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p3 IMA calls off proposed protests after meeting with Shah

p5 Parties decry VAT hike on petro products; fear price rise

p7 Deficient pre-monsoon rainfall in NE region

NEWS Capsule

PM interaction

NEW DELHI, April 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with chief ministers via video link on April 27 morning on the way ahead in the fight against coronavirus, official sources said today. This will be the third video conference of Modi with the chief ministers during the COVID-19 emergency. – PTI

State aid

GUWAHATI, April 22: Around 1,02,272 people of the State stranded outside were provided Rs 2,000 as subsistence allowance. In addition, 34 people stranded abroad have been sent USD 1,000, while Rs 25,000 was transferred to the accounts of 717 patients stranded in other states. – Staff Reporter

Total tests

GUWAHATI, April 22: There was no COVID-19 positive case in the State in the past week, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said today. So far 5,789 tests were conducted in six State labs and it included samples sent by neighbouring states. He also said journalists can avail free COVID-19 test at GMCH on April 25. – Staff Reporter

Office timing

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Assam government has allowed its employees belonging to Islam religion to leave office at 4:30 pm, half an hour earlier than the scheduled time, during Ramadan commencing from April 24 subject to the condition that they will attend office half an hour earlier i.e. at 9 am. – Staff Reporter

US assertion

WASHINGTON, April 22: The World Health Organization has become a tool of 'Chinese propaganda', the Trump administration has alleged, asserting that the global health agency has lost all its credibility during the ongoing coronavirus crisis. The US is the largest contributor to the Geneva-headquartered world health body. – PTI

JOCOSERIOUS



I have decided to change my business. From now on I will sell only masks and sanitizers!

3-day conditional inter-district movement from April 25

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: Assam government has decided to allow inter-district movement of certain categories of people on April 25, 26 and 27, but they will have to follow the Central government guidelines and get prior approval from the respective Deputy Commissioners.

Elaborating on the guidelines for the relaxation, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said as medical colleges and hospitals will open from April 24, the government will allow inter-district movement of patients.

"This relaxation to patients will continue till lockdown. But they will have to get the approvals from the DCs. The e-passes will be issued for round trips and the patient must be in the vehicle," Sarma said.

During those three days, people stranded in other districts can move to their home district or to their work places in their vehicles. However, that also will require prior permission from the DCs who will issue a pass which will be valid for a day. "The DCs may regulate the movement on the three days," he said.

The government will also allow inter-district movement of migrant workers on those three days.

"Some workers are stranded in different districts and may want to move to their homes, while some may want to move to their workplaces. The employers can transport the workers in their vehicles, following permission from the DCs. Also, during the movement, they will have to follow the Central government guidelines," Sarma said, adding that not more than 25 people will be allowed in one vehicle.

The ASTC will run buses

on certain routes on those days to enable stranded people, including students, to move to their places of residence or work.

"Anyone wanting to avail the ASTC service will have to dial 104. ASTC will intimate them about the date of journey and how they will be transported. We may not be able to cater to all, but we will give priority to elders, women and students," Sarma said.

The Health Minister said the relaxation should not be interpreted as a "blanket permission" and all movements will require DCs approval.

Centre okays Rs 15,000 cr for COVID-19 package

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, April 22: The Union Cabinet has approved Rs 15,000 crore for 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package'.

The funds sanctioned will be utilised in three phases and for immediate COVID-19 emergency response, an amount of Rs. 7,774 crore, has been provisioned and rest for medium-term support (1-4 years) to be provided under mission mode approach.

Official sources said the key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 in India through the development of diagnos-

Alert TODAY Alive TOMORROW

tics and COVID-dedicated treatment facilities, centralised procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients, strengthen and build resilient National and State health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks, setting up of laboratories and bolster surveillance activities, bio-security preparedness, pandemic research. These interventions and initiatives would be im-

plemented under the overall umbrella of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

In Phase 1, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the support of all the other line ministries has already undertaken several activities. Additional funds to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore have been released under the package to the States for strengthening of existing health facilities.

SEE PAGE 6



Essential food items being distributed among the needy people during the nationwide lockdown, at Bakaliaghat on Wednesday. – UB Photos

Govt asks private schools to waive off 50 pc fees for March

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: State government today asked all the private schools of Assam, across all educational boards, to waive off 50 per cent of the school fees for the month of March. The schools also cannot increase their fees without prior permission from the Government of Assam till the COVID-19 induced situation prevails.

State Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today told the mediapersons here that the step has been taken as a goodwill gesture to provide some succor to all sections of people amid the ongoing crisis. However, the school au-

thorities cannot curtail the salaries of the teachers and non-teaching staff of the schools.

The fee waiver will be applicable on the lump sum amount of a month's school fee, from pre-primary level to class XII.

Sarma also warned that the private schools not complying with the directives will be closed down under the Disaster Management Act.

"We have talked to some of the schools who readily agreed to extend their support to this move. We are confident that other private schools would also willingly comply, considering it as a token of goodwill. Institutions that have already collected

the fee for the month of March (which is collected in April) will have to adjust the concession in next installment. On the other hand, schools willing to increase the concession rate, can do so," the Minister stated.

It may be noted that all schools and colleges of the State were closed from March 16, and all other activities came to a halt due to nationwide lockdown from March 24.

"The school fees cannot be increased without permission from the government. And in present situation granting any permission for fee hike is out of question," he added.

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Ordinance to punish those attacking health care workers

NEW DELHI, April 22: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an ordinance making acts of violence and harassment against healthcare personnel deployed in combating COVID-19 a non-bailable offence, meeting a key demand of health professionals in the wake of recent attacks on them while discharging their duty.

The maximum sentence under the new provision is seven years imprisonment and Rs 5 lakh fine. A person can be sentenced to anywhere between three months and five years of jail, besides a fine between Rs 50,000 and two lakhs, for such crimes, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said,

asserting that the government has "zero tolerance" for violence and harassment against doctors, nurses, paramedics and other healthcare personnel.

In cases where injuries caused are serious, the punishment will range from six months to seven years, and carry fine between Rs 1 to 5 lakhs, the minister told reporters.

The ordinance will amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and the amended law will also be invoked if health care personnel face harassment from their landlords or neighbours over suspicion that they may carry the coronavirus infection due to the nature of their work, he said.

An offence under the amended law will be cognizable and non-bailable, Javadekar said.

"Our government has zero tolerance against violence and harassment targeting doctors, nurses, paramedics and ASHA workers when they are doing their best to fight the pandemic," he said.

COVID-19 status in INDIA

Confirmed cases	20,471
Cured/Discharged	3,960
Death	652

Figures include foreign nationals As on 22/04/2020 at 5 pm

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

SEE PAGE 6

Fuel price hike temporary step: Govt

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: Citing that the royalties paid by the oil companies will go

down by more than half due to the record slump in crude oil prices, Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said the hike in oil taxes im-

posed by the State government was a "temporary measure" to cover up some revenue loss.

"The pain has to be borne by everyone. In any case, people are staying indoors and it will not impact the common man much," Sarma said when asked about yesterday's decision to hike the fuel taxes by more than Rs 5 in the State.

He indicated that the hike could be rolled back once the COVID-19 pandemic is over. "Once corona is over, we will review the decision again," he said.

SEE PAGE 6

World corona count

- More than 2,593,000 cases have been registered around the globe
- Death toll from the pandemic 179,725
- At least 696,900 patients recovered
- Now the pandemic epicentre, the US has 788,920 infections and 42,458 deaths
- Europe is the hardest hit continent with 110,192 people dead from 1,246,840 cases registered

Data as on Wednesday – JHU/AFP

FMCG goods facing wastage in godowns

SIVASISH THAKUR

GUWAHATI, April 22: Lack of coordination among various authorities, especially the district administration and the police, has hindered transportation of FMCG items, especially packaged food like biscuits, chocolates, etc., in the State.

The situation is all the more unwarranted, given that many retailers in the city are running dry of FMCG products. A city-based trader, who deals in both wholesale and retail, told *The Assam Tribune* that truckloads of FMCG items were facing wastage in

the godowns as he had not been able to procure the transportation passes.

Questions have also arisen whether favouritism and red-tapeism in the officialdom are playing a role in determining who gets the required passes.

"I have been made to run from pillar to post but to no avail. The authorities keep turning my request for a pass down for inexplicable reasons. This is frustrating and has seriously affected my business. Many FMCG products are perishable with short expiry period and therefore need to reach the retailer im-

mediately. Truckloads of goods worth lakhs of rupees are lying in the godowns," he said.

Aside loss to business, the situation is also causing revenue loss for the government at a time when it is facing a serious depletion of revenue sources.

During the initial days of the lockdown, retailers were hit by shortage of manpower and restrictions in transportation but now the lack of co-ordination among the government authorities has choked the supply line.

SEE PAGE 6

Validate rapid test kits before use: Experts

RITURAJ BORTHAKUR

GUWAHATI, April 22: With many states raising doubts over the accuracy of the rapid test kits procured from China, experts in Assam too have felt the need to validate the kits before using them for detecting COVID-19 infection in the State.

The State's health department yesterday had suspended its plan to begin rapid testing – which was scheduled to begin today – following an advisory from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) which said it needs to check the kits first.

The Central government had provided the State 9,600 kits – LIVZON IgM/ IgG diagnostic kit – procured from China. This kit was among 23 other kits manufactured by different firms found to be "satisfactory" when validated at the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune.

SEE PAGE 6

Lockdown delays work on NRC

R DUTTA CHOUDHURY

GUWAHATI, April 22: The countrywide lockdown has delayed the process of taking the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to its logical conclusion and now the process will start only after the situation improves.

Highly placed official sources told *The Assam Tribune* that the NRC State Coordinator's Office was planning to issue the rejection slips with the details of the causes of rejection to those whose names did not appear in the NRC from March 20. The persons whose names did not appear

in the NRC will be able to approach the Foreigners' Tribunals with the rejection slips.

But the whole process was delayed because of the outbreak of COVID-19 and now the new dates will have to be announced after the situation improves. Sources pointed out that names of more than 19 lakh applicants were not included in the NRC after the completion of the process of filing of claims and objections, of which around 3.9 lakh did not file claims and rejection slips would have to be issued to the rest.

The NRC Coordinator's

Office is ready to issue the rejection slips as soon as the process starts. Sources said that at this moment, it is not possible to issue the slips as it would lead to crowding of the NRC Seva Kendras and defeat the purpose of the lockdown. Sources said that the NRC Coordinator's Office started functioning from yesterday and it would be able to release the rejection slips as and when required as the software for it is also ready. But the opening of the Seva Kendras is also not possible at this moment.

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Around the WORLD

nCoV death toll tops 110,000

PARIS, April 22: The death toll from the novel coronavirus in Europe has passed 110,000, according to figures compiled by AFP from official sources by 0920 GMT on Wednesday.

With 110,192 people dead from 1,246,840 cases registered, Europe is the hardest-hit continent by the pandemic that has killed 177,368 people around the world.

Italy has recorded 24,648 deaths, Spain 21,717, France 20,796 and Britain 17,337. — AFP

Mayor quits over drink driving

BARCELONA, April 22: A Spanish mayor resigned on Wednesday just hours after being arrested for drink driving and attacking police who stopped him, a court and local media reported.

Nearly six weeks into one of the most restrictive coronavirus lockdowns in the world, Alex Pastor stepped down as Badalona mayor following reports he was caught driving under the influence and bit an officer who tried to give him a breathalyser test.

"Alex Pastor has resigned," said a statement from the Badalona town hall, a beachfront town just north of Barcelona that is home to 200,000 people.

He was arrested in Barcelona on Tuesday night and later charged with "a road safety violation and for attacking police", a court statement said. — AFP

Hydroxychloroquine

NEW YORK, April 22: Hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug which US President Donald Trump called a "game changer" against COVID-19, is not effective against the disease, according to a study which raises concerns about the drug's widespread usage by many governments across the world in fighting the pandemic.

The yet to be peer-reviewed study, published in the preprint server medRxiv, made a retrospective analysis of patients hospitalised with COVID-19 in all the Veterans Health Administration medical centres across the US.

The scientists, including those from the University of South Carolina in the US, analysed the associations between the use of drugs hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin, and corresponding clinical outcomes. — PTI

Happy reunion!

SAN FRANCISCO, April 22: Four months after a distraught San Francisco woman hired a plane to fly a search banner for her stolen dog, the blue-eyed mini Australian shepherd has been found and the two were reunited on Tuesday.

Emilie Talermo, 31, said she received a call on Monday from an animal shelter in Palmdale, which is about 370 miles (600 kilometres) away in Southern California, telling her someone had just dropped off a dog with a microchip connected to her phone number.

To be sure it was her 6-year-old dog, Jackson, Talermo asked the shelter to send her photos.

"As soon as I saw them, I burst into tears. It was him!" Talermo said. — AP

As people stay home, Earth turns wilder and cleaner

WASHINGTON, April 22: As people across the globe stay home to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, the air has cleaned up, albeit temporarily.

Smog stopped choking New Delhi, one of the most polluted cities in the world, and India's getting views of sights not visible in decades.

Nitrogen dioxide pollution in the northeastern United States is down 30 per cent. Rome air pollution levels from mid-March to mid-April were down 49 per cent from a year ago. Stars seem more visible at night.

People are also noticing animals in places and at times they don't usually. Coyotes have meandered along downtown Chicago's Michigan Avenue and near San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. A puma roamed the streets of Santiago, Chile.

Goats took over a town in

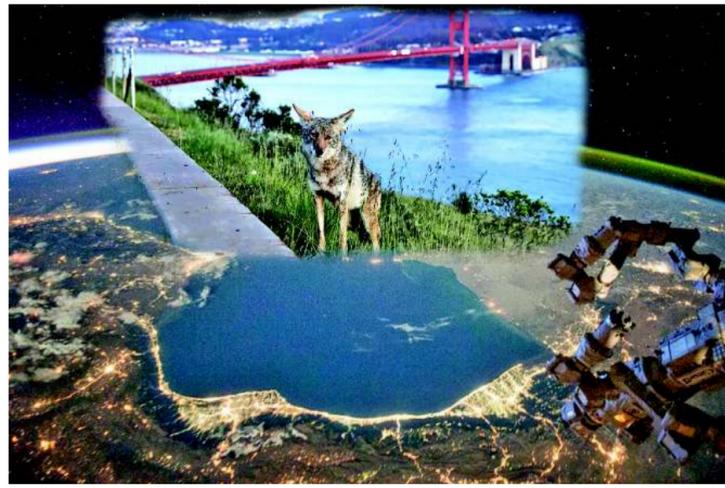
Wales. In India, already-daring wildlife has become bolder with hungry monkeys entering homes and opening refrigerators to look for food.

When people stay home, Earth becomes cleaner and wilder.

"It is giving us this quite extraordinary insight into just how much of a mess we humans are making of our beautiful planet," says conservation scientist Stuart Pimm of Duke University. "This is giving us an opportunity to magically see how much better it can be."

Chris Field, director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, assembled scientists to assess the ecological changes happening with so much of humanity housebound.

Scientists, stuck at home like the rest of us, say they are eager to explore unexpected changes in weeds, insects, weather patterns, noise and light pollution. Italy's govern-



ment is working on an ocean expedition to explore sea changes from the lack of people.

"In many ways we kind of whacked the Earth system with a sledgehammer and now

we see what Earth's response is," Field says.

Researchers are tracking dramatic drops in traditional air pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, smog and tiny particles. These types of pollution

kill up to 7 million people a year worldwide, according to Health Effects Institute president Dan Greenbaum.

The air from Boston to Washington is its cleanest since a NASA satellite started meas-

uring nitrogen dioxide, in 2005, says NASA atmospheric scientist Barry Lefter. Largely caused by burning of fossil fuels, this pollution is short-lived, so the air gets cleaner quickly.

Compared to the previous five years, March air pollution is down 46 per cent in Paris, 35 per cent in Bengaluru, India, 38 per cent in Sydney, 29 per cent in Rio de Janeiro and 9 per cent in Durban, South Africa, NASA measurements show.

"We're getting a glimpse of what might happen if we start switching to non-polluting cars," Lefter says.

Cleaner air has been most noticeable in India and China. On April 3, residents of Jalandhar, a city in north India's Punjab, woke up to a view not seen for decades: snow-capped Himalayan peaks more than 100 miles away. — AP

US lawsuit nothing short of absurdity: China

BEIJING, April 22: China on Wednesday dismissed as "nothing short of absurdity" and violation of sovereignty the lawsuit filed by the US state of Missouri which alleges that Beijing suppressed COVID-19 information, arrested whistle-blowers and denied its contagious nature, leading to the loss of life and causing "irreparable damage" to the world.

Filed in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, the lawsuit was submitted by Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt against the Chinese government, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), and other Chinese officials and institutions.

It alleges that during the critical weeks of the initial outbreak, the Chinese authorities deceived the public, suppressed crucial information, arrested whistle-blowers, denied human-to-human transmission in the face of mounting evidence, destroyed critical medical research, permitted millions of people to be exposed to the virus, and even hoarded Personal Protective

Equipment (PPE), causing a global pandemic that was unnecessary and preventable. The lawsuit seeks relief on one count of public nuisance, one count of abnormally dangerous activities, and two counts of breach of duty.

Remedies could include civil penalties and restitution, abatement of the public nuisance, cessation of abnormally

dangerous activities, punitive damages and more, it said.

Reacting to the lawsuit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said: "this so-called accusation has no factual and legal basis. It is nothing short of absurdity." He reiterated that since the outbreak, the Chinese government has been acting in open, transparent and responsible manner to report the information to the US and other countries and the World Health Organisation (WHO) besides issuing general sequence of the virus.

Geng said China is in communication

with the US on this issue since January 3, ensuring updates.

"This is part of China's important contribution and recognised by the international community. This so-called litigation is a malicious abuse of litigation. It violates the basic law and principle of equal sovereignty in international law.

"The Chinese government's response in the pandemic is not under the jurisdiction of US courts," he said.

Geng said that such abuse of litigation is not conducive to epidemic response at home in the US and also runs counter to international cooperation.

"What the US should do is to refute and reject such abuse of litigation," he said. Besides the lawsuit, China faced stringent criticism from US President Donald Trump and its top politicians and officials, including allegations of cover-up and under-reporting of coronavirus casualties.

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

'Terror threat' to UK hospitals during lockdown

LONDON, April 22: There are fears that terrorists may be looking to target hospitals and other places on the coronavirus pandemic frontline in the UK, according to a counter-terrorism officer who said that additional security advice is being issued to the country's National Health Service (NHS) trusts.

Scotland Yard Chief Superintendent Nik Adams, the National Coordinator for the UK's Prevent Counter-Extremism programme, said the force is closely monitoring if terror outfits such as the Islamic State (ISIS) could be looking to exploit the crisis to find new recruits to target the places currently busiest given the social distancing lockdown in place to curb the spread of the virus.

"We're seeing the exploitation of the circumstances to encourage acts of violence," Adams was quoted as saying by *The Independent*.

"The reality is we're very prepared for any such eventuality, and monitoring any literature being disseminated around the world. We are working closely with colleagues across the Five Eyes [UK, US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand] countries, with academics and community advisory networks to monitor how that information is playing out, and making sure that protective security advice is being adapted for the places that might be considered more vulnerable now," he said.

Adams warned that terror supporters could "be encouraging people to target the places that appear most vulnerable" and calling for attacks during lockdown in the hope that police and security services would be "distracted and overwhelmed". — PTI

IN MEMORIAM



Late Smt. Sushila Sarma

03.05.1950 — 05.05.2019

Today on the "Punya Tihi" of your 1st Death Anniversary, we fondly remember you and seek yours heavenly blessings.

"Om Shanti"
All family members
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ACHIEVEMENT



Kangan Jyoti Sarma, a Research Scholar of Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat has been awarded the Degree of Philosophy (Ph.D) by The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda for his thesis entitled "Fish and Fishery of Hilsa (Family: Clupeidae) of Gujarat state with reference to migration". He carried out his research under the supervision of Professor Pradeep C. Mankodi, Department of Zoology, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. Kangan is the son of Mr. Nipendra Narayan Sarma, and Mrs. Usha Sarma of Guwahati, Assam. Achiv/NL000020/1

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'Indian pharmaceutical firms will play key role'

WASHINGTON, April 22: Indian pharmaceutical companies, the well-known for producing affordable low-cost medicines, will play an important role in the global fight against the coronavirus pandemic that has affected over 2.5 million people across the world, India's top diplomat here has said.

India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu also underlined that as global strategic partners, India and the US are prepared to face this public health crisis together.

India, one of the largest producers of anti-malarial drug Hydroxychloroquine, has seen a spurt in demand in recent weeks. India has sent the drug to over 50 countries over the last few days, including the United States, he said on Tuesday. Hydroxychloroquine has been identified by the US Food and Drug Administration as a



Indian Envoy to US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu

possible treatment for the COVID-19 and it is being tested on more than 1,500 coronavirus patients in New York.

Global war on nCov

"Indian pharmaceutical companies are global leaders in producing affordable low-cost medicines and will play an important role in the fight against this pandemic," Sandhu said in his virtual conversation with Asia Society Policy Institute

Senior Fellow Puneet Talwar.

In fact, India and the US have robust tie-up in health and scientific research, which will be key in the fight against this disease.

