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SummitTIMES

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O N T O P O F T H E N E W S

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Department justifies interviews for serving adhoc teachers as necessary to facilitate their regularization later

“PREVIOUS GOVT HAD NOT VISUALIZED THAT REGULARIZATION WOULD BE SUBJECT TO STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE NCTE NORMS”

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 JUL:**

The Education Department today explained its insistence for serving adhoc teachers to sit for interviews for renewal of their contracts to bring even their hiring on temporary basis in compliance with the existing rules and regulations of the Department, Ministry, NCERT and NCTE.

In a press communiqué issued this evening, Special Secretary, Nodal Officer, Public Relations & Publicity, Education Department, Bhim Thatal, has alleged that the previous SDF Government “had not visualized that regularization of adhoc teachers would be subject to strict adherence to the NCTE norms.”

Now that the SKM Government has decided to regularize the services of adhoc teachers after completion of eight years of service, the process will be proper and

transparent if their original hiring on adhoc basis was done in compliance with the existing rules for regular appointments [as prescribed by the Department, Ministry, NCERT and NCTE]. Hence the call for interviews this year.

The release goes on to state: “For this, policy decision has already been taken to regularize such qualifying candidates through the Sikkim State Teachers’ Recruitment Board.”

Adhoc teachers who had sat through an interview process last year and have been directed to sit for another round now have been protesting the move claiming that it was not only demeaning, but also unfair to have them interview again for the same job and same terms.

The issue has been heating up of late and the Department has remained unable to convince either the protesting teachers or the gen-

eral public about the propriety of its decision.

The press release opens with the claim that the government decided to review the recruitment and administration of teachers “in order to promote better education system with administrative and qualitative reforms.”

The release argues further that since appointment of teachers “is not only a factor of providing employment and supporting the economic activities of the people” and “also implies creation and maintenance of better human resource for qualitative education,” it was decided that even adhoc appointments be done in adherence to norms for regular appointments.

“As the future of children cannot be compromised merely for the sake of providing employment, selection to the post of teachers to different categories on the basis of NCTE rules and

regulations is necessary in order to have qualified and competent teachers,” the release details.

The Department has further clarified that during selection, in addition to professional competency, assessment of past services and experience certificates from the respective school-heads will also be given weightage. This implies that serving adhoc teachers will receive weightage for services already rendered.

For future renewals, serving adhoc teachers will have to only submit performance reports, the Department has further clarified.

It reiterates: “They will not have to appear in any further interview for their renewal for every subsequent academic year and after completion of 08 (Eight) years of service they will be brought to regular establishment.”

Assured meeting with CM, ad-hoc teachers put protest on hold

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 JUL:**

Ad-hoc teachers who were protesting the re-interview circular issued by the Education Department met the Education Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha, Sikkim Housing Development Board Chairperson, Karma Tashi Bhutia and Department officials today.

In a press conference held late this evening, the teachers said that they were given assurances that after they sit for this interview they will not have to sit for interviews for the next 8 years. An appointment with the Chief Minister has also been fixed for 08 July, the teachers inform.

They said that they will plan further course of action after the meeting with the CM, till then their protest stands suspended.

They also announced the names of the members of the executive body of the new association they had formed recently.

CHIEF MINISTER’S MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF “A DAY FOR MOTHER EARTH”

“Let us show solidarity in our concerted climate action”



My beloved citizens, as you may be aware that the Government of Sikkim has dedicated 07 of July every year since 2019 as “A Day for Mother Earth”, a novel green initiative for the protection and conservation of our fragile ecosystem. This year being an important year with the onset of United Nation’s decadal action 2021-2030 for ecosystem restoration, we will be celebrating the day with great zest and fervour taking up environment friendly activities across the State. The day is also coinciding with the closing day of Van Mahotsav Week i.e. 01 to 07 July.

On 07 July, let us show solidarity in our concerted climate action by stopping all vehicles for seven (7) minutes from 11am to 11.07am. I request all the environment friendly citizens of Sikkim, Government Departments/ Agencies, Taxi Drivers Association and so on NOT to ply any vehicles (except emergency vehicles like Ambulance, Police, Fire services etc) for seven (7) dedicated minutes on this day. This action has been continuous since 2019 as our affirmative action towards ameliorating the deteriorating environmental effects.

As we are still fighting the deadly Covid-19 pandemic, let us make sure compliance of social distancing and Covid-19 SoPs. With this, let each one of us spare some time at our homes and neighbourhood to dedicate our green good deeds to the Mother Earth by contributing in whatever small way possible and strengthen the hands of Forest and Environment Department and efforts of the Government for a clean and green Sikkim. Clean and healthy environment starts from our homes. During the Van Mahotsav, let us clean and beautify our neighbourhood, plant native saplings, resort to eco-friendly lifestyles and create low carbon footprints. Let us reduce and stop using single use plastics and resort to environment conscious lifestyle. It is the duty and responsibility of every citizen to be well aware and be conscious about environmental issues and put green ideas into action.

I appeal to one and all to resort to reduce, re-use and re-cycle practices and manage our natural resources efficiently and make this a habit and way of life in this beautiful Mountain State.

Swachh Sikkim Swasth Sikkim. Jai Hind.

No new Covid deaths in Sikkim in past 24 hours

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 JUL:**

Sikkim’s tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reached 21,403 today with 177 new cases of novel coronavirus reported in the last 24 hours. These 177 new cases were detected from the testing of 846 samples on Monday giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 20.9%.

Of the new cases, 86

were registered in East District, 44 in West District, 44 in South District and three in North District.

In the meantime, 151 more COVID patients were discharged from home and facility isolation after making full recoveries to further improve the figure of recovered cases of COVID-19 to 18,944.

On the other hand, no

new COVID deathswere reported in the last 24 hours to hold Sikkim’s COVID death toll at 309.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department, 97 of the new cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 468 samples, while 79 more persons were found positive for COVID-19 in rap-

id antigen testing of 372 samples and one case picked up in TruNat testing of six samples.

Hospitals saw only four new admissions over the last 24 hours.

There are 1,894 active cases of coronavirus in the State at present of whom nine are currently admitted in ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

Tibetology marks Dalai Lama’s birthday with plantation drive



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 JUL:**

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT) organized a mega drive to plant medicinal plants and herbs at Namgyal Sowa-Rigpa Herbal Garden on the occasion of the 86th birthday of the XIVth Dalai Lama and also to observe “A Day for Mother Earth” – an initiative of the Government of Sikkim, a press release informs.

The XIVth Dalai Lama has a special relationship with Sikkim in general and the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in particular. On the request of the Crown Prince PaldenThondupNamgyal (1923–1982), who had envisaged the need for establishing a centre for Buddhist studies and research, His Holiness the Dalai Lama laid the foundation stone of NIT in 1957 while he was on his way back to Tibet, via Sikkim, after attending the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha’s Parinirvana on the invitation of the Government of India.

On the 80th Birthday of the XIVth Dalai Lama, the Government of Sikkim announced the setting-up of Buddhist Studies in Sikkim and NIT was given the responsibility for establishing a Buddhist University at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology on 06 Jul, 2015. As a follow-up action on the State

Government’s decision, NIT established the Faculty of Sowa-Rigpa and Master Course in Buddhist & Tibetan Studies, in affiliation with the Sikkim University.

The plantation drive has a three-pronged message of Health, Healing and Harmony: Creating awareness of herbal plant’s health benefits; identifying medicinal plants used in Sowa-Rigpa and living in harmony with mother earth.

NIT planted 1360 saplings of five main species of medicinal plants and herbs used in Sowa-Rigpa medical system – an ancient medicinal science of Tibet – practiced widely in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Ladakh, Sikkim and the Himalayan region of India. The names of the saplings in Tibetan and their corresponding scientific names are Aru (TerminaliaChebula), Baru (TerminaliaBellirica), Kyuru (Phyllanthusemblica), Letae (TinosporaCordifolia), and Tsampaka (OroxylumIndicum).

The Medicinal Plant Conservation, (MPCA), Mamring, of the Forest Department, Government of Sikkim graciously donated these saplings for transplantation.

NIT Director, Pema W Rinzing launched the plantation drive at NamgyalSorig Herbal Garden on the NIT campusat 11.00am on 06 Jul, 2021. This was carried out by

maintaining strict COVID-19 protocols and guidelines.

Herbal Garden is one of the essential parts of the Faculty of Sowa-Rigpa under NIT. Presently NIT identified and planted 100 types of herbal plants in the herbal garden of NIT premise.

The five and half-year bachelor degree course on Sowa-Rigpa is offered in five institutions across India. The Faculty of Sowa-Rigpa, NIT, is the first Institution to get the privileged of being registered under the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India.

Sikkim is gifted with a bountiful natural herbal plants found in higher altitudes and, therefore, it presents a unique opportunity for the cultivation of medicinal plants as more and more people are adopting a healthy and organic lifestyle which includes an increasing preference for herbal treatment.

Therefore, NIT aims to develop the Herbal Garden for the Faculty of Sowa-Rigpa and to encourage the people of Sikkim, especially farmers, to cultivate medicinal plants for their health and economic betterment. NIT is also on a mission for the conservation of medicinal plants found in higher altitudes, especially used in Sowa-Rigpa.

Dalai Lama turns 86, says committed to reviving ancient Indian knowledge

DHARAMSHALA, JUL 6 (PTI): On his 86th birthday on Tuesday, the Dalai Lama said he has taken full advantage of India's freedom and religious harmony and is committed to reviving ancient Indian knowledge.

In a virtual address from his residence here, the Tibetan spiritual leader thanked people from across the globe who greeted him on his birthday and said he would continue to serve humanity and combat climate change.

Since I became a refugee and settled in India, I have taken full advantage of India's freedom and religious harmony. I want to assure you that for the rest of my life I am committed to reviving ancient Indian knowledge, said the Dalai Lama, whose real name is Tenzin Gyatso.

I really appreciate the Indian concept of secular



values, not dependent on religion, such as honesty, karuna (compassion) and ahimsa (non-violence), he added.

Now that it is my birthday, I want to express my deep appreciation to all my friends who have really shown love, respect and trust I can assure you that I am committed to serving humanity and

working to protect the climate, he said.

The Dalai Lama urged people to practice non-violence and be compassionate towards each other.

I am committed to non-violence and compassion until my death. This is my offering to my friends. All my brothers and sisters should keep these two things in mind

-- non-violence and compassion... On my birthday, this is my gift, he said.

I am just one human being. Many people really show they love me. And many people actually love my smile. In spite of my old age, my face is quite handsome. Many people really show me genuine friendship, he said.

SMU Awards PhD Degree to Anita Gupta

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 JUL:

Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) has awarded Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree to a research scholar in the Department of Management Studies, Anita Gupta, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT), SMU, a press release informs.

