



**ALIA BHATT'S GANGUBAI
KATHIAWADI WRAPS SHOOT**

PG.08

**A POTENTIAL WE ALLOWED TO
WILT, BUT CAN STILL RECLAIM**

pg 04

**F9 TAKES A SMASHING
START!**

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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No Covid deaths after three days, and Sikkim continues posting more recoveries than new cases

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 27 JUN:

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported so far has crossed the 20,000-mark today and now stands at 20,111 with 170 new cases detected in the last 24 hours. With the number of tests being conducted on a daily basis having substantially come down, the positivity rate has climbed up and works out to 20.8% today. The 170 new cases were picked up from the 817 samples tested on Saturday.

Sunday was also special because the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department this morning also informs that no Covid deaths were reported in the past 24

hours. Sikkim saw a no new Covid death day after three days. Thus far, the State has lost 301 lives to Covid, 165 of them in past two months alone.

In the meantime, the state witnessed another big jump in recoveries with 203 formerly Covid-positive people making full recoveries and getting discharged from home isolation and returning to their normal lives. Thus far, 17,421 have beaten the virus in Sikkim.

While 116 persons were found positive for COVID-19 in RT-PCR testing of 532 samples, 54 more cases were detected in rapid antigen testing of 278 samples.

Of the 170 new cases of coronavirus in the State, 65 were registered in East District, 55 in West District and 50



in South District.

Today, only 12 COVID patients were hospitalised. There

are currently 2,137 active cases of Covid in the State of whom only 91 are in hospital, the rest

having mild or no symptoms and hence recuperating at home or facility isolation.

Chamling recounts his govt's green initiatives on 10 Minutes to Earth anniv

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JUN:

Sikkim Democrat-Sic Front president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, recounted the green initiatives undertaken when his party was in government from 1994 to 2019 and also thanked the environmentalists who participated in the webinar hosted by the SDF recently on the anniversary of the 10-Minutes to Earth initiative.

In his Sunday post on Facebook, Mr Chamling explained the 10-Minutes to Earth initiative as having been "born out of the wedlock of our concern for the environment and politics of the environment" and recounted similar initiatives in detail.

He reminds his audience that SDF is one of those rare political parties which has included environmental protection as a major political program and policy-commitments towards this end were included in every election manifesto.

"While running the government in Sikkim, I was driven by a deep conviction and ambition that Sikkim can and must become a torch bearer in the politics of ecology. I wanted Sikkim to be at the forefront in proving to the world that development and environmental conservation can go together," he adds.

He then goes on to rue that the present Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Government has sidelined all the globally-acclaimed policies and initiatives of

the SDF Government and reassures that SDF itself has not given up.

For instance, on the anniversary of 10-Minutes to Earth, SDF organised a webinar themed, "Ten Minutes to Earth - Lessons for the Future," which had Sunita Narain, Director General of the Center of Science and Environment, as the keynote speaker. Others who joined the panel were Amba Jamir, vice president at Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI), Usha Lachungpa, Sikkim's famed environmentalist and retired forester, Archana Vaidya, Environment Lawyer and Dr Smriti Basnet, Glaciologist.

He also shares that "a number of people and some small children participated in plantation activities all across the state" and "well-wishers of Ten Minutes to Earth program planted trees in countries like the USA, Nepal, Bhutan and even in neighbouring Darjeeling."

Ms Narain, in her address, said, "What Sikkim has shown in 1998 and is important for us to showcase, even today, is not that the environment does not make for good development. In fact what Sikkim showed very clearly is that the environment and development go together."

Other panellists recommended that the initiative be adopted by NEDA and praised it as worthy of national replication and within Sikkim, taken up by panchayats for wider and deeper reach.

Does Delta Plus Variant Harm Lungs More?

NEW DELHI, 27 JUN [PTI]: The Delta plus variant of COVID-19 has greater affinity to lung tissues as compared to other strains but it does not mean that it will cause severe disease or is more transmissible, head of coronavirus working group NTAGI Dr N K Arora said.

A new viral variant of the coronavirus, Delta Plus, was identified on June 11. It was recently classified as a variant of concern.

Till now, 51 cases of Delta Plus have been detected across 12 states, with Maharashtra reporting the maximum cases of this variant.

Speaking about Delta plus, chairman of COVID-19 Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) said it has been found that the variant has greater affinity to lung tissues as compared to other

strains of coronavirus but clarified that it does not mean the Delta Plus variant will cause more severe disease or is more transmissible.

"Delta plus is having greater affinity to mucosal lining in the lungs, higher compared to other variants, but if it causes damage or not is not clear yet. It also does not mean that this variant will cause more severe disease or it is more transmissible," Mr Arora told PTI in an interview.

He said the impact of the Delta Plus strain will become clear only as more cases are identified but it appears that the disease is generally mild in all those who have got either single or double dose of the vaccine.

"We need to keep a very close watch and look at its spread so that it will give us transmission efficiency," he said.

...turn Pg2

Assam govt to pay Rs 2.5 lakh to Covid widows

GUWAHATI, JUN 27 (PTI):

The Assam government on Sunday announced that it will give Rs 2.5 lakh each to all widows, whose husbands died of COVID-19, if their family income is less than Rs 5 lakh. Under the new 'Chief Minister's COVID-19 Widows Support Scheme', the beneficiaries of 'Orunodoi' and 'Widow Pension' schemes are also eligible for the one-time financial assistance.

"Many precious lives were lost due to #COVID19, leaving a number of families in distress. In our sincere effort to provide some relief to women whose husbands died of the disease, Rs 2.5 lakh will

be given to such eligible widows as one time grant," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma tweeted.

As per the scheme, the beneficiary's husband should have been a COVID-positive patient at the time of the death and it should be certified by the State-Level COVID Death Audit Board.

"The beneficiary must belong to a low-income family having an annual income up to Rs 5 lakh," the scheme details mentioned.

It, however, stated that widows of government servants will not be covered under this scheme as they get the family pension as per usual norms.

"The Deputy Commissioner shall compile the list of eligible beneficiaries from the NHM database of COVID victims.

The list will be verified keeping in mind the eligibility criteria. On verification, the money will be disbursed to the beneficiaries' accounts," the scheme document said.

Any person, who meets the eligibility criteria and is not a part of the final list, can submit representation with supporting documents to the DC concerned, it added.

According to the National Health Mission (NHM) bulletin, a total of 4,403 persons have died in Assam due to COVID-19.

Rise in depression, insomnia cases due to Covid-related trauma: Experts

NEW DELHI, 27 JUN [PTI]: Inability to mourn with family members or cope with grief alone due to Covid constraints has led to an increase in cases of depression, anxiety, insomnia and other mental health disorders among people in Delhi who have been affected directly or indirectly by the pandemic, experts said.

Several hospitals and clinics in the national capital are registering a spike in the number of patients complaining of symptoms related to psychological ailments triggered by post-traumatic stress, they said.

Delhi had reeled under a brutal second wave of the pandemic which claimed a massive number of lives daily, with the oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals, having added to the problems.

Hospital premises and crematoriums had witnessed distressful scenes, with grieving family members, many in full PPE kits, trying to come to terms with the loss of their loved ones.

Medical experts in Delhi concurred that the family members were unable to grieve together after losing their dear ones to Covid due to safety constraints and so-

cial distancing norms.

The second wave, in many cases, saw the whole family testing positive for coronavirus, and even after death, they couldn't conduct last rites, leading to sedimentation of grief inside that triggers mental health disorders, they said.

In several cases, even though there were no fatalities in the families, many people lost their friends, acquaintances or someone they knew closely, or they survived with great difficulty, adding to their mental stress, doctors said on Sunday which coincided with the PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) Awareness Day.

"Sadness, isolation, grief of fear of losing loved ones, loss of income and decreasing socialisation are exacerbating mental health conditions. OPD footfall has increased by 30-40 per cent since the surge in cases," said Manish Jain, consultant, psychiatry department at BLK Hospital in New Delhi.

People with pre-existing mental health issues are also more vulnerable to substance and impulsive behaviours during a pan-

dem. Restriction in lifestyles and fear of COVID-19, both have started taking a toll on their mental health, he said.

Dr Sameer Malhotra, director and head, department of mental health and behavioral sciences, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket said, "There's a definite rise in the cases of anxiety and depression seen across the population during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Whereas there have been significantly high numbers registered after the second wave, the hospital has seen many people coming to terms with grief after having lost their family members, and suffered depression and significant anxiety due to it, he said.

But people are looking for relief from such mental disorders through not just allopathy but homeopathy too.

Doctors at Delhi's Dr Kalyan Banerjee's Clinic, which sees rush even on regular days, are witnessing a significant rise in patients reporting with psychological and mental health conditions.

The clinic has seen a 40 per cent spike in the number of patients complaining of symptoms related

to mental health. About 2,500 prescriptions every month, as opposed to 1,750 prescriptions per month in the pre-pandemic era, are being given to manage symptoms like anxiety, depression, panic attacks, insomnia, and other related symptoms, doctors said.

Patients of mental health disorders whose condition had improved to the extent that it required no medicines, have begun to experience relapses, they said.

Patients who had never experienced any mental health issues in the past are also coming to the clinic complaining of vague, but significant symptoms like a feeling of being tired all the time, inability to fall asleep, lack of appetite, irritability, inability to focus on work and other issues, said experts at the clinic, founded by Padma Shri Dr Kalyan Banerjee.

Many of these patients have been directly affected by COVID-19, where they or someone close contracted the infection, or they knew someone who has passed away due to coronavirus, doctors said.

"India along with most countries in the world, has seen a spike in mental health cases during this pan-

dem. A section of the patients is turning to homeopathy because they are uncomfortable taking psychiatric medicines which may be difficult to give up," Banerjee said.

Patients who are personally or professionally unaffected by the disease or by the lockdown, are also not being spared. The most important aspect in these cases is the physical presence of friends and loved ones, but due to Covid norms, people unable to get together or channelise grief, the doctor said.

Some other reasons that could trigger such disorders include fear of long-term effects of COVID-19 and the pervasive negativity around us today, he added.

Dr Kushal Banerjee, senior homeopath at the clinic said, "A major cause behind the rise in numbers of patients experiencing psychological distress and post-traumatic stress is that our mechanisms for coping with irreplaceable loss are either failing or not being allowed to kick in due to restrictions on our movements, activities, and interactions. This in turn has made it imperative that they seek professional help and guidance."

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Availability of Covid vaccine for children will pave way for school reopening: AIIMS Chief

NEW DELHI, 27 JUN [PTI]: Making COVID-19 vaccine available for children will be a milestone achievement and pave the way for reopening of schools and resumption of outdoor activities for them, AIIMS Chief Dr Randeep Guleria has said.

