



## POONAM PANDEY IS ENGAGED!

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## BATTLE THE BOTTLE

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## TOM HANKS AND RITA WILSON ARE OFFICIALLY GREEK CITIZENS

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# SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 198 | Gangtok | Tuesday | 28 July 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | RS. 5

## Sunday pause for Sikkim – Only 10 new cases against 26 recoveries

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

Ten new cases of COVID-19 were reported on Monday even as 26 patients made full recoveries and were discharged from hospital, bringing the number of active COVID cases here down to 380. There were 397 active cases in Sikkim yesterday.

The total number of COVID cases detected in Sikkim so far is 555 of whom a total of 174 have beaten the virus and recovered.

In his daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department DG-cum-Secretary, Dr Pempa T Bhutia informed that five new cases were detected through RT-PCR testing of 363 samples yesterday at VRD Lab in STNM hospital.

Out of these five, four are primary contacts of the patient from Arithang and the fifth is a lady from Sichey whose mother had tested positive at Chanatar, Rangpo and is already in hospital.

Meanwhile, all 50 samples tested by TrueNat yesterday returned negative.

While giving break-up of rapid antigen testing on Sunday, Dr Bhutia mentioned that RAT of all six samples at Rongli PHC returned negative. They were family members of the patient who succumbed to COVID-19 yesterday.

He further added that one sample at Pakyong and two samples at Duga tested negative during RAT. Likewise, 11 samples were tested by RAT at Rangpo yesterday in which one returnee detected positive out of six and four more contacts tested positive, he informed.

## India's COVID-19 tally crosses 14-lakh mark with record single-day spike of 49,931 cases



**NEW DELHI, JUL 27 (PTI):** With a record single-day jump of 49,931 COVID-19 cases, India's caseload climbed to 14,35,453 on Monday, while recoveries surged to 9,17,567, according to the Union Health Ministry data

The country's death toll rose to 32,771 with 708 fatalities being recorded in a day, the data updated at 8 am showed

There are 4,85,114 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country, while 9,17,567 patients have recovered and one person has migrated

The recovery rate stands at 63.92 per cent, according to the data

The total number of confirmed cases also includes foreigners

This is the fifth consecutive day when COVID-19 cases have increased by more than 45,000

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a total of 1,68,06,803 samples have been tested up to July 26, with 5,15,472 samples being tested on Sunday.

## Injured Lineman tests positive at CRH emergency ward, WhatsApp university peddles panic

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

A Lineman injured in the line of duty at Timburbong, West Sikkim, was rushed to the emergency ward of the Central Referral Hospital at around 4AM Monday morning. Following prescribed COVID-19 protocol since he was brought in from a containment zone, he was screened for Novel Coronavirus and the Rapid Antigen Test returned positive. He was then shifted to the COVID-19 Wing at STNM Hospital.

WhatsApp warriors picked up this information and people woke up to various versions of this incident, all of which warned people against going to CRH even in the event of a medical emergency since the facility was "infected." This is dangerous advice, as was also attested by the CRH

## Govt okays home quarantine for asymptomatic COVID cases

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

The "high-level" meeting chaired by Chief Minister PS Tamang today has decided that asymptomatic COVID-19 patients "may" be placed in home quarantine.

The meeting, which was also attended by the CM's Cabinet colleagues and senior government officers, agreed on this "in view of the increase in number of cases" in Sikkim. The State currently has 380 active cases, actually 17 fewer than it did on Saturday.

Be that as it may, the meeting also decided that the technical committee of the Health Department "may" issue Standard Operating Procedure in this regard.

Interestingly, also today, the SDM-Soreng directed the SHO, Soreng to "immediately" register an FIR against four residents of Mangsari who had been sent to Home Quarantine because they were primary and secondary contacts of a COVID-positive person

from Budang but had attended a paddy planting ceremony when they should have been quarantined.

Meanwhile, the high-level committee also decided that drivers and helpers of trucks carrying essential commodities and coming from Siliguri to be changed upon arrival at Rangpo. This will essentially mean having two teams of drivers/helpers on either side of the border.

For marriages, funerals, etc, permission will have to be taken from the concerned DC.

One time movement of GREF workers in Rongli, who have completed their quarantine period, to be allowed to enable them to reach their work sites.

Movement of workers in border areas may be allowed if the DCs are satisfied that all safety measures are being followed.

One time movement of Pharma workers stranded in different districts will be allowed with prior clearance from the concerned DC.

management, which has stressed that anyone who needs emergency medical attention "should seek medical help because not doing so could be more harmful to critical patients needing immediate medical interventions."

"We would also request the public not to panic and follow COVID-19 safety measures diligently," an official communiqué from CRH states.

The release goes on to inform that in the process of initial management of the patient in the Emergency Room and the subsequent shifting of the patient to STNM Hospital, the staffs present at the Emergency Room were exposed and have been shifted to isolation. The facility has been sanitized.

"The Management of CRH would like to inform the general public that the Hospital is fully functional and

not sealed, contrary to the fake news making rounds in the several media platforms. Our OPDs and other departments are open and receiving and treating patients," the release issued by Sikkim Manipal University, PRO, Sarikah Atreya, informs.

The release adds, "The Management would also like to reassure the general public that CRH has been and will continue to serve the people of Sikkim at this hour of crisis, by performing all duties as a Non COVID-19 Health Care centre and will not put anyone at undue risk"

Meanwhile, the DC-West, has informed that all contacts of the Lineman at Timburbong and from there onwards to Jorethang PHC and the journey to Gangtok have been traced and isolated and some even tested through RAT [in which they returned Negative].

## Central Pendam Panchayat provides essentials to COVID positive families

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

Central Pendam Gram Panchayat Unit, East Sikkim has come forward to support all COVID-19 positive families in the area, a press release informs.

A team headed by Panchayat President, Dronacharya Sapkota, vice president, Meena Darjee, Members: Ganga Pradhan, Laxmi Prasad Rasaily and Bharat Kumar Chettri visited their ward and they provided food grains, masks, sanitizers to all the 23 COVID-19 positive families today.

Dronacharya Sapkota informed that as per protocol, the COVID-19 positive families are not allowed to come out of their homes and have to stay indoors practicing home quarantine so the Panchayat Members have decided to support them.

## CM takes stock of essential commodities supplies

GANGTOK, 27 JUL (IPR):

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang convened a meeting with Food and Civil Supplies Department at Samman Bhawan today. The meeting was held to take stock of essential commodities in the State.

The meeting was attended by Minister, Food and Civil Supplies Department Arun Upreti, Chief Secretary S. C. Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary Finance V. B. Pathak, Secretary Food and Civil Supplies L. B. Chettri, senior officials of the department, DCSOs of all districts and other officials.

During the meeting, schemes under Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana, Aatma



Nirbhar Yojana and other schemes of the Government of India were discussed in detail.

The Chief Minister took stock of distribution of essential commodities in the State and also assessed the district-wise distribution during the lockdown period.

The Chief Minister in his brief address directed the department

to take urgent steps to ensure the availability of essential commodities in the State. He also directed the department to effectively implement all the centre government schemes pertaining to the under privileged section. He directed the department to coordinate with the concerned MLAs and other officials and

shortlist the beneficiaries list amongst the under privileged people having Aadhaar card to distribute the benefits under various schemes.

The Chief Minister also urged the department to ensure buffer stock of essential commodities in the districts owing to present monsoon season and the pandemic situation.

## CM CHAIRS STATE TASK FORCE MEETING

### State Level Steering Committee to be constituted for manpower management

**GANGTOK, 27 JUL (IPR):** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang chaired a high level meeting of State Task Force to review the State Government plan of action on COVID-19 at Samman Bhawan today.

The meeting was attended by Cabinet Ministers, Chief Secretary, Addl. Chief Secretary Finance, DGP, Heads of various Government departments, ADGP Law and Order, DIG Range, and senior officers of the State administration.

Chief Secretary, S.C. Gupta in his opening remarks presented a brief overview of the status of COVID-19 in the State. He also briefed about the second Notification issued on 26th July with regard to extension of lockdown, taking into account the prevailing situation in the State.

The Chief Secretary apprised that the State is also facing monsoon woes due to incessant rainfall and the government is trying to restore the situation so that least hurdles and headships are being faced by

the people. The State administration has also pulled manpower (safaikarmacharis and office attendants) from various departments to augment the manpower in the Health Department.

During the meeting, contact tracing, testing and preventive measures of COVID-19 along with post lockdown scenario after 1st August was also discussed at length.

The Chief Minister in his address informed about the State Government's effective coordination to tackle the present situation. He pointed out in detail about the menace of fake news being circulated in social media which is adding to the already existing challenge. He stressed on the need to disseminate correct and factual information through credible source and all news or information in any form should be verified and thoroughly checked with concerned department before posting and uploading.

He further said that if anybody is found to be spreading fake news on social media, electronic media, or in any form, Government will take stringent action.



The Chief Minister also stressed on the need to consistently follow basic guidelines by everyone and added that the sudden surge of positive cases in the State is due to the gross violation of lockdown norms, despite repeated appeal from the State Government. He directed the Police to strictly initiate action against those who are found violating the lockdown

guidelines. The proper health guidelines should be enforced and implemented in letter and spirit.

The Chief Minister maintained that post 1st August, there could be slight relaxation to facilitate certain activities. He urged everyone to continue to abide by all safety norms.

It was also informed that a State Level

Steering Committee to be constituted in the State for manpower management and keeping in view both present and future requirements in all districts.

In the meeting, it was informed that if any person came in contact with COVID-19 positive cases, they should immediately contact the toll free State helpline number 104. The Chief Minister stressed that the Helpline Number should be adequately publicized as a potential medium to aid in contact tracing.

The meeting also took stock of the arrangements in place for operation of OPD services in Old STNM hospital as a makeshift facility to provide basic healthcare. Issues concerning supply of medicines and consumables in various hospitals, CHCs, PHCs, and PHSCs were also discussed in detail.

