

Choosing the next Dalai Lama and the fight involving India, US, China



SUDHI RANJAN SEN
NEW DELHI, 15 APR [BLOOMBERG]: Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama-the spiritual leader of Tibetans, who lives in exile in India-turns 86 in July. The choice of his successor is shaping up to be a struggle between India and the U.S. on the one hand and China on the other.

The Dalai Lama is believed to be a living Buddha who is reincarnated after his death. Traditionally a search for a child reincarnation is conducted, and once a boy is confirmed, he studies to prepare for his role. The current Dalai Lama was identified at the age of 2. There's no single method of choosing a Dalai Lama, and the process can be long and complicated.

Senior security officials in India, including in the prime minister's office, have been involved in discussions about how New Delhi can influence the choice of the next Dalai Lama, two officials with direct knowledge of the matter said, asking not to be identified given the sensitive nature of the matter. India hosts the Tibetan government-in-exile in the city of Dharamsala and only recognized Tibet as part of China in 2003. The prime minister's office didn't respond to a request for comment.

From January through March, along its Himalayan border with China, India convened five separate assemblies of senior monks from various sects and schools in the region-the first time such gatherings have taken place in more than 2,000

years. The government hopes that this group will grant international legitimacy to the current Dalai Lama's successor and help fill a power vacuum, as it could take two decades or longer for a reincarnation to be identified and to come of age.

In 1959, U.S. intelligence agents helped smuggle Tenzin Gyatso out of Tibet and into northern India to avoid being captured by Chinese security forces. He hasn't laid out a clear succession plan. A decade ago, he issued a statement saying he'd consult with other Tibetan Buddhist leaders when he's about 90 on whether the more than 600-year-old institution of the Dalai Lama should continue after he dies.

Samdhong Rinpoche, who is part of the Dalai Lama's personal office, the Gaden Phodrang, which will help decide the succession, says that if Tibet "remains occupied" by China, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said he will be reincarnated outside Tibet and most likely in India." China may appoint its own Dalai Lama, but its choice "will have no legitimacy."

Until last year, Rinpoche says, there was "semi-official communication" between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama, with the government trying to persuade the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. His return wouldn't be possible under the current political situation, Rinpoche says.

In 2007, China issued an order that requires authorities in Beijing

turn to pg02

Petrol And diesel prices drop marginally after remaining unchanged for 15 days

NEW DELHI, 15 APR [PTI]: Fuel prices in India saw a marginal drop today on April 15, 2021, after a hiatus of 15 days. In the country's national capital Delhi, petrol prices stood at ₹ 90.40 per litre after seeing a drop of 16 paise, while diesel rates fell 14 paise to ₹ 80.73 per litre.

A day before, petrol and diesel were priced at ₹ 90.56 per litre and ₹ 80.87 per litre, respectively, in Delhi. At the same time, the country's financial capi-

tal, Mumbai saw a 15 paise drop in both petrol and diesel prices standing today at ₹ 96.83 per litre and ₹ 87.81 per litre, respectively.

State-run oil companies like Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum, and Bharat Petroleum currently revise fuel retail prices in India based on the global crude oil rates each day. Today Brent Crude is priced at \$ 66.27 per barrel.

Covid spikes with 41 new cases in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 APR:

Sikkim registered another surge of 41 new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 6,497 on Thursday. Of these 41 cases, 37 were detected in samples collected in East District and four in South District. There are currently 229 active cases of coronavirus in Sikkim.

In his daily health bulletin, Health Department State IEC Officer Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that these 41 cases were picked up in the testing of 303 samples on Wednesday. While 35 samples returned positive in RT-PCR testing of 266 samples, one was detected in TrueNat testing of four samples and five in rapid antigen testing of 33 samples.

Among the new cases from in and around the capital, there are five persons from Upper Sichey, three from near the North Sikkim Taxi Stand at Vajra, two from Manbir Colony, two from 6th Mile [Tadong], two from MG Marg, one from Daragaon [Tadong], one from Greendale School Road, one from Metro Point Tadong, one from opposite SSB Gate [Vajra], two more from Tadong, one from

the A-block staff quarters at Central Referral Hospital and one from Deorali.

Likewise, three people from Rangpo, two from Ranipool, two NHPC employees and two people from Chanatar [Rangpo] in East District and two from Rabongla, one from Namchi and one from Dambudara in South District were found positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that an Army personnel has also tested positive and was following the COVID protocol of the Army. He added that a person from Kalimpong admitted at CRH-Tadong has also reported positive and has been shifted to the COVID dedicated STNM Hospital.

He added that a 72-year-old male from Tadong, a 51-year-old lady from Development Area, a 25-year-old lady who has given her address as Birpara, West Bengal, and a 32-year-old male who has given his address as West Bengal have also tested positive for COVID-19 but cannot be contacted over the phone numbers provided by them. Their phones have remained either switched off or were not being answered. Mr Bhutia has called on them to immediately contact the concerned authorities.

In the meanwhile, the number of recov-

ered cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim has further improved to 5,995 with five more recoveries on Wednesday.

26,328 vaccine jabs in 4 days

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 APR:

Sikkim administered 26,328 vaccine shots in the four-day Teeka Utsav from 11 to 14 April.

The highest number of vaccine shots were given in East District at 13,701, followed by 5,940 in West District during Teeka Utsav.

A total of 4,625 persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 in South District and 2,062 in North District.

While giving details of Covid vaccinations carried out on Wednesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that a total of 6,058 persons were given vaccine shots - 5231 receiving the first dose and 827 completing their vaccine schedule with the second dose.

"Wrap up 4 rounds of voting in one day":

Mamata Banerjee to election body

KOLKATA, 15 APR [NDTV]: Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has called for clubbing the remaining four phases of elections into one day in view of the increasing Covid cases in the state -- a possibility the Election Commission has already negated.

Bengal is the only state where elections are still due. The other states which went to polls in this round -- Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala -- and the Union Territory of Puducherry, are now waiting for results.

"Amid an ongoing pandemic, we firmly opposed @ECISVEEP's decision to conduct WB

polls in 8 phases. Now, in view of the huge surge in #COVID19 cases, I urge the ECI to consider holding the remaining phases in ONE go. This will protect the people from further exposure to #COVID19," Ms Banerjee tweeted this evening.

Earlier today, the Election Commission said there was no question of clubbing the remaining phases of elections in Bengal, putting an end to speculation on the matter. "No such plan of clubbing phases," a spokesperson of the Commission said.

Several senior Trinamool leaders have accused the Com-

mission of drawing out the elections over an unprecedented eight phases to favour the BJP. The party has earlier repeatedly accused the poll body of partisanship.

"It is certainly criminal negligence bordering on manslaughter on part of @ECISVEEP to mandate 8 phase election in WB in middle of worst pandemic. Unbelievable that we are being put through this. Infections, deaths rising everyday," tweeted party MP Mahua Moitra.

Going a step further, senior Trinamool leader Derek O'Brien tweeted:

The Chief Minister has

blamed the BJP for the spread of Covid in parts of the state.

"Do you know, they have got a whole lot of people into the state. In the name of election campaign, they have got so many outsiders and they have spread the disease here and run away and now they say 'Give us the vote'," she had said at a rally in north Bengal yesterday.

Over the last 24 hours, Bengal logged 6,769 cases, pushing the state's total to 6,30,116. There are 36,981 active cases. Twenty-two people also died, taking the total number of fatalities to 10,480.

DC East convenes meeting to discuss punctuality and police bandobast for Covid protocols

GANGTOK, 15 APR [IPR]: A meeting was conducted at the Conference Hall, District Administrative Centre, Sichey today.

The meeting was chaired by District Collector [East], Ragul K, and was also attended by ADC-East, Tushar G Nikhare, ADC (HQ), Hemant Rai, SDPO Gangtok, Prakash Subba, SDM Gangtok, Tshering Bhutia, officials and staff.

During the meeting, following few important points were discussed.

Figuring prominently in the deliberations was the Chief Minister's message

regarding maintaining of punctuality of all employees in the office for public convenience; Deployment of Sikkim Police to adhere to COVID protocols; and proposal of biometric facial recognition for maintaining attendance in DAC office in days to come.

It was also informed in the meeting that people visiting the DAC office may ensure physical distancing and adhere to COVID -19 appropriate behaviour keeping in mind the prevailing situation of COVID-19 in the State.



The Covid Battle is the People's War

VIEWPOINT

VIEWPOINT

JIWAN RAI

Being aggressively political and intensely religious has been India's biggest problem during these perilous Covid times. As if being the world's third worst hit country by Coronavirus was not bad enough, we so foolishly dropped our guard, giving the second wave a free run in the country. Covid-19 has had a cake walk. India has now crossed Brazil to become the second worst hit country in the world.

Covid-19, so far, has infected nearly 14 crore people, claiming nearly 30 lakh lives globally. In India, around 1.4 crore people have been infected and over 1.72 lakh lives have been lost to Covid-19 so far. One widespread argument to promote India's success has been that India has one of the lowest case fatality rates (CFR) in the world. At one point, it had gone down to 1.1 % which meant only one percent of the total infected popula-

tion was dying. Our country did well to bring it down from 3.6 % in April last year to 1.6% by the end of September.

However, our performance against the second wave has left much to be desired. Nearly 2 lakh people are being infected on a daily basis which is highly likely to go up to 3 lakh per day. But what is more worrying is the steady rise in CFR which now stands at 1.26%. The rise in percentage may look almost negligible but some experts studying the rise in daily cases are predicting a sharp rise in daily deaths. We are now hearing news of how some crematoriums have been found to be too inadequate to cope with the rising deaths.

These are tough times. The leaders in highly responsible positions in the government are more focussed on election campaigns than on fighting the rising cases of this deadly virus. The country's two mighty leaders – Prime Minister Modi and

Home Minister Amit Shah are spearheading these campaigns. They are addressing huge crowds of people. Masks, social distancing and other Covid appropriate behaviours are stark by their absence. The Home Minister seems more resolute than ever to spread 'courage' to face coronavirus without any of these. Other leaders are not far behind them. The political leadership has utterly failed in leading by example.

What about Sikkim? We would do well to learn that Sikkim, located a short distance from the hot and happening cities of India, has a window of a few months to prepare itself. We got that window during the first wave. Unfortunately, we wasted precious time in self-congratulating and when the infection eventually hit us, we were caught off guard. We lost 135 lives during the first wave. Now the second wave has begun to touch Sikkim. Unfortunately, four MLAs who had visited Gujarat to participate in Dandi March,

have now tested positive. One of them is said to have even attended a public meeting before his test result was out. Another worrying matter is the positive cases found among tourists. So far, a few schools have been declared containment zones after some students tested positive.

The experts say that the second wave may continue until May end. How the state government will tackle it will be of great significance. Here are a few reasons why Sikkim must be highly alert.

One, the tourists entering Sikkim are from the plains of India, many of whom are actually coming from Covid hotspots. There is suspicion that the second wave virus is more contagious.

Two, our neighbouring state of West Bengal has been a shameless spectacle of reckless election campaigns. The neighbouring hills of Kalimpong and Darjeeling witnessed rally after rally with people openly defying Covid protocols. Leaders were

leading from the front in their defiance. These hills and Siliguri are our first point of contact with the country.

Three, our own people in general are not particularly Covid conscious. The infamous Holi dance in Gandhi Marg was a stark example. Even some journalists were seen shaking their legs flat out with the crowd.

Four, Sikkimese people do not necessarily have the best of immunity against Covid-19. We recorded one of the worst CFRs during the first wave. If the second wave of coronavirus is deadlier than the first, as has been speculated, we have alarming times ahead.

The pandemic is not only far from being over but, going by the trend in the country, the worst is yet to come. Nothing can be a substitute for best public behaviour. The state government must up the ante. But what is more important is that people mustn't depend on the government alone. It is the people's war.

Ambedkar Jayanti observed at Teesta Stage-V power station



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 APR:

NHPC's Teesta-V Power Station organized a special tribute to mark the 130th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on 15 April here at Balutar, a press release informs.

The program began with the General Manager (I/c), Teesta-V Power Station, Sanjay Darbari, offering a floral tribute to a portrait of Dr Ambedkar. Mr Darbari highlighted that Dr Ambedkar, apart from heading the Constitu-

tion drafting exercise and devoting his life to social upliftment of the underprivileged, was also a great Institutional builder. He urged all employees to continue to cherish and follow the ideals enshrined in the Constitution of India.

