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GUWAHATI, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2020

p2 Pakistan PM to get tested for COVID-19

p5 'Harassed' health workers to light candles, observe black day

p7 1 more tests positive for COVID-19 in Meghalaya

NEWS Capsule

Relaxations
NEW DELHI, April 21: In further revision of its list of relaxations, the Central government today exempted in-house caregivers of senior citizens, prepaid mobile recharge utilities and food processing units in the urban areas from lockdown restrictions to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. - Spl Correspondent

Arogya Nidhi
GUWAHATI, April 21: The Assam Arogya Nidhi account has received an amount of Rs 100.50 crore till date by way of donations. The amount includes one-day salary contribution of State government employees and donations from around 46,470 people. - Staff Reporter

Govt initiative
NEW DELHI, April 21: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan today launched the 'COVID India Seva', an interactive platform for establishing a direct channel of communication with millions of Indians, enabling transparent e-governance delivery in real-time. - PTI

Positive tests
CHENNAI, April 21: At least 25 people, including journalists, working for a Tamil news television channel tested positive for coronavirus here on Tuesday. "Not less than 25 people have tested positive... (of the) ...90 plus samples taken," a health department official said. - PTI

Mishap kills 2
TEZPUR, April 21: Two persons were killed when a car fell into a roadside ditch after hitting a cyclist at Barpatgaon near Balipara this morning. Cyclist Ratneswar Saikia and 11-year-old Rihan Baruah who was with their parents in the car died on the spot. - Correspondent

JOCOSERIOUS



Now everyday is just like Sunday!

WHO warns against rush to ease lockdown

BANGKOK, April 21: The World Health Organisation said on Tuesday that rushing to ease coronavirus restrictions will likely lead to a resurgence of the illness, a warning that comes as governments start rolling out plans to get their economies up and running again.

This is not the time to be

lax. Instead, we need to ready ourselves for a new way of living for the foreseeable future, said Dr Takeshi Kasai, the WHO regional director for the Western Pacific.

He said governments must remain vigilant to stop the spread of the virus and the lifting of lockdowns and other social distancing

measures must be done gradually and strike the right balance between keeping

COVID-19 resurgence feared

people healthy and allowing economies to function. Despite concerns from health officials, some US states on Monday announced

aggressive reopening plans, while Boeing and at least one other US heavy-equipment

manufacturer resumed production. Elsewhere around the world, step-by-step reopenings were underway in Europe, where

the crisis has begun to ebb in places such as Italy, Spain and Germany.

Australia said on Tuesday that it will allow the resumption of non-urgent surgeries from next week as health authorities grow more confident that hospitals there won't be overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients.

The reopenings come as politicians grow weary of soaring unemployment numbers and the prospect of economic depression. Asian shares followed Wall Street lower on Tuesday after US oil futures plunged below zero because of a worldwide glut as factories, automobiles and airplanes sit idled. - AP



Employees washing their hands before entering Janata Bhawan in Guwahati on Tuesday. - UB Photos

ASDMA plan to fight flood amid COVID-19 emergency

MANASH PRATIM DUTTA

GUWAHATI, April 21: The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) is chalking out a plan to manage both COVID-19 emergency and flood-induced disasters concurrently in the coming days.

The plan will be finalised soon and come into action immediately as the pre-monsoon season has already started across the State with continuous heavy rainfall and thunderstorms.

The plan will come at a time when the coronavirus-induced medical emergency situation is keeping the whole State government machinery, including the ASDMA, engaged. At present it has become a great challenge for Assam to face both flood and medical

emergency at the same time. Sources said though the flood preparedness has been started from February, at present all the efforts are in abeyance due to the medical emergency situation.

As part of the preparedness, the State Fire and Emergency Service (SFES) has started repairing its water vessels and other equipment. A senior official said at present SFES has more than 100 water vessels, including rubber boats, fibre-reinforced plastic boats and high-density polyethylene boats.

Sources said Assam has 40

places vulnerable to flood. Moreover, this time Morigaon, Dhubri, Golaghat, Sivasagar and Hojai districts are under strict surveillance. As part of the preparedness, the State government is also working to form a full-fledged battalion of the SDRF.

Assam also has one battalion of NDRF and deployment of its personnel will start soon in vulnerable places. This time, NDRF personnel will be equipped with PPE kits to face COVID-19 cases amid the flood. For this purpose, around 3,000 PPE kits will reach Assam from New Delhi soon.

Stay at HOME
Stay SAFE

115 families at President's Estate put in self-isolation

NEW DELHI, April 21: Anxious moments were witnessed at the President's Estate after a kin of an employee, working in the housekeeping department, was detected with COVID-19 prompting authorities to keep 115 families under "self-isolation" as a "preventive measure".

Spread over 330 acres from the famous Raisina Hill till South Avenue, the Rashtrapati Bhawan houses nearly 1,000 families who are engaged in various duties that include maintenance of the majestic palace with 340 rooms, a central lawn, Ashok Hall and Durbar Hall.

The detection of the COVID-19 case from the premises of the President's Estate prompted Rashtrapati Bhawan to issue a statement in which they clarified that "no employee of the President's secretariat has tested positive for

Employee's relative tests positive for COVID-19



COVID-19 and the secretariat along with the local administration is taking all the preventive measures required under the government guidelines."

A COVID-19 positive patient from central Delhi, who was neither an employee of the President's secretariat nor a resident of the Presi-

dent's Estate, died on April 13, 2020 with comorbidities at the BL Kapoor Hospital in New Delhi, the statement said.

After contact tracing of the deceased, it was found that a family member of an employee of the President's Secretariat had been in contact with the deceased prompting the authorities to shift the employee along with the family, residents of Pocket 1, Schedule A area of the President's Estate, to a quarantine facility at Mandir Marg on April 16, the statement said.

"Subsequently, one of the family members who was in contact with the deceased tested positive. All other family members, including the employee of the President's Secretariat, have tested negative," it said.

SEE PAGE 6

Petrol, diesel prices go up in State

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: At a time when global crude oil prices have hit a record low, the State government has effected a modification of the rate of fuel tax that would hike the petrol prices in Assam by nearly Rs 6.

The finance (taxation) department issued the notification today, following which the rates would change from midnight.

Following the tax hike, the price of petrol will increase from Rs 71.61 to Rs 77.46 per litre, according to the dealers association. The price of diesel will be Rs 70.50 per litre up from Rs 65.07.

Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had been indicating the poor state of State finances due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

SEE PAGE 6

Sonowal directs DCs, SPs to take firm action

Anomalies in distribution of essential items

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21 : Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal directed the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to hold review meeting with Minister in charge of the respective districts on the implementation of lockdown guidelines and maintenance of social distancing norms once every three days. The Chief Minister directed this while taking stock of COVID-19 preparedness of Kamrup (Metropolitan) district in a meeting held at DC office, Kamrup (Metro) today.

Observing that the State government received several complaints on anomalies in distribution of essential commodities supplied by the gov-

ernment to poor families, Sonowal said that all the DCs were directed to take prompt action against all unscrupulous elements and ensure exemplary punishment for them.

Further saying that the State government had already decided to provide 5 kg rice per month to per member of poor families who do not have ration cards under NFSA, the Chief Minister said that the Food & Civil Supply department was instructed to maintain close watch on the distribution of food items. Fixing responsibility for distribution of rice to poor families on the Revenue Circle Officers, the Chief Minister said that they would have to ensure proper distribution of rice to targeted poor families involving

gaonburas, panchayat representatives and MLAs.

The Chief Minister also asked the agriculture department to carry out a survey of crops and other agricultural produces in the State and directed to ensure safe storage of it during the lockdown period. He also directed the department to develop a mechanism for collection and selling of products thus collected from farmers.

Stating that Kamrup (Metro) district has an important role to play in the fight against coronavirus epidemic, the Chief Minister said that district administration would have to ensure safekeeping of all 1230 stranded workers of other States sheltered in the district.

CM interacts with gaonburas, tea garden sardars

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal interacted with over 3500 gaonburas and sardars of tea gardens through audio conference today and urged them to play active role in generat-

ing awareness among people on the importance of maintaining the norm of social distancing in their respective areas to fight COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chief Minister appreciated the gaonburas and line sardars for their cooperation in making the nationwide lock-

down successful in the State. He also asked them to extend support and keep watch on smooth distribution of essential commodities supplied by the State government among the poor and needy people.

While interacting with the gaonburas, the Chief Minister informed that the State government has relaxed lockdown conditions for taking up farm activities as per guideline of the Central government provided the farmers strictly adhere to the norm of social distancing. He appealed the gaonburas to ensure maintaining all health advisories and lockdown guideline by the farmers along with other villagers of their respective areas. He also called for their active role in seamless distribution of essential goods and other assistance among poor village people.



World corona count

- More than 2,501,000 declared cases have been registered around the globe
- Death toll from the pandemic 171,810
- At least 537,700 patients recovered
- Now the pandemic epicentre, the US has 788,920 infections and 42,458 deaths
- Spain has 204,178 positive cases with 21,282 deaths, followed by Italy (181,228 positive and 24,114 deaths)

Data as on Tuesday - John Hopkins University

SEE PAGE 6

SEE PAGE 6

Patowary reviews activities of industry and transport depts

GUWAHATI, April 21: Assam Industry and Transport Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary on Tuesday reviewed the activities of industry and transport departments with senior officials at Janata Bhawan here.

Patowary said the transport department in accordance with the orders of the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has decided that the fitness certificate, permit (all types), driving licence, registration or any other documents whose extension of validity could not or not likely to be processed due to the COVID-19 lockdown, and which have expired since February 1, 2020 or would expire by June 30, 2020 will be treated as valid till June 30, 2020.

Taking stock of the industrial sector, Patowary stated that the standard operating procedure (SOP) for industries issued by the Government of India should be followed in letter and spirit. He also directed officials and district general managers to strictly enforce the COVID-19 guidelines in industrial units. The guidelines allow the industrial units to operate after submitting an undertaking that they are committed to follow all safety norms issued by the Government of India.

Fifty rapid tests were scheduled to be done at the city housing complex Spanish Garden tomorrow and 25 at the Aathgaon Kabarsthan Masjid - both declared containment zones following detection of positive cases there.

SEE PAGE 6

AASU asks Govt to chalk out plan for students

R DUTTA CHOUDHURY

GUWAHATI, April 21: With the educational institutions closed due to outbreak of coronavirus, the students are facing an uncertain future and under the circumstances, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has called upon the Government to chalk out a comprehensive plan to protect the future of all the students right from primary to university level.

Talking to *The Assam Tribune*, AASU chief adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya said that while chalking out a plan for the students, the Government should ensure that the students of the State do not lose an academic year and at the same time the health of the students should not be compromised with. He said that before opening the educational institutions, the Government would have to take steps to sanitize all the buildings of the institutions and if required, health check up of students should be carried out.

Bhattacharya said that as the first step, the Government can think of abolishing the summer vacation to make up for the time lost due to the outbreak of coronavirus. He, however, said that if the State faces excessive hot weather, appropriate decisions can be taken at that time. Moreover, the number of holidays can be reduced to make up for the time lost. Extra classes can be taken on Saturdays. Similarly, all the educational institutions can take extra classes on specific subjects as and when required.

On the issue of online teaching, Bhattacharya said that it should be encouraged so that the students do not lose touch with their studies.

Pak PM to get tested for COVID-19

ISLAMABAD, April 21 : Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan may go into self-quarantine after it emerged that he came in contact with an individual who tested positive for the novel coronavirus last week.



like symptoms and tested positive for the virus the following day, sources said. Faisal is the

son of Abdul Sattar Edhi, the noted Pakistani philanthropist. Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* reported on Tuesday quoting Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital CEO Faisal Sultan, who is also Khan's personal physician, as saying that the premier was "currently occupied with a cabinet meeting" but "as soon as he is finished," he will recommend that he "gets tested and follow all the protocols in place".

Faisal however, according to his son who spoke to the Dawn newspaper, is in self-isolation and his health remains fine. He has donated Rs 1 crore to the Prime Minister Imran Khan fund for Pakistan's fight against the pandemic. The Edhi foundation is also helping the coronavirus victims in their burial services. So far 197 people have died and over 9,500 tested positive for the disease in Pakistan. — IANS



Commuters wearing masks to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus at Asuncion, Paraguay, on Monday. — PTI

Lanka fixes fresh dates for parliamentary elections

COLOMBO, April 21: Sri Lanka has announced June 20 as the new date for its parliamentary elections, after the initial plans to hold them on April 25 had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

elections after Rajapaksa - considered a hero of the civil war against Tamil rebels - registered a landslide victory in presidential elections held in November.

However, the rapid spread of the highly contagious coronavirus infections forced the Sri Lankan authorities on March 19 to postpone the elections in a country that had 59 positive cases at the time.

Around the middle of last month, Sri Lanka also imposed a curfew, which was relaxed Monday in 19 of the country's 25 districts, but restrictions on movement have been maintained in areas considered high-risk, such as Colombo.

Due to the economic impact of the lockdown, the government has encouraged the people to return to work but

after taking adequate precautions, such as wearing a mask and maintaining social distance.

The curfew will be lifted in all areas between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m., although schools and cinemas will remain closed until further notice. As of now, the curfew in high-risk areas is expected to continue until April 27. On Monday, the country recorded 33 fresh cases of COVID-19, marking the highest infections in a single day. The total coronavirus cases now stand at 304, with seven deaths.

The pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the tourism sector of this South Asian country, which was only just beginning to recover from the Easter Sunday terror attacks on April 21 last year that left over 250 dead. — IANS

3 policemen killed in Afghanistan

KABUL, April 21 : Two separate bombings in Afghanistan targeted a senior police chief and a provincial Governor on Tuesday, killing three policemen and wounding several people, including the police chief, local officials said.

In the first attack, police chief Ghulam Sakhi Ghafori was on his way to inspect the security situation in the volatile district of Paato in the central Day Kundi province when his car struck a roadside bomb. Three policemen in his convoy were killed and the police chief was wounded, along with two others, according to police spokesman Gul Aqa Sujadi.

In the second attack, a suicide car bombing struck by Mohammad Halim Fidayi's car in eastern Khost province, wounding two of his bodyguards and 12 civilians, said the governor's spokesman, Talib Mangal.

Shortly after the attack, Fidayi, who was unharmed in the explosion, appealed on the Taliban in a Facebook live video asking them to stop such attacks and join the peace process. There was no claim of responsibility for either of the attacks and the Taliban did not immediately respond to the governor's appeal. Since the signing of a peace agreement between the US and the Taliban in February, the insurgents have stopped attacking US and NATO troops but have struck Afghan forces in outlying areas. — PTI

Singapore COVID-19 lockdown extended till June 1

SINGAPORE, April 21 : Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on Tuesday that the partial lockdown imposed in the city-state to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus has been extended until June 1.

This means that more workplaces will be closed to further reduce the number of workers keeping essential services going, reports *The Straits Times*. Some hot spots, such as popular wet markets, remain a problem, as large groups of people continue to congregate there, Lee said in his fourth national address on the COVID-19 situation.

While he noted that the measures, termed a "circuit breaker", have been working, he stressed that Singapore cannot be complacent.

He said the number of unlinked cases has not come down, which suggests a "hidden reservoir" of cases in the community.

Singapore must therefore press on with its tight circuit breaker measures to decisively bring down numbers in the

community, *The Straits Times* quoted Lee as saying.

"We also want to make sure that if any leakage occurs from the dorms to the wider community, we can detect and contain it early, and prevent new clusters from forming and bursting out of control."

He called on all Singaporeans to stay homes as far as possible, and urged those who have to go out to do so alone and not as a group or with family.

Lee last addressed the nation on April 3 to announce the lockdown measures that kicked in four days later, forcing people to keep their distance from one another in an effort to limit the virus' spread.

Singapore has seen a massive jump in infections among migrant workers living in cramped dormitories, which has become the city state's greatest challenge in tackling the coronavirus, reports the *South China Morning Post*. Infections among these workers made up 76 per cent of Singapore's cases as of Monday. — IANS

Singapore reports 1,111 new COVID-19 cases

SINGAPORE, April 21 : Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Tuesday urged his citizens to "persevere" with the strict restrictions and help one another, as the city-state reported 1,111 new COVID-19 cases, a majority of them foreign workers living in dormitories, taking the total infections in the country to 9,125.

A vast majority of the new cases are work permit holders residing in foreign worker dormitories, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said in a statement.

"This is an uncertain and worrying time for many of us, especially with the large number of cases in the migrant worker dorms. Our teams have been working hard to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the dorms, and look after the well-being of our migrant workers," Prime Minister Lee said. The Health Ministry said it was still working through the details of the cases, and will share the updates soon. — PTI

2 Indians killed in Nepal

KATHMANDU, April 21 : Two Indians, who were on their way back home on a bicycle due to the lockdown in view of the coronavirus pandemic, died after their vehicle fell in a gorge while negotiating a sharp turn in Nepal, a police official said on Tuesday.

hilly road at Jhakridada, some 30 kms from here, on Sunday, Kantipur daily newspaper reported quoting a police official. As the lockdown continued even after more than three weeks, they decided to go home along with two others as they ran out of money.

The four persons were riding two bicycles. It was not immediately known if they got separated on their way back home as Dinanath Mahato, father of Santoshi, and Munna Gupta, reached home in Motihari while two died. — PTI

hilly road at Jhakridada, some 30 kms from here, on Sunday, Kantipur daily newspaper reported quoting a police official. As the lockdown continued even after more than three weeks, they decided to go home along with two others as they ran out of money.

The four persons were riding two bicycles. It was not immediately known if they got separated on their way back home as Dinanath Mahato, father of Santoshi, and Munna Gupta, reached home in Motihari while two died. — PTI

IN MEMORIAM

Gayatri Barthakur
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Boeing 737 MAX jets parked on an airfield adjacent to a Boeing production plant in Renton, Washington on Monday. — PTI

Origin of human language may be 25 million years old: Study

LONDON, April 21 : Researchers have discovered an earlier origin to the human language pathway in the brain, suggesting that its origins lie around 25 million years ago - 20 million years earlier than previously thought.

Previously, a precursor of the language pathway was thought by many scientists to have emerged more recently, about 5 million years ago, with a common ancestor of both apes and humans.

For neuroscientists, this is comparable to finding a fossil that illuminates evolutionary history. However, unlike bones, brains did not fossilize. Instead, neuroscientists need to infer what the brains of common ancestors may have been like by studying brain scans of living primates and comparing them to humans.

"It is like finding a new fossil of a long lost ancestor. It is also exciting that there may be an older origin yet to be discovered still," said study lead author Chris Petkov from Newcastle University in the UK.

For the findings, published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, the international teams of European and US scientists carried out the brain imaging study and analysis of auditory regions and brain pathways in humans, apes and monkeys.

Although speech and language are unique to humans, the link via the auditory pathway in other primates suggests an evolutionary basis in auditory cognition and vocal communication. "We predicted but could not know for sure whether the human language pathway may have had an evolutionary basis in the auditory system of nonhuman primates. I admit we were astounded to see a similar pathway hiding in plain sight within the auditory system of nonhuman primates," Petkov added.

The study also illuminates the remarkable transformation of the human language pathway.

A key human unique difference was found: the human left side of this brain pathway was stronger and the right side appears to have diverged from the auditory evolutionary prototype to involve non-auditory parts of the brain.

The study relied on brain scans from openly shared resources by the global scientific community. It also generated original new brain scans that are globally shared to inspire further discovery.

Also since the authors have predicted that the auditory precursor to the human language pathway maybe even older, the work inspires the neurobiological search for its earliest evolutionary origin - the next brain 'fossil' - to be found in animals more distantly related to humans. — IANS

9 killed

BEIRUT, April 21 : Israeli air strikes late Monday in the area of the central Syrian city of Palmyra killed nine fighters loyal to the Iran-backed Damascus regime, a war monitor said on Tuesday.

Those who died in several missile strikes included three Syrians and six foreigners of unknown nationalities, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Since the start of the civil war in 2011, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria targeting government troops as well as allied Iranian forces and fighters from Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

Syrian state media had said that Syrian air defence late Monday downed Israeli missiles over Palmyra in the central Homs province before they could reach their targets. Contacted by AFP, an Israeli army spokesperson declined to comment. Israel has repeatedly vowed to impede any Iranian encroachment in war-torn Syria across its border. Monday's attack came hours after Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus. — PTI

Spain reports slight rise in virus deaths

MADRID, April 21: New deaths attributed to the new coronavirus in Spain are slightly up again on Tuesday, with 430 fatalities that bring the total death toll to 21,282 from a 4-week low of 399 daily deaths on Monday.

Spain is reporting nearly 4,000 new infections to a total of 204,178, a 2% day-to-day increase in line with the average for the past four days, health ministry data shows.

The government is assessing already how to roll back one of Europe's strictest lockdowns, starting from next Monday by allowing children to go out onto the streets for brief periods. Spain's center-left Cabinet is discussing details on how the measure will be implemented during Tuesday's weekly meeting.

An 8-week survey of 30,000 households that will be tested for the new virus is also expected to roll out on April 27, allowing authorities to gauge what's the level of immunization beyond hospitals and nursing homes, where testing has focused during the peak of the pandemic. — PTI

Jennifer Lopez sued

NEW YORK, April 21: A New York City photographer has filed a lawsuit against singer-actor Jennifer Lopez for using a photo of hers on social media without permission.

According to EOnline, photographer Steve Sands claims the singer and her production company Nuyorican Productions used the photograph taken by him on Instagram to promote their brand.

