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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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First time in 44 days that Sikkim reports no Covid deaths!

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:**

The State was allowed a collective sigh of relief today to mark the first time in 44 days that Sikkim reported no Covid deaths. The second wave of Covid-19 has been brutal for Sikkim, the month and a half that it has been among us claiming as many lives as the virus had taken in the entire year till then. The last time that Sikkim saw no Covid deaths was on 24 April, 2021. In the 44 days that have passed since, Sikkim has lost a staggering 136 lives to Novel Coronavirus. In a weird coincidence, Sikkim's Covid death toll until the second wave hit, including a two month period from Feb to April in which only one life was lost, also stood at 136. The number of lives the virus snatched away in a year, the second wave managed to do so in barely 44 days.

For some further clarity, this news-

paper counts 22 April as the start of the second wave in Sikkim as it from that day the Covid deaths became a regular feature [while no deaths were reported on 23 and 24 April, from thereon, Sikkim has received no pause until today]. That was the 137th Covid death in Sikkim, and came after a more than two months of no fatalities due to the virus except one on 06 April. After a steady stream of deaths, Covid mortalities had stopped on 01 Feb, 2021.

A day without any deaths after a month and a half of averaging three deaths per day, including a record number of nine fatalities on 13 May, is special no doubt, but it is still too early for Sikkim to celebrate. The second wave is clearly on its way out, but Sikkim is still not out of the woods yet. Sikkim's COVID death toll stands at 273.

That said, yesterday being a Sunday, even the number of new cases were low since no RT-PCR tests were carried out and the number of recoveries also swelled. Against barely 59 new Covid cases picked up from the screening of 706 samples, 312 people made full recoveries and were discharged from home and facility isolation across the State in the 24 hours ending 8AM, 07 June.

Sikkim's figure of recovered cases now stands at 12,608 while its tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 detected thus far has now reached 17,170.

There are currently 4,051 active cases of coronavirus in the State, of whom 25 are in ICU.

It was a markedly different picture a day earlier when on Sunday, Sikkim reported 340 new cases and five more Covid deaths.

Coalition of entrepreneurs donates 93 oxygen concentrators to Sikkim



GANGTOK, 06 JUN (IPR):

A total number of 93 oxygen concentrators were donated to the Government of Sikkim by Action Covid-19 Team Grants (ACT Grants) which is a non-profit coalition created by the Indian start-up ecosystem to fight the pandemic and drive change and Swasth Alliance which is a non-profit alliance of over 150+ healthcare organisations in India on 06 Jun, 2021.

Karma Michung Bhutia and his wife Ira Bhutia coordinated the delivery of the aforementioned

oxygen concentrators to the state and formally handed them over to the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang who expressed his heartfelt gratitude to them and everyone, including Delhivery (logistics partner) for their effort and the organisation for their kind gesture.

He also conveyed his thanks to Prashanth Prakash (Advisor to Chief Minister, Karnataka). The oxygen concentrators are currently at STNM, Sochyangang.

It is to be noted that

ACT, Swasth Alliance (a not-for-profit alliance of over 150+ healthcare organizations) and Feeding India (a not-for-profit run by Zomato) are working towards the goal of sourcing and distributing 50,000 oxygen concentrators with Delhivery as the logistic partner, Temasek Foundation (Sourcing and Funding partner), Paytm (Sourcing partner) and several others from the ecosystem as support for the fight against COVID.

Lost bridge. Wasted crores. Absent accountability.

Summit Report
Gangtok, 07 Jun:

The bridge on North Sikkim Highway at Gairi ward of Lingchom Tingda GPU under Kabi Lungchok constituency, constructed at a lavish cost of Rs 2 crores, lasted barely two years and collapsed under the assault of last night's furious downpour. Not surprisingly, the affected villagers have been left fuming and frustrated.

According to the villagers and the panchayat president, the bridge was completed with such poor workmanship because of the negligence of the officers of the concerned department. The Panchayat President alleges that when he had suggested better quality work, he was rebuked by the officers. The results are there for all to see now. Don't expect any accountability. Even the villagers harbour no such misconceptions. What the more than 300 affected people are left with instead are hours of plodding on the road during the lockdown to pur-



chase essential provisions.

Area MLA Karma Loday Bhutia, RDD Minister Sonam

Lama, Additional Political Secretary to the CM, BDO, SDM and others inspected the col-

lapsed bridge and have assured to provide full relief through various measures.

After petrol, diesel nears Rs 100-mark in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, JUN 7 (PTI): After petrol, diesel is now nearing the Rs 100 per litre mark in Rajasthan as oil firms raised fuel prices yet again on Monday.

Petrol price was hiked by 28 paise per litre and diesel by 27 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The hike -- the 21st since May 4 -- took fuel prices across the country to historic highs.

Petrol is retailing above the Rs 100 per litre mark in six states and union territories -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Ladakh.

In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of Rs 95.31 a litre, while diesel is now priced at Rs 86.22 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state

depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan near the border with Pakistan has the costliest fuel in the country -- petrol is priced at Rs 106.39 a litre and diesel at Rs 99.24.

Retail prices have risen after an increase in international oil prices on investors' optimism that improving demand and a dwindling supply glut may mean the market can absorb any additional production from OPEC and its allies. Brent crude, the global oil price benchmark, is nearing USD 72 per barrel for the first time in two years.

Rajasthan levies the highest VAT on petrol and diesel in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Himalayan Cleanup from home reveals 60% of our plastic waste is multi-layered non-recyclable food packaging

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

With over 350+ participants from across all the states of the Indian Himalayan Region, the reflective and insightful one week of The Himalayan Clean Up (THC) from Home comes to an end. Organized annually by the Integrated Mountain Initiative and Zero Waste Himalaya, it is a call to all mountain communities, individuals and organisations to reflect, switch and demand for sustainable living as well as to bring to the forefront the Himalayan waste crisis. The usual site clean ups of the THC were made more personal this year by taking it to our individual homes due to the worsening state of the pandemic.

With participants from across the Indian Himalayan Region, this clean up from



our homes revealed that 60% of our plastic waste is multi-layered food packaging

which are non-recyclable. The Himalaya is littered with these problematic plastic wastes with waste management systems and institutions left clueless to address it. This revelation also alludes to nutritional challenges that these hyper processed and taste enhanced food that is being preferred during the lockdown.

The efforts of THC are to bring attention to the burgeoning waste crisis of our mountains specifically that of single use plastic waste. Our mountains are fragile ecosystems overburdened with woes of water, land degradation and the changing climate. The accumulating plastics only add to our growing problems. THC's demand is to bring in systemic changes through awareness and Extended Producer Responsibility especially for products and

packaging that have no solution like the 60% multi-layered food packaging plastic waste that the THC 2021 has revealed.

Taking the question of who is responsible for the plastic waste, The Himalayan Cleanup included a Brand audit which was conducted in collaboration with Break Free from Plastics, a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. The brand audit revealed the top brands that are polluting our mountains and demands that the brands take responsibility for the waste through Extended Producer Responsibility mechanisms of providing support to waste management institutions and ultimately design out these products and packaging.

...turn Pg2

6/198 shopkeepers screened test positive in Namchi



NAMCHI, 06 JUN (IPR): In continuation with the State Governments directive of mass random testing drive of Covid-19, the same was held at Central

Park on 06 Jun, 2021. Present during the testing were medical team from Namchi District Hospital, Chairman (NMC), Ganesh Rai along-

with other councillors.

The test was done on shopkeepers of Gangyap and other areas of NMC. A total of 198 people underwent the test out of

which 6 people were detected positive.

The positive patients were provided with medical assistance by the team.

State govt should get its priorities straight, says Bhaichung

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Hamro Sikkim Party working president, Bhaichung Bhutia today accused the State government of having misplaced priorities.

While expressing his disappointment over the construction of a 300-bed hospital in Namchi, he has urged the government to stop the construction until the pandemic is over and to shift the priority to increasing man power and upgradation of existing hospitals and PHCs in the State.

In a press release, Mr Bhutia has said that it was disappointing to

learn of the Government of Sikkim's decision to construct a 300-bed hospital in Namchi at a cost of over Rs 500 Cr and the CM's statement that Rs 80 Cr has already been released so far for the same.

"First of all, this hospital is being built on the only playground available in Namchi at the moment. It would have been better if it had been shifted to Karfector near Jorethang, where the Govt has sold land for a cancer hospital. This location suits people from both South and West Sikkim," he says.

The release goes on

to add that during this pandemic the government should have focused on upgrading all existing hospitals and PHCs with the right infrastructure, equipment and trained manpower to fight Covid on a war footing instead of building a new hospital.

Mr Bhaichung has questioned the decision to sanction Rs 80 crore for the project instead of focusing on procuring vaccines for people of Sikkim, which is the need of the hour.

"I would request the Govt. to kindly stop the construction and start when pandemic is over.

The focus right now must be on man power and upgradation of existing hospitals, including PHCs. And importantly, they must shift the project from the only playground available in Namchi," he has urged.

He further alleges that people voted for Parivartan but what is actually taking place in Sikkim has been disappointing.

"Percentages and commissions can wait but peoples' lives and livelihoods are at stake here so let us hope the government gets its priorities right," the release adds.

VIT-AP University Celebrates University day



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

VIT-AP University celebrated its fourth University day on a colourful note virtually on Sunday, 06 Jul, 2021. Adityanath Das, Chief Secretary to Govt, Govt of Andhra Pradesh attended as the Chief Guest. Addressing the gathering he said that VIT stands for its quality teaching and innovative techniques to make future generation knowledgeable and competent enough to face global competition.

Founder & Chancellor VIT, Dr G Viswanathan told that students are the future of the country and expressed his happiness

that in the short span VIT-AP has provided world class infrastructure for the 4728 students from 28 states and six countries and Faculty from 17 states and foreign country along with 65 clubs and chapters to keep students thoughtful and resourceful in attaining the practical knowledge and creating holistic education even though the last year was done virtually.

Vice president, Sekar Viswanathan, VIT-AP University said that skilled youth with ethics and values is important for the development and the progress of nation. Students, Researchers,

Professors and staff were awarded for their performances. 71 Academic awards, 13 Student Achievement awards, 17 awards to faculty, six awards to Staff and appreciation certificates in academic, research, co-curricular, special achievements were given.

Executive Director, Dr Sandhya Pentareddy, VIT-AP University called the students, staff and faculty to work with heart and soul to achieve happiness in work and life as well. This takes you to excellence in whatever you do.

Vice-chancellor, Dr SV Kota Reddy, VIT-AP University said that

during the last four years University has been able to expand connections through 20 MoU's with foreign university and Industry tie-ups along with best in class infrastructure. These collaborations from all the Schools with various partners help us understand the need of the industry and also give students the required exposure to subjects that are the need of the present and immediate future.

Registrar, Dr CLV Sivakumar, Asst Director-Student Welfare, Dr Anupama Namburu, Faculties, Students and staffs were also virtually present.

COVID-19: Ladakh records dip in daily infections

LEH, JUNE 7 (PTI): Ladakh has recorded 50 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the overall tally to 19,197, while the active cases in the region dropped to 1,089 after 131 more patients recovered from the deadly disease during the past 24 hours, officials said on Monday.

Ladakh, which has started a gradual unlock on Monday morning after a month-long coronavirus curfew, has

witnessed 195 Covid-related deaths since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. The worst-hit Leh had registered 141 deaths followed by 54 in Kargil.

Of the new cases, 38 persons tested positive in Leh, taking the infection tally in the district to 15,854, while 12 cases were detected in Kargil pushing the district tally

of infections to 3,343, the officials said.

