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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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‘LABOUR REGISTRATION TO HELP IN DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS’

3000 workers registered so far, process not mandatory for CoI holders



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 29 JUN:**

Secretary to Labour Department, Namrata Thapa asserted that the complete database of individual workers working in the State would help the government to formulate schemes and policies for them.

The Secretary was referring to the ongoing exercise of detailed data collection and registration of individual workers on the basis of the recently passed Sikkim Labour (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Bill, 2021 in the State Assembly. She mentioned that the process is currently being carried out only in the Gangtok Municipal Corporation area and around 3000 workers have already been registered so far. She thanked the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Ward

Councilors of GMC for their full support in the process.

Ms Thapa further stressed that registered workers would be able to take full advantage of various schemes and programmes of the Centre and the State government. She added that the government would be able to work effectively in the interest of workers especially during natural disasters and calamities if it has detailed database of workers.

While mentioning that there was some confusion on whether voters of Sikkim need to register themselves, the Secretary clarified that as per the provisions of the Act it is optional for workers holding COI and voters of Sikkim. It is mandatory for workers coming from outside the State, she added.

However, she added that only registered workers would be eligible to en-

joy various welfare schemes and benefits of the Centre and the State.

The database of workers would help the government to formulate schemes and programme as well as to provide assistance and relief to workers during disasters and calamities, said Ms Thapa.

She also listed out series of schemes and programmes of the government for the workforce in organised and unorganised sectors.

GMC Mayor, Nell Bahadur Chettri expressed gratitude to the State government for passing an important bill in the state assembly in the interest of the people. He added that this act was a big achievement of the State government.

He alleged that some anti-social elements have been trying to misguide the people on this act and urged the people not to listen to such elements.

The Mayor mentioned that the state government faced some obstacles in distributing relief and assistance during the lockdown due to the absence of the exact data of workers in the State. He also reiterated that the database of workers would help the government to work in their interest.

Responding to media queries, the Secretary said, "There was some confusion among the people as the process is in its very initial phase and I am very hopeful that people will understand and come forward themselves for registration."

The press conference was also addressed by Deputy Mayor, Tshering Palden Bhutia and Additional Labour Commissioner, DS Kunwar and Joint Labour Commissioner II, Tashi Wangmu Sherpa.

142 new Covid cases in Sikkim at TPR of 23%



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 JUN:

Sikkim recorded 142 new cases of novel coronavirus at a Test Positivity Rate of 23% in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 20,324. These 142 new cases were detected from the testing of 615 samples on Monday. Covid also claimed one more life in the state over the same 24 hours when a patient passed away at STNM Hospital. Sikkim has now lost 305 lives to Covid. The COVID death has been reported from STNM hospital.

In the meantime, 103 formerly Covid-positive people overcame the virus and were discharged from home and facility isolation on Monday after making complete recoveries. The number of recovered cases of COVID-19 in the state stands at 17,702.

There are currently 2,065 active cases of Covid-19 in the State,

of these only seven have symptoms severe enough to require admissions in ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and Central Referral Hospital. In what can only be seen as a sign that resilience against the virus is growing in Sikkim, hospitals saw only four new admissions and the total number of Covid patients in hospital now stands at 100.

As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, while 78 samples returned positive for COVID-19 in RT-PCR testing of 284 samples, 63 persons tested positive in rapid antigen testing of 325 samples and one more case picked up in TruNat testing of six samples.

Of the 142 new cases, 85 were registered in East District, 31 in West District, 19 in South District and 07 in North District.

Asar Pandhra celebrated with paddy planting at Chota Singtam



GANGTOK, 29 JUN (IPR): The popular agricultural festival of 'Asar Pandhra' was celebrated with honour and great enthusiasm at the paddy field of Chota Singtam, East Sikkim, today.

The Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma, Area MLA Namcheybung Constituency, Em Prasad Sharma and Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling, attended the traditional festival of 'Asar Pandhra' where they joined the local gentry in relishing the traditional experience of rice plantation. The farmers expressed their joy and excitement as they joined the dignitaries in ploughing and planting.

Secretary, Agriculture Department, Rinzing C Bhutia, Secretary AH&VS Department Dr Sangey D Bhutia, and senior officials from Agriculture, Horticulture and AH & VS Departments also participated in the planting the paddy saplings.

The local farmers, both men and women were seen in the paddy field planting together with joy of singing traditional folk songs and splashing muddy water at each other.

Speaking to the media, the Minister extended his warm wishes to the farming community on the occasion of Asar Pandhra. He expressed his happiness on the participation of the dignitaries and officials as a mark of respect to the entire farming community. The state government under the leadership of the Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang is determined for the upliftment and welfare of the farmers,

comprehensively. He reiterated the financial incentive of Rs. 8/ Litre of Milk, introduced by the state government and also shared the plans of the Government to offer attractive increment in per kilogram production of Cardamom and other notified crops in near future.

He also shared an accomplishment of the ruling government in implementing Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Nidhi Yojana and informed that, around 9100 (Nine Thousand and One Hundred) farmers have been benefited under the scheme with the allocated fund of approximately Rupees. Eight Core Fifty Lakhs.

The Minister appealed to every household, irrespective of social and economic background, to adopt farming for the strengthening of the economy and to realize the vision of the Government for a Atma Nirbhar or Self Reliant Sikkim.

Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling also extended his warm greetings to the farming community and stated that the State Government has initiated several beneficial schemes for the welfare of the farmers. Elucidating the importance and indispensability of the farming profession, he added that, nothing seems possible in nature without agriculture, hence, all the people should consider and adopt farming as their lifestyle.

MLA Em Prasad Sharma also extended his best wishes to the farmers on the special occasion of 'Asar Pandra'.

After participating in ploughing and planting on the field, the dignitaries joined the farmers in savouring the special traditional delicacy of curd and beaten rice (dahi cheura).

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TO SHARE?**

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AFFECTED CITIZENS OF TEESTA (ACT)
IS ORGANISING A WEBINAR ON THE 4TH OF JULY, 2021.

On the theme
'DAMS IN SIKKIM BOON OR BANE'

THE CASCADE OF DAMS IN THE STRETCH OF RIVER TEESTA !

Join the eminent environmental speakers and be a part of the 'River' talk of Sikkim and North Bengal hills.

#TEESTA MATTERS TO US

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Date: 4th July, 2021
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Phoor Tshering- 7364052625

Darj-Sikkim merger will make bond stronger: GRC response to BJP Sikkim

SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 29 JUN:

Reacting to the statement given by Bhartiya Janata Party Sikkim Pradesh president, DB Chauhan on Darjeeling-Sikkim merger proposal of the Gorkha Rashtriya Congress, its president, Bharat Dong today said that they are proposing the merger to

make the bond between the two stronger.

After a GRC delegation met West Bengal Governor, Jagdeep Dhankar and placed the demand for Darj-Sikkim merger, Mr Chauhan had said that the proposal seeks to destroy friendly relations between Sikkim and Darjeeling.

"I want to make it

clear that we are not demanding the merger to destroy friendly relation, rather we are trying to make a bond that is indestructible," said Mr Dong.

On Mr Chauhan's comment that he will be happy to support the demand for Gorkhaland than Darj-Sikkim merger, Mr Dong said that in 1986 the Bengal gov-

ernment had passed a white paper in which it was mentioned that Darjeeling is not a part of Bengal but of Sikkim, therefore the Bengal Government cannot give Gorkhaland.

"This is the reason why our party GRC is demanding the merger. And if Sikkim government passes a notifica-

tion stating that Darjeeling doesn't belong to Sikkim then we can take the Gorkhaland demand further," he stated.

GRC strongly believes that if Sikkim and Darjeeling come together then they will have a more powerful voice at the centre, said Subhoad Pakhrin [chief coordinator of GRC].

East District Development Committee meets

GANGTOK, 29 JUN (IPR):

The District Development Coordination Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting for East District was held at the conference hall of Zilla Bhawan, DAC, today. The meeting was organised by the Office of DC East in coordination with Rural Development Department and was graced by MP (Lok Sabha), and Chairman DISHA, Indra Hang Subba, as the chief guest, in the special presence of MLA (Rhenock Constituency) Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara.

The meeting was also attended by DC East Ragul K, Additional Political Secretary (East), Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha, Officials of DAC and RDD, and representatives of NHIDCL, PMGSY, Power Grid, and National Highway Wing PWD.

Chaired by MP, Indra Hang Subba, who is also



the Chairman of DISHA, the meeting had the presence and participation of panchayats and officials to review the State and Central Government schemes pertaining to infrastructure and overall development of the State.

The meeting discussed in detail the status of roads damaged due to the monsoons and the restoration works under progress. Salient features like compensation issues, role of Pancha-

yats, and maintenance of roads and bridges were discussed.

The MP in his address thanked the members of the Committee for their feedback and suggestion on various issues of public interest. He called for continued effort to ensure that all the schemes and programmes aimed at grassroots development are achieved in the stipulated time. He urged all the representatives and the authorities to ensure

inter-departmental coordination while carrying out tasks.

DC East Ragul K said that this was the very first meeting of DISHA in the first quarter of 2021 which could not be held earlier due to the pandemic. He said that in every meeting one or two sectors will be reviewed thoroughly so that all the issues will be addressed and will be taken up at the higher level.

He stated that in today's meeting, National

Highways and PMGSY roads and Power Grid were chosen as they were important and needed immediate attention. He also briefed that independent agencies NHIDCL and Energy Power Grid Organisation were called at the meeting as they are handling very important projects in the State.

The DC further said that all the field Block Level officials who are directly dealing with the public can get a brief idea about the major power projects like NHIDCL and Power Grid at the State level about what is happening under their jurisdiction. He concluded by saying that the meeting was very productive where pertinent issues were raised and discussed in detail.

The meeting concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by ADC (Development), Gangtok, Radha Pradhan.

Citizens Foundation helps poultry farmers in Pakyong



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 JUN:

Citizens Foundation with the support of HDFC Parivartan is promoting poultry based livelihood in Amba and Thekabong Parakha GPUs of Pakyong subdivision, East Sikkim, a press release informs.

Citizens Foundation

is providing household supplies with support of HDFC Parivartan to promote poultry based livelihood under the SOULS Project in all the 10 project villages of Amba and Thekabong Parakha GPUs of East Sikkim.

Around 50 women farmers are getting directly benefitted by

this intervention starting from construction of poultry sheds to distribution of broiler and kroiler chicks to supplying feed for the chicks, the release mentions.

Team Citizens Foundation will also take an active role in facilitating market linkages of the livestock.

Disaster Management Control Room set up in Namchi



Namchi, 29 Jun (IPR):

The Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) under Namchi Smart City Limited was established at the Parking Plaza of Namchi today.

