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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Govt to focus on Infrastructure Support for 100+ Primary Schools

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 JUN:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang convened a high-level meeting of the Education Department at Samman Bhawan today, a press release from Education Department informs. Present in the meeting were Minister for Education Kunga Nima Lepcha, Additional Chief Secretary, G.P. Upadhyaya, Secretary Sikkim State Teachers' Recruitment Board and SPD Samagra Shiksha Bhim Thatal, Director Secondary Education, Hondala Gyaltsen, Principal Chief Engineer Praveen Pradhan, Chief Engineer AB Subba, Additional Chief Engineer CK Pradhan, Director Finance & Accounts, BB Subba, Director-in-Charge Scholarship, Sonam Denzongpa and the officers from the CMO.

The Chief Minister reviewed some of the major civil works being carried out by the Department in the Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education sectors. He desired that the construction work of the Centre of Excellence proposed at Chakung should

start immediately and the allocated fund must be utilized within time. The Department has been directed to initiate all-out effort to complete this reputed project well on time.

While mentioning damages caused to the schools and other educational institutional properties, he instructed the Engineering Cell and the ACS that funds may be managed from appropriate areas like natural calamity funds. He further mentioned that requisite funds have been earmarked in the budget provision for developmental activities, fencing, upgradation, repair works, and new buildings for several schools. Development of auditoriums, fencing works, grounds for colleges have also been sanctioned for which the Department has to take up the work on priority.

In his instructions to the Engineering Cell of the Department, the Chief Minister mentioned that funds have been provided for repair works and construction of school buildings.

He further mentioned that repair-works shall



be taken in the current financial year for exclusively 100 new primary schools. Construction and repair work for these 100 primary schools are to be prioritized keeping in view the importance accorded to the primary education by the National Education Policy, 2020. The NEP 2020 emphasises the first five years of schooling as a fundamentally important area where all round development of children is focused.

He further stressed upon starting the construction of Sikkim State University at Tarku, South Sikkim.

The Department is in the process of establishing one Model School at

Assam Lingzey for the purpose of admitting students under the Chief Minister's Meritorious Scheme.

"This school will be on autonomous mode and students selected for CMMSS will study. This school will also admit other students. Apart from this, four model schools (one in each district) are also being established for which fund provision has been made and therefore operationalization of these schools should be expedited," the release states.

The Chief Minister further directed the Department that all project related activities should also be accomplished in

coordination with the Department and Engineering Cell. Funds allotted from RUSA, Samagra Shiksha, MDM or other centrally sponsored schemes need to be utilized timely and orderly. In the matters where such centrally sponsored schemes are not sufficient to cater, the State Government will take up such matters.

The Chief Minister also called for proper coordination with the Welfare Department.

130 new cases, 155 recoveries and one more death



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 JUN:**

Sikkim's recorded 130 new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 19,811. It also continued its trend of recording more recoveries than new cases with 155 recoveries recorded over the same 24 hour period, the State also unfortunately recorded one more fatality taking the State's Covid death toll to 299.

The 130 new cases were detected from the testing of 687 samples on Thursday giving Sikkim a daily positivity rate of 18.9%, this high number

clearly caused by the noticeably fewer number of tests being conducted.

Meanwhile, the figure of recovered cases crossed the 17,000-mark and now stands at 17,005 with the discharge of 155 more persons from home isolation after making full recoveries.

The one new death was reported from STNM Hospital, the Daily Report of COVID-19 released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department informs.

While 73 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 313 samples, 57 new cases were

picked up from RT-PCR testing of 359 samples.

Out of the 130 new cases, 73 were registered in East District, 21 in West District, 35 in South District and 01 in North District.

There are currently 2,255 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State, of whom 13 are currently admitted in ICU. Hospitals saw only nine Covid patients get admitted in hospital today. At 97, the number of Covid patients in hospital has now stayed below 100 for two consecutive days now. This number had flirted close to 300 in the peak of the second wave.

CM reviews progress of RDD activities

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 JUN:**

A review meeting on the progress of activities under the Rural Development Department was chaired by Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at Samman Bhawan, Gangtok, today, a press release informs.

The meeting was attended by Minister, Rural Development Department, Sonam Lama, Principal Secretary, RDD, CS Rao, Commissioner Dr. P. Senthil Kumar, Pr. Chief Engineer, L. D. Lamtha, Special Secretary, Sarika Pradhan, Director Accounts, Raj Narayan Pradhan, Chief Engineer, Sanjeev Rai



and Director, Panchayat, Prabhakar Rai.

Minister, RDD, Sonam Lama briefed the Chief Minister on the major activities undertaken by the department.

Principal Secretary, RDD, CS Rao presented the progress of activities under various schemes under the department through a powerpoint

discussion and all other officials participated in the discussion on the progress of activities.

The programs reviewed in the meetings are Sikkim Garib Awas Yojana (SGAY), Jal Jeevan Mission, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Various state plan programs, Rural Mission, Mahatma

Gandhi-NREGA, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY) Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Grameen (PMAY-G), etc.

In the meeting, the Chief Minister focused on finer details of the programs, appreciated the progress in various activities and gave directions to improve the performance in all schemes.

He conveyed that the rural people shall be given attention in fulfilling their aspiration through the officials of rural development department and assured all support for the department to enable its better performance.

Post COVID Care initiative Swasthya Sampark launched

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 JUN:**

Health and Family Welfare Department with support from US-AID, NISHTHA/Jhpiego has launched a post COVID care initiative "Swasthya Sampark". This platform is a remote help desk integrated with telemedicine to support individuals who have recovered from COVID-19.

The patients can connect through a toll free number wherein a trained health professional will attend to the call and address their concerns. Further, patients requiring advanced

care will be connected to a doctor through telemedicine, thereby providing timely care right at people's home. The platform would also provide services like mental health counseling, dietary counseling through tele counseling services as well as treatment for any medical ailment developed or worsened during post COVID period through teleconsultation services.

This initiative will go a long way in timely monitoring of Post COVID Patients and ensuring they get the right care at tight time.

DK Bhandari named for Bhanu Puraskar 2021

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 JUN:**

Former Lok Sabha MP, Dil Kumari Bhandari, whose impassioned speech in Parliament is hailed as being instrumental in securing Constitutional recognition for Nepali language, has been named for this year's Bhanu Puraskar by Nepali Sahitya Parishad.

An NSP press release informs that Ms Bhandari's name was selected on the recommendation of the Listing Committee and Study Committee constituted by the NSP to decide this year's recipient.

While the award is presented every year on Bhanu Jayanti, 13 July, Covid protocol restrictions and the ongoing pandemic have convinced NSP to postpone the ceremony.

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Landslide washes away portion of highway near Tindharia in Darjeeling

SILIGURI, 25 JUN [PTI]: A major landslide washed away a portion of National Highway 55 in West Bengal's Darjeeling district on Friday, an official said.

No casualties, however, have been reported so far, he said. Almost 40 metres of the national highway has been completely washed away in Gairigaon area near Tindharia early in the morning following heavy

rain, the official said.

The landslide has blocked traffic movement on the vital road connecting Siliguri and Darjeeling, he said. It will take time to restore connectivity through the road, he said.

However, the landslide has not cut off Darjeeling as vehicles are now being diverted through a longer route via Rohini, the official added.

Plantation drive at Mining Rangpo



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 JUN:

PG Bottling Plant, Bageykhola in association with Forest Department, Rangpo, Government of Sikkim conducted mass tree

plantation drive at Mining, Rangpo today, a press release informs. Plant Manager, Suman Tamang, Block Officer, Gautam Gurung and his team took part in this day-long drive.

BJP to get 2 berths, NR Congress 3 as Puducherry finally gets a Cabinet

PUDUCHERRY, 25 JUN

[NDTV]: The BJP will

get two berths in the Puducherry cabinet and its ally, the NR Congress, will get three, it was announced on Friday evening. The news ends an extended - 50 days - period of suspense over the make-up of Chief Minister N Rangasamy's ministerial team.

The NR Congress-BJP alliance won the April election and Mr Rangasamy took his oath on May 7.

K Lakshminaryanan, C Djeacoumar and Chandira Priyanga of the NR Congress and Namassivayam - who quit the Congress before the polls - Sai J Saranvan Kumar of the BJP will take oaths Sunday.

The BJP has been given the post of Puducherry Speaker; R Selvam has already been appointed.

Cabinet formation in Puducherry had dragged on since election results were declared May 2, with the BJP initially in-

sisting on the Deputy Chief Minister post. The party finally settled for the Speaker's post.

On Wednesday, Mr Rangasamy submitted the list to Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan.

The total strength of the ministry will be six - four from the NR Congress (including the Chief Minister) and two from the BJP.

The NR Congress and BJP won a majority in the April election, winning 10 and six seats, respectively, in the 30-member Assembly

The DMK, which allied with the Congress to sweep to power in Tamil Nadu, also won six seats.

The Congress won just two seats - a massive drop of 15 from its tally in 2016.

The remaining six seats were claimed by independent candidates, three of whom have offered their support to the ruling NR Congress-BJP alliance.

CM chairs meeting with Building & Housing Dept

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 JUN:

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang convened a meeting with the Building & Housing Department today at Samman Bhawan, a press release from the CMO informs.

The meeting was attended by Minister, Sanjit Kharel, Principal Chief Engineer cum Secretary, Rajen Sharma and other officials.

During the meeting, status of various construction works was discussed which includ-

ed Stairway to Heaven located at Daramdin, West Sikkim; Construction of Covid Dedicated Hospital at SICB Karfector, South Sikkim; Statue of Sardar Patel; Statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; construction of SDM of-

fices, temples, churches, monasteries, government quarters; Preparatory plans for New District headquarters; construction of government medical college; besides many other construction works.

Power Minister chairs meeting with Rangit HEP officials

GANGTOK, 25 JUN (IPR):

Minister for Power, MN Sherpa chaired a coordination meeting with the Rangit Hydro Electric Power Project under National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), at his official chamber, Tashiling Secretariat today afternoon. The meeting had the special presence of the Minister-cum-Area MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, Lok Nath Sharma and MLA Barfung constituency, Tashi Thendup Bhutia and the newly constituted Management and Coordination Committee of Rangit Hydro Electric Power Project.

Minister Power, Mr Sherpa stressed upon exchange of cooperation and proper coordination between the newly formed committee and the authority of Rangit Hydro Electric Power Project. He extended his best wishes for smooth conduct of business at all levels, so as to benefit both the State and the Union Government. He



came out with invaluable suggestions to meet up the framed objectives behind the formation of the Management and Coordination Committee.

