



**ROB EDWARDS TO MAKE
DIRECTORIAL DEBUT WITH
ANIMATED FILM 'SNEAKS'**
pg 08

LET'S NOT LITTER
pg 04

**KAJAL AGGARWAL TO TEAM
UP WITH SUJOY GHOSH FOR
SLICE-OF-LIFE FILM 'UMA'**
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | RS. 5

Test Positivity Rate drops to 8.85%

SIKKIM SETS NEW RECORD ON NUMBER OF COVID TESTS CONDUCTED IN A DAY

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 04 JUN:**

The State Government's focus on ramping up testing was proven today with the official daily report on the Covid situation reporting that a staggering 3,986 samples, the highest number thus far, were screened for Novel Coronavirus in the 24 hours ending 8AM Friday.

Much as this energy helps detect cases early even in asymptomatic people, it also brings relief even if the overall number is high. This record number of testing, for instance, returned 353 positive cases, but when put in perspective, this gives the State a Test Positive Rate of 8.85%, a substantial drop from the above 30% TPR Sikkim was recording just last week.

This drop in TPR, however, comes tempered with information that Covid-deaths continue to hit families here and over the same 24 hour period,

three more Covid patients succumbed to the virus. The State has now lost 266 lives to Covid. While one of new deaths was reported from STNM Hospital, two Covid patients breathed their last at Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

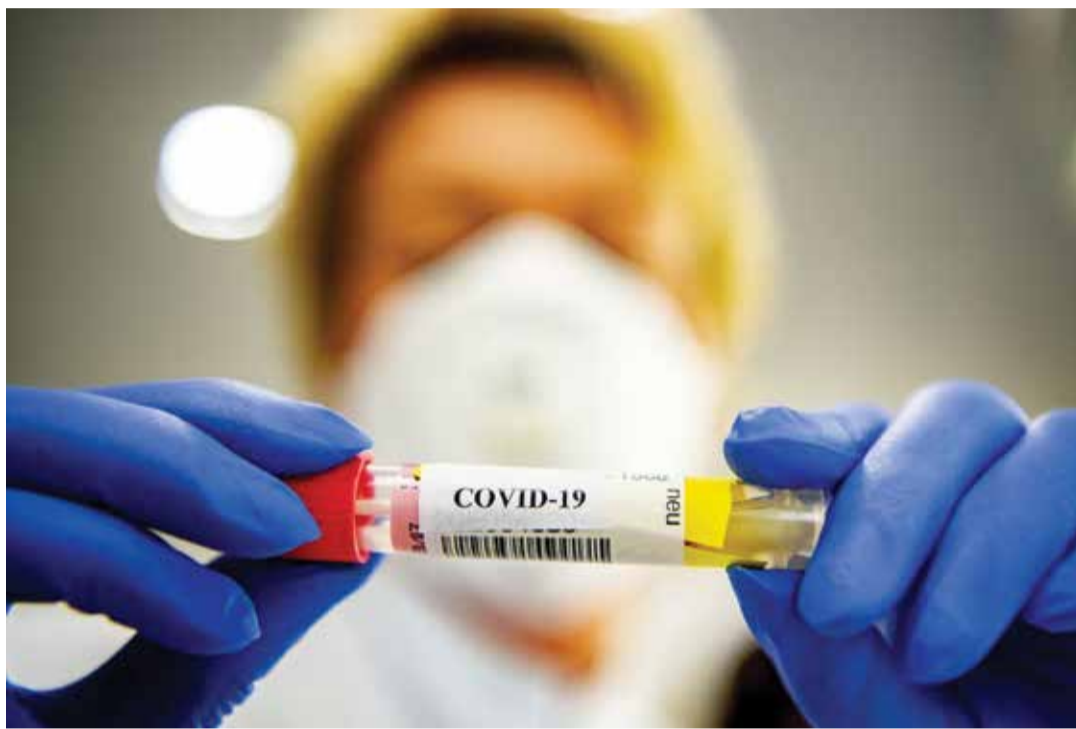
Meanwhile, Sikkim tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has reached 16,518.

Sikkim's count of recovered cases has also further improved to 11,766 and the discharge of 262 more people from home isolation after they made full recoveries.

There are currently 4,250 active case of Covid in the State, of whom 4,209 are in facility or home isolation, suggesting that do not have symptoms severe enough to require hospitalisation.

At present, there 214 Covid patients admitted in hospitals, 28 of whom are in ICU.

Against the more than 350 new cases, only 19 more peo-



ple were admitted to hospital even as 17 Covid patients were discharged from hospitals and into home isolation after their symptoms responded to medical intervention.

Out of the 353 new infections, 177 were registered in East District, 104 in West District, 65 in South District and seven in North District. 148 of the new cases were detected in

RT-PCR testing of 843 samples, while 204 persons were found positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 3,142 samples and one more case was picked up in TruNat testing.

Indrahang and Yuksam MLA visit health centres, check on recovering health workers



**PRITAM LAMA
GYALSHING, 04 JUN:**

Sikkim's Lok Sabha MP, Indrahang Subba, accompanied by area MLA Sangay Lepcha visited health centres at Yuksam-Tashiding constituency in West Sikkim today, interacted with the staff and assessed and reviewed the COVID-19 situation in the area.

The MP and MLA visited Yuksam Primary Health Centre and Tashiding PHC today. The Yuksam PHC, it may be recalled, has been contained after all 13 personnel posted there - the Medical Officer In-charge, three dental surgeons, two nurses and other healthcare

workers - tested positive for Covid recently.

Mr Subba and Mr Lepcha called on the 13 frontline workers currently under home isolation and the MP handed over books and provisions to them while checking on how they were faring.

"They are working for us during this critical time without fearing for their own lives. It is our duty to thank them and express gratitude," the MP underlined.

While in Yuksam, they also visited the temporary Out Patient Department being run from the Panchayat Bhawan and checked on the healthworkers deputed there.

The MLA assured continued support for the frontline workers in combating the pandemic and invited them to highlight their requirements for timely redressal.

Later, the MP met with the "Yuksam COVID Warriors Team", a group formed by Panchayats, local NGOs and civil society members in the area and congratulated and thanked them for their initiative.

He also assured that the State Government was working tirelessly to contain the pandemic and highlighted that support and involvement of the civil society was crucial for success.

1 year of new Farm Laws: Farmers to protest outside BJP lawmakers' homes Saturday

GHAZIABAD, 04 JUN [PTI]: Farmers protesting against the new farm laws will hold demonstrations outside the residences of BJP lawmakers across the country on Saturday, a Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) officebearer said on Friday.

The protest outside the residences of BJP MPs and MLAs is to mark the one year of the promulgation of these laws as ordinances by the Centre, the official said.

"The protesters would burn the copies of the legislation outside the residence of BJP MPs and MLAs across the country as a symbolic protest against the Centre," BKU media in-charge Dharmendra Malik told PTI.

"In districts where there is no BJP MP or MLA, the protest would take place outside the district magistrate's office," he added.

The decision for the June 5 protest was taken during a recent meeting of leaders of the farmers' associations and unions which have been camping on Delhi borders since November 2020.

Hundreds of farmers are encamped at Delhi's borders demanding that the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 be rolled back and a new law made to guarantee minimum support price for crops.

However, the government, which has held multiple rounds of formal dialogue with the protestors, has maintained that the laws are pro-farmer.

Someone from Russia found vaccine maker in Himachal, Centre failed: High Court

NEW DELHI, 04 JUN [NDTV]: The Delhi High Court today expressed anguish over the way things have transpired in the second wave of COVID-19 where vaccine shortage is hitting everyone even when the Central government says the best way to fight the pandemic is to vaccinate the entire population.

The high court was deliberating with the issue related to manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V by India's Panacea Biotec in

collaboration with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF).

The high court directed the Centre to release arbitral award of over ₹ 14 crore along with interest from 2012 to Panacea Biotec for manufacturing Sputnik V vaccine in India subject to the condition that the company obtains permission from the government to manufacture the vaccine.

A bench of Justices Manmohan and Najmi Waziri said the release of the amount, awarded

to the company by the arbitral tribunal, will also be subject to the undertaking of the firm that 20 per cent of its sale proceeds of Sputnik V will be deposited with the court's registry till the awarded amount is secured.

"Today, we are a bit anguished with the way things have transpired during the second wave. As a responsible citizen, you also would be anguished. Vaccine shortage is hitting each and everyone. Even today vaccine is not available

in Delhi. You have good products in India, a little handholding will work," the bench said.

It added that "Someone from Russia was able to locate infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh but the Centre has failed to do so."

The high court's order came on a plea of Delhi-based Panacea Biotec seeking to modify a July 2020 order, by which the firm had undertaken not to prosecute further the execution proceedings instituted by them in rela-

tion to an arbitral award, running into crores of rupees, passed in its favour and against the Centre.

The company, in its fresh application, sought release of the arbitral award saying it needs funds at the earliest in the larger interest of humanity as it has already manufactured trial batches of COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V in collaboration with RDIF and the process of manufacturing scale-up batches is on.

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CM's message on World Environment Day



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

Chief Minister, PS Tamang has appealed to all the people in Sikkim to be a part of global action for ecosystem restoration on the occasion of World Environment Day.

"The World Environment Day is important to all of us as it calls for global decadal action to restore our ecosystem. Sikkim is a small and beautiful Himalayan state profoundly rich in biodiversity. The effects of global warming and pressing environmental issues have impacted Sikkim also despite its robust ecosystem and biodiversity of our small State. The effects are obvious as many of our glaciers, water bodies and biodiversity in our Himalayan ecosystem are in potential danger of causing environmental hazards. The recent glacial lake outburst at Uttarakhand is one example and a caution too. On this World Environment Day let us all garner our true environmental consciousness to act at institutional as well as individual levels with concrete climate action in tune with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the current unprecedented crisis of global pandemic due to Covid-19, while Sikkim is affected to certain extent, yet fighting strongly to contain the pandemic. Let us all observe this important day while staying at homes with green good deeds and following necessary protocols to contain the pandemic. Let us plant flowers and trees in our nearby surroundings or in our garden or at our homes. Let us keep our environment clean and healthy. Let all people in Sikkim advocate environment protection and conservation and let Sikkim consolidate its position as a forefront State for its conservation efforts in India and across the World. Let us reduce and stop the use of single use plastic. Let us all join hands and make Sikkim a model State for climate action.

Happy World Environment Day," the CM has said.

The World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated every year on 05 June since 1974, engaging governments, businesses and citizens in an effort to sensitize and address the pressing environmental issues. It is the United Nations Day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action to protect our environment. This year the WED theme is 'Ecosystem Restoration' and on this day will launch the decade 2021-2030 for ecosystem restoration.

Visas of stranded foreigners extended till Aug 31

NEW DELHI, JUN 4 (PTI): The visas of foreign nationals, stranded in India due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have been extended by the government till August 31 on gratis basis or free of charge.

