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SummitTIMES

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With two more fatalities, Sikkim's COVID death toll climbs to 35

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 SEPT:**

The COVID-related death toll in Sikkim reached 35 today with reports of two more COVID-19 positive patients passing away on Monday. A 73-year-old female from Mamring, South District, passed away late last night and a 47-year-old male from Namchi-Singhithang, South District, this afternoon.

In the daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam G Bhutia, informed that the 73-year-old, who had tested positive on rapid antigen testing at Namchi was admitted to STNM Hospital on the morning of 27 September.

He added she was admitted in the ICU and passed away due to cardiac failure at 9:41 PM the same night. He informed that the patient had the co-morbid ailment of asthma.

The 47-year-old man from Namchi-Singhithang passed away around 2:30 PM Monday afternoon due to cardio-respiratory arrest. He informed that the patient had the co-morbid condition of the acute respiratory infection.

In the meantime, the State's tally of confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 2,815 on Monday with the detection of 25 fresh cases.

There are now 698 actives cases of novel coronavirus in the State.

Of the new cases, 20 have been reported from East District and five from South Sikkim.

On the other hand, 18 more patients were discharged from isolation facilities on Sunday, taking the total number of people discharged to 2,083.

There are also eight COVID patients currently admitted in the ICU ward at STNM Hospital.

On Sunday, a total of 17 cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 111 samples at the VRD Lab in STNM hospital, while three cases were found in TrueNat testing of 15 samples. Similarly, five more patients were reported positive for COVID-19 in the rapid antigen testing of 31 samples.

While giving the break-up of new cases found in RT-PCR testing, Mr Bhutia informed one person from near STNM hospital on Ranka Road in Sichey, one from Sisa Golai, two from the containment zone in Daragaon Tadong, one from the containment zone in Sichey, one health worker from quarantine centre of health workers at Yatri Niwas, one from near the Parking area in Arithang, one from near Police Headquarters in Church Road area, one from above the driving institute in Upper Sichey and three from Barpibal in Sichey tested positive.

He added that four persons from Namchi in South District and one from Duga in East District were found COVID positive in RT-PCR testing as well.

One person from the containment zone in Shyari, one from 6th Mile Tadong and one from the containment zone at Pani House area were found positive in TrueNat testing.

Likewise, a person from Sombaria Bazaar and one from Upper Majhigaon in Jorethang, one from near ICDS Centre at Sumin Mangthang and two from Rhenock Bazaar tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing.

Social distancing a challenge at STNM Flu Clinic VISIT HOSPITAL ONLY IF SYMPTOMATIC, URGES MEDICAL SUPDT

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT:

As COVID numbers continue to go up in the state, the only COVID hospital of Sikkim, STNM Hospital is also seeing an increased footfall in the Flu Clinic which is the first stop for patients who want to get tested for the virus. With the rise in COVID cases, a lot of primary contacts are visiting the Flu Clinic which has increased the load on the health staff there.

According to sources, the Flu Clinic is receiving around 80 patients per day and this has made social distancing extremely difficult.

When this Summit Times correspondent reached STNM Hospital today, there was a patient who had tested positive via Rapid Antigen Testing at CRH Tadong following which he had been sent to STNM Hospital. This person was waiting in line at the Flu Clinic along with other patients.

Medical Superintendent, STNM

Hospital, Dr CS Sharma, said that the hospital has been trying to implement social distancing rules but there is still a lack of awareness among the public and convincing people is difficult.

"This morning also we had made arrangements at the Flu Clinic. But people do not follow the rules and it is difficult for us to enforce them if people are resistant. There is still need for more awareness. People who are asymptomatic should not come to get tested but some still do. They are only risking exposure to the virus by doing so. They should isolate themselves at home," he stated.

When asked about the patient who had tested positive via Rapid Antigen Testing at CRH Tadong and was at the Flu Clinic today, Dr Sharma said that the person may have been sent to STNM Hospital after testing positive via RAT but he should not have gone to the Flu Clinic.

"If you have tested positive via RAT, you are COVID positive. You do not need



an RTPCR test to confirm it again," he said.

Since STNM Hospital is the only dedicated COVID hospital, patients who test positive at CRH Tadong are referred to STNM Hospital for treatment. However, they do not need to go to the Flu Clinic and if they are asymptomatic they do not need to even go to the hospital. It is advised that

they isolate themselves at home if they are asymptomatic. Only symptomatic patients are admitted in the hospital.

Dr Sharma also informed that so far, around 40 health workers have tested positive for COVID-19 and so the hospital is short on staff as well.

He urged people to not panic and isolate at home if they are asymptomatic for the their own safety.

COVID tally crosses 60 lakh; 1,039 more deaths

NEW DELHI, SEPT 28 [PTI]:

India's coronavirus tally galloped past 60 lakh on Monday with 82,170 new cases, while the number of recoveries surged to 50.17 lakh after 74,893 more people recuperated, the Health Ministry said.

The death toll from the pathogen climbed to 95,542 with 1,039 more deaths. There are 9,62,640 active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), comprising 15.85% of the caseload, according to the ministry data.

The total novel coronavirus cases mounted to 60,74,702, while 50,16,520 people have recuperated, taking the recovery rate to 82.58%. The case fatality rate declined to 1.57%, it said.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, 7.20-crore samples have been tested so far, with 7.09-lakh tests being conducted on Sunday.

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 15.

It took 110 days for the COVID-19 cases in the country to reach a lakh mark, while it had taken 59 days more to go past the 10-lakh post. The cases jumped from 10 lakh to 20 lakh in 21 days, then it took 16 more days to race past 30 lakh, 13 days more to cross the 40-lakh mark, 11 days to go past 50 lakh and 12 days to cross 60 lakh.

Of the 1,039 new deaths, 380 were in Maharashtra, 80 in Tamil Nadu, 79 in Karnataka, 77 in Uttar Pradesh, 60 in West Bengal and 50 in Punjab.

Forty-five more people succumbed to the disease in Andhra Pradesh, followed by 42 in Delhi, 31 in Chhattisgarh, 26 in Madhya Pradesh and 21 in Kerala. There were 17 more fatalities in Assam, 16 in Haryana, 15 in Rajasthan, 14 in Odisha and 13 in Puducherry.



Eleven people died from the pathogen in Himachal Pradesh, followed by 10 each in Gujarat and Goa, nine in Jharkhand, eight in Uttarakhand and seven each in Jammu and Kashmir, and Telangana.

Tripura registered three more fatalities, while two more persons each died in Sikkim, Chandigarh and Bihar, and one each in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakdakh.

Of the total 95,542 deaths, Maharashtra reported the

maximum of 35,571 fatalities, followed by 9,313 in Tamil Nadu, 8,582 in Karnataka, 5,708 in Andhra Pradesh, 5,594 in Uttar Pradesh, 5,235 in Delhi and 4,781 in West Bengal.

As many as 3,416 people died from the virus in Gujarat, followed by 3,238 in Punjab, 2,207 in Madhya Pradesh, 1,441 in Rajasthan, 1,307 in Haryana and 1,132 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Telangana recorded 1,107

deaths so far, while 888 people died in Bihar, 848 in Chhattisgarh, 797 in Odisha, 679 in Jharkhand, 677 in Kerala, 655 in Assam and 574 in Uttarakhand.

Puducherry registered 513 fatalities, followed by 401 in Goa, 273 in Tripura, 175 in Himachal Pradesh and 147 in Chandigarh.

Sixty-four people have died in Manipur, 58 in Ladakh, 53 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 43 in Meghalaya, 33 in Sikkim, 16 in Nagaland, 14 in Arunachal Pradesh and two in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

The ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures was subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Turncoats have a field day in poll-bound Bihar

PATNA, SEP 28 (PTI): It was "aayaram gayaram" politics in Bihar on Monday when the ruling JD(U) as well as the opposition RJD claimed to have scored brownie points with the induction of turncoats into their respective folds.

Rashtriya Janata Dal dealt a body blow to its renegade alliance partner Rashtriya Lok Samata Party when the latter's state unit chief Bhudeo Chaudhary joined Lalu Prasads party.

Prasads younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav inducted Chaudhary minutes after RLSP founding chief Upendra Kushwaha returned from the national capital where he is believed to have held parleys with top leaders of the BJP to facilitate his return to the NDA.

Of late, Kushwaha had begun to strike notes of dissent and demanding a change in leadership of the Grand Alliance, holding that

Yadav, a former Deputy Chief Minister who is 31 years of age, was no match to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, a veteran who heads the JD(U) and is aiming at his fourth consecutive term in office.

Earlier, the RJD also inducted Lovely Anand, a former MP herself who is better known as the wife of Anand Mohan, a dreaded musclemans of the 1990s who is serving life sentence for the murder of an IAS officer.

Anand reached Tejashwi Yadav's residence along with her son Chetan Anand, dropping ample hints that the son was being groomed to take over the political mantle from their parents.

"We have reposed trust in the RJD because it is led by Tejashwi Yadav who represents the younger generation. Also, I will continue to fight for justice for my father who has been wrongly framed. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

has been paying lip service, expressing sympathy for Anand Mohan but doing little to facilitate his release", Anand said.

Anand Mohan has been accused of instigating a mob, in Muzaffarpur district, in the early 1990s which lynched G Krishnaiah, who was then the District Magistrate of Gopalganj.

A self-styled Robinhood of Mithilanchal region, Anand Mohan had come to Muzaffarpur to attend the funeral of Chhotan Shukla, another dreaded gangster with political clout, whose broad daylight murder had triggered angry outbursts from his community.

On the other hand, the JD(U) welcomed into its fold Mohd Firoz Hussain, a 40 years old aspiring politician who made his electoral debut as an RJD candidate from Dehri assembly segment last year but lost to the BJP rival.

RUDRA KAUSHIK

GYALSHING, 28 SEPT:

The dwindling prices of large cardamom this year have disappointed farmers from West Sikkim involved in cardamom farming. A maund (40 kg) of the cash crop is currently fetching Rs.16,000 to Rs.17,000, an all-time low according to the farmers.

Large cardamom is a major cash crop of the State and many farmers find it lucrative since it ensures good returns and the demand for large cardamom in the national and international market is consistently high.

"We used to get Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 70,000 for 40 kg of cardamom each year but fall in prices since 2018 has compelled farmers to opt for other crops. Fall in prices of large cardamom each year is discouraging farmers. We are concerned



that Sikkim will lose its unique identity as a major cardamom producing State in the country very soon," the farmers said.

