



TELEVISION ACTOR SUSHEEL GOWDA DIES BY SUICIDE; FRIEND SAYS, 'I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THAT HE IS NO MORE'
pg 08

WHEN WILL THE NUMBERS BECOME TOO MANY TO IGNORE?

pg 04

"ENDGAME' EASTER EGG MAY TEASE AN ICONIC COMICS CROSSOVER FOR 'AVENGERS 5'
pg 08



Summit **T**IMES

Vol 05 | Issue 180 | Gangtok | Thursday | 09 July 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Regretful that CM also supports 'miscommunication' excuse - Cong on illegal entry from Melli episode

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee president, Bharat Basnet, today rejected Chief Minister, PS Tamang's [Golay] defence of the DGP in the matter involving illegal entry into Sikkim by Gauri Shankar Gupta and his family from Melli check-post recently.

The Chief Minister had endorsed the version presented by Sikkim Police and the State administration - "miscommunication" - when asked to comment on the issue recently.

Mr Basnet has tagged the CM's position as being "unfortunate, regretful and unbelievable."

He asserted that instead of continuing to embarrass himself with the incident, the CM should institute a high-level independent enquiry headed by a retired Judge or Chief Secretary to place the truth with the people.

Addressing a press conference

SDF accuses Govt of hypocrisy in implementation of Disaster Management Act

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

Sikkim Democratic Front has condemned Chief Minister PS Tamang's acceptance of the "miscommunication" excuse in the unchecked entry from Melli episode.

A press release issued by SDF spokesperson, Prashant Babu Chettri, stressed that where the CM should have initiated stringent action on the matter, Mr Tamang has shirked responsibility and let the people down.

CBSE should explain rationale behind dropping certain chapters from curriculum: Sisodia

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): The CBSE should explain the rationale behind dropping certain chapters from the school curriculum, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Wednesday, asserting that the board must have had "very strong" reasons behind the move.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Tuesday had notified that it rationalised by up to 30 per cent the syllabus for classes 9 to 12 for the academic year 2020-21 to reduce course load on students amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The Human Resource Development Ministry maintains that the curriculum has been rationalised while retaining core elements.

here this afternoon, Mr Basnet stated that it was unfortunate that the CM was also covering up for the DGP and refusing to accept the administrative lapses which led to the incident.

He asserted that the CM was not only the CM of a party and the officers but also the people.

He added that the people of Sikkim and even supporters of his party were not satisfied with the statement of the CM on the matter.

While alleging that the CM has breached the Oath of his Office, Mr Basnet asserted that Members of the State Assembly should immediately move a no-confidence motion in the legislative assembly.

He urged the Governor to intervene in the matter as well and informed that a Congress delegation will meet the Governor on the matter.

He also questioned the silence of Bharatiya Janata Party and its MLAs on the matter.

The release also points out the hypocrisy of the Government in expecting the lay people to follow the Disaster Management Act while its own officers are allowed to not only break the law, but also receive State support in hoodwinking the people and escaping accountability.

The quickness of the enquiry, completed in one day, has also been questioned by the SDF and wonders why the report itself has not been made public yet.

The board in its syllabus rationalisation exercise has dropped chapters on democracy and diversity, demonetisation, nationalism, secularism, India's relations with its neighbours and growth of local governments in India, among others, as per the updated syllabus.

"The Delhi Government has always been a votary of syllabus reduction and I have said so on several occasions as a large syllabus does not mean more learning. I support the CBSE's decision to reduce the syllabus for the academic session 2020-21 in the secondary and senior secondary grades but I have reservations and concerns over the manner and content of the syllabus reduction exercise," Sisodia said.

6 GREF personnel test positive, active cases tally rises to 49

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

With six new case, the tally of COVID-19 positive cases reported so far in Sikkim reached 133 on Wednesday. There are now 49 active cases in the State as one more patient has recovered and been discharged from STNM hospital. The number of discharged patients so far is 71. Likewise, 13 patients have migrated out to Army Hospital in Bagdogra, Siliguri.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department DG-cum-Secretary, Dr Pempa T Bhutia informed that the six GREF personnel were part of a 16-member group that had come to Sikkim from Kerala on a GREF vehicle. They were all in a quarantine centre at the GREF camp in Rongli. The camp, which had 47 personnel, has been declared a containment zone.

The 6 positive patients were brought to STNM hospital by a GREF vehicle on 06 July and were admitted at the Triage Facility of the hospital. He added that samples were taken out and sent for testing and all six tested positive for COVID-19. He informed that the ambulance driver, nursing supervisor and other personnel will be conducted after seven days.

While giving details of the other two cases that he had informed about in Tuesday's bulletin, Dr Bhutia said that the 27-year-old woman had returned from Devidanga, Siliguri with her friend on 28 June and then travelled with six other teachers in a bus from Melli check-post to Manjushree School in South Sikkim and were in quarantine. Out of eight teachers in the bus, one was from Kolkata, 3 from Siliguri and 4 from Kalimpong.

He informed that the remaining seven persons have tested negative for now and their samples will be tested again after seven days and Manjushree School has been contained.

He informed that the 37-year-old man was a Bihar returnee, who returned to Sikkim 29 June in a bus till Siliguri and then took a Bolero with a co-passenger till Rangpo. He had then boarded another vehicle with the same co-passenger till the paid quarantine facility at Sikkim Retreat.

The Secretary informed that CMO [East] accompanied by other health department officials and concerned SDM visited the camp and declared the entire camp as a containment zone with strict orders. He mentioned that the authorities have been making all efforts to contain the infection and to avoid community spread at any cost.

Free health insurance provided to 1,202 families

GANGTOK, 08 JUL (IPR):

A distribution programme of Sikkim Manipal Swasthya Surakhsha Insurance Card and Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) Health Insurance Card was held in a programme at Samman Bhawan today. The programme was graced by the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) as the Chief Guest.

Sikkim Manipal Swasthya Surakhsha is a health scheme initiated by Central Referral Hospital (Manipal) and sponsored by Government of Sikkim in order to provide added health care facilities and protection to the people from financial disabilities arising out of health setbacks. It covers hospitalization expenses in General Ward at CRH, 5th Mile to an extent of Rs 1 lakh on a family floater basis and offers cashless treatment along with seven free OPD visits and 10 to 30% discount on CT Scans, MRIs and other tests. Under the scheme, upto five members of the family can be enrolled in a family plan.

The Sikkim Manipal Swasthya Surakhsha has taken 1,202 families and 4,900 beneficiaries under its ambit in the State till date. The benefits of the scheme can be availed from 01 April,



2020 to 31 March, 2021.

The Ayushman Bharat - PM-JAY is a health assurance scheme initiated by the Government of India and aims at providing health coverage of Rs. 5 lakhs annually per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation across public and private empanelled hospitals in India.

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang handed over the Sikkim Manipal Swasthya Surakhsha Health Insurance Cards and PM-JAY health cards to the beneficiaries present of the State.

In his brief address, the CM stressed on the need for maximum awareness on these

schemes at grassroot level so that economically weaker section of people from every corner of the State can avail for the health facilities being provided by the State and Central governments. The scheme is meant to reduce the burden arising during medical emergencies and is designed to help families of below poverty line with quality healthcare services, he added.

He reiterated that health sector has always been the State government's top priority and added that the people of Sikkim will be provided with maximum health benefits.

The CM informed that the State government will pay a

premium of Rs. 2000 per annum and people who hold COI/ domicile will be able to avail quality healthcare at Central Referral Hospital Manipal (CRH) for the insurance scheme. He also shared that the scheme will be further extended from the next financial year for the benefit of less privileged of the State. He further informed about the Mobile Village Clinic services which will be initiated in all districts from the next financial year, wherein quality healthcare will be provided at the doorstep of the people.

Additionally, dialysis facilities have been set up in all four districts which will be further taken up to the sub-divisional level, he added.

He further informed about the Mukhya Mantri Jeewan Raksha Kosh wherein economically weaker section of people can avail for healthcare benefits.

On the occasion, incentives were also provided to six (6) progressive farmers of Khamdong Singtam constituency in order to encourage and motivate them towards farming sector.

The distribution programme also had the presence of Deputy Speaker, SLA, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Political Secretary to CM, Confidential Secretary, Vice Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University, and other dignitaries.

India's coronavirus caseload goes past 7.42 lakh

NEW DELHI, JULY 8 (PTI): With 22,752 fresh cases of COVID-19 in a day, India's virus caseload increased to 7,42,417 on Wednesday, while the death toll climbed to 20,642 with 482 people succumbing to the disease, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The number of recoveries stands at 4,56,830, while there are 2,64,944 active cases of coronavirus infection presently in the country, the updated data at 8 am showed.

"Thus, around 61.53 per cent of patients have recovered so far," an official said.

The total number of confirmed cases included foreigners.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 1,04,73,771 samples have been tested up to July 7 with 2,62,679 samples being tested on Tuesday.

Of the 482 deaths reported in the last 24 hours, 224 are from Maharashtra, 65 from Tamil Nadu, 50 from Delhi, 25 from West Bengal, 18 from Ut-

tar Pradesh, 17 from Gujarat, 15 from Karnataka, 13 from Andhra Pradesh, 11 from Rajasthan, seven each from Bihar and Telangana, six from Punjab, five each from Jammu and Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh, four in Odisha, three from Haryana, two each from Jharkhand and Puducherry and one each in Chandigarh, Goa and Uttarakhand.

Of the total 20,642 deaths reported so far, Maharashtra accounted for the highest at 9,250 fatalities followed by Delhi with 3,165 deaths, Gujarat with 1,977, Tamil Nadu with 1,636, Uttar Pradesh with 827, West Bengal with 804, Madhya Pradesh with 622, Rajasthan with 472 and Karnataka with 416.

The COVID-19 death toll reached 313 in Telangana, 279 in Haryana, 252 in Andhra Pradesh, 175 in Punjab, 143 in Jammu and Kashmir, 104 in Bihar, 43 in Uttarakhand, 42 in Odisha and 27 in Kerala.

Jharkhand has registered 22 deaths, Chhattisgarh, Assam and

Puducherry 14 each, Himachal Pradesh 11, Goa eight, Chandigarh seven, Arunachal Pradesh two and Meghalaya, Tripura and Ladakh have reported one fatality each, according to the Health Ministry.

More than 70 per cent deaths took place due to comorbidities, it said.

Maharashtra has reported the highest number of cases at 2,17,121 followed by Tamil Nadu at 1,18,594, Delhi at 1,02,831, Gujarat at 37, 550, Uttar Pradesh at 29,968, Telangana at 27,612 and Karnataka at 26,815, according to the ministry data.

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 23,837 in West Bengal, 21,404 in Rajasthan, 21,197 in Andhra Pradesh, 17,999 in Haryana and 15,627 in Madhya Pradesh.

It has risen to 12,570 in Bihar, 12,522 in Assam, 10,097 in Odisha and 8,931 in Jammu and Kashmir. Punjab has reported 6,749 novel

coronavirus infections so far, while Kerala has 5,894 cases.

A total of 3,415 people have been infected by the virus in Chhattisgarh, 3,230 in Uttarakhand, 2,996 in Jharkhand, 1,903 in Goa, 1,704 in Tripura, 1,430 in Manipur, 1,083 in Himachal Pradesh and 1,041 in Ladakh.

Puducherry has recorded 930 COVID-19 cases, Nagaland 625, Chandigarh 494 and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu together have reported 405 cases.

Arunachal Pradesh reported 276 cases, Mizoram has 197 cases, Andaman and Nicobar Islands has 147, Sikkim has registered 125 infections so far, while Meghalaya has recorded 80 cases.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said, adding that 5,018 cases are being reassigned to states.

State-wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, it added.

Illustrated biography of Dalai Lama to hit stands soon

NEW DELHI, JUL 8

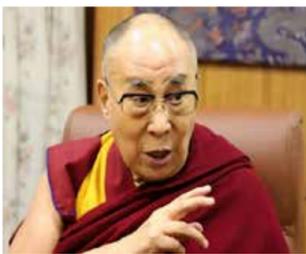
(PTI): A new book

on the Dalai Lama featuring over 400 never before seen photographs and documents from the life and times of the Tibetan spiritual leader will be released in October, publishers Roli Books said on Wednesday.

The 352-page book, "His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: An Illustrated Biography", in making for nearly five years, has been written by one of the Dalai Lama's closest aides and advisor of over 40 years Tenzin Geyche Tethong. The Dalai Lama marked his 85th birthday on Monday.

The book, which includes nearly 400 photographs and documents, also features a personal message by the spiritual leader, along with a foreword by his younger brother, Tenzin Choegal.

"From the early years of the Dalai Lama, when he led a sheltered yet rigorous existence spent between the Potala and Norbulingka palaces, to the complex and increasingly dangerous relationship with communist China, the book gives us a glimpse into an important slice of history before the Dalai



Lama was forced to flee to India in March 1959," the publishers said in a statement.

