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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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India adds 67,208 fresh COVID-19 cases in single day

NEW DELHI, JUNE 17 (PTI): A single day rise of 67,208 new coronavirus infections were recorded taking India's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 2,97,00,313, while the active cases declined to 8,26,740, the lowest after 71 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The COVID-19 death toll climbed to 3,81,903 with 2,330 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The active cases declined to 8,26,740 comprising 2.78 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 95.93 per cent.

A net decline of 38,692 cases has been recorded in the COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 19,31,249 tests were conducted on Wednesday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 38,52,38,220.

The daily positivity rate was recorded 3.48 per cent. It has been less than 5 per cent for 10 consecutive days, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate has declined to 3.99 per cent.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 35th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,84,91,670, while the case fatality rate has increased to 1.29 per cent, the data stated.

Cumulative COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered so far under the Nationwide Vaccination Drive.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

Test Positivity Rate drops to 4.5%, vaccination picks up, and Sikkim breathes easier

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 17 JUN:

Sikkim can now safely vouch that its struggle with Covid's second wave is at its fag end with the latest statistics showing that the Test Positivity Rate has shrunk to 4.5%. What should reassure the people even more is that with the Central Government having finally begun the process of coming to its senses when it comes to vaccination, record numbers of people here have been receiving their Covishield jabs raising hope that should Novel Coronavirus return for a third wave, Sikkim will be better inoculated to withstand the assault. As per the latest data on vaccination in Sikkim, more than 2.71 people have already received the first dose, 64,215 in the last week alone [11-17 June].

As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project of the Health Department this morning, the daily cases of COVID-19 dropped to two-digits after a long gap

with just 90 new cases reported in the last 24 hours. These fresh cases were picked up from the testing of 1,957 samples collected on Wednesday.

Also today, the State marked an entire week of daily recoveries outnumbering new cases. Against the 90 fresh cases detected in the past 24 hours, Sikkim saw 145 formerly Covid-positive people complete their home isolation free of Covid symptoms and returned to their normal daily lives.

Sikkim has recorded more recoveries than new cases unbroken since 11 June, and over the week that has passed since, it has recorded at total of 943 new cases and clocked a handsome 2,074 recoveries.

What brings more hope for the future is the smart clip at which vaccination is picking up pace in the State. Today alone, 14,341 people received their Covid vaccine jabs at 79 vaccination sites across the State. Only 12 of these jabs were of the second dose and the rest were receiving their

first shot of the vaccine. Yesterday, Sikkim had administered a record number of 15,485 shots.

Sikkim had seen some busy days of vaccination the past, but has never consistently vaccinated so many people for so long. In the past week, 12-18 June, 51,564 people here received their first dose, most of them in the 18-44 age-group, while 59 people completed their vaccination schedule with dose-2. Sikkim doubled its delivery within a week. Last week, 05-11 June, at total of 25,347 vaccine shots were administered here.

This is the highest number of doses administered in the State in a week thus far. The previous record was held by the week 10-16 April when a total of 42,280 received their shots.

A total of 2,71,899 people



NEW CASE 90
NEW RECOVERIES 145
TEST CONDUCTED 1957

RECOVERY RATE: 81.7%

POSITIVITY RATE

4.5%

have received at least the first dose of the vaccine in Sikkim thus far.

These positive tidings come tempered with news that Covid continues to claim lives in Sikkim, and in the last 24 hours, two more lives were lost to the virus here. While one more Covid death was reported from STNM Hospital, another Covid patient passed away at Central Referral Hospital, Tadong, taking Sikkim's COVID death toll to 287.

Of the 90 new cases in the State, 51 were registered in East District, 15 in West District, 23 in South District and one in North District.

Sikkim's count of active cases of coronavirus now stands at 2,907, of whom 22 are admitted in ICU at STNM Hospital and CRH and only 11 more Covid patients were hospitalised today. The load on the hospitals is also much lighter now with only 120 Covid patients in hospitals

across the State while this number had breached 250 on a regular basis during the peak of Covid's second wave. The rest of the Covid-positive people are recuperating at home.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is 18,896 of whom 15,452 have already made full recoveries while 2,787 are under home or facility isolation, their symptoms mild enough not to present a worry.

CBSE announces Class 12 scoring plan, results by July 31

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN [NDTV]:

Class 12 results will be announced by July 31 and will factor in students' performance over three years or from Class 10, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) told the Supreme Court today, announcing its assessment plan after exams were cancelled because of the Covid crisis.

The total marks should be based on the past performance of the school in Class 12 board exams, it said. "The historical performance of the school, in terms of the best overall performance in the previous three years' Board examination, will be taken as the reference for moderating the marks assessed by the school for 2020-21," the Board has said.

A "moderation committee" will be set up to check schools that award liberal marks to students to boost their performance, Attorney General KK Venugopal, appearing for the CBSE, told the court.

"The CBSE Class 12



result committee will comprise two of the senior-most teachers in the school. If necessary, a third expert will be appointed. This will be the "moderation committee", Mr Venugopal said.

About 40 per cent of the marks will be based on Class 12 pre-board exams, 30 per cent on the Class 11 final exam and 30 per cent marks will be based on best-of-three Class 10 marks, the CBSE told the bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari. Practicals will be for

100 marks and the students will be assessed based on marks submitted by the schools, a 12-member committee constituted by CBSE told the court.

"If a student is unable to meet the qualifying criteria - now spread across three years of study - they will be placed in the 'essential repeat' or 'compartment' category. Students who are not satisfied can appear again when the CBSE conducts Class 12 board exams," Mr Venugopal told the court.

The Supreme Court has in principle agreed with the central education board's plan.

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), meanwhile, said that unlike the CBSE it would consider the performance of students for the last six classes.

During the hearing, the bench said there should be a dispute resolution panel for students who want correction of final results, and timelines be given as to when the results would

be declared and the optional exams would be conducted. "There has to be some outer date. Optional examination will also be specified. Subject to conducive situations and logistical issues," the bench said.

"We will certainly do so. This is the totality of it. We will note down the suggestions and consider them seriously," Mr Venugopal said.

The court will hear the case again on Monday (June 21).

The Supreme Court had given CBSE and CISCE two weeks to come up with objective criteria to mark Class 12 students, who need these results for college and competitive exams. Soon after, a committee was formed by the boards to work on the CBSE Class 12 evaluation criteria.

The government on June 1 cancelled the CBSE Class 12 board exams amid the pandemic across the country. CISCE too, soon after, decided to scrap the examinations for its ISC students.

Centre makes pollution check certificate for all vehicles uniform across India

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN [PTI]:

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification to make the PUC (Pollution Under Control) certificate for all vehicles uniform across the country and also to link the PUC database with the National Register.

After the changes in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 by the road ministry, the QR code shall be printed on the PUC form and will have details of the vehicle, owner and the status of the emission.

"The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification dated 14th June, 2021, for a common format of the PUC Certificate to be issued across the country, under Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989," an official statement said.

According to the statement, the new PUC will have vehicle owner's mobile number, name and address, engine number and chassis number.

"The owner's mobile number has been made mandatory, on which an SMS alert will be sent for validation and fee," it said.

The statement said the concept of rejection slip is being introduced for the first time.

"A common format of rejection slip is to be given to the vehicle owner in case the test result value is more than the maximum permissible value,

as mandated in the concerned emission norms," the statement said.

It added that this document can be shown at the service centre for getting the vehicle serviced or can be used, in case the PUCC centre device is not working properly when tested at another centre.

As per the statement, if the enforcement officer has reason to believe that a motor vehicle is not complying with provisions of emission standards, he may communicate in writing or through electronic mode to direct the driver or any person in-charge of the vehicle to submit the vehicle for conducting the test in any one of the authorised PUC testing stations.

"If the driver or person in-charge of the vehicle fails to submit the vehicle for compliance or the vehicle fails to comply, the owner of the vehicle shall be liable for payment of penalty," it said.

The statement said that enforcement would be IT-enabled and would help in better control over polluting vehicles.

"If the owner fails to comply with this, the registering authority shall, for reasons to be recorded in writing, suspend the certificate of registration of the vehicle and any permit granted, until such time a valid PUC certificate is generated," it said.

Govt extends validity of motor vehicle documents till Sept 30

NEW DELHI, JUNE 17 (PTI): The government on Thursday extended the validity of motor vehicle documents like driving licence (DL), registration certificate (RC) and permits till September 30, 2021, in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) said it has advised the enforcement authorities that the validity of fitness, permit (all types), licence, registration or any other concerned document(s) may be treated to be valid till

September 30, 2021.

"This covers all documents whose validity has expired since Feb 1, 2020, or would expire by September 30, 2021. This will help out citizens in availing transport related services, while maintaining social distancing," it said.

The ministry's advisory said all the states and union territories are requested to implement this advisory in letter and spirit so that citizens, transporters and various other organisation, which are operating un-

der this difficult time, may not get harassed and face difficulties.

It had earlier issued advisories dated March 30, 2020, June 9, 2020, August 24, 2020, December 27, 2020 and March 26, 2021 in connection with extension of validity of documents related to the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989.

From a daily case count of over 4 lakh, the number of new COVID-19 cases has been hovering around 70,000 in the last few days.

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Lingi Payong school announces winners of summer fun activity contest

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 JUN:

The result for the fortnight long Virtual Summer Fun Activity Contest organised by Lingi Payong Secondary School for its students was announced today, a press release informs.

The winners were announced under three themes for three categories of participants. Under mobile photography, the winners for junior category (from class 1-8) were Akash Ganga Koirala (Class 6), Archana Pekurel (Class 5) and Agrim Gautam (Class 6) in first, second and 3rd position respectively whereas in senior category Bepana Khatiwara (Class 10), Astha Rai and Master Pawan Khatiwara (both outgoing Class 10) secured first, second and third position respectively.

The activity was judged by Bhawana Sharma, an expert in mobile photography from Pakyong on the basis of originality, composition, story, and theme presentation.



Similarly for activity under the theme domestic works, Adarsh Rai (Class 3), Archana Pekurel (Class 5) and Adarshika Gautam (Class 5) were adjudged as top three winners in sub junior category whereas Akash Ganga Koirala and Agrim Gautam (both Class 6) were adjudged first and second respectively in junior (Class 6-8) category. In the senior category for Class 9-10, Tilak Bhan-

dari (Outgoing Class 10) stood first whereas Pawan Adhikari and Saroj Bhandari (both Class 9) stood second and third respectively. This activity was judged by Bandana Chhetri Faculty of DIET Namchi on the basis of age appropriateness of the activity to clarity in highlighting the activity.

The last category of activity was creative works that students undertook as a part of the contest. Anupam Dhakal

(Class 4), Ashwin Rai and Archana Pekurel (both class 5) were adjudged as top three winners in sub Junior Category whereas in junior category (Class 6-8), Akash Ganga Koirala, Bhupen Khatiwara (both Class 6) and Emili Luestina Lepcha (Class 7) secured the top three position.

Likewise, the top position in the senior category was once again secured by Tilak Bhandari (outgoing Class 10)

followed by Sneha Rai (outgoing Class 10) and Bidhya Pekurel (Class 9) in second and third position. The activity in this category was judged by Passang L. Bhutia, Faculty DIET Namchi on the criteria ranging from innovation and creativity to colour combinations and use of appropriate techniques.

The virtual fun activity competition was organised for the students to give them a break from the prolonged closure of school and break the monotony of following screen of digital device attending virtual classes.

Also, the activity was aimed to provide them an opportunity to explore their innate potential which can be developed into a hobby and that can be pursued as a career in future. The prizes to the winners and certificates to all participants will be handed over by school on a suitable day after school reopens in coming days, the release mentions.

SKM team inspects damaged house at Nardang



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 JUN:

Under the guidance of Advisor, State Medicinal Plants Board, Dechen Phigu Bhutia, a delegation led by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha CLC president of

Barfung, Bishnu Sharma visited the house of Mon Singh Rai at Nardang Ward, Rayong Tinkitam GPU, today.

