



**MADSMIKKELSEN WOULD HAVE 'LOVED TO HAVE TALKED' TO JOHNNY DEPP ABOUT TAKING OVER GRINDELWALD ROLE**  
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**WITHER WILDLIFE**  
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**CARDI B EXPECTING SECOND CHILD WITH OFFSET**

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# Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## New districts will benefit not just Pakyong and Soreong, but all of Sikkim: CM

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 28 JUN:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang joined a meeting to discuss the new districts proposal here at Manan Kendra today. A press communique from the Chief Minister's Office informs that the CM stressed that the decision will be beneficial for all Sikkimese and not just those belonging to these areas. Pakyong and Soreong, it may be recalled, are on their way to becoming districts from the year 2022 onwards.

Commenting on the presentations made today, the CM remarked that the work done in advance by the concerned authorities were the first steps towards the establishment of the new districts.

Speaking on the idea behind the decision, he stated that the main focus of the Government is to provide the best facilities to the people, adding that the decision was tak-



en keeping in mind the collective welfare of the people.

The Chief Minister reiterated the initiative of Governance at the doorstep, which seeks to provide basic facilities at the doorsteps of the people.

He emphasised the use of IT for various official works to increase efficiency and urged the concerned officials to adopt IT as a foundation for the upcoming districts and build on it.

He also urged the

Ministers, MLAs, Advisors and others to familiarise themselves with these technologies for swift implementation of works and other matters.

Further, he stated that the Government functions as per the standard norms and policies and urged all to be mindful of these guidelines and adhere to them for smooth functioning.

Similarly, he advised the concerned individuals to follow these norms

and policies to build a stronger foundation for the new districts and discuss best measures for the collective welfare of the new districts and the people, the release adds.

Referring to the recent budget session, he informed the gathering about certain financial expenditure of the state and also about the meetings being conducted with individual departments regarding the management of funds, completion of works as scheduled and

other matters.

The Chief Minister emphasised collectively working towards the welfare of the state and encouraged all to adopt a healthy working mentality to transform the work culture in the state. He reiterated the recent decision of the Government to provide discretionary funds to the ADCs (Development) and BDOs which can be used during emergencies and have also provided vehicles where required.

...turn Pg3

## Section of ad-hoc teachers protest against 're-interview'



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 28 JUN:**

At the gates of the State Secretariat, Tashiling, today there was a large gathering of teachers who had come to meet the Education Minister to place their grievances regarding the extension of their appointment as ad-hoc teachers.

Every year, the Sikkim Government appoints teachers on ad-hoc basis for a limited period of time, usually, a year. When their term is over, they are given fresh appointment orders or

'extension'. Along with extension of teachers who have been working on such ad-hoc basis for many years, there are also fresh appointments.

Last year, for the first time, appointment of teachers on ad-hoc basis was made via interviews. The term of this batch of ad hoc teachers appointed after passing interviews has ended and the Education department has announced that in order for them to be given fresh appointment orders, or in other words, their service to be 'extended', they have

to sit for an interview again.

It is this re-interview that the group of ad-hoc teachers, numbering around 800, is protesting against.

According to them, it is an 'injustice' since ad-hoc teachers hired before them have never had to sit for such interviews and their service is extended every year without any interview.

The teachers also alleged that there have been a slew of allegedly "illegal" appointment of ad-hoc teachers without any

...turn Pg3

## Family of Olympian Tarundeep Rai felicitated by Sports Dept

**SAGAR CHHETRI**  
**NAMCHI, 28 JUN:**

Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, South District, expressed best wishes to Olympian Tarundeep Rai for upcoming Tokyo Olympics 2020. As part of Tokyo Olympics 2020 Campaign here on Monday, the Department felicitated the family of Olympian Tarundeep Rai. The felicitation was received by Anjana Bhattarai, wife of Tarundeep Rai, on behalf of the family.

The function had Additional Political Secretary to the CM [South District], Anjeeta Rajalim as the chief guest who was accompanied by Additional District Collector [South], Satyem Kumar Pradhan among other dignitaries.

In her address, Joint Director SYA Department [South], Tshering Ongmu Bhutia mentioned that a series of activities have been organized under Tokyo Olympics 2020 Campaign to create awareness on Olympics and Olympians. She said



that the participation of Tarundeep in Tokyo Olympics is a matter of pride for the entire state and is a great source of inspiration for young aspirants.

Tarundeep hails from Namchi so it is also a special moment for the people of Namchi, she added.

Speaking to media persons, Anjeeta Rajalim said that Tarundeep's participation in the Olympics is a matter of pride for entire Sikkim. On behalf of South District, she further extended her best wishes to Tarundeep.

ADC [South] stated that Tarundeep is the only Olympian from Sikkim in this Tokyo Olym-

pics 2020 and it is a great moment for the people of Sikkim and especially for South District. He expressed confidence that Tarundeep would return home with medals for the country and the state.

Anjana Bhattarai, wife of Tarundeep Rai, thanked the department of Sports & Youth Affairs for the honour and urged the people of Sikkim to extend full support to Tarundeep and his team to boost their confidence.

"Tarundeep has been going through rigorous training sessions every day and is also confident of good results this time. I would like to express best wishes to the entire

archery team and Indian contingent in this Olympics," she said.

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha sports wing coordinator [South], Anand Prakash Subba thanked the department of SYA for organizing such an event to honour Tarundeep. On behalf of SKM sports wing, he expressed his confidence that the participation and performance of Tarundeep would encourage young sportspersons in their respective disciplines.

BAC Sporting Club, Namchi general secretary, Mandeep Rai also expressed best wishes to Tarundeep to win gold for the country and bring laurels for the State.

## India reports 46,148 new COVID-19 cases, 979 deaths in last 24 hours

**NEW DELHI, 28 JUN [NDTV]:** India saw a single-day rise of 46,148 new coronavirus infections taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,02,79,331, while daily fatalities were recorded below 1000, taking the total death count to

3,96,730, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

India saw 979 fatalities due to COVID-19 in a day, the lowest in 76 days.

According to the data published at 7 am, the cumulative vaccine doses

administered in the country has reached 32.36 crore under Nationwide Vaccination Drive.

"India achieves another milestone in COVID-19 vaccination and overtakes the USA in a total number of Covid vaccine doses adminis-

tered," the ministry said.

The active cases declined to 5,72,994 comprising 1.89 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 96.80 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.



### STATE BANK OF SIKKIM

(A Government of Sikkim Undertaking)  
**RECRUITMENT OF ASSISTANT MANAGER**  
IN STATE BANK OF SIKKIM

NOTIFICATION NO. SBS/AM/2021/01 Dated: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

Applications are invited from eligible Indian Citizens of Sikkimese origin having Sikkim Subject certificate/Certificate of Identification for appointment as Assistant Manager (AM) in the State Bank of Sikkim.

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1	<b>Minimum qualification</b>	A. Degree of Bachelor and above from a recognized university with any one of the following as a major subject; (i) Business Economics, (ii) Accounting, (iii) Commerce, (iv) Financial Management/Finance, (v) Banking, (vi) Mathematics B. Minimum of one year of Certificate Course in Computer Application. <b>OR</b> A Degree of Bachelor or above in any discipline from a recognized university with minimum experience of five years of working in clerical cadre and above in any Banks in India.						
2	<b>Age Limit</b>	As on 01.04.2021 minimum age of the candidate should be minimum 21 years and maximum of 40 years for all category of candidates in accordance with the orders issued by the State Government from time to time.						
3	<b>Other Qualifications</b>	(a) Should have knowledge of any of the Sikkim State Languages. (b) Should be conversant with the customs and usages of Sikkim.						
4	<b>Number of Vacancies</b>							
	UR	BL	OBC (CL)	OBC (SL)	ST	SC	PT	TOTAL
	5	5	5	5	3	2	1	26
	out of which		out of which		out of which		out of which	
	W	BPL	W	BPL	W	BPL	W	BPL
	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	0
								8
								3

Abbreviation: UR-Unreserved BL-Bhutia Lepcha OBC(CL)-Other Backward Class Centre List OBC(SL)-Other Backward Class State List ST-Scheduled Tribe SC-Scheduled Caste W-Women BPL-Below Poverty Level

Prospective candidates will have to apply after carefully reading the notification regarding the process of examinations and interview, eligibility criteria, online registration processes, payment of prescribed application fee/intimation charges, pattern of examination, issuance of call letters etc. and ensure that they fulfil all stipulated criteria and follow the prescribed processes. To download notification and apply online, candidates should visit our official website [www.statebankofsikkim.com](http://www.statebankofsikkim.com).

#### THE TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Activity	Dates
On-line registration including Edit/Modification of Application by candidates	01.06.2021 to 30.06.2021
Payment of Application Fees/Charges	01.06.2021 to 30.06.2021
Dates for downloading of admit card, date of written exam shall be notified in due course through email, newspaper advertisement and bank's website etc. Candidates are advised to regularly keep in touch with the official SBS website <a href="http://www.statebankofsikkim.com">www.statebankofsikkim.com</a> and respective emails for details and updates.	

sd/-

(S.R.Karki)

GANGTOK THE 25<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021.

CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER

## MLA inspects under-construction CMGAY houses in Yuksam-Tashiding

PRITAM LAMA  
YUKSAM-TASHIDING, 28 JUN:

Area MLA, Sangay Lepcha, also the Deputy Speaker of Sikkim Legislative Assembly, visited remote villages of West Sikkim under Yuksam-Tashiding constituency and inspected the under-construction houses under Chief Minister's Garib Awas Yojana [CMGAY].

The MLA visited four Gram Panchayat units of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency today accompanied by local Panchayats and other officials.



The team visited remote Karge-Mangnam, Dhupi-Norkhola, Mangder and Kongri-Labdang

Gram Panchayat Units and reviewed the progress of construction of houses.

The MLA directed the concerned authority and local contractors to speed-up the construction work and complete it on time.

Speaking to this Correspondent, MLA Sangay Lepcha said, I have visited villages and panchayat ward of four Gram Panchayat unit today under my Constituency to oversee the progress of under-construction Pakka Housing scheme sanctioned under Chief

Minister Garib Awas Yojana for people.

"The Chief Minister has directed us to review and to complete all the under-construction houses sanctioned under Chief Minister Garib Awas Yojana allotted in the year 2019-2020 within the stipulated time. The state government is planning to sanction new housing schemes for deserving and weaker sections," said the MLA.

The MLA will tour other remaining Gram Panchayat Units to review the housing scheme progress.

## BJP Sikkim provides oximeters to health workers

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 28 JUN:

Bharatiya Janata Party Sikkim's Majdoor Morcha general secretary, Bikash Prasad distributed oximeters to health workers of Rangpo Bazaar, Chanatar SDL and IBM area today, a press release informs.

The event took place in the presence of Medi-



cal Officer, Nikhil Topden, Senior CHO, Milan Thatal & Ex-Councillor, Sabitri Pradhan.