On the sudden dip in cardamom prices this year, some farmers of West Sikkim expressed that the crop failed to get the market this year as export has been disrupted due

to the Covid-19 crisis worldwide. They added that lack of demand and an effective corridor for exporting cardamom to national and international markets owing to pandemic-induced lockdowns could have led to the sudden fall in cardamom prices.

The farmers hope that the crop will get its

due value once the Covid-19 crisis gets over and markets open for larger trade activities.

Most of the farmers have collected their harvest this year and are preparing to sell their produce.

A farmer said he had expected to fetch a good return from cardamom farming that

would have helped him to overcome the financial constraints that he was facing. He added that he had depended upon cardamom cultivation as he was not able to actively take part in other livelihood based activities this year due to the pandemic.

"The decrease in prices has disappointed farmers who have invested in cardamom farming hoping for a healthy return," a cultivator from HeeGaon said.

Another farmer shared that he gave up cardamom farming two years ago as it was becoming less profitable due to fluctuating prices.

The farmers of West Sikkim have appealed to the State government to come to their aid. They rued that they will suffer a huge loss if the price of cardamom does not improve.

Webinar deliberates Poshan Maah priorities for East district

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, SEPT 28:

As part of the ongoing 'Poshan Maah', a webinar on Digital Poshan Panchayat was held under Poshan Abhiyaan, East District, today, a press release informs.

The main agenda of the webinar was the identification and management of children with Severe Acute Malnutrition and Moderate Acute Malnutrition, developing of nutria-garden across all Aaganwadi Centres and Schools and at community level and the role of Ayush in



strengthening immunity against illness.

The webinar was attended by Councillors, Zilla and Ward Panchayat members from all GPUs

under East District along with resource persons from Health Department, AYUSH and Horticulture Department.

The programme

was also participated in by Deputy Director, Social Justice and Welfare Department, GM Subba, who is also the State Nodal

Officer for Poshan Abhiyaan.

A detailed powerpoint presentation was made by MO/ IC Rhenock CHC Dr Raju Singh on the identification and management of SAM and MAM children.

The State Nodal Officer, in his address, talked about the role of Panchayats in providing awareness at the GPU level and the importance of identifying SAM/ MAM children in their respective areas.

An open discussion was also held where participants shared ideas and information with the resource persons.

Diverse potential of North East to propel 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' by being 'Engines of Growth', opine Experts

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT (PIB): The diverse potential of North East to propel 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' by being the 'Engines of Growth', experts opined in a Webinar organised by Press Information Bureau, Guwahati on the topic today. Experts from Industry, Government sector along with academicians deliberated and discussed about the potential of North East from multi-sectoral and policy perspective.

Mentioning about examples of North East and its challenges, Regional Director, LR Sailo, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Aizawl said that Eco-tourism, Medical tourism, adventure tourism has provided the core competence of North East from the perspective of growth and development. Shri Sailo said that Sports and Power Sector has tremendous potential in North East region. He said that the development of North East has to be seen from multi-dimension such as better connectivity via. road, rail, telecom, power and waterways sectors. He said that the initiatives of the Central Government by various programmes and policies are a constant endeavour for the development and growth of the region. This has ushered a huge transformational change in the ease of living and accessibility of services to individuals.

Dept of Geography, Prof Anup Saikia, Gauhati University said that Government's initiatives for Swachh Bharat does not restrict to health and hygiene. He said that creating environment conscious individual about the role of Swachh environment in healthy development of individual is quintessential aspect of the Swachh Bharat initiative.

Advocate, Sanyuk Banerjee, Purbo Bardhamaan said that Environment and Swachh has to be in tandem with the Sustainable Environmental Goals. He said that environment is pivotal aspect in attaining Mahatma Gandhi's vision of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the whole world constitutes a family. He said that AatmaNirbhar Bharat is India which is AatmaNirbhar in being environment friendly and being aware of the efficacy of environment and its role.

Professor of Economics, Prof (Dr) Kishor Goswami, Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur delved into the potential of North East from the perspective of its AatmaNirbhar supply chain management of diverse fruits, agriculture and agro-industry, especially the Small and Medium Enterprises of the region. He said that the silk and textile of the region are a competitive advantage in the global market arena. Prof Goswami said

that Leveraging diverse local talent and Human Resources of the region would provide the WIN-WIN scenario in future for emerging leadership role in the world, for not only North East but also the entire country.

Senior officers of PIB Kohima, Assistant Director, Shri Sonikumar were present in webinar. Deputy Director, Pallav Chakravorty, PIB welcomed the experts as the webinar delved into details on topics such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, Poshan Abhiyaan, Atmanirbhar Bharat and the essential awareness about 'Destination North East' such as Emerging Delightful Tourists destinations, Centres of World Tourism as emphasised by Union Home Minister, Amit Shah and Union Minister of State (I/C) for the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space, Dr Jitendra Singh.

The entire webinar was planned and coordinated by Joint Director (M&C), Samrat Bandyopadhyay, PIB, Guwahati. Along with students, eminent journalists and other government senior officials from Doordarshan Guwahati, Regional Outreach Bureau, Guwahati, All India Radio Guwahati were also present on the occasion.

Yangang bags most innovative tourism award

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT (IPR):

In one of the most prestigious and only region-based "Himalayan Hospitality & Tourism Awards" of the country endorsed by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (Kolkata office), Yangang in South Sikkim has been named as the most innovative tourism product of the year with the introduction of number of iconic projects coming up in the area and the start of a unique marketing campaign. Celebrating the World Tourism Day,



this event was held in the luxurious Mayfair Tea Resort, New Chumta, Siliguri on 27 Sept, 2020. The event was

organized by Himalayan Hospitality and Tourism Development Network (HHTDN) and supported by

ACT, Robin Basnet, Entrepreneur and Tourism Activist from Yangang and Deputy Secretary/Protocol

Officer under Home Department, Sharmista Pradhan, Government of Sikkim, Siliguri received this award on behalf of Sikkim in the presence of honourable Tourism Minister of West Bengal, Gautam Deb and Regional Director of Tourism, Government of India, Sagnik Choudhury.

In his few words Robin introduced Yangang as the new tourism destination and appealed the fraternity to work together to develop the region in a sustainable way.

Namcheybong MLA visits Assam Lingzey

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT:

Area MLA-cum-Advisor (Excise), Em Prasad Sharma visited Assam Lingzey to monitor the status of ongoing works in his constituency on Saturday, a press release informs.

He visited pig breeding farm at Pastenga, folk healing centre site at Nupgaon-Gaucharan, Gaucharan JHS to inspect the landslide near the School, Gairigaon-Rajakharka PMGSY Road, Mulaso PMGSY Road, and inspected the newly sanctioned connecting road to Khatek Pema Choling Gumpa from Floriculture Centre at Zero Point.

He earlier discussed various aspects of the under construction folk healing centre so that the work progresses fully for the benefit of the public of Assam Lingzey and the whole of Namcheybong Constituency.

He was accompanied by Chairman (Excise), Panchayats, local gentry and officials from the line departments.



COVID awareness by Young Mind Organization

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT:

Members of Young Mind Organization organized a short program on Covid-19 and distributed masks at Padamchey Secondary School under Rhenock Constituency, East Sikkim today, a press release informs.

This organisation is working from the

early phase of lockdown period, making people aware about the virus, the release mentions.

Members of the organisation also interacted with the students and teachers, and appealed to them to compulsorily wear face masks and follow social distancing norms. The members highlighted the process of wearing masks during the program.



Never lost self-belief even after the worst 20 balls I ever played: Tewatia

SHARJAH, SEP 28 (PTI):

Rahul Tewatia, who became an overnight star by smashing West Indian pacer Sheldon Cottrell for five sixes in an over, says his self-belief did not waver despite the "worst 20 balls" he ever played early in his roller-coaster knock.

His sensational effort helped Rajasthan Royals beat Kings XI Punjab in an incredible IPL match on Sunday night. Early on his his innings, he was struggling to put bat to ball.

"The dugout knows I can hit the ball long. I knew I had to believe in myself. It was a matter

of one six," the 27-year-old Tewatia said after the Royals' 4-wicket win.

"Five (sixes) in the over, that is amazing. I tried to hit the leg-spinner, but unfortunately I couldn't. So I had to hit other bowlers."

He hit those big hits in the 18th over off Cottrell, four of them on the trot, to turn the match on its head after the Royals needed 51 runs from the last three overs.

Tewatia struggled to connect with the ball initially after he was sent at Steve Smith's fall ahead of the likes



of Robin Uthappa. However, with he wasting the deliveries at the crucial juncture, pressure was building on Sanju Samson.

Asked about it, the

player from Haryana said, "Now I am better. The worst 20 balls I have ever played. After then I began to hit so I kept going. I will never forget this knock."

BTS to release new album BE' in November

LOS ANGELES, SEP 28 (PTI): South Korean pop group BTS will be dropping a new album, titled BE', on November 20 this year.

The group's management agency, BigHit Entertainment, announced the album's release date on Twitter.

According to the announcement, BE' imparts a message of healing to the world by declaring, Even in the face of this new normality, our life goes on.

The release said that the new album "contains the most 'BTS-esque' music yet and has the direct involvement of the septet Jungkook, V, Jimin, RM, Jin, J-Hope, and Suga.



BTS, which stands for Beyond the Scene, released their first album of the year, Map of the Soul: 7, in February. The group recently

performed on America's Got Talent and is set to appear on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon from Monday to Friday.

The K-pop sensations have also planned online concert on October 10 and 11, in support of Map of the Soul: 7.



BUILDING FOR SALE

A two storey house building constructed on plot area 50×40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong, near Phong SS , South Sikkim is on sale. Price Negotiable. Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

Support sought to test efficacy of Ayurveda Raksha Kits

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT: RARI, Gangtok, a peripheral Institute of Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences [CCRAS] under the Ministry of AYUSH is conducting a prosperity open Label Controlled International study on the effect of Ayurveda Intervention [Ayurveda Raksha Kit] as a prophylactic measure in the pandemic of COVID-19 under Scheduled Caste Sub Plan Programme, a press

release informs.

Under this programme, Information Education & Communication (IEC) and COVID-19 related safety kits recommended by the Ministry of AYUSH, are being distributed to healthy adults above 18 years of age with participants drawn from Scheduled Caste dominated areas where at least one confirmed case of COVID-19 has been detected in Gangtok.

