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# Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## 3 more Covid deaths take Sikkim's toll to 359

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 11 AUG:**

Sikkim's COVID-related death toll climbed up to 359 with three more COVID deaths reported in the last 24 hours. All three deaths were reported from STNM Hospital. The state has recorded four COVID deaths so far this week.

In the meantime, 157 people tested positive for COVID-19 from the screening of 1,251 samples on Tuesday bringing the daily test positivity rate to 12.5%. Of the 157 cases, 47 were registered in East District, 81 in West District, 26 in South District and 03 in North District.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department this morning, 97 of the new cases were picked up in RT-PCR testing of 738 samples, while 59 more were found positive in rapid antigen testing of 511 samples and one

in TruNat testing of two samples. The count of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the state now stands at 28,175.

There are currently 2,543 active Covid cases in the State with the discharge of 178 more persons from home and facility isolation on Tuesday after they made full recoveries.

The figure of recovered cases has now reached 24,995.

There were 18 new admissions of COVID patients in hospitals in the State in the past 24 hours and five COVID patients are undergoing treatment at ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

*BJP member sent to 2-day judicial custody for anti-Muslim slogans*

**NEW DELHI, 11 AUG**

**[NDTV]:** A Delhi Court on Tuesday sent BJP member Ashwini Upadhyay and five others, arrested over violent anti-Muslim slogans raised at a protest held at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, to two days in judicial custody. All the accused have requested bail.

The six were arrested from different parts of Delhi and its neighbouring areas on Tuesday morning. They have been charged with promoting religious enmity and for "acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony".

A video showing anti-Muslim slogans being raised during a protest on Sunday was widely circulated on social media, following which the Delhi Police registered a case on Monday. The police say they had refused permission to the march at Jantar Mantar because of Covid protocol but a crowd showed up.

While seeking judicial custody for Mr Upadhyay and three others, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava told the court, "My friend knows the law...he has filed 100+ petitions...he knows the law. He should not have done it when the permission was denied. When Parliament was on and Covid is there, in fact there were prep up for Independence Day, they should not have assembled."

In clips on social media, "Ram, Ram" chants were raised along with threats to kill Muslims. "Hindustan mein rehna hoga jai shri ram kehna hoga (To stay in India, must say Jai Shri Ram)," the group shouted barely a km from parliament and top government offices.

## Reunited! Homeless woman rescued from Jorethang last year had gone missing from Telangana ten years back

**NAMCHI, 11 AUG [IPR]:**

A homeless lady, aged around 45, was brought to the One Stop Centre at Jorethang, South Sikkim, by Jorethang police on 18 April 2020 during first phase of the COVID lockdown.

During investigation, it was discovered that the lady had been living on a lane at Jorethang bazaar for the past 2-3 years. She could only tell her name and the state she came from as she spoke only Telegu. After providing temporary shelter at the OSC, she was shifted to Swadhar Grah (Mamtalaya), Gangtok until her legal guardian was traced out.

OSC, Jorethang, meanwhile, got in touch with the State Programme Manager (Women & Child Division) at Telangana. She had a telephonic conversation with the



women there and her address was traced to Jagtial District, Telangana. Soon, intimation was sent to OSC, Jagtial, and on 12 April, 2021, her family members arrived at OSC Jagtial with details and proof to establish their relationship with the lady.

She was identified as Ramagiri Sathamma, 46. She was married and had two children and had been missing from home for the past ten years. Her family members are willing to take care of her but due to financial constraints, could not come to Sikkim to escort her back.

With the consent and approval of District Collector (South), her repatriation was carried out by Sangita Gurung, Centre Administrator and Binita Mangar (MPW), One Stop Centre, Jorethang, on 10 August 2021.

She was handed over

to her legal guardian on 10 August at around 8pm in the presence of District Welfare Officer, B Naresh, Women Commission Member Rewati Rao and Centre Administrator OSC Maneela of Jagtial District, Telangana at the office of One Stop Centre Jagtial.

## SFPB meeting discusses upcoming Film City at Yangang

**GANGTOK, 11 AUG (IPR):**

A meeting was held in the office of the Chairperson, Sikkim Film Promotion Board Pooja Sharma, with the five empanelled Associations of the Board, today.

The meeting was called to discuss ideas about the upcoming Film City at Yangang, South Sikkim, so that every aspect of filmmaking is taken into consideration and to make Sikkim a viable and sustainable tourist destination.

The meeting was attended by representatives of Sikkim Film Co-operative Society,



Sikkim Producers Association, Sikkim Artists Association, OMAS, Sikkim Fashion Fraternity and officers of the IPR Department.

The Associations put forward their valuable inputs and also dis-

cussed at length various measures which can be undertaken to promote local artists, employment opportunities, host local events and create an artist-friendly environment.

The Chairperson

thanked them for their valuable inputs and stated that the State Government under the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang is ready to render every possible support to emerging entrepreneurs of the state.

**DEAR READERS,  
IF YOU ARE HAVING  
TROUBLE GETTING  
YOUR COPY OF  
THE SUMMIT  
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NEIGHBOURHOOD,  
PLEASE MESSAGE  
OR WHATSAPP  
US YOUR NAME  
AND ADDRESS  
AT 9832556698  
AND WE WILL  
ENSURE THAT  
THE NEWSPAPER  
REACHES YOU.**

## "Like Killing A Part Of Ourselves": Goans On Vanishing Portuguese Legacy

**PANAJI, 11 AUG [AFP]:** As Lorraine Alberto begins her Portuguese class at Goa University, students from the former colony are in short supply.

Across Goa, a tiny coastal state once administered by Lisbon, there is little appetite for the territory's 450 years of European heritage.

Ramshackle colonial homes and Bollywood's increasing cultural dominance portend the disappearance of local history in a place where speaking Portuguese was once a passport to status and power.

"My children don't speak it at all," Alberto told AFP. "They just don't see the point of learning it."

Those alive in 1961, when Indian

troops marched into Goa and incorporated it into the rest of the country, recall an overnight transformation.

India's exit from the British empire in 1947 spurred many Goans to demand an end to Portuguese rule, but few expected so much to change so quickly.

"It was a very strange feeling... The changes came so fast," said Honorato Velho, a retired school principal.

The 78-year-old once lived next to the grandfather of Antonio Costa, Portugal's current Prime Minister, and he fondly remembers a childhood peppered with European and local influences.

But his enthusiasm has not been

inherited by the next generation.

"My wife and I still speak Portuguese out of habit, but never with our children," Velho told AFP. Across the state, homes influenced by old Portuguese design trends are falling into disrepair or being pulled down to make way for apartment blocks.

The gradual disappearance of covered terraces and mother-of-pearl shell windows -- built to diffuse harsh sunlight -- is not just a loss to architecture, said author Heta Pandit.

"These houses are evidence of Goan history, they are capsules of our culture," she said.

Only a handful of traditional homes have been earmarked for

protection from development or destruction, Pandit added.

Some Goans have nonetheless found themselves drawn into a relationship with their heritage, even against their own early inclinations

At a recent outdoor concert in a coastal village, dozens of people gathered to listen to Goan singer Sonia Shirsat, an accomplished performer of traditional Portuguese fado music.

The 40-year-old specialises in the melancholy, guitar-driven genre, which was born at the turn of the 19th century and was in recent years recognised by UNESCO for its "intangible cultural heritage".

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## Mayor launches online Municipal Services for Gangtok



**GANGTOK, 11 AUG (IPR):**

Online Municipal Services for the public was launched by Mayor, Gangtok Municipal Corporation, Nell Bahadur Chettri, at the Conference Hall of Gangtok Municipal Corporation today.

The programme was attended by Deputy Mayor, GMC, Tshering Palden Bhutia, Councilors, Commissioner GMC, Hem Kumar Chettri, Senior Technical Director, NIC, TG Namgyal and his team, officials and staff of Gangtok Municipal Corporation.

It may be mentioned that the Online Municipal Services under the direction of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, New Delhi has engaged National Information Centre (NIC) for the implementation of online services.

Following the guidelines of the Ministry, the Urban Development Department, Government of Sikkim along with the NIC team has taken up the following services in the Gangtok area under the jurisdiction of GMC:

1. Grievances Re-

dressal.

- Issuance of Permission for Banners Placement.
- Issuance of Permission for Mega Events.
- Issuance of Permission for MG Marg - Profitable Events.
- Issuance of Permission for MG Marg - Non-Profitable Events.

The Mayor expressed his gratitude for launching an easy and accessible service and said that he will work in coordination with the departments in providing the services for the people. He apprised that the online services also respond faster to address the public services.

A demonstration of the online services was presented by the NIC representative, Prateek Sasankar.

On the occasion, the Appreciation Certificate was also presented to Senior Technical Director, NIC, TG Namgyal, Prateek Sasankar and Punstok Gyatso Topgyal of NIC on behalf of the GMC in preparing the software for the online service system.

## Active cases in country lowest in 140 days

**NEW DELHI, AUG 11 (PTI):** India logged 38,353 new coronavirus infections taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,20,36,511, while the active cases have declined to 3,86,351, the lowest in 140 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The death toll has

climbed to 4,29,179 with 497 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The active cases comprise 1.21 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate stands 97.45 per cent, the ministry said.

turn to pg02



**Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT)**  
Deemed to be University  
(Established U/S 3 of UGC Act, 1956) Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India  
(An Institution of Eminence)

**17<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation**  
Date: 14th August 2021 | Time: 11.00 a.m.  
Virtual Mode

**Chief Guest**  
**Shri Dharmendra Pradhan**  
Hon'ble Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Govt. of India

**Convocation Address by**  
**Professor Jean-Marie Lehn**  
Nobel Laureate in Chemistry (1987), France  
He will receive Honoris Causa Degree.

**KIIT-DU will also confer Honoris Causa Degree on:**

**Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (Amma)**  
Spiritual Leader, Guru & Humanitarian

**Shri Vallabh Bhansali**  
Co-founder, ENAM Securities; Founder, Desh Appanay Sahayog Foundation & Founder-Director, FLAME University

Please watch LIVE from 11.00 a.m. onwards  
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# Series of events to mark Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav

**GANGTOK, 11 AUG (IPR):** This 15 August, the nation is celebration 'Amrut Mahotsav' of Independence. In the ongoing 75 week-long nationwide celebrations, all the events related to freedom movement, the unsung heroes of the independence struggle, the distinguished history, culture, literature, music and manifold facets are being brought to light and reaching out to the people.

In Sikkim, several programmes including exhibitions, radio quiz and 'Fit India Freedom Run' events will be held starting from 13 Aug,

2021. To mark the celebrations, the Sikkim IPR Department will organize a photo exhibition in coordination with the Culture Department at Manan Kendra in Gangtok from 13 to 15 Aug, 2021.

As part of celebration of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav-India@75, the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, is organizing Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 throughout the country. Taking inspiration from inaugural speech of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, during the curtain raiser of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav on 12 Mar, 2021, the Minis-

try of Youth Affairs and Sports has conceptualized celebration of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav under the pillar of Actions and Resolves @75.

The first edition of the campaign was organized from 15 Aug to 02 Oct, 2020. This time - Fit India Freedom Runs 2.0 will commence from 13 Aug, 2021 and conclude on 02 Oct, 2021. Nationwide programmes will be virtually launched by the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur and Minister of State, Youth Affairs and Sports, Nisith Pramanik on 13 Aug, 2021 and there will be 75 physical

events at different historical locations on the launching day i.e. on 13 Aug, 2021.

Under this campaign, the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Sikkim, working under the Department of Youth Affairs, Govt. of India, will organize the Fit India Freedom Runs 2.0 events in the State in association with NSS, other Government Departments and NGOs. The events will be held at Namchi, South Sikkim, on 14 and 15 August, at Gyalshing, West Sikkim, on 21 Aug, at Mangan, North Sikkim on 28 Aug and at Gangtok, East Sikkim on 04 Sept,

2021. The theme of the programme is 'Jan Bhagidari to Jan Aandolan'.

The regional news unit of All India Radio Gangtok in collaboration with the Department of Culture, Govt. of Sikkim, is organizing 'Aazadi ka Amrut Mahotsav' radio quiz from 12 Aug, 2021. One question will be asked to the audience on every Monday and Thursday after the regional news bulletin of 6.40pm. Audience can send their answer on the email ID [airgtkquiz@gmail.com](mailto:airgtkquiz@gmail.com). The winners will be given E-Certificates and award by Department of Culture, Govt. of Sikkim.

