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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Test Positivity Rate continues to remain below 10%, but Sikkim has lost two more lives to Covid

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 JUN:**

In what must help calm nerves frayed by the brutal second wave of Covid-19 in the State, Sikkim continues to witness a steady decline in new cases and a lower Test Positivity Rate than had become routine barely a week back. Today, the State posted a test positivity rate of 9.52% today when only 253 of the 2,655 samples collected across the State returned positive for Covid in the past 24 hours. Barely a week back, Sikkim was returning a TPR upwards of 30%.

In more reassuring news, the State also recorded more recoveries than its single-day count of new cases with the discharge of 283 persons from the home isolation after they made full recoveries in the last 24 hours.

Sikkim's tally of recovered cases of COVID-19 has now crossed the 12,000-mark and stands at 12,049. The current recovery rate of COVID-19 in Sikkim is 71.84 which might appear low but needs to be considered in light of the fact that there are currently 4,218 active Covid cases in the State. In the past 30 days alone, the State has recorded 7,852 new cases.

What the lay people need to take heart from is that only 221

of the 4,218 active cases have symptoms severe enough to require hospitalisation and the rest are either convalescing in facility or home isolation.

What remains a worry though is that the fatality rate has been very high in the second wave. The State has lost 117 lives in the past month [05 May to 05 June] and today as well, two more Covid patients breathed their last, taking Sikkim's overall COVID death toll to 268. Both the COVID deaths were reported from STNM Hospital.

While 163 persons were detected positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 1,746 samples, 90 more in RT-PCR testing of 907 samples.

Out of 253 new cases, 110 were registered in East District, 47 in West District, 67 in South District and 29 in North District.

Among the new cases, only 22 were admitted in hospitals, 28 sent to COVID Care Centres established by the government and rest have been put under home isolation.

There are 4,218 active cases of coronavirus in the State, of whom 27 persons are currently admitted in ICU facilities in the State. A total of 18 COVID patients are under treatment in ICU of STNM hospital and 09 are in ICU of Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

Governor and CM lead plantation drive at Raj Bhawan to mark World Environment Day



GANGTOK, 05 JUN (IPR): The World Environment Day 2021 was organised by the Forest Department at Raj Bhawan Gangtok today. The day was marked by plantation of saplings by the Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad and the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang along with Minister for Forest, Karma Loday Bhutia, Chief Secretary, DGP, Additional CS Forest, and other dignitaries.

Governor of Sikkim Ganga Prasad in his short press briefing extended his warm greetings to the people of Sikkim on the special occasion. He said that this year the World Environment Day is being celebrated with the theme "Ecosystem Restoration" with focus on aspects of restoration, rejuvenation and growth. He added that Sikkim is blessed with splendid nature and the people of Sikkim have preserved this natural heritage. He further stated that World Environment Day is important to all of us as it calls for global decadal action to restore our ecosystem. He added that we should preserve our natural resources by rationalizing our consumption pat-

tern as the effects of global warming and pressing environmental issues have impacted our State causing environmental hazards.

The Governor concluded by saying that at this unprecedented crisis caused by Covid-19, Sikkim is strongly fighting to contain the pandemic. He urged all the fellow citizens to stay at homes with green good deeds and following necessary protocol and guidelines issued by the Government.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang said that Sikkim is a small Himalayan State rich in biodiversity. He added that over the years a negative impact on our environmental resources can be felt due to global warming and with the growing concern over environmental issues particularly climate change that confront us today we have no choice but to redefine our values and principles that underline the relationship of mankind with the earth. He said that World Environment Day is observed every year on 05 June

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CM lays foundation stone of 300 bed District Hospital at Singithang

NAMCHI, 05 JUN (IPR): Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang laid the foundation stone of a 300-bed District Hospital at Singithang Ground today. He was accompanied by Minister for Health Department Dr MK Sharma, Minister for Buildings and Housing Department, Sanjeet Kharel, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling, Confidential Secretary to CM, Bikash Basnett and other officials alongwith councillors of Namchi Municipal Council.

The Chief Minister extended his congratulations to the people of the state for this upcoming healthcare infrastructure. He also spoke about the importance of this 300 bedded hospital and underlined that building of this hospital is extremely necessary in order to aid the people of Sikkim particularly in these times of COVID-19 pandemic. The State Government aims to build a robust public healthcare system in Sikkim wherein expert doctors and other specialists is available to treat the public.