AYUSH has requested

people of Gangtok to actively participate and coordinate in the programme and cooperate in spreading awareness as Self Help Groups/ NGOs/ Organizations/ Welfare Associations working in Gangtok.

The programme has been underway since 15 Sept and is scheduled to continue for four months.

The Ayurveda Raksha Kit consists of Chyawanprash, Ayush Kwath, Samshamani/ Guduchi Vati, and Anu Taila.

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 SEPT:

National Service Scheme Cell of Sports & Youth Affairs Department has launched the 'Spit Free Campaign' under Fit India Movement in the State, on 24 September and will continue till 02

October, a press release informs.

An NSS press release informs that an active team of staff, programme coordinators, programme officers and volunteers of NSS led by the State NSS Officer has started the campaign through different means

of creating awareness among the masses about the harmful effects of spitting with regard to COVID-19.

The release states that the coronavirus can survive in snow and freezing temperatures according to the World Health Organization

so an infected wad of spit would at least theoretically leave a lasting risk of infection on outdoor surfaces.

"To make the people aware about the harmful effects of spitting, the NSS team has made awareness videos,

posters and also created short skits under the #spitfreecampaign. So, we would like to appeal to all the people to join us in making this campaign a success and help us in making our state free from unnecessarily transmitting this deadly virus," the release adds.

Wawrinka routs Murray in Slam champ matchup at French Open

PARIS, SEP 28 (AP): That Andy Murray and Stan Wawrinka were back together on Court Philippe Chatrier, all these years and operations later, was something of an accomplishment not to mention a rare first-round matchup between past Grand Slam champions.

Only one, Wawrinka, played like it.

Having no trouble smacking his one-handed backhand and other strokes through the thick air as the fall-time French Open got going Sunday, the barrel-chested Wawrinka needed just 97 minutes to overwhelm Murray 6-1, 6-3, 6-2.

The six games collected by Murray equaled the fewest he has managed in any of his 237 career Grand Slam matches; that also happened in a loss at Roland Garros in 2014 against 12-time champion Rafael Nadal.

I'll need to have a long, hard think, said Murray, ranked 111th as he works his way back from two hip surgeries, and try and understand what happened.

One big problem: He didn't serve well, putting only 36% of his first serves in play.

Another: He didn't return particularly well

either and won only 25% of points in Wawrinka's service games.

Murray said those things weren't related to his artificial hip.

It's going to be difficult for me to play the same level as I did before. I mean, I'm 33 now and I was ranked No. 1 in the world, so it's difficult with all the issues that I have had, Murray said.

But, yeah, I'll keep going. Let's see what the next few months holds, and I reckon I won't play a match like that between now and the end of the year.

This was the first time two men with Grand Slam titles Murray and Wawrinka each own three such trophies played each other in the first round at Roland Garros since Yevgeny Kafelnikov against Michael Chang in 1999, and at any major tournament since Novak Djokovic faced Juan Carlos Ferrero at Wimbledon in 2012.

Murray and Wawrinka met in the 2017 semifinals in Paris and neither has been quite the same since.

Many things happened to him, said the 35-year-old Wawrinka, who is seeded 16th.

To me, also.

But 2015 French Open champion Wawrinka's

road back from two procedures on his knee has been less arduous than Murray's journey.

And Wawrinka's path in Paris continues for at least another match.

VENUS DONE FOR 2020

Venus Williams finished 2020 with an 0-3 record in Grand Slam matches, adding a first-round exit at the French Open to those she had at the Australian Open and U.S. Open.

After her 6-4, 6-4 loss to Anna Karolina Schmiedlova in front of a handful of spectators at Court Simone Mathieu, the 40-year-old Williams said that, no, she would not play again this season but that, yes, she definitely will be back on tour in 2021.

It's really just about going back and reevaluating and moving on as quick as possible, Williams said.

It's been a very long year of quarantine. Now I'll get to rest. So I'm looking forward to that.

She is a seven-time major champion and was the 2002 runner-up at the French Open to her younger sister, Serena. But after a resurgent 2017 reaching two finals at Grand Slam tournaments and making it to the semifinals at another the

older Williams has not enjoyed much success at her sport's four most important events.

Dating to the start of 2018, she now has failed to get past the first round in seven of the past 11 Slams.

Schmiedlova plays U.S. Open runner-up Victoria Azarenka in the second round.

And what's next for Williams?

I'm going home from here. I'm done, she said. If there is somewhere to play, I won't be there.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

For Sebastian Korda, sports success is all in the family.

The 20-year-old American's father, Petr, won the 1998 Australian Open and was the runner-up at the 1992 French Open; his mother, Regina, reached the top 30 in the WTA rankings.

And his older sisters, 27-year-old Jessica and 22-year-old Nelly, both play professional golf and have won LPGA Tour titles.

He said he tries his hand at golf, and they occasionally pick up a tennis racket.

I mean, my only claim to fame is the only (golf) tournament I ever played, I won, and I beat my sisters, when I was like 11 years old, Korda said Sunday, so, yeah, they will never live that one down.

Fire at Fort William in Kolkata

KOLKATA, SEP 28 (PTI):

A fire broke out at a basement office in the Fort William, the Army's Eastern Command headquarters, on Monday, officials said.

The blaze, which was reported at 7.35 am, was brought under control at 11.15 am, a Fire Brigade

official said.

No one was reported to be injured or trapped, he said.

Four fire tenders doused the blaze at Fort William in the heart of Kolkata, he added.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, the official said.

20 new cases push COVID-19 tally of Andamans to 3,794

PORT BLAIR, SEP 28 (PTI):

The COVID-19 tally of Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 3,794 on Monday as 20 more people tested positive for the infection, a health official said.

One more patient succumbed to the infection, taking the Union territory's coronavirus death toll to 53, he said.

Six new patients have travel history, while 14 fresh infections were detected during contact

tracing, he said.

Two more people have recovered from the disease, the official said.

There are now 188 active coronavirus cases in the archipelago, while 3,553 people have been cured of the disease so far, he said.

The administration has so far sent 56,661 samples for COVID-19 tests, of which 25 reports are awaited while the remaining results have been received, the official added.

NIA to have new branches in Imphal, Chennai and Ranchi

NEW DELHI, SEP 28 (PTI):

The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved three new branches for the National Investigation Agency in Imphal, Chennai and Ranchi, an NIA official said on Monday.

The decision will help in responding quickly to any emergent situation in the concerned states by the premier anti-terror investigation agency, the official said.

It will also strengthen the NIA's capability

in investigation of terrorism-related cases and other national security-related matters, the official said.

Currently, the NIA has nine branches in Guwahati, Mumbai, Jammu, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Kochi, Lucknow, Raipur and Chandigarh besides specialised units at the headquarters in New Delhi, the official said.

The decision to open three new branches will

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Tripura reports 193 new COVID-19 cases, 3 more deaths



AGARTALA, SEP 28 (PTI):

Tripura on Monday reported 193 new cases of COVID-19, taking the state's tally to 24,921, a Health Department official said.

Three more people died in the state, following which the toll rose to 270, he said.

There are 5,692 active cases in the state at present.

So far, 18,936 people have recovered from the disease in the state.

Twenty-three patients have migrated to other states, the official said.

On Sunday, 567 patients were discharged from the GB Pant Hospital, the main referral hospital for COVID19 cases, after recovery, officials said.

So far, 3,82,592 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in Tripura, he added.



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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

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

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AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Disaster Management in Times of Climate Change

The two realities are best prepared for in tandem

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management are relatively recent responsibilities shouldered on two departments in Sikkim – Climate Change to the Department of Science & Technology and Disaster Management to Land Revenue Department. The recognition of the two challenges as issues requiring round the year and official attention is welcome and maybe it is even time that the two developments were placed under the charge of a single authority. This would be worthwhile because it is now clear that a majority of the natural disasters in the future will be Climate Change triggered. It would thus make sense to make Climate Change Mitigation a part of disaster management. This, more so in the case of hill states like Sikkim which already flirt too often with natural disasters, the intensity of which will grow as climate begins to change more dramatically.

The impact of climate change is becoming increasingly evident in the polar caps and in the Himalayas. High mountain communities have noted that glaciers are retreating at unprecedented rates. The planet's extremities are canaries in the coal mines - alerting the rest of the world to the extent of the changes that are coming and we, because Sikkim holds that canary, should start getting more involved in the initiatives being undertaken to save the environment because that really is the only cushion to minimise climate change risk.

At the policy level, Sikkim has launched several measures aimed at preserving its environment and understanding where it stands on the climate change risk graph. These, however, remain typically [for Sikkim] top-down affairs and have come as government initiatives thus far. One doesn't see any private participation in drawing focus to the larger picture. Most NGOs and social organisations are involved in almost exclusively local issues like garbage disposal and plantation works. While these are also necessary, Sikkim needs more who communicate in specifics and undertake studies on climate change impact in the State. There has unfortunately not been any concerted effort in Sikkim on this front thus far. While most people are familiar with climate change, very few are aware of how it is manifesting in Sikkim. The closest that the State has come to studying this is aspect is in the committee (or was it as commission?) set up to study the glaciers of Sikkim. It is not clear what came of this study although some glaciers on high melt have been kept under high watch now. Events like an occasional workshop-cum-orientation which announces that it will discuss climate change and disaster management do not really ever get into the specifics of climate change impact on Sikkim. Without making this change directly relevant to the people, efforts towards mitigation or management will remain funds-driven undertakings which, even if they are earnest, will remain superficial.

Climate Change manifests in both, subtle and overt ways, its slower encroachment not being noticed until it is too late and its more dramatic displays like GLOFs coming so suddenly and destructively that rescue and repairs distract from the causative factors. The dots are not connected and hence lessons are never learnt and preparation always compromised. Some years ago, an ambitious workshop-cum-orientation programme was held in Sikkim on "Climate Risk Management through Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation". Followed up in earnest, it could have marked a change in attitudes if it had only succeeded in acquainting stakeholders and line department officials to how climate change has already impacted Sikkim. Then, perhaps management and mitigation plans could have been more than the copy-paste speculative drafts that remain in circulation. The main problem in Sikkim's handling of climate change and even disaster management plans is that most people engaged for it work on generalised blueprints prepared elsewhere. Such blueprints should be seen as suggested frameworks to be filled out with Sikkim-specific data, traditional knowledge base and local know-how to deliver management and mitigation plans which actually deliver.