Initially Covid War Room was set up to monitor and create a data base for active Covid-19 cases and ongoing vaccination. Now with the advent of monsoon, and with the opportunity to explore the facilities

encompassed within the ICCC, the District Disaster Management Authority (South) has also decided to establish District Control Room at the ICCC which shall be made operational 24x7 commencing from 30th of June, 2021.

The Control Room shall have a dedicated contact no viz. 03595-264100 manned 24x7 by officials from Police Department, QRT's round the clock on shift basis.

The public is requested to report any disaster directly to the Control Room henceforth. All information related to all kinds of disaster shall be collected, documented, disseminated to concerned authorities from the Control Room itself.

The DDMA (South) is working in close coordination with officers Namchi Smart City Limited, DIO NIC Namchi for preparation of data base, modules and software.

NITI Aayog releases report on "not-for-profit" Hospital Model in India

NEW DELHI, 29 JUN:

NITI Aayog on Tuesday released a comprehensive study on the not-for-profit hospital model in the country, which is a step towards closing the information gap on such institutions and facilitating robust policymaking in this area.

"There has been relatively low investment in the expansion of the health sector in the private domain. The stimulus announced yesterday provides us with an opportunity to change this situation. The report on the not-for-profit sector

is a small step in that direction," said VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog.

The report was released by Mr Paul, in the presence of CEO Amitabh Kant, Additional Secretary Dr Rakesh Sarwal, and representatives of hospitals across the country who participated in the study.

The study provides insights into the operation model of not-for-profit hospitals. It presents research-based findings on such hospitals--categorized under ownership and premise

of service--and makes subsequent comparisons with private hospitals and health schemes of the Union government.

NITI Aayog has been extensively studying the private-sector healthcare-delivery landscape in the country. While there exists adequate information on for-profit healthcare providers and institutions, there is a dearth of reliable and structured information on their not-for-profit counterparts, known for their tireless service in making quality healthcare accessible and af-

fordable to everyone.

The not-for-profit hospital sector provides not only curative but also preventive healthcare. It links healthcare with social reform, community engagement, and education. It uses government resources and grants to provide cost-effective healthcare to people without being concerned about profits. However, over the years, this sector has remained understudied.

The study discusses in detail the cost-containment strategies implemented by not-for-profit hospitals. It seeks

to understand the challenges that burden the operations of these institutions and hinder their growth.

The report proposes short- and long-term policy interventions--such as developing criteria to identify these hospitals, ranking them through a performance index, and promoting top hospitals for practising philanthropy, among others. It also highlights the need to use the expertise of these hospitals in managing human resources with limited finance in remote areas.

"If marriage is abusive...": Kerala lemonade vendor-turned-cop cautions

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:

When Anie SP, a Kerala police Sub-Inspector, walked out of her abusive marriage more than a decade ago, she was merely 19, and already nursing a newborn. Today, at 31, she is policing the very small town whose streets she once roamed doing small jobs like selling insurance, lemonade, and ice cream.

Her life of grit and determination stands out even more at a time when a number of cases of dowry deaths and domestic abuse have been reported in the state.

"Married life is about adjustments. But when things cross the line, your ability to bear, especially in physical violence,



there's nothing to think about. Just call your parents. Go to your parents," Ms Anie told NDTV.

"My son was nine months old when I walked out of an abusive marriage...I would make ₹ 3,500. Of which, ₹ 3,000 would go towards the house rent, ₹ 400 for my son's day-care. I

would be left with only ₹ 100. I would do more odd jobs to make ends meet."

At state capital Thiruvananthapuram's Varkala police station, the Sub-Inspector appears prompt at addressing grievances, despite a stream of people visiting her to congratulate her on her being posting

there recently.

"The feeling of returning to Varkala as a two-star police officer is something I cannot express. I feel proud," Ms Anie said, recalling her days there spent in struggle.

The Kerala police have now accepted, on compassionate grounds,

her request to be posted in Kochi again for the sake of continuity in her son's education.

Over the past two years, the policewoman's mother has been living with her, though her father is yet to speak to her.

"I was not accepted by my parents, when I walked out of the marriage. It wasn't an arranged marriage. I stayed with my grandmother and wrote my final year exam, with my son. I was already doing door-to-door sales...I then moved out and was by myself," Ms Anie said.

"I know the value of this uniform. The protection it gives, not only me, but to many other women, and the elderly."

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KUTSE SHEGU



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
Kuentzel Gensapa 7679217911
Ranjana Chakraborty 9641927953

Former journalist at Hong Kong's Apple Daily released on bail

HONG KONG, 29 JUN [AFP]: A former senior journalist at Hong Kong's now-closed pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily was released from custody on Tuesday, two days after he was arrested at the airport, media reported.

Fung Wai-kong, 57, became the latest person from the media outlet to be targeted after a raid on the newspaper by 500 officers nearly two weeks ago and the arrests of five executives, two of whom have been charged under a sweeping new national security law.

Live footage showed Fung leaving a Hong Kong police station but he declined to comment to reporters.

In an email response for comment on Fung's release, police said only that a male suspect had been released from custody. Investigations were ongoing and the person needed to report back to police in late July.

It was not immediately clear what the investigation into Fung was focused on. Fung is the seventh employee at the media group to be arrested in recent weeks, deepening concerns over press freedoms in the former British colony which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Hong Kong media outlets including online platform Stand News said Fung was released on cash bail of HK\$200,000 (\$25,760), had his travel documents confiscated and was ordered to report to police in late July.

Fung could not be reached for comment.

The Hong Kong government did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The government has said previously that media freedoms in the global financial hub are respected but not absolute and they cannot endanger national security.

Next Digital, the publisher of Apple Daily, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The Apple Daily, a popular tabloid, was forced to fold following the raid on its headquarters on June 17 and the freezing of key assets and bank accounts. It printed its final edition last Thursday.

Authorities say dozens of the paper's articles may have violated the national security law that Beijing imposed on the financial hub last year, the first instance of authorities taking aim at media reports under the legislation.

Hong Kong returned to China with the promise of continued wide-ranging freedoms not enjoyed on the mainland, including freedom of speech and an independent judiciary.

Next Digital said in a statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange late on Tuesday that it had accepted a proposal to divest Amazing Sino, which operates the online edition of Taiwan's Apple Daily.

Large Cardamom area expansion effort reaches Simick Lingzey



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 JUN:

Horticulture Department East District organized day-long training cum Distribution of Large Cardamom under Area Expansion programme at Simick Lingzey under Singtam Khamdong Constituency, East Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The programme was led by Political Advisor to CM, TN Dhakal and participated by officials from Horticulture Department, SKM CLC president and cardamom producers.

While briefing to producers, Political Advisor to CM, TN Dhakal stated that the main object of the programme was to encourage farmers to utilize barren land and be self-sufficient. He apprised that this programme is the very first step of the SKM government to promote

large cardamom cultivation in Sikkim as well as to improve economic condition of producers. He distributed saplings of large cardamom to more than 80 families of Aritar, Subithang and Lingzey under Simick Lingzey GPU, East Sikkim.

large cardamom cultivation in Sikkim as well as to improve economic condition of producers. He distributed saplings of large cardamom to more than 80 families of Aritar, Subithang and Lingzey under Simick Lingzey GPU, East Sikkim.

COVID-19: India records 37,566 new cases, 907 more deaths

NEW DELHI, JUN 29 (PTI): The single-day

rise in fresh cases was recorded below 40,000 after 102 days, bringing the COVID-19 infection tally to 3,03,16,897, while the daily fatalities remained below 1,000 for the second consecutive day, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday. India saw 37,566 new cases being reported in a day, while the COVID-19 death toll rose to 3,97,637 with 907 daily fatalities, the lowest in 77 days.

According to the data

published at 7 am, 32.90 crore cumulative vaccine doses have been administered so far under the nationwide vaccination drive.

The number of active cases has further declined to 5,52,659, comprising 1.82 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 96.87 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

A net decline of 20,335 cases has been recorded in the active case-load in a span of 24 hours. Also, 17,68,008 tests

were conducted on Monday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 40,81,39,287, while the daily positivity rate has declined to 2.12 per cent. It has been less than 5 per cent for 22 consecutive days, the ministry said.

The weekly positivity rate has declined to 2.74 per cent.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 47th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease

surged to 2,93,66,601, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.31 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7; 30 lakh on August 23; 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28; 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed one crore on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4 and 3 crore on June 23.

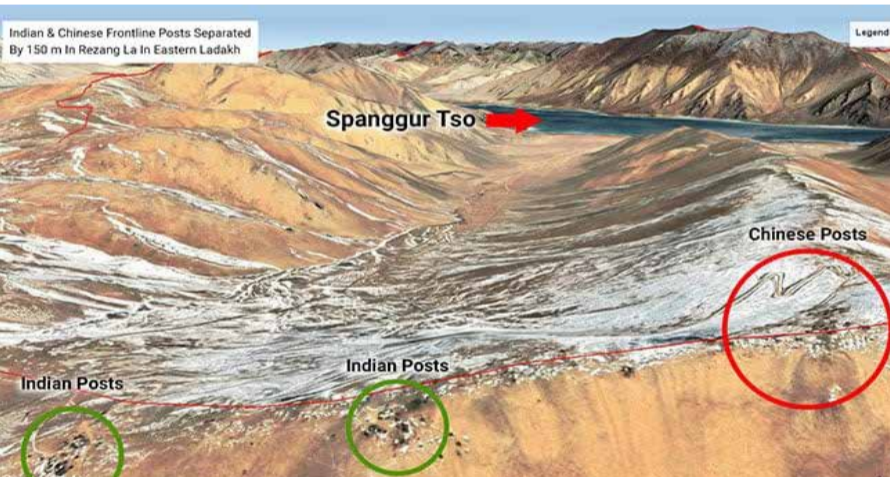
India-China posts just 150 metres apart in Feb, new satellite pics show

NEW DELHI, 29 JUN [NDTV]: Satellite images

of February 11 this year, the day after Indian and Chinese forces started withdrawing from the South Pangong heights in Eastern Ladakh, show Indian and Chinese posts located approximately 150 metres from each other, a clear indicator of the extent of the military build-up of both sides at the height of the tensions between the two sides.

The images, recently updated on Google Earth Pro, show tents and housing for soldiers at an altitude of 17,000 feet in the Rezang La area of South Pangong. An Army source NDTV spoke to says in certain locations, they were even closer. "At places along the Kailash Range, tanks of each side were within 50 metres of each other." The Google Earth imagery described here does not show tanks which were mutually withdrawn a day earlier on January 10.

The images of the area show two major Indian Army positions, each with dozens of olive green and alpine white camouflage tents precariously perched just beneath a ridge-line which Google Earth marks as the Line of Actual Control in the area. Some Indian tents are located beyond this LAC marking. Army sources say Indian soldiers were only deployed within India's percep-



tion of the Line of Actual Control which may not precisely match what is shown on Google Earth. All Indian positions in the Rezang La area are fed by a road which ascends the steep hill-feature from an altitude of 15,400 feet to approximately 17,000 feet where the bulk of Indian forces were deployed.

