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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Life in a COVID-hit metro

KUNAL DUTT
NEW DELHI, SEP 11 (PTI): The screeching brakes of a metro train and the announcements of its arrival were a throwback for Priyanka Sharma as she eagerly waited at a station to use the service to reach office, the first time in over five months.

Three days before the first nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25 to contain the spread of the pandemic, metro services were closed, only to be resumed in a graded manner after a long hiatus, on September 7.

In this 169-day period, the familiar sights and sounds and touch of the life in a metro were suddenly taken away, as people were left confined to their homes while coronavirus wreaked havoc in the country.

Sharma, who works at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), on Monday said when the Yellow Line services resumed, she decided to take metro to go to office as two stations are in the vicinity of her workplace.

"The moment a train came whizzing past me by the platform, I suddenly became very conscious of the sound the wheels were producing until the train came to a screeching halt. It wasn't unfamiliar, of course, but to hear it after five-and-a-half months suddenly, it felt something new in a COVID-hit world," she told PTI.

The light inside the coaches, the buzzing sound of opening and closing of doors, the regular announcements made on public audio system, and the typical blue colour of all station name labels, it was very strong on the senses, said Sharma, as she boarded a train at Jor Bagh station on Yellow Line.

Nine corridors of the Delhi Metro network have now been reopened as part of the stage one and stage two of the phase-wise resumption of services, once again connecting Delhi with the neighbouring cities on the network.

Yellow Line and Rapid Metro were the first to be reopened on Monday. Blue Line and Pink Line resumed services on Wednesday and services on the Red Line, Violet Line and Green Line commenced operations again on September 10, and Magenta Line and Grey Line resumed services on Friday.

This correspondent spent three hours inside stations premises and train coaches of three major corridors on Thursday to get a real sense of the new normal.

Shirleen, 47, a Kerala native **turn to pg 02**

Grim Friday for Sikkim with 3 COVID deaths on single day

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

It was a grim Friday for Sikkim with three COVID casualties recorded in a single day. All three had comorbidities. With this the COVID death toll now stands at 11.

A 68-year-old female from Lall Bazaar passed away at STNM Hospital's isolation ward High Dependency Unit at around 5:30am this morning. The patient tested positive via RAT at CRH Tadong and was referred to STNM hospital on 01 Sept, 2020. She was a dialysis patient.

Another Lall bazaar resident, a 69-year-old male was taken to CRH Tadong on Friday morning and was declared



brought dead at the hospital. This person was suffering from diabetes.

An 85-year-old man from Arithang, Gangtok, containment zone passed away on Friday evening at STNM Hospital. He was a primary contact of a COVID patient and was admitted to the hospital on 08 Sept. He was suffering from partial paralysis and other illnesses due to old age.

This week, five COVID casualties have been reported in the state.

It may be mentioned that the first COVID casualty was a 67-year-old retired Headmaster from Rongli, East Sikkim. He too had comorbidities of diabetes and hypertension.

17 new cases take Sikkim's COVID tally to 2026

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

Sikkim recorded 17 new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours as of 8 AM Friday taking the State's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 2026. The number of active cases of COVID-19 in the State stands at 532.

Meanwhile, 16 more patients have won their battle against novel coronavirus and were discharged on Thursday from different isolation facilities. The figure of

cured and discharged patients of COVID-19 has now reached 1486 in the State.

State IEC Officer, Sonam G Bhutia mentioned in the daily Health Bulletin, that in testing of 152 samples by RT-PCR in VRD Lab in STNM hospital on Thursday, 13 reported positive for COVID-19. He mentioned that two of 22 samples tested by TrueNat were found positive and two new cases of COVID-19 were detected in the rapid antigen testing of 23

samples. Out of 17 new cases, 12 have been reported in East District and five in South District.

In the break-up of new cases detected in RT-PCR testing, Mr Bhutia informed that one person from below Paljor Stadium area, one from near Royal Plaza in Upper Shyari, one from Metro Point, Tadong, one from below Canara Bank in Upper Arithang and three primary contacts from the containment zone in Arithang were tested positive

for COVID-19.

He added that one from Majhigaon, Rangpo and four IRB personnel from quarantine facility at Namchi Girls School were returned positive in RT-PCR testing. He mentioned that one 41-year-old male from Lower MG Marg, who also reported positive in RT-PCR testing, is untraceable as his phone number cannot be reached.

Mr Bhutia informed that one person from Naya Bazaar in West Sikkim was found positive in

the rapid antigen testing at Namchi District Hospital, while another person from Mamring was also found positive in RAT at Singtam District Hospital.

Likewise, one from Housing Colony in Namnang tested positive in TrueNat testing while a second COVID case is that of an 83-year-old man from near ICICI Bank in New Market, MG Marg, who passed away on Thursday. The test on the latter was done after he had passed away.

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What explains surge in coronavirus numbers in India?

AKASH BISHT

NEW DELHI, 11 SEPT [ALJAZEERA]: India has added another 300,000 coronavirus infections to its caseload in the past four days, an infection rate which could see it overtake the United States to become the world's worst-affected country within weeks. The country registered 96,551 new cases - a fresh global record - on Friday. On Monday, India had surpassed Brazil as the country with the second-highest number of coronavirus cases in the world, with 4.2 million cases. The US has a caseload of 6.4 million infections.

More than 76,000 people in India have died due to the coronavirus, which has killed more than 909,000 people worldwide.

India's health ministry says the surge in cases is due to an increase in daily testing that has now exceeded one million.

Despite the steep surge in new cases and deaths, India continues to ease restrictions and open up its economy to make up for losses incurred during its long and punishing lockdown period, which experts believe was rushed through and "illogical".

The March lockdown forced hundreds of thousands of workers to flee cities for their homes, and experts say it probably contributed to the spread of the virus in rural areas.

Moreover, they say that the government has not successfully communicated an effective and uniform message on masking, social distancing and congregation - measures that could have helped contain the spread of the outbreak. As the infections spike in rural areas,

health experts say the country's crumbling rural health sector is not equipped to deal with the surge in cases in the world's second-most populous nation.

The only silver lining for the government is the high recovery rate (77 percent) and the low mortality rate (1.6 percent) - points the government continues to emphasise.

POOR HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Even in cities, patients have had to suffer due to poor hospital facilities and protocols. Mohinder Kaur, who was admitted to a government-run Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital in the capital, New Delhi, after testing COVID-19 positive, told Al Jazeera of her ordeal.

"No one would come near us or even help us. If anyone would accidentally touch us, the staff would shout at them for ruining a PPE (personal protective equipment) kit, the 75-year-old retired school teacher told Al Jazeera. "In this heat, the fans were not working and the staff would not get them fixed despite several complaints. The toilets were filthy and sometimes had no water. The ward had rats, lizards, cats and even dogs roaming around. It was a living hell and we are fortunate to have survived this," she said.

India's capital still has better health facilities in comparison to rural areas where only 20 percent of India's doctors and 40 percent of hospitals are located. Health experts feel that this could put millions of people at risk.

"India's epidemic is two-part, urban followed by rural, each consisting of innumerable outbreaks - each district or city/large town with its own outbreak, the sum total

is what is seen in numbers," said Dr T Jacob John, epidemiologist and former professor at Christian Medical College, Vellore. "In the last week of August, the epidemic reached all nooks and corners - evidenced by infection among tribal communities. That means, spatially the epidemic has peaked," he said.

STAGE FOUR OF THE PANDEMIC

John says India has entered stage four of the pandemic, which means the country is seeing widespread transmission, and that is reflected in the record number of daily infections in the past several weeks.

But the government has so far steadfastly denied community transmission, during which the source of contagion is not known. John says India witnessed community transmission (stage three) between March and July. The epidemiologist said authorities must move from the idea of "control" to "mitigation".

Preeti Kumar, vice president, public health system support at the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), a public-private non-profit, pointed out that India is a federal state and health is largely a state subject.

"Each state has implemented the response based on the strength of its health system and available resources," Kumar told Al Jazeera.

"Kerala and Punjab states introduced lockdowns even before the rest of the country did. Four southern states (with stronger health systems) have also tested more and reported better.

"In contrast, the poorer northern states with weaker health systems, are only now beginning to feel the impact and are struggling

with testing, tracing, treating and reporting," she said. According to Kumar, the Indian government provided much of the leadership in the early stage of the pandemic, and continues to support through strategic guidelines, expertise and some level of funding.

INEFFECTIVE LOCKDOWN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government had introduced one of the world's strictest lockdowns, triggering a working-class exodus from cities to rural areas and smaller towns.

The two-month lockdown led to the shuttering of factories and loss of millions of jobs, and experts say the decision, taken at four hours' notice, was "ineffective and unscientific". Calling it a rushed move, Christian Medical College's John said India's lockdown had no scientific support. "National lockdown was illogical. It was necessary in different states at different times as they reached phase three," he said.

Meanwhile, Kumar of PHFI believes that other countries like South Korea, Japan, Thailand and Taiwan did not see the rise in cases the way India has seen post-lockdown because they had invested heavily in testing, contact-tracing and quarantine.

"Lockdown was declared to help buy time to prepare the system to cope - prepare facilities, equipment, consumables, testing labs, surveillance systems and health workforce," Kumar said.

"These countries also had widespread use of masks, distancing etc. These interventions together helped flatten the curve. Our scale-up

turn to pg 02

LTVC presses for LT Assembly seat reservation

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

Limboo Tamang Voluntary Committee [LTVC] submitted a three-point memorandum to the Chief Minister on Friday. In the memorandum, LTVC has requested the passing of a Bill pertaining to LT Assembly seat reservation and protection of Tamang Community's land in Sikkim in the upcoming Sikkim Legislative Session and placing of LT seat reservation issue in the Parliament.

A copy of the memorandum provided with a press release by LTVC states that SKM party has always been sympathetic towards LT communities' constitutional rights and had been frequently raising LT seat issue in the previous SDF Government's tenure by demanding reservation of LT seat from existing 32 seats.

It further mentions that it was during Budget Session on 19 March in 2016, that SKM MLA Kunga Nima Lepcha brought a private member's bill in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and demanded a resolution to the LT Assembly seat reservation issue from existing 32 seats in order to give justice to long deprived LT communities.

Prior to the 2019 election, SKM organized many meetings, rallies for LT seat issue i.e. Limboo-Tamang seat Arakshan Yatra on 26 June, 2018 which was led by SKM MLA, Sonam Lama and even promised to resolve LT seat within 10 days after forming new government, LTVC mentions.

"SKM also submitted many memorandums demanding the same at the Centre. Hence, we request SKM to fulfill their pre-poll promises to LT communities of Sikkim like mentioned in their party manifesto 2019," LTVC states.

Alleging that the previous SDF Government failed to protect Tamang community's land along with Limboo community's land via The Sikkim Regulation of Transfer of land (Amendment) Bill, 2019 although central Ministries i.e. MHA, MoTA & MSJW&E had clearly directed the State Government to protect both Limboo & Tamang (ST) communities land in Sikkim through various notifications after LTVC's request to Central Government's intervention in the matter.

The memorandum requests the CM to direct the Sikkim MP to raise the LT seat reservation issue inside the Parliament in the up-coming Parliament session scheduled from 14 Sept with formula in order to clear the stand of SKM party and demand early solution for LT seat under Article 371(F) with Centre which is pending since 18 years.

The memorandum has further requested for passing of a Bill in the SLA for LT seat reservation with formula and passing of a Bill in SLA for protection of Tamang (ST) community's land in Sikkim during the up-coming Sikkim Legislative Assembly Session scheduled to be held on 21 September.

Awareness on Climate Change and Health at CHC Rhenock



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

A day-long awareness programme was convened at PHSC Rorathang on the topic of National Programme on Climate Change & Human health (NPCCHH) and suicide prevention today, a press release informs.

The programme was organised by CHC, Rhenock, East Sikkim and was chaired by MO/In-charge, Dr Raju Singh in the presence of CHO, Sunita Pradhan, PHSC In-charge, Kamala Sapkota, VHW, Pramila Pradhan, VHSNC committee, NT Sherpa, ICDS staffs, ASHA workers, staff and local participants.

During the meeting,

CHO, Sunita Pradhan highlighted the importance of cleanliness and interacted with the participants.

MO, Dr Raju Singh addressing the programme highlighted the various effects on health associated with air pollution and biomass. He also stressed on how to reduce exposure and contribution to air pollution.