The Dalai Lama had fled from Tibet as a 23-year-old and sought asylum in India. He currently resides in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh.

According to Roli Books, the illustrated biography promises to be "richly compelling, and is a stunning visual celebration of the Dalai Lama.

It sketches a memorable portrait of the icon that has won the attention and hearts of billions across the world.

"The second half of the book looks at His Holiness' role as one of the most recognised world leaders today and how he gave up the temporal authority to continue to spiritually guide millions of Tibetan Buddhists around the world," the publishers added.

The Dalai Lama, a staunch advocate of non-violence and freedom, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

The book will also be published globally in several other languages including German, Dutch, Russian, Italian, Czech, Estonian, Lithuanian and Slovak.

SKM forms ward level committees in Yuksam-Tashiding



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 JUL: Two public meetings were held at Tsong and Khyongtay ward under Yuksam block today wherein 25 families quit SDF and joined SKM, a press release informs.

The meeting was chaired by SKM CLC Coordinator and PS to SLA Deputy Speaker, Keshar Kumar Khataiwada.

SKM District Coordinator (West) Nandu Gurung said that the party is conducting public meetings following all norms and protocol issued by the Ministry of Health and the state ad-

ministration.

We are forming ward level committees in every village to bring the people together for real development and also to uplift the underprivileged sections, he added.

Similar public meetings were held at Rimbi block under Yuksam-Tashiding constituency. The meeting was chaired by SKM Yuksam-Tashiding constituency (CLC) president, Basant Tamang at Rimbi block, wherein block and ward level committees have been constituted. Another meeting was also held at Gerethang block.

Flood waters continue to recede in Assam; one dead

GUWAHATI, JUL 8 (PTI): The situation in Assam improved on Wednesday as flood waters receded from a district, but the deluge claimed another life, raising the death toll to 40, the State Disaster Management Authority said.

Over 1.7 lakh people across 12 districts have been affected by the flood waters, the ASDMA said.

On Tuesday, nearly two lakh people were affected in 13 districts but the flood receded from Jorhat district on Wednesday.

One person died in Barpeta district, taking the death toll due to flood and landslides to 64 across the state, according to the daily flood report of the ASDMA.

Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Charaideo, Biswanath, Chirang, Nalbari, Barpeta, Goalpara, Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat and Tinsukia districts remain submerged, the ASDMA said.

Barpeta is the worst-hit where around 65,500 people have been affected, followed by Dhemaji where almost 48,500 people have been hit and Goalpara where nearly 28,000 are suffering.

The Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger

mark at Nimatighat in Jorhat and Dhubri town.

The Disang is flowing above the danger mark at Nanglamuraghat in Sivasagar, the Dhansiri at Numaligarh in Golaghat and the Jia Bharali at NT Road Crossing in Sonitpur.

At present, 348 villages are under water and 26,910.99 hectares of crop area has been damaged, the ASDMA said.

Thirty-five relief camps and distribution centres are being run by the administration across five districts, where 1,095 people are taking shelter currently.

The authorities are distributing rice, dal, salt and mustard oil along with tarpaulin, drinking water, face mask and soap among the people.

The floods have damaged embankments, roads and other infrastructure in Goalpara, Barpeta, Majuli and Lakhimpur districts, the ASDMA said.

Massive erosions have been witnessed at different places in Majuli and Bongaigaon districts.

In the Kaziranga National Park, the home to one-horned Indian rhinos, the floods have claimed lives of 48 animals.

Six new COVID-19 cases in Ladakh, 28 more recoveries

LEH, JUL 8 (PTI): Six more people tested positive for COVID-19 in the Union Territory of Ladakh, bringing the infection tally to 1,047, officials said on Wednesday.

The fresh cases were detected in Leh district even as 28 more patients -- 24 in Leh and four in Kargil -- were discharged after recovering from the novel coronavirus, the officials said.

They said the number of active COVID-19

cases in the UT has gone down to 158 97 in Leh and 61 in Kargil district. The condition of all the COVID-19 patients is "stable", the officials said.

While one person had died from the coronavirus in Ladakh, the number of recoveries now stands at 888 653 in Kargil and 235 in Leh.

Out of total cases so far, Kargil district has recorded a maximum of 714 cases, while 333 cases were reported in Leh.

To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at GANGTOK:

For circulation details Contact: (Sandeep) 9734152451 & for Advertisement booking at 9933427505 or at office no 03592 208698. Mail us at advertise@summittimes.com

SILIGURI:
Mr. Mani Rai, M/s. Space Ads, B.R. Ambedkar Building, Room No.7, 1st floor, Opp. Ganga Hotel, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri - 03. Ph. 9832318644/ 9800682989/ 9153035100 or mail at mani_siliguri@yahoo.co.in

KOLKATA OFFICE:
Irrshad Ali/ Imteeyaz Synapse, 6, Madan Street, Mezzine - 2, 2nd floor, Kolkata - 700072. Ph. 033-22124348/ fax 033-22124337/ mob. 9830547774/ 983108397. E-mail: contact.synapse@gmail.com/ irshad_ali123@rediffmail.com

A Day for Mother Earth in Mangan



WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 08 JUL:

A Day for Mother Earth was observed in Mangan on 07 Jul 2020. The Mangan district police displayed plaques with messages of the day and vehicular movement was stopped by the police officials and staffs for 7 minutes.

West dist's Standing Committee for Finance meets

RUDRA KAUSHIK

GYALSHING, 08 JUL:

The Standing Committee for Finance under West District Zilla Panchayat convened a meeting today at the Zilla Panchayat conference hall here. The meeting reflected on developmental plans and policies and matters related to budget and disbursement of funds to the various territorial constituencies of West Sikkim for the developmental projects in West Sikkim through Panchayati Raj System.

The meeting, chaired by the chairperson of the finance committee, Zilla Upadhakshya Ashok Gurung, was also attended by Zilla Adhakshya, Devika Subba, chairman of SICUN, LP Kafley, members of finance committee: BB Rai, Tara Gurung, Sanmati Limboo and District Planning Officer (DPO), Saran Pradhan.

The chairman of the Standing Committee for Finance, Ashok Gurung informed that as per the annual planned budget, 1.49 crore was allotted to the West District Zilla



Panchayat for the developmental initiatives to be given the priority in all the territorial constituencies of West Sikkim. He added that out of the total fund allotted, 4.5 lacks would be disbursed to each 31 territorial constituencies of West Sikkim for the developmental work as necessitated. Mr Gurung further mentioned that West District Zilla Panchayat would monitor and assess the progress of the projects initiated and financed under various welfare schemes being undertaken through Panchayati Raj System.

Mr Gurung stressed for proper utilization of

the sum allotted by the Government of India (GOI) as an award cash comprised of rupees 50 lakhs to West District Zilla Panchayat and utilization of the received cash was also discussed.

It was informed that sum of rupees 500000 was contributed to Chief Minister Relief Fund and remaining amount would be utilized in other constructive programmes such skill development. The members of the finance committee placed their opinions in the meeting. They pitched for the proper utilizations of the allotted funds for the public welfare.

In the meeting, the subject pertaining to

the sum allotted by the Government of India (GOI) as an award cash comprised of rupees 50 lakhs to West District Zilla Panchayat and utilization of the received cash was also discussed. It was informed that sum of rupees 500000 was contributed to Chief Minister Relief Fund and remaining amount would be utilized in other constructive programmes such skill development.

The members of the finance committee placed their opinions in the meeting. They pitched for the proper utilizations of the allotted funds for the public welfare.

19th Century Martyr Prophet The Báb

The Báb, born Siyyid 'Alí Muhammad in Shiraz, Iran, claimed the august station of the Imam Mehdi or Qa'im, whom Muslims awaited in accordance with prophecies in the Quran and Hadith. Muslim divines in the cradle of Islamic scholarship, the holy city of Karbala, had determined that the promised advent would occur in 1260 AH (1844CE). Groups of Islamic scholars spread through Iran in search of their Qa'im. One group reached Shiraz on 23 May, 1844, where a twenty-five years old descendent of Prophet Muhammad laid claim to that exalted station, with convincing proof that inspired such faith and resolve in His followers, as to motivate them to lay down their lives for their new-found faith. News of the Báb's claim spread through Iran like wildfire, attracting sincere souls among scholars and lay Muslims. And also the wrath of the clergy, who conspired to nip in the bud what they perceived to be a growing and serious threat to their authority and stranglehold on the masses. From their pulpits the clergy denounced Bábis as heretics and enemies of Islam, aroused the passions and frenzy of the rabble, and unleashed a reign of terror. Thousands were butchered, thousands driven from their homes. The Báb was arrested, and imprisoned. The inevitable death fatwa followed. And, in view of the well-known Hadith that the Qa'im would die at the hands of Muslims, a regiment of Christian soldiers was

deputed to carry out the execution to prove the Báb was an imposter.

On 09 Jul, 1850 the city square in Tabriz filled with zealots thirsting for the blood of the denounced enemy of Islam, and devout souls eager to set eyes upon one who claimed to be their Imam. The crowd swelled to over ten thousand, filling every vantage space in the square and building rooftops. With great fanfare the only Christian regiment of the Iranian army, under the command of Col. Sam Khan, marched into the square and took up position in three files of two hundred fifty soldiers each. Two ropes dangled from a wooden rafter from which would be suspended the Báb and a youthful follower who opted for death rather than separation from his Master. The jailor, sent to fetch the prisoners, found the Báb dictating to his disciple. Being rudely interrupted, the Báb admonished the jailor saying "Not until I have said to him all things I wish to say, can any earthly power silence me." He was dragged away, nonetheless.

The restive crowd shuffled and strained to catch a glimpse of the Báb as he was escorted into the square and suspended from the ropes with his disciple. Col. Sam Khan, marched up to the Báb, pleading forgiveness for having to carry out a military duty. The Báb assured him if his intention was pure, God would assuredly resolve his perplexity. The firing squad readied for its onerous task. Three

volleys of bullets were aimed at the prisoners. When the smoke from the guns cleared, the bewildered crowd saw the Báb's disciple standing unharmed. The bullets had severed the ropes. The Báb was not to be seen. The soldiers and the populace were awed. How could seven hundred fifty bullets miss their mark? Mysteriously was Sam Khan's plea answered, and the Báb's audacious claim to the jailer fulfilled. Col. Sam Khan marched off with his regiment and the jailer resigned. After a frantic search the Báb was found in his cell completing his interrupted dictation. He was led, again roped and suspended with his devotee in front of the new regiment of Muslim soldiers that had replaced the Christian firing squad. The guns barked again and left hanging a mangled mass of flesh and blood. The Hadith that the Imam would be killed by Muslims was fulfilled. If the reported event had not occurred as recently in the mid-nineteenth century, and not in view of thousands-strong crowd, it could have been written off as a myth. But its reality is the signed document dated 22 Jul, 1850 of the British Ambassador to Iran, preserved in the archives of the British Foreign Office.

Denied burial, the Báb's body was gathered by devotees and transferred, over many years, to the Holy Land, and interred in a golden domed shrine on Mount Carmel, which attracts millions of Bahá'í pilgrims. And the worldwide Bahá'í community commemorates His martyrdom in July each year.

[State Bahá'í Council of Sikkim]

PIB-Guwahati organizes webinar on Disaster Management and Crisis Communication

GUWAHATI, 08 JUL (PIB): Assam is walking on a double edged sword at the moment. It is experiencing not just the wrath of corona virus but also the nature's fury in the form of the floods which has now affected lakhs of people across the state.

In these times of crisis, the role of the government gains far more significance much beyond providing relief to the affected people. These are times when communication with the people becomes imperative. Beyond the publicity of the relief measures, camps being organized etc, it is pertinent to communicate with the people to prevent a panic situation. Often such communication borders on the lines of educating the masses about the precautions one should adhere to in order to avoid spread of virus (in this case of corona) or diseases like diarrhea, dysentery etc. which become common in flood situations.

It is with this perspective that Press Information Bureau under the aegis of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India is organizing a Webinar on Disaster Management and Crisis Communication. PIB with the mandate of dissemination of information and fighting any kind of fake or misleading news will be scheduling this Webinar tomorrow between 12:30pm to 2.00pm. Lt Gen (retd) Syed Ata Hasnain has consented to be the Chief Guest at the Webinar and would be gracing the discussion by imparting the inaugural address. He

is Member, National Disaster Management Agency and has 40 years of illustrious career in the armed forces wherein he also served as General Officer Commanding 15 Corps (Srinagar). He is also Chancellor of the Central University of Kashmir.

