



CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY
 Join Online Live Classes for IAS/ACS
 Batch Date: 10th May, 2020
 For 3 days Free Online Demo Classes
 Call : 8811092481

p2 Nearly 4,000 Sri Lankan Navy personnel quarantined

p5 Lockdown causes Rs 34-cr loss to vegetable growers

p11 New wholesale market in Golaghat gains momentum

NEWS Capsule

Academic session

NEW DELHI, April 25: The academic session in universities and higher educational institutions can be started from September instead of July in view of the COVID-19 situation in the country, a panel appointed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) has recommended. – PTI

Also see page 3

New CVC

NEW DELHI, April 25: Sanjay Kothari, the secretary to the President, was on Saturday appointed the Central Vigilance Commissioner, according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique. The post was lying vacant since June last year after KV Chowdhary completed his tenure. – PTI

Pak missile

ISLAMABAD, April 25: The Pakistan Navy today successfully test-fired a series of anti-ship missiles in the North Arabian Sea. The missiles were fired from surface ships, fixed and rotary-wing aircraft, Navy spokesperson Rear Admiral Arshid Javed said. – PTI

Also see page 2

Sunday
 April 26, 2020
 Lights, camera, corona!
 Kalpa Jyoti Bhuyan
 The Quarantine 15 syndrome
 Joyshree Baruah
 UP CLOSE
 A social responsibility
 Partha Pratim Hazarika
 WOMEN PLUS
 SHGs to the fore
 Rousy K. Baruah
 FICTION
 Under a rock-I
 Kaustabh Kashyap
 MY SPACE
 Childhood in a COVID-19 world
 Dr. Sripama Pathak
 IN BLACK AND WHITE
 When time stood still
 Jahnabi Barua
 Plus all our regular features

JOCOSERIOUS



I don't require any domestic help. My husband has become an expert in doing household chores.



Passengers waiting for their turn to board buses at Paltan Bazar ASTC bus stand after inter-district movement was allowed by the State government for three days amid lockdown, in Guwahati on Saturday. – Photo: Samararendra Sarma

2 mass quarantine centres on Dhubri border to be ready soon

CORRESPONDENT

DHUBRI, April 25: State Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday visited different parts of Dhubri district to take a stock on the preparedness in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and inspected the work on mass quarantine centres that will come up on the Assam-Bengal border.

The government is building two mass quarantine centres in Dhubri district – one at Chagolia with up to 700 capacity and the other at Halakura with a capacity for 300. These two mass quarantine centres will be functional by May 4.

The minister said the government will build another mass quarantine centre at Srirampur of Kokrajhar district near the interstate entry gate for the travellers who would

entre Assam on or after the withdrawal of nationwide lockdown.

“Our special emphasis is

on Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts as they share border with West Bengal, where more than 500 COVID-19

positive cases have been detected,” Sarma said, adding, in the coming days more quarantine centres are needed to be constructed.

The minister also said that the health department will conduct more random tests for COVID-19 in Dhubri. “In the district we have got five COVID-19 positive cases, which we could detect after a duration of time... Therefore, we will do 50 more random sample tests each in the Bilasipara, Chapar and Dhubri areas,” he said.

The minister said it will provide information about infected persons other than those linked with the Nizamuddin and Athgaon religious congregations. He said swab samples for 150 random tests will be collected on Sunday.

COVID-19 STATUS	
WORLD	
Confirmed cases	2,840,830
Cured/Discharged	803,139
Death	199,272
INDIA	
Confirmed cases	24,942
Cured/Discharged	5,209
Death	779
ASSAM	
Confirmed cases	35
Cured/Discharged	19
Death	1

Data as on Saturday

SEE PAGE 6

Decision on opening of shops on April 27

R DUTTA CHOUDHURY

GUWAHATI, April 25: The Assam government has not slackened the lockdown norms and a decision on opening of shops other than those already notified will be taken on April 27, said Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna.

There were some confusion regarding opening of shops following an order by the Ministry of Home Affairs and some shops other than those already notified opened in parts of the State, including Guwahati, this morning. However, the government made it clear that there is no slackness of the norms and such shops were closed down later in the day.

The Ministry of Home Affairs last night issued a notification saying that the neigh-

bourhood and standalone shops as well as shops in the residential complexes registered under the Shops and Establishment Act would be able to open with 50 percent staff. The notification also said that all the employees would have to wear masks and maintain social distance.

The notification created confusion among the people, which led to opening of some shops this morning. However, when contacted, the Chief Secretary admitted that there was some lack of clarity in the notification which led to the confusion. He said that as soon as the matter came to the notice of the government, prompt action was taken and by noon, those shops were closed.

Sanjay Krishna said that the government would discuss the issue on April 27 before a decision is taken in this re-

gard. It may be mentioned here that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to hold a video conference with the Chief Ministers of all the States to review the situation in the morning of April 27. The Cabinet Secretary also had a discussion with the Chief Secretaries of all the States to review the situation today.

The Chief Secretary said that all concerned, including the police, have been directed to enforce the lockdown strictly and the inter-district movement of stranded people with permission from the respective Deputy Commissioners went on smoothly today. The government has allowed such movement in the State for three days from today.

SEE PAGE 6

4,992 passengers take bus ride on Day 1

3-day inter-dist movement amid lockdown

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: Some 4,992 passengers boarded 320 buses in eighteen districts and were bound for various destinations on the first day of the three-day conditional relaxation allowed by the Assam government for intra-state movement amid lockdown.

ASTC managing director Anand Prakash Tiwari, who is overseeing the exercise, said the total number of registered applicants through the helpline number 104 for inter-district transfer is 41,651. Lines were closed at midnight of April 23.

“Today we were able to send 4,992 passengers in 320 buses. Tomorrow we will send 12,000,” he said, adding that the maximum number of passengers – 1,667 – boarded buses in Guwahati for various destinations.

An initial text message was already sent to all applicants that their request has been accepted and they were requested to wait for the next message containing the bus and travel details.

Boarding passes were issued on registered mobile number with details of boarding point, name of passenger, date of journey, bus number, seat number, etc. The text or SMS pass is mandatory along with ID proof of passenger for boarding.

Four boarding points have been fixed in Guwahati – ISBT, Adabari, Machkhowa and Paltanbazar. For other districts, ASTC bus stands are single boarding points. In Guwahati city, 30 ASTC city buses and 200 Uber/Ola cabs were used for movement of passengers within the city.

People who have registered for the inter-district movement will receive the boarding pass on their mobile number a day prior to journey. Altogether 2,500 buses are going to be utilised for the inter-district transportation on the three days, and if required, it may be extended beyond three days.

Medical screening of passengers was arranged by district administration before they boarded the buses. Sanitisation of bus, use of mask and sanitizer, and social distancing were ensured by local authorities.

From 12 noon today, five helpline numbers were activated for all those people who have already registered their request on 104 or filled up the link provided by the government. For any query, people may call at tollfree number 18003453986 and WhatsApp numbers 6026901061, 6026901062, 6026901063, 6026901064 and 6026901065.

For those owning private vehicles, the respective deputy commissioners had already issued passes for travelling today. Over 12,000 vehicle passes were issued for today.

Daily growth rate of infection is down: Govt

NEW DELHI, April 25: The nationwide tally of coronavirus positive patients neared 25,000 on Saturday with fresh cases getting detected in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh among other places, but the government said the daily growth rate has dipped to 6 per cent and some states began relaxing some lockdown conditions by allowing more shops to open.

At least 56 more deaths have been reported since Friday evening – the highest so far in a span of 24 hours – to take the death toll across the country to at least 779, according to the Union Health Ministry figures.

While an estimated 5.8 lakh tests have been conducted so far, the government has put on hold the use of rapid test kits procured from two Chinese firms to check their efficacy after some states, including Rajasthan, reported they were giving inaccurate results.

SEE PAGE 6

Devanand Konwar passes away

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: Veteran leader and former Governor of Bihar, Tripura and West Bengal Devanand Konwar passed away here early this morning. Konwar breathed his last at his residence at Rukminigaon here.

Sources in the Congress party, with which Konwar was associated for most of his political career, said that Konwar was unwell since some time.

His mortal remains were later taken to his native place Nitaipukhuri in Sivasagar district for the last rites, which will be performed tomorrow morning with State honours.

Konwar leaves behind his wife, a son, two daughters and a host of other relatives. Konwar joined the Congress in 1955 as a student leader. He was first elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1983 from the Sivasagar constituency. Afterwards, he was elected for three consecutive terms in 1991, 1996 and 2001, to the Assembly from the Thowra constituency.

He served as a minister in the Hiteswar Saikia-led State government in 1991. He also served in the Cabinet of the then Chief Minis-



ter Tarun Gogoi in 2001. Konwar handled various portfolios during his two tenures as minister, including Finance, Revenue and Law.

In June 2009, Konwar was appointed Governor of Bihar where he served till March 2013. He then served as Tripura Governor from March 2013 to June 2014. In between, he also had held the additional charge as West Bengal Governor from December 2009 to January 2010.

Konwar was born in 1936 at the Rajah Ali tea estate in Tinsukia to Padma Kanta Konwar and Kusum Kumari Konwar. He completed his primary education at Nitaipukhuri and did his BA from Cotton College and MA in English from Delhi University, besides LLB from Gauhati University.

SEE PAGE 6

Sale of pigs, pork banned in State

Measure due to unknown disease in farm animal

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: Following the spread of an unknown disease that has led to death of 1,964 pigs in Assam in the past few days, the State Government on Saturday imposed a ban on sale of pig and pork. The order will be in force until further notification as the toll has been rising rapidly.

The disease was first reported from Dhemaji district in the last part of February. Later it spread to its nearby districts.

Agriculture Minister Atul Bora said the outbreak of the disease was reported in six

districts – Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar and Jorhat. The highest toll was reported from Sivasagar district where 1,128 pigs have died so far.

The State government has also put containment zone tag in these districts where transportation of pigs and feeds will be strictly restricted until further order.

Apart from precautionary measures, the authorities have also collected samples

of infected pigs from the field. Bora said the collected samples were processed at the North Eastern Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory and at the laboratory of College of Veterinary Science, and sent to Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases to ascertain the virus responsible for the disease.

“As a precautionary measure all pig farmers have been instructed to use maximum

bio-safety norms in their respective farms. They should have to bury the carcass of infected pigs in a pit of at least six feet deep,” Bora said.

Further steps will be taken after receiving the report from the Bhopal-based laboratory, which is expected to come within two to three days, he said.

“A large section of local youths are associated with pig farming. So we are planning to compensate them for the loss. We have already sent an advisory to every district restricting the transportation of pigs,” Bora said.

SEE PAGE 6

Sonowal reviews measures taken by Guwahati Police

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday held a review meeting of the measures taken by Guwahati Police in the fight against COVID-19 at Police Reserve in the city.

Appreciating the steps taken by the city police to distribute food to 5,000 people daily in Guwahati with the help of NGOs, Sonowal hailed the action taken by Guwahati Police to keep three people arriving from China in quarantine for 28 days in the last week of February, much before the pan-

demical took alarming proportions in the county.

Crediting the strict measures taken by Assam Police for successful observance of lockdown in the State, Sonowal reiterated the crucial role of police in the execution of relaxation of certain sectors during the second phase of lockdown.

Assam Police, through their dedicated and exemplar-

ry services, has turned out to be the friend in need for the people in distress,” he said. People of the State would remember this dedication till eternity and the faith of the people in police would keep on motivating the police personnel to carry out their duties more vigorously in the future, he added.

During today's review meeting, Sonowal also inter-

Fight against COVID-19



acted with Deputy Commissioners of Police and traffic police officials and asked about their difficulties and experiences while performing their duties.

He instructed the city police to keep a close watch on violation of law-and-order cases, like theft and robbery, drug paddling, etc., in railway stations, bus stands, parks, etc.

He also directed the police to get in touch with leading citizens of the society while urging them to create awareness among the people of Muslim community to conduct namaz in their houses during the holy month of Ramadan.

**Wash HANDS
Ward off VIRUS**

SITUATION VACANT

Work from home Online Job. Candidate with Computer with Microsoft Windows 10, Webcam & Microphone with Internet connection. Contact on 88765-20846, 98540-58887, Email Id: hr.hq@vssindia.net SV/P/BP000002/1

A 25 year old CA firm at Athgaon, Guwahati need Fresh CA on partnership / pay roll basis and full time Audit /Office Assistant. May contact 6901268384 between 11am to 2 pm. SV/RP000008/1

TO-LET

1 BHK (3rd floor) at Lachit Nagar Bye Lane-9 Rs. 9000/- (water on condition) Mob : 86389-31493. TL/RP000007/1

HOUSE & FLAT

Residential 2/3 BHK flat/commercial space at Noonmati (Opp. Axom Jatiya Vidyalay, Ph. 98640-10641. H&F/P/BP000003/2

80% work completed 2/3 BHK flat at Chandmari Colony (Nizarapar). Avail PMA Y benefit Ph. 98640-10641. H&F/P/BP000004/3

Booking going on for 2 and 3 bedroom residential flat at Jyotinagar near Kalimandir. Contact J&A Developers : 87239-77197. H&F/P/SP000014/6

Only two numbers of 2 bedroom residential flat with 60% completed available for booking at Gandhibasti, Islampur. Contact J&A Developers : 87239-77197. H&F/P/SP000015/6

MARRIAGE POSTPONED

NOTICE OF POSTPONEMENT This is for information to all well-wishers that due to the present circumstances, the proposed marriage and reception ceremony of our son Dr. Rishiraj with Dr. Rupshata which was to be held on 8th May 2020, has been postponed at present. The new date will be informed in due course. - Dr MK Baruah, Dr Aditi Baruah, Zig-Zag Road, Chowkidinghee, Dibrugarh 786001. Marriage Postponed/...../1

MATRIMONIAL

Choose your partner North-East No-1. Matrimony. Never Married / Divorcee / Widow - Any caste / Age / Community / Religion. Any place of North-East. Contact for Bride/Groom outside of Assam/India. Sanjyog Matrimony. Guwahati Ulubari. @8638153087. Mat/P/AC000041/1

FREE REGISTRATION TILL LOCKDOWN Gathbandhan Centre A Personalized Matrimonial Service 7044442233/8240320156 F Fort Building, Ground Floor, Near KFC, Ulubari, Guwahati: 07 CD/Mat/P/AC000044/1

GROOM WANTED

Bengali, Kayastha/26-5'3"/B.Tech/ residence Ghy/Asst. Engineer /caste no bar/75760-26601/88222-30669. Mat/G/P/AC000040/1

Assamese girl 26 years working as a Government employee looking for a well educated boy. (Caste no bar) #60020-08134. Mat/G/P/AC000042/1

BRIDE WANTED

Wanted groom, preferably in Government job or having sound business, for an Assamese Brahmin bride of Bharadwaj Gutra residing at Biswanath Chariali. Age : 35. Contact : 84729-47994. Mat/G/P/AP000001/1

BRIDE WANTED

Kalita boy, 38 y, 6', 80kg B.Tech (CSE) established @Ghy, seeks Hindu girl, 99547-12250. Mat/B/P/AC000011/2

Assamese Brahmin boy 30 yrs./5'11"/B.Tech/MBA working as a Software Developer in a reputed company in Mumbai. Father rtd. employee, looking for a beautiful and educated girl for marriage. Own flat in Guwahati. Contact : 93653-83668. Mat/B/P/AC000043/1

IN MEMORIAM

IN THE LOVING MEMORY OF GHANASHYAM BAROOWA Today on your 1st Death Anniversary, we remember you with heavy hearts and pray for GOD for eternal peace of your departed soul. Smt. Damayanti Baruah and family Ajanta Path Survey Guwahati

Dear Deuta, With every passing year, we miss you more than ever. Your love was deep, it was strong & will live with us forever. Your beaming smile would light up the room, Your kind & inspiring words dispel any gloom. Your work ethic, your drive, your love of culture, music, sports and art, Are legacies we carry forward with happiness in our heart. There was so much more to learn from you, to love you, hug you and to hold. But you had to go, before all the stories could be told. Remembering you on this 35th year of your passing, Nandini & Pankaj Neog Sandeep & Anita Baruah Indrani & Partha Sarathi Mahanta Krishnadeep & Elizabeth Baruah & grandchildren.

Late Dr. Harendranath Baruah Dear Deuta, With every passing year, we miss you more than ever. Your love was deep, it was strong & will live with us forever. Your beaming smile would light up the room, Your kind & inspiring words dispel any gloom. Your work ethic, your drive, your love of culture, music, sports and art, Are legacies we carry forward with happiness in our heart. There was so much more to learn from you, to love you, hug you and to hold. But you had to go, before all the stories could be told. Remembering you on this 35th year of your passing, Nandini & Pankaj Neog Sandeep & Anita Baruah Indrani & Partha Sarathi Mahanta Krishnadeep & Elizabeth Baruah & grandchildren.

ADYA SHRADDHA

Late Pradip Boro Born : 01.04.1953 Death : 16.04.2020 With a heavy heart and grief, we adieu to our beloved Husband/Papa/Koka as he left for his heavenly abode. May Almighty bless you with eternal peace. Family Members Dalimi Gayari Boro (Wife) Rahul Boro (Son-in-Law) Trishna Boro (Daughter) Teasha Rani Boro (Grand Daughter) Lachit Nagar, Opposite Byelane-7 (Near Boro Market) House No.-104, G.S. Road, Ghy-7. M. No.: 9085944271

LAND & PROPERTY

2 katha Highway 1st plot land at Jalukbari. Price : 3.25 crore (Fixed). Contact : 86386-42083. L&P/P/AC000036/2

Land for sale at Chandmari Colony (1440 sq.ft.) Contact : 99302-61701, 91010-84694. L&P/P/SP000013/1

GODOWN

2500 to 98,000 sq. ft Industrial Shed/Warehouse, Godown at Khanapara, Beltola. Lohitra, Amingaon, Changsari, Mirza. 9435403986. Godown/P/AC006815/1

PUBLIC NOTICE

TINSUKIA COLLEGE Important Notice

With reference to our advertisement published in "The Assam Tribune" and the "Dainik Janambhumi" dated 17th March, 2020 inviting applications to fill up the Vacant Post (Permanent) of Assistant Professors in the subjects of Geography, Statistics, Economics & History, the last date of receiving applications is hereby extended till 15th May, 2020. This extension is due to present lockdown for COVID-19 Pandemic in the State. (Dr. Surjya Chutia) Principal Tinsukia College Tinsukia

More New Yorkers ingested cleaners after Trump's comment!

NEW YORK, April 25: Cases of New York City residents, contacting healthcare authorities over possible exposure to common household cleaners, rose following a controversial comment by US President Donald Trump suggesting injecting disinfectants into the human body as a coronavirus treatment. In the 18 hours following the comment, the Poison Control Center, a subagency of the city's Health Department, managed a total of 30 cases of possible exposure to disinfectants, the New York Daily News reported on Friday citing a spokesperson. None of those who contacted the centre died or required hospitalisation. Out of these 30 cases, nine were linked to possible exposure to Lysol, 10 were related to possible exposure to bleach and 11 were associated with household cleaners in general, according to the spokesperson. Compared to these cases, the numbers were nearly half for the same 18-hour period last year, said the report. After a scientist made a presentation at the daily Coronavirus Task Force briefing on Thursday showing that COVID-19 virus is killed by sunlight in two minutes, Trump suggested bringing powerful light inside the body. He compounded it further by suggesting injecting cleaners like bleach and isopropyl alcohol because Bill Bryan, the head of Homeland Security Department's Technology Directorate said that bleach killed the virus in five minutes and alcohol in 30 seconds. Trump wondered if the cleanser "gets in the lungs and it does a tremendous number on the lungs". - IANS



Trump says he was being 'sarcastic'

WASHINGTON, April 25: Trying to wriggle out of the backlash he received for his outlandish suggestions, US President Donald Trump said that he was being "sarcastic" when he told his medical experts that they should consider using UV light, heat, or injecting disinfectants into the COVID-19 patients as a potential treatment. Trump faced intense rebuke on Thursday for his far-fetched suggestion from health experts who urged people not to listen to the President's "dangerous" advice. Doctors and the company that makes Lysol and Dettol warned that injecting or ingesting disinfectants was dangerous. When Trump was asked about his comments during a Bill signing on Friday, he said: "I was asking a question sarcastically to reporters like you just to see what would happen". "I was asking a sarcastic" and a very sarcastic question "to the reporters in the room about disinfectant on the inside," he said. Trump suggested he was talking about disinfectants that can safely be rubbed on people's hands. "But it does kill it, and it would kill it on the hands and that would make things much better. That was done in the form of a sarcastic question to the reporters," The Hill

quoted Trump as saying. When a journalist in the Oval Office pointed out that Trump had turned to experts next to the stage when he first raised the idea on Thursday, the President claimed he was asking those officials "whether or not Sun and disinfectant on the hands can help us." Trump on Thursday latched on to a presentation from the Department of Homeland Security for Science and Technology Under Secretary Bill Bryan who detailed initial findings that the coronavirus deteriorates more quickly when subjected to higher levels of heat, humidity and ultraviolet rays from the Sun. - PTI

Saudi abolishes flogging

RIYADH, April 25: Saudi Arabia has abolished flogging as a punishment, the Supreme Court announced, hailing the latest in a series of "human rights advances" made by the King and his powerful son. Court-ordered floggings in Saudi Arabia - sometimes extending to hundreds of lashes - have long drawn condemnation from human rights groups. But they say the headline legal reforms overseen by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have brought no let-up in the conservative Islamic kingdom's crushing of dissent, including through the use of the death penalty. The Saudi Supreme Court said the latest reform was intended to "bring the kingdom into line with international human rights norms against corporal punishment". Previously, the courts could order the flogging of convicts found guilty of offences ranging from extramarital sex and breach of the peace to murder. - AFP

Nikki Haley launches 'Stop Communist China' campaign

WASHINGTON, April 25: Asserting that China's Communist government needs to be held accountable for "lying" about the coronavirus pandemic, top Indian-American Republican politician Nikki Haley has launched an online petition urging the US Congress to act. More than 40,000 people have signed the 'Stop Communist China' petition by Friday night, hours after being launched by the former Governor of South Carolina who has set a goal of getting 100,000 signatures. "China's Communist government needs to be held accountable for their role in lying about the Coronavirus pandemic, and the US Congress needs to respond now," said 48-year-old Haley, a former US Ambassador to the United Nations. "Join us in our fight to stop China from gaining influence in America and around the world. Sign this petition and please share with your friends," she added. "Sign our petition to stop the Chinese Communist government's deception and manipulation. We need Congress to act NOW to prevent China's growing influence," the petition said. Among other things, the petition urges members of Congress to probe whether China covered up the coronavirus outbreak, end the United States' reliance on China for critical medical supplies and pharmaceuticals, make China pay its fair share to the



United Nations, back Taiwan against China's bullying, and mandate all US colleges to disclose Chinese funding. Early this week, she called for an emergency Security Council meeting on China's involvement and knowledge of the virus. Haley has been a fierce critic of China. "As soon as the UN opens again, the US should call for an emergency Security Council meeting on China's involvement and knowledge of the virus. When did they know and decisions made. If ever the was a time to have a world discussion, it would be following this pandemic," Haley said in a tweet. Responding to her tweet, the Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun asserted that his country has nothing to hide. - PTI

Honour for Indian-American

HOUSTON, April 25: Renu Khator, an Indian-American university Chancellor, has been elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences for her contributions in the fields of education and academic leadership. Khator, 61, joins more than 250 exceptionally accomplished artists, scholars, scientists and leaders in the public, nonprofit and private sectors as members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) class of 2020. Born in Uttar Pradesh, Khator is the University of Houston System Chancellor and the varsity's president. She is the first woman Chancellor and the first Indian immigrant to head a comprehensive research university in the United States. Khator, who has been at the current position since 2008, was elected in the field of Educational and Academic Leadership. "While recognition from this esteemed organisation is personally very gratifying, I am even more pleased with the honour it brings to the University of Houston and UH System, which has given me such a valuable opportunity to develop my leadership skills," Khator said. - PTI



PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, MATHS @ INTELLECTUALS (SINCE 2009) BY CBSE SCHOOL TEACHERS, BELTOLA BAZAR (97064-95883).