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When politicians use hate speech, political violence increases

JAMES PIAZZA

THECONVERSATION.COM

Politicians deepen existing divides when they use inflammatory language, such as hate speech, and this makes their societies more likely to experience political violence and terrorism. That's the conclusion from a study I recently did on the connection between political rhetoric and actual violence.

President Donald Trump is not the only world leader who is accused of publicly denigrating people based on their racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds.

In the 2019 parliamentary campaign in India, politicians from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party targeted Muslims as part of a widespread electoral strategy to galvanize Hindu nationalism. Similarly, in the 2019 Polish election, incumbent president Andrzej Duda made demonization of the LGBT community as well as foreigners the centerpiece of his successful reelection campaign.

Hate speech has also figured prominently in the recent rhetoric of political leaders in a variety of countries including Russia, Colombia, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine, the Philippines, Italy, Greece, Sri Lanka and Iraq.

These remarks are not just empty rhetoric or political theater. My research shows that when politicians use hate speech, domestic terrorism increases – in the U.S. and in other countries.

Indeed, since the beginning of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, domestic terrorism has more than doubled in the



United States. During the Obama administration's two terms, the U.S. averaged 26.6 incidents of domestic terrorism per year, according to the Global Terrorism Database. The most active year, by far, was 2016, which saw 67 attacks, more than double Obama's overall average. During the first two years of Donald Trump's presidency, 2017 and 2018 – the latest year for which data are available – domestic terror activity stayed that high, with 66 and 67 attacks, respectively.

POLARIZING POLITICS PAVES THE WAY

Hateful rhetoric targeting minority groups is an established technique to unify and mobilize political supporters and to delegitimize and dehumanize political opponents. Hate speech by politicians also serves to deepen political polarization.

More polarized societies are especially susceptible to bouts of political violence and terrorism

when politicians use hate speech. Examples include Weimar Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, which featured assassinations of leftist politicians and street brawling by Nazi partisans; Argentina in the 1970s during the so-called "Dirty War" in which government-backed right-wing death squads fought with left-wing political movements who themselves engaged in terrorism; and Turkey in the late 1970s early 1980s, when ultranationalist right-wing organizations and leftist opposition movements attacked each other.

When taken to an extreme, hateful rhetoric by political leaders can precipitate civil wars and genocides, as was the case in the 1990s in Rwanda, where Hutu extremists used anti-Tutsi radio broadcasts to foment widespread violence.

EXAMINING THE DATA

For my analysis, I used statistical data on domestic terrorist incidents from the Global Terrorism Database at the University of Maryland, and major party figures' use of hate speech in about 150 countries between 2000 and 2017 from the Varieties of Democracy project at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

I tried to determine the relationship between politicians using hate speech and the number of domestic terror attacks the country experienced the following year. Other elements can affect domestic terrorism, so I factored into my

analysis each country's political system, its gross domestic product per capita, its population size, its degree of ethnic and linguistic diversity and its level of media freedom.

To further distinguish political violence that was specifically produced by hate speech, I also factored in how much domestic terrorism the country had experienced in previous years and whether or not the country was experiencing a civil war.

VIOLENCE CLIMBS WHEN POLITICIANS SPEAK WITH HATE

What I found is that countries where politicians frequently weave hate speech into their political rhetoric subsequently experience more domestic terrorism. A lot more.

Countries such as Costa Rica or Finland, where the data show politicians "never" or "rarely" employed hate speech, experienced an average of 12.5 incidents of domestic terrorism between 2000 and 2017. Countries where politicians were found to "sometimes" use hate speech in their rhetoric, such as Belgium or Cyprus, experienced 28.9 attacks on average.

However, domestic terrorism was quite frequent in countries whether politicians used hate speech "often" or "extremely often." Such countries, including Iraq, Russia, Turkey and Sudan, experienced an average of 107.9 domestic terrorist attacks during that period.

What public figures say can bring people together, or divide them. How politicians talk affects how people behave – and the amount of violence their nations experience.

[the writer is Liberal Arts Professor of Political Science, Pennsylvania State University]

Canada's 'me first' COVID-19 vaccine strategy may come at the cost of global health

SRINIVAS MURTHY

THECONVERSATION.COM

When the throne speech was delivered on Sept. 23, Canada had already committed over \$1 billion in advance purchase agreements with five drug companies for a minimum of 154 million vaccine doses, if and when these candidate vaccines are proven effective and safe. Two days later, Canada inked another agreement with another company for 20 million more doses, hedging its bets on which of the vaccine contenders will be the first to arrive.

In doing so, Canada joins the premier league of the vaccine nationalists, a handful of rich countries that has pre-purchased (so far) more than half the world's expected short-term supply of vaccines.

It is understandable that countries want to ensure their ability to protect their citizens' health. But most of the world's population lives in countries without the same financial resources to play the global "me first" vaccine contest. Efforts to elevate national interests over collective global health result in slower progress and limited global capacity to pool resources, while placing the interests of wealthy countries over others, with devastating effects.

Recent modelling compared two scenarios for allocating the first three billion doses of a vaccine that is 80 per cent effective. The "unco-operative" scenario — in which two billion doses went straight to high-income countries, and the rest to everybody else — would lead to 28 per cent more deaths than a "co-operative" scenario, in which the three billion doses are distributed globally, proportional to population size.

WHAT CAN CANADA DO?

To begin, our pledge to the World Health Organization's COVAX Facility's Advanced Market Commitment (AMC), should, at a minimum, match what we invest in procuring vaccine for use within Canada. The facility manages the world's largest and most diverse portfolio of vaccine candidates. High-income countries like Canada that join COVAX have the option to purchase approved vaccines through the facility, even if they have already entered into bilateral purchase agreements with vaccine companies. On Sept. 25, Canada announced that it would do so, committing \$220 million to purchase 15 million more vaccine doses from the facility if and as they are approved.

Arguably of more importance, the facility's

AMC will provide vaccines to more than 90 eligible poorer countries unable to afford them on their own. The AMC needs to raise \$2 billion by December to do so, with the short-term goal of immunizing three per cent of all COVAX countries' populations. As of Sept. 21, only \$700 million had been promised. On Sept. 25, Canada committed \$220 million to the AMC, on top of \$25 million it had already given. This is welcome and commendable, but it is also inadequate.

The AMC's longer-term aim is to reach 20 per cent — a goal that will allow health-care workers and vulnerable populations in poor countries to receive vaccines — but this will depend entirely on how generously high-income countries, philanthropists and drug companies donate to the AMC.

Much more AMC funding is needed now, and going forward. We argue that Canada should commit a dollar-per-dollar amount to the AMC based on what it spends on its own vaccine purchases. This would mean providing up to \$1 billion more than its current AMC pledge, with funds flowing through our country's official development assistance (ODA) envelope. Canada has global obligations under international declarations to do so.

Canada says it is a voice for equity and human rights, at home and on the global stage. Actions speak louder than words. Canada in recent years has not been particularly generous in its overseas assistance. We ranked 17th out of 30 of the OECD club of donor nations in 2019, contributing just 0.27 per cent of our gross national income, with no foreseeable increase. A \$1 billion immediate AMC top-up would still not lift us to our long-pledged 0.7 per cent ODA target.

One billion dollars sounds like a lot of money. But it is only one-fifth the amount the federal government has borrowed weekly since March from the Bank of Canada (which it owns) to finance its pandemic assistance programs. Most less-endowed countries lack the same ability to borrow indefinitely from their own central banks and instead must turn to foreign creditors, with the debt-burden risks that entails. Or do without.

VACCINE MANUFACTURING

According to the CEO of the world's largest vaccine maker, the Serum Institute of India, even with expanded global capacity, it may take until 2024 before there are enough doses for the world's population. In addition to ensuring more

generous support for the COVAX Facility, Canada can also ramp up its own vaccine manufacturing capacity. It's already on a pathway to do so, with the government's \$126-million investment for a new facility in Montréal. The facility's goal is to produce two million vaccine doses per month for domestic use by summer 2021.

Why not double-down on this investment, and reserving half the output for AMC use to meet urgent global needs? This would signify to all Canadians the importance of a collective response to this pandemic.

PUBLIC HEALTH IS GLOBAL

As the world eagerly awaits arrival of an effective vaccine, it's important to remember three things. First, the longer-term effectiveness of any vaccine will remain uncertain for some time. Second, even if herd immunity to COVID-19 eventually develops, there will almost certainly be another novel infection in the not-so-distant future. Third, one way to deal with both future pandemic risks and the present short supply of COVID-19 vaccine is to embrace the range of non-pharmaceutical interventions that can flatten and even contain infectious curves. This is especially so in those countries that are home to the half of humanity who still lack access to essential health care.

All countries need stronger public health workforces: more nurses, testers, contact tracers and community health workers. All countries need universal health coverage, one of the Sustainable Development Goal targets to which the world (Canada included) committed to achieve by 2030. But it is the poorer half of humanity who needs this more urgently.

So, if Canada and other rich countries in their vaccine nationalism continue inadvertently to crowd out access for poor countries, they should compensate by massively underwriting the investments such countries need to provide the social protection, income support and food security basic to their citizens' health, and to strengthen their health systems with the public health capacity to suppress outbreaks as they arise.

It is in our own national interest to do so. As the Sept. 23 throne speech concluded:

"We cannot eliminate this pandemic in Canada unless we end it everywhere."

[the writer is Clinical associate professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia]

Shocking that, Centre said no data available on migrant labourers death: Mamata

KOLKATA, SEPT 28 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday criticised the Centre for not providing any data on the death of migrant labourers during the lockdown drawing sharp retort from the Congress and BJP which said that the state government should be transparent “before lecturing others”.

Banerjee said every citizen is entitled to Right to Information, as the government is answerable and accountable to the people.

She was supported in this by Leader of Congress party in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury who, however, went o to add that instead of pointing fingers at others “the state government should follow the path of transparency”.

The BJP state leadership criticised the TMC government for, what it called, its “double standards”.

Referring to the Centre’s response during the monsoon session of Parliament that it does not have any data on the death of migrants, Banerjee said it is ‘shocking’ how the union government got exposed.

“Today is International Day for Universal Access to Information. It is shocking how GOI got exposed during



the recent Parliament session. Most answers said ‘no data available’. Every citizen has a right to information. The government is answerable and accountable to the people,” Banerjee said in a tweet.

Her comments followed Union Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar’s statements during the monsoon session of Lok Sabha that the government does not have data on the number of migrants who died or were injured while returning to their native places during the lockdown.

The union government had said that many states and union territories had not provided details of farmer suicides.

