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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Water shortage at multispeciality hospital delays dialysis in Gangtok

SURAJ LIMBOO

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

Shortage of water at SSTNM Hospital in Sochyagang today left dialysis patients waiting for the whole day. Dialysis started only at around 3 pm today. Dialysis machines require consistent water supply to function. Patients from in and around Gangtok were waiting the whole day while those from outside the capital, had to return home because of the delay.

Some of the kidney patients who came for dialysis were senior citizens and some of them were suffering from other diseases including high blood pressure and diabetes.

The patients were told that dialysis would have to go on till midnight since the process takes around 4 hours for one patient. This had many



worried about how they would return home with no taxis available that late in the night, arranging food, etc.

Phurba Sherpa, a senior citizen from Upper Tumin, who is

undergoing dialysis, was worried about how he would return home late in the night.

Similarly, Suk Prakash Limboo from Samdong, West Sikkim, said that he faced many

problems when the dialysis process did not start on time and he also requested the hospital authority and Sikkim government to take this matter seriously. He said that this was the second

time such an incident has happened.

Summit Times tried but could not contact the medical superintendent of the hospital till the time of the filing of this report.

Sikkim's butterflies in your pocket



AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

The Butterflies of Sikkim, a pocket guidebook by butterfly enthusiasts Nosang M. Limboo, Sonam P. Sherpa and Sonam W. Lepcha, was released by Soreng-Chakung MLA, Aditya Golay, at his office here at Sikkim Legislative Assembly today.

The guidebook, an initiative of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Students Wing, is pegged as the ideal souvenir from Sikkim for tourists.

It has been jointly published by the Thamylok Putali Charphemba Famlyap (TAPCF) Butterfly Enthusiasts of Sikkim, with photographs contributed by butterfly enthusiasts from all over Sikkim and compiled by the trio.

MLA Aditya Golay, on behalf of the SKM Students Wing,

congratulated the team for taking out the pocket guide, remarking that it will be beneficial for students, amateur butterfly enthusiasts and tourists.

"Sikkim is home to 720 species of butterflies and the pocket guide aims at generating awareness on a larger scale. This book will be beneficial to those interested in butterflies and encourage more people, especially the Sikkimese youth, to study and document butterflies found in Sikkim. The pocket guide will also be sent to schools when they reopen," the MLA said.

He also urged students and enthusiasts from other fields to come up with similar pocket guides and assured that the SKM Students Wing will fully support such endeavours.

Co-author and SKM Students wing joint

secretary, Nosang M. Limboo, explained that the pocket guide is a collection documenting 100 butterflies found in Sikkim and designed as a quick reference guide in the field.

He thanked SKM Students Wing for its support and urged people to support the effort.

Sonam Wangchuk Lepcha further informed that the research and documentation process had begun in 2014 after which it took three months to compile the book.

The book release event was also attended by SKM Students Wing president Pema Chopel Bhutia, SKM north-east district convener Tirtha Sharma, Additional Political Secretary to CM Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha and SKM CEC vice president Bhim Kumari Sharma.

Sikkim's Covid toll climbs to 333 with two more deaths

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

Active Covid cases in Sikkim spiked to 3,075 with 277 new cases being reported in the 24 hours ending 8AM Tuesday. Over the same period, Sikkim also recorded two more deaths, both at STNM Hospital, to take the Covid toll here to 333.

Hospitals also saw slightly higher than average new admissions with 23 Covid patients getting admitted as

against the average of 11 new admissions that were being reported on a daily basis over the recent weeks.

Currently, there are 111 Covid patients admitted in hospitals across the State, 14 of whom are in the ICU.

On the other hand, 170 more people were discharged from home and facility isolation on Monday after making full recoveries from Covid to further improve the number

of recovered cases in Sikkim to 21,941.

Out of the 277 new cases, 98 were registered in East District, 101 in West District and 78 in South District. There were no new cases in North Sikkim. Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 detected here since 28 Feb, 2020, has accordingly reached 25,616.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance

Programme of the Health Department 277 cases were picked up from the testing of 1,789 samples on Monday, giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 15.5%.

While 153 of these cases were found in RT-PCR testing of 938 samples, 123 others tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 848 samples and one more case was reported in TruNat testing of three samples.

Centre seeks extension till Jan 09 for framing Citizenship Law rules

NEW DELHI, 27 JUL

[PTI]: The central government has sought an extension till January 9 for framing rules of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was passed by Parliament in 2019, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai informed Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

He was replying to a question from Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on whether the government had missed the deadline to frame and notify CAA rules and the steps taken in this context.

"The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) has been notified on 12.12.2019 and has come into force w.e.f. 10.01.2020," the minister said.

"The Committees on Subordinate Legislation, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have been requested to grant further extension of time up to 09.01.2022 to frame the rules under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019," Mr Rai said.

The CAA envisages to grant Indian nationality to persecuted non-

Muslim minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

This is the fifth extension sought by the government for framing of these rules.

According to the Manual on Parliamentary Work, the rules for any legislation should have been framed within six months of presidential assent or seek extension.

The objective of the CAA is to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities like Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Those from these communities who had come to India till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution there, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

After the CAA was passed by Parliament, widespread protests were witnessed in different parts of the country leading to deaths of nearly 100 people in police firing and related violence.

Prabhakar Golay takes office as West District Cricket Committee president



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

Prabhakar Golay has been elected president of West District Cricket Committee of Sikkim Cricket Association [SICA]. The election was conducted in a meeting held at Pelling, West Sikkim, on 26 Jul, a press release informs.

The meeting was chaired by president SICA, Lobzang G Tenzing and co-chaired by treasurer SICA, Naresh Kr Agrawal. The meeting was also attended by Chairman PHE Department, Hari Narayan Subedi, Additional Political Secretary to CM (West), Madhusudan Sharma, Garib Jankalyan Prakosta Advisor, Deepesh Bhandari amongst

others. The newly elected executive body of WDCC has Ugen Palzor Bhutia as vice president, Samir Tewari as secretary, Abhishek Pandey and Dil Bir Subba as joint secretaries and Chandan Kr Gupta as treasurer, the release mentions.

The meeting was addressed by Ringzing Namgyal Bhutia, KN Bhutia and Naresh Kr Agrawal wherein each of them spoke on different topics like district body responsibilities, head office and district coordination and SICA financial rules and regulations.

The new president, Mr Golay, gave his acceptance address and promised to

work sincerely for development of cricket in West district. He along with the new secretary have also decided to revamp the organisation.

Two cricket bowling machines were handed over to the new president for Soreng subdivision.

President SICA, in his address, stressed on building a strong district body which, he said, is the essence and foundation of all sports bodies. The transparency and efficiency of SICA has been recognised by all and it is the duty and responsibility of the younger generation to take it forward, he added.

He said that Prabhakar Golay and Sonam Gyaltzen Tenzing are founder members of

Aakraman FC and their contribution to sports cannot be ignored as the club has become one of the few professional A division football clubs in Sikkim.

The president thanked the ad-hoc committee, sponsors and dignitaries of West district for their support and expressed hope that they will continue to support cricket development in West Sikkim.

President SICA also visited Kyongsa ground to oversee the current SICA trials and coaching camp. He and treasurer SICA along with other members visited the office of WDCC. He sanctioned the rent and office furniture for WDCC.

Bojoghari School's Swarnima Tiruwa wins SOA Online Slogan & Poster Competition

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 27 JUL:

Swarnima Tiruwa of Bojoghari Senior Secondary School has emerged as the winner of the Slogan Writing and Poster Competition organized by Sikkim Olympic Association [SOA] in collaboration with National Service Scheme [NSS] Cell, Sports & Youth Affairs Department under #Cheer4India Campaign for NSS volunteers. Swarnima's slogan and poster "Sweat to Glory" won the first prize.

More than 300 NSS volunteers took part in the competition.

Kunga Dolma Bhutia of Yangyang SSS and Prava Tamang of Sikkim University stood on the second and third positions, respectively. Kunga's poster read "No matter how hard it is right now, think of what the result will make you feel" while Prava's poster read "Kanchenjunga kabhi jhoohta nahin, Tarundeep kabhi chookta nahin."



Five consolation prizes were presented to Dibya Thapa of Dentam SSS, Bandana Rai of Sikkim Govt College of Nursing, Samir Gurung of Sikkim University, Anjana Chhetri of Lingmoo SSS and Umapati Bhandari of Nar Bahadur Degree College, Tadong.

The organisers gave away cash prizes of Rs 15000, Rs 10,000 and Rs 5000 to the first, second and third place winners of the competition, respectively. Cash prize of Rs 1000 each as consolation prize was given to five participants. The cash prizes were sponsored by Sikkim Olympic Association.

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Governor felicitates Sikkim House personnel in Delhi



SUMMIT REPORT

NEW DELHI, 27 JUL:

Governor Ganga Prasad felicitated the Resident Commissioner, officers and staff of Sikkim House today for the work done on State's response to preparation to handle Covid-19 pandemic.

The felicitation was held at a special function hosted at Sikkim House, New Delhi, a press release from Raj Bhawan informs.

A Certificate of Appreciation was also handed over to the Sikkim House staff for their relentless work

during the pandemic.

The Governor encouraged and appreciated the work carried out by the officers and staff of Sikkim House "gave his blessings to employees of Sikkim House to continue doing the good work," the release adds.

Amid Assam-Mizoram border row, Centre's statement in Parliament



NEW DELHI, 27 JUL

[NDTV]: Assam is dealing with boundary disputes with four states, including Mizoram, and inter-state border disputes can "only be resolved with the cooperation of state governments involved in the matter", the Home Ministry told parliament today, adding that the centre "just acts as a facilitator in such disputes".

"There are boundary disputes arising out of demarcation of boundaries and claims and counter-claims over territories have arisen between states," Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said in a written reply.

As per the data available with the government, he said, out of seven boundary demarcation issue, four pertain to Assam with four different states. "There are disputes over territories between Haryana-Himachal Pradesh, union territory of Ladakh-Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra-Karnataka, Assam-Arunachal Pradesh, Assam-Nagaland, Assam-Meghalaya and Assam and Mizoram," the Minister said in his written reply.

The centre's statement in the parliament comes a day after five Assam cops were killed in clashes as tensions escalated at

Assam-Mizoram border.

