Government Act.

- There are around 3.5 Crore registered workers in the Fund.

- State Governments will be given directions to utilise this fund to provide assistance and support to these workers to protect them against economic disruptions.

District Mineral Fund

- The State Government will be asked to utilise the funds available under District Mineral Fund (DMF) for supplementing and augmenting facilities of medical testing, screening and other requirements in connection with preventing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic as well as treating the patients affected with this pandemic.

DPIIT sets up control room to monitor status of transportation and delivery of goods

DELHI, 26 MAR (PIB): Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has set up a control room to monitor in real time the status of transportation and delivery of goods, manufacturing, delivery of essential commodities to common man and the difficulties being faced by various stakeholders during the lockdown period from 25 Mar, 2020 to 14 Apr, 2020. In the event of any manufacturing, transporter, distributor, wholesaler or e-commerce companies facing ground level dif-

iculties in transportation and distribution of goods or mobilization of resources, the same may be informed to the Department at the following telephone number/email:-

Telephone: + 91 11 23062487.

Email: control-room-dpiit@gov.in

The telephone number will be functional from 8.00am to 6.00pm. The issues reported by various stakeholders will be taken up by the Department with the concerned state government, district and police authorities, and other concerned agencies.

NHPC Teesta V distributes essentials to locals

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

NHPC-Teesta V Power Station, Balutar, East Sikkim, distributed face masks, hand sanitisers, hand wash liquid and soaps to residents of Raley, Ralap, Singbel, Salebong, Sokpey and other areas on 25 and 26 Mar, under its CSR & SD initiatives to help fight the battle against Novel Coronavirus, a press release informs.

Head of the Power Station, Sahadev Khatua, stressed that social

distancing, personal hygiene and sanitation were key to break the transmission chain of the virus.

He also congratulated the medical services department of Teesta-V Power Station for its tireless efforts in creating awareness on Coronavirus.

The items were handed over to the Rakdong-Tintek BDO, P Wangchen Namkarpa, who thanked NHPC for providing basic protective items.

Nurses at Aurangabad hospital demand protection gear

AURANGABAD (MAHA), MAR 26 (PTI): Nurses at the government hospital in Chikalthana area here, where swab samples of suspected coronavirus patients are collected, demanded protection gear and other facilities on Thursday.

There weren't enough personal protection kits, necessary medicines and sanitizers and handwash facilities at the hospital, they complained in a memorandum submitted to the civil surgeon Dr Sundar Kulkarni.

"These things are available in only few wards. In view of the present situation, they should be provided in every ward," said Jana Munde, secretary of the Aurangabad chapter of the Maharashtra State

Nurses Association.

"We also need separate washrooms and changing rooms to avoid infection. Reaching hospital in time is a problem due to lockdown. So we have demanded transportation facility.

Answering police's questions while travelling to work causes delay," Munde added.

There was no canteen and due to the closure of hotels, the hospital staff can not even get a cup of tea in the vicinity, she added.

Hospitals in Aurangabad, a central Maharashtra district, does not have any active COVID-19 patient at present. But the state is leading with number of cases -- 125 -- in the country.

Khaling visits Central Health Store to check adequacy of stocks

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling, today visited the Central Health Store at Tadong here to take stock of the supplies and status of materials required to combat coronavirus in the state. He returned satisfied that adequate stock has been maintained.

Sharing the information in a Facebook post, Mr Khaling explains that the Central Health Store "ensures that basic health commodities like masks, sanitizers, gloves etc have sufficient supplies" and adds that dispatches to the districts were also checked.

"Upon checking it was found that there is

sufficient supply as of now. The state government has also ordered for more adequate equipments, other basic health supplies which have already reached and more of which are on their way," Mr Khaling adds.

He goes on to assure that following the directives of Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], the

state machinery was leaving no stone unturned to combat the coronavirus pandemic and stopping it from entering Sikkim.

The CM, he adds, has directed for adequate supplies for the people and mostly for the health workers so that everyone remains safe and can combat the virus collectively.

Thursday [26 March] itself.

Mr Tamang responded this quick development by thanking the Health Minister in a Facebook post and highlighting that this facility "will not only save time for people in Sikkim and neighbouring states but will also help save millions of lives."

CM thanks Union Health Minister for granting Covid testing lab demand

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 26 MAR:

Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] took to Facebook today to thank Union Health Minister, Harsh Vardhan, for granting his demand seeking the setting up of a Covid-19 testing laboratory at North Bengal Medical College and Hospital in Siliguri.

Mr Tamang had written to the Health Minister on 23 March pointing out that Sikkim did not have a Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratory and that one sanctioned by the ICMR for Sikkim was being set up at the State Referral Hospital in Gangtok but would still take some time to be ready.

That being the case,

and given Sikkim's need to have access to a COVID-19 testing facility closer home, the CM had requested that such a facility be set up at North Bengal Medical College and Hospital in Siliguri.

On 25 March, the ICMR announced that such a facility was being set up there and would get operational from

tion of this."

Yechury said while the government had announced that each farmer would be given Rs 2,000, it was the first instalment that is due to them under PM KISAN scheme announced just before the 2019 polls.

The transfer of Rs 500 to Jan Dhan accounts held by women is too inadequate, he said.

"We had asked for a direct transfer of Rs 5000 for each month for the next three months, for all Jandhan account-holders and BPL families. There is no substantial benefit for Workers.

"The 24 per cent of monthly wages into their own Provident Fund (PF) accounts does not give them any extra relief - this is their due, their own savings!" he added.

Centre's relief package inadequate: CPI(M)

NEW DELHI, MAR 26 (PTI): The CPI(M) said on Thursday the Rs 1.75-lakh-crore economic package announced by the Centre in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic was inadequate.

The comments come after the government unveiled the relief package involving free food grain and cooking gas to the poor for the next three months, one-time doles to women and poor senior citizens, higher wages to workers and measures to boost liquidity of employees, as it looked to contain the impact of unprecedented nationwide lockdown over the deadly COVID-19

"The Rs 1.75 lakh crore package announced today missed

out on a crucial issue of the migrant workers returning to their own states," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said in a statement.

"We have airlifted Indians from many countries abroad, surely our own brethren should have been provided with food and shelter, to either stay where they are currently or to be transported to their home states," Yechury said.

"This failure is defeating the purpose of this 21-day lockdown when big crowds are surging, threatening 'community-spread'. This should be remedied at once," the Left leader said.

Yechury pointed out that while some propos-

als in the package, such as provision of doubling food grains, free gas cylinders for three months, a 1-kg of pulses per family, have some merit, but they were "thoroughly inadequate".

"The key to resist COVID-19 is good nutrition. This does not serve the purpose," he said.

"The announcement to give Rs 1000 to aged widows and the disabled is too little," Yechury said. "The insurance cover for health workers come at no cost to the government. There is no clarity if this covers the private sector."

He underlined that what the health workers required immediately was protective gear, medicines and adequate testing facilities, adding that there was no men-

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General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).
Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

The passengers, including a few women and children, set off from Hyderabad in cabs after obtaining special travel permits from the local police.

After a smooth ride up to Garikapadu, the border between the two states, the vehicles were stopped around 3.30 pm, leaving the

passengers stranded.

"We are a group of students and have been asked to vacate our hostels. The Hyderabad police gave us special travel permit to return to our native place and accordingly we hired a cab and started our journey this morning. We were blocked at this place as the AP police are unwilling to let us in," a student said.

Another person said he was travelling with his wife, who was nine months pregnant, after a medical check-up in Hyderabad.

"Despite our situation, the police are not willing to let us travel to our destination," he said.

The local MLA arrived on the scene on Wednesday night and took up the stranded passengers' case with the police but to no avail.

"Those who were going to Guntur from Hyderabad were allowed via Piduguralla but here they blocked everything. There is a clear lack of coordination between the officials of the two states," Udayabhanu said.

He said the passengers could be permitted to journey further after conducting the required thermal screening tests.

The Andhra Pradesh government or the police were yet to take a decision on the stranded passengers when reports last came in on Wednesday night.

Gyalshing adds muscle to lockdown enforcement

RUDRA KAUSHIK GYALSHING, 26 MAR:

West district has delegated 30 IRBn personnel to patrol the Gyalshing bazaar area in a move to enforce the nationwide lockdown more stringently. Police Inspector, Gyalshing Police Station, CP Silal, while speaking to SummitTimes over the phone, informed that the IRBn patrol team has been tasked to check public movement around town and also keep the law and order situation under control.

The second day of the lockdown was successful in most parts of West district and the people co-operated by maintaining proper self quarantine.

Some persons were however shooed home by police at Soreong and Gyalshing bazaar when

they were found flouting the prohibitory orders, it is informed.

Apart from grocery stores and medical shops, everything remained closed in Gyalshing town today as well.

Grocery shop owner Chotey Lal Gupta of Gyalshing bazar informs that he has been receiving very few customers. Only those who could not stock up before the lockdown came into effect are visiting the shop, he said. Another grocery shop owner, Prem Chand Gupta, also echoed similar sentiments and said that business was down.