The Union Home Ministry said that due to the non-availability of normal commercial flight operations on account of the pandemic since March, 2020, a number of foreign nationals who came to India prior to that date on valid Indian visas got stranded in the country.

Keeping in view the difficulties being faced

by such foreign nationals in getting their visas extended due to the lockdown, the Home Ministry had issued an order on June 29, 2020 conveying that the Indian visa or stay stipulation period of such foreign nationals expiring post June 30, 2020 shall be deemed to be valid until 30 more days from the date of resumption of normal international flight operations, on gratis basis.

However, such foreign nationals have been applying for extension of their visas or stay stipulation period on a monthly basis, the Home Ministry said in a statement.

13 of 349 shopkeepers test positive in Namchi



NAMCHI, 04 JUN (IPR): Mass Random Testing for COVID-19 was conducted for shopkeepers of Central park and Bhutia Basti today.

The testing was done at two different locations namely at Central Park and Car Plaza. At Central park the Covid-19 test was conducted for 175

persons out of whom 2 were tested positive. Similarly at Car Plaza the Covid-19 test was conducted on 174 people out of whom 11 were tested

positive. The medical team did the covid test on a total number of 349 people out of whom 13 were tested positive at Namchi.

FCS and cops conduct awareness and inspection drive in Mangan

SUMMIT REPORT MANGAN, 04 JUN:

A joint team of Food & Civil Supplies Department led by DCSO North, Palden N Lachungpa, and Police personnel led by SHO Mangan Sher Bdr Mangar conducted an awareness cum general inspection in the Mangan Nagar Panchayat area today to take stock of availability of essential items and regulation of prices.



SKM reaches essential supplies to Budang Kamarey GPU

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

Chairperson, Sikkim Housing Board, Karma Tashi Bhutia, today reached essential supplies to BPL families in the five wards of Budang Kamarey GPU under Rhenock constituency in East Sikkim.

Earlier, he had distributed similar supplies to people in Central Pandam under West Pandam constituency and later in the day, handed over the essential goods to SKM's CLC president for Gnathang-Machong, MB Gurung, for onwards



distribution to BPL families in the constituency, an SKM press release informs.

The Chairperson undertook the drive on the directions of the Chief Minister and

under the guidance of the Rhenock MLA Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara, the release informs.

NIOS Class 12 exams cancelled

NEW DELHI, 04 JUN [NDTV]: The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has cancelled Class 12 public exams in view of the Covid-19 situation in the country. The institute will devise an "well defined objective criteria" for preparing results, an official statement said. NIOS in May postponed the Class 12 public exams and cancelled exams for Class 10 exams.

The decision to cancel NIOS 12th exams will benefit around 1.75 lakh students, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said.

"Keeping the safety and security of our students on priority, NIOS cancels class 12 exam-



inations. Students will be evaluated based on objective criteria to be announced soon. This will benefit around 1.75 Lakhs students," Mr Pokhriyal tweeted. Learners who remain dissatisfied with the alternative evaluation criteria will be given a chance to improve their results through on demand examination, which will be held when the situ-

ation becomes conducive, the institute said. While announcing Class 10 public exam cancellation, the institute said it will review the COVID-19 situation again on June 20 and the fresh examination notification for Class 12 will be issued 15 days prior to the commencement of the examination. However, the institute has followed the

route set by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) who earlier this week had cancelled their Class 12 board exams.

After CBSE's announcement, close to a dozen state boards, and the central board CISCE, have cancelled their Class 12 board exams. Other states are likely to make announcements soon.

For Class 10 students, "suitable criteria" for assessment and preparation of results will be formulated, NIOS had said, adding that learners who are not satisfied with this method will be given a chance to improve their scores later.

Contraband seized by Ranipool police



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

Ranipool PS team of East District seized contraband substances during routine vehicle checking near Setipool

on 02 June, a press release informs.

During checking, the behaviour of the 4 occupants was found to be suspicious. As soon as the police found the box

which was covered with grass, 2 of the occupants ran away. Later, 360 capsules and 8 cough syrup bottles were found in the bag and were seized.

A case under SADA

and NDPS has been registered. A manhunt was launched soon after and the two who had absconded were apprehended on the morning of 03 June, 2021.

SKM Youth Wing continues relief distribution in South District

SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 04 JUN:

A team of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha led by Minister cum In-charge, SKM Youth Wing, Sanjeet Kharel reached Rangang Yangang Constituency today with an aim to provide relief materials for the people affected by the pandemic, a press release informs.

Today's visit was part of an ongoing essential commodities distribution campaign to several constituencies under South District, an initiative of SKM Youth Wing under the direction of Party President, PS Tamang, the release mentions.

A sizeable amount of essentials were delivered to the CLC Ran-



gang Yangang team.

The distribution programme was chaired by Minister, Sanjeet Kharel who was also joined by se-

nior SKM leaders and functionaries.

The distribution of essentials is being carried out especially in constituencies with non

SKM legislators and the entire initiative is conducted in close coordination with President, SKM Youth Wing, Lakpa Moktan.

Zilla Panchayat hands over medical and safety supplies to Assam Lingzey's frontline workers

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

Zilla Panchayat, Assam Lingzey Territorial Constituency under Namcheybong, Severine Rai, handed over pulse oximeters, battery operated sprayers, PPE kits, N95 masks, surgical masks, gloves and face shields to the staff of the PHSC at Assam Lingzey today, a press release informs.

Mr Rai also handed over a supply of ther-



mometers, face shields, surgical masks, gloves and PPE kits to the ASHA and AWW work-

ers, along with sodium hypochlorite solutions, face shields, battery operated sprayer, surgical

masks and gloves at milk collecting centres at Gairi Gaon, Gaucharan and Pastanga.

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Agri Minister flags off 9 vehicles for transporting organic local produce

GANGTOK, 04 JUN (IPR): A total of nine vehicles for the transportation of certified organic local farm produce under Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna (PKVY) were flagged off by the Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma at Krishi Bhawan, Tadong today.

The programme was organized by the Agriculture Department and had the presence of Secretary Agriculture Department, Rinzing Chewang Bhutia, Secretary Horticulture Department, MT Sherpa, officials of Agriculture Department, District Agriculture in-charges from all the districts of Sikkim and media personnel.

After flagging off the vehicles, the Minister, Lok Nath Sharma mentioned that nine number of ISUZU pick-up trucks have been acquired by the State government to make it convenient for the farmers to market their produce. Under PKVY scheme, the Ag-

riculture Department, Government of Sikkim, has created 84 clusters across 4 districts in Sikkim, after an extensive survey by the department officials. The vehicles will be placed under the disposal of district officers-Joint Director at headquarter and Deputy Directors and ADOs in the sub-divisions. The vehicle can be availed by the farmers of these clusters whenever their organic produce is ready to be marketed, by paying a nominal charge that has been fixed by the department. The vehicle will be under the aegis of the Agriculture Department, but is to be only made available for the farmers.

The Minister also mentioned that understanding the great importance of farmers in our lives and that they are the most vital part of the society who fulfil our need for food, a vehicle of this kind is being provided to the farmers for the first time in Sikkim, under the thoughtful leadership and guidance of the



Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang.

The Minister also mentioned that the farmers of Sikkim have been provided with Rs.6000/- year in three installments under the Prime Ministers Saman Nidhi Karyakram. 9997 Beneficiaries have availed a total of Rs.8cr 86lac 59thousand since the formation of the present government until now.

The Minister concluded his address by urging the district in-charges to

be prompt in providing the vehicles to the farmers if and when they need it, so that the produce they harvest with utmost effort does not go to waste and is marketed efficiently in its best form. He extended his gratitude and congratulations to all the officials of the department for the success in acquiring these vehicles for the farmers. He extended his heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Minister for making this feat possible. The Min-

ister also extended his congratulations and best wishes to the farmers of Sikkim to be presented with these vehicles and requested them to make utmost use of it with proper care and safety.

It is to be mentioned that, the Agriculture Department, Government of Sikkim, has created 84 organic village clusters across the State, of which 9 clusters are in North District and about 24 each in other districts of Sikkim.

DASH becomes official delivery partner for CRH



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

A Service Agreement was signed between Central Referral Hospital (CRH) Manipal and DASH Sikkim, a delivery service provider to enable fast and secure delivery of test reports and medicines, a press release informs.

The agreement was signed by Medical Superintendent, Dr Yogesh Verma, CRH Manipal & MD, Kunga Dhondup, DASH Sikkim here on 02 Jun, 2021.

With this agreement, DASH Sikkim will be the official delivery partner for CRH and will facilitate the people of Gangtok in availing services from the comfort of their home at a nominal delivery fee.

This initiative was led by Head Operations, Dr Mingma L Sherpa, CRH to facilitate home delivery of test reports and home sample collection within Gangtok via DASH Sikkim. With the increasing number of COVID cases in the State, this is imperative for reducing community transmission and would serve the current need of the people of Sikkim.

As a part of the Service Agreement, DASH Sikkim will also deliver medicines (except Schedule-x drugs) through CRH Pharmacy upon verification of the prescription. This is another need of the hour and would provide much convenience to the people who are not able to

leave home or have access to pharmacies in their vicinity. CRH Pharmacy is the biggest pharmacy in Gangtok with a wide range of medicines available and is operational 24x7. CRH also has a superior in house cold storage (mandatory for storing vaccines and maintaining the cold chain of vaccines). The delivery services will be available during the operating hours of DASH Sikkim as per the Government of Sikkim COVID-19 regulations.

The other representatives present on the occasion include Sr Executive (Marketing), Deeki C Barfungpa, CRH Manipal and Co-founder & Marketing Head, Nitin Rai, Dash Sikkim.

RDD Minister attends national launch of Citizens Charter for Gram Panchayats



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

Minister for Rural Development, Government of Sikkim, Sonam Lama attended the virtual National Level launch of Citizens Charter for Gram Panchayats organized by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Panchayati Raj, Narendra Singh Tomar today, a press release informs.

The programme had the presence of Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, Deputy Chief Minister of Haryana and Ministers for Panchayati Raj representing other states. The RDD Minister attended the virtual programme from NIC, Tashiling Secretariat, along with Principal Secretary, RDD CS Rao and Director Panchayat, Prabhakar Rai.

The need for Citizens Charter at the Gram Panchayat level in coherence with the 29 subjects enshrined under the 11th schedule of the Constitution was explained through a presentation by Jt Secretary, MoPR, Alok Nagar.

The virtual launch was initiated by the Union Minister through remote control after which, in his address emphasised on proper planning and implementation of activities at the village level in accordance to the plan passed by the Gram Sabha as listed in the GPDP. He also highlighted on the priority sector to be identified by the Panchayats to activate the works.

