



**KANGANA RANAUT BLASTS BOLLYWOOD AFTER SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT'S DEATH: WAS IT SUICIDE OR PLANNED MURDER?**  
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**THE NEXT ONCE-A-CENTURY PANDEMIC IS COMING SOONER THAN YOU THINK – BUT COVID-19 CAN HELP US GET READY**

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**SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT FUNERAL: SHRADDHA KAPOOR, RAJKUMMAR RAO COME TOGETHER TO BID THEIR CO STAR GOOD BYE**

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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## India to witness solar eclipse on June 21

**KOLKATA, JUN 15 (PTI):** India will witness a solar eclipse on June 21 and it will be annular in some parts of the country, where skygazers will get an opportunity to observe the "ring of fire" during the phenomenon, an official said on Monday.

However, for most parts of the country, the eclipse will be partial.

The path of the annular solar eclipse will start near Gharsana in Rajasthan around 10:12 am and the phase of annularity will begin around 11:49 am and end at 11:50 am, Director of the M P Birla Planetarium Debi Prasad Duari said.

The ring of fire will be visible for that one minute from places such as Suratgarh and Anupgarh in Rajasthan, Sirsa, Ratia and Kurukshetra in Haryana, and Dehradun, Chamba, Chamoli and Joshimath in Uttarakhand.

However, the ring of fire will not be as prominent this time as it was on December 26 last year and will be a little narrower, Duari said in a statement.

"The annular solar eclipse occurs when the sun, moon and the earth come in a straight line and almost on the same plane.

"At that moment, the moon must be farther away from the earth in its elliptical orbit and hence, cannot cover the disc of the sun completely, resulting in a narrow band of light around the dark silhouette of the moon, making the ring of fire visible," the statement said.

But from a much wider-region country, people can observe a partial solar eclipse of a different magnitude.

In Kolkata, the partial eclipse will begin at 10:46 am and end at 2:17 pm, while the timing will be from 10:20 am to 1:48 pm in New Delhi, from 10 am to 1:27 pm in Mumbai, from 10:22 am to 1:41 pm in Chennai and between 10:13 am and 1:31 pm in Bengaluru.

On June 21, the annular eclipse will first start for the people of Congo in Africa and progress through South Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Indian Ocean and Pakistan, before entering India over Rajasthan.

It will then move on to Tibet, China, Taiwan, before ending at the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

# Economically backward Sikkimese to get reservation in central jobs

## NO VIVA FOR GRADE C & D GOVT JOBS

**GANGTOK, 15 JUN [IPR]:** In a major development for the State of Sikkim, the economically weaker section of people who do not fall in the reserved category of ST, SC and OBC in the Centre will now be entitled for 10% central reservation. This was passed by the Cabinet meeting which was held today.

This was informed by Secretary to CM, S.D. Dhakal in a press conference at Tashiling Secretariat this evening. He said that this was a long pending aspiration of a certain section of the Sikkimese population who had been deprived of all the privileges especially with regard to availing employment and educational opportunities outside the State, including



the All India Services.

Terming this as a historical development, the

Secretary said that the matter was given highest priority by the present

Government and was vigorously pursued and was placed in the As-

sembly Session, and after thorough examination, it was finally passed in

today's Cabinet Meeting. He informed that the Notification regarding the

entitlements to the reservation will be issued by the State Government within a week's time.

Explaining about the entitlements of the reservation, the Secretary informed that only people who fall within the stipulated category and within the bracket of 'economically weaker section' will benefit from the reservation. This includes persons whose family annual income is less than Rupees Eight Lakhs, or who possess less than 5 acre of land, or less than 1000 sq.ft residential flat in any municipal area, or less than 100 sq yard of residential plot in a municipal area, or less than 200 sq yard of residential plot outside municipal area along

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## 11502 more COVID-19 cases, 325 deaths in India



**NEW DELHI, JUN 15 (PTI):** India saw a jump of over 11,000 novel coronavirus cases for the third consecutive day on Monday, taking the total number of infections to over 3.32 lakh, while the toll rose to 9,520 with 325 more deaths, the Health Ministry said.

There are 1,53,106 active cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), while 1,69,797 people have recovered and a patient has migrated, according to the ministry data updated in the morning.

Therefore, 51.07 per cent of the patients have recovered so far, an official said. The number of confirmed cases rose to 3,32,424 with 11,502 new infections in the last 24 hours, the ministry said.

As many as 120 out of the 325 more deaths were from Maharashtra, followed by 56 from Delhi, 38 from Tamil Nadu and 29 in Gujarat. There were 14 more fatalities in Uttar Pradesh, 12 each in West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, and 10 each in Rajasthan and Haryana.

Five COVID-19 deaths were reported from Karnataka, followed by four in Jammu and Kashmir, three each in Telangana

and Puducherry, and two each in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Punjab.

A person each succumbed to the infection in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha.

India is the fourth worst-hit nation by the pandemic after the US, Brazil and Russia.

According to the Johns Hopkins University, which has been compiling COVID-19 data from all over the world, India is in the ninth position in terms of death toll.

Of the total 9,520 deaths, Maharashtra tops the tally with 3,950 fatalities, followed 1,477 by Gujarat and 1,327 in Delhi.

The toll from the pandemic rose to 475 in West Bengal, 459 in Madhya Pradesh, 435 in Tamil Nadu and 399 in Uttar Pradesh. There have been 292 COVID-19 deaths in Rajasthan and 185 in Telangana.

The number of fatalities reached 88 in Haryana, 86 in Karnataka, 84 in Andhra Pradesh, and 67 in Punjab. Jammu and Kashmir has reported 59 COVID-19 deaths, followed by 39 in Bihar, 24 in Uttarakhand and 19 in Kerala.

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## SDF demands President's Rule

**SAGAR CHETTRI**

**GANGTOK, 15 JUN:**

Sikkim Democratic Front spokesperson, MK Subba has demanded President's Rule in Sikkim alleging that the economy as well as the law and order situation in the State is collapsing. He further added that Sikkim is a sensitive border state surrounded by three international borders and the constitutional machinery of the State has totally failed.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Subba alleged that political terrorism has increased manifold referring to the recent attack on SDF spokesperson, JB Darnal.

He further alleged that the state government does not have any emergency, survival or revival plans with regards to the state's econ-



omy. The government has raised funds from the people through CM's Relief Fund and increased the burden of tax on the people, said Mr Subba.

The state government has not been able to announce any economic package in this time of COVID-19 pandemic, he added.

In view of all this the

Governor should use his special power provided under Article 371F to recommend the Centre to extend President's Rule in Sikkim to protect the interest of Sikkim and its people, stated Mr Subba.

He mentioned that the SDF president will soon meet the Governor with this proposal and urged organizations and

individuals of the State to support this demand.

Sikkim is facing political terrorism after the formation of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha government and numerous incidents of attacks and vandalism have been reported since SKM came to power, alleged Mr Subba.

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## Nepal to deport foreigners who joined coronavirus protest

**KATHMANDU, 15 JUNE:**

Nepal will deport five foreign tourists and ban them from entering the Himalayan nation for two years after they joined protests against the government's response to the coronavirus outbreak, officials said on Monday.

Police arrested three Chinese nationals and one each from the United States, Australia and Norway during a street protest on Saturday in the capital Kathmandu, Reuters reported.

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## Pandemic leads to a bicycle boom, and shortage, around world

Portland (US), Jun 15 (AP): Fitness junkies locked out of gyms, commuters fearful of public transit, and families going stir crazy inside their homes during the coronavirus pandemic have created a boom in bicycle sales unseen in decades.

In the United States, bicycle aisles at mass merchandisers like Walmart and Target have been swept clean, and independent shops are doing a brisk business and are selling out of affordable family bikes.

Bicycle sales over the past two months saw their biggest spike in the US since the oil crisis of the 1970s, said Jay Townley, who analyses cycling industry trends at Human Powered Solutions.

People quite frankly have panicked, and they're buying

bikes like toilet paper, Townley said, referring to the rush to buy essentials like toilet paper and hand sanitizer that stores saw at the beginning of the pandemic.

The trend is mirrored around the globe, as cities better known for car-clogged streets, like Manila and Rome, install bike lanes to accommodate surging interest in cycling while public transport remains curtailed.

In London, municipal authorities plan to go further by banning cars from some central thoroughfares.

Bike shop owners in the Philippine capital say demand is stronger than at Christmas.

Financial incentives are boosting sales in Italy, where the government's post-lock-

down stimulus last month included a 500-euro ( 575) bici bonus rebate for up to 60% of the cost of a bike.

But that's if you can get your hands on one. The craze has led to shortages that will take some weeks, maybe months, to resolve, particularly in the US, which relies on China for about 90% of its bicycles, Townley said.

Production there was largely shut down due to the coronavirus and is just resuming.

The bicycle rush kicked off in mid-March around the time countries were shutting their borders, businesses were closing, and stay-at-home orders were being imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus that has infected millions of people and killed more than 450,000.

Sales of adult leisure bikes tripled in April while overall US bike sales, including kids' and electric-assist bicycles, doubled from the year before, according to market research firm NPD Group, which tracks retail bike sales.

It's a far cry from what was anticipated in the US. The 6 billion industry had projected lower sales based on lower volume in 2019 in which punitive tariffs on bicycles produced in China reached 25%.

There are multiple reasons for the pandemic bicycle boom.

Around the world, many workers were looking for an alternative to buses and subways.

People unable to go to their gyms looked for another way to exercise. And shut-in families scrambled

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## Law and order situation failing in Sikkim: Nawin Kiran



### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Sikkim Subject Committee [SSC] vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan has made a serious allegation that the law and order situation in the State is deteriorating and the police have failed to work independently. He was talking with reference to the recent attack on Sikkim Democratic Front spokesperson, JB Darnal by unknown persons.

Regarding the same, SSC submitted a memorandum to the Governor, Ganga Prasad on Monday urging that Sikkim Police be allowed to function without any pressure and asking for the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police to be summoned regarding the attack on Mr Darnal. SSC has asked for the case to be handed over to an independent investigation agency if Sikkim Police cannot find the culprits.

A copy of the memorandum has also been

sent to the Prime Minister with a request to ask for the investigation report on the attack on Mr Darnal from the State government. Copies have also been sent to Union Home Minister and National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Mr Pradhan alleged that the life-threatening attack on SDF spokesperson could be a political conspiracy to suppress the voice of the people. He alleged that Sikkim Police has been taking action only against opposition leaders.

He stated that the police have not been able to make any progress in the investigation regarding the attack.

Another SSC member, Arun Limboo stated that if an opposition leader was attacked in broad day light in an urban area then such incidents can happen to anyone.

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### SDF demands...

There is no word from the police on the attack on JB Darnal and the CM is also silent on the incident even after 72 hours of the attack, said Mr Subba. He alleged that the police has not taken by action on the incident.

On COVID-19, the SDF spokesperson alleged that there would be fewer cases if the state government had followed the SOP and guidelines of ICMR, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Home Affairs on COVID-19. **11502 more...**

Odisha registered 11 coronavirus deaths so far, followed by eight each in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam, and seven in Himachal Pradesh.

Five people have succumbed to the contagion in Chandigarh and Puducherry, and one each in Meghalaya, Tripura and Ladakh, the ministry said.

More than 70 per cent of the deaths are due to comorbidities, it added.

The maximum number of cases are from Maharashtra with 1,07,958 infections, followed by 44,661 in Tamil Nadu, 41,182 in Delhi and 23,544 in Gujarat.

The tally rose to 13,615 in Uttar Pradesh, 12,694 in Rajasthan and 11,087 in West Bengal.

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 10,802 in Madhya Pradesh, 7,208 in Haryana, 7,000 in Karnataka, and 6,470 in Bihar.

As many as 6,163 people have contracted the deadly disease in Andhra Pradesh, followed by 5,041 in Jammu and Kashmir, 4,974 in Telangana, 4,049 in Assam and 3,909 in Odisha.

There are 3,140 cases of the pathogen in Punjab and 2,461 in Kerala, while 1,819 people have been infected in Uttarakhand and 1,745 in Jharkhand.