## Minor girl raped by 44-yr-old man

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 28 JUN:

In another incident, a 16-year-old girl was sexually assaulted by a 44-year-old man in

West Pendam, East Sikkim on 25 June. The victim's mother reported the crime to the police on 27 June.

The accused Dalay

Tamang was arrested by Singtam Police and a case has been filed against him under POC- SO Act.

## Indian Chamber of Commerce hosts virtual session on MSME Linkages

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 28 JUN:

To commemorate the MSME Day, Indian Chamber of Commerce, North Bengal Chapter organized a virtual session on MSME LINKAGES-NORTH BENGAL PERSPECTIVE today. Chief guest of the programme was Minister-In-Charge, Chandranath Sinha, MSME & Textile, Govt of West Bengal.

MIC MSME acknowledged the initiative of ICC North Bengal Chapter for organizing such event which will concrete the position of North Bengal MSME's. The Minister added that his department is very much confident that MSME's of North Bengal will act as a catalyst to generate employment and entrepreneurship in this part of West Bengal. Chandranath Sinha appreciated the role of Chamber and MSME's in supporting the West Bengal Govt during pandemic times. MIC also said that Biswa Bangla brand has shown the potential of West Bengal local industries/MSME's.

Chairman ICC North Bengal, Nishant Mittal

INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
A VIRTUAL SESSION  
MSME LINKAGES - NORTH BENGAL PERSPECTIVE  
MONDAY | 28<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021 | 11 AM

Chief Guest:  
SRI CHANDRANATH SINHA,  
HONBLE MIC MSME,  
GOVT. OF WEST BENGAL

PANELISTS

DR. MOU SEN JT DIRECTOR, MSME	MOHAN DEBNATH BOARD MEMBER, WBIDC	NISHANT MITTAL CHAIRMAN, ICC NORTH BENGAL
MANABENDRA MONDOL IN CHARGE, DIC MALDA	SANJIT SAHA MEMBER, MSFEC	SANJAY GOYAL VICE CHAIRMAN, ICC NORTH BENGAL
VIKASH BANSAL CHAIR, MSME ICC	HIRALAL AGARWAL VICE CHAIR, MSME ICC	CA MANISH GOYAL CHAIR, STARTUP & INVESTMENT ICC
SUBHASH HALDER SECRETARY, MALDA INDUSTRIAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE		

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in his deliberation highlighted the objective and achievement of West Bengal Govt MSME department which is notified as one of the best

in the country. He also stated that in coming days ICC North Bengal Chapter will adequately support the MSME sector of this region in

collaboration with the Government and its field formations like District Industry Centres. He highlighted the aspects of MSME-Banking, Indus-

trial park usage, export potential of North Bengal MSME's, employment opportunities, utilization of MSME schemes like Bangla, Karmasree, etc. He ensured proper handling by ICC to MSME units of this region.

The event was well attended by District Industry Centres, Govt of West Bengal from Malda, Raiganj, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Coochbehar, Islampur, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and some other parts of West Bengal and major Industry Chambers & Associations from North Bengal.

In the session panelists like Jt Director, Dr Mou Sen, MSME, Govt of West Bengal, Manabendra Mondol, GM DIC, Malda, Subhash Halder, Secretary, Malda Industrial Chamber of Commerce, Sanjit Saha, Member, MSFEC, Mohan Debnath, Board Member, WBIDC, Manish Goyal, Chair Startup & Investment ICC NB, expressed their views regarding MSME sector challenges and way forward. Vote of thanks was delivered by ICC North Bengal Vice Chairman Sanjay Goyal.

## West Sikkim girl launches Bayul Creations to empower rural women

PRITAM LAMA  
GYALSHING, 28 JUN:

To enable rural women to sell their handmade art and craft products, Phuntsok Ongmoo Bhutia from Chumbung near Pelling, West Sikkim has started Bayul Creations.

Phuntsok Ongmoo Bhutia hails from Chumbung and has done her masters in international relations from JNU Delhi. Bayul Creations, a small startup launched during the lockdown, aims to empower rural women by providing platform and promotion of their handmade products.

Not just marketing and promotion of the products, Bayul Creations also wants to train rural women and give them the confidence to earn on their own.

Currently, Bayul

Creations is working with rural women of Chumbung village and is planning to expand to other nearby villages.

Ms Bhutia is confident that this initiative will help rural women, especially housewives economically and socially.

She provides wool and raw materials free of cost to the rural women, and encourages rural women to showcase their talents through knitting and crocheting in their free time.

"As it is said - 'The things you are passionate about are not random, they are your calling'. The thing that has always driven me in life is seeing people around me happy. As life unfolds for me, I've realised that my sole happiness lies



right there. I want to put my heart & soul into creating a platform where I can implement my ideas

to uplift the ones in need. I want to bring about a change by getting out the creative side of people. Deeply and pure-

ly rooted from the heart," believes Ms Bhutia.

You can find Bayul Creations on Instagram and Facebook.

## Bengal extends COVID curbs till July 15 with relaxations

KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI): The West Bengal government on Monday extended the COVID-related restrictions till July 15, announcing certain relaxations.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said public buses will be allowed to operate in the state with 50 per cent capacity.

Government and private offices would also be allowed to function with 50 per cent workforce, she said.

Gymnasiums and beauty parlours can also operate with 50 per cent capacity from 11 am to 6 pm, she added.

Social gatherings such as weddings would be allowed with a maximum of 50 people, Banerjee said, urging people to continue wearing masks and maintaining social distance.

The government also allowed vegetable markets to remain open from 6 am to 12 pm.

The restrictions, imposed on May 16, were last extended till June 30.

## KUTSE SHEGU



With deep sorrow we would like to inform that Kutse Shegu of Late Tenzing Bhutia who left his Heavenly abode on 15th May 2021 falls on 02nd July 2021 [Friday]. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering Prayers for the departed Soul at Deorali, Hotel Chowtara besides But-

terfly Fly Over.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude towards all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement and to thank you all for your kind support and concern.

Passong Gensapa 8918153622

Kuentel Gensapa 7679217911

Ranjana Chakraborty 9641927953

## First 5 lakh tourist visas to be free: Centre's boost for Covid-hit tourism sector

**NEW DELHI, 28 JUN [NDTV]:** Five lakh tourist visas will be issued free of charge - once the government resumes issuance - Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Monday evening, as the government unveiled a list of eight relief measures for some of the sectors worst affected by the Covid pandemic and lockdown.

This scheme will run till March 31, 2022, or till the first five lakh tourist visas are issued, whichever is earlier, Ms Sitharaman said, adding that each tourist could only avail of this scheme once.

The Finance Minister said the total financial implication of the scheme will be ₹ 100 crore.

Travel and tourism sector is among the sectors most badly hit by the pandemic. States for whom tourism is a big earner - like Goa and Kerala - have reported thousands of crores in losses.

As early as May last year (three months after the government suspended issuing tourist



visas and ordered a lockdown), then Kerala Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran said the state suffered an estimated ₹ 15,000 crore loss.

To illustrate the impact Covid has had on this sector, Nirmala Sitharaman said 10.93 million tourists visited India in 2019 and spent nearly US\$ 31 billion on leisure and business.

On average, an individual tourist stayed for about 21 days and spent \$34, or ₹ 2,400, daily.

To help the country's tourism sector recover,

Ms Sitharaman also announced other measures, including a new loan guarantee scheme for 994 travel and tourism stakeholders (TTS, as recognised by the Tourism Ministry) and 10,700 regional- or state-level licensed tourist guides.

Loans will be provided with 100 per cent guarantee up to certain limits, she said.

For TTS the limit will be ₹ 10 lakh (per agency) and for guides it will be ₹ 1 lakh.

There will be no processing charges and

waiver/foreclosure payment charges, and no additional collateral is needed, she said.

Worldwide, the Covid crisis cost the global tourism sector \$1.3 trillion in lost revenue in 2020, the United Nations said in January, calling it "the worst year in tourism history".

International tourist arrivals fell by one billion, or 74 per cent, in 2020 with Asia - the first region to feel the impact of Covid-19 - seeing the steepest decline, the UN said.

### New districts will benefit...

Since the new guidelines for unlocking are applicable from today, the Chief Minister appealed to the people to be cautious and not interpret this as the end of the pandemic and directed the concerned officials to remain vigilant and not permit any form of large gatherings for the next few weeks.

Likewise, he added that the Government is preparing for the third wave of the pandemic and has been adopting every necessary precaution. He affirmed his faith in the state's health infrastructure, doctors, nurses, etc and added that they are more than capable of handling any sort of challenges.

The Chief Minister added that the Government has prioritised Health and Education sectors and that despite several hurdles, they have been persevering to further enhance the facilities in the state.

Earlier, MLA Em Prasad Sharma thanked the Chief Minister for fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Pakyong. He added that the decision will speed up the process of development of the area and the state and assured to work with dedication towards making it a model district.

Likewise, MLA Aditya Golay also expressed his gratitude towards the Chief Minister, Cabinet Ministers and the Government of Sikkim for this historic decision to make Soreong a district. He added that modern amenities should be integrated into the new districts from the start and also placed a few requirements of the new district.

Ministers KN Lepcha, MN Sherpa, MLAs BK Khatiwara, Aditya Golay, Em Pd Sharma and Sunita Gazmer, Zilla Adhakshya, Upadhyaksha, Advisors, Chairpersons, Political Secretary, Deputy Mayor, Councillors, Chief Secretary, ACS, Principal Secretary, Secretaries, Addl. Political Secretary, other officials attended the meeting.

### Section of ad-hoc teachers protest against 're-interview'...

interview since after they cleared their appointment process. There are more than 100 such appointments made at the beginning of this year and their services have been retained till March 2022, claimed some of the protesting teachers.

The teachers had come to the Secretariat to meet the Education Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha, however, since he was not available, they met Director, Hondala Gyaltsen.

Just before this meeting, the Education department released a circular stating that, "It has been decided that after 30.06.2021, all appointments of ad-hoc teachers in the Education Department, would only be made subject to participation in walk-in interview with the appointing authority, and in fulfillment of the criteria as prescribed for in the NCTE Acts, its Rules and its Regulations."

Five representatives of the teachers met the Director who told them that their grievances will be forwarded to higher authorities.

Following the meeting, they said that they will continue to press for their demands; withdrawal of the circular released by the Department today, and extension of service without re-interview.

## On Foot, Mule, Vehicle: Arunachal's vaccine drive 13,000 feet near Tibet border

**NEW DELHI, 28 JUN [NDTV]:** The deadly second wave of the novel coronavirus saw India's daily case count go beyond the 4-lakh mark at its peak. Since then, the country's vaccination drive has gained momentum, with Covid warriors across the country committing to inoculate people against the virus that has caused 3.96 lakh deaths and infected over three crore people since its outbreak in early 2020.

Praising the healthcare staff, including doctors, nurses, and others, and their "passion to serve", Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, on Monday, shared a video of Covid warriors travelling to remote areas near the Tibet border.

The 49-second video shows the medical staff trekking, alongside mules carrying their bags. "Travelling 180 km on foot, mule, and vehicle. To remote location Togy near Tibet (China) border," read

the text at the bottom of the frame.