She was awarded the PhD for her research work titled "Skill India Mission: an assessment of initiatives, scope and challenges in Sikkim", under the supervision of Dr Neeta D Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, SMIT.

Anita Gupta is an educator since 1992 and began her professional career as a Post-graduate teacher in West Point School, Tathanchen and Deorali Senior Secondary School, Gangtok, Sikkim. She also taught in Sikkim Govt. College (Nar Bahadur Bhandari College) as an ad-hoc lecturer teaching History to graduate students. She headed the Women's Training Institute as a Deputy Director, YWCA of Delhi, looking after skill development and vocational training programme for women and children to make them self-reliant and em-



ployable.

The Doctor of Philosophy will be awarded to

her during the next Convocation of Sikkim Manipal University.

SIBLAC condemns Sikkim-Darj merger issue, wants more protection for Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 JUL:

Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee has condemned the recent statements made by Gorkha National Congress advocating the Sikkim-Darjeeling merger.

In a press release issued today SIBLAC has said, "Our organisation condemns the attempt of Gorkha National Congress and few other personnel's to rake up the issue of gift of Darjeeling to British India government to stake claim for a merger of Sikkim and Darjeeling region to form another state."

The merger of Sikkim and Darjeeling to form another state has always been an issue dredged up by political parties to gain publicity to further their own political agendas when they run out of

any other issues to gain the attention of the public, the release states.

According to SIBLAC, the contention that Darjeeling belongs to Sikkim based on the gift deed is a misinterpreted understanding of the agreement.

Darjeeling was gifted to the Britishers as an unconditional cessation of a narrow enclave of 138 square miles, about 30 miles long and 6 miles wide. It was entirely surrounded by the Raja's dominions entry and exit being restricted to a narrow path, which included the sites of Darjeeling and Kurseong towns and touched the plains near Pankhabari, the release mentions.

The land gifted to East India Co. in 1835 did not comprise the whole present Darjeel-

ing. After independence the government of India stepped into the shoes of British India with the authority over the territory of British India including Darjeeling. The later treaty of 1950 between India and Sikkim did not dispute the status of Darjeeling as part of India. The final merger of Sikkim into India finally closes any ambiguity on the status of Darjeeling as part of Sikkim.

"The attempt by the Gorkha National Congress to incite the sentiments of the Nepali population of Sikkim towards the merger is a serious threat to national security in view of the sensitive position of Sikkim as a border state and the recent threat by the Chinese on the international border," the release states.

SIBLAC states that the Nepalese of Sikkimese origin are Sikkimese first with interest of Sikkim in their heart and any attempt to lure them into their secessionist movement will be strongly resisted by all Sikkimese.

It further advises the government to take urgent steps to safeguard the local population from any such attempt. The Association has asked the government to reinforce protection provided under Article 371F by adopting more safeguards through laws; implement orders of the High Court of Sikkim in the false Sikkim Subject case; registration of labours must include agricultural workers, MGNREGA workers and others; and enforce inner line permit (ILP).

Furniture sanctioned to 3,050 houses under SGYA

GANGTOK, 06 JUL (IP-R): Minister for Rural Development Department, Sonam Lama along with Principal Secretary RDD, CS Rao, Principal Chief Engineer, Special Secretary, Dir Accounts and other members of the department inspected the furniture and finalised the specifications of the furniture including the television set of LG brand.

The team finalised the following items which will be supplied to all the 3050 nos. of houses being constructed under

Sikkim GaribHawasYojana (SGAY). The details of furniture being supplied are as follows:-

1. Double bed- 5ft x 6ft wooden frame with 19mm Plyboard
2. 2 nos. Single bed - 3ft x 6ft wooden frame with 19mm Plyboard
3. Wooden sofa - 3+1+1 seats
4. 2 nosfo steel almirah - 3ft x 6ft
5. Centre table - 4ft x 2ft
6. LG Smart television set - 32" LED.

As per the progress informed by the con-

tractor, the construction activity has started for 2005 no. of houses wherein casting of slab has been done for 1010 houses, 503 houses have completed plinth level and the remaining houses construction activities are at different levels. The Department is trying to complete these 3050 nos. of houses by 31 Mar, 2022.

The team also inspected the construction activities of the houses under Duga BAC and interacted with the beneficiaries to know their views. The team also

expressed their satisfaction by seeing the active participation of beneficiaries for constructing their houses. The Department has also cross checked with the contractor whether the directions given by the HCM regarding the use of chemical to prevent leakage has been incorporated while casting slabs.

The beneficiaries also expressed their happiness and satisfaction to the CM and the Government for identifying their basic needs and providing quality housing.

Hill Trinamool to hold protest dharna against runaway fuel prices

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 JUL:

Hill Trinamool Congress has announced plans to organise protest dharnas on 10 and 11 July all over the hills, lending support to the TMC plans for similar statewide protests against the runaway fuel prices in the country.

Spokesperson, Hill Trinamool, NB Khawas, explains, "The main idea to inform the people that before coming to power, BJP had promised that fuel prices will be brought



down. Look at what is happening all around us."

In Darjeeling, the dharna will be held from

10AM to 4PM on both days at the motorstand.

IBM and Board of Open Schooling & Skill Education to offer free skills training

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 JUL:

IBM (NYSE: IBM) and Board of Open Schooling and Skill Education (BOSSE), Sikkim today announced a partnership to provide online courses for the State's students, job seekers, and entrepreneurs that will enhance their professional and IT skills, a press release informs.

IBM will work with the BOSSE and implementation partner CS-RBOX to foster the skills development of learners by providing industry-relevant course content through the IBM SkillsBuild program. The program will run across online open schools and several traditional schools and colleges as part of the partnership.

The collaboration will help impart free twenty-first-century skills to 18-year-old students looking to upskill or reskill, women interested in pursuing corporate careers and rural learners to supplement their traditional education.

"The Government of Sikkim is focussed on developing the digital skills of students and building a tech-focused education system in Sikkim. In the digital era, it is imperative to have the necessary technical and professional skillsets needed to build careers and businesses in emerging sectors. In order to address this concern, the Government established BOSSE. This collaboration between BOSSE and IBM will provide the State's youth with the opportunity to up-

skill and build new-age capabilities required to achieve success in their endeavours," said Prof (Dr) Vice-Chairman of BOSSE, Kuldeep Agarwal

Managing Director, Sandip Patel, IBM India/South Asia said, "The world is digitizing and technology has become the sutradhar – the unifying force – driving the future of business. Business leaders are adopting technologies like Hybrid Cloud, advanced analytics, and AI to survive the big challenges and changes over the past year, further driving the need for the next generation to have the right skillsets for the future of work. IBM's skilling program is designed to provide industry-relevant content and skill sets that will help bridge the industry skill gap and enhance their employability."

Aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, BOSSE emphasizes quality skill education and envisages the strengthening of vocational education for enhancing employability and career prospects of learners in Sikkim state. Partnering with IBM is the first key initiative by BOSSE to develop employability skills and promote inclusion for Sikkim's youth in future. BOSSE is also a key member of IBM SkillsBuild's global alliance of 30 organizations along with Manpower Group to provide skill training and employment opportunities for their learners.

IBM SkillsBuild is a free digital program that offers learning path-

ways on technologies like Cloud, AI, data analytics & cybersecurity, and professional skills like Communication Skills & Design Thinking for any adult learner to develop technical & professional skills that will help them reinvent their careers and businesses. Learners accessing the program can conduct a self-assessment of employment interests and aptitudes, helping them identify and connect with a learning path that fits their skills set.

In India IBM has previously partnered with the National Skills Development Corporation, Directorate General of Training at the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Central Board of Secondary Education, Niti Aayog and State Department of Education and State Skills Missions to impact more than 4 lakhs learners and students across 22+ states through its education and skilling initiatives.

About IBM India

For more information on IBM India, please visit <http://www.ibm.com/in/en>.

For the latest annual corporate responsibility report describing IBM's leadership and accountability in how it collaborates with communities, clients, governments, shareholders, employees, and not-for-profits on environmental, social service, and governance issues, please visit here. Follow IBM's corporate social responsibility initiatives by following @IBMorg or visiting www.ibm.org.

Even Centre feels that crowds in hill stations is frightening

NEW DELHI, 06 JUL

[PTI]: The government on Tuesday cautioned that people roaming in hill stations and markets without following COVID-19-appropriate behaviours can nullify the gains made in the management of the pandemic so far.

Stressing that the pandemic was not yet over, an official described the images of large numbers of people thronging

popular hill stations as "frightening".

The government said violations of Covid protocols will lead to further increase in the infections as it stressed on wearing of masks and maintaining of physical distancing.

The second wave of COVID-19 has come down in most states.

However, some states are still in the midst of the second wave and the

areas reporting a test positivity rate of over 10 per cent have to impose/reinstate restriction measures, it said.

In a joint press conference on the pandemic situation and vaccination status, a senior official said as many as 73 districts across 17 states and union territories reported more than 10 per cent Covid positivity rate in the week from June 29 to July 5.

A total of 91 districts

in the country reported more than 100 daily new cases in the week ending July 4, he said.

Eighty per cent Covid cases in India were reported from 90 districts across 14 states and union territories, indicating the need for focused attention in these areas, the official said.

With 553 fresh fatalities, India recorded the lowest daily death toll in around 90 days

while 34,703 new cases of coronavirus were reported, the lowest in 111 days, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

With the fresh cases, the total tally of COVID-19 cases climbed to 3,06,19,932, while the death toll climbed to 4,03,281.

The active cases further declined to 4,64,357, the lowest in 101 days, and comprise 1.52 per cent of the total infections.

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Tadong School organises online poetry and quiz comptt

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 JUL:**

Government Senior Secondary School, Tadong, organised a virtual children's poetry competition through Google meet with technical support of TribhuvanDhakal, Nepali PGT on 06 Jul, 2021. On this occasion, the results of the inter-school quiz contest held on 28 June were also announced.

Senior literary writers, Sudha M Rai and Amar BaniyaLohoro were present as guests in the program organized today. School principals, language teachers and students of the four districts participating in the inter-school quiz contest were present.

Utsa Sharma, Chokit Lepcha, Sajit Ali, Dilmayachhetri, RajuMandal, YogeshChhetri and NandaniChhetri recited in Nepali and Rani Kumari, ReshmaKhatun and AnujDarjee recited in Hindi and Sohormit Lepcha, Chingjong Lepcha, PasangChhamuSerpa, Pemphuti Lepcha, Lenoor Lepcha recited in Lepcha self-composed sweet-sweet poemswhile PoojaChhetri, HemantChamagain and RomilaChhetri of Assam Lingzay, Ranka and Mangan Senior Schools also recited their original poems.

PGT Biology, Dr HP Subedi and Nepali language teacher, SabitriBhandari also recited their poems with the aim

of motivating the students.

Literary writer Sudha M Rai expressed her congratulations and best wishes to the participating students and recited a poem to encourage students towards literary activities.

