



DIANE KRUGER, RAY NICHOLSON TO HEADLINE INDIE THRILLER 'OUT OF THE BLUE'
PG 08

CROWDED OUT BY CARS
pg 04

DEEPIKA PADUKONE TO STAR IN CROSS-CULTURAL ROMANTIC COMEDY BY STXFILMS
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | RS. 5

Second wave wanes, Sikkim goes seven days with under 100 new cases

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 31 AUG:**

Covid infections are clearly going down in Sikkim, and today, for the seventh day in a row, new cases came in at under 100 when only 37 new cases were reported in the past 24 hours. These 37 cases were picked up from the testing of 444 samples yesterday giving the State a daily test positivity rate of 8.3%.

Unfortunately, even though the number of Covid fatalities has come down, they still continue, and one more life was lost to the virus in the past 24 hours taking Sikkim's Covid toll to 370.

That said, even the number of Covid deaths have been consistently coming down and in the past seven days, there were a total of three such deaths and Sikkim also had four days, including today, when no Covid death was reported.

Meanwhile, of the 37 new cases, 10 were registered in East District, 17 in West District, nine in South District and one in North District.

Also in the past 24 hours, the number of recoveries counted out to more than four-times the number of new cases

with 129 people making full recoveries and getting discharged from home and facility isolation on Monday.

Sikkim's count of the recovered cases has accordingly improved to 28,132 and the current recovery rate of COVID-19 stands at 95%. Of the total of 29,878 Covid cases reported in the State since 28 Feb, 2020, a total of 22,270 cases have come in the second wave.

There are currently only 1,094 active Covid cases in the State, only 63 are with symptoms

severe enough to require hospitalization and the rest are nursing mild enough symptoms from which they are recovering under home or facility isolation. There are 10 Covid patients currently admitted in the ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and CRH.

Of the Covid patients in hospital, only seven are under 18 years of age, one of whom was admitted in the past 24 hours. None of them is in the ICU.

As for the break-up of the positive cases, while 28 persons tested positive in rapid antigen test-

ing of 211 samples, seven were reported positive in RT-PCR testing of 226 samples.

On the vaccination front, the IDSP report informs that 48 persons in the 45 and above age-group [14 first dose & 34 second dose] and 357 persons in age group of 18 to 44 years [187 first dose & 170 second dose] received their Covishield jabs on Monday.

While 94.84% of the population eligible to receive the Covid vaccine has already received the first shot, 31.36% have completed their vaccine schedule.

CM meets Union Health Minister, seeks approval for enhancement of medical seats at SMIMS



NEW DELHI, 31 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang called on the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Manukh Mandaviya in New Delhi today.

During the call on, the Chief Minister informed about the enhancement of medical seats (50 free seats and 30 full payment seats) reserved for Sikkimese students in Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sci-

ences (SMIMS) and sought the approval of the Union Minister for the proposal before the commencement of the academic session.

He also cited various correspondence from the state government and SMIMS to the National Medical Commission (NMC) regarding the subject.

Further, he informed that SMIMS is fully prepared to meet NMC requirements at the Letter of Permis-

sion (LOP) stage and requested for conducting the NMC inspection for LOP at the earliest. The Union Minister assured to look into the proposal and depute officials for the immediate inspection of SMIMS for an early resolution.

Minister of State (Health & Family Welfare), Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Ministers; MN Sherpa, Loknath Sharma, and Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal were also present during the occasion.

Maruti Suzuki expects 60% drop in Sept production due to chip shortage

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG [REUTERS]: India's top car maker Maruti Suzuki expects production at its plants in the states of Haryana and Gujarat to be impacted in September due to a shortage of semiconductors, it said on Tuesday.

Total production volume across both locations could be around 40% of normal output, it said in a regulatory filing.

Car makers across the world have been hit by multiple semiconductor supply chain disruptions during the pandemic and face stiff competition from the sprawling consumer electronics industry for chip deliveries.

Marathon Man and team back from 24 Hrs Stadium Run held in Mumbai



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 31 AUG:**

Marathon Man Amar Subba came fourth in the 24 Hours Stadium Run held on 28 and 29 August at Wings Sports Centre, Bandra West, Mumbai. He covered a distance of 159.20 KMs in 24 hours in the run which started at 5:30 PM on 28 August and continued till 5:30 PM on 29 August.

His students, Jatin Chettri also came fourth covering 95.2 KMs, Pritam Rai finished on the 8th position with 94.01 KMs and Dhan Kumar Mangar covered 82.8 KMs in 12 hours stadium

run held from 5:30 AM to 5:30 PM on 29 August.

Unfortunately, another long-distance runner from Sikkim, Shiva Hang Limboo failed to qualify in 100 KMs run for the upcoming international competition in the same event. It is informed that there were 25 runners in the 24 hours run, while the 12 hours run had more than 500 runners.

The five-member team reached home this evening after participating in the event, which was organized by NEB Sports.

Addressing a press conference here today, 52-year-old Amar Sub-

ba expressed happiness and satisfaction over the team's performance.

"It was a big challenge for us to participate in such a big event after a gap of two years especially for runners from hills. I am satisfied and happy with my performance and of my students in the event even though the weather condition was not the best," he expressed.

He expressed his gratitude to Sikkim Krantikari Morcha and its sports wing for extending full support to the team for the event. He also thanked the state government for creating

a suitable environment for the development of sports and sportspersons in Sikkim.

Mr Subba and his students will soon start training for the upcoming international 24 Hours Stadium Run to be held in December at Delhi.

"My target was to cover at least 160 KMs in 24 hours but I ran short by a few meters. Now my target is to cover 200 KMs in 24 hours in the upcoming 24 hours stadium run in Delhi. We will prepare hard to give our best in the competition and make Sikkim proud," he said.

Commercial Taxes Dept launches e-Suvidha Kendra



**SURAJ LIMBOO
GANGTOK, 31 AUG:**

The Commercial Taxes Department, Government of Sikkim, launched a Help Desk/ e-Suvidha Kendra today at Commercial Taxes head office Gangtok. The Help desk was inaugurated by Revenue Secretary of Finance Department, CL Sharma.

The help desk is meant for GST registered tax payers of Sikkim who find it difficult to file their monthly GST returns.

They can also solve interest penalty related problems by consulting

the Help desk officers, informed Commissioner, Commercial Taxes Division, Finance Department, Jigmee Dorji Bhutia.

He informed similar Help Desks will shortly open in South and West districts as well.

Revenue Secretary of Finance Department CL Sharma informed that they are also ready with a new Incentive Scheme on lottery basis for voluntary declaration on Tax Invoice. This scheme shall cover transactions within Sikkim for those who

have a tax invoice value of a minimum of Rs 10,000 and maximum of Rs 1,50,000.

To claim this incentive, all invoices need to be declared in the Invoice Declaration System on www.sikkimtax.gov.in. After the invoices are declared a verification mail will be sent to the registered e-mail ID. The buyer needs to verify within 15 days or before the last day of the month, whichever is earlier, to qualify for the draw, informed CL Sharma. This incentive scheme will start from October 2021, he added.

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Menmetso Trout Farm gets electricity supply, finally

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 31 AUG:**

Secretary, AH & VS Department, Sangey D Bhutia, Director of Fisheries, N Jaswant, along with other senior officials of the Directorate of Fisheries visited the Menmetso Trout Farm in East Sikkim. The newly connected electricity supply line at the Menmetso Trout Farm was inaugurated by Secretary, AH & VS Department, a press release informs.

On the occasion, the Directorate also organized an awareness program on Riverine Fisheries Conservation which was attended by fish farmers, fishermen and stakeholders. Sangey D Bhutia congratulated the officers and staff of the Directorate for the commendable work done in the recent past.

The electrification of the Menmetso Trout Farm, which has happened after 45 years of its establishment, is a remarkable

achievement of the Directorate considering various hurdles along the way especially the lack of adequate budgetary provisions.

Further, he also urged the general public including the fishermen and stakeholders to come forward and support the Directorate in the conservation of Riverine Fisheries Resources.

Director, Directorate of Fisheries, N Jaswant, in his speech highlighted the importance of Riverine Fisheries conservation. He stated that the population of various fish species has depleted drastically in the recent past due to various anthropogenic activities.

Dr. Pushpa Tamang in the year 1993 had reported about 48 fish species in the drainages of Teesta & Rangeet River system of Sikkim. An independent study conducted by MoEF in the year 2002 had reported only 31 species. Further, as per

a preliminary report of the ongoing study being conducted by the College of Fisheries, Lembucherra, Tripura, only 21 species have been reported in Sikkim.

He also stated that among the various reasons for decreasing population of indigenous fishes is the introduction of cat fishes in our riverine system. It is being promoted by a religious practice of the local people called Chettda whereby live fishes (mainly cat fish) are released in the river. There are around five locations where the population of these cat fishes are observed to be the largest. The cat fishes feed upon the small fries and fingerling of the indigenous fishes thereby decreasing their population. Apart from that illegal fishing practices like the use of poison, electric fishing by use of batteries/UPS which wipes out entire generation of fishes has been contributing to the loss of aquatic biodiversity.



The Director also highlighted that indiscriminate loss of aquatic biodiversity is going to have grave repercussions. The fishermen community who are dependent on fishing for their livelihood will be directly affected due to reduced catch. It will also affect the ecology in some way or the other causing the breakdown of the ecosystem. Therefore, the need of riverine fisheries conservation is of outmost importance at this point of time.

The Director also talked about the State Fisheries Policy which is being for-

mulated by the Directorate of Fisheries for the first time in the State's history. He further stated that the policy shall focus on:

1. Fish (Flesh & Seed) Production: With the objective to increase the per capita fish consumption of the state from a mere 1.2 Kg per annum to the national average of around 10 Kg the Directorate shall strive for increasing the fish seed and flesh production by formulation and implementing various schemes and programmes.

2. Indigenous fish conservation: Breeding protocol of various indigenous fish species shall be developed and regular ranching of the seed produced shall be done to increase the population of indigenous fishes in the wild. Apart from that, conservation of the breeding and feeding ground of various fish species by providing highest level of protection through some notification or declaration of Fish sanctuary shall also be done.

ADC-South chairs coordination meet on Poshan Maah

NAMCHI, 31 AUG (IPR):

A coordination meeting on celebration of Poshan Maah was chaired by ADC (South), Anant Jain at District Administrative Centre today. Present amongst others were Child Development Project Officers of South District along with other officials.

Addressing the meeting, ADC Jain spoke about the activities which can be included during the month long celebration of poshan maah. He spoke about the various kinds of events like handwashing and other compe-



tition which can be infused as a part of Poshan Maah.

The launch of Poshan

Maah will be held tomorrow at the premises of DAC, Namchi. It may be mentioned that this year

a wide gamut of activities during the Poshan Maah will be observed and some of them will broad-

ly focus on Plantation Drive by all the stakeholders in the space available at Anganwadis, School Premises, Gram Panchayats and other places. There will also be a special drive for Height and Weight Measurement for Children.

