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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Sikkim's COVID tally crosses 200 mark with 11 fresh cases

### 54 from Rongli so far

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 15 JUL:**

Eleven new cases of COVID-19 were reported on Wednesday taking the number of active cases to 122 and total number of cases reported so far to 209 in Sikkim. Out of eleven new cases, nine are primary contacts of positive patients from GREF camp, Rongli in East Sikkim and two are returnees placed in quarantine facilities in East Sikkim.

It may be mentioned that with the 9 new cases from Rongli, the total number of cases from Rongli GREF camp and their contacts has now reached 54.

Out of 209 cases reported so far in Sikkim, 142 were reported in East District, 22 in West District, 44 in South District and 01 in North District.

Meanwhile, one patient was discharged from the hospital on Tuesday taking the num-



ber of patients cured and discharged to 87.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department DG-cum-Secretary, Dr Pempa T Bhutia informed that 19 samples were tested by TrueNat on Tuesday and all came out negative while 40 samples tested by Rapid Antigen Testing have also come out negative. Out

of 354 samples tested by RT-PCR yesterday, eleven tested positive, he added.

Dr Bhutia informed that a 39-year-old Bihar returnee from facility quarantine at ATTC Bardang tested positive. The patient reached Sikkim on 04 July from Bihar. Likewise, he informed that another 53-year-old returnee from Rajasthan who was at the quaran-

tine facility at Eco Paradise Resort, Mining, also tested positive.

The Secretary informed that the Health Department from Singtam District Hospital has visited areas of Rongli and Pakyong sub-divisions and collected 190 samples for RT-PCR testing. He informed that samples collected includes 30 from Rong-

li PHC, 55 of police personnel, 10 of personnel involved in sanitization, 47 samples of family members of 15 positive patients and 48 of personnel in 130 RCC GREF camp, Rongli.

He informed that the decision has been made to start the Antigen Testing of all residents of Pakyong and Rongli sub-divisions

**turn to pg 02**

## "Indefensible" lapses by Govt and GREF, alleges Chamling

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 15 JUL:**

Sikkim Democratic Front president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, has said that the alleged lapses on the part of the state administration and GREF resulting in the COVID-19 outbreak in Rongli are simply indefensible.

In a Facebook post, Mr Chamling has said, "How gross negligence on the part of the GREF camp went unnoticed is a question that Sikkim is asking. To go from zero cases a few weeks ago to over 200 cases in Sikkim now and some



suspicion of public transmission testify as to how poorly the state handled the situation."

He has accused the state government of taking "poor administrative decisions" and questioned the new restrictions put in place by the administration.

"The complete restriction of private vehicles and two wheelers is a completely illogical decision," he states.

Mr Chamling has requested the government to conduct meticulous contact tracing and comprehensive testing as soon as possible.

## FIR filed against OC GREF Rongli

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 15 JUL:**

As directed by DC East, SDM Rongli today filed an FIR against OC GREF Rongli camp at the Rongli Police station. The case has been registered under section 51 of the Disaster Management Act and sections 188,269,270,271 of the Indian Penal Code. However, arrest and interrogation could not be possible since Rongli has been declared a containment zone.

## 7-day lockdown begins in Siliguri

**SUMMIT REPORT  
SILIGURI, 15 JUL:**

Siliguri will go into a seven-day lockdown starting 9AM on 16 July, Thursday.

The lockdown will be in force in the Siliguri Municipal Corporation area, including Darjeeling district's portion, an official notification informs.

As per an order is-

sued by the DM, Darjeeling, today, all offices and shops, govt and private, except banks and those providing essential services and provisions, will remain closed.

All religious and social activities, except marriages and funerals withing "allowable participant limits," have also been disallowed.

## State Task Force has failed Sikkim: HSP

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 15 JUL:**

Hamro Sikkim Party has argued that the recent surge in COVID cases in Sikkim due to GREF negligence was proof that the State Task Force has failed miserably in its duties.

An HSP press release issued by the party president, Dr Bina Basnet, alleges that there appears to be no joint standard operating guidelines or any coordination between the STF and the military and paramilitary forces. This is inexcusable given the number of months that have passed since COVID became a problem.

The release adds that all the irrational, vague, ever-changing notifications issued by the State Government were ex-

tended only to common citizens while others violated them with impunity putting lives at risks and putting a huge burden on the economy.

HSP has suggested that the government immediately hold a meeting with the forces and initiate a strong inquiry against officials who are found to have violated the quarantine protocol.

The party has further suggested rigorous contact tracing, testing, isolation, hospitalization, infection prevention and control and active surveillance taken up.

"All districts hospitals should be prepared for future upsurge in the number of cases. COVID care centers to be established in all the districts with adequate infrastructures for early

intervention and management in order to save lives," the release adds.

HSP president asked the government for extensive capacity-building of field workers and front-line workers in preparation for rapid mobilization during emergencies and establishing of a tele-medicine portal at the earliest for triage, guidance and support.

The release demands that the districts have dynamic control rooms for monitoring and strengthening of communication between the administration and the community.

HSP has demanded for strict containment only in areas where it is required and door-to-door survey for screening with standard guidelines to be carried out by trained people.

## Delhi to get 3rd plasma bank at GTB Hospital



**NEW DELHI, JUL 15 (PTI):**

With the Delhi government backing plasma therapy to reduce the COVID-19 death rate, the state-run Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital is soon going to launch a plasma bank which will be the third such facility in the national capital.

Binay Bhushan, the nodal officer of GTB Hospital, said the the largest medical facility in East Delhi has got the equipment, know-how and staff to start a plasma bank.

"The hospital has already got a blood bank which caters to the demand in the East Delhi region. This facility can be used to collect and store plasma," Bhushan said.

Last week, the hospital said it has made all arrangements, including

procuring an apheresis machine, to provide plasma therapy to COVID-19 patients who need it.

Bhushan said the competent authority has allowed the hospital to start collecting plasma from recovered patients.

"We have prepared a list of COVID-19 patients who were treated at the hospital and have fully recovered. They have expressed willingness to donate plasma," he said.

On July 2, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched Delhi's first plasma bank at the city government-run Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences. This week, he inaugurated the second plasma bank at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital.

Kejriwal said plasma

therapy is one of the reasons behind the reduced COVID-19 death rate in Delhi. "We cannot say it can save 100 percent of the lives...but the death rate has reduced in Delhi and plasma has a role in it."

Covid-19 patients can donate their plasma 14 days after recovery.

They should age between 18 and 60 and weigh not less than 50 kg.

Women who have been pregnant, people with diabetes, hypertension, cancer survivors, those with chronic heart, liver, lung and kidney diseases and high blood pressure cannot donate plasma.

The GTB Hospital is also aiming at increasing the number of ICU beds to 500. At present, it has 100 ICU beds.

## Exports fall 12.41 pc, imports by 47.5 pc in June



**NEW DELHI, JUL 15 (PTI):**

Contracting for the fourth straight month, India's exports declined by 12.41 per cent to USD 21.91 billion in June mainly due to drop in shipments of petroleum, textiles, engineering goods, and gems and jewellery items.

Imports too plunged 47.59 per cent to USD

21.11 billion in June, leaving a trade surplus of USD 0.79 billion, compared to a deficit of USD 15.28 billion in the same month of the last year, according to the data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Wednesday.

During April-June 2020, exports fell by 36.71 per cent to USD 51.32 bil-

lion, while imports shrank by 52.43 per cent to USD 60.44 billion.

The trade deficit stood at USD 9.12 billion during the two months of the current fiscal.

Oil imports dipped 55.29 per cent to USD 4.93 billion in June. Gold imports in June plunged by 77.42 per cent to USD 608.7 million.

**NEW DELHI, JULY 15 (PTI):** India registered a record single-day jump of 29,429 COVID-19 cases pushing its tally to 9,36,181 on Wednesday, while the death toll climbed to 24,309 with 582 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The number of recoveries stands at 5,92,031, while there are 3,19,840 active cases of coronavirus infection presently in the country, the updated data at 8 am showed.

"Thus, around 63.24 per cent of patients have recovered so far," an official said. The total number of confirmed cases include foreigners.



Of the 582 new deaths reported, 213 are from Maharashtra, 85 from Karnataka, 67 from Tamil Nadu, 43 from Andhra Pradesh, 35 from Delhi, 28 from Uttar Pradesh, 24 from West

Bengal, 14 each from Bihar and Gujarat, 10 each from Madhya Pradesh and Telangana.

Punjab has reported nine fatalities followed by Jammu and Kashmir with eight, Assam,

Haryana and Odisha four each, Jharkhand three, Chandigarh two while Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Kerala and Uttarakhand have reported one death each.



# Nawin Kiran wants govt to deliver consistent COVID management, not selective and disconnected governance

## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUL:

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan, today asserted that the State government needs to make strong policies to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in Sikkim.

He lay the blame for the outbreak in Rongli and worries in Rhenock and Pakyong on the doors of disconnected administration and governmental irresponsibility.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Pradhan argued that these situations had resulted from the State Government's continuing inability to extend the rule of law equally on all people. The higher-ups and those with contacts can avoid rules and regulations extended on the lay people



and this puts everyone at risk, he said.

Citing the unchecked entry from Melli incident, he pointed out that by hiding behind the "miscommunication" excuse, the government had proved that influential people are allowed to live by a different set of rules.

It is this attitude which was at the root of the Rongli outbreak since GREF was allowed to operate beyond rules that the common people have to follow, he said.

He went on to accuse COVID-management in Sikkim to be disconnected from the realities

of the common people. Citing the example of the ban on private vehicles, he pointed out that private vehicles and two-wheelers were safer modes of transport than share-cabs which most people take in Sikkim.

He demanded that the government reconsider

this decision and come up instead with some clear and effective plans to contain COVID-19.

He also condemned the service extension given to MD, Arvind Kumar and other key officials and staff of Teesta Urja by the government on the excuse of the COVID-19

situation. At a time when the government has stopped regularization and appointment of junior government employees, this explanation reeked of entitled hypocrisy.

He also took a jab at the Students' Rights Day observed by SKM and rejected it as tokenism given that it has still not been able to punish officials responsible for the lathicharge on students in 2014, a moment marked with the Students' Rights Day observed recently.

Advocate Bina Rai who also addressed the press briefing, in turn pointed out that there was a standing government notification prohibiting social and political gatherings till 31 July which the SKM, the party in office, was flouting on a regular basis.

## Govt should apologise for Rongli: KB Rai



## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUL:

Sikkim Republican Party president, KB Rai today alleged that the state government is trying to hide mistakes it has made instead of admitting them and apologizing to the Sikkimese.

Speaking at a press conference in Rangpo, Mr Rai also said that Chairperson of District Disaster Management Authority cum DC East, Raj Yadav should be held accountable for being "careless and irresponsible" with regards to COVID prevention in Rongli and strict action should be taken against him.