CM's felicitation prog postponed

GANGTOK, 15 APR [IPR]: A coordination meeting of Advisors and Chairpersons of the Government of Sikkim was held at the conference hall of Soochna Bhawan today. The meeting was chaired by Advisor, Information and Public Relations Department Birendra Tamling, and was attended by Advisors, Chairpersons and Confidential Secretary to CM.

During the meeting, it was informed that the upcoming felicitation programme for Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang scheduled for



17 April has been postponed due to the current situation of COVID-19 in the State.

Mr Tamling informed that the date for the felicitation programme of the Chief Minister will be fi-

nalised shortly after considering the prevailing situation of COVID-19 in the State.

Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti assists Teeka Utsav at Singtam Hospital

SUMMIT REPORT RANGPO, 15 APR:

Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti stepped forward to make the Covid-19 vaccination drive successful here at Singtam District Hospital.

Members of Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti of Singtam volunteered



at the District Hospital, escorting senior citizens to the vaccination rooms and also helping out with paperwork.

The support was well-received given that the Singtam District Hospital caters to a sizeable population coming in from East, South and North districts.

Head of akhara suffering from COVID-19 dies in U'khand

DEHRADUN, APR 15 (PTI): The head of the Maha Nirvani Akhara from Madhya Pradesh Swami Kapil Dev who was under treatment for COVID-19 at a private hospital here has died, an official said on Thursday. The akhara's Mahamandaleshwar, who had come to attend the ongoing Kumbh Mela in Haridwar from Madhya Pradesh, was admitted to the Kailash Hospital here after his RT-PCR test result, Haridwar's Chief Medical Officer S K Jha said.

Swami Kapil Dev passed away at the hos-

pital on April 13, Superintendent of Police (City) Sarita Dobhal said.

Over 1,700 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Haridwar Kumbh Mela area from April 10 to 14 confirming fears that one of the world's largest religious gatherings may contribute further to the rapid rise in coronavirus cases.

Medical workers conducted 2,36,751 tests over the five-day period in the mela site. Out of these, 1,701 came out positive for coronavirus.

The numbers include both RT-PCR and Rapid

Antigen Test reports of devotees and seers of different akharas (ascetic groups) over the five-day period in the entire mela site extending from Haridwar to Devprayag, Jha said.

More RT-PCR test reports are awaited and the trend shows that the number of infected persons in the Kumbh Mela site is likely to climb to 2,000, he said.

The Kumbh Mela area is spread over 670 hectares covering parts of Haridwar, Tehri and Dehradun districts, including Rishikesh.

A majority of the

48.51 lakh people who took part in the last two 'royal baths' (shahi snan) held on the occasion of Somwati Amavasya on April 12 and Mesh Sankranti on April 14 were seen openly violating COVID norms like wearing face masks and maintaining social distancing.

Despite their best efforts, the police could not impose the standard operating procedures (SOPs) on the seers of akharas and the ash-smearers covering parts of Haridwar, Tehri and Dehradun districts, including Rishikesh.

A majority of the

Andamans reports 38 fresh COVID-19 cases, 1 new death

PORT BLAIR, APR 15 (PTI): Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported 38 new COVID-19 cases, pushing the coronavirus tally in the union territory to 5,247, an official said on Thursday.

The COVID-19 death toll in the archipelago rose to 63 as one more person succumbed to the infection on Wednesday, the official said.

All the new cases were detected in South Andaman district during contact tracing, he said.

The union territory now has 106 active COVID-19 cases and all the patients are in South Andaman district. The other two districts North and Middle Andaman and Nicobar have no active COVID-19 cases, the official said.

Twenty four more COVID-19 patients recovered from the disease on Wednesday, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,078, he said.

The union territory administration has so far tested 3,43,431 samples for COVID-19 and the test positivity rate is 1.53 per cent.

Information, Publicity and Tourism secretary of the union territory administration S K Singh said people not following the COVID-19 protocols is the major reason for the sudden surge in coronavirus cases in the archipelago.

He said that there are no plans as of now to impose lockdown but COVID-19 protocols will be strictly enforced and action will be taken against violators.

The secretary said more than 46,000 beneficiaries have been vaccinated in the union territory so far and test, track and treat is our focus.

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Agri Minister inaugurates Tribal Development Fund project



GYALSHING, 15 APR (IPR):

The Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, IPR and Printing and Stationery Departments, Lok Nath Sharma officially inaugurated the Tribal Development Fund for WADI (Wasteland Development in India) based project at Sankhu Radhu Khandu, Panchayat Bhawan, West Sikkim, today.

The inaugural function also had the presence of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party Area In-charge of Maneybong Dentam Constituency, Purna Hang Subba, Chairman SABCCO, JB Subba, SDM Dentam, NK Karki, President of Tribal Development Committee, Narayan Bhattacharai, Assistant General Manager NABARD Bhama Devi, Assistant General Manager RBI Gangtok IYT Namchu, Officials,

farmers and others.

The Minister, in his address, applauded the newly initiated WADI programme and expressed gratitude for conceptualizing a holistic development approach that takes into account all aspects of rural life.

He also elaborated the various schemes and programmes initiated by the State Government to uplift the farmer's economic and social status. He also articulated farmer centric policies implemented in the State and the future programmes envisioned by the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang to benefit the farmers at large.

Mr Sharma also appealed everyone to follow COVID-19 protocol and urged the population of forty five years to get vaccinated without hesitation. He also reminded remarkable role accomplished by the farmers

during COVID crisis in 2020 and also anticipated same kind of contribution to ensure surplus production in order to address the increasing demand.

It may be mentioned here that the main features of WADI model are economic upliftment of the farmers through sustainable agriculture, social empowerment, improvement in quality of life including health and women empowerment in tribal areas of the country. The broad interventions are in the areas of land use planning, soil and water harvesting measures and improved farming based agro-horti-forestry practices. Therefore, WADI, a flagship programme of NABARD, not only strengthens the agrarian livelihoods of the tribal households, but also increases food and nutritional security.

Speaker follows-up on road repairs ordered by CM

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 APR:

Sikkim Legislative Assembly Speaker, LB Das, led a team of officials to inspect follow-up on instructions passed by the Chief Minister with regard to repairing and upgradation of the Rangpo to Rorathang road and the Duga to Churibotey axis during his last visit to Rangpo.

Both roads falls in West Pendum constituency which the Speaker represents in the legislative assembly.

A Sikkim Krantikari



Morcha press release informs that Mr Das headed a team comprising of chairperson, Sikkim Housing Board, Kamra Tashi Bhutia, SKM CLC president Hari Dangal, SDM-Rang-

po, DE, AE (Roads & Bridges Deptt.) and other officials and "inspected Rangpo to Pendum road and Duga to Churibotey road which has been miserable condition since long time back."

During the course of the visit, Mr Bhutia directed the officials to execute the repair and upgradation work at the earliest while also ensuring quality, the release informs.

Choosing the next Dalai Lama...

to oversee the next Dalai Lama's selection without the interference "of any foreign organization or individual." It calls for potential successors to be chosen by picking lots from the golden urn in Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibet's capital. When installed, the Dalai Lama must then get a "living Buddha permit" from the Chinese government. Chinese officials say there's precedent for Beijing to be involved in picking the Dalai Lama, as the current one ascended to the position in 1939 after being approved by Chiang Kai-shek, who was president of the Republic of China before the Communist Party took power in 1949.

The Dalai Lama has called that a "lie" and says the golden urn method was used to pick only two of the 14 Dalai Lamas since the first one was born in 1391. (The Dalai Lama said a different procedure, the "dough-ball method," could be used if there were multiple candidates; this entails writing the names on a piece of paper, encasing them in dough balls, placing these in a bowl before a sacred object for three weeks, and then publicly rolling them around in the bowl until one falls out.)

The struggle over the Dalai Lama comes as the Biden administration works more closely with partners in Asia to sanction Beijing over human-rights abuses, restrict exports of key technology to China, and push back against the country's territorial claims, including over Taiwan. Beijing has responded by lashing out at the U.S. and its allies, insisting they have no say in Tibet, Xinjiang, or other "internal" matters.

Last year, former President Donald Trump signed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which reiterates the U.S. stand that the current Dalai Lama is the final authority on his reincarnation, and in November 2020, the head of Tibet's exiled government visited the White House for the first time. The Biden administration is maintaining Trump's policy: "We believe that the Chinese government should have no role in the succession process of the Dalai Lama," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters in March. Rinpoche says the U.S. policy is well-intentioned, but "the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is entirely a spiritual matter for the people of Tibet."

Majority-Hindu India was the birthplace of Buddhism and is reasserting its role as a protector of the religion. In previous decades, leaders in New Delhi saw the Dalai Lama's presence in the country as a "Tibet card" they could use to pressure authorities in Beijing by holding out the threat of recognizing Tibet as an independent country. More recently, their view of the Tibetan exile community has shifted depending on relations with China. As tensions heated up last year with the deadliest clash in decades along the India-China Himalayan border, India last September openly acknowledged for the first time a secret military unit with Tibetan soldiers.

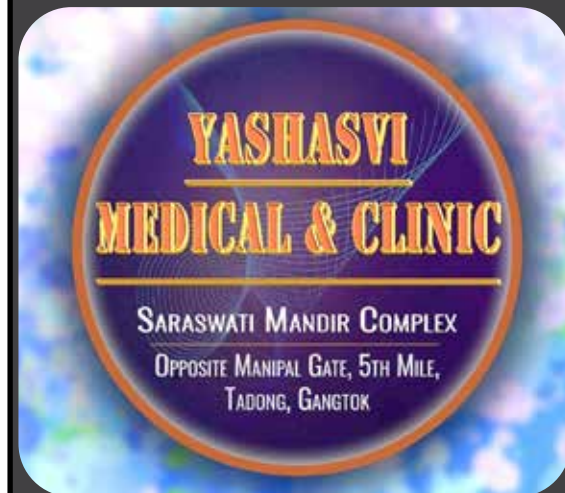
China, too, sees value in using Buddhism to exercise power in Tibet and more broadly throughout Asia. "China has been using Tibetan Buddhism as a soft-power tool," says Sana Hashmi, a visiting fellow at the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation.

While the current Dalai Lama has advocated only autonomy for Tibet, not independence, Beijing still sees that as a threat. Wu Yingjie, the Communist Party's top official overseeing Tibet, wrote in an official publication last October that China should "go deep in exposing the counter-revolutionary nature of Dalai Lama and the Dalai Clique" and guide the Tibetan people to "take a rational approach to religion."

A similar power struggle played out with the Panchen Lama, the second-most prominent figure in Tibetan Buddhism. After the death of the 10th Panchen Lama in 1989, both the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama identified reincarnations. The man selected by Beijing is now a senior adviser to China's parliament. The Dalai Lama's choice hasn't been seen in two decades, and his followers say he was abducted at the age of 6.

"The reincarnation of Dalai and Panchen is rightly China's internal affair" and "allows no interference of external forces," China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "We urge the relevant parties to recognize the anti-China separatist nature of the 14th Dalai and the so-called Tibetan government-in-exile, be careful in their words and deeds, and stop using Tibet-related issues to interfere in China's internal affairs."

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SMIMS hosts webinar on virtual dissection techniques



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 14 APR:

The Department of Anatomy, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences (SMIMS) under Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) organised a live webinar on the subject "Augmented reality, digital and real human cadavers: perspectives of students and an expert."

The webinar was hosted by Organising Secretary & Associate Professor, Dr Polly Lama, Department of Anatomy, SMIMS along Head of the Department, Department of Anatomy, Profes-

sor Dr Binod Kr Tamang, SMIMS.

A press release informs that the main theme of the webinar was to demonstrate and discuss about blended innovate use of the state-of-the-art virtual dissection and conventional cadaveric dissection teaching techniques at SMIMS, SMU.

The resource faculties/experts for the event were Consultant Ophthalmologist STNM hospital & President of Indian Medical Association Sikkim Branch,

Dr Karma Loday Bhutia, who demonstrated the complexities of eye surgery and mentioned that even a tiny error during eye surgeries can have overwhelming consequences, thus cadaveric and virtual dissection are equally important for practicing medical students.

