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Kolkata book street weathers a storm

Varsha Benedict

KOLKATA: Sandeep Shau, who owns a bookstore in College Street, says he had little to no sales at all after the Covid-19 lockdown started. He faced a loss of around Rs 3 lakh after the Cyclone Amphan hit, and he is just one among many who shared the story.

One of the largest book markets in Asia, College Street — locally known as Boi Para — was heavily affected by the cyclone two months ago.

A lot of shops were damaged and ruined. Books were strewn all over the streets floating in water. Local estimates said books worth Rs 50-60 lakh were destroyed.



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Shau, the owner of Sandeep Books, related to The Beacon what has happened since.

He said his sales were pretty good before the lockdown. He would earn a profit of up

to Rs 5,000 per day. But little to no sales have happened made thereafter.

The situation worsened when Cyclone Amphan hit West Bengal two months ago, he said.

Shau said he might have been able to cover the losses had the pandemic not happened, since this time of the year business at College Street usually sees an increase due to term breaks and students from all over would come to buy books.

Somnath, who sold books on the footpath in College Street and made a profit of up to Rs 3,000 per day, faced an even worse situation: He could not save a single book from the storm, and that cost him around Rs 1 lakh.

Sujay, another bookseller, lost all his wares — worth Rs 80,000 — and hasn't gone back to work since then.

Assam gets its own Doordarshan channel

Worinphi Ronra Shimray

The state of Assam got its own Doordarshan channel on Tuesday, August 4, with Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar launching DD Assam.

Formerly DD North East that was conceived in 1990 and launched in 1994, DD Assam now caters to only that state. DD North East used to be broadcast from Doordarshan Kendra Guwahati. The 24x7 channel DD Assam will be aired from the same broadcasting centre.

Other states in the region already have DD channels: DD Meghalaya, DD Mizoram, DD Tripura, DD Manipur and DD Nagaland. Even Arunachal Pradesh got its own channel — DD ArunPrabha — last year.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) Secretary Amit Khare, according to an MIB official statement, said the idea of converting DD North East into a channel for Assam came from that launch.

"I am sure DD Assam will provide a new platform for the emerging talent of the region and bring the rest of India closer to North East and also make the talent of North East to all of India," he said.

Lonavala: Tourists defy social distancing rules

Jesly Pulikotil

LONAVALA: Holiday homes in Maharashtra's popular monsoon tourist destination Lonavala are seeing a worrying uptick in tourist influx from Mumbai and Pune, with local caretakers of such holiday homes expressing concern over it, especially over fears of the spreading of Covid-19.

Darshan Panwar, caretaker of one such holiday home who refers to his guest as "Sir", said, "This is the third time in the lockdown that sir and family has come down from Mumbai. He goes back to Mumbai whenever his job requires him to, and is back in a week or two."

He added: "I have to make sure that the house is clean and sanitised, that the refrigerator, bar and pantry and fully stocked every single time he arrives."

Asked whether this homeowner or those with him follow any of the health measures put forward by the authorities during the lockdown, he said: "Not at all. Every evening, when they go out for their walks, they never forget their phones, earphones, or fitness bands. A mask though, no! I do not hold a say in the situation since I get paid only when they are here to stay. I have a family to feed, or else who would risk their health for this?"

Kota bizmen feel the pinch

Abhimanyu Singh

KOTA (RAJASTHAN): Ajay Meena, who owns a dairy booth in Kota, Rajasthan, says he is frustrated.

This small-business owner has barely seen any business for more than four months, ever since the country went into lockdown over the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said he feels the state and Central governments have not done enough for people like him since end-March. And he is not alone.



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Nathuram Sharma, who supports a seven-member family, depended heavily on his stall to earn a living wage. "We used to make about Rs 10,000 a month before lockdown, but not even a single paisa these

days" he said. With the stall closed for more than three months, the earning pressure has fallen on his eldest son, who holds a low-paying job as a factory supervisor and constantly looks for secondary income sources.

Mother overcomes pandemic with hospital help

Shahul Hameed

POLLACHI (TAMIL NADU): Imagine not being able to hold your baby after giving birth. What would you do? One woman at a private hospital in Chennai actually threatened to take out her C-section sutures as she and her newborn were separated because she had been admitted pregnant to the hospital with the Covid-19 infection.

Aamina Hussain, a second-year Community Medicine PG student from the hospital, told The Beacon the woman eventually recovered, but not before giving the staff some



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wakeful nights. The woman tested Covid-19 positive in the first week of June, before she was admitted to the hospital. She delivered within a week, and

the baby was separated from her right after because she was Covid-19 positive, said Hussain. The woman wasn't allowed to breastfeed the baby, and

couldn't see the child as there was a curtain separating them.

Postpartum depression set in after a mostly uneventful five days and she turned aggressive and threatened to rip off her C-section sutures and run away from the hospital with the baby, Hussain recalled.

The doctor and nurses tried to calm her with medication, and later sought psychiatric help.

That was what came in handy, said Hussain, adding that the mother recovered within a week and was cleared to cradle her baby for the first time after that.



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