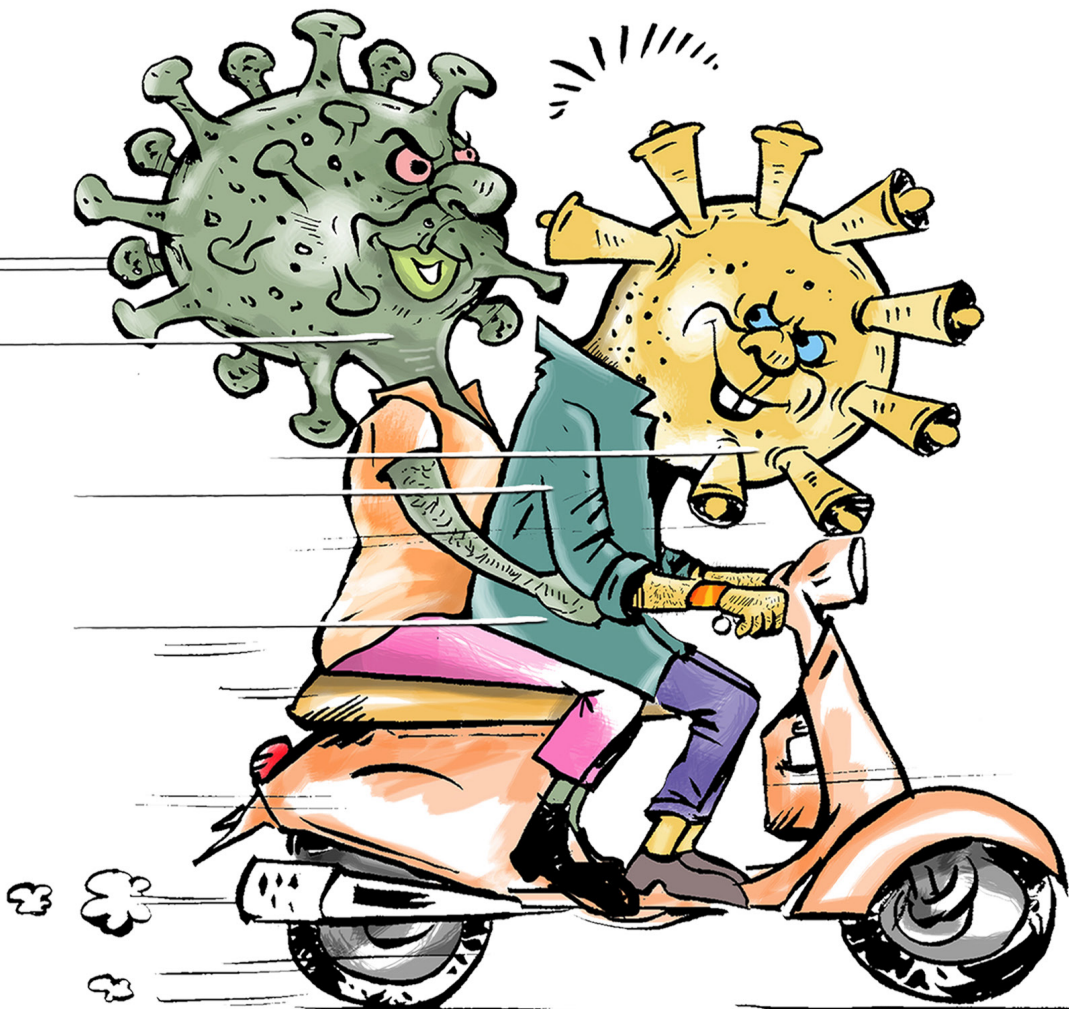


Break the Fake Toons

#CheckTheFake on #COVID19



Dr Anamika Ray Memorial Trust
Guwahati, Assam



#CheckTheFake on
#COVID19

a campaign against infodemic



Dr Anamika Ray Memorial Trust
www.armt.in

Partners Speak

The Assam Tribune

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At a time when a lot of misleading news is doing the rounds in the social media creating confusion and at times panic among the people, the #CheckTheFake campaign through its cartoon characters send the right message at the right time to the people. The Assam Tribune is happy to be a part of this campaign initiated by Dr Anamika Ray Memorial Trust at this moment of grave crisis before the people.

Prashanta J Baruah
Executive Editor,
The Assam Tribune

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NORTHEAST NOW

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The novel corona virus has taken the world by a storm. Even as almost every country in the world are under lock-down for the last few weeks, Fake News is spreading on social media like a wild fire.

Fake News is spreading faster than the killer virus, and that too, at a dangerous proportion. As the health workers are fighting the pandemic, combating the #Infodemic every day is getting even more difficult.

#CheckTheFake has been a fantastic month-long movement against #Infodemic amid the pandemic by Dr Anamika Ray Memorial Trust #ARMT (www.armt.in) of Guwahati. Collaborating with ARMT as a digital platform for the movement against #Infodemic has been a great learning experience for the entire team of Northeast Now (www.nenow.in).

Northeast Now is committed to create awareness on #fakenews on the digital platform, and promise to work in tandem with ARMT in future.

Anirban Roy
Editor-in-Chief,
Northeast Now

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content

#CheckTheFake

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preface

A panorama of #CheckTheFake

With a sea of misinformation flooded around the novel coronavirus, the month of April has been painted as the month of fake news and rumours on the social media. The project #CheckTheFake on #COVID19 has coincided with the month of April that started with fooling others as a celebration of April fool's day worldwide; the issue of fake news has been realized on the very forefront of this month that has toed the same line of converting the last 30 days in its entirety as a fake month. It seemed that with increasing number of fake news surrounding the pandemic, each passing day is celebrated as April Fool's day; and from there it starts the journey of this small but an honest, illustrated and attractive way of awareness campaign by the Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust, a non-profit educational and research organisation. Ethical Journalism Network defines that fake news is information deliberately fabricated and published with the intention to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts. A report of Council of Europe describes that there are three types of information disorder, namely, misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. Misinformation refers to the false or inaccurate information, deliberately created to deceive others. Disinformation is also about false information, deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country. On the other hand, mal-information is based on reality, but used to inflict harm on a person or an organization. Literally, there is a thin line differences between all these terms. Fake

news is the umbrella term that unifies all these types of information disorder. The journey of coming up with an issue of fake news and rumours on COVID-19 each day hasn't been that tough for there lies an ample of sources that has traced and tracked this misinformation and rectified it already. But the most important and interesting part; rather the most difficult part for this project was to take the same issues among the people in the most informative, educative and entertaining way underlying the importance of awareness among the people on COVID-19.

The campaign through two exclusive cartoon characters/protagonists – 'Pandemic' and 'Infodemic' beautifully represented by their own characteristics competing to each other revolves around the issues being circulated as misinformation. From introducing the new terminology used by the World Health Organization – 'Infodemic' as equally destructible to the declaration of the outbreak of COVID-19 as 'Pandemic', #CheckTheFake could easily understand the pulse of the crowd on social media by highlighting several issues later found to be false like – rumours about the extension of lockdown whereas at the same time it illuminated the issuance of directives by the Govt. of India to the social media companies for containing the spread of misinformation on novel coronavirus.

The leading actors of this campaign, both pandemic and infodemic have their own characteristics and image. The character of pandemic is full of patience, confident as it knows that it has the power to destroy the world slowly and steadily

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The character of pandemic is full of patience, confident as it knows that it has the power to destroy the world slowly and steadily one day or the other since no antidote is discovered till now. While infodemic may be characterised by overconfidence, witty.

one day or the other since no antidote is discovered till now. While infodemic may be characterised by overconfidence, witty, mischief and stubborn as it knows all the tactics to bind the people into its clutch. Stubborn because, its objective of viraling a fake message is pretty clear whether it has its antidote or not.

From highlighting the misinformation like #CoronaJihad, myth about the dead of virus in hot temperature, minimum intake of warm water to kill the virus, seafood causing corona, cow dung and urine curing corona, distorted figures of corona cases creating tensions, technological effect on immune system causing corona, alcohol can kill corona, shortages of essential items like salt during pandemic, age vulnerability for corona, newspaper, bats and mosquitoes spreading virus, falsification of government's announcements in view of this pandemic, false recommendation for cure of corona; to superstitious speculation of corona solution, stating quotes from uncertified sources and designing a false structure of lockdown into phases, etc., the project has travelled near and far across the social media to raise the fake issues circulated on social media in the 30 days of the month of April. But it wasn't enough to accumulate all this misinformation together; many of such misinformation have been left out for the nature of this study which is objective of creating awareness on COVID-19 without falling into the trap of infodemic.

More important than raising the issues of false information in particular, making its round on social media platform, the study has acted through an interactive course with the readers through cartoon characters and the story narrated by them. There has also emerged a plot in each episode on its own creating relevance to the representations of comic characters carrying a message as a whole

which can never be underestimated.

Establishing a tussle between the pandemic and infodemic from the very beginning of the study to realizing about the lasting impression of infodemic, even though the pandemic ends hopefully at the end very beautifully presents a package of pushing the crisis of infodemic at forefront of the present scenario. The study has all through its journey tried to give its one hundred per cent effort of putting both the issue of pandemic and infodemic at parallel lines to highlight the impression of both as similar and serious before the public. But somewhere down the line, it has always come down to the infodemic that proves to be the dominant player and a permanent destroyer of lives after the containment of the spread of coronavirus.

In each of these thirty days, we could understand how the study has tried to demonise the character of 'Infodemic' that is more dangerous playing with the minds of the people despite people hopes to restore the physical attack of the pandemic. From trying to prove the novel coronavirus as non-secular, leaving 'Covidiot's' on social media as similar to lions on the streets of Russia, tagging all the subscribers and the viewers as its patients, transmit its effect even staying on far two ends over the social media platforms, taking more lives at one single click, etc. to creating prejudices over religions and communities and linking it to the virus may lead to a social turmoil or particularly to a riots ending the lives in masses over wrong reasons. The study at this point may take a stance that rather than dying of wrong reasons, it is much better to die of the right reason of pandemic. Therefore, at this note of finding the truth behind the reason of death, it is important that the fight against infodemic may go on for infinite times so that the spread of misinformation and its

effect may be controlled for all the right reason to live with justification.

#CheckTheFake is a collaborative work taken under Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust. The process includes the research and development of the concept, tagline, dialogues of the characters by the research team. Then it was sent to the cartoonist followed by the finalization of the cartoon by the graphic designer and writing the description before releasing in the website and social media platforms. I am grateful to Dr. Anupa Lahkar Goswami, who played the leading role in developing the ideas with me. In conceptualizing the themes, Trust's Vice Chairperson Mr. Rajat Baran Mahanta often guided the team. Popular cartoonist Mr. Nituparna Rajbongshi illustrated the concept extraordinarily based on the research of the team. Dr. Sanjib Bora gave special effort in finalizing the cartoons with graphics design and Mr. Raja Das expressed the thematic descriptions of each of the cartoons. The entire team worked very hard every day of the month of April, 2020 and all of them should get appreciation for their sincere efforts to make the campaign a grand success. We won't be able to reach a large audience, if it won't be carried by the Assam Tribune, the highest circulated English daily of the region and North East Now, the most read webportal of the region. My sincere gratitude to Mr. Prashanta Jyoti Baruah, Executive Editor of the Assam Tribune and Mr. Anirban Roy, Chief Editor of North East Now. I am thankful to the members of the Board of Trustees of Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust for their encouragement.

I hope, the readers will provide positive response to this longest organized campaign against fake news.

June 6, 2020

Dr Ankuran Dutta
Principal Investigator

#CheckTheFake 1

Celebrating 365 days of non-stop fake news

April Fool's day? With fake news, everyday is an April Fool's day...

Happy birthday, in other words, happy April Fool's Day.



April Fool's Day is an annual custom celebrated on first April consisting of practical jokes and hoaxes for several centuries by different cultures. The custom of setting aside a day for playing harmless pranks upon one's neighbour has been relatively common in the world historically. In India too, the day has been observed for centuries to make another person fool by telling a fake story. Fake news has become so common in our day to day life that people are unable to distinguish between true and false news which also harms people in a lot of ways.

Posts from the websites of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization received only 364,483 'engagements' on social media as compared to combined 76 US sites spreading misinformation about COVID-19 that received whopping 52,053,542 engagements, which is 142 times that of the legitimate source (NewsGuard).

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: HealthImpactNews.com, a health-related website on Feb 25, 2020 claimed that Coconut oil is a possible treatment against COVID-19.

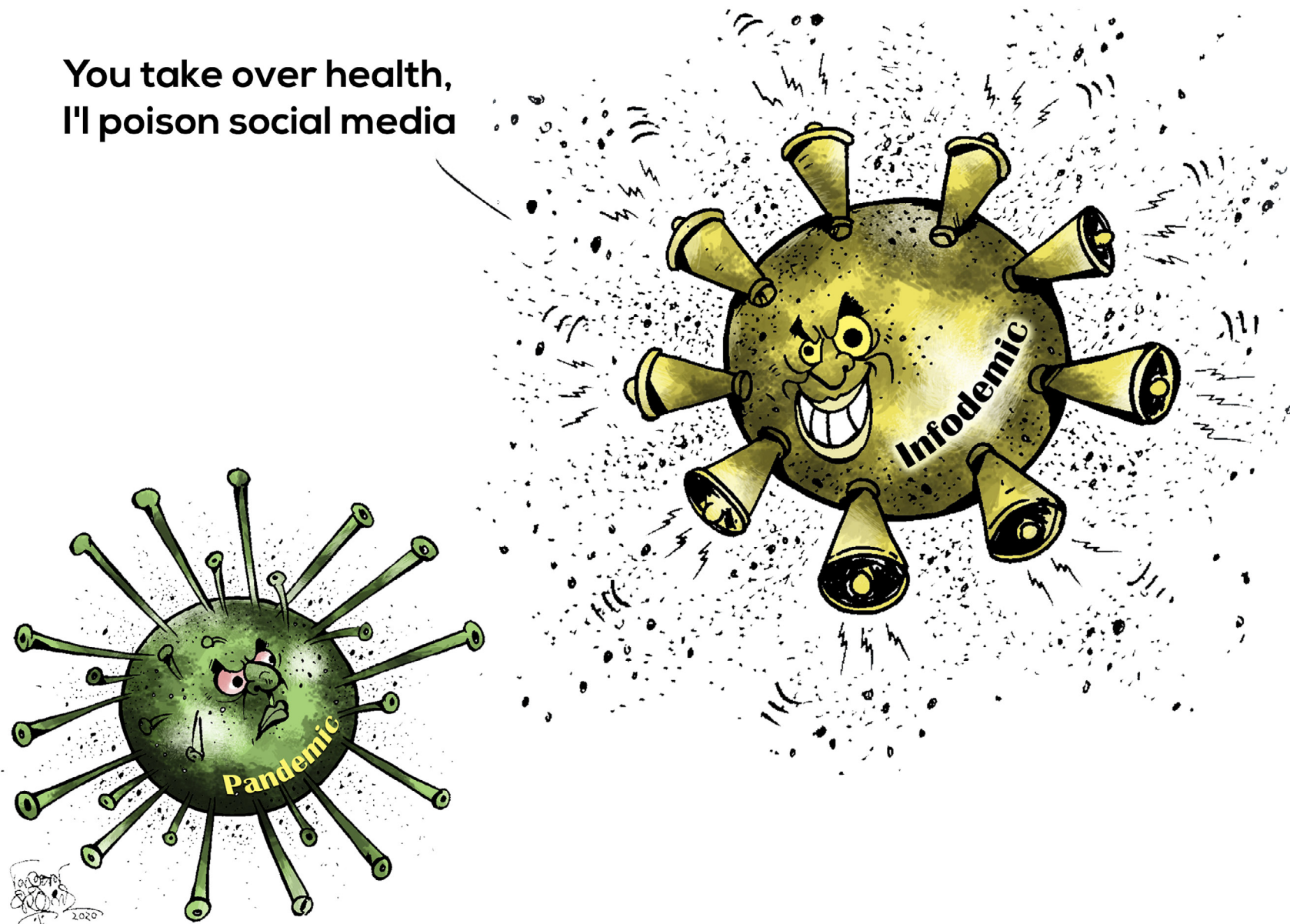
FACT: WHO says till date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-19. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue, and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing.



#CheckTheFake 2

Rise of Infodemic takes whole world offguards

You take over health,
I'll poison social media



The rise of Infodemic on COVID-19 over the social media platforms at the time of relentless threat to our health by this pandemic takes the whole world offguard. Keeping in view, the concerns expressed by WHO on Feb 15, 2020 about the rising infodemic, the Government of India issued directives to the social media companies in the country to stop the mis-information spread on COVID-19. Now, it's the responsibility of these social media companies to deal with this infodemic in a more sophisticated manner. Facebook has asked its task force to rate COVID-19 related content as true or false, and in case any article or post is rated false, it will 'limit its spread' and notify that a particular content is fact-checked. While Instagram decided to provide information in eight local Indian languages from local authorities to fight misinformation. TikTok, the most popular social media platform for teenagers in India claims that it will "remove deliberate attempts to deceive the public." Similarly, WhatsApp has introduced three official automated chatbot-based helplines so far. YouTube has also clear policies that prohibit videos promoting medically unsubstantiated methods to prevent the coronavirus in place of seeking medical treatment, and if any videos violate these policies are quickly removed only when its users flag the problematic content. All searches about coronavirus on the social media platforms starting from Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube will link users to official content on the WHO's platform.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: That the lockdown would continue for more than three months is triggering the mass exodus of migrant workers from cities to their homes in villages.

FACT: No plans to extend the 21-day coronavirus lockdown, said Union Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba in a review meeting held with the Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on the first week of April, 2020.



Novel Coronavirus is secular



When the entire world is under the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic, polarised media and propagandists have tried to give this a communal color in parts of the country. It started with the Nizammuddin Tablighi Jamaat event in New Delhi in the month of March that emerged into an epicenter of coronavirus outbreak. The event attended by around 3,400 people in early March was linked to the sudden rise in COVID-19 positive cases doubling the count of Covid infected patients within a span of three days. Punya Salila Srivastava, Joint Secretary to the Home Ministry in a media briefing on COVID-19 situation on Thursday said, "As many as 9,000 Tablighi Jamaat workers have been quarantined; out of which 1306 are identified as foreigners".

'Coronajihad' was one of the top trending topics on Twitter in early April, 2020. Along with this, many statements from top leaders, especially from the ruling party linking the irresponsible act of the attendees to a conspiracy against Hindu majoritarian took the social media by storm.

