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SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 165 | Gangtok | Thursday | 25 June 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

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With four new cases and nine full recoveries, Sikkim's active COVID-19 count comes down to 44

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 24 JUN:

With four new positive cases and nine patients having made full recoveries and getting discharged from hospital, Sikkim's count of active COVID-19 cases came down to 44 on Wednesday. The four new cases were reported from quarantine centres in South Sikkim and were detected during routine testing of returnees. Likewise, nine patients lodged in the isolation ward established at AYUSH Hospital in Kyongsa, West Sikkim, were discharged from after returning negative results in repeat tests.

Out of 83 COVID-19 cases reported in Sikkim thus far,

there are presently 44 active cases with 39 patients having been discharged.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department DG-cum-Secretary Dr Pempa T Bhutia informed that out of 82 samples tested by RT-PCR at the VR&DL, STNM Hospital, on Tuesday, four returned positive.

Among the four is a 30-year-old Delhi returnee from Namchi who had recently flown back and was lodged in a facility quarantine in Purano Namchi. Dr Bhutia added that the three other positive cases were detected from returnees lodged at the facility quarantine established at SICB, Karfector.

He informed that a 22-year-

old Siliguri returnee from Namchi and a 10-year-old Kolkata returnee, also from Namchi, who travelled in the same SNT bus from Siliguri on 16 June have tested positive. Similarly, he added that a 26-year-old Mumbai returnee from Pabong, South Sikkim, also tested positive for COVID-19. She travelled in a flight from Mumbai and returned in a private Innova from Siliguri on 12 June.

The Secretary informed that all four patients were asymptomatic and were found positive during routine testing conducted after five days of quarantine. He informed that all four new patients have been admitted at the Samdruptse

isolation ward, South Sikkim.

He further informed that nine patients from the Kyongsa isolation ward were also discharged today and only five COVID patients remain admitted in West Sikkim now.

He added that testing of these five patients of West Sikkim was scheduled for 27 June.

Dr Bhutia informed that out of 83 positive cases reported so far in Sikkim, 25 were residents of East Sikkim, 21 from West Sikkim and 37 from South Sikkim. All were returnees.

He added that at present, 31 patients are admitted at STNM Hospital, five at Kyongsa isolation ward and eight at Samdruptse isolation ward in South Sikkim.

Don Bosco School Quarantine Facility sanitized and readied for academic activities.



SUMMIT REPORT

SORENG, 24 JUN:

Don Bosco School, Malbaisey, which had housed 47 returnees for facility quarantine was sanitized in keeping with prescribed protocol for COVID19 prevention and handed over to the school administration today, a press communiqué from SDM-Soreng's office informs.

The handing over function was attended by SDM-Soreng, Himmat Rai, Father George, School Principal; Father Jose; AE (Roads, Soreng) Facility Incharge Suman Chettri; Horticulture Officer, LO, Bison Pradhan; Malbaisey Panchayat Bishal Chettri; Binod Chettri, SKM CLC president and other volunteers.

The SDM thanked the Principal and the Don Bosco family for providing their school infrastructure for Facility Quarantine at the time of utmost need when there was a big rush of returnees to West District.

He further thanked the area MLA, Aditya Golay (Tamang) for his support and personal presence during the quarantine. He also thanked the Panchayat Malbaisey Ward for his

support and Binod Basnet and his volunteer team of Soreng Chakung for helping with catering and other management.

He also thanked BDO Soreng, Sabina Limboo and her BAC team; the in-charge and LO of Don Bosco Quarantine Facility, UD&HD, Power & Energy, PHED, all NGOs/ SHGs who sponsored lunch, Sri Satya Sai Samiti and everyone else involved.

It may be mentioned that no COVID19 positive cases were reported from Don Bosco Facility and the now the District Magistrate, West, Karma R. Bonpo, has denotified Don Bosco School as a facility quarantine centre and now the School will be available for academic activities for students, occupation by boarders and ensuing examinations.

The West District administration has now declared the school safe for its further activities as the Centre has fully sanitized as per required protocol.

Lastly, the Don Bosco School Quarantine Centre Team has thanked the Chief Minister for full support and assistance.

Minister chairs state level monsoon preparedness meeting

GANGTOK, 24 JUN (IPR):

A State level meeting on monsoon preparedness was convened under the chairmanship of Minister for Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department (LR&DMD) Kunga Nima Lepcha at the conference hall of Tashiling Secretariat today.

The meeting was held to review the arrangements and precautionary measures being taken by various stakeholders in combating the threats and challenges posed by the monsoon season in the State.

The meeting was co-chaired by Chief Secretary, S.C. Gupta, in the presence of Secretary, LR&DMD, P.N. Sherpa, Special Secretary, Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA), C.K. Chettri, and Director, SSDMA, G.C. Khanal, along with a host of nodal



officers from various State government departments and representatives of Sikkim Police, Armed Forces, central agencies, telecommunications and NGOs.

During the meeting, representatives and stakeholders presented their reports regarding the preparedness in their concerned fields and also placed forward various requirements needed to tackle the disasters that are likely to be triggered

during monsoon season in Sikkim.

Minister for Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, K.N. Lepcha, in his address, extended gratitude to all the attendees for participating in a proactive manner and to the State government departments as well as the Central agencies for doing a tremendous job for the welfare of the people of the State.

He expressed that the high attendance of participants from all line departments and the stakeholders indicates their concern to mitigate any possible form of disaster. He further mentioned that in Sikkim, extensive rainfall occurs during the month of June till September which leads to disasters like landslides and flash floods and to lessen the extent of damaged caused, the inputs of the

meeting plays a valuable role.

While quoting the saying "Prevention is better than cure", the Minister also gave suggestions wherein he said that proper dissemination of information is essential through various mediums of media to spread awareness to the general public and communities to remain prepared in any disaster. He also

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Cut-off Lower Chongrang demands early restoration of road

RUDRA KAUSHIK

GYALSHING, 24 JUN:

The villagers of Lower Chongrang under Yuksam Tashiding constituency have demanded early restoration of the village road which is blocked at Rangul bhir by a landslide.

The residents inform that the village road that connects Lower Chongrang with Tashiding has remained blocked for the past several days and restoration work has not yet begun.



The villagers have appealed to the concerned department to clear the traffic at the earliest and alleviate problems being faced by them. They further expressed that due to the road blockage, transportation of essential goods has become a major problem for the villagers.

"For three weeks now, the road has remained inaccessible. Restoration work has not been initiated yet. We are facing problems to access the other

places of the constituency," a villager said.

A major portion of the 2.5 kilometre stretch of road has been damaged at Rongul bhir.

Panchayat member, GB Bista, informs that unmanaged drainage along the road and overflow of water from villages situated above the road could be the reason behind the recent landslide. He suggested that better drainage be developed at the road.

All cooperative banks to come under RBI supervision

NEW DELHI, JUN 24 (PTI):

The government on Wednesday said that all urban cooperative banks and multi-state cooperative banks will come under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India, a development aimed at providing comfort to depositors and prevent repeat of PMC Bank like scams.

The President of India will promulgate an ordinance to this effect, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar told

reporters after the meeting of the Union Cabinet.

Terming it a landmark decision, the minister said 1,540 urban cooperative banks and multi-state cooperative banks will be brought under the RBI supervisory process as is applicable in case of scheduled commercial banks.

"...depositors (of cooperative banks) will get protection and benefit from this decision," Javadekar said.

There are 1,482 urban cooperative banks and 58 multi-state cooperative banks having about 8.6 crore depositors with total savings deposit of about Rs 4.85 lakh crore.

The decision assumes significance in the wake of a scam in the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank and some other cooperative banks affecting lakhs of customers who are facing difficulty in withdrawing their money due to restrictions imposed

by the Reserve Bank of India.

The RBI had placed regulatory curbs on the PMC Bank on September 23, 2019, after finding out certain financial irregularities and misreporting of loans given to real estate developer HDIL.

Earlier this month, the RBI had put restrictions from People's Co-operative Bank, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

had introduced 'The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020' in Lok Sabha on March 3, 2020, which is pending approval. The proposed law sought to enforce banking regulation guidelines of the RBI on cooperative banks.

In her February 1 Budget Speech, Sitharaman had proposed amendments to the Banking Regulation Act with an aim to increasing professionalism and improving governance among the cooperative banks.

West Bengal extends lockdown till July 31

KOLKATA, JUN 24 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday announced extension of the lockdown in the state till July 31 to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The ongoing lockdown in West Bengal was to end on June 30.

Banerjee, after attending an all-party meeting held at an auditorium adjacent to the state secretariat, said though there were differences of opinion among the leaders, it was finally decided to extend the curbs till the end of July with relaxations.

Delhi overtakes Mumbai to become city with highest Covid-19 caseload in country

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE: With a record 15,968 coronavirus cases reported in the past 24 hours, the total count in India crossed the 4.5 lakh-mark. The death toll has gone up to 14,476 as Covid-19 claimed 465 lives in 24 hours. Of the 4,56,183 cases, over 2.5 lakh have recovered, while 1.8 lakh are still active infections. Maharashtra has reported 1,39,010 cases, followed by Delhi at 66,602 and Tamil Nadu at 64,603. Maharashtra has reported 6,531 coronavirus deaths followed by Delhi at 2,301 and Gujarat at 1,710.

Delhi, which has the second-highest cases, on Tuesday reported close to 4,000 new cases, more than any state has disclosed in the last 24 hours. Even Maharashtra, which has more than double the number of cases in Delhi, has never reported these many new infections. Delhi, whose caseload is currently growing at almost twice the national growth rate, can potentially overtake Mumbai as early as today. Mumbai, which has 68,410 cases, is growing much slowly, and on Tuesday added only 842 new cases.

Another state where increased testing has triggered a surge in confirmed cases has been Telangana. Delhi, Telangana and Tamil Nadu are likely to drive the India number for the next few days. But the numbers could start flowing in from other places as well, as new rapid antigen tests are deployed.

