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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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**Kerala High Court stays Lakshadweep administration's meat ban in schools**

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 22 JUN [NDTV]:** The Kerala High Court today stayed two major measures of "reform" introduced recently in Lakshadweep by the Union Territory's new Administrator Praful Khoda Patel: removal of chicken, beef, and other meat from the island group's school menu and closing down of dairy farms. The order followed a plea alleging that these decisions were based on a "hidden and mischievous personal agenda" and violated the islanders' rights.

Other such sweeping changes brought in by Mr Khoda's regime have, in recent months, set off a wave of anger in the island group, besides in neighbouring Kerala.

The court stated that no further action should be taken on these two specific decisions -- the meat ban and closing down of dairy farms -- until a counter-affidavit was filed by the Union government. It must be noted here that unlike chicken and beef, fish and eggs were not on the list of items barred.

Lakshadweep Collector S Asker Ali had, in May, said: "During monsoon it is hard to transport chicken from outside. And if children's requirements are met locally through egg and fish, I don't see a problem." The court's order today came based on a public interest litigation filed by Ajmal Ahmed R, an advocate at the Kerala High Court and an executive member of the Lakshadweep Bar Association. His plea will be considered again next week.

"The officials are literally using this situation (lockdown) as a means to implement the irrational reforms, which are totally against the interest of Lakshadweep and Islanders therein. The Administrator is attempting to impose his hidden and mischievous personal agenda...in blatant violation of Article 15, 16, 19, 21, and 300A of Constitution of India," Mr Ahmed's petition stated.

Referring to the meat ban, the petitioner told the court that chicken and other meat items have been on the menu in Lakshadweep's schools "from its inception". Calling the Administrator's intervention "ill-motivated" and alleging a "hidden agenda", Mr Ahmed's plea said there was no deliberation or consultation before changing the school menu. "...preparations are going on to entrust...mid-day meals to non-governmental organisation Akshayapatra, having an office in Bengaluru," he said.

## CM INAUGURATES OXYGEN PLANT AT STNM

# "Working towards making Sikkim first mask-free state in India"

**AARON RAI**

**GANGTOK, 22 JUN:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang today said that the state government is aiming at making Sikkim the first mask-free state of the country. He said this during the inauguration of the 1000 Litres Per Minute PSA Oxygen Plant at STNM Hospital, Sochyagang, Gangtok, today.

The CM said that the government is focusing on vaccinating all its citizens with the aim to become the first mask free state in the country.

The Oxygen Plant has been allocated by the Government of India for STNM Hospital, Sochyagang under PMCAES. The civil work for the installation of the Plant had commenced on 28 May, 2021. The plant is now fully functional and will be able to supply oxygen to the entire Hospital.

Oxygen Plants are also coming up at all the four District Hospitals, and the Gov-



ernment plans to install a 1000 LPM Bottling Plant at Rangpo from its own fund to ensure that the State Government will have enough supply of Medical Oxygen to deal with any health crisis.

It may be mentioned that the State Government in its early response to the second wave of Covid-19 had installed a 500 Lites Per Minute VSA Oxygen Plant at STNM Hospital. The 1000 LPM Plant

inaugurated today will further supplement the Oxygen supply to the Hospital.

While addressing the medical fraternity after the inauguration programme, the CM lauded the efforts of the

## CM ANNOUNCES

1. Government will ensure free medicines for all the people who cannot afford to buy medicines (BPL category). To achieve this, the budget allocation for the procurement of medicines has been enhanced for the Financial Year 2021-22.
2. Government has decided to procure all the medicines directly from the manufacturer, thus completely eradicating the system of middlemen.
3. All Government doctors and medical practitioners should only prescribe medicines which are available in the Health Store (CMS).
4. The manufacturers should deliver the medicines directly to the District Hospitals and the STNM Hospital so that there is even distribution and adequate stock.
5. Sanitation Assistants officially renamed Safaikarmacharis.
6. 120 KV Generator Backup for the newly installed Oxygen Plant will be sanctioned immediately and made available within the next fifteen days.

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entire team involved in the process of installation of the Oxygen Plant in STNM Hospital. Dedicating the Oxygen Plant to the people of Sikkim,

he said that this is yet another milestone achieved by the State in terms of strengthening the health infrastructure.

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## Road to Saffo: 30 yrs in the making and still incomplete



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA**

**MANGAN, 22 JUN:**

The people of Saffo and Salim Pakel of North Sikkim have voiced their dismay over the

delay in construction of a road that was started 30 years ago!

They have said that 107 GREF has not completed the road from CWC

to their village which was started in 1991 and has since been abandoned.

This road via CWC in Upper Dzongu can make life easier for people of Saffo and Salim Pakel since they can reach BAC and SDM office in Dzongu in around 30 minutes. The other road via Shipgyer Toong takes 4 hours. This road is also regularly blocked due to landslides during the monsoon season.

The public of these two villages have appealed to the District Administration North and the state government to look into matter as early as possible.

## CM's message on Int'l Olympic Day

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 22 JUN:**

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang has conveyed his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of International Olympic Day and has urged the youth fraternity to actively take part in various games and sports activities so that besides healthy environment they get a chance to be noticed by the renowned associations.

The International Olympic Day is a day dedicated to sports and fitness. Every year on June 23, the day is commemorated as a call to action for people all around the world.

The CM has also extended best wishes and good luck to the Indian contingent and Archer Shri Tarundeep Rai who is going to participate in the upcoming Tokyo Olympic Games.

Similarly, he has extended heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the Sports Department, Govt. of Sikkim for launch of "Road to Tokyo Olympics 2020" in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India. It will be a month-long program which will sensitise and create awareness amongst the people about the Olympics movement.

The International Olympic Day was first

observed in 1947. At the 41st Session of the International Olympic Committee in Stockholm that year, Dr Josef Gruss, a Czech IOC member, proposed the concept of a World Olympic Day. He advocated designating a day to commemorate everything the Olympics stands for. After a few months of work, Dr. Gruss' idea was approved at the 42nd IOC session in Switzerland. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was formed on the same day in Sorbonne, Paris, in 1894, thus June 23 was chosen as the International Olympic Day because of its historical significance.

## Tourism stakeholders and Govt discuss possible resumption of tourism

**SAGAR CHETTRI**

**GANGTOK, 22 JUN:**

Tourism stakeholders came together on a single platform on Tuesday to discuss various issues pertaining to resumption of tourism in the state with better planning and preparedness.

The meeting, which was initiated by Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation [STDC] Chairman, Lukendra Rasaily, was attended by Additional Chief Secretary to Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, K Jayakumar and representatives of hotels, resorts, homestays, travel agencies and other stakeholders. It is informed that the suggestions and issues discussed in the meeting would be placed to the state government.



During the open discussion, stakeholders suggested that there should be better coordination between concerned departments before taking out any notification to understand the issues and problems of stakeholders. They asserted that Home Department and Health Department should coordinate with the Tourism

Department before taking out any notification to make way for tourism stakeholders.

They stated that COVID-19 is an ongoing process and no one knows when it will end; at the same time tourism is the main revenue generating source for Sikkim so better planning and coordination are needed for the sus-

tainability of tourism sector and its stakeholders.

Tourism stakeholders have also placed other issues and problems faced during the lockdown in the state. They suggested vaccination of all tourism stakeholders and digital promotion and marketing of Sikkim tourism before unlocking.

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## 3 deaths and 137 new Covid cases in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 22 JUN:**

Sikkim recorded two more Covid deaths and 137 new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 19,458 and the number of Covid fatalities to 296.

Out of the three deaths, two were reported from STNM Hospital, while one Covid-positive person passed away at the COVID Care Centre set up in Namchi Girls School in South District where 13 people are currently undergoing isolation.

On a more hopeful note, Sikkim continued its record of posting more recoveries than new cases with 152 more people

completing their home isolation for a long enough duration without symptoms to get discharged. Of the nearly 19.5K cases recorded in Sikkim thus far, 16,481 have already recovered while 2,430 Covid-positive people are on their way to recovery under home isolation with symptoms mild enough not to require hospitalisation.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department collating data as of 8AM this morning, 137 people tested positive in the testing of 844 samples on Monday.

A total of 75 persons were found positive for COVID-19

in rapid antigen testing of 524 samples while 61 more tested positive in RT-PCR testing of 307 samples and one more case was picked up in TruNat screening of 13 samples.

The daily positivity rate of COVID-19 in Sikkim has slightly increased to 16.2%.

Of the 137 new cases, 69 were registered in East District, 41 in West District and 27 in South District.

There are currently only 117 Covid patients admitted in hospitals here, 23 of whom were admitted today. At present, there are 12 Covid patients admitted in ICU facilities at STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

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# Do you still need an antivirus software in 2021?

**PRAJESH SJB RANA**

**KATHMANDU, 22 JUN [KATH-MANDUPOST]:** We have come a long way from glitching Windows screens to adware and just plain annoyance viruses. Windows 10 today doesn't feel as unsafe as the operating system in its earlier days.

Viruses are mostly controlled by Microsoft's in-built Windows Defender and with proper digital hygiene, tech-savvy people can identify phishing attempts and viruses manually. Considering how Windows automatically protects you from digital threats, do you need an antivirus software in 2021?

While yes, viruses have been controlled to some extent in modern operating systems, we have also seen some malicious applications plague digital users in the recent past. Wanna-Cry was the infamous ransomware cyptoworm that encrypted around 200,000 computers across 150 countries. Mydoom, a worm, is considered one of the fastest spreading email worms with computers getting affected even today since its inception in 2004. As security has changed, so have the many viruses that infect your computer.

While in the past, viruses were mainly designed to annoy or display unwanted information, the current landscape of the digital world has also given rise to more complex viruses with a specific purpose. Malware, like Stuxnet, have even been used to disable and disrupt nuclear power plants and engage in cyber warfare.

Antivirus software like Windows Defender is good in de-

tecting known threats, blocking unwanted applications and network attacks but newer and newer viruses are developed which might not be identified in virus databases.

These new variants can easily pass through antivirus scans and by the time they are detected, they might already have wreaked havoc on your computer. And even more than direct network attacks, social engineering infections are also one of the most common ways that computers are infected. If you don't know what to look for, an exact copy of Facebook's login page might be a phishing site.

While known threats are easy to protect against, it is the newer ones that use unknown vulnerabilities within a system that internet users need to be more worried about. The power of your computer to be used as a botnet and access to your personal data can be disastrous these days. Third-party antivirus softwares, while providing all the services of Windows Defender, also offer some great tools to keep you that extra bit safe on the internet.

Antivirus softwares like Kaspersky Internet Security, ESET Internet Security, Avast Antivirus, McAfee and BitDefender are all available in Nepal through eSewa or Khalti. All of these antivirus softwares have free versions as well but if you want to pay for the service, there are local dealers for them. For a free service, however, we recommend staying with Windows Defender since the integrated software works really well with Windows and is very light on

resources. Free versions of any of these third-party services would add a few new features but for the most part, Windows Defender should work fine.

Paid versions of these services are where their value truly resides. Almost all of the third-party antivirus softwares come equipped with machine learning and artificial intelligence-based threat detection. Some, like Kaspersky and McAfee, also offer Password Managers to help complicate your passwords and keep them safe. Further features like Ransomware remediation help you protect your files even after your computer has already been infected by a ransomware.