A vegetable vendor of the Sabji Mandi here also pointed out that it was risky for them to demand another consignment of vegetables since very few people have been coming to make purchases.

Disinfecting Namchi



NAMCHI, 26 MAR [IPR]: The South District Administration, in collaboration with Fire and Emergency Services [Namchi], has initiated a set of measures, including disinfecting of Namchi

town, to prevent the spread of Novel Coronavirus.

Today, the drive was conducted by the Fire & Emergency Services personnel led by SHO Bishal Rai and

joined by officials from the DAC.

Frontline staff of Namchi Fire Services undertook this drive disinfecting the public spaces with bleaching powder and other products. The drive

was carried out at Central Park, Car Plaza, Organic Market and SNT complex

Special attention is being paid to vulnerable spots such as benches, public drinking water taps etc.

Prez likely to address Governors, LGs on coronavirus

NEW DELHI, MAR 26 (PTI): President Ram Nath Kovind is likely to address all governors and lieutenant governors soon through video conference to discuss the coronavirus outbreak and ask them to help the state administrations combat the endemic, an official said on Thursday.

The move came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a series of meetings with various stakeholders, including chief ministers, industrialists, doctors and healthcare workers, representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and senior editors.

The president is expected to address the governors and lieutenant governors soon to encourage

them to be involved in the fight against coronavirus, the senior government official said.

The involvement of the constitutional heads is seen as an all-out effort of the central government to deal with the emerging medical crisis engulfing the world.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister P K Mishra, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla also held several meetings with chief secretaries of all states and asked them to ensure full compliance of the 21-day lockdown and at the same to ensure the availability of essential commodities.

COVID-19 has so far claimed 13 lives in India and there are 649 positive cases.

Assam to set up four 300-bedded temporary hospitals for coronavirus patients: Minister

GUWAHATI, MAR 26 (PTI): The Assam government will set up four temporary hospitals with 300 beds each across the state for treatment of COVID-19 patients, a minister said on Thursday.

It is also constructing an isolation facility for 700 persons with separate rooms and 200 attached lavatories at the Sarusajai Sports Complex, which will be ready within a week, Health and Family Welfare Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"We have had discussions with a leading private sector construction company regarding the temporary hospitals. Almost all parliamentarians from both ruling and opposition parties of Assam have also offered to contribute funds to set up the hospitals," Sarma told reporters, after inspecting the ongoing construction work at the complex.

"It will be finalised

within the next three days.

We are looking to set up these hospitals in places where there is no medical college," he said.

Assam has not reported any COVID-19 case so far.

"We have enough space in the Sarusajai Sports Complex to set up an isolation unit for another 1,000 persons.

However, this will be created subject to availability of logistics as construction materials for temporary structure are not available at this moment," Sarma said.

Once the Sarusajai Sports Complex is full, the state government might set up another such facility at Radha Gobinda Baruah Sports Complex, the minister said.

Around 700 people are at check gates in Kokrajhar district along the Assam-West Bengal border and they will

be brought directly to the Sarusajai facility, Sarma said.

On the steps taken to augment the strength of medical staff, he said, "We have developed a training module. Around 700 students are in the final year of MBBS in medical colleges of Assam. They are called PRCs, which is equivalent to doctors.

"From today onwards, we will train them in the module for coronavirus treatment. Similarly, around 2,000 final year students of nursing in the state will also be trained for the same purpose. Many young doctors who have returned to the state have offered their voluntary services if need arises."

The Health Department had also conducted examinations for ward boys and girls, the results of which are awaited, Sarma said.

"We have asked the authority concerned to

announce the results immediately, because 300-400 new entrants in the healthcare system will benefit us immensely," he said.

On cases of harassment of doctors and nurses by landlords, Sarma said instructions have been given to all SPs to register criminal cases against them. "I am personally monitoring this situation".

The minister said as Manipur and Mizoram have one positive coronavirus case each, "we are thinking of sealing the inter-state border with these two states".

Sarma also expressed regret that people are still coming out of their homes in large numbers despite the lockdown.

"Weekly markets are open with hundreds of people assembling to purchase essential commodities. We have asked the DCs and SPs to take stern action to enforce the lockdown," he added.



SAFETY FIRST: Hand-washing units should become ubiquitous at all public spaces in these times of Novel Coronavirus fears. Here, a visitor washes his hands thoroughly before entering the district hospital, Singtam. [from YOGEN THATAL]

Italian football chief ready to finish season in August

MILAN, MAR 26 (AFP): Italian football federation (FIGC) president Gabriele Gravina said he was determined that the Serie A season would be concluded even going into August.

All sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic which has forced the postponement of Euro 2020 and the Tokyo

Olympics.

"We will do everything to complete the championships, if necessary we will ask for the support of UEFA and FIFA to go beyond June 30 and play also in July or August," Gravina told Radio Marte.

"It's premature to think of a date, but we must think positively, also for the health of Italians and hope that this

situation will end as soon as possible."

The FIGC chief had last week expressed his hope that the championship could resume on the weekend of May 2.

A meeting is scheduled Thursday between the representatives of the Italian league, FIGC, the players' union, coaches and the government to evaluate the future.

"There are many is-

sues," said Gravina.

As for the suspended championship, Gravina rejected either cancelling or assigning the title as the table stands where champions Juventus were leading by a point when the season was halted.

"This would lead to an unpleasant scenario. As long as possible, I will continue to reject these options.

Transport arranged for 700 migrant workers: Guj DyCM

AHMEDABAD, MAR 26 (PTI): Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel said on Thursday that he arranged vehicles for around 700 migrant labourers who had left the city for Rajasthan on foot amid lockdown on account of coronavirus.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, on the other hand, urged migrant workers not to leave and assured that arrangement will be made to provide them food and accommodation.

Hundreds of labourers from the neighbouring state were seen walking home in the last two days as the lockdown kicked in and they had no work.

The Rajasthan border is around 225 km from here.

"Deputy chief minister yesterday night on highway came across a group of 700 migrant workers who were walking back to their native villages in Rajasthan from Ahmedabad," said Patel's Twitter handle.

"He called upon officials and minister of state for home Pradeepsinh Jadeja to the spot on highway, made arrangements for their food and also arranged vehicles so that they can be transported upto Rajasthan border," it added.

Migrant workers

have no option but to return to their home states as they can not even find food here with hotels closed. Most of them are daily wage workers and cannot afford to pay house rent too, when there is no work.

"We have decided to walk all the way to our villages because if we stay here we will die of hunger," said one labourer.

"No hotels or shops are open. At few outlets which sell food, one roti costs Rs 50. We can not afford it," he said.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani urged migrant workers not to leave amid the threat of the

spread of coronavirus.

"It is not advisable to travel in groups in these difficult times. Migrant workers should stay where they are.

The state government with the help of voluntary organisations will look after their food requirements," he said in a statement.

He also requested employers to make arrangement to provide accommodation to such workers and promised help from the government too.

In some parts of the state, police is distributing food packets to migrant workers who are walking back to their native places.

reflected in their relationships. Kiranmoyee lost her husband Sudhamoy, who committed suicide after they moved to Kolkata and were swindled out of all their money.

Suranjan and Maya have both broken off their marriages (to Hindu Bengalis). Suranjan then starts seeing Zulekha, the survivor of a gang rape, while Maya is dating the upwardly mobile Sibohan (whose name she first thought was the Hindu Shovan).

Taslina comes out with 'Lajja' sequel 'Shameless'

NEW DELHI, MAR 26 (PTI): Controversial author Taslina Nasreen's sequel to her banned work "Lajja" will be published in English next month, more than 10 years after it was written.

In fact, "Shameless" has never been published in its original Bengali, or any other language, until very recently, when a Hindi translation was brought out. It talks about communal tensions in India and the deep scars they leave on

individual lives.

According to publishers HarperCollins India, the book is an "explosive sequel" to "Lajja" and an "uncompromising, heart-breaking look at ordinary people's lives in our troubled times".

Nasreen wrote the sequel during the time she lived in Kolkata before she had to leave the city forever. The book has been translated from Bengali by Arunava Sinha.

"Lajja" dealt with the alleged persecution of

Hindus in Bangladesh after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. At the end of the novel, Suranjan Datta and his family relocated to Kolkata, hoping to find a safe haven.

"Shameless" takes forward the story of Suranjan and his family - his mother Kiranmoyee and his sister Maya - as they struggle to eke out a living in Kolkata, poor, rootless, and the victims of a violence so brutal that it has scarred them forever.

Their inner turmoil is

Tibetan body asks community to follow lockdown rules

DHARAMSHALA (HP), MARCH 26 (PTI): The Tibetan government-in-exile has appealed to the community to strictly comply with the nationwide lockdown imposed to fight coronavirus.


The appeal comes after the death this week of a member of the community in McLeodganj, where the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is headquartered.

This was the first death due to coronavirus in Himachal Pradesh.

On Thursday, the Dalai Lama praised the tough measures being taken to contain the virus.

The Tibetan spiritual leader also wrote to Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, expressing support.




