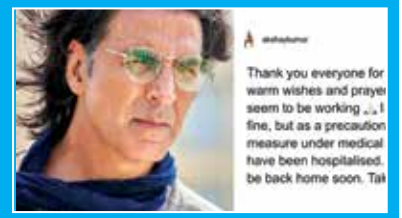




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SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 91 | Gangtok | Tuesday 06 April 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Sikkim records Covid death after more than 2 months

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 APR:**

Novel Coronavirus claimed one more life in Sikkim today after a gap of more than two months. The COVID-related death toll in Sikkim reached 136 today with the passing away of a 65-year-old lady from Sichey in East District.

Her passing away is being recorded as a COVID Death with Co-morbidities.

The last Covid death in Sikkim, the 135th, was recorded on 31 Jan when another 65-year-old, a male that time, from Pakyong-Senti in East District had succumbed to Covid related complications.

In his daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the lady was taken to Central Referral Hospital here after taking ill and was found COVID positive in rapid antigen testing.

She passed away at STNM Hospital yesterday evening.

The IEC officer added that while the patient had no primary contacts since she used to live alone, the contact tracing team has prepared a list of potential contacts and was following up.

In the meanwhile, six new cases of novel coronavirus were reported in the last 24 hours in

the State taking Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 6,263.

These new cases were reported from the testing of 45 samples on Sunday of which 29 were found in RT-PCR testing and two in rapid antigen testing of 15 samples.

One person from Baghey Khola, one from Lingtam and one from 6th Mile-Tadong in East District and one person from Ashram of the Heavenly Path Organization at Nandu Gaon in South District have tested positive for COVID-19.

Two tourists from Rajkot, Gujarat, have also tested positive. They had apparently taken

ill will travelling to Gangtok and went for the testing here and two of them were found positive for COVID-19.

He informed that the group has returned to Gujarat immediately after receiving their COVID report.

The contact tracing team is preparing a list of primary contacts of the hotel where they had checked in.

With no new discharges from isolation, the number of recovered cases of COVID-19 holds at 5,970. There are now 56 active cases of coronavirus in Sikkim, of whom one is currently in the ICU facility of the COVID-dedicated STNM hospital.

Interschool debate in Tamang language on 07 April



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 05 APR:**

Sikkim Akademi today announced that the final round of an interschool debate competition organized by it in Tamang language is scheduled for 07 April.

The interschool debate competition is part of Sikkim Akademi's concerted efforts to support the development of regional languages of the state and is being organized in association with the Lan-

guage Section of Education Department.

In the first step of this initiative, Sikkim Akademi had begun an interschool debate competition in Tamang language on 07 November last year.

The final round of the debate competition on the topic, 'Sikshan Pranalima Matri Bhasako Prayogle Matra Sarvanghin Bikash Huna Saksha' in Tamang language is now scheduled to be held on 07 April here at the mini hall of Manan Kendra.

turn to pg02

Homestay Congress begins at Okharey with 125 participants

**PRITAM LAMA
GYALSHING, 05 APR:**

Homestay Congress, a state-level event and training session for homestay stakeholders of the State organised by the Homestay Association of Sikkim, got underway here at Okharey under Daramdin constituency in west Sikkim today. The event is being supported by the Tourism & Civil Aviation Department and had chairperson, State Bank of Sikkim, DB Gurung, as the chief guest.

HAS president, Jigme Dorjee Bhutia, presenting an overview of the event explained that the Homestay Congress seeks to codify directions and extend required support to passionate homestay stakeholders of the state.

He urged participants to take the 4-day Congress seriously and make the most from the trainings being offered.

The topics covered today were registra-



tion and office management. Resource persons also spoke about online and offline marketing and Social Media marketing.

Subsequent sessions will cover bird-watching, accessing subsidised loans, entrepreneurship development etc.

Underlining that homestay tourism was a viable business model, he stressed that this sector was even more vital since it was not just about profits but

also an important tool to promote Sikkim's culture and ethos.

He added that with a Homestay Association of Sikkim now in place, the stakeholders now had an organisation to support and promote these aspects of the sector and coordinate efforts to facilitate stronger entrepreneurial expressions.

The chief guest, in turn, welcomed the workshop for its potential to boost rural tourism and assured

that the State Government too was focusing on developing and supporting Homestay tourism in the state.

125 participants from across the State have registered and are attending the workshop.

Okharey is a major tourism destination with a pronounced rural homestay aspect with 90% of the residents operating homestays and being engaged in tourism directly or indirectly.

Rangpo-Rorathang road opens for light vehicles

**SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 05 APR:**

The old road connecting Rangpo and Rorathang was reopened for light vehicles after 20 months today.

The road was closed off in July 2019 due to damage at the alignment below Sikkim Distilleries.

A temporary bypass was constructed from Chanatar; however, the condition of this alternative was not good and the inconvenience continued. The reopening of the road was a major event today with many VIPs present the moment.

Senior BRO officer, Ramchandra Prasad, while discussing the construction of the road said that the task was very challenging and that BRO was happy to dedicate the road to the nation today.

The total cost of construction of the 130-meter-long stretch, it is informed, is estimated at Rs 7.98 crore, out of which Rs 2.22 crore went towards land compensation.



BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

41ST FOUNDATION DAY

*Heartiest greetings to all the
karyakartas and the people of
Sikkim on the occasion of
41st Foundation Day
of Bharatiya Janata Party.*

**SABKA SAATH !
SABKA VIKASH !!
SABKA VISHWAS !!!**



**ISSUED BY:
BJP SIKKIM PRADESH**

The Streets for People Challenge is an initiative of the Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India, to inspire cities to create walking-friendly streets through quick measures, in response to COVID-19.

The city-led Design Competition aims to crowd source innovative ideas for designing and testing the pilot interventions through quick, low-cost, and innovative solutions.

Who can participate?

Site 1: Flagship project
Site 2: Neighbourhood level

For Both :
1st Prize : Rs.10,000 2nd Prize: Rs 7,500 3rd Prize:Rs. 5,000

FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT: <http://smartnet.niua.org/indiastreetchallenge/competition/>

Competition roll-out 5th April 2021
Registration closes 12th April 2021
Walking Audit 13th April 2021
Submission by 11:59 pm IST 25th April 2021
Announcing of results 27th April 2021

State and central statistical officers resolve to strengthen coordination



GANGTOK, 05 APR [PIB]: A co-ordination meeting between senior officers of National Statistical Office, Government of India and senior officers of Government of Sikkim was organized by the National Statistical Office, Gangtok at the Fern Denzong Hotel and Spa, Gangtok, on 05 April, 2021.

M. Peter Johnson, Director General, National Statistical Office, Government of India, New Delhi, inaugurated the event. In his inaugural address he stressed on the need for better co-operation between the State and Central Offices of the statistical system. He emphasized that the National Statistical Office makes all endeavors to improve the statistical system for the benefit of the state.

Rinzing Chewang Bhutia, Secretary, Planning and Development, Government of Sikkim,

Smt. Devika Sharma Chhetri, Director General, Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring & Evaluation (DESME), Government of Sikkim, Smt. Sumita Pradhan, Special Secretary cum Director, Department of Commerce & Industries, Government of Sikkim, Ganga Kumar, Deputy Director General, National Statistical Office (HQ), Govt. Of India, T R Sreenivas, Deputy Director General, NSO (FOD), Gangtok and other officers from DESME and NSO (FOD) actively participated in the discussions.

TR Sreenivas, Deputy Director General, National Statistical Office, Government of India, Gangtok, while welcoming the Guests mentioned that this is the first high level meeting organized for this purpose. He informed the gathering

that the meeting was planned to strengthen the coordination activities between the central and state statistical agencies.

The meeting agreed to constitute a high-level committee along with terms of references for further deliberations.

The meeting ended with the proposal of Vote of Thanks by Jaya Pradhan, Head of Office, NSO (FOD), Gangtok.

M Peter Johnson, DG, T. R. Sreenivas and Ganga Kumar, DDGs, and other senior officers from NSO later had a meeting with S C Gupta, the Chief Secretary of the state, and appraised him of the outcomes of the Co-ordination meeting and requested to extend the co-operation needed for smooth functioning of the activities of the National Statistical Office, Gangtok, in the state of Sikkim.

March was third warmest in 121 Years

NEW DELHI, 05 APR [PTI]: March was third warmest in 121 years in terms of monthly average maximum temperature, the India Meteorological Department on Monday said.

The IMD, in its review for the month, said the observed monthly average maximum, minimum and mean temperature for the country as a whole during March

this year are 32.65 degrees Celsius, 19.95 degrees Celsius and 26.30 degrees Celsius, respectively, against the normal 31.24 degrees Celsius, 18.87 degrees Celsius and 25.06 degrees Celsius based on the climatology period 1981-2010.

"The all India average monthly maximum temperature during March 2021 with 32.65 degrees

Celsius is the warmest in the last 11 years, and third warmest in the last 121 years with 2010 and 2004 as the ever warmest and second warmest month with 33.09 degrees Celsius and 32.82 degrees Celsius, respectively," the IMD said.

Several parts of the country had recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius in March.

SikkimSCAN

SU celebrates Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav with Vande Mataram

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 APR:

Sikkim University organised a cultural evening, 'Vande Mataram,' to mark the end of Dandi March and start of Salt Satyagrah here at Manan Kendra on Monday.

The event is part of the ongoing nationwide celebration, Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav, launched by the Government of India to mark the start of the 75-week celebration as the nation approaches its 75th year of Independence.

The programme had Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha as chief guest accompanied by Deputy General Officer Commanding of 17 Mountain Division, Brigadier Vikram Bhan as guest of honour and Sikkim University Vice

Chancellor Prof Avinash Khare among other dignitaries.

The main highlight of the event was the presentation of patriotic songs and dances and a skit by students and teachers of the Music Department of SU and other artists.

In his address, Education Minister expressed that every citizen needs to take inspiration from the struggle and sacrifices made by leaders and freedom fighters.

He added that it was important for the people to ask themselves whether they were contributing enough towards the nation-building process and honoring the sacrifices of the freedom fighters.

Mr Lepcha stated that Indian Army has been serving the nation with



aplomb thanked the soldiers for their service.

While congratulating Sikkim University for organising the programme, the Minister appreciated the cultural presentation given by students and Music Department of the university.

Likewise, Brigadier Vikram Bhan stated that no success comes without a struggle so it was important to face challenges to arrive at durable solutions.

He also stressed that discipline was very important in life as it reinforces determination and

resolve.

Earlier, in his address, the SU Vice Chancellor mentioned that the main objective of the celebration was to commemorate and remember freedom fighters and celebrate the achievements and successes of the country.

SGREWA exec body to continue for another term

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 APR:

Sikkim Government Retired Employees Welfare Association [SGREWA] has resolved that the executive body continue in office a new term of three years.

This was decided at a meeting of the central executive committee of SGREWA held at Ranipool on Sunday. The meeting, which was chaired by its president DT Bhutia, discussed various issues of the association.