They said the number of cured patients has risen to 17,913 after the recovery of 120 patients in Leh and 11 in Kargil.

Himalayan Cleanup from home...

The Himalayan Cleanup shows that the top 10 plastic polluters are:

S No.	Company
1	Hindustan Unilever
2	Nestle
3	Asian Thai Foods
4	PepsiCo India
5	C G Foods
6	Hindustan Coca Cola
7	Parle Products
8	GCMF
9	ITC
10	Parle Agro Pvt. Ltd.

THC2021 Conversations as part of The Himalayan Clean Up had active engagement from youth across the mountain states with over 200+ participants. The conversations unpacked food from the perspective of Zero Waste, sustainable menstrual health practice, composting for degradables and the alternatives to switch to a zero waste living. Participants were enthralled to learn their waste profiles, top polluting brands and how to make the switch.

The Way Forward session as a concluding event was held on 6th of June, 2021. It was attended by participants across the Himalaya with a special mention to Martin Luther Christian University, Scavengers Darjeeling, Clean Mokochung campaign, Little Green World- Ladakh, Clean Chizami Campaign & Northeast Network. It emphasized the need to amplify the demand for EPR of companies. Multi-layered single use food packaging plastic is of utmost concern. THC2021 recommends mountain sensitive waste management policies as well as stop single use plastics and phase out multilayered plastic.

Satyarupa Shekhar from Break Free From Plastics in the concluding session stated that the Oil & Gas industry of currently 450 billion \$ is projected to see a 50% expansion in the next 10 years thereby increasing the production of plastics. THC provides the platform which plays a crucial role in providing data for policy advocacy to push national and global policies. Director, Dr Dipankar Ghose, WWF India raised the issue of pandemic generated plastic waste and the need to flag this burning issue.

PD Rai, President, IMI reiterates that as much as its important for IMI as a platform to engage with the process of systemic change, it is also important to engage here and now. The event ended with Robert Swain's famous quote: 'The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it'. It is a call for action to all stakeholders associated with the issue of waste to work together.

This initiative is supported by the European Outdoor Conservation Agency (EOCA) and WWF-India.

Medical equipment distributed at Regu-Premlakha-Subaneydara



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Zilla Panchayat member of Regu Premlakha Subaneydara Territorial Constituency, TM Rai distributed medical equipment like pulse oximeters, N-95 masks, face shields, sodium hypochlorite, stheto-dual basic Dr Odin, infra-red thermo FC-9721T, hand sanitizer, Accusure TD BP, PPE kits, medical grade face masks to Gram Panchayats, VCMC and ASHA workers at Premlakha-Subaneydara Gram Administrative Center today, a press release informs.

Similarly, Zilla Panchayat of Aritar Terri-

torial Constituency, NB Chhetri distributed some medical equipments like pulse oximeter, BP apparatus, stethoscope, Nebulizer machine, hand sanitizer, gloves, thermal scanner, face mask to frontline health care workers of Aritar Primary Sub center, frontline workers of Hatticherey Police check post and Gumpa Simana Checkpost today. Zilla Panchayat was accompanied by Gram Panchayat President, Hem Chandra Pradhan, members of different Self-help groups. These medical equipments were distributed under Zilla fund.

Govt has failed to implement lockdown properly, alleges Chamling

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Former Chief Minister and president of Sikkim Democratic Front, Pawan Chamling has accused the state government of poor implementation of the partial and complete lockdown in the state. He has also accused the Chief Minister, PS Tamang of setting a poor example by orga-

nizing public gatherings during lockdown.

In a Facebook post, Mr Chamling has said that the "state government has no idea about what a lockdown is and how it should be managed." He adds that Sikkim achieved the rare feat of becoming the only red zone in India in the middle of the lock-

down.

He also criticizes the foundation stone laying ceremony of a 300-bed hospital in Namchi for flouting Covid protocols adding that the ceremony could have been held virtually.

"In Namthang-Rateypani constituency, MLA, Sanjit Kharel so defiantly distributed cows and pigs to lo-

cals during the lockdown. Two of the beneficiaries tested positive after the program. It is obvious many got infected there and spread the infection in their villages. That's how irresponsible this government is. First they imported the virus from their Dandi March trip and now they are distributing

it across the villages," Mr Chamling has alleged.

Questioning the logic behind the daily opening of shops from 8-12, Mr Chamling has said the door-to-door delivery of essentials should have been taken up by the government and since Sikkim is a small state it is possible to do so.

Rishal adjudged Best Delegate Global Youth International Model United Nations

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 MAY:**

Gangtok's Rishal Pandey Chettri, a Class 12 student at Delhi Public School, Siliguri, has bagged the "Best Delegate Award" at the Global Youth International Model United Nations [GYIMUN], a press release

informs.

He was a delegate representing India at the event and was recognised for his "outstanding diplomacy skills and knowledge of International Relations" displayed at GYIMUN.

The competition was organised virtually ow-

ing to Covid-19 travel restrictions and had delegates participating from 40+ countries on 24 and 25 Apr, 2021. The results were announced on 06 May, it is informed.

Global Youth International MUN is a United Nation's Simulation

Conference that aims to inculcate the skills of Public Speaking, Diplomacy and Negotiations among the Youth.

Born to Meena Bhujel and Om Prakash Pandey, Rishal completed his class 10 from Holy Cross School, Tadong and went on to pursue his +2 from

DPS,Siliguri.

"These conferences and Model United Nations address real world concerns to equip the participating young adults with practical and applicable expertise which will enhance their skills of diplomacy," he explains.

Lt Gen MD Venkatesh takes over as SMU Pro-Chancellor

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:**

Lt General (Dr) MD Venkatesh has been appointed as the Pro-Chancellor of Sikkim Manipal University (SMU), in addition to his onerous responsibility as Vice Chancellor, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, a press release informs.

He has taken over from erstwhile Pro Chancellor, Rajen Padukone, SMU who was also Group President (Academia) of Manipal Education & Medical Group (MEMG).

Mr Padukone has served with distinction with his vast and rich



experience of over 40 years, in the diverse fields of education, healthcare, banking, financial services and manufacturing sectors, all over the country.

"Team SMU, along with its constituent institutes, colleges and units, welcomes Lt Gen (Dr) Venkatesh as the Pro-Chancellor; and looks forward to benefit from his nurturing mentorship and guidance, to enable the University to fulfill its true potential as the preferred academic & high quality healthcare destination of the region and our state of Sikkim," the release states.

Covid War Room for South district set up



NAMCHI, 07 JUN (IPR):

The South District Administration [SDA] in order to track and monitor the spread of Corona Virus has set up a COVID-19 war room with dashboard at Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) today which is constructed under the Namchi Smart City Projects and located above the Multi-Level Car Plaza Building.

The aim of the COVID-19 war room is to have real time information about the status of the incidence of COVID-19 infection within South-Sikkim. Information about the various Covid care centers, containment zones and details of ambulances, etc. are available which shall ensure effective management while making an informed decision for responding to the pandemic. The integrated Covid-19 dashboard provides the status which includes availability of beds at various Covid care centres within the South District, the information on accessibility of the Government as wells as taxi ambulances are also given.

The dedicated team working at the Covid-19 war room cell functions as the Control Room and provides emergency assistance related to medicine and other drugs, ambulances, and admission to the covid care centres based on the health care report and the request of patient and their relatives. The additional

services include contact details of doctors of the respective areas, and other allied health needs.

In addition to this, the District Administration has also set up a dedicated 24x7 Covid-19 Helpline desk through the existing Contact Center Management Solution. For any emergency enquiries, the helpline number is 03595-264100. The centre also assists the South Police Department in executing their work by means of monitoring video CCTVs feeds. In Namchi, CCTVs has been installed at various locations executing feeds of the CCTVs installed at the various locations. Hence, in this ICCC the Surveillance footage is overseen and the police personnels can monitor the movement of people, especially during the time of lockdown. Regular announcement through Public Address System installed at Smart Poles which is connected to the main ICCC room is also done by the Police Department informing the public about the Covid-19 guidelines issued by the State Government.

Some of the key features of Covid-19 war room are as follows:
1) CCTV Surveillance.
2) Public Address System (PAS).
3) Emergency call box.
4) Public Wi-Fi.
5) Environmental Sensors.
6) Automated Traffic Management Solution.
7) CCMS based LED

street lights.

8) Contact Centre Management Solution. This newly functional district level Covid-19 war room also provides a video wall display which shows information related the latest data of confirmed, active and recovered covid cases within the district. Apart from this, the District Collector's office along with Namchi Smart City Limited has worked in collaboration with ESRI India to have a web based application platform involving geo spatial data on rate of infection according to demography. The web based application also has the capability to provide visual interface of the trends of covid clusters at block levels. The dashboard also highlights the culminating graph of cases on daily and monthly basis which is updated every 24 hours and the platform is developed with the help of ArcGIS (Software).

The war room is managed by the officials of the District Administration alongwith other officials from Namchi Smart City Limited, NIC (Namchi) and Health Department. To assist in this endeavour, an NGO the Blood Army of Sikkim is also volunteering in managing the helpline numbers and feedback from the public via helpline numbers which are- 95642-26981, 93396-24796 and 86534-56458.

Ivermectin, HCQ dropped from one Covid treatment list, kept on another

NEW DELHI, 07 JUN [NDTV]:

The Union Health Ministry's Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has issued revised guidelines for the management of Covid patients, dropping ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine and favipiravir - three widely-used drugs - from its list of approved treatment options. The guidelines, however, differ from those provided by the Health Ministry, which recommends both ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine.

The new guidelines, which were issued on May 27, also do not mention taking steam inhalation and the use of vitamins for Covid treatment, which again contradicts the advisory on the Health Ministry website.

Ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine and favipiravir - used for asymptomatic and mild cases - were removed from DGHS guidelines after experts found they did not help patients infected with the coronavirus, according to officials. Under the new DGHS guidelines, asymptomatic Covid patients (except those with comorbidities) have been advised against taking any medication. Those with mild cases may take antipyretic (medication used to prevent, or reduce fevers) and antitussive (to relieve or suppress coughing) for symptomatic relief. Those with cough may inhale 800 mcg of budesonide (via metered-dose inhaler with space device) twice a day for five days.

"No other COVID-19-specific medication is required. The patient may have to be investigated further if symptoms persist or de-

teriorate," the guidelines said. Remdesivir, an antiviral drug in great demand in India - is to be used only in select cases - specifically for hospitalised Covid patients with moderate or severe symptoms, and who were placed on oxygen support within ten days of the disease onset, the guidelines add.

On the use of tocilizumab - which is also in high demand - the DGHS said it should be used only for severely and critically ill patients. The new guidelines also warn against the unnecessary use of high-resolution CT scans.

This morning India recorded 1.06 lakh cases, a drop of 12 per cent from yesterday's 1.14 lakh that was reported to be the lowest in two months. The country's caseload now stands at 2.89 crore.

Days before Centre's policy change, Supreme Court's tough remarks

NEW DELHI, 07 JUN [NDTV]:

The change in the Centre's Covid vaccination policy, announced today by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, came a week after the government faced some tough questions from the Supreme Court. A three-member bench had on May 31 flagged "various flaws" in the inoculation drive, criticising aspects such as differential pricing, shortage of doses, and a lack of access in rural India.

In a national address today, PM Modi announced that his government would take back control of the drive from the states and provide vaccines free of charge to all above 18 from June 21.

He revised the rules of the drive's third phase which came into force a month ago.

On May 31, the Supreme Court bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, LN Rao, and S Ravindra Bhat had observed, "Your rationale was high mor-

ality in the 45+ group (but), in the second wave, this group is not seriously affected...it is 18-44. If the purpose is to procure vaccines, why should the Centre procure only for those aged over 45?"