The Chief Minister also directed the State administration to immediately address the shortage of manpower in Health Department and make it fully equipped. There should not be dearth of manpower and medicines in the hospitals across the State, he stated.



# Containment zones in Namchi sanitized



**NAMCHI, 27 JUL (IPR):** Following reports of COVID-19 being detected in Namchi and subsequent containment zones of the said area on 25 July, the District Administration ordered thorough sanitization to prevent further spread of the disease in Mirage building and its surrounding areas today.

The area located in Namchi bazaar was also sanitized as per said safety and hygiene protocol keeping in view the instance of positive case in the area a few days earlier.

## ED books Sanjay Bhandari in fresh money laundering case

**NEW DELHI, JUL 27 (PTI):** The Enforcement Directorate has filed a money laundering case against absconding defence consultant Sanjay Bhandari to probe kickbacks worth USD 4.99 million allegedly received by him from South Korean major Samsung Engineering Co Ltd (SECL) in 2009, officials said on Monday.

Bhandari's firm was paid by SECL, in violation of rules, to influence government officials in awarding a Rs 6,744-crore contract for setting up a Dual Feed Cracker Unit in Gujarat to OPaL, a company promoted by some oil PSUs, including ONGC, they said.

OPaL, in turn, awarded the contract of the project to a consortium of SECL and Germany's Linde for Rs 6875.11 crore, they said.

They said the central probe agency has filed an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), equivalent to a police FIR, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe these dealings.

The agency took cognisance of a CBI FIR filed early this month against Bhandari and others in the case, they said.

This is the second money laundering case against Bhandari after he was booked by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for alleged possession of undisclosed assets abroad and other charges in February, 2017.

A charge sheet was filed by the ED in this case in June.

The central probe agency said Bhandari had not cooperated with it in the probe in the first case

and had run away from the country and was last stated to be in the UK or a nearby country.

In the latest case, the CBI has charged Bhandari for allegedly receiving kickbacks worth USD 4.99 million from SECL in 2009 to influence government officials in awarding the Rs 6,744-crore contract to ONGC Petro Additions Ltd (OPaL), a company promoted by PSUs like ONGC, GAIL and Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation.

The allegation is that the Dual Feed Cracker Unit (DFCU), the CBI had said, which was to be set up at Dahej Petrochemical Complex in Gujarat, was awarded in favour of SECL in 2009 and advance payments were released to it from ONGC in contravention of Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) guidelines.

In its FIR, the CBI has also named the then Senior Manager of SECL Hong Namkoong, UK-based Foster Wheeler Energy Ltd, and Bhandari's UAE-based company Santech International FZC, besides unidentified officials of ONGC and OPaL, for alleged corruption in the award of the contract.

The tender for the DFCU project was floated on April 20, 2007 for which two consortiums -- Germany's Linde and Korean SECL, and USA-based Shaw Stone and Webster and Indian Larsen & Toubro -- submitted their bids.

Linde and SECL consortium won the contract at their quoted "lump sum price of Rs 6875.11 crore" on the basis of higher Net Present

Value (NPV).

NPV of Linde and SECL was calculated to be around Rs 4,160 crore while that of Shawstone and Webster and L&T around Rs 3,918 crore.

The tender committee came to the conclusion that NPV of Linde and SECL was higher and lump sum prices were 7.75 per cent lower than the competing consortium.

The other consortium challenged the decision but the objection was turned down and the contract was awarded to Linde and SECL consortium for a lump sum price of over Rs 6,744 crore on February 10, 2009.

The agreement signed between the consortium and ONGC and OPaL had an integrity pact which said no agent or consultant was to be engaged and no commission or fee could be paid against the contract in India or abroad, the CBI had said.

The CAG had also raised objections to it and the project was not completed even two years after the deadline of August 2012.

The CBI has alleged that Bhandari in its Income Tax returns did not disclose maintenance of foreign bank accounts in the name of Santech International and also the receipt of USD 4.99 million.

Bhandari's case first came to light after the Income Tax department conducted searches against him in April, 2016 and recovered certain "sensitive" official defence documents from his premises.

The tax department had booked him under criminal charges of the anti-black money law.

## Elephant found dead in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district

**KOLKATA, JUL 27 (PTI):** A full-grown elephant was found dead near a tea estate in Nagrakata area in the morning hours.

He said it was a male elephant of around 30 years of age.

Another forest official said prima facie the death of the elephant seemed to be natural

Ravikant Sinha said the elephant was found dead near a tea estate in Nagrakata area in the morning hours.

He said it was a male elephant of around 30 years of age.

Another forest official said prima facie the death of the elephant seemed to be natural

as no electric wire was found lying near the spot between two tea estates but still the forest department was ascertaining the circumstances and the carcass has been sent for autopsy.

A male pachyderm died of electrocution at Bamandanga area

of the district on July 22 and another jumbo also died of electrocution at Ramghora area also of the district on July 21.

On July 9, a carcass of a male elephant was found in a paddy field near Garo Busty village in the Rajabhatkhawa area adjoining the Buxa Tiger Reserve in neighbouring

Alipurduar district.

Six elephants have died in Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts, including two near the Buxa Tiger Reserve, since mid-June, forest department sources said.

Four of the six elephant deaths were caused by electrocution, the sources said.

## Punjab farmers hold protest against Centre's ordinances

**CHANDIGARH, JUL 27 (PTI):** Growers, representing 13 farmers' outfits in Punjab, held a state-wide protest against three ordinances of the Centre on Monday.

The agitating farmers took out protest marches at several places in the state, including Ludhiana, Moga, Muktsar, Phagwara and Hoshiarpur, to express their anger.

They were protesting against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance.

The farmers moved towards the residences or offices of the leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the BJP in their tractors to protest against the ordinances.

Adequate numbers of police personnel were deployed in view of the

farmers' state-wide protest, officials said.

Thirteen farmers' outfits, including All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugarhan), BKU (Krantikari) and BKU (Sidhuwal), joined hands to launch the protest.

The Centre is trying to destroy the farming sector with the implementation of these three ordinances, said a protesting farmer in Muktsar.

Farmers also slammed leaders of the SAD for supporting these ordinances.

The main apprehension of the farming community against these ordinances was the dismantling of the minimum support price system for foodgrain procurement.

In Phagwara, farmers in around 500 tractors moved from the grain market to the residence of Union minister of state for Commerce and Industry Som Parkash.

They put up black flags and anti-ordinances banners on tractors.

The protest threw road traffic out of gear on the Hoshiarpur-Phagwara road and later the protesters were stopped by police at some distance from Parkash's residence.

They held rallies at grain market and on the main road of Urban Estate, a few furlongs away from the residence of the minister.

Manjit Singh Rai, President BKU (Doaba), alleged that these ordinances would pave way for the entry of corporates into agriculture activities, forcing small farmers out of their ancestral profession.

They also alleged that the minimum support price (MSP) of crops would be withdrawn, leaving farmers at the mercy of private players.

Satnam Singh Sahni, General Secretary Doaba Kisan Union urged Punjab Chief Minister

Amarinder Singh to convene an emergency session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha for adopting a unanimous resolution against these ordinances.

Farmers said a countrywide protest will be held against these ordinances on August 9.

In Amritsar, farmers also took out a protest from the Company Bagh area to the residence of BJP MP Shwait Malik.

In Ludhiana, farmers warned of intensifying their agitation if the ordinances were not rolled back.

In Hoshiarpur, activists of farmers' outfits took out a protest march from Tanda Chowk to Rahimpur grain market.

They also gave

memorandum to the Naib Tehsildar at Rahimpur, demanding withdrawal of the ordinances.

At some places, including Moga, farmers reportedly flouted social distancing norms during the protest.

They also rued that rising diesel prices have raised their input cost.

The protests were held despite Chief Minister Amarinder Singh appealing to the farmers to postpone the agitation against the anti-farmer ordinances in view of the restrictions in place to check the spread of coronavirus.

On July 20, BKU (Lakhawal) and BKU (Rajewal) and some other outfits had staged protests on similar issues.

## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### 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 ad is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks tec. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

Riverside land [General] along Ra-nipool-Rumtek Highway near Adampool, stretching from the roadside down till the river bank. Total area measuring 0.2348 Hectares [approximately 25,274 sq ft]. Ideal for developing a Resort. Parties interested in purchasing the entire plot can contact 9083826462 and 9832556698. Brokers will not be entertained.

### FLAT FOR SALE

4BHK flat, total area 2376 sqft  
Ninety Bazaar, Near Paljor Stadium, Gangtok  
Contact: 9563083895

### LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sqft and 50X30 sqft JunkeriDara, SamlikMarchak  
Price negotiable Contact: 6296366498, 9641878315, 9593262407

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

**Contact: 9800201335**

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### LAND FOR SALE

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

## Eight get life term for murder in Jammu

**JAMMU, JUL 27 (PTI):** A court on Monday sentenced eight people to life imprisonment after holding them guilty of attacking and killing a man over a property dispute in Kanachak border belt in Jammu district in 2006, officials said.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge, Jammu, convicted 10 accused in the case and slapped a fine of Rs 10,000 on each.

While Ramesh Singh, Tilak Raj, Suram Singh, Bhalwan Singh, Raghubir Singh, Mangal Singh alias Manga, Manoj Lal and Tilak Raj got life term, Bharat Bushan and Naresh Kumar were



sentenced to two-year jail term, the officials said.

The case was lodged at Kanachak police station. According to the complaint, the accused had an enmity with Bodh Raj over some land, following which they attacked him at his home.

When he ran inside the room in a desperate bid to save himself, he

was dragged and again attacked by the accused, leaving him critically injured. They, however, fled the spot after the alarm was raised.

The investigation into the case was transferred to the Crime Branch and after thorough probe, clinching evidence was collected and charge sheet was produced against the accused in the court, the officials said.