Professor Mark Billingham, as the international resource faculty located at University of South Australia and the director of the Empathic Computing Lab, with an on-line pre-recorded video

lecture discussed and showed how augmented reality interface is designed in real-time and emphasized that augmented reality can be made without any prior coding knowledge.

Dr Polly Lama, as the internal resource expert discussed about the importance of dissection demonstration and virtual reality tools at SMIMS currently being used in the COVID situation, and demonstrated innovation made with blended dissection techniques especially for SMIMS

students.

Professor Dr Binod Kr Tamang drew a critical introductory and conclusive overview addressing the student's point of view on the pro and cons of anatomical human dissection techniques and 21st centuries change we ought to advocate following situation such as the COVID, Prof Tamang mentioned that we all need to focus on the lesson we learnt and that may be by accepting technology which is already here to only make life easier for all of us.

Health & Wellness Day celebrated at STNM Hospital

GANGTOK, 15 APR [IPR]: The third anniversary of Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Day - was observed at the auditorium of STNM Hospital, Sohyagang on 14 April.

The programme had Advisor, Health and Family Welfare Department, KB Gurung, as chief guest accompanied by Principal Director-I, Health Services, Dr Tsering Laden, and PDHS and Mission Director NHM, Dr T Yamphel Bhutia.

The Chief Medical Officers and representatives from the districts, Primary Healthcare teams from the PHC-HWC and SHC-HWC, Programme officers from the Headquarters, IEC Team and other staff of the department attended the programme.

The Additional Medical Superintendent, STNM-H, Dr Yudok Bhutia and Principal, Sikkim Government College of Nursing, Ms. Chunni Bhutia were also present.

The programme was organized by the State Health Society NHM, Department of Health and Family Welfare.

Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWC) provides a comprehensive primary health care. It is the country's flagship programme and a national initiative for a healthy India or Ayushman Bharat. In this initiative, all the sub health centres and

the primary health centres in the rural and the urban will be upgraded to Health and Wellness Centres.

In Sikkim, the programme has already been implemented and all the sub centres have been provided with one additional manpower, a Mid-Level Health Provider.

During the programme, "Individual and Team Certificates of Recognition" were distributed for exemplary contribution in strengthening delivery of comprehensive primary health care services through AB-HWCs, "Kayakalp award" to the best performing District Hospital, CHC and PHCs and "Certificate of Appreciation" for quiz competition under NTEP.

Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Award

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

1. Dr Pallabi Pariyar, Medical Officer Ravangla PHC.
2. Zangmu Bhutia, Mid-Level Health Provider, Lingchom H&WC.
3. Krishna Gurung, Staff Nurse, Dentam PHC.
4. Hangmit Subba, ANM, Dodak H&WC.
5. Karma Tsultim Bhutia, MPW(M), Kabrey H&WC.
6. Sarmila Rai, Health Educator, Soreng PHC.
7. Tshering Tshomu Bhutia, ASHA, Samdong PHC.

Best PHC was awarded to Namthang PHC and the best PHSC was awarded to Maniram



Bhanjyang PHSC. The award was received by Dr Mingyur Lassopa, Medical Officer, Namthang PHC.

KAYAKALP AWARD

- 1st commendation Award - District hospital Singtam
- 2nd commendation Award - District hospital Gyalshing
- 3rd commendation Award - District hospital Mangan
- 4th commendation Award - District hospital Namchi

B. Community Health Centres: Best CHC - Rhenock CHC Commendation Award - Jorethang CHC

C. Primary Health Centres: **EAST DISTRICT:** Best PHC - Sang PHC Commendation Award - Rangpo PHC West District: Best PHC - Tashiding PHC Commendation Award - Mangalbaria PHC

Commendation Award - Dentam PHC **NORTH DISTRICT:** Best PHC - Chungthang PHC

Commendation Award - Hee - Gyathang PHC Commendation Award - Passingdong PHC

SOUTH DISTRICT: Best PHC - Temi PHC Commendation Award - Yangyang PHC Commendation Award - Namthang PHC Apart from the award, a special Certificate of Appreciation was also awarded to Chairman, Bikash Thapa, Stars of Hope who was one of the first volunteer to render his support to the department in our fight against COVID-19.

In the meeting, ADHS CPHC Dr Raj Prabha Moktan gave a brief presentation on the status of AB- Health and Wellness Centre and its importance in the Sikkim while ADHS Quality Assurance, Dr Baroon Subba outlined the Kayakalp pro-

gramme in the state and how it strengthens and improves the quality of the health system.

PDHS cum MD NHM in his address emphasized the importance of primary health care and how preventive measures were very important especially in times of COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted that Sikkim has achieved distinction of posting 100% MLH- Ps (Mid-Level Health Provider) in the country. This would help in reducing burden of Non-communicable and Communicable diseases in the rural areas and further strengthen our ability to fight present pandemic at the community level.

The chief guest advised on providing quality health care to people of Sikkim especially at the primary health care level reducing the caseloads at the secondary and tertiary levels. He also commended the good work done by the department.

Punjab farmers visit CP Bhattarai's Model Integrated Organic

SUMMIT REPORT RANGPO, 15 APR:

Farmers from Punjab's Mansa district visited CP Bhattarai's Model Integrated Organic Farm and other farms at Kamarey in East Sikkim near here today.

The Punjab group is on an exposure tour to learn more about organic farming and its practical applications, it is informed.

They were taken to bee farms, sericulture,



horticulture and agriculture units in the area and introduced to these aspects of farming.

Kamarey is an organic model village and has been visited of late by a large number of national and in-

ternational delegates.

An interaction program was also held between farmers from Kamarey and Punjab.

The visiting group also visited the seed bank and appreciated the initiative of establishing a Model Integrated Organic Farm.

The group was accompanied by Mansa's ATMA Deputy Director, Chamandup Singh, and other officers.

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT Samaj Kalyan, TADONG, GANGTOK						
Memo No: 11/GOS/439/SJ&WD/EC/2021				Dated: 13.04.2021		
NOTICE INVITING TENDER						
The Divisional Engineer, (N/E) Social Justice & Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim on behalf of Governor of Sikkim, invites sealed tenders in percentage Rate basis from the eligible contractors of appropriate class Vide Notification No. 584/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 08.10.2018 vide Notification No. 515/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 12.06.2018 Notification No. 104/R&B Dated 08.10.2020 for the work(s) listed under:-						
Sl. No.	Name of work	Value put to Tender (in Rs.)	Completion Time (in months)	Amount of Earnest Money @2.2% for issue of tender form (Rs)	Amount of Bank receipt for cost of tender documents (Rs.)	Constituency / GPU/Ward.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction of Community Centre at Pacheykhani in East Sikkim.	1,06,22,230.00	18 months	2,65,556.00	30,000.00	Dickling Chalamthang GPU. 19 th Rhenock Constituency.
Time Schedule is as follows:-						
1. Start Date for submission of application with Bank Receipt - 16 th April 2021 to 20 th April, 2021 (10.00 am to 4.30pm) for issue of Tender Documents (Excluding the tender form).						
2. Last date for issue of tender form - 23rd April, 2021 (11:00hrs to 13:00hrs).						
3. Date and Time for submission of Tender - 03rd May, 2021 (10:00 hrs to 13:00 hrs).						
4. Date and Time of opening of Tender - 03 rd May, 2021 (13:30 hrs to 16:30 hrs) in the respective GPU.						
Note: The details of tender documents including tender form can be obtained from the office of the Divisional Engineer- (N/E) SJ&WD on production of receipt of deposit made to respective Ward.						
1. Tender is open only to the eligible Contracts/Firms of appropriate Class/Area.						
2. The intending tenders/contractors should apply in writing for issue of tender documents. The application would invariably be signed by the contractor himself/herself. The tender documents will not be issued to any person other than the INTENDING TENDER.						
3. The applicants should enclose attested copies of the (a) Valid GSTIN Registration Certification, (b) Latest Income Tax Clearance Certificate as per the Indian Income Tax Act and (c) Validated Contractor Enlistment Certificate, and Professional Tax Clearance Certificate along with the application. It is mandatory to produce the original validated/updated Enlistment Certificate during sale/issue of the Tender Document for verification (d) PAN card.						
4. The prescribed Non-Transferable Tender Documents (Excluding the Tender Form) can be obtained during the period specified in (As above from the office of the Addl. Chief Engineer/ Superintending Engineer of Social Justice & Welfare Department, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim, on production of receipt deposit to the revenue of the respective GPU.						
5. Earnest Money Deposit @2.5% in the State Bank of Sikkim in the form of deposit receipt of schedules bank which includes in the form of temporary deposit receipts or fixed deposits receipts in favour of the Sr. Accounts Officer of the Department Tender Form shall be issued only on the production of the deposit receipt to the contractors who has obtained the tender documents, on production of deposit receipts of 2.5% earnest money.						
6. The Tender documents including the Tender Form with quoted offer should be placed in a sealed cover with the name of the Tenderers and the name of the work superscripted on it. Supporting documents listed at SL 3(a), (b) and (c) above should be enclosed with the offer.						
7. Sealed Tenders may be deposited in the Tender Box in the concerned GPK on the date and time indicated above.						
8. Tenders will be opened by a Tender Opening Committee a prescribed by the Government in the presence of the tenderer on the date and time indicated above.						
9. The Tender should sign on every page of the tender documents as Acceptance of the General Direction and Conditions of Contract and other laid down norms. The rate quoted should be both in figures and words and should be inclusive of GST and all other Taxes and Levies. Overwriting and correction should be avoided and if made should be authenticated. Incomplete/ Conditional tenders shall be rejected forthwith.						
10. In case of any discrepancy in rate(s) printed in the Schedule of Rates and Quantities issued with the tender document, rates as per approved Schedule of Rates will be taken as correct. For items outside the SOR, the rates shall be as per the technically checked/estimate/analysis. Decision of the Add. Chief Engineer cum Secretary/Head of the Department will be final in this regard.						
11. The Work Value, scope and quantum of work are subject to change, the contractor shall execute the work as per the directives of the Department. No claim on this account shall be entertained whatsoever. If any extra claim is made, it shall be as per the agreement rates.						
12. Avoidable damages due to negligence of the contractor shall be at his own risk and cost. The Department shall not be liable for payment of such damages (if any), including accidents to laborer at site.						
13. The offer shall remain valid for a period of 90 days. The work should commence within 15 days from the date of issue of work order.						
14. The department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.						
15. Subletting of contract work is against the norms and if it comes to the notice, the original contract shall be cancelled and appropriate action shall be initiated as per the rules						
16. The Department also reserves the right to increase, decrease, alter or modify the item of works as indicated in the NIT without assigning any reason thereof.						
17. The contractor will have to pay all taxes and duties as applicable and notified by the State/Central Government and no claim shall be entertained in this regard whatsoever.						
18. The rate quoted shall be inclusive of prevailing taxes.						
19. The department reserves the right to reject the incomplete tender without any reason there-off.						
20. The Contactor has to submit the work program/ bar Chart may be submitted in the initial stage.						
Sd/- Divisional Engineer (N/E) Social Justice & Welfare Department Government of Sikkim..						
R.O. No. 21/IPR/Pub/Classi/21-22 Date. 15.4.2021						

Buy2-Get3 Free at Brand Factory

GANGTOK, 15 APR: Go crazy and save your money with Brand Factory's Buy 2 Get 3 Free Offer. Brand Factory - the ultimate discounted branded shopping destination presents New Math of Shopping "1+1=5" i.e. Buy 2 Get 3 Free Offer.

Brand Factory is India's only store that offers 20% to 70% discount on over 200 original brands 365 days a year. If you are a fashion lover who wears nothing but original brands and is in search of the best offers head to the nearest Brand Factory store



soon.

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chase of Rs. 2500/- will get an Alvaro Men's Accessories Gift Set worth MRP 1999/- just at Rs. 499/- and a gift voucher worth Rs. 500/- which

will be valid in the month of May 2021. Customer can also choose to purchase an Adidas bag worth MRP. 2299/- just at Rs. 599/-.

One can choose from brands like include Killer, Crocodile, Buffalo, Knighthood, Bare Denims, Zara, Privilege Club, Bare Leisure, Scullers, Twills, Crimsoun Club, Lee Cooper, Spykar, IKTARA, Nayan's, SBPRC, Umbro and much more.