The Webinar will see participation of the Head of Department, Department of Mass Communication, Tezpur University, Smt. Joya Chakraborty who would take a session on 'How to communicate and reach out to the people during the time of crisis specially natural disaster'. Tezpur University is one of the reputed Universities in the field of journalism and hence the endeavour to bring in the academic perspective through the faculty of journalism. Dr. C. Lalmuansangimi, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Aizawl will be connecting from Mizoram on the subject, 'Effective Communication Strategy during the time of Crisis'. Ms. Meghna Choudhury, Information Officer in the Government of Assam will be delivering lecture on 'Role of Government Information System during the time of Crisis'.

The Webinar will include amongst its participants District Information and Public Relations Officers from 25 districts of Assam, students of IIMC Aizawl and Tezpur University, Press Information Bureau and Regional Outreach Bureau officials from the 8 northeastern states of India.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

LAND FOR SALE

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College.
Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).
Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

FOR RENT

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

SC grants a month more to Centre for giving permanent commission to women officers in Army

NEW DELHI, JUL 7 (PTI): The Supreme Court Tuesday granted one more month to the Centre to implement its verdict directing that permanent commission be given to all serving SSC women officers in the Army.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra said the Centre will have to comply with all the directions in the verdict.

The Centre told the bench that decision making on the issue is at a final stage and only formal orders remain to be issued.

It said the court's verdict will be complied with in letter and spirit.

The top court's direction came on the Centre's application seeking six months' time, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, to implement the verdict.

In a landmark verdict on February 17, the top court had directed that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission and command postings, rejecting the Centre's stand of their physiological limitations as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".

It had directed the Centre that within three months, all serving Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers have to be considered for Permanent Commission (PC) irrespective of them having crossed 14 years or, as the case may be, 20 years of service.

It had said that the question of combat posting of women officers is a policy decision and was not dealt by the

Delhi High Court in its 2010 verdict.

The top court accepted the Centre's policy of February 25, 2019 to grant PC to SSC women officers in all the 10 streams in the Indian Army.

Despite this policy, the Centre's stand in a matter before the top court was that provisions of Army Act contemplate that women will be eligible for enrolment only in those segments which the government permits.

The top court had said that women officers have got numerous commendation certificates and laurels and their track record of service to the nation is beyond reproach.

It had rejected the Centre's submission that women officers cannot be granted PC due to physiological limitations, all-male environment in a unit, combat capability and said that mindset change is required to recognize the values of the Constitution.

"To cast aspersion on their abilities on the ground of gender is an affront not only to their dignity as women but to the dignity of the members of the Indian Army men and women who serve as equal citizens in a common mission," the top court had said.

"The submissions advanced in the note tendered to this Court are based on sex stereotypes premised on assumptions about socially ascribed roles of gender which discriminate against women," it had said.

It had said reliance on inherent physiologi-

cal differences between men and women rests in a deeply entrenched stereotypical and constitutionally flawed notion that women are the "weaker sex" and may not undertake tasks that are "too arduous" for them.

Rejecting the Centre's arguments, the top court had said it is founded on the physical strengths and weaknesses of men and women and on assumptions about women in the social context of marriage and family which do not constitute a constitutionally valid basis for denying equal opportunity to women officers.

"To deny the grant of PC to women officers on the ground that this would upset the peculiar dynamics in a unit casts an undue burden on women officers which has been claimed as a ground for excluding women," it had said.

It had held that the option of grant of PC shall be given to all women SSC officers and if those with more than 14 years of service do not opt for grant of PC then they will be entitled to continue in service until they attain 20 years of pensionable service.

The top court had also cleared the hurdle for command postings for women by staying the enforcement of the expression "in various staff appointments only" and "on staff appointments only" in para-5 and Para-6 of notification dated February 25, 2019.

They deal with grant of PC to SSC women officers in various staff

appointments only and within their parent department.

The top court had said SSC women officers with over 20 years of service who are not granted PC shall retire on pension in terms of policy decision.

It had said that pension and other benefits would be made available to those officers in service or those who had moved the high court by filing the Writ Petitions.

It had said that following the Delhi High Court 2010 judgment, the Centre was under a mandate to grant PC to women officers, to the exclusion of the Combat Arms, and at par with the grant of PC to their male counterparts.

On the Centre's policy decision of February 25, 2019, the top court had said it is a recognition of right of women officers to equality of opportunity.

The top court had noted that Indian Army has sanctioned 50,266 posts for officers, while the posts currently occupied are 40,825 including 1,653 by women officers.

It had noted that there is shortage of 9,441 officers in the Indian Army.

There are total of 1,653 women officers which is a miniscule 4 per cent of the total strength of commissioned officers in the Army, it had said.

The total of 1,653 officers includes -- 77 having above 20 years of service, 255 having service tenure between 14 and 20 years and the fate of 322 women officers was to be decided by the verdict of the apex court.

Lady cop helps destitute woman deliver baby in Mumbai

MUMBAI, JUL 8 (PTI): At a time when the police and medical services are grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, a woman police officer and her staff helped a 35-year-old destitute woman deliver her baby on a footpath in south Mumbai, police said on Wednesday.

As heavy rains lashed the city in the early hours of Sunday, sub-inspector Priya Garud was on check post duty when she got

a call about a destitute woman crying out for help near Metro cinema, an official said.

Garud, who is attached to the Azad Maidan police station, rushed to the spot with her staff and found that the woman, who is mentally challenged, was experiencing acute labour pains, he said.

When the personnel saw that the woman didn't even have proper clothes, they went to a nearby

house to borrow some clothes and bedsheets, the official said.

The policewoman then ran to the state-run hospital nearby, where the doctors asked her to get the patient to the hospital, he added.

By the time Garud returned to the spot, she found that the woman had already delivered the infant, the official said, adding that the personnel tried their best to keep the

woman and the baby safe as they waited for an ambulance.

When the ambulance finally arrived after over an hour-long wait, the woman and her baby were shifted to Cama and Albles Hospital and both are doing well, the senior officer said.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh took to Twitter to praise the efforts taken by the police personnel.

Cabinet approves extension of PF contributions till Aug

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to extend the scheme for the payment of employers and employees' PF contributions for three months until August.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the extension of the benefit in May this year under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Cabinet has approved the extension of the scheme where the government pays contributions of employees and employers till August," Union Minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters after the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package, the payment of 12 per cent of employer and 12 per cent employee contribution was

made into EPF accounts.

For the wage months of June, July and August, 2020, the scheme will cover all the establishments having up to 100 employees and 90 per cent of such employees earning less than Rs 15,000 monthly wage.

The benefit was provided earlier for salary months of March, April and May 2020. This support is extended by another three months to salary months of June, July and August 2020.

"The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi today has given its approval for extending the contribution both 12 per cent employees' share and 12 per cent employers' share under Employees Provident Fund, totalling 24 per cent for another three months from June to August, 2020, as part of the package announced by



the government under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)/Aatmanirbhar Bharat in the light of COVID-19, a pandemic," an official statement said.

"The approval is in addition to the existing scheme for the wage months of March to May, 2020 approved on April 15, 2020. The total estimated expenditure is Rs 4,860 crore. Over 72 lakh employees in 3.67 lakh establishments will be benefitted," the statement said.

Javadekar said that the decision has been taken to facilitate more take-home salary for employees and give relief to employers in payment of PF dues. The government had imposed lockdown on March 25 to fight the deadly COVID-19.

The extension of the benefit will provide liquidity relief to 3.67 lakh establishments. The statement said that the government will provide a budgetary support of Rs 4,800 crore for 2020-21 for this purpose.

Governor dedicates his birthday to frontline warriors



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

Governor Ganga Prasad dedicated his birthday celebrations to frontline warriors of Sikkim to thank them for their service and efforts in the State's battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a 'Thank You' gesture for their services rendered during these

tough times of global pandemic, a group of Doctors, Sikkim Police and Sanitation workers were honoured and acknowledged on his 84th Birthday celebration at Raj Bhavan today, a press release informs.

Thanking the frontline workers of the State, the Governor said, "You all are real

frontline warriors, I salute you all for your dedication and commitment. Sikkim has waged a strong fight against COVID-19 due to courageous frontline warriors who have cared and cured many patients in the State. On my birthday, I got an opportunity to say "Thank You" to frontline COVID-19 warriors for their endeavour

services." As a token of love some gifts and sweet packets were given to the representatives of Doctors from STNM hospital, Sikkim Police and Sanitary Workers from Raj Bhavan, the release informs, while adding that the Governor also planted a 'Rhododendron' sapling on the Raj Bhavan premises today.

Josh Brolin, Kathryn Boyd expecting second child

LOS ANGELES, JUL 8 (PTI): Hollywood star Josh Brolin and his wife, model Kathryn Boyd are expecting their second child together.

Boyd, who has 19-month-old daughter Westlyn with Brolin, took to Instagram reveal the news on Tuesday.

"The Brolin's are a growin'!! Our little December babe is on the way," the 32-year-old model captioned the picture with their little one.

Brolin, 52, and Boyd tied the knot in 2016.

The "Avengers: Endgame" star also shares two children, son Trevor, 32, and daughter Eden, 26, from his first marriage to "Beverly Hills Cop II" actor Alice Adair.

Now you can WhatsApp SummitTIMES @ 9832556698 9832080753

DONATE BOOKS FOR NOBLE CAUSE TO BUILD LIBRARY

If anyone willing to donate books or support through Finance, than you are most welcome

"GIVING IS NOT JUST ABOUT MAKE A DONATION, ITS ABOUT MAKING DIFFERENCE"

For more Details Contact : 6294745117, 8768809862
Email : chitishchettri7@gmail.com

SummitTIMES

CONTACT	MANGAN/ DIKCHU	GANGTOK
SUMMIT TIMES REPORTERS	9832612485/ 9434011213	8116388176 9832424750 8016270440
SINGTAM		
8170070813		

What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Suicidal Still

When will the numbers become too many to ignore?

Suicides might not make it to headlines as often as they used to, but that is more because the lockdown has a way of allowing such stories to remain unreported and this newspaper has come to terms with the fact that mere reportage was serving no constructive purpose anymore. A news-report on a suicide was never about just informing people about another self-inflicted death, it was more importantly about flagging a concern about the frequency with which such fatalities were occurring. So no, fewer news reports do not mean that lives are not being lost to this distressing phenomenon. Even a casual observer of developments around us and anyone with even a sliver of empathy would have realised that mental health requires special attention and back-up in these COVID-pandemic times. And yet, there is none around. Just having a helpline or claiming that help is available is not enough. What is required is constant reiteration of whom to reach out to in times of psychological distress.

A seventeen-year-old committing suicide should be an aberration. In fact, it should never happen, and even if it does, it should be such a rarity that the entire state goes into mourning, wracked by guilt for having allowed a teenager to slip into such deep levels of depression. Unfortunately, such news does not even shock any more, with even newspapers reporting it in passing, pulling sanitised details from police records, reporting about a suicide, but not about the life that was lost or the situations which led that final moment when a child tied a noose and then suffocated to death.

Too many people are succumbing to suicide, a problem which grips all age groups, social strata and locations in the State. Suicides are always a worry and even more so when it claims lives so young. The phenomenon is so routine nowadays that most readers probably don't even read the reports any more. It is also troubling to learn that the society at large has become so inured to this condition without even having tried to understand or address the problem.

It is obvious that depression is a common ailment among suicide victims, but what cannot escape notice is the fact that one does not even associate such problems as depression and stress with the teen years [at least not of an intensity that would lead to suicide]. Yet, a disturbing number of Sikkim's young have taken their own lives. There might be even more who have survived a suicide attempt. While one can theorise endlessly on why the present day youth is so troubled, it is urgent to start caring for them. Urban pressures, peer pressures, hormonal pressures, academic pressure - these are only some of the tensions which one goes through growing up. Until newspapers started reporting about suicides and the police started documenting such unnatural deaths more diligently, Sikkim lived in an idyll believing that suicides could not happen in the relaxed environs of the hill state. That idyll now stands shattered, not because suicides have started happening only now, but because now we are learning about it regularly. So, let us not go complaining that the times have changed or that the past was better; suicides were always happening... accept it. And now, let's start addressing the problem. Begin with having experts sensitising teachers and community groups on recognising and handling such psychiatric symptoms as stress, depression and trauma in school-going children. Yes, some efforts were made towards this end some years ago, but the effort was not as well coordinated as it should have been, and worse still, has not even been sustained. Since no concerted effort has yet been launched to address suicides, an initiative should now begin which cushions the young better.

While psychiatry might be an iffy science for most, it has been proven that if symptoms are recognised in time there are options to address every psychiatric ailment. Let us accept the fact that the younger generation is growing in conditions much different from earlier times. They need special care and understanding. As teachers, parents and elders, we have to change our approach towards addressing juvenile issues. Also, as the generation at decision-making levels, we should also approach the problems of senior citizens with more empathy. Why do people, especially such young people and such senior citizens, commit suicide? Sikkim needs to engage itself more closely to identify the triggers, address them and save more lives.

