

**p2** ISIS steps up as Iraq, Syria grapple with virus

**p7** Black rice of Manipur gets GI recognition

**p11** 26 Bangladeshi nationals apprehended in Dhubri

## NEWS Capsule

### CRPF HQ sealed

NEW DELHI, May 3: The headquarters of the CRPF here has been sealed after a personal staff of a senior officer and a bus driver of the paramilitary tested positive for coronavirus, officials said on Sunday. The five-storey building is located inside the Central Government Offices complex on Lodhi Road. – PTI

### ATF price cut

NEW DELHI, May 3: Jet fuel (ATF) prices were cut by a steep 23 per cent in line with a slump in global oil prices and it now costs about one-third of petrol and diesel whose rates continue to be frozen for the 50th day on Sunday. This is the sixth reduction in ATF prices since February. – PTI

### Fresh dates

NEW DELHI, May 3: In a relief for engineering and medical aspirants, the HRD Ministry will announce fresh dates for competitive exams – JEE and NEET – on May 5. The exams were postponed due to nationwide lockdown announced to fight the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. – PTI

Also see page 3

### Force rotation

NEW DELHI, May 3: The annual rotation of BSF and ITBP soldiers posted along the international borders with Pakistan, Bangladesh and China has been shelved till March next year because of the novel coronavirus outbreak, the top commander of the two forces has said. – PTI

### Shipping curb

NEW DELHI, May 3: As many as 63,000 crew members and passengers on board vessels, mostly from China, have been denied disembarkation at Indian ports so far, as part of efforts to curb the spread of novel coronavirus, a Shipping ministry official here today said. – PTI

### JOCOSERIOUS



Times have changed. Now you can't even bargain with the shopkeepers!



An Indian Air Force helicopter flies past the MMCH in Guwahati to express gratitude towards medical professionals fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. This exercise is part of 'India Salutes Corona Warriors' campaign organised across the country. – UB Photos

## IAF conducts flypast across India

### Gratitude to Corona warriors

NEW DELHI, May 3: Fighter jets and transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force on Sunday carried out flypasts over major cities and towns while military choppers showered petals on leading hospitals across the country as part of a mega exercise to express gratitude to lakhs of doctors, paramedics and other front-line workers battling the coronavirus pandemic.

A fleet of military jets comprising Sukhoi-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar flew over Rajpath, Delhi's centrepiece boulevard, and then, orbited over the city and the national capital region for around 30 minutes from 11 am.

Premier transport aircraft C-130 also carried out a separate fly-past over the Delhi and the NCR region. The aircraft flew at an approximate height of 500 metres to 1000 metres keeping aerospace safety in mind, a senior official in the Indian Air Force said.

The thanks-giving activities started with laying of wreaths at the national police memorial in Delhi to honour the police personnel deployed in the enforcement of the nationwide lockdown, officials said.

A military chopper also showered petals on the memorial.

Besides Delhi, the Indian Air Force conducted fly-pasts in a number of cities including Mumbai, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Patna, Lucknow, Srinagar, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Coimbatore and Thiruvananthapuram, they said.

A large number of helicopters belonging to the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy dropped flower petals over leading hospitals treating coronavirus patients across the country including in Delhi, Shillong, Guwahati and Mumbai.

Army's military bands also performed outside leading hospitals. – PTI

**Our Staff Reporter adds:** The Armed Forces today paid their respect and showed solidarity to all the corona warriors throughout the country by organising various events at different locations. The armed forces are indebted to the corona warriors who are at the forefront of the healthcare system, they said.

SEE PAGE 6

## Lockdown 3.0 from today

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3: The State government will impose curfew from 6 pm to 6 am during the third phase of lockdown from tomorrow which will be marked by relaxations stricter than those given by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Even though standalone shops will open during daytime and industries and offices – both government and private – can operate with fifty per cent staff, all workers and employees will have wear masks and adhere to social distancing norms.

People above 65 years of age and kids below 12 years will have to strictly stay indoors unless there is a medical emergency.

Taxis, e-rickshaws and cycle rickshaws will be able to ply but with only two passengers, according to a State government notification.

The government has exempted women employees – both in government sector and private – to stay at home if they have a below-five-year-old child.

All sports, cultural, political and religious events will remain banned during the third phase of lockdown.

The exemptions will, however, not apply to the four orange zone districts –

### GUIDELINES IN STATE

- The movement of individuals is strictly prohibited between 6 PM and 6 AM throughout the State across all zones, except for emergency services namely medical services, police, fire services and emergency response for restoring telecom and electricity.
- Private medical clinics and OPDs shall be allowed to open including veterinary OPDs.
- All standalone shops shall be allowed to operate till 5 PM. In areas where there are adjacent shops it shall be ensured that there are at least two closed shops in between two open shops except for pharmacies, grocery stores and book shops. Deputy Commissioners shall in consultation with market associations, identify the shops and allow them to operate only after this is finalised. Market complexes and shopping malls shall remain closed.
- Auto rickshaws, e-rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and taxis shall operate with one driver and two passengers maintaining social distancing.
- Private four wheelers are allowed with driver and two others.
- For two wheelers, pillion riding is allowed either with one female or one child up to the age of 12 years.
- All constructions in urban areas shall be allowed with a maximum of 50 per cent work force.

SEE PAGE 6

Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Morigaon and Dhubri – where only grocery shops, pharmacies and vegetable vendors will be allowed.

Elsewhere, during the curfew hours, there will be no exemption except for medical personnel, media, fire services and government vehicles.

Hospitality services, cinema halls, malls, gyms, sports complexes, swimming pools, entertainment parks, theatres, bars and auditoriums, assembly halls

and similar places will remain closed.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal appealed the people of the State to make the third phase of lockdown successful like the first two phases.

He said that though the State Government would implement relaxation for certain sectors from May 4 following the guideline issued by the Central Government to restart economic activities, people must not be complacent as the threat of COVID-19 is yet to over.

### CM constitutes economic advisory panel

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today constituted an economic advisory committee as a measure to revive the economy of the State and break the stagnation brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The eight-member committee led by retired IAS officer Subhash Das would study various aspects of the State's economy and provide recommendations to bring back economic buoyancy through systematic interventions.

SEE PAGE 6

### Col, Major among 5 killed in J&K encounter

SRINAGAR, May 3: In a setback, two senior Army officers, including a colonel-rank officer, were among five security personnel killed during an encounter with terrorists at a village in Rajwar forests of north Kashmir, officials said on Sunday.

The deceased security personnel are Colonel Ashutosh Sharma, Major Anuj Sood, Naik Rajesh and Lance Naik Dinesh, all from the Brigade of GUARDS regiment, and at present part of the 21 Rashtriya Rifles, deployed to counter terrorism in the hinterland.

A Jammu and Kashmir Police sub-inspector, Shakeel Qazi, also fell victim to the bullets of terrorists.

The two holed-up terrorists, who were eliminated in the encounter, included commander of banned Lashker-e-Taiba Haider, a Pakistani national who has been active in the north Kashmir area.

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## Govt plan to bring back stranded Indians

### 1700 from State stranded abroad trying to return home

R DUTTA CHOUDHURY

GUWAHATI, May 3: Around 1700 persons from Assam, who are stranded abroad, have applied through the respective Indian Embassies to return home and the Government of India has chalked out a plan to bring the stranded Indians from foreign countries in phased manner on priority basis. Those stranded include tourists and students.

Highly placed official sources told *The Assam Tribune* that the External Affairs Min-

istry has chalked out an elaborate plan to bring back the Indians stranded abroad and

**Stranded persons from Assam seeking to return home (over hundred)**

Country	Number of people seeking to return
Kazakhstan	325
Philippines	253
Kyrgyzstan	215
Canada	110
Nepal	110
Nigeria	110

the process is likely to start soon. But as all such persons cannot be brought back to-

gether, the Government has decided to bring them back on priority basis. Not all the Indians staying abroad are keen on coming back and those who want to return have applied through the Indian Embassies in those countries.

According to the plan chalked out, the first priority will be given to the persons who are facing deportation due to ex-

piry of their visa. The next priority will be the migrant workers who have been laid off because of the coronavirus outbreak. Next in the priority list are the persons facing medical emergency, pregnant women and elderly. The persons who want to return due to death of close relatives will come next in the priority list, which will be followed by the stranded tourists and students whose institutions and hostels are closed.

SEE PAGE 6

## Students, mentors made Assam Cares a success

SIVASISH THAKUR

GUWAHATI, May 3: The Assam Cares programme launched by the State government to help people from Assam, including a large segment of migrant workers and students, stranded at different parts of the country received an overwhelming response, enabling the authorities to make timely monetary intervention to ease their lives amid the nationwide lockdown.

Managing the lakhs of missed calls (those in distress were supposed to give a missed call to the helpline) and then gathering all the required information from them and creating an online

COVID-19 STATUS	
WORLD	
Confirmed cases	3,452,285
Cured/Discharged	1,101,695
Death	244,320
INDIA	
Confirmed cases	40,263
Cured/Discharged	10,886
Death	1,306
ASSAM	
Confirmed cases	42
Cured/Discharged	32
Death	1

Data as on Sunday

database for streamlining delivery was an arduous task and the helpdesk had to work day in and out to ensure that the grievances of the needy did not go unanswered or unaddressed.

It took a team of around 800 student volunteers from Gauhati University, Cotton University and Assam Engineering College, Guwahati who worked relentlessly and painstakingly from 10 am to 10 pm, calling lakhs of stranded people across the country. Hundreds of study rooms of such students were transformed into mini call centres in the process. The mentor professors were guiding, helping, troubleshooting and motivating the volunteers

through online. After 10 pm, the mentors compiled the statistics and sent reports to the government team.

"It was quite tough. We received around 29 lakh missed calls, out of those around six lakh were genuine ones... The next step was to send an automatic SMS to all those six lakh numbers containing a web link that provides a simple form facilitating submission of information like where they are put up currently, their Assam address, and the bank account number and IFSC code," Prof Sikhar Sarma of Gauhati University, who headed one of the groups of the mission, told *The Assam Tribune*.

SEE PAGE 6

## Rate of growth of new COVID-19 cases steady: Centre

NEW DELHI, May 3: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said the rate of growth of new COVID-19 cases has been steady for a while and the recovery rate improving, adding that India is on the path of success and will win the war against the pandemic.

He said around 10,000 COVID-19 patients have recovered so far. "The recovery rate of COVID-19 patients has steadily increased which shows that more and more of these patients are getting better," he said.

"The rate of growth of new cases has also been steady-

ing for a while," Vardhan said.

According to the data received on Sunday, for the past three days, the doubling rate of the virus is 12.0, for seven days it is 11.7 and for 14 days it is 10.4, the Minister was quoted as saying in a statement.

"We have crossed over 10 lakh tests till date and are performing over 74,000 tests in a day presently," he said.

The Minister added that the government has distrib-

uted around 20 lakh PPE kits all over India and supplied medicines [both Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and Paracetamol (PCM)] to more than 100 countries.

He said India is on a "better footing" as compared to other nations, adding the country is capable to pull off any eventuality with more than 2.5 lakh beds in dedicated COVID-19 hospitals and health centers. – PTI

SEE PAGE 6

**Wash HANDS  
Ward off VIRUS**



# US Air Force, Navy stage spectacular flypast

WASHINGTON, May 3: The US Air Force and Navy pilots staged a rare joint flyover in three American cities, including Washington, to salute the frontline coronavirus responders and essential workers as the country, the worst hit by the pandemic, fought a grim battle against the "invincible enemy".

Scores of people descended upon the National Mall here on Saturday as the elite pilots of the Thunderbirds

and the Blue Angles performed a rare joint flyover over Washington, Baltimore and Atlanta called 'America Strong' to thank the frontline workers, some of whom have sacrificed their lives.

The Thunderbirds and the Blue Angles performed flyovers in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC, on Saturday before the aircraft travelled to Atlanta, Georgia. A formation of six F-16C/D

Fighting Falcon and 6 F/A-18C/D Hornet aircraft conducted the flyover.

Washington is under a stay-at-home order to slow down the spread of the vi-

sidewalks around the mall were crowded, US media reports said.

The novel coronavirus, which originated from the Chinese city of Wuhan in

number of infections at 1,133,069 and over 67,400 people have died due to the disease.

"During today's tribute, viewers were encouraged to watch the flyover online from the safety

of their home quarantine and asked to refrain from traveling to landmarks, hospitals and gathering in large groups," an Air Force official told CNN.

They are the US military's

flight demonstration squadrons, and this is the second joint flyover mission being conducted to salute the health care workers, first responders, military and other essential workers risking their lives during the pandemic.

The first joint flight was conducted on Tuesday across New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The joint operation is part of a series of multi-city flyovers being conducted over the next two weeks. - PTI

## COVID-19: Saluting frontline workers

rus but that did not stop crowds from gathering between the US Capitol and the Washington Monument.

While many people practised social distancing and some wore masks, the

December last year, has claimed 243,922 lives and infected over 3.4 million people globally, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

The US has the highest



People practice social distancing while enjoying the pleasant weather at Central Park's Sheep Meadow on Saturday in New York. New York City police dispatched 1,000 officers this weekend to enforce social distancing as warmer weather tempted New Yorkers to come out of quarantine. - AP/PTI

# ISIS steps up as Iraq, Syria grapple with virus

BAGHDAD, May 3: The man wearing an explosive vest emerged from a car and calmly marched toward the gates of the intelligence building in Iraq's northern city of Kirkuk. When he ignored their shouts to halt, guards opened fire, and he blew himself up, wounding three security personnel in the first week of Ramadan.

Days later, a three-pronged coordinated attack killed 10 Iraqi militia fighters in the northern province of Salahaddin, the deadliest and most complex operation in many months.

The assaults are the latest in a resurgence of attacks by the Islamic State (ISIS) group in northern Iraq. The first was a brazen suicide mission not seen in months.

The second was among the most complex attacks since the group's defeat in 2017. In neighbouring Syria, ISIS attacks on security forces, oil fields and civilian sites have also intensified.

The renewed mayhem is a sign that the militant group is taking advantage of governments absorbed in tackling the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing slide into economic chaos.

The virus is compounding longtime concerns among security and UN experts that the group would stage a comeback after its "caliphate,"

which once encompassed a third of Iraq and Syria, was brought down last year.

In Iraq, militants also exploit security gaps at a time of an ongoing territorial dispute and a US troop drawdown.

"It's a real threat," said Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister of the northern Kurdish region of Iraq.

"They are mobilising and killing us in the north and they will start hitting Baghdad soon." He said the ISIS was benefiting from a "gap" between Kurdish forces and federal armed forces caused by political infighting.

Intelligence reports say the number of ISIS fighters in Iraq is believed to be 2,500-3,000.

In northeast Syria, Kurdish-dominated police have become a more visible target for ISIS as they patrol the streets to implement anti-virus measures, said Mervan Qamishlo, a spokesman for US-allied Kurdish-led forces.

ISIS fighters in late March launched a campaign of attacks in government-held parts of Syria, from the central province of Homs all the way to Deir el-Zour to the east, bordering Iraq.

Some 500 fighters, including some who had escaped from prison, recently slipped from Syria into Iraq, helping fuel the surge in violence there, Iraqi intelligence officials said. - AP

It's a real threat... they are mobilising and killing us in the north and they will start hitting Baghdad soon

- Qubad Talabani

# North, South Korean troops exchange fire along border

SEOUL, May 3: North and South Korean troops exchanged fire along their tense border on Sunday, the South's military said, the first such incident since the rivals took unprecedented steps to lower frontline animosities in late 2018.

Violent confrontations have occasionally occurred along the border, the world's most heavily fortified. While Sun-

day's incident is a reminder of persistent tensions, it didn't cause any known casualties on either side and is unlikely to escalate, observers said.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said in a statement that North Korean troops fired several bullets at a South Korean guard post inside the border zone. South Korea responded with a total of 20 rounds of warning shots on

two occasions before issuing a warning broadcast, it said.

South Korea suffered no casualties, the military said. Defence officials said it's also unlikely that North Korea had any casualties, since the South Korean warning shots were fired at uninhabited North Korean territory.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency, or KCNA, did not immediately report about the incident. - AP

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### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Shhaurya Sharma, have changed my former name Priyanku Jyoti Sharma w.e.f. 26.04.2020 through an affidavit in the Court of Civil cum Assistant Sessions Judge, Kamrup. Henceforth, in all dealings both official and non-official, I shall be known as Shhaurya Sharma. PN/P/BP000007/1

### ACHIEVEMENT



Mrs. Munni Puzari has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Life Science (Zoology) by Dibrugarh University for her thesis entitled "Study on the Distribution Pattern, Nutritional Value and Phylogeny of Freshwater Bivalve Parreysia favidens (Benson) from Upper Assam, India." She carried out her research work under the guidance of Dr. Devid Kardong, Associate Professor, Dept. of Life Sciences, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh. She also worked as a project fellow in a DST sponsored project during her research work. She is the daughter of Mr. Jiten Puzari and Mrs. Rupali Puzari of Dibrugarh, Assam, wife of Mr. Amlanjyoti Baruah of Bhandup, Mumbai and daughter in law of Mr. Mridul Baruah and Mrs. Archana Baruah of Bhandup, Mumbai.

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# UK doctor alerts Indians over poor diet

LONDON, May 3: Poor diet is a major cause behind the COVID-19 deaths and the Indians must urgently cut down on ultra-processed food to build resilience against the deadly virus, a leading Indian-origin cardiologist in the UK has cautioned.

Dr Aseem Malhotra, who is among the UK's National Health Service (NHS) frontline medicals and also a professor of

evidence-based medicine, said that obesity and excess weight were the "elephant in the room" that need to be addressed as a major factor behind the deaths

## nCoV deaths

of the coronavirus.

"India is particularly vulnerable, having a very high prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases," says the 42-year-old med-

ic, who is on a mission to spread awareness around lifestyle changes as a major weapon in the fight against coronavirus.

"Specifically, conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease are three of the major risk factors for death from COVID-19. This is rooted in excess body fat, a cluster of conditions known as a metabolic syndrome," he noted.

Western countries such as the US and the UK have seen some of the highest death rates from COVID-19 in the world, which are likely to correlate with unhealthy lifestyles.

"The elephant in the room is that the baseline general health in many Western populations was already in a horrendous state to begin with. In the UK and US, more than 60 per cent of adults are overweight or obese," he pointed out. - PTI



Supporters of President Donald Trump circle the State Capitol as they protest Governor Tim Walz's "Stay Home MN" orders meant to slow the spread of COVID-19 on Saturday, in St Paul, Minnesota. - AP/PTI

# Desert or sea: Virus traps migrants in mid-route danger zone!

GUATEMALA CITY, May 3: Thousands of "desperate" migrants are trapped in limbo and even at risk of death without food, water or shelter in scorching deserts and at sea, as governments close off borders and ports amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Migrants have been dropped by the truckload in the Sahara desert or bused to Mexico's desolate border with Guatemala and beyond. They are drifting in the Mediterranean Sea after European and Libyan authorities declared their ports unsafe.

And about 100 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are

believed to have died in the Bay of Bengal, as country after country pushes them back out to sea.

Many governments have declared emergencies, saying a public health crisis like the coronavirus pandemic requires extraordinary measures. However, these measures are just the latest efforts by governments to clamp down on migrants, despite human rights laws.

"They just dumped us," said Fanny Jacqueline Ortiz, a 37-year-old Honduran travelling with her two daughters, aged 3 and 12.

Ortiz reached the US, but American authorities expelled her to Mexico. The Mexican government in turn abandoned the family on March 26 at the lonely El Ceibo border crossing with Guatemala. Ortiz and other migrants on the two-bus convoy were told to avoid the Guatemalan soldiers guarding the border, which was closed due to the pandemic.

## Over 1.5 lakh Indians in UAE register to return home

DUBAI, May 3: Over 150,000 Indians in the UAE, who wish to return home amid the coronavirus lockdown, have applied through the online registration process to the Indian missions here, according to media reports.

The Indian missions in the country last week opened online registration for the expatriates who wish to fly back home after getting stuck in the country amidst the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"As of 6 pm on Saturday, we received more than 150,000 registrations," Consul General of India in Dubai Vipul told the Gulf News on Saturday.

A quarter of them want to return to their homeland after losing their jobs, he said.

According to a report in the Khaleej Times on Sunday, about 40 per cent of the applicants who have registered are blue-collar workers and 20 per cent are working professionals.

"Roughly 20 per cent have suffered job losses and about 55 per cent of the total applicants are from Kerala," Neeraj Aggarwal, Consul, Press, Information, Culture was quoted as saying in the report.

Aggarwal said that the figures would change as they are expecting registrations from workers from other states, including Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. - PTI

## Around the WORLD



A woman dressed in traditional costume holding an umbrella walks next to another woman, both wearing protective face masks, to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus as they visit the capital's popular tourist spot of Nanluoguxiang reopened for tourists following the coronavirus outbreak in Beijing, on Sunday. From the United States to Europe and Asia, people in many parts of the world are emerging from their homes as virus-related restrictions begin to ease and springtime temperatures climb. - AP/PTI

## Rohingya refugees

DHAKA, May 3: At least 29 Rohingya refugees from a fishing boat floating in the Bay of Bengal for weeks have landed on an island in southern Bangladesh, officials said Sunday.

The refugees, including 15 women and six children, landed on Bhasan Char island on Saturday and are believed to be from one of several boats stuck at sea, said Tommoy Das, local chief government official in Noakhali district.