China's counter-deployment, located right next to that of the Indian Army, was also based on a pre-existing all-weather track. This stretches approximately 10 km to Chinese positions further afield, along the banks of the Spanggur Lake. The new satellite images also show a massive Chinese build up of military positions, including artillery gun emplacements and infrastructure in their rear-positions located approximately 10-12 kilometres from the site of the faceoff described here.

In late August last

year, after Chinese forces refused to vacate their positions on the North Bank of the Pangong Lake in Eastern Ladakh, the Indian Army occupied high altitude positions of the Kailash range on the South Bank of the Lake, thereby dominating Chinese positions further afield. Indian soldiers stuck to their ground despite multiple efforts by the Chinese Army to get them to vacate their posts. Both sides ultimately deployed tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers, triggering an eye-ball to eye-ball standoff which threatened to escalate at any moment.

Despite gaining the upper-hand in South Pangong, India accepted the terms of a mutual deescalation in the region in February this year linked to a broader plan to de-escalate along all contested areas in Eastern Ladakh. "I want to assure this House that in

these talks we have not conceded anything," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told parliament on February 11. "These are mutual and reciprocal steps and any structures that had been built by both sides since April 2020 in both North and South Bank areas will be removed and the landforms restored," he said.

Despite multiple rounds of subsequent military talks, Chinese forces remain within Indian territory in areas that they illegally occupied in April-May last year. This includes Hot Springs, Gogra and Dapsang, further to the North. Last week, the External Affairs Ministry said that both sides agreed to hold a 12th round of military commander talks to achieve complete disengagement from all friction points so as to ensure a full restoration of peace and tranquility in bilateral relations.

Covid vaccination for 18-44 yrs at Namthang



Namchi, 29 Jun (IPR): The team from Namthang Primary Health Centre led by (Medical Officer, In-charge, Namthang PHC) Dr. Mingyur D. Lassopa administered COVID-19 Vaccination at Shopping Plaza, Namthang Bazaar,

under Namthang Health and Wellness Centre for people belonging in the category of 18-44 years today.

A total of 722 beneficiaries were vaccinated out of which 402 were at Namthang Bazar and

320 at Bimbong Primary Health Sub Centre.

The team also vaccinated a total of 1102 beneficiaries yesterday covering people living in areas namely that of Namthang Bazaar, Bimbong, Kateng and Kabrey.

More power to autonomous colleges of Assam soon

GUWAHATI, JUN 29 (PTI): More powers

should be granted to the three autonomous colleges in Assam to allow them to award degrees on their own, Assam Governor and Chancellor of State Universities Prof. Jagdish Mukhi said on Tuesday.

At a meeting convened at the Raj Bhawan here, a detailed discussion was held on implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the state.

As an initial step, more powers will be granted to the three autonomous colleges of the state - North Lakhimpur College, Lakhimpur, Jagannath Barooah College, Jorhat, and Nowgong College, Nagaon - the meeting decided.

The Governor asked

Education Minister Ranaj Pegu and the Education department to ensure that secondary education sections in all three autonomous colleges are transferred to nearby senior secondary schools to enable them to concentrate exclusively on quality degree courses.

He also said all vacant faculty positions should be filled up at the earliest to ensure no contractual teachers remain on the roll.

It was also decided to appoint a committee to study and suggest ways and means for these autonomous colleges to start implementing NEP 2020.

Education Minister Pegu said the colleges should concentrate on rendering quality education and work towards producing more entre-

preneurs.

Higher educational institutions, from higher secondary level itself, should not only focus on educating enrolled students but also in educating potential non-enrolled students in their local community by promoting Extension Services, he added.

Besides the minister and Principal Secretary, Education, Kalyan Chakravarty, Education Advisor Prof. Mihir Kanti Choudhury, Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, Joint Secretary of Higher Education Nivedita Laskar, Director of Higher Education Dharmakanta Mili and the principals of North Lakhimpur College, Jagannath Barooah College and Nowgong College were also present at the meeting.

Aditi Ashok qualifies for her second successive Olympics

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29 (PTI): India's top ranked

woman golfer Aditi Ashok will take part in her second successive Olympic Games in Tokyo next month after finishing 45th on the qualifying list released on Tuesday.

Aditi thus joined Anirban Lahiri and Udayan Mane to make it a team of three to Tokyo. Lahiri also like Aditi, will be participating in his second straight Games after Rio, 2016.

Aditi and Lahiri, figured in the first list of 60 players, of whom some are likely to skip the Games.

"I still think of Rio 2016 like it was only yesterday. To have the honour of playing for India is beyond exciting. I am privileged to have the opportunity to represent my country and my sport at the Games again," the golfer tweeted.

Even as Aditi came through in the first list, Diksha Dagar also figures in the second list as the fifth reserve in case of some specific pull-outs. Diksha, who trailed Tvesa Malik till last week overtook the latter with a tied-fourth finish at an event in the Czech Re-

public.

Mane made the cut following the withdrawal of Emiliano Grillo of Argentina. His entry will be confirmed on July 6 by the IGF and by then it will also be known who all are withdrawing from the women's section.

As a fifth reserve, Diksha will need a lot of permutation and combinations to get the nod. In a rather complicated system of filling in reserves for specific withdrawals, a simple withdrawal of five players may still not be enough.

The next step is for the International Golf Federation (IGF) to send confirmation of

the qualified athletes to the National Olympic Committees.

The NOCs will then confirm use of allocated quota places to the IGF by July 1 and the IGF, in turn, will re-allocate all the unused quota places before the Tokyo 2020 sport entries deadline on July 5.

The Olympic golf competition for men will be held at the Kasumigaseki Country Club from July 29 to August 2, while the women will play at the same course a week later from August 4 to 7. It will be a four-round 72-hole affair with no cuts for the starters.

What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever Cough Difficulty in breathing Shortness of breath Loss of taste or smell Headache Sore throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash your hands often with soap. Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer Observe good personal hygiene. Avoid touching your face with unclean 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.
<p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment is symptomatic and supportive. There is no specific antiviral treatment. Most patients recover within 2-14 days. Seek medical advice if symptoms worsen. 	<p>If you seek help, you may call:</p> <p>- Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District Surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7620872130</p> <p>WEST : 9682978803</p> <p>NORTH : 9640574803</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407694933</p> <p>New STN</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p>

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Spending on What?

Sikkim needs to get its expenditure arrangement worked out

The incongruity of the government hiring people on ad hoc basis [the most recent partial push back against which is being seen in the case of ad hoc teachers] for what are clearly permanent requirements is perhaps best explained by the unjustifiably high salaries that government servants take home. The bureaucracy is perhaps the only salaried class which decides its own salaries, it is thus not surprising that their emoluments put the exchequer under such severe stress that blatantly unfair hiring compromises like ad hoc appointments for permanent requirements have become commonplace in government jobs which hire and require in large numbers of which teachers are one component. And before the machetes are drawn to challenge the “unjustified” tag, here is a clarification - the handsome salaries are unjustifiable not only because most personnel are not worth it, but more so because it comes at the cost of reduced spending on creating new assets and implementing schemes; in simple words, governments are now spending more on personnel who help it do its job and less on its primary job itself.

The scenario is best understood in this manner - government servants are paid salaries to ensure that what the government spends for and on the lay people is done properly. The government has to be kept running to ensure that services for the people and public projects stay on course. What the government spends to meet expenditure towards day-to-day running of the organisation is Revenue Expenditure. This covers salaries and wages [which is the biggest component], pensions, interest payment against loans etc. Capital expenditure, on the other hand, is used to create permanent assets, or to enhance the utility of such assets, or to reduce permanent liabilities. As far as the people are concerned, RE should be a small component of the total expenditure and CE should be where most of the money is spent.

As per the innocently named, “Accounts at a Glance for the Year 2018-19,” prepared by the Accountant General’s office, Capital Expenditure is essential if the growth process is to be sustained. In Sikkim, in the financial year 2018-19, against a budget estimate of Rs 1,291 crore on capital disbursements, the State spent Rs 944 crore less. It will be interesting to find out where this nearly one thousand crore got expended, but what is more worrying is that Capital Expenditure did not even keep pace with the steady growth of GSDP. In 2018-19, for instance, when GSDP grew by 20%, CE grew by only 4%. Contrast this with how excessively Revenue Expenditure has grown - the total revenue expenditure increased by 40% from Rs 3,731 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 5,227 crore in 2018-19 and committed revenue expenditure increased by 64 per cent over the same period. Revenue expenditure, it is reiterated, is used to meet the day-to-day running of the government, something that does not concern the lay people beyond irritating them or making them jealous of those who find themselves in government whether by appointment or by election. One needs to also bear in mind that large chunk of wages, those paid out to temporary employees is most times made out from the Capital Expenditure budgets so there is even lesser available for public works.

Around 68.03 per cent of the revenue expenditure in 2018-19 was incurred on committed expenses like Salaries and Wages (Rs 2,014 crore), Interest payments (Rs 445 crore), Pensions (Rs 737 crore), Subsidies (Rs 3 crore) etc.

Sikkim’s smart rate of growth, as measured in GDP and GSDP terms and as calculated by DESME and reported in the Monday edition of this paper, makes for interesting reading. Sikkim is powering ahead on a stronger clip than the country but when one looks beyond the 8.14% growth posted by Sikkim for 2010-11, one will realise that the economic buoyancy is essentially floated by the State exchequer and the purchasing power standards held up by what the State pays out by way of salaries and wages to its employees and payments for supplies and contracts since it is also the largest consumer here. GSDP is the total income of the State or the market value of goods and services produced using labour and other factors of production at current prices. Since government salaries and wages make up nearly 24% of the State’s Gross State Domestic Product, this sector should perhaps be understood better.

The pressure of paying out salaries and wages is clearly so huge that it is now eating into the development expenditure of the State. Revenue Expenditure is the cost of maintaining the bureaucracy and other liabilities of the State and Capital Expenditure is the amount spent on creating real assets. The commissioning of a new road for example, is capital expenditure, and its maintenance, which includes engineers on the government’s payroll, revenue expenditure. Of all the expenditure incurred by the Government, the most important, as far as the lay citizens are concerned, is Capital Expenditure and the non salary component of Revenue Expenditure. As things stand, Revenue Expenditure makes up a staggering 81.50 per cent of everything that the Government spends. In lay man’s terms, for every Rs. 100 that the Government spends, nearly Rs. 82 goes towards paying salaries and maintaining offices and assets to ensure that the remaining Rs. 18 gets spent properly. The need to realign the allocative priorities to improve the quality of expenditure is obvious.