SGREWA general secretary, PL Sharma, informs that the main objective of the meeting was to constitute a new body of the association

and after thorough discussions, the meeting unanimously decided that the existing body continue for a new tenure of three years.

He informed that the term of the existing body had ended in 2019 but elections for the new body could not be conducted last year due to the pandemic.

The meeting also appointed TP Koirala and SK Nepal as financial advisors and KN Sharma as the chief advisor of the organization.

It is informed that conveners of eleven branches of SGREWA were also appointed as members of the central executive committee.

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Interschool debate in Tamang language...

Salghari Secondary School will take on Maniram Secondary School on the day. Addressing a press conference here today, Sikkim Akademi president, SR Subba, stressed that the speaking and debating in a language was very important for a language's development as reading and writing were not enough on their own.

He added that the inter-school debate competition has started with Tamang language and such debates will be organized in other regional languages in the days to come with the support of the Language section of the Education Department.

Sikkim Akademi general secretary Purna Yonzon detailed that four students each from eight schools of Sikkim had participated in the debate competition in Tamang language.

Phurmit Lepcha of Maniram SS was the best speaker so far in this debate competition.

While speaking about some recent activities of the Akademi, the president mentioned that the organization was unable to organize any events due to the COVID pandemic for most of last year and its first initiative after the lockdown was the preparation and release of its book, 'Sikkim Ma Janmiyeka Tatha Sikkim Lai Karmashetra Banayera Baseka Diwangat Sahityakar Ra Pratrakarharu.' The book was released by the Chief Minister on 02 December last year.

He added that another event organized by Sikkim Akademi was the workshop for authors and illustrators of children's literature from 23 to 26 March in association with National Book Trust in Gangtok. He added that the workshop was attended by 5 writers and 5 illustrators from Sikkim and 3 writers and 3 illustrators from West Bengal.

Sikkim Akademi secretary, PL Sharma, further informed that Sikkim Akademi has been planning to organize training for upcoming painters in the coming days.

It is informed that Sikkim Akademi has also been planning workshops on developed and under-developed regional languages of Sikkim.

The President added that Sikkim Akademi has many plans and programmes but was facing funds constraints and other issues.

"Sikkim Akademi is not able to work actively due to funds constraints and lack of manpower and infrastructure. We have also placed the issue of having our own bhawan in the State to work better," he said.

AFFIDAVIT

I, PRITAM KARKI, S/O KULDIP CHHETRI born 31/12/1995, residing at Timburbong West Sikkim, P/S Soreng Pin No.-737121, have changed name as PRITAM CHHETRI vide affidavit dated 05/04/2021 before Sub-Divisional Magistrate Ranjan Ra

SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, 05 APR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Nepal Airlines has finally decided to lease out or sell its six Chinese-made aircraft, nearly a year after grounding them because they were more trouble than they were worth.

"Out of the two options recommended by the Finance Ministry—dry lease or outright sale—Nepal Airlines will try the first one," said Dim Prasad Poudel, managing director of Nepal Airlines.

"We have constituted a committee to determine the lease rate. The panel will submit a report within a week, and we will show it to the board for its go-ahead," he told the Post.

After the board's approval, Nepal Airlines will invite offers from prospective national and international bidders to lease the Chinese planes, said Poudel. "If there are no takers, we will go for the second option—sale. Both options seem difficult, but we don't have any alternative," said Poudel.

According to Nepal Airlines officials, the planes will be given on dry lease, which means the owner will provide the aircraft only, without crew or ground staff.



Nepal Airlines has repeatedly said that the Chinese-made planes were causing heavy losses ever since they were acquired between 2014 and 2018, and that it wants to remove them to stop further losses.

The Finance Ministry is the owner of the planes and Nepal Airlines is the operator.

The ministry gave the green signal to Nepal Airlines last month to lease out or sell the planes.

In July last year, the board of directors of Nepal Airlines unanimously decided to stop flying the Chinese planes as they cost more money to operate than they brought in.

Five months after the decision, in December 2020, the national flag carrier had submitted four options to its line ministry—Civil Aviation

Ministry—to get rid of the six inefficient Chinese aircraft in its fleet.

The first option was to ask the aircraft manufacturers to buy back the planes by evaluating their existing worthiness.

The second option presented by the flag carrier was to lease out the planes to interested Nepali operators on either a long-term or a short-term basis.

The third alternative was to auction off the planes through a global competitive bidding process.

The fourth option was to look for Chinese or international companies or banks interested in buying or leasing them.

As the planes have been grounded for a long time, Nepal Airlines officials said that they need to expedite the process to lease out or sell the

planes because aircraft depreciate quickly if they are kept on the ground for a long period.

In November 2012, Nepal Airlines signed a commercial agreement with Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), a Chinese government undertaking, to procure six aircraft—two 56-seater MA60s and four 17-seater Y12es.

As part of the deal, China provided grant and concessional loan assistance worth 408 million Chinese yuan (Rs6.67 billion) to acquire and purchase the six aircraft.

Out of the total aid money, a grant worth 180 million yuan (Rs2.94 billion) went to pay for one 56-seater MA60 and one 17-seater Y12e aircraft; and a loan worth 228 million yuan (Rs3.72 billion) was used to purchase one MA60 and

three Y12e aircraft.

The 17-seater Y12e is a twin-engine turboprop utility aircraft built by Harbin Aircraft Industry Group, previously Harbin Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation.

The 56-seater MA60 is a turboprop-powered airliner produced by China's Xi'an Aircraft Industrial Corporation. Both manufacturers are subsidiaries of AVIC.

In 2014, marking the beginning of what was supposed to be a new era for Nepal Airlines after acquiring the planes, it had even changed its classic red and blue stripes livery, opting for a more modern design.

But these planes never took to the air.

The delivery of the rest of the Chinese aircraft was stalled for years after issues appeared in the first batch of planes that arrived in 2014.

These issues included lack of pilots, lack of instructor pilots, lack of spare parts and lack of engineers trained to maintain them.

The second batch of MA60 and Y12e aircraft, as part of the six-aircraft deal between Nepal and China, arrived in January 2017.

The corporation received the final two Y12e aircraft in February 2018.

Summit Times

in Nepali

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Thank You!



Orientation organised for Yuksam-Dubdi farmers on high-value vegetable farming

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 APR:

An orientation training on high-value vegetable farming for farmers and SHG members of Yuksam Dubdi GPU was organised on 04 April by Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee in collaboration with the Gram Panchayat and Yuksam BAC with technical support from Amerjoti [an NGO] and Horticulture Department, a press release informs.

This was in continuation of the two greenhouse sheds supported by WWF-India under the Snow Leopard Conservation Program and to ensure proper distribution of seeds, an initiative undertaken in consultation with Panchayats and other community representatives, the release adds.

The training was supported by WWF-India, Khangchendzonga Landscape Program, Sikkim Office, and was also attended by Panchayat President, Bhim Bdr Gurung and Panchayat member Sancha Hang Subba.

The training began with a conversation on



the lockdown, the community's views on the impact of the lockdown, impact on forest and agriculture and the need for smart and high value agriculture. Discussions on soil and the need for soil conservation were also explained along with importance of soil conservation and management as the basis for healthy crops.

Cropping patterns and promotion of diversity was also shared with the participants. Different types of composting techniques were discussed, and a brief conversation on pest

management was initiated so that the next phase of training could be built upon it. The participants showed keen interest in the training as it was hands on and site specific, building upon their knowledge and practices. 20 family from four wards and SHGs has been selected by the respective Panchayat members for cherry pepper cultivation which shall be covered in coming season.

As a follow up of the assessment conducted by WWF-India and Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee, it

was understood that the lockdown did bring forth the importance of food security. During lockdown there were observations of families going back to farming practices in most villages of West Sikkim which brought forward a clear need to strengthen this sector. Hence under the Snow Leopard Conservation Program, supported by WWF-UK, three villages were identified in Yuksam (Tsong, Kyongtey, upper belt of Yuksam). Since these are the gateway villages for the communities living in the Snow Leop-

ard Habitat areas, the main objective of the ongoing Snow Leopard Conservation Program was to support the communities to strengthen alternative livelihood in these villages. Hence to strengthen the sustainable agro-ecology ideas which came out of the community meeting conducted in the villages by WWF-India and KCC, for establishing community seed/seedling farm with green house sheds, where seed of different crops can be developed and distributed to the communities were followed up.

COVID-19 cases reach record high in India

NEW DELHI, APR 5

(PTI): India recorded an all-time high of 1,03,558 coronavirus infections in a day pushing the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,25,89,067, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The single-day rise in cases surpassed the earlier peak of 97,894

infections reported on September 17, last year, making it the highest since the pandemic began in India, while the death toll increased to 1,65,101 with 478 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 26th day in row, the active cases have increased

to 7,41,830 comprising 5.89 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 92.80 per cent, the data stated.

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 comprising 1.25 per cent of the total infections.

The number of people who have recuperated

from the disease surged to 1,16,82,136, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.31 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on

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

According to the ICMR, 24,90,19,657 samples have been tested up to April 4 with 8,93,749 samples being tested on Sunday.

Sikkim at SARAS Mela in Tripura

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 APR:

A four-member team representing two Self Help Groups from Martam and Soreng blocks representing Sikkim at the SARAS Mela organised by the Tripura State Rural Livelihood Mission from 19 to 30 March in Tripura, a press release informs.

Two members from Nalina SHG of Soreng put up a food stall while two members from Saipatri Kisan Sumuruddhi SHG had a stall exhibiting packaged food.

Nalina SHG prepared Sikkimese treats like Momos, Thukpa, Sel Roti, Phaley, Tai-pho, etc. while the Saipatri Kisan Sumuruddhi SHG stall displayed organic garlic powder, ginger powder, local chilli powder



(Dalley), buckwheat flour, mango pickle, turmeric powder, local rice, beaten rice, etc. for sale.

Both did brisk business.

Sikkim also bagged the 3rd prize at the fair and received a Rs 25,000

cash prize and a trophy.

Much appreciation was received by the SHG members for their products at the fair, a press

release from the Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission which had sponsored the SHGs to the Tripura event informs.

Poll rallies still on, thousands attend as daily Covid cases cross 1 lakh

New Delhi, 05 Apr [Reuters]: India reported a record rise in COVID-19 infections on Monday, becoming the second country after the United States to post more than 100,000 new cases in a day, as politicians stage massive election rallies raising fears of further spreading the virus.

Hospitals in the worst affected state, Maharashtra, are being overrun by patients. Maharashtra reported a record 57,074 new cases overnight.

The country's dai-

ly infections have risen about 12 fold since hitting a multi-month low in early February, when authorities eased most restrictions and people largely stopped wearing masks and following social distancing.

With 103,558 new infections, India has now reported 12.6 million cases, the highest after the United States and Brazil, data from the health ministry showed.

India has recorded the most number of infections in the past week

anywhere in the world. More infectious variants of the virus may have played a role in the second surge, some epidemiologists say.

Deaths jumped by 478, still one of the lowest fatality rates in the world, raising the total to 165,101.