Allowing GREF workers to enter the state

without following the COVID-19 protocols was one of the biggest mistakes made by the administration, he alleged.

4 GREF personnel entered Sikkim on 06 June followed by 9 workers on 10 June, 7 workers on 13 June, 18 on 23 June, 5 on 29 June, making a total of 43 workers entering via Rangpo check post without proper checking, said Mr Rai.

He demanded that an all-party meeting should be immediately called on the matter. Mr Rai also criticized the silence of former CM, Pawan Chamling on some of the burning issues of the state alleging that an SKM-SDF deal could be the reason behind the silence.

## LTVC meets Minister, requests PVTG status for Limboo community

## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUL:

A team of Limboo Tamang Voluntary Committee [LTVC] met the UDHD Minister, Arun Upreti on Wednesday. The team submitted a file pertaining to granting "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, previously Primitive Tribal Group status, to Limbu Community of Sikkim on Historical Background" and requested immediate action on the same.

The team has also requested the Minister to forward the submitted letter to the CM, an LTVC press release informs. The LTVC team discussed the matter with the Min-



ister and requested his proactive intervention.

The Minister assured his cooperation and support in the matter, the release mentions.

"The file was sent to

CMO on 22/11/19 from Chief Secretary's office for necessary action but till date [8 months] CMO haven't forwarded the file to SJE&WD for further action however the same

has caused immense hardships," the release states further adding that LTVC has been pursuing the matter with the concerned departments and authorities since past 3 years.

LTVC has expressed that the issue is a long pending legitimate demand of the community and despite making several representations to the state authorities there has not been any positive action on paper.

However, the release mentions that the Minister patiently heard the committee's concerns and grievances, for which the team is grateful and looks forward to some concrete action.

## NABARD Sikkim celebrates 39th Foundation Day



## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUL:

NABARD Sikkim Regional Office celebrated the 39th Foundation Day by inaugurating two projects in South Sikkim, a press release informs.

On the occasion, the first NABARD Rural Haat project of Sikkim was inaugurated at Daring, Namphing GPU, South Sikkim by Minister for Commerce & Industries, Tourism & Aviation, Bedhu Singh Panth, Government of Sikkim in the presence of the Panchayat Presidents and members of Namphing GPU and Bermiok Tokal GPU.

One Farmers Producers' Organization was also launched for the

farmers of Tokal Bermiok GPU.

The Minister handed over the sanction letter to the Producer Organization Promoting Institution (POPI) – our partner NGO Himalayan Educational Society. Keeping in view the present situations a small programme was held comprising of local farmers and SHGs from Daring area and farmers from Tokal Bermiok area who will be benefiting from the projects.

The objectives of the projects and responsibilities of all stakeholders were discussed in the programme. Minister Panth congratulated NABARD on its

achievements and contribution towards the development of the nation and Sikkim State and urged the people to support NABARD to implement the above projects successfully.

The General Manager & Officer-In-Charge, Sikkim RO, Dr Diwakar Hegde in his message conveyed his best wishes to all the stakeholders of both the projects and urged them to make the best out of our interventions as he is presently on institutional quarantine. NABARD Sikkim RO was represented by – AGM, Bhama Deuri, AGM, Divya Rai and DDM South & West District, Rupen Kr Lamichanney.

## Teenage boy dies of plague in Mongolia after eating marmot

BEIJING, 15 JUL [AP]: A 15-year-old boy has died of bubonic plague in western Mongolia after eating an infected marmot, the country's health ministry has said. Two other teenagers who also ate the marmot were being treated with antibiotics, said a ministry spokesperson, Narangerel Dorj.

The government imposed a quarantine on an area of Gobi-Altai province, where the cases occurred. The health ministry said 15 people who had contact with the boy were quarantined and receiving antibiotics. Plague is found in marmots, large rodents that live in burrows in the sprawling north Asian grassland, and some other wild animals in parts of Mongolia, north-western China and eastern Russia.

The Mongolian government warned the public not to hunt or eat marmots. In 2019, Mongolia imposed a six-day quarantine in its westernmost province of Bayan-Ulgii, which borders Russia and China, after an ethnic Kazakh couple died of plague after eating raw marmot.

In an unrelated case, a patient who was infected with plague in China's northern region of Inner Mongolia is improving, according to China's official Xinhua news agency.

## MLA takes stock of landslide damage in Yuksam-Tashiding



## PRITAM LAMA GYALSHING, 15 JUL:

Sikkim Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker and Yuksam-Tashiding MLA, Sangay Lepcha visited the landslide affected areas of his constituency on 13 and 14 Jul, 2020. Heavy rainfall for the past one week has triggered a series of landslides snapping road links at several places in West Sikkim with major damage to road at Famrong falls near Gerethang.

Vehicular movement towards Legship, Jorethang and Gangtok from Yuksam is being diverted via Pelling and Gyalshing due to a road block at Famrong falls. Restoration may take one week or more, as per officials.

Deputy Speaker Sangay Lepcha visited Famrong bridge near Labing-Gerethang where the portion of road connect-

ing Yuksam and Tashiding was completely washed away on Saturday.

Mr Lepcha then visited the landslide area in Rangzang under Karjee-Mangnam GPU and Thangchung ward under Tashiding GPU of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency West Sikkim and took stock of damages caused by incessant rain.

Mr Lepcha was accompanied by Roads & Bridges Department officials and local Panchayats.

During his visit, the Deputy Speaker interacted with the people of affected areas and assured that the State Government and local administration are on high alert and appealed to the public to be vigilant during the monsoon season. He said that all the blocked roads under the constituency will be restored at the earliest.

## Sikkim's COVID...

who came into contact with GREF personnel and everyone from the GREF camp.

Dr Bhutia mentioned that immediately after approval from ICMR, the State procured Antigen Testing kits and set up a lab at the State border within two days and started the rapid testing at borders.

He mentioned that those testing positive in Antigen Testing are confirmed positive and those who test negative are kept under observation. He urged the people not to panic due to fake news and to contact the department in case of any query. He informed that the national helpline number 08046110007 and the State helpline 104 are always open for any query.

## ANTHYESTI KRIYA

The Anthyesti Kriya of our beloved father, Lt DB Shrestha who left for his heavenly abode on 10 July falls on 22 Jul, 2020 (Wednesday).

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our friends, relatives and well wishers who have stood by us during our time of bereavement and request all to pray for the departed soul of our beloved father.

The Anthyesti Kriya will be held at Shrestha Building (our residence), Below Janta Bhawan, DPH Area, Gangtok.

**Shanti Shrestha**

**Dr Kaushilya & Neeraj Pradhan: 9933922696**

**Sushila & Saroj Pradhan**

**Nareesh & Varsha Shrestha: 9433169663.**



## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft  
Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak  
Price negotiable  
Contact : 6296366498,  
9641878315, 9593262407

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### FOR RENT

Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Bazaar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General roadside land for sale measuring 30 by 45 square feet near smile land below apica garden. Contact no. 7797885351/9733538899.

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# Health officials address mental health issues related to COVID

**GANGTOK, 15 JUL (IPR):** Keeping in view, the recent spike in the coronavirus positive cases in the State, the health officials representing the District Mental Health Programme (East) addressed various Covid-19 related mental health and wellbeing issues at the IEC Control Room, Health and Family Department in Gangtok today.

District Nodal Officer, District Mental Health Programme East District, Dr Deki W Phempu, said that assessing and addressing mental health during these trying times is of utmost importance as poor mental health can affect the ability to make healthy decisions thus compromising the immune system of a person.

In her message to the people at the containment zones of Rongli and Rhenock, Dr Phempu sought for constructive support from the public to break the chain of the virus in the concerned areas and added that the health officials, counsellors and IEC experts will be extending their constant help and support.

Addressing the importance of community participation, Dr Phempu said that community service providers like the NGOs, teachers and social workers can approach the Medical Officer, In-charge at any PHC for basic training on managing mental health issues.

She also informed about the health helpline numbers issued to address any grievances or crisis. Although it is not feasible for



the health officials and counsellors to be physically available at the containment zones, people can reach out to them over the phone through these helpline numbers, she added.

The health helpline numbers are:

1. Grievance Redressal Cell - 104
2. 24x7 Crisis Centre - 18003453225 (helpline) / 03592202111 (landline)
3. National helpline - 08046110007

Clinical Psychologist, STNM, Dr Sonam O Lassopa, said that containment zones have been declared by the State government for the safety of the entire population of Sikkim as a whole and that people at these zones need not panic. She stressed on prioritizing the best approaches towards a healthy mental status and urged all to focus on staying connected while also managing

the information intake. These times call for overcoming negative thoughts and embracing positive thinking, she added.

She further informed that trained counsellors and psychiatrists have already been mobilised by the Health Department in all the PHCs of the districts in order to address the stress level and anxiety of people owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Psychiatrist, STNM hospital, Dr Upashna Gurung, said they have been receiving numerous cases of panic attacks and anxiety caused by the fear of contracting coronavirus. She stated that the doctors and counsellors have been providing both medical and psychological treatment to such patients.

She further added that this situation of psychological distress owing to the Covid-19 pandemic can be controlled by reaching out for proper help,

avoiding fake rumours and information being the top priority. She encouraged all to promote mental health at an individual level and fight against the mental distress collectively while avoiding stigmatization.

State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen, reiterated the golden rules required to be applied everyday to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. Practising regular and thorough hand hygiene, avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth, proper usage and disposal of masks and maintaining strict social distancing at all times are the basic habits that people need to adhere to in today's fight against the novel coronavirus, he stated.

Shri Gyaltsen requested all to incorporate a safe and healthy system in order to reduce the risks of spread of the virus furthermore and urged the people to maintain discipline and follow the safety guidelines. He also requested people to extend support and cooperation to the ASHA, Anganwadi and other health workers who procure information at the grassroots level as the situation today demands active participation from every individual.

Highlighting on the high rate of Covid-19 recovery cases, Shri Gyaltsen appealed for responsible journalism from the Press and media fraternity and asked the public to follow only authentic news and information issued by the concerned authority and the media.

## Forest Minister inaugurates Local Marketing Space for SHGs

**GANGTOK, 15 JUL (IPR):** Minister of Forest and Environment Department, Karma Loday Bhutia inaugurated the Local Marketing Space for Self Help Groups (SHGs) at Forest Secretariat, D Block, opposite GMC, today.

The initiative has been supported by JICA assisted Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project (SBFB) under Forest and Environment Department, Government of Sikkim, to provide a platform to display and marketing of the local products.

The inaugural function also had the presence of Project Director cum Chief Conservator of Forest, Territorial (CCFT), NW Tamang, Additional Project Director, D Manjunathan, DFO JFM, SBFB, Shewani Pradhan along with other senior Forest officials and members of SHGs.