"The approach of the central government has consistently been that inter-state disputes can be resolved only with the cooperation of the state governments concerned and that the central government acts only as a facilitator for amicable settlement of the dispute in the spirit of mutual understanding," Mr Rai said in response to a question on the role of the government in redressing border disputes between states in the country.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah was on two day visit to northeast India this weekend and he was accompanied by Director Intelligence Bureau Arvind Kumar and Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla.

Mr Shah also had chaired a meeting with top officials of all the states in the region, and had told them that the NDA government at the Centre is keen on resolving boundary disputes among the Northeastern states and making the region peaceful and developed.

Meanwhile opposition has started targeting Mr Shah over his visit. "All eyes on the Home Minister, who was in the North-east a few days ago. His incompetence being exposed one day at a time," Trinamool leader Derek O'Brien tweeted.

Covid vaccine for children likely next month: Health Minister to BJP MPs

NEW DELHI, 27 JUL [NDTV]: Covid vaccines for children are likely in a matter of days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was told this morning at a meeting of BJP MPs at parliament.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said at the meeting of the BJP's parliamentary party that the government would likely start vaccinating children next month, according to sources.

According to experts, this will be a giant step in breaking the chain of transmission and also reopening schools across the country amid warnings of a possible third wave of Covid.

Earlier this month, Dr NK Arora, who heads the National Expert Group on Vaccines, had told NDTV that vaccination for children will start by September with the

Zydus vaccine for 12 to 18-year-olds.

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Zydus Cadila's candidate are testing vaccines for children. The results of the Covaxin trials are expected by September, AIIMS chief Randeep Guleria has said.

Dr Guleria had also said vaccinations for children could start by September.

"I think Zydus has already done the trials and they're waiting for emergency authorisation. The Bharat Biotech's Covaxin trials should be over by August or September, and by that time we should get an approval. Pfizer vaccine has been already approved by the FDA (US regulator - Food and Drug Administration). Hopefully, by September, we should start

vaccinating children, and that will be a big boost as far as breaking the chain of transmission is concerned," Dr Guleria told NDTV.

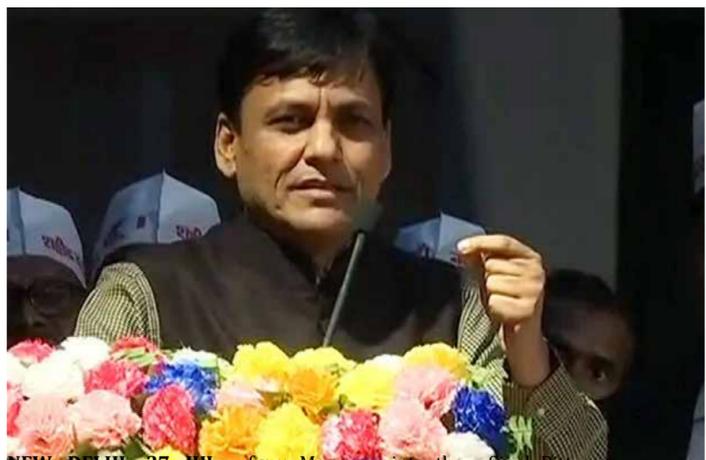
India has given over 44 crore doses of vaccines so far. The government's plan is to vaccinate all adults by the end of this year.

On Friday, the European medicines watchdog approved the use of Moderna's coronavirus vaccine for children aged 12 to 17.

In May, the US had authorised the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for children aged 12 to 15 years old.

A study published earlier this week by The Lancet, one of the world's oldest medical journals, underlined that "living with 11-17 year olds increases the risk of infection by 18-30 per cent."

Centre issued advisory to check illegal influx from Myanmar: Minister in Lok Sabha



NEW DELHI, 27 JUL:

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha over the illegal influx of Myanmar nationals into India, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai on Tuesday said the Centre has issued an advisory to the governments of Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland on March 10 to take action as per law to check influx

from Myanmar into the country.

He also informed that the state governments/UT administrations have been taking actions against illegal immigrants under the relevant provisions of the Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920 and the Foreigners Act 1946.

The MoS was responding to a question by DMK's SR Parthiban and Congress Ravneet

Singh Bittu.

The Central government has issued instructions from time to time to all states and UTs regarding the identification of the illegal migrants and their deportation from India. Consolidated instructions regarding issues overstay and illegal migration of foreign national has also been issued on March 30," the reply said.

People throw chairs, beat each other with sticks at UP vaccination centre

LUCKNOW, 27 JUL

[NDTV] Five people have been arrested by the Uttar Pradesh police from a village in Ballia district after a brawl over COVID-19 vaccination turned violent on Monday evening.

The incident took place in the Karnai village of the eastern UP district, around 400 km from state capital Lucknow.

Video clips from the incident showed a huge crowd gathered outside a vaccination centre while several men and women attacked each other with belts and sticks. Several people could also be seen throwing chairs at each other.

Many people, including a doctor, were injured in the clashes, according to news agency PTI.

"The brawl happened over vaccine. The dispute was over who would get the vaccine first. We have arrested five people and are taking further action," Ballia police chief Vipin Tada said in a statement.

This was the second incident of violence reported from the state in a single day. A man in his 20s died by suicide in Baghat district, hours after a brawl with cops at a Covid vaccination centre on Monday, following which 10 police officials were removed from duty.

Uttar Pradesh has vaccinated 3.79 crore people till now with at least one dose of the Covid vaccine. The government said 1.32 crore vaccine doses were administered till now but less than 1 lakh people are fully vaccinated.

Thirty-three new coronavirus cases took the state-wide tally in Uttar Pradesh to 17,08,208, while no new COVID-19 death was registered as the count remained at 22,750, official data showed on Monday.

Bojoghari School's Swarnima Tiruwa wins SOA Online...

Following COVID protocol in the state, the results were declared in an online meet on Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by Sikkim Olympic Association president, Kuber Bhandari and was also attended by SOA general secretary, Arjuna Awardee Jaslal Pradhan, NSS State Nodal Officer, Lalita Chettri, State NSS Coordinator, Tseten Bhutia along with programme coordinators, programme officers and volunteers of NSS.

On the occasion, the SOA president mentioned that the main objective of the competition was to motivate and cheer Indian athletes in Tokyo Olympics 2020 through slogans and posters. He thanked the NSS State Cell for collaborating in the event and further thanked NSS volunteers in the State for being a part of the event. He appreciated the efforts of NSS volunteers for their instrumental role in disseminating information on COVID-19 to the people at the grassroot level during this pandemic period.

While mentioning that Jaslal Pradhan was the first Olympian from Sikkim, Mr Bhandari mentioned that SOA wants to inspire and support young athletes from Sikkim who want to compete in the Olympics. He stressed that the Olympic movement needs to reach the grassroot level in the State to inspire youngsters in sports and to spot and nurture talented athletes from different corners of the State. On the same, he urged NSS volunteers to play a vital role in reaching the Olympic movement to the people.

The SOA president mentioned that the recent enhancement of cash incentives for Olympic medal winners, medal winners at different levels, enhancement of reservation from 2% to 5% for sportspersons in government jobs, infrastructure development in sports and other efforts of the State government would definitely help in producing Olympians and international athletes from Sikkim.

Likewise, SOA general secretary, Jaslal Pradhan congratulated NSS volunteers for participating in the competition. He mentioned that Sikkim has talented sportspersons in all disciplines so the need of the hour is to spot and nurture them.

If the Olympic movement reaches all corners of the State, it will definitely produce more Olympians in the near future, said Mr Pradhan. He urged youths to change their mindset and take up sports as a career rather than just aiming for government jobs.

The virtual meet had started with the welcome address by NSS State Nodal Officer, Lalita Chettri, and ended with the vote of thanks presented by State NSS coordinator, Tseten Bhutia.

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SummitTIMES

Mumbai doctor tests Covid positive thrice, twice after both vaccine doses

MUMBAI, 27 JUL [NDTV]: Amid debate over the efficacy of Covid vaccines, particularly against newer and more aggressive variants of the coronavirus, a 26-year-old Mumbai doctor tested positive thrice in 13 months - twice after taking both doses of a vaccine.

The doctor's family - father, mother and brother, who have comorbidities - also tested positive, for the first time each, this month. They too have been given both doses of a vaccine.

The entire family was hospitalised, and samples from the doctor and the brother are being analysed to establish the variant (or variants) that infected them and their family.

Dr Shrishti Hallari was on Covid duty at the Veer Savarkar Hospital in Mumbai's Mulund area, and first contracted the virus on June 17 last year. It was a mild infection at that point.



The first vaccine dose (Covishield) was taken on March 8 this year and the second on April 29. The whole family was vaccinated together.

However, a month later - on May 29 - Dr Hallari tested positive for a second time, this time with mild symptoms that allowed for recovery at home.

The virus then struck

again - on July 11 Dr Hallari tested positive again, and this time it was the entire family. All four members are being treated with Remdesivir.

"This third time I suffered more... my family and I were hospitalised, needed Remdesivir. My brother and mother have

diabetes and my father

has hypertension and cholesterol problems. My brother had difficulty breathing, so he was kept on oxygen for two days," Dr Hallari said.

The doctor also said a test for Covid antibodies in the blood returned positive results.

Experts have pointed out that a Covid vaccine does not translate to immunity from the

disease, and that even after both doses people can still get infected.

The benefit of the vaccine, they have stressed, is that breakthrough infections (infections after vaccination) are milder, rarely require hospitalisation and very unlikely to be fatal.

"I have seen patients who became Covid positive after both doses... patients of all ages can have breakthrough infections... but vaccines reduce the effect and help the patient recover quickly," Dr Behram Pardiwala, chief of Internal Medicine at Mumbai's Wockhardt Hospital, said.

Earlier this month an ICMR-funded pre-print study said only 67 of 677 positive RT-PCR samples from across India (from people who had received at least one dose of Covishield or Covaxin) required hospitalisation, and only three resulted in deaths.

Saudi to impose 3-year travel ban for those visiting "Red List" countries

LONDON, 27 JUL [REUTERS]: Saudi Arabia will impose a three-year travel ban on citizens travelling to countries on the kingdom's 'red list' under efforts to curb the spread of coronavirus and its new variants, state news agency SPA said on Tuesday.

It cited an unnamed interior ministry official as saying some Saudi citizens, who in May were allowed to travel abroad without prior permission from authorities for the first time since March 2020, had violated travel regulations.