The Chief Minister highlighted that only by constructing a state of art infrastructure is not enough; it should also have easy availability of efficient health care givers along with effortlessly be accessible to public at large. Furthermore, he said that the State Government

will adequately provide the best healthcare as the wellbeing of the Sikkimese population is at the centre of the State Government's policy. He also said that an alternate land for Singithang playground in Boomtar has been sought after by the State Government for the same.

With regards to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Chief Minister informed that every resources available in the state are being utilized to upgrade the existing health care centres. He also informed that the COVID-19 testing is being accelerated both in rural as well as urban areas, and with the increase of COVID-19 testing, the number of positive patients will also go up and these positive patients are being treated by the health care professionals. As for COVID-19 vaccination, he updated that Sikkim has regularly administered vaccination to 45+ individuals and added that vaccination is crucial to manage and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chief Minister said that the vaccination for 18+ will also resume at the earliest. He also updated that 18+ vaccination will start from rural areas health care centre and said that an oxygen plant will soon be installed at Rangpo. The Chief Minister also said that Mobile Village Clin-

ic will commence soon and emphasized that the State Government has given ambulances especially at rural areas in order to transfer COVID-19 positive patients. The Chief Minister also earnestly solicited cooperation from the public in defeating COVID-19.

Principal Chief Engineer cum Secretary Buildings and Housing Department, Rajen Sharma gave a brief note about the construction of 300 bedded District Hospital at Namchi which is being built in an estimated cost of Rs. 561.26 crores. The work has been awarded to the Government contractor on turnkey basis duly entrusting for conceptualization, drawings, design and construction work along with Medical equipment entitled for District Hospital as per Indian Public Health Standard (IPHS) norms. Shri Sharma said that the completion time for the project is for three years and the proposed building is a eight storied with parking facility and other amenities.

High Court appreciates govt's ramping up of testing, reminds it that ICU needs of general patients cannot be overlooked

GOVT REQUIRED TO HAVE POLICY IN PLACE TO SHIELD SIKKIM FROM THIRD WAVE, COURT OBSERVES

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 JUN:**

The High Court of Sikkim has recorded its "appreciation" for steps taken by the State Government to augment Covid testing facilities in the State, observing that this has resulted in early testing and follow up treatment of patients found to have tested positive for the virus. Over the recent weeks, the Health Department has ramped up testing from a previous high of around 800 tests per day to now consistently testing more 2,500 samples everyday

and on some days hitting nearly 4,000 tests in a day. Mass testing at areas which have emerged as Covid clusters is also being done on a regular basis now.

The High Court made this observation while hearing a public interest litigation it has taken up suo moto on the State's Covid-19 Management. In the hearing held on Friday, the High Court bench comprising of Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai and Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan also made elaborate observations on the healthcare infrastructure

and passed specific directions, including one which requires the State Government to set up VRD Labs in all four districts to carry out RT-PCR tests. At present, there are only two VRD Labs in the State - at STNM Hospital and CRH-Tadong - while one more is reportedly being set up at Jorethang.

At the last hearing, the High Court had sought details about Covid-dedicated Intensive Care Units in the districts and was informed yesterday that the 10 ICU beds for general patients have been redirected to accommodate

Covid patients.

In this regard, the Justices voiced concern about the situation which could arise if ICU beds are not available there for general patients anymore and reiterated that "the Hospital cannot be devoid of ICU beds for general patients." The State Government had been directed to address this issue.

As for the government's submission that three ICU beds have been earmarked for Covid patients at District Hospital, Mangan, the Court again pointed out that this number is "abysmally low"

considering the number of Covid-positive persons in North Sikkim. While 29 new cases were reported in North Sikkim today, there are currently 24 patients in hospital there and 121 in home or facility isolation. None of the Covid patients in North district are currently in the ICU there.

The Additional Advocate General undertook in Court yesterday to ensure that facilities are ramped up in the district hospitals and ICU beds increased for both, general and Covid patients.

turn pg.2

Labour Minister leads inspection of pharma units to check compliance with advisory



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 JUN:**

The Minister for Labour Department, MN Sherpa, accompanied by Secretary, Namrata Thapa, and other officers of the Labour Department inspected various pharmaceutical companies of East and South districts from 02 to 04 June, an official press release informs.