In the midst of all this, there arose some serious questions that reflects the local intelligence lapse, failure on the part of district administration and the state government of New Delhi. Even the Prime Minister's announcement of 21-day lockdown on March 24 that too 13 days after WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic escaped their failure to understand the seriousness of this virus. Many users started to bring back the issues of the controversial law Citizenship Amendment Act 2016 by posting #support against the #AntiCAA and #ProCorona, #ThrowbackTheOutsiders, etc.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Corona Jihad is an opportunity for Indian Muslims to exploit the pandemic.

FACT: There is no such term as 'Corona Jihad' and it is used on Twitter for the first time to exploit the opportunity of sowing seeds of communal politics in this crisis.



#CheckTheFake 4

It's a WhatsApp 'forward' that accompanies our morning tea

Every minute millions of fakenews are forwarded in the world

This 'forward' further multiplies as people are locked up in their homes these days due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Unlike Facebook, WhatsApp underlying encryption mode makes it tough to handle the challenge of rumours unless it is reported by the active authors of the content.

Due to end-to-end encryption in WhatsApp, authorities are unable to stop and punish people spreading fake news or misinformation; and it is more of a serious concern as the number of times a WhatsApp message forwarded is doubled, even tripled than the number of creations of fake contents. With the access of WhatsApp on the personal computer, it becomes convenient for the users to go for the 'forward' option easily without giving any second thought to it.

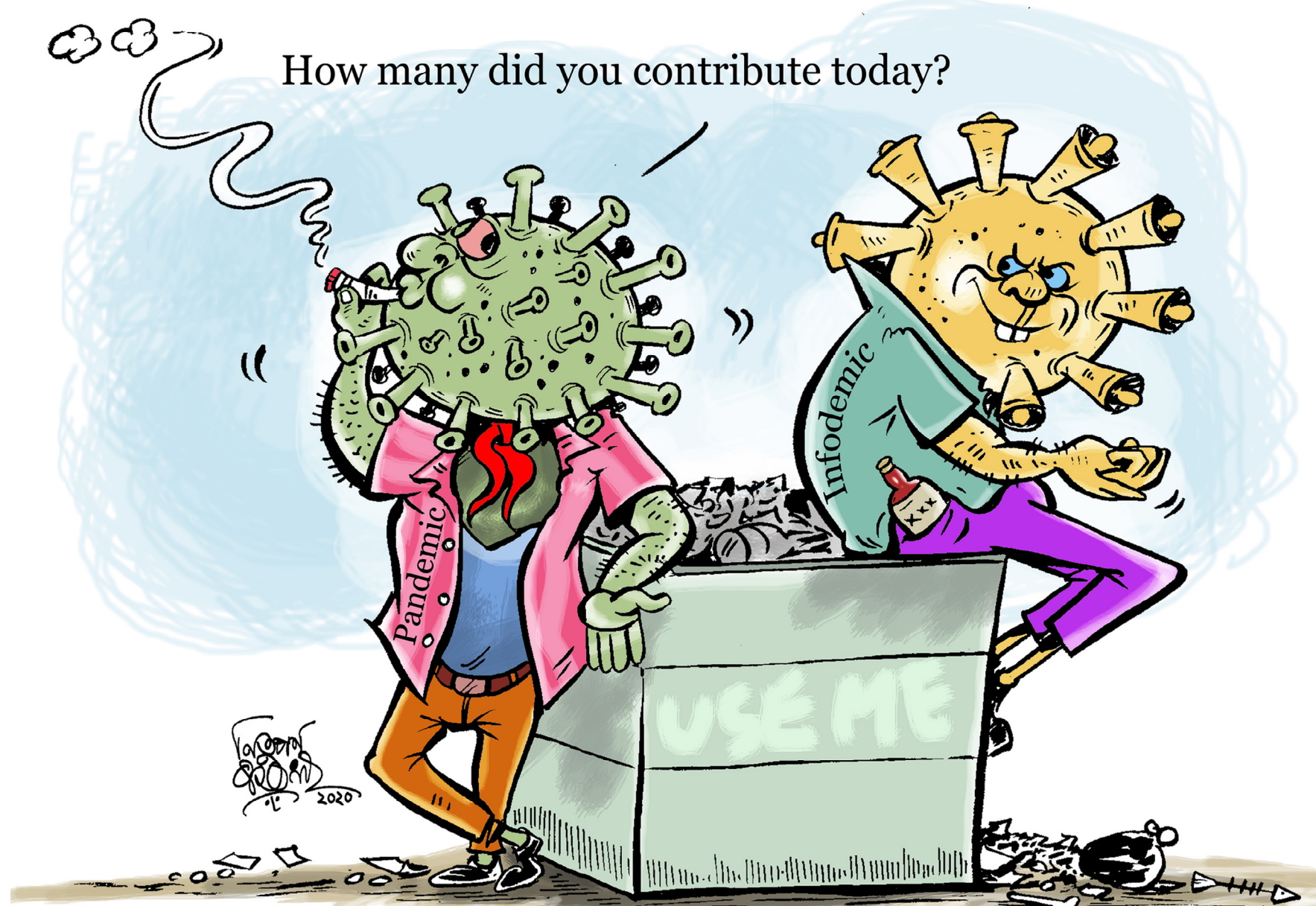
So, one who forwards the fake content without any cross check is more liable to punishment than the one who simply creates these contents.

Though, WhatsApp limited the number of times a user can forward a message to five with labeled as 'forwarded', it does not have any effect on the users as it's other benefits like up to 256 people can be part of a group chat that involves people making plans, sharing jokes, receiving news and catching up propaganda messages and videos, apart from the encryption mode makes it incredible and at the same time dangerous too.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: "Corona viruses don't survive in hot temperature, as per research by NASA. If 130 candles are lit together, the temperature will increase by 9 degrees as per IIT professor. So, Corona will die at 9:09 PM on mid-April, Masterstroke by Modi" (a WhatsApp forward message quoted).

FACT: NASA is a space research organisation and hasn't conducted any research on COVID-19 yet. But both NASA and ESA are looking for funding research on COVID-19. Moreover, WHO revealed that the rise of 9 degrees temperature is irrelevant, as COVID-19 is spreading in places with hot and humid weather.



#CheckTheFake 5

Encourage frontline warriors,
Discourage fakenews

Let the West realise, how wise we are,
driving coronavirus with sound & light



COVID-19 travels faster than 'Light'

With the rise in rate of new #COVID-19 cases across the world, the rate at which the disease spreads is phenomenal.

When a quantity of infected is multiplied by two every three days, the original quantity ends up being multiplied by 10 in about 10 days and by 100 in about 20 days. This is a very fast rate of growth (JHU CSSE)

In an outbreak of an infectious disease it is important to study the death rate, not only the number of deaths, but also the growth rate at which the number of deaths are increasing. This is because even if the current numbers of deaths are small, compared to other diseases, a fast growth rate can lead to very large numbers rapidly.

Countries like Iran, Spain, UK, USA etc. witnessed the highest number of new deaths over a course of weeks from the break of the epidemic. The exact death rate is difficult to calculate as official death tolls for COVID-19 may exclude people who died before they could be tested. They also ignore people who succumbed to other causes, perhaps because hospitals had no room to treat them "The data is the tip of the iceberg," Giorgio Gori, the mayor of Bergamo's capital in Italy, told The Economist on Friday. "Too many victims are not included in the reports because they die at home."

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: No 9. 9 am speech, 9 minutes at 9pm on April 5 (5+4=9). 9 days lockdown over. 9 days left from April 5th. 9 Planets. No 9 = Mars (Mangal - the planet of Light & Fire). Modi ji igniting the planet of light & fire for Welfare of India. Simply Outstanding!!! (a WhatsApp forward quoted)

FACT: There is no relevance of Number 9 killing novel coronavirus. "Number 9 is the number of planet Mars, but to get the positive effect of the planet, the calculations of dates o Break the Fake Toons.



WHO info on COVID-19 buried under 'Fake letters'

Believe only genuine information
and not letters



Infodemic appears in the form of 'fake letters' this time purporting to share different countries' and personalities' views on COVID-19. As a result, WHO's official reports and information on COVID-19 is increasingly losing its trace under these 'fake letters', which are widely shared through internet during this pandemic.

A number of 'fake letters' from Wuhan city in China, countries like France and Italy, from the Presidents of different countries and personalities even in the name of Bill Gates have overshadowed the social media platforms by misinforming and misleading the people.

The content of these letters mostly starts from suggesting the measures for prevention and cure for novel coronavirus to overall explanation of this pandemic; while some carries a propaganda against a particular country in spreading the virus and some highlights the superstitious beliefs behind the cause of this pandemic.

While most of these fake messages are also forwarded as a spam mail in the address of Center for Disease Control and Prevention of United States, Ministry of Health Emergency from China, etc. Moreover, thousands of coronavirus-related websites are created daily by cybercriminals for phishing attacks, distribute malware-laced files, or for financial fraud, for tricking users into paying for fake COVID-19 cures, supplements, or vaccines.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: "Ministry of Health's emergency notification to the public that the Coronavirus influenza outbreaks this time is very serious & fatal. There is no cure once you are infected. Its spreading from China to various countries..." (A Fake Letter).

FACT: First of all, the letter does not have the full information of which country the 'Ministry of Health's emergency' belongs to. Secondly, no ministry of health of any countries in the world have listed advisories about regular and minimum amount of water intake on its website as a prevention of COVID-19.



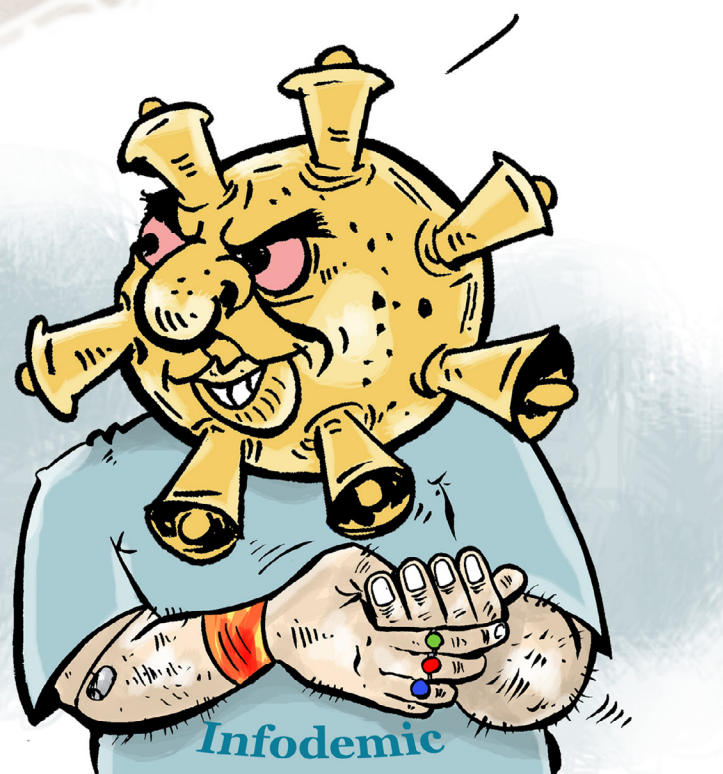
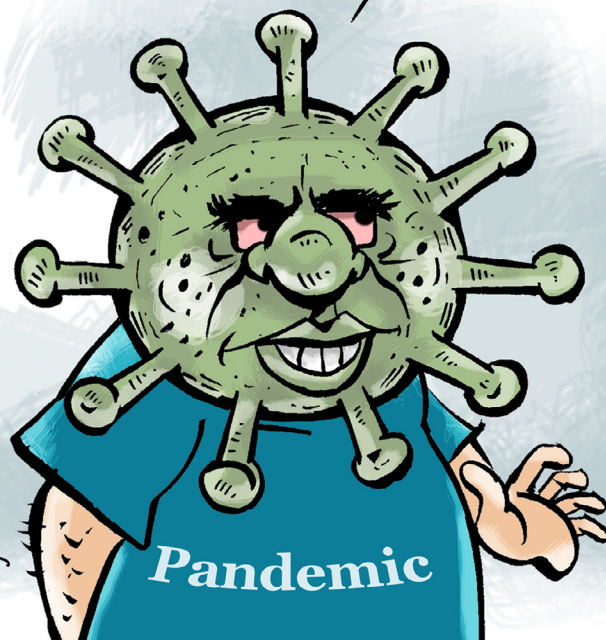
#CheckTheFake 7

Who attributes WHO on fake lockdown phases? It's me, Infodemic!



WHO on
Lockdown protocol

Who is your target today?



If you were panic buying before the assumed phase-III of lockdown attributed to WHO, be sure that you have fallen prey to infodemic! A viral message attributing to WHO on the procedures and protocols of lockdown into four phases during COVID-19 created a chaos among the public. The message says that the WHO divided the lockdown period into four stages and the Indian government is also following the same. The Press Information Bureau of India (PIB), through their fake news detection initiative #PIBFactCheck, put out a tweet on Monday saying the WHO circular about the lockdown schedule was fake.

The virality of this message has coincided with the 21-days lockdown period announced by PM Narendra Modi earlier that is about to end on April 14. So, keeping in view the increasing cases of novel coronavirus and number of deaths in the country, people are anxious to know the next steps by the government to fight this pandemic. But unfortunately, many people influenced by the fake viral message stating that the third phase of the lockdown starts from April 20 for 28 days, planned to stock pile the essential commodities leading to a panic situation.

No country in the world is following the lockdown pattern as seen in the viral message. Each country has its own rules and regulations for lockdown. India, China, France, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, and the UK have implemented the world's largest and most restrictive mass quarantines so far.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: According to a message attributed to WHO on protocols and procedures of lockdown – in the first step, a one-day lockdown will be observed, followed by a 21-day lockdown in phase 2. This will be followed by a relaxation period of five days. After five days, the stage 3 of the lockdown will be enforced, which will last for 28 days. This again will be followed by a relaxation period of five days. The final lockdown will be of 15 days.

FACT: WHO South-East Asia on April 5 tweeted – Messages being circulated on social media as WHO protocol for lockdown are baseless and FAKE. WHO does NOT have any protocols for lockdowns.

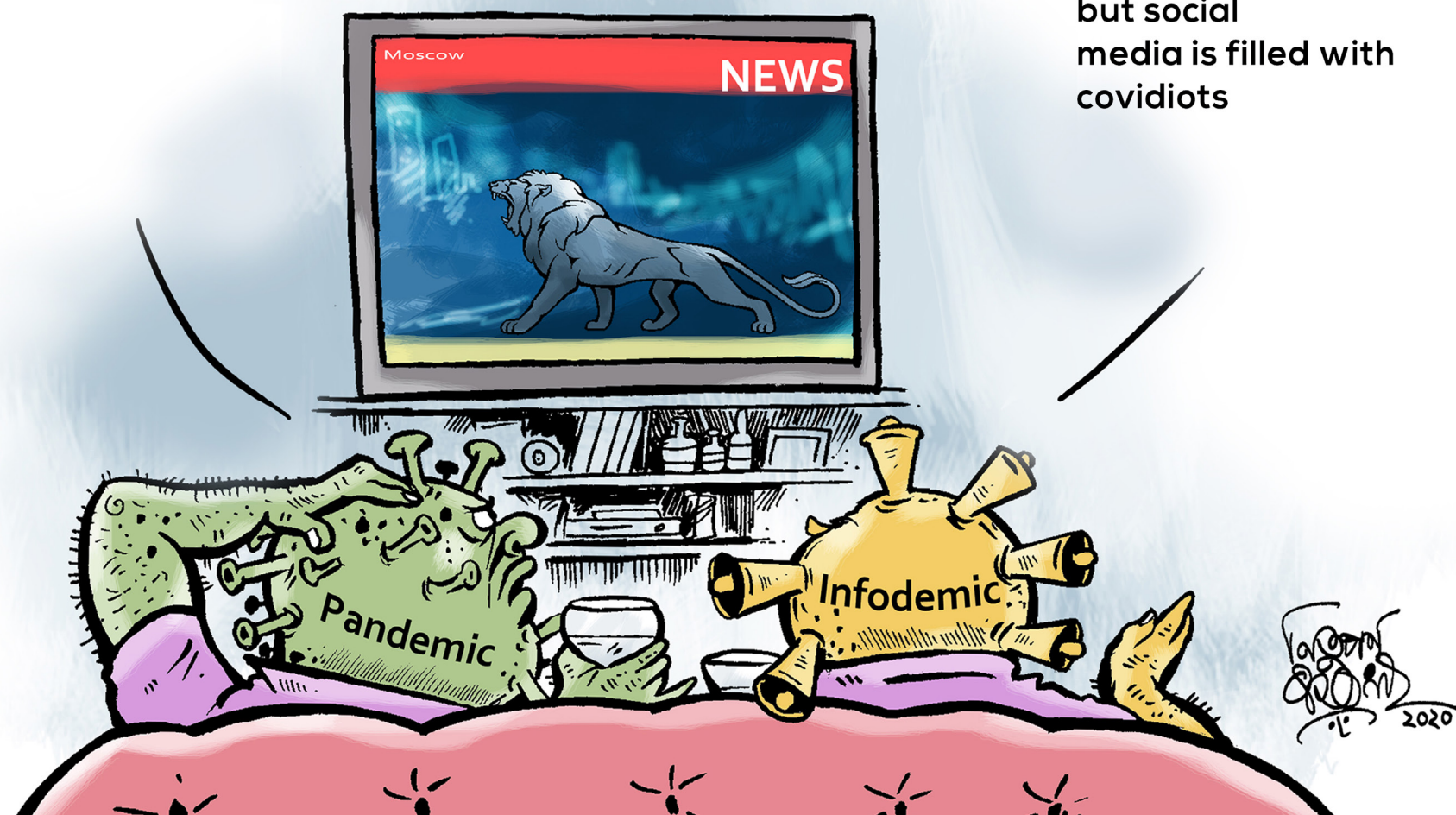


#CheckTheFake 8

Not Lions, but Covidiots are roaming on the streets of social media

The streets of Russia are not filled with lions right??

No, they are not but social media is filled with covidots



Lions aren't on the streets of Russia; they are roaming on the social media worldwide, claims #CheckTheFake. These lions aren't let loose by the Russian President Vladimir Putin; but are a product of fiction generated by fake news Covidiots on different social media applications, like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook etc.