Das said food, doctors and a team of 10 policemen were sent to the island to take care of the refugees.

An official from Bangladesh's Refugee Commissioner's office in Cox's Bazar district said the office was aware of the development. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Rights groups say hundreds of Rohingya are stranded on at least two fishing trawlers between Bangladesh and Malaysia. The refugees reportedly attempted to illegally reach Malaysia, but failed because of strict patrols to keep out the coronavirus.

More than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims came to Bangladesh starting in August 2017, when the military in Buddhist-majority Myanmar began a harsh crackdown against them in response to an attack by insurgents. Global rights groups and the UN have called the campaign ethnic cleansing involving rapes, killings and torching of thousands of homes. Currently more than 1 million Rohingya live in Bangladesh. - AP



A health worker checks the temperature of car passengers in an effort to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, as they enter the city in the Paghman district of Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday. - AP/PTI

## Egypt press crackdown

CAIRO, May 3: Journalism in Egypt has effectively become a crime over the past four years, as authorities clamp down on media outlets and muzzle dissent, Amnesty International said in a report released on Sunday.

As the number of coronavirus infections in Egypt continues to rise, the government is strengthening its control over information, the London-based rights group said, instead of upholding transparency during the public health crisis.

"The Egyptian authorities have made it very clear that anyone who challenges the official narrative will be severely punished," said Philip Luther, Amnesty's Middle East and North Africa director.

Amnesty documented 37 cases of journalists detained in the government's escalating crackdown on press freedoms, many charged with "spreading false news" or "misusing social media" under a broad 2015 counterterrorism law that has expanded the definition of terror to include all kinds of dissent.

An Egyptian press officer did not respond to multiple calls seeking comment, but authorities have previously denied rights violations and justified arrests on national security grounds.

Following general-turned-president Abdel Fattah el-Sissi's rise to power in 2013, most of Egypt's television programmes and newspapers have taken the government position and steered clear of criticism, or else disappeared. Many privately-owned Egyptian news outlets have been quietly acquired by companies affiliated with the country's intelligence service. - AP



Beachgoers wear face masks at Island Beach State Park in New Jersey on Saturday on the day New Jersey's state parks reopened after a closure brought on by the coronavirus outbreak. - AP/PTI

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## 'Delhi to enjoy all red zone relaxations from today'

NEW DELHI, May 3: The Delhi government will allow all the red zone relaxations in the city from Monday while the lockdown will be continued, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday.

Speaking to the media, Kejriwal said the Centre has announced extension of lockdown for two weeks from Monday.

"Entire Delhi is a red zone. The Central government has given some relaxations to the red zones and we will be allowing all that," Kejriwal said.

He said all the government offices with essential services will have 100 per cent staff while those in non-essential services will run with 33 per cent attendance.

"All inter-state buses, metros and air travel will be suspended. Autos will be suspended too. The movement of the goods will be allowed," he said.

Malls, market complexes and all the market areas will be shut. But the shops of es-

sential items inside these markets will be allowed. Stationery shops will be allowed.

The standalone shops will be allowed to open irrespective of whether they sell essential or non-essential items.

The movement of people between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. will be barred unless something essential.

Four category of people – those above 65-year, pregnant women, those having serious diseases and children below the age of 10 – are not allowed to step out, he said, adding they are more prone to the infection which can even kill them.

"The entire city is a red zone. We followed all the instructions from the Centre. Making the entire city a red zone is creating trouble for the people. Our revenue has gone down," he said. Kejriwal said in April the government received only Rs 300 crore as revenue. "Usually in April, the revenue used to be Rs 35,000 crore." – IANS

## Many outsiders want to enter Goa: CM Sawant

PANAJI, May 3: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Sunday claimed that many people from outside the state wanted to come to Goa which is classified as 'green' zone, and appealed to locals against providing them any shelter.

He said only those outsiders with medical emergencies and extremely genuine cases would be allowed in Goa.

"Many people from outside the state are trying to come to Goa as the state has been classified as green zone. I appeal to locals not to provide any shelter to them without informing the government," the chief minister told reporters on the eve of the beginning of the third phase of the coronavirus-induced national lockdown.

He said entry in Goa will be allowed on the basis of a proper permission from district collectors concerned.

Goa shares its boundaries with Maharashtra and Karnataka.

He also said that more than

3,000 Goans stranded in various parts of the country have already applied seeking repatriation to their home state.

"Goans entering the state will be taken to institutional quarantine facility for two days where COVID-19 test would be conducted on them. Only those whose test turns negative will be allowed to go home where they will be placed under quarantine for 14 days," he said.

The state government is also exploring whether a special train can be operated for Uttar Pradesh ferrying labourers stranded in Goa.

"The carrying capacity of such train, if operated, is around 1,000 passengers," he said.

The Railways has been operating Shramik Special trains from various parts of the country since the last two days, after the Union government allowed inter-state movement of stranded labourers, students and tourists on fulfilling certain conditions. – PTI

# 'A proud moment', medics express gratitude to armed forces

NEW DELHI, May 3: Doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) and Safdarjung Hospital in the national capital said it was a proud moment for them to be honoured by the Indian Armed Forces.

Speaking to IANS they said it was a great gesture by the Armed Forces to boost their morale as it is a very challenging time for the entire country, specially for the frontline warriors in the battle against novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) jets and transport planes across India on Sunday showered petals on hospitals and places of national importance to show honour and express their gratitude towards the coronavirus warriors who are battling against the pandemic.

Speaking to IANS, Dr Adarsh Pratap Singh, president of the Resident Doctors Association (RDA) of All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) Delhi, said: "It was a great gesture shown by the Indian Armed forces. The armed forces have always come to the forefront whenever the country is in difficulty. This time, health workers are the frontline warriors in this difficult time of coronavirus pandemic. Despite having limited resources, doctors are giving their hundred percent to save the people of the country. It is their unique way of saluting to the health workers battling coronavirus.

Dr Singh said this is the time when the government



An IAF chopper flies over Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital to express gratitude towards medical professionals for their contribution in fight against COVID-19, in Chennai on Sunday. – PTI

must ensure safety of all health workers. "Now we expect the government to provide a safe work environment in all the hospitals across the country. In AIIMS we have sufficient quantities of PPEs etc. but there are other hospitals in the country which have raised this issue. The government should sort this out otherwise if doctors and health workers keep getting infected, the entire health infrastructure will come to a halt."

Echoing the same sentiment, Dr Manish RDA President of Safdarjung Hospital told IANS that it was a proud mo-

ment for all the doctors at the Safdarjung hospital. "It was a proud moment for the medical fraternity. Not only the flow-ers were showered but the Army band also performed here. The Indian Armed forces have given a message to the society that health workers should be respected."

Dr Manish said that all the frontline workers have been working in very difficult conditions and recent attacks had brought a feeling of disparity in their minds and hearts. "We are working really hard, in difficult conditions. Many doctors are working 12 hours contin-

ously or even more, not because there are less number of doctors, but to reduce the exposure. Suppose if three doctors work in COVID ward in a day, they all will be exposed to the virus but if one works for a longer duration, at least two will be saved. This is our internal management, other hospitals are working as per their own system.

Dr Manish said they all have to wear PPE in hot temperature because the centralised air conditions of the hospital have been switched off in order to avoid the transmission. "There are suffi-

cient quantity of PPE kits, masks, and sanitisers for all, including nurses and support staff, in our hospital. But the major challenge we are facing is of asymptomatic patients, and there is no solution for it as they sometimes do not know that they are infected. Some patients are still hiding their travel or contact history which is posing a huge threat to the health workers resulting in infecting them. No one can wear PPE all the time. The centralised air conditioner is off to minimise the transmission," he said. – IANS

## Shops selling non-essentials allowed in Mumbai

MUMBAI, May 3: The Maharashtra government on Sunday announced that shops selling non-essential commodities, including liquor, will be allowed to open from Monday in the COVID-19 non-containment zones across the state.

Senior IAS officer from the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Bhushan Gagrani, told this to reporters on Sunday.

A similar decision had already been announced for the COVID-19 green and orange zones, and such shops in these two zones were scheduled to open from Monday.

However, the state government on Sunday extended the easing of restrictions for shops in the red zones as well.

"Even in the red zone districts, there are some areas where coronavirus infection has been not prevalent since

over a month now. These areas are known as non-containment zones.

"Such non-containment areas will have some relaxation, where shops selling non-essential commodities, like clothes, footwear, liquor, stationery, among others will be opened," Gagrani said.

The decision has been taken after discussions with the Centre, he said.

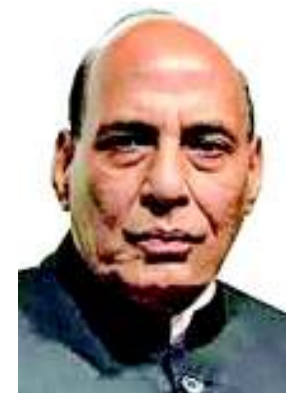
"Only five shops in one

lane will be allowed to operate during the entire day. But this particular restriction is not applicable to the shops selling essential items such as medical and grocery. As of now, there are no restrictions on the timing of the shops to remain open," Gagrani said.

Sale of liquor in standalone shops will be allowed, he said.

However, social distancing norms have to be followed by all the shops. – PTI

## Will never forget their bravery and sacrifice: Rajnath Singh



light the determination of the security forces to safeguard the lives of the people.

"Commanding Officer leading from the front along with other personnel of the unit and J&K Police have laid down their lives, living up to the motto; Service Before Self," General Rawat said.

He also said that the Armed Forces are proud of their courage as they have successfully eliminated the terrorists. "We salute these brave personnel and express our deep felt condolences for the bereaved families," he said.

In a statement, Indian Army said that based on the intelligence input that terrorists were taking the civilian inmates of a house in Changimulla at Handwara of Kupwara district hostage, a joint operation was launched by Army and Jammu and Kashmir Police.

"A team comprising of five Army and J&K Police personnel entered the target area occupied by the terrorists to evacuate the civilians. The team of Army and JK Police entered the target area and successfully extricated the civilian," Indian Army said.

The force stated that during the process, the team was subjected to heavy volume of fire by the terrorists. "In the ensuing fire fight two terrorists were eliminated and the team of five army and J&K personnel comprising of two Army officers, two Army soldiers and one J&K Police Sub Inspector attained martyrdom," Indian Army said. – IANS

## HRD Ministry to announce fresh dates for NEET, JEE on May 5

NEW DELHI, May 3: In a relief for engineering and medical aspirants, the HRD ministry will announce fresh dates for competitive exams –JEE and NEET– on May 5.

The exams were postponed due to nationwide lockdown announced to contain the COVID-19 spread.

"The fresh dates will be announced by HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on May 5. This will put an end to uncertainty for the aspirants. The minister will also interact with students online the same day," a senior ministry official said.

While Joint Entrance Exam-Mains (JEE-MAINS) is conducted for admission to engineering colleges across the country, the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) is held for medical colleges.

More than 15 lakh students across the country have registered for NEET this year, which is the gateway to medical colleges in India, whereas more than 9 lakh have registered for JEE Mains, the entrance exam for all other engineering colleges except IITs.

The JEE-Mains is considered as a qualifying exam for JEE-Advanced.

The HRD Ministry's National Testing Agency (NTA) had also given students an option to change their opted centres for the two tests as students have moved to different places since the lockdown.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16 when the centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Later, a nationwide

lockdown was announced from March 25, which was extended till May 17.

There is however, no clarity yet on when the pending board exams for class 10 and 12 will be conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

The board had announced that it will conduct pending exams in 29 subjects crucial for promotion and admission to higher education institutions.

The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 1,301 and the number of cases climbed to 39,980 in the country on Sunday, according to the Union health ministry.

The number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 28,046, while 10,632 people have recovered and one patient has migrated, the ministry said. – PTI



### The Blessed Month

Ramadan or Ramzan is the ninth month of the Islamic Calendar. The word 'Ramzan' has Persian roots, while 'Ramadan' has Arabic roots.

P.S. In Malaysia Puasa is used to denote the fasting of Ramzan. It comes from Sanskrit 'Upavasa'.



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## More coronavirus hotbeds in western than eastern India

NEW DELHI, May 3: To contain coronavirus effectively, the government has demarcated the country into three zones – red, orange and green. There are more coronavirus cases in western region than the eastern region.

There are more red zones in prosperous states, like Maharashtra, than states considerably less advanced, like Bihar and Odisha. The number of cases in metros, like Mumbai and Delhi, is more than smaller cities in the eastern region.

In Maharashtra, there are 14 red, 16 orange and 6 green zones. In Bihar, there are 5 red, 20 orange and 13 green zones. There are 130 red, 284 orange and 319 green zones in the country, according to the letter written by Health Secretary Preeti Sudan to the state secretaries on April 30.

Explaining these zones, the government said the green zones comprised districts with either zero confirmed case or no confirmed case in the last 21 days. The classifi-

cation of districts as red zones takes into account number of active cases, doubling rate of confirmed cases, extent of testing and surveillance feedback from there. The districts, which are neither defined as red nor green, are classified as orange zones.

As of 8 am on May 3, Maharashtra reported 12,296 coronavirus cases and 521 fatalities. Bihar had 481 cases and 4 deaths; and Odisha 157 cases and one death, according to the Health Ministry.

Among the other west-

ern states, Gujarat reported 5,054 cases and 262 deaths, followed by Rajasthan with 2,770 cases and 65 fatalities. In the eastern region, West Bengal reported 922 cases and 3 deaths, and UP 2,487 cases and 43 deaths.

Speaking to IANS, K Sri-nath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), said, "The pattern reflects difference in economic development, indicated by the size of the international airports, number of international and

domestic flights operating from those airports, foreign-returned travellers arriving and spreading out from there."

"Western India is more urbanised, with greater mobility of people with whom the virus hitch hikes to spread fast. Eastern India has lower foreign returnees to initiate the spread," Reddy said.

According to him, the rural India has less mobility. "This too has protected eastern parts. That's why the more urbanised western countries

too have seen a rapid spread. Similar phenomenon in India has occurred," he said.

Dr Manoj Goel, Director (Pulmonology), at Fortis Memorial Research Institute, told IANS attributed this distribution of infection to the population density in different parts of India.

"India is a large country. It's like a subcontinent with over 17 per cent of the world population. So there is likely to be no uniformity in distribution of cases in the different regions," he said. – IANS

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## MESSAGE FOR TODAY

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.*

— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

## The Assam Tribune

### Media interaction

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal had held an interactive session with editors and senior journalists of Assam not only to provide a broad perspective about the coronavirus-related developments in the State, but also to get their perspective on the situation in the region and suggestions on the roadmap which needs to be drawn up in the coming days. He had very rightly asked the media to exercise restraint while reporting news and to ensure that data is properly verified; otherwise false reporting could lead to adverse consequences. Citing an example, he referred to an untrue report made by a section of the media that one member of the NSG detailed for his security had been infected by Covid-19, and opined that such unverified news can create chaos in the Government mechanism. He too correctly asserted that the media was the conscience keeper and opinion moulder of society and its role was to disseminate news, generate awareness and act as a bridge between the administration and the general public. It was reassuring to learn from the CM that the supply chain of essential commodities in the State has been maintained, and, in view of the possible floods during the monsoons, work on repair of embankments was under way. The outlining of the strategy being adopted to monitor the movement of people from outside entering the region was equally reassuring.

The participants from the media made a number of suggestions which the Government needs to heed. For instance, it was suggested that if floods do occur, schools should not be converted into relief camps since this would mean further loss of school hours for students, who are already remaining absent due to the pandemic. In the light of the need to keep the State insulated from Covid-19 through rigorous monitoring of entrants, the suggestion that watch be kept on rural roads in border districts through which unwanted elements could sneak in was of particular relevance. The Government also took note of the suggestion that police personnel be subjected to Covid-19 tests to ensure their protection and promised to set it into motion. The economic distress which has hit almost every sector has afflicted the media establishments too, in particular the print media. With most measures, such as the reduction of duties on newsprint, being in the hands of the Centre, naturally the State Government is not in a position to offer much by way of alleviation. However, it is well known that the regional media is to a great extent dependent on government advertisements, thus the CM's assurance that there would be regular and quick payment of such dues is to be welcomed. All in all, the fruitfulness of such interactions was apparent on this occasion and it is expected that it would be a continuous, periodic process.

### Swine fever outbreak

As if the woes stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic were not enough, a massive outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) has hit the State, affecting thousands of domestic pigs in quick time. Given the near hundred per cent fatality rate of the pestilence, a large number of animal fatalities is a foregone conclusion, with some 2,500 pigs already perishing in six districts of the State. Pigery being a rewarding and popular venture in the region which provides livelihood to thousands of families, the developments are bound to trigger a perilous economic fallout for those engaged in pig-rearing. Significantly, this is the first time India has been hit by AFS which – after it had originated in Kenya in 1921 – affected many countries across Africa, Europe and Asia in recent decades. The Bhopal-based NIHSAD has confirmed the disease that has been prevalent in the State for the past one week or so to be ASF. The task ahead of the State Government is clear and it has to act on a war footing to contain the spread of the epidemic. Any laxity will cost the State dear, as the disease does not have any vaccine or treatment till date. The only way out is to identify all the areas where the disease has been reported and create containment zones. This will require coordination among various departments and the administration, more so in view of the lockdown-induced restrictions on transportation, gatherings, etc. As the disease can infect pigs through humans as carrier, inspection and treatment of pigs will have to be done with utmost care and safeguards. Given that Assam has a large population of wild boars and they are often found to be intermingling with domestic pigs near their habitats, the dangers emanating from the swine fever could be catastrophic for the wildlife as well.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, the Centre has also issued directives to the State Government for checking the spread of ASF. It is also likely that the authorities will have to go for culling of affected pigs to contain the outbreak. A high-power committee with scientists, farmers' representatives and departmental officials has been formed to monitor the situation closely and execute the relevant guidelines strictly. Another imperative is to build the capacity of the State's veterinary labs for quick and efficient surveillance. In Assam, the source of spread of the disease is yet to be ascertained even as the disease spread rapidly after it was first witnessed at Jonai. The general practice of throwing the carcasses of the diseased pigs to rivers and rivulets, delay in imposing restriction on pig movement and sale of pork, and unscientific method of pig rearing have been factors that triggered a rapid spread of the outbreak.

# Some lessons as we prepare for Lockdown 3.0

## ■ MA Kalam

Covid-19 is a jolt to the way we work and live. The response, what the IMF has called 'the Great Lockdown', was a different kind of jolt. Now, the lifting of the lockdown will be a different kind of jolt and return to normalcy won't be seamless. As we near the end of Lockdown 2.0, the question is about the nature of Lockdown 3.0. The Government is unlikely to lift the lockdown across the nation in one go. More significantly, our commercial centres and some key urban cities, notably the financial centre Mumbai, are unlikely to have any relaxation so that the partial restoration of the supply chain will pose problems of its own kind.

Consider that of the 100 most populated urban wards in India, 43 are located in Maharashtra; Greater Mumbai alone accounts for 41 of these. In Gujarat, Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara have 20, 11 and 10 such wards respectively, contributing a total of 41 of these. The rest of the country accounts for just 16 most populated urban wards. The denser the area, the higher the affected cases is the simple equation. Hence, Maharashtra and Gujarat will have to work out their strategies on a completely different plane as compared to the rest of the country, both presently as well as in the post-lockdown context.

In effect, going by the figures that we have as regards the rate at which

cases are being detected, treated, and the number of people succumbing to the disease in different parts of the country, it appears as though each State has to work out its own unique plan post this second phase of lockdown that has ended on the 3rd of May. Also, the strategies have to be different for different geographic locations even in the same State as the urban conglomerates have entirely different density and settlement patterns as compared to the rural areas.

Just to give an example, the handling of migrant labour will necessarily have to be different in States that receive the so-called guest workers. Kerala has around 31 lakhs of them; other States have much less. But there have been no issues in Kerala in handling the migrant labour, whereas Mumbai and places in Gujarat have witnessed violent scenes. Kerala already had plans on hand while the other State governments have been found wanting. The point is, the Central advisories in a blanket manner have little meaning. Micro-level planning at each State level as regards various aspects has to be dealt with at that particular State level. We will need administrative ingenuity in different ways to be shown in the post-

lockdown situation.

We are in this kind of a situation because of mistakes, grave ones, made right from the beginning in delaying the suspension of international flights and in planning for the lockdown. Whatever the ostensible reasons (whether hosting President

The lesson we must draw from this is that sudden jolts are never good for people, administrators and the economy. Thus, the lifting of the lockdown, or its continuation in part where it is deemed necessary to stop the spread of Covid-19, should be transparently discussed and announced well in advance.

Trump, end-February, and the toppling of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Government, end March, were the motives or not), the right time to act was around the last week of January, not the last week of March!

Testing, the most minimum, was started at the international airports of India quite late; around the second week of March. But then only thermal screening was introduced. All those who did not show any symptoms of fever were let go and those who had fever, some of which

could have been unconnected with the coronavirus, that is, the false positives, were expectedly isolated/quarantined. One cannot quarrel with that. On the other hand, a multitude were let go since they were asymptomatic. That is where the big mistake happened – those who went through the 'green channel' could have been carriers, and as it was realized later, they in fact were. These negative results through thermal screening were undoubtedly false negatives. The State woke up tardily and started searching and chasing these false negatives, from the lists of airline passengers, quite late. Meanwhile, it is not just likely, but for sure these false negatives have infected those they came in contact with. And those contacts have in-

fecting others in an ever-widening circle. That has been a colossal, and unforgivable, failure on the part of decision-makers in India. Currently, there are ongoing desperate measures to undo these lapses; but the cases they have to deal with have expanded tremendously due to the earlier lapses.