Hence the national data on the causes for suicides in the farming

sector is “untenable”.

Chowdhury, who is also West Bengal Congress president, said suppression of facts by the government is a direct affront to a vibrant democracy.

Both the state and central governments have been negating the RTI Act to hide the truth, he said.

“The International Day for Universal access to information is being celebrated today. I think that the epoch-making legislation of RIGHT TO INFORMATION act conceived and passed during UPA regime in India could be recognized as a befitting tribute to the essence of this day,” he said in a series of tweet.

“Suppression of facts by the govt of any denomination is a direct affront to a vibrant democracy. Union govt

has been negating the RTI act to hide the truth. Even state govt of West Bengal is also fervently emulating the path of Union govt by denying the right to the common men,” he said.

The Congress leader urged Banerjee to lead by example instead of pointing fingers at others and demanded that the state government issue a white paper on the pandemic.

“Charity should begin at home. At least my demand to the state govt to issue a white paper on the COVID pandemic situation that could be a precursor of transparency, please do the same in regard to this historic day,” he said.

Criticising the Trinamool Congress government, West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said it had mastered the art of “hiding facts and

figures”.

“The TMC government should stop lecturing the Centre.

Its double standards have been exposed. The state government during the COVID pandemic has mastered the art of hiding facts and figures. They were caught red-handed by the visiting inter-ministerial central team,” he said.

A nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25 to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

A large number of migrant workers returned to their far flung native places from different parts of the country, many of them even on foot, during the unprecedented lockdown which was imposed to break the chain of coronavirus infection.

Arunachal’s COVID-19 tally crosses 9,000-mark with 135 new cases

ITANAGAR, SEPT 28 [PTI]: Arunachal Pradesh’s COVID-19 tally crossed the 9,000-mark on Monday as 135 more people, including 26 security personnel, tested positive for the disease, a health department official said.

The fresh infections have taken the northeastern state’s caseload to 9,004, he said.

Of the new cases, 62 were reported from the Capital Complex region, 18 from Kra Daadi, 13 from West Siang, eight from East Siang, seven from Lower Siang and six from Papumpare, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Four fresh cases were also detected in Kurung Kumey, three in Upper Subansiri,

two each in Longding, Tawang, Namsai, Tirap and Anjaw and one each in West Kameng, Changlang, Lower Subansiri and Lohit districts, he said.

“Twenty-six security personnel, including 18 state policemen and eight Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) employees are among fresh patients,” Jampa said.

Two Border Roads Organisation (BRO) staffers have also contracted the disease, he said.

Barring five, all are asymptomatic and they have been shifted to COVID Care Centres, he said.

At least 98 people were cured of the disease and discharged from hospitals on Sunday, taking the total number

of recoveries to 6,495, the SSO said.

The recovery rate among COVID-19 patients in the state currently stands at 72.13%.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 2,495 active cases, while 14 have died due to the disease so far.

The Capital Complex region comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, has reported the highest number of active cases at 1,369, followed by Papumpare at 142, West Siang at 126, Changlang at 122 and East Siang at 91, Jampa said.

The state has so far conducted 2,39,900 sample tests for COVID-19, including 1,681 on Sunday, he added.

Naga talks: Ravi in Delhi amidst uncertainty

KOHIMA, SEPT 27 [NAGALAND PAGE]: Nagaland Governor and the Union Government’s Interlocutor, R N Ravi is currently meeting Central leaders, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, at New Delhi, against the backdrop of uncertainty hovering over the Naga peace process.

Lately Ravi has been shuttling between Kohima and New Delhi meeting Central leaders possibly on the Naga issue.

The Union Government appears to be in hurry to sign the final agreement with the Naga groups engaged in peace process but the issue of flag and constitution has not been resolved with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah).

Successive Prime Ministers have asked NSCN (IM) to be patient

to hammer out solution but since the signing of truce in 1997, there have been a growing number of outfits which is taking a toll on the public.

The Centre has failed to check mushrooming of outfits, while some civil society organizations have recognized those outfits as Naga national groups. On the other hand, some organizations have been constantly voicing against extortion and collections by outfits, which Governor Ravi has taken serious note of.

At least 9 groups are engaged in peace process with the Government; another 5 groups are outside.

Sources said the NSCN (IM) has asked the Centre to resolve the issue of flag and constitution by this month. But Government has reportedly rejected

the demand.

Sources said the Centre and the NSCN (IM) have almost finalized the competencies except flag and constitution.

The next round of formal talks is expected to be held next month, according to a source. Currently, Intelligence Bureau (IB) officials are holding talk with the NSCN (IM) top leaders.

Reportedly NSCN (IM) chairman, Q Tuccu and vice chairman, Tongmeth Wangnao have told the Union Government’s representatives about the importance of flag and constitution to sign the final agreement.

The Government of India said there will be only one agreement with the Naga groups but it remains to be seen whether this assertion will remain, as other groups said they are ready to ink an agreement.

Govt extends ban on Khaplang faction of NSCN

NEW DELHI, SEPT 28 (PTI): The Centre on Monday extended the ban on NSCN-K, saying the Naga insurgent group has been engaged in violence, extortion and secessionist activities.

In a notification, the Union Home Ministry said the militant group has been involved in 104 violent incidents resulting in the killing of seven security forces personnel, six civilians and the abduction of 75 civilians since September 28, 2015.

The home ministry said the NSCN-K has been engaged in unlawful and violent activities thereby undermining the authority of the government of India and the governments of Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and spreading terror and panic among the people.

The group is aligning itself with other unlawful

associations like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), Meitei organisations of Manipur and indulging in kidnapping for ransom and extortion of money from businessmen, government officials and other civilians.

Now therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967), the central government hereby declares the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) along with all its factions, wings and front organisations, as an unlawful association, the notification issued by Joint Secretary in the home ministry Satyendra Garg said.

The home ministry said the NSCN-K has its professed aim to create a sovereign Nagaland

incorporating the Naga inhabited areas of the Indo-Myanmar region by secession from the Indian Union in alliance with other armed secessionist organisations of Nagaland and Northeastern region.

It said the NSCN-K is continuously embarking on a drive for the recruitment of cadres to continue its terrorist activities, establishing camps and hideouts across the international borders.

It is also involved in obtaining assistance from anti-India forces in other countries to procure arms and other assistance in furtherance of its objective of achieving a separate State.

The central government is also of the opinion that if there is no immediate curb and control of unlawful

activities of the NSCN-K, the organisation may make fresh recruitment, indulge in violent terrorist and secessionist activities, collect funds and endanger the lives of innocent citizens and security forces personnel, it said,

T h e r e f o r e , circumstances do exist which render it necessary to declare the NSCN-K as an unlawful association with immediate effect, it said.

The central government “is of the firm opinion that it is necessary to declare the NSCN-K along with all its factions, wings and front organisations as an unlawful association with immediate effect”, the notification said.

The NSCN-K continues to be a proscribed organisation for decades now and the

ban is extended every five years. Its leader S S Khaplang, a Myanmarese Naga, died in 2017 after leading the group for decades. The outfit is now run by two of his deputies.

Its rival faction NSCN-IM is currently involved in peace negotiations with the central government to find a lasting peaceful solution to the seven decades old insurgency problem of Nagaland.

Implement SARFAESI Act in Nagaland: CNCCI

DIMAPUR, SEPT 27 [NAGALAND PAGE]: The Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CNCCI) has again called for implementation of SARFAESI Act in Nagaland with an amendment in tune with Article 371A.

In a press release, CNCCI insisted that implementation of SARFAESI Act in the State will help thousands of self-employed entrepreneurs to grow, and mitigate the unemployment scenario as the Government cannot support or employ every unemployed youth.

CNCCI chairman Dr Khekgha Muru and general secretary Dr

Seyievilie Mor stated that the economic scenario and unemployment in the State has been further pushed to the edge with the COVID-19 pandemic with months of lockdown and with the returning of thousands of entrepreneurs and employees working in private sectors outside Nagaland.

“The CNCCI would like to inform the government that not every person is privileged sons and daughters of politicians and bureaucrats and unless the government desires to exploit the people without empowering its public, the government should not even have a second thought to provide such an opportunity to our people,” it said.

CNCCI reminded

that it had on various occasions raised the issue of the need to implement SARFAESI Act, including a letter addressed to the Chief Minister dated 24 April 2020 flagging issues and concern confronting the business community especially during the pandemic times.

Further, CNCCI informed that it had raised and presented the need to implement the SARFAESI Act as a priority economic policy to the three working group under the core group headed by Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner of Nagaland, which was entrusted by Strategic Committee for Economic Affairs headed by the Chief Minister to draw a road map for the

economic development of the state vis-à-vis pandemic lockdown.

“Yet again the whole exercise looks like another procedural fulfillment to be dumped to dust in some office,” it lamented.

The CNCCI said it was very optimistic that issue of the SARFAESI Act will be addressed in the 2020 monsoon assembly session, but much to the dismay of the Naga entrepreneurs and Naga business community, the State Government did not take up the issue despite knowing that it was the most important and pressing issue considering the grim economic scenario of the State and the future of thousands of entrepreneurs and unemployed youths.

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London Marathon goes virtual but its unrivalled ability to unite never more vital

SEAN INGLE

LONDON, 28 SEPT [THEGUARDIAN]: There is a day in the sporting calendar that I can guarantee will put a wide smile on my face – in fact, I can time the moment it happens to the nearest minute. It comes at 7.01pm on the last Sunday of April as I head towards Green Park tube station at the end of a long day covering the London Marathon. Without fail there are runners being propped up by friends, their walks now a waddle, having got around the 26.2-mile course in five or maybe six hours. In truth it looks like a scene from 28 Days Later. But do you know what? You can see the scale of the personal achievement etched on every single face; the totality of their effort on each sweat-drenched charity vest.

There are bigger sporting events, to be sure. But not many that enrich the soul like the London Marathon. Next Sunday my admiration for all the everyday runners taking part in this race will be even greater than usual.

For while the elite athletes will charge around a loop of St James's Park almost 20 times watched by millions on TV, 45,000 people from more than 60 countries will be



running 26.2 miles virtually, on a course of their choice, without 750,000 or so spectators creating a wall of sound along the way.

Given the scale of the pandemic, it is perhaps grimly appropriate that the world's biggest marathon has also gone global. Yet rarely will the loneliness of the long-distance runner have felt more stark.