There is nothing new that has been said here, but hopefully, there will be some new initiatives soon.

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

COVID-19 Vaccine: The challenges of running a trial in the middle of a pandemic

JEFFREY MPHAHLELE
THECONVERSATION.COM

South Africa recently announced the start of the country's first COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial. The vaccine is also being tested in the UK and Brazil. Ina Skosana spoke to the vice-president for research at the South African Medical Research Council, Professor Jeffrey Mphahlele, to find out more.

HOW BIG IS THE TRIAL AND WHO'S INVOLVED?

The trial is a joint effort between different stakeholders. The main player is the University of the Witwatersrand, under the leadership of Professor Shabir Madhi. The South African Medical Research Council is co-funding the project with R10 million. Other funders include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and vaccine developers at the University of Oxford.

In South Africa the aim is to vaccinate around 2000 volunteers. This will happen in at least three different groups. Half of the participants will receive the experimental vaccine and half will receive placebo. They'll be followed for about a year to assess the safety of and the immune response to the experimental vaccine.

Before enrolling the large group of volunteers, the trial will start with a group of about 50 HIV negative healthy volunteers to evaluate the vaccine safety and to a limited extent immune response. Later, the trial aims to investigate the vaccine safety and ability to mount the immune response in HIV positive volunteers. It's important to test the vaccine in a participants with HIV given the high burden of HIV and AIDS in South Africa and the continent.

It's prudent to evaluate the safety of the vaccine in this group during the clinical trial and not to wait until the vaccine is licensed. Even so, the vaccine, once licensed, will be for everybody.

At this stage, this particular vaccine candidate (ChAdOx1) is being tested in South Africa, Brazil and the UK.

If and when the vaccine is licensed, the aim is to make it a public good and available to all countries in the world - rich and poor.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICA'S INVOLVEMENT?

It's critical that developing countries are involved in clinical trials because it's important to test the vaccine in different populations.

If the vaccine candidate is developed and tested in high income countries only, the efficacy may not necessarily be the same in populations living in low- and middle-income countries.

This has happened with vaccines before.

One example was the rotavirus vaccine candidates. The purpose of the rotavirus vaccine is to protect against dehydration and severe gastroenteritis. Early vaccine candidates demonstrated high efficacy of over 80% when tested in developed



countries with low child mortality. But when the same vaccines were tested in low-income and middle-income countries of Africa and Asia, the efficacy was between 40% and 65%.

That did not rule out the use of rotavirus vaccines in the developing world. In fact, research has now shown that there has been a significant reduction in hospital or emergency unit admissions for acute rotavirus gastroenteritis, or mortality in children under five years old, in countries with rotavirus vaccination programmes. This was particularly true for low-income and middle-income countries with high child mortality.

There are a number of reasons why vaccine efficacy differs. These include the genetic background of the population. With the rotavirus vaccine, additional factors that are thought to affect optimal vaccine efficacy may include early age of first infection before administration of the first vaccine dose, maternal antibodies, distinct medical problems (high levels of HIV, TB, malaria, high background of enteric infections and malnutrition), and unique diversity of circulating rotavirus strains not included in the vaccines.

In the case of COVID-19 the virus seems to be genetically stable. This is a big plus.

WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THIS TRIAL PRESENT?

The most important challenge is the fact that a clinical trial is being conducted in the middle of a pandemic. It means that countries are having to deal with managing a public health emergency while simultaneously setting aside resources to do research.

Public health emergencies demand a response programme that is effective and nimble. No doubt the number one priority is to save lives and contain the epidemic. The recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa was a game changer in many ways. The outbreak spiralled out of control to become a global public health emergency due to a number of factors ranging from poor health systems to lack of

medical innovations. When the cause of public health emergencies is known or predictable, and the tools to respond and intervene are widely available, it is always easy to respond and save lives.

We have learned a great deal since Ebola and other outbreaks. A key lesson is that research should take centre stage and become the norm in responding to a public health emergency - especially when the cause is unknown or novel - like with SARS-CoV-2. Rapid and responsive research during a public health emergency should aim to optimise and field test development of new health interventions such as vaccines, therapeutics and rapid diagnostic tools.

It should also include socio-behavioural research, medical anthropology research and applied and translational research.

In the case of the COVID-19 vaccine trial in South Africa, rising numbers of infections create a conducive environment to conduct the trial because high levels of infections are needed to field test the vaccine efficacy. Doing this clinical trial at a time of low infections would take longer to yield such results. But now that the cases are spiking, we should be able to know sooner if the vaccine is likely to work or not.

As indicated above, this is not the first time research is conducted in the middle of an outbreak. We've got experience from Ebola, and other pathogens that were associated with outbreaks and epidemics like the original SARS, the MERS coronavirus and the Zika virus. These viruses were associated with epidemics - obviously not to the same magnitude as SARS-CoV-2.

We just need to keep a balance between saving lives and doing research. In a pandemic like this one, the priority is to save lives. But there's a limit in what we can use to save lives unless research innovation takes centre stage. Initially, the focus was on diagnostic tests. This has now shifted to treatment and the prevention regimens.

We're making strides in treatment and prevention strategies. Recent breakthroughs include the use of remdesivir from the US and dexamethasone from UK for COVID-19 related treatment.

HOW IS THIS TRIAL SIMILAR TO OTHERS?

Clinical trials are standardised so I don't see this trial being different from others. Researchers should conduct trials following established legal, ethical and regulatory procedures governing conduct of trials. These include, but are not limited to, obtaining clearance from the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority and institutional Human Research Ethics Committees.

[the writer is Vice President for Research, South African Medical Research Council]

Why protesters are fed up with Sudan's tricky transition

DAVID E KIWUWA
THECONVERSATION.COM

In the last few days, tens of thousands of people have, once again, taken to the streets of Sudan's major cities to demand "freedom, peace and justice", the rallying cry for the protesters who ousted Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

The big difference is that this time they are marching against the civilian-military Sovereign Council, demanding a greater role for civilians in the country's transition towards democracy and faster reform.

A year ago the people of Sudan were heralding the fall of Bashir, the country's long-serving strongman. A mass uprising led by the Sudan Professional Association and Resistance Committees had eventually managed to precipitate the deposing of the president. A host of grievances fanned the protests. Among them were endemic corruption, a struggling economy, human rights violations, and a failed health system.

Why then have the protests returned to the street so soon after they vacated them in triumphant euphoria?

The answer lies in the fact that the balance of power in the transition period that follows the fall of a despot is always tricky. This was evident in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt. When reformers are relatively weak and those determined to protect the status quo are strong, substantive change will be demonstrably lethargic and long-winded. It will sometimes be stalled, and even reversed in certain instances.

Entrenched status quo elites will be reluctant to change because this poses a threat to their interests.

Events in Sudan point to this tension.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

Following Bashir's ouster, a civilian-military sovereign council headed by a civilian prime minister,

Abdalla Hamdok, and made up of six civilians and five military officers, was instituted. Its immediate challenge was ensuring security and stability, negotiating peace with Darfur rebels, and repairing Sudan's battered economy.

So what is on its report card a year on?

For starters, the systematic jailing of opponents has stopped, and arbitrary arrests from the security bureau have largely ceased. Censorship and the muzzling of the press has all but stopped. And the public order law has been repealed. This law was notorious for giving police disproportionate powers of arrest and punishment including for moral and religious infractions.

In rebuilding institutional trust, the police chief and his deputy have also been fired, after protesters demanded more measures against officials linked to Bashir.

In addition, serious effort have been made to meet another core protest demand - the end to incessant conflicts in Sudan. Peace efforts have been pursued with the rebel Sudan Revolutionary Front. These efforts produced a preliminary peace accord, including the drawing down of the UN peace keeping mission in Darfur.

Most recently, an anti-corruption body to trace ill-gotten wealth and provide accountability has been set up. The confiscation of almost \$4 billion of assets from Bashir, his family and associates signals a move in the right direction.

In addition, the transitional government has actively sought to change Sudan's standing in the world by shedding its image as a pariah state. This was not of primary concern to the protest movement, which was focused more on issues of bread and butter. But the transitional government nevertheless has acted to mend fences in the hope that it will deliver dividends for the

country.

To this end, it has actively lobbied the US government to remove it from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Washington is still considering this request. In the meantime it has removed the country from a black list of states endangering religious freedom. It has also lifted sanctions on 157 Sudanese firms.

And, for the first time in 23 years, the two countries have exchanged ambassadors.

For its part, Sudan has reduced the number of troops it has in Yemen by two thirds.

WHAT'S MISSING

But the expectations of last year's popular uprising have not been met. The reason for this is that substantive reforms have been slow.

One area of clear frustration has been the snail's pace at which civilian control is taking place. The civilian governance footprint on the country's body politic is not yet evident. Instead, the military elite continues to have de facto control and influence, sidelining the civilians and often pushing for greater compromises from civilian partners.

Examples of this include the fact that a legislative transitional council has yet to be installed. This would have provided a degree of counterweight to the military dominated sovereign council. Legislation is thus being done in an ad hoc manner.

In addition, civilian governors haven't been appointed to replace military ones in the various provinces, which would signal another move away from military governance.

The lack of urgency in bringing Bashir and his henchmen to trial is also frustrating people. It appears to be a marginal priority, and in some instances deliberately frustrating.

Nor have the country's economic woes been addressed. People still queue for three to six hours to buy bread, or fill their tanks at petrol stations. Electricity reliability is still

sketchy, with power cuts the norm. Accessing domestic gas is also a problem.

The economy has been contracting and oil revenues have slumped due to falling oil prices and low production capacity. This has affected public expenditure and the investment needed to jumpstart the economic recovery.

COVID-19 has done even more damage.

What's holding back reforms Sudan has competing power structures that are inhibiting coherent and far reaching reforms. In the one camp are the reformers, in the other those who wish to defend the status quo. Reformers are constantly having to negotiate and make strategic calculations about what changes can be made and how fast.

This game of political brinkmanship is beginning to take its toll.

Clearly the civilian half of the transitional government has struggled to assert or leverage its moral authority or "popular legitimacy" in the face of military intransigence.

But the prime minister Abdalla Hamdok remains popular. In seeking to placate the demonstrators, he recently admitted that the transitional authority had to "correct the revolution's track". This was tacit acknowledgement that on his watch things have gone off the desired path.

But does he have the leverage to correct this diversion from the expectations of the street?

That answer might sadly be, not to a great extent.

For now, the reality that the protesters and civilian elite have to contend with is that after a long and destructive authoritarian legacy, change will not come easily. Nor can it be fast-tracked. Rather it is a product of patience, compromise - and above all perseverance.

[the writer is Associate Professor of International Studies, University of Nottingham]

COVID-19 death toll rises to 48 in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, JUL 8 (PTI): Odisha reported six more COVID-19 fatalities on Wednesday, taking the death toll due to the disease to 48, while the state's total tally rose to 10,624 with 527 fresh cases, a health department official said.

Three deaths were reported from Ganjam and one each from Rayagada, Kendrapara and Khurda, he said.

"Regret to inform the demise of six COVID positive patients while under treatment in hospital," the official said.

Two men, aged 56 and 64, and a 50-year-old woman from Ganjam district succumbed to the disease, and they were suffering from diabetes, he said.



A 55-year-old man from Bhubaneswar in Khurda district also died of the coronavirus infection, the official said.

"An 80-year-old man from Rayagada district, who was suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, died of COVID-19, while a

49-year-old man from Kendrapara also succumbed to the disease. He was a diabetic patient," the official said.

Of the 48 deaths so far in Odisha, Ganjam, the worst-hit district, accounts for 27, followed by eight in Khurda, five in Cuttack, and one each in Baragarh,

Gajapati, Angul, Kendrapara, Puri, Rayagada, Jajpur and Sundergarh, he said.

A 53-year-old coronavirus patient from Khurda district also died, but the health department attributed the cause of his death to "non-COVID reasons", the official said.

According to the health department, he was HIV positive.

With this, the number of coronavirus patients who died due to "non-COVID reasons" increased to 13 in Odisha.

A total of 527 people, including Salipur's BJD MLA Prasant Behera, tested positive for coronavirus, the official said.

Of the fresh cases, the highest of 215 were

detected in Ganjam, followed by Sundergarh (78), Khurda (50), Balasore (26), Jajpur (25), Bolangir (21), Nayagarh (18), Cuttack (17), Puri (16) and Mayurbhanj (10).

Sixteen other districts reported new COVID-19 cases but the numbers are in single digit, the official said.

Of the 527 fresh cases, 338 have been reported from different quarantine centres, while 189 were found due to the contact-tracing exercises, the official said.