A Facebook page "Humour TV" posted a picture of a lion on an empty street with the caption, "Vladimir Putin has dropped 800 Tigers and lions all over the country to push people to stay home" during this pandemic.

When India Today Anti Fake News War Room (AFWA) jumped onto it to check its validity on March 24, the post by then was already shared more than 18,000 times. It is still viral on other platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp. Encouraged by the post, many Indian too commented that this should be the approach of a leader.

A picture on WhatsApp with TV 'Breaking News' graphic plate imposed on it saying "Russia unleashed more than 500 lions on its streets to ensure that people are staying indoors during this pandemic outbreak" has added to the virality of this message all over the world.

In the Google reverse image search conducted by AFWA, it found two reports of Daily Mail and New York Post in 2016 that relates it to the filming of the lion called 'Columbus' in Johannesburg that despite the disapproval for filming was brought into the streets by the film company. Even, the Johannesburg Roads Agency later confirmed in a U.K. news and photo agency called 'Caters News' four years ago that 'Columbus' was part of the film shooting; but the production crews failed to notify proper authorities for the lion's presence. Moreover, the AFWA found that the graphic plate did not belong to any news channel. It was created by using a website where one can develop one's own "breaking news".

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Lions are released on Russian streets by Vladimir Putin to force people inside their homes during COVID-19.

FACT: The post and the picture is about four years old directing to various news reports on April 15, 2016 from Johannesburg in South Africa. This has nothing to do with Russia and Vladimir Putin or novel coronavirus. The incident is connected to a film shooting on the streets of Johannesburg.



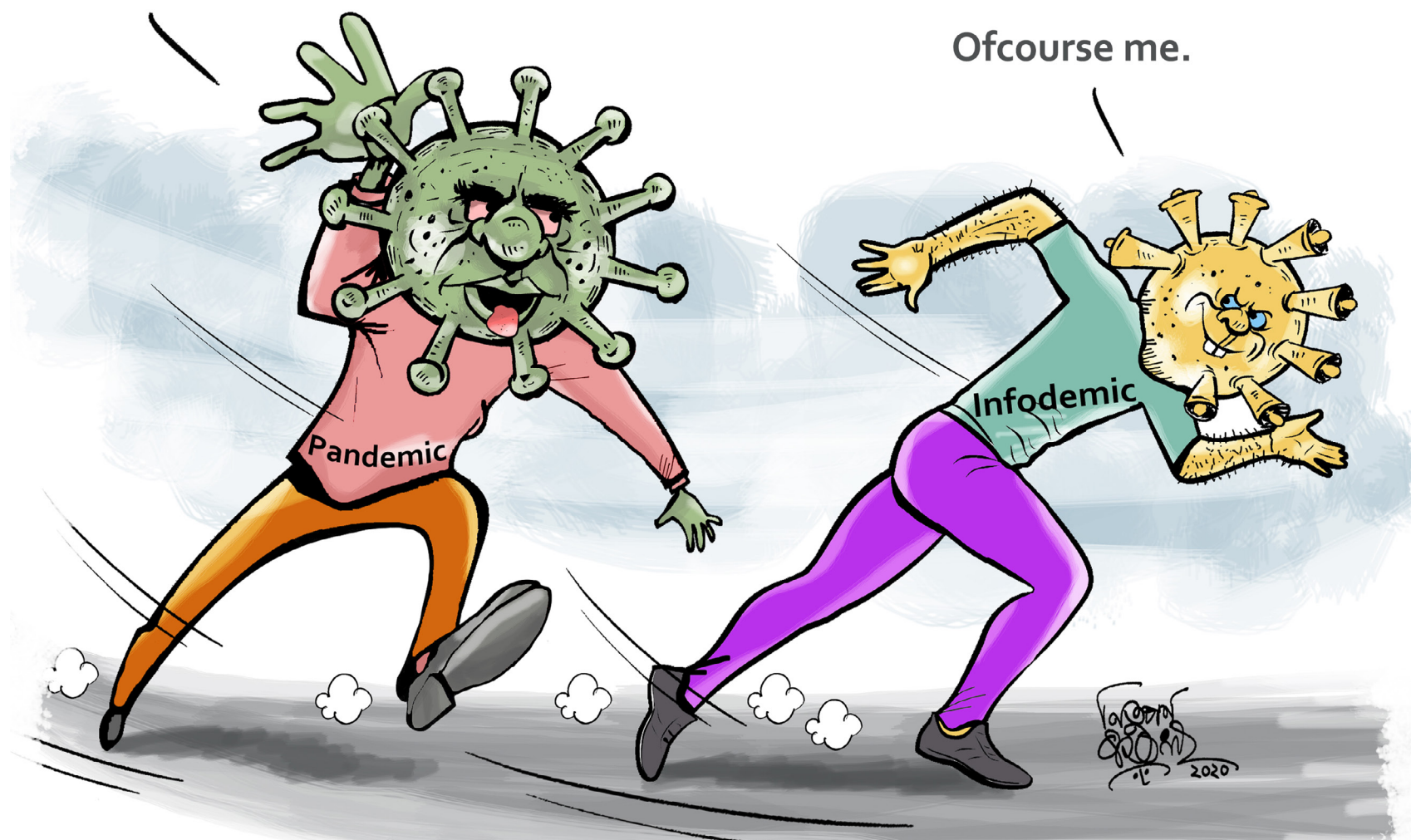
#CheckTheFake 9

More subscribers and viewers than COVID-19 patients in hospitals

nCoronavirus spreads to 15 lakhs in four month, fake news spreads to millions in no time

Who travels faster, you or me?

Ofcourse me.



Infodemic is making it tough for the people struggling for relief from COVID-19 pandemic. All across the globe, doctors and other frontline warriors are fighting novel coronavirus, but overload of misinformation and fake messages have raised the waves of infodemic to a greater height. While a social media specialist, Deniz Unay told the Turkish news agency 'Anadolu Agency' that there are over 3 billion posts and over 100 billion interactions on #COVID-19, #coronavirus and similar hashtags; it has become difficult to trace, how many of these are based on facts and fakes. But nevertheless, it is an open secret that thousands of social media bots are created, which are actually fake accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram with a single goal of spreading fear and anxiety through fake news on novel coronavirus.

YouTube, which has more than 265 million monthly active users in India has also been at the forefront in spreading panic over COVID-19. One of the videos of 'Prajapati News', a YouTube channel with over 6.21 million subscribers, says the coronavirus spreads through seafood. This particular video was viewed 4.7 million times. Such kind of videos are helping Vishal Prajapati, the founder of the channel to draw in more subscribers – he says his subscriber count is increasing by more than 10,000 dailies. This increase in posts, viewers and subscribers attributing to the fake contents are laying down a red carpet to the infodemic over pandemic daily with a large gap of differences between the increasing percentage of false information and number of COVID-19 cases across the world.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Novel coronavirus spreads through seafood (A YouTube video)

FACT: As of now, there is no such explanation or any confirmation from WHO about the spread of novel coronavirus from any animals. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share updated findings.

But WHO has aware the people on its website that one can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.



#CheckTheFake 10

Infodemic can make you sick even while maintaining social distance

Don't let fake news pamper your beliefs
Break the chain of fake forwards

Everybody wishes for an antidote to this pandemic, not to the rising Infodemic. Despite the keys to stop the infodemic already available at our hands, people are keen to the key of success to contain the spread of COVID-19.

In order to flatten the increasing curb every day, the world is still struggling for developing an antidote to COVID-19. According to WHO, there hasn't developed any vaccine, drug, specific antiviral medicine or treatment for COVID-19 yet. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalised immediately.

But the rise of infodemic is overshadowing the numbers of this pandemic daily. Despite the numbers, the matter is of serious concern as infodemic can make more people sick than the novel coronavirus even while maintaining social distance.

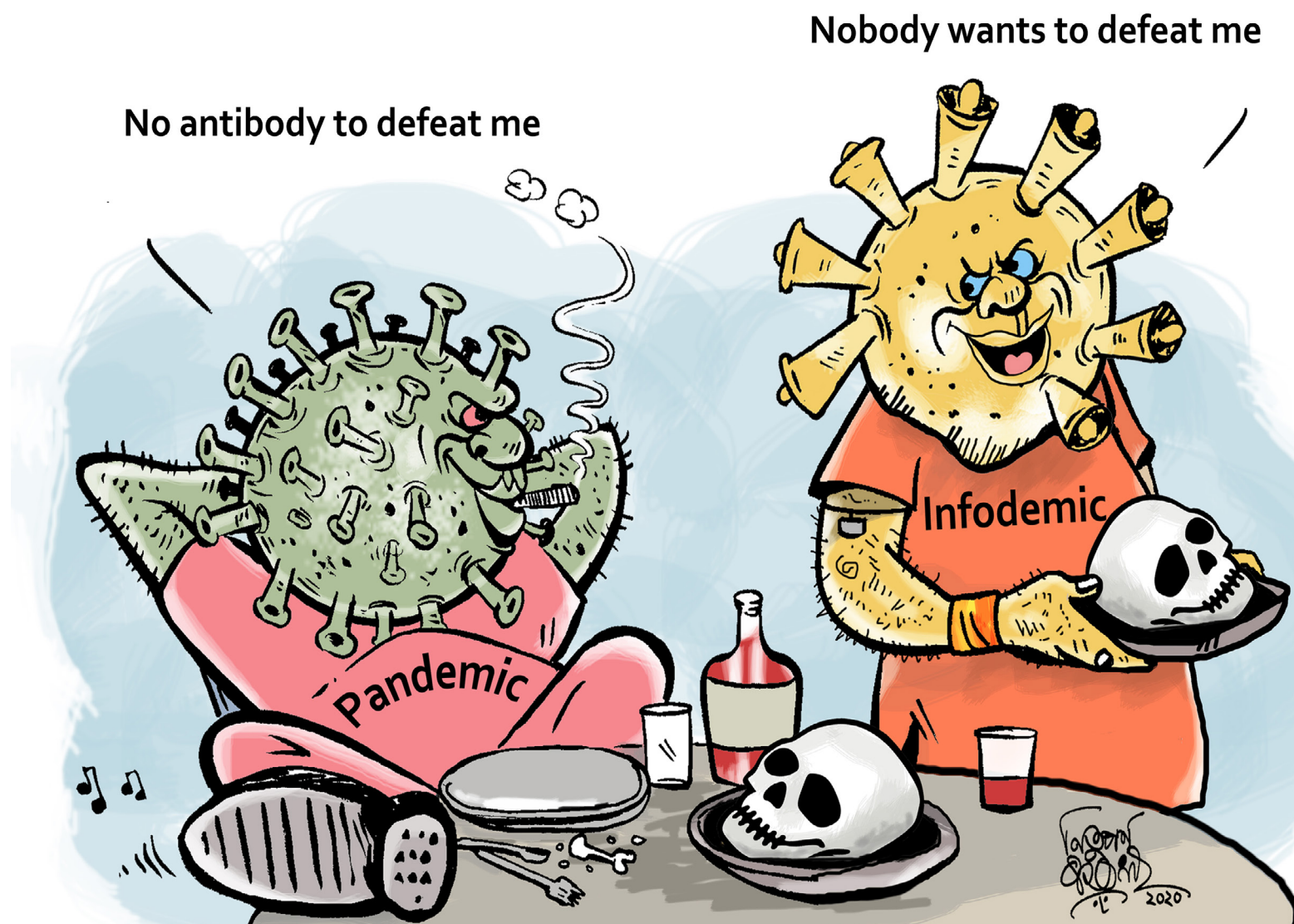
To get rid of this sickness, #CheckTheFake urges to sanitise our minds before hands with few tips like – discard unquoted stories, disbelief stories from any non-official or unauthentic sources, discourage fake news forward, dismiss photos without verifying and develop critical thinking. These are the simple key to success, which are already available at our hands unlike the antidote to pandemic, on containing the spread of fake news on novel coronavirus.

A group of more than 400 scientists from India has raised their voices against the COVID-19 fake news machinery. The hoax busting team is just one of a bunch of groups organised under the voluntary, pan-India effort – Indian Scientists' Response to COVID-19 (ISRC). Started about two weeks ago, with more than 400 scientists across more than twenty scientific and research institutes in the country, the initiative counts among its volunteer astrophysicists, animal behaviorists, computer scientists, mathematicians, engineers, chemists, biologist, doctors, social scientists and others. Their goals include analyzing "all available data and support national, state and local governments for evidence-based action," in addition to verifying and communicating information.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Cow urine or cow dung can protect people from novel coronavirus.

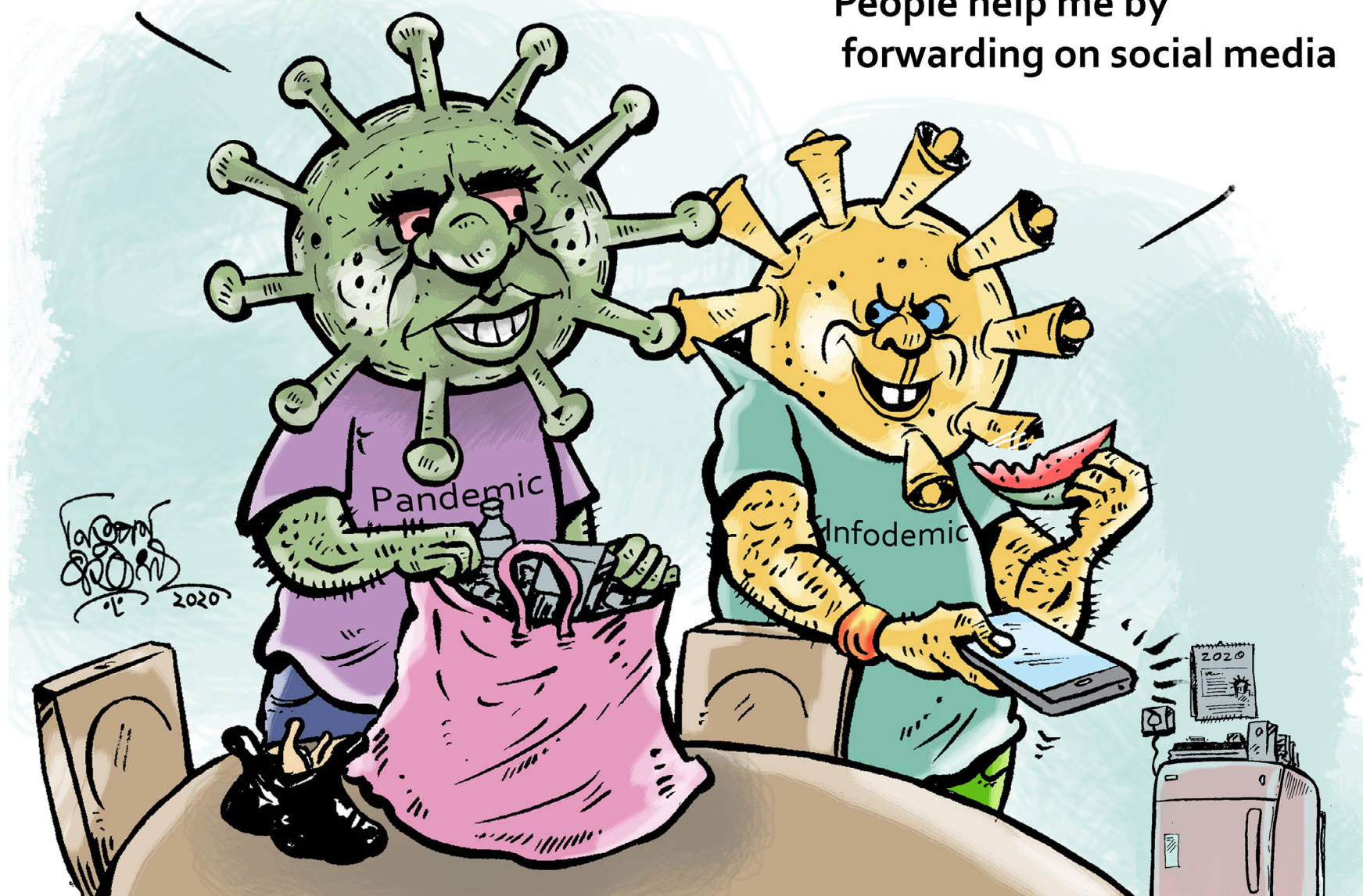
FACT: Absolutely not. While cow urine and cow dung might be used in several medicines, it can certainly not cure coronavirus. No such statement has yet been made by any scientist. In fact, a 50-year-old Sheikh Mahmud Ali from Hooghly, West Bengal, was held by the police after he was caught selling cow urine and dung as a cure to the novel coronavirus (The Hindu report on March 18).



Your 'one-step forward' is my 'one-fake forward': Infodemic

People help me by
not doing social distancing

People help me by
forwarding on social media



What 'one-step forward' is to COVID-19 pandemic, 'one-fake forward' is to infodemic. The spread of rumours and misinformation is continuously increasing the curve of infodemic that has become a matter of serious concern all over the world. Indian states are no way behind in helping to increase this infodemic curve, though police with its activeness and innovative tactics are awaring the people on social media about this menace. The Assam police has also been very strict to contain the spread of this fake information from last half of March, 2020. It has so far established a monitoring system to check social media users spreading rumours about COVID-19.

According to a report of News18 India, a of total 52 cases had been registered for spreading rumours or uploading objectionable comments on social media, 25 people had been arrested and eight detained people released after issuing notice in this manner till April 8. Sources also cited that counselling was done with 110 people and more than 120 social media posts had been deleted and many accounts were deactivated. This committee is looking after fake news and also giving directions to district information officers to look after social media handles and activate WhatsApp numbers so that the public can get access to correct information. While by maintaining social distancing can prevent the 'one-step forward' cause for COVID-19 pandemic, it is also important to follow the 'social media distancing' norms to prevent the 'one-fake forward' cause for rising infodemic.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: 'ONE-FAKE FORWARD' claims – the Supreme Court of India has made an order saying that sharing of updates on COVID-19 on social media and WhatsApp is a punishable offence and the WhatsApp admins should watch out for police action.

FACT: The Supreme Court of India has not issued any order prohibiting people from sharing updates or information on COVID-19 on social media platforms or WhatsApp groups. (Times Fact Check of The Times of India, April 7).



No weekends or summer trip: breathe fresh air in 'Jail' this pandemic!