Tuition/P/AC006746/8 Highly experienced home Tutor for (XI-XII) Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics. Conception #99573-06841. Tuition/P/AC000037/29

Home Tuition by experienced faculty for Assamese/Sanskrit/Hindi (CBSE/ICSE). 60009-73182, 9864381656. Tuition/P/NP002649/1

Online Physics class for NEET & Boards by exp. Kota Faculty. Contact : 69009-77274. Tuition/P/AC000022/8

HIGHLY EXPERIENCED HOME TUTORS FOR (VIII-XII) PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, MATHEMATICS. CALL : 80111-98297 # UTKARSH TUTORIALS. Tuition/P/AL000002/1

Live Physics, Maths (XI-XII) B.Sc. (Physics) class sitting home. Anywhere # 94015-38617. Tuition/P/AC000007/8

PAYING GUEST

Accommodation for PG (working women and students) Newly constructed flat with full security, 24 hours running water, electricity, 3 meals per day along with tea, attached bathroom. Rs. 6000 onwards. Mother Teresa Road, Hatigarh Chariali. 2 min walking distance from the market. Staircases and lift are sanitized at regular intervals. Please contact: 98640-27540. PG/P/AC000039/1

NURSING

Home Nursing care, Baby care, Patient care. Contact: 86388-95299, 86387-22884. Nursing/AL000001/1

TENDER NOTICE

ASSAM POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LTD. REHABARI :: GUWAHATI-8 EXTENSION NOTICE This is for general information to all concern that the tender time schedule for Bid Download, Bid Submission & Technical Bid Opening against the works "New Chirang District Jail at Kajalgaon" (Online) is hereby by again extended upto 12-05-2020, due to unavoidable circumstances, which was issued vide SNIT No.: APHC/T/9/Pt.-III/2018-19/18, date: 27/02/2020. Details may be seen at website http://assamtenders.gov.in The other terms & conditions will remain same. Sd/- Chief Engineer, Assam Police Housing Corporation Ltd. Rehabari, Guwahati-8. CD/TN/BL000010/1



A combo of 15 images showing fifteen former Italian partisans posing at their home in several Italian cities between Thursday and Friday. On April 25 every year, Italy celebrates the end of the Nazi occupation during World War-II. The date is also the occasion for the members of the National Association of Italian Partisans to celebrate their uprising against the fascist rule of dictator Benito Mussolini, backed up by the Nazis, with marches throughout the country. The COVID-19 outbreak in Italy this year forced the cancellation of all the activities to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Italian Liberation Day. - AP/PTI

Pak Navy test-fires anti-ship missiles

ISLAMABAD, April 25: The Pakistan Navy on Saturday successfully test-fired a series of anti-ship missiles in the North Arabian Sea, a spokesman said. The missiles were fired from surface ships, fixed and rotary-wing aircraft, the Navy's spokesperson Rear Admiral Arshid Javed said. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi witnessed the firing of the missiles, he said in a statement. "The anti-ship missiles were fired at the sea level by warships and aircraft," according to the statement. The successful demonstration of missile firing is a testament to the Pakistan Navy's operational capability and military readiness, the official said. On the occasion, Admiral Abbasi said that the "Pakistan Navy is fully capable to respond enemy's aggression befittingly." The Navy spokesperson Rear Admiral Javed took to Twitter to share the information of the test-fire of the missiles. "PakNavy conducted Live Weapon firing of Anti-Ship Missiles from Surface and Aviation units in North Arabian Sea." Adm Zafar Mahmood Abbasi witnessed LWF as chief guest. - PTI

Nearly 4,000 Sri Lankan Navy personnel quarantined

COLOMBO, April 25: Nearly 4,000 Sri Lankan Navy personnel and their families have been quarantined at a major naval facility after 60 COVID-19 cases were confirmed in two days, a media report said on Saturday. The move came as 30 Navy personnel tested positive for the COVID-19 virus each on Friday and Saturday at the country's Welisara Naval camp, the state-run Daily News reported. "Today 30 Navy personnel

have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Another 30 had tested positive for the virus yesterday," Army Commander Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva was quoted as saying by the paper during his media briefing of the National Operation Centre for the Prevention of COVID-19 here. Following the new cases, nearly 4,000 naval personnel and their families at the naval base have been isolated within the camp, the paper reported, citing an order issued by the Sri Lankan Navy. The spurt in new cases came amidst Sri Lanka deciding to lift the nationwide curfew imposed to stem the spread of the coronavirus on Monday. Sri Lanka has been under a strict curfew since March 20 to combat the COVID-19 that has claimed seven lives and infected 420 people.

The government had on Monday dropped its decision to relax the nationwide curfew and extended it to April 27 following a sudden spike in the number of COVID-19 cases. However, there has been intermittent lifting of the curfew in selected areas which were not seen as dangerous for the spread of the deadly virus. The Sri Lankan government has planned various measures to protect the security forces personnel from contracting the COVID-19 infection while engaged in operations to control the spread of the disease, the Colombo Page reported. "All naval personnel are restricted from travel and confined to barracks without leave. They are only allowed to leave the bases for assigned duties," the report said. The COVID-19 has so far infected more than 2.7 million people and killed over 190,000 globally. - PTI

60 test positive for COVID-19

spread of the coronavirus on Monday. Sri Lanka has been under a strict curfew since March 20 to combat the COVID-19 that has claimed seven lives and infected 420 people.

Manmohan slams govt over dearness allowance freeze

NEW DELHI, April 25: Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has slammed the government over freezing of dearness allowance, asserting that it was not necessary at this stage to impose hardships on government servants and armed forces personnel.

The Finance Ministry on Thursday froze inflation-linked allowance for 50 lakh central government employees and 61 lakh pensioners till June 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis. However, DA and dearness relief (DR) at current rates will continue to be paid, it said.

"We should be on the side of people whose dearness allowance is being cut. I sincerely believe it is not necessary at this stage to impose hardships on government servants and also on the armed forces people," Singh said during the Congress' consultative group meeting whose video was released by the party today.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi also slammed the government over the issue, saying the problem was with the government's going ahead with the central vista redevelopment project.

"You are taking away money from the middle class, you are not giving money to the poor people and you are spending it on your central vista," Gandhi told the meeting.

Senior Congress leader and former Finance Minister P Chidambaram said, "When you (government) have not cut



back expenditure on the bullet train, central vista development, those are the programmes which should be first put on halt before you halt people's dearness allowance."

The Centre last month approved the land use change for execution of its ambitious central vista redevelopment project in Lutyens' Delhi with the issuance of a notification by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.

The redevelopment project of the Central Vista – the nation's power corridor – envisages a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one, common Central Secretariat and revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath – from Rashtrapati Bhavan

to India Gate. Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it would have been fine if the money was being transferred to migrant labourers.

"But you are continuing with the new Parliament House, new building for ministers, new house for PM, you are continuing with zero cut on expenditure of the government which could save you close to 2-2.5 lakh crore rupees. But, you are denying relief to your armed personnel, to your pensioners, to your government servants," he said.

Former Union Minister Manish Tewari said the first thing the government should have done before cutting allowances, salaries, etc., was to set up an expenditure rationalisation commission.

Congress general secretary, organisation, KC Venugopal said there is a lot of anguish among the government employees over the dearness allowance issue as it will harm them very much.

The Congress last week had constituted a consultative group with former Prime Minister Singh as its chairman to deliberate on "current concerns" and formulate views and policy of the party on important issues.

Besides Singh, Gandhi, Surjewala, Venugopal and Tewari, former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, Praveen Chakravarty, Gaurav Vallabh, Supriya Shrinete and the party's social media head Rohan Gupta are also part of the panel. – PTI



A Muslim family ends their fast with iftar on the first day of the holy month of Ramzan during a nationwide lockdown, in Prayagraj on Saturday. – PTI

UGC panels moot academic session from September

J-K prison inmates manufacture face masks

NEW DELHI, April 25: The academic session in universities and higher educational institutions can be started from September instead of July in view of the COVID-19 situation in the country, a panel appointed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) has recommended.

Two committees were constituted by the UGC to look into the issues of academic loss and online education in the wake of the lockdown in the country due to the coronavirus pandemic.

One of the committees led by Haryana University Vice-Chancellor RC Kuhad was formed to look into the ways of conducting exams in universities amid the lockdown and work on an alternate academic calendar. The second committee, to suggest measures to improve online education, was led by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IG-

NOU) VC Nageshwar Rao. Both the panels submitted their reports on Friday.

"One panel has recommended that the academic session be started from September than July. The second panel has suggested that universities should conduct online exams if they have the infrastructure and means or wait for the lockdown to get over and then decide a date for pen-and-paper examinations," a source said.

According to HRD Ministry officials, the two reports will now be studied and official guidelines in this regard are expected to be notified by next week.

"It is not binding that all the recommendations will be accepted. After deliberating on the feasibility issues and keeping the situation in mind, guidelines will be issued," an official said.

Another hurdle in starting

the academic session is the delay in conducting entrance examinations as well as the pending board exams, the panel has pointed out.

"As of now, the plan is to conduct entrance examinations like NEET and JEE in June. But it is extremely important to keep reviewing the COVID-19 situation," the official said.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16 when the Union government announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the outbreak. Later, a nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24 which has now been extended till May 3.

The Central Board of Secondary Education has already announced that it will conduct pending board exams for only 29 subjects which are crucial for promotion and undergraduate admissions. – PTI

JAMMU, April 25: Hundreds of inmates in prisons across Jammu and Kashmir have volunteered and joined efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic with mass production of face masks in jail premises, officials said today.

They said the prisoners started manufacturing the high quality polypropylene masks last month after the prisons department's proposal got the nod of Lt Governor GC Murmu administration which has called for universal usage of face covers to contain the spread of the contagious disease in the Union Territory.

Jammu and Kashmir has recorded six coronavirus deaths so far, four in the Valley and one each in Udhampur and Baramulla districts with nearly 450 others infected in the Union Territory. Mask-making inside the jails is going on in full swing under the guidance of the officials. – PTI

ADKJ #DID YOU KNOW ?



The woody spice

Nutmeg known as Jaiphal is known for its woody flavour. It is considered quite useful for reducing pains, has benefits for the stomach and good for respiratory problems.



contribution@apnedeshkojano.com
Powered by: Priya Communications

Udhampur prepares over 7,000 food packets per day

JAMMU, April 25: Three community kitchens in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur town have been preparing and distributing over 7,000 food packets daily among migrant workers who are stranded at different locations owing to a countrywide lockdown.

"In these community kitchens, the meals are cooked, packed and distributed among the needy at different locations of the district. The initiative has been widely hailed by people and till date more than one lakh meals have been provided to needy persons at their doorsteps," a district officer said.

Over 7,000 food packets are prepared and distributed among the needy in Udhampur town on a daily basis amid the lockdown imposed across the country to contain the spread of coronavirus, he said.

The community kitchens have been set up at different locations to efficiently cater to the needy in the peripheral areas, he said.

Initially, one community kitchen was set up by the district administration for feeding the stranded labourers and truck drivers. After observing the growing demand of food from different areas and getting requests from the poor, the district administration with the help of some volunteers later added two more community kitchens at different locations.

"Professional cooks prepare food in these community kitchens, volunteers pack and distribute the food packets among the needy at different locations. A distribution road map has been charted out, keeping in view all health advisories while cooking and distributing food," he added. – PTI



A couple wearing face masks perform rituals as they get married during the nationwide lockdown, in Jodhpur on Saturday. – PTI

Chandan Jatra, Akshaya Tritiya to be held in Puri temple premises

BHUBANESWAR, April 25: The 'Chandan Jatra' and 'Akshaya Tritiya' festivals of Lord Jagannath will be held in the temple premises in Odisha's Puri on Sunday, in view of the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, Gajapati Maharaja of Puri, Divya Singha Deb said.

The decision was taken during the temple managing committee's meeting with Govardhan Peeth Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati on Friday night, he said.

"As per the advice of Guruji (Shankaracharya), it has been decided to conduct both the Akshaya Tritiya and the Chandan Jatra on the temple premises. The Guruji said the tradition of the temple should be maintained and the centuries-old rituals cannot stop," Deb told reporters.

The rituals will be performed by se-

lected priests and servitors, but devotees will not be allowed inside the temple premises, he said.

The Gajapati Maharaja had earlier said the temple administration will not undertake any activities outside the religious institution's premises in view of the lockdown.

Akshaya Tritiya is held at the 'Rath Khala' outside the temple while the Chandan Jatra is organised in a tank in Puri.

He, however, said the decision on holding the Rath Jatra will be taken after May 3. Apart from Gajapati Maharaja, members of the Jagannath Temple Management Committee, including Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Krishna Kumar, the Puri district collector and the superintendent of police had met the Shankaracharya to seek his advice on how to conduct the rituals amid the lockdown.

The Gajapati Maharaja said the lockdown guidelines prohibit religious congregations both inside and outside the temple. The 12th century shrine has been closed to devotees since the imposition of lockdown in Odisha on March 22.

SJTA chief administrator Krishna Kumar said the collector and the SP will hold a meeting with the servitors of the temple on Saturday to decide on the place in the premises where the Chandan Jatra and Akshaya Tritiya rituals will be held.

"During the Chandan Jatra, or the 'sandalwood voyage' of Lord Jagannath, images of the deity are floated on a boat in a sacred tank in Puri. It is the longest festival of Lord Jagannath that is held for 42 days in two phases," Bhaskar Mishra, a researcher on the Jagannath culture, said.

Akshaya Tritiya marks the beginning of construction of chariots for the annual Rath Yatra. – PTI



Ministry of AYUSH recommendations, based on Ayurvedic literature & scientific publications, for preventive health measures and boosting immunity with special reference to respiratory health.

General Measures



Drink warm water throughout the day.



Daily practice of Yogasana, Pranayama and Meditation for at least 30 minutes as advised by Ministry of AYUSH.



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

Issued in public interest by
Directorate of AYUSH, Assam
Banphul Nagar Path, Dispur, Guwahati - 06

MESSAGE FORTODAY

It is a recession when your neighbour loses his job; it is a depression when you lose yours.

- HARRY S TRUMAN

The Assam Tribune

Gradual shift

The latest order from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, a modification of the order issued by the ministry on April 15, allows for further relaxation in the extended lockdown due to end by 3th May. From yesterday certain shops and commercial establishment registered under the Shops and Establishment Act of the respective States and Union Territories and market complexes outside municipality areas have been permitted to resume operations with 50 per cent staff for the remainder of the lockdown.

Such a gradual shift is sensible, and will help to normalize economic activities in the deeply stricken rural sector and provide succour to workers who had lost their jobs. In addition to the relaxations announced by the Centre various States are also taking their own steps to either mark a gradual shift towards triggering renewed economic activity, or to assist stranded people to get back to their domiciles.

For instance, the Assam Government has lifted restrictions on movement of people within the State for three days from April 25 to allow those stranded away from their homes due to the lockdown to return to their families. People with private vehicles who were stranded in another district can avail of this window to drive back home after obtaining passes from Deputy Commissioners.

Immunisation programme

The importance of immunisation needs no exaggeration. It helps to save lives and protects the future generations by eradicating diseases. Thanks to immunisation programmes, a good number of diseases which had at one point of time claimed a large number of lives have either been eradicated or its spread been kept under tight check.

While it's imperative that the health care sector must go all out to combat the scourge of COVID-19 but at the same time the immunisation programmes cannot be ignored. Though at the present time with lockdown, social distancing it is not at all easy to carry on with the immunisation programmes, but the fact remains that the parents and the health care sector must ensure that the children get the required vaccines as soon as COVID-19 outbreak is brought under control.

The Assam Tribune From THE PAST ABOUT 4000 COURT ARREST ON 3RD DAY OF SATYAGRAHA

By A Staff Reporter

GAUHATI, April 25: Nearly 4,000 volunteers courted arrest all over the Brahmaputra valley today on the third and final day of the three-day April, Assam State Council sponsored Satyagraha movement against Government's eviction policy and demanding land for the landless.

'Assam better placed to face lockdown'

Face to Face

Prasanta J Baruah

Amiya Sharma, Executive Director of Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi (RGVN), is a senior economist trying to apply development economic theory to practice. A postgraduate from the Delhi School of Economics, he did his Phd from Rutgers University, USA. Earlier he taught in Delhi, Rutgers and Tezpur University and worked as an Economist in NEDFI.



Due to the lockdown because of COVID 19, there are doubts that there may be a depression like situation in the world economy?

Depression is a very strong term to use. It is a situation where economy shrinks over a long period of time, more than two-three years at a stretch. The last known depression was from 1929 to 1933 where the developed countries experienced unemployment close to 25% and the economies were shrinking.

In fact India and China are expected to have positive growth even this year. For India the growth rate expected is anywhere between 1.5 to 2.8% (World Bank). By the way India has experienced negative growth rates even after independence although not for more than one year at a stretch.

What about recession?

Recession is when the economy experiences negative growth rates for more than two or more quarters at a stretch. India may face

recession since the lockdown will affect almost all segments of the economy. However, if the govt can come up with a package worth about 6 to 7% of GDP to be made effective immediately, then recession may be avoided, provided the virus does not cause so much damage as to have another round of lockdown and the movement of the people and goods are unrestricted.

Economics operates in a manner such that if all of us think that there will be recession then there will be recession because all the players will try to safeguard their savings causing a lack of demand which will cause production to be halted and a vicious cycle to develop. A lockdown of a month followed by five months of extreme activity should be enough to pull the economy out of recession.

er it appears that even if movements may not be restricted after May 3, the people themselves will be very careful about their expenditure and travel.

What would be the impact on the various sectors of the economy?

Of the three main sectors - primary, secondary and the tertiary, the tertiary or the service sector specially the trade, travel and tourism sectors will be hit very hard. It seems that travel and tourism will take a lot of time to achieve normalcy.

Agriculture has not been impacted so much to bring the economic growth to a recessionary level. Contribution of agriculture to the GDP has been falling drastically and it is a mere 14%.

What can the government do to put the economy back on the track?

If a stimulus package of seven to eight lakh crore could be spent by the government the Indian economy will be in a sound position. This will have an impact on the fiscal deficit. But with foreign exchange reserves of more than \$48000 crore added to RBI's strong reserves of more than Rs 8 lakh crore, India is in a relatively better position to take some risks.

Even if there is no recession the poor especially the migrant workers will be hit hard. What should the government do?

While the government has to give first priority to keep the health services in excellent position to tackle any such fall out in the near future, the amelioration of the condition of the bottom thirty to forty per cent of the population becomes very crucial and that has to be priority number two.

poverty line are those made poorer because of the lockdown.

Direct benefit transfer is very relevant which is why one is referring to the crucial role of the banks in the fight to save the economy. MNREGA too is very important but the provision of food for the migrants who do not have all the papers as well as bank accounts in their native places must be assured.

What about Assam? Will it escape recession?

Just like India has been less affected by the virus because it is not a very open economy, similarly Assam has been in a better position compared to the developed states. Going by the performance of the economy over the last couple of years, Assam should be able to escape recession.

In Assam, the rural economy is much larger compared to the Indian average. About 85% of the population live in the rural areas and in any such situation, rural economy does not get hurt as much as the urban economy.

Tea industry has been hit by the lockdown.

Tea has lost the first flush which is a huge loss. Some sources have pegged its financial losses at around Rs.1200 crore and in terms of production losses - about 15% of the annual production of 700 million kilograms in Assam.

What about the rice production, fishery, live-stock?

Rice which is the main crop has not been affected much. The kharif paddy has not been affected at all. Fishery sector, piggery, poultry have been affected by the lack of feed and consequently lack of sale as in most sectors.

The industrial activity has come to a standstill.

MSME sector will be hit hard. Almost all the key industries are in the public sector and are in a strong position to pull up. MSMEs serving the PSUs should not find it difficult to get back. Traders of products including industrial products, travel and tourism sector will be badly affected as it was hit by the anti CAA movements few weeks before this lockdown.

Overall one may say that six weeks of shutdown will not be able to bring down Assam's growth rate to a recessionary situation over a long term, provided unrestricted movements at least within the country as far as practicable, are allowed and the State Government makes all efforts in order to make funds available to kick-start the economy/businesses immediately.

(pjbaruah_at@yahoo.com)

Gazing beyond COVID-19

Geetima Das Krishna

We have already celebrated our one-month anniversary of complete lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. A virus that started in Wuhan, China spread quite nimbly - helped by our modern ways of living and travelling in a globalised world.

Did we ever imagine we would see a day when more than 80 per cent of the world economy will be shut and most of the world population will be locked down at home?

Many of us who prided ourselves for having a ring-side view of the great global financial crisis (GFC), were left stunned at how the crisis unfolded. The world economy got whacked sideways. Longer the lockdown, longer it would take the economy to get back to normal.

The current crisis is unprecedented as it has two aspects to it - an economic aspect and the healthcare aspect. Economic policy alone cannot solve the problem. Unlike previous crises, the stimulus packages, this time around, are not aimed at restarting the economy, but rather making sure to help us survive the crisis.

Already a lot has been written about the devastating economic impact of COVID-19. My experiences tell me that we should never try to forecast too far into the future. But, won't it be interesting to look at the world a month, a year from now - how our perspectives will change, what lifestyle choices we will make, what immediate impact it will have on various sectors? The changes that we hope to see.

First, work-from-home (WFH) will no longer be frowned upon. Both private and public companies will be open to the idea. Many, not all, would have already discovered that they could be equally productive working from home. With proper guidelines in place, WFH

will improve work-life balance. Most probably, in the future, for small meetings including board meetings, people would prefer to connect over platforms like zoom instead of commuting for hours or catching a flight. Cutting down on travels will also reduce carbon footprints.

It is said that the devastating global cholera outbreak in the 1850s that claimed more than 10,000 lives in London, led to the development of a modern sewerage system there. Every public health crises have left their mark in our big cities. This time will be no different.

Sanitation, hygiene, and safe drinking water will turn into necessities. Our public healthcare system is already getting ramped up. Hopefully, there would be further strengthening of the government hospitals with higher budgetary allocation. The smart cities cannot be called 'smart' enough without proper medical infrastructure for the public.

Agriculture is the first sector that is opened up. Going forward, the state should seriously look into well-functioning mandis, better procurements process, uninterrupted supply chain, cold storage, food processing units. A crisis should never be wasted.

Did not we read all those reports, a few years back, about how Kirana shops would vanish due to the competition from the large multi-brand retailers and on-line stores? But these small Kirana stores became our saviors. During the pandemic, these entrepreneurs evolved, customised their services, and delivered items home at a time when big online stores stopped delivering. Some even helped source

items from other stores and supplied them. These small neighbourhood stores will continue to flourish.

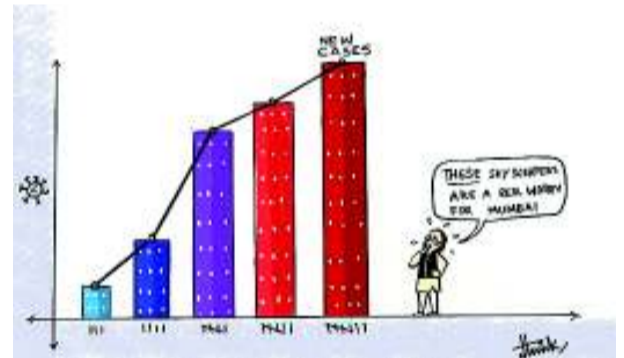
School and college education have moved online during this lockdown. Perhaps, there will be opportunities to expand this avenue in higher education. However, in India, schools should go back to their old routine. Rural schools with no internet infrastructure and poor students with no smartphones are already suffering. Many students come to school just for the mid-day meals.

We are Social Animals. So, immediately after the lockdown, we would like to meet our friends and loved ones. However, small get-togethers would be preferred over big parties. Take-outs would be preferred over dining outs. Even restaurants would design interiors with social distancing in mind.

We will get used to washing hands, carrying sanitizers. Sanitizers would be a common sight in restaurants, parlours, hotel lobbies etc. People will be more concerned about immunity, personal health, and spend more time in meditation, exercise, and yoga. In this new era of social distancing, there will perhaps be a cultural shift in how we greet one another.

Businesses would rethink their strategy. With severe supply disruption during the pandemic, just-in-time inventory management would take a hit. Low debt and cash reserves for the crisis would be the mantra.

Voices of the WEEK



Courtesy: THE HINDU

"No compromise on safety of healthcare personnel fighting the Covid-19 pandemic..." - NARENDRA MODI, PM, India

"Jiomart and WhatsApp will empower nearly 3 crore small Kirana shops to digitally transact with every customer in their neighbourhood." - MUKESH AMBANI, Chairman, Reliance Industries Limited.

"Start of production would depend on our supply chain and dealerships which are non operational in most of the cases currently." - RAJESH GOEL, Director Honda Cars India

"It is the right time to bring about structural reforms in the country's aviation sector." - AJAY SINGH, CMD, Spicejet

"No communal angle to Palghar, strict action will be taken against those spreading fake news and igniting communal hatred on social media." - UDDHAV THACKERAY, CM, Maharashtra

"The situation of corona in India is much better than in the world" - HIMANTA BISWA SARMA, Health Minister, Assam

"Let wine shops reopen, it will boost revenue in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak." - RAJ THACKERAY, president, MNS

"Books are the carriers of civilization. They give wings to the mind and flight to imagination." - NAVEEN PATNAIK, CM, Odisha

"The biggest lesson Covid-19 has taught us is to become self-reliant." - NARENDRA MODI, PM, India

Hand washing

Different Strokes

Dr Utpal Kumar Katak

House Officer, like myself, to scrub hands prior to wearing the latex gloves, a must before handling anything in the Theatre.

On one such operation day, as I entered the Theatre, I had seen the Professor dressed up waiting for his team to be ready. Next to him, I noticed a round mirror placed over a round table.

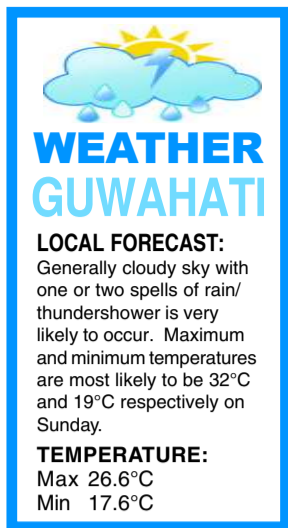
During the days that followed, my curiosity about the 'mirror' never faded away and was looking for an opportunity to find out the mystery. I gently asked Dr Medhi one day while we both happened to be in the common room.

"Don't you know why?" he replied with a sardonic smile. "Sir's eyes are always focused on the mirror when you wash your hands"

Now, after 51 years, I think I am expert with SafeHands Challenge.

Different Strokes

Anecdotes full of wit and humour with a finishing punchline having a word count of 360 words may be sent to differentstrokes@assamtribune.com



Aid to lockdown-hit poor people continues

CITY CORRESPONDENT/
CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI/JORABAT, April 25: In a bid to help the needy amid the nationwide lockdown to curb spread of coronavirus, the 128 Battalion Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on Saturday distributed dry ration, masks and other items among over 300 needy people in Marokdola area under Sonapur revenue circle.

The 128 Bn of the CRPF under the guidance of DIG Range Guwahati JPK Ray and Commandant Surjit Kumar Atri, also distributed nutritious meals making sure the hygiene standards are not compromised.