Dr Raju also discussed and shared information regarding suicide prevention on World Suicide Prevention Day.

The programme concluded with vote of thanks by NT Sherpa requesting the doctor to make twice a month visit which the MO took positively.

Ecclesiastical Minister visits Pemayangtse Monastery



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

Minister Ecclesiastical Affairs and RDD, Sonam Lama visited Pemayangtse Monastery, West Sikkim today. During his visit, he offered prayers and inspected landslide affected area of the Gumpa. A massive landslide triggered by incessant rain had occurred in the Gumpa premises, a press release informs.

In the meantime, the Minister directed the concerned officials to take all

measures to control the active landslide and repair the damages in the Gumpa premises.

Later, the Minister chaired a coordination meeting of Jal Jiwan Mission Project (JJM) in West Sikkim. The meet was attended by DC, ADC, RDD Officials and HODs of West District.

During the interaction session, Mr Lama directed the officials to comply with all the projects of West District under JJM.

Team of officials inspects damaged road in Sajong



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

Under the direction of area MLA, Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara and PWD Minister, Samdup Lepcha, a team headed by Chairman Sikkim Housing Board, Karma

Tashi Bhutia inspected the damaged road in Sajong, Budang-Kamerey GPU under Rhenock Constituency and took stock of the situation, a press release informs. The team also had DE, AE, BDO/Duga and local villagers.

Budung road has been severely damaged by the incessant rain of last few days. This road connects Central Pendam and Singtam, and since it is damaged, the public of these two areas are facing a lot of

problem in transportation of essential commodities.

Meanwhile, Chairman (Sikkim Housing Board, Karma Tashi Bhutia) has directed the concerned authority to restore the road as early as possible.

West observes World Suicide Prevention Day

GYALSHING, 11 SEPT (IPR): World suicide prevention day is observed across the globe every year on 10 Sept since 2003 to raise awareness about suicide and its prevention. A meeting regarding the same was held today at the chamber of DC West, on the theme "Working Together to Prevent Suicide".

On this very day of the Prevention and Control of Suicide in Sikkim, District Level Working Group Committee was also formed under the chairmanship of DC West, Karma R. Bonpo. The meeting had the presence of Tushar Nikhare, ADC, West; Tashi Wangyal, SP, West; Anant Jain, SDM, HQ; P.L. Subba, Deputy Director, Education Department; Dr. Anusha Lama, CMO, West and Dr. Kunzang Ongmoo, District Nodal Officer/District Mental Health Programme.

ADC West highlighted healthy suggestions for prevention. He mentioned that every individual of the society must take responsibility to save the life of people committing suicide. Identifying the behavioral tendency of the individual at high risk is important.



He also stated that communities and organisations have an extremely important role in developing preventive services and programs. He also asked teachers for organising programs in schools and colleges which can reduce the rate of suicide and promote healthy mental activities. Teachers can help young children during their tender age to provide proper support and identify and understand the children's problem at an early stage and counsel them accordingly.

Dr. Kunzang Ongmoo highlighted the causes and the different level of prevention of suicide. She also mentioned that they have trained some people to create awareness among people. She also stated that counseling is must to prevent suicide and creating awareness programs as well.

The process to send back the Bangladeshi prisoners, who had completed their tenures to their country has started.

The official process between the state home affairs department and external affairs ministry has started recently. Most of these prisoners had completed their tenure few months ago, but we could not start the process due to the COVID-19 situation and the lockdown, a senior official of the department.

WB begins procedure to send back B'deshi prisoners

KOLKATA, SEP 11 (PTI): West Bengal correctional services department has begun the official procedure to send back around 650 Bangladeshi prisoners who have completed their terms and are lodged in various prisons. This is among the several measures taken by the department to prevent crowding in jails in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The official process between the state home affairs department and external affairs ministry has started recently. Most of these prisoners had completed their tenure few months ago, but we could not start the process due to the COVID-19 situation and the lockdown, a senior official of the department.

According to sources in the correctional services department there are around 950 Bangladeshi prisoners in various jails across the state. About 650 of them have already completed their prison terms. It will also help us to stop crowding in West Bengal prisons. Already three prisoners have died of COVID-19 in the past few months. So we are taking all steps at our disposal to reduce the overcrowding, he said.

Manindra Gurung takes charge as Chairman of SMPB

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:

Chairman (Sikkim Medicinal Plant Board), Manindra Gurung under the department of Forest & Environment (head office) assumed office from today. He was welcomed by Forest officials, a press release informs.

"Sikkim is a state

rich in herbal medicines which most of us are unaware of. We will make a team of experts to spread awareness about these various herbs. We can fight various diseases through such type of herbal treatments," he said.

He thanked Chief Minister, PS Tamang for



offering him this opportunity.

What explains...

in testing has taken more time, starting from a very low base. Lastly, our public measures and awareness on masking, hygiene and distancing are very low."

In India, especially in rural areas and even semi-urban areas, poor hygiene standards and lack of social distancing measures further contributed to the spread of the virus, experts say.

"Poor sanitation is the government's failure," said John.

"Beyond the big metros, there is little information on wearing masks. I think the communication has not been sufficiently effective and sustained to spread awareness about it. Opening up is being perceived by people as if the epidemic is no more a threat. This incorrect perception needs to be addressed," she added.

According to her, countries which have managed to flatten the curve have relied on the government to scale up testing, contact tracing and treatment. "Alongside, they have effective policies on active public engagement on masking and distancing," she told Al Jazeera.

India has conducted 54 million tests so far, compared with the US which has conducted more than 90 million tests. The US population is a quarter of India's 1.4 billion people.

GOVERNING PARTY SPOKESMAN DEFENDS GOV'T On flattening the curve, John said, "Mask-wearing and avoiding crowding, school closure etc has definitely flattened the curve a little bit, not as much as we could have achieved had we done lockdowns in a planned manner."

The only silver lining for India in its fight against the pandemic is its low mortality rate. Experts say the mortality rate is also low in neighbouring countries.

"Fortunately, COVID-19 mortality is quite low in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Median age in these countries is below 30 and that is one reason for the low mortality. Mortality is also declining globally - my hypothesis is that the virus is becoming less virulent, a natural phenomenon in new hosts and multiple generations of virus growth," said John.

A spokesman from the BJP defended the Modi government's management of the pandemic.

"Those who are saying that lockdown was unscientific have wrong intentions," Bizay Sonkar Shastri, BJP's national spokesperson, told Al Jazeera.

"It is because of lockdown that our daily numbers are at around 90,000, otherwise they would be in lakhs [hundred of thousands]. If lockdown was not enforced earlier, we would have been in an even worse position.

"Those who are raising questions about the lockdown are anti-Modi and anti-BJP," he said.

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LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410

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A two storey building constructed on plot area 50x40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS, South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

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Life in a...

who lives in Dilshad Garden here, anxiously asked for directions on Thursday evening to the Kashmere Gate station falling on the Violet Line as she walked hurriedly across a rather empty concourse of the Red Line of the same station on regular days bustling with a sea of commuters.

As she descended the squeaky clean escalator, she fished out a small sanitiser bottle and disinfected her hands.

"My daughter is coming from Badarpur after writing her B.Ed exam. She will be coming by the last metro. She is 22 and born and raised in Delhi, and very bold to travel alone, but I am a mother and life is so uncertain these days," she said, adding that it was her first ride in the metro post the lockdown.

At Kashmere Gate, Rajiv Chowk and Central Secretariat stations, three major interchange facilities, infamous for their swirling crowds with passengers jostling for space to board or alight a

train, hardly one or two passengers were seen exiting the coach.

Trails of sanitising chemical left behind on the floors of platforms typified the health emergency the capital is battling since March 1 when the first novel coronavirus case was reported in Delhi.

Round steel benches at platforms remained unoccupied at majority of the stations as commuters preferred to stand while waiting for trains to avoid surface contacts, while commercial advertisements on small and big screens have been replaced by health advisory videos.

Jag Prakash, 30, a DMRC staff who lives in Faridabad, waited for a train bound for HUDA City Centre while Himanshu Kumar, who works in a private company, awaited arrival of the Samyapur Badli-bound service to reach their destinations at Jor Bagh station.

"I am undergoing training at Metro academy, but today (Thursday) was the first time I boarded a metro train

since the lockdown. In the morning, a colleague had dropped me to the centre. Life must go on, COVID or no COVID, and life in metro should also go on," Prakash said.

On Thursday, the city also recorded 4,308 fresh cases, the highest single-day spike till date in Delhi, taking the COVID-19 tally here to over 2.05 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 4,666.

With services available on most of the metro lines now, the total ridership recorded on Thursday (from 7 am to 11 am) in the morning and then from 4 pm till 7:30 pm in the evening, was nearly 84,841.

On regular days, the average daily ridership of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is over 26 lakh.

Trains are being made available at peak frequency throughout the day but crowd in coaches are largely thin and women's compartment saw either no passenger at all or hardly two or three

riders in most of the trains on Thursday when the service hours were staggered in two parts, from 7-11 am and 4-8 pm.

During the 169-day hiatus, the DMRC had "kept in touch" with people through social media, using interactive quizzes and posts and urged people to gear up for the new normal soon after announcing the services resumption plan.

Chhange Kumar, a train operator, who had been working with the DMRC for the last 11 years, said everyone is adjusting to the new normal, in and out of trains, in and out of metro.

Asked if he feels scared while doing his job in this scenario, he said, "Yes, a bit."

"But life for me has always been anything but normal. You see, I have six fingers in one of my hands," he quipped and flashed his extra digit as he walked away towards the control room to report for duty.

Life in a metro goes on.

Odisha reports record 3,991 new COVID-19 cases



BHUBANESWAR, SEP 10 (PTI): Odisha on Thursday reported its highest single-day spike of 3,991 new COVID-19 cases, taking the state's tally to 1,39,121, a Health Department official said.

Eleven more fatalities pushed the death toll to 591, he said.

The state also reported the recovery of 2,706 patients taking the num-

ber of people cured of the infection to 1,08,001, which is 77.63 per cent of the total caseload.

Most of the new cases were detected in Khurda where 687 people tested positive, followed by Cuttack (392) and Puri (332), the official said.

The fresh deaths were reported from eight districts, he said.

While two patients

each died in Khurda, Cuttack and Puri districts, one each succumbed to the infection in Bhadrak, Ganjam, Koraput, Nayagarh and Rayagada districts, the official said.

Ganjam has reported most of the deaths at 214, followed by Khurda where 82 people have so far died. Odisha's fatality rate is one of the lowest in the country at 0.42 per cent,

Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, P K Mohapatra, said.

There are 30,476 active cases in the state at present.

Odisha has so far tested 22.73 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 47,161 on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, keeping in view the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in the state capital, the Bhu-

baneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) decided to conduct health screening in all slums and other localities in the city.

Newly appointed BMC Additional Commissioner Parul Patwari said that 565 Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) have been formed to carry out the job. She said the BMC will collect garbage along with bio-medical wastes from the house of the infected people, who are in home isolation.

"To stop the spread of the virus, the BMC will keep a constant vigil on the infected persons to ascertain whether they are abiding by the COVID-19 guidelines," Patwari said. Meanwhile, Director of Public Health, Niranjana Mishra said the COVID surge is likely to come down from the last week of September.

He said the positivity rate will fall if people strictly abide by the standard protocol like maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and frequent hand washing.

Edu Minister chairs SDG conference 2020



GANGTOK, 11 SEPT (IPR): Minister for Education, Kunga Nima Lepcha, participated in a video conference on SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) conference 2020 held at Gangtok today. It may be recalled that Gangtok and its periph-

ery have been inducted in the SDG 25+5 cities to fulfill SDG goals and targets by 2025.

Graciela Marty, Co-ordinator (UNICIPIO Mendoza) Alcalde Claudio Castro, Mayor of Renca (Santiago de Chile) Ajay Devassar, UNGSII, India,

Christopher Edwards, Prof Zaria Haque, WSA, Dhaka were the speakers on the day.

Kunga Nima Lepcha deliberated on the strength and challenges of Gangtok. He highlighted some future projects to be carried out for the development of the town area and its periphery.

Ajay Devassar, India head of UNGSSI, assured support to the State Government in preparations for future plan of action for Gangtok city.

Secretary to the Chief Minister, SD Dhakal (IAS) was also present during the video conference.