Over hundred cases registered in India for fakenews post on coronavirus

Socialising will increase the risk of transmitting the vulnerable novel coronavirus. Therefore, putting oneself at home is not the only way to stop this pandemic, one also needs to maintain a social media distance or prevent oneself from falling a victim or stop being a perpetrator of spreading fake news on the virus. But on the top of it, more than hundreds of fake news cases on COVID-19 has been reported from various states of the country with nearly hundred arrested cases so far.

As cited in a report of The Asean Post on April 11, at least 266 people have been arrested for posting coronavirus-related information in 10 Asian countries, from Thailand to India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Mongolia, according to an investigation based on a tally of police reports by international news agency – Agence France-Presse (AFP). The arrested cases in Indian states may be advantageous for the administration or police machineries as now these people can be quarantined for minimum of a year time and the maximum of two years in India and not exceeding five years outside in foreign countries through imprisonment as a punishment under section 52 and 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 for spreading fake news on coronavirus.

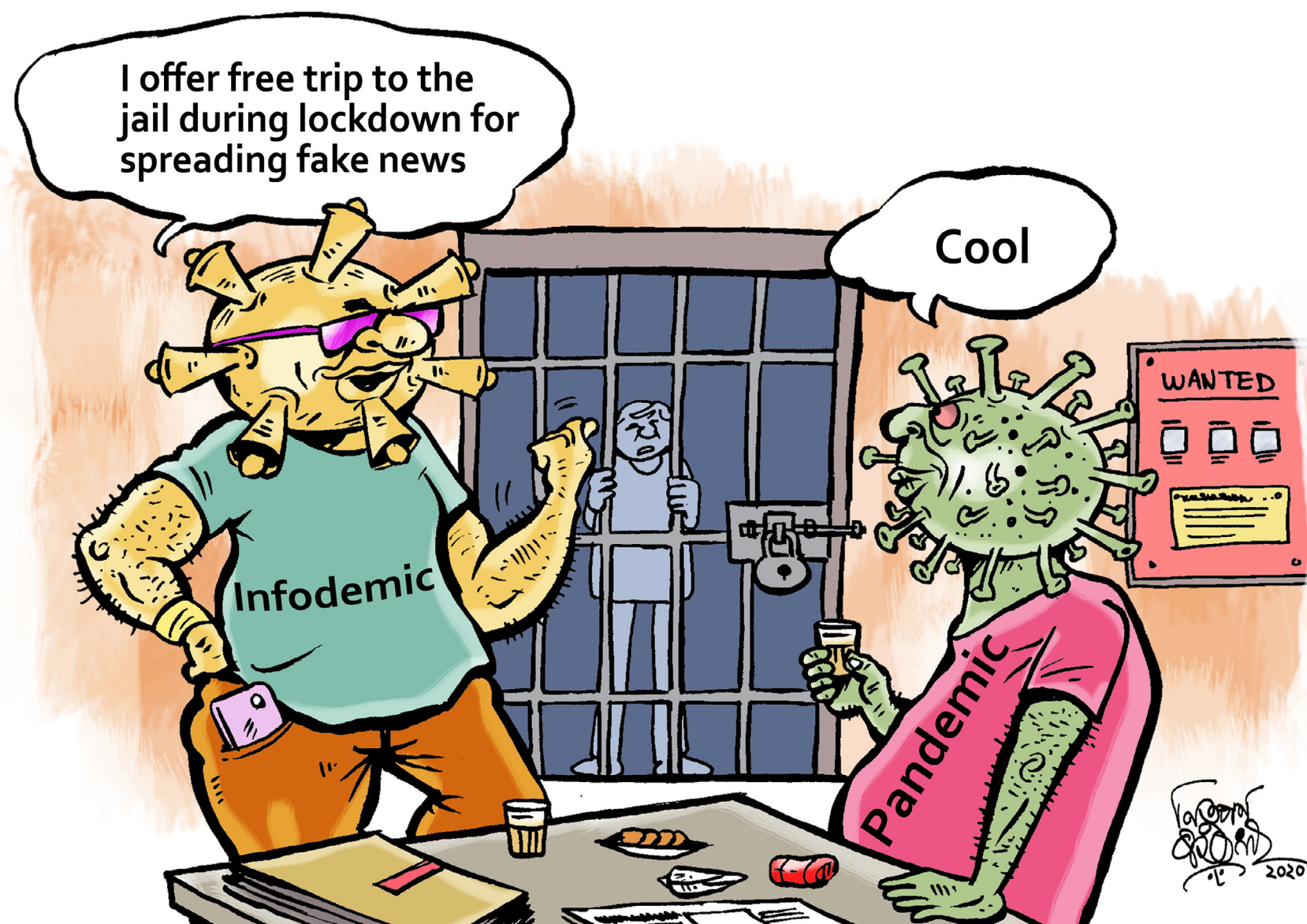
The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in its lockdown order refers to section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, which says, "Whoever makes or circulates a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic, shall on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine".

While section 52 of 2005 Act says that making a false claim to get relief, assistance, repair or some other benefit from the Centre/state governments or the NDMA is punishable of a two-year imprisonment along with a fine. So, it's now up to you; whether to quarantine yourself being at home or in jail. In both cases, it protects the country.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

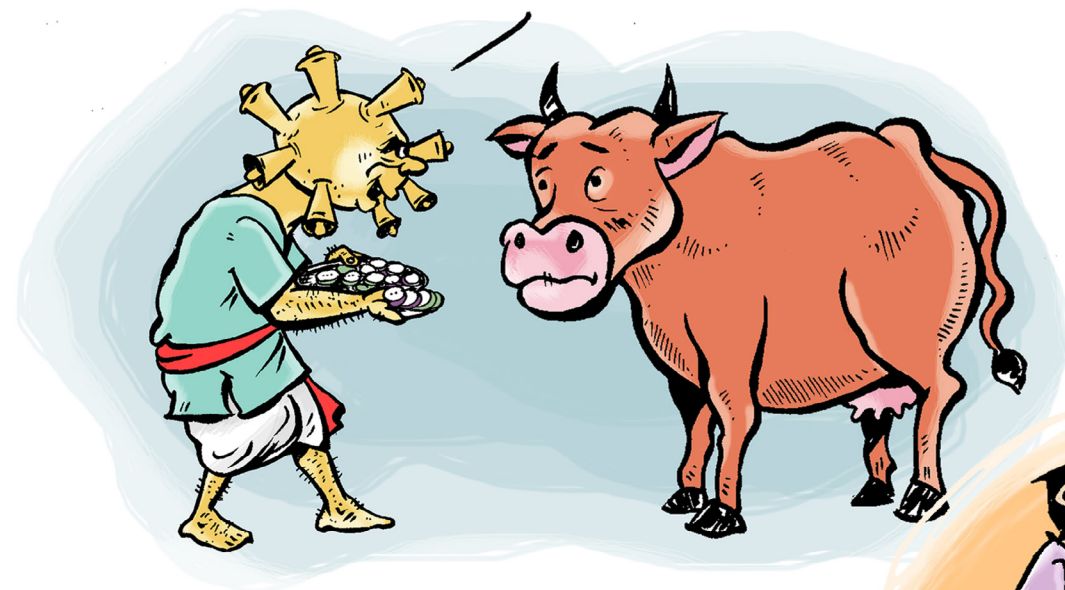
FAKE: Earlier, a national television channel had carried a false report claiming 11 Tablighi Jamaat members from Arunachal Pradesh were tested positive for coronavirus.

FACT: There is only 1 COVID-19 positive case in Arunachal Pradesh till April 12. Later, the news channel ran an apology on its channel.

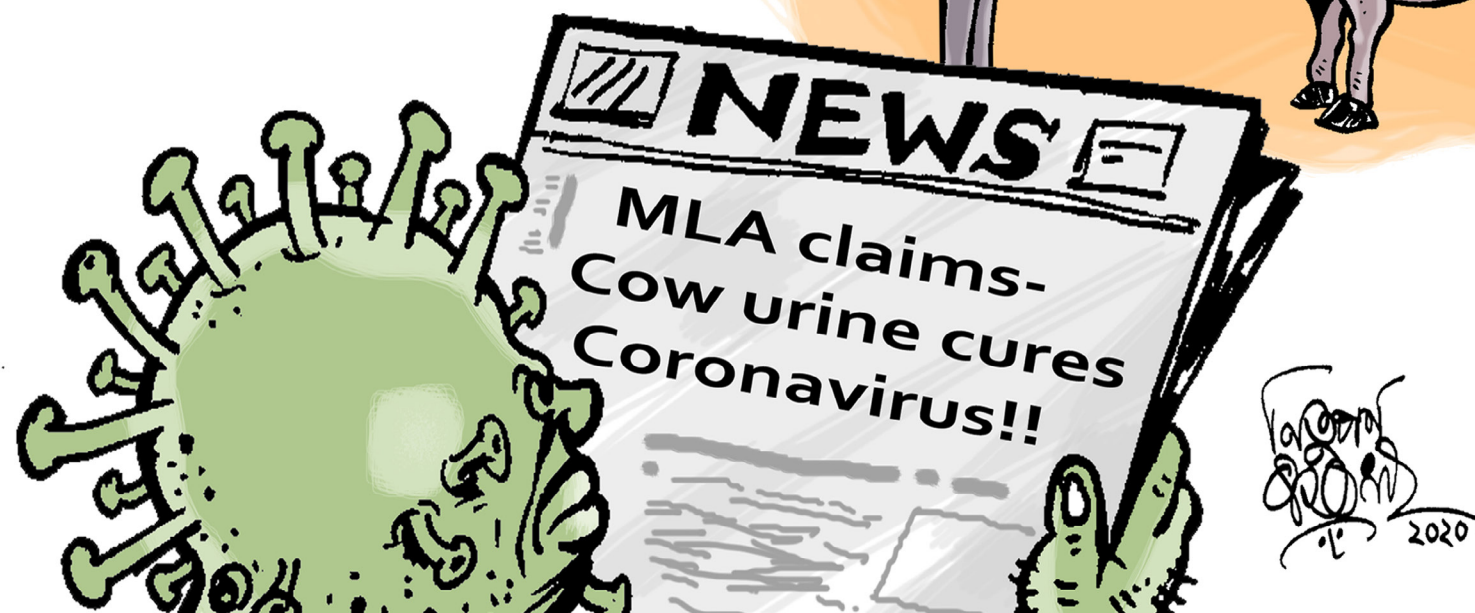
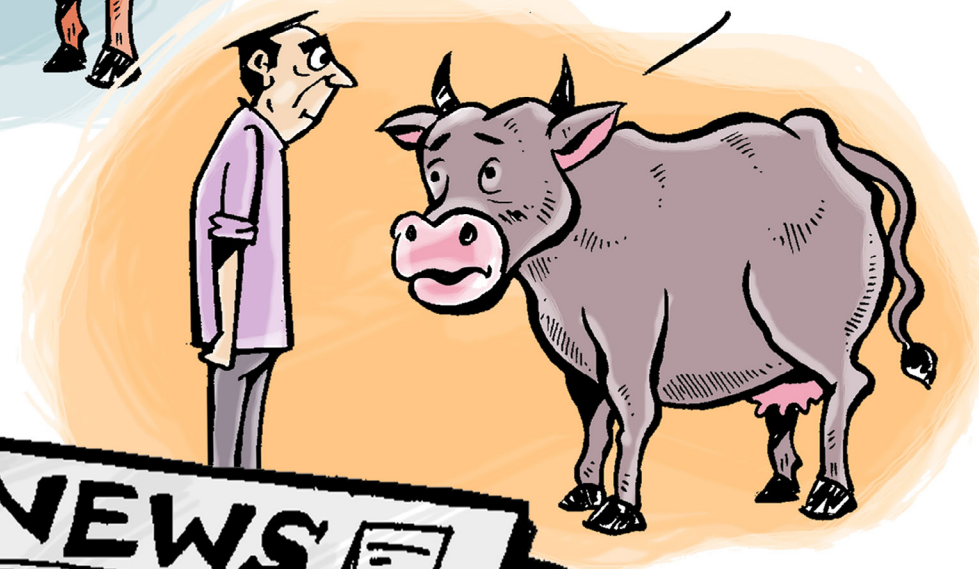


Cow after corona or Corona after cow, it's all Infodemic!

Lau kha, bengena kha,
coronavirus mari ja...



Gau-mutra nakhabi,
thog nakhabi,
fakenews uruai nidibi...



When the entire world is gripped into COVID-19 pandemic, some legislators in India seems to negotiate cow urine as an immediate antidote.

India has crossed 8,000 confirmed cases until April 12, with 7,409 active and 273 deaths for the outbreak of novel coronavirus, yet its legislators are no way behind in claiming that cow urine can cure the pandemic.

Earlier on March 14, some right-wing organisations organised a cow urine drinking party in the national capital without waiting for any scientific validation.

But the entire plot was triggered more with some MLAs and political leaders echoing the same idea leading to misleading beliefs among many.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Consuming cow dung and cow urine can cure Coronavirus. In some places and several cities in India this has been administered as an antidote with a claim that it boosts our immune system and kills the virus. There have been instances where cow urine has been sprinkled on some areas as a disinfectant of sorts.

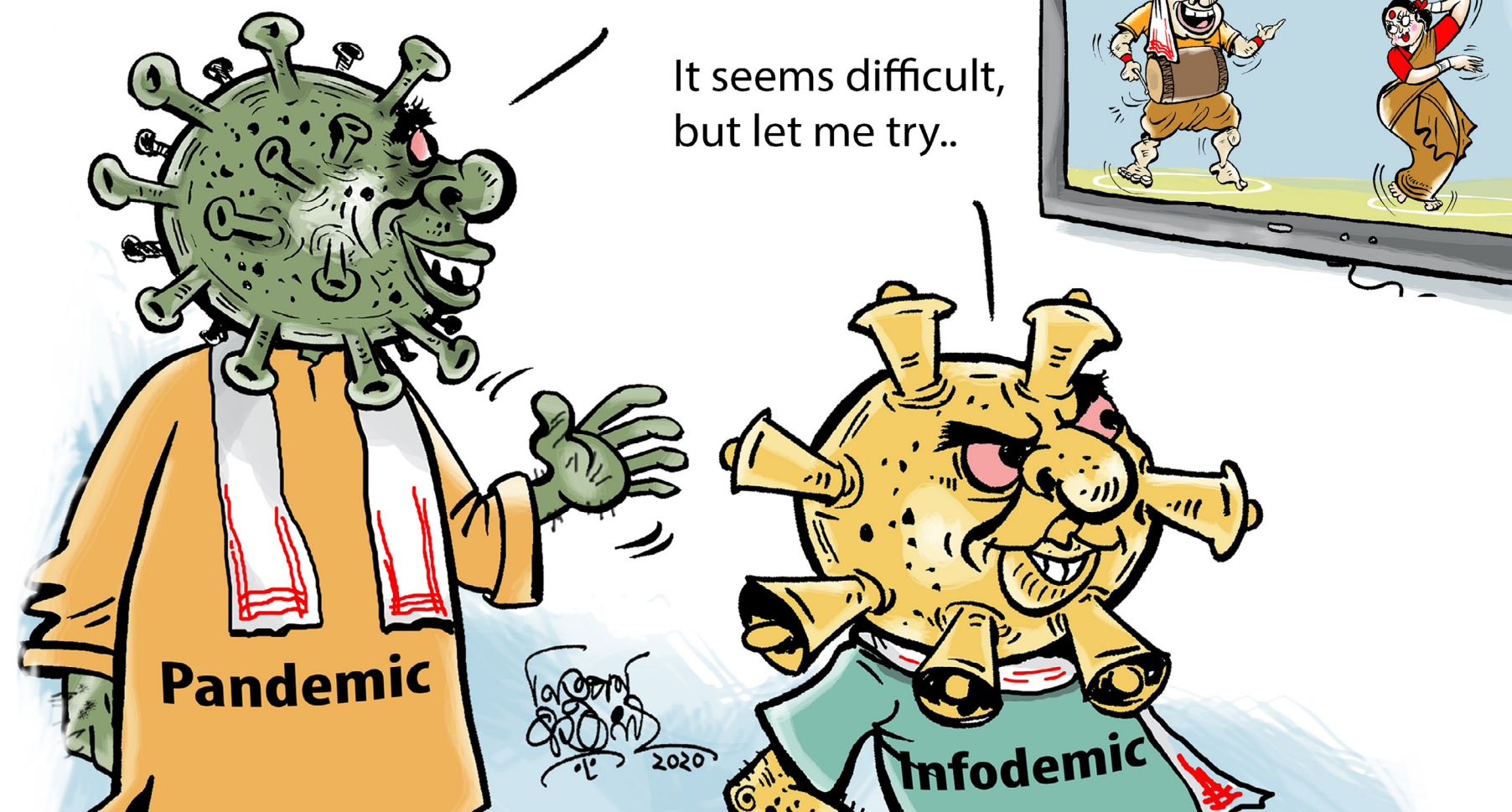
FACT: "Let me tell you that scientifically there is no basis to this particular myth. It hasn't been proven or determined yet that cow urine or cow dung used in any form either as a surface applicant or administered orally, kills the virus", Dr Navin Gnanasekaran, Associate Director of Medical Services and Senior Consultant Radiologist at MGM Healthcare, Chennai said to The New Indian Express on March 8.



Beware of Infodemic mess this spring festival!

Hey, can you help me gather
people for Bihu festival today?

It seems difficult,
but let me try..



As the spring festival marks the beginning of the new year in many Indian states, including Assam, people avoid gatherings and dedicate their fight against COVID-19. The Bohag Bihu also called the Rongali Bihu, which is a main festival of Assam, starts right from Gorum Bihu on April 13, when people in villages are seen taking cows for the traditional bath near the ponds or rivers maintaining the norms of social distancing. The spirit of Bihu is dampened by this pandemic; no people on the roads, no markets for Bihu shoppings, no groups of Bihu dancers into the lanes of the cities and villages completely quite in such a festive time.

Earlier, the state administration through a guideline on COVID-19 in sync with the Bihu celebration stated that not more than 5 people will assemble in marking the beginning of Bihu on April 13 with a flag hoisting and will end with flag hoisting only.