Minister Lok Nath Sharma advised to constitute a Disciplinary Committee to ensure work delivery of assigned responsibilities, with utmost sincerity. There should be unanimous consensus within the Committee in awarding contract works and the higher authority will

recommend the same for onward action, he advised.

The meeting had thorough discussion for preparing proper working mechanisms so as to ensure smooth execution of contract works with complete transparency and accountability.

General Manager, NHPC, threw light on the guidelines and the required criteria for eligibility in pursuing Contract Works and Employment. He underlined

mandatory requirements of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) Registration, and the registration under GST, ESI, MSME as necessary requirements to meet up the required eligibility of Contract works. Additionally, he informed on the provision of work experience and financial turnover as the significant factor for the same.

MLA, Barfung Constituency, Tashi Thendup Bhutia also placed his views and suggestions.

Bio-medical waste carrier vans flagged off by Agri Minister

GANGTOK, 25 JUN (IPR):

Minister for Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services (AH&VS) Department, Lok Nath Sharma flagged off the Two Bio-medical Waste Carrier Vans in a brief function held at the premises of AH&VS Dept., Sokaythang, Gangtok, this morning.

The flagging off ceremony was attended by the Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Dr Sang-e D Bhutia, Directors, Additional Directors and officials.

The Minister offered Khada to the designated drivers and flagged off the vehicles for carrying Bio-medical wastes from the veterinary centres.

Additional Director (Bio Medical/ PVS) Dr Sonam Choden Bhutia informed that the vans were procured under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) project



(2020-2021). The vehicles shall carry Bio-medical wastes from the veterinary centres and deliver them for burial or incineration as the case may be to the designated site.

At the moment, each vehicle shall cater to two

districts and four more vehicles for the remaining district will be proposed in the coming financial year.

It may be mentioned here that, under the project 2020-2021, various components including Two dedicated Bio Med-

ical Waste Carrier Vans, Burial pit for veterinary hospitals, BMW equipment/ implements and consumable items and training of vets were sanctioned for initiating the process of streamlining management of Bio Medical Waste.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CHIEF MINISTER AND EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

“...kindly cancel the idea of re-interview and extend our terms at par with others”

To
Hon'ble CM Sir
Hon'ble Education Minister
Education Department
Government of Sikkim

Date: 25 June 2021

Subject: Requesting for extension of adhoc teachers interviewed and appointed in 2020.

Sir/Madam

We, the adhoc teachers (appointed on merit basis after walk-in-interview) would like to lay down following prayers for your kind consideration please.

That, we have come to know from various sources and also from the meeting minute chaired by HCM; dated 07/06/2020 that the department is planning to conduct an interview not only for new appointments but also for us i.e. those who are serving in different schools since October 2020.

Sir, the news of re-interview came like a bolt from the blue for us as we were least expecting it to happen. On one hand, teachers who never sat for any interview got their service extended till March 2022, on the other, those who were appointed after having interview in front of 7-8 experts, they will again have to sit for an interview. This we believe is an injustice towards us. It is also hereby informed to Govt. That there are teachers who are working on adhoc basis and also getting their B.ed degrees from outside universities simultaneously, which is illegal, against NCTE norms. If they are given extension without any second thought, why are we getting terminated / why should we sit for an interview again and again?

Sir, we know at this time the entire world is facing deadly effects of Covid-19 which has not only affected people's Physical health but it has deadly affected mental health. Can you imagine losing your only source of income / getting terminated from your hard earned job at this time?

Sir, we fulfill all the criterias required, we were selected on merit basis in an interview, we served sincerely and dedicatedly, but at the end we are getting terminated? How many times do we have to face this type of hardships? There are employees in other departments also who work on adhoc basis, but they never face this kind of troubles ever. Why teachers only? Actually, we have become the subject of mockery among people, and the irony is we are in a profession which is considered to be the noblest of all.

Therefore sir, in the light of above difficulties, we would like to request you to kindly cancel the idea of re-interview and extend our terms at par with others. We assure you that we shall work with utmost dedication and sincerity and serve selflessly for the betterment of entire department.

Thanking you sir,

*Yours,
Adhoc Teachers
(Appointed in 2019 via interview)*

Corbett, Rajaji to remain open throughout year

DEHRADUN, JUN 25

(PTI): Corbett and Rajaji

tiger reserves in Uttarakhand will now remain open for visitors throughout the year, state Forest and Environment Minister Harak Singh Rawat said on Friday.

The two tiger reserves located in Nainital and Haridwar districts respectively remain closed to visitors every year from June 30 to mid-November.

The decision to keep the two tiger reserves open round the year was taken after a discussion with the forest department top brass, Rawat said.

He said opening

the two tiger reserves throughout the year is part of plans to boost the department's income hit hard by the Covid pandemic over the last one and half years.

The purpose is to open eco-tourism zones for wildlife lovers and provide more livelihood options in the time of the Covid pandemic, the minister added.

However, wildlife activists feel the decision is not good for animals as monsoon is the breeding time for them and the crowd of visitors may be disturbing for them.

It may even lead to man-animal conflict situations, they warned.

gun,” Mr Salve said.

The high court had earlier sought to know whether “Nyay: The Justice” has been released as scheduled on June 11 after both the director of the film and the actor's father gave contradictory statements on the aspect.

The single judge had on June 10, refused to stay the release of several movies, including “Nyay: The Justice”, saying these films are neither portrayed as biopic nor factual narration of what transpired in his life.

“Posthumous privacy right is not permissible,” it had said in its interim order on a plea by Mr Rajput's father to restrain such films.

Court declines to stay release of film on Sushant Singh Rajput's life

NEW DELHI, 25 JUN [PTI]: The Delhi High Court today declined to stay the release of the movie “Nyay: The Justice”, reportedly based on late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's life, in cinema halls and on OTT platforms. The court said there is no “unholy interest” in the story of the man's life which was “exceptional”.

A vacation bench of Justices Anup Jairam Bhambhani and Jasmeet Singh said there is nothing to show that there would be “any detrimental effect” on Mr Rajput's reputation by production of movies about his life based on “what is available in public domain”.

Mr Rajput's father Krishna Kishore Singh had challenged a single judge's or-

der refusing to stay the film or to restrain anyone from using his son's name or likeness in movies.

The high court said there was no written script or story which has been used by the filmmaker and refused to pass any interim order on the appeal.

“There is nothing that they (makers) have or they could have had used except what is available in the public domain. There is no unholy interest in the life story because the man's life was an exceptional life which is a plausible theme for a movie and they have made a movie,” the court said.

The high court issued notice and sought response from the movie's director

Dilip Gulati and producers Sarla Saraogi and Rahul Sharma and others while posting the matter for hearing on July 14.

The bench noted the submission of senior advocate Chander Lal that the film has been released on website and a mobile app on June 11 as scheduled.

Senior advocate Harish Salve, representing Mr Rajput's father, argued that the producer and the director of the film have commercially exploited life story of the actor who allegedly committed suicide at his Mumbai home last year.

Mr Salve argued that the single judge has misdirected, misapplied and misinterpreted law laid down by the Supreme Court in Puttaswamy case (Right to Private)

cy).

At the outset, the counsel appearing for the director of the movie told the court that the film has been released on the OTT platform named Lapalap original as scheduled.

Mr Salve, however, said: “This is some obscure platform and only god knows what kind of website is this.”

He said the movie is going to infringe upon the right to privacy and the right to a fair trial and with each passing day, it is causing damage to the reputation of the actor.

“The film is trying to portray his life. What exactly happened to him is still under investigation. You cannot jump the

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Soreng school batch of 1991 donate Crash Cart trolleys and Craddle Bed to CHC

GYALSHING, 24 JUN (IPR): The Alumni (1991 Batch) of Government Senior Secondary School Soreng came out with a noble deed and donated two Crash Cart Trolleys and a Cradle bed to Community Health Centre, Soreng. The Minister Agriculture & Horticulture, LokNath Sharma along with the batch mates jointly handed over Two Crash Cart Trolley and Craddle Cart to the Medical Professionals of Soreng Community Health Centre in special presence of

the Press Advisor to the CM, CP Sharma and the Chairman, Agriculture and Horticulture Board, CK Rana, in a brief function held at Power Guest House today.

The programme also had the presence of SDM Soreng, Ranjan Rai, BDO Soreng, Sabita Subba, Panchayats, Alumni Batch Mates and others.

Minister Mr Sharma, in his brief address, expressed happiness that the Alumni could accomplish the social and noble deed and also

requested the medical staff to take care of the received materials, so that, maximum number of patients can be benefited in future.

He also applauded cooperation of Alumni members and informed that the batch mates have also donated Oxygen Cylinders to Jorethang CHC, Rinchenpong PHC, Mangalbaria PHC, Bermiok PHSC in recent days. He also urged people to adopt COVID appropriate behaviour and the guidelines issued by the government.

Press Advisor to CM, CP Sharma acknowledged the noble gesture of the Alumni to support the health care system and anticipated further replication of such social services in the society. He also extended his best wishes for amicable coordination and unity amongst the alumni for future endeavours as well.

Medical Staff of Soreng CHC, Technical Officer, Suren Subba and Assistant Nursing Superintendent, Meena Devi Sharma expressed

gratitude to the 1991 batch mates for providing the much needed and useful health care items. The Cradle bed will be highly useful for carrying unconscious/traumatic patients and the Trolley would be truly significant to accommodate all required medicines, accessories and other requirements in emergency cases, they stated.

On the occasion, the Alumni Batch Mates also felicitated and honoured, Manita Pradhan from Soreng for scaling the summit of World's highest peak Mt. Everest, recently.

The Minister also presented cash amount of Rupees Twenty Five Thousand only as a token of honour, from his personal level.

Ms Pradhan expressed her gratitude to the Alumni members and also shared her experiences of climbing the Mt Everest.

The Minister, Advisor, Chairman, dignitaries and the alumni members congratulated the mountaineer for her remarkable achievement and wished for her good health and further endeavours.

Kerala doctors intensify protest over assault of junior surgeon

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 25 JUN [PTI]: The Kerala Government Medical Officers' Association (KGMOA) is set to intensify its protest on Friday over the non-arrest of an alleged police trainee, accused of assaulting a doctor on duty at the district hospital of Alappuzha.

Sharing the details of their boycott, KGMOA president Dr GS Vijayakrishnan said, "A doctor was assaulted by a police officer in Kerala. No arrest has been made yet. We are going to boycott all specialty OPDs at government hospitals and general OPDs for one hour, without hindering emergency and ICU services."

As part of the protest, specialty OPDs and non-emergency surgeries were to be boycotted in institutions across the state under the health department. The KGMOA

had informed the government that other outpatient services will be suspended from 10 am to 11 am and protest rallies held in all institutions.