In the next shot, the team members, in PPE kits, are seen administering the vaccine to a person. The healthcare staff is seen speaking to locals. In his tweet, Mr Kandub tagged PMO India and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and wrote, "Our #CovidWarriors are reaching remote areas near Tibet (China) border to achieve 100% vaccination coverage of Brokpa (Yak herders) population living in Topgye at an avg 13000 feet elevation."

The video concluded with the text: "COVID warriors on mission are determined for 100% coverage."

At the time of publishing, the post was already viewed by over 1,500 people. Many on Twitter reacted to the video and were all praises for the Covid warriors.

Chau Zingnu Namchoom, an MLA from Arunachal's Namsai dis-

trict and the State General Secretary of BJP, commented on the tweet with an emoji of folded hands, expressing gratitude.

According to NDTV's vaccination tracker, Arunachal Pradesh's vaccination rate was eight per cent above the daily target of 7,800 as of June 21.

India has set a new record as it surpassed the United States in terms of the total number of doses administered so far: While India has administered 32.36 crore doses, the US has administered 32.33 crore doses.

**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

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

**Symptoms of nCoV**

- Fatigue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Cough
- General body weakness
- Headache
- Pharyngitis, hot, dryness

**Precautions to Prevent nCoV**

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory symptoms, and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

**Treatment**

- Treatment is symptomatic, and supportive.
- Rest is the best medical condition.
- The vaccination available as of now.
- Seek Doctor to cure symptoms related.

If you seek help, you may call:

Toll free no. 104  
District Surveillance Officer  
EAST - 762072100  
WEST - 9593267800  
NORTH - 8641057488  
SOUTH - 7407691483  
New STN8  
AMS - 8434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

## Man arrested for sexual assault on minor daughter

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 28 JUN:**

A 31-year-old man has been arrested for sexually assaulting his 5-year-old daughter in Mangan, North Sikkim. The accused, Shyam Kr Limboo, has been charged with sexually assaulting his daughter several times over the last two months. The case came to light when the victim's aunt filed an FIR on 27 June after she learnt that her niece had been telling her friends about what her father was doing. Subsequently, the father was arrested and the case is under investigation.

## After a day's pause, Covid claims 3 more in Sikkim

**SAGAR CHHETRI GANGTOK, 28 JUN:**

After going one day without a COVID death on Saturday [updates released on Sunday], Sikkim recorded three more COVID deaths in the last 24 hours. With this, Sikkim's COVID death toll has reached 304.

Of the three new COVID deaths, one was reported from STNM Hospital, another at Central Referral Hospital, Tadong, and the third was a Covid patient under home isolation in rural East district.

In the meantime, 71 new cases of novel coronavirus were detected from the testing of 454 samples on Sunday giv-

ing Sikkim a test positivity rate of 15.6%.

As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department at 8AM Monday morning, 27 cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 179 samples and 44 more persons were found positive for COVID-19 in Rapid Antigen Testing of 269 samples.

Of the 71 new cases in the State, 32 were registered in East District, eight in West District, 29 in South District and two from North District.

What continues to be a reassuring development for Sikkim is that

the number of daily recoveries have been consistently out-numbering new cases, and in the 24 hours that 71 new cases were detected, Sikkim also recorded 178 more people getting discharged from home isolation after making full recoveries to further improve the figure of recovered cases of COVID-19 to 17,599.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 stands at 20,182.

There are currently 2,027 active cases of coronavirus in Sikkim, of whom nine are under treatment in ICU facilities at STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

## "Flying Blind": Gold-obsessed Indians now pouring billions into crypto

**NEW DELHI, 28 JUN [BLOOMBERG]:**

The cryptocurrency aficionados' mantra that Bitcoin is equivalent to digital gold is winning converts among the world's biggest holders of the precious metal.

In India, where households own more than 25,000 tonnes of gold, investments in crypto grew from about \$200 million in the past year, according to Chainalysis. That's despite outright hostility toward the asset class from the central bank and a proposed trading ban.

Richi Sood, a 32-year-old entrepreneur is one of those who swerved from gold to crypto. Since December, she's put in

just over 1 million rupees (\$13,400) - some of it borrowed from her father - into Bitcoin, Dogecoin and Ether.

And she's been fortunate with her timing. She cashed out part of her position when Bitcoin smashed through \$50,000 in February and bought back in after the recent tumble, allowing her to fund the overseas expansion of her education startup Study Mate India.

"I'd rather put my money in crypto than gold," Sood said. "Crypto is more transparent than gold or property and returns are more in a short period of time."

She's part of a growing number of Indians -- now totalling more than

15 million -- buying and selling digital coins. That's catching up with the 23 million traders of these assets in the U.S. and compares with just 2.3 million in the U.K.

The growth in India is coming from the 18-35 year old cohort, says the co-founder of India's first cryptocurrency exchange. Latest World Gold Council data indicated Indian adults under age 34 have less appetite for gold than older consumers.

"They find it far easier to invest in crypto than gold because the process is very simple," said Sandeep Goenka, who co-founded ZebPay and spent years representing the industry in

discussions with the government on regulation. "You go online, you can buy crypto, you don't have to verify it, unlike gold."

One of the biggest barriers preventing wider adoption is the regulatory uncertainty. Last year, the Supreme Court quashed a 2018 rule banning crypto trading by banking entities, resulting in a trading surge.

However, authorities show no signs of embracing cryptocurrencies. The nation's central bank says it has "major concerns" about the asset class and six months ago the Indian government proposed a ban on trading in digital coins - though it has been silent on the topic since.

**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**  
**BUILDINGS & HOUSING DEPARTMENT**

**No: 138/2020/P/208-SE/NE Bldgs. Dated: 21/06/2021**

### INVITATION FOR BIDS

1. The Buildings & Housing Department, Government of Sikkim, on behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, invites percentage rate tender under single cover system from Class II B registered contractors within the District enlisted with the SPWD for execution of work as detailed below:

Sl.No	Name of work	Cost of Bidding documents	Bid security 2.5% of the bid value	Bid value
1	2	3		5
1	Vertical Extension of Barrack No. 1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9 & 10 at State Central Jail, Rongyek, East Sikkim.	Rs.30000/-	Rs. 5,95,956.00	Rs.2,38,38,276.00

**The date and time of tender and submission of completed bid document are under.**

**i) Date of Sale of Tender Documents by the Department on: 05/07/2021, Office hours.**

**ii) Last Date of submission of bid Documents & copy of bid security : 07/07/2021. 1400 hours.**

**iii) Date of opening of Tender :09/07/2021, 11.00 AM onwards.**

2. Eligible Contractors having experience in the construction of building works and considers themselves capable to undertake execution of the project may procure tender documents from the office of the Divisional Engineer (HQ), Buildings & Housing Department, Government of Sikkim, Nirman Bhawan, Gangtok.]

3. The completed tender documents must be submitted on 07/07/2021, 1400 hours. All the relevant papers such as i) valid Enlistment copy ii) Tax Clearance certificate iii) Bidding documents including financial bid along with the cost of Tender Form in the form of challan / TDR in favour of Chief Accounts Officer, Building & Housing Department, Government of Sikkim, payable at Gangtok on the scheduled date & time. If the copy of the relevant document i/c the cost of tender document and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) are not received on 07/07/2021, before 14.00 hours, the tender documents submitted by the bidder shall be considered non-responsive and shall be summarily rejected.

4. The tendered/bidder is supposed to inspect the site before the submission of tender to acquaint him/her the working environment.

5. The Department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the bid(s) without assigning any reason thereof.

**Sd/-  
Superintending Engineer (N/EO  
Buildings & Housing Department**

**R.O. No. 79/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22 dt. 28.6.21**

## Wither Wildlife

*The young will protect what they know*

Any reference to Sikkim and the qualifying sentence invariably makes mention of the fact that it is a biodiversity hot-spot. We have all read reams after reams on the various geographical zones that Sikkim packs into its 7,096 square kilometres. Experts tell us that Sikkim has 4,000 varieties of flowering plants and herbs, 450 species of orchids, 300 species of ferns, nine species of conifers, 550 species of birds, 600 types of butterflies and a list of fauna that outstrips any other area its size.

This is what one has read.

Few would have seen even a sliver of it. Jackals on the roads and the rare deer straying into habitations is what most of us have experienced of this wildlife and some might have heard of bear attacks and of course, some villages routinely bring in complaints of damage to crops by wild boars. For now, let's not count monkeys as wildlife in the context that we are discussing.

Meanwhile, the past few years have seen a rise in wildlife-human conflict [with the wildlife at the suffering end], but these have been limited to bear attacks and the occasional crop damage, beyond that, even the bastis have not been spying on too much biodiversity. Deer populations are on the rise one is told, but in the absence of any scientific study, this could be credited as much to the wiping out of the predator population as to the ban on hunting or simply lack of food in the wild leading to more sighting. May be the other fauna has retreated deeper into the forests; but even that is unlikely because Sikkim's small size ensures that even the thickest of forests has but a constricted sweep with either a habitation or a road encroaching the slopes. Admittedly, in the absence of any statistics [current or otherwise], the suggestion that wildlife or flora is not very abundant is as unlettered as the frequent claims of Sikkim still being a biodiversity paradise.

This is not to challenge claims of Sikkim's position in biodiversity rankings, but to underline the need for more detailed, from the field, contemporary studies on Sikkim's flora and fauna. Any such effort will obviously begin with a genuine stirring for something on these lines by the Forest Department and then a parallel effort to excite interest on such matters among the young, for it will be they who inherit whatever is left and will hopefully soon study the state of Sikkim's wilds. This section has often registered problems with the tokenism of special days and weeks that planners organise to escape any real commitment to resolving real issues the rest of the year round, but even in their tokenism, such days have a role to play – in exciting the interest of the young since it is invariably they who get pulled out of classrooms to join rallies and raise placards. In the context of wildlife, one such occasion arrives every October with the first week observed across the country as the Wildlife Week. The first week of October is still some months away, but it should never be too early to talk about wildlife.

Any "awareness" on about wildlife should be organised with the belief that what the younger generation sees, it will protect. A trip to the Himalayan Zoological Park at Bulbuley above Gangtok will bring them a chance to see only a handful of animals. Sikkim's flora and fauna spans a much wider expanse and there is a real need now to educate students on how abundant Sikkim's biodiversity is. Awareness should provide an impetus to take the introduction of the Sikkimese young to their environment to the next level. The universal greed for "progress" is apparent, if not even more amplified in Sikkim, and has hopefully only pushed the wildlife deeper into the forest reserves and driven them to extinction from these environs.

Sikkim, to its credit, can stake claim to having segregated areas as wildlife reserves much ahead of even India, but now the time has come to reaffirm this commitment. The State has already lost animals like the Takin, the Pygmy Hog and the Sikkim Stag to the bracket which records "extinct animals" and has placed more in the "endangered list." Someone, and only the Forest Department comes to mind, has to now take the responsibility of educating the younger generation on the inventory of animals that the State still has with it. Sponsored visits to wildlife sanctuaries and tours conducted by experts, as and when the pandemic allows, are the need of the hour. Then, the young will see what Sikkim has and will become more committed to protecting it.