It also asked why states were required to pay more for the vaccines under the Centre's new "liberalised" policy which allowed states to buy up to 50 per cent of their needs directly from manufacturers, although at prices higher than

what the Centre had to pay.

The court asked the Centre to revisit the new policy, calling it "arbitrary" and "irrational". It sought a roadmap of the availability of vaccines till December 31, along with the details of the ₹ 35,000 crore set aside in the Union budget to buy doses. The bench wanted a comparison of vaccines' prices in India and abroad. It also asked for documents and file notings related to the Centre's new policy.

When the Centre

asked the Supreme Court to keep off policy-making, it refused to be a "silent spectator" when executive policies infringed constitutional rights.

"Let me tell you from my experience as a Judge -- the ability to say that you're wrong is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength," Justice Chandrachud had said.

The next hearing of the Supreme Court on the matter is on June 30.

ISRO develops 3 types of ventilators, will transfer technology

BENGALURU, 07 JUN [PTI]:

The Indian Space Research Organisation has developed three types of ventilators, and has come forward to transfer the technology to industry for clinical usage as the country battles the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. A low-cost and portable critical care ventilator, "PRANA" ("Programmable Respiratory Assistance for the Needy Aid") is based on the automated compression of an AMBU (Artificial Manual Breathing unit) bag.

The system has a sophisticated control system that includes airway pressure sensor, flow sensor, oxygen sensor, servo actuator as well as expiration and PEEP (Positive End Expiratory Pressure) control valves, according to an interest exploration note posted on the website of Bengaluru-headquartered space agency.

The clinicians can select the ventilation mode and set the required parameters through a touch screen panel and monitor various parameters like pressure, flow, tidal volume and oxygen concentration on the same screen.

The ventilator can deliver the required flow of oxygen-air mixture to the patient's lung at a desired rate set by the clinicians.

It has a provision to attach external battery for backup during power failure.

ISRO said PRANA supports both invasive and non-invasive ventilation modes and is capable of giving mandatory breaths (controlled by ventilator) as well as spontaneous breaths (controlled by the patient).

A robust algorithm for controlled and safe ventilation of the patient is implemented which raises alarm and opens safety valves to prevent barotrauma, asphyxia and apnoea during the ventilation.

Alarm is also raised in case of wrong or improper connection of the ventilation circuit or inadvertent disconnection of the hose or sensors.

There are also provisions to attach bacterial viral filters at each interface to prevent cross-infection and the contamination of air.

The ICU grade pos-

itive pressure mechanical ventilator titled "VaU" (abbreviation of Ventilation assist Unit) can assist or replace the spontaneous breathing in patients under respiratory distress, ISRO said.

VaU is based on a centrifugal blower which draws in filtered ambient air, compresses it and delivers it to the patient to achieve ventilation and can therefore operate without a compressed pneumatic source.

Provision is also given in the ventilator to connect a high pressure oxygen source, from which oxygen is metered automatically, to achieve the desired oxygen concentration (FiO2) in the inspiratory flow.

Microcontroller based control module in the ventilator acquires signals from an array of sensors and commands the electro-pneumatic components to effect closed loop control.

VaU also comes with an intuitive Human Machine Interface (HMI) System running on a medical grade touch screen PC, which allows the operator to set and monitor various ventilation parameters in real

time.

A power supply unit, which can operate with 230VAC or an internal battery pack, is used to power the electro-pneumatic components, controller, and the HMI system of the ventilator.

VaU has been configured to operate in a variety of patient/ventilator triggered invasive and non-invasive ventilation modes and has provisions to detect fault conditions and raise alarms through the HMI system to alert the operator.

Gas-powered ventilator "Space Ventilator Aided System for Trauma Assistance (SVASTA)", a basic mode for non-invasive ventilation, is well-suited for emergency use for first line treatment and as transit ventilators inside vehicles, according to ISRO.

The basic design is simple, and the components can be easily mass produced for emergency use in pandemic like situations.

This ventilator, which runs on compressed air, is able to perform various ventilation conditions using manual mechanical settings.

The system is capable of pressure control ventilation (PCV) in its basic

Water Issues

A knowledge-base drained

Nearly a decade back, there used to a hugely popular reality show which did not rely on obnoxious individuals to hook audiences and treated Sunday afternoon viewers to lucid explanations by subject experts and inspirational stories of best practices. Hosted by Aamir Khan, Satyamev Jayate used to air on multiple TV channels and today we take off from one of the episodes which introduced the country to the water crisis developing in India. That was in the year 2012 and nine years hence, we are living the prediction despite the monsoon having opened with a vengeance. For those too young to have experienced days when television had something decent in it, the series has a Youtube playlist worth checking out. In the episode in question, one of the experts blamed the situation on the British rule of India and the administration it spawned. Unfortunately, the same administrative mindset prevails pushing the nation on the brink.

A specialist on water issues informs that when the British first landed and settled in India, they couldn't understand how a country that received barely 100 hours of rain on an average per year, could sustain such vibrant civilisations. For someone coming from a country which literally "pisses" [her words] rain all year round, this was definitely a culture shock. Also, the British spread across India from South up and noticed the water reserves of Himalayan glaciers which feed most of India's rivers much later. In the nearly three hundred years that the British spent in India [some years as traders, more than a century as the kingdom-grabbing East India Company and 90 as the Crown], the British tried to set things "right".

Unwilling to accept that the 'natives' had a better model for water conservation and sharing, the British administrators dismantled the traditional arrangements and started administering water supply [tourists, for example, would know of the many water tanks, called "kunds", which remain dry now and receive tourists across the dry belt of India]. The state-people collaboration which managed water in India was dismantled and British babus took control of supply. The first casualty was the sense of ownership among the people on their water sources and then was lost the traditional knowledge-base about water harvesting and conservation. This has remained the administrative model ever since and we suffer its consequences to this day in wide swathes of Bihar and UP and every pocket of Sikkim. Babudom, one needs to accept, has made a hash of more things than one.

Climate change and environmental degradation have contributed, but it has essentially been the cultural distancing of people from water sources which has created the water crisis. Images of rural folk walking hours to collect potable water brings to question the intelligence of the people in settling so far away from such a necessity as water. It is obvious that the people were not foolish, it is only that in the last century or so, the water has dried away from them. A water source they nurtured through generations, took less than a century of state control to trickle away from them. What is worrying is that the traditional knowledge base and traditional practices continue to recede further away from public memory.

Take Sikkim's example. Isn't it ironic that this land of plenty should have drought prone regions? Well, maybe having drought prone regions is not ironic, but what is ironic is that such regions are also among the more heavily populated. It is obvious that when people settled there, water not as scarce as it has now become. The moment RMDD or PHE pipe water to homes, the need to conserve the local source is no longer directly felt because the responsibility has shifted. Add to this the control Forest Department insists over forests and the traditional practices of forestry, which always ensure balance and conservation [not only of the forest, but also the catchment area of water sources], is lost as well. Before one realises, even Sikkimese, blessed with getting to live so close to nature end up believing in the myth of perennial water sources. There might not be water riots in Sikkim yet, although the rush at tanker supplies when the taps run dry can get quite aggressive, but if the connection between people and water is not returned to its traditional intimacy soon, the crisis will arrive here as well. The Dhara Vikas programme is a positive move towards this end, but for it to succeed, the bureaucracy will have to limit its role to facilitator and allow whatever can be salvaged from the traditional knowledge base to play the initiator.

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COVID-19 recovery: some economies will take longer to rebound – this is bad for everyone

GULCIN OZKAN

THECONVERSATION.COM

National economies are beginning to return to their pre-pandemic levels. But like the uneven impact of the pandemic itself, the pace of economic recovery is massively divergent across countries.

In 2020, the global economy contracted by 4.3%, with some countries doing considerably worse than others. For example, the UK economy suffered its worst recession in 300 years, shrinking by nearly 10%. The resulting impact on jobs was also unprecedented, and ten times worse than during the 2009 global financial crisis, with 114 million jobs lost globally in 2020.

More than a year on from the start of the pandemic, global prospects appear to be improving, according to recent reports by the OECD and the World Economic Forum. The data shows that some countries – such as the US, South Korea, Japan and Germany – are on course to recover to pre-pandemic levels of GDP per capita by the end of 2021.

But others, such as Spain and Iceland, both of whom suffered a huge blow from the collapse in tourism revenues, are expected to operate below pre-pandemic levels until at least mid-2023. Worse still, countries such as South Africa and Argentina are forecast to remain below their 2019 levels until the end of 2024, or well into 2025.

UNEVEN RECOVERY

Two main factors underpin the speed of a country's economic recovery from the pandemic: the strength of its COVID-19 policy response, and the success of its vaccination programme.

Unsurprisingly, the UK and the US, with the highest projected growth rates among advanced economies – 7.2% and 6.9%, respectively – also top the league tables for size of pandemic response policy packages and share of the population successfully vaccinated.

Leaders across the globe deployed a range of economic policy responses in the fight against the pandemic. Public spending measures included transfers to (low-income) households, grants and tax holidays to businesses, and additional funding for healthcare



systems. Some supplemented conventional interest rate cuts with unconventional measures such as liquidity injections and asset purchases. Many governments also used financial measures including foreign exchange interventions.

Importantly, policy action varied significantly across countries in type, size and scope. The pandemic hit emerging markets harder than advanced economies, unlike in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. Many poorer countries have found it harder to contain and mitigate the virus because of their limited healthcare capacity, and with less ability to expand public spending, suffered greater losses from the pandemic.

The divergence in recovery can also be linked to the varying success of national vaccination programs – as the OECD put it, "more jabs, more jobs". For example, while Israel has vaccinated about 60% of its population, in many other countries, fewer than one in ten have received any vaccinations. Israel's economy is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels by early 2022.

What is worse, many poor countries may see almost no vaccinations until at least the end of 2021. This – and the significant ongoing variation in both infection and death rates – suggests that the pattern of recovery from the public

health crisis will also be uneven.

GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES

This multispeed recovery from the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis will have repercussions, not just for the countries with slower recoveries but also for the global economy. On the health front, no country will be fully safe from the virus until all are safe. Local vaccination successes will not be sufficient to protect individual countries from potential further outbreaks, especially in cases of new variants.

But divergence in the speed and scale of economic recovery also entails substantial risk to individual countries as well as their trading partners. The COVID-19 economic crisis has exposed the fragility of existing international trade structures, where countries are highly dependent on one another. These interdependencies arise from the global value chains – production broken into multiple stages and completed in different countries – accounting for 70% of current global trade.

One example of the global economy's reliance on certain countries is the shortage of semiconductors, the microchips used in the production of every electronic device from mobile phones to home appliances. Lockdowns in the early days of the pandemic affected the major producers, including China,

creating a significant shortage of semiconductors. This led to production bottlenecks of electronic goods in many other countries, forcing a serious rethink of the costs versus benefits of global supply chains.

The pandemic and related economic crisis have also had different effects within national boundaries. In many countries, inequality has widened significantly in multiple ways. Less well-off households have lost out much more than those at the top of the income distribution, and there has also been a much more substantial contraction in contact-based service industries than in other sectors.

A significant rebalancing will be an important step in a successful transition to a post-COVID world. In terms of international policy coordination, the immediate challenge is how rich and poor countries can work together to increase the vaccine coverage rates in as many countries as possible. The COVAX programme – an international effort led by the WHO to provide vaccines to poor nations – and the problems it currently faces show that while such international coordination is possible, it is fraught with difficulty.

On economic recovery, too, national gains are unlikely to be long-lasting if a significant part of the world remains behind.