As many as 19,604 passengers have been brought to Mumbai in 125 flights from different countries so far as part of the Centre's 'Vande Bharat Mission'. "So far, 19,604 passengers

have landed in Mumbai under the Vande Bharat programme undertaken to bring back Indians stranded in other countries. Till now, 125 flights have flown the passengers, who are residents of Maharashtra and other parts of the country," the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Office (CMO) provided these figures in a statement issued on Wednesday. Of the total number of passengers, 13,899 are from Maharashtra and 7,218 of them hail from Mumbai, the statement said.

In addition to this, more than 45 flights are expected to land in Mumbai on July 1.

Delhi recorded 3,788 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday taking the total tally to 70,390, while the death toll climbed to 2,635, authorities said, according to PTI. On Tuesday, the national capital reported a record of 3,947 cases, the highest single-day spike till now. The Delhi health department confirmed that 64 deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours. From Friday-Sunday, 3,000 or more fresh cases were being reported per day in the national capital. On Monday, 2,909 cases were recorded.

A cumulative total of 73,52,911 samples have been tested for coronavirus till June 23, of which 2.15 lakh were examined on Tuesday, the highest in a day since the beginning of the pandemic, ICMR officials said, PTI reported. The apex health reaserch body had validated the 1,000th testing laboratory, ramping up the capacity for detection of COVID-19 in the country. Currently, three lakh samples can be tested per day, an official said.

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SBJM provides financial support to Singtam fire victims

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 24 JUN:

Sikkim Bihari Jagran Manch Central and SBJM Singtam Branch Committees held a meeting at Bihari Dharmshala Singtam and decided to provide financial support to the fire victims of Singtam, a press release informs.

Pappu Sharma (Baram Sharma) and Uma Shankar Soni were provided Rs.10000



each while Bijay Prasad, Pappu Roy and Fishraj Limbo Shankar Bhagat, Sudama Prasad, Jay Prakash Prasad, Padam Bahadur Sunar, Uttam were provided with cash relief of Rs. 5000 each.

MP inspects road construction work at Lingey Kunabar

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 24 JUN:

Member of Parliament, Indra Hang Subba along with SKM area In-charge, Purna Hang Subba and SKM CLC president, TB Thapa inspected the ongoing road construction at Lingey-Kunabar Ward under Maneybong-Dentam Constituency, West Sikkim, today. The public of Lingey-Kunabar ward welcomed the delegation led by MP, Indra Hang Subba and thanked the government for fulfilling their long pending demand, a press release informs.



Nine COVID survivors discharged in West Sikkim

GYALSHING, 24 JUN (IPR):

A total of 9 fully recovered COVID-19 positive patients were released from the Isolation Ward in Ayush Hospital, Kyongsa, West Sikkim today.

The entire process was administered by DC, West, Karma R Bonpo; SP West, Tashi Wangyal; ADC West, Karma L Lepcha and CMO (W), Dr Anusha Lama, along with all health officials.

DC West while addressing the recovered patients congratulated them for fighting against the unseen enemy. He urged all to take proper care of themselves as they have a huge responsibility of keeping their loved ones safe by following the protocols of home quarantine.



He further stated that the remaining Positive patients need not worry rather they should take proper care of themselves and eat well along with exercise and yoga. He also wished them for speedy recovery so that they too can go back to their individual homes.

SP West also in his address congratulated them and wished them good health. He also advised them to follow the home quarantine

protocols strictly.

As per the information received, the remaining 5 positive patients are asymptomatic in nature and are receiving all the necessary treatment in the Ayush Isolation Center where they are kept under continuous observation.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) West, Dr Anusha Lama stated that all necessary health and safety protocols are being followed by all. The patients were

discharged after the tests came negative twice within 24 hours.

She informed that the remaining 5 patients of Ayush Isolation center would be re-tested on 27 Jun, 2020. She also informed that the PHC Doctors and ASHA workers have been informed for follow up and strict compliance to the rules of Home Quarantine.

Ayush Isolation Center is the only Isolation Center in Sikkim apart from the one at the State's Capital, Gangtok and has all the necessary equipments to handle such cases.

Instructions of proper home quarantine protocols were given by Ayush In-charge, Dr Nitali Lepcha.

Army chief visits forward areas in Ladakh; takes stock of ground situation

NEW DELHI, JUN 24 (PTI):

Army Chief Gen M M Naravane on Wednesday visited various forward areas in eastern Ladakh and took stock of the Army's combat preparedness in the region in the wake of the bitter border standoff with China, officials said. Gen Naravane, who arrived in Leh on a two-day visit to the region, also awarded Commendation Cards to a number of soldiers who fought valiantly during the recent face-offs with Chinese Army in the region, people familiar with the matter said.

The Chief of Army Staff reviewed the overall security situation in the region with Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Yogesh Kumar Joshi, commander of the 14

Corps Lt Gen Harinder Singh and other senior Army officials on Tuesday afternoon.

"General M M Naravane #COAS visited forward areas in Eastern #Ladakh and reviewed operational situation on the ground. #COAS commended the troops for their high morale and exhorted them to continue working with zeal and enthusiasm," the Army said in a tweet.

Soon after arriving in Leh, Gen Naravane visited an Army hospital where 18 soldiers injured in the clash in Galwan Valley on June 15 are undergoing treatment.

Twenty Indian Army personnel were killed and 18 were seriously injured in the violent clash with Chinese military in Galwan Vally.

When asked about conferring of "Commendation Cards" by Gen Naravane, an Army source said "whenever the Chief of the Army Staff visits formations or units, it is a norm to award on the spot Commendation Cards to personnel who exhibit exceptional devotion to duty."

"In the instant case also, personnel have been awarded for devotion to duty," the source said. It is learnt that soldiers who have been awarded the "Commendation Cards" fought valiantly in the Galwan Valley clash.

The Leh-based 14 Corps is tasked to take care of security situation along the Line of Actual Control in the Ladakh region.

On Monday, Lt Gen

Singh held a nearly 11-hour meeting with Commander of the Tibet Military District Maj Gen Liu Lin.

In the meeting, the two sides arrived at a "mutual consensus" to "disengage" from all the friction points in eastern Ladakh.

The first round of the Lt Gen talks were held on June 6 during which both sides finalised an agreement to disengage gradually from all the standoff points beginning with Galwan Valley.

However, the situation along the border deteriorated following the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 as the two sides significantly bolstered their deployments in most areas along the 3,500-km de-facto border.

Blood Donation Camp held at Namthang

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 24 JUN:

Gafma Samuha Namthang in collaboration with Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim (VBDAS) organised a day long Blood Donation Camp at BAC Hall Namthang with the help of Government Blood Bank District Hospital Namchi.

Total of 60 units of blood were collected during this outdoor Voluntary Blood Donation Camp, a press release informs.

The camp started after a briefing about the camp by general secretary of VBDAS, Som Bahadur Rai and a short encouragement speech from BDO



Namthang BAC, Ram Kumar Tamang.

The camp was also attended by Senior Technical Officer Namchi District Blood Bank, Bhaichung Bhutia along with other technical team, VBDAS president, Kishore Baniya and executive members of VBDAS and

Gafai Gafma Samuha Namthang.

The donors were from adjoining villages of Namthang representing different institutions namely Church of God Karek Toribari, All Saints Church Tek, Shiloh Church Pamphok, Kolbung United Social Welfare Namthang, SHG

members Students of Namthang Senior Secondary School and donors from Phongla, Maneydara, Karek, Kabrey, Nagi Nalam Village.

Certificates of appreciation were handed to institutions, organisations and donors.

Namthang to Melli road via Upper Katyang opens

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 24 JUN:

The road between Namthang to Melli via Upper Katyang, Lower Katyang and Bokrong which was closed for a week opened for traffic today.

As per a press

release, the road was opened following the intervention of Area MLA cum Transport Minister, Sanjeet Kharel. The villagers have thanked the Area MLA and SKM members for taking the initiative.



Skill Development Training at Sawney



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 24 JUN:

Seven-day Skill Development Training programme started at Sawney village of West Pendum Constituency, East Sikkim under the theme of Kosis (an effort to make society self-reliant) conceptualized and coordinated by Sikkim Youth Foundation, a press release informs.

The training programme was sponsored by Lupin Human Welfare & Research Foundation, Bhasmay, 4th Mile, and East Sikkim. Resource persons from Namchi Designer Candles will

impart the training to the 10 participants from different Self Help Groups.

For the inauguration, social worker, Harka Bahadur Limboo and entrepreneur, Hem Kumar Gurung were the chief guest and guest of honor respectively. In the meantime Sikkim Youth Foundation coordinator, Suresh K. Lama welcomed the guests, resource persons and the participants.

Group Leader of Namchi Designer Candles, Smita Rai briefed about the courses and shared her experience with the participants.

Delhi overtakes Mumbai...

Of the 1,000 COVID-19 testing laboratories, 730 are in government setups while 270 are in the private sector. This includes RT-PCR labs (557), TrueNat Labs (363) and CBNAAT Labs (80).

The Indian armed forces personnel, who return from leave or temporary posting, will not be required to undergo COVID-19 testing before, during and after the quarantine period unless symptomatic, as per the revised protocol, stated by PTI. "As per the revised policy, Indian Army personnel will undergo 14 days of quarantine on returning from leave or reporting on temporary duty/permanent posting. They will not be tested before, during or after quarantine unless symptomatic," Army Spokesperson Col Aman Anand said.

The revised protocol also suggested avoiding short duration duties of up to seven days unless deemed crucial for the interest of the services. Under the previous guidelines, all personnel coming to any military station from home or other stations were mandated to go for a 14-day quarantine period if they did not fulfill certain conditions.

Senior Trinamool MLA Tamonash Ghosh (60), who had tested positive for Covid-19 in the last week of May, passed away in a hospital in West Bengal on Wednesday. Ghosh, who was a three-time MLA from Falta, had tested positive along with his two daughters and three aides last month. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took to Twitter to express her condolences to his family. Governor Jagdeep Dhankar also expressed his sadness over Ghosh's demise. Ghosh, a resident of Harish Chatterjee Street in South Kolkata, was also Banerjee's neighbour.