A total of 1,662 people are afflicted with the disease in Chhattisgarh, followed by 1,076 in Tripura, 564 in Goa and 518 in Himachal Pradesh.

The number of coronavirus cases rose to 458 in Manipur, 549 in Ladakh and 352 in Chandigarh.

Puducherry has registered 194 COVID-19 cases so far, followed by 168 in Nagaland, 112 in Mizoram and 91 in Arunachal Pradesh.

Sikkim has 68 COVID-19 cases, while there are 44 infections in Meghalaya and 38 in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu have registered 36 COVID-19 cases so far.

The figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research, the ministry said, adding that 6,972 cases were being reassigned to states.

Statewise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, it added.

## Upper Burtuk MLA holds meeting on COVID-19

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

A meeting was conducted by Upper Burtuk MLA, D.R Thapa today with all the councilors and panchayats of the constituency. This emergency meeting was called in light of the growing cases of COVID-19 in the state, a press release informs.

The group discussed the need to be increasingly aware of the cases and conduct regular checks of the quarantine facilities. It was also advised that more awareness needs to be spread for taking necessary precautions.

Besides affecting health, the virus is also taking a toll on the state's economy and the group



discussed ways to help revive the economy. Mr Thapa advised the councilors and panchayat leaders to make

known and explain to their constituents the multiple schemes under "Atmanirbhar Bharat" from which they could

derive benefit for themselves and the state. Ongoing development work of the constituency was also discussed.

## Potters are on the brink of starvation

### DR SATYAWAN SAURABH

The lockdown due to Corona has also shattered the dreams of artisans who make pottery. They have made earthenware pots but due to lack of sale, they are also tired of eating. But now neither the chalk is running nor the shops are opening. The pottery lying for sale on the house and chalk has to be taken care of. People of Prajapati Samaj all over the country work in making pottery.

The lockdown caused by Corona has turned their hopes upside down. Their utensils are not being sold. Months of hard work are kept out of the house. In these circumstances, it has become difficult to support the family. Given the summer season, potters made a large number of pots. Designers also designed small pots and piggy banks with pots. Even today some people prefer potable water. But this time they lost money. How the family will run. No one is coming to buy pots. People involved in the business have also stopped selling pots by putting them on carts.

The initiative of Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, has created a hope for the skilled workers earning their livelihood through pottery, for the people of Prajapati Samaj across the country, according to which a Micro Mati Kala Common Facility Center will be set up in every division of the state. (CFC) will be constituted. The cost of CFC will be Rs 12.5 lakh, to which the government will contribute Rs 10 lakh. The balance has to be borne by society or the concerned institution. Land, if not available with the institution or society, will be provided by the Gram Sabha. Each center will have gas-fired furnaces, pugmills, electric pot chucks, and other equipment for processing soil in the earth. Workers will have all the facilities to develop their products under one roof. Employment will be provided to more and more people through these centers.

This is a great effort of khadi and village industry, if the products are of quality and their prices are reasonable, then there will be good demand for them in the market. This will increase employment opportunities locally for business people. Also, lifting soil from ponds will increase subsequent water-storage capacity. By making these products an alternative to polyethylene, polyethylene contamination will also be prevented. Lockdowns to prevent the spread of coronavirus have completely disrupted work in almost every area. The central government is trying to keep small, medium, and cottage industries alive by announcing special packages.

However, the lack of ambiguity and lack of proper guidance does not seem to bring much relief. There are many sections in the country whose ancestral occupation has been and there are also many castes who make their living by doing special work. Such as gardeners, blacksmiths, potters, milk sellers, tailors, carpenters, barbers, people of the Mushar caste who make a living by doing sheet work. These are the people whose work has been most affected by the lockdown. The government has given

en a lot for big businessmen, medium businessmen, but no special relief has been announced by the government for the above people.

### VIEWPOINT

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi while addressing the nation on building a self-reliant India. He announced



immediate relief to MSMEs to move the country forward. However, the budget was left to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. At the same time, he spoke of being a vocalist for the locals but did not mention the people affected by the lockdown, whose livelihood depended on their own business and skills. Lockdown has had a profound effect on them. Such people do not have much savings to run their household expenses by spending their accumulated capital. Such people earn every day, which provides them with food. Now that the lockdown has taken place, their work has stopped completely. In this case, the government should take some different measures for these people. So that their life can run smoothly.

Today, when the villages of India are undergoing a period of change, the traditional businesses running in the villages also need to be given a new look. Mansukh Bhai, a resident of Rajkot in Gujarat, has taken the initiative to do something new like this. Mansukh, a potter by profession, not only established good business using his skills and innovative ideas but also won national awards. Today, his name and work are being praised not only in India but all over the world. Their pottery is also being sold abroad. Former President Abdul Kalam called him a 'true scientist of rural India'. Honoring him, President Pratibha Patil said that for the development of rural India, courageous and innovative people like him are needed. Today they are a precedent for entrepreneurs.

Some people talk about ending the traditional business of the villages, which is wrong. We can still keep the rural business alive, it just needs to be changed a little bit. The villages of India are now equipped with new technology and new facilities. India's villages are changing, so we need to change our business a little bit. Through new thinking and new experimentation, a rural business can be maintained, and through it, one can make a living.

When we start a business in the village, it not only benefits us but also fulfills our social responsibility. We become self-reliant and employ all the unemployed. It is the responsibility of every person to encourage others as well as himself. Make them aware of working. This will fulfill the dream of the empowerment of rural India.

## 8,894 people under quarantine in Mizoram

AIZAWL, JUN 15 (PTI):

As many as 8,884 people are currently under quarantine in Mizoram, state Health minister Dr R Lalthangaliansa said on Monday.

Most of them are quarantined at institutional facilities while others are lodged at community facilities, some are in home quarantine and some have put up in hotels.

The health minister on Monday visited several quarantine facilities set up by churches here.

Expressing apology to those inmates, who have completed their quarantine period but need to stay back at their respective quarantine facilities due to delay in getting sample results, Lalthangaliansa said, the testing process could not be expedited because installation of automated RNA extractor machines was in progress.

He said that the government is currently running two Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) machines, at Zoram Medical College (ZMC) to test samples for COVID-19.

Similar machines will soon arrive in the state and one of them will be installed at Lunglei to cater to the needs of people, he said.

"We hope that our testing ratio will increase once the new machines are installed," he said.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the RT-PCR technique is highly sensitive and specific and can deliver a reliable diagnosis as fast as three hours, though usually laboratories take on average between six to eight hours.

The health minister also said that at least 116 coronavirus patients are currently undergoing treatment in different parts of the state.

Of the 116 patients, 43 are undergoing treatment at the ZMC, he said.

All the 116 patients are in stable condition, he added.

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### Economically...

the roadside or in commercial areas. The Secretary further informed that the Certificates will be issued after thorough verification by the District Collectorate, and all the Sub-Divisional Magistrates. He explained that the Certificates can also be availed through the online mode and should be renewed on yearly basis.

The Secretary shared that the reservation will not apply to Technical and Scientific posts and other such posts which are outside the purview of the Central Services.

Secretary, S.D. Dhakal also informed the media of another major decision that was taken in today's Cabinet Meeting, that of the removal of the system of conducting viva-voce for all State Government posts for C and D Category. He shared that once this is notified, there will be no viva-voce for group C and D posts in the State Government, and all Public Sector Undertakings and Organizations/Institutions under the State Government.

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### Pandemic leads...

to find a way to keep kids active during stay-at-home orders.

Kids are looking for something to do. They've probably reached the end of the internet by now, so you've got to get out and do something, said Dave Palese at Gorham Bike and Ski, a Maine shop where there are slim pickings for family-oriented, leisure bikes.

Bar Harbour restaurateur Brian Smith bought a new bike for one of his daughters, a competitive swimmer, who was unable to get into the pool.

On a recent day, he was heading back to his local bike shop to outfit his youngest daughter, who'd just learned how to ride.

His three daughters use their bikes every day, and the entire family goes for rides a couple of times a week.

The fact that they're getting exercise and enjoying fresh air is a bonus.

It's fun. Maybe that's the bottom line. It's really fun to ride bikes, Smith said as he and his 7-year-old daughter, Ellery, pedaled to the bicycle shop.

The pandemic is also driving a boom in electric-assist bikes, called e-bikes, which were a niche part of the overall market until now. Most e-bikes require a cyclist to pedal, but electric motors provide extra oomph.

VanMoof, a Dutch e-bike maker, is seeing unlimited demand since the pandemic began, resulting in a 10-week order backlog for its commuter electric bikes, compared with typical one-day delivery time, said co-founder Taco Carlier.

The company's sales surged 138% in the US and rocketed 184% in Britain in the February-April period over last year, with big gains in other European countries.

The company is scrambling to ramp up production as fast as it can, but it will take two to three months to meet the demand, Carlier said.

We did have some issues with our supply chain back in January, February when the crisis hit first in Asia, said Carlier.

But the issue is now with demand, not supply.

Sales at Cowboy, a Belgian e-bike maker, tripled in the January-April period from last year. Notably, they spiked in Britain and France at around the same time in May that those countries started easing lockdown restrictions, said Chief Marketing Officer Benoit Simeray.

It's now becoming very obvious for most of us living in and around cities that we don't want to go back into public transportation, said Simeray.

But people may still need to buy groceries or commute to the office one or two days a week, so then they're starting to really, really think about electric bikes as the only solution they've got.

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

### LAND FOR SALE

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



# CS and Health Secy call on Governor

## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Chief Secretary, SC Gupta, accompanied by Principal Secretary, Health Department, K Srinivasulu and DG cum Secretary, Health Department Dr Pempa T Bhutia called on Governor of Sikkim Ganga Prasad at Raj Bhavan today.

It was a formal call on by the Chief Secretary and Health Officials in the backdrop of recent spike of COVID-19 positive cases in the State, a Raj Bhavan press release informs.

The Governor sought information with regard to state of preparedness, safety protocols being followed and the



health condition of the COVID-19 positive persons admitted in the hospital. He further enquired about the per-

sons currently in facility quarantine, their testing and future plan of action in view of the impact of pandemic going beyond

the expected time frame in the future.

The Chief Secretary apprised on the various aspects of State's fight

against COVID-19 pandemic and stated that Sikkim is fully prepared to meet any eventuality related with COVID-19.

## Sikkim Journalist Union pays homage to Late Santosh Nirash



## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Sikkim Journalist Union held a Shradhanjali sabha here at Gangtok today to pay homage to Late Santosh Nirash, who passed away last Wednesday.

President of SJU, Bhim Rawat remembered her as a legend,

democrat, and a social reformer who had contributed immensely in the field of women's empowerment, child rights and education.

Various media persons shared their memories of Late Nirash and remembered her contribution to the field of journalism in Sikkim.

Kiran Rasaily remembered her as his teacher, social worker and media person who contributed to the State without any fear.

Vishnu Neopane, Kishore Kumar Chettri, Prabin Khaling, Shekhar Khawas, Kabita Sharma, Dechen Bhutia and Bi-joy Gurung spoke on the occasion.

## Tucked away and forgotten

### YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 15 JUNE:

Just because an eyesore is out of sight does not mean that it does not exist. It does. Even if the concerned agencies turn a blind eye to it. Such is the case of a cluster of shanties housing around 15 families in dangerously unhygienic conditions in Singtam.

It qualifies to be called a slum and is

tucked away where the riverside walkway meets Goskhan Dara at Singtam Lal Bazaar.

Families here know about Novel Coronavirus, but that is through their own agency, and not because any awareness or counsel has reached them. And even if they know about the need for social-distancing, that is a luxury that their homes do not afford them.

## Childline Services inspect Rhenock Bazaar



### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Childline Services Rongli Sub-Division under Youth Development of Sikkim (YODESS) inspected shops, tea stalls, hotels of Rhenock Bazaar today, a

press release informs.

The inspection was to check if any children were being employed in the shops and to spread awareness on related laws. YODESS conducted a sanitization drive in the area as well.

## CAB organises power yoga webinar for women's U-19 team

KOLKATA, 15 JUNE (PTI):

To keep the women players both mentally and physically fit during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) on Monday arranged a power yoga webinar for the state's Under-19 team.