## Didn't get Centre letter for info on Oxygen crisis deaths: Manish Sisodia

**NEW DELHI, 11 AUG [PTI]:** Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia today alleged that the Delhi government has not received any letter from the Centre inquiring if any deaths in the national capital occurred due to oxygen shortage during the second Covid wave.

The minister, however, said they have decided to share all the details with the central government.

"The central government has not yet asked Delhi whether there have been deaths due to lack of oxygen in Delhi or not, but in Delhi we have decided that the Delhi government will send the complete information about the deaths due to lack of oxygen in the form of a report, to the Central government.

"You can put out that reply in front of the Supreme Court and the public and in Parliament," he said in an online briefing.

Mr Sisodia accused the Centre of not showing seriousness towards the oxygen crisis during the second wave.

"The country was struggling with the oxygen crisis during the second wave of Covid. People in hospitals were dying due to lack of oxygen. The Supreme Court seriously questioned the central government on this, but the central government continues to remain insensitive," he said.

Citing media reports, he said the Centre has asked state governments to inform on the number of deaths occurring due to the oxygen crisis in

each state.

A newspaper report claims that 13 states have responded, out of which only one state has submitted the number of deaths while the other 12 have claimed that no deaths occurred in their area, he said.

"A few days ago, I had read that the central government has given time until August 13 to state governments to inform them regarding the number of deaths due to oxygen scarcity. But till now no information or letter has been sent to the Delhi government," he said.

Mr Sisodia accused the Centre of spreading the lie that states are not giving information and said that the Centre "has not asked for any information from the states".

"The Delhi government had constituted an inquiry committee long back to audit the deaths due to lack of oxygen in Delhi, but it was rejected by the Lieutenant Governor at the behest of the central government. This shows that the central government is neither asking anything from the states nor allowing the states to work," he alleged.

The Delhi government believes that there was an oxygen crisis and without an inquiry it is difficult to say whether any deaths happened due to it or not, he said.

While stating that the people have not forgotten the pain of the crisis that spread across the country during the second wave, he said if the third wave comes, the oxygen crisis may arise again.

## SYSS thanks CM and MP for reiterating LT seats demand

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 11 AUG:** Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Songjumkho has welcomed the step initiated by the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang and Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Indra Hang Limboo in placing the demand for Assembly seat reservation for the Limboo and Tamang tribal communities before Union Ministers in their recent visit to Delhi.

In a press release,

SYSS states, "The two Limboo-Tamang tribal communities are deprived of the Constitutional rights for the last 18 years and the demand still remains unfulfilled. Considering the legit demand of seat reservation by the LT and their long deprivation, the Chief Minister and Member of Parliament had honestly appraised the issue before the Union Government."

SYSS has expressed

gratitude towards the CM and MP, and stated that it is hopeful that the State Government will soon initiate a concrete step and dispense justice towards the Limboo and Tamang tribal communities.

SYSS along with other registered Limboo community associations has also decided to call on the CM to appraise him about the issues and demands of the community.

## India ranks 122nd one new Global Youth Development Index

**LONDON, 11 AUG [PTI]:** India is ranked 122nd on a new Global Youth Development Index measuring the condition of young people across 181 countries, released by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London on Tuesday.

The triennial rankings of youth development found India among the top five risers on the index between 2010 and 2018, alongside Afghanistan and Russia, advancing their score on average by 15.74 per cent across areas such as education and employment.

"The top five risers from 2010 to 2018 were Afghanistan, India, Russia, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso," says the '2020 Global Youth Development Index'.

Singapore ranked topmost followed by Slovenia, Norway, Malta and Denmark. Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Niger came last respectively.

"Young people are indispensable to delivering a future that is more just, inclusive, sustainable and resilient. By measuring their contributions and needs with hard data, our advocacy for their development becomes more powerful, and we are then able incrementally to increase the positive impact and benefits youth are able to add towards building a better future for us all," said Commonwealth Secretary-General Baroness Patricia Scotland.

"Our Youth Development Index is a vital tool which has already significantly enhanced our capacity to assess the extent to which youth are



engaged to contribute beneficially in their societies, and empowered by enabling policies and tools," she said.

The index ranks countries between 0.00 (lowest) and 1.00 (highest) according to the developments in youth education, employment, health, equality and inclusion, peace and security, and political and civic participation.

It looks at 27 indicators including literacy and voting to showcase the state of the world's 1.8 billion people between the age of 15 and 29.

"While the data used to compile the index was gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings indicate where progress was being achieved and where it was not, and that urgent action is now needed so that pre-pandemic gains are not lost but sustained and developed further, more broadly and more inclusively," added Baroness Scotland.

The 2020 Global Youth Development Index reveals that the conditions of young people have improved around the world by 3.1 per cent between 2010 and 2018.

Overall, the index shows advances in

youth's participation in peace processes and their education, employment, inclusion and health care since 2010.

Health made the largest gains of 4.39 per cent driven by a 1.6 per cent decline in global youth mortality rates and a 2 per cent drop in HIV, self-harm, alcohol abuse and tobacco use. Sub-Saharan Africa made the greatest strides in improving the health of young people.

Levels of underemployed youth and those not in school, training or work remained constant. Advances in equality and inclusion are led by improved gender parity in literacy as well as fewer child marriage cases and pregnancies in girls under 20. Yet, the index found no progress occurred in women's safety.

The global education score increased by 3 per cent, with South Asia making the largest improvement of 16 per cent. Peace and security improved by 3.41 per cent, resulting from fewer young people dying from direct violence. Somalia recorded the largest gains in the peace and security of young people, followed by Colombia, Sri Lanka, Eritrea and Russia.



## CM meets MoS Finance

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**NEW DELHI, 11 AUG:**

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang called on the Minister of State (Finance), Pankaj Chowdhary at his office in North Block, New Delhi, today.

It was a courtesy visit, wherein the Chief Minister extended his best wishes to him on assuming the office and also wished him a successful and productive tenure, a press release informs.

## Study on mixing Covaxin, Covishield gets drug regulator approval

**NEW DELHI, 11 AUG [NDTV]:** A study on mixing Covishield and Covaxin, the two main vaccines used in India's COVID-19 vaccination programme, has been given the go-ahead by the Drugs Controller General Of India (DCGI).

This study and its clinical trials will be conducted by Vellore's Christian Medical College.

"Permission has been granted for a research study by CMC Vellore (Tamil Nadu) on mixing of vaccines doses," Dr VK Paul, NITI Aayog Member (Health), said during a press briefing on Tuesday. A Subject Expert Committee of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) had recommended conducting the study on July 29.

This study will be different from the one by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which said mixing the two Covid vaccines elicited better safety and immunogenicity results.

The mixing of doses had raised considerable anxiety.

The study conducted



on individuals in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in India received Covishield as the first dose followed by inadvertent administration of Covaxin as the second dose at an interval of six weeks.

A total of 18 participants were in the heterogeneous group. However, two participants were unwilling and were excluded. Among them, 11 were male, and seven were female with a median age of 62 years.

The ICMR said the study suggested immunization with a combination of an adenovirus vector platform-based vaccine followed by an inactivated whole virus vaccine was not only safe

but also elicited better immunogenicity.

"We did a comparison with heterogeneous group and homologous group, we found better immune response, if somebody gets Covishield first and Covaxin second that it gives better immunity. This is the first study on a combination of Adenovector and whole variant vaccines," Dr Samiran Panda, Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, ICMR, said.

However, the top medical body added that more detailed and in-depth research must be done on the limitations, as the study is done merely on 18 participants.

### "Like Killing A..."

Shirsat paused between songs to patiently explain the meaning behind each track, knowing many in the enraptured audience spoke little if any Portuguese.

It's a role she is well-suited to play, tracing her own journey from a teenager who refused to learn Portuguese to a fado evangelist who is now training others to follow in her footsteps.

"My mother tried to teach me the language, but I just wasn't interested," she told AFP.

That changed when Shirsat met a Portuguese guitarist who told her that her rich, velvety voice was ideal for the genre.

### Active cases in...

A decrease of 2,157 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 17,77,962 tests were conducted on Tuesday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 48,50,56,507.

The daily positivity rate was recorded 2.16 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for the last 16 days, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 2.34 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,12, 20,981 and the case fatality rate stands at 1.34 per cent, the data stated.

Cumulatively, 51.90 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered under the nationwide vaccination drive.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It

She decided to move to Lisbon for training, becoming the first Indian to stage a solo fado concert there in 2008.

Shirsat has since performed all over the world, sometimes incorporating a cross-cultural element with the use of Indian instruments like the sitar.

All fado songs are infused with a sense of yearning for the past, but in Goa, they also serve as a bridge between two eras.

"Fado doesn't just talk about what is lost, it also talks about what is to come," she said.

"It has lived in Goa for over 100 years. If we don't preserve it, it is as if we are killing a part of ourselves."

went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 497 new fatalities include 152 from Kerala and 137 from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,29,179 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,34,201 from Maharashtra, 36,848 from Karnataka, 34,367 from Tamil Nadu, 25,068 from Delhi, 22,775 from Uttar Pradesh, 18,252 from West Bengal and 18,004 from Kerala.

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

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

## Delhi records zero COVID-19 fatality, 37 fresh cases

**NEW DELHI, AUG 11 (PTI):** Delhi recorded zero COVID-19 fatality and 37 fresh cases of the infection on Wednesday, with the positivity rate declining to 0.06 per cent, according to data shared by the city health department. Forty-seven patients recovered from the infection in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 14,11,280 in the national capital.

The city reported 52 fresh COVID-19 cases and one more fatality due

to the disease on Tuesday with a positivity rate of 0.08 per cent.

Delhi reported 39 fresh Covid cases and one fatality on Monday, while the number of active cases in the city dropped below 500 for the first time since April last year.

With the new cases, Delhi's COVID-19 tally has climbed to 14,36,889. The death toll due to the disease stands at 25,068.

The city has 494 active cases of the infection, down from 504 the previous day.



# “Small letters to youth”

BIVEK SHARMA

## MY DEAR COMRADES,

On the occasion of “International Youth Day” I would like to appeal my all comrades that, youth power is the backbone of any country or society. Young people posse’s energy, but it should be channelized in the positive direction. Youth is a bridge to connect the past, present and make future bright of any country. Youth represents new value, new thinking and the new ways of life.

Comrades, our tomorrow society, tomorrow states, and tomorrow country future is depending on today’s youths. Society should mold itself according to the thinking of young generation. The young should always look with and outmost zeal to the future. They must have the spirit to work among masses and also give a sense of positive direction for the others to follow. The youth is the mirror of the any country. Where we can see the past, present and make future of any society bright.

Dears comrades, we must have positive thinking, discipline, national love, diligence, creative qualities to put the society, state, and country on the path of progress. The faith of the young people

is never so rigid; they can adopt, modify and change their ideas according to the demands of the circumstances. So, youth of every country should take this responsibility on the shoulder. Moreover, it is on the shoulders of young that the future of the country rests because they represent new values, new thinking and the new ways of life. Today wealth of any society or country is the present youths. Society should mold itself according to the youths. Because it is difficult for the oldest generation to have new thinking.

My dear comrades, there are always hardships and lots of challenges in everyone life but, we must live by struggling with those repercussions. Our freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Mahatma Gandhi and others freedom fighters faces lots of suppression and challenges from the British regime. If they lived only for their family and themselves, our country would not be free today from the British fascist regime. If they lived their own selfish interests, we would still be living as a slave in our own country. They always struggle for the society, for the country, and people more than for

themselves.

Dear comrades, we should not only live for ourselves but also for the society, state, and the nation. The identity of a good youth is not his wealth but good deeds for country, good thinking and diligence and being able to save the society and country for the negative forces. Our political freedom must create condition not only for better life but also for peace for the rest of the world. Political freedom gives duties as well as responsibilities. These are more important

## ViewPoint

as the cases of India, because we want to free from poverty, diseases and all types of divisive forces. The youth of India should be inspired with these ideas and make them as popular with the people as it is possible. Youth is the focal point of the progress of the society. We have to bear the same responsibility. Youth’s power should be used for the benefit of the society and the nation, but not for the benefit of any undemocratic forces, individuals, or any political parties.