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General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).
Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410



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BMC to procure one lakh antigen testing kits

MUMBAI, JUN 24 (PTI): The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation will purchase one lakh antigen testing kits to ensure speedy results for suspected COVID-19 patients, an official said on Wednesday.

According to a release issued on Tuesday, the civic body has initiated Mission Universal Testing, under which it will use ICMR-approved antigen testing kits that provide results within 15 to 30 minutes.

These kits will be used at all civic, state-run hospitals and COVID-19 treatment facilities to test suspected patients and ensure timely treatment, the release stated.

At present, RT-PCR tests are being used to

detect infections, but the results of antigen tests will be comparatively faster, the civic body said.

M u n i c i p a l commissioner I S Chahal has also urged 35 major private hospitals in the city to procure government-approved antigen testing kits and instructed chief executive officers of medical labs about using them.

According to the BMC, in a government resolution dated June 22, the state government has permitted the use of rapid tests.

The civic body has appealed to private companies and corporate houses to buy government-approved kits to test employees to contain

the spread of the infection once work resumes following ease in lockdown restrictions, the official said.

Under Mission Universal Testing, the BMC plans to increase the testing capacity from 4,500 to 6,500, the release stated.

Meanwhile, the BMC has permitted high-risk contacts of COVID-19 patients, who are home quarantined, to test themselves for the infection using kits from medical laboratories.

It has also allowed senior citizens above 70 years and their helpers to get tested at laboratories without any prescriptions from doctors, it was stated.

First stakeholder meeting of GOAL programme

GANGTOK, 24 JUN (IPR): The first stakeholder meeting of GOAL (Going Online as Leaders) programme initiated by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India in collaboration with Facebook, was held under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Social Justice and Welfare Department, Tshewang Gyachho today.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of Associations of the four tribal communities of the State, namely Bhutia, Lepcha, Limboo and Tamang.

In his address Secretary, Tshewang Gyachho apprised about the latest scheme launched by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, with an aim to digitally equip the youth belonging to the tribal communities and prepare them for leadership roles in society.

The Secretary asserted that the programme will go a long way in imparting essential skills and instilling a sense of purpose among the tribal youth in the



country and the state. He urged the community representatives to spread the information about the scheme through all available platforms so that the tribal youth of Sikkim can benefit from the programme. He reiterated that only 5000 youth throughout the country can apply for the programme as a mentee. Likewise, only 2500 renowned individuals from areas of expertise like teachers, artists, entrepreneurs, social workers, and other influencers will be selected from all over the country to mentor the tribal youth. He shared that the applicants can

apply as a mentor or a mentee through the web portal www.goal.tribal.gov.in. He further informed that the application process has already started.

Earlier, Additional Secretary and Director, Tribal Research Institute, Gloria Namcho explained in detail about the GOAL initiative and highlighted the key areas and objectives of the programme. She explained that the mentorship programme will cover Digital Literacy, Life Skills and Leadership and Entrepreneurial training. It was informed that

the GOAL programme will cover broad sectors like agriculture and allied activities, art and culture, handicrafts and textile, health nutrition and education, general leadership, entrepreneurship and other relevant fields.

The Director further informed that the selected mentees will be given a smart phone each with free internet access for one year and study material in digital format. Each mentor will be assigned two mentees and the mentor will connect and guide the mentee through the online mode. The said programme will run

for nine months where weekly sessions will be conducted for first seven months, followed by an internship opportunity for two months in a reputed organisation based on skill set of the mentees.

Youth belonging to the ST community can easily access the dedicated online portal (goal.tribal.gov.in) which has been launched to apply under this programme and for any other important communication. All details regarding this programme is also available on the GOAL portal. The programme is also displayed in the website of the department www.sikkimsocialwelfare.gov.in and the State Government website <https://sikkim.gov.in>.

The representatives of the four tribal communities also put forth their suggestions and queries during the meeting.

The meeting was also addressed by Administrative Officer, Ongdup Lepcha, TRI and Nodal Officer for GOAL programme for coordination with MoTA and Facebook.

100th Shramik special train leaves Pune carrying 682 migrants

Pune, Jun 24 (PTI): The 100th 'Shramik special' train from Pune, carrying over 680 passengers, mostly migrant workers, students and their families, departed for Jharkhand on Wednesday, the district administration said.

District Collector Naval Kishore Ram said that there were 682 passengers on board the

Pune-Hatia train, which was the 100th Shramik special train to depart from the city. "Of these 682 passengers, 618 were from Jharkhand, 57 from Odisha and seven from West Bengal. The passengers include migrant workers, students and their families," he added. So far 1.25 lakh passengers, mostly migrant workers, have

been ferried in Shramik special trains from Pune to different states, including Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.

The district administration has also used state transport buses to ferry migrant workers from Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka till the borders of their states so far, he said.

Delhi violence: Court grants bail to three persons

NEW DELHI, JUN 24 (PTI): A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to three persons arrested in connection to the murder of a local resident during the communal violence in north east Delhi in February, saying that the police failed to explain how they were identified in the case. Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav granted the relief to Israr Ahmad, Mohd Tayyab, Mohd Rizwan on furnishing a bail bond of Rs 20,000 each with one surety of like amount.

In the entire report the Investigating Officer has nowhere mentioned as to how applicants (Ahmad, Tayyab and Rizwan) were identified in the matter. The report is completely devoid of material against the

applicant(s), the court said in its order.

The court directed the three accused to keep their mobile phone in operational condition and to install Arogya Setu App.

It also asked them to join the investigation and not tamper with evidence.

During the hearing, advocate M M Hashmi, appearing for the accused, told the court that they have been falsely implicated in the case.

The investigation in the case was completed and they were no more required for custodial interrogation, he said.

The advocate further argued that there was no video footage or electronic evidence showing the involvement of the

three persons in the riots.

Additional Public Prosecutor Taufeeq Ahmed, appearing for the state, opposed the bail applications saying they were found involved in a heinous case and the allegations against them were serious in nature.

The trio were arrested in connection with the alleged murder of a local resident during the riots that broke out during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act on February 24 in Khajuri Khas area of the north East Delhi.

According to the FIR, the complainant's brother was injured due to stone pelting by the mob when he was returning to his home. He succumbed to his injuries in the hospital, said the

complaint.

They have been arrested for the offences under sections 147 and 148 (rioting), 149 (unlawful assembly), 302 (murder), 153A (promoting enmity between groups based on religion, caste, language etc), 505 (public mischief), 120-B (criminal conspiracy), and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

The offences entail a maximum punishment of death penalty.

Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi on February 24 after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

NGT directs UPPCB to file action taken report on restoration of water body in Jaluan district

New Delhi, Jun 24 (PTI): The National Green Tribunal Wednesday directed the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) to file an action taken report on a plea seeking restoration of a water body in Jaluan district.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that in view of the pitiable condition of the water body, as depicted in an earlier UPPCB report, remedial action has to be taken promptly. "Let the State PCB file a further action taken report in the matter before December 1, the next date of hearing," the bench said.

The NGT also asked the board to prepare appropriate guidelines for restoration of 'Sadar Talab' in Kadaura area of the district.

The bench further said that the UPPCB, in exercise of its functions and duties, may prepare appropriate guidelines for restorations of such water bodies across the



state. Concerned State authorities may also perform their duties. UPPCB may provide hand holding to the local body. The restoration of water bodies is significant for protection of environment, for availability of drinking water, recharge of ground water, harvesting of rain water and microclimate, it added.

The order came after the board informed the NGT that Sadar Talab in Kadaura is fully covered by the vegetation of water hyacinth and sewage is being disposed due to which the water quality of water body is being affected.

At the time of inspection a sample of stored talab water has

been collected by the officers of above noted Joint committee.

As per analysis report, the characteristics of water pollutants parameters are above the limit of prescribed standards and the dissolved oxygen is 0.7 mg/l against prescribed limit of 2.0-14.0 mg/l, the report said.


It also told the green panel that water quality of Sadar Talab is very poor due to discharge of Sewage and domestic waste water and it has given notice to executive officer, Nagar Panchayat to take immediate steps for control of sewage and domestic effluent.

The UPPCB told the tribunal that it has also issued show cause notice for imposition

of environmental compensation of Rs 1.82 crore as Kadaura Nagar Panchayat has not installed sewage treatment plant for the treatment of generated sewage.

The tribunal was hearing a plea filed by UP resident Pushpendra Kumar seeking restoration of a water body called the main pond (Sadar Bazar) of Kadaura Town, District Jalaun as would help access to drinking water.

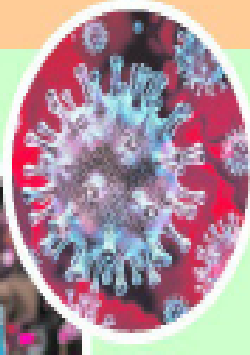


The plea has also sought directions to stop continuous burning of solid plastic waste, garbage cans, electronics waste, glass inside the residential area of town Kadaura that emits poisonous gases causing severe air pollution.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
<h3>Treatment</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Prepped for Disasters?

Not always all ready. And that is a worry

Four years ago, a cliff had collapsed in Dzongu. The bhir crumbled at a safe enough distance from the nearest habitation to ensure that no casualties occurred. It was however still close and dramatic enough to be captured on smartphones and the frightening visuals and videos were circulated widely on social media. The material loss at Mantam, a habitation of around 24 homes, was substantial. The settlement was battered by the extremely violent headwinds of the landslide, suffered through the confusion of zero visibility caused by the fine-as-talc dust kicked up by the landslide and watched Kanaka, a friendly stream, turn into 3km long lake dammed up behind a nearly 300 feet high dam of debris. Kanaka has since spilled over the debris dam, and although the risk of this artificial dam bursting and causing a flash-flood is now rather remote, the downstream areas will probably not be fully out of the woods. The lake has remained erratic, sometimes full of sand banks and debris, at others a spilling bucket of turbid water.