"Yoga is integral to our culture and power yoga is a perfect mix of science and tradition. It has been our continuous effort to keep the players motivated and fit," CAB President Avishek Dalmi-

ya said in a statement. "Even if on-field action does not begin CAB is mindful of keeping the players fit in body and mind and this session is part of the ongoing process."

Yoga instructor Suman Bhat, who conducted the webinar, said, "It will help players increase flexibility, get relief from anxiety and stress. Our aim is to keep the girls engaged with sports and fitness through various activities during this difficult period."

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## Sikkim joins Global Akhanda Gayatri chanting for 24 hours

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Sikkim, joined in the global Akhanda Gayatri chanting for 24 hours beginning on 13 Jun, 2020 at 8:00 pm and culminated at 8:30 pm on the 14 Jun, 2020. For the last 30 minutes from 8 pm onwards devotees from across the state joined in from their homes at the same time and chanted in unison across the state, a press release informs.

The prayers were initiated by the International Sathya Sai Organisation and devotees from 188 countries and every state of India joined in these prayers from their homes.

In Sikkim, the state Organisation vowed to chant prayers across the



state for 24 hours and this was achieved by segregating time slots for each mandali (a village unit of the Organisation) and Samithi (a cluster of few village units).

Sikkim has a total of 160 mandalis and 37 Samithis across the state and devotees of each mandali and samithi continuously chant-

ed the Gayatri Mantra during the time allotted to them. In this manner, the chanting of Gayatri Mantra resonated in more than 25,000 households in the state.

The Organisation has also been supporting the state's efforts against the pandemic and had contributed a sum of Rs. 1,51,000 on 03 Jun, 2020.

## Fees fixed for COVID-19 tests in private labs, hospitals in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, JUNE 15 (PTI): The cost of conducting a COVID-19 test in private lab has been fixed at Rs 2,200 and the fee for treatment of the infection in corporate hospitals Rs 4,000 per day.

These charged were fixed by the Telangana government on Monday.

The chief minister K Chandrababhu Naidu held a review with the chief secretary and other senior officials and announced some key decisions on Sunday.

One of them is giving nod to private labs who have taken permission to conduct tests.

The fee for the test is Rs 2,200, Health Minister E Rajender told reporters here.

The charge for treatment of patients in ICU without ventilator support has been fixed at Rs 7,500 per day, while it would be Rs 9,000 per day for those who are on such support, he said.

Since the cost of some anti-viral injections is in the range of Rs 40,000 Rs 50,000, such treatment can be charged separately, he said. The government would like to convey to the private players not to consider views of those who would like to get tested without having any symptoms, he said.

The information related to tests and those undergoing treatment at private hospitals should be shared with the government as preventive measures, including tracing of contacts and others, need to be taken, he said.

The chief minister has allowed recruitment of healthcare personnel on a temporary basis, if necessary, to conduct a survey of every house in Hyderabad for influenza like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI), pneumonia cases and others, he said.

He said Telangana is in a position to conduct about 7,500 tests per day, he said.

People should utilise government healthcare facilities and if those who can pay to go to private hospitals, they can do so, he said.

The state government has received requests from some people who wanted to choose the private sector, Rajender said.

Asked about the 50,000 tests proposed to be conducted in Hyderabad and adjoining areas as part of measures to contain the infection, he said the 50,000 tests would be conducted free of cost from the coming week to 10 days.

The government is ready to conduct more tests if necessary.

Quoting ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research), Rajender said there is no community spread of the virus in Telangana.

The state has followed the guidelines of ICMR, he said.

The Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar said there is no need to fear the virus and that Hyderabad is in a better position compared to other cities and states.

The government has decided to increase the number of tests as misinformation, including in the social media, has been spread about testing in the state. The government has decided also to instil confidence in the people in this regard, he said.

The tests would be conducted for people with influenza-like symptoms, family members of positive cases, and high risk groups, including doctors and other healthcare personnel, police, government officials and mediapersons, he said. The private diagnostic agencies should not indulge in malpractice to test many people, he said.

## EPFO launches multi location claims settlement facility



### NEW DELHI, JUN 15

(PTI): Retirement fund

body Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on Monday said it has launched a multi-location claim settlement facility to expedite member claims, moving away from the existing system of geographical jurisdiction for claim processing.

The facility will bring a paradigm shift by allowing EPFO offices to settle online claims from any of its regional office across the country, the labour ministry said in a statement.

All types of online claims i.e. provident fund, pension, partial withdrawal and claims and transfer claims can be processed under this novel initiative, it added.

COVID-19 crisis has affected 135 regional offices of the EPFO with different levels of severity depending on their location.

The ministry said it was observed that though many offices in Mumbai, Thane, Haryana and Chennai zones operate with even less than skeletal staff on account of COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a disproportionate increase in claim receipt due

to recently introduced COVID-19 advance.

Consequently, claim pendency in these offices rose to higher levels leading to delay in claim settlement cycle while other offices, working with 50 per cent workforce and with the help of recently introduced auto settlement mode could bring the claim settlement period down to three days for COVID-19 advances.

To reduce the delays by uniformly distributing the claim settlement related workload nationwide, EPFO has moved away from the existing system of geographical jurisdiction for claim processing by rolling out multi-location claim settlement facility, it said.

This will allow offices with lesser workload to share the burden of offices that have accumulated a higher level of pendency, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

It enables fast-tracking of settlement process through most appropriate engagement of EPFO's workforce in all its regional offices across the country.

The initiative aimed at enhancing ease of living experience for its members, has been

achieved in record time.

The first batch of multi-location claims under this path-breaking project was settled for Gurugram Region on June 10, 2020.

The claims of employees pertaining to the regional office of Gurugram Region were settled by EPFO staff deployed in Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Jalandhar offices. After settlement the payment was made from the Gurugram office to the bank account of the individual member.

Since its launch, claims pertaining to offices that fall in containment zones are being distributed to offices in other locations for expedited processing. The ministry noted that despite its functioning being adversely impacted due to COVID-19 restrictions, EPFO's officers and staff have been settling more than 80,000 claims amounting to Rs 270 crore per working day since April 1, 2020.

With multi-location claim facility EPFO is set to achieve higher benchmarks in service delivery ensuring social security for its more than 6 crore subscribers during the time of crisis, it added.



### 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

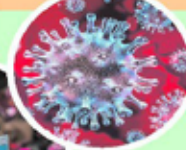
- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

### 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.



If you seek help, you may call :  
-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7029372100  
WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



## Work Harder at Inspiring Excellence

***More attention should be diverted to stem the regression from privileges to entitlement***

A recent discussion on ideas of identity teased out something which should have been obvious all along – a lot of the passion behind reinforcing and reasserting identities, as much as they may be about ideas of self and of belonging, are also about privileges which accrue when such claims fructify. Privileges, however, are only one step away from ingraining a sense of entitlement even instilling sloth, and that is where futures can get compromised.

Maybe the minds that should be applying themselves to finding solutions are too occupied with other pursuits or maybe because the fire in the belly is just not burning strongly enough, whatever the reason, measures aimed at securing the futures for the present and coming generations remain perennially short-term in Sikkim. We speak of employment here. Quotas, reservation and guaranteed employment are short-term measures; options put in place till such time that the 'local' workforce acquires the skills and training required for the wider opportunities available. Make these protections permanent and the policy ends up rewarding mediocrity because it stops placing a premium on excellence. Why, after all, will a 'local' work hard at becoming employable when the carrot of guaranteed placement keeps dancing in front of him/ her? In fact, to do so [work hard at becoming employable] would be seen as a waste of energy by many. But this approach is self-defeating. Sikkim is growing, both, in census figures and aspirations, and the job opportunities here will never be able to keep pace. Every job opportunity that opens in Sikkim in the next five years, once it is filled, will remain occupied on an average for the next thirty years. Even if all these job openings are made available only to locals, one still looks at an increasing number of job seekers entering the job market every year. School enrolments are up and the number of graduates has been consistently rising in the State, why, despite the density of "universities" here and one proper Central University, the State is in the process of establishing a state university as well because of the overflow. Given how young the pursuit of education is in Sikkim and the manner in which the population is growing, the number of job-seekers will keep multiplying every year. The State, even after 100% reservation, will soon run out of job opportunities.

The policy makers in government and noise makers outside have to realise that the solution is not in reserving jobs in Sikkim, but grooming generations to become employable anywhere in the world. Once that happens, jobs in Sikkim will automatically go to locals and this will come bundled with pride because they would have been earned on merit and not recommendations or old laws. This cannot happen though if people are spoilt for doles. It is not suggested that jobs in Sikkim should not be reserved for locals; what is being suggested is that celebrating protectionism only grooms mediocrity. Protections exist and should be maintained as a safety net, but aspirations have to be set much higher. One way to do this would be by fixing accountability not just on those who organise skill development programmes [by checking up on how many self-employed youth emerged from the training], but also following up on the funds the government invests on students by way of free education, text books, scholarships and other aids. It would not be a bad idea to release figures on how much the State spends on an average on its youth since the time they join school to the time they graduate. When the figure stares them in the face in black & white, maybe more of the youth will be inspired to put their education to better use than demanding a job from the government. If this happens, they will inspire more to follow in their footsteps. That is the chain reaction of achievers that the State has to aim at setting off, not pampering the youth with a policy that makes them lazy.

### WRITE US:

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

# The next once-a-century pandemic is coming sooner than you think – but COVID-19 can help us get ready

DAVID MURDOCH  
*theconversation.com*

COVID-19 is being referred to as a "once in a century event" – but the next pandemic is likely to hit sooner than you think.

In the next few decades, we will likely see other pandemics. We can predict that with reasonable confidence because of the recent increased frequency of major epidemics (such as SARS and Ebola), and because of social and environmental changes driven by humans that may have contributed to COVID-19's emergence.

A COVID-19-type pandemic had long been predicted, but scientists' warnings weren't heeded. Right now, while we have the full attention of politicians and other key decision-makers, we need to start rethinking our approaches to future preparedness internationally and within our own nations. That includes countries like New Zealand, where – despite getting its active COVID-19 cases down to zero in June 2020 – big challenges remain.

WE CAN'T SAY WE WEREN'T WARNED

Less than five years ago, I was one of about 100 global experts invited to a World Health Organization (WHO) meeting in Geneva, prompted by the then ongoing Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

Then, as now, WHO was criticised for its response to the outbreak. The December 2015 meeting was meant to improve international collaboration and preparation for future epidemics and other infectious disease risks.

The very last presentation was from Dr David Nabarro, then the United Nations Special Envoy on Ebola (and now a Special Envoy on COVID-19).

In the wake of the Ebola outbreak, politicians were more focused on public health than ever before. Nabarro urged us to show greater leadership and capture that interest, before political and public attention moved on. He stressed the importance of trust, respect, transparent communication, and working with nature.

Yet five years later, we're still talking about inadequate funding for pandemic preparedness; delays in adopting preventive measures;

failure to develop surge capacity in health systems, laboratories and supply chain logistics; and reduced infectious disease expertise.

But there are signs that some lessons may have been learned. For example, countries most affected by SARS (such as Taiwan and Singapore) have tended to respond more quickly and decisively to COVID-19 than oth-



er countries.

Primed and ready, vaccine developers have progressed at enormous pace, with several COVID-19 vaccine candidates already undergoing clinical trials. The volume and pace of sharing scientific information about COVID-19 has been unprecedented.

We've also seen a number of rapid reports urging us to learn from this pandemic and past epidemics to protect us from future events – especially by taking an holistic "One Health" approach. This brings together expertise across human health, animal health and the environment.

For instance, last month the Lancet One Health Commission called for more transdisciplinary collaboration to solve complex health challenges. Similarly, the World Wide Fund for Nature's March 2020 report on The Loss of Nature and Rise of Pandemics highlighted the likely animal origin of COVID-19, and how intimately connected the health of humans is to animal and environmental health.

WHAT NEW ZEALAND CAN LEARN FROM COVID-19

As well as working more effec-

tively together internationally, each country will need its own strategy. So what should we be doing to protect New Zealand from future infectious diseases threats?

Our health system has, for the most part, responded well to COVID-19. Our research institutions and universities have engaged quickly and effectively to provide scientif-

ter value from such collaborations.