The Union Minister appraised the gathering about the SVAMITVA project launched and implemented in all the states wherein the villagers are being handed over land documents of Abadi areas. The Chief Minister of Rajasthan and Ministers of Pan-

chayat Raj representing states submitted their opinions as requested by the Union Minister.

In his address the Minister for RDD, Government of Sikkim lauded the initiative of Narendra Singh Tomar in spearheading grievance redressal at the Gram Panchayat level through the launch of Citizens Charter. He also informed that adhering to COVID-19 protocols, the holding of Gram Sabha on the 15 Aug, 2021 to approve the Citizens Charter at Gram Panchayat level may not be feasible but the Panchayat Committee shall look into the matter as per prescribed guidelines issued by MoPR and obtain appropriate approval from the Gram Sabha on a later date.

The meeting ended with the closing remarks of the Union Minister who thanked everyone for placing their suggestions and opinions.

Slides in Rakdong-Tintek inspected

WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 04 JUN:

A joint inspection was conducted today of major landslides at Rakdong-Tintek block.

The team comprised of Additional Political Secretary [East] to the CM, OSD to CM, SKM area in charge for Tumin Lingee, SDM-Gangtok, BDO Rakdong Tintek, concerned Ward Panchayats, AE (BAC), JE (BAC), RS (BAC), Coordinator NHPC and residents. The slide at Shelay



where fresh slides have been reported was inspected first.

It was decided a few households and their livestock imperilled by the slide be relocated to a safer place. The slide zone is to be barricaded to avoid mishaps.

Arrangements for relocating the affected citizens have already be-

gun and tarpaulins, coil pipes and other required materials will be distributed as relief measures.

The Barang slide below the Singtam-Dikchu highway, Lower Raley slide and the Dikchu Zang hilltop slide near Sokpay were also inspected today.

Further, the SDM informed that another team from the Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department will be visiting affected areas soon as well.

Governor's message on World Environment Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

On the occasion of World Environment Day 2021, Governor, Ganga Prasad has extended his best wishes to all fellow citizens of Sikkim, a press release from Raj Bhavan informs.

This year's theme for World Environment Day is "Ecosystem Restoration" and this year marks the beginning of UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Ecosystem restoration will assist in recovering of ecosystems that are degraded or destroyed on one hand while conserving the ecosystems that are still intact and ensure that they stay so on the other.

"Although, we are celebrating world environment day, we are not without deep concerns for life on the planet and more so for mankind in current times. The nation is passing through difficult phase because of the mayhem done by Covid-19 pandemic. Our development has been paralyzed, economic

growth has been deeply affected. We stand together with the nation and the entire world today in this hour of COVID-19 pandemic, in consolidation of our efforts in conservation of environment as we observe the World Environment Day on 5th June 2021. The situation in general is grim as the country battles with a pestilence of gargantuan proportions that has claimed many lives so far and continues to do so. Our greatest sympathies go out to all the people who have succumbed to the corona virus menace in form of Covid-19. Our deepest appreciation of efforts by all the front-line workers from every sector whose dedication and relentless service has made a huge impact on containing the spread of the contamination to varying degrees. Regardless, life is resilient and we need to focus on aspects of the restoration, rejuvenation and growth. So we celebrate the World Environment Day that stands as a silent guardian to life de-

spite facing numerous onslaughts.

We, as a state, stand proud today at one of the highest forest cover ratio in the country and also species a part of biodiversity hotspot. And as we celebrate world environment day we focus on how this year's theme "ecosystem restoration" resonates perfectly with Sikkim's splendour. We cannot contain our pride and awe in declaring even at such an hour, how we are blessed with the majestic repositories of nature and how well the Sikkimese people have preserved this natural heritage. Sikkim has been accorded as the state with the best environmental policies by FAO selected among 25 other countries nominated in this category. Sikkim has also initiated a carbon neutrality vision in line with IPCC SR 15 report to achieve the targets determined in the Paris Agreement whereby the rise of global temperature needs to be maintained below 2°C, preferably at 1.5°C. In

sync with the NDC goals, Sikkim has managed to maintain its forest and tree cover at 47.12% of its geographical area and remains an overall carbon negative state so far. Our greatest strengths lie in the blessings of the Creator as a mega biodiversity hotspot.

Also Sikkim is one of the fastest growing economies in the country. The state's GDP per capita is rated third in the country after Goa and Delhi. The state also has a host of green policies that are aligned with development initiatives to comprehend NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with primary focus on the environment, society and economy. If we as a state, learn to cherish our environment then we can always be assured that the environment would in its ways cherish our existence in perfect harmony with nature. Our conservation efforts needs to be at a landscape level encompassing the entire east-

ern Himalayan ecosystems rather than a fragmented approach which does not appropriate a wholesome conservation of the biological units. Since nature does not recognize political boundaries, even our efforts at its preservation should echo these natural laws and a joint effort from all Sikkimese people to achieve this harmony with our environment is solicited at this World Environment Day 2021. Let us restore the degraded environment and preserve what we are endowed with and leave a pristine natural legacy for posterity. I urge my fellow citizens to observe this day by planting at least one seedling of your choice at your house premises or cleaning your own compound and dwelling houses without making any gathering duly respecting and following the Covid containment protocols and guidelines issued by the Government. Clean Environment sound existence," the Governor has said.

NHPC leases 25 more Electric Vehicles, will become PSU with largest fleet of EVs

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 JUN:

NHPC today signed E-Mobility Agreements with Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) to lease 25 Electric

Vehicles and receive 3 Electric Vehicle fast chargers. As per an NHPC press release, this will give NHPC the biggest fleet of Electric Vehicles among all Central Public Sector Enterprises.

NHPC had earlier leased two Electric Vehicles through EESL in 2019, it is informed.

The E-Mobility Agreements were signed through video conferencing today, it is informed.

A broad MOU between NHPC and EESL to explore opportunities of Energy Efficiency and Conservation measures in NHPC is also under process, it is informed.

Ambubachi Mela at Kamakhya cancelled again due to Covid

GUWAHATI, 04 JUN [NDTV]: Assam's famous Ambubachi festival, held annually at the iconic Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, has been cancelled for the second time in a row due to the raging coronavirus pandemic. The festival was to start from June 22. The Ambubachi Mela is the biggest religious congregation in eastern India and sees over 25 lakh devotees from across the

country. Last year too, due to the pandemic, the festival was cancelled for the first time ever.

This year, Kamakhya Temple's management committee had decided in May to keep the holy place shut till June 30 as Covid cases saw a massive spike in the more deadly second wave. "We will perform all the rituals of Ambubachi like we have done last year. But just like last year we have decided to avoid

any congregation of devotees due to Covid. The people of Nilachal Hills are dependent on the devotees for their livelihood so by not holding the festival for two back to back years, people would be suffering economic losses as well. But this is for the the greater good of humanity," said the chief priest (Bordoloi) of Kamakhya temple Mohit Chandra Sarma in a telephonic interview to NDTV.

No devotees will be allowed at the temple to stop the spread of the deadly virus.

Kamakhya is one of 51 Shaktipeeths or holy sites for the followers of the Shakti cult, each representing a body part of Sati, Lord Shiva's companion. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple houses the "yoni" of the Goddess.

During the festival, the temple is shut for four days as it is believed

the Goddess, Devi Kamakhya, goes through her annual menstrual cycle during this time.

This year, all rituals of the festival will be performed by the temple committee inside the premises without any devotees.

Assam reported over 4,000 coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. The state has registered over 4.24 lakh cases since the beginning of the pandemic last year.

Let's Not Litter

...we are already ugly enough

When they experimented with MG Marg, the policy-makers had hoped that the litter & spit free zone would eventually encompass all of Gangtok, and if that happened, dream even bigger and extend it to all of Sikkim. Wishful thinking, one can now say with the benefit of hindsight [the MG Marg effort is now several years in the past]. In a town where the residents continue live comfortably in the company of stinking jhoras which they themselves have clogged with all types of household refuse and even the occasional sewage release, cleanliness around public spaces is perhaps too much to expect. This task has been made even more challenging by incomplete notifications which enforce social distancing but sidestep how garbage is to be collected. Drive around town, and piles of garbage left overnight for the GMC trucks to hopefully collect ate a common sight. It would be advisable to remember this trend and discontinue it the moment the pandemic takes a pause.

Returning to the theme. Gangtokians might live in pine-wood panelled houses that they themselves rub with mansion polish every day, but are oblivious to their civic duties as they prove with clockwork regularity as the corners and roadsides continue to mimic public dustbins. This, despite a functional garbage collection service in place which needed only a little tweaking to adapt to lockdowns. Gangtok is admittedly a much cleaner town than most others in the country, but that should not be any consolation because with even a few more collaborative efforts, this town could be much better.

A keener sense of responsibility towards public spaces would help and the right awareness at the school level could easily address the problem of irresponsible littering. It is after all not enough to reach a garbage bag to the GMC trucks in the morning or stack them neatly by the roadside at night and then spend the rest of the day littering the town with wrappers and other refuse [yes, we manage that despite the restrictions on movement].

What is required is an attitudinal shift which displays more collective consideration. At present, house-owners in general are lavish with space for their own accommodation, but cram the floors below into pigeonholes and common toilets and bathrooms. Gangtok drivers will not make a mental note to be more considerate of vehicles behind when they stop to check messages on their smarter phones or make a U-turn, but will blare away on their horns when they are confronted with similar insensitivity, displaying an impatience that is fast becoming a universal affliction of the capital.

This mindset, which disregards common intent or pursuits, continues to rear up in all engagements and personal aggrandisement thus becomes a driving force. An immediate fall out of this has been the noticeable rollback in aesthetic nuances. Aesthetic appeal is after all for public consumption and extravagance for personal consumption. No prizes here for guessing which option Gangtok chooses on a daily basis. Bigger cars, higher buildings and increased consumption have left Gangtok an ugly town. Take any by-lane and one will be confronted with innumerable case-studies of how private greed has encroached upon public space and convenience.

The capital is exploding with private decisions thumbing their collective noses at public courtesies. Even public spaces reflect this indifference with the slew of multi-storeyed car parks and shopping complexes, whatever their utility, presenting perhaps the ugliest creations of concrete.

With too much ugliness already permanent in the form of concrete, the least that can be done is to leave the open spaces [which are mostly parking lots and shortcuts now in Gangtok] free of litter. Maybe starting with this conscious effort, Gangtok could begin the process of becoming and town more becoming of its hill station status...

Covid's Impacts on the Brain and Mind are Varied and Common

CAMERON WATSON & JONATHAN ROGERS
THECONVERSATION.COM

Although COVID-19 was first described as a disease of the lungs, as its relentless march has continued we've realised that it has a far wider reach in the human body. COVID-19 has been associated with skin rashes, bleeding disorders and structural damage to the heart and kidneys. It has also been implicated in disorders of both the brain and the mind.