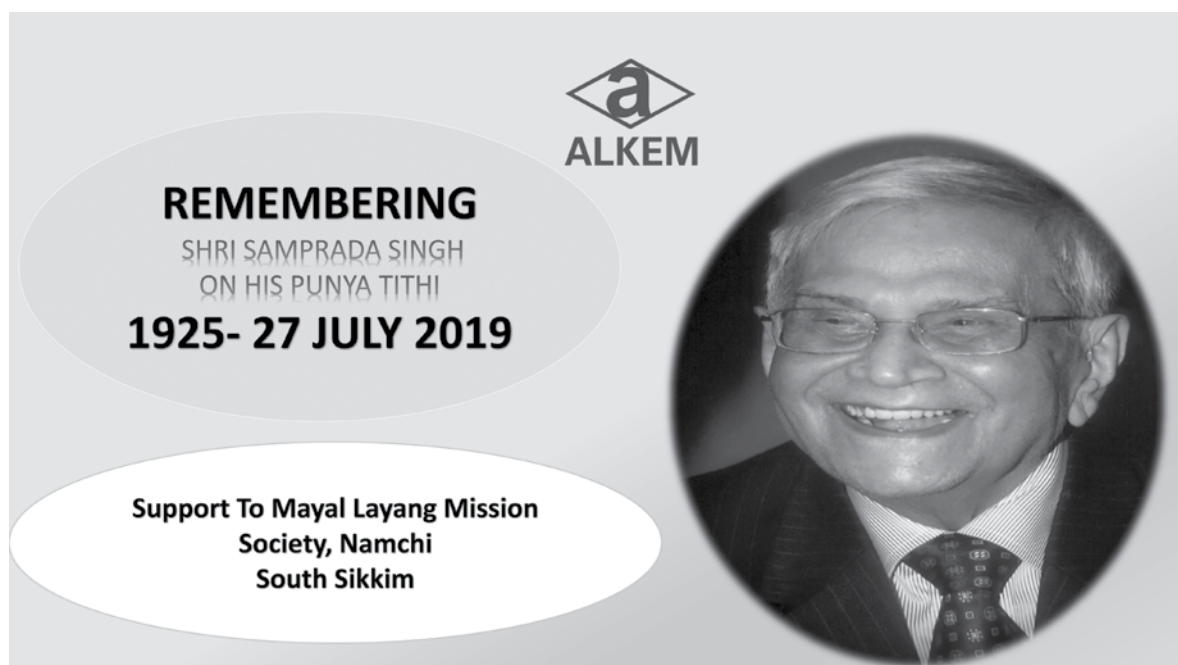


# Alkem marks death anniv of founder

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 27 JUL:**

Alkem observed the 1st death anniversary of its Founder-Chairman, Late Samprada Singh today, a press release informs. On the occasion of his Punya Tithi, Alkem employees paid tribute by offering flowers and also observed 2 minutes silence.

Apart from this many other prayer meetings and Bhakti prayers were also organized worldwide where Alkem has its presence. In fond remembrance of its Chairman, Alkem Sikkim has announced to support an Old Age home at Jalipool, East Sikkim and an Orphanage named as Mayal Lyang Mission Society at



Namchi, South Sikkim.

Objective of this project are: To make available a secure place where orphan children can play, reside and

enjoy their childhood; To improve and support the quality of life of the older person by providing basic amenities like shelter; food; To uplift the unprivileged

Girls/Children of Orphanage In this way Alkem Sikkim family pays tribute and commemorate to its beloved Founder-Chairman.

Alkem was founded in the year 1973 and still now it is gaining prestige and momentum for doing work over the past 47 years.

## Education Deptt moves career counselling online

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 27 JUL:**

With the objective to add value to learning and to reach out to students to enhance their learning despite the COVID-19 situation, the Samagra Shiksha wing of Education Department today launched a series of online career counselling sessions for secondary students, an official press release informs.

On this platform, students will get the chance to "engage in understanding and learning aspects which could guide them to make further career choices in the times to



come."

The e-learning edition of the career counselling series was launched through a webinar by Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya, in the presence of Secretary, Anil Raj Rai, State

Project Director (SPD), Samagra Shiksha and Director, Elementary Education Bhim Thatal, Director, Secondary Education Honda

Department, while congratulating the Samagra Shiksha wing, stressed the use of digital platforms for e-learning

Resource Centre Coordinators from all districts and Block Administrative Centres and other officials from the Education Department, the release details.

Mr Upadhyaya expressed happiness on the launch and underlined the need to encourage students to utilise the digital space and stressed upon the need for our students to believe in hard work and also to aim high in life.

Secretary, Education Department, while congratulating the Samagra Shiksha wing, stressed the use of digital platforms for e-learning

initiatives and desired to further explore future initiations from the Department, the release states.

Mr Thatal stated that Samagra Shiksha will accelerate e-learning initiatives in the future and stressed on the need to change the perception of students, teachers and parents about career planning.

The career counselling package has been exclusively designed for the students of the secondary level to analyse their capacity and also to support them understand what options are available after Class X.

## Dept of IT proposes to set up SEZ, BoA to consider proposal on 31 July

**NEW DELHI, JUL 27**

**(PTI):** The highest decision-making body for SEZs will on July 31 consider a proposal for setting up a new special economic zone in Sikkim with an investment of around Rs 43 crore.

S i k k i m ' ' s department of information technology has proposed to set up the SEZ.

Inter-ministerial body Board of Approval (BoA), chaired by

Commerce Secretary, Anup Wadhawan, will take up this proposal for consideration in a meeting on July 31, according to BoA's agenda.

BoA is the highest decision-making authority for special economic zones (SEZs).

"The Department of Information Technology, Government of Sikkim has submitted a proposal for setting up of an IT/ITES SEZ

at Namli, East Sikkim over an area of 6.82 Hectares," it said.

The department, which is the developer of this SEZ, has directly requested the Ministry of Home Affairs for providing National Security Clearance.

"DC (Development Commissioner), Falt SEZ has recommended the proposal for consideration of the BoA. In view of the facts and position, the

proposal is submitted for consideration of the Board for in-principle approval in terms of... the SEZ Rules, 2006," it said.

Further, the BoA would also consider a proposal of HBS Auto and ANC SEZ Pvt for further extension of the validity period of formal approval granted for setting up a zone in Gujarat.

"The developer was granted eight

extensions. Last extension validity period was extended till June 16 this year. The developer has requested for further extension in validity for one year," the agenda said.

SEZs are developed as export hubs, which enjoy certain benefits. As many as 240 such zones are operational. Exports from these zones stood at Rs 7.87 lakh crore last fiscal as against Rs 7.01 lakh crore in 2018-19.

## Sanitization at Mamring, Samardung and Turung



**NAMCHI, 27 JUL (IPR):** With the rising case of COVID-19, thorough sanitization of all the houses where COVID-19 positive cases were reported was conducted on 26 July.

The places where the

sanitization activity was carried out are: Mamring, Samardung and Turung, the sanitization process was overlooked by Incident Commander SDM (HQ), Chiran Rizal along with health inspector from Namchi District Hospital.

**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions**  
**Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances**

**PRIME MINISTER'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**  
**TO BE PRESENTED ON 31.10.2020**  
\*\*\*\*\*

Applications are invited for District Performance Indicators Programmes of Government of India and Innovations in Public Administration.

**(A). The District Performance Indicators Programmes are:**

- Inclusive Development through Credit Flow to the Priority Sector,
- Promoting People's movements --"Jan Bhagidari" in the district
- Improving service delivery and redressal of public grievances

**Eligibility**  
Districts are eligible to compete for the Awards for the above District Performance Indicators Programmes

**(B) Awards for Innovation in Public Administration will be considered in the following fields:**

"Environment conservation, disaster management, water conservation, energy education, health, women and child centric initiatives etc".

**Eligibility:-Organisations** of Central/State Governments/Districts are eligible to apply for the Awards in Innovations.

**(C) Aspiration District Programme**

**Eligibility:-** All Aspiration Districts

**(D) Namami Gange Programme**

**Eligibility:-** 57 District Ganga Committees

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Online Applications may be submitted on the designated portal from 01.08.2020  
Last date for filling applications online on PM Awards' portal will be 15.08.2020

Modalities and other details of the scheme are available on PM's Awards Portal (pmawards.gov.in) and the link of which is also available on website of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (<http://darpg.gov.in>).

**Contact person for further clarification**

Director (AR)  
Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances,  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sardar Patel Bhawan, Parliament Street,  
New Delhi - 110001 Tele Fax : 011-23743030  
Email: satish.kj@nic.in

(Kamal Kumar Thakur)  
Under Secretary to the Govt. of India  
011-23401428

**davp 32101/11/0001/2021**

## Haryana reports 5 more COVID-19 deaths; 795 fresh cases

**CHANDIGARH, JUL**

**27 (PTI):** Haryana on Monday reported five more deaths due to COVID-19, even as another big spike of 795 fresh cases pushed the state's caseload to 32,127, according to health department's daily bulletin.

There were three fatalities in Faridabad district, while one death each was reported in Ambala and Nuh districts, it said.

With this, COVID-19 death toll in Haryana has risen to 397, the bulletin said.

Among the districts which reported new infections include Faridabad (218), Gurgaon (108), Rewari (91), Karnal (81), Ambala (80), Sonapat (50), Hisar (35) and Sirsa (31),

according to the bulletin.

During the past ten days, Haryana has witnessed a sharp increase in cases, with most of them from districts falling in the NCR.

On July 17, Haryana had reported the highest single-day spike of 795 cases, while 724 cases were added on July 22, 789 on July 23, 780 on July 24, 783 on July 25 and 794 on July 26, it said.

Active cases in the state currently are 6,684, while 25,046 COVID-19 patients have recovered, according to the bulletin.

The state's recovery rate on Monday was 77.96 per cent, while the rate of doubling of infections was 23 days, it said.

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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

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

### Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected

### Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.