The house was severely damaged when a tree fell on it due to heavy rainfall. The team

provided tarpaulin and ration to the family and assured all possible help.

BDO Ravangla has instructed MGNREGA Mate to clear the tree from the premises at the earliest through MGNREGA.

Need to get our leadership in order: Congress' Jairam Ramesh to NDTV

New Delhi, 17 Jun [NDTV]: Congress's Jairam Ramesh --- not one of the G-23 leaders clamouring for a change in leadership -- admitted today that the party needs to put its "house in order" before the next general elections roll around. This, he indicated, was also essential in order to come to an understanding with like-minded opposition parties for forming a common front against the BJP -- an effort that failed the last time.

"If you are asking me .. if you are telling me ... that we need to resolve the leadership issue one way or the other ... I agree - these are issues that we should not keep hanging for too long. We lost badly in 2014. We lost very very badly in 2019 and we have to get our house in order. House in order means getting the organisation in order, getting the leadership in order, getting our messaging in order. All this has to move," Mr Ramesh told NDTV in an exclusive interview today.

At the same time, the former Union minister, known to be close to the Gandhi family, added, "No one leader has a magic wand... this is a team effort". The Congress has been floundering without a leader since the 2019 general elections when Rahul Gandhi stepped down from the party's top post.

Despite promises to sort out the leadership issue following the explosive letter by 23 prominent leaders of the party, Sonia Gandhi remains as the interim chief.

The party, meanwhile, had a string of reverses in assembly elections, failing to capture power in Assam and Kerala where it has a solid voter base. In Bengal, it failed to win a single seat

and lost the few it held. It even failed to retain power in the tiny Union Territory of Puducherry.

In Rajasthan, it is precariously holding onto power and in Punjab -- where it won a solid victory -- the party is struggling to contain a very public infighting ahead of next year's elections.

Last year, Congress lost Madhya Pradesh to the BJP following a revolt by Jyotiraditya Scindia and his loyalists.

"Youngsters who have left us are privileged by birth. They got good positions by the party," Mr Ramesh admitted today, days after another key GenNext leader, Jitin Prasada left for the BJP.

But "for every Scindia who left, there are thousands of young Congress party workers who are fighting for the party," Mr Ramesh said.

"We are not in power at the Centre. In spite of this, there are thousands of youngsters who have committed their lives to the Congress," he added.

He also questioned why the BJP is accepting those it had always scorned for being "privileged".

"Why is the BJP accepting those they criticise for being privileged? When these people are in Congress, BJP criticises them but then it takes them too... there is a certain discipline to a party - people can't just go and come as they please," Mr Ramesh said.

On this note, he also praised Sachin Pilot -- considered another flight risk after his rebellion last year against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. Mr Pilot, he said, is a "great asset to the Congress... there is a great future ahead of him in the party".

Ramdev faces police case for "false" information on allopathy

RAIPUR, 17 JUN [PTI]: The police in Chhattisgarh's Raipur have registered an FIR against yoga guru Ramdev for allegedly spreading "false" information about the medicines being used by the medical fraternity for the treatment of COVID-19, police official said on Thursday.

The case was filed on Wednesday night against Ramkrishna Yadav alias Ramdev based on a complaint filed by the Chhattisgarh's unit of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Raipur's Senior

Superintendent of Police Ajay Yadav said. Ramdev has been booked under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly passed by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and others of the IPC and provisions of Disaster Management Act, 2005, he said.

Further investigation into the matter is underway, he added. Chairman of Hospital Board IMA (CG) Dr

Rakesh Gupta, IMA's Raipur President and Vikas Agrawal were among doctors who had earlier lodged the complaint.

As per the complaint, since over the last one year, Ramdev has been allegedly propagating false information and his threatening statements on social media against medicines being used by medical fraternity, Government of India, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and other frontline organisations in treatment of coronavirus infection.

Some police officers working like SKM muscle: Nawin Kiran Pradhan

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 JUN:

Advocate Nawin Kiran Pradhan has alleged that some police officers in the state are working like members of the ruling party.

In a press conference held today, Mr Pradhan said that police wanted to arrest him on 04 June in the Simran fake ID case but he filed for anticipatory bail. He said that

the police are wrongfully trying to frame him in the case on the basis of his online chats with Prakash Lee, one of the accused in the fake ID case. Mr Pradhan was Mr Lee's lawyer in the case.

"If they can try to intimidate an advocate like me, imagine what they can do to a common man? The current government is muzzling free expression," he alleged.

Airtel brings Rs 456 prepaid recharge plan with 50GB data, unlimited calls to compete with Jio's Rs. 447 pack

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN [NDTV]: Bharti Airtel has expanded its prepaid recharge portfolio and launched a new Rs. 456 plan that comes with 50GB of data and validity of 60 days. The new prepaid recharge plan also comes with unlimited voice calling benefits as well as 100 SMS messages per day -- throughout the validity. The Rs. 456 Airtel prepaid recharge plan competes with the Jio Rs. 447 prepaid pack that was introduced just last week with an almost identical list of benefits. Airtel additionally offers access to services including Amazon Prime Video Mobile Edition, Airtel Xstream Premium, and Wynk Music.

As initially reported by PriceBaba, Airtel has listed the Rs. 456 prepaid recharge plan on its website. The plan is also available for purchase through the Airtel Thanks app as well as third-party sources such as Google Pay and Paytm.

In terms of benefits, the Rs. 456 Airtel prepaid recharge plan offers 50GB data for 60 days, along with unlimited voice calls and 100 SMS messages per day. Post the given data cap, users

will be charged at a rate of Rs. 50 paise per megabyte as well as Re. 1 for local and Rs. 1.5 for every national SMS message.

The new Rs. 456 Airtel prepaid plan also carries a 30-day free trial of Amazon Prime Video Mobile Edition as well as access to Airtel Xstream Premium and Wynk Music. Customers will additionally get free hotlines access on recharging with the Rs. 456 recharge plan.

Airtel also offers Rs. 100 cashback on FASTag for customers recharging with the Rs. 456 prepaid recharge plan. Further, there is one year of free access to online courses offered by Shaw Academy.

The benefits bundled with the Rs. 456 Airtel prepaid recharge plan make it similar to the Rs. 447 Jio prepaid pack that debuted on Saturday -- alongside four other new 'no daily limit' plans by the telco. The Rs. 447 Jio pack offers 50GB of high-speed data along with unlimited voice calls and 100 SMS messages per day for 60 days. It included access to Jio apps, namely JioTV, JioCinema, JioNews, JioSecurity, and JioCloud.

Court grants Lakshadweep filmmaker interim shield from arrest in sedition case



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 17 JUN [NDTV]: The Kerala High Court has directed Lakshadweep police to grant interim bail of one week to filmmaker Aisha Sultana if they decide to arrest her after questioning her in a sedition case. The court has reserved its final order in her anticipatory bail plea.

Aisha Sultana faces an FIR that has invoked sections of sedition and hate speech. The FIR was lodged following a police complaint by the BJP's Lakshadweep unit chief C Abdul Khader Haji, who objected to her use of the term "bioweapon" while criticising the Centre and Lakshadweep Administrator Praful Khoda Patel over the alleged dilution of COVID protocols.

Aisha Sultana tendered an apology before the court today, saying she never realised that the use of the term "bio-

weapon" was an offence.

The counsel for the Lakshadweep administration told the court that while their intent was not to arrest but to question, a decision on arrest would be taken only after she is questioned. The counsel alleged that Aysha's statement promoted communalism.

Aisha Sultana's counsel, on the other hand, argued that she was criticising the government and that it did not attract the charge of sedition. The filmmaker's counsel also said that she was willing to appear before the police for questioning.

Speaking at a news debate on a regional channel, the filmmaker had said that decisions by the new administrator had led to the Covid spike in the Union Territory.

"Lakshadweep had zero cases of COVID-19.

Now it is reporting a daily spike of 100 cases. What the Centre has deployed is a bioweapon. I can say this clearly that the central government has deployed bioweapon," she had said.

Her remarks came against the backdrop of protests in Lakshadweep and online against draft orders issued by Praful Patel after taking over.

Among the proposals made by the new administrator are a detention law that gives sweeping powers to the administration to arrest anyone for up to one to a year, a land acquisition law that gives arbitrary powers to the administration and a proposed ban on killing of cattle. Lakshadweep's residents, who are mostly Muslims, have said the proposals are against their traditions and have been issued without consultations.

1 Indian, 2 Chinese workers killed in flood in Nepal

KATHMANDU, 17 JUN [PTI]: An Indian and two Chinese workers were killed after being swept away by the flood in central Nepal's Sindhupalchok district, an official said on Thursday.

The body of the Indian worker was found in Sunkoshi river in Sindhuli on Thursday, whereas two Chinese were found dead in Sindhupalchok, Chief District Officer Arun Pokharel said.

The victims used to work for the Melamchi

Water Supply Project.

Meanwhile, two Indian and one Chinese workers were still missing, another official said.

Altogether 17 people were missing in the flood and landslide triggered by incessant rain in the district.

Torrential rains battered Nepal this week, causing widespread flood and damage to critical infrastructure. The worst-affected district due to the heavy rains was Sindhupal-

chok, 65 km from capital Kathmandu, where the Melamchi river flooded.

Rescue and relief operations were being carried out by Nepal Police, the Army, and the Armed Police Force.

Officials said the excess rains had led to the rivers overflowing, which resulted in the widespread destruction. Continuous rains have been recorded in central Nepal's Bagmati and Lamjung provinces since Monday evening.

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HAS thanks CM for tabling Mega Homestay Project in Assembly

SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 17 JUN:

Homestay Association of Sikkim (HAS) today said that the introduction of the Mega Homestay Project by the Chief Minister, PS Tamang has laid the foundation of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism, and will boost rural tourism in the State.

While expressing their deep gratitude to the CM for this Mega Homestay Project, HAS members assured to extend all possible support to the government through their experiences and suggestions for the grand success of the project in the State. They thanked the State government for this initiative to establish 1,000 homestays of three rooms each and other amenities in the State to further boost tourism in the State and to create jobs and other opportunities for people of Sikkim.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, HAS president, Jigme Dorjee Bhutia welcomed the endeavour of the State government and to provide homestays to the genuine and interested beneficiaries. He expressed that this mega homestay project would not only boost tourism in the State but also create



lots of job opportunities for local youths.

HAS general secretary, Pintso Gyatso Bhutia stated that such a visionary initiative would help to promote homestays and encourage local youth to earn better through rural tourism activities. He asserted that everyone needs to work together for the success of this project.

Likewise, a HAS executive member, Karma Thutup stressed on the need for marketing and promotion of homestays in order to make them sustainable. On the same, he urged the authorities to discuss these issues with the concerned stakeholders.

Another HAS executive member, Abhishek Rai stressed upon the need of skill development programmes to build skilled manpower in this sector. He also listed out various skill development and other ac-

tivities in different parts of the State for homestay owners and aspiring youth.

Similarly, a HAS executive member, Swarna Lata Gurung spoke on the importance of women in running homestays successfully. She encouraged more women to come forward in this sector to be self-reliant.

In a press release, HAS publicity secretary Tshering Thendup Bhutia stated that the project will greatly benefit entrepreneurs in Sikkim who are looking to build a new homestay and earn a livelihood through tourism.

"To ensure the project success, a well thought out execution plan could be created after taking into consultation all relevant stakeholders including travel agents, homestay owners, architects, etc. This would result in a comprehensive plan with inputs from different people special-

izing in different fields," he said.

It is informed that during the earlier homestay program [about 8 to 9 years back], many homestays were built with Government aid but there was no plan to promote the homestays once they were built, resulting in huge investments but very little return. It is further added that to avoid such a situation this time around, the Association requests that Marketing be made a key component of the project and a well thought out plan be chalked out to promote these homestays once they are built.