Head to the nearest Brand Factory at GangtokTadong, Jade Building, Near Krishi Bhavan.

‘Other Workers’ Have Taken the Lead

So, while traditional occupations are supported, think for the “others” as well

Some years, in fact, more than some years ago, a workshop/ seminar ambitiously titled, “Job Profile, Life Management, Skills Orientation Program for Educated Youth of Sikkim” travelled across the State for a week. It was an ambitious initiative given the number of commas dividing the many tasks it aimed to address apart from being a workshop and a seminar bundled into one. The basic idea was obviously to support the skill and capacity development initiative underway at the time and being earnestly enough pursued to still make the news occasionally. The idea was well placed though in that it was help the youth still in school zero in on their future prospects well in time. That special focus, however, did deliver better than the tokenism which has traditionally plagued departmental, especially HRDD, undertakings and that was unfortunate because agriculture, despite what the Organic enforcement might want us to believe, is no longer the highest employer in the State.

As per the last set of Census 2011, cultivators and agricultural labourers [as of 2011] make up 46.5% of the total workers in Sikkim. That is a substantial number, but a decade earlier, this segment made up a majority of the workers at 56.4% in 2001. Perhaps for the first time in Sikkim’s history, “other workers” now make a majority of the workforce at 51.8%, having grown from their proportion of 42% in 2001. Agriculture is not receiving any new hands, so in the seven years that have passed since the last head-count, the number of other workers could have grown substantially more. The definition of “other workers” as per the Census operation is very loose, it is anyone who is not a cultivator or an agricultural labourer or a household industry worker. Simply put, the aspiration to become farmers has dulled substantially in Sikkim, and even as this trend needs to be addressed more seriously, one needs to also address the counseling needs of an increasing number of young who aspire to join the “other workers” club in Sikkim. In that sense, the skill development effort mounted through the Livelihood Schools was a move well ahead of its time and one which should be refined and made more effective to meet the aspirations of Sikkim’s young; job profiling and skills orientation should hence deliver more lucidly.

Even as this happens, Sikkim needs to also address the falling proportion of farmers. It needs to recognize that enterprise is not developed to a level high enough to become a majority employer and agriculture deserves to be reinforced to provide the foundation for its economic plans. This is also important because projections for agriculture are ambitious in Sikkim with an intense Organic Mission underway here.

The setting is also perfect. Nature endows Sikkim as the land of bountiful, agriculture is a traditional occupation and organic farming is a well advised value addition for the farms here. What is however still a worrying reality is the lethargy that continues to define the Horticulture and Agriculture Departments and the inexcusable disinterest with which they engage with the farmers. And no, And no, enforcing the ban on non-organic produce does not count as engagement because engagement would require supporting organic farming (and there is a difference) which they have clearly not done a great job of.

Given the expansive presence of government in all sectors then, it is hardly surprising that agriculture, like any other private sector activity here, is yet to shine. Granted there have been flashes of excellence, but these are either individual achievements or targeted project interventions. The universal pursuit to grow more and grow relevant is not palpable yet. Not enough young are obviously taking to revamped traditional occupations and economies. The support mechanism has been instituted in most cases, but most are blowing bubbles because government officials continue to talk down to the stakeholders instead of deliberating with them to refine the State’s policy.

That said, the problem is also not only in the support that the State provides its farmers or entrepreneurs; it is also in the attitude of the farmers and the entrepreneurs themselves. They are, let’s accept it, simply not driven enough to realize that the market is thirsting for some local enterprise, but entrepreneurs refuse to display the motivation or the hunger to succeed. The State, if anything, is guilty of making the people lethargic. Locals, anywhere in the world, are rarely well disposed towards hard work. In Sikkim, the spoon-feeding by the State machinery makes hard work an even rarer commodity. The spoon however has rubbed thin and the sooner people realize this, the faster will Sikkim boom sustainably.

Why Words Matter: The negative impacts of racial microaggressions on Indigenous and other racialized people

ILORADANON EFIMOFF
THECONVERSATION.COM

“Don’t you go to school for free?”

“You don’t pay taxes!”, “Do you live in a teepee?” are things Indigenous students have heard.

In some cases, there is widespread agreement on what racism is. For example, most people would agree that restricting a racial group’s right to vote in a federal election is racist. (Indigenous people were the last to gain full voting rights in Canada in 1960.)

But in other cases, the agreement is scant — the quotes at the top of this page represent some of those cases. They are examples of racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are often considered “minor.”

WHAT ARE RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS?

Racial microaggressions are incessant, subtle forms of racism that can be verbal, behavioural or environmental. Racial microaggressions have been described as “racial indignities.”

As a mixed-race Haida woman, I’ve been routinely told I “don’t look Indigenous” or I’m “not like other Indigenous people” because I was born with my mother’s skin tone instead of my father’s. This is an example of a racial microaggression.

Microaggressions may seem small or “micro,” but as incessant forms of racism, they can have big impacts on mental health, physical health and social life.

One study of university students found that non-Indigenous university students regularly asked Indigenous university students if they lived in teepees. Another study found that

Indigenous students were stereotyped by others as drunks, addicts or on welfare.

DAILY HASSLES

One way of looking at the impact of racial microaggressions could be to look at daily hassles. Daily hassles are defined as “relatively minor, everyday problems such as commuting problems, family arguments or household repairs.”

The cumulative impact of daily hassles is linked to chronic health conditions like digestive problems, mental health conditions like depression and anxiety and even death. Some researchers have even found that daily hassles have a larger impact on health than major life events given their relentless nature.

The concept of daily hassles show that small things can have big impacts.

RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS AND HEALTH

Researchers have shown that racial microaggressions are associated with depression in Latino community members, in university students of Asian descent and create PTSD symptoms in Black participants. Microaggressions are also related to physical health outcomes. Experiencing racial microaggressions during the COVID-19 pandemic was related to physical health issues and sleep troubles for Asians and Asian Americans.

They’re also associated with a whole host of other negative outcomes like substance use, anxiety, stress and even suicidal thoughts in many racialized groups.

Although there is little quantitative research on the impacts of microaggressions on Indigenous people, qualitative research has indicated that Indigenous people feel



disrespected, degraded, uncomfortable or like they have to hide their Indigenous identity after experiencing microaggressions.

MICROAGGRESSIONS AREN’T JUST BASED ON RACE

Microaggressions can be based on many factors. Researchers have identified microaggressions based on gender, LGBTQ identity and ability.

Experiencing microaggressions based on these other factors can have similar effects as racial microaggressions: for example, experiences of disability-related microaggressions were related to higher levels of anxiety in Canadian university students.

A person can experience multiple types of microaggressions, due to the intersectionality of their identities.

For example, an Indigenous woman who identifies as bisexual might experience race, gender and sexual orientation-related microaggressions all in one day. Based on research on the impact of microaggressions and daily hassles, it is likely these combined experiences have negative impacts.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM?

What can people do about microaggressions? Freelance writer Hahna

The best hope for fairly distributing COVID-19 vaccines globally is at risk of failing. Here’s how to save it

DEBORAH GLEESON

THECONVERSATION.COM

COVAX, the global initiative to coordinate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in an equitable way, is crucial for bringing the pandemic under control.

But COVAX’s aim of delivering 2 billion doses to participating countries by the end of 2021 — including 92 low-income countries that can’t afford to buy vaccines directly from manufacturers — is threatened by chronic under-investment, vaccine nationalism and export restrictions.

COVAX is not intended only for low-income countries: Canada has so far received 316,800 doses through the scheme. As such, it represents an important “insurance policy” for Australia, potentially enabling access to a wider portfolio of vaccines than we could secure through negotiations with suppliers.

The vulnerability of our vaccine procurement strategy has become clearer over the last few weeks, with supply blockages limiting vaccine imports from Europe and now the government’s warning about the AstraZeneca vaccine and its links to a rare blood-clotting disorder.

Saving COVAX will require more than donations (of both funds and vaccines), as well as the removal of export bans. Countries must collaborate to urgently remove the legal and technical barriers preventing more widespread vaccine manufacturing in order to increase the global supply of vaccines for COVAX to distribute.

HOW DOES COVAX WORK?

COVAX is led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI); Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (a public-private partnership that aims to increase vaccination in low-income countries); and the World Health Organization.

It aims to deliver doses to all of the participating countries that have requested them in the first half of 2021, and 2 billion vaccines in total by the end of 2021.

COVAX is complex, but essentially it works by investing in a portfolio of promising vaccines and then distributing them according to a formula to both “self-financing countries” and “funded countries”.

Self-financing countries are those which have contributed funds to COVAX, such as Australia. They are able to buy the vaccines at cheaper prices negotiated by COVAX and will initially receive enough to vaccinate 20% of their populations. In the longer term, these countries may receive enough doses to vaccinate up to half of their populations, depending on how much they contribute.

Funded countries include 92 low-income countries that can’t afford to buy their own vaccines. They will also receive enough to vaccinate 20% of their populations, provided COVAX is able to meet its goals. This is nowhere near enough to achieve herd immunity, but will at least allow health workers and the most vulnerable groups to be vaccinated.

Australia has committed A\$123.2 million to enable it to purchase 25 million vaccines for domestic use.

It has also committed A\$80 million specifically earmarked for providing vaccines for low-income countries. This money will be drawn from existing aid funding, however, and won’t go very far in terms of assistance.

HOW IS THE PROGRAM GOING SO FAR?

COVAX made its first delivery of vaccines to Ghana on February 24. By April 11, it had shipped approximately 38.5 million doses to 106 countries and territories.

While these figures might look promising at first glance, this is a long way behind COVAX’s aim to deliver 100 million doses by the end of March.

And they don’t stand up well in the context of global vaccine roll-outs. So far, only 0.2% of the 700 million vaccine doses administered globally have been given in low-income countries, whereas 87% have been received by people in high-income and upper middle-income countries.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, pointed out last week that only one in 500 people in low-income countries have so far received a vaccine — a situation he described as a “shocking imbalance”.

WHY IS COVAX STRUGGLING TO DELIVER?

COVAX needs more funding, to the tune of US\$3.2 billion even to meet its modest goals for 2021. But the supply of vaccines is an even bigger problem.

Rich countries like Australia have undermined COVAX by negotiating deals for vaccines directly with pharmaceutical companies, rather than waiting for COVAX to allocate them fairly. By last November, high-income countries making up just 14% of the world’s population had negotiated pre-market agreements covering 51% of the global supply.

Adding to COVAX’s problems, the flow of vaccine deliveries has mostly dried up in the last week.

Some 90 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured in India that were to be delivered to 64 countries in March and April have been delayed as a surge in COVID-19 cases prompted the Indian government to restrict

exports.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

WHO has called on rich countries to immediately share 10 million doses to prop up COVAX in the first half of 2021.

But so far, no country has committed to do this. Donations that come after countries have fully vaccinated their own populations will be too late. And where bilateral donations have been made outside of the COVAX program (mainly by China and Russia), they have largely been driven by security, strategic or political considerations, rather than donated to the countries where they are most needed.

Removing export restrictions would help. But as long as demand exceeds supply and the countries where vaccines are manufactured face large outbreaks, we are likely to continue to see these types of barriers.

What is needed most are more sustainable approaches to dramatically boost the global supply of vaccines and ensure there’s enough to go around.

This first requires removing the intellectual property protections that allow vaccine developers to hold exclusive rights to control who can make and sell them.

India and South Africa have put forth a proposal at the World Trade Organization to waive intellectual property rights for COVID-19 medical products during the pandemic, which has been supported by more than 100 low- and middle-income countries. However, several high-income countries, including Australia, have blocked it.

Secondly, governments need to support mechanisms for sharing intellectual property, such as the WHO’s COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).

This was set up nearly a year ago, but no vaccine developer has contributed to it yet. Governments need to make sharing intellectual property and contributing to the pool a condition of public funding for the development of COVID-19 products.

Finally, governments need to help low- and middle-income countries to produce their own vaccines. This means investing money to build up manufacturing capacities in these countries and facilitating technology transfers from companies based in high-income countries.

For COVAX to supply enough vaccines for even 20% of the world’s population, rich countries will need to step up. And fast.