The CRPF officers also called for use of soap to ensure that people wash their hands before eating. The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) Cell of Cotton University on Thursday distributed ration and other necessities to 64 needy families of Nijpanbari at Chandrapur, a village adopted by the university under its UBA programme.

The packets that were distributed contained rice, pulses, oil, salt, sugar, tea, potatoes, onions and soap cakes. Joint coordinator of UBA Cell Dr Narayan Sharma, accompanied by students Manab Talukdar and Dhiraj Das, visited Nijpanbari to distribute the materials with due permission and full cooperation from the DSP (Admin), Guwahati.

Gaomburha of Nijpanbari village Prasanta Ranghang had all arrangements ready with the villagers maintaining social distancing and ASHA workers rendering full support by providing sanitizers and supervision.

Cotton University has adopted five villages and similar work will be done in the remaining villages within the next few weeks. Earlier, materials were also distributed to needy families of another village Chakardeo- Kalitapara adopted under UBA, by Dr Narayan Sharma.

Worker dies of electrocution

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 25: A 25-year-old worker died on spot after he was electrocuted at a construction site at Adabari today. The deceased has been identified as Judhistir Roy of Dhupdhara, Goalpara.

A police source said two more persons received minor injuries in the incident. Altogether 15 workers were working at the site.

Call to ramp up COVID-19 testing in State

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: The All India Professionals' Congress (AIPC) has called upon the State government to ramp up COVID-19 testing to prevent spread of the pandemic.

"An exponential ramping up of coronavirus testing is required to gauge the actual impact of the nationwide lockdown so far. There is an urgent need to upgrade health care facilities with extensive testing. Assam has many districts under red zone and orange zone. There is a need to scale up testing exponentially in all such districts if we want the lockdown to work. Assam is still not out of the woods, and large-scale testing alone can make the picture clear. The government seems to be clueless on 'what after May 3', when the lockdown period gets over as the government has to take a backseat due to negligible COVID-19 testing being done so far to come to any conclusion. This has

Lockdown causes Rs 34-cr loss to State vegetable growers

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: Proving all the initiatives taken by the State Agriculture department ineffective in this season, vegetable growers of Assam have faced a loss of around Rs 34 crore. The loss occurred as the growing of vegetables doubled in this season in comparison to previous years.

Revealing the data here today, Agriculture Minister Atul Bora claimed that during the lockdown days, farmers of Assam have earned around Rs 475 crore by selling their farm produces.

This year, Assam also exported 18,000 MT of vegetables to different parts of the country. Bora said this time the State has exported a large amount of vegetables to New Delhi, Rajasthan and Haryana along with a large amount of banana to West Bengal.

Amid the lockdown, the State Government also wrote to the Centre, seeking an additional Rs 150 crore under Remunerative Approach for Agriculture and Allied Sector Rejuvenation Scheme. Moreover, around 27 lakh farmers in

Assam will avail financial assistance under PM-Kisan Scheme soon, for which the department concerned has earmarked an amount of Rs 150 crore.

"We are trying to mitigate the loss of farmers by deploying several farmer vendors in every part of the State. These vendors are working to collect farm produces directly from farmers. To look after the matter, district-level monitoring committees have been formed in every district. Moreover, a high powered state-level monitoring committee is relentlessly looking after the activities of district-level committees," Bora said.

The minister said the main duty of a district-level committee is to look after the marketing and supply of vegetables grown by the local farmers. To cover the loss of farmers, the State Agriculture department will also set up several cold storages across the State and for which the officials concerned will carry out a survey soon.

Moreover, the cold storages located at Goalpara and Chaygaon will become operational soon. The department is also planning to repair all defunct cold storages in the State too.

"We are chalking out some short-term and long-term plans to ensure the availability of vegetables and other agri products in the coming days. As a short-term measure, we urged every person to start a kitchen garden in their homes. As a long-term measure, we are collecting the data about scope, surplus and production of vegetable products from every district," Bora said.

For Sali cultivation, the minister also directed all the district administrations to help farmers in their respective districts. In this connection, the chief secretary has also issued an order. Very soon all enlisted beneficiaries of Assam will also avail tractors and power tillers from the government.

The minister said for the convenience of farmers, the direction has been made to every district to keep open all tractor repairing shops along with shops deal in seed, fertilizer and water pump.

In the coming days, the Agriculture department will also carry out an awareness drive about crop insurance among farmers of Assam. Additionally, 21 soil testing laboratories will become operational in the State soon.



With the State government easing inter-district travel for three days, people stand in a queue outside the Deputy Commissioner's Office to avail passes, in Guwahati on Saturday. — AT photo

City florists incurring heavy losses

ABINASH KALITA

GUWAHATI, April 25: Hundreds of flower vendors in the city are incurring heavy losses due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown.

A florist Jayanta Barman of Panbazar said around 70 per cent of the total flower saplings were perished due to the ongoing lockdown.

"I am facing a huge loss due to the total shutdown. Nearly 70 per cent of my flower plants worth over 70,000 perished. All the remaining plants will perish in the coming days if proper care is not taken," Jayanta Barman said.

"All the flower plants are lying on the footpath near the Nehru Park ever since the lockdown was imposed. We have sought permission from

the district administration to water the flower saplings during the lockdown but nothing has been done in this regard," he added.

There were 25 florists selling flower saplings in the Panbazar area but all of them are now going through a very tough time.

"50 per cent of the flower saplings worth Rs 20,000 are of no use. I urged the administration or the government to provide some spaces to sell those remaining plants. We know that the government has been providing some financial assistance to the poor but these are not enough to feed the entire family for a long period," another florist Dipak Barman said.

Dipak Barman, who also owned a nursery in the Maligaon area, said, "Traders like me are suffering the heavy losses as there is no return on the investment."

Moreover, all the flower shops in the city are closed due to ongoing lockdown.

"We have no orders for decorations for weddings or parties. There is hardly any demand for flowers now," a florist Suraj Neog of Pancy Bazar said.



ing flower saplings in the Panbazar area but all of them are now going through a very tough time.

"50 per cent of the flower saplings worth Rs 20,000 are of

Bid to create controversy over Abdul Malik's poem decried

AJIT PATOWARY

Some forces seem to be bent on infusing a communal rift in the Assamese society. First they tried to raise a controversy around a new genre of poetry — Miyan kobita (Miyan poetry). Then, they raised a hullabaloo in a bid to castigate an entire community following the controversy over a section of people attending a religious congregation at the Nijamuddin headquarters (Markaz) of the Jamat-e-Islam. And this time, they are trying to create a controversy by distorting 'Moi Asamiya', a widely acclaimed poem of Syed Abdul Malik, a towering figure in Assamese literature.

Significantly, these forces have been using social media in their bid to catapult such controversies. However, the saner section of the Assamese society has so far been deflecting all such evil designs of these wicked forces.

These forces have alleged that Syed Abdul Malik had in fact tried to glorify the Mughals in his poem 'Moi Asamiya'. To mislead the common people, they have projected only the first few stanzas of the poem, which were written by Malik only to mock at the self-acclaimed invincibility of the Mughals as a military superpower.

Until their Assam expedition, the Mughals were boasting that no force on earth could defeat them. But, the Assamese forces made the 'mighty' Mughal power bite the dust on multiple occasions.

Abdul Malik highlighted the military prowess and the assimilating powers of the Assamese people in his poem 'Moi



Asamiya'. But the above-mentioned forces are now despicably trying to project this great piece of literature as an advocate of Muslim communalism.

Former Assam Sahitya Sabha president Dr Paramananda Rajbongshi has described 'Moi Asamiya' as one of the highly acclaimed patriotic poems of Assamese literature. This poem even encouraged M Ibrahim Ali of Darrang district to compose another brilliant poem — 'Tumi Yadi Asamiya'. Both these poems are regarded to be exquisite patriotic compositions, said Dr Rajbongshi.

The former Sahitya Sabha chief also

appealed to all concerned not to create any controversy over 'Moi Asamiya' and Syed Abdul Malik.

The Natun Sahitya Parishad has condemned the attempt of some 'communal forces' to malign the image of Syed Abdul Malik by distorting his poem 'Moi Asamiya'. It has urged the State government to take appropriate action to discipline these forces.

Syed Abdul Malik is a leading figure in the post-Lakshminath Bezbaroa era of Assamese literature. He played a major role in democratising the Assamese society. His literary works are precious assets of Assamese society. Some forces tried to malign his image during the Assam Agitation too. But Syed Abdul Malik remained a leading light for the Assamese society, the Sahitya Parishad said.

Malik's 'Moi Asamiya' also encouraged noted poetess Nalini Bala Devi to compose another brilliant poem 'Tumi Asamiya'. Noted literary journal *Banhi* described these poems of Syed Abdul Malik, M Ibrahim Ali and Nalini Bala Devi as the three best patriotic poems of Assamese literature, said the Sahitya Parishad.

It has called upon the conscious people of the State to remain vigilant against the evil designs of the diabolic forces.

Cab operators seek financial aid

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 25: The All Assam Cab Operators' Union on Saturday urged the State government to provide financial assistance to the cab drivers and the owners.

All the members of the union today took to the social media and uploaded a picture with their family members with placards to get the attention of the government. The union also sent a letter to the Chief Minister in this regard.

Ismail Ali, president of the union, said, "The cab operators and the daily wage earners are the worse affected due to the lockdown. There are 12,000 cabs under our union. We find it extremely difficult to make our ends meet. In this situation, how we will repay the loans taken from financial institutions?"

He added, "We also appeal to the government to provide Rs 10,000 to each of the cab operators to deal with the crisis and take measures to repay our loans as well."



A WELCOME MEAL: A homeless man having food with his child on a footpath in Guwahati on Saturday. — UB Photos

Devananda Konwar's demise condoled

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: State Industries and Commerce Minister Chandran Mohan Patowary has condoled the demise of former Bihar, Tripura and West Bengal Governor and former Assam minister Devananda Konwar.

In a condolence statement, the Minister stated, "Devananda Konwar had a long and outstanding political career. As a student leader, teacher, minister and finally as a Governor, he left an indelible mark in the history of our political life. His demise is an irreparable loss."

The Minister also extended his condolences to the members of the bereaved family and prayed to the Almighty for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Senior Congress leader and former APSC member Shirazul Hussain also condoled the death of the former Governor and State minister.

World Malaria Day observed

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: Assam this year has reported altogether 58 malaria cases so far, revealed the National Health Mission here today.

The State on Saturday observed World Malaria Day on the theme "Zero malaria starts with me".

Health workers across the State today carried out miking, door to door fever surveillance, distribution of leaflets on the vector-borne disease, etc. as part of the programme.

All chemist shops to sell hand sanitizers, masks

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 25: The Chemists and Druggists Association of Assam (CDAA) has said people will get hand sanitizers and masks at all retail chemist counters in the State from now on, at a price fixed by the government.

The CDAA on Saturday in a press statement said the consumers can contact pharmacies in their respective areas to procure hand sanitizers and other products like handwash soaps, disinfectants from Dettol, Savlon, etc. at prices (MRP) fixed by the government across the State.

"A local manufacturer of As-

sam took the lead in making these products available at government recommended prices while maintaining the quality. The 'Handuser-C' of GRD Pharmaceuticals is the first such hand sanitizer brand in the north-east region," president Dr NL Agarwala and secretary Jitu Barman of the CDAA stated.

"The customers should refrain from buying sanitizers above government rates and old MRPs. The current MRP rate as per government rule is Rs 250 for 500 ml, Rs 100 for 200 ml and Rs 50 for 100 ml," the statement added.

The association noted that there has been a sudden growth in sanitizer manufacturing com-

panies in different parts of the State and the majority of them are producing sanitizers and other products without having requisite licences or expertise.

"They are not following the mandatory norms for manufacturing health products as recommended by ICMR and dermatologists. The genuineness of such products is also questionable. Such companies and individuals are also producing masks and selling them at higher prices thereby violating the provisions of different Acts under which these products are regulated and distributed at government-approved MRPs," the statement added.

Webinar under 'Dekho Apna Desh' series showcases Assam villages

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 25: As the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India continues with the initiative of organising a series of webinars under the overall theme 'Dekho Apna Desh', its 8th webinar in the series titled 'North East India — Experience the Exclusive villages' with focus on Assam and Meghalaya highlighting the lesser known villages, was presented on April 24.

The 8th webinar had 3,654 participants and was attended by people from countries like Afghanistan, Canada, France, Germany, Pakistan, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Describing the tourism po-

tential of the region, an official statement said that North East India is the land of exquisite beauty, offering a blend of emerald landscapes, azure water bodies, pristine silence, infinite vastness and mesmerising local populace.

"The infinite variety of its geographic setting, its topography, its varied flora and fauna and avian life, the history of its people and the variety of its ethnic communities and their rich heritage of ancient traditions and lifestyles, its festivals and crafts make it a holiday wonderland that just requires to be discovered afresh. The North East's amazing diversity makes it a holiday destination for all seasons," the statement said.

The webinar was presented by Arijit Purkayastha, CEO, Koyeli Tours and Trav-

els (P) Ltd and Dr Shreya Barbara, chief operating officer, Landscape Safari.

The webinar showcased the unique tourism potential of a number of spots in Assam including Sualkuchi, Ranthali, Hajo, Dadara, Sarthebari, Nalbari, Bansbari, tea bungalows of Assam, Majuli and Nampahke village. A number of tourist destinations of Meghalaya including Mawphlang, Kongthong and Jowai also featured in the webinar.

The ministry's efforts to showcase India's landscape, cities and other experiences through webinars are also available on YouTube Channel of Incredible India and the ministry's websites www.incredibleindia.org and www.tourism.gov.in.



Security personnel use a drone while patrolling at Badi Chaupar during the nationwide in Jaipur, on Saturday. - PTI

'Developed nations trying to learn from India's experience in fighting COVID-19'

NEW DELHI, Apr 25 (PTI) Union minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday said that developed countries are trying to learn from India's experience in fighting COVID-19 pandemic. The minister said this in a video conference with former bureaucrats from across the country while discussing measures to combat coronavirus and to brief them about the efforts

being made by the Modi government to contain the pandemic, besides obtaining their inputs in this regard. Singh gave a chronology of measures undertaken under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a proactive basis, as a result of which, he said, India's record was much better compared to most other countries of

the world. "Today even the more developed countries of the world are looking forward to India, not only for support in terms of medicine supplies like chloroquine but are also trying to learn from India's experience in fighting CO-

ID pandemic," the minister was quoted as saying. "At the same time, they are more familiar with the state and place where they had settled after superannuation and can therefore also offer suggestions specific to that region," said Singh.-PTI

Montek to head post-COVID revival group for Punjab

CHANDIGARH, April 25: The Amarinder Singh-led Punjab government on Saturday constituted a group of experts, headed by noted economist and former deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, to come out with the post-COVID revival strategy for the state.

The group, which includes leading economy and industry experts, will recommend to the Punjab government a short-term (one year) as well as medium-term action plan, including a fiscal management strategy along with other policy measures to revive the state's economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

Amarinder Singh said his government was grateful to Montek for accepting the difficult task of finding ways for the state's economic revival.

The Chief Minister had announced his government's decision some days ago to set up a panel of experts to formulate a comprehensive strategy to revive the state's economy and industry in the post-COVID scenario.

The 20-member group has been mandated to submit its initial set of recommendations by July 31. - IANS

Formulate nat'l plan for handling COVID-19 crisis: Cong tells Govt

NEW DELHI, April 25: The Congress today urged the government to formulate a national plan for handling the coronavirus crisis under the Disaster Management Act.

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal said at a press conference via video-conferencing that it was time for the government to rethink the lockdown measures as the country cannot have the "lockdown of people and lockout of the economy".

"You cannot have a lockdown of people, and a lockout of the economy. That is not the way to formulate policy. We are not criticising, we are only saying it is time to rethink, we will support the government in every possible way," he said.

Sibal also called upon the judiciary to evolve a policy to ensure that the justice delivery system is considered an essential service during such crisis.

He alleged that bureaucrats, who do not have any idea about ground realities, were formulating policy for the government during the lockdown.

The former Union Minister said as per the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the Union government was duty-bound to formulate the national plan to deal with COVID-19, and accused the government of maintaining "conspicuous silence" on the issue.

The Union government, in the absence of a national plan to deal with COVID-19, seems to have delegated its responsibilities under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to the state governments, he alleged.

Without the necessary infrastructure, both human and physical, and adequate financial resources, state governments are not in a position to effectively deal with this pandemic, he noted.

"Our Prime Minister's limited role, so far as we can see, is addressing the nation from time to time. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) made no preparations to put in place a plan despite the WHO declaring the virus to be a public health emergency towards the end of January."

"Why were detailed plans not made

within seven weeks of the WHO declaration when on March 24, the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown? We are in the fourth week of April, yet there is no plan in place even now," Sibal said.

He said the Prime Minister should inform the people about the minimum standards of relief that are required to be provided to persons affected by the disaster. Instead of discharging its "solemn responsibilities to provide succour to the poor and helpless stranded migrants", the Union government has chosen to shift the onus to state governments to do what they can without a plan and without guidelines prescribing minimum standards of relief, the senior Congress leader alleged.

"It is unfortunate that even till date, there is no plan. We are all aware that the provisions in shelters are pathetic without adequate sanitation, medical cover, food and clean drinking water. The states are not able to make available adequate food supplies to those affected," he said. - PTI

Ready to cooperate with Indian agencies: Chinese cos

NEW DELHI, April 25: Two Chinese pharma companies, which supplied 5.5 lakh rapid testing kits for COVID-19 to India, said they are ready to cooperate with Indian agencies looking into allegations of poor accuracy of their products.

In separate statements, Guongzhou Wondfo Biotech and Livzon Diagnostics said they follow strict quality control of their products, asserting that specified guidelines must be followed in storage of the kits as well as in their usage to get accurate results.

India's apex medical research body ICMR on Tuesday advised states to stop using the rapid

antibody test kits for the next two days till it examines their quality following complaints that they are not fully effective in detecting coronavirus infection.

Last week, India procured 5.5 lakh rapid antibody test kits from these two Chinese firms and they were distributed to several states reporting rising cases of coronavirus infection.

While Guongzhou Wondfo Biotech supplied 3 lakh test kits, Livzon Diagnostics delivered 2.5 lakh.

Livzon Diagnostics, in its statement said: "We are shocked to receive negative reports from India related to poor accuracy of COVID 19

rapid testing kits made in China, including our brand. We have shown great concern on this issue, and we are willing to coordinate with the related govt departments for investigation."

The company said it fulfilled all required quality control standards prescribed by the Chinese government and that the company has been exporting the product to at least 10 countries, including Brazil, Peru, Columbia and several European nations.

"The test kits should be stored at a temperature between 2 and 30 degree celsius and should not be frozen... If

the storage temperature is too high, the accuracy of the test may be influenced," it said.

In its statement, Guongzhou Wondfo Biotech said the company has been exporting the kits to more than 70 countries and that the product was validated and approved by the ICMR through the National Institute of Virology in Pune.

"In the process of exporting the products to overseas countries, Wondfo fully cooperates with relevant health authorities in each country to carry out various verifications on the sensitivity and specificity of our products," it said.

The statements by the two

companies were released to the media by an official of the Chinese embassy here.

At present, the government hospitals have been using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests to detect coronavirus from throat or nasal swab samples of people. These take around five to six hours to show the results.

In the rapid antibody tests, the blood samples of suspected patients are taken, and it normally takes around 15-30 minutes to give the result.

India has been facing severe shortage of testing kits in view of rising cases of coronavirus. - PTI

2 mass...

(Contd from page 1)

"These samples will be tested at the medical college of Barpeta, and the results will be out within one day," he said.

Sarma along with Minister of State for Health Pijush Hazarika, Tourism Minister Chandan Brahma, local MLAs and officials first visited Chapar, where the district's first positive case was detected. Then he went to Bilasipara, where three such cases were detected. The minister also visited the quarantine centres in these areas.

Meanwhile, around 390 stu-

dents from Assam, who were stranded at the country's coaching hub Kota in Rajasthan, will arrive at Srirampur by tomorrow. "On their arrival, each of them will be medically screened at the border entry point," Sarma said.

"Although they were quarantined at Kota, but as they are travelling now and have passed through several states, they might contract the infection. While those with no COVID-19 symptoms will be sent to the Sarusajai quarantine centre in Guwahati, the rest will be kept at the Srirampur quar-

antine centre till further order," he said.

Meanwhile, the Health Minister clarified that the State government will not implement any relaxation for the next two days after the Central government relaxed some lockdown conditions by allowing more categories of shops to open.

"On April 27, a video conference will be held where the Prime Minister and the chief ministers of all the states will take part, and only after that, the State cabinet will take a call on further relaxation," he said.

Decision ...

(Contd from page 1)

The Chief Secretary also made it clear that until further orders, only the shops already notified, including medicine shops, grocery shops, fruits and vegetable shops, will remain open. Shops selling fans, etc., would be allowed to open. The government has also allowed opening of book stores for three hours every day to enable students to procure textbooks.

Sale of ...

(Contd from page 1)

The minister, however, asserted that there is no chance of the disease spreading to other animals or humans.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal held a meeting with top officials and scientists of the animal husbandry and veterinary department at the Brahmaputra State Guest House here and directed the department to conduct an inquiry into the 'pig flu' cases in the State and take remedial measures at the earliest in the greater interest of farmers engaged in the piggy sector.

Agriculture Minister Atul Bora and Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna were also present in the meeting.

Devanand ...

(Contd from page 1)

Konwar started his career as Lecturer in English department of Cotton College, before joining the American Standard Vacuum Oil Company in Mumbai. He was also the founder principal of Guwahati College, said sources in the Congress party. Later he joined the Gauhati High Court Bar and practiced as an advocate for many years. He also served in various organizational positions in the Congress party before becoming a Minister in 1991.

In 2015, Konwar switched to AIUDF from Congress. He was appointed vice president of AIUDF. However, he later left the AIUDF Governor Jagdish Mukhi, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, State Congress president Ripun Bora, former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, BJP State president Ranjeet Kumar Dass and AIUDF president Badruddin Ajmal, among others, condoled the demise of Konwar.

Daily ...

(Contd from page 1)

On a positive note, the Delhi government said it has seen encouraging results from the plasma therapy trial on more patients. Karnataka also began similar trials on Saturday, while Rajasthan said it was also ready to conduct these trials.

Some states, taking cue from a late Friday night order from the Union Home Ministry, said they are taking steps to open more categories of shops, including those selling garments, mobile phones, hardware and stationery items.

would not be allowed for shops located in market places, malls and COVID-19 hotspots and containment zones. In rural areas, all shops barring those in malls have been allowed to open.

Liquor and cigarette shops would remain closed everywhere irrespective of their location, while sale of non-essential items through e-commerce platforms continue to remain shut. Restaurants, hair salons and barber shops will not be allowed to open as these render services and do not fall under the shop category.

The Delhi government said

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION ASSAM

Dated : 25th Apr 2020

CANCELLATION NOTICE

It is hereby informed that, the bid process for the work "Construction of Resident Hostel (Girls & Nurses, G+2, One unit) at Diphu Medical College (Formerly AHMC&RI), Diphu, Karbi Anglong under NHM, Assam on Turnkey Basis" against the IFB issued vide this office No.NHM/C-CW/Diphu Medical College/Ph-II/4073/20-09 Dated Guwahati the 19th Feb' 2020 has been cancelled as no bid was found responsive. The Bid securities submitted by the bidders can be obtained from the office of the Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam, Christianabasti, Guwahati-5 during working hours.

The bids for the other works vide the same IFB however will continue.

Sd/- Mission Director, NHM, Assam

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION ASSAM

Dated : 23rd Apr 2020

EXTENSION NOTICE

The tender notice issued vide No. NRHM/C-CW/CHC/Bogapani/Tinsukia/1985/13/133 dated Guwahati the 21st Mar' 2020 and extended vide NRHM/C-CW/CHC/Bogapani/Tinsukia/1985/13/133 dated Guwahati the 8th Apr' 2020 for the work "Construction of Community Health Centre (Ghoirail Model Hospital) including residential quarters at Phuloguri (Rangapara) in Sonitpur District under NRHM, Assam on turnkey basis" is hereby extended as follows:-

1. Submission of Bid: 06/05/2020 (end date) at 14:00 hrs. (end time)
2. Opening of Bid: 08/05/2020 at 15:30 hrs
3. All other terms and conditions will remain same.

Sd/- Mission Director, NHM, Assam

Short-Tender Notice

Mission Directorate of Swachh Bharat Mission (U), Assam invites sealed quotations from eligible Companies/Firms/Distributors for supply and delivery of following items at Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of Assam.