The inspection was mainly to ensure that the advisory issued by the Labour Department during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic is being complied with by the companies in the larger interest of the companies, workers and State as a whole.

The inspection team interacted with both the company management and workers separately.

All the companies were found to have complied with the directives issued by the Department, the release states, and the Minister while emphasizing on some important issues to be taken care of by all the companies issued further directives as under:-

1. Maintenance of Inspection Book both digital and manual.
2. Companies to immediately inform the Head Office, Labour Department in case of any problem arising in the company.
3. Company to submit compliance report of the Advisory, press release and SOP issued by the Department at the earliest possible.
4. List of job vacancies available in the company to be submitted to the Department immediately.
5. Statement of workers with all the de-

tails and documents to be submitted to the Department urgently.

6. Welfare benefits for the workers to be widely publicized for creating more awareness.

7. Workers to be felicitated on the occasion of Labour Day, Independence Day. Gandhi Jayanti and annual function of the Company on the basis of performance and attendance in order to motivate the workers.

8. Company to work in close co-ordination with the Labour Department under intimation to the concerned area MLAs.

9. Arrangement for accommodating key personnel of the Company to be made within the premises of the Company.

10. Departmental officers to be involved in functions and activities of the Company with a view to have better co-ordination.

11. Company advised to document all the function, activities etc. of the Company on yearly basis.

12. Complaint/Suggestion box to be placed in an area without any CCTV surveillance.

13. Full time Doctor and Nurses to be made available in the Company premises with ambulance facilities.

14. Installation of sanitary napkin vending machine for female workers in the Company.

15. Company to induct Casual workers into Company pay roll after completion of 5 years of service based on performance and attendance.

turn pg.2

Densa Palchen Choling Monastery donates equipments to Ravangla PHC

NAMCHI, 05 JUN (IPR): Densa Palchen Choling Monastery on behalf of the 12th Goshir Gyalsab Rinpoche donated COVID-19 essential equipment to Ravangla Primary Health Centre, Namchi District Hospital and Covid Care Centre located at the hostel of Namchi Girls Senior Secondary School.

The equipment was received by Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at Singhithang Ground, today. The Chief Minister thanked his eminence for extending help towards the State Government during this



time of ongoing pandemic.

The donation included Oxygen Concentra-

tor's, PPE Kits, Face shields, N95 Mask, Surgical Mask, Disposable Caps, Surgical Gloves, Sterile

Gloves, Auto BP Machine, Pulse Oxymeter, Glucometer with strips, Nebulizer and Thermometers.

Lingi Payong School observes WED virtually

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 JUN:**

The Eco Club of Government Secondary School Lingi Paiyong observed World Environment Day on Saturday through virtual mode by organising different activities, a press release informs. The theme for this year's celebration was Ecosystem Restoration which was kept in mind while organising different activities.

The member students of Eco club as well as other students participated in activities spread over a wide range of themes like video messages, developing eco bricks, plantation of trees and flower in memory of loved ones, making paper bags, card-



board box holders, puppets on environmental themes and Nature Art Collage.

The students had worked on these activities from 03 June and showcased them on the

occasion of the WED. The students were provided e-certificate for their participation in different events whereas the school has decided to award them with prizes and gift hampers once the school reopens.

Nodal Teacher for Eco Club, Goma Sharma guided the students in various activities. Earlier in the morning, the participants met virtually through Google Meet where headmaster, Suraj Kumar Sharma appraised the students about the need and importance of the day.

The club thanks all the students and their parents for their support in this first ever virtual WED celebration.

NHPC Teesta-V Power Station observes World Environment Day

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 JUN:**

NHPC, Teesta-V Power Station, Sikkim observed World Environment Day at its Residential Township in Balutar and Samdong Colony on 05 Jun, 2021, a press release informs.

On the day, Head of the Power Station, Sanjay Darbari planted an Areca Palm sapling along with the participation of officers and staff of the Power Station, in the ex-



tension of Herbal Park located near the helipad. The event was observed following COVID-19 guidelines.

Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay Darbari said that resetting humanity's relationship with nature will be the focus of World

Environment Day on 05 Jun, 2021, which also marks the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a ten-year global push to prevent, halt and reverse ecosystem degradation.

The present COVID-19 Pandemic is a reminder to all of us of consequences of human activity induced damage to nature. He urged all participants to strive to live in harmony with Nature.

SSB 72Bn observes World Environment Day

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 JUN:**

72 Bn Hqr and its Companies and Border Out Posts (BOPs) organized an extensive plantation drive at the various locations under the jurisdiction of the Battalion on the occasion of World Environment Day today, a press release informs.

Officiating Commandant, SK Awadhiya, Dy Commandant, Om Prakash Singh and other personnel planted 200 saplings at Bn Hqr Melli Aching (Yuksam). All field Companies and BOPs planted saplings under the command of their respective Commanders.

Total of 3,000 saplings of local variety provided by Forest Deptt (West Sikkim) have been planted by the unit on the day. Due to ongoing pandemic situation of COVID-19 and lockdown in the State, no local residents were invited for the plantation on the occasion.



Deputy Speaker participates in plantation drive at Yuksam

**PRITAM LAMA
YUKSAM, 05 JUN:**

On the occasion of World Environment Day, Deputy Speaker and area MLA, Sangay Lepcha participated in a brief plantation drive organized by Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP-division) of state Forest Department at Yuksam today.

Along with KNP ACF, Joseph Lepcha, KNP-Range Officer, Tenzing W Bhutia, Panchayats, Members of joint forest management committee, Deputy Speaker Sangay Lepcha planted saplings in and around the premises of KNP Checkpost.



The plantation drive was organised by maintaining social distancing measures and Covid protocols, informed KNP-Range Officer, Tenzing W Bhutia.

It may be mentioned that due to the lockdown and the situation arising

out of Covid-19, the World Environment Day was a low key affair at Yuksam-Tashiding Constituency this year.

Earlier, KNP distributed ration and essential items to the yak herders, porters and locals

as relief and support from the State Government to those who rely on trekking and tourism for their livelihood. MLA Mr Lepcha handed over the essential items to the tourism stakeholders and locals.

404 new COVID-19 cases push Arunachal Pradesh's tally to 28,786

ITANAGAR, JUN 5 (PTI):

The COVID-19 caseload in Arunachal Pradesh rose to 28,786 as 404 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior health department official said here on Saturday.

The COVID-19 death toll increased to 122 as three more persons succumbed to the disease, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

The three patients from Capital Complex region, East Siang and Lower Siang died on Thursday while undergoing treatment at various health facilities, the official said.

Changlang district witnessed the highest spurt in fresh cases at 102, followed by the Capital Complex region (52), Namsai (38), Anjaw (36), Tawang (21), Lohit, West Kameng and Pakke Kesang at 19 each, Lower Dibang Valley (15), Lower Subansiri and Papumpare at 14 each and East Siang at 11.

Nine fresh infections were also reported from East Kameng, Upper Subansiri (8), Longding (7), Upper Siang (6), four each from Kurung Kumey and Tirap, two each from Leparada and Dibang Valley and one each from Kra Daadi and West Siang district respectively, the SSO said.

Of the fresh cases 387 were detected through rapid antigen tests, 12 through RT-PCR and 5 through TrueNat method, the official said, adding 145 people have symptoms of COVID-19.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 3,829 active COVID-19 cases.

At least 415 more people recuperated from the disease on Friday, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 24,835.

The COVID-19 recovery rate now is 86.27 per cent while the active percentage stands at 13.30 and the positivity rate at 4.49 per cent, Jampa said.

Governor and CM lead plantation drive...

to rededicate ourselves to the cause of nature. The Chief Minister also mentioned that Sikkim is already on the path of restoration process as the State government has initiated measures to address growing concern on environmental degradation. He called on the citizens to pledge to continue with their efforts to keep the environment clean and healthy. He appealed to everyone to plant at least one sapling of our choice in our surroundings and be part of the global action for ecosystem restoration and conservation.

On the special occasion, the Governor Ganga Prasad and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang flagged off four numbers of Fire Tender Vehicles provided by the Forest Department for use in each district.