He said the data of phase two and three trial of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin on two to 18 years age group is expected by September. The vaccine can be available for children in India around that time following approval from the drug regulator, he said.

"If the Pfizer vaccine gets approval before that, then it can also be an option for children," Dr Guleria told PTI on Saturday.

According to a senior government official, pharmaceutical major Zydus Cadila is also likely to soon apply to the Drugs Controller General of India for emergency use authorisation for its COVID-19 vaccine Zy-CoV-D, which it claims can be given to both adults and children.



"So, if the Zydus vaccine gets approval, it will be another option," Dr Guleria said.

He stressed that though children mostly have mild infections of COVID-19 and some even are asymptomatic, they can be carriers of the infection.

Underscoring that there has been a major loss in studies in the last one-and-half years on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AIIMS chief said, "Schools have to be reopened and vaccination can play an important role in that."

Vaccination is the way out from the pan-

demic, he said.

The government has recently cautioned that even though COVID-19 has not impacted children greatly till now, that can increase if there is a change in the behaviour of the virus or in epidemiology dynamics. It said that preparations are being made to deal with any such situation.

A national expert group has been formed to review COVID-19 infections among children and approach the pandemic in a new way and reinforce the nation's preparedness for it.

On the issue of vac-

inating children, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul recently said, "Child cohort is not a small one. My rough guess is that if it is between 12 to 18 years, this itself is about 13 to 14 crore population for which we will need about 25-26 crore doses."

He further shared that not only Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, Zydus Cadila's vaccine is also being tested on children.

"So when Zydus comes for licensure soon, maybe we have enough data to take a view on whether the vaccine can be given in children," Paul said.

Prodged by Supreme Court, Centre presents Covid vaccination roadmap

NEW DELHI, 27 JUN [NDTV]: The Centre on Saturday told the Supreme Court that it expects to get around 188 crore vaccine doses - from at least five manufacturers - to inoculate the entire adult population by the end of the year. Only about 5.6 per cent of India's adult population has received two doses, according to the government.

"Total population - above 18 years of age - is approximately 93-94 crore. As such, administering two doses to these beneficiaries would require an estimated 186 to 188 crore vaccine doses. Out of this requirement, 51.6 crore doses will be made available for administration by July 31, leaving a requirement of approximately 135 crore vaccine doses for complete vaccination to the eligible population," the Centre said in an affidavit filed by Manohar Agnani, Additional Secretary, Health Ministry.

In its 375-page affidavit - filed in response to the Supreme Court's pointed questions on its vaccine policy, the centre presented a roadmap on how it plans to procure



the remaining 135 crore doses.

"Sputnik V vaccine, developed by M/s Gamaleya Institute, Russia has received Emergency Use Authorization by the DCGI in April 2021 and is now being administered in India," it said.

In addition, vaccines from domestic pharmaceutical companies Biological E and Zydus Cadila are in the late stages of clinical trials and subject to regulatory approvals, it said. Zydus Cadila is working on a vaccine for 12-18 years of age and a vaccine for the age group will be available soon, the gov-

ernment said.

Walk-in vaccinations have been allowed for all ages and the digital divide is not a constraint for access to vaccines anymore, it added.

"Till June 25, 31 crore vaccine doses have been administered across the country. COWIN platform registration is not mandatory, people in rural areas can visit the nearest vaccination centre go get vaccinated," it said.

About 56.24 per cent of the rural population have taken the jabs, it said.

Calling its vaccination policy dynamic and

not static, the centre said COVID-19 shots are now free for all above 18 years under the new policy in effect since June 21.

The 375-page government affidavit was presented to the court in response to the Supreme Court's pointed questions on its vaccine policy.

In a sharply worded order earlier this month, the top court had said that the centre's policy of paid vaccination for those between 18 and 44 was "arbitrary and irrational".

The Supreme Court will examine the affidavit on June 30.

Another BJP leader criticises Covid handling in UP

BALLIA (UP), JUN 27 (PTI): Criticising the handling of the COVID-19 crisis in Uttar Pradesh, a ruling party leader has claimed that at least 10 people died in every village during the second wave as no lessons were learnt from the first one.

State BJP working committee member Ram Iqbal Singh, who made the remarks on Saturday, is the latest among the party's leaders who have questioned the management of the coronavirus infection in the state.

Speaking to reporters here, Singh rued that the Health Department did not learn any lesson from the first wave of COVID-19

which led to a large number of deaths due to the disease in the second wave.

At least 10 people died from every village in the state during the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, he alleged.

The BJP leader also demanded that Rs 10 lakh be given to the kin of those who succumbed to the infection.

He lamented that after 75 years of freedom, this district with a population of 34 lakh, has no doctors or medicines. On being reminded that during his visit to Ballia, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had expressed satisfaction with the arrangements made by the Health De-

partment, Singh said the officials had misled the CM, and the truth was not shown.

He also urged the BJP government to give a diesel subsidy to farmers.

Earlier in May, BJP's Sitapur MLA Rakesh Rathore had joined the list of ruling party lawmakers in Uttar Pradesh, expressing resentment over the alleged COVID-19 mismanagement in the state and saying that he feared a sedition charge for speaking up.

"What standing do MLAs have? If we speak too much, treason and sedition charges will be slapped on us as well, Rakesh Rathore had told reporters, according to a video clip.

On May 9, Union Labour minister Santosh Gangwar had complained to the chief minister about the situation in his Bareilly constituency, saying officials don't take calls and government health centres send back patients for 'referrals' from the district hospital.

In a letter to Adityanath, he had also complained about the big shortage of empty oxygen cylinders and the high prices of medical equipment in Bareilly.

A day later, BJP MLA from Jasrana in Firozabad Ramgopal Lodhi claimed that his coronavirus positive wife was not admitted to an Agra hospital for over three hours, with officials saying that beds were not available.

Medical supplies provided to Aanganwadi workers and ASHAs at Namthang



NAMCHI, 26 JUN [IPR]: Digital BP instruments, Thermometers, sanitizers and face-mask were distributed to 15 Anganwadi work-

ers and seven ASHAs by Maneydara Nagi Zilla panchayat, Yadu Nath Mishra, at the BAC conference hall at Namthang today.

The distribution programme was also attended by BDO Namthang, Ram Kumar Tamang, CDPO-Namchi, Laxman Tamang,

Dr Dewraj Gurung, Panchayat President Nagi Karek GPU and Panchayat Members of Namthang Maneydara GPU.

Centre plans e-courts- land records linking to ease property registration

NEW DELHI, 27 JUN [PTI]: Seeking to help bonafide buyers know whether the land they plan to buy is under any legal dispute, the government plans to link e-courts with land records and registration database.

The government feels that in the long run it will reduce dubious transactions, help in dispute containment and also reduce clogging of the court's system.

The pilot project on linking of e-Court with land records and registration database has been successfully completed in Maharashtra along with Uttar Pradesh and Haryana and soon it will be launched across the country.

The Department of Justice in the Law Ministry has requested the registrars general of all the high courts to provide clearance to state governments to integrate land records and registration database with eCourts and National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) for speedy disposal of property disputes.

Eight high courts have so far responded. These are Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Himachal Pradesh.

"In this regard, it will be appreciated if you could facilitate expeditious action at your end in providing the state government with necessary clearances for enabling the nationwide launch of linking of e-Court with land records and registration database as well

as other tasks related to it," the Department of Justice letter sent in April this year said.

It observed that registering property in an easy and transparent manner is one of the parameters evaluated by the World Bank for assessing the performance of 190 global economies on the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) Index.

The Department of Land Resources (DoLR) is the nodal department responsible for registering property index and has earned only 3.5 marks against a total weightage of 13 marks for quality of Land Administration Index, it noted.

"To foster ease of land property registration and creation of a conducive eco system, a committee was set up along with eCommittee of the Supreme Court for linking of eCourts with land records and registration database. The logic behind this is that if the legal status of any land/plot is properly captured and made available on the public domain, it would transparently guide a bonafide buyer while registering a sale deed as to whether the title of the subject land is disputed or not," the letter said.

The eCourts project is being implemented in district and subordinate courts of the country with an aim to provide designated services to litigants, lawyers and judiciary through universal computerisation of district and subordinate courts.

5 new cases take COVID-19 tally of Andamans to 7,446

PORT BLAIR, JUN 27 (PTI): The COVID-19 tally of Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 7,446 on Sunday as five more people tested positive for the infection, a health bulletin said.

Twenty more people were cured of the disease, taking the total number of recov-

eries to 7,265, it said, adding the Union territory now has 54 active cases.

The archipelago has thus far registered 127 coronavirus deaths.

The administration has tested over 4 lakh samples for COVID-19 so far.

More than 1.6 lakh people have been inoculated to date, it added.

Does Delta Plus Variant Harm Lungs More?....

Mr Arora said the number of cases identified of Delta Plus variant may be more as there may be many asymptomatic individuals also -- those who do not have any COVID-19 symptoms but they are carrying the virus and spreading it.

"But the important point is that our genomic surveillance component has picked it up rightly and early enough. Now what will happen is that states have already been told that it is a variant of concern and it requires action which means that several states have already started making micro plans for the districts where the virus is identified so that their spread can be contained. Obviously vaccination will have to be increased in these districts," he said.

Responding to a question if the Delta Plus variant can trigger the third wave of coronavirus, Mr Arora said it is difficult to assess that as of now.

"Waves are linked to new variants or new mutations so there is a possibility as this is a new variant, but whether it will lead to a third wave is difficult to answer as it will depend upon two or three things," he said.

"The first thing is we had a ferocious second wave in the last three months and it is still going on, we are seeing for the last 8-10 days the number of cases are stuck at 50,000, while at some places cases continue to come so that wave has not settled down," he said.

He said the second wave will influence the community's response to another variant and the third wave will depend upon what proportion of the population got infected in the second wave.

"If a large proportion is infected then in the next wave people can develop a common cold like illness but may not develop a serious or fatal illness," he said.

"Secondly, another thing that is important is vaccination -- the rapidity with which we vaccinate... even single dose is effective and the way we are planning, if we rapidly immunise, then possibility of third wave becomes very less because vaccine plus... Covid appropriate behaviour will save us from next wave, mitigate the next wave and the third wave will not be able to cause the damage as was caused in the first two waves," he added.

KUTSE SHEGU



With deep sorrow we would like to inform that Kutse Shegu of Late Tenzing Bhutia who left his Heavenly abode on 15th May 2021 falls on 02nd July 2021 [Friday]. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering Prayers for the departed Soul at Deorali, Hotel Chowtara besides But-

terfly Fly Over.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude towards all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement and to thank you all for your kind support and concern.