Telangana sees 2,426 new COVID-19 cases, 13 fatalities

HYDERABAD, SEP 11 (PTI): Telangana clocked 2,426 fresh COVID-19 cases and 13 related deaths, taking the aggregate to 1.52 lakh in the state.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) accounted for the most number of cases with 338, followed by Rangareddy 216, Medchal Malkajgiri 172 and

Nalgonda 164 districts, a government bulletin said on Friday, providing data as of 8 PM on September 10. With 13 more deaths, the toll mounted to 940.

The cumulative recovered cases stood at 1.19 lakh while 32,195 are under treatment.

As many as 62,890 samples were tested on September 10.

Cumulatively, 20.16

lakh samples have been tested. The samples tested per million population was 54,313, the bulletin said.

The case fatality rate in the state was 0.61 per cent, while it was 1.67 per cent at the national level.

The recovery rate in Telangana was 78.2 per cent, while it was 77.63 per cent in the country.

Letter to Editor

Sikkim State University (SSU), the lone state university in the state is running with just 2-departments, without a roof, without a single faculty, without permanent statutory officials and with an acute shortage of fund. Whereas the people are in the dire need of standard university, public hospitals, employment, etc. the ruling class is hell bent to keep people's attention diverted in the issues like temple, church, pilgrimage centre, prayer tower, statue, etc. Sikkim State University is running with just two departments currently namely Sanskrit and Nepali. Even in the subjects being taught presently, there is not a single permanent teaching faculty. Faculties from Under Graduate (UG) colleges were taking classes before the pandemic. However, after the pandemic there has not been a single class.

There is no appointment of permanent statutory officials like Controller of Examination (COE), Registrar, finance officer etc in the university.

The students of Sikkim University have been running post to pillar from last 2 years. However, except a few minor changes there has not been any substantial change in the ground zero.

The students of SSU staged a week long Dharna in front of the Vice Chancellor's Office in the premise of Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College with the demands of permanent campus, statutory officials, faculties, other departments. Following the protest, a dialogue had taken place between students and the Education Minister, MP Lok Sabha, and other brass level bureaucrats. However, the assurances given in the dialogue are largely unfulfilled. In the month of August, the students also organised an online campaign with the same demands. Following the online protest, the Government allocated a land for the construction of the campus.

The university is in a fund crunch. So much so that the university does not have the funds to start its website. A university needs to be independent with the state Government only providing it the budget to run it smoothly. However, the university has not been allowed to run independently. In the acute shortage of fund the University has not been able to carry its routine work too. The Government must release the requisite fund to the university immediately.

The only university in the state is in a shamble, utterly neglected by the Government. The future of the university along with the students looks bleak. Instead of strengthening the only university in the state, the Government has decided to start Extended Campus for PG courses in 3 UG colleges of the state, where Nepali is also one of the subjects. It is baffling why the Government needs Nepali course in extended campus when it is already in the SSU? When the Government has failed to appoint sufficient teachers in the lone university of the state, from where will it manage teachers in the extended campus? Will the extended campus be able prepare the students for research? Why there is no research facility in the SSU? The Government is clearly neglecting higher education in the state. The Government is neglecting the importance of Sanskrit and Nepali language in the state. All the democratic loving people, people in the favour of higher education, scholars of Sanskrit and Nepali must raise their voice for the Sikkim State University. Our movement for our rights as students shall continue until all our demands are fulfilled.

- Naresh Bista,
Final year student of
Sikkim State University



Sunita Gautam takes charge as RDD Chairperson

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 SEPT:**

Sunita Gautam assumed the charge as Chairperson, Rural Development Department today. She was accorded a warm welcome by Principal Secretary, CS Rao, Rural Development Department

accompanied by Commissioner, NRLM, Additional Secretary cum PD MGNREGA, Director Panchayat and other officers of the Department.

The office of the Chairperson is located in the SIRD Office building at Tashiling Secretariat Road, Gangtok.

SIKKIM RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

(AN AGENCY UNDER THE ENERGY & POWER DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM)

SREDA BHAWAN, D.P.H ROAD, GANGTOK, SIKKIM.
Phone: (03592) 202711, email : sreda.sik@nic.in
www.sreda.gov.in

No: 489/SREDA

Date : 8/9/2020

NOTICE INVITING QUOTATIONS

Sealed quotations are invited by SREDA from the eligible and enlisted manufacturer of solar Rooftop systems (RTS) or firms/agencies of MNRE, Government of India for the rates of the below mentioned items:

SL NO.	COMPONENT DESCRIPTION	SPECIFICATION	UNIT
1	SPV Modules	325 Wp, 24 V, Multi crystalline of reputed brand	1 Nos.
2.	Module Mounting Structure	Hot Dipped GI	Suitable for 1kWp
3.	Hybrid Solar Inverter cum Charge Controller	Output: 440 V, 3 Phase AC, 50 Hz, Efficiency:>93% with built in galvanic isolation THD:>3%, PF:>0.9 with IGBT/MOSFET type MPPT controlled date logging, fault protection & complete metering system.	1 Nos.
4.	Solar Tubular Battery	a. 12V, 150 Ah, VRLA/GEL type b. 24 V, 150 Ah VRLA/GEL type	1 Nos each
5.	P.V.C Cu Tin Coated Solar Cable	! core, 4 mm ² Polycab	Per meters.
6.	Array junction Box.	IP 65 protection for outdoor use with Fuses, MCB's & DC SPD's weather proof	1 Set
7.	AC Distribution Box	IP 65 protection for outdoor use with 40A MCB 4P ^& AC SPD	1 Set
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9.	GI strip	25mm x 3mm	Per Metre
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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.



If you seek help, you may call :
-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

The Incongruity of Temp Terms for Permanent Requirements

Adhocism is a reality, but should not be so for teaching

Some parties in the Opposition have made some comments on the worries and insecurities of Adhoc teachers. But parties in the Opposition, because they are prone to exaggerations, much like the ruling party at the other end of the spectrum, are rarely taken very seriously especially since they are also prone to inconsistent pursuit of issues. That said, the woes of teachers hired on adhoc basis are not worries that can be dismissed too lightly. To begin with, the hiring of teachers on temporary basis for clearly permanent requirements [because education is a hopefully a permanent commitment] is unfortunate and wrong on many levels.

For all the excuses that the department might proffer, none can justify how and why such a large number of teachers continue to be hired by the academic session for such a long time on such exploitative terms. The present lot of adhoc teachers are being directed to join duty now and will draw a consolidated salary once they begin and once the present term runs out, the wait begins for the next academic session. Such an arrangement should be allowed only when the Education Department has to fill a sudden, unforeseen vacancy. When a teaching post falls vacant mid-term and students need to be attended, such a temporary appointment can be considered. But the Department has been resorting to such hiring for too many years now. It is clear that the practice continues because the insecure pool of the unemployed seize even these clearly inconsiderate terms in the hope that it will eventually lead to regularization of service and the more than handsome emoluments that accrue from such employment. There have been ample instances when rules have been bent to absorb adhoc employees into permanent service to inspire the adhoc teachers to make such demands off and on and expect them to be met.

It is however time that the State's employed demanded that such relaxations be banned because it is tantamount to double denial of opportunities to the other unemployed. The hiring rules for adhoc/ temporary employment are lax and open to abuse and/ or compromise. To then regularize services which were not appointed under the strictest and most transparent hiring processes can be seen as a second denial of opportunities to others who could have bid for the job. Better planning, a codified procedure, clear communication to hired temp teachers and faster processing of files could go a long way towards ensuring that the classrooms are staffed by adhoc teachers who have fewer worries on their minds and can focus better on the charges under their care.

What needs to be addressed more importantly is why permanent requirements continue to be filled on temporary basis allowing for uncertainty to prevail, unfair service terms to be imposed, unclear demands to be raised and unmerited aspirations to be voiced.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

‘What do you mean, it was a false positive?’ Making sense of COVID-19 tests and terminology

PRİYANKA GOGNA
theconversation.com

During the COVID-19 pandemic, words and phrases that have typically been limited to epidemiologists and public health professionals have entered the public sphere. Although we've rapidly accepted epidemiology-based news, the public hasn't been given the chance to fully absorb what all these terms really mean.

As with all disease tests, a false positive result on a COVID-19 test can cause undue stress on individuals as they try to navigate their diagnosis, take days off work and isolate from family. One high-profile example was Ohio Governor Mike DeWine whose false positive result led him to cancel a meeting with President Donald Trump.

False negative test results are even more dangerous, as people may think it is safe and appropri-

out how well a test works when we already know which people do, and don't, have the disease.

But the true value of a test in a real-world setting comes from its ability to correctly predict who is infected and who is not. This makes sense because in a real-world setting, we don't know who

	Disease	Disease-Free
Positive Test	20,000	7,500
Negative Test	5,000	67,500
Total	25,000	75,000
	Sensitivity=20,000/25,000 =80%	Specificity=67,500/75,000 =90%

truly has the disease — we rely on the test itself to tell us. We use the positive predictive value and negative predictive value of a test to summarize that test's predictive ability.

To drive the point home, think about this: in a

	Disease	Disease-Free	Total	
Positive Test	20,000	7,500	27,500	PPV=20,000/27,500 =73%
Negative Test	5,000	67,500	72,500	NPV=67,500/72,500 =93%

ate for them to engage in social activities. Of course, factors such as the type of test, whether the individual had symptoms before being tested and the timing of the test can also impact how well the test predicts whether someone is infected.

Sensitivity and specificity are two extremely important scientific concepts for understanding the results of COVID-19 tests.

In the epidemiological context, sensitivity is the proportion of true positives that are correctly identified. If 100 people have a disease, and the test identifies 90 of these people as having the disease, the sensitivity of the test is 90 per cent.

Specificity is the ability of a test to correctly identify those without the disease. If 100 people don't have the disease, and the test correctly identifies 90 people as disease-free, the test has a specificity of 90 per cent.

This simple table helps outline how sensitivity and specificity are calculated when the prevalence — the percentage of the population that actually has the disease — is 25 per cent (totals in bold):

A test sensitivity of 80 per cent can seem great for a newly released test (like for the made-up case numbers I reported above).

PREDICTIVE VALUE

But these numbers don't convey the whole message. The usefulness of a test in a population is not determined by its sensitivity and specificity. When we use sensitivity and specificity, we are figuring

population in which no one has the disease, even a test that is terrible at detecting anyone with the disease will appear to work great. It will "correctly" identify most people as not having the disease. This

	Disease	Disease-Free	Total	
Positive Test	800	9,900	10,700	PPV=800/10,700 =7%
Negative Test	200	89,100	89,300	NPV=89,100/89,300 =99.8%
Total	1,000	99,000	100,000	Sensitivity=800/1,000 =80% Specificity=89,100/99,000 =90%

has more to do with how many people have the disease in a population (prevalence) rather than how well the test works.

Using the same numbers as above, we can estimate the positive predictive value (PPV) and negative predictive value (NPV), but this time we focus on the row totals (in bold).

The PPV is calculated as the number of true positives divided by the total number of people identified as positive by the test.

The PPV is interpreted as the probability that someone that has tested positive actually has the disease. The NPV is the probability that someone that tested negative does not have the disease. Although sensitivity and specificity do not change as the proportion of diseased individuals changes in a population, the PPV and NPV are heavily dependent on the prevalence.

Let's see what happens when we redraw our disease table when the population prevalence sits at one per cent instead of 25 per cent (much closer to the true prevalence of COVID-19 in Canada).

Table showing numbers of positive and negative test results in rows, and disease cases, disease-free

cases and totals in columns, along with values for sensitivity (80 per cent), specificity (90 per cent), PPV (seven per cent) and NPV (99.8 per cent)

So, when the disease has low prevalence, the PPV of the test can be very low. This means that the

probability that someone that tested positive actually has COVID-19 is low. Of course, depending on the sensitivity, specificity and the prevalence in the population, the reverse can be true as well: someone that tested negative might not

truly be disease-free.

FALSE POSITIVE AND FALSE NEGATIVE TESTS IN REAL LIFE

What does this mean as mass testing begins

for COVID-19? At the very least it means the public should have clear information about the implications of false positives. All individuals should be aware of the possibility of a false positive or false negative test, especially as we move to a heavier reliance on testing this fall to inform our actions and decisions. As we can see using some simple tables and math above, the PPV and NPV can be limiting even in the face of a "good" test with high sensitivity and specificity.