At the onset, Minister Bhutia visited the new stalls in the marketing space and felicitated the members of the SHGs.

Congratulating the SHGs on the inaugural function, Minister Bhutia urged the respective SHGs to sell quality products at competitive prices to the customers and



assured that all possible help and support will be provided by the Forest Department for smooth operation and streamlining of their businesses in the future.

He further mentioned that this was a good initiative taken by the Forest Department and also added that the Department has initiated several unique strategies to promote SHGs socially and economically, and has recognised SHG as a tool for women empowerment under the leadership of the visionary Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang.

Earlier, during the inaugural function, Divisional Forest Officer, JFM SBFP, Shewani Pradhan informed that SBFP has adopted 179 JFMC/EDC till date. She further mentioned that a block grant of Rs. 1,80,000 has been provided to

each Joint Forest Management Committee (-JFMC)/Eco-Development Committee (EDC). The JFMC/EDC in turn provide loans to SHGs at Rs. 60,000 at minimal interest for income generating activities.

She further informed that the space is being provided on a quarterly rotation basis to provide an opportunity to all interested SHGs for a minimal rent of Rs 30 per day.

The three SHGs opting for marketing include Hope SHG, Kopibari, Shyari, Pulyong SHG, Bhojghari and Mahila Shakti SHG, Kopibari, Shyari.

Various semi and processed food products, vegetables, flowers, local snacks, sweets, pickles, handicrafts (wood, cloth and paper) cotton/silk handlooms and traditional apparel, etc are available at the Local Marketing Space for sale to the customers.

## Rumor targets Sikkim Motors

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 15 JUL:**

With the Rongli COVID detections making all Sikkimese ants, it was not surprising when another rumor hit the streets of Gangtok. This time, it was the Sikkim Motors show-

room located 6th Mile, Tadong, that supposedly had COVID positive workers. The rumor spread like wildfire forcing Sikkim Motors to issue a clarification online stating that this was fake news and none of its workers has contracted the virus.

## Sports Minister attends virtual meeting with Rijiju



**GANGTOK, 15 JUL (IPR):** The Video Conference of Minister of State (I/c) for Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, Kiren Rijiju with Ministers and Secretaries of 18 States and Union Territories including Sikkim was held today. Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, KN Lepcha, Secretary, Kuber Bhandari and Senior Officers of the State attended the conference.

Minister, KN Lepcha highlighted the achievements of the sporting activities of 2019-20 and the activities taken

during the Covid-19 pandemic. The major highlights were Online North East Chess Competition, Online Yoga Session, 15 days online Zumba training starting 26 Jun, 2020 duly commemorating International Anti Drug and Illicit Trafficking Day, Blood donation camp on Olympic Day and contributions of NSS and NYK Volunteers to combat Covid-19 pandemic.

Minister also dwelt on the future plans to carry sporting activities during pandemic especially online and on field

programmes mainly for non contact sports duly issuing SOPs.

Minister highlighted on the need of sports infrastructures for the State and sought the intervention of the Central Minister for approval of projects submitted by the State.

Union Minister for State, Kiren Rijiju appreciated the activities taken by the State even in the pandemic and assured full cooperation. The video conference was held on 14 and 15 Jul, 2020.

## Siliguri cops take seize and arrest route to impose lockdown



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**SILIGURI, 15 JUL:**

Two autos were seized and several people detained in Siliguri today as West Bengal police took the seize and arrest route to impose the lockdown and containment zones in the city.

The cops were in

action at Airview More where, within about an hour, two auto-rickshaws were seized for violating lockdown guidelines by carrying four passengers. Also during the same hour, cops detained some people who were found venturing out without face-masks.

## Rajasthan political crisis: Sachin Pilot says not joining BJP

**NEW DELHI, JUL 15 (PTI):**

"I am not joining the BJP," Congress leader Sachin Pilot said on Wednesday, asserting that the speculation about his switching sides was being fuelled by certain leaders in Rajasthan to tarnish his image.

Pilot's remarks come a day after the Congress sacked him as Rajasthan's deputy chief minister and the party's state unit president. Two loyalists of Pilot were also dropped from the state Cabinet.

"I have worked very hard to bring the Congress party back in the government and defeat the BJP," he told PTI.

In an apparent ref-

erence to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's camp, Pilot said some leaders in Rajasthan were trying to fuel speculation that he is joining the BJP and that he would like to categorically state that he was not doing so.

"Such a speculation is being fuelled to tarnish my image," he said.

After being sacked, Pilot had tweeted in Hindi on Tuesday, "Truth can be rattled, not defeated."

Gehlot has accused his former deputy of playing into the hands of the BJP. Pilot had kept away from two CLP meetings held on Monday and Tuesday after which the action against him was taken.

## Sanitiser - a fire HAZARD!

*Hand sanitisers, now part of everyday life, can also be a fire hazard if used carelessly. There are different types.*

*One comes with Isopropyl alcohol base and the other with ethyl alcohol base. Many are a mixture of both. They readily evaporate at room temperature into an ignitable vapour. When sanitiser evaporates in a confined area, like a car, it only takes a spark to start a fire. They are inflammable and people should be aware. They should be kept in safe and cool places. Exposure to extreme heat can alter the chemical composition. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be rubbed over hands and other surfaces until it evaporates and dries up. Even a small quantity of alcohol on your hands exposes yourself to fire risks while cooking or smoking.*

*While sanitizing your vehicle, never use alcohol based sanitisers on hot or running vehicles, they can be sanitized with hypochlorite solutions type sanitisers.*

**-Sikkim Fire & Emergency Service-**

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**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

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

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever</li> <li>● Difficulty in breathing</li> <li>● Dry Cough</li> <li>● Severe acute respiratory syndrome</li> <li>● Pneumonia - like symptoms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wash your hands often with soap.</li> <li>● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer</li> <li>● Observe good personal hygiene.</li> <li>● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.</li> <li>● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.</li> <li>● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Treatment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.</li> <li>● No vaccinations available as of now.</li> <li>● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.</li> </ul>	<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Toll free no. 104</li> <li>District surveillance Officer</li> <li>EAST : 7029372100</li> <li>WEST : 9593297809</li> <li>NORTH : 9641957468</li> <li>SOUTH : 7407691463</li> <li>New STNM</li> <li>AMS : 9434711402</li> </ul>

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE**  
**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**



## Indifference Imperils the Future

*A society that does not engage will not get responsible citizens in the future*

That Sikkim has by and large failed in its responsibilities towards its young is no secret. Sure, it provides the schools and the occasional teachers, sometimes even trained and inspiring ones, and the textbooks and the uniforms; in fact, it is actually quite good at acquiring the tangibles, things that can be billed and procured. It is in the intangibles that the babus and the leaders falter. The empathy required to prioritise children over work orders remains in short supply. When schools spend entire academic sessions without the required staff-strength, students see themselves stuck in a dead-end school. To them, teachers do not want to report to a “punishment posting”. What sense of belonging can be expected from someone who went through his/ her entire schooling without a happy, fully staffed staff-room? We make too many demands from the young when we expect them to show up smart and excited to schools which, apart from missing teachers, also house disgustingly filthy toilets, no water in the taps and classrooms which are hot in summers, noisy in monsoons and freezing in winters. Yes, the kids are not in school at present, but that is hopefully a hiatus that will end soon and not a break which will stretch on and on just because we remain blundering in our response to the COVID situation.

That said, and we wonder why substances of abuse are becoming popular among the young. But what the young must also be wondering is how the society remains so oblivious to their condition. It must initially bother them that societal indifference continues even though the very young are acquiring addictions, even though years too young to have acquired any real sorrows are ending at self-tied nooses, even though their parks and playgrounds are being acquisitioned for site allotments, “development”, roads and/or factories and no safe places are being created for them.

The initial botheration will eventually harden into despise, and from that is born a general disregard for the immediate community, then societal norms and then the state or any sense of service. How can a generation groomed in an environment lacking interest or concern be expected to deliver “responsible citizens”? When a society refuses to engage, the young grow up not only selfish, but also hostile, and while in most cases they will become asocial, in worst-case scenarios they will end up criminally antisocial. Several self-serving politicians have cried wolf that growing unemployment and lack of engagement will lead to a “Kashmir-like” situation in Sikkim in the future. That is unlikely to happen because extremism requires a very strong sense of belonging and deep commitment to ideology. We are not grooming the young on those lines. Instead, the detached disdain that is being projected and instilled makes them easy putty for criminal deviations. Warning signs are aplenty to suggest that this is a possible trajectory that many are finding easy to take. This has become a very clear and present danger, and before it becomes a full blown law & order issue, a societal reboot should be attempted, priorities rewired and a future rescued.

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# COVID-19 has resurrected single-use plastics – are they back to stay?

JESSICA HEIGES  
*theconversation.com*

COVID-19 is changing how the U.S. disposes of waste. It is also threatening hard-fought victories that restricted or eliminated single-use disposable items, especially plastic, in cities and towns across the nation.

Our research group is analyzing how the pandemic has altered waste management strategies. Plastic-Free July, an annual campaign launched in 2011, is a good time to assess what has happened to single-use disposable plastics under COVID-19, and whether efforts to curb their use can get back on track.

### FROM PLANS TO PANDEMIC

Over several decades leading up to 2020, many U.S. cities and states worked to reduce waste from single-use disposable objects such as straws, utensils, coffee cups, beverage bottles and plastic bags. Policies varied but included bans on Styrofoam, plastic bags and straws, along with taxes and fees on bottles and cups.

Social norms around plastic waste have evolved quickly in the past several years. Pre-COVID-19, “Bring your own” tote bags, mugs and other foodware had become part of daily life for many consumers. Innovative startups targeting reusable foodware niches include Vessel, which partners with cafes, enabling customers to rent stainless steel to-go mugs, and DishCraft, which picks up dirty dishes from dine-in restaurants and to-go food outlets, cleans them with high-tech equipment and returns them ready for reuse.

Just before COVID-19 lockdowns began in March 2020, the New Jersey senate adopted a bill that would have made the state the first to ban all single-use bags made of either paper or plastic. And U.S. Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico and U.S. Rep. Alan Lowenthal of California introduced the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act – the first federal measure limiting use of single-use disposable items.

COVID-19 shutdowns drastically changed all of this. In just a few weeks, plastic bags returned to grocery stores in states that had recently banned them. Even before lockdowns were official, restaurants and cafes started refusing personal reusables such as coffee mugs, reverting to plastic cups and lids, wrapped straws and condiment packets.

By late June, cities and states had temporarily suspended almost 50 single-use item reduction

policies across the U.S. – mainly bans plastic bag bans. The pandemic also spurred demand for single-use personal protective equipment, such as masks and plastic gloves. These items soon began appearing in municipal solid waste streams and discarded on streets.