Though cases have risen exponentially in nearly a dozen states, politicians and ministers are still addressing election rallies attended by tens of thousands of mask-less people jostling for space.

Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was ridiculed on social media on the weekend after saying there was no need for masks in his state and that wearing one hurts businesses like beauty parlours. Assam is voting to elect a new government.

Maharashtra will start shutting shopping malls, cinemas, bars, restaurants and places of worship from this evening. Authorities will also impose a complete lockdown at weekends, as experts wor-

ried about a shortage of critical-care beds in hospitals, especially in its smaller cities. India, the world's biggest maker of vaccines, has injected 77 million doses at home since starting its campaign in the middle of January - the third highest after the United States and China.

India's per capita COVID-19 vaccinations, however, are lower than many other countries, including that of more populated China that started giving shots to its citizens much earlier.

Temi Tea showroom opens at Hill Cart Road



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 05 APR:

An exclusive Temi Tea Showroom, a first of its kind, was opened at Hill Cart Road today.

The inauguration was done Chairperson,

Tea Board of Sikkim, Tashi Tshering Bhutia in the presence of General Manager Sunil Kumar accompanied by the Assistant Manager and other staff of Temi Tea Estate.

The opening saw the attendance of business delegates, dealers, market representatives, trading partners along with an enthusiastic number of public and media.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
LAW AND PARLIAMENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
GANGTOK- 737103

No: 70/MISC/LD/2004-11/6350/LD/2021

Dated: 18.02.2021

NOTICE

This is for the information of all concerned that in terms of section 4 of the Sikkim regulation of Societies, Associations and other voluntary Organizations Act, 2008 (hereinafter referred to as the Act), all societies, organizations and associations registered under the Act shall be renewed upon expiry of every two years from the date of registration. Failure to renew the association within a period of one month from the date of expiry of renewal of registration would render the organization liable for suspension or cancellation of its registration without further notice.

Further, in terms of Section 5 of the Act, submission of annual audit report and annual activity report to the Registering Authority by 31st March of each year is mandatory, failing which the registration of the association shall be liable to be suspended or cancelled.

A list of organizations and associations registered under the said Act along with their due date for renewal has been hosted in the official website of the Government of Sikkim, which can be accessed through <https://www.sikkim.gov.in/departments/law-parliamentary-affairs-department>.

All office bearers of societies, associations and other voluntary organization are therefore, advised to visit the link and verify whether their registration needs renewal. They may also take notice of the fact that failure to renew the registration will result in cancellation of registration without any further notice.

Sd/-

LR-cum-Secretary

Law & Parliamentary Affairs Department

R.O No. 03/IPR/PUB/Classi/21-22

Dated: 05.04.21

RUCHI DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Behind telephone Exchange Near Old STNM Hospital. Gangtok

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EXISTING FACILITIES:

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- DIGITAL X-RAY
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- PATHOLOGY
- MICROBIOLOGY
- BIOCHEMISTRY
- ENDOSCOPY
- B M D
- E C G
- DENTAL O P G
- GASTRO CLINIC
- PAEDIATRIC CLINIC
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- Sushruta Medical, Ranipool.
- Arihant Medical, Opp. CRH gate, 5th Mile.

COMPLETE ENT FACILITIES UNDER ONE ROOF

ENT O P D Monday to Friday
10.00 am to 2.30 pm

1. ENT OPD CLINIC
2. ENT ENDOSCOPIES
3. MICROSCOPIC PROCEDURES
4. MINOR OT PROCEDURES
5. VERTIGO MANAGEMENT
6. AUDIOMETRY, TYMPANOMETRY AND HEARING AIDS.

CONSULTANT ENT SURGEON
DR. ONGDEN GYATSO, MS (AIIMS)

GASTRO CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am to 9.00 am

MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D

9.30 am

ORTHO AND GYNEA CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

Speak to Me

Language sustains cultures, nuances identities

The many communities of Sikkim are not alone in the worry that their way of life is at risk of becoming extinct. This is a worry that grips communities across the world. Fact also remains that for many, their way of life is already in the past, its people having adjusted into accepting something else as their cultural heritage. But we leave that discussion for some other day, for now, let us proceed by first accepting that before one even begins trying to salvage what remains of a culture, one should first agree that no culture can survive once its language is lost. There is nothing new in this acceptance. The value of language to identities is what Sikkim celebrates when it observes a holiday on Teyongsi Sirijunga Sawan Tongnam for instance. Sirijunga was a Limboo priest in 17th Century Sikkim who was put to death for his efforts to revive the Limboo language and script. He is believed to have been a reincarnation of the Sirijunga who gave the community their script in prehistory. This day then becomes apt to discuss languages.

While earlier, indigenous communities could rely on traditional education systems to ensure their linguistic and cultural survival, this support system does not exist anymore. In the past, the language would get passed down around kitchen fires and along with it would slip through the essence of ethnic cultures and traditions, nuances which made the people unique and belong to each other. As Sikkim grows more cosmopolitan, outside influences have edged out this form of learning. The formal education system, which, although it includes many indigenous languages in the curriculum, cannot include the subtlety with which cultures were earlier fostered by the continuance of languages; that is something which only a lived experience can ensure and cannot be mimicked by dictated syllabus. What learning a mother tongue in school can achieve though is set up the young for a better introduction to themselves. For that, unlike the present trend, where the learning curve ends with the schooling years, the learning will have to begin once the language has been mastered. The continued engagement will also keep the language relevant because its users will then keep their language “up to date”. Don’t do that, and one runs the risk of the language become archaic or getting reduced to an incomplete dialect. Not all archaic languages have the literary or philosophical wealth to become classical like Latin of Sanskrit, which leaves on with the situation where the language will first degenerate into a dialect and then become incapable of even keeping conversations alive anymore and fade away. It then falls on the existing language users to use their language more often in more expressive ways because indigenous languages are already finding fewer and fewer people using them and the few who have mastered the tongue need to record whatever it is they can cull from the older generation so that some element of their identity survives the march of time. In fact, this is one aspect of the attempts at cultural revivalism afoot all over the Hills that needs to be paid special attention to. While it is all too easy to play the role of the victimised and collect sympathy, it is in substantiating these voices of concern with real action that the Hill communities are failing. This applies not just to the minority Lepchas and Bhutias but also to the Nepalis, who, in the national context, are speakers of a minority language even if they enjoy recognition under the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution of India. All three are equally at risk of being swamped out of their individuality. This, not because the majority is Evil, but because the minority is not honing its survival skills well enough.

It needs no reiteration that language is the link to identity. It is the language that keeps cultures alive. For example, the differences in the way Nepali is spoken in the Hills here and in Nepal where it was born, nuance the differences in the identity of Indian Nepalis and the Nepalese from Nepal. The inflections of each language highlight the influence of the past which shapes the present of individual communities. Languages are more than just tools for communication and it is not enough to just be able to speak and understand them. To sustain cultures, they need to be written and read. Do we have enough of that happening around us, or is everyone fine with only rhetoric?

WRITE US:

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

Power in numbers: Making visible the violence against racialized women

MIWA A. TAKEUCHI
THECONVERSATION.COM

Violence and pain change the way we experience our surroundings and the way our bodies move: our eyes become wide in search of potential dangers, our bodies become tense.

What is the power — both negative and positive — of understanding such violence and pain with numbers? There are dangers in reducing our pain to numbers, but at the same time, we can use mathematical literacy for social causes by revealing hidden violence, such as the violence against migrant racialized women.

Mathematical literacy doesn’t just mean mastering mathematics defined by school curriculum; it also means gaining a sense of how to apply mathematical concepts to everyday life, for social causes and gaining insight into how numbers and data have inherently political resonances. It can also provide us with the opportunity to listen to historically marginalized voices to analyze interlocking systems of violence and oppression.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The recent mass shooting in Atlanta that violently took the lives of eight people, six of which were Asian American women, sparked demonstrations against anti-Asian racism that have long been silenced through the model minority myth — which minimizes and undermines the experiences of racism among Asians.

The intersection of racism and sexism and other interlocking systems of oppression, like migration, geo-economic politics and the criminalization of sex work are considered to be at play in the violence that happened in Atlanta.

A lens of intersectionality shines light on the violence against Black women, Indigenous women and racialized women at large. And it also reveals the violence against Asian women who have been stereotypically hypersexualized and deemed submissive, disposable and consumable.

THE POWER OF MOBILIZING MATHEMATICAL LITERACY

Understanding intersectional violence through numbers can help make visible the invisible.

In an era of protests, the political neutrality of mathematics is being questioned.

The power of mobilizing mathematical literacy for local policy changes became evident in my work with Virgie Aquino Ishihara, a long-time volunteer and community activist, at the Filipino Migrants Center, in Japan.

The Filipino Migrants Center worked tirelessly with migrant communities to redress violence rooted in human trafficking in the urban entertainment industry. It countered official data on domestic and workplace violence that did not reveal historically marginalized voices and violence against their bodies, through the numeration of hidden violence. Mobilization of mathematical literacy became a powerful tool in the context of social movements to redress human trafficking associated with entertainer visas.

By analyzing the economic impact of remittance from migrants in relation to governmental policies, the Filipino Migrants Centre was able to contextualize what pushed women to migrate as entertainer visa holders. These big-picture understandings led the activists to see historical and macro-economic dilem-

mas around domestic and workplace violence against migrant women — something that has been historically construed as personal problems.

DANGERS IN PUTTING NUMBERS TO OUR PAIN

When violence against racialized women’s bodies is reduced to a number (“one” incident), and discussed simply as one more violent act against an anonymous racialized woman, elements and stories that women embody begin to be erased.

In this light, movements such as #SayHerName are important in centering stories of Black women who have been victimized by racially charged police violence from becoming a number (as seen in the recent killing of Breonna Taylor). Journalist, Shiori Ito, who led Japan’s social movement to fight against sexual violence chose to de-anonymize herself in order to challenge media that reports and speaks for these “numbers” whose stories and bodies end up erased through anonymity.

Such politics of de-anonymization, however, should also respect the choice of silence. To stay silent and to endure the hardships toward dignity — a notion captured by the Japanese term shinbo — was a choice made by some Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans who experienced internment during the Second World War.

Numeration can also risk reducing our intersectional histories and experiences to deterministic categories. Binary and categorical frameworks (e.g. women versus men) inscribed in statistics can perpetuate genderism and queerphobia that privileges those who can conform

to gender norms, cisnormativity and heteronormativity.

The complexities of human stories and the voices that deviate from the norm shouldn’t be lost in the process of numeration and mathematization.

HEALING OUR COLLECTIVE PAIN

In our study, the Filipino Migrants Centre’s efforts to make visible the invisible by exercising mathematical literacy brought consequential changes in the urban entertainment district.

As we walked around the district, we noticed significant changes that took place in the public park — migrant women and allies came together. And as people came together, resident-led safety efforts developed as an alternative to institutional policing and surveillance. Creating a safer outdoor place required changing the actions of bystanders who can intervene in violence.