"Perhaps the most successful tangible example of our successful bilateral cooperation in recent years was the development of the rotavirus vaccine, which saves thousands of lives every year," he said.

Rotavirus vaccine is a vaccine used to protect against rotavirus infections, which are the leading cause of severe diarrhoea among young children.

"Our network of scientific institutions, including the Indian Council of Medical Research and NIH (National Institute of Health) and the CDC (Center for Disease Control) in the US is active. This is part of our longstanding cooperation, which has been engaged in the context of this pandemic," Sandhu said. — PTI

China steps up testing at borders

BEIJING, April 22: China has reported 30 new COVID-19 cases, a majority of them are the Chinese returning from abroad, taking the number of imported infections in the country to 1,610, the health officials said on Wednesday, as the authorities stepped-up the testing and treatment facilities in all border regions.

The death toll due to the novel coronavirus remains 4,632 with no new fatalities were reported on Tuesday, while the overall confirmed cases climbed to 82,788, of which 1,005 patients are still being treated and 77,151 have been discharged, China's National Health Commission (NHC) said.

China's imported cases have risen to 1,610 with 30 new cases, including 23 imported infections. Of the total imported cases, 811 people are being treated with 41 in severe conditions, it said. — PTI

No last goodbye!

DUBAI, April 22: The body of the Indian migrant who died from coronavirus far from home was kept inside the ambulance in front of the crematorium in case a friend

"The whole world is changing. Nobody comes anymore, nobody touches, nobody says goodbye," said Ishwar Kumar, a manager of the Hindu Cremation Ground located in a desert area south of Dubai. — Ishwar Kumar

came by for a last goodbye.

But nearly an hour later no one had appeared, and the workers in protective suits had to carry out their grim task.

In silence, the four men carefully moved the body,

wrapped in a white plastic bag, to a furnace where it was reduced to ashes that were placed in a silver box.

Millions of foreigners work in the United Arab Emirates and across the other wealthy Gulf nations, providing the backbone of the workforce in hospitals and banks, as well as on construction sites and in factories.

Many have spent decades toiling to provide for their families, with the hope of returning one day to open a business or build a house.

But a death from coronavirus means that the body cannot be sent home, and that it has to be cremated or buried in the country where the person dies.

"The whole world is changing. Nobody comes anymore, nobody touches, nobody says goodbye," said Ishwar Kumar, a manager of the Hindu Cremation Ground located in a desert area south of Dubai. — AFP

Wuhan embraces Yangtze river!

Virus-hit city reopens



WUHAN (China), April 22: Bathed in golden late-afternoon light, Chen Enting snapped a photo of his ticket to commemorate his first ferry ride across the Yangtze river after a 76-day quarantine ended in the Chinese city where the coronavirus pandemic began.

The reopening of ferry services on the Yangtze, the heart of life in Wuhan for two millennia, was an important symbolic step to get business and daily life in this city of 11 million people back to normal.

Wearing goggles, gloves, a homemade mask and a black trench coat, Chen was checked by security guards in protective suits and bought a 1.5-yuan (20-cent) ferry ticket. He boarded with a dozen

other passengers, some pushing electric scooters, and found a bench at the front beside a red flag with a yellow sickle.

He sprayed the seat with disinfectant before sitting. "The ferry on the Yangtze river is a symbol of Wuhan's people," said Chen, a 34-year-old cost engineer and Chinese Communist Party member.

"The choppy river symbolizes the force of life," he said, as the Sun set behind the Toroise Mountain TV Tower. "Although Wuhan had such an ordeal, it will flow away just like the river and receive exuberant vitality." Wuhan was one of China's most important centers under inward-looking dynasties that had little interest

in foreign trade and carried out commerce and politics over the country's vast river networks.

The city was eclipsed by the explosive rise of Shanghai, Hong Kong and other coastal cities after the ruling Communist Party set off a trade boom by launching market-style economic reforms in 1979.

Today, Wuhan is regaining its status as an economic dynamo as Chinese leaders shift emphasis from exports to developing more sustainable growth. The city government says more than 300 of the world's 500 biggest companies, including Microsoft Corp. and Honda Motor Co, have operations in Wuhan to get access to central China's populous market. — AP

Pandemic causes pain for jobless Thais

BANGKOK, April 22: Long lines of unemployed relying on free food across Bangkok, scrambles for cash handouts and fishing in fetid canals — Thais are getting increasingly desperate as the pandemic destroys the economy and the government struggles to respond.

Some 27 million informal workers — who lost their jobs in the tourism, entertainment, food and service sectors — have applied for a monthly cash handout from the government, though only half have received approval.

Premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha has also issued conflicting information on how long the

state can afford to give people 5,000 baht (\$150) a month.

A spirit of volunteerism has filled the gaps left by the state.

"The government hasn't helped me with anything," said Chare Kunwong, a 46-year-old masseur who caters to tourists — a revenue stream that dried up with COVID-19's stranglehold on global travel.

He stood in line alongside hundreds on Wednesday in Bangkok's historic quarter, waiting to receive food donations of rice, noodles, milk and curry packets.

"If I wait for the government's aid then I'll be dead first," he told AFP. — AFP

BHU plans clinical trial of Ayurvedic drug against COVID-19

NEW DELHI, April 22: Professors at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) have proposed to carry out a clinical trial of immunity-boosting Ayurvedic drug 'fifatrol' to check its efficacy in tackling the deadly COVID-19. However, the proposal is yet to be approved, official sources said.

According to BHU professor and principal investigator for the proposed project Dr KN Dwivedi, the plan has been sent to a task force formed by the government for scientific validation of Ayurveda and traditional medicinal formulas through research institutions in tackling COVID-19.

The Interdisciplinary AYUSH Research and Development Task Force has members from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) as also AYUSH practitioners and others. Their job is to identify potential preventive therapy and therapeutic approaches from ayush systems in different stages of COVID-19 treatment.

The AYUSH ministry had issued a no-

tification on March 31, asking Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) practitioners and institutions to submit their suggestions on various therapies, and has received over 2,000 proposals.

Experts say that fifatrol, enriched with immune-enhancing herbs, has been found to be effective in curing major bacterial infections such as staphylococcus species that causes fever, cough and cold, and skin diseases among others.

AIMIL Pharmaceuticals, the company that produces fifatrol, said that drug is used to treat flu and viral infections of upper respiratory tract. But this is for the first time that experts have decided to determine if it can be helpful in combating the novel coronavirus.

Head of the Department of Dravyaguna at BHU Dr Dwivedi said fifatrol is given to patients with symptoms similar to COVID-19. "So, we are now trying to evaluate this drug on critically-ill COVID-19 patients to check if it can help re-

duce mortality," he said.

"During a trial on dengue patients at AIIMS, Bhopal, the drug was found to have increased platelet count significantly. The study also established that fifatrol can strengthen the liver with no systemic side effects," the professor said.

In fact, researchers at AIIMS, Bhopal, in their preliminary results have found that the drug can be a suitable alternative to Allopathic antibiotics without causing any side effects.

"Fifatrol is an antimicrobial solution prepared from 13 key herbs, including *sudarshan vati, sanjeevani vati, godanti bhasma, tribhuvan kirti ras and mrityunjay ras, tulsi, kutki, chirayata, motha and giloy*," Dr Dwivedi said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also urged AYUSH practitioners to pitch in to tackle the coronavirus pandemic. He has also been exhorting the citizens of India to fall back on traditional home remedies during times of such a global health crisis to boost their immunity. — PTI



A woman feeds stray dogs during the nationwide lockdown imposed in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, in Chennai on Wednesday. — PTI

IGIB scientists develop low cost COVID-19 test

Kit named after detective character 'Feluda'

NEW DELHI, April 22: Scientists at the CSIR's Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology have come up with a low-cost coronavirus test that will not require any expensive machines for detection of the pathogen.

Named after 'Feluda', the detective character in legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray's stories, the test has been developed by Debojyoti Chakraborty and Souvik Maiti as a simpler way of detecting SARS-coV2 presence in clinical samples, IGIB Director Anurag Agarwal said.

The CSIR is a department under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology.

It starts the same way as a normal real time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), which is extraction of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and its conversion to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), Agarwal said.

It then differs by using a specifically designed PCR reaction to amplify a part of the viral nucleic acid sequence. Then a highly specific CRISPR, FncAS9, developed at IGIB, binds to that sequence, he added. Using the innovative chemistry on a paper strip, the CRISPR

complex, bound to that specific sequence, can be visualised as a positive band — like one seen in simple pregnancy tests. The total time required for the test is less than an hour.

In the RT-PCR tests, the RNA is converted to DNA by using specific primers and probes, with fluorescent reporters, to amplify and detect viral nucleic acid presence. It requires expensive Real Time PCR machines which are available at specialised sites.

"If successfully commercialised, which depends upon all its components being available at scale and the commercial product being successfully validated by regulatory agencies, it would allow the test to be done in local path-labs that do not have expensive real time PCR machines, but simple cheap thermo-blocks used for conventional PCR," Agarwal said.

Asked why the test was named after Feluda, Agarwal said the researchers at MIT and University of California, Berkeley have named the tests as 'Detector' and 'Sherlock', so Feluda was an Indian version, he added. — PTI

Encourage more COVID-19 warriors to undergo online training: Centre

NEW DELHI April 22: The Centre has asked all States and Union Territories to encourage more corona warriors to undergo online training courses in order to handle the pandemic efficiently.

It said brave and dedicated doctors, healthcare workers, police and other volunteers require enhanced capacity and updated information to keep in step with the latest advances in techniques and global understanding of the virus.

"All State/UT governments are requested that wide publicity be made and more and more COVID-19 warriors be encouraged to onboard the integrated Online Training Module (iGOT) platform and undergo online training course(s) relevant to them so that the pandemic may be handled efficiently," the Personnel Ministry said in a statement.

It said a tailored version of the iGOT has been launched recently to train all the COVID-19 warriors of the country.

"As all are aware, the whole world, including India, is facing a significantly higher threat from the COVID-19 pandemic. India is responding to the novel coronavirus pandemic with an unprecedented mobilisation of human resources — the intrepid COVID warriors who are battling the virus at the frontline," the ministry said.

"These brave and dedicated doctors, healthcare workers, technicians, paramedics, AYUSH doctors, State/UT government officers, police and other volunteers require enhanced and updated information to keep in-step with the latest advances in techniques and global understanding of the virus," it said.

Over 1.44 lakh persons have enrolled at the iGOT platform to combat COVID and about 96,268 of them have completed the course, officials said. — PTI

IMA calls off proposed protests after meeting with Shah

NEW DELHI, April 22: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has called off its proposed 'White Alert' and 'Black Day' protests scheduled on April 22 and 23 following a meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah through video conference on Wednesday.

The doctors' body has been demanding that the Centre bring a law to protect healthcare workers from rising attacks at a time when they are battling COVID-19.

According to a statement by the IMA, the Union Home Minister lauded the medical community for their work. He said the safety and security of doctors and other health care workers was his great concern, the doctors' body said.

"He (Union Home Minister) also as-

sured IMA of a Central Law against violence. He appealed on behalf of the Prime Minister to defer the symbolic protest.

"In view of the assurances given from the highest authorities of the government, the IMA calls off the protest. White Alert on April 22 and Black Day on April 23 stand cancelled. We thank all our members for their unprecedented solidarity and support," the doctors' body said in a statement.

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

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

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

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

"We demand a special Central law against violence on doctors, nurses, healthcare workers and hospitals by an ordinance," the IMA had said on Tuesday. — PTI

UNODC launches series of online dialogues on COVID-19

NEW DELHI, April 22: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) has launched a 'Lockdown Learners' series of online dialogues with students and educators in India on COVID-19 and its impact on Sustainable Development Goals.

The dialogues have been launched by the United Nations body under its flagship Education for Justice initiative.

Through these dialogues, the aim is to sensitise students on concerns of vulnerable groups and emerging issues such as cybercrime, misinformation, gender-based vio-

lence, discrimination, corruption among others, the UNODC said in a statement.

The series also provides a platform for students to receive mentorship and knowledge support through activity-based learning, and use their talent and skills to promote awareness and share their ideas and solutions to address some of these problems, it said.

Over the last week, educational resources have been shared with partner schools in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, and focused interactions convened with hundreds of students and educators, Samarth

Dentist hailed for saving life of migrant worker, child

BENGALURU, April 22: A city-based woman dentist is earning plaudits for reviving the newborn of a migrant labourer, who delivered the child outside the former's clinic after failing to find a hospital despite a 7-km walk.

Though the incident occurred on April 14 morning, it came to light recently and social media users have been showering praises on Dr Ramya Himanish, who runs a dental clinic here.

The migrant labourer Shanti had walked 7 km looking for a hospital in the city. As she went into labour, the young woman had delivered the child on the pavement next to Himanish's clinic. When the child did not respond, the woman's husband assumed it had died and wrapped it with a newspaper.

"When I went there, I saw the woman bleeding. I brought her inside and provided treatment. Then I checked the baby. After the resuscitation process, the child came to life," Dr Himanish told PTI.

Later, Himanish arranged for an ambulance and sent the woman and the newborn to a government hospital for further treatment. — PTI

COVID-19: UP police station turns marriage venue

LUCKNOW, April 22: Anil and Jyoti will always remember how they began their married lives — walking out of a police station in the midst of a lockdown against a virus.

Their marriage ceremony took place on Monday on the premises of Dheena Police Station in Uttar Pradesh's Chandauli district.

Anil, who is from Mahuji village in Chandauli district, and Jyoti from Ghazipur district tied the knot at a Shiva temple located inside the police station complex.

"It was a marriage with limited means and five people each from the groom's side and from the bride's side were present during the ceremony, SHO Rajesh Kumar told PTI.

Police were returning a favour to the couple. Anil had helped them during a boat tragedy in February, saving several people from drowning. His role was lauded by senior officials of the police and the district administration.

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

contacted us and sought a solution," the SHO said.

Police reminded him about the restrictions on gatherings.

"Anil then asked us whether his marriage could be solemnised at the Shiva temple inside the police station compound," Kumar said.

He assured police that only five people from each side will take part in the ceremony. "On this condition, we gave our nod," Kumar said. The decision to hold the wedding at the police station was taken just a couple of days before the event.

Senior police officials, including the Additional Superintendent of Police, Circle Officer and in-charge of a police outpost were present during the marriage.

"The event, though with limited means, was solemnised amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras, while strictly adhering to social distancing norms," the police officer said.

Unlike the usual time-consuming, elaborate rituals in Hindu marriages, this marriage was relatively shorter," he added. — PTI

Quarantined migrant workers give makeover to schools in Sikar

SIKAR, April 22: Quarantined in two schools in Rajasthan's Sikar district, a group of migrant labourers have added colour to their temporary abode by painting the chipped walls of the institutions.

About 54 workers from Haranya, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, quarantined in the Shaheed Sitaram Kumawat and Seth KL Tambi Government Higher Secondary Schools in Palsana

town, wanted to express their gratitude for the arrangements made for them in quarantine.

Palsana Sarpanch Roop Singh Shekhawat said that in response to the good care taken of them at the quarantine centres, the migrant workers wanted to express their gratitude.

Wall paint and other necessary items were made available to them, which they used to give makeover to the schools.

"The entire village is over-

whelmed by their behaviour. All these people are perfectly healthy and their quarantine time is also over. It is joyful to see the constructive work done by the workers who have used the quarantine period beautifully," Shekhawat said.

Jagat Singh Panwar, secretary of district legal services authority who had visited the centre and met the workers, praised the workers for taking the initiative. — PTI

Over 154 crore students hit by closure due to COVID-19; girls to be worst hit: UNESCO

NEW DELHI, April 22: Over 154 crore students are severely impacted by closure of educational institutions across the world amid the COVID-19 outbreak due to which girls will be the worst hit as it will lead to increased dropout rates and further entrenched gender gaps in education, UNESCO said.

Stefania Giannini, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education, told PTI in an interview that shutting down of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic comes with a warning of "potential for increased dropout rates which will disproportionately affect adolescent girls, further entrench gender gaps in education and lead to increased risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and early and forced marriage".

"Out of the total population of students enrolled in education globally, we estimate that over 89 per cent are

currently out of school because of COVID-19. This represents 154 crore students enrolled in school or university, including nearly 74 crore girls. Over 11 crore of these girls are living in the world's least developed countries where getting an education is already a struggle," she said over phone from Paris.

According to Giannini, for girls living in refugee camps or who are internally displaced, shutting down of schools will be the most devastating as they are already at a disadvantage and education responses must prioritise the needs of adolescent girls' at the risk of reversing 20 years of gains made for girls' education.

"Refugee girls at secondary level are only half as likely to enrol as their male peers. We are only beginning to understand the economic impacts of COVID-19, but they are expected to be widespread and devastating.

"Particularly for women and girls in countries where limited social protection measures are in place, economic hardships caused by the crisis will have spill-over effects as families consider the financial and opportunity costs of educating their daughters. While many girls will continue with their education once the school gates reopen, others will never return to school," she said.

"As governments prepare for indefinite school closures, policymakers and practitioners can look to lessons from the past crises to address the specific challenges faced by girls. We, therefore, call on governments to protect progress made in favour of girls' education through six gender-responsive, evidence-based and context-specific actions," Giannini said.

The six-point strategy suggested by UNESCO for the purpose includes leveraging teachers and communities,

adopting appropriate distance learning practices, considering the digital divide, safeguarding vital services and engaging young people.

"Closure of educational institutions, even if temporary, is problematic for various reasons. Firstly, the reduction in instructional time impacts learning achievement. When schools close, educational performance suffers. Disrupting schooling also leads to other harder to measure losses, including inconveniences to families and decreased economic productivity as parents struggle to balance work obligations with childcare," she said.

There have been 25,03,429 recorded cases and 1,72,551 deaths around the world. Europe, the most affected continent, has 12,30,522 official cases and 1,08,797 fatalities, while the US, where COVID-19 is spreading most rapidly, has 7,88,920 cases and 42,458 deaths. — PTI

ADKJ #DID YOU KNOW ?



Healthy Fort

The first human milk bank was established in the India at Sion Hospital in Mumbai for new born babies who cannot get their mother's milk for various reasons. It was started under the supervision of Dr. Jayshree Mondkar who is still associated with this initiative.



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MESSAGE FOR TODAY

The most important thing when ill is to never lose heart.

— VLADIMIR LENIN

The Assam Tribune

Restarting education

With the extended lockdown disrupting the academic calendar of educational institutions in an unprecedented manner, the Government and the school authorities need to evolve a way to ease the situation for students in the days ahead. As indications are clear that the schools will take a long time to reopen in view of the heightened threat congested classrooms can pose to young students, the authorities should put in place a methodical arrangement to minimize the academic losses for the young learners. The summer vacations can be done away with given that the students will have completed a one-and-a-half month break by the time the extended lockdown comes to a close. The lockdown needs to be considered as a vacation period for schools and the modalities of a new arrangement once the schools start functioning should be worked out through consultations with the diverse stakeholders. While most schools in the city and urban areas have started online classes to mitigate the classroom losses, that is not going to be enough and the vast rural landscape lacks such technology-driven solutions. Assuming that schools will be able to reopen after two or more months from now, the school authorities will have to facilitate extended hours for holding extra classes. Unless a matching arrangement is made, the students might end up losing an academic year. And once educational institutions start to operate, every care will have to be taken to ensure that the campuses are sanitized regularly and the health of the students is checked. The Government must keep this crucial aspect in mind when schools are allowed to function after the break.

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) which had decided to revise the academic calendar for schools and colleges following the announcement of the lockdown has in a recent circular to all the States and autonomous bodies such as the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), has asked them to work on an alternate academic calendar. For enabling the students to make up for the days lost amidst the lockdown, the number of holidays should be reduced. Shortage of textbooks can emerge as another irritant and here too the Government will have to play its part. Many private educational institutes, especially schools, have already issued instructions to the parents to pay the monthly fees of their wards and some have even hinted at hiking the fees. Given that these schools have a high fee structure, the Government should intervene and ensure that fees are reduced during this distressed situation. It should also be monitored that the school authorities do not go for pay cuts of its teaching and non-teaching staff.

Oil concerns

The dramatic fall in the global price of oil has been one of the quirky outcomes of the economic downturn that the world is currently experiencing due to the devastation being caused by Covid-19. Such an unprecedented plunge has occurred despite the recent agreement between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers like Russia to cut production by a stupendous 9.7 million barrels per day. Because of the pandemic the world has been thrown into a state of immobility; with lockdowns being imposed in many countries there are far fewer vehicles on the roads, particularly in urban areas. Simultaneously, railways running on fossil fuel have stopped operating, while most airlines, both international and domestic, have ceased almost 90% of their flights. Thus there has been a huge gap between demand and supply creating an unprecedented situation when there is more oil being produced which cannot be stored and oil-tankers carrying crude have had to remain on the high seas because their cargo cannot be unloaded for lack of storage space. The crisis has reached abnormal proportions with oil prices falling below zero dollars, which means that it is the sellers who would have to pay the customers for purchasing their oil! However, while the situation is tailor made for customers, ironically the latter will not be able to avail of the low prices because of the lockdowns.

