



DEEPIKA PADUKONE STEPS DOWN AS JIO MAMI MUMBAI FILM FESTIVAL CHAIRPERSON

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HERE IS A LOT THAT IS BEYOND RE-PAIR, BUT SOME THINGS CAN STILL BE SALVAGED

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NICK CANNON EXPECTING TWINS WITH ABBY DE LA ROSA

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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5 new cases on low-testing Sunday; Sikkim crosses one lakh vaccinations

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 APR:**

Five new cases of novel coronavirus were reported in the last 24 hours in Sikkim taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 6,410. All the new cases were reported from East District and were found in rapid antigen testing of 11 samples. No RT-PCR tests were carried out yesterday since the VRD Lab, the only facility where these tests can be carried out, are closed on Sundays. The State is on hyper-enforcement mode at present since daily cases have been spiking over the past few days. Given the high numbers [there were 54 new cases in the last RT-PCR tests carried out on Saturday], even though the low numbers today are because of inexplicably low number of testing, the single digit incidence will come as a relief for most.

In his daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that one person from Kingstone in Rhenock was found positive for COVID-19 as was a 42-year-old lady from near Cooperative, Sichey [Gangtok]. The contract tracing team has not been able to contact her though.

The remaining three cases are of tourists - one from Patna and the other two from Kolkata - who returned home after testing positive.

On the other hand, the number of recovered cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim reached 5,985 with two more recoveries on Sunday. There are currently 161 active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim.

Meanwhile, 1,383 people were vaccinated for COVID-19 on Sunday, of whom 961 received their first dose of vaccine while 422 completed their vaccine schedule with the second dose.

Mr Bhutia informed that 15 healthcare workers [03 first dose & 12 second dose], 376 frontline workers [07 first dose & 369 second dose] and 992 persons in age group of 45 years & above [951 first dose & 41 second dose] were vaccinated for COVID-19.

While giving a cumulative figure of the vaccinations so far, he informed that 1,00,656 persons have received the first dose of vaccine and 16,810 have already received their second shot. A total of 1,17,466 persons were vaccinated so far for COVID-19 in Sikkim.

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 APR:**

All shops, except those selling essential items, will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays, fresh guidelines issued by the State Government today order. Alongside the weekend "lockdown," which, well, can come into effect only on weekends, the government has also put a ceiling on social and religious gatherings which too will come into effect only from the weekend onwards.

The new guidelines issued today by the Chief Secretary also direct that from 17 April [Saturday] onwards, all social, political and religious gatherings can have only 50 persons present at any given point of time. Even in such cases, prior permission of the concerned District Collectors should needs to be obtained.

If the exuberant police bandobast to ensure "Covid appropriate" behaviour is any indica-

tion, expect the new guidelines to be enthusiastically enforced. The guidelines specify that all gatherings will require to maintain Covid appropriate protocols like mask-wearing, social-distancing, hand-washing etc. Meanwhile cops across Sikkim are already taking enforcement of mask-wearing and social distancing at shops and public spaces very seriously even if policing of gatherings will happen only from the 17th.

These regulations for gatherings will obviously continue after the weekend as well.

As for the orders on keeping shops closed on weekends, since the order states that these provisions will remain in effect till 30 April, for two weekends, the rural folk who come to sell their produce at the vegetable markets on weekends will lose two weekends of the shopping they also take home from the bazaars.



As per the order, except for medical shops, ration shops and vegetable vendors in bazaar areas, all other shops will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

This directive will remain in effect till 30 April and the normal weekly off-days for

shops, like Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays depending on where the shops are located, will also be suspended.

For tourists who have negative RTPCR test reports but whose 72 hour limit has expired, Rapid Antigen Testing

[RAT] facilities will be set up at Rangpo and Melli by the Health Department.

A separate SOP will be issued by the Health Department regarding procedure, location and effective date for operation of these facilities.

AMIT SHAH IN KALIMPONG

Union Home Minister promises SIT to investigate "political killings" during past two Aandolans

SMRITA KHAWAS

KALIMPONG, 12 APR:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced today that should the BJP form the Government in West Bengal, one of its first orders of business will be to set up Special Investigation Teams to enquire into "political killings" in the Hills in the 1980's and 2017.

Mr Shah was speaking at a public meeting here at Kalimpong today and also assured that with a BJP Government at the centre, no Gorkha will be harmed for the political expressions or because of the National Register of Citizens.

About this latter point, which has been alleged often in anti-BJP campaign in the Hills, Mr Shah insisted that the NRC will have no impact on the Gorkhas, and accused the ruling TMC in West Bengal of spreading lies to create fear among the people of the hills.

"NRC has not yet been implemented, but whenever it is done, not a single Gorkha will be asked to leave," he placated.

As for his invoking memories



of past Aandolans in the Hills, Mr Shah said, "I know that the Gorkhas have faced injustice earlier in 1986-88 when CPIM was in power when more than 1,200 Gorkha brothers and sisters lost their lives. And then again in 2017 under the TMC government, Didi also created violence in Hills and killed many of our Gorkha

brothers. And today I am here to tell you to keep faith in me and our party and vote for us so that after the results and as soon as our government is formed, we will form a Special Investigation Team to inquire into all the incidents of political killing. Those who are responsible will be behind bars. No one will be spared."

He also highlighted that the BJP has promised tribal status for the 11 left-out Gorkha communities in its election manifesto and will deliver on it to secure the future of the Gorkha youth.

He also promised support and promotion of Nepali language by establishing Nepali language TV channels and radio stations.

Chisopani gets a police booth, finally



SURAJ LIMBOO

GANGTOK, 12 APR:

Senior SP-South, Thakur Thapa, today inaugurated a Police Booth at Chisopani in South Sikkim.

The SP informs that the police booth will be staffed with six police personnel and Village Guards who will be on call 24 hours.

The personnel, he explained, will work as mediators between the vil-

lage and Jorhang Police Station and also carry out patrolling in the area.

A Police Booth has been a long-pending demand of the public of Chisopani and was welcomed by the Panchayat President Sovu Khati who was also present for the inauguration.

The police booth is situated on the Namchi-Jorethang highway and was constructed with donations made by

residents of the area. It is also equipped with five CCTV cameras donated by Bikram Pradhan of Namchi.

The inaugural function was also attended by BDO Poklok-Nandugan, Tenzing Bhutia, DSP [Traffic] Jorethang, Jyoti Chettri, 36-Tinik Chisopani Panchayat President Shova Khati, Ward Panchayat Hemlata Chettri and local people of the area.

NEW DELHI, APR 12 (PTI):

Ten states -- Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan have shown a steep rise in the daily COVID-19 cases accounting for 83.02 per cent of the new infections, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday.

India's daily cases continue to rise and 1,68,912 fresh coronavirus infections were registered in a span of 24 hours,

the highest single-day rise since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily cases at 63,294. It is followed by Uttar Pradesh with 15,276 while Delhi reported 10,774 new cases.

Sixteen states -- Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Kerala, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal are displaying an upward

trajectory in daily new cases.

India's total active caseload has increased to 12,01,009 and now comprises 8.88 per cent of the country's total infections. A net increase of 92,922 cases has been recorded in the total active caseload in a day.

Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala cumulatively account for 70.16 per cent of India's total active cases. Maharashtra alone accounts for 47.22% of the total

active caseload of the country.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,21,56,529 with 75,086 recoveries being registered in a span of 24 hours.

Besides, the daily deaths continue to show an upward trend with 904 deaths being reported in a day.

Ten States account for 89.16 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (349). Chhattisgarh follows with 122 daily deaths.

Nine states and UTs have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in a span of 24 hours. These are Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh (UT), D&D and D&N, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh.

On the vaccination front, the cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 10.45 crore as India marks day-2 of the countrywide 'tika utsav'.

Waiting shed inaugurated at Karmithang

SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 12 APR:

A waiting shed was inaugurated by BDO-Duga, IB Chhetri, at Karmithang under West Pendum constituency today.

Rudra Mani Khanal provided land for the construction of the waiting shed which itself was constructed for Rs 3.50 lakh under the Gram Panchayat Development Plan 2019-20 of Central Pandam GPU.

The inauguration was also attended by Panchayat members from the nearby wards, residents and representatives from different organisations.



DC West chairs coordination meet on Jal Shakti Abhiyan

GYALSHING, 12 APR (IPR):

A coordination meeting pertaining to the implementation of Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) under West District was held at the Conference Hall of West District Zilla Panchayat Bhawan (WDZP), Kyongsha, Gyalshing, today.

The meeting was chaired by the District Collector West, Karma R. Bonpo alongwith ADCs (Development), Gyalshing and Soreng, Surat Kumar Gurung and Gaayas Pega, Additional Director/Education Department, K.C. Gyatso, Block Development Officers, Officials from various Line Departments and NGOs.

Addressing the house, District Collector West briefed about the signif-

icance of Jal Shakti Abhiyan and urged the BDOs to work in coordination with the various line departments to make this programme a success. He stressed on rain water harvesting and stated that rain water harvesting is the main motive of this programme. He also updated that the Forest Department plays a vital role and added that most of the perennial sources of water are located in forest areas.

He suggested to prepare District Water Conservation Plan as soon as possible to all BDOs and asked to implement it immediately before monsoon starts. He highlighted the measures of water conservation which can be adopted. He spoke about Dhara Vikas and asked to make it a priority.



He also touched upon mega projects under West District and asked to submit a report to figure out and implement at the earliest. He further asked for the possible ways of water harvesting on monsoon to recharge major lakes of west. He stated that water resources of urban areas also needs to be protect-

ed and added that protective measures should be identified.

He further asked that the BDOs are required to identify the areas per Block for adoption of Abhiyan. He directed Rural Development Department to look into the physicality of rain water harvesting and asked to implement demon-

strable models in some places especially in dry areas. He also directed the present officials to raise ample of awareness activities at large.

During the course of meeting, an interactive session was also conducted wherein feedback and suggestions were shared and issues were discussed at length.