Without adequate understanding of the science behind testing and why false positives and false negatives happen, we might drive the public to further mistrust — and even question the usefulness — of public health and testing. Knowledge is power in this pandemic.

[the writer is PhD Candidate, Epidemiology, Queen's University, Ontario]

How to hold elections safely and uphold democracy during the COVID-19 pandemic

NIC CHEESEMAN
theconversation.com

Free and fair elections face a new kind of threat. In addition to scheming leaders and compromised electoral commissions, there is now the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In response, a new report published by the British Academy sets out how elections can be held safely and democratically amid COVID-19. Edited by renowned political scientist Sarah Birch, it covers a range of topics, including how to establish health protocols and manage the risk of election violence. The report sets out the options for international election observers.

This is critically important because despite the health crisis, there will be no letup in controversial elections – starting with Tanzania in October and the United States in November. International observation will not insulate these polls from malpractice, but it will make it less likely and allow it to be exposed.

Yet the kind of observation carried out by the Carter Centre, European Union, Organisation of American States, and other international organisations requires flying large numbers of people between countries. It is therefore one of the election activities threatened by the pandemic.

The report looks at how the observation industry can best adapt. It concludes that, instead of simply introducing short-term COVID-19 guidelines and protocols to get through the crisis, observers should "look for new ways to harness technology and build stronger partnerships between domestic and international groups."

By doing this they will be able to both respond to the COVID-19 challenge and more effectively counter new forms of electoral manipulation.

IMPORTANCE OF ELECTION OBSERVATION

International observation has come in for criticism in recent years – sometimes unfairly – for failing to call out electoral manipulation that was later condemned by the courts. But it nonetheless remains a vital weapon in the fight against election

rigging. The verdicts of foreign observers carry more weight than those of their domestic counterparts, and are more likely to prompt international intervention.

Simply not observing elections would be the easiest way to manage health risks. But it would significantly increase a variety of important political risks. In Burundi, for example, a late requirement that international monitors would be quarantined made observation impossible. In its absence, there was no significant attempt by ruling party leaders to stop the intimidation of the opposition.

Even when observers do not condemn every electoral abuse, they can highlight and hence dissuade such explicit human rights violations.

So what options do observers have to respond to COVID-19? The report finds that they have a menu of three options to choose from: they can carry on regardless, observe through expats or work virtually and through partnerships.

CARRY ON AS NORMAL - CAREFULLY

The most obvious strategy is simply to observe "traditionally" while adopting strict social distancing protocols. This would involve dispatching teams of foreign nationals – usually between 15 and 140 people – earlier than usual in case they must quarantine. It would also mean holding fewer socially distanced meetings with key groups and individuals in the capital, and taking greater care when dispersing to polling stations.

Although this option represents the path of least resistance, it is problematic on health grounds and could mean no international observation in countries where the disease is spiking. It also represents a missed opportunity.

The health risk of flying in international observers is obvious. The missed opportunity is that the sector needs to adapt to the changing nature of electoral manipulation. More subtle strategies of rigging and the increasing digitisation of electoral processes mean that the traditional model of international observation looks outdated.

By responding effectively to the pandemic, when constraints on public cam-

paigning mean that there will be an even greater focus on digital politics, observers can also build a more effective model for the post-pandemic world.

OBSERVE THROUGH EXPATS

If observers are to evolve new ways of working to deal with changing electoral realities it is essential that they do not simply look for stop-gap responses to COVID-19 such as working through foreign nationals already resident in the country.

This may at first appear to be a tempting option as it would enable observation groups to tap into a pool of people who would not need to travel, and would have greater knowledge of the context.

But it would also generate new problems. Most obviously, people who have spent a long time in a country may have developed political attachments that mean they are not seen as being independent. This undermines the fundamental point of international observation, which is to build teams around people who have no personal interest in the elections, and so are seen to be neutral.

It would also encourage observers to continue with business as usual just when they should be innovating.

OBSERVE VIRTUALLY AND THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

A more radical alternative is for international observers to reduce the significance that they place on deploying their own staff on the ground, and to instead observe "virtually" and through partnerships with domestic organisations. While international donors already funding domestic civil society groups, and international observers do engage with their domestic counterparts, this rarely takes the form of a true partnership.

Adopting three new ways of working could make observation more effective, both now and in the future:

PARTNERSHIP. Working with domestic monitors and civil society groups, helping to fund their activities and then sharing the data collected, would reduce the need to deploy large numbers of international observers. Given that domestic groups deploy many more individuals to

many more polling stations, working in this way would enhance both the geographical coverage of international missions and the resource base of domestic groups.

VIRTUAL MONITORING. With an increasing proportion of electoral activity taking place digitally and online, it makes sense for international observers to place greater emphasis on monitoring digital processes and online spaces such as Twitter and Facebook.

CROWD SOURCING. Crowd sourcing (and then verifying) data from individuals on the ground can be a cost effective way of mapping the extent of electoral manipulation. A good example is how the Ushahidi platform famously tracked the violence in Kenya's 2007/8 general elections.

By allowing domestic and international groups to focus on areas in which they have particular strengths, this option would be more efficient and effective.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Of course, observing virtually and through partnership would generate new logistical challenges and require international observers to recruit new kinds of skills and experience. Observers would also need to be careful not to distort the priorities of domestic groups by adopting a rigid funding regime. But while global intergovernmental organisations don't tend to do this at present, NGOs such as the Carter Centre and the National Democratic Institute have been using elements of this strategy for many years. There is no reason these programmes can't be deepened and extended.

This approach would also yield other benefits, such as boosting suitability. One of the aims of the international observation should surely be to make itself redundant by helping to build the capacity and authority of domestic observers. This may be a very long-term goal, but it is an important one. In addition to giving ownership of the process to the citizens concerned, it would also help to show that criticisms of poor quality electoral processes are not the result of foreign "meddling".

[the writer is Professor of Democracy, University of Birmingham]

HC questions Arnab for running parallel investigation in Pushkar death case, asks to show restraint

NEW DELHI, SEP 10 (PTI): The Delhi High Court Thursday questioned Arnab Goswami for running a parallel investigation and trial in the Congress leader Shashi Tharoor's wife Sunanda Pushkar's death case and directed the journalist to be bound by his undertaking on showing restraint and bringing down the rhetoric while covering the matter.

Justice Mukta Gupta said the court was not saying that anyone will gag the media but at the same time, sanctity of investigation must be maintained.

Please show restraint. Once the police investigation is going on in the criminal case, there cannot be a parallel investigation by the media, the judge said and remarked that people must take a course in criminal trial and then get into journalism.

The high court referred to December 1, 2017 order in which it was stated that Press cannot convict anyone or insinuate that he/she is guilty or make any other unsubstantiated claims. Press has to exercise care and caution while reporting about matters under investigation or pending trial.

It has been noted in the 2017 order that the counsel for the journalist and channel has assured the court that in future they would exercise restraint as well as bring down the rhetoric.

On Thursday, the judge said, Defendants (Goswami and his channel) are thus directed to



be bound by the statement made on their behalf by their counsel till the next date of hearing.

On the channel's claim that they have evidence with them, the judge questioned them saying were you at the spot? Are you an eye witness? There is some sanctity attached to the investigation.

To this, advocate Malvika Trivedi, representing Goswami, said there was evidence from AIIMS, based on which certain broadcast was aired.

The judge said it was for a court of law to decide what was evidence in a criminal trial and there are statements from here and there which are not evidence.

Can the media sit in appeal against the charge sheet filed by an investigating agency?, the judge asked.

It is not a reflection on the Plaintiff (Tharoor) but the investigating agency. Can there be a parallel investigation or trial?.. Would you not like the courts to take their own course?, the judge said.

The high court was hearing an application by Congress MP Tharoor seeking interim injunction against Goswami, Editor-in-Chief of Republic TV, from making defamatory remarks against the leader.

Tharoor's grievance relates to broadcast of the programmes naming him on the TV channel in July and August and in the telecast, the journalist has claimed that they have investigated Sunanda Pushkar case better than the police and that he still has no doubt that Pushkar was murdered.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Vikas Pah-

wa, representing Tharoor, said charge sheet has been filed by the police in the case and he has been summoned for the alleged offence of abetment to suicide then how can the journalist abuse him and allege that there was a murder.

The application, filed through advocates Gaurav Gupta and Muhammad A Khan, sought that the journalist should be directed to report only on matters which are factually correct or established.

The high court noted that the Delhi Police has filed a charge sheet in the trial court which has taken cognisance of it and he has been summoned under Sections 306 (abetment to suicide) and 498A (cruelty to married woman) IPC in the light of the investigation done by the agency.

The high court sought

response of the journalist on Tharoor's application and listed the matter for further hearing on November 20.

In the December 1, 2017 order, the high court had said Goswami and his channel have the right to air their stories and the same cannot be curbed, but it has to be tempered and balanced.

The court's 2017 order had come on three different applications filed by Tharoor in his Rs two crore defamation suit against Goswami and the channel for allegedly making defamatory remarks against him while airing news relating to the mysterious death of his wife.

Pushkar was found dead in a suite of a five-star hotel in south Delhi on the night of January 17, 2014 under mysterious circumstances. Tharoor has alleged that they continued to engage in defaming and maligning him despite an assurance given by their counsel in the court on May 29, 2017.

The court had on May 29, 2017 said the journalist and his news channel could put out stories stating the facts related to the investigation of Pushkar's death but could not call the Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvananthapuram a criminal.

The Congress leader has sought a direction to them that they should not mention the expression murder of Sunanda Pushkar anywhere, since it is yet to be established by a competent court whether her death was a murder.

AMU to start admission process from October 23

ALIGARH (UP), SEP 11 (PTI): Aligarh Muslim University will begin its admission process from October 23, according to an official notification issued on Friday.

The entrance tests for admission to various university courses were postponed earlier due to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to Controller of Examinations Mujibullah Zubairi, wearing masks will be mandatory and social distancing will be observed by increas-

ing the number of test centres. The candidates found suffering from fever will be allocated special isolation rooms at the examination centres, he added.

The university will hold examinations in phases. In the first phase from October 23 to November 10, it will hold admission tests for several courses, including BA, BSc, BCom, BEd and MBA.

As per the revised schedule, the entrance for admission to Class 6 at schools affiliated

to the university will be held on October 23. This will be followed by a test for admission to Class 9 on October 27, a spokesman of the university said. Admission tests for senior secondary schools will be held on November 1.

According to AMU spokesperson Shafay Kidwai, the schedule for remaining courses will be announced later. He said no date has been finalised for the completion of the examination process as of now.

127 new COVID-19 cases in Arunachal Pradesh; tally rises to 5,672



ITANAGAR, SEPT 11 [PTI]: Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 caseload rose to 5,672 as 127 more people including 14 security personnel have tested positive for the virus, a senior Health department official said on Friday.

Of the fresh cases, Capital complex region reported the highest number at 57, followed by Papumpare (18), East Siang (12), Lower Subansiri (11), Lower Dibang Valley (10), Upper Siang (5) and Lohit (4), the official said.

Two cases each were also reported in Tirap, Longding and Upper Subansiri and one each in Lohit, East Kameng, Tirap and Upper Siang districts, State Surveillance Officer Dr L Jampa, said.

"Fourteen security personnel including seven ITBP personnel and six state policemen and one army jawan are among the fresh cases," the official said, adding a that health care worker from Upper Subansiri was also infected with the virus.

Barring 11 all are asymptomatic and shifted to Covid-19 care centres, he said.

As many as 99 people including 20 from Papumpare, Capital Complex region (17), 12 each from Changlang and East Siang, West Kameng (10), East Kameng (9), Tawang (6), Namsai (4), two each from Shi-Yomi and Upper Siang and one each from Leparada, Lower Siang, Anjaw, Lohit and Lower Subansiri districts, were cured of the disease and discharged from hospitals on Thursday, Jampa said.

The recovery rate among the COVID-19 patients in the state now stands at 70.61 per cent, he said.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 1,658 active COVID-19 cases, as 4,005 people have recovered from the disease and nine patients have succumbed to the infection, Jampa said.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, has the highest number of active cases at 369, followed by West Siang at 223, the official said.

The state has so far tested 1,97,711 samples for COVID-19, including 3,068 on Thursday, Jampa added.

IGNOU Term End Exams from Sept 17



DIMAPUR, SEPT 10 [NAGALANDPAGE]: Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has informed that the Term End Examination for June, 2020 is going to commence from September 17 and would conclude on October 16. The normal exam schedule was postponed due to the pandemic.