However, the KGMOA authorities had assured that the emergency department, emergency surgeries, labour room, IP treatment, Covid treatment, and preventive measures will not be disrupted.

The doctors at the district hospital in the Mavelikkara area of Alappuzha district have been protesting since June 3, alleging the inaction of police over an incident in which a junior consultant surgeon, Dr Rahul Mathew was assaulted by a COVID patient's relative on May 14.

According to the KGMOA, the accused in the case was a police trainee, and his mother -- a COVID patient -- was brought dead to the hospital.

Army thanks Govt for milk supply

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 JUN:

Major General Narendra Singh, Eastern Command, and other officials called on Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at his official residence at Mintokgang today, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

In the courtesy call, the Major General expressed his gratitude to the State Government for providing uninterrupted logistics for transporting essential items and other goods to the border areas by Sikkim Nationalised Transport (SNT) even during the harshest climatic conditions. He



also expressed his appreciation towards the State Government for supplying milk to the armed forces from this year onwards.

The Major General further acknowledged the assistance of the Transport Department for transferring tanks and other military equipment.

It is the first time a meeting was held in the state with the Ministry of Defence to negotiate the rate and logistics, the release mentions.

On camera, "empty" syringe used to vaccinate man in Bihar

PATNA, 25 JUN [NDTV]: A man in Bihar was injected with an "empty" syringe at a Covid vaccination centre in the state. The incident came to light after a video of the incident in Chhapra was widely shared on social media.

The nurse who administered the 'injection' has reportedly been removed from duty.

The video - which was shot on a mobile phone - shows the nurse taking out a new syringe and straightaway inoculating the man without drawing the vaccine from the vial.

The man who was administered the 'vaccine' said he realised what had happened only hours later, after he was alerted by the friend who shot the video.

"I realised about the mistake from the nurse only after my friend alerted me after watching the video," he told NDTV.

On whether he took another jab, the man refused saying he has started having headaches af-

ter he was injected with the "empty" syringe.

His friend, who shot the video, said, "I made the video just for fun, to record his reaction while being administered the jab. While checking the video in the evening, we realised that the nurse just removed the plastic cover over the syringe and put it in my friend".

He said officials at the vaccination site had been informed and they had been assured that the issue will be looked into.

Bihar has administered the first dose of Covid vaccine to more than 10 lakh beneficiaries of the 18-44 years age group, according to the Health Ministry.

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KUTSE SHEGU



With deep sorrow we would like to inform that Kutse Shegu of Late Tenzing Bhutia who left his Heavenly abode on 15th May 2021 falls on 02nd July 2021 [Friday]. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering Prayers for the departed Soul at Deorali, Hotel Chowtara besides But-

terfly Fly Over.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude towards all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement and to thank you all for your kind support and concern.

Passong Gensapa 8918153622
Kuentsel Gensapa 7679217911
Ranjana Chakraborty 9641927953

[Rule-8 (1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property)

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized officer of the State Bank of India under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice dated 27-01-2021 calling upon the borrower Shri Pramod Agarwal S/o Omark Mull Agarwal to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 10,38,540.00/- (Rupees Ten Lakhs Thirty eight thousand Five hundred Forty only) as on 16.01.2021 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed repay amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on this 22nd day of June of the year 2021.

The borrower / guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be with subject the charge of the State Bank of India for an amount of Rs. 10,38,540.00/- (Rupees Ten Lakhs thirty eight thousand Five hundred Forty only) and further Interest from 17.01.2021, cost, etc. thereon.

Description of Immovable property in the name of Shri Pramod Agarwal

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CORRIGENDUM

In reference to amendment in revised uniform guidelines for Review Medical Examination in CAPFs & ARs for GOs & NGOs issued by Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India OM No. E.32012/ADG(Med)/DME&RME/DA-1/2020/ 1166 dated 31st May, 2021, following amendments are made in Para-7 of the advertisements for recruitment to the posts of Constable (Tradesman) & Constable (Driver) in ITBP uploaded on ITBP recruitment website <www.recruitment.itbp.nic.in> and published in Employment News of 29th July, 2017 to 4th August, 2017 and 10th February, 2018 to 16th February, 2018 respectively:-

In place of	Read as
APPEAL AGAINST DETAILED MEDICAL EXAMINATION:-	CONSENT FOR REVIEW MEDICAL EXAMINATION (RME):-
A candidate declared unfit in detailed medical examination if not satisfied with the findings of the Medical Officer, can submit an <u>appeal for his Re-Medical Examination (RME) with duly filled Medical certificate (at Annexure-VII) as a proof of evidence about the error of judgment on the part of Recruitment Medical Officer.</u>	a) All candidates declared unfit in DME will be allowed to undergo Review Medical Examination (RME), provided they give their written consent by appending their signature on the intimation indicating the reasons for being unfit in DME given by the Recruitment Board.
a) The medical certificate will not be taken into consideration unless it contains a note by the medical practitioner concerned to the effect that it has been given in full knowledge of the fact that the candidate has already been rejected as unfit for appointment in ITBP by a Medical Officer and until the photo & signature of the candidate has not been attested and stamped by the Medical Practitioner.	b) The consent for RME duly signed by the candidate should be submitted to the Recruitment Board within 24 hours after he/she is informed of his/her unfitness in DME.
b) The appeal will also not be taken into consideration unless it contains Medical Re-Examination Fee of Rs. 25/- in form of Indian Postal Order and Rejection Slip (original) issued by the Presiding Officer. RME fee in the form of IPO should be prepared in the name of INSPECTOR GENERAL (NW)/(Central) Frontier, ITB Police Force.	c) The RME of the candidates will be conducted in continuation of DME preferably on the next day of DME.
c) The appeal complete in all respects should be received within 15 days from the date of issue Rejection Slip in which the finding of the Medical Officer are communicated to the candidate. ITBP will not be responsible for any postal delay. The application for re-medical examination shall be sent to THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (NW) Frontier, ITB Police Force, PO – Seemanagar, Near Airport, Chandigarh (UT) Pin – 160003 & THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (CENTRAL) FRONTIER, ITB POLICE FORCE, Village – Kanasaiya, PO – Kokta Hathaikhera, Raisen Road, Tehsil – Huzur, Distt – Bhopal (MP) Pin – 462021. The decision of the re-medical board of ITBP shall be final and no 2nd appeal will be entertained.	d) The decision of the RME Board shall be final and no second appeal will be entertained.

2. All other terms and conditions of the subject advertisements will remain unaltered.

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Don't Blame it on the Rain

Roads also collapse because officers don't take note in time

The weather has been stereotypically unpredictable in keeping with these times of climate change worries. While this unpredictability might be inconvenient for individuals and their travel plans, concerned government agencies and professional organisations, the insistent ferocity of the initial-monsoon showers notwithstanding, cannot be excused for the ease with which infrastructure – roads in the present case – have crumbled across the State.

One night of slightly heavy downpour a month back and the capital has been forced into a series of regular and complicated detours since sinks remained inconveniently ignored and given only cosmetic repairs leading to a situation where almost strategically placed landslides have carved away road alignments and given Gangtok a new pair of trouble-spots. While the trouble-spots might have only now become severe, it would be wrong to say that they are new because the sink near Tamang Gumpa and the inexcusable disruption at Sisa Golai have been acting up for a while but none of the agencies could be bothered to respond. It is possible that if addressed in time, these two irritants would not have become as chronic as they are now. And this is why the excuse of rains should not be accepted.

It was always obvious to all that heavy rains are a given for any monsoon in Sikkim, and this season had already been predicted to be “above normal.” All agencies responsible for roads are aware of these realities and when they know, it is confounding that they are caught wrong-footed by showers every monsoon. Earlier, it used to be actual Acts of God when jhoras on North Sikkim Highway and some in West Sikkim and hydel-compromised sections of roads which no engineering can repair after the less than intelligent engineering with which projects appear to be developed, but take a look around, no other road in Sikkim is in any great health either. Wet scars on the road to Tsomgo can be spied from Gangtok and an excursion on that axis is ill-advised, but to undertake such an adventure, one has to reach Gangtok first and that requires running a gauntlet of slides and detours even within town limits, and this with only half the vehicles allowed on the roads any given day. Even the slighted downpour unravels the BRO back-cutting experiments on the highways and roads in the capital scream reminders of how clueless the State's officials are.

This brings us back to topic of unpreparedness. Authorities, commuters and lay citizens have to start calling the bluff of road managers when they blame rains for the litter of blockages on Sikkim roads. Rains have been around in Sikkim for longer than these hills have had roads; rain-resilient roads should hence have been chiselled out right when the projects were planned. The point being made here is that since roads have been the sole lifelines to Sikkim ever since they were cut into the hills, shouldn't those responsible for the care of these roads have developed the science and procedures to ensure that they did not collapse so facily?

One could understand when the road network broke down due to something unprecedented like the 2011 Earthquake, but how is it that the roads give up so frequently for something as common to Sikkim as rains, or irresponsible construction for that matter? Enough is obviously not being done. When its road network cannot withstand something as routine as monsoon rains, how does Sikkim resolve its preparedness plans for disaster situations? Arguments like these return to this section every monsoon, and this repetition is probably because not enough pressure is being applied. The State Government has often complained to Delhi about BRO's general tardiness and lethargy and now even the High Court is hearing a suo moto PIL on the organisation's obvious unpreparedness. These need to be supplemented with more noise and questions from the road users, the lay people and the civil society. The disorganised manner in which the weather resilience of Sikkim's roads is being pursued needs to be shaken into some semblance of effective implementation.

COVID-19 Vaccines: Why It's Important You Get Your Second Dose

REBECCA AICHELER
THECONVERSATION.COM

Vaccination is the safest way to gain immunity to the coronavirus, and with most COVID-19 vaccines, you need two doses to get the greatest possible protection.

Immunologists call this method of giving people multiple doses “prime-boosting”. Essentially, you first teach the immune system what it is looking for – you prime it with the first vaccination. Then, after the immune system has had time to respond to the priming, it is challenged again. The immune response learned the first time is boosted when put into practice on the second exposure.

Most (though not all) vaccines – COVID-19 or otherwise – use prime-boosting to maximise protection. Some even require further doses. This is because immunity can wane over time or, as is the case with the flu vaccine, the virus that causes the disease can change so that the original vaccine no longer provides good protection.

With COVID-19, we have strong evidence that taking a second dose increases your defence against the disease. Despite this, one in 40 people in the UK who have had a first dose don't seem to be getting their second. In the US, there have been reports of millions of people skipping their second doses. In doing so, these people are endangering their health.