The World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated every year on 5th June since 1974, engaging governments, businesses and citizens in an effort to address the pressing environmental issues. It is the United Nations Day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action to protect our environment. This year the WED theme is 'Ecosystem Restoration' and on this day, the decade 2021-2030 for ecosystem restoration has been launched.

In the state of Sikkim, the Forest and Environment Department steers the celebration of the WED by engaging all sections of the society for generation of true environmental consciousness. Due to the current situation caused by the pandemic, the department has organized the programme in a reduced scale with ceremonial plantation followed by flagging-off of the fire tenders by the Governor and the Chief Minister at Raj Bhawan premises.

The department at respective districts and blocks shall be holding similar plantation drives with other dignitaries at local levels duly following social distancing and all Covid-19 protocol.

To engage students from schools and colleges and the general public, the department has launched online competitive events such as quiz, painting and drawing, slogan writing, open photography and short video contest with cash prizes up to Rs.20,000/-. The online event is hosted in Sikkim ENVIS website www.sikenvis.nic.in and the entries are being accepted from 01 June till 05 June, 2021 till 5.00pm.

The Forest and Environment Department has taken up various measures and included activities in its various schemes and annual plan of operations for sensitization, generating awareness among masses and restoring the ecosystem through plantations, other engineering measures concomitantly generating livelihood opportunities. Also, in the past three years, cocoon production in the state has increased by three times and through construction of 1000 silk rearing houses, it has greatly benefitted 1000 women silkworm farmers supported under intensive sericulture development in the State. Sikkim is one of the most progressive states in the country for forest and environmental conservation and has won many laurels and national awards.

On the occasion of WED, the department has appealed to one and all to celebrate this day at individual level, at their homes by taking up plantation, gardening, cleaning and any green good deeds that contribute towards restoration of our ecosystem.

Labour Minister leads inspection...

16. Company to provide skill capacity building training to the employees as per the qualification, interest and their capabilities.
17. Company to display all the advisories, notifications etc. received from the Labour Department in the notice board for information of workers.
18. Company to share the annual calendar of activities as well as calendar of training to the Department.
19. Company to maintain social distancing in the changing, lunch room of the workers.
20. Company to arrange for additional buses if required, from the State Transport Department with a view to maintain social distance.
21. Company to strictly comply in respect to SOP issued by Labour Department.

High Court appreciates govt's ramping up of testing,

The Court also appeared satisfied that facilities at the Covid-dedicated STNM Hopsital were adequate for now.

Turning its attention to the State's plans to increase the number of VRD Labs, the Court expressed concern that the State's response made no mention of setting up such a facility in North district. As for the earlier plan to set up such a lab at Jorethang, the Court was informed that this was not found feasible and that the State Government will be setting one up at District Hospital, Namchi, within 45 days of receiving approval and release of funds from the Indian Council of Medical Research [ICMR].

In this regard, the High Court has reminded the State Government that a VRDL facility is required in each district, especially in light of the approaching monsoons and possible disruption of connectivity.

"...a sample collected from West District for testing cannot be left for the vagaries of nature should there be road blocks to the South District," the High Court order underlines, adding, "Similarly, such dependency should not be created for the North District on the East District for the self-same reasons. This would obviously have the repercussion of delayed treatment."

As for the Assistant Solicitor General of India's submission that protocols established by ICMR in 2013 need to be complied with before such facilities can be set up in a State, the Court remarks that these protocols established in 2013, "way before the pandemic set in" for the situation as it existed then.

The situation is different now and hence the State Government should take immediate steps to establish VRDL facilities in every district, the Court has directed. The Additional Advocate General has also assured the Court that necessary steps will be taken by the State with the ICMR within three days.

The Assistant Solicitor General has also assured that should the State initiate the steps, necessary follow-up action will be taken from her end. While the ASG has been directed to inform the Court about ICMR's response within ten days, the state's respondents have been directed to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to establish VRDL facilities in all four districts within 90 days.

Taking up the Covid vaccination issue next, the Court highlights, "considering the entire population of the State, a meagre amount of 14 lakhs vaccines would be the approximate requirement of the State."

The order expresses hope that the State Government will make "untiring and proactive efforts to obtain the entire number of requisite doses so that the population of the State can be vaccinated at the earliest."