Ignorance can prove fatal, because if the present trend of tokenism continues and more animals are lost, no one will even notice the loss until it is too late. There might actually come a time when the young grow up believing that the Red Panda is a stuffed toy and not a real animal. Conservation will not be possible once that stage is reached...

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# China is Using Mythology and Sci-Fi to Sell its Space Programme to the World

MOLLY SILK  
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On the morning of June 17, China launched its long-awaited Shenzhou-12 spacecraft, carrying three Chinese astronauts – or taikonauts – towards the Tianhe core module. The module itself was launched at the end of April, forming part of the permanent Tiangong space station, which is planned to remain in orbit for the next ten years.

China's construction of its own space station stems from the nation's exclusion from the International Space Station, a result of US concerns over technology transfers that could enhance China's military capabilities. Undeterred by this, China has forged ahead with its own space programmes and alliances. Since, the country has demonstrated that the Chinese "brand" of space technology is reputable and can hold its own in the international arena.

An impressive track record of remarkable space endeavours is not the only thing that distinguishes China's space brand from other national players. The government and related organisations have made concerted efforts to establish a unique "Chinese space culture" alongside the country's advances in space technology. While the target audience for many of these cultural creations remains domestic, China's space ambitions are directed at global audiences in a variety of ways.

LEGENDARY BEGINNINGS

Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the naming of these programmes after China's traditional roots.

The name Tiangong translates as "Heavenly Palace". This was the residence of the deity who holds su-

preme authority over the universe in Chinese mythology, the Celestial Ruler. The name is particularly fitting for a Chinese space station, which acts as a home in the heavens for the country's taikonauts. The meaning of Shenzhou, the missions that take taikonauts to space, is "Divine Vessel", which is also a homophone for an ancient name for China, "Divine Land".

China's lunar exploration missions, meanwhile, are named after the legendary Moon goddess Chang'e. The tale goes that Chang'e flew from Earth to the Moon after stealing the elixir of immortality from her husband, Hou Yi.

According to Chinese mythology, Chang'e continues to live on the Moon with her rabbit companion, who spends its time pounding the elixir of immortality in a mortar for the goddess. The rabbit is known as Yutu, or "Jade Rabbit". China's two lunar rovers, the second of which became the first to land on the far side of the Moon in 2019, are named after it.

A key component of this lunar landing mission was Queqiao, a communication relay satellite. This was named after the myth of the "Magpie Bridge", which joins the "Cowherd" and the "Weaver Girl" across the stretch of the Milky Way in a romantic folktale. The satellite acted as a vital bridge of communication between the Chang'e mission components and China's mission control centre.

The linking of China's traditional past to its forward-looking space activities serves to strengthen the identity of these space programmes as distinctly Chinese.

In connecting these achievements to the country's cultural heri-

tage, they are presented not as mere copies of their space power predecessors, but as having developed from national talents and progresses. They also serve as a reminder that while the programmes aim for the furthest reaches of space, China's future will never be disconnected from its national and cultural roots.

Furthermore, these legendary names are a signal to the international community that space is not the exclusive domain of historical western figures such as Apollo or Artemis, but that it also belongs to the lineage of the Chinese people.

CHINA'S FUTURE IN FICTION

Over the last few years, multiple corporations based in China have released space-themed commercial products and promotional campaigns in conjunction with China's official space organisations, from upmarket fashion brands to KFC. But perhaps the most notable promotion of China's space ambitions is in films.

In 2019, the blockbuster sci-fi film *The Wandering Earth* was released. The film was well received, and was publicised by the state's international media platforms as a must-see.

Director Frant Gwo has spoken about the importance of the message behind the film, claiming that China's way of thinking about space is vastly different from US ideologies. According to Gwo, while the US dreams of eventually leaving the Earth to move to other planets, the Chinese space dream is to improve life on Earth through the use of space resources. The film promotes the idea that we mustn't try to flee our planet, but instead, we must strive to protect it.

While most space-themed commercial products remain aimed at a domestic market, Chinese sci-fi is becoming increasingly popular abroad. Books such as *The Three Body Problem* by Liu Cixin, who wrote the short story which *The Wandering Earth* was adapted from, *Folding Beijing* by Hao Jingfang, which is also being adapted for the screen, and *The Redemption of Time* by Baoshu have all succeeded as translations.

Recognised by politicians as a potentially powerful tool for promoting state-approved narratives, government bodies have encouraged China's sci-fi filmmakers to incorporate narratives that fit with the regime's wider ideological and technological ambitions.

The fantasy aspect of sci-fi may explain why the genre is being internationally promoted first over other commercial products that feature imagery of actual Chinese space missions. Unlike China's increasing capabilities in space, which are viewed as a threat by the US, the country's fictional space developments pose no real-life risk. Able to incorporate the backdrop of a technologically powerful China into entertaining and compelling narratives, such stories allow foreign audiences to engage with the idea of China as a space power without the kind of political discourse that surrounds its real space activities.

Eventually, a foreign audience may begin to grow more comfortable with the notion of China as a technological world leader. And this, in turn, may cultivate an interest in the activities of the Chinese national space programme.

*[the writer is PhD Candidate, Chinese Space Policy, University of Manchester]*

## I listened to animals' hearts to reveal their hidden emotional worlds

CLAUDIA WASCHER  
THECONVERSATION.COM

It's not only humans who feel emotions. In his 1872 book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Charles Darwin described a range of "innate" and "evolved" emotions in dogs, cats, chimpanzees, swans and other non-human animals.

But animals can't verbally report their emotions, and humans often misread how an animal's feeling, which can lead us to make them feel worse despite the best of intentions. That's because we tend to anthropomorphise animals, seeing in them human expressions and emotions which cloud our understanding of how they're really feeling.

Learning how animals perceive emotions is important. Understanding what makes them stressed or unhappy can inform how we approach animal welfare in zoos, sea life centres and farms, as well as helping us treat our pets with more compassion.

Perhaps poetically, researchers have turned to animals' hearts to learn more about their emotions, as detailed in my recent paper. By measuring how animal heart rates fluctuate in response to different situations, we're getting closer to understanding how and when animals feel.

In both humans and animals, an increase in emotional arousal from low to high can be quantified by an increase in heart rate, measured in beats per minute (bpm). Taking these measurements – with wearable heart rate belts, implanted transmitters or artificial eggs – provides a rare window into the emotional worlds of animals.

The heart rate of animals increases rapidly when they have aggressive encounters such as fights, and decreases during friendly interactions such as grooming. For example, in greylag geese, the mean heart rate during aggressive interactions increases from 84 bpm during rest to 157 bpm. Heart rate increases more when geese are interacting with a more dominant opponent, showing that geese are more emotionally aroused during a confrontation they're more likely to lose.

This might be simply explained by an increase in physical activity during fights, except that we see the same effect in geese that are merely observing events in their environment, for example when they're watching other geese fighting. This heart rate increase reflects emotional arousal, not physical activity.

Most remarkably, my research has shown that geese's heart rate increased more when their partner or a family member was involved

in aggressive encounters, compared to unrelated individuals. This suggests that greylag geese are capable of what's called emotional contagion – when an individual is affected by the emotions of other individuals.

A similar effect has even been observed in dogs and their owners. A study found that heart rate in dogs increases when it increases in their owners, and that this effect was stronger the longer the human had owned the dog. This suggests that their emotional states are synchronised, despite belonging to different species.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Heart rate also provides insights into the cognitive abilities of animals. Chimpanzees, for example, have different mean heart rates, depending on whether they're shown pictures of aggressive, friendly or unfamiliar chimps. This suggests that they recognise different emotional expressions.

Other studies have found that a number of species – for example goats, horses, cattle and European starlings – show increased heart rate when engaging in a learning task, revealing that they're emotionally aroused by the task.

Heart rate is a particularly revealing measure when animals don't express their emotions through any behavioural response. American black bears, for instance, don't behave differently when drones are flying over them. But scientists have found the presence of a drone does increase their heart rate, which shows that the bears are disturbed – even if they're not showing it.

And that's the key reason why monitoring animal heart rates can help improve their welfare: by showing us when they're stressed. This could help pet owners to understand when certain situations stress their pets, and what they can do to reduce it.

We know for instance that many pet dogs are stressed by fireworks. Heart rate studies have found that the presence of the dog's owner helps offset some of this stress. We're less aware that cats, according to one study, actually feel more



stressed when they're stroked. By looking at cats' heart rates, we could understand which types of strokes they're most and least fond of.

In kennelled dogs, meanwhile, a study has shown that auditory and olfactory stimulation (playing music and smelling lavender) decreased their heart rate, indicating stress reduction. The same could be true of animals in zoos. And developing an understanding of how wild animals like black bears react to human disturbances could help us to minimise the effect of human activity on wildlife.

WILD AT HEART

Although heart rate allows us to quantify the level of emotional arousal in animals, it doesn't provide information about whether this emotional arousal is received as positive or negative. We can only assume that a fight is perceived negatively, and courtship positively.

Still, we can use heart rate as a measure to understand how excited our pets are in certain situations. We can learn how they feel about different styles of music or different flavours of food. Given that owners appear to accrue cardiovascular benefits from their pets – in reduced blood pressure, for example – we owe it to our animals, and those in the wild, to listen to their hearts, helping foster a more compassionate relationship between humans and animals.

*[the writer is Senior Lecturer, Animal and Environmental Biology, Anglia Ruskin University]*

# As black fungus cases rise, Nepal faces shortage of drugs for treatment

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA

**KATHMANDU, 28 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]:** The Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital on Saturday admitted two new patients—a 56-year-old woman and a 65-year-old man—with mucormycosis, a rare fungal infection commonly known as 'black fungus' and mostly found among diabetic Covid-19 patients.

With the new cases, the number of patients with mucormycosis at the government-run hospital has reached 14.

According to the hospital, the condition of both patients admitted on Saturday is critical.

But the hospital does not have Liposomal Amphotericin B, the primary drug used for treating the black fungus infection.

India, the main source of the drug, has banned its export.

"In the absence of this drug, we are treating the patients with an alternative drug—Deoxycholate," said Dr Rabindra Pradhananga, coordinator of the Mucormycosis Management Committee at the Teaching Hospital.

Mucormycosis affects the brain, sinuses and lungs and can be life-threatening to diabetic or severely immunocompromised individuals like cancer and HIV/AIDS patients. Such cases have appeared mostly among Covid-19 patients in Nepal and neighbouring India.

Amid the shortage of Liposomal Amphotericin B, Deoxycholate and Posaconazole are two other drugs available in the Nepali market to treat patients of mucormycosis.

But Dr Pradhananga said that the patients' families need to procure Deoxycholate and Po-



saconazole from the markets and these drugs are available only because they were in stock before India imposed a blanket ban on the export of Amphotericin B drugs amid surging cases of mucormycosis in India in early June.