Dear comrades, we should try



to give practical shape to ideals of democracy which we have kept before us. An ordinary person is not enough to take up the challenges to adopt certain ideas which may be good for the nation. Generally, the actions of the individuals are guided by the normal way of thinking and also by normal convention. It is only the youths who can accept unconventional ideas with spirit and enthusiasm. Chetan Bhagat in his book “What young India wants” articulate one inspiring paragraph: in the United States, there is a term called the “Great American Dream”. The great American dreams are that, life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. The American dream says that everyone has a right to prosper and success

through hard work, innovation and excellence. We do not have equivalent great Indian dream. And we don’t think we can copy paste the American dream for ourselves. But if every citizen should work hard, prosper and succeed through innovation and hard work and once successful, every citizen should give back to the society that made her or him what he or she is. Furthermore, he also writes that, all of us need to engage with the issues involving our country. We need to not ignore politics because we fell nothing will ever be done. His essay appeal us that lets us contribute to new direction India needs to move in. when people look back at our times, they may say this was a period of great turmoil. But let them not stay it was the time when people sat around and did nothing to make better.

Just freedom fighters who made such sacrifices for us, lets us also join hands to make India a better place. There is no Hindu India, or Muslims India. There is no Punjabi India or Tamil India. There is no upper caste India or lower caste India. There is not even a congress India or BJP India. There is just one India, our country, which we all want to become better place. We want a society with good values.

Dear comrade lets adopt afore-said inspirational essay by Chetan Bhagat. Now let’s dawn from our society like “my great society dream” and steadily “my great dream Sikkim” and lastly “my great Indian dreams”.

“Dream, Dream, Dream. Dreams transform into thoughts and thoughts results in action”, APJ Abdul Kalam.

“Happy International Youth Day”.

## South District Task Force reviews COVID-19 status

NAMCHI, 11 AUG (IPR):

A meeting of District Task Force (DTF) was held yesterday at DAC, South Sikkim. The meeting reviewed COVID-19 vaccination status, COVID-19 positive status, preparedness and other issues.

The meeting was chaired by DC (South), M Bharani Kumar along with ADC (Dev), Dr CP Rai, CMO (South), Dr DC Sharma, DRCHO (South), Dr Junita Yonzon, DSO (South), Dr Urgen Sherpa, ASP (South) Rinzing Chopel Rai and other officials.

DRCHO (South), Dr Junita Yonzon summarized the status of COVID-19 vaccination in detail under south district. Till date the coverage of first dose is 94% in the age group of 18-44 years category and second dose is 80% in the age group of 45 years and above. Special ses-

sions for persons without valid ID are going on across south district and till date 3445 number of such beneficiaries has been vaccinated. For people who are disabled a COVID Vaccination Centres has been set up wherein they are being vaccinated. The Mobilisation of all unvaccinated beneficiaries will be done at all levels by the end of August 2021.

COVID ICU Namchi is functioning since first week of June 2021 and for which police personnel were sought for security duty from the police department. It is also decided that of three COVID Care Centres (CCC), two CCCs will continue to function namely CCCT, Chisopani and Girls Hostel Namchi under South District.

DSO (South) Dr Urgen Sherpa briefed the members on the prevailing COVID-19 situation

along with details of COVID-19 data. Further he informed about various directions received from Government of India regarding focus on rural areas, Genome sequencing and activities to be undertaken if mutations are detected.

He highlighted the gradual reduction in positivity and suggested testing of groups like drivers etc. to assess the level of infection in community since they ferry people from different areas.

Additionally, National Deworming Day (NDD) was also discussed where children aged 1-19 years are given albendazole tablets. This is being done biannually, the first round was held in Feb 2021, where 33041 numbers of children were given albendazole tablets. The second round will be held in the month of October 2021.

## SLSA organizes training for Sikkim’s Advocate Mediators

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 AUG:

A one-day training programme on “How to conduct Mediations through Online/Virtual Mode” for the Advocate Mediators of Sikkim was conducted on 07 Aug, 2021, through virtual mode by the Sikkim State Legal Services Authority under the direction of Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, Judge, High Court of Sikkim and Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLSA who is also the Judge-in-Charge of the Mediation Monitoring Committee and in coordination with Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee, Supreme Court of India.

The purpose of the training was to ensure that Mediation continued during the Pandemic duly complying with Covid-19 protocols, a press release informs.

Trainer, Pussip Gupta, Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee, Supreme Court of India, New Delhi was the Resource Person for the said training programme.

The virtual training programme was attended by officers and staff of the Sikkim State Legal Services Authority and the Advocate Mediators.

The topics discussed were (i) Definition of Mediation (ii) Facilitate

the Technical Aspect to guide the Parties (iii) Encouragement of Dialogue with the Parties (iv) Summarize (v) Reflect (vi) Reframe (vii) Paraphrase (viii) Acknowledge (ix) Full transmission (x) Impartiality (xi) Building Rapport/Trust (xii) Physical Appearance (xiii) Proper Visibility of Cameras and Audibility of Microphones (xiv) Working and Requirements of Online Mediation such as Technical Devices and Proper Internet (xv) Benefits of Online Mediation such as Time Saver, Economical, Safety of Parties etc.

The Welcome address was delivered by Member Secretary, Sonam Palden Bhutia, Sikkim SLSA while the Vote of Thanks were proposed by Under Secretary, Praveen Pradhan, Sikkim State Legal Services Authority and In-charge/Secretary of Mediation Monitoring Committee.

Member Secretary, Mezivolu T Therieh, Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee also addressed the gathering wherein she had appreciated the initiative taken by Sikkim SLSA under the guidance of the Executive Chairperson.

33 Advocate Mediators from all the four districts attended the said programme via virtual mode.

## CM calls on Union Minister Anurag Thakur, invites him to inaugurate Bhaichung Stadium

NEW DELHI, 11 AUG

(IPR): Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang paid a courtesy visit to the Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Sports and Youth Affairs, Anurag Thakur at his official residence in New Delhi today.

The Chief Minister congratulated him on being appointed as the Minister in-charge of the aforementioned departments and wished him a prosperous and fruitful tenure.



He also extended an invitation to the Union Minister for the inauguration of Bhaichung Stadium at Namchi and the

foundation stone laying ceremony of the Khelo India projects, slated to be held towards the end of September.

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## PIB webinar on Covid vaccination and Adolescent health

GANGTOK, 11 AUG [PIB]: Regional Outreach Bureau, Siliguri, organized webinar on Covid & Covid vaccination and Adolescent health & Menstruation hygiene where NGO’s & NYK of Darjeeling district participated.

Jane Namchu ADG, PIB/BOC, Kolkata, in her address said that due to the pandemic we are not able to hold programs at grass-root level where we used to reach more people to disseminate such message as such we are bound to hold a webinar.

Resource person Dr. Debjani Basumallick, District Tuberculosis Officer said that presently we are facing second wave of Covid, we need to take more heed on safety measure. In order to overcome the menace of the virus, it is essential to take the Covid vaccine as well follow Covid appropriate behaviour like maintaining social distances and frequently washing hand with soap, etc, she added.

Any person having Covid symptom such as fever, body ache, sore throat, headache, loss of taste or smell a should immediately seek a medical help, Dr. Basumallick said. She also mentioned that lactating mothers can take a Covid vaccination while pregnant mother must consult their Gynecologist before taking the vaccine.

Prena Chettri, PPM Coordinator,

District Tuberculosis Office, Siliguri present as resource person for adolescent health stated that adolescent is vital phase of change from childhood to adulthood and there are possibilities where they may get involved in alcohol, drugs and tobacco as well early pregnancy and child birth. So in order to tackle such issues the proper guidance and counseling is needed for their better future.

Ms. Chettri also stated that Adolescence is an important time for promoting health and preventing disease. In such age, higher risk of emerging mental health issues and involving in bad company.

As such in order to ensure holistic development of adolescent population, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) on 7th January 2014 to reach out to 253 million adolescents - male and female, rural and urban, married and unmarried, in and out-of-school. Such centres are functioning in various places of Darjeeling district where people can get help in developing health of adolescent community, she added.

During the technical session amongst the participants and resource person, doubt regarding both Covid vaccination and adolescent health was cleared.

**THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**  
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## A Support System for Quality Education

*Help teachers make learning relevant and fun*

Education, in principle, is reasonably universal now, so access to classrooms has not been an issue, save in the past year and a half when the pandemic and uninspired leadership and babudom shut schools down and played out the fiction of online education on all of us. Results for board exams which were not even held have been declared and admissions are underway for the next academic year. Much as one can mope about how the virus has accelerated the downhill roll that learning had already been put on by arms of the sarkar which feel threatened by an informed citizenry. On that note, let's begin with the assumption that at the policy-level, we are going to get commitment only to groom subjects/ bhakts and that leaves hope only from the profession which arguably has the deepest impact on our lives. More than the details of lessons learnt from textbooks, the memories that stay longer with most people are of the teachers who taught them. Every person invariably has a teacher who either inspired the entire class to chase their dreams or toed the other end of the spectrum and actively engaged in stifling imaginations, enforcing norms and dictating conduct. This Teacher's Day, let's go over what role teachers can play in preparing students for life.

The pressure of examinations and competition, and the tendency to prioritise rote over comprehension has handicapped the teaching fraternity into becoming problem solvers, handing out answers and solutions for students to mug-up instead of assisting students find their own answers and expressions, encouraging them to enquire more and develop faculties that question more often instead of accepting things as dished out. Several attempts have been made to correct this approach and at least in the Indian context, all efforts have failed thus far. Because students look up to teachers, it is important for teachers to offer themselves as role models, but it would be even better if teachers could introduce their wards to personalities worth emulating and inspiring students to excellence. Teachers should ideally motivate and inspire students towards learning, not hand-hold them through the syllabus till the exams and then pick up another batch to repeat the same.

If one agrees that these are the qualities one seeks in teachers, the obvious question that follows is, can one be trained for such a role? And do the existing models of 'training' focus enough on these aspects of teaching? Only trained teachers will be able to answer these questions, but fact remains that these should not even be issues that distract from more important policy interventions. Teachers, ever since modern education was introduced, were required to be qualified. For how long have B. Ed. courses, for example, been offered? For a very, very long time. And yet, it is only now that precious resources and attention is being invested in getting even already appointed teachers with impressive on-job experience to acquire these degrees. If the teacher appointment process had not been blatantly usurped by enthusiastic proponents of nepotism, India and Sikkim would have been deliberating weightier issues of education by now. Appointment of deserving and qualified teachers should always have been a given, and then one could engage in more meaningful discussions on how to retain the better teachers, appoint better facilities in schools and update syllabus and teaching methods.

Sikkim's pursuit of quality education is welcome, but for it to get anywhere, the ennui that HRD Department has become will have to be shaken off first. Ironically, this is the one aspect that remains missing from all discussions on the delivery of quality education. The ideal teachers and the perfect students, will after all, need the support of at least a reasonably functional Human Resource Development Department which is as motivated to appoint better facilities in schools [by way of libraries, laboratories and even basics like electricity, toilets and running water] as it is excited by the opportunity to conduct trainings, order books or organize workshops. Sikkim is lucky to have a substantially big pool of new teachers who are motivated and genuinely interested in making a difference in the lives of students under their care. It is important that the school management committees and local communities support them in efforts to make classrooms more vibrant and learning more fun and relevant. It is important for people to find ways to get more involved with their neighbourhood schools (to begin with) even if their wards are not enrolled there and offer assistance and support to these institutions to be able to deliver quality education.

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# Complicity and Silence Around Sexual Harassment Are Common

SANDY HERSHCOVIS, IVANA VRANJES, JENNIFER L. BERDAHL & LILIA M. CORTINA  
*theconversation.com*

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's resignation came after more than a week of bad news, starting with a damning report from the state attorney general's office that detailed his sexual harassment of 11 women, some of whom worked in his office. An executive assistant to Cuomo, Brittany Comisso, filed a criminal complaint against him with the Albany County sheriff's office. The state Legislature readied impeachment proceedings.

Then, top aide Melissa DeRosa resigned amid a flurry of questions surrounding her role in protecting Cuomo. Attorney Roberta Kaplan also resigned from the #MeToo advocacy organization Time's Up after the attorney general's report revealed that she helped draft a letter that denied Cuomo's wrongdoing.