Closer home, in the context of the plunge of global oil prices, the decision of the Assam State Government to hike retail prices of petrol and diesel is inexplicable, as well as deplorable. On the 21st of this month, the Assam Finance Department issued a notification and modified the rates of Assam Value Added Tax on diesel, petrol and other motor spirits, fixing it for diesel at 23.66 paise in the rupee or Rs 17.45 per litre, and for petrol and other motor spirits at 32.66 paise in the rupee or Rs 22.63 per litre. Such a hike has caused prices of petrol, diesel and motor spirits to shoot up, thereby placing an undue burden on consumers. However, the paradox in this case is that currently, due to the lockdown, it is Government vehicles which are primarily operating on the streets, which means that the Government, in fact, is taxing itself! Even more deplorable is the burden it is placing on many of our frontline workers such as doctors, nurses, health system employees, Government officials, media personnel, etc., who have to use their own vehicles to reach their places of work. The assertion of the State Finance Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, that the Assam Government has taken the decision to meet financial exigencies of the State that have emerged due to the coronavirus lockdown, does not hold water, for surely he could have searched for other options.

We are all in this together



Suddenly the pandemic caused by a tiny virus, whether manufactured or otherwise, has sent the world into a tizzy. Governments are responding with the resources they have at their command but it's all trial and error. We know so little as to how this virus manages to lodge itself on to a human host despite all precautions. And knowing how all of us humans are so susceptible to this virus the fear is palpable. On the part of the State governments, while some like Assam are informing the public all details about every person testing Covid-19 positive, other States like Meghalaya are trying to keep the names under wraps on the pleas of patient privacy. Perhaps the Government is wary about the social stigma that the Covid positive person would be subjected to. After what happened to the first Covid positive patient, a renowned medical doctor of many decades, who died within two days of detection and the aftermath of that death where locals protested against his cremation and burial until his body was finally laid to rest after 48 hours in a cemetery offered by a particular religious denomination, the Government is treading very cautiously. Ignorance, fear and paranoia are social disorders that are difficult to tackle if carefully laid out strategies and action plans are not in place. These are, in fact, reasons why doctors everywhere are stigmatized and those who die of Covid-19 are not being allowed to be cremated with full honours due to them.

In Meghalaya, the worst case scenario happened on April 13 when the doctor mentioned above, who also owns a popular hospital and health outreach centres at several places, became a victim of Covid-19. Most people are led to believe that the body of a Covid victim is still capable of spreading the virus. Of course, there is as yet no clear-cut scientific evidence that the virus does not jump from a dead person's body to another living host. A single case of a doctor in Thailand who is believed to have been infected by the dead body of a Covid patient is doing the rounds on social media. What is not told is that the doctor who died was working in a forensic laboratory and it is possible that he might have handled some body parts of the patient while conducting an autopsy. Whatever be the case, the fears are genuine and should not be brushed aside as misplaced but should be handled with better communication strategies.

The above case became Meghalaya's worst case scenario because the State had taken optimum precautions to ensure that the Covid-19 virus did not find its way to Meghalaya. When it did arrive here it was from very unexpected quarters. The sudden turn of events shocked the citizenry of Shillong. Doctors meet several patients besides other persons for various purposes on a daily basis. To carry out contact tracing by doing a back-check was a monumental task. It was made worse by the fact that some family members of the doctor including his wife and domestic helpers, tested positive. The hospital was sealed; the doctors, nurses and other caregivers had to be quarantined. The

inmates of the hospital also had to be tested and removed elsewhere for quarantine. It took all the resources of the Government to tackle the crises.

But Meghalaya is not the only State to be afflicted by the conundrum of a Covid casualty being denied burial or cremation. Dr Simon Hercules, a neurosurgeon who ran the New Hope private hospital in Chetpet, Tamil Nadu who expired on Sunday last, faced similar stig-

Covid-19 is not just a health emergency. The unknown factor about the virus requires a huge social mobilization. This is also where risk management communication becomes imperative. Indeed the fear and paranoia surrounding Covid-19 is worse than the disease.

matization. He was refused cremation and those who accompanied his body for the last rites were attacked. Dr Simon had battled Covid for 15 days at the Apollo Hospital in Chennai before succumbing to it. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has taken a very dim view of the manner in which the medical fraternity was being subjected to such stigmatization when they are at the frontline of providing healthcare to Covid patients.

Covid-19 is not just a health emergency. The unknown factor about the virus requires a huge social mobilization. This is also where risk management communication becomes imperative. Indeed the fear and paranoia surrounding Covid-19 is worse than the disease. It springs from the

perception that the disease is incurable and has the potential to jump from the dead body of a deceased to infect others. Tackling public perception should have been the first task of not just the government but other institutions such as universities and societal stakeholders as well. Perceptions are rooted in the subconscious and are not always logical. Many of the perceptions people carry are influenced by culture and coloured by emotions. Risk management communication also involves managing public fear and outrage. In fact, fear management should have gone alongside the awareness creation on hygiene.

What is also visible at this time is that the public seem to believe that the fight against Covid-19 is between the Government with all its resources and paraphernalia including the medical fraternity and the virus. That's not true at all. This is a fight between Covid-19 and the entire humanity. The lockdown requires that the public cooperate. Thus far we are told that the only way to flatten the curve is to maintain the physical distance of three feet between humans. While the government has given a clarion call for all of us to follow these procedures, unless we respect the protocols laid out by the government, our fight against the virus will remain futile.

It is therefore important for all State governments to widely communicate that, 'We are all in this together'. Covid-19 has to be fought by the government and public together. It has to be all of us against Covid-19. The government is just one of the stakeholders in the system with resources at its command.

A prudent government would have involved members of the public as partners to take up tasks they are professionally competent at in the fight against this X factor.

What is lacking as of now is a volunteer force to pan out in all directions to create awareness about Covid-19, beyond the hand-washing, mask wearing and use of sanitizers. While this public health education protocol is extremely important, what people need to know is (a) not all that test Covid-positive will die. This is important communication. (b) The elderly who are predisposed to the disease because of their reduced immunity and other pre-existing ailments such as diabetes and heart ailments are more vulnerable, hence they should remain indoors and not be exposed to chances of contacting the virus; (c) many more Covid positive patients have recovered than have died of it and (d) strict quarantine of those who test positive is important.

At this point there is a controversy raging in Meghalaya as to whether the names of those contacts of the first Covid patient, who test positive, should be revealed or be kept a state secret. People are anxious and want to know the names so that they can get themselves tested if in case they have been in contact with a Covid positive person. This need to know is causing a lot of anxiety; much more in fact than anxiety about the virus. What is necessary at this time is that the governments inform their citizens the names of those that have tested positive while simultaneously carrying out a massive awareness campaign using multiple communication strategies. Knowledge indeed is power, and secrecy at this point is self-defeating.

The battle against Covid-19 has to be fought on multiple fronts!
(patricia.mukhim@gmail.com)

This is not a war!

■ Bedartha Goswami

Apandemic is not a war, but a catastrophe. The Covid-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus is, at its core, a natural catastrophe, one in which the principal agents of destruction are populations of nanoscopic viruses invisible to the naked eye. These entities do not 'attack' us, simply because they have neither will nor consciousness. Rather, they 'infect' us, often fatally, in the course of their own life cycle. To call a pandemic a war is to use a metaphor – when we call a thing as being like something else. The metaphor of war is not uncommon while tackling disease – think of the 'wars' on cancer, AIDS, Type-II diabetes – nor is it the only one used for the Covid-19 pandemic, but it certainly is the most dominant one.

For a contagious disease like Covid-19, 'pandemic as war' means that a healthcare professional returning home from work is perceived as more than a potentially infected individual; they are 'soldiers' likely 'turned' by the viral enemy. Even while we applaud healthcare workers, their very virtue – that they 'fight' for us at the 'frontlines' – is used against them to mark them as

a potential 'other,' a vector of the enemy. We sanction our loathing because we are at war. What is worse: the war metaphor easily supplants its subject and becomes a literal truth for many. Then it begins to distort reality: doctors are not soldiers, but we repeatedly make them so. It is not necessary, however, to glorify healthcare professionals as warhorses, or to ostracize them as defectors. We function better by keeping our emotions centred, by understanding that they are our 'primary responders' in the pandemic (imagined as catastrophe, not war). They are indispensable for our survival. They have to be accommodated among us with dignity, no matter how difficult the precautions for the rest of us. We are not at war, and they are not our enemy. We cannot justify ostracism.

It is immaterial whether we are talking about healthcare workers, or any potentially infected individual. They are all citizens. And the probability of a SARS-CoV-2 infection inside their bodies does not diminish their citizenship. In protecting ourselves from disease, we do not gain licence to oppress others. This is not a war, and they are not our enemy. Without 'pandemic as war,'

we cannot truly defend the marking of the bodies of the quarantined, circulating the addresses of Covid-19 patients in the media, or harassing the families of those at the forefront of the pandemic. Without the sanction of war, we cannot justify taking away the dignity of others.

As a general rule, war is a dangerous metaphor as it legitimizes extremes. To declare a 21-day lockdown, though, is not extreme, given the pandemic. To announce it for 1.3 billion people only four hours in advance, without plan or foresight, however, is extreme. And for 'pandemic as war,' unwitting civilians constitute the 'battleground' and they shoulder the failures of their 'generals,' their leaders. At the beginning of this lockdown, millions were thrust into uncertainty, without provisions or information. Such haphazard action is typically most extreme for the marginalized: the under-represented and the vulnerable. Hundreds of migrant workers braved stampede-like conditions at Kurla station to get on crowded trains to go home. Thousands were stranded for days in Delhi bus depots, without food or shelter, harassed or beaten up by police for not staying home. Out of options, many started walking. Cruel and surreal, the only dignified way to continue

living was to walk, on empty stomachs, to their villages hundreds of kilometres away. But fortitude has its limits: on March 28, Ranveer Singh, who delivered food for a Delhi restaurant as a living, died near Agra of a heart attack – caused by exhaustion after having walked around 200 km.

Our goal should not be to survive the Covid-19 pandemic at any cost, but to do so with dignity of human life, and without loss of human life. The tasks ahead for the healthcare system are challenging, but nevertheless clear: increased testing and more ventilators. The requirements for preventing deaths through collateral circumstances such as the ongoing lockdown, however, are harder to formulate. Even harder is to preserve the dignity of all citizens as we proceed deeper into this pandemic.

Dignity, outside than that of the patriotic, religious or affluent, is largely absent from the discourse of our political class. The first article of the Germany Grundgesetz (Basic Law) states that "Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority." Human dignity is placed even before the right to life. The Constitution of India, too, assures us 'fraternity assuring

the dignity of the individual'. Our political class, however, did not care for the dignity of the marginalized in their initial plans. Our middle class, on its part, does not care for much outside of itself.

We are fortunate, however, to have journalists and activists who showcased the plight of the oppressed: the evicted healthcare workers, harassed airline crew members, physically-abused lockdown violators and stranded migrant workers. They raised alarm bells, resulting in remedial actions. They also showed people volunteering support and food for those in need. But all of this should not have been necessary. A country's citizens should not have to depend on charity to stay alive, at least never because of governmental action.

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented natural catastrophe and public health emergency for India. The road ahead is difficult, but it will clearly be more difficult for some than others. As we go forward, we need to ease the pain of the vulnerable, not exacerbate it. If we are to survive the pandemic with our fraternity and liberty intact, our political class must stop borrowing sanctions from the metaphor of war. One thing is for sure: this pandemic is not a war.

Letters to the EDITOR

Sir, – Even if the Sonowal Government is to be credited for being proactive in combating the coronavirus during the lockdown, yet it has cut a sorry figure in a few equally important sectors like agriculture, supply, etc. The vegetables produced by farmers are rotting in the fields, milk in great quantities is being dumped in rivers and drains, horticultural produce are too rotting in bulk quantities. All this wastage is due to the utter failure of the ministers concerned to realize that they too had a role in the Covid combat. What the ministers and officials concerned should study is the existing system of lifting of agri produce from the source, supply and marketing chain involving middlemen network and retail network to reach up to the consumers. What for is there the Agricultural Marketing Board? Should it not step in for aid of the government? The coronavirus

Ministries must coordinate

crisis may not end in near future (due to no medicine discovered as yet) and lockdowns being the only means of minimizing the number of affected people by way of maintaining social distance, the same may be extended for months in future; and in that event a well-coordinated effort by all the ministries is a must for the coming days. Yours etc., SATYADHAR MATAK, Khanapara, Guwahati.

Appreciable steps

Sir, – The State Government has done a good job by extending aid to the people stranded outside the State and abroad besides giving a tough fight against the Covid-19 spread during the lockdown period, in the State. This has shown the sincerity and responsibility of the Government towards the people living within or outside the State. The anxiety or agony faced by the stranded people is different and manifold in such a horrific time. They feel lonely and defeated when they are in dire need of help. The State Government has come forward to address this burning

issue on behalf of them, both financially and psychologically. The lump sum amount provided particularly to the cancer, kidney and heart patients would be of great relief. In addition to this, the State Government has shown concern about the well-being of the elderly personalities of all fields during the lockdown tenure. The way the State Government has been working hard in all aspects since the imposition of the lockdown is widely applauded. Yours etc., KULENDRA NATH DEKA, Majuli.

Stranded bus crews

Sir, – The lockdown is no doubt essential to stop the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. In these hard times, along with the government authorities, many kind-hearted people have also come to the aid of the poorer section of the society. But the Government of Assam should also try to help the stranded bus crews at the ISBT, Guwahati. These are the bus crews who ferried passengers on the last day to Guwahati before the lockdown was

imposed on March 24. As they are stranded in the ISBT since March 24 without any help, they are facing a very difficult time. Occasionally, some people are helping but that is not enough. I hope this letter attracts the attention of the government authorities concerned about the poor plight of the bus crews at the ISBT, Guwahati. Yours etc., DEBOJIT BORA, Janakpuri, New Delhi.

Spirit of generosity

Sir, – During the first phase of the lockdown itself, the State Government appealed to all the government employees to provide the poor and needy living in their areas with food or a little sum of money in order that they could make both ends meet in this lean season. The appeal had been responded quite well. In certain villages, as far as I know, even the families with not a single government employee were also involved in this humane exercise. Those benevolent people really deserve commendation. But here, I would

like to draw the attention of those people to another important point. Nobody will deny that unlike the populace of a town or city, the residents in rural areas dwell more sociably for many a reason. As such, it is more likely that sometimes people may fall out with each other for some reason or the other. Evidently, such untoward happenings cannot be avoided, though nobody wants the same. Under such circumstances, one needs to restrain oneself from mentioning the help extended to a certain person in either presence of that particular person or in his or her absence. It makes the person getting help in distress feel touched to the quick. If we do so, the very spirit of the generosity would only be abused. We should always remember that we, as human beings, have the responsibility to help others in need. Yours etc., DIPEN GOGOI, Teok, Jorhat.

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

Parties decry VAT hike on petro products; fear price rise

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: Condemning the State government's decision to increase the Value Added Tax (VAT) on diesel, petrol and other motor spirits, major opposition parties today said that the move will put further burden on the common people who are already facing income losses and inflation of basic commodities on account of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown.

Opposition parties called upon the State government to roll back the VAT increase.

"Daily wage earners, small traders, self-employed and other poor segments have been the worst sufferers during this period. In such circumstances the decision of the State government is uncalled for and



Tarun Gogoi

Badruddin Ajmal

Suprakash Talukdar

we strongly protest against it. This (hike in VAT) will be a big blow to the poor people," said former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, calling upon the government to cancel the notification of the hike.

The AIUDF also castigated the State government on the issue. "It is unfortunate that at a time when global crude oil

prices have declined to a 20-year low our State government has increased VAT on petrol and diesel. It will have a chain reaction leading to a jump in the cost of transportation of essential items, which will become even more expensive and beyond the reach of the common people. It comes as a double whammy at a time

when masses are already suffering on account of the pandemic and the lockdown. Earnings are down and people are barely managing to survive. And the State government, instead of providing comfort and support to citizens, is taking steps which will make lives of poor and middle classes even more miserable," said AIUDF president Badruddin Ajmal.

The CPI (M) termed the move "ill conceived". "No proper thought was put into the matter before taking this decision. Countless families have lost their income in the last few weeks. Economic activities have virtually ceased. Spiralling prices of basic essentials have affected people across Assam, including in Guwahati. Now the increase in prices of petrol and diesel will put further burden on the lower income

segments as well as the middle classes of society. Prices of essential items will go up further as transportation costs will escalate," said Suprakash Talukdar, central committee member of CPI (M).

He said that the Assam government should have adopted the model followed by Kerala. "Instead of hiking VAT on petrol and diesel to boost its revenue, the Assam government should have asked the Centre to allow states to increase borrowings as well as for expanding Central grants. To secure revenue by hurting the common people is not sensible governance or economics," said Talukdar, calling for immediate roll-back of the VAT increase.

The CPI also demanded that the government roll back the hike in VAT for petroleum products.

First instalment for PMGKY beneficiaries released

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: The State panchayat and rural development department released the first instalment of ex-gratia of Rs 500 to each of 8,51,642 beneficiaries today. Out of these beneficiaries 7,05,022 are old age pensioners, 1,12,040 are widow pensioners and 34,580 beneficiaries are under the dis-

abled pension scheme.

This financial assistance is provided under the special package of the Government of India, rolled out under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) to help the vulnerable section of people in view of the nationwide lockdown. According to a statement, Minister of department Naba Kumar Doley has been personally monitoring

the disbursement process.

Under this assistance programme, Rs 1,000 each will be paid in two instalments of Rs 500. For this, the beneficiaries of old age pension, widow pension and disabled pension under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) will be covered. The Government of India has sanctioned around Rs 42 crore under this scheme.

Mediapersons' role in spread of COVID-19 awareness hailed

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Chief Minister's Media Adviser Hrishikesh Goswami today spoke to the office-bearers of several press clubs of the State over phone and appreciated the role played by them in spreading awareness among people on the novel coronavirus pandemic.

During the conversation, he also took stock of their health and solicited their support in taking the message of preventive measures to the grassroots more forcefully in the days ahead. The Media Adviser also advised them to take adequate precautions while going for outdoor reporting.

Hailing the service rendered

by the mediapersons in these testing times as praiseworthy, Goswami urged them to keep close touch with the Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police and other senior officials of the respective district administrations.

He also said that the Directorate of Information and Public Relations is always ready to provide them with all needful support and advised them to contact him and the DIPR if necessity arises.

The office-bearers of press clubs with whom the Media Adviser interacted include president of Chirang Press Club Amrit Narayan Patgiri, president of Jorhat e-Media Association Rajiv Bora, secretary of Majuli District Journal-

ist Association Dipu Bora, president of Nagaon Electronic Media Biren Bora, president of Goalpara Press Club Manoj Kumar Das, president of Greater Bongaigaon Press Club Sujit Rai, secretary of Kokrajhar Press Club Harishankar Thakur, acting president of Haflong Press Club Surjya Thaoson, president of Gossaigaon Press Club Hafizur Rahman, secretary of Mangaldai Press Club Mukut Raj Sarma, president of Dalgajha Press Club Pradip Ghosh, president and secretary of Silchar Press Club Bijoy Krishna Nath and Shankar Dey, secretary of Hailakandi Press Club Rahul Chakraborty, president of Sivasagar Press Club Dr Soumarjyoti Mahanta,

president of Sonitpur Press Club Subhas Biswas, president of All Assam Journalist Union Pankaj Kumar Nath, president of North Lakhimpur Press Club Sailen Baruah, secretary of Dibrugarh Press Club Anil Poddar, president of Dibrugarh District Journalists Association Bipin Bora, president of Biswanath Chariali Press Club Tarun Saikia, secretary of AAPCU Tushar Hazarika, secretary of Udalguri Press Club Baidyanath Upadhyay, president of Udalguri Journalists Association Jayanta Kumar Das, secretary of Dhemaji Press Club Harendra Nath Sarma, Mankachar District Press Club president RK Mandal and Karbi Anglong Press Club president Kiri Ronghang.

Public can now apply for inter-dist travel e-passes

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Kamrup Metro district administration today issued three WhatsApp numbers for the public to apply for e-pass required for inter-district travel in Assam from April 25 to 27.

The numbers are 8638112297, 7002546684 and 6901462595. An applicant needs to upload all authentic documents and information via WhatsApp in order to avail a pass.

Online application facility for e-passes is also available on the official website of the district administration.

11 held for not wearing face masks

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 22: Paltan Bazar police on Wednesday arrested 11 people for not wearing face masks at public places and registered a case in this regard.

On the other hand, an FIR has been lodged at Hatigaon Police Station in connection with fake news.

Meanwhile, Assam Police has arrested 2,059 people for violating lockdown rules and seized 17,268 vehicles so far across the State.

Traders' body contributes Rs 31L more

GUWAHATI, April 22: Close on the heels of contributing Rs 30,00,200 to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund on Tuesday to help in the State's fight against coronavirus, the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce (KCC) has contributed another Rs 31,07,000 for the same purpose.

According to a press release issued today, a KCC delegation comprising its president Mahavir Jain, joint secretary Deepak Bajoria and other members, handed over the cheque for the said amount to Health Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Tuesday evening.

Meanwhile, KCC has applauded Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Health Minister Dr Sarma for their untiring efforts to combat the novel coronavirus pandemic.



175 Bn CRPF personnel serving free food to needy people hit by the nationwide lockdown, in Guwahati on Wednesday. - UB Photos

NDRF gives 600 dignity kits to Kamrup (M) dist admin

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: The 1st Battalion NDRF Guwahati (Assam) which is carrying out awareness programmes and sanitization drives on COVID-19 in different areas of the State, today handed over 600 dignity kits to the Kamrup (Metro) district administration.