"Anyone who is proven to be involved will be subject to legal accountability and heavy penalties upon their return, and will be banned from travel for three years," the official said.

Saudi Arabia has banned travel to or transit at a number of countries including Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, South Africa, Turkey, Vietnam and the United Arab Emirates.

"The Ministry of Interior stresses that

citizens are still banned from travelling directly or via another country to these states or any other that has yet to control the pandemic or where the new strains have spread," the official said.

The kingdom, the largest Gulf state with a population of some 30 million, on Tuesday recorded 1,379 new COVID-19 infections, bringing its total to 520,774 cases and 8,189 deaths.

It saw daily infections fall from a peak above 4,000 in June 2020 to below the 100 mark in early January.

Thailand sends COVID-19 patients to hometowns by train

BANGKOK (AP): Authorities in Thailand began transporting some people who tested positive for the coronavirus from Bangkok to their hometowns on Tuesday for isolation and treatment to alleviate the burden on the capital's overwhelmed medical system.

A train carrying more than 100 patients and medical workers in full protective gear left the city for the northeast.

It will drop patients off in seven provinces, where they will be met by health officers and taken to hospitals.

Medical authorities in Bangkok said Monday that all ICU beds for COVID-19 patients at public

hospitals were full and that some of the sick were being treated in emergency rooms. Officials said they have asked army medics to help out at civilian hospitals.

"These are patients from Bangkok who haven't received treatment in hospitals. We want to bring them to doctors in their hometowns. And the traveling process is controlled all through the journey," said Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who was on hand to watch the operation.

"We will continue this service until no COVID-19 patients who cannot get beds in Bangkok are left," he

said. He said buses, vans and even aircraft might be deployed to send people back to less badly affected provinces.

Thailand initially kept coronavirus cases in check but outbreaks have flared in recent months.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's government is facing harsh criticism over its handling of a delta variant-fueled surge and slow vaccination program, amid reports of people dying in the streets or in their homes while waiting for treatment.

Of Thailand's total of nearly 500,000 confirmed cases and more than 4,000 fatalities, 137,263

cases and 2,176 deaths have been recorded in Bangkok.

Most of the 4,451 beds for COVID-19 patients in the city of about 15 million are occupied by people with mild or no symptoms. Hospitals are beginning to urge such patients to isolate at home or in community isolation centers.

Bangkok Gov. Aswin Kwanmuang said the city government will coordinate with the State Railway to install 240 beds in 15 railway carriages in a maintenance shed in the city's huge Bang Sue station as a "pre-admission center" for coronavirus patients

without symptoms.

He visited the station on Tuesday to inspect the carriages. He said they should be ready for use by Friday.

The government said supplies of medical oxygen are sufficient and manufacturers have been asked to ensure enough is available. But people ill with coronavirus who are unable to find places for treatment are not always able to get supplemental oxygen.

Meanwhile, some temples in the devoutly Buddhist country have begun to offer free cremations as the number of deaths rises, the government said.

India records less than 30,000 fresh COVID-19 cases in over three months

NEW DELHI, JUL 27 (PTI): India recorded less than 30,000 fresh COVID-19 cases after 132 days while its active caseload fell below 4,00,000 after 124 days on Tuesday, according to Union health ministry data

As many as 29,689 new coronavirus infections took the country's tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,14,40,951 while 415 fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 4,21,382, the data updated at 8 am showed

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,06,21,469, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.34 per cent, it said

The number of active cases dropped to 3,98,100 and comprises 1.27 per cent of the total infections. The national COVID-19 recovery rate improved to 97.39 per cent, it stated

The number of active cases fell by 13,089 in a span of 24 hours

As many as 17,20,110 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Monday, taking the



total number of tests conducted so far to 45,91,64,121

The daily positivity rate declined to 1.73 per cent. The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 2.33 per cent, the ministry data stated

The total number of Covid vaccine doses administered so far as part of the nationwide vaccination drive has reached 44.19 crore

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and

50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19

The caseload crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4 and 3 crore on June 23

The 415 new fatalities include 135 from Kerala, 62 from Odisha and 53 from Maharashtra

A total of 4,21,382 deaths have been reported so far in the country including

1,31,605 from Maharashtra, 36,405 from Karnataka, 33,937 from Tamil Nadu, 25,044 from Delhi, 22,750 from Uttar Pradesh and 18,085 from West Bengal

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

LOKAYUKTA SIKKIM GANGTOK

Ref No: 672/LOK/2021

Date : 9.7.2021

NOTICE

This is for information of all concerned that the Office of the Lokayukta, Sikkim has been shifted from its previous location Vidhayak Aawas, (Block 'C') VIP Colony, Gangtok to Old State Guest House (Below TNA), Bhanupath, Gangtok. Henceforth the official address of Lokayukta Sikkim shall be: Lokayukta, Sikkim

Bhanupath (Below TNA)\
Gangtok, East Sikkim
PIN 737101.

Sd/-
Protocol Officer
Lokayukta, Sikkim.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Secretariat Annexure - I, Sonam Tshering Marg, Gangtok, Sikkim.

Notice Inviting Tender for "Selection of Firm for Appointment of Project Consultant and Transaction Advisory for Sikkim IT Special Economic Zone" Department of Information Technology, Government of Sikkim invites Tenders for "Selection of Firm for Appointment of Project Consultant and Transaction Advisory for Sikkim IT Special Economic Zone". The last date of receipt of Tender is 23rd August 2021. For further details please visit : www.sikkim.gov.in.

Sd/-
Additional Director,
Department of Information Technology
Government of Sikkim.

R.O. No. 113/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21
Date. 23.7.2021

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM OFFICE OF THE SR.SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE STATE RESERVE LINES COMPOSITE BUILDING, BELOW PALZOR STADIUM, GANGTOK (737101) Ph: (03592) 202933/202055

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tenders are invited from reputed reliable and experienced firm for stitching of uniform items for personnel of Civil Police, Sikkim Armed Police and India Reserve Battalions for the year 2020-2021. Tender form may be obtained from office of the Sr. Superintendent of Police, State Reserve Lines, Composite Building, Below Palzor Stadium, Gangtok on production of the Bank challan for Rs. 5000/- (Five thousand) only of the State Bank of Sikkim under receipt Head 0055-Police, Sub-Head-103 Fees Fines & Forfeiture.

Tender Forms may be collected during working hours from 16/08/2021 to 20/08/2021 Tender form duly filled in and sealed along with the certified copies of Licence, Tax Clearance Certificate Along with the TDR of Rs. 50,000/- (Fifty Thousand) only as earnest money (refundable) should reach the office of undersigned before 1300 Hrs on 24/08/2021 which will be opened on 24/08/2021 (Tuesday) at 1400 Hours by the Committee in presence of the tenderers or their representatives, if any.

The Department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders with or without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-
Sr. Superintendent of Police
State Reserve Lines
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R.O. No. 114/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22
Dt. 26.7.2021

Environmental Concerns

The real ones, not the ones that babus deem as important

The US is trying hard to undo the damage wrought by a President who preferred pollution over protection (of the environment) and had torn up the fate of an international accord which would have scaled down emissions which have been harming the planet for far too long. Meanwhile, the developing world wants the developed countries to clean up their act and reduce their unloading of greenhouse gases. What cannot be denied is that the developed countries remain predominant producers of these gases and therefore need to take the lead in reducing harmful emissions. The developing world, because this section also needs to provide for its people and has a lot of catching up to do, is also a major contributor now, although their per capita contribution to the ruining of Earth is comparatively much lower. But then again, most of the people on this planet reside in the developing segment so the quantum becomes too large to ignore. These are part of the global debate on the environment which has been going on for many years. The developed countries have been asking the poorer nations to desist from practices that harm the global environment while the developing countries have pointed the finger right back at the richer countries over the hothouse gas issue.

Blame game is not going to cool this planet down or stop it from overheating. While both sides make valid points, the unavoidable fact is that all of us, the rich and the poor, have to live together on spaceship Earth. We have to be collectively responsible for making the world environmentally sustainable.

While the developing countries need to ensure that their factories move up the technological ladder and adopt manufacturing methods that are safer, the richer countries must help with transfer of technology to the poorer countries so that they can become environmentally responsible. The developed countries cannot dictate terms in this regard and have to listen to the reasonable arguments of the poorer nations.

While the debate between the developed and the developing heats up further, it is time that we started another debate at the national level - one between the highlands and lowlands. In Sikkim, as must surely be the case with any other hill state, we suffer because of rules framed by policy-makers sitting in the air-conditioned confines of Shastri Bhavan posturing concern for glaciers like Zemu or Gangotri. They read somewhere that using wood for fuel puts undue pressure on the environment. While this might be true, they don't realise that a villager in Labdang in west Sikkim does not have as easy an access to even kerosene oil as the babu in Delhi has to LPG. He has no alternative, but to depend on the forest for his needs. Why the policy framers can't comprehend the fact that villagers don't exploit the forest resources, but only share it in sustainable models refined over centuries, defies all logic. Maybe it doesn't, because, sadly for the peripheral states like Sikkim, policies are framed with dry statistics in mind by even drier officials. Local concerns are ignored and the colonial hangover sees to it that the natives need to be told what to do. So even though Sikkim and Himachal lost a lot of their forests to provide timber for the railway berths which never even made the climb to towns in the two states, the locals are made to pay. All of a sudden someone realised that the forest cover was shrinking and the forests were made out of bounds for the locals who might have even protested earlier when the plains denuded their hills.

Since we sit on the lungs of the entire country, it is time that Sikkim and other states like it are given a greater say in the framing of environmental policies. And no, the Forest Rights Act, at least in the form it is understood and implemented is not the only way to go. The rest of the country, the section which ruined the environment, should listen to regions which have conserved well and lived responsibly.

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Worried About Traveling With Unvaccinated Kids?

WILLIAM C. MILLER

THECONVERSATION.COM

The risk of COVID-19 associated with travel is largely determined by how you will travel, where you're going, who will be there and what you will do there. By assessing these variables, parents can make informed decisions about their travel plans.

1. HOW MUCH RISK DOES COVID-19 POSE FOR KIDS?

When thinking about COVID-19 and unvaccinated children, two types of risk should be considered - both the direct risk for the child and the risk of transmission to others. Children develop severe disease from COVID-19 far less commonly than adults, and they die much less often. But children do die from COVID-19. COVID-19 has caused nearly 500 deaths in children 17 years of age and younger in the U.S. And some children also suffer from long COVID-19 - the lingering effects of COVID-19 that are still not well understood.