Lopez posted the photo on her official Instagram page on June 23, 2017 and has so far received over 650,000 likes. In the lawsuit, filed in Manhattan federal court Monday by lawyer Richard Liebowitz, Sands said that the 50-year-old singer-actor did not pay or ask for his permission to use the headshot of hers. Sands is seeking damages of up to USD 150,000 and lawyer's fees. Lopez or her representative have not yet commented on the lawsuit. — PTI

Pakistan, Afghan bilateral forum to meet soon

ISLAMABAD, April 21 : The next session of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), a bilateral forum set up in May 2018, will be held soon.

The agreement to arrange the next meeting of APAPPS was reached during a telephonic conversation between Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Afghan counterpart, Hanif Atmar, on Monday, reports *The Express Tribune*.

A statement issued by the Foreign Office said Qureshi congratulated Atmar on his recent appointment and expressed hope that during his tenure, there would be enhanced interaction between the foreign ministries of the two countries.

Prospect of enhancing bilateral relations in all areas were discussed. Qureshi reiterated the importance of existing bilateral mechanisms and hoped that the next session of APAPPS would be held soon which would help further strengthen bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The APAPPS was established in May 2018 as part of efforts by two sides to sort out issues through negotiations.

The APAPPS framework provides a comprehensive and structured mechanism to enhance engagement between counterpart institutions of the two countries. — IANS

Corona Snippets

Don't increase school fees: Telangana govt

HYDERABAD, April 21: The Telangana government on Tuesday issued orders directing private unaided recognised schools in the State, affiliated to State Board, CBSE, ICSE and other international boards not to increase any kind of fees during 2020-21 academic year and charge only tuition fees on monthly basis, till further orders.

A Government Order (GO) said the State Cabinet, keeping in view the hardship caused by lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, passed a resolution that schools shall not increase any kind of fees during 2020-21 academic year.

It warned that non-compliance of the instructions will result in cancellation of school recognition, revoking the NOC already granted for affiliation to other boards and initiation of appropriate action against the school management under relevant Acts/Rules. – PTI

150 buses to bring back stranded students

GWALIOR, April 21: The Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday sent 150 buses from Gwalior to Kota in Rajasthan to bring back students stranded due to the lockdown in place for the coronavirus outbreak, a senior official said.

Gwalior Divisional Commissioner MB Ojha said the 150 buses that left were sanitised, and the drivers and helpers given personal protection equipment (PPE) kits.

"They will bring back 3,000 MP students stranded in Kota. There will be police personnel in each bus, and each bus will be allowed to carry only 20 students. Once the students arrive, they will undergo medical check-up," he added. – PTI

28,000 Gujarat doctors to take part in protest

AHMEDABAD, April 21: At least 28,000 doctors in Gujarat will join the Indian Medical Association's call for a candlelight vigil on April 22 to protest against violence and discrimination faced by medical practitioners treating COVID-19 patients, an official said on Tuesday.

As many as 28,000 doctors from across the State will take part in a candlelight vigil at their respective places at 9 pm on April 22, secretary of the IMA's Gujarat chapter Dr Kamlesh Saini said.

The IMA wants the Centre to pass a stringent Act to protect doctors and restore their dignity, he added. – PTI

14-storey tower turned into COVID-19 hospital

HYDERABAD, April 21: It just took 20 days for the Telangana government to convert a 14-storey tower at Gachibowli sports complex here, into a 1,500-bedded COVID-19 special hospital.

About 1,000 workforce sweated it out to convert the complex, constructed in 2002, into a full-pledged coronavirus hospital with 50 ICU beds, a senior official of Telangana government said adding the facility is ready to accommodate patients.

The official said the State government proved that not only China which has reportedly built a makeshift 1,000-bedded hospital in just 10 days in Wuhan at the peak of coronavirus spread, Telangana can also do wonders in terms of making quick decisions and execution of plans. – PTI

13,381 arrested for lockdown violations

MUMBAI, April 21: Police have registered more than 60,000 cases in Maharashtra for various violations during the coronavirus-enforced lockdown in the last 31 days and arrested 13,381 people, an official said on Tuesday.

While 121 cases were registered for assault on police, a total of 411 people were arrested for this particular crime. Other offences included illegal transport and violation of coronavirus quarantine measures, he said. Police have collected the total fine of Rs 2.30 crore during the last 31 days.

Police have invoked various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 188 (Disobedience to the order duly promulgated by a public servant), the official said. – PTI

ADKJ #DID YOU KNOW?



The White Bank

There is a Red Fort in Chennai. Madras Medical College (MMC) has a building of red Bricks built in 1897. It had the Anatomy Block for many years and has a Museum now.



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Sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik creates a sand sculpture on the novel coronavirus with an awareness message 'Together We Will Defeat COVID-19', at Puri beach of Odisha on Tuesday. – PTI

Bengal restraining Central teams from visiting hotspots: MHA

NEW DELHI, April 21: The Union home ministry on Tuesday said the West Bengal government is not cooperating with the Central teams visiting the State to assess the COVID-19 situation and are specifically restraining them from interacting with health workers and touring the affected areas.

In a letter to West Bengal Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said it has been brought to the notice

of the ministry that both the inter-ministerial Central teams, visiting Kolkata and Jalpaiguri, have not been provided with the requisite cooperation by the State and local authorities.

"In fact, they have been specifically restrained from making any visits, interacting with health professionals, and assessing the ground level situation.

"This amounts to obstructing the implementation of the orders

issued by the Central government under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and equally binding directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court," Bhalla said.

The Union Home Secretary said, therefore, the State government is directed to comply to make all necessary arrangements for the Central teams to carry out such responsibilities as have been entrusted to them.

Home ministry Joint Secretary

Punya Salila Srivastava also raised the issue at the daily media briefing on the COVID-19 situation in the country. She said the Centre has sent teams under Disaster Management Act to four States – Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.

While Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are extending full support, the government in West Bengal is not doing so, she added. – PTI

Most areas of West Bengal's Hooghly district declared COVID-19 containment zones

KOLKATA, April 21: Most parts of the Hooghly district in West Bengal was declared as COVID-19 containment zones by the State government, a senior official said on Tuesday.

All wards of the municipalities of Uttarpara Kotrang, Dankuni, Srerampore, Rishra, Konnagar, Baidyabati, Champadani, Chandannagar, Bhadrashwar have been identified as COVID-19 containment zones, he said.

The gram panchayats of Raghunathpur in Srerampore Uttarpara block, Kumirmora, Bhagwatipur, Hariipur of Chanditala I Block and Garalgacha, Barijhati of Chanditala II, Mundalika, Kotalpur and Dilakhas under the

Hooghly (Rural) Police District have also been identified as containment areas, an order issued by the office of the District Magistrate said.

Areas under the gram panchayats of Rashidpur, Rajbhalhat I, Rajbhalhat II of Jangipara Block have also been declared containment zones, the order stated.

Though there have not been many cases in the district, we are imposing the restrictions as a precautionary measure to contain the spread of the virus. Nobody will be allowed to go out, and nobody will be allowed to come in, a senior official of the Hooghly district ad-

ministration told PTI.

Any office, whether that of the government or a private entity, has been prohibited from opening in these areas which are affected or susceptible to be infected, the order said.

The instruction further stipulates that only a few private and commercial establishments like IT and ITES, e-commerce of essential goods, banks, NBFC are allowed to operate with 25 per cent manpower. Other private offices are to remain closed," it stated.

Till Monday evening, West Bengal witnessed 12 deaths due to COVID-19, and 330 positive cases. – PTI

Police books Jamia students under UAPA in violence case

NEW DELHI, April 21: Delhi Police has booked Jamia students Meeran Haider and Safoora Zargar under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in a case related to communal violence in northeast Delhi over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, said a lawyer.

Haider and Zargar, arrested for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to incite the communal riots in February, are in judicial custody. While Zargar is the media coordinator of Jamia Coordination Committee, Haider is a member of the committee.

The police has also booked Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader Umar Khalid under the UAPA in the case, said advocate Akram Khan who is representing Haider in the case.

Haider (35) is a PhD student and presi-

dent of RJD youth wing's Delhi unit, while Zargar is an MPhil student of Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) university.

In the FIR, the police has claimed that the communal violence was a "premeditated conspiracy" which was allegedly hatched by Khalid and two others.

The students have also been booked for offences of sedition, murder, attempt to murder, promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion and rioting.

Khalid had given provocative speeches at two different places and appealed to the citizens to come out on streets and block the roads during the visit of US President Donald Trump to spread propaganda at international level about how minorities in India are being treated, the FIR alleged. – PTI



An aerial view of the areas around Hanumantal Lake in the COVID-19 red zone district of Jabalpur on Tuesday. – PTI

Home delivery of newspapers

PCI notice to Maharashtra govt over ban

NEW DELHI, April 21: The Press Council of India (PCI) on Tuesday issued a notice to the Maharashtra government over prohibition of door-to-door delivery of newspapers and magazines in the State, seeking an explanation and expressing concern over the issue.

The Maharashtra government on Saturday decided to stop door-to-door delivery of newspapers and magazines to contain the spread of coronavirus infection in the State.

Press Council of India (PCI) Chairman CK Prasad noted with concern the order of the Maharashtra government, a PCI statement said.

It said the order did not adhere to the Central government's directive issued on March 23 to Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs to ensure operational continui-

ty of print media in view of the threat of COVID-19 outbreak.

The PCI had also advised all State governments and administrative authorities to take necessary measures to ensure the smooth functioning of media during the lockdown to combat the coronavirus outbreak.

"Taking suo-motu cognizance on the issue, the Chairman has issued a notice for comments to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Maharashtra," the PCI statement said.

The production and sale of newspapers and magazines is allowed at stalls and shops established for the purpose but the print media sector has been asked to avoid home deliveries, the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Office had said in a series of tweets on Saturday. – PTI

COVID-19 patient given plasma therapy shows improvement, weaned off ventilator

NEW DELHI, April 21: A critical COVID-19 patient admitted to a private hospital here has shown signs of improvement and taken off ventilator support after he was administered plasma therapy, officials said on Tuesday.

The 49-year-old had tested positive for coronavirus on April 4 and the same day he was admitted to the dedicated COVID facility in East Block of Max Hospital, Saket, with moderate symptoms and a history of fever and respiratory issues. His condition deteriorated during the next few days and he soon required external oxygen to maintain saturation, hospital authorities said.

"He soon developed pneumonia with Type I respiratory failure and had to be put on ventilator support on April 8," the hospital said in a statement on Monday.

When the patient showed no improvement in his condition, his family requested the hospital for administration of plasma therapy on compassionate grounds, "a first of its kind treatment modality that was used for this disease in India," it said.

This patient has shown positive results and was recently weaned off ventilator support, the hospital authorities said.

Dr Sandeep Budhiraja, Group Medical Director, Max Healthcare, said, "We are delighted that the therapy worked well in his case, opening a new treatment opportunity during these challenging times." – PTI

Scientists bat for smartphone contact tracing to fight COVID-19, but say privacy a concern

NEW DELHI, April 21: Scientists across the world believe that contact tracing using smartphone apps, such as India's Aarogya Setu, may help control the COVID-19 pandemic and ease the world out of the lockdown, while also flagging privacy issues with the technology-driven intervention.

Experts say the technology can help trace all the people who come in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient, helping medical authorities to track potential patients, test them, and further prevent the spread.

As India entered the second phase of lockdown from April 15, the government launched Aarogya Setu application which it said can track COVID-19 cases in addition

to having other uses.

"There are two parts to contact tracing – the first thing is that it traces your location through applications like Aarogya Setu and other apps used worldwide," Aakash Sinha, an assistant professor at Shiv Nadar University in Uttar Pradesh, told PTI.

The second part is that wherever you have been, whenever you are coming in contact with can also be traced. If I have the app and you also have it. So when I meet you, the apps can register that we came in close proximity," he explained.

Contact tracing is being used by China, South Korea and many other countries that have successfully controlled the spread of the vi-

rus, Sinha noted.

He explained that the location of the places where a person goes is traced by using their phone's global positioning system (GPS) network as well as the location history.

Many of these apps also have a way to share information via Bluetooth or a Wi-Fi if they are very close, and that way this information exchange is done if somebody came in contact with an infected person, Sinha noted.

A global race to develop smartphone apps and other types of mobile phone surveillance systems to track and contain the spread of the novel coronavirus has started.

After studying the dynamics of the early corona-

virus epidemic in China, researchers at the University of Oxford in the UK have demonstrated that almost half of all transmissions occurred before anyone showed symptoms.

They also estimated that delaying contact tracing by even a day from the onset of symptoms could make the difference between epidemic control and coronavirus resurgence.

To respond to this, the team rapidly conceptualised a simple mobile contact tracing app that it said can help control the spread of the novel coronavirus, save lives, and ease the population out of lockdown.

In the US, Boston University scientists, including one of Indian origin, are working on

a smartphone app that could let people know if they have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, while protecting their privacy.

The app being developed by researchers, including Mayank Varia, uses Bluetooth-enabled cell phones to notify a person if they have come into close proximity with someone infected with SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Similarly, scientists at University College London in the UK have developed a new Bluetooth contact tracing app for detecting COVID-19 proximity, that they say will help epidemiologists to analyse the spread of the pandemic while fully protecting individual privacy. – PTI

MESSAGE FOR TODAY

We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.

— JOSEPH CAMPBELL

The Assam Tribune

Distribution network

Assam has done well to start rapid testing from Monday even as the State's total number of Covid-19 positive cases stood at 34. Also heartening is the fact that of the 34 affected, 19 have been cured and the death toll has remained only one so far. With the ease effected in some lockdown norms, all the State Government offices have now begun to function with 30% workforce. Such an arrangement had to be done, failing which the government machinery cutting across departments barring a few like Health and Agriculture ran the risk of coming to a prolonged standstill. But the office functionaries will have to be careful so as not to compromise on the physical distancing norms at workplace. With reports of many poor families not covered by existing food security schemes having a harrowing time amidst the extended lockdown, the Government has through a belated move decided to provide rice to those needy segments. As agriculture and allied activities have now been allowed to function normally, the farming community which has witnessed substantial loss of perishable crops such as horticultural produce can heave a sigh of relief. But along with production, the distribution network has to be streamlined in order to make things really meaningful. The arrangement to export surplus fruits such as banana which is grown abundantly in Assam to outside the State is a much-needed initiative that can go a long way in minimizing the losses suffered by the farmers. The shortage of cold storages has long been a bane for the State's cultivators and this stood blatantly exposed during the first phase of the lockdown when thousands of tonnes of vegetables perished in the fields. This should be prioritized by the Government as a major area to invest in during the coming days. Assam has immense potential in horticulture and food processing and there is a lot the Government can do to tap these sectors.

While Assam is doing a good job in containing the Covid-19 outbreak and the credit for this goes to the Health Department led by the dynamic Health Minister, it should learn from the experience of States such as Kerala which has done exceedingly well despite being the first to be afflicted by the scourge. The 'Kerala model' is already being held up around the world as a success story. Kerala being a tourism hub and a major workforce exporter had been all the more vulnerable to the pandemic but the astute political leadership realized the gravity of the situation much before the nationwide lockdown was enforced and it was backed by bureaucratic efficiency in tackling the spread through well-coordinated moves. Kerala's effort to contain the outbreak had begun as early as January and intensified in the subsequent period. Its robust public health system, clear risk communication and community participation supplemented the efforts of the Government.

Self-defence

The Covid-19 pandemic has adversely impacted upon almost all global economies, creating vulnerability in many nations, thereby energizing their self-defence mechanism, much like the immunity system of our bodies react to intrusions of a coronavirus! Unfortunately, certain nations do not hesitate to take advantage of such vulnerability and try to penetrate into the economic body metabolism, thereby violating all norms of ethical behaviour. It must be borne in mind that in a highly globalized economic environment, nowadays hostility may not be shown only on our physical borders, which has to be confronted by the armed forces, but also on our economic barriers, which needs to be tackled by mechanisms inbuilt in the system precisely for that purpose. It is this latter possibility which has induced the Government of India to initiate a major change to its foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, and decree that all the investments from neighbouring countries, including China, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, would from now on require prior government approval. This is a reversal brought about by the economic crisis the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown has brought upon the country and closes the 'automatic route' for the listed nations through which an increasing number of foreign firms and individuals had begun to invest of late. It hardly needs to be reiterated that the pandemic is currently wreaking havoc in India's economy.

Reacting to the lockdown, Indian stock markets have plunged, with the BSE Sensex having reported its sharpest ever fall in the previous quarter. The fact that, given such a scenario, the Union Government viewed with concern the recent raising of the stakes by the People's Bank of China in India's largest non-banking housing loan provider HDFC Ltd, was to be expected. Experts believe that the latest directive by the Centre is to prevent opportunistic takeover of highly vulnerable Indian companies by Chinese predators, although as a diplomatic gesture other neighbours too have been named. There is also a possibility that the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) would take a close look at foreign portfolio investment from Chinese sources and impose some restrictions in the near future. No matter that China has reacted angrily to India's moves, the latter's response is an integral aspect of our self-defence strategy. It may be pointed out that India is not alone in imposing such a restriction, and many countries across the world have taken measures to prevent hostile takeovers of their own firms. Ironically, the latest media reports indicate that a huge number of foreign firms, which had their production units in China, are planning to shift their operations from there to India. Thus perhaps it is high time that China begins to shed its predatory instincts and energize its own self-defence system to prevent an imminent economic meltdown!

Stop driving in the dark on Covid spread

■ Shaheen Madraswala, Nachiket Mor

As lockdowns continue to be the most frequently-resorted-to response strategy to the threat of Covid-19, governments world over face a difficult trade-off between saving lives and saving the economy. In India, the lockdown has imposed debilitating economic hardship, borne disproportionately by migrant and informal sector employees, most of whom have weak safety nets at best.

Data will be critical to decision-making even in these unprecedented times. We have tested approximately 200,000 individuals for Covid-19 or approximately between 15,000-20,000 individuals per day since mid-March. However, our current set of data is neither random (as only those with a travel history, symptoms or both are eligible for testing), nor sufficient, as our capacity lies somewhere between 150,000-200,000 tests per day, across 255 public and private laboratories. To address these shortcomings, the Government needs to leverage the extended lockdown period to collect a large, representative and random risk-weighted sample of data, which it can utilize to learn about the spread of the pandemic and to help it make an informed decision about a gradual relaxation of the lockdown.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in a highly positive move, recently announced

scaling up to 100,000 tests per day. However, moving beyond symptomatic testing of individuals to population-based testing will require a more comprehensive strategy. This includes deeper integration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's (MoHFW) ground-level containment strategy and better coordination with the larger scientific and research community to analyse the data. Leading the charge on the ground, the MoHFW is following a 'cluster containment strategy' to isolate geographic areas reporting one or more positive cases. Local authorities in Mumbai, for example, have identified 382 containment zones across 24 administrative wards. While this strategy is intended to contain the spread of the infection it is not clear that it will, because it relies on one or a group of individuals first testing positive. In this current climate, it is not clear how one gets a prescription or reaches a testing centre. Moreover, from the limited data available, we already know that around 70% of the positive cases reported in Maharashtra were asymptomatic.

A national population based testing strategy will involve segmenting the entire country into non-

overlapping clusters; determining a representative sample of the population within each cluster; screening and testing the sample on a periodic basis for Covid-19, using RT-PCR tests potentially on pooled samples; and finally using statistical tools to infer prevalence rates with relevant error bands. This would need the Government to collaborate with established statistical and scientific research institutions to outline a representative

We have the expertise; it's up to us to channelize it towards a strategic response. India's large network of ASHA workers and primary healthcare providers can be trained to conduct screening and testing activities.

sampling strategy along with screening and testing protocols. India has extensive experience in collecting primary data. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS), for example, is a national representative survey, conducted every two years. Its findings, used to inform India's national health policies, include prevalence of anaemia and diabetes for instance which requires door-to-door collection of blood samples. We have

the expertise; it's up to us to channelize it towards a strategic response. India's large network of ASHA workers and primary healthcare providers can be trained to conduct screening and testing activities.

A number of governments are contemplating population-level testing measures to better understand how their populations are affected. Germany, for example, recently announced plans to implement a nationwide antibody testing programme to learn about how many Germans are immune to the virus, the progression of the virus, and to eventually decide how to phase out their lockdown which has been in place since March 22.

As with any policy recommendation, this comes with its limitations. The biggest constraint to scaling-up testing will be imposed by a shortage of testing kits given the surge in global demand. To relax this, there is a need to accelerate the approval process for domestically manufactured as well as imported kits, including both the PCR and rapid antibody varieties. There is also a need to make the approval process more transparent and streamlined thus improving incentives to participate, for India's advanced biotechnology sector. Finally, the current strategy of empan-

elling a large number of private and public labs could be coupled with experimenting with pooled testing methods, and utilizing tuberculosis testing machines which are bound to have a wider geographic spread.

To questions on whether sampling and testing of the kind suggested here are feasible at all in the current scenario, we must note that the notion of large is variable. It has to be large enough depending upon the risk base and the availability of test kits. The smaller the sample, the wider the error bands, but the approach would have to be of the type described here, failing which we will simply not have enough information about when and how to open up the economy. What we recommend is the most parsimonious way of using the available test kits, as opposed to the ad hoc individualized testing currently implemented which leaves us entirely in the dark about the extent to which the virus has spread.

India should be prepared for a long and arduous journey towards a complete recovery. The worse hit amongst us globally, like the Chinese and the Italians, have experienced either complete or intermittent lockdowns for over three months now. Committing to short-term, ambitious goals like implementing population-based testing measures can be a first step, enabling the government to make evidence-based decisions about a phased reopening of the economy. (The Billion Press)

Cacophony of a pandemic

■ Karobi Gogoi Hazarika

There was a time when India under the British Raj was hit by the outbreak of cholera, *kala azar*, etc., epidemics. The bubonic plague hit Surat town of Gujarat in 1994. Science and technology has blessed the human race even though Nature had tested us time and again.