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



## Battle the Bottle

*Booze is a problem that the society ignores at its own peril*

The lockdown insanity is upon us; a march of at least a week ahead and a few months in the past, a period in which the only consistent factor apart from a disconnected, entitled administration has been the consistency with which the tipplers have downed their favourite spirits. Yes, liquor shops are shut in the latest lockdown, but if anyone thinks that the regulars are staring at bare bar-cabinets, they are tripping on something which they should prescribe to the rest of State so that everyone can enter the make believe world. Soon, the festive season will also have arrived and although public celebrations will be toned down, expect the coming months to be as much about piety as they will be about excesses, making this the right time to speak about alcoholism. And no, cops at play with breathalyzers, stopping vehicles and inviting drivers to blow into the equipment is not the solution. Hmm.... There was that time as well when one actually had places to go to even late at night, pick up drunk friends wasted at gatherings which carried neither risk of infection or police action. But we digress. Checking DUIs penalizes and keeps the roads and passengers safer, yes, but it does not address the core problem. One could argue about the many levels at which such random stopping [without any apparent reason] for random checks is wrong [inconvenient in the least], but that line of argument will not find many backers in light of the fact that Gangtok roads used to be dangerous after dark with too many inebriated hands behind the wheels. While checking by cops might lead to some challans and avert some accidents, what remains unaddressed is the root problem – alcoholism, a condition which does not surface only on weekends or only at night and is a 24x7 worry for too many families.

The problem of alcoholism is not talked about enough probably because it is substance abuse and HIV/ AIDS which receive funding, leading unfortunately to a situation where this condition is not as widely discussed as the scale of the problem requires. Many people tend to identify alcoholism as a traditional dispensation of the Hill People. This is an ill-informed preconception since alcoholism [as a wide-spread problem] could not have debuted in the hills more than half a century back or six decades at the most. Alcoholism really becomes possible with the arrival of the IMFLs [India Made Foreign Liquors] since the local brews required too much work and time to be manufactured in enough quantities to feed alcoholism on a scale that cause the kind of health and social complications which are now possible and common. It is hence wrong to begin any discussion on alcoholism by suggesting that it is a traditional weakness of the Hill People. The communities here might have allowed 'drinking', but that cannot be construed as addictive levels of drinking. The prejudice, however, because it serves so many businesses so well, has been allowed to set in and after it was ignored in the initial years [of IMFLs and other mass distilling units arriving], spread rapidly to ingrain itself in the society.

The damage wreaked by alcoholism cannot be stressed enough and media here should carry forward its success with getting the problem of substance abuse addressed and report more effectively and widely on the abuse of alcohol which is just as impairing. But the local media, when it overlooks the problem of alcoholism in the society, ends up reflecting the social acceptance of this malaise. Sikkim's indifference towards this problem will weigh heavy on its collective conscience some day. Many excuse alcoholism with the argument that the person is earning enough to indulge himself/ herself. Substance abuse, because it usually starts at a much younger age, is more scandalous also because of the petty crimes that the addicts invariably resort to finance their addictions. While there is no denying that substance abuse is a serious concern, alcoholism, because not enough seem to be taking it seriously, is even more worrying. Even if one were to keep the emotions aside, the impact alcoholism has on the economy should attract corrective action. Most people turn alcoholic in what should be the most productive years of their lives, both professionally as well as part of a family. When their faculties are compromised, as alcoholism is wont to do, their work suffers as do their families. Indifference towards this problem puts too much at risk because like with all social problems, alcoholism does not affect only the individual but has the entire family suffering. While the younger 'addict' makes the elders of the family suffer guilt pangs, an alcoholic, because in most cases they are working members of the family, end up abusing the family [because they have more 'power' but less control]. This is a social problem and requires the community to step forward and engage proactively in its battle against the bottle. Sadly, in Sikkim, even the war-cry has not been sounded yet...

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# It's easy to judge. But some people really can't wear a mask

**HOLLY SEALE**  
**THECONVERSATION.COM**

Victoria's chief health officer Brett Sutton said recently there were good reasons why some people can't wear a mask:

A number [...] are legitimately not able to wear masks so please don't vilify individuals or don't make the assumption they are simply stubborn. There will be people with medical, behavioural, psychological reasons [...] certainly don't make an assumption that they should be the subject of your ire.

He commented on the first day wearing a mask in public in Greater Melbourne and Mitchell Shire became mandatory, except for those without a valid reason.

IT'S EASY TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS

As wearing a mask in public becomes more common in Australia, either because it's mandatory where you live or because you choose to wear one, it might be tempting to assume people who don't wear masks are irresponsible, misguided or selfish.

You might also question why you need to wear a mask when others don't.

But some people find wearing a mask difficult or distressing. So, to reduce the risk of inflammatory or inappropriate comments being made, we need to understand some of the reasons why:

- autism — some people with autism spectrum disorders find covering the nose and mouth with

fabric can cause sensory overload, feelings of panic, and extreme anxiety

- disability — some people with a disability can find wearing a mask difficult if they cannot remove one from their face without help. For example, someone with cerebral palsy may not be able to tie the strings or put the elastic loops of a face mask over the ears, due to limited mobility

- post-traumatic stress disorder, severe anxiety or claustrophobia — people with these conditions can find wearing a mask terrifying and may not be able to stay calm or function while wearing one

- hearing impairment — people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those who care for or interact with someone who is hearing-impaired, rely on lipreading to communicate. So wearing a face mask can be a challenge

- facial deformities or physical trauma — may be incompatible with wearing a mask.

THERE ARE LEGITIMATE SAFETY CONCERNS

This is not a list of exemptions. Nor should we assume all people who fall into these categories can't wear masks.

In some situations, wearing a face covering may worsen a physical or mental health condition, lead to a medical emergency, or be a significant safety concern.

In the United States and United Kingdom there have been reports

of people with disabilities being challenged, threatened with arrest, or excluded from retail and food outlets for not wearing a mask.

Conversely, there have been incidents in which anti-mask activists have feigned disability to avoid having to wear a mask in public. This could magnify scepticism and mistrust of people with legitimate, but potentially not obvious, reasons for not having to wear a mask.

While there are people who genuinely cannot wear masks, for others, it may just take extra time, resources, adaptations, alternatives and support to feel comfortable wearing one.

That might involve a bit of trial and error before finding a mask that fits well or is made from a comfortable fabric. Others may be able to wear a mask, but for only a short time.

There are online resources with useful tips and strategies to reduce the stress and challenges associated with using a mask or face shield. However, governments also need to ensure these resources are accessible to the people who need them, their family and carers.

HOW ABOUT BREATHING PROBLEMS?

The Victorian government includes people with breathing problems on its list of valid medical exemptions for not wearing a mask in public.

But this is a grey area. We don't have evidence-based guidelines

for judging these various medical exemptions. Each country is currently taking a slightly different approach in this area.

In any case, given the types of masks the public are wearing (cloth masks or surgical/face mask), some experts say it's unlikely these masks will cause problems.

For instance, the chief medical officer of the American Lung Association said recently:

"People with underlying chronic lung disease, such as [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] or asthma, should be able to wear a non-N95 facial covering without it affecting their oxygen or carbon dioxide levels."

The World Health Organisation also says face masks of breathable material, worn properly, will not lead to oxygen deficiency or carbon dioxide intoxication.

FOR MOST OF US, WEARING A MASK IS NEW

While we all adjust to wearing masks in public, it is important we try to assume as little as possible about others based on whether they're wearing one.

Remember, the goal of the public wearing a mask when leaving the house is to reduce the risk of community transmission. If we can do that without vilifying people who genuinely can't wear masks, or need a bit of extra support to do so, we all benefit.

*[the writer is Senior Lecturer, UNSW]*

## After COVID-19, nations can tackle environmental crises by shifting priorities to sustainable development

**KAI CHAN**  
**THECONVERSATION**

A little over a year ago, in May 2019, a United Nations report on biodiversity made headlines for the bad news it contained: A million species at risk of extinction. The biosphere's many contributions to people are being degraded by a variety of industrial activities and resource use. Freshwater, soils and a stable climate are all under threat and giving way to droughts, floods, zoonotic diseases and more.

Amid all the bad news, however, were bright lights. I was one of the authors of that report, and we found a way out of the mess, with the seeds of solutions sprouting all over the world. While the report delivered a jarring message that only transformative change could address the climate and ecological crises, it also laid out a pathway to sustainability.

After days of negotiations with 132 nations over the wording of the report's summary, the other authors and I left Paris full of hope. Yet 14 months later, many nations already seem to have lost their way, focusing on restoring pre-COVID-19 economies rather than building resilient social and ecological systems for thriving sustainability.

There is a way forward, but it entails addressing several inconvenient truths.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION, DOUBLE-EDGED SWORDS

In a paper published in the new journal People and Nature, 39 co-authors and I identify what's needed for vibrant sustainable pathways. Here are a bundle of commonly misunderstood truths.

We are often told we need more technology, innovation, investment and incentives for sustainability. In truth, we actually need to shift all four. And restricting damaging forms of technology, innovation, investment and incentives is often harder — but more important — than boosting desirable kinds.

Technology, for one, is not only a source of good. It is also an enabler of ever-increasing human activity and associated environmental impacts.

In agriculture, for example, there is great scope for enhanced technologies to reconcile tough trade-offs. These technologies can help produce food for humanity while maintaining space for nature and its contributions to people, such as water purification, dust retention for air quality, the mitigation of floods and the esthetic and cultural values associated with pastoral landscapes. Think smart irrigation but also enhanced crop breeding.

Technology has not only improved yields and reduced environmental impacts, but it has also expanded agriculture into marginal lands and increased farmer dependence on other proprietary technologies, such as pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

Thus the answer is not more technology, innovation and investment, but a shift in focus. Evolved regulatory regimes would boost technologies that meet human needs while also



benefiting climate, wildlife, soils, water and broader ecosystems.