### THE PLASTIC PANDEMIC

With legislation restricting disposables suspended, many food vendors and grocery stores have shifted entirely to disposable bags, plates and cutlery. This switch has raised their operating costs and cut further into their already-low margins.

Grocery stores have sharply increased plastic bag usage. Households are generating up to 50% more waste by volume than they did pre-COVID-19. Anecdotal reports indicate that these waste streams contain more single-use disposable items.

The recycling industry has weighed in on the impacts of more single-use bags and higher residential waste volumes. Waste industry workers, who have been uniformly declared essential, work in closed spaces with many other people, so even if surface transmission of coronavirus is not a serious risk, the pandemic has increased person-to-person transmission risks in the waste industry.

### HYGIENE: A RED HERRING

The main rationale that states, cities and vendors have offered to justify switching from reusables back to disposables is hygiene. Plastic packaging, the argument goes, protects public health by keeping contents safe and sealed. Also, discarding items immediately after use protects consumers from infection.

This narrative handily dovetails with the plastics industry’s ongoing effort to slow or derail bans and restrictions. The industry has loudly supported turning the clock back toward single-use disposable products.

In a March 2020 letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Plastics Industry Association argued that single-use items were the “most sanitary” option for consumers. Industry representatives are actively lobbying against the Break Free From Plastics Act.

However, studies show that these products are not necessarily safer than reusable alternatives with respect to COVID-19. The virus survives as long on plastic as it does on other surfaces such as stainless steel. What’s more, studies currently cited by the plastics industry focus on other contaminants such as E.coli and listeria bacteria, not on coronaviruses.

Viewed more holistically, plastics generate pollutants upstream when their raw materials are extracted and plastic goods are manufactured and transported. After disposal – typically via landfills or incineration – they release pollutants that can seriously affect environmental and human health, including hazardous and endocrine disrupting chemicals.

All of these impacts are especially harmful to minority and marginalized populations, who are already more vulnerable to COVID-19. In our view, plastic goods are far from being the most hygienic or beneficial to public health, especially over the long term.

### BUILDING RESILIENCE

Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic make it hard to see the bigger picture. No longer having to remember reusable tote bags or coffee mugs can be a relief. But the quick return of single-use disposable products shows that recent restrictions are precarious, and that industries don’t cede profitable markets without a fight.

Waste reduction advocates, such as Upstream Solutions and #BreakFreeFromPlastic, are working to gather data, educate the public and prevent decision-making about plastics that is based on perception rather than scientific reasoning. On June 22, 115 health experts worldwide released a statement arguing that reusables are safe even under pandemic conditions.

Some governments are taking notice. In late June, California reinstated its statewide ban on single-use plastic bags and requirement for plastic bags to contain 40% recycled materials. Massachusetts quickly followed suit, lifting a temporary ban on reusable bags.

For the longer term, it is unclear how COVID-19 disruptions will affect consumerism and waste disposal practices. In our view, one important takeaway is that while mindful consumers are part of the solution to the plastics crisis, individuals cannot and should not carry the full burden.

We believe that at the local and federal levels, policymakers need to build cross-jurisdictional alliances, recognizing shared interests with the waste management industry and emerging businesses like Vessel and Dishcraft. To make progress on reducing plastic waste, advocates need to reinforce measures in place before the next crisis hits.

*[the writer is PhD Candidate in Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, University of California, Berkeley]*

# Why Buddhist monks collect alms and visit households even in times of social distancing

THOMAS BORCHERT  
*theconversation.com*

Monks socially distancing as they go about their daily alms rounds while dressed in face masks as well as robes have become a common sight during the coronavirus pandemic in Thailand. Pictures in Thai media show the efforts monks and their lay supporters are making in maintaining social distance, as they carry on with the practice nonetheless.

I lived in Bangkok for the first six months of 2014 conducting research on the response of Thai Buddhist monks to political issues. I saw that even on days when political protests would close major intersections, making notoriously bad traffic even worse, monks would rise before dawn and silently walk barefoot around the city to collect alms. The donations from lay Buddhists provide the primary source of daily food for the thousands of monks who live in Bangkok.

While political upheaval did not disrupt or change this practice in a meaningful way, COVID-19 has affected these interactions, limiting and putting constraints on them.

### DAILY ROUNDS OF MONKS

This daily alms round is a central practice for Theravada Buddhist monks and novices in much of Southeast Asia.

It comes from the disciplinary rules for monks that instruct monks not to engage in agricultural labor, keep only a few possessions and eat only what is offered in their bowls each morning on the alms rounds.

There are exceptions to this, such as monks who are too old or ill to go on daily rounds. Yet a significant portion of Thailand’s almost 300,000 monks receive their food from their morning rounds.

Following the emergence of the coronavirus in Thailand, in mid-March 2020, senior abbots in Bangkok released guidance that temples be closed and that festivals as well as rituals be postponed.

However, monks were allowed to leave the temple to go on alms rounds.

### BELIEF BEHIND THE PRACTICE

There are many reasons why this practice was allowed despite the risks brought about through close contact between the monk and his lay donor.

In religious terms, monks provide laypeople with an opportunity to

long history in Theravada Buddhism. The early 20th-century supreme patriarch of Thailand, Prince Wachirayan, wrote that this was a way that Theravada monks can rebuke laypeople for improper actions that threaten either the teachings of the Buddha or the monastic community. In effect, it meant that the military rulers and their families could not make merit.

Economically, the daily alms

morning alms rounds.

### THE RITUAL

This goes beyond the economic, however: Monks do not solicit food on their alms rounds, but people come up to them freely. While temples do not have formal congregations, monks often have disciples who are regular patrons.

The ritual of giving food each morning is highly formal, with neither monk nor layperson making eye contact with each other. The monk blesses the food, and the giver receives nothing save a karmic benefit.

However, in practice, it can be more than this. While there is no formal assignment of alms routes, monks will often travel through neighborhoods in a regular pattern. Monks get to know the people who regularly provide them with food, and they make it possible for elderly

or sick disciples to make merit by going to their homes and waiting for the disciple to step out.

As Charles Carstens, a scholar of Buddhism in Myanmar, has shown, religious community is formed in the midst of this highly formalized donation.

The coronavirus has brought significant challenges to people all over the world, religious communities included. In the last several months, Jews celebrated Passover Seders and Christians celebrated Easter virtually; Muslims were forced to break their Ramadan fasts at home, rather than in festive gatherings with friends and relatives. Pilgrimages and festivals around the world have been reduced in scale or canceled altogether.

Some of these changes are easier than others to incorporate. But in Thailand, the morning alms round is such an integral part of the daily fabric of life, religiously and economically, that it cannot be simply postponed.

*[the writer is Professor of Religion, University of Vermont]*



make merit. Buddhist teachings generally highlight that an individual’s social situation is the result of karma, the effect of actions performed earlier in this life or in a previous incarnation.

Many Thai Buddhists believe that making merit – good karma – through giving can help mitigate the effects of wicked acts. These are acts motivated by greed, hatred or delusion. Giving food to monks is not the only way that Thais make merit, but it is a common one, tied to daily life throughout the country.

Merit making can also have political consequences. In 2007 monks in Myanmar took part in protests against the government that started with complaints against a spike in oil prices but quickly took on more overtly political overtones. This “Saffron Revolution,” so-called because of the role played by the saffron-colored robes of the monks, was triggered when monks on their morning alms rounds turned over their bowls.

This act, while not common, has a

round is important, providing an important regular source of food for many monks in Thailand.

In normal conditions, temple economies in Thailand are based on annual festivals as well as individual donations tied to family events. Approximately 10% of monks receive financial support from the government, but this mainly pays utility bills.

Individual monks also often receive money for conducting funerals, as well as other rites, such as blessing new homes or businesses, but these have been curtailed by social distancing rules in the pandemic. As a result of the restrictions, food shortages have emerged for monks, particularly in rural areas of Thailand, and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Concerns that monks will not receive enough support during the pandemic caused the government to float a plan to provide relief for monks, but these plans have yet to result in actual support. In other words, Thai monks still depend on



# Shiv Sena slams Nepal PM Oli's remarks on Ayodhya

**MUMBAI, JUL 15 (PTI):** Criticising Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli over his remark that the "real" Ayodhya lies in Nepal, not in India, the Shiv Sena on Wednesday said he may even claim that Mughal emperor Babur was a Nepalese.

Lord Ram belongs to the entire world, but Ayodhya, where the God was born, belongs only to India, the Shiv Sena said in an editorial in party mouthpiece 'Saamana'.

Terming Oli as a puppet in the hands of China, it said he has forgotten the religious and cultural ties between India and Nepal as he has got close to the Chinese Dragon.

Oli on Monday claimed the "real" Ayodhya lies in Nepal, not in India and that Lord Ram was born in Thori in southern Nepal.

Several top Nepalese political leaders from different parties slammed Oli and asked him to withdraw his controversial statement.

Referring to Oli's



remarks, the Shiv Sena on Wednesday said there are descriptions in 'puranas' (ancient scriptures) that the Saryu river flows from near Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh and not Nepal.

The same Saryu had turned red with the blood of 'kar sevaks' who fought for the Ram tem-

ple cause, but Oli, who has become a slave of the Chinese, has got nothing to do with it now, the Uddhav Thackeray-led party said.

"Today, he has claimed Ayodhya and Lord Ram are Nepalese. Tomorrow, he will claim Babur also as being a Nepalese. Lord Ram be-

longs to the entire world, but the Ram janmabhoomi Ayodhya belongs only to India, it said.

The Shiv Sena charged Oli with taking anti-India positions at the behest of China. It accused him of surrendering Nepal and the Hindu culture in the Himalayan nation before China. "Had Lord Ram

been in Nepal today, like he had killed Ravana and destroyed sins, he would have done the same thing in case of Hindurohi (Hindu-treacherous) Oli, it said.

The fight for Lord Rams birthplace in Ayodhya has been going on for at least 70 to 75 years, the Marathi daily said, wondering why Oli took so much time to give evidence of the Lord belonging to Nepal.

Further ridiculing Olis remark, the Shiv Sena in sarcastic remarks said his ancestors hoodwinked even Babur, who wanted to bring down the Ram temple to build a mosque in place of it, by diverting the Mughal emperor to North India instead of Nepal.

Ayodhya was in Nepal and Olis ancestors hoodwinked Babur and diverted him to North India (instead). Oli fooled Babur. This is in a way insult of Islam and will Olis junior baap (father) Pakistan punish him as per Islamic laws? it asked.

## India Post launches stamp design contest for I-Day



**KOLKATA, JUL 15 (PTI):** India Post is organising a national-level photography competition on the theme "UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India (Cultural)" as part of the Independence Day celebrations.