"The Mega Homestay Project could be a big game changer for the tourism industry in Sikkim and the Homestay Association of Sikkim promises to extend every support possible to the Government to make this project a huge success," the release adds.

"They won't be able to threaten us with jail:" Student-activists released

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN [NDTV]: Student-activists Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif Iqbal Tanha walked out of Delhi's Tihar jail today, hours after a court ordered their immediate release. They were arrested for alleged conspiracy in the north-east Delhi riots case.

"It shows the desperation of the government... We are women who are not scared of them," Ms Kalita told reporters after coming out of the jail

gates, amid a sea of supporters shouting slogans. "We survived because we received tremendous support from friends, from well-wishers. I thank them all," she said. Ms Narwal said she doesn't want to comment on the case as it's still in court. "However, we would like to thank the Delhi High Court for upholding what we believe in. Any such protest that we have done is not terrorism. It was a democratic protest, led by women,"

Ms Narwal said. "They won't be able to threaten us with jail. If they threaten to incarcerate us, that will only strengthen our resolve to carry on our fight," Ms Narwal said. Her father, Mahavir Narwal, died of Covid in May while she was in jail. Her brother, who came to receive her, said they miss their father, who if alive would have come to greet her on walking out of jail.

"I don't know how I

will deal with it (father's death)... This should be a reminder for us how the system of incarceration separates us from our loved ones. My case was highlighted. But there are many who are not allowed even one phone call," Ms Narwal told NDTV. "We should ask ourselves, how did we reach such a point where the line between terrorism and dissent has been blurred? People are jailed with frivolous charges.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Tadong, Lumsey

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

N.I.T. No: 13/GOS/SJ&WD EC/2021-22

Dated: 15/06/2021

The Assistant Engineer, (E) Social Justice & Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong East District, Sikkim on behalf of Governor of Sikkim, invites sealed tender in percentage Rate basis from the eligible contractors of appropriate class Vide notification no 584/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 08.10.2018 Vide notification No. 515/R&B/Pwd/Secy. Dated 12.06.2018 notification No. 104/R&B Dated 08.10.2020 for the work (s) listed under:-\

Sl. no.	Name of work	Value put to Tender (in Rs.)	Completion Time (in months)	Amount of Earnest Money @ 2.5% for issue of tender form (Rs.)	Amount of Bank receipt for cost of tender document Rs.)	Constituency / GPU/ Ward.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Construction of 8 room School building at Mulukey in East Sikkim.	79,09,344	18 months	1,97,734.00	5,000.00	Mulukey Ward, Chujachen Constituency.

Time Schedule is as follow:-

1. Date for submission of application with Bank Receipt – 18th June, 2021 (10.00am to 4.30pm) for issue of Tender Documents (Excluding the tender form).
2. Last date for issue of tender form – 23rd June, 2021 (11:00 to 13:00 hrs).
3. Date and Time for submission of Tender – 20th July, 2021 (10.00 hrs to 13:00 hrs).
4. Date and Time of opening of Tender – 20th July, 2021 (13:30 hrs to 16.30 hrs), in the respective Ward.

Note: The details of tender documents including tender form can be obtain from the office of the Assistant Engineer- East (II) SJ&WD on production of receipt of deposit made to the respective Ward.

1. Tender is open only to the eligible Contractors / Firms of appropriate Class/Area.
2. The intending tenders/contractors should apply in writing for issue of tender documents. The application would invariably be signed by the contractor himself/herself. The tender documents will not issued to any person other than the INTENDING TENDER.
3. The applicants should enclose attested copies of the (a) Valid GSTIN Registration Certificate, (b) Latest Income Tax Clearance Certificate as per the Indian Income Tax Act and (c) Validated Contractor Enlistment Certificate, and Professional Tax Clearance Certificate along with the application. It is mandatory to produce the original validated/updatd Enlistment Certificate during sale/ issue of the Tender Document for verification (d) PAN Card.
4. The prescribed Non-Transferable Tender Documents (Excluding the Tender Form) can be obtained during the period specified in (As above from the office of the Addl.Chief Engineer/ Superintending Engineer of Social Justice & Welfare Department, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim, on production of receipt deposit to the revenue of the respective GPU/Ward.
5. Earnest Money Deposit @ 2.5% in the state bank of Sikkim in the form of deposit receipt of schedules bank which includes in the form of temporary deposit receipts fixed deposits receipts in favour of the Sr. Accounts Officer of the Department Tender Form shall be issued only on the production of the deposit receipt to the contractors who has obtained the tender documents, on production of deposit receipts of 2.5% earnest money.
6. The Tender documents, including the Tender Form with quoted offer should be placed in a sealed cover with the name of the Tenderers and the name of the work superscripted on it. Supporting documents listed at SL3 (a), (b) and (c) above should be enclosed with the offer.\
7. Sealed Tenders may be deposited in the Tender Box in the concerned ward on the date and time indicated above.
8. Tenders will be opened by a Tender Opening Committee as prescribed by the Government in the presence of the tenderer on the date and time indicated above.\
9. The Tender should sign on every page of the tender documents as Acceptance of the General Direction and Conditions of Contract and other laid down norms. The rate quoted should be both in figures and words and should be inclusive of GST and all other Taxes and Levies. Over writing and correction should be avoided and if made should be authenticated. Incomplete/Conditional tenders shall be rejected forthwith.
10. In case of any discrepancy in rate(s) printed In the Schedule of Rates and Quantities issued with the tender document, rates as per approved Schedule of Rates will be taken as correct. mFor items outside the SOR, the rates shall as per the technically checked/estimate/analysis. Decision of the Addl.Chief Engineer cum Secretary/Head of the Department will be final in this regard.
11. The Work Value, scope and quantum of work are subject to change, the contractor shall execute the work as per the directives of the Department . no claim on this account shall be entertained whatsoever, if any extra claim is made , it shall be as per the agreement rates.
12. Avoidable damages due to negligence of the contractor shall be at his own risk and cost. The department shall not be liable for payment of such damages (if any), including accidents to laborer at site .
13. The offer shall remain valid for a period of 90 days. The work should commence within 15 days from the date of issue of work order.
14. the department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
15. Subletting of contract work is against the norms and if it comes to the notice, the original contract shall be cancelled and appropriate action shall be initiated as per the rules.
16. The Department also reserves the right to increase, decrease, alter or modify the item of works as indicated in the NIT without assigning any reason thereof.
17. The contractor will have to pay all taxes and duties as applicable and notified by the State/Central Government and no claim shall be entertained in this regard whatsoever.
18. The rate quoted shall be inclusive of prevailing taxes.
19. the department reserves the right to reject the incomplete tender without any reasons there-off.
20. The Contractor has to submit the work program / bar Chart in the initial stage.

Sd/-

Assistant Engineer (E)
Social Justice & Welfare Department
Government of Sikkim

R.O. No. 64/IPR/Pub/classi./21-22
Datet. 15.6.2021

Gold biscuits worth Rs 21 Cr found in car after 18-hour search in Manipur

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN [NDTV]: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence officials, in a massive operation, have seized more than 43 kg of gold biscuits worth ₹ 21 crore from Imphal in Manipur.

On receiving inputs, officials on Tuesday intercepted a car in the city in which two people were travelling. After questioning them and a thorough search, gold biscuits were found hidden inside three different cavities especially made inside the vehicle, officials said.

It took around 18 hours for the officials to get all the 260 foreign-made gold biscuits out from the cavities.

Officials said the same vehicle had also been previously used for smuggling.

Gold smuggling continues unabated in Manipur, bordering Myanmar, even amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown. In the last three months, around 67 kg of gold worth over ₹ 33 crore has been seized from the Guwahati zonal unit Myanmar sector. Of this, 55 kg of gold alone has been seized in June till now.

Officials said the gold is smuggled through the India-Myanmar border.

Amid a rise in COVID-19 cases, the Manipur government has extended the ongoing curfew in seven districts, including Imphal, till June 30 while inter-district movement remains prohibited.

WHO warns of fresh Indonesia surge fed by virus variants

JAKARTA, INDONESIA (AP): Indonesia's president ordered authorities to speed up the country's vaccination campaign as the World Health Organization warned Thursday of the need to increase social restrictions in the country amid a fresh surge of coronavirus infections caused by worrisome variants.

"We need vaccination acceleration in order to achieve communal immunity, which we hope can stop the COVID-19 spread," President Joko Widodo said in a remarks while visiting a vaccination center just outside the capital, Jakarta.

Widodo said he ordered his cabinet ministers and local governments to increase the number of people vaccinated each day to 1 million by next month. He said Indonesia is currently vaccinating half a million people a day.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, aims to inoculate more than 181 million of its 270 million people by March 2022, but authorities have only fully vaccinated 11.8 million people and partially vaccinated another 9.6 million others.

National COVID-19 task force spokesman Wiku Adisasmito said the slow progress can be put down to lim-

ited global vaccine supply, the unpreparedness of the national health system and vaccine hesitancy. The government has received 92.2 million vaccine doses so far. Indonesia saw its number of confirmed new cases climb to more than 12,600 on Thursday, an increase blamed on travel during last month's Eid al-Fitr holiday as well as the arrival of new virus variants, such as the the Delta version first found in India. In Jakarta the number of hospital beds occupied has shot up to 75% this week from 45% last week, government data shows.

The WHO in its situation report Thursday noted that Indonesia's drastic increase in bed occupancy rates is a major concern and necessitates in the implementation of stricter public health and social measures, including large-scale social restrictions.

"With increased transmission due to variants of concern, urgent action is needed to contain the situation in many provinces," it said.

Indonesian health officials say they've detected the Delta variant in Jakarta, Central Java and East Java provinces. They say they have spotted three of the four variants of concern flagged by the WHO.



Email: spcbsikkim@gmail.com

STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD -SIKKIM DEPARTMENT OF FOREST & ENVIRONMENT GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM DEORALI, GANGTOK - 737102

F. NO -/SPCB/228

Dated: 15/6/2021

NOTICE

This is to information of all concerned that, the Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change, GOI has notified the E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 which came into effect on 23rd March, 2016 and as per the Rule 2(1), the provision of the E-Waste Management Rules, 2016, is applicable to every manufacture, producer, consumer, bulk consumer, collection centers, dealers, e-retailer, refurbished, dismantler and recycler involved in manufacture, sale, transfer, purchase, collection, storage and processing of e-waste or electrical and electronic equipments listed in Schedule I, which needs to obtain authorization from State Pollution Control Board under Rule 13 of the said Rules.

Therefore all concerned are hereby informed to comply with E-Waste Management Rules, 2016, and further obtain authorization at the earliest and submit the Annual Report to State Pollution Control Board- Sikkim on or before 30th June 2021.

For further details contact State Pollution Control Board, Department of Forest and Environment, Government of Sikkim, Deorali, East Sikkim.

Sd/-

Member Secretary
State Pollution Control Board,
Department of Forest and Environment,
Government of Sikkim,
Deorali, East Sikkim

R.O. no. 68/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22
Date: 16.6.2021

Panchayati Raj Under Mai-Baaps

It's worrying when the obvious needs to be recommended

The Annual Technical Inspection Report on Panchayati Raj Institutions by the Office of Accountant General (Audit), Sikkim, like all other CAG Reports, makes for interesting reading. The instances of oversights bordering on intentional embezzlement carry a dark humour in their stupefying disregard for prescribed processes. The lapses however stop being amusing when one sits back and realises that the cited instances were thrown up from random sample surveys and the sniggers choke up fast when it sinks in that a more detailed appraisal would be even more embarrassing in its findings.