TWO DOSES CLEARLY BENEFICIAL

The benefits of prime-boosting with COVID-19 vaccines were initially seen in clinical trials. Early studies of the currently approved COVID-19 vaccines compared the immune responses in people who received one or two vaccine doses. Results showed that after the second dose, people had higher amounts of antibodies to fight the virus, indicating that taking more than one dose would probably increase vaccine effectiveness.

Larger clinical trials then continued with this prime-boosting regimen. With the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, protection against symptomatic COVID-19 was found to be 52% from 12 days after the first dose (immunity takes time to build). Protection then rose to 95% after the second dose.

With the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, protection against symptomatic COVID-19 from 22

days after the first dose was estimated to be 76%. When a second dose was given 12 weeks after the first, it raised protection to 81%.

With the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines across many countries worldwide, we're now getting real-world data that confirms the benefits of prime-boosting that were recorded in trials. A recent British preprint – a piece of research not yet reviewed by other scientists – found that from 21 days after the first vaccine dose, coronavirus infections were reduced by 66% in people receiving the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and by 61% in those taking the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. But in people who had also taken second doses, these reductions then fell further to 80% and 79% respectively.

THE ADDED DANGER OF DELTA

There's also now an extra reason you should get your second dose: new coronavirus variants of concern. These are forms of the coronavirus that have genetic mutations that may make them more transmissible, less susceptible to the protective effects of vaccines, harder to detect, or cause more severe disease.

From late 2020, the UK struggled against the alpha variant, a more transmissible form of the virus that became dominant over winter. This variant has since been out-competed by the delta variant, an even more transmissible form of the virus that is now dominant instead.

A new lab-based study suggests that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine provides protection against currently circulating variants, including alpha and delta. However, it also found that after only one dose, the ability of the vaccine to combat different variants varies significantly.

The scientists investigated the antibody responses of 250 people vaccinated with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against five variants of the coronavirus, including the original “wild type” that spread in early 2020 as well as the alpha and delta variants and several other forms. After the first and second dose, the researchers looked to see whether people had antibodies able to prevent infection – called neutralising antibodies – for these different forms of the virus.

In individuals who had received only one dose of the vaccine, neutralising antibody levels for the

delta variant were significantly lower than for the alpha variant. That is to say, the research suggested that a single dose might still afford more protection than no vaccination, but that people who had only had a single dose would be less well protected than they were before the delta variant had emerged.

Critically, these laboratory results appear to be reflected in the real world. A preprint from Public Health England suggests that after one dose, the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are 50% protective against symptomatic disease caused by the alpha variant but only 33% protective against the delta variant. To stress, against the newly dominant variant in the UK, a single vaccine dose is less likely to stop you from getting ill.

Yet after two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, the paper suggests protection against symptomatic COVID-19 rises to 93% against the alpha variant and 88% for the delta variant. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine also sees a lift: after a second dose it's 66% protective against alpha and 60% effective against delta.

The importance of having two doses is even more evident when looking at hospitalisation rates for COVID-19. Another recent preprint from Public Health England suggests that protection against needing hospital treatment for COVID-19 caused by the delta variant goes up from 94% with one dose to 96% with two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. The difference is even more marked for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, with protection rising from 71% to 92% with a second dose.

Although these findings are yet to be formally published, the evidence is strong that getting a second vaccine dose raises your protection against getting ill and developing serious illness. Meanwhile, the new dominance of the delta variant has also made the lower protection offered by a single dose even lower than it was before. Making that second trip to the vaccine clinic is therefore critically important.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Immunology, Cardiff Metropolitan University]

Mispronunciation: why you should stop correcting people's mistakes

JANE SETTER
THECONVERSATION.COM

A recent survey of 2,000 adults in the UK identified the top ten “mispronunciations” people find annoying. Thankfully the majority (65%) of annoyed people do not feel comfortable correcting a speaker in public.

But leaving aside the fact that 2,000 is hardly a representative sample of the UK, with its population of over 66 million, this survey raises longstanding linguistic questions: why do people pronounce words differently, why does pronunciation change, and why does so-called mispronunciation upset some people to the point of making it possible (and interesting) to compile a top ten list?

I'm a phonetician – an expert in the way people make speech sounds and pronounce language. I've also written about what we can learn about a person from the way they speak.

A universal truth about language is that it is subject to constant change – and pronunciation is just as likely to change over time as aspects like grammar or vocabulary.

HOW LANGUAGE CHANGES

One criticism of speakers who pronounce nuclear (“NU-cle-ar”) as “nucular” is that it does not match the spelling. In fact, English is known for having some very irregular spelling-to-sound correspondences, so that argument does not always hold up. The most extreme cases are probably family and place names: the surname Featherstonehaugh can be pronounced to sound like “Fanshaw”, for example,

while Torpenhow in Cumbria is pronounced “Trepenna”.

How did we get to those pronunciations? Through a process of gradual, historical language change. These changes could be the result of social interaction (“other people say it like this”), mishearings, spelling pronunciations, phonetic processes or the influence of other languages, among other things. Certainly, language change is inevitable, which is handy because it keeps us linguists in business and generates a lot of copy for newspapers and the like.

Let's have a look at some of the pronunciations people objected to in that survey.

“Espresso” is pronounced “expresso” by many people, even though there is no “x” in the spelling. This pronunciation probably arose by analogy with the word “express”. The two are actually cognate words with similar origins, both meaning “press out” or “obtain by squeezing”.

If you hear someone ask for an espresso, it's easy to see how you might mishear this to be nearer to a word you already know, and therefore adopt that pronunciation. Importantly, you are unlikely to misunderstand what the speaker has asked for.

We don't have a similar issue with the pronunciation of “cappuccino” or “macchiato” because we simply don't have anything similar to those words in English. Incidentally, I'm reliably informed that the French word for “espresso” is “expresso”. Vive la différence.

The pronunciation of “probably” as “proibly” likely

arises from a process called weak syllable elision or deletion. The weak second syllable in “probably” is often deleted in speech. A similar phenomenon happens in “especially”, pronounced “specially” – the first syllable is weak and is deleted. In English, the most important syllables for listener comprehension are stressed. That's why young children acquiring language say “tatoes” for “potatoes”, or “jamas” for “pyjamas”.

In rapid adult speech, it is very likely that these weaker syllables will be deleted. As George Bailey, a sociolinguist at the University of York, notes, it is interesting that “probably” and “especially” are singled out when we do this with many words. He gives the examples “memory” (pronounced “MEM-ry”) and “library” (pronounced “LI-bry”), which did not make the list.

I have, however, noticed a recent change in the way some words which have historically had weak syllable elision are pronounced. For example, “irreparable” seems to be changing from four syllables with a main stress on the second (“ir-REP-ra-ble”) to five syllables with the main stress on the third (“ir-re-PAR-a-ble”), with the stressed syllable sounding like “pear”. I'm not entirely sure what is going on here, but it could be by analogy with the word “repair”, or with “comparable”, which seems to be shifting from “COM-pra-ble” to “com-PAR-a-ble”.

The last word I'll draw out for examination is “Arctic”, pronounced “Artick”. It is possible that the first “c”

might not be heard in rapid speech, even if a speaker is articulating it. This is because it is produced further back in the oral cavity than the following “t”, and so its release can be masked.

Historically, as Graham Pointon, formerly the BBC's pronunciation adviser, has noted, the Chambers Etymological Dictionary lists the earliest English version as “Artic”. The “c” could have been reinserted during the Renaissance period, when scholars sought to reform English spelling to reflect classical languages such as Latin and Greek.

Unfortunately they also reformed the spelling of words which had entered the language via other routes. This gave us such fun spellings as “debt” for what had been written “dette” in Middle English and came from Old French “dete” (and of course we don't pronounce the “b” in “debt”).

Another route for language change is the influence of other speakers. I'm half-expecting people to start pronouncing “microwave” quite differently following this viral clip of Nigella Lawson. I've already had discussions with people who say they have adopted it “just for fun”. How long before it goes mainstream?

PRONUNCIATION AND PREJUDICE

So what does all this say about the 35% of people who feel compelled to correct so-called mispronunciations in public? Nothing good, in my opinion. It seems to be a pedantic display of perceived superiority which can only result in the person with the “unacceptable” pronuncia-

tion looking stupid.

The way people speak and pronounce words is very much dependent on their language background and experience. By correcting a pronunciation that you have actually understood but somehow object to, you could be inadvertently – or even purposefully – pointing out perceived deficiencies arising from differences in social class, culture, race, gender, and so on.

Correcting pronunciation can actually be an act of linguistic prejudice. This is different from correcting a language learner in a pronunciation classroom or asking someone to repeat something you have not understood, for example. Taking someone politely aside is less threatening, but you should still consider your motivations for doing so.

It might not always be the case that the corrector's motivations are self-centred. My father always corrected me (in private) because he believed that having a “non-standard” accent – particularly one which is perceived as ugly by some – would negatively affect my career prospects. Sadly, at the time (this was the 1980s), I think my father was right.

Issues of linguistic prejudice linked to race and class are still alive and well, as was recently brought into sharp focus in an article on the American television news journalist Deion Broxton. The good news is that linguists in the UK are actively working on research and resources to help combat accent prejudice.

[the writer is Professor of Phonetics, University of Reading]

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Nepal vaccine uncertainty aggravated by political mishandling, say experts

ARJUN POUDEL

KATHMANDU, 25 JUN [KATHMANDU-POST]: Of the several calls Dr Sarad Onta has been getting lately, around half a dozen or so every day are from those who want to know if he could help arrange the second dose of the Covishield vaccine. "Their concerns are genuine. They think I can make some recommendations," said Onta, a public health expert. "But I am helpless. I apologise to them and say I can barely do anything."

Around 1.4 million Nepalis aged 65 and above took the first dose of Covishield some four months ago—between March 7 and March 15.

With no stock of doses, the government has not been able to inoculate them with the booster dose—a must for better efficacy.

Despite being one of the first countries to launch the vaccination drive against Covid-19, Nepal's inoculation campaign has become a fiasco now. Though government officials have been claiming that they are making "utmost efforts" to get vaccines, there has not been any substantial development.

When Nepal started its vaccination campaign on January 27 with the 1 million doses of Covishield provided by India under grant assistance, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had announced that all Nepalis would be inoculated within three months. It was seemingly a wild claim. But in February, when the government signed a deal with the Serum Institute of India, the manufacturer of Covishield, which is the AstraZeneca type vaccine, to buy 2 million doses, it raised hopes. The government said it would buy an additional 5 million doses "soon".

Given the fact that the Serum Institute is the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world, there was no room to doubt that Nepal would be able to vaccinate as many people within months, if not in three months.