Passong Gensapa 8918153622

Kuentsel Gensapa 7679217911

Ranjana Chakraborty 9641927953

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
- Coughing or Sneezing
- Sore Throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Headache
- Shortness of breath

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 unashed 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 symptoms and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive based on the person's clinical condition.
- No vaccination available as of now.
- Work closely with your healthcare provider.

If you seek help, you may call:

Toll free no. 104

District surveillance Officer

EAST : 7620372100

WEST : 9542971800

NORTH : 9541057400

SOUTH : 7407601400

New OTNM

AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



Int'l Day Against Drug Abuse at Sanjeevani Rehab

GANGTOK, 27 JUN: Sanjeevani Rehabilitation Society organized an awareness programme at its rehab center at Lower Phalidara, Bhanjiyang Road, Namchi, on 26 June to mark International Day Against Drug Abuse & Illicit Trafficking, a press release informs

One more arrested in Chhatrasal Stadium brawl

NEW DELHI, JUN 27 (PTI): The Delhi Police's Crime Branch on Sunday arrested a 22-year-old man in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl in which a wrestler died and his two friends were injured, police said. The accused, Gaurav Laura, a native of Haryana, is also a wrestler. He was living here in Najafgarh's Baprola village, they said.

Police said a crime

branch team probing the case nabbed Laura from Delhi and he will be further produced before Rohini court for seeking police remand for further investigation.

A senior police officer said, "He was found to be involved in the incident at Chhatrasal Stadium here where he engaged in a fight along with others leading to the death of the young wrestler."

Police said 11 peo-

ple, including two-time Olympic medallist winner Sushil Kumar, have so far been arrested in connection with the case.

Kumar, along with his associates, allegedly assaulted Sagar Dhankar and two of his friends at the stadium on the intervening night of May 4 and 5 over an alleged property dispute. Dhankar, 23, succumbed to the injuries later.

The police have claimed that Kumar is the "main culprit and mastermind" of the murder and said that there is electronic evidence in which he and his associates could be seen beating Dhankar.

Kumar was nabbed on May 23, along with co-accused Ajay Kumar Sehrawat. Till now, he has undergone police and judicial custody of 10 and 23 days, respectively.

North Koreans worry over Kim Jong Un's apparent weight loss

SEOUL, 27 JUN [REUTERS]: Everyone in North Korea is heartbroken over leader Kim Jong Un's apparent weight loss, said an unidentified resident of Pyongyang quoted on the country's tightly controlled state media, after watching recent video footage of Kim. The rare public comment on Kim's health came after foreign analysts noted in early June that the autocratic leader, who is believed to be 37, appeared to have lost a noticeable amount of weight.

"Seeing respected

general secretary (Kim Jong Un) looking emaciated breaks our people's heart so much," the man said in an interview aired by state broadcaster KRT on Friday.

"Everyone is saying that their tears welled up," he said.

In the clip, which Reuters could not independently verify, Pyongyang residents were seen watching a big screen on the street showing a concert attended by Kim and party officials after a plenary meeting of their Workers' Party of Korea

(WPK).

The broadcast did not provide any details on what had led to the weight loss.

When Kim reappeared in state media in June after not being seen in public for almost a month, analysts at NK News, a Seoul-based website that monitors North Korea, noted that his watch appeared to be fastened more tightly than before around an apparently slimmer wrist.

Given Kim's tight grip on power in North Ko-

rea - and the uncertainty over any plans for a successor - international media, spy agencies, and specialists closely watch his health.

Early last year, speculation about Kim's health exploded after he missed the birth anniversary celebrations of state founder Kim Il Sung on April 15, only to reappear in public in early May.

In 2014, state media reported that Kim was suffering from "discomfort", after a prolonged period out of the public eye.

Will call off protest if laws repealed, say farmer leaders

NEW DELHI, 27 JUN [PTI]: As their agitation completed seven months, farmer leaders on Saturday stuck to their demands, saying they will call off their protest if the government repeals the three farm laws even as Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar appealed to them to end their stir and offered to resume talks.

Yudhvir Singh, general secretary of Bhartiya Kisan Union, an umbrella body of farm unions that is spearheading the agitation, said farmers will end the protest once the agri laws are repealed.

"The government does not talk about minimum support price. The government always talks about amendment in the laws. However, we want them to repeal the laws. We also want them to introduce a law on MSP," Singh said.

Shiv Kumar Kakka,

national president of the Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Mahasangh, said they will not hold talks under any precondition.

"We have lost over 600 farmers in last seven months and they (government) are telling us to end this agitation. There will be no dialogue under any preconditions.

"If the government repeals the three farm laws and makes a new one with the guarantee of minimum support price (MSP), we will thank them and head back to our respective places," Kakka said.

The government and farmer unions have held 11 rounds of talks so far, the last being on January 22, to break the deadlock and end the farmers' protest.

Talks have not resumed following widespread violence during a tractor rally by protesting farmers on January 26.

Jamhuri Kisan Sabha general secretary Kulwant Singh said they also want to go back home as soon as possible.

"The government is asking us to end the protest as they are ready for talks. We have already asked the government several times to repeal the three laws. If they do so, we will head back home as soon as possible from the borders. We do not like doing this and staying out of home for months," Mr Singh said.

The Supreme Court had put on hold the implementation of the three laws till further orders and has set up a committee to find solutions. The committee has submitted its report.

"I want to convey through your (media) that farmers should end their agitation.Many are in favour of these new laws across the country. Still, some farmers have

any issue with provisions of the laws, Government of India is ready to listen and discuss with them," Mr Tomar tweeted on Saturday.

He said the government held 11 rounds of consultations with protesting farmer unions. The government has increased the minimum support price (MSP) and is procuring more quantity at MSP.

On Saturday, hundreds of farmers from interiors of Uttar Pradesh, reached Ghazipur on Delhi's borders to mark the completion of seven months of the protest.

Led by Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait, a group of protesters submitted a memorandum of their demands at the office of DCP Northeast Delhi after a virtual meeting with Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal.

Namchi's drains unclogged

NAMCHI, 26 JUN [IPR]: Following directions of DC-South, M Bharani Kumar, to mitigate the threat of storm water runoff in and around Namchi, a Safai Abhiyan to clear the blocked drains was carried out on Saturday.

The Abhiyan saw the involvement of NMC led by MEO, SI, ASI and field staff along with Safai Karamcharis.

The PWD team was led by AE, PWD, Namchi, Kamal Sharma, JE's Sangey Bhutia, Bishan Rai, Gunjan Powdyal, Subodh Adhikari, Supervisors (PWD) Karma Lepcha, Yuwa Pradhan,



Binod Rai, Padam Bdr. Gurung, Chandra Kr. Chettri (JCB Operator), along with labourers from different maintenance gangs of roads

connecting Namchi. Also present during the activities was Ward Councilor Gangyap and her team.

This abhiyan is an effort to keep the drains

free from clogging, but the drinking water pipelines running through the drains are a major obstruction in thorough cleaning.

India records 50,040 new COVID-19 cases, 1,258 fresh fatalities

NEW DELHI, JUN 27 (PTI): A single-day rise of 50,040 fresh COVID-19 infections took India's tally to 3,02,33,183, while the number of active cases dipped to 5,86,403, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Sunday.

The death toll climbed to 3,95,751 with 1,258 more people succumbing to the viral disease in a day.

Active cases now comprises 1.94 per cent of the total infections, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Recoveries outnumbered daily new cases of COVID-19 for the 45th consecutive day with the number of people who have recuperated from

the disease surging to 2,92,51,029. The case fatality rate stood at 1.31 per cent.

While the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 96.75 per cent, the weekly case positivity rate has come down to 2.91 per cent.

According to the ministry data, the daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.82 per cent. It has been less than 5 per cent for 20 consecutive days.

India administered 64.25 lakh vaccine doses in a day, taking the cumulative number of jabs given so far under the nationwide inoculation drive to 32.17 crore, according to immunisation data published at 7 am.

Also, 17,45,809 tests

were conducted on Saturday for the detection of COVID-19, taking the total number of tests conducted so far in the country to 40,18,11,892.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7 last year, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

The country crossed the grim milestone of two crore total COVID-19 cases on May 4 this year and three crore on June 23.

The total 3,95,751 deaths reported so far in the country include 1,20,881 in Maharashtra, 34,654 in Karnataka, 32,199 in Tamil Nadu, 24,961 in Delhi, 22,443 in Uttar Pradesh, 17,583 in West Bengal, 15,979 in Punjab and 13,427 in Chattisgarh.

The ministry has stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths reported so far have occurred due to comorbidities.

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

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From 10 Minutes to a Lifetime

A potential we allowed to wilt, but can still reclaim

A couple of days back, those still in Sikkim Democratic Front maker 10 Minutes to Earth, an initiative its government had begun little over a decade back. The party is no longer in office and the new dispensation has done away with the initiative and observes something similar on a different day with a different spin. In the SDF camp, the dedication continues, albeit as a party effort which has taken a political spin to replace the people's effort it could muster when it was also in government. Where there used to be a rush among those given to sycophancy to ensure a photo-op and a celebratory press release singing praises to the party and its leader and government. Now, SDF sings its own praises. Be that as it may, it was an interesting initiative which did some good as well. Even if very few of the saplings survived, those numbers would still be more than what Sikkim would have planted without this event. More substantially, it established that if pushed, Sikkim can be inspired to care for the environment. There is no contesting the fact that saplings were indeed planted and it was obvious that children, even those from junior schools, returned home excited bearing news that they planted little ones of big trees which will now grow up with them. And that should have always been the focus for the 10-Minute dedication – drawing strength and sustaining involvement from the innocence and infectious idealism of the young. That, in the hands of babus who organised these events, was never the priority otherwise the young ones would have kept their date with Earth even though the political masters have changed.

And that is an unfortunate loss. In a world where countries continue to try and justify why they should be allowed to continue polluting, and despite all the snide comments that detractors might proffer, Sikkim was at least earnest in its gesture. Launched in the year 2009, the dedication was promoted as Sikkim broadcasting an appeal to the world to protect the Earth and by doing so, inspire more contribution towards the planet's health. There was nothing new about a plantation drive; that is a tokenism that the world community evolved long back as a fig leaf for World Environment Day to cover the abuse that it subjects the environment to for the rest of the year. What was new however was that the 10-Minute dedication was reasonably successful through its past instalments in engaging participation. Sikkim, with 47.59% of its geographical area already under forest cover, did not need more plantation drives, but it was still a welcome initiative because it gave the young a unique undertaking - to begin caring for nature. For the outside world, it was a prayer to get the bigger states and nations thinking on how they should complement tiny, and already Green, Sikkim's gesture.