In its appeal to Tibetans in the state and elsewhere in the country, the CTA urged strict compliance to instructions issued by any state government.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

<p>Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<p>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
<p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected 	

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

This Will Not Help

*...because you cannot lathich-
arge the virus away*

Someone needs to tell the cops and maybe also the administrators that a 21-day lockdown, no matter how strongly enforced, will not chase Novel Coronavirus out of our country or Sikkim. When it comes to killing the virus, this is just about as effective as banging utensils or ringing bells. What the lockdown seeks to attempt is “break the chain,” give the spread of the virus a pause. It is a speed-breaker, not an antidote. Yes, the people should stay indoors and those with any history of travel outside the State or direct contact with someone who has, should self-isolate, but please stop fooling yourself – the lockdown will not wipe out the virus no matter how much you disinfect the public spaces emptied out of the people. There will be a lot more to be done to effectively contain and combat the virus and the lockdown is a supporting act for those efforts. This section had spoken about those measures yesterday, so today, we stick to the problems with the obsessive gusto with which the lockdown is being enforced.

To begin with, the police has no right to unleash violence or even harsh words unless a crowd itself is violent or uncooperative. And yet, that is how the khaki is responding to the situation and that should be unacceptable in a democracy. Since they have been tasked with the responsibility to enforce the lockdown, they are completely within their rights to tell people to get indoors if they find them loitering. They cannot resort to any form of violence unless provoked. And yet, there are already some videos of Sikkim Police abusing and beating people found breaking the lockdown. Someone should brief them better. For those who still believe that people don’t listen unless beaten, here is the other reality they must face – the people being so roughed up are either obviously underprivileged “non-locals” or youth who have no dad or uncle to call and reprimand the cops. It cannot be denied that the police action is disturbingly class-driven. This is wrong on several counts, one of which is the fact that most of those at the receiving end of the police batons are people Sikkim completely blindsides when it comes to the living conditions they have to suffer. They live packed in squalid rooms with no ventilation or even space beyond what they need to sleep. It is rude to call their accommodations living quarters because most of these spaces are actually uninhabitable. To force them to stay indoors in such conditions for any length of time beyond what is absolutely necessary is cruel. And for what? A lockdown, which like demonetization earlier, is receiving a new set of orders, relaxations and rules every day, indicating that not all aspects were taken into consideration before it was imposed?

Some practical realities also need to be considered. While opening Paljor Stadium for kids might be ill-advised since people come there from different areas and diverse backgrounds, there nothing worryingly dangerous if kids living in the same building continue to meet and play because they are not coming into contact with anyone new and have lived cheek-by-jowl since much earlier than the virus left Wuhan. If one of them has contracted the virus, they would have gotten it much before the authorities decided to lock everyone down to keep them safe. Contact with anyone other than immediate neighbours is unlikely any more because of the restrictions on travel and vehicles. This is not an attempt to suggest that the lockdown is not necessary but just a suggestion that its enforcement need not be as aggressive and obsessive as some officials want it to be.

To lock people down, to strand them and to stop all economic activity which earned them their daily wages might be a necessary undertaking, but that does not mean that their privations can be ignored or increased. But that is what we achieve when we beat them up when they are found violating the lockdown orders. A different approach should be considered.

PS: And please, someone should brief police personnel better about safety measures necessary for their own safety. Beating people up is dangerous because spittle, those tiny droplets in which the virus rides, does shoot out only when people sneeze or cough but also when they are screaming for mercy. Also, cops huddled up together while they enforce social distancing also defeats the whole idea behind it...

Can’t sleep and feeling anxious about coronavirus? You’re not alone

OLIVIA FISHER
THECONVERSATION.COM

This is a confusing and, frankly, scary time for a lot of us. There’s so much contradictory information, and the “right” thing to do yesterday is now the “wrong” thing to do today.

If you’re feeling edgy, having trouble sitting still or concentrating, finding yourself constantly or obsessively checking for updates, losing sleep, or waking in the early hours of the morning feeling anxious – you’re not alone.

These are completely normal, human reactions to a completely abnormal situation. Worrying about whether you’re doing enough to protect yourself and others, whether you’re going to lose income, and what this will all mean long-term is to be expected.

You might be wondering whether this worry and other feelings of anxiety might indicate a developing mental health problem.

Feeling this way for a few days, or even weeks, in the context of a major national emergency, does not indicate that you have a mental disorder.

But some people will need to access support or talk to their GP about ongoing concerns.

WHAT’S NORMAL?

Normal fear responses are part of a healthy, adaptive process that allows us to get away from or deal with something we perceive as dangerous.

Normal anxiety:

- is situation specific – related to a particular event of circumstance
- is limited in time
- does not have a long-term impact on your ability to go about your day-to-day life (although there may be short periods where it can feel overwhelming).

However, sometimes our fear can become overwhelming and start to impact on our ability to function in our daily lives.

Some anxiety symptoms to be aware of are excessive worry which is difficult to control, restlessness, feeling easily fatigued, having difficulty con-



centrating, irritability, muscle tension or sleep disturbance.

COPING MECHANISMS WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

In times of trouble, Australians usually band together to support each other with hugs, a helping hand and a nice hot cuppa. We raise money, have benefit concerts, and get to work so we can feel we’re doing something. We build belonging in our community, and feel a sense of accomplishment when we pull through together.

This time it’s different, and our normal ways of coping with disasters are not going to work. For many of us, social distancing means we are not able to use most of our day to day coping strategies either, such as going to the gym or hanging out with friends.

But there are things we can do to buffer against the impact of uncertain and traumatic times.

Having a strong sense of belonging, along with a regular sense of accomplishment, are key to our mental well-being. They’re linked with lower levels of depression and anxiety symptoms, and higher levels of mental well-being.

BELONGING

Social distancing does not require

social isolation. There are safe ways to connect with people that don’t involve putting yourself at risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Staying connected is not just a nice thing to do – it’s actually important for our health. Some theorists have suggested that belonging is a fundamental human motivation, just as compelling as the need for food.

Don’t wait for people to connect with you – reach out to them. There’s a good chance that they’re feeling isolated and afraid as well.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

It’s important to find ways in your day to day life to feel a regular sense of accomplishment, and it might be a matter of re-framing what you consider to be an accomplishment.

If you have kids in the background, dogs barking to be taken for a walk, and all the other wonderful interruptions that may come with working from home, it’s likely that just reading and responding to emails is an accomplishment in itself.

If you’re not working at the moment and funds are tight think about what else you can accomplish. Spring clean. Plant capsicum, strawberry or tomato seeds saved from your lunch and see if they

will grow. Or learn something new, like robotics, knitting or crochet.

WHEN TO GET HELP?

Sometimes what you’re experiencing will signal a more serious problem that needs some external support.

It’s time to seek help if:

- symptoms of anxiety are starting to affect your ability to function in your daily life
- the symptoms are getting worse
- the symptoms feel overwhelming or
- the symptoms persist over time – more days than not.

Beyondblue has online information and resources such as the beyondblue web chat.

For children, teens and young adults, web chat or email.

Your GP can help you to identify whether your symptoms meet the criteria for an anxiety disorder. They can also write a mental health care plan, if appropriate, and refer you to professional services in your local community.

[the writer is Research Fellow (Health Services Research) Faculty of Health, School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology]

Coronavirus: why lockdown may cost young lives over time

ALAN COLLINS & ADAM COX
THECONVERSATION.COM

Covid-19 will cause a lot of deaths if we don’t curb the spread of infection successfully by lockdowns and other recently announced measures. The pandemic is anticipated to disproportionately impact older people in the “Baby boomer” generation – those aged between 55 and 74. In terms of fatalities, individuals over 70 years old are at the greatest risk, alongside those with underlying health conditions.

But what about the young? Some in the Millennial and Generation Z groups have bluntly described the pandemic as a “boomer removal” on some social media channels. There have also been cases of young people ignoring social distancing rules and throwing wild parties, both in Europe and North America – creating an escalating conflict between generations.

This may be partly fuelled by long, simmering resentment among the young of perceived widespread boomer entitlements, such as easier access to property ownership, secure pensions and affluent retirement. Their neglect of climate change impacts is another trigger.

But there are other legitimate reasons for concern. In the long run, we may see death rates among young as well as old people go up as a consequence of long periods of lockdown and isolation – something we must mitigate against.

ECONOMY AND DEATH RATES

It is extremely difficult to estimate the net impact on death rates from the Covid-19 crisis. We know that lockdown measures will save thousands of lives. This isn’t just in terms of reducing infection, but also due to improved air quality and a reduction in traffic accidents. But we also know that the pandemic will have a severe impact on the economy over a number of years. This is also likely to cost lives.

Past downturns and crises have led to increasing unemployment but also growing mental health problems and spikes in suicide rates in many countries. In the UK, 6,507 people killed themselves in 2018 – that’s nearly twice the number of deaths seen in Spain from the coronavirus. And research estimates that the 2007 economic crisis in Europe and North America led to more than 10,000 extra suicides.