"All three drugs—Liposomal Amphotericin B, Deoxycholate and Posaconazole—come under Amphotericin B and all of them come under India's restrictive category," said Dr Pradhananga.

The government does not have any of these drugs in its store to distribute to its hospitals at the moment.

"We had received 1,000 doses of Liposomal Amphotericin B in early June from the World Health Organization but they have been used up," said Krishna Prasad Paudel, spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population.

"Alternative drugs can be found in the market but they are not as good as Liposomal Amphotericin B. The government does not have a stock of these alternative drugs either."

In a notification dat-

ed June 1, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under India's Commerce Ministry categorised Amphotericin B under the restricted category for export with immediate effect.

According to an NDTV report as of June 11, over 31,000 black fungus cases had been identified in India with the death of over 2,100 people from the infection.

With the stock of the Deoxycholate and Posaconazole also running out in the market, doctors said that it would be difficult for Nepali patients to secure these drugs if cases of black fungus rose sharply.

A patient needs many vials of this scarce drug and the 1,000 vials of Liposomal Amphotericin B received from the World Health Organization in early June were used up early.

"All the vials of the medicines were spent in treating 16 black fungus patients at government-run hospitals," said Paudel, who is also the director of the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division under the

Health Ministry. "A single patient required as many as 80 vials."

According to him, the government had requested 3,000 vials with the WHO but only received 1,000.

Unified Covid-19 Hospital, run on the premises of Bir Hospital, also treated four patients of mucormycosis and most of the drugs made available by the Health Ministry were used, the hospital authority said.

Dr Nabin Pokharel, deputy director at the Unified Covid-19 Hospital, said that his hospital has a few vials of Liposomal Amphotericin B remaining to treat any new patients.

"Initially, we failed to get Liposomal Amphotericin B to treat patients and used alternative drugs," said Pokharel.

The drugs to treat mucormycosis are expensive, which the poor will not be able to afford.

According to an Indian media report, one vial of Amphotericin B costs as high as INR (5,000-6,000) or almost Rs10,000 in the Indian market.

"If a patient needs 80 vials, he or she will end up paying around Rs800,000 for this medicine only," said Paudel.

Given the shortage of the medicine in the market, the cost might be even higher in the black market.

Meanwhile, the number of black fungus cases has been rising. In early June, the fungal infection was seen in about a dozen people. Now, the number has reached around two dozens even though the number of daily new coronavirus infections in the country has been falling sharply.

On Sunday, 1,353 new Covid-19 cases were reported, the second lowest figure since April 20. On Saturday, 1,174 new cases were reported. The Ministry of Health and Population reported 34 more deaths from Covid-19 complications, taking the total toll to 9,009.

The number of cases reported since the pandemic began stands at 633,679. The number of active cases stands at 40,336.

The black fungus in-

fection is mostly seen in people with pre-existing diabetic conditions who have been infected with the coronavirus. It causes blackening or discoloration over the nose, blurred or double vision, chest pain, breathing difficulties and coughing blood.

The indiscriminate use of steroids for some Covid-19 patients could be linked to mucormycosis or other fungal infections, doctors say.

"Of the 14 patients admitted at the Teaching Hospital, one died and six were discharged, four of them after recovery and two without completing treatment as per their own request," said Dr Pradhananga.

The other seven are undergoing treatment.

The Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital has so far conducted surgeries on seven mucormycosis patients to remove the mucor fungus.

Likewise, two patients admitted at Unified Covid-19 Hospital have died while two others were discharged, according to Dr Pokharel.

One patient who had been admitted at Seti Zonal Hospital died on June 3. A patient who was hospitalized at Lumbini Provincial hospital died in late May.

In May, four Covid-19 patients were found with the black fungus infection at the Nepalgunj-based Bheri Hospital of which one had died. But with the Indian ban on exports, it is uncertain when the drugs treating the disease will be available in Nepal.

"It is not certain when we can get additional vials," said Paudel, the spokesperson.

## Arunachal records 165 new COVID-19 cases, tally 34,932

**ITANAGAR, JUN 28 (PTI):** The COVID-19 tally in Arunachal Pradesh rose to 34,932 on Monday with 165 more people testing positive for the infection, a senior health official said.

The death toll in the frontier state remained unchanged at 167, the official said.

Capital Complex Region recorded the maximum number of new cases at 66, followed by Changlang at 16, Lower Subansiri at 13 and West Kameng at 11, State Surveillance Officer Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Nine fresh cases were reported from Papumpare, six each from Upper Subansiri, Lohit and East Siang, four each from Lower Dibang Valley and Anjaw, three each from Kamle, Kra Daadi, Tawang and West Siang, two each from Kurung Kumey, Tirap and East Kameng and one each from Leparada, Longding, Lower Siang, Namsai, Pakke Kessang and Upper Siang district.

Of the 165 fresh cases, 155 were detected through rapid antigen

tests, eight via RT-PCR and two with the help of the TrueNat method, the SSO said.

The land-locked state currently has 2,495 active cases, he said.

At least 216 patients recuperated from the disease on Sunday, taking the total number of recoveries in the north-eastern state to 32,270, Jampa said.

The recovery rate stands at 92.38 per cent and the positivity rate at 4.45 per cent, he said.

Capital Complex Region -- comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas -- has the highest number of active cases at 500, followed by West Kameng at 289, East Siang at 174, Changlang at 160 and Lohit at 152.

Altogether, 7,50,910 samples have been tested for COVID-19 so far, including 3,704 on Saturday, Jampa added.

Meanwhile, State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Padung said a total of 5,63,021 people have been administered COVID-19 vaccines since the inoculation drive began in January.

## Eastern Railway launches mobile COVID vaccination centre

**KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI):** A mobile COVID vaccination centre on tracks was started for the first time by the Eastern Railway on Monday for inoculation and medical check-up of its employees and their families at far off stations under its Sealdah division, an official said here.

The railway mobile unit 'Aarogya' is an air-conditioned EMU coach with separate compartments for patient waiting, doctors' room, observation area, dressing room/minor OT, with oxygen cylinder and basic resuscitative equipment, he said.

"This special medical coach is intended for health check-up and vaccination of railway employees posted at far-off stations under Sealdah division of Eastern Railway and their families," Divisional Railway Man-

ager S P Singh said.

With its inaugural run to Ranaghat, Rail Mobile COVID Vaccination Centre is introduced for the first time in Eastern Railway, Dr Rudrendu Bhattacharya, Chief Medical Director, ER, said.

The mobile health unit, to be manned by doctors and paramedical staff, will be moved independently in any direction to any railway station or shed within the jurisdiction of Sealdah division, covering Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Nadia and Murshidabad districts, the official said.

The West Bengal state health authorities have given approval to run 'Aarogya' as mobile COVID vaccination centre to wayside stations and vaccinating railway beneficiaries for three categories frontline workers, dependents of employees aged more than 45 years and retired employees.

# Nepal has not seen a single conviction for torture and custodial deaths in the past three years

BINOD GHIMERE

**KATHMANDU, 28 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]:** The National Penal Code that came into force in 2018 has criminalised torture and includes a provision of up to five years of imprisonment for the perpetrators in addition to compensation for the victims.

Nepal in 1996 adopted the Compensation Relating to Torture Act following pressure to fulfil its international commitment. As the government is a party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1991, having a domestic law was necessary. The convention treats all acts of torture as criminal offence and envisions punishment for the perpetrators and compensation for the victims.

Article 14 of the convention says each state party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the

event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation, it says.

However, the 1996 Act didn't reflect the spirit of the convention as it was limited to providing compensation up to Rs 100,000 to the victims with the provision of some departmental actions against the government employees involved in torture but it lacked the provisions of prosecution.

The issue was addressed in the National Penal Code-2017, which came into force in August 2018.

Section 167 (1) of the code says no authority who is competent under the law in force to investigate or prosecute any offence, implement law, take any one into control, or hold any one in custody or detention in accordance with law shall subject, or cause to be subjected, any one to physical or mental torture or to cruel, brutal, inhuman or degrading treatment.

A person who commits the offence referred to in subsection as per the section is liable to a sentence of imprisonment for a term

not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding fifty thousand rupees or both the sentences, according to the penal code.

Despite such a provision in place, not a single perpetrator of torture has been convicted over the past three years although cases of torture are reported in significant numbers every year, according to organisations working on human rights.

Over a dozen cases of custodial deaths and several cases of torture have been reported in the past three years since the enforcement of the National Penal Code. The death of Bijay Ram Mahara from Garuda in Rautahat in August 2020, Raj Kumar Chepang in July 2020 in Chitwan and Shambhu Sada Musahar in Janakpur in June last year are some of the cases where there have been no prosecution. Although the police reluctantly received complaints from the victims' families, there have not been any investigations. "Firstly, it is extremely difficult to file a police complaint of custodial death due to torture because police themselves are involved in the torture so they are reluctant to reg-

ister the complaint," Bikash Basnet, a programme manager at the Advocacy Forum, a non-governmental organisation advocating for human rights in Nepal, told the Post. "Even if a complaint is registered with the police, prosecution doesn't happen."

The police are reluctant to book their officials even in the cases which have been termed as "extrajudicial killings" by the National Human Rights Commission. In October last year, the constitutional human rights watchdog had concluded that the police extrajudicially killed Gopal Tamang, 23, of Sindhupalchok and Ajay Tamang, 24, from Nuwakot in a forest in Bhaktapur. The commission had recommended action against the police officials including a deputy superintendent of police who had shot the two alleged kidnappers dead after their arrest in August 2018.

The commission's investigation also found that police had killed Kumar Paudel, Sarlahi district in charge of the Netra Bikram Chand-led Communist Party of Nepal, after his arrest in June, 2019. The commission termed it extrajudicial killing and recommended

actions against the perpetrators including a police inspector. The police didn't adhere to the recommendations. "Cases of torture and extrajudicial killings are continuing because there is no action against the perpetrators," Govinda Sharma Poudyal, a former member of the National Human Rights Commission, told the Post.

Following the police reluctance in investigating the cases of torture, custodial deaths and extrajudicial killings, the Supreme Court in January 2020 (full text was issued in December) directed the government to constitute a separate entity, independent of Nepal Police, to investigate the cases where the police officials are involved. The ruling by the division bench of justices Ishwar Prasad Khatiwada and Kumar Regmi said a separate mechanism comprising experts from different sectors is necessary as the police cannot be trusted to conduct impartial investigation into cases where its own officers are involved.

"The government must form an independent agency with specially trained experts to investigate allegations of a serious and

violent nature," read the verdict. "It must establish a legal and institutional framework to facilitate investigations that are independent, impartial and effective."

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SummitTIMES

Sri Lanka cricketers face inquiry for alleged bio-bubble breach in England

**COLOMBO, JUN 28 (PTI):** Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has launched an inquiry against Niroshan Dickwella and Kusal Mendis for allegedly breaching the bio-bubble during the ongoing tour of England after a purported video of them on a night out went viral on social media.

The two were seen roaming the streets in Durham after the final T20 international on Sunday night, which Sri Lanka lost. Both the players were a part of the playing XI in the match with Sri Lanka lost by massive 89 runs.