The 10 Minutes to Earth initiative has since been shelved, but the idea at its root should not be allowed to wilt. Sikkim needs to do build on the introduction it facilitated between the young and nature and help the younger generation rediscover the close understanding that the people here had evolved of the land they lived in. Environment Studies is now a compulsory part of the syllabus, but it is woefully alien and too generalized. The text books are little more than repackaged Geography lessons. Environmental education is more than that, it includes cultural relationships with the land and should be more about learning to live with the environment and not an alienated learning about environment per se. Sikkim is perfectly positioned to make EVS [as Environmental Studies is known in schools], relevant and fruitful. Students, say in Delhi, might need textbooks because they have only concrete blocks around them, but depending on textbooks in Sikkim will only distance students here from the nature that surrounds them. What is more, the State already has a rich tradition of sustainable dependence on the environment, aspects of which form an integral part of traditional life-styles here. That knowledge base is only one generation distant in the past. It can still be reclaimed. As part of Environmental Studies, students here should be learning about the concept of sacred groves maintained by village communities [an effective way to conserve green cover], learn of the stories of mythical powers imbued in its water bodies and understand how people effectively protected them from pollution [and eventual loss] - by reinforcing their surroundings by presenting them as abodes of easily angered nymphs or protecting deities.

The young need to also learn of the traditional hunting practices in which animals were killed only for food, and never as game or in retribution. If the environment has to be protected and conserved, people need to go back to tradition, not turn to more rules and penalties. Tradition needs to be invoked, not as blind faith, but as the only pragmatic and practicable option. The myth that forests and wildlife need to be 'protected' from the lay people needs to be demolished. Wildlife was not wiped out by hunter-gatherers, they were pushed into extinction by city dwellers on indiscriminate weekend hunts. The forests were not lost to the need of villagers, but were consumed by the greed of the cities – that insensitive obsession for silver-fir panelled rooms in concrete jungles. The young need to understand this, and then learn of how their own respective communities connected with nature and lived with it, how they adjusted their life-styles around it and how they worked their belief structures to weave conservation and sustainable practices as part of that one aspect that no one can argue with – Faith. The 10-Minutes to Earth had provided the perfect launching pad for a return to such involved engagement, but we wasted that potential. That, however, does not mean that we give up on the potential itself.

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Mispronunciation: Why You Should Stop Correcting People's Mistakes

JANE SETTER
THECONVERSATION.COM

A recent survey of 2,000 adults in the UK identified the top ten “mispronunciations” people find annoying. Thankfully the majority (65%) of annoyed people do not feel comfortable correcting a speaker in public.

But leaving aside the fact that 2,000 is hardly a representative sample of the UK, with its population of over 66 million, this survey raises longstanding linguistic questions: why do people pronounce words differently, why does pronunciation change, and why does so-called mispronunciation upset some people to the point of making it possible (and interesting) to compile a top ten list?

I'm a phonetician – an expert in the way people make speech sounds and pronounce language. I've also written about what we can learn about a person from the way they speak.

A universal truth about language is that it is subject to constant change – and pronunciation is just as likely to change over time as aspects like grammar or vocabulary.

HOW LANGUAGE CHANGES

One criticism of speakers who pronounce nuclear (“NU-cle-ar”) as “nucular” is that it does not match the spelling. In fact, English is known for having some very irregular spelling-to-sound correspondences, so that argument does not always hold up. The most extreme cases are probably family and place names: the surname Featherstonehaugh can be pronounced to sound like “Fanshaw”, for example, while Torpenhow in Cumbria is pronounced “Trepenna”.

How did we get to those pronunciations? Through a process of gradual, historical language change. These changes could be the result of social interaction (“other people say it like this”), mishearings, spelling pronunciations, phonetic processes or the influence of other languages, among other things. Certainly, language change is inevitable, which is handy because it keeps us linguists in business and generates a lot of copy for newspapers and the like.

Let's have a look at some of the pronunciation people objected to in that survey.

“Espresso” is pronounced “expresso” by many people, even though there is no “x” in the spelling. This pronunciation probably arose by analogy with the word “express”. The two are actually cognate words with similar origins, both meaning “press out” or “obtain by squeezing”.

If you hear someone ask for an espresso, it's easy to see how you might mishear this to be nearer to a word you already know, and there-

fore adopt that pronunciation. Importantly, you are unlikely to misunderstand what the speaker has asked for.

We don't have a similar issue with the pronunciation of “cappuccino” or “macchiato” because we simply don't have anything similar to those words in English. Incidentally, I'm reliably informed that the French word for “espresso” is “expresso”. Vive la différence.

The pronunciation of “probably” as “probly” likely arises from a process called weak syllable elision or deletion. The weak second syllable in “probably” is often deleted in speech. A similar phenomenon happens in “especially”, pronounced “specially” – the first syllable is weak and is deleted. In English, the most important syllables for listener comprehension are stressed. That's why young children acquiring language say “tatoes” for “potatoes”, or “jamas” for “pyjamas”.

In rapid adult speech, it is very likely that these weaker syllables will be deleted. As George Bailey, a sociolinguist at the University of York, notes, it is interesting that “probably” and “especially” are singled out when we do this with many words. He gives the examples “memory” (pronounced “MEM-ry”) and “library” (pronounced “LI-bry”), which did not make the list.

I have, however, noticed a recent change in the way some words which have historically had weak syllable elision are pronounced. For example, “irreparable” seems to be changing from four syllables with a main stress on the second (“ir-REP-ra-ble”) to five syllables with the main stress on the third (“ir-re-PAR-a-ble”), with the stressed syllable sounding like “pear”. I'm not entirely sure what is going on here, but it could be by analogy with the word “repair”, or with “comparable”, which seems to be shifting from “COM-pra-ble” to “com-PAR-a-ble”.

The last word I'll draw out for examination is “Arctic”, pronounced “Artick”. It is possible that the first “c” might not be heard in rapid speech, even if a speaker is articulating it. This is because it is produced further back in the oral cavity than the following “t”, and so its release can be masked.

Historically, as Graham Pointon, formerly the BBC's pronunciation adviser, has noted, the Chambers Etymological Dictionary lists the earliest English version as “Artic”. The “c” could have been reinserted during the Renaissance period, when scholars sought to reform English spelling to reflect classical languages such as Latin and Greek.

Unfortunately they also reformed the spelling of words which had entered the language via other routes. This gave us such fun spellings as “debt” for what had been written “dette” in Middle English and came from Old French “dete” (and of course we don't pronounce the “b” in “debt”).

Another route for language change is the influence of other speakers. I'm half-expecting people to start pronouncing “microwave” quite differently following this viral clip of Nigella Lawson. I've already had discussions with people who say they have adopted it “just for fun”. How long before it goes mainstream?

PRONUNCIATION AND PREJUDICE

So what does all this say about the 35% of people who feel compelled to correct so-called mispronunciations in public? Nothing good, in my opinion. It seems to be a pedantic display of perceived superiority which can only result in the person with the “unacceptable” pronunciation looking stupid.

The way people speak and pronounce words is very much dependent on their language background and experience. By correcting a pronunciation that you have actually understood but somehow object to, you could be inadvertently – or even purposefully – pointing out perceived deficiencies arising from differences in social class, culture, race, gender, and so on.

Correcting pronunciation can actually be an act of linguistic prejudice. This is different from correcting a language learner in a pronunciation classroom or asking someone to repeat something you have not understood, for example. Taking someone politely aside is less threatening, but you should still consider your motivations for doing so.

It might not always be the case that the corrector's motivations are self-centred. My father always corrected me (in private) because he believed that having a “non-standard” accent – particularly one which is perceived as ugly by some – would negatively affect my career prospects. Sadly, at the time (this was the 1980s), I think my father was right.

Issues of linguistic prejudice linked to race and class are still alive and well, as was recently brought into sharp focus in an article on the American television news journalist Deion Broxton. The good news is that linguists in the UK are actively working on research and resources to help combat accent prejudice.

[the writer is Professor of Phonetics, University of Reading]

Bumble's Week Off: Employees Suffering From Burnout Need More Than an Extra Holiday

FEHMIDAH MUNIR
THECONVERSATION.COM

After a busy year involving a rise in customers, a stock market debut and all the pressures that come with a global pandemic, the dating app Bumble recently announced that all staff would be given a week off work. The company's offices closed, with all 700 employees on paid leave to deal with what one executive called “our collective burnout”.

It was widely seen as a positive gesture which will have hopefully given staff the time and space to recover, mentally and physically, from a stressful period. They may also feel supported and cared for, which in turn should increase their feelings of job satisfaction and self worth.

That said, taken as a stand-alone initiative, it is a temporary fix, and staff could well be returning to the same volume of work after their time off.

But Bumble's founder, Whitney Wolfe Herd, might have plans to address this. The company already offers a wide range of initiatives to support wellbeing. These include things like attractive work spaces and services (such as free manicures), but also more important perks such as allowing staff to choose their own hours, as long as the work gets done.

Whether the company-wide week off reaps benefits or not, the idea will have sounded appealing to millions of workers elsewhere who would no doubt be delighted with such an offer.

In the UK, it is estimated that



as many as 1.6 million people suffer from work-related ill health – over half of them with stress, depression or anxiety. Around 55% of all sick leave days are due to work-related mental health problems, primarily caused by pressures including tight deadlines, poor working relationships lack of manager support and workplace harassment.

To better understand how employers can address mental health problems, I've been following some closed groups on social media where most of the conversation is about work. Within the exchanges, there is a noticeable and growing frustration that workplaces tend to have a predominantly reactive approach to dealing with the stress and burnout caused by work pressures.

This could mean anything from yoga classes to mindfulness and resilience training, and while these programmes can indeed be use-

ful for supporting general mental wellbeing, they only go so far.

For there appears to be a genuine appetite in these groups for an approach which prevents and manages mental health issues before medical treatment and long-term sick leave are actually required.

ROOT CAUSES

A more systematic and comprehensive approach would seek to eliminate the original problem (such as too great a work load), provide support to those who are suffering (perhaps a workshop on coping skills), and also treat and rehabilitate those already on long-term leave.

It is also important to target all of these intervention categories at different levels, both in and out of the workplace. In effect, this means taking into account the individual worker, the group (colleagues), the manager or team leader, and the organisation itself.

Very few workplaces take such a full approach. Instead many opt for strategies aimed at making the individual worker feel better, rather than targeting the working conditions that are at the root of the problem. They also tend to fail to support workers in a way that empowers them to make changes to their own working lives for a better work-life balance.

This is because many organisations hesitate to improve or change working conditions as they believe it will have a negative impact on their productivity. But evidence suggests that this is not the case.