[the writer is Professor of Finance, King's College London]

Why politicians should be wary of publicly pursuing the Wuhan lab-leak investigation

MAXIME LEPOUTRE

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The theory that SARS-CoV-2 originally leaked out of a laboratory in Wuhan, China, is making a comeback – so much so that President Joe Biden has publicly ordered the US intelligence community to "redouble" its investigations into this hypothesis. Politicians, however, should be wary of publicly advocating the Wuhan lab-leak hypothesis. In doing so, they risk fuelling groundless and dangerous conspiracy theories.

Why might that be? The reason is not that the lab-leak theory is itself baseless and therefore unworthy of being pursued. Indeed, it was the predominant view until an investigation by the World Health Organization in February 2020 concluded that the lab-leak scenario was "extremely unlikely", and that it was far more probable the virus had naturally spread from humans to animals.

Yet its credibility has grown in recent weeks. In light of new evidence regarding the Wuhan Institute of Virology's research on coronaviruses, its inadequate safety practices, and the structure of the virus, many of the same sources that once dismissed the lab-leak theory as mere fantasy now regard it as plausible. Though this evidence is by no means proof, it arguably warrants further investigation.

But even if the lab-leak theory is credible and therefore worth pursuing, that doesn't mean that politicians should publicly pursue it. In doing so, they may accidentally lend credibility to the many COVID-19 conspiracy theories that also revolve

around a laboratory origin. For example, the conspiracy theory that SARS-CoV-2 is a Chinese biological weapon first created and later spread by the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

To be clear, the lab-leak theory pursued by the Biden administration differs from these conspiracy theories in important ways. For one thing, it sees the coronavirus spread as accidental, not deliberate. For another, it doesn't lay the blame exclusively at China's door. After all, the Wuhan Institute's coronavirus research was partly funded by the US National Institutes of Health.

ATTENTIVE READERS IN SHORT SUPPLY

Politicians have a responsibility to consider not just whether what they're saying is credible, but also how their words will be understood. And how their words will be understood depends importantly on how attentive their audience is. The problem is that in the era of social media, attentive readers may be in short supply. A 2016 study notably revealed that nearly 60% of stories shared on Twitter have not been read.

This matters for the lab-leak theory. A headline such as Biden Orders Investigation into Wuhan Lab-Leak Theory does not discriminate between the credible version of that theory and the conspiratorial version. The crucial differences between these two theories are therefore likely to be lost to a reader who – as many do – simply reads a headline and then shares the article.

The risk of conflation is not simply due to the audience's inattentiveness. It also results from how the lab-leak theory has previously been reported. Until recently, it was itself categorised as a conspiracy theory. In early March 2020, for in-

stance, a widely circulated open letter published in The Lancet condemned as "conspiracy theories" all hypotheses suggesting that SARS-CoV-2 doesn't have a natural origin.

This meant it was lumped together with the idea that the virus was deliberately created as a biological weapon. In turn, this creates problems when politicians later try to rehabilitate the lab-leak theory: if one supposed conspiracy theory turned out to be credible, some might wonder whether other related conspiracy theories might be credible too.

The problem with conspiracy theories isn't just that many people believe them. The bigger problem, a recent examination has shown, is that they cultivate an environment of uncertainty and disorientation. In other words, they create a situation where it's hard to tell what is credible and what isn't, which sources are trustworthy and which aren't. That uncertainty alone is enormously consequential.

If, for all I know, SARS-CoV-2 might have been an act of biological warfare by a foreign state, that already shapes what I'm willing to do. For example, I might be unwilling, because of my uncertainty, to use vaccines produced by that state.

The point is that, for COVID conspiracy theories to wreak havoc, they only need to be viewed as live hypotheses – hypotheses that are up for debate. Publicly saying that the Wuhan lab-leak theory is plausible, to a distracted public, in a context rife with closely related disinformation, runs the risk of making this the case. The Biden administration may be right that the Wuhan lab-leak theory deserves a closer look. But it should be cautious, for the time being, of publicly saying as much.

[the writer is Lecturer, Political Theory, University of Reading]

NITI Aayog report putting Bihar at the bottom rekindles special status demand from JD(U)

NACHIKETA NARAYAN PATNA, JUNE 07 (PTI): The long-standing demand for special status to Bihar has been rekindled by a recent report of NITI Aayog that put the state at the bottom and provided the opposition with fresh ammunition against the NDA which has been in power here for more than a decade.

The NITI Aayog had last week come out with its latest SDG (sustainable development goal) index placing states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh at the top while Bihar with 52 points out of a total of 100 was at the bottom, a spot it has been occupying for long.

On cue, JD(U) leader Upendra Kushwaha came out with a couple of tweets tagging Prime Minister Narendra Modi whom he requested to reconsider the demand for special category status, asserting that while the Nitish Kumar government in the state had done all it could to improve the overall economic situation, a real turnaround has eluded Bihar.

JD(U) leaders contend that the state was been adversely affected by the carving out of the resource-rich Jharkhand two decades ago.

Kushwaha, who is the JD(U)s parliamentary board president, is at present seen as a key ally



of the Bihar Chief Minister whom he had parted ways with nearly a decade ago but to whom he has returned, merging his Rashtriya Lok Samata Party, after a series of political somersaults.

Notably, vishesh rajya ka darza (special category status) has been a pet demand of Kumar, who has been vehemently raising the same since coming to power in 2005 and often made it a poll plank.

He had promised to support any government that fulfilled this demand while the Congress-led UPA ruled the Centre. He persisted in seeking special status, belying speculations that he will tone down his demand, on returning to the NDA-fold with an assertive Modi at the helm.

Kumar frequently wrote letters to the Centre highlighting the raw deal Bihar was getting under the new formula for distribution of

tax revenue among the states.

The BJP which has been saddled with similar demands emanating from other states since assuming power at the Centre, has however chosen to remain equivocal.

While the volatile Prime Minister has avoided touching upon the subject, late Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had pinned the blame on the 14th Finance Commission which had allegedly done away with the system of conferring special category status upon weaker states.

Jaitleys averment had triggered hopes that the record would be straightened by the 15th Finance Commission. However these were dashed when the commissions head N K Singh said it was a demand that could be met only by the National Development Council.

Incidentally, Singh, now with the BJP, had been a strong votary of

Bihars special status demand when he was serving his Rajya Sabha tenure as a JD(U) member.

Speculations that the latest demand could be a ploy by the JD(U) to flex its muscles, mortified by its diminution in strength in the assembly polls last year, have been dismissed by the party.

Re-induction of Kushwaha by Kumar, who is known not to easily forgive his deserters, is seen as an attempt to consolidate his Kurmi-Koeri base and send out a strong message to the BJP which has ended up being numerically stronger on account of LJP chief Chirag Paswan, who swears by his loyalty to the PM, having opened a front against the JD(U) in the assembly polls.

KC Tyagi, the JD(U)s principal national secretary general and chief spokesman underscored that special status has been our long-standing

demand. The Niti Aayog report is not a reflection on Nitish Kumars performance. Rather, it affirms our stand that Bihar has been wronged and must get its due.

Bihars score of 52 in the SDG rankings against a national average of 66 and Keralas impressive 75, was an eyeshore as even Jharkhand which was cared out of it has a higher ranking and score. However, the narrative woven by the JD(U) is that lack of resource allocations has made it even more difficult for Bihar to break out of the poverty trap it is in.

The opposition Grand Alliance, helmed by the RJD, however, however took potshots at Kumar over the report. RJDs supremo Lalu Prasad, the Chief Ministers arch rival came out with tweets laced with his characteristic acerbic wit and declaimed the double engine in Bihar is just a trouble engine.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Prasads son Tejashwi Yadav, who has taken over the party mantle from his father.

RJDs junior alliance partners like Congress and the Left also came out with statements asserting that the NITI Aayog report was proof that Nitish Kumars claims of having ushered in good governance were hollow.

14 new cases push COVID-19 tally of Andamans to 7,119

PORT BLAIR, JUN 7 (PTI):

The COVID-19 caseload in Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 7,119 as 14 more people tested positive for the disease in the Union Territory, a health department official said on Monday. Of the new patients, two have travel history and others were detected during contact tracing, he said.

The death toll remained at 122 as no new fatality due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours.

At least 18 people were cured of the disease during the period, taking the total number of recoveries in the archipelago to 6,894.

The Union Territory now has 103 active cases.

The local administration has been strict to contain the spread of the disease and has adopted an approach of tracking, testing and treating, he said, adding that people arriving here from the mainland are mandatorily required to under-



go COVID test.

Information, publicity and tourism secretary SK Singh urged people to cooperate with the administration to combat the spread of the virus. He appealed to them to maintain discipline by strictly adhering to COVID appropriate behaviour.

South Andaman is the worst-affected district as it currently has 97 active cases.

“Though COVID-19 cases have come down in the last few days due to the lockdown in the South Andaman region, the administration has not let its guards down.

Strict vigil is being maintained,” Singh said.

Altogether, 1,27,970 people have been inoculated and 17,394 of them having received both doses of the vaccine.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has conducted 3,90,574 sample tests for COVID-19 so far, and the positivity rate stands at 1.82 per cent, the health official said.

Instances of people violating COVID norms are still being reported from various parts of the territory and appropriate action is being taken by the law enforcing agencies, Singh added.

Mizoram logs 113 new COVID-19 cases, 2 more fatalities

AIZAWL, JUN 7 (PTI): At least 113 more people, including a two-month-old baby, tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram in the last 24 hours, taking the tally in the state to 13,679, an official said on Monday.

Two more fatalities due to the infection pushed the death toll to 55, he said. Two persons, aged 30 and 42, have succumbed to the infection while undergoing treatment at Zoram Medical College (ZMC), the official said.

Of the fresh cases, 75 were reported from Aizawl district, 17 from

Lawngtlai, nine from Lunglei, six from Kolasib, four from Saitual and one each from Mamit and Khawzawl.

The single-day positivity rate was at 15.14 per cent as 113 new coronavirus-positive cases were detected from 746 sample tests, he said.

Sixty-eight new patients were detected during contact tracing, while it is yet to be ascertained how others contracted the disease, the official said.

Of the fresh patients, 58 have developed symptoms of COVID-19.

Mizoram now has 3,279 active cases, while 194 people were cured of the disease on Sunday, taking the total number of recoveries to 10,345.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients stands at 75.63 per cent.

The northeastern state has so far tested 4,10,614 samples for COVID-19, the official said.

According to state immunisation officer Dr Lalzawmi, 2,66,613 people have been inoculated till June 5, and 52,191 of them received both doses of the vaccine.

“Sometimes dynasty better than nasty”: Mamata Banerjee’s nephew’s dig at BJP

KOLKATA, 07 JUN [NDTV]: Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee - newly promoted as General Secretary - took a swipe at the BJP Monday over its use of the “dynasty” tag in attacks on him and his status within Bengal’s ruling outfit. He mocked them for being “rattled” by his appointment and not practicing what they preached ; he said they hadn’t passed a law on the topic because they were “importing dynastic turncoats”.

“You ran a campaign on ‘dynasty’. People gave you an answer. I want to tell the BJP... sometimes a dynasty is better than being nasty,” Mr Banerjee said, referring to an election campaign littered with crass comments, personal attacks and sexist swipes.

“I don’t want any ministerial berth for the next 20 years. Can Jay Shah (Home Minister Amit Shah’s son, who was ap-



pointed BCCI Secretary in 2019) say the same about his BCCI post?” he asked.

Abhishek Banerjee - who is Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s nephew - was named the Trinamool’s General Secretary yesterday, in a move widely seen as reward for having played a key role in planning the party’s emphatic win over the BJP in the April-May Assembly election.