Also, the suddenness of the lockdown versus a plan to watch carefully, pre-announce steps and stop anxieties would have been a better way to roll out a complete stop-

page of all economic activity. That would have ensured that the problem of migrant workers would have been minimized. The lesson we must draw from this is that sudden jolts are never good for people, administrators and the economy. Thus, the lifting of the lockdown, or its continuation in part where it is deemed necessary to stop the spread of Covid-19, should be transparently discussed and announced well in advance. This will keep people ready, administrators prepared and will allow for an adjustment with minimum anxiety and stress. It can help contain further disruptions.

We also need to be mindful of the terminology. 'Social distancing' as a term has historically been used in India in the context of caste and the associated aspects of discrimination and untouchability. An appropriate and meaningful phrase is 'physical distancing' which does convey that distance has to be maintained in the physical sense between those who interact.

We might consider that distancing is here to stay and will also likely change the way we work, travel and consume. These are huge behavioural changes that will probably impact the way we return to business and will influence the contours of our post-Covid growth. Many existing models will die and new ones are being written even as the epidemic chips away at our existing globalized world order.

(The Billion Press)

## Corona pandemic and higher education

### ■ Ankuran Dutta, Anupa Lahkar Goswami

Indian higher education can boast of being one of the torchbearers among many developing nations with a rich plethora of dynamic content. The higher education architecture in the country has grown exponentially in the length and breadth of the country, particularly in the post-independence period, and has stealthily grown into the largest system of its kind in the world. While this exponential growth is often hindered by shortcomings that include financing and management including access, equity and relevance, re-orientation of programmes by laying emphasis on health consciousness, values and ethics and quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues were evaluated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) through different deliberations since they lay a strong foundation for the education sector which is a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of this century.

The even semesters start from the month of January and the period between March and May are mid semesters in higher education institutions; these are a crucial time for academic activities, where full-term classes are held only for a span of three-and-a-half months of a semester. But, due to sudden yet evasive coronavirus pandemic, all in-

stitutions were compelled to shut down in between the mid-semester. This could possibly affect the higher education scenario in different ways. Having left with no options, lockdown was the only possible way out to manage this tremendous crisis. Now such a crucial step should be assisted with wise academic decisions, proactive enough to bail out an academic year of crores of students as well as give a roadmap for future prospects. To understand this, it would be pertinent for us to have a look on the present scenario of higher education in the country.

The AISHE-2019 reveals the fact that Indian higher education comprises 53,620 institutions with 3 crore 70 lakh students. There are a total of 41,901 colleges, 10,726 standalone institutions and 993 universities, out of which 394 universities are located in rural areas. Out of 14 lakh teachers engaged in higher education, 11 lakh teachers teach in the colleges, 1,58,000 teachers in universities and 1,47,000 teachers are employed in standalone institutions. A total of 2 crore 60 lakh students study in different colleges, followed by 20 lakh students in universities and 70 lakh in the standalone institutions. The total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 3 crore 74 lakhs with 48.6% female enrolment. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India

is 26.3%, out of which distance education contributes 10.62%.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus lockdown, in all the institutions, a total of about one crore academic hours are compromised, which will be rather difficult to compensate. The UGC through its advisory instructed all the institutes to continue classes in online mode as per feasibility and engage ICT tools for academic discourse. The teaching communities are requested to make use of various online tools in order to reach out to the students. To assist this endeavour, there are many open access tools available, which are already used by many universities and colleges. For example, many departments of Gauhati University have been using different online tools, such as live online classes through Skype, use of YouTube with recorded lectures, NPTEL materials, Google Classroom, live online classes through Piazza, Zoom, EasyClass, etc. With the availability of high speed mobile networks, online live classes from home became a reality and many success stories have emerged in the process of engaging the students effectively using different online applications. Despite the fact that the attendance rate in the classes are not more than 80% in aggregate due to the technical glitch, it restricts a sizable number of students to avail these opportunities.

The UGC advisory has instructed the faculty members to develop online teaching content, such as instructional materials using Mooles, PowerPoint presentations, recording video lessons and even audio teaching materials that can be shared through different content sharing platforms and messaging applications like WhatsApp, Messenger, Imo, Viber, etc.

The UGC's recommendation for the faculty members and students has been to avail maximum benefit from various digital/ICT initiatives of MHRD, UGC and its Inter University Centres. Among the ICT facilities, SWAYAM is one of the most user friendly MOOC (massive open online course) platforms, which was designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of education policy, viz., access, equity and quality. The objective of this effort is to take the best teaching-learning resources to all, including the most disadvantaged. SWAYAM seeks to bridge the digital divide for students who have hitherto remained untouched by the digital revolution and have not been able to join the mainstream of the knowledge economy. Swayampbha is another ICT facility for viewing digital courses on television. The government facilitates different digital contents through National Digital Library, e-PG Pathshala, Shodhganga, e-ShodhSindhu and Shodhgangotri. To accelerate hands-on learning, the Government initiated e-Yantra that creates

laboratories for training in embedded systems in collaboration with IIT Bombay. FOSSEE is a provision that allows access for use of open source software. Spoken Tutorial and Virtual Labs are also remarkable initiatives for self-training and virtual experiments.

The recommendations set forward by the UGC have been visionary, provided the application of such facilities are widely accepted and applied by the teaching fraternity who have to understand that Asian countries have not compromised on the teaching-learning time even at the wake of such crises. Also, there are risks of many students having to drop a valuable academic year due to extra months added to the course completion while many others might simply engage in alternative areas.

Nevertheless, it depends on the commitment of the faculty members of higher education institutes how they consider their role in such a situation when other occupations like doctors and administration are waging a war against the virus, the teaching fraternity and equip the new age students with knowledge and teach them the value of time. It is only responsibility and accountability to the service that can enable teachers to engage their students by providing quality instructions to utilize this lockdown period, because nobody knows for how long the lockdown extends in the country and how socially and economically it could impact the lives of many.

## Letters to the EDITOR

Sir, – Through the columns of your esteemed daily, I would like to express my deep concern for the students of Assam University. Being a former student of the institute, with my past experiences, I would like to state that the university since its inception has been running obdurately. One of the many such obduracies is observed primarily in the conduction of their PG examinations. While many of the premier institutes of our State have the provision of conducting arrear exams for the students 45 days after the announcement of the results, the students of Assam University have to suffer the loss of a year if they happen to have a backlog, as the re-examinations are conducted only a year later along with the regular students. Moreover, if the students resort to re-scrutiny, it would take half of the year for the results to manifest because of the lackadaisical attitude of the exam-conducting machinery. In a high edge competitive world, a year lost

## Academic loss in Assam University

indeed is a big deal, and at a bleak hour as such, it is no less than any nightmare not just for the students, but for the people related to them as well. The authorities should at least by now realize the exigency of the situation and formulate a mechanism for the conduct of the arrear examinations whereby they could minimize the losses that are being caused to the students. Yours etc., RUPAM KHOUND, Doom Dooma.

### Great loss

Sir, – It is a matter of great sorrow that we have lost one of the prominent writers of the State as well as a freedom fighter, Anil Roychowdhury. He was widely acclaimed for his progressive writings and socio-cultural research-oriented works such as *Namoni Asomor Samajik Pobhumi*, *Asomiya Samaj aru Nabavaishnavbad*, *Asomor Samaj Nihosot Nabavaishnavbad*, *Asomiya Bhasar Darson*, *Asomot Bangladeshi*, etc. He had participated in the trade union movement and raised his voice for peasants' and workers' rights. He was also a member of the Natun

Sahitya Parishad. May his soul rest in eternal peace. Yours etc., RUPAK G DUARAH, Rajahnagar, Guwahati.

### Post-lockdown scene

Sir, – The pouring of funds to help the agriculture sector including the tea industry within the State will be of utmost significance post lockdown. Revamping the medical infrastructure to cope up with OPDs concerning various non-Covid-19 diseases maintaining social distancing norms is also necessary. New recruitments to various posts need to be initiated, to absorb local talent who will be in dire need of jobs, post lockdown. Economic development such as construction works should be given priority in the green zone districts within Assam, so that businesses can return to normalcy in the days to come, also it would directly benefit the unorganized sector. The various schools, colleges and universities of Assam should be guided by the Education Ministry of the State to formulate new guidelines for mitigating the time that was lost during the lockdown, underlining the fact that the

educational institutions are lenient towards the students' fraternity. Hopefully, when normalcy is restored in the coming weeks, inter-district travel can also be made feasible within the green zones without any restrictions, subject to prior governmental scrutiny and policy. Yours etc., BANRAJ KALITA, Guwahati.

### Praiseworthy deed

Sir, – As the nationwide lockdown continued in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, many poor and needy people received the helping hands of some good Samaritans. Though some did this act as a measure of popularity, the rest did this as a humane gesture. In this context, I need to mention about a woman officer of the Assam Police, Jikirani Mahanta, ACP, Noonmati who in a beautiful gesture has extended help to some needy people, especially a few old widows in the Noonmati area of the city. Such an act of the lady police officer deserves praise. I would like to request the Chief Minister who holds the Home portfolio to encourage such woman police officers who have really done

something to get the blessings of the ones in distress. Yours etc., PRANJAL BHUYAN, Gitanagar, Guwahati.

### Community transmission

Sir, – The four Covid-19 cases recently reported from Bongaigaon district have triggered a panic not only among the people of Bongaigaon but also for other districts of Assam. According to the news reports, the four patients had no travel history and neither had they come in direct contact with the Nizamuddin Markaz attendees. Though Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that the four cases cannot be termed a community transmission, however, the question remains how and when they came in contact with the virus. How many people came in contact with these persons? If this becomes the first community transmission case in Assam, then it could be the worst-case scenario. I hope this doesn't happen. Yours etc., SAMUJAL RAY, Chirang.

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](mailto:editor@assamtribune.com).





Food being distributed among needy people at Fancy Bazar during the lockdown, in Guwahati on Sunday. – UB Photos

## 44,251 get jobs since resumption of works under MGNREGA

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3: The State Panchayat and Rural Development has started works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for providing assistance to economically and socially vulnerable sections of people across rural areas of Assam to compensate their daily wages during nationwide COVID-19-induced lockdown.

Following resumption of works under the MGNREGA, 44,251 members of 34,307 families have been provided work till now.

Under MGNREGA, every interested family is issued a job card where all eligible members' names may be incorporated for wage-based employment.

"At present, the wage under the scheme is enhanced to Rs 213. In im-

plementation of the scheme during this lockdown period, government norms like social distancing, wearing masks and frequently washing hands with soap are strictly adhered to," an official release said.

P&RD Minister Naba Kumar Doley has urged the people who have come back from other states and now have to stay without engagement, to apply for job card immediately in their respective Gaon Panchayats so that they might also be provided wage employment to cope with present crisis.

"The department has already issued guidelines for it. He has also advocated for the same for other families who are willing to get wage employment but yet to apply job card. The PMAYG beneficiaries may ensure 95 days' employment by constructing their own houses. Minister Doley is relentlessly monitoring

the whole initiatives taken by the P&RD department to help the poor people of rural areas of the State," it added.

The wage-based employment under MGNREGA started with special thrust upon water conservation, irrigation, repairing of roads and individual beneficiary schemes to help the poor in earning sustainable livelihood.

"Arrangement has also been made to keep a good number of sanctioned schemes, so that every wage employment seeker may be engaged in work during this crisis. Principal Secretary of P&RD, Assam, Dr JB Ekka, and Commissioner Hemen Das urged the field officials of the department to serve the needy people through fruitful implementation of the schemes with dedication and commitment, so that the vulnerable section may be benefitted in letter and spirit," it said.

## NF Railway adopts strategy to help Govt in COVID fight

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to assist the government in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Several measures have been taken by the Indian Railways to boost the efforts of the Central and the respective state governments in the fight against COVID-19. Accordingly, we, in the NFR, which serves the Northeastern states as well as parts of West Bengal and Bihar, have adopted a multi-pronged strategy in this regard," said a senior official of NF Railway.

"Our zone is also lending a helping hand through innovations. The workshops and sheds in NFR are making innovative hands free wash basins for use of staff at work places and we are also involved in repairing and construction of hospital beds,

side tables and hospital trolleys, among other items as per requirement," he said, adding NFR is contributing to reinforce the health infrastructure in this region.

"NFR has modified 315 passenger coaches as isolation coaches, providing about 2,500 isolation beds which will be made available to the Health authorities as and when required. It has also equipped the existing Railway hospitals to meet the COVID-19 needs, earmarking 170 hospital beds as isolation beds, arranging about 800-bed quarantine facilities and recruiting additional doctors and paramedics to deal with any exigency," said the official.

He said that as a part of the effort to equip its officials and staff with basic safety equipment, the zonal railway has produced more than 2,500 litres of hand sanitizers and over 76,000 reusable face masks for use by its on-duty staff.

"Masks are being made by

staff working from their respective home at various locations like Agartala, Alipurduar, Lumding, Silchar, Katihar, Tinsukia and Rangiya, while hand sanitizers are being produced in the various depots and workshops. We are also making Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the doctors and paramedic staff at our workshops," the source added.

He said the NFR is transporting essential commodities to all areas under its jurisdiction to avoid shortages.

"We are making all-out efforts to ensure that there is no shortage of essential commodities like sugar, salt and edible oil for consumption of the citizens during the nationwide lockdown. With the active support from the respective state governments, the loading, transportation and unloading of these essential commodities are going on smoothly and during this period around 600 rakes have been unloaded in various

goods sheds located at different parts of NFR," he said.

He said NF Railway is operating parcel express trains as per fixed time table to destinations like Agartala, Dibrugarh, Dimapur and Mendipatara to facilitate transportation of essential goods in small quantities. More than 90 parcel trains have run till date to carry goods to different parts under NFR's jurisdiction as per requirement.

The official added, "We are carrying out humanitarian efforts during these difficult times, like providing free meals to the needy section of society who lack means to cope with the lockdown situation. We have provided more than one lakh free meals till date."

He said over 90 per cent of the employees of NFR and their families have downloaded the Arogya Setu App. The App had been launched by the Union government on April 2 to check spread of COVID-19 among the population.

### City buses to operate again from today

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, May 3: City buses will be allowed to operate in Guwahati from tomorrow, but only with 50 per cent passengers during the lockdown, stated an official release.

From Monday, 100 city buses will resume operation in Guwahati between 6.30 am and 5 pm. The entire ticketing will have to be done through the Challop app, the release stated.

Passengers will not be allowed to travel without wearing masks. They may wear gloves while entering the vehicle. Passengers will not be allowed to travel standing.

Spitting, too, will not be allowed anywhere—be at the bus stand or inside and outside the vehicle. Violation of all these norms by passengers or staff will invite legal action, the release said.

No bus staff will be allowed to pick up wayside passengers who have not purchased digital tickets, or have not booked their tickets in advance. Bus operators will not be allowed to carry any animal or animal product.

## CM urges varsity professors to keep students motivated

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today held a telephonic conference with the professors and associate professors of different universities of the State and sought their views and opinions regarding the prevailing situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Every crisis brings opportunity with it and we must consider this difficult phase as an opportunity to build a new Assam by identifying our inherent strengths. Teachers are seen as guides of the society and to break the stagnation brought by COVID-19 and revive the socio-economic condition of the State, the suggestion offered by professors of universities would go a long way in formulating future action plans," the Chief Minister said.

Thanking the teachers and students of universities for their cooperation in making both phases of the lockdown successful, Sonowal called for their support in the extended period of lockdown as well and sought their active participation in making the people aware about the observance of COVID-19 health and hygiene protocols. Teachers occupy a special place in the society and hence, their role in spreading the right information regarding social distancing, hand washing, etc. was very

crucial, he said.

Saying that students' learning process had been affected by the lockdown, Sonowal underlined the role of teachers in the present scenario through increased use of technology as alternative to classroom teaching methods. He called on the university teachers to devise a strategy to teach those students in rural areas who do not have access to Internet connection or smartphones while at the same time maintaining social distancing norms.

During these difficult times, it was important for the university teachers to keep the students motivated by keeping in close touch with them through telephone or social media and providing them necessary academic guidance, he said.

The Chief Minister also took various suggestions from university professors about preparing the future framework for continuing educational development in the State and they also appraised him about the ways students are being taught during the lockdown.

The teachers also thanked the Chief Minister for taking timely and swift action by the state government to contain COVID-19 outbreak in the State.

Notably, 2,645 professors and associate professors of 11 universities of the state participated in the telephonic conference today.

## Lockdown deals huge blow to artisans

RITURAJ BORTHAKUR

GUWAHATI, May 3: The lockdown has hit the handloom and handicrafts sector hard and it might take more than a year for it to recover, leaving lakhs of artisans and workers associated with it worried.

The tourism industry is shut down and this will directly impact the handicrafts sector, because tourists play a big role as they are the main customers.

"As there will be no conferences, meetings, etc., in the coming months, this will have a serious impact on the sale of gamusa and conference folders indigenously made from cane bamboo and water reed, and wood-carving souvenirs," award-winning master craftsman Sapon Neog from Tezpur said.

Before the start of monsoon, the craftsman dealing in indigenous items like cane, bamboo, wood carvings, jute, water reed, etc., and the handicrafts industry stock their raw materials. "However, due to the lockdown, they will be unable to do it this time. The rainy season is about to begin," Neog explained.

Neog has trained over 1,000 youths in handicrafts and all these youths, who used to earn a livelihood through it, have been left in the lurch.

Naveen Sood of Canecraft & Allied Industries said there will be no trade fairs or exhibition for some time as such events have been banned. "It will have a big impact on this sector as the craftsmen used to

depend on exhibitions and trade fairs for their sale and orders," Sood said.

He felt that even after the lockdown is lifted, the handicrafts sector will not be able to sustain itself for at least six to eight months.

"These are not essential items used on a daily basis. So, hardly, there will be any clients to buy it," Sood added.

Many artisans said that the government needs to look into the problems in the sector, as it has been doing in case of agriculture. There are 12.50 lakh weavers presently engaged in the handloom sector in Assam. The number of people directly or indirectly involved in the handicrafts sector could be over 4 lakh.

The Govt needs to look into the problems in the sector as it has been doing in case of agriculture

**WEATHER GUWAHATI**

**LOCAL FORECAST:**

Partly cloudy sky with with one or two spells of rain/thundershower is very likely to occur. Maximum and minimum temperatures are most likely to be 34°C & 21°C respectively on Monday.

**TEMPERATURE:**

Max 34.0°C  
Min 21.1°C

### GMC eviction drive against illegal vendors

CITY CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI, May 3: The Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) has been carrying out an eviction drive against unauthorized and unhygienic poultry shops, vegetable vendors, illegal hoardings and banners across the city. Altogether Rs 79,000 has been collected as fine so far. The drive has been conducted under the supervision of its Commissioner Devajyoti Hazarika.

"A section of vegetable vendors as well as fish, chicken, mutton vendors in Guwahati are operating without valid authorisation from the district administration and at exorbitant prices, by defying COVID-19 protocol including social distancing norms. The Veterinary Branch of GMC seized 426 kg chicken and fish, 380 kg vegetables and 10 plates of egg during the drive. The seized items have been distributed to various welfare organisations and shelter homes in the city," the source added.

"The GMC's hoarding branch dismantled over 1,000 kiosks from different parts of the city. It dismantled 195 kiosks on Panbazar road, 84 on MG Road up to Jalukbari, 153 at Chandmari, 48 on RGB Road up to Ganeshguri point, 156 from RGB Road to Geetanagar Road, 172 from Maligaon, 159 from Chandmari to Bamunimaidam, 119 on BK Kakati Road and 90 from Lalgaon to Lakhara," a source said. Five hoardings and 966 banners have already been removed.

The GMC today sanitised the Administrative Staff College, various hotels across the city, and over 70 bylanes.

## Tight security at Jorabat

CORRESPONDENT

JORABAT, May 3: In view of the opening of inter-state borders of Assam with the other northeastern states today, the Assam Police has tightened security at the inter-state border checkpoint here and police and medical surveillance teams have also

been deployed in the area.

The teams are screening and maintaining data of every person coming from the neighbouring states, while also urging the people to adhere to the lockdown guidelines and to maintain social distancing to break the novel coronavirus chain, said a police official from the Jorabat

police outpost.

A total of 33 persons have come back to their home state Assam from Meghalaya through Jorabat checkpoint today. The majority of the people who entered the State through Jorabat today were the labourers, who came on foot from Byrnihat and the nearby areas.

## Discussion on revival of handloom, handicraft sector

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3: The Indian Chamber of Commerce organised a webinar on the topic 'The Impact of Coronavirus Outbreak on Handloom and Handicrafts of North East India and its revival strategy' in the city on Saturday.

The objective of the seminar was to assess the damage caused by the coronavirus outbreak in the handloom and handicrafts of Northeast India, revival strategy for the handloom and handicrafts sector in the region, ways and means to restore the broken supply chain of handloom and handicrafts products and enabling the marketing of the products, survival strategy for the

exporters and financial incentive requisite for the revival of the sector.

The webinar was moderated by Ishantor Sobhapanidit, regional director, Indian Chamber of Commerce, North-East Initiative.