With COVAX, the international vaccine-sharing scheme backed by the United Nations, making a commitment to provide around 13 million doses, enough to inoculate 20 percent of the 30 million population, Nepal looked confident in its fight against the coronavirus.

As per COVAX commitment, 1.9 million doses were to arrive in Nepal by March. After the shipment of 348,000 doses on March 7, there is no communication from COVAX, except that an additional 348,000 could come by July.

But as the coronavirus crisis deepened in India from March, it put a ban on exports of AstraZeneca vaccine. After supplying 1 million doses, the Serum Institute told the Nepal government about its inability to provide the remaining doses. Serum even suggested that Nepal could take the money back, if it wished so. There was no basis to believe Nepal could buy an additional 5 million doses.

"We are not in position to say anything about when the vaccines will arrive," said Dr Roshan Pokhrel, chief specialist at the Health Ministry.

Apart from Covishield, Nepal has so far received 1.8 million doses of Vero Cell, developed and manufactured by Sinopharm, a Chinese state-owned company, under grant assistance from the government of China.

About three weeks after the second wave hit India, the pandemic snowballed into a grave crisis in Nepal. Nearly 6,000 people have lost their lives to the virus over the past nine weeks, ever since the second wave made its way to the country. Infections rose exponentially. The realisation then deepened greatly among the authorities that the only way to fight the virus is a vaccine.

Though the number of new daily infections has declined over the past few weeks, experts are warning of a third wave. Amid this, the Health Ministry said on Monday that the highly infectious K417N, a sub-lineage of B.1.617.2, known as Delta variant, has been confirmed in swab samples of some infected people in Nepal. The new sub lineage has also been dubbed "Delta Plus" in India. Of the 48 swab samples of infected people, on which whole genome sequencing was performed earlier this month, the Delta variant was detected in 47 people. Among the 47, the new sub-lineage K417N also known as AY.1 has been identified in swab samples of nine people.

Nepal's coronavirus crisis at one point in recent months had become so grave that people were dying from a lack of oxygen and beds. Hospitals were turning away patients because they did not have beds, ventilators and oxygen supplies.

Prime Minister Oli then made an appeal to the world community to extend support. On May 10, through an opinion piece in the UK's Guardian newspaper, Oli said Nepal is overwhelmed by Covid-19 and called for supplying medical goods as well as vaccines. The world community turned its attention to Nepal and countries since have been airlifting medical goods, oxygen concentrators and other equipment. But none of the countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Germany, the European Union and many others—have provided the vaccine, the commodity that Nepal needs the most.

Amid talks that some European Union member countries could provide vaccines, on June 18 at least two ambassadors ruled out any such possibility, saying whatever doses Nepal would get under their commitment would arrive

through COVAX.

A scrambling government, which was initially over-reliant on India, turned to China. But Sinopharm's non-disclosure agreement proposal created some hurdles. A Cabinet meeting on June 14 ap-



proved the Health Ministry's proposal to buy 4 million doses of Vero Cell but after some officials disclosed the estimated price per dose, the Chinese expressed their displeasure.

Officials refused to divulge any further details on the development regarding the deal with China for buying vaccines.

"We have been told that the government is close to reaching a vaccine deal with China, but we do not know how close," said an official at the Department of Health Services, the government agency that carries out procurement of medical goods.

"The Health Ministry has not yet informed us about the deal. Nor have we been informed when the vaccines will arrive," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told the Post.

Just when the coronavirus crisis deepened in Nepal, so did the political crisis.

Prime Minister Oli has thrown the country into uncertainty yet again by dissolving the House of Representatives for a second time.

Over the last six months, Oli has shuffled ministers at the Health Ministry, the line ministry to deal with the virus and do the groundwork for buying vaccines, three times.

Dr Onta believes frequent changes in ministries and political turmoil in the country too have impacted Nepal's vaccine procurement plan.

"Several people from donor agencies in Nepal I have spoken with have communicated their frustration as to how difficult it becomes to work in Nepal due to frequent changes," Onta told the Post.

According to Onta, political uncertainty and instability in government mechanisms could be the main reason

behind Nepal's failure to reach any deal on vaccine purchase.

Pokhrel, the director at the Family Welfare Division under the Health Ministry, does not deny.

"Frequent changes in bureaucracy do have an impact on long-term policy decisions and implementation," he admitted. He, however, was quick to add that the government is committed to inoculating all the eligible people free of cost and it has been pulling out all the stops to procure jabs.

While Prime Minister Oli, also the chairman of the CPN-UML, over the past few months remained busy in his political ma-

neuverings, his government put President Bidya Devi Bhandari forward. In what is described by many as a bizarre move, President Bhandari wrote to her counterparts in different countries as well as the British queen, asking them to facilitate the process to ship vaccines to Nepal. None has responded, leave alone sending vaccines.

Nepal so far has been able to inoculate just about 8.3 percent of the population. Only 2.4 percent of the population has received both doses.

"For the last eight months, the government has been distributing assurances," said GD Thakur, a former director of the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division. "Preparations for the third wave also include inoculating as many people at the earliest."

Experts say the government needs to take a two-pronged approach—get enough doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to give booster doses to 1.4 million people and procure any other vaccine from any country or manufacturer.

Some reports have surfaced over the last few days that India is planning to resume vaccine supplies to the neighbourhood as part of its "vaccine friendship".

ThePrint reported on Wednesday that New Delhi is aiming at July-end or August to at least release those vaccines that have been bought by Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. But the paper caevated that with "depending on the scale of production of vaccines within the country".

But July-end or August is too late for those who have taken the first Covishield shots in mid-March. The 1.4 million people with their first Covishield shots must have taken their booster doses by May 29.

"Resumption of vaccine export by India in July-August does not help us address our ongoing crisis," said Pokhrel, the chief specialist of the Health Ministry.

"We are trying to get AstraZeneca vaccine to provide booster shots to those who took the first dose. We have appealed to and approached many countries, but to no avail."

There have also been talks in recent days in the ministry also about COVAX providing 600,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The Post, however, could not verify the information.

"I don't want to talk about this [Johnson & Johnson] issue," Dr Jhalak Gautam, the chief of the National Immunisation Programme under the Health Ministry, told the Post.

In March, COVAX had communicated to Nepal about possible delays in supplying the vaccine [Covishield] in light of India facing a crisis of its own and asked Nepal to choose a job other than AstraZeneca.

When American President Joe Biden on May 17 announced that his administration would share around 60 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine with the world, it too had raised some hopes in Nepal.

On June 3, the White House announced that it would be sharing 7 million doses with 17 countries, including Nepal. There was no clarity on the number of doses and when they would arrive. Anyway, for a country like Nepal, which needs 44 million doses, 7 million doses divided among 17 countries would mean too little.

The United States recently announced sharing an additional 55 million doses, but it has said most of the doses would be distributed through COVAX.

The vaccine scarcity around the world, with the poor countries struggling the most, now has also raised a new debate whether it is a "global public good" or a simply yet another pharmaceutical commodity. The World Health Organisation has been constantly insisting that the vaccine is a global public good and the rich nations owe the doses to the poor.

Ever since the vaccines started to appear in the market, rich nations have been facing criticism for stockpiling doses multiple times more than they actually need.

Experts say while there was nothing wrong in waiting for the jabs to arrive under grant or through the global vaccine-sharing facility, the government should have continuously made efforts to get as many doses at the earliest possible.

According to doctors, the vaccine is as good as a commodity and it's about standing in line with money in hands, rather than holding out a begging bowl all the time.

"No one will raise questions even if the government takes a loan to buy vaccines, if in case it is short of money," said Onta. "If the government has not been able to buy vaccines, then it is not because of a shortage of money, but because of a lack of interest, failure to make it a priority and a bungling of diplomacy."

Amid outrage over felling of trees in Shillong, government's assurance

SHILLONG, 25 JUN [PTI]:

Amid outrage over the felling of heritage pine trees - believed to be more than 100 years old - in Meghalaya's Shillong, an assurance has now come from Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, who said he is trying to "look for a better solution". With over Rs. 1,200 crore sanctioned for four-laning of the Dawki-Shillong highway, the pine trees are being cut for the development project.

While the state government has said some iconic pine trees will have to be cut for expanding the national highway, it has also requested the central agency - the National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) - to stop the felling of trees and look for a "better solution"

Locals on social media had alleged that the government agencies took advantage of the COVID-19 lockdown to chop the pine trees as photos and videos - showing the trees being cut - went viral.

"We are aware of the social media outrage. It's a major road project and over 16 hectares of forest land is getting affected and felling of trees is actually unavoidable. However, we will ensure that only those are fallen, which are blocking the expansion," said James Sangma, Meghalaya's Environment Minister.

"To safeguard the heritage trees, the NHICL has reduced the right of way from standard 45-60 meters for four-lane highways to the bare minimum of 24 meters.

To compensate the loss, compensatory afforestation would be undertaken in a land designated by the agency. For every single tree cut, 10 trees shall have to be planted," he added.

Viral visuals showed logs of woods lying besides the road from the town's Riblong Bridge to Upper Shillong. The stretch of the road is part of the 71-km Shillong-Dawki four-lane project estimated to cost 1,251 crore.

Dawki is a trade point on the border with Bangladesh.

Sources in the state's forest department have indicated that it received orders to cut down 4,447 trees for the road widening project after it was cleared by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Ladakh admin renovating Rezag La memorial on Sino-Indian border

LEH, JUN 24 (PTI): The administration of the union territory of Ladakh and the Army is renovating the Rezag La war memorial on the Sino-Indian border where Indian troops fought the Chinese army during the 1962 war, officials said on Thursday.

The UT administration along with the Indian Army is renovating the Rezag La memorial, situated in Chushul in Ladakh, and we hope for its timely completion this year, Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur said.

He said the brave battle fought by the Indian forces at Rezag La in 1962 should always be fresh in the minds of all Indians.

The battle of Rezag La that was fought during the war of 1962 is one among the few battles of the world where troops fought with the enemy

till last man, last round and created history of their valiance in the defence of the motherland, the officials said.

The troops of 'C' Company of 13 Kumaon, led by Major Shaitan Singh, will always be remembered in the annals of history as 'Bravest of the Brave', they said.

The Indian Army will be observing the anniversary of the battle of Rezag La at Chushul in Ladakh in November this year, to commemorate the historic battle with China in 1962, the officials said.

Mathur said the 11 war monuments spread across Ladakh are reminders of the courage of Indian soldiers during their battles against enemy forces.

He said the same courage was portrayed by Indian troops during the Galwan standoff last year.

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SummitTIMES

Bolt’s forecast: Watch out for Bromell in 100 at Olympics

EUGENE (US), JUN 25 (AP): Usain Bolt figures his world record is safe for now. But that Olympic gold medal well, it has to go to somebody else this summer.