As news emerged about the silence from Cuomo's staff, who had long protected him, and his victims who feared blowback, our thoughts turned immediately to our research on harassers.

"See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil" is the title of our new article for the Journal of Applied Psychology, which describes the role witnesses play in helping and protecting harassers. Evidence suggests that, rather than helping victims, witnesses often protect the harasser.

The report on Cuomo's sexual harassment is replete with examples that showcase how members of Cuomo's top staff, known collectively as the "Executive Chamber," silenced victims. One victim explained in the report: "I was terrified that if I shared what was going on that it would somehow get around ... and if senior aides Stephanie Benton or Melissa DeRosa heard that, I was going to lose my job."

Although #MeToo gave voice to millions of women to speak up about sexual harassment, it remains rare for victims to report sexual harassment to employers. They are afraid of blowback. They think management won't believe them. They fear being blamed or shamed. And these fears are warranted.

### SILENT COMPLICITY

Research shows that reporting mechanisms rarely work and often backfire.

For example, employees who speak up about workplace harassment frequently face retaliation, both personal and professional. This is evident in multiple victim accounts in the Cuomo investigation.

One victim was quoted in the report saying that "she did not feel she could safely report or rebuff the conduct because, based on her experience and discussion with others ... it's kind of known that the Governor gives the seal of approval who gets promoted and who doesn't."

But what about bystanders? Colleagues? Leaders? Why don't they speak up when they see sexual harassment?

Part of the problem, we have found, lies with social networks – the webs of interconnections among victims, perpetrators, co-workers and man-

agers. The way these networks are configured encourages members to be silent, silence others and not hear victims who voice concerns about sexual harassment.

One of Cuomo's 11 alleged victims, a state trooper, described a conversation she had with Cuomo while driving him to an event. The governor questioned her clothing choices, asking why she wasn't wearing a dress. After the conversation, the victim's state police superior, who was in the car during the interaction, messaged her, saying



that the conversation "stays in the truck."

"TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE"

Why do people protect harassers? A number of factors are at play.

First, a harasser can establish a central status by having many strong ties to others in the network. Strong relationships within a tie require an investment of time and resources on both sides, and in turn, they yield loyalty and reciprocity. So network members close to the harasser are more likely to stay silent about his misdeeds, and to silence or manipulate those who speak up into questioning their sanity.

Also, when the harasser is the sole link between disconnected members of the network, he can isolate victims, control information and conceal wrongdoing. The result of all this: Victims, witnesses and would-be supporters stay silent.

In the case of Cuomo, he had many loyal ties. The attorney general's report states that the Executive Chamber had "an intense and overriding focus on secrecy and loyalty that meant that any and all perceived acts of 'disloyalty,' including criticism of the Governor [Cuomo] or his senior staff, would be met with attacks of a personal and professional nature."

The second reason people protect male sexual harassers lies in how certain network beliefs prize men and masculinity. These beliefs normalize male dominance over women, encouraging support for those who enact displays of masculine superiority.

When these beliefs pervade a social network, and central men sexually harass women, network members stay silent. They also rally to defend and protect harassers by silencing and not hearing

those who speak up.

Because women are devalued in these networks, powerful witnesses have little motive to hear sexual harassment complaints or take action to support female victims. The investigation into Cuomo's conduct concluded: "This culture of fear, intimidation, and retribution co-existed in the Executive Chamber with one that accepted and normalized everyday flirtations and gender-based comments by the Governor."

Finally, mythologies about sexual harassment

are frequently found in social networks such as the one that surrounded Cuomo. These common myths deny that sexual harassment has happened, often by questioning women's complaints – for example, suggesting that false allegations are common. Or they downplay the gravity of these offenses.

When harassment becomes undeniable, myths lead network members to move on to justify it: absolving harassers of responsibility or blaming victims – asking what women did to invite sexual advances.

Myths such as these silence network members because speaking up is likely to be futile or even dangerous. Throughout the report, senior staff members in Cuomo's office denied wrongdoing by Cuomo. One victim, Ana Liss, testified that Cuomo had held her hand, kissed her cheek and been flirtatious. She did not want to report it because "the environment in the Executive Chamber deterred her ... she was fully expecting the Governor's team would deny, deny, deny, character assassinate."

It is rare that scholarly research and current events so perfectly reflect each other. But the Cuomo case is – no metaphor here – a textbook example of a network of complicity and silence around sexual harassment.

*[Sandy Herscovis is Professor at Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary; Ivana Vranjes is Assistant Professor of Social Psychology, Tilburg University; Jennifer L. Berdahl is Professor of Sociology, University of British Columbia; Lilia M. Cortina is University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor of Psychology, Women's & Gender Studies, and Management & Organizations, University of Michigan]*

## After Islamic State: how local shop owners in Mosul are rebuilding their historic markets

YOUSIF AL-DAFFAIE  
*theconversation.com*

In the four years since Islamic State was defeated and Mosul liberated, local inhabitants have reckoned with the destruction wrought by the insurgents. The occupation of the city – Iraq's second largest – lasted from 2014-2017 and saw 800,000 people displaced.

Severe damage was also inflicted on the built environment, with around 35,000 buildings demolished. S.H., a man who lived through the occupation, and whom I interviewed in September 2020, recounted how, in the immediate aftermath of the war, the city was unrecognisable.

Non-governmental organisations, including Unesco and the United Nations Development Programme, have focused on reconstructing iconic landmarks and restoring homes. However, amid political tensions between local authorities and central government, the cost, estimated at \$1 billion, of rebuilding the Old Town has largely fallen to the people themselves.

Mosuli historian and journalist Omar Mohammed put it plainly: "After the liberation of Mosul," he wrote in January 2020, "the city is no longer a priority for the Iraqi government. All reconstruction has mainly been undertaken by the citizens."

As part of my doctoral research into the ways in which local residents

are coming to terms with this recent past, I have interviewed Mosulians, on location in the Old Town and among the Iraqi diaspora online. In particular, I have focused on the shop owners of Mosul's historical markets, who see their erstwhile trades and crafts as integral to their city's identity – and reviving them, their duty.

### A RICH HISTORY

The Old Town of Mosul – the city's beating heart – is seen as the physical embodiment of the rich, cultural diversity that has, for millennia, characterised Iraq. Established on the western bank of the Tigris during the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612-559 BC, it was submitted by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage to Unesco in 2018 as a potential world heritage site.

According to a 1926 edition of the Journal of the Central Asian Society, Mosul – the name of which referred to the city's position at the junction of major Middle Eastern trade routes – was home to 166,940 Arabs, 494,000 Kurds, 38,000 Turcomans, 61,330 Christians, 11,890 Jews and 26,000 Yezidis. While some ethnicities had diminished in numbers by 2014, this co-existence remained a defining factor of the Mosulian cultural heritage.

As noted in the Unesco submission, before the Islamic State takeover and the subsequent battle to liberate the city, the Old Town's built heritage was largely intact and untouched by modernisation. The old city was con-

sidered one of the best examples of medieval urban development in the Middle East, housing a plethora of shrines, churches, mosques, madrasas and cemeteries.

These included the 12th-century Al-Nuri Mosque with its leaning minaret, destroyed in the final days of the Battle for Mosul, and the 19th-century Al-Sa'a church which Islamic State began demolishing in 2016. A system of narrow streets and alleyways – locally known as the awjat – connected the town's historic markets, including the 7th-century Bab al-Saray souq, the 13th-century al-Sirjkhane souq and the al-Najafi souq from the early 20th century.

Research has identified multiple reasons behind Islamic State's destruction of historic urban spaces. They fall broadly under the concept of what international relations specialist Martin Coward calls urbicide. This refers to the targeting of historic and cultural spaces as a means of erasing a city's identity and establishing complete control over its future.

### RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS

After liberation, reconstructing the souqs, the homes and the awjat became an imperative for local inhabitants. Shop owners have reopened the same businesses, selling the same products in the same spots.

"I worked in this exact place," a carpenter in Al-Najjarin told me. "We all learned from the same teacher." Other artisans explained how they

had learned their craft – as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, coppersmiths and spice merchants – from their parents and grandparents.

One man told me that re-opening was better than fleeing the city and starting up elsewhere, even if it ultimately cost more to do so. "Shop owners who have been here for a long time feel obligated to reconstruct," he said. "We owe it to the souq."

I heard the same sentiment expressed all across Bab al-Saray. People have made huge sacrifices to restore their market. And their efforts are paying off. As Bab al-Saray has been revived, so have the smaller surrounding souqs, including al-Samajah (the fishmongers' market) and al-Najjarin (the carpenters' market).

During the war, the Old Town went from being a place of culture and daily interactions to one of terror. Research on Iraqi reconstruction has emphasised the human aspect of cultural heritage and how crucial a sense of belonging is to the broader healing process. In bringing the market buildings and activities back themselves, these tradesmen and craftsmen have restored to local people precisely that.

*[the writer is PhD Researcher, Centre for Architecture, Urbanism and Global Heritage, School of Architecture, Design, and the Built Environment, Nottingham Trent University]*



# "A Bengal Repeat Across Country If....": Derek O'Brien's Dig At Centre

Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien also raised the Pegasus controversy while speaking in RajyaSabha on the 127th Constitution Amendment Bill.

New Delhi: "What happened in Bengal will happen across the country," Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien warned the government today as he asked it to heed the Opposition's suggestions.

Mr O'Brien was speaking in RajyaSabha during the debate on the 127th Constitution Amendment Bill. The legislation, which proposes to restore the powers of states to prepare their own lists of OBCs for providing reservation in jobs and educational institutions, was passed in LokSabha yesterday.

Mr O'Brien, who is leader of the Trinamool's parliamentary party in RajyaSabha, asserted that he supports the legislation, but said Prime Minister NarendraModi should be present in the House for this discussion.

"We are really missing our honourable Prime Minister... I make



a humble appeal...This is an important Constitution amendment Bill. I am sure my appeal will not fall on deaf ears and he will come here to listen to us."

Taking a swipe, he added, "Or else, in the Olympic spirit, we can have a cutout too, but that would not be very Parliamentary." In the just concluded Tokyo Olympics held amid the Covid pandemic, cardboard cutouts of crowds and piped-in cheers were used to simulate the atmosphere of a crowded

stadium. The Trinamool leader went on to add that there is no doubt that the Prime Minister is a "great believer in the Olympic Games". "There is an Olympic God... Poseidon is linked today to Army, media, judiciary, activists, Opposition members, Abhishek Banerjee...because Olympic God Poseidon's son is called Pegasus." He also said the government does not want to discuss the issue because "if we start discussing it, lots of skeletons will come out of the cupboard".

In Greek mythol-

ogy, the mythical divine winged horse Pegasus is considered the offspring of Poseidon, one of the 12 Olympian gods.

Targeting the government for its "incompetence" in implementing legislation, including the GST, he said, "My request to the government is take our advice, don't be hasty, change gears. Otherwise what happened in Bengal will happen in the rest of the country."

Mr O'Brien also questioned why no caste-based Census was being held. "Why no Caste-

based Census? Why no Caste-based Census? It is an obvious question. It is a rhetorical question," he said.

During the debate on the Bill to give states the power to prepare their OBC lists, NDA allies and even a BJP MP have demanded a caste-based Census. The demand comes against the backdrop of the centre's recent clarification that as a matter of policy, it would not enumerate the population caste-wise in the Census, except for SCs and STs.

## Sharife Cooper's late 3 lifts Hawks to 84-83 win over Pacers

LAS VEGAS (AP): Sharife Cooper made a go-ahead, 3-pointer just before the buzzer that lifted the Atlanta Hawks to an 84-83 win over the Indiana Pacers in the NBA Summer League on Tuesday night.

Cooper scored 21 points — making 5-of-8 3-pointers — and had nine assists. Atlanta drafted the 6-foot-1, 180-pound guard with the No. 48 overall pick after he entered the draft following his freshman season at Auburn.

Jalen Johnson, drafted No. 20 overall from Duke, had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Hawks. Atlanta's Skylar Mays, a second-round pick last year, scored 16 points.

Chris Duarte, selected No. 13 out of Oregon, led Indiana with 21 points and seven rebounds. Second-year pro Cassius Stanley scored 14 points, third-year pro OshaeBrissett had 13 points and Isaiah Jackson, taken with the No. 22 pick, added 13 points.