Poshan Maah is celebrated across the country in the month of September with the aim of community mobilization and creating awareness to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent Girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

BJP holds NHVC training in Rinchenpong

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 AUG:

Under the BJP National Health Volunteers Campaign (NHVC), a training workshop was organised for the village level volunteers at Khanisherbung under Rinchenpong Constituency, a press release in-

forms. State BJP president, DB Chauhan, State BJP secretary, Laten Sherpa, NHVC state coordinator, Bhupendra Giri, IT coordinator, IK Rasaily, District general secretary, Bhaichung Rai, Mandal president and other dignitaries were present during the training. The session was attended by



village level volunteers from the constituency.

Addressing the workshop, Bhupendra Giri apprised about various initiatives taken by the Modi government to combat COVID crisis in the country and stressed on the need for all volun-

teers to be ready to fight against a possible third wave.

He briefed the trainees on the use of medical tools such as thermometers, thermal scanners and oximeters. He also shared information on precautionary home

remedies and vaccinations.

Similarly, Mr. IK Rasaily gave a detailed presentation on the objectives of the campaign and the responsibilities of the volunteers.

Addressing the session, State president, DB Chauhan encouraged the

trainees and stressed that all the volunteers should be dedicated to the service of their respective villages and communities after the training.

BJP Sikkim has enrolled more than 1150 volunteers till now and will achieve the target of 1251 volunteers by the end of the day, he added. The session was also addressed Laten Sherpa and Bhaichung Rai.

A similar training workshop was held today at Okharey GPU under Daramdin Constituency which was attended by more than 40 volunteers from around Okharey GPU.

'Can't understand anything online': DU students trend #ReopenDU, demand offline classes

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG

[NDTV]: Delhi University (DU) students, disappointed with the manner in which colleges and departments have shifted to online classes, now want their classes to resume in offline mode as Covid cases are declining now.

While several students say that Delhi University colleges and departments should reopen in offline mode as, during the last one year of online classes, the students have not understood anything, many others say that online classes are just for "name-sake and are useless".

Worried about the future, DU students have taken to Twitter to express their disappointment and urge the university administration to resume classes in offline mode soon. Students have been using #ReopenDU and making posts on Twitter to make their voices heard.

An undergraduate student saying that it is difficult to under-

stand classes online said: "Please reopen the college for fresh undergraduate also. It's very difficult to attend online classes. We hardly understand anything online."

Terming the online classes "name sake", a student said: "It was worth waiting last year but its truly worthless wasting one more year if the university does not open now. Online studies are just for the namesake and useless. Please reopen the university."

The All India Students Association (AISA) as well today protested to reopen universities offline.

The DU had closed its gates for physical classes since March last year due to the onslaught of Covid. However, the university had allowed final-year students to return to colleges for accessing labs and take practical classes in February this year. The classes were again suspended in April due to the second wave of Covid.

Earlier this month,

the Delhi University had issued an official notification announcing that it would hold physical classes for Science stream students from September 1 in view of a decline in coronavirus cases, following which a section of teachers had expressed displeasure over the university's decision to call students to campus. The university had later deferred its decision, with DU registrar Vikas Gupta saying that the Delhi Disaster Management Authority had not issued any guidelines on reopening of campuses, PTI said.

Talking about the Delhi government's latest announcement that schools and colleges can reopen from September 1, Mr Gupta on Friday said, "We have an executive council meeting on August 31 and we will plan after that and hold a meeting. We won't be able to resume from September 1. Whenever we open, we will first open for Science students."

In a first, 9 Supreme Court judges take oath in one go

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG

[NDTV]: Nine new Supreme Court judges, including three women, were administered their oaths of office by Chief Justice NV Ramana on Tuesday morning.

This is the first time in the history of India's highest court that nine judges have been sworn in at one time. The ceremony was held in the court complex's auditorium building to ensure social distancing and adherence to Covid protocols; traditionally it is administered in the chief justice's court room.

The new judges include Justice Abhay Oka (former Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court), Justice Vikram Nath (former Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court), Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheshwari (former Chief Justice of Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh High Courts) and Justice Hima Kohli (former Chief Justice of Telangana High Court).

Justice BV Nagarathna (former Karnataka High Court judge) was also sworn in.

The daughter of former Chief Justice ES Venkataramiah, Justice Nagarathna will become India's first woman chief justice in 2027. However, she is likely to have a tenure of only one month.

The other new judges are Justice CT Ravikumar (former Kerala High Court judge), Justice MM Sundresh (former Madras High Court judge), Justice Bela M Trivedi (former Gujarat High Court judge) and Justice PS Narasimha (senior advocate and former Additional Solic-

itor General).

Two weeks ago Justice Vikram Nath, in his capacity as then Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court, delivered an interim order that said six sections of a state law to stop "love jihad", including one that places burden of proof on the accused, could not be allowed to stand. "If the state takes any action for inter-religion marriage, you come to us, we will protect you," he had said.

In 2014 Justice Oka, when he was a Bombay High Court judge, ruled "freedom of religion includes right of an individual to claim he is an atheist". This was in response to a plea to restrain the government from forcing citizens to declare their religious affiliations.

Justice Maheshwari, when she was with the Andhra Pradesh High Court, said "freedom of speech includes right to opt for medium of instruction in (the) mother tongue". That was while quashing a state order seeking to implement English as the medium of instruction for primary schools.

Justice Ravikumar, whose father was a bench clerk in a magistrate's court in Kerala's Changanassery, is famous for having observed that "the law is long, but life is short". The statement was delivered in 2013, and in the context of a person's right to a speedy trial.

Justice Narasimha, in his capacity as ASG, represented the government in the Italian marines case. He also appeared for Hindu parties in the Ayodhya land title suit.

CM calls on Union Labour Minister



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 AUG:

Chief Minister, PS Tasmang called on Union Minister for Labour & Employment, Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav in New Delhi today, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

The Chief Minister extended his best wishes to the Union Minister

on being appointed as the Minister-in-charge of the aforementioned ministries. They discussed several issues including Sikkim Majdoor Awas Yojana for which a resolution has already been passed by the Labour Welfare Board. The CM also submitted a proposal listing out points concerning the state and sought his intervention in the matter.

The Union Minister has assured his assistance in all the concerned matters. Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ashwini Choubey, Ministers from Sikkim, MN Sherpa, Loknath Sharma, Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal were also present during the meeting.

MLA leaves BJP for Trinamool, 3rd to return after Mamata Banerjee's win

KOLKATA, 31 AUG

[NDTV]: BJP MLA Biswajit Das today switched to the ruling Trinamool Congress in Bengal, becoming the third lawmaker to return since Mamata Banerjee's big victory in the April-May state polls.

Biswajit Das had moved to the BJP in an exodus of Trinamool Congress leaders just before the election.

Like many others who claim to have "realized their mistake", he has now joined the reverse tide from the BJP to Mamata Banerjee's party.

Tanmay Ghosh, another MLA who had moved to the BJP and won, returned to the Trinamool on Monday.

The biggest homecoming was that of Mukul Roy, the BJP's first



import in Bengal, who returned to the Trinamool in June after four years.

In Bengal politics, Mukul Roy's return was symbolic of the Trinamool's resurgence, and, as the party had calculated, gave other defectors like him a lot to think about.

The return of the defectors is key as the Trinamool preps for the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Its wants to prevent a repeat of 2019, when the BJP

scored big gains at the Trinamool's cost. Mukul Roy had a big hand in it, but the BJP could not sustain the gains by the time it came to the state election.


Mamata Banerjee won a third term with the Trinamool scoring 213 of the state's 294 assembly seats. The BJP put up a tough challenge but was limited to a distant second, with 77 seats. With the latest exit, the BJP's strength in the assembly is down to 72.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
Treatment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected 	





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District surveillance Officer

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WEST : 9583297809

NORTH : 9641957468

SOUTH : 7407691463

New STNM

AMS : 9434711402

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Thank You!



AKRS-South thanks CM for archery academy announcement, wants it for Poklok-Kamrang

BIKASH CHETTRI

NAMCHI, 31 AUG:

Akhil Kirat Rai Sangh, South District, today thanked Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] and his wife, Krishna Rai, for the announcement to establish 'Tarundeep Rai Archery Academy' in Sikkim, and in a statement issued today, requested that the academy be established in Poklok-Kamrang, a constituency that he represents in the legislative assembly.

AKRS general secretary, Lalit Rai, in a statement issued today, lobbies for Poklok-Kamrang by highlighting that the constituency has a large number of students and adults who will benefit



from the academy, and pointed out that even Tarundeep has said that a warmer place was more conducive for practicing sports and that even the people of Poklok-Kamrang and entrepreneurs

and drivers here were expecting the area to be chosen.

AKRS-South has also offered to take the responsibility to provide the land required for the Academy if the govern-

ment grants the request to establish it in Poklok-Kamrang constituency.

The panchayats and the youth of the constituency also plan to submit a letter to the Chief Minis-

terconveying the request, Mr Rai informs.

The CM had announced plans to establish the 'Tarundeep Rai Archery Academy' on National Sports Day on 29 August in Gangtok.

Meeting discusses revival of Trilineal Khamsal Ceremony

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

DZONGU, 31 AUG:

A meeting was conducted at Passingdang BAC on revival of Trilineal Khamsal Ceremony 2021 at Thulong Monastery, Upper Dzongu, today.

The meeting was conducted under the chairmanship of MLA Dzongu cum Advisor Power Department, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha who was also accompanied by ADM (N), Sonam Lepcha, SDM Dzongu, BDO Dzongu, CDPO Dzongu, AE, JE BAC officials, khamsal ceremony committee Advisor,



Palden G Nangpa along with celebration committee, Health Department personnel, Head Lama

along with the Zilla Panchayats and Gram Panchayats of Dzongu Constituency.

Various issues related to the Khamsal ceremony were discussed in the meeting and it was also

decided to hand over various works to the 8 GPUs respectively.

It may be mentioned here that the Trilineal Khamsal ceremony at Thulong Monastery has not been organised after 2013 since landslides had made the area inaccessible.

The Khamsal puja has been tentatively scheduled for the last week of November this year.

All the delegates of the meeting expressed their desire to extend their support and make the Khamsal ceremony 2021 successful.

National Parties collected Rs. 3,377 crore from unknown sources In 2019-20: Watchdog

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG

[PTI]: National parties collected Rs. 3,377.41 crore from unknown sources in the 2019-20 financial year, which was 70.98 per cent of the total income of these parties, according to poll rights group Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

In a new report, the ADR said that the BJP declared Rs. 2,642.63 crore as income from unknown sources, the highest among the national parties, which also include Congress, NCP, CPI, CPI(M), TMC and BSP.

"During the financial year 2019-20, the BJP declared ₹ 2,642.63 crore

as income from unknown sources which is 78.24 per cent of the total income of national parties from unknown sources (Rs 3,377.41 crore)," the report said.