North Sikkim has traditionally been unlucky when it comes to natural disasters, but what keeps things of as even a keel as its situation would allow is the diligence of the officers it has always had in the people's service. At the end of the day, no one person or set of officers can do much after a major disaster has struck. But when they make the effort and reach affected people despite obvious dangers and difficulties, they reassure them that they matter. And for a people grappling with nature at its most fearsome, such assurances go a long way. It is in a similar context that one needs to see the rush of good Samaritans who had raced to disaster-hit places with relief materials. Even if the relief was collected without checking what the affected area really required, it was the gesture that counted. And then there was also the National Disaster Response Force which was pressed into service. They were unfamiliar with the terrain, unsure of what to do since no rescue was required and their boats unlikely to navigate the debris-heavy lake at Mantam, but seeing these men in their orange overalls busy at the site was a reassuring sight for the people there since it convinced them that they were not forgotten. But all of these were for the immediate days after the disaster. And this is true for all natural disaster events and not just the one at Dzongu.

After the adrenaline has worn off and the sympathy wave ebbed, the real task of rehabilitating and adjusting should have begun in earnest. The true mettle of the officers and the authenticity of good Samaritans gets tested then. The numbers in Dzongu are low, so rehabilitation was never very challenging, so what remains of this space can be used to discuss the importance of disaster prevention over disaster management.

For a place which has a natural disaster for every season, Sikkim is staggeringly casual about preventive measures. It is also very poor when it comes to mitigation, and it is thanks only to its small size and conscientious officers, that the fallouts of disasters are not much worse than what is seen. When it comes to preparation, the first requirement should be area-specific list of potential threats, preventive measures to keep those threats at bay and a checklist of things to do in worst-case-scenarios. These should be worked in detail down to the ward level, but has obviously not been done at any scale, anywhere beyond documents which speak in vague generalities. These documents should be given to village elders to draft because they know the history of natural disasters in their respective areas, still remember the traditional safeguards the communities had worked into their lifestyles, and, well, will be motivated more by the greater common good than the civil-works priorities which might influence the less public spirited consultants. That is really where Sikkim's preparation for disasters needs to begin, should have begun rather.

How fake accounts constantly manipulate what you see on social media – and what you can do about it

JEANNA MATTHEWS
THECONVERSATION.COM

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram started out as a way to connect with friends, family and people of interest. But anyone on social media these days knows it's increasingly a divisive landscape.

Undoubtedly you've heard reports that hackers and even foreign governments are using social media to manipulate and attack you. You may wonder how that is possible. As a professor of computer science who researches social media and security, I can explain – and offer some ideas for what you can do about it.

BOTS AND SOCK PUPPETS

Social media platforms don't simply feed you the posts from the accounts you follow. They use algorithms to curate what you see based in part on "likes" or "votes." A post is shown to some users, and the more those people react – positively or negatively – the more it will be highlighted to others. Sadly, lies and extreme content often garner more reactions and so spread quickly and widely.

But who is doing this "voting"? Often it's an army of accounts, called bots, that do not correspond to real people. In fact, they're controlled by hackers, often on the other side of the world. For example, researchers have reported that more than half of the Twitter accounts discussing COVID-19 are bots.

As a social media researcher, I've seen thousands of accounts with the same profile picture "like" posts in unison. I've seen accounts post hundreds of times per day, far more than a human being could. I've seen an account claiming to be an "All-American patriotic army wife" from Florida post obsessively about immigrants in English, but whose account history showed it used to post in Ukrainian.

Fake accounts like this are called "sock puppets" – suggesting a hidden hand speaking through another identity. In many cases, this deception can easily be revealed with a look at the account history. But in some cases, there is a big investment in making sock puppet accounts seem real.

For example, Jenna Abrams, an account with 70,000 followers,



was quoted by mainstream media outlets like The New York Times for her xenophobic and far-right opinions, but was actually an invention controlled by the Internet Research Agency, a Russian government-funded troll farm and not a living, breathing person.

SOWING CHAOS

Trolls often don't care about the issues as much as they care about creating division and distrust. For example, researchers in 2018 concluded that some of the most influential accounts on both sides of divisive issues, like Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter, were controlled by troll farms.

More than just fanning disagreement, trolls want to encourage a belief that truth no longer exists. Divide and conquer. Distrust anyone who might serve as a leader or trusted voice. Cut off the head. Demoralize. Confuse. Each of these is a devastating attack strategy.

Even as a social media researcher, I underestimate the degree to which my opinion is shaped by these attacks. I think I am smart enough to read what I want, discard the rest and step away unscathed. Still, when I see a post that has millions of likes, part of me thinks it must reflect public opinion. The social media

feeds I see are affected by it and, what's more, I am affected by the opinions of my real friends, who are also influenced.

The entire society is being subtly manipulated to believe they are on opposite sides of many issues when legitimate common ground exists.

I have focused primarily on U.S.-based examples, but the same types of attacks are playing out around the world. By turning the voices of democracies against each other, authoritarian regimes may begin to look preferable to chaos.

Platforms have been slow to act. Sadly, misinformation and disinformation drives usage and is good for business. Failure to act has often been justified with concerns about freedom of speech. Does freedom of speech include the right to create 100,000 fake accounts with the express purpose of spreading lies, division and chaos?

TAKING CONTROL

So what can you do about it? You probably already know to check the sources and dates of what you read and forward, but common-sense media literacy advice is not enough.

First, use social media more deliberately. Choose to catch up with someone in particular, rather than consuming only the default feed. You might be amazed to see what you've been missing.

Help your friends and family find your posts by using features like pinning key messages to the top of your feed.

Second, pressure social media platforms to remove accounts with clear signs of automation. Ask for more controls to manage what you see and which posts are amplified. Ask for more transparency in how posts are promoted and who is placing ads. For example, complain directly about the Facebook news feed here or tell legislators about your concerns.

Third, be aware of the trolls' favorite issues and be skeptical of them. They may be most interested in creating chaos, but they also show clear preferences on some issues. For example, trolls want to reopen economies quickly without real management to flatten the COVID-19 curve. They also clearly supported one of the 2016 U.S. presidential candidates over the other. It's worth asking yourself how these positions might be good for Russian trolls, but bad for you and your family.

Perhaps most importantly, use social media sparingly, like any other addictive, toxic substance, and invest in more real-life community building conversations. Listen to real people, real stories and real opinions, and build from there.

[the writer as Full Professor, Computer Science, Clarkson University]

In many countries the coronavirus pandemic is accelerating, not slowing

ADAM KAMRADT-SCOTT
THECONVERSATION.COM

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating. While some countries such as Australia and New Zealand have managed to flatten the curve, in many other parts of the world the number of cases has continued to reach new highs.

On Sunday, the World Health Organization (WHO) recorded 183,000 new cases — the single largest number of new cases reported in one day. Over the past week, there have been more than 150,000 new cases per day on three separate days.

The numbers of new infections are now growing at such a rate that while it took some three months to reach the first 1 million cases, the last million cases was reached in just eight days. The total number of COVID-19 infections now exceeds 9 million worldwide.

Even more tragically, the deaths from COVID-19 are also growing. The United States has recorded more than 120,000 fatalities, while Brazil has exceeded 51,000 deaths related to COVID-19. The situation has become so dire that Latin America's largest country is reporting an average of 1,000 deaths every day.

THE WORLD IS DIVIDED

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that the world is dangerously divided. He has cautioned against the ongoing politicisation of the pandemic and called for solidarity and leadership, noting that countries should not have to choose "between lives and livelihoods. Countries can do both".

These warnings are likely to go unheeded, if recent developments are anything to go by. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro,

who has railed against "job-killing" social distancing measures, appears unrepentant for firing his health minister even as he confronts escalating numbers of infections and an economic downturn in which Brazil's economy is expected to shrink by 6.2%.

In the United States, President Donald Trump reportedly joked his country should slow down testing because public health authorities were identifying too many COVID-19 cases. Trump made his remarks even as news emerged that more than two dozen public health officials across the US have been either fired, resigned or retired due to threats of physical violence, intimidation or persecution.

THE THREAT IS FAR FROM OVER

In many parts of the world, the pandemic is only starting to make its presence felt. Indonesia has seen an alarming increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases, with more than 1,000 new cases per day on eight of the past ten days, despite very low rates of testing.

Likewise, India, which yesterday morning recorded 14,000 new cases for the previous 24 hours, has now risen to become the fourth worst-affected country in the world. Officially, India has documented just over 440,000 cases and 14,000 deaths, but these numbers are generally believed to be significantly under-reported.

More disturbingly, even those countries that showed initial signs of recovery are continuing to struggle with the virus. South Korea, which has been regarded for months as a poster child of an efficient COVID-19 response, has now entered a "second wave", according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC). The CDC said the new cases were driven by

the May holiday period, when coronavirus guidelines were relaxed, and particularly by young people via nightclubs and bars.

Fears of a second wave have also emerged in Iran, while China is now dealing with more than 200 new cases following an outbreak in Beijing.

THERE IS STILL HOPE

Despite the dire global situation, there are a handful of places that have demonstrated it's possible to suppress the virus' transmission (at least for now). New Zealand recorded just two new cases on Monday, despite dropping almost all its coronavirus restrictions after reaching zero active cases two weeks ago. All nine of its active cases are returned travellers in hotel quarantine.

Several Pacific Island states, including Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, have maintained zero active cases.

And outside of ongoing community transmission in parts of Melbourne, Australia overall has continued to record very few new cases despite restrictions easing across most of the country. Tasmania, the Northern Territory, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory all have zero active cases.

What remains abundantly clear is that testing, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine, and community engagement are essential to halting the spread of COVID-19 across the world. Importantly, though, all of these measures depend on leadership and a shared sense of vulnerability. We need to marshal that, putting aside our differences and coming together to defeat a common foe. And we need to do it now.

[the writer is Associate professor, University of Sydney]

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BJP-led Manipur govt will complete its term: Ram Madhav

IMPHAL, JUN 24 (PTI): BJP General Secretary Ram Madhav on Wednesday asserted that the Biren Singh government in Manipur will complete its term till 2022, as the party intensified patch-up efforts with its regional ally National People's Party (NPP). Madhav, who is the party's pointsman for Northeastern states, arrived here on a day the CBI questioned Congress Legislature Party leader O Ibobi Singh in connection with a corruption case.