The meeting was represented by panellists from the Government of India and industry players from the North-east, including S Bandopadhyaya, director (East Zone), Weavers' Service Centre Guwahati DC (Handlooms), Union Ministry of Textiles; VP Thakur, regional director (NER), Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Union Ministry of Textiles; Dr Shailendra Chowdhury, managing director, North East

Handicrafts & Handlooms Development Corporation Ltd., Union Ministry of DoNER; Winfred Warshong, director, Meghalaya Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited; Dilip Barooah, managing director, Fabric Plus Pvt Ltd; Arita Kashyap Bhowmick, proprietor, Doyna; and Dr Arnab Banerjee, assistant professor, Department of Fashion Management Studies, NIFT, Shillong.

Bandopadhyaya highlighted the plight of the craftsmen and weavers who would be most affected by the pandemic. He laid stress on e-commerce platforms which can be utilised for the dispatch of products by the artisans and weavers.

Bandopadhyaya further said

that potential handloom production agencies need to be identified to carry out supply of masks and other clothing materials.

VP Thakur talked about the current situation and also shared his foresight regarding the transaction of goods online.

Shailendra Chowdhury discussed the present situation and emphasised on market intelligence and e-marketing as a tool to handle the current situation. Winfred Warshong spoke about the mask-making initiative of the Government of Meghalaya wherein over one lakh masks have been made and those would be distributed among the citizens of Meghalaya through hospitals and medical centres.



Police capture a youth for violation of lockdown norms, at Lachit Nagar in Guwahati on Sunday. – UB Photos



## Kerala CM draws flak for 'ignoring' stranded people

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 3: Both the Congress and the BJP today slammed Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for failing to do anything to bring back Keralites who are stuck in various parts of the country, even as migrant workers in the State have started to leave for their home States.

"While many migrant labourers from Bihar, Odisha and other States, who were stuck in Kerala after the lockdown came into force, have started making their way back in trains, many Keralites who for various reasons got stuck in other parts of the country, are still waiting to return. So is the case with Keralites stuck in the Middle East countries. It appears that the State Government's responsibility is over after opening a website for these people to register to return. What happens today is only a blame game

between the Centre and the State," said senior Congress legislator KC Joseph, a former State Minister for Diaspora Affairs in the Oommen Chandy Government.

It was early this week that the State Government opened a website and by now 3.98 lakh Keralites in 201 countries and 1.38 lakh Keralites within the country have registered from various States, wanting to return.

State BJP president K Surendran told media persons here that it was surprising to see that the Kerala Government has done nothing to get back its people stuck in various parts of the country and abroad.

Meanwhile, the Kerala Government has asked those stuck outside the State to apply for pass so that they can enter the State through the borders, which it shares with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. - IANS



Stranded people boarding a special government-arranged bus to reach their respective native places, amid the lockdown in Bengaluru on Sunday. - PTI

## Migrant workers stage protests in two towns of Telangana

HYDERABAD, May 3: Days after 1,200 migrant workers returned to their homes by a train from Telangana, scores of them staged a protest in two towns today, demanding they be allowed to leave for their native places, while rumours of operation of a special train led to many gathering here.

At Ramagundam in Pedapalli district, about 500 migrant workers staged a protest and argued with the police when told that those wishing to leave have to apply for e-passes to enable them to reach their respective States.

"They squatted on the road and argued with police

personnel. Anticipating violence and in order to prevent any law-and-order problem, the police dispersed them," a police official said.

Around 600 migrant workers employed at a cotton mill in Urkonda in Nagarkurnool district staged a protest in front of the unit with the same demand.

Police explained to them that there are procedures to be followed and that they should apply for e-passes, after which they dispersed.

Meanwhile, over 1,000 migrant labourers assembled at Tolichowki area in Hyderabad to reach the railway station following rumours that the Government would op-

erate special trains for them. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West Zone) AR Srinivas told reporters that workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka employed at various establishments in the city, gathered in the area following the rumours.

"We collected their names and told them that as and when arrangements for trains and buses are made, we will inform them," he said. Police also assured them that arrangements would be made for them to get food, following which they left, he said.

Police had on Saturday said that those stranded in Telangana and intending to leave

for their native states can apply for e-passes by submitting the required information at [tsp.koopid.ai/epass](http://tsp.koopid.ai/epass).

"After due verification ur E-PASS will be sent to you, to move ahead," Telangana DGP M Mahendar Reddy had tweeted.

In another tweet on Sunday, Reddy said, "Those who have already applied will receive E-PASS at the earliest possible hour. Due to heavy load of hits, some issues still persist & our teams are on it to restore the services by best. Hope u all understand the concern behind this initiation & u all are requested to support." - PTI

## Govt plan to bring ...

(Contd from page 1)

However, the Government is of the view that the persons working or travelling abroad are well off and they will have to pay the expenses for their return to India. The Government will arrange special flights to facilitate their return home. Though the date for starting the operation to bring back the stranded Indians is yet to be finalized, the process is likely to start shortly.

Meanwhile, about 1,700 persons from Assam have applied through the Indian Embassies of as many as 48 countries to return home and the highest number of 325 persons have applied from Kazakhstan, followed by 253 from Philippines and 215 from Kyrgyzstan. Sources said that a number of students from Assam are studying in countries like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and that is why, the number of persons seeking to return from these countries is higher.

Sources said that according

to records available so far, 110 persons each have applied to return to Assam from countries like Canada, Nepal and Nigeria. Many people go for work in Canada and Nigeria and those seeking to return home from Nepal are mostly tourists.

As many as 96 persons are seeking to return to Assam from Singapore and a majority of them are believed to be tourists. Though a large number of people of Assam are in countries like the USA and Britain, not many have applied to return home. As per records, 55 persons from Assam have applied to return home from the USA and 34 from the United Kingdom. People from Assam go to the UAE both as tourists or to work and 73 of them have applied to return home, while 27 have applied to return from Saudi Arabia. Ukraine has a number of students from Assam and 37 of them have applied to return home.

## Swine fever came ...

(Contd from page 1)

As another preventive measure, the department is also contemplating culling of infected pigs. But, according to the minister, the department prefers to save the pigs rather than culling them. Moreover, if needed, the culling will be done zone-wise, where infection has already taken place.

As per the 2019 census, Assam had around 21 lakh pigs but the number has increased to around 30 lakh this year.

To prevent the disease, as per the contingency plan issued by the Central government, the affected areas have been classified into infected or containment zone and surveillance zone. The department will also carry out awareness camps across the State and in every district a high-level committee will look after the implementation of the Central government guidelines to contain the disease.

The infected zone will cov-

er an area within a radius of one km from an infected farm and the surveillance zone will cover an area within a radius of 10 km from an infected farm.

Meanwhile, the minister asserted that there would be no restriction on consumption of meat of healthy pigs. Inter-State movement of livestock carrying vehicles has been banned in view of the epidemic.

The department has also temporarily stopped the vaccination for classical swine fever for 20 days. The vaccination drive against the disease will resume after the period as experts have been studying the situation. In the next vaccination drive, the department will use GPS tagging. The minister will also request Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to talk to his counterparts in the other North Eastern States to take action to prevent the disease. Bora also made it clear that African swine fever has no link with COVID-19.

## Guidelines ...

(Contd from page 1)

- City buses, intra-district and inter-district buses shall operate with 50 per cent capacity. Only 50 per cent of total number of buses shall be allowed to operate and only under the authority of ASTC. All vehicles which are allowed to ply are not permitted to stop in the Red and Orange Zones but can only pass through.
- Government and private offices shall operate with 50 per cent of employees.
- All tea shops, restaurants, ice-cream parlours, cooked food outlets are allowed to operate on take away or home delivery basis only.
- Barber shops, saloons and parlours shall continue to remain closed. However, home visits of barber would be allowed after following hygiene and sanitisation norms.
- No livestock carrying trucks shall be allowed to enter the State. However, if there is any truck already loaded with livestock and headed for any State outside Assam those may be allowed to move to their destination without stopping in the State of Assam.
- E-Commerce for all commodities is allowed.
- Maintaining social distancing and arrangement for thermal scanning, hand sanitization shall be the responsibility of the head of the organization both public and private.
- Female employees, both private and public, with children below 5 years of age are not to attend office till May 17 when this will be reviewed.
- Haats and bazaars including weekly markets shall remain closed throughout the state.
- Movement of persons beyond the age of 65 years and below the age of 12 years shall be restricted in public spaces except for medical purposes.

## IAF ...

(Contd from page 1)

In Guwahati, the solidarity was shown in the form of three Sukhoi-30 flying over the State Legislative Assembly. Flower petals were dropped from an Air Force Mi-17 helicopter on the city COVID hospitals (GMCH and Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital), while at the same time the Air Force band played tunes for all the corona warriors.

All doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and other front-line workers witnessed the display of the armed forces and expressed their gratitude.

In other parts of the State, the Army also paid rich tribute to police personnel who are working tirelessly to enforce a successful lockdown across the State by laying wreaths for the martyrs and also honouring the corona warriors.

## CM ...

(Contd from page 1)

Retired VC of the Assam Agricultural University Dr KM Bujarbarua, professor of Gauhati University Dr Madhurja Bezbarua, associate professor at Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development Dr Joydeep Barua, Managing Director of Rashtriya Gramin Vikash Nidhi Dr Amiya Sarma, ARIAS Society's agribusiness consultant Gautam Goswami, State organising secretary of Bharatiya Kishan Sangha Krishnakanta Bora and journalist Adip Kumar Phukan are the other members of the committee.

On April 28, the Chief Minister held an interactive session with 29 eminent economists of the State who suggested several long-term and short-term measures to overcome the economic slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also advocated setting up of an economic task force and expert committee and taking those suggestions in consideration, the Chief Minister today constituted the economic advisory committee.

## Alcoholics turn to sanitizers in Bhopal, officials claim ignorance

BHOPAL, May 3: The closure of liquor vends due to the lockdown for the coronavirus outbreak has made some alcoholics here reportedly turn to sanitizers to satisfy their craving, though most officials dismissed it claiming they were unaware of such incidents.

Most sanitizers available in the market have a high content of alcohol, but consuming it can cause ethanol poisoning and complications that could lead to coma and death.

"I have come across this

trend of alcoholics turning to sanitizers during the lockdown and risking their lives. Recently, I treated an 18-year-old girl who consumed it, though she claimed she had taken it by mistake," said Bhopal-based Siddhanta Red Cross Super Speciality Hospital Director Dr Subodh Varshney.

"Sanitizers being produced by liquor distillers have ethyl alcohol and hydrogen peroxide, which is a very toxic combination. In fact, there is double the amount of alcohol in them

than what is there in a whiskey bottle," he said.

He said three types of sanitizers are being manufactured at the moment, but some people are consuming the ones being made by liquor distillers as these contain "edible alcohol".

On Saturday, a man identified as Indal Singh Rajput, was held in Sultanpur area of Raissen district in the State for allegedly making liquor from sanitizers to profiteer from the closure of alcohol vends during the lockdown, the police had said. - PTI

## Col, Major among 5 killed ...

(Contd from page 1)

The identity of the other was yet to be ascertained. They had held some civilians hostage, the officials said.

Security forces had noticed the presence of some terrorists in the Rajwar forests in Handwara area for the past few days and a brief exchange of fire had taken place on Thursday deep inside the jungles.

Around Saturday afternoon, Intelligence inputs indicated presence of the same group of

terrorists inside a house at Changimulla village, prompting security forces to launch a search operation.

After a considerable lull, Col Sharma and four other personnel barged into a cowshed adjacent to the house, presuming that the terrorists had been eliminated in the heavy gunfire.

According to the officials, the team came under heavy fire after rescuing the civilians and all communication

link with Col Sharma and his team were snapped. Calls made on the mobile numbers of the team were answered by terrorists.

The Army then rushed in paratroopers, who after ascertaining that the Army officer and his team were killed in the encounter, launched an offensive by the first light of the day and killed the two terrorists.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the nation in paying tribute to the soldiers. - PTI

## Students, mentors made Assam ...

(Contd from page 1)

Principal Secretary, Education, Assam, B Kalyan Chakravarty is heading the mission.

The total number of people, who could follow the web link and submit their info online was not more than two lakh and the next challenge was how to collect bank info from the rest four lakh - most of whom were not online savvy or lacked smartphones, or might not have access to or even did not know the Internet.

"The government approached the vice chancellors and heads of institutes like GU, CU and AEC. The institute heads appealed to the students to volunteer, and prepared a list of around 800 volunteers who had Internet and

laptops at their homes and who were willing to join the mega mission. Their job was to log in to an online web portal containing the list of such people, call them one by one through the portal, initiating voice calls, and gather the required info over phone, and simultaneously input in the portal against the particular number - a complex and troublesome job given that many did not know the IFSC and many lacked clear voice communication," Prof Sarma said.

The State government has so far deposited Rs 2,000 each (for one month) to the accounts of 2.5 lakh people, with more to follow.

Prof Sarma added that a major thrust of the mentors

was to keep the volunteers motivated, and to guide and support them mentally and psychologically - and suggesting them to be always calm. Many students reached to over 160 calls a day, working continuously for 12 hours.

"It is unbelievable how all the student volunteers have worked so professionally with just a short session of online training. They have really taken it from their heart and extended exemplary service. Their work was very challenging and the accomplishments highly appreciable. Looking at the volume of calls to be made, the government has now included another 75 teachers from different colleges to volunteer for the cause," he said.

## Virtual courts not antithetical to traditional court system: SC

NEW DELHI, May 3: The Supreme Court has said the traditional open court system and new-age virtual court system is not antithetical to each other, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the latter does not crumble administration of justice.

In a statement defending its current practice of taking matters through video conferencing, the apex court said the traditional open court system, in its physical manifestation, and new-age virtual court system are not antithetical to each other. "On the contrary, both systems could definitely co-exist, delivering qualitative justice, wherever deployed in light of extant circumstances", said the court.

The apex court insisted the institutional requirement has to ensure that administration of justice does not crumble, in the face of this unprecedented scenario. Lately, the video conferencing system for taking up cases has come under criticism as it does not adhere to the concept of open courts.

The court is taking up extremely urgent matters virtually. The apex court, backing its performance during the lockdown, said it conducted a hearing on 22 days until May 1, where 116 benches assembled, which included 73 benches for adjudicating review petitions. As many as 538 matters were taken up,

besides 297 connected matters, said the top court.

Lawyers complained on several issues - convincing the judge of the urgency involved in the matter and arguing their case through video link.

"In view of the circumstances under the current pandemic, the Virtual Courts system cannot be said to be negating the principles of fairness that are sacrosanct to the administration of justice nor is it failing to adhere to requirements of an 'Open Court' system," said the top court in its 38-page statement.

The apex court cited that many developed countries like the USA, UK and France, have already transitioned to virtual courts systems, and India is ahead of them in terms of output.

The statement cited the UK Supreme Court decided 18 cases from February 5 to April 29. And the Supreme Court in the US decided 28 cases between February 24 and April 27.

The apex court insisted that it is imperative that all the stakeholders must welcome, accept and act as per the necessities of a fair adjudicatory process before the virtual court system.

The court said adopting an open court system under such circumstances would be seen to be in complete violation of universal social distancing norms being adopted globally by communities and nations. - IANS

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION ASSAM	
No: NHM/18013/2019-PROC-NHM/ECF-123372/P-99 Date: 02-05-2020	
<b>EXTENSION NOTICE</b>	
This has reference to the e-tender No: NHM/18013/2019-PROC-NHM/ECF-123372/P-77 DATE: 13-03-2020 for entering into rate contract for supply <b>ESSENTIAL CONSUMABLES &amp; LINENS</b> to health facilities under Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Assam.	
Details as below:	
Events	Extended date
Start Date & Time for online submission of Bid and Offline Submission on Hard Copies	Time: 2.00 pm & Date: 18/05/2020
End Date & Time for online submission of Bid and Offline Submission on Hard Copies	Time: 2.00 pm & Date: 26/05/2020
Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid	Time: 4.00 pm & Date: 26 /05/2020
<b>ALL OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE TENDER REFERRED TO ABOVE SHALL REMAIN UNCHANGED.</b>	
<b>Sd/- Mission Director, NHM, Assam</b>	

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION ASSAM	
No: NHM/18013/2019-PROC-NHM/ECF-117235/P-209 Date: 02-05-2020	
<b>EXTENSION NOTICE</b>	
This has reference to the e-tender No: NHM/18013/2019-PROC-NHM/ECF-117235/P-188 DATE: 16-03-2020 for entering into rate contract for supply <b>ESSENTIAL SUTURES, STAPLERS, MEDICAL DEVICE</b> to health facilities under Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Assam.	
Details as below:	
Events	Extended date
Start Date & Time for online submission of Bid and Offline Submission on Hard Copies	Time: 2.00 pm & Date: 18/05/2020
End Date & Time for online submission of Bid and Offline Submission on Hard Copies	Time: 2.00 pm & Date 25/05/2020
Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid	Time: 4.00 pm & Date 25/05/2020, NHM-SHQ
<b>ALL OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE TENDER REFERRED TO ABOVE SHALL REMAIN UNCHANGED.</b>	
<b>Sd/- Mission Director, NHM, Assam</b>	

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION ASSAM	
No: NHM-18018/5/2020-PROC-NHM/ECF-139634/8-P Dated. 2/5/2020	
<b>e-TENDER NOTICE (NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)</b>	
Tenders in two Bid System (Technical Bid & Price Bid) affixing Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (or IPO of Rs. 10.00 in favour of "State Health Society, Assam" bidders located outside Assam) are invited for intended bidders for out sourcing of <b>Real Time PCR COVID-19 test</b> on an <b>urgent basis</b> in view of COVID-19 pandemic condition. The complete set of tender documents may be downloaded from <a href="http://assamtenders.gov.in">assamtenders.gov.in</a> or the official website of NHM <a href="https://nhm.assam.gov.in">https://nhm.assam.gov.in</a> .	
<b>The technical bid as well as financial bid (BOQ) is to be uploaded in assamtenders.gov.in . There is no requirement to submit the hard copy of neither technical bid nor financial bid.</b>	
<b>Important dates related to the Tender:</b>	
1. Tender publication date : 04/05/2020 from 11.00 am.	
2. Tender submission start date : 04/05/2020 from 2.00 pm.	
3. Tender submission last date : 11/05/2020 up to 2.00 pm.	
4. Tender opening date : 11/05/2020 at 4.00 pm.	
<b>The technical bid as well as financial bid (BOQ) is to be uploaded in assamtenders.gov.in There is no requirement to submit the hard copy of neither technical bid nor financial bid.</b>	
<b>Sd/- Mission Director, NHM, Assam</b>	



**WEATHER  
NORTHEAST**

**Forecast for North Eastern States:** Rain / thundershower is very likely to occur at many places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura and at a few places over Arunachal Pradesh. No significant change in maximum temperatures likely over northeast India during next 2-3 days.

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

**Temperatures:**

	Max (°C)	Min (°C)
Dibrugarh	31.6	23.2
Tezpur	31.2	23.0
Silchar	32.8	21.0
Dhubri	31.8	21.7
Jorhat	30.0	20.7
N Lakhimpur	30.5	22.6
Shillong	21.4	
Cherrapunjee	23.7	14.0
Aizawl	24.9	14.1
Kohima	22.4	11.4
Pasighat	31.5	22.6
Itanagar	29.7	22.0
Imphal	27.7	16.5
Agartala	32.0	22.4

# Tripura Congmen attacked during relief distribution

**CORRESPONDENT**

AGARTALA, May 3: Three Congress workers, including president of Majlis-pur Block Congress Arun Saha, sustained injuries when they were allegedly attacked by a group of BJP-backed miscreants during a relief distribution programme at Ranir Bazar in West Tripura district this morning.

Relief materials brought by the Congress workers were allegedly snatched away by the miscreants.

PCC general secretary Tajen Das somehow escaped unhurt in the attack.

PCC president Pijush Kanti Biswas rushed to the spot and expressed serious concern over the attack during the relief distribution programme meant to provide succour to the poor dur-

ing the lockdown. An FIR has been lodged with the Ranir Bazar Police Station against the attackers but no arrest has been made yet.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress Bhavan here, the PCC president alleged that party leaders and workers were attacked and threatened by the BJP workers at various places for helping the poor.

"Today's incident at Ranir Bazar is the latest when our party leaders and workers who went there to help the poor during the lockdown came under attack. Don't know what kind of message they want to send by attacking Opposition party workers," he said.

Referring to Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb's tough words against errant party supporters at the all-party meeting, Biswas said

it would deem to be double standard if strong action is not taken against those involved in the Ranir Bazar incident.

"We want a clarification from the Chief Minister on relief distribution for the poor. Following the Chief Minister's appeal, we decided to lend a helping hand to the people in distress in these difficult times. If they think only the ruling party is authorised to distribute relief among the poor then let them do it. Truly speaking, the rural poor are really struggling because of the lockdown that commenced on March 25," he said.

Earlier, Congress leaders and workers had faced threats and intimidations at Belonia, Khowai and Teliamura from the BJP supporters but nobody has been arrested yet.



An IAF chopper showering petals over a COVID-19 hospital at Dimapur on Sunday. - Photo: Correspondent

## Screening machine at Mokokchung

**CORRESPONDENT**

DIMAPUR, May 3: Nagaland Health Minister S Panguy Phom has inaugurated the TrueNat machine for preliminary screening of samples at the Mokokchung District Hospital. The minister also visited the designated COVID-19 hospital at Mokokchung.

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had sent the TrueNat machines to Mokokchung and Mon districts in the State.