Commemorative postage stamps will be issued on the occasion of Independence Day based on the best entry which will also fetch a cash award of Rs 50,000, the Philately division of the Department of Posts stated in a release on Tuesday.

"The photography competition for Independence Day 2020 has been

launched on the "MyGov" portal where contestants of all age groups, amateur or professional photographers from all parts of the country, may participate by uploading the photographs at <https://www.mygovin/task/design-stamp-themed-unesco-world-heritage-sites-india-cultural>," it said.

The first and second runner-up will get Rs 25,000 and Rs 10,000 respectively while there will be Rs 5,000 consolation prizes for five participants, it added.

The last date for submission of entries is July 27.

## Seoul to launch probe into allegations against late mayor



**SEOUL, JUL 15 (AP):** The city government of the South Korean capital, Seoul, said Wednesday it will launch an investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct surrounding late Mayor Park Won-soon, who was found dead after one of his secretaries filed a complaint claiming yearslong abuse.

City spokesman Hwang In-sik said the investigation committee will also include civic activists and experts, but didn't specify when it would start how much power it would have.

By forming a joint investigation committee of government officials and civic experts, we will ensure fairness and objectiveness of the investigation, Hwang said at the news conference at City

Hall. We will discuss with women's rights organizations and other groups to determine how the committee will be formed and operated and when it could start."

Rescue workers found Park's body in a wooden area in northern Seoul early Friday, following a massive search that involved hundreds of officers, dogs and drones after his daughter reported him missing.

On Monday, lawyer Kim Jae-ryon told reporters that she gave legal counsel to one of Park's former secretaries before a complaint was lodged with police on July 8 alleging sexual harassment.

According to Kim, the ex-secretary said Park subjected her to unwanted

sexual advances and physical contact for years and sent her lewd photos and text messages that she showed to some of her friends, colleagues and a journalist.

The allegations have tarnished the reputation of Park, a liberal who built his career as a reform-minded politician and a champion of women's rights. He was considered a potential presidential candidate for the elections in 2022.

Hwang lamented what he described as speculative media reports but avoided specific answers when asked about the city's response to the allegations or Park's death, including whether city officials had ignored earlier complaints by the ex-secretary.

## 'West Bengal didn't handle migrants issue properly'



**MUMBAI, JUL 14 (PTI):** The Bombay High Court on Tuesday said the migrants' issue was not handled properly in West Bengal amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and the government there at one point of time even refused to permit labourers from other parts of the country to return to their homes.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Anuja Prabhudessai made the observation while hearing a petition filed by Centre of Indian Trade Unions, a Mumbai-based trade union body, raising concerns over the plight of migrant workers stranded in Maharashtra in the wake of the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

According to the petitioner, the process laid down by the Maharashtra government wherein migrant workers have to register themselves to travel by 'Shramik Special' trains to their native states was cumbersome and should be simplified.

The government last month told the court that presently there are no demands for 'Shramik

Special' trains. Senior counsel Gayatri Singh, appearing for the petitioner, on Tuesday told the court that the governments submission that there are no stranded migrants who desire to go back to their native states was "incorrect".

"The petitioner has got in touch with several such migrant labourers and has learnt that there are some 56,000 labourers who still want to travel back to their native states, Singh said, adding many of these labourers are from West Bengal.

The court, however, asked how can it accept this.

"Do you know the situation in West Bengal? The government there at one point did not even permit migrant labourers to return...we do not want to say anything against anyone but the situation there was not handled properly, Chief Justice Datta said.

He also gave an example of 30 labourers stranded in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra who had arranged a bus on their own and travelled to West Bengal a few months back.

"Each and every migrant labourer is not banking upon the state government. Many are making their own arrangements to travel back to their native states," the court said.

Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, appearing for the Maharashtra government, on Tuesday told the court that a similar matter pertaining to the issue of migrant workers was pending before the Supreme Court.

The high court, after perusing the order passed by SC on July 9, noted that it was specific to Maharashtra.

"The Supreme Court, in its order dated July 9, 2020, expressed its displeasure at the state governments reluctance to find out if there are migrants stranded in Maharashtra and were ready to leave for their native states. The apex court sought Maharashtra governments response and has listed the matter for further hearing on July 17, the high court said.

In view of this, the bench posted the petition for hearing in the first week of August.

## 86.34pc students pass West Bengal class-10 board exam

**KOLKATA, JUL 15 (PTI):** An estimated 86.34 per cent students passed the class-10 board examinations in West Bengal this year, the results of which were published on Wednesday.

A total of 10,03,666 students had appeared for the Madhyamik Pariksha this year and 8,43,305 of them passed it, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education President Kalyanmoy Ganguly told reporters here.

According to the merit list published by the board, Aritra Paul of Memari Vidyasagar Memorial School in Burdwan East district topped the tests, securing 694 out of 700 marks with a percentage of 99.14.

The state class-10 board examinations were held from February 18 to 27.

The results can be accessed on the two websites of the board, while the mark sheets will be distributed from various centres across the state on July 22, Ganguly added.

## Trump downplays police violence against Black people, says 'more white people' killed

**WASHINGTON (REUTERS):** President Donald Trump on Tuesday praised U.S. police departments and downplayed police violence against Black people, saying "more white people" are killed by police officers. During a CBS News interview, the Republican president was asked why Black people were still dying at the hands of law enforcement. "And so are white people, so are white people. What a terrible question to ask. So are white people. More white people, by the way. More white people," Trump responded.

The May 25 death of African-American George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis sparked protests across the United States and has led to an increased focus on U.S. police violence against Black people.

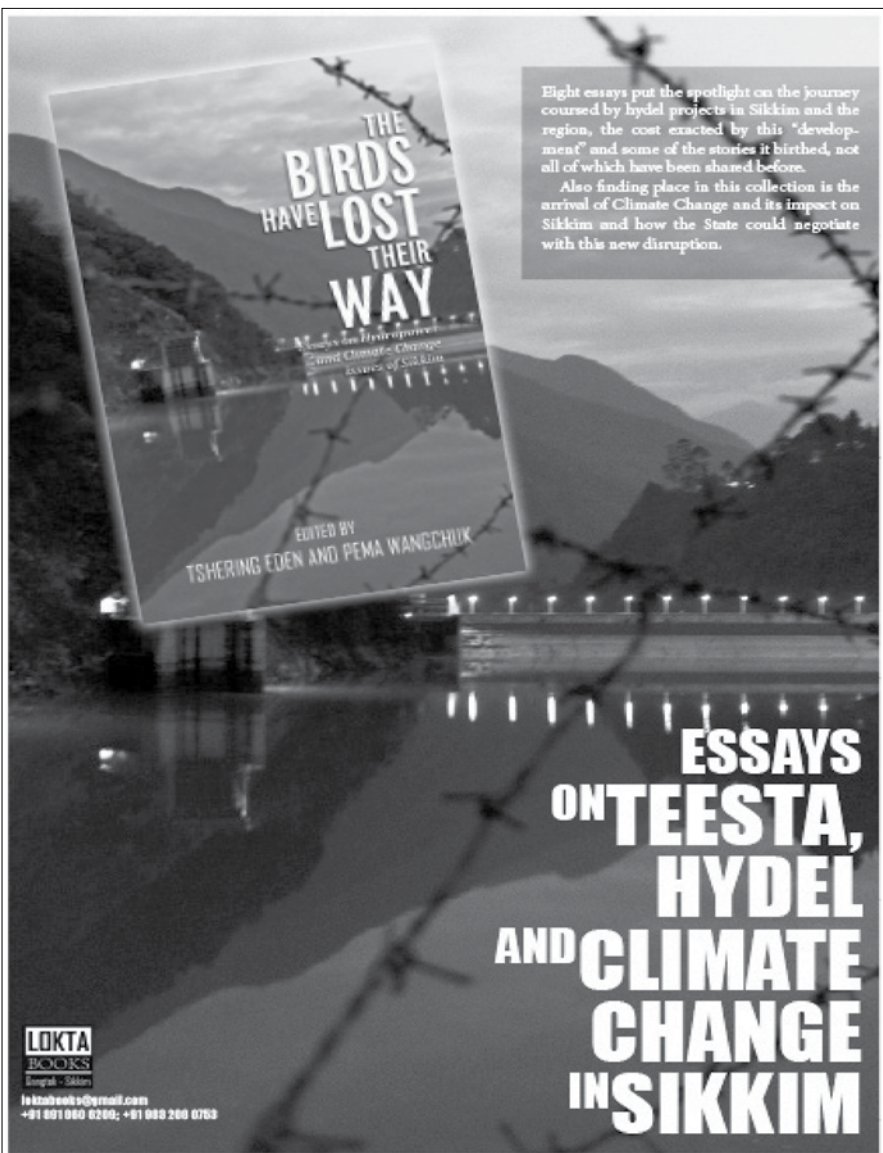
According to a Washington Post analysis updated on Monday, half of people killed by police are white, but Black Americans are shot at a disproportionate rate. They account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population but are killed by police at over twice the rate of white Americans, the newspaper analysis found. Some Americans argue that the Black Lives Matter protests have unfairly maligned the police forces.

Trump, speaking to reporters at the White House, defended police departments, saying they "do an incredible job in this country."

"You can have a rogue, terrible cop, on occasion like you do in any industry, any business, in any profession," Trump added. The American Civil Liberties Union's Jeffery Robinson said in a statement in response that Trump's comments were racist. "Trump's racism is so absolute that he continues to refuse to give even a tacit acknowledgment to the epidemic of police violence against Black people in America," he said.

Recent social unrest has raised new questions about the flying of the Confederate battle flag in areas of the country and whether statues honoring Confederate leaders during the U.S. Civil War should be removed from prominent places.

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*Pakistan need to give Fawad Alam a second chance to revive his Test career: Ramiz Raja*

**KARACHI, JUL 15 (PTI):** Former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja believes left-handed batsman Fawad Alam deserves to be given a second chance to revive his Test career in the upcoming series against England to be played in a bio-secure environment.

Ramiz said Alam, 34, had been waiting in the wings for long to have a second crack at Test cricket.

"I think the way he (Alam) has performed consistently in domestic cricket, he deserves a chance now as age is not on his side," Ramiz said while answering fans' questions in a live YouTube session.

"I think they should play Fawad Alam because he has been waiting in the wings with the team. If they hold on for longer, age might start becoming a factor because your reflexes start to slow down. He should definitely get one chance in this Test series," he added.

Pakistan will square off in a three-match Test series against England, starting August 5 at Manchester.

Alam represented Pakistan in only three Test matches, piling 250 runs at an average of 41.66. His last Test was against New Zealand at Dunedin way back in 2009.

But Alam's Test chances brightened up after middle-order batsman, Haris Sohail had pulled out of the England tour due to family reasons.