[the writer is Associate Professor in Public Health, La Trobe University]

Why Nepal is not on the list of invitees for climate summit called by Joe Biden

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL & ANIL GIRI

Kathmandu, 15 Apr [KathmanduPost]: American President Joe Biden last month invited world leaders, including Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia and Xi Jinping of China, to a virtual summit on climate change. At least three leaders from South Asia—Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh and Lotay Tshering of Bhutan have also been invited. Nepal is not on the list of invitees.

It was widely expected that Nepal would be among the countries to be invited because of the climate vulnerability it faces and the brunt of the climate change it has to bear, for which its role is negligible, and the impacts the country is going to face in the future because of the climate crisis.

While some see Nepal's exclusion as a diplomatic failure of the government, others say there is no need to make a hue and cry over the US not extending an invitation to the climate summit.

Nepal should have been able to ensure its participation as it has been leading several initiatives related to climate change in the past and the government is also planning to hold Sagarmatha Sambad, a multi-stakeholder dialogue forum committed to deliberating on the most prominent issues of global, regional and national significance including climate change, according to some former diplomats.

"There are some reasons why Nepal has been excluded," said Durga Bhattarai, a former foreign secretary who has also served as Nepal's permanent representative to the United Nations.

"Internationally, we are not leading any climate change related issues," Bhattarai told the Post. "Bhutan and Bangladesh, on the other hand, have made significant and visible contributions."

Climate change experts also say Nepal should have been able to demonstrate its vulnerability and efforts it is making to mitigate climate change impacts so as to get a seat in the Biden-called climate summit, which is scheduled for April 22-23.

According to Raju Pandit Chhetri, a climate change expert and executive director of Prakriti Resources Centre, a non-governmental organisation working for sustainable development and environmental justice in Nepal, only big emitters and major climate change partner countries have been invited to the event.

"It's natural for us to feel that we should have been invited. That Nepal has not been invited is not a big issue though," Chhetri, who has been involved in international climate negotiations for several years, told the Post. "What is important is that the United States is now sending a positive signal by calling such a summit on climate change, which never became the White House's priority during Donald Trump's four years."



Hours after being sworn in as US president, Biden on January 20 had reinstated the US to the Paris climate agreement. The US had become the first country in the world to pull out of the Paris agreement in November last year during the fag end of the Trump presidency.

"It was unfortunate that the US had withdrawn from the Paris agreement. Now, the US, which is also one of the major emitters, taking leadership shows climate change is gaining political momentum too," said Chhetri.

Nepal ranks fourth in terms of climate risk, according to the Global Climate Risk Index that analyses to what extent countries and regions have been affected by the impacts of weather-related events. An analysis of data on extreme weather events between 1999 and 2018 ranked Nepal ninth among the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events. Such rankings for Nepal indicate that the country could be hit by natural calamities anytime, leaving it fending for itself.

Studies suggest millions of people could be affected due to climate change impacts vis-a-vis reductions in agricultural production, food insecurity, drying of water resources, and loss of forests and biodiversity, among others.

According to Uttam Babu Shrestha, director at the Global Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, a think tank based in Kathmandu, when the US, which itself is a key player in global climate change issue, is organising such a summit, Nepal should have been among the invitee nations as one of the climate change vulnerable countries.

"Nepal would have had an opportunity to share its experiences before the global leaders," said Shrestha.

Some experts, however, say the climate summit is a symbolic gesture and that Nepal should rather focus on demonstrating how it is suffering and what all it has been doing so as to seek more support to tackle

the climate change-induced crisis.

According to Chhetri, Nepal has not been able to show the kind of climate actions Bangladesh, a country severely affected by the climate crisis, has done over the years.

"Bangladesh has been a champion of climate change at home, and at regional and international levels. Nepal has not shown such a response, especially on the climate adaptation part," said Chhetri. "They are the frontrunner at home and outside. Their climate action is commendable."

Similarly, according to Chhetri, India has been invited because it is one of the largest economies and a major emitter of greenhouse gases.

"India is a growing economy and a global economic player. Therefore, they deserved the place," said Chhetri. "Bhutan is currently the head of LDC group so it has been invited with that status."

The LDC Group is made up of the 47 poorest countries in the world, which contribute the least to the cause of climate change, but disproportionately suffer from its ever-increasing impacts.

Pakistan, yet another South Asian country whose vulnerability to climate change is also immense, has also not been invited to the summit, and this has caused an outrage among Pakistanis. The issue has garnered massive media coverage, asserting that it should have been invited to the event for its climate actions like plantation drive among others.

Even Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed his surprise, saying he was puzzled over Pakistan not being invited to the climate change conference.

That there has not been an outrage like situation in Nepal is also because of lack of awareness in the country on climate change issues, say experts. According to them, Nepal, however, must continue to make concerted efforts to draw the developed countries' attention to the brunt it

has to bear because of them.

"Bangladesh has been vocal for nearly 20-25 years about the impacts of climate change on the country and actions they have taken to address the crises," said Manjeet Dhakal, another climate change expert.

Dhakal said he is not surprised why Nepal is not among the 40 countries invited to the climate event.

"Why not Nepal? Because it's neither a major economy nor it can make a significant influence in negotiations," Dhakal, who currently serves as an advisor to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) chair at the UN Climate Change, told the Post. "For now, Bhutan, which currently chairs LDC group, will speak on behalf of Nepal too."

According to Dhakal, Japan-Brazil Dialogue, which took place in February, also did not invite Nepal as a participant. Likewise, Germany every year organises Petersburg Climate Dialogue, but Nepal was not invited to the 12th edition of the event. Nepal was not on the list of invitees of the 5th session of the Ministerial on Climate Action (MOCA), co-convened by China, the European Union and Canada.

"We need international support because we are vulnerable. However, we also need to be able to demonstrate before the world community that we are indeed doing something," said Dhakal. "For drawing international attention and securing invitations to such events, we have to work like Bangladesh and Costa Rica and showcase our efforts. There are areas where Nepal can work in its fight against climate change."

Chhetri agrees that Nepal, which is experiencing climate change impacts, has areas where it can collect evidence of impacts felt by the country.

"In the plains, there are floods every year. In the hilly region, we experience landslides, forest fires and droughts and in the mountains, glaciers are melting faster. These impacts are the backdrops against which Nepal can champion the cause of

the climate change debate," said Chhetri. "Every country is somehow affected by climate change. If Nepal considers it deserves to be invited, then it needs to seriously advocate for our issues and actions."

Based on climate vulnerabilities, experts like Shrestha still argue that Nepal should have been invited to the summit for its climate change experiences that are different from other countries.

"Our climate change experience might be similar to Bhutan to some extent. However, India and Bangladesh have their unique climate change issues – different from Nepal," said Shrestha. "If Pacific Island countries and some ASEAN countries get invited then Nepal should have also been on the list as mountainous countries experiencing climate effects."

According to Shrestha, unlike other mountainous countries of the region invited to the summit, Nepal has more peaks above 8,000 metres and could be experiencing harsher impacts in the future.

"Nepal itself is also organising Sagarmatha Sambad to draw the attention of the international community and showcase itself as an affected mountainous country," said Shrestha. "Besides, the US is also one of the key development partners for Nepal. Hence, an invitation to such a crucial summit would have been beneficial for Nepal."

The US Embassy in Kathmandu said that under President Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, climate change has become an essential element of Washington's foreign policy.

"We know Nepal has been a leader on this issue and we look forward to working together to combat the climate crisis for the sake of our shared future...," said

Anna Richey-Allen, spokesperson for the US embassy, in an email response on Nepal's exclusion from the climate summit. "We stand ready to partner with Nepal on climate issues, including our attendance at the Sagarmatha Sambad when it is organised."

Bardiya becomes a tourist hotspot courtesy of Royal Bengal tigers

KATHMANDU, 15 APR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Ranjan Sapkota of Samkhushi in Kathmandu visited Bardiya National Park for the first time in March. While there, Sapkota, accompanied by his six friends, went on a wildlife jungle safari tour, where the group spotted a tiger.

"I was thrilled. It was a Royal Bengal tiger," said Sapkota.

Sapkota and his friends couldn't believe their luck for they had a relatively easy sighting, that too on just the second day of their tour. "There was no limit to our happiness when we saw the tiger. We were excited," he said.

Sapkota and his friends weren't the only lucky ones to spot a tiger at the park in recent days. Jayant Bhatta of Kailali saw a Royal Bengal tiger with her cub at Baghaura grassland in the western section of the park.

Bhatta immediately took a picture of his sighting and posted it on social media.

The photo garnered much attention and soon his friends too were mak-

ing plans to visit the national park to get a glimpse of a tiger.

According to tourism entrepreneurs, due to word-of-mouth recommendations and social media publicity, Thakurdwara, a village adjacent to the park which is also a tourist hotspot, has been drawing a large number of domestic tourists of late. Most of the footfall in the area is that of tourists seeking Royal Bengal tiger sightings.

The park is home to endangered animals such as the Royal Bengal tiger, wild elephant, great one-horned rhinoceros and a wide variety of near-threatened bird species.

Jungle safari guide Tilak BK says that about 40 percent of tourists who come to Bardiya are successful in spotting a tiger these days.

"Those who see tigers on their visit to the park return home with a happy heart. Those who don't see one also enjoy the jungle safari and sightings of other rare animals and birds," he said.

The number of domestic tourists has been in-

creasing since the park reopened on October 17 last year after several months of closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

On Tuesday, the eve of the Nepali New Year, hotels around Bardiya were booked to their capacity mostly by tourists on the lookout for tigers.

Bardiya National Park was established in 1988 as Royal Bardiya National Park. It covers an area of 968 sq km and is the largest national park in Nepal's Tarai, adjoining the eastern bank of the Karnali River and intersected by the Babai River in Bardiya district.

The park is home to 53 mammals, including rhinoceros, wild elephants, Royal Bengal tigers, swamp deer and the Gangetic dolphins, and 542 bird species.

The number of tigers has increased in Bardiya in the past few years due to suitable natural habitat, availability of prey and improved security, according to the park authorities.

As per the 2018 tiger census, there were 87 Roy-

al Bengal tigers in the park.

Bishnu Bahadur Thapa, director of Sansara Safari Camp, said that domestic tourists from far east to far west are coming to the national park attracted by the prospect of sighting endangered creatures in their natural habitat.

"The New Year and days leading up to it have been good for hoteliers here. Business has been picking up after nearly a year of inaction," said Thapa. "The arrival of tourists has raised hopes for a fast recovery."

Dharmaraj Ghimire, manager at the Babai Resort in Thakurdwara, said there's a steady flow of tourists courtesy of the tigers at the park.

Bishnu Prasad Shrestha, chief conservation officer of the park, says that the tiger habitat has been opened for tourists with effect from this Nepali New Year with safety standards in place.

More than 16,000 domestic and foreign tourists visited the park last year.

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Curry’s 42, Green’s triple-double lead Warriors past Thunder

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP): Stephen Curry scored 25 of his 42 points in the third quarter, and the Golden State Warriors ran away from the Oklahoma City Thunder 147-109 on Wednesday night.

Curry went 8 for 8 from the field and made all six of his 3-point attempts in the third quarter to post his high point total for a quarter this season. He was coming off a 53-point game against the Denver Nuggets on Monday that made him the franchise’s career scoring leader. He followed it by making 11 of 16 3-pointers and 14 of 20 shots overall.

“I’m still in awe of the shotmaking,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “It’s just incredible. The level of confidence and skill is just stunning. It’s beautiful to watch. It’s a man at the peak of his powers with a lifetime of training and work — not just on his body, but on his mind.

“This is a guy who, he’s functioning at a level that very few human beings have ever functioned at in their particular field.”

It was Curry’s sec-

ond straight game with at least 10 3-pointers — just the second time he has done that in his career. He posted his eighth consecutive game with at least 30 points despite resting in the fourth quarter.

“I was actually joking with him,” Kerr said. “I told him he was going back in and he didn’t understand the joke. He just wanted to run back onto the floor. I mean, that’s how hot he was.”

Draymond Green had a triple-double with 12 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds for the Warriors. It was his fourth triple-double this season and the 28th of his career. He fueled a Golden State offense that matched a franchise record with 24 3-pointers.

Green said he knew right away it would be a big night for Curry.