Threat detection for all of the aforementioned antivirus software are impeccable, helped by the fact that threat detections are now shared across all antivirus softwares. But for added protection to privacy, some also offer VPN services and software webcam kill switches.

Extra security is all well and good, but it doesn't help very much if they hog all of your system resources. And in the past, antivirus softwares have been notorious resource hogs, completely freezing your computer while an active scan is running. With how invisible Windows Defender is, this doesn't seem to be a problem with Microsoft's in-house offering, but what about the third-party ones?

Installing any new antivirus is definitely going to take up some of your system resources but it's not as bad today as it was in the past. This is also because hardware has contin-

ued to evolve over the past decade, and what felt like heavy programs in the past, now run easily on one core of your CPU, leaving you with plenty of parallel processors to work off of. Kaspersky, ESET, and McAfee all raise system resources by a couple of percent while idle, but these are minimal increases that don't necessarily affect system processes unless they're running active scans. Norton was the heaviest and still, system performance was only slightly affected.

Considering everything, would I recommend installing an antivirus on your modern 2021 computer? Absolutely. The added protection offered by any of these security solutions will help not only protect your computer from infections but rather act reactively to malicious software as well. Additional services like Password Managers and VPNs are a must use today, and even if you don't end up shelling out money for any of these antiviruses, free Password Managers (BitWarden) should be an essential program for any internet denizen to keep their online accounts safe. Getting one of these paid antivirus software is definitely going to help protect your data better, but they also come at a cost. Which is why, we recommend the default Windows Defender too, for those looking for a free solution. Viruses aren't what they used to be, they're used more nefariously today than ever before which is why thinking about cyber security should be a must to keep yourself safe in the digital world.

## SDM inspects Primitive Tribe Girls Hostel construction



**SUMMIT REPORT  
MANGAN, 22 JUN:**

SDM Dzongu, Sonam R Lepcha and team inspected the status of upcoming Primitive Tribe

Girls Hostel Facility at Lingdong, Dzongu, North Sikkim, today.

The team inspected and took stock of the progress of the construc-

tion which is in its final stage.

The project was funded by the Social Justice and Welfare department.



## CHANGE IN ONLINE VACCINATION SLOT BOOKING PROTOCOL

Starting this Saturday, you can book your vaccination slots online for any day next week. Following a change in the vaccination protocol, every Saturday vaccination slots for the next week will open for people to pick and choose the site and date as per their convenience. What this means is that online vaccination slots for 28 June – 03 July will be open for booking from Saturday.

## CM's personal intervention brings stranded ailing Sikkimese home from Gujarat



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 22 JUN:**

Kalpana Sharma, a resident of Chujachen, East Sikkim, who was working at Jamnagar in Gujarat had taken ill and was stranded there during the ongoing lockdown. When the matter was brought to the notice of the Chief Minister, his personal intervention got the evacuation process rolling and she landed at Bagdogra today and was reunited with her family.

As per informed sources, Kalpana was brought to Sikkim House,

Kolkata, aided by her house owner on 21 June and then put on a flight to Bagdogra where she was received by protocol officials of the State Government. Her brother was also at the airport, and Sikkim Jan Kalyan Prakosta volunteers organised an ambulance to ferry her home to Chujachen, today, it is informed.

Kalpana and her family members have expressed gratitude towards Chief Minister PS Tamang for having extended immediate support and help.

## Congress to participate in all-party meeting convened by PM Modi

**JAMMU, 22 JUN [PTI]:** The Congress will attend the all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday, its Jammu and Kashmir unit spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, he said.

The meeting was attended by former prime minister Manmohan Singh and senior leaders Karan Singh, P Chid-

ambaram, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Rajni Patil, GA Mir and Tariq Hameed Karra, the spokesperson said.

Fourteen leaders from Jammu and Kashmir have been invited to the meeting to be chaired by the prime minister to discuss the future course of action for the union territory.

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee president GA Mir and party leader and former chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad are among the invitees.

## Minister convenes meeting with GNP, inspects Gyalshing



**GYALSHING, 22 JUN (IPR):** Minister-cum-MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, Lok Nath Sharma convened a meeting with the members of Gyalshing Nagar Panchayats (GNP) and Departmental officials of District and Sub Divisional Level at the office of GNP and carried out joint inspection in and around Gyalshing, today.

The meeting also had the presence of President of Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat Devendra Sharma, Panchayat Members, Additional District Collector(Development) Surat Kumar Gurung, Sub Divisional Magistrate/

Gyalshing Santosh Kumar Alley, Municipal Executive Officer Gyalshing Smt Bhumika Pradhan, Block Development Officer Gyalshing Mukesh Dahal, Divisional Engineer, Urban Development and Housing Department (S/W) Suman Shanker, Assistant Town Planner (W) Zigmee Bhutia, Revenue Officer-cum-Assistant Director Sonam Palmu Bhutia, officials and others.

At the outset, the President of Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat Devendra Sharma and MEo,

Bhumika Pradhan briefly informed on the existing monsoon challenges and works to be taken up within the urban area of Gyalshing.

Minister Lok Nath Sharma asked the concerned officials to draw out a detailed blue print to permanently resolve the issues of frequent blockage of Drainage System, Water Connectivity Pipeline, Sewerage system, Power connectivity and other works covering the entire Nagar Panchayat Area. He also urged concerned officials to prepare estimates for Jhora Training Works.

Minister Sharma also informed that the Urban Garib Awas Yojana will also be implemented in Nagar Panchayat area.

Additionally, the State Government will also provide a Residential Unit of a flat to each eighty landless urban families within Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat Area. He also advised to put up proposal for the Construction of Office of Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat and Sub Divisional Office of Urban Development and Housing Department.

Thereafter, he led the

joint inspection in and around Gyalshing to take stock of the drainage system, water connectivity pipeline, Jhora blockage and Monsoon affected sites. He stopped at various points including the Hospital Road, Tikzok / Sakyong Phatak, Dzumsa Pelling Phatak, Pelling Road and also visited affected Jhora site and the Residential Houses aligned along the jhora at Pandey Colony and Lotus Village.

Thereafter, the visiting team jointly inspected the proposed site for Car Parking Plaza / Kishan Bazar/ Residential Housing Complex at 9th Mile, Gyalshing.

The Minister then visited the ongoing construction of Zonal Tank under Water Supply Scheme at Legship. He directed the concerned Assistant Engineer of PHE Department, Gyalshing, Pema D. Sangdarpa to ensure physically strong tank with the provision of RCC wall and double concrete plum. The targeted beneficiaries have expressed gratitude to the Area MLA for timely intervening the work progress and safeguarding the apprehended effects.

## 'Working towards...

He said that the entire credit for this achievement goes to the Health Department. He also thanked the officers and engineers of the Central PWD for completing the civil work within the stipulated time, and the technical team from L&T company for installing the Plant. He extended his gratitude to the Prime Minister and the Union Health Minister for their continuous support to the State to deal with the pandemic.

The Chief Minister said that the present crisis caused by the pandemic has drawn everyone's attention towards the health sector, and there is heightened awareness among the general public. He reaffirmed the commitment of the State Government to defeat the pandemic and work towards rebuilding Sikkim and putting it back on the track of development.

He assured all possible support from the Government to the entire medical fraternity in the State. He said that steps are being taken to appoint more doctors, nurses and paramedical staff to strengthen the health setup.

The CM also acknowledged the relentless effort of the State Level Oxygen Management Committee headed by Minister for Transport, Sanjit Kharel.

## CM ANNOUNCES...

- The Government will immediately appoint technical manpower to operate and maintain the Oxygen Plant at STNM Hospital as well as the Plants being set up in the districts. In the meanwhile, all the technical staff engaged in the Oxygen Plant should get adequately trained by the technical team from L&T company before they leave the State.
- The Government aims to make the STNM Hospital at par with renowned private hospitals. To achieve this, there should be strict rules in place and everybody should comply with them. Doctors and paramedics should not be burdened with management related work, rather it should be taken care of by the Hospital Administration. The overall ambience and sanctity of the hospital should be maintained.
- Regarding Medical Assistance under Chief Minister's Medical Relief, an Office has been established on the first floor of Old STNM Hospital (Urban PHC). The office will be open from Thursday to Saturday. After scrutiny, the applications are sanctioned on Sunday, processed on Monday and Tuesday, and the cheque is released on Wednesday.

## Tourism stakeholders...

STDC Chairman mentioned that suggestions and outcome of the meeting would be placed to the state government. He added that tourism stakeholders have been suffering during this lockdown especially problems related to loans.

The Chairman, Mr Rasaily urged all tourism stakeholders to work for the upcoming tourism programme, 'Visit Sikkim 2022'. He added that it was the collective responsibility of every tourism stakeholder to work for the success of 'Visit Sikkim 2022' for further marketing and promotion of Sikkim tourism in the world.

Additional Chief Secretary to Tour-

He thanked the entire team for ensuring timely management and transportation of medical oxygen.

The Chief Minister put on record his appreciation for the entire medical fraternity and support staff for rendering their valuable service during the Covid-19 pandemic. He said that in due course of time, the Government will felicitate all the individuals for their selfless service.

He further thanked the entire team of SEED Cell for contributing 3000 numbers of PPE Kits, 700 Pulse Oximeters, 1000 Immunity Boosters and 2 Lakh Face Masks, to the Health Department, as a token of support during the pandemic. On behalf of SEED Cell, its Coordinator, Raj Lama had earlier handed over the items to the CM.

Meanwhile he said that during this pandemic, around 404 people have been appointed to various posts under the health department.

The CM accused some doctors belonging to the opposition of jeopardizing the health of citizens in the name of check-up. He said that they were risking the lives of people in the name routine checkup by visiting both Covid and other patients without changing PPE.

ism and Civil Aviation Department, K Jayakumar suggested that tourism stakeholders come forward to take responsibility in proper COVID management in the state. He said that if tourism stakeholders are able to manage their own COVID Care Centres, immunization centres for all stakeholders and share other responsibilities in COVID management then they would not have to depend much on the government departments.

On the same, the ACS stated that all stakeholders should come forward with proper plans and preparation to reassure the government by sharing the responsibility of COVID management.



# American NGO provides 100 oxygen concentrators

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 22 JUN:

The United States - India Strategic Partnership Forum under the US India Friendship Alliance, Inc donated 100 oxygen concentrators to the State Government for the fight against COVID-19, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs. Lalita Ambika Kumari, State Outreach and Parliamentary Initiative, USISPF and Dr Mukesh Aghi, Director and Secretary, US India Friendship Alliance Inc, were instrumental in coordinating and facilitating the delivery of oxygen concentrators valued at Rs 28 lakh, the release mentions. ACS (Health) and Resident Commissioner,



New Delhi extended their support and Secretary (Agriculture/ Planning) facilitated the process of receipt of the oxygen concentrators and pre-

sented it to the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at Samman Bhawan, Gangtok. USISPF is a New York-based non-profit organ-

isation that is leading the humanitarian relief efforts to secure medical and other necessary items needed by the citizens of India.