The order adds, "This becomes imperative in view of the peculiar circumstances of the State inasmuch as the foot-fall of tourists sometimes outnumbers the residents of a particular town and the availability of the medical infrastructure or the lack of it has to be thereby taken into consideration making the vaccination of the population an urgent requirement. This becomes even more imperative looking at the present Covid-19 situation in Sikkim and the mortality rate of patients vis-à-vis the population."

Amicus Curiae Jorgay Namkha, who is assisting the High Court in pursuing the PIL, also drew attention to news about a third wave of the pandemic. Upon being told about the State Level Task Force headed by the Chief Secretary, the Court comments that while it does not seek to undermine the work of this task force, "however, we are concerned that no policy has been envisaged till date for the purpose of dealing with the third wave, God forbid, should there be one."

"We are of the considered opinion that the State Respondents are required to have policies in place to deal with the third wave in order to shield the population of Sikkim from its repercussions and wide advertisement given to such policies that they seek to adopt for the knowledge of the common man. The preparedness should also be in terms of augmented infrastructure medical and otherwise. This, of course, includes human resources," the order goes on to detail.

The PIL comes up for hearing next on 16 June.

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Pakyong observes World Environment Day



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 JUN:

World Environment Day was observed at Pakyong by Forest Department today with a plantation drive, a press release informs.

Saplings were planted in the premises of Forest Office, Pakyong. The program was attended by the MLA Namcheybong, Em Prasad Sharma, Enchung Bhutia Advisor

(Food & CS), ADC (Dev), Tenzing Denzongpa, SDM Himmat Rai, BDO Pakyong, Nilkantha Bhandari, DE Power, Binoy Shama, Revenue Officer, DR Acharya, Dy RTO, PR Dulal, ACF (T),

Satish Vasistha, Police Personnel, Social workers, Prabha Pradhan, Jigme Bhutia and various members of civil society and officials of Forest Department.

GJM and CII donate ambulances to supplement Vikrun Foundation's Oxygen on Wheels initiative



SMRITA KHAWAS DARJEELING, 05 JUN:

The Oxygen of Wheels initiative of the Vikrun Foundation of Darjeeling today received the support of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (Binoy Faction) and Confederation of Indian industry (CII) which do-

noted two ambulances to the foundation.

Vikrun Foundation director Vikram Rai said, "We had launched the Oxygen On Wheels initiative and for this we have to travel to where the patients are so today we are very thankful to the Confederation of Indian

Industry and Mr Binay Tamang president of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (Binoy Faction) for providing us two ambulance so that we can reach where help is needed as soon as possible. We have decided that we will keep one ambulance for Covid-19 patients

whereas another ambulance will be dedicated for non-Covid patients."

The foundation, it may be added here, also plans to sponsor the education to children from underprivileged background who have lost their parents to the pandemic.

GMAC announces enhancements to GMATTM Online

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 JUN:

The Graduate Management Admission CouncilTM (GMACTM), the administrator and owner of the Graduate Management Admission TestTM (GMATTM), has introduced enhancements to the GMAT online exam last month, a press release informs.

Now candidates have more choice and flexibility to bring their best on test day, and confidently meet their business school goals.

The enhanced online experience further aligns with the test center exam with the following features added:

- Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA). Demonstrate writing and critical thinking skills with the addition of the Analytical Writing Assessment

ment (AWA) section.

- Select exam section order. Candidates can choose which section order to take the exam in.
- Two 8-minute optional breaks. Candidates will have the option to take advantage of two breaks to prepare themselves for the next section of the exam.
- View unofficial score immediately. Unofficial scores will be displayed on the screen after exam completion so they can plan their next steps.
- Schedule GMATTM online exam appointments up to 6 months in advance. Candidates will be presented with GMATTM online exam appointments on a rolling 6-month basis.

Candidates can learn more about the enhanced GMATTM online exam at mba.com/gmatonline

Joy Jones, Chief Product Officer and General Manager Assessments said, "We believe that test takers should have the ability to choose how they test to bring their best on exam day. Our ongoing enhancements to GMAT online exam help to ensure the options are consistent regardless of where a candidate prefers to test. We're focused on providing the flexibility and support to address long-term needs of schools and test takers. As we continue to adjust to uncertainties of the new norm, our online exams become a vital standard option, providing test takers with the confidence to test in a test center or online to meet business school application needs."