“I can kind of tell when he comes out,” Green said. “Just the look in his eyes, attacking from the beginning, what type of night it’s going to be for him. He’s had that a lot lately. Hopefully, we can continue to help him and turn that into wins.”

Darius Bazley had



22 points and eight rebounds, and Moses Brown added 18 points and 12 rebounds for Oklahoma City. The Thunder have lost eight straight, all by double digits. They continue to play without leading scorer Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who has been out since late March with plantar fasciitis in his right foot.

Golden State led 36-32 at the end of the first quarter before taking control. The Warriors led by as many as 27 in the second quarter and took a 75-54 advantage into the break. It was the

most points the Warriors have scored in a half this season. Golden State made 13 of 25 3-pointers in the first half and shot 55% overall.

Andrew Wiggins’ two-handed jam in traffic put the Warriors up 96-68 in the third and brought Golden State’s bench players out of their seats.

Curry left for good with 32.5 seconds remaining in the third. The Warriors led 125-83 after three quarters. Their 50-point third quarter was the highest by any team in any quarter this season.

“I felt like we played good defense for like a quarter and a half,” Thunder guard Svi Mykhailiuk said. “And then after that, I felt we became real lazy and stopped really communicating. We just started getting lost a little bit, and that was it.”

TAKING ADVANTAGE Warriors guard Gary Payton II had four steals in the fourth quarter in just over nine minutes of action. Payton, who is on a 10-day contract, was the 2020-21 G League Defensive Player of the Year.

QUOTABLE Kerr, on the signif-

icance of Thursday’s game in Cleveland: “It’s really important. We’re in the midst of a play-off race and we’ve been searching for momentum all season long. I think we can all feel it right now. We feel that something is clicking and things are happening.”

TIP-INS Warriors: Guard/forward Kelly Oubre Jr. missed his third straight game with a sprained left wrist. ... Green had six assists in the first quarter. ... Shot 61% from the field in the second quarter while holding Oklahoma City to 32% shooting. ... Curry also had eight assists and six rebounds.

Thunder: Guard Lu Dort sat out with left shoulder soreness the day after he scored a career-high 42 points at Utah. ... Rookie forward Aleksei Pokusevski sat out with right arm soreness. ... Forward Isaiah Roby fouled out. ... Shot just 7 of 27 on 3-pointers and made 14 of 25 free throws.

UP NEXT Warriors: visit the Cleveland Cavaliers on Thursday.

Thunder: visit the Detroit Pistons on Friday.

Officials say Olympic cancellation, no fans still an option

TOKYO (AP): Two officials in Japan’s ruling LDP party on Thursday said changes could be coming to the Tokyo Olympics. One suggested they still could be canceled, and the other said even if they proceed, it might be without any fans.

Toshihiro Nikai, the No. 2 and secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, mentioned the cancellation only a day after Tokyo reached the 100-days-to-go mark on Wednesday.

He made his comments in a show recorded by Japan’s TBS TV.

“If it seems impossible to go on with the games, they must be definitely canceled,” Nikai said. “If there is a surge in infections because of the Olympics, there will be no meaning to having the Olympics.”

Asked if a cancellation was still an option, Nikai said: “Of course.”

But he also added: “It is important for Japan to have a successful Olympics. It is a big opportunity. I want to make it a success. We will have many issues to resolve and prepare, and it is important to take care of them one by one.”

Prime Minister Toshihide Suga said in a statement there was “no change to the government position to do everything to achieve safe and secure Olympics.”

Tokyo organizers said they, the IOC and the International Paralympic Committee “are fully focused on hosting the games this summer.” They said Suga “has repeatedly expressed the government’s commitment” to holding the Olympics.

COVID-19 cases have been rising across Japan. On Thursday, Japan’s second-largest metropolitan area of Osaka recorded 1,208 new cases. It was the third straight day that new cases surpassed 1,000. Tokyo hit 729, its highest total in more than two months. Japan has attributed 9,500 death to COVID-19, good by world standards but poor by results in Asia.

Tokyo and Osaka have been under an alert status since earlier this month, but officials are concerned there is little sense of

urgency. Experts on a Tokyo metropolitan government taskforce warned that the new variant could replace the conventional virus and trigger explosive infections by early May. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike urged residents to take maximum protection and asked non-Tokyo residents not to visit the area.

Taro Kono, the government minister in charge of Japan’s vaccine rollout, said even if the Olympics go on, there may be no fans of any kind in the venues. He said it’s likely that the Olympics will have to be held in empty venues, particularly as cases surge across the country.

That means only television cameras and still cameras will be around to record the action, joined by some reporters, judges and match officials.

The delayed Tokyo Olympics are to open in just over three months on July 23, and the Paralympics follow on Aug. 24. Fans from abroad have already been banned. Now even Japanese spectators could be kept away.

“I think the question is how to do the Olympics in a way that is possible in this situation,” Kono said Thursday on a television talk show. “That may mean there will probably be no spectators.”

Kono did not suggest the Olympics would not go ahead, but he said they could be held under only “certain conditions.”

“The way these Olympics will be held will be very different from past ones,” he said.

Tokyo organizers have said they expect to announce a decision this month on the number of fans allowed into each venue.

Organizers had expected to receive about \$800 million from ticket sales, their third-largest source of income. Any shortfall will have to be made up by Japanese government entities, which are already footing most of the bills.

The official cost for the Olympics is \$15.4 billion, but several government audits have suggested it might be twice that much, and all but \$6.7 billion is public money.

‘Distance makes sense.’ Semenya pins Olympic hopes on 5,000

PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA (AP): Caster Semenya won the 5,000-meter race at the South African national championships on Thursday in a personal-best time and then said she’s likely to focus on long-distance events for the rest of her career.

That could be her best hope of running at this year’s Tokyo Olympics after being barred from defending her 800-meter title.

The two-time Olympic champion won the 5,000 in 15 minutes, 52.28 seconds at Tuks Athletics Stadium at the University of Pretoria. That was outside the Olympic qualifying standard of 15:10.00 but Semenya has until the end of June to qualify for Tokyo.

Although the nationals are South Africa’s main trials for the Olympics, athletes only need to register a qualifying time once at any recognized meet before the June 29 cutoff.

It’s still a long shot for the 800-meter specialist, but Semenya’s time on Thursday was more than 22 seconds faster than her last outing in the 5,000.

Semenya’s participation in the event at the nationals was confirmed the day before the meet started and is a departure from her previous plans after announcing last year that she would attempt to qualify for the Tokyo Games in the 200 meters.

“We had to look into, can we do 200 for the next five years? It was not really in our favor,” the 30-year-old Semenya said Thursday. “I’m getting old, I’m scared to tear my muscles. We had to sit down and make sure that the decision that we make makes sense. Distance makes sense.”

Semenya is barred from running in events from 400 meters to one mile at top track meets under World



Athletics’ testosterone rules. She has refused to bow to those rules and take medication to lower her natural testosterone levels, calling the regulations unfair and discriminatory.

She can now only run in the 100 and 200 meters, or in long-distance races. All of those events are unfamiliar to her.

Semenya also hasn’t given up on getting the rules overturned in court. She said in Febru-

ary she was challenging the testosterone policy at the European Court of Human Rights in her third legal appeal against them. Semenya has previously lost court cases against World Athletics at the Court of Arbitration for Sport and at the Swiss supreme court. No date has been set for her case at the human rights court but it’s highly unlikely it would be heard before the Tokyo Games open on July 23.

Semenya’s story has been one of sport’s most contentious since she arrived as an unknown teenager and won the 2009 world title in the 800 in a blisteringly fast time.

It was then announced she had undergone sex verification tests during those championships and her career has been submerged in a complex argument over sex and gender since.

Semenya was as-

signed female at birth and has identified as female her whole life. But World Athletics argued in court that she is “biologically male” with the typical male XY chromosome pattern, and her testosterone level is higher than the typical female range. That gives her an unfair advantage over other female runners, the track and field body says. World Athletics said it would allow Semenya to run in female competitions if she reduces her testosterone level through medical intervention.

Semenya has refused to do that, insisting she is female and her high natural testosterone is merely a genetic gift.

Semenya is believed to have one of a number of conditions known as differences of sex development, sometimes known as intersex. Details of her exact condition have never been released.

Super-G ace Andrew Weibrecht back on skis for Make-A-Wish

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (AP): It’s been three years since Andrew Weibrecht retired from the U.S. Ski team, but the mountains always beckon. So, the two-time Winter Olympic medalist is back on his skis for a unique fundraising event — he’s skiing the summits of all 46 high peaks in the Adirondack Mountains for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Northeastern New York.

The Albany-based organization was forced to cancel a fundraising ski event in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. When it happened again this year, Weibrecht moved forward with his own “Do it Yourself, Ski-For-Wishes

COVID-19 Edition.”

“It was unfortunate that our best intentions were derailed due to COVID-19,” said Weibrecht, who won Olympic bronze and silver in super-G in 2010 and 2014. “Knowing 2021 won’t offer a social climate in which we can hold any events, this seemed like an opportunity to combine my love of skiing and the outdoors with the needs of Make-A-Wish.”

The Mirror Lake Inn Resort and Spa in Lake Placid, which is owned by the Weibrecht family, began its Ski-For-Wishes Fundraiser in 2019.

The digital effort kicked off a month ago on Weibrecht’s Facebook and Ins-

tagram pages, and his longtime partners Head and Stio have pledged financial support.

“What started out as a concept I’ve been rolling around in my head gained serious momentum when I presented it to Stio and Head,” Weibrecht said in a release. “It’s exciting when things come together like this and partners whom you have a history with jump on board and put their resources behind making it a reality.”

So far, Weibrecht is up to 21 peaks and intends to complete his quest in about a year. He says he’s looking forward to longer days and more stable weather to make a strong push before

all the snow melts.

“Ski mountaineering in the Adirondacks is a special kind of experience,” Weibrecht said. “Like with anything you need to respect your limits and understand when the mountains are saying ‘no.’

“Given the current snow conditions and the depth at the higher elevations, I see no reason not to ski into May. My hope is to cover about half the peaks this season and the remainder next winter. We’ll raise money throughout the entire process, with a goal of positively impacting the Make-A-Wish Foundation and all the great work they do in turning dreams into reality.”

Arizona governor to sign bill legalizing sports betting

PHOENIX (AP): Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey plans to sign a bill Thursday that allows a major expansion of gambling in the state. The measure approved by the Legislature adds additional types of table games at tribal casinos and for the first time allows sports betting under licenses issued to tribes and pro sports teams. It also allows gambling on fantasy sports and new Keno games at horse race tracks and fraternal organizations.

The passage of the legislation is tied to the updated gaming compact Ducey has struck with tribes and plans to publicly release for the first time Thursday morning. It is known that some new casinos will be al-



lowed under the updated agreement.

The governor has invited lawmakers and tribal leaders to attend the signing at the Heard Museum.

The biggest part of the plan will allow pro sports teams like the Arizona Coyotes, Arizona Diamondbacks and

Arizona Cardinals to run sports betting operations at their respective venues, at a retail location within a quarter mile and online. There would be 10 licenses awarded to sports, which could include professional golf and even NASCAR.

Tribes would also get 10 licenses and could run

sports books at two dozen tribal casinos in the state.

The tribes, which have fiercely protected their exclusive right to most gambling in the state under the gaming compact approved by the state’s voters in 2002, get the right to build new casinos under an updated deal. And in a big win, they would also be allowed to greatly expand their exclusive gambling offerings, adding games like Baccarat and craps to existing offerings of slot machines, blackjack and poker.

There are also options for online gambling as well, allowing growing online gambling sites like Draft Kings to piggyback on the licenses.

Sydney man finds snake in lettuce bought at supermarket



CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP): Alex White thought he was watching a huge worm writhing in plastic-wrapped lettuce he'd just brought home from a Sydney supermarket — until a snake tongue flicked.

"I kind of completely freaked out when I saw this little tongue come out of its mouth and start flicking around and realized it was a snake because worms don't have tongues," White said on Thursday.

"I definitely kind of panicked a bit," he added. It was a venomous pale-headed snake that authorities say made an 870-kilometer (540-mile) journey to Sydney from a packing plant in the Australian city of Toowoomba wrapped in plastic with two heads of cos lettuce.