What’s more, in the early stages of the Covid-19 crisis, before the UK government offered financial help to support employees, many firms conveniently made people redundant and activated rapid plant or outlet closures. A number of studies have shown that substantial job displacement in other contexts significantly increased mortality



rates over time, possibly through stress and income shocks.

Generally, the young have been more resilient to these problems, enjoying greater success in reemployment following job loss. They are also better placed to migrate to places with stronger economies. At the moment, though, poor economic prospects are becoming globally widespread – most likely for some time to come. And research has shown that poverty kills, with poor people dying nearly ten years earlier than rich people in the UK.

CURRENT MITIGATION

The UK government has already increased and redirected resources to the National Health Service (NHS) and civil emergency authorities. It has also put forward a substantial business and labour market rescue and mitigation package.

While these measures will go some way to sustain business continuity and income for company employees, they are not yet comprehensive in coverage. At the time of writing, the package excludes many young adults, including those who work as freelancers, are self-employed or in “gig” economic sectors. More of the young also rent their accommodation, or live where they work (such as nannies).

And if lockdown measures including closed shops and restaurants remain active for several months, this will cost the economy. Despite the Bank of England lowering interest base rates to 0.1%, their lowest ever level, this is unlikely to cause an uplift or acceleration in investment plans anytime soon.

While the government’s package of measures comprise some 15% of current UK GDP, this may well turn out not to be enough. It will need to inject huge additional sums into the NHS and other direct expenditures for managing the virus.

Inevitably, the crisis will cause the economy to further contract and the scale of the dip in economic activity could be unprecedented in peacetime – decimating the quality of life and labour market prospects of the young in particular.

Despite this, UK prime minister Boris Johnson has boldly suggested the country will be able to “turn

the tide” of the crisis in three months. It is not entirely clear if he means peak infection or the end of the crisis, but this view seems unduly rosy. The Spanish flu pandemic (1918-1920) featured three peaks, so getting to the other side quicker may simply lead to the upside of a second peak a bit faster.

LIVING WITH THREAT

Young people are already struggling with depression. There is now a new dread to add to the list of existing crises – climate change, Brexit, housing and pensions. That’s another zoonotic virus pandemic. The economy will have to develop resilience to that, and it will come with a considerable price tag.

What’s more, for those identified as “key workers”, this is a time of very high job stress. Will younger key workers get burnt out? The risk is that they may consider complete career, lifestyle and location changes going forward. If so, without incentives to stay put, it would further degrade the UK’s resilience to a similar crisis.

It is reasonable to ask what the likely scale of these negative consequences will be across the generations after the crisis. Is there anything we could do now to help flatten the expected spikes in unemployment, poverty, mental health problems and suicide in the aftermath of this crisis?

We think that access to retraining and education without the associated burden of debt will be important. The government should also consider writing off existing education debts and create measures supporting geographical relocation within the UK and across borders. This would provide a basis for enabling freedom – socially and geographically.

The government should obviously do whatever it can to protect as many lives as possible. But it is important that the challenge of COVID-19 isn’t framed simply in terms of lives at risk from the virus versus the economy. Prolonged periods of unemployment, the stress of job fragility and poverty can also claim lives. Timely thought and action is needed to reduce that risk too.

[Alan Collins is Professor of Economics and Public Policy, Nottingham Trent University; Adam Cox is Principal Lecturer, University of Portsmouth]

Elderly man tests positive for COVID-19 in Kolkata



KOLKATA, MAR 26 (PTI): An elderly man tested positive for COVID-19 in West Bengal, taking the total number of cases in the state to 10, a senior health official said on Thursday.

The 66-year-old from Nayabad in Kolkata had no history of travelling abroad or outside the state, he said.

He is undergoing treatment at a private hospital's intensive coronary care unit, especially set up for novel coronavirus patients, the official said.

His family members have been placed under home quarantine, he said, adding that police have been posted outside their residence.

The man recently attended a wedding ceremony at Egra in East Midnapore district, where he might have come in contact with an infected person, sources in the health department said.

"After coming home from the wedding ceremony, he complained of fever and breathing problems, following which he was admitted to a private hospital on March 23," one of the sources said.

His samples were tested twice and the re-

sult turned out to be the same, a doctor at the private hospital said.

The sexagenarian has been given oxygen support and necessary medicines, the doctors added.

Meanwhile, a woman who was sneezing and coughing in a bus, which was on its way to Kolkata from Paschim Burdwan, was told by the driver and his helper to get herself tested but she refused.

The driver, on reaching Esplanade area in the city, informed police about the matter, following which he was told to take the bus to Beliaghata ID hospital.

The woman, however, refused to alight from the bus despite repeated requests by doctors at the hospital.

"We tried convincing her to get down so that we can conduct a test, but she was reluctant," a senior doctor of Beliaghata ID hospital said.

A team of police officers also reached the hospital to convince her but she again refused, the doctor said.

The woman was finally taken to MR Bangur hospital in south Kolkata, where she agreed to get her tests done, a senior police officer said.

Nagaland: Petrol pumps to remain open on alternate days, groceries for 4 hours daily

KOHIMA, MAR 26 (PTI):

As the country enters second day of the 21-day lockdown in an attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus, Nagaland government on Thursday announced that

petrol pumps across the state will remain open on alternate days, and groceries will function for four hours daily.

The state government has issued a directive to grocery shop owners to keep their shops open from 10 am to 2 pm daily and petrol pumps to supply fuel on alternate days.

The directive came into effect from Thursday.

The Home department has said that only one person from a family should go out for shopping from a nearby shop.

On the second day

of the nationwide lockdown, business establishments in the state were shut, except groceries, bakeries, petrol pumps and medicine shops.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio assigned ministers and advisors the responsibility to monitor implementation of steps to prevent the spread of the deadly contagion.

They have been asked to monitor the situation in Wokka, Junhebet, Tensang, Phek, Longleng, Mon, Dimapur, Kohima, Peren, Kiphire and Mokokchung, an official statement said.

The Home Department has assured people that the supply of essential commodities and goods, including petroleum, oil and lubricants continues to remain normal.



Urging people to stay indoors and come out only for buying essential goods, it asked the residents to maintain social distancing even at shops.

Mentioning that the district administration

and police were keeping an eye on the situation, the department cautioned that strict action would be taken against anyone found indulging in non-essential travel.

The overall situation is peaceful with people

remaining indoors, except for those out to purchase essential commodities, sources said.

The respective district administrations have enforced regulations while volunteers of respective tribal bodies

in the districts with personnel from police and district administration are restricting people from moving around.

No positive coronavirus case has been reported in the state till Wednesday.

Centre takes cue from relief plans rolled out by WB: TMC

NEW DELHI, MAR 26

(PTI): The Trinamool Congress on Thursday said the Centre's financial package announced in the wake of a countrywide lockdown to combat coronavirus has taken a "cue" from the one offered by the party-led dispensation in

West Bengal.

"Centre takes cue from relief plans already rolled out by state govts like #Bengal a week ago -- free 6 months ration for the poor, health insurance for champion frontliners fighting corona and Rs 1000 for daily wagers under new

Prochesta scheme. Will supplement State efforts," tweeted TMC MP Derek O'Brien.

The central government on Thursday unveiled a Rs 1.70-lakh crore economic package involving free foodgrain and cooking gas to poor for the next three

months, one-time doles to women and poor senior citizens, higher wages to workers and measures to boost liquidity of employees as it looked to contain the impact of unprecedented nationwide lockdown.

West Bengal Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee had on March 24 announced a scheme 'Prochesta' under which a financial help of Rs 1,000 will be extended to those working in the unorganised sector, who will be the worst hit by the coronavirus lockdown.

Assam govt to set up 4 temporary hospitals for COVID-19 patients: Minister

GUWAHATI, MAR 26 (PTI): The Assam government has decided to set up four temporary hospitals with 300 beds each across the state for treatment of COVID-19 patients, a minister said on Thursday.

The government is also constructing an isolation facility for 700 persons at the Sarusajai Sports Complex, which will be ready within the next seven days, health and family welfare minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"We have discussed with a leading construction company to

construct temporary hospitals. Almost all parliamentarians from both ruling and opposition parties of Assam have offered to contribute funds to set up the hospitals," Sarma told reporters after inspecting the ongoing construction work at the complex.

He said the government is looking to have four such hospitals with 300 beds each.

"It will be finalised within the next 2-3 days. We are looking to set up these hospitals in places where there is no medical college," he

said.

Assam has not reported any COVID-19 case so far.

"We have enough space in the Sarusajai Sports complex to set up an isolation unit for another 1,000 persons.

However, this will be created subject to availability of logistics as construction materials for temporary structure are not available at this moment," Sarma said.

The government may build another such facility at Radha Gobinda Baruah Sports Complex as well, he added.

Pay-and-use quarantine units at 31 hotels in Bengal

KOLKATA, MARCH 26 (PTI): Amid the spurt in Covid-19 cases, a total of 31 hotels in the city and nearby Rajarhat and New Town areas have agreed to offer pay-and-use rooms to people who have been asked to live in isolation for 14 days, a senior official said.