SLC will investigate whether they breached the bio-bubble by going out in the night.

Reacting to the video, which was posted by a Sri Lankan fan, SLC chief Shammi Silva said, "an investigation is underway as they have breached the (code of) conduct."

Sri Lanka went down 0-3 in the T20 series that ended on Sunday. This was the island nation's fifth straight series loss in T20 internationals since October 2020.

The defeat led to former greats such as Sanath Jayasuriya, Muttiah Muralitharan, Roshan Mahanama, Hashan Tillekaratne and Tillekaratne Dilshan expressing dismay at the poor performance.

Sri Lanka will play the first of three ODIs with England tomorrow at Chester le Street.

## Japan ups health controls as Olympic athlete tests positive

**TOKYO (AP):** Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged Monday to strengthen health controls at airports after a Ugandan Olympic team member tested positive for COVID-19 at the town hosting their training camp, triggering concerns that the upcoming games will spread infections.

A Ugandan team member, reportedly a coach, tested positive on Saturday at Tokyo's Narita airport and was quarantined there. But the rest of the nine-person team was allowed to travel more than 500 kilometers (300 miles) on a chartered bus to their pre-Olympics camp in the western prefecture of Osaka.

Three days later, a second Ugandan also tested positive for the virus, forcing seven town officials and drivers who had close contact with the team to self-isolate. The team members were quarantined at a local hotel.

Concerns escalated after it was announced that both Ugandans had the delta variant of the virus, which is believed to spread more easily.

In response to criticism of the case, Suga rushed to Tokyo's Haneda international airport to inspect virus testing for arrivals and vowed to ensure appropriate border controls as growing numbers of Olympic and Paralympic participants enter Japan ahead of the July 23 opening of the games.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato later Monday said Japan plans to step up quarantine requirements for Olympic athletes and other participants from areas where the delta strain has been detected by requiring daily virus tests for seven days prior to departure to Japan — extended from the current four days — and up to 14 days after entry



and training in isolation in the first three days.

The Uganda case illustrated that Japan's border health controls can be easily breached, Tokyo Medical Association Chairman Haruo Ozaki said Sunday on NHK public television.

"Apparently the border controls are not adequate, even though there has been plenty of time to work on them," he said.

Osaka Gov. Hirofumi Yoshimura said the entire team should have been quarantined at Narita airport.

Government officials initially defended the airport health controls as

having properly detected and isolated the positive case, and said that contact tracing and isolation of those suspected of having had close contact was not their job but that of local health officials.

"No matter what measures you take, infected people would come in and it is unavoidable," Japanese Olympic Committee President Yasuhiro Yamashita said at a news conference in Tokyo.

"Strict border control at airports is extremely important," Yamashita said, urging the government to do more instead of pushing all the responsibility of contact tracing on local authorities.

Experts have noted a significant increase in the movement of people in Tokyo and other metropolitan areas since the easing of a state of emergency on June 21 and warned of signs of a resurgence of infections in the Tokyo region.

Tokyo on Monday reported 317 new cases, up from 236 from a week earlier, the ninth consecutive day of week-on-week increases, with an increase in cases of the delta variant. That could accelerate the resurgence to levels that might require another state of emergency during the Olympics, experts said.

## Switching from handball to hockey changed my life: India women's team forward Udita

**BENGALURU, JUN 28 (PTI):** Indian women's hockey team forward Udita says the decision to switch to hockey from handball six years ago changed her life completely as she gears up to represent the country in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

The 23-year-old from Haryana, who has played 32 matches so far, was named in the 16-member Indian team that will participate at the Tokyo Games beginning July 23.

"It's amazing where life takes you. I only started playing hockey six years ago. Before that, I was busy playing handball. But life had other plans for me," Udita said in a release issued by Hockey India on Monday.

"My handball coach was absent for three consecutive days and led me to choose hockey as an alternative sport. And the choice to play hockey changed my life entirely."

Udita, who made her senior team debut in 2017 and was part of the silver medal-winning team at the 2018



Asian Games, said she is fortunate to have played in some of the biggest sporting events in her career so far.

"I was selected for the Junior National Camp in 2015 after some impressive performances in domestic tournaments. Then, I made my debut for the Junior Team in 2016.

"I later went on to lead the junior India squad that won the bronze at

the 4th U-18 Women's Asia Cup in 2016.

"I have been very fortunate to have got an opportunity to play for India in some of the biggest events like the Asian Games and the World Cup in London where we had some significant performances as a team."

Talking about the preparations for the Tokyo Games, Udita said the next few weeks are going to be the most crucial

days of their lives.

"The Indian team only has one focus right now, which is Tokyo. There is no doubt that the next few weeks are going to be the most crucial days of our lives," she said.

"Everything we do now, we will do with an aim to produce the best results at the Tokyo Olympics."

Udita said she has learned a lot from experienced players such as

Rani and Vandana Katarinya.

"Training with Rani and Vandana has taught me a lot of things. They have played nearly 500 games for India between them and share a very good rapport," she said.

They are very experienced players and have always supported me during my time with the team. I am very lucky to have seniors like them around in the team.

PCB adds 3 spots in women's central contracts list, increases monthly retainers



**Lahore, Jun 28 (PTI):** The PCB has added three more spots in the central contracts for women cricketers for the 2021-22 season, while also increasing the monthly retainers across all categories by 10 per cent, the board announced on Monday.

The contracts, which come into effect from July 1, include 12 spots, divided between A, B and C categories, while eight cricketers have been retained in the emerging contracts list.

"In total, the PCB has awarded 20 contracts for the 2021-22 cricket season, which is two more than the previous," the PCB said in a statement.

"Monthly retainers across all rungs including the emerging category have been increased by 10 per cent and the national women's selection committee has kept one spot open in the central contracts that will be awarded in the year based on on-field performance," it added.

The decision was taken by the PCB in its bid to continue to reward and incentivise top-performing women cricketers.

"The Pakistan Cricket Board has increased the list of central contracts from nine to 12 as it continues to value and reward the best performers on the circuit," Urooj Mumtaz, the chair of the national women's selection committee, said.

Emerging contracts for women's cricketers for 2021-22 season: Ayesha Naseem, Kaynat Hafeez, Muneeba Ali Siddiqui, Najiha Alvi, Rameen Shamim, Saba Nazir, Sadia Iqbal and Syeda Aroob Shah.

Said.

Deepika reclaims world no.1 ranking after hat-trick of gold medals at WC Stage 3

**PARIS, JUN 28 (PTI):** Star Indian archer Deepika Kumari on Monday regained the number one position in global rankings following her hat-trick of gold medals at the World Cup Stage 3 here. The 27-year-old from Ranchi, who had achieved the top spot for the first time in 2012, on Sunday claimed gold medals in three recurve events -- women's individual, team and mixed pair.

"This is going to take Deepika to the number one spot in the world rankings on Monday," World Archery had tweeted on its official handle after Deepika's gold rush.

Deepika first combined with Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari to notch up the women's recurve team gold with a comfortable win over Mexico.

She then paired up with husband Atanu Das and the couple from a 0-2 deficit to down the Netherlands' Sjeff van den Berg

"The emerging category retains eight players. Over the next year, the PCB, in total, will contract 20 women cricketers, which is an increase of two from the 2020-21 season.

"To ensure that the players who have not earned central contracts stay motivated, we have announced an open spot in the central contracts to be awarded to one player for outstanding performances during the year."

The Pakistan women's team host England for two T20Is and three ODIs in October, before they play ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in December and feature in ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and Commonwealth Games next year.

Central contracts for women's cricketers for 2021-22 season:

Category A Bismah Maroof and Javeria Khan

Category B Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig and Nida Dar

Category C Anam Amin, Fatima Sana, Kainat Miaz, Nahida Khan, Nashra Sandhu, Omaid Sohail and Sidra Nawaz

Emerging contracts for women's cricketers for 2021-22 season: Ayesha Naseem, Kaynat Hafeez, Muneeba Ali Siddiqui, Najiha Alvi, Rameen Shamim, Saba Nazir, Sadia Iqbal and Syeda Aroob Shah.

Said.

and Gabriela Schloesser 5-3 for the gold medal.

The Ranchi archer then blanked 17th ranked Russian Elena Osipova 6-0 to cap a perfect three out of three in the recurve women's section, her fourth individual World Cup gold medal.

Overall, she has nine gold, 12 silver and seven bronze medals in the World Cup.

"This is the first time I've won all three medals in a World Cup. I'm really happy but at the same time, I've to continue improving as we have some very, very important competitions lined up," Deepika had told PTI after her triumphs.

Deepika had become only the second Indian woman after Dola Banerjee to grab the numero uno status in June, 2012 after claiming her first individual recurve World Cup gold medal at Antalya, Turkey.

She will be the only Indian woman archer to represent the country at the Tokyo Olympics next month.

## Odisha urges Centre for 6 lakh more Covishield doses

**BHUBANESWAR, JUN 28 (PTI):** The Odisha government on Monday urged the Centre to allocate 6 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine to the state to continue the inoculation drive smoothly till the end of this month.

An additional 6 lakh doses of Covishield will help the state to ensure smooth management of the vaccination drive in June, Das said.

"As per allocation for June (2nd fortnight), we have received 13,78,310 doses of Covishield, which has been distributed to all dis-

tricts. As of today, we have a stock of 3.38 lakh Covishield doses, which will be exhausted in two days," Das wrote in the letter.

"There will be a stock-out of Covishield vaccine in the state from June 29 onwards, for which it will not be possible to conduct a ses-

sion in the state after that," he added.

Odisha has administered over 1.14 crore vaccine doses since January 16, and maintained a negative wastage of 3 per cent, saving 2.9 lakh doses, Das said.

The state has been vaccinating three lakh citizens on an average every day since June 21,

and it has the capacity to vaccinate 3.5 lakh beneficiaries per day.

In this situation, it will not be possible to conduct sessions in the state after Tuesday, Das informed Vardhan.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a vaccination camp in Jharsuguda, the minister said that

the state has decided to open new nursing colleges in Mayurbhanj, Balangir, Koraput, Balasore, Jharsuguda, Puri, Sundergarh, Angul, Keonjhar and Jajpur districts.

Besides, a pharmacy college will be attached to each of the three existing medical colleges and hospitals in the state, Das said.

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# Hong Kong family leaves a changing city for UK

**HONG KONG, JUN 28 (AP):** After two years of turmoil and change, Hong Kong was not the same for Mike Hui. One month ago, the 36-year-old photographer pulled up roots and moved with his wife and young daughter to the U.K. to try starting anew.

I felt that I couldn't stay anymore, and that I couldn't let my next generation grow up in a society like this, he said.

His departure came after anti-government protests divided the city in 2019 and a subsequent crackdown that has rounded up democracy activists and stifled dissent.

Until early April, Hui was a photojournalist for the Apple Daily, a pro-democracy newspaper that shut down last week following the arrest of five top editors and executives and the freezing of its assets under a national security law that China's ruling Communist Party imposed on Hong Kong as part of the crackdown.