Sl. No.	Items
1	Washable/Re-usable Cloth Mask
2	Re-usable Rubber Hand Gloves
3	Manual Spraying Machines (16 liters capacity)
4	Water proof full Jackets with trouser & caps

Detail of Tender document may be seen in the SBM(U), Assam website <http://sbmurbanassam.in>

Sd/- Mission Director Swachh Bharat Mission (U), Assam Dispur, Guwahati-6

Janasanyog/CF/31/20

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION ASSAM

Dated Ghy the 25th April 2020

No.: NHM/C-CW/ Diphu Medical College/Ph-II/4073/20- 25

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) (e-Tender Notice)

The Office of the Mission Director, National Health Mission, Christian Basti, Guwahati-5 invites fresh bid for the works **ON TWO BIDS SYSTEM** under NHM as detailed below-

Name of the work: Construction of PH-II works of Diphu Medical College Diphu (Formerly AHMC&RI, Diphu) Under NHM on Turn Key Basis

Name of the Building	Provisions	Value of Work (In Rs.)	Bid Security (In Rs.)	Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.)	Period of Completion (from the date of issue of work order)
Resident Hostel (Girls & Nurses)	G+2 (One Unit)	5,25,39,320.00	2% for General Category & 1% for SC/ST Category	10,000.00	12 Months

- Eligibility Criteria:**
 - (a) Registered APWD (Bldg) Class I-(A),(B) / CPWD/ Reputed Construction Company/ Agency registered under Govt./ Public Sector undertaking
 - (b) Contractor must have satisfactory completed
 - (i) Four similar works, each of value not less than 25% of the estimated cost put on tender or
 - (ii) Three similar works, each of value not less than 40% of the estimated cost put on tender or
 - (iii) Two similar works, each of value not less than 50% of the estimated cost put on tender or
 - (iv) One similar works of value not less than 80% of the estimated cost, all amounts rounded off to a convenient full figure, in the last 5 years ending on the last day of the month previous to the one in which the tenders are invited.
- (c) Contractor must have achieved Annual Turnover of at least 30% of estimated cost in any **ONE YEAR** during last 5 years ending 31st March of the Previous Financial Year.
- (d) The Contractor having PAN Card/GST Registration/Labour License registration under EPF & MP Act, 1952 etc. are eligible to participate in the bid process
- (e) Contractor shall have relevant experience in execution of similar nature of works preferably in hilly terrain.
- (f) The intended bidders are asked to verify the site for the work prior to quoting their rates.

2. Cost of tender document should be drawn in favour of **State Health Society, Assam**, payable at **Guwahati** in the form of Pay Order/Demand Draft.

3. Bid security with a validity of 225 (i.e. 180+45) days should be in the form of Bank Guarantee/ FDR/CDR and drawn in favour of the **State Health Society, Assam**, payable at **Guwahati**.

4. The Contractor/ bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam ([website http://assamtenders.gov.in](http://assamtenders.gov.in)). Contractors/ Bidders can download documents free of cost. Contractors/ Bidders have to necessarily down load the bidding document from the ETS using their own ID (Digital Signature Certificate). Bid documents not procured (downloaded) through the ETS/not using the contractor's own user ID will be considered invalid and summarily rejected. Contractors submitting bids online have to submit copy of the documents of technical bid required to be submitted manually along with cost of tender document before the expiry of the sequence "Online Bid Submission" date and time as mentioned in the tender schedule. Bid will be rejected/ cancelled if Financial Bid submitted off-line/hard copy.

5. The tender will be available through the link <http://assamtenders.gov.in> from 27/04/2020

6. Tender Schedule:-

Sl No.	Name of Event	Start Date	Start Time	End Date	End Time
1	Tender Download	27.04.2020	10.00 HRS	18.05.2020	14.00 HRS.
2	Tender Submission	27.04.2020	10.00 HRS	18.05.2020	14.00 HRS.
3	Technical Bid Opening	19.05.2020	11.30 HRS.	-	-
4	Financial Bid Opening	Will be intimated latter on			

Technical bid submitted along with Cost of Tender and Bid Security manually will be accepted till 18-05-2020 upto 14.00 hours

Sd/- Mission Director, NHM, Assam

WEATHER NORTHEAST

Forecast for North Eastern States:

Rain/thundershowers is very likely to occur at many places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya and at most places over 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

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

Temperatures:

Table with 3 columns: Location, Max (°C), Min (°C). Locations include Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Silchar, Dhubri, Jorhat, N Lakhimpur, Shillong, Cherrapunjee, Aizawl, Kohima, Pasighat, Itanagar, Imphal, Agartala.

Arunachal Assembly sets up COVID-19 control room

CORRESPONDENT

ITANAGAR, April 25: The Arunachal Pradesh State Legislative Assembly on Friday set up a COVID-19 control room at the Assembly Secretariat premises here, in a bid to help the State's people stranded across the country amid the ongoing nationwide lockdown.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, during a video conference with all presiding officers of the State Assemblies on April 21, had suggested establishment of COVID control rooms at the Lok Sabha Secretariat as well as in the State Assemblies to help migrant workers and students stranded due to the lockdown.

Accordingly, under the direction of Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Pasang Dorjee Sona, a COVID-19 control room has been set up at the Assembly Secretariat. The control room will coordinate with the central COVID control room at the Lok Sabha Secretariat and those of other State Assemblies for exchange of information.

The control room will be made operational from Monday with youths from different walks of life turning up to volunteer for the cause. It will function under the supervision of Special Secretary to the Speaker, PN Thongchi, who is also the COVID-19 Nodal Officer, Joint Secretary Agaab Mossang and Under Secretary L Rongrang.

An Assembly Secretariat release stated those stranded can contact the control room on landline numbers 0360-2214216/2214238 and WhatsApp number 9485236624, or email at aplacovid19controlroom@gmail.com for any help.

Online classes for students

GUWAHATI, April 25: The National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) centres in Assam and Meghalaya have been conducting online classes for their regular students amid the ongoing lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The NIELIT covers Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Kokrajhar, Silchar, Tezpur and Majuli in Assam, and Shillong and Tura in Meghalaya, a press release received here stated.

Different online tools like Google Classroom and e-learning portal of the NIELIT, along with social media tools like WhatsApp, phone, e-mail and bulk text messages, are being used for conducting the online classes. Faculty members are also providing free on-call technical guidance to private schools, junior colleges and the public to start digital and online classes. The NIELIT conducts several courses, mostly in IT and Electronics, including awareness courses for school students and parents, programming courses for engineering graduates and other ICT-based livelihood training, Dr Y Jayanta Singh, Director of NIELIT, Guwahati and Shillong, stated.

Meghalaya Govt, Opp discuss State COVID-19 scene

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, April 25: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought Meghalaya's ruling alliance and the Opposition together. In a meeting held here today, they urged people to be "sympathetic with and not stigmatize" anyone affected by the virus and "be kind and respectful" to healthcare workers.

The meeting, chaired by Meghalaya Assembly Speaker Methbah Lyngdoh, was attended by Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, Leader of the Opposition Mukul Sangma, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, Home Minister Lakhmen Rymbui, Health Minister AL Hek, Congress MLA and former Assembly Speaker Charles Pynngrope, and others.

While the Government made a powerpoint presentation on its current efforts, the Opposition made suggestions to boost these efforts. "Provide sensitive support to all COVID-19 positive individuals and those probable cases and not to stigmatize any individual as the vi-

rus can affect any person," a joint statement said. People should "not be fearful of the virus," but follow standard protocols relating to personal hygiene, handwashing, cough etiquette and social distancing, it added.

Observing that most people affected by the virus will not need hospitalisation, the statement, however, added that "the Government is fully prepared to deal with all cases that may need hospitalisation".

The National People's Party-led Government in the State has been at the receiving end ever since a spate of COVID-19 positive cases were reported in the State, followed by the death of the first patient and the subsequent controversy surrounding his cremation.

The COVID-19 victim initially did not get a resting place due to opposition from local residents, which caught the Government totally off guard. Moreover, the poor testing rate of the primary and secondary contacts of the first patient is also something the Government is trying to rectify. Meghalaya Chief Secretary MS Rao present-

ed details of the steps the Government has undertaken to contain the spread of the disease. He also highlighted the measures taken to distribute foodgrains and essential commodities.

The Government also stated that reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction testing would be increased from 90 to 370 by mid-May. Moreover, 50,000 rapid antibody diagnostic kits will be available by the first week of May.

The State Government also highlighted the facilities available in the healthcare systems and the stocks related to personal protective equipment, masks and other medical items. It further said that surveillance and monitoring of all the 5,200 individuals quarantined in their homes are being done by the Government.

Moreover, foodgrain distribution to the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and non-NFSA beneficiaries has already been completed for the current month.

Assistance to people stranded outside and workers in the unorganised sector was also discussed in the meeting.

Second COVID-19 patient of Tripura discharged from hospital

CORRESPONDENT

AGARTALA, April 25: Tripura's second COVID-19 patient, a jawan of the 3rd battalion of the Tripura State Rifles (TSR) hailing from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, was given a warm send-off by the doctors, nurses and paramedical staff of the GB Pant Hospital here today.

For the overworked and tense doctors and nurses, this was a joyous occasion as they clapped all the way when the jawan left the institutional quarantine ward and strode towards an ambulance waiting to take him back to his barracks in Kanchanpur subdivision of north Tripura.

He will be quarantined for 14 more days at a place close to his barracks under the supervision of a doctor.

"He has fully recovered, but another round of quarantine at home or at the place of posting is an additional precaution. The State's first COVID-19 patient, a middle-aged woman from Udaipur, was discharged from hospital last Monday," an official said.

In a Facebook post, Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb termed it as a happy moment. "The 2nd and last COVID-19 patient of Tripura has got released from hospital, where all the healthcare staff gave him a round of applause while he was leaving for another round of quarantine," he said.

"I thank all the frontline warriors for making our State Corona free. The fight is not over yet. I urge everyone to follow the Government guidelines," he added.

State COVID-19 panel formed in Manipur

CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL, April 25: A 21-member State Consultative Committee for COVID-19 has been constituted in Manipur with Chief Minister N Biren Singh as its chairperson, to fight the dreaded disease.

The committee was formed following a Cabinet decision on April 20, an order issued on Friday stated.

The committee includes five ministers and five MLAs, including three from the Opposition party. The Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare, V Vumlungma, is the convener of the committee.

Meanwhile, a total of 22,018 people, who are stranded outside the State, have been provided Rs 2,000 each, incurring a total amount of Rs 4.4 crore.

Revealing this, the Chief Minister on Friday tweeted: "Till today, altogether 22,018 of our people stranded outside the State have been assisted through CM's COVID-19 Relief Fund Rs. 2000 each, involving a total sum of over Rs 4.4 crores. Deeply grateful to hundreds of individuals and groups who have contributed to the Relief Fund in this moment of need."

Earlier, Principal Secretary PK Singh, who is the Resident Commissioner of the Manipur Bhavan in New Delhi, led a team to provide dry rations to more than

2,000 students and people in and around New Delhi.

At the same time, the State Government has been distributing rice under the PDS to people of the State, including migrant workers, during the ongoing lockdown.

It may mentioned here that the two COVID-19 patients of the State, who were confirmed positive for the disease on March 24 and April 2 respectively, were discharged from the JNIMS and RIMS hospitals here on April 12 and April 21 respectively.

Meanwhile, necessary measures are being taken by the State Government to prevent further spread of the disease. State officials have screened a total of 1,95,315 individuals, while 416 were tested for the disease as on April 25. About 84 individuals are in government quarantine centres, while 313 have already completed their quarantine period.

Meanwhile, as part of the ongoing drive to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Singjamei Police arrested 40 persons for violating the ongoing lockdown restrictions and seized 44 vehicles. The lockdown violators were produced before magistrates and fine amounting to Rs 5,800 was imposed on them.

Similarly, Thoubal Police teams also arrested 298 lockdown violators and seized 181 vehicles, besides fine amounting to Rs 28,000.



RG Lyngdoh, chairman of the Indian Red Cross Society, Shillong, handing over a letter of donation of sanitizers and masks to the DC of East Khasi Hills, Marsiewdor W Nongbri, at her office chamber, in Shillong on Friday. - UB Photos

NSCN(I-M) deplors action against cadres

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, April 25: The NSCN (I-M) today accused the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police of belligerently trying to throttle it in Manipur at a time when the entire world is battling the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The outfit said the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police are doing it on the pretext that the ceasefire between the Centre and NSCN (I-M) is not applicable in Manipur. "They have also taken the anti-

quated stand that there is no NSCN designated camp in Ukhrul district (of Manipur)," a release issued by the outfit said.

It also alleged that the Assam Rifles earlier attempted to attack the NSCN camp at Kangoi under Kasom Khullen block of Ukhrul district, but women organisations of the area foiled their plan.

The NSCN cadres, however, shifted the camp to avoid further aggravation of the situation, the release said.

The outfit said the intrusion of

the Indian Army and Manipur State police into Kashung-Bungdung area when the villagers are strictly abiding by the COVID-19 protocols has put the villagers at a great risk of exposing themselves to the asymptomatic coronavirus carriers.

"Such a blatant violation of the COVID-19 protocols when the whole world is grappling with the spread of the dreaded virus is nothing but highly irresponsible and condemnable by all who share the fear of what is happening to the

world today," it said. The outfit described the "bellicose stand" taken by the Manipur Government against it as "alarming".

"This inglorious act of the Manipur Government against the Nagas will go down into history as an act against humanity," it said.

The NSCN (I-M) said there is every indication that the Union Home Ministry has given a "carte blanche" to the Unified Command of Manipur Police and security forces to deal with it.

Nagaland allows neighbourhood shops to reopen

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, April 25: The Nagaland Government today allowed neighbourhood and standalone shops providing non-essential goods and services at residential complexes within the limits of municipalities and town councils to reopen.

However, shops located in market complexes, and multi-brand and single-brand malls will not be allowed to operate.

Chief Secretary Temjen Toy, in an order, said the shops located in crowded areas which offer no scope for enforcing satisfactory social dis-

tancing like in Hong Kong Market and New Market in Dimapur town and BOC Market in Kohima, will remain closed, except shops and outlets dealing in foodgrains, vegetables, food items, medicines and other essential items.

In areas outside the limits of municipalities and town councils, all shops - including those in residential and market complexes - except multi-brand and single-brand malls have been allowed to function.

The order said these shops would have to operate with 50 per cent staff who have to strictly maintain social

distancing and mandatorily wear masks.

It said the protocol for social distancing, as specified in the lockdown measures, national COVID-19 directives and standard operating procedure, must be ensured. Truck repair shops along the highways have also been allowed to reopen.

The order asked the Deputy Commissioners to make assessment of such locations in their respective districts and issue suitable orders.

It reiterated that salons, dine-in restaurants, eateries and departmental stores would continue to remain closed. However, home

deliveries from dine-in restaurants, food outlets and delivery of online orders of essential commodities would be permitted.

The order said the proprietors of shops and establishments which are allowed to reopen, will make arrangements for keeping hand sanitizers or provide facilities for washing hands with soap and water for the public as well as their own staff and workers.

They should also get the door handles, surfaces and other objects, which are frequently touched by people, regularly cleaned and disinfected, the order added.

Tripura Govt adopts austerity measures to tackle economic crisis

CORRESPONDENT

AGARTALA, April 25: The Tripura Government has adopted a slew of austerity measures in view of the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In the 19-point austerity measures, the heads of all government departments, PSUs, local bodies and other government organisations have been asked to slash down non-essential expenditure.

"Office and contingent expenses should be cut down by 30 per cent, while the government departments should increase non-tax revenue by 10 per cent," said Education Minister Ratan Lal Nath.

If any government official requires air conditioner or cable TV/DTH

service, he or she must seek permission of the State Economy Board (SEB). Besides, a complete ban has been imposed on procurement of vehicles. The employees have also been told to use e-mail communication to avoid use of paper.

The heads of departments and other government organisations have also been asked to reduce expenditure on electricity and telephone by at least 10 per cent.

The State Government departments and organisations have been barred from holding fairs, programmes or exhibitions, but this would not apply to programmes sponsored by the Centre.

Most importantly, the Government will not buy any land as part of the austerity measures to ease the

burden on the State's economy.

Admitting that the State, which is heavily dependent on the Central Government, is passing through a very critical phase, the State Cabinet has approved of the stringent measures to address the fragile fiscal position.

Nath said the Fifteenth Finance Commission has already expressed concern over the increasing revenue expenditure.

Nath added that the Finance Commission has asked the State Government to control revenue expenditure as much as possible. According to the Commission, there must be efforts to redeploy work force in case of any shortage through rationalisation to curb revenue expenditure.

Let's Fight #Infodemic #CheckTheFake on #COVID19



NEWS IN BRIEF



Police personnel being felicitated with gamosas for their dedicated service during the lockdown period, at Patacharkuchi on Saturday. — Photo: Nava Kanta Kalita

Phani Bhusan visits Kokrajhar

KOKRAJHAR, April 25: Minister for Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Phani Bhusan Choudhury visited Kokrajhar on April 23 to take stock of the food situation in the district. He met officials of the BTC administration, including BTC principal secretary Robinson Mushahary and local traders. Presiding over a meeting at the Bodoland Guest House, the Minister asked the administration to put emphasis on storage of food and other essential items. He later told the media that arrangements have been made across the state so that there was sufficient food stock for at least one month. He also said stern action would be taken against unscrupulous traders who were selling essential items at high rates. — Correspondent

Relief distributed

TIHU, April 25: Ganesh Tamuli, an eminent sports organiser and chairman of the North East Cancer Hospital, who has been distributing food items to needy families from the beginning of the lockdown, distributed packets of essentials commodities under the aegis of Pub Nalbari Coaching Centre to 80 families in Jajjabari, Sahpur and Dalua villages on Friday. He was accompanied by Dipak Kumar Das, Bhagirath Tamuli, Diganta Narayan Konwer, Hitesh Das and Bhabesh Bharali. — ANN Service

Donation by retd teachers

DHEMAJI, April 25: Members of the Machkhwa Anchalik Provincialised School Retired Teacher-Employees' Association in Dhemaji have donated Rs 22,000 to Assam Arogya Nidhi set up to fight the coronavirus pandemic. The amount was sent to Assam Arogya Nidhi through Allahabad Bank, Machkhwa Branch. — ANN Service

Doley visits Dhakuakhana

DHEMAJI, April 25: Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Naba Kumar Doley, in association with the Dhakuakhana subdivision administration distributed relief materials to around 21,000 people having no ration cards in three development blocks in Dhakuakhana Assembly Constituency. The relief materials — consisting 5 kg rice, 1 kg dal, salt, potatoes, onion, biscuits and soap — were distributed at Boginadi, at Dewalia panchayat of Ghilamara development block and Kherkata panchayat of Dhakuakhana development block. Lakhimpur Zila Parishad president Manju Borgohain, Lakhimpur DRDA project director Naren Paw, CEO Pradip Doley, Dhakuakhana SDO (Civil) Arindom Barua, social worker Pradip Chamuah and Basanta Saikia were also present. — ANN Service

Labourers provided food

PATACHARKUCHI, April 25: As many as 13 labourers, who were stuck in Saderi area of Bajali subdivision due to the lockdown, were suffering from starvation and started to return to Dhubri on foot. But due to the joint efforts of the Bajali administration and mediapersons, they were provided food and assured that they would be taken to their native place. The labourers were taking shelter in a bamboo shed but a storm damaged their shelter. They had no food, and on finding no alternative, they started walking towards Pathsala. On the way, a mediaperson, Dimpal Talukdar, came to know about their hardship and informed the administration. SDO(C) Nayan Jyoti Bhagabati, Dr Sangita Sarma, circle officer Dibash Bordoloi, and Pathsala outpost-in-charge Chandan Rowat reached the spot and assured them of all help. They were also provided food. — ANN Service

Sanitary napkins distributed

GUWAHATI, April 25: Social worker Maidang K Basumatary has taken up an initiative to help women and young girls in Kokrajhar district and has reached out to women in need of sanitary napkins and who are facing difficulties due to the lockdown, stated a press release. The initiative is set to be continued even after the lockdown is removed. Plans are on to devise a strategy to make women of villages aware of the benefits of maintaining menstrual health and hygiene. The plan also consists of a programme to train women to produce sanitary napkins and sell it within the villages at a low cost.

ONGC sanitises public areas

SIVASAGAR, April 25: ONGC, Assam Asset, Nazira-Sivasagar has been undertaking extensive sanitisation programmes at its workplaces and public places around ONGC's operational areas to combat COVID-19. Sanitisation has been carried out at ONGC premises at Nazira and Sivasagar, Nazira Police Station, daily market, dumping grounds, etc. ONGC's fire fighting teams and its sister organisations have joined hands in these programmes. — Correspondent

Minister reviews measures on tackling floods

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

JORHAT, April 25: State Water Resources and Science and Information Technology Minister Keshab Mahanta visited Majuli on Friday and reviewed the preparations by the Majuli district administration to tackle possible floods.

A Majuli district administration official stated that Mahanta on Friday evening chaired a meeting attended by officials of the district administration, Water Resources department and Brahmputra Board at the Deputy Commissioner's office at Garmur. The Minister reviewed the progress of work car-

ried out under several schemes to tackle floods and check erosion.

Mahanta directed the authorities of the Water Resources department and the Brahmputra Board to immediately resume work on embankments and to prevent erosion under 10 schemes, which were suspended due to the lockdown. He directed the officials to complete the work before the rainy season.

He later told the media that the district administration will be facing a dual challenge of continuing with the fight against COVID-19 and also the annual floods that hit the Brahmputra island during the rainy season every year.

Doomdooma Correspondent

add: Water Resources Minister Keshab Mahanta visited Tinsukia on Thursday evening and held a review meeting on the need of immediate repair of all sensitive embankments in the district before the floods.

Tinsukia Deputy Commissioner Bhaskar Pegu, Superintendent of Police Siladiya Chetia, Lakhimpur Lok Sabha member Pradan Baruah and Sadiya legislator Bolin Chetia were present.

The Minister said discussions were going on regarding pre-flood preparations, because due to COVID-19 and the lockdown, all departments were having issues in com-

pleting their targets.

He also reviewed the status of schemes being executed by the department and directed that ongoing schemes should be completed at the earliest. In cases where tender process has been completed, the contractors may be directed to start the work immediately instead of waiting for the work order.

Mahanta said erosion was the main problem and Geo bags and other protection works have to be completed in the vulnerable areas, including Sisimi and 8th Mile in Sadiya.

In Berakuri, a scheme is being temporarily held up as the area falls

under the eco-sensitive zone and the Minister instructed the officials to take up the issue with the Forest department and complete the scheme at the earliest. He also said that in vulnerable areas, if required, contractors may be allowed to hire more workers and even work in double shifts to complete the schemes.

Later, addressing the media, Mahanta said the repair work should have been started much before, but the lockdown gave a serious jolt to the process. The government would take all possible measures to relieve the people from the onslaught of the floods, he said.

COVID-19 medical warriors felicitated in Cachar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, April 25: As many as 58 medical professionals — including 11 doctors, five technicians and 42 nurses and paramedical staff — who completed 14-day institutional quarantine after treating COVID-19 patients at Silchar Medical College and Hospital were felicitated by the Government of Assam on Friday.

In a brief meeting organised by the Cachar district administration at the hotel where the healthcare professionals were kept, Minister of Excise, Forest and Fisheries Parimal Suklabaidya honoured the doctors and other staff and congratulated them for their commendable services in saving humanity from the lethal disease.

"We are amidst a time when COVID-19 has put our existence at risk. But we are fortunate that our doctors, nurses, technicians and paramedical staff are on the first line of duty, treating COVID-19 patients putting their lives at risk. On behalf of the government and people of the state, I thank all of you for the selfless service. We pray that all of you stay in good health," Suklabaidya said.

Cachar Deputy Commissioner Barnali Sarma, ADCs Lolita Rongpipi and Sumit Sattawan, SMCH principal Dr Babul Bezbaruah, superintendent Dr Abhijit Swami, Joint Director of Health Services Dr SJ Das, and district surveillance officer Dr Ajit Bhattacharjee also conveyed their wishes to the doctors and technical staff.

Dr Bezbaruah said that five doctors had been released a day before and the remaining members of the first batch have completed their institutional quarantine and all of them have undergone two rounds of routine health tests. How-



Minister Parimal Suklabaidya felicitating a doctor on completing the quarantine period. — Photo: Arindam Gupta

ever, they would continue to be on home quarantine for another 14 days. He said the local residents can go back to their homes while others can stay back in their respective accommodations.

Silchar MP Dr Rajdeep Roy was also present during the felicitation.

50 nomad families facing problems: In what could be called a shocking state of affairs, at least 50 families living in makeshift huts in an open field alongside the bypass near NIT Silchar are facing tremendous difficulties due to the lockdown.

NGO Saksham's south Assam wing along with Jan Shikshan Sansthan reached out to the families with ration and sanitisation kits.

"The people living in the huts were found to be Banjaras. There are around

400 people and all are living without food or proper hygiene. We saw children suffering from skin problems and paediatric disorders. They are commonly seen coming into the town begging for food. Social distancing is a big question among these people who are largely ignorant about health and hygiene. We urge the district administration to look into the matter," said Mithun Roy, secretary of Saksham south Assam.

Meanwhile, when the matter was brought to the notice of the administration, Deputy Commissioner Barnali Sarma said steps would be taken for the benefit of those people. District Development Commissioner Jessica Lalsim said that the Joint Director of Health Services Cachar was informed and steps will be taken accordingly.

GMB sanitation workers go on indefinite strike

CORRESPONDENT

GOALPARA, April 25: Safai karmacharis of the Goalpara Municipality Board (GMB) went on an indefinite strike from Friday amidst the lockdown after two workers were assaulted by police near the ASTC point of Goalpara town.

The victims, Jiten Rabha and Pabitra Rabha, alleged that police misbehaved and refused to recognise their identity cards and assaulted them when they were working near Florence Hospital.

In a letter addressed to the Deputy Commissioner, the Goalpara Zila Safai Karmi Union (GZKU) regretted the alleged police highhandedness and demanded action against the police personnel involved in the incident.

The GZKU informed that

they will not return to work till the matter is settled and the workers also alleged that on an earlier occasion during the lockdown, police assaulted three safai karmacharis, Subur Ali, Sobdesh Ali, Anser Ali and Sumit Basfor when they were on duty, but the matter was settled after the safai workers were pacified by the police and then getting assurances that such incidents will not be repeated.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) in a separate memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner supported the demands of the GZKU and urged the administration to take immediate remedial steps at this critical situation due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic so that sanitisation works in the municipality areas continue uninterrupted.

Man kidnapped from Harangajao

CORRESPONDENT

HAFALONG, April 25: At a time when the entire nation is observing lockdown fighting against the COVID-19, one Santosh Hojai (38) of Gamadi Howar under Harangajao police station was kidnapped by unknown youths yesterday.