We need to strengthen capability in such areas as epidemiology, modelling and outbreak management, and build pandemic plans that are flexible enough to respond to all eventualities. New Zealand has a Centre of Research Excellence in plant biosecurity – but not in animal biosecurity or infectious diseases. We also need to

ic support for the public health response.

Yet we can and must still do better. Our expertise and systems are not always well joined up – vital for coordinated and timely responses to challenges like COVID-19.

We allow scientists to work in silos, despite obvious overlapping interests and skill sets. Of particular importance for tackling infectious diseases is the need to break down artificial barriers between human, animal and environmental health.

This approach makes particular sense in New Zealand. We are an island nation vulnerable to introduced infectious diseases, and economically dependent on agriculture and the physical environment. But we're also home to an existing indigenous Māori worldview and knowledge system that emphasises interconnectivity between humans, animals and the environment.

University-led efforts, such as One Health Aotearoa, have brought together professionals and researchers from different disciplines. But more investment is needed to get even bet-

ter integrate science and research into the health system, a key feature of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017-2027. This requires a culture change so research is regarded as business as usual for district health boards, providing the science needed to inform policy, preparedness and best practice.

Crucially, we need a new generation of scientists and professionals who are systems thinkers and comfortable working with multiple disciplines and across the human-animal-environment interface.

And we need the kind of leadership Nabarro called for: science-informed and forward-looking, rather than reactive.

We have seen good leadership based on science in the highest levels of New Zealand's government in response to COVID-19.

We now need to see this at all levels of health, research and politics to get us out of this pandemic in the best shape possible – and be better prepared for our next pandemic.

[the writer is Dean and Head of Campus, University of Otago]

# Coronavirus: Fake news less of a problem than confusing government messages – new study

STEPHEN CUSHION, MARIA KYRIAKIDOU, MARINA MORANI & NIKKI SOO  
*theconversation.com*

Studies have suggested social media is rife with disinformation, with surveys showing a high proportion of people have been exposed to false or misleading claims about COVID-19, fuelling dramatic headlines.

But our six-week diary study of news audiences between April 16 and May 27 found that the vast majority of our panel of 200 participants could easily spot fake news. They found stories such as the conspiracy theory that 5G is responsible for the spread of COVID-19 or the quack remedy that gargling with saltwater cures coronavirus immediately suspect.

So it wasn't fake news being peddled on social media or conspiracy websites that was of most concern. When we asked them about what false or misleading information about COVID-19 they had encountered, many instead referenced examples of what they saw as government or media misinformation.

Our panel of news audiences was made up from a representative mix of the UK population. We mainly asked them questions aimed at finding out about their knowledge of the pandemic and the way it was reported by news media.

### RETHINKING COVID-19 MISINFORMATION

When representative surveys reveal that many people have seen disinformation about COVID-19, it is not always clear what the false or misleading information they have seen was – or where it came from. What's more, even when people are exposed to disinformation, we often assume rather than question whether it will affect their understanding of the pandemic.

But when we asked respondents about some of the most prominent false claims associated with COVID-19 disinformation they were easily detected. For example, the vast majority of participants rightly said 5G was not responsible for spreading the pandemic, that drinking more water does not kill the coronavirus and that gargling with saltwater is not a cure for COVID-19.

But while our panel could easily spot fake news, they were less aware of issues that may help them understand how the pandemic is being handled.

Three in ten respondents did not know the government had failed to regularly meet its testing targets, for example. Almost a third did not realise living in more deprived areas of England and Wales increased the likelihood of catching the coronavirus. And many participants underestimated the UK's death toll compared to other countries and were suspicious of the UK government's figures.

After new lockdown measures were announced in England on May 10, we also found many people did not realise they did not necessarily apply to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Half of all respondents wrongly believed the UK government was in charge of the lockdown measures across all four nations.

### GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA MISINFORMATION

When we asked participants what counted as misinformation, some respondents mentioned discredited medical claims, such as Donald Trump believing that injecting disinfectant protects against the coronavirus. But many more told us that either government claims or the media were responsible for spreading false or misleading information. As one respondent told us:

"Misinformation to me would be reading an article saying schools to go back on June 1 without many details and then finding out it's just a phased reintroduction for certain age groups. It's panicking many parents when that didn't need to happen, headlines should still be brief but not misleading."

Another participant believed misinformation "related to things the government have said that have later turned out to be false, such as the PPE shortage, number of tests done, care home deaths. I think misinformation in this case relates to the media reporting facts that haven't been clear by the government in statements."

Broadcasters have long been caught up in debates about how far they fact-check government statements while ensuring that the public believe they are being impartial. When we asked respondents about this difficult balancing act, many believed a greater emphasis on fact-checking would enhance rather than undermine public trust in journalism.

As one respondent put it: "I think fact checking is more relevant than ever before because unfortunately people in power make false claims that, sad-

ly, are believed by many people."

### ADDRESSING PUBLIC CONFUSION

Public faith in the government's handling of the pandemic has fallen dramatically since mid-April. We watched this develop during our six-week study from April 16 to May 27.

Over this period, participants told us they wanted more media scrutiny of government decision-making, including fact-checking dubious claims. They also wanted more experts informing media coverage rather than politicians.

If it becomes routine for government ministers to appear at the daily Downing Street press briefing without any scientific or health experts – as happened on June 6 – it may limit how far journalists can quiz them about their advice to ministers. As Sky News' political correspondent, Sam Coates, has pointed out, with no scientific advisers present, it allows the government to select the most politically convenient evidence when responding to questions.

With public confidence in the UK government plummeting, broadcasters have an increasingly important role to play in the pandemic. Over the six-week study, our respondents have consistently said they want accurate and impartial information, with journalists regularly fact-checking political statements and challenging any dubious claims.

Our research suggests broadcasters may have helped people become fairly confident in spotting egregious examples of fake news. But many participants were confused by more routine political decisions, most strikingly the lockdown measures that can affect people in England differently to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For broadcasters to more effectively counter misinformation, our research tells us it is not only about boldly questioning what politicians say and holding the government to account. It is about identifying what people are most confused about and finding ways to raise their level of understanding about complex and contentious issues.

[Stephen Cushion is Chair professor, Cardiff University; Maria Kyriakidou is Lecturer, School of Journalism, Cardiff University; Marina Morani is Postdoctoral research associate, Cardiff University; Nikki Soo is Postdoctoral Research Associate, Cardiff University]



# Bengal's Tarapith temple still closed to devotees

**SURI (WEST BENGAL), JUN 15 (PTI):** Though many famous places of worship in West Bengal have opened their doors to devotees with adequate precautionary measures in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Tarapith temple will take more time to unlock its gates, an official said.

The authorities of the centuries-old shrine have expressed concern over health safety of devotees, amid the rise in COVID-19 cases in the state, he said.

The state government has granted permission to all places of worship to unbolt their doors to the devotees from June 1, while stressing that safety protocols have to be strictly followed at all shrines.

The Tarapith temple committee had, earlier, announced that it would unlock the doors of the shrine from June 15.

"We have decided not to open the gates from Monday and will monitor the overall situation for some more days. The prevailing condition is not satisfactory as the number of COVID-19 cases is on the rise in the state and also in the country," the temple



committee's secretary Taramoy Mukherjee said.

India saw a jump of over 11,000 novel coronavirus cases for the third consecutive day on Monday, taking the total number of infections to over 3.32 lakh, while the toll rose to 9,520 with 325 more deaths, the Union Health Ministry said.

According to a bulletin, West Bengal registered 389 fresh coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the infection tally to 11,087 in the state.

The Tarapith temple,

a Shakti Peeth in Birbhum district, attracts thousands of devotees from different parts of the country every day and remains closed after the nationwide lockdown was enforced in March.

Mukherjee said the authorities of the temple are looking forward to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with the chief ministers.

"We are waiting to see what decision the government will take regarding the lockdown. The committee has convened a meeting on June

20 to deliberate on the issue," he said.

Modi will hold the video-conferencing with chief ministers on June 16 and 17.

Meanwhile, prominent temples, gurdwaras, mosques and churches, in keeping with the government guidelines, have thrown open the gates since the beginning of the month, while some religious places have sought time to ensure that all safety protocols were in place, before allowing the devotees inside.

The doors of the re-

nowned 19th century Dakshineswar Kali temple, built by Rani Rashmoni in the northern fringes of Kolkata, have been opened after putting in place all safety measures required to contain the spread of COVID-19, while Kalighat temple is yet to unlock its gates to the devotees.

Belur Math, the global headquarters of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, is scheduled to throw open its gates to the devotees from June 15.

## Odisha: 146 new COVID-19 cases; tally crosses 4,000

**BHUBANESWAR, JUN 15 (PTI):** Odisha's COVID-19 tally on Monday crossed the 4,000-mark, with 146 more people, including nine disaster response personnel, testing positive for the infection, a Health Department official said.

With these fresh patients, the total number of COVID-19 cases in the state rose to 4,055, he said. Of the 146 cases, 128 were detected in various quarantine centres where people returning from different states are staying, while 18 were found in contact-tracing exercises, the official said.

"The new cases included nine disaster

response personnel of the state fire service, who were engaged in the post-cyclone-Amphan restoration works in West Bengal and had returned from there," he said.

With this, the total number of disaster response men getting infected with the disease has increased to 158.

Odisha has now 1,333 active cases, while 2,708 people have recovered from the disease.

Eleven people have succumbed to the disease, while three other COVID-19 patients have also died in the state, but their deaths were attributed to other reasons.

The new cases

were reported from 15 districts.

Kandhamal reported the highest of 48 fresh cases, followed by 19 each from Bhadrak and Cuttack and eight each from Balasore and Ganjam.

Seven cases were detected in Khurda, six in Angul, five in Rayagada, four each in Jagatsinghpur, Nayagarh and Sundergarh, two in Sonapur and one each from Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal.

The state health department conducted 2,499 tests on Sunday, while over 2.25 lakh samples have been tested in the state so far, the official added.

## Russia sentences US ex-marine to 16 years in spy trial

A Russian court on Monday sentenced former US marine Paul Whelan to 16 years in a penal colony for espionage in a case that strained ties with Washington and fuelled speculation of a prisoner swap.

Moscow City Court found Whelan guilty of receiving classified information as he stood in the dock with a sign that read "Sham trial!" and pleaded for US President Donald Trump to intervene in the case.

The court process is "slimy, greasy Russian politics nothing more, nothing less," he said.

Whelan, 50, has been held in a Moscow jail since his arrest in December 2018 and his trial was held behind closed doors because of the accusations of seeking to obtain state secrets.

Throughout the trial he maintained his innocence, saying he was framed and comparing himself to the hapless comedy character Mr Bean. "Russia thought they caught James Bond on a spy mission, in reality they abducted Mr Bean on holiday," he said.

Whelan says he was detained on a visit to Moscow to attend a wedding when he took a USB drive from an acquaintance thinking it contained holiday photographs. The prosecution

had asked the judge to sentence Whelan to 18 years in a strict-regime penal colony, just short of the 20 years maximum term for the charge.

- 'No evidence' -

The US ambassador to Moscow John Sullivan condemned the trial as unfair and lacking transparency.

"I am disappointed, outraged by what I just heard," he told reporters in court.

"(Whelan has) been sentenced to 16 years in prison with no evidence that's been produced.

"I can't say I'm surprised. This is the direction this case has been heading from the beginning," he added.

The prosecutor summed up last month by saying Whelan tried to receive information that was a state secret and could harm Russia's security, Whelan's lawyer Vladimir Zherebenkov told reporters.

The prosecutor claimed that Whelan has the rank of an officer -- "at least a colonel" -- at the US defence intelligence agency, the lawyer said.

Whelan's family had said ahead of the verdict that a guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion.

After Monday's ruling, his brother David said in a statement that he family would con-

tinue to fight for his release, and criticised the court's politically motivated verdict.

"We had hoped that the court might show some independence but, in the end, Russian judges are political, not legal, entities," he said.

Whelan was dishonourably discharged as a marine before working as head of global security at a US auto parts company.