Sanjeev Kumar Sinha, Assistant Commandant handed over the kits meant for men and women.

A standard dignity kit for women, packed in a plastic bucket, contains a small toothpaste, brush, bathing and washing soaps, two pairs of undergarments, a towel, oil, comb, two pairs of salwar suits in different sizes, a nail cutter, mirror, a packet with 10 sanitary pads, an anti-septic cream and a mug.

The men's kit also contains similar items and has two pairs of pyjama-kurta instead of the women's attire, and a shaving pack instead of

women's hygiene products.

Global disaster response procedures mandate that victims are provided basic sanitation and surviving items so that they can sustain themselves for some time in the aftermath of a calamity.

Randhir Singh Gill, Commandant 1st Battalion NDRF Guwahati (Assam) informed that the 600 disaster dignity kits given to the DC office, Kamrup Metro, would be given to people affected by coronavirus and are living in quarantine.

GU task force to monitor students' mental health

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: Following an instruction from the University Grants Commission, the Gauhati University authorities have constituted a mental health task force to monitor the mental

health, psychological aspects and well-being of the students during the present COVID-19 pandemic.

The task force will connect with individual students or the student community through mail, WhatsApp, telephonic calls, etc., to keep

them fit during the current medical emergency situation.

The task force comprises Prof Sauravpran Goswami as chairperson, Prof Polly Vauqueline as member secretary and Prof Polee Saikia, Dr Dulumoni Goswami and Arunjyoti Baruah as members.

IIT-G taking active part in fight against COVID-19

PRANJAL BHUYAN

GUWAHATI, April 22: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati is taking an active part in the ongoing fight to prevent spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, including working on development of several state-of-the-art technologies, and the institute's efforts have been appreciated by Union Human Resources Development Minister Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'.

"We are participating in providing scientific support and extension of sophisticated instrument facilities. We are also working in the development of life-saving equipment as part of the campaign to prevent spread of the COVID-19 pandemic," said an official of the institute.

IIT Guwahati's Department of Bi-science & Bioengineering is carrying out research on multiple fronts for vaccine development.

"Likewise, other departments are also working in developing multiple

HRD Minister Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal praises efforts

Recently Union Minister Dr Pokhriyal had sent out a tweet appreciating the projects and research work undertaken by IIT Guwahati in the fight against COVID-19.

Sources added that the departments of mechanical engineering and electronics & electrical engineering of the institute are working to develop several state-of-the-art technologies which include robot-based drug and food carrying units to work in isolation wards and robot-based screening units, large and high capacity autoclave machines,

hand-held temperature measuring units, hospital beds, ventilators, medical waste disposal system for use in the isolation wards and shower for disinfection, among other things.

Research is also on to develop drugs for COVID-19. "As there are no approved drugs at present, the faculty members are in the process of developing small molecule inhibitors for treatment of COVID-19 using modern biotechnological tools. The overall idea is to develop safe, efficacious and affordable drugs for this disease and other dreadful viral infections," a source said.

IIT Guwahati faculty members have developed a PCR machine in-house which has been patented and is ready for commercialisation.

"Besides, the portable organic field-effect transistor (OFET) sensors fabricated at the institute could be integrated for COVID-19 diagnosis," he added.

The institute is also working on setting up an advanced research centre for COVID-19 analysis with the idea

to make it a state-of-the-art facility for the entire north-eastern region.

"The centre would help to develop qualified manpower for diagnosis of different infectious diseases in the early stage of infection and in prevention of such ailments," said the official.

He added that IIT Guwahati has prepared hand sanitizers at its various departments and academic centres since the initial days of the pandemic and provided them to the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) and the Assam government. The institute has provided two real-time PCR machines to GMCH for diagnosis of COVID-19.

IIT Guwahati has taken steps to educate the community at large on practising social distancing and hygiene to prevent spread of COVID-19.

"The institute's hospital and the Centre for Nanotechnology have taken up training of health centre doctors and nurses and healthcare workers," the official added.

Free ration to mediapersons

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Guwahati Press Club (GPC) organised a free ration distribution programme for mediapersons in its premises here on Tuesday.

The initiative covered around 200 mediapersons of the city, for which city-based businessman Bimal Nahata extended his helping hand.

GPC office-bearers said the initiative will be continued in the coming days. Senior advocate Bijan Kumar Mahajan was also present on the occasion. - Staff Reporter

Relief activities for poor people

GUWAHATI, April 22: The All Assam Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Birthday Celebration Committee and United Bank Officers' Association (UBOA) jointly organised relief activities for poor people covering more than 200 families today.

The relief activities were carried out at Guwahati Netaji Chowk, Paltan Bazar, Milanpur, Rehabari, Shri Guru Nanak LP School and Marakhali.

The relief activities were supported by Ramen Deka, ex-MP; Vijay Gupta, Chairman, Assam Financial Corporation; Mrigen Sarania, ex-Mayor and many others. The daylong relief activities were personally coordinated by Queen Ojha, MP of Guwahati constituency.

Red Cross Society awareness drive for GMC workers

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Indian Red Cross Society, Assam State Branch, in association with the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC), has conducted an awareness programme for safai karmacharis of the Corporation on the importance of using masks, gloves, etc.

The representatives of the Red Cross Society conducted the campaign in Division-I and II of GMC, during which they demonstrated the correct way of hand washing and distributed masks to the Safai Karmacharis.

This awareness programme will be conducted in all the six divisions of the Corporation.

Meanwhile, the State unit of the Mahadalit Parisangh, led by its city unit president Siva Basfor, today felicitated the safai karmacharis of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) and personnel of the Bharalumukh Police Station for their dedicated service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Admin allows operation of shops that deal in curriculum books

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Kamrup Metro district administration has allowed operation of book shops and stalls that only deal in curriculum books for students, in the city from Wednesday between 10 am and 5 pm under specific conditions.

As part of these conditions, the administration has asked the stall owners to arrange home delivery of books, although the guardians who reside near the book stall will be allowed to collect the books albeit without using any vehicle. The administration has made it clear that maintenance of all kinds of health norms will mandatory for every shop.

Archdiocese of Guwahati Vicar General no more



STAFF REPORTER

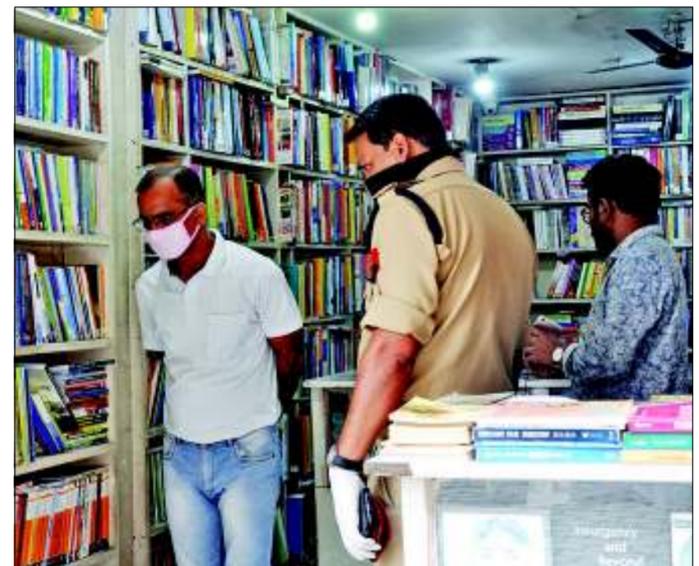
GUWAHATI, April 22: Fr Varghese Kizhakevely, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Guwahati, passed away on Tuesday in Kerala after a six-month long battle with cancer. He was 63.

Kizhakevely was an important part of the founding team of the Archdiocese of Guwahati who dedicated his life for its growth and development.

As the Vicar General, Kizhakevely was instrumental in establishing the Archdiocese of Guwahati and playing a key role in nurturing other dioceses in the North East India as well.

Online classes

GUWAHATI, April 22: Shrimanta Shankar Academy, Panbazar, will start online classes for its higher secondary students from Thursday, said a press release.



Buyers visit a stall after the Kamrup Metro district administration allowed book shops dealing in students' curriculum books to operate, in Guwahati on Wednesday. - AT photo

Corona Snippets

Offer prayers at home during Ramzan: Ajmer shrine head

JAIPUR, April 22: The spiritual head of the Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti shrine in Ajmer has appealed to the Muslims to offer prayers at homes instead of visiting mosques during the holy month of Ramzan.

He also exhorted them to maintain social distancing while offering 'namaz' at homes to combat the coronavirus threat.

"The Muslims of the country should stay at homes and offer namaz there instead of going to mosques. They should maintain social distancing. Parents should make sure that after 'Roza iftar' (breaking of fast), their children should continue to stay at homes," the shrine's spiritual head or 'Dargah Deewan', Zainul Abedin Ali Khan, said.

He said people should strictly follow the advisories and guidelines of the Central as well as the State governments and also cooperate with the district administration during the ongoing lockdown period. PTI

Seven workers trek home from Jhansi, walk 500 km

BALRAMPUR (UP), April 22: Jobless in Jhansi after the coronavirus lockdown, seven migrant workers walked nearly 500 kilometres to reach their village here.

The labourers said they remained 20 days without work in Jhansi after the nationwide lockdown was imposed. Then, as their savings ran out, they decided to set out on foot for their village, Khadar in Balrampur district's Pachpedwa area.

The trek home took seven days. They reached here on Monday and have been home quarantined by the authorities.

They walked day and night, often just getting four or five hours of sleep. Local people, and sometimes policemen, gave them food, one of the labourers said.

"Our only job was to walk. We would rest under a tree when we felt tired and after stopping for 10 or 20 minutes, we started again," he added.

Superintendent of Police Dev Ranjan Verma said the seven labourers were screened and then sent into home quarantine for 14 days. A police team is keeping an eye on them to ensure that they do not mingle with others, he added. - PTI

Nurse who was suspected to have COVID-19 dies in Indore

INDORE, April 22: A 55-year-old woman nurse who had been hospitalised on suspicion of having coronavirus infection died in Indore on Wednesday, a senior official said.

The Indore city of Madhya Pradesh has witnessed one of the worst outbreaks of the pandemic in the country.

The nurse was admitted to the government-run Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital (MYH) here on Tuesday night, said hospital superintendent Pramendra Thakur. "She had symptoms similar to coronavirus, so her samples had been sent to the laboratory for testing. The report is awaited," he said.

Indore district has reported 923 cases of coronavirus so far, including 52 deaths. 73 persons have been discharged upon recovery. - PTI

Over 150 groups come together to aid COVID-19 response

NEW DELHI, April 22: Over 150 groups representing different sections of society have come together to aid the government's coronavirus response.

The #COVIDActionCollab (CAC) has been formed to combat the spread of COVID-19 effectively, according to a statement by the Catalyst Group, a 26-year-old social impact platform which ideated the collaborative.

It said their purpose is to support various stakeholders - civil society, private sector, academics, networks, foundations and Central and State governments - to rapidly and cost-effectively prevent new infections, diagnose early, treat appropriately, and mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on peoples' livelihoods.

The statement said the collaboration consists of over 150 organisations and would reach more than 12.5 million across 16 states and 100 districts in India. "The collaboration is also expanding to other countries like Nigeria, Tanzania on request," the statement added. - PTI

Controversy over video of dead patient in Bengal hospital

KOLKATA, April 22: A video posted on social media by Union minister Babul Supriyo of a dead patient allegedly lying in the isolation ward of a state-run hospital here has stoked a controversy with the West Bengal government questioning its veracity and asserting that the Opposition BJP "specialises" in spreading fake news.

Supriyo, who posted the video on Twitter, claimed that it was in the public domain and urged the ruling Trinamool Congress to urgently investigate the matter.

"This is a shocking video... Since this VDO is in the public domain, I would request Honble WBCM @MamataOfficial to conduct a thorough enquiry into it & release the FACTS asap," the Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change wrote on the micro-blogging site.

Senior West Bengal minister and TMC secretary-general Partha Chatterjee said the authenticity of the video needs to be looked into and if the contents are found to be true then the administration will take appropriate steps. "We have to first check whether the video is true or fake, as we all know that the BJP specialises in spreading fake videos," Chatterjee alleged.

The Union minister also called on the Mamata Banerjee-led dispensation to clear the air over reports that use of mobile phones have been banned in hospitals in the State after the video became viral. - PTI

Ordinance ...

(Contd from page 1)

People responsible for violence will also be liable to pay damages, which will be double the market value of the property vandalised, the Information and Broadcasting Minister said.

"The government is ensuring that our health professionals can work without any tension," he added.

Healthcare professionals have faced violent attacks in some areas during their drive to test people for suspected infection or quarantine them.

There have also been reports that their landlords or neighbours in some cases opposed their presence claiming they may be carriers of the infection on account of their work. - PTI

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

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

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

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

"This is to convey my highest assurances for the implementation of the orders of Central government issued under the Disaster Management Act as well as the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court," the State Chief Secretary told the Union Home Secretary.

A home ministry spokesperson welcomed the West Bengal government's assurance of cooperation to the two

visiting teams.

The West Bengal Chief Secretary sent the letter on Tuesday night, hours after the Central government had directed the State government not to obstruct working of the two Central teams.

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

The West Bengal Chief Secretary wrote: "It is not a fact that the IMCT has not been provided with any cooperation by the State government. In fact the teams had arrived without any prior consultation with us and, therefore, there was neither such opportunity to provide any logistic support as envisaged in the order dated April 19 nor the team asked for any help," he said.

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

"In this connection, this is to inform that the IMCT in Kolkata led by Apurva

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

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

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

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

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

Relaxation to Assam PM-KISAN beneficiaries

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, April 22: The Union Cabinet today cleared the extension of relaxation of mandatory requirement of Aadhaar seeding of data of beneficiaries of Assam and Meghalaya for one year from April 1, 2020 for benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme.

A meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave its approval to relax the mandatory requirement of Aadhaar seeding of data of beneficiaries of Assam and Meghalaya as well as Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh for release of benefits to them under PM-KISAN scheme up to March 31, 2021, official sources said. It has been assessed that it would take much more time for Assam and Meghalaya and the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh to complete the work of Aadhaar seeding of data of beneficiaries and the beneficiaries of these States may not be able to avail the benefits of the scheme from April 1, 2020 onwards, if the relaxation from mandatory requirement of Aadhaar seeding of data is not extended.

The total number of beneficiary farmers in these states and UTs, who have been paid at least one instalment as on April 8, 2020, are as follows: 27,09,586 in Assam, 98,915 in Meghalaya and 10,01,668 beneficiaries in J&K and Ladakh, sources said.

CANCELLATION OF NIT
Due to technical error E-tender notice no. C-LMG-19-2020; Dated: 17-04-2020 regarding "Hiring of 4-wheeler commercial vehicle (Scorpio/Bolero/Innova (Crista) along with Driver) for use of Sr. DCM/Lumding for a period of 02 (two) years (i.e. 730 days)" may be treated as cancelled.
Sr. DCM/Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

CORRIGENDUM - 02
The following changes have been made in Tender Notice No: 48/Mechl/Water-Hydrant/19-20; Dated: 04-03-2020. Please read as: Closing date of Tender is 20-05-2020 at 15:00 hrs. instead of 30-03-2020 at 15:00 hrs. and opening on 20-05-2020 at 15:30 hrs. instead of 30-03-2020 at 15:30 hrs.
All other terms and condition remain unchanged.
Sr. DME (IC), Katihar
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

Notice

It is for general information of all Class-II registered Contractor under Jorhat (PHE) Circle that a database of all Class-II registered Contractors is need to be prepared for taking up various works for implementing **JAL JEEVAN MISSION (JJM)**. For preparing the said database, some particular information about each of the registered contractors are required in a prescribed format. The Prescribed format can be obtained from the office of the undersigned in any working day with effect from 24.04.2020 up to 8.05.2020

Sd/- Superintending Engineer (PHE)
Jorhat Circle
Janasanyog/D/261/20

No. DME/ENT/132/2019/5067

E-Tender INVITATION FOR E-BID (IFB) NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Re-e-Tenders are invited online through e-procurement system i.e. through website www.assamtenders.gov.in from the intending Manufacturer/Accredited Dealers for supply Equipment & instrument for the Department of E.N.T. for all Medical College Hospitals of Assam under the Health & F.W. Department, Govt. of Assam.

The Equipment tendered here have been invited for bids vide an earlier tender, but due to less participation, only few items are finalized through the earlier tender and now is being re-tendered again for the remaining items/equipments. Pre-bid meeting is also scheduled as per date and venue given below.

The e-Tender is a Two-Bid System, to be submitted with affixed Court Fee Stamp Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight point two five paise) only (for local bidders) or IPO of Rs. 10/- (Rupees Ten) only (in case of bidders from outside of the State of Assam) in favour of "Director of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

Important dates of the e-Tender

Sl. No.	Scheduled	Start Date	Start Time	End Date	End Time
1.	e- Tender Publishing	20-04-2020	11.00 AM	-	-
2.	e- Tender Download	21-04-2020	12.00 Noon	26-05-2020	12.00 Noon
3.	Pre-Bid Meeting	14-05-2020	11.00 AM	Venue - Room No. 4C, 2nd Floor, Directorate of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Guwahati- 32	
4.	Bid Submission	15-05-2020	02.00 PM	26-05-2020	02.00 PM
5.	Bid Opening	26-05-2020	03.00 PM		

1. Brief Schedule

Description (Name of the Items)	Bid Security (E.M.D.)	Delivery/ Installation schedule/ Completion period	Tender fees in Rs.	Eligibility
Supply and Installation of Equipment related to E.N.T. Department for all Medical College Hospitals of Assam	Rs. 2.0 Lakhs	25 days,	Rs.5,000/-	Manufacturer/ accredited Dealer

The detailed information of Bidding documents are available online through e-procurement system i.e. through website www.assamtenders.gov.in only. The bidders would be required to register in the website for submission of the bids. The bidders are required to have Digital Signature (DSC) from any of the Certifying Authorities. Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-procurement may obtain the same by registering in the www.assamtenders.gov.in. The requirements to register with the e-procurement portal are available on the website indicated above. The tender fees is non refundable and payable in favour of the "Director of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022, at SBI-Dispur (Guwahati) Branch.

Sd/- Director of Medical Education, Assam SIXMILE, KHANAPARA, GUWAHATI-22
Janasanyog/C/36/20

Validate rapid ...

(Contd from page 1)

The kit with the State government performs rapid diagnostic tests based on host antibody detection.

A senior microbiologist here told *The Assam Tribune* that like in any viral infections, antibodies for COVID-19 too starts appearing in the blood after about seven days of onset of infection.

"The rapid antibody test for COVID-19 detects antibody to coronavirus after about seven days of infection. So detection of antibody by rapid test can be done in those patients who have a travel history or had a contact with positive patients," the microbiologist said.

Citing studies which suggest that patients develop antibody response only in the second week after onset of symptoms, the World Health Organization (WHO) further says that strength of antibody response depends on several factors, including age, nutritional status, severity of disease, and certain medications or infections like HIV that suppress the immune system.

"This means that a diagnosis of COVID-19 infection based on antibody response will often only be possible in the recovery phase, when many of the opportunities for clinical intervention or interruption of disease transmission have already passed. Antibody detection tests targeting COVID-19 may also cross-react with other pathogens, including other human coronaviruses and give false positive results," a WHO advisory stated.

WHO feels that tests to detect antibody responses to COVID-19 in the population can, however, be critical to support the development of vaccines, and to add to the understanding of the extent of infection among people who are not identified through active case finding and surveillance efforts, the attack rate in the population, and the infection fatality rate. For clinical diagnosis, however, such tests have limited utility because they cannot quickly diagnose acute infection to inform actions needed to determine the course of treatment.

State health experts say though confirmatory gold standard test remains the RT-PCR yet in view of heavy sample load and requirements of biosafety for testing which is not available in all the hospital set-ups, the rapid tests, which uses only blood samples and has minimal risks to laboratory personnel performing the tests, seem like a boon.

"But there have been reports of certain rapid kits which are showing invalid results, particularly those from China. We have placed orders for rapid kits from South Korea as they seem to give better results. But from whatever sources we procure the kits it should be first validated and confirmed by testing with known positive and negative samples. Only then we can be able to use it for the patients. Also the sensitivity and specificity of the test kit should be checked prior to initiation because it may again give invalid results or false positive results too," another microbiologist said.

FMCG goods ...

(Contd from page 1)

"A truncated workforce was a major factor hindering supply to the retail stores earlier. But now the authorities seem to be deliberately denying passes to those who need it urgently," another trader rued.

Some traders are of the opinion that while the Central government's intervention helped in movement of goods across borders, local authorities' insistence on their own set of guidelines was complicating matters.

"Local-specific unwise curbs like restrictions on time of opening and closing stores, unnecessary hindrances on business customers to visit the company's stores for their stock fulfilment, etc., have caused stock replenishment to suffer. This has led to a conspicuous shortage of FMCG items and panic among citizens," a trader said.

Many retailers in the city have complained that FMCG products such as branded biscuits, chocolates and salted snacks were not reaching them for a long time.

"Apparently, some lacunae are there in the supply chain and the administration needs to streamline it. But it is not doing this for reasons best known to it," a retailer said.

Fuel price ...