At the end, the result of inter-school quiz contest was declared in which LeelaLimbu of Singtam School, Kshawan Sharma of Ranka School and RenukaRai and AnshuBhujel of Kyongsha and Rangpo Schools were stood first, second and third respectively and others obtaining more than 40% will also be awarded by transferring cash prizes and e-certificates.

Similarly, Chukit Lepcha, NandaniChhetri and YogeshChhetri won first, second and third place in today's school level Nepali Poetry Competition; ReshmaKhatun, AnujDarji and Rani Kumari in Hindi and Lenoor Lepcha, Sohormit Lepcha and Pemphuti Lepcha in Lepcha were also announced to be given cash prizes and e-certificates.

Finally, the online program concluded by thanking the guest, participating teachers and students, including Nepali teachers, TN Sharma, BikashBhattarai and SanitaTamang of Rangpo, Singtam and Kyongha schools, who acted as judges.

Samples for RT-PCR testing collected from Lower Mamring and Samardung



NAMCHI, 06 JUL (IPR):

A team from Namthang Primary Health Centre, led by Medical Officer in-charge, DrMingyur D Lassopa, Dental SurgeonsDrSushmitaChettri

and Dr Ayesha Chettri collected samples for RT-PCR testing for Covid-19 from Lower Mamring and Samardung, respectively.

The team collected a total

of 185 RT-PCR samples. At Transasia Bio Medical Company a total of 148 samples were collected from the workers of the company.

At Lower Mamring

samples of 15 primary contacts were collected and at JP Construction Company a total number of 22 samples from the workers were collected.

Samarthan NGO develops sanitizer “machine” from waste and bamboo

**SMRITAKHAWAS
DARJEELING, 06 JUL:**

Youth from Darjeeling and Kalimpong associated with Samarthan NGO have developed an automatic hand sanitizer dispensing machine using waste materials and bamboo.

Making the announcement, YoelSunam, president of Samarthan NGO, said, “We, the youth of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, jointly formed the NGO during the lockdown last year. We have 45 members and have decided to make an automatic hand sanitizer dispensing machine using bamboo and waste



materials.”

The prototype developer, AzelKarthak, adds: “Being a student of BTEC at Siliguri Institute of Technology and member of Samarthan, I felt such a machine would be beneficial for all.”

The group has decided to gift its first consignment to Kalimpong Municipality office, District Hospital, Police station and Traffic office.

They are currently on fund raising drivesince their initiatives thus far

have been financed from personal contributions.

They have developed 20 machines thus far and hope to put together at least 300 so that all three hundred health centres in Hills can be donated at least one machine.

SGAY field monitoringin Sumbuk Block

**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 06 JUL:**

Field Monitoring of Sikkim GaribAwajYojna (SGAY) was conducted from 02 to 03 Jul, 2021, under Sumbuk Block under the leadership of Additional Political Secretary (South) to Chief Minister, AnjeetaRajalim, a press release informs.

MsRajalim was accompanied by ADC DevNamchi, BDO Sumbuk, concerned Panchayat members, president SKM CLC, NGOs, officials from ADC, Dev/BAC, Sumbuk, Project Manager/Incharge/Engineers, MTL Pvt Ltd Singtam and beneficiaries.

The field monitoring programme started with briefing on background of SGAY scheme by project manager and followed by fruitful interaction session amongst beneficiaries, Project Company, panchayat members



and departmental official concerned.

The two-day programme covered 4 GPUs namely; Sumbuk-Kartik, Lungchok-Kamarey, Sadam-Suntaley, and MelliDara-Paiyong. Turuk-Ramabong GPU could not be covered since it is a containment zone.

Problems faced by the beneficiaries were addressed by the monitor-

ing team and on-spot settlement of various issues related to SGAY had been done, assuring every possible support to complete their houses in stipulated time frame.

The APS during the interaction session and visit assured of possible help to the beneficiaries to complete the construction of their SGAY scheme houses and in return asked for their co-

operation to this effect as well. The project company representatives were directed to start the construction works where it has not started yet, within a week without compromising on quality.

Overall SGAY schemes in the block found to be satisfactory and expected to be completed before the stipulated time as informed by the project manager.

Vietnam's Hongbang International University reaches out to medical aspirants from Northeast India

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 JUL:**

Vietnam's Hongbang International University (HIU) has partnered with Aieraa Overseas Studies as its India partner for seeking medical aspirants from India. The Ho Chi Minh City-based University is welcoming medical education aspirants from India, especially Northeast India. Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Ambassador of Vietnam to India, Pham SanhChau, said, “This is a first joint initiative in Indo-Vietnamese Education. And with direct flights from



Kolkata to Ho Chi Minh city and also cultural, food and demographic similarities between Vietnam and India, Indian students will find it like a second home. I will also take this as a personal endeavour and help each student individually for anything that they may require.”

Other than Indian Medical Institutes, around 20,000 (2019) medical aspirants from India have been going to complete their MBBS, to Russia, Philippines, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan Philippines & China. Vietnam thus becomes an affordable destination for their

medical studies as the cost of living is also comparatively inexpensive.

Hongbang International University Medical programme is approved & recognised by the Health Ministry of Vietnam, and the medical college is enlisted in the World Health Organisation (WHO). Thus the students of HIU are globally recognised for their best practices and calibrate their abilities to global standards. The university also tied up with 7 Hospitals in Ho Chi Minh city. The medium of education is English.

SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

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EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS FOR WOMEN IN DISTRESS

This is for information to the general public especially to women/ children that an incident of rape, sexual assault/ abuse, child labour, domestic violence, human trafficking, dowry demand or any other matter can be reported in the following helpline numbers. Always report such incidents. No person has a right to take away your dignity.

One Stop Centre

1.	East District	-	One Stop Centre Building, Below Main Office Building of Social Justice & Welfare Department, 5 th Mile Lumsey, Gangtok, East Sikkim	Contact No 9339063146/8900576356
2.	West District	-	Ground Floor of Aayush Hospital, Below Kyongsa Ground, Near Bhanu Salik Museum, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim	Contact No 9647490507
3.	North District	-	Ground Floor of Doctor's Quarter, Opposite O.P.D. Clinic, District Hospital, Pentok, Mangan North Sikkim	Contact No 8670539777
4.	South District	-	1 st Floor of Old U.D. & H.D. Building, Housing Colony, Below Fire Station, Jorethang, South Sikkim	Contact No 8670177558 03592-257022

Women Helpline

1.	Women Helpline	-	One Stop Centre Building, Below Main Office Building of Social Justice & Welfare Department, 5 th Mile Lumsey, Gangtok, East Sikkim	Contact No 181 03592- 200081 For Emergency Assistance: 8617867234/9775484841
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Suicide Crisis Centre

1.	Helpline	-	Old Psychiatric Ward Above Old Emergency, Old STNM Hospital, Gangtok, East Sikkim	Contact No 1800-345-3225 03592-202111
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Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU)

1.	Addl. Supdt. of Police (AHTU)	-	3rd Floor, Manan Kendra Building, Development Area, Gangtok	Contact No 9475013449/ 7872594033 9547272350
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Child Helpline No

1.	Helpline No.	-	1098
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Legal Aid (Office of Sikkim SLSA)

Helpline No.	-	Front Office of Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok	1800-345-3340 03592-205377
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Legal Aid Office (Districts)

Helpline Nos.	-	Office of DLSA(East), District Courts Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim	1800-345-3382 03592-284462
		Office of DLSA(West), District Courts Complex, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim	1800-345-3383 03595-250010
		Office of DLSA (South), District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim	1800-345-3362 03595-/264654
		Office of DLSA (North), District Courts Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim	1800-345-3384 03592-234694
		Office of Judicial Magistrate-cum- Civil Judge(Soreng), West Sikkim	03595-253000

Issued by: Sikkim State Legal Services Authority Development Area, Gangtok.

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Prioritise Agriculture. Trust Farmers

...because agriculture still provides for a majority of Sikkim

When seventy per cent of the population, that majority living in rural Sikkim which registers agriculture as its profession, is extended only a sliver of the loans advanced by banks in Sikkim, one knows that an inexcusable denial is afoot. During the Third quarter of Financial Year 2020-21, the overall achievement of Banks under Annual Credit Plan was only 21.4% under Agriculture sector. And this was a portion of what was projected for the sector. As per stipulations governing banking practices in the country, loans to the agriculture sector should constitute at least 18% of the total advances released by banks. In Sikkim, this figure was 01.51% a decade back and although the situation has improved over the years, if agriculture does not get even a quarter of what is apportioned for it, it is unlikely that it is receiving 20% of the entire buffet. It would have been all well if the under-performance by banks was because farmers in Sikkim were so well off that they did not need loans to improve the productivity of their farms. But that is obviously not the case because the number of hands taking up the plough as also the total acreage under cultivation has been steadily declining in the State.

Census 2011 tells us that in India, more than 2,400 farmers quit agriculture and migrate to the cities every day! These are farmers giving up on their lands at home to move to an alien city and work as menial labour. Clearly, the migration is forced by their privations. The same Census also informs us that 42% of the nation's farmers would, if given the choice, quit agriculture. It is into this frame that Sikkim's situation needs to be viewed. There might not be widespread indebtedness as elsewhere in the country or desperate poverty among the farmers in Sikkim, but the sector has obviously plateaued out and is now on the decline which is why fewer families have the new generation tilling the fields. It can also not be denied that the lure of white collar jobs and vocations which are less "rustic" in nature are edging agriculture out of the prospective list of options for the young. This is not to say that the children of farmers should remain farmers, but is an argument to highlight that dignity needs to be brought back to the sector and more youngsters allowed the chance to leverage their wider exposure, keener scientific temperament and higher ambitions to revolutionise agriculture in Sikkim.

The State Government, to its credit, has undertaken the right policy decision by pursuing the Organic Sikkim mission and identifying horticulture and floriculture as thrust areas for the rural economy. These missions, even as they strive to resuscitate agriculture to its original, un-poisoned-by-pesticides roots in Sikkim, also capitalize on a growing respect for organic products in the world market. It will be identifiers such as this which will fetch produce from Sikkim a premium in the agri-business and script new introductions for the new generation of farmers and excite more of them to stay in the business. More people need to join agriculture to supplement the dwindling ranks of farmers in the State, and such a turnaround can begin if capital formation in agriculture and allied sectors is accelerated. No one can have complaints against sops from the government, but for agriculture to thrive, more investment credit needs to be extended to the sector. Sikkim has the benefit of being in a situation where agriculture loans are required not for sustenance but to propel the sector to a new level of prosperity.