Singh has been leading efforts to topple the BJP-led coalition government following the resignation of four NPP ministers last week.

The BJP General Secretary said questions regarding stability of the government are being raised for the past one year and it has been seen that the coalition ministry in Manipur has always been stable and winning elections. "Take it from me. We will be stable till 2022 (when next Assembly election will be held)," Ram Madhav told reporters at Imphal Airport.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh also sought to downplay the trouble that has besieged his ministry saying its a "family issue", and exuded confidence that



the political problem will be resolved soon.

After the 2017 Assembly polls, the BJP had formed a coalition ministry with the help of the regional outfit NPP and others.

Meanwhile, the CBI questioned former chief minister Ibobi Singh at his residence here for nearly three hours on Wednesday in connection with alleged misappropriation of Rs 332 crore development funds between 2009 and 2017, when Singh was the chairman of the Manipur Development Society.

The Congress has alleged that it was a desperate bid to save the BJP-led government in Manipur.

"Unlikely to save an unpopular leadership.

This (is) nothing but an effort to buy time for a sinking ship. People will lose their faith in the CBI," Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi had tweeted after the agency had summoned Ibobi Singh.

The four former NPP ministers, whose resignation had plunged the Biren Singh ministry into turmoil, have been taken to the national capital for a meeting with the BJP central leadership for ironing out differences among the coalition partners.

During a fresh round of talks with the convenor of BJP-led North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Tuesday the NPP leaders had stuck to their demand for change in the leadership

of the BJP-led coalition government, BJP sources had said.

"You have been asking about stability of the Manipur government for last one year. It has been stable. It is winning elections," Madhav said.

"We are celebrating and felicitating our newly elected Rajya Sabha member today", he said, adding it was a grand victory for the people of Manipur and the BJP leadership.

In the June 19 poll for the lone seat of the upper house of Parliament from Manipur, BJP's Leishemba Sanajaoba had defeated his Congress rival.

"Since ours is a coalition government and there is some issue of disputes, the national leadership is simply

enquiring about the matter and it is a family issue," Biren Singh told reporters on the premises of a city hotel where Ram Madhav met the state BJP leaders.

"We won (RS poll) by a margin of 28 to 24. Everything is transparent and is openly available to the people. There is no question of the party and government being shaky," the chief minister said.

As part of the efforts to repair cracks in the coalition in the state after the four NPP ministers walked out of the government, BJP on Tuesday took the four members of the regional outfit to Delhi for a meeting with central leaders to hammer out the differences.

Five other legislators, including three from the BJP, lone MLA of All India Trinamool Congress and an Independent, had also pulled out of the government.

Sensing a chance, opposition Congress had roped in the nine rebels and formed a coalition called the Secular Progressive Front (SPF).

A day after the resignations, they met Governor Najma Heptullah and urged her to convene a special session of the assembly for taking up a no-confidence motion against the Biren Singh government.

Competition Comm approves Facebook-Jio deal



NEW DELHI, JUN 24 (PTI): The Competition Commission on Wednesday said it has cleared Facebook's proposed acquisition of 9.99 per cent stake in Jio Platforms, the digital arm of Reliance Industries.

The USD 5.7 billion (Rs 43,574 crore) deal -- the single largest FDI in the technology sector in India -- was announced in April. The US social-networking major had set up a separate entity -- Jaadhu Holdings LLC -- for making the

investment.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved "acquisition of 9.99 per cent stake in Jio Platforms by Jaadhu Holdings LLC", according to a tweet.

Jio Platforms was created in October last year to house all-digital initiative of Reliance.

The deal would bring together JioMart, the e-commerce venture of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, and Facebook's WhatsApp

platform to connect consumers with neighbourhood kirana stores.

WhatsApp has over 400 million users in India while Jio has more than 388 million phone subscribers. Facebook has about 250 million users in India.

Deals beyond a certain threshold require approval of the CCI, which seeks to prevent unfair business practices and promoter fair competition in the market place.

Elephant calf electrocuted to death in Bengal



ALIPURDUAR (WB), JUN 24 (PTI): An elephant calf was electrocuted to death in a village adjoining the Jaldapara National Park in Alipurduar district of West Bengal on Wednesday, forest officials said.

The incident

occurred in the morning when a herd of elephants entered a betel nut grove in Purba Madarihat village and started vandalising it, they said.

One of the trees fell on power supply lines and a wire got snapped. The elephant calf came in contact with it and

died on the spot, the officials said.

The villagers chased away the herd back to the forest, averting more deaths of elephants as the pachyderms could have got electrocuted while trying to rescue the calf, they added.

Mamata Banerjee depriving people of Bengal benefits of central schemes: Yadav

KOLKATA, JUN 24 (PTI): BJP national general secretary Bhupender Yadav on Wednesday alleged that TMC workers are misappropriating relief materials and food meant for cyclone Amphan victims in West Bengal and also accused the Mamata Banerjee government of depriving the people of the benefits of central schemes amid the coronavirus situation.

Claiming that the state is lagging behind in healthcare, education and culture, in which it once used to be a leader in the country, Yadav said that soon the BJP will get a chance to change the situation for the better.

"We all know that during its 34-year rule, the Left Front caused huge damage to industrial activity, culture, education and democratic values in the state.

"But Mamata Banerjee, whom the people had brought to

power with much hope, impaired the situation further instead of alleviating the problems," he said addressing a virtual rally here.

Union minister Smriti Irani was supposed to address the rally but could not do it, so Yadav addressed the rally in place of Irani.

Yadav, a Rajya Sabha MP, alleged that TMC workers have unleashed a reign of terror in the state among BJP workers for indulging in any kind of democratic opposition movement.

He alleged that the TMC was indulging in politics even for providing relief to the people affected by cyclone Amphan and coronavirus-related lockdown and hardships.

BJP state president Dilip Ghosh claimed that at least 34,000 criminal cases have been lodged against BJP workers and supporters in the state by the police for participating in

democratic political activities.

"Even during the coronavirus pandemic, the TMC workers have been indulging in violence against our people," he said.

Accusing the TMC of corruption in food grain distribution through the public distribution system, he alleged that rice, wheat and lentils are being looted from ration shops and godowns.

Terming as "unfortunate" the death of TMC MLA Tamonash Ghosh, who was admitted to a hospital after testing positive for COVID-19, he said, "The healthcare system in the state has broken down and the government is unable to provide proper treatment to the people inflicted with coronavirus."

He alleged that the TMC government has failed to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak in the state.

Yadav said that through policy intervention, the central government has provided a big relief to the farmers of the country.

He said that the central government has decided to bring changes in the Essential Commodities Act for the benefit of the farmers so that they can get proper price for their produce.

The Union government has decided to deregulate foodstuffs, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onion and potato after an amendment to the six-and-half-decade old Essential Commodities Act.

Stock limit of produce will be imposed only under exceptional circumstances after the amendment.

Farmers are currently bound to sell agriculture produce only to licensees in APMCs (Agricultural Produce Market Committees) while no

such restriction of sale applies for any industrial produce.

These restrictions hinder the free flow of agricultural produce and lead to lower price realisation for farmers, Yadav said.

"The central government has provided financial assistance to farmers across the country under the 'Kisan Samman Yojana', but the farmers of West Bengal have been deprived by the Mamata Banerjee government owing to her opposition to it and refusal to allow it in the state," he said.

Yadav said that for the benefit of labourers and workers, the central government has simplified labour laws by introducing reforms in it.

He said that to provide relief to the people of the country amid the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a package of Rs 1.76 lakh crore.

Pangolin rescued, poacher arrested in Bengal

JALPAIGURI (WB), JUN 24 (PTI): A pangolin was rescued from a village adjoining Baikunthapur forest in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal and a poacher was arrested in this connection, forest officials said on Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the Special Task Force of the North Bengal Forest Division raided Mantadari village on Tuesday and rescued the pangolin, which is a critically-endangered animal, from the possession of poacher Fajnu Mohammad,



Baikunthapur Forest Ranger Sanjay Dutta said.

The arrested person has revealed that the pangolin was meant to be smuggled to Siliguri, he said, adding that Mohammad was involved

in other poaching cases in the past.

From Siliguri, the pangolin could have been trafficked abroad, forest officials said.

The rescued pangolin was released in the

Bengal Safari Park near Siliguri.

Pangolins from the region are often trafficked to China, where its meat is consumed and scales used for medicinal purposes, they said.

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Day after being declared COVID-19 positive, Hafeez tests negative

KARACHI, JUN 24 (PTI):

Former Pakistan captain Mohammed Hafeez has tested negative for COVID-19, a day after the PCB found him positive for the deadly virus ahead of the team's much-anticipated tour of England.

Hafeez and Wahab Riaz were among the 10 Pakistan players, who tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday. The team is due to leave for England on Sunday for a Test and T20 series in August.

On Wednesday, Hafeez took to twitter and clarified that he and his family members have tested negative and also posted the medical report to back his claim.

"After Tested positive COVID-19 acc to PCB testing Report yesterday,as 2nd opinion & for satisfaction I personally went to Test it again along with my family and here I along with my all family members are reported Negative (sic) Alham du Lillah. May Allah keep us all safe," Hafeez tweeted.

Fakhar Zaman, Imran Khan, Kashif Bhatti, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Rizwan, Shadab Khan, Haider Ali and Haris Rauf are the other eight players who tested positive as per PCB Chief Executive Wasim Khan.

PCB had earlier said all who have tested positive did not report any symptoms prior to testing.

"The PCB medical panel is already in contact with these players and the masseur, who have been instructed to observe strict quarantine at their homes for their and their families' wellbeing," the PCB said in a statement on Tuesday.

Khan had said that players testing positive for the virus is a warning for the general public.

He also revealed that a support staff member, masseur Malang Ali, had also tested positive for COVID-19.

Khan said that the players and officials would now assemble in Lahore and another round of tests would be carried out on Thursday and a revised squad would be announced the next day.

"It is a matter of concern but we shouldn't panic at this time as we have time on our hands," Khan said.