Early studies prompted fears that healthcare services would collapse under a crushing wave of strokes, brain inflammation and muscular disorders. Moreover, reviews of previous coronavirus outbreaks warned that those recovering from COVID-19 may face an increased burden of psychiatric disorders like depression and PTSD.

But despite research on COVID-19 and the brain being produced at unprecedented scale and speed during the pandemic – with hundreds of new articles appearing every week – it was hard initially to find reliable data to confirm or disprove these fears.

So, as a team of doctors, students and researchers from disciplines including psychiatry, psychology and neurology, we joined forces to analyse all the available research on the effects of COVID-19 on the brain. By doing so, we aimed to cut through a lot of the speculation surrounding COVID-19's neurological and psychiatric effects. Here's what we found.

DIFFERENT CONDITIONS, DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES

Our team soon realised that many of the associations between COVID-19 and the brain were being drawn from small, highly selected groups of patients, which risks bias. So to combat this, we whittled down the vast number of potentially relevant papers on the neurology and psychiatry of COVID-19 (more than 13,000) to 215 that were robust enough to be analysed. Collectively, these covered 105,000 people from 30 countries.

We found that in these studies the most common neuropsychiatric symptoms were loss of smell (anosmia), weakness, fatigue and a change in taste (dysgeusia), which all happen quite frequently. Anosmia and weakness appeared in more than 30% of the patients the studies we looked at, for example. It's therefore very likely that neuropsychiatric



symptoms in COVID-19 are the rule and not the exception.

But reassuringly, initial fears about more serious brain-related conditions – such as widespread inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and Guillain-Barré syndrome, where the immune system attacks the nerves – seemed to be based only on very rare events. Concerns about vast waves of such conditions seem unfounded.

However, we did find that some important mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, were each occurring in as many as 25% of people with COVID-19. These may represent a huge burden to patients in years to come. Even neurological events reported less frequently, like stroke (which occurred in about 2% of hospitalised patients), will still represent an enormous challenge to patients and healthcare systems due to the sheer scale of this pandemic's reach and the fact that they often have life-changing results.

Interestingly, we found that several symptoms (including muscle pain and loss of smell) were actually reported more commonly in those with less severe COVID-19 – the opposite of what you might expect. Of course, there may be a simple explanation for this: perhaps critically unwell patients are less likely to be probed about certain symptoms, particularly those that are less severe. We also saw many disabling symp-

toms (including fatigue and headache) present in those who were not hospitalised at all.

BUT ANSWERS ARE FAR FROM FINAL

While reading this, you may have been struck by a big question surrounding all these studies: how do we know that COVID-19 is actually causing any of these problems? Depression is common – might these people have developed it anyway without getting COVID-19? And what if having a psychiatric illness makes you more likely to get COVID-19? One large study with US data suggests that this is the case.

These are all real issues in the data available up to this point, as unless you have a comparison group of individuals without COVID-19, it's impossible to know whether the people you are studying were going to have high rates of neuropsychiatric disorders regardless of catching the coronavirus. Ideally, you need a group of people without mental illness as your baseline, and to then see what happens when some of them are exposed to COVID-19.

Without such studies, it's hard to draw any hard conclusions – and unfortunately almost all of the studies we looked at didn't have comparison groups. However, we're starting to get some comparative data now. For example, we now know that people who have had COVID-19 are more likely than the general population to develop a new mental illness. In addition, most psychiatric and neurological problems seem to be more common after COVID-19 than

after flu.

Another issue is that the research done so far contains biases that can't be eliminated. It's biased towards patients in hospital, when most people with COVID-19 never go near a hospital. It's biased towards acute illness, rather than the longer-term effects of COVID-19. And it's biased towards China, the US and other western countries, with little known about what is happening in Africa or much of the Pacific region. To get a more comprehensive view, we need future research to have a wider scope.

What we do know is that people with COVID-19 very often experience a range of neurological and psychiatric problems, so healthcare providers need to prepare not only for the immediate care of these patients, but also the intensive and often lengthy rehabilitation needs that follow. Early research (yet to be reviewed by other scientists) is raising concerns about signs of neuropsychiatric symptoms persisting many months following the onset of illness.

Finding out the true impact of COVID-19 on the brain is only a first step. In reality, the disease's neurological and psychiatric impacts are likely to pose a challenge to clinicians and healthcare systems for many years to come.

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How well your immune system works can depend on the time of day

ANNIE CURTIS
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When microorganisms – such as bacteria or viruses – infect us, our immune system jumps into action. It's highly trained to sense and eliminate infections and clear up any damage caused by them.

It's typically assumed our immune systems work the exact same way regardless of whether an infection occurs during the day or at night. But research spanning over half a century now shows our bodies actually respond differently at day and night. The reason for this is our body clock, and the fact that each cell in the body, including our immune cells, can tell what time of day it is.

Our body clock has evolved over millions of years to help us survive. Every cell in the body has a collection of proteins that indicate the time depending on their levels. Knowing whether it's day or night means our body can adjust its functions and behaviours (such as when we want to eat) to the correct time.

Our body clock does this by generating 24 hour rhythms (also termed circadian rhythms) in how cells function. For example, our body clock ensures that we only produce melatonin as night falls, as this chemical makes us tired – signalling it's time for sleep.

Our immune system is composed of many different types of immune cells that are continually patrolling the body looking for evidence of infection or damage. But it is our body clock that determines where those cells are located at particular times of the day.

Broadly speaking, our immune cells migrate into

tissues during the day and then circulate around the body at night. This circadian rhythm of immune cells may have evolved so that immune cells are directly located in tissues at a time when we are more likely to be infected, primed for attack.

At night, our immune cells circulate around the body and stop off at our lymph nodes. Here, they build up memory of what was encountered during the day – including any infections. This ensures they can respond better to the infection the next time they encounter it.

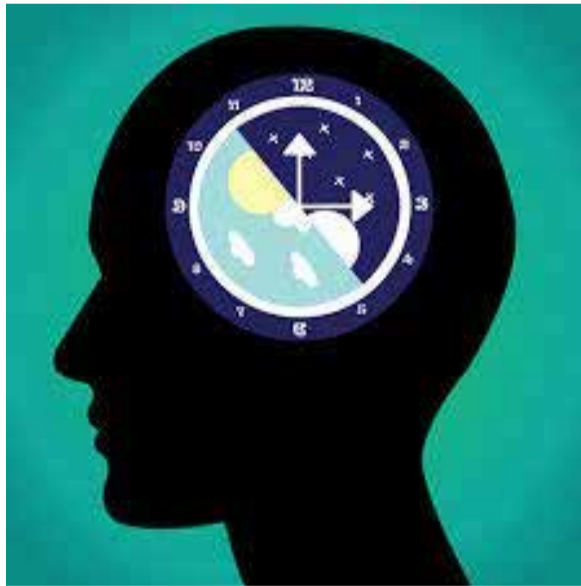
Given the body clock's control over our immune system, it's hardly surprising to learn that some research has shown that the time we're infected with a virus – such as influenza or hepatitis – can impact how sick we become. The exact timing is likely to differ depending on the virus in question.

Other research has also shown that the time we take our medicines can affect how well they work – but again, this depends on the drug in question. For example, since we make cholesterol when we sleep, taking a short-acting statin (a cholesterol-lowering drug) just before bedtime provides the most benefit. It's also been shown that time of day impacts how well certain types of immune cells work.

BODY CLOCKS AND VACCINES

There's also an increasing body of evidence showing vaccines – which create an immune “memory” of a particular pathogen – are impacted by our body clock, and the time of day that a vaccine is administered.

For example, a 2016 randomised trial of over 250 adults aged 65 and older showed having the influen-



za vaccine in the morning (between 9am and 11am) resulted in a greater antibody response compared to those vaccinated in the afternoon (between 3pm and 5pm).

More recently, people in the mid-twenties who were immunised with the BCG (tuberculosis) vaccine between 8am and 9am had an enhanced immune response compared to those vaccinated between noon and 1pm. So for certain vaccines, there's evidence that early morning vaccination may provide a more robust response.

One reason for seeing improved immune response to vaccines in the morning may be due to the way our body clock controls sleep. In fact, studies have found that sufficient sleep after vaccination for hepatitis A improves the immune response by increasing the number of vaccine-specific immune cells which pro-

vide long term immunity compared to those who had restricted sleep following vaccination.

It's still not fully understood why sleep improves vaccine response, but it might be because of how our body clock directly controls immune cell function and location during sleep. So for example, it sends the immune cells to our lymph nodes while we sleep to learn about what infections were encountered during the day, and to build a “memory” of this.

Of course this raises the question of how this might all relate to the current pandemic and worldwide vaccination programmes. How our immune body clock works might be important in terms of whether we develop COVID-19. Intriguingly, the receptor which allows the COVID virus, SARS-CoV-2, to gain entry into our cells is under control of our body clock.

In fact, there are higher levels of this receptor on the cells which line our airways at distinct times of day. This could mean we're more likely to get COVID-19 at certain times of the day, but further research will be needed to determine whether this is the case.

Whether the time of day we're vaccinated against COVID-19 impacts immune response remains to be answered. Given the high effectiveness of many COVID-19 vaccines (with both Pfizer and Moderna reporting over 90% efficacy) and the urgency with which we need to vaccinate, people should be vaccinated at whatever time of day is possible for them.

But current and future vaccines which do not have such high efficacy rates – such as the flu vaccine – or if they're used in people with poorer immune response (such as older adults), using a more precise “timed” approach may ensure better immune response.

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Curbs need gradual lifting, with other measures to control pandemic, Nepal’s experts say

KATHMANDU, 04 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]: By the time the prohibitory orders currently in place in Kathmandu Valley end on June 14, the Capital will have been under lockdown for 47 days. Valley authorities on Wednesday extended the lockdown by 10 more days.

Not only the Valley but much of the country has been under lockdown. Rupandehi, Kaski and Kailali, three of the hardest hit districts, too have extended prohibitory orders till June 14. In Saptari prohibitory orders have been in place indefinitely since May 5.

But restrictions cannot go on indefinitely, experts say.

“It will be unjust to say that restrictions should be continued for an indefinite period, as thousands of people have been severely affected by it,” Dr GD Thakur, former director at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, told the Post.

Lockdown needs to be lifted gradually but before that authorities should ensure that risk of explosion of new cases has minimised, according to experts.

For that certain things need to be done—massive testing, contact-tracing, isolating the suspected and infected people, and zoning— identifying areas into red, yellow and green zones—and putting restrictions accordingly, among other measures.

“It has become too difficult for people to survive due to the ongoing restrictions,” Dr Biraj Karmacharya, an epidemiologist, who is also the chief of the Department of Community Programme, at Dhulikhel Hospital, told the Post. “But at the same time we should not forget that the pandemic is not yet over. New cases could surge again and a small wave of infections could be created if restrictions were to be lifted without meeting other necessary measures.”