A vocal voice during campaigning, he was targeted by senior BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, with cries of “to-labaj bhaipo”, or “extortionist nephew”, as they doubled down on accusations of nepotism and nepotism-linked corruption.

A furious Mr Banerjee responded saying he would “walk to the gallows if found guilty

on any charge”. He also mocked the BJP for criticising ‘dynastic politics’ but refusing to pass laws against it, saying that was because their own leaders were guilty of the charge.

At today’s press conference Mr Banerjee dared the BJP to pass a law banning ‘dynasties’ in politics.

“You say Trinamool does not have presence outside Bengal... and then get rattled by

my appointment. I request Amlit Malviya (the BJP’s social media chief) to drive to his bosses’ homes in Lutyens Delhi and bring a bill that stops dynastic politics,” he declared.

“You people import dynastic turncoats. If you bring a bill on this, I will be the first to resign...” he added.

He also took a swipe at governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, who continued his long-running feud with the Trinamool by exchanging barbs with Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra on Sunday and today.

“You are a governor, you cannot differentiate between BJP and Trinamool. You have started attacking the Chief Minister within hours of her taking oath. This is not done,” he said, referring to a series of tweets over the past days attacking Ms Banerjee for “retributive post-poll violence”.

Covid lockdown extended for another week in U’khand

DEHRADUN, JUN 7 (PTI): The Covid lockdown in Uttarakhand has been extended for another week till June 15 with some relaxations. The period of current lockdown in the state was scheduled to come to an end at 6 am on Tuesday morning.

Extended for another week, the curfew would remain in force till 6 am on June 15, Chief Secretary Om Prakash had said in an order on Sunday.

The order authorises district magistrates to give relaxations in rural areas under their juris-

diction based on their assessment of the Covid situation.

However, people will be allowed to go to vaccination centres to get vaccine jabs during the lockdown if they have the document to prove their purpose.

Only 20 people with negative RT-PCR test reports not older than 72 hours can attend weddings, the order said.

Similarly, not more than 20 people can attend funerals.

Shops dealing in essential commodities like milk, meat, fish, fruits



and vegetables will open daily from 8 am to 12 pm during the extended curfew. PDS outlets will also open daily from 8 am to 12 pm whereas groceries and stationery shops will open from 8 am to 1 pm on June 9 and 14, the order said.

Liquor shops have also been allowed to open for five hours from 8 am to 1 pm on June 9, 11 and 14. However, bars will remain closed till further orders, it said.

All educational and coaching institutes, cinema halls, shopping malls, stadiums, gyms, and

restaurants will remain closed during the period.

People coming from outside the state will have to register on the Smart City portal and produce a negative RT-PCR test report not older than 72 hours on arrival.

Migrants returning to their villages will have to remain in local quarantine facilities for seven days after which they can go home depending on their symptoms.

Medicine shops and testing labs will remain open for 24 hours, while banks will be open from 10 am to 2 pm.

France opens graft probe into Lebanon’s central bank chief

PARIS (AP): The French national financial prosecutor’s office has opened a preliminary investigation into the actions of Lebanon’s central bank governor involving potential money laundering, the prosecutor’s office said Monday.

The French move came months after Switzerland started a probe into possible money laundering and embezzlement at Lebanon’s central bank, which is now at the center of an unprecedented financial crisis roiling the small Mediterranean country.

The French prosecutor’s office said the investigation around Riad Salameh was opened in late May involving potential charges of money laundering and association with an organized criminal group. It gave no fur-

ther details.

Salameh, 70, who has run Lebanon’s central bank for nearly three decades was for many years seen as the symbol of monetary stability in the tiny country. But Lebanon was in 2019 plunged into its worst economic and financial crisis. The Lebanese pound, pegged for more than 20 years to the dollar at 1,515, is now trading at nearly 13,000 on the black market.

Anti-government protesters now refer to Salameh — a former investment banker with Merrill Lynch — as a “thief” and protests have been repeatedly held outside his office in Beirut amid the crash of the local currency and contraction in the economy that crossed 20% in 2020, according to the

World Bank.

In January, Switzerland’s attorney general said he has asked Lebanon for cooperation into the probe of the central bank, without offering further details. It’s also not clear what prompted the Swiss investigation.

Local media reported over the past months that Salameh and his brother as well as one of his aides have been involved in illegal businesses, including money transfers abroad despite the capital controls imposed at home. Salameh had denied making such transfers.

Salameh, who has held the central bank post since 1993, has defended his role, alleging a systematic campaign meant to hold him responsible for the country’s financial crisis.

Central team reaches Bengal to assess cyclone damage

KOLKATA, JUN 6 (PTI):

A seven-member Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), which will assess the damage caused by cyclone Yaas in West Bengal by visiting affected areas, reached Kolkata on Sunday evening, an official said.

The team headed by S K Shahi, Joint Secretary

in the Ministry of Home Affairs, is scheduled to complete its assessment by June 9 and return to Delhi, he said.

On Monday, the IMCT will visit Digha and Mandarmani in Purba Medinipur district, where state government officials will give a presentation on the damage

caused by the cyclone, the official said.

The team is also likely to hold a meeting with the state Finance Department officials during its three-day visit.

Cyclone Yaas left behind a trail of destruction after making landfall in coastal Odisha and West Bengal on May 26.

Sasu wins US Women's Open

SAN FRANCISCO, JUN 7 (AP): Yuka Saso birdied the third playoff hole to beat Nasa Hataoka and become the second teenager to win the U.S. Women's Open after Lexi Thompson collapsed down the stretch.

Saso overcame back-to-back double bogeys early in the round to make the playoff. She then won it with a 10-foot putt on the ninth hole to become the first player from the Philippines to win a golf major on Sunday.

Saso matched 2008 winner Inbee Park as the youngest U.S. Women's Open champion at 19 years, 11 months, 17 days.

Both players made pars at Nos. 9 and 18 in the two-hole aggregate playoff, sending the tournament to sudden death back at the ninth hole. That set the stage for Saso to win it just up the road from Daly City, dubbed the Pinoy Capital of the United States for its large population of Filipinos.

Thompson, who had a five-stroke lead after the eighth hole, played the final seven holes in 5 over for a 75 that left her a stroke back. Her approach shot on the par-4 18th ended up in the bunker and then she missed a 10-foot putt to make the playoff.

The only other players to finish under par on the Lake Course at Olympic Club were Megan Khang and Shanshan Feng, who both were at 2 under.

High school junior Megha Ganne played in the final group but shot 77 and finished 3 over as the low amateur for the tournament.

Saso overcame a rough start to the final round with double bogeys on the second and third holes that seemed to knock her out of contention but she managed to steady herself with a birdie at No. 7.

Saso then made back-to-back birdies on the par-5 16th and 17th holes to get to 4 under and join Hataoka in the playoff. Hataoka used a run of three birdies in a four-hole span on the back nine that put pressure on Thompson.

Cantlay wins a playoff at Memorial without Rahm

DUBLIN (US), JUN 7 (AP): The emotion and intensity felt the same to Patrick Cantlay, whether it was his clutch 25-foot birdie putt to tie for the lead or his 12-foot par putt in a playoff that made him a winner again in the Memorial.

The handshake with Jack Nicklaus? As special as it was two years ago. That was as far as normalcy was allowed to go at a tournament that was as much about the guy who won as the guy who didn't play.

Plenty of drama. A little rain. No sign of Jon Rahm.

Some 24 hours earlier, as Rahm pulled away with a 64 to build a six-shot lead, Cantlay already was trying to figure out how low he would need to score to have a chance. And then Rahm was told off the 18th green Saturday evening that his COVID-19 test came back positive, knocking him out of the tournament.

I would much rather have faced him down today and shot an extremely low round and beat him that way, Cantlay said after closing with a 1-under 71 and beating Collin Morikawa (71) with a par on the first playoff hole.

But unfortunately, there's nothing I can do, he said.

I did everything I could with the cards I was dealt, and I really did a good job of focusing today on the task at hand and staying present. And that's all you can do in this game.

He did it one putt better than Morikawa, who missed a 6-foot par putt to extend the playoff.

The tour said Rahm had been in contact with a COVID-19 positive and was in its contact trac-



ing program, subjected to tests every day since Monday. Every test was negative until Saturday, after his rain-delayed second round.

He was informed after tying the 54-hole record at 18-under 198. His six-shot lead tied the Memorial record set by Tiger Woods. And then he was out of the tournament.

We're all devastated, Nicklaus said earlier Sunday.

I wish we could figure out how to give Jon three-fourths of the trophy.

Nicklaus also figured it would add another element for Cantlay and Morikawa to confront, having gone from a six-shot deficit to a share of the lead.

They both handled it fine, and the lead was exchanged among Cantlay, Morikawa and Scottie Scheffler, who bogeyed the final hole for a 70 to finish two shots out of the playoff.

All I had to do was focus on my game and go out and play golf. There's nothing else I could really change, Morikawa said.

I can't dictate anyone else's future or how they play or what's going on. So waking up this morning I felt great. I was ready to go play golf and see if I could win the tournament.

Morikawa surged ahead with an 8-foot birdie putt on the par-5 15th, while Cantlay missed birdie putts from 8 feet to tie him on the 15th, and then on the par-3 16th.

The round was halted for about five minutes because of a pop-up downpour while they were on the 17th green. When it resumed, Cantlay holed a 25-foot birdie putt to tie, and Morikawa stayed in the game with a 12-foot par.

Cantlay had a 25-foot birdie putt for the win on the 18th in regulation that grazed the right side of the cup, leaving them at 13-under 275.

Rahm reached 13 under on the 11th hole Saturday and kept going. How would he have fared Sunday is unknown. No one has ever lost a lead that large in the final round at Muirfield Village, though it has hap-

pened seven times on the PGA Tour, most recently by Dustin Johnson in Shanghai in 2017.

It was such a weird situation, so unfortunate, Cantlay said.

Everyone, me included, knows it would be totally different today if that hadn't happened. But there's nothing I could do about it. I tried as hard as I could to reset and refocus.

It led to the fourth victory of his PGA Tour career, and second this season. Cantlay also won the ZoZo Championship in California last October, rallying from a three-shot deficit to beat Rahm and Justin Thomas.

He becomes the seventh player to win multiple times at the Memorial, a list that starts with Tiger Woods winning five times and Nicklaus, the tournament founder, winning twice.

Morikawa won at Muirfield Village last year, just not the Memorial. He won in a playoff against Thomas at the Workday Charity Open, a one-time even when the pandemic forced the John Deere Classic to be

canceled.

In that tournament, Morikawa twice had to watch as Thomas had a putt on the 18th green to win, and he survived to win on the third extra hole.

This time, he escaped one birdie chance by Cantlay in regulation. On the 18th in the playoff, Morikawa had a sliver of mud on his ball and came up well short from the fairway into deep rough. He chipped out to 6 feet.

Cantlay was well right and hacked it out into a bunker, but his shot from the wet sand rolled out 12 feet. It was on the same line as his 25-foot birdie attempt in regulation, and this time he poured it in for par. Moments later, Morikawa missed his 6-footer and Cantlay let out a big exhale before going over to shake hands with Nicklaus.

There's a little something that I can't quite put my finger on that make it's feel a little different, Cantlay said.

"But I really hit a lot of clutch, solid shots today. And so I think I'll remember that mostly.

Pulisic scores in extra time, US beats Mexico 3-2



DENVER (AP): Christian Pulisic lifted a trophy for the second time in eight days, this time his first for the United States. Ethan Horvath, back in Colorado for the first time in three or four years, expected to watch the game from the bench and found himself saving Andrés Guardado's penalty kick — in the 124th minute!