## Area MLA inspects Lumsey



SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 22 JUN:

A team led by Upper Tadong MLA, GT Dhungel inspected water supply and drainage systems in Lumsey area on Tuesday. The MLA inspected drainage, footpaths, water supply and landslides in the area. The team had Irrigation Department Secretary, KP Sharma and Chief Engineer, Gozen Lachenpa accompanied by Ward Councillor, Milan Gautam along with CLC president, Sonam Pintso Bhutia, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Nari Shakti representatives

and ward president of SKM party. The team also listened to complaints placed by local residents regarding water supply and drainage. The MLA assured to work on every problem of the people on priority basis for early solution. He mentioned that the SKM government under the leadership of the Chief Minister, PS Tamang has been working in the interest of Sikkim and its people. He also thanked the Secretary and officials of Irrigation Department for accompanying the team for the inspection.

## Mizoram BJP unit urges CM to resolve boundary dispute with Assam & Tripura

AIZAWL, JUN 22 (PTI): The Mizoram BJP unit in a letter to Chief Minister Zoramthanga has urged him to resolve the state's boundary dispute with neighbouring Assam and Tripura.

In its letter to the CM on Monday, the Mizoram BJP unit said that the Centre was keen on solving the boundary disputes among the north-eastern states.

It said that Union Home Minister Amit Shah had instructed all the northeastern states on at least two occasions to resolve inter-state border disputes through bilateral dialogue.

The letter said that the Mizo National Front (MNF) headed by Zoramthanga, which is part of the BJP led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), must find an opportunity to resolve the border dispute with As-

sam and Tripura at a time when the BJP is in power at the Centre and in the two neighbouring states.

Earlier, top leaders of Mizoram Presbyterian Church, the largest denomination in the state, had also urged Zoramthanga to take measures to resolve border disputes with neighbouring states. Mizoram shares about 164.6 km long inter-state boundary with Assam and about 66 km with Tripura.

The border dispute between Mizoram and Assam is a long pending issue, which has been unresolved till date. Several dialogues held since 1995 to resolve the border dispute have yielded little result.

The last border stand-off between Mizoram and Assam took place on June 5 when unidentified people torched two abandoned farmhouses in the area claimed by both states.

# Tribal products from India turn heads at event in New York's Times Square

NEW DELHI, 22 JUN [PTI]: Stalls showcasing tribal products, including immunity boosters, flutes and bamboo candles, were the centre of attraction at an event organised by the Consulate General of India in New York to celebrate the International Day of Yoga, the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry said on Tuesday.

The daylong event on yoga, holistic health, ayurveda and wellness at New York's Times

Square was attended by over 3,000 people, it said in a statement.

"A particular attraction was the stalls on display, which showcased unique natural tribal products including immunity boosters and ayurvedic products," the statement said.

The stalls put up by Tribes India showcased a range of tribal articles, including organic immunity-boosting products such as millets, rice, spices, honey, chyawan-

prash, amla, ashwagandha powder, herbal tea and coffee, besides yoga mats, wind flutes, herbal soaps, bamboo aromatic candles etc.

To promote tribal products and give tribal entrepreneurs access to larger national and international markets, TRIFED had collaborated with the Consulate General Of India in New York to explore channels for popularising ethnic products in the United States.

TRIFED is an agency

under the ministry that markets and promotes tribal products.

"Some opportunities being explored are the inclusion of Tribes India products in the gifting product list of the Consulate General of India New York Office, possibility of a tie-up with cultural and innovation centres in the US, and opportunities of working together for sustainable living projects in the East and West Coast," the statement said.

## Second Supreme Court Judge drops out of Bengal-related case

NEW DELHI: A second Supreme Court Judge has dropped out of a case involving West Bengal in two weeks. Justice Aniruddha Bose, who is from Kolkata, today withdrew from a case involving Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's petition in the Narada bribery case, saying: "I do not want to hear this case." A bench headed by Justice Vineet Saran will hear the Chief Minister's plea on Friday. "This is a new case which has come to us now. We have not yet read the file. So let us have it on Friday," Justice Saran said.

Last week, Justice Indira Banerjee, who is also from Kolkata, had opted out of a separate case related to violence in parts of Bengal after the May 2 state election

verdict that gave Mamata Banerjee a massive victory. A petition asked for a CBI or Special Investigation Team probe into the killing of two BJP workers in the clashes between political workers.

Today's case is linked to petitions in the Supreme Court by the Bengal Chief Minister and state Law Minister Moloy Ghatak challenging the Calcutta High Court's refusal to take on record their affidavits in the Narada case.

The Chief Minister and Law Minister wanted to file affidavits to present their version on the CBI's request to shift the Narada case out of Bengal on grounds of pressure from the state government. But the High Court said they both took the calcu-

lated risk of not filing affidavits at the right time, "now they cannot be allowed to file the affidavits at their own whims and fancies."

The CBI has asked for the Narada hearing to be transferred out citing "mobocracy" in the state. Its argument is based on Mamata Banerjee's protest at the CBI office when four Trinamool leaders were arrested in the bribery case on May 17. The CBI also alleged that when the arrested leaders were being produced in court, the Law Minister landed there with a mob.

The Narada case involves a sting operation by a journalist in which several Trinamool leaders were allegedly caught on camera accepting wads of cash in bribe.



## SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

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### “MESSAGE”.

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority is organizing National Lok Adalat on Saturday the 10th July, 2021 for the following types of pre-litigation and pending cases viz:

#### Pre-Litigation

- (i) N.I Act cases under Section 138;
- (ii) Money Recovery cases;
- (iii) Labour disputes cases;
- (iv) Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- (v) Maintenance Cases.
- (vi) Other (Criminal Compoundable and other Civil dispute).

#### Pending in the Courts / Tribunals:

- (i) Criminal Compoundable Offences;
- (ii) N.I. Act cases under Section 138;
- (iii) Money Recovery cases;
- (iv) MACT cases;
- (v) Labour disputes cases;
- (vi) Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- (vii) Matrimonial disputes (except divorce);
- (viii) Land Acquisition cases;
- (ix) Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits;
- (x) Revenue cases (pending in District Courts and High Courts only);
- (xi) Other civil cases (such as rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits) etc.

Any individual or any department having such matters either pending in Courts/Tribunals/ Departments or in pre-litigation stage may approach directly before the Sikkim SLSA, District Lok Adalats or Taluk Lok Adalats for settlement on or before 03.07.2021 at the following address:

1. Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim\_slsa@live.com Phone No.03592-207753.
2. High Court Legal Services Committee, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim\_slsa@live.com Phone No. 03592-207753.
3. District Legal Services Authority (East) District Court's Complex, Sichey Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462.
4. Taluk Legal Services Committee (East), District Court's Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462.
5. District Legal Services Authority (North) District Court Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 234694.
6. Taluk Legal Services Committee (North), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Pentok, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone no.03592 234694.
7. District Legal Services Authority (South) District Court Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 264654.
8. Taluk Legal Services Committee (South), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone no.03595 264654.
9. District Legal Services Authority (West) District Court Complex, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 250010.
10. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone no.03595 250010.
11. Taluk Legal Services Committee, Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Chungthang, Sub-Division, North Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 234502.
12. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Soreng, Sub-Division, West Sikkim. Phone n o: 03592-253000.

(published by Sikkim State Legal Services Authority).

R.O. No. 73/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22

Date: 21.06.2021.



## ABD PROJECT DIVISION ROADS & BRIDGES DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM NIRMAN BHAWAN

Ref No. 01/E-Tender/GoS/R&B(ADB)/2021-22

Dated: 22.06.2021

### E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

The Project Director, ADB Cell, Roads and Bridges Department, on behalf of the Governor of Sikkim invites percentage rate bids through e-procurement online in the website [www.sikkimtender.gov.in](http://www.sikkimtender.gov.in) by contractors of appropriate class registered with state government for execution of work. The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment with his/her own Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). The demand draft in the form of hard copy for tender fee is to be submitted to the office of the Sr. Account Officer, Roads and Bridges Department latest by 27.07.2021 by 4.30 pm. The bids whose hard copy is not received by Account cell during the time given will considered non responsive for bidding even if submitted online.

Sl. no	Name of Work	Tender Value / Bid Value (Rs. In Lakh)	Eligibility of Contractor	Bid Security (EMD) 2.5% of the Bid Value (Rs. In Lakhs)	Cost of Tender Form / Bid Form (Rs. In Lakh)	Completion Period.
1	Restoration work along Melli-Nayabazzar Road (SK-01) and along Nayabazzar to Namchi (SK-02) South Sikkim.	1723.90	Class I-A	43.10	1.00	12 months.

The date and submission of completed bid document is as under;

1	Advertising the Notice Inviting Tender	
	a) Letter to IPR for Publication of Press Notice	22.06.2021
	b) Publication of online Tender in e-procurement portal	23.06.2021
2.	Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal	24.06.2021
3.	Date & time for seeking clarification w.r.t tenders	09.07.2021 at 1500 hrs.
4.	Last date of online submission of completed bids	23.07.2021 upto 1600 hrs.
5.	Date of submission of hard copies (Tender Fee and Security Bid).	26.07.2021 upto 16 hrs.
6.	Date of opening of Tender bids	27.07.2021 at 1100 hours.
7.	Place of opening of bids	Office of the Project Director (ADB), Roads and Bridges Department, Nirman Bhawan, Gangtok.

R.O. No. 75/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22  
Date: 22.06.2021

Sd/-  
Project Director, ADB  
Roads and Bridges Department.



## Temp Terms for Permanent Requirements?

*Some things don't make sense but continue nevertheless*

There is a process underway to appoint adhoc teachers... yet again. This is wrong on all levels – from the manner in which the Education Department continues to hire teachers on temporary basis for clearly permanent requirements to the uncertainty that teachers appointed have to live with and them the "understanding" that their services will be eventually regularised/

First, the hiring process...

For all the excuses that the department might proffer, none can justify how and why such a large number of teachers continue to hired by the academic session for such a long time on such exploitative terms. The present lot of adhoc teachers are posted to schools when an academic session begins and draw a consolidated salary. At one time they used to be let go at the end of the academic session and hired again when a new session began, and arrangement because of which they did not receive salaries for the holiday months. Apart from a drought in their bank accounts, the "lay-off" months also wracked their minds with uncertainty. Now, they are appointed for longer terms, but still on ad hoc basis and while this arrangement ensures that they receive salaries throughout their terms, it is still not a fair situation. Such an arrangement should be allowed only when the Education Department has to fill a sudden, unforeseen vacancy, like say for instance when a teaching post falls vacant mid-term and students need to be attended to with an urgent hiring which is beyond SPSC's capacity to deliver. Or when the vacancy is of a temporary nature but long enough not to be left vacant. But the Department has been resorting to such hiring for too many years now. It is clear that the practice continues because the insecure pool of the unemployed seize even these clearly inconsiderate terms in the hope that it will eventually lead to regularization of service and the more than handsome emoluments that such employment offers. There have been ample instances when rules have been bent to absorb adhoc employees in other departments into permanent service to inspire the adhoc teachers to also make such demands and expect them to be met.

It is time that the State's employed demanded that such relaxations be banned because it is tantamount to double denial of opportunities to the unemployed. Adhoc/ temporary employment rules are lax and open to abuse and/ or compromise. To then regularize services which were not appointed under the strictest and most transparent hiring processes can be seen as a second denial of opportunities to others who could have bid for the job. The Department will now claim that even ad hoc hiring has been made strict and fair, but if that is the case, then why are the appointments not permanent? It is obvious that some babu somewhere dreamt up such a system to ease the pressure on the exchequer because permanent employments require better remunerations and "security" and political masters are also fine with this system because then they can play favourites and have a pool of insecure thousands to exploit with promises. These suspicions aside, there is no defending this system.