Odisha now has 3,860 active cases, while 6,703 patients have recovered from the disease.

The health department on Tuesday tested 5,918 samples.

Earthquake strikes Andaman sea



PORT BLAIR, JUL 8 (PTI): An earthquake of 4.4 magnitude occurred in the Andaman sea on Wednesday morning, officials said.

No loss of life and property has been reported yet, they said.

The earthquake took place at

5:19 am and the epicentre was 71-km east of Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, according to the National Centre for Seismology.

The depth of the earthquake was 150-km, it said.

VIEWPOINT

Covid-19: Ambiguity on Vaccine, Prevention & Management Fronts

VIEWPOINT

DR AALOK & JAYSHREE SHRIVASTAVA

Born in this beautiful and mystical planet one has to leave it one day. It is an universal, fully established and time tested TRUTH. We are supposed to always remember God on the one hand and Death on the other. But in order to attain superperson name and fame, most of us mostly go astray. Not only we deviate, we also tend to be deviant. Unjustifiable lust and baseless notions gradually control us, over take us as also take over, one day.

It is an ancient Indian belief that in the event of our sins outclassing the virtues, catastrophe,

such as, Corona or Covid may strike, rather strike vehemently, bereft of any mercy or consideration. It may have a tendency to hit the horizon either in a natural way or subsequent to 'research' in 'controlled or guided conditions'.

ALL PERVADEING PHENOMENON

No wonder, six months into the outbreak, tentacles of Corona defy any prediction. Our understanding of the infection & the deadly virus, how it moves surreptitiously, how it enters & spreads in the human body etc is still evolving.

Neither any specific Vaccine or a Drug has been developed as yet, nor there is an agreed SOP for declaring Lockdown or relaxing or easing controls. It leads to relapse situation in many places apart from severely impacting the economy and playing villain to educational and health sectors.

We are also not sincere enough in following TEST protocols, reporting, analysing, sounding polite alerts etc. As a result, Rumour Mongers and Media have a field day, rescue & treatment gets adversely affected and formulation of suitable preventive and curative strategies takes a back seat. To add insult to injury, a plethora of 'Experts' bereft of any or negligible field exposure, spring up overnight to comment & respond, which is generally far away from the brass stacks.

While we are still fighting a sort of lost battle with Corona 'Auntie', Cyclones and Floods have resurfaced with occasional warnings emanating from Locusts on the one hand and more than 30 low intensity tremors in last two and a half months on the other. Last but not the least, Policemen refuse to tone down and show citizen-centric behaviour at a time when once, our 'friend' China is attempting to 'fine tune' its never to die nefarious business and territorial ambitions and designs. After all, she has to get attention diverted from Wuhan syndrome and also to cover up its utter failure in controlling Covid virus elsewhere in mainland China.

Lately, it has been widely believed that Geopolitics, per se, has become redundant. On the contrary, I may subscribe to the view that with the preponderance of Coronavirus & its expected long term impact on both society & economy, and fear of Recession looming large, it may regain its lost ground.

It is not that one always comes across hicups or setbacks with regard to national Corona experience or the future strategy. We did have a few notable Success Stories in Kerala, Rajasthan and lately in Tamil Nadu. In the dismal and God forsaken scenario of Maharashtra also, silver lining has been witnessed in terms of reduction

in number of daily deaths in the last fortnight. However, the total number of new cases during this period continues to cause deep concern. Delhi which has figured right in top 5 league, right from the beginning, unfortunately has 'surpassed' Mumbai a few days ago despite maintaining a more than impressive Recovery Rate (RR) of 60 per cent. Maximum positive cases were hospitalised during the one week period between 1st to 7th June despite undertaking high decible campaigns & sensitization drives and rapid rise in tests to the extent of 21,144 tests on 26th June. This measure of Aggressive Testing and Isolation Plan in Delhi or other congested metropolises could have been resorted to much earlier.

EFFICACY OF PLASMA THERAPY

Another baffling phenomenon or step has been hovering around the use or non-use of Plasma Therapy. On the recommendation of the ICMR, it was introduced in the 3rd Week of April to be withdrawn quickly due to apprehensions expressed by some top brass. Now it is being tried & prescribed again. Recovery of the Health Minister of Delhi with its help could have perhaps led to fresh expression of confidence. However, it does not work on the patients already on Ventilators but helps those with moderate symptoms. Its overall effectiveness in reinforcing immune system is still being reviewed.

So the million Rupee question is- CAN THESE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS & REVIEWS SUSTAIN?

Never before a Pathogen or a Pandemic of this type has spread to such a huge area or has lasted so long. It has already affected 9,995,806 persons with 498,880 deaths all over the World and 16,101 casualties out of 5,29,485 Confirmed Cases (CC) in India. Maharashtra with 1,59,133 CC and 7106 deaths continues to top the tally, while Delhi, after getting past Mumbai two days ago, has 80,188 CC and 2,558 of its patients have lost their lives so far.

As regards death cases of Delhi, at one stage in May, the total number would remain in the range of 60 to 67 for almost eight to ten days, which defies any logic, that too at a time when large number of casualties were being reported from many vulnerable zones and pockets.

ACTIVE CASES, FATALITY RATE & RECOVERIES

As compared to the Fatality Rate of 2.3% and Recovery Rate of 23.47% towards the end of April, these rates have become 3% and 58.25% respectively now. Thus out of more than five lakh & thirty thousand CC and 1,97,387 Active Cases, 2,95,881 patients had already Recovered in the country upto 27th June.

Nevertheless, the most disturbing development as yet has been reporting of 18,552 CC, Pan India on 26th June and that One lakh Confirmed cases were added only in six days between 21st and 26th June.

Herein it may be pertinent to note that CC from zero to one lakh took 110 days (18 May), while the addition of next one lakh took only 15 days (2nd June). Further one lakh CC took 10 days (12 June), Next one lakh was added in 8 days (20 June) while the country unfortunately crossed the mark of 5 Lakh CC in just 6 days, i.e., on 26th June.

If one returns to the grim scenario of Delhi, some anomalies and mis-

understandings did add fat to the fire in the beginning of June. As long as CC were within manageable limits, there was no hue and cry regarding admission into Covid earmarked Central & State Government hospitals as also a few private hospitals.

When the cases were getting accelerated, an unfortunate distinction was made by the NCT Chief Minister between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Though it was impossible to separate the two categories, patients who were denied admission suffered a number of hardships for five to six days. There were some casualties as well. Situation was brought under control by the timely intervention of the Lt. Governor of Delhi.

Another challenge was lack of uniformity in the daily charges for General Ward, Shared Rooms, Private Wards, Charges for Beds in ICU with Ventilator etc.

INORDINATE DELAY IN VACCINE & DRUG

Before going further into the intricacies of or the politics of rate fixation in the earmarked Covid hospitals, it may be necessary to touch upon the progress on the vexed issue of a specific vaccine or a drug for the Pathogen.

Though WHO rightly flagged it soon after the outbreak in Wuhan, only China, India, UK and USA took a lead in March itself. But fact of the matter is that we have not reached a 'Dead-End', rather we are still experimenting and researching or swimming in the troubled waters. One is not sure about an expected success within a targetted time frame.

In view of the ever mounting casualties to the tune of 5 Lakh 5 thousand 9 hundred & 56 all over the world, more and more delay on this front is bound to cost us very dearly. It will be a notable loss which can not be replenished, more so, in the settings largely dependent upon the labour or skilled manpower from outside, be it USA, India, UK, Brazil or an West European nation.

Despite intensive research by some leading drug manufacturers or solo efforts by some countries, the following mixed if not dismal scenario has emerged. So there may be a ray of hope amid Corona-19 darkness:

HCQ Tablets used for Malaria treatment in India were tried on Corona patients with some success in India and were later picked up and tried by USA and round about 12 other countries. However, there was a general lack of clarity and confidence. Though advice was given to the effect that these tablets had to be administered only during a certain stage or wave or a category of patients, there is no valid or verified statistics to prove that so many cases were cured. And if not cured, what would be negative impact or the extent of damage already caused.

Though search or research for a new vaccine began in later part of February, it was not easy to find volunteers. If same could be arranged, no fixed time-line regarding the availability of vaccine in the market could be indicated.

DEXAMETHASON, a cheap and easily available anti-steroidal drug made in India can also save one in three critically indisposed Corona patients. It has been found so, subsequent to a scrutiny by University of Oxford.

REMDESIVIR, the anti-viral drug

again made in India has also shortened the time of recovery of moderate Corona patients on oxygen support by four or five days.

Other approved drugs for such ailment in India are Glucocorticoids, Favipiravir and Tocilizumab.

Out of 140 vaccines being developed to defeat Covid, 13 have been reported to be in clinical stage. The WHO has identified the vaccines developed by Oxford University-AstraZeneca and the Moderna Inc. as the front runners. A senior woman scientist of Oxford has confidently stated that their vaccine may be available by September '20 subsequent to trial on the volunteers of Oxford and elsewhere in London. The world can have more faith in her owing to short time line padded with her previous experience of having been involved in development of a drug to tackle SARS.

This Notable vaccine, at present in Phases II and III of trial (involving hundreds of children & elders & thousands of adult respectively) is being tested in UK and Brazil. Two billion doses of vaccine are expected by September. (A contradictory press clipping is now pointing to the deadline of END OF 2020.)

On the other hand, the Moderna Inc. vaccine of USA will begin Phase II of its trial on 30 thousand people in July-August but vaccine doses are expected to be ready not before early 2021.

The third vaccine (in stage II Trial) to be in market by October is being developed by Pfizer-BNTECH.

The Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh vaccines are being developed by the Imperial College of London (Stage II), Sinovac Biotech Vaccine (stages II & III trials in China & Brazil), MMR of India and Patanjali Ayurved of Baba Ramdev.

MMR VACCINE may prevent severe lung inflammation & Sepsis associated with Corona infection. It is likely to be an Immune Preventive Measure.

Discovery of Indigenous drugs named CORONIL and SWASARI as a cure for Corona were announced by Patanjali Ayurved barely a week ago. However, approval for manufacturing & marketing is yet to be given by Uttarakhand State Licencing Authority.

Though no clinical data has been released, the company has claimed 69% RECOVERY on Day 3 PCR in treatment group and 100% Recovery on Day 7. In the meanwhile, the AYUSH Ministry has sought full details from Baba Ramdev and asked him to stop advertising till their claim is verified.

Let us hope and pray that the first vaccine to hit the market i.e. the Oxford one achieves its stated objective soon.

SAGA OF INDECISIVENESS OVER TESTS, QUARANTINE, ELIGIBILITY OF BEDS, PPE'S & VENTILATORS

Apart from the correct drug or vaccine, fierce battle goes on almost every day either between MHA and NCT Govt. OR between the Delhi CM and LG over duration of home or hospital Quarantine, availability of General Ward beds, PPE's, Ventilators as also the rate at which Covid-19 Tests are to be done even when success has been recorded in rationalisation attempts in some states, apart from the highly positive development in reaching the figure of 1100 plus Centres/Clinics as opposed to only one in the entire country on 1st January '20.

Should we expect that sooner or

later or with fresh SETBACKS these crucial issues may be resolved, much ahead of occurrence of PEAK OF CORONA, expected by the end of 2020?

PLAY OF STATISTICS?

Based on my own long Civil Service experience and what comes out in public domain at present, both at the State and Centre levels, officers & staff sometimes fiddle with as also suppress the basic statistics, such as, number of tests & their rate, Confirmed vis-a-vis Active cases, Casualties AND Recovery, Fatality, Positivity & Doubling rates etc. It may be happening due to "FEAR OF UNKNOWN". To be very fair, the prevailing VEIL OF SECRECY will have to be lifted at the earliest so as to enable WHO and the concerned 'Competent Authority' of the country to have a free hand in making amendments in the 'Rolling' Action Plan concerning Corona-19.

Experience has revealed that even if a District or a State head follows the desirable path of honest & correct information, there is no guarantee that the superiors manning the 'crucial' positions would toe such a line. Hence, there is every possibility that due to created cleavage between the cutting edge and the State H.Q. OR between the State Line Department and the Ministry of Health & F.W. relatively low or 'tolerable' figures may have been reported during April-May in respect of parameters dovetailed above.

One, at the same time, wishes to ask the authorities very politely as to How can a vast and densely populated country like ours have ONLY nos. Of CC with number of casualties when our Recovery Rate is rather impressive at 59% plus? May be, Russia and Brazil were more curt in reporting or else from being far far behind in the overall tally till April, they would not have overtaken India. China of course, despite being most populous country & the "leader" of current spate of Virus, happens to be shrewd villain of piece in not divulging its Statistics Card. Rather, she is indulging in 'Romance' of a different kind.

Shall we continue to be playing objects of three visible super powers or should we have our OWN UNIQUE IDENTITY?