Cooper's game-winning shot from the corner, in front of the Pacers' bench, was the eighth lead change in the fourth quarter.

CELTICS 107, NUGGETS 82

Aaron Nesmith scored 33 points and made 7-of-9 3-pointers while Payton Pritchard had 21 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds to help the Boston Celtics rout the Denver Nuggets.

Nesmith, drafted No. 14 overall last year, had 11 points in the first quarter as the Celtics jumped out to a 31-25 lead. Pritchard, who is also in his second year, and third-year pro Carsen Edwards were in double figures in the first half to help Boston lead by 20 points at halftime after shooting 62%.

BolBol, son of former NBA player ManuteBol, led the Nuggets with 26 points and nine rebounds. He is trying to make the most of his opportunity in Las Vegas after playing sparingly in his first two NBA seasons.

Denver's Nah'Shon "Bones" Hyland, drafted



No. 26 overall, scored 16 points and Davon Reed added 10 points in his hopes of making it back to the league. Reed was not in the NBA the previous two seasons after appearing in 31 games over two seasons with Phoenix and Indiana.

BULLS 92, SPURS 89

Patrick Williams, drafted fourth overall last year, scored 30 and second-round pick Marko Simonovic had 13 points to help the Chicago Bulls earn a comeback win over the San Antonio Spurs.

San Antonio outscored Chicago 26-14 in the first quarter and led by 15 points at halftime. The Bulls went on a run early in the fourth quarter to take the lead and held on for the victory.

Second-year pro Tre Jones had 23 points and rookie Joe Wieskamp scored 11 points for the Spurs.

Jaylen Morris scored 20 and Malik Newman had 19 points for the Spurs, who are giving both players another chance to play in the NBA.

ROCKETS 111, PISTONS 91

In a featured showdown between the No. 1 and No. 2 picks, it was Jalen Green who received more offensive help from his teammates in Houston's win over Detroit.

Green, the second overall pick who bypassed college basketball to play in the G League, scored 25 points in 30 minutes — going 6 of 11 from the field and 10 of 11 on free throws. His third and final 3-pointer gave the Rockets an 18-point lead with two minutes left.

Josh Christopher, the No. 24 selection out of Arizona State, helped Green run the Houston offense with 15 points and seven assists. Tur-

key's AlperenSengun, the No. 16 pick, controlled the paint for Houston with 21 points, eight rebounds and three blocks.

Cade Cunningham, the No. 1 pick after spending one season at Oklahoma State, was 8 of 18 from the field for 20 points to lead Detroit. Luka Garza, Iowa's high-scoring big man, added 15 points.

KINGS 89, WIZARDS 75

Louis King led six Sacramento players in double figures with 16 points and four 3-pointers.

Davion Mitchell, the No. 9 pick who was pivotal during Baylor's championship run, was 5 of 8 from the field to add 12 points for the Kings.

Sacramento made 14 3-pointers and Washington turned it over 21 times.

Caleb Homesley led Washington with 17 points and Corey Kispert, the No. 15 pick from runner-up Gonzaga, was held to eight points in his debut.

NBA Finals MVP GiannisAntetokounmpo sat courtside with siblings Thanasis and Kostas to support their brother Alex, who entered late in the fourth quarter for Sacramento.

TRAIL BLAZERS 86, CLIPPERS 66

Kobi Simmons, from the 2017 draft, led Portland with 15 points and Emmanuel Mudiay, the No. 7 pick in 2015, added 14 in a blowout victory.

Antonio Blakeney, who scored 27 in Portland's opener on Sunday, and George King each scored 12 points.

Jay Scrubb had 15 points and 10 rebounds for Los Angeles, and Daniel Oturu added 11 points and 13 boards. The Clippers shot 24 of 88 (27.3%) from the field.

## Bengal governor meets PM, talks about state's political situation: report

Earlier, JagdeepDhankhar met Union Culture and Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy and urged him to enhance the "efficacy" of the Victoria Memorial.

New Delhi:West Bengal Governor JagdeepDhankhar on Wednesday met Prime Minister NarendraModi and apprised him of the political situation in the state, sources

said. MrDhankhar is scheduled to meet Home Minister Amit Shah as well.

"It was a courtesy call on the PM," said MrDhankhar after meeting the PM.

Earlier, he met Union Culture and Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy and urged him to enhance the "efficacy" of the Victoria Memorial.

## Assam Encounter Deaths Rise To 17 In 3 Months As Dacoit Killed Trying To Escape

Assam Chief Minister HimantaBiswaSarma had earlier said that the police have been given "full operational liberty" under the ambit of the law to fight criminals.

Mangaldoi, Assam: A dacoit was killed in a police encounter when he attempted to escape from custody in Assam's Darrang district on Wednesday, a senior officer said.

With the fresh encounter, a total of 17 accused people have been killed and 31 others injured in Assam as they allegedly attempted to evade arrest or escape from police custody since the HimantaBiswaSarma government assumed office on May 10.

The dacoit, who was the prime accused in several cases, was caught in Kharupetia in Dalgaoon police station area. While being taken to the police station, he attempted to escape by attacking a policeman, following which other law enforcers retaliated, leading to his death on the spot, Superintendent of Police SushantBiswaSarma said.

The dacoit was the prime accused in the murder of prominent advocate Binoy Kumar Ghosh (85), president of the Mangaldoi Chamber of Commerce

and a key member of the district bar association, in 2014, the officer said, adding that the dacoit's body has been sent for post-mortem examination.

On August 8, a drug trafficker was killed and two others, including a police officer, injured in an encounter with a gang of drug dealers in Nagaon district. The unabated police encounters have led the opposition and a section of the civil society to accuse the police under the second BJP government in the state of indulging in "open killings".

The chief minister had earlier said that the police have been given "full operational liberty" under the ambit of the law to fight criminals. The Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has taken suomotocognisance of the encounters and asked the state government on July 7 to institute an inquiry into the circumstances that led to the casualties in the police encounters.

Earlier, a New Delhi-based lawyer from Assam, Arifwadder, had filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) against the Assam Police for the series of encounters that have taken place under MrSarma's rule.

## In Iran, slow vaccinations fuel anger in unending pandemic

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): Iranians are suffering through yet another surge in the coronavirus pandemic — their country's worst yet — and anger is growing at images of vaccinated Westerners without face masks on the internet or on TV while they remain unable to get the shots.

Iran, like much of the world, remains far behind countries like the United States in vaccinating its public, with only 3 million of its more than 80 million people having received both vaccine doses. But while some countries face poverty or other challenges in obtaining vaccines, Iran has brought some of the problems on itself.

After Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei refused to accept vaccine donations from Western countries, the Islamic Republic has sought to make the shots domestically, though that process lags far behind other nations.

The supply of non-Western shots remains low, creating a black market offering Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech shots for as much as \$1,350 in a country where the currency, the Iranian rial, is on the verge of collapse. Meanwhile, U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran mean the cash-strapped government has limited funds to purchase vaccines abroad.

And even as the delta variant wreaks havoc, filling the country's already overwhelmed hospitals, many Iranians have given up on wearing masks and staying at home.

The need to earn a living trumps the luxury of social distancing.

"What is next? A sixth wave?A seventh wave? When is it going to end?" asked Reza Ghasemi, a 27-year-old delivery man without a face mask, smoking a cigarette next to his motorbike on a recent day in Tehran. "It is not clear when this situation will change to a better one." Since the start of the pandemic, Iran has recorded nearly 4 million COVID-19 cases and more than 91,000 deaths — the highest numbers across the Middle East.

The true count is believed to be much higher. In April 2020, Iran's parliament warned its case number was "eight to 10 times" higher than the reported figures, due to undercounting. While coronavirus testing capacity has surged since then, officials repeatedly have suggested the case count remains far off. The death toll is likely three times higher, officials say, as Iran only counts those who die in a hospital while being treated for coronavirus.

Khamenei in January slammed shut any possibility of American or British

vaccines entering the country, calling them "forbidden."

"I really do not trust," them, Khamenei said of those nations. "Sometimes they want to test" their vaccines on other countries.

The decision, after Khamenei earlier floated conspiracy theories about the virus' origin in March 2020, saw Iran turn inward and try to develop its own vaccines. Those efforts, relying on traditional "dead virus" vaccines rather than the Pfizer and Moderna method of targeting the coronavirus' spike protein using RNA, have yet to reach mass production. And while the government claims local shots are 85% effective, they've released no data from their trials.

For now, the majority of Iranians receiving vaccines rely on foreign-made shots. Japan has donated 2.9 million doses of its locally produced AstraZeneca shots. China has sent 10 million doses of its shots. Iran also made a deal with Russia to buy 60 million doses of Sputnik V, but so far, Moscow has delivered just over 1 million shots.

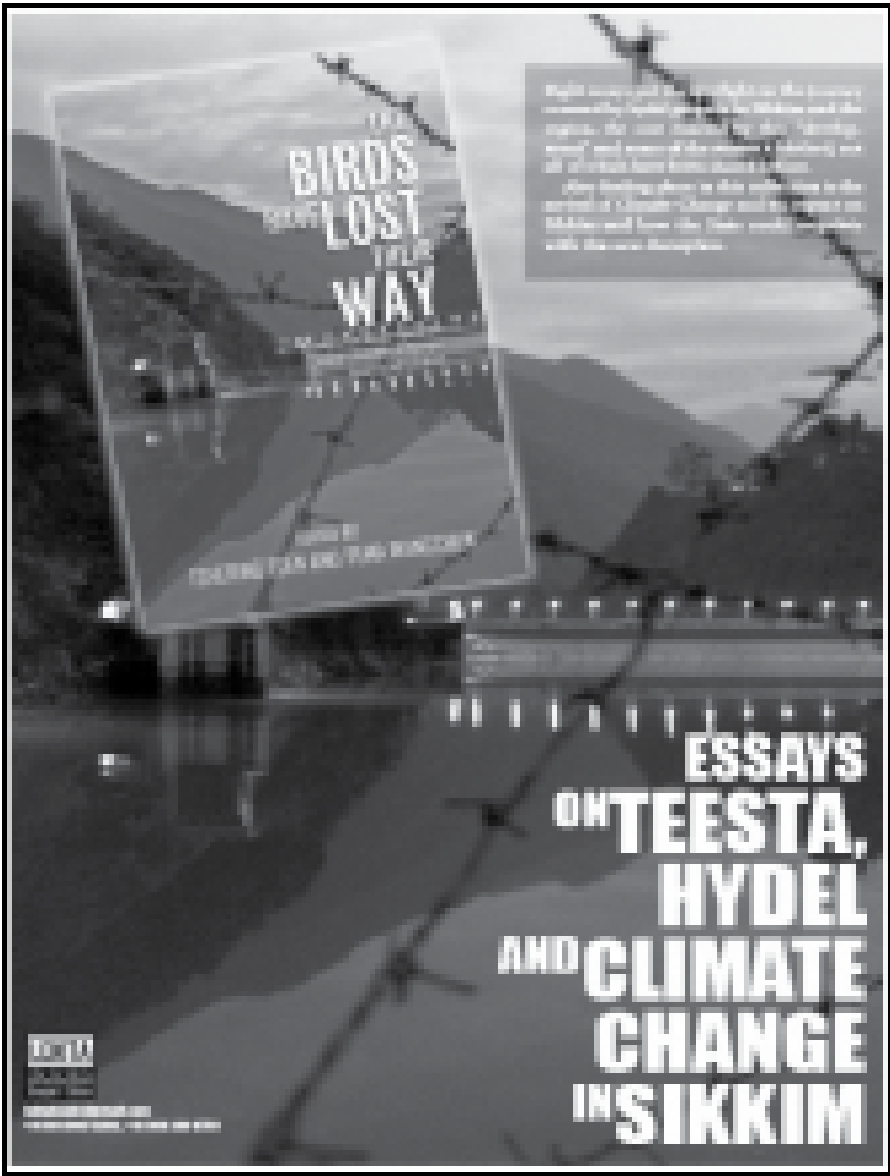
Doctors received the first set of vaccines, while the government now offers shots to those 50 and older, as well as to taxi drivers, journalists and those with diabetes. But it hasn't been nearly enough to keep up with demand. Only 4% of the Iranian public are fully vaccinated, according to government statistics.