But the fact that the event is being staged at all, and with many of the world's best athletes – including the world record holders Eliud Kipchoge and Brigid Kosgei – is a cause for quiet celebration. Because let us be frank here, the pandemic has exposed many painful truths about British exceptionalism. Six months on, the UK has the worst overall death rate in Europe. It still

lacks an effective track and trace system. It has repeatedly failed to learn lessons from other countries. Its strategy, such as it is, oscillates between the slapdash and the straitjacket, bumbling and wishful thinking. Moonshots? That only brings to mind those rockets from the embryonic days of the space race, which spluttered off their stands, before briefly pirouetting and bursting into flames.

Yet in the London Marathon, Britain really does have an undisputed world-beating success story. And, in the midst of these troubled times, its organisers have found a way to stage the event in a way that preserves that unique bond between the elite and the everyday.

Unsurprisingly, there have been a few bumps on the way. Initial

plans to hold a mass-participation event using “revolutionary” Bluetooth technology to safely allow 45,000 competitors to socially distance had to be shelved following a spike in coronavirus cases in the UK. Instead those runners will run the race virtually, logging their runs on a dedicated app.

From Monday, meanwhile, the elite runners and their coaches will enter a biosecure hotel, one with 40 acres of its own grounds. The London Marathon's operations director, Andrew Smith, tells me that all sorts of safety precautions are in place for the week – including athletes having their own individual changing areas and a dedicated toilet on race-day itself.

It will be a very

different marathon for these very different times. Yet when the 40th race begins at 7.15am on Sunday, it will be an opportunity to reflect on how far the event has come. It was back in 1979 that Chris Brasher, the then athletics correspondent of the Observer, returned from running the New York Marathon determined to recreate in London the magic and mysticism he had experienced. In fact he created something better.

As Brasher wrote on his return: “Last Sunday, in one of the most violent, trouble-stricken cities in the world, 11,532 men, women and children from 40 countries of the world, assisted by 2.5 million people, laughed, cheered and suffered during the greatest folk festival the world has seen. And at the end of it all the story was written in their faces – faces of contentment and happiness.”

Brasher was merely getting into his stride. “Nearly 2,000 years ago Paul saw a vision on the road to Damascus,” he continued. “Last Sunday millions of us saw a vision of the human race, happy and united, willing their fellow human beings to a pointless but wonderful victory over mental doubt and

bodily frailty. I wonder whether London could stage such a festival?”

Of course it could. Indeed it took only 18 months before the Elysian vision of Brasher and the co-founder John Disley became a reality – during which time Brasher repeatedly used his newspaper as a bully pulpit and even a training hub for wannabe competitors. In the 39 years since, it has become a fixture on the sporting landscape, a life-changing event for so many people and charities and, at a time of so much division across society, a rare unifying force for the country.

“We are holding the event in circumstances that we believe are entirely fitting for where society is in its fight against Covid-19,” Brasher's son Hugh told me recently. “And to have the greatest athletes in the world is quite incredible. But it will also be about the everyday athlete. Of people dressed in rhinos running for charity in Limerick and Lima, and to show this amazing sense of community and togetherness.”

True, this year's event will be very different. But some things never change. On Sunday the marathon's spirit will burn as brightly as ever.

Ronaldo's header salvages draw for Juventus at Roma

ROME, SEP 28 (AP): Even on a night when Juventus was outplayed for long stretches, the nine-time defending Serie A champion managed to salvage a point in a 2-2 draw at Roma.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice, including a second-half equalizer with a towering header after Juventus had been reduced to 10 men, while Jordan Veretout had a brace at Roma.

We got back into it, even after the red card, Ronaldo said.

By the end of the season this could prove to be an important point.”

Veretout put Roma ahead in the 31st with a penalty following a handball from Adrien Rabiot, who was trying to block a shot from Veretout.

Ronaldo then equalized from the spot after Lorenzo Pellegrini used his arm to block the five-time Ballon d'Or winner.

Veretout scored his second in first-half added time as Roma tore past Juventus' veteran but aging center backs Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini. Henrikh Mkhitaryan escaped down the left flank and crossed for Veretout, who used one touch to get away from a defender before shooting past goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny.

Juventus was reduced to 10 men in the 62nd when Rabiot picked up his second yellow card for sticking his boot into the left thigh of Mkhitaryan.

Moments earlier, Roma forward Edin Dzeko struck a shot off the post after his marker had already fallen to the ground.

Juve then had a chance to equalize when Ronaldo volleyed directly at goalkeeper Antonio Mirante.

Ronaldo finally found the target again in the 69th when he rose to head in a cross from Danilo -- giving him three goals in Juve's opening two matches.

We're at the start of the season and there's a new coach (Andrea Pirlo) with new ideas, Ronaldo said. But I see the team working well, enthusiastic and I see a bright future for us.

It was the first point this season for Roma, which was inflicted with a 3-0 loss in its opener last weekend at Hellas Verona for using an ineligible player. The

match had ended 0-0.

Juventus, which beat Sampdoria 3-0 in its opener, trails early Serie A leaders Napoli, Verona and AC Milan by two points.

A limit of 1,000 fans is being allowed for soccer games in Italy amid the coronavirus pandemic.

NAPOLI ROUT

Hirving Lozano scored twice as Napoli routed Genoa 6-0 in a match that had been delayed by a positive coronavirus result.

Kickoff was pushed back by three hours after Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin tested positive, prompting a new round of swabs on Saturday and delaying the team's trip to Naples. Genoa midfielder Lasse Schone also tested positive.

Napoli led 1-0 at halftime after Dries Mertens had set up Lozano for the opener in the 10th minute.

Piotr Zielinski scored seconds after the restart and Mertens also netted before Lozano doubled his tally.

Goals from Elif Elmas and Matteo Politano capped a great night for Napoli, which visits Juventus next week.

Napoli forward Lorenzo Insigne is now a doubt for that match after pulling up injured with a thigh injury in the first half.

INJURY FEARS

There was also bad news for AC Milan as forward Ante Rebic was forced off with a possible dislocated elbow in the Rossoneri's 2-0 win at newly promoted Crotone.

Milan is already without forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who tested positive for COVID-19 last week.

Franck Kessi converted a penalty for Milan on the stroke of halftime and Brahim Diaz doubled the visitors' lead five minutes after the break with his first goal for the club.

Stretching back to last season, Milan extended its unbeaten streak to 17 matches in all competitions the first time it has reached that number since 1996 under Fabio Capello, when it went 27 games without a loss.

OTHER MATCHES

Andrey Galabinov scored newly promoted Spezia's first-ever Serie A goal but it lost its first match in the Italian top flight 4-1 at home to Sassuolo.

Verona beat Udinese 1-0.

Confident Delhi look to continue momentum against struggling Sunrisers

ABU DHABI, SEP 28 (PTI): Off to the best possible start with two wins on the trot, a confident Delhi Capitals will hope to keep the juggernaut rolling when they take on the winless Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

Both sides have endured contrasting campaigns so far.

Delhi head in to the game after two morale-boosting victories. The Shreyas Iyer-led side edged past Kings XI Punjab in a thrilling Super Over before thrashing Chennai Super Kings comprehensively to jump to the top of the points table.

On the other hand, Sunrisers are the only side yet to register a win in the tournament, having lost both their games and David Warner and his men will be desperate to turn things around.

In their opening encounter, despite opener Jonny Bairstow (61) and Manish Pandey (34) putting Sunrisers in a winning position in

a chase of 164, the team failed to cross the line.

Against Kolkata Knight Riders, the middle-order failed to fire and the team settled for a below-par total which the bowling unit couldn't defend.

Wriddhiman Saha was particularly slow and would be expected to his innings more suitable to the format.

For Delhi, the South African pace duo of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje has looked sharp with the new ball while spinners Axar Patel and Amit Mishra have performed splendidly in the absence of Ravichandran Ashwin.

Ashwin suffered an injury in the team's first outing and is likely to miss the match against Sunrisers.

“Ashwin, I feel is doing pretty well, but we wanted to give him a 2-3 game rest so that he feels better,” Iyer had said ahead of the match against CSK.

In batting, the onus will be on seniors such as Shikhar Dhawan to lay the foundation, and



he will have the talented Prithvi Shaw at the top of the order for the company.

Rishabh Pant and Iyer have also looked in good nick, after rescuing the team from a spot of bother in the first game, the two pitched in with valuable runs against CSK.

Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis has proved he is handy with the willow while Shimron Hetmyer can also complement the strong batting line up.

For Sunrisers to do well, they would need to look beyond Warner and

Bairstow. The side must click as a batting unit to post its first win of the season on Tuesday.

The 2016 champions replaced the injured Mitchell Marsh with Afghanistan off-spinner Mohammad Nabi, who played a quick cameo with the bat and also bowled an economical spell later.

However, with the batting unit letting them down in both outings, Sunrisers might consider bringing in Kane Williamson, who has recovered from his

injury, to provide stability to the line-up. He would be coming in place of Nabi.

Sunrisers spinners led by Rashid Khan continue to impress but the side is lacking an out and out pace bowler who can hit the deck and push the batsman back off a good length.

Australian fast bowler Billy Stanlake is an option but with only four overseas slots available, his inclusion looks unlikely.

The Squads (From): Sunrisers Hyderabad: David Warner (c),

Jonny Bairstow, Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey, Shreevats Goswami, Virat Singh, Priyam Garg, Wriddhiman Saha, Abdul Samad, Vijay Shankar, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Jason Holder, Abhishek Sharma, Bavanaka Sandeep, Sanjay Yadav, Fabian Allen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Khaleel Ahmed, Sandeep Sharma, Shahbaz Nadeem, Siddharth Kaul, Billy Stanlake, TNatarajan, Basil Thampi.

Delhi Capitals: Shreyas Iyer (c), Ravichandran Ashwin, Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Shimron Hetmyer, Kagiso Rabada, Ajinkya Rahane, Amit Mishra, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ishant Sharma, Axar Patel, Sandeep Lamichhane, Keemo Paul, Daniel Sams, Mohit Sharma, Anrich Nortje, Alex Carey (wk), Avesh Khan, Tushar Deshpande, Harshal Patel, Marcus Stoinis, Lalit Yadav.

Match Starts at 7:30pm IST.

Talk in KXIP dressing room still very positive: Mayank Agarwal after loss to RR

SHARJAH, SEP 28 (PTI): Kings XI Punjab opener Mayank Agarwal says his team's dressing room remains a positive space despite two close defeats in three IPL games so far and it won't be long before things fall in place for the side.