One of these ATIRs dusted out from the archives concludes by recording that the two major recommendations of the Twelfth Finance Commission Grants, viz transfer of assets of water supply and sanitation to PRIs and creation of database and computerisation of maintenance of accounts were not implemented even after lapse of five years [2005-10, the duration of the Twelfth Finance Commission, yes, this one is from a decade back but referenced here since which specifics might have changed, the attitudes have shown no signs of improving]. Although a High Level Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary was appointed to monitor works, it dealt "very scantily" with issues related to PRIs. Rs. 13 crore was released to PRIs under the 12th Finance Commission Grants for operation and maintenance of water supply schemes and sanitation programmes between 2005 to 2010. It is another matter that the release of these funds by the Centre were enormously delayed [in one instance by a staggering two and half years], and the concerned Department in the State did not help matters by engineering still longer delays in onwards release of funds to the PRIs.

The panchayats, so handicapped, were understandably disorganised, and their potential for performance ruined by a recalcitrant parent department. The concept of Utilisation Certificates, for example, was completely lost on everyone and when pressure mounted for submission of these documents, the District Development Officers, since they had not obtained these certificates from the Gram Panchayats, went ahead and submitted utilisation certificates for the full amount of grants without any reference to the actual utilisation of funds. This Kafaeque scenario was barely salvaged by the fact that select panchayats in the State have still performed so well that they are now counted among the best in the country. But that is more due to the insistence of the stakeholders and the diligence of their representatives than the support of the concerned Department. There are many more specifics which will be shared more detail in forthcoming issues of the paper, but what should be already obvious is that it's time to get worried when the Recommendations section of an audit appraisal lists out advice which should always have been obvious.

The CAG appraisal recommends that: an effective system of obtaining utilisation certificates from PRIs be instituted; water supply and sanitation assets be handed over to the PRIs; Panchayats levy user charges for maintenance of these assets; and computerisation and creation of complete data base be taken up on priority. These, it needs to be stressed here, were the guiding principles of the 12th Finance Commission Grants under which the funds were released in the first place. How does one start hoping for improved performance by Panchayats and the Department when the very basics of what is required of them have proven so difficult to achieve?

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



Why nobody will ever agree on whether COVID lockdowns were worth it

JAMES D. LONG, MARK A. SMITH & VICTOR MENALDO
theconversation.com

As an increasingly vaccinated world emerges from lockdowns, lots of people are talking about whether the fight against the pandemic was too strong or too weak. Some people argue restrictions did not go far enough; others maintain the attempted cures have been worse than the disease.

One reason for these conflicting views is that the answer depends on both facts and values.

Relevant facts include features of the virus like transmission rates and deaths. Government policies were often guided by scientific findings to reduce the spread of the virus and the resulting illnesses and deaths.

Relevant values include health and longevity, but also prosperity, opportunity, equality and freedom. Different people weigh those values differently.

Our research on the study of how fair and reasonable discussion helps citizens reach political decisions suggests there will never be widespread agreement on whether lockdowns, the most controversial coronavirus policy, were worthwhile.

COSTS VERSUS BENEFITS

In a perfect world, policymakers' decisions are based on evidence. But which science and data matter to some people is different from the science and data that matter to others. Should the government prioritize public health at the expense of the economy? Should individuals sacrifice liberty for the social good?

In principle, the U.S. could have devoted all of society's resources to fighting coronavirus – but doing so would have meant ignoring all other illnesses and the personal priorities that make life worth living, like hugging Grandma on July 4th.

Cost-benefit analyses offer one way to ensure that various trade-offs are explicitly considered rather than left unstated. These analyses rely on well-established methods to estimate how much society is implicitly willing to pay to save one life.

Based on those estimates, the number of deaths prevented by coronavirus mitigation policies could be converted into dollars for the "benefit" side of

the ledger. The associated "costs" include direct government expenditures now and into the future, along with lost wages and revenues for individuals and businesses.

With both benefits and costs denominated in dollars, it's potentially possible to determine a policy's net social effect: It's a simple math problem.

LOCKDOWNS ARE HARD TO EVALUATE

But even if we could cleanly compare costs to benefits, it's impossible to definitively measure the effects of lockdowns. Communities that had longer and more extensive lockdowns were often those likely to be more vulnerable to the spread of disease, or with less access to medical care.

For example, some denser places with more intergenerational households introduced severe lockdowns – but were also more likely to suffer high levels of virus transmission and death. This would artificially make it seem like lockdowns didn't work, because those places still suffered many deaths – just fewer than they would have without the lockdowns.

Fortunately, one of the central aims of social science work is finding ways to tease out cause from effect using real-world data. Researchers can use statistics to adjust the data in a way that neutralizes the effects of factors that influence both a state's fatality rate and its propensity to adopt lockdowns, like its population density, wealth, age distribution and health care capacity.

Still, any honest researcher should acknowledge they can only reduce, not eliminate, this type of uncertainty.

THE RANGE OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

Even if it were possible to isolate the number of deaths prevented through a lockdown, it's hard to measure other costs and benefits associated with coronavirus policies.

Confining people to their homes may have reduced their odds of spreading the virus. But staying home may have raised other risks, such as domestic abuse, addiction and mental health problems and the harms from delayed treatments for other medical conditions.

Among children, the lack of in-person schooling can hurt learning and raised rates of anxiety, depression and sleep disorders.

Other potential costs can be measured only in the future – such as smaller expected earnings among people whose learning was slowed down.

On the flip side, mask-wearing and social isolation may have had the unintended benefit of temporarily countering seasonal flu, which kills about 40,000 Americans a year. And there may have been technological innovations – like improved video-conferencing – sparked by lockdowns. It's simply too early to tell.

While the ultimate economic effect of lockdowns may be negative, lockdowns may still be justified if people value a dollar today more than one tomorrow. But policymakers, let alone citizens, simply do not agree how much society should value today's versus tomorrow's dollars. Indeed, this perhaps fuels the biggest disagreements over policies with delayed effects.

THE NEED FOR HUMILITY

Because the benefits and costs of policies unfold over time in ways that produce different winners and losers, it's simply hard to arrive at a consensus on what benefits to rank first and what costs are worth incurring.

An older person may want the government to prioritize elderly people's health, while parents with young children may emphasize reopening schools. Young adults may bemoan lost job opportunities while waiting out lockdowns.

Ultimately, that's why there will never be a definitive answer on whether the country's lockdowns were "worth it." The costs and benefits can be clarified, but not measured completely. And values come into play: How many lives were saved can never be exactly equated with how many children's development suffered.

Data can only bring society some of the answers. The rest we have to decide for ourselves.

[James D. Long is Associate Professor of Political Science, Co-founder of the Political Economy Forum, Host of "Neither Free Nor Fair?" podcast, University of Washington; Mark A. Smith is Professor of Political Science, University of Washington; Victor Menaldo is Professor of Political Science, Co-founder of the Political Economy Forum, University of Washington]

Working From Home: How classism covertly dominated the conversation

TRACEY WARREN & CLARE LYONETTE
theconversation.com

Since the arrival of the pandemic, media accounts about the new world of work have painted a curiously uniform picture of the jobs that people across the UK do. Chief among them was the idea that everyone was all suddenly compelled to work fully from home, with each working day newly shaped by endless online calls and muted-microphone hitches, all brightened by the unruly entry of pets and small children into serious meetings.

It's an idea that will be given more credence now that Sage, the government's science advisory group, has suggested that working from home is "likely to be needed beyond the end of the current road map process" out of lockdown, namely for COVID-safety purposes. But though this may be the reality for some office employees, this popular framing of the impact of COVID-19 on how and where we work is a firmly class-based story.

As the effects of the pandemic became more apparent in the UK, class inequalities quickly shaped employee experiences, with some workers better protected from the negative impacts of COVID-19 but many more severely disadvantaged, fearing for their health, job security and income.

The importance of class for the analysis of pandemic-impacted working lives has been under-examined

and too rarely discussed. In our research project with the UK Women's Budget Group, we looked at working lives in the face of the extraordinary and shifting burdens brought on by the pandemic. We focused on how working-class women fared compared with other groups of employees. Our findings show deep inequalities in how COVID-19 affected how we work.

VERY FEW WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE WORKED FROM HOME

Focusing solely on the disadvantages, delights and future potential of working from home neglects the fact that most of the UK's workforce rarely or never worked from home after the pandemic hit. Yet the media put emphasis on these circumstances, prioritising the experiences of a select group of workers while disguising real class inequity in both who could work from their homes and home-working conditions.

Before the pandemic, only 6% of women workers (and 4% of men) had "always" been working from home. After the first national lockdown, those figures jumped sharply to a third of the employed. Even then, home-working was a strongly classed phenomenon. Around a half of workers in managerial and professional jobs reported that they were working from home all of the time in April 2020 (with an additional 24% saying they sometimes or often did so).

The figures for working-class employees, however, tell a very differ-

ent story. Only 10% of working-class women in semi-routine jobs (such as care-workers, retail assistants, hospital porters) or routine jobs (cleaners, waiting staff, bus drivers, bar staff, sewing machinists, according to the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification) were always working from home (only 10% more reported doing it sometimes or often).

A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE?

While many of those who had to work fully from home already had a suitable home office set-up, far more had to make do with working at cramped tables or from sofas and beds. There were also deep class disparities in who had adequate computing facilities with reliable and fast broadband and printing and office supplies. As the summer months came to an end, inequalities in home-working conditions were intensified by stark variations in the workers' abilities to afford to heat home work spaces over an extended period.

Working from home is only one of a range of flexible working arrangements available to many workers. Some workers were permitted more flexible working, including fitting work around intensified caring or home-schooling responsibilities, but access to good quality arrangements during the pandemic was, as it had been before, firmly classed. In June, 38% of managerial and professional women could work flexibly and 53%

vary their work hours informally, compared with only 13% and 31% of working-class women.

Class inequalities persisted in workers' wages and household earnings, with working-class women faring the most poorly, taking home the lowest weekly wages in our employed sample. Compared with senior workers, far fewer of the working class were able to make savings from their income, building up no financial safety nets. As 2020 came to a close, a growing large minority of working-class women said that they were in difficulties or just about getting by financially.

The idea of working in frontline and essential jobs while managing the pressures of living, working and caring through a global pandemic and struggling to make ends meet doesn't sound much like the accounts we're used to hearing about the pandemic's impact on working lives. But it speaks to the lives of far more in the working population than debates that focus on the experiences of a minority and relatively privileged group. Without widespread recognition and urgent government support, the traditional working-class backbone of the workforce will be stretched to the limit, with longer-term implications for the rest of society.

[Tracey Warren is Professor, University of Nottingham; Clare Lyonette is Research professor at the Warwick Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick]

Book focuses on 6-point plan to tackle Covid

NEW DELHI, JUN 17 (PTI): At a time when Covid has crippled the world, forcing people to frantically search for the best ways to survive and thrive, a new book offers some practical strategies including a 6-point plan to fight the deadly disease.

Dr Vishakha Shivdasani, a nutritionist, uses the same principles of healing her patients with reverse chronic lifestyle diseases, to develop a new protocol that shows how to expedite recovery from Covid, reduce the chances of post-Covid complications and recover from them.

This protocol also works on new Covid strains that are emerging.

HarperCollins India had published "Covid and Post Covid Recovery" as an e-book earlier this year and now has released the paperback version. The book has vital information on the symptoms, recovery and effects of contracting the virus and tips on how to build immunity.

The six-point plan of Shivdasani or Doctor-Vee as she is popularly known, covers diet, gut health, sleep, exercise, stress management and enhanced healing with supplements.



"Having been a general practitioner for more than 20 years, with a focus on reversing diseases like diabetes, obesity and PCOS, I find the best results lie in combining modern medicine with lifestyle changes," says the author.

"This holds true for treating Covid as well. You have more power than you think, and seeing patients recover and thrive during this pandemic has been the most gratifying part of my career. I am confident that my six-point plan in this book will help people heal from Covid and its related complications both in the short and

long term," she says.

Shivdasani says as a doctor, she has seen the entire gamut of cases, from patients who are completely asymptomatic to those who have unfortunately succumbed to the virus.