That said, given how such matters have been handled in the past, one could even overlook the aspiration for more permanent employment among the adhoc teachers [for the record, the protesting teachers are not demanding outright regularisation but are seeking more secure employment even if on adhoc basis]. One cannot deny teachers their right to demand, protest, aspire or lobby, but what needs to be addressed more importantly is why permanent requirements continue to be filled on temporary basis allowing for uncertainty to prevail, unfair service terms to be imposed, unclear demands to be raised and unmerited aspirations to be voiced.

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## Private Messages Contribute to the Spread of COVID-19 Conspiracies

SAM ANDREY & ALEX RAND  
*theconversation.com*

The COVID-19 global pandemic has been accompanied by misinformation about the virus, its origins and how it spreads.

One in seven Canadians thinks there is some truth to the claim that Bill Gates is using the coronavirus to push a vaccine with a microchip capable of tracking people. Those who believe this and other COVID-19 conspiracy theories are much more likely to get their news from social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

In extreme cases, conspiracy thinking spurred by online disinformation can result in hate-fuelled violence, as we saw in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the Québec City mosque shooting, the Toronto van attack and the incident in 2020 where an armed man crashed his truck through the gates of Rideau Hall.

### MODERATE CONTENT

These and other events have placed pressure on social media platforms to label, remove and slow the spread of harmful, publicly viewable content. As a result of implemented responses to the spread of misinformation, Donald Trump was deplatformed during the final weeks of his presidency.

These discussions on content moderation have mainly centred around platforms where content is generally open and accessible to view, comment on and share. But what's happening in those online spaces that aren't open for all to see? It's much harder to say. And perhaps not surprisingly, conspiracy theories are spreading on private messaging apps, like WhatsApp, Telegram, Messenger and WeChat, to spread harm.

By leveraging large groups of users and long chains of forwarded messages, false information can still go viral on private platforms.

White nationalists and other extremist groups

are trying to use messaging apps to organize, and malicious hackers are using private messages to conduct cybercrime. False stories spreading on messaging apps have also led to real-world violence, as happened in India and the United Kingdom.

### TRUST AND PRIVATE COMMUNICATION

We conducted a survey of 2,500 Canadian residents in March 2021 and found that they're increasingly using private messaging platforms to get their news.

Overall, 21 per cent said that they rely on private messages for news — up from 11 per cent in 2019. We also found that people who regularly receive their news through messaging apps are more likely to believe COVID-19 conspiracy theories, including the false claim that vaccines include microchips.

There is a level of intimacy in private messaging apps that's different from news viewed on social media feeds or other platforms, with content shared directly by people we often know and trust. A majority of Canadians reported that they had a similar level of trust in the news they receive on private messaging apps as they do in the news from TV or news websites.

Our research also uncovered a uniquely Canadian phenomenon. As a multicultural society with many newcomers, the Canadian private messaging landscape is remarkably diverse. For example, people who have arrived in Canada in the last 10 years were more than twice as likely to use WhatsApp. Similarly, newcomers from China were five times more likely to use WeChat.

We also found that half of Canadians receive messages that they suspect are false at least a few times per month, and that one in four receive messages with hate speech at least monthly. These rates were higher among people of colour. Because different apps provide different ways of spreading and mitigating harmful content, each requires a

tailored strategy.

### MITIGATING HARM

Platforms and governments around the world are grappling with the tension between mitigating online harms and protecting the democratic values of free expression and privacy, particularly among more private modes of communication. This tension is only exacerbated by some platforms' use of privacy-preserving end-to-end encryption that ensures only the sender and receiver can read the messages.

Some messaging apps have been experimenting with how to reduce the spread of harmful materials, including the introduction of limits on group sizes and on the number of times a message can be forwarded. WhatsApp is now testing a feature that nudges users to verify the source of highly forwarded messages by linking to a Google search of the message content. Some experts are also advancing the idea of adding warning labels to false news shared in messages — a concept that a majority (54 per cent) of Canadians supported when we described the idea.

However, there is certainly more that governments can do in this quickly moving area. More transparency is required from messaging platforms about how they're responding to user reports of harmful material and what approaches they're using to stall the spread of these messages. Governments can also support digital literacy efforts and invest in research about harms through private messaging in Canada.

As Canadians shift to more private modes of communication, policy needs to keep up to maintain a vibrant and cohesive democracy in Canada while protecting free expression and privacy.

[Sam Andrey is Director of Policy & Research, Ryerson Leadership Lab, Ryerson University; Alex Rand is Research Assistant on Technology, Cybersecurity & Democracy, Ryerson University]

## Food is Poised to Get a Lot More Expensive, But it Doesn't Have To

EVAN FRASER & LENORE NEWMAN  
*theconversation.com*

As we emerge from the pandemic, people everywhere are facing punishing housing costs and stagnant wages. At the grocery store, consumers are also confronting rising food prices, a sobering reminder that good food costs too much for too many.

Consumers aren't used to expensive food. Over the past few years, most North Americans have typically spent around 10 per cent of household income on sustenance. In 1900, (when housing was much more affordable), food costs took up 42 per cent of incomes in the United States.

By 1950, new agricultural technologies had boosted production, helping slash costs to 30 per cent, but the gains were just beginning. The number fell to 18 per cent by 1960, and has mostly trended downward since.

Today, with inflation on the rise, we need to consider what we can do to ensure the cost of a healthy diet stays within reach. There are two broad approaches. The first is to reduce poverty. The second is to reduce the cost of food.

Both approaches are necessary but we're focusing on the latter: how to keep food costs down. In particular, we believe that with the right strategies, in the relatively near future, even healthy food may be cheaper than ever. The key will be technology and policy. To the doubters, and we know there are many, consider the following example.

### 40-YEAR-OLD WAGER

In 1980, an economist made a bet

against an ecologist.

Julian Simon, a business professor at the University of Maryland, wagered Paul Ehrlich, an ecologist at Stanford University, that the cost of raw materials would fall over the decade. Ehrlich chose a set of raw materials and the two agreed to reconvene on Sept. 29, 1990. If prices rose (a sign of scarcity), Ehrlich won. But if they fell (a sign of abundance), Simon would come out on top.

The reason for the bet related to each man's world view. Simon was a strong proponent that innovation and technology allow us to overcome limits to growth. Ehrlich observed the world's environmental problems and argued the result of population growth would be famine, scarcity and ruin.

Forty years later, with the spectre of inflation twinned with climate change, a similar debate is emerging. We'd like to advance our notion, more aligned with the optimism expressed by Simon. We believe that thanks to technology, healthy food might actually become cheaper — radically cheaper — over the next 20 years as innovation provides many tools to overcome some of the problems caused by resource scarcity.

### HOW CAN WE DO IT?

Today, a wave of technological innovation is sweeping over food and farming systems. Better quality seeds are helping farmers all over the world remain productive during droughts.

Smart tractors, new "green chemistry" platforms and nanotechnology promise that in the near future farmers will reap record harvests while

only applying a fraction of the fertilizers and pesticides they once did.

Cellular agriculture, which involves producing animal proteins in bioreactors or fermentation tanks, is poised to produce an enormous amount of protein.

And extraordinary improvements in artificial lighting and automation suggest that even fruits and vegetables may soon be produced at low costs in greenhouses and vertical farms close to consumers.

### 'GOOD CHEAP' VERSUS 'BAD CHEAP'

But before we get too carried away, there is an important nuance. If food is cheap because the environment is exploited, or agricultural workers and farm animals are treated badly, then having cheap food won't solve any problems.

Similarly, if cheap food is low-quality and unhealthy, that doesn't help either. When it comes to cheap food, we have to distinguish between "good cheap" and "bad cheap."

Ensuring we end up on the right side of this equation is where policy comes in. Government regulations must put a price on things like greenhouse gas emissions and water pollution so that farmers who are good stewards of the environment are rewarded.

Similarly, animal welfare must be protected and labour compensated appropriately (both in agriculture and across the economy). If we calibrate the right policies, then the technologies that are giving us new ways of producing food really have potential to lower the cost of healthy,

sustainable and affordable nutrition. Good food won't have to cost the earth.

### WHO WON THE BET?

The economist won the bet against the ecologist. All of the resources Ehrlich identified declined in price over the 1980s. Simon crowed about the role of ingenuity and innovation. Ehrlich grumbled he'd chosen badly and a recession in 1990 artificially dampened prices.

Both academics were partly right and partly wrong. Ehrlich underestimated the innovation Simon celebrated. But Simon did not appreciate the importance of strong policy to protect labour and environment.

As we look at the 21st century, a century that threatens both massive disruptions but also promises huge innovations, we need two things.

First, we must capitalize on the technology that can help us change the way we produce food. And we can never forget the importance of public policy to ensure there's a fair price put on things such as biodiversity, climate change, human labour and animal welfare.

If we embrace both of these principles, there is a very real chance that we will be able to bring the price of producing healthy food down without destroying the ecosystems we all depend on for life.

[Evan Fraser is Director of the Arrell Food Institute and Professor in the Dept. of Geography, Environment and Geomatics, University of Guelph; Lenore Newman is Canada Research Chair, Food Security and the Environment, University of The Fraser Valley]



## Fake job racket busted in Bengal, 4 arrested

**KOLKATA, JUN 22 (PTI):** A job racket was busted here and four of its members arrested for allegedly duping several people by collecting anything between Rs 2 lakh and Rs 5 lakh from them with a promise of employment in the Kolkata Metro Railway, a senior police officer said on Tuesday.

Acting on a complaint filed by an official of the Kolkata Metro, the police arrested the four from different locations in Nadia district late on Monday.

"The four accused identified themselves as senior officials of Kolkata Metro Railway and produced fake ID cards and email addresses," the officer said.

After scanning the call detail records (CDRs) of the mobile numbers allegedly used by them, the police conducted raids at different places in Nadia district and nabbed the four, he stated.

All of them have been booked under sections of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the Indian Penal Code, the officer said, adding that some job aspirants who were cheated by the four have lodged complaints with the cyber cell of the Kolkata Police.

## Jharkhand records one COVID-19 fatality, 122 new cases

**RANCHI, JUN 22 (PTI):** Jharkhand's COVID-19 tally rose 3,44,665 as 122 more people tested positive for the infection while one new fatality pushed the death toll to 5,100, a health department bulletin said on Tuesday.

The COVID-19 death was reported from Hazaribag district.

Of the 122 new cases, East Singhbhum district reported the highest of 16 cases, followed by Simdega (12) and 10 each from Chatra, Hazaribag, Latehar and Ramgarh.

Jharkhand now has 1,489 active COVID-19 cases, while 3,38,076 patients have recovered from the infection including 228 during the last 24 hours, the bulletin said.

The COVID-19 recovery in the state now is 98.08 per cent, better than the national average of 96.40 per cent.

The mortality rate in the state was recorded at 1.47 per cent, higher than the national average of 1.30 per cent.

Altogether, 94,35,232 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in Jharkhand, including 50,725 since Monday, it added.