Many civilizations have been wiped out due to pestilence. The autochthones particularly in the Americas were overpowered by the Spanish conquistadors not by weaponry but by releasing viruses which the natives had no resistance to. Even syphilis entered India in the Malabar Coast when Vasco da Gama and his sea-faring navigators landed there.

In our race with time we have perhaps never bothered to think about our sole nurturer, Mother Nature. We have plundered her wealth at the cost of jeopardizing our own health. With one lung of planet Earth (the Amazon Basin) already reduced to an inferno, we are inviting our own doom. Nature has silently tolerated. It is time for her to caution us so that we re-

think about our insatiable greed not just for exotic food but for materialistic things too.

China has been notorious for her civilizational isolation much before the coronavirus originated in the industrial town of Wuhan. Readers are aware about China's infamous market which deals with wildlife parts and meat, a market where parts of even dogs, cats and other wild animals are chopped off alive (yes, the animal is still alive when its different parts are chopped off). A lesson post the corona pandemic is, be responsible while eating too. One must ensure that one does not make others' lives vulnerable by what is served on his or her platter. The story of the virus developed by China to be used as a fatal bio-weapon which accidentally escaped from a lab in Wuhan is also doing the rounds in social media.

Coming to the current Covid-19 scene, it is now a pandemic as announced by the UN, invading new territories and cutting across cultures. It sees no nations and no colour. Under the strict Chinese regime, China was able to contain the virus from spreading its tentacles

(even though at great loss) but unfortunately, it sneaked into Europe, with Italy the most hard hit, followed by Spain, France and most of the developed European nations where the distribution and density of population is far lesser compared to either China or India. These European countries are better equipped than India when it comes to medical health facilities and have sound social security mechanisms. The Italians belonging to one particular age bracket have been almost wiped out. Its army was pressed into emergency services to handle the cadaver.

How is our country, the second in terms of population standing just next to her northern neighbour China, coping with this pandemic? There is still no cure for Covid-19. Countries like Israel and the US have accelerated its research to find a vaccine to eradicate the virus.

The Indians are very social people, it being ingrained in our genes. India's overpopulation is the biggest challenge at this hour and on top of it the lack of education of the masses. The five-minute ringing of conch, prayer bells, drums and kitchen utensils, and clapping in unison at 5 pm on March 22 last

after the 'Janata curfew' saw entire India standing up in solidarity to show their gratitude to the countless doctors, nurses and frontline staff who are working tirelessly to combat the spread of Covid-19. The medical fraternity has left no stone unturned to serve those suffering, rising up to the occasion to fight the dreaded disease.

The need of the hour is patience and not panic, not to believe in rumours, not to go on a panic buying spree. Businessmen must refrain from taking advantage of the current situation by not hoarding essential commodities. The various media houses (especially the local electronic media) have a greater responsibility to flash authentic news. Those who keep domestic helpers and avail other services at home (cooks, drivers, gardeners, etc.) could be empathetic and avoid their pay-cut for not reporting to work. The virus can't knock you down until you go out and come in contact with someone who carries the virus. So, we should stay safe indoor and secure our homes and families.

How is the young generation kept hooked at home? The introduction of online classes is the man-

tra. Schools too are bringing the classroom alive from home.

People especially in the developed nations have embraced the concept of Double Income No Kids (DINK) and Single Income No Kids (SINK) with urban India slowly accepting it. These two are a couple's/individual's personal voluntary choices not to reproduce any offspring(s) since the Earth is already harbouring more than the optimum population it can sustain. We will need two Earths to supply us with resources if our demand for it goes unchecked.

With the current lockdown, India is waking up to a harsh new reality. These are testing times not just for the Indians but for the entire human race. Nature has gone in a self-healing mode and is rejuvenating. How about thinking for a few seconds if our Earth is ailing, humans are the actual virus and corona is the panacea?

While the Indians greet 'Namaste!' to the rest of the world, let us patiently wait to jettison Covid-19 out of planet Earth. Let us remain positive, spread good cheer and let go of our fears. And continue to give love even in the time of this pandemic.

Letters to the EDITOR

Sir, — In this pandemic situation where everything and everyone is in lockdown condition, the students are unlocking their brain, doing the online classes and assignments given by the course instructors. Kudos to not only the students doing their assignments but also to the teachers who are organizing the online classes! Today the students of all age groups and categories are performing their duties with a mobile phone or a PC. The 'Online mode' simply means you need to sit in front of a screen which emits harmful radiation. Has anyone thought of the condition of a student who sits for long hours in front of a screen? Who will be liable to the hazards thus occurred to the eyes? Not only eyes, it certainly affects one's brain too. The efficiency of completing a work decreases drastically. And in order to meet the deadline, the student pushes himself to the extreme. Not only the ill effects on one's overall health, but also it is one of the absolute reasons of losing interest over that very subject, and broadly on the online mode of education.

In this period of lockdown, everyone wants to be productive, everyone wants to learn new

Effects of online mode of education

skills, a new way of living life. But is it really happening? A big NO! The students are busy in finishing their assignments, leaving no time for extracurricular activities and learning new skills. Yours etc., RAHUL SARMA, Jagiroad.

Power supply

Sir, — With the lockdown going on and all the industrial or production facilities have been temporarily closed, the power scenario in Assam should be good because there is no consumption except domestic use. The supply of electricity is counted among the most essential services and it is the duty of the employees of the State power organizations to give their best during the period of lockdown. I do not know about the other districts but we the people of Sivasagar are facing the worst from the power authorities because from morning onwards, the electricity supply plays the game of hide and seek each day. There must be some faults in the lines due to which such fluctuations occur. When there is no heavy electrical consumption and if there still is a shortage in power supply, it is a serious issue. The engineer concerned should have looked into it. Through your newspaper, I request the Deputy Commissioner, Sivasagar to take up the matter and redress the same. Yours etc., PARTHASARATHY DUTTA, Sivasagar.

Embankment repair

Sir, — As all we know, Assam is a land of rivers. Every year the mighty Brahmaputra and Barak rivers along with more than 50 tributaries cause a huge loss in the socio-economic growth of Assam. Due to the ongoing lockdown for Covid-19, we are still in a panic situation, both physically and mentally. In the recent days, heavy rainfall and storms have again reminded us of the seasonal flood problem in the State. The drainage system of Guwahati and the embankments in Majuli district along with other flood-prone areas should be regularly inspected by the minister and officials concerned. These issues should be immediately reviewed and a prompt action plan should be prepared immediately. Otherwise, the situation of people rendered homeless by the devastating flood will again distress our minds. Yours etc., Dr RUDRASINGHA BURAOHAIN, Guwahati.

Good read

Sir, — The letter titled 'War against an invisible enemy' written by Dr Ila Bania (April 17) was a good and pleasing read. It is pleasing because Dr Bania happens to be my ex-student. And it is good because of the merit of its content. She has expressed something of really great substance in so few words. As she said, "Human superiority

is on the verge of extinction", I feel that is very true and the sooner we realize it, the better for mankind. Else, nature will keep on retaliating this way or the other to keep the balance. Yours etc., PRANAB KR SAIKIA, Laipuli, Tinsukia.

Economic setback

Sir, — The outbreak of the Covid-19 disease has created a global crisis on both economic and educational systems. This pandemic has caused the biggest economic setback in global history. The stock markets across the world are falling due to this. As the coronavirus spreads, the stock markets are experiencing their worst crashes since 1987. This had led to the disruption of business activities in many economic sectors. The problem of unemployment is on the rise globally. But whatever it is, we have to continue our fight against the virus and follow all the rules and regulations as prescribed by the Government. Yours etc., PURABI BURAGOHAAN, Assam University, Diphu.

Racial discrimination

Sir, — The racial discrimination against the people from the Northeast in the towns and cities across India after the outbreak of Covid-19 is distressing. The people of the NE are increasingly facing racism and discrimination in the rest of the country since

the outbreak of the coronavirus. The Mongoloid-looking people of the NE are facing cases of racial discrimination or hate crimes time and again in most of the metros and cities of India. Reports showed such people were spat on, beaten, abused and denied entry into apartments, complexes, or forced to leave apartments, restaurants, etc. These acts of racism and discrimination have happened even at the campuses of prestigious institutions like Delhi University, TISS, Mumbai, etc. The MHA on March 21 last had to issue an advisory to all the States and UTs to act against such racial attacks. But the advisory is not enough as there is no law against racial discrimination in the country. Yours etc., PP DAS, Lakhipur, Goalpara.

High prices

Sir, — The prices of some food items such as vegetables, fruits, egg, etc., are exorbitantly high at some shops in Biswanath Chariali. As these items are necessary, we cannot but purchase them even at high prices. I would, therefore, like to request the authorities concerned to look into the matter and take necessary action. Yours etc., PUTUL SARMA, Biswanath Chariali.

Articles (within 1000-1100 words) and Letters to the Editor for publication in the editorial page may be sent to the email ID: editor@assamtribune.com.



(From left) Two-wheelers seized from lockdown violators being loaded onto a tow-away van; police personnel control vehicular traffic; people maintain social distancing as they wait to make purchases at a shop, in Guwahati on Tuesday. – AT/UB photos

WEATHER GUWAHATI

LOCAL FORECAST : Generally cloudy sky. Rain/thundershower is very likely to occur. Maximum and minimum temperatures are most likely to be 30°C and 20°C respectively on Wednesday.

TEMPERATURE:
Max 28.5°C
Min 20.7°C

Hawkers raise their issues before CM's Media Adviser

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 21: The All Guwahati Newspaper Hawkers' Association today met Hrishikesh Goswami, Media Adviser to the Chief Minister, and raised their pertinent issues arising out of the COVID 19-induced lockdown.

A team comprising the Association's president Dilip Barman, general secretary Brajen Barman and acting president Dipak Kalita submitted a letter to the Chief Minister in this regard.

Goswami assured them to raise their issues in front of the Chief Minister for necessary measures.

Additional Director of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations Pradeep Brahma and *Raijor Batori* Editor Bhupendra Nath Bhattacharjee were also present in the meeting.

Many employers haven't paid salaries to staff

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: A large section of employers are yet to pay salaries to their employees in Assam, despite the fact that the State labour department had given a specific instruction to employers in this regard right at the start of this month.

On the other hand, 1.58 lakh construction workers are yet to avail the Rs 1,000 one-time grant from the government as well.

The Assam State Committee of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) stated these allegations in a memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister and Finance Minister today.

It also demanded strict action against tea garden owners who have not paid the full amount of salaries to their employees for the service the latter have rendered during the lockdown.

The CITU also appealed to the govern-

ment to ensure payment of salaries to every private sector employees, including teaching and non-teaching staff of private educational institutions. It also urged the government to supply free ration to around 20 lakh workers of the private transport sector.

It also urged the government to provide PPE kits to ASHA and Anganwadi workers of Assam, who have been working in the field to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The CITU today carried out a Statewide protest in support of their various demands, while adhering to the social distancing norms. Organizations like the Students' Federation of India (SFI) extended their support to the protest.

Meanwhile, the Assam committee of the All India Road Transport Workers' Federation today appealed to the Transport Minister to provide Rs 10,000 as one-time grant to drivers and petty transport traders.

State labour dept had given clear instruction in this regard

'Harassed' health workers to light candles, observe black day

GUWAHATI, April 21: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has demanded of the Union government to enact a Central law on violence against doctors, nurses, other health workers and hospitals in the face of abuse and violence meted out to them, especially during the current COVID-19 scenario.

In a statement to the press here today, Dr Satyajit Borah and Dr Hemanga Baishya, State president and State secretary respectively of IMA Assam State Branch, condemned the incidents of abuse, violence, spitting, pelting of stones, denial of entry to societies and residential accommo-

nation aimed at doctors, nurses and other health workers throughout the country during the ongoing

IMA wants a Central law on violence against doctors, nurses, other health workers

COVID-19 pandemic.

They said, "IMA has maintained utmost restraint and patience in spite of extreme provocations. That doesn't mean our patience is endless. Abuse, violence, spitting,

pelting of stones, denial of entry to societies and residential accommodation have been tolerated so far since we expected the governments to do their normal duty. Obstruction to cremation is the last straw that IMA can bear. If dignity is denied even in death, our patience and restraint lose their value."

Calling for an immediate halt to such abuse and violence, the IMA leaders said all doctors and hospitals will light a candle as a mark of protest and vigil at 9 pm on Wednesday.

They further said that IMA will observe 'black day' on April 23, with all doctors in the country to report for duty wearing black badges.

CM, Himanta apprise Govt of measures

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Minister of Health and Family Welfare Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday called on Governor Prof Jagdish Mukhi at Raj Bhavan and briefed him about the status of COVID-19 in the State.

The Chief Minister and the Health Minister during the meeting informed the Governor about various measures that the State government has taken to prevent novel coronavirus outbreak and other welfare projects meant for all sections of people in the State.

Water pumps being readied for monsoon

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 21: The Water Resources Department (WRD) has started cleaning up the Bharalumukh pumping station and Bharalu sluice gate.

A source in the WRD said that maintenance of the pumps and garbage cleaning have been carried out from April 13 after an instruction was issued by the Kamrup (Metro) district administration.

"Our personnel have been engaged in garbage cleaning around the pumping station and the sluice gate. Moreover, all the power-driven permanent pumping machines at Bharalumukh, Mora Bharalu, Bondajan, Lakhimijan, Anil Nagar, Lachit Nagar, Tarun Nagar and Jonali have been

made ready to operate," the source added.

"Work will continue till October this year. Moreover, desiltation of the rivers is also important to accommodate the excessive water coming down from the hills in the city. But the desilting works have not started yet," the source said.

Meanwhile, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has also started cleaning the drains in several parts of the city.

A local resident of Ganeshguri however said, "The workers of the corporation clean the drains, but they do not dispose the mud and silt, they just dumped it on the roadside. It should be disposed immediately after the drains are cleaned."

Control room

STAFF REPORTER

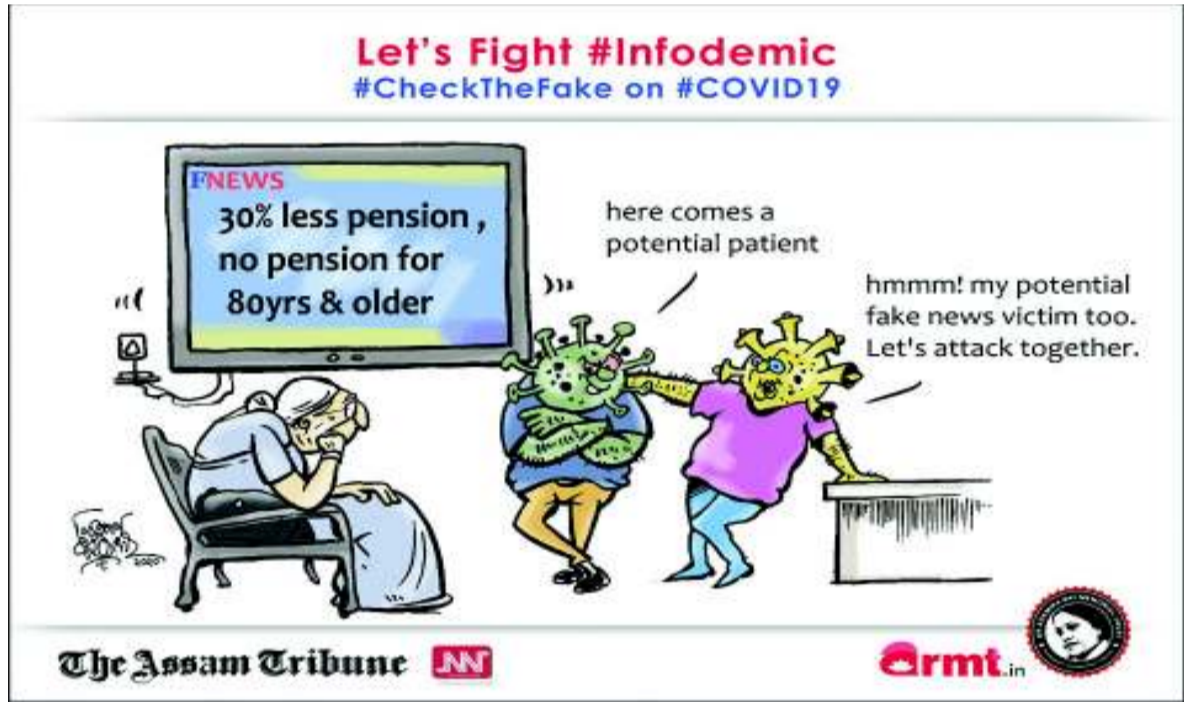
GUWAHATI, April 21: A control room has been set up at the Directorate of Agriculture, Khanapara, to facilitate agricultural activities in the State during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and it will start formal operations from tomorrow.

The control room, with the phone number 0361-2332215, will be supervised by a number of senior officers.

Free coaching

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: Online coaching platform Concept Learner has decided to conduct free coaching for HSLC 2021 candidates whose classes have got disrupted on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, said a statement.



Traders' body, others contribute towards COVID-19 fight

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: Extending their bit in the State's fight against COVID-19, traders' body Kamrup Chamber of Commerce today contributed Rs 30,00,200 to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

A delegation of the traders' body led by its president MP Jain today met the Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and extended the contributions.

The NRC Employees' Association Assam (NRCEAA) has contributed Rs 2,43,300 to the Assam Arogya Nidhi for the same purpose. Altogether 381

employees had contributed for the noble cause, said a press release.

The Assam Science Society has contributed Rs 1,59,200 to the Assam Arogya Nidhi as contribution towards the State government's fight against COVID-19.

The society has also called upon citizens of Assam to strictly adhere to social distancing norms and other directives of the government.

Assam Science Society is also planning to undertake a series of programmes to spread awareness about healthcare and cleanliness once the ongoing lockdown is over.

Placement of IIT-G students not hit by corona dislocation

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 21: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati today said that despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing nationwide lockdown, placement of its students has not been impacted.

"Even in the current uncertain situation, the institute is happy to note that placements have not been impacted so far. No offers, domestic or international, have been withdrawn. However, a few companies have postponed the date of joining," said a statement issued by IIT Guwahati.

For internships, the institute is consulting the companies to assess the feasibility of the 'work from home' model.

"The institute is doing everything in its capacity to support students during this critical period. We have been conducting online classes of all the theory courses on account of the ongoing nationwide lockdown," the statement said.

IIT Guwahati has been conducting classes of more than 350 theory courses since April 4 and will likely complete them by May 15.

The institute has tentatively scheduled examinations for July. The next session is expected to begin in August.



Agriculture Minister Atul Bora visiting a meat processing plant of the Assam Livestock and Poultry Corporation, at Panjabari in Guwahati on Tuesday. – UB Photos

2-day int'l online conference on role of virtual learning during pandemic

GUWAHATI, April 21: A two-day international online conference – "Teaching-Learning in the Time of Pandemic: Role of Online Learning" began today under the aegis of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU). The conference is being organised in collaboration with the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), said a press release here.

Prof Madhu Parhar, Director CEMCA, in her welcome address discussed at length the need to make use of online platforms for engaging in interactive discussions especially during crisis situations. Keeping in line with the sustainable development goal of 'Quality Education' (Goal number 4), she said that a concerted effort needs to come from all (including the government, stakeholders and people) so that there is uninterrupted flow of information and knowledge across all sectors while keeping the quality of education intact.

Professor Asha Kanwar, president and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning, Van-

couver in her inaugural address threw light on how people can make the best use of online resources during the current pandemic situation. She made a presentation – 'Will COVID-19 change the way we teach-learn?' where she emphasised the impact the present situation has had on the teaching-learning process. She specifically said that not only the learners of various universities and colleges but also those belonging to secondary and primary levels consisting of over 90 per cent of the student population, have been facing constraints as far as accessibility to education is concerned.

Prof Kanwar said that although a lot of steps have been taken to see that education is not hindered at this crucial juncture, a few pertinent issues like uninterrupted connectivity, electricity and accessibility to different online platforms need to be worked out at the earliest. Talking about the area of 'Equity and Inclusion' Prof Kanwar said that a vast number of learners belonging to the rural areas are

yet to be reached as far as accessibility and reach of educational platforms are concerned. She said the differently-abled learners will benefit a lot from online education provided they are given the basic resources to access it. As far as the role of Commonwealth of Learning is concerned, she said that it has been promoting OER-based online learning, preparing a series of about 12 webinars on designing and developing MOOCs, enhancing micro-learning through videos and promoting international partnerships of distance and online learning for COVID-19.

Prof Kanwar said that various inter-governmental agencies, governments and educational institutions must work in tandem to build frameworks for implementing and monitoring online learning, share best practices and resources in the field of online learning, promote global and regional partnerships, monitor impact of distance and online learning, invest in technology infrastructure, work on capacity building of the instructors and provide tar-

getted support to the vulnerable learners.

Prof Nageswar Rao, Vice Chancellor IGNOU mentioned that during a pandemic, especially if it concerns the health and well-being of an individual, the person concerned must adhere to certain safety regulations as spelt out by the government. He urged the people concerned to religiously follow the precautionary measures so as not to endanger the lives of others. Spread of rumours and other hoaxes will not be beneficial in the long run as it will create a sense of panic in the minds of the people, thereby affecting the dissemination of information in society.