(Contd from page 1)

"We are fearing if international prices go down drastically, we lose immensely in oil royalty as it is linked to the global prices. But increasing the tax, we are trying to protect our revenue," Sarma said.

The State used to get a royalty of Rs 166 crore from the oil companies every month. According to the Finance Minister, yesterday's hike will give the government Rs 50 crore in about a month's time. Following yesterday's tax hike, the price of petrol in the State increased from Rs 71.61 to Rs 77.46 per litre, while diesel jumped from Rs 65.07 to Rs 70.50 per litre.

Govt asks ...

(Contd from page 1)

There are approximately 2,200 private schools in Assam. On loss of academic days the Minister said that even if the lockdown continued till May 31, total 52 academic days will be lost.

"Fifty two days can be managed through taking full classes on Saturdays, and even Sundays if necessary. We can also curtail the summer vacation and declared holidays like the Durga Puja holidays. However, if it continues beyond that, it will be very difficult to manage the academic year. We have asked the department to prepare a contingency plan for such a situation," the Minister added.

Centre ...

(Contd from page 1)

Hotspots have been identified and appropriate containment strategies are being implemented. Diagnostic laboratories network has been expanded. "In fact, leveraging on the existing multi-disease testing platforms under National TB Elimination Programme, orders for procurement of 13 lakh diagnostic kits have been placed to augment COVID-19 testing," said sources.

All health workers, including Community Health Volunteers (ASHAs) have been covered with insurance under the "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers fighting COVID-19". Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), N95 masks and ventilators, testing kits and drugs for treatment are being procured centrally.

The major share of the expenditure will be used for mounting robust emergency response, strengthening National and State health systems followed by strengthening pandemic research and multi-sector national institutions and platforms for One-Health, community engagement and risk communications and implementation, management, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation component. Minister of Health and Family Welfare has been authorised to re-appropriate resources among components of the package and among the various implementation agencies (National Health Mission, Central Procurement, Railways, Department of Health Research ICMR and National Centre for Disease Control as per the evolving emergent situation.

Lockdown ...

(Contd from page 1)

Sources said that after receiving reports that names of some declared foreigners and persons against whom cases are pending in the Foreigners' Tribunals were also included in the final NRC, reports have been sought from the districts in this regard.

Meanwhile, the Government has initiated steps to set up new Tribunals under the provisions of the Foreigners' Act to deal with the applications of those whose applications were rejected by the NRC authorities. As per the plan, the Government decided to set up 200 new Tribunals and appointed members for the same. The Government also issued a notification for the new Tribunals to start functioning, but the lockdown delayed its functioning. It may be mentioned here that even the existing Tribunals are not functioning due to the lockdown.

No. DME/Outsourcing/88/2020/5073

E-Request for Proposal (Invitation of Bid)

E-Request for Proposal (Bid) are invited online through e-procurement system i.e. through website www.assamtenders.gov.in from the intending and experienced agencies for selection of suitable Agency (s) for providing Cleaning & Sanitation Services to different Hospital (s) under DME, Assam on outsourcing basis under the Health & F.W. Department, Govt. of Assam.

The E-Request for Proposal (Bid) is a Two-Bid System, to be submitted with affixed Court Fee Stamp Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight point two five paise) only (for local bidders) or IPO of Rs. 10/- (Rupees Ten) only (in case of bidders from outside of the State of Assam) in favour of "Director of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

Important dates of the e-Tender

Sl. No.	Scheduled	Start Date	Start Time	End Date	End Time
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2.	e- Tender Download	22-04-2020	12.00 Noon	15-05-2020	12.00 Noon
3.	Pre-Bid Meeting	06-05-2020	11.00 AM	Venue - Room No. 4C, 2nd Floor, Directorate of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Guwahati- 32	
4.	Bid Submission	06-05-2020	02.00 PM	15-05-2020	02.00 PM
5.	Bid Opening	15-05-2020	03.00 PM		

Brief Schedule

Sl No.	Description and purpose	Bid Security (E.M.D.)	Delivery/ schedule/ Completion period	Tender fees in Rs.	Eligibility
1	Providing Cleaning & Sanitation Services to different Hospital (s) under DME, Assam on outsourcing basis under the Health & F.W. Department, Govt. of Assam.	Rs. 5.00 Lakhs	21 days	Rs. 5000/-	Experienced agencies

The detailed information of E-Request for Proposal/Bidding documents are available online through e-procurement system i.e. through website www.assamtenders.gov.in only. The bidders would be required to register in the website for submission of the bids. The bidders are required to have Digital Signature (DSC) from any of the Certifying Authorities. Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-procurement may obtain the same by registering in the www.assamtenders.gov.in. The requirements to register with the e-procurement portal are available on the website indicated above. The tender fees is non refundable and payable in favour of the "Director of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022, at SBI-Dispur (Guwahati) Branch.

Sd/- Director of Medical Education, Assam SIXMILE, KHANAPARA, GUWAHATI-22
Janasanyog/C/41/20

Meghalaya Govt distributes essential commodities to quarantined households

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, April 22: The Meghalaya Government today said that it was providing small kits containing essential commodities to households under quarantine in the State. Chief Minister Conrad Sangma revealed that the State Government has already started providing the much needed assistance to the households.

"We have covered 600 to 700 households as on Wednesday, and we will cover the total of 4,500 households in the next few days," the Chief Minister maintained.

The Government is providing food and other items of daily use in the kits to families under quarantine as they are unable to move out to fetch them by themselves.

Sangma said that these kits are being distributed to "encourage and support them" as they are cooper-

ating with the Government by staying at home and are under self-quarantine. "It is just to show our support to them for the responsible manner in which they are handling the situa-

tion," the Chief Minister added.

On the other hand, the State Government has already conducted tests on 1,046 samples out of which 904 samples were negative

and 130 test results are still awaited. The active COVID-19 cases in the State stand at 11.

Sangma said all the active cases are stable and all standard protocols are being

followed in the treatment of the patients. He further stated that the tests with the rapid testing kits (RTKs) have been kept on hold as per the direction of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR). The Chief Minister said that the Government is conducting polymerase chain reaction tests on suspected cases, in addition to the tests conducted through RTKs.

"We will wait for the direction from the ICMR before we resume the tests with the RTKs," Sangma added.

He also stated that there are at present 64,458 personal protective equipment kits, over five lakh three-layer masks and over 65,000 N-95 masks.

Moreover, 5,392 among the 10,287 registered people who are stranded outside the State, have been provided a one-time financial assistance of Rs 3,000.



A fleet of new ambulances bought under the Meghalaya Chief Minister's Relief Fund, parked in Shillong on Wednesday. - UB Photos

Civil society appeals for peace after clash

CORRESPONDENT

AGARTALA, April 22: Amid escalating tension at Kanpui village under Kanchanpur subdivision of North Tripura district bordering Mizoram following a clash between villagers and Indian Reserve (IR) personnel of Mizoram and the subsequent arrest of three youths, different civil society organisations, including the Jampui Hills Mizo Convention, Young Mizo Association and civil and police administrations of both Tripura and Mizoram have appealed to the people of all communities to maintain peace and tranquillity on the Jampui Hills.

On April 18, the clash between the villagers of Kawnpui and Mizoram IR

personnel broke out when the latter allegedly misbehaved with some indigenous women. After the clash, an FIR was lodged at the Vangmun Police Station and the police subsequently arrested three local youths identified as Santilal Chakma (31), Bimal Chakma (19) and Mohanlal Chakma (28). But when the three arrested were taken to a local hospital for medical checkup, Santilal managed to escape from the spot. Later, the two others were produced in a court, where the Mizoram Police appealed for their transit remand. But the court kept them in police custody in Tripura.

On Tuesday, in a press statement, the Jampui Hill Mizo called for communal harmony and peace among the tribes and termed the events following the at-

tack on two Mizoram State IR personnel by villagers of New Kawnpui (on the Tripura side of the border) on April 18 as unfortunate.

Apart from government officials of both Mizoram and Tripura who visited the village, leaders of civil society organisations from Mizoram and Tripura including the Young Mizo Association and the Mizo Zirlai Pawl visited Zomantlang (on the Mizoram side of the border) on April 20. They held meetings with local community leaders and government authorities with the aim of de-escalating the tension and helping the administrations of both States to ensure that all people responsible for the attacks on the IR personnel are brought to book.

Mizoram Police to appeal against court order

CORRESPONDENT

AIZAWL, April 22: The Mizoram Police today stated that it would appeal against a Tripura court order rejecting its plea for transit remand of the accused in the assault on two Mizoram Police personnel.

In a statement today, the Mizoram Police said the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate of Kanchanpur in Tripura has released the accused on bail after rejecting the Mizoram Police's prayer for their transit remand. "Necessary efforts are being made to file an appeal against this order at an appellate court," the release added. Mizoram Police are pursuing the matter with due diligence and exploring all possible legal avenues, it added.

Meanwhile, the Mizoram DGP has ordered a high-level inquiry into the incident, to be conducted by the DIG (CID).

Three Chakma villagers from Kawnpui-I village of Tripura were arrested by Tripura Police on Sunday for allegedly assaulting two personnel of the 5th India Reserve (IR) battalion of Mizoram Police when the latter were guarding the inter-State border the previous day. The incident took place at New Kawnpui in west Mizoram.

NSCN (I-M) slams Nagaland cops

CORRESPONDENT

DIMPUR, April 22: The NSCN (I-M) today said it was appalled at the "unpleasant situations" created by Nagaland Police personnel by targeting the doctors in the State during the lockdown.

The outfit's 'health ministry', in a release issued by its klonser (minister) Dr A Yanthan, condemned such "mindless violence against the doctors".

Stating that the doctors, nurses and other medical staff are the frontline warriors in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSCN (I-M) said it was utterly shocking and surprising to witness the recent physical assault on Dr Nerozol Sezo in Dimapur on April 3 and

Dr Mongshithung Murry in Wokha on April 17 by the State police personnel for "no fault of theirs".

The outfit expressed its deepest sympathy and solidarity with Sezo and Murry as well as the entire medical fraternity over these "unfortunate incidents".

The release said the doctors and other medical staff are also human and they perform their professional duties with unwavering spirit, notwithstanding many difficulties and risks involved.

"Thus, the police personnel should deal with doctors and other medical staff with a sense of humanity and not in a brutish manner," it said.

It stressed that the security personnel should protect all sections of the

people and not take law and order into their hands as per their whims. "This point ought to be thoroughly understood by every single police personnel on duty," it said.

The release added that the attacks on the frontline workers made a mockery of the fight against the infectious COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is the bounden duty of the police force to protect the health workers from all unseen forces," the release added.

Alleging that the two doctors have become victims of police high-handedness, the 'health ministry' of the outfit appealed to the police personnel on duty to be more humane and professional like the health professionals.

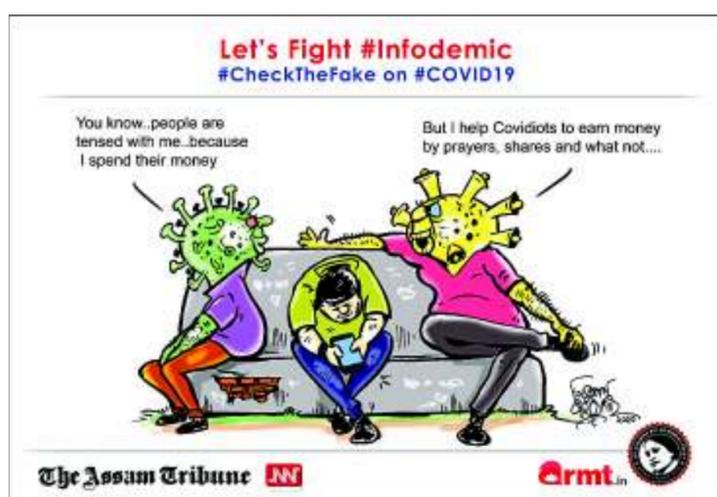
Mizoram people donate Rs 5 cr to CM's Relief Fund

NEWMAI NEWS

AIZAWL, April 22: The people of Mizoram have so far donated nearly Rs 5 crore to the Mizoram Chief Minister's Relief Fund to fight COVID-19 in the State.

This was disclosed by Chief Minister Zoramthanga on Wednesday. According to him, a sum of Rs 2.5 crore has been spent on helping stranded people of Mizoram outside the State as relief, NGOs and village task forces set up in connection with the COVID-19 issue.

Zoramthanga said that an amount of Rs 1.56 crore has been given to various Mizo welfare associations to give assistance to the people of Mizoram who are stranded outside the State. The Chief Minister also stated that the State Government had extended a relief of Rs 5 lakh to the Chin people from Myanmar, who are stranded in Delhi. Zoramthanga said that migrant workers and people from outside the State stranded in Mizoram are being fed and sheltered by the State Government.



Deficient pre-monsoon rainfall in NE region

AJIT PATOWARY

Though there has been recurrent rainfall over the North Eastern region since the last few days, the India Meteorology Department (IMD) maintains that there was deficient pre-monsoon rainfall over the region for the period between March 1 and April 22.

The Nagaland-Manipur-Mizoram-Tripura Meteorological (Met) subdivisions of the region recorded a deficit rainfall of 56 per cent. While the deficit in rainfall recorded by the Arunachal Pradesh Met subdivision was 54 per cent, the Assam-Meghalaya Met subdivision recorded 28 per cent deficient rainfall during this period.

Meanwhile, the Borjhar-based Regional Meteorology Centre (RMC) of the IMD in Guwahati warned of the "very likelihood" of thunderstorm activities with lightning, accompanied by gusty wind

with the speed of 40 to 50 km per hour, at isolated places over many districts of Assam during the next 24 hours from 8.30 am on Wednesday.

The districts, which are "very likely" to witness such activities at isolated places continuously till April 26, include Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj.

The districts of Dhubri, South Salmara-Mankachar, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Barpeta, Baksa, Kamrup, Nalbari, Kamrup (Metro), Sonitpur, Biswanath, Sivasagar and Charaideo are also "very likely" to have such activities during the next 24 hours at isolated places.

The districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia are "very likely" to face such activities at isolated places during the next 48 hours. Lakhimpur and Dhemaji are "very likely" to witness such activities again at isolated places on April 26.

The districts of Jorhat and Majuli are "very likely" to experience such activities again at isolated places on April 24 after a break tomorrow. Such activities in both districts are "very likely" to continue till April 25.

The RMC said Kokrajhar, Kamrup, Kamrup (Metro) and Golaghat districts are "very likely" to undergo such activities at isolated places for the next 96 hours. Chirang is "very likely" to experience such activities at isolated places for the next 72 hours.

With a break in such activities only tomorrow, Dhubri and South Salmara-Mankachar districts are "very likely" to experience thunderstorm with lightning, accompanied by gusty wind (40 to 50 km per hour) till April 26.

Morigaon, Hojai and Nagaon district are "very likely" to witness such activities during the next 72 hours.



WEATHER NORTHEAST

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

Warning : Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty wind with speed (30-40) kmph is very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh. Thunderstorm with squall with speed (exceeding 60) kmph accompanied by hail is very likely to occur at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh.

Temperatures :

	Max (°C)	Min (°C)
Dibrugarh	25.2	17.8
Tezpur	27.0	18.4
Silchar	28.0	21.6
Dhubri	28.1	19.7
Jorhat	29.2	18.0
N/Lakhimpur	27.5	19.1
Shillong	19.3	-
Cherrapunjee	19.7	12.6
Aizawl	25.3	14.9
Kohima	22.8	10.5
Pasighat	26.0	18.8
Itanagar	27.7	18.6
Imphal	26.2	16.5
Agartala	34.2	23.6

Second COVID patient of Manipur discharged

CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL, April 22: Manipur's second COVID-19 patient, who tested negative in two successive tests, was discharged from the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) here on Tuesday.

Manipur had earlier reported two COVID-19 cases and both the patients have been released now.

Though the patient was released from hospital following improvement in his condition, he will remain under surveillance.

"Surveillance over him will continue," stated a press release issued by Additional Director of the State Health Department Dr Kh Sasheekumar Mangang.

Even after the patient tested negative on April 18 and 19, he was advised to remain in hospital for a few days as he is a diabetic.

On April 19, Chief Minister N Biren Singh had tweeted, "I am glad to share that Manipur is now Corona free. Both patients have fully recovered and have tested negative."

অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

No. 45PSC/DR-72/1/2017-2018

NOTIFICATION

In continuation of this office Advt. No. 01/2020 vide No. 71 PSC/DR-5/1/2019-2020, dtd. 18.03.2020 which was issued for filling up of 1 (One) post of A.E. (C) under Handloom Textiles and Sericulture Department, it is for information of all concerned that the last date of receipt of application form is hereby extended upto 04.06.2020 instead of 24.04.2020 due to outbreak of coronavirus.

Other terms and conditions of the earlier Advt. mentioned above will remain the same.

Sd/- Secretary

Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22

Janasanyog/D/267/20

No. GMC.13/2020/3

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, PWD (Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids for the following work having experience of similar nature of work from APWD Registered contractors.

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in.

The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Sl. No.	State/Package	Name of work	Approx. value of work (Rs. in Lakh)	Time of completion	E.M.D.	E.M.D to be drawn in favour of	Tender cost (Rs.)
1	MMCH/MGP-1	Installation of the Medical Gas Pipe Line with repairing of existing 2 Nos. rooms for accommodation of Gas storage (Manifold room) and compressor (plant room) of MMCH (Including Electrical works)	112.86	30 (thirty) days	(2% for General and 1% for Reserved category)	E.E, PWD Guwahati Building Division-II, Dispur, Guwahati-6	3,500/-

N.B.- (i) Value of work may be varying according to final BOQ which may be seen in the detail NIT.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, PWD (Building)

Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati- 3

Dated Guwahati the 21st April 2020

Janasanyog/C/45/20

Be part of the Celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity

22nd May, 2020

Theme: Our Solutions are in Nature
State Level Competitions for Students of Assam for awareness generation (Online Submission through Email only)

- Essay Competition (Submit the entries at the designated email against each)**
 - Group-I : Class VI- Class VIII (Email: biodayessay01@gmail.com)
 - Group-II : Class IX - Class XII (Email: biodayessay02@gmail.com)

Theme: Our Solutions are in Nature
Language: English
Length of Essay: Maximum 1500 words
- Painting Competition (Submit the entries at the designated email against each)**
 - Group-I : Class III- Class V (Theme: Nature and Human Interface)
i. Email: biodaypainting01@gmail.com
 - Group-II : Class VI- Class VIII (Theme: Our Solutions are in Nature)
i. Email: biodaypainting02@gmail.com

Size of Paper: A4 Size or A3 Size
- Poster Competition (Submit the entries at the designated email against each)**
 - Group-I : Class IX- Class X (Email: biodayposter01@gmail.com)
 - Group-II : Class XI- Class XII (Email: biodayposter02@gmail.com)

Theme: Our Solutions are in Nature
Language: English
Size of Poster: 2.5x6 ft

Participants may submit only one entry along with a Photo ID of the School and full corresponding address with phone number.

Students are also encourage to submit a self photo, preferably in school uniform, while painting or writing the essay or making the poster along with the entries.

Last Date of Submission of Entries: 5th May 2020

PRIZES for each Category: 1st, 2nd and 3rd Prize in each category: Certificate + Memento

All Participants will get Participation Certificate

For more details, log on to our website www.asbb.gov.in



Janasanyog/D/264/20

NEWS IN BRIEF

Books distributed among children



PATACHARKUCHI, April 22: Considering the mental state of the children due to the ongoing lockdown, Nagen Choudhury, president of Bajali Zila BJP, has taken a unique initiative through which, he distributed books and pencils, among children in a bid to refresh their mind. "Due to the prolonged lockdown, children are facing a major problem, and, therefore, we have decided to distribute books to keep their minds fresh," Choudhury said. Several children of Nityananda Gaon Panchayat received books and pencils from the president. During the distribution, president of Nityananda Gaon Panchayat, Parag Talukdar along with booth-level representatives of the party and general workers extended their help to Nagen Choudhury. — ANN Service

Relief distributed at Jorhat

JORHAT, April 22: The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), Jorhat unit in association with a group of teachers of Jagannath Barooah College, led by its principal, Dr Bimal Chandra Barah distributed food items to lockdown-hit 70 families of Kamargaon and Maoutgaon of Jorhat town on Tuesday. Subhashish Sarmah, Shankar Das, Gautam Kalita, Rajib Sarmah (all teachers of Jagannath Barooah College) along with assistant teacher of Normal School Moushami Baruah, extended their help during the distribution. — Staff Correspondent

Killing of sadhus condemned

MORIGAON, April 22: Asom Satra Mahasabha has expressed grave concern over the killing of two Hindu sadhus (saints) and their driver at Palghar in Maharashtra on April 16. In a press release issued here today, Kusum Kumar Mahanta, general secretary, Asom Satra Mahasabha said that on April 16, the sadhus were brutally killed on Dhawarikhanbel Road in Maharashtra causing widespread concern among the people throughout the country. The Mahasabha also demanded a high-level enquiry into the incident. — Correspondent

Food packets handed over

DULIAJAN, April 22: The president, former president and the general secretary of Zaloni Ladies Club, Duliajan handed over 200 packets of food items to the Circle Officer, Tengakhat for distribution to the needy families of the area recently. Later, the ZLC extended its gratitude to the OIL management, especially the Logistics and Security Departments for their support in the endeavour. — ANN Service

Wild jumbo electrocuted

DIPHU, April 22: A male elephant got electrocuted in the wee hours of Monday along Hojai and West Karbi Anglong districts border area near Tumpreng Bridge. According to reports available, the incident occurred early in the morning when a few elephants were playing and others were scratching their backs on an electric post of 33000 KVA high tension wire making it swing to and fro. Suddenly, one of the elephants accidentally came into contact with the cable and fell off into the Kopili river. — Correspondent

Section 144 promulgated

DIPHU, April 22: The Deputy Commissioner of West Karbi Anglong, Syed Isfaque Rahman on Monday issued a prohibitory order imposing Section 144 of the CrPC to contain the spread of the coronavirus among the people of the area. The prohibitory order was issued through public notification making it mandatory which includes wearing of face masks, practice of social distancing, and restricting gathering of five or more persons in close proximity, spitting in public places, sales of gutka, tobacco and liquor. — Correspondent

Relief materials provided

PATACHARKUCHI, April 22: The Rajnusa Foundation, a State-level organisation today distributed relief materials, including food and other essentials items among 400 families under Bajali subdivision. Rajnusa Foundation distributed relief materials in several areas, including Ghatbar Saderi, Doloigaon, Barsaderi, Bhotanta Saderi, Jojia and Dezarpara villages of Bajali subdivision. Meghnath Talukdar, Dr Pratim Talukdar and Mriganika Talukdar from Rajnusa Foundation were present during the distribution. — ANN Service

Nirendra Nath Bhattacharyya: a tribute

Although a great modern Assamese poet Hirendra Nath Bhattacharyya sang the glory of death describing it as an 'Art' scripted in the hard stone of life, for an ordinary human being like me nothing is more fearsome than death. For a child, the death of his mother is the rudest of the shocks and a veritable demon. The death of Nirendra Nath Bhattacharyya, my dearest class mate right from ME School to the Intermediate class in the JB College, Jorhat, is indeed a nightmare and a veritable bolt from the blue.