Unfortunately, if one were to look at the existing debates in the public domain, no one is even alluding to it yet – not the government, and definitely not the employees.

YUEN CHAN

THECONVERSATION.COM

Hongkongers had barely dried their tears over the forced closure of Apple Daily, a populist, sometimes bawdy, always staunchly pro-democracy daily launched as the “Hong Kong people’s newspaper” in 1995, when more bad news dropped for the city’s once-vaunted press freedom.

The former managing editor of Apple Daily’s English edition and lead Chinese editorial writer Fung Wai-kong (who wrote under the pen-name Lo Fung) was arrested at the Hong Kong International Airport on Sunday, June 27 as he prepared to leave for the UK. He is accused of conspiring to collude with foreign forces and is the seventh senior Apple Daily journalist to be arrested on national security charges in two weeks.

The paper Fung wrote for was undoubtedly flawed, with its sensationalist coverage and ethical lapses, but it also exposed corruption in high places, won awards for its investigative reporting, and dared to stand up to Beijing. Its existence was a barometer of Hong Kong’s press freedom and freedom of expression.

The end of Apple Daily on June 24 wasn’t a surprise. But that it came at such short notice, following dramatic raids, the arrest of senior journalists and the freezing of its assets has already had a chilling effect on the rest of Hong Kong’s media.

Many in the sector have harboured fears that independent online media would be next. Sure enough, hours before news of Fung’s arrest broke, Stand News announced a slew of pre-emptive mea-

sures to reduce risk to its staff, authors and supporters. The platform is a non-profit, independent online news outlet that has reported extensively on Hong Kong protest movements and provides a platform for civil society voices. Among the measures was the temporary removal of all opinion articles published in and before May this year.

RUNNING OUT OF PLACES TO WORK

Apple’s demise and the wiping of Stand News archive are the latest in a series of developments that have eroded Hong Kong’s press freedom and undermined editorial independence at the city’s news outlets. These include the muzzling of Hong Kong’s public service broadcaster RTHK and personnel changes at pay-TV channels i-Cable and Now TV that have seen pro-government figures replace respected journalists. In the wake of these developments, journalists are running out of newsrooms where they can still practise relatively independent, critical journalism.

Joy* joined Apple Daily in November 2019, at the height of the protests, due to the censorship she says was practised by her previous employer, the main terrestrial broadcaster TVB. “There was much more freedom at Apple Daily,” she says. “In my heart, I still want to be a journalist, but my only remaining choices are Stand News and Citizen News. Yet they’re likely to be the government’s next targets.”

Another journalist, Max* who currently works at Citizen News admits he does worry: “We’re always saying we might not be able to carry on for much longer, maybe a year, or

maybe even that’s too optimistic.”

But Max insists that even if the platforms disappear, there will be journalism as long as there are journalists. He himself is a member of the former i-Cable China team that joined Citizen News en masse after the mass resignations there last year. His experience has prompted him to urge former Apple Daily journalists to set up their own teams and journalistic ventures.

He told me: “I’m always reminding myself that when mainland [Chinese] journalists are still striving within and outside the system ... how can we give up so easily?”

TOMORROW’S JOURNALISTS

Bruce Lui is now a senior lecturer in journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University, but he too formerly worked for the storied i-Cable China Team. Lui says journalism schools used to teach students how to be journalists in a free society. But as Hong Kong loses more of its freedoms “we have to help students understand how to report in Mainland [China], because the environment is increasingly converging with that of the mainland, where there are many clear and hidden rules,” Lui says. “Behind them are a bunch of political intentions, controlling these regulations, determining the rules of the game.”

Another journalism lecturer, who did not want to give her name, agrees. She told me: “Fewer students may want to become journalists, but those that do are more serious about it. They pay great attention to topics like source protection in class. They have no fantasies or illusions about journalism, they know it’s hard, they know

they could end up in prison.”

When I spoke to Charis*, a journalism student who reported from the frontlines of the 2019 anti-extradition bill protests in January last year, she said her experiences had hardened her resolve to become a journalist.

Now she’s conflicted because Hong Kong’s national security law, passed in 2020, has made it more difficult to report, and the crack-down on independent and critical media means there are fewer outlets where she’d be able to report freely.

Many journalism students used to aspire to work for RTHK, but Charis recently turned down a coveted internship there because new rules would have required her to swear an oath of allegiance to the Hong Kong government.

“I’m going on exchange to Taiwan in September, but in June Taipei issued a form where anyone seeking to reside there had to declare whether they had sworn allegiance to the Hong Kong government ... I realised that swearing the oath could affect my whole future,” she explains.

Despite the setback and her concerns about how the Hong Kong mediascape will look when she graduates in a year’s time, Charis hasn’t given up on journalism just yet. “It’s a difficult path to tread and press freedom is forever shrinking. But I still hope we can use any remaining freedom to report the best we can. I believe that as long as there are people willing to do so, there will be space to practice journalism.”

[the writer is Senior Lecturer, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Journalism, City, University of London]

Love Island: What makes the show so successful?



XAVIER L'HOIRY

THECONVERSATION.COM

Audiences can’t get enough of reality dating TV shows, including First Dates and Married at First Sight. But few programmes have been able to drum up the same level of excitement as Love Island, which returned this week after an 18-month break.

With viewing figures usually in the millions, Love Island, in particular, has become ubiquitous in British pop culture since its arrival in 2015. But beyond the apparent appeal of watching people go through the up and downs of finding love, what is the enduring attraction of this genre of reality TV?

The gimmicks of shows like Love is Blind and the upcoming Netflix dating show Sexy Beasts, (in which participants wear animal prosthetics to mask their true appearance) may certainly explain why viewers tune in. But dating competitions like Love Island remain immensely popular despite introducing relatively little change in format from one year to the next.

For some, the apparent authenticity of reality TV is a key part of its appeal, particularly when watching “real” people seemingly fall in love. But there are different views within academic research on this particular appeal of reality.

Some have argued that the more viewers perceive a show to be authentic, the more their enjoyment increases (and vice versa). Others, however, propose that authenticity has become less important for viewers who are increasingly savvy to the fact that many reality TV shows are engineered to provoke dramatic moments. Instead, audiences are said to deliberately suspend disbelief to indulge in their favourite shows, accepting that realism is a fluid and ambiguous concept.

Indeed, scholars have argued that audiences enjoy trying to distinguish the real from the false in reality TV. This may explain the popularity of shows such as Keeping up with the Kardashians

and others billed as reality TV despite widespread acknowledgement that scenes are scripted and key events choreographed. So if realism and authenticity aren’t key attractions, what is?

THE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Audience engagement is a critical part of why these shows have remained so popular in the past two decades. Ever since the introduction of Big Brother and Pop Idol in the early 21st century, reality TV has offered viewers a chance to be part of the story. For the first time, audiences moved beyond passive viewers watching content unfold and became active participants, shaping outcomes and voting on the success and failure of contestants. In this sense, audiences were no longer just consumers but recast in a dual role of viewer-producer in a new participatory relationship.

However, audience engagement and participation are only part of the story. In fact, my research has found that for shows as popular as Love Island, social media is the key to success. Love Island’s producers have made little secret that generating audience engagement via social media is central to their strategy. This approach seeks to elicit a loop whereby television and social media content feed back onto each other in a cycle, driving audiences to engage with the show across many platforms, including on TV, via the show’s official mobile app and on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram.

Perhaps more importantly, social media allows audiences to watch and engage with shows together, as the show is aired. In the past few years, fans of Love Island have congregated online every summer, creating a vibrant fan community mediated largely via Twitter and Instagram. They provide real-time commentary on the show, creating memes and gifs, predicting outcomes, and generally sharing their thoughts.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Though this form of multi-platform consump-

tion is now common practice for many TV shows, for Love Island viewers, consuming the show across many platforms has become not only normalised but also a central part of their enjoyment.

In 2018, Sarah Manavis argued in New Statesman that “for an hour a day, Love Island made Twitter a kind place to be”, explaining that the show’s friendly virtual community overcame the usually confrontational and toxic nature of social media.

She claims that Love Island has gone so far as having “transformed the way we treat each other online” with open and supportive discussions among fans. Twitter posts at the end of one of the show’s runs often capture this positivity:

Collective consumption of the show has even prompted fans to group together online to challenge perceived injustice and subterfuge by the show’s own producers. One example of this was the infamous #kissgate in 2018 when Twitter users banded together to reveal that an apparently unscripted and impromptu kiss had actually been filmed in two separate takes, misleading viewers as to its authenticity.

However, it should be noted that alongside this positivity comes some negativity. For some viewers, part of the attraction of consuming the show online with others is the opportunity for trolling. This type of behaviour has even prompted Love Island to post a trolling warning ahead of the show’s 2021 run.

Love Island has achieved the perfect blend of creating ways to engage audiences across multiple platforms and leading its audience towards largely friendly and vibrant online fan communities. With a default model like that (and a hungry fan base to contend with after a pandemic-related hiatus), it’s no wonder Love Island remains immensely popular.

[the writer is Lecturer in Criminology and Social Policy, University of Sheffield]

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Several settlements in hill districts of Lumbini at high risk of landslides

SHAMSHER BIKRAM GC

KATHMANDU, 29 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]: Junga Bahadur Pun, the ward chairman of Gaumukhi Rural Municipality-3 in Pyuthan, has been staying in an animal shed for the past one year. He says he and his family started living in the shed, as his village is at risk of landslides.

"The Khara settlement is gradually sinking. My house's walls have developed cracks due to landslides. So we have been staying in the cowshed," Pun said. "Many houses in my settlement are tilted with cracks now."

According to him, 13 families in the settlement take shelter either in their animal sheds or relatives' houses every monsoon due to fear of landslides.

The buildings of Khara Secondary School, a local community school, and the ward office of Gaumukhi-3 are also at risk of landslides. A massive landslide erupted just below the settlement last year, displacing Pun and 12 other families.

According to Pun, a team of geologists, with the assistance of the Lumbini Province government, came to Khara to conduct a field study five months ago.

"The geologists studied the landslide-prone settlement but did not give any information to the ward office. I am worried that a landslide will sweep away my settlement," Pun told the Post.

Not only Khara but several set-

tlements in Gaumukhi Rural Municipality are at risk of water-induced disasters.

The settlements of Paiyupata, Harjakhola, Thulakharka and Lekhchhahara are at high risk of landslides. The local unit said at least 10 houses in Thulakharka should be relocated to safer locations at the earliest due to erosion caused by Jhimruk river.

"Similarly, the households in Lekhchhahara settlement of Gaumukhi Rural Municipality Ward No. 2 also need to be shifted to a safer place," said Dor Bahadur Rana, the ward chairman of Gaumukhi-2.

Despite the risk of landslides, the relocation process is yet to commence.