The 34-year-old Bolt, retired since 2017, will watch from the comfort of his home in Jamaica as someone other than him captures the title in the 100 and later the 200 for the first time since 2004. One of Bolt’s favorites in the 100 at the rescheduled Tokyo Games will be Trayvon Bromell, who won the event last weekend at the U.S. Olympic track and field trials.

The fact I get to watch, it’s wonderful and it’s a breath of fresh air for me, Bolt told The Associated Press on Thursday.

But I’m competitive. And just to see somebody going out there and winning the 100 meters without me is going to be weird. But I’m excited to watch.

He likes Bromell for his speed and his story. Bromell was an up-and-comer who finished tied for third at the 2015 world championships in a race Bolt won when he passed Justin Gatlin at the line for a .01-second victory. But Bromell dealt with persistent Achilles-heel issues following



the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games that kept him on the sideline for chunks of time. He has since re-emerged and once again demonstrates blazing speed.

Bromell is showing great promise, said Bolt, who shares an agent with Bromell.

I must say, it’s something I’m looking forward to. He’s been a talent

over the years and proven himself to be good. But he’s had some bad injuries. He’s showing up this season. I’m looking forward to seeing him in the Olympics.

As for the 100 record of 9.58 seconds set at the 2009 world championships Bolt doesn’t see anyone breaking that. Not this season, anyway. Possibly down the

road.

But let’s see what happens next,” Bolt said.

I’m keeping my eyes on Bromell because I know the times and seen the work. I’m keeping my eyes on next year and the years to come.

Bolt stays plenty busy at home in Kingston. He and his partner, Kasi Bennett, recently had twins they named Saint Leo

and Thunder. They also have a daughter named Olympia Lightning.

About that name Thunder: “I just wanted to make a statement Thunder Bolt. He’s going to love it when he grows up. That’s a good name.”

Perhaps a powerful track name, too just like Usain Bolt.

The charismatic Bolt has eight Olympic gold

medals on his resume. (A ninth, in the 2008 4x100 relay, was stripped because of a doping case involving a teammate). Bolt had a signature pose after wins, too, and broke numerous records, including the 200 (19.19), which he also set in 2009.

Nowadays, instead of breaking records, he’s making them as part of his music label. The sprinter, who years ago cofounded a Jamaican restaurant-night club called Tracks & Records, focuses on reggae but he envisions branching into the hip-hop realm at some point.

It’s something that I’ve always wanted to do,” Bolt said of his burgeoning music career.

“I’m spending time in Jamaica to really pursue it and really put some energy behind it. That’s something that I’m looking forward to.

Although he enjoys the more easygoing pace of his new life, he does miss the world track stage and consistently putting on a memorable show. But one thing always snaps him back to reality the workouts.

When I go to the track and start training, I don’t miss it that much, Bolt cracked.

2-time winner Mickelson needs to make move at Travelers

CROMWELL, JUN 25 (AP): Phil Mickelson has had his share of success at TPC River Highlands, winning twice back when the PGA Tour event was still called the Greater Hartford Open.

Then he took 15 years off.

The six-time U.S. Open runner-up needed a break after golf’s most grueling major to recover and spend time with his family. Now that his three children have grown, he’s back at the Travelers Championship trying to recapture the form that helped him to victory in 2001 and ‘02.

I skipped it for a long time because it was our kids’ time to take a break in the summer, Mickelson, who didn’t play the event from 2004-18, said Thursday after shooting a 1-under 69 that left him six strokes behind the leaders. “Now they’re all out and back East and all over the place.”

Satoshi Kodaira and Kramer Hickok each shot a 63 the best in their careers on tour to share the first-round lead. Tabor Gooch was one stroke back, and five golfers were two strokes off the lead at minus 5.

Defending champion Dustin Johnson, who held the world No. 1 ranking until Jon Rahm passed him Sunday with his U.S. Open victory, stumbled at the start with a bogey on the second hole and then a double on No. 3. He finished with a pair of birdies to end the day at 70 at TPC River Highlands.

Mickelson sank a 64-foot putt for birdie on the par-4 ninth hole his second-longest putt since the tour began tracking such things in 2004. The 51-year-old PGA Championship winner then made a 40-footer for par on No. 10.

That long birdie putt, it’s just a bonus. You’re just trying to lag it up there close and it just felt in, Mickelson said.

Same thing on 10, after making a mistake and having that long par putt. To make it was a nice little boost. Unfortunately, I didn’t advantage of that on the back nine.

Mickelson was 1 over on the back.

I let a good opportunity go after playing the front nine a couple under, he said.

I was very close to hitting a lot of really good shots but they were just fractionally off.

Gooch was a stroke behind Hickok after the morning rounds. Kodaira took the lead at 8 under in the afternoon after making the turn onto the front nine birdie-eagle-birdie, but a bogey on the par-3 eighth dropped him back into a tie with Hickok.

Kodaira’s 63 matched his best score on the PGA Tour, from the second round of the 2018 RBC Heritage his only victory. He was helped when he holed out from the fairway for an eagle on the 348-yard, par-4 second hole.

I knew it was on target but didn’t see it go in, he said.

I heard the applause, so I knew it went in.

Hickok’s top finish is a tie for eighth at the Bermuda Championship this year. He opened with a bogey on the par-4 10th hole, then rattled off eight birdies without dropping another stroke the rest of the way.

He missed a 5-foot birdie putt on the 13th hole, but then birdied five of the next seven holes and he played the last four of the day in three under.

I really only hit one bad putt on the par-5 13th. Other than that, I just felt like the holes looked awfully big today, he said.

I made a lot of good putts today, and the greens says are rolling so good that just the holes look big.

Hickok said he had his worst warmup session of the year in the morning, spraying the ball all over the range.

So I really changed my strategy, he said.

You just take a lot of weight off your shoulders and you just go and simplify things ... just saying, I don’t have that shot today. I’m not going to try and hit it. Just go with what you got.

Germany preparing for “next games” despite mixed Euro 2020

MUNICH, JUN 25 (AP): After reaching the knock-out stage of the European Championship, Germany wants to cut down on mistakes.

Not just for the next game against England, but the games after that, too. I’m convinced that we’ll manage to improve in the next games and that there will be more games. Also beyond the England game, Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich said ahead of Tuesday’s match at Wembley Stadium in London in the round of 16.

However, the German team remains a work in progress for Joachim Löw in his last tournament as coach.

The Germans just about squeezed into the last 16 on Wednesday after Leon Goretzka scored a late equalizer in a 2-2 draw against Hungary. It didn’t look likely until Löw took an all-or-nothing gamble to avoid another first-round exit at a major competition.

With less than 10 minutes remaining, Löw sent on 18-year-old Jamal Musiala and another attacker in Kevin Volland.

We had to simply get the ball into the penalty area and we had to get as many people in there as possible, Löw said.

With full force and all our strength, somehow



fighting for every meter forward.

Musiala, making his first appearance at Euro 2020, provided the key when he eluded three Hungarian defenders in the buildup to Goretzka’s goal a deflected shot past goalkeeper Peter Gulcsi in the 84th minute.

Löw praised his team’s morale, though it was clear he would have been happier if it hadn’t been so dramatic.

France’s 2-2 draw with Portugal in the other group game meant Germany needed at least a point.

It was one of the hardest games altogether, said Löw, who won the World Cup title in 2014 but saw his team elim-

inated from the group stage in 2018. But we expected it to be like that.

Hungary’s defense had already impressed despite a 3-0 loss to Portugal, when the visitors only made the breakthrough late, and in a 1-1 draw with World Cup champion France.

Löw knew how the Hungarians would play defensively and hoping to break on counterattacks but still his team had no answers. Germany was vulnerable in defense and showed little in attack. Again.

Germany had also struggled in its opening game against France, a 1-0 loss, when the French always looked more likely to score.

Against Portugal in the next game, the Germans conceded first with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring. But they then found gaps in the Portuguese defense and won 4-2.

The German team lacked that urgency against the Hungarians. Dominik Szalai scored early and then set up Andreas Schuster to make it 2-1 right after Kai Havertz had equalized for Germany.

There were of course a few mistakes that we made, Löw said.

I’m thinking of the goals we conceded. They can’t happen in the next games.

The Hungarians ran more, and they seemed to fight more than the

Germans, too. Robin Gosens, the UEFA man of the match against Portugal, was ineffective on the left against Hungary, while Leroy Sané produced a forgettable performance on the right.

There was hardly any free room, also not for the two wingers. That’s why it was more through the middle today, Löw said.

But we also didn’t find the right ways through the middle, there were no gaps. Everything was closed, and after they went in front, then they pulled even further back and defended.

Löw will need to find answers to breaking down opponents’ defenses in time for Tuesday’s match against risk-

averse England, which has yet to concede a goal at the tournament but has only scored twice.

Now it’s all or nothing, that’s also a good situation, said Löw, who gave his players an extra day off on Friday. We’ve had some shaky performances in this group stage. We know, when the chips are down, what we can do.

Germany’s defenders Mats Hummels in particular will be wary of England forward Jadon Sancho, though he’s been given only six minutes of playing time by England coach Gareth Southgate.

Sancho, who plays for Borussia Dortmund, has already shown in the Bundesliga that he’s capable of causing Germany’s defense serious problems, but he’s being kept out of the England team by the likes of Phil Foden, Raheem Sterling, Marcus Rashford and captain Harry Kane.

It will be a whole other game, because the English certainly have to be more attacking at home. It will be an open game, more open than it was now, and logically we’ll have to correct a few things, Löw said.

There are no excuses anymore. We’ll have to do things much better there now.

ICC congratulates NZ for clinching World Test Championship title

DUBAI, JUN 25 (PTI): The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday congratulated New Zealand on clinching the inaugural World Test Championship title by beating India in a riveting final.

It is the first major ICC trophy for New Zealand, who had reached back-to-back ODI World Cup final in 2015 and 2019, since 2000.

An incredibly tight game saw the Black Caps bowl out India for 170 in the second innings, leaving them 139 to chase for victory at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton on Wednesday.

Geoff Allardice, ICC Acting CEO, said, I would like to congratulate the first ever World Test Champions, the Black Caps who displayed the skill and temperament required to be the best Test team in the world.

“I would also like to congratulate the Indian team, who performed so

consistently to qualify for the Final and came so close to winning it.”

Allardice said both teams showed their quality and it was an outstanding game of Test cricket that will live long in the memories of cricket fans around the world.

“(It was) also played in a great spirit that highlighted the mutual respect between the teams,” he said.

After a complete wash-out on the first and fourth days respectively, the marquee final stretched to the reserved day with New Zealand ultimately lifting the Test Mace.