The final year Students' (Master's Degree, Bachelors' Degree, PG Diploma, Diploma and Certificates) who have applied for June 2020 Term End Exam are eligible to appear for the Exam.

Hall Ticket (Examination Intimation Slips) will shortly be available on IGNOU website www.ignou.ac.in.

The students may download the Hall Tickets from the University

website and appear in the examination. Students have been advised to be in possession of the valid Identity Card issued by the University and Hall ticket during the Examination.

Use of mobile phones is strictly prohibited inside the examination hall. No students will be allowed to enter the examination hall without mask and hand sanitizer. Students have been advised to bring their own pen, pencil, ruler etc. for precautionary measures due to COVID-19 and also should maintain social distancing during the examination.

Students have been further advised to contact the Examination Centre Superintendent and Regional Centre for any queries.

39 new COVID-19 cases in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

PORT BLAIR, SEP 11 (PTI): Thirty-nine more people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, taking the tally in the union territory to 3,465, an official said on Friday.

Of the 39 new cases, 35 were detected during contact tracing while four were airport arrivals, he said.

All passengers coming from the mainland have to mandatorily undergo rapid antigen test

for COVID-19 at the airport here on arrival, the official said.

At least 43 people were cured of the disease in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 3,121.

At present, there are 293 active COVID-19 cases in the archipelago, while 51 people have died of the infection, the official said. A total of 42,585 samples have been tested for COVID-19 so far, he added.

Mizoram's COVID-19 tally rises to 1,353

AIZAWL, SEP 11 (PTI): At least 20 people, including two infants, have tested positive for coronavirus in Mizoram, taking the state's COVID-19 caseload to 1,353, an official said on Friday.

Sixteen cases were reported from Aizawl district, three from Kolashib district and one from Lunglei district in the last 24-hours, the official said.

Two infants aged 6 and 10 months and a BSF jawan were among the newly infected persons,

he said. Of the 20 cases, 10 are locally transmitted while contact histories of six people are yet to be ascertained, the official said.

There are 603 active cases in the state while 750 people have already recovered from the virus.

According to the health department, the COVID-19 recovery rate in the state is 55.44 per cent.

Altogether, 46,638 samples have been tested till Thursday for COVID-19, it said.

Aizawl district reported the highest number of cases at 887, followed by Lunglei (214).

Meanwhile, the Mizoram government has announced one-week partial lockdown in Aizawl municipal area from midnight of Thursday till September 17 in view of the surge in coronavirus cases in the state.

Mizoram on Thursday reported 141 new COVID-19 cases, which was the highest single-day spike ever reported in the state.

Odisha Minister tests positive for COVID-19

BHUBANESWAR, SEP 11 (PTI): Odisha's Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti Minister Tukuni Sahu on Friday said that she has tested positive for COVID-19. Sahu became the fifth minister in the state to be infected by coronavirus. Earlier, Rural Development Minister Susant Singh, Higher Education Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo, Textile Minister Padmini Dian and Tourism Minister J P Panigrahi had tested positive for the infection.

"I have tested Covid positive. Now I am in home isolation and stable. Those who have

come in contact with me in the last few days are requested to get themselves tested if required," Sahu said in her twitter post.

Three Lok Sabha MPs, two from BJP and one from BJD, have also tested positive for the infection. They are Nabarangpur MP Ramesh Chandra Majhi, Bhadrak MP Manjulata Mandal (both BJD) and Bargargh MP Suresh Pujari (BJP).

This apart, several other BJD MLAs including Nabarangpur MLA Sadasiva Pradhani, Laxmipur MLA Prabhu Jani, Anandpur MLA Bhagirathi Sethy, Khanda-pada MLA SR Patnaik,

Basudevpur MLA Bishnu-brata Routray, Bhubaneswar North MLA Susant Rout, Bhubaneswar Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, Berhampur MLA Bikram Panda and Chandbali MLA Byomakesh Ray have also tested positive.

The other MLAs to test positive are Badamba MLA Debi Prasad Mishra, Pottangi MLA Pritam Padhi, Bhadrak MLA Sanjib Mallick, Bari MLA Sunanda Das, Polasara MLA Srikanth Sahu, Remuna MLA Sudhanshu Shekhar Parida, Jagatsinghpur MLA Prasanta Muduli and Salipur MLA Prasant Behera.

Kulkarni meets Rijiju; discusses sports development

MUMBAI, SEP 11 (PTI): Former India spinner Niles Kulkarni on Friday said he discussed with sports minister Kiren Rijiju about the development of sports in the country in a recent meeting.

Kulkarni's International Institute of Sports Management (IISM) has been bestowed with the 'Rashtriya Khel Protsah-

an Award' for the work done by it. According to a release issued here, Rijiju emphasised on the need for development of the sports ecosystem in the country to realise his grand vision of seeing India among the top-10 medal winners in 2028 Olympics.

The 47-year-old Kulkarni, who has played for Mumbai, agreed with

Rijiju's view on a holistic development of sports in the country. Kulkarni, who turned out for India in three Tests and 10 ODIs, has already stated that it was a matter of pride for his institute to get national recognition.

Among other things, IISM has been conducting an in-depth study on various aspects related to sports development.

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Premier League: 10 things to look out for this weekend

PAUL DOYLE, JOHN BREWIN
& NICK AMES

LONDON, 11 SEPT [THEGUARDIAN]: Chance for Arsenal's Saliba to impress at Fulham, Ancelotti and Mourinho do battle and big-spending Chelsea face Brighton

1) KLOPP'S LACK OF SIGNINGS COULD PAY OFF FOR LIVERPOOL

A price of success is the fear of following it up with failure and a section of Liverpool fans are twitchy at a lack of new personnel. Kostas Tsimikas is the sole senior summer arrival and as back-up to Andy Robertson. There is also January signing Takumi Minamino, who will be required to build on cameo roles during last season's run-in. That Rhian Brewster and Harry Wilson are being touted for sales also suggests Jürgen Klopp is parsing down the youngsters he feels can augment his squad. Tsimikas and Minamino cost £21m between them and the football finance guru Swiss Ramble has suggested Liverpool's parsimony is down to increased costs. Fans yearn for Thiago Alcântara to freshen the midfield but that deal is by no means guaranteed. Does that point to a weakened Liverpool? Not necessarily since Klopp's team had an easier Project Restart schedule than their peers, having exited the Champions League in March and had all but won the league by the time of resumption. Liverpool's problem in early season may be rustiness but despite that lack of refreshment and Chelsea's lavish spending, only Manchester City are likely to stop 19 league titles becoming 20. JB

2) LEEDS FACE EARLY ACID TEST BUT MAY WAIT TO TEST NEW ASSETS

Fresh after winning the Championship, Norwich visited Anfield on the first day of last season. They gave Jürgen Klopp's team a scare with slick and dynamic attacking, won some admirers and got absolutely pummelled. By the end of the season they were a musty pat in the Premier League field. So there is the cautionary tale for Leeds. How will Marcelo Bielsa adapt his approach to the higher level? Not very much seems the most likely answer, except in one critical respect – the one that Norwich failed to apply: Leeds have upgraded in some key positions. Mind you, Bielsa tends not to throw players straight into action if he has had little time to work with them, so the Spain striker Rodrigo and Germany defender Robin Koch may start on the bench against Liverpool, who have the potential to run amok against Leeds' defence but, by the same token, could be shocked if they do not match the visitors' energy and sharpness. PD

3) SALIBA DEBUT BRINGS HOPE OF NEW DEFENSIVE DAWN AT ARSENAL

Almost 15 months have passed since Arsenal signed William Saliba for £27m, delighting their fans into the bargain by fending off Tottenham's advances for the centre-back. He spent last season on loan with his former club, Saint-Étienne, although injury halted his momentum. Now



he is likely to start at Fulham on Saturday and, for most onlookers, it will be a first opportunity to see why the 19-year-old is regarded as one of the most exciting defenders around. Saliba may well find himself holding everything together: for a club overloaded with centre-backs Arsenal have remarkably few available, with an injury to David Luiz the latest headache for Mikel Arteta, so Saliba could start in a back three with Kieran Tierney and the back-in-favour Rob Holding. The game at Craven Cottage probably comes too soon for another expensive newcomer, Gabriel Magalhães, but a solid start for Saliba would inspire confidence that Arsenal's regenerated backline may be able to banish the ghosts of several years' incompetence. NA

4) PRESSURE ON LAMPARD TO GET TUNE FROM NEW TOYS AT BRIGHTON

Graham Potter did a better job at Brighton last season than Frank Lampard did at Chelsea but both are under pressure to achieve even more this season, especially Lampard, who has had nearly £200m-worth of new players lavished on him over the summer. Brighton got a sneak preview of Chelsea's attacking talent when Hakim Ziyech started a move that led to Timo Werner scoring with his first touch for the club in a pre-season friendly at the Amex and since then Chelsea have also signed Kai Havertz. How Lampard uses an abundance of talent will be as interesting as how they are dealt with by Brighton's defence, who could include Ben White as well as Tariq Lamptey, who made a terrific impression after arriving from Chelsea in January. PD

5) MOURINHO BEGINS SEASON TO SHAKE OFF HAS-BEEN TAG

In July, Tottenham and Everton contested one of the dreariest matches –

amid some competition – of the fan-free post-shutdown schedule. So it does not exactly lift the heart to see them face off again so soon but there should, at least, be some accent on greater entertainment. Both sides need to be much better than they were last season: more creative, more dynamic, far more fluent. Everton have made particular strides to remedy those failings: Abdoulaye Doucouré and Allan should certainly address the lack of midfield energy while James Rodríguez could yet be revitalised by Carlo Ancelotti's guiding hand. Pierre-Emile Højbjerg and Matt Doherty do not quite match that signing for glamour but should give Spurs the stability to help others flourish. Ancelotti and José Mourinho are both in need of a positive season themselves in order to stave off accusations they are yesterday's men. Do not expect a see-sawing thriller but do anticipate a little more bite than these two provided last time. NA

6) TOP-FLIGHT STALWARTS SHOULD STEADY NEWCASTLE SHIP

There has rarely been a point when one of West Ham and Newcastle are not operating under the label of crisis club. Opening day will see both kick-off under such a cloud. However, despite another failed takeover meaning the Toon Army must accept Mike Ashley's continuing ownership – even if he is challenging the Premier League on that – Newcastle actually seem far more settled than West Ham when it comes to matters on the pitch. Callum Wilson is no Kylian Mbappé, Ryan Fraser is hardly Frenkie de Jong, Jamal Lewis is no Trent Alexander-Arnold and Jeff Hendrick is no Jadon Sancho, as might have been the dream of those Newcastle fans slugging cans in anticipation of a Saudi takeover,

but all are solid Premier League players who can improve Steve Bruce's team. West Ham have signed precisely nobody and the sale of Grady Diangana to West Brom has caused insurrection among fans, not least the captain, Mark Noble. The club's owners, Davids Gold and Sullivan, might regret there will no be cash-paying fans in the London Stadium but may appreciate that they have escaped a Saturday evening of being barracked in the stands. JB

7) INJURIES IN DANGER OF HAMPERING LEICESTER REVIVAL

After practically hobbling to the finish last season, Leicester could do with a strong start. The problem is they are still missing key players, especially in defence, where Wilfried Ndidi may have to drop back from midfield to fill in alongside Çağlar Soyuncu. With Ricardo Pereira still injured, new signing Timothy Castagne is likely to start on the right-hand side of that defence. Further forward, Nampalys Mendy will probably be asked to try to do what Ndidi normally does in midfield, while James Maddison's continuing absence increases the creative burden on other players, notably Harvey Barnes, who enjoyed a thrilling loan spell at the Hawthorns in 2018. It will be crucial for West Brom to subdue him if they are to profit from any failings in Leicester's rejigged defence and enjoy a happy return to the top flight. PD

8) BATSHUAYI: THE STRIKER CRYSTAL PALACE NEEDS

If anyone needed a reminder of Michy Batshuayi's capabilities it arrived in mid-week when he scored twice for Belgium, one of them a cute backheel, against Iceland. He has a phenomenal record at international level and there is the enduring sense more can be coaxied out of him

on the club stage. In 2019 he scored five times in 11 Premier League appearances for Crystal Palace in a half-season loan from Chelsea and now, having joined for the entirety of 2020-21, he has a chance to replicate that form over a longer period at a club where he clearly felt at home. It may help, too, that Roy Hodgson intends Palace to be a younger, more vibrant side this season. The arrivals of Eberechi Eze and Nathan Ferguson are an exciting step in that direction and they retain a strong interest in the Ipswich midfielder Flynn Downes. Batshuayi is a reliable finisher, even if other areas of his game require work, and could thrive in Palace side with added creativity. At 26 there is still time for him to arrest a stuttering four years at Stamford Bridge; Southampton, themselves primed for better things, will hope he gets off to more of the same. NA