Niren who was a couple of years older than me joined me in class III at the Jagannath Baruah Arya Vidyalay in Baligaon. We were very fortunate to have great teachers like Murulidhar Barua, who was a freedom fighter, Kiron Chandra Goswami, a brilliant student of Banaras Hindu University, Upendra Nath Neog and Pandit Giridhar Sarma of Rajahoroly. An ace footballer of his time he was also a dexterous player of hockey, cricket and volleyball. I can't describe in words how I am grateful to him for the unbounded hospitality he offered to me both at his residence and his bookshop at Jorhat town. With the death of Niren, I have lost the last of my classmates of school and college days which is indeed a terrible experience.

Today on the day of his adyashradha, I pray to God for the eternal peace of his departed soul. — DN Chakravarty

Rural pupils fail to reap benefit from smart classes

CORRESPONDENT

DOOMDOOMA, April 22: The academic losses suffered by the students during the ongoing lockdown in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic cannot be compared with the students, parents/guardians and the teachers are worried about the ongoing situation. Considering the gravity of the situation, the government decided to provide academic support to the students through various apps in a smartphone.

On March 20, the Commissioner and Secretary of the Higher, Secondary and Elementary Education Department of the State government issued an order (No. - PMA. 234/2018/51) to all the Inspector of Schools, District Ele-

mentary Education Officers and District Mission Coordinator of SSS requesting them to instruct the heads of the institutions of their respective districts to create class wise Whatsapp groups and provide necessary academic support to the students through those groups. But, much before issuance of this order, Bitupon Hazarika, the Inspector of Schools, Tinsukia District Circle at his personal initiative tried to introduce this system in the secondary level educational institutions of the district with a positive attitude.

However, in the government order, the Commissioner and Secretary of Education Department said, "There is a wide penetration of smartphones in Assam. In fact, children are also more familiar

with regard to the use various options of smartphones. We may take help of smartphone to provide learning support to the children."

But, the real picture is just opposite of what the government has presumed. Because 90 per cent of the students belong to BPL families and majority of them do not have smartphones. In Tinsukia district, majority of the students in the government-run schools belong to rural and tea garden areas and 90 per cent of them belong to BPL families. Many of them do not even have any mobile phone.

"In my school there are around 650 students and among them I have got 125 students having a mobile phone at home and all of them are not smartphones," said a

headmaster of a high school in Doomdooma Circle, who did not wish to be named.

Another head of the institution said, "90 per cent the students of my school belong to tea garden areas and majority of them do even have a mobile phone."

Gitimoni Gogoi, a student of Kordoiguri High School said, "We belong to a flood-affected area. There are 12 families in our vicinity with two TV sets and only one android phone among all. Our family does not have either a TV set or a mobile phone."

"I am a petty trader. But, due to the ongoing lockdown I have to keep my business off and my savings are also getting dried up. At this moment, I have to think of the daily bread for my family rather

than net-pack for my mobile phone", said Bijoy Tanti of Dighaltarrang Tea Estate here whose son studies in class-IX in a provincialised school.

These are a few examples only. Under such conditions, providing academic support to the students through smartphones during this lockdown period is a figment of imagination. However, the same has proved to be successful in case of the private sector educational institutions. These institutions are providing their students full learning support through smart phones with 95 per cent success.

In this regard, State Academic Council and Joint Forum of Teachers' Associations of Secondary Schools, Assam sent a memorandum

to the Commissioner and Secretary of Education Department, Assam citing the futility of providing academic support to the students through smartphones and urged the government to chalk out a universal plan for all categories of students to make up their academic loss. The forum assured the government its full cooperation in this regard.

The AASU also expressed its reaction over the matter. In a press note AASU president, Dipanka Nath has urged the government to make such plans that benefits all categories of students. He also urged the government that such plans should be made in such a way that the students would not have to lose their academic year.

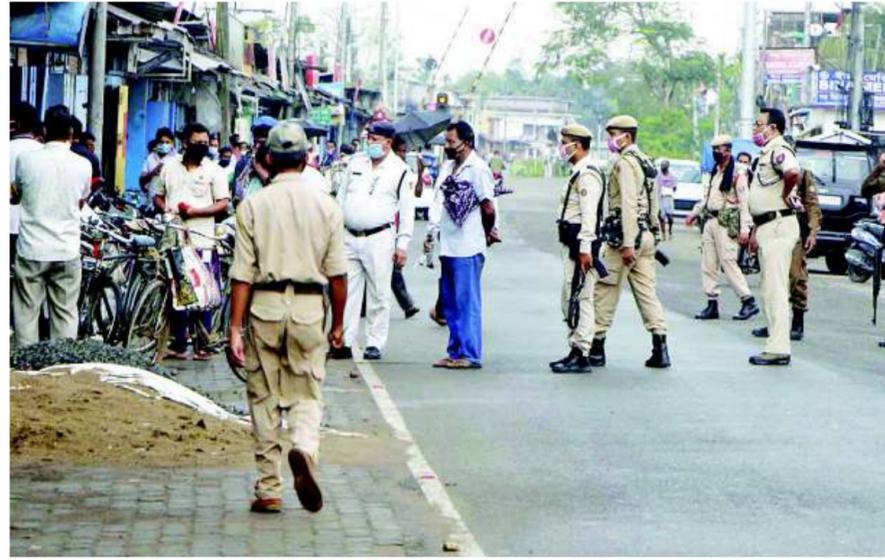
DIPR Mangaldai extends service during lockdown

CORRESPONDENT

MANGALDAI, April 22: The staff of the Information and Public Relations has been playing a key role during the lockdown. The district office of the department here with limited resources and staff has been working round-the-clock in this battle more than two weeks before the lockdown being announced. The staff of the department has been extending services, including creating awareness, especially in the char areas, broadcasting of CM bulletins through FLS, relaying of AIR Assamese evening bulletins on coronavirus prevention programme. "We have been working to create awareness on COVID-19 since March 8 and our service has paid dividends," said Manimala Gogoi, District Information and Public

Relation Officer. "Presently we are trying to reach out to the masses through 38 FLSes in the entire district," Gogoi added.

Meanwhile, talking to this correspondent Dibya Kanti Saha, owner of local pharmacy said, "Sitting in my shop I regularly listen to different awareness talk shows, songs, announcements, correction of social media, fake news etc., on COVID-19 relayed through the FLS fitted near the Ram Janaki Temple." Echoing the view, in-charge of the Town branch of Mangaldai PS, sub-inspector, Latuk Das said that the programmes prepared by the DIPR, Darrang has immensely benefitted the people to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus. He also appealed to the people to follow the awareness programmes of the DIPR.



Police personnel keep vigil during the nationwide lockdown in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak at Mariani on Wednesday. — UB Photos

Sonitpur tea farmers may suffer huge losses



CORRESPONDENT

TEZPUR, April 22: The ongoing lockdown has severely affected the small tea growers in Sonitpur district. The growers are likely to incur a huge loss this season. The tea season generally begins from April and it continues till December. However, due to the ongoing lockdown, the farmers have not been able to harvest their crops, and as a result of which they (farmers) have been forced to chop off the tea leaves.

Presenting a gloomy picture in this regard, Bhaben Nath, a progressive tea farmer of Monai Jaisiddhi, informed that over 2,000 small tea growers in Sonitpur district covering from Mazabat to Diplunga (Gohpur) area, are heading for an uncertain future as they have not been able to pluck tea leaves. Nath,

who is also a member of Diplunga Small Tea Growers' group, also mentioned that in Monai Jaisiddhi around 200 farmers have been affected. "We will be facing more serious problems, if lockdown is not withdrawn," he said, adding that the big companies, who purchase green leaves from the small tea growers are not willing to buy leaves from the small farmers as they are now focusing on their production.

In this context, he informed that the small tea growers of the Sonitpur district have been contributing a huge chunk of revenue to the Government exchequer. "Given the current situation, the small growers will not be able to contribute revenue this season," he opined. According to a report, there are over 40,000 small tea growers in the State.

19 vultures die of poisoning in Sivasagar district

CORRESPONDENT

SIVASAGAR, April 22: Yet again in a tragic incident, 19 vultures were poisoned to death at Jolatopa Lepaigon, Desungmukh yesterday, an act which has saddened bird lovers in the district.

Last year, 39 vultures were killed in a similar incident at Bamrajabari, Panidihing, about 20 km east of Tuesday's incident. According to Jayashree Naiding, DFO, Sivasagar, the cause of death may be a carcass of a calf on which the vultures fed.

"Fourteen vultures have been given treatment and are recovering fast", Naiding said. Members of BNHS and Forest department officials visited the spot yesterday and samples

have been sent to Guwahati for ascertaining the exact cause.

It is suspected that some villagers had poisoned the carcass of the calf to kill stray dogs. Once a heaven of various species of birds and located close to the Panidihing Bird Sanctuary, the avian population is fast dwindling in the whole area due to a number of reasons like pollution, denuding of the forests and abject neglect of forest and bio-resources.

Task force formed for malaria and JE prevention: The Sivasagar district administration has formed a task force to prevent malaria and Japanese encephalitis, which often take on an epidemic form in the district as the rainy season begins. The

meeting held for the purpose was presided over by Bidit Das, DC, Sivasagar and was attended among others by Dr Syamanta Madhov Sarmah, Jt Director, Health, Dr Arun Mahanta, Dr Udayaditya Rajkonwar and other district officials of the department.

Dr S Sarma submitted the overall programme to contain the diseases and the pre-

paratory steps taken so far. The steps to be taken and discussed were vaccination, fogging in suspect areas, distribution of medicated mosquito nets and distribution of medicines. Bidit Das called on all concerned and the general people to embolden the medical fraternity presently fighting COVID-19 pandemic on the front lines.



Repair work of dykes begins

CORRESPONDENT

BARPETA, April 22: The Water Resource Minister Keshab Mahanta has emphasised on the need to plug all sensitive embankments expeditiously before the floods begin. He also directed the Deputy Commissioner of Barpeta to extend all help and cooperation in the repairing works of embankments which commenced on Tuesday

amidst the nationwide lockdown.

The minister who visited Barpeta this morning urged all to be prepared for the ensuing floods. Mahanta sought the cooperation of police officers and circle officers in this process. Addressing a meeting of the officials here, Mahanta admitted that the repairing work had to commence much earlier but the lockdown gave a serious jolt to the process. But

the government will take all possible measures to relieve the people from the onslaught of flood.

Borsingh Rongpi, Chief Engineer of the Water Resource Department, Additional Chief Engineers Abani Hazarika and Sayed Abbas, Superintending Engineer Mukul Deka and Officer on Special Duty Dibakar Bhat-tacharya also accompanied the minister during the visit.

OBITUARY

Semanta Goswami

GUWAHATI, April 22: Semanta Goswami, a retired employee of Hatijan Tea Estate, PO Hoggan in Dibrugarh district, died on Tuesday when a tree fell on his house when he was sleeping during the heavy storm last evening. He was 70. He leaves behind his wife and a son.



Licences of fair price shops suspended at Hailakandi, Nalbari

CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI, April 22: The retail trade licences of three fair price shops under Mohonpur Gaon Panchayat Samabay Samiti Limited have been cancelled following detection of anomalies.

Assistant Director of Food, Civil Supplies and Corporate Affairs, Ganesh Choudhury said here that the decision of cancelling the licences of the three fair price shops was taken following the receipt of report from sub-inspector of the department, Dibyajit Pathak. During the inspection in the presence of Magistrate,

sub-inspector, Pathak found that fair price shop agent under Mohonpur GPSS Limited, Aynul Haque had been unauthorisedly running two fair price shops of Anowara Begum, secretary, West Mohonpur Gaon Panchayat Women Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited and Tasarun Nessa. The fair price shops failed to produce the account books relating to lifting and distribution of essential commodities.

Highly-placed government sources said following the violation different provisions as well as terms and conditions of the licence under

APDA Order, 1982, the trade licences of the aforesaid fair price shops have been cancelled, Choudhury said.

The secretary of Algapur Gaon Panchayat Samabay Samiti Limited with whom the Mohonpur GPSS Limited has been tagged has been instructed to issue commodities to the tagged fair price shops in the presence of Area Officer, Food, Civil Supplies and Corporate Affairs, Choudhury said.

Meanwhile, Hailakandi Superintendent of Police, Pabindra Kumar Nath informed that another quantity of around five quintals of

embezzled rice was recovered by the in-charge of Mohanpur outpost from Khasiapunji, Mohanpur.

On the Mohonpur GPSS Limited scam, the police already registered two cases at Algapur Police Station against the persons involved and conducting raids one after the other leading to seizure of embezzled rice worth 2,250 kg and 250 kg flour. Three persons have been arrested so far. The police is on the lookout for the kingpin of the scam, Aftabuddin Laskar and Aynul Haque, both of whom are absconding, police said.

It can be mentioned here

that the district administration of Hailakandi unearthed a racket involving embezzlement of rice and other essentials by the secretary of Mohonpur GPSS, Aftabuddin Laskar in cahoots with some fair price shop dealers worth around Rs.40 lakh. Around 1,858.20 quintals of NFSA rice allotted to the Mohonpur GPSS for the month of March and lifted from the FCI godown on February 23 were not distributed thus allegedly depriving 33,315 beneficiaries.

Licences of six fair price shops suspended: The Deputy Commissioner of

Nalbari, Bharat Bhusan Dev Choudhury, by an order suspended the licences of six fair price shops of the district with immediate effect. The owners of the shops reportedly distributed rice under the National Food Security Scheme less than their allotted quota. The Deputy Commissioner after receiving complaints conducted an inquiry and initiated action against those shop owners. The owners are Ajit Deka of Haulighat, Dilip Barman of Bistupur, Atiqur Rahman of Sapkata, Matiur Rahman of Barkshetri Barni and two from Chilling village.

Facebook buys 9.99% stake in Jio Platforms for Rs 43,574 cr

NEW DELHI, April 22: Facebook today announced an investment of \$5.7 billion (Rs 43,574 crore) to buy a 9.99 per cent stake in Jio Platforms – a deal that will help RIL cut debt and use WhatsApp to create an Indian e-commerce giant that could rival Amazon and Walmart.

The largest foreign direct investment (FDI) in the technology sector in India will give the US social networking firm a broader foothold in its biggest global market.

"Today we are announcing a \$5.7-billion, or Rs 43,574-crore, investment in Jio Platforms, part of Reliance Industries Ltd, making Facebook its largest minority shareholder," the company said in a statement.

Reliance Industries (RIL) in

a separate statement said the investment by Facebook values Jio Platforms at Rs 4.62-lakh crore pre-money enterprise value (\$65.95 billion).

Facebook will be issued fresh equity shares and will get a board position on Jio Platforms. Mukesh Ambani's twin children, Isha and Akash, are also part of the board.

Jio Platforms, which was created in October last year to house all-digital initiative of Reliance, will retain Rs 15,000 crore and use the remaining amount to pare some of its about Rs 40,000-crore debt.

Transaction advisers to prepare term sheet for the deal were engaged sometime in November last year, implying commercial negotiations between the two

groups would have started in July or August.

Ambani had in August last year told Reliance Industries shareholders about plans to sell stake in some of the businesses with the goal of making the firm free of net debt by 2021.

The deal was originally targeted for March 31, but the outbreak of COVID-19 pushed the negotiations into a virtual zone.

The deal will bring together JioMart, the e-commerce venture of Ambani, and Facebook's WhatsApp platform to connect consumers with

neighbourhood kirana stores, he said.

This is Facebook's biggest stake buy since its 2014 acquisition of WhatsApp.

The US giant has typically been buying into media and online properties till now and investment in Jio Platforms underscores the potential it sees in a country that is rapidly embracing online payment and e-commerce as more people get smartphones.

The deal would require the approval of the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

RIL spent almost \$50 billion, mostly borrowed money, on Jio, whose entry in 2016 with free calls and cheap data pushed some rivals to exit business or go for mergers.

At the end of December quarter, RIL had an outstanding debt of Rs 3,06,851 crore. It also had cash in hand of Rs 1,53,719 crore, bringing the net debt position to Rs 1,53,132 crore.

Facebook said the investment "underscores our commitment to India and our excitement for the dramatic transformation that Jio has spurred in the country".

Together with WhatsApp and Instagram, Facebook overall is estimated to have more users in India than any other single country, and the numbers are to grow.

The number of internet users in India is projected to rise to about 850 million in 2022, according to consultancy PwC, up from 450 million in 2017. – PTI

Centre gives 1 more year's exemption to Assam, Meghalaya, J&K, Ladakh

NEW DELHI, April 22: The Centre today extended till March 2021 the relaxation given to Assam, Meghalaya, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh from the mandatory requirement of Aadhaar seeding of data of beneficiaries under the PM-Kisan scheme.

The decision was taken in the meeting of the Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme, launched in February 2019, an amount of Rs 6,000 per annum is released in three equal instalments directly into the bank accounts of 14.5 crore farmer beneficiaries across the country.

From December 1, 2019 onwards, the Centre started releasing the amount to beneficiaries after the State governments uploaded the Aadhaar details on PM-Kisan portal. However, exemption was given to Assam, Megha-

laya, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh till March 31, 2020 considering less penetration of Aadhaar.

In a statement, the government said the Cabinet today approved the Agriculture Ministry's proposal after it assessed that States of Assam and Meghalaya and Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh would take much more time to complete the work of Aadhaar seeding of beneficiaries.

"...and the beneficiaries of these States and UTs may not be able to avail the benefits of the scheme, w.e.f., 1st April, 2020 onwards, if the relaxation from mandatory requirement of Aadhaar seeding of data is not extended," it said.

The Centre said as on April 8, it has disbursed at least one instalment to as many as 27,09,586 beneficiaries in Assam, 98,915 in Meghalaya and 10,01,668 beneficiaries in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. – PTI



Raise moratorium period to 6 months: IBA to RBI

NEW DELHI, April 22: Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has submitted a list of recommendations to both the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to ease the financial burden faced by various sectors due to the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic.

Some of the key recommendations included blanket credit guarantee for MSME loans, one-time loan restructuring for sectors hit hard by COVID-19 and raising of moratorium and relief for the NBFC sector, sources said.

As per the RBI's norms, restructuring of loans is prohibited and resolution of default cases are dealt as per the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Based on the representation made by various industry associations, a detailed and comprehensive list of suggestions have been submitted to the government and the RBI for addressing problems faced by various sectors including MSME in general and banking sector in particular, sources said.

It is for the regulator and the government to take an informed decision on those suggestions depending on their assessment and keeping in mind prudential norms, sources added.

However, the IBA in its meeting last week was of the view that this is an extraordinary situation and response to this should be also extraordinary. Bankers believed that some safety net has to be created for both industry and banks for survival first, sources said, adding, revival would follow.

Various estimates indicate a drastic reduction in GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal due to the impact of COVID-19 and consequent lockdown.

As per the World Bank's latest assessment, India is expected to grow 1.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent. Similarly, the IMF projected a GDP growth of 1.9 per cent for India in 2020.

Earlier this month, SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar had said that the IBA will request for raising the loan moratorium period from the existing three months to 5-6 months depending on the evolving situation. – PTI

JioMart-WhatsApp to empower 3 cr kirana shops: Mukesh Ambani

NEW DELHI, April 22: Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), said today that in the very near future, JioMart, Jio's new digital commerce platform, and WhatsApp will empower nearly 3 crore small Indian kirana shops to digitally transact with every customer in their neighbourhood.