Prof Rao also said that the gap between conventional learning and distance learning can be minimised with the right kind of technology. Coming to the conventional classroom scenario, Prof Rao said that in the post-pandemic period there is every possibility of the intake capacity to be reduced in order to prevent the spread of infection. This will be applicable in case of laboratory-

based classes and in examination halls.

Prof Rao also discussed the online methods of learning which are not cost-effective from the learner's point of view. He was of the view that instead of only focusing on online learning, effort must be made on making the admission and examination processes flexible which comes in handy during a crisis situation. In light of the present situation he suggested admission to various academic programmes and examinations be conducted on a quarterly basis. This, he said, will help reduce the workload of the learners to a great extent. He said that since the whole world is looking at the online and ODL systems of teaching and learning in the present scenario, the government and other educational institutions are expected to play a proactive role in combining both ODL and online methods of learning. He urged the community as a whole to go for online counselling sessions which are flexible and can be recorded, reused and reviewed by the

learners as per their own convenience.

Dr BK Bhadri in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, in his opening remarks, mentioned that the ODL universities are in an advantageous position in the present scenario because of its flexible nature of functioning. However, he also said that the Government of India has been laying a lot of emphasis on integrating the primary, secondary and higher educational systems on a common online platform.

Prof Kandarpa Das, Vice Chancellor, KKHSOU offered the formal vote of thanks. He said organising such a conference in the face of adversity is in itself a big achievement. He expressed hope that such a gathering will bring together the best of the minds under one single roof leading to debates and discussions. He specifically thanked the officials and staff of both KKHSOU and CEMCA for lending a helping hand in organising the conference in the virtual world, the release added.

Centre asks States to remain cautious during Ramzan

NEW DELHI, April 21: The Union government has asked the States and Union Territories to remain cautious and ensure that there are no prayer gatherings during the Islamic holy month of Ramzan beginning on Thursday in view of the ongoing lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, officials said.

The Central government has also asked the State governments and UT administrations to urge Muslim leaders to ask their fol-

lowers to remain at home.

"Prayers and gatherings at any religious place are prohibited during lockdown and we hope that everyone will abide by the directive," a senior government official told PTI.

The State governments have been told to be in touch with Muslim leaders to ensure that there are no gatherings in mosques and people must pray at home, the official said.

The Central government

Ensure no gatherings in mosques

conveyed this to the States and UTs after receiving inputs that people may gather in mosques in some parts of the country for 'Taraweeh' prayers, which are normally conducted in mosques in the evening.

According to the revised consolidated guidelines issued by the home ministry on April 15, all religious places and plac-

es of worship shall be closed for public. Religious congregations are strictly prohibited during the lockdown, which will continue till May 3.

The State governments were also told to reach out to mosque management committees and community leaders through local police so that no one visits mosques for prayers,

another official said.

Even though several Muslim organisations and clerics have appealed to people to pray at home during Ramzan, authorities are apprehensive in view of detection of a large number of people at Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Nizamuddin in Delhi despite the lockdown and social distancing orders.

The Nizamuddin Markaz also hosted a large religious congregation last month and

authorities said 30 per cent of India's total COVID-19 cases were linked to it as many of those who attended the meeting or those who had come in contact with the attendees tested positive for the infection.

During the month of Ramzan, Muslims observe dawn-to-dusk fast and hold community prayers. There are also iftar feasts where people gather for a community meal in the evening. - PTI

30 Jamaatis, 16 foreigners held: SP

ALLAHABAD, April 21: An Allahabad university professor has been arrested along with 29 persons, including 16 foreign participants of Tablighi Jamaat meet at Nizamuddin in New Delhi, an official said on Tuesday.

City Superintendent of Police Brijesh Kumar Shrivastava said Prof Mohammed Shahid was arrested on charges of arranging the shelter for Indonesians among the foreigner Tablighi Jamaat members in a mosque here and not informing the police about them.

One of the Indonesians had earlier tested positive for coronavirus infection and had undergone treatment for it at Kotwa Bani in Allahabad district, he said.

Shrivastava said other arrested included nine Thailand nationals, one each from Kerala and West Bengal besides

eleven others associated with Abdullah mosque and Hera mosques at Kareli in the city.

While the professor has been remanded to judicial custody after the arrest, others have been kept in isolation, the SP said, adding those arrested have been booked on charges of violating the Foreigners Act and colluding with each other for providing shelter to foreigners and shielding information about them from the police.

The SP said during the investigation, it transpired that Prof Shahid had attended the Tablighi Jamaat meet at Nizamuddin in New Delhi last month along with many of these foreigners and had shielded this information from the police, besides arranging for the foreigners' stay in local mosques. - PTI



The Yamuna river in New Delhi, as seen on Monday. According to a report by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee, the biological oxygen demand levels in the river have improved by up to 33 per cent. - PTI

60 more arrested for attack on health workers in Bengaluru: Govt

BENGALURU, April 21: Sixty more people have been arrested in connection with attack on police and health workers on COVID-19 duty at Padarayanapura here, taking the total number of those detained to 119 in the past two days, Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Tuesday.

In a related development, a district jail in nearby Ramanagara has been converted into a "sort of COVID-19" prison and the first batch of 59 people arrested in connection with the incident lodged there after being remanded to judicial custody by a court, an official said.

The entire Padarayanapura, a minority-dominated area, is under 'control', Bommai said, a day after Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa termed as "goondaism" the attack on the health workers and

police personnel on Sunday and directed stringent action against those taking law into their hands.

Police had on Monday said 59 people had been arrested in connection with the incident during which a large number of residents gathered and thrashed the health workers, who visited the area to quarantine contacts of a COVID-19 patient, and also some locals who came to their rescue. "Bengaluru police have so far arrested 119 people who had created a riotous situation at Padarayanapura. The entire area is under control," Bommai told reporters here.

When asked whether action under the National Security Act would be initiated against them, he said criminal cases will be registered against them under the National Disaster Management Act and

the Epidemic Diseases Act in addition to the Indian Penal Code provisions.

The health workers had visited the area to quarantine some 40 odd primary and secondary contacts of a COVID-19 patient when the people, mostly youths from the minority community, unleashed violence.

According to one of the five FIRs, the mob allegedly raised slogans "Kill police. Don't spare them" and rushed towards the workers and police holding stones, sticks and sharp-edged weapons.

A prison official said the inmates already lodged in the Ramanagara Jail were being shifted to the Central prison here.

"At present there are 177 prisoners in Ramanagara Jail they will be shifted to the Parappana Agrahara Central Jail," the official said. - PTI

Rajasthan stops use of China-made rapid testing kits

JAIPUR, April 21: The Rajasthan government on Tuesday stopped using the China-made rapid testing kits for coronavirus after they delivered inaccurate results.

The State's Health Minister Raghu Sharma said the kits gave only 5.4 per cent accurate results against the expectation of 90 per cent accuracy and therefore the kits are of no benefit, adding that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been informed about the issue.

"We have written to ICMR asking what to do. We are waiting for their response. The rapid test results were negative even on patients who tested positive in lab tests," the minister said.

A committee comprising heads of medicine and microbiology departments at the Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here was set up by the government to examine the accuracy of the kits and it found that only 5.4 per cent test results were accurate.

"As per the advice of the committee, we have stopped testing from the rapid testing kits," the minister said.

He said 168 tests were conducted through rapid testing kits that were also used for testing of patients who have already tested positive for coronavirus in PCR-based tests and the result was negative in their case too, which, the minister said, raised questions about the credibility of these kits.

"If the ICMR's response comes in our favour, the kits could be returned," he said.

Rajasthan had started conducting tests through rapid testing kits on Friday in the State's hotspots, starting from Jaipur. - PTI



Labourers load coconuts on a truck during the nationwide COVID-29 lockdown at Padianilam in Kozhikode on Tuesday. - PTI

Guidelines for bringing home remains of COVID-19 patients

NEW DELHI, April 21: The Union Health ministry on Tuesday issued guidelines for bringing home the remains of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients but asserted that importation of human remains of such cases is not recommended.

However, according to the guidelines, if human remains of suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus arrive into India, the airport health officer will verify the death certificate mentioning the cause of death, 'No objection certificate' for the transportation of human remains issued by Indian missions and embalming certificate issued by an authorized agency.

The airline shall ensure that the external packing of human remains (coffin) is undamaged and the airport health officer will verify the documents and inspect the packing in accordance with the provisions under the Indian Aircraft (Public Health) Rules, 1954.

"If there is any obvious sign of damage to the external packing, the handlers shall use full PPE, cover the coffin in plastic sheets to avoid any contact with the body/body fluids before hand-over of the human remains to the concerned authority for final burial/incineration," the guidelines stated.

The personnel handling the human remains should follow the laid down procedures for

donning and doffing of personal protective equipment and follow other protective measures for COVID-19, like hand-washing with soap and water to ensure that they remain protected during the procedure.

The packaging (coffin) shall be buried/incinerated following the norms for burial/incineration for human remains with high risk pathogens. The handlers would be monitored for 28 days and the designated vehicle shall be disinfected.

The ministry, however, clarified that the "ashes remaining after cremation pose no risk to the relatives who handle such mortal remains" and will be cleared in accordance with the provisions under the Indian Aircraft (Public Health) Rules, 1954. Any death on board during the pandemic, is to be suspected of COVID-19, unless proved otherwise and the pilot has to inform about the death on board to the airport health officer for appropriate measures, the guidelines mentioned.

If the aircraft lands within the Indian territory, the crew will cover the body with sheets and blankets and move the passengers from nearby seats to other seats.

If the remaining flight time is more than 8 hours, the pilot would seek permission to land at the nearest airport. - PTI

CM interacts ...

(Contd from page 1)

The Chief Minister while talking to sardars of the tea gardens reaffirmed the State government's commitment to ensure well being of all tea garden workers. He said that the State government allowed plucking of tea leaves engaging 50 per cent workers as per direction of the Central government. However, the garden workers would have to maintain the norm of social distancing and the sardars must observe that government directives in this regard are adhered in toto, the Chief Minister added. He also urged the sardars to ensure use of mask by tea workers at their work place and availability of adequate water and soap for regular handwashing in coordination with tea garden management and local administration. The Chief Minister also appealed the sardars to see that all garden workers adequately receive government assistance and other facilities.

The gaonburas and garden sardars during interaction assured the Chief Minister to ensure complete compliance of lockdown norms and monitoring smooth distribution of government aid and assistance in their respective areas.

AASU asks Govt ...

(Contd from page 1)

But at the same time, some students cannot take advantage of such classes, particularly in the interior areas. A good number of students cannot afford android phones, while, some remote areas do not have electricity or mobile network coverage. The Government will have to chalk out plan for such students, he added. He also said that the Government should ensure that text books are made available for all students so that they can carry on their studies at home.

On the issue of fees taken by the private schools, Bhattacharya said that some schools take very high rate of fees from the students and such schools should be asked not to take fees at this moment. But some private schools are barely surviving and the Government should think of extending some kind of support to those schools. However, he said that all the private schools should be asked to pay the salaries of the teachers and other employees regularly.

115 families ...

(Contd from page 1)

Adhering to the instructions and guidelines under the Disaster Management Act, 115 houses in Pocket I, Schedule A area of the President's Estate were identified for movement restriction and residents have been advised to remain indoors, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

"The residents of these houses are being provided doorstep delivery of essential commodities," it added.

Spread over 2.5 kilometres, the estate provides residential accommodation to employees posted with the President's Secretariat that includes the home and office of the President, a museum complex and famous gardens - The Mughal Gardens, Herbal Garden, Musical Garden and Spiritual Garden.

It is a virtual city within a city which has its own post office, places of worship, schools, medical and cultural centres, besides an auditorium where special screenings of movies are held for the President. - PTI

Rapid testing ...

(Contd from page 1)

The ICMR said states were complaining of inaccuracies in these test kits which was not a "good sign". The medical body said in the next two days, they will send representatives to all states where the rapid test kits are being used "and will bring the samples and test here".

"Till then, we advise all states not to use this. In two days, we will be in a position to give a detailed report on this," the ICMR said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also said that before these rapid tests can be recommended, they must be validated in the appropriate populations and settings. "Inadequate tests may miss patients with active infection or falsely categorize patients as having the disease when they do not, further hampering disease control efforts," it said.

Petrol, diesel prices ...

(Contd from page 1)

He had also indicated that it would be difficult for the State to meet the June expenditure, including salaries of the government employees if there is no "infusion of funds".

The State can impose taxes in only fuel or liquor.

Set up control rooms in Assemblies: LS Speaker

NEW DELHI, April 21: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Tuesday that control rooms should be set up in Assemblies for better coordination between States in helping migrant labourers and students stranded due to the ongoing lockdown to combat the novel coronavirus.

After an online interaction with Assembly Speakers on the prevailing situation, Birla said a control room would also be set up in Parliament for exchange of real-time information between MPs and MLAs, and for better coordination in the fight against the deadly virus.

"I interacted with Speakers of 27 State Assemblies and one Chairman of State Legislative Council. All in once voice said they are with the respective executives in this time of crisis," Birla said.

The country has been under a lockdown since March 25 which will continue till May 3.

The Lok Sabha Speaker also urged State Assemblies to explore the feasibility of extensive use of digital technology in legislative and financial work and for other routine tasks such as meetings and file movements so as to make sure that stringent social distancing norms are followed in their respective States. - PTI

Corrigendum No-03
Tender No. DYCE3-MLG-AFFOR-2020-02 published vide Tender Notice No. CON/MLG/2020/March/02. Please read as: Closing date of tender is 12-05-2020 at 14.30 hrs. instead of 23-04-2020 at 14.30 hrs. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
Dy.CE/CON-3/Maligaon
Northeast Frontier Railway
(Construction Organisation)
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Corrigendum No-03
Tender No. DYCE1-MLG-MAINTAIN-20-01 published vide Tender Notice No. CON/MLG/2020/March/01. Please read as: Closing date of tender is 12-05-2020 at 15.00 hrs. instead of 24-04-2020 at 15.00 hrs. and opening on 12-05-2020 at 15.30 hrs. instead of 24-04-2020 at 15.20 hrs. All other terms and condition remain unchanged.
Dy.CE/CON-1, Maligaon
Northeast Frontier Railway
(Construction Organisation)
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Corrigendum
Tender No. EL-CON-SCL-18-2019-JI published vide Tender Notice No. DY.CEE/CON/SCL/07/2020/JI. Dated: 19-03-2020. Please read as: Closing date of Tender is 12-05-2020 instead of 27-04-2020 and opening on 12-05-2020 instead of 27-04-2020. Other terms and conditions of tender will remain same.
Dy.CEE/CON/SCL, Silchar
Northeast Frontier Railway
(Construction Organisation)
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

PRIMARY MAINTENANCE MAIL/EXPRESS TRAINS OF KATI HAR DIVISION
E-Tender Notice No: 02/Mech/OBHS/20-21. Dated: 20-04-2020. E-tender in "Two Packet System" are invited by the undersigned for the following work. Name of work: On Board Housekeeping Service (OBHS) in Eight Nos. Primary Maintenance Mail/Express trains of Kathar Division of N.F. Railway for a period of four (04) Years. Tender Value: ₹12,13,80,096/-. Earnest Money: ₹7,56,900/-. E-Tender will be closed at 15.00 hrs. on 12-05-2020 and Opened at 15.30 hrs. on 12-05-2020. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website <http://www.irops.gov.in>
Sr. DME/C/Kati Har
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

No. TE(Ex)Admn-2/2020/146
EDUCATIONAL NOTICE
The Polytechnic Admission Test (PAT) 2020, Polytechnic Admission Test (MOM) 2020 & DBHRGFTI (PAT) 2020 are postponed and new date of test will be notified soon.
Portal for online submission of application and fees are kept open for convenience of the candidates.
Sd/- Director of Technical Education, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19
Janasanyog/D/249/20

Office of Development Commissioner
Ministry of MSME, Government of India
A-Wing, 7th Floor, Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi-110108
www.dcmsme.gov.in
"Revised Notice Inviting e-Tender"
The schedule of tender no. S/21/2019-20/PMS / Evaluation dated 13.03.2020 for the same scope of work has been extended due to COVID-19 lockdown as per the revised schedule for eligible Government Organizations /PSUs/ Public partnership / Pvt. limited company/Firm.
SCOPE OF WORK
Engagement of an Agency for "evaluation of the Procurement and Marketing Support scheme" as mentioned in the tender document.
Revised Schedule:
a) Last date & time of Submission of Tender : 6th May, 2020, 15:00 hrs
b) Date & time of opening of Pre-Qualification bid : 8th May, 2020, 15:30 hrs.
c) Date & time of Opening of Technical Bid : 15th May, 2020, 15:30 hrs
d) Date & time of Opening of Financial Bid : 27th May, 2020, 15:30 hrs.
e) Pre-Bid Meeting (Date & Time) : 4th May, 2020, 15:30 Hrs
Other T&C will remain the same. DSWP 25113/17/0303/2021

No. DME/PG/54/2020/5079
NOTICE
1st Round Counselling for Admission into 50% Post Graduate Seats in Medical Colleges of Assam under Assam State Quota, Session 2020
This is for information of all concerned that the 1st Round Counselling for Admission into 50% Post Graduate Seats in Medical Colleges of Assam under Assam State Quota for the session 2020 is going to be held under this Directorate as per Notice issued by the Government of India/MCC/MCI, vide Notification No. U-12021/44/2019/21-MEC, dtd. 17.04.2020. Candidates who appeared in NEET-PG-2020 conducted by the National Testing Agency may participate in the Online counselling provided they fulfill all the eligibility criteria mentioned in the Assam Medical Colleges (Regulation of Admission to Post-Graduate Courses) Rules, 2006 and all subsequent Amendments as well as meet the cut-off scores in NEET PG-2020. Further, except for the NEC sponsored candidates, the name and NEET PG-2020 Roll No. of the candidate must be present in the list of eligible candidates published by this Directorate.
Online Registration for the counselling will commence from 25.04.2020 to 28.04.2020 midnight, which will be available at the official website of this Directorate, www.dme.assam.gov.in. After completion of Online Registration process Online Filling of Choices will be available from 30.04.2020 to 02.05.2020 midnight, after which the choices will be locked automatically if not locked earlier by the candidate. After processing the data, a College-wise and subject-wise list of selected candidates will be displayed along with modalities of admission. The selected candidates will have to get admitted in the respective institutions as directed and pay the requisite fees along with counselling fees at the time of admission.
Candidates are directed to visit the official website of this Directorate, www.dme.assam.gov.in regularly for updates.
Sd/- Director of Medical Education, Assam
Janasanyog/D/562/20
Sixmile, Khanapara, Ghy-22



WEATHER NORTHEAST

Forecast for NE: Rain/thunderstorm is very likely to occur at most places over Arunachal Pradesh and at many places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

Warning: Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty wind with speed (40-50) kmph is very likely to occur at isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty wind with speed (40-50) kmph accompanied by hail is very likely to occur at isolated places over Assam and Meghalaya. Thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh. Heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

Temperatures:

	Max (°C)	Min (°C)
Dibrugarh	28.8	18.8
Tezpur	29.7	20.8
Silchar	31.6	19.8
Dhubri	26.3	22.8
Jorhat	29.2	18.9
N Lakhimpur	30.6	19.3
Shillong	22.3	-
Cherrapunjee	22.6	14.3
Aizawl	26.9	-
Kohima	21.6	-
Pasighat	27.8	19.0
Itanagar	31.6	19.5
Imphal	29.5	17.3
Agartala	32.5	22.8

4 more test positive at Mizoram House, Mumbai

CORRESPONDENT

AIZAWL, April 21: Four more persons at the Mizoram House in Mumbai tested positive for COVID-19 today, taking the number of positive cases in the lodge to eight, Mizoram Health Minister Dr R Lalhangliana said today.

Two cancer patients among the four new COVID-19 patients. The other two include an attendant of another cancer patient (who has, however, tested negative), and a Mizoram House employee, a local resident of Mumbai. The first three are residents of Mizoram.

Lalhangliana said after a 26-year-old woman – a cancer patient – tested positive on April 14, samples of 20 occupants of the Mizoram House were collected, out of which three were found positive. The woman had been staying at the Mizoram House along with other cancer patients from Mizoram undergoing treatment at the Tata Memorial Hospital. On April 18, all the remaining 35 people in the lodge were tested, and all of them were found to be negative. However, it transpired today that some samples had wrongly tested negative.

“When samples of those who had already tested negative, including those of the Mizoram House employees were tested again, four were found to be positive,” the Mizoram Health Minister said. While two of the COVID-19 patients were admitted to the Seven Hills Hospital, the other two have been put in a quarantine facility.

1 more tests positive for COVID-19 in Meghalaya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, April 21: Another person tested positive for COVID-19 in Meghalaya last night, taking the total number of active cases in the State to 11.

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, in a late night tweet, gave information about the new COVID-19 case. “One of the family friends of the positive patient has also been tested positive. The person is already in quarantine centre. The total number is at 12. One deceased and other 11 are stable,” Sangma tweeted.

The first COVID-19 patient was a doctor who passed away last week. The Chief Minister further informed that rapid antibody tests were conducted on all the seven family members of the person who tested positive last night. All the seven test results were, however, negative.

The State has also taken steps to increase the “real time Polymerase Chain Reaction tests capacity by deploying GeneXpert ma-

chine at NEIGRIHMS.”

In all, 933 samples have been tested in the State. As many as 831 tests results were negative and 100 results are awaited, the Chief Minister said.

He stated that 7,500 rapid test kits for testing antibodies have arrived and this would further enhance the testing capabilities of the State.

On a section of the public seeking that the Government should make public the name of the active COVID-19 patients, the Chief Minister rejected the demand, stating that it would infringe on the privacy of patients.