"There is no textbook case or exact guidelines for recovery like we have for malaria, typhoid or even another virus like influenza. Fortunately, statistics show us that the number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 far exceeds that of those who are left with complications or sadly succumb to it," she writes.

She, however, adds

that there is a sizeable number of people who have been infected with Covid but can't seem to rid their bodies of its effects even months later.

"It is a mystery that has baffled the medical community. Patients among this group may even develop COVID-19 like symptoms and others, weeks after testing negative for the virus. They have been designated 'COVID long-haulers' or 'Long COVID sufferers'," she writes.

She says common symptoms of long Covid can range from hair fall, skin problems, chronic cough, brain fog, headaches, loss of taste and

smell to insomnia, fatigue, difficulty in breathing, palpitations, depression, joint pains to blood clots and lung scarring.

According to her, the vaccine is not a 'quick fix' but seems to be the best bet to not just slow down the transmission of this virus but also slowly end this pandemic.

"To prepare the body to increase the effectiveness of the vaccine is of paramount importance, especially for high-risk patients like the elderly and people with comorbidities. They are at a much higher risk of poor outcomes and complications caused by the Covid virus," she writes.

Mamata gains unexpected ally in war against Bengal Governor

Kolkata, 17 Jun [NDTV]: As Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar holds a series of meetings in Delhi amid clashes with the Mamata Banerjee government, his controversial role and comments have landed the Left on the same side as rival Trinamool Congress.

A top Left leader has echoed the Trinamool's criticism of Mr Dhankhar, who has been locked in a long-running feud with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over claims and counter-claims on post-poll violence in Bengal.

Left parties slammed the Governor for allegedly acting like a BJP mouthpiece and condemned his "partisan" role.

"He is not a man of the BJP but his function is tantamount to be a man of BJP. This cannot be the role of a governor. He is identifying himself as a man of BJP. This is not right. This cannot be the

role of a governor, particularly in West Bengal," Biman Bose, Left Front chairman, said today.

The Trinamool Congress has accused Mr Dhankhar of overstepping his brief and caustically said he should not return to the state.

Mr Dhankhar has not specified any reason for his four-day trip to the capital; he flew out a day after a delegation of BJP MLAs petitioned him on alleged deterioration of the law and order situation in the state.

Before leaving on Tuesday evening, he wrote a letter to the Chief Minister accusing her of silence over violence in the state and "not taking steps to rehabilitate the suffering people".

He shared the letter on Twitter, after which the state government accused him of violating established norms.

On Thursday, the Gov-

ernor said he met Union ministers Prahlad Joshi and Prahlad Singh Patel. He also called on the National Human Rights Commission. He has talked about meeting Home Minister Amit Shah.

"We have never seen such a governor who has no regard for the Constitution and its norms. He has been violating every constitutional norm. According to our Constitution, the governor is supposed to act as per the instructions of the council of ministers headed by the chief minister. But he doesn't follow any such norm and acts as per his whims and fancies," said Sougata Ray, senior Trinamool Congress leader.

"Uncleji going to Delhi on June 15th he says... Do us a favour WB Governor Sahib - don't come back," another Trinamool MP, Mahua Moitra, tweeted.

Centre withdraws VIP security cover of Mukul Roy



NEW DELHI, JUN 17 (PTI): The Z-category VIP security cover of West Bengal politician and MLA Mukul Roy, who recently re-joined the Trinamool Congress (TMC) after a brief stint with the BJP, has been withdrawn, official sources said on Thursday.

They said the Union Home Ministry has directed the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to recall its detachment deployed with the 67-year-old Roy.

Roy had last week joined West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led TMC along with his son Subhrangshu in Kolkata.

Sources said Roy, who won the assembly election as a BJP candidate from Krishnanagar Uttar constituency, had written to the Centre to with-

draw the security cover, which has now been given effect to.

Roy had quit the TMC after being removed from the post of the party's national general secretary. He had joined the BJP in November, 2017, and was made the party's national vice president.

Soon after, he was accorded a low category Y-central security cover of the central paramilitary CRPF which was upgraded to the second top level of Z just before the assembly polls in the state that were held in March-April this year.

He had a contingent of about 22-24 armed CRPF commandos who used to move with him every time he travelled in West Bengal.

Sources said the small category security cover being provided to

Subhrangshu by another central paramilitary force CISF has also been withdrawn.

The father-son are now being provided security by the state police.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Home Affairs in a clarification contended that Mukul Roy has surrendered his 'Z-Category' security cover, it was not withdrawn.

Sources told news agency Press Trust of India that Mr Roy, 67, who won the assembly election as a BJP candidate from Krishnanagar Uttar constituency, had written to the centre to withdraw the security cover, which has now been given effect to.

He had a contingent of about 22-24 armed CRPF commandos who used to move with him every time he travelled in West Bengal.

Mamata condemns Centre's efforts to 'control' Twitter

KOLKATA, JUNE 17 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday slammed the BJP-led union government over its "efforts to control" Twitter and claimed that the Centre, having failed to influence the microblogging platform, is now trying to bulldoze it.

Drawing a parallel, Banerjee said her government, too, was being meted out the same treatment by the Centre.

"I condemn it; they can't control Twitter, so they are trying to bulldoze it. They (Centre) are trying to do so with everyone they are unable to manage. They can't control me, and that is why they are trying to bulldoze my government, too," Banerjee said while talking to reporters here.

The networking platform has lost its 'safe harbour' shield in India over non-compliance to IT rules and failure to appoint key personnel mandated under new guidelines.

It will now be liable for action under the Indian Penal Code for third party unlawful content.

Making light of BJP's allegations of continued political violence in the state, the chief minister said it was a saffron party "gimmick" and the claims made were completely "baseless".

"There is no political violence going on in the state right now. There may have been one or two sporadic incidents, but those can't be labelled as incidents of political violence," she added.

Durgapur Barrage releases 12,000 cusec water



KOLKATA, JUN 17 (PTI): Authorities of Durgapur Barrage in West Bengal released 12,000 cusec of water till Thursday morning after two dams of Damodar Valley Corporation discharged water due to incessant rain in Jharkhand, officials said on Thursday.

Panchet and Maithon dams of DVC in the neighbouring state released 15,000 cusec of water, they said.

"DVC's Panchet dam released 9,000 cusec and Maithon 6,000 cusec,

which raised the water level in Durgapur Barrage.

We had to discharge 12,000 cusec. As of now, there is no major threat of flood," the officials said.

West Burdwan is one of the districts that may witness inundation if more water is released from the barrage, they said.

"Optimum pond level of the barrage is 211.5 ft and water reaches the maximum limit," the officials said.

Editors Guild condemns UP Police's track record of filing FIRs...: On Assault

NEW DELHI, 17 JUN [NDTV]: The Editors Guild of India has condemned filing of police complaints against the news website The Wire and several journalists for their tweets on the assault of a Muslim man in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad.

"...In the video that was posted by those charged, the man is seen alleging that he was beaten up by some people and was forced him to chant 'Jai Shree Ram'. Several media organisations and journalists, besides the ones charged by the police, posted this video on their social media feeds," the Editors Guild said in a statement today.

"Subsequently, there was an alternate version offered by the UP Police claiming the assault was borne out of a dispute regarding a talisman the elderly man had sold to some people, which was also reported by these media organisations and journalists," the Editors Guild said, highlighting

the news organisations and journalists only carried what the man claimed and later also took the police's version, as is the case with any other report.

The Editors Guild said it is "deeply concerned by the UP Police's track record of filing FIRs against journalists to deter them from reporting serious incidents without fear of reprisals."

"It is the duty of journalists to report on the basis of sources and in case facts become contested later on, to report the emerging versions and facets. For police to wade into such professional calls by journalists and attribute criminality to their actions is destructive freedom of speech, which is constitutionally protected and is entrenched feature of the rule of law," the Editors Guild said.

"...The Guild condemns this wanton misuse of laws to criminalise reporting and dissent to

harass independent media and demands that the FIRs be withdrawn immediately," it said.

A lawyer approached Delhi Police with his complaint on Wednesday against actor Swara Bhasker, journalist Arfa Khanum and a person named Asif Khan alleged that through their Twitter handles, they "got inspired from the incident and started a propaganda to spread hate amongst citizens".

"Manish Maheshwari, the head of Twitter in India, did not take any action to remove these false tweets knowing the fact that the incident did not have any kind of communal angle", the complaint says.

In the case filed by Uttar Pradesh Police, Twitter has been accused of not removing "misleading" content linked to the incident. The charges the social media giant faces include "intent to a riot, promoting enmity and criminal conspiracy".

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US Open tennis tournament to allow 100% fan capacity in 2021

NEW YORK, JUN 17 (AP): The U.S. Open tennis tournament will allow 100% spectator capacity throughout its entire two weeks in 2021, a year after spectators were banned from the event because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The U.S. Tennis Association announced Thursday that all tickets for courts and grounds passes will go on sale in July. The year's last Grand Slam tournament is scheduled to be held at Flushing Meadows in New York from Aug. 30 to Sept. 12.

The USTA's decision to return to its usual number of people on-site is the latest step in a return to normal for New York and for fans of various sports as the world emerges from more than a year of COVID-19 restrictions.

On Tuesday, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said many of the state's remaining social distancing rules would be eased because 70% of its adults have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine.

The New York Mets announced Wednesday they will return to full capacity next week. A sellout crowd of 52,078 attended a baseball game at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles on Tuesday night. The Indianapolis 500 on May 30 sold around 135,000 tickets, which is 40% of capacity at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

For tennis, the U.S. Open will be the first Grand Slam tournament to have full attendance since the Australian Open in January-February 2020 shortly before the coronavirus outbreak turned into a full-blown pandemic.

The USTA held the 2020 U.S. Open with no spectators at all, significantly altering the atmosphere and the competitive conditions at an event where raucous crowds are a part of the scenery, especially during night sessions at 23,771-seat Arthur Ashe Stadium.

More than 700,000 people attended the 2019 U.S. Open.

The recently concluded French Open let more than 5,000 spectators into the Roland Garros grounds each day during Week 1, and that rose to more than 13,000 people by the end. The main stadium, Court Philippe Chatrier, was limited to 5,000 fans about a third of capacity for the singles finals last weekend.

The All England Club and British government announced this week that Centre Court would be filled at 50% capacity when Wimbledon starts on June 28, with that rising to 100% by the women's and men's singles finals on the closing weekend of July 10-11.

Wimbledon was canceled completely in 2020 because of the pandemic, the first time since 1945 that tournament wasn't held.

WTC Final: Kohli eyes legacy, Williamson prize for consistency in battle of equals

SOUTHAMPTON, JUN 17 (PTI): Virat Kohli carries the expectations of a billion while cricket romantics will pin their hopes on Kane Williamson when India and New Zealand engage in a battle to create a lasting legacy in pristine whites in the inaugural World Test Championship final starting here on Friday.

For the connoisseurs of the glorious game, Test cricket is the ultimate format and despite its aura, the 144-year-old history needed a facelift along with a context which the World Test Championship provided despite various bottlenecks, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Kohli, India's most successful Test captain, a trophy-less cabinet doesn't do justice to the champion performer that he has been for a decade. Lest one forgets, he has been a fine leader in his own right even though Mahendra Singh Dhoni may forever remain a sentimental favourite.

Kohli needs a global triumph. Every captain needs it but perhaps the Indian captain wants it more.

It's how history will remember him just like it remembers Dhoni with a lot of respect and utmost fondness for those heroic World title wins. Williamson stands in his way with a bunch of fine cricketers and the most amiable set of players that one would come across in international cricket.

They are India's rivals but when Williamson hits those



cover drives, Devon Conway teases a Ravichandran Ashwin or Ravindra Jadeja, Trent Boult gets one banana inswinger aimed at Rohit Sharma's bootlaces, the crazy fans of a cricket-mad nation wouldn't possibly be able to hate them.