He called the closing of the paper, where he worked for seven years, heart-aching.

I felt that all my memories of these years, and



everything that proved that I existed in this place as well as this industry, were gone. ... It's like losing a family member who was very close to you, he said.

Hui misses family and friends but less so the city where he was born and raised. I don't have strong feelings about this place after it's been ruined in the past two years, he said.

He pointed to a July 2019 attack on people

in a subway station by a mob apparently opposed to the then-on-going protests. It came amid tensions between police and supporters of the protesters, and many, including Hui, were disappointed by how police handled the attack in Yuen Long.

The rollout of the national security law a year later was a catalyst for his decision to leave, he said.

The adjustment to life

in Leeds, a city in northern England, has perhaps been easiest for his 5-year-old daughter. Before leaving, Hui told her that their new home was a place where people of different skin colors and races lived, just like in the Disney movie Frozen. She has been enjoying the spacious parks, huge warehouse-like toy stores and a larger bedroom than in densely packed Hong Kong. After all she's still young, and

she doesn't know what's going on, he said.

Despite more than 10 years in media, Hui has no plans to pick up the job again in the U.K., at least not full-time. He doesn't intend to resume the Hong Kong way of life either.

Having moved here, I want to have a reborn mindset," he said. "I want to start over and challenge myself. You have to move on from something ... and try new things.

## Uprooted again: Venezuela migrants cross US border in droves

**DEL RIO (US), JUN 28 (AP):** Marianela Rojas huddles in prayer with fellow migrants after trudging across a slow-flowing stretch of the Rio Grande and nearly collapsing when she stepped on American soil for the first time.

Only passports and money in your hands. Everything else earrings, chains, rings, watches in your backpacks.

It's a frequent scene across the US-Mexico border at a time of swelling migration.

But these aren't farmers and low-wage workers from Mexico or Central America, who make up the bulk of those crossing.

Among them are bankers, doctors and engineers from Venezuela, and they're arriving in record numbers as they flee turmoil in the country with the world's largest oil reserves and pandemic-induced pain across South America.

Two days after Rojas crossed, she left detention and got a bus out of the Texas town of Del Rio.

The 54-year-old fled hardship in Venezuela a few years ago, leaving a paid-off home and career as an elementary school teacher for a fresh start in Ecuador.

But when the house-cleaning work she found dried up, she decided to uproot again.

It's over, it's all over, she said on the phone to loved ones.

Everything was perfect. I didn't stop moving for one second.

Last month, 7,484 Venezuelans were encountered by Border Patrol agents along the

US-Mexico border more than all 14 years for which records exist.

The surprise increase is a harbinger of a new type of migration that has caught the Biden administration off guard: pandemic refugees.

Many of the nearly 17,306 Venezuelans who have crossed the southern border illegally since January had been living for years in other South American countries, part of an exodus of millions since President Nicol s Maduro took power in 2013.

While some are government opponents, the vast majority are escaping long-running economic devastation marked by blackouts and shortages of food and medicine.

With the pandemic still raging in parts of South America, they relocated again.

Increasingly, they're being joined at the US border by people from the countries they initially fled to like Ecuador and Brazil as well as far-flung nations hit hard by the virus, like India and Uzbekistan.

Compared with other migrants, Venezuelans garner certain privileges a reflection of their firmer financial standing, higher education levels and US policies that have failed to remove Maduro but nonetheless made deportation all but impossible.

The vast majority enter the US near Del Rio, a town of 35,000, and don't evade detention but turn themselves in to seek asylum.

Like many of the dozens of Venezuelans The Associated Press spoke to this month in Del Rio, 27-year-old LisBriceno had already migrated once before.

After graduating with a degree in petroleum engineering, she couldn't get hired in the oil fields near her hometown of Maraca-

ibo without declaring her loyalty to Venezuela's socialist leadership.

So she moved to Chile a few years ago, finding work with a technology company.

But as anti-government unrest and the pandemic tanked Chile's economy, her company shuttered. Briceno sold what she could to raise the USD 4,000 needed to get to the US.

I always thought I'd come here on vacation, to visit the places you see in the movies, Briceno said.

But doing this? Never. While Central Americans and others can spend months getting north, most Venezuelans reach the US in as little as four days.

This is a journey they're definitely prepared for from a financial standpoint, said Tiffany Burrow, who runs the Val Verde Border Humanitarian Coalition's shelter in Del Rio, where migrants can eat, clean up and buy bus tickets to US cities.

They first fly to Mexico City or Cancun. Smugglers promoting themselves as travel agencies on Facebook claim to offer hassle-free transport to the US for about USD 3,000.

The steep price includes a guided sendoff from Ciudad Acuna, where the bulk of Venezuelans cross the Rio Grande and which had been largely spared the violence seen elsewhere on the border.

If you're a smuggler in the business of moving a commodity because that's how they view money, guns, people, drugs and everything they move, as a product then you want to move it through the safest area possible charging the highest price, said Austin L. Skero II, chief of the US Border Patrol's Del Rio sector.

## Powerful explosion in Dhaka kills seven, injures hundreds; police suspect gas leak



**DHAKA, JUN 28 (PTI):**

A powerful explosion that destroyed an old three-storey building in a crowded area here in Bangladesh's capital and killed at least seven people and injured around 400 others may have been caused by a faulty gas line or gas cylinders, authorities said on Monday.

Police have ruled out any foul play behind the horrific explosion in Moghbazar area at around 7.30 PM on Sunday and said the initial investigation of the site suggests that the explosion might have been caused by "gas accumulation".

Authorities suspect the building that collapsed was the epicentre of the explosion as it had a restaurant and a faulty gas line or gas cylinders used by it could be the reason behind the blast.

The blast was so powerful that the shock wave smashed the glasses of nearly a dozen buildings

around it.

Seven nearby buildings and two passenger buses were badly damaged in the blast that killed seven people and injured 400, some 50 of them critically, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqul Islam said late Sunday.

The severely injured were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

The Dhaka Community hospital treated almost 300 victims, AZM Rahmatullah Shabuj, outdoor in charge of the hospital, said, adding that they treated victims who mostly had cuts in their bodies or their heads.

Most of them had cuts from the glass shards. Many had wounds in their heads, Sabuj said.

On the possibility of the explosion being deliberate, the Police

Commissioner told bdnews, It doesn't look like that to me. If that was the case or had a bomb been exploded, people would've been ravaged by splinters."

I've gathered from the fire service personnel that gas had accumulated here," he said.

Fire Brigade chief Brigadier General Sajjad-Hossain said primary evidence suggested that the explosion was triggered by a leak after the accumulation of gas.

There were gas cylinders at a restaurant at the ground floor of the building and air-conditioners at a showroom upstairs. There were gas cylinders also at the road construction site at the scene...investigations have been launched, Hossain said.

According to residents in the neighbourhood, the explosion rocked the part of the city spreading panic while television footage showed broken pil-

lars, concrete and glass shards strewn across the street at the scene in the central part of the country's capital.

I was on a bus when the explosion occurred. I jumped out of it through a narrow window of the vehicle, initially thinking the bus gas cylinder exploded... never experienced such a big explosion in my life, 50-year-old Tajul Islam, who received injuries on his waist and complained of hearing impairment due to the explosion, told PTI.

Another witness said he saw a fireball go over his head and the explosion turned everything dark and smoky in his vicinity while pieces of glass started to shower from above.

The sound was so huge... it scared everyone, he told a TV channel.

According to witnesses, soon after the explosion the buses and cars crashed into one another and panic-gripped passengers struggled to get out of the vehicles.

Several residents of an apartment building in the area came downstairs following the explosion.

One of them, Mukfarul Islam, added: We are at a distance here. Still, several glasses of our apartment were shattered.



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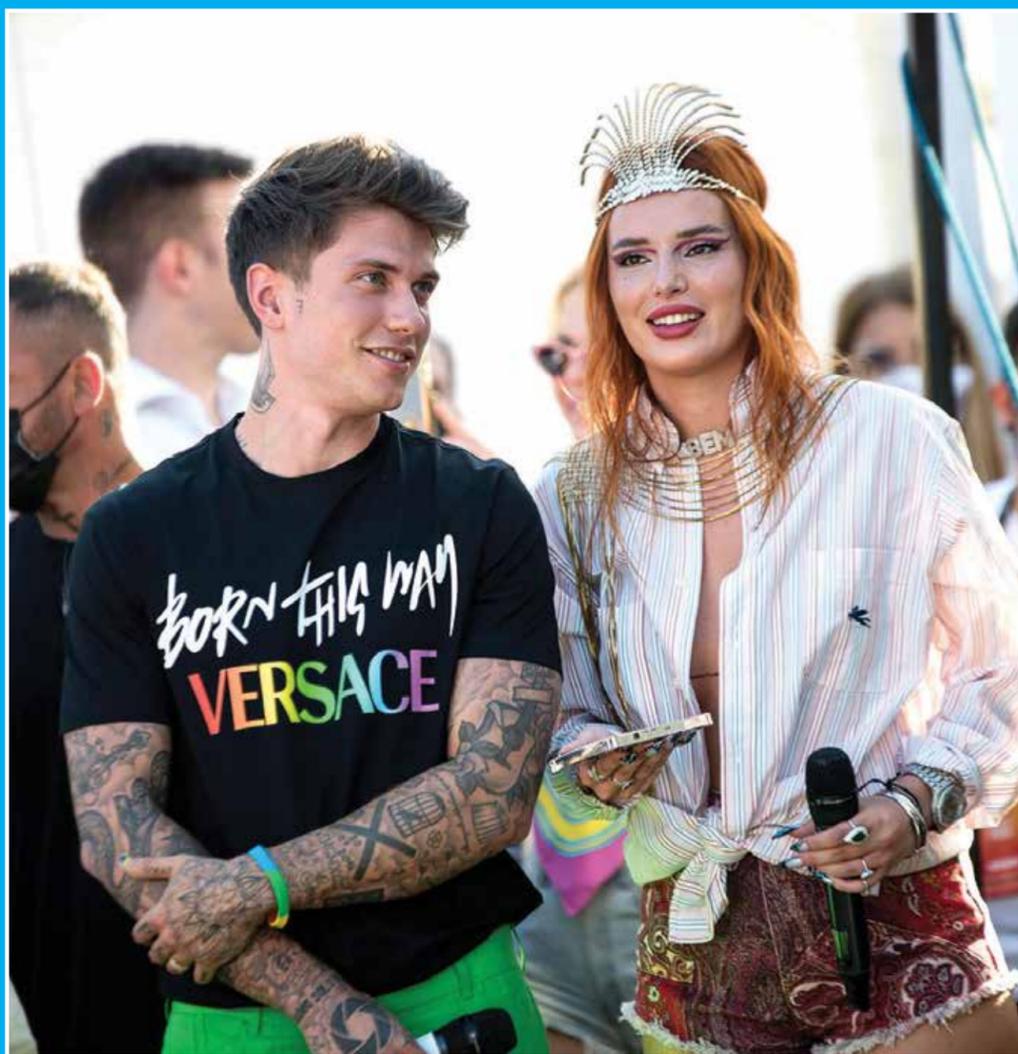
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**PRIDE AROUND THE WORLD!** Actor Bella Thorne and fiancé Benjamin Mascolo spoke at Milan Pride in Italy.