To put that in perspective, the number of deaths due to influenza in a typical flu season is about 150 to 200 children in the U.S. But only one child is known to have died from the flu in the 2020-2021 influenza season. In the past year, COVID-19 has been one of the most common infectious disease-related causes of death in children.

But even when children do not get seriously ill with COVID-19 or show symptoms, they can still transmit the virus to other children and adults. The rate of child-to-adult transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is roughly half the rate of adult-to-child transmission. So even when the risk is low for children, transmission to other unvaccinated

kids and adults is still a serious concern.

2. ARE ROAD TRIPS SAFER THAN AIR TRAVEL?

People can encounter others more often when they are traveling than in their daily lives, which automatically increases the possibility of being exposed to someone with COVID-19.

With air travel, families need to consider the number of people they're exposed to in airports, as well as on the airplane. In airports, travelers are exposed indoors to many people, potentially from different parts of the country and world. But risk is reduced by the requirement to wear masks indoors at all times in U.S. airports.

On an airplane, travelers may sit near several people outside of their own family for a few hours, and some of these people may not comply with mask requirements consistently. Although outbreaks have been associated with air travel, fortunately these reported outbreaks have been rare.

In general, traveling by car is likely to be safer, with exposures limited to infrequent rest stops and short meal breaks.

3. HOW DOES THE DESTINATION AFFECT THE RISK?

Whether in one's own community or when traveling afar, a serious risk factor to consider is the rate of COVID-19 cases, including the incidence of delta variant in that community. When COVID-19 rates rise in a community, that destination becomes less safe, generally, than a community with low, stable rates. In recent weeks, the highest

COVID-19 infection rates have been seen in communities with the lowest vaccination rates. One way to assess the risk of a particular destination is to compare recent COVID-19 and vaccination rates in your destination to the rates in your own community using the CDC website.

4. WHAT KINDS OF GATHERINGS ARE SAFE RIGHT NOW?

When people travel, they come into contact with strangers, friends and extended family whom they would not encounter at home. These interactions, what epidemiologists call "mixing," increase the chances for people to be exposed to SARS-CoV-2.

The added risk from that mixing depends on the vaccination status of the people encountered, the number of people encountered, the nature of that encounter and the duration of the encounter. If you are near many people for several hours, the risk is greater than if you are near a few people for a short time. If almost everyone you'll come into contact with is vaccinated, the risk will be very low. But as the number of unvaccinated people goes up, the risk will go up as well.

5. WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES ARE SAFE?

An important rule of thumb is that being outdoors is safer than being indoors. Indoors, the virus can hang in the air for some time, increasing potential exposure. Outdoors, the virus disperses quickly, greatly reducing the chances you're exposed to virus shed by someone infected with the coronavirus.

The primary concern outdoors is when people are close to one

another for extended periods. Sitting near other people for several hours outdoors, like at a baseball game or a music festival, could carry some risk, especially if people aren't wearing masks and the vaccination rate in the community is low. For kids playing together, an activity like wrestling in the grass is going to be less safe than playing soccer or tossing a Frisbee.

6. WHAT STEPS CAN LOWER THE RISK OF INFECTION?

No decision is going to be right for everyone. Every parent will need to weigh the risks and make their own decisions. Traveling will inevitably lead to exposures to unvaccinated kids and adults. But the risk will be determined by the extent of that exposure.

It's important to remember that vaccination is only one of the tools that can be used to reduce risk. Consider using masks indoors whenever possible. Masks reduce transmission and have been proven to be an effective complement to vaccination. Wearing a mask indoors and in public spaces part of the time - even if not all of the time - further cuts down on risk.

Before traveling, families should talk through expectations and concerns, both within their own family and with others they will be meeting up with. These conversations can be difficult. People should talk openly, honestly and without judgment about who has been vaccinated and who hasn't and agree up front on a set of rules.

And then do your best to enjoy your vacation.

[The writer is Senior Associate Dean of Research and Professor of Epidemiology, The Ohio State University]

Kids' grip strength is improving, but other measures of muscle fitness are getting worse

GRANT R. TOMKINSON & JUSTIN J. LANG

THECONVERSATION.COM

Physical fitness in kids refers to their ability to perform physical activity. Their fitness level is not only important for success in sports and athletics, but also for good health.

Aerobic fitness - the ability to supply oxygen to the body's big muscles during continuous physical activities, such as running, biking or swimming - has long been known as important to health in kids as well as adults. Muscle fitness refers to the ability of the muscles to produce force maximally, quickly and repeatedly - otherwise known as strength, power and endurance.

Research on the health benefits of muscle fitness for children and adolescents has increased significantly in the past decade. One systematic review of this research found that low muscle fitness was associated with high body fat, poor bone health and low self-esteem, as well as a high risk of developing heart disease in later life.

Findings like these are why both the World Health Organization and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services now recommend that kids aged 5 to 17 years participate in muscle- and bone-strengthening activities at least three days a week.

We are a professor of kinesiology and an epidemiologist who conduct research that focuses on physical fitness and health. In 2019, our research team published a study that compiled more than 30 years of aerobic fitness data on 1 million kids from 19 high- and upper-middle-income countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States. We found that the aerobic fitness of kids in these countries significantly declined from 1981 to about 2000, with little change ever since.

This research got us wondering: Has kids' muscle fitness also declined? So we decided to take a look at that as well.

THE MUSCLE FITNESS OF TODAY'S KIDS
Our research team reviewed hundreds of studies. They contained decades of data on the muscle fitness of tens of millions of kids aged 9 to 17 years, mostly from high- and upper-middle-income countries. We focused on the measurements of grip strength, standing long jump for leg power and sit-ups for abdominal endurance, because these are the most common ways researchers worldwide measure kids' muscle fitness.

We found that in most of these countries, grip strength has progressively improved since the



1960s. We also found that leg power and abdominal endurance had improved to about the year 2000, then declined.

So it appears that today's kids have better grip strength than their parents and grandparents had when they were kids. Their leg power and abdominal endurance is better than what their grandparents had, but the same or worse than their parents.

WHAT'S THE CAUSE?

To explain these findings, our research team looked at several national trends in each country, including trends in muscle fitness, physical activity levels, body size and income inequality.

We found no significant links between muscle fitness trends and trends in either body size or income inequality. But our research showed that countries with the largest declines in physical activity levels also had the largest declines in leg power and abdominal endurance. For example, physical activity levels and abdominal endurance have recently declined in kids from Slovakia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, both have recently increased in kids from Poland, Slovenia and Spain.

This suggests that kids' muscle fitness might be improved by increasing their physical activity levels, like when achieving the U.S. government's recommended physical activity guidelines. For school-aged children and adolescents, they include doing 60 minutes or more a day of moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic activities, along with muscle and bone-strengthening activities at least three days a week.

This is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, because lockdowns appear to have dramatically reduced kids' fitness levels. For instance, Slovenian kids' fitness levels dropped by 13% to a 30-year low after only two months of self-isolation.

KIDS GET DIVERSE BENEFITS FROM MUSCLE FITNESS

A growing amount of research suggests that kids of all ages can benefit from properly supervised resistance training. A recent review of studies on resistance training among children and adolescents found that it improves muscle fitness, body composition, sports performance, self-confidence and self-esteem. Building muscle fitness requires at least three sessions a week lasting more than 30 minutes and steady increases in weight.

Although there may be fears among parents that such activities are unsafe for growing children, research also shows that participation in a properly supervised resistance training program does not stunt kids' growth or damage developing growth plates.

Improving muscle fitness makes it easier for any kid to move and lift things and play sports. Our research suggests that resistance training may especially benefit overweight and obese adolescents who may be unwilling or unable to perform aerobic activities. In a different study we published in 2014, we found that six months of supervised resistance training made overweight and obese adolescent boys stronger and more confident about exercising.

WHAT CAN KIDS DO TO IMPROVE THEIR MUSCLE FITNESS?

Muscles get bigger and stronger from doing weight-bearing or "resistance" physical activities. These are exercises that cause a muscle or a group of muscles to contract against an external resistance, such as a barbell, exercise band or one's own body weight.

Although often performed in a gym, resistance training can be performed anywhere using different activities and equipment. Jumping, climbing on playground equipment, push-ups, squats, lifting weights and yoga are all weight-bearing activities.

As their muscle fitness improves, kids can try increasing the time or difficulty of their favorite physical activity, or doing activities more often.

[Grant R. Tomkinson is Professor of Kinesiology, University of North Dakota; Justin J. Lang is Adjunct Professor, L'Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa]

Kala-azar and dengue reported in Okhaldhunga, Kalikot and Myagdi

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, 27 JUL [KATHMANDUPOST]: At a time when the entire focus of the health authorities is on containing the Covid-19 pandemic, cases of kala-azar, dengue and scrub typhus have been reported in at least three districts.

The Epidemiology and Disease Control Division said that infection of kala-azar and dengue have been found in Kalikot, Okhaldhunga and Myagdi districts, which would not report these diseases in the past.

"We have alerted the health workers at the local level and districts about the risk of a large-scale outbreak of kala-azar and dengue," said Lila Bikram Thapa, a senior public health administrator at the division. "What is alarming is these diseases have been reported from mountain districts, which were considered non-endemic to the diseases."

Kala-azar, also known as visceral leishmaniasis or black fever, is transmitted through the bite of infected female phlebotomine sandfly.

Detection of kala-



azar cases in areas above 650 metres where it was thought impossible for female phlebotomine sand flies to survive is a cause for serious concern, health officials say.

"We were taught that phlebotomine sandflies do not survive above the altitude of 650 metres, but now cases of infection are being reported in altitudes over 1,400 metres," said Thapa.

Weight loss, weakness, cough and fever that lasts from a few weeks to months are common symptoms of kala-azar.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease, which is

transmitted by female *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. The same vector also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika virus disease.

In 2019, at least six people died and over 16,000 people were hospitalised due to dengue outbreaks in 68 districts in Nepal.

Dengue sufferers with mild symptoms do not visit the hospital and 70 to 90 percent of the cases are asymptomatic, suggesting that the incidence rate could be much higher, health officials say.

Thapa refused to reveal the exact number of cases detected in the

said districts but said that several cases have been reported.