However, authorities still do not seem to be doing the basics.

“We have been repeating the same thing—increase testing, make contact-tracing effective, isolate the suspected and the infected people,” Dr Mingmar Gyelgen Sherpa, former director general of the Department of Health Services, told the Post. “Before lifting the restrictive measures, authorities should know the status of the infection.”

An official of the Health Ministry conceded that extended lockdowns are not the answer and a lot of things need to be done before relaxing the restrictive measures, which include massive testing and management of crowds.

“But the ministry alone cannot do all this,” said the official on condition of anonymity. “There are other government agencies too and the three tiers of government and they must be equally responsible to check the virus spread.”

After more than four weeks of restrictions in most of the country, the number of those testing positive has gone down. But that is also because the number of tests has gone down.

The number of total infections has come down to 34,680 in the last week between May 28 and June 3, out of the 108,874 polymerase chain reaction tests conducted, from 53,611 in the preceding week between May 21 and May 27, of the 142,271 tests conducted.

The positivity rate came down to 32 percent from 38 in the two weeks. At one point it was as high as 52 percent.

The positivity rate was 31 percent on Thursday while a rate of anything higher than 5 percent is considered to be a situation out of control, according to the World Health Organization.

The Ministry of Health and Population reported 5,825 new



infections and 75 deaths on Thursday. The total number of infections now stands at 576,396 of which 101,839 are active. The total death toll stands at 7,630.

There are simply not enough tests being conducted.

Nepal’s 90-odd polymerase chain reaction test laboratories have the capacity of testing a little more than 20,000 samples a day and that capacity has not been increased even while the second wave of the pandemic continues to rage across the country.

Authorities have instead opted for antigen tests with 1.7 million testing kits Nepal received from donors.

Antigen tests have been increasing gradually but positivity rates in these are also dangerously high. On Thursday, of the 3,211 tests, 1,000 were positive, according to the Ministry of Health and Population. (The Post does not include antigen tests in its records.)

The ministry aimed to conduct 25,000 daily antigen tests but blamed the local governments’ reluctance to conduct them for the low numbers.

Meanwhile, Valley authorities may have lifted some restrictions starting Friday like allowing grocery stores to open in the mornings, but experts warn against complacency.

“But at the same time we should not forget that the pandemic is not yet over,” said Karmacharya, of Dhulikhel Hospital.

He points out that last year the number of infections actually increased after the four-month countrywide lockdown was lifted in July and three-week prohibitory orders lifted in early September.

During the first wave the highest number of daily infections was recorded on October 21 with 5,743 new cases.

“We should not forget that the peak of the first wave of infections

was reached after lifting all restrictions,” said Karmacharya. “A secondary wave could come after the restrictions are lifted.”

Doctors stressed that authorities concerned should know about the infection status before lifting the restrictions.

But instead science seems to have taken a backseat and the administrators are taking decisions.

According to experts, new infections might have lowered of late but the decision to let the grocery shops open until 9 in the morning and allowing trucks carrying construction materials in the night is not convincing.

“Our main goal of breaking the chain of transmission might not be served if grocery stores are allowed to open for a limited time as people could crowd the stores for daily essentials,” Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of Clinical Research Unit at Sukraraj

Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, told the Post. “Similarly, viruses spread even at night.”

He said that authorities should instead focus on managing crowds, ensuring social distancing and enforcing safety measures strictly.

Besides these, risk communication remains equally important and this means launching awareness drives for behavioural change following public health measures, doctors say.

“Changing perception and behaviour is not so easy,” Dr Radhika Thapaliya, director at the National Health Education Information and Communication Center under the Department of Health Services, told the Post. “Along with other measures, awareness drives, especially risk communication, play an important role in containing the pandemic in the coming days.”

Thapaliya, who is also an expert on risk communication, said that mechanisms need to be created to know about the people’s problems and their perceptions about the risk and restrictions enforced to contain the spread, and authorities should make strategies accordingly.

“If we could increase testing in sufficient numbers and identify the clusters of infection, restrictions can be loosened up in areas that are not risky,” said Thapaliya. “But it should be ensured that people follow the safety measures including wearing of face masks and maintaining social distance.”

But it is unclear who is making the decisions and who is in charge.

“There is no point in recommending anything,” the Health Ministry official said. “The government did not listen to our recommendations, and does not listen now. We haven’t been recommending anything for the local administrations on the ongoing prohibitory orders.”

Assam Govt trying to implement Citizenship Act in roundabout way: Congress



GUWAHATI, 04 JUN [NDTV]: Leader of the Opposition in Assam Assembly and Congress MLA Debabrata Saikia has alleged that the BJP government in the state is trying to get the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) implemented in a “roundabout” way.

Mr Saikia has cited a March 19 government letter that directed Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police, Foreigners Registration Officers etc to disseminate information regarding grant of citizenship to migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who hold Long Term Visas. The letter was issued days before the Assembly polls after which BJP returned to power.

Sharing a copy of this letter with the media, Mr

Saikia has demanded that the long-pending claims and objections process of the National Register of Citizens be completed urgently through Foreigners’ Tribunals, as per rules.

Mr Saikia demanded that since only the names of genuine citizens of the pre-1971 period would be left after a fair claims and objections process, the government should issue National Identity Cards to these citizens in accordance with provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

He mentioned that any foreigner can apply for Indian citizenship under Sections 5 & 6 of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and there is no need to invoke the CAA.

He said that since CAA was introduced to

grant citizenship to migrants from these three countries, there is reason to suspect that the state government’s directive is nothing but a ploy to implement the legislation in the state in a roundabout way.

Mr Saikia said the result of the recently held Assembly elections cannot be interpreted as an endorsement of CAA because the BJP secured only 33.21 per cent of vote share.

He demanded that if a section of foreign migrants are to be granted citizenship on the basis of Long Term Visas, then the Inner Line Permit system should be introduced in Assam as per provisions of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, to safeguard rights of the indigenous people.

Assam had seen widespread protests against the CAA. But while protesters in other parts of the country alleged that the Act is discriminatory on religious grounds, those in Assam were opposing the legislation for a different reason.

The Assam protesters wanted that the cut-off date for citizenship be fixed at 1971 as per the agreement in the 1986 Assam Accord. The CAA offers citizenship to persecuted minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who arrived in India before the end of December 2014. The Assamese people opposed the legislation, arguing that it would benefit illegal migrants from Bangladesh who have settled in the state.

With 4,624 new cases, Nepal’s Covid-19 tally reaches 581,560

KATHMANDU, 04 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]: Nepal on Friday reported 4,624 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours taking the nationwide infection tally to 581,560.

Similarly, 2,029 people tested positive in a total of 6,631 antigen tests, according to the Health Ministry.

As of Friday, 3,121,120 PCR tests have been carried out across the country.

A total of 14,182 PCR tests were performed in the past 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry.

In its regular situation report, the minis-

try did not mention the death toll over the past 24 hours. It, however, reported 101 Covid-19-related fatalities, which included the number of deaths managed by Nepal Army on different dates.

The countrywide death toll has now reached 7,731. The number of active cases stands at 97,699.

According to the ministry, 476,130 infected people have recovered from the disease so far; 8,663 of them in the last 24 hours.

Kathmandu Valley recorded 1,384 new infections in the past 24

hours. Of these, 897 cases were confirmed in Kathmandu, 299 in Lalitpur and 188 in Bhaktapur.

In the past 24 hours, 862 new infections were recorded in Province 1, 411 in Province 2, 2,047 in Bagmati, 577 in Gandaki, 381 in Lumbini, 144 in Karnali and 202 in Sudurpaschim.

According to the data released by the ministry, 47 districts are home to more than 500 active cases each and other 13 districts host more than 200 active cases each.

On Friday, 1,422 individuals infected with

the virus were being treated in intensive care units across the country. Another 404—52 in Province 1, 27 in Province 2, 252 in Bagmati, 33 in Gandaki, 29 in Lumbini, five in Karnali and 11 in Sudurpaschim—were on ventilator support.

Nepal on Thursday reported 5,825 new cases and 75 Covid-19 related deaths. Similarly, 4,524 new cases and 101 Covid-19 related deaths were recorded on Wednesday and 5,285 new cases and 68 Covid-19 related deaths were recorded on Tuesday.

4 Bengal leaders appear before CBI Court in Narada Case

KOLKATA: Four senior leaders, facing trial in the Narada case, appeared before the special CBI judge at a court in Kolkata on Friday.

Judge Anupam Mukerjee had on April 17, while ordering interim bail to the four leaders, directed them to physically appear before the court on June 4.

State ministers Subrata Mukherjee and Firhad Hakim, TMC MLA Madan Mitra and former city mayor Sovan Chatterjee appeared before the judge and left the Bankshall court premises after a while.

Judge Mukherjee said that the next date for the hearing of the matter will be fixed later in the day.

A five-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court

granted interim bail on May 28 to the four leaders, who were arrested on May 17 by the CBI, which is investigating the Narada sting tape case on an order of the high court.

The special CBI court had granted them bail on that day itself, but the order was stayed by the high court, which remanded them to judicial custody.

Production of the four before the special CBI court was held virtually on May 17 as the investigating agency claimed it was unable to produce the accused in court physically owing to protests outside its office at Nizam Palace by a mob of 2,000-3,000 people.

Chargesheet in the Narada sting case was



also submitted against the accused before the special court on that day.

The special court, granting interim bail, had fixed the next date of hearing on June 4, when the accused were to appear before it.

They were placed under house arrest on May 21 by a division bench of the high court, which

modified its earlier stay on interim bail granted to the four leaders by the special CBI court.

The matter was referred to a larger bench of five judges after the judges of a division bench presided by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal differed on granting interim bail to the four accused.

Rising Suns have high hopes after dethroning champion Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AP): The Phoenix Suns were one of the NBA's most consistent winners during the decades on either side of the turn of the century. They made 19 playoff appearances in 22 seasons with some of the most entertaining teams and major personalities in recent basketball history.

A parching decade of postseason drought in the Valley of the Sun drained much of the fun out of this franchise — until this season, when Chris Paul arrived to guide Devin Booker, Deandre Ayton and a lively supporting cast to the playoffs.

And now that Phoenix has knocked off the injury-plagued defending champions in its first playoff series victory since 2010, there's no telling how far these Suns can go.

"These guys over here are battle-tested," Booker said after scoring 47 points in the Suns' clinching victory over the Lakers on Thursday night. "We're not going to celebrate our first series like we won a championship. We know we have a tough opponent in Denver coming up soon."

Indeed, the Suns will welcome Denver to Phoenix on Monday night to begin the second round, but they'll start a new series with the knowledge they sent LeBron James to a first-round playoff series loss for the first time in his 18 NBA seasons.