In a bid to combat the second wave of COVID-19, the government has extended the lockdown like restrictions in the state till June 24.

# Ilam sees hard times ahead as tourists stop coming

**BIPLAV BHATTARAI**  
**KATHMANDU, 22 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]:** As 2020 got underway, Nepal's hotel industry was at the peak of an expansion frenzy.

Dambar Khadka of Ilam in the eastern part of the country too had been making big plans. He had bought 55 ropanis of land in the ecotourism destination of Kanyam to build a luxury resort.

The Rs1.5 billion hotel would offer a host of recreational activities like casino, shopping mall, park and mini train.

But almost overnight, the tourism industry went into a downward spiral the likes of which entrepreneurs said they had never seen before. Tourism demand plunged with no foreseeable end, and new development came to a screeching halt.

Pause or proceed? Many entrepreneurs like Khadka are in a fix. "My project suffered right after the country was hit by the coronavirus in 2020," Khadka said. "Now, everything has become complicated. There is no end in sight to Covid-19," he said.

Khadka had prepared a master plan and even procured construction materials like iron and steel, cement, gravel and sand to build the resort. He is deeply troubled. "I cannot move forward, and I cannot withdraw from the project." Ilam attracts travel-



lers who come to enjoy stunning views of the rising sun. Vacationers, especially from parts of the Tarai and India, head for Ilam to escape the heat of the plains. Celebrated as the queen of the hills, Ilam offers a moderate climate amid tranquil tea plantations.

The history of tea growing in Ilam goes back to 1863, and its gentle green hills covered with tea bushes are prime attractions for tourists.

Ilam Tea Estate, the first in Nepal, along with Kanyam and Antu Tea Estate, draw hundreds of tourists and tea enthusiasts to observe the entire process of tea production—from cultivation, cutting and picking of tea leaves to their processing and sampling.

Like many other tourism hotspots across the country, Ilam's progress is hindered by lack of infrastructure. Khadka is one of the several entrepreneurs who have seen the opportunity in the eastern hill district. But his plan has been shattered by Covid-19.

Bijay Rai, who has leased a house to run a hotel at Ilam bus park, had just completed a new project when the Covid-19 pandemic brought calamity. He had hoped things would settle down in 2021 after a disastrous 2020.

Rai had spent Rs40 million on the project, and now faces ruin following the second wave of the pandemic. He is wondering how he is going to repay his bank loan. "The gov-

ernment should launch subsidy programmes to save our investment," he said. "Otherwise we are finished."

Tourists, mostly domestic, had started coming back to Kanyam and Antu in autumn 2020. The government had withdrawn the lockdown in July, and people had become confident enough to travel and let their wanderlust take over.

Entrepreneurs who had been struggling to pay their repayment instalments, were cheered when visitors reappeared, and they made a good recovery in a short span of time.

But their happiness did not last long. The second wave started in mid-April and

peaked in May, and was even more dangerous than the first which has so far killed over 5,000 people.

Hemu Bhujel, a trader from Harkate near Kanyam, said she used to earn around Rs100,000 monthly by selling vegetables and gift items. "With Covid-19 raging again, it has become a difficult life for us," she said.

A string of more than 200 shops selling vegetables and gift items extend from east Pathivara to Fikkal. Tourists buy tea, hard cheese, lollipops and vegetables. The business directly benefits entrepreneurs and farmers in rural areas.

Nearly 100 horse traders in Kanyam and dozens of

homestays in Antu have also fallen on hard times due to the declining number of visitors.

As tourist arrivals started drying up due to the pandemic, life has become difficult for everyone.

Rajan Pradhan, general secretary of the Suryodaya Chamber of Commerce and Industry and co-treasurer of the Federation of Hotel Entrepreneurs of Province 1, said it would be a catastrophe if the situation lasted.

"We did not get any relief packages from the government last year," he said. "If the government does not start any relief programmes for entrepreneurs, it will be hard to revive our businesses."

There are 450 hotels in the district that provide 2,300 jobs.

"The situation is becoming worse by the day. If it continues, it will drive a large section of the population into unemployment," said Devi Poudel, president of the Hotel Entrepreneurs' Association of Ilam.

According to the association, last year the district suffered losses amounting to Rs720 million per month. There are 200 hotels with an investment of Rs300,000 to Rs500,000 each, 190 hotels with an investment of Rs10 million to Rs20 million each, and 60 hotels with an investment of Rs10 million to Rs100 million each.

## Mamata urges people to take measures to protect children amid COVID-19 third wave threat

**KOLKATA, JUN 21 (PTI):** Underlining that the overall COVID-19 situation in Bengal has improved, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday urged people to take all forms of measures to protect children amid warning by experts that the third wave of the pandemic may pose greater risk to them.

Banerjee also said that the number of beds in the paediatric divisions of hospitals has been increased.

The state on Monday registered 1,879 fresh cases of COVID-19, which pushed the tally to 14,83,586, while 42 more deaths raised the toll to 17,390, the health department said in its bulletin.

"The COVID-19 situation in Bengal has improved a lot.

The positivity rate, which rose to 32 per cent during the eight phase elections in the state, has

now come down to four per cent," she explained.

In some districts, the number of new cases in a day has dipped to seven or eight, the CM said.

In North 24 Parganas and Howrah, the daily caseload is still somewhat high, but things are under control in the metropolis. We must, however, take all forms of precautionary measures to protect children as experts have warned that the third may pose a bigger threat to them, Banerjee told reporters at the state secretariat.

A senior official said the government is planning to allot more beds for women in hospitals, as it make arrangements to combat the third wave.

It has also decided to increase inpatient COVID-19 facilities for children following suggestions

from an expert committee, the official said.

Around 10,000 general beds have been earmarked for mild and moderate paediatric cases in the age group of 90 days to 12 years, and 20 per cent of special newborn care unit beds has been set aside for one day to 90-day-old COVID-19 patients, he added.

According to the health department bulletin, 19 of the 42 fatalities died due to the comorbidities.

Since Sunday, 2,113 people recuperated from the disease in the state, taking the number of recoveries to 14,43,456. The discharge rate stands at 97.30 per cent.

As many as 3,17,993 people were inoculated with a COVID-19 vaccine on Monday.

With that, the total number of people who have received at least one jab rose to 1,93,39,317.

## NIA court clears Akhil Gogoi of charges under UAPA in one case

**GUWAHATI, 22 JUN [PTI]:** A National Investigation Agency (NIA) court on Tuesday cleared Siv-asagar MLA Akhil Gogoi in one of the two cases against him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 for his alleged role in violent protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Assam.

NIA Special Judge Pranjal Das did not frame charges against Gogoi, who was arrested in December 2019, in connection with the case registered in the Chabua police station.

The court also discharged his two associates, Jagatjit Gohain and Bhupen Gogoi, of all charges under UAPA in the case.

Akhil Gogoi, president of the Rajior Dal, was earlier granted bail in the original case filed at the Chabua police station, which was later transferred to the NIA.

The NIA is investigating two cases, which



were initially registered at Chandmari and Chabua police stations, related to the alleged role of Akhil Gogoi and his three colleagues in the violent protests.

Charges were framed against his third associate, Bhaskarjyoti Phukan, but not under the UAPA but under Section 144 IPC (Joining unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapon) and the case has been now transferred to the court of the chief judicial magistrate, Dibrugarh.

The NIA court is also hearing on Tuesday the cases of the Chandmari police station which was also transferred to the NIA.

The court had rejected his bail application in the Chandmari police station case in August last year following which he had challenged it in the Gauhati High Court.

After the high court rejected Akhil Gogoi's bail plea, he moved the Supreme Court which decided not to "consider the petition at this stage".

Akhil Gogoi was arrested on December 12, 2019 from Jorhat, during the height of the anti-CAA protests in the state, as a "preventive measure" in view of the deteriorating law and order situation in the state and his three associates were taken into custody the next day.

The cases were later handed over to the NIA and they were booked under UAPA for their alleged role in the violent protest and their possible links with Maoist elements.

## Assam signs MoU with Survey of India for rural property survey



**GUWAHATI, JUN 22 (PTI):** The Assam government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Survey of India for implementing the Svamitva scheme in the state, which aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural areas.

The MoU was signed between Assam, Director of Land Records and Surveys, Shantanu P Gotmare and Director Assam and Nagaland, Survey of India on Monday.

The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj, and

Assam Government's Department of Revenue and Disaster Management will implement the scheme with the support of the Panchayat and Rural Development.

Survey of India, as the technology partner, will take steps for survey of inhabited rural land by drone as well as establishment of ground based control stations to enable a detailed spatial database of properties in rural areas.

It is expected to reduce property related disputes in rural areas

and legal cases.

The Svamitva scheme was launched on a pilot basis on April 24, 2020, on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, and was rolled out across India on April 24 this year.

The scheme would provide the 'record of rights' to village household owners possessing houses in inhabited rural areas in villages which, in turn, would enable them to use their property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits from banks.

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# Lack of match practice hurting Indian pacers in WTC final: Simon Doull

**SOUTHAMPTON, JUN 21 (PTI):** Former Kiwi pacer Simon Doull feels lack of match practice in the run-up to the ongoing World Test Championship final against New Zealand was hurting India's pace bowling attack.

Unlike New Zealand, who played two Tests against England before the WTC final, India have been devoid of match practice ahead of the marquee clash.

The Virat Kohli-led side's last five-day match was against England in a 2-1 series win at home in March.

"...at times you look and overthink and say 'did they (India) have enough preparation?' I think they did. I am sure in the last 10-12 days they would have bowled enough deliveries to make sure they are ready and raring to go," Doull told Harsha Bhogle in a cricbuzz show.

"But its hard to simulate match practice. You can try in these intra-squad games but it just doesn't quite work and that's the key. It is genuinely hard to replace match practice that makes you better and get you ready for those matches." Doull made the statement in reference to Indian pacers below-par display in New Zealand's first innings score of 101 for 2 in reply



to India's 217 all out. The pace trio of Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami failed to extract considerable amount of swing from the favourable Ageas Bowl conditions, unlike their Kiwi counterparts.

Kyle Jamieson (5/31), Neil Wagner (2/40) and Trent Boult (2/47) used the seaming conditions well to bundle out India for a timid total in the rain-affected match.

Doull said New Zealand were definitely benefited by the two games

against England ahead of the marquee clash. "...New Zealand went into their first Test match at Lord's against England, they had the very same preparation that India had coming into this Test match.

"New Zealand were in Southampton for around 10-11 days, played intra-squad matches, training practices and when they turned at Lord's they looked pretty set and ready to go.

"Tim Southee bowled beautifully, Devon Conway came straight out

of 10 days of net session here and scored a double hundred at Lord's. They looked like they were prepared and ready to go."

Doull said barring Ishant Sharma, India lack an out-and-out swing bowler in the playing eleven.

"They are not genuine swing bowlers. I know Jasprit Bumrah can swing the ball, Ishant is more of a swing bowler, he comes round the wicket with that angle wrist takes the ball away. He does

take the ball away from the left-handers and into the right-handers. "Mohammed Shami has never really been a genuine swing bowler. He is a seam bowler and always bowls upright," the 51-year-old former fast bowler said.

"To me, it is not Bumrah, Shami it is more Ishant Sharma. I did however expect the ball might seam a little bit more. Shami and Bumrah at times found it but they were not just consistent enough," he added.