There is also the fear that such sensitive details would further ostracize the patients and lead to social stigma in the State, which has witnessed the unfortunate incident of the first patient being denied a resting place by residents several localities in the initial stages.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister held a review meeting with officials from the Education, Health, Agriculture and Food and Civil Supplies departments.

Cash assistance to Nagaland citizens stranded outside

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, April 21: The Nagaland Government will provide immediate cash assistance to citizens stranded outside the State owing to COVID-19.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said a patient would be given a cash assistance of Rs 20,000, a professional or working person would get Rs 4,000 and a student would receive Rs 3,000.

A separate portal has been opened at iamstranded.nagaland.gov.in for this purpose, where any citizen of the State who is currently outside and is facing distress due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown, may apply for direct assistance.

The Government has also decided to reach out to daily wagers, considering the hardships they are going through. Rio said relief packets consisting of rice, dal and other essential items would be provided to the daily wagers through the respective district administrations.

CM's Relief Fund: The Nagaland Government has disbursed Rs 2.32 crore as assistance under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund till April 20.

An update in the “new initiatives and announcements”

section of the Nagaland COVID-19 dashboard said the disbursed fund included financial assistance to students and people outside Nagaland, deputy commissioners and the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority.

The financial assistance to deputy commissioners stood at Rs 1.78 crore, while an amount of Rs 20 lakh was given to the NSDMA.

The total amount given to those staying outside, including students and working people, stood at Rs 34.2 lakh, the dashboard stated. It added that a total of 2,278 working people have been assisted, while 881 students were helped through their respective Naga students' union.

Donations: The Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) received a little over 2.95 crore as donations till date, according to the Nagaland Chief Minister's website.

The CMRF had over Rs 84.70 lakh as the opening balance on March 26, while the total donations received after March 26 stood at Rs 2.11 crore, according to the details provided on the website.

“While every effort is made to project the exact amount, the actual figure may vary due to bank charges, interest accrual, etc.,” it added.

4 suspects held for ‘hunting’ videos

DIMAPUR, April 21: Four suspects linked to the three videos of hunters flaunting their kill, surrendered to the wildlife wing of the Environment, Forests and Climate Change Department of Nagaland today, the Dimapur Chief Wildlife Warden's Office stated in a release. The Nagaland Wildlife Crime Control Bureau was on the trail of the persons featuring in the viral videos. One video depicted ruthless killing of barking deer and a large Indian civet cat, the release added.

The four suspects are Im-chainba of Longkhum village, Osungkum N Jamir, NM Jamir, Yanger Jamir of Unger village and Opangetmsu of Asangma village.

“This follows investigation by the department into the incident and zeroing down on the suspects seen in the video celebrating lockdown festival,” the release said. – Correspondent

1 held for killing king cobra

ITANAGAR, April 21: One of the two accused persons, who were filmed killing a king cobra in Arunachal Pradesh recently, has been arrested. The duo had on April 18 allegedly killed the reptile near the old suspension bridge at Pachin Colony in Naharlagun, the video of which had gone viral on the social media.

A wildlife team of Lobi Wildlife Range, led by Range Forest Officer Tadar Raju, with the help of the local police, had conducted a house-to-house search and nabbed one of the accused.

The other accused is still absconding, stated a press release from the IPR Department here. – Correspondent



Beneficiaries receiving essential commodities being distributed by an NGO in South West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, on Tuesday. – UB Photos

Sikkim Govt aid to State scribes

A CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, April 21: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has presented financial incentive to journalists in recognition of their service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A cheque was presented to the president of the Press Club of Sikkim, Joseph Lepcha, in the presence of the Secretary of the IPR Department, Namrata Thapa, and members of the press club.

The financial incentive is being provided to journalists from print, electronic and social/digital media working at the forefront during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Tamang extended his gratitude to members of the media for their contribution in ensuring timely dissemination of news and information to the general public on COVID-19.

The Chief Minister said that the financial incentive is a small gesture from the Government to express thankfulness towards media persons who have been risking their lives in the process of news gathering and dissemination. He said that media persons working on the field as well as those on the desk are warriors who are continuously rendering their valuable service to society even in these challenging circumstances.

The Chief Minister further said that the Government would continue to provide necessary support and encouragement to the media fraternity in the State.

The president of the Press Club of Sikkim thanked the Chief Minister for the gesture. He also praised the Chief Minister for the timely steps taken by the State Government to keep the State free from COVID-19 thus far.

On the occasion, senior reporter of *The Sikkim Express*, Dichen Ongmu Bhutia, made a personal contribution towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for COVID-19. Bhutia thanked the State Government for the timely response in keeping the State free from COVID-19.

Arunachal to have two COVID-19 hospitals

CORRESPONDENT

ITANAGAR, April 21: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has said that the State will have two separate COVID-19 hospitals – one at Itanagar for the western zone and the other at Pasighat for the eastern zone.

“In Pasighat, an Ayurveda institute has been identified as COVID-19 hospital. For Itanagar, a suitable place will be identified as COVID-19 hospital somewhere in an isolated area. This is to let TRIHMS (hospital at Naharlagun, which was converted into COVID-19 hospital) attend to normal patients,” stated a CMO release here.

The decision to set up the two COVID-19 hospitals in the State was made public by the Chief Minister today while

interacting with members and district presidents of the BJP Mahila Morcha through video conferencing. The video conferencing was also attended by State BJP Mahila Morcha president Higo Aruni. This was the third video conference the Chief Minister had held with party workers on COVID-19 this month.

During the interaction, Khandu urged the Mahila Morcha leaders to spread the message on wearing of face masks and practising social distancing to combat COVID-19.

“The Chief Minister urged them to spread words on social distancing, on mandatory use of face masks (when one steps out of home), and on maintaining all safety guidelines,” the CMO release said.

Khandu urged the party members to encourage people to exercise caution

and maintain safety measures, while pointing out that once the lockdown was lifted, people stranded outside the State would start rushing in and that is when strict measures would be needed to stop the spread of the deadly virus.

The Chief Minister stated that due to risk of the virus entering Arunachal Pradesh through potential carriers coming from outside the State, 11 check gates along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border have been made operational. Frontline workers on duty in these check gates are being provided with all safety kits and equipment, he said.

The Chief Minister also assured that the State would have no shortage of personal protection equipment (PPE) kits, and an order would be placed for more kits.

2 private hospitals empanelled for general patients in Tura

CORRESPONDENT

TURA, April 21: Following concerns raised by residents of the Garo Hills following a notification converting the Tura Civil Hospital into a full-fledged COVID-19 hospital, a new notification has empanelled the Tura Christian Hospital

and the Holy Cross Hospital here for all general patients, including emergency cases.

A release from the Superintendent of the Tura Civil Hospital, stated that since the Tura Civil Hospital has been notified and converted as a COVID-19 hospital with effect from

April 20 for focused treatment of any suspected and infected cases of COVID-19, all general patients, including emergency cases, will now be attended to, at the Christian Hospital and the Holy Cross Hospital.

Further, since these two hospitals are empanelled for

MHIS, the patients can avail of MHIS facilities in them. Those patients without MHIS cards can make new cards instantly at the two private hospitals. Moreover, if the patients need specialised consultation, the authorities of the hospitals can call specialists from the Tura Civil Hospital.

Manipur CM calls for extra vigil along border

CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL, April 21: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh today said that the State needs to maintain extra vigil along the border. He was speaking while distributing preventive aids to chief medical officers (CMOs) of various districts under the Local Area Development Fund of Lok Sabha member (Manipur Outer) Lorho S Pfoze here.

Maintaining that Mao, Behiang and the border areas of Kamjong and Tengnoupal districts are vulnerable, the Chief Minister said that he had directed the State police chief to reinforce the force in Churachandpur district and increase the number of check posts.

He said the State cabinet had also discussed opening of grocery kiosks in some border areas to discourage crossing of border by people to purchase essential items.

The Chief Minister asserted that a systematic approach is required to overcome the current situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and added that the Government would not tolerate if anybody is found supplying substandard medical items to frontline workers.

In today's distribution programme, 85 thermal scanners, 930 PPE kits, 510 N-95 masks, 26,000 three-layered masks, 25,500 gloves, 85 oximeters, 8,500 surgical caps and 85 sanitizers which were procured with funds from MP Lorho's LADF, were distributed to the CMOs.

One BiPAP ventilator each was also handed over to the CMOs of Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong, Tengnoupal and Jiribam and the Medical Officer of the Mao PHC.

In his speech, MP Lorho said that 13 out of the total 19 districts of the State partially or fully fall under the jurisdiction of the Manipur Outer



Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh speaking at a programme held for distribution of medical items, in Imphal on Tuesday. – Photo: Correspondent

Parliamentary constituency. Health and Family Welfare Minister L Jayantakumar, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Karam Shyam, Public

Health Minister L Dikho, MLAs Awangbow Newmai (Tamei) and Th Satyabrata (Yaikul), MP Lorho S Pfoze and Tamenglong Autonomous District Council chair-

man Namsinrei Panmei also attended the function.

Manipur Governor: Governor Dr Najma Heptulla on Monday interacted with deputy commissioners of 16 districts through video conferencing at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal. The conference was held to take stock of the preparedness in each district during the ongoing lockdown, supply and distribution of food items and essential goods, and the grievances redress mechanism, a report of the DIPR, Manipur, stated. As many as 11,126 migrant workers have been provided dry rations in Imphal West district and rice distribution has been completed in two Assembly constituencies of the district. The process is on for four other constituencies.

The Governor praised the DCs for their hard work and called for random screening as a precautionary measure.

DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY DIBRUGARH
(for faculty positions under the Dibrugarh University)

NOTIFICATION

It is hereby notified to all concerned that last date for submission of application forms for various teaching posts advertised vide Advt. No.A-1/2020 dated 17.03.2020 has been extended until further notification and fresh date for submission shall be notified in due course of time.

Sd/- Registrar

ASSAM POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
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SHUTDOWN NOTICE

It is for general information to all our valued consumers that due to construction of new 11 KV line at MT Road from upcoming 33/11 KV Geeta Mandir DSS, power supply of a portion of 11 KV Goetanagar Feeder under Zoo Road ESD will be interrupted from 11:00 hours to 13:30 hours w.e.f. 22/04/2020 to 29/04/2020. The affected areas will be Kanya Mahabidyalaya Path, Girl Path, Arunoday Path, Anupam Path, Bhagadutta Path and adjacent areas.

The undersigned reserve the right to charge the lines at any time after or before completion of the work. Inconvenience caused to our valued consumers is sincerely regretted.

Sd/- AGM, Guwahati Electrical Division(E), APDCL(LAR), Dispur.

Please pay your energy bill on time and help us to serve you better!

NEWS IN BRIEF

CRPF distributes food items



DOOMDOOMA, April 21: The officers and jawans of 87/B battalion of CRPF stationed here distributed food items and sanitisers among 129 tea labour families of Palong Line of Raidang Tea Estate here on Tuesday. Led by the commander of the battalion, Pramod Kumar and Sub-Inspector Kamal Khaklari, the CRPF personnel distributed these relief materials among the labourers with the help of the Line Chowkidar Deepak Tanti. It can be mentioned here that the officers and jawans of the CRPF battalion contributed some amount from their salary and distributed these relief. — Correspondent

Blood donation camp

SIVASAGAR, April 21: RESCUE, an NGO, organised a blood donation camp at Sivasagar Civil Hospital recently to which a host of youths responded and donated blood at a critical time when the hospital was facing great difficulty for shortage of blood. Dr Akhil Hazarika, in-charge, Blood Bank, instructed the members and technical staff to abide by COVID-19 precautionary measures when collecting blood including collecting the donor's full history. Over 35 youths donated blood during the day. — Correspondent

Lockdown violation at Gossaigaon

GOSSAIGAON, April 21: Today being Tuesday, the market day at Gossaigaon, a huge gathering was seen in front of the SBI, the Assam Gramin Vikash Bank and UCO Bank alongwith their Customer Service Points for withdrawal of money by accounts holders through open violation of lockdown and social distancing. The O/C, alongwith the CISF and APBn jawans warned the pedestrians not to gather on roads, and that they should move alone for their work. People and motorcycle riders were asked to avoid riding motorcycles. A few motorcycle riders were apprehended at the Chariali by the Police. — ANN Service

Theft at school

GOSSAIGAON, April 21: Amidst lockdown, on the night of April 19 at 1 am, thieves broke into the Sankardev Vidya Niketan English medium high school complex and breaking the lock of the Pradhanacharya's office chamber, looted all the cash in the cash box amounting to Rs 14,000. The incident came to notice the next day morning when the pradhanacharya, Prafulla Bharali saw the lock broken. Bharali later filed an FIR with the Gossaigaon Police. — ANN Service

Fund donated to CM Relief Fund

GOSSAIGAON, April 21: The Gossaigaon Bazar Byabsayee Samitee (new building), donated Rs 10,000 to the Chief Minister of Assam's Relief fund through the Additional Deputy Commissioner, I/C, Gossaigaon subdivision on April 20 to fight the novelcorona pandemic. — ANN Service

Reopening of book stalls uncertain

MANGALDAI, April 21: Uncertainty shrouds the reopening of the book stalls here at Mangaldai town and its surrounding areas though the Chief Secretary and the DGP of the State in a joint press conference on Monday did mention granting permission to open the book stalls dealing with text books for three hours a day with a maximum of three days in week. Talking to this correspondent Pranabjyoti Saha, a prominent book seller and owner of Pioneer Book Stall 'Jnanjyoti' said, "We are constantly getting queries from customers and book lovers over phone since morning today but we are unable to give them a clear answer. When I enquired from the ADC and Circle Officer, both replied that they have not received any instructions from the government".

Vegetable farmers of Tinsukia hit by lockdown, natural calamity

CORRESPONDENT

DOOMDOOMA, April 21: At a time when many districts in Assam are dependent on their own production of vegetables as the respective administrations have ordered an indefinite ban on entry and exit of all vegetables carriers in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, farmers in Tinsukia district are facing hardship for protecting their vegetables produced in their fields due to storm and hailstorm. Moreover, due to the ongoing lockdown, the farmers failed to transport their produce to the market.

Debojit Moran, a farmer with his agricultural fields at Tengapani village under Hahkhathi Gaon Panchayat in Tinsukia district, which shares its border with Namsai district of eastern Arunachal Pradesh, said: "Farmers like us are in great distress these days due to rain and

storm-induced damage. Yet we will struggle hard to supply vegetables to the people of our district amidst the ongoing lockdown."

"Most of the daily wage earners have returned to their ancestral villages and will return only when the lockdown is over. So I have come to the field with my family members to collect all the vegetables ourselves as early as possible to prevent them from rotting.

To supply these vegetables to other parts of the district, we have to face a lot of trouble. The link roads are in poor condition and the Zubeen Garg Setu has also been damaged. We are dependent on a single boat. Moreover, due to the lockdown, regular vehicles in which we use to transport our produce are not plying and we are facing much trouble in supplying our vegetables to various markets in the district," Moran added.

He lamented that they did not get adequate

price for their produce. "Retailers from urban areas purchase our produce at very cheap price and sell them in the markets at exorbitant rates," Moran said.

"This year our production is good. Our major worry is how to store our produce during this period. With no other option available, we have to keep them in the open field. We don't have any space to store them in our small house. If the rain continues, or if our produce get stolen, then our toil will be ruined. The longer the produce stays in the field, the higher is the risk," Bhagyawati Moran, another farmer said.

The farmers have lost at least 20 per cent of their produce to natural calamities. To add to their woes, many farmers have outstanding dues and cannot afford crop damage. These poor farmers have sought some special package from the government to overcome the present crisis.

Farmers to get seeds very soon: Atul Bora

CORRESPONDENT

BARPETA, April 21: The Agriculture department of the State is fully prepared to assist the farmers in view of the current pandemic COVID-19. This was disclosed by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Atul Bora here on Monday afternoon.

Bora who was here to assess the situation due to the ongoing lockdown informed that there is no proof that the coronavirus is transported through vegetables. However, he suggested that vegetables be consumed after being washed in hot water. He suggested that the period of lockdown may be extended in case the infection rate increases.

The minister stated that his department has chalked out a specific action plan to keep the agro-based economy of the State healthy and as part of the plan, seeds will be supplied to the farmers very soon. He requested the cultivators to work in their farmlands keeping in mind the principle of social distance. He also assured of regular and uninterrupted supply of fodder with a strict warning to hoarders and black marketers.

Referring to the Pradhan Mantri Krishak Kalyan Nidhi, Bora informed that 27 lakh farmers of the State will be provided an amount of Rs six lakh under this scheme and the first instalment of Rs 2,000 will be disbursed soon. Besides, Rs 5,000 will be given to each farmer under the Chief Minister's agri-equipment scheme. He stated that the Finance department has released Rs 150 crore to help the farmers.

Earlier, the minister attended a review meeting here in presence of several MLAs and officers. He informed that 1.40 lakh farmers of the district will be given crop seeds free of cost. He urged all concerned to work with dedication during these tough times so that the base of the economy is not destroyed. He instructed the Deputy Commissioner to look into the problems of the farmers and make adequate arrangements for sale of vegetables, fish and meat.

Minister reviews COVID-19 preparedness at Dhakuakhana

ANN SERVICE

DHEMAJI, April 21: State Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Naba Kumar Doley reviewed preparedness to tackle the COVID-19 situation at Dhakuakhana Sub-Division recently with the local administration.

A meeting was held in this connection at the digital classroom of Dhakuakhana College that day by maintaining strict social distancing protocol. The proceedings were initiated by SDO (Civil) of Dhakuakhana Sub-Division Arindam Boruah.

Besides the administrative officials of the subdivision, the meeting was also attended by a number of representatives of around 30 local organisations.

In the meeting, Minister Doley took stock of the availability of foodgrains and smooth flow of essential commodities in the subdivision, besides discussing problems faced by the people of Dhakuakhana, from the sub-divisional administration.

After a threadbare discussion, the meeting resolved to form three committees and a fund with the name 'Sarathi' under the joint aegis of Minister Naba Kumar Doley and Dhakuakhana sub-divisional administration in order to extend helping hand to the poor and needy people during the current lockdown.



Family members receiving prisoners released from the detention camp in Tezpur Central Jail on parole during the nationwide lockdown in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak at Tezpur, on Tuesday. — UB Photos

Lockdown brings misery to rural folk

CORRESPONDENT

NALBARI, April 21: On other days, Govinda Deka of Kathupha village in Nalbari district drives an Uber at Guwahati earning livelihood for his five-member family. His business has stopped since March 18 due to the lockdown for the COVID-19 outbreak.

"My family has been facing a lot of problems as my business has stopped," the youth said. He further said that as the situation is not such that normalcy will come shortly, there is no possibility that his Uber service will run again in a

short time. "I have no alternate income also to compensate for the bank instalment, the insurance premium of my vehicle," he lamented. He stated that since his income has stopped, his family will have no alternative but to starve in the coming days. "Panic-stricken people will not utilise the service of public vehicles like Uber even if the lockdown is over," Deka felt.

Another youth of the village, Satyendra Deka drives a tempo from Bijulighat to Nalbari on the Hajo-Nalbari Road. But the ongoing lockdown has also brought to a standstill his small business. While

talking to this correspondent, Satyendra said that he has no alternative income and the Prime Minister's Garib Kalyan Yojana has failed to cover him. Finding no option, he has called upon the Government authority to issue him a job card to compensate for his income. He also opined that the common people in this situation will not be in a mood to take a tempo to travel from one place to another. Govinda and Satyendra are not the only victims of the lockdown. Most of the people of rural areas in Nalbari district have lost their livelihood and are facing a bleak future.

Licences of some PDS agents, LPG dealers suspended

CORRESPONDENT

TEZPUR, April 21: Following complaints from a section of customers, the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs department has issued show cause and suspended the trade licences of PDS traders and LPG retailers of the district.

In an order dated April 19, 2020, Deputy Director, F&CS, BC Bordoloi has placed the PDS licence of Sitaram Chouhan, agent of M/s Rangajan SS Ltd under suspension for not having taken any permission to close his shop, violating the terms and condition of Licence Sl. No. 4, 8(2) and Clause 14 of the APDA Order, 1982. In two separate orders, the Deputy Director, F&CS, has also suspended the PDS licence of Md Zahid Hussain, agent of M/s Rangajan SS Ltd and of Lakhani Lal Sahu, a PDS agent of M/s Mahabhairab SS Ltd, for not issuing PDS/TPDS articles to the consumers properly and for not properly maintaining Stock and Price Board, violating the terms and condition of Licence Sl. No. 4, 14, and

18 and Clause 14 of the APDA Order, 1982 and Clause 5 of the PDS (Control) Order, 2001.

The Food and Civil Supplies department has tagged the ration cards of all consumers of Sitaram Chouhan with nearest agent Nira Sharma of M/s Rangajan SS Ltd for easy procurement of all PDS/TPDS articles. On the other hand, the ration cards of all consumers of Md Zahid Hussain have been tagged with nearest FPS agent Md Ibrahim Ansari of M/s Rangajan SS Ltd while the ration cards of Lakhani Lal Sahu have been tagged with nearest FP shop M/s Panchmile BMSS of M/s Mahabhairab SS Ltd.

Based on complaints received from various consumers and for violating the provisions of Clause 9 (C) of the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order 2000 as amended, read with the prohibited activities as laid down in Schedule 1 of the order, the F&CS Department has temporarily directed M/s BM Gas Service, LPG distributor and a dealer of IOCL located at Kamarchuburi, Tezpur to stop functioning, after it

was found that the distributor has failed to make home delivery of LPG refills and maintain stock of LPG cylinders causing great inconvenience to its customers. All consumers of M/s BM Gas Service have been temporarily tagged with M/s Tezpur Gas Agency, Main Road, Tezpur.