With mental health issues on the rise, it is time for employers to put into practice the evidence on what actually works in the long term to reduce mental health problems at work – for everyone's benefit, including their own.

[the writer is Professor of Health Psychology, Loughborough University]

World's smallest hog released into wild by conservationists in Assam

MANAS, 27 JUN [AFP]: A dozen of the world's smallest pigs have been released into the wild in northeastern India as part of a conservation programme to boost the population of a species once thought to have become extinct.

The pygmy hog, which has the scientific name *porcula salvania*, lives in tall, wet grasslands and was once found along plains on the Himalayan foothills in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Its population declined in the 1960s, leading to fears it had become extinct until it was rediscovered in India's northeastern state of Assam in 1971, conservationists say.

By 1993, it was only found in a few pockets of Assam's Manas National Park, which borders Bhutan.

The Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme, involving several organisations including from state and national governments, established a captive breeding scheme with six hogs in 1996 to



try and revive their population.

"This time we are releasing 12 pygmy hogs including seven male and five female," the programme's field scientist Dhritiman Das told AFP at the release site in Manas National Park on Saturday.

Eight of the hogs were released in Manas on Tuesday and four

more on Saturday. Some 14 were released last year.

The programme looks after around 70 captive hogs and is breeding more to be released.

The past week's releases take the number of pigs reintroduced into the wild by the programme to 142.

The wild population

is estimated to be less than 250, conservationists say.

"In next four years, we target to release 60 hogs... so that they can build their own population in the wild," Mr Das added.

The programme has also sought to rehabilitate the grasslands home to the tiny creatures, which measure about 25

centimetres (9.8 inches) in height and 65 centimetres in length and weigh around 8-9 kilogrammes (17.6-19.8 pounds).

The species' survival has been threatened by the loss and degradation of its habitats due to human activity such as settlement and agriculture, and the improper management of such areas, experts say.

Assam CM conspiring to keep me behind bars, claims Akhil Gogoi

GUWAHATI, 27 JUN [PTI]: Jailed Independent Assam legislator Akhil Gogoi on Saturday alleged that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is hatching a conspiracy to keep him confined behind bars and is putting "tremendous pressure" on the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to ensure this.

Mr Gogoi, who was granted two-day parole to visit his ailing mother and son by an NIA court hearing cases against him, told reporters at his Selenghat village residence in Jorhat district that he is aware of all the conspiracies that are being hatched against him.

"My appeal to the chief minister is that he should not do Uttar Pradesh-type of politics here but ensure that the norms of traditional democracy are sustained. The politics based on democratic principles in Assam should not be turned into a communal, fascist one," he said.

The Rajior Dal president said that if Mr Sarma believes in democracy, the Cabinet should have taken a decision for his release after he was elected to the assembly.

Mr Gogoi was arrested on December 12, 2019, from Jorhat at the peak of the anti-CAA protests in the state as a "preventive measure" in view of the deteriorating law and order situation. The case was later handed over to the NIA.

NIA special judge Pranjal Das, after hearing a petition requesting permission to visit his family members in Guwahati



and Jorhat and the people of Sivasagar constituency, had granted him parole for 48 hours on Friday afternoon.

The court allowed Gogoi to visit only his ailing mother in Jorhat and his son in Guwahati, but asked him not to meet the people of his constituency due to the prevailing pandemic situation.

He stepped out of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, where he was undergoing treatment for various ailments, late on Friday night. He spent the night at his rented residence in Guwahati with his wife and son who recently recovered from COVID-19.

"I could not sleep at all. My son is very sad and disturbed. I spent the entire night with him. I cannot take him with me as I am going in a police escort," Mr Gogoi told reporters outside his residence before leaving for Jorhat, over 300 kms from Guwahati.

Mr Gogoi received a tumultuous welcome at his village and had an emotional reunion with

his octogenarian mother Priyada Gogoi whom he met after two years and gave credits for his fighting and uncompromising spirit.

Villagers lined up with "gamoshas" (traditional Assamese towels) along the road to his home and raised slogans in his support as he was escorted home amid tight security cover.

He shall spend the night with his mother and return to Guwahati on Sunday at the end of his parole.

"Ma (mother) is everything to me. She is a very progressive woman. I have seen her making innumerable sacrifices when our father was injured in an accident and later in raising us," Mr Gogoi told reporters at his home, with his arms around his mother.

Stating how his mother had led his election campaign, Mr Gogoi said, "She has become a star campaigner. She doesn't know public speaking, she is not a political activist but the

way she spoke for me, she looked like someone capable of changing the course of politics." Mr Gogoi said that four-time Congress MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi, who resigned from the assembly to join the BJP on June 21, has committed a mistake for which the people will not forgive him.

"The people had elected him so that he could be their voice. For this betrayal of people's trust, he will lose (if he seeks re-poll) even if he spends ₹ 100 crore," he said.

The Rajior Dal president said that he will hold discussions with the local people on a suitable candidate for Mariani constituency.

Mr Gogoi, who contested and won from neighbouring Sivasagar seat, had filed nomination from Mariani also, but later withdrew it.

The peasant leader also expressed his gratitude to the people of his village and adjoining areas for always standing by him whenever any difficulty befell him.

"I also thank the people of Sivasagar with folded hands. You have elected me from behind bars and created history. I hope I can be free soon and serve you," he said.

He is the first person in the state to be elected to the assembly from prison.

Mr Gogoi, who was allowed to attend the legislative assembly only for a day to take oath as an MLA in May, said that he would raise the problems of his constituency in the coming Budget session and work to get Sivasagar, the erstwhile capital of the Ahom dynasty, declared as a historic town.

On the new responsibility as an elected representative, the Rajior Dal chief said that he may have to change his path a bit, but he will never compromise on his principles and ideologies "even if the government kills me".

The Rajior Dal president said that the government should provide monetary help to the tune of ₹ 7,000 to ₹ 10,000 for the next three to six months to families with no fixed salary.

On a personal front, Mr Gogoi said that he was happy to share with all that his wife Geetashree Tamuly, a lecturer at a college here, was awarded the PhD from IIT-Guwahati two days ago.

"I came home to this piece of good news. The fact that she could complete her PhD in such difficult and troubled times makes me very happy," he said.

Odisha based steel industries face shortage of iron ore

JAIPUR (ODISHA), JUN 27 (PTI): Steel industries in Odisha have urged the state government to bail them out from the high price of raw materials including iron ore.

Iron ore production in Odisha has dropped by over 31 million tonnes from 142 million tonnes in 2019-20 to 111 million tonnes in the 2020-21 financial year, according to official data.

Due to less production and increase in exports, the local industries have to pay around Rs 10,000 per tonne of iron ore in comparison to Rs 2,200 per MT in June last year.

They claimed that due to an unprecedented increase in the price

of the iron ore, many of the units had become unviable or on the verge of closure.

Industry bodies like the Orissa Sponge Iron Manufacturers' Association and the Kalinga Nagar Industries Association have already taken up the matter with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, chief secretary and the Steel and Mines secretary to keep iron ore prices at a reasonable level so that iron and steel industries in the state could survive and make some margin.

"There should be a hike in the production of iron ore.

Secondly, captive miners should not take part in the auction process," Kalinga Nagar

Industries Association president P L Kandoi said.

He said there should be a special provision for fair price of iron ore for the LTL (less than truck-load) buyers so that iron and steel industries in the state can survive and make some margin.

Odisha Sponge Iron Manufacturing Association president Yogesh Dalmia also opposed the current auction process, saying that the auction of iron ore by the state-owned OMC should be made on a monthly and not bi-monthly basis.

Despite the auction, 80 per cent of the iron ore should be reserved for Odisha-based industries, Dalmia said.

Assam groups districts into 3 categories to streamline fight against Covid

GUWAHATI, 27 JUN [PTI]: In a bid to streamline its efforts to fight Covid, the Assam government today divided the 33 districts in the state into three categories on the basis of their positivity rates.

The districts of Morigaon, Biswanath and Goalpara, and the Bokakhat subdivision of Golaghat district have been categorised under districts with high positivity rate.

There are 20 districts in the moderate positivity category. Ten districts, including Kamrup Metro where capital Dispur and Guwahati are located, have been grouped as districts showing

an improvement in the Covid situation.

An order by the Assam Disaster Management Authority said the high positivity districts will be under curfew round the clock and the districts with moderate positivity from 2 pm to 5 am. Districts where the Covid caseload is dropping will be under curfew from 5 pm to 5 am.

As per the order, shops, restaurants and government and private offices will remain closed in the high positivity category. For the districts with moderate positivity and low positivity, shops and offices can stay open

till 1 pm and 4 pm, respectively. Shops selling essential items can operate till 5 pm in the high positivity districts.

Assam today reported 2,640 Covid cases and 33 deaths over the past 24 hours.

State Health Minister Keshab Mahanta has said that the standard operating procedure for the Covid fight has been updated. Now, government employees who have taken one dose of the coronavirus vaccine can resume their duties and those who have taken both doses of vaccine will no longer need to take COVID tests to travel.

Hundreds of fish found dead in Guwahati pond

GUWAHATI, JUN 27 (PTI): Hundreds of fish have been found dead in Dighalipukhuri in Guwahati suspectedly due to depletion of oxygen level in the pond, a Fishery Department spokesperson said on Sunday.

The dead fish were found floating in the water body on Saturday and the process of retrieving them has begun, he said.

Preliminary investigation has ruled out poisoning and environmental degradation is suspected to be the cause, the spokesperson said.

"Depletion in oxygen level in the water due to organic overload seems to be the reason behind the mass fish deaths but



we can say anything definitely only after a complete investigation," he said.

Dighalipukhuri or 'long pond' in Assamese is around 500 metres long and is located in Ambari area of the state's largest city.

The pond was dug by Ahom rulers as a canal of the Brahmaputra River and served as a naval yard. The canal was later filled up during British rule.

Dighalipukhuri, which has boating facilities, is a popular tourist spot in the city.

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SummitTIMES

The Germany v England clash isn't what it used to be – thankfully

PHILIP OLTERMANN

BERLIN, 27 JUN

[THEGUARDIAN]: If Jamal Musiala gets to play at Wembley on Tuesday in the Euro 2020 knockout match between England and Germany, he might need to occasionally glance down to remind himself which shirt he is wearing.

The wiry Bayern Munich midfielder, who played the crucial pass that set up Germany's equaliser in a tetchy 2-2 draw against Hungary last Wednesday, has only made four appearances for his country's senior side. But between 2016 and 2020, Musiala played 25 games for the national youth teams of Tuesday's opponents, England.