"There is no safer place nearby to relocate the settlements and the villagers do not want to leave their ancestral settlements," said Bishnu Kumar Giri, the chairman of Gaumukhi Rural Municipality.

Of the nine local units in Pyuthan district, Gaumukhi and Naubahini rural municipalities are prone to floods and landslides. As many as 53 people in the area had been killed due to floods and landslides in 2016.

"There are streams flowing below several settlements. The streams erode the banks each year, risking the settlements to landslides," said Shivaraj Rijal, the chairman of Naubahini Rural Municipality. According to him, residents of Kurtibang, Syaulibang



and Khabang settlements of Ligha need to be shifted to safer locations.

Rolpa, another hill district of Lumbini Province, is also affected by landslides every year. According to the District Natural Disaster Management Committee, many settlements in Sunchhahari, Thabang and Tribeni rural municipalities are prone to landslides.

"The villagers cannot sleep well in the rainy season due to fear of landslides. The topography in the area is very fragile. Furthermore, the haphazard construction of roads by using dozers leaves the settlements at high risk of landslides," said Sher Bahadur Gharti

of Seram in Sunchhahari Rural Municipality.

The local people complained that the local unit and other authorities concerned have failed to take concrete steps to control landslides and relocate the villagers to a safe place. No preparations have been made to mitigate the risk of disasters, said Gharti.

"Around 30 percent of settlements in the rural municipality are at risk of water-induced disasters," said Pabitra Gharthimagar, the vice-chairperson of Sunchhahari. "Some efforts have been made but they are not enough to mitigate the risk of the disaster."

Gulmi is also one of the districts worst hit by water-induced disasters. Musikot and Resunga municipalities and Satyawati, Malika, Dhurkot, Madane, Chandrakot, Satyawati, Chhatrakot, Ruruchhetra, Kaligandaki, Gulmidarbar and Isma rural municipalities in the district are at high risk of landslides.

"We are formulating an action plan to prevent any untoward incidents in the future. We have kept our team on standby to take necessary actions," Chief District Officer of Gulmi Rudrawati Sharma.

According to Sharma, the risk of landslides is high in the hills due to their fragile topography. "Haphazard construction of roads using

heavy machinery in rural areas is also one of the leading causes behind landslides," said Sharma.

Road expansion works have increased the risk of landslides in Palpa district as well. Expansion works along the Tansen-Harthok road, Harthok-Chhahara road, Aryabhanjyang-Rampur road and the Siddhartha Highway, among other road sections in Kaligandaki Corridor, have put several settlements at risk of disasters, says Chief District Officer of Palpa Yogendra Prasad Pandeya.

"The settlements in Rampur, Madiphan, Argali, Banstari, Jhadewa, Tinau, Arunkhola, Nisdi and Purbakhola Taar can face possible inundation this monsoon while there's a threat of landslides in Jalpa, Devinagar, Jhadewa, Madanpokhara, Dovan and Tansen Sammobari," Pandeya said.

According to the District Disaster Management Committee in Palpa, over 200 families in the district are at risk of landslides and more than 225 families could be displaced due to monsoon-related disasters this year.

Meanwhile, in Arghakhanchi, 24 families displaced by last year's landslide in Shitaganga Ward No. 12 have yet to return to their settlement, as the risk of landslide is still there and the authorities have failed to relocate them to a safe place.

A massive landslide had erupted at Kothiya Maidan in Shitaganga in September, 2020.

War of words between Oli and Nepal continues as they drift apart

ANIL GIRI

KATHMANDU, 29 JUN

[KATHMANDUPOST]:

A tug-of-war has been going on in the CPN-UML for months. Party chair KP Sharma Oli, also the prime minister, has not only criticised and humiliated senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal but also on one occasion ousted him from the party. Nepal, who leads a faction within the party, has at times threatened to form a separate party, but he has not done so yet. The two adversaries, however, continue to remain in the same party, even though they do not miss a single opportunity to lash out at each other.

But if some recent developments are anything to go by, according to insiders and observers, a split in the UML is just a matter of time. Some second-rung leaders have been making a last-ditch effort to keep party unity intact, but the basis has weakened and the bitterness between the leaders has only grown, they say.

On Monday, Oli took on Nepal over the latter's statement that he was offered the post of prime minister.

"Nepal has become a tail of Dahal. A few days back he said I have offered the post of prime minister to him. Am I bitten by a mad dog?" said Oli, evoking derisive laughter from his party members.

Nepal, along with 22 other UML members, is currently backing the opposition alliance which has pitched Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister. The alliance has filed a petition

at the Supreme Court demanding House restoration and appointment of Deuba as prime minister.

"Madhav Nepal claims to be a senior UML leader, but how can a leader who is supporting the opposition party leader as prime minister be a UML leader?" said Oli. "Madhav Nepal is destroying the communist movement."

Later in the day, Nepal responded to Oli's remarks at a different function in Kathmandu.

"Oli's language is worth pondering. Please keep that on record. The prime minister is at the top when it comes to violating basic civility."

Oli's scathing remarks against Nepal come days before a meeting of the UML aimed at taking the party to the stage it was before May 18, 2018. This will mean a broader call to the Nepal faction to decide if it wants to be under the UML party which existed before its merger with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre).

"The UML will dissolve the national convention organising committee of the party and revive the Central Committee," said Rajendra Gautam, who is close to Oli. "We will announce a roadmap for keeping the party united. Those who are interested can join."

But many say things have escalated badly and that the likelihood of Oli and Nepal remaining under the same party has diminished.

A member who spoke on condition of anonymity said leaders

like Nepal, Jhala Nath Khanal, Bhim Rawal, Asta Laxmi Shakya, Ram Kumari Jhakri and Rajendra Kumar Rai are unlikely to join hands with Oli.

Nepal so far has expressed his commitment to backing the opposition alliance, but given his nature of being risk-averse and indecisive, not many are convinced.

Nepal had aligned himself with Pushpa Kamal Dahal in the then Nepal Communist Party (NCP) to create a force against Oli. But on March 7, the Supreme Court invalidated the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and revived the UML and the Maoist Centre.

Even though Nepal has said on multiple occasions that he would form a party of his own, he has not yet broken his ties with the UML. In joint statements of the opposition alliance, Nepal signs as "senior leader of the CPN-UML."

With Oli's position becoming untenable, the Nepal faction now appears to be preparing to desert the UML. And much depends on the Supreme Court decision on Oli's May 21 House dissolution.

As many as 23 lawmakers, including Nepal, from the dissolved Parliament have signed the petition filed by the opposition alliance led by Deuba against the House dissolution.

Leaders close to Oli say he will make utmost efforts to stop Deuba from becoming prime minister if the House is reinstated.

For that, according to UML leaders, Oli has two options—either make

sure that the Nepal faction comes into his fold, or strip all the leaders from the Nepal faction of their lawmaker positions.

If Oli passes the trust vote with the support of the Nepal faction, he will stay on for a year and a half and if he loses it, the House would be dissolved again, according to people from Oli's orbit.

"The present situation [in the party] is quite complicated after the Supreme Court's order [to invalidate the national convention organising committee]," said Pradeep Gyawali, spokesperson for the UML. "We are on a wait and watch mode."

According to Gyawali, there is little chance of Nepal returning to the UML fold, as "he has been lured by the Nepali Congress and the Maoist Centre".

"We have heard about a merger of different forces led by Nepal, Dahal and Upendra Yadav. We have also heard about pre-electoral alliances," said Gyawali. "But the way the activities of Nepal and the opposition alliance are directed, I see a larger party unity within UML with Nepal and other leaders as impossible."

Gyawali, however, believes that "some leaders" might come to Oli's fold.

One of the leaders who deserted the Nepal faction to return to the Oli camp is Bishnu Rijal.

"If the Supreme Court reinstates the House, there will be pressure on Oli for party unification. In that scenario, he might even offer the post of party chair to Nepal," said

Rijal. "If the court passes an order to restore the House and appoint Deuba as prime minister, Oli will have to remove the leaders of the Nepal faction as lawmakers."

According to Rijal, the UML's unity fate largely depends on the Supreme Court's verdict.

Nepal faction leaders, however, are not optimistic about Oli accommodating them in the UML.

"Oli's calls so far have been an eyewash," said Som Prasad Pandey, a leader close to Nepal. "Our leadership has already squandered the opportunity that we had to start afresh. There is very little chance of going with Oli now."

But whether Oli will indeed accommodate Nepal and his faction's leaders or oust them from the party, thereby relieving them of their lawmaker positions if the House is restored is still up in the air.

Hari Roka, a political commentator, said it won't be easy for Oli to sack lawmakers, given a recent Supreme Court ruling on the removal of four provincial lawmakers of Karnali that the party's National Convention Organising Committee's decision is not valid and only that of the Central Committee is valid.

"Oli is left with limited options and alternatives after a series of Supreme Court orders in the recent past," said Roka. "If Oli removes Nepal faction leaders, it will be illegal. And he is not going to offer the post of party chair to Nepal. Oli is taking the country towards a disaster."

COVID vaccination camp for tribals of hilltop villages

JAJPUR, JUN 29 (PTI):

A COVID vaccination drive has begun in Nagada village of Odisha's Jajpur district after reports around a fortnight ago that many tribals were suffering from fever in the backward hilltop villages that had hogged headlines for a series of child malnutrition deaths in 2016.

The district administration kick-started the drive in the village as a precautionary measure even as no Covid case has been detected in the tribal hamlet yet. The camp was organised at the Tala Nagada Anganwadi centre.

It had set a target of vaccinating around 250 adults -- 200 in Nagada and 50 from neighbouring hamlets Tumuni and

Guhiasal.

A total of 176 tribals or 70.4 per cent of the target got the first jab in a peaceful and smooth manner on Monday, of which 106 are men and the rest women, officials said.

Though the residents of Nagada were initially reluctant to take the vaccine and avoided coming to the camp, they later cooperated, said Sukinda, community health centre, superintendent, Jayadev Nanda.

"We persuaded them with great difficulties by convincing them that nothing harmful will happen if they take the jab. After a great effort by the medical staff, they decided to take the vaccine at the camp," Nanda said.

Desa Pradhan, 28,

of Tala Nagada village was the first person to take the jab at the camp, agreeing to take the shot after much persuasion by Nanda.

The official himself administered the vaccine on Pradhan, following which others agreed to go to the booth.

"I was scared before taking the vaccine," Pradhan said. "However, when the doctor 'babu' gave me assurance that he would administer the vaccine to me, I built confidence in myself and agreed to take it."

Situated on a hilltop in Sukinda block, around 100 km north of Bhubaneswar, Nagada is divided into three parts -- Tala Nagada, Upara Nagada and Majhi Nagada.

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SummitTIMES

Neymar complains about Copa America pitch again

RIO DE JANEIRO, JUN 29 (AP): Brazil star Neymar complained about a Copa America pitch again.