This is not simply a matter of rolling out low-carbon technology. Technology must also transition away from its reliance on newly extracted materials — which causes habitat degradation — and its production of waste. We need a circular economy, where products end their lives by becoming resources for future production.

SPEND MORE, BUT ALSO DIFFERENTLY

Underpinning innovation, investment and the use of technology are subsidies and incentives. Many have called for more public money to incentivize actions and approaches with smaller impacts on nature, including electric vehicle rebates, solar energy buyback programs and payments for ecosystem services.

Some have called for an elimination of harmful or perverse subsidies. But in governmental and intergovernmental circles, this is rarely accompanied by a specification of what is harmful or perverse, leaving the impression that most subsidies are OK.

Harmful subsidies are actually in the majority. A subsidy is harmful, we argue, if its primary purpose or effect is to enhance production or extraction. And in most contexts, including for fisheries, the majority of subsidies are just that, boosting fisheries catches and the vessels to catch fish.

The same is true for agriculture: most of the more than US\$600 billion per year in subsidies is production-oriented, which exacerbates environmental problems. Only a minority of subsidies target improved management and environmental performance.

FUND WORKERS AND THE TRANSITION

Governments struggle to fund incentive programs to cure environmental ills fuelled by harmful subsidies. Throwing good money after bad is inefficient and ineffectual. Instead, governments could re-orient all public funds towards strong and durable environmental stewardship and social sustainability.

Such a transition can help many workers whose livelihoods depend on current technologies and practices. In many nations, the wealthy co-opt most subsidies and reap the benefits of technological innovation, while the poor get left behind. Globally, small farmers are struggling with debt, droughts and crop failures, with farmer suicides in India providing a dramatic example.

Both people and nature can be served by reorienting subsidies away from producers and distributors of seeds and chemicals, and towards small-farmer loans and ecologically restorative farm practices. Similarly, ending fossil-fuel subsidies can facilitate the transition to clean energy without stranding workers, if those subsidies are reoriented to retool workers in clean technology.

Paradoxically, it's even harder to stop giving money to industries than to promise new money.

THE FATE OF COVID-19 RECOVERY FUNDING

Our new paper addresses several other inconvenient truths.

It's inconvenient to recognize that many of us must reduce our material consumption, and that we must collectively rein in human population growth. Or that solving environmental challenges requires comprehensively addressing inequalities in income and power across gender and other lines of social difference. And that effective and sustainable actions and strategies must transparently include diverse stakeholders, especially Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

We now know the components of sustainable pathways, and they have been officially approved via intergovernmental negotiation. Do governments and businesses have the courage to follow them, including in COVID recovery funding and restructuring?

Perhaps if individuals and groups hold them accountable, they will.

*[the writer is Professor in Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia]*



# 32 fresh COVID-19 cases in Arunachal; count rises to 1,158

**ITANAGAR, JUL 27 (PTI)** Thirty-two more people, including six ITBP personnel, have tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, taking the northeastern state's caseload to 1,158 on Monday, a senior health official said.

Eleven fresh cases were reported in Seppa, the district headquarters of East Kameng, eight in Changlang district, six in Upper Siang, five in the Capital Complex region and one each in East Siang and Lower Subansiri districts, State Surveillance Officer Dr L Jampa said.

The new cases in Seppa are contacts of a COVID-19 patient in East Kameng district, while four of the eight new patients in Changlang are returnees from other states and two each are government employees and health workers, he said.

The six fresh cases reported in Upper Siang district are Indo Tibetan



Border Police (ITBP) personnel, while both the new patients in East Siang and Lower Subansiri had returned from other states, Jampa said.

The five fresh infections in the Capital Complex region were detected during rapid antigen tests, he said.

Barring nine, all the new patients are

asymptomatic.

They were shifted to COVID-19 care centres, Jampa said.

Seventy-seven more people, including 70 from the Capital Complex region, have recovered from COVID-19 and were discharged from hospitals on Sunday, he said, adding they have been advised strict home quarantine and self-

monitoring.

Of the 1,158 cases, 650 are active while 505 people have recovered from the disease and three patients have died, he said.

Arunachal Pradesh witnessed a spurt in coronavirus cases after the residents of the state started returning from other parts of the country. The state has recently

registered a steep rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, with 967 people testing positive for the infection since July 1, Jampa said.

Arunachal Pradesh reported its first COVID-19 case on April 2 and the person recovered from the disease on April 16.

The state registered its second case on May 24.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlungun, Banderdewa and Nirjuli areas, has the highest number of active COVID-19 cases at 337, followed by Papum Pare (61), East Siang (39), Namsai (36), Changlang (32) and Tirap (24), the official said.

The recovery rate among the COVID-19 patients in Arunachal Pradesh is 35 per cent and a total of 59,558 samples have been tested for the disease in the state so far, Jampa added.

## COVID-19: 2 more die in Tripura, 37 fresh cases reported

**AGARTALA, JUL 27 (PTI)** Two more COVID-19 patients died in Tripura, taking the state's toll to 13, while 37 new cases pushed its tally to 3,920, a health department official said on Monday.

A 76-year-old man died due to the disease at a hospital in Gomati district on Sunday. He was also suffering from kidney ailments, according to the official.

Another 84-year-old patient, who was undergoing treatment at a private hospital since July 24, died in West Tripura district. He suffered from cardiac

problems, the official said.

"Unfortunately 2 (West 1, Gomati 1) COVID-19 POSITIVE patients died today," Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb tweeted late on Sunday night.

"Glad to share that 126 COVID-19 patients have been discharged today from various District CCCs (COVID care centres) and DCHs (dedicated COVID-19 hospitals) after their test results came negative. I pray for the speedy recovery of all the COVID-19 patients," he said in another tweet.

Of the 3,920 infected people in the state, 2,362 have recovered so far.

In view of the rising cases in Tripura, a three-day lockdown began in the northeastern state at 5 am on Monday.

Health officials said a door-to-door survey is being conducted to track suspected COVID-19 patients.

Education minister and cabinet spokesperson Ratan Lal Nath had earlier said the week-long survey will help the authorities prepare a map of the regions where there are multiple cases.

## Assam reports 1,142 new COVID-19 cases, two more deaths

**GUWAHATI, JUL 26 (PTI)** Assam reported 1,142 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday, taking the state's tally to 32,228, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Two COVID-19 patients also died in the state, raising the toll to 79, he said.

Of the new cases, 171 were from Guwahati, 188 from Kamrup and 100 from Darrang, the minister said.

Sarma said 20,542 tests were done in the last 24 hours, of which 1,142 tested positive, which means there was a low positivity rate of 5.55 per cent.

The two patients, including a 53-year-old woman from Tinsukia and a 50-year-old

man from Dibrugarh, died at Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh, he said.

The mortality rate in the state is currently at 0.25 per cent, officials said.

Meanwhile, 985 patients were discharged from different hospitals in the state.

So far, 24,040 people have recovered from the disease in Assam.

A three-month-old baby boy and his mother were among those who were recovered and discharged during the day.

They were undergoing treatment at Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital (MMCH).

A total of 1,178 police

personnel have so far tested positive and of them, four died and 893 recovered.

"Four of our colleagues made the supreme sacrifice and inspire us every day. After fighting bravely, 168 of our #CoronaWarriors have already joined back duty," Assam Police tweeted.

The first COVID-19 case was detected in the state on March 31.

The current doubling time has increased to 14.5 days from the previous week's 11.4 days.

There are 8,106 active cases in the state, while three patients have migrated out of Assam.

More than 7.74 lakh samples have been tested in the state for COVID-19

## Nagaland reports another COVID-19 death; tally rises to 5

**DIMAPUR, 27 JUL [NAGALANDPAGE]:** Nagaland reported another COVID-19 death on Sunday taking the death toll due to novel corona virus in the State to five.

On Sunday, an 82-year old patient from Zeliangrong village in Dimapur who was on ventilator passed away, taking the COVID-19 death toll to 5.

The confirmatory test by RT-PCR of another COVID-19 related death on Saturday is still awaited. The deceased – an employee of Zinyu Gas Agency – had tested positive for COVID-19 by TrueNat after his death Saturday morning.

The 82-year old patient who passed away on Sunday had earlier tested positive while he was admitted at the Intensive Care Unit of Eden Hospital on July 17. The octogenarian was earlier admitted at the



Shamrock Hospital on July 16. He had coronary problems and had been undergoing treatment since the past few years for the same.

According to a kin of the deceased, the deceased was admitted at Shamrock Hospital on July 16. The next day the attending doctor advised that the patient be shifted to Nikos hospital as he needed to be treated in ICU. The same day he was shifted to the ICU of Nikos Hospital where he was

kept for a few hours. But his condition worsened and he needed to be put on ventilator. As both ventilators at Nikos were already occupied, the deceased's family was advised to take him to the Eden Hospital. The attending doctor at Nikos went ahead and arranged for his admission into Eden Hospital. The same evening he was shifted to Eden where a TrueNat test was conducted and his result returned positive. The RT-PCR test

result also came positive. "I spoke to him while he was admitted in the ICU of Nikos Hospital, and also after he was admitted into Eden. After that his health started deteriorating," the eldest daughter in law of the deceased told Nagaland Page.

She informed that her father-in-law largely kept to himself and rarely went out of his room. "So we were shocked when doctors at Eden hospital informed us that he tested positive for Covid-19."

After he tested positive for Covid-19 the health of the octogenarian deteriorated. Hospital sources informed that given his age and underlying health conditions – he was a diabetic with past history of open heart surgery and Pulmonary Tuberculosis – the virus spread fast.

The deceased

admitted at Dimapur Covid Hospital was being monitored by medical team comprising of one doctor, two nurses and two attendants on eight hourly rotation basis.

Earlier a 72-year old man who passed away on July 21 and tested positive for COVID-19 was admitted at Nikos Hospital on July 14, and undergoing treatment there.

## 34 fresh COVID-19 cases in Andamans; count rises to 324

**PORT BLAIR, JUL 27 (PTI)** Thirty-four more people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, taking the Union Territory's caseload to 324 on Monday, health officials said.

