

VARIETY

Care homes preparing to protect those most vulnerable



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Earlier this week, Hope Hermitage Elderly Care Gairidhara, an NGO working for the welfare of elderly people in Nepal, completely restricted the entry of outsiders into its establishments. It also issued guidelines to its staff members and carers to wear masks, gloves and wash hands regularly.

In accordance with weak health care facilities and growing concerns that there may be an undetected communal spread of coronavirus, these additional precautions were instituted by the organisation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that people above 60 years and those with underlying medical conditions such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes are especially susceptible to the virus. This puts at risk the elderly of Nepal and the nursing homes across the Valley are doing their best to curtail the dangers associated.

Taking precautions

Realising that their residents are especially vulnerable, Pramila Bajracharya Thapa, Founder Chairperson of Hope Hermitage, said that all outsiders except for the in-house residential care had been barred from the premises and that any gathering and cultural pro-

grammes had been cancelled. The home accommodates 35 senior citizens, and acknowledging the exclusive needs of each elderly, has divided its services in two wings — Alzheimer's and Related Dementia Residential Care and Assisted living Home.

"We have sent all the staff members on force leaves with only the in-house carers, who are available 24/7, being allowed to stay," informed Thapa. For the staffs any sign of illness may require time off, something which already highly-strung services like a nursing home may struggle to deal with.

Thapa said: "After the virus scare there has been a shortfall in the number of qualified staffs available." Prior to the shutdown, there would have been frequent influx of visiting doctors and physiotherapists, all of which has now been reduced to a few in-house care-givers.



Photos: Courtesy Dharma Old Age Home / Hope Hermitage / Manjushree Elderly Home

In addition to restricting entry and getting staff to wear protective clothing, care homes across the Valley are also giving the elderly additional training about the threat posed by COVID-19 and how best to tackle the disease. An awareness programme was hosted at Divine Service Home - Old Age Home, Gollufar in coordination with Nepal Health Corps and a team of Mannohan Memorial Health Foundation also presented the demo of preventive measures to the elderly people there.

"Following the motto of prevention is better than cure, we have been following the preventive measures as well as guiding our senior citizens to implement the preventive measures

to keep them safe from potential infection of COVID-19," says Ananda Singh Karki, advisor at Divine Service Home, which has been providing shelter to 14 elderly women.

Keeping in touch

Currently, the elderly in Hope Hermitage have been keeping in touch with their family outside via Whatsapp and viber video chat, organised daily by the nurses available at their disposal.

Across the globe, public health experts have suggested that practising social distancing and limiting human contact could control the disease from rapidly spreading and not overburden public health systems. Heeding this advice, senior citizens at care homes have also resorted to isolating themselves from outside visitors as well as from other members within the care homes.

For the hermitage home residents, this has meant stopping their evening walks, cancelling their tai chi sessions and weekend trips to Nagarkot or Bhaktapur.

Being able to go out and take part in such activities classes is part of the healing process but balancing the wellness and well-

being of the elderly will be a challenge in the weeks ahead. At Manjushree Elderly Home, the 12 sheltered elderly have now nothing to do but watch TV, as the owner of the home Manju Thapa Magar has restricted their movement outside and any other outdoor activities.

"They spend countless hours watching news and as a result many of them are overcome with enormous fear and grief," said she. Among them, however, 106-year-old Dev Maya Shrestha, originally from Sindhupalchok is the only one completely unphased by the situation. Unlike her younger peers at the care home, she is neither diabetic nor has any cardiovascular diseases. "She is fitter than me or the young staff members but is hard of hearing," remarked Manju. Like her all residing at Manjushree have no family outside and were rescued by Manju and her team. Operating solely on basis of donations, the elderly home is now feeling a bit of pressure since most of the resources come from individuals who offer blankets, food and money during their birthdays.

"We also get them from schools and voluntary organisations but now the visits have stopped entirely due to the virus fear," mourned Manju.

Man who taught the world importance of handwashing

NEW DELHI: As the deadly new Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to spread and hand sanitisers disappear at both retail and online stores, Google researchers have dug out a German-Hungarian physician and scientist known as the 'Saviour of Mothers' by proposing handwashing way back in 1847.