Mathematical literacy can allow us to listen to historically marginalized voices that are less heard yet powerful and strong to analyze interlocking systems of violence and oppression. However, numeration and mathematization have to be done through a non-hierarchical distribution of power with people who are directly impacted by historical oppression with respect to pain that cannot be reduced to numbers.

Intentional design of spaces toward solidarity, backed up with ethical mobilization of mathematical literacy, could move us toward healing our collective pain of violence.

[the writer is Associate Professor, Learning Sciences, University of Calgary]

Floodplains Aren’t Separate to a River — they’re an extension of it

MELISSA PARSONS & MARTIN THOMS
THECONVERSATION.COM

Dramatic scenes of flood damage to homes, infrastructure and livelihoods have been with us on the nightly news in recent weeks. Many will be feeling the pain for years to come, as they contend with property damage, financial catastrophe and trauma.

But what if, for a moment, we removed the humans and their structures from these tragic images — what would we see?

We would see a natural process of river expansion and contraction, of rivers doing exactly what they’re supposed to do from time to time. We’d see them exceeding what we humans have deemed to be their boundaries and depositing sediment across their floodplains. We’d see reproductive opportunities for fish, frogs, birds and trees. The floods would also enrich the soils. Floods can be catastrophic for humans, but they are a natural part of an ecosystem from which we benefit.

These scenes clearly depict the intersection of humans and nature, and it’s not working out well for either side.

We must envision a new way of interacting with floodplains – these brilliant social-ecological systems that are not separate to rivers but rather part of the riverine landscape.

Humans can live on and with floodplains — but the way we do that has to change.

WHAT IS A FLOODPLAIN?

Floodplains are relatively flat stretches of land located next to rivers. It helps to think of them as an extension of the river; it is natural and normal for a river to flood their adjacent plains.

Floodplains are composed of sediment the river has transported and then deposited, which makes them incredibly fertile. Flow and sediment regimes interacting over decades — or millennia — determine the physical and ecological character of floodplains, and the way they flood.

There are more than 15 generic floodplain types in Australia. Each harbours a unique set of evolutionary properties, physical features and ecosystems.

These influence the way floodwaters traverse floodplains, how long water remains on a floodplain, the velocity, turbulence and depth of floodwaters, and ecosystem responses to flooding. Floodplains are complex and highly variable.

Floodplains are also dynamic and ever-changing — and we should expect them to change even more in the coming years. Australian rivers have experienced regular periods of increased flood activity in the past 100 years.

And climate change is predicted to increase flood activity.

HUMANS BENEFIT FROM FLOODPLAINS



Floodplains are among the most productive ecosystems on the planet – they are biodiversity hotspots.

That’s in large part due to periodic flooding between different parts of a river-floodplain system; flooding is crucial to the function of floodplains. Without floods, these floodplains wouldn’t “work” — they would not be able to deliver the ecosystem services we benefit from. Those benefits include, but are not limited to:

- food grown in these fertile soils
- regulation of a balanced ecosystem
- cultural heritage
- transportation (as floodplains are easy to build roads on)
- the supply of good quality drinking water
- recreation.

The economic value of floodplain ecosystem services exceed US\$25,681 per hectare. Roughly 25% of global terrestrial ecosystem services come from floodplains.

Humans are drawn to live on floodplains because of their productivity. In Australia, the floodplains of the Murray Darling Basin, heavily developed for agriculture, yield more than A\$10 billion annually. These floodplain ecosystems provide an estimated A\$187 billion per annum from their various ecosystem services.

However, the more we interrupt floodplain processes with development, the more we diminish the supply of ecosystem services.

THE PERILS OF LIVING ON FLOODPLAINS

Putting the people back into the news footage reveals a social picture that is costly, traumatic and disruptive. The events of the past weeks have now brought into focus the perils of living on floodplains.

Humans have come up with ways to contend with this peril. Dams and levees. Land use planning. Building codes. Engineered floodscapes. Insurance. Emergency preparation systems and community engagement.

But if floodplains are a social-ecological system, where society gains great benefits but is also periodically placed at risk, which side should get

the greatest policy attention? The humans or the ecosystem?

The answer is: both. But they also need to be better integrated.

BALANCING THE SOCIAL WITH THE ECOLOGICAL

Balancing the social and ecological aspects of floodplains requires a mindset change. We must combine community participation with research, resilience and adaptation to make long-term decisions about the future of these complex social-ecological systems.

If society wants to continue to derive the billions of dollars of benefits from floodplains, we need to ensure that flooding continues to occur on floodplains, and adapt to risk in imaginative and innovative ways that also protect the benefits.

Business as usual is not an option. The limitations of technocratic controls such as dams and levees should now be obvious. Time and time again, these have increased flood risk and failed to flood-proof the floodplain.

Rarely do such linear solutions solve complex problems in social-ecological systems. Linear solutions often exacerbate a problem or simply move it on to other parts of the system, creating social inequality, environmental decline and future risk.

The Australian government’s 2018 National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework sets the challenge to join up the built, social, economic and natural environments to address disaster risk in Australia.

Accepting the challenge requires a broader focus on balancing the social-ecological sides of Australia’s vast floodplains. Complexity, not linear thinking, must be embedded in the way we re-imagine policy about floodplains and floods.

This requires transformative collaborations between government departments, researchers, business, and community stakeholders.

[Melissa Parsons is Senior Lecturer, Geography and Planning, University of New England; Martin Thoms is Professor of Physical Geography, University of New England]

Decomposed carcass of rhino found in Chilapata forest

ALIPURDUAR (WB), APR 5 (PTI): The decomposed carcass of a full-grown rhinoceros was found in the Chilapata forest range in West Bengal's Alipurduar district, officials said on Monday.

The carcass with the horn missing was found on Sunday in the Bania 12 compartment area of the forest, they said.

It is suspected that the rhino was killed for its horn by the poachers, said Rajendra Jakhar, north Bengal's Chief Forest Conservator (Wild-life).

This is the first such incident at the forest since October 2019, triggering tension in the Forest Department.

Since April 2014, 10 rhinos have been killed by poachers in the forest, officials said.

Elected women reps in Nepal's Achham excluded from decision-making Menuka Dhungana

KATHMANDU, 05 APR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Mathura Bhul, a ward member of Jayagadh Rural Municipality-3, is unaware about the local unit's administrative works—be it budget allocation, projects or programmes. Bhul was elected as a ward member under the Dalit quota as provisioned by the law. Her four-year tenure is coming to an end in mid-July without her having shouldered any responsibility as a ward member.

According to the existing legal provisions, the municipal assembly must ensure the representation of three persons from Dalit and minority communities while the village assembly should have the representation of two from these two groups.

The Local Level Election Act 2017 has made it mandatory for local units to have the representation of two women ward members, including a Dalit woman, in each of its ward offices.

There are a total of 364 ward members from 10 different local bodies in Achham district. Most female ward members say the government policies have only served a perfunctory function of fulfilling gender and caste representation at the local level.

"We are elected representatives only on paper and for the sake of filling quotas," said Bhul. "We haven't been given any responsibilities by the ward office. We haven't even had the chance to work for those who voted us in."

A majority of women elected representatives reiterate Bhul's sentiments. Another Dalit representative Bhunti Dholi of Ward No. 2 in Mangalsen Municipality said, "I had reached people's doorsteps asking for votes, promising more Dalit representation and changes at the policy-making level. But that has not happened. My term is about to end and I haven't been able to keep my promises to my voters."

Nepal to administer Chinese Covid vaccines to essential workers

ARJUN POUDEL

KATHMANDU, 05 APR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Amid a sharp rise in new cases of coronavirus infections, the Ministry of Health and Population has decided to administer vaccines gifted by China to essential workers from April 7.

"We have decided to administer the vaccine to people providing essential services from April 7," Dr Jhalak Gautam, chief of the National Immunisation Programme, told the Post. "The vaccine will be administered only from hospitals of Kathmandu Valley for now."

Essential workers include those working in postal and telephone services, public transportation services, water supply and distribution, tourism sector—hotels and restaurants—production, sales and distribution of medicines, electricity supply, storage and transportation of consumer goods as well as health workers who missed out in the first phase of the vaccination drive that began on January 27.

Apart from those working in essential sectors defined by the government, the Chinese vaccine will also be administered to businessmen and truck drivers who have to go to China frequently.

Nepali students pursuing higher degrees in China but stuck in Nepal due to the pandemic will also get the jabs, according to Gautam.

China recently introduced vaccination passports for travellers to prove that they are free from the coronavirus infection. It has been reported that China is resuming visa processing for foreigners if they



have been inoculated against the coronavirus with Chinese vaccines.

China had given 800,000 doses of coronavirus vaccine, the BBIBP-CorV developed by Sinopharm, an affiliate of the state-backed pharmaceutical giant Sinopharm, under grant assistance and they arrived in Kathmandu last Monday.

Gautam said that essential workers between 18 and 59 years can get the vaccine in the drive.

Earlier, the Health Ministry had decided to provide the vaccine to people between 40 and 59 years.

Unlike in the first and second phases of Nepal's immunisation campaign against the coronavirus, the Chinese vaccine will not be administered from the district hospitals and the primary health centres.

Instead, they will be administered at 12 hospitals of the Valley—

nine in Kathmandu, two in Lalitpur and one in Bhaktapur.

In the first phase of the campaign, frontline health workers and others had been given the jabs from district hospitals and in the second phase, during which those above the age of 65 had been given the jabs, the campaign had been expanded to primary health centres.

Doctors, however, say that if the immunisation service is provided from only a few hospitals, coverage of the vaccine will be narrow, as all targeted people may not be able to reach the designated hospitals.

"A lot of people in the targeted group could miss the jabs if we run only a few immunisation centres," Dr Shyam Raj Upreti, coordinator of Covid-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee, told the Post.

But whether they will be expand-

ed to other hospitals outside Kathmandu Valley or not will depend on how many doses remain once the campaign is completed in Kathmandu.

"We will start the campaign from April 7 and continue for several days," Dr Tara Nath Pokhrel, who is also a member of the Covid-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee, told the Post. "We will take another decision on launching the immunisation drive from provincial hospitals on the basis of how many doses of the vaccine remain."

According to a report published in The Lancet, inactivated BBIBP-CorV Covid-19 vaccine is safe and well tolerated.

On December 30 last year, Sinopharm announced the vaccine's efficacy at 79 percent, which was lower than the 86 percent efficacy announced by the United Arab Emirates on December 9.

According to recent reports in The Washington Post, the United Arab Emirates, which was among the first countries to adopt Sinopharm vaccines, BBIBP-CorV is not adequately generating antibody response after two doses.

According to the paper, Walid Zaher, chief researcher for G42 Healthcare, which distributes the Sinopharm vaccine in the United Arab Emirates, told Dubai Eye Radio that a study was underway to give some people their third doses.

G42 Healthcare also coordinated Sinopharm's Phase 3 clinical trials in the UAE and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Nepal has so far been using Covishield, the vaccine developed by University of Oxford and pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India.