"This means all of you can order and get faster delivery of day-to-day items, from nearby local shops," Ambani said in a video message as he announced the Facebook partnership with Jio.

He added that at the same time small kiranas can grow their businesses and create new employment opportunities using digital technologies.

Ambani said, "The combined power of Jio's world-class digital connectivity platform and Facebook's intimate relationship with the Indian people, will offer innova-

tive new solutions to each one of you.

"And in the days to come, this winning recipe will be extended to serve other key stakeholders of Indian society – our kisans, our small and medium enterprises, our students and teachers, our healthcare providers, and above all, our women and youth, who form the foundation of a New India," he added.

"Our visionary and most respected Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has set two ambitious goals in his 'Digital India' mission – 'Ease of Living' for all Indians, especially for common Indians; and 'Ease of Doing Business' for all entrepreneurs, especially for small entrepreneurs.

"Today I assure you that the synergy between Jio and Facebook will help realise these two goals," Ambani added.

"All of us at Reliance and Jio are delighted to welcome Facebook Inc as our long-term and esteemed partner. At the

core of our partnership is the commitment that Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, and I share for the all-round digital transformation of India and for serving all Indians. Together, our two companies will accelerate India's digital economy," Ambani added.

"Our partnership will be a great catalyst to make India the world's leading digital society," he said.

Over the past few years, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram have become household names in India.

"WhatsApp, in particular, has entered our people's daily vocabulary in all the 23 official languages of India. WhatsApp is not just a digital application. It has become *aapka, aur hum sabka, pyara dost*," Ambani said and added that WhatsApp is "a friend who brings together families, friends, businesses, information-seekers and providers". – IANS

Special IOB credit facility for agri borrowers

MUMBAI, April 22: State-run Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) today rolled out a special credit facility for its existing borrowers from the agriculture sector and allied activities, which have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The working capital demand loan is available to all its existing borrowers from poultry, dairy, fisheries and other allied activities and infrastructure activities such as cold storage and rural godowns, the bank said in a release.

The bank will be offering loans of 10 per cent of the existing fund-based working capital limit with a maximum of Rs 10 crore to the poultry sector. – PTI



Labourers load sacks of rice onto a truck from a godown during the nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic, in Guwahati on Wednesday. – PTI

IRDAI allows health insurance premium collection in instalments

NEW DELHI, April 22: IRDAI has allowed insurers to collect health insurance premiums in instalments for products they deem appropriate, in view of the prevailing conditions due to COVID-19 outbreak, which has adversely affected economic activities.

In September last year, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) had permitted insurers to add premium payment options (frequency/

payment of premiums in instalment) in individual health insurance products on certification basis.

"In view of prevailing conditions owing to COVID-19 outbreak, considering the need for easing the payment of health insurance premiums, all the insurers are allowed to collect health insurance premiums in instalments... as they may deem appropriate for any specific product(s)," IRDAI said in a circular. – PTI

TRA-Tocklai shifts to video conferencing mode

AJIT PATOWARY

GUWAHATI, April 22: In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Tea Research Association (TRA) Tocklai, which provides scientific guidance to its over 1,000 tea estate (TE) and small tea grower (STG) members in the North-east region and West Bengal, has completely shifted to video conferencing mode for the past about one month, to advise its members regularly on the issues concerning their plantations.

TRA Secretary Joydeep Phukan said, "We are fully geared up with all the online communication tools to connect with our 1,000-plus member TEs and STGs across nine States. Till things get back to normal as per the government guidelines, these measures would be continued."

It needs mention here that the tea industry has now started its operations in Assam and West Bengal

with 50 per cent and 25 per cent of manpower, abiding by the Central government's guidelines on social distancing. But, the tea industry is heavily relying on the scientific instructions issued by the TRA-Tocklai.

TRA Director Dr AK Barooah and his team of scientists had given detailed instructions on the

Advice to members concerning plantations

procedures to be followed in the post-COVID-19 lockdown period in the fields and also at the factories, ahead of the recent opening of the TEs for limited operations.

Usually, the ten advisory branches of the TRA located in Assam, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Meghalaya make two planned field advisory visits annually, covering the TEs of its members. However, the COVID-19 outbreak has prevented

the TRA scientists from undertaking such visits.

In the face of such a situation, the TRA took recourse to the video conferencing mode on a regular basis by using different platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Cisco Webex and Zoom. Planters are taking part in such video conferences with their queries, which are answered by the TRA teams comprising different subject experts.

Besides, WhatsApp video call facility is used to facilitate interactions between the planters and the TRA scientists in identifying pest problems and in giving instant solutions to such problems. The TRA has dedicated WhatsApp groups for each region and during the past three years, hundreds of planters have taken part on a daily basis to discuss their problems with the TRA scientists through such groups.

The TRA has also been using the Twitter, Facebook and YouTube platforms since 2012, to disseminate general information on tea, Phukan said.

Many firms may not survive COVID-19 onslaught, fear CEOs

LONDON, April 22: With the prospect of a prolonged recession hardening as the spread of the coronavirus hardly showing any signs of slowing down drastically, many business leaders believe that some companies may not survive the impact of the pandemic with CEOs in Asia seeing the greatest impact to their revenues, says survey.

More than half of those surveyed had already experienced negative impacts to their revenues, and far more – 82 per cent – expect more severe and negative impacts over the next six months, according to the survey by Young Presidents' Organisation (YPO), a business

leadership network.

Around 84 per cent of CEOs in Asia said revenues had already been impacted, followed by CEOs in Middle East and North Africa (74 per cent), and then in Europe (70 per cent).

While the hospitality and travel segment has taken the highest hit, the construction sector got least impacted, the results showed.

The findings are based on responses from over 2,750 global business leaders.

"Most expect the slump to last less than a year. 54 per cent of global respondents expect their revenues to be the same or better in a year's time. However, if the

respondent was in a more severely impacted region they were more likely to expect a greater than 20 per cent decrease in sales over the next 12 months," Randall Tavierne, Partner and Global Deputy for Growth Markets and Global Assurance at EY (London), wrote in a LinkedIn post, while summarising the survey results.

"In Asia, where the impacts were felt earlier, 34 per cent of respondents expect a greater than 20 per cent decline in sales over the next year while in the US a mere 13 per cent did," Tavierne said.

A leading US public health chief warned that a new wave of coronavirus hitting the US next winter could be "even more

difficult" for the country to deal with than the current outbreak as it would coincide with the normal influenza season, *The Guardian* reported today.

"There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through," Robert Redfield, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) federal agency, said in an interview with the *Washington Post*.

According to data from Johns Hopkins University, over 2.5 million people have so far tested positive for COVID-19 globally, while more than 180,000 have died. – IANS

File No. AYUSH/ASCIM/35/2014/PV9772

NOTICE

In pursuance of the Government of India letter vide DO No. 01/COVID-19/EG-4/2020 dated 16th April, 2020 and outbreak of Covid-19, it is hereby informed that Government of India has constituted eleven Empowered Groups to formulate plans and provide effective solutions to address the challenges of the country. Of these, Empowered Group 4 has been mandated with the identification of human resources for various COVID 19 related activities along with necessary capacity building for them.

In this connection, Government of India has launched a special digital platform – Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal (<http://igot.gov.in>) for training and capacity building of AYUSH doctors.

Considering the necessity and urgency of the situation, all the Doctors registered under Assam State Council of Indian Medicine (ASCIM) are requested to take part in the training by registering themselves in the iGOT portal on an urgent basis.

Accordingly, all the Doctors registered in iGOT portal, are also requested to report to the Assam State Council of Indian Medicine (ASCIM) through e-mail with following information. The e-mail ID of the Assam State Council of Indian Medicine (ASCIM) is ascimguwahati@gmail.com.

Name of the doctor:
Registration (ASCIM) No.:
Contact No.:
E-mail:
Address:

Sd/-
Director of AYUSH, Assam cum President Assam State Council of Indian Medicine
 Janasanyog/D/272/20

No. AYUSH/8/2020/11

NOTICE

In pursuance of the Government of India Letter vide DO No. 01/COVID-19/EG-4/2020 dated 16th April, 2020 and outbreak of Covid-19, it is hereby informed that Government of India has constituted eleven Empowered Groups to formulate plans and provide effective solutions to address the challenges of the country. Of these, Empowered Group 4 has been mandated with the identification of human resources for various COVID-19 related activities along with necessary capacity building for them.

In this connection, Government of India has launched a special digital platform- Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal (<http://igot.gov.in>) for training and capacity building of AYUSH manpower including doctors.

Considering the necessity and urgency of the situation, all the Doctors registered under the Board of Homoeopathic System of Medicine, Assam are requested to take part in the training by registering themselves in the iGOT portal on an urgent basis. All are also requested to download Arogya setu app.

All the Doctors registered in iGOT portal and downloaded Arogya setu app are also requested to report to the Board of Homoeopathic System of Medicine, Assam through Board' E-mail homoeoardassam@gmail.com with following information.

Name of the Doctor:
Board's Registration No.:
Contact No.:
E-mail:
Address:

Sd/- Dy. Director of AYUSH, Assam
 Cum Registrar Board of Homoeopathic System of Medicine, Assam

Sd/- Director of AYUSH, Assam
 Cum President Board of Homoeopathic System of Medicine, Assam

Janasanyog/D/277/20



Anushka's fitness funda

How the top Bollywood actress stays fit, maintains healthy diet

Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma and her cricketer husband Virat Kohli are maintaining a routine for a healthy lifestyle every single day despite the COVID-19 lockdown, and they are being focused on boosting immunity.

"We, honestly, are not doing anything different from what we normally do. I think Virat and me are people who don't believe in diets and we just have a lifestyle which is very healthy. We have always been like that," Anushka said during a live chat for an online educational platform.

She says that the couple always maintains body alkaline to boost immunity. Anushka said: "There are certain things we don't eat because they are not good for you, we try to eat food which is alkaline so it's kind of easy on the stomach and keeps you healthy because if your body is alkaline your immunity is good and that's something that we have always followed."

"I think all of us are trying to do whatever we can to boost our immunity. We have been having a lot of haldi, haldi in the

morning when we wake up, we are having haldi, ginger and *kali mirch ka chai* (tea) and we are trying to drink a lot of water – sometimes we forget but we try to drink a lot of water," she said.

Anushka maintains that having a routine to a day is extremely important and being mobile is key.

"Just working out, more than anything else, it's giving me a routine, it's giving Virat a routine. When you are working out you are like ok I will do something that I have to do now, I will do it and you feel good after the workout," she said.

She urged everyone to push themselves even if they don't feel like exercising.

"When you are about to go to workout, you might feel that you aren't feeling like doing so but you have to push yourself. So, we are trying to do that because there is obviously a lot of time in hand and we are just trying to do things which will just keep us physically feeling good, immunity high and also mentally feeling better," she said.

(Source: IANS)

Kids

GN
12:00 Ogy And The Cockroaches
13:00 Bandbudh Aur Budbak
15:00 Roll No. 21
16:00 Bandbudh Aur Budbak
17:00 Ogy And The Cock...
19:00 Roll No. 21
19:30 Bandbudh Aur Budbak
21:00 Ogy And The Cock...
23:30 The Tom & Jerry Show

Paaru
12:00 Chhota Bheem Aur Ganesha In The Amazing O
12:30 Super Bheem Bana Vajaveer
13:30 Chhota Bheem

14:00 Chhota Bheem Chatpat
14:30 Chhota Bheem
16:30 Grizzy And
17:30 The Lemmings
18:00 Chhota Bheem
18:30 Chhota Bheem Chatpat
18:30 Chhota Bheem...
20:30 Super Bheem
21:00 Grizzy And The...
22:00 Mr. Bean
23:00 M.A.D.
23:30 Grizzy And The...

Entertainment

SONY SAB
12:00 Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah
17:00 My Name Jai Lakkhan
17:30 Badi Doooor Se Aaye Hai
18:00 Office Office
18:30 Partners Trouble Ho
18:30 Gayi Double
19:00 Tera Kya Hoga Alia

StarPlus
12:00 Mahabharat
13:00 Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlai Hai
14:00 Bidaai
15:00 Diya Aur Baati Hum

16:00 Saath Nibhaana Saathiya
17:00 Mann Ki Awaaz... Pratiyoga
18:00 Mahabharat
19:00 RadhaKrishn
20:00 Mahabharat
21:30 Devon Ke Dev Mahadev
22:00 Maharaj Ki Jai Ho
22:30 Hostages
23:00 RadhaKrishn

Colors

18:00 Hum Paanch
18:30 Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li Champs 2017
20:00 Qubool Hai

12:30 Khatra Khatra Khatra
13:00 Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania
15:30 Khatra Khatra Khatra
16:00 Mahakali Arth Hi Aarambh Hai

21:00 Hum Paanch
22:30 Kehne Ko Humsafar Hain
23:00 Hum Paanch

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23:00 RadhaKrishn

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12:00 Swaragini
13:00 Kasam Tere Pyaar Ki
14:00 Sasural Simar Ka
18:00 Kasam Tere Pyaar Ki
19:00 Swaragini

17:00 Ram Siya Ke Lev Kush
18:00 Balika Vadhu
20:00 Jai Shri Krishna
22:00 Policegiri

20:00 Sasural Simar Ka
22:00 Udaan

Movies

UTV MOVIES
12:00 Daag: The Fire
15:00 Saajan Chale Sasural
17:30 Puli
20:00 Sanam Bewafa
23:30 The Ghazi Attack

UTV ACTION
12:00 Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief
14:30 Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2
17:00 Riddick
19:00 Monster Hunt 2
21:00 The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

HBO
15:00 Inception

HBO
11:30 Godzilla (2014)
13:30 Pokemon Detective Pikachu
15:00 Inception
17:30 Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
19:30 Thor
21:00 The Intern
23:00 Ocean's 8

13:00 Torque
14:30 Mean Girls
16:00 Pain & Gain
18:00 Monkey Trouble
19:30 Cradle 2 The Grave
21:00 You've Got Mail
23:00 Catwoman

11:00 Hungama
13:00 Virasat Ki Jung
17:00 Masterpiece
20:00 Bajrang Bhaijan
23:30 Indian Soldier Never On Holiday

13:30 Hum Apke Hain Kourt... I
17:30 Mahaabali
19:30 Daring Rakhwala
21:00 Phir Hera Pheri

ZEE ACTION
20:00 Indra - The Tiger

12:30 The Real Tiger 2
15:00 Hindustan Youth
17:00 Sher Ka Shikar
20:00 Indra - The Tiger
22:30 Sher

11:00 Ant-Man And The Wasp
13:00 The Peanut Movie
14:30 Commando
16:30 Beauty And The Beast
18:30 The Forbidden Kingdom
19:30 Ice Age: The Meltdown
21:00 Avatar

ZEE CINEMA
21:00 Phir Hera Pheri

Infotainment

NAT GEO WILD
12:00 Africa's Wild Side
13:00 Wild Families
14:00 Built For The Kill
15:00 Survival Of The Fittest
16:00 Animal Fight Club
17:00 Hostile Planet

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL
12:00 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
13:00 Monster Fish
14:00 Primal Survivor
15:00 Snakes In The City
16:00 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
18:00 Primal Survivor
19:00 Earth At Home
20:00 Jane Goodall: The Hope
21:30 Combating Covid-19
22:00 Together At Home

ANIMAL PLANET
11:30 Wildest Survival
12:30 Fishing Leopards
13:00 Animals Unleashed
13:30 Animal Planet Exclusives
14:00 Tera
15:30 Brave Wilderness
16:00 How Do Animals Do That?
16:30 The Cute Ones
17:00 World's Wildest...
18:00 Animals Unleashed...
18:30 Bizarre Beasts
19:00 Epic Earth
20:00 Nature's Strangest
20:30 Jewels Of The Natural World
21:00 River Monsters
22:00 Wild Frank

21:00 The Hidden Kingdoms Of China
22:00 Animal Fight Club
23:00 Dangerous Encounters
23:30 Wonderfully Weird

HISTORY TV
12:00 Forged In Fire
12:30 Ancient Aliens
13:30 Pawn Stars
14:00 Storage Wars
14:30 Food Tech
15:00 OMG! Yeh Mera India
16:00 Forged In Fire
16:30 Counting Cars
17:00 Storage Wars
17:30 Shipping Wars
18:00 Home Planet
19:00 Secrets Of The Supercleries
20:00 OMG! Yeh Mera India
21:00 Forged In Fire
22:00 Pawn Stars
22:30 Storage Wars
23:00 Knife Or Death

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

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23:30 Football United Special

12:00 ICC CWC 1996
18:30 Vivo IPL 2018 Hls
19:00 ICC World Cup 1999 Hls
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Barpathar Gaon Panchayat receives national award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DIBRUGARH, April 22: Barpathar Gaon Panchayat under Barbaruah block in the district has been awarded with the national award along with 30 other recipients from other States and Union Territories of the country.

The Gaon Panchayat was adjudged for the 'Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award 2020', a release stated. Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India has been incentivizing the best performing panchayats.

Keeping in view that the basic component of social development is creating a conducive atmosphere for the healthy growth and development of children, the award Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (CFGPA) was announced for best performing Gram Panchayats (GPs)/Village Councils (VCs) (one in each State/UT) for adopting child-friendly practices, a release stated.

Mother of rescued rhino calf yet to be traced

CORRESPONDENT

KAZIRANGA, April 22: There was still no sign of the female rhino which had abandoned its calf in Bandardubi area, adjacent to Kaziranga National Park. Informing this, Director of Kaziranga National Park cum Tiger Reserve P. Shiva Kumar told this correspondent that the Forest personnel of Kaziranga National Park were doing everything possible to detect the mother rhino which had abandoned its one-month old male rhino.

Currently, the rhino calves under care and treatment of Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) at Borjuri in Kaziranga.

When enquired on any new development on evicted land in Bandardubi and Deosur, a senior Forest official informed that till today the evicted land in Bandardubi and Deosur areas had not been formally handed over to the Kaziranga National Park authority. But a few locations in the said areas have now become grazing ground for rhinos and other wild animals of Kaziranga National Park, which indicates a healthy sign as far as conservation of wild animals is concerned, said the senior official.

The areas under Bandardubi and Deosur were evicted by State government as per the order of Gauhati High Court a few years back.



Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal during a visit to a LPG bottling plant at Mirza, on Wednesday. – UB Photos

State taking steps to revive agri sector in Dhubri: Atul Bora

CORRESPONDENT

DHUBRI, April 22: State Agriculture Minister Atul Bora along with Food and Civil Supplies Minister, Phani Bhushan Choudhury, visited Dhubri district to take an account of the preparedness of the district in the agricultural sector and distribution of ration, amid lockdown.

It's worth mentioning that most of the people in the district survive by engaging themselves in various agricultural activities and its produce such as rice, vegetables and fruits, and the produce are distributed all over the State and also in other parts of the country. But, due to lockdown, the farmers of the

district have to face innumerable challenges and most of the either had to throw away their agricultural produce or had to sell those off in a very low price.

Attending a press meet, Atul Bora said that they have already allowed the farmers to go to their farmland, keeping in mind the social distancing norms. "We will streamline a way to distribute such produce in the areas where the demand of these products is high," the Minister said, adding that the farmers of the district have already lost agricultural products worth Rs 2 crore during the ongoing lockdown.

He also urged the Deputy Commissioner of the district

to make KCC loans available for the farmers.

He said that the department has already contacted with the markets in Delhi and 19 trains are already functional for carrying the goods. "So we will soon streamline and facilitate farmers towards distributing their goods. Moreover, the State is also mulling over the distribution of locally available agricultural produce to different countries," the Minister said.

Several farmers have complained that as Dhubri is a Red Zone area, people from other districts are not buying its agricultural produce. However, the Minister said, "Due to some fake news, such misinformation is pre-

ailing in the State. We are consuming vegetables which are produced in Red Zone areas of other parts of the country. If we wash and boil what we eat, there will be no issue. And it is also scientifically proven that the coronavirus can't be spread through fruits and vegetables."

He also said that the department is gathering data of loss in the district amid the lockdown and will soon prepare ways to deal with it.

Meanwhile, the Food and Civil Supplies Minister, Phani Bhushan Choudhury, said that the district has almost one month's rations in stock and also has enough fruits and dry fruits for ensuing Ramadan month.

Retailers, wholesalers of essentials in Karimganj dist sternly warned

ANN Service

NILAMBAZAR, April 22: "Retailers and wholesalers of essential commodities in Karimganj district will face corporal punishment if any of them try to gain extra benefit by raising the prices amid the prevailing situation of the nationwide lockdown," said Dhruvajyoti Deb, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs department in-charge cum Additional Deputy Commissioner during a conversation with this correspondent here today.

"Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs officials have already started a district-wide drive to prevent price hike of essential commodities. During the drive, we will check cash memos in every shop and initiate action against the rule violators," ADC said.

He informed that the district administration after receiving several complaints regarding skyrocketing prices in wholesale and retail markets of the district, has formed a monitor-

ing committee headed by Joint Director of Food and Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs department to supervise the price rise of essential commodities throughout the district. All circle officers of Karimganj have also been directed to form the task forces for monitoring the same within their respective jurisdictions.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner asked the traders not to increase prices frequently. He also directed the traders to keep the district administration posted every day about the latest position in regard to the price list.

"The administration ordered the traders not to create artificial scarcity of commodities with an intention to increase prices. Otherwise, authority will be compelled to take necessary steps under the provision of the law," the ADC warned.