The Congress declared ₹ 526 crore as income from unknown sources which is 15.57 per cent of the total income of the national parties from unknown sources, the ADR said.

"National parties collected ₹ 3,377.41 crore from unknown sources in the financial year 2019-20, which is 70.98 per cent of the total income of the parties. Out of the ₹ 3,377.41 crore as income from unknown

sources, share of income from Electoral Bonds was ₹ 2,993.826 crore or 88.643 per cent," the report said.

Between 2004-05 and 2019-20, the national parties collected ₹ 14,651.53 crore from unknown sources, it said. According to the donations reports, containing details of donations above ₹ 20,000 of the 2019-20 fiscal, ₹ 3.18 lakh was received in cash by the national parties.

The poll rights body also said that the combined income of the Congress and the NCP from sale of coupons between the financial years 2004-05 and 2019-20 stands at

₹ 4,096.725 crore.

Unknown sources are income declared in income tax returns, but without giving source of income for donations below ₹ 20,000. Such unknown sources include 'donations through Electoral Bonds', 'sale of coupons', 'relief fund', 'miscellaneous income', 'voluntary contributions', 'contribution from meetings/morchas'.

The details of donors of such as voluntary contributions are not available in the public domain.

The ADR recommended that scrutiny of financial documents submitted by political parties should be conducted

annually by a body approved by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and the Election Commission of India to increase transparency and accountability of political parties with respect to their funding.

National and regional political parties must provide all information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the ADR said.

"This will only strengthen political parties, elections and democracy. However, RTI or not, political parties should voluntarily account for every rupee that they get or spend," the poll rights body recommended.

Rise in Covid cases in some states indicates 3rd wave: ICMR

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG:

Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Dr Samiran Panda, said on Monday that the states which did not face an intense second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic are now with the increasing trend of COVID-19 cases, showing early signs of the third wave.

Dr Panda said that it is important to not talk of India as a whole and to instead take a state-specific view when talking about COVID-19 because all the states are not homogenous.

"Several states began imposing COVID-19 restrictions and increased vaccinations, learning from Delhi and Maharashtra. Due

to this, the second wave in several states was not as intense, leaving scope for a third wave. Therefore, the increasing number of COVID-19 infections in some states presently is indicating a third wave," he said.

"Every state should look into their number of COVID-19 infections and its intensity in both the first and the second wave of the pandemic to decide about their strategy/pandemic preparedness for the possibility of the third wave," the doctor added.

On the reopening of the schools, Dr Panda said we should not panic about it. "The fourth national serosurvey clearly shows that more than 50 per cent of children are infected, a little less than adults. So, we need not panic unnecessarily," he said.

Tesla inches closer to entering India with four models approved

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG [REUTERS]: Tesla Inc. is closer to making its official debut in India after it received approval to make or import four models in the South Asian nation.

Tesla has had its vehicles certified as being roadworthy in India, a posting on the website of the ministry of road transport and highways showed.

"The tests ensure the vehicle matches the requirements of the Indian market in terms of emission and safety and road worthiness," according to the site. A Tesla fan club earlier tweeted about the development, saying the cars were probably Model 3 and Model Y variants.

Gaining a foothold in the Indian car mar-

ket won't be easy considering EVs account for only 1% of the nation's annual car sales and Tesla's automobiles are very expensive. Scant charging infrastructure and a lack of financing for companies wanting to develop electric cars are other reasons why India is behind in the electric shift.

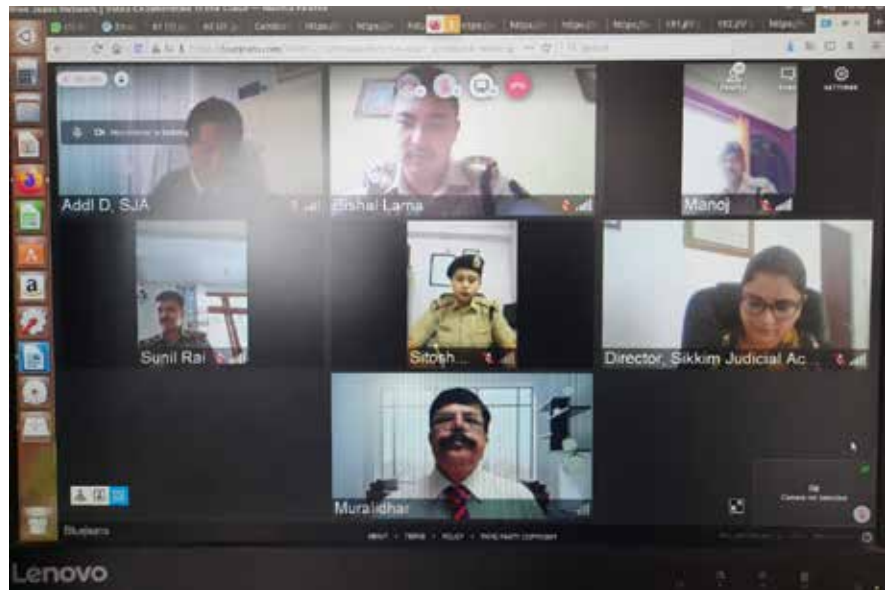
The country's high tax regime is another roadblock. Tesla Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk last month tweeted that import duties in India are among the highest in the world and the nation treats clean energy vehicles the same as gasoline, which isn't consistent with its climate goals. The billionaire has said a factory in India is "quite likely" if the

California-based carmaker can first test the waters by importing vehicles.

Tesla's call for a tax cut on imported EVs has received a mixed reception. Volkswagen AG's India unit and Hyundai Motor India Ltd. have backed the move while Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. has called for a review of import tariffs along with lower domestic levies.

Tata Motors Ltd. Chief Financial Officer P.B. Balaji said during an earnings call last month the government should continue with the existing EV subsidy plan, which places an emphasis on localization and affordability of electric models. India's government has said it has no plans to cut import duties on electric vehicles.

SJA holds training for Police Officers on investigation



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 AUG:

Sikkim Judicial Academy (SJA) organised an online training programme on "Investigation of Criminal Cases" for Police Officers on 27 Aug, a press release informs.

The Resource Person for the programme was retired Superintendent of Police and trainer at SVP National Police

Academy, Muralidhar Bala of Hyderabad.

The Resource Person started the programme by discussing the important definitions contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). He emphasized on the points to be borne in mind while handling sensitive cases such as rape cases. The qualities to be possessed by an In-

vestigating Officer were also discussed.

There was an elaborate discussion on the provisions dealing with arrest, details of complaint and FIR. The Resource Person also spoke on Lockup management.

The programme was very detailed and informative. The Resource Person addressed all the queries put forth during the interactive session.

April runner-up Rajaney Gurung begins Arithang-II campaign

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 31 AUG:

Rajaney Gurung began her election campaign for the Arithang-II ward by-elections under Gangtok Municipal Corporation on Tuesday. Accompanied by support-

ers, she went on a door-to-door campaign across the ward today. She has been assigned the election symbol 'ring'. Ms Gurung is contesting for the Arithang-II municipal ward for the second time and had received

the second highest votes in April. There are 3,632 voters in Arithang-II ward. The other two candidates in the fray are Dawa Sherpa with the 'candle' symbol and Pasang Tamang contesting on the symbol, 'can.'

Rotary Club Gangtok South presents pin to Governor

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 AUG:

President, Rotary Club South, Gopal C Basnett accompanied by the executive members called on Governor Ganga Prasad at Raj Bhawan today and presented the club's induction badge pin, a press release informs. The Governor also accepted Honorary mem-

bership of the Club.

President Gopal Basnett presented a memento to the Governor on behalf of all the members.

Secretary, RCS Gangtok, Prof. Sujata Upadhyay apprised the Governor about the history and activities of the Club.

Governor Ganga Prasad thanked the

members and asked them to start an organ donation mission. It may be mentioned that the Governor also heads the Organ Donation Organization based in Patna, Bihar.

The Governor also asked the Club to think about sponsoring children who have been orphaned due to Covid-19.

"Will get Ayurvedic treatment in jail": Supreme Court denies Asaram bail

NEW DELHI, 31 AUG

[NDTV]: Self-styled godman Asaram's plea for interim bail to receive Ayurvedic treatment was turned down by the Supreme Court today as it noted that what he had been convicted for was "not an ordinary crime at all".

The self-styled godman, who is serving life imprisonment after he was convicted of raping a 16-year-old devotee at his ashram, had sought interim bail for two months on medical grounds to receive treatment in Uttarakhand.

"You will get all ayurvedic treatment in jail itself," the court said, turning down his plea.

In 2018, a Jodhpur court sentenced the self-styled godman to life imprisonment after he was found guilty of raping the 16-year-old at his ashram in 2013. He was convicted under sections of the IPC, the Juvenile Justice Act and the Protec-

tion of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Two of his co-accused got 20 years in jail each and two were acquitted. During the trial in the Jodhpur case, nine witnesses who testified against Asaram were attacked and three of them died. Arguing against his plea for bail in Supreme Court, the Rajasthan government said that the

self-styled godman wants to get his sentence suspended under the garb of receiving treatment.

The state argued that Asaram had made similar pleas in 2014 and 2016 and both times, a committee of doctors appointed by the Supreme Court found that his health condition was stable.

LOST

I Dawa lamu lepcha, daughter of Ongyal Lepcha Resident of middle Chongrang Arithang Chongrang GPU under Yaksum Tashiding constituency, west Sikkim has lost her original Certificate of Identification (COI) bearing sl.no 339 volume number X while travelling from Tashiding to Geyzing Tikjuk DAC, west sikkim. If found please contact: 7407362293

ANTHYESTI KRIYA



The Anthyesti Kriya of late Krishna Dural who left for his heavenly abode on 24th August falls on 5th September 2021. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us for the last offering prayer to the departed soul at Hotel Chowtara, Deorali.

Dilu Chetteri (wife) 7872889133
Sanjok Dural (son) 6297003136
Deepa Dural (daughter-in-law) 7047963341
Priyanka Manger (daughter) 8436000232

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Yours Sincerely
Principal Cum Director
SIST, Chisopani

Crowded Out by Cars

Instead of cursing traffic jams, collaborate to find a solution

There is a footpath lining the highway in Gangtok, and yet parents are not comfortable sending children out on their own. And it is not just the virus that discourages them. Two decades back, children would rarely stay at home, gathering in groups and heading outdoors. That is a luxury which is denied the generation now in school because outdoors in the capital is a now one big parking lot. People have been noticing the increase in traffic on Gangtok roads, many have even ventured explanations and some have stuck their necks out with criticism, and all have come to the same conclusion – Gangtok has been taken over by cars. Cars have captured public spaces and pushed everything else away. The neighbourhood streets, even those which lead to dead-ends, have been consumed and the town still needs to come up with more and more ingenious ways to park its cars. Despite the obvious glut on the roads, the rush is showing no signs of abating. Some years ago, a study by the Central Road Research Institute [yes, there is such an institute] revealed that vehicles were occupying almost as much space [10.8%] as the forest cover [11.5%] in the National Capital Region of Delhi. Anyone who has watched the explosion of vehicles in Gangtok will agree that Sikkim's capital too is trying hard to bring vehicular occupation at par with its green cover. Here, the plant life might not be getting hacked away to make space for more parking lots, but it is being choked to death by the swarm of idling engines stuck in impossibly long traffic jams which grip the roads during peak office hours nowadays. There might not be too many people who remember how long a pony ride from Ranipool to Gangtok took in earlier times, but it could not have been much longer than what it takes to make it from Tadong to MG Marg in a car nowadays.