After inoculating a little over 1.7 million people in two phases until March 15, Nepal's vaccination drive remains suspended because of lack of supply.

Nepal launched its vaccination drive with the one million doses of Covishield that India had provided under a grant assistance.

Nepal then paid for 2 million doses, but the Serum Institute has supplied only a half of the ordered amount, with no clarity on when the remaining half will arrive. Nepal's plan to buy additional 5 million doses from the Serum Institute is also currently in limbo.

Nepal has also received 348,000 doses of Covishield under the World Health Organisation-backed COVAX programme.

The Health Ministry said that the second dose will be given to those who got the first dose in the first phase of the immunisation campaign, from the 500,000 doses of Covishield vaccines in stock, from April 20 to 24.

Meanwhile, there are fears of a second wave of coronavirus infections in the country as the number of cases has continued to rise in the past few weeks. The Health Ministry said that 176 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours. The number of active cases stands at 1,672.

Nepal has so far reported 277,944 cases of coronavirus infections and a death toll of 3,032.

IIT-G suspends student arrested on charge of molestation

GUWAHATI, APR 5 (PTI): Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati (IIT-G) has suspended the student arrested on the charge of molesting a fellow woman student.

The student has been suspended from April 4 as recommended by the institute's Students Disciplinary Committee after prima facie it has been found that he had committed an act that has been considered a serious criminal offence by the judiciary leading to his arrest on April 3, a statement issued by IIT Guwahati said on Monday.

The four other students being investigated by the police for their alleged involvement in the incident have been isolated from each other on the institute's campus and will be retained there for further police investigations as well as internal investigations, the statement said.

Asserting that "the institute condemns such heinous acts in the strongest possible terms", the statement said that "the institute has been cooperating with the police on the investigation on the sexual assault of the woman student on campus".

"These acts are a serious violation of the



disciplinary rules of the institute, compromising the safety and security of students, hostel boarders and residents of the campus and disruptive to the institute's environment. The institute is also putting in place enhanced safety and security measures to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future", it said.

IIT-G claimed that sections of the media have been "filing unverified" reports about the incident and about the institute discharging the girl student without following doctors advice from the Gauhati Medical College Hospital where she was admitted.

It said "This is a very sensitive issue with implications on the future well-being of the girl student.

Media is requested to

report responsibly only verified news and is also requested not to sensationalise the issue".

The institute said that "all due procedures were followed as per hospital guidance for discharge of the girl student. The medical report is awaited and only after this the nature of assault can be confirmed".

A student of IIT-G was arrested on Saturday on the charge of molesting his college mate on March 29.

According to a police officer, the complainant, a resident of Gujarat, has claimed in her statement that the accused, a fellow student in the mechanical engineering department, molested her after spiking her drink at IIT-G hostel during Holi celebrations on March 29.

The woman said she fell unconscious after consuming the drink.

Authorities at the institute, after finding out about the incident, had taken her to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, and the police were subsequently contacted, the officer said.

Based on the statement given by the woman, the accused was arrested on Saturday and produced before the court of the CJM, Amingaon, which forwarded him to jail custody.

A fact-finding committee, constituted by IIT-G to probe the matter, has also submitted its report, following which the premier institute, on its part, filed a police complaint, sources said.

The woman is out of danger and recovering speedily, they added.

Jaya Bachchan to campaign for Trinamool Babul Supriyo

KOLKATA, 05 APR [NDTV]: Mamata Banerjee's Bengal re-election bid will receive a high-profile shot in the arm on Monday, when veteran actor and Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan campaigns for the Chief Minister's Trinamool Congress during the ongoing Assembly election.

Listed as a 'star campaigner', Ms Bachchan's presence reinforces the Trinamool's popular slogan "Bangla nijer mayekay chaye", or "Bengal wants only its own daughter". And she is that - a Bengali from Jalpur married to superstar Amitabh Bachchan; who is often referred to as 'Banglar jamai', or the son-in-law of Bengal.

Ms Bachchan - who arrived in Kolkata late Sunday evening - will begin with a campaign for three-time Tollygunge

MLA Aroop Biswas, who faces Union Minister Babul Supriyo in defence of his seat.

The rival contestant and the seat are both significant - Mr Supriyo is a popular singer and Tollygunge is Kolkata's 'cinema district' - better known as Tollywood - that houses studios where films are shot.

Jaya Bachchan's presence also underlines Ms Banerjee's plan to take on a ruthless BJP poll machine - to stitch together a pan-India working alliance of non-BJP parties, for this and other elections.

An idea also floated - unsuccessfully, because the parties were unable to resolve differences - by Ms Banerjee in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, this time, it seems different.

Ms Bachchan is in Kolkata because last month Samajwadi Party

chief Akhilesh Yadav said his party would campaign for the Trinamool. This was after he said the BJP is spreading "politics of hate (and) confusion and propaganda" in Bengal, and said his party "will not allow this conspiracy".

The day before Akhilesh Yadav's comment, RJD chief Tejashwi Yadav - who came agonisingly close to beating the BJP in Bihar - said: "It is our duty to strengthen Mamata didi's hands and fight the BJP."

The Shiv Sena, a longtime ally of the BJP that split over government formation in Maharashtra, has also backed Ms Banerjee; senior leader Sanjay Raut described her as "the real Bengal tigress".

Sharad Pawar's NCP, a member of the ruling alliance in Maharashtra, has also expressed support.

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Valencia walks off field in racism protest; Atletico loses



MADRID, APR 5 (AP): On a day dominated by Valencia saying it felt threatened into resuming its interrupted game after an alleged racial insult, Atletico Madrid risked seeing its once-comfortable Spanish league lead cut to a point after losing to Sevilla.

Valencia stopped playing at C diz on Sunday and walked off the field before halftime after defender Mouctar Diakhaby said he was insulted by C diz defender Juan Cala.

Fourth-place Sevilla beat Atletico 1-0, opening the door for Barcelona to inch closer to the top with a win at home against relegation-threatened Valladolid on Monday.

The loss left Diego Simeone's team only three points ahead of second-place Real Madrid, which on Saturday beat Eibar 2-0 to tighten the race for the title entering the final stretch.

Barcelona now depends on its own results to lift the trophy, as it will host Atletico in May.

RACISM ACCUSATION

At C diz, Cala denied any wrongdoing and was defended by teammates and coach Ivaro Cervera.

The team resumed the game after more than 20 minutes. Valencia said its players felt threatened after the referee told them about the potential consequences of not returning to the field which would be the likely loss of points.

"The players were forced to play after the threat of punishment," the club said in a statement.

It had earlier said the decision to return was made after a request to do so by Diakhaby, who is Black.

C diz scored late to win the match 2-1.

"Today is a sad day for our sport," Valencia said.

"We didn't lose only a match, we lost the respect and the spirit of soccer and of sport."

OTHER RESULTS

Celta Vigo won 3-1 at last-place Alavés with Nolito, Iago Aspas and Santi Mina all scoring. Celta played with 10 men from the 54th after defender Jeison Murillo was sent off with a second yellow card.

Relegation-threatened Elche drew 1-1 with fifth-place Real Betis.

Augusta National now a 10-day celebration at home of Masters

AUGUSTA (US), APR 5 (AP): A stream of people young and older walked on a path along the driving range at Augusta National, most of them carrying bags from the golf shop, some of them taking home a prized trophy.

To their right was Bryson DeChambeau and Phil Mickelson, smashing drivers into the horizon, one fuelled by protein shakes and the other by his own brand of coffee.

More surprising was a Brooks Koepka sighting, considering he had surgery less than three weeks ago.

More than the first major of the year, Augusta has become a 10-day celebration at the home of the Masters.

It started with 82 of the best women amateurs from around the world, practicing on Friday and then competing on Saturday in the Augusta National Women's Amateur.

On Sunday, the practice area and 18th green was buzzing with 80 kids from 30 states, Canada and France, ages 7 to 17 in the Drive, Chip and Putt national finals. Sam Udovich of Minnesota won the his age division (Boys 12-13), which he thought was pretty cool. Sweeter yet was Justin Thomas coming over to give him props.

"He just came over



and said, Hey, great job, congratulations.' He was going to tee off in like two minutes, so it was great for him to say congratulations," Udovich said.

Next to the first tee, one man had one hand on a merchandise bag and the other on his son's shoulder as they watched Brendon Todd and Brian Harman rip tee shots.

"Save that bounce for the tournament," Todd said to his fellow Georgia Bulldog.

By late afternoon, the focus shifted to the 88 players in the Masters and their pursuit of a green jacket.

Thomas, the No. 2 player in the world who captured The Players Championship three weeks ago, is among the favorites. So is Jon Rahm,

now with nothing but winning on his mind after his wife gave birth to their first child on Friday.

Dustin Johnson is the defending champion of a Masters that either feels like a long time ago or like yesterday. By the calendar, he won 140 days ago on Nov. 15, the first autumn Masters because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the colours of azaleas that were popping with colours, it can feel like November never happened.

"Now this looks like Augusta," Match Play winner Billy Horschel said when he teed off.

Rory McIlroy, in pursuit of an elusive green jacket he needs to com-

plete the career Grand Slam, was on the putting green. Mickelson played alone.

Also arriving in Augusta on Sunday was Koepka, the four-time major champion who plans to play this week. Koepka is not even three weeks removed from having surgery on his right knee from a dislocated knee cap and some ligament damage from a fall he took.

He missed the Honda Classic, The Players Championship and the Dell Match Play during some serious rehabilitation in California. Even without playing a tournament since a runner-up finish in the World Golf Championship in Florida, it wasn't a dull March.

He got engaged to Jenna Sims.

DeChambeau, meanwhile, had to do some math on the first tee, which is not unusual, except for these circumstances. He was playing with two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson against a pair of Augusta National members, which included former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

DeChambeau wanted to know how many strokes they would be giving.

"Condi negotiated it," Watson replied.

It's not unusual for members to play the course alongside the players. On Monday, the stage belongs to the best in the world. It's all about the Masters.

Man United fights back for 2-1 win over Brighton in EPL

MANCHESTER, APR 5 (AP): Mason Greenwood completed a strong comeback by Manchester United in a 2-1 win over Brighton that strengthened the team's grip on second place in the Premier League.

While Manchester City is all but certain to capture the league title, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side is looking to underline its progress by finishing as runner-up and going all the way in the Europa League.

Brighton made life difficult and United academy graduate Danny Welbeck put the visitors on course on Sunday for their first-ever league victory at Old



Trafford, only for Marcus Rashford and Greenwood to reply in the second half.

This match was far less dramatic than United's 3-2 win in September's reverse fixture

when Bruno Fernandes converted a penalty after the final whistle but Brighton made the hosts work hard for its victory.

United consolidated second place and is four

points ahead of third-place Leicester and 11 ahead of Tottenham in fifth.

Dean Henderson was chosen ahead of David De Gea in goal for United and did well to repel a

point-blank header from Welbeck, only for the striker to direct home the rebound in the 13th minute.

Rashford provided a smart, angled finish from Fernandes' pass to make it 1-1 in the 62nd.