Aadhaar Card now accepted: Candidates in India will now have the choice to validate

their identity using their Aadhaar Card OR passport during the GMATTM online exam registration process as long as the Card is current and valid. For the test center version of the GMAT exam, the passport remains as the only acceptable ID. The Aadhaar, is only available as an alternate ID for the online version of the GMAT exam.

Regional Director - South Asia, Gaurav Srivastava, GMAC-TM said, "In order to provide more flexibility and easier access to candidates for the Enhanced GMAT online exam, we have introduced the Aadhaar, as an acceptable form of ID. Through this new feature several thousands of Indian candidates living in remote areas will find it easier to use their Aadhaar ID and appear from virtually anywhere for the online exam."

Speaker SLA provides relief to West Pendam families



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 JUN:

Under the direction of Speaker Sikkim Legislative Assembly cum MLA West Pendam, LB Das, essential commodities were distributed to some families of Karmithang and Bhurung Wards under West Pendam Constituency today, a press release informs.

Wife of Speaker, Sangeeta Das also provided financial assistance for Covid-19 patients and other patients. Ms Das bore the expenses of the essential commodities distributed on the day.

Ms Das was accompanied by PS to Speaker SLA, JN Gau-

tam, SKM CLC president, Hari Dungal, CA to Speaker SLA, Govind P Bajgain, PA to Speaker, Anand Chettri, CLC & WLC Executives and active youth of concerned wards.

The beneficiaries extended their gratitude to the Sangeeta Das for the support during the pandemic.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen blames Centre's "Schizophrenia" for Covid crisis in India

MUMBAI, 05 JUN [PTI]: India's "confused" government focused on taking credit for its actions, rather than working to restrict the spread of COVID-19, resulting in schizophrenia that led to massive troubles, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has said.

India was better placed to fight the pandemic because of its pharma manufacturing prowess and also higher immunity levels, the noted economist said while speaking at an event organised by the Rashtra Seva Dal late Friday evening.

Amartya Sen's remarks came in the backdrop of the second wave of the pandemic seeing the number of officially reported cases topping over 4 lakh a day and over 4,500 deaths daily, and also concerns over alleged under-reporting. Some eminent personalities have said a sense of early "triumphalism" led to the crisis.

Amartya Sen said

India could not play on its strengths because of a poor response to the crisis due to confusion in the government.

"The government seemed much keener on ensuring credit for what it was doing rather than ensuring that pandemics do not spread in India. The result was a certain amount of schizophrenia," Amartya Sen said.

Amartya Sen, who is a professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University, cited writing by Adam Smith in 1769 wherein the father of modern economics argues that if one does good things, he does get credit for it. And the credit could be sometimes an indicator of how well one is doing.

"But to seek the credit, and not the good work that generates the credit shows a level of intellectual naivete which has to be avoided. India tried to do that," Amartya Sen added.

"It (government) was trying to generate the credit boasting across the world that India will save the world perhaps. And at the same time, allowing the problem to develop and have a grip over the lives of Indians across the country," he added.

Amartya Sen said India was already afflicted with social inequities, slowing growth and unemployment at record highs, which came to haunt it during the pandemic.

"A failure of economy and failure of social cohesion was the basis of the failure of the pandemic attack as well," he said, adding that limitations on education led to difficulties in assessing early symptoms and treatment protocols.

Amartya Sen also argued for a "big constructive change" in healthcare and education above all, but also in economic and social policies in general.

Horti Secretary takes stock of crops in Allay Ward

NAMCHI, 05 JUN (IPR):

Secretary, Horticulture Department, MT Sherpa visited field in Allay Ward under Maniram Phalidara GPU today. He was accompanied by Joint Director (Horticulture), Dikendra Bhujel, Horticulture Inspector, Nasum Tamang along with other field functionaries and staff of the department. The aim of this visit was to assess the horticultural crops in this GPU owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

During the field visit, the secretary interacted with the progressive young and educated farmers of the area and enquired about the status of horticulture crops harvested in their fields. The farmers apprised about



various aspects related to cultivation, marketing, distribution as well as management of their produces and the bottlenecks faced by them. The

Secretary encouraged them to continue working with same zeal as being done till date and assured them to extend all support from Department for promotion of horticulture sector. He also apprised them of pro farmer schemes available with the Government and Government's will-

ingness to implement the same for doubling their incomes.