“Throughout the two year World Test Championship both Kane and Virat made no secret of their desire to win the Test Mace and that was clearly evident over the last six days. The quality of play was befitting of two best Test teams in the world and it was an enthralling game,” Allardice said.

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Russia mandates vaccinations for some as virus cases surge

MOSCOW (AP): They tried grocery giveaways and lotteries for new cars and apartments. But an ambitious plan of vaccinating 30 million Russians by mid-June still has fallen short by a third.

So now, many regional governments across the vast country are obligating some workers to get vaccinated and requiring the shots to enter certain businesses, like restaurants.

As many Western countries lift coronavirus restrictions and plan a return to normal life after mass vaccinations, Russia is battling a surge of infections — even though it was the first in the world to authorize a vaccine and among the first to start administering it in December. Daily new cases have grown from about 9,000 in early June to about 17,000 on June 18 and over 20,000 on Thursday, with Moscow, its outlying region and St. Petersburg combining for about half of all new infections.

Officials have blamed Russians' lax attitude toward taking necessary precautions and the growing prevalence of more infectious variants. But perhaps the biggest factor is the lack of vaccinations.

Only 20.7 million people, or 14% of its population of 146 million, have received at least one shot as of Wednesday, and only 16.7 million, or about 11%, have been fully vaccinated.

Experts say those numbers are due to several factors, including the public's wariness of the rushed approval and

rollout of the Sputnik V vaccine; an official narrative that Russia had tamed its outbreak; criticism on state TV of other vaccines as dangerous; and a weak promotional campaign that included incentives such as consumer giveaways.

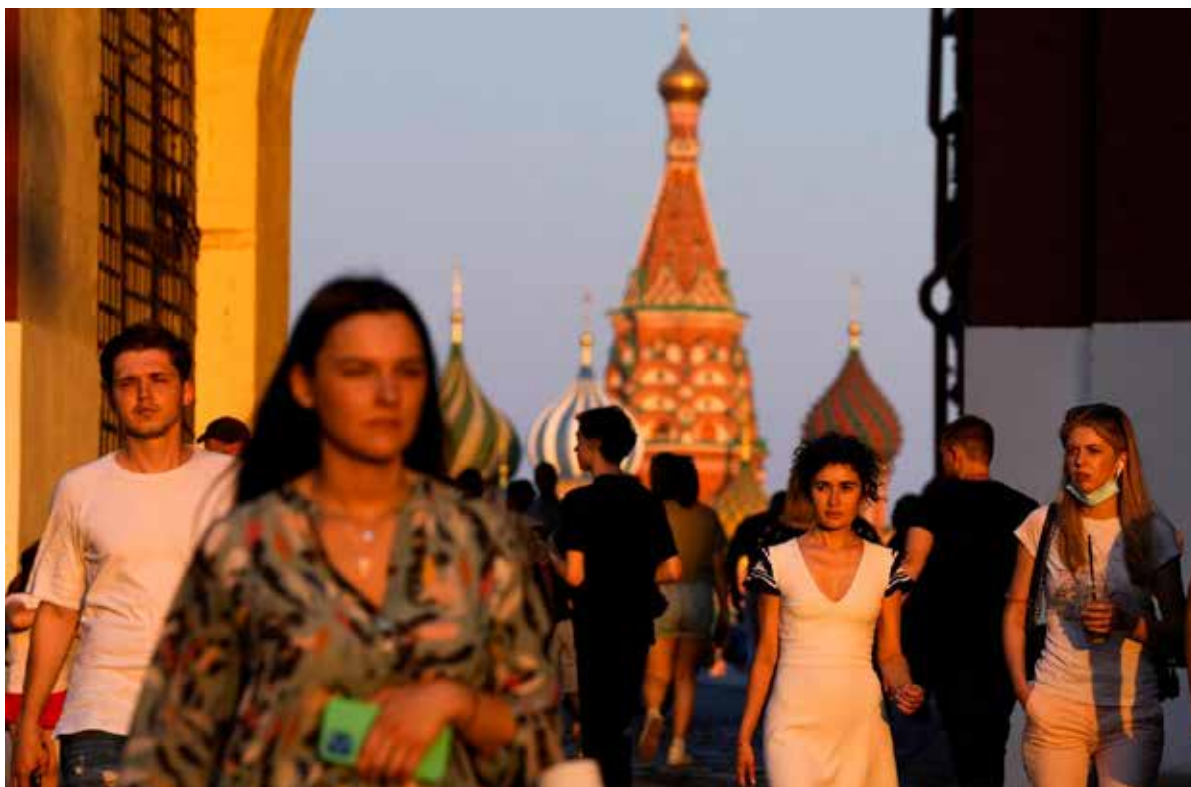
In light of the surge, at least 14 Russian regions — from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the remote far-eastern region of Sakhalin — made vaccinations mandatory this month for employees in certain sectors, such as government offices, retail, health care, education, restaurants, fitness centers, beauty parlors and other service industries.

Moscow authorities said companies should suspend without pay employees unwilling to get vaccinated, and they threatened to temporarily halt operations of businesses that don't meet the goal of having 60% of staff get at least one shot by July 15 and both shots by Aug. 15.

As of Monday, all Moscow restaurants, cafes and bars will admit only customers who have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 in the past six months, or can provide a negative coronavirus test from the previous 72 hours. City officials also limited most elective hospital care to those who are fully vaccinated or can provide tests showing they have antibodies to fight the infection.

The moves seem to be an act of desperation by authorities.

"They backed themselves into a corner, they have no choice now," said



Judy Twigg, a political science professor specializing in global health at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"They overhyped this vaccine so that people didn't trust it. Then they took a series of measures that were clearly attempted to make it seem as though the government had everything under control, the pandemic was no big deal. ... And now they're in this situation, not surprisingly, where low vaccination rates have left an opening for the delta variant to come in," she said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted Thursday the vaccinations in Moscow were "voluntary," because those refusing to get the shot can still seek a different job.

The governor of the southern region of Krasnodar, home to the Black Sea resort of Sochi, said hotels and sanitariums

will only accommodate vacationers with a negative coronavirus test or a vaccination certificate starting July 1. As of Aug. 1, only vaccinated individuals will be admitted.

The mandates have drawn mixed responses, with some saying they are welcome if they prevent closures of businesses, while other say it's unclear how employers can persuade those who don't want the shots.

"Most restaurateurs believe that vaccination is necessary," said Sergei Mironov, founder of a restaurant chain and vice president of the Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers. "But it is necessary to create (the right) conditions for the vaccination (drive)."

"There are too many rumors, and even doctors say different things," and convincing

younger employees to get vaccinated is especially difficult, he said.

Tatyana Moskalkova, the government's human rights commissioner, said the unvaccinated have cited discrimination by employers, with threats of dismissal or withholding bonuses.

At a TV awards ceremony Tuesday, popular actor Yegor Beroyev wore a yellow star akin to those worn by Jews under the Nazis in World War II, and he spoke of "waking up in a world where (COVID-19 vaccination) became an identification mark of whether you are a citizen, ... will you be able to visit institutions and events, will you enjoy all the benefits and rights."

As proof of vaccination for entering a restaurant, customers must visit a government website and get a QR code, a digital pattern designed to be read by a

scanner.

Restaurant owners won concessions Thursday when Moscow agreed the QR codes aren't needed for the next two weeks at establishments with outdoor terraces, and underage customers won't have to provide documentation if accompanied by their parents.

Still, the situation for many restaurants "is hard and will be harder by the day," Mironov said.

In Moscow, online searches for fake inoculation documents increased shortly after the mayor announced mandatory vaccinations, social anthropologist Alexandra Arkhipova told an online lecture on vaccine hesitancy.

Police quickly cracked down, launching 24 criminal cases last week against sellers of fake vaccination certificates. Still, several accounts offering the bo-

gus documents could be found easily on the Telegram messaging app this week.

The number of such offers has grown about 19% every month since March, said Evgeny Egorov, digital risk protection analyst at Group-IB, a Singapore-based cybersecurity company. In mid-June, Group-IB found at least 90 active offers, he said.

The independent pollster Levada Center said polls show about 60% of Russians are unwilling to get vaccinated.

Levada director and sociologist Denis Volkov said the vaccination mandates could change the minds of many because it's a clear signal from the government that the shots are necessary.

"I often hear (from respondents) that they wouldn't do it, are afraid and so on, but if there are restrictions, and it is required for travel, state services, or at work, then yes," Volkov said.

It could be starting to change attitudes. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova said the average vaccination rate across Russia has almost doubled in the past week, and long lines have been seen at pop-up vaccination clinics in Moscow shopping malls.

A demand for vaccines could also lead to shortages. As of mid-May, just over 33 million doses were produced in Russia, and a significant amount was exported.

Several regions have reported supply problems this week, but Peskov said those were "temporary logistical difficulties."

Parts of Sydney going into lockdown as virus outbreak grows

WELLINGTON, JUN 25 (AP): Parts of Sydney will go into lockdown late Friday as a coronavirus outbreak in Australia's largest city continued to grow.

Health authorities reported an additional 22 locally transmitted cases and imposed a weeklong lockdown in four areas, saying people could leave their homes only for essential purposes.

The outbreak of the highly contagious delta variant was first detected last week, and 65 people have been infected.

If you live or work in those local government areas, you need to stay at home unless absolutely necessary, said Gladys Berejiklian, the premier of New South Wales state.

She said the lockdown, which was due to go into effect just before midnight, would have a significant impact on businesses, especially in the central business district of the city of more than 5 million people.

This is in order for us to ensure that this doesn't take a hold for weeks and weeks, and we believe this is a proportionate response to the risk," Berejiklian said.

A day earlier, the premier had said there wasn't any need for further restrictions despite it being the scariest period the state had been through during the pandemic.

Berejiklian herself tested negative for the virus after her Agriculture Minister Adam Marshall tested positive. Health Minister Brad Hazzard is self-isolating as a close contact of a suspected COVID-19 case in Parliament House.

China launches first bullet train in Tibet, close to Indian border



BEIJING, JUN 25 (PTI): China on Friday operationalised its first fully electrified bullet train in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, connecting the provincial capital Lhasa and Nyingchi, a strategically located Tibetan border town close to Arunachal Pradesh.

The 435.5-km Lhasa-Nyingchi section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway has been inaugurated ahead of the centenary celebrations of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) on July 1.

The first electrified railway in Tibet Auton-

omous Region opened Friday morning, linking Lhasa with Nyingchi as "Fuxing" bullet trains enter official operation on the plateau region, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will be the second railway into Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. It will go through the south-east of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of the world's most geologically active areas.