The second-seeded Suns won three straight



over the Lakers, whose injury problems didn't completely account for the Suns' excellent play in the final 2 1/2 games. Anthony Davis barely contributed for LA during that stretch, but Booker and Paul put on a show that would have been trouble for any opponent.

The Lakers had the NBA's best defense in the regular season, but Booker dropped 30 points in Game 5 before erupting for 22 in the first quarter of Game 6. He barely slowed his pace thereafter, hitting eight 3-pointers in an all-around floor game that finished off LA.

These Suns aren't the run-and-gun showmen of the Steve Nash/Amar'e Stoudemire era, but they've got a solid supporting cast around

Booker, Ayton and Paul. They were too much for the Lakers, who are fairly deep themselves.

Coach Monty Williams was already thinking extensively about the Nuggets in the moments after the clinching victory in the coach's first career playoff series triumph. But when prompted, Williams acknowledged a level of accomplishment, even if it's fleeting for the coaches.

"You do feel a level of excitement, because winning in the NBA is really hard as it relates to one game, but to win a series, you have to enjoy that," Williams said. "We've moved the program to a place where we want to be, but at the same time, my mind is already moved towards the next thing we have to do, and

that's preparing for Denver, right? That's just my mindset."

The Suns also know this journey is going well partly because they're healthy. Phoenix didn't make the 2020 postseason despite going 8-0 in the bubble, leaving the returning players with a decent offseason of rest while the club added Paul, the veteran playmaker whose all-around skills have transformed several franchises.

While the four conference finalists from the bubble have all battled major injury problems undoubtedly rooted in the short offseason, all of the Suns' most important contributors are healthy with the exception of Paul, who has a bruised right shoulder that appears to bother

him more in some games than others. While the injury has largely eroded his 3-point shooting ability, Paul can still hit mid-range jumpers while orchestrating the Suns' offense.

The Nuggets were one of those four finalists, and they're without second-leading scorer Jamal Murray. When Ayton lines up against Nikola Jokic next week, he'll know he has a rising team behind him with a strong chance to advance to the Suns' first conference finals since 2010.

"I'm grateful for what our players do every single day," Williams said. "I'm grateful for these opportunities. I hope our fans appreciate what's happening, because it is a blessing to be on this journey with this team."

Sponsors hail Naomi Osaka's 'courage' on mental health

NEW YORK, JUN 4 (AP): A few years ago, a star athlete dropping out of a major tennis tournament over mental health issues might have been seen as a sign of weakness. Today, at least for Naomi Osaka's corporate sponsors, it is being hailed as refreshingly honest. That would explain why so many of them have stuck by Osaka after the four-time Grand Slam champion announced Monday that she was withdrawing from the French Open because she didn't want to appear for the requisite news conferences that caused her "huge waves of anxiety."

Osaka, who also acknowledged suffering "long bouts of depression," received criticism by some who say the media events are just "part of the job."

But Nike, Sweetgreen and other sponsors put out statements in support of the 23-year-old star after she revealed her struggles.

"Our thoughts are with Naomi," Nike said in a statement.

"We support her and recognize her courage in sharing her own mental health experience," Sweetgreen tweeted that its partnership with Osaka "is rooted in wellness in all its forms."

And Mastercard tweeted: "Naomi Osaka's decision reminds us all how important it is to prioritize personal health and well-being"

Allen Adamson, co-founder of marketing consultancy Metaforce, said that Osaka's disclosure has made her a more authentic spokesperson and more valuable to corporate sponsors.

"Every athlete gets a sports sponsorship because they win games or perform well," he said.

"But the best ones become true brand ambassadors when they have a broader persona. The best brand ambassadors are real people. (Osaka) is talking about an issue that is relevant to many people. Mental health is a bigger issue than winning or losing tennis."

Reilly Opelka, a 23-year-old American tennis player seeded 32nd at the French Open who plays his third-round match Friday, told The Associated Press he's glad Osaka "is taking time to get better."

"She's one of the best players in the world she's very influential," Opelka said.

"The sport needs her. She's an icon. It's bad for the sport to have one of the main attractions not around."

Osaka, who was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and Haitian father, moved to the United States with her family when she was 3, and now lives in Los Angeles.

She has taken a leading role in protesting the deaths last year of George Floyd and other Black people who died at the hands of the police, wearing a mask with a different victim's name on each match day at the 2020 U.S. Open. She was named the 2020 AP Female Athlete of the Year.

According to Forbes, Osaka is the world's highest-paid woman athlete, earning 37 million in 2020 from blue-chip sponsors such as Tag Heuer, AirBnB, and Louis Vuitton in addition to Mastercard and Nike.

Nike has stood by sports stars after other controversies, including Tiger Woods after his 2009 sex scandal and former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick after he knelt during games to protest police brutality against Black people. But it recently dropped Brazilian soccer star Neymar after he refused to cooperate with an internal investigation into sexual assault allegations from a Nike staffer.

Osaka's disclosure comes as celebrities and other public figures openly address their own issues with depression and anxiety. Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan Markle, shared their experiences in a televised interview with Oprah Winfrey and have since teamed with her to create a mental health focused series called "The Me You Can't See," in which Prince Harry talks about working through anxiety and grief.

Osaka also joins a growing list of top-tier athletes speaking out about mental health. Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, NBA players Kevin Love and DeMar DeRozan, and the WNBA's A'ja Wilson have all spoken very publicly about their bouts with depression, sharing both the successes and set-

backs.

The four Grand Slam tournaments reacted to Osaka's withdrawal by pledging to do more to address players' mental health issues. The episode also could serve as a tipping point for the professional tennis tours and leagues in other sports to safeguard athletes' mental, and not just physical, health, said Windy Dees, professor of sport administration at the University of Miami.

"It's absolutely a growth opportunity for the (Women's Tennis Association) and all leagues, there's a lot of work to be done," Dees said.

Marketing consultant Adamson believes Osaka's decision to come forward will encourage many more athletes to divulge their own mental health battles. He noted that if Osaka had revealed her bouts with depression 10 years ago, her corporate sponsors likely would have stayed on the sidelines because the issue had been taboo. But, he noted, the pandemic has raised awareness around mental illness.

From August 2020 to February, the percentage of adults with recent symptoms of an anxiety or a depressive disorder increased from 36.4% to 41.5%, according to a survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Census Bureau.

The survey also found the percentage of those reporting they didn't get the help they needed increased from 9.2% to 11.7%. Increases were largest among adults aged 18-29 years and those with less than a high school education.

Ken Duckworth, chief medical officer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said Osaka's decision to go public is a positive development for all people who feel isolated.

"We are moving from mental health and mental illness as a 'they' thing to a 'we' thing," he said.

"These are ordinary common human problems. And I firmly believe that isolation and shame directly contributes to people not getting help. I look at a great athlete, an exceptional athlete, as one potential role model.

10-man India lose 0-1 to Qatar, goalie Gurpreet saves team from big defeat

DOHA, JUN 4 (PTI): A 10-man India lost 0-1 to Asian champions Qatar with goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu's outstanding performance coming in the way of a heavier loss for the tourists in their World Cup qualifying round match here.

Abdel Aziz scored in the 33rd minute in a match completely dominated by the Qataris on Thursday night.

The two sides had played out a goal-less draw in their first leg match here in September 2019, mainly due to Sandhu's impressive show under the bar that time as well.

India played with 10 men from the 18th minute onwards as Rahul Bheke received his marching orders after picking up a second yellow card for handling the ball outside the box. He had earlier received a yellow card in the ninth minute.

India are already out of contention for a World Cup berth but they are still in the reckoning for the 2023 Asian Cup.

Igor Stimac's men still have two matches in the joint qualifiers to salvage some pride and notch up at least a win. They play Bangladesh on June 7 and Afghanistan on June 15.

Group toppers Qa-



tar, who are yet to lose a match, came up with waves of attacks and more than half their squad stayed put in the Indian half for most of the time. They had 66 per cent possession as against 34 per cent of India.

But for Sandhu's heroics, India would have lost the match by a big margin. He pulled off as many as nine saves in the Group E match played at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium Thursday night.

In fact, Qatar had 29 shots on opposition goal as against India's none. India did have two good moves from counter-attacks but Manvir Singh failed to make them count.

India captain Sunil Chhetri, who returned

to the team after recovering from COVID-19, was replaced by Udanta Singh at the resumption of second half.

A winless India remained in fourth spot in the group with three points from six matches.

They are two points behind Afghanistan (third with five points) who played out a 1-1 draw against Bangladesh earlier in the day.

It was all Qatar from the very beginning as Felix Sanchez's men put India under pressure in the first minute with Abdelkarim Hassan blasting his effort just wide from outside the box.

Hassan then had another chance in the fourth minute but his effort off Karim Boudi-

af's corner was saved by Sandhu.

Qatar came close to scoring again in the 15th minute after Yusuf Abdurisag did well on the right to cut back in and relay the ball to Abdel Aziz Hatim, who however hit his volley over the bar.

Despite being a man down, India showed determination and continued to deny Qatar with Sandhu foiling the West Asians' attempts at goal.

Debutant Glan Martins was impressive, pulling the strings in mid-field alongside Bipin Singh Thounaojam and Suresh Singh Wangjam.

India had their first real look at the Qatari goal in the 29th minute when Ashique Kuruni-

yan managed to slip past his marker and essayed it behind the defensive line for an onrushing Manvir.

But the striker's touch let him down as the Qatar goalkeeper collected the ball.

However, Qatar scored the opening goal in the 33rd minute after Mohammed Muntari found space down the left before slipping the ball to Abdel Aziz Hatim, who converted off a rebound from his first attempt.

A counter-attack on the 42nd minute gave India a sniff of a chance. Chhetri, with all his experience, shielded Bassam Alrawi as he found Manvir, whose shot was, however, blocked by a Qatari defender.

Sandhu continued to frustrate Qatar when he kept out Abdelkarim Hassan from close-range in the 47th minute and later Muntari's snap-shot from inside the box in the 53rd minute.

Qatar had their best chance of the second half with four minutes of regulation time left on the clock, when substitute Abdullah Alahraq rifled a long-ranger onto the near post.

However, the ball ricocheted off the post and went out of play.

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SummitTIMES

Jerusalem evictions that fueled Gaza war could still happen

JERUSALEM (AP): A long-running campaign by Jewish settlers to evict dozens of Palestinian families in east Jerusalem is still underway, even after it fueled weeks of unrest and helped ignite an 11-day Gaza war.

An intervention by Israel's attorney general at the height of the unrest has put the most imminent evictions on hold. But rights groups say evictions could still proceed in the coming months as international attention wanes, potentially igniting another round of bloodshed.

The settlers have been waging a decades-long campaign to evict the families from densely populated Palestinian neighborhoods in the so-called Holy Basin just outside the walls of the Old City, in one of the most sensitive parts of east Jerusalem.