9) SHEFFIELD UNITED'S NEW BOYS TAKE ON WEAKENED WOLVES

Chris Wilder says that if Sheffield United bring in another forward by 5 October, then they will have had the best transfer window since he has been managing the club. On Monday at least one of his new signings – goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale – seems sure to start, any involvement by Oliver Burke will be even more interesting to watch. Scoring more goals is an obvious target this season and Wilder said he bought Burke from West Brom because United needed more pace and power up front. He also said Burke, who has generally played on the wing at previous clubs, will be used centrally. The wide areas, however, may be where Wolves are most vulnerable in the early part of the season, with injury to Jonny and the sale of Matt Doherty depriving them of both of last season's regular wing-backs. On the attacking front, however, Wolves could give a debut, most likely off the bench, to Fábio Silva, the 18-year-old bought for £35m. PD

10) FULHAM KEEP IT SIMPLE TO FORGET RELEGATION NIGHTMARE

Fulham's last spell in the Premier League was nothing short of an embarrassment, a £100m spending splurge yielding a 19th-placed finish that left them 10 points shy of survival. It was all too much, too soon but under Scott Parker – the third manager to occupy their dugout that year – there is a sense of purpose and an impression they will go happily about their business more quietly this time. This pre-season has been unflashy, much as Alphonse Areola and Antonee Robinson are smart signings, and the sense of continuity may stand them in good stead. Two of those expensive flops from 2018-19, Jean Michael Seri and Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa, are back from loan spells, although there appears little chance they will be given an opportunity to put things right. A little simplicity could go a long way for Parker and, given Arsenal's squad balance remains questionable, he has a chance to get Fulham off to an altogether more palatable start in the Saturday lunchtime kick-off. NA

Sharma lands rare albatross, but cards 73, lies 93rd in Spain

VILAMOURA (SPAIN), SEP 11 (PTI): A rare albatross on the penultimate hole of the opening round brought Indian golfer Shunhankar Sharma to par in one swoop but the double bogey on the last one spoilt the effort at the 2020 Portugal Masters.

Sharma experienced ecstasy and agony on successive holes as he closed with two-over 73 to lie at Tied-93 on Thursday.

Sharma, who is going through a lean patch, opened the round late in the afternoon with a bogey on Par-4 first.

He got his first birdie on the fourth, but a double bogey on the seventh saw him turn in 2-over 37. On the back nine a bogey on 11th pushed him further down to 3-over.

As the round came closer to the end, Sharma's 2-Iron from 241 yards on the 588 yard par 17th hole found its way into the cup for a rare albatross. It was the first albatross on the 2020 Race to Dubai.

But he finished with his second double bogey of the day on 18th for a 74.

Last year at the Memorial on PGA Tour, Sharma had a similar albatross in the second round.

Liam Johnston produced the lowest round of his European Tour career at Dom Pedro Victoria Golf Course, firing a sparkling round of 61 to lead by one shot at the end of the opening day.

At nine under par through 16 holes the Scot was in contention to match the historic 59 Oliver Fisher shot here two years ago.

England's Laurie Canter is at seven under par after a round of 64, as all of the leading three players went bogey-free in Vilamoura.

Northern Ireland's Jonathan Caldwell is at six under par, one shot ahead of South African George Coetzee, England's Matthew Jordan, Dane Thorbjørn Olesen and Sebastian Soderberg of Sweden.

A group of 12 players are then at four under par, with World Number 16 Tommy Fleetwood and the highest-placed Portuguese player Tom s Bessa amongst a further eight players at three under par.

Victoria Azarenka turns back clock to set up US Open final against Naomi Osaka

TUMAINI CARAYOL

NEW YORK, 11 SEPT

[THEGUARDIAN]: The US

Open finalists were determined on one of the great nights of women's tennis in New York as Victoria Azarenka produced a sublime performance

to recover from a first set demolition against Serena Williams, finally winning 1-6, 6-3, 6-3. Earlier, Naomi Osaka overcame Jennifer Brady in high class 7-6(1), 3-6, 6-3 tussle. Azarenka will face Osaka in a rematch of the Western & Southern Open final two weeks ago, which Osaka withdrew from with a hamstring injury.

Thursday night marked only the second time in 18 years that three current multiple slam champions simultaneously reached a slam semi-final. For Williams and Azarenka, this meant the rekindling of one of the defining rivalries of the previous decade. The pair have stared each other down in 23 matches over 12 years and such familiar-

ity was an asset for Williams early on. She had struggled through a triad of three-set matches over the fortnight, but on Thursday was all too aware that her previous form would not suffice.

Williams opened with a near perfect set of tennis, breezing through the first set. It has been seven years since Azarenka last experienced the emotions and pressure of a slam semi-final, and in those early moments it showed in her sluggishness.

"I knew I had to step up with my game," she said. "It was very quick. In the beginning, it was a lot of very short rallies. She served really, really well. I felt like I was kind of out of range. I wasn't finding my serve. Second serve was getting killed."

Azarenka was immediately on her own case, barking at herself in encouragement and punctuating her modest victories with fluent English expletives.

She pushed forward to the baseline and began to take the ball as early as she could, opening up the court and commanding the rallies. What transpired was one of the best sets of her career, in which she made only one forced error across 54 points alongside 12 winners.

Early in the third set, Williams hurt her ankle and received a medical timeout to apply heavy wrapping, immediately losing her serve upon the restart. Against many other opponents there would have remained hope for a comeback, but Azarenka had fallen into a rhythm. She refused to be pushed from her spot on the baseline and she constantly forced Williams onto the run, sharply redirecting the American's blows as she saw out the win. In the end, Williams did as well as she could. She improved her level dramatically from the previous rounds and she played well enough.

Azarenka played better.

"It's obviously disappointing," said Williams. "At the same time, you know, I did what I could today. I feel like other times I've been close and I could have done better. Today I felt like I gave a lot."

For Azarenka, who reached No 1 and won the 2012 and 2013 Australian Open, this marked her first slam final since she lost to Williams at the 2013 US Open. Afterwards, the 31 year-old talked about the journey she has taken over seven years as she recovered from injuries, a custody battle for her son, Leo, and her own ego to return to the top of the sport once more.

"When you're coming up from kind of nothing, then you become a No 1 player in the world, sometimes you can start to think you're invincible and that you're better than everybody, and it's not true. So the ego starts to grow. It's very hurt-

ful when it gets damaged," she said.

"Instead of getting the ego damaged, I tried to remove that and learn from my mistakes of that ego, and realising, maturing, that being a tennis player doesn't make you better or worse than anybody else, that you're still human, and all you can do is try to be the best version of yourself and keep improving. I try to put that aside. But not when I play card games. It's still so big."

Awaiting in the final is Osaka, who wore a mask with the name of Philando Castile, a black man who was shot dead by a police officer in front of his partner and four-year old daughter during a routine traffic stop in 2016.

Both Osaka and Brady arrived on Arthur Ashe Stadium acutely aware of the moment and they conspired to produce three sets of brutal, beautiful first strike tennis. Both players were already in ex-

cellent form but their levels were elevated, taking big risks with a minimal return of unforced errors.

Osaka has shown herself to be a competitor of rare fortitude under pressure and after the pair split sets, she took control in the third set with a blaze of forehand winners to reach the final. A reflection of Osaka's penchant for big moments is in her record deep in slams. She has now passed the fourth round three times in her career. The results are startling: she won the 2018 US Open, the 2019 Australian Open and she has now reached the 2020 US Open final this week.

"The closer it gets to the finals, the more I think about – honestly, like no one remembers anyone but the winner," she said. "Even if I do happen to... [not] achieve my goal in the finals, at least I get a shiny little trophy. At least I can leave with something."

10 dead as California fire becomes deadliest of year

GRIDLEY, CALIF. (AP): A Northern California wildfire that destroyed a foothill hamlet has become the state's deadliest blaze of the year with 10 people confirmed dead — and the toll could climb as searchers look for 16 missing people.

The North Complex fire that exploded in wind-driven flames earlier in the week was advancing more slowly Friday after the winds eased and smoke from the blaze shaded the area and lowered the temperature, allowing firefighters to make progress, authorities said.

However, the smoke made for poor visibility and fire helicopters couldn't fly Thursday.

In most parts of the state, red flag warnings of extreme fire danger because of hot, dry weather or gusty winds were lifted.

Only a day or two earlier, the North Complex fire tore through Sierra Nevada foothills so quickly that fire crews were nearly engulfed, locals fled for their lives to a pond, and the town of Berry Creek, population 525, was gutted.

On Thursday, Butte County Sheriff's Capt. Derek Bell said seven bodies were discovered, bringing the total to 10 in two days. At least four people with critical burns were hospitalized.

Deputies and detectives were searching for human remains as they made their way into devastated areas with a team of anthropologists from Chico State University, Bell said. Burned-out and



overturned cars, downed power lines and the ruins of buildings littered Berry Creek and nearby areas, the Sacramento Bee reported. One hatchback found on a dirt road had three dead dogs in it, while a pickup truck had the remnants of a guitar case and melted CDs in the bed.

More than 2,000 homes and other buildings had burned in the fire, which began several weeks ago as a lightning-sparked collection of blazes northeast of San Francisco. The final toll is expected to be much higher. Damage assessment teams planned to begin a methodical search of the burned areas on Friday.

Among those unaccounted for were Sandy Butler and her husband, who had called their son to say they were going to try to escape the flames by finding shelter in a pond.

"We're still hoping and praying for good news," said Jessica Fallon, who has two children

with the Butler's grandson and considers them her own grandparents. "Everything is replaceable, but not my grandparents' lives. I'd rather lose everything than those two. They kind of held the family together."

Fallon said she'd been peppering hospitals with phone calls in search of her grandparents. There was no word of them late Thursday night.

The speed and ferocity of the fire astonished observers, even those who remembered a blaze only two years earlier that killed some 85 people and devastated the town of Paradise, a few miles away from the current blaze.

Residents jammed the main road out of town on Wednesday amid falling ash and red skies. Authorities lifted an evacuation warning for Paradise on Thursday but authorities urged people to remain alert.

A crew fighting the fire was overrun by flames Wednesday when winds shifted and its

members escaped with only minor injuries after deploying emergency shelters. It was the second time in two days that firefighters in California had to take the rare last-ditch effort to save their lives.

The blaze is among 29 major wildfires burning from the Oregon border to just north of Mexico. More than 4,800 square miles (12,500 square kilometers) have burned so far this year — more land than Rhode Island, Delaware and Washington, D.C., combined — and fall is typically the worst season for fires. Nineteen people have been killed and at least 4,000 structures have burned across California.

"It's a historic season on top of a historic season that replaced a historic season. We just keep setting new precedents, and then we keep destroying them," said Sean Norman, a battalion chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Smoke blew into

vineyards in wine country north of San Francisco, and rose above scenic Big Sur on the Central Coast and in the foothills and mountains of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego counties in the southern part of the state.

President Donald Trump spoke with Gov. Gavin Newsom "to express his condolences for the loss of life and reiterate the administration's full support to help those on the front lines of the fires," according to White House spokesman Judd Deere.

Neighboring Oregon and Washington also have been besieged. More than 1,400 square miles (3,625 square kilometers) have burned this week in Oregon, where hot, windy conditions continued. Authorities said more than 500,000 people — more than 10% of the state's population — have been forced to evacuate.

Wildfires have scorched nearly 937 square miles (2,426 kilometers) in Washington.

Peru's Indigenous turn to ancestral remedies to fight virus

PUCALLPA, PERU (AP): As COVID-19 spread quickly through Peru's Amazon, the Indigenous Shipibo community decided to turn to the wisdom of their ancestors.

Hospitals were far away, short on doctors and running out of beds. Even if they could get in, many of the ill were too fearful to go, convinced that stepping foot in a hospital would only lead to death.