The state government had requested the hotels to let out some of their rooms as quarantine units, following which necessary arrangements were made at these properties, in accordance with the protocols set by the health department, he said.

"The decision was taken in view of the increasing demand for quarantine centres. We had approached the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HREEI), following which 31 hotels were selected for the purpose," he said.

According to the health department, the rooms should have an attached bathroom facility.

The department also stated that windows be "kept open during daytime, and the floor and other surfaces in the rooms be mopped with bleach solution".

"Soiled linens, clothes, towel shall not be mixed with those of others and shall be disinfected with bleach, washed properly and sun-dried daily and also before next use. Freshly prepared bleach solution (that is one per cent hydrochloride solution) must be used to clean furniture wash basin and toilets," the department said.

All housekeeping and room service staffers have been asked to wear masks and gloves while serving the guests.

"No visitors other

than doctors, medical officers or authorised officials shall be allowed inside the hotel to meet a quarantined person," the department noted.

According to the state government directive, after completion of the 14-day quarantine period "the guests will be allowed to leave subject to the permission from the health department".

"If any person develops (Covid-19) symptoms such as fever, cough and respiratory illness during his or her stay, the hotel management must mandatorily inform the nodal officer immediately for taking appropriate action," it said.

The state health department will designate a medical officer, who will visit and monitor the pay-and-use quarantine units at these designated hotels from time to time, the order added.

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SummitTIMES

Indian table tennis player stuck in Spain



KOLKATA, MAR 26 (PTI): Indian paddler Takeme Sarkar left for Malaga hoping to play in the Spanish League and gain some experience, but now finds herself quarantined in an apartment there after suspension of airline operations owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She had gone to compete in the Spanish League in Malaga, about 12 kilometres from capital Madrid.

The 14th ranked India player, who hails from Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, was slated to return on March 24.

"I'm safe and doing fine in my area, my club members are very supportive, they are providing food everything," the 28-year-old said in an audio message.

"I'm also happy to receive support from back home in India, my coach and association officials

are in constant touch. I've got another ticket for May 11, and hopefully, the situation will become normal by then, and I will return," she added.

Takeme, along with Sagarika Mukherjee and Moumita Dutta, are the reigning national champions.

"I'm staying put at home the whole day and cooking myself. Three other Japanese girls are also here with me," she said from Spain.

The unprecedented health crisis has led to either cancellation or postponement of all upcoming sporting events, including the Tokyo Olympics and football's European championships.

The pandemic has so far claimed over 20000 lives while infecting lakhs of people across the world, with Spain being one of the most worst affected countries.

Indian shuttlers urge BWF to freeze ranking, seek clarity

AMIT KUMAR DAS
NEW DELHI, MAR 25 (PTI): The Olympics postponement brought some relief but Indian shuttlers, including B Sai Praneeth, are still wondering why the Badminton World Federation (BWF) is yet to freeze the rankings and sought clarity about the qualification process of the Tokyo Games.

The BWF had suspended all HSBC BWF World Tour events post the All England Championships due to the COVID-19 pandemic and there were calls for the extension of the Olympic qualification period which falls on April 28.

But now with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) postponing the Olympics to next year, shuttlers believe its time BWF immediately freeze the ranking.

"Our points are getting deducted even though the tournaments were postponed by BWF due to the coronavirus. Swiss Open got postponed but my points got deducted. So like this, if they keep slashing the points for all the qualifiers which were postponed, I don't know what will happen," Praneeth told PTI.

"BWF should at least freeze the rankings, later they can decide about the qualification depending on the the dates of Olympics but as of now there is no clarity."

Praneeth, who was set to make his Olympic debut, said he is no more sure about his participation as he will have to fight again for points.

"If Olympics would have happened in July, I would have been sure about my qualification but since it is now a year to go, so the qualification process will again be on, so again I will have to fight for ranking points. It is not easy to maintain that ranking, can't say what happens after one year."

London Games quarterfinalist Parupalli Kashyap, who alongwith Saina Nehwal had earlier urged the world body to extend the qualification period, also wondered why it is taking so much time for BWF to freeze the rankings.

"Now that the Olympics have been postponed, we have to see what BWF do with qualification. They haven't even frozen our rankings yet. We don't know what will happen."

"As far as the preparations go, it will still be be-



low par as it's impossible to train fully at home," said Kashyap.

A former top 10 player, H S Prannoy also expressed his concerns.

"By the time tournaments starts again my ranking would be close to 100. @bwfmedia is not doing anything to freeze the current rankings," he tweeted on Tuesday.

Besides Praneeth, women's singles player P V Sindhu and men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy are currently assured of an Olympic berth.

Sindhu's father P

V Ramana feels BWF should freeze rankings post 2020 All England Championships and then consider the tournaments which would be held next year between March 17 till April 28 as qualifiers for the Tokyo Games.

"The situation is very serious and it will hugely impact the Olympic preparation of the athletes because I believe it will take 4-5 months for things to be normal, meaning starting a full-fledged training schedule for next year's Games," Ramana said.

"So the only feasible way for BWF is to freeze the rankings till this year's All England for Olympic qualification and carry on with the rest of the calender whenever things improve and play is resumed.

"They can then take into consideration the ranking points of the events, which were cancelled this year, but happens next year at the same time keeping the April 28 as the deadline."

Praneeth also echoed similar views. "I don't think till July any tournament will happen, I mean since they

are postponing Olympics, so how can Superseries go on. So BWF have to freeze the ranking, perhaps till All England, otherwise ranking points will continue to be cut for the cancelled/postponed events and it will affect the ranking of everyone.

"There is no scope or time to host these postponed qualifiers because the calender have already been decided."

The BWF, on its part, had said that it "make a further announcement on any implications related to the Olympic qualification period at a later date."

Players unite to form Chess Players Forum

CHENNAI, MAR 26 (PTI): Prominent players such as Dibyendu Barua, Swati Ghatge and Abhijit Kunte have joined hands to form a Chess Players Forum with an aim to protect interest of the players and take up their issues with the government and other authorities.

"Welcome to a new chapter in the History of Indian Chess! The Chess Players Forum has been founded to give a voice to the chess players of India for their own welfare and rights, as well as duties," the Forum wrote on its website.

"We are a democratic and transparent organisation to empower chess players to play a part in their own destinies and in the growth of the game."

"The Forum aims to present the chess players' voice to the governing bodies of the game as well as to the Government of India, and to liaise with them on various issues involving



chess players."

The founder members and current office-bearers are: IM Varugese Koshy (President), GM Dibyendu Barua (Vice President), IM V Saravanan (Secretary), WGM Swati Ghatge (Treasurer), GM Abhijit Kunte, IM Neeraj Mishra and IM (Correspondence) N R Anil Kumar (all Managing Committee members).

The forum is registered in Pune as an association, as well as under the Income Tax department, thus under the

ambit of legal and financial laws.

The forum Secretary Saravanan told PTI that they will reach out to legendary Viswanathan Anand, P Harikrishna and the women's ace Konery Humpy to have them on board

"We will be contacting everyone. We want all to join. We kept the formation of the Forum away from the public eye so far, due to the registration process. Now that we are ready, we shall propagate ourselves in a big way," he said.

The forum on its website said that there will be democratically held elections between three to six months of its initial registration and office-bearers will be elected by a defined voting process.

"We have ambitions to get affiliated with national and international sports/chess bodies and thus work for the growth of the game," it said and appealed to all chess players in the country to become a part of it.

Worst fear has come true: Vinesh on Olympics postponement



NEW DELHI, MAR 26 (PTI): The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics was her "worst fear" and India's medal hopeful Vinesh Phogat says the extended wait is going to be tougher than competing at the Games.

In an unprecedented move, the 2020 Tokyo Games was on Tuesday pushed to next year due to COVID-19 pandemic that is wreaking havoc on the world.

Star wrestler Vinesh was "deeply disappointed" when she learned of the postponement.

"This was every athlete's worst fear and it has come true. Every-

body knows that competing at the Olympics is the toughest test for an athlete but I believe waiting for an opportunity to be on that stage is tougher," she said in statement on Twitter.

"I don't really know what to say right now but inside me there is a roller-coaster of emotions," the 25-year-old added.

She was one of India's biggest medal hopes at the Rio Olympics before a freak injury cut short her Games during an earlier round.

And she was preparing in earnest for Tokyo too, having qualified for the Games after finishing on the podium at the last year's world championships.

"This is a very crucial

time for the world and the greater sporting fraternity. Though I am very deeply disappointed, it is more important than ever to see the silver lining in this dark cloud."

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had faced growing calls to postpone the Games, with 1.7 billion people across the world in lockdown to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

The decision to postpone the quadrennial extravaganza was welcomed by sportspersons and federations officials alike.

Vinesh said, "Now is the time for all of us to be stronger than ever, keep fighting these extraordi-

nary circumstances and believe with all our might that we will overcome this challenge.

"We need to summon all our reserves of determination, refocus, and work towards our goals."