Brighton's penalty appeals fell on deaf ears after Harry Maguire appeared to pull back Welbeck close to the goal, before Greenwood's diving header from Paul Pogba's mis-hit shot completed the recovery in the 83rd.

Solskjaer revealed in his pre-match interviews that United could be without Anthony Martial for the rest of the season due to a knee injury.

Marseille beats Dijon to stay on track for Europa League

PARIS, APR 5 (AP): Marseille laboured to a 2-0 home win against last-place Dijon but strengthened its bid for a Europa League place after its rivals dropped points over the weekend.

The scrappy victory moved sixth-place Marseille one point behind Lens in fifth place and a Europa League spot next season. Rennes and Montpellier dropped three points behind Marseille by drawing their matches on Sunday, the day after Lens was held by Lyon.

It was a third win in four games for Marseille's new coach, Jorge Sampaoli, but he was clearly frustrated at times.

Dijon has not won



this year, losing 11 straight league games and drawing the other three. Despite facing poor opposition, Marseille struggled to create anything in a drab first half.

Seconds before the break, Argentina center back Leonardo Baler-

di, who is on loan from Borussia Dortmund, headed in Dimitri Payet's corner at the near post on Sunday.

Payet set up the second goal for another central defender as Alvaro Gonzalez nodded home from his free kick in the 78th.

Montpellier was held 1-1 at Angers while Rennes needed a late equalizer from striker Serhou Guirassy to draw 2-2 with Reims.

English striker Steph Mavididi's header just after halftime earned him a ninth goal of the season for Mont-

pellier, but Stephane Bahoken equalized for Angers in the 71st.

In other matches Sunday, it was: Lorient 1, Brest 0; Bordeaux 2, Strasbourg 3; Nantes 1, Nice 2; and Nimes 0, Saint-Etienne 2.

Denmark striker Kasper Dolberg netted twice for Nice.

Twenty years after winning its eighth league title, former league standout Nantes is 19th and deep in relegation trouble with just seven games remaining.

A hectic Saturday saw defending champion Paris Saint-Germain lose at home to Lille, which is three points clear at the top.

PSG star Neymar was sent off for the second time this season.

Many in Pakistan blame de Kock for Fakhar Zaman's run-out



KARACHI, APR 5 (PTI): A debate broke out in Pakistan cricket circles with many blaming South African wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock for "deliberately distracting" Fakhar Zaman and leading to his controversial run-out in the second ODI at Johannesburg.

In a stiff chase of 342, Zaman's smashed a spectacular 193 but his effort was not enough for Pakistan, as the hosts levelled the series 1-1 with a 22-run win at the Wanderers.

Zaman was run out in the 50th over and replays showed that de Kock tricked Zaman into believing that the throw was going to the non-striker's end.

The South Africa wicketkeeper pointed his finger towards Lungi Ngidi but the ball was, in fact, thrown by Aiden Markram towards the keeper's end and it was a direct hit. Zaman had slowed down his pace at the end of his second run and could not make it back into his crease.

This did not go down well with many in Pakistan cricket.

Cricket fans, critics and some former players have pointed out that de Kock "deliberately misled" Zaman into believing the ball was at

the non-strikers end and then ran him out.

ICC Law 41.5 says: Deliberate distraction, deception or obstruction of batsman. 41.5.1 in addition to 41.4 states it is unfair for any fielder willfully to attempt, by word or action, to distract, deceive or obstruct either batsman after the striker has received the ball."

However, the Pakistani opener, who achieved the highest score by a batsman in a ODI chase, refused to blame de Kock.

"The fault was mine as I was too busy looking up for Haris Rauf at the other end as I felt he'd started off a little late from his crease, so I thought he was in trouble. The rest is up to the match referee, but I don't think it's Quinton's fault."

"I played a very good innings but it would have been better if we had won the match," Fakhar said after the game.

The three-match series is now tied at one all with the third game to be played on Wednesday.

The hosts will be without five of their top performers in de Kock, David Miller, Kagiso Rabada, Ngidi and Nortje, who will be leaving for the IPL.

Delhi to set up micro-containment zones amid Covid surge

NEW DELHI, 05 APR [PTI]: Delhi is witnessing a fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic and to tackle it testing capacity has been ramped up while micro-containment zones were being created where two or more cases are being reported, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Monday.

The national capital recorded 4,033 coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the tally to over 6.76 lakh, while the death count mounted to 11,081 with 21 new fatalities being reported, according to the bulletin issued by the health department.

Mr Jain on Monday said Delhi is witnessing a fourth wave of the pandemic and the government is taking all relevant measures to contain its spread.

"The case positivity rate was 4.64 per cent. Random tests are being done at a fast pace and capacity is being ramped up. More than 80,000 tests are being conducted a day which is five times more than the national average," he told reporters.

The Arvind Kejriwal government is taking a number of other decisions to contain the contagion, the minister said, adding micro-containment zones are being created wherever two to three COVID-19 cases are

getting detected.

Mr Jain, a COVID survivor, appealed to the people who have recuperated from the disease to donate plasma.

"I appeal to all citizens of Delhi to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour and not show any negligence. I believe that taking necessary precautions is of utmost importance to stop the spread of the infection," he said.

Asked about the surge in the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, Mr Jain said, "The severity of the cases (this time) is comparatively lower vis-a-vis the previous waves."

"The Delhi government is taking appropriate measures, the most significant one being boosting daily testing capacity. Around 80,000 tests are being done each day. Moreover, asymptomatic and mildly symptomatic patients are being kept in home isolation, while and moderate to severe cases are being treated in the hospitals," he said.

"Genome tracing is also being carried out... Additionally, micro-containment zones are being created to prevent the spread of the virus."

About the coronavirus variants, he said let scientists look into the variants.

Minorities in Myanmar borderlands face fresh fear since coup

JAKARTA, INDONESIA (AP): Before each rainy season Lu Lu Aung and other farmers living in a camp for internally displaced people in Myanmar’s far northern Kachin state would return to the village they fled and plant crops that would help keep them fed for the coming year.

But this year in the wake of February’s military coup, with the rains not far off, the farmers rarely step out of their makeshift homes and don’t dare leave their camp. They say it is simply too dangerous to risk running into soldiers from Myanmar’s army or their aligned militias.

“We can’t go anywhere and can’t do anything since the coup,” Lu Lu Aung said. “Every night, we hear the sounds of jet fighters flying so close above our camp.”

The military’s lethal crackdown on protesters in large central cities such as Yangon and Mandalay has received much of the attention since the coup that toppled Aung San Suu Kyi’s elected government. But far away in Myanmar’s borderlands, Lu Lu Aung and millions of others who hail from Myanmar’s minority ethnic groups are facing increasing uncertainty and waning security as longstanding conflicts between the military and minority guerrilla armies flare anew.

It’s a situation that was thrust to the forefront over the past week as the military launched deadly airstrikes against ethnic Karen guerrillas in their homeland on the eastern border, displacing thousands and sending civilians fleeing into neighboring Thailand.

Several of the rebel armies have threatened to join forces if the killing of civilians doesn’t stop, while a group made up of members of the deposed government has floated the idea of creating a new army that includes rebel groups. The U.N. special envoy for Myanmar, meanwhile, has



warned the country faces the possibility of civil war.

Ethnic minorities make up about 40% of Myanmar’s 52 million people, but the central government and the military leadership have long been dominated by the country’s Burman ethnic majority. Since independence from Britain in 1948, more than a dozen ethnic groups have been seeking greater autonomy, with some maintaining their own independent armies.

That has put them at odds with Myanmar’s ultranationalist generals, who have long seen any ceding of territory — especially those in border areas that are often rich in natural resources — as tantamount to treason and have ruthlessly fought against the rebel armies with only occasional periods of ceasefire.

The violence has led to accusations of abuses against all sides, such as arbitrary taxes on civilians and forced recruitment,

and according to the United Nations has displaced some 239,000 people since 2011 alone. That doesn’t include the more than 800,000 minority Rohingya who fled to Bangladesh to escape a military campaign the U.N. has called ethnic cleansing.

Since February anti-coup protests have taken place in every border state, and security forces have responded much as they have elsewhere with tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition. But residents and observers say the post-coup situation in geographically isolated borderlands has been made worse by increased skirmishes between the military and armed ethnic organizations jockeying for power and territory.

Lu Lu Aung, who hails from the Kachin ethnic group, said she participated in protests, but stopped as it was now too dangerous. She said Myanmar security forces and aligned militias recently occupied their old village where they planted crops

and no one left the camp because they feared they would be forced into work for the army.

“Our students can no longer continue the schooling and for the adults it’s so much difficult to find a job and make money,” she said.

Humanitarian aid for civilians in the borderlands — already strained by the pandemic as well as the inherent difficulty outside groups face operating in many areas — has been hard it since the coup as well.

Communications have been crippled, banks have closed and security has become increasingly uncertain, said the director of a Myanmar-based organization supporting displaced persons who spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

“There is no more humanitarian help and support,” she said.

In eastern Karen State, where the airstrikes have displaced thousands, there are concerns that the arrival of rainy season could exacerbate a humanitarian situation already made difficult by reports that Thailand has sent back many of the civilians who fled. Thailand has said those who went back to Myanmar did so voluntarily.

Yet there are parts of the country’s borderlands that have hardly been impacted by the coup.

In Wa State, a region bordering China and Thailand that has its own government, army and ceasefire agreements with the Myanmar military, videos being shared online show life going on as usual, including the rollout of a coronavirus vaccination campaign.

Near Bangladesh in coastal Rakhine State, where the Rohingya were driven from and where violent clashes with the

Arakan Army group have been ongoing for years, the junta last month removed the group from its list of terrorist groups, raising hopes a lowering of hostilities. The Arakan Army, unlike a number of other armed groups, had not criticized the coup.

The group, however, since released a statement that declared its right to defend its territory and civilians against military attacks, leading some to fear a fresh escalation in fighting.

Other armed groups have issued similar statements. Some such as the Karen National Union have provided protection for civilians marching in anti-coup protests.

Such actions have contributed to the calls for a “federal army” bringing together armed ethnic groups from across the country. But analysts says such a vision would be hard to achieve due to logistical challenges and political disagreements among the groups.

“These groups are not in a position where they can provide the support against the Myanmar military needed in urban centers with large populations, or really too far outside their own regions,” said Ronan Lee, a visiting scholar at Queen Mary University of London’s International State Crime Initiative.

Despite the uncertainty of what’s to come, some minority activists say they have been heartened since the coup by the increased focus on the role ethnic groups can take in Myanmar’s future. They also say there appears to be greater understanding — at least among anti-coup protesters — of the struggle minorities have faced for so long.

“If there’s any silver lining in all of this, that’s it,” said one activist, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of fears for their safety.

Nepal to administer Chinese vaccines to citizens from April 7

KATHMANDU, APR 5 (PTI): Nepal will start its second phase of the COVID-19 inoculation drive from April 7 using a China-donated vaccine to fight against the deadly infection, according to the health ministry.