Israel captured east Jerusalem, home to holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, in the 1967 war and annexed it in a move not recognized internationally. Israel views the entire city as its capital, while the Palestinians want east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

The settlers are using a 1970 law that allows Jews to reclaim properties lost during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, a right denied to Palestinians who lost property in the same conflict, including Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Israeli rights group Ir Amim, which closely follows the various court cases, estimates that at least 150 households in the neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan have been

served with eviction notices and are at various stages in a long legal process.

The plight of four extended families comprising six households in Sheikh Jarrah, who were at risk of imminent eviction, triggered protests that eventually merged with demonstrations over the policing of a flashpoint holy site. After warning Israel to halt the evictions and withdraw from the site, Hamas fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem on May 10, triggering heavy fighting between Israel and the Islamic militant group that rules Gaza.

As tensions rose, Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit secured the postponement of the final hearing in the case of the four families. Another group of families requested that the attorney general also intervene in their cases, securing a delay. Israelis are currently trying to form a new government, adding more uncertainty to the process.

That has bought time for the families, but nothing has been resolved.

"Everything is very much hanging in the balance," said Amy Cohen, a spokeswoman for Ir Amim. Rights advocates fear Israel will proceed with the evictions once the furor dies down and international attention turns elsewhere.

"We're talking about over 1,000 Palestinians in both these two areas that are at risk of mass displacement," Cohen said. "Because these measures are taking place in such an incremental manner, it's so much easier to dismiss."

The families in Sheikh Jarrah are stuck in lim-



bo. A total of at least 65 families in two areas of the neighborhood are threatened with eviction, according to Ir Amim, including a group of families set to be evicted in August.

Banners hang in the street in Sheikh Jarrah, and small, occasional protests are still held there. Police man checkpoints at either end of the road and keep watch as Jewish settlers — who seized one of the homes in 2009 — come and go.

The settlers say they acquired the land from Jews who owned it before the 1948 war, when Jordan captured what is now east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. Jordan settled several Palestinian families on the land in the early 1950s after they fled from what is now Israel during the 1948 war. Settlers began trying to evict them shortly after Israel captured the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 war.

For Palestinians, the evictions conjure bitter memories of what they refer to as the Nakba, or "catastrophe," of Israel's creation, when some 700,000 Palestinians — a majority of the popula-

tion — fled or were driven from their homes as the new state battled five Arab armies. Most ended up in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza and neighboring countries.

"This isn't just about Sheikh Jarrah, it's about the entire Israeli occupation, that's the problem. They aren't going to stop here," says Saleh al-Diab, who was born, grew up, married and raised his own children in one of the homes under threat in Sheikh Jarrah.

"You lose your home to them in 1948 and then they come back after 1967 and take your home again," he said.

Yaakov Fauci, a settler from Long Island, New York, who gained internet fame after a widely circulated video showed a Palestinian resident scolding him for stealing her home, says the Palestinians are squatting on private property.

"They've lived here since 1956. This is not exactly ancestral land going back to the times of Abraham," he said. Fauci says he is a tenant and has no personal involvement in the legal dispute, but he insists the land belongs to the Jewish people.

"We don't want to cause them any pain and suffering, but we need to have our land back," he said. "If there are people there, they have to unfortunately get out."

Ir Amim estimates that settler organizations have already evicted 10 families in Sheikh Jarrah and at least 74 families in Silwan, a few kilometers (miles) away, in the last few decades.

The Israeli government and a settler organization that markets properties in Sheikh Jarrah did not respond to requests for comment. Israel has previously said the evictions are a private real estate dispute and accused Hamas of seizing on the issue to incite violence.

The settler movement enjoys strong support from the Israeli government and the right-wing parties that dominate Israeli politics. The settlers have benefited from Israeli policies going back to 1967 that have encouraged the expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem while severely restricting the growth of Palestinian communi-

ties.

Today, more than 700,000 Jewish settlers live in both territories, mostly in built-up residential towns and neighborhoods. The Palestinians and much of the international community view the settlements as a violation of international law and a major obstacle to peace.

Ir Amim says Israeli authorities could intervene in any number of ways to prevent the Jerusalem evictions, including by modifying the law that allows settlers to take over such properties.

Hamas, which is designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the European Union, has demanded that Israel rein in the settlers as part of the informal truce brokered by Egypt that ended the Gaza war. Egyptian mediators are exploring ways to prevent the evictions, and previous cease-fires have included significant concessions to Hamas.

A war that destroyed hundreds of homes in Gaza may have ensured that residents of Sheikh Jarrah can remain in theirs, at least for now.

Organizer of Hong Kong's Tiananmen vigil said to be arrested

HONG KONG, JUN 4 (AP): A member of the committee that organises Hong Kong's annual candlelight vigil for the victims of the Tiananmen Square crackdown was arrested early Friday on the 32nd anniversary, local media reported.

Public broadcaster RTHK and others reported Chow Hang Tung, the vice chair of The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, was arrested by police early Friday.

It is not clear why Chow was arrested, and police have yet to comment on the matter.

The committee organises the vigil and ran a museum dedicated to the 1989 military crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The vigil has been banned by city authorities for a second year, and the museum was closed this week.

Despite the ban on the vigil and police warning residents that marking the event in the usual Victoria Park venue may be illegal, Chow has continued her activism, urging people to commemorate the event privately by lighting a candle wherever they are.

Two other key members of the Hong Kong Alliance Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho are behind bars for their participation in unauthorized assemblies in 2019.

Chow said in an interview with The Associated Press last month that she was expecting to be imprisoned at some point for her activism.

I'm already being persecuted for participating and inciting last year's candlelight vigil, she said.

If I continue my activism in pushing for democracy in Hong Kong and China, surely they will come after me at some point, so it's sort of expected.

German archbishop offers to quit over church abuse scandals

BERLIN (AP): One of Germany's most prominent Roman Catholic archbishops on Friday offered his resignation to Pope Francis, citing the church's handling of sexual abuse scandals as one reason he wants to step down and saying the church had arrived at "a dead point."

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, 67, the archbishop of Munich and Freising, published parts of his resignation letter to the pope online.

In the letter, he wrote that he wants to take a share of responsibility for the "catastrophe of sexual abuse by office-holders of the church in the past decades."

Marx, who led the German Bishops' Conference from 2014 until 2020, wrote that investigations during the last decade showed there had

been "a lot of personal failures and administrative mistakes but also institutional or systemic failure."

In 2018, a church-commissioned report concluded that at least 3,677 people were abused by clergy in Germany between 1946 and 2014. More than half of the victims were 13 or younger when the abuse took place, and nearly a third of them were altar boys, according to the report.

Earlier this year, another report on sexual abuse in the country's western Cologne diocese brought up numerous cases of sex abuse by priests. The archbishop of Hamburg, a former Cologne church official who was faulted in that report, offered his resignation to the pope and was granted a "time out" of unspecified length.

Olympian Yamaguchi says Japan 'cornered' into holding games

TOKYO (AP): Tokyo has been "cornered" into holding the games during the coronavirus pandemic, one of Japan's best-known Olympians and an executive member of the Japanese Olympic Committee said in an outspoken editorial published Friday.

Kaori Yamaguchi said the International Olympic Committee, the government and local organizers are ignoring widespread opposition to the games from the Japanese public.

Depending on how the question is phrased in different polls, between 50-80% of Japanese people oppose holding the Olympics.

"We have been cornered into a situation where we cannot even stop now. We are damned if we do, and damned if we do not," Yamaguchi wrote in an editorial published by Japan's Kyodo news agency. "The IOC also seems to think that public opinion in Japan is not important."

Yamaguchi won a bronze medal in judo at the 1988 Seoul Olympics and is also a former world champion. She teaches at the University of Tsukuba.

"What will these Olympics be for, and for whom?" she asked. "The games have already lost meaning and are being held just for the sake of them. I believe we have already missed the opportunity to cancel."

Japan has officially spent \$15.4 billion to organize the Tokyo Olympics, and government audits say it may be twice that. The Switzerland-based IOC derives almost 75% of its income from selling broadcast rights. Its income has been stalled since the one-year postponement of the Tokyo Olympics, and estimates suggest it could lose \$3 billion-\$4 billion in broadcast income if the games were canceled.

Fans from abroad have already been banned for the Tokyo Olympics.

In her weekly briefing on Friday, organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto said organizers would follow government guidance on having any local fans. That decision was expected on June 20 when the current state of emergency in Tokyo expires.

Kengo Sakurada,

head of the association of corporate executives in Japan, said Thursday that no fans should be allowed.

"Many people are feeling extremely uneasy about the safety of holding the Olympics," he said. "Even if the infections slowed, no fans should be the rule."

Hashimoto was asked if the Olympics were 100% certain to take place. The IOC and organizers have said they will and venues are now being set up for the Olympics to open on July 23. Senior IOC member Richard Pound said last week it would take "Armageddon" to stop the games.

IOC vice president John Coates said several weeks ago that the Olympics would go ahead if there were a state of emergency.

Hashimoto hedged, slightly.

"Whether it's 100% or not, well, I have been receiving this question many times," Hashimoto said. "If the IOC judges, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government judges, that it is difficult, then it is also our mission to respond to such judgment."

She also said that the visit by IOC President

Thomas Bach, which was announced for July 12 by Coates, was now uncertain.

"Nothing is decided," she said.

Bach's scheduled visit to Hiroshima in May was called off because many parts Japan were under a state of emergency.

The IOC's plan is to get 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes from more than 200 countries and territories into Tokyo, sequester them in a bubble at the Olympic Village, let them compete and then get them out of Japan within two days of their finish.

Tens of thousands of others will also enter: coaches, judges, officials, broadcasters, media and members of the so-called Olympic Family.

"Sports we know is one big industry now," Hashimoto said. "But even with these industrialized games, there are athletes, pure athletes out there who have been doing everything to prepare for these games. For us, providing an arena for these athletes to show what they have been doing is also another mission of the Tokyo Olympics."

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From the Beatles to Elton John: Oldest DJ's storied career

HONG KONG (AP): Ray Cordeiro considers himself the luckiest radio DJ in the world. In a storied career spanning over 70 years in Hong Kong, Cordeiro has interviewed superstars including the Beatles and Elton John, and even received an MBE — an order of the British empire for outstanding achievement or service to the community — from Queen Elizabeth.

Cordeiro, who holds the Guinness world record for the world's longest-working DJ, retired last month at the age of 96.

"I've been talking all my life about music and all, and I'd never thought that I would retire. I never thought that I was getting older," he said.

Cordeiro was born in 1924 in Hong Kong and is of Portuguese descent. His musical tastes as a child were influenced by his brother who was 10 years older and collected records from groups like the Mills Brothers and the Andrews Sisters.

Back then records were breakable, Cordeiro said.