Even the state health department had earlier issued an advisory asking all Bihu organisers to limit the celebrations into only the rituals and abide by the social distancing norms aimed to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Organisers of the Bihu programmes also cancelled this year's celebrations including open field or stage performances in order to maintain social distancing to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

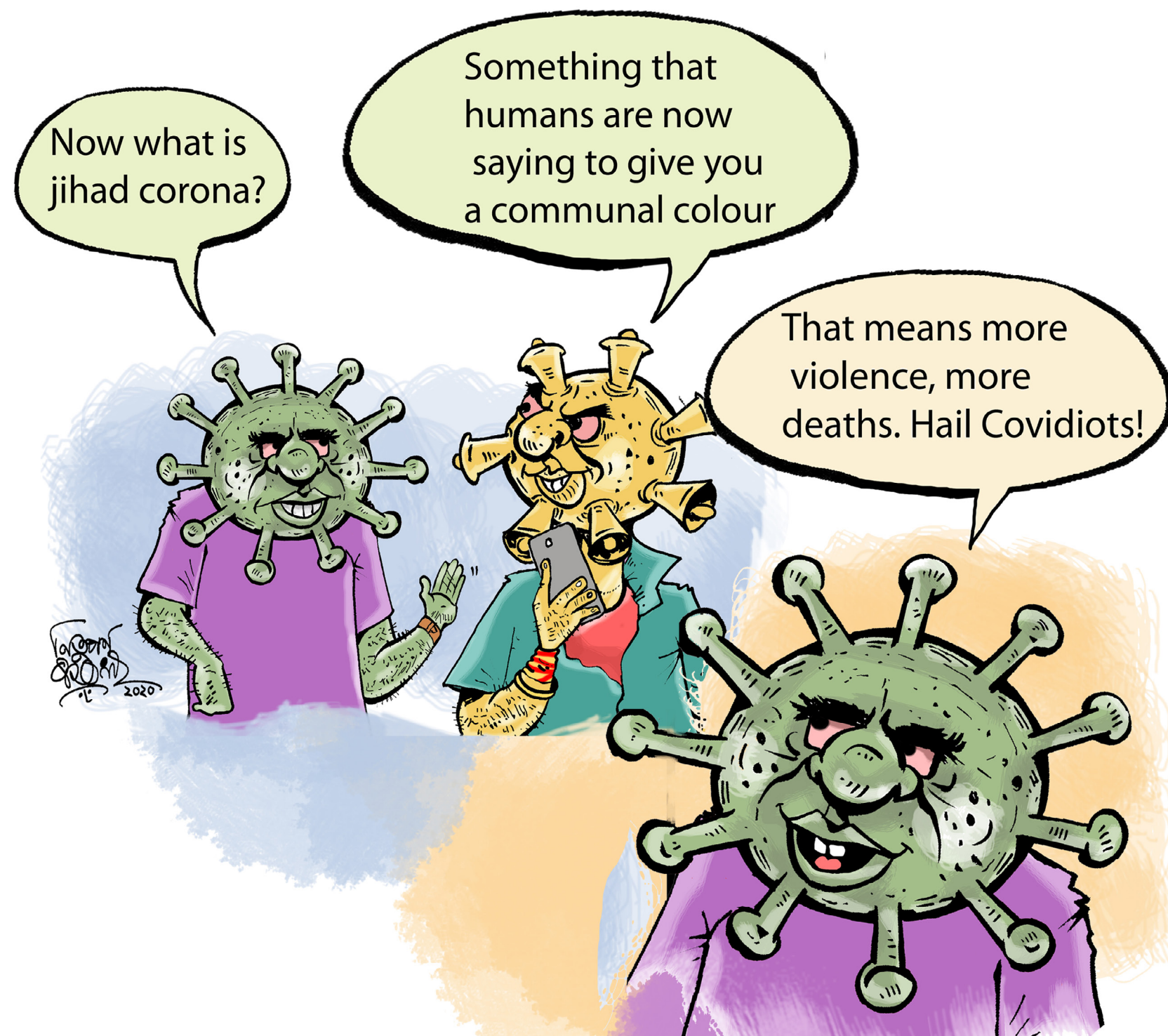
#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Rumours were doing the rounds that people are invited in various competitions like singing, painting, Bihu dances, etc. organised by different Bihu committees in the city on the occasion of the celebration of Bihu (Facebook posts).

FACT: These competitions are organised on social media by various Bihu committees in view to the maintenance of social distancing norms laid by the state administration during Bihu. No people are allowed to violate the national lockdown (ARMT Research).



Infodemic may cause more deaths than pandemics



Corresponding to the situation in Nizamuddin, the Joint Secretary of the Health Ministry officially stated that before the event, the number of confirmed cases doubled in around 7.4 days on an average, but after the Tablighi Jamaat event the cases doubled in around 4.1 days on average. The government also claimed more than 8,000 people, including foreigners, visited the headquarter in early March. The calculations for the COVID-19 cases changed and were represented in comparison to each states' pre and post Nizamuddin cases by now. On April 7, of the total 610 COVID-19 cases in Tamil Nadu, at least 570 were linked to the Markaz event; in Telangana, all 11 deaths were linked to the event with at least 265 Jamaat members tested positive; out of 260 cases in the Andhra Pradesh, 243 had links with the Jamaat event and immediately increased the line graph of positive cases from 1 to about 30 in Assam, where more than 400 people have been quarantined out of the 835 who attended the Markaz event. Since then, hate videos began circulating depicting Muslims deliberately smearing vegetables and fruits with their saliva, spitting into food served in restaurants, and coughing into the faces of other people, all with the malevolent intent of infecting non-Muslims. Hashtags like #CoronaJihad, #BioJihad and #TablighiJamaatVirus began to circulate and trend. The consequences were immediate, terrifying and deadly, and continue to mount. Hate messages were hence doing the rounds in all social media forums.

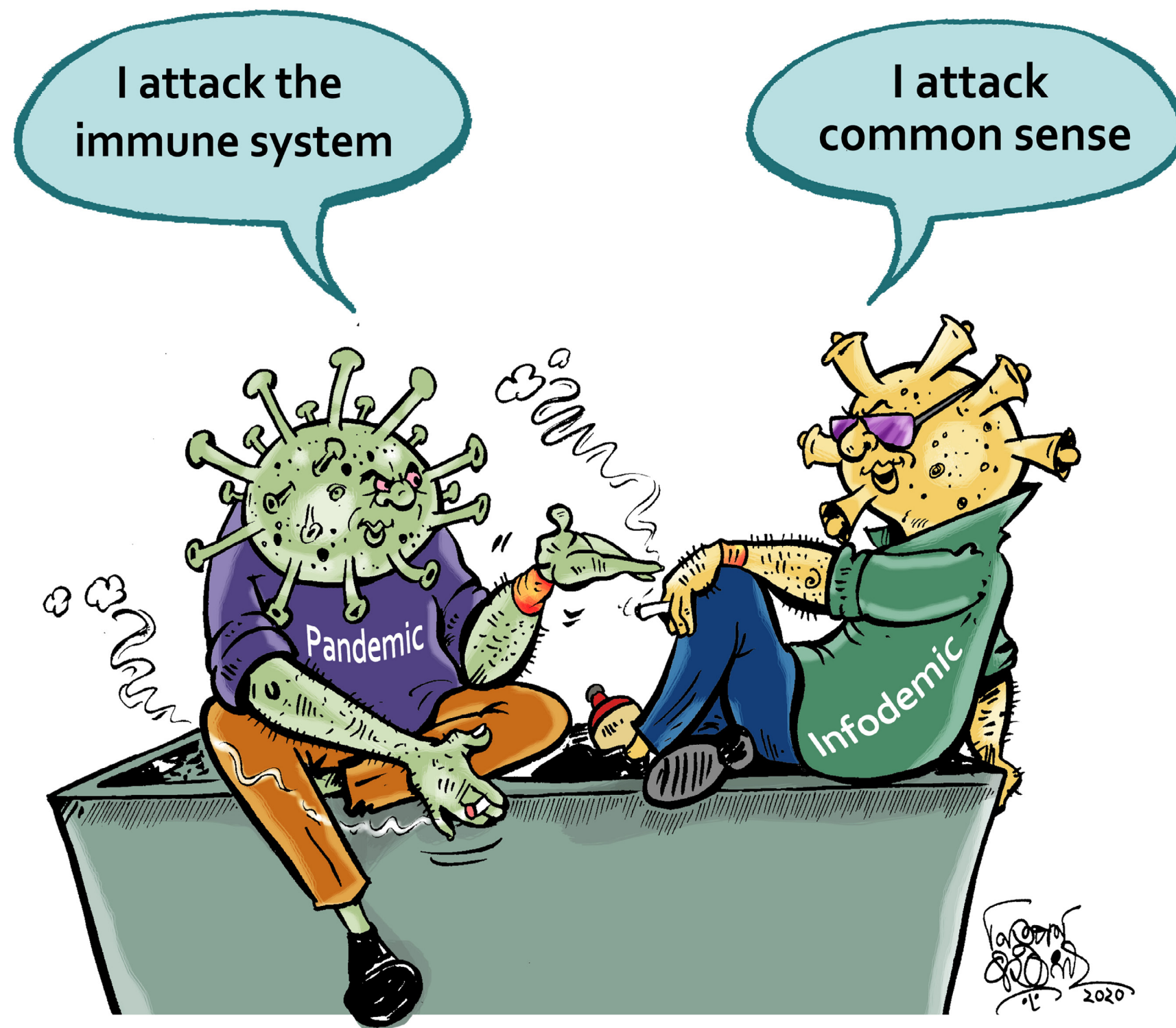
#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: #CoronaJihad is an opportunity for Indian Muslims to exploit the pandemic.

FACT: There is no such term as 'CoronaJihad' and it is used on Twitter for the first time to exploit the opportunity of sowing seeds of communal politics in this crisis. Moreover, the Muslim population will also be vulnerable to this virus if they rely on faulty medical or health information and religious extremism (According to a British researcher, Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, who is a specialist on the Syrian Civil War, Iraqi Civil War and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant).



Loss your 'common sense', get back your 'immunity': Infodemic



World scientists on COVID-19 are leaving no stones unturned in finding out the entire design of human being's immune system and a way to boost it, if vulnerable to the deadly virus.

It is true that the low immunity person is more vulnerable to the disease; but one cannot deny the fact that people's lack of common sense is more vulnerable to all the fake information surrounding the COVID-19.

It's the time and situation and the person attached to it who should have the ability to distinguish between true or false news. Earlier this week, it is aired that 5G suppresses the immune system, making people susceptible to the virus. It also claimed that the virus can somehow be transmitted via radio waves, which later on is dubbed as a 'conspiracy theory'.

People are more easily trapped into 'conspiracy theories' today than by the nature of the deadly disease itself. This itself raise a question on our living brains; of what nature is the knowledge or information it receives and transmit to our bodies that fails to understand the difference between perception and reality. Even, mobile industry body GSMA urged internet giants, content providers and social media platforms to "accelerate their efforts" to remove fake news linking the two – 5G and novel coronavirus.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: 5G suppresses our immune system.

FACT: There is no evidence that 5G is linked to, or causes coronavirus, or reduces immunity. This is termed as "the worst kind of fake news" or the worst of all the conspiracy theories by a top representative of the UK's National Health Services.



#CheckTheFake 17

Worry is not Muslim co-patient, but absence of cure to COVID-19

Fear and anxiety have manifested the fight of COVID-19 as central to communalism in India. The rising infodemic surrounding COVID-19 on different social media platforms has laid down a red carpet to islamophobia today. And this has found its staunch presence in Ahmedabad hospital in Gujarat on April 15, where coronavirus patients are segregated into two different wards based on religious identities.

The circulation and tolerance of calling Muslim population as the bearer of the novel coronavirus over the social media platforms has paid off. It has already done its work by drawing a line of religious differences and characterizing a particular community as the main sinner.

When patients in hospital become unsure of their security just not because of the absence of cure to COVID-19 yet, but because of the presence of co-patients belonging to a particular community, it is obvious from this that people begin to act upon the perception that is created.

The Gujarat Health & Family Welfare Department termed it as "absolutely baseless" further clarifying that "patients are kept in different wards based on their medical condition, severity of the symptoms and age, purely based on the advice of the treating doctors".

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: A video clip showing a group of people, mostly youth belonging to the Dawoodi Bohra community huddling around utensils and licking them, is being widely shared on social media claiming that Muslims are deliberately spreading Coronavirus in the country amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

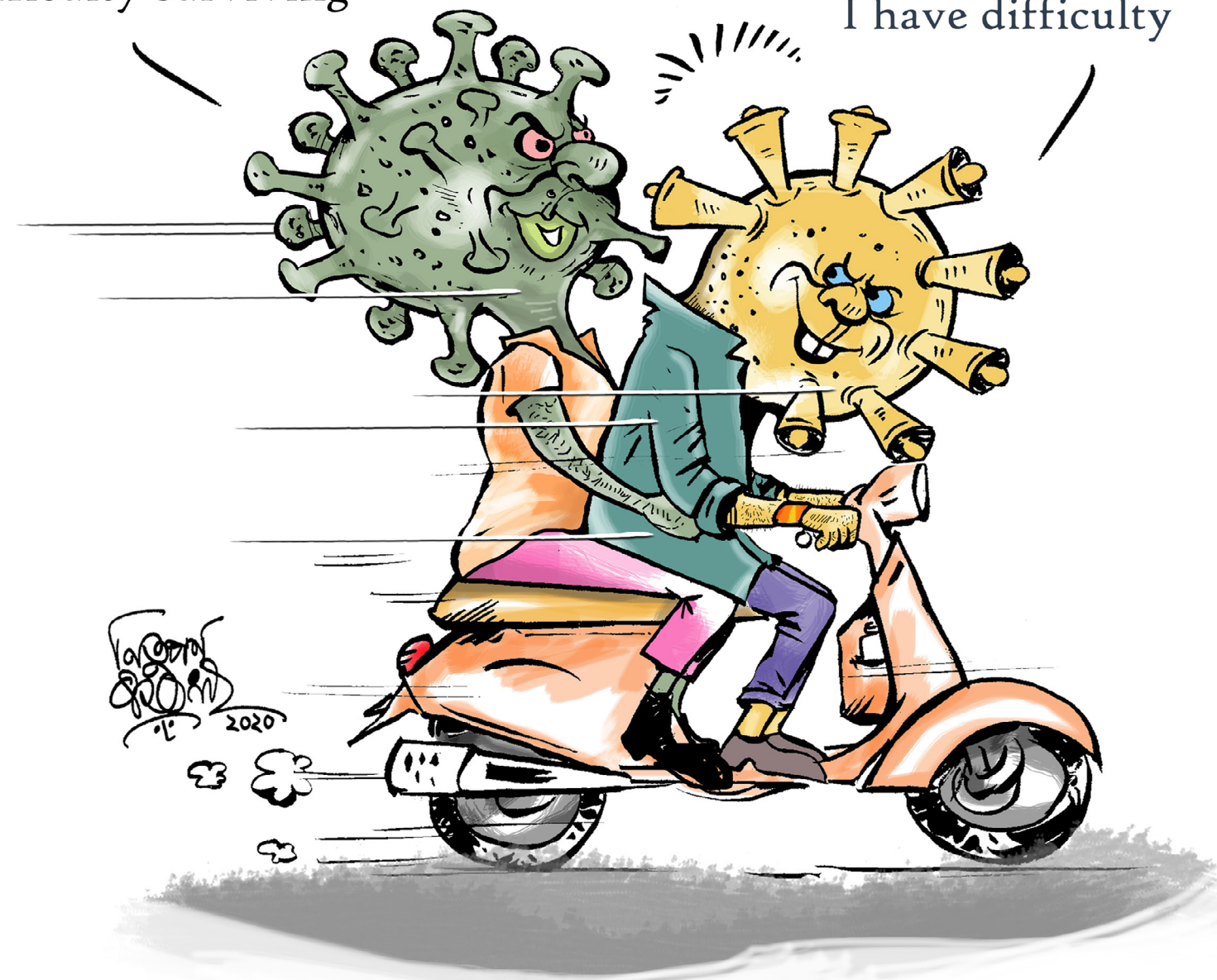
FACT: Although old, the video is real and being shared with the misleading claim. Searching Google with the keywords 'Muslim', 'Licking', 'Plates' and 'Saliva' revealed that the video dates long before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. According to the description of this video, the people in the video under the leadership of the Bohra chief priest Syedna Mufaddal were cleaning the big plate called Thal, so as not to waste food (The Logical Indian Fact Check website).



Don't hand shake: but cross-check the info

if people maintain
social distance I have
difficulty surviving

if people recheck news
before forwarding,
I have difficulty



What social distancing is to pandemic, cross-check is to infodemic. It is important to understand that cross-checking any news before its circulation can stop infodemic, similar to the ways that social distancing can contain the spread of COVID-19. Several instances of misleading information have led many to fall victim of infodemic over the last one week. The circulation of unsubstantiated medical chemicals as a cure for the novel coronavirus or false reports on resumption of transport services gathering people in stations and bus depots violating the lockdown have added fuel to the spread of misinformation. As the frontline warrior against fake information, various companies and organisations like Google, Google News Initiative, Facebook, Yahoo News, etc. have either invested on or themselves set up a fact-check points or agencies to cross check any facts before it is spread or circulated. But, huge investments like \$1 million by Facebook or \$6.5 million by Google to support fact checking and verification efforts by fact checkers and non-profit agencies do not matter at all till people in general do not start cross-checking an information by themselves from different sources. People must make the habit to cross-check their information at all times, to use every available source in their quest to learn more about the origin of the information. It is true that a number of fact-check organisations have risen; but at the same time, it cannot be denied of the fact that these agencies or fact checkers may not be independent. They may lead to the circulation of biased facts.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Consuming high-strength alcohol can kill the COVID-19 virus.

FACT: It does not. Consuming any alcohol poses health risks, but consuming high-strength ethyl alcohol (ethanol), particularly if it has been adulterated with methanol, can result in severe health consequences, including death (WHO).



Shortage of essential commodities, leads to panic buying

there will certainly
be no shortage of fake news!



There was never a shortage of salt in India; not even from the time of Chandragupta Maurya when heavy taxes were imposed on salt. Not even during the pre-independence period when a salt march was led as a protest against hefty tax imposed on salt by the British.

A fake rumour about shortage of salt in Assam has spread like wildfire amid the tensions of global health emergency caused by the pandemic. Before this false news cross the limits and cause heavy damage, Assam Police and other government organisations termed it as baseless and alert people not to believe on it.

Assam Police on April 18 made an official statement that there is no shortage of salt. It further stated that there is "more than enough stocks of all essentials, including salt are available".

There has always been a conspiracy to exclude people from their basic needs. And these conspiracies have been orchestrated by a series of misinformation. It is for this misinformation that even during pre-independence period, people were blind enough to accept that salt is truly precious but not possible to obtain its supply without any sacrifices.