"We have asked the health agencies concerned to make the surveillance system active, mobilize female community health volunteers and supply medicines to the health facilities," said Thapa. "Health workers have been asked to study the symptoms of patients of these diseases."

Entomologists say that detection of dengue and kala-azar in the district in the midst of the pandemic increased risk of massive outbreak, as health workers, who have been continuously

serving for a long time have been exhausted. Moreover, symptoms of many vector-borne diseases including kala-azar and dengue overlap with symptoms of Covid-19 infections.

"As the authorities have allowed resumption of public transportation, which increases mobility, chances of spreading the diseases not only the coronavirus but also other vector-borne diseases will increase," said Sishir Panta, an entomologist, told the Post.

"Vectors of dengue and kala-azar and others have been present throughout the country. What is needed is the source of infection and if infected people travel, the risk of spreading the infection increases."

The Health Ministry said that cases of kala-azar have been reported from 60 districts and dengue from 68 districts. The ministry has decided to eliminate kala-azar by 2030 and for that cases of infection should be reduced to 1 per 10,000 population. Officials said that the existing case detection rate of kala-azar is over 1 per 10,000 people.

Doctors say that possible outbreaks of vector-borne diseases could create panic among the general public and increase the chances of late detection and severity.

"If someone suffers from fever, people think that he/she might have suffered from the coronavirus," Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of Clinical Research Unit at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, told the Post. "Health workers may not perform additional tests if patients tested negative for Covid-19, and without proper diagnosis, people may return home, which only increases severity in the patients."

As most of the symptoms of the vector-borne disease—fever, body ache, sore throat and rash with coronavirus infection, there are also chances of misdiagnosis, doctors say.

"Surveillance of the vector-borne diseases should be stepped up and health workers should be encouraged to perform another testing if patients tested negative to coronavirus," Pun said.

Pawar likely to meet Mamata in Delhi on July 28



MUMBAI, JUL 27 (PTI): NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday said he is likely to meet West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday in New Delhi, where the TMC head will hold parleys with opposition leaders to explore ways to cobble together an alliance of anti-BJP parties ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Banerjee arrived in Delhi on Monday on her first visit to the national capital since assuming office as the West Bengal CM for a third term and is expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo, who apparently seeks to take up a larger role in national politics prior to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, is also scheduled to meet Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and a host of other leaders from opposition parties.

Responding to a question in this context by reporters here, Pawar, whose party shares

power with the Shiv Sena and Congress in Maharashtra, said, "She called me last week and told me about her visit to New Delhi and her willingness to meet. I think we are likely to meet tomorrow in New Delhi.

The former Union minister, however, refused to comment on the Pegasus snooping controversy.

"This is not the time and place to say anything about it. We will raise the issue at the right place in Parliament. We will try to raise it there, he said.

Last week, an international media consortium had reported that over 300 verified Indian mobile phone numbers, including two ministers, over 40 journalists, three opposition leaders besides scores of businesspersons and activists in India, could have been targeted for hacking through the Pegasus spyware of the Israeli firm NSO.

However, the central government has been denying all Opposition allegations in the matter.

"Need top court-monitored probe into Pegasus": Mamata Banerjee after PM Meet

NEW DELHI, 27 JUL [NDTV]: Mamata Banerjee met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his residence in Delhi today. This was the Bengal Chief Minister's first meeting with the Prime Minister after the acrimonious Bengal election campaign in which the two clashed frequently.

After the meeting, she told reporters that there should be a Supreme Court-monitored inquiry into the Pegasus scandal involving opposition leaders, two union ministers and 40 journalists revealed as potential targets of surveillance using Israeli Pegasus spyware that is sold only to governments. The allegations have virtually blocked the monsoon session of parliament with the opposition demanding answers from PM Modi and Home Minister Amit



Shah.

Ms Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee is among the potential targets whose names have surfaced as part of a worldwide investigation by a media consortium that includes India's The Wire. Yesterday, she announced a judicial inquiry led by former Supreme Court judges - the first since the Pegasus scandal broke - to investigate reports

that many Bengal leaders were targeted.

The Chief Minister said in her meeting with PM Modi - she described it as a 'courtesy visit' - she had discussed the Covid situation, the supply of vaccines and medicine to the state and also a proposal to rename Bengal as Bangla. "I should not speak what the PM said," she told reporters when pressed for details.

She said she was also supposed to meet President Ram Nath Kovind. "But the problem is they are asking me to have an RT-PCR done before meeting him. I have got both the doses though. Where will I go here," she said.

Tomorrow, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has invited the Bengal Chief Minister, whose three-day visit to Delhi is packed with politically

significant meetings. Ms Banerjee will also meet Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday.

Earlier today, Ms Banerjee met with Congress leaders Kamal Nath and Anand Sharma. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav is also expected to call on her. "I will also have a meeting with Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi," she told reporters.

Ms Banerjee has been a key figure in speculation swirling around the opposition's attempts to join forces to take on PM Modi and the BJP in the 2024 national election. Her recent election victory in Bengal has buttressed her image as an opposition face that can challenge the BJP's might.

She was last week named leader of the Trinamool parliamentary party though she is not

an MP. The new role signals her readiness to play a larger role in national politics beyond Bengal.

Ms Banerjee and PM Modi had met briefly in May, when Ms Banerjee's move to skip PM Modi's Cyclone Yaas review meeting became a huge flashpoint between the Centre and Bengal. Ms Banerjee left the meeting after handing over a report.

Then Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, caught in the crossfire, was recalled by the Centre but he retired on May 31 and became special adviser to the Bengal Chief Minister. In June the Centre warned him of "major penalty proceedings" for allegedly "not attending" the PM's review meeting.

Assam to approach Supreme Court after bloody border clash with Mizoram

SILCHAR, 27 JUL [PTI]: The Assam government will approach the Supreme Court seeking protection of Innerline Forest Reserve from destruction and encroachment, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said today, a day after border clashes with Mizoram left five state policemen and a civilian dead and 60 others injured.

He told a press conference in Silchar that satellite images have shown that roads are being constructed and forests cleared for jhum cultivation which cannot be allowed.

"We will move the Supreme Court to ensure that the forests are protected," he said.

Jhum cultivation is a

farming activity where farmland is cleared of trees and other vegetation and then set on fire. The practice is followed in most states of the northeast.

"The dispute is not regarding land but encroachment of reserved forests is the issue. We have no settlements in the forest areas and, if Mizoram can give evidence, we will immediately carry out eviction," he said.

The Chief Minister asserted that not an inch of Assam's land could be encroached by the neighbouring state.

"People have sacrificed their lives but boundary has been protected which we will continue to do at any cost," he asserted.

"All eyes on Home Minister": Trinamool leader on Assam-Mizoram border clash

NEW DELHI, 27 JUL: Attacking the central government over the border clashes between Assam and Mizoram, Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien on Tuesday said all eyes are on the Union Home Minister Amit Shah who was in the northeast a few days ago.

"All eyes on the Home Minister, who was in the North-east a few days ago. His incompetence being exposed one day at a time," tweeted Mr O'Brien.

He also retweeted Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee's tweet targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party over the issue.

"Shocked and Stunned to hear about the ruthless violence that has transpired at the Assam-Mizoram Border. My condolences to the bereaved families. Such unremitting incidents under BJP's watch have invited the death of democracy in our nation. INDIA DESERVES BETTER (sic)," tweeted Mr

Banerjee. The border clash between the two states claimed five lives while many police personnel and a few locals have also been injured in the clashes, said reports.

In view of border tensions with Mizoram, the Assam government on Monday urged the neighbouring state to restrain its "people and police personnel" from indulging in "wanton violence" and work towards restoring peace.

"It is with a heavy heart that we are constrained to note that what is being termed by the Mizoram side as an intrusion and aggression by Assam has left 5 Assam Police personnel dead (6 as per initial reports, which is being confirmed) and more than 50 injured, including SP Cachar Vaibhav Nimbalkar, who has a bullet embedded in his leg and is in the ICU," said the Assam government.

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Indian shooters crash out in 10m air rifle mixed qualifications

TOKYO, JUL 27 (PTI): The two Indian pairs participating in the 10m air rifle mixed team event crashed out in the first qualifications stage, missing out on yet another final after an outing that left a lot to be desired in the Tokyo Olympics here on Tuesday.

The duo of Elavenil Valarivan and Divyansh Singh Panwar finished 12th with a total of 626.5 across three series each, while Anjum Moudgil and Deepak Kumar ended 18th out of 29 pairs with an aggregate score of 623.8 at the Asaka Range.

The mixed events are making their Olympic debut.

It wasn't an ideal start for the more fancied Elavenil and Divyansh while Anjum and Deepak found themselves languishing at the bottom of the pile.

The top eight teams make the Qualification 2 and the top four pairs in the second phase qualify for the medal rounds.

In the first qualification round, there are three series of 10 shots for each team member while in the second, members of the top eight pairs of the first round shoot two series of 10 shots.

The team with the higher combined score of single shots fired by each team member on command gets two points with one point awarded for a tie.

The first team to reach 16 points with a difference of two, wins.

TT: Sharath takes a game off great Ma Long before bowing out

TOKYO, JUL 27 (PTI): Indian paddler Sharath Kamal took a game off the legendary Ma Long, the reigning Olympic and world champion, before making a third round exit from the table tennis competition at the Tokyo Games here on Tuesday.

Sharath fought tooth and nail to take the second game from Long but eventually lost 7-11 11-8 11-13 4-11 4-11 in 46 minutes.

With the defeat, India's challenge has ended in table tennis at the Games. Manika Batra, Sutirtha Mukherjee and G Sathiyam have all exited the singles competition.

After losing a close first game, Sharath took a 7-3 lead in the second with some perfectly placed forehands, and he was also helped by some errors by Long.

The Chinese legend soon reduced the margin by taking five straight points, inducing backhand errors from the Indian.

A crushing forehand winner after a short rally gave Sharath a chance to close the second game in his favour and he sealed that with a slap shot.

Sharath responded extremely well to the balls hit close to his body to lead 4-2 in the third game but Long took four consecutive points to snatch the lead.