There had been suggestions that Whelan -- who also has British, Canadian and Irish passports -- could be returned to the US in a prisoner swap.

Whelan's lawyer said on Monday that Russian intelligence services were considering an exchange with two Russians detained in the United States, including pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, imprisoned on drug smuggling charges.

David Whelan, the brother, said recently that the family hoped a conviction would allow Russia and the United States to "begin discussing Paul's release immediately".

Whelan had complained of being mistreated in prison and late last month underwent an operation in a Moscow hospital that his family said was emergency hernia surgery.

## Dhoni at no 3 would have broken most records: Gambhir



**MUMBAI, JUN 15 (PTI):** Former India opener Gautam Gambhir believes that Mahendra Singh Dhoni would have been a different player with all batting records in his kitty had the Indian captain opted batting one down in 50-over format.

Gambhir was asked to chose between current India skipper Virat Kohli and Dhoni, to chase down a target.

"It's very difficult to compare both of them because one bats at No. 3, one bats at No. 6 or 7," Gambhir said on Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected'.

According to Gambhir, with the kind of flat pitches on offer and quality of current bowling attacks in world cricket now, the Jharkhand dasher could have broken most of the records had he batted at three.

"Probably, I would have taken MS Dhoni. MS

Dhoni batting at No. 3 on flat wickets, with the quality of bowling attack now in world cricket.

"Look at Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, West Indies, in the current situation, with the kind of quality in international cricket there is, MS Dhoni would have probably broken most of the records," added the southpaw, who is a member of both 2007 and 2011 World Cup winning Indian team.

Dhoni in his career usually batted lower down the order and was more of a finisher.

The former left-handed opener felt that Dhoni would have been the most exciting cricketer in the world had he not captained India and batted at number three.

"Probably, world cricket has missed one thing and that is MS didn't bat at No. three. Had MS not captained India and batted at No.

three, probably world cricket would have seen a completely different player, probably he could have got many more runs, he would have broken many more records."

However former India speedster Irfan Pathan had a different viewpoint.

Pathan said that if one compares Dhoni to Kohli at number three, Kohli would have been a better option.

"But MS had all the chance to bat at No. 3, he didn't. Look, I really believe that if you compare Virat and Mahendra Singh Dhoni batting at No. 3, I still feel Virat has a better technique.

"There's nothing that I am taking away from Mahendra Singh Dhoni, obviously he has been an absolute legend of the game. Everyone has their own opinion. I will still take Virat any day," said Pathan on the same show.

## Arrested ULFA cadre declared brought dead by hospital

**JORHAT (ASSAM), JUN 15 (PTI):** A suspected ULFA-I cadre who was apprehended during an anti-insurgency operation jointly by the army and the Assam police, was declared brought dead when he was rushed to Jorhat Medical College Hospital, a district official said on Monday.

According to district deputy commissioner Roshni Aparanji Korati, the incident took place on Sunday.

The Army's 224 Field Regiment, based in neighbouring Charaideo district had sent information on presence of several ULFA-I and NSCM-IM cadres along the border areas of Assam and Nagaland and requested Jorhat district administration to conduct a search operation there.

Accordingly a Jorhat Police team went to assist the Army in the search operation at Kakodunga area, the DC said.

On Sunday, the army apprehended the suspected 30-year-old ULFA-I cadre having links also with NSCN-IM and took him to Borhulla police station in its vehicle, she said.

On reaching there, the army team reported that the victim was feeling unwell so police from the Borhulla police station rushed him to the local community health centre. There doctors on duty gave him preliminary treatment and referred him to Jorhat Medical College Hospital where he was declared brought dead, the DC said.

A magisterial inquiry headed by senior additional deputy commissioner Tapan Gohain has been constituted and will submit his report within 10 days from today.

## Drive-in worship adopted by church in Bengaluru

**BENGALURU, JUNE 15 (PTI):** A church here organised a unique drive-in worship allowing visitors to perform Sunday service without breaking the social distancing norm in view of the coronavirus spread. The Sunday mass was divided in five service and divided in three batches.

The first batch was of two-wheelers at 7 am and 5 pm, the second batch was of cars from 9 am to 7 pm and the third batch at 11 am was of those who came in auto-rickshaws, cabs, buses or by walk to the church.

According to pastor Dani Kuruvilla of Bethel AG Church, the worshippers performed the prayers without getting off their vehicles.

"It is not a must in these pandemic times for all the people to come into the church. For, those in vehicles performed the prayers from inside their vehicles, those who came without vehicles went into the main building and those who could not make it to the mass attended it online," the pastor told PTI.

According to Vineeta who handles public relations for the church, its authorities stumbled upon the idea of organising the 'Drive-in Worship' to let the worshippers perform their religious obligation without any hindrance.

## 5 fresh COVID-19 cases in Mizoram; count rises to 117

**AIZAWL, JUN 15 (PTI):** Five women have tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, raising the state's tally to 117, a Health Department official said on Monday.

All new patients, who had recently returned to the state from Delhi, are from Mamit district, he said.

"A total of 682 samples were tested at Zoram Medical College (ZMC) on Sunday and five of them were found

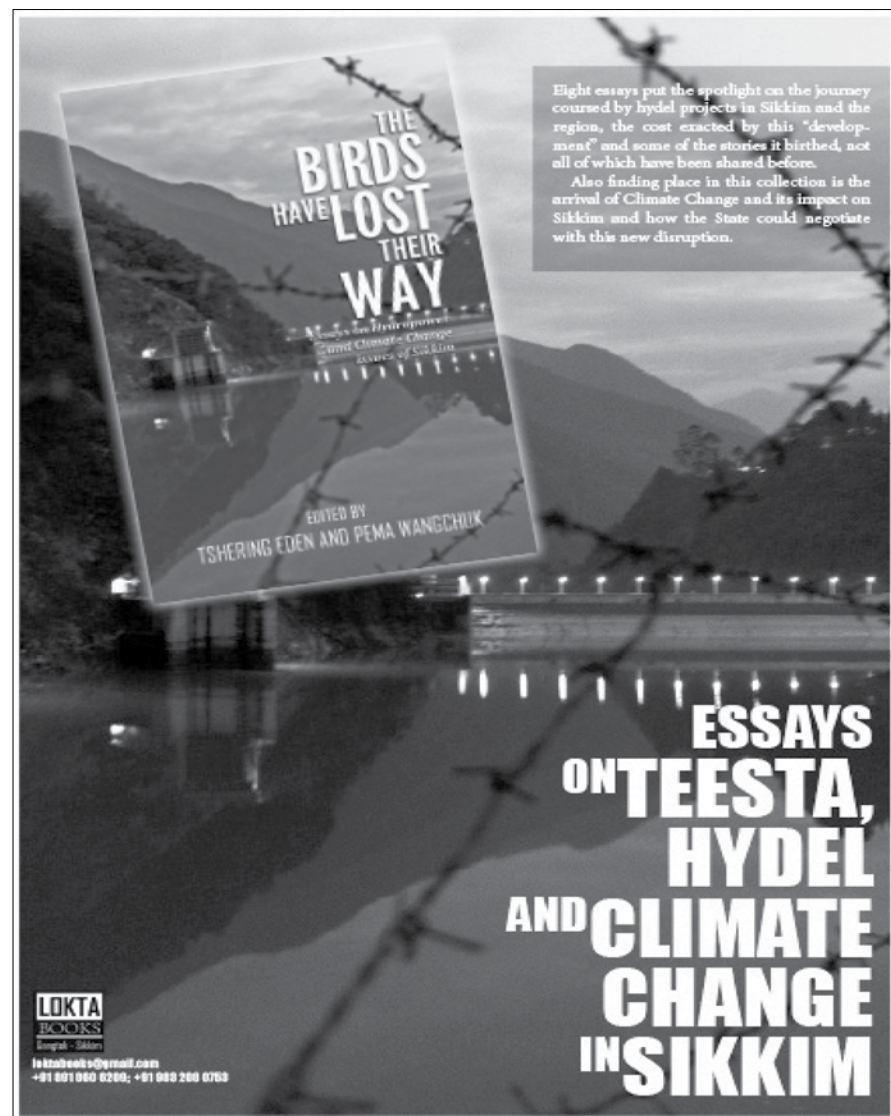
positive," the official said.

The fresh patients are aged between 21 and 23 years and asymptomatic, he said. Mizoram has now 116 active cases, the official said, adding that 59 patients are females and 57 males.

The first patient in the state, who had tested positive for COVID-19 on March 24, recovered from the disease in early May. Meanwhile, Aizawl Hospital and Research

Centre (AH&RC), which was temporarily shut down on Saturday after a patient was diagnosed with the coronavirus-infection, has resumed functioning.

"The hospital has been opened from Monday as 29 staffers, who came in contact with the patient, have tested negative for the virus," its managing director Dr Lalrinawma Hnamte said.





NRL match postponed over coronavirus fears

SYDNEY, JUN 15 (AP): A match in Australia's National Rugby League between the Sydney Roosters and Canterbury Bulldogs has been postponed over fears a Bulldogs player may have been exposed to the coronavirus.

Prop Aiden Tolman has a child at the Laguna Street Public School in Caringbah, Sydney at which a staff member has tested positive to Covid-19.

Tolman was tested for the virus, which subsequently came back negative later Sunday, meaning the match provisionally postponed until Monday will now go ahead.

Prior to the results of Tolman's test, the chairman of the Australian Rugby League Commission, Peter V'landys, described the risk of the virus spreading to Bulldogs players as "remote" but said no chances will be taken.

"There's a very remote risk of infection within the Bulldogs squad," V'landys said.

"To ensure there is no risk at all the player will be tested today and the game delayed until tomorrow to ensure the test results have returned.

"I want to congratulate the Bulldogs for swiftly informing the NRL."

All Bulldogs players and staff inside their nominated 50-person roster have been tested as a precaution. The match is the first to be affected by the virus since the competition resumed at the end of April.

Bull runs wild, firemen calm it down at port area

MANGALURU, JUN 15 (PTI): The fire service department personnel of the New Mangalore Port Trust (NMPT) on Sunday rescued a bull which became aggressive after it was choked by a rope tightly tied around its neck allegedly by illegal cattle traders.

The rope had been tightened around its neck apparently for transportation to a slaughter house.

The residents in the area have been seeing the animal in agony for the last few weeks and trying to save it with the help of the animal care trust based in the city.

Their attempts failed as the animal almost ran amok when people approached it. The bull entered the dock area in the port on Saturday in search of water with visible symptoms of agony and suffocation.

The fire service personnel initially tried to physically hold the bull to release the rope but it became aggressive.

The bull was then brought to an enclosed area and its gate was closed.

After a full day of domestication by providing it with food, the animal calmed down and the staff began their work of removing the rope.

They were successful in the attempt by Sunday night, a press release from the port trust here said.

Real Madrid's fast start sees off Eibar and maintains pressure on leaders

LONDON, 15 JUN [THEGUARDIAN]: Real Madrid moved to within two points of the Spanish league leaders Barcelona after returning to action with a routine 3-1 win over Eibar on Sunday.

First-half goals from Toni Kroos, Sergio Ramos and Marcelo ensured Zinedine Zidane's side made light work of their first game for three months. Pedro Bigas made it 3-1 after the break but defeat means Eibar remain two points above the relegation zone.

Madrid responded to Barca's 4-0 win at Mallorca on Saturday to keep the pressure on their title rivals. Madrid are playing at their training base, the Estadio Alfredo Di Stefano, after renovation work at the Bernabéu was stepped up during lockdown.

Kroos opened the scoring after four minutes when his first-time finish from 18 yards found the top corner following good work from Karim Benzema. It was 2-0 after 30 minutes when Ramos started and finished a quick break, marauding forward before tapping in after an unselfish



lay-off by Eden Hazard.

Seven minutes later Marcelo made the game safe when he drilled in from just inside the box after Hazard's shot had been saved. The defender then took a knee to celebrate in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Thibaut Courtois denied

Sergio Enrich but the visitors pulled a goal back on the hour when Bigas's deflected effort found a way in. Gareth Bale was a second-half substitute while Hazard came off and had an ice pack put on the ankle he injured in February.