Any instance of Under Reporting or Panic Reporting of Covid cases would be further injurious to the domestic economy already struggling at a low Growth Rate of 2 or 3 percent.

If we wish to see a clear & transparent light at the end of the Corona Tunnel, we may have to get rid of the insincere warriors, the opportunist industry captains and the middlemen still active to make a fast buck out of a truly human crisis of the Century. Side by side, the migrant & daily wage labourers should also get what is 'Due' to them.

TAILPIECE-

Instead of taking up yeomen task of rescuing the selfish Indians by air or ship, let us tighten and closely monitor our porous international borders. A large number of Super Spreaders of Corona may have used this route. We need to Review again and again by giving "free hand" to the concerned Line Departments.

We May Overcome if we Utilise our Resources and Human Potential Properly & Adequately.

[the writer is ex-Chief Secretary, Govt of Sikkim]

Jamie Vardy gives Arsenal painful reminder of what they almost had

ED AARONS
LONDON, 08 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]: It was the kind of prediction you could not help suspecting might come back to haunt Ashley Cole. Assessing Arsenal's chances of keeping Jamie Vardy quiet with a backline consisting of David Luiz, Shkodran Mustafi and Sead Kolasinac, the former England defender seemed confident enough.

"They're well equipped to deal with Vardy," Cole told Sky before the match. "He won't cause them any trouble." But on a night when Leicester desperately needed their leading man to write another chapter in his remarkable story, the Premier League's leading goalscorer was always destined to have the last laugh.

It has been four years since the striker who was playing for Halifax Town in the Northern Premier League as recently as 2011 decided to turn down the opportunity to join Arsenal in the aftermath of Leicester's fairytale title. Having gone as far as visiting the club's London Colney training ground and meeting Arsène Wenger after the Frenchman had triggered his release clause, Vardy famously had a late change of heart and stayed put.

Given the relative fortunes of both clubs since, he has no reason to regret that decision. While Arsenal have failed to reach the Champions League since the 2016-17 season when



his goals guided Leicester to the quarter-finals of the competition, the 33-year-old has continued to flourish and had taken his Premier League tally to an impressive 101 in 205 appearances after the double against Crystal Palace on Saturday.

"I would like to see where Leicester were today without Vardy in the last three years," Mikel Arteta said before their encounter at the Emirates Stadium.

Having missed out on the Golden Boot to Harry Kane in 2016, the showdown with Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was the perfect opportunity for Vardy to consolidate his two-goal lead over his

closest challenger this season. Yet, as Cole also pointed out before kick-off, the absence of the injured James Maddison meant Leicester have lacked creativity of late and their talisman was restricted to one shot from outside the box in the first half that was easily saved by Emiliano Martínez. Arteta felt Vardy was lucky to escape a red card after his left foot caught Mustafi in the eye during one coming together and it was a decision that would prove crucial.

Instead, it was left to Aubameyang to score his 52nd Premier League goal in 80 appearances after a superb assist from the rising star Bukayo Saka - a phenom-

enal record that even Vardy cannot match. Aubameyang's future in north London has yet to be confirmed, as contract talks continue behind the scenes, although official pictures released by Arsenal this week of him modelling next season's training kit sent speculation that he could be staying into overdrive.

Wary of committing to another expensive contract in the region of Mesut Özil's £350,000-a-week deal, Arteta must decide whether to cash in on a player who has spent much of the season playing out of position on the left flank but is still in the running to win the award he shared with Liverpool's Mohamed Salah

and Sadio Mané last season. You can imagine another season in the Europa League will not hold much appeal for Aubameyang, either.

Operating in support of Alexandre Lacazette, the 31-year-old showed once more that his game is not only about scoring as Arsenal attempted to defend their lead in the second half, even providing willing assistance to Kieran Tierney when called upon. But while Arteta would undoubtedly acknowledge his importance to his young side, Vardy's late equaliser and 22nd league goal of the season was yet another illustration of how much Leicester's chances of reaching the Champions League rest on his shoulders.

After Vardy provided two perfect crosses for Kelechi Iheanacho that were the closest they had come to breaking the deadlock, his golden opportunity to score at the home of the club he rejected seemed to have finally arrived in the 66th minute, only for Vardy to barely make contact with the ball with his left foot.

It seemed that it would be Aubameyang's night until the red card for Eddie Nketiah allowed Leicester to mount a late siege on Martínez's goal. When his moment duly arrived, there was no way Vardy would miss again. "It was all about being patient," he said afterwards. Bournemouth's leaky defence must be quaking in their boots before Leicester's visit to the south coast on Sunday.

AICF secretary Chauhan hits out at Raja faction after chief selector's resignation

CHENNAI, JUL 8 (PTI): All India Chess Federation (AICF) secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan has hit out at rival P R Venketratnam Raja faction's allegations that he "prompted" the resignation of chief selector R B Ramesh and urged the Grandmaster to clear the air.

Ramesh on Tuesday resigned as the chief selector of the AICF alleging "interference" from warring officials of rival factions.

Responding to the development and the subsequent allegations that he was behind it, Chauhan stated, "I am appalled to see a news release issued by Vijay Deshpande on behalf of P R V Raja that says that I prompted the resignation of one of our selectors GM R B Ramesh."

"This is another at-

tempt for cheap publicity by Deshpande and Raja," he said in a press release.

"I do not know when they will stop. I urge Ramesh to come out in the open and clarify if this false information is true," he added.

Ramesh, a former Commonwealth chess champion, said he found it difficult to continue as the selection panel head due to the constant interference in team selection issues and confusion created by federation officials.

Chauhan said: "These people (Deshpande and Raja) have touched the lowest ebb in their lives by sending this press release to malign me. I know that they do not have any morals anymore but what I figured today (Tuesday) was the



level at which they can stoop."

He also denied charges that he tried to help a Delhi player and said: "In the press release it has been mentioned that I was trying to help a Delhi player. If trying to clarify certain things is a problem then I do not have any comments to make."

Chauhan reiterated that Deshpande was not a secretary of AICF.

"Only elected per-

son can be a secretary of AICF and Mr. Deshpande was never elected as a secretary. The very act of Deshpande to act as a secretary of AICF and writing letter to few players on 3rd July (without following selection criteria and process) saying they have been selected for online Olympiad created uncertainty and confusion on chess in India," he added.

He also said that players had the right to know

the reasons for their selection or exclusion and it was the duty of the secretary to do so.

"Concerned player and Arjun awardee requested the same to be considered for selection process as no one expected epidemic to cancel all the tournaments in last 4 months. Ramesh, in fact, cleared the first team suggested by me and later changed it," he said.

"Is being transparent about the selection process wrong? Being transparent with players is wrong," he asked.

"Ramesh resigned not because of me, but because Deshpande had sent a parallel team which did not fulfil the criteria," Chauhan said.

The Raja and Chauhan factions have been at loggerheads for long over various issues.

Banned for life by FIFA, soccer officials line up to appeal



GENEVA, JUL 8 (AP): The first of a number of appeals by former soccer officials banned for life by FIFA was heard at sport's highest court. FIFA said Ariel Alvarado a former member of its ethics committee challenged its verdict at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Alvarado is one of at least 29 officials banned for life by soccer's governing body in the last five years.

The Panamanian's case kicked off a monthly series of upcoming appeals at CAS brought by Latin American soccer officials removed from soccer after being indicted by the U.S.

Department of Justice on various charges of racketeering, money laundering and wire fraud conspiracy.

The sports court has scheduled an appeal in August by disgraced former Brazil soccer boss Ricardo Teixeira, who has questioned if the U.S. federal evidence is accurate.

Next up in September is Juan ngel Napout of Paraguay who was convicted at a 2017 trial in Brooklyn. The conviction was upheld on appeal last month.

Another Brazilian, Marco Polo del Nero, is expected to have an October date with CAS, and an appeal is pending for Manuel Burga who was banned by almost two years after the Peruvian was acquitted by the

same jury which convicted Napout.

CAS said Tuesday that Alvarado's hearing was conducted by video link from the court in Lausanne, Switzerland a process made routine by travel restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic.

Still, other remote hearings are likely simply because the appellants such as Teixeira and Del Nero risk arrest in Switzerland since their indictments were unsealed by the Justice Department in December 2015.

Del Nero fled Zurich in May 2015 in the aftermath of early morning raids at luxury hotels in the city to arrest top soccer officials attending FIFA meetings and a presidential election.

Those arrests revealed the sprawling and ongoing American and Swiss investigations of bribery and corruption worth tens of millions of dollars linked to marketing deals and hosting votes for the World Cup and other international competitions.

The American case developed over years from early targeting of Chuck Blazer, the most senior elected American at FIFA for more than a decade who became a co-operating witness.

Blazer's life ban, imposed by FIFA on July 9, 2015, was the first of around 30 so far arising from the Justice Depart-

ment evidence. Blazer was seriously ill at the time and died in 2017.

Alvarado was found guilty last year by FIFA, relying on American evidence, of getting at least USD 230,000 in bribes linked to commercial contracts World Cup qualifying games and the CONCACAF Gold Cup from 2009 to 2011.

At the same time, he sat in judgment of other soccer officials summoned before the FIFA ethics panel.

At his own FIFA ethics hearing, Alvarado argued he was a victim of double jeopardy because the North American governing body, CONCACAF, has previously banned him from soccer in the region.

Teixeira, however, disputed the U.S. evidence in a wider federal investigation that has seen guilty pleas, convictions and indictments from dozens of soccer and marketing officials.

The FIFA allegations against Teixeira, his lawyers argued last year, "are no more than assumptions made by U.S. attorneys, without any evidence to support the indictment."

Teixeira, like many others, was also fined 1 million Swiss francs (1.06 million) by FIFA ethics judges.

The first verdicts from CAS judges are likely late this year and should continue into 2021.

Milan's six-minute salvo fires dramatic comeback to stun leaders Juventus

ROME, 08 JUL [AP]: Milan scored three goals in six second-half minutes as they came from behind to stun Juventus, winning 4-2 at San Siro to deny the Serie A leaders the chance to move 10 points clear at the top.

After a goalless first half, Adrien Rabiot and Cristiano Ronaldo scored in quick succession early in the second period, giving Juve a 2-0 lead. But the game changed when Milan were awarded a 62nd-minute penalty after a VAR check deemed Leonardo Bonucci guilty of a handball. Zlatan Ibrahimovic converted from the spot, then turned provider for Franck Kessié to

equalise four minutes later. Moments after the restart, Rafael Leão raced on to a loose ball after Ante Rebic was brought down, before firing low inside Wojciech Szczesny's near post to put Milan ahead. Rebic added a fourth 10 minutes from time with a fierce finish from 10 yards to complete a famous comeback and lift Milan into fifth place.

The defeat meant Juve failed to capitalise on Lazio's earlier defeat at lowly Lecce, although Maurizio Sarri's side remain seven points clear. Their nearest challengers slumped to a 2-1 defeat despite Felipe Caicedo putting them in front after just five minutes.

Khouma Babacar head-

ed Lecce level on the half-hour mark and the hosts had the chance to take a first-half lead, only for Marco Mancuso to scoop his penalty over the bar. Early in the second half, Fabio Lucioni headed in from a corner to put Lecce ahead, and they held on to climb out of the relegation zone.

The visitors' best chance to equalise fell to the substitute Bobby Adekanye, whose header from close range was turned over the bar by Gabriel. The Lazio defender Patric was sent off in stoppage time after appearing to bite Giulio Donati on the arm. It was an ugly end to another painful defeat for Lazio - their third in five games since the restart.

Chelsea into 3rd place in EPL, Arsenal held by Leicester

LONDON, JUL 8 (AP): On a night of spectacular goals in the Premier League, it was a pair of tackles that had the most significant impact on the hard-fought race for Champions League qualification. Chelsea's 3-2 win at Crystal Palace was only secured thanks to a remarkable last-ditch challenge by center back Kurt Zouma, who somehow made up ground to divert the ball away as Christian Benteke was about to shoot late in stoppage time.

Then, hours later at a rain-soaked Emirates Stadium, Arsenal was leading 1-0 against Leicester and on course for a win that would have thrown open the fight for a finish in the top four when substitute striker Eddie Nketiah was handed a straight red card in the 75th minute for a studs-first lunge on James Justin.

Jamie Vardy equalized nine minutes later with a goal that took a while to be

confirmed by the video assistant referee to seal a 1-1 draw, dealing a huge setback to Arsenal's improbable hopes of climbing into the top five.

The two results left Chelsea in third place and a point clear of Leicester, which finally dropped to fourth after a poor run of results in the league since late January.

Manchester United is four points back in fifth place, which will secure qualification for the Champions League if second-place Manchester City fails to overturn its two-year European ban.

Arsenal stayed seventh, five points behind United with only four games remaining. United's game in hand is against Aston Villa on Thursday.