Moreover, all inspectors and sub-inspectors of the F&CS department have been directed to frequently visit all wholesalers and retailers in the areas under their jurisdiction and ensure that price list of all essential items are displayed in the shop premises and to take necessary legal action against any defaulting traders.

All BDOs have been directed to supervise all wholesalers and retailers dealing in grocery items, in cooperation with PRI members so that they cannot charge more from the customers than the rate fixed by the district administration. It may be noted that, in a raid carried out on Sunday, 45 LPG cylinders were seized from 2 No. Batamari area under Naduar Circle by Inspector, F&CS, Tezpur, Bikash Das.

Prodipeswar Bhattacharyya: a tribute

Our *Mama*, Prodipeswar Bhattacharyya passed away on the morning of April 12. A multifaceted personality, he was born to the great Sanskrit scholar Late Dhireswar Bhattacharyya and Late Daiboki Devi.

He passed his matriculation from Government Boys' School, Jorhat. A brilliant student all along, he was a gold medalist from Gauhati University, while doing his masters in Mathematics. Later, he went on to the Imperial College under the University of London and did his PhD in 1969. After serving in various educational institutes all over the world, he subsequently joined IIT Madras in the Department of Mathematics. He was a mathematician of international repute and instrumental in setting up of IIT, Guwahati. Later, he took over as the second Vice Chancellor of Tezpur University.

He was one of the brightest minds in the world of mathematics and also an astute administrator. The biggest quality that I remember about him was his

humility. He was a personal friend of Late APJ Abdul Kalam, but never for once could we ever find any trait of arrogance in him.

An excellent orator, he had vast command over various languages. The biggest quality, in as much as his skills

over language were concerned, was the fact that he could crack a joke in any language.

A vast reservoir of experiences from the world over, he could always make one come back wiser. An accomplished bridge player, he left an indelible impression on anyone who had come across him. Publicity shy, I feel his life and his achievements should be a case study for any aspiring young person.

His death, besides being a personal loss to me, is also a great loss to the State of Assam and the world of academics.

Today on his *adyashradha*, I pray to the Almighty so that his departed soul rests in peace, wherever he may be. — Jishnu Baruah



Wild buffaloes creating panic among farmers by raiding crops, attacking people

MOBARAQUE HUSSAIN

MIRZA, April 21: A herd of wild water buffaloes have lately been inflicting heavy losses on the agrarian economy by repeatedly raiding a vast stretch of cropland containing boro paddy, maize, chilli, sweet potato, banana, fodder grass etc., in several villages along the Brahmaputra under Palasbari LAC in Kamrup district.

Surprisingly, the concerned forest personnel have not made any effort to drive away the marauding herd of wild water buffaloes to some other area.

A sizeable section of people at Futuri village, who are in a state of panic, lamented that till date several hectares of boro paddy, maize, chilli, sweet potato, cabbage etc., have either been devoured or damaged by the herd of wild buffaloes since the past one month.

Incidentally, it has become very difficult for the farmers to guard their standing crops in view of the ongoing lockdown. "Normally, wild water buffalo herds numbering around 8-9 take rest in the open sandy flood plains at Mohmaridia under Palasbari LAC in Kamrup district. The muscular, curved-horned herbivores often raid standing crops in over 6-7 villages located near their temporary habitat."

"Sometimes, the wild buffalo herds

move over 7-8 kms per night in search of fresh fodder, or standing crops rather. Under the circumstances, these nomadic herds need to be translocated to some other area in the collective interest of safeguarding lives of the farmers and also saving the precious food crops," observed Naksher Ali, a farmer of Futuri village, whose standing crop has been raided repeatedly by the herd since the last several days.

According to Nayeb Ali, 42, another farmer of Futuri village, the wild buffalo herds have been witnessed frequenting the standing cropland in their village as the boro paddy seems to act like a magnet in attracting the herbivores.

"How can we survive if all our precious crops, which are our only means of sustenance, is devoured by the wild buffalo herds," said Babu Ali, whose only plot of boro paddy too was finished off by the browsing herd.

The farmers claimed that after night-fall, standing boro paddy and other agricultural produce of local farmers like Akbar Ali, Babu Ali, Naksher Ali, Hasmat Ali, Amjed Ali and Kader Ali, to name only a few, were either devoured or destroyed by the marauding herds.

According to the farmers, the buffalo herds are very ferocious and liable to at-

tack anyone they see even at a distance of 1 km. Several villagers have been injured or chased by the herd. They consider themselves lucky to be still alive



A bull stands guard as the herd wallows in a water body. — Photo: Mobarque Hussain.

and kicking, that too in one piece.

It becomes very risky to collect firewood, fodder, rear domestic buffalo and cows or even engage in agriculture due to the presence of the herd under reference. Fishermen along the Brahmaputra have also become frequent target of the lumbering black herbivores.

Domestic buffalo bulls reared by the local villagers at Mohmaridia buffalo reserve have also become the target of these wild buffalo herds. The wild denizens do not

tolerate the presence of any domestic buffalo bull in the Mohmaridia buffalo reserve island, the villagers informed.

Sources pointed out that the herd of wild water buffaloes are very clever and never raid one place on two or more consecutive days. If they raid one village on a particular day, then they turn to another

village the next day so as to avoid contact with the agitated victim farmers.

According to the farmers, the herd has been frequenting crops in several villages in the area, including Futuri, Bartari, Baniapara, Biturtari, Sengratari, Kalaridia, Siyalmaria etc., thus leading to a state of panic among the farmers, who are all along at the receiving end.

It may be mentioned here that two female wild buffaloes had taken shelter at the Mohmaridia-Siyalmari Buffalo Reserve located in the Brahmaputra sandbar under Palasbari LAC in Kamrup district about 6-7 years ago.

It is believed that the two female wild buffaloes could have drifted along the flood waters of the Brahmaputra from either Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary or Kaziranga National Park. After drifting in the floodwaters for over 150-200 km or even more through the swirling waters, the two female wild buffaloes finally swam ashore and took shelter in the Mohmaridia Buffalo Reserve island.

The herd, it seems, has taken a liking to Mohmaridia as a safe habitat as hundreds of domestic buffaloes are reared by the *guwals* in the Mohmaridia buffalo reserve, which is a dense grassland full of *ikora*, *khagori*, *nal*, *jaobon* and other trees, besides herbs and shrubs.

Incidentally, the two wild female buffaloes have in the meantime given birth to calves every year since the past 6-7 years. Presently, they have become a herd of 8-9 wild buffaloes, including two adult bulls.

The adversely affected farmers have therefore demanded that the herd of wild buffaloes need be tranquilised and translocated to some wildlife sanctuary. "The wild buffaloes could be shifted to the nearby Manas National Park or even other sanctuaries," observed a nature lover on condition of anonymity.

Sources informed that tranquilising wild buffaloes was a very difficult proposition as they were very ferocious, extremely strong and bulky animals. Once tranquilised, they run the risk of running into the nearby river and drowning.

It may be mentioned here that the herd of wild buffaloes, an endangered species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, could be the target of a mob attack sooner or later, given the amount of damage the herd has repeatedly inflicted on the aggrieved villagers.

Hence, it may be prudent on the part of the authorities concerned to rescue the wild buffalo herd and translocate them to some sanctuary in the greater interest of wildlife preservation.

Oil price collapse in US not to lead to any big drop in fuel prices in India: Expert

NEW DELHI, April 21: The historic rout in oil markets that sent US crude prices plummeting to as much as minus \$40 a barrel is unlikely to translate into any big reduction in petrol and diesel prices in India as domestic pricing is based on different benchmark, and refineries are already filled up to brim and cannot buy US crude just yet.

With storage capacity already overflowing amid coronavirus-induced demand collapse, traders rushed to get rid of unwanted stocks triggering the collapse of US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for May delivery.

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) Chairman

Sanjiv Singh said the collapse was triggered by traders unable to take deliveries of crude they had previously booked because of a demand collapse. And so they paid the seller to keep oil in their storage.

"If you look at June futures, it is trading in positive territory... around \$20 per barrel," he said.

Low oil prices may seem good in short term but in the long run it will hurt the oil economy as producers will have no surplus to invest in exploration and production which will lead to a drop in production, he said.

He did not comment on retail fuel prices that have been static

since March 16.

Oil companies have not changed rates despite a fall in international prices as they first adjusted them against the increase that was warranted from a Rs 3-per-litre hike in excise duty and close to Re 1-per-litre additional cost of switching over to cleaner BS-VI grade fuel from April 1.

Petrol in Delhi is priced at Rs 69.59 a litre and diesel comes for Rs 62.29 per litre.

Meanwhile, in a statement Indian Oil Corp (IOC) said the sharp decline in crude oil prices, ultimately plunging WTI into a historic minus-\$37.63-a-barrel level

on Monday "was a result of panic selling of May 20 delivery contracts a day before its expiry date, failing which the delivery would have been necessary amidst COVID-19-related demand destruction and the storage constraints at Cushing, Oklahoma".

However, WTI futures for June-20 as well as ICE Brent for May-20 are still trading at around \$16/bbl and \$21/bbl respectively, it added.

"The negative price has no direct impact on India or Indian oil prices, as this has taken place due to crude oil produced and traded within the US. India's prices are driven partly by another bench-

mark, the Brent, which is still trading at \$25/barrel. Therefore, the retail price of fuels in India are unlikely to fall," said Amit Bhandari, Fellow, Energy and Environment Studies, Gateway House.

Also, Indian refineries are already overflowing as fuel demand has evaporated due to the unprecedented nationwide lockdown imposed to curb spread of COVID-19. So, they can't rush to buy US crude.

The refineries have already cut operating rate to half because the fuel they produce has not been sold yet. India imports 4 million barrels/day (1.4 billion barrels/year) of oil. The country has been bene-

fitting from the falling prices of oil for the last five years, when oil dropped from a peak of \$110/barrel to \$50-60/barrel last year, enabling India to invest in public service programmes.

"However, the additional \$30 fall of this week is good for India - but there is also a downside. If oil prices are too low, the economies of oil-rich gulf countries will be hurt, threatening the job prospects of the 8 million Indians working in the gulf countries. India is the largest recipient of foreign remittances due to these workers and very low oil prices will hurt this cash stream," Bhandari said. - PTI



Amul eyes 15% growth in turnover despite COVID-19 pandemic

NEW DELHI, April 21: GCMMF, which markets dairy products under Amul brand, expects its turnover to grow 15 per cent this fiscal year from Rs 38,550 crore in 2019-20 despite economic slowdown caused by the nationwide lockdown to control coronavirus outbreak.

The household consumption of milk and other dairy products is expected to rise and will compensate any temporary loss of sales caused by closure of hotels, restaurants and cafeterias (HoReCA segment) during the ongoing lockdown period, said RS Sodhi, Managing Director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF).

"COVID-19 will not have any impact on demand of the food products. Our sales in value terms during this month are at par with the same month last year. The demand of some products has come down but at the same time sales of many products have risen," Sodhi told PTI in an interview.

Asked about the outlook for this fiscal year, he said: "We expect our turnover to grow by 15 per cent."

Regarding sales, he said the demand for fresh milk has declined by 8 per cent as hotels and restaurants are closed, while sales of butter, ghee, paneer, cheese and milk powder have gone up in the range of 20-35 per cent as people are consuming more. - PTI

Kia Motors plans to offer financial support to dealers

NEW DELHI, April 21: Kia Motors today said it has come up with various initiatives to financially support its dealer partners amid difficult business environment due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The company said it has formulated a programme to help its dealers steer through the challenging phase, which includes multiple initiatives to sustain and improve cash flow to the dealer partners.

The auto-maker said it would provide support in terms of interest cost of dealer stock, including vehicles in physical and transit stock. Besides, unutilised dealer funds lying with the company have already been remitted back to their current accounts, it added.

Further, all the accepted service claims for warranty have been credited to the dealers' accounts, Kia Motors said.

The company said that warranty payments have been credited to dealers and the company would provide clearance on priority within 15 days post lockdown for all dealer invoices. - PTI



Beekeepers harvest honey from artificial beehives at an apiary during the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the coronavirus, on the outskirts of Jammu on Tuesday. - PTI

I-T dept sends e-mails to 1.72 lakh assesseees over outstanding tax dues

NEW DELHI, April 21: The income tax department has sent e-mails to 1.72 lakh assesseees, including start-ups, companies and individuals, who have outstanding tax demands as well as tax refunds, asking them to provide an update on the payment.

Since April 8, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has been fast-tracking refund payments to help taxpayers in the COVID-19 pandemic situation and has till date issued nearly 14 lakh refunds involving an amount of over Rs 9,000 crore to various taxpayers including individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), proprietors, firms, corporates, start-ups, and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The CBDT in a statement said its e-mail seeking clarification from all those

who are entitled to get tax refund but also have outstanding tax to pay cannot be misconstrued as harassment.

"An opportunity is provided by the department to the assessee to either clear the demand or intimate the status of said demand to the I-T department. Invariably, such communication is made by the department by sending an e-mail to the assessee informing it of the quantum of outstanding demand and providing an opportunity to pay the demand or respond with evidence regarding payment of the same if already made, or update the status of any other action on it," it said.

The CBDT said that the assesseees are required to furnish details of the pending demand, whether it has been paid or

has been stayed by any appellate/competent authority so that the department could keep the same in abeyance and do not deduct this amount from refund.

"Thus, following the existing procedure of recuperation of outstanding demand, similar mails have also been sent to 1.72 lakh assesseees including start-ups to intimate to the I-T department, the status of the demand outstanding and whether it has been stayed by the competent authority so that appropriate action can be taken for release of refunds without delay to the start-up," it added. The CBDT said these e-mails are part of faceless communication and are auto-generated under Section 245 of the I-T Act in refund cases where there is any outstanding demand payable by the assessee. - PTI

Jewellery brands go online for Akshaya Tiritiya sales this year

BENGALURU/CHENNAI/MUMBAI, April 21: Tata jewellery brand Tanishq, Kalyan Jewellers, and Senco Gold & Diamonds have announced their plans of taking Akshaya Tiritiya sales online this year with stores remaining shut due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

The Tanishq offer is on from April 18 to April 27 on its e-commerce platform - www.tanishq.co.in.

Once the situation returns to normalcy and services resume, the customers can either opt to go to the store and pick up their jewellery or get it delivered at their doorstep, Tanishq said in a statement.

Akshaya Tiritiya is also a traditional anchor for a lot of Tan-

ishq's customers, with nearly 54 per cent of its regular Akshaya Tiritiya buyers expressing their interest to pursue the tradition of bringing gold as a harbinger of good times, it said.

Ajoy Chawla, CEO, Jewellery Division at Titan Company Ltd, said: "Contactless shopping experience throughout will be a new experience for us and for our customers as well... We have launched new technology initiatives such as video-calling feature, live-assisted chat on our website and setting up of a remote war room to resolve any customer query in real-time to name a few."

On the other hand, jewellery retailer Kalyan Jewellers has announced sale of gold

ownership certificates through online platform in view of Akshaya Tiritiya and the nationwide lockdown in force to contain spread of coronavirus.

According to company officials, customers can purchase the precious metal from two grams upwards following which a gold ownership certificate would be sent to them on the day of Akshaya Tiritiya based on the customer recommended platforms.

The gold ownership certificate would indicate the person owns the yellow metal with a certain amount of value fulfilling the tradition of purchasing gold on Akshaya Tiritiya day, they said.

"This is the first time in dec-

ades we are in a state of lockdown during the Akshaya Tiritiya period. This time around, owing to the lockdown, our social media channels are flooded with queries on purchase of gold," Kalyan Jewellers CMD TS Kalyanaraman said.

Senco Gold and Diamonds has also announced innovative online offers for its customers looking to buy gold this Akshaya Tiritiya. Under the offer, which runs on April 22-27, customers can lock in the gold price of the day when they complete the online booking, a release said here. Once the lockdown is lifted, customers can either go to the store to collect their jewellery or get it delivered at their doorstep. - Agencies

CBIC extends export, import of goods without bonds till May 15

NEW DELHI, April 21: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) today extended the facility given to businesses to import and export goods without furnishing bonds to the customs authorities till May 15 in view of the extension of the lockdown period till May 3.

Earlier this month, the CBIC had extended similar relaxation till April 30. However, with subsequent extension of lockdown, it was felt that the relaxation needed to be longer to facilitate trade.

As per the revised circular issued today, the CBIC said that importers and exporters will need to furnish an under-

taking to the customs authorities, which is required during customs clearance, till May 15. Consequently, the date of submission of proper bond in lieu of which the undertaking is being temporarily accepted is extended till May 30, 2020, the circular said.

In addition, the CBIC has said that the undertaking in lieu of bond will have to be submitted by the registered e-mail ID of the Import-Export Code (IEC) number holder or their authorised customs broker. In addition, customs offices may prescribe uploading of the undertaking on e-Sanchit (e-

Storage and Computerised Handling of Indirect Tax Documents) for paperless processing, uploading of supporting documents.

The relaxation will, however, be reviewed at the end of the lockdown period, CBIC said in the circular.

The relaxation has been given by CBIC after exporters brought to notice the problems faced by them to get notarised stamp paper for furnishing bonds during the lockdown. The undertaking will allow for legalised system of clearing goods by the Customs department till the time the proper bond could be furnished. - IANS

Over 11.37 lakh trucks, 2.3 lakh transporters linked on e-NAM: Agri Ministry

NEW DELHI, April 21: More than 11.37 lakh trucks and 2.3 lakh transporters have registered on the electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) platform to ensure faster movement of farm produce from mandis to other locations during the COVID-19-induced lockdown, the Union Agriculture Ministry said today.

They have registered under the module of Uberrisation of logistics aggregators, recently launched on e-NAM platform to help traders find out transporters in their vicinity for quick movement of the supplies from the mandis, it said.

"More than 11.37 lakh trucks and 2.3 lakh transporters are already linked to this module," the ministry said in a statement.

At present, 585 mandis (agri-markets) across 16 States and two Union Territories have been integrated on e-NAM platform, with a user base of 16.6 million farmers, 1.28 million traders and 70,934 commission agents.

The ministry also said that it has launched a mobile app called 'Kisan Rath' to help farmers provide transportation facility for movement of produce from farm to mandis during the lockdown period.

The mobile app has been designed for users of both e-NAM and non-e-NAM platforms.

To reduce crowd in mandis during the lockdown period, the ministry is encouraging farmers to use e-NAM platform, for which two additional features were added recently.

One of the feature is a warehouse-based trading module that enables farmers to sell their produce from the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)-registered warehouses notified as deemed markets.

The other trading module enables farmer producer organisations (FPOs) to upload their produce from collection centres with picture/quality parameters for online bidding without physically reaching the mandis.

"So far, FPOs from 12 States (Punjab, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhhand, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand) have participated in the trade," the ministry said.

The ministry said that States are promoting virtual trading platforms like e-NAM thereby reducing human intervention in handling of the produce. - PTI

HDFC cuts home loan rate by 15 bps

NEW DELHI, April 21: Leading mortgage lender HDFC today slashed its lending rate by 15 basis points amid a gradual decline in cost of borrowing across the system.

The move comes after a few lenders, including the country's biggest lender State Bank of India, trimmed their lending rates.

"HDFC reduces its Retail

Prime Lending Rate (RPLR) on housing loans, on which its Adjustable Rate Home Loans (ARHL) are benchmarked, by 15 basis points (bps), with effect from April 22, 2020," the company said in a statement.

The change will benefit all existing HDFC retail home loan customers, it said.

Rates will range between

7.85 per cent and 8.15 per cent for salaried class.

Rates across the banking system have headed south in the last few months, as the RBI and the government work in tandem to propel the slowing economy. The RBI last month cut the policy rate by 75 basis points to spur growth amid the COVID-19 crisis. - PTI

COVID-19 stress on industry to extend beyond June: Survey

NEW DELHI, April 21: Economic stress on India Inc arising out of the lockdown induced by coronavirus is expected to last well beyond the first quarter of the current financial year, according to a survey.

The ASSOCHAM-Primus Partners' joint survey findings also highlighted that companies are planning deferral or cancellation of investment plans and more employers prefer to retain manpower than those seeking to reduce the headcount.

The survey was conducted across sectors, including manufacturing, infrastructure and services, with a sample size of 3,552 persons from each segment encompassing all sizes of the industry - small, medium and large.

As many as 79 per cent of the respondents pointed towards the economic impact of the COVID-19 extending beyond a single quarter with the lockdown resulting in breakdown in the supply chain - from raw materials to intermediates to finished goods and transportation to the consumer destination.

"While we expect major easing of lockdown after May 3, even if some States continue with stringent restrictions, the industry faces a long haul of challenges till the world finds a medical solution to the coronavirus pandemic. Hopefully, India remains among those least affected, aided by several factors like young population, ramp-up in health infrastructure, aided by

national lockdown, though at a huge economic cost," said ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood.

He said, "It goes to the credit of both employers and employees that we have so far avoided displacement of workforce. Companies are resorting to pragmatic solutions like reducing manpower costs and retaining the headcount, while employees are responding well to the fast developing situation being among the most important business stakeholders."

The survey found that the biggest worry, as noted by 33 per cent respondents, arose from the lack of working capital while payment of salaries with output loss and without cash realisation was the second

biggest pressure point for the industry (27 per cent).

When it comes to business revenue, over 78 per cent of the respondents said the impact in the April-June quarter would be the maximum, while it would stretch to the subsequent quarter as well.