The first CONCACAF Nations League final turned on an injury and not one or two but three video reviews.

"This is the perfect way to end the year," Pulisic said after his penalty kick in the 114th minute led the United States over Mexico 3-2 Sunday night in frantic finale of the first CONCACAF Nations League.

Or as U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter put it: "One of the classic, odd U.S.-Mexico games."

A testy match that was stopped for about three minutes in second-half stoppage time because of discriminatory fan chants at Empower Field also was marred by American attacker Gio Reyna getting hit on the face by a thrown object following Pulisic's goal.

"Total lack of respect for what's happening on the field and all effort that both teams are putting into the game," Berhalter said. "I think he's going to be OK, but he did take something to the head, and it could have been a lot worse."

Horvath, who a week earlier played his first international match since March 2019, entered in the 69th minute, seven minutes after starting U.S. goalkeeper Zack Steffen fell to the ground, clutching his left knee, after coming off his line in what seemed to be a routine manner to grab a through pass from Héctor Herrera that was too far for Uriel Antuna.

"If you're on the bench as a keeper, you don't expect to come in the game," said the 25-year-old Horvath, who had about 20 family and friends at the match.

Jesús Corona put 11th-ranked Mexico ahead 63 seconds in after a sloppy giveaway by defender Mark McKenzie, whose poor pass into Corona's path in the U.S. penalty area allowed the Mexican to break in alone on Steffen.

El Tri appeared to go up 2-0 in the 24th minute on a header by an unmarked Héctor Moreno, but a video review disallowed it for offside after Panamanian referee John Pitti consulted VAR.

Reyna, a son of former U.S. captain Claudio Reyna, tied the score in the 27th minute with his third international goal. The 18-year-old kicked in a rebound after Weston McKennie's header from Pulisic's corner kick hit a post.

Diego Lainez gave Mexico a 2-1 lead in the 79th, one minute after entering, when he cut inside from Tim Ream and beat Horvath.

By then Berhalter had changed tactics. He started five defenders that included Sergiño Dest as a wingback, a formation that could morph into a 4-3-3, then switched midway through the second half to four in the back.

Pulisic, fresh off of winning the Champions League with Chelsea on May 29, made the decisive move when cut inside the penalty area in the 108th minute and was pulled down by Carlos Salcedo.

Pitti did not initially signal a penalty but consulted a video review and then pointed to the spot. Mexico coach Tata Martino appeared received red card, apparently for putting a hand on an official during the review, and Hirving Lozano was given a yellow card for arguing after the decision.

Pulisic sent the ball to the upper corner past the left arm of goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa for his 16th international goal.

Pitti again did not make a call in the 119th minute when Luis Romo's header went off the left arm of McKenzie, whose arm was perhaps only slightly outstretched. Another lengthy wait for a video review followed.

"It plays with your head a little bit when it takes long for the ref to decide whether it's a PK or not," McKennie said, "and he didn't lose his head. He went with his gut and his instinct and his training."

Horvath waited to the last moment and dived right to bat away the penalty by Mexico's captain.

"It's been a tough season for him, and to come have a performance like that in his hometown was the stuff that storybooks write about," Berhalter said.

The U.S. survived an extended 11 minutes of stoppage time following the second extra period and beat Mexico in a competitive match for the first time since 2013 following a stretch of three losses and a draw, gaining confidence ahead of the start of World Cup qualifying in September.

"We're a young side and we need to learn how to win," Berhalter said. "It's also about the fight and spirit. .. They really showed the heart of champions."

Notes: Honduras beat Costa Rica 5-4 on penalty kicks after a 2-2 draw in the third-place match. Costa Rica goals from Joel Campbell in the eighth minute and Francisco Calvo in the 85th, and Honduras got goals from Edwin Rodriguez in the 48th and Alberth Elis in the 80th,

Copa America drama eclipses World Cup qualifiers

SAO PAULO, JUN 7 (AP): South American World Cup qualifiers involving bitter rivals Colombia and Argentina, and Paraguay hosting Brazil, are being overshadowed by a possible player revolt against taking part in the upcoming Copa America. The South American tournament is scheduled to be played June 13-July 10 in Brazil.

Copa America was originally set to be co-hosted by Colombia and Argentina. Colombia was forced to withdraw following social unrest and Argentina reportedly declined to host the continental tournament because of a worsening of the pandemic.

It will now be hosted by Brazil, even though more than 470,000 Brazilians have died so far from the coronavirus and analysts expect another wave of the virus to hit Brazil by late June.

On the field, Brazil leads the round-robin tournament with 15 points, four ahead of second-place Argentina. The top four teams automat-



ically secure a spot at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

PARAGUAY vs. BRAZIL

The post-match news conference of Brazil coach Tite in Asuncion is more anticipated than the game itself. After the Sele o's 2-0 home win against Ecuador, Tite said he and his players would make it clear whether they will participate in the next Copa America in a decision that mixes views on pandemic control and internal politics.

We want to speak after the match against Paraguay because we don't want to lose our focus,

Brazil captain Casemiro said Friday.

Brazilian media reports say Tite could resign before the tournament begins due to disagreements with the country's soccer confederation.

Supporters of Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro are calling for Tite to resign on social media. Bolsonaro has defied social distancing policies, claiming lockdown measures kill more than the virus.

The government confirmed Saturday night that Bolsonaro had assured executives of South American soccer body CONME-

BOL that Brazil will host the event no matter what.

Brazilian soccer confederation president Rogério Caboclo was suspended on Sunday for 30 days after an accusation of sexual harassment against him emerged. He denies any wrongdoing.

The suspension could be further extended as the committee investigates the accusation. Bolsonaro agreed Brazil could host the South American tournament after a request from Caboclo.

COLOMBIA vs. ARGENTINA
Argentina's soccer fed-

eration says the team will be present at Copa America as a reflection of "its sporting spirit throughout history, but did not make clear if the team's top players, including Lionel Messi, will be at the tournament.

All the staff of the Argentinian national team will work in unity to overcome this adversity that, unfortunately, affects all of us South Americans equally, the federation said.

It tweeted that it had received authorization to use its base in Buenos Aires for the tournament in Brazil.

We will follow the mandatory arrival at the Brazilian host city on the day before the (Copa America) match, it said.

About 5,000 fans are expected to attend Colombia's game at the Metropolitan stadium in Barranquilla despite still alarming coronavirus figures in the Andean nation.

Also on Tuesday, third-place Ecuador will face last-place Peru. Venezuela plays Uruguay, and Chile takes on Bolivia.

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Pair of Jerusalem activists freed after detention by Israel

JERUSALEM, JUN 7 (AP): Israeli police on Sunday detained two members of a prominent family in the contested Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem who led protests against attempts by Jewish settlers to evict dozens of Palestinian families from their homes in the area. The twin brother and sister were released later in the day. The arrests of Muna and Muhammad al-Kurd, 23, came a day after police detained a well-known Al Jazeera reporter covering a demonstration in the neighborhood. The reporter, Givara Budeiri, was held for four hours before she was released and sent to a hospital to treat a broken hand. It was not clear how her hand was broken, but her boss blamed police mistreatment.

Earlier this year, heavy-handed police actions in Sheikh Jarrah and other parts of east Jerusalem fueled weeks of unrest that helped spark an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

Those tensions are simmering again and could flare anew if Israeli ultranationalists follow through on plans to march Thursday through the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. Israeli police were expected to hold consultations on whether the parade, which was originally set to take place when the war erupted on May 10, would be allowed to proceed.

Renewed violence could complicate the task of embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political opponents, who formed a fragile and disparate coalition last week, of passing a parliamentary vote of confidence required to replace him and take office. A close ally of Netanyahu oversees the police.

In Sheikh Jarrah, Jewish settlers have been waging a decades-long campaign to evict the families from densely populated Palestinian



neighbourhoods just outside the walls of the Old City.

The area is one of the most sensitive parts of east Jerusalem, which is home to sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims and which Israel captured in 1967 and annexed in a move not recognised internationally. Israel views the entire city as its capital, while the Palestinians want east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Settler groups and Israeli officials say the Sheikh Jarrah dispute is merely about real estate. But Palestinians say they are victims of a discriminatory system. The settlers are using a 1970 law that allows Jews to reclaim formerly Jewish properties lost during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, a right denied to Palestinians who lost property in the same conflict.

The al-Kurd family in Sheikh Jarrah has been at the forefront of months of protests against the planned evictions.

Early Sunday, police took Muna al-Kurd, 23, from her home.

Her father, Nabil al-Kurd, said police stormed the house in large numbers and in a barbaric manner.

I was sleeping, and I found them in my bedroom, he said. Police then searched the house and arrested his daughter. Video posted on social media showed her being taken away in handcuffs.

The reason for the

arrest is that we say that we will not leave our homes, and they do not want anyone to express his opinion, they do not want anyone to tell the truth, he said. They want to silence us.

Police also searched for her brother, Muhammad, but he was not there. Later, he turned himself in to Jerusalem police.

The siblings' lawyer, Nasser Odeh, told journalists outside the police station that his clients were accused of disturbing public security and participation in nationalistic riots.

On Sunday evening, Muna al-Kurd was released. But before she was freed, police briefly clashed with a crowd outside the station, throwing stun grenades. Later Sunday, Muna posted on Instagram that her brother had been released as well.

The arrests came a day after Al Jazeera's Budeiri, wearing a protective vest marked press, was dragged away by police at a protest in Sheikh Jarrah.

According to witnesses, police asked Budeiri for identification. Colleagues said police did not allow her to return to her car to retrieve her government-issued press card. Instead, they said she was surrounded by police, handcuffed and dragged into a vehicle with darkened windows.

In video footage posted online, Budeiri can be seen in handcuffs, while clutching her note-

book and shouting. Don't touch, enough, enough.

Israeli police said entrance to the neighbourhood is limited due to the tense situation, and only accredited journalists are allowed in. They said that when Budeiri was unable to provide her press pass, police removed her. They added that Budeiri was arrested after becoming hostile and pushing an officer.

The Israel Police will allow the freedom of press coverage, provided that these are done in accordance (with) the law while maintaining public order," according to a statement. The statement did not reference her broken hand.

Budeiri was held for four hours before she was released and sent to the hospital, said Walid Omary, the Jerusalem bureau chief for Al Jazeera. In addition to the broken hand, Omary said Budeiri also suffered bruises on her body. He said her cameraman's video camera was also heavily damaged by police.

As part of her release, Budeiri is banned from returning to the neighbourhood for 15 days, Omary said.

They are attacking the journalists in east Jerusalem because they don't want them to continue covering what's happening inside Sheikh Jarrah," he said.

The Foreign Press Association, which represents hundreds of journalists working for international news orga-

nizations, said the treatment of Budeiri was the latest in a long line of heavy-handed tactics by Israeli police against the media in recent weeks. It said journalists have been hit by stun grenades, tear gas, sponge-tipped bullets and putrid-smelling water.

"We call on police to punish the officers who needlessly injured an experienced journalist and broke professional equipment. And once again, we urge police to uphold Israel's pledges to respect freedom of the press and to allow journalists to do their jobs freely and without fear of injury and intimidation," the FPA said.

Last month's war was triggered by weeks of clashes in Jerusalem between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a flashpoint holy site.

The war erupted on May 10 when Hamas, calling itself the defender of the holy city, launched a barrage of rockets at Jerusalem. Some 254 people were killed in Gaza and 13 in Israel before a cease-fire took effect on May 21.

Al Jazeera's acting director general, Mostefa Souag, noted that Budeiri's detention came after Israel's May 15 war-time destruction of a Gaza high-rise that housed the local office of Al Jazeera. The tower also housed The Associated Press' office.