Aged 18, the Stuttgart-born holder of a British and a German passport is the youngest player to represent Germany since Uwe Seeler, the captain in the famous World Cup final defeat to England in 1966. Musiala is too young to have experienced how politics and sport have overlapped when the two sides met in the past: he wasn't even born when pictures of Paul Gascoigne and Stuart Pearce, Photoshopped to look like second world war soldiers, were published in the Daily Mirror in 1996 alongside the headline "Achtung! Surrender".

However, having moved to the UK in 2010 because his mother was studying at Southampton University, and with Brexit reportedly "a factor" in his family's return to Germany in 2019, Musiala will know that politics isn't just reflected in the rhetoric around the game, but can redirect sporting fortunes too.



The match has been trailed as the rekindling of an "old rivalry" or even a "grudge match" in the British press, but German players and pundits have spoken of the clash in more celebratory tones. "To play against England at Wembley, that's awesome", said midfielder Leon Goretzka.

One reason for this has purely to do with sport: Germany's real grudge matches are against teams that have inflicted painful defeats, like Italy or the Netherlands. Matches against England, by contrast, tend to produce happy memories: England have won only six out of 24 matches against West and reunified German teams since 1966. Germany won England's last match at the old Wembley stadium, and the first after it was demolished and rebuilt. "Four World Cups and three European Championships" is the correct response to England's "Two World Wars and one World Cup" chant.

The other reason has to do with politics: when showdowns with

England accidentally assume an overtly political meaning for the German side, it is usually because they symbolise the start of a new era. The key match in this respect is not '66 but '72, when Germany beat England in the Euro quarter finals.

Germany's free-flowing style that night, epitomised by the long anti-establishment locks of playmaker Günter Netzer, was seen as the sporting expression of a political reinvention: at snap elections in November that year, Willy Brandt's centre-left SPD would gain a majority for the first time in German history. The Daily Mail described the match as the "night that changed the German image".

"No Englishman can ever again warm himself with the old assumption that, on the football field if nowhere else, the Germans are an inferior race", wrote the Observer's Hugh McIlvanney.

A 4-1 victory at South Africa's 2010 World Cup served a similar springboard function, show-

casing for the first time a more multicultural Germany studded with players of Brazilian, Ghanaian, Tunisian and Turkish heritage.

For England, these encounters often ended up channeling fears rather than hopes. The 1990 World Cup semi-final in Rome took place just two days before East and West German diplomats sat down to negotiate the terms of reunification – a process Margaret Thatcher had opposed more vocally than any other European leader.

That summer, trade and industry secretary Nicholas Ridley was sacked over a Spectator interview in which he described European monetary union as "a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe", illustrated with a cartoon of Helmut Kohl sporting a Hitler moustache.

Germany's dominance on the football pitch and the tennis courts (Boris Becker and Steffi Graf won their respective singles tournaments at Wimbledon in

1989)] touched a deeper paranoia about being sidelined by what was now Europe's largest economy. When Britain plunged into recession a year later, many blamed Germany's low interest rates.

When Germany knocked England out of the Euro semi-finals in 1996, John Redwood urged Times readers to "think again about the problem of Germany", and a Conservative campaign poster in the run-up to the 1997 election depicted Tony Blair sitting puppet-like on Kohl's giant knees.

Tabloid attempts to frame that encounter in terms of martial conflicts of the past – "Let's blitz Fritz" wrote the Sun in 1996 – look in hindsight more like desperate diversion tactics, a case of "Don't mention the economy". They were also new: when the teams had met in 1966, some 20 years after VE Day, there were no reports of the Wembley crowd booing the German anthem, and the war was barely mentioned by the British press.

Can Tuesday's match still sustain similar political narratives? If Germany lose, it will leave a question mark at the end of the 15-year period in which its football team has been managed by Joachim Löw and the country by Angela Merkel. For coach and chancellor, it could shift the emotional emphasis from the achievements of their era to the opportunities they missed.

Some Brexit advocates may wish for a swashbuckling English victory to drive home the dividends of the UK breaking free of the shackles of that old "German racket". Yet a German team that no longer lives up to old stereotypes of ruthless efficiency, and an England side more wary of patriotic hubris than in the past, may be ill-equipped to sustain that storyline.

When England and Germany met in 2010, one German player was under contract at a Premier League club. This time around, eight players in Germany's squad earn or used to earn their club wages in England, while England players Jadon Sancho and Jude Bellingham play with Germany's Mats Hummels at Dortmund. Not to mention Jamal Musiala's time in England's junior teams.

These are two sides that tell a story of increased international entwinement, at a time when Brexit has spun the two countries in different directions. As vessels for narratives about the nation state, for once, they no longer look fit for purpose. Instead, they look ahead of the curve.

West Indies beat South Africa by 8 wickets in 1st T20

ST GEORGE'S, JUN 27 (AP): Evin Lewis made 71, including a half-century from 22 balls, to steer the West Indies to an eight-wicket win over South Africa in the first of five Twenty20s.

South Africa fell short of a par total when it was held to 160-6 from its 20 overs after being sent in.

Lewis took his 71 runs from only 35 balls and shared partnerships of 85 for the first wicket with Andre Fletcher and 39 for the second with Chris Gayle to set up the West Indies' win. When he was out in the 12th over, the West Indies were 124-2 and within sight of victory.

Gayle's and Andre Russell's unbroken 37-run partnership for the third wicket carried the West Indies past South Africa's total in only 15 overs. Gayle finished 34 not out from 24 balls and Russell was 23 from 12 deliveries.

The West Indies innings included 15 sixes, seven of which were hit by Lewis.

"I was confident today and backing my ability," Lewis said. "This wicket is excellent for batting, it's important to cash in."

"We felt they were 30 or 40 runs short because these were excellent conditions. Andre Fletcher and I just tried to get a good start in the power play, most importantly, and then try and build from there to get the victory."

Saturday's match, the first to be played at St George's in Guyana, was also the first between the West Indies and South Africa since the 2016 Cricket World Cup which the West In-

dies won. But the West Indies has won only two of its last seven T20 series.

South Africa made a solid start, led by the in-form Quinton de Kock who hit 37 from 24 balls. It was 95-2 in the 11th over, set for a competitive score. But, though Rassie van der Dussen batted through the last half of the innings to make 56 from 38 balls, the innings lost its momentum.

Fabian Allen bowled well early and took 2-18 from four overs and Dwayne Bravo stifled any late rally, taking two wickets with consecutive balls in the 19th over.

Lewis and Fletcher gave the West Indies the perfect start, putting on 85 in only seven overs. Fletcher was looking strong when he was run out taking a bye, beaten by Lungi Ngidi's direct hit at the non-striker's end.

Proteas captain Temba Bavuma rotated his bowlers but couldn't constrain the West Indies' scoring.

In the absence of Aiden Markram, Bavuma lacked an additional slow option after left-arm-er George Linde, who opened the bowling, and the wrist spinner Tabraiz Shamsi. He was forced to call on part-timer Reeza Hendricks who hadn't previously bowled in a T20 international.

Hendricks was introduced in the 11th over, when the West Indies was coasting at 93-1 and faced the daunting prospect of bowling to Chris Gayle. The West Indies master blaster hit his first two balls for six and took 21 from his only over.

Sri Lanka cricket fans launch social media campaign against players after England drubbing

COLOMBO, 27 JUN [AFP]: Disgruntled Sri Lanka cricket fans launched a campaign to shun their team on social media after they slumped to a dismal Twenty20 series drubbing in England. England recorded a thumping 89-run win at Southampton on Saturday to sweep the contests 3-0 -- a fifth consecutive series defeat for Sri Lanka in the shortest format.

As the hashtag #unfollowcricketers began to trend on Facebook on Sunday, thousands of fans boycotted the Facebook pages of vice-captain Kusal Mendis and opener Dhanushka Gunathilaka, the newscenter.lk website said.

"The aim of the campaign is to unfollow failed Sri Lankan cricketers from their verified profiles on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter," the popular website said.

Fans were also sharing memes asking each other not to watch the national team on television.

"Unfollow all these failed cricketers," said Ahmed Inaamulhaq on Twitter. "Don't let them have the social media attention if they can't perform for the national team. They do not deserve massive fan bases."

There was no immediate reaction from any of the senior play-

ers, but some observers posted that the latest performance in England was one of the team's worst in three decades.

"I have been watching cricket matches since 1993 but I have never seen such a weak Sri Lankan cricket team," sports reporter Manjula Basnayake said on Twitter. "They can't hit the ball. #SLvENG."

England's 180 proved well beyond Sri Lanka, who were all out for 91 as left-arm quick David Willey took 3-27.

England and Sri Lanka meet again in the first of three one-day internationals at Chester-le-Street on Tuesday, with the Sri Lanka batting set for another stiff test against the 50-over World Championships.

"We knew it was going to be a tough series coming into it, but our batting wasn't up to the mark," said Sri Lanka captain Kusal Perera.

"That was our main issue. We couldn't get used to the pace and the bounce of the pitches and conditions."

Sri Lanka have played 10 Twenty20 series since October 2018 and won only one. They have lost two each to England, New Zealand and the West Indies and one each to Australia, India and South Africa.

Gwen Berry turns away from anthem at US Olympic trials and says she was 'set up'

WASHINGTON, 27 JUN

[THEGUARDIAN]: Olympic hammer thrower Gwen Berry has said she was "set up" after turning away from the national anthem during the medal ceremony at the US Olympic trials on Saturday night.

The 31-year-old has a long history of activism and raised her fist as The Star-Spangled Banner ended when she won gold at the 2019 Pan American Games, something she said was a protest against injustice in the US and the presidency of Donald Trump. On Saturday, the anthem started as Berry was on the podium after finishing third in the trials. While the music played, Berry placed her left hand on her hip and shuffled her feet. She took a turn, so she was facing the stands, not the flag. Toward the end of the anthem, she picked up her black T-shirt with the words "Activist Athlete" emblazoned on the front, and draped it over her head.

Berry believes it was no coincidence that she was front and center during the anthem. Unlike the Olympics, the



anthem does not accompany medals ceremonies at the US trials. But the hammer throwers received their awards just before the start of the evening session, which has been kicking off all week with a video rendition of The Star-Spangled Banner played on the scoreboard. "I feel like it was a set-up, and they did it on purpose," Berry said of the timing of the anthem. "I was pissed, to be honest."

USA Track and Field spokeswoman Susan Hazzard said that "the national anthem was scheduled to play at

5.20pm. We didn't wait until the athletes were on the podium for the hammer throw awards. The national anthem is played every day according to a previously published schedule." On Saturday, the music started at 5.25pm.

"They said they were going to play it before we walked out, then they played it when we were out there," Berry said. "But I don't really want to talk about the anthem because that's not important. The anthem doesn't speak for me. It never has."