So Mery Fasabi gathered herbs, steeped them in boiling water and instructed her loved ones to breathe in the vapors. She also made syrups of onion and ginger to help clear congested airways.

"We had knowledge about these plants, but we didn't know if they'd really help treat COVID," the teacher said. "With the pandemic we are discovering new things."

The coronavirus pandemic's ruthless march through Peru — the country with the world's highest per-population confirmed COVID-19 mortality rate — has compelled many Indigenous groups to find their own remedies. Decades of under-investment in public health care, combined with skepticism of modern medicine, mean many are not getting a standard treatments like oxygen therapy to treat severe virus cases.

In the Ucayali region, government rapid response teams deployed to a handful of Indigenous communities have found infection rates as high as 80% through antibody testing. Food and medicine donations have reached only a fraction of the population. Many say the only state presence they have seen is from a group responsible for collecting bodies of the dead.

At a spot known as "Kilometer 20" near the city of Pucallpa, a new cemetery has sprung to life with the remains of about 400 people.

"We've always been forgotten," said Roberto Wikeff, 49, a Shipibo man who turned to Fasabi's treatments to help treat his COVID-19. "We don't exist for them."

Peru is home to one

of Latin America's largest Indigenous populations, whose ancestors lived in the Andean country before the arrival of Spanish colonists. Entire tribes were wiped out by infectious diseases introduced by the Europeans. Today many live and work in urban areas, but others reside in remote parts of the Amazon that have few doctors, let alone the capacity to do complex molecular testing or treatment for the virus.

Wikeff said the 10 doctors, nurses and aides who usually staff a nearby clinic abandoned their posts when the coronavirus arrived. The Shipibo had tried to prevent COVID-19's entrance by blocking roads and isolating themselves. But in May, he and others nonetheless came down with fevers, coughs, difficulty breathing and headaches.

A month later, he was still feeling ill and turned to Fasabi, who along with 15 other volunteers had set up a makeshift treatment center.

"I was taken there in agony," he recalled.

The Shipibo highlight the use of a plant known locally as "matico." The buddleja globosa plant has green leaves and a tangerine-colored flower. Fasabi said that by no means are the remedies a cure, but their holistic approach is proving effective. Unlike in hospitals, volunteers equipped in masks get close to patients, giving them words of encouragement and touching them through massage.

"We are giving tranquility to our patients," she said.

Juan Carlos Salas, director of Ucayali's regional health agency, said efforts to expand hospital capacity have proven only marginally successful. The region of about a half million people located along a winding river had just 18 ICU beds at the start of the pandemic and today has around 28. A shortage of specialists means they have not been able to staff all the beds.

At the peak of the outbreak in May and June,

around 15 people were dying a day, he said. Overall, about 14,000 cases have been diagnosed, likely a vast undercount.

"We didn't have a way of tending to patients," he said. "We couldn't accept more."

He said transportation is one of the biggest hurdles in treating Indigenous groups, some of which can only be reached by helicopter or an eight-hour boat ride. Pucallpa's bustling port where wood, bananas and other fruit are loaded onto ships for export is believed to be one main source of contagion.

Of about 59,000 rapid antibody tests, some 2,500 were administered to Indigenous groups.

"We were surprised," Salas said. "The majority had been infected."

Lizardo Cauper, president of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest, said that of about 500,000 Indigenous people living in the Amazon, his group estimates that 147,000 have been infected by the virus and 3,000 have died.

While the lucky recover with ancestral remedies, the less fortunate often die at home. A government team travels from one spartan, thatched-roofed home to the next, plucking the dead from the beds and chairs where they took their last breaths. The poor are taken to the COVID-19 cemetery and interred in the burnt-orange dirt.

Rider Sol Sol, 48, said he and a crew of gravediggers buried up to 30 people a day at the height of the pandemic. The father of four had been out of work before getting this gravedigger's job.

"I give thanks to God that I have a job," he said.

These days, with the death count lower, he is the only man working most days. Alone amidst rows of white crosses, he tries not to let his mind drift toward the what ifs. The bodies come with a name and a number and he does not ponder their stories.

He keeps his mask on, digs into the earth and drinks from a bottle with matico.

France tries forcing change on Lebanon's politicians

BEIRUT (AP): During his visit this month, French President Emmanuel Macron gave Lebanon's politicians a road map for policy changes and reform, set deadlines for them to take action and told them he'd be back in December to check on progress.

It was a hands-on approach that angered some in Lebanon and was welcomed by others. And it revived a bitter question in the tiny Mediterranean country: Can Lebanese rule themselves?

Lebanon's ruling class, in power since the end of the civil war in 1990, has run the tiny country and its population into the ground. Heading a sectarian system that encourages corruption over governing, the elite have enriched themselves while investing little on infrastructure, failing to build a productive economy and pushing it to the verge of bankruptcy.

Anger over corruption and mismanagement has come to a peak after the giant Aug. 4 explosion at Beirut's port, caused by the detonation of nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate that politicians allowed to sit there for years. Nearly 200 people were killed and tens of thousands of homes were damaged. Another large fire erupted at the port on Thursday, only further traumatizing and frustrating Beirutis.

Poet and journalist Akl Awit wrote in An-Nahar newspaper that he strongly opposes outside interference, but the political elite brought it on themselves.

"This is a class that does not care about law, constitution, judiciary, morals, conscience, earthquakes or even about bankrupting people," he wrote. "This class only wants to stay in power ... (It) understands only the language of the rod."

Some worry that even outside pressure cannot force reform on politicians, for whom reform means an end to power and perhaps eventual accountability.

"They are known to give empty promises whether to their people or the international community," said Elias Hankash, a legislator from the right-wing Kataeb party who resigned from parliament following the port explosion. "Regrettably maybe

President Macron does not know whom he is dealing with." Resistance to reform can be startling. In 2018, a France-led conference pledged some \$11 billion in aid to Lebanon. But it came with conditions of reforms, including audits and accountability changes that could have hurt the factions' corrupt patronage engines. Politicians were unable to pass the reforms to unlock the desperately needed money.

Late last year, Lebanon's economic house of cards collapsed into its worst financial crisis in decades. The local currency has crashed, throwing more than half the country's 5 million people into poverty.

In his Sept. 2 visit, Macron came in with a strong push for change. He met with officials from the eight largest political groups. They were given a so-called "French Paper," which lay out what it called a "draft program for the new government" on everything from how to deal with the coronavirus, to investigating the port explosion, rebuilding the port, fixing the electricity sector and resuming talks with the International Monetary Fund.

It reminded many of the nearly three decades when Syria dominated Lebanon — particularly of Rustom Ghazaleh, the late Syrian intelligence general who ran day-to-day affairs in the country and would often summon its politicians to his headquarters in the border town of Anjar. Syria's domination ended in 2005 after nationwide protests broke out following the assassination for former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

During those years, Syrian intelligence agents were known to drive around Beirut and Lebanon in French-made Peugeot cars. One meme that circulated on social media after Macron's visit showed photos of him and Ghazaleh grinning over a Peugeot. "This time, the owner of the car factory himself came. The big boss came to form a government," it read.

On Wednesday, authorities met one key demand by Macron, launching a forensic audit into Lebanon's central bank to know how billions of dollars were wasted. The

factions also quickly agreed to name Lebanese-French citizen Mustapha Adib, Lebanon's ambassador to Germany, as the new prime minister.

But already, there appear to be delays in negotiating a new Cabinet, despite a Monday deadline that Macron said Lebanese politicians agreed on to form the government. In the past it has taken months to form governments as factions bargain over who gets which ministries.

Joe Macaron, a fellow at the Arab Center in Washington, said France is not in the position Syria once had to dictate policies — there are other outside players to take into account.

"The French role largely depends on the cooperation of both the U.S. and Iran," he said.

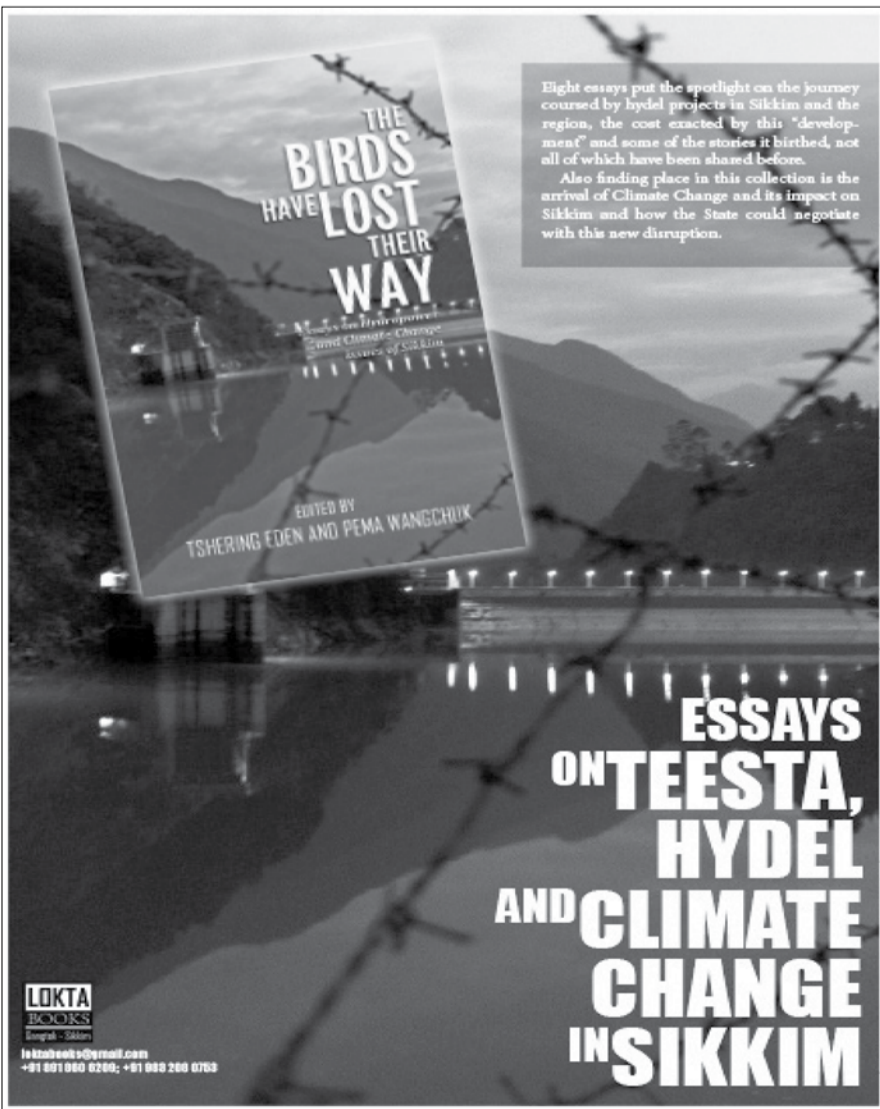
Since 2005, Lebanon's politics have been divided between a U.S.-backed coalition and another supported by Iran and Syria led by the militant Hezbollah. Disagreements sometimes led to street clashes -- but they always managed to agree on splitting financial gains.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Treasury imposed sanctions on two former Lebanese ministers allied with Hezbollah for their links to the militant group. It also said both are involved in corruption.

While some Lebanese criticize Macron's interference, others yearn for the days when Lebanon was a French protectorate after World War I until independence in 1943. More than 60,000 signed a petition after the blast to return to French mandate for 10 years. Macron dismissed the idea.

Since the port blast, international officials, including Macron, Italy's prime minister and Canada's foreign minister have visited and called on the government to implement reforms to receive financial assistance. Many dignitaries toured the Beirut neighborhoods most damaged in the blast, something no senior Lebanese official has done, apparently fearing residents' fury.

"The only state that is not interfering in Lebanon's affairs is the Lebanese state," goes one joke making the rounds.



Barrymore sets high standard in her models as talk show host

NEW YORK (AP): Drew Barrymore is setting a high standard for herself as she joins the world of daytime talk show hosts on Monday. She wants to emulate David Letterman and Howard Stern as interviewers.

Both men became media stars through their comedy — ironic for Letterman, crude for Stern. Yet each man, as their careers lengthened, became particularly skilled at disarming guests to get beyond stilted “what have you been up to lately” conversations.