Brazil's quarterfinal on Friday against Uruguay or Chile will be in Rio de Janeiro at Nilton Santos Stadium, of which the field has been heavily criticized since the start of the tournament.

In a post on Instagram, Neymar pondered Where will the next Brazil match be played? beneath photos of a dirt pitch and Wembley Stadium's impeccable-looking pitch during the 2012 Olympics.

Neymar also criticized the Rio pitch on June 17 after Brazil beat Peru 4-0.

Celebrating yesterday's goal in the beautiful' pitch of the Engenhao, the striker said, using the name Brazilians use to call the stadium.

Please, fix the pitch.

Lionel Messi and his Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni have also criticized the pitch of Nilton Santos.

Brazilian media reported at the weekend that Brazil wanted to play its quarterfinal at Arena Pantanal in Cuiaba because of the pitch at the Rio stadium. If Brazil advances, it will also play the semifinal at Nilton Santos.

CONMEBOL said it finished on Sunday upgrading the Maracan Stadium pitch for the final on July 10.

Messi breaks Argentina's record for caps at Copa America win

Cuiba (Brazil), Jun 29 (AP): Lionel Messi became Argentina's most capped international player, marking the occasion with two goals as he led his national team to a 4-1 win over Bolivia at the Copa America.

The 34-year-old Messi's 148th appearance for Argentina beat the mark previously held by retired defender Javier Mascherano.

His two goals and one assist helped Argentina ensure top spot in Group A, setting up a quarterfinal against Ecuador on Saturday.

Messi made his Argentina debut in 2005 in a 2-1 win in a friendly against Hungary. He was sent off during that match after hitting a rival with his elbow.

The Barcelona striker, who holds the all-time Argentina high of 75 goals, is also seeking to break two South American records: Pele's as the top goal scorer of a national team (77 for Brazil), and Chile's Sergio Livingstone mark of 34 for most Copa America appearances (Messi has 31).

Diego Maradona scored 32 goals in 87 matches for Argentina, including the 1986 World Cup triumph. Messi, despite his impressive individual statistics, is yet to win a major title for Argentina.

He was runner-up at the 2014 World Cup and at two editions of Copa America in 2015 and in '16.

Gritty Clippers stave off elimination, beat Suns 116-102

PHOENIX (AP): Paul George had just wrapped up his brilliant night, scoring 41 points to keep the Los Angeles Clippers' season alive. He shared some hugs and fist bumps with teammates and assistant coaches before he finally got to head coachTyronnLue.

There were some words of encouragement. They were also apparently too hot for TV.

"I can't share that," George said with a grin, recalling the conversation. "Bleep this and bleep that."

George set his playoff career high in scoring, Reggie Jackson added 23 and the feisty Clippers staved off elimination by beating the Phoenix Suns 116-102 on Monday night in Game 5 of the Western Conference finals.

The Clippers have been counted out multiple times in this postseason. That continues to be a mistake.

"The group of guys we've got, I love those guys. They compete every single night no matter who is on the floor," Lue said. "The work's not done, but we came into a hostile environment and got a gritty win.

"We've got to do it again two more times."

The series moves back to LA with the Suns holding a 3-2 advantage. Game 6 is Wednesday.

The short-handed Clippers were playing without two-time NBA Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard and center Ivica Zubac, who missed his first game of the season with an MCL sprain in his right knee. They've

already fought through two grueling series wins in these playoffs, coming back from 2-0 deficits to beat both the Dallas Mavericks and Utah Jazz.

Now they're trying to claw back against the Suns. Game 5 was a good start.

George was fantastic after a tough shooting night in Game 4, pouring in 20 points in the third quarter. He finished 15 of 20 from the field, including 3 of 6 from 3-point range and added 13 rebounds and six assists.

"If they were going to finish this series, they were going to have to work for it," George said. "That's just the mentality we had. We weren't going to back down. We weren't going to throw in the towel. The fact of the matter is they've got to beat us."

Marcus Morris Sr., who played for Phoenix earlier in his career, added 22 points on 9-of-16 shooting.

The Suns trailed by as many as 15 points during the first half but took their first advantage in the third when Chris Paul knocked down a 16-foot jumper for a 62-61 lead. The Clippers responded with the next 10 points and then started sinking 3-pointers. George hit back-to-back 3s and Patrick Beverley added one to push LA ahead 82-70, gesturing to the Suns crowd as he jogged back down the court.

It was the common theme of the night: Every time the Suns got some momentum, the Clippers were there to squash it in a hurry.

The Clippers took



a 91-78 lead into the fourth. The Suns pulled within 98-94 with 6:58 left but LA responded with a 10-2 run and pulled away for the win.

Devin Booker led the Suns with 31 points. Paul — who is trying to go to the NBA Finals for the first time in his 16-year career — added 22 points and eight assists. Deandre Ayton had 10 points and 11 rebounds.

"We've got to be better," Paul said. "They came out and they were the aggressors. They looked like us in Game 4. They hit us, they were too comfortable and we've got to be better."

The Clippers played inspired basketball in the first half, jumping out to an 20-5 lead by halfway through the first quarter. Jackson threw down a huge one-handed jam during the run and LA hit nine of its first 11 shots.

"It is just unacceptable the way we started the game," Suns coach Monty Williams said. "It was a big hole for us. It is pretty obvious that we

can't play with the show-up mentality. We showed up in the first quarter and they played with desperation."

Morris was 6 of 7 in the first and Jackson made a layup at the buzzer to give the Clippers a 36-26 advantage going into the second.

The Suns cut the advantage to 44-42 midway through the second but the Clippers rallied again to push ahead by 10. Booker hit a 3-pointer at the halftime buzzer to cut the Clippers' advantage 59-52.

Morris had 20 points in the first half.

The Suns are trying to make their first NBA Finals since 1993. The Clippers have never been this far in the postseason.

TIP-INS
Clippers: DeMarcus Cousins had 10 points in just six minutes in the first half. He made 5 of 9 shots, putting a shot on the rim once every 40 seconds on average. ... Leonard missed his seventh straight game. ... This was the Clippers' sixth

double-digit win when trailing in a series this postseason. That is the most such wins in a single postseason in NBA history.

Suns: F Abdel Nader played in his second straight game after missing several weeks with a knee injury. He scored two points. ... Phoenix announced a sellout crowd of 16,664.

MISSING ZUBAC

The 7-foot Zubac has been an ironman for Los Angeles and this was the first game he's missed for two years. Coach TyronnLue admitted the Clippers were down during morning shootaround after hearing that Zubac wouldn't play.

Zubac moved into a more prominent role in these Western Conference finals, averaging 12.8 points and 11 rebounds in the first four games. He's also been important on defense as a rim protector.

The Clippers went small to replace Zubac in the starting lineup, going with the 6-foot-5 Terance Mann.

Youth runs wild: Collegians, teens dot track team for Tokyo

EUGENE (US), JUN 29 (AP): Sprinter Allyson Felix earned her spot in a fifth straight Olympics. Long jumper Brittney Reese made her fourth games. That sort of experience any sort of experience appears more of the exception than the rule on the track team the United States is sending to Tokyo next month.

The team is headlined by a 17-year-old sprinter who broke Usain Bolt's youth records (Erriyon-Knighton) and a long/high jumper from LSU (JuVaughn Harrison) accomplishing things not seen since the days of Jim Thorpe.

There's a Harvard-educated sprinter who wants to be an epidemiologist one day (Gabby Thomas) and another speedster with orange hair (Sha'Carri Richardson).

New faces all waiting to make their mark.

Maybe the most confident voice among this youthful bunch belongs to 23-year-old Noah Lyles. He, too, is heading to his first Olympics after winning the final event of the 10-day trials the men's 200 meters. Lyles fully believes the team can top the 32 medals it won at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

Shoot, I want all the sprints. Plain and simple, Lyles said.

I don't think I'm crazy for saying I think we can do it. Why not sweep them all? Why not go top three in each one? I don't think it's crazy."

Far less crazy now that Bolt is retired and watching on TV.

There's no Jamaican dominance. There's only U.S. dominance. We're going to start breaking records, Lyles said. That, in fact, has already begun.

Shot putter Ryan Crouser, 28, broke a 31-year-old world record on the first day of trials.

On the last day, in record-setting heat that led the trials to be moved to the night, Sydney McLaughlin provided a perfect bookend, finishing the 400 hurdles in 51.90 seconds. The 21-year-old edged Dalilah Muhammad, who babysat the record for 23 months.

It was definitely just a matter of time. Definitely knew she was capable of it, Muhammad said. I absolutely saw it coming.

DAY & KNIGHTON

Not even Bolt was this fast at 17 years old. Knighton, who's from Florida, broke an under-20 200 record that once belonged to the Jamaican sensation, finishing in 19.84 seconds. Bolt's overall world record stands at 19.19.

It will probably sink in when I get home, Knighton said of his accomplishments.

It's a really big achievement.

Just as happy for him was Lyles, who finished a spot short at the 2016 trials when he was a teenager.

"To watch him PR in each round, I was just hoping, Don't gas out. Don't gas out," Lyles said.

When he went out and he (got a personal record), I was so happy for him. I was like,

Bruh, you did it. You did what I couldn't do.' He did it. I'm just so happy for him.

JUMP FOR JOY

Harrison went 2 for 2 on a steamy final day of trials, winning the long jump in the evening after taking the high jump in the heat. The LSU product became the first American to make it in both the high and long jumps at one Olympics since Thorpe in 1912, according to Olympic historian Bill Mallon.

This is what fueled him: A McGriddles breakfast sandwich from McDonald's and later a sandwich from Firehouse Subs.

I have a tradition for practice and tradition for competition, Harrison explained.

For practice, I eat something hot and spicy. For competition, I usually eat a sandwich.

It's working.

A great day, he said. But I am exhausted.

HAIR APPARENT

Watch out, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. The Jamaican superstar will be pushed by Americans in both the 100 and 200 sprints in Tokyo.

Richardson won the 100 in 10.86 seconds and Thomas, the Harvard graduate, won the 200 in 21.61. Thomas not only broke the meet record held by her idol, Felix, but it also made her the second-fastest woman ever in the event, trailing only the two times posted by the late Florence Griffith Joyner.

The 21-year-old Richardson picks a hair color so I'm visible and able to be seen, she explained.

There may be a new color for Tokyo.

I've got tricks up my sleeve, Richardson said. Stay tuned.

ATHING OF BEAUTY

Athing Mu, whose parents emigrated to the U.S. from Sudan before she was born, has been tracking toward success for quite a while. The 19-year-old from New Jersey was the NCAA champ in the 400 for Texas A&M this season.

She bumped up to the 800 for trials, where she held off a veteran field to finish in 1 minute, 56.07 seconds. Her time broke the meet record set by Meredith Rainey in 1996.

A 25-year-old record is really old, Mu said. I knew it was within me. It's great to have it.