The pandemic has so far claimed over 20000 lives across the world while infecting over 425000 people.

The Indian wrestler added, "While there is more to this chapter, a new story is already being written, but we will overcome."

"We are all together in this, one world, one goal. This is that unique chance to do something for your family, your community, your country, and our world."

Pak cricketers to donate Rs 5 million to govt emergency fund for COVID-19 pandemic

KARACHI, MAR 26 (PTI): Pakistan's centrally-contracted cricketers will contribute Rs 5 million to the national government's emergency fund to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Ehsan Mani on Wednesday said apart from centrally-contracted players contributing Rs 5 million, the employees in the board, up to the se-

nior manager level, will contribute their one day's salary.

Those employed as general managers or on higher posts will give two days' salary to the fund.

"The PCB will collect all these funds and deposit it to the government's coronavirus fund," he said.

Pakistan has recorded more than 1,000 positive cases of the deadly virus, which has claimed

more than 19,000 lives all over the world.

"It is the history of the cricket board that we always stand by the government in difficult times," Mani said.

The PCB has already given its high performances centre in Karachi at the national stadium to be used by paramedical staff working at the special coronavirus hospital set up at the expo centre in the in the city.

Mani said though cricket has been disrupted by the virus outbreak but it was far more important for the nation to stand by the government and also take all precautionary steps during the pandemic.

Pakistan's centrally-contracted players are entitled to monthly salaries ranging from Rs 5 to 12 lakh besides match fee and other earnings.

Stokes continues IPL preparations despite cancellation threat

LONDON, MAR 26 (PTI): Star England all-rounder Ben Stokes continues to train for the 13th IPL even though he is aware that the T20 league may become yet another sporting event to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The league was originally scheduled to start on March 29 in Mumbai but it was postponed to April 15 to contain the spread of the coronavirus, which has claimed more than 19,000 lives across the globe.

"At the moment my next competitive cricket is going to be in the IPL," Stokes, who was bought by Rajasthan Royals in the 2018 IPL auction for Rs 12.5 crore, told the BBC.

"That hasn't changed yet so I have to think I will be playing on April 20."

The England and



Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had said last week that the county season would not start until at least the end of May, while England's tour of Sri Lanka was also postponed due to the dreaded disease.

The number of positive cases in India has surpassed the 600-mark, while 11 deaths have been reported so far, prompting the government to put the country under lockdown till April

14 to halt the spread of the virus.

Given the current circumstances, a cancellation of this year's IPL looks inevitable.

However, Stokes said he needs to keep working on his fitness to be ready if and when the IPL happens.

"I have to get my head round that I am playing even though in the back of my mind I know I am probably not," he said.

"I have to build up and get myself physically in a position that if it does happen I am good to go. I cannot take three weeks off and expect the body to be ready for April 20 because it doesn't work like that. It might happen and if it does I don't want to be behind."

"There will be a lot of advice given to us and if it was an option to go we will have to take the sensible one."

Senate passes coronavirus rescue package on unanimous vote

WASHINGTON, MAR 26 (AP): The Senate has passed an unparalleled USD 2.2 trillion economic rescue package steering aid to businesses, workers and health care systems engulfed by the coronavirus pandemic.

The unanimous vote came on late Wednesday despite misgivings on both sides about whether it goes too far or not far enough and capped days of difficult negotiations as Washington confronted a national challenge unlike it has ever faced.

The 880-page measure is the largest economic relief bill in US history. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky, appeared somber and exhausted as he announced the vote and he released senators from Washington until April 20, though he promised to recall them if needed.

"The legislation now before us now is historic because it is meant to match a historic crisis," said Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY. Our health care system is not prepared to care for the sick. Our workers are without work. Our businesses cannot do business. Our factories lie idle. The gears of the American economy have ground to a halt."

The package is intended as relief for an economy spiraling into recession or worse and a nation facing a grim toll from an infection that's killed nearly 20,000 people worldwide.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, asked how long the aid would keep the economy afloat, said: "We've anticipated three months. Hopefully, we won't need this for three months." Underscoring the effort's sheer magnitude, the bill finances a response with a price tag that equals half the size of the entire 4 trillion annual federal budget. Insistently optimistic, President Donald Trump said of the greatest public-health emergency in anyone's lifetime, "I don't think it's going to end up being such a rough patch" and anticipated the economy soaring like a rocket ship when it's over.

The drive by leaders to speed the bill through the Senate was slowed as four conservative Republican senators from states who economies are dominated by low-wage jobs demanded changes, saying the legislation as written might give workers like store clerks incentives to stay on unemployment instead of returning return to their jobs since they may earn more money if they're laid off than if they're working. They settled for a failed vote to modify the provision.

Other objections floated in from New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who has become a prominent Democrat on the national scene as the country battles the pandemic.

Cuomo, whose state has seen more deaths from the pandemic than any other, said, "I'm telling you, these numbers don't work." Ardent liberals like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez were restless as well, but top Washington Democrats assured them that a additional coronavirus leg-

islation will follow this spring and signaled that delaying the pending measure would be foolish.

The sprawling measure is the third coronavirus response bill produced by Congress and by far the largest. It builds on efforts focused on vaccines and emergency response, sick and family medical leave for workers, and food aid.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., swung behind the bipartisan agreement, saying it "takes us a long way down the road in meeting the needs of the American people."

Senate passage delivered the legislation to the Democratic-controlled House, which will most likely pass it Friday. House members are scattered around the country and the timetable for votes in that chamber was unclear.

House Democratic and Republican leaders have hoped to clear the measure for Trump's signature by a voice vote without having to call lawmakers back to Washington.

The package would give direct payments to most Americans, expand unemployment benefits and provide a USD 367 billion program for small businesses to keep making payroll while workers are forced to stay home.

It includes a controversial, heavily negotiated USD 500 billion program for guaranteed, subsidized loans to larger industries, including airlines. Hospitals would get significant help as well.

Six days of arduous talks produced the bill, creating tensions among Congress' top leaders, who each took care to tend to party politics as they maneuvered and battled over crafting the legislation. But failure is not an option, nor is starting over, which permitted both sides to include their priorities.

"That Washington drama does not matter any more, McConnell said. "The Senate is going to stand together, act together, and pass this historic relief package today."

The bill would provide one-time direct payments to Americans of USD 1,200 per adult making up to USD 75,000 a year, and USD 2,400 to a married couple making up to USD 150,000, with USD 500 payments per child.

A huge cash infusion for hospitals expecting a flood of COVID-19 patients grew during the talks to an estimated USD 130 billion. Another USD 45 billion would fund additional relief through the Federal Emergency Management Agency for local response efforts and community services.

Democrats said the package would help replace the salaries of furloughed workers for four months, rather than the three months first proposed. Furloughed workers would get whatever amount a state usually provides for unemployment, plus a USD 600 per week add-on, with gig workers like Uber drivers covered for the first time.

Fake cures, risky rumours: virus misinformation hits home



From being duped into taking poisonous "cures", to watching businesses crumble and avoiding life-saving medication, people are suffering devastating real-world impacts of a deluge of online virus misinformation.

As the new coronavirus that has killed more than 20,000 people causes markets to crash and sets scientists scrambling for a solution, rumours and false claims are fuelling confusion and deepening the economic misery.

The effects can be tragic -- in Iran, one of the hardest-hit countries, more than 210 people died from drinking toxic alcohol after claims circulated online that it could treat or ward off COVID-19, the official Irna news agency reported.

Dangerous fake cures debunked by AFP include consuming volcanic ash and fighting infection with UV lamps or chlorine disinfectants, which health authorities say can harm the body if used incorrectly.

Another remedy that "kills the coronavirus", according to misleading social media posts, is drinking silver particles in liquid, known as colloidal silver.

"I am making colloidal silver now. I have asthma and does it really work... worried/stressed over virus. Does this help if I take a teaspoon a day. New to this..." said a post by a user named Michelle in a public Facebook group, alongside a photo of a jar of water with a metal rod in it.

The side effects of taking colloidal silver can include a bluish-grey skin discoloration and poor absorption of some medicines including antibiotics, according to the US National Institutes of Health.

But this has not put some people off. An Australian man who said he regularly buys the concoction told AFP it had "sold out in my town ... but before the virus, I could always get some".

Cocaine and bleach-

like solutions are also among the risky fake cures touted online. "No, cocaine does NOT protect against #COVID-19," the French government tweeted in response.

- Businesses hit hard - As panic buying leaves supermarket shelves empty around the world, some Indian traders and farmers have had the opposite problem -- people shunning their products due to false information.

Retailers in Delhi told AFP they had stocked up on Chinese-made goods such as toy guns, wigs and other colourful accessories ahead of Holi festival earlier this month.

But "misinformation about Chinese products -- that they might transmit coronavirus -- caused a downfall in the sales of

Holi goods. We witnessed a reduction in sales of around 40 percent compared to previous year", said Vipin Nijhawan from the Toy Association of India.

The World Health Organization has said the virus does not last long on inanimate surfaces, so it is unlikely imported goods would remain infectious even if contaminated.