“We’re all human beings on this planet going through our lives and our journeys and there’s a way to connect through that,” Barrymore said. “We don’t have to poke. I’m not looking to mess someone over. But at the same time, I just like to go in beneath the layers. I can’t stand the surface. I’ve never lived in that space.” “The Drew Barrymore Show,” retrofitted for the coronavirus era, is being distributed by CBS Television. It will air live at 9 a.m. in cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Miami, and at 2 p.m. in Chicago, Dallas and San Francisco and others.

Several bold-faced names will help the 45-year-old actress through her crucial first week: Reese Witherspoon, Jane Fonda, Charlize Theron, Tyra Banks and, on the first show alone, former co-stars Cameron Diaz, Lucy Liu and Adam Sandler.

Letterman and Stern developed their skills through years of hard work. For Bar-

rymore, the hope is that likability and the audience’s familiarity with a star they’ve watched grow up since she was a 7-year-old in “E.T.” will give her the chance to learn by doing. Bill Carroll, a veteran tele-

vision consultant and expert in the syndication market, said he’s impressed that Barrymore is shooting high.



vision consultant and expert in the syndication market, said he’s impressed that Barrymore is shooting high.

“It’s good to look at modeling yourself after someone who is an unconventional interviewer,” he said. “Both of these men turned out to be excellent but unconven-

hears back to her appearance with Johnny Carson as a little girl in the 1980s, a reminder to viewers that they know her. Yes, some may regard Barrymore as slightly loopy and hippie-dippie (“we’re all human beings on this planet”), but it’s more endearing than annoying. The daughter of

actor John Barrymore went through drug rehabilitation at an age most people worried about braces, as well as three divorces and motherhood, all in the public spotlight. She starred in movies like “The Wed-

ding Singer” and “50 First Dates,” playing big-hearted characters it’s impossible to root against.

She’s had memorable moments as a talk show guest, like in 1995 when she danced on the table and flashed Letterman, her secret crush. “Everyone my age has grown up with her,” said Elaine Bauer Brooks, head of development for CBS Television. “She lives her life in front of all of us. She’s had her mistakes and her wins and she’s kind of owned them all along the way. There’s a warm feeling about her and a sense of wanting her to win.” Barrymore, who most recently produced and starred in the Netflix series “Santa Clarita Diet,” said the time was right to try a talk show. She’ll have a schedule that’s a better fit for a single mom raising two girls than most entertainment jobs.

Her show will originate from New York, where she lives now. It will air live

in the morning to be responsive to what is going on in the world, but that’s only to a point. She’ll concentrate on celebrity, self-help and comedy segments and leave politics to others.

“I find politics extremely alienating to one side or the other, depending on who’s watching,” she said, “and I don’t want to make people feel not welcomed here or judged or disliked.”

Makers of “The Drew Barrymore Show” had to adjust on the fly to COVID-19. There won’t be a studio audience, although they will try to link to an audience at home electronically. Through technology, Barrymore will be able to interview a guest who seems to be sitting in a comfy chair across from her, even if they’re actually across the country. Barrymore described herself as a “naughty” talk show guest through the years for avoiding the pre-show interview, where guests discuss in advance the seemingly spontaneous stories they’ll tell later when the cameras are on.

Barrymore prized true spontaneity — “I like to go in blind and play because life is just too short not to” — but now she’ll be on the other side. And, yes, her staff will conduct pre-show interviews. It’s helpful to know how far someone will be willing to go in addressing certain topics, she said.

“I’ve had all my stuff out there, and I know how raw and vulnerable it feels,” she said.

Madras High Court issues notice to music composer AR Rahman over alleged tax evasion

The allegation is that the money had been transferred to the AR Rahman Foundation, which did not have a Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence then CHENNAI, 11 Sept: A division bench of the Madras High Court on Friday issued a notice to music composer AR Rahman in a case filed by the Income Tax department alleging that he routed income of over Rs 3 crore through the A R Rahman Foundation, a charitable trust managed by him, to evade tax. The Income Tax Department moved the Madras High Court challenging the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, Chennai, verdict that set aside the order of the Principal Commissioner of Income Tax in Chennai.

According to senior standing counsel for the Income Tax department T R Senthil Kumar, in the assessment year 2011-12, Rahman received income to the tune of Rs 3.47 crore in connection with an agreement made with the UK based Libra Mobiles. The contract was to compose exclusive ringtones for the company and the term of the contract was for three years. As per the contract, Rahman instructed the company to pay his remuneration directly to the foundation managed by him, the department said.

The allegation is that the money had been transferred to the Foundation, which did not have a Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence then.

“The taxable income must be received by Rahman and after due deduction of tax, it can be transferred to the trust. But the same cannot be routed through the trust as income to the charitable trust is exempted under the Income Tax Act,” the counsel said.

According to the petition filed by the Income Tax department, Rahman after receiving the IT notice had moved the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal in Chennai and the tribunal in September 2019 had then held that the government of India had accorded “post facto approval” with respect to this contribution.

‘Avengers’ and ‘Game of Thrones’ star Diana Rigg dies at 82

LONDON (AP): Diana Rigg, a commanding British actress whose career stretched from iconic 1960s spy series “The Avengers” to fantasy juggernaut “Game of Thrones,” has died. She was 82. Rigg’s agent, Simon Beresford, said she died Thursday morning at home with her family. Daughter Rachael Stirling said she died of cancer that was diagnosed in March.

Rigg “spent her last months joyfully reflecting on her extraordinary life, full of love, laughter and a deep pride in her profession. I will miss her beyond words,” Stirling said.

Rigg starred in “The Avengers” as secret agent Emma Peel alongside Patrick Macnee’s bowler-hatted John Steed. The pair were an impeccably dressed duo who fought villains and traded quips in a show whose mix of adventure and humor was enduringly influential.

Rigg also starred in 1969 James Bond thriller “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service” as Tracy di Vicenzo, the only woman ever to marry, albeit briefly, Agent 007. Bond producers Michael G Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said Rigg was “much beloved by Bond fans for her memorable performance.”

George Lazenby, who made his only appearance as Bond in the film, said on Instagram that he was “so sad to hear of the death of Diana Rigg. She undoubtedly raised my acting game when we made On Her Majesty’s Secret Service together in 1968-9.”

In later life, she played Olenna Tyrell — the formidable “Queen of Thorns” — in “Game of Thrones,” receiving an Emmy Award nomination for the role.

Other television roles included the

Duchess of Buccleuch in period drama “Victoria,” and Rigg starred alongside her daughter in the gentle British sitcom “Detectorists.”

Rigg spent several years in the 1960s as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and combined screen work with a major stage career, in plays including William Shakespeare’s “Macbeth,” Bertolt Brecht’s “Mother Courage” and Tom Stoppard’s “Jumpers” at the National Theatre in London.

She had several acclaimed roles in the 1990s at London’s Almeida Theatre, including Martha in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” and the title role in Greek tragedy “Medea.” Rigg won a Tony Award for “Medea” on Broadway, and was nominated on three other occasions — most recently in 2018 for playing Mrs. Higgins in “My Fair Lady.”

Jonathan Kent, who directed Rigg in some of her great stage roles, said her “combination of force of personality, beauty, courage and sheer emotional power made her a great classical actress — one of an astonishing generation of British stage performers.”

She never retired. One of Rigg’s final television roles was in rural veterinary drama “All Creatures Great and Small,” which is currently running on British television.

Stoppard said Rigg was “the most beautiful woman in the room, but she was what used to be called a Trouper.”

“She went to work with her sleeves rolled up and a smile for everyone. Her talent was luminous.”

Rigg is survived by her daughter, son-in-law Guy Garvey — lead singer of the band Elbow — and a grandson.



CASUAL COOL! The actress, Shay Mitchell is seen on set prepping for a photoshoot in LA.

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES:

Yes, you will be tested. Yes, you will be met by hurdles at every level. How strong is your will to triumph over your demons? You were born to win this battle, Aries. Don't give up now. What the cards want you to know is that your patience and persistence will be rewarded. PS: When in doubt, turn to that one friend who never fails to remind you of your magic. Tip: Your patience and persistence will be rewarded.

TAURUS:

Ups and downs on both the work and family front are indicated, Taurus. You will feel like you have no place to run and hide. What do you do when you cannot fix the external? You look within and work on your inner alignment. A few minutes of meditation or mindfulness every morning will help you face your challenges with the wisdom of a Zen Master. Cleansing and purifying your space and your aura are also necessary. You don't want any of that sticky energy to linger on for any longer than it is meant to. Tip: Centre your energy.

GEMINI:

Yes, this is a turbulent time in the Gemini HQ. What the cards want you to know is that the Universe never gives us anything we're unprepared to handle. Trust that you possess the strength, courage and wisdom required to slay your demons and emerge victorious. The right people will show up at the right time assisting you in your journey towards the light. If things have been awry on the romantic front, trust that you and your partner will find a way to set things right. Tip: You possess the strength, courage and wisdom required to slay your demons.

CANCER:

Your current situation brings the cliché 'one man's meat is another man's poison' to mind. Every body has its own mechanism, Cancer, and you're being asked to understand what's yours. The foods you've consumed all your life could be triggering a negative reaction right now. It's best to consult a nutritionist or an expert to understand what works for you. Remember, it's not about following fad diets. It's about nourishing your body in the way that it deserves to be taken care of. Tip: Pay attention to your diet.

LEO:

Our conditioning plays a major role in determining who we are and how we respond to the world around us. Pay attention to these responses, Leo. Are they coming from a space of love or are they triggered by fear? Upon deeper examination, you will understand how your childhood traumas are keeping you from experiencing the joy and pleasure you truly deserve. Word for the wise: it's time to consciously release the guilt and the shame that's been a part of your narrative for some time now. Tip: You are deserving of joy and pleasure.

VIRGO:

The cards are warning you against spiritual bypassing. By saying 'everything is alright' and 'be positive' you could be dishonouring what you are truly feeling right now. Instead of taking the denial route, feel the chaos in its entirety. The sadness, the anger, the fears, and the melancholy. Know that the power to transform your wounds into wisdom has always been within you. Tip: Allow yourself to feel the chaos in its entirety.

LIBRA:

The method you're using is obsolete, Libra. No wonder you've hit a roadblock! The cards are urging you to tap into the power of innovative thinking in order to navigate the given situation with ease. This may seem counterintuitive, but stepping away from what you are creating will help you rather than distract you. So, befriend joy and playfulness and watch how the doors that were once locked open for you. Tip: Tap into the power of innovative thinking.

SCORPIO:

We tend to think of intuition as something woo-woo, a tool that helps psychics and mediums channel information from the unseen realms. But, the truth is, there are many practical applications of this gift—knowing how to navigate the tricky waters of your career, for instance. Trust the information you are receiving. More importantly, trust yourself to guide other people. Your spirit team is with you in every moment. PS: If insomnia is still a cause of concern, get yourself some lavender incense (or tea) ASAP! Tip: Tap into the power of your intuition.

SAGITTARIUS:

We tend to think of physical and emotional wellness as two separate things. However, the mind, body, and soul are deeply connected. So instead of trying to fix the turmoil, work inside out. Tune into your body's needs and understand what it is asking you for. Prepare a simple, home-cooked meal for yourself, and you'll immediately notice the difference in your being. The cards are also emphasising on the importance of sunlight and fresh air. Go for a run every morning or spend a few minutes meditating on your terrace. Tip: Tune into your body's needs.

CAPRICORN:

'Be positive' is a great affirmation to tell yourself, but it may not hold true for where you are right now. How and where are you denying yourself healing, Capricorn? It's time to look within and have a chat with your demons. The inner work seems intimidating from where you are standing. Trust yourself to venture into the unknown anyway, knowing that this will help you move one step closer to liberation. Tip: Don't be afraid of venturing into the shadows.

AQUARIUS:

The earthly realm or wheel of samsara, as told by the Buddhists texts, is synonymous with pain and suffering. To be human is to sign up for experiences that may not always be pleasant in nature. But, what does one do when they are faced with a karmic lesson? Choosing the path of least resistance may be the best way forward. Remember, you are connected to the stream of consciousness and guided by your inner oracle in every moment. Tip: Listen to your inner oracle.

PISCES:

Playing it safe has its perks. For starters, it's a fail-safe method to achieve your goals and arrive at the desired destination. But does it guarantee growth? Does it challenge you on a personal level and inspire you to push your limits? Pisces, you have the answer to this one. Today you're being encouraged to tap into your playful side and bring an element of fun into everything you do. Remember, the only rules that apply to you are the ones you want to adhere to. Tip: Fun and playfulness promise to take your work to a whole new level.