Earlier on Sunday Diego Costa scored on Atlético Ma-

ดริด's return to action, at Athletic Bilbao, and dedicated his goal to his club's midfielder Virginia Torrecilla who is recovering from a brain tumour.

Costa celebrated with teammates after bringing Atlético level in the first half of their 1-1 draw at San Mamés before running to the touch-

line to hold up a shirt bearing Torrecilla's name as a show of support for the Spanish women's international who had surgery last month to remove a brain tumour.

The surgery, in Pamplona, was successful and she has since left hospital to continue her recovery. After seeing

Costa's gesture she tweeted: "I have no words .... YOU ARE AMAZING !! Thanks from my heart!!" Torrecilla has made 63 appearances for Spain and played in all four of their games at last year's World Cup.

On the field, Atlético missed out on the chance to capitalise on slip-ups by their rivals for Champions League places. Iker Muniain gave Athletic the lead in an empty San Mamés stadium by prodding home in the 37th minute to complete a clever move but Atlético responded two minutes later when Costa slotted in following a through ball from Koke.

Diego Simeone's side had the best chance to win the game after the interval when the Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simón parried a cross from Renan Lodi into the path of Santiago Arias but the keeper recovered to block the rebound with his leg. Atlético remain sixth in La Liga on 46 points.

In the late game, Real Sociedad came back to secure a point against Osasuna, as Mikel Oyarzabal cancelled out Adrián's penalty.

Barty joins players expressing concern over US Open timing



BRISBANE, JUN 15 (AP): Ash Barty has joined the ranks of high-profile players concerned over the staging of the U.S. Open while there's still so much uncertainty around the coronavirus pandemic.

The women's No. 1 hasn't had the chance yet to defend her French Open title because all elite tennis competition is shuttered. She's already processed the fact there'll be no Wimbledon in 2020 but is still awaiting clarity on the U.S. Open, which is scheduled to begin Aug. 31.

Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, winners of the last eight men's major titles, have aired reservations about the potential restrictions on players, limits on player entourages and other changes being considered for the U.S. Open. Women's No. 2 Simona Halep reportedly is also uncertain about playing.

I have concerns too, Barty said in an e-mail to The Associated Press. I understand the tournaments are eager to

run but keeping everyone safe has to be the priority.

A decision from the U.S. Tennis Association's board about whether to hold the Grand Slam tournament in New York in August could be made as early as this week.

The U.S. has accounted for more than 115,000 of the almost 433,000 deaths globally from COVID-19, including more than 30,000 in the state of New York, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Djokovic last week told Serbia's state broadcaster RTS that most players he's talked to were quite negative about entering the U.S. Open and that for him, as things stand, most probably the season will continue on clay at the beginning of September.

The French Open was postponed from a May start to late September because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Under usual circumstances, the U.S. Open is the last of the four majors to be played in the

season, when the tours go back to hard courts following the grass and clay-court swings.

U.S. Open tournament director Stacey Allaster has said organizers have been trying to figure out how to engage fans virtually, making it unlikely that fans or at least large groups of fans will be allowed to attend.

Under proposals to get the tournament started, players would need to prove they had tested negative for COVID-19 before traveling on charter flights the USTA would organize from a handful of cities. There would likely be daily health questionnaires and temperature checks, along with occasional nasal, saliva or antibody testing. Barty said she's still getting my head around what the tournament set up would be.

Australia closed its international borders in March and there's still travel restrictions domestically and strict physical distancing regulations, although restrictions are easing. Aus-

tralia has recorded 102 deaths from 7,335 cases of COVID-19, but the infection rate is declining.

I can't wait to get back out there and play but we have to make sure it's safe to do so first, not just for me but for my team," Barty told the AP.

Barty hasn't played competitively since a semifinal loss to Petra Kvitová at the Qatar Open in late February. That followed her first title on home soil at the Adelaide International in January and her semifinal run at the Australian Open. She's been able to spend time at home in Australia's Queensland state since March, keeping up tennis practice and fitness while also lowering her golf handicap during regular rounds with her partner Garry Kissick, a trainee golf pro.

She had a 24th birthday during the height of the lockdown in April, and hosted a virtual party on Zoom earlier this month to mark the first anniversary of her first major singles title at Roland Garros.

A Grand Slam title defense is likely a priority for the remainder of the year, but there's so much unknown.

It's tough to set goals, that's for sure, (when) we still don't really know what the rest of the year will look like, there is so much out of our control," Barty said. When we have some certainty on the rest of the year, my team and I will sit down and set a few tennis goals.

Kirsten recalls how he landed India coach's job in 7 minutes



NEW DELHI, JUN 15 (PTI): He was never interested in coaching neither did he apply for the job, but it took exactly seven minutes for Gary Kirsten to land the high-profile India coach's job back in 2007, a process set in motion by the great Sunil Gavaskar.

Speaking on the 'Cricket Collective' podcast, Kirsten recalled the "bizarre" series of events that unfolded in 2007.

Kirsten said he went for interview on the invitation of Gavaskar, who was part of the coach selection panel, and ended up with the job after being offered his predecessor Greg Chappell's contract.

"I got an email from Sunil Gavaskar - would I consider coaching the Indian team," Kirsten recalled.

"I thought it was a hoax. I never even answer it. He sent me another email, and said, 'Will you come for an interview?'. I showed it to the wife, and she said, 'They must have the wrong person'.

"So it was a bizarre entry into the whole thing, and rightly so. I mean, I had no coaching experience or anything," he said.

Kirsten said when he landed in India for the interview, a chance meeting with the then captain Anil Kumble had them both laughing at

the prospect of him being in contention for the position.

"I went for the interview, it was a bizarre experience in many ways because I kind of arrived at the interview and I see Anil Kumble, who's the current Indian captain, and he says, 'What are you doing here?'. I said, 'I have come for an interview to coach you!'.

"So we kinda laugh about it. It was quite a laughing matter."

Even though he didn't have any coaching experience then, Kirsten went on to become one of the most successful India coaches of all time, guiding the team to the top of the Test rankings in 2009, and then to the World Cup title two years later.

Talking about the interview, Kirsten said he had gone unprepared and it was current India coach Ravi Shastri, who was in the selection panel at that time, to "break the ice".

After that, the former Proteas opener said, all it took was seven minutes to get the nod.

"...I am in this board meeting with these BCCI officials, and it was quite an intimidating environment; the secretary of the board said, 'Mr. Kirsten, would you like to present your vision for the future of Indian Cricket?', and I said, 'Well, I don't have

one.' No one had asked me to prepare anything for it. I had just arrived there," Kirsten said.

"Ravi Shastri, who was on the committee, said to me, 'Gary, tell us, what did you guys as the South African team do to beat the Indians?'. I thought it was a great ice-breaker, because I could answer it and I answered it in about two-three minutes without saying strategies that we kind of probably use to this day.

"He was suitably impressed, as was the rest of the board, because three minutes later I had been in the interview about seven minutes the secretary of the board slides across a contract to me," he added.

Kirsten said the contract handed to him at that time had outgoing coach Greg Chappell's name on it.

"(I) pick up the contract, and the first page, I am looking for my name frantically, and I can't see my name, but I see Greg Chappell's name, who was the previous coach.

"So I slide the contract back and I say, 'Sir, I think you have given me your previous coach's contract. He kind of looks at it a little bit perturbed, and takes out a pen from his pocket, scratches out his (Chappell) name and writes my name on it," he said.

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# BP to take up to \$17.5bn hit on coronavirus

British energy giant BP said Monday that it will take a hit of up to \$17.5 billion in the second quarter as "sustained" coronavirus fallout ravages global oil demand.

The company, fresh from outlining plans to axe almost 10,000 jobs on COVID-19 fallout, said in a statement that it will suffer a negative impact of between \$13 billion and \$17.5 billion (11.4 billion euros and 15.3 billion euros) in non-cash impairments and write-offs.

BP also cut its long-term oil price forecast after the deadly virus outbreak slammed the brakes on the global economy and hurt oil prices this year.

"With the COVID-19 pandemic having continued during the second quarter of 2020, BP now sees the prospect of the pandemic having an enduring impact on the global economy, with the potential for weaker demand for energy for a sustained period," BP said, adding the virus



was set to accelerate a transition to lower carbon energy.

The group continued: "BP has revised its long-term price assumptions, lowering them and extending the period covered to 2050.

"As part of its long-term strategic planning, and in the context of its continuing focus on capi-

tal discipline, BP is also reviewing its intent to develop some of its exploration intangible assets.

"These actions will lead to non-cash impairment charges and write-offs in the second quarter, estimated to be in an aggregate range of \$13 billion to \$17.5 billion post-tax."

BP Chief Executive

Bernard Looney warned that the COVID-19 pandemic "increasingly looks as if it will have an enduring economic impact".

"So, we have reset our price outlook to reflect that impact ... We are also reviewing our development plans.

"All that will result in a significant charge

in our upcoming results, but I am confident that these difficult decisions ... will better enable us to compete through the energy transition."

BP now expects European benchmark London Brent North Sea oil prices to average \$55 per barrel between 2021 and 2050, while it also lowered its guidance for gas prices. The London-listed energy major had announced plans one week ago to axe "close to 10,000" jobs, or almost 15 percent of its global workforce.

And it warned that oil prices had plunged well below the level which the group needed to turn a profit.

After companies worldwide closed their doors and airlines grounded planes towards the end of the first quarter, oil dropped off a cliff, causing prices to briefly turn negative.

Prices have however rebounded sharply in recent weeks as governments ease lockdowns and businesses slowly reopen.

## Europe reopens borders but China battles new virus outbreak



A raft of EU nations reopened their borders to fellow Europeans on Monday after months of coronavirus curbs, but China was battling a new outbreak that has stoked fears of a second wave. As caseloads have declined in recent weeks across many parts of Europe, governments have been keen to ease painful lockdowns that have saved lives but devastated economies and wearied confined populations.

Belgium, France, Germany, Greece and Ukraine were among those lifting border restrictions on Monday, while shops and outdoor attractions in England were set to welcome their first customers since March and in Paris cafes and restaurants were allowed to fully reopen.

"We're desperate about tourists, we need them and we want them. If we don't have the people, how will we survive," says Michalis Drosos, who works in a souvenir shop in Fira, capital of the Greek island of Santorini.

However, the pandemic is gathering pace in Latin America, and Iran and India have reported worrying increases in deaths and infections -- adding to concern over challenges the world will face in the long fight against COVID-19.

China, where the virus emerged late last year, was the first country to implement extreme restrictions on movement early this year, forcing local transmission down to near-zero as the crisis hammered the rest of the world.

But health officials on Monday reported 75 cases of the respiratory illness in Beijing where the fresh cluster has been linked to a wholesale food market. Streams of people queued in a Beijing stadium as mass testing was carried out, and a strict lockdown was extended across 21 Beijing neighbourhoods.

- US reports lowest daily toll -

More than 430,000 people worldwide have died from COVID-19, nearly halfway through a year in which countless lives have been upended and the global economy ravaged by the crisis.

The United States -- by far the hardest-hit country with more than 115,700 recorded fatalities -- on Sunday reported its lowest 24-hour death toll since its infection rate peaked in mid-April.

President Donald Trump's administration has noted that some states have seen new flare-ups, but insists there will be no shutdown of the economy even if a new wave arises.

But stock markets tumbled again on Monday on fears that an upsurge of infections could put the brakes on the easing of lockdowns and dash hopes of economic recovery.

- 'Micro-outbreaks inevitable' -

The Middle East's worst-hit country, Iran, reported an uptick on Sunday, recording more than 100 new virus deaths in a single day for the first time in two months.

Surging infections in India have highlighted the precarious state of its healthcare system, and more than 1,000 new cases are being reported each day in the capital alone.

Mortuaries in New Delhi are overflowing with bodies and cemeteries and crematorium staff say they cannot keep up with the backlog of victims.

There have also been two new outbreaks in Rome, with 109 infections including five deaths diagnosed at a hospital and 15 cases detected at a building inhabited by squatters.

"It means the virus hasn't lost its infectiousness, it isn't weakening... we shouldn't let down our guard," World Health Organization deputy director Raniere Guerra told journalists.