Israel has alleged that Hamas military intelligence was operating from the building. The AP has said it has no indication of a purported Hamas presence and has called for an independent investigation.

Turkish mafia boss dishes dirt, becomes YouTube phenomenon

ANKARA, TURKEY (AP): From alleged drug trafficking and a murder cover-up to weapons transfers to Islamic militants, a convicted crime ring-leader has been dishing the dirt on members of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party through a series of tell-all videos that have captivated the nation and turned him into an unlikely social media phenomenon.

Sedat Peker, a 49-year-old fugitive crime boss, who once openly supported Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, has been releasing nearly 90-minute long videos from his stated base in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, making scandalous but yet-unproven drip-by-drip allegations, in an apparent bid to settle scores with political figures.

The weekly YouTube videos have been viewed more than 75 million times, causing an uproar, heightening concerns over Turkish state corruption and putting officials on the defensive. They have also exposed alleged rifts between rival factions within the ruling party and added to Erdogan's troubles as he battles an economic downturn and the coronavirus pandemic.

On Sunday morning, a couple in Istanbul were absorbed while watching Peker's latest release. They were among millions in Turkey who tuned in.

"I've added (Peker's videos) to the category of TV series I watch every week," Gulistan Atas said. "Just like a TV episode, I wait in excitement, and every week on Sunday, we prepare our breakfast when we get up and watch them along with our breakfast."

Clad in a waistcoat

or a half-buttoned shirt displaying a medallion, Peker taunts his opponents from behind a desk with neatly arranged notes, prayer beads and books, promising to bring their downfall using nothing more than a "tripod and a camera."

His initial videos targeted former Interior Minister Mehmet Agar and his son, Tolga, a ruling party lawmaker, whom he accused of raping a young Kazakh journalism student and later covering up her murder as a suicide. Mehmet Agar, Peker suggested, misappropriated a luxury marina that may have been used in drug trafficking operations. Agar later resigned from the marina's board.

Subsequent videos leveled accusations against business people and media figures close to the government, as well as former Prime Minister Binali Yildirim's son, claiming he was involved in drug smuggling from Venezuela. But the target of Peker's most vitriolic and mocking attacks is Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, whom he accuses of abuse of power and corruption while aiming to become Turkey's president. Peker justifies the tell-all by saying Soylu betrayed him despite the crime leader's help to defeat a rival faction within the ruling party.

All those implicated have rejected Peker's accusations.

In an explosive claim with international dimensions, the mob boss said that a former security advisor to Erdogan accused of leading a paramilitary force had sent weapons to Al-Qaida-linked militants in Syria. Erdogan hasn't yet addressed those claims although the government has in the past denied allegations that it had

armed jihadis.

Erdogan ignored the Peker videos for weeks, but broke his silence on May 26, when he dismissed earlier allegations by the mafia leader as a conspiracy against Turkey.

"We will spoil these games, these plots. No one should doubt that we will disrupt this devious operation," Erdogan said. "We pursue members of criminal gangs wherever in the world they flee to ... We will not leave these criminals alone until we bring them back to our country and hand them over to the judiciary."

Peker responded to Erdogan that week and suggested that the Turkish strongman could be the focus of future videos. He later said he would speak about Erdogan after his meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden on June 14 so as not to "weaken his hand." In his latest video Sunday, he said his revelations would be conducted with respect and wouldn't hurt the state itself.

"Will finding and bringing me (to Turkey) change the reality," he said.

Opposition parties, meanwhile, have seized on the allegations to demand the resignations of implicated figures as well as parliamentary and judiciary inquiries.

The ruling party and its nationalist allies have blocked opposition bids to launch parliamentary inquiries into Peker's claims as well as into the arms smuggling allegations.

Authorities have issued a new warrant for Peker's arrest.

Can Selcuki, the director of polling and analysis platform Turkiye Raporu, said of Peker: "We shouldn't forget that he's a criminal," but explained the videos' popularity as a need for information.

Bulgaria's leader makes new push to fight endemic corruption

SOFIA, BULGARIA (AP): Bulgaria's interim prime minister on Monday urged the government to redouble its efforts to fight endemic graft, calling for changes in prosecutors' offices, the judiciary and all law enforcement agencies.

Prime Minister Stefan Yanev spoke at a meeting of the government security council that he convened to discuss new anti-corruption policies following U.S. sanctions on Bulgarian officials and businessmen for their allegedly "extensive" roles in corruption.

Last week, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act against the former member of parliament and media mogul De-

lyan Peevski; oligarch Vassil Bozhkov; and former national security official Ilko Zhelyazkov for their alleged roles in public corruption.

It also imposed sanctions on 64 entities allegedly linked to them, saying the move was its single biggest action targeting corruption to date.

The sanctions on the Bulgarians and companies effectively prevents them from accessing the U.S. financial system, freezes their U.S. assets and bars Americans from dealing with them.

Yanev said the Bulgarian government will try to minimize the political and the economic risks for the country from the U.S. sanctions.

"We must protect state-owned companies from financial

sanctions being imposed. To this end, we must prevent bank transactions with these investigated persons, so that businesses and state-owned companies are not blocked," Yanev said.

He admitted, however, that the U.S. sanctions are a serious signal that corruption in Bulgaria has deep roots in the country's political and economic system and the consequences of that already go beyond the country's borders.

Bulgaria, a member of the European Union and NATO, has repeatedly been reprimanded by its Western partners for failing to effectively fight corruption. Transparency International, a corruption watchdog, has declared Bulgaria the most corrupt country in the

27-nation EU.

Yanev said the corrupt environment in Bulgaria not only destroys the country's international authority, it undermines its political system and the foundations of its democracy, making it dysfunctional and inefficient.

"There is no way we can have a stable political system, a prosperous economy, or a functioning social system without solving the fundamental problems with corruption," he said.

The interim government, appointed after an inconclusive general election in April, has made a series of revelations of alleged corruption involving the previous government under former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov.

VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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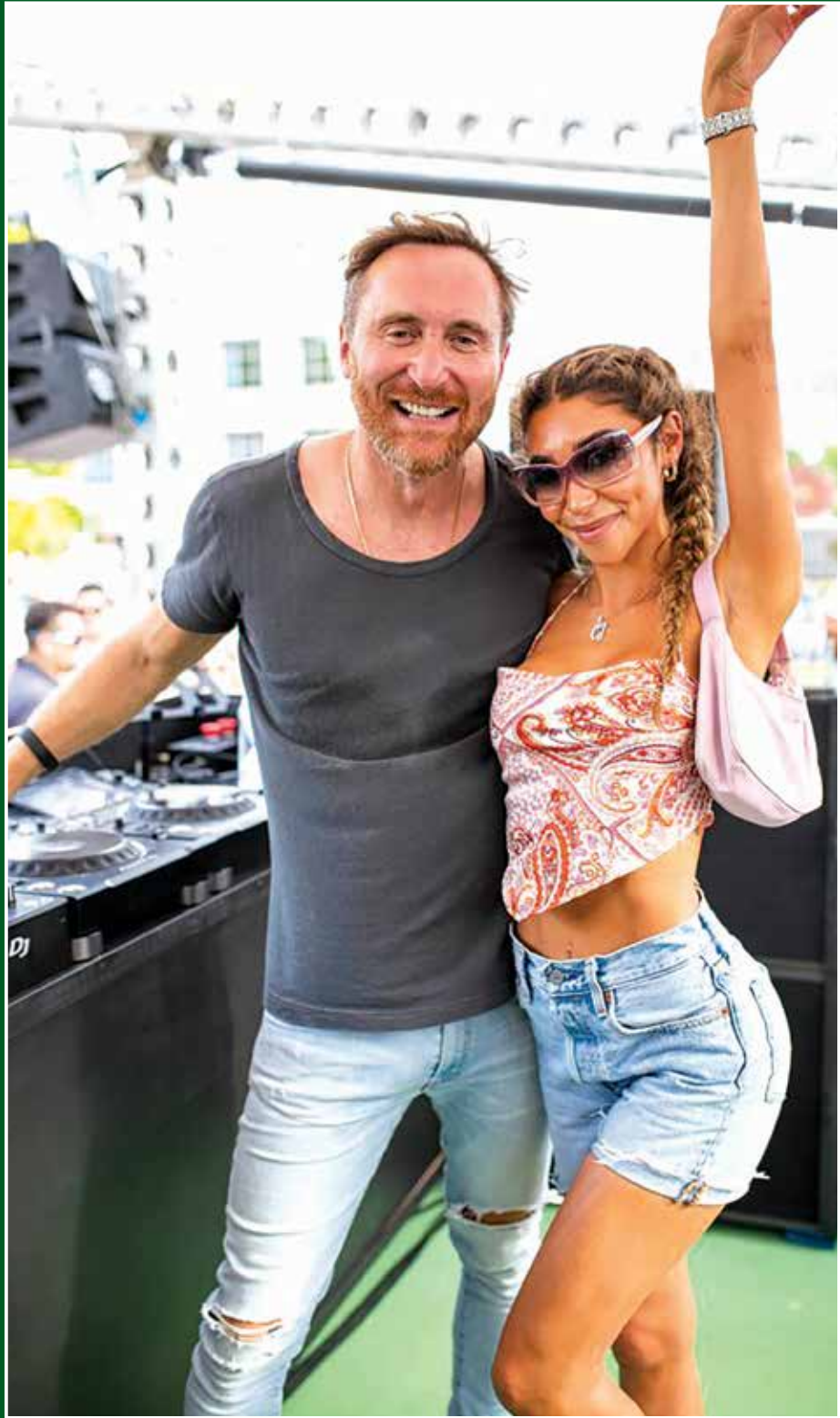
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PARTY TIME! DJ David Guetta and actress Chantel Jeffries were living it up at Strawberry Moon in Miami.

Logan Paul Reacts to Those Memes About His Boxing Match With Floyd Mayweather

Logan Paul clearly heard the jokes people were making about his boxing match with Floyd Mayweather. Logan Paul is weighing in after the world watched his boxing match against Floyd Mayweather. The 26-year-old YouTube personality took to the ring against the 44-year-old boxing legend on Sunday, June 6, and the exhibition event at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami lasted the full eight rounds. Since there was no knockout and no judges to score the fight, there was no official winner, although ESPN scored the bout 78 to 74 in favor of Floyd. “He’s better than I thought he was,” Floyd said after the fight. “I was surprised by him tonight. Good work. Good little guy.” For his part, Logan was proud of the fact that he remained upright for eight three-minute rounds against a boxer who was undefeated in 50 previous professional bouts before retiring in 2017. “I don’t want anyone to tell me anything is impossible ever again,” Logan said afterward. “The fact that I’m in here with one of the best boxers of all times proves the odds can be beat.” Among the litany of social media reactions were tweets from Logan’s younger brother Jake Paul, also a boxer, who was adamant that

his sibling had pulled off the upset. “50-1,” Jake tweeted, a reference to Floyd’s 50 previous wins. **“HOLY F--K. MY BROTHER JUST BEAT FLOYD MAYWEATHER.”** A number of individuals posted memes referencing the fact that the two fighters spent some of the fight leaning against each other and appeared to be hugging. Clearly, Logan noticed these memes. Just before the fight, he reposted an illustration to his Instagram Story that depicted himself and Floyd engaged in a kiss. Then, after the fight was over, Logan reposted a Barstool Sports screenshot from the match that showed him resting his head on Floyd’s shoulder with his eyes closed while both guys had their arms wrapped around each other. “Having a heart to heart with your boy at 3am after drinking all the beers,” Barstool Sports’ caption read. Logan shared the post but did not add any message of his own. Earlier in the day, the social media figure tweeted that when he moved to L.A. five years ago, his dream was to become the biggest entertainer in the world. “I had no idea HOW or WHEN it would happen, but after 6 years of manifestation, it’s happening,” Logan wrote. “Life is a wild ride.”