Admittedly, all this description is not required because it is obvious to every Gangtokian that traffic and cars have become a problem and a nuisance. What has still not been accepted is that this problem needs to be addressed. The only initiative taken to address the problem of too many cars has been the commissioning of more parking lots some of which are built and ready but await an inauguration. While more parking is definitely required, this is not enough of a solution primarily because the parking space being created will already be too cramped by the time the structure is completed. For another, more parking space does not address the problem of vehicular movement. In this regard, Gangtok's topography and building practices play spoilsport, making the creation of alternate roads impossible.

The only real option then is to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. This cannot be achieved by stronger legislations [in case someone is floating that idea], but can be pulled off with an approach which combines structured parking fees, safe and spacious parking in the outskirts [of the congested areas, say beyond Deorali or Burtuk at the other end or even along the bypass] and fast, frequent and reliable public transport. Bigger cities around the world have worked this combo quite well and there is no need why Gangtok should not try out the model as well. This is but one option that can be mulled and what would be even better for Gangtok to attempt will be a series of brainstorming meetings aimed specifically at addressing its traffic and parking challenges. Experts from diverse fields can be invited to study the problem and offer solutions. Think about it the next time you stare aimlessly out of the car window at another one Gangtok's traffic jams.

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Government funds are not 'taxpayer money' — media and politicians should stop confusing the two

JONATHAN BARRETT
THECONVERSATION.COM

Rhetoric plays an important role in tax debate and therefore tax policy. If your side manages to gain traction in the public imagination with labels such as “death tax” or “dementia tax”, you have gone a long way to normalising the labels and winning support.

Some truth underpins these particular labels — an estate tax is triggered by a person's death, and the United Kingdom's abandoned levy for end-of-life care would have been particularly relevant for dementia sufferers.

Nevertheless, these tags are essentially political messages and we should expect unbiased media to use neutral terminology. Fair reportage would not, for example, repeat the extreme libertarian claim that “tax is theft” — a baseless slogan incompatible with the rule of law.

However, both reputable media and politicians of every stripe invariably use the phrase “taxpayer money” to describe government funds, despite the phrase having no constitutional or legal basis.

This article argues that truth-based media should avoid the phrase, and progressive politicians should recognise they fall into a conservative trap when they repeat it.

TAXPAYERS DON'T OWN THEIR TAXES

Richard Murphy, one of the founders of the UK's Tax Justice Network and author of *The Joy of Tax*, explains that “taxpayers' money” is the money left in our pockets after we have paid taxes that are legally due. Money payable through taxes is the government's property.

This is quite easy to prove — try not paying your income tax and see if the courts will enforce government property rights in that money.

Murphy also observes that “taxpayer” is typically understood as “income tax payer”, thereby implicitly preferring high income earners while excluding beneficiaries. But a goods and services tax (GST) ensures everyone is a taxpayer, and indirect taxes disproportionately affect the poor.

Similarly, at a local level, “ratepayer” has become synonymous with the propertied voice to which councils should pay heed, even though renters (rather than the registered ratepayer for a leased property) bear the effective burden of local rates.

If the government is the legal owner of its funds, then, does it hold tax revenue in trust for taxpayers? Not at all. Subject to the rule of law, governments can do what they choose with their money.



ELECTIONS DECIDE HOW TAXES ARE SPENT

Self-appointed watchdogs such as the Taxpayers' Union claim to bring government waste to public notice. Rightly so — as citizens, we should demand proper stewardship of government funds.

But our actionable right as electors is to vote a wasteful government out of office. The electorate as a whole, rather than an ideological interest group, determines the size of government we should have.

Unlike trust beneficiaries, we do not have an equitable interest in the government's money. If it were otherwise, groups of taxpayers might have some claim on the government to spend or not spend its money in particular ways.

For example, paying taxes to fund belligerent activities is problematic for pacifists, notably certain religious groups. A Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act, which has been regularly introduced to the United States Congress, would permit dissenting taxpayers to assign the defence portion of their taxes to supporting peace work and social services.

Proponents of the legislation have not sought to pay less tax than their fellow citizens but to direct how their tax contribution is spent. These attempts have failed, as they must do. Democratic political communities permit dissent, but non-conformism does not extend to directing how taxes should be spent.

TAX IS PART OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

In *The Variorum Civil Disobedience* (1849), a reflection on his imprisonment for failing to pay a highway tax, Henry David Thoreau recognised that an individual citizen can protest against government by refusing to pay tax (and accept the

consequences), but they cannot treat the government's choices in its expenditure as if it were a cafeteria. He wrote:

“It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually. I do not care to trace the course of my dollar, if I could, till it buys a man or a musket to shoot one with — the dollar is innocent — but I am concerned to trace the effects

of my allegiance.”

Liberal democracies are based on some form of metaphorical social contract, most obviously manifest in the constitution. Under this arrangement, parliamentarians are elected representatives, not agents for particular groups.

Like any government that fails to comply with the basic values of society, groups that seek to control government expenditure outside the electoral process can be seen as bending, if not breaching, the social contract.

A HANDBRAKE ON DECISIVE ACTION

A progressive government should reject the suggestion that its funds are not its own to use as it sees fit for the betterment of society — as always, in accordance with New Zealand's two fundamental constitutional principles of parliamentary sovereignty and the rule of law.

Kowtowing to a myth of “taxpayer money” may act as a handbrake on decisive action. We are taxed in accordance with statutory law. If Inland Revenue seeks to collect more from us than is due, we have access to various tribunals and courts.

These legal rules and processes determine what is mine and what belongs to the government. Broadly, we are free to deal with our own property as we see fit — and the government is too.

Media and progressive politicians should stop perpetuating the untruth that taxpayers retain some residual property interest in the taxes they pay. Taxpayer money is nothing more than their after-tax property and the government's money is its own.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Taxation, Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington]

How Japan's Olympic success has been followed by COVID failure

PAUL O'SHEA & SEBASTIAN MASLOW
THECONVERSATION.COM

From a sporting perspective, the Tokyo Olympics were a massive success for Japan. Finishing third behind the Olympic behemoths of the US and China, Japan secured a record 27 gold medals. Yet, as the closing ceremony reached a crescendo, on the Tokyo streets ambulances were taking patients from hospital to hospital in a desperate search for available beds.

During the first week of August, there were 2,897 cases of ambulances unable to admit patients to hospitals nationwide, a sharp increase from previous weeks. And with the delta variant now dominant, each day is currently seeing a record-breaking number of new COVID-19 cases.

Just before the Olympics, everything had seemed to be on track: Japan's vaccination programme had just reached the impressive milestone of one million vaccinations per day, case numbers were manageable, and both the International Olympic Committee and Japanese government had promised a “safe and secure” games. Since then, though, Japan's situation has nosedived.

OPERATING IN 'DISASTER MODE'

Japan is now facing not only record cases, but also record numbers of severely ill patients: 1,974 as of August 26 2021. In Tokyo alone, daily infections have topped 4,000 throughout August, including more than 270 severe cases at the time of writing.

New guidelines stipulating that only high-risk patients be hospitalised mean that more than 20,000 infected individuals in Tokyo are staying at home. Unsurprisingly, reports are emerging of patients whose conditions have deteriorated rapidly, in some cases ending in death.

To deal with this spike of patients unable to receive medical care, the prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, has outlined plans to set up “oxygen stations” to give supplemental oxygen outside of hospital and to offer the Ronapreve antibody cocktail treatment for patients to use at home.

The government's expert panel has described the situation as “out of control”, with the capital's hospitals now operating in “disaster mode”. The panel is advising that at this stage, the public should take its own measures

to protect itself from the virus. Public attention has fixed on the Tokyo metropolitan area, but the virus has now spread and is rampant throughout the country.

THE ROLE OF THE OLYMPICS

There was widespread opposition to the staging of the Olympics before they began, as the public was sceptical of the claims of a “risk-free” games. Undoubtedly the event helped the virus spread.

In the end it was not the athletes that were the problem, but rather the mixed messaging of staging the world's biggest mega-event in the middle of a pandemic. Despite spectators not being allowed into Olympic venues, people still gathered to watch the games in parks and bars across the country. Public compliance with government measures deteriorated.

As the Suga government's own chief COVID-19 expert, Shigeru Omi, has explained, the Olympics “affected the public's perception” of the crisis, weakening the government's own stay-at-home message and undermining the declaration of a state of emergency.

VACCINATIONS TO THE RESCUE?

Taro Kono, the minister in charge of Japan's vaccine rollout, has trumpeted his country's success in inoculating its population. Japan went from vaccine laggard to one million doses per day in an astonishingly short time, and the majority of the elderly population have received two doses.

Still, with only 43% of the population fully vaccinated (approximately 54% had received at least one shot as of August 26), Japan is near the bottom of the OECD vaccination table.

So far Japan's death rate has not increased in tandem with the infection rate. While there is likely some degree of lag, other countries have shown that high vaccination rates do help to erode the link between infection and death — meaning the climbing vaccination rate may have spared the country from an worse outcome.

Nonetheless, the dominance of the more infectious delta variant, together with Japan's still relatively low vaccination rate, bodes ill for the coming months.

WHERE IS THIS ALL GOING?

Japan's current wave has begun to slow but

is yet to crest. Its impact on the health system is already visible and will likely worsen. The fallout in terms of long COVID will reveal itself in time.

A key problem is that the government has lost credibility. Staging the Olympics was only the latest in a series of mixed messages on COVID-19 — last year the government's “Go To” travel campaign encouraged tourism in the middle of the country's third wave, while the delayed vaccination campaign is partly the result of prioritising domestic-vaccine development over imports. The recent cover up of Japan's first case of the lambda variant, as it was related to the Olympics, has added to public distrust.

The government meanwhile has expanded the scope of the current states of emergency that are in place, adding more prefectures. Suga's top adviser Omi has called for a 50% reduction in mobility to flatten the curve and to relieve pressure on hospitals. Experts have also demanded legal changes to allow for stricter lockdown measures, like those implemented in Europe. Yet legal changes will require time.

With a general election scheduled for October, growing frustration over the government's crisis management is threatening Suga and his Liberal Democratic Party's electoral prospects. In post-Olympic polls, support for the government slipped below 30%, the lowest since the prime minister took office.