It is learnt that, yesterday at about 6 pm a group of unknown youths came to the house of Hojai and asked Hojai's wife Santoshi's whereabouts as they "needed the help of a JCB to pull out their Alto car that was stuck somewhere down the road." As the discussion was going on, Hojai reached there. As soon as he arrived, the unknown youths took him away in a Bolero vehicle.

Meanwhile, the wife of Hojai has lodged an FIR at the Harangajao Police Station giving the details of the incident.

Udalguri officials told to ensure food supply during Ramzan

CORRESPONDENT

KALAIGAON, April 25: The Udalguri district administration has taken a few steps for peaceful observation of Ramzan in the district.

A district-level meeting was held at the conference hall of the office of the Deputy Commissioner on April 23. The meeting, presided over by Deputy Commissioner Prakash Ranjan Gharphalia, directed the Deputy Director of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs to ensure availability of food items including fruits, vegetables, grocery items and dry fruits in the market during the month of Ramzan.

The meeting also directed

all Revenue Circle Officers of Kaligaon, Khoirabari, Harisinga, Udalguri and Mazbat to convene meetings with masjid committees to urge them to avoid any public gatherings for prayers due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

All police officials were directed to take steps to inform Muslim families to avoid activities like distribution of free food to needy people in groups and to avoid mass gathering for iftar parties.

The meeting also directed all vendors of grocery and fruits to facilitate home delivery of essential commodities. The district administration made it mandatory for all to maintain social distance and wear masks at all times.

OBITUARY

Sadananda Hazarika

CORRESPONDENT

BISWANATH CHARIALI,

April 25: Sadananda Hazarika, former principal of Tyagbir Hem Baruah College at Jamugurihat, and a resident of Kalyanpur, died on Friday at a hospital in Guwahati. He was 74. His body was later taken to his native village Chatiya. He leaves behind his wife and two daughters.

Holiram Deka

CORRESPONDENT

MORIGAON, April 25: Holiram Deka, a resident of Jagi Bhakatgaon in Morigaon district, died at his residence following a cardiac arrest on Friday. He was 85. After retiring as a teacher of Jagi Bhakatgaon HS School in 2006, he worked as a lawyer in Morigaon. Minister for State Piyush Hazarika mourned his death. Deka leaves behind two sons and a daughter.

Kusum Bora

ANN SERVICE

KALIABOR, April 25: Kusum Bora, a retired teacher of Kuwaritol High School, former president of Kaliabor Sakha Sahitya Sabha and a resident of Hatbor, died on Friday due to old-age ailments. He was 85.

The brother of late Mahim Bora, former president of Assam Sahitya Sabha, Bora is survived by his wife, a son and three daughters.

Kalaigaon mushroom farmers suffer massive losses

CORRESPONDENT

KALAIGAON, April 25: Local mushroom farmers of Kalaigaon and other villages of Udalguri district have suffered massive financial losses due to the nationwide lockdown.

Several hundred kilograms of raw mushrooms have got damaged at home farms because of the closure of markets and other restrictions imposed on transport and markets etc., because of the lockdown. Local farmers have found no way out but to let the raw mushrooms rot at home. Hundreds of unemployed educated youths of Kalaigaon, Tengabari, Bholabari, Bokrajhar Bagicha, Bagichachuba, Bahjani, Borpuhuri, Borongabari, Kabirali etc., had procured mushroom seeds from MPG (Man Power Group) company of Asansol in West Bengal in October

last year at the rate of Rs 1,000 per kilogram. At the beginning, the farmers started mushroom production with 100 units against payment of Rs 5,700 per unit. All the farmers could sell three to five kilograms of raw mushrooms per day @ Rs 200 per

kilogram. The farmers could easily have earned an amount of Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 per month.

Following these examples of success by a few, many others too started mushroom production. A few farmers, who did not sell raw mush-

rooms could also sell dry mushrooms to the said company @ Rs 1000 per kilogram. But the sudden enforcement of nationwide lockdown due to stop spreading of COVID-19, has brought darkness to all the small local mushroom farmers.

Purbajyoti Medhi, a journalist of an Assamese daily and also a successful mushroom farmer of Kalaigaon told this correspondent that due to prevailing rainy weather, they could not dry the raw mushrooms for preservation and had to throw away produced raw mushrooms. The closure of markets and transportation has compelled us to close mushroom production not to speak of financial losses," Medhi said in despair. He urged the government to support the local mushroom farmers of Kalaigaon and other villages in the district.



A local mushroom farmer of Kalaigaon seen with his produced raw mushrooms which he failed to sell or preserve.



LPG tanker trucks are seen parked at Indane LPG filling station during the government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the coronavirus, at Ennore in Chennai on Saturday. - PTI

Govt working on creation of Rs 1-lakh cr fund: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, April 25: The Centre is working on a scheme to address the issue of delayed payments to MSMEs wherein a Rs 1-lakh crore dedicated fund will be created to reimburse outstanding payments owed by Central and State government undertakings as well as major industries, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Friday.

The minister said he is devising the scheme to set up the fund and the proposal will be placed before the Cabinet for approval once the Finance Ministry gives its go-ahead.

"We have decided to set up a fund of Rs 1-lakh crore. We will insure this fund with the government paying the premium. We will come up with a formula for sharing of the interest burden between the paying entity, payment-receiving entity and banks against this fund, for the payments due to MSMEs that are stuck with the PSUs, Central and State governments, and major industries," Gadkari said.

The Minister for MSME and Road Transport and Highways said the fund will impart relief to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector to a certain extent.

He said the corpus will be a mobile fund that will help increase liquidity in the market.

While commenting on delayed payments to MSMEs, Gadkari said all efforts should be made to make payments immediately, and all government departments have been given directions in this regard.

Addressing a webinar, Gadkari also said he has mooted a proposal to Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar to make use of the amount of Rs 80,000 crore lying with the ESIC to tide over the immediate crisis faced by the MSMEs, as the pressure

Repayment of pending dues to MSMEs

for April salaries and wages is mounting.

The proposal will have to be examined by the Finance Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), he said.

Besides, the minister said all national highways have been reopened.

"We have informed State governments and collectors that we have opened up all national highways and till Thursday, about 55-60 per cent transport movement had started. I hope we would soon be able to normalise it," he added.

Gadkari said he would talk to State Trans-

port and Public Works Ministers to ascertain if there are any specific issues being faced with regard to road transport, even as ports have also been opened up with essential workmen at the JNPT, Mumbai.

Interacting with representatives of Assocham via video-conferencing, the minister asked the industry chamber to explore a technical joint venture through investment of capital between Indian industry and major global corporations.

Gadkari also suggested the industry body to compile investment data regarding companies from the US, the UK and other nations present in China and invite them to set up businesses in India.

The minister said he is willing to monitor this initiative to expedite all the required permissions in this regard.

Besides, Gadkari said he would take up the issue of expediting GST and income tax refunds with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to ease MSMEs' liquidity issue.

"I am also going to recommend to the Finance Minister that since computerised systems are in place for GST and income tax refunds, why can't we expedite the system and process refunds within 8 days," he said. - PTI

Finance panel's advisory group suggests support to small businesses, NBFCs

NEW DELHI, April 25: The economic advisory panel of the 15th Finance Commission has suggested that the government should look to support small enterprises and avert bankruptcies in the financial sector as part of the fiscal response to deal with the coronavirus crisis.

At its two-day meeting held via video-conferencing, the members of the advisory council felt that the shortfall in tax and other revenues will be large due to subdued economic activity and hence the fiscal response to the crisis should be much more nuanced.

"It is important not just to look at the size of fiscal response but also carefully at its design... The advisory council also felt that the magnitude of the impact of these developments on public finances is uncertain, but will certainly be significant.

"Governments will have substantial expenditure burden on account of health, support to poor and other economic agents," an official statement issued after the meeting said.

The council felt that the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown would slow down domestic activity and impact cash flows of financial institutions and businesses, besides loss of global demand for Indian products because of a steep global recession.

"All of them were unanimous to suggest that the projections of real GDP growth made before March 2020 need to be relooked into entirely, and, revised downwards considerably.

"Once the lockdown of the economy is released, the recovery can only be expected to be gradual, depending on the ability of the workforce to get back to work soon, restoration of supplies of intermediates and cash flows and, of course, the demand for output. Therefore, the full magnitude of the economic impact of COVID will only be clear only over a course of time," the statement said.

Among the suggestions made to the commission, the council members said small-scale enterprises were cash-starved even prior to the

onset of the pandemic. "As their activity levels and cash flows are affected, it is important that a support mechanism be devised to help them overcome this problem," it said.

Also, non-banking financial companies are affected by the slowdown and in order to avoid bankruptcies and deepening of NPAs in the financial sector, measures should be appropriately designed.

Measures like partial loan guarantee may help. The Reserve Bank of India will have a key role in ensuring that financial institutions are well capitalised, the council members suggested.

Also the finances of the Central and State governments need to be watched carefully in the wake of increased spending to fight the pandemic.

"As we move ahead, we need to think of options for financing the additional deficit. It is important to ensure that the State governments get access to adequate funds to undertake their fight against the pandemic," it added. - PTI

BoB announces ex gratia, health cover for business correspondents

NEW DELHI, April 25: State-owned Bank of Baroda today said it will provide an ex gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh to the next of kin of business correspondents (BCs) in case of loss of life due to COVID-19.

It will also provide health insurance cover of Rs 60,000 to the BCs. The bank has taken steps for BCs' financial security, in terms of ex gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh to the nominee in case of loss of life due to COVID-19, and health insurance facility of Rs 60,000 to each active BC, it said in a statement.

Bank of Baroda said to ensure maintenance of hygiene and safety, it is also providing additional support in tranches to keep the BC points sanitized and clean through sanitizers, disinfectants, use of masks and other measures.

In the first tranche, Rs 2,000 was provided to each active and functional BC in the month of April 2020.

In May, each functional BC will be provided Rs 1,000 for hygiene maintenance, the bank said.

Further, the bank will pay an amount of Rs 100 per working day towards transportation as an incentive to the BCs to encourage them to extend their services from 10 am to 5 pm till June 30, 2020 (except where local-level restrictions are imposed), subject to minimum 40 transactions.

The lender's Executive Director Vikramaditya Singh Khichi said, "The business correspondents are an extended family for us and are performing a very important role in our fight against COVID-19 on the economic front.

"They are our connect to the masses of India and a key part of our bank's efforts to deliver the benefits of the government's financial package under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY), PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, pension, etc." - PTI

Traders seek clarity on reopening of shops

NEW DELHI, April 25: With the Centre allowing reopening of neighbourhood and standalone shops, traders today sought more clarity for easier implementation of the order and urged States to issue necessary guidelines, without which shop owners would not be able to resume work.

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) said the government's order to allow reopening of shops is open to interpretation as terms like "market complexes" are not easily understood.

The retail industry body said keeping in mind the current environment and lessons learnt by keeping essential retail open through the lockdown, "we would recommend that the government open up all channels of retail on a date that it feels safe with the social distancing norms clearly defined", while also asking for malls to be allowed to open.

The government on Friday night allowed opening of neighbourhood and standalone shops, including

those located in residential complexes within municipal areas, but at a 50 per cent strength and after taking necessary precautions.

However, the order, signed by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalra, made it clear that shops in mar-

States urged to issue guidelines

ket places, multi-brand and single-brand malls located in municipality areas shall continue to remain closed till May 3.

"We feel the current circular is open to interpretation and needs more clarity for easier implementation - terms like market complexes are not easily understood," RAI said in a statement.

Domestic traders' body CAIT said shopkeepers would not open their stores till States issue necessary guidelines.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said that shop owners are now waiting for necessary guidelines from State gov-

ernments.

"In pursuance of the order of the Home Ministry, the State governments have to issue necessary order to implement the order of the Central government.

"Traders shall have to wait for the orders of States and after that only they will be eligible to open the shops by complying (with) the norms of health safety and social distancing," CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said.

He also urged Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Urban Development Minister Hardeep Puri to make a clear plan and advise all States to take necessary steps for sanitizing the markets and shops.

Khandelwal added that only such shops which are registered under the Shops and Establishment Act and fall within the territory limit of a municipal corporation or municipality would be allowed to open.

He appealed to the traders not to open their shops and wait for the order of the respective States. - PTI

Rural Devp Ministry releases Rs 36,000 cr to States/UTs in April

NEW DELHI, April 25: The Centre has already released more than Rs 36,000 crore to the States/UTs in the current financial year (FY2020-21) for the development schemes of the villages, said Union Minister for Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar, on Friday.

Tomar held a meeting with all the Rural Development Ministers and concerned officials of the States and Union Territories via a video-conference and urged them to scale up of the works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), in the light of the relaxations granted by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in the non-containment areas w.e.f. April 20.

He informed that the Union Ministry of Rural Development has already released more than Rs 36,000 crore to the States/UTs in the current financial year.

The ministry has sanctioned Rs 33,300 crore under MGNREGA out of which Rs 20,225 crore has been released to liquidate all the outstanding dues of previous years towards wages and materials.

The said sanctioned amount is sufficient to meet the expenses under MGNREGA till June, 2020. The minister assured the States and UTs that adequate financial resources are available for the rural development programmes.

The Union Minister emphasised that although the challenge posed by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is very serious, it must be perceived as an opportunity by all States/UTs to develop and strengthen rural infrastructure, create employment opportunities in rural areas and facilitate

diversification of rural livelihoods.

Tomar also urged the States and UTs to proactively start rural development schemes relating to employment generation, infrastructure creation and strengthening of rural livelihoods while taking all necessary COVID-19-related precautions.

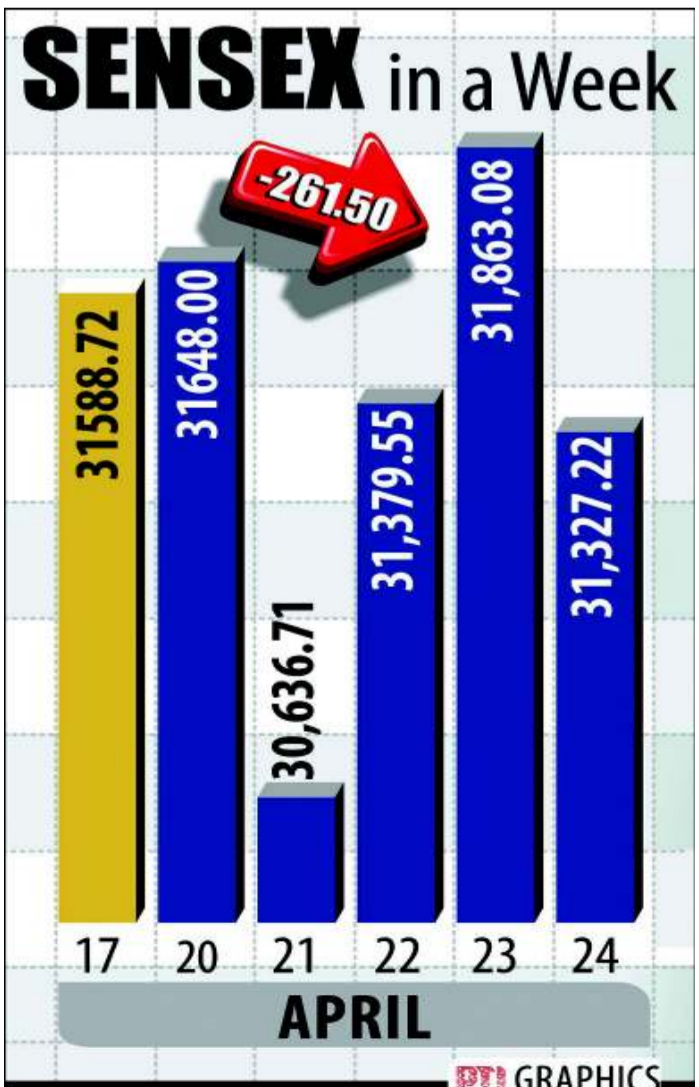
He emphasised that under MGNREGS, the focus should be on water conservation, water recharge and irrigation work in convergence with the schemes of the Ministry of Jal Shakti and Department of Land Resources.

He appreciated the fact that women SHGs under NRLM are making protective face covers, sanitizers, soaps, apart from running community kitchens in large numbers.

Under PMAY-G, the priority would be to complete those 48 lakh housing units where third and fourth instalments have been given to the beneficiaries. - IANS



A worker dries vermicelli during the holy fasting month of Ramzan, amid unprecedented circumstances due to the coronavirus pandemic and the nationwide lockdown, in Prayagraj on Saturday. - PTI



About 328 entities opted for RBI's 3-month moratorium: ICRA

MUMBAI, April 25: At least 328 entities across sectors, including state-owned and those backed by big conglomerates, have opted for availing the Reserve Bank's three-month moratorium on their debt repayments, rating agency ICRA said today.

The list of entities, rated by it, include Air India Express, ONGC Petro Additions, entities from Tata Group, JSW Group and GMR Group.

On March 27, the RBI had given borrowers a three-month moratorium on debt repayments for the March-May period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is a voluntary measure and interest keeps accruing on the loan during the period of moratorium, and experts have opined that such a move would generally elongate the loan repayment period.

ICRA said it is disclosing the names of the entities as per a mandate received from SEBI, and made it clear that pending payment by these entities even in the case of pending formal approval from the lending institutions prior to the original due date, is not considered an instance of default.

Air India Express having a debt of Rs 1,301 crore, and ONGC Petro Additions, which had debt of Rs 33,180 crore and \$155 million in foreign borrowings, have opted for the moratorium on its loans, the agency said.

Interglobe Hotels, with debt of Rs 811 crore, and having its outlook on rating revised to negative earlier this month due to worries on the hospitality sectors, has also opted for the moratorium, it said, adding that other hospitality sector companies, including Lemon Tree Hotels, and Barbeque Nation Hospital-

ity have also sought relief.

Among the financiers, city-based Centrum Financial Services, Creditaccess Grameen, Indostar Capital Finance, Madhura Micro Finance and Spandana Sphoorty Financial have opted for delays in their repayment of their debt commitments - like on commercial paper borrowings, even as banks are yet to arrive on whether to accord the relief to the NBFCs.

Entities in the GMR Group, including GMR Ambala Chandigarh Expressways (Rs 240-crore debt) and GMR Hyderabad Aviation SEZ (Rs 58 crore) have opted for the moratorium provided by the RBI, it said.

Similarly, three entities in the Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Group also seem to have opted for the moratorium, including JSW Steel (Rs 71,952-crore debt), the unlisted JSW Paints (Rs 160 crore), the agency said.

Tata Group entities, including Tata Power (Rs 7,231-crore debt), Taj GVK Hotels and Resorts (Rs 195 crore), and Tata Power Renewable Energy, have opted for the relaxations, it said.

Billionaire Ajay Piramal-led companies, including the flagship Piramal Enterprises and Piramal Capital and Housing Finance (nearly Rs 30,000-crore debt) have also opted for the relaxation offered by the central bank, as per the data disclosed by ICRA.

Kalyan Jewellers having an outstanding debt of Rs 3,555 crore as of September 2019, and private sector milk operator Parag Milk Foods, which has a debt of Rs 390 crore, have decided to opt for the leeway on debt repayments, the agency said. - PTI

E-tailers urge govt to allow sale of non-essential goods

NEW DELHI, April 25: With the government allowing the opening of standalone retail shops in a bid to ease lockdown restrictions, Amazon and Flipkart today urged the authorities to also let them sell non-essential items so that millions of consumers at home can be benefitted.

Flipkart said they welcome the government's decision of providing gradual relaxations in retail and hope for the safety and security of all stakeholders. However, "a gradual opening up of delivery of non-essential goods through e-commerce will help meet consumer demands, which include items that will enable them to work from home, stay in touch with others and also address the rising temperature across the country," a Flipkart spokesperson said.

"E-commerce can help meet these requirements in a safe and secure way while ensuring social distancing and allowing the government to continue their efforts to contain this situation," the company spokesperson added.

An Amazon India spokesperson told IANS that e-commerce offers the safest way for sellers and retailers to serve the needs of citizens while ensuring social distancing.

"We are committed to keep citizens safe and urge the government to enable e-commerce to play its role in the joint fight against the pandemic by allowing the supply of all goods that people need over a prolonged period," said the company spokesperson.

In a modification of the earlier order, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has replaced the term "shopping complexes" with "market complexes" within the limits of municipal corporations and "municipalities". Shops have been allowed outside the city limits except those in malls with 50 per cent workforce while wearing masks has been made compulsory.

Flipkart said that e-commerce can also support in easing the burden of piled up inventory of MSMEs and "help in the delivery of these products to consumers in a safe and secure way while following the robust safety standard operating procedures (SOPs)".

On April 19, when the government said that e-commerce platforms will be able to sell only essential goods, Srinivas Mothey, Senior VP, Paytm Mall, said that the ambit of essential goods should be increased. - IANS

Staying indoors has brought the family closer, feels Soha Ali Khan



Lockdown benefits

Actress Soha Ali Khan says the lockdown has brought her closer to her family than ever. The actress asserts that she tries to do interesting activities with husband, actor Kunal Kemmu, and daughter Inaaya. Here's how Soha Ali Khan is spending her time during the lockdown:
• Reading: Reading has always been something I love doing and our busy lives make it difficult to sit down and make time for it every day. The lockdown has enabled us to stay indoors and focus on the activities that our busy schedules would not allow us to do. Reading is one of the things that I have included in my daily tasks; I dedicate at least one hour to reading as it helps me with my writing better. Therefore, if you were once an avid reader and have lost the touch of it, this is the perfect time to reconnect to your stack of untouched lying favourites.
• Fun with family: Family to me always comes first! In the times of lockdown, your family is what is going to keep you together by supporting you and making you laugh or be your partner in fun. The lockdown has brought us closer than ever. Kunal and I make sure that we engage ourselves with some or the other interesting activity. We try to indulge Inaaya in various activities such as drawing, puzzles, colouring, learning the alphabet or numbers, and sometimes we

gaze out of windows and play the "I spot" game from the balcony.
• Experiment with healthy snacks: I love snacks that are filling and healthy and so does my family, hence I cook our meals that are rich in nutrients. Since almonds are one of my favourite snacks to munch on, I make sure that my recipes include a handful of almonds. They not only keep you full but also prevent you from bingeing on unhealthy options as they help suppress hunger in between meals.
• Exercising with FAM Jam indoors: The lockdown has put a hold on the gyms but not on us, hence I make sure to take out time to exercise for an hour. Kunal and I motivate each other to perform the basic exercises at home. Occasionally we take Zumba and Yoga sessions for Inaaya and love to watch her groove with the music.
• Skincare routine: Maintaining the glow inside out is important. I use facemasks once in a week to exfoliate the impurities and dust from my skin. It is also important to take care from within; therefore, I hydrate myself and intake lots of water. Make sure to include Vitamin E in your diet as it may help in imparting anti-aging properties and benefits skin health.

(Source: IANS)

Entertainment TV schedule for Kids, CN, and Zcfe channels.

Entertainment TV schedule for rishtey, StarPlus, and &tv channels.

Movies section featuring UTV MOVIES, STAR MOVIES, and ZEE CINEMA.

Infotainment TV schedule for Nat Geo Wild and National Geographic Channel.

Regional TV schedule for NEWS LIVE and NEWS 18 channels.

Sports TV schedule for various sports channels.

Know your DAY

By JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Sunday, April 26, 2020:
You are independent and have the stamina for the long haul. You cultivate incredible success this year. Others might offer advice and funding that will help you financially. If single, a sudden attraction can shine the light of love on you if you have been lonely. If attached, preserve the status quo. Wait and watch before making any giant leaps. You are in a good relationship. ARIES is too impatient.
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 accomplish something of a miracle online today. A communication or creative project you have been working on suddenly goes viral and reaches a lot of people. You feel challenged by a friend. Tonight: Listen to someone you see every day for a suggestion.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ You are beginning a long-time phase when family and home expenses will have to be considered. A financial adjustment is in the works. Your own business judgement is better than the advice offered by others. Trust your hunches. Tonight: Listen to a friend's qualms.
GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ Today favors creative work, time spent with children and declaring your love. Partnership, promises and propriety are highlighted. Looking something up, you are drawn to study law and ethics on some level. It is a day full of happy distraction. Tonight: Continue with the joy.
CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ A relative might need assistance. Give as much as you are able. Your energy will be low. Be tolerant of another's idiosyncrasies. Reconsider decisions recently made. In terms of future work plans, treasure the bird in hand over the one in the bush. Tonight: Collapse.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Friends offer valuable new ideas during the course of casual conversation. Consider becoming more active within a certain social group or organization. Prestige is located there. This is the beginning of more growth and opportunity for you. Tonight: Prepare a feast.
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Pursue a goal that nurtures your creative and spiritual needs while weighing financial considerations. Today is perfect for releasing old patterns. You make plans to journey onward and upward on many levels. Tonight: Catch up on news from old colleagues.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Ships are safe in harbor, but that is not what ships were built for. Focus on exploring what love really means to you. Under-scored is a genuine zest for life. You are ready for adventure, with the added blessing of great physical vitality. Tonight: Daydream.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Enjoy chance meetings with those from your past. A reunion with a longtime friend is likely. You reconsider the pursuit of a dream once abandoned. Be diplomatic when discussing controversial issues. Call ahead and confirm plans. Tonight: Where the action is.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Romantic prospects appear; you are at your most charming and charismatic. Closest ties will demand effort and energy. Offer those you care most about your emotional support. Relationships have been subject to sudden change. Tonight: Do not change your commitment status.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ Developing more rapport with either a domestic or wild creature can heal you. Transportation needs are being considered and information exchange is very important. Be alert and stay well informed and all will be well. Tonight: Read between the lines.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Matters of the heart are most promising today. Soul mates are technically those whom we have encountered in previous incarnations. A transformative connection with a soul mate might occur. Your entire concept of partnerships and commitments is changing. Tonight: A child needs you.
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Home and family life are highlighted today. Patiently work out differences and make needed repairs. Shop for the best prices. A relative is feeling very adventurous and might surprise you by taking a gamble. Give your best advice. Tonight: Kick back and think of summer.