The players and officials would be retested on reaching England.

Despite the developments over two days, Khan said the tour is on track.

"The tour to England is very much on track and the side will depart as per schedule on 28 June.

"Fortunately, all the first-choice red-ball squad, barring Mohammad Rizwan, are negative, which means they can start training and practising immediately after they have been tested and given the all clear when they arrive in England."

Napoli wins at Verona, keeps building under Gattuso

ROME, JUN 24 (AP):

Three matches into the restart, Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso can celebrate three different achievements.

In the Partenopei's latest performance on Tuesday, reserve forwards Arkadiusz Milik and Hirving Lozano scored in a 2-0 win at Hellas Verona in Serie A. That followed Napoli's Italian Cup victory in a penalty shootout over Juventus for its first title in six years.

Before that, Dries Mertens broke Napoli's all-time scoring record in the southern club's first match back -- a draw with Inter Milan that earned a trip to the cup final.

Milik, the subject of transfer speculation, scored with a header off a corner at the end of the first half. Then Lozano, who was kicked out of training last week by Gattuso due to a lack of effort, sealed the win with a header in the 90th shortly after coming on.

"I don't like to hold grudges," Gattuso said



of Lozano.

"But I strongly believe that when you're part of a football club everyone needs to be on the same wavelength. You always have to train at 100 per cent."

Gattuso has led a quick turnaround since replacing the fired Carlo Ancelotti in December, when Napoli was in crisis with players boycotting a training camp ordered by club president Aurelio De Laurentiis.

"The squad has improved. The team is in form," Gattuso said.

"It's a team that knows how to keep the opposition from scoring, that knows how to pass very well."

Before kickoff, Napoli sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli confirmed that Milik will be offered to other clubs if he doesn't agree to a contract extension.

"It's up to him," Gattuso added of Milik, who now has 10 goals this season despite alternating with Mertens at center forward.

"He's one of the strongest forwards in the world right now."

Napoli moved within three points of fifth-place Roma, which plays Sampdoria on Wednesday.

Promoted Verona, which had a second-half equalizer disallowed by the VAR, is eighth.

"I haven't seen many teams play well against Verona," Gattuso said.

"We played a great match both with and without the ball."

HAT TRICKS

Two seasons removed from Serie B, Parma is fighting for a spot in Europe.

Andreas Cornelius scored a hat trick and Dejan Kulusevski added another as Parma won 4-1 at Genoa to move into seventh place.

Cornelius also scored a hat trick against Genoa in October.

Also, Andrea Bellotti scored as Torino beat Udinese 1-0; and Cagliari won 1-0 at relegation-threatened Spal with a late header from Giovanni Simeone.

Cooling breaks were held in the early games.

All the matches are being played in empty stadiums.

Burnley to show support for Black Lives Matter in 'clear stand' against banner

ANDY HUNTER

LONDON, 24 JUN

[THEGUARDIAN]: Burnley will demonstrate further opposition to the "White Lives Matter Burnley" banner flown over the Etihad Stadium when they resume their campaign at home against Watford on Thursday.

Players and club officials were appalled by the stunt over Manchester City's stadium before kick-off on Monday when the captain, Ben Mee, said he felt ashamed and embarrassed.

Discussions were held on Tuesday at the club over reiterating condemnation of the banner, and support for the Black Lives Matter movement, at the Watford game. Although details have yet to be confirmed it is understood Burnley will

project their "One Club For All" message inside the stadium with support from Sean Dyche's squad.

"One Club For All" is an initiative that includes an inclusion advisory group and Burnley FC in the Community, whose activities involve 33,000 people, 19% from a BAME background. "Clarets Welcome", another Burnley FC in the Community project, provides weekly coaching sessions for men from 20 Syrian refugee families settled in the town.

Burnley issued a statement during the match on Monday that condemned the banner and vowed to ban for life those supporters responsible. That stance was repeated in a statement by the chairman, Mike Garlick, and chief executive, Neil Hart, on Tuesday.

Lancashire police have said no criminal offence took place.

Garlick said in an interview with ESPN: "We need to gather our thoughts, but clearly we need to make a clear stand against this sort of behaviour. I am sure will be doing that over the next few days to make our actions speak as loudly as our words. It's a tiny minority, as any form of hooliganism or racism always has been, because the vast majority come to football in peace. But I want to stress that Burnley football club welcomes all people, from all creeds, races and religions."

Garlick echoed Mee's embarrassment at Monday's events – the chairman was at the Etihad Stadium – and said it was a shameful episode. "We will root out these racists and I am sure they will be dealt

with in due course," he said.

"We will do whatever we can to make sure justice is done against these people. Let's be clear. The plane didn't fly in our name. It has absolutely nothing to do with Burnley football club and we absolutely deplore it. But we have to talk about it. We cannot and will not sweep it under the carpet.

"I was at the game and I have been chairman/co-chairman for eight years. I have always been proud to be in that position, but I can tell you that I wasn't proud to be Burnley chairman last night. It was for all the events that happened off the pitch, not what happened on the pitch. The game became irrelevant after the plane flew over. But I thought Ben Mee, our captain, spoke exceptionally

well in really difficult circumstances. I am proud that he is captain of our football club and I have told him that."

B u r n l e y ' s condemnation of the banner on Monday prompted numerous complaints on social media and to the club questioning their stance. Garlick and Hart felt compelled to explain their objection in Tuesday's statement.

It read: "While we naturally consider that all lives matter, let us be clear that the Black Lives Matter movement aims to overcome years of racial inequality against the BAME community and promote a greater fairness for all. We at Burnley therefore stand firmly behind it and oppose anything that may appear to undermine or challenge such a positive message."

David Luiz extends his Arsenal contract until the end of 2020-21 season

NICK AMES

LONDON, 24 JUN

[THEGUARDIAN]: David Luiz has extended his stay at Arsenal until the end of the 2020-21 season after the club triggered the option of a second year in his contract, putting an end to speculation that his spell would conclude this month.

The centre-back, who is among the club's highest earners and had been considered vulnerable to their precarious financial situation, has accepted the offer to continue with Mikel Arteta's side until next June, when he will be 34.

Arsenal have also confirmed the loanees Dani Ceballos, Cédric Soares and Pablo Marí will stay until the end of the 2019-20 season, and that Soares and Marí will join on permanent deals from Southampton and Flamengo respectively

when the transfer window reopens.

Doubts over David Luiz's future had increased further after he was sent off to end a disastrous substitute cameo in the 3-0 defeat at Manchester City last week but Arteta had remained keen to secure his future.

"David is a really important player for us," Arsenal's technical director, Edu, said. "He has played most of our matches this season and has been important for the team. His passing, his communication with the team on and off the pitch. He helps everyone."

With Marí now set to miss two or three months after injuring an ankle at the Etihad Stadium, Arsenal's defensive options would have been limited had no deal been agreed.

It is the latest



development in a mixed 24 hours for Arteta, who endured another injury setback on Tuesday with the news that Gabriel Martinelli has sustained a serious knee injury towards the end of Monday's training session. The forward is likely to be out for a number of months, but the goalkeeper Bernd Leno will not be sidelined for as long as the club had feared.

Martinelli has had an outstanding first

season in England, scoring 10 goals after joining from the Brazilian lower-league club Ituano. But the 19-year-old seems sure to miss the start of next season, with Arteta admitting the prognosis is bleak. "In training he got hit by another player and damaged his knee," Arteta said on Tuesday. "The doctor is assessing the extent of the injury, but it's not looking good at all. We don't know, but it's looking like months."

Arsenal had feared similar news on Leno after he hyperextended his knee following a late challenge from the Brighton forward Neal Maupay in the 2-1 defeat on Saturday. The German's injury is less serious than expected and he should return to training within four to six weeks. Realistically that rules him out of the

rest of this campaign, meaning Emiliano Martínez will deputise, but it saves Arteta a potential transfer market headache at a time when finances look painfully tight.

Those constraints have not prevented a deal for Marí, who joined on loan in January, nor for Soares, who is yet to make an appearance because of injuries.

Edu said: "We were really pleased with Pablo – his behaviour, the way he is training, his mentality and his quality. Unfortunately, he has that injury but of course we are really happy to keep him for the future.

"Cédric is also going to be an important player. He has been unlucky with the injuries but he is close to being ready and gives us more strength in the right-back position."

'Not a great look': Andy Murray aims volley at Djokovic after win over Broady



KEVIN MITCHELL

LONDON, 24 JUN

[THEGUARDIAN]:

In normal circumstances, Andy Murray's return to tennis after seven months away with a solid straight-sets win over an ebullient contender, Liam Broady, would be the feelgood moment of a shredded season starved of positivity. Yet, as encouraging as his 6-2, 6-2 win was on the opening day of the Battle of the Brits – the charity event his brother, Jamie, has brought to London behind closed doors – Murray struck his most memorable blows in front of the microphone afterwards.

Mixing sympathy with a teeing-off, he said of Novak Djokovic's revelation that he and his wife, Jelena, have tested positive for coronavirus: "First, I hope [they] are well and they recover, and that everyone who is affected

sex, colour of your skin, background, religion. It's a pretty basic human right that everyone should be treated the same and given the same opportunities. But I am aware that is not the case." Murray said he was heartened, nonetheless, by all the players kneeling before each match on Tuesday, a sight rendered all the more poignant in the silent arena.

As for his tennis, he was similarly satisfied with his serving and good finish, but reckoned his hip, such a burden the past couple of years, could move a little more smoothly yet. "The hip that I have makes everything around it more complex," he said. "It's important to make sure my abdominal work is OK and it functions properly. Physically, it wasn't perfect. These courts are the worst to move on.

"If you look at the way I am hitting the ball, I am not where I want to be. It's good to get matches and see how my hip responds to playing three days in a row. It's not the highest level but it is a good level. I'll see how I feel at the end. Maybe I'll get another match at the weekend as well. The intensity of the match is better than in practice. It's pushing myself more."

On a warm midsummer's day indoors in London, Jamie Murray was a surprise loser in the opening doubles, alongside Neal Skupski, against Liam Broady and Cameron Norrie. He did not think the rolling Djokovic drama had "put back tennis", but he probably could have done without the distraction after spending several weeks putting this tournament together.