As for manpower, the survey noted that most of the participants (36 per cent) said there would be no change in the headcount since the companies would like to retain the human resource for reopening of the economy. However, as many as 26 per cent of the respondents did feel there could be reduction in manpower even beyond 20 per cent of the payroll because of the ongoing crisis. - PTI





Screen time risks

Screen time for babies linked to higher risk of autism-like symptoms

Amid the pandemic induced lockdown across the globe when many children are at home all day sitting in front of a tablet or television due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, researchers have found that too much of screen exposure can be linked to a higher likelihood of autism spectrum disorder (ASD)-like symptoms in babies.

The study, published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, found that 12 months of babies who spend large portions of time looking at screens were more likely to show autism-like symptoms at two years of age.

"The findings strengthen our understanding of the importance of playtime between parents and children relative to screen time," said senior author David S Bennett from Drexel University in the US.

"There is a great opportunity for public health campaigns and paediatricians to educate and empower parents to possibly minimize their child's risk of ASD symptoms, which may include increasing social interaction and limiting screens at an early age," Bennett added.

For the results, during babies' 12- and 18-months well visits, their caregivers were asked about how often their baby is exposed to screens or books, and how often they play with their child. Following this group of 2,152

children from the National Children's Study the team examined how watching television or videos, as well as social playtime and reading together, were associated with ASD risk and ASD-like symptoms at two years of age as measured by the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT).

While toddlers generally are interested in interacting with others, those with ASD-like symptoms are less likely to show these social behaviors.

The findings showed that viewing screens at 12 months of age was associated with four per cent greater ASD-like symptoms, and daily playtime with a parent compared to less than daily playtime was associated with nine per cent less ASD-like symptoms.

The study backs recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics which discourages screen time in children younger than 18 months unless it is used for video chatting.

The authors noted that their study did not find an association with ASD risk, but rather with ASD-like symptoms. Future studies should explore whether this relationship is determined by children predisposed to ASD being drawn to the screens or screens contributing to ASD-like symptoms, they said.

(Source: IANS)

Kids

GN
12:00 Ogy And The Cockroaches Roll No. 21
15:00 Ogy And The Cockroaches Roll No. 21
19:00 Ogy And The Cock...
21:00 Be Cool, Scooby-Doo
22:00 Courage The Coward
23:30 The Tom & Jerry Show

Paaru
12:00 Chhota Bheem
12:30 Chhota Bheem Movie - In Rise Of Kirmada
14:00 Chhota Bheem
16:30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
17:30 Chhota Bheem
18:30 Chhota Bheem Chapat
18:30 Krishna Vs Zimbara
20:00 Super Bheem
21:00 Grizzy And The Lem...
22:00 Mr. Bean
23:00 M.A.D.
23:30 Grizzy And The Lem...

Entertainment

SONY SAB
12:00 Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah
18:30 Partners Trouble Ho Gayi Double
19:00 Tera Kya Hoga Alia
19:30 Tenali Rama

Colors
12:00 Kundali Bhagya
13:00 Tujhe Hai Raabta
14:00 Kasamh Se
15:00 Choti Bahu
16:00 Pavitra Rishta
17:00 Brahmaraakshas
18:00 Kumkum Bhagya

rishtey
12:00 Swaragini
13:00 Udaan

StarPlus
12:00 Bidaai
13:00 Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai
14:00 Mere Angne Mein
15:00 Diya Aur Baati Hum
16:00 Saath Nibhaana Saathiya

Movies

UTV MOVIES
10:30 Suryavanshi
13:30 Hum
17:00 Prem Ratan Dhan Payo
19:55 Kudradd
22:50 Pyaar Ko Khel Nahin

WB
22:40 Timeline

HBO
12:10 Austin Powers in Goldmember
13:30 Beneath
14:55 Dance Flick
16:10 Horrible Bosses
17:40 Hotel for Dogs
18:00 Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit
21:00 17 Again
22:40 Timeline

HBO
11:40 Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen
13:50 Godzilla: King of the Monsters
16:10 What Men Want
18:10 Kung Fu Panda 2
18:40 Madagascar
21:00 The Terminal
23:10 War of the Worlds

STAR MOVIES
21:40 Con Air

STAR GOLD
23:25 Supreme Khiladi 2

Infotainment

NAT GEO WILD
12:00 Deadly Instincts
13:00 Wild Families
14:00 Cave Cross Of Gabon
15:00 Survival Of The Fittest
16:00 Animal Fight Club

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL
12:00 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
13:00 Monster Fish
14:00 Primal Survivor
15:00 Snakes In The City
16:00 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
17:00 Rescued
18:00 Brain Games
18:30 Science of Stupid
19:00 World's Most Extreme
20:00 50 Days 50 Stories
21:00 Primal Survivor
22:00 Running Wild With Bear...
23:00 Airport Security Madrid

ANIMAL PLANET
12:00 Wildest Survival
13:00 Animals Unleashed
14:00 Animal Planet Exclusives
14:30 Just Animals
14:30 Nature's Strang
15:00 Meet The Peng
15:30 Coyote Peterson
16:00 How Do Animals Do
16:30 The Cute Ones
17:00 World's Wildest
18:00 Bizarre Beasts
19:00 Animal Planet Exclusives

HISTORY TV
12:00 Forged In Fire
12:30 Ancient Aliens
13:30 Pawn Stars
14:00 Storage Wars
14:30 Food Tech
15:00 OMI Yeh Mera India
16:00 Forged In Fire
16:30 Counting Cars
17:00 Storage Wars
17:30 Shipping Wars
18:00 Modern Marvels
19:00 Idiot TV
19:30 Pawn Stars
20:00 OMI Yeh Mera India
21:00 Forged In Fire
22:00 Pawn Stars
22:30 Storage Wars
23:00 Forged In Fire

Regional

NEWS LIVE
07:00 Breakfast Live
08:00 Live at 8
09:00 Good morning Assam
10:00 Assamese news
11:30 Katha Bara (R)
12:00 Mid Day Live
13:00 Assamese Telefilm
14:30 Afternoon Prime
17:30 Guwahati Bisesh
18:00 Guwahati Live
18:30 Breaking @ 6:30
19:00 Assamese Prime Time
20:00 Discussion Show
21:00 Super Prime Time
22:00 Live at 10
22:30 Noix Guwahati
23:00 Noix Batori

18
07:45 Pratham Xongbad
14:00 Blyorl Headline
16:00 Abeler Khabar
16:30 Superfast Prime Time 100
17:00 City 18
18:00 Prime Time 18
19:00 Dintur Shironam
20:00 Porjyobekhyon
21:30 Aparadh Nama
22:00 North East Scan
22:30 Noix Xironam

raing
17:00 Xopun
17:30 Barala Kai
18:30 Xopun Aasutia Rang
20:00 Jonaki Kareng
20:30 Xopun
21:00 Oi Khapla
21:30 Bah Amarawati Bah
22:00 Borola Kai

SONY TEN 1
11:00 ICC CWC
18:30 IPL Hls
19:00 Great Knocks
20:00 IPL Hls
20:30 Vvo IPL Hls
21:00 Great Knocks
22:00 IPL Hls
22:30 Vvo IPL Hls
23:00 Football United Special
23:30 Hero ISL Hls

SONY TEN 2
11:00 ICC CWC
18:30 IPL Hls
19:00 Great Knocks
20:00 IPL Hls
20:30 Vvo IPL Hls
21:00 Great Knocks
22:00 IPL Hls
22:30 Vvo IPL Hls
23:00 Football United Special
23:30 Hero ISL Hls

SONY TEN 1
12:00 Turf Wars
12:30 Nail-Biting Finishes
13:00 Best of Abu Dhabi
14:30 On the Line
14:30 Men in Blue Victorious
16:30 Cricket Talk
17:00 On the Line

SONY TEN 2
12:00 Turf Wars
12:30 Nail-Biting Finishes
13:00 Best of Abu Dhabi
14:30 On the Line
14:30 Men in Blue Victorious
16:30 Cricket Talk
17:00 On the Line

Regional

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17:00 On the Line

SONY TEN 2
12:00 Turf Wars
12:30 Nail-Biting Finishes
13:00 Best of Abu Dhabi
14:30 On the Line
14:30 Men in Blue Victorious
16:30 Cricket Talk
17:00 On the Line

Know your DAY

By JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Wednesday, April 22, 2020:

Super organized you will make a success of this year. Money matters will improve dramatically. Sudden profits, windfalls and opportunities are possible. Save time for your creativity. A sense of the miraculous prevails through the year's end. If single, you reach out to strengthen a desired liaison, but there is a backing away. If attached, your relationship will demand effort and energy. Offer emotional support. VIRGO offers the best advice, always.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ You are in fine form until specific financial situations come to your attention today. Time and patience are essential. Diligence on your part, rather than seeking a quick windfall, will pave the way to success. Appreciate all you have. It's a lot. Tonight: Gratitude.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ You feel sleepy until this afternoon, when you perk up. With the moon in your sign, you can do no wrong. Just watch that you're not overbearing with people. Debating about spiritual topics makes you receptive to deeper truths. Tonight: Early bedtime.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ You restore stability and feel more in control. There is time for a romantic encounter or a favorite leisure activity. You discover much about others and how they feel toward you. Seek the truth. Tonight: Catch up with old friends and colleagues.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★ You have just been through a beginning and an ending. You could now leave a tradition that you have outgrown and seek new ways. A well-traveled and well-read acquaintance can serve as your inspiration or your spiritual counselor. Tonight: Make a game plan.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Faraway friends are willing to give your career a boost. Exercising creativity and artistic skills can lead to great professional success. Successful faraway travel plans can even be finalized. Much healing, on many levels, is in process. Tonight: Watch a foreign documentary.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★ Investments, inheritances or insurance settlements might affect your security. Make sure you go over everything with a fine-toothed comb. Someone close to you is making important decisions about the future. Your income will come back. Tonight: Take a meditation class online.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Your entire concept of partnership and commitment is beginning a cycle of transformation and growth. Today marks a turning point in matters of the heart. Love connections seem especially karmic. Spend time with a child. Tonight: As you like it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Today, care must be taken to avoid those who are ill or who constitute an energy drain. Be cautious about acting upon health-related advice. Check with your own intuition and seek a second opinion if you are uncertain. Tonight: Take care of yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Balancing love and intimacy with freedom and independence has been a focus. The stars promise happiness in matters of the heart today. Children are also a big part of your day. Purchase a new article of clothing - it will become your favorite. Tonight: Very playful.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ It's a day for rest and reverie and solitude. Answers come from within. Allow nature and wildlife to draw nigh. The natural world offers peace and comfort. If you must get busy, work on home repairs and renovations. Tonight: Take a healing herbal bath.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★ You settle matters with a sibling or neighbor. There is a lot of correspondence today. Return all calls and answer emails. Yes, you can get everything done. Time passes more quickly than usual, a relief in this surreal time. Tonight: Watch an old movie.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Your values and financial priorities are in a state of transformation. Seek ways to turn antiques, investments, a hobby or a natural aptitude into a source of ready cash. Overall, this bodes well for your financial matters. Tonight: Take the night off.

Thought for the day

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.

- MILTON BERLE

LOCKHORNS

"I'M NOT SURE IF HE'S ROOTING FOR THE PLAYERS OR THE CHEERLEADERS."

By Lee Falk

"HIS MOM MUST BE WORN OUT... NOW IT'S MY TURN!"

THE PHANTOM

"RRRRRR!"
"YES, DEVIL, I KNOW I'M YOUR FRIEND!"
"I'M WORKING! GO AWAY!!!"
"IN THE BANDAR TONGUE"

BLONDIE

"MY SON JUST STARTED HIS OWN DRONE PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS!"
"WOW! GOOD FOR HIM!"
"THE ONLY PROBLEM IS, I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I'M BEING WATCHED."
"WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?"
"JUST A GUT FEELING"

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

"I LOST MY SWORD... I LOST MY SHIELD... I LOST TODAY'S BATTLE!"
"I BET YOU HAVEN'T LOST YOUR APPETITE!"
"NOT A CHANCE!"

Tribune CROSSWORD - 6874

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10				
11		12				
13		14		15	16	17
18						
20	21					
22				23		
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26	27	28		29		30
31				32		33
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						38

SOLUTION TO TRIBUNE CROSSWORD - 6874

Across: 3 America, 8 Ryder, 11 Mob, 12 Dora, 13 Ingra, 15 Canes, 18 Elk, 19 Junks, 21 Twitter, 22 Alias, 23 Lent, 24 Sailer, 25 Arenas, 29 O'er, 31 Basic, 32 Lugging, 34 Chaos, 35 Eld, 36 Snake, 37 Ally, 38 Sioke.

Down: 1 Hymns, 2 Hebrws, 3 Moun, 5 Conour, 6 Edgar, 7 Vexas, 8 Dog, 12 Dikats, 14 Mil, 15 Nicer, 17 State, 19 Jeahoun, 20 Namb, 30 Endow, 32 Lock, 33 Ill.

2 Taxer, 23 Largely, 24 Sachet, 25 Leg, 27 Rainy, 28 Nicks, 30

Down: 1 Hymns, 2 Hebrws, 3 Moun, 5 Conour, 6 Edgar, 7 Vexas, 8 Dog, 12 Dikats, 14 Mil, 15 Nicer, 17 State, 19 Jeahoun, 20 Namb, 30 Endow, 32 Lock, 33 Ill.

Across: 3 America, 8 Ryder, 11 Mob, 12 Dora, 13 Ingra, 15 Canes, 18 Elk, 19 Junks, 21 Twitter, 22 Alias, 23 Lent, 24 Sailer, 25 Arenas, 29 O'er, 31 Basic, 32 Lugging, 34 Chaos, 35 Eld, 36 Snake, 37 Ally, 38 Sioke.

Down: 1 Hymns, 2 Hebrws, 3 Moun, 5 Conour, 6 Edgar, 7 Vexas, 8 Dog, 12 Dikats, 14 Mil, 15 Nicer, 17 State, 19 Jeahoun, 20 Namb, 30 Endow, 32 Lock, 33 Ill.

HEALTH CAPSULES®

by Bron Smith

CAN SUGAR AFFECT MY BLOOD PRESSURE?

SALT HAS LONG BEEN LINKED TO HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. NOW IT HAS BEEN LEARNED THAT SUGAR ALSO RAISES BLOOD PRESSURE. SUGAR CAUSES BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS TO RISE, WHICH RAISES BLOOD PRESSURE. 15 OUNCES OF A CARBONATED SOFT DRINK HAS BEEN SHOWN TO INCREASE BLOOD PRESSURE BY 15 POINTS.

Health Capsules is not intended to be of a diagnostic nature.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

DORSA
CMUIS
BERUTT
ADEICD

Democracy consists of choosing your _____ after they've told you what you think it is
- Alan Coren (9)

SOLUTION
Corink

Answer: Democracy consists of choosing your dictators, after they've told you what you think it is you want to hear? - Alan Coren (9)



Seized vehicles during the lockdown period at a Dibrugarh police station, on Tuesday. – UB photos

Barpeta cops' aid to bell metal workers of Sarthebari

CORRESPONDENT

BARPETA, April 21: The police administration in Barpeta district has been extending its helping hands to the poor and needy since the lockdown began. They have given both cooked food and raw materials to poor people living in different parts of the district.

As part of its benevolent activities, a team of Assam Police led by Deputy Superintendent of Police Samiran Baishya distributed food items to the bell metal workers residing around Sarthebari in the district.

The team moved along several villages like Gomura, Karakuchi, Namshala and Amrikhowa and handed over bags containing rice, dal, potatoes, mustard oil, salt, pumpkin, hand sanitiser and face masks. They were assisted by office bearers of Assam Bell Metal Workers' Association, officer-in-charge of Sarthebari Police Station Anjan Boro, Chairman of Sarthebari Municipality Board Bijay Bhuyan and some local social workers.

Later talking to reporters DSP Samiran Baishya said that the district police have kept in mind about those becoming jobless due to the lockdown and have been assisting them generously. He informed that a community kitchen has been set up in the police reserve and 1000 persons are being provided cooked food everyday. He also requested the people to follow the norms of lockdown and stay home for a healthy life.

DCs intervention eases Barak Valley patients' woes

CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI, April 21: After the intervention of Deputy Commissioners of Hailakandi district of Assam and East Jaintia district of Meghalaya, the patients from Barak Valley, Tripura and Mizoram will now be able to cross the Assam-Meghalaya border during the lockdown.

The Deputy Commissioner of Hailakandi took up the matter with her East Jaintia Hills district counterpart to remove the barriers for timely treatment of patients following reports of critically ill patients from Barak Valley facing extreme difficulties in crossing through the Meghalaya side due to the lockdown.

Hailakandi Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli mailed a letter to East Jaintia Hills district Deputy Commissioner

Federick M Doph, requesting him for removal of the hurdles so that serious patients from Hailakandi in particular and Barak Valley in general referred to Guwahati could get timely medical care and treatment.

Jalli also pointed out that vehicles including ambulances with passes from the respective district administrations were not given passage despite guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

"As you may appreciate the fact that patients from Barak Valley seeking critical care for heart and kidney ailments often travel to Guwahati crossing Meghalaya through Ratacherra checkpoint. Such barriers would result in loss of precious time and cause inconvenience to patients and families," Jalli said in the letter.

Doph, in his reply, on Saturday informed his Hailakandi counterpart that necessary instructions have been issued to the Ratacherra check-point bordering Assam to expedite smooth travel of critical care patients en route to Guwahati.

Doph, while assuring his counterpart Jalli of his full cooperation on the 'matter of life and death', made a plea to her for issuing advisories from her end to all concerned to keep the papers handy and to ensure that "only one attendant and one medical staff to accompany the patient to avoid delay in clearance at the checkpoint".

The East Jaintia Hills district deputy commissioner, in his letter, cited instances of more than one attendant, besides the medical expert and driver accompanying the patient causing the delay.

3 detainees released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, April 21: Forty-nine-year-old Seema Bardhan, a resident of Joypur part-1 under Lakhipur constituency, was released on Tuesday. Silchar MLA Dilip Kumar Paul along with Biswajit Chetri of Joypur were the bailers of the woman. Later in the evening, two other women from Udharbondh constituency, Minara Begam (35) along with her 9-year-old daughter and Sulekha Das (65) were also released. Out of 56 persons left at the centre, 28 are declared foreigners, 20 Bangladeshis, 8 Rohingya nationals, Paul claimed.

State's 33 lakh farmers to get financial aid: Minister

CORRESPONDENT

NALBARI, April 21: State Minister of Agriculture Atul Bora said the agriculture sector in Assam has been adversely affected due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Addressing a press conference at the Nalbari deputy commissioner's office last evening, Bora said in order to give temporary relief to the farmers in the state, the Central government will provide Rs 6,000 to each of the 27 lakh farmers under the Prime Minister's Kisan Sanman Nidhi. At the same time, the state

government under the chief minister's special scheme will provide a cash benefit of Rs 2,500 to each of the six lakh farmers.

The minister further said to compensate the loss, the agriculture department has chalked out a massive plan to set up kitchen gardens in the state.

Bora called upon the people to change their mindset towards the COVID-19 pandemic.

He earlier reviewed the situation in the district with the deputy commissioner and high officials.

Wholesale market for vegetables at Dergaon

CORRESPONDENT

DERGAON, April 21: The Golaghat district administration is all set to start a wholesale market at an abandoned bus stand at Arengapara in Golaghat town from Wednesday.

As a result of the lockdown, the produce of the vegetables farmers in the district have been damaged as it did not find any place to be sold.

But with the active initiative of Golaghat Deputy Commissioner Bibhash Ch Modi, the District Agricultural Department has arranged the market where the farmers will be able to sell their products directly to wholesalers.

"We have started this new model for a trial run," Deputy Commissioner Modi said.

The district agricultural officer Nabin Ch Bora said that if the administration gives the permission, then the market will be a permanent one.

Street painting drive on COVID-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DIBRUGARH, April 21: The Marwari Yuva Manch in Dibrugarh has initiated a massive street painting drive particularly at the major intersections of the town with various awareness messages on COVID-19 pandemic.

The Manch has engaged the artistes from Inborn Sanat for the paintings.

The initiative of the Marwari Yuva Manch has been appreciated by the citizens of the town.

6 held for gambling in Dhubri

CORRESPONDENT

DHUBRI, April 21: Six persons were arrested by police allegedly for gambling inside a club located at the College Nagar area here on Monday evening.

Police informed that the raid was conducted in Zeus Club located near BN College.

In the raid, six persons, identified as Ankur Roy, Samiram Ch Mandal, Manoj Das, Samubhik Das, Sankar Das and Bimal Mandal, were arrested and a case (no. 523/2020) was registered under Section 188/269/271 IPC R/W Sec 14/15 of the Assam Game and Betting Act with the Dhubri Police Station. During the raid, seven mobile handsets, Rs 6,000 cash etc., were also recovered from their possession.

The club has been sealed by the district administration.

Donation: The Dhubri Idd Gah Committee, which runs the Dhubri Eid Gah field in the heart of Dhubri Town, on Monday donated to the Assam Arogya Nidhi.

The members of the committee handed over a cheque of Rs 10,001 to ADC Sharfaraj Ahmed.

State Labour Minister inspects tea gardens, distributes masks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DIBRUGARH, April 21: Labour and Tea Tribes' Welfare Minister Sanjay Kishan today visited five tea gardens in the district to personally examine the preventive steps taken by the garden management against the spread of the coronavirus among workers.

He first visited Sepon and Moran tea estates under Moran Revenue Circle.