## Multan beats Islamabad, qualifies for its maiden PSL final

**ABU DHABI, JUN 22 (AP):** Multan Sultans qualified for their first Pakistan Super League final after beating two-time champion Islamabad United by 31 runs in the playoffs.

Islamabad will have another opportunity to make the final when it takes on Peshawar Zalmi on Tuesday. Peshawar completed a five-wicket win over Karachi Kings with just one delivery to spare in the first of the eliminator finals.

Sohaib Maqsood's 59 and Khushdil Shah's 42 off 22 balls spurred Multan to 180-5 after captain Mohammad Rizwan was dismissed without scoring.



Islamabad, renowned for its run chases, fell against the pace of Sohail Tanvir (3-17) and Zimbabwe swing bowler Blessing Muzarabani (3-31) and was bowled out for 149 with an over to spare.

Left-arm seamer Tanvir knocked back the middle stump of the in-form Colin Munro for a duck off his second delivery and returned to get the key wicket of Usman Khawaja, who threatened to take the game away from Multan with a scintillating knock of 70 off 40 balls.

Khawaja, who plays test cricket for Australia but is the only Islamabad-born player in the United squad, completed his half-century off 33

balls and smashed Muzarabani for a six and three consecutive boundaries in the 14th over.

But Tanvir returned in the next over and Shah hung onto a well judged catch at deep midwicket to dismiss Khawaja. Islamabad hopes died.

Earlier, after electing to bat first, Maqsood earned a fourth half-century this season. The discarded Pakistan international hit seven fours and three pulled sixes to save Multan.

Islamabad captain Shadab Khan picked up both of his wickets in the first over when he had Shan Masood and Rilee Rossouw leg before wicket and Multan slipped to 59-3 in the eighth over.

But Maqsood added a brisk 63 with Johnson Charles, who hit a quick-fire 41 from three fours and three sixes.

Shah kept up the momentum when he smacked young fast bowler Akif Javed for 29 runs in the penultimate over that featured four

successive sixes and a four.

In the later match, Karachi batted first and posted 175-7, with Babar Azam scoring 53 at the top of the order and Thisara Perera belting three sixes as he reached 37 from 18 balls in the middle.

Hazratullah Zazai anchored the run chase for Peshawar in a player-of-the-match innings, hitting five sixes and 10 fours as he plundered the Karachi attack for 77 from 38 deliveries. He dominated partnerships of 49 with Kamran Akmal and 43 with Imam-ul-Haq for the first two wickets and lifted Peshawar to 103-3 by the time he was dismissed in the 12th over.

Shoaib Malik (30) kept up the momentum for Peshawar until his dismissal in the penultimate over.

The winner of the Tuesday's second eliminator will meet Multan in the final on Thursday.

### ICC should come up with formula to find winner in case of drawn WTC final: Gavaskar

**SOUTHAMPTON, JUN 22 (PTI):** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar feels the ICC should find a way to decide a winner in case the rain-hit World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand here ends in a draw. The ongoing match has been affected by English weather with the opening and fourth day washed out completely, while play has been disrupted frequently due to bad light.

Even though there is a reserve day but with no play possible for two out of the first four days, the match might end in a draw if inclement weather continues to play spoilsport.

"There must be a formula to pick a winner in case of a drawn World Test Championship final. ICC's cricket committee should think and then take a decision," Gavaskar told 'Aaj Tak'.

There is unlikely to be any change in the rules in this edition as the ICC had made it clear last month that India and New Zealand will share the trophy in case of a draw or a tie.

"It seems that the World Test Championship final will end up as a draw and the trophy will be shared. This will be the first time that the trophy will be shared in a final," Gavaskar said.

"To complete three innings in two days would be really difficult. Yes, if both teams bat really badly, the three innings could be completed."

# Olympic boxer Fuchs determined to win her fight against OCD

**COLORADO SPRINGS (US), JUN 22 (AP):** Ginny Fuchs' obsessive-compulsive disorder sometimes compels her to use a dozen toothbrushes a night, tossing one after another into the trash when she decides they've been contaminated. She has spent hundreds of dollars a week on cleaning products, and she sometimes bleaches the bottoms of her shoes.

She even wears baseball players' batting gloves when she does her strength-and-conditioning work with the U.S. Olympic boxing team so she won't have to touch the workout mats while doing push-ups.

It's like this black cloud that follows me every second of my day, Fuchs said of OCD, which invades the mind with unreasonable thoughts and fears leading to repetitive, compulsive behavior.

I always feel like I'm in this jail of OCD mind that I can't get out of.



Yet Fuchs is headed to Japan next month to compete in the Tokyo Olympic boxing tournament, where she realizes it's almost impossible to avoid coming into contact with the blood, sweat and saliva of the stranger across from her.

Fuchs is fighting inside and outside the ring these days, both for a gold medal and for mental health awareness. She is determined to speak openly and frankly about a disorder she tried to hide for many years.

Fuchs sees the contradictions in taking her condition into the chaos of a boxing ring. Her OCD has affected all areas of her life, yet it's somehow wildly overmatched by Fuchs' desire for gold.

This is why OCD is so irrational, Fuchs said.

It doesn't even make sense. I'm getting punched in the face, and some spit or blood might get on me. And I

understand that, but my mind is, I guess, able to rationalize that. But if I drop my phone on the floor of my house for two seconds, I'll freak out. Oh my God, I can't touch my phone.' I've got to use like 1,000 Clorox wipes before I feel like it's clean enough.

Fuchs hasn't allowed OCD or two Olympic near-misses to deter her from her ultimate goal. After barely failing to qualify for London and Rio, the 33-year-old flyweight finally punched her ticket this year as one of the world's top fighters in her weight class.

She is among the favorites for gold in a sport where much depends on the tournament draw and the whims of unpredictable judging, but those inherent uncertainties don't consume nearly as much of Fuchs' mind as her OCD.

Fuchs struggled through all of 2018, saying her OCD was beating her every second, yet she still won bronze

at the AIBA world championships in India. She put herself into inpatient care in February 2019, skipping a smaller tournament and only leaving for the qualifiers for the Pan-American Games, where she won silver.

I should have stayed there longer, but I just didn't know how to control those thoughts anymore, and it scared me, Fuchs said.

I still was able to compete and everything, but personally and mentally, I was going through hell.

Fuchs' determination to speak up against the stigma of mental illness comes at a time when awareness is rising throughout sports. Most notably, four-time Grand Slam tennis champion Naomi Osaka received widespread support when she cited mental health issues in withdrawing from the French Open, Wimbledon and the Olympics.

Fuchs spoke poignantly

about her struggle in Mysteries of Mental Illness, a four-part documentary series premiering this week on PBS. Fuchs was inspired by the desire to create greater access to mental health help for underserved communities embodied in the project, which includes a short-form streaming digital video series.

Fuchs also appeared this year on The Me You Can't See, an Apple TV documentary series produced by Oprah Winfrey. Their cameras followed Fuchs at the U.S. Olympic Training Center, where she has spent years managing her OCD in the dorm-style living conditions in Colorado Springs.

The message I want to tell people is, talk about it, Fuchs said.

Don't be ashamed about it. If you get them to understand it and paint a picture of what you're struggling with, maybe they can relate or under-

stand. That's what has helped me. Talking about it actually helped me understand why I might have these thoughts, and why I might do these certain behaviors and rituals.

Fuchs first noticed her OCD symptoms in the fifth grade when she was repulsed by the perceived dirtiness of her backpack. Fuchs' mother saw signs even earlier, and the symptoms became more pronounced in the sixth grade when Fuchs began to struggle with anorexia. Fuchs said a therapist identified her OCD as the root of her eating disorder while she received inpatient treatment in the eighth grade.

OCD can subsume Fuchs' life for long stretches, yet she also beats it back at times, particularly during competitions. She can't explain the fluctuations or the contradictions.

My mind is telling me to clean more, to get back in the

shower, Fuchs said.

But I realize the value of that moment is to recover and get ready for the next fight. I'm able to shut those thoughts off easier and just focus on the fight ahead of me, and winning the tournament.

Fuchs has tried a cognitive behavior therapy called exposure and response prevention, but her busy boxing schedule has prevented her from fully investing in the process. She hopes to pick it up after the Olympics while determining the next step in her boxing journey.

For now, she's thinking about the challenges looming in Tokyo, including how to get enough cleaning supplies to assuage her mind's constant pressure in the unfamiliar surroundings of the athletes' village.

It's going to be very hard for me to be comfortable, Fuchs said.

I know at least it's a very clean country.



## Hungary's foreign minister defends law limiting LGBT rights

**BUDAPEST, HUNGARY (AP):** Hungary's foreign minister alleged Tuesday that a disinformation campaign was being used to rally international criticism of a recent law passed in Hungary that has been widely seen as targeting LGBT people.

Speaking at a press conference following a General Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg, Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto reacted to a question on reported plans by Benelux countries to release a joint statement condemning the new law.

"A global fake news campaign is taking place concerning the law on the protection of children," Szijarto said, adding that "99% of those making criticisms have not read the entire law."

The law is ostensibly designed to crack down on pedophilia, but critics argue amendments to it make a dangerous link between homosexuality and the abuse of minors. The law prohibits sharing any content portraying homosexuality or sex reassignment to children under 18 in school sex education programs, films and advertisements.

Human rights groups have denounced the measure, saying it could be used to stigmatize and harass residents because of their sexual orientation or gender identities, and deprive young people of essential sex education information.

Thousands have protested in Hungary's capital of Budapest against the measures.

Munich Mayor Dieter Reiter asked permission from UEFA, Europe's governing body for soccer, for Germany's stadium to be lit up with rainbow colors to reject homophobia and intolerance when the national team plays Hungary on Wednesday.

UEFA declined the request, saying Tuesday it understands the intention but was rejecting the move because of its political context — "a message aiming at a decision taken by the Hungarian national parliament."

At the press conference, Szijarto repeated earlier Hungarian government claims that the legislation is designed only to protect children from pedophiles and to ensure that only parents have the right and responsibility to education their children on matters of sexual orientation.

"The law does not discriminate against any social group, and it doesn't discriminate against the gay community either," he said.

# Iran's election unsettles Biden's hope for a nuclear deal

**WASHINGTON, JUN 22 (AP):** Biden administration officials are insisting that the election of a hard-liner as Iran's president won't affect prospects for reviving the faltering 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran. But there are already signs that their goal of locking in a deal just got tougher.

Optimism that a deal was imminent faded as the latest talks ended Sunday without tangible indications of significant progress. And on Monday, in his first public comments since the vote, incoming Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi rejected a key Biden goal of expanding on the nuclear deal if negotiators are able to salvage the old one.

At the same time, Raisi is likely to raise the Iran's demands for sanctions relief in return for Iranian compliance with the deal, as he himself is already subject to US human rights penalties.

I don't envy the Biden team, said Karim Sadjapour, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who has advised multiple US administrations on Iran. I think the administration now has a heightened sense of urgency to revise the deal before Raisi and a new hard-line team is inaugurated.

President Joe Biden and his team have made a US to return to the deal one of their top foreign policy priorities. The deal was one of President Barack Obama's signature achievements, one that aides now serving in the Biden administration had helped



negotiate and that Donald Trump repudiated and tried to dismantle as president.