Meanwhile, Principal Secretary (Home) Abhijit Sinha, in his briefing, said as on Friday, 664 samples were sent for testing from the State. The results of 650 samples have been received and all are negative. The results of 14 samples are awaited, he added.

# Partial lockdown in Mizoram from today

**CORRESPONDENT**

AIZAWL, May 3: Mizoram will go for partial lockdown from Monday with the State-Level Task Force issuing guidelines for 'Lockdown 3.0' late Saturday night.

Mizoram's international and inter-State borders will remain sealed barring two entry/exit points with Assam and one with Tripura, which will remain open for vehicles transporting essential commodities. Drivers and handymen will be screened at the check gates and will stay at quarantine centres.

Those drivers and handymen from outside Mizoram will prepare meal for themselves on the highway and go back after their goods are unloaded.

Stranded residents brought back to the State will be medically examined and quarantined in their respective districts.

Shops selling essential commodities and other items will be allowed to remain open on alternate days.

As per the latest guidelines, all shops will have to be closed by 5 pm.

Shopkeepers will be required to wear face masks and maintain social distancing of at least

six feet from their customers. Wearing surgical mask or covering face with cloth is mandatory for anyone going outdoors. However, people were advised not to venture out except for urgent matters.

Passenger vehicles, including taxis, will be allowed to operate as per odd-even rule. While taxis can carry only two passengers, other vehicles are allowed to ferry only 50 per cent passengers of their total seating capacity.

Two-wheeler taxis have not yet been allowed to ply.

All public places, except government offices, will remain closed. Though restaurants will remain closed, home delivery service has been allowed.

Assembly of more than five persons is prohibited and only those who are exempted from the lockdown restrictions can venture out at night.

While any form of social gathering is prohibited, only 20 persons are permitted to attend funerals by maintaining social distancing.

Group A and B government employees will attend office on every working day while group C and D employees will work on alternate days. They are advised to maintain social distancing at their workplaces.

# COVID-19 patient tests positive again in Meghalaya

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

SHILLONG, May 3: Meghalaya will have to wait a bit longer to become COVID-free with the lone active patient of the State retesting positive today.

According to Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, the test result of the lone COVID 19 patient has come positive. The samples of the patient would be sent for retest after three days as per the health protocols.

There were 11 active cases in the State and one person had died. All but one remains positive at this moment. The rest who have recovered are in home quarantine for 14 days.

Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force today

showered flower petals from helicopters over the Civil Hospital, Bethany Hospital and NEIRIGHMS this morning.

The Chief Minister along with Health Minister AL Hek and other officials were at the Civil Hospital to lend support and encouragement to the health workers.

Applauding them, Sangma said people owe their gratitude to the frontline health workers.

He encouraged them by adding that the health workers despite the difficult times have continued their work with dedication.

"At this time of crisis, it is very important that we keep the spirits of our frontline workers upbeat. Let us continue to fight together to overcome this global pandemic," Sangma later tweeted.

## USTM to host online conference

GUWAHATI, May 3: The University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM), will host an international online conference on "Emergence and Resurgence of Communicable Diseases - Social Sciences Perspectives" on July 21 and 22, 2020.

The conference will be held in collaboration with the Indian Sociological Society; University of Delhi; Forum for Learning and Action with Innovation and Rigour (FLAIR), Delhi; and Tripura Bamboo and Cane Development Centre, Agartala, stated a press release.

Some of the prominent speakers of the conference will be Prof Sailendra Sarma (University of San Francisco), Prof Liaquat Ali (former VC, Bangladesh University of Health Sciences), Dr Raj Bhandari (Member-Niti Ayog), Prof Abdul Mannan (former Chairman, UGC-Bangladesh), Prof Yasmin Saikia (Arizona State University), Prof PC Joshi (University of Delhi), Prof Abdul Matin (FLAIR, Delhi), Prof Rama V Baru (JNU), among others.

The sub-themes of the conference include 'social sciences perspectives and theories on health and illness', 'education, health, wellbeing and social stigma', 'emergence and re-emergence of communicable diseases', 'COVID-19 - impacts on health, economy, education and society', 'COVID-19 and gender' and 'COVID-19 - disaster management, role of media and civil society'.

## Manipur aims to increase farm output

**NEWMAI NEWS**

IMPHAL, May 3: In view of the COVID-19 situation, the Manipur Government is working on measures to increase agricultural and horticultural produces in the State.

In this regard, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh chaired a high-level meeting with the representatives of farmers producer companies (FPCs) here on Saturday.

Singh emphasised on increasing the production and availability of agri-horticultural produces in view of the evolving situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting discussed the situation and constraints in connection with cultivation, production and supply of different crops in the State.

The Chief Minister advised the Department of Horticulture and Soil Conservation to support farmers and FPCs to start cultivation of short duration high-value crops the suit the present climatic condition.



A COVID-19 testing centre being set up at the Tura Civil Hospital on Sunday. - UB photos

# Bear cub shifted to rehabilitation centre

ITANAGAR, May 3: A Himalayan black bear cub rescued from the Lower Siang district in Arunachal Pradesh has been handed over to the authorities of Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation at Pakke Tiger Reserve in Seijosa, forest officials said.

The two-month-old cub was rescued by one Marmi Riba, a resident of Old Deka village in New Seren circle of Lower Siang district, from a forest area in the first week of April.

The cub was separated from its mother, Range Officer of Nari Forest

Range Jumbo Geyi said.

The cub was handed over to the officials and veterinary doctors of the rehabilitation centre, he added.

Geyi said the cub was too young to survive in the wild if released and hence it was handed over to the animal rehabilitation centre.

"On receiving information about its rescue, we informed the authorities of Biological Park in Itanagar but due to the lockdown, the transportation of the cub was not possible. However, the cub was taken care of by the rescuer with telephonic guidance of the veteri-

nary officer of the Biological Park," Geyi informed.

On pursuance of Pasighat Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Tashi Mize, the officials of Rehabilitation Centre took custody of the bear, Geyi added.

The Asiatic bear rehabilitation project at Seijosa in East Kameng district was officially launched on March 15, 2002 after a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked between the State Forest Department and Wildlife Trust of India. Since then the centre is home to many rescued Asiatic black bear cubs of the region. - PTI

## Movement curbs to stay in Nagaland

**CORRESPONDENT**

DIMAPUR, May 3: The Nagaland Government on Sunday said that movement of people and vehicles, except those exempted from the lockdown restrictions, would not be permitted and the inter-State borders would remain sealed.

Additional Chief Secretary and Commissioner Sentiyanger Imchen directed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure strict compliance of the order.

The order followed de-sealing of the inter-State borders by the Assam Government on Saturday to allow stranded people of the State to return.

Imchen said according to an order by Chief Secretary Temjen Toy on Saturday the State is still under lockdown and the State's boundaries are yet to be de-sealed.

According to reports, hundreds of people from other States stranded in Dimapur have applied for fitness certificates from the district surveillance unit for COVID-19 to return to their respective States after the Assam Government opened its borders.

# Mein lays stress on saving lives, reviving livelihoods

**CORRESPONDENT**

ITANAGAR, May 3: Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein has said that saving lives and reviving livelihoods were the priorities of the State Government.

"This pandemic is a collective crisis, and saving lives and reviving livelihoods are the priorities of the State Government," the Deputy Chief Minister said in a tweet.

Mein, who is leading a seven-member high-level team on a two-day visit to eastern Arunachal districts along Assam border to take stock of the districts' preparedness and assess measures taken to tackle the COVID-19 crisis, said, "We have to treat the combination of lockdown and social distancing as an effective social vaccine against the pandemic."

Stating that the State Government was continuously monitoring the preparedness and management of COVID-19 in the State which were also being monitored at the highest level by the Centre, he asked the district administrations to keep vigil at check gates on the entry of stranded people, including students who would be returning home from various places.

The Dy CM, who was accompanied by Health Minister Alo Libang, advised the district administrations to take due precautions to check everyone who would be returning home in order to prevent the spread of the highly contagious virus.

He said that since Arunachal has been categorised as green zone, the daily and economic activities, as per the MHA guidelines, have to be allowed in districts to help the small growers and traders. He appealed to the district administrations to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities, and to sensitise people to wear mask and maintain social distancing.

While commending the Lohit district administration for its resilience, hard work, dedication and commitment in dealing with the State's lone COVID-19 positive case, Mein informed that there would be no dearth of funds in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the State.

# Black rice of Manipur gets GI recognition

**CORRESPONDENT**

IMPHAL, May 3: Chakhao, the black rice of Manipur, has bagged the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

The Geographical Indications Registry has confirmed it on their official website - <http://ipindiaservices.gov.in/GirPublic/Application/Details/602>.

The registration process took more than a year, which included documentation by a team of the State Agriculture Department, official sources said.

GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.

Project Coordinator of Manipur Small Farmers' Agri Business Consortium MS Khaidem said that after the registration,

they can now start selling Chakhao seeds as well as grains anywhere in the world.

"We will get loyalty if anyone wants to trade in it," he said.

Some farming communities here had expressed their concern over reports of cultivation and harvesting of the rice variety in other parts of the country.

Chakhao, a scented glutinous rice variety, is being cultivated in Manipur for many centuries. It is grown in the plains and hills of Manipur where the soil quality is rich.

It is also used by traditional medical practitioners as part of traditional medicine.

Chakhao is said to be anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic, beneficial for heart and to prevent onset of Alzheimer's disease.



- Photo: Correspondent

The GI application says an important aspect of black rice cultivation is that farmers neither apply agro-chemicals nor use any motorised implements. Only human labour is used for farming.

Chakhao is characterised by its special aroma. People usually have it during community feasts and is used to prepare 'kheer'. It is sold at a price of Rs 100-120 per kg in local market.

Khaidem further informed that they are also trying for GI tag for a local pea variety called Hawaitharak-makhayat-mubi.

Earlier, Kachai lemon of Manipur had got the GI tag. This particular lemon contains 45-51 mg ascorbic acid per 100 ml, which is the highest among citrus fruits. It grows at Kachai village in Manipur's Ukhrul district.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Sankaradeva in Harvard**

NAGAON, May 3: Harvard University recently included an essay on Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva written by Dr Sanjeev Kumar Borkakoti in the syllabus of the university from the current year. According to sources, the essay "Unique Future of Srimanta Shankaradeva's Religious Philosophy" written by Dr Borkakoti has been included in the subject of Religion of the university. — A Correspondent

**Keshab Mahanta reviews work**

BAIHATA CHARIALI, May 3: Water Resources Minister Keshab Mahanta reviewed the ongoing embankment construction work along the Puthimari river at Athgaon in Kamalpur Assembly Constituency recently. The minister said that due to the lockdown, the construction remained suspended and now it will resume in full swing so that work is completed before the rainy season. If any contractor is found performing substandard work, departmental action will be taken. Kamalpur MLA Satyabrata Kalita said that last year, the floodwaters of the Puthimari had breached the embankment at Athgaon for which the public had to face tremendous hardship. Kamrup Deputy Commissioner Kamal Kumar Baishya, Kamalpur Circle Officer Dr Ananta Sarma and other officials were also present. — ANN Service

**Relief items distributed**

DOOMDOOMA, May 3: The Doomdooma Sanmilita Samaj, a joint forum of various organisations, distributed grocery items among 400 households of Kakojan area on Saturday. AASU general secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi, All Moran Students' Union president Arunjiyoti Moran, AJYCP Tinsukia district committee president Surajit Moran, Tinsukia Zila Sahitya Sabha president Arjun Baruah, Tinsukia District Journalists' Association former president Anuj Kalita, Doomdooma Sakha Sahitya Sabha secretary Deben Deka, Doomdooma Chambers of Commerce secretary Kishan Pareek, Doomdooma Press Club assistant secretary Manoj Baruah distributed the items. — Correspondent

**Tributes to Hema Bharali**

DHEMAJI, May 3: The demise of Padma Shri recipient Hema Bharali, a veteran Gandhian and freedom fighter who was involved in social work, was condeoled at her birthplace in Dhakuakhana. A 'shraddhanjali' ceremony was held at Dhakuakhana Bamun Gaon under the aegis of the Dhakuakhana Bamun Gaon Yuba Sangha, where a number of people paid tributes to the social activist. — ANN Service

**Relief in Patacharkuchi**

PATACHARKUCHI, May 3: Patacharkuchi MLA Pabindra Deka on Sunday distributed relief materials among 90 poor people struggling for survival during the lockdown. Deka distributed atta, potato, dal and mustard oil among the beneficiaries including butchers, fish sellers, rickshaw pullers, tempo drivers, and hand cart pullers of Patacharkuchi. He had earlier distributed relief among 45 newspaper hawkers, 256 ASHA workers, supervisors and Anganwadi workers, and differently-abled people. — ANN Service

**Masks, sanitisers distributed**

PATACHARKUCHI, May 3: As part of the fight against COVID-19, the Pathsala Press Club distributed sanitisers and masks among newspaper agents and hawkers and other persons. On the occasion, the Press Club members appealed to the people to follow the lockdown strictly in the greater interest of the society. — ANN Service

**AASU distributes relief**

MORIGAON, May 3: The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) distributed food items among people in several remote villages in Morigaon district on May 1 and 2. The AASU's central team led by executive members Utpal Sarma and Naba Nath distributed food packets among poor families at Kushtoli, Bhuragaon, Gasarguri, Bhurbandha, Habi-Barangabari, Mikirbhetta, Jagiroad, Mayong, Dharamtul and Ahotguri. The team appealed to affluent persons to help the distressed people in this hour of crisis. — Correspondent

**Gutkha trader held**

DOOMDOOMA, May 3: In spite of the government ban on the use and sale of gutkha during the lockdown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a section of dishonest traders in Doomdooma have been continuing the trade of gutkha and other banned items. Police on Saturday seized a huge quantity of gutkha from the residence of one Rohit Jaiswal. Doomdooma PS officer-in-charge said that based on information, police launched a search in the residence of Jaiswal at Trolley Line in Beesakopie Tea Estate and also arrested Jaiswal. A case has been registered under various sections of the IPC and Disaster Management Act, 2005. The arrested trader was sent to judicial custody. — Correspondent

**Elephant kills one**

DOOMDOOMA, May 3: One Mridul Saikia (45) of Borpartha village under Talap outpost of Doomdooma PS was killed by a wild elephant at Mechaki Reserve Forest on Saturday morning. According to information, he along with a few other people of his village had gone to the forest in search of their cows when they faced a herd of wild tuskers. Though his companions managed to escape, Mridul was killed by an elephant. The deceased leaves behind his wife and three daughters. — Correspondent



Tractors being distributed among farmers at Pathsala on Sunday by Deputy Commissioner Munindra Sharma under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Rural Development Scheme. The distribution is going on in a phase-wise manner due to the lockdown in order to avoid gathering of people. Tractors will be distributed among farmers in 438 villages, and 46 tractors have been distributed since March 2020. — Photo: Nava Kanta Kalita

## Door-to-door fever testing in Cachar district soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, May 3: Following Government instructions, the Cachar District Health Society has decided to intensify the medical examination of people within the district in order to ensure there is no community transmission of COVID-19.

Joint Director of Health Services, Dr Sudip Jyoti Das informed the media on Saturday that they are likely to start a door-to-door medical examination campaign in the next few days to screen if anyone is suffering from fever.

"Since the season is prone to many diseases especially the Japanese Encephalitis and malaria, our medical teams shall reach out to people both in rural and urban areas to screen for fever

screening. Also, we shall check if anyone, including those who would be returning home from other States and districts are bearing symptoms of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARI) or Influenza Like Illness (ILI) which might lead to COVID-19 among them," Dr Das said.

Echoing the Joint Director, Dr Ajit Bhattacharjee, District Surveillance Officer said that if there are any detection of SARI or ILI cases, the doctors in the medical teams shall determine the case in connection to COVID-19 and throat swab samples would be sent to Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH) after uploading the list in the designated portal. "There are over 17 lakh people living in the rural areas of the district together with more than

2 lakh urban population. We are gearing up to send our medical teams to each residence for proper surveillance and fever screening. The objective is to check and avert community transmission, should there be detection of COVID-19 positive cases. If anyone is found with the SARI or ILI symptoms, the patient and the concerned family member shall be kept in home quarantine till reports of the swab samples are available," Dr Bhattacharjee maintained.

Meanwhile, Dr Bhaskar Gupta, vice principal of SMCH informed that even as both COVID-19 positive patients are maintaining stable health, the first positive patient of the State is likely to undergo yet another swab sample test soon.

## 36 cameras at animal corridors of Kaziranga in flood season



CORRESPONDENT

DERGAON, May 3: As many as 36 cameras have been set up at the animal corridors of Kaziranga National Park (KNP) as a precautionary measure for the flood season ahead.

As pre-monsoon showers have hit the State, the Kaziranga National Park authorities are gearing up preparations to face the floods. The major problem for the animals of KNP is to cross the NH-37 and to move towards the Karbi hills during floods.

Six cameras will be installed at the animal corridors on the NH-37 to record the movement of the animals and also the speed of the vehicles passing through the park at that time.

The director of KNP P Sivakumar told this correspondent that the park authority with the help of higher authorities has taken several measures to control death of animals during

the flood. The director said that two automatic cameras each at Panbari and Haldhibari and one each at Deosur and Amguri corridors would be placed to monitor the animals.

On the other hand, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF), Wildlife, Government of Assam MK Yadav visited the park on Friday and took stock of the park in the wake of the latest swine flu pandemic and necessary measures at Kaziranga.

The PCCF told mediapersons that the pigs who had died of swine flu had been flown into the river Brahmaputra and that would be a threat to Kaziranga if the animals come into contact with these carcasses. "If the floating carcasses of pigs enter Kaziranga, a great threat will be posed to the wildlife of the park," he said. The PCCF directed the forest officers of upper Assam to be more sensitive to the issue so that the wildlife remains safe at all costs.

## OBITUARY

### Narendra Nath Sarma



ANN SERVICE

PATACHARKUCHI, May 3: Narendra Nath Sarma, an octogenarian citizen of the area and a frontline dairy and progressive farmer, died on April 30 at his residence at Patacharkuchi. He had suffered a stroke a few days back and was admitted to the GNRC, Guwahati.

As his condition did not improve, he was brought back home where he died soon after.

Sarma leaves behind his wife, two sons, two daughters, and grandchildren.

## Students' body demands justice in abduction, 'murder' case

CORRESPONDENT

HAFLONG, May 3: The Harangajao block unit of the Hmar Students' Association (HSA) has expressed shock over recent events in the area, in which the body of Santosh Hojai, who was abducted from his residence by unknown persons, was recovered from a reserve forest area. The students' body demanded justice in the case without any delay.

A press release issued by the students' body stated that on April 24, Santosh Hojai of Harangajao was abducted from his residence by miscreants and his body was recovered at Lailing Reserve Forest under Langting Police Station, in what seemed to be a clear case of murder. The HSA condemned the failure of the Dima Hasao district administration and the law enforcement agencies in protecting the people.

The HSA urged the Government of Assam and the Dima Hasao administration to investigate the matter without delay and bring to book

those involved in the abduction and murder of Hojai and also ascertain the cause of death of Ramakanta Dey (head teacher of Michikhur Part-II LP School, Ditokcherra), whose body was found near Ditokcherra Railway Station on May 1. It also expressed its deepest sympathies to the bereaved families.

**Thousands bid tearful adieu:** Thousands of people from every walk of life gathered to bid a tearful adieu to late Santosh Hojai who was kidnapped and killed by unknown gunmen under mysterious circumstances during the nationwide lockdown at Harangajao on Saturday.

A silent procession along with the body of Hojai was held to honour the departed soul up to the cremation ground near Choto Narainpur.

Meanwhile, the Dimasa Students' Union and the All Dimasa Students' Union and other community organisations, while condemning the incident, demanded a high-level and fast-track inquiry into the incident.

## Free seeds to grow vegetables at home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

JORHAT, May 3: With an aim to assist people in urban and adjoining areas of the district in the post-lockdown period to grow vegetables in their residential compounds, the Jorhat district administration with support from the Agriculture department will distribute free seed kits of eight *khari* vegetables door to door.

Jorhat Subdivisional Agriculture Officer (Headquarters) Dr Nitumoni Gogoi told this newspaper that under the initiative named 'Ghore Ghore Lao (bottle gourd) Jika (ridged gourd) Bholor (sponge gourd) Asoni (project)', hybrid seed kits will be distributed free to 10,000 permanent residents in urban and nearby areas across Jorhat district.

The official informed that the kits will contain seeds of the aforementioned vegetables as well as that of cowpea (dangbodi) cucumber, papaya, lady's finger and chilli. The seeds in the kit will be sufficient enough to grow vegetables in one *katha* plot of land, Gogoi stated. He said seeds will be distributed through NGOs and a list of the beneficiaries has been prepared by the administration.

Gogoi said that the seeds will be distributed soon and if people start work this month, then the vegetables will be ready for consumption in the next 2-3 months.

He said the initiative was aimed to attract people to start taking up vegetable cultivation on a small scale as many have a hobby and, moreover, if people continue the same, then they could contribute in making the district become self-sufficient in vegetables.

## New BTC officials assume office

CORRESPONDENT

KOKRAJHAR, May 3: The new administrator of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Rajesh Prasad and newly-appointed Principal Secretary Siddhartha Singh assumed their offices on April 30 at the BTC Secretariat, Kodamtola in Kokrajhar.

Both the officers jointly held a meeting with the BTC officials at the secretariat.