The efforts of Dr Ignaz Semmelweis is celebrated in the times of hand sanitising and cleanliness to prevent the spread the germs which is on top of every human's mind.

Born in 1818, Semmelweis was an early pioneer of antiseptic procedures. He discovered that the incidence of puerperal fever (also known as 'childbed fever') could be drastically reduced by the use of hand disinfection in clinics. Puerperal fever was common in mid-19th Century hospitals and often fatal.

Semmelweis proposed the practice of washing hands with chlorinated lime solutions in 1847 while working in Vienna General Hospital's First Obstetrical Clinic, where doctors' wards had three times the mortality of midwives' wards.

He later published his findings in a book titled *Etiology, Concept and Prophylaxis of Childbed Fever*. Despite various publica-

tions of results where hand washing reduced mortality to below one per cent, Semmelweis' observations conflicted with the established scientific and medical opinions at that time and his ideas were rejected by the medical community.

Hand cleanliness was largely ignored, rejected or ridiculed at that time. He was dismissed from the hospital for political reasons and harassed by the medical community in Vienna, being eventually forced to move to Budapest.

In 1865, Semmelweis supposedly suffered a nervous breakdown and was sent to an asylum by his colleagues. He died 14 days later, at the age of 47, after being beaten by the guards from a gangrenous wound on his right hand which might have been caused by the beating, according to media reports.

The scientist instituted a policy of using a solution of chlorinated lime (calcium hypochlorite) for washing hands between autopsy work and the examination of patients. He did this because he found that this chlorinated solution worked best to remove the putrid smell of infected autopsy tissue, and thus perhaps destroyed the causal 'poisonous' or contaminating 'cadaveric' agent hypothetically being transmitted by this material. — IAS



Ignaz Semmelweis

Weinstein tests positive for Coronavirus



WASHINGTON: Disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, US media reported on March 22.

Weinstein, 68, is in prison in northern New York state after being sentenced to 23 years in jail for rape and sexual assault.

The fallen film producer's diagnosis was reported on March 22 evening by celebrity news website TMZ and local paper the *Niagara Gazette*.

Weinstein's spokespersons have declined to comment to US media on the subject.

The New York State Department of Corrections did not respond when contacted by AFP for confirmation of the reports. Sources told TMZ that Weinstein was one of two inmates to test positive at the high-security Wende Correctional Facility northwest of New York City and that he has had no contact with family or his lawyers since his diagnosis.

Prior to his transfer, he stayed at Rikers Island pris-

on and a Manhattan hospital, where he was treated for chest pains.

Crowded US prisons have the potential to become hotbeds for coronavirus infections. Last week, guards at Rikers and New York's Sing Sing prison tested positive for the virus, local media reported.

As of March 22, the virus has killed 417 people in the US out of more than 33,000 cases, according to a tracker managed by Johns Hopkins University.

Weinstein was convicted in February of a criminal sexual act in the first degree and rape in the third degree, while being cleared of predatory sexual assault charges.

He was convicted of raping ex-actress Jessica Mann in 2013 and of forcibly performing oral sex on former production assistant Mimi Hales in 2006.

Nearly 90 women, including Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek, have leveled sexual misconduct allegations against Weinstein, the Oscar-winning producer of *Shakespeare in Love* and numerous other critical and box office hits. — AFP



Domingo reveals he has COVID-19

MADRID: Plácido Domingo announced on March 22 that he has tested positive for the coronavirus. The 79-year-old opera singer's illness comes after his own glowing career has recently been stained by sexual misconduct revelations.

The Spaniard said in a post on his personal Facebook account that "I feel it is my moral duty to announce to you that I have tested positive." The tenor says and his family are in self-isolation and that he is feeling well despite having fever and a cough. "I beg everyone to be extremely careful, follow the basic guidelines by washing your hands frequently, keeping at least a six foot distance from others, doing everything you can to stop the virus from spreading and please avoid all stay home if you can!" he said.