The first phase of the vaccination drive began in January with the one million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine provided by India under grant assistance in sync with its ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy.

The second phase will begin from Wednesday, April 7. The 800,000 doses of the China-manufactured vaccine - Vero Cell-against COVID-19 infection will be administered to the frontline workers as well as those involved in trans-Himalayan trade



activities in the mountainous region, Dr Jageshwor Gautam, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Health and Population, said.

Nepali students studying in China under scholarship schemes and those preparing

to visit China for further studies will also receive the Chinese vaccine, Gautam said.

As many as 500,000 of the total 900,000 people targeted for vaccination have already received COVID-19 vaccines.

These 800,000 doses of China-donated vaccines will be administered to the remaining 400,000 people of the targeted group, he added.

Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Hou Yanqi, had handed over COVID-19 vaccines to the Minister for Health and Population Hridayesh Tripathi amidst a special function organised in Kathmandu on March 29.

Nepal had granted a conditional emergency approval for use of Vero Cell, the coronavirus vaccine manufactured by China’s Beijing Institute of Biological Products earlier on February 18.

Nepal, home to 28 million people, has recorded 277,944 coronavirus infections and 3032 deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Philippines extends lockdown as infections spike

MANILA, APR 5 (AP): The Philippine government extended a lockdown by another week Monday after an alarming spike in coronavirus infections continued to surge and started to overwhelm many hospitals in the capital and outlying regions.

President Rodrigo Duterte placed Metropolitan Manila and four outlying provinces, a region of more than 25 million people, under lockdown last week as daily infections breached 10,000. Roman Catholic leaders shifted Holy Week and Easter events online after all public gatherings, including in places of worship, were temporarily banned.

The government-run Lung Centre of the Philippines became the latest hospital in the capital region to announce over the weekend that it can no longer accept walk-in patients after its COVID-19 ward reached full capacity and its emergency room was handling twice its capacity.

We are not just full. We are very full. In fact, the hospital has been full for the past two weeks, Lung Centre spokesman Dr Norberto Francisco said.

Other hospitals said they could expand bed capacity but lacked enough medical workers partly because many



had been infected.

Duterte’s administration has increasingly faced criticisms of mishandling the pandemic, but presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the spread of more infectious coronavirus variants came as a surprise.

No one could have probably foreseen how infectious these new variants are and as a result of which we have these ballooning numbers, Roque told ABS CBN News, adding officials would inaugurate a 110-bed intensive-care unit in a hospital in the capital region Monday and were planning to launch mobile COVID-19 intensive-care centres.

The Philippines has reported more than 795,000 COVID-19 cases with 13,425 deaths, the highest totals in Southeast Asia after Indonesia.

Polish hospitals struggle with surge of virus patients

BOCHNIA, POLAND (AP): Polish hospitals struggled over the Easter weekend with a massive number of people infected with COVID-19 following a huge surge in infections across Central and Eastern Europe in recent weeks.

Tougher new pandemic restrictions were ordered in Poland for a two-week period surrounding Easter in order to slow down the infection rate. The country hit new records of over 35,000 daily infections on two recent days, and deaths have been in the hundreds each day.

The aim of the new restrictions was to prevent large gatherings over the long weekend culminating with Easter Monday. Meanwhile, the government is also trying to speed up the country’s vaccine rollout, but the pressure on the country’s hospitals is still relentless.

On Easter Sunday, coronavirus patients



filled almost all of the 120 beds at the County Hospital of Bochnia, 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of the southern city of Krakow.

“It is a difficult situation, because there are a lot of patients,” said Bozena Gicala, a nurse treating COVID-19 patients who spoke to Associated Press reporters visiting the hospital.

She said the support of her colleagues was critical in managing the unprecedented situation.

Another nurse, Ewa Ptak, said she had COVID-19 herself and is on a mission to help those who are suffering more than she did.

“Thank God I went without a hospital and I was fine. But I know what it is and I just want to help people,” Ptak said.

One patient, 82-year-old Edward Szumanski, voiced concerns about how some people still refuse to see the virus that has killed over 2.8 million people

worldwide as a threat. Poland has seen about 55,000 of those deaths.

“The disease is certainly there and it is very serious. Those who have not been through it, those who do not have it in their family, may be deluding themselves, but the reality is different,” he said.

Szumanski said he is also worried that ICU spaces in hospitals could soon run out and that more people will die. There have been warnings and reports

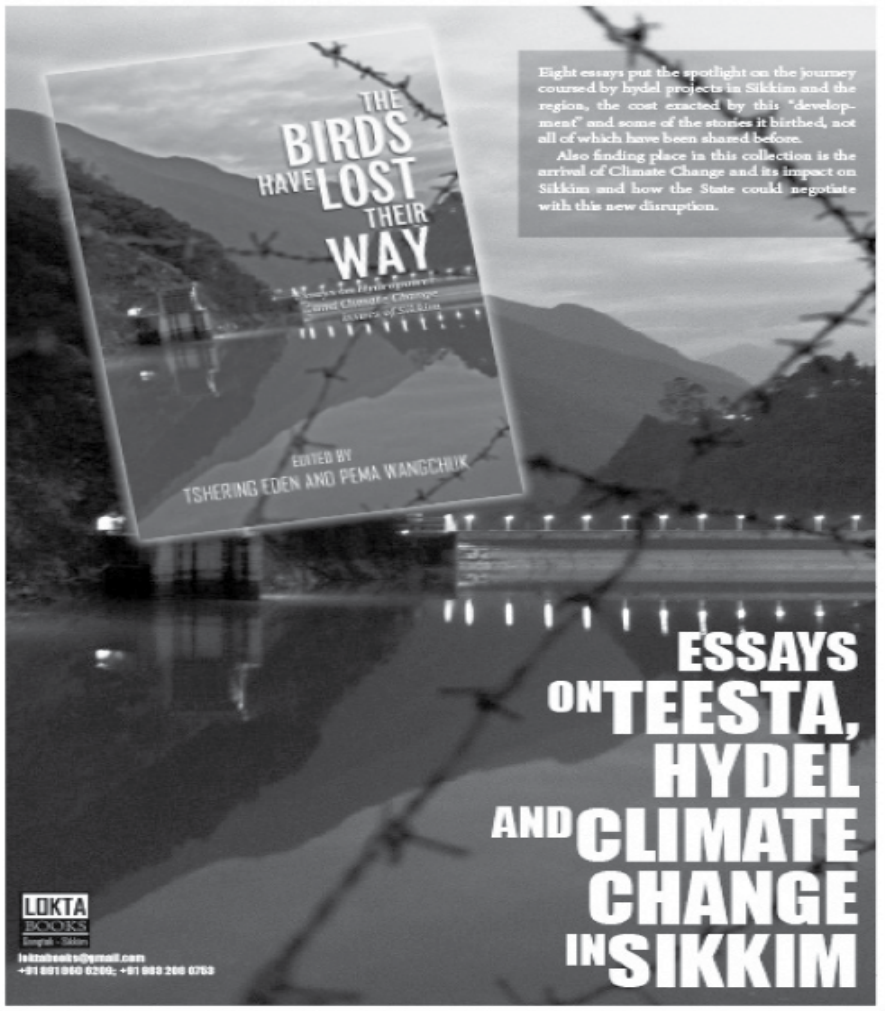
in Polish media about how the nation’s health care system is reaching a breaking point.

The hospital’s medical director, Jaroslaw Gucwa, said the pandemic has been made worse by those who believe it is all a hoax and have shunned masks or ignored restrictions.

The hospital is so stressed that it is discharging patients who still need more treatment “in order to make room for the next ones in a serious condition. This is not a normal situation,” he added.

Poland registered 204 new COVID-19 deaths on Easter Sunday, but the numbers in recent days have been much higher, mostly around 500 per day. On Wednesday, they hit a high for this year of 653.

“The hardest part is when you intubate your friends and leave them in intensive care,” Gucwa said.





STYLISH KAIA! Model Kaia Gerber left a workout class in West Hollywood.

Govinda tests positive for COVID-19

MUMBAI, APR 5 (PTI): Actor Govinda has tested positive for the novel coronavirus and is under home quarantine, his wife Sunita Ahuja said on Sunday.

The 57-year-old actor has "mild symptoms" and is following necessary protocol.

"He (Govinda) tested positive today morning. His symptoms are absolutely mild. There's nothing to worry about. He is quarantining at

home and taking precautions," Sunita told PTI.

Govinda was last seen on the big screen in the 2019 comedy "Rangeela Raja".

Earlier in the day, superstar Akshay Kumar and "Bandish Bandits" actor Ritwik Bhowmik also tested positive for COVID-19.

On Saturday, Mumbai reported 9,108 new cases of coronavirus, the highest spike in a single day.

Prayer vigil planned for stricken rapper DMX

WHITE PLAINS (US), APR 5 (AP): A prayer vigil was planned for Monday outside the suburban New York hospital where rapper DMX remained on life support Sunday following a heart attack.

The family of the rapper said in an email Sunday that the vigil will be held outside White Plains Hospital at 5 p.m.

On Friday night, April 2nd, 2021, our brother, son, father, and colleague DMX, birth name of Earl Simmons, was admitted to White Plains (NY) Hospital, facing serious health issues, the family said through a publicist. We ask that you please keep Earl/DMX and us in your thoughts, wishes, and prayers as well as respect our privacy as we face these challenges.

Another statement released Sunday afternoon said the rapper remained in a coma and was on a ventilator.

Simmons' longtime lawyer, Murray Richman, said the rapper was admitted to the intensive care unit at White Plains Hospital after going into cardiac arrest. Richman said he could not confirm reports that DMX, 50, overdosed on drugs and was not sure what caused the heart attack.

DMX made a splash in rap music in 1998 with his first studio album It's Dark and Hell is Hot, which debuted No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart. The multiplatinum selling album was anchored by several hits including Ruff Ryders' Anthem, Get At Me Dog and Stop Being Greedy.

The rapper had four other chart-topping albums including ...And Then There Was X, Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood, The Great Depression and Grand Champ. He has released seven albums and earned three Grammy nomi-

nations.

Along with his music career, DMX paved his way as an actor. He starred in the 1998 film Belly and appeared in Romeo Must Die a couple years later with Jet Li and the late singer Aaliyah. DMX and Aaliyah teamed up for the film's soundtrack song Come Back in One Piece.

The rapper also starred in Exit Wounds with Steven Seagal and Cradle 2 the Grave with Li.

Over the years, DMX has battled with substance abuse. The rapper canceled a series of shows to check himself into a rehabilitation facility in 2019. In an Instagram post, his team said he apologised for the cancelled shows and thanked his fans for the continued support.

Last year, DMX faced off against Snoop Dogg in a Verzuz battle, which drew more than 500,000 viewers.

Iran spy TV show ignites controversy for 2nd season

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): A controversial Iranian TV spy thriller is once again generating buzz in the Islamic Republic, drawing the ire of government officials and complaints from viewers Sunday over alleged censorship in the second season finale.