Despite Raisi's impending presidency, Biden administration officials insist prospects for reaching an agreement are unaltered. They argue that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who signed off on the 2015 deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, will make any final decisions regardless of who is president.

The president's view and our view is that the decision leader is the supreme leader, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday. That was the case before the election; it's the case today; it will be the case probably moving forward.

Iran will have, we expect, the same supreme leader in

August as it will have today, as it had before the elections, as it had in 2015 when the JCPOA was consummated for the first time," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

But hopes for substantial progress fizzled last week ahead of the Iranian election amid a flurry of speculation about the impact of the vote on the indirect talks between Iran and the U.S. in Vienna. Diplomats and others familiar with the talks had thought the last round, the sixth, could produce at least a tangible result even if it fell short of a full deal.

Now, that round has ended and a seventh round has yet to be scheduled as Raisi, Iran's conservative judiciary chief, brandished an absolute rejection of anything more than Iran's bare minimum compliance with the 2015

agreement in exchange for a lifting all of US sanctions.

In his public comments Monday, Raisi brushed aside US calls for Iran to agree to follow-on discussions on expanding the initial nuclear deal to include its ballistic missile program and its support for regional groups that the US designates terrorist organizations.

It's nonnegotiable, Raisi said.

Iran experts agree it will be a tough, if not impossible, for Biden to get Iran to go beyond the nuclear agreement.

I'm very skeptical that once we've lifted the sanctions to get them to return they'll feel any incentive to come back and negotiate more concessions, Sadjapour said. And, if we coerce them with sanctions to come back

to the table, they'll argue that we've abrogated our end of the nuclear deal. Again.

Critics of the nuclear deal maintain that the administration has already given away too much in exchange for too little by signaling its desire to repudiate Trump's repudiation of the nuclear deal. And, they say that even if Iran agrees to some sort of additional talks, the pledge will be meaningless.

It was pretty obvious that the Iranians were never going to negotiate in good faith beyond the JCPOA, said Rich Goldberg, a Trump administration National Security Council official who has espoused a hard line on Iran.

But now, even if the administration gets some sort of face-saving language from the Iranians about future talks,

Raisi has already said they're not interested. The jig is up, he said. You can't come back to a skeptical Congress, allies and deal opponents and say the promise means anything it means when Raisi has already said it doesn't.

But administration officials are adamant that as good as the nuclear deal is, it is insufficient and must be improved on.

We do see a return to compliance as necessary but insufficient, but we also do see a return to compliance as enabling us to take on those other issues diplomatically, Price said, adding that the point had been made clear to the the Iranians in no uncertain terms.

An additional complication is that Raisi will become the first serving Iranian president sanctioned by the U.S. government even before entering office, in part over his time as the head of Iran's internationally criticized judiciary a situation that could complicate state visits and speeches at international forums such as the United Nations.

Psaki and Price both said that the U.S. will continue to hold Raisi accountable for human rights violations for which he was sanctioned by the Trump administration.

Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018 and set about a maximum pressure campaign on Iran that included re-instating all the sanctions eased under the agreement along with adding a host of new ones.

## New Zealand approves Pfizer vaccine for young people from 12 to 15, but they'll have to wait their turn



**CHRISTCHURCH (NEW ZEALAND), JUN 22 (THE CONVERSATION):** New Zealand's medicines regulator Medsafe has granted provisional approval of the Pfizer vaccine for youth aged 12 to 15, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern expects cabinet approval to follow next week.

Once cabinet approves, 12-15-year-olds will become eligible for vaccination towards the end of the year, after older groups have had their turn.

Although children are at lower risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19 than older people, it is still essential to vaccinate them for two reasons.

First, if children catch the virus they can spread it to other people, including higher-risk groups or people who can't be vaccinated for medical reasons. Several countries have seen outbreaks start in young people and spread into older age groups, causing significant hospitalisations and deaths.

Second, although the risk of death is very small, children can still suffer significant long-term health complications as a result of COVID-19, often known as long COVID. This has been shown to affect a significant proportion of people, even in younger age groups.

The Medsafe approval is based on solid data showing the vaccine is safe and highly effective for this age group. It follows similar moves in Europe, the US and Canada.

Vaccinating teenagers reduces their risk of getting sick and of passing the virus to others. By getting vaccinated, we are protecting not only ourselves, but also those

around us.

How children fit into New Zealand's rollout plan

In New Zealand, 265,000 children are in the 12-15 age group, accounting for just over 5% of the population. Add that to the 80% who are older than 16, and the Pfizer vaccine now has Medsafe approval for use in 85% of the population. This is good news because we will need really high vaccination rates to have a chance of reaching population immunity (sometimes called herd immunity).

The vaccine is not mandatory and it's likely not everyone will want to take it. This means we might need to vaccinate some children in younger age groups. Trials are currently underway to assess if the vaccine is appropriate for children aged six to 11. Director General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said Medsafe would consider the trial results once available.

There is a strong relationship between age and risk of severe COVID-19. It makes sense for the general rollout to start with older people and gradually work through the age groups, as Ardern announced last week. There may be exceptions teenagers living with border workers or who have underlying health conditions could be offered the vaccine earlier in the rollout.

There are also other risk factors. We know that as a result of longstanding systemic racism in the healthcare system, Maori and Pacific people are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment for COVID-19. Therefore, an equitable rollout should ensure Maori and Pacific communities are pri-

oritised for early access to the vaccine.

Moving towards collective immunity

At the moment, New Zealand's population is like a pile of dry kindling: sparks of COVID-19 from countries around the world are constantly threatening to set it ablaze. Vaccinating our population is like dousing that kindling pile with a hose.

To begin with, the wood is still dry enough that a spark landing in the wrong place could set it alight. But eventually, once the wood is wet enough, there might be a bit of smouldering here and there, but the fire won't be able to take off.

The government has laid out its side of the bargain: the plan is to offer the vaccine to everyone by the end of the year. Ardern said New Zealand's pre-purchase orders of the Pfizer vaccine will deliver enough doses during the rest of the year to offer two doses to 12-15-year-olds without anyone else missing out.

Now it's up to all of us to do our bit and get vaccinated when our turn comes. Everyone who gets vaccinated is making a contribution to our collective immunity against the virus.

The higher we can get our collective immunity, the better protected we will be as a community, and the more options we'll have for safely allowing international travel to resume. Vaccinating young people will be an important part of this effort and this latest announcement marks a significant step on the long journey towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Hong Kong leader says US 'beautifying' security offenses

**HONG KONG (AP):** Foreign governments are "beautifying" acts that endanger national security in Hong Kong when they criticize the recent crackdown on a pro-democracy newspaper, the leader of the semiautonomous Chinese territory said Tuesday.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam's comments come as some countries including the U.S. condemn the arrest of editors and executives at Apple Daily and the freezing of its assets as the latest examples of eroding freedoms in the former British colony.

Those arrested at the newspaper have been accused of breaching sweeping security legislation imposed by Beijing last year by colluding with foreign countries to endanger national security.

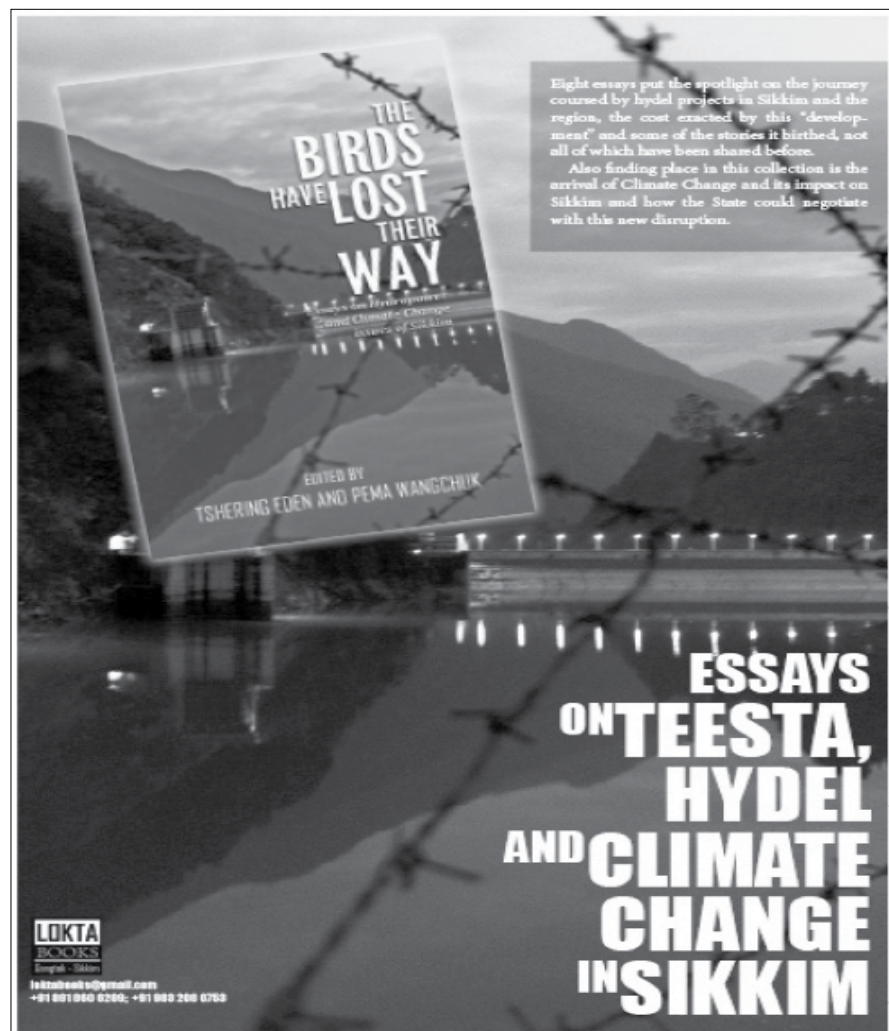
"Don't try to underplay the significance of breaching the National Security Law, and don't try to beautify these acts of endangering national security, which the foreign governments have taken so much to their heart," Lam said.

Lam took particular aim at comments made by U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price saying Hong Kong

authorities were using the law to suppress the media and silence dissent. Price said that "exchanging views with foreigners in journalism should never be a crime." "What we are talking about is not exchanging views between foreigners and journalists," Lam said. "It is violating the law as defined in the National Security Law and based on very clear evidence which will bring the case to court."

In a police operation last week, authorities arrested five Apple Daily editors and executives and froze \$2.3 million worth of assets of three companies linked to the paper. Apple Daily has said that if some of its funds are not released by Friday, the paper may cease operations this weekend. By Tuesday, Apple Daily had ended its English news and online financial news services.

The newspaper and its executives were vocal supporters of the pro-democracy protests that roiled Hong Kong for months in 2019. The protests were sparked by concerns that Hong Kong was losing the freedoms that Beijing promised it could maintain when it was handed from British to Chinese control in 1997.



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# Angelina Jolie visits Burkina Faso as UN Special Envoy

**GOUDOUBO (BURKINA FASO), JUN 22 (AP):** Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie has visited war-weakened Burkina Faso to show solidarity with people who continue to welcome the displaced, despite grappling with their own insecurity, and said the world isn't doing enough to help.