The refrigerated supermarket supply chain likely lulled the cold-blooded juvenile into a stupor until White bought the lettuce at an inner-city ALDI supermarket on Monday evening and rode his bicycle home with salad and snake in his backpack.

White and his partner Amelia Neate spotted the snake moving as soon as the lettuce was unpacked onto the kitchen table.

They also noticed the plastic wrapping was torn and that the snake could escape, so they quickly stuffed the reptile with the lettuce into a plastic food storage container.

White phoned the WIRES rescue organization and a snake handler took the snake away that

night.

Before the handler arrived, White said WIRES had explained to him: "If you get bitten, you've got to go to hospital really quickly."

ALDI is investigating how a snake could have found its way into a supermarket.

"We've worked with the customer and the team at WIRES to identify the snake's natural habitat, which is certainly not an ALDI store!" the German-based supermarket chain said in a statement.

WIRES reptile coordinator Gary Pattinson said while the snake was less than 20 centimeters (8 inches) long, it was "as venomous as it will ever be."

Pattinson is caring for the snake until it is returned to Queensland state next week, following the WIRES policy of returning rescued wildlife to where it comes from.

"It's the first snake I've ever had in sealed, packed produce," Pattinson said. "We get frogs in them all the time."

Neate, a German immigrant, said her brush with a venomous snake in a Sydney kitchen was a setback in her efforts to assure relatives in Europe that Australia's notoriously deadly Outback wildlife was nothing to worry about.

"For the last 10 years or so, I've told my family at home that Australia's a really safe country," Neate said.

"I've always said I'm just in the city; it's totally fine here," she added.

EU top court backs bloc in ban on electric pulse fishing

BRUSSELS (AP): The European Union's highest court on Thursday backed the bloc's decision to ban as of July the practice of using electric shocks to stun fish before scooping them up in nets.

The European Court of Justice dismissed a Dutch challenge arguing that the EU didn't take the latest scientific evidence into account when it took the decision two years ago.

The decision will specifically hit the Dutch fishing fleet, which has invested strongly in electric pulse fishing. They argue the technique is environmentally friendly because it allows trawlers to use far less diesel and doesn't damage the seabed.

Over 80 of the Dutch fleet's 137 trawlers are equipped for pulse fishing.

Opponents characterize the method as industrial fishing that is wiping out fish stocks.

"The court dismisses the action brought by the Netherlands in its entirety," the ECJ said in a statement.

The Dutch fishing federation said the decision will lead to bankruptcies in a sector already hit hard by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Because of the ban on pulse fishing, cost will substantially rise. We already see family firms quitting after generations of fishing. More bankruptcies will come," the federation said.

Bangkok nightlife clusters expose Thailand's virus stumbles

BANGKOK (AP): When Thailand's transport minister was recently diagnosed with COVID-19, it was Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha who got a headache. Prayuth was not particularly lauded for his leadership last year against the coronavirus, but for much of 2020 Thailand fought the disease to a standstill, with low infection and death rates envied by more developed countries.

Now, an outbreak at nightspots in the capital Bangkok has sent new infections surging, suggesting the country may have been lulled into a false sense of security before mass vaccinations begin.

On Thursday, 1,543 new cases were confirmed, taking the total to 37,453, with 97 deaths. While that is much better than most other countries, Thailand's cases in the first three months of this year were triple what the country had all of last year and its daily numbers are rising fast.

The new outbreak has spread among mostly young, affluent and mobile Thais, and some of the newly infected had the more contagious variant first identified in the U.K.

The government says Transport Minister Sakasam Chidchob caught the virus from an aide who patronized some of the infectious nightspots, including a club described by Thai media as a glorified strip joint that was blatantly ignoring social distancing precautions. That has added to widespread skepticism over the government's handling of the latest crisis.

Thailand only recently began easing strict border controls that for the past year have kept out most travelers, especially all-important tourists whose spending supports millions of jobs. The restrictions have included mandatory testing and 14-day



quarantines for almost all arrivals.

Officials had appeared reluctant to impose sweeping restrictions like curfews, bans on serving alcohol and closures of bars, parks and shopping malls that were the rule this time last year, when Songkran Thai New Year holidays were cancelled.

This week, the holiday went ahead, and as many as a million Thais headed out to visit family or crowded onto beaches, even as some hospitals halted COVID-19 testing due to a rush by thousands of people worried they had been exposed or needing proof they were virus-free. Some hospitals claimed to have run out of testing supplies, but the government said the real reason was an unintended consequence of a well-meaning regulation — they are required to admit infected patients right away, but believed they lacked enough beds to accommodate them.

Officials pivoted to allow referrals, and thousands of beds have filled up at field hospitals set up to house those with confirmed infections, following the government's protocol of isolating all known patients. Online photos show exhausted medical staff in protective gear, slumped over sleeping on their desks and chairs.

A worst case scenario from the Department of

Disease Control's epidemiology division calculated that without safety measures, the country could see a maximum of 28,678 daily cases.

"The situation is still worrisome; more measures are to come," Dr. Opas Karnkavinpong, the department's director-general, warned Tuesday.

Gen. Natthapon Napanich, operations chief for the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration, elaborated Wednesday, saying the government was considering instituting lockdowns in several areas after the holiday. They include Bangkok and its surrounding provinces, Prachuab Khiri Khan to the south, where the resort town of Hua Hin is, the northern city of Chiang Mai, and parts of the Eastern Seaboard, where another popular holiday destination, Pattaya, is located.

On Tuesday, the government raised eyebrows by posting photos of soldiers spraying forest areas along the border, even though experts say the greatest virus risk is airborne.

The latest crisis has made glaringly apparent an Achilles heel in Thailand's strategy, a failure to secure enough doses this year to inoculate a targeted 70% of the population believed necessary to achieve herd immunity.

So far, under 1% of 69 million Thais have been vaccinated, a smaller proportion than in many of its Southeast Asian neighbors.

Thailand's early success in containing the virus was remarkable given the millions of international travelers, especially from China, that it usually hosts each year. The first case outside China was a Chinese traveler whose fever was detected at Bangkok's airport.

It's unclear why Thailand and several other Southeast Asian nations succeeded in containing the pandemic for much of last year. Thailand's extensive and experienced public health system played a large role, and Prayuth's government generally deferred to medical experts' advice.

But the nation has paid a heavy price for its aggressive effort to control outbreaks: The economy contracted 6.1% in 2020 and the resurgence of cases makes a tourism recovery unlikely anytime soon. Household debt rose 42% last year as incomes fell or stalled, to 87% of the country's GDP.

And Thailand's lucky streak faded late last year, when a virus cluster was found among migrant workers working in factories and seafood markets and living in crowded dormitories. Severe restrictions and a mas-

sive testing campaign near the outbreak's epicenter seemed to contain it after several weeks.

"We don't want to lock down the entire country, because we know what the problems are, so can you all lock down yourselves?" Prayuth said at the time. "This is up to everyone, if you don't want to get infected just stay home for 14 to 15 days."

That flare-up drew attention to the government's vaccination plans just as the U.S. and European countries began doubling down on their inoculations.

In early January, Prayuth said Thailand was trying to secure 63 million doses, which at two doses per person would cover less than half its population. Local production of the AstraZeneca vaccine is expected to begin in June.

Complaints emerged that well-connected companies might profit unfairly from government contracts to produce and supply vaccines, allegations denied by the government and the companies involved. Prayuth's political opponents piled on, complaining about mismanagement, a lack of transparency and a failure to diversify beyond the AstraZeneca and Chinese Sinovac vaccines.

Registration for vaccines for the general public is set to begin in early May, with inoculations to start later in the month. So far, inoculations have mostly gone to medical workers, areas considered at particularly high risk, and communities that may be opened early as so-called bubbles where foreign tourists who have been vaccinated may be allowed to stay without undergoing quarantine.

On Wednesday, 1,681 people got their first shot and 388 their second jabs. So far, only 73,949 people have been fully vaccinated.

France's pandemic death toll set to pass 100,000 amid surge

PARIS (AP): France's coronavirus death toll is expected to pass 100,000 on Thursday after a year of hospital tensions, on-and-off lockdowns and personal loss that have left families nationwide grieving the pandemic's unending, devastating toll.

The country of 67 million will be the eighth in the world to reach the symbolic mark, and the third in Europe after the United Kingdom and Italy.

The cumulative death toll since the start of the epidemic totaled 99,777 on Wednesday evening. In recent days, French health authorities have been reporting about 300 new daily deaths from COVID-19.

Lionel Petitpas, president of the association "Victims of COVID-19," told the Associated Press that the number of 100,000 deaths is "an important threshold."

After months of peo-

ple getting accustomed to the virus, the figure "is piercing a lot of minds. It is a figure we thought would never be reached," he said.

Petitpas, who lost his wife Joelle on March 29 last year from the virus, said families of victims "want the government to make a collective gesture to recognize our collective loss."

French President Emmanuel Macron told Le Parisien newspaper he thinks about all of the people who died in the pandemic and their families.

The pandemic was "so cruel" to individuals "who sometimes were not able to accompany, during the last moments and in death, a father, a mother, a loved one, a friend," Macron said. Yet the crisis also shows "the ability of the French people to get united," he added.

French government spokesperson Gabriel Attal suggested it is too soon to set a specific date to

honor those who died as the country is now fighting another rapid rise in confirmed cases.

"There will be an homage for sure, a national mourning for the victims of COVID-19," Attal said Wednesday. "That time will come."

"Today, we throw all our forces in the battle against the epidemic," he said.

Experts say the 100,000 mark is an under-estimate, by at least several thousands. Analysis of death certificates shows that some COVID-19 cases are not reported when people die at home or in places like psychiatric units and chronic care facilities, they stress.

Petitpas started a Facebook group last year for families of victims to share memories of their loved ones. Nearly every day, new testimonies appear.

"My wife, like so many others, was just put in a

body bag," he recalled. "It was like a luxury garbage bag. And then she was put in a coffin and sent to cremation." He was not allowed to see her.

Petitpas said that despite a decree in January allowing people to see their deceased loved ones, many places still aren't allowing it.

"All these people who left us (are) like people with the plague, without human dignity, with nothing at all," he deplored.

Celia Prioux-Schwab, a social services worker, lost her 82-year-old grandmother in January, four days after she was sent home from the Reims hospital — even though her family had no home-care option, and she still had COVID-19.

She is now pushing for a change in French law to guarantee the right of families to visit hospitalized patients even during a pandemic, "to offer support, or even just to say goodbye."

Senior royals to skip uniforms at Prince Philip's funeral

LONDON (AP): Senior royals must wear civilian clothes to Prince Philip's funeral, defusing potential tensions over who would be allowed to don military uniforms.

Queen Elizabeth II's decision means Prince Harry won't risk being the only member of the royal family not in uniform during Saturday's funeral for his grandfather, who died last week at the age of 99.

Members of the royal family often wear uniforms to public events by virtue of their honorary roles with the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. But Harry lost his honorary military titles when he decided to give up frontline royal duties last year.

As a result, protocol suggests that Harry, an army veteran who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, may only wear a suit with medals at royal functions, Britain's Press Association reported.

The decision also sidesteps another potential controversy after reports that Prince Andrew considered wearing an admiral's uniform to his father's funeral. Andrew retains his military titles even though he was forced to step away from royal duties after a disastrous interview with the BBC about his acquaintance with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The funeral is scheduled to take place Saturday at Windsor Castle, with attendance limited to 30 because of coronavirus restrictions.

Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, served in the Royal Navy for 12 years and maintained close ties to the armed forces throughout his life. Military personnel will have a large role in honoring him Saturday despite the attendance limit.

Members of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Royal Air Force and the British Army plan to take part in the funeral procession. Philip's coffin will be carried to St. George's Chapel on a specially adapted Land Rover, which he designed himself.

Military personnel rehearsed for the event Wednesday at Army Training Centre Pirbright, near London. One of the four Royal Marine buglers who will play "The Last Post" at the service said it was an "honor and privilege" to perform the role.

"It's incredibly important. We feel nervous," Sgt. Bugler Jamie Ritchie. "We feel the pressure, but we're channeling that and we're using that and we're going to deliver an outstanding performance."

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BEHIND THE SCENES! Actress Gabrielle Union is spotted on the set of the newest version of Cheaper by the Dozen in Los Angeles.