The investment is required because as per the Agriculture Census of 2010-11, 77% of the farmers in Sikkim fall in the small and marginal category, working on average farm sizes of 0.64 hectares. The general consensus on the minimum size of farmland to allow a farmer the space to "do well" is at least one hectare. Hence, for farmers to prosper, or even sustain, they will need to invest in their small landholdings and improve productivity through better irrigation, improved seeds, wider diversification and adding sources of livelihood like poultry and animal husbandry. This should ideally come through agriculture loans and not via departmental interventions alone because the latter has its limitations which can also extend to hobbling the decision-making capacities of farmers. Government support should continue and improve, but should be complemented by market support which begins with banks getting more involved in the economic prospects of a majority of the population among which they conduct their business. This is an urgent requirement because, as the National Sample Survey Organisation report titled "Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households" for 2012-13 reveals, agriculture is not only in terrible crisis, but is "fast decaying" across the country. Sikkim is too heavily invested in its Organic State and horticulture and floriculture prospects to allow the decay to spread too deep here as well.

To draw a positive from even the current status of poor banking support for agriculture, this situation allows Sikkim the benefit of learning from the horrors of farmer indebtedness which has torn through wide swathes of farmlands across the country. If the policy-makers decide that banking support for agriculture should be expanded, they should first ensure that fiscal prudence and financial planning is instilled in rural Sikkim. Urban Sikkim already has a very poor track-record of loan repayments, but that spectrum has the cushion of salaries and commerce to tide them over, rural Sikkim is not as privileged, but its resilience is a strong asset to keep the loans safe and serviced if the people are first informed about banking and loan repayment processes.

Diana Statue: What it reveals about the challenges of sculpting famous people

BENEDICT CARPENTER VAN BARTHOLD

THECONVERSATION.COM

The excitement around the uncloaking of a statue of Diana, Princess of Wales at Kensington Palace on what would have been her 60th birthday seemed to spread around the world last week. But it wasn't just the prospect of the re-union of Prince William and Prince Harry that sent the press and the public wild with anticipation.

In fact, like many tributes made in the images of the public figures we revere, it was also the appearance of the sculpture itself. Here was a memorial to a woman with one of the most recognisable faces in the world - but did it actually look like her? According to many critics, not quite. These reactions reveal the danger of sculpting a modern media star in bronze.

The sculpture of Diana with three children is by Ian Rank-Broadley. You might not know the name, but you will know his work. His 1998 profile of Queen Elizabeth II circulates on UK and Commonwealth coins. He has made relief portraits of Prince Charles and Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. His medals are outstanding, and he has made several public memorial sculptures. This sort of work demands a conservatism on the sculptor's part, and there are few British sculptors with the practised ability - or inclination, perhaps - to work in this way.

Critics have been harsh about Rank-Broadley's sculpture. The Guardian's Jonathan Jones, for example, writes that it was "modelled apparently with thickly gloved hands and no photo to consult". He gets it wrong. The surface of the sculpture is uncomfortably smooth - over rather than under controlled. And there are far too many photos of Diana for any one person to contend with.

The basic problem is put in simple terms by Diana's former private secretary: Diana "was the most photographed woman in history and everybody has their own idea of what she should look like".

THE DECLINE OF FIGURATIVE SCULPTURES

The challenge of photography to sculpture is bigger than just this example. We see so many photographs each day that their conventions shape the way we think about and see the world. To get a sense of what I mean by this, imagine a photograph of an athlete crossing the finishing line. Such an image may well impress the viewer, but it doesn't seem strange. Take the same image into drawing, or even more so into sculpture and it looks contrived, like Han Solo frozen in carbonite.

Figurative sculpture has been in crisis for a century. From 1850, across Europe and the US, there was a mania for statues. But by around 1910 the public had al-

ready had enough. The need for memorials following the two world wars provided an unfortunate, brief stimulus but in western democracies, the very idea of a public language for sculpture was tainted by the revival of figuration in both fascist and communist dictatorships.

Consequently, sculpture followed the movement of paintings from the academy to the studio, from public conversation to private innovation. Today, there are few art schools in the UK where a student can learn how to model in clay. It's as though this skill is no longer needed. To cap it all, our public sculptures seem to increasingly be on the wrong side of history. There is now no commonly accepted style for public figurative sculpture on which the sculptor might rely.

ANALYSING THE DIANA SCULPTURE

This does not mean that the artist has free reign. The most important person is the sculptor's subject, not the sculptor. The result for Rank-Broadley's Diana is an impersonal and awkward smoothness. The sculptor has stepped back too far from the work. It's an oddly airbrushed image. Compare this sculpture with Oscar Nemon's rugged Viscount Montgomery of Almain, or Jacob Epstein's bust of the Italian actor Gina Lollobrigida and you will see

what I mean: the hair, clothing and skin are modelled differently and with character.

The sculptor's efforts are more apparent in the statue's composition. Diana's stance is protective and maternal, like a madonna. This protective pyramidal composition draws attention to its apex, which is formed by Diana's head. The emphasis is skilfully balanced by her strong horizontal belt, which is at head height to the two children in front.

This gives the children a stronger presence, and it seems important to the meaning of the work, speaking both to the princes' relationship with their late mother and of Diana's interest in children. These aspects are both symbolically and sculpturally successful. Interestingly, the belt and the rest of Diana's attire seem to come straight from the photograph shown above.

But an unfortunate consequence of this strong, protective shape is that it is so stable that it appears static. Here again, the camera works against the artist. The nation's memory of Diana is of a mercurial, light and tragically brief life, a figure in motion. Diana was many things, but she was not stolid. What works for the sculpture is at odds with our televisual expectations.

In the laconic utterance of one art historian who preferred to remain unnamed, sculpting is "a tough gig".

[the writer is Pricipal Lecturer, School of Art & Design, Nottingham Trent University]

How missing out on nursery due to COVID has affected children's development – new research

CATHERINE DAVIES, ALEX-ANDRA HENDRY & NAYELI GONZALEZ-GOMEZ

THECONVERSATION.COM

Nurseries can be noisy places. A clutch of three-year-olds gathered round a book shout excitedly. Across the room, a small committee of toddlers negotiates over stickers and string. Outside, key workers encourage pairs of miniature gymnasts while others sing to drowsy babies. And through the cacophony, children's use of language develops.

For parents collecting their children, the chatter and buzz of childcare settings is always reassuring. All the more so during the pandemic: another day of play and learning is done, with protective measures in place.

Parents are understandably anxious about how the pandemic has affected their pre-schoolers' development. More than half of the 570 parents surveyed for a recent Sutton Trust report felt that their two-to-four year-olds' social and emotional development had been negatively affected during the pandemic. A quarter of these parents felt their child's language growth in particular had suffered. One in five had similar concerns about their physical development.

In a recent study on what attending childcare does for children's speech, understanding, and thinking skills, we found that a child who regularly attended nursery or a childminder one day a week during the pandemic understood an average of 24 more new words over the research period compared with their peers.

PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

As the first lockdown in England was announced in March 2020, nurseries, childminders and other early years providers were



closed to all children except those of critical workers or those classed as vulnerable. In the four months that followed, nursery attendance in England was down to 5-10% of its usual rate.

Nursery staff worked hard to stay connected to families. Many provided free and easy online activities such as stories and songs, puppet shows and creative competitions.

Despite these huge efforts, we don't yet know what impact the disruption will have on children in the longer term. Will those who were able to attend nursery have reaped the usual, pre-COVID benefits, as so many of their playmates and teachers were at home, and their usual play environment looked so different?

Although the benefits of early childhood education and care are particularly pronounced in children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those from more privileged backgrounds will likely also have been impacted by nursery closures, as families struggled to provide supportive learning environments at home while splitting their time between caring for young children, educating their other children and working.

To understand how this disruption has affected families and young chil-

dren, we recruited nearly 200 UK families through our research labs. Between March and June 2020, we asked about their use of formal (such as nursery and childminders) and informal (family and friends) childcare, before, during, and between the first and second lockdowns in England. We also gathered information on income, level of education, occupation, and neighbourhood.

To investigate early thinking skills (known as executive functions - the control of attention, behaviour, and emotion), we asked parents how often their child showed different behaviour such as following instructions, exploring, and regulating their emotions. Parents and carers told us how many words their children said and understood from categories such as animals, vehicles and food. And we asked them to play games with their child -- which were designed to elicit skills such as waiting, finding, and sorting -- then analysed their observations.

In November and December 2020, we then followed up with the families on their children's abilities in the same areas, and explored the relationship between the time children had spent at nursery or with a

childminder, their growth in language and thinking skills, and their socioeconomic background.

We found that a child regularly attending two days came to understand 48 more new words than their peers over the same period. This effect was greater among children from less affluent backgrounds. Children who continued to attend nursery or a childminder also showed larger boosts in their cognitive control, flexibility, and memory, regardless of socioeconomic background.

LEVELLING INEQUALITIES

Our data clearly shows that time at nursery or with a childminder helps children strengthen their language and cognitive skills. This fits in with research that shows that, alongside a supportive home learning environment - vital for early language and literacy development - high-quality childcare is equally important.

Childcare can stimulate the social, cognitive, physical and language growth that children need for starting school. And children who enter their education with firm foundations have better chances at school and better economic success in adulthood.

Children from disadvan-

tagged backgrounds stand to gain extra benefits from early childhood education and care. Families who have to adapt to greater economic stress (lower income) and greater environmental stress (income volatility, housing discrimination) tend to speak less to their children, which can impact their language growth.

Research shows that high-quality childcare helps to buffer against these risk factors, as well as against individual risk factors. For example, household instability in early childhood has been shown to lead to worse cognitive and social outcomes by the age of five. Going to nursery or spending time with a childminder, however, can substantially reduce this impact.

This suggests that children from the most disadvantaged families gain the most from early childhood education and care. But chronic underfunding of early years education presents a major barrier. Government investment is therefore a powerful way of alleviating socioeconomic inequalities.

Lower-income families, who have been disproportionately affected by infections, unemployment, mental ill-health and deaths during the pandemic - all stressors which are likely to affect home interactions with children. Our findings provide evidence that access to early childhood education and care is important for all children, and is an effective way of tackling inequality. Government investment is therefore crucial.

[Catherine Davies is Associate Professor in Language Development, University of Leeds; Alexandra Hendry is Junior Research Fellow, University of Oxford; Nayeli Gonzalez-Gomez is Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Oxford Brookes University]

BJP lacks basic courtesies and decency: Mamata Banerjee

KOLKATA, 06 JUL [PTI]: Sharpening her attack on the BJP, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said members of the saffron camp “do not know courtesy and decency” and that was evident from the ruckus they created during Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar’s inaugural speech in the Assembly.

Mr Dhankhar had on July 2 tabled his address, after reading out a few lines of his 18-page speech, amid protests by BJP MLAs over incidents of post-poll violence in the state.

The TMC supremo, during her speech in the House, further said that the incumbent governor, chosen by the BJP leadership at the Centre, should have been allowed to address the House by the saffron party’s MLAs in the state.