Prasad, expressing his satisfaction over the fact that the

BTC area has remained free from COVID-19, urged the people to maintain social distancing. He also thanked the Governor for appointing him as the BTC administrator.

The term of the BTC ended on April 27 and the Governor of Assam has appointed IAS Officer Rajesh Prasad as the new BTC administrator. The Governor gave the responsibility of the BTC administration to Prasad after taking over charge of the council.

## 3 youths, 2 girls return from Bihar on bicycles

ANN SERVICE

GOSSAIGAON, May 3: Three youths and two girls arrived at Simultapu on the Assam-West Bengal border on Saturday by riding bicycles for over 400 km on the National Highway 31(C) from various places in Bihar.

These five persons had gone to Bihar in search of work in February before the declaration of the lockdown. They were looking for jobs but could not manage to find any. On March 24, when the nationwide lockdown was declared, they started feeling lonely, and finding no other options, they somehow managed to purchase five bicycles and started their homeward journey. After riding continuously for five days, they arrived at Simultapu on Saturday.

On receiving information, Gossaigaon police along with civil administration staff took them for medical check-up and later sent them to the Dhaulaguri orphanage for quarantine.

The three youths were identified as Shankar Munda (26), Rajesh Munda (27) and Alexious Gori (24), all from Subankhata village in Baksa district. The

girls were identified as Jasanta Gori (25) and Nandi Ekka (24) from Sagunbari village in Udalguri district.

**18 carpenters on way to Bihar held:** As many as 18 persons, all of them reportedly working as carpenters who were facing starvation due to the lockdown, were held at Simultapu on Saturday. They were coming from Khanapara, Guwahati on foot and were walking towards Bihar. The carpenters were sent for quarantine by the civil and police administration of Gossaigaon. These people had reportedly crossed over the Assam border, but were again chased back towards Simultapu inside the Assam boundary by West Bengal Police.

**76 labourers walking towards Bihar held:** As many as 76 persons in two groups – 16 from Guwahati and 60 from various places in Meghalaya – who are residents of Bihar and were working as labourers, reached Simultapu by walking for 5-7 days. The 16 persons from Guwahati are residents of Darbhanga in Bihar and the rest are from Khagaria district. The first batch arrived at Simultapu on April 29 and the sec-

ond on the next day.

They wanted to cross over to West Bengal, but police detained five of them and the rest were chased towards the Assam border. All the labourers spent

sleepless nights at a petrol pump on empty stomachs.

Simultapu police at the instance of the Gossaigaon civil administration quarantined the 71 persons, while the

five detained in West Bengal were sent for quarantine at Barobadha.

Questions are being raised as to how these people were able to cross interstate borders without the knowledge

of the administration and police.

**16 youths reach Gossaigaon from Siliguri on foot:** A total of 16 youths working in various industries as well as labourers in Siliguri reached the Gossaigaonhat Railway Station on April 30 on foot. They were detained by railway police.

Due to financial hardship and disruption in the communication system, they took the decision to walk a distance of around 250 km, all the way from Siliguri, and arrived at Gossaigaon after four days. The youths walked on the railway track from Siliguri, and were looking tired and hungry, police stated. The youths are residents of Barpeta and Goalpara districts. Police later sent the youths to quarantine camps.

**Man reported missing:** A 48-year-old man, identified as Subhash Chandra Saha, a resident of ward No.1 in Gossaigaon town, has been reported missing since March 21. His family members said Saha had gone to Siliguri by the Kanchanjunga Express, and since then his whereabouts have not been known. An FIR has been lodged at the Gossaigaon Police Station.



The 16 youths who came on foot from Siliguri to Gossaigaon. — Photo: Khanindra Nath Das



# Commerce Ministry working to identify key sectors

NEW DELHI, May 3: The Commerce and Industry Ministry is working to identify certain key sectors – like capital goods, leather and chemicals – with a view to establish India as manufacturing hub, according to sources.

Several meetings have taken place with stakeholders, including industry chambers, to identify those sectors which have the potential to become global winners and make India a strong manufacturing hub, the sources said.

“There are 12 champion sectors which can be looked upon. These include modular furniture, toys, food

processing like ready-to-eat food, agro-chemicals, textiles like man-made fibres, air-conditioners, capital goods, pharma and auto components,”

Groups and sub-groups have been constituted on the matter by engaging representatives from industry chambers like CII and Assocham.

The core group would identify specific implementable policy based on issues like technological capability, employment potential, and global as well as domestic demand, they added.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has recently stated that in the post-COVID era, there is going to be a perceptible change in the global supply-chains, and Indian industrialists and exporters should be looking to capture significant share in the world trade.

He has said that the ministry is working on identifying the specific sectors which can be taken forward in the immediate future for the exports purpose.

Promoting manufacturing will help

in creating more jobs and pushing India's dwindling exports.

Manufacturing sector contributes about 15 per cent in the country's economy and the government is aiming to increase it significantly.

The output of eight core infrastructure industries shrank by a record 6.5 per cent in March due to significant dip in production of crude oil, natural gas, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity amid the coronavirus lockdown.

Exports too contracted by a record 34.6 per cent in March on account of the lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreak. – PTI

# EPFO employees contribute Rs 2.5 cr towards PM fund

NEW DELHI, May 3: Employees of retirement fund body EPFO have collectively contributed Rs 2.5 crore towards the PM-CARES Fund to support fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The EPFO employees have also come forward to support the government's initiative in combating the COVID-19 crisis and voluntarily contributed one day's salary, amounting to around Rs 2.5 crore, towards the PM-CARES Fund, according to a

statement by the Labour Ministry.

The EPFO, as one of world's largest social security organisations, stands committed in the service of the nation in every possible way, it said.

COVID-19, declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation, has posed serious challenges for the health and economic security of millions of Indians.

The Government of India has set up a public charitable trust under the

name of the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation.

Officers and staff of EPFO are also contributing by putting in extra efforts for providing relief by expeditiously processing EPF withdrawal claims including COVID-19 claims under the PMGKY package. – PTI

# Traders, retailers seek clarity from authorities

NEW DELHI, May 3: Ahead of easing restrictions on shop reopenings, retailers and trader associations have sought more clarity from local authorities to clear confusion over what constitutes a neighbourhood and standalone shop, and what differentiates them from those in market place.

The government has allowed all standalone (single) shops, neighbourhood (colony) shops and shops in residential complexes to open in urban areas, without any distinction of essential and non-essential. This means shops in market places as well as malls are allowed to reopen. E-commerce activities, in the red zones, are permitted only in respect of essential goods.

Retailers Association of India (RAI) said it will have to be seen how it works out at the ground as there is confusion, and many States are yet to come up with guidelines to follow the Centre's decision. It has al-

ready stated that what constitutes market places could be misinterpreted.

Similarly, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) also claimed they will be in a “dilemma” as there is confusion over “what constitutes a neighbourhood shop and a standalone shop”, while organised retailers such as Future Group and V-Mart Retail said they are also seek-

## Relaxation for reopening of shops

ing permissions from local authorities.

“Some parts of the businesses will reopen. What we see is that there is the possibility of opening of some standalone stores... We will open wherever we can and we will talk to the local authorities to open. We will have to see how it works out.

“In any case individual States will have

to come out with clear guidelines. While some States have come out with the guidelines but they are the same as what Centre has said. I think the States are also confused and they are printing the same thing that Centre is sending,” RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan told PTI.

Expressing similar concerns, CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said, “The traders will be in a dilemma.”

When asked whether things are expected to change on the ground with the phase 3 of lockdown beginning Monday, he said there is “lack of clarity and confusion over what constitutes a neighbourhood shop and a standalone shop”.

He asserted that the “clarification should come from the right quarters. Not only the Centre, it is the duty of the State governments to issue that clarification because most of the issues are under the domain of the State governments...” – PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairing a meeting to discuss ways to boost the agriculture sector, in New Delhi on Saturday. – PIB

## Lockdown month

GSTN helpdesk handles over 56,000 taxpayer issues

NEW DELHI, May 3: GST Network Helpdesk today said it has handled over 56,000 taxpayer issues in one month since the nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25.

According to data from GSTN, over 19,552 tickets raised by taxpayers were resolved between March 25 and April 24. The highest number of tickets handled in a day was 2,766 and the highest number of calls handled was 1,776.

“However, due to the lockdown, there is a steep dip experienced in the call and ticket volume trend at GST helpdesk. The total received transactions (inflow of calls and GRP tickets) are approximately 20 per cent of the usual volume trend,” GSTN said.

Before the lockdown, on an average, GST helpdesk would receive around 8,000 to 10,000 calls every day, while around 2,000 tickets were raised on the GRP portal on a daily basis.

The GST helpdesk, whose 65 per cent of staff worked from home, was fully operational through its toll-free number from 9 am to 9 pm serving in 12 languages, it added.

GSTN CEO Prakash Kumar said helpdesk agents had to work from home, calls had to be routed to them at their phone and this was done in a secured manner.

“This was not a small job, but necessity made GSTN and its tech partner Tech Mahindra to do this...,” Kumar added. – PTI

# CII calls for permission to resume all industrial, business operations

NEW DELHI, May 3: Districts with substantial economic activity should be permitted to resume all industrial and business operations with highest safety protocols for enterprises to remain financially sustainable while averting job losses, CII said today.

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) called for economic contribution of districts to be taken into consideration while classifying lockdown zones.

Districts with high economic activity should resume all industrial and business operations, including in containment zones with highest safety protocols, said CII in its report titled ‘A Strategy Note on Resumption of Economic Activities in Industrial Areas’, sub-

mitted to the government.

The government notification of May 1 has permitted industrial estates, special economic zone (SEZ) and industrial townships with restricted entry within urban areas of red zones to commence operations.

The industry body said that all industrial units, including in non-notified industrial areas and standalone units, be allowed to function in urban areas. These should include non-essential goods and services as well.

It has recommended that close surrounding areas can be classified as orange zones

where industrial activity can be continued with strict precautionary measures and monitoring.

The distinction of essential and non-essential items should be removed and all factories should be permitted to commence operations.

“The third phase of lockdown necessitates a focused strategy to minimise economic contraction due to COVID-19, without compromising on efforts to control the contagion. Prioritising districts with heavy presence of economic and industrial activities with continued operations accompanied by strictest pre-

cautions can help enterprises to remain financially sustainable while averting job losses,” CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said.

While the protracted lockdown in the country, necessitated by the rapid spread of COVID-19, has helped in controlling the spread of epidemic and given us time to augment medical capacity, it has also caused enormous stress to the financial sustainability of many businesses, the chamber said.

CII has requested that the top districts should be identified based on variables like their contribution to the country's GDP, or presence of industrial estates and clusters or registration of enterprises in a district. – PTI

# Emergency credit line BoB disburses Rs 2,300 cr to MSMEs

NEW DELHI, May 3: The MSME sector is a key priority area and Bank of Baroda (BoB) is taking various steps, including extending a Rs 2,300-crore worth financial support, to help the sector hit hard by the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the bank's Executive Director Vikramaditya Singh Khichi said.

The state-owned bank launched an emergency credit line to provide funds to its existing MSME and corporate borrowers in the last week of March, soon after the lockdown was announced.

In the past one month, the bank has approved 64,000 applications and about Rs 2,300 crore has been disbursed to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to help them meet liquidity requirements, he told PTI.

Under the scheme, the bank provides an additional line of credit of 10 per cent of the existing fund based on working capital limits, subject to a maximum of Rs 200 crore.

The MSME sector was already under stress for the past few years due to economic slowdown and their financial position got further exacerbated due to the lockdown.

The bank is looking at re-assessment of working capital for the sector and after the assessment, will enhance their capital so that they have enough liquidity to undertake activity smoothly, he said.

Khichi also said the bank is encouraging MSME units to take advantage of the one-time restructuring plan announced by the RBI. – PTI

# Threat of pest attacks, diseases looms over State tea sector: Expert

AJIT PATOWARY

Another critical phase is perhaps in the making to aggravate the crisis of the State's already ailing tea industry. After the adverse impacts of the coronavirus-related lockdown, which is estimated to cause a loss of around 77 million kg of made tea, pests and diseases may also take a heavy toll on the State's tea industry in the coming days, warned renowned consulting tea scientist Prafulla Bordoloi.

Bordoloi, who teaches in the Centre of Tea and Agro Studies, Dibrugarh University, besides running a tea research and development centre, said May is the month of pests and diseases in tea plantation of Assam. He said that in his post-lockdown visits to the tea estates, he could notice large-scale damage caused by red spiders, looper caterpillars, thrips, mealy bugs and scale insects, besides the sporadic attacks of Helopeltis and red slug caterpillars.

Helopeltis may prove to be the most damaging pest on the onset of monsoon in June, with the potential to create havoc if not controlled timely. All tea planters should arrange to get the supply of chemicals at the earliest and apply the same as per the demand of the situation without delay, he suggested. However, he maintained that due to financial constraints, many of the estates may find it difficult to apply all agricultural inputs in time and in full doses.

He, therefore, recommended a somewhat cost-reduction measure in fertiliser application by refraining from applying or reducing the dose of phosphatic fertiliser in the current season for a year. This will not have any major adverse impact on productivity, he maintained. But, in the same breath, he cautioned against making any reduction in the recommended doses of nitrogen and potash meant for the soil. This is a must to sustain productivity, he said.

Bordoloi has worked out the State tea industry's loss by taking into consideration the loss it is facing during the first and second flush periods in both its organised and unorganised sectors. In the organised sector, the overall estimated loss is pegged at about 37 million kg, while in the unorganised sector, that is, the small tea growing sector, the overall loss is pegged at around 40 million kg.

He said that his field analysis indicated a 70 per cent lockdown-induced dip in the overall first flush tea production during March and April. The State normally produces 10 per cent of the total annual tea of about 720 million kg in the first flush and the lockdown has brought it down to only three per cent of the estimated total production.

Assam produces 52 per cent of the total Indian tea and this constitutes 12 per cent of the total global production of 6 billion kg.



Farmers load harvested sugarcane crop on a tractor during the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown, in Muzaffarnagar on Sunday. – PTI

# Auto industry may go for cut in R&D spending: Deloitte

NEW DELHI, May 3: The domestic automobile industry might resort to cuts in spending on research and development (R&D) and also exit unprofitable businesses and segments with the coronavirus pandemic taking a toll on companies' revenues and cash flows, according to a report by Deloitte.

The reduction in R&D activities may impact progress made in the alternative fuel technologies till now, the report noted.

“The COVID-19 lockdown has had a multiplier effect – the industry has been at a complete

standstill since March 24. A prolonged truncation of consumer demand due to the lockdown is significantly affecting auto sector revenues and cash flows,” Deloitte India Partner and Automotive Sector Lead Rajeev Singh said.

In response, companies may resort to starving their R&D funding in order to sustain core operations, and potentially set back the progress made on alternative fuel and mobility technologies by 2-4 quarters, he added.

“Eventually, some companies

may even choose to take a strategic call to exit unprofitable markets and vehicle segments,” Singh said.

The auto industry in India has already undergone considerable slowdown over the past 12-18 months due to structural changes beginning with goods and services tax (GST), shift to shared mobility, axle-load reforms, the BS-IV to BS-VI transition and liquidity crunch, he noted.

The domestic automotive industry is likely to witness a prolonged U-shape recovery, with a best-case recovery to 2018-19

sales volumes expected by 2021-22, the report said.

Elaborating further, the report said the automotive dealers will have to resort to heavy discounting after the lockdown in order to clear inventory build-up.

“Dealers face significant burden to liquidate unsold BS-IV inventory, estimated to be worth Rs 6,300 crore,” it added.

In this scenario, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) will need to support dealer groups, both financially and otherwise, further stressing their own balance sheet, the report said.

Despite several difficulties, the report also outlines few positives for the industry.

“The industry has responded in a very matured manner taking care of employees, customers and other stakeholders,” Singh said.

Some of the leaders in the industry are gearing up to the new normal – working on digitising sales and marketing processes, setting up mechanism for contactless sales of new cars, automating back-end processes to get more efficient and setting up new systems to start operations across the value chain, he added. – PTI



Dinesh Bihani

AS per the latest auction sale (No 14) of Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) held on March 28, the total tea offerings were 2,722 packages out of which 97 per cent was sold. There was strong demand for the nominal quantity of new season teas offered so far with prices up by Rs 30-60 compared to the opening levels of last year. Western India and North India buyers actively participated. The auction average price for this week stood at Rs 254.64.

Top garden prices					
BOP	Price	BOPSM/BP	Price	OF/PF	Price
HALMARI	451	HALMARI	403	MADHUPUR	351
HALMIRA	341	MADHUPUR	354	DUKLINGIA	326
MADHUPUR	322	DUKLINGIA	350	GHILLIDARY	316
BEHALI	312	LUKWAH	350	BEHALI	313
GHILLIDARY	311	GHILLIDARY	331	KOPATI	311

Secretary, Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association (GTABA)





# Mind blowing

Extraction on its way to become Netflix's biggest film of all time

Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth has thanked everyone for loving his digital movie *Extraction*, which is on its way to become Netflix's "biggest film of all time".

Hemsworth took to Instagram to post a video to express his gratitude about the response to the film, reports *hollywoodreporter.com*.

"Hey, what's up guys, I hope you're doing well. I just want to say a massive thank you to everyone who checked out 'Extraction', you've made it the number one film on the planet right now," said the actor from his gym.

"And it looks like it's going to be Netflix's biggest feature film of all time, which is absolutely mind blowing" he added.

The *Thor* star went on to say: "We are blown away by the response and the support. On behalf of myself, the Russo Brothers, Netflix, our director Sam Hargrave, thank you so so much. We love you guys."

He also addressed the rumors of a sequel to *Extraction*.

"There's been a lot of talk and questions about sequels and prequels and all sorts of things, and all I can say is who knows," said the actor, adding: "but with this amount of support, it's something I will be pretty stoked to jump back into."

The action thriller released on Netflix on April 24, and attracted viewership from "an estimat-

ed 90 million households in the first four weeks" of its release, according to Hemsworth's previous Instagram post.

With *Extraction*, Hargrave graduated from being Chris Evans' stunt double in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* for fight scenes and stunt coordinator in *Captain America: Civil War* to a feature director.

Hargrave was an additional second unit director in *Avengers: Infinity War*.

For his first film, Hargrave reunited with his *Avengers* family. He got *Thor* star Hemsworth to lead the film, screenplay of which is done by Joe Russo. The film is produced by Russo Brothers (Joe and Anthony Russo), Mike Larocca, Chris Hemsworth, Eric Gitter, and Peter Schwerrin.

It revolves around Tyler Rake (essayed by Hemsworth), a fearless, black market mercenary, who embarks on the most deadly extraction of his career when he is enlisted to rescue the kidnapped son of an imprisoned international crime lord.

It has been shot extensively in India, along with other places around the world. Originally titled *Dhaka*, the film also stars Indian actors Randeep Hooda, Pankaj Tripathi, Priyanshu Painyulli and Rudraksh Jaiswal.

(Source: IANS)

**Kids**

**GN**

12:00 Bandhuh Aur Budbak  
14:00 Roll No 21 vs 7 Villains  
15:30 Ogy And The Cock...  
18:30 Roll No. 21  
19:30 Bandhuh Aur Budbak  
21:00 Ogy And The Cock...  
22:00 Bandhuh Aur Budbak  
23:00 Courage The Cowardly...  
23:30 The Tom & Jerry Show

**Pogo**

12:30 Chhota Bheem Kung Fu...  
13:00 Chhota Bheem  
13:30 Chhota Bheem Kung Fu...  
18:30 Chhota Bheem and The...  
19:30 Chhota Bheem  
21:00 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
22:00 Mr. Bean: The Animated...  
23:00 M.A.D.  
23:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...

**StarPlus**

12:15 Mahabharat  
13:00 Yeh Fishta Kya Kehlata Hai  
14:30 Diya Aur Baati Hum  
16:00 Saath Nibhaana Saathiya  
17:30 Mann Ki Awaaz...Pratiya  
18:30 Siya Ke Ram  
19:00 RadhaKrishn  
20:00 Mahabharat  
21:30 Devon Ke Dev Mahadev  
22:30 Savdhaan India : India Fights Back

**StarOne**

15:30 Chhota Bheem  
16:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
17:30 Chhota Bheem  
18:30 Chhota Bheem and The...  
19:30 Chhota Bheem  
21:00 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
22:00 Mr. Bean: The Animated...  
23:00 M.A.D.  
23:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...

**Entertainment**

**StarPlus**

12:15 Mahabharat  
13:00 Yeh Fishta Kya Kehlata Hai  
14:30 Diya Aur Baati Hum  
16:00 Saath Nibhaana Saathiya  
17:30 Mann Ki Awaaz...Pratiya  
18:30 Siya Ke Ram  
19:00 RadhaKrishn  
20:00 Mahabharat  
21:30 Devon Ke Dev Mahadev  
22:30 Savdhaan India : India Fights Back

**AXN**

13:40 Constantine  
15:30 Swordfish  
17:05 The Bourne Legacy  
19:15 American Ninja Warrior  
20:05 Little Big Shots UK  
21:45 Genius Junior  
22:35 The Brave One

**Zcafe**

12:30 MasterChef Australia  
19:05 Starry Nights Gen Y  
20:05 The 100  
21:00 Supergirl  
22:00 Starry Nights Gen Y  
23:00 Love Island UK

**Colors**

12:00 Khatra Khatra Khatra  
13:00 Om Shanti Om  
15:55 Khatra Khatra Khatra  
19:00 Mahavir Hanuman  
20:10 Jai Shri Krishna  
21:50 Dance Deewane  
23:00 Khatra Khatra Khatra

**StarOne**

15:30 Chhota Bheem  
16:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
17:30 Chhota Bheem  
18:30 Chhota Bheem and The...  
19:30 Chhota Bheem  
21:00 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
22:00 Mr. Bean: The Animated...  
23:00 M.A.D.  
23:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...