'Administrative at your doorstep' initiative at Darap

GYALSHING, 12 APR [IPR]:

A day long administrative camp in regard to processing and on spot issuing of various certificates like Married, Unmarried, Employment, Age proof and others, along with the Land Revenue and Certificate of Identification / Residential Certificate related works was conducted at Darap GPK under 11 Darap Nambu GPU, today.

SDM (HQ), Anant Jain attended the camp and interacted with the general public whilst even informed them on various important procedures related to the District Collector's Office



for the procurement of the needed certificates. He even urged the present officials to assist the general public in every possible way to assert them with the hassle free administrative services

at the proximity.

The camp was organised under the initiative 'Administrative at your door steps' to sensitise the people residing in village areas who are not aware about various

documents required to obtain services like certificates, registration, Land related matters and other important works related to District Collector's Office.

The programme also

saw the presence of District Project Manager, District e-Governance Society, Pempa Tashi Tamang, Revenue Inspector, Deepa Sharma, Concerned Departmental Staffs from District Administrative Centre, Rabdentse, Panchayats and public at large.

It may be mention here that the same initiative would also be replicated in other GPUs to ensure the convenience of the public in the prevailing Covid-19 situation. Alongside camp, the first dose of Covid-19 vaccination drive was also carried out at the GPU premises under the supervision of the SDM, HQ.

"Modi ji, stop this eventbaazi. Vaccinate all who need it": Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI, 12 APR [PTI]:

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi today asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "stop holding events" and, instead, take steps to vaccinate everyone in the wake of the ferocious second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic sweeping the country. He also sought financial help for the poor to tide over the prevailing economic conditions.

In a video message posted on Twitter today, he reminded the Prime Minister of his promise to win the battle against the pandemic in 18 days.

"You got bells rung, thaalis banged, mobile-phone torches lit. Corona kept moving ahead. Now it is the second wave. And lakhs of people have turned victims of the disease," Mr Gandhi said in

the message.

"Now end this eventbaazi (propensity to hold events). Provide vaccines to those who need them. Stop exporting vaccines. And provide income support to our poor brothers and sisters. Thank you," he said.

The tweet accompanying the video carried a similar message saying the battle against "couldn't be won even after 385 days".

Mr Gandhi's message came on a day India saw the highest ever fresh number of Covid-19 cases being registered across the country at 1,68,912 and 904 pandemic-related deaths. The cumulative figure for the country now stands at 1,35,27,717 infections and 1,70,179 fatalities since Covid-19 hit India in January 2020.

Maharashtra postpones state board exams: "Your health is our priority"

MUMBAI, 12 APR [NDTV]:

Maharashtra has postponed the state board exams for classes 10 and 12 amid the Covid surge. The class 12 exams will now be held by the end of May and the class 10 exams in June, state School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad said today. The exact dates will be announced based on the developing situation, which the administration is monitoring, she said.

"The present circumstances are not conducive for holding exams. Your health is our priority," Ms Gaikwad said in a video message posted on Twitter today.

The decision to postpone the exams was based on consultations with various stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, elected representatives from

across parties, academicians, and tech giants, she said.

"During the consultations, various alternative assessment options were evaluated keeping the health, well-being and future of our students in mind. Postponing exams seemed to be the most pragmatic solution," she said, thanking Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray for "his guidance".

"We'll also be writing to the CBSE, ICSE, IB, Cambridge boards, requesting them to reconsider their exams dates," she said.

Maharashtra, already the worst affected state since the pandemic hit India in January 2020, is in the grips of a torrid revival of infections that has affected the entire country. Yesterday alone, the state recorded 63,294 new cases

and 349 deaths, taking its overall figure to 34,07,245 infections and 57,987 deaths.

Parts of the state are back to partial lockdowns and night-time curfews. Officials have already warned that if the situation does not improve, then the state may even consider a complete lockdown, which it is trying to avoid.

Amid the Covid-19 surge, thousands of students from across the country had earlier this month demanded that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) either cancel the board exams scheduled to be held in May or conduct them online. The board, however, refused saying adequate safety arrangements were being made for students who will be writing the exams.

TRIFED officials visit Namchi



NAMCHI, 12 APR (IPR):

A one-day visit under "Village and Digital Connect Drive" under Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana—a TRIFED (The Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India) scheme under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India was conducted in Namchi Sub-division on 09 Apr, 2021.

A press release informs that the team was accorded a traditional and a warm welcome by the Van Dhan Kend-

ras (MPCS's). The team consisted of Technical Assistant, Santosh TRIFED-Delhi, Senior Program Officer, Asif Ekbal, TRIFED-Guwahati, Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Indra Mani Adhikari, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies-Department of Cooperation, Atish Rai, Gangtok and Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies-South, DR Sharma along with other District Officials.

The team visited 3 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras under Namchi Sub-divi-

sion viz: Salghari MPCs Ltd, Sadam MPCs Ltd and Tanzi Bikmat MPCs Ltd under PMVDY-Namchi. The team interacted with the SHG members under the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras with regards to digitally connecting the members of the SHG's via emails, WhatsApp, and Video Conferences.

The team also inspected the various products displayed by the SHG's under the banner of the Van Dhan Kendras and appreciated the efforts of the SHG's.

ECOSS team visits Kamarey for organic farming tips



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 12 APR:

Members of Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim [ECOSS] and farmers today visited Kamarey, an organic model village near here, on an exposure trip.

The visit was part of

a project being funded by NABARD.

Around 40 farmers from Namcheybong were facilitated on the visit to the model integrated organic farm of CP Bhattarai.

The team was led by Research Assistant/Project Coordinator ECOSS,

Uden Lhamu Bhutia; CEO ECOSS, RP Gurung and former chairperson, Agriculture and Horticulture Board, DN Sapkota.

The visiting team interacted with the "organic man," CP Bhattarai, about organic farming and marketing.

Problem solved for water-scarce Gadi village



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 12 APR:

The residents of Gadi village have been suffering water scarcity for a while now. Not anymore. Thanks to the efforts of Central Pendum Gram Panchayat Unit the around 30 families which call Gadi their home,

now receive 500 litres of water pumped to their homes every day.

Panchayat President, Dronacharya Sapkota, accompanied by panchayat members Nanda Sharma, Bharat Chhetri, Lakshmi Rasaily and BDO Duga, IB Chhetri, inform that under this mission, they in-

stalled a water pump at a natural source in the area and four water pumps at the village.

These pumps have successfully been transporting water to the families.

The project was commissioned at an estimated cost of Rs 3 lakh.

Vaccines will last only 3 days: Kerala CM writes to Centre

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 12 APR [NDTV]:

Kerala's COVID-19 vaccine stock will last only three more days and the state needs at least 50 lakh doses, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said in a letter to Health Minister Harsh Vardhan. The letter by the Kerala Chief Minister comes amid a surge in COVID-19 cases across the country. Reports of hospitals in other states asking for more vaccine doses are becoming common as the lines of waiting people grow longer.

"Kerala is witnessing a rise in the number of Covid cases at present," Mr Vijayan wrote in the letter. "The stock (of vaccine) which is left with us is sufficient for conducting vaccination for the next three days only. This shortage of

vaccine has been brought to the notice of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare... We are yet to get any additional supply of Covid vaccine," the Chief Minister wrote.

He said Kerala has so far got over 56 lakh doses of Covid vaccine - some 54 lakh Covishield and over 2 lakh Covaxin, adding the state has used a little over 48 lakh doses till Sunday.

"I request you to allot additional 50 lakh doses of Covid vaccine to our state in the next couple of days so that our vaccination programme proceeds uninterrupted for successfully controlling the pandemic," Mr Vijayan said in the letter to the Health Minister.

Kerala reported 5,692 fresh Covid cases in the last 24

hours, taking the total infections to 11.72 lakh.

"Out of those found infected today, 188 reached the state from outside, while 5,088 contracted the disease from their contacts. The sources of infection of 393 are yet to be traced. Twenty-three health workers are also among the infected," state Health Minister KK Shailaja said in a statement, according to news agency PTI.

India on Monday overtook Brazil as the country with the second-highest number of infections, after logging more than 168,000 new cases in a single day. Several states have also warned of tougher restrictions unless the public keeps to social distancing and the wearing of masks.

Safe Motherhood Day observed at Manul

MANGAN, 12 APR [IPR]: National Safe Motherhood Day was observed at Manul, North Sikkim, today.

An awareness programme was organised by District Level Centre for Women (DLCW), Mahila Shakiti Kendra-North District.

The programme had the presence of Senior Auxillary Nurse Midwife (ANM), Palzom Bhutia (guest speaker), DCPO(N), Wendy Lepcha, OSC Centre Administrator, Sonam P Lepcha and the member of Panchayat.

Mrs Bhutia spoke on



the importance of colostrum, family planning, obstetrics care, nutritious diet, teenage preg-

nancy while Mrs Sonam spoke on the purpose of implementation of One Stop Centre and ex-

plained its functions.

Mrs Wendy talked about POSCO Act and the District Coordinator,

NHPC sprinkles Singtam bazaar road to settle dust



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 APR:

NHPC's Teesta Stage-V power station at Balutar arranged for sprinkling of the Main Bazaar

Road at Singtam on Monday to settle the dust there which had become a nuisance.

An NHPC press release informs that it de-

ployed a water tanker to the task as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives on the request of Singtam residents.