- Heart meds - The rapid spread of information online means that when scientists discuss as-yet unproven theories, anxious patients can take unnecessary risks.

Confusion has been sparked by letters and theoretical papers published in scientific journals about whether some types of heart medication can raise the chance

of developing a serious form of COVID-19.

This has prompted health authorities across Europe and America to advise heart patients -- already more at-risk for the disease -- to continue taking their drugs.

Carolyn Thomas, who runs a blog for women living with heart disease, said dozens of her readers had contacted her for advice after seeing tweets warning about ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers. "Until I get in to see my own cardiologist, I'm still taking my own drugs, even as I wonder if they are increasing my own vulnerability to catching the virus," Thomas, who is self-isolating at home in Canada, told AFP.

"I'm afraid to take them, yet I'm afraid to

stop," she said.

Professor Garry Jennings, chief medical advisor for Australia's Heart Foundation, said the theoretical papers were "based on a number of factors which are all disputed" and warned that if patients stopped taking their medication there could be an upshot in heart attacks and deaths.

"In the absence of any other evidence that it's actually happening, and with the knowledge that these drugs are beneficial... it's not a good idea to stop," he said.

And a man died in the US from taking a form of chloroquine -- hailed by President Donald Trump as a potential "gift from God" remedy -- after he took a form of the drug his wife had used to treat her pet fish.

The woman told NBC News: "I saw it sitting on the back shelf and thought, 'Hey, isn't that the stuff they're talking about on TV?'"

Banner Health, a non-profit health care provider based in Phoenix, said on its website that "a man has died and his wife is under critical care after the couple, both in their 60s, ingested chloroquine phosphate, an additive commonly used at aquariums to clean fish tanks."

Indian-American hoteliers offer free accommodation to stranded Indian students

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, MAR 26 (PTI): Indian-American hoteliers have come forward to rescue the stranded Indian students in the US following implementation of lockdown measures in the country in response to the rapidly-spreading coronavirus pandemic, offering them free accommodation and free meals.

With the students scrambling for a roof over their heads after being asked to vacate their hostels and India banning international flights for a week from March 22 due to the coronavirus pandemic, more than 6,000 rooms in nearly 700 hotels were offered to them by Wednesday following a call from the Indian Embassy.

The Indian Embassy have been running a round-the-clock helpline since last week for the students in the US, who number over 2,50,000.

Most of these hotels offered are in and around universities and colleges, but the hotel owners from across the country have come up in large numbers to the call given by community leaders, who have roped in Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) for the purpose.

India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu said in a tweet, "It is heartening to see that

Indian; Indian-American and other hotel owners are coming forward to help people with accommodation in these testing times. Together we can overcome the fight against COVID19!"

"The Indian community has come together to help the student and many hotel owners have offered their rooms free of cost to them. Many of them are also offering free meals to these students," Chicago-based community leader Nirav Patel told PTI.

Indian-American hotelier couple K K Mehta and Chandra Mehta have offered more than 100 rooms to Indian students at their two prime properties each near the Times Square and Barclays Center in New York City, said Jaipur Foot USA chairman Prem Bhandari on behalf of the hotels.

The Indian Consulate in New York had contacted them about this 10 days ago, he said.

"These students are the future of both India and the United States. All the top Indian-American CEOs, scientists and doctors came to this country as a student. It's our moral duty to help them with our resources," Bhandari said.

Regional director of AAHOA Upper Midwest Kalpesh Joshi said they had created a master list



of the availability hotel rooms, which was being constantly updated.

Free accommodation would be allocated in coordination with the Indian Embassy and its consulates, he said.

"The Indian Embassy and its consulates are working tirelessly to get these students rooms," he added.

Joshi has also sent out a video message to his hotelier colleagues: "Because of the coronavirus outbreak, our Indian students in the US are out of shelter. Let's work together. As a hotelier, I would like to request all my hotelier friends to come forward... let's provide some rooms to the students."

Boston-based Computer Society of India (North America) has collaborated with AAHOA to help students and Indian IT professionals searching for

emergency accommodation due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Anyone who is having financial hardship will be given hotel accommodation either free of cost or the rates will not be more than USD 50, said the Computer Society of India (North America).

Minesh Patel, the chairman of Virginia Asian American Store Association, said between Richmond, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach, Indian-American hotel owners can help in arranging accommodation for over 500 Indian students.

Florida-based Vipul

Patel, the national president of Asian American Store Owners Association, said support for the Indian students have been pouring in from the Indian-American hoteliers.

"I have not come across any hotel owner who said no to us," Patel said.

Rooms would be allocated to students on the recommendation of the Indian Embassy and its consulates in Houston, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and New York.

The Indian Consulate in New York was the first to take a lead in this

regard. It has worked with Ham-mock Worldwide Hotels and Resorts to provide temporary accommodation for the students at a flat rate of USD 50 per night.

Joshi said that initially there was a suggestion to charge a convenience fee of USD 20-25 per day from the students.

"But when a few of them offered free rooms and free meals, everyone agreed to it," he said.

According to Johns Hopkins University coronavirus tracker, the number of deaths caused by the novel coronavirus in the US rose to 1,031 with 68,572 confirmed cases. The US has the third highest number of confirmed cases behind China and Italy.

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Yesteryear star Nimmi passes away

MUMBAI, MAR 26 (PTI): Nimmi, the doe-eyed star of 1950s and '60s Hindi movies such as "Aan", "Barsaat" and "Deedar", has died after prolonged illness. She was 88.

The actor was brought to a suburban Juhu hospital on Wednesday after she complained of breathlessness. She died in the evening, family sources told PTI.

"She was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday afternoon after she complained of breathlessness. She passed away this evening. She had been unwell for quite sometime. She had been in and out of hospital this year," the source added.

Nimmi will be buried at a cemetery in Reay Road in Mumbai on Thursday afternoon.

The actor, born as Nawab Banoo, came to be known by her screen name 'Nimmi', which was given to her by filmmaker Raj Kapoor, who first spotted her as a shy teen on the sets of his film "Andaz".

Raj Kapoor cast her as the second lead in "Barsaat" in 1949. The film had three popular songs -- 'Barsaat me hamse mile tum', 'Hawa me udta jaye' and 'Meri Patli qamar hai' -- picturised on her.

After the success of "Barsaat", there was no turning back for Nimmi.

Though she often played the second fiddle to the popular heroines of her era, she established herself in the roles of ill-fated lover or the feisty village belle.

Such was her popularity that an extended dream sequence was added in "Aan" as distributors felt her character dies too early in the film.

Inspired from William Shakespeare's play "Taming of the Shrew", the film had Nadia and Dilip Kumar in lead roles but Nimmi as village belle Mangala left a lasting impression on viewers' mind.

The film released with the title 'Savage Princess' in England and in France as "Mangla, fille des Indes" (Mangla, the



daughter of India).

Nimmi worked with top actors of her era, including Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Ashok Kumar in films "Sazaa", "Aan", "Uran Khatola", "Bhai-Bhai", "Kundan", "Mere Mehboob", "Pooja Ke Phool", "Akashdeep", "Love and God", which was her last film.

She left movies to get married to writer-director S Ali Raza, who passed away in 2007.

Mourning her death, actor Rishi Kapoor said, "RIP. Thank you Nimmi aunty for all the blessings and love for Bobby on its premiere release. You were part of the RK family. Barsaat was your first film. Allha aapko jannat naseeb kare. Ameen."

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt said, "You may win your hearts desire, but in the end you are cheated of it by death. Goodbye Nimmi ji".

"A beautiful and extremely talented actress and a beautiful and humble human being passes on. #RIP #Nimmi ji," tweeted Jaaved Jaafari.

Idris Elba Explains Why Coronavirus Is Really So Scary: 'I've Had No Symptoms'

A little over a week ago, actor Idris Elba had reported that he tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, and went

into a period of quarantine with his wife, Sabrina Dhawre Elba. It's unknown how long into his bout with the coronavirus he was when he made that report, but one would think that by this time he'd be symptomatic and showing is condition. But as he's now revealed, Elba is still asymptomatic; showing the really scary side to this serious ailment.

During a recent interview, the actor spoke about his ultimate fear involving COVID-19, in the following context:

"I'm glad you brought that up because I think that's a key component here. I could be in the public. I could

be at home amongst my family. I could be still spreading it and I have no symptoms."

This comes from part of a conversation that Idris Elba had with Oprah Winfrey, as part of her new Apple TV+ show Oprah Talks: COVID-19.

In a series of interviews that focus solely on the coronavirus crisis, Winfrey mixes testimonials, spiritual guidance, and human interest stories, along with actual accounts of what's been taking place during this unique crisis.

Idris Elba's fears about spreading the virus while asymptomatic are, indeed, a major part of the reason most of the world has engaged in quarantine protocols, as COVID-19 can be in a patient's system for weeks before actually manifesting symptoms. All the while, the

patient is able to spread the virus, without even knowing it.