The fresh infections have pushed the number of active cases in the islands to 142, while 182 people have recovered from COVID-19, including six in the past 24 hours, they said.

Lieutenant Governor

Admiral (Retd.) D K Joshi, in a radio address, has appealed to the islanders to follow the guidelines issued by the administration in the wake of the rise in COVID-19 cases.

Noting that over 36,000 islanders have travelled to the Union Territory from other parts of the country from May till date, he urged people to avoid unnecessary travel.

## Shillong goes under 72-hour lockdown amid rising COVID-19 cases

**SHILLONG, JULY 27 [PTI]:** A 72-hour lockdown started in Meghalaya's state capital Shillong from Monday amid rising cases of novel coronavirus in the state, officials said.

Around 30 localities, mostly in the worst-hit East Khasi Hills district, have already been declared containment zones, they said.

The lockdown in Shillong agglomeration – localities within the Shillong municipality and scheduled areas – was announced after 56 new COVID-19 cases were reported in the last two days.

Of these, 37 are armed forces personnel, including 23 troopers of the BSF, Health Services Director Aman War said.



Meghalaya has 543 active COVID-19 cases, while 173 people have recovered from the disease. Five coronavirus deaths have been reported in the state so far.

The East Khasi Hills district alone has 441 active cases, officials said.

"The lockdown in the

entire Shillong city agglomeration will continue till Wednesday midnight," the district's Deputy Commissioner Matsiewdor W Nongbri said.

During this period, health workers will be working extra time to track all primary and secondary contacts of positive patients, and conduct random tests

to break the chain of infection, she said.

Meanwhile, two police stations in East Jaintia Hills district have been closed after a few COVID-19 cases were detected there.

"Both the police stations have been disinfected and personnel placed under quarantine," an official said.

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Nepomniachtchi inflicts another defeat on Anand in Legends of Chess tourney

**CHENNAI, JUL 27 (PTI):** Former world champion Viswanathan Anand’s struggles continued in the USD 150,000 Legends of Chess online tournament as he suffered his sixth consecutive defeat with a 2-3 loss to Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia.

Anand started the sixth round match with a draw as he came up with good defensive moves to keep the Russian at bay in a 53-move draw.

However, Nepomniachtchi went ahead by pulling off a 34-move win in the second game. The third saw the players sign peace after 48 moves.

The five-time world champion then fought back well to claim the fourth game in 42 moves to push the contest into the Armageddon (a tie-breaker).

Nepomniachtchi won the decisive tie-break in 41 moves to shatter the hopes of the 50-year old Indian superstar and left him winless after six rounds.

World champion Magnus Carlen continued his winning run and tops the standings with 17 match points. Nepomniachtchi is second on 16 followed by compatriot Vladimir Karmnik (12).

Anand, who is making his debut on the Magnus Carlsen Tour, lies ninth with three points.

Legends of Chess is a unique event where Carlsen, Ding Liren, Nepomniachtchi and Anish Giri, semifinalists at the Chessable Masters (part of the Magnus Carlsen Tour), received an automatic invite and are up against six legends aged 40-52, who have been at the top of world chess at various points in their career.

The winner of this event will qualify for the USD 300,000 Grand Final, scheduled from August 9 to 20.

Results - Round 6: Ian Nepomniachtchi beat Viswanathan Anand 3-2; Magnus Carlsen beat Ding Liren 2.5-1.5; Anish Giri beat Peter Leko 2.5-1.5; Vladimir Kramnik beat Boris Gelfand 3-2; Peter Svidler beat Vasyil Ivanchuk 3-2.

# Sport’s cascading tales of abuse and fear demand action from the very top

SEAN INGLE

**LONDON, 27 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]:** In safer and saner times, the world’s eyes would now be fixed on the Tokyo Olympics: the gleaming smiles, the shiny medals, the illusion of perfection. But the postponement of the Games has at least allowed space for something more vital: exposing the human cost of chasing glory, especially for young girls in aesthetic sports such as gymnastics and figure skating.

In the past week alone athletes in Japan, China, Britain, Australia and the Netherlands have come forward with disturbing stories. Time and again they refer to the unequal power balance between them and their coaches and federations – and the impossibility of speaking out for fear of missing out on a world championships or Olympics. Poignantly, they have also mentioned how watching the Netflix documentary Athlete A had given them the reassurance that they are not alone, and to add their voices to the collective clamour.

In all the various stories we heard last week, there is a common theme. A survey of 800 Japanese athletes which found that 19% of respondents under 24 had been hit, punch, slapped, kicked or beaten was commissioned by Human Rights Watch. The other stories of abuse – including



that of the world championship figure skater Jessica Shuran Yu’s “dehumanising” treatment in China, including regular beatings and abuse revealed in the Guardian – came from journalists. They were not coming from the sports themselves, or their governing bodies.

Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised. While investment is linked to medals, as it is in so many countries, individuals will always face a massive temptation to take any shortcuts necessary to achieve the results, especially when they help sustain organisations and justify the salaries of the people they employ.

Britain is not immune. Two years ago, UK Sport – the body that funds Olympic sport – instituted a “culture health check” after widespread allegations of a culture of fear in cycling, canoeing,

bobsleigh and elsewhere. It insists the resulting policies have made a difference. The cascade of revelations from GB Gymnastics, as well as UK Sport’s continuing focus on medals, gives reason to fear that it is as effective a diagnostic tool as a child’s stethoscope.

It was certainly striking to hear the British Olympic silver medallist Cath Bishop say last week that medals were prioritised over welfare. As Bishop pointed out, when only medals count, then the way in which they are won becomes less important.

“Shortcuts in welfare and coaching approaches are encouraged so long as the results come,” she wrote. “Athletes and coaches (and parents) lose their voice to raise concerns as results trump everything else. Toxic environments and ‘cultures of fear’ develop when winning

is the end that justifies any means. It’s become Darwinian.” She urged UK Sport to change its culture, from “medals and more” to “more than medals”, a subtle but important distinction.

Of course it is not just Britain that faces questions about whether enough has been done for athlete welfare. One study in 2016 asked an elite Dutch coach what they thought of Safe Sport. “It’s a game,” he said, adding that “when you are surrounded by people who think this policy is important you play along. When they are gone, you go back to doing what you did before. You just have to be smart in how you handle these things.” Similar studies have found elite coaches often justify their methods by saying that because elite sport is tough, children need to learn to take criticism and pain, otherwise they won’t make the grade.

But if sports and countries won’t act, how will things change? When I spoke to Yu last week, she made the point that the International Olympic Committee needs to recognise that young and vulnerable girls in aesthetic sports are particularly at risk. She called for it to set up a dedicated hotline staffed by child protection experts for abuse cases and to use more of its resources to help. Certainly, given it funds so many

Olympic sports, it has a better chance than most of forcing change.

There is not much evidence of it stepping up. Sadly of all the stupendous feats performed by elite athletes, none is greater than the political gymnastics of the IOC. It makes billions in TV revenue because of their endeavours – yet when it comes to doing right by them it falls short. It is an 180-degree flip worthy of Simone Biles.

Meanwhile at the weekend, the renowned gymnastics coach Gerrit Beltman admitted his shame at having abused many Dutch athletes. “I’m very deeply ashamed of myself,” he admitted. “It was never my conscious intention to beat them, to yell at them, to hurt their feelings or belittle them, to gag them or make constant derogatory remarks about their weight. But it did happen. I went too far, I thought that was the only way to instil a winning mentality in them.” He also admitted the system needed to completely change, adding: “We need to rid ourselves of that stifling atmosphere where only results count, the judgmental culture, at too young an age.”

It is at least welcome news that one sinner has repented. But much more needs to be done to help every young athlete’s voice be heard, to hold organisations far more to account, to drain all the poison from the system.

## Bournemouth relegated despite win at Everton; Baines retires

**LIVERPOOL, JUL 27 (AP):** Bournemouth’s five-year stay in the Premier League ended despite a 3-1 win at Everton on the final day of the season.

Eddie Howe’s side needed wins from Arsenal against Watford and West Ham against Aston Villa, as well as its own win at Everton, to clinch another late escape.

But Villa’s 1-1 draw at West Ham ensured it just survived and that Bournemouth’s efforts came too late. Villa stayed one point clear and both Bournemouth and Watford which lost 3-2 at Arsenal were relegated.

Everton defender Leighton Baines announced his retirement after his 420th and final appearance for the Toffees.

“I am incredibly proud to have represented Everton for the past 13 years and my decision to retire has been a difficult one to make,” the 35-year-old former England defender said in a message to Everton fans on the club’s official website.

Howe named an attacking Bournemouth lineup and was rewarded

with an early lead after Joshua King converted a penalty in the 13th minute.

Brazilian forward Richarlison was penalized after moving the ball with his arm.

With Arsenal leading against Watford, Bournemouth still needed West Ham to score against Villa.

But Moise Kean equalized for Everton in the 41st after being picked out at the back post by Theo Walcott.

Dominic Solanke restored the visitors’ lead in first half injury time.

Everton dominated possession without creating clear chances in the second half.

Callum Wilson should have scored for Bournemouth before substitute Junior Stanislas finally made it 3-1 with 10 minutes of regular time remaining.

However, Jack Grealish’s late goal was enough for Villa to survive at Bournemouth’s expense.

Villa finished with 35 points, followed by Bournemouth on 34, ahead of Watford on goal difference. Norwich City was already relegated and finished the season on 21 points after a 5-0 drubbing at Manchester City.

## Juventus claim ninth title in a row as Ronaldo sets up win over Sampdoria



**TURIN, 27 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]:** Juventus have won the Serie A title for the ninth successive season after goals from Cristiano Ronaldo and Federico Bernardeschi earned a 2-0 win at home to Sampdoria.