These are 'Gentlemen Cricketers' who have grown on the fans bit by bit with their cricket and their conduct. It's difficult not to love them, especially after their gut-wrenching World Cup defeat at the Lord's two summers back. If Williamson happens to stand with the ICC Test Mace on the Hampshire Bowl balcony, one might just smile and think that perhaps "Nice guys don't always finish last".

But after two years and half a dozen series later, a battle-hardened Indian team will

give its all in a match, from which the winning team will also walk away with a USD 1.6 million windfall.

There are a number of cricketers, who wouldn't practically have a shot at any other global trophy and for them it's their 'World Cup' which they want to lay their hands on.

Cheteshwar Pujara would be ready to take more bruises on his body if Neil Wagner started bowling short. Ajinkya Rahane has grown in stature after a series for the ages and he will squeeze that extra ounce of energy to make it count.

Ravichandran Ashwin is unlikely to play a white ball World Cup again and wouldn't mind one bit if he can fool Williamson, Ross Taylor or the dogged Henry Nicholls

with a carrom ball or a slider.

Ishant Sharma has grown 14 years older since that epic WACA spell to Ricky Ponting and India's senior-most player deserves to win a World Championship as much as anyone else.

Man to man, there is very little to choose between the two teams even though playing New Zealand in conditions that aid seam and swing isn't the easiest of tasks.

England found it out recently by losing a Test series and India have had a torrid experience, albeit in New Zealand where they lost two Tests inside three days. But a final has its own set of pressures and no one would feel it more than Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill, who would have the hardest job currently in Test cricket. They would

face the most under-rated but perhaps the best new ball pair in the business in Boult and Southee, who would make the new ball jag around and the old ball talk.

Rohit has had lot of success in India but the real battle would start with the WTC final followed by the England Test series where both his technique and temperament will be tested big-time.

Kyle Jamieson hasn't been played till now but Williamson knows what kind of a nightmare he was with his steep back-of-length bounce generated from his 6 feet 9 inch frame.

If that's not enough, Wagner will pound it in with stuff aimed at rib-cage enticing the batters to go for the hook and pull shots or take it on the body. In fact, Wagner versus

Rishabh Pant could be one intriguing battle, knowing his love for the fallen hook shot.

Pant's self control and Wagner's relentless probe will make for a great contest.

Similarly, New Zealand's new star Conway would face a very different kind of challenge that Jasprit Bumrah will pose with awkward angles and the late swing that will be generated by Mohammed Shami. Conway has, in fact, also prepared for Ashwin and Jadeja by sprinkling kitty litter on the practice pitches back to create rough which helps in getting the ball to turn and bounce.

This match could be one for the keeps unless pacers from either sides engineer an anti-climax.

Teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (vc), Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha (wk).

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (C), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner BJ Watling and Will Young. On-field Umpires: Richard Illingworth, Michael Gough

Match Referee: Chris Broad

Match Starts: 3:30 pm IST.

Brazil detects 53 with COVID in relation to Copa America

SAO PAULO, JUN 17 (AP): Brazil's health ministry raised the number of COVID-19 cases related to the Copa America to 53, one more than the previous day, after a total of 5,082 tests.

It also adjusted the figures of infected players or staffers from 33 to 27.

The ministry also said on Wednesday that 26 workers hired for the tournament had tested positive.

Some of the workers are located in Brasilia,

where Brazil opened the tournament on Sunday with a 3-0 win over Venezuela. Others were in Rio de Janeiro, which hosted Monday's 1-1 draw between Argentina and Chile. And a few are based in Goiania, where Paraguay beat Bolivia 3-1.

The Venezuela squad is depleted after nearly a dozen cases of COVID-19 involving players or staff. Bolivia is missing three players.

Staffers with Peru, Colombia and Bolivia

also tested positive.

The ministry said 1% of the tests related to the Copa America had come back positive. It also said that it will detect variants in the samples of the infected within two weeks.

Brazil stepped in late as emergency host of the 10-team continental championship despite the country having the second-highest number of recorded deaths from the coronavirus in the world, more than 490,000.

Vaughan, Cook predict NZ victory in WTC final

LONDON, JUN 17 (PTI): Former England captains Michael Vaughan and Alastair Cook reckon New Zealand will walk away with the top honours in the WTC final against India as they have the ability to play long periods of disciplined cricket and have got acclimated to the English conditions.

The two sides are set to lock horns in the marquee clash starting Friday in Southampton.

"I fancy New Zealand. I know I'm going to get absolute pelters on social media for going against India. But the way New Zealand played in the two Tests against England, I think they're going to do it. They are a high-class cricket team - I like every aspect of their game," Vaughan told 'BBC'.

"New Zealand play long periods of disciplined cricket, with bat and ball. They bat with a great maturity and read the situation perfectly.

"If you analyse Test cricket, generally it is the side that are able to cover all the bases the longest that wins, and New Zealand are able to do that because they have a very skilful bowling attack," he added.

New Zealand head into the fixture on the back of a 1-0 Test series victory over hosts England last week while the last red-ball match India featured in was in March.

Cook feels New Zealand's match sharpness will work in the favour of Kane Williamson and company.

"New Zealand are going to win. They're two matches further into match-sharpness after the series win against England - they're used to playing under pressure and in English conditions."

Cook, who amassed 12,472 in 161 Tests for England, backed the inclusion of left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel in the Kiwi playing XI.

"The only thing they've got to deal with is the selection question - and getting the balance of the side right. I hope they go in with Ajaz Patel, the left-arm spinner. "But that means one of their big four seam bowlers - Trent Boult, Tim Southee, Neil Wagner or Matt Henry - who have done such a good job for them, isn't going to play," he added. Former England women's speedster-turned-analyst Isa Guha said India have the depth in squad with quality batters and an equally potent bowling attack.

"I'm going to go for India. They have got tremendous depth in their squad, the big guns are back and they are a quality outfit under the leadership of Virat Kohli. "They've got an unbelievable top six -Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant are a world-beating line-up and they've got pace bowlers to back it up.

"They have a wonderful bowling attack, probably the best in the history of Indian cricket," Guha said.

Croatia looks to fire up attack, stifle Schick at Euro 2020

GLASGOW, SCOTLAND (AP): Croatia's chances of advancing in the European Championship hinge on two things — firing up a struggling front line and containing Czech Republic forward Patrik Schick.

Under pressure to deliver at Euro 2020 after reaching the World Cup final three years ago, Croatia was stifled against England in the first group match and lost 1-0.

Croatia assistant coach Vedran Ćorluka called on the team to be "more dangerous" and "attack-minded" in the Group D game against Czech Republic at Hampden Park on Friday.

"We know that our problem lately has been our finishing," Ćorluka said. "We are working to fix that for the next game. I am certain we will much better and more dangerous."

But Ćorluka knows Croatia's next opponents very well and

how tricky they can be. He played in central defense when Croatia threw away a two-goal lead against the Czechs in a group match at Euro 2016 that finished 2-2.

And he thinks they are even better this time around.

"The Czechs today are a much more dynamic team, much faster, and I think much more unpleasant, so it will be harder for us," he said.

Much of the Czech Republic's threat comes from Schick, who scored twice in a 2-0 win over Scotland on Monday, including a recording-breaking goal from near the halfway line when the striker spotted the goalkeeper far off his line.

But Croatia isn't planning to change its defensive tactics to deal with Schick.

"We will not strictly man-mark him, because we have never done that, and we will not do

it on Friday," Ćorluka said.

Other Czech players that Croatia will have to shut down are midfielders Jakub Jankto, who Ćorluka described as "fast and dynamic," Vladimír Darida, Tomáš Souček and Alex Král.

"They are very dangerous going forward and we most certainly won't rush for three points from the very beginning," Ćorluka said. "We want to win, but we will try to do it in a calmer way, without leaving space for Czech counterattacks or dangerous situations."

For Croatia, playmaker Luka Modrić will need to step up his game after failing to shine against England at Wembley Stadium. He was forced into deeper positions by England's defense, a situation he will have to overcome against the Czechs.

But Czech Republic players don't think the 35-year-old Modrić,

who won the 2018 Ballon d'Or, has lost his fitness, or his ability to dictate play in midfield with his passing and vision.

"He's an excellent player and keeps proving that in every game," Czech Republic backup goalkeeper Tomáš Vaclík said. "He has achieved so much."

Czech Republic defender Ondřej Čelůstka said Modrić "is the brain of their play, he will get a lot of ball and try to get loose from the players marking him."

After beating Scotland in their first match, the Czechs are going into Friday's game with confidence as they lead Group D on goal difference and are looking to advance to the round of 16.

"We're not going to gamble and play for a draw," Czech Republic assistant coach Jiří Čmýř said. "It's impossible to do that. We will go onto the pitch determined to win."

Multan knocks Quetta out of PSL with 110-run win

ABU DHABI, JUN 17 (AP): Multan Sultans ended Quetta Gladiators' bid to qualify for the Pakistan Super League playoffs after a 110-run victory.

Opener Shan Masood orchestrated Multan's healthy total of 183-5 with 73 off 42 balls before leg-spinner Imran Tahir's haul of 3-7 helped skittle out Quetta for 73 in 12.1 overs.

We couldn't get the team combination right this season, especially with the foreign players, said Quetta captain Sarfaraz Ahmed. Quetta's two leading foreign cricketers -- Andre Russell and Faf

du Plessis -- suffered concussion during the early part of the Abu Dhabi leg of the Super League, taking the sting out of Sarfaraz's team.

In the absence of Russell and du Plessis, Quetta's two other foreign batsmen Jake Weatherald (19) and Cameroon Delpoit (0) fell cheaply on Wednesday.

Earlier, after being put into bat, Masood dominated an opening stand of 72 with captain Mohammad Rizwan (21).

Masood hit seven fours and four sixes before being caught on the long-on boundary. Johnson Charles then smashed 47 off 24

balls. Fourth-placed Multan now has eight points from eight matches. We play 10 matches so you need momentum somewhere, Rizwan said.

We didn't get that in Karachi but have gelled well here in Abu Dhabi. Someone or the other keeps performing and that's giving us the results.

Islamabad United, on 12 points, is the only team to have qualified for the playoffs. Peshawar Zalmi and Lahore Qalandars have 10 points each, while defending champion Karachi Kings is fifth on 6 points.

Editors of Hong Kong newspaper arrested under security law

HONG KONG (AP): Hong Kong police used a sweeping national security law Thursday to arrest five editors and executives of a pro-democracy newspaper on charges of colluding with foreign powers — the first time the legislation has been used against the press in yet another sign of an intensifying crackdown by Chinese authorities in the city long known for its freedoms.

Police said they had evidence that more than 30 articles published by Apple Daily played a “crucial part” in what they called a conspiracy with foreign countries to impose sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

Apple Daily said in a statement that the move left it “speechless” but vowed to continue its reporting. The newspaper has long been one of the most outspoken defenders of Hong Kong’s freedoms and in recent years has often criticized the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for walking back promises that the territory could retain those freedoms for 50 years after the former British colony was handed over to China in 1997.

The newspaper has thus found itself a frequent target. Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai is currently serving a 20-month prison sentence after being convicted of playing a role in unauthorized protests in 2019, when Hongkongers took the streets in massive antigovern-



ment demonstrations in response to a proposed extradition law that would have allowed suspects to stand trial in China. Protests grew to include calls for broader democratic freedoms, but the movement only appeared to harden Beijing’s resolve to limit civil liberties in the territory, including by imposing the national security law used in Thursday’s arrests.

The legislation outlines secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign collusion and has been used to arrest over 100 pro-democracy figures since it was first implemented a year ago, with many others fleeing abroad. The result is that it has virtually silenced opposition voices in the city — and drawn sanctions from the U.S. against Hong Kong and Chinese government officials.

Those arrested Thursday included Apple Daily’s chief editor Ryan Law; the CEO of its publisher Next Digital,

Cheung Kim-hung; the publisher’s chief operating officer; and two other top editors, according to the newspaper.