Having done well at the Test level, Agarwal is in the middle of his breakthrough year in the IPL and smashed a spectacular hundred on Sunday night here.

Despite a Super Over loss to Delhi Capitals and another close defeat

to Rajasthan Royals on Sunday, Agarwal said the team is in good spirits.

“See, very honestly, the talk in the dressing room is very positive, we still have 11 games to go, there are a lot of things that we are doing right, yes we have not been able to close out, but we are not focussing on the results,” he said in the post-match press conference.

“The kind of cricket we are playing, the brand of cricket and the plans we are executing, we are quite happy with that.”

Leavingswashbuckler Chris Gayle out of the eleven is always a tough call and Agarwal is just glad that he is able to do the job for the team alongside skipper KL Rahul.

“The management did speak a lot about it (on the opening pairing before the start of the IPL). We are not thinking about it too much, we are very happy with the way we are playing and the start we are able to give to the side and we will take it as it comes,” said Agarwal.

“It was up to the coach and captain

whatever decision they take, I will be happy with that going forward also.”

Agarwal and Rahul form arguably the best opening pair in the ongoing IPL.

“Definitely, it is a lot of fun to bat with KL, top-class cricketer we share a good friendship, he is a great guy. The talk in the middle was if we both are set, then one guy at least of us two bats through,” he said referring to their 183-run stand.

Royals in-form batsman Sanju Samson praised Rahul Tewatia

for taking the team over the line with a 53 off 31 balls, including five sixes in an over bowled by Sheldon Cottrell, to turn the game in his team's favour.

“It was a very brave innings from Tewatia. He never gave up. I could see that he was so down (during their partnership) but he never gave up and he had the ability to come up and strike those 30 runs off an international player,” Samson said.

“...he is going to be very useful to us in the tournament,” he added.

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Church says Cardinal Pell returning to Vatican in crisis



CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP): Cardinal George Pell, Pope Francis' former finance minister, will soon return to the Vatican during an extraordinary economic scandal for the first time since he was cleared of child abuse allegations in Australia five months ago, a church agency said Monday.

Pell will fly back to Rome on Tuesday, CathNews, an information agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said, citing "sources close to" Pell.

Pell's return follows Francis last week firing one of the cardinal's most powerful opponents, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, over a financial scandal.

Pell was regarded as the third highest-ranking Vatican official and was attempting to wrestle the Holy See's opaque finances into order when he returned to his native Australia in 2017 to clear himself of decades-old allegations of child sex abuse.

Instead, Pell became the most senior Catholic to be convicted of child sex abuse crimes. He served 13 months in prison before Australia's High Court acquitted him in April of molesting two choir boys in the late 1990s when he was archbishop of Melbourne.

In his first television interview after his release, Pell linked his fight against Vatican corruption with his prosecution in Australia.

The interview was conducted in April by Herald-Sun newspaper columnist Andrew Bolt, a vocal champion of the cardinal who reported the news early Monday of his return to the Vatican.

The Sydney Archdiocese did not respond to a request for comment on Pell's travel plans, and a woman who answered the phone at the Sydney seminary where Pell lives told The Associated Press: "We have no comment."

In the interview, Pell said he did not have evidence of a link. But he suspected that a man who swore he had been sexually abused by Pell as a 13-year-old choirboy had been "used."

Pell again seemed to hint at a link in a statement last week in which he "thanked and congratulated" Francis for firing Becciu.

"I hope the cleaning of the stables continues in both the Vatican and Victoria," Pell said, referring to his home state of Victoria where he was convicted.

Pell, 79, said in April he planned to return to Rome when the coronavirus pandemic allowed him to pack up his apartment. But he intended to make Sydney his home.

Becciu said he was fired after Francis told him that documents from the Italian financial police alleged the 72-year-old cardinal had embezzled 100,000 euros (\$116,200). Becciu, the former No. 2 in the Vatican's secretariat of state, denied any wrongdoing.

Becciu's name had previously been caught up in a whirlwind financial scandal involving the Holy See's investment in a London real estate venture.

But Becciu said that investment wasn't raised in his conversation on Thursday with Francis.

Germany launches new search for nuclear waste storage site

BERLIN (AP): Germany has launched a new search for a site to store its most radioactive nuclear waste, eliminating a disputed site at a former salt mine that was earmarked decades ago and has long been a focus of protests.

A report issued Monday by Germany's waste management organization, or BGE, identified 90 areas covering 54% of the country's surface area as potentially geologically suited for a nuclear storage site. It kicked off what is bound to be a politically fraught process, with a final decision slated for 2031. The aim is to start using the selected site in 2050.

Following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan nine years ago, Germany decided to phase out its own nuclear power generation by the end of 2022. But the question of where to put the waste already generated has

remained unresolved. Three years ago, parliament cleared the way for a science-based search for a site.

Officials are seeking a safe home for a million years for some 1,900 containers of waste, which make up only 5% of Germany's total nuclear waste but 99% of its radioactivity, BGE chairman Stefan Stedt said.

"Germany's geology is so favorable, from north to south and east to west, that we can say with conviction that it will be possible to find the one site with the best possible security for the final storage of highly radioactive waste," Stedt added.

One site that won't be considered is the one that was earmarked by West German authorities in the 1970s — a former salt mine at Gorleben, in a sparsely populated area then located in an isolated corner of the country, close to the border with communist East Germany.

Armenia, Azerbaijan keep up deadly fight for disputed region

YEREVAN, ARMENIA (AP): Armenia and Azerbaijani forces kept fighting Monday over the disputed separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh after hostilities broke out the day before, with both sides blaming each other for resuming the deadly attacks that reportedly also wounded scores of people.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry claimed that Armenian forces started shelling the town of Tartar on Monday morning, while Armenian officials said the fighting continued throughout the night and Baku resumed "offensive actions" in the morning.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry told the Interfax news agency Monday that over 550 Armenian troops have been "destroyed (including those wounded)", a claim that Armenian officials denied.

According to Nagorno-Karabakh officials, 31 servicemen have been killed so far. Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Artsrun Hovhannissyan said Monday over 200 people have been wounded. Azerbaijani



authorities said 26 civilians have been wounded on their side as well.

The heavy fighting broke out on Sunday morning in the region that lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since 1994 at the end of a separatist war.

It was not immediately clear what sparked the fighting, the heaviest since clashes in July killed 16 people from both sides.

Mostly mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh — a region around 4,400 square kilometers (1,700

square miles) or about the size of the U.S. state of Delaware — lies 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the Armenian border. Local soldiers backed by Armenia also occupy some Azerbaijani territory outside the region.

The European Union on Monday urged both sides to halt the fighting and return to the negotiating table, following similar calls by Iran, Russia, France and the United States.

"We hope and we urge everyone to everything they can in order to prevent an all-out war from breaking out, because this is the last

thing the region needs," European Commission spokesman Peter Stano told reporters in Brussels. "There is no military solution to this conflict."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday that the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh "is a cause for concern for Moscow and other countries."

"We believe that the hostilities should be immediately ended," Peskov told reporters, adding that the process of resolving the conflict between the two countries should shift into "a politico-diplomatic" dimension.

Brussels imposes curfew on bars as coronavirus cases soar

BRUSSELS (AP): Facing a surge of new coronavirus cases far higher than in other parts of Belgium, Brussels authorities are closing bars early in the EU institutions capital city.

Beginning Monday night, all bars and cafes have to close between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. while any other businesses selling drinks or food will shut down at 10 p.m. In addition, eating at street markets is now forbidden.

Local media said authorities thought about starting the bar curfew at 10 p.m. but the proposal was rejected to support virus-ravaged businesses. According to the Belgian cafes federation, half of the country's 12,000 bars may not survive the coronavirus crisis.

"Currently in the Brussels region we



Since the start of the pandemic, more than 114,000 coronavirus infections have been recorded in hard-hit Belgium — a country of 11.5-million residents — including 9,980 deaths. From Sept. 17-23, 11,934 new infections were diagnosed, with the biggest spike in Brussels, where the positive rate now averages 9.7% compared to 4.7% in the whole of Belgium.

"Currently in the Brussels region we

have roughly 10% of positive tests. This is extremely important and confirms that the virus is circulating in the capital, it's not only due to an increase in the number of tests," said Yves Van Laethem, a spokesman from the COVID-19 crisis center.

Local authorities also announced increased testing across the city and will enforce the ban

on gatherings of up to 10 people, especially when the bars close.

The move came only days after Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes relaxed some virus restrictions at a national level. Starting Thursday, Belgium no longer will require people to wear a mask outdoors except in crowded places. The government also reduced the mandatory quarantine period from 14 days to one week for people with COVID-19 symptoms who eventually test negative for the virus.

Health experts urged Belgian residents and employers to keep implementing social distancing and back remote working when possible.

Saudi Arabia: G-20 gathering of world leaders to be virtual

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): Saudi Arabia, which is presiding over the Group of 20 countries this year, said Monday that the upcoming November gathering of world leaders will be held virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The kingdom had originally planned to host world leaders for the G-20 summit in Riyadh before the pandemic, offering Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman the chance to share handshakes and wide smiles with presidents and prime ministers, such as Donald Trump, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, India's Narendra Modi and China's Xi Jinping.

Instead, the planned virtual meet-up announced Monday strips the kingdom of the pomp that would have accompanied televised arrivals on Riyadh's tarmac just two years after the killing and dismemberment of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi stained the crown prince's reputation.

Prince Mohammed has insisted he had nothing to do with the operation carried out by Saudi agents inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, despite U.S. senators and intelligence officials saying he bore responsibility for the slaying.

Saudi Arabia said the virtual summit Nov. 21-22 will be chaired by King Salman. The meeting will focus on focus on "protecting lives and restoring growth by addressing vulnerabilities uncovered during the pandemic and by laying down the foundations for a better future," a Saudi statement said.

The statement added that G-20 countries, which represent the world's biggest and most powerful economies, have contributed over \$21 billion to support the production of vaccines and access to therapeutics, as well as injected \$11 trillion "to safeguard the global economy".

G-20 nations, however, have been criticized for not taking cohesive action against the virus and its economic impact. The U.S., China and Russia have opted out of a collaborative effort to develop and distribute a vaccine.

The G-20 agreed this year to suspend the debt of developing countries and defer billions of dollars in payments as governments focus spending on emergency stimulus programs to protect vulnerable people and boost national health care systems. Pakistan's prime minister, however, has called for outright debt relief for poorer nations from the world's richest countries.