It's a natural fit that Elba be the show's first guest, as he was one of the first celebrities to announce they were positive for COVID-19, around the same time that stars like Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson, as well as Quantum of Solace star Olga Kurylenko, came forward with their individual diagnoses.

Since his diagnosis, Idris Elba has seen support from many members of his circle of friends and family. Not only has The Suicide Squad director James Gunn exhibited the same fears while also praising his friend and co-worker's attitude, but Elba's wife Sabrina also went on record as to why she decided to quarantine with her

husband throughout this health scare. Ms. Dhawre-Elba has also recently been confirmed as carrying the COVID-19 virus.

These are difficult and scary times, but an open dialogue full of carefully confirmed knowledge is most beneficial to the public. We here at CinemaBlend wish a speedy recovery to those who are currently suffering from COVID-19, and advise our readers to exercise caution, while keeping up their spirits.

Oprah Talks: COVID-19 is currently available on Apple TV+. Meanwhile, Idris Elba can currently be seen in Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw on HBO and its streaming platforms, and Cats, which is currently available on digital HD.

David Collings obituary

Versatile stage, TV and film actor who featured in sci-fi series and became a mainstay of the Royal Shakespeare Company

After a spectacular start to his television career in the 1960s, when he played leading roles in two classics by Dostoevsky, the actor David Collings, who has died aged 79, became a cult favourite of sci-fi fans with weird appearances in UFO (produced by the Thunderbirds team of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson), three Doctor Who sagas and the 1979 supernatural detective series Sapphire and Steel, co-starring Joanna Lumley and David McCallum.

Although he started out on the stage, Collings did not consolidate his reputation there until completing more than a decade of television stardom, after

which he was in a string of important roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

At the Open Air theatre in Regent's Park he was a genuinely funny Polonius opposite newcomer Damian Lewis's firebrand Hamlet in 1994, directed by Tim Pigott-Smith; he had first played a tetchy but benignly well-meaning Polonius for an RSC touring production with Philip Franks in 1987.

Collings was a fine featured, red-haired actor with sensitive blue eyes who was equally good at playing neurotic and sweet-natured characters. On television he also ran a good line in eminent characters from history: Percy Grainger in Ken Russell's Song of Summer (1968), Sir Anthony Babington in Elizabeth R (1971), John Ruskin in

The Love School (1975), William Wilberforce in The Fight Against Slavery (1975) and William Pitt in Prince Regent (1979).

He was born in Brighton, East Sussex, to George Collings, a greengrocer, and his wife, Lillian (nee Parsons). At Vardean grammar school he enjoyed acting but had no thoughts of setting out to be a professional actor and, on leaving, started work as a designer in lettering, inheriting that interest from his father, a keen artist. From 1960 he was happily involved with amateur dramatics with the Withean Players and the Lewes Little theatre, but then was recommended by the actor Freda Dowie to the director David Scase, who had been appointed to run the Liverpool Rep.



FASHIONABLE GROCERY RUN! Actress, Emma Roberts wore ankle jeans, a light brown sherpa jacket, snakeskin ankle booties and designer sunglasses for a trip to the grocery store in Los Angeles.

Challenge with 'Pushpavalli 2' was not to fall in writing pattern of season one: Naveen Richard

MUMBAI, MAR 26 (PTI): Actor-comic Naveen Richard is thrilled with reactions coming his way for "Pushpavalli" season two and he says the response feels sweeter as the team worked hard to not fall into the trap of repeating themselves in the new chapter.

Created by comic Sumukhi Suresh who also stars in the title role, the first season of the Amazon Prime Video's original series saw Pushpavalli move to Bengaluru from Bhopal to stalk Nikhil, a man she is obsessed with.

The new season chronicles the revenge Pushpavalli plans against Nikhil, who rejected her advances.

Naveen said the team wrote season two for close to eight months and he came on board towards the end.

"Between season one and writing two, I was also working on the 'Better Life Foundation' web series. By the time I got back to the show, I forgot the expectations, which helped. You want to do better for sure. But the thing

which was challenging was to not fall in the same pattern in writing and character arcs.

"You'll be writing for days and would suddenly realise, 'Damn, we have done this before.' Even with Pankaj, we had to give him a lot of other things to do," Naveen told PTI in an interview.

The Bengaluru-based comedian, whose performance as the perennially angry librarian Pankaj has earned him praise from all quarters, asserted he is nothing like his on-screen character.

"I am glad the audience bought into the character and they were able to feel like he's real because he's so different from who I am. I'm glad people found it convincing and weren't put off by the yelling, which means his softness also felt real.

"It is hard to get people to like a character who keeps shouting. I guess we gave him a good arc," he said.

Naveen said the trick was to also show a different, softer side of Pankaj, who,

as a lot of people texted him saying, "truly cares for Pushpavalli," who manages to manipulate probably the only true friend she has.

"Inherently I'm a more approachable guy. That's why in the scenes where he's interacting with Swati (Preetika Chawla) you see how much of a softy he really is. Once you show the audience that's who he is (they will relate)... On top of that, he always means well."

His onscreen love-hate relationship with Sumukhi has been appreciated a lot and the comedian said the secret to their chemistry is their longtime off-screen friendship.

"The chemistry comes from years of working together. In fact, the moment we started working together, I remember, she had a sketch with her friends and they wanted me to play a few parts in it. We started getting along, both Tamilians in Bengaluru connecting with each other.

plan of action in hand right now. What you need to know will be revealed along the way. Given the current state of affairs, some of you may be doubting the path you have chosen to walk on. Tune in to your heart space and ask yourself how you feel about the decisions you have made. Know that the obstacles that are standing in your path are but transient.

Cancer: Productivity is overrated. Quarantine season is inspiring you to get dirty with your hands, tap into the stream of creativity consciousness, make art, make love, and express your innermost self. Remember, there is no goal here. Discover the joy of doing things simply because they bring you joy. Not money. Not fame. Not status in society. Some of you may feel inspired to spread the good juju with others who are under house arrest. Thank god for technology! Consider starting a YouTube channel or going live on Instagram.

Leo: Working from home was supposed to be fun! But self-isolation is turning out to be a nightmare and sharing space (even with your closest people) is triggering you in more ways than one. Breathe, Leo, breathe. You have no control over your external circumstances. What you do have dominion over is your state of mind, your consciousness. So, tap into that space of compassion. Exercise kindness towards yourself and others. If you've hurt somebody consciously or unconsciously, now is the time to send them a heartfelt apology note.

Virgo: We are all assigned an army of angels and guides at the time of birth, who look out for us from mysterious realms above. You may not be able to see them in a physical form, but you

can sense their presence through the guidance they send you and the miracles they manifest on your behalf. Today, when you find yourself receding into a dark space, call upon your council of light. Trust that they will help you find the strength and courage required to get through and realign with your sense of purpose.

Tip: Call upon your council of light.

Libra:

Spoiler alert, Libra: you're the only one judging yourself. Soften your tone. Whisper words of kindness to yourself. As you do, remind yourself that you are gifted and that you have something worthwhile to share with the world. Yes, you will feel exposed initially, and that's okay. Allow yourself to experience the discomfort that comes from being seen and heard. It's all a part of that evolution process.

Scorpio:

There are no wrong turns, Scorpio. Everything you've worked on in the past has brought you to this point in your existence. Despite what your three dimensional reality will have you believe, you are in the right place. So trust your instinct. And trust the chosen path. What the cards are urging you to do right now: put your phone on flight mode and give the project at hand your undivided attention. There's no better time to show the world what you are truly capable of.

Tip: Trust your path

Sagittarius:

You are not where you want to be, but that doesn't mean the road you're on isn't taking you there. Think of this as the unbecoming process, the turning point in your journey where you decide that you are no longer defined by the pain and the sadness. One step at a time, beautiful one. Know that Spirit is guid-

ing you at every step along the way. Remember, there is a lot to process. So let go of the idea of productivity and allow yourself to rest and integrate.

Tip: It's time to integrate the lessons and rise up to the next level.

Capricorn:

Some people find their bliss in working as doctors, healers and medical practitioners. Others find that the road to salvation can be found through art and music. It doesn't matter what your chosen path is, Capricorn. You are doing your bit to bring light into the world and you are enough. Your time away from the matrix is also serving as a major wake-up call. Use this time to unplug and turn inwards. Reflect upon the theme of unity and oneness. We're all in this together and we will get through this!

Aquarius:

Given how things are unfolding, it's easy to externalise the situation, play the blame game, propagate fear and spread hate. Becoming a warrior of light on the other hand takes an insane amount of courage. Continue to walk the chosen path, Aquarius. Spread the message of harmony and oneness. While you're at it, don't forget that the change starts with you. Find new ways to practice self-care in this time of self-isolation. Make a conscious effort to present to your own needs as you are to those of others.

Pisces:

Spiritual amnesia is real, Pisces, and it makes us forget our true origins. But you didn't come here to follow the script handed down to you by society or become a part of the herd. You came here to be the light and spread the message of oneness and love. So do your bit to make the world a better place and know that no contribution is too small. As Joseph Goldstein famously said, "The light of a single candle can dispel the darkness of a thousand years."