Rupinder's brace hands India 3-0 win over Spain in Olympic men's hockey

TOKYO, JUL 27 (PTI): Dragflicker Rupinder Pal Singh scored a brace as the Indian men's hockey overcame a demoralising defeat in the previous match to cruise past Spain 3-0 and inch closer to a quarterfinal berth at the Tokyo Olympics here on Tuesday. Drubbed 1-7 by Australia in their last match, India produced a spirited performance against world No.9 Spain and scored through Simranjeet Singh (14th minute) and Rupinder Pal Singh (15th and 51st) to record a comfortable win in their third Pool A match at the Oi Hockey Stadium.

India, ranked fourth in the world, had earlier defeated New Zealand 3-2 in their opening fixture. Spain, on the other hand, are yet to register a win in the competition.

Spain drew 1-1 against Argentina before losing 3-4 to New Zealand.

The Indians will next play reigning Olympic champions Argentina on Thursday.

For any team it is always tough to recover from a morale-shattering loss within a day, but India looked more organised and sorted against Spain on Tuesday.

Despite the win, India's chief coach Graham Reid said the team needs to work upon a lot of grey areas, like conceding penalty corners, ahead of their remaining matches.

"Better result today, but a lot of things to work on from an improvement perspective. The fact that we gave too many corners, that's always a concern when that



happens. But the team did really well in terms of defending," he said.

"The first quarter was played very well, we could move the ball really well and it was exactly what we planned to do. We struggled a bit in the second and third quarters."

Manpreet Singh's men played high pressure hockey from the word go and dominated the possession in initial 10 minutes even though they failed to create any real scoring opportunities.

In the ninth minute, India came close to breaking the deadlock but Simranjeet's deflection from skipper Manpreet Singh sailed over the goal.

Spain slowly and steadily got into the groove and secured their first penalty corner in the 12th minute but wasted the chance.

The Indians mounted number of attacks in the final few minutes of the game and the ploy bore fruits when Spain's defence was caught off guard by Amit Rohidas'

pass and an unmarked Simranjeet just tapped the ball into the goal past Quico Cortes.

The goal rejuvenated India as they secured three back-to-back penalty corners in the final minute of the first quarter and from the third set piece Harmanpreet's flick found the body of a Spanish defender, which resulted in a penalty stroke.

Rupinder Pal Singh stepped up and made no mistake in doubling India's lead.

Trailing by two goals, the Spaniards pressed the Indian defence hard in the second quarter and the play was mostly inside the Indian half.

Spain's pressure tactics earned them three penalty corners in the third quarter -- the last one coming just seconds from the end following a referral -- but the Indian defence held firm to keep their lead intact.

Experienced India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who had a nightmarish outing against Australia, had a brilliant game as he

showed good reflexes to pull off some fine saves.

The fragile Indian defence, known for succumbing in tough situations, somehow managed to soak up the pressure put up by the Spaniards.

With a two goal cushion, the Indians were quite content in just defending in the fourth and final quarter as Spain continued to apply relentless pressure.

But in the 51st minute India managed to find the net again when they earned a penalty corner, their fourth of the match, from a counter attack and this time Rupinder was bang on target with a powerful low flick to the right of Spanish goalkeeper Cortes.

Down 0-3, Spain didn't give up and continued to attack in numbers while the Indians looked to just defend.

In the 53rd minute, Spain secured three consecutive penalty corners but their dragflicker Pau Quemada failed to breach the Indian back-line led by Sreejesh.

Spain secured another penalty corner in the final minutes of the game but again Sreejesh denied Quemada to help India keep a clean sheet.

Sreejesh said he is experienced enough to make a comeback after a forgettable outing against Australia the other day.

He also lauded the Indian defence, which withstood the tremendous pressure put up by the Spaniards on Tuesday.

"Goalkeepers are there to take pressure. I think, when you are experienced enough you will be able to manage the pressure and control the team," he said.

"Against Australia it was very bad for the defence, but today they did a wonderful job. They did their job in the proper way and we came out with a clean sheet so that's most important.

"...if you can forget the past match and bounce back to play a better game, that's most important for a game like that at the Olympic Games.

Tsitsipas looking to extend family legacy at Olympics



TOKYO, JUL 27 (AP): A family legacy. A Greek tradition. An individual breakthrough. Stefanos Tsitsipas is attempting to match his grandfather by winning a gold medal at the Olympics.

After being pushed to three sets in his opening match at the Tokyo Games, the fourth-ranked Tsitsipas stepped up his play in a 6-3, 6-4 win over Frances Tiafoe to reach the last 16 on Tuesday.

It was a measure for revenge for Tsitsipas, who was beaten in straight sets by the 54th-ranked American in the first round of Wimbledon a month ago.

It was also the first match of the Olympic tennis tournament held indoors. With rain falling outside, organizers closed the roof over the Ariake Coliseum.

Tsitsipas' grandfather, Sergei Salnikov, was part of the Soviet Union soccer team that won gold at the 1956 Melbourne Games. His mother is Russian and his father is Greek, although Grandpa Sergei also had Greek roots.

Tsitsipas has talked often this week about being inspired by Greece's role in Olympic history from ancient times to hosting the first Games of the modern era in 1896; not to mention the 2004 Games in Tsitsipas' hometown of Athens, when he was just learning to play as a 6-year-old.

Tsitsipas, who finished runner-up to Novak

Djokovic at this year's French Open in his first Grand Slam final, is also entered in the Olympic mixed doubles competition with Greek teammate Maria Sakkari.

Sakkari was playing fourth-seeded Elina Svitolina later in singles.

Tsitsipas took control from the start, breaking Tiafoe's serve at the first opportunity to take a 2-0 lead in the opening set then another break midway through the second.

The indoor setting provided perfect serving conditions and Tsitsipas hit nine aces to Tiafoe's three.

With his long hair held together with a blue ponytail holder to match his shirt in the blue-and-white colors of the Greek flag, Tsitsipas also compiled 28 winners to the Tiafoe's 13.

Tsitsipas will next face either 14th-seeded Ugo Humbert of France or Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia for a spot in the quarterfinals. One more victory after that and he'll be in the medal rounds.

While spectators are barred from most of the Tokyo Games, Tsitsipas had some vocal support from Greek staff members in the stands, who also draped a large Greek flag over a barrier behind one end of the court.

Tiafoe was still to play again with partner Rajeev Ram in the second round of the doubles tournament against the Croatian pair of Marin Cilic and Ivan Dodig.

Disbelief, support in Japan after Naomi Osaka's elimination

TOKYO (AP): "Masaka" — or, in English, "No way." That's how an incredulous Japan reacted Tuesday to the unexpectedly early loss of Naomi Osaka at the Tokyo Olympics, erasing her chances for gold.

And people quickly turned to an outpouring of sympathy.

"Watching you gave me courage. You don't have to win a medal. Watching you play is enough for all your fans," said Yuji Taida, a novelist.

Japanese media relayed urgent reports on her loss, with "masaka" in the headlines.

"Her mother's motherland. Her dream to stand at the pinnacle, with the rising sun on her heart, was not to be," reported Sports Hochi, a Japanese daily sports newspaper.

The stock of Japanese tennis racket maker Yonex, one of her major corporate sponsors, plunged Tuesday, just as she lost to former French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-4 in the third round.

The stock recouped some of the losses but ended down 1.8%. The disappointment came just four days after Osaka left the nation teary-eyed by running up a Mount Fuji-like set at the National Stadium and lighting the Olympic cauldron with her torch to open the Olympics.

For many here, the Japan-born Osaka, whose father is Haitian, has grown to personify a ray of hope for diversity in a nation long linked with discrimination and intolerance for differences.

"Undoubtedly the greatest athletic achievement and honor I will ever have in my life," Osaka had written on Instagram about her role in her first Olympics.

Some Japanese said it broke their hearts to imagine how much Osaka had wanted to win the gold for her country.

"She has her principles about her pride for Japan, and playing for Japan, while also being proud of her diverse roots in having a Haitian father and living in the U.S.," said lawyer

Atusko Nishiyama, who was already starting to worry Osaka might get attacked for her loss.

Nishiyama said she had been impressed by Osaka's statements on Black Lives Matter, such as last year when she wore masks bearing names of black people who had been killed.

"Compared to her courage, it is so sad some people are still at a very low level," Nishiyama said.

While news reports speculated whether it hurt her not to play for two months and referred to how Osaka had talked about her bouts with depression and then sat out Wimbledon, Japan's response was overwhelmingly one of doting love.

Japanese media made a point to say Osaka had answered "hai," or "yes" in Japanese, when asked a question by reporters in Japanese and noted that tears were running down her cheeks.

Shotaro Akiyama, a university student who loves to play tennis, said he hoped Osaka

wouldn't give up.

"The opponent just played a smarter game

this time," he said.

"She will have another chance at the gold."

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey coursed by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this "development" and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before.

Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

THE BIRDS HAVE LOST THEIR WAY

EDITED BY TSHERING EDEN AND PEMA WANGCHIK

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Chinese President Xi Jinping visiting Tibet is a threat to India, says senior US Congressman

WASHINGTON, JUL 27 (PTI): Chinese President Xi Jinping visiting Tibet last week is a threat to India, an influential US lawmaker has said, accusing the Joe Biden-led administration of not doing enough to stop the Chinese "march".

Xi on Wednesday last made an unannounced three-day trip to Nyingchi in Tibet, close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh. Xi, who is also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, met top officials of the Tibet Military Command and reviewed development projects in the region.

In an interview to Fox News, Republican Congressman Devin Nunes said: "Just last week, you had Xi Jinping, the Chinese dictator, on the border with India, in Tibet, claiming victory. This was the first time in 30 years, I believe, that a Chinese dictator had been to Tibet, and also threatening India,



over a billion people also a nuclear power; threatening India that he's going to build a big water project, possibly cut off water to India."

During his visit to Nyingchi, Xi visited the Nyang River Bridge to inspect the ecological preservation in the basin of the Brahmaputra river, which is called Yarlung Zangbo in Tibetan language.

China this year

approved plans to build a huge dam over the Brahmaputra river during the current 14th Five-Year Plan, which raised concerns in the riparian states of India and Bangladesh.

So, no matter what you plug into the propaganda machine, you can build all the narratives you want here in Washington, D.C., but then there's reality. The reality is that the Chinese are

on the march, and the (President Joe) Biden administration is letting them do whatever they want," Nunes said.

A senior Republican in the House of Representatives representing the 42nd Congressional district of California, Nunes was the chairman of the powerful House Intelligence Committee from 2015 to 2019.