## MadsMikkelsen would have 'loved to have talked' to Johnny Depp about taking over Grindelwald role

**LONDON, JUN 28 (PTI):** Danish star MadsMikkelsen says he wishes he could have spoken to Johnny Depp about stepping in to play the dark wizard Gellert-Grindelwald following his exit from the upcoming third film in the fantasy film series "Fantastic Beasts".

Mikkelsen was tapped in as Depp's replacement after the American actor lost a major libel suit relating to abuse allegations by former wife, actor Amber Heard against a UK newspaper last November.

Though he doesn't know if Depp losing the role was fair, Mikkelsen said he knew the third film was still on track.

"I mean, obviously, they were going to do the film, and obviously he was not involved any more," the "Another Round" star said of Depp.

"But I didn't have a dog in that fight. And I don't know what happened (in his private life), and I don't know if it was fair, him losing the job, but I just knew that the show was going on, and I would've loved to have talked to him about it if I had the chance, but I just don't know him in that sense," Mikkelsen, 55, told The Times.

The actor, known for Hollywood films "Casino Royale" and "Doctor Strange", and Danish movies "The Hunt" and "Pusher", was rumoured to be playing Grindelwald in the yet-to-be-titled "Fantastic Beasts 3" late last year. The studio Warner Bros Pictures confirmed



his casting a week after the reports surfaced online.

The makers were in a "hurry" to get the project going, said Mikkelsen.

"But they called me and they were obviously in a hurry, and I loved the script and so said yes. And I know it was controversial for many people, but that's just the way it plays out once in a while," he continued.

The actor reiterated that he wants to add his own touch to the character of Grindelwald while retaining a few links with how Depp played the role.

"I didn't want to copy what Johnny had done. I think he's a masterful actor,



so copying him would've been creative suicide," he said.

"I had to figure out something that was definitely my own, and yet also act as a bridge to what he had done. My take is different, and the look is a little different, but we'll have to wait for the film's release (next year) to find out," he added.

Mikkelsen is currently working on "Indian Jones 5". Fronted by Hollywood veteran Harrison Ford, the fifth film in the popular action adventure franchise is set to be released in the summer of 2022.

## Cardi B, Queen Latifah, Lil Nas X shine at BET Awards

**NEW YORK (AP):** Cardi B's "WAP" had new meaning at the BET Awards: winning and pregnant.

The Grammy-winning star debuted her baby bump during a live performance Sunday alongside husband Offset as well as Quavo and Takeoff of Migos. She also won video of the year for her Megan Thee Stallion-assisted No. 1 hit "WAP".

Cardi B didn't stay to accept the honor at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, but Megan Thee Stallion rushed to the stage to pick up the award, forgetting to thank Cardi during her speech.

But the "Savage" rapper made up for it when she won best female hip-hop artist moments later.

"I really forgot to say 'thank you Cardi' for even putting me on 'WAP' because it makes me feel so good to be acknowledged by one of my peers, who I think so highly of," said Megan Thee Stallion, who was the big winner of the night with four trophies. "I think so highly of all the women who was nominated in this category."

Along with celebrating female artists, the BET Awards also highlighted gay pride with a seductive performance by Lil Nas X and Queen Latifah, who thanked her reported partner and son when she accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award.

As she rattled on thank you's, she said: "Ebony, my love, Rebel, my love." The 51-year-old ended with: "Peace! Happy pride!"

Queen Latifah was honored for her illustrious career as a Grammy-winning rapper, a Golden Globe-winning actor and an Emmy-winning TV producer. Rapsody and Monie Love kicked off the

tribute with a performance of "Ladies First," which was followed by Lil Kim and MC Lyte rapping the classic "U.N.I.T.Y."

Lil Nas X won over the crowd with his No. 1 hit "Montero (Call Me By Your Name)," which ended with the rapper locking lips with a male background dancer, as the crowd roared loudly. Some audience members jumped out of their seats in praise.

His stage was set in Ancient Egypt, much like Michael Jackson's "Remember the Time," which Lil Nas X paid tribute to with a skilled dance break during the performance.

Mothers were also saluted during the three-hour-plus show: Queen Latifah, who attended with her father, held a photo on her mother onstage; Megan Thee Stallion remembered her mother, who died in 2019, during her speech: "She can't be here with me today but I still think about her everyday and she is the reason why I keep going." And Jazmine Sullivan — who won album of the year for her critically acclaimed EP "Heaux Tales" — attended the show with her mother, who is battling cancer.

"My mom was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago so we didn't see any of this happening, but God has been so faithful to us and my mom is in remission," she said. "This is my prize. This is my gift. It means more to me than anything that she's here with me. She supported me all my life."

The ceremony was dedicated to "the year of the Black woman," as actor and host Taraji P. Henson put at the top of the show. Rep. Maxine Waters said her sig-

nature phrase — "reclaiming my time" — before Sullivan hit the stage for a sultry, top-notch performance featuring fellow R&B singer Ari Lennox. The first award of the night went to Andra Day, who won best actress, while Darnella Frazier — the teenager who pulled out her cellphone and began recording when she saw George Floyd being pinned to the ground by a police officer — was given the Shine a Light Award.

Frazier didn't attend the awards show but the honor came weeks after she was awarded a special citation by the Pulitzer Prizes for her video that helped to launch a global movement to protest racial injustice.

H.E.R., who also wowed the audience with her performance, won best female R&B/pop artist. The Grammy winner told the crowd that it is "important for us to recognize each other and celebrate each other."

"If we don't, who else will?" she added.

Rapper Lil Baby won best male hip-hop artist and joined forces with gospel artist Kirk Franklin to kick off the show with a performance that got Issa Rae, Queen Latifah, DJ Khaled and Zendaya bouncing in their seats.

Swizz Beatz curated the tribute to DMX, who died in April at age 50. Performers included Busta Rhymes, Method Man, The Lox, Michael K. Williams and Griselda.

Other winners Sunday included Chris Brown, who won best male R&B/pop artist; Giveon, named best new artist; and Silk Sonic — the duo of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak — took home the best group award. Chadwick Boseman posthumously won best actor.

## Cardi B expecting second child with Offset

**LOS ANGELES, JUN 28 (PTI):** Rapper couple Cardi B and Offset are set to welcome their second child together.

Cardi, 28, shared the news while performing with her husband and his group Migos on Sunday evening at the BET Awards.

According to People magazine, after the trio finished performing "Straightenin'", Cardi joined the group for "Type S--".

She appeared on the stage in a rhinestone-embellished black bodysuit, with a sheer panel showing off her baby bump.

Cardi made the news Instagram official simultaneously with their act.

"#2!" she captioned her photo with a heart emoji, tagging Offset.

The couple is already parents to daughter KultureKiari, who turns three in July. Offset, 29, also has daughter Kalea, six, and sons Kody, six, and Jordan, 11, from previous relationships.



Cardi and Offset, who tied the knot in 2017, have had their fair share of ups and downs. They were even headed for a divorce late last year but eventually reconciled by November.

At the awards, Cardi won video of the year and best collaboration for the smash hit "WAP", featuring Megan Thee Stallion.

### ARIES:

Your flexible nature may get you in trouble today, Aries. Personalities may clash when no one is willing to lead. Be aggressive without being manipulative. Keep it light. Don't try to pin anyone down. Your nature is open and expansive. Give other people the freedom they want. Unexpected events may dramatically change the course of the day, so don't be upset if things don't go as planned.

### TAURUS:

Things will flow smoothly for you, Taurus. There's barely a reason for you to lift a finger. You have the good fortune of enjoying this day with very little effort on your part. Keep in mind that if you decide to get something done, you will be extremely successful and able to accomplish quite a bit. You're in sync with today's energy.

### GEMINI:

People aren't going to want to be quite as intense as you require today, Gemini. Things are light and airy. You may find that no one is in the mood to delve as deeply as you want to go. Use the day to relax and release control for a while. Take deep breaths and long walks. Go for a bike ride or short road trip. Crazy, unexpected events may crop up throughout the day. Be prepared for surprises.

### CANCER:

Things probably aren't going to go exactly as you planned today, Leo. Realize that people may act in erratic, powerful bursts, especially when it comes to emotional issues. Your feelings may be a bit distant, and you may find it hard to get in touch with what's really going on inside you. Do your best to maintain a positive attitude. That's all anyone can ask.

### LEO:

Don't get sad if no one is laughing at your jokes today, Virgo. It doesn't mean you aren't funny. It just means that people may not be in the mood to laugh. Ridiculous as it seems, today is simply a better day to cry. Let out all your pent-up emotions. Talk things over with others. Your heart communicates well through you today.

### VIRGO:

Today is an excellent day for you, Virgo. Events will flow quite smoothly. The only thing to be aware of is that your emotions may seem rather erratic and unwieldy. There's a great deal of power behind your words and people are sure to listen. They would be smart to do so. What you have to say will be right on target with today's energy.

### LIBRA:

You may be indecisive today, Libra. You may not be

able to find solutions you can live with. You don't need to finalize anything now. Use this day to lay low and gather data. People may seem rather insensitive and erratic. Go with the flow. You have a great deal of warmth and passion to share. You may find that a strong, unpredictable force is affecting your emotions.

### SCORPIO:

There is plenty of air to fuel your fire today, Scorpio. You're able to get quite a bit done. Multitasking is key to accomplishing what you want to do. An element of the unexpected is likely to add a surprising dimension to the day. You're able to communicate freely, and you will likely be on the same page with the people you meet.

### SAGITTARIUS:

You may need to make some slight adjustments in order to get through to people today, Sagittarius. The pace may be a bit faster than you'd like. Remember that people aren't mind readers. They won't be sensitive enough to pick up on your subtle messages. If you want to get something across, state it clearly and succinctly. Feel free to explore the unconventional and bizarre.

### CAPRICORN:

Today is an excellent day for you, Capricorn. You will receive some bursts of unexpected energy that help you accomplish whatever it is you wish to do. You should enjoy a favorable mood and good relations with others all day. Enjoy yourself and feel free to indulge in things that make you happy. Spend time with your family and let them share in your positive energy flow.

### AQUARIUS:

Things may be moving a bit too quickly today for you to grab hold of anything, Aquarius. There's an element of the unexpected entering into the equation. Be prepared. The mood of the day is especially light and perhaps a bit superficial. People may not be entirely reliable. If there's something you absolutely need to do, consider doing it by yourself.

### PISCES:

Enjoy the day today, Pisces. Take control of the situation and make the most of whatever comes your way. Do it with a smile. There's a great deal of fun-loving, excited energy ready for you to draw upon. Get your ideas out to others. Communicate your thoughts. Attend a party or two. You're the epitome of the social butterfly. Make sure to wear your best attire.