“I have seen BJP leaders like Rajnath Singh to Sushma Swaraj... This BJP, however, is different. They (BJP members) do not know culture, courtesy, decency and civility,” the Chief Minister said, after thanking the governor for the inaugural address.

Bengal reports 885 fresh COVID-19 cases, 18 deaths

KOLKATA, JUL 5 (PTI): West Bengal reported 885 fresh COVID-19 cases on Monday, the lowest single-day count in months, the health department said in a bulletin.

The state’s coronavirus tally rose to 15,06,279 with the new infections, while 18 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 17,817, it said.

The number of active cases stood at 17,950, as 1,697 people recovered from the disease since Sunday, raising the discharge count to 14,70,512.

Till date, 1,44,70,472 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in West Bengal, including 40,388 in the last 24 hours, the bulletin said.

Meanwhile, a total of 2,93,193 people were vaccinated on Monday, an official said.

Total Covidcufew declared in 7 Assam districts

GUWAHATI, 06 JUL [PTI]: With Covid cases piling up, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) today put seven districts with the highest incidence under a total curfew and issued a revised and consolidated directive for both rural and urban areas.

The seven districts facing a total shutdown are Goalpara, Golaghat, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Biswanath, and Morigaon, where the restrictions will come into force at 5 am tomorrow.

In districts with moderate positivity rates, the restrictions will be from 2 pm to 5 am. These places are Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Kokrajhar, Barpetta, Nalbari, Baksa, Bajali, Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon, Hojai, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Cachar, Karimganj, and Karbi Anglong.

In those districts showing an improvement in the pandemic condition, the curfew will be



between 5 pm and 5 am. These are Dhubri, Kamrup Metropolitan, South Salmara, Majuli, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Udalguri, West Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, Charaideo, and Hailakandi.

“Sivasagar and Dibrugarh districts are being kept under close watch for a week,” the order mentioned.

Following are the re-

strictions and exceptions mentioned in the revised standard operating procedure:

All workplaces will be closed until further orders in districts showing high positivity rates. This includes business or commercial establishments, shops dealing with groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, and animal

fodder, besides restaurants, dhabas, and other eateries, sale counters, and showrooms, cold storages, and warehouses, among others.

In districts with moderate positivity rates, they will be allowed to open up to 1 pm, and up to 4 pm in places showing an improvement.

There will be a total ban on the movement

of all public and private transport in the districts under full curfew. Movement of goods shall continue, though. In other places, all public transport authorities shall enforce COVID-19-appropriate behaviour, including those pertaining to seating inside vehicles.

All inter-district passenger transport services and movement of people to and from other districts shall remain suspended.

Public gatherings are banned in the total containment districts. In others, up to 10 persons are allowed at weddings and funerals. The wearing of face masks is compulsory in all public places.

Other restrictions, including the odd-even formula for vehicles and the declaration of containment zones, as well as exemptions, shall continue as notified on June 26, unless specifically modified by the latest order.

Odisha logs 2,487 new COVID-19 cases, 51 more fatalities



BHUBANESWAR, JUL 6 (PTI): Odisha’s COVID-19 tally mounted to 9,27,186 on Tuesday as 2,487 more people tested positive for the infection, while 51 fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 4,299, a health department official said.

Of the new cases, 1,428 were reported from quarantine centres and the remaining 1,059 detected during contact tracing.

Cuttack district registered the highest number of fresh cases at 422, followed by Khurda (407) and Jajpur (202).

Of the 51 fatalities, nine were registered in Khurda, five each in Bargarh, Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal, three each in Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Sundargarh and Jajpur districts.

Two deaths each were reported from Bhadrak, Deogarh, Ganjam and Nayagarh, and one patient each succumbed to the infection in Kandhamal, Kendrapara, Keonjhar and Nabarangpur.

Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have died due to comorbidities, he said.

Amid the allegation that the state government is suppressing the exact number of COVID deaths, the Health and Family Welfare Department clarified that the fatalities are not included in the health bulletin on a real-time basis.

“This list does not reflect deaths occurring on a particular day. It gives details of past deaths for which the death audit process has been duly completed and the cause of death has been identified as due to COVID-19,” the health department said on Twitter.

Directorate of Medical Education and Training chief Prof CBK Mohanty said the COVID-19 fatalities are included in the bulletin after the completion of the death audit process.

“If a coronavirus-positive patient dies, the authorities verify whether the death is due to COVID-19 or comorbidities. The process takes time to confirm. Even some COVID patients ended their lives,” Mohanty said while denying the allegation.

Odisha currently has 28,730 active cases, while 3,326 more patients were cured of the disease, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,94,104.

The state has conducted over 1.41 crore sample tests for COVID-19, including 63,184 on Monday, and the positivity rate stands at 6.53 per cent.

Altogether, 4,02,434 people were inoculated on Monday, the highest single-day count so far, a senior official said.

“Odisha reached a new high in COVID-19 vaccination today (Monday) by vaccinating over 4 lakh people in a single day... Many congratulations to our health team and to the citizens who made it possible,” the department said on the microblogging site.

Previously, 3,32,717 people were vaccinated on June 21.

The state has administered 1,24,91,857 doses of the COVID vaccines to the beneficiaries till Monday, the official added.

Man held in Kolkata for masquerading as govt officer

KOLKATA, JUL 6 (PTI): Kolkata Police on Tuesday said it has arrested a man for allegedly impersonating as a state government officer and travelling in a blue beacon-fitted vehicle.

The person, who was apprehended late on Monday, has been identified as Sanatan Roy Chaudhuri.

He is an advocate and a resident of Baranagar’s Mondalpara area, police said.

The development comes less than two weeks after a 28-year-old man was arrested for masquerading as a joint commissioner of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and organising dubi-

ous immunisation camps in the city, where people were administered fake vaccines, including TMC MP Mimi Chakraborty.

Chaudhuri, who was moving around in the metropolis in an SUV with a blue beacon on top, was not able to respond to queries on why he was travelling in such a car,

when he was stopped by police at a checkpoint, an officer said.

The vehicle, which has been impounded, has ‘CBI’ and ‘Advocate’ stickers pasted on it, he said.

“The arrested person claimed that he represented the state government in CBI-related cases, but could not furnish

any proof substantiating his assertion. We will question him further and investigation is underway,” the police officer said.

As per an initial probe, Chaudhuri was making efforts to “illegally possess” properties worth over Rs 10 crore in Gariahat area, he added.

106 children among 520 new COVID-19 patients in Mizoram

AIZAWL, JUL 6 (PTI): At least 520 more people, including 106 children, tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, taking the tally in the state to 21,854, a health department official said.

The death toll rose to 98 as three more people succumbed to the infection in the last 24 hours, he said.

Aizawl district reported the highest number of fresh cases at 353, followed by Kolasib at 76 and Lunglei at 50 cases, he said.

Three new patients have travel history, while 517 were found to



have contracted the disease locally, the official said.

“At least 106 children

are among new patients. Today’s tally of new cases is the highest since June 22,” he said.

The single-day positivity rate is at 8.96 per cent as the 520 fresh cases were detected from

5,801 sample tests, he said.

Mizoram now has 3,730 active cases, and 18,026 people have recovered from the infection so far.

The northeastern state has tested 5,06,918 samples for COVID-19 till date, the official said.

State immunisation officer Dr Lalzawmi said that over 5.4 lakh people have been vaccinated till Monday.

No fresh COVID-19 case in Andamans, tally at 7,482

PORT BLAIR, JUL 6 (PTI): Months after witnessing a rise in COVID-19 cases, Andaman and Nicobar Islands did not record a single fresh infection in the last 24 hours, a health department official said on Tuesday.

The coronavirus tally in the Union Territory remained at 7,482, he said. Six people were cured of the disease on Monday, taking the total number of recoveries in the archipelago to 7,339.



The death toll remained at 128 as no fresh fatality due to the contagion was reported in the last 24 hours, the official said.

The Union Territory

now has 15 active cases.

The local administration has been strict to contain the spread of the disease and has adopted an approach of tracking,

testing and treating, he said, adding that people arriving here from the mainland are mandatorily required to undergo COVID test.

Altogether, 1,91,102 people have been inoculated with 32,257 of them having received both doses of the vaccine.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has conducted 4,14,166 sample tests for COVID-19 so far, and the positivity rate stands at 1.81 per cent, the official added.

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SummitTIMES

US women defeat Mexico 4-0 in final tune-up before Olympics

EAST HARTFORD (US), JUL 6 (AP): Tobin Heath scored her second goal in as many games and the United States beat Mexico 4-0 in the American women's final match before the Olympics.

The United States is undefeated in 44 straight matches, the second-longest unbeaten streak in team history. The Americans also extended their winning streak against Mexico to 15 games and improved to 39-1-1 overall. The lone US loss in the series was in a 2010 World Cup qualifier.

US coach Vlatko Andonovski continued to fine-tune his lineups in advance of the Olympics later this month. The United States, a four-time gold medal winner, is aiming to become the first team to follow a World Cup title with an Olympic gold medal.

"I feel good," Andonovski said.

"Very excited about

the trip. Obviously I feel like we're prepared. I feel like we are moving in the right direction and slowly but surely fulfilling all the tasks necessary to be fully prepared for the Olympics."

Heath started after coming off the bench and scoring in the United States' first send-off game against Mexico on Thursday, which the Americans also won 4-0. She hadn't played for some six months because of injury.

Carli Lloyd got the start Monday in place of Alex Morgan, and midfielder Rose Lavelle got the nod while Kristie Mewis and Megan Rapinoe were available off the bench.

Rapinoe, Mewis and Morgan all started the second half.

The United States scored all its goals in the first half. Horan scored on a volley in the sixth



minute, followed by Lloyd's diving header in the 11th.

"You guys don't know how often I work on volleys, they're my favorite shot to hit," Horan said.

"So yeah, I was a little excited when that opportunity came. Thank goodness I didn't miss it"

After an own-goal in the 37th minute, Heath scored in the 39th.

"The energy is really high, the environment feels really great," defender Becky Sauerbrunn said.

"The form on the field, I think there are still things that we're just narrowing down, and to me it's always going to be about precision. But I think we've made a lot of strides, especially in the final third, with that

precision."

Horan was seen with ice on her knee, but Andonovski said after the game that it wasn't a concern.

Next up for the United States is the Tokyo Olympics. The Americans play Sweden the team that knocked them out of the 2016 Games in the quarterfinals to open the tournament on July 21.

The team will not have any scrimmages against other teams before the opener because of COVID-19 protocols.

Julie Ertz, who did not play in the send-off series because of a knee injury, should be available to play, Andonovski said.

Mexico did not make the field of 12 teams for the Tokyo Games.

Argentina trusting Messi to find answer to Ospina's Colombia



BRASILIA (BRAZIL), JUL 6 (AP): Argentina will continue to trust that Lionel Messi finds a way to overcome Colombia goalkeeper David Ospina at Man Garrincha Stadium in Brasilia to return to the Copa America final.