Xi's visit to Tibet took place amidst the current

India-China military tensions in eastern Ladakh.

India and China have been locked in a military standoff at multiple friction points in eastern Ladakh since early May last year.

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

China is accused of suppressing cultural and religious freedom in Tibet. China has rejected the accusations.

Since becoming President in 2013, Xi has pursued a firm policy of stepping up security control of Tibet. Beijing has been cracking down on Buddhist monks and followers of the Dalai Lama, who despite his exile remains a widely admired spiritual leader in the remote Himalayan region.

Thousands of foreigners leave Indonesia amid COVID-19 crisis



JAKARTA, INDONESIA (AP): Thousands of foreigners have left Indonesia in recent weeks, airport records released Tuesday showed, apparently spurred by a brutal pandemic wave and a general shortage of vaccines, which have gone to high-priority groups first.

Indonesia now has the most confirmed daily cases in Asia, as infections and deaths have surged over the past month and India's massive outbreak has waned. Infections peaked in mid-July, with the highest daily average reported at more than 50,000 new cases each day. Until mid-June, daily cases had been running at about 8,000.

Since early this month, nearly 19,000 foreign nationals have left through Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in the capital, Jakarta.

The exodus increased significantly in the past three days alone, accounting for nearly half of all individual departures this month, said Sam Fernando, who heads the immigration authority at the airport.

Japan's ambassador to Indonesia, Kenji Kanasugi, said the difficulty of getting

vaccines for foreign nationals has prompted some Japanese citizens to get vaccinated in their home country.

"Amid a pandemic situation that is very difficult for all of us, some Japanese citizens in Indonesia will temporarily return to Japan," Kanasugi said on Instagram earlier this month.

Japanese and Chinese nationals made up the largest share of departures, with 2,962 and 2,219 individuals respectively, followed by 1,616 South Korean citizens. Airport figures also showed departures by 1,425 Americans, as well as 842 French, 705 Russian, 700 British, 615 German and 546 Saudi Arabian citizens.

Initially, only representatives of foreign countries and international nonprofit organizations were eligible for the government's free vaccine program. The program was expanded last month to include those aged 60 and older, as well as teachers and education staff.

Still, television reports showed foreigners complaining about the difficulties they've faced getting vaccinated.

Wiku Adisasmito, a spokesman for the

National COVID-19 Task Force, said Tuesday that limited vaccine supply remains a challenge. He expressed hope that 45 million more doses set to arrive in August would improve the situation.

Indonesia, home to 270 million people, had secured at least 151.8 million vaccine doses by late July. The vast majority of doses — 126.5 million — are from the Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinovac.

Indonesia's daily death toll has continued to top 1,000 in the past two weeks. The health system is struggling to cope, and even patients fortunate enough to get a hospital bed are not guaranteed oxygen.

Several countries have announced new bans or restrictions on travelers from Indonesia, including neighboring Singapore and the Philippines.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Taiwan and Hong Kong are among the nations and territories that have placed Indonesia on their travel ban list.

Overall, Indonesia has reported more than 3.1 million cases and 84,766 fatalities. Those figures are widely believed to be a vast undercount due to low testing and poor tracing measures.

Human Rights Watch: Israeli war crimes apparent in Gaza war

JERUSALEM (AP): Human Rights Watch on Tuesday accused the Israeli military of carrying out attacks that "apparently amount to war crimes" during an 11-day war in May against the Hamas militant group.

The international human rights organization issued its conclusions after investigating three Israeli airstrikes that it said killed 62 Palestinian civilians. It said "there were no evident military targets in the vicinity" of the attacks.

The report also accused Palestinian militants of apparent war crimes by launching over 4,000 unguided rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers. Such attacks, it said, violate "the prohibition against deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians."

The report, however, focused on Israeli actions during the fighting, and the group said it would issue a separate report on the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in August.

"Israeli forces carried out attacks in Gaza in May that devastated entire families without any apparent military target nearby," said Gerry Simpson, associate crisis and conflict director at HRW. He said Israel's "consistent unwillingness to seriously investigate alleged war crimes," coupled with Palestinian rocket fire at Israeli civilian areas, underscored the importance of an ongoing investigation into both sides by the International Criminal Court, or ICC.

The Israeli military has repeatedly said its attacks were aimed at military targets in Gaza. It says it takes numerous precautions to avoid harming civilians and blames Hamas for civilian casualties by launching rocket attacks and other military operations inside residential areas.



The war erupted on May 10 after Hamas fired a barrage of rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel's heavy-handed policing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, built on a contested site sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers in a nearby neighborhood. During the fighting, Hamas fired over 4,000 rockets and mortars toward Israel, while Israel has said it struck over 1,000 targets it says were linked to Gaza militants.

In all, some 254 people were killed in Gaza, including at least 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants, while Israel has claimed the number is much higher. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

The HRW report looked into Israeli airstrikes. The most serious, on May 16, involved a series of strikes on Al-Wahda Street, a central thoroughfare in downtown Gaza City. The airstrikes destroyed three apartment buildings and killed a total of 44 civilians, HRW said, including 18 children and 14 women.

Twenty-two of the dead were members of a single family, the al-Kawlaks.

Israel has said the attacks were aimed at tunnels used by Hamas militants in the area and that the damage to the homes was unintentional.

In its investigation, HRW concluded that Israel had used U.S.-made GBU-31 precision-guided bombs, and that Israel had not warned any of the residents to evacuate the area ahead of time. It also found no evidence of military targets in the area.

"An attack that is not directed at a specific military objective is unlawful," it wrote.

The investigation also looked at a May 10 explosion that killed eight people, including six children, near the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun. It said the two adults were civilians.

In a statement Tuesday, the Israeli military said the casualties were caused by errant rocket fire launched by militant groups, not Israeli airstrikes. It released aerial photos of what it said was the launch site, some 7.5 kilometers (4 miles) away, and the landing area.

"This incident demonstrates the blatant disregard for civilian life on the part of terror organizations in the Gaza

Strip," it said.

But based on an analysis of munition remnants and witness accounts, HRW said evidence indicated the weapon had been "a type of guided missile."

"Human Rights Watch found no evidence of a military target at or near the site of the strike," it said.

The New York-based group said that Israel refused to allow its investigators to enter Gaza. Instead, it said it relied on a field researcher based in Gaza, along with satellite images, expert reviews of photos of munitions fragments and interviews conducted by video and telephone.

The third attack HRW investigated occurred on May 15, in which an Israeli airstrike destroyed a three-story building in Gaza's Shati refugee camp. The strike killed 10 people, including two women and eight children.

HRW investigators determined the building was hit by a U.S.-made guided missile. It said Israel has said that senior Hamas officials were hiding in the building. But the group said no evidence of a military target at or near the site and called for an investigation into whether there was a legitimate military objective and "all feasible

precautions" were taken to avoid civilian casualties.

The May conflict was the fourth war between Israel and Hamas since the Islamic militant group, which opposes Israel's existence, seized control of Gaza in 2007. Human Rights Watch, other rights groups and U.N. officials have accused both sides of committing war crimes in all of the conflicts.

Early this year, HRW accused Israel of being guilty of international crimes of apartheid and persecution because of discriminatory policies toward Palestinians, both inside Israel as well as in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel rejected the accusations.

In Tuesday's report, it called on the United States to condition security assistance to Israel on it taking "concrete and verifiable actions" to comply with international human rights law and to investigate past abuses.

It also called on the ICC to include the recent Gaza war in its ongoing investigation into possible war crimes by Israel and Palestinian militant groups. Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and says it is capable of investigating any potential wrongdoing by its army and that the ICC probe is unfair and politically motivated.

First person tried under Hong Kong security law found guilty

HONG KONG (AP): The first person to be tried under Hong Kong's sweeping national security law was found guilty of secessionism and terrorism on Tuesday in a ruling closely watched for indications of how the law will be applied as China tightens its grip on the city long known for its freedoms.

Tong Ying-kit was charged with inciting secession and terrorism for driving his motorcycle into a group of police officers last year while carrying a flag bearing the banned protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times." Rights groups condemned his conviction, and many are bracing for further such trials since more than 100 people have been arrested under the legislation — part of Beijing's increasing crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong following months of anti-government protests in 2019.

Tong, a 24-year-old restaurant worker, pleaded not guilty to the charges, arguing

the slogan itself does not call for secession. He now faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, but his lawyers are expected to argue for a lighter punishment at his sentencing hearing Thursday.

The new national security legislation not only resulted in the charges against Tong, but it also spelled out how the trial would be conducted. The proceedings, which ended July 20, were held in the Hong Kong High Court with no jury, under rules allowing the exception from Hong Kong's common law system if state secrets need to be protected, foreign forces are involved or if the personal safety of jurors needs to be protected. Trials are presided over by judges handpicked by Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam.

Reading the verdict, Justice Esther Toh said Tong "committed terrorist activities causing or intended to cause grave harm to the society" in pursuit

of a political agenda.

His behavior was an act of violence aimed at coercing the central and Hong Kong governments and intimidating the public and carrying the flag constituted an act of incitement to secession, she said.

Tong did not speak during the reading of the verdict. He waved to his parents and others in the gallery as he was escorted from the chamber.

Tong's defense lawyer has said it's impossible to prove that Tong was inciting secession merely by having used the slogan.

The defense also said there is no evidence that Tong committed the act deliberately, that he tried to avoid crashing into officers and that his actions couldn't be considered terrorism since there was no serious violence or harm to society.

The verdict was immediately condemned by Amnesty International, which called it "the beginning of the end for freedom of expression in Hong Kong."

Britney Spears' new lawyer files to remove father's control

LOS ANGELES (AP): Britney Spears' new attorney petitioned Monday to oust her father from the conservatorship that has controlled her life and money for 13 years and replace him with a professional accountant.

Matthew Rosengart said in documents filed in Los Angeles Superior court that the current legal arrangement "has grown increasingly toxic and is simply no longer tenable."

He proposed that James Spears be replaced with CPA Jason Rubin as conservator of the pop star's estate, which documents say equates to \$2.7 million in cash and more than \$57 million in assets.

Rosengart said in the filing that before he sought to end the conservatorship, he was first addressing "the most pressing issue facing Ms. Spears: removing Mr. Spears as conservator of the estate."