**rishtey**

12:00 Padmaavat  
15:15 Sasural Simar Ka  
18:00 Choti Saradaam  
20:00 Sasural Simar Ka  
22:00 Kasam Tere Pyaar Ki

**StarOne**

15:30 Chhota Bheem  
16:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
17:30 Chhota Bheem  
18:30 Chhota Bheem and The...  
19:30 Chhota Bheem  
21:00 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
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15:30 Chhota Bheem  
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19:30 Chhota Bheem  
21:00 Grizzy And The Lemm...  
22:00 Mr. Bean: The Animated...  
23:00 M.A.D.  
23:30 Grizzy And The Lemm...

**Movies**

**StarOne**

11:55 Yeh Vaada Raha  
14:40 Doosra Admi  
17:25 Rafoo Chakkar  
19:55 Chandni  
23:30 Aap Ke Deewane

**StarOne**

13:00 War  
16:10 Sholay  
20:10 Golmaal Again  
23:15 Golmaal

**StarOne**

13:35 Cradle 2 The Grave  
15:15 Executive Decision  
17:25 Batman Forever  
19:20 Mortal Combat  
21:00 Who Am I ?  
23:00 Drop Zone

**StarOne**

12:05 The Dark Knight Rises  
16:25 Entourage  
18:05 Journey To The Center Of The Earth  
19:40 Cloverfield  
21:00 Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes Of Grindelwald  
23:15 A.I. Artificial Intelligence

**StarOne**

13:00 Dumbo  
15:05 Iron Man 2  
17:15 Frozen  
18:55 Avengers: Infinity War  
21:25 Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl  
23:45 Primeval

**StarOne**

14:55 Pardesi  
17:25 Samba  
19:40 Daring Policewala  
22:25 Shiva The Super Hero

**StarOne**

12:00 Baadshah  
15:25 Mehs  
18:00 Pardesi Babu  
22:35 Juaan

**StarOne**

13:00 Gharwali Baharwali  
14:15 Kyo Kii... Main Jhuth Nahin Bolti  
20:10 Kis KisKo Pyaar Karoon  
22:45 Fukrey

**StarOne**

12:55 Percy Jackson: Sea Of Monsters  
14:40 Iron Man 2  
16:50 Brick Mansions  
18:40 Pirates Of The Caribbean: Salazar Ki Yalgaar  
20:55 Avengers: Infinity War

**StarOne**

13:00 NBA 2019/20 Hls  
14:00 NBA2K Sundays With...  
15:00 Impact Wrestling  
17:00 Immortal  
18:00 Best Of UEFA Champions...  
19:00 NBA 2K Players Tournament  
20:00 UFC Main Event  
21:00 March Of The Champions...  
22:00 Immortal  
23:00 Unforgettable Moments  
24:00 Football Greatest  
25:00 UFC Main Event  
26:00 Immortal  
27:00 Football Greatest

**Infotainment**

**NAT GEO WILD**

12:35 Ultimate Weekends  
14:30 Monkey Thieves  
14:50 India's Jungle Heroes  
15:40 World's Weirdest

**Discovery**

16:00 Africa's Deadliest  
16:50 India's Wild Edens  
17:40 Monkey Thieves  
18:00 World's Deadliest  
18:50 Animal Fight Club  
19:40 Man V. Animal  
20:00 Into The Okavango  
21:45 India's Wild Edens  
22:35 Trials of The Wild  
23:00 Winged Seduction  
23:45 Wild Sex

**History TV**

12:35 Ancient Aliens  
13:25 Pawn Stars  
13:45 Storage Wars  
14:15 Modern Marvels  
15:05 OMGI Yeh Mera India  
15:55 Forged In Fire  
16:45 Idiot TV  
17:10 Storage Wars  
17:30 Shipping Wars  
18:00 Food Tech  
19:00 Counting Cars  
20:00 Modern Marvels-Mega...  
21:00 Dynamo: Magician...  
22:00 Pawn Stars  
22:30 Storage Wars  
23:00 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death

**National Geographic Channel**

12:05 Running Wild With Bear...

**Discovery**

12:50 Adventure: Man V. Monster  
13:45 Shakes In The City  
14:55 Wildlife: Hostile Planet  
15:45 Monster Croc Wrangler  
17:00 Adventure: Dirty Rotten...  
17:45 Outback Wrangler  
18:10 Science: Do Or Die  
18:35 Monster Croc Wrangler  
19:00 Wildlife: Hostile Planet  
19:50 Running Wild With Bear...  
20:40 Monster Croc Wrangler  
21:00 Adventure: Monster Fish  
21:55 Spotlight: Cosmos  
22:40 Adventure: Danger Decoded  
23:00 Investigates: Banged up...

**Animal Planet**

12:10 Jewels Of The Natural World  
12:35 The Lion Kingdom  
13:00 The Paek  
13:20 Animal Planet Exclusives  
14:05 Wild Frank  
14:50 Wildest Survival  
15:35 Epic Earth  
16:00 Intruders  
16:55 Lion Country: Night & Day  
17:40 Animals Unleashed  
18:05 Mahayudh: Battle Of...  
19:00 Animal Planet Exclusives  
20:00 Wildest Survival  
21:00 World's Wildest Continents  
22:00 Coyote Peterson: Brave...

**Discovery**

12:35 Brave Wilderness  
23:00 Animals Unleashed

**Regional**

**NEWS LIVE**

11:00 Assamese news  
11:30 Assamese news  
12:00 Mid Day Live  
13:00 Assamese Paafure film  
16:30 Discussion Show (R)  
17:30 Guwahati Blesch  
18:00 Guwahati Live  
18:30 Breaking @ 6:30  
19:00 Assamese Prime Time  
20:00 Discussion Show (R)  
21:00 Kotha Barta  
21:30 Talk Time  
22:00 Live at 10  
22:30 Noxo Guwahati  
23:00 Noxo Barta

**NEWS 18**

14:00 Blyoril Headline  
16:00 Abellir Khabar  
16:30 Superfast Prime Time100  
17:00 City18  
18:00 Prime Time18  
19:00 Dintur Shironam  
20:00 Porjokbeython  
18:00 Guwahati Live  
18:30 Breaking @ 6:30  
19:00 Assamese Prime Time  
20:00 Discussion Show (R)  
21:00 Kotha Barta  
21:30 Talk Time  
22:00 Live at 10  
22:30 Noxo Guwahati  
23:00 Noxo Barta

**raising**

16:00 Upasona  
17:00 Devotional Slot  
17:30 B2B Music  
18:00 North East Diva GF  
20:00 Rang Blockbuster  
23:00 B2B Music

**SONY TEN 1**

13:30 WWE BlockBusters  
15:30 Arena eSports

**SONY TEN 2**

18:30 IPL 2019 Hls  
19:30 Cricket Connected 2020  
19:30 IND vs AUS 2020 ODI Hls  
20:00 Cricket Connected 2020  
20:30 VIVO IPL 2019 Hls  
21:00 Cricket Connected 2020  
21:30 Great Knocks New Shows  
22:00 IPL 2014 Hls  
18:00 2 Nations 1 Obsession  
19:00 Memorable Masterstrokes  
19:30 India's Golden Mome...  
20:00 Nail-Biting Finishes  
20:30 Forged In Fire  
21:30 Men In Blue Victorious  
22:30 Forged In Fire  
23:00 Memorable Masterstrokes

**SONY TEN 1**

13:30 WWE BlockBusters  
15:30 Arena eSports

**Spports**

**STAR TEN 1**

18:30 IPL 2019 Hls  
19:30 Cricket Connected 2020  
19:30 IND vs AUS 2020 ODI Hls  
20:00 Cricket Connected 2020  
20:30 VIVO IPL 2019 Hls  
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20:00 Nail-Biting Finishes  
20:30 Forged In Fire  
21:30 Men In Blue Victorious  
22:30 Forged In Fire  
23:00 Memorable Masterstrokes

**STAR TEN 2**

18:30 IPL 2019 Hls  
19:30 Cricket Connected 2020  
19:30 IND vs AUS 2020 ODI Hls  
20:00 Cricket Connected 2020  
20:30 VIVO IPL 2019 Hls  
21:00 Cricket Connected 2020  
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22:30 Forged In Fire  
23:00 Memorable Masterstrokes

# Know your DAY

By JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Monday, May 4, 2020:

A natural teacher in all you do, you help others so much that you rarely leave enough time for yourself. This year, you become freer in your responsibilities and engage in a successful, creative project. If single, you love dating more than committing this year. If attached, you like each other's company more and more in the beautiful home you have created together. GEMINI loves to make jokes to make you laugh.

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

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19)  
★★★★ A potential conflict occurs when intense power struggles are likely, particularly in business partnerships. Many of you will be experiencing an ending of one career or life phase, followed by a major beginning in another. Embrace it, for it will be good. Tonight: Celebrate.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)  
★★★★ Visiting elders with your partner is favored today. A partner's perspective is grounded. You might finally get the go-ahead for a new work project. You will be working closely on a consulting basis with a co-worker. Tonight: Clear your desk and pay outstanding bills.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20)  
★★★★ Your creativity will be enhanced as imagination and originality run high today, particularly in the field of tactile art forms. Intense encounters are likely, maybe even something that feels like fated love, so be careful if you are partnered. Tonight: Dinner with those you love.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22)  
★★ Additional domestic responsibilities come up today. A parent might need extra help, even moving in with you temporarily, or vice versa. Some of you might simply be rescheduling your moving plans as they become fraught with delays. Patience is essential. Tonight: Early bedtime.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22)  
★★ A decision or situation you have been wrestling with returns to haunt you once more. Do not despair. A neighbor or sibling saves the day. It might be difficult keeping things harmonious in your neighborhood, but compromise will help. Tonight: Catch up with old friends.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)  
★★★★ Undoubtedly, you are used to financial ups and downs by now, but today you will have reason to cheer. New financial opportunities look likely, especially gracing those who work with computers or in high-tech fields. Health professions also are favored. Tonight: Relax.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)  
★★★★ You impress someone special, as you are at your most charismatic and charming. If you are craving a different look, today is the time to complete your transformation. You may be surprised as a brand-new you emerges. Tonight: Enjoy yourself.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)  
★★★★ You spend time being creative or enjoying solitary hobbies today. Later, you will need to spend time with a loved one who needs emotional assistance. Inner healing can occur now. Do not get into a psychological dither; all you need to do is listen. Tonight: Comfort.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)  
★★★★ Today you join that new group, especially if there is virtual travel involved or a chance to meet others from foreign lands. Some old acquaintances reenter your life. This gives you the chance to rethink past ties in terms of your changing values. Tonight: Relax.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)  
★★★★ There will be opportunities galore to make your mark on the world. You can begin by cultivating business contacts. Pleasure and business mix well today. Some of you will be mixing with well-to-do and prestigious individuals. Tonight: Return calls first.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)  
★★★★ Plans that have been on hold may now be undertaken. This includes travel opportunities, which abound during various times this summer. New learning experiences through reading or courses leads to increased confidence and spiritual growth. Tonight: Spend time with a child.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20)  
★★★ You might be able to obtain that loan today. Agitated friends need you as a sounding board, but do not lend them money unless you are prepared to not get it back. This is not the time for risk-taking. Tonight: Slow down.

Thought for the day

Leadership is something which other people have to recognize. You cannot demand that I am a leader.

- MS SWAMINATHAN

**LOCKHORNS**

"IMPRESSIVE... BUT ISN'T THAT THE EXACT NUMBER OF STEPS TO ARTHUR'S BAR AND BACK?"

**THE PHANTOM**

"IF YOU WERE IN SCOUTS YOU'D KNOW THAT'S POISON IVY"

**THE PHANTOM**

By Lee Falk

**BLONDIE**

BUNSTEAD, WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE MORE IMPORTANT TO READ ON COMPANY TIME THAN THAT STACK OF CONTRACTS?

IT'S A TERRIFIC INSPIRATIONAL BOOK, BOSS!

I HAVE AN EVEN MORE INSPIRATIONAL BOOK THAT MIGHT MOTIVATE YOU, BUMSTEAD.

IT'S CALLED 'GETTING RICH BY THINKING RICH'

IT'S CALLED 'GOING BROKE BY GETTING FIRED FOR BEING A USELESS OFFICE MANAGER!'

**HAGAR THE HORRIBLE**

WE HAVE OUR CASTLE! I TOLD YOU IF WE WORKED HARD AND WERE PATIENT, OUR SHIP WOULD COME IN!

ANOTHER SHIP JUST CAME IN!

**Tribune CROSSWORD - 6884**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9			10		
11			12			
13			14		15	16
17						
20	21					
22						23
26	27	28		29		30
31				32		33
36						37
						38

**Across**

3 Quake (5)  
8 Aunt's husband (5)  
10 Greek letter (5)  
11 Eccentric shaft (3)  
12 Of or pertaining to gold (5)  
13 In the direction of (7)  
15 Billiard stroke (5)  
18 Literary snippets (3)  
19 Times of great events (6)  
21 Plant parts (7)  
22 Nitrogenous fertilizer (4)  
23 Remedy (4)  
24 Opposite word (7)  
26 Hand in or present (6)

**Down**

29 Yang's opposite (3)  
31 Donkeys (5)  
32 Lukewarmly (7)  
34 Composer Andrew Webber (5)  
35 Sever (3)  
36 Consent or say yes (5)  
37 Palindrome: I'm Adam (5)  
38 Prevent legally (5)

**38**

1 Under an assumed name, perhaps (5)  
2 Former capital of Kazakhstan (7)  
4 Running birds (4)  
5 Provides or uses less than is needed? (6)  
6 Chinese port (5)

7 Imitative; tending to copy (5)  
9 Call of the crow (3)  
12 Unyielding (7)  
14 Genetic material (3)  
16 Jostling crowd (5)  
17 German steel city (5)  
19 Had a good time? (7)  
20 City in Oklahoma (5)  
21 Eastern Europeans (5)  
23 Sceptical (7)  
24 Gangways (6)  
25 Bite or nibble at (3)  
27 Custom (5)  
28 Scrimmage (5)  
30 Knot-tying site (5)  
33 A failure (3)

**SOLUTION TO TRIBUNE CROSSWORD - 6884**

Across: 3 Quake, 8 Aunt's husband, 10 Greek letter, 11 Eccentric shaft, 12 Of or pertaining to gold, 13 In the direction of, 15 Billiard stroke, 18 Literary snippets, 19 Times of great events, 21 Plant parts, 22 Nitrogenous fertilizer, 23 Remedy, 24 Opposite word, 26 Hand in or present, 29 Yang's opposite, 31 Donkeys, 32 Lukewarmly, 34 Composer Andrew Webber, 35 Sever, 36 Consent or say yes, 37 Palindrome: I'm Adam, 38 Prevent legally.

Down: 1 Under an assumed name, perhaps, 2 Former capital of Kazakhstan, 4 Running birds, 5 Provides or uses less than is needed, 6 Chinese port, 7 Imitative; tending to copy, 9 Call of the crow, 12 Unyielding, 14 Genetic material, 16 Jostling crowd, 17 German steel city, 19 Had a good time, 20 City in Oklahoma, 21 Eastern Europeans, 23 Sceptical, 24 Gangways, 25 Bite or nibble at, 27 Custom, 28 Scrimmage, 30 Knot-tying site, 33 A failure.

**HEALTH CAPSULES**

by Bron Smith

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF OVER-PRESCRIBING ANTIBIOTICS TO CHILDREN?

IF YOU HAVE A VIRAL INFECTION, ANTIBIOTICS WON'T CURE IT.

RECENT RESEARCH HAS REVEALED THAT WHEN CHILDREN ARE OVER-PRESCRIBED ANTIBIOTICS FOR MINOR INFECTIONS, THEY WILL BE MORE PRONE TO INFECTIONS AND ILLNESSES LATER IN LIFE. ABOUT 25% OF ALL MEDICATIONS PRESCRIBED TO CHILDREN IN THE U.S. ARE ANTIBIOTICS.

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

**JUMBLED WORDS**

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

GSEEE  
HWST  
AINDLN  
AORUFV

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being true. - Arthur Schopenhauer (4-7)

**SOLUTION**

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



## Concern in Gossaigaon as 4 COVID-19 cases detected in nearby Alipurduar

ANN Service

GOSSAIGAON, May 3: Public concern is growing in Gossaigaon subdivision of Kokrajhar district as COVID-19 positive cases have been increasing at Barovisha in nearby West Bengal's Alipurduar district.

Till now, four positive cases have been detected at Barovisha, which is only 10 kms away from the Assam-Bengal border through NH-31 (C).

Gossaigaon subdivision is adjacent to Dhubri and Bongaigaon districts. Residents of Gossaigaon subdivision are worried over the positive COVID-19 cases in nearby Barovisha, and in Bongaigaon and Dhubri districts. After seeing the positives cases of nearby Barovisha who have been quarantined in their own State, the Gossaigaon civil and police administration have sealed the Assam-Bengal border so that nobody can intrude into Assam.

Four quarantine facilities are being maintained at Gossaigaon subdivision since a long time. Stranded people are

reaching their homes by various means and through walking. The GRP and RPF personnel after detecting them within Gossaigaon Haat Railway Station track and hand them over to Gossaigaon Police for the mandatory quarantine.

The administration here informed that five persons of Barovisha went to Delhi for medical treatment and were quarantined there. They returned home on April 27 and were again quarantined at Barovisha by the Bengal Police, four persons were found COVID-19 positive.

Hence, Gossaigaon Police and Simultapu police outpost are in constant touch and have sealed all roads, subways, link roads etc., leading to Gossaigaon so that no outsider can enter the State without the knowledge of the administration. Barricades and strong vigilance has been set up. Everyone, including police and the civil authority are trying their level best to safeguard the green zone status of the area.

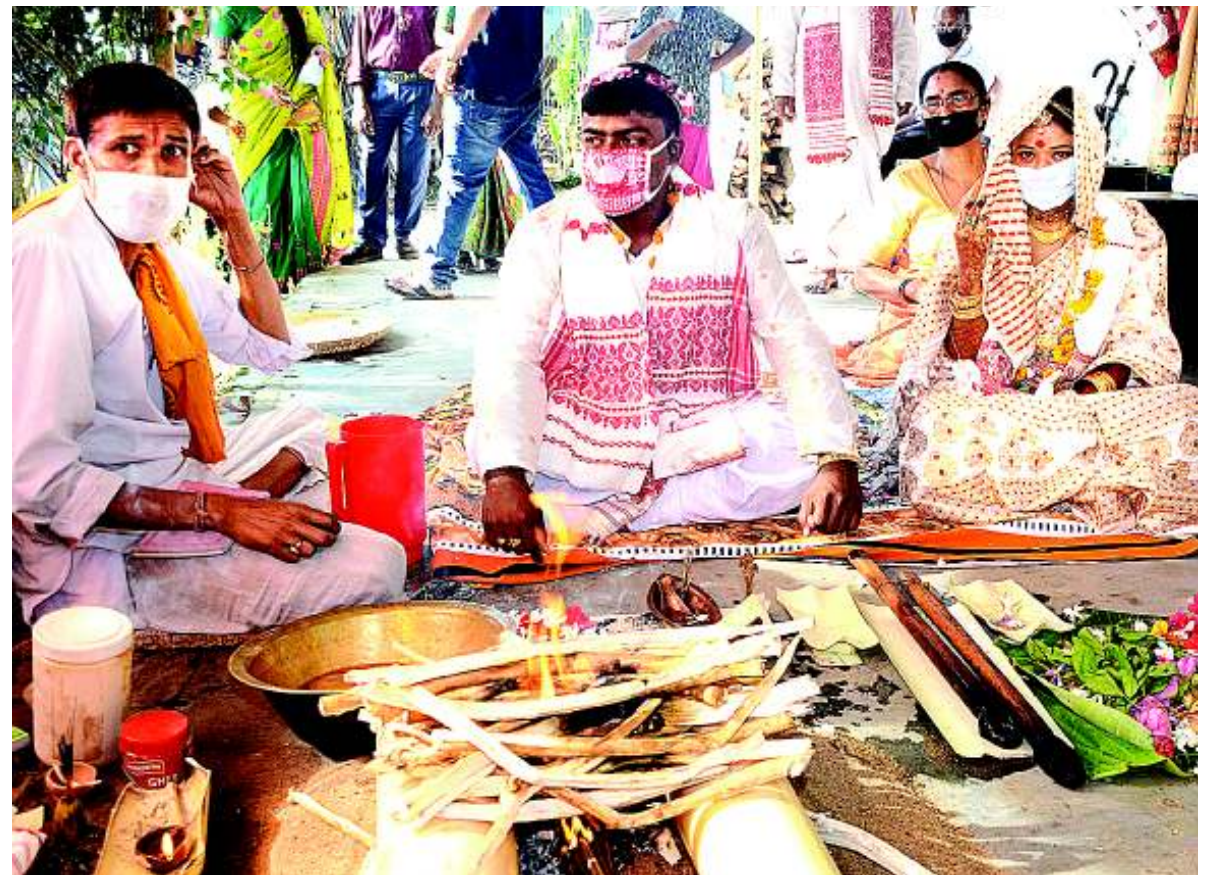
**Trucks stranded:** Thousands of goods-laden trucks have been stranded in between Gossaigaon-Srirampur on

NH- 31(C) owing to sanitisation being carried out in the bordering areas of West Bengal since the last few days.