Those with residency permits have sought shots in the United Arab Emirates. Others have gone to Armenia where authorities offer free shots to visiting foreigners. In Tehran, word-of-mouth claims that Pfizer and Moderna shots smuggled in over the border from Irbil, Iraq, including the ultra-cold freezers needed for them, are now for sale in the Iranian capital. A two-dose Moderna or AstraZeneca vaccine goes for \$390, while two Pfizer shots cost \$1,350. Those paying go on faith that the products have not expired — or are even legitimate vaccines.

Mahsa, a 31-year-old woman in Tehran, said she got the Moderna vaccine through her boyfriend's friend, a doctor working at a pharmacy.

"I am sure the vaccine is genuine because I trust the doctor," she said.

Amirali, a 39-year-old father of a baby girl, said he bought shots of the Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccine from an Iranian doctor secretly vaccinating people for profit. Amirali said he took the chance as his wife, a permanent U.S. resident, received the Pfizer vaccine while visiting America.





# Australian team condemns double-quarantine for 16 Olympians

**SYDNEY (AP):** A strict four-week quarantine imposed on 16 athletes returning from the Tokyo Games has been criticized as “cruel and uncaring” by the Australian Olympic Committee.

All travelers entering Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic are subjected to a mandatory 14-day hotel quarantine, and members of Australia’s Olympic delegation have returned in groups to undergo two weeks of supervised isolation in various state capitals.

But South Australia is imposing an additional 14-day domestic quarantine on those athletes who want to return to the state after isolating in Sydney, where a coronavirus outbreak has forced the city into lockdown. And that has sparked outrage among athletes and Olympic officials.

Australian Olympic committee chief executive Matt Carroll on Wednesday said South Australia’s decision posed mental health risks for the athletes, who have all been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and lived and competed under a strict bio-security conditions since before leaving for Japan.

“While other countries are celebrating the return of their athletes, we are subjecting ours to the most cruel and uncaring



treatment,” Carroll said. “They are being punished for proudly representing their country with distinction at the Olympic Games.”

Carroll said the South Australian government ignored medical advice from the Australian Institute of Sport which indicated the mental health of athletes could be “severely challenged after returning from a highly constrained Tokyo Games environment into the further isolation of extended lockdown.”

The athletes represented an extremely low

risk to the community after being tested daily over many weeks, Carroll said, and the South Australian health department had given no reason why it rejected an application for an exemption to the additional domestic quarantine.

Australian Institute of Sport chief medical officer Dr. David Hughes said he respected the process designed to keep South Australians safe, but described the decision to reject an exemption for the athletes as “profoundly flawed.”

Carroll said after weeks of negotiations with the state government, the AOC was informed the athletes returning to South Australia from Sydney would have to home quarantine for two weeks, if they successfully applied for an exemption to another 14-day hotel quarantine.

“Athletes subject to home quarantine will not be permitted a welcome home hug,” Carroll said. “Either the athlete’s family must move away, the athlete must find a way of isolating from the fam-

ily or the entire family goes into quarantine.

“That is not an acceptable option for someone who is fully vaccinated and who has already just completed two weeks’ quarantine.”

Australia sent more than 480 athletes to the Tokyo Games, including 56 from South Australia state, and placed sixth on the standings with 17 gold and 46 medals overall. The Olympics finished on Sunday.

South Australia is the only jurisdiction in the nation to impose the double-quarantine.

## Only 9 ancestral properties restored to Hindus in J&K since August 2019

**Shiv Sena MP Anil Desai** Asked the government whether it has formed any authority to take requests from Hindus who have returned to Jammu and Kashmir to reclaim their ancestral properties.

New Delhi: Only nine ancestral properties of the Kashmiri Hindu community have been restored to them in the last two years since special status to Jammu and Kashmir was removed and it was divided into two Union Territories.

“Nine properties have been restored to their rightful owners. And 520 migrants have returned to Kashmir and have taken up jobs under the PM scheme,” Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai told the Rajya Sabha today.

Shiv Sena MP Anil Desai asked the government whether it has formed any authority to take requests from Hindus who have returned to Jammu and Kashmir to reclaim their ancestral properties. The Home Ministry in a statement replied that district magistrates are the legal custodians of ancestral properties and can take action on their own if they find any encroachment. “The migrants can also request district magistrates in such cases,” the Home Ministry said.

The centre also clarified on altered land laws in one of the two newest Union Territories. “As per the adapted land laws of Jammu and Kashmir, the government may, by notification in the official gazette, allow transfer of land, for public purposes such as education, charitable purpose and healthcare,” the Home Ministry said.

# Bayern seeks to complete decade of Bundesliga domination

**BERLIN (AP):** Fans are back but the fundamental question remains the same as the Bundesliga season begins Friday.

Who can stop Bayern Munich?

The Bavarian powerhouse has won an unprecedented nine consecutive German league titles and looks likely to complete a decade of domination.

“The chase is on. The team knows that the others have no great interest in seeing us at the top for the 10th time in a row. They’ll do all they can to get us down,” said Bayern chairman Oliver Kahn, who does not expect the challengers to be successful.

“If we deliver on our potential, we’ll be champions again,” Kahn said. “The team has shown than it’s always capable of surpassing itself.”

Last season’s closest rival, Leipzig, finished 13 points behind Bayern last season, while Borussia Dortmund was 13 points adrift the season before that. It’s hard to see either team maintaining a season-long challenge again, while the likes of Borussia Mönchengladbach, Bayer Leverkusen, Eintracht Frankfurt and Wolfsburg will have to address their own inconsistencies before they can break into the top three. All the teams have new coaches in charge.

Supporters are also a novelty as limited numbers are allowed back in stadiums after a season in which they were largely excluded due to the coronavirus pandemic. The opening weekend will be uncharacteristically loud as up to 25,000 spectators are permitted in some stadiums. Smaller stadiums can have up to 50% capacity.

Germany’s rate of new COVID-19 infections — which has been picking up again in recent weeks — will determine spectator numbers as the season continues.

Cologne has already tightened



its rules. Fans with at least a negative test result can attend its season-opening game against Hertha Berlin on Sunday, but for future games only fully vaccinated fans or those who have recovered from COVID-19 can attend.

Bayern starts its record-extending title bid at Mönchengladbach on Friday. The defending champions have a new coach in Julian Nagelsmann, poached from Leipzig to replace Hansi Flick, who cut short his tenure to take over the Germany national team.

The 34-year-old Nagelsmann enjoyed great success with Hoffenheim before confirming his credentials at Leipzig, which he led to the Champions League semifinals in his first season, then a German Cup final and second place in the Bundesliga is his next.

French defender Dayot Upamecano also moved from Leipzig to Bayern after the team met the 22-year-old’s buyout clause of 42.5 million euros (\$50 million).

Bayern also signed English defender Omar Richards on a free transfer from second-division Reading, but otherwise it’s been a quiet summer of activity for the league’s richest club.

David Alaba, Douglas Costa, Javi Martínez and Jérôme Boateng have all left the club, while other players including goalkeeper Alex-

ander Nübel have been farmed out on loan.

Kahn said the pandemic was having an adverse effect on the club’s finances.

American coach Jesse Marsch has replaced Nagelsmann at Leipzig, arriving from sister club Red Bull Salzburg and continuing the path of transfers between the clubs backed by the energy drinks manufacturer.

Marsch looks to benefit from familiar face Dominik Szoboszlai’s return to fitness as the Hungarian striker scored on his injury-delayed debut in a 4-0 win at Sandhausen in the German Cup on Saturday. Szoboszlai joined from Salzburg in January.

Leipzig also signed Portugal striker André Silva from Bundesliga rival Frankfurt, meaning goals should not be a problem for Marsch’s team.

Dortmund also has a new face in charge in former Mönchengladbach coach Marco Rose, who will have to do without English star Jadon Sancho, who joined Manchester United in the offseason.

But Dortmund still has Erling Haaland and will do all it can to keep the strong Norwegian striker for at least another year. Haaland started the season with a hat trick in the German Cup on Saturday.

# Lionel Messi eyes Champions League trophy with PSG

**PARIS (AP):** Lionel Messi said he’s “in the right place” to win another Champions League trophy and cited a reunion with Neymar as a key factor in his decision to sign with Paris Saint-Germain.

The 34-year-old Argentina star spoke at his introductory news conference at Parc des Princes stadium on Wednesday, the morning after signing a two-year deal with the option for a third season after leaving Barcelona.

“My goal and dream is to raise another Champion’s (League Trophy) and I believe that I am in the right place to have the best chances to achieve that,” Messi said.

“When you see this squad, you really want to play with them because there are so many possibilities,” he added. “We have the same goal. And Neymar of course did a lot and was important for my choice.”

Qatari-backed PSG has been desperate to win the Champions League, falling just short when it lost the 2020 final to Bayern Munich. Messi helped Barcelona win four Champions League trophies.

Messi’s arrival gives PSG formidable attacking options as he links up with not only Neymar — his former teammate at Barcelona — but also France World Cup winner Kylian Mbappé.

“I’m going to play with best players, it’s very nice, it’s incredible to be able to experience this,” said Messi, who also cited Argentina teammates and PSG players Ángel di María and Leandro Paredes.

“Obviously, one of the reasons (I came) was the locker room: Neymar, Di María, Paredes, whom I know.”

Messi said he is “ready” to start playing with PSG, which hosts Strasbourg on Saturday night.

“When I feel it, when



the staff thinks I’m ok, I’ll be ready. I’m willing to play,” he said. Messi became the most high-profile free agent in soccer history after his attempts to stay at Barcelona were rejected last week by the Spanish league because the salary would not comply with financial regulations, with the Catalan club burdened by debts of more than 1.2 billion euros (\$1.4 billion).

PSG moved quickly to sign the Argentina star. The team, Messi said, “positioned themselves and everything went really fast and it was easy. It happened in little time. It was a difficult situation and they were efficient.”

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino quickly made contact with his fellow Argentine after Barcelona announced last Thursday that Messi would be leaving the club he joined as a 13-year-old boy.

Messi won every major honor with Barcelona and was granted a tearful exit news conference on Sunday to signal the end of an era. Only Cristiano Ronaldo in the current era challenges Messi’s status as an all-time great.

While PSG had to pay 222 million euros (then \$261 million) to sign Neymar from Barcelona in 2017, there was no transfer fee for Messi. No salary details were given,

but a person with knowledge of the negotiations earlier told The Associated Press that Messi is set to earn around 35 million euros (\$41 million) net annually. The person said on condition of anonymity before the contract was signed.

PSG will be hoping not only that Messi helps the team regain the French title it lost to Lille last season but finally win the Champions League. Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi praised “a historic day for the club, football world and it is a fantastic moment for us.”

“Everybody knows Leo... He makes the football magic, beautiful and he’s a winner. It will be very exciting for our supporters and the fans worldwide,” he added. “We have big ambition.”

Messi said it was “very hard” to leave Barcelona after so many years but added “the moment I arrived here I felt very happy.”

PSG supporters have seen their club transformed over the last decade since the influx of Qatari sovereign wealth investment linked to the emir. Once Messi’s Barcelona contract expired — and the Catalan club was unable to afford to keep him — PSG was one of the few clubs that could finance a deal to sign the six-time world player of the year.

## Olivia Podmore, New Zealand 2016 Olympic cyclist, dies at 24

**AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND (AP):** Olivia Podmore, a track cyclist for New Zealand who competed at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, has died. She was 24.

Cycling New Zealand said Podmore died “suddenly” Monday but did not disclose a cause or other details.

Podmore also represented New Zealand at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on Australia’s Gold Coast.

In a statement Tuesday, Cycling New Zealand described Podmore as a “much loved and respected rider.”

The organization noted that many are “understandably devastated” and, without elaboration, urged people to seek help for mental health if needed.

“Be kind to each other and take care of each other,” the statement said.

The New Zealand Olympic Committee said it has begun offering support to athletes and staff on the country’s Olympic team.

In a statement, double Olympic rowing gold medalist Eric Murray said he and Podmore had been snowboarding together on Sunday, and he was likely the last person to see her alive.

Murray said Podmore was a close friend and when he last saw her, she was happy and smiling. He said he had no cause to be concerned for her well-being.