He took stock of the health protocols being implemented in the garden to protect the workers from COVID-19. Lo-

cal MLA Chakradhar Gogoi accompanied the minister during his visit to the two gardens. He also distributed masks provided by the State government among the workers and later interacted with them.

He later visited Rajali, Namrup and Mottock tea estates. He distributed masks and interacted with the workers in the presence of Naharkatia MLA Naren Sonowal and Dulaijan MLA Teres Goala.

In Namrup, he interacted with the pluckers while they were at work. He tried to find out the level of understanding

among the workers about COVID-19.

Masks were also distributed among the workers in Ethelwood, Durgapur and Jamira tea estates by Dibrugarh MLA Prasanta Phukan and in Baughpara, Ghooronia and Mancotta tea estates by Lohaloh MLA Rituparna Baruah.

Similarly, Tingkhong MLA Bimal Bora also conducted sanitization drive at several places under Tingkhong LAC and distributed masks among workers in Tingkhong, Nilmoni, Sarojini, Azizibagh, Karangan and Joonktolie estates.

Unique gesture by Jorhat doctor!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

JORHAT, April 21: A case of a doctor of Jorhat Medical College and Hospital going out of his way to extend assistance to a patient and her attendants by dropping them in his own car by driving over 230 kms himself has brought much relief to the patient and her family members.

Dr Shankarjyoti Parashar, Assistant Professor, Pulmonary branch, JMCH, told *The Assam Tribune* today that an elderly woman with multiple ailments of Jyotipur, Naharjan Tinali of Bokakhat Civil Sub-division of Golaghat district was admitted to a private hospital (Sanjivini Hospital) here on April 16 and was under her treatment.

The patient identified as Binu Baruah was living with one of her daughters at the latter's residence and was brought to the hospital by the daughter.

Dr Parashar said that though the patient discharged on April 19 by him, he came to know on Monday (April 20) that the family members could not arrange an ambulance to take back the patient home due to the long distance and charge too was quite high.

He said that seeing their plight, instantaneously, he offered them to drop the patient and the at-

tendants, which seemed to be a big relief for them.

"I thought at this hour of crisis I should do whatever I could do to extend a helping hand to people in need," Dr Parashar stated.

He said that as the family members wanted to keep the patient at another daughter's place - Chakalia, Sepon, Dibrugarh district, he drove the patient and their two daughters to the said address which was far east of Jorhat.

After dropping the mother (patient) and a daughter of her at Chakalia, Sepon (Dibrugarh district) the doctor drove back to Jorhat and went to drop the other daughter at Bokakhat as she had no other means of transport available to return home.

Priyakshi Baruah Sarmah, the daughter of Binu Baruah with whom Baruah was residing and was brought by her to the private hospital of Jorhat, told this newspaper over phone this evening that their family cannot say in words about the magnitude of help offered by Dr Parashar.

"We did not approach him, but after coming to know about our plight he came forward immediately to help us, which was something very unexpected and we will always remain indebted to him," Priyakshi said.



Police chasing away lockdown violators at a market in Nagaon, on Tuesday. – UB Photos

AASU alleges irregularities in distribution of cash among poor

CORRESPONDENT

SIVASAGAR, April 21: The Sivasagar unit of AASU through a release today alleged gross irregularities in the distribution of Rs 1,000 in cash among all poor people who are deprived of food and other items given under BPL category in various panchayats.

The AASU team compris-

ing Sarat Hazarika, Samiran Phukan, Ashim Dutta and Dipankar Saikia today submitted a memorandum to Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner Lakhinandan Gogoi to look into the matter and take action against the members of panchayats and ward members of the town committee.

Some of the now-defunct Sivasagar Municipality Board

members have also been allegedly distributing the cash aid among the beneficiaries close to them.

In ward numbers 1, 3 and 5 under Bethari Gaon Panchayat, the people covered by National Food Security Scheme have also been given cash benefits, while the deserving poor people have been facing acute food scarcity.

Scribe bodies distribute ration, masks

CORRESPONDENT

BISWANATH CHARIALI, April 21: In the present scenario of COVID-19, Chatiya Press Club of Biswanath district distributed around 150 packets of ration today among the needy, who do not have any means to buy ration. The rations were distributed in Barbhuyan gaon, Nagayan Baruahchuk, Charajania, Gereki, Udaypur, Ghatowal, Nalbari, Bhakatgaon etc.

Each packet of ration comprised essential commodities like rice, dal, mustard oil, potatoes, onion, biscuit, soap, salt etc. President of Chatiya Press Club Pranav Ojah, Secretary Hemanga Hazarika, members Ratul Bhuyan, Ananda Handique, Sourabh Hazarika, Anjan Saikia, Sahidul Islam, Pawan Joshi, Uttam Nath and Tridip Bhuyan par-

ticipated in the distribution programme. The business community of Chatiya offered help to the scribe body in this endeavour. The club members also created awareness among the common people in the villages on COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the Biswanath district unit of Assam Press Correspondents' Union (APCU) distributed around 500 three-layered masks today among police personnel working in several police stations in the district in association with Dhiraaj Sharma, the proprietor of newspaper distributor 'Papu Refills' of Biswanath Chariali. Additional Superintendent of Police, Biswanath, Saurabh Jyoti Saikia inaugurated the programme while APCU Central General Secretary Hemanta Saikia, District Secretary Tushar Hazarika, member Shantanu Chamuah etc., were present on the occasion.



Workers of Kokrajhar tea estate staging a protest in demand of timely payment of wages and ration, on Tuesday. – UB Photos

'Protirodhi Bondhus' functional in Dima Hasao now

CORRESPONDENT

HAF LONG, April 21: 'Protirodhi Bondhus', catering to various essential services like information dissemination and awareness, tele-psycho counselling and telemedicine, e-Pashu Chikitsa (vet advice), banking services, e-store etc., by providing support digitally, has been functional in Dima Hasao.

'Protirodhi Bondhus' is a joint initiative of Common Services Centres Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC SPV) of Assam and Assam State Disaster Management Authority to fight against the pandemic COVID-19 that will disseminate

advisories and other vital information through direct and indirect modes such as live webcasting, phone call, SMS, WhatsApp, etc.

The CSC VLEs (Village Level Entrepreneur) in coordination with the field officers of DDMA will disseminate advisories, related information including dos and don'ts issued by the Health department and DDMA for the purpose of information, dissemination and awareness.

To ensure healthy mental care of citizens, especially elderly and children, staying at home for long times and buried with an avalanche of information - often

unreliable - could lead to fear, anxiety, distressed behaviour and trauma. Live counselling sessions with empanelled psychologists is being organised at such centres as necessary and medication is also prescribed as required.

Thus, a telemedicine platform is created where patients seek doctors' advice through live video-based interactive teleconsultation about non-emergency medical problems reducing the already overburdened healthcare system in the wake of the pandemic situation. Three specialties viz., allopathy, ayurveda and homeopathy are presently available. The Protirodhi Bondhus also help in getting med-

icines from nearby pharmacies.

Healthcare of farmers' livestock is taken care of through e-Pashu Chikitsa which facilitates farmers to seek veterinarian's advice right from their residence for any illness or disease of their livestock. The farmers can either call up the VLE helpdesk or visit nearby CSCs for appointment with veterinary doctors empanelled in the system.

Banking services is taken care of through Digipay - an Aadhar-enabled payment system that enables CSCs to cater to the needs of financial services in far-flung and banking-deprived areas of the country which also ensures

reduction of crowding in banks. CSCs are already providing banking services across all districts of States to relax the process of DBT under the Garib Kalyan Scheme starting from April, when money is being transferred into the accounts of farmers and also those under Jan Dhan Yojana.

Further CSC points are being utilized as stock and distribution points of essential commodities or even groceries and vegetables in coordination with the district administration. Orders may be placed to the CSCs through phone call, SMS or WhatsApp for delivery of items at their doorsteps. This service for now

has been functional in three points i.e., in Maibang, Langting and Laisong.

This is an effort to meet all possible logistical needs to cope with the challenges emerging from the prevalent situation worldwide including the State of Assam. Stress has emerged as the new challenge in the time of lockdown and prohibitory orders have seriously affected mental health of many people. Fear of financial insecurity coupled with non-availability of basic services related to day-to-day life and livelihood of the people have hurt people which may have a further psychological impact on individuals and families as a whole.

Corruption has damaged Pak cricket: Zaheer Abbas

KARACHI, April 21: Pakistan batting great Zaheer Abbas says the PCB has been "soft" in dealing with corruption in country's cricket which, according to him, has been as damaging for the game here as the 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan team.

The former captain was giving his views on the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) recent move, asking the government to criminalise fixing in sports.

"It is the right thing to do for the Pakistan board because for too long, we have been soft while dealing with corruption cases and these have led to a string of scandals which badly damaged our image and also hurt our cricket's progress," Abbas said.

"If the militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus dealt a big blow to Pakistan cricket as we were forced to play away from home, these corruption

scandals have not been less damaging to our cricket over the years," he reasoned.

Abbas said a legislation to criminalise fixing should have been pushed by the board much earlier as it would have prevented recent cases of spot-fixing.

"In the end it is Pakistan cricket which suffered as we lost good players and more importantly we sent out the wrong message to cricketers and even those who try to lure, entice and corrupt players," he said.

Known as the 'Asian Bradman', Abbas said he would like to see the board bring all those players to book, who have been found guilty or had



any involvement in corrupting the game.

"I say spare no one because this is the worst thing a cricketer can do to his country, team and sports," Abbas said.

PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani, in a recent podcast, said he has spoken to the government to legislate a law which would make match-fixing and spot-fixing criminal offences in future.

Mani said it would empower the investigators to probe bank accounts and assets of a player suspected of wrongdoing.

Abbas said he always felt sad when cases of corruption emerged because he couldn't fathom why any cricketer would get involved when

there was so much to be earned legally from the game.

"The earnings of the players from playing domestic cricket, for their national teams, in T20 leagues, endorsements, sponsorships is so much that at times, it is hard to comprehend what is wrong with the players who get caught in this web of corruption," he said.

"These bookmakers should not be spared as well," he said.

Pakistan's former Test pacer, Aaqib Javed also said in a separate interview that players found guilty of corruption should not be allowed back into the sport.

"I think in the past many times authorities took wrong decisions thinking so and so players is indispensable for us or he will win matches.

"If swift action had been taken in the past things would have been different," he said. - PTI

Cricket Australia considering five-match Test series against India

SYDNEY, April 21: Cricket Australia is considering the prospect of turning its four-match Test series against India later this year into a five-game contest as it continues looking for ways to compensate the financial losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

India's tour of Australia will begin with a T20 tri-series in October and is scheduled to end with a four-match Tests series in December. In between there is the T20 World Cup, scheduled for an October 18 start, but the mega event's future is also shrouded in uncertainty due to the global health crisis.

"If you contemplate the prospect of the international season in particular being affected, we have an issue of hundreds of millions of dollars on our hands," Cricket Australia CEO Kevin Roberts was quoted as saying by the Australian Associated Press on Tuesday.

"So it's very important that... we do everything possible to stage the season. Whether or not there's people at the venue or not... we will explore all viable options," he added.

Adding a fifth Test match in



the series, which could be played in one city at a stadium without spectators, is one of the options discussed by the financially struggling CA.

"Fortunately we have a little bit of time to work through the different scenarios with the India series. But we're not ruling out any possibility for that at this point

in time," Roberts said.

CA is also discussing hosting the T20 World Cup without any fans.

"We might not generate financial returns from that event that are as significant as the international cricket season (in Australia)," Roberts said.

"But what we do know is that the bigger returns from the broadcast rights around the event that are generated by the ICC are very important to all of our counterparts around the cricket world."

"So it's incumbent on us to do everything possible to stage and host the T20 World Cup."

With the coronavirus outbreak halting all cricketing action, CA has laid off 80 per cent of its staff for the rest of the financial year which ends on June 30. Reports suggest the board will run out of cash by August. - PTI

K-league allows practice matches

SEOUL, April 21: South Korean football clubs will be allowed to hold practice matches behind closed doors from Tuesday, the K-League said, with the season delayed by two months so far over the coronavirus epidemic.

South Korea endured one of the worst early outbreaks of the disease outside China, but appears to have brought it under control thanks to its extensive "trace, test and treat" programme.

The outbreak had prompted sports leagues to suspend or delay their seasons across the country.

Sports fans around the world have been starved of live action because of the virus, with broadcasters resorting to repeats of matches from past years, while leagues face the prospect of paying rights-holders multi-

million-dollar refunds.

But at the weekend Seoul said it would permit outdoor sports matches behind closed doors as the country is seeing a steady decline in new virus cases. The Korean Professional Football League responded late on Monday, announcing that its clubs would be allowed to play practice matches against each other from Tuesday.

No games have been confirmed yet, and a K-league spokesman told AFP that the exact schedule was under discussion between the clubs.

As well as fans being barred, media access will be limited, the K-League statement said.

As preventive measures, it added, footballers will be banned from talking to each other during matches, while handshakes with referees will also be prohibited. - AFP

Families sue helicopter company in deadly Kobe Bryant crash



Wreckage of the helicopter that crashed near Calabasas, California, in which former NBA basketball player Kobe Bryant, his 13-year old daughter Gianna, and seven others were killed.

LOS ANGELES, April 21: Family members of four of the eight passengers killed in a helicopter crash with Kobe Bryant and his daughter have joined the NBA star's widow in filing wrongful death lawsuits against the companies that owned and operated the aircraft.

The suits on behalf of three members of one family, and a woman who helped coach Bryant's 13-year-old daughter in basketball, were filed electronically on Sunday in Los

Angeles Superior Court.

The pair of lawsuits comes about two months after Bryant's widow, Vanessa, the mother of Gianna, also sued Island Express Helicopters Inc., which operated the Sikorsky, and its owner, Island Express Holding Corp.

A person who answered the phone at Island Express Helicopters declined to comment and an email from The Associated Press requesting comment was not immediately returned.

Unlike Vanessa Bryant's lengthy lawsuit, the new identical 7-page cases do not name the dead pilot, Ara Zobayan, or his representative, as a defendant. All the suits allege that the two companies were careless and negligent.

One suit was filed by two surviving children of Orange Coast College baseball coach John Altobelli and his wife Keri. Their daughter Alyssa played basketball with Gianna. - AP

Ailing Dingko to be brought to Delhi by air ambulance

NEW DELHI, April 21: Asian Games gold-winning boxer Dingko Singh will be brought here on April 25 by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) to resume his treatment for liver cancer after he was forced to miss a scheduled radiation therapy session due to the ongoing coronavirus-forced lockdown. The 41-year-old, who is currently in Imphal, was due to undergo radiation therapy a fortnight back but could not come to Delhi because of the lockdown.

"He has been contacted and arrangements have been made for him to be brought here on an air ambulance to continue his radiation therapy," BFI Executive Director RK Sacheti told PTI.

Earlier, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju requested the Manipur government to take stock of the boxer's condition and extend all possible help for his treatment. - PTI

ICC Anti-Corruption council official relives horror of bombings

NEW DELHI, April 21: On this day last year, ICC Anti-Corruption council officer Steve Richardson chose to eat breakfast in the executive lounge on the ninth floor of Cinnamon Grand instead of heading down to restaurant, a decision that saved him from the Easter Bombings.

Richardson, who was in the country along with his colleagues to investigate corruption charges against Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), was staying on the ninth floor of the hotel in Colombo, one of the six locations where bombs went off in a series of blasts, killing and injuring hundreds of people across the country.

"We were in Sri Lanka doing follow-up inquiries on a long-running investigation into Sri Lanka cricket," Richardson was quoted as saying by stuff.co.nz.

"We sat down for breakfast and I said, 'Oh blimey, here we go again. Another hotel breakfast'. It does get a bit same when you have stayed in the same place for weeks, so we talked about going to the breakfast room downstairs. I decided not to because it could get very busy, with long queues."

Little did Richardson know that a suicide bomber was standing in at the Taprobane restaurant in the basement, ready to activate a blast.

"I got up to get some food and was walking back to the table when there was a massive explosion. It shook the building. A mushroom cloud came up."

"The explosion was right below us and I looked out of the window and I could see the swimming pool attendant was getting up holding his ears."

What followed was chaos and Richardson just hoped the building was strong enough to withstand the explosion.

"Another woman was getting up and ran off to pick up her handbag. She had been blown off her feet."

"One thing we were concerned about was that the explosion was so big it might bring the building down. You hope the building will stay structurally safe, but my mind went back to 9/11."

He recalled how the people injured were being sent to hospitals in rickshaws and cars and whatever transport was available at that point of time. - PTI



Steve Richardson

Serie A commits to finishing season after virus lockdown

MILAN, April 21: Serie A insisted that they were committed to finishing the season despite reports seven clubs are against a return to action as the coronavirus pandemic continues to afflict Italy.

"The Lega Serie A Council that met today unanimously confirmed its intention to complete the 2019-2020 season, if the government allows it to take place," Italy's top flight said in a statement on Monday.

It added that any resumption will take place "in accordance with regulations laid out by FIFA and UEFA" and the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), and "in compliance with medical protocols to protect the players".

Brescia, Torino, Sampdoria, Udinese, SPAL, Genoa and Sardinian outfit Cagliari do not want to play because of the "incalculable risk" of restarting, according to reports in Italy.

Six of those clubs are situated in the north of Italy which has been hardest hit by a virus which has killed over 24,000 people.

No football has been played in Italy since March 9 with the current lockdown measures in the country extended to May 3.

Sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora will meet with FIGC officials midweek, but he warned he was not sure that Serie A teams can even resume training.

"I am not giving any assurances for the start of the championship or training on May 4, if the conditions for the country do not exist beforehand," Spadafora told Tg2 Post. - AFP

Nadal frustrated by tennis lockdown, Federer happy

MADRID, April 21: Rafael Nadal expressed his frustration that tennis players remain unable to practise due to the coronavirus pandemic, while Roger Federer revealed he was happy with his recovery from knee surgery.

The Spanish government has extended the country's state of alarm until May 9, with the entire population confined to their homes except a small number working in specific sectors, leaving Nadal perplexed as to why he can't train.

"It's true I don't understand very well because we cannot play tennis when many people are going to work and even more so in our sport, where we keep at a large and safe distance and we play on opposite sides of the court," world number two Nadal said during an Instagram Live.

"But I understand that we are in a very critical situation, that the government is dealing with something unprecedented and I also understand that the last thing they think of is who can train and who cannot train."

"I understand the situation and obviously there are many things that are not logical but you have to accept the rules." - AFP

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"I understand the situation and obviously there are many things that are not logical but you have to accept the rules." - AFP

'Chess has adapted well to COVID-19 shutdowns with online events'

CHENNAI, April 21: Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand feels chess has adapted quite well to the coronavirus-forced shutdowns across the globe by simply going online just as he has been doing to stay in touch with family while being stuck in Germany for a couple of months now.

Anand had gone to Germany in February to compete for SC Baden OOO in the Bundesliga Chess. However, travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have ensured that he has been unable to return home.

"I would say Germany is pretty comfortable. I am in a small town. I have had a chance to go out a couple of times for a walk... of course, keeping a safe



distance," he told PTI from his current base near Frankfurt.

"Also, (I) do some shopping and essential stuff like that. I have friends living nearby and that's a big comfort," he said.

The 50-year-old reflected on sports in time of worldwide lockdowns and said chess seems to have coped well so far.

"Nobody really knows what the impact (of COVID-19) on the economy will be. First of all, let's take chess. Chess was already something that happened a lot on the internet. So, it has been relatively smooth to adapt to going completely online," he pointed out.

"Even so, it is a bit of shock that so many tournaments got cancelled and everyone is sit-

ting at home. Playing chess on the internet is lot of fun

"(But) organising a chess tournament (online) requires some skill. Where do you place the arbiter? How do you monitor things? and so on... yet chess has adapted relatively easily," he added.

As for how he has been doing while being away from his family for such a long duration, Anand said he has tried to stay positive by devoting time to some aspects of his game, which he ignored earlier.

"I have a chance to do some chess work that I never had time for. I have a lot of time to wander around the internet just looking for information on this or that.

"One nice thing is that not

only do I have a fair amount of free time, I have a lot of old friends who also have a lot of free time and we are able to connect and talk a lot," Anand said.

The Chennai-based legend said he is pretty comfortable overall.

"Germany is having a mild case of coronavirus in the sense that their mortality rate is very low. People here seem fairly relaxed. All in all the only problem is that I am cut off from home but otherwise I am doing okay here," he said.

While in Germany, Anand enjoyed his maiden commentary assignment during the Candidates event in Yekaterinburg in Russia, which was called off midway due to the pandemic. - PTI

SU DO KU

		4		5				
			7				6	
8			9		6			5
2	5							6
9	1		8		5		2	3
6								5
1			6		3			8
	3				4			
				1		7		

Solution of last problem

3	9	7	2	5	8	6	4	1
6	1	8	4	7	3	9	2	5
4	5	2	9	1	6	8	3	7
8	7	9	5	3	1	4	6	2
2	3	1	6	4	9	5	7	8
5	4	6	8	2	7	1	9	3
9	6	5	3	8	2	7	1	4
1	2	4	7	9	5	3	8	6
7	8	3	1	6	4	2	5	9

Originating from Japan, 'su do ku' is a mind game and a puzzle that can be solved with proper reasoning and logic. Fill the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9 without repeating any.

Shri Anillesh Borgohain

Left for his heavenly abode on 12-April-2020 from where he wanted to be at his last breath - his birthplace Assam.

May his beautiful soul rest in peace and may his blessings and memories give us the strength to smile - despite the tears.

Today we join in SRADHA prayers for the departed soul from our homes

In prayers : Family & Friends