"Any father who genuinely loves his daughter and has her best interests at heart should willingly step aside in favor of the highly respected professional fiduciary nominated here," Rosengart said in the documents.

Lynne Spears, Britney's mother and James' ex-wife, said in a declaration supporting Rosengart's filing that his "microscopic control" over her health care and business decisions in a key period in 2018 and 2019 was especially damaging.

"Such scrutiny is exhausting and terrifying, like living in custody," Lynne Spears said.

James Spears stepped down as the so-called conservator of the person for his daughter in 2019, ceding control of her life decisions and health care to court-appointed professional Jodie Montgomery while maintaining control of her finances.

A message sent seeking comment from James Spears and his legal team was not immediately returned. But at a July 14 hearing, his attorney Vivian Thorene said he would not be stepping down and he has only ever been motivated by his daughter's best interests.

Thorene said Britney Spears had many inaccurate beliefs, among them that "her



father is responsible for all the bad things that have happened to her."

Judge Brenda Penny gave Britney Spears permission to hire an attorney of her choice at that hearing, when for the second straight time the singer publicly assailed the conservatorship that has been in place since 2008, breaking into tears as she described the "cruelty" it subjected her to.

"My dad needs to be removed today," she said, adding that she would like to see him charged with abusing his position.

Penny has not yet shown any inclination to remove James Spears, and it is not the first time an attorney for Britney Spears has sought her father's ouster.

Last year, Rosengart's court-appointed predecessor, Samuel Ingham III, proposed that James Spears be replaced with estate-management firm The Bessemer Trust. Penny instead ruled that Jamie Spears and the firm should work in tandem, but Bessemer bowed out of the arrangement before it formally began.

Ingham resigned after the dramatic June hearing when the pop star publicly decried the conservatorship for the first time, telling Penny: "I just want my life back."

A hearing to address Rosengart's petition and other issues in the conservatorship is scheduled for Sept. 29.

Disney props, art, costumes on display at Graceland center

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP): An exhibit of artwork, costumes and props from The Walt Disney Co. archives is on display at the Graceland Exhibition Center in Tennessee.

The 10,000-square-foot (929-square-meter) display, "Inside the Walt Disney Archives," covers multiple Disney properties, ranging from Disney live action to animated films, Walt Disney's personal effects, items from various Disney Parks and more.

The exhibit premiered at D23 Expo Japan in 2018. The items are on loan to Graceland, Elvis Presley's home in Memphis.

Some items include Jack Sparrow's compass from "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," Mary Poppins' original carpet bag, Wilson from "Cast Away," Lumiere and Cogsworth props from 2017's "Beauty and the Beast" and Congo Queen Model Boat from Disneyland's Jungle Cruise.

The exhibit will continue through Jan. 2, with special events planned through the run. Tickets are \$15 for ages 11 and older and \$8 for ages 5 to 10. There is no charge for children 4 and younger to visit.

Lucky to have got opportunity to play real-life hero in 'Shershaah', says Sidharth Malhotra



KARGIL, JUL 27 (PTI):

Actor Sidharth Malhotra, who will be seen playing the role of Kargil hero Vikram Batra in the upcoming film "Shershaah", says he is fortunate to have been chosen to play the real-life hero on-screen.

The biographical war drama, directed by noted south film director Vishnuvardhan, narrates the life story of Captain Batra and how he led the charge of his troops during the 1999 Kargil war. He was given the highest wartime gallantry award Param Vir Chakra posthumously.

In the film, Malhotra will be seen in the double role of Captain Vikram Batra and his twin brother Vishal Batra.

"This day is extremely emotional for me. We started this journey five years ago with Vishal Batra ji. This is my first film where I have portrayed the life of a real-life hero. 'Shershaah' has been an experience bigger than a film," Malhotra said Sunday at the trailer launch event of the film at the National Horse Polo Ground here in Drass town on the eve of the 22nd Kargil Vijay Diwas.

"I would like to thank the Indian Army... This story is about true, real-life heroes like you. And I consider myself lucky that I got to play him," the 36-year-old actor added.

"Shershaah", which borrows its title from the martyr's codename, also stars Kiara Advani.

Advani, who plays Dimple Cheema - the romantic interest of Captain Vikram Batra in the film, said working on the film transformed her on a personal level.

"Some films change you professionally but there are some that change you

personally. 'Shershaah' is that film for me. Thank you to the Batra family, Dimple and everyone who made this possible for us. I will forever be grateful. We can't wait to share this with the world," she said.

The 28-year-old actor also expressed her gratitude towards the Indian Army.

"I am quite nervous right now because I am standing in front of the Indian Army for the first time. No amount of words would justify the gratitude we all have in it hearts for each of you. I would also like to thank the families here. We salute you for your support, prayers and for being true pillars of strength for men and women in uniform," she added.

Director Vishnuvardhan, who makes his directorial debut in Hindi cinema with "Shershaah", is credited with making successful Tamil movies like "Arinatham Ariyamalum", "Pattiyal", and "Billa", among others.

Directing a film inspired by the life of Captain Batra was "once in a lifetime opportunity" for him, Vishnuvardhan said.

"Apart from reading and knowing about him (Captain Batra), it was the experience of meeting the people, all the officers, who fought by him," he said.

The director said the team has tried to stay true to the events of the 1999 war.

"We never thought we would shoot in Kargil. We would imagine how it would have been during the war. Every time we would shoot, we could see it all coming alive. What we filmed on those heights is nothing compared to what the Indian Army achieved at that time. So, we have tried to bring everything possible on screen," he added.

"Shershaah" is scheduled to be released on August 12

on Amazon Prime Video. The film is jointly produced by Dharma Productions and Kaash Entertainment.

Vijay Subramaniam, Director and Head, Content, Amazon Prime Video, India, said when Dharma Productions approached him to release on the streaming platform, it was an instant yes from their team.

"Dharma Productions and I share warm relationship and when they asked us about this film, we instantly said yes. It is a unique experience," Subramaniam said, adding the film will have a wider release in more than 200 countries.

It was producer Shabbir Boxwala, who first learnt about Captain Batra and approached his family to make a film on him.

"In the first meeting, they agreed to give the rights of (the life of) Vikram Batra and that was the happiest day of my life. They are part of the family now. The support of the Indian Army and his family was very essential and unconditional," Boxwala added.

The trailer launch was also attended by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Y K Joshi, filmmakers Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and the family members of Kargil war veterans, several soldiers and officers.

Before the event, homage was paid to the heroes of the Kargil war by Army personnel and a group of school children, who sang popular patriotic songs like "Chak De! India", "Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Sathiyon", "Teri Mitti", and "Ae Watan".

"Shershaah" also stars Shiv Panditt, Raj Arjun, Pranay Pachauri, Himanshu Ashok Malhotra, Nikitin Dheer, Anil Charanjeet, Sahil Vaid, Shataf Figar and Pawan Chopra.



ON THE MOVE! Shirtless Sasha Farber hit the streets on an electric bike in Studio City, California.

ARIES:

You may feel like you're walking through a dark passageway right now, and that the light at the end of the tunnel is a myth. But that is far from the truth, Aries. The cards are encouraging you to move forward despite what your physical reality is showing you as you remember that the chaos is a part of the illusion too.

TAURUS:

Working with the law of attraction and updating your vision board is a big mood in the Taurus HQ. You're thinking about what you want your future to look like and consciously planting seeds that will help you move to the desired destination. A good way to see dreams come to fruition is to practice non-attachment. Once you've done your bit, surrender the rest to the Universe and repeat the mantra, "The best is yet to come."

GEMINI:

You've been telling yourself all the wrong things, Gemini. You've been repeating the story of failures and disappointments, thus giving the negatives

more power than they deserve. What the cards want you to do today is shift the story around. Reaffirm all that is good and trust in the process of manifestation. You are deserving of your dreams, beautiful, and the time to realise your best life is now!

CANCER:

Your words are like spells, beautiful. Spells that are affirming all that is blessed and beautiful. So use your words wisely with the inner knowing that you are creating your reality as you go along. Yes, there are things that are not quite right at the moment.

LEO:

Your words are like spells, beautiful. Spells that are affirming all that is blessed and beautiful. So use your words wisely with the inner knowing that you are creating your reality as you go along. Yes, there are things that are not quite right at the moment. Yes, chaos is beginning to seem like a constant. Look beyond the illusion shown to you by your physical reality as you trust that the best

is yet to come.

VIRGO:

Breathe, Virgo, breathe, and as you do, remember who you are and the battles you have survived in the past. Despite what your physical reality is showing you, you've got this, and you know exactly how to slay your demons. So tap into your inner warrior as you go forth and conquer.

LIBRA:

Libra, you've been dedicating yourself to the process of inner alchemy, and it shows. But, are you able to retain the energy you are harnessing for yourself? Something to think about when you feel unusually drained. Remember, we don't always have control over who we have to interact with. But we can control how much of our energy we give to other people. Start by reaffirming your boundaries wherever necessary.

SCORPIO:

Feelings are just visitors. Let them come and go, come and go. Try not to identify with them. This is the only way to rise

above the murky realm of emotions, Scorpio. That said, this is not a time to take your mental health lightly or push yourself to do any more than you can handle right now.

SAGITTARIUS:

That vision board looks like a vision, Sagittarius, but it isn't going to manifest itself. This chapter of your life is about putting the given plan into action. Remember, everything seems intimidating at first—until you get the hang of it. So, take the first step and trust that you will learn the ways of the world as you go along.

CAPRICORN:

The stirrings of your heart are anything but random, Capricorn. You have attracted these opportunities into your experience for a reason. Honour them as a chance to develop your gifts and pour your energy into the things that you feel aligned with. The time to start moving towards your True North is this minute! Remember, your practical side will kick in every now and then and convince you

that you are dreaming too big. Take a shot of optimism and keep moving forward nonetheless.

AQUARIUS:

As the most rebellious sign of the zodiac, you tend to oppose the system fervently and have the tendency to get triggered by people in a position of authority. Today, you're being asked to be mindful of both your actions and your words. Resist the urge to say something that could potentially damage your reputation or relationship with others.

PISCES:

As an old soul, you understand that nothing in our life is truly random. Everything that takes place is a part of the grand plan—the grand plan that's helping us evolve on a soul level. So, honour these lessons, beautiful. Be mindful of what you're being asked to heal and transform within. Remember, it is through the path of inner alchemy that you will emerge as the most radiant version of yourself.