Beat the impressive Ospina and Colombia, and Argentina will take on Brazil in Saturday's decider. The hosts beat Peru 1-0 on Monday and star Neymar ended a news conference by saying he wanted to face Argentina in the final.

Messi has been in Barcelona form, scoring four goals and giving four assists in one of the best tournament displays of his Argentina career. The Copa America top scorer netted one and assisted his teammates twice in beating Ecuador 3-0 in the quarterfinals.

Ospina stopped two penalties in the shootout against Uruguay in the quarterfinals, was key in the 0-0 draw in regulation time, and plays a pivotal leadership role for a team that has scored only three times in the entire tournament.

Messi is seeking his first major title with Argentina, which has not lifted a trophy since the 1993 Copa America. Colombia's drought is not as long, but its only Copa title was in 2001.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni praised Colombia as a "ough rival," and was wary it will have back Juan Guillermo Cuadrado from a suspension.

"We hope to play the match with the same intensity, the same willpower," said Scaloni, who has led Argentina on an unbeaten streak of 18 matches.

The coach said later on Monday that defender Cristian Romero is still recovering from an injury, so German Pezzella is likely to start. He still has doubts on his left back position between Marcos Acua and Nicol s Tagliafico. There's also a choice to make in midfield between Leandro Paredes and Guido Rodrguez.

"Argentina is a very compact team, very mature," Colombia coach Reinaldo Rueda said.

"You need to play with wit, make a lot of effort, to take them off balance."

Colombia will count on Cuadrado's return. He was suspended against Uruguay.

"It isn't only him (Messi), Argentina has many players that could damage in any circumstance," Cuadrado warned.

"We should not pay attention only to Messi. We will play a final against Argentina. We are not giving 100 per cent we are giving 200 per cent.

Women's Tests should be five-day contests: Meg Lanning

MELBOURNE, JUL 6 (PTI): Australia captain Meg Lanning wants women's Tests to be made five-day contests, like it is for their male counterparts, to get more results and cited the recent rain-affected drawn game between India and England to call for the change.

Speaking to the media here, Lanning said the current system of four-day Tests for women lessens the possibility of an outright result especially if weather plays

spoilsport.

"I think it probably makes sense to take it out to five days, we saw in the last two, the Test match we played against England and the one just recently with England and India that there was a little bit of rain around and once that happens, it makes it pretty difficult to get a result," she said.

"So I think pushing out the five days makes a lot of sense and I think you will get more

results and then teams pushing for that."

Lanning believes India women playing Test matches abroad is a big advertisement for women's cricket and hoped that her team's upcoming contest against MithaliRaj's side would become a regular feature and not just a "one-off" affair.

The Indian women's team is currently touring England where they shared honours in the lone Test and won the final match of the three-

ODI series. The two sides will now square off in a three-match T20 series starting July 9 at Northampton.

After the England sojourn, the Indians will travel to Australia in September to play three ODIs and as many T20Is besides their maiden Day-Night Test at Perth starting September 30.

"It's really exciting that they've (India) agreed to play in a Test match and they're very willing to do it hav-

ing played England as well," Lanning said.

"I think it's only going to move the game forward and increase the awareness of the game both here and in India as well which I think is a really important part of it."

The 29-year-old World Cup-winning Australia skipper personally can't wait to tour India for a Test engagement.

"Personally I'd love to play a Test match in India. I think that would

be a great test and a really good challenge and something I'd love to happen in the not too distant future.

"Hopefully, this Test match being part of the series against them is not just a one-off, hopefully, it's the start of something that will continue into the future as well," Lanning said.

The Indian women last played a Test match against Australia in February 2006 at the Adelaide Oval which the hosts won.

Longtime tormentor Italy stands in way of Spain at Euro 2020

LONDON, JUL 6 (AP): They are opponents who have long struck fear into the heart of Spanish soccer.

The Italians: tough, defensively strong, cynical. Winners by whatever means possible or so it was widely perceived in Spain anyway.

And Luis Enrique knows all about it.

The current Spain coach was a member of the national team that was beaten by Italy 1-0 in the 1994 World Cup quarterfinals. As famous as the 88th-minute winning goal by Roberto Baggio was the elbow to Luis Enrique's face administered by Italy's hard man in defense, Mauro Tassotti.

The violent act went unpunished during the game Tassotti would later get an eight-match ban but wasn't forgotten in Spain. The photo of an anguished Luis Enrique, blood pouring from his broken nose onto a splattered white towel, has gone down in history, and is often brought out whenever the two rivals meet.

Like they will at Wembley Stadium on Tuesday in the European Championship semifinals.

"We've spoken a few times since but that's in the past, part of foot-



balling history," Luis Enrique said on Monday about the incident with Tassotti.

"Both of us, of course, would've preferred that had gone differently but there's nothing more to say."

Actually, Luis Enrique doesn't appear to hold any grudges toward the Azzurri, his feelings possibly changing after spending a year coaching Italian club Roma in the 2011-12 season.

"It's a country I'm very fond of, he said. Whenever I've a bit of free time, I always like to visit Italy. It's lovely to come up against the Azzurri it's always very nice."

Many in Spain would disagree.

For 88 years, Spain didn't beat Italy in a competitive match and an inferiority complex naturally grew. A clash of styles typically attacking Spain against defensive Italy always went one way.

Until 2008, that is. That was when a weight was lifted from a nation as Spain defeated Italy in a penalty shootout in Vienna in the European Championship quarterfinals on its way to its first continental title in 44 years.

Four years later, Spain would beat Italy again at Euro 2012, this time 4-0 in Kyiv for the most lop-sided score in a final in the tournament's history.

Yet Spain's title de-

fense was ended in the last 16 five years ago by a limited but tactically superior Italy coached by Antonio Conte, which won 2-0 in Paris.

The teams, then, will be meeting in a fourth straight tournament. This match promises to be different, though, purely because of the way Italy's approach has altered since Roberto Mancini took over as coach in 2018.

Sure, the trademark Italian robustness in defense is still there, but the team has an attacking swagger these days and also has become more of a passing team. They're not in Spain's league in terms of possession, but then again who is?

"We're leaders in the

possession stats, but they too are a side who enjoy playing with the ball. So that's going to be the first battle to win," Luis Enrique said.

"But they're also very good without the ball. We need the ball. We want to have it."

Spain has the squad with youngest average age in the tournament at 24.1 years and there's a sense that Luis Enrique feels his players have exceeded expectations by reaching the semifinals.

It's why he was so proud of getting past Switzerland in the quarterfinals, albeit with the need of a penalty shootout.

"It's impossible to understate this, he said. We're not an experienced

national team."

Indeed, when it comes to being street-wise at international level, few can top the Italians.

A clip of Italy striker Ciro Immobile falling dramatically in the area and apparently feigning injury during the win over Belgium in the quarterfinals, only for him to instantly spring to his feet moments later after Nicola Barella scored the opening goal, has been spread widely over social media.

Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci laughed it off on Monday, saying "the joy and excitement of a goal in matches such as these means you don't experience any more pain." But to some it was another classic example of gamesmanship.

It's why players like Champions League winners Cesar Azpilicueta, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba will be so important for Spain to guide the team's younger players at Wembley. "We're not an experienced team," Luis Enrique said, "but it doesn't mean we don't have experience of the game. Many of our players have played at a very high level and are used to these games.

"I just hope we're up to the challenge.

India, England Test series set to be played in front of capacity crowd

LONDON, JUL 6 (PTI): The upcoming Test series between India and England is set to be played in front of capacity crowds after the UK government announced the lifting of all COVID-19 restrictions on gathering of people.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday confirmed that all legal COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, including the mandatory wearing of face masks and limit on crowd at indoor, outdoor and sports events, will come to an end on July 19.

"We will remove all legal limits on the numbers of meeting indoors and outdoors," Johnson was quoted as saying by 'Sky Sports'.

"We will allow all businesses to reopen, including nightclubs. We will lift the limit on number of visitors to care homes and number of people attending concerts, theatres and sports events," he added.

"We will move away from legal restrictions and allow people to make their own informed decisions about how to manage the virus."

The five-Test series between India and England starts at Nottingham on August 4. Currently, the Indian players are on a break and will reassemble on July 14.

The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand was played in front a limited crowd at Southampton last month with the upper attendance limit capped at 4,000.

After troops exit, safety of US Embassy in Kabul top concern

KABUL, JUL 6 (AP): As the end to America's forever war rapidly approaches, the U.S. Embassy and other diplomatic missions in Kabul are watching a worsening security situation and looking at how to respond. In the countryside, districts are falling to the Taliban in rapid succession. America's warlord allies are re-arming their militias, which have a violent history, raising the specter of another civil war once the U.S. withdrawal is finished, expected in August.

A U.S. Embassy spokesperson told The Associated Press that security assessments are frequent these days. Speaking on condition of anonymity in line with briefing rules, she said the embassy is currently down to 1,400 U.S. citizens and about 4,000 staff working inside the compound the size of a small town.

A well-fortified town, that is. Besides its own formidable security, the embassy lies inside Kabul's Green Zone, where entire neighbourhoods have been closed off and giant blast walls line streets closed to outside traffic. Afghan security forces guard the barricades into the district,

which also houses the Presidential Palace, other embassies and senior government officials.

The only route out is Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport, currently protected by U.S. and Turkish troops. Before America can declare its war over, the security of the airport will have to be settled. Ankara is in talks with Washington, the United Nations and the Afghan government to decide who will protect the airport and who will foot the bill.

For now, the airport is running without interruption, except for restrictions imposed by a deadly third COVID surge that has prompted some countries to suspend flights to Kabul.

In Kabul, it's common to hear speculation about when and if the U.S. Embassy will evacuate and shut down, with images resurrected of America's last days in Saigon at the end of the Vietnam war.

Already, long before the last U.S. and NATO troops began packing to leave, American diplomats arriving at the airport were taken to the heavily fortified U.S. Embassy by helicopter. The 4-mile road trip through Kabul's chaotic traffic



was considered too dangerous.

Suicide bombers struck along that road with uncomfortable frequency.

For many of Washington's new diplomats to Afghanistan, their view of the country and Kabul is limited to what they see from the confines of the sprawling embassy compound, hidden deep inside the Green Zone and protected by 10-foot blast walls, heavily armed U.S. Marines, explosive-sniffing dogs and cameras at every corner.

An American employee of Resolute Support, the name of NATO's military mission in Afghanistan, who arrived in the country last November,

had not been outside the giant gates of the mission by June.

Citing security concerns, the U.S. spokesperson said she couldn't reveal evacuation plans, or even if that's a part of today's conversation, but said the embassy has detailed plans for every scenario to protect its staff.