The Assam Police appealed not to pay heed to such rumours.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: There is shortage of salt in Assam.

FACT: "Some mischievous elements are trying to spread rumours about the – 'Shortage of Salt' in Assam. This is Fake, Untrue & Baseless. There is NO SHORTAGE OF SALT. More than enough stocks of all essentials, including Salt are available. Citizens are requested not to pay heed to rumours" – tweeted Assam Police.



#CheckTheFake 20

Beach or Club, all are COVID-19 hub: Beware millennials!

I want more
young people infected

don't worry
I will people believe
Coronavirus only infects the old



A false rumour about the age-vulnerability to COVID-19 dispels fear regarding the Pandemic among the youths. Young people across the world ignore the affective impact of the novel coronavirus on all ages, compromising its spread. This section of population has easily become victim of infodemic that the virus affects the older age much. But this is not true. "Although older people are hardest hit, younger people are not spared," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference in April. "I have a message for young people: you are not invincible; this virus could put you in hospital for weeks or even kill you." The WHO has warned the younger population against complacency as most of the time people of these ages are ignoring the advice to practice social distancing.

A report titled Severe Outcomes Among Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 states, "Clinicians who care for adults should be aware that COVID-19 can result in severe disease among persons of all ages". Even reports from Italy and France are proving that young people from twenty to those in early forties are falling seriously ill of the pandemic; most of which require intensive care.

Available data from the website of Statista raises a serious concern that in Italy, the hardest hit country in Europe, almost a quarter of the nearly 28,000 coronavirus patients are between the ages of 19 and 50. Similar trends have been seen in the U.S. Among nearly 2,500 of the first coronavirus cases in the U.S., 705 were aged 20 to 44, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: COVID-19 attacks people of older ages; younger population must not worry.

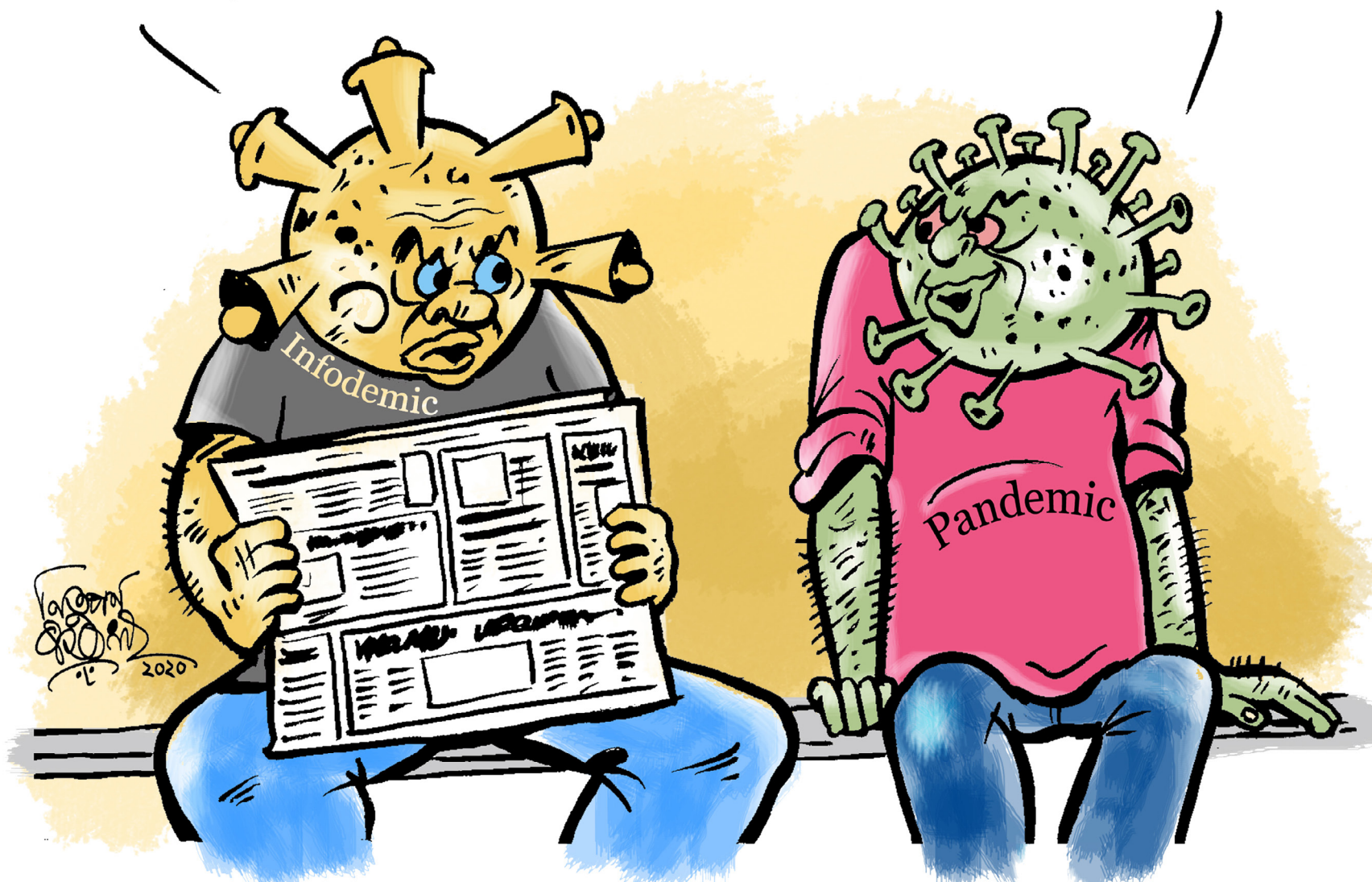
FACT: "The very notion that 'COVID-19 only affects older people' is factually wrong. As a colleague of mine recently said, "Young people are not invincible". 10% to 15% of people under 50 have moderate to severe infection. Severe cases of the disease have been seen in people in their teens or twenties, with many requiring intensive care and some unfortunately passing away. Age is not the only risk for severe disease", Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe in Copenhagen on April 2, 2020.



WHO confirms
newspaper are safe

newspaper dispel
all doubts, kills me.

So kill newspapers by telling
they are my carriers



Newspaper A carrier of information or virus?

People are still in a dilemma to decide whether to stop delivery of newspaper or not. A rumour about the spread of COVID-19 through newspaper spread like wildfire on social media for a couple of weeks bringing down the circulation of newspapers drastically.

Despite WHO categorically rejecting the rumour about newspaper as a carrier to COVID-19, the Maharashtra government on April 18 said door-to-door delivery of newspaper and magazines is prohibited as part of measures to contain the spread of the virus.

As reported in various news portal, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has clearly mentioned that any package received by persons – including newspaper delivery – does not infect the receiver or the delivery person.

But Iran's Coronavirus Combat Taskforce issued a decree in end March suspending all newspaper printing, delivery, and distribution, citing the need to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only this, even the authorities in Yemen, Oman, Jordan and Morocco have imposed similar bans on newspaper printing and distribution to contain the spread of novel coronavirus since March 17.

The International News Media Association (INMA) – a global body that promotes healthy news media practices came up with various scientific evidences trying to prove the rumour as false and fake.

It made a point that newsprint is extremely porous to carry the virus on its surface though porous surfaces carry the lowest potency for the shortest period of time

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Newspaper spreads coronavirus

FACT: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has clearly mentioned that any package received by persons – including newspaper delivery – does not infect the receiver or the delivery person (stated a website – Moneycontrol.com).



Fake news on pension cuts bewilders the elderly

Fake news on pension cut by 30 per cent created panic among people amidst this lockdown. The message about slashing the pension of government employees by 30 per cent and terminating the same for people older than the age of 80 on social media platforms has tensed the situation.

Not only social media, but some media outlets like 'Rediff' publishing articles with headline "Govt may slash pension to employees to by 30%" in the beginning of April has also encouraged such false claim.

Immediately after this, PIB FactCheck on April 9 bust the claim by saying that "Government may reduce employees' pension by 30 percent and terminate it for those above the age of 80, in the context of COVID-19, is FAKE".

Even the Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) has clarified in its communique issued later that there is no such proposal for reduction of pension and no action is contemplated by the government in this respect. Instead, the government is committed for the welfare and well-being of the pensioners.

The message spread like wildfire among the people after the Union Cabinet decided to reduce the salaries, allowances and pensions of MPs by 30 per cent for a year. The Union Cabinet has also approved the temporary suspension of the MPLAD funding from 2020-21 and 2021-22. However, pensions and allowances of MPs will remain unaffected, the government said.

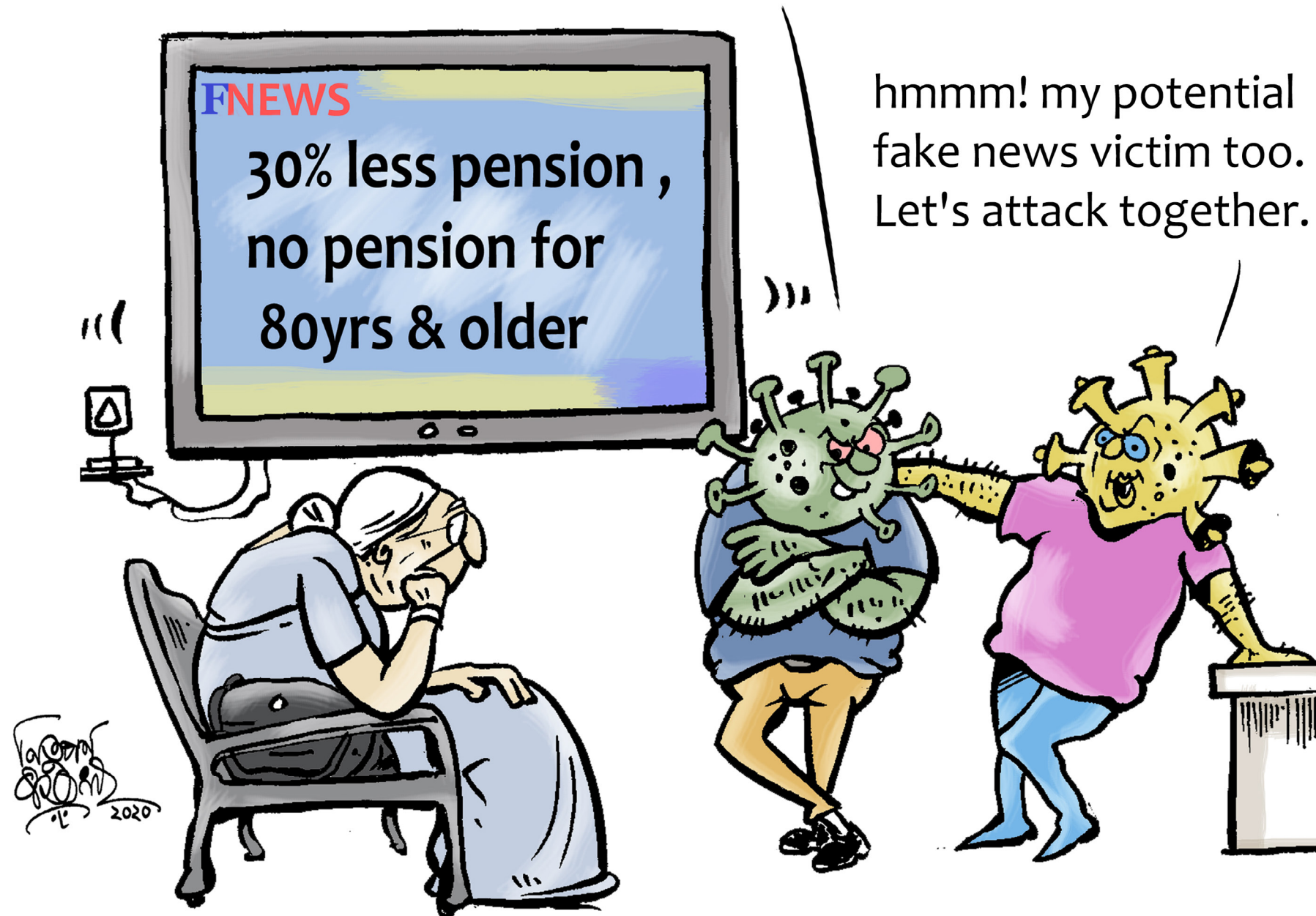
#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Government is going to slash pension of the employees by 30 per cent (a facebook user).

FACT: "It is being reported that a 20% cut in Central Government Pensions is being planned. This news is FALSE. There will be no cut in pension disbursements. It is clarified that salaries and pensions will not be affected by Government Cash Management instructions. @PIBFactCheck" – tweeted Ministry of Finance on April 19.

here comes a potential patient

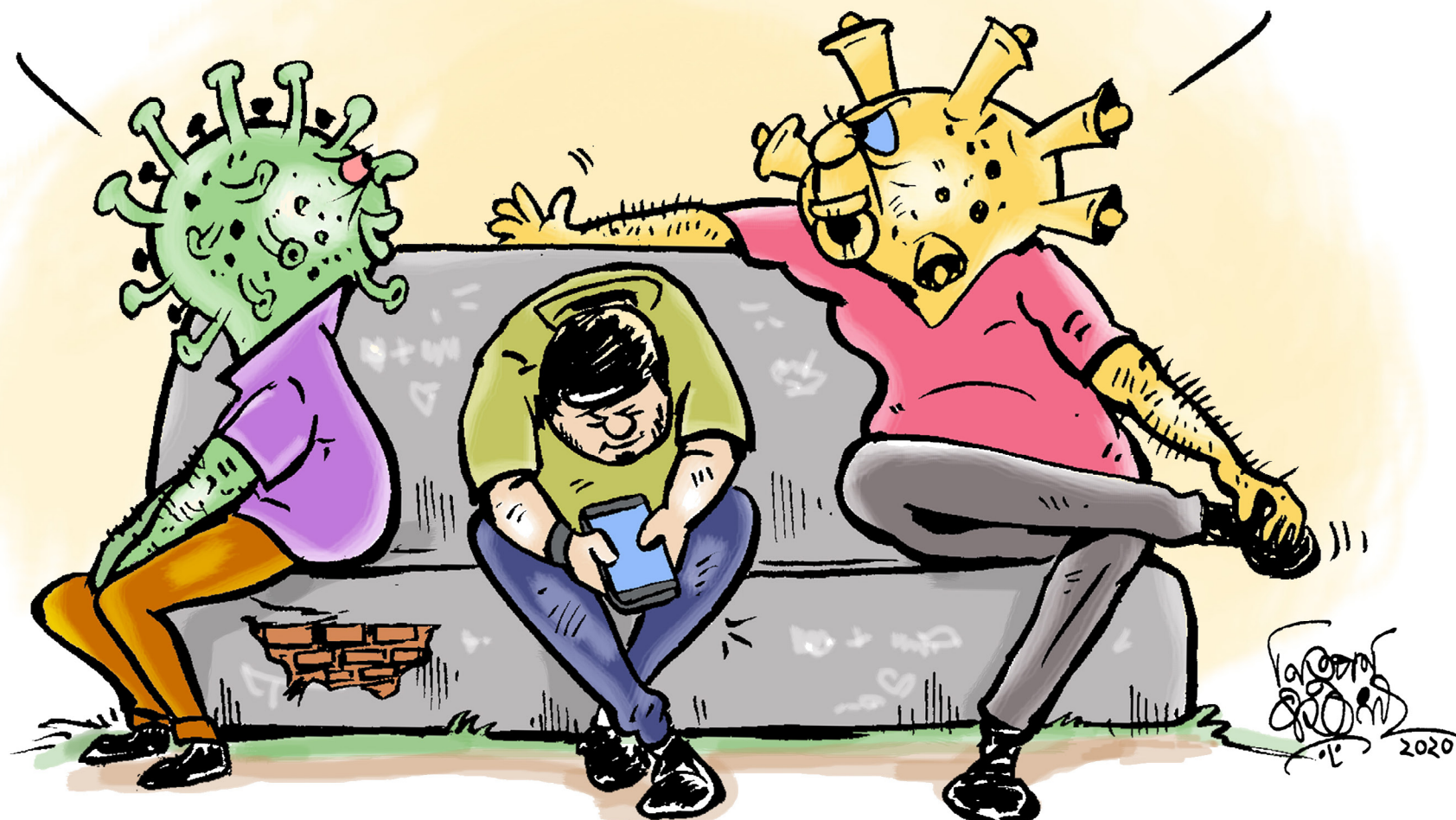
hmmm! my potential fake news victim too. Let's attack together.



Fake sharing can play with our compassion and sympathy

You know..people are tensed with me..because I spend their money

But I help Covidiot's to earn money by prayers, shares and what not....



Sharing information for the sake of one's intention to gain financial assistance has become a new normal with the rise of infodemic. It is simply because this rise of infodemic has now been a town-talk of collecting money by all false means.

As it has been seen that a fake Facebook post of a daughter crying prayer for her mother suffering from novel coronavirus attracted audiences in large numbers with sympathy and compassion. The post by one of the users has been shared for more than 73,000 times, which simply indicates how a continuation of false post can trap innocent mind and exploit them.

It is unfortunate that at a time when the cases of COVID-19 are increasing day by day, such fake posts create wildfire over social media platform leading to panic. India Today Anti Fake News War Room (AFWA) found the post to be misled as it is a collage of two photographs based on different context that dates back to pre-corona period.