ARSENAL BLOW

It was a contrasting night for two of Arsenal's bright young hopes as the team's Champions League ambitions took a hit.

Bukayo Saka, a talented 18-year-old winger, enhanced his reputation with a superb pass to tee up Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in the 21st minute for the striker's 20th league goal of the season.

Arsenal delivered one of its best halves under Mikel Arteta and should have been further ahead by the time another highly rated youngster, 21-year-old Nketiah, came on as a replacement for Alexandre Lacazette and showed poor discipline by lunging at Justin in the center of the field four minutes later.

The referee initially showed a yellow card but changed his decision to a red after viewing the incident on the pitchside monitor.

"I know Eddie, he is not an aggressive player," Arsenal goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez said.

"He slipped and did not want to injure him, and the red card is harsh."

Vardy's goal was his league-leading

22nd of the season and left Leicester seven points clear of sixth-place Wolverhampton, which plays its game in hand against Sheffield United on Wednesday.

RELIEVED LAMPARD

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard was more relieved than overjoyed after his team just about managed to hold onto its lead against Palace.

Moments before the tackle from Zouma, goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga had flung himself to his right to tip onto the post a header from Scott Dann.

"Not good for your nerves," Lampard said. Chelsea rushed into a 2-0 lead by the 27th minute at Selhurst Park through goals by Olivier Giroud and Christian Pulisic, the American winger's third in five games to maintain his great form since the restart.

After Wilfried Zaha pulled a goal back with a 25-meter screamer, substitute Tammy Abraham regained the two-goal

advantage for Chelsea only for Benteke to set up what proved to be a frantic finale by scoring a home goal for the first time since April 2018.

NORWICH DOOMED

Last-place Norwich could be relegated as early as Saturday after squandering an early lead to lose 2-1 at Watford and slip 10 points adrift of safety with only four matches remaining.

For Watford, it was a huge win its first since the restart that moved the fourth-from-last team four points clear of the relegation zone.

Danny Welbeck scored the winning goal with an overhead kick from near the penalty spot in the 55th minute. Watford battled back from conceding a fourth-minute goal to Emiliano Buendia, with Craig Dawson scoring the equalizer from a corner in the 10th.

Norwich's relegation will be sealed if it loses at home to West Ham on Saturday.

China defends WHO, lashes out at US move to withdraw

BEIJING (AP): China on Wednesday defended the World Health Organization and lashed out at the U.S. decision to withdraw from the U.N. body.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the move was "another demonstration of the U.S. pursuing unilateralism, withdrawing from groups and breaking contracts."

WHO is "the most authoritative and professional international institution in the field of global public health security," Zhao said at a daily briefing.

The U.S. departure from the organization "undermines the international anti-epidemic efforts, and in particular has a serious negative impact on developing countries in urgent need of international support," Zhao said.

The Trump administration formally notified the U.N. on Monday of its withdrawal from WHO, although the pull-out won't take effect until next year. That means it could be reversed by a new administration or if circumstances change.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said he would reverse the decision on his first day in office if elected.

President Donald Trump has harshly criticized WHO over its response to the coronavirus pandemic and accused it of bowing to Chinese influence. Trump said in a White House announcement that Chinese officials "ignored" their reporting obligations to WHO and pressured the organization to mislead the public about an outbreak that has now killed more than 130,000 Americans.

The move was immediately assailed by health officials and critics of the administration, including numerous Democrats who said it would cost the U.S. influence in the global arena while undermining an important institution that is leading vaccine development efforts and drug trials to address the coronavirus.

The withdrawal notice was sent to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday and will take effect in a year, on July 6, 2021.

The U.S. is WHO's largest donor and provides it with more than \$450 million per year, but owes about \$200 million in current and past dues. Those financial obligations must be met before a U.S. withdrawal can be finalized.

Brazil's president says hydroxychloroquine to cure his virus

RIO DE JANEIRO, JUL 8 (AP): Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro says he is confident that he will swiftly recover from the new coronavirus thanks to treatment with hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug that has not been proven effective against COVID-19.

Bolsonaro said he tested positive for the new coronavirus on Tuesday after months of downplaying its severity while deaths mounted rapidly inside the country.

The president told reporters he underwent a lung X-ray on Monday after experiencing fever, muscle aches and malaise. As of Tuesday, his fever had subsided, he said, and he attributed the improvement to hydroxychloroquine.

He stepped back from the journalists and removed his mask at one point to show that he looked well.

The 65-year-old right-wing populist who has been known to mingle in crowds without covering his face confirmed the results while wearing a mask and speaking to reporters huddled close in front of him in the capital, Brasilia.

I'm, well, normal. I even want to take a walk around here, but I can't due to medical recommendations, Bolsonaro said.

Later Tuesday, he posted a video to Facebook of him taking his third dose of hydroxychloroquine, which has also been promoted by President Donald Trump.

Today I'm a lot better,



so certainly it's working, Bolsonaro said, downing the dose with a glass of water. We know today there are other remedies that can help fight the coronavirus. We know none of them have their efficacy scientifically proven, but I'm one more person for whom this is working.

So I trust hydroxychloroquine. And you? Brazil, the world's sixth-biggest nation, with more than 210 million people, is one of the outbreak's most lethal hot spots. More than 65,000 Brazilians have died from COVID-19, and over 1.5 million have been infected.

Both numbers are the world's second-highest totals, behind those of the U.S., though the true figures are believed to be higher because of a lack of widespread testing. On Tuesday alone, 1,254 deaths were confirmed.

Other world leaders who have had bouts with COVID-19 include British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Britain's Prince Charles, Prince Albert II of Monaco and

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez.

Bolsonaro is the democratic leader who has most denied the seriousness of this pandemic, said Mauricio Santoro, a political science professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro.

"Him getting infected is a blow to his credibility. It will be seen as another example of the failure of his coronavirus response.

Bolsonaro has often appeared in public to shake hands with supporters and mingle with crowds, at times without a mask. He has said that his history as an athlete would protect him from the virus and that it would be nothing more than a little flu if he were to contract it.

He has also repeatedly said that there is no way to prevent 70% of the population falling ill with COVID-19 and that local authorities' efforts to shut down economic activity would ultimately cause more hardship than allowing the virus to run its course.

For nearly two

months, Brazil's fight against COVID-19 has been in the hands of an interim health minister with no health experience before April. He took over after his predecessor, a doctor and health care consultant, quit in protest over Bolsonaro's support for hydroxychloroquine.

Brazilian cities and states last month began lifting restrictions that had been imposed to control the spread of the virus, as deaths began to decline along with the caseload in intensive care units.

Bolsonaro supporter Silas Ribeiro said on the streets of Rio that the president is correct in saying the dangers of the virus have been exaggerated.

Our president is a popular man. He is showing that he isn't afraid to die, said Ribeiro, 59. He is going to have health and get through this sickness. Speaking near recently reopened shops in Rio, Wesley Morielo said he hopes Bolsonaro's sickness prompts him to reassess his stance.

"I think everything he said before, of not giving importance to COVID-19, came back against him," said Morielo, a 24-year-old student.

The World Health Organization's emergency chief, Dr. Michael Ryan, wished Bolsonaro a speedy recovery and said his infection brings home the reality of this virus" by showing that it doesn't distinguish between prince or pauper.

Bolsonaro has repeatedly visited the hospital since taking office, requiring several operations to repair his intestines after he was stabbed on the campaign trail in 2018.

He said he canceled a trip this week to Brazil's northeast region and will continue working via videoconference and receive rare visitors when he needs to sign a document.

Unlike Britain's prime minister, who moderated his rhetoric after testing positive for the virus, Bolsonaro will probably not change his stance, said Leandro Consentino, a political science professor at Insper, a university in Sao Paulo.

He's going down a path of trying to indicate to his base of support that COVID-19 is just a little flu and take advantage of the illness to advertise for chloroquine, Consentino said.

Over the weekend, the Brazilian leader celebrated American Independence Day with the U.S. ambassador to Brazil, then shared pictures on social media showing him in close quarters with the diplomat, several ministers and aides. None wore masks.

Trump admin's policy change on global students misguided: US varsities, lawmakers

WASHINGTON, JUL 8 (PTI): Several Congressmen and top American educational institutions decried the Trump administration's policy change that will require international students in the US with an F-1 visa to take at least one in-person course or else face the prospect of deportation.

The new guidelines have created panic among international students, a majority of whom come from China and India.

The Trump administration's new policy will damage the economy, harm the US institutions and do nothing to improve America's safety or security, Congressman Bennie Thompson, chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, and Congresswoman Kathleen Rice, chairwoman of the Border Security, Facilitation and Operations Subcommittee, said.

"There is no apparent legitimate reason for the administration's inflexibility towards international students attending colleges and universities that adopt online-only policies the administration seems to just want them to leave, they said in a joint statement.

International students contribute billions of dollars to the US economy and barring them from our country will deprive Americans of badly needed income.

We cannot allow President (Donald) Trump to continue destroying jobs and cause needless suffering just to satisfy his anti-immigrant base. We oppose this reckless policy and the lasting harm it will cause to universities and communities across the country, the two lawmakers said.

Stanford President Marc Tessier-Lavigne expressed concern that the decision will create more uncertainty and complexity for international students.

Our international students must be able to continue making progress towards completing their degrees, and as a university we intend to support them in doing so.

We will be working with our peers and national associations to understand how best to accomplish that in the context of these new rules, as well as to urge the administration to rethink its

position, he said.

However, the State Department, which issues visas to international students, said that the decision is temporary, asserting that it will allow a mixture of both in-person and some online coursework to meet the requirements for nonimmigrant student status.

This temporary accommodation provides greater flexibility for nonimmigrant students to continue their education in the US, while also allowing for proper social distancing on open and operating campuses across America, the State Department said.

International students will still have to obtain the appropriate visa and may still be subjected to other visa processing or travel restrictions due to the COVID-19. Students should check with the local US embassy or consulate for information specific to their country, it said.

In a statement, the Embassy of India Student Hub encouraged students to monitor their university's official channels for university/program specific information and to remain in contact with their universities for additional questions.

We will issue updates in the coming days as we receive more clarity on this broadcast message, it said.

Congresswoman Debbie Dengell urged the Department of Homeland Security to review its decision.

Removing these students due to circumstances beyond their control is senseless and concerning.

There does not appear to be any public benefit to the US, it will harm the quality of education students receive because of the many logistical challenges, while not in the classroom many remain on campus and in the community contributing to educations and cultural experiences in many other ways, and many have already signed leases and paid tuition as well, she said.

Among all the uncertainty, it is disturbing that the federal government would initiate removal proceedings for international students especially given it is a reversal of an earlier decision taken by the agency at the on-set of the pandemic, she said.

Japan battered by more heavy rain, floods, nearly 60 dead

TOKYO, JUL 8 (AP): Pounding rain that already caused deadly floods in southern Japan was moving northeast Wednesday, battering large areas of Japan's main island, swelling more rivers, triggering mudslides and destroying houses and roads.

At least 58 people have died in several days of flooding.

By Wednesday morning, parts of Nagano and Gifu in central Japan were flooded by massive downpours.

Footage on NHK television showed swollen water in the Hida River gouging into the embankment, destroying a national highway along the river. In another central Japanese city of Gero, river water rose to just below

Texas passes 10,000 confirmed new virus cases in single day

AUSTIN (US), JUL 8 (AP): Texas surpassed 10,000 new coronavirus cases in a single day Tuesday for the first time, crossing a sobering milestone rarely seen since the pandemic first hit the U.S. in March.

The record high of 10,028 new cases in Texas served as another alarming new measure of COVID-19 nationwide and the failures of the country's response.

Republican Governor Greg Abbott of Texas aggressively began one of America's fastest reopenings in May, but reversed course last week, order-



the bridge above it.

In a mountainous town of Takayama, several houses were hit by a mudslide, with uprooted trees and other debris scattered around. It was not immediately known what happened to their residents.

Across the country, about 3.6 million people were advised

to evacuate, although evacuation is not mandatory and the number of people who actually took shelter was not provided.

As of Wednesday morning, the death toll from the heavy rains starting over the weekend had risen to 58, most of them from the hardest-hit Kumamoto prefecture. Four others

were found in Fukuoka, another prefecture on Kyushu, Japan's third-largest island.

Though the rains were causing fresh flooding threats in central Japan, flooding was still affecting the southern region. And search and rescue operations continued in Kumamoto, where 14 people are still missing.

The number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: NEWS@summittimes.com

Com

to book advertisements in SummitTimes call 03592-208698 9734152541 9647102692 advertise@summittimes.com

VIDEO NEWS SECTION

Sikkim SCAN | CapitalTIMES | Neighbourhood WATCH | Sports & Specials | ElseWhere | EICETERA

It's easy to relax... When you can trust the News.