For various reasons, his party's victory had seemed preordained. Although the opposition has so far failed to take advantage of the government's failures, with two potentially devastating months ahead, now Suga's position has never been more precarious. If the situation becomes dire, the challenge may even come before the election from within his own party.

Right now, it is hard to see the government regaining the public's trust, and the short-term outlook is bleak. However, as the situation deteriorates, the Japanese public itself may sufficiently alter behaviour to slow the virus's spread.

[Paul O'Shea is Senior Lecturer, Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University; Sebastian Maslow is Senior Lecturer in International Relations, Sendai Shirayuri Women's College]

443 people died of AIDS in Mizoram in a year: Govt

AIZAWL, AUG 31 (PTI): At least 443 people died in Mizoram due to complications caused by AIDS during the financial year 2019-2020, as per official data.

According to statistical handbook Mizoram 2020, released on Monday, 2,339 people were diagnosed with AIDS during 2019-2020.

In 2018-19, 2,237 people were found to be HIV-positive and 716 died due to the disease.

The handbook released by the State Economics and Statistics Department said that 51,691 blood samples were tested during 2019-2020 as against 65,615 samples in 2018-2019.

With 2.32 per cent of its total 10.91 lakh population (2011 census) infected, Mizoram has the dubious distinction of being the highest AIDS prevalent state in the country, as per the National AIDS Control Or-



ganisation (NACO).

Mizoram reported its first HIV-positive case in October 1990.

According to the Mizoram State AIDS Control Society (MSACS), 23,092 people, including 1,972 pregnant women, were diagnosed with AIDS and 2,877 people died of the disease from

October 1990 till September 2020.

More than 78 per cent of HIV-positive cases in the state were sexually transmitted, while about 20 per cent of the cases were transmitted through sharing needles by intravenous drug users, it said.

It has been estimated

that about 1.19 per 1,000 people are diagnosed with AIDS in Mizoram, according to MSACS.

The AIDS incident rate was highest among youths in the age group of 25-34, which was tagged at 42.59 per cent, followed by people in the age group of 35-49 at 26.49 per cent, it said.

One new case takes COVID-19 tally of Andamans to 7,565

PORT BLAIR, AUG 31 (PTI): Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported just one new COVID-19 case, which took the tally in the Union Territory to 7,565, a health department official said on Tuesday.

The fresh case was detected during contact tracing, he said.

The death toll remained at 129 as no new

fatality due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours, the official said.

One more person was cured of the disease during the period, taking the total number of recoveries in the archipelago to 7,431.

The Union Territory now has five active cases.

The local administration has been strict to contain the spread of the

disease and has adopted an approach of tracking, testing and treating, he said, adding that people arriving here from the mainland are mandatorily required to undergo COVID tests.

Altogether, 3,61,370 people have been inoculated with 1,05,192 of them having received both doses of the vaccines.

Of the total number of immunised people, 1,44,383 beneficiaries in the age group of 18-44 years have been vaccinated till date.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has conducted over 4.88 lakh sample tests for COVID-19 so far, and the positivity rate stands at 1.55 per cent, the official added.

Jyotika makes her social media debut on Instagram

CHENNAI, AUG 31 (PTI): Actor-producer Jyotika on Tuesday made foray into social media through Instagram.

The 43-year-old actor, who predominantly appears in Tamil films, shared a series of photos from Kashmir in her first post.

"Hello everyone! On social media for the very first time! A lot of positivity to share from my lockdown diaries," Jyotika captioned the pictures.

The actor, known for "Kaakha Kaakha", "Kushi"

and "Chandramukhi", said she went on a 70km trek in the Himalayas on the Independence Day weekend.

"At the Himalayas on Independence Day, The beautiful Kashmir Great Lakes, 70 km trek With the awesome team of Bikat adventures - Rahul, Sachin, Raul and Ashwin, n the Kashmir team Mushtaq n Riyaz bhai. Thank u (sic). Life is only an existence, unless we start living it!! India is gorgeous! Jai hind!" she further wrote in the post.

Jyotika made her acting debut with the 1997 Hindi romance drama "Doli Saja Ke Rakhna", directed by Priyadarshan. Two years later, she starred in her first Tamil film "Vaali" and went on to feature in her first Telugu film "Tagore", opposite Chiranjeevi, in 2003.

She was last seen in the Tamil legal drama "Ponmagal Vandhal", which was released on Amazon Prime Video in May 2020.

Jyotika will next ap-

pear in the family drama "Udanpirappe", backed by 2D Entertainment which is headed by her husband and South star Suriya. The project is part of a four-film deal with Amazon under which the movies will be released directly on the streaming platform this year.

Other films in the line-up are "Jai Bhim", a legal drama starring Suriya and Prakash Raj, children's film "Oh My doG" and satirical drama "Raman Aandalum Ravan Aandalum".

90 cases push Arunachal's COVID tally to 52,960

ITANAGAR, AUG 31 (PTI): At least 90 more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, taking the tally in the state to 52,960, a health department official said on Tuesday. The death toll remained at 260 as no new fatality due to the infection was reported in the past 24 hours, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

The Capital Complex Region recorded the highest number of new cases at 20, followed by Changlang (16), Lower Subansiri (9) and Anjaw (8).

Eight-seven fresh cases were detected through rapid antigen test, two through TrueNAT method and one through RT-PCR, he said, adding that 62 people have developed symptoms of COVID-19.

Arunachal Pradesh



now has 900 active cases, the official said.

At least 156 patients were cured of the disease on Monday, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 51,800, Jampa said.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state currently stands at 97.81

per cent.

The Capital Complex Region - comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas - has the highest number of active cases at 206, followed by Lower Subansiri (89), West Kameng (66) and Upper Siang (58).

Over 10.55 lakh samples have been tested for

COVID-19 in the state so far, including 3,615 on Monday, and the positivity rate is at 2.48 per cent, Jampa said.

State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Padung said 9,69,178 people have been vaccinated so far in the state since the beginning of the inoculation drive in January.

Janmashtami celebrated in Bengal



KOLKATA, AUG 30 (PTI): Devotees celebrated Janmashtami, which marks the birth of Lord Krishna, across West Bengal on Monday by following COVID-19 protocols.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar wished people on the occasion.

The ISKCON temples at the global headquarters at Mayapur in Nadia district were brightly illuminated and pujas were held since morning but entry of devotees like past year was reg-

ulated considering the COVID-19 situation.

At the ISKCON headquarters, security persons ensured that people entering the temple were sanitised, wore masks, maintained appropriate distance inside the temple hall and stood in queues, spokesperson Subrata Das said.

The major attraction this year was the offering of close to 400 "Kalashas" (pitchers) to Lord Krishna by the devotees, he said.

Daylong puja was also conducted at the

Albert Road compound of ISKCON Kolkata.

The Birla temple in the city as well as other Radha Krishna temples here and in the districts were decorated, but the huge crowd seen till 2019 was missing.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted "Best wishes to all on the auspicious occasion of #Janmashtami."

"May Lord Krishna bless everyone with happiness, good health and prosperity."

In a tweet in Hindi, Governor Jagdeep

Dhankhar also wished all on the pious occasion of Janmashtami.

Several big time Durga puja committees in the city like Ekdalia Evergreen, Vivekananda Sporting, Bhawanipore 75 Pally performed khuti puja, a customary ritual before putting up pandals to initiate Durga Puja festivities.

"This is an auspicious date to start our puja preparations," heavy-weight TMC leader Subrata Mukherjee said on behalf of Ekdalia Evergreen Puja Committee in south Kolkata.

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45 per 1,000 people in Mizoram COVID-positive

AIZAWL, AUG 31 (PTI): Mizoram on Tuesday reported its highest single-day spike of 1,157 new COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 59,119, an official said.

At least 45 persons per 1,000 population have been infected by the coronavirus in the state, taking into account the 2011 census, he said.

As per the 2011 census, Mizoram's population was 10.97 lakh.

Among the new patients were 219 children (18.92 per cent),

the official said.

Aizawl district reported more than half of the new cases at 679, he said.

The positivity rate was 8.32 per cent as the fresh cases were detected after testing 13,040 samples, he said.

Most of the new cases were detected through Fluorescent Immunoassay tests (28.60 per cent), while some cases were found through RT-PCR tests (11.89 per cent), TrueNat tests (18.37 per cent) and rapid antigen test (7.97 per cent).

Of the new patients, 503 have symptoms.

There are 9,107 active cases in the state at present. So far, 49,798 people have recovered, including 358 on Monday.

At least 214 people have succumbed to the infection so far.

The recovery rate among COVID-19 patients is 84.23 per cent and the fatality rate is 0.36 per cent.

Till Monday, 2.36 lakh people have received both doses of COVID-19 vaccines in the state.

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Afghan Hossain Rasouli gets his chance in the Paralympics

TOKYO, AUG 31 (AP): Afghan athlete Hossain Rasouli finally got his chance Tuesday to participate in the Paralympics.

Rasouli and teammate Zakia Khudadadi got to Tokyo on Saturday after being evacuated from Kabul. They arrived a week late, and since then the two-person team have been sequestered in the Paralympic Village for privacy and safety reasons.

They have also declined to speak to the media, before or after events.

Hossain is primarily a sprinter but arrived too late for his event. So he tried the long jump in the T47 class, his only event at these Games.

Predictably, he finished last in the 13-man competition with a jump of 4.46 meters. The winning jump was 7.46 meters by Cuban Robiel Yankiel Sol Cervantes.

International Paralympic Committee



spokesman Craig Spence said he spoke to Rasouli on Monday but declined to share much information.

He was super excited to be competing, Spence said.

He had done long jump previously, but it was his first long jump in a major competition. It was a very special occasion. That's as much as I'll say."

Khudadadi is set to become the first female

Afghan athlete to compete in the Paralympics since 2004. She will challenge in the women's 44-49-kilogram weight category in taekwondo on Thursday.

The Afghan athletes were met in Tokyo at the Paralympic Village on the weekend by IPC president Andrew Parsons.

Their arrival came less than two weeks after the IPC was informed the Afghan team could

not travel to Tokyo, a move, Parsons said, that broke the hearts of all involved in the Paralympic movement and left both athletes devastated.

Parsons said that announcement started a major global operation that led to their safe evacuation from Afghanistan and arrival in Japan via France.

The new star in Paralympic sprinting is Germany's Felix Streng, who took gold in a pho-

to finish on Monday night with a winning tie of 10.76 seconds. Sherman Isidro Guity Guity of Costa Rica was second in 10.78. Two sprinters tied for third in 10.79 Britain's Jonnie Peacock and Johannes Floors of Germany. Both will get bronze medals.

Peacock was the two-time defending champion in the event. His winning time five years ago in Rio de Janeiro was 10.81, which he bettered in Tokyo, but it still only yielded bronze.

"It feels amazing, Streng said.