The fictional series, titled "Gando," chronicles the exploits of Iran's Revolutionary Guard agents — in the style of James Bond or Jason Bourne.

Hard-liners and other fans of the show are blaming the government for pulling the second season off the air prematurely, the semiofficial ISNA news agency reported. When uncut scenes surfaced Sunday on Aparat.com, an Iranian version of YouTube, speculation swirled on social media about possible government censorship. The clips showed that episodes aired last week had altered dialogue to replace mentions of "the president" with "an official."

The first season grabbed headlines for depicting Iranian intelligence operatives combating an American super spy who bears a striking resemblance to Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian. Before being freed in a prisoner swap in 2016, Rezaian spent 18 months in an Iranian prison on charges of espionage that he and American officials denied.

The show, which valorizes Iran's hard-liners and portrays Iran's Foreign Ministry as inept, long has caused consternation among relative moderates in the government. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif railed against the

second season on the the popular audio chat app Clubhouse last week, calling it a "lie from beginning to

two of Zarif's deputies in talks with the U.S. over Iran's nuclear program.

Over its two seasons, Gando "reversed realities ... and exposed a rift in the establishment while adding differences in the ruling system," said Tehran-based political analyst Majid Younesian.

Certain scenes in the last two episodes appeared to be crudely edited and the finale came to a strangely abrupt end, fueling criticism over possible government interference in the series.

An adviser to President Hassan Rouhani, Hesameddin Ashena, promised that the government had not disrupted the show or pressed for its cancellation.

The allegations came as Iran and U.S. President Biden's administration announced that the countries would start indirect negotiations this week in Vienna about how to restore Iran's tattered 2015 nuclear program with world powers. Former President Donald Trump withdrew from the accord nearly three years ago and imposed unprecedented sanctions on Iran.

Iranian hard-line newspaper Vatan-e Emrooz ran a front-page story Sunday criticizing Iranian diplomats for agreeing to negotiate with the U.S. over the country's nuclear program.

Banned in big, bold letters was the headline: "Will Gando Season 3 be in Vienna?"



end."

When the first season aired in the summer of 2019, Zarif sent a formal letter of protest to the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The 13-episode second season, aired during Iran's 13-day Nowruz, or New Year, holiday, pits Iranian intelligence agents against Western spies trying to infiltrate Iran's government and gather confidential information about nuclear negotiations amid a crippling U.S. economic pressure campaign.

In keeping with the show's spirit of heroic video game fantasy inspired by real events, a character resembling prominent exiled journalist Ruhollah Zam, who was abducted in Iraq and executed in Iran last December, makes a cameo in the second season. One of the treacherous diplomats in the show is thought to be modeled on

'The Walking Dead' final season to premiere in August



LOS ANGELES, APR 5 (PTI): The eleventh and final season of popular zombie drama "The Walking Dead" will premiere on AMC network on August 22.

The makers of the show, which concluded its season 10 on Sunday, shared the premiere date of the upcoming season in a teaser released on AMC.

Coming off of the six additional episodes for Season 10, which focused on smaller, character-driven stories, we're excited to kick off Season 11 bigger than ever," showrunner Angela Kang said in a statement to Variety.

"The stakes will be high: we'll see more zombies; tons of action; intriguing new stories; never-before-seen locations and our groups together in one community for the first time, trying to rebuild what the Whisperers took from them," she added.

The season 11 will launch

with eight episodes and will feature total 24 episodes.

Based on the Image Comics series by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard, "The Walking Dead" debuted on AMC in 2010.

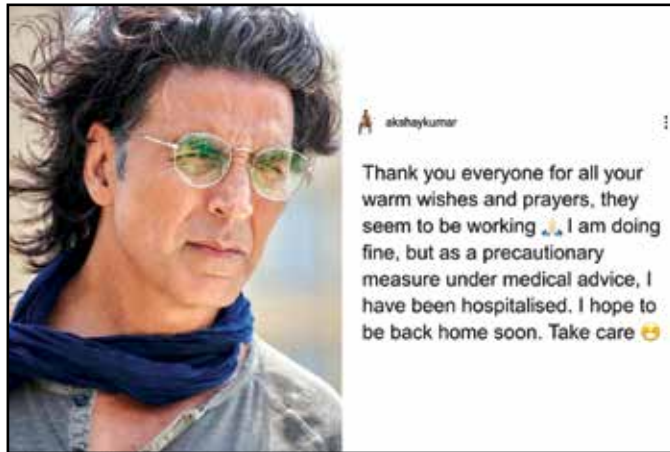
The show centres on the survivors of a zombie apocalypse and the communities they form, as well as the shifting alliances those tribes reach with each other.

It stars actors Norman Reedus, Melissa McBride, Lauren Cohan, Josh McDermitt, Christian Serratos, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Seth Gilliam, Ross Marquand, Khary Payton and Cooper Andrews

The series spawned TV spin-offs "Fear the Walking Dead", which was renewed for a Season 7, and the two-season limited series "The Walking Dead: World Beyond".

Other spin-offs and tie-in films are also in the works.

Akshay Kumar hospitalised day after testing COVID-19 positive



MUMBAI, APR 5 (PTI): Superstar Akshay Kumar on Monday said he has been admitted to a city hospital as a precautionary measure a day after testing positive for the novel coronavirus.

In a statement posted on his official Twitter page, the 53-year-old actor said he is "doing fine" and hopes to be back home soon.

"Thank you everyone for all your warm wishes and prayers, they seem to be working. I am doing fine, but as a precautionary measure under medical advice, I have been hospitalised. I hope to be back home soon. Take care," Kumar said.

The actor tested positive for the virus five days after starting the shoot of his action adventure drama "Ram Setu".

Apart from Kumar, as many 45 crew members working on the film have tested positive for COVID-19.

BN Tiwari, President, Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE), said a crew of nearly 100 was set to begin filming in Madh Island from April 5 but when the mandatory COVID-19 tests were done, 40 junior artistes tested positive.

"They all have been quarantined after testing positive. Out of those, 40 were junior artistes while the rest were Akshay's make up team, their assistants. Now the shooting has been halted indefinitely," Tiwari told PTI.

After his diagnosis, Kumar had urged all those who came in contact with him to also get themselves tested.

ARIES:

This is a wonderful time for rams who are working in the field of publishing. You are experiencing a surge of new ideas—ideas that promise to change the course of your work for the better. So, create a distraction-free environment that supports your creative process so you can remain in that state of flow. While you're at it, add the word 'focus' and 'discipline' to your repertoire, and know that in the end it's all going to be worth it.

Tip: Your story deserves to be told.

TAURUS:

Now is a great time for Taureans who have a business of their own. Your profits are likely to surge unexpectedly over the next few weeks. So continue to put in the work you have been, knowing that sweet, sweet rewards are on their way to you. There's good news for Venusians who have been planning a family too, by which we mean you are likely to add a new member to your tribe soon!

Tip: All's well that ends well!

GEMINI:

In an attempt to raise the bar, we often set unrealistic expectations for ourselves. Expectations that we may or may not be capable of meeting. How and where are you being unrealistic with yourself, Gemini? How and where do you need a helping hand? The Universe is offering you a leg up, which could come your way in the most unexpected manner.

Word for the wise: say yes!

Tip: It's time to get real about what you can and cannot do.

CANCER:

Today, you're being asked to put that to-do list aside and turn your gaze inwards. To connect with that space of stillness within you. To find what the Buddhist monks refer to as your 'centre'. What the cards want you to remember is that you are a part of the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Consciousness is one with you. There are no fancy tools, props or mantras required.

LEO:

You've been obsessing over what is gone and what is yet to come, and no, it isn't helping your cause one bit, Leo. What the cards want you to remember is that both the past and the future are an illusion. The only thing we truly have dominion over is this moment. So, break up with your inner control freak and embrace what the present is offering you. In doing so, you will realise that the potential to change the story is within you.

Tip: Be in the present. That's all!

VIRGO:

What are you giving your attention to, Virgo? We repeat: what are you giving your attention to? What the cards want you to remember today is

that heaven and hell are not faraway concepts. They exist right here, right now, in this time and space dimension. It all comes down to the choices we make. So, instead of obsessing over what went wrong and how you could have fixed it, visualise a clean slate. Paint it with the colours and symbols that awaken a sense of joy within, and trust the Universe to transform your thoughts to things.

Tip: Visualise a clean slate.

LIBRA:

There's no such thing as a coincidence. Every experience we attract is a result of our own choices—choices we made prior to boarding the spaceship to the earthly realm. Given that the challenges are chosen by the higher self, wouldn't the solutions to these challenges be within us too? What the cards are urging you to do today is sit down with yourself and unlock the door to your subconscious. The answers you seek will come to you. You are the Oracle. You are the light. You are the one you've been looking for, beautiful.

Tip: Sit down with yourself and unlock the door to your subconscious.

SCORPIO:

You've been taking care of everybody, Scorpio, and now it's time to turn your attention towards yourself. Begin the day with the question, "How would you

like to be nurtured?" as you allow the answers you seek to come through from your subconscious. A therapeutic massage, a walk in the park, a journaling or doodling session, or a dance-yoga class are some of the ways in which you can alleviate the stress and connect with yourself on a deeper level.

Tip: It's time to prioritise your own well-being.

SAGITTARIUS:

The trouble is, we spend too much time worrying about 'the how' and 'the why'. We spend too much time worrying about whether or not things will work out in the way that we desire. In doing so, we end up wasting our precious energy—energy that could be utilised for our highest good. Become aware of how you're giving into the fluctuations of your mind as you vow to come into that space of single-minded focus. Remember, your job is to show up for your mission fully. Everything else will be taken care of by the mysterious forces above.

Tip: Come into that space of single-minded focus.

CAPRICORN:

Not all of us get the love, approval and validation we desire from our families. Some of us go through our entire lives seeking that warmth in our interactions with the outside world, only to be disappointed time and again. But you are not one of those people, Capricorn. You have been granted the gift of a soul family—uplifting connections that transcend

the boundaries of space and time. So, let go of the old story as you allow yourself to lean on those who truly care. What the cards want you to remember is that you will always be loved and taken care of.

Tip: Allow yourself to lean on those who truly care.

AQUARIUS:

There is a reason all of Creation is referred to as Mother Nature. She is the ultimate nurturer. The sacred womb through which we enter the earthly realm. The connection we share with her is truly special, and when we are cut off from this connection is when negative emotions such as fear and anxiety tend to arise. Today, instead of receding into that space of darkness, reconnect with your wild side. Consider a walk in the park, a hike through the forest, an Ashtanga session outdoors, or a grounding meditation.

Tip: Reconnect with your inherent wildness.

PISCES:

We'd like to say that healing is a linear process, but that is far from the truth, Pisces. It comes with its own twists and turns—twists and turns that sometimes threaten to throw you off. Become an observer of what's coming through from your subconscious without attaching a story to it. Know that the pain is serving a special place and purpose in your life even though you do not fully understand it.

Tip: Become an observer of what's coming through from your subconscious.