A journey back through the Kardashians as their TV show ends

NEW YORK (AP): It’s almost time for all those famous Kardashians to shuffle off to Hulu and new projects as their 20-season reality TV mainstay comes to an end. But before they do, here’s a journey back through the tears, tantrums and togetherness that propelled the “Keeping Up with the Kardashians” clan to superstardom: **THE MEN & THE MARRIAGES** With five sisters and a brother, along with the Kris and Caitlyn drama, the years have taken us through many a man, a woman or two, and a myriad of love tangles. And the action started at the get-go. The very first episode references the sex tape with Brandy brother Ray J that launched the show and their mega-careers. Before that, there was Kim’s first husband, music producer Damon Thomas, followed by a 72-day marriage to second husband, basketball player Kris Humphries, and a third trip to the altar with Kanye West. All three unions ended in divorce. Kim’s divorce from Humphries dragged on far longer than the marriage, threatening to keep her legally tethered to Humphries at the birth of her first child, with West. That didn’t happen. North West was born two months after mom’s second divorce was finalized in 2013. And that’s just one sister! There’s Kourtney’s on-again, off-again relationship and three kids with Scott Disick, who makes his first appearance in Kardashian TV land on Episode One. The two never married amid his alcohol and drug abuse scandals, but they co-parent and he’s a die-hard on the series. Disick has become a fan favorite to some as the K family has embraced him as one of their own. Sister Khloe married basketballer Lamar Odom in 2009 and filed for divorce in 2013, but she withdrew the papers after Odom suffered a drug overdose and went into a coma for several days. He was found slumped on the floor of a Nevada brothel. The divorce was finalized in late 2016. Khloe never married the father of her child — another basketball player, Tristan Thompson. He cheated on her while she was pregnant — and again with her younger half-sister Kylie Jenner’s best friend, Jordyn Woods. But Khloe and Tristan are now more than a little friendly and co-parenting 3-year-old True, even quarantining together during the pandemic. Are you keeping up? Let’s not forget Kylie’s relationship with rapper Travis Scott. They never married but also have a child together. And there was Kylie’s romance with Tyga, who just happens to have a child with Blac Chyna, who just happens to have a child with Kardashian bro Rob. Does your head hurt yet? Chyna and Rob had a tailspin of their own, leading him to post revenge porn on Instagram that got him banned from the platform. Kardashian stepparent Caitlyn Jenner is OG Caitlyn publicly came out as transgender in a Diane Sawyer interview in April 2015. **NAME THOSE CHILDREN** The Kardashian-Jenner clan has oh so many kids, and they’re creative



name-pickers. Caitlyn has six children with three successive wives, including Kylie and Kendall with Kris. Kris had four children with her first husband, the late O.J. Simpson attorney Robert Kardashian before she divorced him, too: Kourtney, Kim, Khloe and Rob. Kim had three kids following North: Saint, Chicago and Psalm. Oldest sister Kourtney has her three with Scott: Mason, Penelope and Reign. There’s also Khloe’s True, Kylie’s Stormi and Rob’s Dream. Some of the Kardashians brought viewers along while giving birth, and we’ve been treated over the years to home movies showing Kris bringing children into the world. A 12-year-old Kendall watched herself being born. Recently, during the final season, 11-year-old Mason watched his mom pull him into the world herself. **SPIN-OFFS OF SPIN-OFFS** They’re in L.A. They’re in Miami. They’re in New York. No, wait, the Hamptons. Part of keeping up has been chasing all the spin-offs. Is there a record number? It depends on how spin-off, franchise and canon are defined. But it certainly is a lot in the reality TV genre, and several had various sisters “taking” various cities. In all, there were 11 spin-offs on TV — many short-lived. Like the show, they were driven by Ryan Seacrest Productions and the E! network. The first was “Kourtney & Khloe Take Miami” in 2009. It morphed into “Kourtney & Kim Take Miami” after Khloe spun herself back into real life to do other work. There was a plethora of bikinis and big boats as the ladies sought to broaden the reach of their boutique Dash with new locations. True fans, especially Scott watchers, will remember the 2013 web series “Lord Disick: Lifestyles of a Lord” that was shown weekly in the third season of all that Miami taking. Scott bought himself the royal title in 2012 while on a trip to London and showed off his high-life trappings like fleets of fancy cars while offering tips on how we, too, can live like lords. In 2011, “Khloe & Lamar” began as the two tried to figure out married life. And there were three seasons of the fitness fest “Revenge Body with Khloe Kardashian” after the marriage didn’t work out. Khloe also had a short-lived talk show, “Kocktails with Khloe.” Kris briefly had an eponymous talk show in 2013, culminating in an appearance by Kanye West and his reveal of the first photos of North. The Fox network did not offer her a second season. After Caitlyn came out, she got her own show: “I Am Cait.” It was a serious dive into her transition and whether she was up to being a role model as new friends educated her on issues facing the trans community. It was canceled after two seasons amid low ratings. **ROBBERY, NUDITY & MORE MOMENTS** Perhaps the scariest of all developments was Kim’s 2016 armed robbery in a luxury Paris flat during fashion week. Season 13 of the series took on the case and the emotional aftermath. She has openly discussed her terror at being tied up at gunpoint and robbed of her jewels. Kim said she thought she was going to die. Among their far happier moments: All those over-the-top birthday bashes, lavish weddings and baby showers, let alone the weddings themselves. Two of Kim’s weddings were on air and in the news. Khloe’s 2009 wedding with Odom a month after they met was featured on Season 4. After the Khloe-Lamar nuptials, the two bought a dream house while Kim was still in a condo. Just sayin’. Mansion is now Kim’s middle name. The sisters are also fond of posing for photos sans clothing, though Kim wasn’t always comfortable with the idea. Soon after turning that sex tape into gold, an up-and-coming Kim had a Playboy magazine moment, appearing on the cover of the December 2007 celebrity issue. After an initial photo shoot, Playboy’s Hugh Hefner came back for more. “Does she have to take her clothes off,” Kris asks Hef in the show’s first season. “Oh yes,” he responds. They compromised: Kim posed naked, strategically draped in long strands of pearls. Kylie also landed on the cover of Playboy, in 2019 wearing nothing more than a cowboy hat with a shirtless Travis in jeans. And then there’s Kendall. The super-model — along with an entire world of other celebrities — has taken her share of nudes and has weathered a few scandals of her own, though her love life has been on the down-low in comparison to her siblings. There was her ill-fated Pepsi commercial in 2017, when she hands a frontline lawman a can of soda during a protest. The imagery was bashed as stolen from the Black Lives Matter movement. It was pulled and Kendall sobbed an apology on air. Kylie and Kendall were accused of exploitation the same year for superimposing their faces onto images of Tupac, Notorious B.I.G. and a host of other music icons for a line of \$125 T-shirts. They pulled the merch. Fans need not worry. The series is ending, but this famous family isn’t going anywhere.

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES: Nothing in our life is without a purpose, especially not our closest ties. Today, you're being asked to honour both your family and your soul squad. The people who make your days a little more tolerable and give you a reason to not hate on the world every day. It's true that you may be facing some differences in the interpersonal front right now, but these differences are merely an invitation to look within and do the work, Aries. The gift of unconditional love and acceptance will help both you *and* those around you thrive, beautiful. **TAURUS:** Something to reflect upon as you sip on your morning chai, Taurus: Is it we who choose the path or does the path choose us? A little bit of both is what we believe in the Vogue HQ. The reason we say this is because what is a vibrational match for us will always find its way into our physical reality. So, embrace the opportunities that are being presented to you. Be open to what the winds of change are propelling you towards. You are prepared for this grand change. Call upon your higher self and get ready to take action! **GEMINI:** You win some, you lose some, and that's just the way life unfolds! Instead of thinking of your failures as a source of shame, embrace them as your biggest teachers. This will help you move forward despite the current fluctuations in your reality and focus on what you came here to achieve, Gemini. PS: Something tells us you have the power and potential to turn your fate around.

CANCER: What are you giving your attention to, Cancer? We repeat: what are you giving your attention to? The more you focus on the lack, the more you will give it power. Redirecting your focus towards the bounty within and without, on the other hand, will help you make space for miracles. What the cards want you to remember is that you are the co-creator of your reality, and the power to bring about a magnificent shift is already within you. **LEO:** Not everything works out in the way we like it to, and that's okay. Embrace the failures as a part of your learning curve—your greatest teachers, if you may. Remember, you are where you are because of the times you slipped and fell. A good way to transmute the energy of the past is to write yourself a letter acknowledging all the ways in which you have grown since you first started walking this path. **VIRGO:** Some of you are still obsessing over your past and it shows, Virgo. Here's the thing, honey: if things had to work out, they would have, despite your resistance. The fact that they haven't proves that what you wanted was never a vibrational match. Word for the wise: let go with love and remind yourself that what you're making place for is far greater than what you have left behind. **LIBRA:** It's that time of the year again. Multiple planets are in retrograde and we're waiting to be hit by yet another eclipse. To expect people to be at their best behaviour would be an act

of tomfoolery, Libra. So, it's a good idea to channel your inner Zen master and watch the drama unfold. What you want to remember now and for the rest of the season: when people say mean or hurtful things, it has everything to do with their own insecurities and little to do with you. **SCORPIO:** If the offer at hand looks too good to be true, it's because it is. But, that doesn't mean you're not worthy of it, Scorpio. So, resist the urge to doubt your power and potential, lest you end up sabotaging your own growth. Given that we're in the midst of retrograde season, some of you could be visiting the attic of your imagination and taking a look at the ideas you never quite set into motion. But, today is a new day, baby, one that is synonymous with hope, optimism, and infinite possibilities! **SAGITTARIUS:** Big risks equal big payoffs. That's been the mantra of your life all along. The good thing is, your physical reality is beginning to bear witness to all the work that you've been putting in. For some of you, this could manifest as a major level up on the career front. Others may even find themselves sharing their work on a public platform *and* receiving global appreciation for this. You are deserving of both success and abundance, Sagittarius. So open the door for what has always been yours! **CAPRICORN:** Nothing that takes place in our reality is truly random. Every event, major or minor, is connected to our pre-birth plan that we co-weave with our ancestors in the

spirit realm. So, instead of playing the blame game, walk with awareness. Accept what the darkness is bringing your attention to at this moment. Remembering that each challenge is an opportunity to grow will help you power through all the changes that you are going through at the moment. **AQUARIUS:** Our spirit guides are a chatty bunch. When they're in agreement with our actions, they send us one affirmation after another. Remember when that song on the radio echoed your thoughts to perfection, Aquarius? When we betray the plan that was written in the stars for us, on the other hand, the red flags never fail to show up. It all comes down to how aware we're willing to be. Word for the wise: take a moment to recognise that which isn't in alignment with your soul mission (no matter how good it looks on paper). **PISCES:** Katut, the medicine man in Eat Pray Love, famously said, "Sometimes, to lose your balance for love is a part of living a balanced life." Just the kind of wisdom you need to imbibe today! You've been trying to do everything by the book, Pisces, obsessing over the ideas of perfection and external validation. So, why not change the game a little? Why not bring a little more laughter and play into the equation? Here are some ways in which you can break your own spell: make grand declarations of your love publicly, wear sequins for a walk around the block and devour cake for breakfast. PS: You're going to love every minute of this lunacy!