Record rise in daily cases in India, active cases surpass 12-lakh mark

NEW DELHI, APR 12 (PTI): India hit a new coronavirus infection record with 1,68,912 new cases, the highest single-day rise so far, taking the total tally of cases to 1,35,27,717, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday

The national COVID-19 recovery rate has fallen below 90 per cent

The active cases have surpassed the 12-lakh mark, while the death toll increased to 1,70,179 with 904 daily new fatalities, the highest since October 18, 2020, the data updated at 8 am showed

Registering a steady increase for the 33rd day in row, the active cases have increased to

12,01,009 comprising 8.88 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 89.86 per cent

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and it was at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,21,56,529, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.26 per cent, the data stated

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past

60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19

According to the ICMR, 25,78,06,986 samples have been tested up to April 11 with 11,80,136 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 904 new fatalities include 349 from Maharashtra, 122 from Chhattisgarh, 67 from Uttar Pradesh, 59 from Punjab, 54 from Gujarat, 48 from Delhi, 40 from Karnataka, 24 from Madhya Pradesh, 22 from Tamil Nadu, 21 from Jharkhand, 16 each from Kerala and Haryana and 10 each from Rajasthan

and West Bengal

A total of 1,70,179 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 57,987 from Maharashtra, 12,908 from Tamil Nadu, 12,889 from Karnataka, 11,283 from Delhi, 10,400 from West Bengal, 9,152 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,507 from Punjab and 7,300 from Andhra Pradesh

The health 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 is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Vegetables and Flowers exhibition for Damthang-Jaubari farmers



BIKAS CHETTRI

NAMCHI, 12 APR:

A two-day competition of vegetables and flowers began at IH-CAE here at Chemchey today exhibiting produce from the farms of Damthang-Jaubari GPU.

The competition

is being organised by ATMA, South Sikkim, in collaboration with Horticulture Department and Damthang Jaubari VAC. Damthang-Jaubari is part of the Saansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana initiative.

Farmers from

Damthang-Jaubari GPU displayed a range of vegetables, seasonal flowers, Cymbidium orchids and Azalea for competition. The exhibition received a good footfall of farmers from other blocks of South Sikkim.

The competition is being held in four categories viz., Vegetables, Cymbidiums, Azalea and Seasonal flowers.

Chairperson, Farmers' Welfare Board, Phurden Lepcha, was present as the chief guest today.

"Unconstitutional": Mamata Banerjee to sit on dharna over campaign ban

KOLKATA, 12 APR [NDTV]: Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will "protest the undemocratic and unconstitutional decision of the Election Commission" - to hand her a 48-hour ban - at noon tomorrow. The Chief Minister's sharp tweet came less than an hour after the poll body suspended her from campaigning - as she seeks to defeat the BJP in an election that is balanced on a knife's edge - over comments on Muslim votes and those allegedly urging a revolt against central security forces.

"To protest against the undemocratic and unconstitutional decision of the Election Com-

mission of India, I will sit on dharna tomorrow at Gandhi Murti (in) Kolkata from 12 noon," she tweeted late Monday night, hours after outgoing Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora issued his order.

Ms Banerjee's Trinamool Congress was more forceful in its critique of the order and the Commission, which it dubbed "Extremely Compromised"; party leader Derek O'Brien tweeted that swipe, and followed it up with: "April 12. BLACK DAY in our democracy".

Mamata Banerjee, 66, was served two notices last week.

She was asked to explain parts of election speeches made on March

28 and April 7, during both of which she allegedly accused central forces of intimidating voters and urged women to hit back.

"Who gave so much power to them that central police are threatening the women without allowing them to cast their votes..." she said in the March rally.

In the April speech she made what the Commission called "highly objectionable remarks" about the Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF).

She was also asked to explain comments "openly demanding votes on communal grounds".

Reacting to that notice, she said: "You (EC) can issue 10 show-cause

notices to me, but my reply will be the same. I will always speak against any division in Hindu, Muslim votes."

Ms Banerjee has a running feud with the Election Commission - which she has accused of ignoring transgressions by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and failing to maintain law and order - in this election.

She was earlier warned over a "factually incorrect" complaint about voting in Nandigram, where she faces her aide-turned-BJP rival Suvendu Adhikari in a high-profile contest.

The results of the eight-phase Bengal election will be declared May 2.

Sputnik V approved by experts, third vaccine for India

NEW DELHI, 12 APR [NDTV]: Russia's Covid vaccine Sputnik V has been recommended for use in India by a committee of experts as the country battles a record spike in virus cases in the country. If approved by regulator DCGI, this will be the third vaccine to be used in India after Serum Institute of India's Covishield - developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca - and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Sputnik V, manufactured in India by Dr Reddy's, has the highest effectiveness - 91.6 per cent -- after the Moderna and Pfizer shots. Dr Reddy's had applied on February 19 for emergency use of

the vaccine, which is in Phase 3 of clinical trials in India.

After the Subject Expert Committee (SEC)'s recommendation, the vaccine has to be greenlit by the Drug Controller General of India before it can be widely used to inoculate citizens. Sputnik V is on track for clearance amid complaints of vaccine shortage from many states, especially Maharashtra, the epicenter of the second surge.

In its last meeting on April 1, the experts' committee had asked Dr Reddy's to submit data on how the shot activates the body's immune response against

the coronavirus.

The panel had also asked unblinded data of all the serious adverse events; "unblinded" means when subjects know whether the shot administered to them was the vaccine or a placebo. A comparative analysis of phase III data generated on the Indian and Russian studies at various times was also sought.

In India, Sputnik V trials are on for around 1,600 people between 18 and 99.

The vaccine is also in trials in the UAE, Venezuela and Belarus.

Sputnik V, named after the first Soviet Space satellite, works on the principle of a weakened Covid virus

delivering parts of a pathogen that triggers an immune response in the body.

The two-dose vaccine, developed by Russia's Gamaleya Institute, costs less than \$10 for each shot in international markets.

The dry form of the vaccine can be stored at 2 to 8 degrees.

The clearance has come on a day India recorded 1,68,912 new Covid cases in 24 hours, the sixth record rise in seven days, pushing the country's caseload to over 1.35 crore.

Government officials have reportedly said five more vaccines will be in use in India by October.

NEW DELHI, 12 APR [NDTV]: Amid a worrying spike in coronavirus cases across the country, the demand for cancellation of offline examinations for Class 10 and 12 board examinations has been growing rapidly.

A parents' association has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting CBSE, state boards and others to evaluate students via internal assessment instead of physical examinations.

The India Wide Parents Association also added in their letter that as teachers and students have not been vaccinated yet, there is a higher chance of infection. The letter also claimed that medical infrastructure across the country is col-

lapsing.

Adding that many countries have apparently opted for internal assessment for the safety of students, the letter said, "I therefore request you to kindly intervene and discuss with all the state governments and adopt a uniform mode of assessment to save their future and academic year."

Days ago, over one lakh students of classes 10 and 12 signed petitions urging the government to either cancel board exams scheduled to be held in May or conduct them online.

However, both the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) have said that adequate safety

Memorial Service



Dhurva Rai (DOB-15 Jul, 1987), son of JB Rai and Shova Rai, bid his final adieu on 09 Apr, 2021.

The memorial service for the deceased will be kept at his residence: Lingding Basti, ICAR Road, Tadong, Gangtok, Sikkim on 13 Apr, 2021 from 11:00am onwards.

Kindly contact the following numbers for further information:

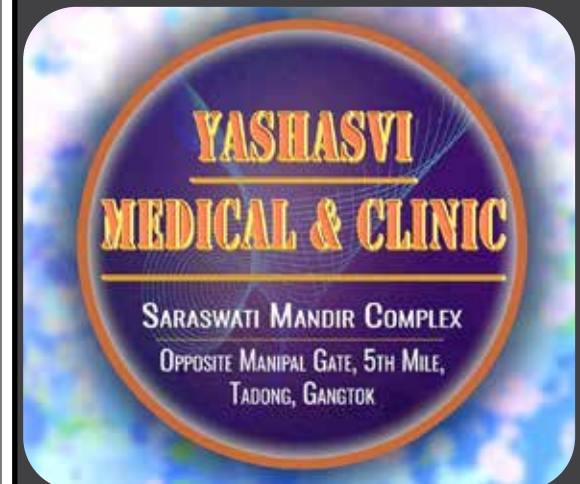
Baunty Rai: 8348688367 (Brother).

Shova Rai: 9593883387 (Mother)

Joshua: 8170875419 (Sister in law).

TIME; 11:00am onwards.

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Urban Woes

There is a lot that is beyond repair, but some things can still be salvaged

For a town that has been a capital for little over a century but has ‘developed’ (read expanded) only in the past three decades, Gangtok is a frightfully ill-planned hill top. Monsoons invariably leave behind calling cards ranging from the disastrous 1997 slides to routine reminders in the form of a flooded highway, scratched hillsides, slipping foundation walls and storm-drain grills exploding out of their fitments and barreling down the highway. Living in a region that signs in at Zone IV on the earthquake expectancy chart and then clocks in rainfall that can leave Cherapunji blushing at times, Gangtok residents knew what they were aspiring for when they chased files to get sites allotted and offered sheepish explanations when the construction concrete digressed extensively from the original blueprint. There is no way that nature can be made to behave any differently from the way it wants to, but better planning and effective monitoring can keep human indulgence in check and even succeed in keeping even a safety-challenged town like Gangtok safe.

If Gangtok habitations are unsafe, they are so as much because of the unsteady slopes of the hill they have been built on as they are because of the short-sighted decisions that the eighties and nineties are littered with. Few other places carry the ignominy of a building collapsing in an area marked out as a ‘Development Area’ or live with national highways which narrow into single-lane passages and lose blacktop with the briefest of showers. For a town that expanded much after ideas of town-planning had become the norm, Gangtok is frightfully littered with habitations, which, while they are most exposed to risk, are also most inaccessible to rescue and evacuation.

Unfortunately, there is very little that can be done for Gangtok anymore except sending up prayers to keep disasters at bay; fortunately, other towns in Sikkim that are ‘expanding’ even as the monsoons advance still have a fighting chance. District towns like Namchi, Gyalshing, even Rabongla and Singtam, are, however, replicating the Gangtok curve of development. These towns have already reported frightful stories of buildings growing into High Tension cables and continuing with excavations even though the slopes have announced they won’t tolerate any more ‘cutting’, but there is still hope for them. Most of these growing towns now have Nagar Panchayats and municipal councils for themselves. One hopes that these bodies will eventually become about more than just situation-required [politically-correct and aid agency-friendly] receptacles for development funds. One hopes that these urban bodies are run by people who understand urbanisation and respect the virtues of planning. One hopes that the elected members of these bodies don’t forever remain busy playing chief guests and also spend some sessions brainstorming on how to develop their areas as safe zones for habitation.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence.