Berry's third-place

finish at the trials guarantees her a place at the Olympics and she has promised to use her position to raise awareness about social injustices in the US. "My purpose and my mission is bigger than sports," she said. "I'm here to represent those ... who died due to systemic racism. That's the important part. That's why I'm going. That's why I'm here today."

Berry's gesture drew virtually no reaction from the stands, and the winner of Saturday's hammer trial, DeAnna Price, said she supported

her teammate. "I think people should say whatever they want to say. I'm proud of her," Price said.

Berry said she needs to get "my body right, my mind right and my spirit right" for the Olympics. The women's hammer throw starts on 1 August in Tokyo. But she doesn't think she needs to be on the podium in Tokyo to have an impact. "I don't need to do anything sport-wise," she said. "What I need to do is speak for my community, to represent my community and to help my community. Because that's more important

than sports."

Berry's demonstration at the 2019 Pan American Games led to a sanction, but ultimately pushed the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee to commit to not punishing athletes who raise fists or kneel at the trials or in Tokyo. It's a potential flash point for Tokyo, where the IOC has said it will enforce its Rule 50 that bans demonstrations at events. It's the same prohibition that meant sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos were sent home from the Mexico City Games in 1968.

New restrictions around the world amid struggle to contain Delta variant

QATAR, 27 JUN [ALJAZEERA]: Authorities in several countries – from Bangladesh and Indonesia to Australia and Israel – are racing to contain the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus, while Russia's Saint Petersburg announced a record death toll, laying bare the challenges faced by nations worldwide in their efforts to return to pre-pandemic life. While vaccination campaigns have brought down infections in mostly wealthy nations, the rise of the Delta variant has stoked fears of new waves of a virus that has already killed nearly four million people. "There is currently a lot of concern about the Delta variant," World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a Friday news briefing.

"Delta is the most transmissible of the variants identified so far, has been identified in at least 85 countries and is spreading rapidly among unvaccinated populations."

In Bangladesh, authorities announced they would impose a new national lockdown from Monday over the variant, with offices shut for a week and only medical-related transport allowed.

Australia's largest city Sydney, meanwhile, entered a two-week lockdown, with people ordered to stay home except for essential trips.

Sydney's new restrictions apply to some five million people, along with hundreds of thousands of



others living in nearby towns.

New Zealand, citing "multiple outbreaks" in Australia, announced a three-day suspension of its quarantine-free travel arrangement with its larger neighbour.

Australia's COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said the suspension would give officials time to consider measures "to make the bubble safer, such as pre-departure testing for all flights" between the two countries.

In Indonesia, President Joko Widodo said the country of 270 million people was facing an "extraordinary situation" and pledged to respond with "quick and appropriate policies". The country recorded more than 21,000 new infections on Saturday, the highest daily tally yet.

Delta, which was first identified in India in April, is so contagious that experts say more than 80 percent of a population would need to be inoculated in order to contain it – a challenging

target even for nations with significant vaccination programmes. The variant is now responsible for more than 90 percent of all new infections in the United Kingdom and about 30 percent in the United States.

European scientists estimate Delta is 40 to 60 percent more contagious than the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7), first discovered in the United Kingdom, which itself was more infectious than the original virus first detected in late 2019.

"It infects more people, it can spread faster," vaccinologist Dr Annelies Wilder Smith, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, told Al Jazeera. "We saw it in India. We're seeing it in Australia and Indonesia, in the UK. And I think we'll see now increasingly in Europe, and indeed, also in the Americas," she said.

"Whether it really

also causes more severe disease has not yet been confirmed. So if you see more disease you will also see more hospitalisations – that does not mean that the virus itself causes more severe disease."

Experts say Delta spreads more easily because of mutations that help it latch onto cells in the body. While several studies have shown that vaccines are slightly less effective against Delta, they are still highly effective – but only after the second dose.

Israel, which has one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns, has seen infections linked to the variant surge since dropping a requirement to wear masks in enclosed public places 10 days ago.

After four days of more than 100 new cases a day, the health ministry has now reversed that decision.

Meanwhile, Russia's Euro 2020 host Saint Petersburg on Saturday reported the country's

highest daily COVID-19 death toll for a city since the start of the pandemic.

Official figures said Saint Petersburg, which has already hosted six matches of the football tournament and is due to host a quarter-final next Friday, recorded 107 virus deaths during the past 24 hours.

Authorities in the Russian city tightened anti-coronavirus restrictions last week in an effort to curb the spike in new infections, including closing food courts in the city's shopping malls and its Euro 2020 fan zone. This came as Russia has seen an explosion of new cases since mid-June, driven by the Delta variant.

In neighbouring Finland, health officials said they had detected a spike in coronavirus infections that was traced to football fans returning from Saint Petersburg. The Finnish health institute's director, Mika Salminen, told public broadcaster YLE that more than 120 cases have so far been identi-

fied from passengers returning from the Russian city, mostly football fans, and the number is likely to increase.

Al Jazeera's Paul Brennan, reporting from London, said there have been concerns about a link between the tournament and COVID-19 outbreaks.

"Attendance at these stadiums has been pre-conditional on you actually showing a negative coronavirus test. But that doesn't stop people's mingling in the streets and mixing with other members of the public who don't have to go through these tests," he said.

Elsewhere, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention warned infections were also surging at an alarming rate in at least 12 countries in Africa, with the Delta variant leading to unprecedented hospitalisations.

According to the WHO, only one percent of Africans are fully vaccinated – the lowest ratio globally.

In Europe, however, some countries announced the lifting of restrictions even as scientists have warned that Delta was expected to account for 90 percent of all new cases in the European Union by the end of August.

Spain on Saturday brought an end to mandatory outdoor mask-wearing, a year after the rule was first introduced.

The decision came despite the announcement of a major coronavirus cluster in the capital, Madrid, traced to a student trip to the holiday island of Mallorca, with more than 2,000 people ordered to self-isolate.

Afghanistan: Thousands flee fighting between government, Taliban



KABUL, 27 JUN [ALJAZEERA]: About 5,000 Afghan families have fled their homes in Kunduz after days of fighting between Taliban fighters and government forces, officials said on Saturday, as the deadline looms for US-led troops to withdraw.

Heavy fighting has also been reported in the provinces of Kandahar and Baghlan, where the Afghan forces claimed to have retaken areas from Taliban control but held on to parts of Pul-e-Khumri area in central Baghlan, according to local media.

The Taliban has taken control of dozens of districts since US-led NATO foreign forces started their final withdrawal in May.

The Afghan group, which has been waging an armed rebellion since it was toppled from power in a 2001 US-led invasion, continues to surround Kunduz city.

The Taliban briefly seized the city twice in recent years but has now captured the surrounding districts and a nearby border crossing with Tajikistan.

Ghulam Sakhi Rasouli, director of the Kunduz Refugees and Repatriation Department, told

AFP news agency about 5,000 families had been displaced by the fighting, up to 2,000 of which had fled to Kabul and other provinces.

Rahmatullah Hamnawa, a journalist based in Kunduz, told Al Jazeera he was forced to move his family from one area of the city to another amid the conflict.

"We hear gunfire and fighting all night," he said, adding that it has been at least a week since the fighting flared in parts of the city and the nearby areas.

"People fleeing Kunduz have been forced to take a circuitous route through Samangan province to Mazar-e-Sharif, about 110km (68 miles) away to the southwest. The shorter road is unsafe and dotted with checkpoints and mines," Hamnawa said.

"But even the Samangan province, which used to be one of the safest in the country, is no longer free from violence. Hence a three-hour journey via Samangan can take up to seven now, if not more."

Many people took refuge in a school in the city and had been provided with food and other relief items, Kunduz provincial council member Ghulam Rabbani said.

Donald Trump returns to campaign trail with rally targeting Ohio Republican

NEW YORK, 27 JUN [THEGUARDIAN]: Donald Trump returned to the campaign trail with a rally in Ohio on Saturday night, campaigning against a Republican who voted for his impeachment and trailing his own candidacy for president in 2024.

Trump repeated his baseless election 2020 grievances and painted a dystopian picture of the country under Democratic control, while in another echo the past, the crowd chanted "Lock her up" at the mention of Hillary Clinton, the Democrat he defeated in 2016.

The rally outside Cleveland on Saturday was to support Max Miller, a former White House aide challenging Anthony Gonzalez, a former college football and NFL star censured by his state party for voting for Trump's impeachment.

While he praised Miller as an "incredible patriot" and a "great guy" who "loves the people of Ohio," Trump spent much of the rally fixating on the 2020 election, which he insists he won. This is despite top state and local election officials, his own attorney general and nu-

merous judges, including some he appointed, saying there is no evidence of the mass voter fraud he alleges took place.

"The 2020 presidential election was rigged," he told the crowd, which at one point broke into a "Trump won!" chant. "We won that election in a landslide."

When Marjorie Taylor Greene, a far-right Republican from Georgia known for her incendiary rhetoric, asked the crowd who their president is, they boomed loudly, "Trump!"

"President Trump is my president, too" she said.

The event had many of the trappings of the rallies Trump held as a candidate and as president. There was the eclectic playlist, the same stage design, and many familiar volunteers.

In the lead-up to the event, Trump told the conservative Newsmax channel: "We're giving tremendous endorsements."

"Fake Republicans, anybody that voted for the impeachment doesn't get it. But there weren't too many of them. And I think most of them are being ... primaried right

now, so that's good. I'll be helping their opponent."

Trump's first impeachment, for abusing his power in approaches to Ukraine, attracted one Republican vote, that of the Utah senator Mitt Romney. In his second, for inciting the deadly US Capitol attack, 10 House Republicans and seven in the Senate voted for Trump's guilt.

Trump was acquitted twice but banned from major social media platforms over his role in the Capitol attack. Regardless, he dominates the Republican party.

All bar one of the House Republicans who voted against him have attracted challengers. The 10th, John Katko of New York, co-authored a proposal for an independent, 9/11-style commission to investigate the 6 January attack on Congress, in which a mob roamed the Capitol, looking for lawmakers to capture or kill in an attempt to overturn the election. Senate Republicans blocked it.

By Saturday afternoon, traffic was backed up from the fairgrounds into town, where pro-Trump signs dotted res-

idents' lawns. On street corners, vendors sold "Trump 2024" flags and other merchandise as supporters arrived.

Marjorie Taylor Greene, a far-right congresswoman from Georgia who was stripped of her committee assignments over a number of extreme comments, mingled with attendees and took pictures.

Trump has said he "didn't win" the election but has not formally conceded defeat by Joe Biden and continues to voice his lie that the loss was the result of electoral fraud.