Last year, multiple women accused Domingo of harassment and abusing his power while he held management positions at Los Angeles Opera and Washington National Opera in stories published by *The Associated Press*.

After first denying any wrongdoing, Domingo issued an apology last month when the American Guild of Musical Artists and the LA Opera found the sexual harassment allegations against him to be credible.

He has since had a number of performances cancelled. He also resigned as the director of the LA Opera.

Spain is the third hardest-hit country after China and Italy with 28,572 infections and 1,720 deaths in the virus outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness. Some 33,000 people have recovered, mostly in China. The virus has infected leading politicians in Spain as well as caused the death of former Real Madrid soccer club president Lorenzo Sanz. — AFP

Cannes open doors to homeless



ANNES: The French town of Cannes said on March 20 that it would open the pavilion of its prestigious annual film festival — postponed due to coronavirus — to homeless people as the pandemic spreads in France.

The Cannes film festival, the world's biggest, is no longer being held from May 12-23 because of the spread of COVID-19.

On March 20, France reported 78 more deaths from the coronavirus over the last 24 hours, bringing the total death toll from the outbreak in the country to 450.

Some 12,612 people have now been confirmed to have been infected, but authorities warn the real figure could be a lot higher.

In face of these developments, Cannes municipal authorities said the venue, which usually houses congresses and art events, has been handed over to

accommodate up to 50 people living on the street in what they saw as "a symbol of solidarity". "Currently, the priority is confinement and the confinement

of the most vulnerable," said Dominique Aude-Lasset, deputy director general of Cannes urban services. Beds, meals and showers will be made available in line with regulations regarding social distancing during the virus-related confinement across France. Television will also be provided, while temperature and baggage checks will be carried out at the entrance, Aude-Lasset said.

The Festival organisers said on March 19 the event would not be able to go ahead in May, but could be postponed to mid-June or early July. Along the Mediterranean coast in Nice, city authorities similarly plan to open up accommodation for the homeless from March 23. — AFP

American DJ hosts 10-hour Instagram dance party

WASHINGTON: Just because there's a pandemic going on, it doesn't mean the party has to stop. And one DJ has kept it going — for 10 hours at a time.

The coronavirus has updated daily lives, with thousands of deaths around the world. Many people are staying at home in an effort to stem the rapid-fire spread.

Celebrity DJ D-Nice has begun hosting virtual dance parties on his Instagram Live channel in an effort to lift spirits as people self-isolate over coronavirus concerns.

Many of his A-list friends — including Rihanna, Common and John Legend — have made guest appearances thanks to Instagram Live's split feature, which lets two people appear in a split-screen.

On March 18, D-Nice posted on Instagram that he would be hosting "Home School," a "social distancing dance party". He set up his turntables in his kitchen and invited his 950,000 followers to tune in and dance along.



party that featured guest appearances from celebrities such as Lil Cool, J, Mary J Blige, Naomi Campbell and Lena Waithe.

"I can't believe that I started the Home School social just four days ago and it's become a place for us to virtually dance together and stay connected," D-Nice wrote in an Instagram post March 19.

"From my kitchen, I'm able to send positive vibrations to each of you." D-Nice, who first entered the music scene in the 1980s as a member of the Bronx hip-

hop group BDP, has begun hosting nightly dance parties in his kitchen, officially dubbed 'Club Quarantine'.

More than 100,000 people tuned in for his March 21 celebration, which lasted for 10 hours and had appearances from former first lady Michelle Obama, presidential hopeful Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, and musician Diddy — who also sent the DJ a bottle of Ciroc vodka, in which Diddy owns a stake, during the set.

The party also included a shoutout to healthcare workers battling the coronavirus.

"Homeschool is a thing!" D-Nice said in a March 21 post. "This has been a great way to keep our spirits high."

Chasten Betsig, who is married to former presidential hopeful Pete Buttigieg, agreed. "Thanks for the dance party last night @djdnic," Chasten tweeted on March 22 morning. "Pajamas acceptable, no body to judge my dance moves, all the snacks I preferred — honesty we should do this more often." D-Nice seems only too happy to oblige: class resumes on March 22 night. — AFP