I am so happy I could execute the race and win in such a strong, competitive field. We want to show that we are competitive, that track and field para sport is amazing.

Peacock was reflective.

My girlfriend told me it was going to be about the best racer and I have to give it to Felix," Peacock said. He was the best racer today.

BCCI condoles demise of Vasu Paranjpe



MUMBAI, AUG 31 (PTI): The BCCI on Tuesday condoned the passing away of former cricketer and well respected coach Vasu Paranjpe.

Paranjpe, 82, breathed his last at his house in Matunga here on Monday and is survived by his wife, and son ex-national selector and India player Jatin.

"The BCCI expresses its grief on the passing away of Shri Vasudeo Paranjape, who served the game in various capacities," the cricket body said in the statement.

"With his excellent grasp of the game, he

shaped the careers of several Mumbai and India stalwarts. Equipped with technical nuances, Shri Paranjape used his man-management skills to great effect.

"He was appointed a Director of Coaching in the 80s by the Board and was a Head Coach of camps for junior cricketers. Paranjape was also among the first set of coaches when the National Cricket Academy was inaugurated in 2000," the BCCI added.

BCCI President and former India captain Sourav Ganguly said, "I vividly remember my con-

versations with Vasoo Sir. Not only was he a terrific coach with an eye for detail, but he was blessed with an amazing sense of humour."

"There was never a dull moment as he would regale us with fascinating stories of cricketers, whom we looked up to while growing up.

"He has played a stellar role from behind the scenes in nurturing cricketers, who have served Indian Cricket with distinction. My sincere condolences to Jatin and the entire Paranjape family," added the southpaw.

Ronaldo completes return to Manchester United after 12 years



MANCHESTER, ENGLAND (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo completed his return to Manchester United on Tuesday after 12 years, saying the club always had "a special place in my heart."

United announced on Friday that it struck an agreement with Juventus to sign the five-time Ballon D'or winner and he has completed his medical examination and signed the two-year contract, with the option to extend for a further year.

A fee of 15 million euros (\$17.75 million) will be paid to Juventus over five years. That could be increased by 8 million euros (\$9.5 million) depending on "specific performance objectives" the 36-year-old forward achieves.

"Manchester United is a club that has always had a special place

in my heart, and I have been overwhelmed by all the messages I have received since the announcement on Friday," Ronaldo said.

"I cannot wait to play at Old Trafford in front of a full stadium and see all the fans again. I'm looking forward to joining up with the team after the international games, and I hope we have a very successful season ahead."

A title winner with Real Madrid and Juventus, Ronaldo won the English Premier League three times with United but the club hasn't won the title since 2013.

"He is not only a marvellous player, but also a great human being," manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said. "To have the desire and the ability to play at the top level for such a long period

requires a very special person.

"I have no doubt that he will continue to impress us all and his experience will be so vital for the younger players in the squad. Ronaldo's return demonstrates the unique appeal of this club and I am absolutely delighted he is coming home to where it all started."

Transfer deadline day saw West Ham sign Croatia attacking midfielder Nikola Vlasic on a five-year deal from CSKA Moscow.

Also, Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson signed a contract extension through 2025. The 31-year-old midfielder has 394 appearances since joining from Sunderland in 2011, scoring 30 goals and winning the Premier League, Champions League and Club World Cup.

Six gold medals for India at Asian Youth Championships

NEW DELHI, AUG 31 (PTI): Indian boxers dominated the Asian Youth Championships, notching up six gold medals along with nine silver and five bronze in the event where the women's competition was significantly depleted due to pullouts caused by COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

Preeti Dahiya (60kg), Sneha Kumari (66kg), Khushi (75kg) and Neha (54kg) clinched gold medals in the women's draw, which shrunk after several teams fielded smaller squads because of the travel restrictions. Of the 10 women finalists, six directly made the finals because of small size of their respective draws.Dahiya defeated Kazakhstan's Zuldyz Shayakmetova 3-2, while Sneha pummeled's UAE Rahmah Khalfan Almurshidi to force a stoppage. Khushi defeated Kazakhstan's Dana Diday 3-0 in bouts held late last night.

World youth bronze-medallist Bishwamitra Chongtham



(51kg) and Vishal (80kg) were the gold-winners in the men's competition.

The silver-winners among women were Preeti (57kg), Khushi (63kg), Tanisha Sandhu (81kg), Nivedita (48kg), Tamanna (50kg) and Simran (52kg).

Vishvanath Suresh (48kg), Vanshaj (63.5kg) and Jaydeep Rawat (71kg) ended with silver medals in the men's competition.

Five Indian boxers, including one wom-

an, had earlier claimed bronze medals in the youth event after losing in the semi-finals.

Among men, Daksh (67kg), Deepak (75kg), Abhimanyu (92kg) and Aman Singh Bisht (92+kg) bagged bronze medals while Lashu Yadav (70kg) ended with a bronze in the women's category.

In the last edition of Asian Youth Championships, held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, India had claimed 12 medals,

including five gold.

The gold medallists in the youth category were awarded with USD 6,000 while USD 3,000 and USD 1,500 were given to the silver and bronze medal winners respectively.

India had earlier won eight gold, five silver and six bronze medals in the junior competition which was held simultaneously for the first time.

In all, India fetched 39 medals from the combined event, 14 of them gold.

"As a federation, we are committed to identify and promote more and more youngsters from across the country, ensuring best coaching and guidance to groom them into future champions at the elite level," said Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh.

"I am sure the valuable experience gained in such a big tournament will help these boxers to carve a strong path for themselves," he added.

IPL 2022: BCCI expects Rs 5000 crore windfall as base price for new teams kept at Rs 2000 crore

NEW DELHI, AUG 31 (PTD): The Indian cricket board could soon get richer by at least Rs 5000 crore with the addition of two new franchises during the 2022 edition of Indian Premier League.

The IPL, which is currently an eight-team tournament, will become a 10-team affair from the next edition and during a recent governing council meeting, the modalities of the bidding process were chalked out.

"Any company can buy the bid document paying Rs 75 crore. Earlier top brass was thinking about keeping the base price for two new teams at Rs 1700 crore but later it was decided to keep the base price at



Rs 2000 crore," a senior BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

The source, who has dealt with the financial side of IPL in the past, said that the BCCI stands to gain at least Rs 5000 crore if the bids go as per plan with plenty of large business

conglomerates showing active interest in bidding.

"The BCCI is expecting anything in the range of 5000 crore if not more. There will be 74 IPL games next season and it's a win-win situation for everyone."

It is learnt that only companies with

an annual turnover of Rs 3000 crore will be allowed to bid for the teams.

In a welcome news, the BCCI is planning to allow a consortium to bid for teams as it makes the bidding process more vibrant.

"I think more than three business entities

won't be allowed to form a consortium but if three business come together and wants to jointly bid for a team, they are welcome to do so," he said.

Among the venues where the teams could be based include Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Pune.

The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad and Ekana Stadium in Lucknow, with bigger capacities, could be the choice for franchises.

Some of the names that are doing the rounds include the Adani group, RPG Sanjeev Goenka group, noted pharma company Torrent and a prominent banker who has shown active interest in buying teams.

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Europe sees higher inflation on fleeting factors like oil

FRANKFURT, GERMANY (AP): Consumer prices spiked higher than expected in Europe in August, boosted in large part by more expensive fuel. Economists say the jump is temporary, but it could raise questions about how persistent higher inflation might turn out to be.

The 19 countries that use the euro currency saw inflation spike to an annual 3.0% in August, up from 2.2% in July, according to figures released Tuesday by European Union statistics agency Eurostat.

The increase was so large in part because some prices were much lower a year ago due to one-time factors connected to the coronavi-

rus pandemic.

Oil prices, following a price slump a year ago during the depths of the pandemic recession, contributed to a 15.4% rise in energy costs. With volatile fuel and food left out, core inflation was 1.6%. The latest figure also reflects other transitory factors, such the timing of summer retail sales in France and Italy, and the expiration of German tax breaks on retail purchases.

Economists have cited a raft of additional reasons for recently higher prices in Europe. Some hotels and tourist businesses have marked up prices after the end of pandemic lockdowns, while supply chain disruptions and higher raw

material prices have raised prices for producers of goods as economic activity has picked up.

The inflation question has been getting global attention, especially after annual U.S. consumer inflation reached 5.4% in July. The International Monetary Fund says it sees inflation returning to pre-pandemic levels in most countries next year, but adds that there's high uncertainty about that. It cautioned that central banks may need to take action if price increases prove to be more persistent than expected.

Since many of the factors are temporary, economists do not expect the European Central Bank to attempt to counter inflation by curtailing

its stimulus programs or by raising interest rates. The central bank's most recent projections from June see inflation hitting 1.9% for all of this year, and falling to 1.5% next year. The ECB's governing council next meets Sept. 9 to review its policy stance.

Still, higher inflation is getting public attention, as witnessed by the front page of Germany's Bild newspaper trumpeting a "new inflation shock" after German figures came in at 3.4% based on inflation out-comes of several regions, the highest in 13 years. Higher inflation expectations could play a role in wage demands by German unions in upcoming negotiations, according

to Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro research at ING bank. One member of the ECB's governing council, Germany's Jens Weidmann, has warned that inflation could go as high as 5% and then decline, although the future path is uncertain.

The higher figures come after an extended period of low inflation that undershot the ECB's goal of below but close to 2%. The bank has recently revised the goal to allow for brief periods of inflation above 2%. Inflation has been low across the developed world for years, with economists theorizing that causes could include digitaliza-tion, aging populations and global competition in labor markets.

Taliban declare victory from Kabul airport, promise security

KABUL, AUG 31 (AP): The Taliban triumphant-ly marched into Kabul's international airport on Tuesday, hours after the final U.S. troop withdraw-al that ended America's longest war. Standing on the tarmac, Taliban lead-ers pledged to secure the country, quickly reopen the airport and grant amnesty to former oppo-nents.

In a show of control, turbaned Taliban leaders were flanked by the in-surgents' elite Badri unit as they walked across the tarmac. The commandos in camouflage uniforms proudly posed for pho-tos.

Getting the airport running again is just one of the sizeable challenges the Taliban face in gov-erning a nation of 38 mil-lion people that for two decades had survived on billions of dollars in fore-ign aid.

Afghanistan is finally free, Hekmatullah Wasiq, a top Taliban official, told The Associated Press on the tarmac. The military and civilian side (of the airport) are with us and in control. Hopefully, we will be announcing our Cabinet. Everything is peaceful. Everything is safe.

Wasiq also urged peo-ple to return to work and reiterated the Taliban pledge offering a general amnesty. People have to be patient, he said. Slowly we will get everything back to normal. It will take time.

Just hours earlier, the U.S. military had wrapped up its largest airlift of non-combatants in history.

On Tuesday morning, signs of the chaos of re-cent days were still vis-ible. In the terminal, ri-fled luggage and clothes were strewn across the ground, alongside wads of documents. Concerti-na wire stills separated areas while overturned cars and parked vehicles blocked routes around the civilian airport a sign of measures taken to protect against possi-ble suicide car bombers entering the facility.