Trump's legal problems mounted on Friday, as his own lawyer confirmed that charges are likely in the investigation of the Trump Organization by the Manhattan district attorney. The company's chief financial officer, Allen Weisselberg, and the company itself are in prosecutors' sights.

Many observers point out that Trump's many legal problems did not stop him winning the presidency in 2016 and are unlikely to put off many Republican voters should he run for the White House again.

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Alia Bhatt's Gangubai Kathiawadi wraps shoot



Alia Bhatt and Sanjay Leela Bhansali have wrapped the filming of Gangubai Kathiawadi in Mumbai's Film City. The actor shared the news on her social media accounts. She shared a few photos from the film's set and captioned the post, "We started shooting Gangubai on the 8th of December 2019 .. and we wrapped the film now 2 years later! This film and set has been through two lockdowns.. two cyclones.. director and actor getting Covid during the making!!! the troubles the set has faced is another film altogether! But through all that and more.. what I take away is the gigantic life changing experi-

ence! Being directed by sir has been a dream all my life, but I don't think anything would have prepared me for the journey I was on for these two years.. I walk out of this set a different person today! I love you sir! Thank you for being you .. there is truly NO ONE like you ☺ When a film ends a part of you ends with it! Today I've lost a part of me.. Gangu I love you! You will be missed☹ P.S – special mention to my crew – my family and friends for these two years! without you nothing would have been possible! Love you guys!!!" Alia Bhatt's Gangubai Kathiawadi wraps shoot: "When a film ends, a part of you ends with it"

F9 takes a smashing start!



F9 aka Fast & Furious 9 has finally arrived in the United States. And as expected, the film is off to a best post-pandemic start. The ninth instalment led by Vin Diesel and John Cena is set for a great box office run and the signs are clearly visible through paid preview collection.

Paid previews for the film were held on 24th June i.e. Thursday. Looking at all the buzz, it was said to take a good start, but what's exciting is that Fast & Furious 9 has surpassed the numbers of Hobbs & Shaw, a spin-off to the franchise.

As reported by Variety, F9 has col-

lected \$7.1 million on Thursday. It surpassed Hobbs & Shaw's \$5.8 million. Looking at such a response, trade experts are now expecting the film to earn between \$60 to \$70 million, which was earlier restricted to \$60 million at most. Interestingly, after beating in previews, the film is also eyeing the \$60 million weekend of Dwayne Johnson-led spin-off.

As a quick recap, Furious 7 had made \$15.8 million in previews, while Fast & Furious 8 had made \$10.4 million.

Helmed by Justin Lin, F9 stars Vin

Diesel, John Cena, Michelle Rodriguez, Tyrese Gibson, Ludacris and others in key roles.

Speaking of the post-pandemic era, the film is expected to bring the best opening weekend numbers. On the 1st it's A Quiet Place which made a gross collection of \$57.1 million during its extended Memorial Day weekend. Godzilla vs Kong stands at 2nd with \$48.1 million. Fast & Furious is said to surpass both like a cakewalk. The film is also the widest release of the post-pandemic era as it's releasing on around 4,000 screens.

Jennifer Lopez looks happier than ever with Ben Affleck on Date Night

On Friday, June 25, the two lovebirds were photographed out to dinner at the Mediterranean seafood restaurant Avra in Beverly Hills, Calif. J.Lo was seen smiling while sitting with the Oscar winner in the back seat of a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce after they exited the eatery.

The 51-year-old actress and singer looked chic in a cream blazer over a matching top and khaki shorts, paired

with black stiletto sandals. Affleck, 48, wore a casual black jacket over a green button-down shirt, dark blue jeans and black tennis shoes.

The two rekindled their romance more than a month ago and more than 17 years after they broke off their engagement in 2004. In recent weeks, J.Lo and Ben have been spotted out together several times, and a source close to the singer recently told E! News that she

plans to move to Los Angeles, where both stars own homes, and has even looked at schools there for her 13-year-old twins, Max and Emme.

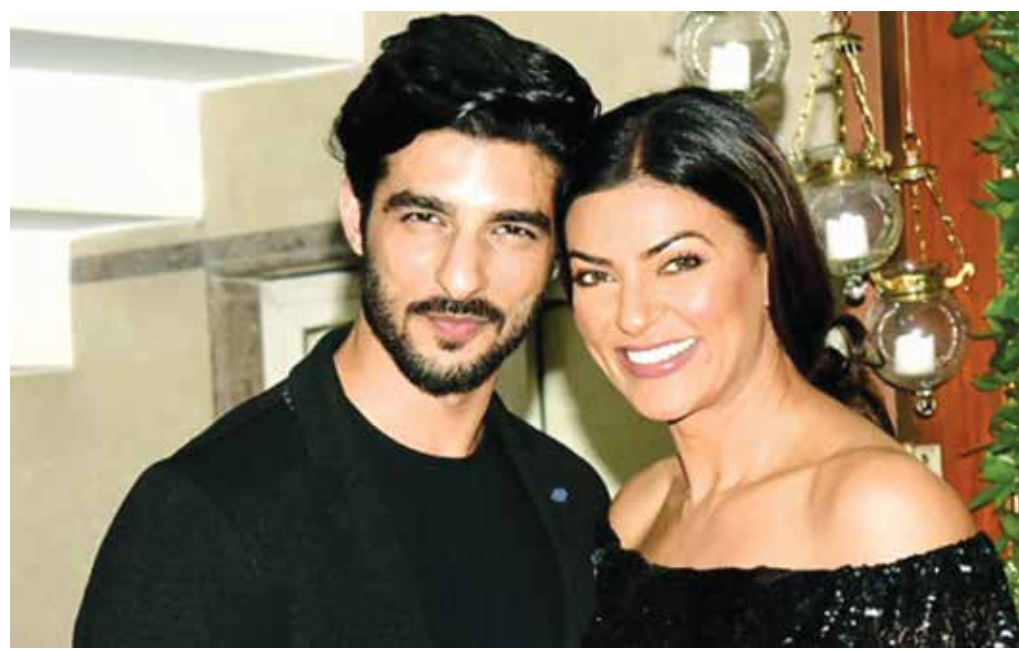
Amid their reconciliation, Ben has also spent time with Jennifer's kids and other members of her family. Earlier this month, he joined the singer and the twins at a birthday dinner for her sister Linda Lopez at Nobu restaurant in Malibu, Calif.

Sushmita Sen's hilarious reply to fan's note of love for boyfriend Rohman Shawl

Actor Sushmita Sen was a tiny bit jealous when a fan confessed her love for her boyfriend, Rohman Shawl. Sushmita did an Instagram Live chat with her fans on Friday with Rohman and her two daughter--Renee and Alisah.

During the live chat, the family got a tonne of compliments from fans. However, one fan even had a declaration of love for Rohman Shawl. "I love you Rohman," read the comment. However, Sushmita Sen was not the happiest on seeing it. "Baad mein milna tum (meet me later)," she said. As for Rohman, he said, "Thank you, koi toh bola (At least someone said it)".

A similar something happened with Sushmita, too. During the live, a fan asked



her to marry them. But before Sushmita could reply, Rohman responded with a firm 'no'. Alisah even let

him know that the question was for her mother and not him. He told her, "But I've answered on her behalf only

no?" When Alisah persisted that Sushmita responds to the fan, she said, "He quickly answered 'no'."

ARIES:

Something about silence doesn't seem right to you today, Aries. Keep talking. Eventually someone will say something meaningful. Latch on to lucrative ideas and keep your ears open for new opportunities. The stranger you pass on the street while going for coffee could be your new best friend. Strike up a conversation with the person standing next to you in line.

TAURUS:

You may be anxious to say what's on your mind today, Taurus. Words are on the tip of your tongue and you aren't afraid to let them spill out. Be careful. There's a danger you will put your foot in your mouth. Your words may come across as harsher than you intended. Be sensitive of other people's emotions. Don't unload your problems on others.

GEMINI:

You will be able to think clearly today, Gemini. Do the best you can with what you have to work with. Do your thing and let people do theirs. Don't dwell on others' dramas. You should enjoy a good working relationship with mechanical objects, and it's a great time to invest in a new gadget or appliance for your home. Don't be a cheapskate. Spend to make life easier.

CANCER:

Your mind is extra clear today, Cancer. Make sure you're helping yourself as well as others. Take care of any tasks that require a great deal of brainpower. You have a tremendous ability to figure out any mental problem. Communicate with confidence. Contact people you haven't heard from in a while. They will be pleasantly surprised to hear from you.

LEO:

Do your thing today, Leo, and don't take garbage from others. Take control of the issue when you see that something needs to get done. Others may be acting rashly and see things differently than you do. Don't change your point of view just to make it easier on others. If people are in your way, confront them.

VIRGO:

You will be able to think clearly today, Virgo. Do the best you can with what you have to work with. Do your thing and let people do theirs. Don't dwell on others' dramas. You should enjoy a good working relationship with mechanical objects, and it's a great time to invest in a new gadget or appliance for your home. Don't be a cheapskate. Spend to make life easier.

LIBRA:

Don't wait for an invitation to speak your mind, Libra. No one will ask what you think. Express yourself. You've given other people plenty of time to have their say. It's now time to chime in with your opinion. Don't be an observer. Be an active player and help shape the conversation and the events of the day with your powerful words and thoughts.

SCORPIO:

Your mind is sharp as a tack today, Scorpio. There's a great deal of power behind your thoughts, so use it wisely. Take this energy to work and see how much you can accomplish. Lady Luck is on your side. The key is to put your brain in motion. Plow forward with new ideas and don't look back. Jump in with both feet. Hesitation will cause you to falter.

SAGITTARIUS:

What are you waiting for, Sagittarius? You aren't going to meet anyone new by staying inside all the time. You aren't going to become a rock star if you never pick up an instrument. Don't do anything halfway today. If you love someone, tell him or her. You never know what will happen tomorrow. Take control and express your true feelings.

CAPRICORN:

Don't waste time today, Capricorn. Act with courage. Tap your primal nature and throw caution to the wind. Your wit and keen mind provide you with opportunities that you should jump on. Link with groups and contribute to projects. Nothing will escape your attention. Enjoy games of wit and puzzles that exercise your brain.

AQUARIUS:

There's a powerful force urging you to act today, Aquarius. Someone may be working counter to your aims and trying to rub you the wrong way. Don't let people outwit you. You have just as much right to express your opinions as anyone else. Use the power of your mind to come out on top in any situation. Freedom is a state of mind. Do something that makes you want to dance.

PISCES:

Put the pedal to the metal today and have confidence in all your actions, Pisces. There's a great deal of power in your words. There's a tremendous amount of information that needs to be exchanged, and you're at the hub of this activity. What you learn may be transformative. Actively participate in the conversation.