If there is an evacuation, it wouldn't be the first.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul shut down in 1989, when the former Soviet Union left the country after negotiating an end to its 10-year invasion of Afghanistan. The pro-communist government collapsed three years later, followed by

Ashraf Ghani expressed concern that Afghan forces might not be able to protect all the diplomatic missions in Kabul, according to an official familiar with the discussions. There were even suggestions that smaller embassies move into the U.S. compound for their protection.

The U.S. Embassy responded with an immediate so-called ordered lockdown, further restricting staff movements and new arrivals.

On April 27, the U.S. Embassy's chargé d'affaires, Ross Wilson, tweeted that non-essential U.S. personnel would leave. The spokesperson would not say how many people left under that order, saying only that staff numbers are constantly being assessed.

Wilson blamed the departure on increasing violence & threat reports in Kabul. He also posted a U.S. Embassy site warning to all American citizens to leave Afghanistan immediately on any available commercial flight. And to Americans planning to visit Afghanistan, the order was clear: don't.

The Australian Embassy closed, and most other Western embassies reduced their staff.

6 students among 9 arrested in alleged Hong Kong bomb plot

HONG KONG (AP): Nine people, including six secondary school students, were arrested in Hong Kong on Tuesday for allegedly plotting to set off homemade bombs in courts, tunnels and trash cans as political tensions rise in the city where China is tightening its grip.

Police said they were detained on suspicion of engaging in terrorist activity under a harsh national security law that Beijing imposed a year ago as part of a crackdown on dissent in the former British colony that has long enjoyed freedoms not seen on the Chinese mainland.

Hong Kong authorities have used the law, enacted in response to anti-government protests that rocked the city in 2019, to arrest many of the city's prominent activists. Others have fled abroad as a result.

If the allegations are true, the group appears to represent a more radical fringe of the protest movement, which has demanded broader democratic freedoms for Hong Kong just as its liberties are under threat. Police said the group was attempting to make the explosive triacetone triperoxide, or TATP, which has been widely used in bombings in Europe and elsewhere, in a makeshift laboratory in a hostel. Police accused

the group of planning to use the explosive to bomb courts, cross-harbor tunnels, railways and trash cans on the street "to maximize damage caused to the society."

Since the 2019 anti-government protests, Hong Kong police have arrested several people over alleged bomb plots and for making TATP, including 17 detained that year in overnight raids that also seized explosives and chemicals.

Nine people between 15 and 39 years old were arrested Tuesday, according to Senior Superintendent Li Kwai-wah of the Hong Kong Police National Security Department.

Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam said at a weekly news briefing that she hopes the members of the public will "openly condemn threats of violence." "They should not be wrongly influenced by the idea that ... breaking the law is in order; if you're trying to achieve a certain cause," she said. "They should not be influenced into thinking that they can find excuses to inflict violence."

Authorities said they seized equipment and raw materials used to make the TATP, as well as a "trace amount" of the explosive. They said they also found operating manuals and about 80,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$10,300) in cash.

In Myanmar, the military and police declare war on medics

JAKARTA, JUL 6 (AP): The clandestine clinic was under fire, and the medics inside were in tears.

Hidden away in a Myanmar monastery, this safe haven had sprung up for those injured while protesting the military's overthrow of the government. But now security forces had discovered its location.

A bullet struck a young man in the throat as he defended the door, and the medical staff tried frantically to stop the hemorrhaging. The floor was slick with blood.

In Myanmar, the military has declared war on health care and on doctors themselves, who were early and fierce opponents of the takeover in February. Security forces are arresting, attacking and killing medical workers, dubbing them enemies of the state. With medics driven underground amid a global pandemic, the country's already fragile healthcare system is crumbling.

The junta is purposely targeting the whole healthcare system as a weapon of war, says one Yangon doctor on the run for months, whose colleagues at an underground clinic were arrested during a raid. We believe that treating patients, doing our humanitarian

job, is a moral job .I didn't think that it would be accused as a crime.

Inside the clinic that day, the young man shot in the throat was fading. His sister wailed. A minute later, he was dead.

One of the clinic's medical students, whose name like those of several other medics has been withheld to protect her from retaliation, began to sweat and cry. She had never seen anyone shot.

Now she too was at risk. Two protesters smashed the glass out of a window so the medics could escape. We are so sorry, the nurses told their patients.

One doctor stayed behind to finish suturing the patients' wounds. The others jumped through the window and hid in a nearby apartment complex for hours. Some were so terrified that they never returned home.

I cry every day from that day, the medical student says. I cannot sleep. I cannot eat well.

That was a terrible day.

The suffering caused by the military's takeover of this nation of 54 million has been relentless. Security forces have killed at least 890 people, including a 6-year-old girl they shot in

the stomach, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors arrests and deaths in Myanmar. Around 5,100 people are in detention and thousands have been forcibly disappeared. The military, known as the Tatmadaw, and police have returned mutilated corpses to families as tools of terror.

Amid all the atrocities, the military's attacks on medics, one of the most revered professions in Myanmar, have sparked particular outrage. Myanmar is now one of the most dangerous places on earth for healthcare workers, with 240 attacks this year -- nearly half of the 508 globally tracked by the World Health Organization. That's by far the highest of any country.

This is a group of folks who are standing up for what's right and standing up against decades of human rights abuses in Myanmar, says RahaWala, advocacy director of the U.S.-based Physicians for Human Rights. The Tatmadaw is hell-bent on using any means necessary to quash their fundamental rights and freedoms.

The military has issued arrest warrants for 400 doctors and 180 nurses, with photos of their faces plastered all over state media like Wanted posters.

They are charged with supporting and taking part in the civil disobedience movement.

At least 157 healthcare workers have been arrested, 32 wounded and 12 killed since Feb. 1, according to Insecurity Insight, which analyzes conflicts around the globe. In recent weeks, arrest warrants have increasingly been issued for nurses.

Myanmar's medics and their advocates argue that these assaults violate international law, which makes it illegal to attack health workers and patients or deny them care based on their political affiliations. In 2016, after similar attacks in Syria, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution demanding that medics be granted safe passage by all parties in a war.

In other country's protests, the medics are safe. They are exempt. Here, there are no exemptions, says Dr. Nay Lin Tun, a general practitioner who has been on the run since February, and now provides care covertly.

Medics are targeted by the military because they are not only highly respected but also well-organized, with a strong network of unions and professional groups. In

2015, doctors pinned black ribbons to their uniforms to protest the appointment of military personnel to the Ministry of Health. Their Facebook page quickly gained thousands of followers, and the military appointments stopped.

This time, the protest by medics started days after the military ousted democratically elected leaders, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, from power. From remote towns in the northern mountains to the main city of Yangon, they walked off their jobs on military-owned facilities, pinning red ribbons to their clothes.

The response from the military was fierce, with security forces beating medical workers and stealing supplies. Security forces have occupied at least 51 hospitals since the takeover, according to Insecurity Insight, Physicians for Human Rights and the Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights.

On March 28, during a strike in the city of Monywa, a nurse was fatally shot in the head, according to AAPP. On May 8, hundreds of miles away in northern Kachin state, a doctor was arrested, tied up and also fatally shot in the head while passing a military base.

Israel blocks law that keeps out Palestinian spouses

JERUSALEM (AP): Israel's parliament early on Tuesday failed to renew a law that bars Arab citizens from extending citizenship or residency rights to spouses from the occupied West Bank and Gaza, in a tight vote that raised doubts about the viability of the country's new coalition government. The 59-59 vote, which came after an all-night session of the Knesset, marked a major setback for Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. The new Israeli leader, who had hoped to find a compromise between his hard-line Yamina party and the dovish factions in his disparate coalition, instead suffered a stinging defeat in a vote he reportedly described as a referendum on the new government. The vote means the law is now set to expire at midnight Tuesday.

The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law was enacted as a tempo-

rary measure in 2003, at the height of the second intifada, or uprising, when Palestinians launched scores of deadly attacks inside Israel. Proponents said Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza were susceptible to recruitment by armed groups and that security vetting alone was insufficient.

Under it, Arab citizens, who comprise a fifth of Israel's population, have had few if any avenues for bringing spouses from the West Bank and Gaza into Israel. Critics, including many left-wing and Arab lawmakers, say it's a racist measure aimed at restricting the growth of Israel's Arab minority, while supporters say it's needed for security purposes and to preserve Israel's Jewish character.

The law has been renewed annually and appeared to have the support of a large majority in parliament, which is dominated by

hard-line nationalist parties. But former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party and his allies decided to oppose it to embarrass Bennett and harm his coalition, which includes a collection of eight parties across the political spectrum, including a small Islamist Arab party.

Interior Minister Minister Ayelet Shaked, a member of Bennett's Yamina party, said the opposition move to block the law's renewal would lead to thousands more applications for citizenship. She accused Netanyahu and his allies of choosing "petty and ugly politics, and let the country burn."

Amichai Chikli, a renegade member of Yamina who voted with the opposition, said the outcome was a sign of deeper issues.

"Israel needs a functioning Zionist government, and not a mismatched patchwork that is reliant

on" the votes of Arab lawmakers, said Chikli. He was the only member of his party to oppose the new coalition-led government last month.

Netanyahu, ousted by the new coalition after 12 years as prime minister, made clear his political goals.

"With all due respect for this law, the importance of toppling the government is greater," Netanyahu said Monday.

Bennett reportedly proposed a compromise with liberal members of the coalition that would have extended the law by six months while offering residency rights to some 1,600 Arab families, a fraction of those affected. But the measure was defeated, in part because two Arab members of the coalition abstained. The vote exposed the deep divisions and the fragility of the new government.

The decision, however, gave some hope to Arab families that have been affected by the law. The law has created an array of difficulties for thousands of Palestinian families that span the war-drawn and largely invisible frontiers separating Israel from east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, territories it seized in the 1967 war that the Palestinians want for a future state.

"You want your security, it's no problem, you can check each case by itself," said Taiseer Khatib, an Arab citizen of Israel whose wife of more than 15 years, from the West Bank city of Jenin, must regularly apply for permits to live with him and their three children in Israel.

"There's no need for this collective punishment just because you are Palestinian," he said during a protest outside the Knesset on Monday ahead of the vote.

The law has been continually re-

newed even after the uprising wound down in 2005 and the number of attacks plummeted. Today, Israel allows more than 100,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank to enter on a regular basis.

Male spouses over the age of 35 and female spouses over the age of 25, as well as some humanitarian cases, can apply for the equivalent of a tourist permit, which must be regularly renewed. The holders of such permits are ineligible for driver's licenses, public health insurance and most forms of employment. Palestinian spouses from Gaza have been completely banned since the militant Hamas group seized power there in 2007.

The law does not apply to the nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers who live in the West Bank, who have full Israeli citizenship. Under Israel's Law of Return, Jews who come to Israel from anywhere in the world are eligible for citizenship.