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Netflix’s big bet on foreign content and international viewers could upend the global mediascape – and change how people see the world

PAOLO SIGISMONDI
THECONVERSATION.COM

As a kid growing up in Italy, I remember watching the American TV series “Happy Days,” which chronicled the 1950s-era Midwestern adventures of the Fonz, Richie Cunningham and other local teenagers.

The show, combined with other American entertainment widely available in Italy in the 1970s and 1980s, shaped my perception of the United States long before I ever set foot in the country. Today, I call the U.S. home, and I have developed my own understanding of its complexities. I am able to see “Happy Days” as a nostalgic revival of an ideal, conflict-free American small town.

“Happy Days” was a product of Hollywood, which is arguably still the epicenter of the global entertainment industry. So recent news that the streaming service Netflix is opening an Italian office and will begin massively funding original local content with the intent of distributing it globally on its platform – following a strategy already launched in other European countries – struck me.

This could be a potentially game-changing move in global entertainment. And it might even change how the world perceives, well, the world.

LEARNING BY WATCHING

I have explored the global media landscape from the privileged vantage point of Los Angeles for the past 15 years.

TV and movies are one way that people, as we go through life, make sense of the world, building on the archive of our personal experiences and opinions of other places.

Absent direct experience with a people or nation, we speculate on what we do not know. This process involves a variety of sources, including reading, Googling and accounts from somebody we trust. But often it is media that exposes people to other cultures, above and beyond our own.

TV and movies fill the knowledge gaps with powerful images and stories that inform the way we think about different cultures. If the media’s messages have consistency over time, we may come to understand these as facts.

But media portrayals may well be inaccurate. Certainly, they are incomplete. That’s because movies and TV series aren’t necessarily meant to depict reality; they are designed for entertainment.

As a result, they can be misleading, if not biased, based on and perpetuating stereotypes.

For example, there is no shortage of Italian and Italian American stereotypes in American entertainment. From the award-winning “Godfather” saga to the less critically acclaimed “Jersey Shore” TV series, Italians are often depicted as tasteless, uneducated, linked to organized crime – or all three.

MEDIA IS A WINDOW TO THE WORLD

But the way people are exposed to media entertainment is changing. Today streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV+ and Disney+ collectively have 1 billion subscribers globally.

Being a relative newcomer in producing original content, Netflix cannot rely on a large library of proprietary content to feed its 204 million paid members in over 190 countries,

as legacy Hollywood players can. So it is increasingly creating original productions, including a number of non-English language originals from places such as Mexico, France, Italy, Japan and Brazil.

We might call this an example of “glocalization of entertainment” – a company operating globally, adapting its content to meet the expectations of locally situated audiences across the world.

This is already the modus operandi, for example, of many popular reality TV shows. “American Idol” is an American adaptation of Europe’s “Pop Idol.” “The X Factor,” “Big Brother” and “Dancing with the Stars” have similarly international origins.

Now, however, glocalization comes with a twist: Netflix intends to distribute its localized content internationally, beyond the local markets.

It is not the global reach of Netflix’s platform per se that would break down old stereotypes. French critics panned the American-produced, internationally distributed Netflix series “Emily in Paris” for its clichéd, romanticized portrayal of the city.

Foreign TV executives must create shows for Netflix that both appeal to local audiences and have international potential, while remaining authentic in their portrayal of their country. If Netflix’s Italian team thinks “The Godfather” is what international audiences expect from Italy, international audiences may tune in – but Italians won’t.

To become truly international, Netflix would also have to foster the development of original local ideas not only in European countries with well-developed cultural industries

but also in smaller countries and those with emerging entertainment industries, such as African nations.

NETFLIX’S OPPORTUNITY – AND CHALLENGE

A side effect of this strategy could be that Netflix upends the traditional way that media informs our understanding of foreign people and lands by more accurately representing these places.

But that’s a tall order, and it’s not, of course, guaranteed.

Netflix’s transformative potential comes from allowing local creatives to tell stories about their own cultures and then distributing them truly internationally. It will depend on the company’s willingness to implement this strategy in a consistent, sustained, inclusive and thoughtful fashion.

Over time, widespread exposure to a diverse array of international media content might change the way people in the U.S. and worldwide think and feel about other cultures they have never, and may never, come into direct contact with.

All it takes is one click – one choice to watch, perhaps even unknowingly, a foreign-produced series.

The way Netflix works, using algorithms to suggest content as viewers make selections, can prolong an initial exposure to and interest in foreign content. Artificial intelligence meant to feed us more of what we like may end up a surprising force for change, making us rethink what we thought we knew.

[the writer is Clinical Professor of Communication, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism]

Anxious about going out into the world? You’re not alone, but there’s help

CLAUDIA FINKELSTEIN
THECONVERSATION.COM

It’s the moment we thought we were all waiting for...or is it? We were cautiously optimistic about the end of the pandemic in view of increasing vaccine availability and decreasing case numbers after the peak in January.

Then, whether due to variants, pandemic fatigue or both, cases and case positivity began to increase again – throwing into question whether the end was as near as we thought. This is merely one of the most recent of the many reversals.

I am a physician and associate professor of medicine at Michigan State University’s College of Human Medicine. In my role as the director of wellness, resiliency and vulnerable populations, I speak with staff and faculty members who may need a sympathetic ear or may be struggling.

Amid the happiness and relief that people are feeling, I also see confusion and some fear. Some people are wary of going out again, and others are eager to throw a party. Some learned that they like being alone and do not want to stop nesting. I think this is all normal from a year of what I call the zigzag pandemic.

CHANGE AFTER CHANGE

Awareness of the novel coronavirus for most of us rose between January – when the first cases in China were reported – and March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization officially declared a pandemic. Since the declaration, daily uncertainty and contradictory information has been the norm.

First, no masks were needed. Then you had to wear a mask. Hydroxychloroquine looked promising and got emergency use authorization, but that was revoked fairly quickly and officials said not only was there no benefit but there was some potential harm.

We were transiently afraid of groceries, packages and surfaces. Then data emerged that surfaces were not as dangerous as previously thought.

In the absence of a coordinated national policy, states began

to fend for themselves, creating their own policies regarding shutdowns and masks. Even now, there is state-by-state variability in which businesses may be open and at what capacity and whether masks are required, suggested or neither.

Both inevitable and avoidable factors played into the back-and-forth. Part of the whiplash is due to the “novel” part of the novel coronavirus, or SARS-CoV-2. This virus is new and many of its characteristics unknown, leading to policy revisions becoming necessary as more becomes known.

Part of the zigzag is due to the nature of clinical trials and the nature of the way scientific knowledge emerges. Learning about a new pathogen requires time and the willingness to challenge initial assumptions. Part is due to the lack of a reliable source of information trusted to act in our collective best interests and a lack of preparedness.

Given the reversals behind us and uncertainty ahead, we need to examine both individual and societal responses moving forward.

DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

There is no question that all of our lives have changed. However, the ways in which they have changed has varied widely. The variation depends on our jobs – think of the differences for grocery store, tech and health care workers – our living situations, our underlying physical and mental health, our financial status and our personalities, just to begin with.

For example, some introverts have been fortunate enough to work remotely in comfortable clothes with broadband internet and no children to educate, while their extroverted colleagues have longed for more social connection. Their colleagues with young children and jobs that could not be done remotely have been scrambling. Many have hit the wall and find themselves adrift and unmotivated, while others have seemingly thrived doing long-postponed projects.

Nearly everyone has been affected in some way. A recent systematic review concluded that the pandemic is associated with highly significant levels of psychological distress, particularly in certain higher-risk groups.

As individuals, what can help us get through this?

WHAT WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES

First, we can begin by making a fearless assessment of our current reality – the state of now. Sometimes making an actual list of our needs and assets can help us to prioritize next steps. Steps may be visiting a community health center, a virtual therapist, a job fair or even something as simple as carrying a printable wallet card with stress reduction tips.

What might work for you might not work for your spouse, partner or best friend. We need to be doing whatever is known to foster resilience in ourselves and our family members.

This includes making human connections, moving our bodies and learning to regulate our emotions. Looking back at how we handled past difficulties may help us. Mental health concerns have become more common, and evidence on overall impact of the pandemic on mental health is still being collected.

There has been increased public awareness about these issues, and telehealth has eased access for some seeking help. Our society – individuals as well as institutions – needs to continue to work to make it acceptable for people to get mental health care without worrying about stigma.

Deciding which of your normal activities you wish to resume and which to let go of helps you to prepare for the future. So does noting which new activities you’d like to hold on to. These lists potentially include attending family or sporting events, traveling, going to the gym or live worship. You may choose to continue to cook at home or work from home if you have the

choice. Of course, all of these choices should be made in accordance with CDC guidelines.

And then there are things we may not want to do. That can include behaviors we learned about during the pandemic that don’t make us feel good or serve us well. That may include watching too much news, drinking too much alcohol and not getting enough sleep. And yes, maybe there are some relationships that need changing or reworking.

Then, we need to think about what we can do on a level larger than the individual.

SOCIETAL AND GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES

For many people, it feels futile to address individual resilience without addressing what feels like a rigged system.

The pandemic hit at a particularly politically polarized time and a particularly unprepared time. This was unfortunate, because fighting a common adversary – such as polio or a world war – can unite a population.

In contrast, the coronavirus was subject to multiple conflicting interpretations and even doubt about its severity. Rather than rallying together against the virus, our adherence to mandates became a surrogate for our political beliefs.