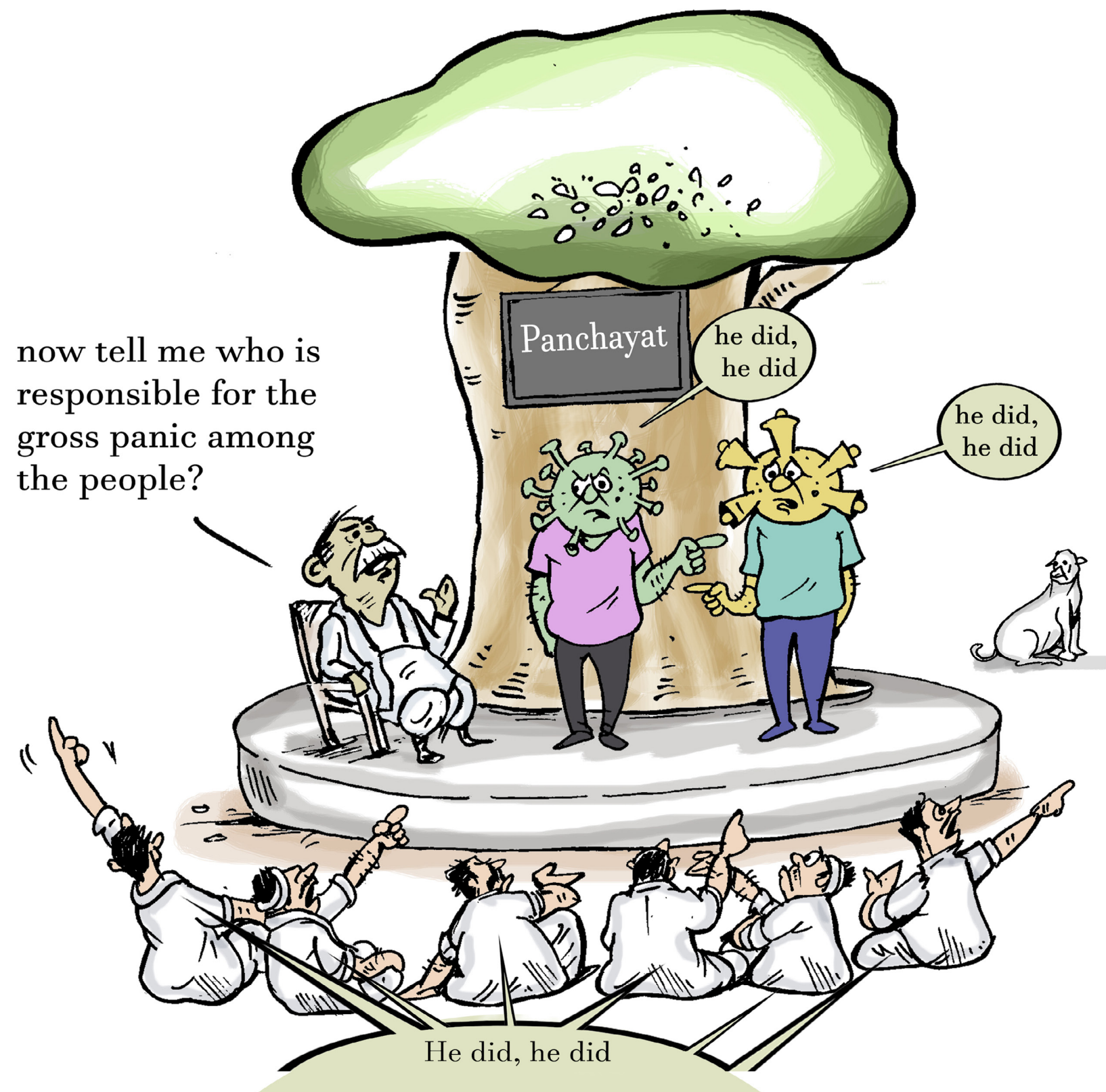
#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: The fake post reads, "Please help save my mum I don't want to lose her. Am not asking for money but prayer and single share. Oh, My Heavenly Father, deliver everyone who shares this prayer from any form of CORONAVIRUS and DEATH. Please share to at least 5 groups on Facebook so she can get more prayers. Thank you and God bless you." – a facebook user.

FACT: First of all, the image of woman is not a COVID-19 patient and the picture of the lady was published on several news website in 2015. Secondly, image of the child with tears in her eyes is available on the Internet since 2018 as a stock shot in several websites such as "Adobe Stock" and "Shutterstock" – India Today Anti Fake News War Room (AFWA).



Even Panchayat will not spare both pandemic and infodemic



On National Panchayati Raj Day, the conversation between Pandemic and Infodemic has been dealt. The seed of panchayat system in India as a symbol of good and grassroots governance, sown in post-independent India under the advocacy of Mahatma Gandhi. The most important part of this system is its decentralised power structure that serve justice in its true sense.

This context of judicious arrangement deeply rooted in Indian administrative system must be kept in highlight in the contemporary crisis situation. This is the time where people are unnecessarily involving themselves into a blame-game of pandemic vs infodemic.

There is no doubt that both the crisis has its own way of destruction; but important fact is that even on the platform of panchayat today, it will be difficult to assess the destructive nature of both the crisis.

Pandemic is itself spread by the people and among the people whereas they are equally responsible for the rise of infodemic too. The only difference lies in the medium through which both pandemic and infodemic spreads. COVID-19 spreads only through people, whereas infodemic is rapidly spread through social media platforms.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: COVID-19 doesn't affect children.

FACT: It is false. In Australia, COVID-19 has affected people under the age of 20 as much as people over 80 years old. Experts say that being in a young age group isn't entirely protective. Infants have higher rates of severe illness than older children.



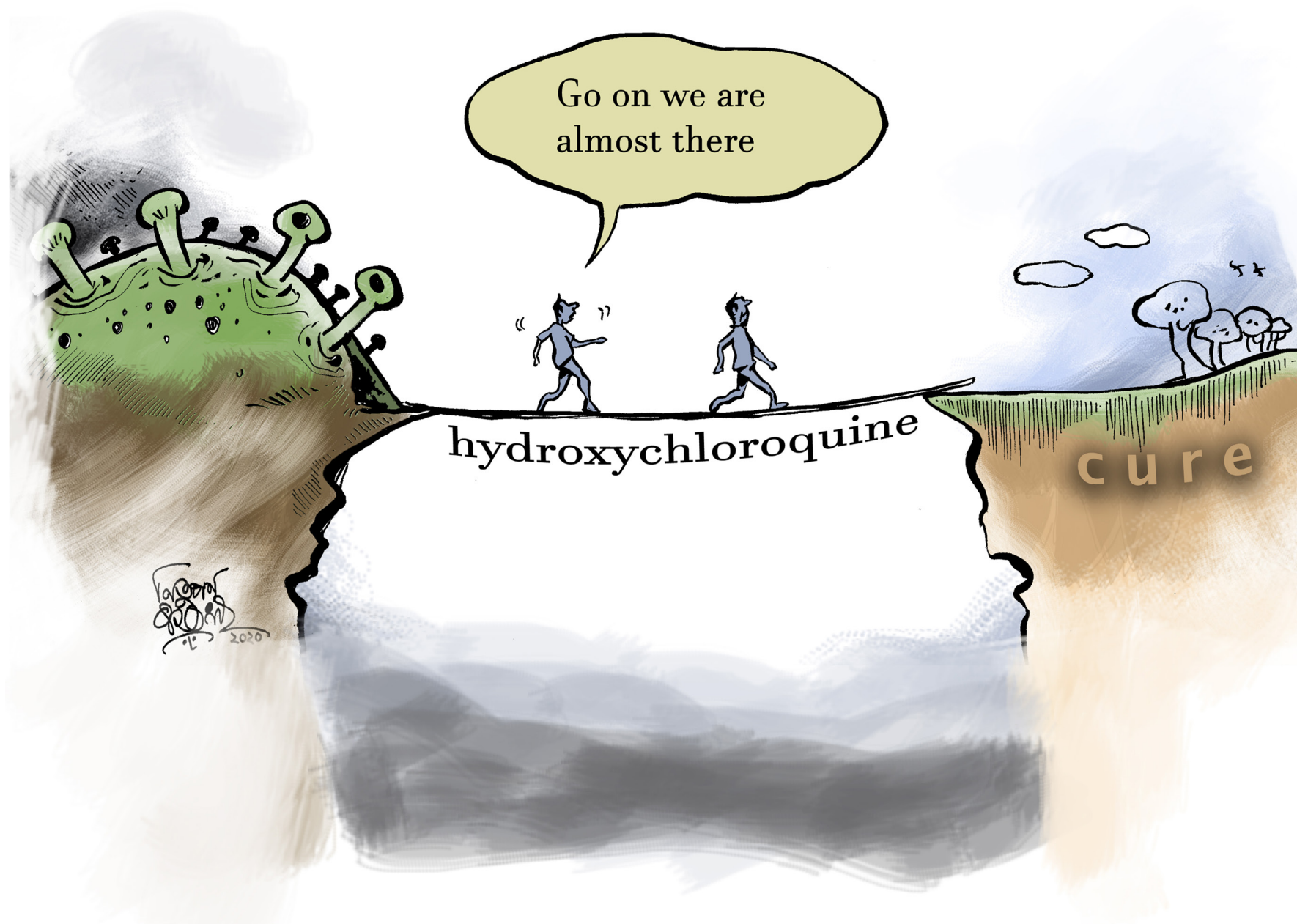
Use of HCQ for COVID-19 is a stale tale

Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) for COVID-19 control is unfortunately not an established fact. HCQ is a medication used for prevention and treatment of malaria, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and porphyria cutanea tarda. It was widely prescribed in 1980s as cases of malaria began to increase in India. The idea of using the tablet for novel coronavirus came from two small studies in China and France, and some anecdotes of successful treatments, including the case treated in Jaipur (where it was used in combination with Oseltamivir, Lopinavir 200 and Ritonavir). But it was not sufficient, more testing was required before the approval from the government. Even WHO, has not approved the use of either chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 treatment or prevention. Even the ICMR released a statement on March 23 recommending use of the antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine as a preventive medicine for those who face a high risk of coronavirus infection. It specified its use for only two high risk categories of COVID-19 – which later on recommended chemoprophylaxis with hydroxychloroquine (400 mg twice on day 1, then 400 mg once a week thereafter) for asymptomatic health-care workers treating patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, and for asymptomatic household contacts of confirmed cases. Since India deals in one of the highest production spots for hydroxychloroquine, the expected lines between the clinical debates in search of an antidote to the pandemic earns HCQ a little space of recognition for some time across the globe. India accelerated its own production and immediately helped altogether 13 countries across the world by supplying the tablet on first come first serve basis. There are still studies going on the impact of the drugs on Covid19.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) is recommended for treatment of COVID-19.

FACT: WHO has not recommended any antidote or antibiotics for containing the spread of COVID-19 yet. Research is still going on.

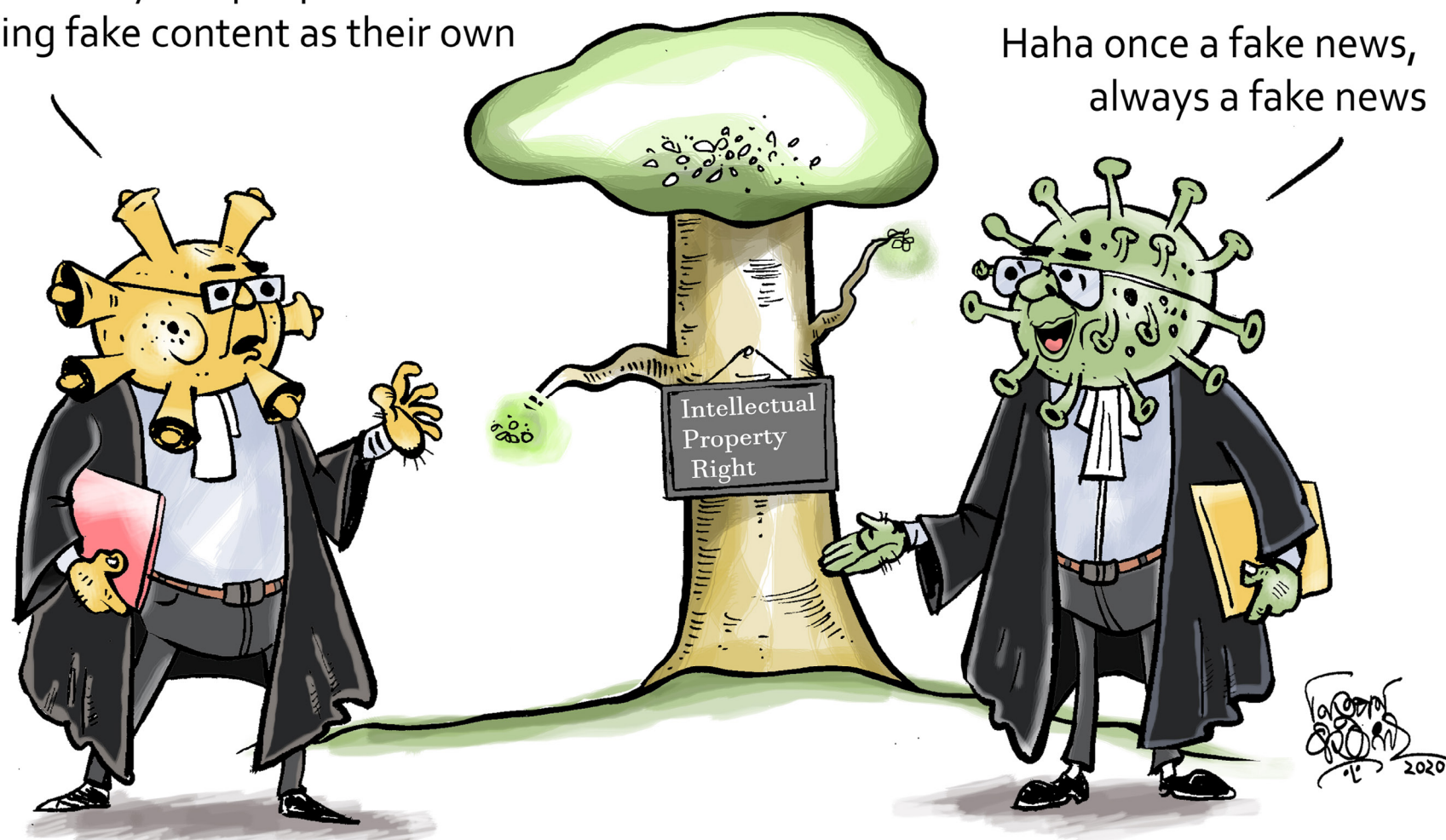


Hydroxychloroquine is not a
proved cure for Covid-19



IPR for Fake news lies at Infodemic, which is a non-answerable entity

I can actually sue people for
passing fake content as their own



It's vain to claim the intellectual property right (IPR) on fake news by individuals because it is a collective task.

The root of fake news is difficult to find out and more difficult than that is to find its creator or the owner. So, one cannot be held responsible immediately for the spread of such fake news or rumor. It requires a large amount of research and fact check to attain at reality.

This is about the consumption of large period of time to assess the intellectual property right of this fake news. It is more interesting to find out that no one can even sue a case against those who tries to infringe the IPR of a particular fake news. In fact, the publisher of fake news and other online content, whosoever he/she may be, should also be aware of the risks associated with the unauthorized use of third-party intellectual property. Because, the problem for them is using third-party names, logos and other identifiers in a way that may confuse consumers as to the origin or sponsorship of products or services. Therefore, they must be cautious of publishing these fake contents.

The creator or owner of fake news who are mostly untraceable may fall victim of this infringement of IPR mostly for their use of third-party brands for product endorsement or promotional purposes.

People in general therefore have the tendency to own the fake news and confidently spread it without any fear of legal action against them; though sharing of fake news or rumor by anyone is a punishable offense.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Mosquitoes can spread coronavirus.

FACT: "To date there has been no information nor evidence to suggest that the new coronavirus could be transmitted by mosquitoes. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales" – WHO.



Uncertainty prevails over the cause of COVID-19

Humans are good at blame game.
They blame me for spreading lies too..



The uncertainty about the cause of novel coronavirus tends to the spread of lies over the social media platform. It is a debatable issue that the outbreak of Covid-19 is caused either by man-made or natural reasons. Earlier, a news was viral that the virus was spread from a defunct refrigerator of a laboratory in Wuhan province of China. While on the other hand, it was also believed that the deadly virus transmitted from animal like bats, pangolins, etc. Despite all these debates making round the social media platform, the WHO hasn't yet revealed any particular answer to solve this uncertainty.

According to the WHO, research is still going on the cause of this virus by world scientists. Therefore, making a guess over the cause of the virus leading to zoonotic or nature is all about prediction. This prediction is actually a lie.

Whatever is spread, it is done on the basis of blame-game that people indulge into actively. This is about spreading lie and nothing else.

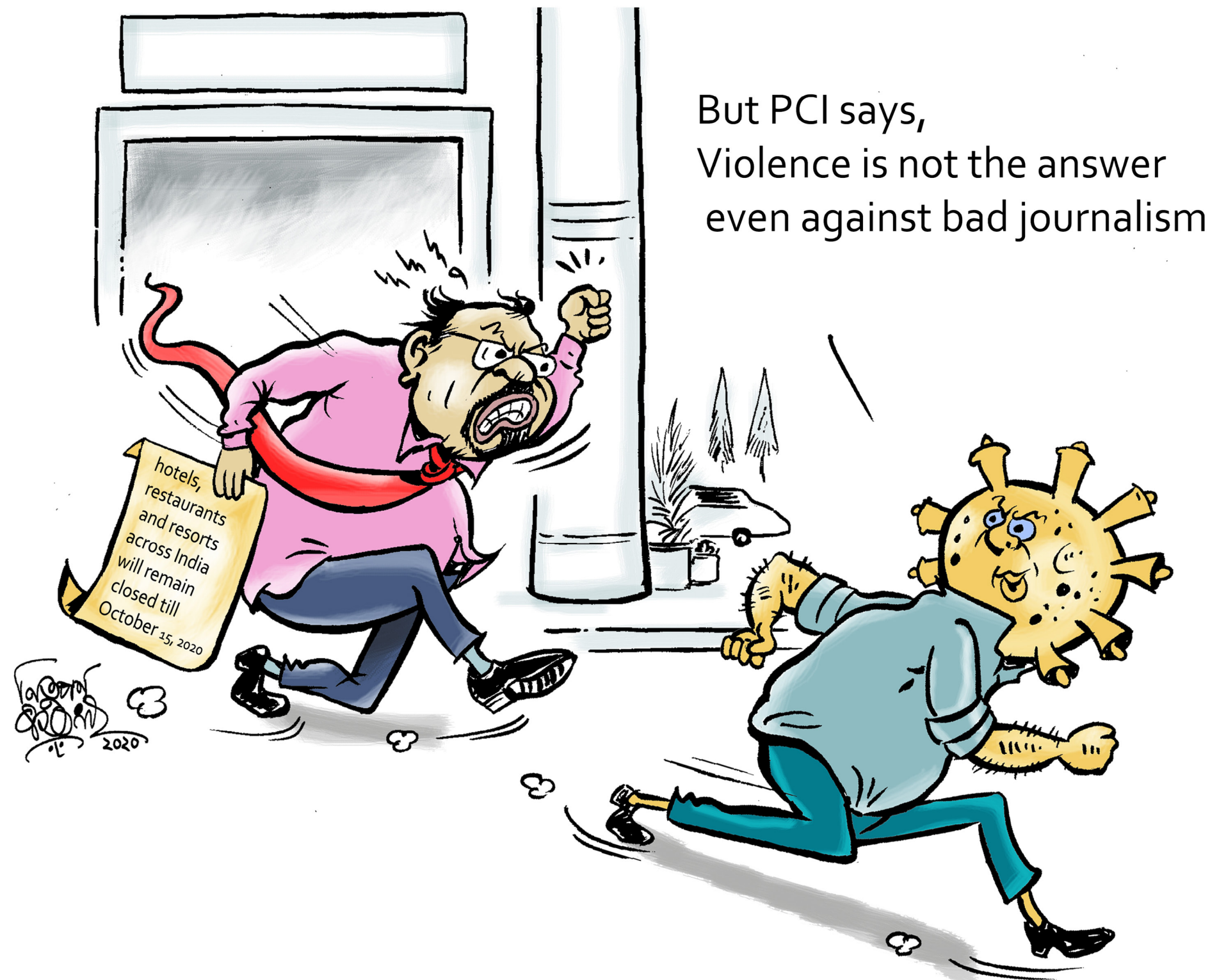
#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Coronavirus spread from bats.