In November, Chinese President Xi Jinping had instructed officials to expedite construction of the

new railway project, connecting Sichuan Province and Nyingchi in Tibet, saying the new rail line would play a key role in safeguarding the border stability.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway starts from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, and travels through Ya'an and enters Tibet via Qamdo, shortening the journey from Chengdu to Lhasa from 48 hours to 13 hours.

Nyingchi is prefecture-level city of Medog which is adjacent to the Arunachal Pradesh border.

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet, which is firmly rejected by India. The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Qian Feng, director of the research department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, told the official daily Global Times earlier that "If a scenario of a crisis happens at the China-India border, the railway will provide a great convenience for China's delivery of strategic materials."

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Netflix feature ‘Strangers’ casts Sophie Turner

LOS ANGELES, JUN 25 (PTI): “Game of Thrones” star Sophie Turner is set to have a cameo role in the upcoming Netflix film “Strangers”, directed by Jennifer Kaytin Robinson. Turner will take on a small part in the Hitchcock-ian dark comedy, reported Deadline.

She joins previously announced cast members Camila Mendes (“Riverdale”) and Maya Hawke (“Stranger Things”).

“Strangers” follows Drew and Eleanor who, after a clandestine meet-cute, team up to go after each other’s bullies.

Robinson, who has penned “Thor: Love and Thunder”, co-wrote “Strangers” with Celeste Ballard.

She will also produce the movie with Anthony Bregman and Peter Cron for Likely Story under their overall deal with Netflix.

Turner was recently cast in HBO Max’s true crime limited drama series “The Staircase” and will also voice Princess Charlotte, daughter of Prince William and Kate Middleton, in “The Prince”, the animated sitcom for the streaming platform.



Favouritism in industry can make you question your craft: ‘Maharani’ actor Pankaj Jhaa



MUMBAI, JUN 25 (PTI): Actor Pankaj Jhaa is thrilled with the response coming his way for his work on the latest series “Maharani” as he believe this success is a result of his hardwork of over a decade.

Headlined by Huma Qureshi, the political drama is created by filmmaker Subhash Kapoor. The series started streaming on SonyLIV last month.

Jhaa, who plays a minister on the show, equated the acclaim for his part in “Maharani” with winning a “big prize”, after a string of appearances on shows like “Balika Vadhu” and “Kyunki Jeena Isi ka Naam hai”.

“The success of ‘Maharani’ has empowered me, reinstated the hope that people might see my work and offer me more interesting parts. I wasn’t expecting this response. I hope this makes people see my craft. I feel like I’ve won a big prize,” the 35-year-old actor told PTI.

Jhaa said the spotlight on him is hard earned and has validated his struggle.

Born in Bihar to a conservative family, which wasn’t entirely supportive of his acting dreams, Jhaa finished his English Honours from Muzaffarpur in the state and moved to Delhi in the early 2000s in the pretext of enrolling in mass communication.

In the capital, Jhaa started doing theatre and credits actor theatre director Dilip Shankar for spotting

and nurturing his craft.

Though he never enrolled in mass communication, Delhi opened up acting doors for him, including an appearance in filmmaker Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra’s “Delhi 6” in 2009.

“I didn’t earn this overnight. I realise today, why actors like Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Manoj Bajpayee took so much time to achieve the stardom they have today. It’s a long journey. The process of scanning actors in the Hindi film industry is not transparent. Favouritism is common in the industry,” Jhaa said.

The actor, who has been in Mumbai since 2009, said it has often happened with him that despite a good audition, he was sidelined because the makers wanted to go for a more “known face.”

“It takes 12-15 years just to prove that you’re a good actor. When this happens, of course you question yourself, the system, its process. It’s frustrating. If someone comes to Mumbai from any acting institute, everyone should go through the same process.

“There should be some fairness in it. This is a major reason why talented people take time to just get noticed. But I don’t have any regrets,” he added.

“Maharani” happened to Jhaa at a time when he had no work.

While the process to look out for exciting roles was on, he hit a roadblock last year when the coronavirus induced nation-wide lockdown was announced.

Jhaa, for whom the first three months of lockdown were “easy”, soon started to feel restless and, along with his wife, moved back to his village Araria.

“I didn’t have any work, so I started shooting videos, recording a podcast to keep myself busy there. When I got the call for the show around August, I taped my audition and forgot about it.

“Two months later, I was informed that my audition has been selected and they require me in Bhopal from November for the shoot!” Jhaa said.

The actor recalled being “extremely nervous” before the shoot as he wasn’t told in detail about his character, Diwakar an educated minister who has his own journey on the show.

A workshop had taken place in Mumbai but I could not attend it because of the lockdown. So, I had to directly land in Bhopal for the shoot. I was scared because I didn’t know how to prepare for the role. I did my bit of research, but nothing truly helped.

“Finally, on the day of the shoot, minutes before my take, Subhash sir told me to refer political strategist Prashant Kishor for the character. I did a few retakes to get it right and finally got the ‘sur’ of the character. I am grateful for the opportunity,” he added.

Next, Jhaa has filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane’s Netflix series “Stardust” and director Madhur Bhandarkar’s film, “India Lockdown”.

Shabana Azmi accuses alcohol delivery platform of cheating her

MUMBAI, JUN 25 (PTI): Veteran actor Shabana Azmi on Thursday accused an alcohol delivery platform of allegedly duping her.

In a Twitter post, the 70-year-old actor claimed that she was conned by Living Liquidz after she placed an order at the platform but didn’t receive it.

“BEWARE I have been cheated by them. #Living Liquidz I paid upfront and when the ordered item didn’t turn up they stopped picking up my calls,” Azmi wrote, sharing

details of her transaction with delivery platform.

The actor, however, didn’t mention the amount of the transaction and also whether she has filed a complaint in the matter.

In the past, Bollywood celebrities including Akshaye Khanna, Nargis Fakhri and Karan Singh Grover fell prey to online scams.

On the work front, Azmi will be seen in Swara Bhaskar and Divya Dutta-starrer queer love story “Sheer Qorma”.

Scarlett Johansson to produce ‘Town of Terror’ film

LOS ANGELES, JUN 25 (PTI): Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson is set to produce a new “Tower of Terror” movie for Disney Studios.

According to Deadline, the deal is in the early stages of development.

Inspired by the classic Disney theme park attraction, the film is being scripted by “Toy Story 4” director Josh Cooley.

Plot details are under wraps and it is unclear at this point whether Johansson will also star in the movie. She will produce the project through her company These Pictures, alongside



Jonathan Lia.

This development from Disney comes as the studio gears up for another ride-based film, “Jungle Cruise”, starring Dwayne Johnson and Emily Blunt.

Directed by Jaume Collet-Serra, the fantasy adventure film is slated to be released on July 30.

The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror opened in 1994 at Disney’s Hollywood Studios in Florida. The ride also has its versions at the Disney California Adventure in Anaheim, France’s Walt Disney Studios Park and Tokyo DisneySea.

Previously, a American made-for-television supernatural horror film on Tower of Terror was released in 1997. Featuring Steve Guttenberg and Kirsten Dunst, the telefilm was written and directed by D J MacHale.



MASK UP! Model Bella Hadid was spotted visiting the Francois Pinault exhibition in Paris.

ARIES:

Pay close attention to your friends today, Aries. One of them may be going through a tough time and need a little extra support and attention. If you can, gather several buddies together and organize an impromptu lunch or dinner or any other activity that allows you to laugh, bond, and share. Your friendships are a treasure to be cherished and nurtured.

TAURUS:

Your artistic nature is especially heightened today, Taurus. Your heart and brain are working together to create something great. Use your creative abilities to make a bold statement. Have a good time. There may be a tendency toward laziness. If sitting on the couch is all you want to do, that’s fine. Realize that there’s a great deal of potential energy available to you if you choose to harness it.

GEMINI:

Nothing will escape your attention today, Gemini. Your sixth sense is right on target. Your mind is razor sharp and emotions extra sensitive. You will move through this day with your radar fully intact. You’re like a detective cutting through to the core of every issue. You will be able to get quite a bit accomplished with very little effort. Things will

naturally flow your way.

CANCER:

You may feel like you’re ready to get the party started today, Cancer, but for some reason, the people around you aren’t exactly following suit. Perhaps you need to slow down and wait for others to catch up. They may end up not coming around at all. If people say they’re doing fine, don’t necessarily believe them. There’s most likely something brewing beneath the surface that needs attention.

LEO:

Don’t get sad if no one is laughing at your jokes today, Virgo. It doesn’t mean you aren’t funny. It just means that people may not be in the mood to laugh. Ridiculous as it seems, today is simply a better day to cry. Let out all your pent-up emotions. Talk things over with others. Your heart communicates well through you today.

VIRGO:

Don’t get sad if no one is laughing at your jokes today, Virgo. It doesn’t mean you aren’t funny. It just means that people may not be in the mood to laugh. Ridiculous as it seems, today is simply a better day to cry. Let out all your pent-up emotions. Talk things over with others. Your heart communicates well through you today.

LIBRA:

Don’t be shy today, Libra. Express how you feel. The more you share with others, the more they will be encouraged to share themselves with you. Today may be filled with a great many tender moments that are worth documenting in your journal tonight. Your thinking is clear and in line with your deepest and truest emotions. You’re the star of the show.

SCORPIO:

Hold your temper today, Scorpio. No one wants to argue. It may be tough to connect with the people around you, but this isn’t a reason to get upset. Tone things down and speak more softly. Listen to what others have to say. There may be a bit of a disruption in your daily routine. Others may challenge what you’re feeling. Don’t doubt yourself.

SAGITTARIUS:

Today is an excellent day for you, Sagittarius. You will discover many opportunities. You would do well to work with others by tuning into your sensitive nature and chiming in to the energy of the group. Your grounding and stability are exactly what are needed to give order to the fluctuating, indecisive minds you’re working with.

CAPRICORN:

Today is a good day for you, Capricorn. New opportunities will abound in your regular routine. Work with a group to accomplish something greater than you could do by yourself. Tune in to the energy of the collective. You have exactly the right qualities that others need today. Use them.

AQUARIUS:

Your intuition is more reliable than your mind today, Aquarius. This is a terrific day in which you should enjoy a good mood and clear head. Your emotions are high, so take advantage of this energy and share it with others. Your generous, nurturing spirit is in demand. If you had a nickel for every good piece of psychological advice you dispense today, you’d be a millionaire.

PISCES:

You may feel extra dreamy today, Pisces. Your moods may fluctuate. It may be hard to get other people to share your boisterous good humor. Trying to get people to jump on your bandwagon of excitement may be difficult. Perhaps there’s something going on with them and their emotions that you simply aren’t noticing. Pay attention.