Now that longstanding inequities have been highlighted by differential infection, hospitalization and mortality rates by race, political and public health officials can begin a careful analysis of the gaps in health care coverage by race.

While examining how to effectively address longstanding disparities is crucial, so is being prepared for the next pandemic. A coordinated nonpartisan, science-based health infrastructure prepared to rapidly roll out emergency responses as well as consistent clear messaging would be vital. However, without a population willing to consider collective good ahead of individual freedom, we run the risk of repeating history.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Medicine, Michigan State University]

Another Assam Mahajot ally moves candidates to "safe location"

GUWAHATI, 12 APR [PTI]: Bodoland leader Hagrama Mohillary's party has become the second Assam opposition outfit to move out its candidates -- at least 10 of them besides some top leaders -- from the state for fear of being poached by the BJP. Part of the Congress-led Mahajot, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) is keeping the whereabouts of its contestants under wrap, for now, its top leaders have confirmed. The move came days after the Badruddin Ajmal-led All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) shifted out 18 of its own to Jaipur, Rajasthan.

"They (the candidates) have left Assam. I have also heard they are out of India, but I cannot say where, as I have not been able to get in touch with them," BPF veteran Pramila Rani Brahma told reporters in Kokrajhar.



Party sources have said that a dozen elected BPF members of the Bodoland Territorial Council, where it is the largest party, have also been move out. The Congress, which is in power in Rajasthan, has already stowed away three of its candidates to a Jaipur luxury hotel.

Ahead of the third phase of the Assam As-

sembly polls last Tuesday, the BPF's Tamulpur constituency candidate, Rangja Khungur Basumatary, pledged his support to the BJP and campaigned for rival United People's Party Liberal.

"It's now a trend since the BJP tries to break the Congress after losing elections. So they (allies) want to take guard," Congress

spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala had said earlier.

Assam, where the BJP came to power in the 2016 election, voted for a new government in three phases between March 27 and April 6. The results are due on May 2 along with those for polls in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry.

Mother of Bihar cop, allegedly lynched during Bengal raid, dies of shock

KISHANGANJ, 12 APR [PTI]: Elderly mother of the Bihar police officer who was allegedly beaten to death by a mob during a raid in West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district the previous day, died due to shock Sunday, family and police sources said.

The mother could not bear the loss of her son and died at home in Abhyaram Chakla panchayat under Jankinagar police station area of Kishanganj district this morning.

Both were cremated during the day in the village amid protest by the fellow villagers.

Meanwhile, on the instruction of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Purnea range, Suresh Chaudhary, seven policemen who had gone to the West Bengal village with the policeman in connection with a motorcycle theft case but ran away when attacked, have been suspended.



Superintendent of police Kumar Ashish ordered their suspension on the DIG instruction for dereliction of duty.

The dastardly incident had happened in Pantapada village in the Goalpokhar police station area of Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal after Friday midnight when Ashwini Kumar, the Station House Officer of Kishanganj police station in Bihar, was leading a raid in connection with a mo-

torcycle theft case.

Mr Kumar was in the village with a police team to apprehend the accused in the case that was registered in the Kishanganj police station, officials said.

However, he was surrounded by a mob and allegedly thrashed, they said.

Later, a team of police personnel from the Panjipara outpost rescued him and took him to the Islampur Sadar Hospital where doctors declared

him brought dead, they said.

The West Bengal Police has arrested three persons in connection with the incident. They have been identified as Firoze Alam, Abuzar Alam and Sahinur Khatoon, officials said.

Uttar Dinajpur in West Bengal and Kishanganj in Bihar share a border.

Mr Kumar had joined Bihar Police in 1994 and was transferred to Kishanganj a year ago.

61 students test positive in IIM-Calcutta's worst COVID outbreak

KOLKATA, 12 APR [NDTV]: As many as 61 students at the prestigious Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta have tested positive for the coronavirus since April 2 and are currently in isolation on campus.

Two buildings in which every single-occupancy room has an attached toilet have been earmarked for the students who started reporting symptoms since the end of March.

Three doctors are in charge and the institute has tied up with top Kolkata hospitals for regular guidance on home care.

More than 570 students have left the campus since the beginning of April. Some 335 are still on campus, including the 61 students in isolation.

"Thankfully all the students have mild symptoms, no one has



had to be hospitalised and all emergency measures like oxygen cylinders and ambulances are in place in case of any problem," said Professor Prashant Mishra who is president of IIM-C's COVID-19 committee.

For months now, IIM-C has had strict rules in place about entry into the campus for students. All students returning to campus were supposed to come with RT-PCR negative reports which they did. By mid-January, almost all of over 900 students were back on campus

and at the time of entry, they were all negative.

There is a possibility that someone contracted the coronavirus in transit and may have spread it.

But the most likely cause of this outbreak are the Holi celebrations by the students "violating all IMC advisories", according to sources.

"There must have been some person who was positive and it spread," sources said.

Seven students reported positive on April 2, six more on 4th, 12 on 5th and 19 on April 6, which was the worst

breakout.

The rest of the cases were reported in the subsequent days and results of some 30 more tests are awaited.

IIM-C authorities say every possible precaution is being taken. Civic and health departments of the government have been contacted to keep the state in the loop and get help and advice on handling the situation. A sanitisation drive is on.

According to sources, IIM Ahmedabad and Bangalore have also had reports of Covid. Ahmedabad students apparently tested positive after they went to watch an India-England cricket match.

Battling a ferocious second wave of infections, India is undergoing its worst phase of the coronavirus and overtook Brazil on Monday for the second spot in the tally of nations with the highest cases.

Foreign investment pledges fall 12.7 percent in Nepal as India's commitment slumps

KRISHANA PRASAIN KATHMANDU, 12 APR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Foreign direct investment pledges in Nepal dropped by double-digit, falling 12.68 percent year-on-year in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, largely because commitment from Nepal's immediate neighbour India slumped.

While investment commitment from China topped the list of foreign investment source countries, increasing slightly compared to the same period last fiscal year, the year-on-year investment from India dropped by a whopping 81 percent.

Nepali officials said that investors around the world are still in a "wait and watch" mode due to the second and third waves of the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, unfolding political uncertainty in the country has complicated things, they said.

According to the Department of Industry, the country received foreign direct investment pledges of Rs26.04 billion in the review period (mid-July 2020 to mid-April 2020). This investment has been pledged for 140 different projects and services.

In the same period last fiscal year, Nepal had received investment pledges of Rs29.87 billion.

China leads the investment commitments to Nepal. The country received 107 foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments of Rs18.45 billion from China in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, which amounts to more than 70 percent of the investment commitments.

In the same period last fiscal year, investment pledges from China stood at Rs18.24 billion.

Jiblal Bhusal, director



general at the Department of Industry, said that investors from China have been eying investment in sectors like hotel, restaurant and cargo.

Investment pledges from India have dropped significantly. Nepal received investment pledges of Rs586 million from Indian investors for seven different projects and services in the first nine months of the current fiscal year. According to the department, in the first nine months of the last fiscal year, Indian investors' investment commitment to Nepal was Rs3.13 billion.

"As India has been highly impacted from Covid-19 and the second wave of the pandemic has started, the investors are cautious. It seems investment from India will take time to recover or even decline in coming months," Bhusal said.

The country has received investment pledges of Rs15.56 billion in the tourism sector for 79 different projects, 15 foreign investment pledges of Rs2.44 billion in the manufacturing sector, 34 foreign pledges of Rs5.18 billion in the service sector.

According to a World Bank report published recently, Nepal will observe a slow recovery in the ongoing fiscal year 2020-21 which is expected to boost the economic growth rate to 2.7 percent.

The report, however, has warned that there is

a risk that political uncertainty, if prolonged, may undermine investment sentiment.

"Sources of risk to the outlook include possible new waves of Covid-19, as well as increased political uncertainties, following the dissolution of Parliament's lower house in December 2020 and the Supreme Court's February 2021 decision to reinstate it," said the report which included activities till March 25, 2021.

Despite the drop this fiscal year, Bhusal said the government is optimistic that foreign investment commitment would recover to the last fiscal year's level, based on the inquiries from investors, if Nepal is not impacted by the second wave of coronavirus.

"We have foreign investment proposals worth Rs5-6 billion in the pipeline in different sectors like hydropower, hotels. We still have three months remaining for the current fiscal year to end and there are other inquiries."

The department received foreign investment pledges of around Rs38 billion in the last fiscal year 2019-20 that ended mid-July 2020.

"We have fast-tracked the projects that are in pipeline and initiated a necessary follow-up for those who are facing documentation hassles," said Bhusal.

"To make the environment for foreign in-

vestors conducive, the government has made some improvement on the policy, regulation and Act."

The government had issued a new regulation three months ago under the Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act (FITTA) to facilitate foreign investment.

The regulation, announced on January 11, has provisioned that foreign investors in Nepal need to bring 70 percent of their proposed investment before beginning operations, and the rest in the next two years.

The FITTA was amended in 2019, and the regulation was introduced to define it with greater clarity.

He said that the government has already introduced a one-window system to facilitate foreign investment. The Investment Board of Nepal is also working on the facilitation measures.

Nepal aims to become a middle-income country and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. But the current level of investment is not enough for the country to reach the middle-income stage from the current low-income status as targeted, according to a World Bank.

One of the major sources of bridging the financing gap is foreign direct investment, but Nepal is among the countries attracting the lowest amount of investment in recent years.

SI canes restaurant patrons, staff; video-clip gos viral

COIMBATORE, APR 12 (PTI): A sub-inspector was on Monday transferred to the police control room after a video purportedly showing him beating up the staff and customers of a restaurant went viral in the social media.

The visuals showed the sub-inspector, attached to Kattoor Police Station, entering the

restaurant at 10.20 PM on Sunday and beating with a baton the staff and a few customers, citing the restaurant's violation of COVID-19 restrictions.

A woman, belonging to a group of five travellers from Hosur, received minor injuries, the police sources said.