Thought for the day
When the solution is simple, God is answering.
- ALBERT EINSTEIN

Comic strips including 'CROCK', 'HAGAR THE HORRIBLE', 'DADDY DAZE', and 'BY JOHN KOVALESKI'.

Tribune SUNDAY CROSSWORD - 1128 grid and solution.

HEALTH CAPSULES® by Bron Smith and SOLUTION TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD - 1128.



Stranded people gather at the ASTC bus stand to begin their journey towards their home districts, in Lakhimpur on Saturday. — UB Photos

Police personnel, safai workers felicitated

CORRESPONDENT

GAURIPUR, April 25: Ashok Kumar Singhi, MLA, Bilasipara East Constituency felicitated the police personnel and the safai workers of Bilasipara and Chapar towns numbering 70 who are working to implement the guidelines set by the government to prevent spread of coronavirus yesterday.

As a recognition of their restless service, the MLA felicitated them with a *phulam gamusa* and an umbrella each.

The solemn function held at Chapar was attended by Bilivya Chaudhury, executive officer, Chapar Municipality and ex-chairman Dwipesh Das, Prafulla Kalita, a BJP worker and Narendra Sethia, a social worker of the town. At Bilasipara, executive officer Kritika Basumaty, who was present on the occasion, praised the efforts of the MLA to strengthen the mind-set of the people. The MLA also distributed food packets to the needy people of the areas.

Masks donated at Biswanath

CORRESPONDENT

BISWANATH CHARIALI, April 25: To combat coronavirus infection in Assam, a social organization namely, CADAT, Biswanath Chariali, handed over around 3,100 home-made three-layered masks to the Deputy Commissioner of Biswanath on Friday. The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the NGO for this job.

The process of mask preparation and distribution was financially helped by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Guwahati in collaboration with USHA International Pvt Ltd. The NGO also provided food materials to North Eastern Regional Multipurpose (physically handicapped) School located in the village of Balipukhuri, Biswanath. On behalf of CADAT, Dhiren Deka, Manoranjan Hazarika and Gobinda Hazarika were present on the occasion.

Inter-dist movement of buses in Dibrugarh chaotic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DIBRUGARH, April 25: The one time inter-district movement of stranded people from the district here got under way as per the government instructions today with the transportation of people, including women, to the nearby districts. However, the transportation could not be operationalized in the desired manner.

The boarding point being Dibrugarh, several passengers from small towns like Duliajan, Naharkatia and other small towns and suburban areas, who have received passes, remained stranded for lack of conveyance to reach the boarding point. The ASTC bus operators here were kept waiting for several

hours for the travellers to reach from their respective areas.

Nevertheless, officials from the district administration informed that about 150 passengers were moved to their desired destinations in the districts of Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur today. As the officials are still expecting passengers from far-flung areas to arrive, buses have been kept ready at the ASTC bus terminal here.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Ranjit Konwar told *The Assam Tribune* that a few private vehicles with passes have also been ferrying passengers one-way. However, it is learnt that the movement system was not going smooth so far due to one boarding point in the district.

569 apply for e-pass in Hailakandi

CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI, April 25: As many as 569 persons stranded within and outside Hailakandi district due to the lockdown have applied for e-movement passes.

District administration authorities disclosed that out of 569 stranded people, who applied for e-passes on Friday, 221 persons applied for movement within the district. Those who applied have had their own vehicles.

Three ASTC buses have been pressed into service for movement of people stranded due to the lockdown.

The District Disaster and Management Authorities has been working till late hours to examine each and every e-pass application.

Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli, who is supervising the entire checking process, disclosed that two reception points at Katakhal and Thandapur and six embarkation points at Thandapur Out-

post, Panchgram Outpost, Al-gapur Police Station, Hailakandi ASTC point, Abdullapur Outpost and Katlicherra Police Station have been put in place to ensure hassle-free movement of stranded people within and outside the district. "Vehicles have been arranged at each point for further drop off," Jalli added.

Medical teams have been deployed at the receiving and deboarding points with hand washing and toilet arrangements.

Jorhat dist admin allows sale of fruits at doorsteps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

JORHAT, April 25: The Jorhat district administration has allowed sale of fruits, including dry fruits, at doorsteps by imposing certain conditions.

An order passed by an Additional Deputy Commissioner on Friday stated that in view of the month of Ramzan commencing from April 24 and lockdown in force, the district administration has allowed sale and distribution of fruits at the doorsteps of residents. However, the administration has imposed certain restrictions to be followed by vendors authorised to carry out the trade.

The vendors will have to be examined by a medical officer with proper certification regarding their health conditions and will be able to sell the products from 8 am to 3 pm daily.

Only fresh fruits from known sources in Green Zone areas will be allowed, and sale of rotten fruits will attract penal action. In case of dry fruits, only FSSAI-licensed products

will be allowed for sale.

The order said all precautionary measures like social distancing, personal hygiene, wearing masks and gloves as asked by the government in order to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak will have to be observed by the vendors.

E-pass for Majuli residents: People who may be needing a pass to come out of their homes during the lockdown period due to some urgent work in Majuli island could apply for e-pass online.

A Majuli district administration official informed that any person who may require to step out of his/her home during the lockdown period could apply for an e-pass by logging onto the official website of the Majuli administration — www.majuli.gov.in — and then clicking the 'Click for application' link found on the bottom of the website.

After filling up the necessary details, a person would be able to know the status of his/her application by clicking the 'Track Your Application Status', the official added.

572 people move towards their destinations from Tezpur

CORRESPONDENT

TEZPUR, April 25: People from different corners of the State, stuck in Tezpur as well as in the entire Sonitpur district during the lockdown period, were today allowed to return to their destination in 33 different buses under ASTC. It may be mentioned here that the State government had made special arrangements of transportation for three days from today for people stuck at different places across the State during the lockdown.

After test/screening of the passengers by a medical team in the presence of administrative officials and Additional SP, Numal Mahatta, on the first day of the special transportation programme today, a total of 572 passengers from Sonitpur returned to their destinations with their valid tickets provided by the competent authority.

Sources in the administration informed that two buses to Nalbari, three buses to Kamrup (Rural), nine buses to Kamrup (Metro), three buses to Golaghat, one bus to Baksa, five buses to Nagaon, seven buses to North Lakhimpur, one bus to

Marigaon and two buses to Darrang district left for their destinations with the passengers in the morning.

Before the passengers boarded the buses, the health department team adequately sanitized the pre-arranged buses. It needs to be mentioned here that the people stuck at various places of outskirts of the Tezpur town were at first dropped at the Tezpur ASTC bus stoppage by a few prearranged vehicles. Moreover, the buses plying on different routes picked up some passengers from various other boarding points.

176 stranded persons reach Nalbari

CORRESPONDENT

NALBARI, April 25: As the Nalbari district is declared COVID-19 hotspot, no person from the district was allowed to travel outside though the State government from Saturday started inter-district movement of some selected people.

However, people from the district stranded in other parts of the State have been allowed to come their home district Nalbari.

Deputy Commissioner of Nalbari, Bharat Bhusan Dev Choudhury, told this correspondent that 529 persons from all over the State got the permission to come to the district in three days.

As per the permission, 176 persons on Saturday reached the district from various parts of the State. Of them, 30 persons came from Tezpur in two ASTC buses on Saturday evening.

The police made arrangements and dropped them at their respective homes after they arrived at Nalbari Police Station. Besides, 146 persons reached the district by their own vehicles. The people entered the district were screened at various entry points including Ghograpar, Bijulighat, Adabari, Doulashal and Bezukuchi.

People wearing masks to get petrol in Biswanath

CORRESPONDENT

BISWANATH CHARIALI, April 25: In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Biswanath district administration has ordered to sell fuel in petrol depots in the district to those people who wear masks. Dhruvjayoti Das, Deputy Commissioner, Biswanath district, issued the directive with immediate effect today. All the oil depots in the district have been directed to comply with the directive.

The sale and consumption of all kinds of gutkha, tobacco, pan masala etc., have already been banned in the district. In the same directive, the district magistrate banned pillion riding and made it compulsory for all people in public places as well as at work to wear masks.

4 youths held

ANN SERVICE

TIHU, April 25: Tihu police arrested four youths on April 23 night on the charge of violating lockdown rules and registered a case against them.

The arrested youths — Nurul Amin Khan (24), Pankaj Kalita (29), Kailash Barman (33) and Dipankar Kalita (37) had come from Guwahati to Tihu with their vehicle AS-0-ET-4704 without the permission of the government. Police arrested them and registered a case no. 62/2020 and seized the vehicle.

Meanwhile, Ratna Kanta Sarma, in-charge of Tihu Police Station has appealed to the public to wear masks, maintain social distancing and obey the rules honestly during the lockdown period.

28 stranded people sent from Nagaon

A CORRESPONDENT

NAGAON, April 25: On the very first day itself, as per the government schedule, 28 people stranded at various locations in Nagaon district were sent by buses under the ASTC today to their respective districts.

Similarly, 84 people stranded in various districts of the State during the ongoing nationwide lockdown have arrived at their home district here till the filing of this report. According to sources, the number of people supposed to arrive here today will increase as many buses are on their way to Nagaon.

It may be mentioned here that a total of 95 persons from various districts of the State stranded at Nagaon had registered and the district administration had scheduled five

ASTC buses to send them back to their respective districts. But only 28 people from various locations of the district reached Nagaon ASTC station today and the rest were yet to report, sources said.

Samar Kalita, District Information and Public Relations Officer, Nagaon told this correspondent here this evening that till 6 pm only 84 people had arrived at Nagaon Borgehat bypass Chariali and many buses were on their way to Nagaon as many buses started their journey late.

It is to be mentioned here that Deputy Commissioner Jadav Saikia and ADC Jayanta Bora and other surveillance staff of the district were receiving these people at a temporary camp set up near at Nagaon bypass Chariali, the sources said.



Dr Numal Momin, MLA, distributing free sanitary napkins at Bokajan, in Karbi Anglong on Saturday. — UB Photos

Missing council grants financial aid to stranded people

CORRESPONDENT

DHEMAJI, April 25: Supporting the State government's policy of helping the stranded people to reach their native places amid lockdown, Mising Autonomous Council (MAC), Gogamukh, has sanctioned Rs 1 crore as an aid to meet travelling expense of the sufferers.

MAC's Chief Executive Councillor Paramananda Chayengiya (Pangging), when contacted, said that a committee, including the council members and Mising Students' Union (TMPK) leaders, has been constituted to deal with the issue of stranded people. The committee, after a ground assessment, submitted the list of people

from different districts, who are stranded in the metropolitan cities and capital towns of different South Indian States, he said.

MAC's Executive Councillor Naresh Kumbang said that about 6,200 names of stranded people were short-listed in the first group, who have been paid Rs 1,500 each by account transfer.

Stating about ongoing 'hue and cry' over the MAC's grant-in-aid issue among many Mising youths, which is widely circulated in the social media, the councillor said, "The bank branches are facing problem to transfer money into the accounts owned by a large number of beneficiaries as their submitted particulars are found dissimilar to bank ac-

count records. However, we are working for correction of the records and taking necessary steps to clear payment without delay," said the councillor, while informing that more than 40 per cent payment/transfer was cleared.

The council with its headquarters at Gogamukh in Dhemaji district is granting the aid to all stranded youths on the wake of COVID-19 lockdown. The beneficiaries belong to different ethnic communities and most of them are starting their journey to different districts of the State from Saturday.

The MAC covers people of 9 districts, including Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Majuli, Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Kamrup (M).

New wholesale market in Golaghat district gains momentum

CORRESPONDENT

DERGAON, April 25: The new wholesale market of local vegetables initiated by the Golaghat district administration has gained its momentum today after three days of its opening.

Amidst extension of lockdown in Assam as well as the nation, the farmer community has been adversely affected along with other sections of the society.

The Golaghat district administration in association with the District Agriculture Department started a wholesale market at an abandoned bus stand at Arengapara in Golaghat on Wednesday.

During the last three days, a total of Rs 2,88,619 was collected from the vegetables sold and a total of 141.67 quintals of vegetables sold in the market. Farmers from remote corners of the district sold these vegetables to wholesale traders.

As a result of the lockdown, the vegetable produce of the farmers in the district were

damaged and the farmers did not find any place to sell their produce.

Moreover, the farmers had to sell their produce in very less price than the market price as the middlemen took away the profits.

Considering this, the Golaghat Deputy Commissioner Bibhash Ch Modi in association with the District Agriculture Department arranged the wholesaler market where the farmers were able to sell their produce directly to the wholesalers. With this, the farmers were also able to know the real price of the vegetables.

Assistant Commissioner and DIPRO in-charge, who is also closely associated with the wholesale market, Papu Gogoi said that the idea behind the market was to give justice to poor farmers.

"By this move, we are trying to sensitise the poor farmers about the actual prices of their vegetable produce. It is thought that it will break the bridge built by the middlemen between the farmers and wholesalers," Papu Gogoi said.



Assam Police personnel distributing food and essential items to needy people, at Dekargaon near Tezpur on Saturday. — UB Photos

Dutch soccer league called off

THE HAGUE, April 25: The Dutch football federation (KNVB) called an end to the 2019-20 season, as the Eredivisie became the first top European league called off due to the coronavirus pandemic.

No team will be declared champions after Ajax and AZ Alkmaar were left level on points at the top of the table with nine games still to play.

"Unfortunately, given the measures (banning large-scale gatherings) taken by the government, it became impossible to finish the 2019-2020 season," the KNVB said in a statement on Friday.

"Public health always comes first. It's not just a football prob-

lem here given what the coronavirus is doing to society. Nonetheless, the professional football committee is aware that today's decisions are going to cause great disappointment for some," it added.

Leaders Ajax, above AZ on goal difference, will qualify for next season's Champions League, according to the KNVB, which will await a definitive verdict from UEFA on May 25.

AZ will likely enter the competition's preliminary rounds, with Feyenoord, PSV Eindhoven and Willem II set to compete in the Europa League based on the final standings. It marks the first time



Public health always comes first. It's not just a football problem here given what the coronavirus is doing to society. Nonetheless, the professional football committee is aware that today's decisions are going to cause great disappointment for some.

— KNVB

since 1945 the Dutch season has finished without a league champion.

"As a player and as a club you naturally want to become champion," Ajax chief executive Edwin van der Sar told the club's website.

"You want to show it on the field and we have been at the top all year round.

"It is a pity that you are not declared champion, but in this situation that may be understandable. There are more important things at the moment than football."

The KNVB announced its intention to scrap the season on Tuesday following the Dutch government's decision to ex-

tend a ban on mass gatherings until September 1.

Matches behind closed doors were said not to be an option as they are considered events which require a permit and police presence.

The final decision was made following a meeting with the clubs on Friday. Next season will begin with the same 18 teams that started the aborted Eredivisie campaign.

"There will be no relegation, nor promotion," said the KNVB, which is expected to face legal action from SC Cambuur and De Graafschap – the top two clubs in the second division. — AFP

'Virus will hit transfer process'

MANCHESTER, April 25: Manchester United vice chairman Ed Woodward has told fans there will be reduced spending on players as the entire football industry deals with the financial consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

English Premier League games have not been played for more than six weeks and stadiums are due to be closed to fans when the season resumes in June at the earliest.

It could be several months before social distancing restrictions are eased to allow supporters back into games, dealing a significant financial blow to United, which generated more than 55.2 million pounds (\$68 million) in matchday revenue in the first half of the season. That will impact the finances available to spend on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's squad. — AP

We have Oz, NZ offers: ECB

LONDON, April 25: The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive Tom Harrison has confirmed receiving offers from Australia and New Zealand boards, helping them host their domestic games – county as well as List A.

On Friday, the ECB suspended all forms of professional cricket till July 1 due to the COVID-19 outbreak which has wreaked havoc globally but more so in the United Kingdom.

"We've had offers as far away as Australia and New Zealand. Those offers are on the table," Harrison was quoted as saying by the BBC. — PTI

World Cup semifinal loss to NZ still haunts us: KL Rahul

MUMBAI, April 25: Star India batsman KL Rahul said the heartbreaking World Cup semifinal loss to New Zealand, after a near-perfect show in the group stages, "continues to haunt" him and his teammates.

In a chat show 'The Mind Behind', Rahul said if he was given a chance to change the result of any one match in the past, it would be the 2019 World Cup semifinal.

"It has to be the World Cup semifinal. I think most of us are still not over that loss, it is still haunts us sometimes," he said. "I can't imagine what the senior players must have felt but you know in a World Cup it just becomes even harder knowing that we played so well in the entire tournament. I still wake up to that nightmare sometimes." — PTI

Burglary attempt in Saha's ancestral home in Siliguri

KOLKATA, April 25: Indian Test wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha on Saturday said his locked ancestral home in Siliguri was the target of a burglary attempt on Friday.

Saha's uncles, who live nearby at Shaktigarh area of the city, foiled the attempt and alerted the police. The miscreants, numbering around six, fled off in their car.

"It's really unfortunate. We only had heard about burglary during our childhood days... Hopefully, police will look into the matter," Saha, who lives with his family in south Kolkata, said. Saha's elder brother works in Mumbai, while his parents, who had come here for a vacation, are stuck due to the nationwide lockdown. — PTI

Kohli can knock it off in 7-8 years: Lee

MUMBAI, April 25: Former Australian fast bowler Brett Lee on Saturday backed Indian captain Virat Kohli to surpass batting great Sachin Tendulkar's record of 100 international centuries, provided he keeps firing for another seven-eight years.

The iconic Tendulkar holds the record for highest number of ODI centuries with 49 hundreds and current batting maestro Kohli is second on the list with 43 from 248 matches.

In Tests too, Tendulkar leads the tally for most number of hundreds with 51 tons. Kohli has 27 from 86 matches till now.

Lee said it will all boil down to three things – talent, fitness and mental strength – and Kohli has all these traits. — PTI

FIFA to make advance payments to members

LAUSSANE, April 25: FIFA says advance payments of USD 500,000 are being sent to member associations to cover running costs during the coronavirus pandemic.

Each of the 211 member associations is entitled to USD 6 million from FIFA spread over the four-year World Cup cycle.

FIFA says the next instalment due in July will now be paid in the coming days along with other payments due from last year. FIFA is easing some criteria required before being paid but the money is still subject to audit checks.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino says the soccer body has a duty to be there and support the ones that are facing acute needs. FIFA previously said it will make substantial sums from its \$2.7 billion reserves available in an emergency fund. — AP

IOC gives \$25M more to Olympic athletes, teams

LAUSSANE, April 25: The International Olympic Committee is allocating more than \$25 million to cover extra athlete and team costs related to the one-year postponement of the Tokyo Games. The IOC says an extra \$15 million will go to a program helping 1,600 athletes from 185 less well-funded countries prepare for the games in 2021.

More than \$10 million is available for national Olympic bodies to cover additional operational costs such as travel and accommodation for officials. The money is being awarded through the Olympic Solidarity program. The program aims to help all 206 national Olympic teams and the refugee team send athletes to the games. — AP

A rarity: cricket goes live in Vanuatu in the South Pacific

PORT VILA (Vanuatu), April 25: Some overnight rain couldn't prevent Vanuatu from producing a rarity in these coronavirus-restricted times – a live sporting event.

The tropical island in the South Pacific was likely the only venue in the world hosting a competitive sports final on Saturday, as most international sport remains shuttered around the globe. Vanuatu Cricket Association chief executive Shane Deitz invited anyone missing live action to tune in to a live stream. And more than 3,000 did at various times during a men's 10-over exhibition match and the women's Twenty20 final won by the Mele Bulls. — AP

Start schools, colleges first: Kapil Dev

NEW DELHI, April 25: Reopening of schools and colleges once COVID-19 pandemic is under control is more important for the younger generation than resumption of sport which can take a back-seat for the time being, feels Kapil Dev.

The world has come to a standstill with no immediate signs of resumption of sport of any kind. But sport can wait, feels the 61-year-old former India captain.

"I am looking at the larger picture. Do you think cricket is the only issue we can talk about? I am rather worried about the children who are not being able to go to schools and colleges because that is our young generation," Kapil told YouTube channel 'Sports Tak'.

"So, I want schools to re-



open first. Cricket, football will happen eventually," Kapil said.

The legendary all-rounder reiterated he is not in favour of a bilateral series between arch-rivals India and Pakistan to raise funds to deal with the pandemic as suggested by former Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar. — PTI

Australian Govt looking at travel exemptions for Indian team

MELBOURNE, April 25: The Australian government might make travel exemptions for the Indian team's tour Down Under later this year to save the cricket board from losing a staggering 300 million Australian dollars in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

Cricket Australia is under huge financial pressure due to global lockdown and has laid off 80 percent of its staff. India's four-Test tour in December-January could provide a relief to the struggling body.

As of now, Australia's borders are sealed till September 30 but their could be an extension of travel sanctions.

According to a report in 'ESPNcricinfo', "international exemptions to allow an India touring party to arrive in Australia next summer

would be seriously considered by the federal government in the event of wider travel bans, strongly suggesting that Cricket Australia will be able to avoid losing up to AUD 300 million in revenue in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic."

The website also reported that CA has received a positive response from its government.

"...The governing body is understood to have received highly encouraging news about their outlook, at least as far as the lucrative India tour is concerned," the report stated.

Cricket Australia was expecting revenue of AUD 500 million from this financial cycle, primarily from broadcast rights. Even if spectators are not allowed and cricket be-

comes a TV only event, they happen to lose AUD 50 million.

But if India fail to tour, the repercussions will be of gigantic proportions.

"Such a scenario (only live TV coverage) would likely leave CA with a hole of around AUD 50 million in its annual revenue of nearly AUD 500 million, but nowhere near the sort of blow they could have expected without being able to welcome India for a series of Test and limited overs matches due to pull the organisation out of the low point of its four-year revenue cycle," the report stated.

Australia Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday had said that his government is looking at all option as far as resumption of sporting activities is concerned. — PTI

Fund released for sportspersons

GUWAHATI, April 25: The Government of Assam, as committed, has released an amount of Rs 40 lakh for 56 athletes and coaches for higher training.

Informing this in a press release today, Lakhya Konwar, Member Secretary of the State Level Advisory Committee for Students and Youth Welfare, Govt of Assam said Rs 73 lakh has been released for the 106 medal winning athletes in the last Khelo India Youth Games held here.

Konwar further stated that Rs 1.25 crore has been awarded to 20 leading sportspersons of the State, including Lovlina Borgohain and Jamuna Boro under the State Government's Sports Policy.

On the other hand sportspersons like Tania Chodhury (lawn bowl), Shivangi Sharma (swimming), Upasana Talukdar (athletics) have donated Rs 10,000 each for the Chief Minister's Relief Fund through Lakhya Konwar.

Donation to Assam Arogya Nidhi

GUWAHATI, April 25: The past and present students along with teachers of the Centre for Studies in Physical Education and Sports, Dibrugarh University have donated a sum of Rs 94,669 to the Assam Arogya Nidhi to fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

The cheque was handed over to the DC Dibrugarh in presence of SP, stated a release issued here by Manti Baru, Director in charge, Centre for Studies in Physical Education, DU.

Guwahati Basketball Club: The secretary of the Guwahati Basketball Club Dilip Hazarika and treasurer Rajib Kumar Sarma handed over a cheque of Rs 50,000 to the Minister Pijush Hazarika yesterday for the Assam Arogya Nidhi.

Jyotirmoy Borah: Meanwhile, Jyotirman Bora, a class IX student, who is also an international wushu player, has donated Rs 10,001 to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the fight against the COVID-19.

Chess players' appeal to FIDE

CHENNAI, April 25: The Chess Players Forum, a collective group of players in the country, has appealed to the world federation (FIDE) to step in and resolve the crisis in the affairs of the national body (AICF). The Chess Players Forum functions as a voice for the players' rights, welfare and responsibilities.

Referring to the state-of-affairs in the All India Chess Federation (AICF), which has been riddled with infighting and legal battles, the forum president Varugeese Koshy wrote to the FIDE chief, requesting his intervention in solving the impasse.

"On behalf of all the chess players of India, the Chess Players Forum hereby wishes to appeal to the FIDE to step in and resolve the crisis in the affairs of the AICF. We assure that the Chess Players Forum will be ready to assist in whichever manner in any such initiative," Koshy wrote in his letter. — PTI

EPL come up with proposals to finish season

LONDON, April 25: The English Premier League are eyeing a resumption of the season on June 8, behind closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic, and reaching a climax on July 27, according to The Times.

The paper claims football chiefs, along with other sports governing bodies, have been holding talks with the British government about when they can resume and at only "approved grounds".

The Premier League has 92 games remaining since it suspended the season on March 13 with Liverpool agonisingly close to their first ever EPL title. The Times says Premier League bosses shared their idea 'Project Restart' with the shareholders last week.

The matches would be played behind closed doors – a maximum of 400 people would



be permitted to attend including media though only if they tested negative for the virus – and at selected stadia to limit stretching the limited resources of the medical services.

Extra changing facilities would be introduced to ensure social distancing measures were in place whilst players would be required to turn up for training individually and already in their kit. — AFP

Saliva is must and vaseline is no replacement, feel Nehra, Harbhajan

NEW DELHI, April 25: Saliva and sweat are components that cannot be entirely done away with, insist a few distinguished India cricketers, as the ICC contemplates legalising ball tampering post COVID-19 by using artificial substances to prevent virus spread.