To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at

GANGTOK: floor: Opp. Ganga Hotel, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri - 83. Ph. +91-982318644 / 980682789 / 913035100 or mail at mam_siliguri@yahoo.co.in.
KOLKATA OFFICE: Irshad Ali/ Intezar: Synapse, 4, Madan Street, Mezzine - 2, 2nd floor: Kolkata - 700072. Ph. 033-22124348 / fax 033-22124337 / mob. +91-9830947774 / +91-9830947774. E-mail: contact.synapse@gmail.com / irshad_ali23@rediffmail.com

Phone: 03592-208698 +91-9832556698 +91-9832080753

www.summittimes.com

news@summittimes.com
summittimes4@gmail.com
advertise@summittimes.com

Address: Santa Bhawan Complex, Church Road Near Diesel Power House (DPH) Gangtok, East Sikkim, 737101



THUMBS UP! The actress, Vanessa Hudgens sends good vibes to her friend before heading together for a workout in Los Angeles.

Television actor Susheel Gowda dies by suicide; friend says, 'I still can't believe that he is no more'

In an unfortunate turn of events, television actor Susheel Gowda, who hailed from Kannada cinema, has left for his heavenly abode. He reportedly died by suicide yesterday.

Days after Sushant Singh Rajput died by suicide, another celebrity from Sandalwood has passed away. Susheel Gowda, a television actor by profession, reportedly left for his heavenly abode yesterday. He died by suicide and his demise has sent shockwaves across the television industry and Kannada cinema. The reason why Susheel took such a drastic step is not known to anyone yet. He was over 30 years of age. And he is gone too soon. The actor passed away in his hometown Mandya.

Apart from being a fantastic actor, Susheel was also a fitness trainer. The actor was looking forward to making a mark for himself in the Kannada cinema. He will be even seen playing the role of a cop in the upcoming movie, Salaga, which also has Duniya Vijay.

After the demise of Susheel, Duniya Vijay took to his Facebook handle and wrote, "When I first saw him I thought he is hero material. Even before the movie got released



he has left us too soon. Whatever may be the problem suicide is not the answer. I think the series of deaths will not end this year. It is not only because of Coronavirus people fear, people are losing faith because they don't have a job which can give them the money to lead a life."

Talking about his untimely demise, his friend Amita Ranganath told ETimes, "I got the news from my friend. I still can't believe that he is no more. He was such a sweet and soft-hearted person who never loses his cool."

She went to add that it is sad to know that he left us so early. According to her, he had the talent to achieve more in the industry.

May his soul rest in peace.

ceive rewards and recognition for their contribution. Let your victories give you the motivation you need to keep moving closer to your goals.

CANCER: The realm of dreams is where the magic is at. You guides and ancestors are coming through with messages from the beyond. Maintain a dream journal. This will help you decipher the signs and the symbols. Working with a therapist or a dream analyst could also give you the clarity you seek. Some of you may feel that strange pull towards the occult.

LEO: What do you do when life gives you lemons? You can either complain about how things never work out for you, or take charge of your circumstances. There's never been a better time to put that limoncello recipe to the test, Leo! On the upside, a mentor or a father figure could give you the advice you need to get through these troubled times.

VIRGO: You may be working from different spaces, but you're still working towards a common goal. 'Teamwork' is your power word, Virgo. Instead of shutting people out, ask for help and encourage others to reach out too. Some of you may feel inspired to step into bigger shoes or take on a teaching/mentorship position. You don't know every-

thing, and that's okay

LIBRA: It's funny how they associate spirituality with love and light. You understand that the path to liberation requires you to face your shadows—the parts of you that you are struggling to integrate. Trust that by surrendering to the process of transformation, you will be able to find your hidden gifts. Stripping away the false layers will also bring the gift of clairvoyance and clairaudience to the light for some of you. Focus on strengthening your connection with your spirit team.

SCORPIO: It's funny how we're eager to fit ourselves in boxes, 'feminist', 'lawyer', 'activist' being some of the examples. The truth is, you're just energy. Energy in its purest, most unadulterated form. Recognising this Universal truth will liberate you in more ways than one. What you could potentially be struggling with is erratic sleep patterns.

SAGITTARIUS: If Andy Warhol's words are anything to go by, then everybody will have their 15 minutes of fame at some point in their lifetime. So, what makes you different, Sagittarius? Do you want to succumb to the fame game or leave a legacy behind, one that you will be remembered long after you're gone? 'Innovation' is your magic word.

CAPRICORN:

It's all or nothing in the Capricorn HQ. You're striving for excellence and working towards outdoing your past self. Trust that the road you're in will lead to success. What you want to be mindful of, however, is the balance between yin and yang—the doing and non-doing aspects of creation. Make time to step away from your work every once in a while. Make time to dream, to wonder, and to indulge your curious nature.

AQUARIUS: Aren't you tired of playing tug of war with the forces? Of trying to control every aspect of the manifestation process? The Universe wants you to step back just a little, to release the stress and anxiety that's been weighing you down, and trust in the divine order. Everything is transpiring as it is meant to.

PISCES: So what if you can't pack your bags and set off on a brand new adventure? You can indulge your curious nature and learn about other cultures. Turn to your own library for inspiration or sign up for a virtual course. The possibilities are endless, Pisces. Spirituality could also be a big theme right now. Make time for meditation and contemplation. There's nothing like direct experience when it comes to discovering your own truth.



'Endgame' Easter egg may tease an iconic comics crossover for 'Avengers 5'

Avengers: Endgame saw the world's mightiest heroes at their lowest point. With the universe's population abruptly cut in half by Thanos and his Infinity Gauntlet, the Avengers had to get creative to undo the devastating damage. As it turns out, Endgame directors Anthony and Joe Russo may have been laying the foundational storyline for Avengers 5 all along.

Reddit user wafflespls recently shared two images of the Hulk, suggesting a link to the comics that's largely flown under the radar since the movie's debut. The first was of Smart Hulk holding up the wreckage of Avengers HQ to keep it from collapsing in Endgame. The second photo is of comic book Hulk, holding up a mountain with all his strength. Take a look below.

To the untrained eye, this is just Hulk holding up something heavy, which he's called upon to do fairly often, given his unparalleled strength. The comparison becomes far more striking when you take a closer look at Marvel's 1985 Secret Wars #4 cover.

Johnny Depp assaulted Amber Heard after she laughed at tattoo, court told

Claim put to actor on second day of his evidence in high court libel claim against Sun

The first time Johnny Depp physically assaulted his former partner Amber Heard was when she laughed at a tattoo on his arm that had been altered to read "wino for ever", the high court in London has been told.

The claim, vigorously denied by Depp, who has admitted to alcohol problems, was put to him on the second day of his evidence in his libel claim against the Sun.

Depp, 57, has repeatedly denied physically assaulting Heard during their four-year relationship and is claiming damages from the paper and its executive editor, Dan Wootton, after it ran a story describing him as a "wife beater".

Sasha Wass QC, representing the Sun, told the court Depp had a tattoo on his arm that used to read "Winona for ever", engraved during his previous relationship with Winona Ryder. After their relationship ended, the tattoo was changed to read "wino for ever", the court heard.

In 2013, Wass said, Depp had "fallen off the wagon" and was taking drugs and alcohol. "Ms Heard laughed at that tattoo," she said. "You were in fact acting like a wino and an alcoholic and felt very sensitive."

Depp agreed: "I was dispirited, after 160 days or so I had broken my sobriety." He did not recall, he added, Heard making a joke about the tattoo and provoking an argument.

Wass put it to him: "You then slapped Ms Heard across the face and that was the first time it happened." He slapped her three times in all, Wass alleged, because Heard did not respond

Secret Wars was a big deal for Marvel back in the 1980s. The massive crossover event saw the collision of multiple universes, timelines, and characters. The storyline was later updated in 2015, with small differences that had a dramatic impact on the future of Marvel's heroes.

Secret Wars #4 included a storyline that left Avengers HQ in ruins. However, unlike in Endgame, the comic saw an entire mountain being dropped on top of the Avengers. Hulk is faced with the nearly impossible task of holding it up while Reed Richards (of the Fantastic Four) uses his formidable scientific knowledge to blow a giant hole in its side to escape.

We know the Russos are big fans of the Secret Wars storyline. Back at a Los Angeles screening of Infinity War in 2018, the brothers said they'd only return to the MCU if they could direct a Secret Wars movie. Such an obvious Easter egg in Endgame likely isn't a coincidence. Were the directors hinting that Secret Wars might be looming in

the Avengers' future?

Of course, the shot of Hulk may have been a simple nod to the iconic Marvel event. However, Secret Wars has long been speculated to be central to the next Avengers film. What's more, an Easter egg in Spider-Man: Far From Home also stands out as a possible Secret Wars clue, which could also pave the way for the introduction of the X-Men and Fantastic Four into the MCU. There are a lot of possibilities here.

THE INVERSE ANALYSIS — Endgame was touted as the Russos' final MCU movie, but it's hard to imagine that they won't be tempted back by Disney and Marvel Studios at some point. Historically, they've been called upon to direct the bigger MCU films like Infinity War and Captain America: Civil War, all of which included game-changing storylines and a multitude of characters from across the MCU. A Secret Wars movie sounds right up the Russos' alley, especially given that Endgame will be several years in the rearview at that point.

but just stared at him.

Depp responded: "It's not true. It didn't happen ... I didn't hit her."

Wass told the court Depp then broke down and started crying, promising never to hit her again. He blamed his behaviour on his "illness" and talked for the first time about "the monster, the alter ego that takes over when you are under the influence of drink and drugs", she said.

Depp, in his written statements, has told the court Heard encouraged him to take alcohol and drugs and did not support him in his efforts to overcome his addictions.

He told the court he had seen Heard, 34, take cocaine: "There were many times in our relationship when not only did she chop the cocaine with a razor blade into lines she also put it on to her finger and rubbed it into her gums ... My eyes have seen the action."

Heard has submitted details of 14 occasions during their relationship when she claims she was assaulted by Depp. He denies ever hitting her.

The second time Depp allegedly hit her, the court was told, was when an argument developed over a painting by Heard's former lover Tasya van Ree, which was hanging in Heard's house.

Wass alleged that Depp had tried to set fire to the painting and slapped Heard with the back of his hand, which was very painful because he wore large rings.

"I did not hit Ms Heard and furthermore I have never hit Ms Heard," he told the court.

Asked whether he was often jealous of partners and suspected them of having affairs with other people, Depp said: "Yes, I can be jealous."

Depp denied ever hanging Heard's dog, Pistol, out of a car window but he

accepted he may have made jokes about putting it in a microwave. "It was that sort of humour," he said. "It was a running joke ... Those dogs are so ludicrously tiny. I would not say that I was the one who had invented that particular joke."

The court was read a series of texts he had exchanged with a friend, the actor Paul Bettany, which, Wass said, reflected his resentment of Heard trying to stop him taking drink and drugs.

In one of them, the court was told, the two men were joking about proving that Heard was a "witch". In one message, Depp wrote: "Let's burn Amber".

Wass suggested the messages, although meant as jokes, were sent because Depp resented Heard acting like the "moral police".

Depp said he was "resentful of the fact Ms Heard was very aggressive and quite insulting about my use of alcohol". He also accepted that she "didn't like me using alcohol and drugs".

That, Wass pointed out, was at odds with Depp's previous assertion that Heard had never supported his efforts to give up his addictions.

She then read out an email that Heard had written but never sent to Depp. "I don't know if I can take this any more," she wrote. "It's like there's a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Half of you I love madly, the other half scares me. I can't take him. The problem is I never really know which one I'm dealing with until it's too late."

Depp has accused Heard of setting up a "hoax" because her allegations were "patently untrue".

The court was told that some of the cross-examination would be heard in private, which the media will not be able to report.

The hearing continues.

ARIES: Your style has always been more 'fast and furious' than 'slow and steady'. But this period of self-isolation has made you take a long, hard look in the mirror. You understand that everything takes its own sweet time to evolve. You're willing to give the project at hand the love and nurturing it deserves. Word of warning: stay in your lane while you're at it. You may find that the environment is volatile and that it's best to disengage from the drama.

TAURUS: Candles and crystals are cool, but have you ever tried believing in yourself? Today, the cards are tempting you to brew the most alluring elixir in the book also known as the self-love potion. Side effects include giving lessers damns about other people's opinions, increased self-worth, and the inability to settle for less. What you could potentially have trouble with however is trusting your instinct. Taurus, you are connected with the cosmic stream of consciousness

GEMINI: There are no quick fixes, Gemini. If you want magnificent results, you have to commit to putting in the work. The project at hand requires your perseverance. On the upside, you will receive the rewards for the work you have already put in. Those associated with the media could re-