After their 3-6, 7-5, 11-9 defeat, the seven-times grand slam doubles champion said of Djokovic's aborted competition: "That

was an event that had thousands of fans turning up and we're playing with no fans. As long as [the upcoming majors in New York and Paris] are going to the lengths we're going to to put on events, then you're creating a safe environment. Everyone [in other tournaments] is going to have to get tested, I imagine. So I don't think it puts the Tour back. They'll have totally different rules in place to what's been going on in Croatia, and wherever else they were playing."

Kyle Edmund, who has bulked up in the lockdown, looked strong when beating James Ward, 6-1, 6-4, and Dan Evans, the British No 1, had few problems accounting for Jay Clarke, 6-3, 6-1.

China warns US over actions against 4 more media outlets

Beijing, Jun 24 (AP): China has warned that it will take countermeasures after the US added four more Chinese media outlets to a list of organisations that should be considered foreign missions in the United States because of their ties to the government and ruling Communist Party.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian attacked the Trump administration's move as yet another example of the US's flagrant political suppression of the Chinese media, saying it would interfere with their reporting on the US and betray America's commitment to freedom of the press.

We strongly urge the United States to abandon the Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice, and immediately stop and correct this wrong practice that serves no one's interest. Otherwise



China will have to make the necessary legitimate response, Zhao said.

The US decision on Monday to add the four organisations to the list, which already included five others, doesn't directly impede their ability to conduct journalism but could force some to cut staff in the US and is likely to further aggravate relations between the two countries.

State Department officials said the four organisations, including state-run CCTV, will be required to submit the identities of all staff in the US and any real estate holdings just as they would if they were foreign embassies or consulates.

The five other Chinese organisations were directed to cap the number of people

they can employ in the United States in March a month after they were designated as foreign missions.

China responded by revoking the media credentials of all American journalists at The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post.

State Department officials said the organizations are essentially mouthpieces

for the Communist Party and Chinese government, not legitimate news outlets.

The US designated Soviet outlets as foreign missions during the Cold War. That precedent reflects the bitter state of relations between the United States and China, which are at odds over the origin and response to the coronavirus, trade, human rights and other issues.

North Korea: Kim suspended military retaliation against South

SEOUL, JUN 24 (AP): North Korea on Wednesday said leader Kim Jong Un suspended a planned military retaliation against South Korea, possibly slowing the pressure campaign it has waged against its rival amid stalled nuclear negotiations with the Trump administration.

Last week, the North had declared relations with the South as fully ruptured, destroyed an inter-Korean liaison office in its territory and threatened unspecified military action to censure Seoul for a lack of progress in bilateral cooperation and for activists floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border.

Analysts say North Korea, after weeks deliberately raising tensions, may be pulling away just enough to make room for South Korean concessions.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim presided by video conference over a meeting Tuesday of the ruling Workers' Party's Central Military Commission, which decided to postpone plans for military action against the South brought up by the North's military leaders.

KCNA didn't specify why the decision was made. It said other discussions included bolstering the country's "war deterrent".

Yoh Sang-key, spokesman of South Korea's Unification Ministry, said Seoul was "closely reviewing" the North's report but didn't further elaborate.

Yoh also said it was the first report in state media of Kim holding a video conferencing meeting, but he didn't provide a specific answer when asked whether that would

have something to do with the coronavirus.

The North says there hasn't been a single COVID-19 case on its territory, but the claim is questioned by outside experts.

Kim Dong-yub, an analyst from Seoul's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, said it's likely that the North is waiting for further action from the South to salvage ties from what it sees as a position of strength, rather than softening its stance on its rival.

"What's clear is that the North said (the military action) was postponed, not cancelled," said Kim, a former South Korean military official who participated in inter-Korean military negotiations.

Other experts say the North would be seeking something major from the South, possibly a commitment to resume operations at a shuttered joint factory park in Kaesong, which was where the liaison office was located, or restart South Korean tours to the North's Diamond Mountain resort.

Those steps are prohibited by the international sanctions against the North over its nuclear weapons programme.

The public face of the North's recent bashing of the South has been Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un, who has been confirmed as his top official on inter-Korean affairs.

Issuing harsh statements through state media, she had said the North's demolishing of the liaison office would be just the first in a series of retaliatory action against the enemy South and that she would leave it to the North's military to come up with the next steps.

The General Staff of the North's military has

said it would send troops to the mothballed inter-Korean cooperation sites in Kaesong and Diamond Mountain and restart military drills in frontline areas.

Such steps would nullify a set of deals the Koreas reached during a flurry of diplomacy in 2018 that prohibited them from taking hostile action against each other.

Also condemning the South over North Korean refugees floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border, the North said Monday it printed 12 million of its own propaganda leaflets to be dropped over the South in what would be its largest ever anti-Seoul leafletting campaign.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Kim's decision to hold back military action would affect the country's plans for leafletting. The North's military had said it would open border areas on land and sea and provide protection for civilians involved in the leafletting campaigns.

The North has a history of dialling up pressure against the South when it fails to get what it wants from the United States. The North's recent steps came after months of frustration over Seoul's unwillingness to defy US-led sanctions and restart the inter-Korean economic projects that would breathe life into its broken economy.

N u c l e a r negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington largely stalled after Kim's second summit with President Donald Trump last year in Vietnam, where the Americans rejected North Korea's demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

Black Lives Matter protests have not led to a spike in coronavirus cases, research says

(CNN): Despite warnings from public health officials, new research suggests Black Lives Matter protests across the country have not led to a jump in coronavirus cases.

A new study, published this month by the National Bureau of Economic Research, used data on protests from more than 300 of the largest US cities, and found no evidence that coronavirus cases grew in the weeks following the beginning of the protests.

In fact, researchers determined that social distancing behaviors actually went up after the protests -- as people tried to avoid the protests altogether. But obviously,



these demonstrations caused a decrease in social distancing among actual protesters.

"Our findings suggest that any direct decrease in social distancing

among the subset of the population participating in the protests is more than offset by increasing social distancing behavior among others who may choose to

shelter-at-home and circumvent public places while the protests are underway," the report reads.

It's still possible that protests may have caused

an increase in the spread of the virus among those who attended protests, according to the report.

Researchers also noted that the effect of protests on social distancing and stay-at-home orders may fade as the violence and scope of protests decline. As the protests begin to lessen or become less intense, non-protesters will feel safer leaving their homes.

"There are other possible explanations for our findings as well, such as avoiding travel outside the home due to additional traffic congestion or street closures, or due to lack of available activities from businesses closures near protest sites," the study reads.

Pilots of crashed PIA plane were not focussed, were discussing coronavirus: Minister

ISLAMABAD, JUN 24 (PTI): The pilots of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane that crashed last month were not focussed and they were discussing coronavirus during the flight, the country's aviation minister told Parliament on Wednesday as he pointed out their "overconfidence and lack of concentration" as some of the reasons for the tragedy that killed 97 people on board.

The domestic flight from Lahore to Karachi crashed in a residential area near the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi on May 22.

The Airbus A320 aircraft of the national carrier had 91 passengers and a crew of eight when it crashed into the Jinnah Garden area near Model Colony in Malir on Friday, minutes before its landing. One girl died on the ground after suffering burn injuries.

Two passengers miraculously survived

the crash.

Federal Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan presented the interim investigation report on the PIA plane crash in the National Assembly, saying that the pilots were not focused and their lack of concentration had caused the crash.

Human error by the pilots and air traffic control caused the crash of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane, he said.

The minister said that the pilots had ignored the instructions of the air traffic control on the height of the aircraft.

"The pilots and the ATC both did not follow the protocol," he said.

"The pilot ignored the instructions of the air traffic controllers and the ATC, on the other hand, did not inform the pilot about the engine colliding.

"The pilots were discussing corona throughout the flight. They were not focussed. They talked about corona [...] their families were affected. When the control tower asked

him to increase the plane's height, the pilot said 'I'll manage'. There was overconfidence," he said.

Sarwar said that the cabin crew and ATC were also responsible for the tragedy.

"Those who are responsible will be held accountable," he said, promising that the complete investigation report will be presented in one year's time.

Sarwar said that the initial report pointed out that there was no technical fault with the aircraft and even the pilot had not said the same in his conversation with the air traffic controllers.

The minister noted that the aircraft touched the runway thrice without the landing gear which caused damage to its engines.

"When the plane took off again, both its engines had been damaged," he said.

Sarwar said that the conversation between the pilot and the air traffic controllers had been recorded and he had heard it himself.

The minister said that the equipment from the aircraft had been extracted and decoded. He said that the recording obtained would be made part of the final report of the PIA plane crash.

The minister said that 40 per cent of pilots of the national flag bearer were flying aircraft with fake licenses. He said that these pilots had not given the exams themselves nor did they have the proper flying experience, he added.

"Pilots are also appointed on a political basis, unfortunately," he said.

"Whilst appointing pilots, merit is ignored," he added, disclosing that degrees of four PIA pilots had been found out to be fake.

Sarwar said that the government will take action against PIA pilots who were found guilty of the above offenses. He said that the government will 'restructure' the PIA and will take it back to its days of glory.

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OUT AT NIGHT! The beautiful, blonde billionaire, Kylie Jenner steps out to dinner with her new hair in Beverly

Bruce Willis to headline action film 'Reactor'

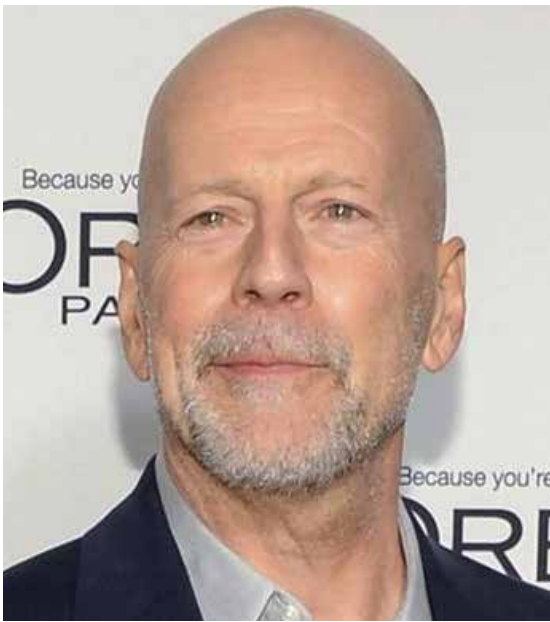
LOS ANGELES, JUN 24 (PTI): Hollywood star Bruce Willis is set to star in action film "Reactor".