Alam, who scored a century on his Test debut back in July, 2009 against Sri Lanka at Colombo, has appeared in 38 ODIs and 24 T20 Internationals between 2010 and 2015.

Ramiz also felt that Pakistan could experiment with with three openers in the playing eleven and try Imam-ul-Haq at number three.

"I think they can slot in Imam as an additional opener because in these COVID-19 conditions with bowlers not allowed to use saliva to shine the ball, I think the most important part would be to see off the new ball without damages and that is why I think we can try an additional opener with Abid and Shan," he said.

"I think in England my experience is that in Tests role of the openers is very important and if they give a good start there is less pressure on the middle and lower order.

"If you suffer less damage against the new ball, it is significantly easier for the middle-order to bat in the middle-order." Ramiz also felt the need for a quality all-rounder in the Pakistan team.

"I don't know if they are preparing someone for that role or not but apart from that the team will be pretty much the same with one spinner and three fast-bowlers," he said.

# Final year UG online exams to be held from Aug 10-31, DU tells HC

**NEW DELHI, JUL 14 (PTI):** Delhi University will hold final year undergraduate online Open Book Examinations (OBE) from August 10-31, the Delhi High Court was informed on Tuesday.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Subramonium Prasad was informed by the varsity that the students left out of online exams will be given an opportunity to appear in physical examinations, to be held sometime in September.

While the university initially informed that it has decided to conduct the exams from August 17 and will conclude on September 8, the court asked it to reconsider the schedule and compress it as the final year students are supposed to pass and join other courses in India or abroad and their career prospects are at involved.

The counsel for DU and Dean of Examinations professor Vinay Gupta agreed to that and after discussions it was decided that the online OBE will commence from August 10 and conclude on August 31.

It was also decided that the first phase of mock tests will start from July 27, instead of July 31 and the second phase of mock tests will commence from August 1 instead of August 4.

While the purpose of the first mock test is only to make students familiarise with the process and the technical aspect, the second mock test will be the real time test, DU



said. On the aspect of schedule of physical examinations and declaration of results, DU's counsel sought some time.

The court also granted liberty to the varsity to bring out the notification for the revised date sheet of exams on its portal.

The court, which conducted the hearing through video conferencing, directed DU to file an affidavit detailing the timeline of the date sheet for the left-out students who will appear in the physical exams and also the timeline for results of students who will sit for online OBE exams in Au-

gust and listed the matter for further hearing on August 17. Senior advocate Sachin Dutta and lawyer Mohinder Rupal, representing DU, informed the court that there are 2.7 lakh final year students and 95 per cent have filed the forms for the online exams.

They also told the court that while the fresh examination plan has been worked out for undergraduate courses, they are yet to finalise the exams' plan for the post graduate students and it will be decided soon.

During the hearing, the court questioned the varsity for pushing the exams to mid-August and said,

why your starting point is the middle of August when you were even ready for holding the exams on July 1?

Dutta said there are three additional measures now -- the students have been given the time till July 25 to fill up forms for online OBE exams, details of the students have been put on the portal and colleges can verify it, students can also check their details and inform the concerned college if there is any change.

Earlier, the court had pulled up the university for repeatedly postponing the final year exams and had observed that examinations are

nerve-wracking and career of thousands of students was at stake.

The court had questioned the varsity on pushing the exams from July 10 to a date beyond August 15, even when it kept maintaining that it was ready to conduct the online OBE on July 1 as well as on July 10.

It had noted that on June 26, DU informed the court that it will go ahead with conducting exams from July 1 and after less than 24 hours, the university postponed the exams to July 10. The court had on June 29 issued notice to the varsity asking why contempt proceedings be not initiated against it and its officers for trying to mislead the court by withholding information on deferment of the online OBE from July 1 to July 10. The court was then informed that the university was firm on commencing exams from July 10.

The high court was hearing various petitions by several final year DU students seeking quashing and withdrawal of the notifications of May 14, May 30 and June 27 for online exams for undergraduate and postgraduate students, including of the School of Open Learning and Non-Collegiate Women Education Board.

As an alternative prayer, one of the petitions has sought direction to the DU to evaluate the final year students based on the previous years' or semesters' results in the same manner as the university has planned to promote the first and second year students.

## Pakistan opener Masood says England still a strong side despite defeat to West Indies

**KARACHI, JUL 15 (PTI):** Pakistan opener Shan Masood does not want to read too much into England's four-wicket defeat against the West Indies in the first Test, saying losing just a match does not make them a weak side. England lost the opening Test by four wickets on Sunday at an empty Rose Bowl in Southampton, the first international cricket match after the coronavirus outbreak.

"This is the first competitive match for both teams after nearly three months and I think the rustiness was evident in the home side. But I think they (England) have a lot of strong reserves to draw up from," Masood said. "When Joe Root returns to the side as captain, the batting will also be more stable," he said on Tuesday.

Pakistan are currently in England to play a three-match Test series starting on August 5.

The 30-year-old Masood said it would be a mistake to think that England are a weak side since they lost to the West Indies and that Pakistan can beat them.



"England have a lot of experience and strength in their squad who have yet to play. And their top batting is also not brittle as some people believe. Don't forget these same batsmen scored runs in South Africa when England won the Test series."

He also does not only see pacer Jofra Archer as the only threat in the upcoming Test series in England and said the Pakistani batsmen will be tested by all the English bowlers.

"England have a great reserve of pace bowlers. Archer is not the only one to worry about as a opener but the remaining bowlers will also pose serious challenges

in their own English conditions," he said.

Masood has been in prolific form for Pakistan in their last three Test series against Australia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, even scoring back to back hundreds against the latter two teams this year. The left-handed batsman also felt that regardless of the fact that bowlers cannot apply saliva to the ball in these COVID-19 times, batting would remain a test in English conditions.

"So many factors come into play, the overhead weather, the pitch, the duke ball etc. In England the role of openers is very important but

in these conditions as a batsman you need to ensure you punish the bad balls. "You are always likely to get that one good ball which will get you out no matter how long you bat for. So it is imperative to play with an intent to score runs, not just defend."

Masood also welcomed the roping in of former Test captain and record breaking batsman Younis Khan as batting coach. He said the strong management team of head coach Misbah ul-Haq, Younis, bowling coach Waqar Younis and spin bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed were working with individual players.

"The good thing is that after three months in isolation we have finally got back to playing some cricket. We have been provided excellent facilities where our health is first and rest later," said Masood.

"But with nearly three weeks still to go before we play our first Test against England, it is good we have plenty of time to work on our game and plans and get ready for the real test.

## About 10 MLB umpires opt out over virus concerns

**WASHINGTON, JUL 15 (AP):** About 10 Major League Baseball umpires have opted out this season, choosing not to work games in the shortened schedule because of concerns over the coronavirus.

Two people familiar with the situation told The Associated Press about the decisions on Tuesday. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because there was no official announcement.

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher David Price, San Francisco Giants catcher Buster Posey and Washington Nationals infielder Ryan Zimmerman are among a dozen or so players who won't participate this year because of health issues. The 60-game, virus-abbreviated season begins July 23. There are 76

full-time MLB umpires and more than 20 of them are age 55 or over. Joe West and Gerry Davis are the oldest umps at 67.

Umpires who are deemed at risk either for their age, health situation or other issues and opt out will continue to get paid. Umps get their salaries over 12 months and have already been paid through April.

A deal between MLB and its umpires reached during the virus shutdown ensured that if even one regular-season game was played this season, the umps were guaranteed 37.5% of their salaries.

Umpires recently began working intrasquad and simulated games at big league camps to sharpen up for the season. Teams are set to start exhibition games

this weekend in preparation for opening day.

Minus 10 or more MLB umpires, many Triple-A umps will work the two-month season. Most of them have previously called games in the majors as fill-in for umpires who have been injured or are on vacation.

It gives guys an opportunity," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

"Some younger guys are going to get to be major league umpires for a season. That'll be fun.

Just as MLB redrew the schedule amid the virus outbreak, umpires are certain to see a shift, too. Crew assignments, travel arrangements and schedules were still under review at the start of the week.



# Banning TikTok takes a big espionage tool away from China: US NSA

**WASHINGTON, JUL 15 (PTI):** China will lose "a big tool" of espionage and surveillance if America and some western European countries ban Chinese apps like TikTok as done by India, US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien has said.

India last month banned 59 Chinese apps, including TikTok and UC Browser, saying they were prejudicial to the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country.

O'Brien told Fox News Radio in an interview that the Trump administration was "very seriously taking a look" at TikTok, WeChat and some other apps coming out of China.

"India has already banned those apps, as you know. And if they lose India and the United States, they lose some western European countries, that takes a big tool away from the espionage work or the surveillance work of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party)," he said in response to a question on the dangers posed by apps like TikTok.

"The kids who are using TikTok -- and it can be a lot of fun -- but there



are a lot of other social media platforms they could use. TikTok is getting facial recognition on you," O'Brien said.

"They are getting all of your personal, private data, your most intimate data. They are getting to know who your friends are, who your parents are. They can map all your relationships," he added.

All the information is going straight to the massive supercomputers in the cloud in China, O'Brien said.

"So China is going to know everything about you. They are going to have biometrics on you.

You ought to be very careful regarding who you give such personal information to," he said.

The Trump administration, he said, is looking not just at TikTok but at WeChat and some other Chinese apps as well, because the Chinese are big consumers of America's personal data.

"They will either try and get you to give it to them for free through WeChat or TikTok -- if they cannot get it that way, they will steal it," O'Brien said.

China, he said, has hacked into Marriott and stolen the personal data

of hundreds of millions of people, including their passport numbers.

"They have hacked into Experian and other credit rating agencies to get most intimate credit details. They have hacked into Anthem healthcare so that they can get medical details.

"So this is not just an advertiser trying to find out what you are interested in searching for on Google so they can sell you a different brand of car, this is a country that is looking to get every bit of personal, private information they can, so they know everything

about you," O'Brien said.

He said there were social credit scores in China for people based on how compliant they are with the Communist party dictates.

"They are going to be able to put social credit scores together on all Americans and everyone in the world soon because of artificial intelligence and supercomputing," he said.

"We need to make sure that does not happen," the US National Security Advisor said.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last week said the US is "certainly looking" at banning Chinese social media apps, including TikTok.

The American leadership's remarks on the Chinese social media apps came amid growing tensions in bilateral ties with Beijing on a range of issues, including on the coronavirus outbreak and the controversial national security law imposed in Hong Kong.

The US has banned Huawei from their 5G networks over concerns of security and Washington has been pressuring other countries to restrict the operations of the Chinese telecom firm.