MODEL BEHAVIOR! Model Cara Delevingne smiled as she attended Dior's Haute Couture Fall/Winer 2021–2022 fashion show in Paris.

Jennifer Lopez says she's "Never Been Better" amid romance with Ben Affleck

While discussing her new song "Cambia El Paso," Jennifer Lopez declared that she's having the "best time," as things heat up with Ben Affleck. "I love my life right now," the Grammy nominee shared.

Jennifer Lopez may have found her endgame in Ben Affleck.

The Marry Me actress admitted she's having "the best time of my life" right now. As she revealed during a new interview with Zane Lowe on Apple Music 1, "I'm super happy. I know people are always wondering, 'How are you? What's going on? Are you okay?' This is it. I've never been better."

The declaration comes less than three months after she split with her fiancé, Alex Rodriguez, before she rekindled her romance with her other former fiancé, Ben, in May.

"I want my people who care about me, because I care about them so much, to know that I've really gotten to a place in my life where I'm great on my own," Jennifer, 51, continued. "And I think once you get to that place, then amazing things happen to you that you never imagine in your life happening again. And so that is

where I'm at."

She said she loves "all the love that's coming my way right now and all of the good wishes" from her fans. And without mentioning the Justice League actor by name, she added, "And I just want everybody to know that it's the best time. It's the best time of my life." Message received!

If her confession wasn't proof enough, Ben and Jen looked head over heels while spending the Fourth of July in the Hamptons. The pair were seen hugging each other during a stroll together in Long Island, New York, where J.Lo owns a multi-million dollar mansion.

They've also taken trips to Montana and Miami this year, but have recently been hanging out with their kids (from previous marriages) in Los Angeles. On June 25, the couple enjoyed dinner at the Mediterranean hotspot Avra in Beverly Hills, Calif., before they took her 13-year-old twins and his 9-year-old son Samuel to Universal Studios Hollywood on July 2.

Jennifer reflected on the recent changes in her life during her Apple Music interview, where she discussed her new song "Cambia El



Paso" with Rauw Alejandro, out Monday, July 5.

Specifically, she recalled her time living in the Dominican Republic this spring while filming the movie Shotgun Wedding. (In March, Alex flew out to meet her there, so they could work out any issues in their relationship.)

"While I was there, I had got to a point in my life where I really felt good on my own. I'm good. I love my life right now. I love what I'm doing. I love where I'm at. I love the person that I am continually kind of evolving into and becoming," J.Lo explained. "And that kind of joy, that kind of happiness, that kind of love always inspires me. I think some people really get inspired when they're heartbroken. You know what I mean? To write music, when they were in pain."

But for her, she shared, "It's the opposite. When I feel really good, I really feel like I do my best music." She said she got back from the Dominican Republic and "immediately" notified "everybody that I know" that she wanted to get back into the recording studio.

The Bronx native was thrilled when Rauw called her, saying, "I'm always so flattered and happy when an artist that I see coming up, who I think is an amazing performer and really special talent will call me and say, 'Would you get on this record?' I mean, it's amazing. It's amazing for me."

R. Kelly's lawyer wants trial delayed due to jail quarantine

NEW YORK (AP): R. Kelly's new lawyers are asking a judge to postpone his Aug. 9 sex trafficking trial in New York City, arguing they haven't had enough time to prepare because he's under a mandatory jail quarantine since his transfer from Chicago.

In a letter Monday to U.S. District Judge Ann Donnelly, lawyer Deveraux Cannick wrote that Kelly's 14-day quarantine ending Tuesday has exacerbated what Cannick said was a "herculean effort" to get up to speed after their June 21 hiring.

Cannick argued in the letter that Kelly's new lawyers haven't been able to meet with him in person because of the quarantine and that proceeding with the R&B star's trial as scheduled would rob him of effective and meaningful representation.

Kelly, whose legal name is Robert

Sylvester Kelly, was placed in quarantine when he arrived at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn on June 22 from Chicago, where he was being held on similar charges. Tuesday will mark 14 days since Kelly's transfer to Brooklyn.

"Robert is anxious to have his day in court; however not at the expense of his Sixth Amendment rights," Cannick wrote, saying the request was not a delay tactic.

Federal prosecutors hadn't responded to Cannick's request as of Monday night and declined to comment. Donnelly has yet to rule on the filing.

Federal lockups have been quarantining transferred and newly incarcerated inmates since early in the COVID-19 pandemic as part of protocols to prevent the disease's spread.

Kelly, 54, is accused of leading an enterprise made up of his managers, bodyguards and other employees who helped him recruit women and girls for sex. Federal prosecutors say the group selected victims at concerts and other venues and arranged for them to travel to see Kelly. The Grammy Award-winning singer denies ever abusing anyone.

Cannick said that once Kelly's quarantine ends and he is cleared to meet with his lawyers, they'll be forced to jockey for one of a limited number of conference rooms at the Brooklyn jail. If a room is not available, he wrote, they'll have to meet with Kelly at a table alongside other lawyers and inmates.

"The nature of the evidence here does not lend itself to open frank discussions in such an environment," Cannick wrote.

Rahul Vaidya, Disha Parmar announce wedding: We seek blessings for new chapter of love

MUMBAI, JUL 6 (PTI): Singer Rahul Vaidya and TV actor Disha Parmar on Tuesday announced that they will tie the knot on July 16.

The couple took to Twitter and posted a joint statement, informing fans about their marriage.

"With the blessings of our families, we are delighted to share this special moment with you all. We are elated to announce that our wedding is set to

take place on 16th of July," Vaidya and Parmar said.

"We seek your love and blessings as we begin this this new chapter of love and togetherness," they added.

Vaidya, 33, had proposed Parmar on the Colors reality show "Bigg Boss" last year.

Towards the end of the show, when Parmar, 26, appeared on the series as a guest, the singer proposed to her in

person.

The couple was supposed to get married soon after "Bigg Boss" ended in February but their plans were pushed due to the second wave of the pandemic.

According to reports, the couple will have a close-knit wedding.

On the work front, Vaidya will be next seen in "Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi".

MUMBAI, JUL 6 (PTI): Actor Taapsee Pannu is set to make her comeback in the Telugu industry with her latest "Mishan Impossible", to be directed by Swaroop RSJ.

Pannu, who started her acting career in 2010 with the Telugu film "Jhummandi Naadam", returns to the industry two years after her bilingual thriller "Game Over".

The film will be produced by Niranjan Reddy and Anvesh Reddy.

The 33-year-old actor joined the film's team in Hyderabad on Tuesday with the makers releasing a working still from the project, featuring Pannu in a hand cast and looking at a laptop.

"In the last seven years I've always been on a lookout to be part of the stories I want



to see myself as an audience. Movies that I will spend my time and money on and 'Mishan Impossible' is one of them," Pannu said in a statement.

The actor further said "Mishan Impossible" has an "impressive storyline and a 'good team' behind it.

"I want to reaffirm the trust the audience has in me for choosing quality films and

I'm doing exactly that by becoming a part of a movie like this," Pannu added.

Pannu's currently stars in thriller movie "Haseen Dillrubaba", which started streaming on Netflix last week.

The movie, written by Kanika Dhillon and directed by Vinil Mathew, also stars Vikrant Massey and Harshvardhan Rane.

ARIES:

All have an idea of who we are and what we're meant to create in this lifetime. But don't let these ideas limit you in any way, Aries. Breathe, let go. Breathe. Repeat. Break the old habits and address the negative beliefs.

TAURUS:

The illusion of separateness is but an illusion. On a soul level, we're just the same—made of stardust and dreams. So, when the collective goes through a calamity, it's but natural for us to feel the pain. Today, you're being asked to acknowledge the pain, instead of burying it, but also remind yourself that you are not your emotions

GEMINI:

Gemini, you're Pandora's box of talent. You possess the gift of the gab and are probably one of the most creative people in any room. How can you possibly doubt yourself when you have so much going for you? The cards are urging you to get real with yourself. To address the negative thought patterns, and the stories that have convinced you that you will never make it. Work with the affirmation 'I am enough' in order to bring about great changes.

CANCER:

Our outer reality, or the world of Maya, has been constructed in such a way that it takes us away

from ourselves. It takes us away from our true calling. This chapter of your life is about looking past the illusion and reaffirming your faith. Spiritual practices such as yoga, meditation, and chanting will help turn your gaze inwards and awaken the slow burning of transformation.

LEO:

Are things falling apart or finding a way to come together? Look beyond the illusion of chaos. Find a way to turn this breakdown into your biggest breakthrough. Remember to assess what your experiences are teaching you before you move on to the next stage. We all have our limitations, and that is okay. Setting realistic goals (and letting go of the lofty ones) seems like the best way forward, beautiful.

VIRGO:

Blessings come in many forms, Virgo. The people we love, the places we go to, the experiences that enrich our life are some of the ways in which the Universe reminds us how loved we are. Today, you're being asked to count each one of the blessings, to make a gratitude list consisting of the profound moments that have awakened you in the past week. Something tells us staying in the energy of gratitude will make you a magnet for goodness.

LIBRA:

You've been sent here for a special purpose. A

mission that can be fulfilled by you and you alone. And bringing peace into this world is a part of that sacred mission. But, you cannot transform the whole world at once. You have to start where you are in order to send out ripples of change. So, pay attention to how you are being asked to mediate today. Become the flag bearer of peace in your own special way.

SCORPIO:

Scorpio, you're all about the good vibes. The whole room lights up every time you walk in with that million dollar smile. The real question, though, is: Do you see yourself through the same lens of love that everybody else sees you through? If not, reflect upon what's keeping you from recognising your true essence. Start with a small, simple exercise: make a list consisting of three things that you are terribly proud of today.

SAGITTARIUS:

Sagittarius, you are no stranger to the benefits of meditation. You fully understand the significance of accessing higher realms of consciousness. What you're being asked to pay attention to today are the visuals that are being planted in your subconscious when you are in a state of trance. The symbols you are seeing are not random in any way. They are giving you a clear indication of how and where you need to redirect the course of your life.

CAPRICORN:

When you're close to somebody, it's hard for you to have perspective. It's hard for you to assess where they end and where you begin. And the price you pay for this is your own mental peace and happiness. Capricorn, you've been feeling the pain and suffering of somebody close to you to the point that you've started doing the work for them.

Aquarius:

There are times in our lives when everything seems out of order, and now is not one of them. Look beyond the illusion of chaos, Aquarius. Look at all the ways in which the Universe and people around you are showing up for you right now. This will help you realise that you are protected and taken care of, and that the storm that tore you apart has officially passed.

Pisces:

Summer gives way to autumn. Autumn makes way for winter once again. Everything in nature changes and transforms. Then, why are we so afraid of changes? Observe all the ways in which you're being asked to let go of the old, heal, and become the person you were always meant to be. Something tells us this period of self-observation is going to have a positive impact on your career and life path as well.