Police also froze 18 million Hong Kong dollars (\$2.3 million) in assets belonging to three companies linked to Apple Daily, said Li Kwaiwah, a senior superintendent at Hong Kong’s National Security Department.

Trading in shares of Next Digital was halted Thursday morning at the request of the company, according to filings with the Hong Kong stock exchange.

In an apparent show of force, more than 200 police officers were involved in the search of Apple Daily’s offices, and the government said a warrant was obtained to look for evidence of a suspected violation of the national security law.

Apple Daily published a letter to its readers, saying that police had confiscated many items during the search, including 38 computers

that contained “considerable” journalistic material.

“Today’s Hong Kong feels unfamiliar and leaves us speechless. It feels as though we are powerless to stop the regime from exercising its power as it pleases,” the letter read. “Nevertheless, the staff of Apple Daily is standing firm. We will continue to persist as Hongkongers and live up to the expectations so that we have no regrets to our readers and the times we are in.”

Hong Kong Security Minister John Lee told a news conference that police will investigate those arrested and others to establish if they have assisted in instigating or funding the offenses.

He alleged that the police action against the Apple Daily editors and executives is not related to “normal journalistic work.”

“The action targeted the use of journalistic work as a tool to endanger national security,” he said.

In a chilling warning, he said that anyone working with the “perpetrators” would “pay a hefty price.” He added: “Distance yourself from them, otherwise all you will be left with are regrets.”

The Chinese government’s liaison office in Hong Kong said in a statement Thursday that it supported police action, noting that while the city’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, guarantees the freedoms of speech and press, those rights cannot undermine the “bottom line of national security.”

“Freedom of the press is not a ‘shield’ for illegal activities,” the liaison office said.

Hong Kong Journalists Association Chairman Chris Yeung criticized the arrests and raid in an online news conference, warning that the national security law was being used as a “weapon to prosecute media executives and journalists for publishing reports and articles that are deemed as a threat to national security.”

He said that the court warrant that allowed police to search the offices of Apple Daily had undermined journalists’ ability to protect their materials, a vital part of upholding press freedom.

“Self censorship will get worse if journalists are not sure whether they are able to protect their sources of information,” said Yeung.

House poised to repeal 2002 Iraq War authorisation

WASHINGTON, JUN 17 (AP): The Democratic-led House, with the backing of President Joe Biden, is expected to approve legislation to repeal the 2002 authorisation for use of military force in Iraq, a step supporters say is necessary to constrain presidential war powers even though it is unlikely to affect US military operations around the world.

A vote on Thursday would come one day after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said he intends to bring repeal legislation to the Senate floor this year.

The Iraq War has been over for nearly a decade, Schumer said.

The authorisation passed in 2002 is no longer necessary in 2021.

The White House said in a statement that it supports the House bill and stressed that no ongoing military activities are reliant upon the 2002 authorization.

The growing momentum behind the repeal measure follows years of debate over whether Congress has ceded too much of its war-making authority to the White House.

Many lawmakers, particularly Democrats, say passage of the 2002 authorisation, or AUMF, was a mistake, and some Republicans agree the authority should be taken off the books. Some lawmakers say the 2001 resolution to fight terrorism, passed after the 9/11 attacks, should be reexamined as well.

Once we pass a repeal of the 2002 AUMF, we must keep up our fight to repeal the 2001 AUMF so that no future president has the unilateral power to plunge us into endless



wars,” said the House bill’s sponsor, Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif.

Schumer said he wanted to be clear that legislation terminating the use of force in Iraq does not mean the US is abandoning the country and the shared fight against the Islamic State group.

He said the measure would eliminate the possibility of a future administration reaching backing into the legal dustbin to use it as a justification for military adventurism.

He cited the Washington-directed drone strike that killed Iranian Gen Qassim Soleimani in January 2020 as an example.

The Trump administration said Soleimani was plotting a series of attacks that endangered many American troops and officials across the Middle East.

The national security adviser at the time, Robert O’Brien, told reporters that President Donald Trump exercised America’s right to self-defence and that the strike was a fully authorised action under the 2002 authorisation to use military force.

There is no good reason to allow this legal authority to persist in case another reckless commander in chief tries the same trick in the future,

Schumer said.

Sen Robert Menendez, D-N.J., the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Wednesday in a joint statement with Sens Tim Kaine, D-Va., and Todd Young, R-Ind., that the committee would take up legislation to repeal not only the 2002 authorisation, but also the 1991 authorisation for use of force in Iraq, which remains on the books.

The 1991 authorisation gave President George H W Bush the authority to use force against Iraq to enforce a series of UN Security Council resolutions passed in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.

The 2002 authorisation was directed against the Saddam Hussein regime as necessary and appropriate to defend US national security against the continuing threat posed by Iraq and to enforce all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Repealing the 1991 and 2002 AUMFs will also send a clear diplomatic signal that the United States is no longer an adversary of Iraq, but a partner,” Young said.

The Senate and House would have to work out any differences in their bills and vote on a final product before it can go to Biden’s desk to be signed into law.

N. Ireland parties ease crisis that threatened power-sharing

LONDON (AP): Northern Ireland’s biggest political parties appear set to agree on a new government Thursday after ending a standoff that threatened to scuttle the Protestant-Catholic power-sharing administration. The pro-British Democratic Unionist Party has picked Northern Ireland Assembly member Paul Givan as its choice of first minister. But the Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein had threatened not to fill the post of deputy because of a feud about protections for the Irish language.

That would have mothballed the administration — under the power-sharing arrangements set up as part of Northern Ireland’s peace accord, a government can’t be formed unless both roles are filled.

The language issue cuts to the heart of tensions between Northern Ireland’s mostly Catholic nationalists, who see themselves as Irish, and Protestants, who largely identify as British.

The Northern Ireland Assembly, in which the DUP is the largest party, has failed to pass a law ensuring protections for the Irish and Ulster Scots languages, despite the power-sharing parties agreeing last year to do so. But early Thursday the British government said it would step in and pass the legislation

in the U.K. Parliament if the Belfast assembly did not do it by September. Sinn Fein welcomed the move, with party leader Mary Lou McDonald saying it had broken the “logjam of DUP obstructionism.” The party said it would nominate Michelle O’Neill as deputy first minister.

DUP leader Edwin Poots accused Sinn Fein of creating instability, but confirmed that “Paul Givan will be nominated for the position of first minister at the earliest opportunity.”

However, he faced anger from many of his party’s senior politicians, who said he shouldn’t proceed before consulting with them first.

The new government follows the resignation of Arlene Foster as first minister and DUP leader. She quit in April, under pressure from her party over her handling of Brexit and her perceived softening on social issues such as abortion and LGBT rights. The party elected Poots, a social and religious conservative, to replace Foster as leader. He broke with tradition by deciding not to serve as first minister.

The DUP, which is rooted in the fundamentalist Free Presbyterian Church, opposed Northern Ireland’s 1998 peace accord. It later became reconciled to it and has shared power with the Irish Republican Army-linked party Sinn Fein.

Fire-ravaged ship sinks, prompting Sri Lankan pollution fear



COLOMBO, SRI LANKA (AP): A container ship carrying chemicals sank off Sri Lanka’s capital on Thursday nearly a month after catching fire, raising concerns about a possible environmental disaster, officials said.

The ship’s operator said the wreck of the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl “is now wholly sitting on the seabed at a depth of 21 meters (70 feet).”

A salvage crew was at the site to deal with any debris and report any spill, X-Press Feeders said.

The head of Sri Lanka’s Marine Environment Protection Authority, Darshini Lahandapura, also confirmed that the ship had sunk.

She said it was currently unsafe to remove the wreck because of rough monsoon seas.

“The sea is very violent. In the rough season, we can’t do anything,” she said.

The monsoon season started last month and usually ends in September.

“Until such time, the owner of the vessel has appointed a caretaker company,” she said. “The entire area will be looked after by the caretaker company until the owner appoints a wreck removal company.”

The fire broke out on the vessel on May 20 when it was anchored about 9.5 nautical miles (18 kilometers) northwest of Colombo and waiting to enter the port.

The Sri Lankan navy believes the blaze was caused by its chemical cargo, which included 25 tons of nitric acid and other chemicals, most of which were destroyed

in the fire. But debris including burned fiberglass and tons of plastic pellets have already polluted nearby beaches. There are concerns that a spill of remaining chemicals and oil from the ship could devastate marine life. Authorities extinguished the fire last week, but the ship then began sinking and attempts to tow it into deeper waters failed when its stern rested on the seabed. The ship had remained partly submerged until Thursday.

The government has asked the United Nations and some other countries for help in assessing the damage to the marine environment and coastal areas.

The country has submitted an interim claim of \$40 million to X-Press Feeders to cover part of the cost of fighting the fire.

Australia raises AstraZeneca safety age to 60

CANBERRA (AUSTRALIA), JUN 17 (AP): Australia has raised the age for which the AstraZeneca vaccine is recommended to 60 from 50 after the shot was blamed for a 52-year-old woman’s death last week from blood clots in the brain.

Health Minister Greg Hunt described the decision on Thursday as conservative and reflecting the relatively low risk of catching the virus in Australia.

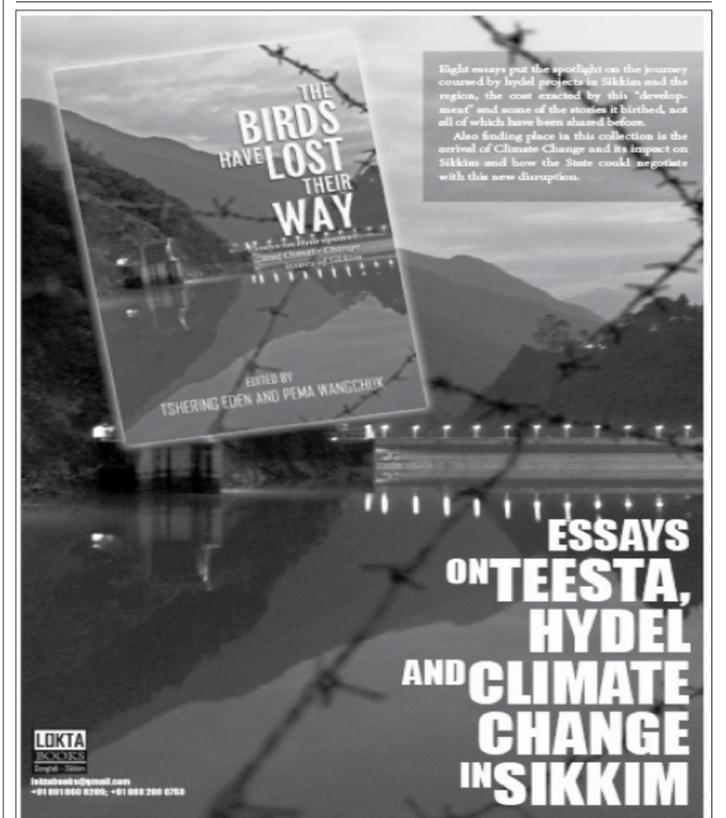
Australians aged between 50 and 59 are now recommended to use the only other vaccine approved in Australia, Pfizer.

Only two deaths in Australia have

been blamed on rare blood clots believed caused by AstraZeneca. The first was a 48-year-old woman who died in April. That death led to AstraZeneca being recommended only to adults aged over 50.

People who have had their first AstraZeneca shot without developing clots have been told it is safe to have the second dose three months later.

The government hopes to have the Moderna vaccine approved for use in Australia soon and to keep to its timetable of having a vaccine available to every adult who wants one by the end of the year.





MERMAID CHIC! Celeb Kylie Jenner stunned at the 72nd annual Parsons Benefit in New York City.

Emma Corrin, Harry Styles wrap shooting of 'My Policeman'

LONDON, JUN 17 (PTI): Emma Corrin and Harry Styles have completed filming on Amazon Prime Video's romantic drama "My Policeman".