The restaurateur lodged a complaint that

the sub-inspector had come to the hotel at 10 PM and asked him to down shutter as senior police officials were on night rounds, the sources said.

Even as the remaining customers were finishing their meal with the shutters half down, the sub-inspector rushed in and started beating up the staff and

the customers, including women, despite the government order that restaurants can operate till 11 PM with 50 per cent capacity.

Based on the complaint, the police commissioner ordered the transfer of the sub-inspector to the control room and also an inquiry into the incident, they said.

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Clinical KKR hope to get it right against nemesis MI

CHENNAI, APR 12 (PTI): Fresh from their clinical display against Sunrisers Hyderabad, two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to set the record straight against nemesis Mumbai Indians in their second IPL match here on Tuesday.

Having missed the last two playoffs, KKR looked a completely different unit, in the manner in which they defeated SRH by 10 runs in their IPL opener here on Sunday.

Be it the aggression shown by the top-order or the explosive finish by Dinesh Karthik, KKR's displayed a fearless approach under skipper Eoin Morgan.

Morgan's intent was evident right at the toss when he chose to leave out their most-trusted lieutenant, Sunil Narine.

The left-right opening combination of Nitish Rana and Shubman Gill started to attack right from the first ball, clearly indicating that the new approach had Morgan's success mantra written all over it.

Boasting of a solid middle-order in Andre Russell, Karthik and Morgan, 2020 was a season of promise for KKR but some rudderless planning did not help their cause.

This time KKR have further bolstered their middle-order by adding Bangladesh superstar Shakib Al Hasan, while Morgan, in his full season



as skipper, gives a new dimension to the side.

Rana's deft wrist work and brute power was on full display on Sunday and it ensured that they stayed ahead despite Rashid Khan's twin blows in the form of Gill and Russell.

After Rana's 56-ball 80, it was underfire Karthik who hit an unbeaten 22-run cameo from nine balls to propel KKR to a winning total of 187 for 6.

And KKR would look to come out all guns blazing against the five-time champions on Tuesday. They have won just once in their last 12 games against MI, and have an overall lopsided 6-21 head-to-head record.

But eventually it will all boil down to battle of wits between Morgan and Rohit Sharma, under whose captaincy MI

has won a record fifth IPL title last season in UAE.

MI will pose real challenge for KKR as the title holders would be desperate to secure their first win of the season after their two-wicket loss to Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL opener on Friday.

KRR found it easy against SRH bowlers, which lacked firepower but in Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult, MI attack will be a completely different proposition.

Gill's struggle to bat at T20 pace has been a concern for KKR and it will be interesting to see the young opener's approach against the finest in the business.

Often known as slow starters, MI lost the other day due to individual brilliance of RCB's Harshal Patel and AB de

Villiers on a two-paced wicket here.

In his debut match for MI, Chris Lynn was their top-scorer, albeit with some stroke of luck as he survived some edges and mishits.

If Quinton de Kock is still in quarantine, MI may have to persist with Lynn at the top, otherwise they may go back to their preferred left-right opening combination of Rohit and de Kock.

MI's explosive middle-order consisting Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and the Pandya brothers -- Hardik and Krunal -- also failed to fire to be restricted to 159 for nine.

Squads (from): Kolkata Knight Riders: Eoin Morgan (c), Dinesh Karthik, Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Kuldeep Yadav, Shi-

vam Mavi, Lockie Ferguson, Pat Cummins, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Rahul Tripathi, Varun Chakravarthy, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Harbhajan Singh, Karun Nair, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer, Pawan Negi.

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma (c), Suryakumar Yadav, Anmolpreet Singh, Chris Lynn, Saurabh Tiwary, Dhawal Kulkarni, Jasprit Bumrah, Rahul Chahar, Trent Boult, Mohsin Khan, Hardik Pandya, Jayant Yadav, Kieron Pollard, Krunal Pandya, Anukul Roy, Ishan Kishan, Quinton de Kock, Aditya Tare, Adam Milne, Nathan Coulter Nile, Piyyush Chawla, James Neesham, Yuvraj Chahal, Marco Jansen, Arjun Tendulkar.

Match starts: 7.30pm IST.

Besides Kohli, the RCB batting line-up also features experienced campaigners like AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell. Padikkal said he can't wait to pick their brains.

"...batting with them (seniors) just takes pressure of you. They are so good at what they do and they just make your job easier, know exactly what to do in every situation. So, it's important that I just make sure I am learning as much as possible," he said.

With India witnessing an exponential surge in COVID-19 cases, the ongoing IPL is being held behind closed doors.

Padikkal hoped that the situation would improve for the fans to come back to the grounds.

"It's definitely better with the fans because the energy they bring to the ground is something unimaginable. It would have been better with the fans in the ground and hopefully sooner than later it will happen.

Hardik had shoulder concern but will bowl soon: Zaheer



CHENNAI, APR 12 (PTI): Hardik Pandya did not bowl in Mumbai Indians' lung-opener on Friday due to a shoulder concern but the India all-rounder will soon contribute in team's cause with ball in his hand, team's Director of Cricket Operations Zaheer Khan said on Monday.

Mumbai Indians, the five-time champions, lost their opening game to Royal Challengers Bangalore by two wickets.

"Hardik, as a whole package is always of great value, everyone knows that. It was a workload related thing in the previous game," Zaheer said at the pre-match conference ahead of their game against Kolkata Knight Riders.

"He bowled in the whole England series, in the last ODI he bowled about nine overs and that is why in consultation with the physio, we had to take that approach.

"There was a little bit of a shoulder concern but I don't think it is worrisome. You will see him bowl very soon. We are very confident that he will be chipping in with the ball in his hand as well," added Zaheer, a former left-arm pacer himself.

Zaheer also said that West Indian all-rounder Kieron Pollard was the team's sixth bowling option.

"Pollard is our sixth bowling option. In that

department we are not very concerned. You have to just adapt and adjust.

"This year's format is a different format. So, from that point of view, we need to have that adaptability and flexibility around the squad as well, with different places, not playing in your home ground, which is what we accept and planning accordingly with regard to the season ahead," he added.

According to Zaheer, South African opener Quinton De Kock is available for the game on Tuesday.

"Quinton is out of his quarantine. He did a practice session yesterday with the team. He is looking forward to the season. He will be available for tomorrow's game," said Zaheer.

Zaheer also heaped praise on wicket-keeper batsman Ishan Kishan and said he has flourished since the last season's game against Royal Challengers Bangalore, where he played a splendid knock.

"Ishan Kishan is looking assured now. When you are growing as a cricketer, when you are trying to make that impact at the highest level, you know you have that tipping point and with Ishan last year was that tipping point when he played that knock against RCB," explained Zaheer.

"He (Kishan) just

flourished from there and he is in the same zone and going about doing his business, making sure he is continuing with those processes and spending enough time in the nets and trying to better himself," he said.

Mumbai Indians' hard-hitting Australian batsman Chris Lynn made a quick-fire 49 in the lung-opener. Now that Quinton will be available, it's still not clear if Lynn will keep his place.

"It is a good headache to have as a management, like I was earlier saying we are lucky and fortunate to have such a squad where people are waiting to grab those opportunities, and pushing each other, so that's the exciting part."

Zaheer also described pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah as their trump card and said he was someone, who could turn the game at any stage.

Asked whether Bumrah should have bowled earlier in the last game against RCB, Zaheer quipped, "You can't set a pattern to use a trump card, you have to use trump card in an aggressive manner, when you are really need it."

"And that was the discussion and that is generally the process around Jasprit. He is someone who can turn the game at any stage and we use him accordingly," he signed off.

Confident Padikkal wants to take domestic form into IPL 2021

CHENNAI, APR 12 (PTI): The "setback" called COVID-19 behind him, Royal Challengers Bangalore opener Devdutt Padikkal says he is now completely ready to play his part in the IPL and confident of replicating his stupendous domestic form in the ongoing league.

Padikkal contracted the deadly virus on March 22 and was in isolation, but has since completely recovered and resumed practice with his RCB teammates.

"COVID was a setback. I wish that it didn't happen but that's something I couldn't control...I had to accept the way it was and just make sure that I kept myself fit so that when I come back I can be ready for the game," he said in a video posted on RCB's Twitter handle.

"Right now I am completely fine, most importantly I am able to move around well, I am able to react to balls and that's the most important part...in IPL you always have to be ready,



you always have to be 100 per cent in every situation. Unless you are 100 per cent, you can't really push yourself."

The 20-year-old Karnataka left-hander was RCB's highest run-getter in IPL 2020 with 473 runs from 15 matches, including five half-centuries in what was his debut season.

Padikkal continued rich form in the last Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (218 runs at an average of 43.60 in six matches) and Vijay Hazare Trophy (737 runs in

seven matches).

"...last IPL was amazing for me. It was such a great experience and exposure for me, the opportunities I got and the fact that I was able to contribute to the side is all that matters in the end.

"Mushtaq Ali was decent, not up to what I was expecting and in Vijay Hazare I was just looking to get back into my rhythm and focus on what I am doing and really improve my game every time I went out to bat.

"It was really great

to have the runs behind me, so coming into IPL, I know that I am confident," Padikkal said.

Having missed RCB's two-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in this year's IPL opener, Padikkal is expected to feature in his side's second game against Kolkata Knight Riders here on April 18.

And the young batsman can't wait to open along side skipper Virat Kohli when the opportunity comes.

"Definitely, it's something new...I am definitely looking forward to that," he said.

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Dubai parts with curtain covers for restaurants in Ramadan

DUBAI, APR 12 (AP): Dubai is parting with a longstanding requirement that restaurants be covered by curtains in the daytime during Ramadan to shield the sight of food from people fasting.

The move, announced Sunday by the city-state's Economic Development Department, is the latest change aimed at boosting tourism in the autocratically ruled Muslim nation.

Restaurants will be allowed to serve customers without putting in place curtains, dividers or facades as has been the mandatory practice previously, the state-run WAM news agency said.