As several COVID positive cases have been detected within Alipurduar and Coochbehar districts of West Bengal, a fullscale sanitisation programme is going on. But as the trucks have been compelled to stay put at the same spot, the drivers and their helpers are suffering from shortage of food and water. Due to the lockdown, all sources of food have dried up.

Perishable goods inside the trucks are also getting damaged. Raw material inside the trucks should have been despatched quickly to their destinations at the instance of the police forces of both the States. But till the time of filing this report, no action was forthcoming in this regard.

In the meantime, the nearly 10 km-long queue of stranded trucks is causing great concern to both the transporters and the common people. The plight of the drivers and their helpers is beyond description.



**Tying the nuptial knot:** Wearing masks, a couple solemnising their marriage during the lockdown, at Bishnupur in Nagaon, on Sunday. – UB Photos

## Mosque torched at Dhing



**Remains of the day:** Fire fighters dousing the flames which razed the mosque to the ground. – Photo: Hareswar Borah

A CORRESPONDENT

NAGAON, May 3: Following a year-long dispute between two factions over a piece of land where a mosque existed at Dhing Solguri Jaanpar under Dhing Police Station, the mosque was set on fire and razed to the ground today morning by an agitated

group of people.

The mob went on a rampage too as some local people tried to stop them from torching the religious institution, that too, during the holy month of Ramzan.

Following the incident, several people, including women were seriously injured. The incident has drawn sharp reaction among the people of

greater Dhing area.

According to sources, a land dispute was going on between the families of one Abdul Rashid and Shofikul Islam for over a year.

In the meantime, members of Dhing Police, ASP (Security) Gunendra Deka and CRPF personnel rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Police immediately rescued

all the injured family members of Abdul Rashid and admitted them at Dhing FRU.

Meanwhile, the family of Abdul Rashid lodged an FIR against the family members of Shofikul Islam in this regard.

Though investigation into the case is on, yet no one was arrested till the time of filing this report, the source further added.

## 9 arrested for attack on police in NL

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, May 3: Lakhimpur Police today arrested nine persons in connection with the alleged attack on the men in uniform at Pandhwa in Nowboicha on Thursday evening.

The arrested persons are Anarul Islam, Abdul, Qasem, Jahurul, Mustafa, Safiqul, Sariful, Asadul and Babul.

It may be recalled that a police team was allegedly attacked by a group of people at

Pandhwa under Nowboicha Police Station in Lakhimpur on Thursday evening after they beat up some persons in a local market for violating the lockdown norms.

The police team was attacked while they were talking to the Imam of a nearby mosque to limit the congregation for prayer inside the mosque during the ongoing lockdown.

As the police was interacting with the Imam and other worshippers of the mosque, a group of people, who were not part of the congregation for *namaz* inside the mosque, pelted stones on the police by taking advantage of the darkness following a power failure in the area. The Officer-in-Charge of Nowboicha Police Station Biswajeet Nath sustained injuries even as a police vehicle was damaged.

The incident created a tense situation in the area with hate mongering in the social media with communal overtones. In the meantime, Lakhimpur Superintendent of Police Rajveer Singh said the situation had been brought under control with full public cooperation and urged the people to strictly adhere to lockdown rules by not gathering at the places of worship. – Correspondent

## Silchar photojournalist brings succour to hungry birds, animals



**Good Samaritan:** Silchar-based photojournalist Partha Seal feeding monkeys during the ongoing lockdown. – Photo: Arindam Gupta.

ARINDAM GUPTA

SILCHAR, May 3: As the country moves into the third phase of the lockdown to contain the spread of the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, politicians and people in general across many places have gone out of their way to provide relief material in the form of essential items to the weaker sections of the society.

In Silchar, 49-year-old photojournalist Partha Seal, how-

ever, is on a different mission altogether. Besides his official assignments, he often reaches out to birds at home and monkeys in far-flung areas across the district.

He even keeps grains for birds in his scooty and spreads them whenever he meets the winged denizens.

*The Assam Tribune* recently spoke to Partha to know about his love and concern for birds and animals and his humane gesture towards them

during the lockdown.

"Apart from my work, I love feeding birds and animals. At home, birds frequent our lawn to feed on grains which I collect for them. Recently, a person from Srikona informed me that hordes of monkeys in the vicinity often visit the residential areas in search of food. With the vegetable markets closed due to the ongoing crisis, the simians are compelled to go hungry, following which they forage for food around the locality,"

"In an effort to bring respite to the hungry simians, I travelled at least 10 kms away from home and subsequently fed the monkeys. From watermelons to cauliflowers, apples and pomegranates, the monkeys gleefully took everything I offered," said Partha.

Asked whether he faced objection from the locals for feeding the monkeys, Partha admitted that there was blatant opposition from people in the area. But the point that the animals too needed food to survive was a far stronger argument to quell the protests.

"I am happy to be of some worth for the animals whom I see struggling to find food. People may utter mean words and even try to disrupt me, but I was able to serve the simians in whatever way I could. Reflecting on the situation, I feel some higher power may be driving my actions, or else how is it that the monkeys do not injure me, nor the birds fail to respond positively," he maintained.

## 13-yr-old virus suspect brought to MMCH

DHUBRI, May 3: A 13-year-old boy from Jhagarpar Pt-III village near Dhubri town who was already in a quarantine facility as his father was found to be COVID-19 positive, was transferred to the Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital (MMCH) in Guwahati today on suspicion of carrying the highly contagious virus.

District administration sources said that the 13-year-old boy tested COVID-19 positive for the third time though results of the third test was doubtful following which he was sent to Guwahati for advanced treatment.

It may be mentioned that the father of the 13-year-old boy, Hazrat Ali was found to be COVID-19 positive on April 13.

Fortunately, he has recovered and was under observation in Dhubri. Ali, it may be mentioned, has a travel history of visiting New Delhi. – Correspondent

## Nurses assaulted

BISWANATH CHARIALI, May 3: Three nurses who were on their way to a rented house from a private clinic were allegedly sexually assaulted in front of an oil depot at Dagaon here.

However, the nurses managed to escape unhurt. An accused named Dhorbindor Sharma (mechanic of a garage just next to the petrol pump) was later arrested with the help of the medical staff.

In due course, police arrested three more oil depot employees. The arrested persons were identified as Rahul Kumar, Ashok Kumar and Gaurav Kumar. All the accused persons hail from Muzaffarpur in Bihar. – Correspondent

## 26 Bangladeshi nationals apprehended in Dhubri

CORRESPONDENT

DHUBRI, May 3: In all, 26 Bangladeshi nationals travelling from Jorhat with an objective to cross the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal was stopped at Bahalpur area of Dhubri district.

Talking to this Correspondent, the SDPO of Bilasipara, Bhargav Muni Das stated that at around 6:30-7 am on Sunday, these Bangladeshi nationals possessing passport and visa were stopped along the border of Dhubri district at Bahalpur area. He informed that all the Bangladeshi nationals were adult males and migrant labourers.

It was also informed that both the vehicles (AS 01 HC 5934 and AS 04 BC 1383) were seized as they did not possess pass and the Jorhat district ad-

ministration did not communicate with the authorities of Dhubri for such inter-district travel.

"We are conducting their medical check-up," said Das and added that all the Bangladeshi nationals are under police custody.

However, it was informed by an investigating officer that the visa that these Bangladeshi nationals were showing are tourist visas, while they themselves are claiming that they have come to Assam to work in various sectors of the fishing industry.

As per their statement, they were working as fishermen in Jorhat and Sivasagar districts. They borrowed the vehicles from Kokilamukh off Jorhat. They resolved to travel to Chagolia by these vehicles, from where they would have

crossed the border to West Bengal and subsequently the international border to visit Bangladesh amid the lockdown, informed police.

Talking to this Correspondent, Dhubri Deputy Commissioner Anant Lal Gyani said the entire matter had been handed over to police for proper verification of the passports, documents and visas, besides the purpose of travel and time period of the visas.

"The entire matter is under investigation. As soon as the probe ends, we will take action as per rules," said Gyani.

Meanwhile, the action by Dhubri Police is being widely appreciated as these vehicles which were moving from Jorhat to Dhubri by crossing so many districts was finally detained in Dhubri district by the local police.

## Hailakandi starts radio classes

CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI, May 3: In collaboration with Silchar's All India Radio (AIR), the Education Department of Barak Valley has started audio classes through radio.

The audio classes started in AIR, Silchar to minimise loss of classes in the schools due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown to break the chain of transmission of the coronavirus pandemic.

The hour-long educational programme has already become popular among the students, mainly in the remote areas. Teachers from Hailakandi and Cachar districts will be delivering lessons as per curriculum and the same will reach students of Class-

IX and Class-X respectively.

An official of the Education Department informed that five teachers from Hailakandi district have been selected for the purpose. Recorded lectures of government school teachers will be relayed and students can listen to them. Radio classes have been conducted following an instruction by the Board of Secondary Education (SEBA) for students not having access to the internet facility or smart phone.

In the meantime, Hailakandi's Inspector of Schools Rajiv Kumar Jha informed that the educational broadcast will enable students to learn through the medium of radio while sitting in their homes and the idea behind the initiative is to en-

gage the students and to reach out to them while they are confined to their homes due to nationwide lockdown.

The SEBA had already started Distance Learning Programme (DLP) covering the syllabus of secondary classes and a large number of students have been connected with the DLP platform, thus creating virtual classes.

Jha said these platforms are for pupils so that they do not feel isolated and can continue with their studies while staying at home. Students of 98 high, higher secondary schools and madrasahs in Hailakandi district studying in government schools under SEBA are availing lectures online.



**Rusting in peace:** Hand-pulled carts that deal in fast food lie idle along the Tulsi Narayan Sarma Path in Jorhat during the nationwide lockdown to break the COVID-19 transmission chain, on Sunday. – Photo: Wasim Rahman.



# Plan to resume national camps from May-end: Sports Minister

NEW DELHI, May 3: Sports Minister Kiren Rijju on Sunday said his ministry is devising a plan to ensure a phased resumption of national camps for Olympic-bound athletes by the end of this month but others might have to wait till at least September.

Rijju said the coronavirus-forced nationwide lockdown, which has been extended till May 17, forced his ministry to delay the resumption of the training camps at Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres. The lockdown was earlier meant to end on May 3.

"The camps will start in a phase-wise manner. First we will start training in NIS Patiala and SAI, Bengaluru where athletes are based currently... by the end of this month training is expected to start in Bengaluru and Patiala," Rijju said at FICCI's webinar titled 'Corona & Sports: The Champions Speak'.

"The camps will be for those sports which have qualified for Olympics or the sports whose Olympic qualification is in future," he said.

"We will relax things partially looking at the Olympics," he added.

The national camps were suspended in mid-March when the COVID-19 cases began rising in the country. The pandemic has killed over 1300

The camps will be for those sports which have qualified for Olympics or the sports whose Olympic qualification is in future. — Kiren Rijju



people in India while more than 39,000 have tested positive for the deadly infection. Globally, the death toll has crossed 2 lakh.

The Sports Minister said he wanted a resumption of the national camps on Sunday itself but his hands were tied by the extension of the lockdown, which comes under the National Disaster Management Act.

"I thought of starting training of athletes at SAI centres from May 3 but now we will have to do that in a phased manner by the end of this month because sports events don't

get any relaxation under the Disaster Management Act.

"We don't fall under essential services," Rijju said.

Rijju, however, made it clear athletes of disciplines, which are not in the reckoning for Olympic qualification, will have to wait for a longer duration to start training.

"We will not allow any national camp beyond Olympic-bound athletes or probables. The resumption of such camps (which are not in reckoning for Olympics) may have to wait till September-October this year," he said.

The minister also said that fans will have to wait for a while to see sporting activities on the ground till the pandemic is brought under control.

"Let us not expect any competitive match in near future," Rijju said.

Rijju's comments came close on the heels of Indian Olympic Association President Narinder Batra's statement on Saturday that he will ask the government to allow national camps under outdoor training inside the country's major sports centres during the lockdown.

The Athletics Federation of India and some athletes at the NIS-Patiala had also written to the Sports Ministry to allow outdoor training.

The Sports Minister said people, including athletes, should expect a lot of changes in their day-to-day life and functioning even after the situation normalises.

"We must accept that things are not going to be as they used to be. We have chalked out certain plans for the future. We are also looking forward to see how India takes up this challenge and emerges as a strong sporting nation post COVID-19," he said.

"Coronavirus is a reality and it is not going to get over soon and so we will have to live with it," he added. — PTI

# Current situation is like Test match on dangerous wicket: Ganguly

NEW DELHI, May 3: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly is deeply saddened and intimidated by the devastation caused because of the COVID-19 pandemic and has equated the unprecedented crisis to playing a Test match on a dangerous wicket.

The decorated former player opened up on life under lockdown due to the novel coronavirus pandemic that has claimed over 2.40 lakh lives across the world while infecting more than 34 lakh people.

"This situation is a Test match on a very dangerous wicket. The ball is seaming and spinning as well — the batsman has very little margin of error," Ganguly said while speaking on '100 Hours 100 Stars', an initiative started by Fever Network.

"So, the batsman has to score runs and keep his wicket safe with this little margin of error, and win this Test match," he added.

A winner of innumerable fierce battles during his play-

ing days when there was no dearth of fearsome fast bowlers and quality spinners, Ganguly was tempted to draw a parallel between the tough moments in the sport and the health crisis.

"This is very difficult, but



we hope that we will win this match together," he added.

Ganguly expressed his sadness at the number of lives lost in the pandemic and the irreparable damage that it has caused.

"I am really upset seeing the current situation, because so many people are suffering outside. We are still struggling to understand how to stop this pandemic," he said.

"This atmosphere all over the world has really bothered me. We don't know how, when and where it came from — we all were unprepared for this," he added.

Not just upset, Ganguly conceded he cannot help feeling a big scared of what's unfolding because of the disease.

"People are being affected by this so much. There have been so many deaths. This situation upsets me, and I also feel scared," he said.

"People come to my house to deliver groceries, food, so I feel a little scared as well. So it's a mixed feeling. I just want this to end as quickly as possible," he added.

He said cricket has taught him to face tough situations in life and the importance of staying alert at all times.

Asked how he keeps himself positive, the former captain said: "Cricket has taught me a lot. I faced real life, high-pressure situations. You have to make runs and there is just one ball left." — PTI

# Pogba using lockdown to prepare for return



LONDON, May 3: Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba is using the coronavirus lockdown to step up his return to fitness after an injury-plagued season.

Pogba had made just eight appearances for United this season before the health crisis forced the suspension of the Premier League in March.

The French World Cup winner hasn't played a single match in 2020 due to his persistent ankle problems. His last appearance came in a December 26 win over Newcastle, but Pogba has been keeping fit during the virus break and hopes to be ready if the Premier League can return in the summer.

"I have a little home gym in my house," Pogba told United's website.

"I can do some training, some running, some bike, go outside and do some things with the ball. I am just keeping busy and keeping healthy.

"We have got to stay motivated, there is no other choice. It is a period and we don't know until when it will be like this, but I still have goals in my head and one day hopefully this (pandemic) will stop.

"And then we have to get back on the pitch, so we have to be ready.

"For myself, I have been out for a long time as well, so for me I just want to come back playing football."

Pogba, 27, has been in regular contact with his United team-mates during the lockdown as they follow the club's fitness regime from home. — AFP

# Neville claims Premier League clubs 'frightened'

LONDON, May 3: Gary Neville has accused Premier League clubs of being "frightened to death" to publicly back the plan to restart the season.

Premier League stakeholders met on Friday to debate how to finish the current campaign, with reports that some clubs want to abandon the season due to the pandemic and others are keen to play all remaining 92 fixtures.

Former Manchester United defender Neville believes clubs do not want to be held liable should a player become ill with the coronavirus if the English season resumes.

The French and Dutch seasons have been called off because of the health



crisis and while the Premier League have apparently earmarked a June return, that date is far from set in stone.

Claiming there needs to be more public comment from clubs, Neville

wrote on Twitter: "The PL are having a CV nightmare. They keep spouting Health First but then brief constantly 'We have to Re-Start'."

"I'd respect them more if they said 'We accept the increase in Health Risk but it's one we are willing to take'. They won't as they are frightened to death!"

When Neville was asked by a Twitter user what would happen if someone died as a result of the restart, he said: "That's why we haven't heard one single prominent CEO/Chairman/Owner or Executive open his mouth to back the re-start! Brief/Brief/Brief! Scared to death of the liability and blame." — AFP

# Rohit has an edge over Kohli: Gambhir

NEW DELHI, May 3: Former India opener Gautam Gambhir feels that Rohit Sharma has been able to make more impact in white ball cricket compared to Virat Kohli despite Indian skipper's staggering statistics in shorter formats.

Gambhir, however, believes that Kohli will end up scoring more runs than Rohit.

"For me white-ball cricket is all about impact. Kohli will end up getting many more runs than Rohit, and Kohli is among the greatest right now, but Rohit has an edge over Kohli because of the impact he has," Gambhir told Sports Tak, according to India Today website.

"I think he (Rohit) is the best white-ball cricketer in the world right now. He is not the greatest overall but at the moment he is the best. He is the only player to have hit 3 ODI double hundreds, 5 World Cup hundreds (in one edition) and he is also the only player, who once gets



I think he (Rohit) is the best white-ball cricketer in the world right now. He is not the greatest overall but at the moment he is the best. — Gautam Gambhir

past 100-run mark, people say that he missed a double century."

Talking further about Kohli and Rohit, the 2011 World Cup winner said, "It is very difficult to compare both of them. Virat Kohli is unbelievable. His stats prove that.

"But when your reputation is such that when you get out after a hundred, people say he has missed out on double hundred, that speaks volumes about you."

The 33-year-old Rohit has

scored 9115 runs from 224 ODIs at an average of 49.27 at a strike rate of 88.92. He has 29 hundreds and 43 fifties to his name. In T20Is, Rohit has scored 2273 runs from 108 matches at an average of 32.62 and a strike rate of 138.78.

The 31-year-old Kohli, on the other hand, has scored 11867 runs from 248 ODIs at an average of 59.33 at a strike rate of 93.25. He has scored 43 centuries and 58 half-centuries. Kohli has also scored

2794 runs from 82 T20Is at an average of 50.80 and a strike rate of 138.24.

The 38-year-old Gambhir, now a BJP Member of Parliament, gave credit to Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Rohit's successful career.

"Where Rohit is today, it is because of MS Dhoni. One good thing about MS was that he always kept Rohit in the talks, even if he was not part of the team, he was always part of the group. He never let him get sidelined," Gambhir said.

It's the backing of captain that makes or breaks a player, Gambhir said.

"You can talk about the selection committee and team management, but if you do not have the backing from your captain than it is all useless. Everything is in the hands of the captain. How MS Dhoni had backed Rohit Sharma over a period of time, I do not think any player has been given such support." — PTI

# I thought of committing suicide thrice: Shami

NEW DELHI, May 3: In a startling revelation, India speedster Mohammed Shami has claimed that he thought of committing suicide thrice while battling personal issues a few years ago, forcing his family to keep a watch over him at all times.

He said his family members feared he "might jump" from their 24th floor apartment.

Shami, one of India's leading bowlers in recent years, opened up on his personal and professional life during an Instagram chat with team-mate and limited overs squads' vice-captain Rohit Sharma.

"I think if my family had not supported me back then I would have lost my cricket. I thought of committing suicide three times during that period due to severe stress and personal problems," Shami revealed during the session on Saturday.

Now one of the mainstays of Indian bowling attack across formats, the 29-year-old was struggling to focus on his cricket, then.

"I was not thinking about cricket at all. We were living on the 24th floor. They (family) were scared I might jump from the balcony. My brother supported me a lot," Shami said. — PTI

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## SU DO KU

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

### 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.

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

## VERY IMPORTANT REQUEST TO ALL THE RESPECTED DISTRICT MAGISTRATES OF INDIA



We are earnestly willing to open all our business branches all over India to start our business.

Keeping the nature of our business in consideration, in every large city, 5 to 10 thousand field workers and at small places, 500 to 1000-2000 field workers will require special passes to move all over the city/area. As the nature of the business demands, all the workers go house to house, shop to shop to conduct 100% business. If we are unable to do so, our business generation level stands at zero.

We also request for passes for 100% of our office workers because there are thousands of offices where only 2,3 or very few office workers are at work and unless all the necessary related sections such as computer, application form, receipt, voucher, payment, commission computing etc., are not fully functional, the office cannot run. The reduced number of workers to one-third or half cannot do the required job. Moreover, we will require many other relevant permissions such as the permission to operate few kinds of vehicles, etc.

For passes and other permissions, our authorised managers will contact you with the complete list of the workers. We request you to please get the passes and required permissions, etc. arranged at the earliest so that we can open our offices soon.

Being the guardian of the world's largest family Sahara India Pariwar, I am conveying to you the feelings of its 15 lakh workers and on their behalf, I express my heartfelt gratitude and deep regards to you the Head of the District Administration and every member of your Team, Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Members of the Police Force, officials and workers of Local Administration, Sanitation Workers and all the warriors who are fighting the tough battle against the corona pandemic in this difficult time.

Sahara Pranam

Saharadevi  
(Subrata Roy Sahara)