Concerns for Podmore first arose after she posted a message on social media. Police were called to her home at Cambridge, near Hamilton on New

Zealand’s North Island, where she was found dead. “With Olivia’s final words, she left us a message, a message that we wish will never have to be read again by anyone else,” Murray said. “We’re seeing locally and around the world the implications of mental health in sport.”

Murray said some of the highest-profile athletes at the Olympics had recently spoken about mental health struggles and “we now have a statistic and that is one statistic too many.”

“We’ve lost a sister, a friend, and a fighter who lost that will of fight inside of her,” Murray said.

Sport New Zealand chief executive Raelene Castle said some cyclists who recently returned from the Tokyo Olympics were finding it “very difficult” in managed isolation, which is part of the country’s strict border regulations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions with the government are under way to determine whether some might be given dispensation from quarantine to attend Podmore’s funeral.

Castle said Podmore had reached out for support before her death.

The head of Cycling New Zealand, Jacques Landry, was asked whether his organization had done enough to support Podmore. He said the sport will be “questioning this for a long time.”

“She had a lot of people supporting her through her career,” Landry said. “We’re now just looking back ... and want to take a step back and review that.”



# Afghan officials: 3 more provincial capitals fall to Taliban

**KABUL, AFGHANISTAN (AP):** The Taliban seized three more provincial capitals in Afghanistan, officials said Wednesday, putting nine of the nation's 34 in the insurgents' hands amid the U.S. withdrawal from the country.

The fall of the capitals of Badakhshan and Baghlan provinces to the northeast and Farah province to the west put increasing pressure on the country's central government to stem the tide of the advance.

While Kabul itself has not been directly threatened in the advance, the Taliban offensive continues to stretch Afghan security forces now largely fighting against the insurgents on their own. A European Union senior official already has said at least 65% of Afghanistan is held by the insurgents, with the government continuing to lose ground.

The Afghan government and military did not immediately respond to requests for comment. However, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani rushed Wednesday to the surrounded province of Balkh to seek the support of two warlords there to push back against the



Taliban advance. Humayoon Shahidzada, a lawmaker from Farah, confirmed to The Associated Press his province's capital fell. Hujatul-

lah Kheradmand, a lawmaker from Badakhshan, said the Taliban had seized his province. An Afghan official, who spoke on condition of

anonymity to speak about an unacknowledged loss, said Baghlan's capital also fell.

In Farah, Taliban fighters

dragged the shoeless, bloody corpse of one Afghan security force member through the street, shouting: "God is great!" Gunfire echoed through the street as Taliban fighters carrying M-16 rifles and driving Humvees and Ford pickup trucks donated by the Americans rolled through the streets of its eponymous capital.

The insurgents earlier captured six other provincial capitals in the country in less than a week, including Kunduz in Kunduz province — one of the country's largest cities.

Speaking to journalists Tuesday, a senior EU official said the insurgents held some 230 districts of the over 400 in Afghanistan. The official described another 65 in government control while the rest were contested. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the internal figures.

Already, northeast Afghanistan largely has fallen to the Taliban, except for Balkh province. There, warlords Rashid Dostum, Atta Mohammad Noor and Mohammad Mohaqiq planned to mobilize forces in support of the Afghan government to push back the Taliban. Ghani traveled there Wednesday

to seek their support.

After a 20-year Western military mission and billions of dollars spent training and shoring up Afghan forces, many are at odds to explain why the regular forces have collapsed, fleeing the battle sometimes by the hundreds. The fighting has fallen largely to small groups of elite forces and the Afghan air force.

The success of the Taliban blitz has added urgency to the need to restart the long-stalled talks in Qatar that could end the fighting and move Afghanistan toward an inclusive interim administration. The insurgents have so far refused to return to the negotiating table.

U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad brought a warning to the Taliban on Tuesday that any government that comes to power through force in Afghanistan won't be recognized internationally.

Tens of thousands of people have fled their homes in the country's north to escape battles that have overwhelmed their towns and villages. Families have flowed into the capital, Kabul, living in parks and streets with little food or water.

## Dubai's busy airport sees passenger traffic drop 40% in 2021

**DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP):** Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest airport for international travel, handled some 40% less passenger traffic in the first half of 2021, compared to the same period last year, its chief executive said Wednesday.

The decline came as more contagious coronavirus variants cut off the hub's biggest source markets and continued to clobber the global aviation industry.

However, CEO Paul Griffiths remains optimistic for the crucial east-west transit point as authorities gradually re-open Dubai's key routes to the Indian subcontinent and Britain.

The 10.6 million passengers that passed through the airport over the past six months "is still very positive," Griffiths told The Associated Press. "I think coupled with the restrictions easing that we're now seeing, (it) will bode very well for a satisfactory end to the year."

The airport, which saw 86.4 million people squeeze through before the pandemic hit in 2019, has held the title of the world's busiest since it beat out London's Heathrow seven years ago. It even kept the crown as the virus turned the world's biggest airports into massive voids. But the once-teeming terminals still have a long way to go before seeing pre-pandemic passenger levels.

The hopes stoked by the United Arab Emirates' speedy vaccination campaign took a hit as the delta variant emerged, prompting familiar border closures and capacity cuts, and hurting the mammoth airport, hub of long-haul carrier Emirates. Dubai World Central, the Gulf city's second airport that went out of use for commercial flights during the pandemic, appears to be a parking lot for Emirates' iconic fleet of double-decker Airbus A380s.

Although the UAE recently lifted an entry ban on India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, which are home to most of the vast foreign workforce in the federation, stringent vaccination requirements still bar many from boarding flights to the country.

"All of those South Asian markets are incredibly important to Dubai, they're a very important transit opportunity, of course, as people go to all parts of northern Europe," said Griffiths. "It's very important we get those traffic flows back."

There are reasons to expect a rebound, Griffiths added. One of the airport's two main terminals, mothballed amid the pandemic, returned to use last month to prepare for an influx of holiday-makers escaping wintry weather and attending the World Expo in October. And after months of frustration and confusion, the U.K. last week removed the UAE from its "red list" that ordered all travelers to quarantine for 10 days in costly, government-approved hotels. The upgrade to "amber" elicited a strong sigh of relief throughout the federation of seven sheikhdoms, home to some 120,000 British expats. London was ranked as the top destination city for Dubai's airport in 2020, with 1.15 million customers.

Griffiths declined to put a number on the financial hit, but said the "loss of traffic (to the U.K.) has had a very, very significant impact on the economy of both countries." So thrilled was Emirates about the flight resumption that the airline plopped a woman on the pinnacle of the tallest tower on the planet, Burj Khalifa, and filmed her raising placards that implored Brits to fly Emirates.

The stakes are indeed high for Dubai, where the economy thrives not on oil, like in other Gulf Arab sheikhdoms, but on travel and tourism. Emirates remains the linchpin of the wider empire known as "Dubai Inc.," an interlocking series of businesses owned by the city-state. There are signs of looming uncertainty, with the airport yet to hire back any of the 5,000 employees it furloughed during the devastation of the pandemic last year.

## China sentences Canadian to 11 years in case tied to Huawei

**DANDONG, CHINA (AP):** A Canadian entrepreneur was sentenced to 11 years in prison Wednesday in a spy case linked to Beijing's effort to push his country to release an executive of tech giant Huawei, prompting an unusual joint show of support for Canada by the United States, Japan and 23 other governments.

China is stepping up pressure as a Canadian judge hears final arguments about whether to send the Huawei executive to the United States to face charges related to possible violations of trade sanctions on Iran. On Tuesday, a court rejected another Canadian's appeal of a death sentence in a drug case that was increased after the executive's arrest.

Entrepreneur Michael Spavor and a former Canadian diplomat were detained in what critics labeled "hostage politics" after Huawei's Meng Wanzhou, was arrested Dec. 1, 2018, at the Vancouver airport.

Spavor was sentenced by a court in Dandong, about 210 miles (340 kilometers) east of Beijing on the North Korean border. The government has released few details other than to accuse Spavor of passing along sensitive information to the former diplomat, Michael Kovrig, beginning in 2017. Both have been held in isolation and have little contact with Canadian diplomats.

The Canadian government condemned Spavor's sentence. It said he and Kovrig are "detained arbitrarily" and called for their immediate release.

The legal process in Spavor's case "lacked both fairness and transparency," said Ambassador Dominic Barton outside a detention center where the sentence was announced.

Spavor has two weeks to decide whether to appeal, according to Barton.

"While we disagree with the charges, we realize that this is the next step in the process to bring Michael home and we will continue to support him through this challenging time," Spavor's family said in a statement.

"Michael's life passion has been to bring different cultures together through tourism and events shared between the Korean peninsula and other countries including China and Canada," his family said. "This situation has not dampened, but strengthened his passion."

Diplomats from the United States, Japan, Britain, Australia, Germany and other European countries plus the European Union gathered at the Canadian Embassy in Beijing in a show of support. They also have issued separate



appeals for Spavor and Kovrig to receive fair trials or to be released.

"These proceedings are a blatant attempt to use human beings as bargaining leverage," the top American diplomat in China, David Meale, said in a statement. "Human beings should never be used as bargaining chips."

Meng, the chief financial officer of Huawei Technologies Ltd. and daughter of the company's founder, was arrested on U.S. charges of lying to the Hong Kong arm of the British bank HSBC about possible dealings with Iran in violation of trade sanctions.

Meng's lawyers argue the case is politically motivated and what she is accused of isn't a crime in Canada.

China's government has criticized the arrest as part of U.S. efforts to hamper its technology development. Huawei, a maker of network equipment and smartphones, is China's first global tech brand and is at the center of U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and the security of information systems.

Beijing denies there is a connection between Meng's case and the arrests of Spavor and Kovrig, but Chinese officials and state media frequently mention the two men in relation to whether or not Meng is allowed to return to China.

Earlier, Barton said he didn't think it was a coincidence the cases in China were happening while Meng's case was advancing in Vancouver.

Asked whether Canada was negotiating over possibly sending Meng home in exchange for the release of detained Canadians, Barton said, "there are intensive efforts and discussions. I don't want to talk in any detail about that. But that will continue."

Canada and other countries including Australia and the Philippines face trade boycotts and other Chinese pressure in disputes with Beijing over human rights, the coronavirus and control of the South China Sea. The United States has warned American travelers

face a "heightened risk of arbitrary detention" in China for reasons other than to enforce laws.

Diplomats from the United States and Germany went to the detention center in Dandong but weren't allowed in, according to Barton.

"Our collective presence and voice send a strong message to China and the Chinese government that the eyes of the world are watching," the ambassador said.

Barton said Chinese authorities cited photos taken by Spavor at airports that included military aircraft.

"A lot of it was around the photo evidence," the ambassador said. "He obviously had a different view on that."

Barton met with Spavor after the sentencing and said he sent three messages: "Thank you for all your support, it means a lot to me. Two, I am in good spirits. And three, I want to get home."

"He's strong, resilient, focused on what's happening," Barton said. "We had a very good conversation."

Kovrig, who also was detained in December 2018, stood trial in March. There has been no word on when a verdict might be announced.

The Canadian Embassy noted Spavor had been held for 975 days as of Wednesday.

Spavor worked in China but had extensive links with North Korea in tourism and other commercial ventures that brought him into contact with the isolated communist state's leadership.

On Tuesday, a Chinese court rejected the appeal of Robert Schellenberg, whose 15-year prison term for drug smuggling was abruptly increased to death in January 2019 following Meng's arrest. The case was sent to China's supreme court for a mandatory review before it can be carried out.

China has tried to pressure Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government by imposing restrictions on imports of canola seed oil and other products from Canada.

## Domestic help case: Uttarakhand Civil judge challenges dismissal in court

Civil Judge (senior division) of Haridwar, Deepali Sharma, filed the petition in the high court on Tuesday claiming that the investigation officer, who had conducted an inquiry into the matter, was biased against her.

Nainital: A civil judge dismissed last year for allegedly torturing a minor girl, who worked as a domestic help at her residence, has filed a petition in the Uttarakhand High Court challenging her dismissal.

Civil Judge (senior division) of Haridwar, Deepali Sharma, filed

the petition in the high court on Tuesday claiming that the investigation officer, who had conducted an inquiry into the matter, was biased against her.

She has prayed for reinstatement to the post, saying she had not been granted a fair opportunity to present her case.

The inquiry report had served as the basis for her dismissal in October last year. She had been accused of torturing a 13-year-old domestic help at her residence.