The new circular replaces circulars issued in previous years that have required restaurants to block dining areas from the sight of those who are fasting.

The new rules also don't require restaurants to obtain special permits to serve food during sunlight hours as well.

During Ramadan, Muslims observing the holy month abstain from food and drink even water during the day. Muslims traditionally break the daylong Ramadan fast with their first sips of water and their evening meal, called iftar.

Among Gulf Arab states, home to large, non-Muslim expatriate populations, most require curtains be put up to block the sight of food from those fasting. Eating and drinking in public also could bring fines and legal trouble.

Dubai, one of the seven sheikhdoms in the United Arab Emirates, long has been a tourism destination for those wanting beaches, shopping and partying in this skyscraper-studded city. However, Ramadan always represented a slower period due to its restrictions.

In recent years, hoping to boost tourism as Ramadan will be marked during its crucial winter months, Dubai has started to change. In 2016, Dubai loosened rules prohibiting daytime alcohol sales.

Norway charges man over thwarted attacks in London, Denmark

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK (AP): A man has been charged in Norway for his alleged role in plans to carry out three extremist attacks in Denmark and in London, and for purportedly spreading Islamic State group propaganda on the internet.

Authorities believe the 24-year-old man, who wasn't identified, was part of a group that sought to strike a church in England, possibly St. Paul's Cathedral in London, but British police thwarted the plot, Norwegian broadcaster NRK reported Monday.

The man was also allegedly involved in plans for one or more attacks in Denmark in March and April 2019 with help from at least one Danish citizen, prosecutor Geir Evanger told NRK. Those attacks are believed to have been prevented as well.



The man has maintained his innocence. If found guilty, the man who claims to be innocent, faces up to 21 years in jail, NRK said. The trial starts in Oslo on May 18.

Evanger was quoted as saying by NRK that as to his involvement in IS, the man spread "ex-

tremist material, violent material and material with religious content" online. He was an administrator for several groups on social media, including some he had created, the prosecutor said, adding they consider him to be "a relatively central participant in many of these

groups."

NRK said the man had been held in custody for a while.

It wasn't immediately known whether the case was linked to the July sentencing in London of Safiyya Shaikh, a British woman who had converted to Islam. She was jailed for life, with

a minimum sentence of 14 years, for plotting to blow up St. Paul's Cathedral, a nearby hotel in London and a subway train in a suicide attack.

Shaikh, born Michelle Ramsden, who was a supporter of the Islamic State group, pleaded guilty to terrorism offenses.

Iran blames Israel for sabotage at Natanz nuclear site

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): Iran blamed Israel on Monday for a sabotage attack on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged centrifuges it uses to enrich uranium, warning that it would avenge the assault.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack. However, suspicion fell immediately on it as Israeli media widely reported that the country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused the blackout.

Sunday's assault and Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh's comments blaming Israel could imperil ongoing talks in Vienna with world powers about saving a tattered accord aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program.

If Israel was responsible, it would further heighten tensions between the two nations, already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who met Sunday with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, has vowed to do everything in his power to stop the reviving of the nuclear deal.

At a news conference at Israel's Nevatim air base Monday, where he viewed Israeli air and missile defense systems and its F-35 combat aircraft, Austin declined to say whether the Natanz attack could impede the Biden administration's efforts to re-engage with Iran in its nuclear program.

"Those efforts will continue," Austin said. The previous American administration under Donald Trump had pulled out of the nuclear deal with world powers, leading Iran to begin

abandoning its limits.

Details remained scarce about what happened early Sunday at the facility. The event was initially described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding its above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls.

"The answer for Natanz is to take revenge against Israel," Khatibzadeh said. "Israel will receive its answer through its own path." He did not elaborate.

Khatibzadeh acknowledged that IR-1 centrifuges, the first-generation workhorse of Iran's uranium enrichment, had been damaged in the attack, but did not elaborate. State television has yet to show images from the facility.

A former chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said the attack had also set off a fire at the site and called for improvements in security. In a tweet, Gen. Mohsen Rezaei said that the second attack at Natanz in a year signaled "the seriousness of the infiltration phenomenon." Rezaei did not say where he got his information.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif separately warned Natanz would be reconstructed with more advanced machines. That would allow Iran to more quickly enrich uranium, complicating talks on the deal.

"The Zionists wanted to take revenge against the Iranian people for their success on the path of lifting sanctions," Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Zarif as saying. "But we do not allow (it), and we will take revenge for this action against the Zionists."

Officials launched an



effort Monday to provide emergency power to Natanz, said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear program. He said the sabotage had not stopped enrichment there, without elaborating.

The IAEA, the United Nations body that monitors Tehran's atomic program, earlier said it was aware of media reports about the blackout at Natanz and had spoken with Iranian officials about it. The agency did not elaborate.

Natanz has been targeted by sabotage in the past. The Stuxnet computer virus, discovered in 2010 and widely believed to be a joint U.S.-Israeli creation, once disrupted and destroyed Iranian centrifuges there during an earlier period of Western fears about Tehran's program.

In July, Natanz suffered a mysterious explosion at its advanced centrifuge assembly plant that authorities lat-

er described as sabotage. Iran now is rebuilding that facility deep inside a nearby mountain. Iran also blamed Israel for the November killing of a scientist who began the country's military nuclear program decades earlier.

Multiple Israeli media outlets reported Sunday that an Israeli cyberattack caused the blackout. Public broadcaster Kan said the Mossad was behind the attack. Channel 12 TV cited "experts" as estimating the attack shut down entire sections of the facility.

While the reports offered no sourcing for their information, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

"It's hard for me to believe it's a coincidence," Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies, said of the blackout. "If it's not a coincidence, and that's a big if, someone is trying to send a message that

'we can limit Iran's advance and we have red lines.'"

It also sends a message that Iran's most sensitive nuclear site is penetrable, he added.

Netanyahu late Sunday toasted his security chiefs, with the head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen, at his side on the eve of his country's Independence Day.

"It is very difficult to explain what we have accomplished," Netanyahu said of Israel's history, saying the country had been transformed from a position of weakness into a "world power."

Israel typically doesn't discuss operations carried out by its Mossad intelligence agency or specialized military units. In recent weeks, Netanyahu repeatedly has described Iran as the major threat to his country as he struggles to hold onto power after multiple elections and while facing corruption charges.

Tokyo adopts tougher virus rules, starts vaccinating elders



TOKYO, APR 12 (AP): Tokyo adopted tougher measures against the coronavirus Monday as it struggles to curb the rapid spread of a more contagious variant ahead of the Olympics in a country where less than 1 per cent of people have been vaccinated.

Japan started its vaccination drive with medical workers and expanded Monday to older residents, with the first shots being given in about 120 selected places around the country.

The tougher COVID-19 rules, just three weeks after a state of emergency ended in the capital, allow Tokyo's governor to mandate shorter opening hours for bars and restaurants, punish violators and compensate those who comply. The measures remain through May 11.

The status was also raised for Kyoto in western Japan and the southern island prefecture of Okinawa, where cases have surged in recent weeks. The near-emergency status there is to continue through May 5, the end of Japan's Golden Week holidays, to discourage traveling.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike has asked residents to avoid nonessential trips and practice social distancing. She asked bars and restaurants in many areas of the prefecture to close at 8 p.m.

An elder care home in downtown Tokyo was among the locations where vaccines were being administered Monday.

But Koike urged residents to buckle up and be cautious while vaccinations are in an early stage.

We are still unarmed as we fight against the resurgence of the infections, Koike said. Please follow the guidelines.

Health officials also will patrol bars and restaurants to ensure safety measures are observed, and testing will be increased at elderly care facilities.

The alert status had been raised a week ago for pats of

western prefectures of Osaka and Hyogo, as well as Miyagi in the north. Fifteen cities in the six prefectures, including downtown Tokyo, are now under elevated virus measures.

The non-binding emergency ended in the Tokyo area on March 21. Tokyo's return to the alert status Monday underscores the difficulty of balancing anti-virus measures and the economy. Suga's government has been criticized for being too slow in enacting anti-virus measures out of a reluctance to further damage the pandemic-hit economy.

Japan has managed the pandemic better than the United States and many countries in Europe, but not so well compared to other Asian countries and vaccinations have largely lagged behind due to limited supplies of the Pfizer vaccine, which is the only one approved in Japan which so far entirely relies on imports.

In Hachioji city in western Japan, a first group of elderly residents had their first shots Monday. But officials are expecting a slow start due to limited shipment at the beginning. It will be the end of June when Japan will have enough vaccine to cover the elderly population of 36 million, officials said.

Just over 1 million people in Japan have received the first of two vaccine doses, and the surge in cases may cause further cancellations of Olympic-related events.

Inoculations started in mid-February for medical workers, and the campaign will focus on older people through late June. The rest of the population is likely to have to wait until about July, making it almost impossible for Japan to reach so-called herd immunity before the Tokyo Olympics begin on July 23.

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Germany's Bild newspaper to launch television channel

BERLIN (AP): Germany's biggest-selling daily newspaper, Bild, plans to launch a television channel that will go on air before the country's election in late September, its publisher said Monday.

Publisher Axel

Springer said that the core of the new Bild channel's schedule will be up to six hours daily of live programming starting in the morning.

It said in a statement that "the focus is on politics, sports, celebrities,

crime, and service topics, among others," and the program could be interrupted at any time for breaking news stories.

Springer already owns Welt, one of Germany's two main all-news TV channels, which was for-

merly named N24 and renamed in 2018 to bear the name of the company's daily broadsheet newspaper. Bild is more tabloid in nature. The company said that the plan is for the new Bild channel to be free to air via cable, satellite and online.

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Deepika Padukone steps down as Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival chairperson

MUMBAI, APR 12 (PTI): Actor Deepika Padukone on Monday announced she has resigned as the chairperson of Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival owing to her work commitments. Padukone had replaced filmmaker Kiran Rao to become the chairperson of the festival in 2019.