Ronaldo opened the scoring on the stroke of half-time from a clever free-kick routine, firing into the bottom corner from Miralem Pjanic’s ball across the area. It was a welcome breakthrough for Juve, who had struggled to get going against stubborn opponents.

Samp had plenty of chances to spoil the hosts’ party, with Wojciech Szczesny saving Fabio Quagliarella’s tame shot in the first half. Lorenzo Tonelli and Gaston Ramirez failed to make the most of headed chances, and they were punished by Juventus midway through the second half.

Ronaldo’s shot was spilled by Emil Audero, allowing Bernardeschi to scramble the ball home. The winger’s first goal of the season gave Maurizio Sarri’s side breathing space, with Szczesny producing a point-blank save to turn away Quagliarella’s header. Claudio Ranieri’s Samp

kept pushing, even after midfielder Morten Thorsby was sent off for collecting two yellow cards.

Maurizio Sarri’s side held firm though, earning their manager his first ever league title. Ronaldo had a late chance to score his 32nd league goal of the season, but blasted his penalty off the crossbar. He stays three behind Ciro Immobile, who hit a hat-trick as Lazio won 5-1 away at Verona.

The Italian is now level with Robert Lewandowski across Europe’s major leagues, and has two games to surpass Gonzalo Higuain’s single-season record tally of 36. Joaquin Correa and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic were also on target for the visitors.

Elsewhere, Lecce fell 2-0 down inside five minutes at Bologna but rallied back to 2-2, only for Musa Barrow to score a last-gasp winner for the hosts. Lecce remain four points from safety with two games remaining.

Jordan Veretout scored twice, including an 87th-minute winner, as Roma beat Fiorentina 2-1 to tighten their grip on fifth place. Stefano Okaka’s early goal earned Udinese a 1-0 win at Cagliari.

# Solskjær’s simple plan delivers red dawn for new-look Manchester United

BARNEY RONAY

**LONDON, 27 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]:** They’re back, baby, they’re back. Back with a whimper perhaps, at the end of an edgy, sluggish, winning performance at the King Power Stadium. But Manchester United are back in the Champions League all the same, a top-four place secured with a slow-burn 2-0 defeat of Leicester City.

This being planet Earth in the year 2020, it came in the strangest of circumstances. Seven minutes into injury time on a muggy late-July day Jesse Lingard could be seen rolling the ball into an empty net in front of a row of inspirational tarpaulins.

Moments later the final whistle euthanised this distended league season out of existence. It was greeted by shouts and shrieks from the scattered United staff, and by the sight of the accidental saviour Ole Gunnar Solskjær bowling out on to the pitch looking wide-eyed and very slightly overcome in his skinny black suit and white shirt.

Eleven months, one global shutdown and an economic collapse in the making, the news is at least reassuringly samey from the Premier League. The four wealthiest clubs in England will now take up those four spots and compete in the world’s

glitziest midweek league. The teams who are usually the teams are once again the teams. Dissent, unrest and social revolution may come and go, but the Premier League remains, for now, largely unmoved.

There was still an element of genuine jeopardy here, not least for Solskjær himself. Rarely has the line between over-promoted company man and curator of the thrilling new red dawn seemed so fine. But such are the margins at times. Football may be theatre. But nobody ever said it was subtle theatre.

To his credit Solskjær played all his strongest cards from the start. Rightly so, as there has been tangible progress on the pitch in the last few months. Pogba-Fernandes-Matic is the most engaging midfield United have had since the Ferguson endgame. Rashford-Martial has become a potent partnership. Mason Greenwood is that rare thing, a genuine, believe-the-hype prodigy of the kind that speaks in direct, seductive tones to United’s own self-mythologising.

Still, there was an awkwardness to the occasion as Leicester sat deep in the opening moments

and allowed United’s passing to stall in front of them. The gameplan seemed clear enough: wait for the mistake, counterattack at speed. Harry Maguire has many qualities as a defender but he also turns like a waterlogged fishing dinghy and runs toward his own goal with all the easy grace of a heavily laden suburban milk float.

For a while the game was scrappy. Occasionally United’s bravura front three clicked into motion, then seemed to lose their timing, like men communicating via a low-bandwidth internet conference call. In the past three months Marcus Rashford has played 10 games and organised a policy-changing child welfare campaign. He is probably allowed to feel a little tired.

Paul Pogba was prominent but never quite in the command seat. Bruno Fernandes was poor, as he has been occasionally; a midfielder hoist as a panacea to successive seasons of incoherent squad-building, and now already facing a world record new-signing backlash. Football has always been a skittish, impatient business, but Fernandes has barely finished holding up the shirt and grinning

beneath a scarf.

By half-time there was still a sense of the day waiting to take shape. Finally, with 67 minutes gone, a kind of deliverance arrived. The impressive Hamza Choudhury gave the ball away. Greenwood played a cute, instant forward pass, a rare act of precision in a sea of vagueness. Anthony Martial was brought down by a double judo-trip move from Wes Morgan and Jonny Evans.

Up stepped the leg-weary Fernandes. On the bench Solskjær looked like a man trying very hard not to vomit over the deck-rail. The kick was tucked gently into the corner. And that was pretty much that, as Leicester’s endless season, not to mention their six missing first-team players, finally caught up with them.

What does it all mean? There is of course a degree of confected tension about all this. But even for a club of such enduring heft a return to the Champions League will affect every aspect of Manchester United.

For Solskjær this is now a mini-era in its own right: if not a new dawn, then at least a first chink of light beneath the curtain. And it is worth being kind here. Despite the

anxieties of the last three games there has been a genuine vim and snap about United’s attacking play of late.

Not to mention a rare sense of clarity. If there is little remarkable in Solskjær’s management, this is a virtue in itself. United’s manager has one outstanding quality: his lack of any obvious outstanding qualities, a simplicity that is in itself a very useful asset.

Let’s face it, this vast sporting machine doesn’t actually need any additional fuel, any complex characters or interfering egos. At times something this large and complex just needs to be steered in the right direction, to be demystified and untangled rather than overthought.

Solskjær has imposed a simple system and made some demands about fitness. United’s zany playing squad has been clarified. The best players tend to end up on the pitch. Half of the outfield 10 were Solskjær players to some degree. Two thirds of a decent team is in place here. Better still, this feels like something else. For all the wariness of the King Power in late July, there is hope here – not to mention, for the first time in some time, a sense of lightness too.

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# Iran moves mock aircraft carrier to sea amid US tensions

**DUBAI, JUL 27 (AP):** Iran has moved a mock aircraft carrier to the strategic Strait of Hormuz amid heightened tensions between Tehran and the US, satellite photographs released on Monday show, likely signalling the Islamic Republic soon plans to use it for live-fire drills. An image from Maxar Technologies taken Sunday shows an Iranian fast boat speed toward the carrier, sending waves up in its wake, after a tugboat pulled her out into the strait from the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas.



Iranian state media and officials have yet to acknowledge bringing the replica out to the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil passes. However, its appearance there suggests Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard is preparing an encore of a similar mock-sinking it conducted in 2015.

The US Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, which patrols Mideast waterways, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The replica resembles the Nimitz-class carriers that the US Navy routinely sails into the Persian Gulf from the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the waterway.

The USS Nimitz, the namesake of the class, just entered Mideast waters late last week from the Indian Ocean, likely to replace the USS Dwight D Eisenhower in the Arabian Sea.

It remains unclear when or if the Nimitz will pass through the Strait of Hormuz or not during its time in the Mideast. The USS Abraham Lincoln, deployed last

year as tensions initially spiked, spent months in the Arabian Sea before heading through the strait. The Eisenhower came through the strait early last week.

The replica carries 16 mock-ups of fighter jets on its deck, according to the satellite photos taken by Maxar Technologies. The vessel appears to be some 200 metres (650 feet) long and 50 metres (160 feet) wide. A real Nimitz is over 300 metres (980 feet) long and 75 metres (245 feet) wide.

The mock-up strongly resembles a

similar one used in February 2015 during a military exercise called Great Prophet 9. During that drill, Iran swarmed the fake aircraft carrier with speedboats firing machine guns and rockets. Surface-to-sea missiles later targeted and destroyed the fake carrier.

That drill, however, came as Iran and world powers remained locked in negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program. Today, the deal born of those negotiations is in tatters. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord

in May 2018. Iran later responded by slowly abandoning nearly every tenant of the agreement, though it still allows UN inspectors access to its nuclear sites.

Last summer saw a series of attacks and incidents further ramp up tensions between Iran and the US.

They reached a crescendo with the January 3 US drone strike near Baghdad International Airport that killed Qassem Soleimani, head of the Guard's expeditionary Quds, or Jerusalem, Force. Iran retaliated with a ballistic missile attack that injured dozens of American troops stationed in neighbouring Iraq.

Given the timing of Iran moving the replica to sea, with satellite photos showing it being tugged out of port on Saturday, a drill targeting it may be a direct response from Tehran to an incident last week.

That event involved a US F-15 fighter jet approaching a Mahan Air flight over Syria, which saw passengers on the Iranian jetliner injured.

## European tourism faces turbulence only weeks after restart

**BERLIN (AP) —** Europe's tourism revival is running into turbulence only weeks after countries opened their borders, with rising infections in Spain and other countries causing increasing concern as authorities worry about people bringing the coronavirus home from their summer vacations.

European countries started opening up to each other's tourists in mid-June, but recent events have shown that the new freedom to travel is subject to unpredictable setbacks. Over the weekend, Britain imposed a 14-day quarantine on travelers arriving from Spain, Norway ordered a 10-day quarantine for people returning from the entire Iberian peninsula, and France urged its citizens not to visit Spain's Catalonia region.

In Austria, the lakeside resort town of St. Wolfgang shortened bar opening hours after an outbreak was detected on Friday. By Monday, 53 people had tested positive, including many interns working in the tourism industry.

In Germany, officials decided last week to set up testing stations at airports to encourage people arriving from a long list of countries deemed high-risk — including traditionally popular destinations such as Turkey — to get tested. They will also allow people to get tested elsewhere for free within three days of arrival.