The matter is yet to be listed for hearing.





# Music's brightest stars align for Global Citizen Live shows

**NEW YORK (AP):** Will.I.Am of the Black Eyed Peas says joining forces with Global Citizen to help headline its upcoming daylong global concert aimed at creating positive change was a no brainer for him.

"Headlining the show in France is super special to us. Just any time you could help make change or bring awareness to issues through music, especially things that you care about — that I care about — like climate (change) and the planet and bringing folks that are just disenfranchised, you know, lifting them up with not only funds, but information and preparation for tomorrow is what I'm about personally," said the super producer of the upcoming Global Citizen Live shows. The group's "efforts align with my efforts."

Global Citizen announced Tuesday that a 24-hour broadcast of performances across multiple networks and platforms will take place on six continents on September 25, boasting some of music's brightest stars.

New York's Central Park will host 60,000 fans who'll dance to artists like Coldplay, Billie Eilish, Jennifer Lopez, Lizzo and Meek Mill, while Ed Sheeran, Doja Cat, H.E.R. and more will join the Peas and 20,000 attendees in Paris. Lagos will also host afrobeat stars like Femi Kuti, Davido, Tiwa Savage, and more performers and locations will be announced soon.

With CEO Hugh Evans calling this "the most ambitious campaign Global Citizen has ever launched," the event is timed to the UN General Assembly in September, followed by the G20 and COP26 Climate meetings in October and November, respectively.

Global Citizen hosted another large concert in May advocating the impor-

tance of vaccine equity, exceeding its goal by raising \$302 million. The "Vax Live: The Concert to Reunite the World" was one of the largest concert gatherings in Southern California since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Evans hopes artists will encourage citizens to push governments and ma-

not seem right to host a global concert. Will.I.Am understands the sentiment.

"There's a part of me that's like, 'I don't want to do it. I don't want to go. I'd rather stay home ... I've been safe. And anything outside of that puts some worry bugs in me,'" said the musician. "But do I want to live that way? ... I think



jor corporations to be more proactive in tackling climate change, poverty and vaccine equity. But do world leaders really care about what partygoers are asking for at a global concert?

"Even if they don't care on the basis of their own — let's call it altruistic reasons — they'll care at the ballot box when citizens say, 'You know what, I want an elected official who cares about taking action on climate change. I want an elected official who cares about taking action to curb the hunger crisis,'" said Evans. "If they don't care about these issues, frankly, they will lose the next election. I think politics changes with the wind and I think the wind is blowing in the direction of change right now."

But as the world still battles the coronavirus pandemic with the delta variant surging in the US, the time might

every single person has to weigh that themselves." In order to attend, concertgoers must provide either proof that they are fully vaccinated or present a negative PCR test within 72 hours of the show's start, and every attendee must be masked regardless of vaccination status. Evans says not only are they complying with local virus regulations, but Global Citizen is going above and beyond those restrictions to make sure everyone stays safe.

"I believe that, ultimately, we need to listen to science and science says that everyone should be fully vaccinated and that they should have a negative PCR test, and if they're in close proximity, they should wear a mask," he said. "We need to take the pandemic very seriously, but we also need to follow the best science. And the science is telling us exactly what to do."

## Machine Gun Kelly reveals dramatic head tattoo as he shaves his hair off

Machine Gun Kelly showed off a very different look on Aug. 10 when he posted a social media photo of himself with a stunning head tattoo in place of his hair.

If you were to say Machine Gun Kelly needs to get his hair under control, that would be a bald-faced lie.

The 31-year-old rapper posted a photo to social media on Tuesday, Aug. 10 revealing he had recently shaved off all his signature blonde locks. This is quite the identity shift, given that his Instagram bio simply reads, "the Blonde Don."

This pic showed off a prominent tattoo on the top of his head, which can be seen in the screenshot below.

His social media post was part of an effort to promote his music video for the first single from his upcoming album, *Born With Horns*. The video, directed by Cole Bennett, drops Wednesday, Aug. 11, and MGK captioned his post, "i shaved my head for this @ColeBennett\_papercuts tomorrow 9pm."

That said, his fans appeared to be skeptical that the hairstyle change is

real, with one fan writing, "don't lie we know it's a bald cap." On Aug. 9, Machine Gun Kelly took to Instagram to post a video of himself and frequent collaborator Travis Barker showing off matching "Born With Horns" tattoos on their forearms. "born with horns' the album," MGK captioned it at the



time. "we're back for round two..."

Lately, the star appears to be more focused on his current music projects than his recently released film work. He met girlfriend Megan Fox on the set of *Midnight In the Switchgrass*, which hit theaters last month, but prior to the release, MGK made it clear he wasn't proud of the movie.

"If I don't talk or tweet about a movie I'm barely in it's because it's [trash can emoji]," the "Bloody Valentine" vocalist tweeted on July 23.

## Stevie Nicks cancels all 2021 performances over coronavirus

**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Stevie Nicks has canceled five forthcoming performances at music festivals, citing coronavirus concerns, she said in a statement Tuesday. Nicks had been scheduled to headline one day each of BottleRock Napa Valley in California and the Jazz Aspen Festival in Colorado in September. In October, she was to have played two days of the Austin City Limits Music Festival and one day of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

The dates were all the shows she had planned for 2021. "These are challenging times with challenging decisions that have to be made. I want everyone to be safe and healthy and the rising Covid cases should be of concern to all of us," the 73-year-old singer said in the statement. "While I'm vaccinated, at my age,

I am still being extremely cautious and for that reason have decided to skip the 5 performances I had planned for 2021."

Most of the festivals themselves are moving forward with replacement headliners. Country star Chris Stapleton will take Nicks' place at BottleRock.

"Because singing and performing have been my whole life, my primary goal is to keep healthy so I can continue singing for the next decade or longer," Nicks' statement said.



**PUPPY POUT!** Model Courtney Stodden showed off their toned physique while carrying their dog.

## Chrissy Teigen fires back at claims she deletes negative comments from her social media posts

Chrissy Teigen responded to "crazy" allegations that she has recently been deleting negative comments from social media users.

Chrissy Teigen has a few pet peeves about the way she feels she's currently being treated on social media.

The 35-year-old Lip Sync Battle co-host took to her Instagram Story on Tuesday, Aug. 10 to share two complaints about how users have recently been reacting to her presence. In the post, she wore a colorful robe and used a puppy filter.

"Two things that I think are funny right now," she said. "One: People in my comments that are mad that there's not enough angry comments in my comments. They think that I like delete them. But like, what?"

She continued, "That's like next-level hater, when you're mad that there's not enough hate. It's pretty... you're just crazy."

As for the other thing that's bothering her, she explained, "If I leave a comment underneath somebody's photo, even if it's nice—'You look great,' 'I love this outfit'—people get all sorts of mad. Because...I am alive."

This isn't the first time that the Cravings

author has spoken out about criticism. Last month, Chrissy reflected on the recent bullying allegations against her by posting to Instagram that she is in "cancel club."

In her July 14 post, she wrote, "Iiii don't



really know what to say here...just feels so weird to pretend nothing happened in this online world but feel like utter s--t in real life. Going outside sucks and doesn't feel right, being at home alone with my mind makes my depressed head race."

Chrissy continued, "But I do know that however I'm handling this now isn't the right answer."

**Aries:** Is the situation as terrible as you think it is, or are you simply "too" close for comfort? Rise above, Aries. Rise above. Get some perspective. Give yourself the permission to look at your circumstances through a fresh lens. This will help you realise that things are neither good, nor bad. They simply are. The inner realisation that everything and everybody we attract is in essence a catalyst for growth will help you honour the workings of the divine matrix on a deeper level.

**Tip:** It's time to rise above your circumstances and get some perspective.

**Taurus:** The trouble is, you've been comparing your journey to that of others. You've been diminishing your power by repeating the story that you haven't achieved enough. But this is merely an illusion, Taurus. An illusion created by your external circumstances. So, turn your gaze inwards. Give yourself the approval, validation, and praise you deserve. As you do, vow to show up for your dreams, each and every day, in a consistent manner. There is so much magic taking place behind the scenes. If only you knew all the strings Spirit is pulling on your behalf, beautiful!

**Tip:** Give yourself the approval, validation, and praise you deserve.

**Gemini:**

Gemini, you've been playing the role of the mother, the nurturer, the healer, and the fixer. But, the law of balance states that you must step back and allow yourself to be nurtured right back, no matter how uncomfortable this makes you feel at first. Notice the people who are showing up for you. They have only and only good intentions in their heart. So, open your heart and 'allow'. Allow, allow, allow. You are deserving of the love that you have attracted into your world.

**Tip:** It's time to receive all the love that you have been putting into the Universe.

**Cancer:**

This is a time of shedding old skin, Cancer. A time of breaking past the illusion and meeting the radiant being of light who's been waiting for you all along. What a beautiful journey this has been (despite the trials and tribulations)! A journey of stepping into your power. A journey of coming home. What the cards want you to know is that you have spent many, many lifetimes dimming your sparkle. It's time to come out of hiding, break the cycle and change the narrative once and for all. PS: The divine forces have got your back and are holding space for this massive transformation!

**Tip:** This is a time of coming into your power.

**Leo:**

What if we said your logical mind is the biggest hindrance to your spiritual growth? The cards are urging you to go beyond

the confines of your mind. To trust both the inner and outer signs that are being revealed to you. Your unyielding faith in the Universe will make space for miracles, Leo. If you're already on the path of connecting with your intuition, go deeper. Set time aside to make that metaphorical journey within. There are big downloads that are being sent your way at this moment—downloads that have the power and potential to change the course of your life.

**Tip:** Trust the inner and outer signs, beautiful.

**Virgo:**

When we're too attached to how things should be or shouldn't be, we tend to get stuck in a loop. What Spirit wants you to know is that there is a larger plan in place, and this plan requires you to loosen the grip a little. So, allow the divine forces to come through. Allow your soul family to step in too. The help and support you require is available to you now and in each moment, Virgo.

**Tip:** Loosen the grip and allow Spirit to come through. It's not for you to control everything, beautiful.

**Libra:**

Don't let your outer reality disillusion you, Libra. You were put here for a reason, and you have within you the strength and courage required to power through your circumstances. So, remember who you are, beautiful. Remember who you are. As you do, let go of the need to witness a drastic change in your reality immediately. Good things take time. Just know

that the seeds of goodness you are planting now will come to fruition when they are meant to.

**Tip:** You have within you the strength, courage, and resilience required to power through.

**Scorpio:**

The trouble is, you have been looking outside for validation, Scorpio, and it isn't serving your highest good. What the cards are urging you to do today is turn your gaze inwards. To remember who you are and why you came to this planet. You are already prepared for the mission you have been entrusted with. It's now time for you to own it!

**Tip:** Remember your worth.

**Sagittarius:**

What doesn't break you makes you stronger, Sagittarius. We repeat: what doesn't break you makes you stronger. So, embrace this as an opportunity to transmute your shadows and come into your light. Disclaimer: it's not going to be easy to get through this phase. You will question your sanity, every single day. Remembering the version of you that awaits you on the other side will help you power through on the darkest of days.

**Tip:** This is a time of inner alchemy.

**Capricorn:**

The signs are all around you, Capricorn. We repeat: the signs are all around you. It all comes down to how awake you will choose to be. Your rational mind will try to interfere

with what your intuition is telling you. Learn to trust the magic nonetheless, with the inner awareness that your spirit guides are communicating with you in every moment.

**Tip:** Believe in the magic, beautiful one!

**Aquarius:**

There are times when we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. Fortunately, now is "not" such a time in your life, water bearer. The Universe is offering you a leg up by way of your soul tribe. So stay open to the help, support and guidance you are receiving with the inner knowing that you deserve every bit of the love you're attracting, beautiful! As such, this is also a time of new beginnings. A magical period, if you may. So, if you're feeling inspired to pour your energy into something, don't hold back!

**Tip:** Trust in the magic!

**Pisces:**

If you're looking for somebody else to validate you, you're going to be disappointed over and over, Pisces. If you're looking for somebody to give you a pat on your back, then you're never going to make it. So turn your gaze inward. Look at both your achievements and failures through the lens of love. Give yourself the approval you desire from the world. What a long way you have come, beautiful! What a long way you have come!

**Tip:** Give yourself the approval you desire from the world.