The actor took to Instagram and wrote she decided to step down from the position as she won't be able to give the festival "undivided focus."

"Being on the board of MAMI and serving as Chairperson has been a deeply enriching experience. As an artist it was invigorating to bring together cinema and talent from all over the world to Mumbai, my second home.

"I have come to realise however, that with my current state of work, I will be unable to give MAMI the undivided focus and attention it requires," Padukone said in the note.

The 35-year-old actor added that she was departing from MAMI knowing that the festival would be in "the best hands possible".



Padukone has a packed film slate, starting with filmmaker Shakun Batra's upcoming relationship-drama and Siddharth Anand's "Pathan", headlined by Shah Rukh Khan.

She would also collaborate with "Baahubali" star Prabhas for a multilingual sci-fi film and team up with Hrithik Roshan for the patriotic-action-drama "Fighter".

Last year, the organisers of Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival postponed its 22nd edition due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Documentary on Osho Rajneesh's former aide Ma Anand Sheela to premiere on Netflix in April

MUMBAI, APR 12 (PTI): Ma Anand Sheela, who shot to global fame with the documentary "Wild Wild Country" on controversial spiritual guru Osho Rajneesh, will be back to the screen in "Searching for Sheela", scheduled to release on Netflix on April 22.

Sheela was a crucial figure in helping Rajneesh establish Rajneeshpuram, a utopian city for his followers in rural Oregon, which functioned between 1981 to 1985.

She was also the primary perpetrator of the 1984 Rajneesh bioterror attack in Oregon, US.

Post the attack she fled to Europe as a fugitive accused of arson, wiretapping, attempted murder, and mass poisonings. She would plead guilty to attempted murder and assault for her role and was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison and paroled after 39 months.

Billed as a docu-film, "Searching for Sheela" aims to explore her journey through India after 34 years and sheds light on her new life post serving time for her alleged crimes.

Sheela Birnstiel said the docu-film will give the audience a glimpse of her "real self" and the evolution of her life over the last four decades.



"This film is about my journey of returning to my home in India, a journey I have longed for many years. It captures the rollercoaster of emotions I experienced on this journey very well. I am looking forward to sharing my story with the world," she said.

"Searching for Sheela" is produced by Dharmatic Entertainment, the digital content arm of filmmaker Karan Johar's Dharma Productions.

Filmmaker Shakun Batra, who serves as the executive producer on "Searching for Sheela", said the documentary is not

an "investigative piece" but a deep-dive into understanding Sheela, a woman living on her own terms with a "questionable past."

"We trace her journey as she grapples with society's expectations of an ex-convict and attempts to re-brand the public opinion of herself.

"Searching for Sheela' is a documentary that tries to get a closer look at one of the most sensationalised personalities in India and I am grateful to Netflix for providing us with a platform and a safe space to share her story," Batra added.

Nick Cannon expecting twins with Abby De La Rosa

Nick Cannon is about to welcome a pair of twins with Abby De La Rosa, as she shared footage and photos of the couple together that showed off her pregnant belly.

Nick Cannon is about to welcome a new pair of little ones into his life.

The 40-year-old star and Abby De La Rosa, 30, are expecting twin boys, as she announced the news via Instagram on Sunday, April 11. She shared video footage and a number of photos of the couple together, and in them, she wore a pearl shawl top exposing her pregnant belly.

"Our dearest sons - my miracle babies, Thank you for choosing me to be your Mommy," the DJ captioned the posts. "I know the Lord has destined me and prepared me for the gift of not one but two little angels. I pray that God give you both the strength to walk brave and boldly in your individual truth just like your Daddy. That God bless you and your brother and guide you into living out your full purpose."

She continued, "Your Dad & I will always be here for you both; in complete unison and support. No matter what this world may throw your way, know that forgiveness is key and what is for you - is for YOU! You both are already so loved and we can't wait to meet you both."

Nick has yet to post anything to social media about the



new set of twins, but the video footage shows the couple holding hands and embracing, and at one point he puts his hand on Abby's stomach.

E! News has reached out to Nick's rep for comment.

The comedian has had recent practice caring for babies, as he and model Brittany Bell welcomed daughter Powerful Queen in December 2020. At that time, the pair, who also share 4-year-old son Golden, had been together on and off since late 2014.

The Masked Singer host and ex-wife Mariah Carey, who finalized their divorce in 2016 after eight years of marriage, share 9-year-old twins Monroe and Moroccan.

Sally Phillips to lead Australian comedy movie How to Please a Woman'

LOS ANGELES, APR 12 (PTI): British actor Sally Phillips is set to star in Australian comedy film "How to Please a Woman", with Renee Webster attached to direct.

Webster, known for directing Australian Broadcasting Corporation series The Heights and Itch", has also written the screenplay.

According to Variety, the film is touted to be a warmhearted look at sexuality and vulnerability at all stages of life.

It features Phillips as a 50-something woman who has the inspired idea of launching an all-male house-cleaning service. But she must ask herself questions when the business grows out of control.

This (is a) more-than-funny liberation story for women who have been afraid to ask for what they want at home, at work and in the bedroom, said Phillips, whose film credits include all the three "Bridget Jones" movies and



Pride and Prejudice and Zombies".

It's exciting that intimate female tales like this one are now being developed, financed and brought to the screen," she added.

Production is set to commence next week in Perth, West Australia.

"The Furnace" actor Erik Thomson is

playing the male lead.

The movie also features Alexander England, Caroline Brazier, Tasma Walton, Roz Hammond, Cameron Daddo and Josh Thomson.

Tania Chambers of Feisty Dame Productions is set to produce along with Such Much Films' Judi Levine.



FLYING HIGH! Actress Anna Kendrick poses in her award show look for the BAFTA's as she attends virtually in Los Angeles, California.

ARIES:

The new moon in your sign is going to shake a few things up in your world, but that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Change is good, especially when you call it consciously. So, breathe. Become aware of the openings that are being presented to you in this moment. You have a choice. You always have a choice. Tap into the power of free will to transform your life.

TAURUS:

No matter how hard you try to move forward, you somehow keep coming back to this point. Break the bad habit, Taurus. Let go of the toxic relationship. Rise above the self-negating pattern that has been the reason for your downfall. Remember, heaven and hell are not faraway concepts. They exist right here, right now, in this time and space dimension. It all comes down to the choices we make.

GEMINI:

So what if it didn't work out the first time around? So what if you faced roadblocks that made you want to give up on your dream altogether? The game isn't over for you, Gemini. It has, in fact, just begun. The new moon sees you working with a whole new strategy, one

that involves rewriting the rules and taking the kind of risks that you've never taken before. PS: If it doesn't inspire you to jump out of bed every morning, it isn't good enough, is it?

CANCER:

After a period of stagnation, things are picking up pace, both on the personal and professional front. It's going to be a wild, wild ride! But you know how to keep your feet firmly planted on the ground through all of it. An adventure or a getaway of some sort may also be on the cards for some. Remember, the plan is overrated. Be spontaneous and allow the cosmic currents to take you where you need to go.

LEO:

It can't always be 'my way or the highway', Leo, contrary to what you believe! Somebody's got to give. Maybe you? Something tells us finding a middle ground between what you desire and what the other person wants will help you settle things in an amicable manner. When in doubt, choose the path of least resistance. The more gentle you are in the manner you communicate your truth, the easier it will be to get things done.

VIRGO:

There are interactions that make you feel refu-

elled and there are interactions that make you wish you'd never gotten out of bed. It's time for a quick check in, Virgo. How do you feel after you have spent time with a certain set of people? Take your anxiety as a sign that sharing this space is doing you more harm than good. Some of you may find that it's hard to get along with the people you love too at this point. It's best not to force things, and allow things to unfold as they must. In due course of time, you will understand the lessons here.

LIBRA:

It's all about zen mornings in the Libra HQ. You're starting the day with sun salutations, a bowl of fresh fruits and prayers that affirm the good in your life. Consider setting some time aside for journaling (or free writing), painting, and a meditation as well. Remember, we are under the influence of the new moon. This is the best time to sow our seeds with love and with intention.

SCORPIO:

Writer and poet Kahlil Gibran's words to begin your day with, dear Scorpio: "No human relationship gives one possession in another—every two souls are absolutely different. In friend-

ship or in love, the two side by side raise hands to find what one cannot reach alone." What are the feelings this quote is awakening within? Are you in a phase where your fears and insecurities are getting the better of you once again? The cards want you to remember that sharing a bed with somebody does not give you the permission to run their lives. Allow them to 'be' as you find that space of wholeness within yourself. Bringing the gift of freedom to the table will transform your relationship dynamically.

SAGITTARIUS:

Like the Librans, you are paying close attention to your morning rituals. You want to begin the day with a supersized cup of positivity-tea, and reaffirm all that is good in your life. We can't say the road that has brought you to this juncture has been easy in any way. But, holding on to the past has never been your style. Word for the wise: work with the energy of the new moon to hit the reset button.

CAPRICORN:

If change is the only constant and everything is but transient, why do we hold on for dear life? Something to think about, dear Capricorn. Despite being set in your ways, you are challeng-

ing yourself to loosen the grip and let go of your false sense of control. You are where you need to be and you're going where you need to go. 'Trust and surrender' are your magic words and you know the Universe will catch you if you fall.

AQUARIUS:

Just when you thought you'd broken a habit, you may find yourself back to square one. But who's responsible for the chaos in your life, Aquarius? Can you really blame your external circumstances for where you are today? What you want to remember now and for the rest of the month: heaven and hell are not faraway concepts. They exist right here, right now, in this time and space dimension.

PISCES:

This is a time of change on the work and career front. But these changes aren't just happening to you. You're consciously calling them into your experience. So work on that CV, paper or college application. It's a good idea to tailor it according to the role you have in mind and be as specific as you can about your expectations and your skill set. Word for the wise: Humility is overrated!