"Such micro-outbreaks were inevitable, but they are limited in time and space. And today we have the tools to intercept them and confine them."

- 'It's going to be a party' -

Despite fears over fresh clusters, many countries are making moves towards semi-normality.

In Paris, restaurant and cafe owners were cheering after the government said they could once again open their dining rooms, three months after being shut to blunt the coronavirus outbreak.

Until now, restaurants in and around the capital could only serve clients on outdoor terraces, even though eateries in the rest of the country opened fully earlier this month.

"It's going to be a party," Stephane Manigold, owner of four Paris restaurants, including the two-starred Maison Rostang, told AFP.

In England, thousands of non-essential retailers such as bookshops and electronics outlets will be welcoming their first customers since halting in-store business in late March.

Drive-in cinemas, safari parks and the outdoor parts of zoos will also be able to reopen, while places of worship are also set to swing open their doors again for individual prayer.

Egypt says it will open its doors for tourists to beach resorts in July, and Peru's Machu Picchu will also reopen next month, although it will sharply reduce the number of daily visitors.

And top-level football continues its return in Europe with the English Premier League making its long-awaited comeback this week, days after Spain's La Liga.

## Facebook rejects call to share revenue with Australian media

Facebook on Monday rejected calls from the Australian government and news companies that it share advertising revenue with the media, suggesting it would rather cut news content from its platform.

The US tech giant said in a submission to Australia's competition watchdog that news represents a "very small fraction" of the content in an average user's news feed.

"If there were no news content available on Facebook in Australia, we are confident the impact on Facebook's community metrics and revenues in Australia would not be significant," it said in a thinly veiled threat to boycott local news companies.

"Given the social value and benefit to news publishers, we would strongly prefer to continue enabling news publishers' content to be available on our platform," it said. In an effort being closely watched around the world, Australia is set to unveil plans to force Facebook and Google to share advertising revenue they earn from news featured in their services. The initiative has been strongly pushed by Australia's two biggest media companies, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and Nine Entertainment.

They argue that the crisis roiling the news industry worldwide is mainly because of Google, Facebook and other large tech firms capturing the vast majority of online advertising revenues, without fairly compensating media companies for advertisements placed against news content.

Newspapers' loss of advertising dollars has forced cutbacks and bankruptcies across the sector, a process exacerbated by the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

More than 170 newsrooms have seen cuts or halted publication in recent years.

- Code of conduct -

Australia's competition regulator, the ACCC, has estimated that Google and Facebook together earn some Aus\$6 billion (US\$4 billion) a year from advertising in the country. Leading news publishers have demanded the two companies pay at least 10 percent of that money each year to local news organisations. Google last month already rejected the demand, saying it made barely Aus\$10 million a year from news-linked advertising.

Google and Facebook both argue they provide hundreds of millions of dollars in value to Australian news companies by driving traffic to their websites, where they can be monetised through ads or turned into paying subscribers.

"We allow news organisations of all sizes, not just the big ones, to post links, raise awareness of their brands and drive monetisable traffic to their websites, free of charge," said Mia Garlick, Facebook's director of public policy for Australia and New Zealand. Facebook and Google also say they provide millions of dollars to media companies through grant programmes and limited purchases of news content. Both companies say they are willing to participate on a collaborative "code of conduct" in Australia to mediate complaints, provide greater transparency in how they rank and distribute news on their platforms and share data on user interactions with their content.

## Filipina journalist critical of Duterte convicted of libel

**MANILA, JUN 15 (AP):** An award-winning journalist critical of the Philippine president was convicted of libel and sentenced to jail on Monday in a decision called a major blow to press freedom in an Asian bastion of democracy.

The Manila court found Maria Ressa, her online news site Rappler Inc. and former reporter Reynaldo Santos Jr. guilty of libeling a wealthy businessman. The Rappler's story on May 29, 2012, cited an unspecified intelligence report linking him to a murder, drug dealing, human trafficking and smuggling. The site's lawyers disputed any malice and said the time limit for filing the libel complaint had passed.

"The decision for me is devastating because it says that Rappler is wrong," Ressa said in a news conference after the decision was handed down. Her voice cracking, she appealed to journalists and Filipinos to continue fighting for their rights "and hold power to account".

She was sentenced to up to six years but was not immediately taken into custody. Ressa posted bail for the case last year, and her lawyer said they will appeal the verdict.

Businessman Wilfredo Keng dismissed the allegations as baseless and false and said Rappler refused to take down the story online and publish his side of the story. He provided government certifications in court to show that he has no criminal record and sought 50 million pesos (USD1 million) in damages, which he said he would donate if he won the case. Rappler's lawyers said the

story was based on an intelligence report and that the one-year period under Philippine penal law when a libel complaint can be filed had ended when Keng filed a lawsuit in 2017, five years after the story was published online.

A cybercrime law, which Rappler allegedly violated, was also enacted in September 2012 or four months after the story written by Santos was published. Rappler's lawyers said Philippine penal laws cannot be retroactively applied.

Rappler, however, acknowledged that it updated the story in February 2014 to correct a misspelled word but said it did not make any other changes. The Department of Justice, which brought the libel charges to court, contended that by updating the story, Rappler effectively republished the story online in 2014, an argument dismissed by the news site's lawyers.

The Department of Justice cited another law to say that a complaint can be filed under the 2012 cybercrime law for up to 12 years, countering Rappler's argument that Keng's complaint was invalid due to being outside a one-year deadline for libel.

If the Manila court upholds the Justice Department's position, journalists and media agencies can be sued up to 12 years after publishing a As Rappler's chief executive officer, Ressa faces seven other criminal complaints in relation to legal issues hounding her news agency, including an allegation that it violated a constitutional ban on media agencies receiving foreign investment funds.

The moves against Ressa, who has worked for CNN and was one of Time magazine's Persons of the Year in 2018, have been denounced by media watchdogs as a threat to press freedom. President Rodrigo Duterte's government said the complaints were part of normal criminal procedures and were not a press freedom issue.

But Ressa has accused the government of abusing its power and of using the law as a weapon to muzzle dissent. Rappler is one of several local and international news agencies deemed critical of Duterte's policies.

Duterte has openly lambasted journalists who write unfavourable stories about him, including about his anti-drug campaign that has left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead.

Duterte had already banned a Rappler reporter from his news briefings after a government corporate watchdog ruled that the news site violated a constitutional prohibition on foreign ownership of media when it received money from an international investment firm.

Rappler, founded in 2012, rejected the ruling. Duterte has openly lashed out against the owner of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, a leading daily.

He has vowed in the past to block the renewal of the congressional franchise of ABS-CBN, which was shut down by the government's telecommunications regulator last month after its 25-year franchise expired. Congress has been hearing the leading TV network's request for a renewal of its franchise.

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## Kangana Ranaut blasts Bollywood after Sushant Singh Rajput's death: Was it suicide or planned murder?

Kangana Ranaut's team shared an explosive video of the actress talking about Sushant Singh Rajput's death. In the video, she is once again seen exposing the Bollywood mafia.

The devastating news of Sushant Singh Rajput's death has divided social media into two. Even as the actor's family prepares for his funeral at the Pawan Hans crematorium at Vile Parle, Mumbai, several Bollywood actors and filmmakers have called for an inward look, questioning the role of 'Bollywood mafia' in the apparent suicide of a 34-year-old promising actor, who managed to carve his niche in the industry without a Godfather.

Kangana Ranaut, who has always been extremely vocal about the issue, released a video on social media reiterating the same.

In the 2-odd-minute video, shared by the official Instagram handle of Team Kangana Ranaut, Kangana says, "Sushant Singh Rajput ki maut ne humein jhinjhor ke rak diya hai, magar kuch is mein bhi ek parallel narrative chala rahe hai. Woh ye ki jinka dimaag kamzor hota hai woh depression mein aate hai aur suicide kar lete hai. Jo banda Stanford ki scholarship... woh rank-holder hai apne engineering ke entrance ki, uska dimaag kamzor kaise ho sakta hai? (Sushant Singh Rajput's death has left all of us devastated, but some are looking for a parallel narrative even here. That whoever has a weak mind, they slip into depression and kill themselves. A guy who has a scholarship from Stanford... he is a rank holder of his engineering entrance, how can his mind be weak?)"

She goes on to add that some of Sushant's last posts prove that he had been literally begging people to watch his films. "Aap agar unke last kuch posts dekhe, woh clearly keh raha hai, logon ko beg kar raha hai ki please meri filmein dekho, mera koi Godfather nahi hai, mujhe nikal diya jayega iss industry se. Apne interviews mein woh yeh zahir karta hai ki mujhe yeh industry kyu nahi apnati hai? I feel like a leftover (sic). Toh kya iss haadse ki koi buniyaad nahin hai? (If you look at his last few posts, he is clearly saying, begging people to see his films, that I don't have a Godfather, I will be thrown out of this industry. Even in his interviews, he says why doesn't this industry make me its own? I feel like a leftover. So doesn't this incident have any reason?)"

Talking about Sushant's films, Kangana said, "Unko unki debut film Kai Po Che ke liye koi acknowledgement nahi mila, ya MS Dhoni: The Untold Story, ya Kedarnath ya Chhichhore. Gully Boy jaisi ek wahiyat film ko saare awards milte hai, Chhichhore is the best film and by the best director, par unki film ko koi acknowledgement nahi. (He didn't get any acknowledgement for his debut film, Kai Po Che, or MS Dhoni: The Untold Story, or Kedarnath, or Chhichhore. A bad film like Gully Boy gets all awards, Chhichhore is the best film by the best director,

but his film gets no acknowledgement.)"

Sushant, much like Kangana herself, was an outsider who made his name on the basis of his good work. While nepotism is a constant in Bollywood, where only star kids seem to get the big projects, outsiders often lose out. But Kangana adds that they don't want their films, all they want is recognition for their work. "Humein aapse kuch nahi chahiye, lekin jo hum khud karte hai, aap uski acknowledgement humein kyu nahi dete hai? Main khud jo filmein direct karti hoon, unn superhit filmon ko yeh flop ghoshit karte hai. Mujhe chey cases kyu daale gaye? Kyu mujhe jail mein daalne ki koshish ki gayi? (We don't need anything from you, we don't need your films, but the films that we do on our own, why don't you acknowledge us for that? The films I myself direct, why do you declare those super-hit films flop? Why have you slammed six cases on me? Why did you want to put me in jail?)"

Kangana's wrath also fell on a section of the media, who she thinks wrote against Sushant. "Kuch journalist aise hai jo Sushant pe blind items likhte hai ki woh psychotic hai, neurotic hai, addict hai. Sanjay Dutt ki addiction toh aapko badi cute lagti hai. (There is also a section of journalists who write blinds on Sushant, that he is psychotic, he is neurotic, he is an addict. But you find Sanjay Dutt's addiction very cute.)"

She further added, "Woh mujhe message karte hai ki tumhara bohot difficult time hai, tum koi aisa-waisa step mat utha lena. Aisa kyu kehate hai mujhe? Kyu mere dimaag mein daalna chahte hai ki aap suicide kar lijiye? (These people message me that you're going through a difficult time, you don't take any such step. Why do they tell me these things? Why do they want to put these things in my head, that you should kill yourself?)"

Kangana further asks about Sushant's death, "Toh yeh suicide thi ya planned murder tha? (So was it a suicide or a planner murder?)"

Kangana is resilient, and she feels Sushant made one mistake that he accepted others' criticism about himself. "Sushant ki galti yeh thi ki woh unki baat maan gaya. Unhone kaha tum worthless ho, toh woh maan gaya. He didn't remember what his mother told him. Woh log chahte hai ki woh itithaas likhe, aur usmein ye likhe ki Sushant kamzor dimaag ka tha. Woh nahi batayenge ki sachchai kya hai. Toh humein decide karna hai who will write history. We will decide that. (Sushant's mistake was that he believed in them. They told him that

he was worthless, and he believed that. He didn't remember what his mother told him. Those people want that they write history, and in it, they write that Sushant was of a weak mind. They will not say what is the truth. So we need to decide who will write history. We will decide that.)"