It may be mentioned here that ruling party and other political parties have alleged that the price rise of essential commodities has been hiked 30 to 40 per cent in bordering district of Karimganj during the lockdown period.

OBITUARY

Nafisa Hussain

GUWAHATI, April 22: Nafisa Hussain (Buri), a resident of South Woodford, London, UK passed away in the early hours of April 21 after contracting COVID-19.

Nafisa Hussain was the daughter of Abdul Rahim, a police inspector posted in Shillong during the early 1930s. She was from the Hirajan Tea Estate and related to freedom fighter 'Bahadur Gaonburah'. She was born in 1930 and returned to Jorhat from Shillong with the family when her father retired in 1937. She studied in Jorhat where she did her ISC and married Nazmul Husain (Makhan) of JB Road, Jorhat. Her husband had already settled in London in 1954 and a year later, she moved to London to be with him.

Her husband had various roles including one as an employee of the London City Council. In 1963, her husband completed his studies and was called to the Bar. He also had a jute and fish import business which continued for a long time. Buri worked in the Indian High Commission in London and was there for almost 16 years. They initially lived in Kensington, London and then moved to Ongar, Essex before settling in South Woodford.

On January 1, 2008 their younger daughter passed away, followed by Makhan on April 11 of the same year. Their elder daughter, Nazia is now living in London after being overseas for 15 years.

Her death has been mourned by her family members, relatives and well-wishers.

Govt facing shortage of skilled labourers

MANASH PRATIM DUTTA

GUWAHATI, April 22: The State Water Resources Department is facing a scarcity of skilled labourers to carry on the dyke repairing works amid the COVID-19 induced lockdown hours.

The repairing of dykes, which was on halt for over a month amid the lockdown, resumed from Tuesday as the rainy season has already started in the State.

Minister of Water Resources department Keshab Mahanta said the department has set a target to repair 68 dykes involving a cost of Rs 700 crore this year and all the works are under way despite the scarcity of skilled labourers.

"We have enough local general labourers. But for protection related works we need skilled labourers. In

such a situation, it is a challenge for us to transport adequate numbers of skilled labourers to the work site. But I think, this scarcity will not

Dyke repairing works

affect the work, as now-a-days we mainly depend on machines," Mahanta said.

He stated that in some areas, repairing works have also been facing disruptions due to the shortage of sand. To mitigate the issue, the minister instructed all officials concerned to co-ordinate with nearby districts where stock of sand is available. This time, the department is also not using boulders in dyke repairing works.

Meanwhile, a senior official of the department asserted that especially in the

red zone areas for coronavirus, it will be a great challenge for the department to carry out dykes repairing works. Moreover, in some locations, water level is also rising which will create further obstacles.

In connection to the labour scarcity issue, the official said that for a contractor it will be a huge task to carry out registration and medical tests of every labourer being engaged.

Reacting to these issues, the minister said that taking as much as possible protective measure is the first priority of the department. This time the department is concentrating more on Barpeta, Nalbari, Baksa, Darrang, Kamrup, Kamrup (Metro), Nagaon, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Dibrugarh and Jorhat districts, where last year floods caused havoc due to breaching of a number of dykes.

5 PDS licence holders, gaonburah suspended in Dibrugarh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DIBRUGARH, April 22: Even as allegations of corruption and nepotism in providing relief and distributing free rations under National Food Security Act and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana schemes continue to pour in from several quarters of the district, the district administration here has so far suspended the PDS licences of at least five fair price shop dealers after enquiry. One Lat Gaonburah has also been suspended for similar practice.

The suspended PDS licence holders include Chandana Boruah of No. 1 Kekurigaon, Md Joshefuddin Ahmed of Chaulkhowa, Ghana Kanta Dutta of Dhubabar Majjan Gaon, Hira Hazarika of Majgaon and Uttam Kurmi of Majjan TE Pucca Line. The suspension was ordered with immediate effect by Jugananda Changmai, Superintendent, FCS & CA functioning as Deputy Director i/c & Licencing Authority, FCS&CA, Dibrugarh.

The licences of Chandana Boruah, Md Joshe-

fuddin Ahmed and Uttam Kurmi were suspended for reportedly distributing lesser quantity of rice than the legitimate share allotted to the beneficiaries by the government. Ghana Kanta Dutta had to forfeit his licence for realizing value against distribution of free rice to the beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana for the month of April, 2020 quota. Similarly the licence of Hira Hazarika was suspended on finding that he had not distributed the free allotted rice to some beneficiaries.

The authority concerned has, meanwhile, tagged all the beneficiaries attached with the penalized distributors with their nearest PDS licence holders for interrupted supply of TPDS items. Similarly one Ganesh Gogoi, Lat Gaonburah of Nalani Kapohua, Majpathar, Tingthengia of Tingkhong mouza under Tingkhong revenue circle has been placed under suspension for gross misconduct. He reportedly resorted to nepotism, corrupt behaviour and negligence of duty in the process of selection of beneficiaries of Rs 1000 cash assistance to people below poverty line.



Police personnel checking vehicles during the nationwide lockdown, at Tezpur on Wednesday. – UB Photos

Youth held for posting communal message

ANN Service

NILAMBAZAR, April 22: Karimganj Police arrested a youth of Kaliganj on charges of sedition and was sent to judicial custody for 14 days on Wednesday.

The arrested youth Islam Uddin (35), a resident of Dighirpar of Kaliganj area, was allegedly posting anti-Hindu messages on the social media platform Facebook.

"We have received complaints and booked him under Section 153 (A)/295(A)/506 IPC, R/W 67 of IT Act and today he was sent to judicial custody after a case was registered at Karimganj police station," said Utpol Chanda, in-charge, Kaliganj Police Petrol Post.

"The Cyber Cell of Karimganj Police has been put on high alert by our SP to keep track of all the sensitive posts made viral via different social medias leading to possible law-and-order situation in the society," Chanda added.

It has been learnt that the accused person is an employee of Indane Gas Agency, Kaliganj. He stated before the police during the investigation that unknown persons have hacked his Facebook profile and uploaded the communal post in his name.

14 ULFA(I) activists nabbed

CORRESPONDENT

DOOMDOOMA, April 22: In a joint operation by the Army and Assam Police, 14 ULFA(I) activists were apprehended from Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Charaideo, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts in upper Assam, stated a press release issued by the Army Brigade Headquarters situated at Laipuli in Tinsukia.

These 14 activists included three cadres, seven overground workers and four recruits. Seven overground workers were aiding ULFA(I) cadres by facilitating extortion, movement of weapons and explosives and luring youths for recruitment in the banned outfit.

Four recruits were rescued from captivity. Later they will be handed over to their parents after counselling by police authorities, stated the Army press release.

CM to visit Sadiya: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal will visit Sadiya in Tinsukia district on Thursday. He will attend a review meeting regarding initiatives taken to combat COVID-19 in the district.



ASHA workers on their way to work during the lockdown, in Majuli on Wednesday. – UB Photos

Cachar dist introduces 'Report Crowd' web to ensure social distancing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, April 22: In a first, the Cachar district administration has launched a portal to contain and disperse crowd accumulation and enhance social distancing during the nationwide lockdown period meant to restrict the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

The webportal named 'Report Crowd' which would be operational along with the official website of the district administration was launched formally in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Barnali Sarma,

District Development Commissioner Jessica Lalim, ADC Sumit Sattawan and other officials.

Taking to mediapersons on the launch, the Deputy Commissioner said, "The facility will ensure social distancing and enable the administration to disperse crowd across the district with the help of feed in the form of on-the-spot photographs with Geo tagging. We hope that we shall be able to maintain the social distancing norms smoothly henceforth."

Later, Assistant Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal elaborated on the usage of the

portal saying that following the Government guidelines on relaxing certain areas of work in the Government sector and anticipating a possible crowd gathering, the facility has been introduced with the technical assistance from software firm Clappia based in Bengaluru. The firm is offering free services during the lockdown phase.

"This kind of an portal is being introduced for the first time in Assam to ensure that social distancing is being adhered to at all cost. The Report Crowd is linked with the official website of Cachar district administration where the aware citizens along with

commoners can help the administration in dispersing crowd for the common good. Anyone who finds a seemingly large assembly of people at one place can simply click a photo, go to cachar.gov.in and upload the photo at the URL cacharreport.clappia.com with little details about the photograph.

The geo-tagging button shall help identify the location. The sender has to upload individual phone number and identity which shall be kept confidential with the administration and ensure that no misuse or abuse of any information is done. The DDMA shall send the information received

to respective Circle Officers with serial numbers from where the information, after proper verification, shall trickle down to police for on-ground action. Police shall send 'action taken report' back to the Circle Officers with details of FIR, arrest, seizure, vehicle seizure and penalty imposed. The same report shall be submitted by the Circle Officers to DDMA and finally to DC, Cachar." Baranwal added to say that the administration expects that people of Cachar shall co-operate to maintain social distancing during the lockdown phase.

Kumble is the best captain I have played under: Gambhir

NEW DELHI, April 22: The numbers are heavily in favour of Mahendra Singh Dhoni but former India batsman Gautam Gambhir says spin legend Anil Kumble was the best India captain he has ever played under.

Gambhir has high regards for Dhoni and Sourav Ganguly as India skippers, but believes Kumble would have been phenomenal as captain had he led the national team for a longer period.

"From the records point of view it obviously has to be MS Dhoni. He has won every ICC trophy possible. He has done fabulously well, he has handled the pressure for a very long time. Sourav (Ganguly) has also done well. "But one person I would definitely, would have liked



Anil Kumble

“I played 6 Test matches under him (Anil Kumble) and had he captained India for a long time would have broken many records.”

– Gautam Gambhir

to captain India for a long time should have been Anil Kumble. I played 6 Test matches under him and had he captained India for a long time would have broken many records," Gambhir said on

Star Sports 'Cricket Connected' show on the occasion of IPL's 12th anniversary.

"From the records point of view Dhoni is right up there but for me the best captain I played under is Anil

Kumble," Gambhir, who is now a BJP MP, added.

Kumble was appointed as India captain after Rahul Dravid in 2007 and led the side in 14 Tests – winning three, losing six and drawing five.

But his stint as captain lasted little less than a year as he retired in November 2008, following which Dhoni was appointed as the skipper in all three formats. Gambhir also picked Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma as the all-time great IPL captain.

"I think it's Rohit Sharma. He has won the IPL four times and his captaincy is all about winning trophies," he said.

"He will end up being the most successful IPL captains of all-time as well, probably he will finish with 6 or 7 titles under his belt." – PTI

Smith took blame to save side: Flintoff

LONDON, April 22: Former England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff believes the entire Australian team was involved in the ball-tampering scandal that rocked world cricket in 2018 and then skipper Steve Smith just "took the blame" to save his side.

Smith was suspended for a year along with David Warner and Cameron Bancroft after being indicted in the sandpaper-gate during a Test match against South Africa in Cape Town.

"I can't believe that the whole team isn't in on it. As a bowler, if someone gives me a ball that's been tampered with, I know initially.

One of the things that Steve Smith did is take the blame for everyone else," Flintoff told Talksport.

"Things like ball tampering have gone on for a long, long time and I think it's just the degrees where you take it. We were accused of putting sweets on the ball. People put sunscreen on it, tried everything they can."

Smith was also banned from taking any leadership roles for two years – a suspension which has now expired.

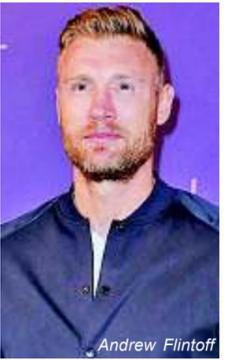
The England legend said it is difficult to believe that others in the team did not have a clue about what was going on.

"Sandpaper is wrong, but it's stupid more than any-

thing. But I can't believe that everyone in the team wasn't involved in some way or another," said Flintoff, who took 400 wickets and scored over 7000 runs in his career.

Flintoff, who retired from the longer format after the 2009 Ashes, said he would give up everything to play one more Test for England.

"It's getting easier as I'm 42 and don't think I should be playing cricket now, but when I finished at 31, I couldn't go anywhere near it, I just wanted to be a cricketer. Still now I would swap everything I do to play one more Test match and wear that England badge at Old Trafford one more time.



Andrew Flintoff

"It's only when it's finished that you think I should have cherished it more.

"When it's gone it's so hard." – PTI

Shakib to auction 2019 WC bat

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

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

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

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

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

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

German football eyes May return

BERLIN, April 22: German football authorities are set to announce plans on Thursday for Bundesliga matches to restart in empty stadiums on May 9, but the potential first return of a major European league in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic is meeting some opposition.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's government is slowly easing nationwide restrictions and the resumption of the Bundesliga, which was halted on March 13, would boost morale in football-mad Germany.

It would also make the Bundesliga the first top-flight European league to begin playing again.

Large public events are banned in Germany until August 31, yet football could resume without spectators – known as "ghost games" in a country that has more testing capacity than other in Europe and players could be tested regularly.

The 18 clubs have been back in training for three weeks, albeit in small groups with social distancing observed even on the pitch.

Having already been given signs of encouragement by politicians, the German Football League (DFL) is set to iron out details in Thursday's video conference meeting of the clubs. – AFP

DDCA secretary Tihara in Meerut jail for past 1 month



NEW DELHI/MEERUT, April 22: Controversial Delhi and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) general secretary Vinod Tihara is currently in jail for allegedly failing to "comply with GST norms" after going "incommunicado" amid speculation that he was self-isolating with symptoms of COVID-19.

"A Delhi resident named Vinod Tihara was arrested by Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) wing of Noida on March 17 on allegations of violations of GST norms and is currently in Meerut jail," SSP Meerut, Ajay Sahni, told PTI.

There was no immediate clarity on the exact nature of the violation he has been accused of committing.

Tihara is Delhi cricket's representative at the BCCI and an influential figure in state's cricket body.

Tihara had been "unreachable" since mid-March leaving DDCA officials, including members of his faction, flummoxed.

"For the longest time, we were under the impression that Vinod ji has tested positive for COVID-19. One or two people who contacted his family members were told that he is under isolation. His

phone is switched off for the past one month," a senior DDCA office-bearer told PTI.

During a recent online hearing in a matter of financial misappropriation of funds, organised by DDCA ombudsman Justice (Retd) Deepak Verma via Skype, one of the body's lawyers, known for his proximity to Tihara, told the apex council members that he had tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

"We all freaked out as we had met Tihara till March 15 at various places. We told him that why weren't we informed as we all needed to quarantine ourselves.

"He then changed track and said that if you people would have been COVID-19 positive, then you would have known by now. It was very suspicious," the Apex Council member who was suspended that day, said. – PTI

BeIN calls on EPL to probe Saudi takeover of Newcastle

DOHA, April 22: A key Premier League broadcast partner has called on club bosses to probe a Saudi Arabian bid to buy Newcastle United over piracy allegations, it said on Wednesday.

The Magpies are on the verge of being sold to a Saudi-backed consortium that involves Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for around 300 million pounds (\$368 million).

It was reported on Tuesday that a non-refundable deposit of 17 million pounds has already been paid to current owner Mike Ashley as part of the deal.

The Premier League must decide if the new owners meet the criteria in its owners and directors test.

Qatar-based BeIN accused Saudi of masterminding the pirate broadcast of BeIN output, which included EPL games, as part of a spat between Doha and Riyadh. Saudi denies the claims.

In a letter to top-flight English clubs, BeIN urges them to put pressure on league officials to investigate whether Saudi "di-

rectors, officers and other representatives" would be fit and proper to own Newcastle.

"My request is purely based on the Saudi Arabia government's role in the past and continuing theft of the commercial interests of your club, the Premier League, all its broadcast partners and football in general – which, I think you would agree, simply cannot go ignored," wrote BeIN Media chief executive Yousef al-Obaidly.

"It is no exaggeration to say that the future economic model of football is at stake," BeIN alleges that following a breakdown in relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and its allies in 2017, Riyadh established a bootleg sport TV operation that stole BeIN's feeds.

The streams were then rebroadcast on satellites controlled from Riyadh, BeIN says.

Though the satellite broadcasts have ceased, BeIN maintains that the set-top boxes distributed by the "beoutQ" piracy operation still enable access to illegal sports broadcasts using internet technology. – AFP

Period away from cricket was like torture: Prithvi Shaw

NEW DELHI, April 22: The time spent away from cricket while serving a doping ban was nothing short of "torture" for him but young India batsman Prithvi Shaw said it also made him hungrier for runs.

The talented 20-year-old was suspended by the BCCI in July last year until November 15 for "inadvertently" ingesting a prohibited substance, commonly found in cough syrups.

"It was a mistake. And the period away from cricket was a torture," Shaw said while interacting with fans during an Instagram Live session on his IPL franchise Delhi Capitals' official handle.

"Doubts and questions arise, but I kept the faith and belief. I spent some time in London where I was working on my fitness, as I wasn't allowed to bat anywhere. When the ban got over, and I returned to domestic cricket, I was hungrier than before.

"I picked up my bat and realised I hadn't lost my touch at all. If anything,



“I spent some time in London where I was working on my fitness, as I wasn't allowed to bat anywhere. When the ban got over, and I returned to domestic cricket, I was hungrier than before.”

– Prithvi Shaw

that time off made me a more determined person," he said.

Talking about the importance of mental health during the unpre-

cedented health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Shaw said the key is to stay patient.

"A lot of us don't have patience for

things in life, so now is a great time to work on it. Everyone should find something to do that they like, and work towards perfecting that. That process in itself will help one grow calmer and become more patient," he said.

Asked how he has been spending time during the nationwide lockdown, Shaw said, "I've been working out a bit indoors and shadow practising to maintain my fitness levels.

"I've also been helping my father in the kitchen. I can cook eggs quite well, and I'm trying to learn a few new things. I've been playing some PUBG too."

Talking about Delhi Capitals' good run in the last IPL season as the team qualified for the play-offs after a seven-year gap, Shaw said the side was "like a family".

"We had Ricky (Ponting) Sir, Dada (Sourav Ganguly), (Mohammad) Kaif Sir to help us with anything and the environment was perfect." – PTI

Vijender, Manoj help raise funds for Dingko Singh

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

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

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

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

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

"Dingko is a hero, an icon for us. We had to come forward because every boxer deserves that his community comes to his aid at the hour of need," he added.

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

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

Manoj, who has two CWG medals to his credit, said he saw it as his duty to be there for a fellow pugilist. – PTI

Australia series this time will be different ball game: Rohit

NEW DELHI, April 22: Swashbuckling India opener Rohit Sharma believes the presence of David Warner and Steve Smith will make the tour of Australia later this year a "different ball game" for his side, which is also at its best right now.

India won the 2018-19 Test series 2-1, their first in 71 years of touring Down Under, but it came against a depleted Australian team which didn't have Warner and Smith, who were both serving a one year ball-tampering suspension.

"I was looking forward to the New Zealand series but unfortunately, injury (calf muscle) happened at the wrong time," Rohit told India Today on Wednesday.

"I can't wait to go to Australia and play the Test matches there. Australia in Australia with those two guys will be a different ball game," India's white ball vice-captain said.

For him, opening is a challenge that he has relished and a testimony to that was his stupendous start against South Africa at home. However, he has been ready for the job since the 2018 Australia tour when the team man-

agement gave him enough hints. "I was told you might be opening in Tests as well. It was two years ago. I was preparing myself from then onwards," he said.

For him, watching the game from the dressing room is no fun.

"You want opportunity, everybody wants to be out there in the middle. I wanted to play and not watch the game.

"When the chance came along, I was ready. There were some technical aspects, I needed to be aware of," he said.

Rohit said the Australia series will be an exciting one as this Indian team is currently playing its best cricket.

"As a team, we are playing best cricket right now, everybody wants to take the game back to the opposition. If it happens (amid the COVID-19 pandemic), it will be a great series to be part of," he said.

The tour is planned between October and January but there is speculation on whether it can be conducted smoothly amid the global health crisis which hasn't shown any signs of being under control as of now. – PTI



BWF names Sindhu as an ambassador for its campaign

NEW DELHI, April 22: World champion PV Sindhu was on Wednesday unveiled as one of the ambassadors for Badminton World Federation (BWF)'s 'i am badminton' awareness campaign.

The campaign provides a platform for players to express their love and respect for badminton by advocating and committing to clean and honest play.

Sindhu, an Olympic silver medallist, said playing clean and honest is very important in any sport.

"This message starts with one voice. If we as ambassadors can highlight this, then I think this will spread to more players," said the 24-year-old Indian.

"You are playing the sport

for yourself. You need to be happy about it. You have to play it very clean and that is very important to me."

It has been five years since BWF's Integrity Unit was formed and this time the campaign has been at the forefront of the governing body's efforts to communicate its approach towards integrity.

Besides Sindhu, other ambassadors include Canada's Michelle Li, Chinese duo of Zheng Si Wei and Huang Ya Qiong, England's Jack Shepherd, Germany's Valeska Knoblauch, Hong Kong's Chan Ho Yuen and Germany's Marc Zwiebler, who is Athletes' Commission Chair.

"It's hoped such a concerted effort will not only raise



awareness across the entire badminton landscape but encourage players to be active participants in shaping the integrity of the sport," the BWF said in a release. – PTI

SU DO KU

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

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 3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9 without repeating any.

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