Former India pacer Ashish Nehra and spinner Harbhajan Singh feel that saliva's use in shining the ball is a "must". Ex-opener Aakash Chopra, while being open to the idea, wants to know where one can draw the line.

While discussions are at nascent stage, questions are already being asked about what external substances could be used if ball tampering becomes legal?

Is it going to be bottle cap in pocket to scuff up one side of the ball, vaseline to shine (made famous by John Lever) or chain zipper?

"Get one thing clear at the onset. The ball will not swing if you don't apply sweat or



saliva on the ball. That's basic necessity of swing bowling. The moment ball gets scuffed up from one side, sweat and saliva must be applied on the other side," Nehra, who completely shot down the idea of using external substances, told PTI.

He went on to explain why vaseline alone can't help a pacer.

"Now let's understand why do you need saliva? Sweat is heavier than saliva but both are heavy enough to make one side of the ball heavier for reverse

swing. Vaseline comes into the picture only after sweat and saliva, not before that.

"It is lighter and doesn't even ensure conventional swing. It can keep the shine but doesn't make the ball heavy," the World Cup-winning former pacer said.

Nehra then gave the example of Englishman Lever who created a furore during his team's 1976 tour of India by applying vaseline during a Test match.

"I can bet Lever used sweat and saliva and then applied vaseline. Vaseline only helps the ball to skid and nothing more. You apply vaseline only, the ball will just go straight. You can check that with any fast bowler," he said.

Harbhajan also agreed that saliva if one has already chewed mint, which has sugar in it, makes it heavier. But when it comes to using external substance, he wants to know what can be the options. —PTI



The Assam Tribune presents



Live concert by

Sunita Bhuyan & Ronojit Bhuyan

Heal The World

on April 26 (Sunday), at 7 pm

<https://www.facebook.com/TheAssamTribune/>

SU DO KU

	8	12			9		7		
	7	3							12
4		1	2	11					3
	1	11	12						9
		6	7	5			1	10	
9		11	1				4		3
12	10		1	4					6
	2	9	10	7			11		
	6						2	3	4
	3		10	9	11				8
5					9				7
		9	4					2	6

Solution of last problem

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 4 box accommodates the digits 1 to 12 without repeating any.

1	9	7	2	8	4	3	5	6
8	3	2	1	5	6	4	7	9
4	6	5	7	9	3	8	2	1
7	1	3	9	6	8	5	4	2
9	2	6	4	7	5	1	3	8
5	4	8	3	1	2	6	9	7
6	5	4	8	2	9	7	1	3
3	7	9	6	4	1	2	8	5
2	8	1	5	3	7	9	6	4

2 WOMEN PLUS
Women SHGs fight COVID-19 in Assam, reports **ROUSY K. BARUAH.**

3 MY SPACE
DR. SRIPARNA PATHAK writes about raising kids in these difficult times.

4 IN BLACK AND WHITE
JAHNAVI BARUA discovers peace in the time of corona.

The Assam Tribune

READING

Sunday

Lights, camera, corona!

With the global economy in disarray and indefinite lockdowns in effect to contain COVID-19, the economically weaker sections are the worst affected of all. Also shutting their doors, the movie and entertainment industry gets a massive blow, leaving many employees out of work. As film releases are being postponed, film festivals cancelled and productions coming to a halt worldwide, cinema is adapting itself because the closure of the big screens has not implied a decrease in the demand for entertainment. As a result, movies, and most importantly, life, might not be the same again when people return to the streets.

Many of the postponed big budget films are aiming for a release in the latter part of the year, which means that it would collide with the independent, low-budget films as the award season takes off by the Fall. The inability to secure enough screens, as the giants compete against each other, will hamper the business and award prospects of the many smaller films, unless the awards are postponed altogether. The cancellation and postponement of film festivals like SXSW (South by Southwest), Cannes, Tribeca also means that many films will go undistributed and unreleased. Film festivals are also important because this is where filmmakers start their career, new films get production grants and countries pick up their Oscar selections from.

The sudden halt in the production of films, which will also lead to a domino effect, has resulted in terrible hardship for the unorganised sectors like the stunt people, caterers, technicians, spot boys, etc., who are paid on a daily basis. Many producers, regardless of their films' sizes are taking the direct-to-video way of releasing their films, instead of waiting for better conditions to arrive. Here, too, many independent movies suffer, unable to find any takers as the studio-backed films enter the digital domain with much ease. Studios have made many fresh titles available for streaming through various platforms. As a result, people are getting to watch premieres of very recent movies from the comfort of their homes. With many new unreleased movies now seeking to premiere directly through video-on-

KALPA JYOTI BHUYAN analyses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on movies.



mand method, the consumer behaviour post-COVID-19 will surely be altered.

For the single screen and art house theatres, with the 90-day window between theatrical and streaming releases no longer existing, and people who are more motivated to sit at home and stream everything, this may be the final hit. With already decreasing footfalls, the small theatre-owners believe that this shift is an irreversible change and could be the final nail on their coffins. Along with these theatres, small business set-ups around them will also disappear. *Forbes* has reported that streaming sites have witnessed an increased usage since the lockdown and as reported by *The Hindu* – citing a survey conducted by *Ormax Media*, people are streaming more TV and web series than movies, in India. Many streaming platforms in India are

also offering free access to their content and attracting large-scale subscriptions.

Further solidifying the digital dominance, productions and film festivals have sought virtual remedies as a work-around to keep things moving. Many productions have conducted virtual table readings and have also devised new methods to keep the cameras rolling with the help of telecommuting technologies. After its cancellation, SXSW has decided to stream over 70 short films of this year for free. While this is not a very feasible option for the larger festivals with major premieres, glamour and the red carpet, but from here on, people would re-think about attending large gatherings which hosts people from all around the world. This puts up the question whether streaming services are the new future for movies?

To protect the rights of the workers from the unorganised sectors and the theatre employees, the governments, cine bodies and guilds of many countries have introduced various legislations, campaigns and set up relief funds to provide financial assistance to the weaker sections. Some film distribution and production companies have also come up with a unique strategy to premiere films on VOD platforms and simultaneously, offer some benefit to the theatres by making the viewers first select a theatre of choice from a list before streaming and then transferring half the revenue generated to the selected theatre. The Golden Globes has also introduced changes in its rules, which will now allow direct-to-video releases under certain conditions to qualify for their film awards as opposed to television awards.

Important changes in the post-COVID-19 landscape might include self-censorship and adjustments that many markets may demand to the plot and storyline of upcoming movies which deals with trauma or anxiety-inducing factors. Also, a movie bearing a plot like 2011's *Contagion* might be a tough sell in China post-COVID-19 as far as the politics of it goes. While the fear will hold back people from visiting the theatres for a couple of months, even after the situation eases, the role of blockbuster movies will play a key role in getting audiences back to the big screen experience.

This is where Christopher Nolan's passionate op-ed column in *The Washington Post*, where he pleads for providing financial assistance to the unsung theatre workers of the U.S., holds true significance. He writes that we have watched and enjoyed movies together and in these uncertain times, too, we are all in this together and continues that we might have thought that we are going to the movies for surround sound, or soda and popcorn, but we weren't. "We were there for each other." He concludes, "When this crisis passes, the need for collective human engagement, the need to live and love and laugh and cry together, will be more powerful than ever." Although Nolan wrote this in the context of the American society, it is fairly relevant to the Indian scenario as well.

666kalpa@gmail.com

UP CLOSE

Partha Pratim Hazarika

partha.hazarika@assamtribune.com



A social responsibility

DR. NARESWAR SARMA is at the forefront of cancer care in Assam.

Dr. Nareswar Sarma is a physician who has been working on the cancer care forefront for 20 years or so in Assam. An unassuming man, Dr. Sarma talks about his life and work in his chosen field. Excerpts from an interview:
You have been tirelessly working in the field of cancer care in Assam. What brought you to the field?

Before working in the field of cancer care, I was intimately associated with the initiative of bringing burn care to the people in Assam. The facilities for burn care in Assam have seen development only recently. I started my career as a surgeon in the Department of Surgery, Gauhati Medical College and Hospital. In 1984, I joined the Indian Oil Corporation, Digboi, as the medical officer. It was in 1994 that we established the first burn care unit in the entire North-East at the Digboi IOC Hospital. However, it was when I was selected as a member in the Indian team of doctors and paramedics for the Mission to Nigeria in 2008 that I started working in the field of cancer care.

Tell us about the Mission to Nigeria.

In 2008, a team of medical professionals was sent to Nigeria to work among the poor people, especially cancer patients. We worked in remote areas, 350 kms. away from the Nigerian capital Abuja. Cancer had a high incidence among the people in that region. Most of these cancer patients were poor. They were suffering because of many factors, including poverty, lack of medical facilities, poor access to healthcare, government failure in healthcare delivery, etc. Most of these poor people were daily wage labourers. We not only treated patients at various stages of cancer, but also worked towards creating awareness about cancer, how to detect cancer at an early stage, what are the palliative measures available, etc. It was a humbling experience for me as a doctor. The pain and distress that the poor people of the remotest parts of Nigeria were going through changed my perspective of looking at an ailment. Unlike other diseases, cancer has a huge social impact. It affects not only health, but also one's economic resources. It is unimaginable how someone's economic resources dwindle while one is going through the scourge of cancer.

Was cancer the priority for the Indian medical team in Nigeria in 2008?

No. Though our main focus was cancer, the Indian team also served the Nigerian villagers in treating various other ailments. I, personally, being a surgeon, did more than 350 surgeries to treat as many patients for different medical conditions. We did a great job in Nigeria. It was one of the most gratifying experiences of my life as a physician. Tell us about your other ventures in the field of serving the people.

When in Digboi, I, with the support of several distinguished persons of the oil town, started the Digboi Pain and Palliative Care Society, an organisation established purely with the motto of serving the needy. You see, diseases give you pain, sometimes, unbearable pain. To ameliorate the pain, one needs constant monitoring of one's health conditions. This is not possible for the patient and his or her family alone. We need a robust support system for this to happen. We started the Society with this objective in mind. And I am happy that the Digboi Pain and Palliative Care Society, of which I was the founder secretary, has been rendering yeoman's service to the needy patients for the last three decades since its inception.

What exactly is pain and palliative care for cancer patients?

Cancer patients not only suffer from bodily pain, but also from psychological trauma. The lack of economic resources hits them hard. The Society has been basically working to provide both medical and mental support to cancer patients. Palliative care helps a patient come to terms with the dreaded disease and also motivates them to live life to the fullest. The family, particularly, plays a major role in this.

What is your perception regarding cancer?

I firmly believe that apart from being a medical and health issue, cancer is also a social responsibility. It is the society at large that can contribute towards reducing the pain and mental stress of the cancer patients. Show them love and care so that they can start their lives anew.



The Quarantine 15 syndrome

Bingeing on anything one can lay hands on is resulting in untoward stress-induced weight gain during the lockdown, writes **JOYSHREE BARUAH.**

Kummerspeck is a German word that roughly translates to 'grief bacon' – *kummer*, meaning 'grief' + *speck*, meaning 'bacon adipose'. It means weight gained from emotional overeating – literally, grief bacon. For some people, stress is directly proportional to their food consumption – either they eat more than required or they do not eat at all. Either ways, this imbalance only aggravates the stress levels they are already reeling under. The COVID-19 pandemic has sent the world spiraling under immense distress. With the lockdown sending more than two billion people under self-isolation, it has led to panic buying – not only of tissue rolls and sanitizers, but also food items that include vegetables, fruits, staple grains, and the dreaded – processed food. Junk food like chips, chocolates, ice-cream, cookies, packaged juices and other calorie-bombs are being purchased and consumed like there's no tomorrow. This is leading to people gaining those extra pounds. Coined 'Quarantine 15', it is the phenomenon of gaining excess weight during this self-quarantine phase. Quarantine 15 originated from the term 'Freshman 15' – an expression commonly used in the U.S., that refers to an amount arbitrarily set at 15 pounds of weight gained during a student's first year at college.

With the lockdown, news of stores running out of essential staples and groceries triggered panic buying. Research has shown that this has spiked up people's stress level by almost 36 per cent. When worried or stressed, one is more likely to seek out comfort food, which is nothing but sugars, fats, and carbs, for a quick energy boost. These foods act like natural tranquilizers that calm down the nerves. "When we are hungry, a whole network of the brain region activates. And under stress, the brain requires more energy, leading many to reach for sugary snacks, which are nothing but carbs. It provides the body with the quickest source of energy," says Dr. Shreya B. Reyes, a San Jose-based cardiologist. "If one

doesn't eat anything, the brain will use glucose from the body, intended for fat and muscle cell use, and, in turn, secrete more stress hormones. This leads to aggravating a person's stress levels, leading to depression, anxiety and probable heart disease in the long run," she adds.

After gorging on those fries and downing those with a soda, one ends up feeling guilty for overeating. Comfort-eating traps a person in a hard-to-break eating cycle as it is all about consuming large quantities of food in response to feelings, instead of hunger. Dr. Parthiv Juneja, a Delhi-based nutrition practitioner, says that 75 per cent of over-eating is caused by emotions. "Many people turn to food for stress-relief. And when they do, they tend to reach for junk food or sweets, which are totally unhealthy," he says, adding how boredom also makes one reach out for that pizza or that pint of ice-cream. "Emotional eating is using food to fill emotional needs, rather than your stomach. Unfortunately, emotional eating doesn't fix emotional problems," he adds.

Breaking the cycle

To break the stress-eating cycle, one has to resort to stress-reducing activities like

exercise, meditation and yoga. With gyms and other fitness centres shut down, staying fit has become more of a challenge. However, it is necessary to devote at least a minimum of 20 minutes to some sort of physical activity, be it through home-based workouts, gardening, or taking the dogs out for a walk. Coupling this with healthy eating – portion meals and mindful eating – and adequate sleep can ease one's lifestyle. Another way to abstain from binge eating is purging your fridge of unhealthy choices. Interestingly, delivery services like BigBasket and Grofers have witnessed 80-100 per cent spike during lockdown. If we don't have high-fat sugars in the fridge or the shelf, it automatically cuts down the intake. To steer clear of gorging on junk food, having meals with family or friends on a dinner table, valuing the time in its own right will help one relax and enjoy the meal, as well as aid digestion.

Research shows that stress alters overall food intake, resulting in either under or over-eating, which may be influenced by stress or severity. A Yale University study found that under threat, even insects like grasshoppers – which normally feed on protein such as grasses – switch to gorging on sugary goldenrod plants. The sugary food provides fuel to quickly feed their amped-up bodies in cases of fight or flight. These insects, like humans, often feed stress, instead of managing it. What we eat during this self-quarantine can help us cope better or make our stress worse, thereby, helping us manage times of crisis. So, stay put in self-quarantine, but steer clear of Quarantine 15.



WOMEN PLUS

Rousy K. Baruah
 asrlms.rousy@gmail.com

The COVID-19 strain, which surfaced in a Chinese seafood and poultry market late last year, has now spread to at least 210 countries, killing thousands around the world. On March 24, 2020, the Indian Prime Minister announced a 21-day nationwide lockdown. This lockdown was then extended to May 3. Massive quarantine of people having travel histories, hospital isolation and treatment of all confirmed cases, tracing and home quarantine of doubtful cases, and sanitisation of public places is ongoing. A separate Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) has also been set up. Arogya Nidhi has been reactivated, and so on.

But what has recently attracted news headlines is the selfless and commendable service that the women Self-Help Groups (SHG) members across India have showed during this global crisis. Face masks, which are the first shield against COVID-19, is in short supply. As per a report of the Ministry of Rural Development, more than 132 lakh masks have been produced by 14,522 SHGs, involving 65,936 members in 399 districts, spread across 24 states of India, in just a period of 15 days from March 15 to March 30, 2020; the count is still ongoing.

The contribution of SHG members across Assam is also worth mentioning. They have been at the forefront of understanding the outbreak and, subsequently, training others to prevent and break the chain of this deadly disease. More than one lakh SHG members, promoted and nurtured under the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM), along with 2,455 community cadres, are relentlessly creating awareness amongst rural masses on the dos and don'ts of the outbreak. More than 13,029 villages have been covered by them where awareness on lockdown modalities, wearing masks, hand-washing and social distancing were imparted to 5,95,709 households. More than 2,000 SHG members are engaged in the production of homemade cotton masks (as per specifications forwarded by the Government of India). They are coordinating with district administration officials for

SHGs to the fore

Women SHGs across India have risen up to the challenge of meeting the COVID-19 pandemic.



When authorities and the administration, medical experts and doctors, police, researchers and scientists are contributing their share during this global crisis, history will also certainly remember the SHG members and their priceless efforts for the greater interest of the rural masses at large.

the sale and free distribution of these sterilised masks. Till recently, 1,39,241 masks have been produced, out of which 15,120 masks were distributed for free and 91,618 masks were sold at a marginal rate.

These unstoppable rural women have also been able to supply 214 tonnes of vegetables; 19,113 litres of milk; 16,930 eggs; 81 tonnes of meat and 13 tonnes of fish in a

span of 15 to 20 days.

We don't need to have deep pockets or be rich to help the needy; we need to have a heart. And such examples have been set by these SHG members. An amount of Rs. 4,11,600 so far has been contributed by them towards the Assam Arogya Nidhi and the PM CARES Fund. Within their limited capacity, they are unanimously coming forward and contributing food (rice, pulses, oil, salt, potatoes), sanitising materials (soap, phenyl, dettol, etc.) to the needy and the vulnerable. They are working in close coordination with various departments, including health, revenue, police, gram panchayats, zilla parishads and banks. Business Correspondent Agents amongst them are providing the last mile doorstep service to provide required financial transactions. When authorities and the administration, medical experts and doctors, police, researchers and scientists are contributing their share during this global crisis, history will also certainly remember the SHG members and their priceless efforts for the greater interest of the rural masses at large.

People Speak

Today's topic

Sunday Reading invites all readers to speak out on vital issues that touch their lives. Our next topic is – "What does COVID-19 teach us?" Send in your response, not exceeding 100 words, enclosing your name, address and passport-size coloured photograph – latest by May 5, 2020, addressed to: People Speak, Sunday Reading, The Assam Tribune, Chandmari, Guwahati-781003 or e-mail us at sundayreading@assamtribune.com

Steps to be taken to rebuild our economy.



The post-COVID economy is envisaged to be far worse than the crash of 1930. All the governments of the world must come together and plan how to revive the economy, give people their livelihoods back and get the engine running. The poor must be given packages to tide over the crisis. Families must have a list of essential and non-essential expenses. The key areas of food, health and education must not be compromised with. With the help of the government, sound planning and wise distribution of resources, we will surely tide over this difficult phase.

Nirmal Bhumsaria,
Insurance professional.



Besides posing a threat to our lives, the scourge called COVID-19 has totally shattered the economy of most nations, including India. The people belonging to the economically weaker sections of the society have been facing difficulties caused by the pandemic. Due to the ongoing lockdown, agricultural and dairy produce have been wasted as markets are closed. Therefore, to rebuild our economy, the authorities have to put emphasis on implementing certain schemes targeting this section of people. In this regard, banks and other financial institutions should work in collaboration with the government to accelerate the economic growth of our country. Steps should be taken to revitalise the agriculture sector, which is the backbone of our economy.

– Pushpanjali Deka,
Bhawanipur, Barpeta.



To restart the economy, we need to follow some short-term strategies. The government needs to immediately stop some of the subsidised schemes which may have a political basis, and which may worsen the state of the economy. To bring in self-sufficiency with regards to food, essential products and services should be the prime focus, keeping aside all other long-term agendas. Thus, agriculture, forestry and fishing, i.e., the primary sector which makes up the largest share of the country's economy, should be encouraged. Employment generation for affected migrant workers is another step towards rebuilding our economy.

– Dhiren Bordoloi,
Hengrabari, Guwahati.



The immediate need is to suppress the spread of the pandemic through testing, home quarantine and social distancing. To rebuild the economy, we should now think of restarting certain activities in low-infection zones with adequate precautions. The government should also require each of its agencies and PSUs to pay their bills to the companies engaged in government contracts like MSMEs so that those firms get valuable liquidity. India must work towards breaking the Chinese hold over manufacturing local goods and machinery.

In all, smart ways to waive tax and ignite consumption is the need of the hour. Hence, MAKE IN INDIA should be implemented in letter and spirit.

– Dipanwita Majumder Dutta,
Maligaon, Guwahati.



We have seen that the COVID-19 epidemic has badly affected the economy of almost all the nations of the world. And, for a developing country like India, this would be a huge challenge as its economy is already down. As per the World Bank's latest assessment, India is expected to grow at 1.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent. Similarly, the IMF has projected a GDP growth of 1.9 per cent for India in 2020. We know that agriculture contributes significantly to the Indian economy. Agriculture engages 60 per cent of India's population and more than 16 crore hectares of land. I think, in this time of need, we have to emphasise on the rural economy. In order to increase agricultural production, the government will have to insist on new techniques to be applied to the agricultural sector. On the other hand, small-scale industries can also contribute a lot to the country's economy. The government will have to devise new schemes to encourage small entrepreneurs.

– Hirakjyoti Nath,
DK College, Mirza.



BEAUTY

Zarin Saleh Hussain
zarinsalehussain.2018@gmail.com

Skin radiance

From oily to dry skin, here are some tips and tricks for all your skin worries.



moisturiser very lightly. Before putting any make-up, apply an oil-absorbing primer which prevents make-up from lodging into pores. Use a matte foundation. You can finish with a powder that matches your true foundation shade. Avoid too much exposure to the sun, you should avoid eating oily food. Eat light food and lots of fruits and green vegetables. You need to increase your intake of water.

wash. Start by drinking eight to ten glasses of water daily. You can also use sandalwood paste on your face, daily, to reduce the oiliness. Avoid fried and gravy foods. Try to keep your skin clean at all times. Use a face wash designed for men with oily skin. Exfoliate often. The key to a great cleansing routine and clear skin is always balance. Use an oil-control moisturiser to increase hydration and minimise extra oil.

Ans: You need to work out a skin-care routine and follow it very strictly. Apply fresh coconut oil for dry skin. After a bath or after applying a pack, moisturise your skin with pure plant oils. Be gentle with your skin. A proper diet and drinking lots of water during the day can keep your skin well-hydrated and radiant.

If you have dry skin, make-up may look uneven and flaky. Therefore, you must learn how to apply make-up. Before applying make-up to dry skin, prime your skin to give it the moisture that it needs and make sure to use products specifically formulated for dry skin. Even if you don't use make-up and if you have dry skin, massage it with a little almond oil or sesame seed oil and wipe clean with a wet cotton pad. This must be done when you return from outdoors.

Q I am 25 years old and have oily skin. What kind of make-up should I use? Also, please suggest the kind of skin-care routine I should opt for.

Smriti

Ans: Cleansing your face twice daily should be an extremely important part of your skin-care routine. Excessive oiliness can be brought under control with an appropriate skin-care plan and by using the right products.

Use a purifying deep-cleansing mask once a week to absorb excess oil and keep the skin clean. Avoid sticky sunscreens.

An alcohol-free purifying toner is a must too, as also a moisturiser. Apply the

Q I am a 19-year-old boy with oily skin. Please suggest some remedies.

Partha

Ans: Clean your face regularly with the help of an astringent and an oil-free face

Q I am 20 years old. I am a no make-up person. I have dry skin, but I don't follow a daily beauty routine. I prefer a minimalist look. Please suggest some tips.

Priyakshi

Q I am a teenager. Can I get a facial done? Please suggest.

Jigyasa

Ans: If you have problematic skin, you should go for it or consult your physician. Most teenagers suffer from acne and blemishes. Teen facials typically begin with a deep cleansing, followed by gentle extractions. A professional treatment will fully cleanse the skin. The best way is to first know your skin and then cleanse and treat it. Facials are essential to prevent imperfections and also, facials are geared to problem solve.



Chicken cooked with alkali

Method:

Sear the chicken directly over the gas flame, until the skin chars on each side. Cut the chicken along with the skin into small pieces. Heat a deep pan over medium-high heat. Stir in the chicken, the sliced onion pieces, the green chillies, the chilli paste, salt and the bicarbonate of soda; mix well.

Add a ladle of hot water to the chicken and cook until the liquid is fully absorbed. Continue adding hot water, a ladle at a time, until the chicken is cooked through.

Stir in the chopped ginger and the papaya pieces or mustard greens, if using, and cook until done. Increase the heat and cook, uncovered, until the water evaporates to the desired consistency.

The finished dish can be either dry or with a little curry. Remove from heat and transfer to a serving dish. Serve with rice.

Note: The chicken can be cooked without the skin as well.

- Ingredients:**
- ▼ Chicken pieces (skin-on) 500 gms
 - ▼ Onion (sliced) 1
 - ▼ Green chilli paste 1 tsp
 - ▼ Green chillies 10 or to taste
 - ▼ Bicarbonate of soda 1 tsp or Kolakhar ½ cup
 - ▼ Ginger (coarsely chopped) 4 tbsps
 - ▼ Water (hot) 2 cups
 - ▼ Papaya or mustard greens (optional) 4 slices
 - ▼ Salt to taste



Sharmin Pasha is a food writer currently based in Dubai, UAE, where she teaches privately-organised cooking lessons on different techniques of cooking. She also hosts an informative page featuring Assamese recipes on Facebook, which was created to showcase the culinary treasures of Assam to the world and to preserve ethnic recipes for generations to come.