## Trump administration rescinds rule on foreign students policy

**WASHINGTON, JUL 15 (PTI):** In a surprise U-turn, the Trump administration has dropped its controversial plan to deport hundreds and thousands of international students, including Indians, if their universities switch to online-only classes in this fall semester due to the coronavirus pandemic.

On July 6, the US immigration authority announced that foreign students will have to leave the country or risk deportation if their universities switch to online-only classes during the September to December semester.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said that for the fall 2020 semester students attending schools operating entirely online may not take a full online course load and remain in the US.

The U-turn in just one week by the administration on Tuesday comes following a nationwide and international outrage against its order and a series of lawsuits filed by over 200 educational American educational institutions, led by the prestigious Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The institutions wanted permanent injunctive relief to bar the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the ICE from enforcing the federal guidelines barring international students attending colleges and universities offering only online courses from staying in the country.

As many as 17 US states and the District of Columbia, along with top American IT companies such as Google, Facebook and Microsoft, joined the MIT and Harvard in the US District Court in Massachusetts against the DHS and the ICE in seeking an injunction to stop the entire rule from going into effect.

"I have been informed by the parties that they have come to a resolution. They will return to the status quo," Judge Allison Burroughs, the federal district judge in Boston, said in a surprise statement at the top of the hearing on the lawsuit.

The announcement comes as a big relief to international students, including those from India. In the 2018-2019 academic year, there were over 10 lakh international students in the US. According to a recent report of the Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVP), 1,94,556 Indian students were enrolled in various academic institutions in the US in January. Judge Burroughs said the policy would apply nationwide.

"Both the policy directive and the frequently asked questions would not be enforced anywhere," she said, referring to the agreement between the US government and MIT and Harvard.

Congressman Brad Schneider said this is a great win for international students, colleges and common sense.

"The administration needs to give us a plan to tackle our public health crisis - it can't be recklessly creating rules one day and rescinding them the next," he said in a tweet.

Last week, India also raised with the US its decision to withdraw US visas from foreign students if their universities switch to online-only classes.

The issue was raised by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla during an online meeting with US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale.

Last week, more than 136 Congressmen and 30 senators wrote to the Trump administration to rescind its order on international students.

"This is a major victory for the students, organisers and institutions of higher education in the #MA7 and all across the country that stood up and fought back against this racist and xenophobic rule," said Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley.

"Taking online classes shouldn't force international students out of our country," Congressman Mikie Sherrill said in a tweet.

In their lawsuit, the 17 states and the District of Columbia said for many international students, remote learning in the countries and communities they come from would impede their studies or be simply impossible.

The lawsuit alleged that the new rule imposes a significant economic harm by precluding thou-

sands of international students from coming to and residing in the US and finding employment in fields such as science, technology, biotechnology, healthcare, business and finance, and education, and contributing to the overall economy.

In a separate filing, companies like Google, Facebook and Microsoft, along with the US Chamber of Commerce and other IT advocacy groups, asserted that the ICE directive will disrupt their recruiting plans, making it impossible to bring on board international students that businesses, including the amici, had planned to hire, and disturb the recruiting process on which the firms have relied on to identify and train their future employees.

This will make it impossible for a large number of international students to participate in the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) programmes.

The US will "nonsensically be sending...these graduates away to work for our global competitors and compete against us..." they said.

International students enrolled in academic programmes at US universities and colleges study on an F-1 visa and those enrolled in technical programmes at vocational or other recognised non-academic institutions, other than a language training programme come to the US on an M-1 visa.

The US is the worst-hit country by the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus has infected more than 3.4 million people and killed over 130,000, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

International travel restrictions in place due to the pandemic have made it increasingly difficult for foreign students in the US to return to their home countries, while those outside America are uncertain if they will be able to travel back.

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## Indian-American Democrat Sara Gideon wins primary in Maine

**WASHINGTON, JUL 15 (PTI):** Indian-origin American politician Sara Gideon has won the Democratic primary for the US Senate seat from the state of Maine and will face incumbent Republican Senator Susan Collins in the November elections. Gideon, 48, is currently the Speaker of the Maine State Assembly. She had long been the favourite to challenge Collins, the sole remaining New England Republican in Congress.

After entrepreneur Rik Mehta, she is the second Indian-American to have won a Senate primary race this election season. Both Gideon and Mehta are the first Indian-American to win the primaries in their respective states.

Daughter of Indian-American father and Armenian mother, Gideon has already attracted the attention of the entire Democratic Party from across the nation and has raised a massive USD 23 million, which is a Maine record.

Democrats are pinning a lot of hope on her to get them a majority in the Senate.

Thank you, Maine, for choosing me as your candidate to take on Senator Collins in November, Gideon said soon after her massive electoral victory. Gideon's father immigrated from India and worked as a pediatrician in Rhode Island, where Gideon, the youngest of four children, grew up. She moved to Maine after meeting her husband Ben Gideon, a personal injury trial lawyer with the firm.

If elected in November, she will be the second Indian-American woman to be elected to the US Senate. Kamala Harris from California is the first Indian-origin Senator to be elected to the US Senate. According to local Bangor Daily News, both candidates are likely to be in the national spotlight as Maine is considered a pivotal state for Republicans looking to hold onto the Senate and Collins has become a target for liberals who argue the senator long seen as a moderate has failed to adequately stand up to President Donald Trump.

"Tonight, I am one step closer, achieving the goal for which she is running the election, Gideon said in a Facebook live telecast Tuesday night.

A broken Washington has failed to take action to address the coronavirus pandemic, she said and alleged that her rival Senator Collins has become part of the establishment.

Mainers deserve a Senator who brings people together, Gideon said and promised to work with everyone and anyone to get things done. "I'm running for Senate today because I know we can take on our toughest issues and work together to ensure that everyone has access to health care that is excellent and affordable," she said.

"To build an economy that truly works for everyone, putting the interests of working families and small businesses first. To invest in ourselves. And to finally tackle special interests' influence in our politics and return our government to the people," she added.

"And as President Trump continues to divide our country, we remember all of the times when Senator Collins enabled and excused his attacks on our democracy," she said.

## Florida, Texas and California fuel surge of new COVID-19 infections



The coronavirus has killed more than 136,000 Americans as Florida, Alabama and Utah all set records for the number of people killed by the virus in the past 24 hours. In Florida, 132 new deaths were reported Tuesday, the most ever for that state. One of every 5 new cases in the world is coming from just three states: Florida, Texas and California.

With infections spiking in 41 states, hospitals are facing a crisis with ICU beds, along with doctors and nurses in short supply. This comes at the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicted the COVID-19 outbreak will only get worse later this year.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said on Tuesday that he expects deaths to rise again, but not to the levels seen in the last peak in the spring.

He also said there should be no problem getting children back to school in areas where the outbreak is minimal. But the decision should be up to local officials.

On Tuesday, the CEO of Miami's largest health system said one-third of all their patients have the coronavirus and about 200 employees have come with the virus.

The steady stream of new COVID-19 patients is pushing doctors and nurses to their limits.

Dr. Mark Supino is

back to work at Jackson Memorial's ER in Miami after contracting the virus himself.

"... it's really about keeping our heads above water," he told CBS News. "We have the resources that we need, fortunately. How much longer can we go? ... I think part of the challenge is not knowing how much longer there is to go."

Florida reported 132 new deaths, a one-day record. Lakeisha Snipes, a Miami bus driver, was among those who died this week.

Governor Ron DeSantis said he's activated 3,000 relief nurses for the Sunshine State.

But one Florida nurse who went to New York City to help during the height of the outbreak there, only to now be dealing with it at home, said getting new nurses could be difficult.

"Right now, Texas is sucking in all ICU ER nurses," she explained. "They're getting all the specialty nurses. Arizona is getting the leftovers of that. So what does Florida get?"

All those states need them. In Texas, where hospitalizations have surged nearly 60% over the last two weeks, some smaller hospitals are having to turn away COVID patients. In the Rio Grande Valley, ambulances are waiting five to 12 hours to deliver patients.

In Arizona, Moises Ramirez Loza has been on a ventilator for more than a week. His first-

floor room — a saving grace — is allowing his children to keep vigil.

California's renewed attempt to stop the spread — closing down all bars, indoor dining and in some counties, gyms and nail salons — is getting pushback.

New York pressed ahead on Tuesday with an effort to require visitors from 22 states to self-quarantine or face up to a \$10,000 fine. And with the Republican National Convention in Jacksonville just over a month away, organizers are planning to move events to outdoor venues given Florida's coronavirus surge.

Meanwhile, Dr. Robert Redfield of the CDC warned that not wearing masks over the next few weeks could turn dire, especially when the coronavirus pandemic coincides with another flu season. If everyone wore face coverings, the virus could be stopped in four to 12 weeks.

"I do think the fall and the winter of 2020 and 2021 are going to be probably one of the most difficult times that we experienced in American public health," he said.

On Tuesday, there were promising results in testing of a new COVID-19 vaccine being developed by Moderna, based in Massachusetts. The vaccine produced antibodies in all of the patients who've received it. The vaccine now moves on to the next phase of testing.

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**CATCHING AIR!** Actress Brooke Burke taped segments for her Brooke Burke Body app at home in Malibu, California.

## Billboard just made it harder to cheat your way into a no. 1 single

On Monday, Billboard announced plans to make a major change when calculating the Billboard 200 and Hot 100 chart scores. After years of artists bundling album or single sales with concert tickets and merchandise, Billboard will no longer count those releases toward charting. The loophole has been utilized far and wide by major artists chasing chart-toppers in the past five years, and Billboard has yet to set a start date for the new restrictions.

This motion reverses a number of rule changes put into effect this January, which outlined that albums bundled with merchandise must be available to purchase separately on web stores. Billboard also tried to disincentive bundling by requiring that merchandise without the album included should be priced lower than its bundle. The latest rule changes function as “an acknowledgement that those measures have fallen short of the intended goal of accurately reflecting consumer intent,” per Billboard.

You might be thinking: who still cares about the Billboard charts in the throes of a global pandemic? If some popular artists and their fans who stream singles on ten devices concurrently are any indication, then a subsection of the music industry still really cares about this stuff. Take 6ix9ine, who back in May launched a public crusade against Billboard, alleging corrupt practices and merch bundle exploitation (which he too was utilizing) that prevented “GOOBA” from topping the charts. He was edged out by Ariana Grande and Justin Bieber’s “Stuck With U,” which was bolstered by a late surge in merch bundles. (Nevermind that 6ix9ine would

earn his first no. 1 the following month with his Nicki Minaj-featuring “Trollz,” temporarily as-suing his problems with the chart.)