The leaders of the G-20 last met virtually in March in a session hosted by King Salman. The virtual video call was unusual at the time, as governments around the world were beginning to stress the importance of social distancing to curb the virus' spread amid closures, curfews and lockdowns globally.

Rights groups and others had called for world leaders to boycott the summit in Saudi Arabia due to Khashoggi's killing, the kingdom's human rights record and its continued detention of activists. It was unclear whether leaders such as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau or German Chancellor Angela Merkel would have attended an in-person summit, but there were others, such as Putin, who said they were ready to take part.

Agnes Callamard, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions who investigated Khashoggi's killing, told The Associated Press earlier this month that another country should volunteer to host the G-20 leaders summit if it was going to be held in-person. Failing that, she said, it should be made conditional that Saudi Arabia releases imprisoned women's rights defenders, human rights activists, journalists and others.

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SummitTIMES

Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara welcome baby boy River

LOS ANGELES, SEP 28 (PTI): Oscar winner Joaquin Pheonix and his fiancée, actor Rooney Mara, have become parents to a baby boy, their first child together.

The couple has named their son after Phoenix's late older brother, actor River Phoenix, who died in 1993 at the age of 23 of a drug overdose.

According to US magazine, the news was shared by Russian filmmaker Victor Kossakovsky during a Q&A at the 2020 Zurich Film Festival on Sunday, post the screening of his documentary Gunda , executive produced by Pheonix.

He just got a baby, by the way, his name was a beautiful son called River, so he cannot promote it now, Kossakovsky said when quizzed about the Joker star.

It was confirmed in May that Mara, 35, and Phoenix, 45, are expecting their first child together.

The couple met in 2016 on the sets of "Mary Magdalene", in which Mara



played the title role alongside Phoenix as Jesus.

They started dating soon after and made their red carpet debut at the closing ceremony of Cannes Film

Festival 2017.

Months later, Phoenix confirmed in an interview that they were living together in the Hollywood Hills.

The duo got engaged last year in July.

Blackpink announces new single 'Lovesick Girls'

LOS ANGELES, SEP 28 (PTI): Popular K-pop band Blackpink on Monday announced "Lovesick Girls", the main track from their upcoming debut full-length LP 'The Album'.

The quartet - comprising Lisa, Rose, Jisoo and Jennie - took to social media to release a poster previewing the new single.

The teaser poster shows the song name and the girls leaning on one another in nighttime lighting.

Blackpink has already released two tracks -- "How You Like That" and "Ice Cream" in collaboration with Selena Gomez -- ahead of the album's release on October 2.

The group will also host fans for "Comeback Live," a live streaming



event set to take place October 1 on VLive, which will be followed by the documentary

"Blackpink: Light Up the Sky" premiering on Netflix on October 14.

Game of Thrones' star Hafthor Bjornsson, wife Kelsey Henson welcome baby boy

LOS ANGELES, SEP 28 (PTI): "Game of Thrones" actor Hafthor Bjornsson and his wife Kelsey Henson have become parents to their first child together.

The strongman-turned-actor, who played Gregor 'The Mountain' Clegane in the hit HBO fantasy series, and Henson took to their respective Instagram accounts to share the news of their baby boy's arrival.

"Our beautiful baby boy made his grand entrance into the world at 11:19 AM on September 26th 2020 after a short and intense six hours, Henson wrote alongside a series of photographs of the new born.

After an extremely hard 2 hours and 19 mins of pushing our healthy, strong, beautiful boy arrived weighing (7 pounds 7 oz, 20.4 inches long), Bjornsson said.

The actor also shares daughter, Theresa Lif, with his ex-girlfriend Thelma Bjork Steimann.



Bjornsson and Henson announced in April that they were expecting their first child together. The couple tied the knot in 2018 in the actor's native Iceland.

Hilary Swank says she developed claustrophobia while filming Netflix's Away'

LOS ANGELES, SEP 28 (PTI): Oscar winner Hilary Swank says she became severely claustrophobic while shooting for Netflix's new sci-fi fantasy series Away.

In the show, the 46-year-old actor plays astronaut Emma Green, who is on a years-long mission to Mars, and wearing a spacesuit for the role caused her to develop a fear of enclosed spaces.

"I have never, not once in my life, had a phobia.

Until now. And I'm gonna be honest, I never understood them, I always thought 'get over it, it's just a spider, etc. walk away.'

Until I, of course myself, became severely claustrophobic. To the point my entire body broke out in sweat and I was drenched within 30 seconds and my face looked like a very ripe tomato... and I almost passed out while trying on my finished spacesuit and helmet for the first time,

Swank posted on Instagram.

The Million Dollar Baby" star said for six months she was not able to overcome her claustrophobia, but has now trained her mind to stay calm during crisis.

"When we calm our minds and sit with the fear, NOT try and push it away, we can sit with it in a different way, that makes it 'doable.' Playing an astronaut in AWAY made me push into the sharp edges in a way I never thought it would, she

added.

Swank said she hopes that opening up about her phobia experience will help others feel 'less alone.'

I hope that in sharing this you might feel less alone in whatever it is that takes over your mind and therefore body. Be patient with yourself. #WeAreNeverInThisAlone #Away.

Away, created by Andrew Hinderaker, premiered on the streaming platform earlier this month.



BIKINI BODY! Blogger Camila Coelho played volleyball on the beach in Santa Monica.

Ava DuVernay, her company honored by MacDowell artist colony

NEWYORK(AP):Filmmaker Ava DuVernay will be honored next month by MacDowell, which is presenting its inaugural Marian MacDowell Arts Advocacy Award to her media company and arts collective ARRAY.

The award is named for the co-founder of MacDowell, the century-old artist residency in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where James Baldwin, Leonard Bernstein and many

others have been visiting fellows. DuVernay, known for such acclaimed movies as "Selma" and "13th," founded ARRAY in 2012 as a way of amplifying the work of women and people of color.

"I am touched that our narrative change collective ARRAY, which is built upon a mission to articulate and amplify stories from the widest range of art makers, is being honored in Ms. MacDowell's name,"

DuVernay said in a statement Sunday. "I look forward to cultivating a partnership between ARRAY and MacDowell to enable more artists of color, specifically women, to be a part of the residency program in coming years."

MacDowell will host a virtual ceremony on Oct. 19. Actress and former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, Jane Alexander, will present the award.

ARIES:

You've been going back and forth in your head for a while now, and this constant oscillation isn't serving you well. The cards are urging you to be still amidst the chaos, to take a moment to connect with your higher self. In moments of silence, you will find the answers you are seeking, Aries. Some of you may be struggling to put yourself first or prioritise your own needs. Remember, you can't make others happy when you're miserable yourself.

TAURUS:

You could stick to the tried-and-tested path (there's nothing wrong with that!), or you could give the world something it has never seen before. Taurus, don't succumb to mediocrity when you have the potential to leave a legacy behind. Overheard at the cosmic conference: your inner rebel will be rewarded greatly. The cards are urging you to embody courage when it comes to your personal life as well. If you've been feeling the feels for somebody, it's time to let them know what's on your mind.

GEMINI:

When you live a life that's full of passion, you always run the risk of having your heart broken. But you wouldn't know any other way, would you now, Gemini? Despite how things turned out, you understand that they were happening for you, not to you. The experiences you attracted were an essential part of your growth and evolution process. Looking at your past through the lens of wisdom is helping you release the pain and expand your heart with love.

CANCER:

It's easy to judge others harshly based on our preconceived notions. But, do we really understand where they're coming from despite having spent some time with them? The cards are urging you to come as you are, and hold space for others to do the same. Learning to be unconditional will help you transform even the most troubled relationships. Some of you may be getting in touch with your spiritual/intuitive side like never before. Trust the messages you are receiving for others and yourself, as they are coming from a higher plane of consciousness.

LEO:

You wouldn't be able to fix everything and everyone even if you tried to. Could you be playing the role of 'the giver' in all of your relationships? Leo, the cards are urging you to get real with yourself. Take a moment to notice where there is an imbalance and consciously take a step back. Learning to receive the love and care you deserve is an integral part of the growth and evolution process.

VIRGO:

Your magic knows no bounds, Virgo. But you didn't need us to tell you that, did you? Monday sees you reconnecting with your inner sorceress. As you do, you will notice the prophecies you once made fulfilling themselves, reaffirming your faith in your own intuition and your connection with the divine forces. Word for the wise: make time to strengthen your psychic muscles. Sometimes, this requires us to unlearn the ways in this

world and remember our true origins.

LIBRA:

We're always talking about manifesting the big stuff, but how often do we actually allow ourselves to kick back and enjoy the blessings that are being sent towards us? Slow down and savour the fruits of your labour, Libra. We all deserve a break every now and then. Connecting with your inner child is also going to be an important theme for you, and sometimes this process involves unlearning the ways of our world. Remember, you are worthy of joy, abundance, and love.

SCORPIO:

When you're doing *this* well for yourself, it's hard not to attract haters and naysayers. But do you really want to give the negativity any more attention than it deserves? Redirect your gaze towards the realisation of your goals, Scorpio. Commit to your projects with a newfound fervour. You have what it takes to take over the world! On the personal front, however, you could be dealing with the pain of betrayal. Remember, things are happening for you, not to you. You are being shown who isn't deserving of your love and care.

SAGITTARIUS:

"Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness." An Oprah Winfrey classic to help you power through the week, Sagittarius. On your agenda: taking over the world while being your most rebellious self. Your unconventional approach to art (and your life) promises to take you places. Remember,

you may or may not have a manual at the moment, and that's okay. Take the first step and know that the Universe will meet you halfway.

CAPRICORN:

This is a time of joy and harmony on the domestic front. You're moving past the negativity that was weighing you down and remembering the love that binds you together. Send a prayer of gratitude for your soul circle, Capricorn! For some, this may be a time of celebration too, as somebody close to you could be thinking about tying the knot.

AQUARIUS:

Looking at your past through the lens of wisdom is an important theme, Aquarius. You're able to understand why things didn't work out the way you imagined they would, and let go of the wounds with loving awareness. The future looks promising and that's what you want to focus on in the coming days. Some of you may be leaving a painful relationship behind. Trust that you will soon make space for the love you deserve even though it doesn't seem so from where you are standing.

PISCES:

The thing about rejection is that it causes severe damage to our psyche. But, your days of living in the shadows are behind you, Pisces. The world is ready to see your true and most authentic self. Take that cloak of invisibility off. Come as you are even if you're shaking on the inside. Breaking out of the mental prison is the key to realising your highest potential.