Tangy fish with lentils



Ingredients:

- ▼ Pink lentils (*masur dal*) 1 cup
- ▼ Cherry tomatoes (halved) ¼ cup
- ▼ Turmeric powder 1 tsp
- ▼ River fish 4 pieces
- ▼ Tomatoes (ripe, chopped) 3
- ▼ Mustard seeds 1 tsp
- ▼ Fenugreek seeds ¼ tsp
- ▼ Green chilli 1
- ▼ Lemon juice 1 tbsps or to taste
- ▼ Coriander leaves (chopped) 2-3 tbsps
- ▼ Mustard oil 2 tbsps
- ▼ Salt to taste

Method:

Wash and then soak the lentils for half an hour. Drain the lentils and put in a pan with a pinch of turmeric, cherry tomatoes, and salt. Pour in enough water to cover the lentils and bring to a boil. Cook until soft, but not mushy. Sprinkle the fish with the remaining turmeric powder and salt, and leave to marinate for 20 minutes. Heat the oil in a deep pan set over medium heat and fry the fish lightly. Drain on absorbent kitchen paper and set aside.

To the same oil, add the mustard seeds and the fenugreek seeds and fry, until they splutter. Add the green chilli, followed by the chopped tomatoes and salt. Cook, over a low flame, until the tomatoes collapse and release their liquid. Stir in the cooked lentils and mix well, adding more water if required. Bring the mixture to a boil. Add the fish. Lower heat and cook until done. Remove from the heat and stir in the lemon juice and the chopped coriander pieces. Serve immediately with rice.

Note: *Rohu, Katla* or *Chitol* fish should be used for this preparation.

FICTION

Kaustabh Kashyap

kaustabhkashyap21@gmail.com

“Lockdown or not, little boy, life’s a game of cards. All of us play and who really gets to win?” Mr. Prasad’s dark brown eyes look up at the window, his footsteps slow and quiet upon the grass as he drops two packets on the porch’s rocking chair. I know he is gazing at me because it has never been his habit to look away while speaking. And eyes don’t change colour, no matter what they see or pretend to unsee.

In my mind’s eye, Mr. Prasad doesn’t carve out a living from selling (adulterated) milk, an open secret in the neighbourhood. He is a philosopher, chewing his betel leaf like his herd of honey-coloured cattle, grazing leisurely in open fields, quietly contemplating the passage of hours. I don’t imagine him that way simply out of an eccentric need. He is a storehouse of profound analogies derived from his earthly existence. He mows our lawns, repairs appliances and doles out advice, as seamlessly as we ignore and slurp his mediocre quality of milk.

“Prasad, we are cutting down on milk from tomorrow. You don’t need to come over unless I call you. Prasad, are you listening?” I hear mother’s sharp words from downstairs as the gate slides open and shut. She believes everyone and everything from outside is infected. Cows, green grass, the skies above, and the roads beyond. An endless list of hazardous objects over which sanitised curtains should be quickly drawn and kept away for the time being. My father specifically deals with respiratory illnesses. But that is immaterial, since my parents’ marriage shrivelled out years ago. He practises in Dehradun, his clinic perched on a hillock, but I am unsure of his fidelity to his second wife.

But something tells me my parents have been telephoning each other.

“You should have insisted and not requested! Don’t you know she barely listens to me? Things are going to get much worse. And God knows when flights and trains will start running again.” Mother’s whispers were interlaced with screams last night. She must have been



Under a rock-I

feeling really desperate to ring him up out of the blue or receive his call. With my sister stuck in another city for an indefinite period of time, I know she’s not going to rest her nerves anytime soon.

Next morning, I eat my mother’s overcooked omelette and soggy pancakes, uncomplainingly. But I don’t have more than a sip of black tea. My palate only approves the taste of milk tea. Without it my entire day will be groggy, full of yawns. The TV blares out statistics of the infected and my mother must be squinting her eyes at the screen. I once wished she watched the news instead of her usual dose of daily soap operas. But this isn’t what I had in

mind. “Ma, Mina won’t be able to buy so much single-handedly. Shouldn’t I go out with her? It’s not like the grocery store is miles away,” I blurt out timidly, fighting the lump in my throat.

“I know she doesn’t have ten hands to buy and bring back the whole shop. She’ll go back tomorrow for what she cannot carry today. And you don’t want to walk out of the house on a day like this.” The resigned spoon drops on my lap. Ever since my mother’s life fell apart and mine added to her pile of disappointments, she has turned into a defensive wall. You don’t want to needlessly hurt a hurting bird whose wings have been clipped several times

before soaring high.

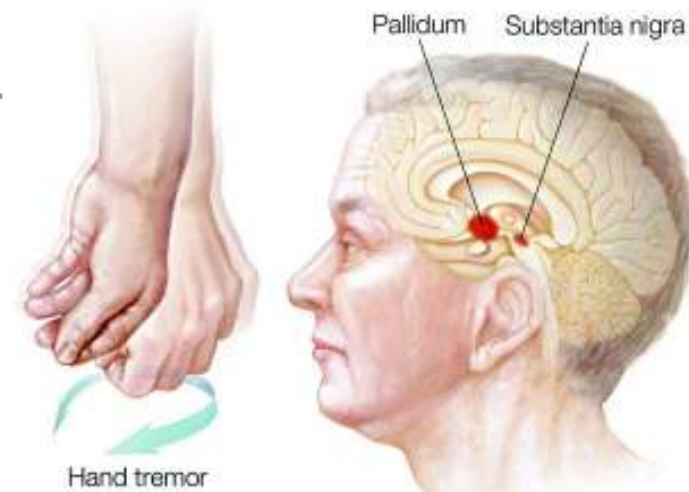
As evening approaches, Mrs. Hazarika brings in the haughty evening wind as Mina turns and pulls the doorknob in. Mrs. Hazarika is a plump, condescending lady in her early 50s. But I guess anyone with a successful husband and even more successful kids would find it hard not to talk down on others. Strangely, I fail to detect any usual pride and self-importance in her honeyed voice. In fact she sounds brittle and breathless like someone running with teary-eyes. “Sushmita, I have brought a homemade cake just out of the oven. I also got some eggs and vegetables.” My mother asks Mina to make two cups of coffee, with no sugar in one. “How are Rohan and Raj?” she asks lowering the TV volume. “I hope they are fine. Who would have ever thought Lombardy and New York – such places of opportunities would suddenly turn into graveyards,” Mrs. Hazarika’s words evidently tremble.

On ordinary days, she parades her sons’ achievements around the neighbourhood like golden trophies. I have always wondered in what stead our family stood in her judgement. If she didn’t see my mother and I as crumbling, desolate fragments, blown over and over by life’s steady storms. She has always pitied us (although my mother and I secretly pity each other as well). Today, however, she carries grief and heartache directed at herself. In spite of her rising paranoia, my mother doesn’t bring up my sister at all. My sister may not be an overachiever or rich, but at least she holds a steady job. I come up in the conversation only in passing as she gets up to leave and I no longer have to strain my ears from my room.

Later, during dinner, my mother imitates Mrs. Hazarika’s voice, exaggerating her mellifluous tone and Mina breaks out into fits of laughter. My mother and I are quite fond of disliking her. When I gave up on college, she relished in informing the whole neighbourhood about it. Or so we heard. “Poor Sushmita’s husband left her and now her son locks himself up in his room. Talk about bad luck!”

(To be continued)

Fiction entries should not exceed 1,800 words.



HEALTHWISE

Chayanika Changkakati

pdmds.india@gmail.com

Tremor troubles

More research and rehabilitation services are needed to tackle Parkinson’s.

“Together we move better!”, the motto of the Parkinson’s Disease and Movement Disorder Society in India (PDMDS), is a reflection of the spirit we hold this April as we celebrate World Parkinson’s Awareness Month! It’s a chance to raise awareness about the condition and push for more research and rehabilitation services to improve the lives of seven to ten million people all over the world who live with this condition every day, of which an estimated one million live in India.

For many People with Parkinson’s (PwPs), those who are senior citizens and those with Young-onset Parkinson’s (YOPD) below the age of 50, living with Parkinson’s is lifelong, and challenging, for themselves and their caregivers. There is currently no cure for the condition and it is progressive in nature, meaning that the symptoms are known to worsen over time. Along with the main motor symptoms like tremors, rigidity of muscles, imbalance, walking difficulties and slowness of movement, there are non-motor symptoms as well which range from sleep and speech issues to constipation, symptoms like depression, anxiety, hallucinations and problems with impulse control. Medication and rehabilitative services help to control the progression of these symptoms.

If dealing with all these issues is not difficult enough, PwPs and caregivers also have to deal with the stigma associated with the condition, the lack of knowledge that people have, and how people misperceive them, which can result in PwPs isolating themselves, and withdrawing from society.

The PDMDS steps in with a mission to integrate all PwPs back into the society and help them manage their symptoms better, together. The multidisciplinary model of care that we follow incorporates techniques and strategies by physiotherapists, psychologists, speech therapists, counsellors, social workers, community workers and neurologists. These form the core of our free-of-cost rehabilitative services that we implement and replicate in 60 support centres in 13 states all over India! We have been able to reach more than 40,000 PwPs and caregivers, both in urban as well as rural areas, and we hope to continue to make rehabilitation and medication affordable and accessible to all PwPs.

LEGAL EASE

Dr. Ankit Todi

(E-mail your questions to: legalaid@assamtribune.com)

The debt trap

Here’s the legal way out to retrieve one’s borrowed money.

Q. I had given some amount of money to a fellow businessman, who had promised to return the principal amount, along with interest, after one year by way of an executive agreement as a written proof of the transaction. It has been two years now; he has refused to return the amount and has denied the transaction and also the execution of the agreement. How can I take action against him?

Shradha

Ans: In order to proceed in the matter for recovery of the principal amount lent, along with interest, one first needs to serve a Notice upon the borrower claiming the amount. Thereafter, the jurisdictional Civil Court may be approached by filing a regular money suit for recovery of the amount. One may also file a summary suit, under the provision of Order 37 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908, which is applicable to suits seeking recovery of debt or liquidated demand in money payable on a written contract or a guarantee. The underlying public policy behind the provision of Order 37 is an expeditious disposal of suits of commercial nature by prescribing a time



frame for a speedy remedy. Once the summary suit is filed, the borrower will be asked to appear before the Court within ten days from the date of service of summons to defend its case, and in case he fails to appear and defend the case, the allegation in the summary suit is deemed to be admitted and the lender will be entitled to a decree for the amount claimed in the suit. The benefit of a suit under Order 37 is that unless

the borrower is able to demonstrate that he has a substantial defence in his case, the lender is entitled to a judgment immediately and the stages of proceeding in an ordinary civil suit gets eliminated.

Alternatively, one may also approach the jurisdictional Criminal Court alleging commission of offence under Indian Penal Code, 1860, of breach of trust, cheating, fraudulent deed and disposition of

property, committed by the borrower who has dishonestly, refused and denied returning the principal amount and interest and further denied execution of the agreement. On proof that the borrower had committed such an offence as alleged and had not given back the borrowed money, the Court shall hold the borrower guilty, and he shall be punished with imprisonment, along with fine.



World Parkinson’s Day is a huge occasion for our PwPs all over India, who celebrate together with various cultural and awareness programmes. This year, with the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have celebrated the month a little differently, using various online and social media platforms. Throughout the month, PDMDS has hosted interactive sessions with doctors to talk about different aspects of Parkinson’s. We have also been uploading various exercise videos, cognitive activities and daily tasks online for PwPs to keep themselves healthy and engaged during the lockdown. Since we cannot hold our weekly group sessions, we have started online group sessions to continue to provide rehabilitative services like physiotherapy, psychoeducation on Parkinson’s and cognitive activities through a support group setup. The PDMDS has also started a free online counselling service for PwPs and caregivers who are experiencing difficulties during the lockdown. We will also be sharing content on social media to keep raising awareness for Parkinson’s.

If you are someone with Parkinson’s or are a caregiver, feel free to contact us. It is a difficult time, but this will not stop us in our mission to raise awareness about Parkinson’s and reach out to as many of you as we can. We will get through this, feel better, do better and move better, together!

MY SPACE

Dr. Sriparna Pathak

sriparnapathak@gmail.com

Childhood in a COVID-19 world

Childhood is seen as the most enjoyable phase of one’s life. However, the world is undergoing a tremendous shift in this day and age of COVID-19. Children are getting restricted to homes and the meaning of childhood is also undergoing changes. How deeply does the COVID-19 impact children and how can these challenges be mitigated? Post the lockdown in India, supplies of a large volume of goods and services, including those for children, have been impacted, as is the case in other parts of the world.

In India, the good news is that the government has kept the supplies of essentials moving. Groceries and medicines fall into the category of essential products. While several parts of India are running low on groceries and medicines, the fact remains that at least these have made it to the list of essentials and there is hope that supplies will be restored. Several state governments have also reached out to

Residential Welfare Associations (RWAs) of different colonies and apartments and drawn up lists of the most vulnerable groups – that is of the elderly and children to prepare for a worst case scenario wherein COVID-19 continues to spread its tentacles unabated and governments have to seal certain places and the only supplies of groceries or medicines will take place through government-appointed personnel supplying essentials from door to door. While it is a dystopia that we are still away from, it is very much a possibility.

However, one segment that has not made it to the list of essentials is that of baby/toddler clothes. While COVID-19 has ensured the global economy comes to an almost screeching halt, what continues unabated is children’s physical growth. Therefore, to meet children’s clothing needs, there is simply no solution. While reuse and recycle is great, fact remains that beyond a certain level of physical growth, children’s clothes, even

after recycling, will not fit them! E-commerce has been a great benefit for India pre-COVID-19, and far-flung areas even without access to posh malls and branded clothes could access clothing and other goods online. In the COVID-19 world, while certain online retailers have been allowed to continue functioning, they can only supply limited quantities of essentials. Diapers, wet wipes, baby formula milk, at least, have made it to this list that can be supplied. However, the quantities that can be supplied are limited. In Sonapat’s Rai locality, for example, Stage 4 of baby formula milk is simply not in stock! Parents of toddlers have been forced to downgrade to Stage 3 of baby formula milk in the absolute lack of supply, which needless to say is not a very healthy option for the physical development of any child. In terms of vaccinations, COVID-19 has simply ensured that children can no longer access hospitals even for vaccinations, given the fear of contracting the

virus! While it is relatively easier for toddlers to defer their vaccinations upon advice from their paediatricians, the same choice is not there for newborn babies whose immunities are not great and they necessarily need vaccinations!

COVID-19 has also ensured that children’s access to public spaces has been completely curtailed under conditions of essential quarantine. This again, needless to say, is having a tremendous impact on children’s physical as well as mental development. The need for reducing children’s dependence on the screen was felt even in the pre-COVID-19 world. However, screen time is the only option available in the present conditions, which is not a healthy option for children’s mental development.

Surviving and growing up in a COVID-19 world is a task in itself and the sooner we find methods to mitigate some of the challenges posed by the virus, the better chances we have to survive as a race.

When time stood still

In the last few days I have been seized by an odd feeling. As if, with each passing day, I am taking a step back in time into the distant past. The early days of the lockdown were distinguished by the ambient noise levels dropping to civilised levels, levels any normal human being should be subjected to, but the days still felt current. We were still living in the present. Albeit, without the liminal roar of traffic that had underscored our every waking and sleeping moment; without people yelling up and down the street as if they were conversing in their homes and without the unrelenting whirr of machinery, building something somewhere.

The days were tranquil, punctuated only by birdsong, snatches of television from a neighbour and dogs barking. The dogs, of course, did not know it was lockdown and continued to bark as before. But we were still in the present.

A curious thing happened about two weeks ago. Along with the cessation of all this real noise, I found that white noise had receded to imperceptible levels. What is this white noise, you may ask. I mean the constant unnecessary intrusions the world makes into your homes and lives. Quite suddenly, I felt I was living my childhood again. It felt more like the Seventies and Eighties than the new millennium. To my surprise, there was a certain comfort and peace in this new living. The day was now structured around immediate family and its basic needs. The cooking of food, the cleaning of the house, watering the garden and after all this work was over, coming together to play board games or watch a film.

The demands of the outside world were less urgent now. They had decreased in frequency and pitch until they entered the home

IN BLACK AND WHITE

Jahnvi Barua



And in a paradoxical way, I now saw the outside world washed in a different light. There was an unexpected clarity in the air and vision. While unnecessary and insignificant things faded out, it was but natural to reach out to those that had been obscured before. I called up aunts and cousins I had not spoken to for a while, to friends from younger days that I had fallen out of touch with. The changing skies at different times of day became a source of entertainment as did birds in the garden, and cooking together with family took on a new charm and meaning.

only intermittently and almost apologetically. Telephones rang less, there were naturally no obligations to step out to meet people, shop or pick this and that up. In an uncanny way, it reminded me of the days when we were growing up, a time when the outside world stayed where it was – outside. There were such tenuous links with it – the sturdy black land telephone, letters the postman brought sometimes – and the country's and our own economies were so modest that we hardly ever stepped out to get away in the weekend or fly out to a neighbouring country, as we do now.

Restful, peaceful, rooted. These are the words that come to my mind. And in a paradoxical way, I now saw the outside world washed in a different light. There was an unexpected clarity in the air and vision. While unnecessary and insignificant things faded out, it was but natural to reach out to those that had been obscured before. I called up aunts and cousins I had not spoken to for a while, to friends from younger days that I had fallen out of touch with. The changing skies at different times of day became a source of entertainment as did birds in the garden, and cooking together with family took on a new charm and meaning.

In a few days the lockdown will end. I wonder how things will be? Will they go back to how they were: chaotic, loud, so busy that we did not have time to breathe. The opening is necessary, of course, to start the engine of the world again; to grow crops, to manufacture things, to sell goods. But I hope, with a small prayer under my breath, that some of the lessons learnt when time stood still will stay on with us.

Jahnvi Barua is a writer based in Bengaluru.



DESTINATION

Arijit Purkayastha

dibarjit@gmail.com

Sarthebari

This is the home for all our bell metal products and jaapis.



In Assam, bell metal products are as ubiquitous as bamboo handicrafts. The second-largest handicraft industry of Assam, bell metal items and artifacts catch one's attention because of how unique they appear to the eye. An alloy of copper and tin, bell metal, unlike bronze, has a higher content of tin and hence, it is preferred by the Assamese craftsmen to make utensils for domestic and religious purposes.

It is in Sarthebari that one gets to see the manner in which the metal is crafted into singular pieces for use and display. Situated 90 kilometres from Guwahati, a visit to Sarthebari is not an experience that one would like to miss. It harks back to the charming old days of yore when craftsmen would use age-old tools to melt and shape metal and then mould and polish them into handicrafts. The technology is not state-of-the-art, but simple and wondrous. And watching craftsmen employ their anvils, hammers, and pincers, to shape and create objects can be joyous.

Maheswar Deka of Sarthebari not only has a story to tell, but also has a way of expressing the magic of crafting. He crafts brass furniture – a king-sized bed is his finest showpiece. His house itself is an institution, providing visitors an experiential interpretation of history.

The best time to visit Sarthebari is in winter and Spring, since the weather is cool and dry. In the summer months, it is advisable to head out early in the morning and return late in the evening.

On the way, one can visit Mughkuchi or Tilana, to see how the Assamese jaapi is made. A hub of jaapi-making, these villages produce thousands of this indigenous headgear. Made from bundles of tokou leaves (palm leaves) and tightly-woven bamboo, the jaapi is no longer a farmer's hat. Today, it is the centrepiece during Bihu dance performances and other socio-religious events.

Exploring the crafts and arts of Assam can be an awesome experience. Sarthebari is one such place, which offers a great experience. Less-known, but immensely worthy of a visit.

Starting today, we feature a monthly column on off-beat destinations in India, written by Arijit Purkayastha, a tourism professional.

FORECAST

April 27 – May 3, 2020

ARIES Spend time with your family this week, it will be enjoyable. During this week, the opportunity to create new relationships might present itself. Focus on your goals.

TAURUS Businessmen, industrialists and those in manufacturing may want to increase the market share of their products. Those working in day jobs may be closely watched by their supervisors at work.

GEMINI During this period, if businessmen exhibit consistent effort and steady determination, the tide might turn in their favour. Some great job opportunities with promising career growth may come your way.

CANCER Overall, the week may promise a stable and strong financial situation throughout. However, beware, as there may be a major family-related expense that might pop up. Try to avoid any unnecessary expenditures, and whenever possible, try and save money.

LEO Students who are pursuing their post-graduation may meet their financial needs, like term fees and other expenses, by picking up some part-time jobs or assignments. Students must remember to keep academics as their top priority.

VIRGO During this period, you may need to accept changes, and face challenges head on. Businessmen who are smart and savvy may be successful. Romantic partnership is on the cards.

LIBRA Take care of the domestic needs of your family. On the relationship front, you may get married to someone of your liking. You must be aware and sensitive towards the choices of your partner.

SCORPIO This may be a tough period as you may need to work extra hard to deliver your assignments on time. Your efforts must be nothing less than stellar. Stay connected to your loved ones via digital platforms.

SAGITTARIUS This week may be quite good for the Sagittarius sign. Boost your self-confidence. For salaried employees, performance at work may be a bone of contention. This weekend, learn to relax.

CAPRICORN This period is a mixed bag. Businessmen may not be able to strike any big-ticket deals. Salaried employees may not be appreciated by seniors at work. Students need to remain focussed.

AQUARIUS During this period, salaried employees may need to constantly strive, in order to improve their overall efficiency. Positivity is the key. Let go of your fears.

PISCES For Pisces, this may be a mixed week. Businessmen may need to put in more effort than usual, especially when negotiating. Try not to take any major business or career decisions during this time.

NEWSMAKERS

Compiled by: Bidisha Singha

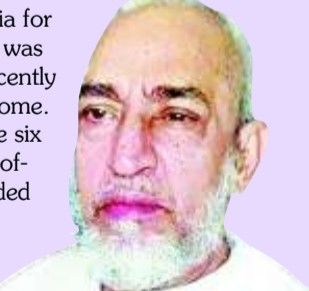
SUDARSANAM BABU

With Sudarsanam Babu's inclusion in the National Science Board, another Indian-American gets into a prestigious American institution. The White House recently announced several key administrative appointments, including Babu's appointment as member of this top science board for a six-year term. An IIT-Madras alumnus, Babu would be the third Indian-American in this prestigious board.



ABDUL MAJED

A former military captain of Bangladesh, Majed was recently executed for his involvement in the 1975 coup in which the country's founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated. He had been in hiding in India for nearly 25 years, and was arrested in Dhaka recently after he went back home. Majed was one of the six absconding ex-army officers who were handed down capital punishment after trial in absentia.



ASHOK DESAI

This former Attorney General (AG) of India and senior advocate passed away on April 13, at the age of 87. One of the leading lawyers of post-Independence India, Desai had been awarded the Padma Bhushan and he had dealt with several landmark cases, including the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Narmada Dam, the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act in Assam, etc.



RANGOLI CHANDEL

Actress Kangana Ranaut's sister has been known for her brusque, no-nonsense comments, especially on Twitter. It could be about her sister's relationships, films or even about people and issues, in general. But she took it a bit too far recently with one particular tweet that targeted a whole community and her Twitter account then got suspended. Despite her sister coming to her defence a day later, most people seem rather pleased with this 'disciplinary' action against an errant public figure.



FOOD TALK

Dr. Ritu G. Goswami

ritugeu_goswami@yahoo.in

A nutritionally adequate and balanced diet is essential for optimal growth and development in all age groups. Eating a well-balanced diet helps in increasing the immunity of the body, reduces anxiety level and emotional distress. The present outbreak of COVID-19 calls for a nutritionally balanced diet and hydration.

Here are a few tips to enhance the natural defence system of the body so that optimal health can be achieved:

- Start the day with one cup of hot water. You can have green tea, herbal tea, tulsi water, dachini water, etc.
- A cup of black tea, with two biscuits, can also be taken.
- Your breakfast should be healthy, consisting of any cereal, vegetables, pulses/egg, milk or curd.
- A fruit can be taken around mid-morning (between breakfast and lunch).
- A glass of lemon water (hot/lukewarm) can be included in the diet.
- Dry fruits like dates, almonds, raisins, etc., can also be a part of the diet.
- Your lunch should be healthy, but not heavy as you are staying at home these days. Cereal, pulses, non-vegetarian food (if available), green leafy vegetables, and other vegetables can be included in the lunch menu.
- A piece of lemon/amla/citrus fruit will also add immunity to the body.
- In the evening, a cup of green tea, herbal tea, tulsi water, dachini water, etc., is a must.
- A bowl of soaked grams can also be included in the evening meal.
- A simple dinner is appreciated.

Immunity boosters

A nutritionally adequate diet goes a long way in improving our immunity.



Turmeric milk

- During bed-time, a cup of milk with a little turmeric powder or grated haldi will not only increase the immunity of the body, but also relieve you from stress and anxiety, and will allow you to sleep better.
- Few DOs:**
 - Always drink warm water.
 - Do yoga, pranayam or any kind of exercise every day.
 - Having crushed garlic (three pods), and the use of turmeric, jeera, black pepper, ginger, onion, dhania, in your cooking is essential.
 - Two cups (150 ml.) of turmeric milk a day will enhance the immunity of the body.
 - Ghee can be used instead of refined oil.
 - A paste of ginger, garlic, pudina leaves, curry leaves, manimuni, etc., can be included in your diet.
 - Eat only freshly cooked food.
 - Since fruits and vegetables are not easily available these days, espe-

cially in urban areas, multivitamins, on the advice of doctors, may be included to supplement the micronutrient requirements of an individual.

● Home remedies like a teaspoon of honey, ginger, pepper, clove can be taken for cough and cold.

● Stay hydrated by including eight to ten glasses of warm fluids in the form of tea, lemon water, soup, milk, dabs, etc., in your diet every day.

Few Don'ts:

- Avoid eating cold foods like ice-cream, iced tea, etc.
- Avoid eating out.
- Avoid catching a cold by using severely cold water for your bath, using A/C or fan. Take precautions and stay safe at home.

(The writer is working in the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development under the Ministry of Women & Child Development, GOI. A few guidelines from the Ministry of AYUSH have also been shared in the article.)