It may seem incredibly futile to care about chart measurements, since they’ve long done a patchwork job of actually conveying what’s the most popular music in America. At the height of ticket bundling, it provided a boost to indie artists like Arcade Fire and LCD Soundsystem (also, The Chainsmokers,) who weren’t moving huge numbers of physical records or downloads separate from concert tickets. Even if just a fraction of fans actually claimed the downloads to qualify a bundle for charting, it would often be enough to push a marginal record over the top. It’s a practice you can trace back to as early as 2004, when Prince bundled a free copy of Musicology to every fan who saw him on tour behind that record. After coasting into the chart’s top three on the back of bundling, Billboard introduced new regulations against the practice that were still wide enough to exploit up through this year.

While merch bundling was still commonplace throughout the pandemic, it is a bit curricular that the rule change would coincide with a prolonged period of no touring for major artists. There’s no end in sight to lost touring revenues, so artists are no longer able to extract chart milestones and album sales from fans pre-ordering concert tickets. Album sales and any non-streaming music revenue has been in a freefall for some time now, and the Billboard charts will always be one of the more inscrutable measurements for an industry health check.

# Autopsy confirms Naya Rivera's death was **accidental** drowning

**LOS ANGELES, JUL 15 (AP):** An autopsy confirmed on Tuesday that “Glee” star Naya Rivera died from accidental drowning, officials said, while her family released a statement honouring her “everlasting legacy and magnetic spirit”.

The examination, performed the day after the 33-year-old’s body was found in a Southern California lake, showed no signs of traumatic injury or disease that might have contributed to the drowning and gave no initial indication that drugs or alcohol may have played a role in her death, the Ventura County Medical Examiner said in a statement.

Dental records were used to confirm Rivera’s identity and routine toxicology tests will be performed for the presence of drugs and alcohol, the statement said.

Rivera was found in Lake Piru on Monday, five days after she disappeared while boating with her four-year-old son, who was found asleep and alone on the boat hours later.

The autopsy’s findings were all consistent with the expectations of the Sheriff’s Office, which conducted the search and investigation.

Rivera’s family members released their first public statement on Tuesday since her disappearance, saying they are “so grateful for the outpouring of love and prayers for Naya, Josey and our family over the past week. While we grieve the loss of our beautiful legend, we are blessed to honour her everlasting legacy

and magnetic spirit”.

The statement said Rivera was “an amazing talent, but was an even greater person, mother, daughter and sister... Heaven gained our sassy angel”. The

Naya loved most of all”.

Josey is Rivera’s son with her former husband, actor Ryan Dorsey. She called the boy “my greatest success, and I will never do any better than him”.



family thanked the search teams for their “commitment and unwavering effort to find Naya”.

The creators of “Glee” also released a statement in tribute to Rivera on Tuesday, announcing that they would be creating a college fund for her son and remembering her as a joyful and immensely talented performer.

“Naya was more than just an actor on our show -- she was our friend,” Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan said in the statement.

“Our hearts go out to her family, especially her mom, Yolanda, who was a big part of the ‘Glee’ family, and her son Josey,” the three producers said, referring to the child as “the beautiful son

While she was not initially hired as a “Glee” cast member, it “did not take more than an episode or two for us to realise that we had lucked into finding one of the most talented, special stars we would ever have the pleasure of working with”, the producers said.

Rivera could act, sing, dance and “nail a joke as well as she could crush you with an emotional scene... She was a joy to write for, a joy to direct and a joy to be around”, they said.

In portraying a high school student in an openly lesbian relationship on “Glee”, Rivera ensured that her character’s love for her partner was “expressed with dignity, strength and with pure intentions”, the producers said.

## Nine Inch Nails artist ridicules pro-Trump fan group: ‘You’ve never actually listened to the lyrics’

Artist Rob Sheridan, known for his extensive collaborations with Nine Inch Nails, has expressed bemusement with a pro-Donald Trump fan group.

Nine Inch Nails, fronted by Trent Reznor, are known for their politically charged songs with progressive, left-wing messages.

On Twitter, Sheridan, who served as the band’s art director from 1999 to 2014, responded to a screenshot of a Facebook group called “Nine Inch Nails America”, which describes itself as “a group for fans of Nine Inch Nails who are Trump supporters, conservatives, or just despise what the ‘left’ has become in the US”.

“When you’ve never actually listened to the lyrics,” he said, captioning the picture.

“I just took a closer look at the godawful graphic of that FB group,” he continued. “They’re specifically using my glitched ‘With Teeth’ version of the NIN logo that coincided with a song that was a direct dig at the Bush administration, but to be fair they’ve only had 15 years to figure that out.”

Sheridan also highlighted a backdrop which was used during the band’s 2008 tour, which featured a giant image of then-president George W Bush which morphed, over the course of a song, into

the Republican presidential candidate John McCain.

“The gag was that old white Repub warmongers were so similar, you didn’t even realise it was happening,” he had previously explained.

Referring back to the tour, Sheridan



joked that the band “weren’t even remotely subtle”.

Nine Inch Nails are far from the first band to have fans miss the political point of their music. Last month, right-wing fans of Rage Against the Machine were mocked online for boycotting the band after belatedly realising the group’s (overt) political leanings.

Sheridan made reference to the Rage Against the Machine furore in his tweets, writing: “The Venn Diagram of members of this group and people who complained about [Rage Against the Machine member] Tom Morello getting ‘too political’ is a big dumb circle.”

## Coroner confirms Elvis Presley's grandson Benjamin Keough took his own life

Keough was the son of Lisa Marie Presley and musician Danny Keough

A coroner has confirmed that Benjamin Keough, the late grandson of Elvis Presley, took his own life. Keough, who was the son of Lisa Marie Presley and musician Danny Keough, passed away on Sunday (July 12) in Calabasas, California. He was 27. Following an autopsy, the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner’s Office has confirmed that Keough took his own life, with his cause of death being listed as a shotgun wound.

In a statement released earlier this week, Lisa Marie Presley’s representative Roger Widynowski said that she is “completely heartbroken, inconsolable and beyond devastated but trying to stay strong for her 11-year-old twins and her oldest daughter Riley.

Lisa Marie once described Keough’s resemblance to her famous father as “just uncanny”. “Ben does look so much like Elvis. He was at the Opry and was the quiet storm behind the stage,” she once said (via TMZ).

“Everybody turned around and looked when he was over there. Everybody was grabbing him for a

### ARIES:

Practitioners of the law of attraction believe that the Universe works as a catalogue. What we ask for and believe in is what we will create—and so we must be accountable for every thought and action we put into the cosmos. Today, in order to give your dreams the power to manifest, the cards are urging you to create a vision board consisting of images, quotes, and affirmations that remind you of the final destination.

Tip: You are the creator of your own reality.

### TAURUS:

Your time is your currency. Your energy is your currency. How are you choosing to utilise your resources? The cards are painting a picture of somebody who is being pushed and pulled in many directions. Today, instead of letting the world get the better of you, set an intention for the things you wish to achieve through the course of the day and consciously direct your energy towards the fulfilment of these goals. Yes, this will require saying no to the unrealistic demands of others.

Tip: Focus your energy towards the achievement of your goals.

### GEMINI:

This is a test, Gemini, one that’s challenging the very foundation on which you have built your dreams. The real question is: will you stand up for your truth or dilute your message? Sometimes, you need to take the not-so-easy way out of the maze. Some of you will be challenged in the realm of your interpersonal relationships as well. Are you agreeing with others for the sake of maintaining law and order? What you want to remember now and for the

rest of your life: self-betrayal comes at a price.

Tip: Speak your truth no matter what.

### CANCER:

Heaven and hell are not far away concepts. They both exist right here in this time and space dimension. The real question is, what do “you” want to create in your reality? Will you choose the path of love or let fear sabotage the game for you? Remember who you are and why you started this journey, Cancer, as you recommit to your life goals. The desired destination may seem unrealistic at this point.

Tip: When in doubt, choose love.

### LEO:

You may feel like you’re doing your best to move forward, but with no avail. However, now is not the time to give up or doubt the chosen path. Instead of second-guessing yourself, let your disappointments propel you forward. The cards are affirming that you are on the right track now. Those who are in the midst of redefining their goals or making important decisions are being asked to research in a dedicated manner. This way you will be backed by both reason and intuition.

Tip: Let your disappointments propel you forward.

### VIRGO:

The cards are urging you to re-examine your relationship with yourself. Are you where you want to be? If not, what’s keeping you from embracing your purpose? Issues related to self-worth may be a constant, reminding you that there is some more inner work to be done. A good way to activate this power is by connecting with your solar plexus, the third energy centre in your body. Visualise a

luminescent yellow-golden ball of light spinning clockwise until it grows in size and clears the blocks.

Tip: You’ve got the power.

### LIBRA:

As a Venusian, you understand the law of balance, yet you tend to falter ever so often. A quick vibe check is in order, Libra. Are you putting the needs of those around you before your own? Do you think you need to be ‘productive’ at all times in order to gain the validation and approval of others? Today, the cards are reminding you that the work you do on yourself is just as important as the work you put out into the world.

Tip: Nurture your mind, body, and soul.

### SCORPIO:

Today, the cards are urging you to explore the mind + body connection. The manifestation of what you are experiencing may be on a physical level, but its roots lie in your subconscious. For instance, knee-related issues indicate a rigid personality. By that logic, learning to go with the flow could bring a sense of ease and comfort to this joint.

Tip: Explore that mind, body, and soul connection.

### SAGITTARIUS:

You’re always talking about manifesting the big stuff, but are you willing to put in the work that will get you there? No more excuses, Sagittarius. The cards are urging you to get down and dirty with the project at hand as you let go of the need for instant gratification. Some of you may have acquired a new skill recently, in which case your magic word is ‘practice’. Looking to expand your business?

Tip: Don’t underestimate the power of daily practice.

### CAPRICORN:

If perfection could be achieved overnight, then our lives would look entirely different. But the truth is, it takes patience and perseverance to get to the desired destination—qualities that you have been blessed with in abundance. Project Self-Improvement is in order, Capricorn. Some of you could be dealing with ups and downs on the physical front. Movement and exercise is a good way to stay on top of your game.

Tip: Give holistic nutrition a shot.

### AQUARIUS:

They say there’s a fine line between genius and insanity. But you wouldn’t know anything about that, would you? You erased the remainder a long time ago. What the cards are urging you to focus on today are the bizarre ideas that are coming through from your superconsciousness. Don’t waste time second-guessing yourself. Bringing these ideas to life is in alignment with your soul purpose. Those who are already working in the media will come to realise this is their time to shine.

Tip: You’re meant to bring these bizarre ideas to life.

### PISCES:

What if we said the only roadblock between where you are now and where you want to be is yourself? Today instead of second-guessing your role in the world, believe in your magic. Take the first step despite your trepidation. You’ll be surprised by how the Universe meets you there. Remember, shadow work is not a one-time thing. It’s a constant and continuous process, somewhat like peeling the layers of an onion.

Tip: Strip away the false layers that are keeping you from believing in your own magic.