COLLEGE TRY

A few other college standouts who made their way onto the podium at trials: Randolph Ross (400, North Carolina A&T), Isaiah Jewett (800, USC), Cole Hocker (1,500, Oregon), Darryl Sullivan (high jump, Tennessee), Anna Cockrell (400 hurdles, USC), Adelaide Aquilla (shot put, Ohio State), Jasmine Moore (triple jump, Georgia) and Anavia Battle (200, Ohio State).

For Ross, it was back to the books.

I'm in summer school and I have another class coming up so it's just get my homework done, graduate early, and start my career from there, explained Ross, who was third in the 400.

Pessina's goal celebration becomes a sensation back in Italy

LONDON, JUN 29 (AP):MatteoPessina's goal-scoring celebration diving face-first on the turf with his arms nearly flat by his side has become quite a sensation back home in Italy.

Rightfully so.

The 24-year-old midfielder, who only joined his national team for the European Championship after another player was injured, scored what turned out to be the winning goal in extra time against Austria in the round of 16.

It was the most spontaneous thing in the world. It didn't seem real to me that it had really happened and I did the stupidest thing I could think of, Pessina said.

I get lots of videos of people imitating it, even on the beach. It's really wonderful.

Not bad for someone who was playing in Italy's third division a little over four years ago and at times struggling to even make the team.

There was a time, when I was in Serie C and I wasn't playing, that I even thought about quitting. But I continued because of the love for this sport, Pessina said Monday.



Soccer is of course my job, but for me it's more something that I adore doing.

Pessina's goal at Wembley Stadium in London in the 2-1 victory was his second at Euro 2020. He also scored in the previous match, a 1-0 victory over Wales in the group stage.

When I scored against Wales, my grandparents were waiting to head off to Sardinia and they watched the game in a bar, Pessina said.

My grandfather told everyone I was his grandson and they offered him drinks.

Pessina, who plays for high-scoring Italian club Atalanta, was originally left out of Italy's 26-man squad but was a late call up following an injury to Stefano Sensi. He earned the spot by scoring his first two goals for the national team in a Euro 2020 warmup match against San Marino.

I started as the 27th man but I didn't think about it that much because I always felt part of this group, even as a 27th man, Pessina said.

The coach asked me to do him the favor of staying with the group for the first few days and

see how things went. Then, as you know, Stefano got injured and I was included in the squad.

But I always felt part of this group from the first call-up. The good thing about this group is that the coach manages to make everyone feel important.

Pessina started in the much-changed lineup against Wales, with Italy already through to the knockout stage of the tournament, and he was brought on as a substitute against Austria.

His two goals in his

New Israeli foreign minister in the UAE on 1st state visit

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): Israel's new foreign minister was in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, kicking off the highest-level visit by an Israeli official to the Gulf Arab state since the two countries normalized relations nine months ago. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid is expected to meet the UAE's foreign minister in Abu Dhabi, with talks likely to focus in part on Iran, which both countries view as a top regional threat.

The Emiratis and Israelis had strong reservations about the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers brokered by the Obama administration, which aimed to limit Tehran's ability to develop nuclear weapons. Their shared concerns that the deal did not go far enough helped propel quiet ties and covert meetings long before they formally announced full diplomatic relations last year.

Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Lior Haiat told reporters Tuesday that the pace of bilateral cooperation between the two countries has been "unprecedented."

"There's been years of under-the-radar relations between Israel and the UAE, and we are now enjoying the fruits of the infrastructure of peace that we've built in the last decades," Haiat said.

The Trump administration brokered the agreement that established ties between the UAE and Israel. It was hailed at the time by both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald Trump as among their greatest achievements.

Lapid's visit to the UAE was one that Netanyahu had hoped to make himself before his 12-year-run at the helm ended earlier this month. He'd repeated-

ly tried to score a lightning trip to Abu Dhabi to capitalize on the normalization deal his government signed and boost his re-election campaign.

President Joe Biden's push to revive the nuclear accord after Trump pulled the U.S. out of it has raised concerns among Israelis and several Gulf Arab states, which had favored Trump's pressure campaign on Iran.

On Sunday, Lapid was quoted as saying that Israel has serious reservations about the nuclear deal being discussed in Vienna, but pledged Israel would make its objections privately.

While in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, Lapid is to inaugurate Israel's Embassy. The Israeli foreign ministry says he is also attending a trade expo where Israeli companies are exhibiting technology.

On Wednesday, he is to inaugurate Israel's consulate in Dubai and visit the Israeli pavilion at the site of the six-month-long Expo in Dubai. The World Fair will begin in October after a year's delay due to the coronavirus pandemic. Lapid is also due to meet with members of the expatriate Jewish community residing in Dubai.

Press access to the foreign minister's various events in the UAE has been strictly limited to Emirati media or to select Israeli media traveling with Lapid.

In recent months, the UAE and Israel have signed extensive trade and cooperation deals, and bilateral trade is already expected to have exceeded \$354 million. More than 200,000 Israeli tourists have traveled to the UAE, the Israeli Foreign Ministry has said. Many of those visits have been to Dubai, which does not require quarantine upon arrival and is open to tourists.



Shortly after the UAE-Israel pact was signed, the Trump administration authorized the sale of 50 advanced F-35 fighter jets to the UAE, which would make it only the second country in the Middle East, after Israel, to acquire them. The Biden administration has vowed to go ahead with the sale of the jets and advanced armed drones.

The UAE's decision to normalize ties with Israel — after the two countries signed the U.S.-brokered "Abraham Accords" — marked the first time in over two decades that an Arab state had established relations with Israel, following Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and 1994, respectively. It was quickly followed by Bahrain, with similar announcements made later by Sudan and Morocco.

Biden's administration has expressed support for these accords, but has also said they are no substitute for engaging on issues be-

tween the Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestinians across the political spectrum have slammed the UAE's ties with Israel, which break down a longstanding Arab consensus that recognition of Israel should only be granted in return for concessions to the Palestinians in a final peace settlement.

Lapid's visit to the UAE comes barely six weeks after an 11-day war in the Gaza Strip that killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children. Gaza's Health Ministry has not said how many of the dead were militants. In Israel, 13 people died as a result of the conflict, including two children.

Emotions ran high among the Arab public across the Gulf, particularly in the lead-up to the conflict when Israeli forces skirmished with Palestinian protesters at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in the final days of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. The site in east Jerusalem is holy to

both Jews and Muslims.

The tensions in Jerusalem drew rare public rebuke from the Emirati government, which has rushed to embrace and deepen its newfound public ties with Israel in the months since formalizing ties.

However, the UAE's tone changed in public statements after Hamas began firing rockets at Israel. The UAE considers Hamas as an Iran-backed militant group and an offshoot of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood.

Lapid's visit to the UAE also comes shortly after Israel's new government was sworn in earlier this month. Lapid heads the centrist YeshAtid party and is a former popular TV anchorman in Israel and novelist.

He struck a power-sharing deal with the ideologically hawkish, right-wing Naftali Bennett, who became Israel's prime minister at the head of a coalition of eight diverse parties, ranging from Jewish ultranationalists to a small Islamist party.

Pandemic points to need to work together as Italy hosts G-20

MATERA, ITALY (AP): With the pandemic providing painful lessons on how interconnected the world is, ministers from nations accounting for more than half the world's population were meeting in Italy on Tuesday to explore how to better cooperate, including on vaccines and climate change efforts.

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio cited both as areas where it's imperative that countries pull together. He opened the appointment, attended by foreign ministers and development ministers from the Group of 20. Together the G-20 nations account for some 80% of the world's GDP.

Some ministers were participating remotely because of COVID-19 travel concerns, including from China, Russia and Brazil.

"In an interconnected world, multilateralism and international cooperation are the only effective instruments in facing global challenges," Di Maio said. "We have had an example of that with the vaccines."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken built on Di Maio's premise in his opening remarks.

"To bring the pandemic to an end, we must get more vaccine to more places," Blinken said. "Multilateral cooperation will be key to stop this global health crisis."

Blinken took the occasion to tout U.S. contributions to COVAX, the U.N.-backed program to get vaccines to needy nations, which include around 500 million Pfizer doses and 80 million other doses.

While some wealthier countries are struggling to convince ever more segments of their populations to be vac-

nated against the illness that has claimed nearly 4 million lives worldwide in confirmed death tallies, poorer nations, especially in Africa, are desperate to receive vaccine supplies, with only a tiny fraction of their people having access so far to the injections.

Scientists and many political leaders have warned that the pandemic can't be effectively brought under control unless all nations have substantial vaccination rates.

One of the sessions on Tuesday focuses on Africa.

For Di Maio, "2021 is a crucial year to relaunch international cooperation," on climate change. "We have occasions we cannot lose to implement the Paris accords."

The decision earlier this year by U.S. President Joe Biden's administration to return to the climate change fight and help lead it has heartened advocates pressing for urgent tackling of climate change threats. Last year, under the then Trump administration, the United States became the only country to leave the 2015 agreement.

The G-20 ministers will also discuss sustainable development and trade.

Italy hopes the meeting will help promote more sustainable and resilient recovery as the world emerges from the global COVID-19 crisis.

Reflecting that, for the first time since 1999, when the grouping was formed, development ministers were invited by Italy to join ministers of foreign affairs in a joint session.

The southern Italian city chosen to the meeting could be an inspiring symbol for development.

South African court orders ex-president to jail for contempt

JOHANNESBURG (AP): South Africa's former President Jacob Zuma has been found guilty of contempt of court and sentenced to 15 months in prison for defying a court order to appear before an inquiry probing wide-ranging allegations of corruption during his tenure from 2009 to 2018.

Zuma was not in court for the ruling on Tuesday and has been ordered to hand himself over within five days to a police station in his hometown of Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal province or in Johannesburg.

If Zuma fails to turn himself in within five days South Africa's minister of police and the police commissioner have been ordered to take him into custody within three days.

This is the first time in South Africa's history that a former president has been sentenced to prison.

The country's apex court, the Constitutional Court, ruled that Zuma defied an order by the country's highest court by refusing to cooperate with the commission of inquiry, which is chaired



by deputy chief justice Raymond Zondo.

"The Constitutional Court holds that there can be no doubt that Mr. Zuma is in contempt of court. Mr. Zuma was served with the order and it is impossible to conclude anything other than that he was unequivocally aware of what it required of him," said acting chief justice SisiKhampepe.

She added that in determining the jail sentence for Zuma, the court found it impossible to conclude that he would comply with any other order.

"Mr. Zuma has repeatedly reiterated that he would rather be imprisoned than to cooperate with the commission or comply with the order made," said Kham-

pepe.

Zuma has previously expressed his unwillingness to appear before the commission, which has so far heard evidence directly implicating Zuma in wrongdoing.