Vehicles carrying the Taliban raced back and forth along the Hamid Karzai Inter-national Airport's sole runway on the military side of the airfield. Be-fore dawn broke, heavily armed Taliban fighters walked through hangars, passing some of the sev-en CH-46 helicopters the State Department used in its evacuations before rendering them unus-able.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid ad-

ressed the gathered members of the Badri unit. I hope you be very cautious in dealing with the nation," he said. Our nation has suffered war and invasion and the people do not have more tolerance.

At the end of his re-marks, the Badri fighters shouted: God is the great-est!

In an interview with Afghan state television, Mujahid also discussed restarting operations at the airport, which re-mains a key way out for those wanting to leave the country.

Our technical team will be checking the tech-nical and logistical needs of the airport, he said. If we are able to fix every-thing on our own, then we won't need any help. If there is need for tech-nical or logistics help to repair the destruction, then we might ask help from Qatar or Turkey.

He didn't elaborate on what was destroyed.

Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of U.S. military's Central Command, earlier said troops disabled 27 Hum-vees and 73 aircraft so they cannot be used again. He said troops did not blow up equipment needed for eventually restarting airport opera-tions.

The airport had seen chaotic and deadly scenes since the Taliban blitzed across Afghan-i-stan and took Kabul on Aug. 15. Thousands of Afghans besieged the air-port, some falling to their death after desperately hanging onto the side of an American C-17 mili-tary cargo jet. Last week, an Islamic State suicide attack at an airport gate killed at least 169 Af-ghans and 13 U.S. service members.

During the evacua-tion, U.S. forces helped evacuate over 120,000 U.S. citizens, foreigners and Afghans, according to the White House. Co-alition forces also evac-uated their citizens and Afghans. But for all who got out, foreign nations and the U.S. ac-knowledged they didn't evacuate all who want-ed to go.

On Tuesday, after a night that saw the Tal-iban fire triumphantly into the air, guards now blearily on duty kept out the curious and those still somehow hoping to catch a flight out.

After 20 years we have defeated the Amer-icans," said Mohammad Islam, a Taliban guard at the airport from Log-ar province, cradling a Kalashnikov rifle. They

have left and now our country is free.

It's clear what we want. We want Shariah (Islamic law), peace and stability, he added.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special repre-sentative who oversaw America's talks with the Taliban, wrote on Twitter that Afghans face a mo-ment of decision & op-portunity after the with-drawal.

Their country's fu-ture is in their hands. They will choose their path in full sovereign-ty, he wrote. This is the chance to bring their war to an end as well.

But the Taliban face what could be a series of major crises as they fully take over the gov-ernment. The majority of the billions of dollars Afghanistan holds in fore-ign reserves is now fro-zen in America, pressur-ing its now-depreciating Afghani currency. Banks have implemented with-drawal controls, fearing runs on their deposits in the uncertainty. Civil ser-vants across the country say they haven't received their salary in months.

Abdul Maqsood, a traffic police officer for the past 10 years on duty near the airport, said he hadn't paid for the past four months.

We keep coming to work but we are not get-ting paid, he said.

Medical equipment remains in short sup-ply, while thousands who fled the Taliban's advance remain living in squalid conditions. A major drought also has cut into the country's food supplies, making its imports even more important and raising the risk of people going hungry.

Also in question are the rights of women, who faced oppression under the Taliban's earlier rule.

Schools have re-opened, and on Tues-day morning dozens of elementary school stu-dents headed to schools in a neighborhood near the airport. The Taliban have ordered schools to be segregated but it is often not enforced for younger children.

I am not afraid of the Taliban, said Masooda, a fifth-grade student.

During the evacua-tion, U.S. forces helped evacuate over 120,000 U.S. citizens, foreigners and Afghans, according to the White House. Coa-lition forces also evac-uated their citizens and Af-ghans. But for all who got out, foreign nations and the U.S. acknowledged they didn't evacuate all who wanted to go.

German unemployment slips in August as recovery progresses

BERLIN (AP): The num-ber of unemployed peo-ple in Germany declined slightly in August, un-usually for the summer month, while the coun-try's jobless rate re-mained steady at 5.6%, official statistics showed Tuesday.

In its last jobs report before a national election on Sept. 26, the Federal Labor Agency said that 2.578 million were regis-tered as unemployed in August. That was 12,000 lower than in July and

377,000 lower than a year earlier.

It is the first time since 2010 that the number of jobless has dropped in August compared with the previous month, ap-parently reflecting a pick-up after many coronavi-rus-related restrictions were dropped.

In seasonally adjusted terms, the unemployment rate dropped to 5.5% from 5.6%, the latest in a string of small declines.

Rises in unemploy-ment in Germany and

elsewhere in Europe have been moderate by international standards during the pandemic. That is because employ-ers made heavy use of salary support programs, often referred to as fur-lough schemes, which allow them to keep em-ployees on the payroll while they await better times.

In Germany, the Fed-eral Labor Agency pays at least 60% of the salary of employees who are on reduced or zero hours.

No stranger to plagues, Venice opens film fest with caution

VENICE (AP): Visitors to Venice could be forgiven for not realizing that be-yond the majesty of St. Mark's Square and the romance of gondola rides lies a city that helped provide a baseline of what the world knows today about containing pandemics.

It was here that the term "quarantine" was coined, after merchant ships arriving in the 15th-century Venetian Republic were moored for 40 days ("quaranta giorni" in Italian) to see if their crews were af-flicted with the plague. It was here that the first isolated pestilence hospital was built on a solitary island in the lagoon, a precursor to today's COVID-19 isola-tion wards. And it was in Venice that 16th-cen-tury doctors donned beak-nosed masks filled with aromatic herbs to cleanse the air they breathed when treating the sick — an attempt at self-protection that to-day is the favored choice for Venetian Carnival costumes.

Venice's central place in the history of battling pandemics provides a relevant backdrop to this year's Venice Film Festival, which opens Wednesday with the pre-miere of Pedro Almodov-ar's in-competition film "Parallel Mothers." Alm-odovar developed the project during Spain's 2020 coronavirus lock-down, one of the harsh-est in the West.

In a pre-opening screening Tuesday, Ital-ian director Andre Segre presents a short docu-mentary shot last year showing how Venice organizers coped with COVID-19 to stage the first and only in-person international film festi-val during the first year of the outbreak, a limited affair that nevertheless showed it could be done. Cannes came back to life this year after skipping 2020, and other big fes-



tivals went largely vir-tual after the pandemic erupted.

The scenes in Segre's film — shocking then, normal now — feature half-full theaters for Hollywood premieres, masked movie stars, cleaners in hazmat suits and the "blink, blink, blink" of remote ther-mometers taking tem-peratures at festival checkpoints.

Similar precautions are planned for this year, with a huge barri-cade once again sealing off public access to the red carpet and limited chances for fans to catch VIP water taxi arrivals on the Lido. More than 10 testing stations have been set up for staff and festival-goers, who must show proof of a negative test, vaccination or hav-ing recently recovered from COVID-19 to enter screenings. Masks are re-quired indoors.

In other words, the Venice show is going on — other premieres at the world's oldest film festival include the de-but of Denis Villeneuve's "Dune" and Kristen Stew-art as Princess Diana in "Spencer" — even as Ita-ly copes with new infec-tions driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

For Venice, though, it's really nothing new.

"The history of Venice is a history that teach-es us how our city, first among European capi-

tals, understood ahead of time how to manage vi-ruses," said Simone Ven-turini, Venice's tourism chief. "These recurrences are studied and recalled even more today because the Venetian model is a model that paradoxically is still used."

Beginning with the first confirmed plague to strike Venice — the 1348 outbreak that killed at least a third of its pop-ulation — the city put in place containment measures even without understanding epidemi-ologically how it spread, said Fabio Zampieri, a history of medicine pro-fessor at the University of Padua Medical School.

Based on the belief that "bad air" was to blame for what became known as the Black Death, Venetian authori-ties closed churches and restaurants, canceled religious processions and ordered a thorough cleaning of homes and public venues, Zampieri said.

During the pestilence that erupted in 1423, Venice's senate decided to lock down the whole city, prohibiting entry of people from suspected plague-ridden places and punishing locals who gave sick foreigners shel-ter with six months in jail, he said. A year later, Venice opened the first "lazzaretto," a hospital on an isolated island in the Venetian lagoon dedicat-

ed exclusively to plague victims.

That concept would transform years later into a proper quaran-tine, an isolated place for people merely suspected of carrying the plague — crews of merchant ships — to wait out 40 days of surveillance while their cargo was disinfected, he said.

During the 1575-1577 plague, doctors in-creasingly used the beak-nosed masks filled with aromatic herbs to try to protect themselves from the sick, still not realiz-ing that the plague was carried mostly by bacte-ria-infected fleas on rats, not "bad air."

"It was still a crucial experience for the histo-ry of medicine, the histo-ry of health care and the history of managing in-fectious diseases," Zamp-ieri said.

After the 1630 pes-tilence again wiped out around a third of the population, weary Vene-tians gave thanks to the Virgin Mary that even more lives weren't taken: They built the Santa Ma-ria della Salute (St. Mary of Health) church across the Grand Canal from St. Mark's Square, one of the city's most visible and iconic images.

The central location of the huge, white octag-onal domed basilica at the tip of Venice's cus-tom's port was entirely intentional, to show the

city's gratitude that it had once again survived and rebounded from the pestilence, said art histo-rian Silvia Marchiori, cu-rator of the Venice Patri-archate's Manfrediniana museum.

"When you arrived in Venice, you arrived from the sea, not land, so you had to notice this great temple that was built in white Istrian stone to at-tract attention," she said.

To this day, Venetians venerate an icon of the Madonna in the basilica during one of the city's main religious festivals on Nov. 21, a day dedicat-ed to offering prayers for good health, she said.

Whether by prayer, public health policy or discipline, Venice as a whole fared relatively well during its latest pan-demic. The city took the extraordinary decision in February 2020 — when coronavirus was just be-ginning to be detected in northern Italy — to can-cel its famous Carnival. It stayed locked down during the worst of the pandemic, watching as neighboring Lombardy and even parts of the surrounding Veneto re-gion got slammed with infections and deaths in one of Europe's worst-hit countries.

Venice has been re-warded with a steady return of visitors this spring and summer, just in time for celebrations marking the 1,600th an-niversary of the found-ing of the city, the film festival, sailing regattas and star-studded fashion shows by Valentino and Dolce & Gabbana.

It's all part of Venice's efforts to attract visitors who stay, spend and ap-preciate the city's history and artistry, rather than day-trippers who take a gondola ride down the Grand Canal and call it a day, said tourism chief Venturini.

"These are the pillars on which we're building a post-COVID tourism," he said.