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the film will be directed by Jared Cohn, who also wrote the original script with Cam Cannon and Stephen Cyrus.

The project, which is backed by 308 Enterprises and Almost Never Films, is being introduced at the Virtual Cannes Market by The Exchange.

Willis, 65, will play the leader of a gang of mercenaries whose lust for revenge sees him hold a nuclear power plant hostage. In the end, it is up to a former soldier to take him down.

The film will be produced by Corey Large of 308 Enterprises alongside Danny Roth of Almost Never Films and Johnny Messner. Steven Eads is attached as an executive producer.



Saroj Khan doing better, will be discharged soon, says family

MUMBAI, JUN 24 (PTI): Veteran choreographer Saroj Khan, who was admitted to hospital here, is under observation and doing fine, family sources said on Wednesday.

Khan was rushed to Guru Nanak Hospital in Bandra on June 20 after she complained of breathing problems.

A source close to her family told PTI that the 71-year-old choreographer is doing better and will be discharged soon.

"She is under observation but is doing fine. She is much better. She shall be discharged soon," the source said.

Following her hospitalisation, a mandatory COVID-19 test was done on Khan, which turned out to be negative.

Meanwhile, filmmaker Anubhav Sinha took to Twitter to assure the people that there is "nothing to worry" as the veteran choreographer is doing well.

"Just spoke to people looking after Saroj Ji. She is in fact in hospital. But doing well. Should be out in a day or two. Nothing to worry. Was there for regular treatment. Felt weak, got admitted. Tested Covidy too. Negative," he posted.

Filmmaker Kunal Kohli tweeted that he spoke to Khan's son, Raju, who assured him that the choreographer is recuperating.

"She was taken to the hospital as she felt breathless. No COVID. She's better now. He (Raju) thanks everyone for their prayers and wishes. We hope and pray our beloved Masterji is home soon," he wrote.



In a career spanning over four decades, Khan is credited with choreographing more than 2,000 songs.

The three-time National Award winner has choreographed for some of the most memorable tracks, including "Dola Re Dola" from Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Devdas", "Ek Do Teen" from Madhuri Dixit-starrer "Tezaab" and "Ye Ishq Haaye" from "Jab We Met" in 2007.

She last choreographed for "Tabaah Hogaye", featuring Madhuri from filmmaker Karan Johar's production "Kalank" in 2019.

Richard Armitage to lead 'Now & Then' adaptation



LOS ANGELES, JUN 24 (PTI): "The Hobbit" series star Richard Armitage will be playing the lead role in the upcoming movie, "Now & Then".

Based on William Corlett's award-winning novel of the same name, the film will be directed by filmmaker Adrian Noble, best known for Vanessa Redgrave and Timothy Spall-starrer "Mrs Lowry and Son".

Matt Western has adapted the film's script from the book, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Armitage, 48, will essay the role of Christopher Metcalfe, who returns to his childhood home following the death of his father, confronting memories of his time in school and an intense, passionate affair he shared with fellow student, Stephen Walker.

The film, which will be produced by Croatian film and TV producer Bruno Mustic, is scheduled to shoot in the UK and Croatia in early 2021.

BTS and Big Hit Entertainment donate \$1 million to help concert crews

(CNN): BTS and Big Hit Entertainment have teamed up to donate \$1 million to help concert crews hurting because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The donation by the Korean pop superstars and their management company was made to Live Nation's charity campaign, Crew Nation, which helps live show staffers who are out of work due to canceled events.

Live Nation launched Crew Nation in March with initial donations of \$10 million to help over 1,000 concert crew members. Some were scheduled to work on the BTS "Map of the Soul" Tour, which was postponed in April.

"If it weren't for COVID-19, we would have been happily touring across the world with many of our live concert crews by now," the K-pop superstars said in a statement. "We are aware that a lot



of communities need help due to COVID-19, and we wanted to support the music industry crews by making a donation. We hope to meet again on stage very soon."

The donation comes after BTS donated \$1 million to Black Lives Matter.

Recently, the group's "Bang Bang Con: The Live" drew 756,000 fans to the paid concert live stream.

M Night Shyamalan's next to release in July 2021

LOS ANGELES, JUN 24 (PTI): M Night Shyamalan's untitled thriller will be released in theatres on July 23, 2021, Universal Studios has announced.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the film was originally scheduled to hit the screens on February 26, 2021, but the studio pulled it from the calendar amid the release date shuffle forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

Though the details of the plot have been kept under wraps, it is rumoured that the movie might be connected with some of the other films by the director.

Shyamalan, who has written the script, will also produce the project.

The cast includes the likes of Eliza Scanlen, Thomasin McKenzie, Alex Wolff, Ken Leung, Abbey Lee, and Nikki Amuka-Bird.

The film is part of the director's two-picture deal with the studio which was announced in 2019.

Universal released Shyamalan's three previous films - "Glass" (2019), "Split" (2017) and "The Visit" (2015), all of which were box office hits.

ARIES:

Expect changes on the organisational front. If you're not in a position of power, you could be offered something tangible, something that requires you to channel your inner boss babe/man. You've got this, Aries! You've been preparing for this great change for a while now. When the self-doubt gets the better of you, remember all the reasons why you have been given this responsibility. Arians who hold key positions are being asked to lead by example. The way you play your role in the midst of this turmoil will teach your team more than a self-help or management book ever will.

TAURUS:

Separation is an illusion. You are always connected with the divine forces, Taurus. All you have to do is tune in and listen. Trust that the answers you need will come through your higher self/superconsciousness. Some of you may have to execute a task or deliver a truth that feels uncomfortable to you. But you know in your heart of hearts that it is for the greater good. Free yourself from the guilt and take a step forward. The forces are with you.

GEMINI:

The thing about the benevolent Universe is that it's always looking out for us. Communicating in signs and symbols is

one of the ways in which it gives us clarity on our path. Maybe you missed your green flag the first time around. Maybe you missed it the second time too, and that's okay. All you have to do is go within and express what's weighing you down. Trust that the guidance you are seeking will come to you in the most unexpected of ways. PS: Who's to say that song on your Shuffle is not a synchronistic message?

CANCER:

Given that chaos is a constant, your tribe could need your tender love and care more than ever before. But what does it truly mean to hold space, Cancer? Today, you're being asked to listen with a loving and compassionate heart as you consciously choose to keep your judgements aside. When you're present to them, you will know exactly what they need, whether it's a shoulder to cry on or words of affirmation reminding them how powerful they are. Some of you may feel inspired to make a shift to service-oriented careers. Listen to your higher self. You're being guided in the right direction.

LEO:

We're either living in the past or fast-forwarding to the future. But, both of these polarities are an illusion. The present is all that exists. But that's something you know all too well, Leo.

So what do you do when your mind takes you to 100 places at once? Start by connecting to your breath. A deep inhale followed by a deep exhale. Repeat it until you begin to feel centred in your body. PS: Reconnecting with your yoga practice (breathwork included) will assist you in restoring mental and emotional balance.

VIRGO:

It's easy to play the blame game or judge others on the basis of what you consider to be the truth. But your truth may differ from theirs, Virgo. Instead of getting defensive, open yourself to listening to their side of the story. Hold space for a healthy exchange. Most importantly, agree to disagree. Peace is always better than war, isn't it? Some of you may be dealing with childhood wounds at this time. You did what you thought was best at that point. Exercise compassion towards your past self.

LIBRA:

The keyword for retrograde season is always 'review' and today you're being asked to review your idea of balance. How much do you give others and at what cost? You are under no obligation to please everybody. Oh, and one more thing! Drawing boundaries is a form of self-care. Some of you may be waiting on the outcome of something. If you've been true to yourself, there's no reason

the scales of Justice will not tip in your favour.

SCORPIO:

We're officially in retrograde season, Scorpio, with Mercury deciding to join the rest of the crew. Reviewing your life lessons is an integral part of this cycle. Today, you're being asked to assess the areas where you are feeling 'stuck'. Ask yourself why you keep coming back to the same point over and over. Self-reflection will help you come closer to your truth.

SAGITTARIUS:

As an inherently adventurous sign, you could be suffering from a serious case of wanderlust. Long distance travel is out of the question. But that doesn't mean you can't explore the holiday destinations closer to home. If the rules are stringent where you are, it's best to respect them at this point. However, you always have the option of making a ritual out of your morning. PS: There's nothing like soaking in the sun to get your feel-good hormones flowing.

CAPRICORN:

The Universe speaks to us in mysterious ways. The sign you've asked for has been sent to you. The real question is: are you willing to take notice? 'Distance' is another keyword for you today, Capricorn.

It's true that your outer reality is synonymous with chaos. But stepping away will help you understand how to deal with the drama in an evolved manner. Remember, you have the strength, courage, and wisdom required to face the storm.

AQUARIUS:

What if true that you have been challenging yourself, but are you realising your full potential? Level 5 is not good enough, Aquarius, not when you're capable of operating from the top. So where is your need to self-sabotage stemming from? Do you not believe you're worthy of being seen and heard? Considering that everything works inside out, it's your inner landscape you're being asked to reflect upon. Let go.

PISCES:

What if our hobbies are not just hobbies? What if they're a portal for us to experience divine connection and share our gifts with the world? Now, more than ever, you are awakening to the gifts of the soul you have been blessed with, whether it's an eye for aesthetics or the ability to weave magic with words. If you've been thinking about following the route of passion, trust that the divine forces are with you. The doors that were once closed promise to open with minimal effort. Take the first step, Pisces.