Want to work in films where women are shown as decision-makers: Paoli Dam

MUMBAI, APR 15 (PTI): Actor Paoli Dam says she's always on the lookout for roles that represent women's perspective in cinema and her latest choices are a reflection of that.

Dam, a prominent star in Bengali and Hindi cinema, featured in "Kaali" and "Bulbbul" in 2020. Both the films earned critical acclaim as well as audiences' love.

In "Bulbbul", the actor received unanimous praise for her portrayal of a widow and in "Kaali", she played a mother navigating a corrupt system of criminals and cops in a bid to save her son.

"This is what I have always wanted. It's not that from the start of my career, I was getting these strong and powerful roles. In mainstream films, there are (only) certain kinds of roles you play. You're used to looking a certain way. But I wanted to star in female-oriented films also, where women are shown as decision-makers," Dam told PTI in a Zoom interview from Kolkata.

The 40-year-old actor began her film career in 2006 and received her first breakthrough three years later with filmmaker Gautam Ghosh's Bengali drama "Kaalbela", set against the backdrop of the Naxalite movement.

Dam credits the film for making viewers,

as well as filmmakers, realise she could pull off "strong independent roles."

She is now gearing up for the release of the upcoming ZEE5 thriller film, "Raati Baaki Hai", co-starring Anup Soni and Rahul Dev.

The film chronicles the story of a single night, where two estranged lovers end up meeting each other after 12 years under strange circumstances.

Dam said starring as the "mysterious and majestic, calm but powerful" Vasuki ticked off her most important criterion of playing a character: being relatable.

"What I look for in my characters is that they have to be closer to reality. Audiences need to relate to my characters, otherwise, you fail. That's my constant lookout when a script comes my way.

"It is important to say from a woman's perspective what we want or desire. That thought should be put out through the characters I play."

Dam, however, admitted that it took her some time to gain this perspective about her art.

A chemistry graduate from Kolkata, the actor was initially more invested in trying to navigate the industry, learning from her directors and co-stars when she started in the mid-2000s.

verse is sending your way with gratitude. If you're a student, consider interning with a firm or organisation that you resonate with. This will give you the kind of exposure you need to level up. Tip: There's a new job offer on the cards.

CANCER: You have been doing things a certain way and that has worked for you. But there's no reason for you to stick to the tried-and-tested when there is so much room for experimentation. The cards are urging you to change things up a little. To blend two different ideas or concepts in a way they haven't been done before. PS: Something tells us there is a major 'aha moment' on your cards! Tip: The secret to your success lies in mixing two unlikely concepts or ideas.

LEO: This is a time of truth-telling. A time of standing up for what you believe in and inspiring others to do the same. Remember, no act of goodness goes unnoticed. The cards are also talking about the theme of balance. The balance between work and play. The balance between what you give others and what you give yourself. Finding this balance hasn't always been easy for you. However, this week you're being able to set aside more time to nurture your inner temple.

Broadway star Karen Olivo protests Scott Rudin silence

NEW YORK (AP): Tony Award-winner Karen Olivo says she won't return to "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" once it reopens, saying she's frustrated by the Broadway industry and especially the silence in the wake of revelations about the behavior of producer Scott Rudin.

"Moulin Rouge! The Musical" is not produced by Rudin but Olivo in an Instagram video posted Wednesday said she was not coming back to the hit show to make a stand about social justice.

"Social justice is actually more important than being the sparkling diamond," Olivo said.

"Building a better industry for my students is more important than me putting money in my pockets."

The move comes a week after The Hollywood Reporter's cover story on Rudin contained accounts of the Broadway and Hollywood heavyweight throwing glass bowls, staples and baked potatoes at former employees.

"What I'm seeing in this space right now, with our industry, is that everybody is scared, and nobody is really doing a lot of the stuff that needs to be done. People aren't speaking out."

Olivo said the silence was "unacceptable" and

criticized the business model of Broadway, which she said put profit over people.

"Let's put our money with people who value human life and respect human life. It's easy," said Olivo, who won a Tony in 2009 in "West Side Story" landed a Tony nod this cycle for her work in "Moulin Rouge."

The Broadway show tweeted its support for Olivo, saying "We applaud and support Karen's advocacy work to create a safe, diverse and equitable theater industry for all."

The revelations in The Hollywood Reporter also

prompted the performers' unions SAG-AFTRA, Actors Equity and the American Federation of Musicians Local 802 to come together condemn illegal harassment and harassment that creates a toxic work environment for entertainment employees.

Rudin, one of the most successful and powerful producers, with a heap of Oscars and Tonys to show for it, has long been known for torturous treatment of an ever-churning parade of assistants. Rudin, himself, hasn't responded to the article or The Associated Press' request for comment.



Rapper Mystikal breaks silence on dropped rape charge

NEW YORK (AP): Mystikal, convicted almost two decades ago of sexual battery and recently cleared of a second allegation of rape and kidnapping, acknowledges his past puts him in a "horrible fraternity." But the rapper says he's ready to move on from the sexually-charged songs of his past and is seeing his career rekindle.

"When I look back and listen to the music, man — I was a nasty lil' rapper!" he said with a hint of embarrassment in an interview with The Associated Press. "A lot of my music now, I imagine myself rapping it to God and if I can rap it, I'm proud."

The Louisiana hip-hop legend spoke to The Associated Press in one of his first interviews after first-degree rape and second-degree kidnapping charges stemming from a 2016 allegation were dismissed in December. The rapper, who pleaded guilty in 2003 to sexual battery and served six years in prison, initially denied involvement with the woman and spent 18 months in jail before being released on a \$3 million bond. Louisiana's Caddo Parish District Attorney closed the investigation after new evidence was presented to a second grand jury that declined to bring an indictment. The district attorney then filed to dismiss the charges.

The long ordeal "was like a reoccurring bad dream," he said. "I didn't know how it was going to work out."

Now he wants to make changes to his career — and life — as he tries to find harmony beyond a troubled past. Though Mystikal says he "can't go to God" with lines like the dirty opening verse of his hit "Shake Ya A(asterisk) (asterisk)," don't expect him to start appearing on the gospel charts.

Within days of the case's dismissal, a blitz of film trailers for Eddie Murphy's

highly anticipated "Coming 2 America" began airing, featuring "Feel Right," Mystikal's 2015 smash with Mark Ronson. The New Orleans product said he had no idea the song would be used, but he doesn't believe in coincidences.

"It felt like God was winking his eye at me," he said with a smile. "That's what strengthens my spirituality right now, things like that."

Maintaining his innocence throughout, the rapper had been free on a \$3 million bond since February 2019 after being jailed in August 2017, but work was quiet due to the uncertainty of the case and seriousness of the charges. But bookings for live performances are picking back up, and his life story will be featured on the upcoming season of TV One's popular music docuseries "Unsung."

"I didn't get a Donald Trump pardon," he said, proclaiming his innocence.

But prosecutors say the term "innocent" may still be up for debate.

Mystikal's most recent trouble began in October 2016 after his performance at a "Legends of Southern Hip-Hop" concert stop in Shreveport, Louisiana, a bill that also advertised other Southern rap icons like Juvenile, Bun B and Trick Daddy. According to police records obtained by the AP, Mystikal and a few members of his entourage, including hopeful rapper Averweone "Lil Hood" Holman, met up with Holman's female friend and her boyfriend.

After hanging out at Sam's Town Hotel and Casino with the group, the victim, who told police they continuously gave her drinks, became separated from her boyfriend for a few hours, the records said. When they reconnected, the boyfriend said she seemed disoriented. Police were called.

According to the reports, Holman

stated he and the victim were both intoxicated and admitted to having intercourse. He told investigators they were the only ones in the room.

Police noted that while the victim said she didn't remember certain parts of the night, she did recall waking up on a bed with her panties down and Holman's penis out. She also had another memory of her buttocks hurting with Mystikal standing behind her, according to the police report.

Mystikal told police he wasn't in the room during the incident and he "did not hear anything." But after forensic tests came back eight months later, DNA showed Mystikal had an intimate physical encounter with the victim. A toxicology report found cocaine and another substance in the victim's system; she told investigators she did not consume illegal drugs.

An arrest warrant was issued for Mystikal, Holman, and a woman who later pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice. Holman pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of simple kidnapping in June 2019 and was sentenced to time served, court records show.

Mystikal hesitantly admitted to the AP that a sexual encounter did happen. He described it as consensual, believing the victim stated she was raped rather than admit the indiscretion to her boyfriend.

"There was additional information that surfaced that the original grand jury did not have an opportunity to consider at the time that the charges were brought forward," said Britney Green, who oversaw the case for the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office. "We then decided that the case needed to stop there because the (second) grand jury did not return an indictment after the review of the additional evidence."

ARIES: None of what transpired is pleasant in any way. Yet, it was part of the plan. The script you carefully designed prior to boarding the flight to the earthly realm. So, take a moment to be grateful for the not-so-good moments as they awakened you to your truth. What you want to focus on over the next few days: cutting the cords wherever necessary and concluding the chapters that you need to.

Tip: It's time to say goodbye, Aries.

TAURUS: The cards are pointing towards emotional baggage. The hurt and the pain that just won't go away. Instead of distracting yourself like you have been, face your troubles, Taurus. As you do, remember the cliché 'the only way out is through'. Things on the work front may also be a bit overwhelming at the moment. Nobody's going to know what you're dealing with until you talk about it. Allow yourself to reach out for help and support.

Tip: The only way out is through.

GEMINI: There could be a brand new offer on the cards for Geminis who've been in the market for a new job. This could even manifest as a raise or promotion for some. Allow yourself to receive what the Uni-

Tip: This is a time of truth-telling.

VIRGO:

The home is our safe space. A place where we can take off the tiresome masks and be our true and most authentic self. As an earth sign, this sense of groundedness is very important to you, and it's what you are seeking today. So clear out the clutter and arrange your space in a way that helps you tap into that state of zen. Trust that this will not only increase your productivity but also enhance the quality of your creations.

Tip: Create your own zen space.

LIBRA:

Reinvention is the name of the game in the Libra HQ, and it requires you to break some of the rules you have set for yourself. Here's the thing, though: you may not get things right the first time. You may not nail them the second time either. Know that trial and error is a part of the process, one that's helping you become the master of your game.

Tip: It's time to break the rules you have set for yourself.

SCORPIO:

Shake that feeling of stagnation off, Scorpio. You are where you need to be and you are progressing at the right pace. So, keep putting in the work

with the inner knowing that the harvest is going to be magnificent. At the same time, don't get too comfortable with where you are. You have things to do and places to go, and now is the time to start working towards the big goals. Remember, you want to get to the desired destination before your competition does.

Tip: Keep putting in the work. That's all.

SAGITTARIUS:

It's time to examine all that is 'toxic' in your life, whether it's an addiction, a bad habit or an ex you keep going back to for an inexplicable reason. You know what that thing is for you, Sagittarius, and you're fully aware of how to free yourself from the given cycle. Think of this as a time for a massive cleanse and purge. Remember, it's something to do for yourself without bringing guilt or shame into the equation.

Tip: Break the habit.

CAPRICORN:

You could say yes to everything, but, would that really benefit your brand? It's time to be discretionary about what you're committing to, and what you're not. The clearer you are about your vision, the easier it will be to manifest the kind of opportunities that will help you level up. On the personal front, you could be dealing with an emotionally

unavailable somebody. Remember, you deserve to be seen and heard, Capricorn. Find a way to express your needs in a gentle manner to the others.

Tip: Be clear about your vision.

AQUARIUS:

The Universe is on your side today and it's bringing all the right opportunities into your world. Opportunities that promise to take your life to the next level. Play your cards right, Aquarius. Your go-getter spirit will work in your favour today. There's good news for those who've been struggling with their finances too. The offers you will receive now could help you create a new source of revenue for yourself.

Tip: Play your cards right.

PISCES:

Everybody is entitled to their opinion. But that doesn't mean you have to take what they're saying personally, Pisces. You already know what does and does not apply to your life. A certain degree of detachment will help you rise above the chaos. On the upside, a collaboration that was off to a rocky start is taking a turn for the better. Trust that this association will become a great source of comfort for you in the days to come.

Tip: A certain degree of detachment will help you rise above the chaos.