Turkish, UAE leaders talk on phone as tensions seem to ease

ISTANBUL, AUG 31 (AP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has spo-ken with the United Arab Emirates' de-facto leader, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, by telephone, Erdogan's office said late Monday, in a sign

of easing tensions between the countries.

The two discussed their countries' relations and regional issues, ac-cording to a statement from the Turkish presi-dency. The statement did not say when the conver-

sation took place.

The UAE's state-run news agency said the lead-ers reviewed the prospects of reinforcing the relations between the two nations in a way that serves their common interests and their two peoples. The call came

two weeks after Erdogan hosted a top UAE securi-ty official and discussed investment in Turkey.

UAE national secu-rity advisor Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan's trip was the highest-level public visit

by an Emirati official to Turkey in years. The two countries have seen their ties affected by regional tensions, including the conflict in Libya, where the UAE and Turkey have backed opposing sides in recent years.

The Big Pic



HOT BOD! Actress Megan Fox had her abs on display during an outing in Brentwood, California.

Diane Kruger, Ray Nicholson to headline indie thriller 'Out of the Blue'

LOS ANGELES, AUG 31

(PTI): Actor Diane Kruger will feature opposite Ray Nicholson in indie movie "Out of the Blue". The thriller, which comes from Quiver Distribution, will be directed by Neil LaBute, known for movies such as "The Wicker Man" and "In the Company of Men", reported Variety.

Touted as a contemporary tale of passionate love, deceit and the perfect murder, the follows Connor (Nicholson), a man whose dull life is transformed into a thrilling fantasy world thanks to the seductive Marilyn (Kruger). "He plunges headlong into the adulterous affair; the ex-con with a heart of gold seemingly destined for the raven-haired trophy wife.

"The only hitch in their idyllic new life



together? Marilyn's trapped in a nightmare with an abusive husband and vulnerable stepdaughter. Desperate and with a history of violence, Connor will do almost anything to see him dead," the official logline read.

The movie will be produced by Berry Meyerowitz and Tara Craig with Jeff Sackman, Larry Greenberg,

Matthew Helderman, Luke Taylor and Joe Listhaus serving as executive producers.

Kruger, known for movies such as "Inglorious Bastards" and "In The Fade", will next star in "The 355", co-starring Jessica Chastain, Penelope Cruz and Lupita Nyong'o.

Nicholson, the son of Hollywood veteran Jack Nicholson, was recently seen in Oscar-nominated movie "Promising Young Woman".

Deepika Padukone to star in cross-cultural romantic comedy by STXfilms

MUMBAI, AUG 31 (PTI):

Actor Deepika Padukone is set to star in an upcoming cross-cultural romantic comedy to be developed by STXfilms, a division of Eros STX Global Corporation, the studio announced on Tuesday.

Padukone will also produce the upcoming film through her banner Ka Productions.

The announcement of the project was made by Adam Fogelson, chairman, STXfilms Motion Picture Group, in a statement.

The studio is also in negotiations with Temple Hill Productions Wyck Godfrey and producer Marty Bowen, known for films such as the "Twilight" franchise, "The Fault in Our Stars", "Love, Simon", to develop the project.

The project will be a "sweeping cross-cultural romantic comedy" revolving around Padukone's character.

Fogelson called Padukone "one of the biggest global stars to come from India" and said the actor, who made her Hollywood debut with "XXX: Return of Xander Cage"



in 2017, has only grown as an international superstar.

"While she has been a phenomenal success in many Eros International films, we are thrilled to be building a romantic comedy with her and our friends at Temple Hill.

"We believe this project gives us the opportunity to tap into the spirit, voice, characters and vibrant settings of India and New York in ways that made 'Crazy Rich Asians' feel so authentic and fresh," Fogelson said.

Padukone said the aim of her production house is to back meaningful stories with global appeal and the upcoming project aligned with that thought.

"Ka Productions was founded with the aim to develop and produce purposeful content with global appeal," the 35-year-old actor said.

"I'm thrilled to be partnering with STXfilms and Temple Hill Productions, that share Ka's ambition and creative vision and look forward to bringing impactful and dy-

namic cross-cultural stories to the world," she added.

Last year's acclaimed drama "Chhapaak" marked the first film of Ka Productions, which has also backed films like the upcoming Kabir Khan directorial "83" and the forthcoming Hindi adaptation of the Hollywood movie "The Intern".

Padukone will also be seen in Shakun Batra's untitled film for Dharma Productions and Siddharth Anand's actioner "Pathan", co-starring Shah Rukh Khan.

Netflix acquires 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' sequel from Legendary Pictures

LOS ANGELES, AUG 31 (PTI): The next "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" movie will make its debut on streamer Netflix.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the streaming service has bagged the exclusive distribution rights to the project from Legendary Pictures.

Directed by David Blue Garcia, the new "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" movie is a direct sequel to Tobe Hooper's 1974 classic.

It features Elsie Fisher, Sarah Yarkin, Jacob Latimore, and Moe Dunford in the lead.

The original revolved around two siblings and their three friends on their way to visit their grandfather's grave in Texas, who end up getting trapped with a family of cannibalistic psy-

chopaths and struggle to survive the terrors of Leatherface and his brood.

The new movie, which disregards all other entries in the franchise, takes place years after the shocking events of the original, in a setting where Leatherface hasn't been seen or heard from since.

Chris Thomas Devlin wrote the script for the film, which has been produced by filmmaker Fede Alvarez and Rodolfo Sayagues via their Bad Hombre banner alongside Kim Henkel, Ian Henkel, and Pat Cassidy.

"Texas Chainsaw Massacre" sequel is the second team-up for Netflix and Legendary, after the release of "Enola Holmes" last year.

Taapsee Pannu starrer 'Blurr' wraps production

MUMBAI, AUG 31 (PTI): Actor Taap-

see Pannu starrer psychological thriller "Blurr" has finished production, the makers announced on Tuesday.

Directed by Ajay Bahl, who is known for movies like "BA Pass" and "Section 375", the film went on floors last month and was shot extensively in Nainital.

"Blurr", also starring Gulshan Devaiah, is produced by Zee Studios, Echelon Productions and Pannu's Outsider Films.

Bahl said the setting of Nainital brought to the film the required "beauty and mystery."

Shooting at real locations like Nainital Lake, Mall Road and other tourist spots can be difficult especially with the overcrowding. We would shoot late at night right into the wee hours of the morning. But it was a completely gratifying experience for all of us. Nainital made for the ideal spot bringing equal parts beauty and mystery to the film," the director said in a statement.

The psychological thriller, penned



by Pawan Sony and Bahl, chronicles the story of a girl "caught up in unavoidable circumstances."

"Blurr", the first film under Pannu's production banner, is scheduled to release in 2022.

ARIES:

Disengage from the drama, Aries. Now is not the time to focus on the outer world. Your inner temple is calling for your attention. So, revisit the mindful practices that help you stay in the present. The Zen rituals that remind you of the power of being in your centre. Yes, you will be disappointed by the way that the people around you are behaving. Yes, you will have to learn to manage your expectations. The gift of acceptance will help you make peace with where you are.

TAURUS:

This is the end of a major cycle, Taurus, and you're constantly dealing with the changes that are taking place within and without. But, the new cannot be created without the destruction of the old. So, allow what needs to come undone, to come undone. The good thing is, you've got a lot on your plate right now. Staying focused on your career goals will keep your mind from going into overdrive.

GEMINI:

Given your circumstances, it will be easy for you to question the chosen path. Stay committed to your goals nonetheless. The challenges you are facing are but temporary, and these challenges are helping you become the most bulletproof version of yourself. This is also a time in your life when major cycles are ending. So, make sure you get plenty of R&R. This will keep you from getting completely overwhelmed, Gemini.

CANCER:

Every big success story is preceded by many, many failures—

and yours is no exception to the rule. Today, you're looking back at all the failed efforts with pride as they helped you polish your skills and become the person you are now. What the cards want you to remember: the effort you're putting in today will yield magnificent results tomorrow. In the realm of love and romance, the cards are pointing towards a certain someone who has eyes for you and only you, Cancer. So, allow yourself to stay open to what the Universe is sending your way and know that you will be pleasantly surprised.

LEO:

Your affirmation for the day: "I live in the quantum field of infinite possibilities, and I possess the power to call in miracles as I go along." This is the *big shift*, Leo. The big shift you have consistently been working towards. So, open your arms and get ready to receive the many blessings that are being sent towards you right now. Remember to stay in the energy of gratitude as you do. Consciously choosing to focus on the good will give the good the power to multiply manifold.

VIRGO:

There was a time you believed in the narrative of star-crossed lovers. There was a time you believed things wouldn't work out for you, no matter what. Look at you working through the limitations, Virgo! Look at you manifesting the life you desire and deserve! This is the quantum shift you have been working towards for some time now. Open your arms, receive the many blessings with grace, and remember to give

thanks to the Universe. It gets better from here.

LIBRA:

We all have an idea of the life we want to create for ourselves and the kind of partner we want to share it with. But, what if these ideas and notions are limiting us in a multitude of ways? Overheard at the cosmic conference: the grand plan is better than any you can possibly imagine. So, loosen the grip a little, Libra, as you become one with the rhythm and flow. The more you say yes to the Universe, the more the Universe will say yes to you.

SCORPIO:

You're being completely tunnel-visioned here, Scorpio. But, the truth is that there is a parallel reality available to you. A parallel reality that requires you to take that giant leap of faith. Will you let fear get the better of you this time, or play for Team Faith? What the cards want you to remember: your risks have the potential to pay off big time and transform your life in more ways than you can imagine.

SAGITTARIUS:

This is the love you've been hoping and praying for, Sagittarius. The love that you have been calling into your life for some time now. So, what's keeping you from opening yourself to your beloved? What's keeping you from letting your vulnerable side show? The cards are bringing your attention to all the ways in which you are coming in the way of experiencing the bliss and oneness you so desire. Word for the wise: work through

the emotional blockages as you prepare yourself to break down the walls.

CAPRICORN:

This is no ordinary romance, Capricorn. The two of you have been brought together in the matrix for a specific reason, and now it's time for you to be a light unto the world. The question you want to ask yourself today is, "How can we wield our power for the greater good?" Step back and allow. Step back and allow. In moments of silence, the answer will become clearer to you.

AQUARIUS:

Somebody's been stealing credit for your work, and you know exactly who that is, Aquarius. But, stooping down to their level is only going to mess with your karma cred. So, rise above the petty politics and continue to focus on the quality of your work. Trust that the truth will be revealed when the time is right. As such, this is a time of showing up for your mission - consistently. Your job is to give your best and only your best. The rest will be taken care of by the Universe.

PISCES:

The trouble is, you're being tunnel-visioned here. But, there is more than one way out of the given situation. Flex your creative muscles, and you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you find today. As such, opportunities for growth and expansion are also available to you. Strike the 'T' out of the 'can't' and focus on taking that first step. Everything will fall in place as if by sleight of hand, Pisces.