This outsider vs nepotism battle has been raging on Twitter since the news of Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide broke yesterday. From Shekhar Kapur to Anubhav Sinha, Gulshan Devaiah to now Kangana Ranaut, several celebrities have shared very telling and pointed allegations towards what is known as the 'elite club of Bollywood' or the 'Bollywood mafia', as Kangana likes to call it.

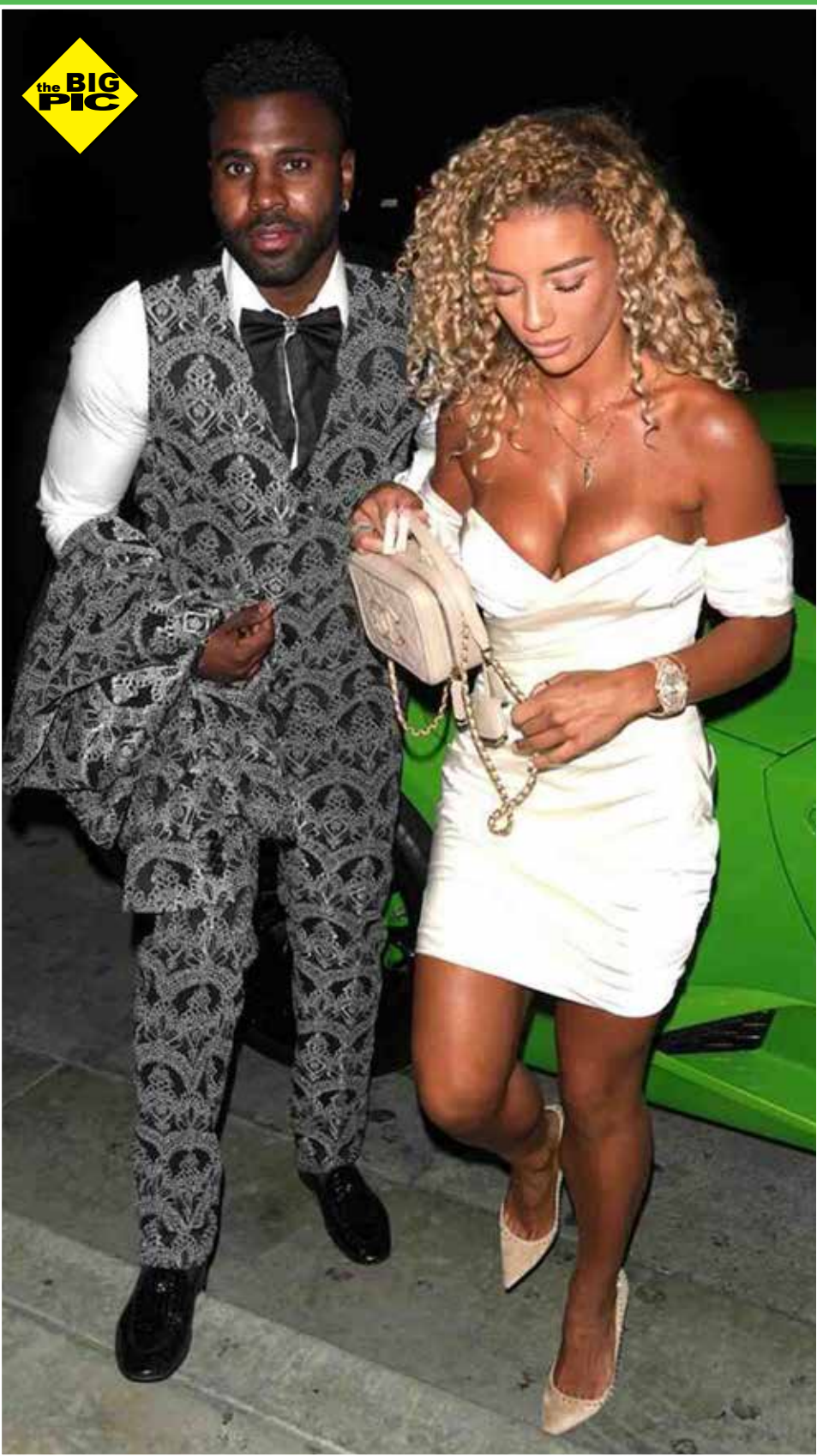
In fact, this phrase was first made popular by the Manikarnika actress on Karan Johar's show Koffee With Karan, where she called out KJo for running a cartel of sorts, giving opportunities to only star kids, and making it difficult for the outsiders to get in. She had also used the word nepotism on the show, which is now a part of Bollywood's vocabulary.

Earlier today, Shekhar Kapur tweeted a message for Sushant, talking about how he knew his pain. "I knew the pain you were going through. I knew the story of the people that let you down so bad that you would weep on my shoulder. I wish I was around the last 6 months. I wish you had reached out to me. What happened to you was their Karma. Not yours. #SushantSinghRajput (sic)," read Shekar's tweet.

Yesterday, Anubhav Sinha had tweeted, "The Bollywood Privilege Club must sit down and think hard tonight. PS- Now don't ask me to elaborate any further (sic)," after news of Sushant's death broke.

Gulshan Devaiah wrote, "As actors, somewhere deep down inside, we think we know why he did it & that's why it so disturbing even if you didn't know him at all. It's a hard game to play and he played it very well but the game won in the end (sic)." In the following tweet, he added, "Really sorry to be doing this but Bollywood is not a family, it never was and never will be. If one thinks it's a family .. there is the problem. Bollywood is an imaginary name for a place of work that's it. I am really not trying to put anybody down here & sorry if it seems (sic)."

Sushant Singh Rajput's last theatre release was Chhichhore. His next, Dil Bechara, was scheduled for a May 2020 release, however, it was delayed due to the novel coronavirus crisis. It will now be released on an OTT platform.



### DATE NIGHT!

The stylish looking couple, Jason Derulo & Jena Frumes arrives at Catch restaurant in Los Angeles.

### Sushant Singh Rajput Funeral: Shraddha Kapoor, Rajkummar Rao come together to bid their co star good bye

Bollywood celebs arrived for Sushant Singh Rajput's last rites in Mumbai today. Kriti Sanon, Shraddha Kapoor, Mukesh Chhabra were seen arriving.

Bollywood celebs arrived for Sushant Singh Rajput's last rites in Mumbai on Monday. Kriti Sanon, Shraddha Kapoor, Mukesh Chhabra and Abhishek Kapoor were among the few ones who were spotted at the Vile Parle crematorium. Hours after the actor was reported to have committed suicide, Sushant's family flew down to Mumbai to attend his last rites.

As per Mumbai Police, the 34-year-old actor committed suicide at his Bandra residence on Sunday. The autopsy report has now confirmed the actor's death due to asphyxia. Sushant and Shraddha had starred together in 2019's Chhichhore which was a massive box office success. The film was also Sushant's last theatrical release as his last film Drive released on Netflix. Sushant's last film, Bollywood remake of The Fault In Our Stars, alongside Sanjana Sanghi has not yet released. Numerous Bollywood stars came

forward to mourn his demise on social media. From Shah Rukh Khan to Anushka Sharma, social media was flooded with messages of shock and prayers for his family. Apart from paying their condolences, celebrities also



urged fans and followers to seek help if depression strikes.

Deepika's post read, "As a person who has had a lived experience with mental illness, I cannot stress enough about the importance of reaching out. Talk. Communicate. Express. Seek Help. Remember, You are not alone. We are in this together. And most importantly, there is hope."

#### ARIES:

Aren't you glad you didn't give up when things got tough? Aren't you glad you listened to your inner voice when everything else was a blur? This, right here, right now, is your best life, Aries—testimony to the fact that you have the power to transform thoughts into things. Continue to embody courage and know that the obstacles that stand in your way will be taken care of.

Tip: Ready for a victory run?

#### TAURUS:

Just in case you need to be reminded: you're doing great, you are where you need to be, and your career is progressing at the right pace. Trust what's unfolding for you, Taurus. Abundance is our very nature. Know that the wealth you desire and deserve will make its way to you soon. Some of you may be noticing a lot more signs and synchronicities in your daily life than you ever did before.

Tip: Abundance is our very nature.

#### GEMINI:

To understand the virtues of kindness and compassion in theory and to practice them every day, in every way, are two very different things. Today, you're being asked to take a good look in the mirror and ask yourself if

you have been practicing what you preach. If not, it's time to move beyond the illusions created by the ego self, soften your stance and listen with an open heart.

Tip: Practice kindness and compassion even when it's hard to.

#### CANCER:

It's easy to buy into the illusion that everything is falling apart. What you need to remember in the midst of the chaos is that you possess the power to be the eye of the storm. Know that this too shall pass. Today, you're being asked to trust the timing of everything in your life. If a certain event or encounter is fated, it will take place no matter what.

Tip: Everything is taking place in divine order.

#### LEO:

"The gates of mystery stand ever ajar, and those who will may pass through into the spacious domicile of spirit," said Canadian-born author and mystic Manly P Hall. This is a time of inner illumination in the Leo headquarters. You're becoming aware of the magic that surrounds you in a way you never have before. The song of the raven and dance of the winds are all bringing forth messages from the beyond—if only you care to listen. Some of you may feel inspired to work with healing mo-

dalities such as reiki or angel therapy.

Tip: The Universe is communicating with you through signs and symbols.

#### VIRGO:

Old structures are falling away, making space for an energetic shift on a collective level. But that doesn't mean the transition to the new age is going to be devoid of chaos. As an empath and sensitive soul, you have a profound understanding of this and are finding a way to keep your feet on the ground. Learn the importance of routine and the meaning of consistency. Establish small, simple rituals that keep you motivated and help you look at the bright side.

Tip: Stay grounded.

#### LIBRA:

If change is the only constant, then where is your resistance stemming from? Let go, Libra. Let go of that false sense of control. Allow Spirit to step in and orchestrate big things for you. The cosmic climate is triggering a blessed change, both personally and professionally, one that could redirect the course of your life. So become cognisant of the signs and allow yourself to take the next step armed with courage and confidence.

Tip: The winds of change are blowing in your favour.

#### SCORPIO:

Your physical space is an accurate barometer of your mental and emotional landscape. So what is your home reflecting back at you? Could there be unhealthy attachments and dated narratives you're refusing to let go of? Time for a cleansing and purging ritual, Scorpio. It is by releasing the burden of the past that you will make space for the new.

Tip: It's time for a cleansing and purging ritual, Scorpio.

#### SAGITTARIUS:

We often save our kindness and compassion for the world, while being unkind to ourselves in private. Pay attention to that inner dialogue, Sagittarius. The words you are choosing in order to communicate with yourself. Replace judgements with openness. Tap into the power of love and compassion. This is the secret to transforming your inner landscape and raising your vibrations.

Tip: Let your self-talk be a source of empowerment.

#### CAPRICORN:

Once again, the cards are reminding you that there are big things to be done. So where is your gaze at? Are you focusing on your long-term vision or allowing yourself to be distracted by things that will have no sig-

well as fill out health declaration forms and have their temperature taken upon arrival.

It is the second Disney-branded theme park to re-open globally, following Shanghai Disneyland which opened its doors to guests last month.

Hong Kong's social distancing measures, which prohibits gatherings of more than eight individuals and limits the capacity of restaurants and eateries, are currently in place until June 18. The city has reported 1,110 cases of coronavirus infections so far, with four deaths.

nificance to your life story tomorrow? Your time and energy are sacred, Capricorn. So draw energetic boundaries and redirect your attention to the things that truly matter.

Tip: Focus!

#### AQUARIUS:

"Whenever we manage to love without expectations, calculations, negotiations, we are indeed in heaven." A heartwarming Sufi quote that throws light on where you are in your journey towards the light. Your time away from the chaos has helped you move past the pettiness and focus on the sacred threads that bind you together. You're bringing forth the energy of love, compassion, and empathy in all of your relationships.

Tip: Tap into the power of love, compassion, and empathy.

#### PISCES:

Complacency is now a thing of the past. You're in the mood to make positive changes in every aspect of your life, starting with health and wellness. Forget about what the lifestyle coaches have to say and tap into the wisdom of your body. This will help you understand what is and isn't right for you, Pisces.

Tip: It's time to make positive changes on the health and wellness front.