Corrin, who shot to global fame after playing Princess Diana on the Netflix series "The Crown", announced the wrap of the Venice schedule on Instagram.

"... aaaaand that's a falafel wrap baaaay," Corrin posted on Wednesday night alongside pictures from the set.

Set in the late 1990s, "My Policeman" follows the arrival of elderly invalid Patrick into Marion and Tom's home, which triggers the exploration of seismic events from 40 years previous: the passionate relationship between Tom (Styles) and Patrick (David Dawson) at a time when homosexuality was illegal.

Corrin is essaying the role of younger Marion.

An adaptation of the acclaimed novel of the same name by Bethan Roberts, the movie is directed by "Genius" fame Michael Grandage from a script by Ron Nyswaner, known for "Philadelphia".

Rupert Everett, Gina McKee, Linus Roache, and Kadiff Kirwan are also part of the cast.

Chlöe, Shahidi, Cordae part of Disney EP honoring Black life



NEW YORK (AP): Disney is celebrating this year's Juneteenth with a new EP about the Black experience featuring actor and activist Yara Shahidi, Chlöe Bailey of Chlöe x Halle and rapper YBN Cordae, who is donating his proceeds to students attending historically Black colleges and universities.

"Music for the Movement Volume III - Liberated," out on Friday, is the third volume in Disney's four-part series of EPs honoring Black lives and social justice under a joint venture between Disney Music Group and The Undefeated, ESPN's platform for exploring the intersections of race, sports and culture.

Shahidi delivers the original spoken word track "To Be A Black Girl" on the EP, while Bailey covers Nina Simone's "Feeling Good." The Grammy-nominated Bailey will perform the track on "Juneteenth: Together We Triumph - A 'Soul of a Nation' Special Event," airing Friday on ABC and marking her first solo TV performance.

Cordae and Common join forces for "What's Life," and Cordae agreed to donate his proceeds from the album release to fund scholarships for students from underrepresented communities attending HBCUs. As a

result, Disney Dreamers Academy and The Undefeated agreed to match his donation.

"So many people need the money more than I do. I feel as though when you're in such a blessed position, it's important to pay that forward to be a blessing to others. It's especially important to me to invest in our youth and the future," 23-year-old Cordae said in a statement. "Young people are the future of our society and the world, so we must do all we can to ensure they are properly positioned to succeed. If I can spark the brain of a few future world leaders and geniuses, I'll die a happy man."

"Music for the Movement Volume III - Liberated" also features songs by R&B singer Lucky Daye and jazz saxophonist Kamasi Washington.

Disney's first volume called "I Can't Breathe/Music for the Movement" was released last October and featured songs by Rapsody, Bilal, Robert Glasper, Terrace Martin, Alex Isley, Jensen McRae and Keedron Bryant. "Black History Always - Music for the Movement Vol. 2" was released in February and included songs by Tinashe, Freddie Gibbs, Tobe Nwigwe, Brent Faiyaz and Infinity Song.

Utah 'Real Housewives' star seeks fraud case dismissal



SALT LAKE CITY (AP): "Real Housewives of Salt Lake City" star Jen Shah and her defense attorneys have asked a federal judge in New York this week to dismiss charges against her in a fraud case because officers allegedly coerced her into waiving her Miranda rights when she was arrested in Utah.

Shah, 47, and her assistant have been accused in a telemarketing scheme that federal prosecutors say took advantage of hundreds of "vulnerable, often elderly, working-class people," The Salt Lake Tribune reported. They both pleaded not guilty to multiple charges.

Shah faces multiple counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Prosecutors said the scheme enticed people to invest in an online "business opportunity," and then sold them tax preparation or website design services, despite many of the people not owning computers.

Prosecutors accused Shah and her assistant of selling lists of potential victims that were generated from telemarketing "sales floors" in Utah, Arizona, Nevada and elsewhere. The sale floor owners allegedly worked with telemarketing operations in New York and New Jersey.

Shah was arrested March 30 by New York detective Christopher Bastos in Salt Lake City after she received a perplexing phone call. She believed the call was tied to an order of protection she has out against a man who once attacked her and was convicted of multiple felonies in New York. After the call, she received another call from Bastos believing it was also tied to the protective order.

Bastos, who told Shah to pull over as she was driving to a shoot in Utah, arrested her as a suspect in the telemarketing fraud case. But as Shah asked whether she was going to jail, she told officials that Bastos made her believe she "might be in danger, and that the police

might be there to help me." Shah's attorneys are arguing that she was coerced, and pointed out that Bastos knew her history with the man, who prosecutors said was also involved in the scheme with Shah and her assistant.

"Although Ms. Shah waived her Miranda rights, she did not do so voluntarily, but rather as a direct result of law enforcement deception and trickery calculated to overpower her will," her attorneys said.

Her attorneys have also said that prosecutors have not provided enough information for the case to proceed, arguing that she is accused of participating in a scheme with "unspecified co-conspirators in unspecified places and selling unspecified products and services to unspecified victims, while laundering the money through unspecified accounts with unspecified financial institutions at unspecified times over an eight- or nine-year period."

Prosecutors have argued that they have turned over more than a million documents and the contents of hundreds of electronic devices, which defense attorneys argue make it impossible to understand or respond to specific claims.

Shah's defense attorneys also argue she wasn't the only one who Bastos lied to. They said some evidence was uncovered in searches authorized based on police statements that were inaccurate or incomplete.

They argued Bastos described Shah as "operator" of two companies that allegedly did business with the sales floors, but her attorneys said she was "middle management" of one, and not an employee of the other. As a result, the attorneys argued Bastos falsely inflated Shah's involvement.

Staff from the New York Police Department and the U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of New York did not immediately respond to The Salt Lake Tribune's requests for comment.

R Balki, Gauri Shinde to collaborate with Pranab Kapadia for their upcoming films

MUMBAI, JUN 17 (PTI): Filmmaker couple R Balki and Gauri Shinde on Thursday said they have partnered with media business veteran Pranab Kapadia as co-producer for their upcoming films to be made under their banner Hope Productions.

The couple's production house, which was founded in 2011, has backed their critically-acclaimed films such as "Cheeni Kum", "Paa", "English Vinglish", "Shamitabh", "Padman", "Ki & Ka", "Dear Zindagi and "Mission Mangal". The company has also made a gamut of television commercials.

Balki said they are delighted to announce their partnership with Kapadia.

"We have known Pranab for about 10 years now, and have always admired his desire to make films and content that not only break the barriers of convention but also tell newer stories, which is well complemented with his sound business acumen.

"With his vast business experience and his love for movies there can be no better person than Pranab to help grow Hope Productions,"

Balki said in a statement. The filmmaker revealed that there are four films in the pipeline, including a thriller, at their production house. "Pranab will be partnering with us in our future ventures beginning with a thriller directed by me that begins filming in July this year, followed by three films planned for 2022," he added.

Kapadia has been in the industry for more than two decades and led the UK subsidiary of Reliance-owned Adlabs. He is also the founder of Moviegoers Entertainment Limited.

The producer said he is honoured and excited to collaborate with Balki and Shinde.

"Their unique style of storytelling, creating entertaining content and commercial success out of subjects that are considered taboo, is remarkable.

"After successfully producing award winning films and commercials, collecting several accolades at prestigious Film Festivals around the world, their production company Hope Productions is now at the cusp of growth and I am excited to lead this," he said.

Aries: We all have that one person in our life. That one person we go back to at the drop of a hat despite their past follies. Who's that one person in your life, Aries, and have you been thinking about them a little more than usual lately? There's nothing wrong with a little walk down memory lane every now and then. But going back to them or an old way of life may prove to be detrimental. So draw boundaries wherever necessary and cut the cords if need be. Remember, your higher self is holding space for you to do what's best for your own well-being at this moment.

Tip: Cut the cords wherever necessary.

Taurus:

When somebody's right for you, you just "know". It's a special time in your life, Taurus. A time when your angels and guides are conspiring to bring you that once-in-a-lifetime kind of love. For some of you, this may mean saying your vows in front of your family and friends. Others may be thinking about starting a family or adopting children. Trust the guidance you are receiving in this moment and follow it through.

Tip: You could be thinking about starting a family of your own.

Gemini:

Experts believe that taking a break from social media

has many, many benefits. For instance, more time to look inwards and focus on the things you love, less FOMO, better sleep, increased productivity, and quality time spent with those who really matter. Now, if that doesn't inspire you to take some time off, what will? Remember, if your business is dependent on your numbers, manage your time better. Allow yourself no more than 30 minutes a day to get your fix. Who knows? Your mysterious presence may actually get your followers even more curious.

Tip: Consider taking some time off from social media.

Cancer:

It's a lucky, lucky time in the Cancer HQ. The air around you is creatively charged and is bringing all the right people to your yard. If you've been thinking about syncing your forces with somebody who complements your skill set, the answer is yes. What's more, the stuck energy around you promises to become unstuck, bringing forth the epiphanies you need to take your work forward.

Tip: Time to get unstuck!

Leo:

It's a 'let's watch the world go by' kind of day in the Leo HQ. You're in the mood to hit the pause button and focus on the activities that nurture your soul. So consider going back to that self-help book you started,

or trying your hand at an instrument of your choice. If it puts you in that state of flow, it means you're doing something right.

Tip: Dedicate your time to the things that make your soul feel good.

Virgo:

It's one of those days, Virgo. You're tired of running errands in your PJs and want to up the glam quotient, even if it's just indoors. Who says you can't dress to the nines for yet another day of WFH? Some of you may be in the mood for a wardrobe overhaul as well. If this is the case, consider investing in natural, breathable fabrics that are brought to life in a manner that's sustainable.

Tip: Let's dress to the nines for another day of WFH.

Libra:

It's one of those days. Every time you try to get something done, you're distracted by yet another phone call or a pointless Zoom meeting that doesn't bring forth any creative solutions. But you are accountable for your time and energy, Libra, and it is up to you to manage your resources better. So, draw boundaries wherever necessary and take a breather from social media if need be.

Tip: It's time to eliminate the distractions.

Scorpio:

You're really feeling yourself today, Scorpio, and this shift in your vibration is bringing all the right opportunities into your world. For some, this may be a time of committing to a business or creative partnership. Others may find that their partnership is thriving like never before. You're also in the mood to take all kinds of chances. With the cat as your spirit animal, you know that you'll land on your feet no matter what.

Tip: It's time to take all kinds of chances.

Sagittarius:

Sagittarius, are you living, existing or merely surviving? Yes, the pandemic has been harsh on all of us, but that's not a good enough reason for you to give up. Focus on what's working out at the moment, and reaffirm the positive. The seeds you planted a while ago are beginning to show life in the midst of all the doom and the gloom, reminding you that there is much to live for.

Tip: Endings are always followed by beginnings.

Capricorn:

That the darkness coexists with the light is not news to you, Capricorn. But, what are you reaffirming today? Are you focusing on the doom and destruction or using your words to cast spells? Don't forget your power

as a co-creator, wild one. If you're looking to transmute your emotions, look no further than movement therapy. An hour of yoga, dance or Zumba will work like magic and get the good juju flowing.

Tip: When in doubt, dance.

Aquarius:

It takes all kinds of people to make this world. While some bring magic into our lives and inspire us to be the best version of ourselves, others lower our vibration and make our lives a living hell. But we have an option. We always have an option. We can decide who we want to offer a place in our circle and who we want to love from afar. Watch the guilt and shame narrative, and how it's getting the better of you. Something tells us it's time to cut the cords.

Tip: Do what's right for you this time.

Pisces:

That life on earth is filled with all kinds of tribulations is not news to you, Pisces. But, you don't have to deal with all the trials by yourself. The cards are reminding you that the support of your tribe is available to you at this moment. So, allow yourself to lean on them. As such, this is a time of recognising your soul ties, and nurturing the ones that bring love, light, and magic into your life.

Tip: Allow yourself to lean on your tribe.