"We are still very concerned about holidays," Bavaria's governor, Markus Soeder, said Monday. "My worry is not that there will be one big Ischgl, but that there will be many mini-Ischgl," he added, referring to the Austrian ski resort that was an early European hot spot in March.

Flight crews are also required to present a negative coronavirus test result 48 hours before boarding a flight to Hong Kong.

families abroad are also a concern. Soeder called for tests of returning vacationers from risky areas at airports to be made obligatory, something that the federal government is considering.

"Mostly it is the considerate people who have behaved very cautiously on vacation anyway who take up the voluntary offers, while those who are more careless don't take a voluntary test," Chancellor Angela Merkel's chief of staff, Helge Braun, told RBB Inforadio. New infections in Germany have been creeping higher from a low level.

Tourism employs 2.6 million people in Spain and generates 12% of the country's economic activity.

Juan Molas, the head of a national association of tourism companies, Mesa del Turismo, said Spain's tourism sector has on average lost 5 billion euros (\$5.8 billion) a week since March.

Tourism Minister Reyes Maroto said the Spanish government is trying to persuade the U.K. to exempt the Balearic Islands, which have a relatively low infection rate, from the quarantine rule.

"We're living alongside the virus. That doesn't mean we can't travel. We can, if we are careful," Maroto said.

The head of the Valencia regional government, which includes the popular Costa Blanca, also said he wanted an exemption.

"The tourist season has already been very difficult," Ximo Puig told Cadena Ser radio. "We had some hope of salvaging something in August, but this is a very hard blow."

The northeastern Catalonia and Aragón regions have Spain's most worrying virus clusters, prompting authorities to tighten restrictions in Barcelona, in a rural

area around Lleida and in Zaragoza that were relaxed only a month ago.

Catalonia is facing "the 10 most decisive days of this summer," regional leader Quim Torra said, warning that it is in everyone's hands to prevent a "critical situation" from worsening. But he also insisted that Catalonia is safe overall and said the tourism sector "is prepared with all the safety measures."

Elsewhere in Europe, authorities in Belgium said that COVID-19 cases are growing at an alarming rate amid a surge of infections in Antwerp. Greek authorities said they are likely to extend the mandatory use of masks at churches and shopping malls, citing worsening public adherence to safety guidelines.

And in north Africa, Morocco banned most travel to and from some major cities — including Tangier, Casablanca and Marrakech, usually a popular tourist destination — to try to stem a small spike in cases.

In the Asia-Pacific region, many countries are still essentially banning foreign travelers or, if they do allow them to enter, requiring them to submit to tests and strict quarantine. That includes Australia, where the premier of Victoria state, Daniel Andrews, said the biggest driver in the region's current outbreak is people continuing to go to work after showing symptoms.

Crossing borders was linked to other outbreaks in Asia. South Korea said 16 of the 25 new cases it confirmed Monday were tied to people arriving from abroad.

The country in past days reported dozens of cases among crew members of a Russia-flagged cargo ship and hundreds of South Korean construction workers airlifted from Iraq.

## Not wearing a mask outside could mean a \$645 fine in Hong Kong as city imposes strict Covid measures

**HONG KONG (CNN):** Hong Kong will make wearing masks in public compulsory and limit gatherings to no more than two people as officials in the city grapple with a rising surge in coronavirus infections.

On Monday, Hong Kong's Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung announced that face masks would be mandatory in both indoor and outdoor public places from Wednesday, with offenders facing fines of up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$645), although he didn't specify how the new measure would be enforced.

People with "reasonable excuses" such as medical conditions or children under the age of two will be exempt, he added.

Cheung also announced that the Chinese central government will help build a Wuhan-style makeshift hospital near Hong Kong's airport with a capacity of around 2,000 hospital beds.

"The epidemic situation is critical," Cheung said, adding that the next few weeks are



extremely crucial for the city. "We are facing a high risk of community outbreak."

The restrictions come as the city faces a coronavirus outbreak dubbed locally as its "third wave," with the origin of many infections still unknown. Hong Kong had been lauded for its relative success in curbing the spread of the coronavirus. However, on Monday, Hong Kong authorities reported more than 100 new cases for the sixth straight day, bringing the city's total to more than 2,700.

Over the past two days, a 76-year-old woman and a 92-year-old man died of Covid-19, bringing the total number of coronavirus deaths in the city to 20.

Before Monday's numbers were announced, Cheung said that over the past 14

days, 1,163 new cases had been recorded -- and the origin of 492 of the infections could not be traced.

The new restrictions are the tightest rules yet introduced in Hong Kong, which had previously limited public gatherings to four people.

When asked why the city stopped short of imposing a complete lockdown -- as other places around the world have done -- Cheung said doing so would be too inconvenient, and said he thought the current measures were appropriate.

Sophia Chan, Hong Kong's health secretary, said that authorities were aiming to expand testing. They planned to test sellers at 300 markets and around 14,000 minibuses drivers.

Though a majority of Hong Kong residents have

willingly worn masks in public since the outbreak began earlier this year, face coverings remain a highly contentious and politicized issue in other parts of the world. In the United States and elsewhere, a number of senior politicians have appeared reluctant to endorse their usage despite evidence showing face masks protect both the wearer and others from Covid-19.

Hong Kong's outbreak

Despite Hong Kong's proximity to mainland China -- where the first cases of coronavirus were reported -- the city has managed to keep its case count relatively low.

That success has been attributed to tight border rules that prevent non-residents from entering the city, efficient contact tracing, and residents' willingness to practice good hygiene, wear masks and practice social distancing.

The situation has changed in recent weeks, with authorities warning of the potential for "exponential growth" in new cases following a sudden cluster of cases.

issued a decree banning burning in the Pantanal wetlands and the Amazon forest for four months. However, in the Pantanal alone, 1,002 fire spots have been identified since the decree came into force.

Mato Grosso do Sul state has declared a state of environmental emergency. It says the critical period of seasonal forest fires is just beginning and cites extreme conditions such as high temperatures, strong winds and low air humidity.

## Number of fires more than doubles in Brazil's Pantanal

**BRASILIA, JUL 27 (AP):** The number of fires in Brazil's Pantanal, the world's biggest tropical wetlands, more than doubled in the first half of 2020 compared to the same period last year, according to data released by a state institute.

Officials said it was the largest number of fires in a six-month period in the last two decades.

The sharp increase in fires comes amid domestic and international concern over Brazilian President

Jair Bolsonaro's calls to clear land in order to drive economic development, and follows a surge in fires, many set to make land available for farming and other industry, in the Amazon last year.

There were 2,534 recorded fires in the Pantanal between January and June, the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research said. Between January and June 2019, the institute recorded 981 fires. The 2020 numbers represent a

158% increase than the 2019 numbers.

As of Saturday, the institute had registered another 1,322 fires in July, for a total of 3,856 blazes in the wetlands that extend through the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, in central-western Brazil.

Until the end of last month, technicians from the institute estimated the total area of the Pantanal burned this year at 1,969 square miles (5,100 km ).

On July 16, the Brazilian government

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**DOG PADDLE! Actress Elisabetta Canalis brought her pooch when she went paddle-boarding in Sardinia.**

## Poonam Pandey Is Engaged!

### Fiance Sam Bombay Gives A Glimpse To The Big Rock!

Sam's followers and the fans of Poonam have been sending the newly engaged couple loads of love via comments on the post.

Model-Actress Poonam Pandey got engaged to her longtime boyfriend Sam Bombay recently. Sam took to Instagram and shared a photo where the newly engaged lovebirds are flaunting their engagement rings.

Sam Bombay captioned his Instagram post as follows, "We finally did it!"

If you are wondering who Poonam is, she is the one who promised to strip if the Indian cricket team lifted the World Cup in 2011. In 2013, she made her Bollywood debut with the film Nasha, where she played a teacher who gets involved with one of her students.

Replying to his post Poonam Pandey commented, "Best feeling." This was followed by a heart emoji.

Sam's followers and the fans of Poonam have been sending the newly engaged couple loads of love via comments on the

post. Some comments read as follows:

"Big Congratulations on the Big Decision,"  
"ur luckiest man bcoz poonam Mam is urs now."

"Wow, congratulations. Stay blessed & have a good life."

Poonam Pandey and Sam Bombay got engaged on July 23, 2020. Sam often shares Poonam's photos as well as their romantic moments.

Poonam Pandey is the queen of controversies. She was in news a while ago for releasing her s\*x tape with her boyfriend. However, she later deleted the post from her Instagram page.

In May, reports were doing the rounds with regards to Poonam and Sam being booked by the Mumbai Police for violating the lockdown rules and

going on a drive. She denied the news with a video shared on her Instagram page and claimed that she was watching films at home.

We wish the happy couple loads of love.



## Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson are officially Greek citizens

(CNN): Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson have a special reason to celebrate this week: they're both officially Greek citizens.

In a picture posted on social media by the country's prime minister, the two proudly hold up their brand new passports.

The couple and their children became honorary Greek citizens last year -- after officials highlighted Hanks' role in helping raise awareness about the 2018 fires that devastated areas near Athens and claimed the lives of more than 100 people.

"Tom Hanks is a person who showed real interest in the people who suffered from the fire in Mati and promoted this issue in the global media," Greek Interior Minister Takis Theodorikakos told CNN in a statement in December.



Wilson, who is part Greek, and Hanks, a Greek Orthodox convert, have often been spotted spending their vacations in Greece, where they also own property on the island of Antiparos.

The two have produced several films based on the Greek community and never shy away from sharing their admiration for the country and its people.

"I've been Hellenic now for the better part of 32 years," Hanks told reporters at the 2020 Golden Globe Awards earlier this year. "Greece is a haven... I've been around the world, I've been to the most beautiful places in the world, none of them tops Greece."

"The land, the sky, the water, it's good for the soul, it's a healing place," Hanks said.

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