In a previous 21-page letter written to Chief Justice MogoengMogoeng, which the court has described as "scandalous," Zuma claimed that he was ready to be sent to prison.

In his letter which he released to the public, Zuma claimed that the commission chairman, Zondo, was biased against him and that evidence presented against him was politically motivated.

Some former Cabinet ministers, high-ranking government officials and executives of state-

owned enterprises are among witnesses who have implicated Zuma in corruption.

Several have testified that while president Zuma allowed members of the controversial Gupta family to influence his appointment of Cabinet ministers and lucrative contracts at state-owned companies.

Zuma is also facing additional legal woes as he is standing trial to face charges related to bribes that he allegedly received during South Africa's 1999 arms procurement deal.

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges and his lawyers have applied for the lead prosecutor in his case to step down because of alleged bias against Zuma.



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COOL GIRL! The actress, Lily-Rose Depp takes a call while strolling in the city in a blouse, daisy duke shorts and western boots in NYC.

Jacobs' post-pandemic runway: Parading puffers in patterns

NEW YORK (AP): Theaters are dusting off the cobwebs and coming to life, the streets of midtown Manhattan are bustling, Bruce Springsteen is back on Broadway. And on Monday, the fashion world gathered to join another New York fixture, designer Marc Jacobs, and celebrate a return to live runway shows. "Through the physicality of this shared experience, I hope to offer a moment of inspiration, curiosity, wonder and possibility," Jacobs wrote in the program notes for his fall collection, an eye-popping parade of op-art-inspired puffers and glistening space-age sequins, held under the grand arches of the main branch of the New York Public Library.

Jacobs, whose inventive shows usually close out New York Fashion Week with a jolt of creative energy, chose not to wait for the next edition, which returns in September; he decided to launch this, his first collection after skipping two seasons during the pandemic, in the heat of a Manhattan summer. On a sweltering evening, he gave fans and passers-by a treat: The show was simultaneously projected onto the facade of Bergdorf Goodman, the luxury department store about 15 blocks up Fifth Avenue, where the collection will be sold exclusively.

The clothes themselves were an enticing mix of puffer jackers and coats in undulating stripes of black and



white, some swishing along the floor like glamorous ballgowns on a ski slope — and huge, bright round sequins emblazoned on long dresses and skirts, sometimes with pants underneath. It felt like winter wonderland meets glitzy red carpet, with a refueling stop in another galaxy.

The models, who included Gigi Hadid and Kaia Gerber, often wore knit hoods or caps with brims, with braids coming out the back. And they wore chunky black platform shoes, one of which fell off its owner early in the show. (A resourceful model finally gave it a healthy kick to the side of the runway.)

The puffer theme got wildly inventive, with puffer

collars to wrap around the neck (and reach up to the ear), or puffer stoles to wrap around the shoulders. The show closed with a series of brightly colored garments in orange, pink, purple or sunshine yellow. One could imagine they were a nod to the designer's mood: His program notes began with the word "Happiness."

"On the journey back to doing what we love most, in the wake of immeasurable loss, loneliness, fear, anxiety and uncertainty, I am reminded of why creativity is so vital to our existence, to life," Jacobs wrote.

He explained that his company's decision to skip the pandemic seasons, when many labels featured digital presentations, "allowed us to

slow down, reflect, ruminate, reevaluate, grieve and take a thorough inventory of what works, what doesn't work, what we love, what we are willing to let go of and what has value, importance and meaning."

What does work, Jacobs made clear, is in-person shows. "While the world continues to change with unimaginable speed, my love for fashion, the desire to create and share collections through this delivery system — the runway — endures," he wrote.

Some of the outfits were so unabashedly voluminous, they brushed against the feet of the spectators — a vital sign if any that this was real, and not a digital presentation.

Kristen Bell Admits She and Dax Shepard "Talk S--t About Each Other" at Therapy

Kristen Bell shared how she reacts when therapy sessions with husband Dax Shepard lead the couple to "talk s--t about each other."

Kristen Bell and Dax Shepard are known for being refreshingly honest about their relationship, and it appears they have no plans to cut back on the candor.

The 40-year-old When in Rome actress discussed her marriage during a chat with guest host Chelsea Handler on The Ellen DeGeneres that airs on Tuesday, June 29. As seen in preview footage, Chelsea pointed out that Kristen has been open about going to therapy with her husband, and the comedian asked how the two balance their careers with their personal time.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, we were at each other's throats, and then all the doors locked in our house, like we had to stay inside, and we were like, 'Woof, we need to get a handle on the annoyances,'" the Gossip Girl star explained.

Kristen, who shares Lincoln, 8, and Delta, 6, with her husband of seven years, added that their therapist, Har-

ry, suggested the two of them see him in solo sessions. This has given the duo a chance to "brush up on your toolbox" and work through things that annoy them about the other person.

"He suggested we go to therapy separately, kinda so that we could talk s--t about each other," she said, which earned laughter from the audience. "And we did, and it's been great. What we've been doing the last couple months is, every two weeks or so, I'll see Harry via Zoom and complain about Dax, and then he'll give me all the reasons why I'm wrong, and then Dax will do the same."

Kristen continued, "And then, by the time we meet up in the evening, we love each other again because our toolboxes are bigger."



This isn't the first time the couple has been open about their bumps in the road. After a fan posted earlier this year that it appears they "can't f--king stand each other," Kristen replied by saying the idea of a "perfect match" is a myth but that they completely "adore" each other.

Ewan McGregor, Mary Elizabeth Winstead welcome first child

LOS ANGELES, JUN 29

(PTI): Actors Ewan McGregor and Mary Elizabeth Winstead have become parents to their first child, a baby boy.

McGregor's eldest child, Clara McGregor, 25, confirmed the birth of her baby brother in an Instagram post on Sunday.

"Welcome to the world little brother... congratulations to my Dad & Mary - this is the greatest gift," Clara wrote alongside two photos with the newborn.

She did not reveal date of the birth of the little one.

Winstead, 36, did not publicly announce her pregnancy and was not photographed with her baby bump.

McGregor, 50, and Winstead met on the



set of the TV series " Fargo " in late 2016 and have been in a relationship since 2017. They went on to costar in the 2020 film " Birds of Prey ".

McGregor also has two other children, Jamyan, 20, and Anouk, 10, from his previous marriage to production designer Eve Mavrakis, whom he divorced after 22 years of marriage.

Winstead was married to filmmaker Riley Stearns for seven years.

ARIES:

The past few weeks have felt like being on board an emotional rollercoaster, and you're just about getting a chance to sit down and process all the changes. Your logical mind will keep giving you grief about not doing enough or being enough. Rise above this nagging voice in your head as you give yourself the permission to breathe, stretch and laze in the sun. Nothing will prove to be more therapeutic than spending quality time with yourself today.

TAURUS:

There is an air of dejection around you today, and it doesn't help that those around you aren't extending their love and support in the way you'd like them to. Could it be that they are dealing with their own trials and tribulations? Could it be that the burden on their shoulders at this time is simply too heavy to bear? Take a moment. Step back and assess your expectations. Letting them go for now may be the best way forward, Taurus.

GEMINI:

Remember when doubting yourself was a lifestyle? Remember when you constantly needed external validation to know that you were offering something worthwhile? Look at where you are now, Gemini. Take a moment to marvel at all the ways in which you have grown. That glorious, crystal-studded crown you're wearing is proof of what a long way you have come, beautiful. So, as and when the demons of doubt rear their ugly heads today, walk them to the exit door, and let them know that they have been banished forever.

CANCER:

It's finally Cancer season, y'all! Yes, that means emotions are at an all-time high, and that crying is the most acceptable form of therapy there is. So, allow yourself to feel all the feels. To shed the tears you need to even if it sometimes seems unnecessary. Even in your worst moments, however, keep in mind that everything is ultimately taking place for your highest good and the change that you are manifesting is unfolding right here and right now.

LEO:

While we're all given the power of free will, not all of us exercise it in the way that we are meant to. Could this be true for where you are, Leo? Do you sometimes feel like things are simply not in your control here? While the external circumstances cannot be fixed, your response certainly can. So, reclaim the reins, honey, and repeat the affirmation, "I am the charioteer of my life."

VIRGO:

Self-care Saturday is not a day, it's a lifestyle, Virgo. A lifestyle that involves loving and nurturing yourself in the way that you are meant to. A lifestyle that involves putting yourself above everybody else. So, draw boundaries wherever necessary and be mindful of what is worth your time and what isn't. As such, you may also find yourself drawn towards the sensual arts this week, finding new ways to activate the portal of pleasure. The gods and goddesses of love are with you, helping you take your relationship to the next level in the days to come.

LIBRA:

Libra, you sometimes tend to overestimate yourself, and believe that you can do it all. As a result, you end up taking on more work than you are capable of handling on your own. Could this be true for where you are? Has that to-do list of yours become a cause of worry, anxiety, and concern? Take a moment. Breathe. Get realistic with yourself about what you can and cannot do. This will help you channelise your energy in the right manner, and pour yourself into the projects that will foster growth.

SCORPIO:

Isn't it funny how we're taught about science but never about the soul? Isn't it funny how we're told to create a life that looks good on the outside but never asked to manicure our inner lawns? As a deeply sensitive person, you possess the power to look beyond the maya, strip away the layers of conditioning, and uncover the jewels hidden within. Remember, the journey is from the self, through the self, to the self. Once you have understood this, you will have understood the essence of why you have been sent to the physical realm.

SAGITTARIUS:

Truth tea, Sagittarius: Adulthood is a constant and continuous process of clearing the trash can. So, pay attention to what you're being asked to let go of today. There are things and people and relationships that have lived on in your ecosystem way past their expiry date. When it comes to decision-making, take it slow. The information you need at this point is not necessarily available to you. Stepping back, however, will allow the

divine downloads to come through.

CAPRICORN:

Beating around the bush is never a good idea, Capricorn. This chapter of your life requires clear and honest communication. So, give yourself the permission to express your thoughts in a manner that seems authentic, minus the fear of being judged. If that feeling of melancholy continues to linger, take a moment to examine what you are giving your time and energy to. If you've been too caught up with the material, make time to look within and engage in activities that nurture your soul.

AQUARIUS:

You're in a good place, Aquarius. A place where you are watching your business grow and move to the next level. Mindful expansion is going to be a key theme in this next phase. So, focus on building the right team as this will help you go places. Freelancers are being encouraged to take the collaborative route. Synchronizing your forces with those who play a little differently than you are used to is a good way to broaden your horizon.

PISCES:

There are all kinds of people in the world, Pisces, and not everybody keeps things black and white the way you do. So, don't make the mistake of trusting others blindly or giving them the benefit of the doubt where there is clearly something fishy going on. Trust your intuition. Draw your boundaries. Safeguard your assets. It's a good idea to remain in self-reservation mode until clarity prevails.