"When he's not home and I played his records, I had to be very, very careful, because if I broke it he would get awfully angry," Cordeiro said. "I grew up with his music."

In his youth, Cordeiro worked as a warden at a local prison and a clerk at an HSBC bank. His love for music eventually led him to pursue a career in radio, where he joined public broadcaster Radio Hong Kong, now known as Radio Television Hong Kong.

It was during a three-month study course in London with the BBC in 1964



that Cordeiro landed the interview that kickstarted his career — with the Beatles, the biggest band in the world at the time.

He had some free time after the end of the course before he had to return to Hong Kong and didn't want to "sit around for two weeks doing nothing."

"So I said, why don't I grab the chance of finding some peeps, some pop groups or singers that I can interview and bring back (tapes) to Hong Kong," he said.

During those two weeks, Cordeiro traveled to venues where groups were performing and interviewed them afterward.

The Beatles had become wildly popular and Cordeiro wanted to interview them the most. Armed with a notebook and a pen, he went to the offices of the band's record label, EMI, to ask for an interview with the group.

By a stroke of luck, he was told to return the next day for

an interview, with EMI loaning him a tape recorder for it. He bought a magazine with a picture of the Beatles on the cover and took it with him to the interview, and got all the members to autograph it.

"Altogether I have some 26 signatures of all the Beatles, and it's probably worth a fortune," he said.

The interview was short because he didn't have a lot of tape in the tape recorder, but Cordeiro managed to spend time with each member of the Beatles. He said John Lennon recounted the Beatles' early days in Hamburg, Germany, where they lived in relative poverty and played in clubs.

He later interviewed the Beatles again when they visited Hong Kong. The interviews shot him to fame, and he quickly became Hong Kong's top DJ, armed with interviews he had conducted in London with the popular music groups at the time.

"I had a career before

that, because I was interviewing local pop stars, but when you compare them to the Beatles it is something quite different," he said.

As the city's most recognizable DJ, he also got to know other stars such as Elton John and Tony Bennett.

Known for his deep, calm voice, flat cap and easy listening repertoire, Cordeiro garnered a loyal following of listeners who would tune in to his weekday radio show "All the Way with Ray," which ran from 1970 until last month.

"I fulfilled my work as a DJ, did what I had to do and the audience followed me, grew up with me, and they're all over the world now," he said. "They're all over and they still listened to me on the internet."

Asked if he were to do it all over again if he would pick being a DJ as a career, Cordeiro doesn't hesitate.

"I don't think I have to actually think about it, the answer is yes," he said.



BRITNEY FOREVER! The Russian model, Irina Shayk sports a Britney Spears T-shirt and ripped jeans while out walking in NYC.

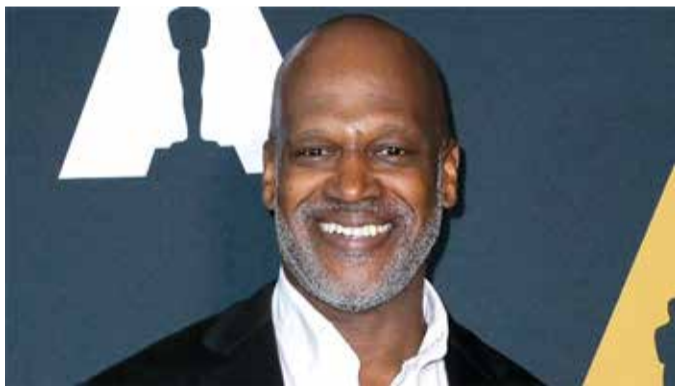
Rob Edwards to make directorial debut with animated film 'Sneaks'

LOS ANGELES, JUN 4 (PTI): Rob Edwards, the screenwriter of popular animation movies "Treasure Planet" and "The Princess and the Frog", will be making his feature directorial debut with "Sneaks".

According to Variety, Len Hartman and Gil Cloyd of Lengi Studios and Laurence Fishburne and Helen Sugland of Cinema Gypsy Productions are producing the animated film.

Meko Yohannes will serve as executive producer along with Robyn Klein and Jeremy Ross. "Sneaks", penned by Edwards, centres on Ty, a misguided, one-of-a-kind, designer sneaker who doesn't know life outside the comforts of his velvet-lined shoe box.

It follows Ty's adventures when he ventures into New York City to find his sister, stolen by a shady collector.



Fishburne, who will also voice the character of The Collector in the movie said he was "thrilled" to be on board the project. I am so thrilled to be a part of this project and to bring the animated world of Sneaks' to life. There is such an incredible and talented group of people involved and it is a pleasure to work alongside them," he said.

Edwards said "Sneaks" for

him was a "hip-hop" version of Pixar's much-loved animated movie franchise "Toy Story".

I try to make movies that my whole family will enjoy, and Sneaks' has got heart, humor, friendship as well as some themes that I hope will connect with people. It's both classic and contemporary at the same time and I can't wait for people to see it come to life, he said.

Kajal Aggarwal to team up with Sujoy Ghosh for slice-of-life film 'Uma'

MUMBAI, JUN 4 (PTI): Actor Kajal Aggarwal will be headlining slice-of-life drama "Uma", which has filmmaker Sujoy Ghosh on board as creative producer.

The upcoming Hindi language film is produced by Avishek Ghosh (AVMA Media) and Mantraraj Paliwal (Miraj Group).

It is directed by debutante Tathagata Singha.

"Set in an aristocratic household with a wedding backdrop where the entire family assembles, the drama unfolds through the multi-faceted characters with the arrival of a stranger Uma," read the official synopsis of the movie.

Aggarwal, known for starring in blockbuster films "Singham", "Magadheera" and "Mersal", said she is excited to delve deep into the world of Uma.

"I'm always keen to give a green signal to scripts that are fun, entertaining yet challenging for me as an actor. I'm



excited to share Uma' with all of you.

"I am very happy to be collaborating with AVMA Media, Avishek and director Tathagata, on an extremely interesting film," the 35-year-old actor said in a statement.

The makers will soon announce other cast members.

"Uma" is slated to be shot in a start-to-finish schedule in the second half of 2021, keeping all COVID-19 protocols in consideration, the producers said.

Aggarwal, who has worked in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi film industry, was last seen in Disney+ Hotstar series "Live Telecast".

ARIES:

The truth is, we know. We always know what's best for us and what isn't. But, we're in the habit of letting both the world and the voice of our small, ego self mess with our heads. What you want to instead is tune into the wisdom of your body. Take the discomfort and queasiness as a sign that the given opportunity is not in alignment with your truth. On the other hand, if you are experiencing a case of the butterflies, take that leap of faith you've been resisting for a while now.

TAURUS:

Sometimes, two plus two equals four. At other times, it's sum total is 22. Sounds trippy? Well, you haven't seen anything yet! What the cards want you to become aware of: the signs and symbols and omens that are revealed to you from beyond the veil. The Universe has a sense of humour, Taurus, and you're about to experience the giggles first hand.

Tip: Become aware of the signs and symbols being revealed to you at the moment.

GEMINI:

Let's talk about stress and anxiety, Gemini. Where do you suppose these emotions are stemming from? Could your need to obsess over what's gone be a hindrance to your soul's growth? Remember, both the past and the future are an illusion. All you truly have is this moment. So, embrace—nay, make love—to the now, and in doing so, you will find that the demons are beginning to loosen their grip on you.

CANCER:

You can spend a lifetime debating over who wronged whom and why. But your higher self knows there are no straight

answers to these questions. Everything transpired for a reason. A reason that is beyond human comprehension. So instead of playing the blame game, honour the soul lessons. Be grateful for all the ways in which your past experiences transformed you and made you a better person. This will help you recognise that things are neither good, nor bad. They simply are.

Tip: Be grateful for all the experiences that transformed you and made you who you are today.

LEO:

There are no shortcuts, Leo. No magic formula that will take you directly to the desired destination within seconds. So, hold the long-term vision in mind's eye as you continue to hustle. Yes, this requires you to look beyond the current fluctuations in the physical landscape. Remember, silencing the voice of the inner critic is just as important. In the words of Sophia Bush: "You're allowed to be both a masterpiece and a work-in-progress simultaneously."

VIRGO:

The eclipse season drama is about to get wilder, Virgo, and you're going to be presented with a front row ticket. At any point of time, you will have two options: to watch the show with mild interest or allow the others to lower your vibration. We sure hope you will stay in your centre and act in alignment with your highest good today.

LIBRA:

There are times to take a laid-back approach, and allow things to transpire at their own pace. But, now is *not* such a time

in your life, Libra. What you are being called to do is embrace that go-getter within you, the one who believes the impossible is possible. At the same time, do not give into the illusion that you have to build everything single-handedly. The Universe is aligning you with fellow warriors—warriors who are just as invested in the mission as you are.

SCORPIO:

We tend to glorify romantic relationships endlessly. In doing so, we forget the real heroes who show up for us—unconditionally—every single day. Today, you're being asked to visualise your soul connections in the form of a circle of trust as you send them waves and waves of love across the multiverse. This includes not just your closest friends and family members, but coworkers, neighbours, acquaintances, employees and pets too. They all bring a unique flavour to your existence, Scorpio, a unique flavour that makes your life oh-so-luscious.

SAGITTARIUS:

It's not just about what you say, but about how you say it too. Tap into the gift of the gab, Sagittarius. Make a strong case for what you stand for and how you would have liked to be supported. The right dose of assertiveness and compassion will help you make an impact on the other person. Remember, the divine plan is perfect and without a flaw. There is a reason your paths have crossed again.

CAPRICORN:

Often, we start off with a certain idea. However, as we go along, the given idea no longer makes sense to us. It's okay to

experience disillusionment. It's okay to have a foolproof plan at hand. Instead of running away from this feeling, sit down with it and pour it a cup of tea. What you will realise in the process is that you have grown in different ways since you first started walking this path, and that you need to reassess and revise a few things.

Tip: That feeling of disillusionment is serving a higher purpose.

AQUARIUS:

Aquarius, are you holding on when the Universe is asking you to let go? We repeat: Are you holding on when the Universe is asking you to let go? It's time to loosen the grip on your past, beautiful. To assess all the ways in which you could be limiting your own growth. Start by clearing out the clutter from a time long gone, and physical reminders that bear testimony to the good memories too. Remembering that what you're making space for is far more precious than what you're leaving behind will help you power through the chaos.

Tip: It's time for spring cleaning!

PISCES:

"Imagine all the people, livin' life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope that someday you'll join us and the world will live as one." Friday finds you humming John Lennon's classic and moonlighting as a conduit for hope and peace. Despite the fluctuations in your current reality, you are convinced that humanity is transitioning from the dark ages, and that we, as a collective, will witness the light. As always, the change begins with you, Pisces. So, ask yourself the question, "how can I raise the universal vibrations today?"

Tip: It's time to dream of a better world.