The humanitarian crisis in the Sahel seems to me to be totally neglected. It is treated as being of little geopolitical importance," Jolie told the Associated Press. There's a bias in the way we think about which countries and which people matter.

While Burkina Faso has been battling a five-year Islamic insurgency linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State that's killed thousands and displaced more than one million people, it is also hosting more than 22,000 refugees, the majority Malian.

As Special Envoy to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Jolie marked World Refugee Day on Sunday in Burkina Faso's Goudoubo refugee camp in the Sahel, where she finished a two-day visit. She spoke with the camp's Malian refugees and internally displaced people in the nation's hard-hit Center-North and Sahel regions.

After 20 years of work with the U.N. refugee agency, Jolie told the AP the increasing displacement meant the world was on a terrifying trajectory towards instability, and that governments had to do something about the conflicts driving the vast numbers of refugees.

Compared to when I began working with UNHCR twenty years ago, it seems like governments have largely given up on diplomacy ... countries which have the least are doing the most to support the refugees, she said.

The truth is we are not doing half of what we could and should ... to enable refugees to return home, or to support host countries, like Burkina Faso, coping for years with a fraction of the humanitarian aid needed to provide basic support and protection, Jolie said.

Maliens began fleeing to Burkina

The increasing attacks are stretching the U.N.'s ability to respond to displaced people within the country as well as the refugees it's hosting.

Funding levels for the response are critically low and with growing numbers of people forced to flee ... the gap is widening, UNHCR representative in



Faso in 2012 after their lives were upended by an Islamic insurgency, where it took a French-led military intervention to regain power in several major towns.

The fighting has since spread across the border to Burkina Faso, creating the fastest growing displacement crisis in the world. Last month Burkina Faso experienced its deadliest attack in years, when gunmen killed at least 132 civilians in Solhan village in the Sahel's Yagha province, displacing thousands.

Burkina Faso Abdourouf Gnon-Konde told the AP.

The attacks are also exacerbating problems for refugees who came to the country seeking security.

We insisted on staying (in Burkina Faso), (but) we stay with fear. We are too scared, said Fadimata Mohamed Ali Wallet, a Malian refugee living in the camp. Today there is not a country where there isn't a problem. This (terrorism) problem covers all of Africa, she said.

## Serbian Roma girl band sings for women's empowerment

**BELGRADE, SERBIA (AP):** Their songs are about "women chained" in abuse witnessed by generations, or teenage brides being forced into marriage by their fathers. And they tell women to seek love, fight back and stand up for their right to be equal with men.

A female Roma band in Serbia is using music to preach women's empowerment within their community, challenging some deeply rooted traditions and centuries-old male domination.

Formed in 2014, "Pretty Loud" symbolically seeks to give a louder voice to Roma girls, encourage education and steer them away from the widespread custom of early marriage. The band has gained popularity and international attention, performing last year at the Women of the Year Festival in London.

"We want to stop the early marriages ... we want the girls themselves, and not their parents, to decide whether they want to marry or not," said Silvia Sinani, one of the band members. "We want every woman to have the right to be heard, to have her dreams and to be able to fulfil them, to be equal."

Sinani, 24, said the idea for an all-female band was born at education and artistic workshops run for Roma, or Gypsies, by a private foundation, Gypsy Roma Urban Balkan Beats. The girls initially danced in GRUBB's boys' band and then decided they wanted one of their own, she said. "They (GRUBB) named

us 'Pretty Loud' because they knew that women in Roma tradition are not really loud," she said.

The band's music, a combination of rap and traditional Roma folk beat, mainly targets a younger generation of girls who are yet to make their life choices — the band itself includes 14-year-old twin sisters. The songs tackle women's position in their community, and seek to boost their self-awareness.

The quest is essential in a community where early marriages are widespread — a UNICEF study published last year showed that over one-third of girls in Roma settlements in Serbia aged 15-19 are already married. Of them, 16% were married before they were 15.

Alarmed, Serbian authorities, too, have formed a state commission to try to reverse the trend.

"I am an example of early marriage," said band member Zlata Ristic, 27, who gave birth to a baby boy at 16. "Nobody forced me into it but I have realized I should not have done it."

Now a single mother, Ristic said she wants other women in similar situations to know that their lives are not over once they have children, and that they can still pursue their dreams.

"My biggest reward is when 14-year-old girls write to me and say they want to become one of us, that they now attend school thanks to us, that they have improved their grades," she said.

## Keira Knightley in negotiations to star in sci-fi drama 'Conception'

**LOS ANGELES, JUN 22 (PTI):** Hollywood star Keira Knightley is in talks to play the lead role in the sci-fi drama "Conception". If the deal goes through, it will be a reunion for Knightley and her "Silent Night" director Camille Griffin, who is on board to helm the Searchlight Pictures project.

According to Deadline, Griffin will write and direct, with Celine Rattray and Trudie Styler attached to produce via their Maven Screen Media banner.

The story is set in the near future, when the British government takes authoritarian rule over parenting. It follows a vigorous licence officer (Knightley), who is a firm believer in the controversial system she upholds until an unexpected event imperils her own parental status in the very administration she enforces.

Searchlight SVP Production Taylor Friedman and Director of Development & Production Pete Spencer will oversee the project for the studio.

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**LOCAL SHOPPING!** The actress Emma Roberts is seen visiting the shops around town in Boston.

## Akshay Kumar begins 'Raksha Bandhan' shoot, dedicates film to sister



**MUMBAI, JUN 22 (PTI):** Superstar Akshay Kumar on Monday started filming director Aanand L Rai's upcoming feature film "Raksha Bandhan" and dedicated the movie to his sister, Alka Hiranandani.

"Raksha Bandhan", also starring Bhumi Pednekar, is billed as a special tale which celebrates "relationships in the most beautiful way".

Kumar took to Twitter and posted a picture with Rai from the film's set. It is the actor-filmmaker's second collaboration after their upcoming drama "Atrangi Re".

"Growing up my sister, Alka was my first friend. It was the most effortless friendship.

@aanandlrai's #RakshaBandhan is a dedication to her and a celebration of that special bond. Day one of shoot today, need your love and best wishes," the 53-year-old actor wrote.

"Raksha Bandhan" also features four new faces, "Shikara" actor Sadia Khateeb, Sahejmeen Kaur, Deepika Khanna and Smriti Srikanth, playing Kumar's sisters. The film is penned by writer couple Himanshu Sharma and Kanika Dhillon.

It is presented and distributed by Zee Studios in association with Hiranandani and Rai.

The film is backed by Colour Yellow Production in association with Cape of Good Films.

**Aries:**  
Aries, you've always lived life on your own terms. You wouldn't know any other way, would you now? What the cards are urging you to observe today is all the ways in which your conditioning is getting the better of you. The voice in your head that's keeping you from realising your highest potential. It's time to break free from the mental prison and reclaim the dreams that are worth fighting for.  
Tip: Freedom is your birth right, wild one.  
**Taurus:**  
Affirmation for the week, Taurus: "I am ready to reach my fullest potential. I am ready to grow and expand. I am ready to unlock the next level of my life. I'm ready, I'm ready, I'm ready!" It's time to give the good things more power. It's time to recognise your power and potential as a co-creator. Big things are about to happen in your world, and it has something to do with your vision board taking tangible form.  
Tip: It's time to unlock the next level of your life.  
**Gemini:**  
This physical reality of ours is made up of both shadow and light, and on most days it feels as if the shadow is overpowering the light. As a result of this, we tend to hide our own light for the fear that we will fall prey to the 'bad vibes'. Could this fear be uncalled for,

though? It's time to observe the things that are keeping you from realising your highest potential. It's time to take the cloak of invisibility off and affirm that circle of protection that has been cast around you.  
Tip: You deserve to be seen, beautiful.

**Cancer:**  
When you're meant to do something, more often than not, things work out as if by sleight of hand. On the other hand, when something isn't meant for you, chaos tends to feel like a constant. The Universe is giving you a clear indication of what isn't a vibrational match for you. The real question is: 'Are you willing to listen?' Word for the wise: create a sacred space for yourself and allow the answers you seek to come to you in mysterious ways.  
Tip: The Universe is giving you a clear indication of what isn't a vibrational match for you.

**Leo:**  
Being an empath comes with all kinds of challenges. Feeling the collective sadness and rage, for one. What the cards are urging you to do today is visualise a circle of protection around you—an energy shield that keeps those bad vibes at bay. Channeling the white light is an excellent way to begin your day. If working with crystals is your jam, bring out that clear quartz to clear out the funky energy, and tourmaline

to help you ground thereafter. Placing a bowl of salt water in one corner of your room also promises to work like a charm.

Tip: Protect your space.

**Virgo:**  
When our decisions are guided by fear, there is only one way to go, Virgo, and it isn't upwards. What happens when we become conduits for love, though? The pathways that have been blocked magically open up and Spirit brings us the ideas we need in order to move forward. Trust the insights that you are receiving, even if they don't make sense on paper. As you do, give yourself the permission to dream. There is a parallel reality available to you.  
Tip: Let your decisions be guided by love.

**Libra:**  
You may be two parts of fear, but you're also four parts courage and infinite parts awesomeness. What the cards are reminding you is that there ain't no mountain high enough for this Libra. So, put your worries to rest, dare to dream, and go after what you believe in with unabridged passion.

**Scorpio:**  
There are times in our lives when no matter how much we try, things refuse to move. The doors we knock on remain tightly shut and the cosmic support

we need doesn't come by easily. The good thing is, now is "not" such a time in your life. You are being reminded that you are loved—oh-so-loved—and that your spirit team is looking out for you from beyond the veil. Call upon their assistance, Scorpio, and get ready to witness a miracle!

Tip: Call upon your spirit team for support.

**Sagittarius:**  
They say when one door closes, another opens, and this has never been truer for you. So, offer a prayer of gratitude for all the things that are nearing their end as they are making space for something new and exciting to come in. Some of you may be feeling inspired to strike out on your own or invest in that dream project. Remember, your heart doesn't understand the language of fear. Trust what you're being guided to act upon and do so without delay.  
Tip: When one door closes...

**Capricorn:**  
The truth is, you'll always be 'too smart', 'too bossy', 'too outspoken', 'too loud' and 'too sassy' for some people, and they are not your people, Capricorn. Today you're being asked to stop apologising for who you are or dimming parts of your personality in order to fit in. Take that cloak of invisibility off, darling, and as you do, remember that it's not your job to make

everybody feel comfortable.

Tip: It's time to take that cloak of invisibility off.

**Aquarius:**  
We tend to believe that 'clairvoyance' is a one way stream, but that is far from the truth. The Universe is reminding you of your power as the co-creator of your reality. So, allow yourself to dream and as you do, plant these visuals onto the vision board in the skies. It's time to get back into the driver's seat, Aquarius. It's time to call in the energy of miracles. The good thing is, you have all the cosmic support that is required by you at this moment.

Tip: It's time to exercise those manifestation muscles in a manner that serves your highest good.

**Pisces:**  
The message in your cards is a clear one, Pisces. You're being asked to give peace a chance. So instead of obsessing over how you have been wronged, move beyond the ego space. Understand how the other person too could have been hurt by your words and actions. As you do, actively work towards resolving the situation. Remember, you always have the option to love them from afar if being a part of their life is no longer an option.  
Tip: Give peace a chance, Pisces.