FACT: To raise awareness, 64 chiropterologists (those who study bats) from six South Asian countries have released a document clarifying myths about bats and strongly affirming that bats do not spread COVID-19. They also clarify that the bat coronaviruses (BtCoV) found in two species of Indian bats (in a recent Indian Council of Medical Research study) are not the same as SARS-CoV-2 and cannot cause COVID-19 (The Hindu).



Do fake news and bad journalism sail on the same boat?



Fake news appeared as a notice that hotels would remain closed till October 15, 2020. The fake news was produced for multiple sharing over the social media platform.

This entire design was backed by individuals of some dedicated institutions or organizations making it difficult to distinguish between fake news and bad journalism.

Most hotels have been turned into quarantine centres for COVID contacts which is possible also owing to the fact that the hospitality sector has witnessed a major footfall in tourists and guests in hotels. Also, strict social distancing measures has given a major blow to the hotel industry. In the wake of all this, when false notices do the rounds in social media it consecutively jeopardises the hotel industry's designs of starting business again. Also, many media houses make stories based out of speculation based on no facts or rationality. This is the reason why fake news has been likened to bad journalism to a large extent.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

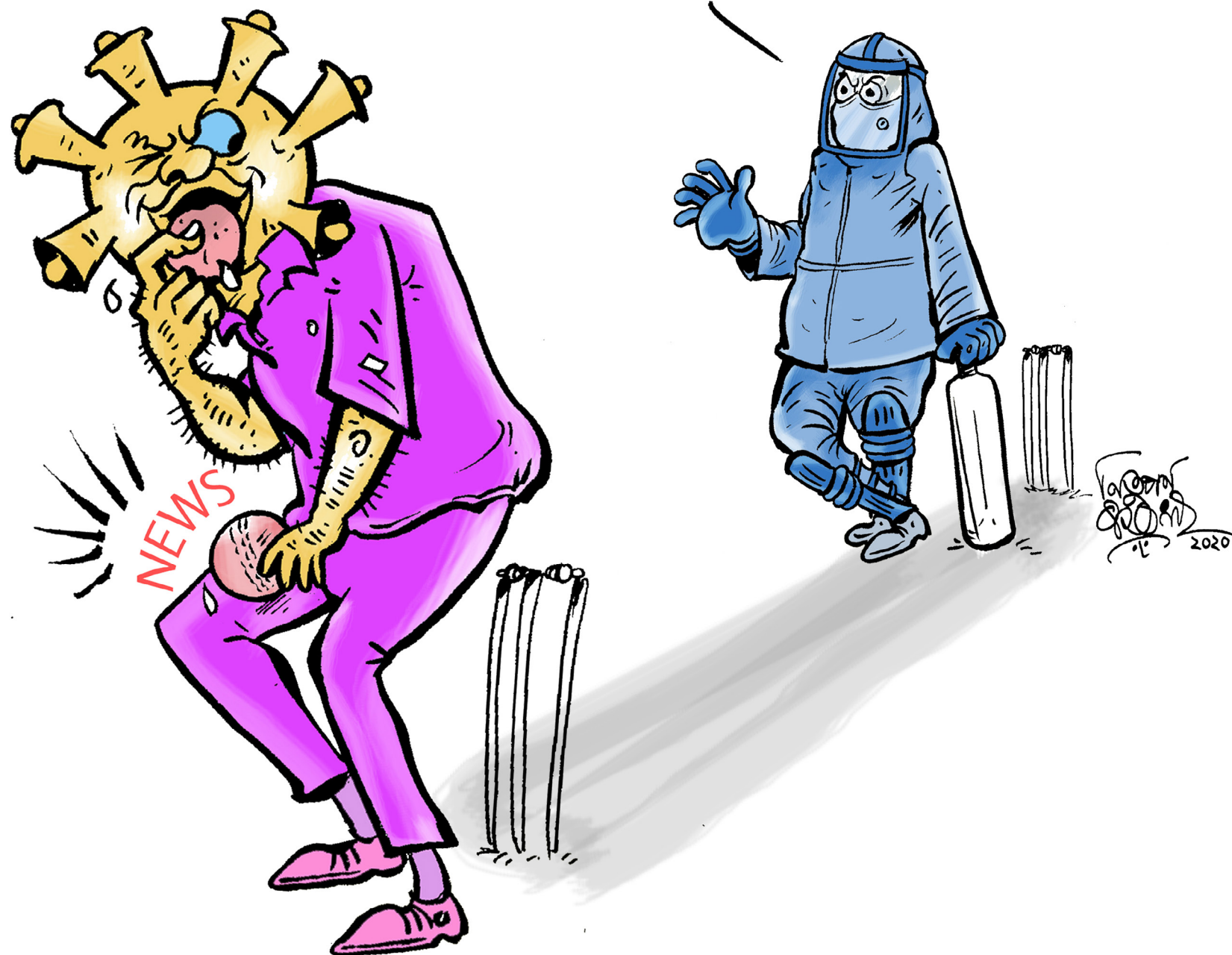
FAKE: The Tourism Ministry has asked restaurants and hotels to remain closed till October 15.

FACT: Reports claiming that hotels & restaurants will remain closed till Oct 15 owing to COVID-19 outbreak are wrong. The order circulating in social media in this regard is FAKE and has not been issued by the Tourism Ministry. Govt has termed these reports as FAKE – tweeted Prasanna Bharati News Services (@PBNS_India) April 8, 2020.



WHO risks the control of both infodemic and pandemic

I can't handle fake news and health hazard together.
The empire is named as WHO



It has become a quite difficult task for WHO to control both the rise of infodemic and pandemic at the same time. The consequences of both the problem can't be compromised; if pandemic poses a serious threat to global health, the infodemic hijacks the flow of information.

The problem emerges out of such crisis period that infodemic cannot be denied for the sake of pandemic or the vice versa. Things become complicated when both issues emerge as an embedded form.

Due to the high demand for timely and trustworthy information about 2019-nCoV, WHO technical risk communication and social media teams have been working closely to track and respond to myths and rumours.

Through its headquarters are in Geneva, its six regional offices and its partners, the Organisation is working 24 hours a day to identify the most prevalent rumours that can potentially harm the public's health, such as false prevention measures or cures. These myths are then refuted with evidence-based information.

Such networks are the need of hour as for a parent and global health organisation like WHO, it is not always possible to trace both the problem of infodemic and pandemic at the same time until and unless each country across the globe communicate the fact-based information with all other countries and importantly with WHO.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: A private Telugu TV channel has scrolled a news item that 32-year-old Ms. Elisa Granato, the first person to take part in Oxford's coronavirus trial is dead. The same is being shared widely on the social media platforms.

FACT: "She is very much alive". The BBC's medical correspondent Fergus Walsh wrote on Twitter that he had spoken to Dr Granato over Skype and even shared a video of Dr Granato saying that she was "very much alive" and "having a cup of tea". The UK's Department of Health and Social Care has also said that the story is "completely untrue".



Pandemic may end, but impression of Infodemic will last forever

While health officials are fighting day in and out trying to bring the pandemic in control, fake news targeting them as potential carriers have led many people into ill-treating these fighters.

Everyday there are stories which report how these front-line health warriors are ill treated or met with violence when in duty. Despite the government enforcing strict laws for their protection, the cases against them are still there. Most of these front-line warriors are disproportionate to the number of affected people yet the challenges they face are innumerable.

While the Pandemic has led to a lasting impact on the health sector, the Infodemic has bruised the moral fibre of the people as a whole. Some fabricated stories on the health system demotivate the fight against this virus to a large extent.

Nevertheless, it is only time that can explain whether the effect of pandemic or infodemic will linger the most.

#CheckTheFake on #COVID-19

FAKE: Congress leader Udit Raj had tweeted a screenshot of a tweet on Sunday, which claimed that the Union government granted the tender for coronavirus testing kits to a Gujarat-based company at the price of ₹ 4500 per kit when the same was being offered to it by 17 other companies at the price of ₹ 500

FACT: "This is Fake News. Price range approved by ICMR is ₹ 740-1150 for RT-PCR and ₹ 528-795 for Rapid Test. No test has been procured at ₹ 4500. Any Indian company wanting to supply at lower rates is welcome to contact ICMR or Ms Anu Nagar, JS Health Research" ICMR tweeted.



How to sanitise #fakenews?

Study says fake story can reach
1500 people six times faster **than a true story**

#CheckTheFake on #COVID19

Get your facts checked before the Fake story
checkmate you

- Discard unquoted stories
 - Disbelief non-official stories
 - Discourage #fakenews forward..
 - Dismiss photos without verifying
 - Develop critical thinking
-
- Curtail excessive news content
 - Contact near and dear ones
 - Contain fear and anxiety, nothing is permanent
 - Create new projects, new hobbies
 - Curb fake news Infodemics

acknowledgement

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glimpses in media



The Indian EXPRESS

Infodemic and Pandemic join hands to take on COVID-19 fake news in Assam

Part of 'Check the Fake' initiative, a comic strip from Assam spells out the dangers of fake news spreading during the pandemic.



Every minute millions of fakenews are forwarded in the world

By Anamika Ray

GUWAHATI: They are what one might call antisocial elements — up to no good apart, but together they are a lethal combination. Most infodemic and pandemic, the protagonists of a new comic strip in Assam, which aims to curb the 'sea of misinformation' that is spreading in tandem with the novel coronavirus.

"We need to sanitise not just our hands, but our minds, too," said Ankuran Dutta, founder of Anamika Ray Memorial Trust (ARMT), the non-profit educational and research organisation, behind the cartoon. At the end of March, Dutta and a few others initiated the 'Check The Fake' movement to fight the infodemic, or the pandemic of incorrect information during COVID-19.

"We are not fact-checkers," explains Dutta, currently the head of the Mass Communication Department at Gauhati University. "But through these cartoons, we are trying to raise awareness about fake news."

The ARMT team has tied up with local newspapers and news portals to publish several strips to keep the check the spread of fake news during the pandemic. "We have a lot of fake news on the internet," says Dutta. "The latter is the danger of the former. We are trying to raise awareness about fake news."

NDTV

"Pandemic, Infodemic": 2 Cartoon Characters Battling Fake News In

The Anamika Ray Memorial Trust, a non-profit dedicated towards media and communication research, has produced a month-long series of cartoon strips that dismiss several misinformation campaigns.

📍 All India 📝 Written by Ratnadi Choudhury

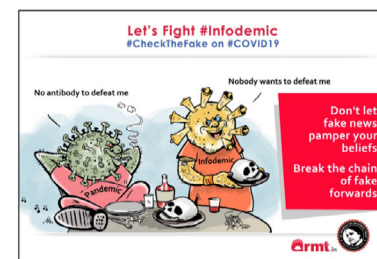
🕒 Updated : May 03, 2020 01:16 am IST



DH DECCAN HERALD

COVID-19: Pandemic and Infodemic jostle to push f fake news in Assam

Sumit Karmakar, DINES, Guwahati, MAY 04 2020, 20:10:15 | UPDATED: MAY 04 2020, 21:05:17



One is full of patience and confidence while the other is witty, smart and stubborn on its target and the combination of the two has already wreaked havoc across the world.

Follow latest updates on the COVID-19 pandemic [here](#)

Most Pandemic and Infodemic, two protagonists in a recently launched cartoon campaign in Assam, representing COVID-19 and fake news and trying to spread facts over fake news. "Who spread faster, you or me?" asks Pandemic in one of the cartoon strips. "Of course me," replies Infodemic, as both are seen in a race. The message in the strip says the coronavirus spread to 15 lakhs in four months, while fake news regarding it spreads to millions in no time.

Pandemic tries to counter the spread of fake news.

AMERICAN CENTER

US Consulate Kolkata @USAndKolkata · 14h
Replying to @USAndKolkata
Dr. Ankuran Dutta is creating videos and infographics and working with police, young leaders, students and journalists to combat misinformation during the #Coronavirus lockdown in #Northeast #India. Great job! #FacesofExchange



Ankuran Dutta @ankurandutta · 13h
Replying to @USAndKolkata @StateDept and 6 others
Thanks a lot for acknowledging our effort to combat #infodemic #fakenews during this #Covid_19 pandemic crisis



MentorTalks

Got 15 minutes? Join us on #MentorTalks and you've got a mentor!
MentorTalks is a new, interactive event that puts exchange program alumni in touch with extraordinary mentors on a wide variety of topics. The series runs on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. You get a chance to learn a little about each mentor and their career, and then ask them questions on their topic, all in 15 minutes.



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ALUMNI



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Fighting Pandemic Misinformation

Exchange Alumni Michelle Cuda Lipa of the National Association for Media Literacy and Dr. Ankuran Dutta of Gauhati University joined us on May 20, 2020 to talk about how you can prevent the spread of harmful rumors.

As the world fights the Covid-19 pandemic, it's also battling rumors and misinformation about the virus that may lead the public to believe and even take harmful actions. Exchange alumni Michelle Cuda Lipa of the National Association for Media Literacy and Dr. Ankuran Dutta of Gauhati University joined us on May 20, 2020 to talk about how you can prevent the spread of harmful rumors.

Come listen, ask questions, and share your own experiences. Dr. Cuda Lipa also participated in the 50th program, and shared her own experiences as well as our family, verify your sources of information, and be more media literate. They also answered several questions from the audience. Watch the video and learn how you can fight pandemic misinformation!

Speakers: Michelle Cuda Lipa, Dr. Ankuran Dutta

Wednesday, May 20, 12PM EDT

The Assam Tribune

Cartoon characters tear fake news to shreds

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 1: In the time of medical emergency, fake news becomes an obnoxious traitor for the common people, misleading the public by giving a devious spin to truth.

In today's digital world, especially, it's really a challenge for the government machinery to stop the spread of fake news. Yet, a section of conscious people have been trying their best to foil the deliberate attempts of the enemies of society at spreading lies without any scruple whatsoever.

Recently, Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust, a registered educational and charitable nonprofit organisation, carried out a monthlong campaign 'CheckTheFake on COVID-19' to make people aware about fake news amid the prevailing situation. The Assam Tribune played a crucial part in this unique campaign against falsehood.

As part of this campaign, the Trust developed two cartoon characters — Infodemic and Pandemic — and through a witty dialogue between them, rendered various fake information useless.

Explaining about the campaign, managing trustee of the organisation Dr. Ankuran Dutta said, "During the lockdown, we initiated the campaign against fake news or information disorder including misinformation, disinformation and mal-information."

Talking about the two cartoon characters, he said 'Pandemic' was shown to be the COVID-19 virus itself which is confident of destroying the human race. 'Infodemic' is a character who spreads fake news and misinformation.

The Sentinel
of this land, for its people

Let's fight 'Infodemic'

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to highlight the message on fake news providing through the

Let's Fight #Infodemic #CheckTheFake on #COVID19

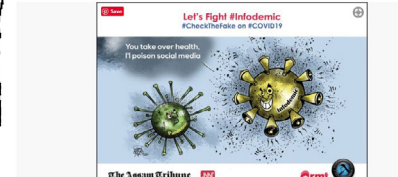


By Santosh Singh Deka · 19 May 2020 12:15 PM

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to highlight the message on fake news providing through the cartoons 'Check The Fake on COVID-19'. The movement was mainly based on two characters — Pandemic and Infodemic and their conversations providing different information on fake news in one conversation. The one-month campaign was launched by non-profit educational and research organisation Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust has #CheckTheFake to combat this infodemic through sanitising the minds of people. mentioned about it by Ankuran Dutta, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Communication and Journalism, Gauhati University in his interview. It is a very commendable step taken to spread the information about the effects of fake news among the common people. Lots of rumours are circulating on COVID-19 after receiving them the common people are panicking. During this crisis period, giving the messages through cartoons is a very good initiative. It was published continuously from April 1, the first one where corona talked about celebrating April fool, while Infodemic talked about making fool society everyday by fake news. Then it also talked about poisoning the social media, about while spreading the virus it doesn't look for any religion and sharing millions of fake news in the world. The cartoons of #Check The Fake on #COVID-19 also asked to encourage the frontline workers and to discourage the fake news. To because the superstitious will only demotivate them. On May 19, cartoon series on a check the fake came to an end with its last cartoon highlighting the importance of checking the fake news. It is going to end. Because, this pandemic is going to end.

dailyhunt

#CheckTheFake: Filtering #fakenews on social media, a huge challenge amid Global Public Health Emergency



The rise of infodemic on #COVID19 over the social media platforms at the time of Global Public Health Emergency has taken the world by surprise.

The WHO is worried with the rising infodemics. Even Government of India recently issued directives to the social media platforms to impede the misinformation dissemination on #COVID19.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Indian media — print, television and digital to publish only the official government version of news on COVID-19.

Now, the onus is on the social media companies to deal with this infodemics in a more sophisticated manner.

Facebook has now asked its task force to rate #COVID19 related content — true or false. And in case any post is rated false or fake, Facebook's AI tools would 'limit its visibility' and notify the publisher.

The Instagram decided to provide information in eight Indian languages from local authorities to fight misinformation or #fakenews.

It has also banned ads of face masks or any businesses looking to cash in on the coronavirus keyword.

The Instagram assigned ad credits to different government departments, to help them promote accurate information and reduce the spread of fake news.

TikTok, the most popular short video app, has also taken steps to limit the spread of fake news.

Break the Fake Toons

A campaign against Infodemic

#CheckTheFake on #COVID19



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