In addition, he also reviewed the status of the refrigerated vehicle which has been granted by Government for transportation of local produce for marketing purpose.

Thereafter, he also took stock of the facilities which are under construction such as Cold Storage Unit, Rural Haat and Vegetable collection centre of the area. It may be noted that the Horticulture Department in collaboration with SIMFED and individual entrepreneurs have continued with marketing of vegetables effectively even during lockdown period.

Assam gets sixth national park on world environment day

GUWAHATI, JUN 5 (PTI):

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday announced that the Raimona reserve forest in Kokrajhar under the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), bordering Bhutan, has been upgraded as the sixth national park of the state.

Announcing this on the occasion of World Environment Day here, the chief minister said that with the new addition, the state now has six national parks.

The process to convert Dehing Patkai wildlife sanctuary into a national park is also under progress, he said.

The chief minister said that this was a landmark step in environment conservation and the newly declared national park will be another endeavour by the state to protect its rich flora and fauna.

The notification declaring Raimona as a national park has been issued by the environment and forest department on Saturday.

The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 says whenever it appears to the state government that an area, whether within a sanctuary or not, is, by reason of its ecological, faunal,

floral, geomorphological or zoological association or importance, needed to be constituted as a national park for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wild life therein or its environment,

The other five national parks in Assam are- Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang and Dibru-Saikhowa.

Sarma said its a step taken towards fulfilment of the UN vision of ecosystem restoration.

Minister for Environment and Forest Parimal Suklabaidya said the announcement made by the chief minister has turned

out to be a red letter day for the state and welcome news for wildlife lovers, nature lovers and conservationists.

The Raimona national park falls under BTR's Kokrajhar district and is a part of contiguous forest patch with an area of 422 square km covering the northern part of the notified Ripu Reserve Forest which forms the western-most buffer to Manas Tiger Reserve in the foothills of Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot.

The boundary of Raimona national park stretches from the Sonkosh river on the west

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Preventive Healthcare

An idea which had arrived and should be revived

Preventive healthcare is not among our country's strong points. The counter that there are just too many of us to be adequately screened to catch health complications before they become, well, complicated, is lame because it has not even been attempted in earnest to be discarded as impractical. But the worries of the country are perhaps too many for any of the challenges to get adequately addressed before they explode. That is not the case with Sikkim which enjoys the benefits of a State for a population smaller than a large locality in the metros. This advantage had been leveraged well with the launch of a series of programmes and Missions which stood the best chance of succeeding well in Sikkim. Starting with the skill development initiative, on to the CM's Merit Scholarship Scheme to the CM's Rural Housing Mission, these are undertakings which, now that the policy has been dictated, carried the potential of elevating Sikkim to a new level of well-being if the executive delivered effectively when it came to implementation. These schemes have been around for a while, and now with a change in dispensation, and once the pandemic calms down, an evaluation would be well advised; not to discontinue any of these initiatives or just rename them. but to tweak them for improved effectiveness.

But we began with the healthcare scenario, and hence return to it now. The Chief Minister's Comprehensive Annual and Total Check up for Healthy Sikkim Programme [CATCH] programme started well, limped along for a while and is MIA now. It's findings were eye-opening and even informed some course corrections in the healthcare sector here. It is a shame that too many years have lost because if that programme had continued, it would have captured much more substantive data which would have served Sikkim well in the facing the current pandemic. The initial years had caught anemia, hypertension and diabetes as increasing lifestyle-induced health conditions and some initial steps were also taken to redress the situation before the problem became chronic. Had CATCH sustained, who knows, maybe Sikkim would have been in better health when Novel Coronavirus arrived. Even if that did not happen, at least the State would have known, with data at hand, whom to protect more consciously and whom to prioritise for vaccination and what level of preparations to put in place.

CATCH, even though little understood beyond those who were implementing it, and unfortunately not as effectively publicised and explained as it should have been, was among the more important initiatives undertaken in Sikkim but somehow flew under the radar and then faded away. There are several illnesses plaguing Sikkim, which, if diagnosed in time, would not only save many lives, but also improve general well-being because the two health-related challenges which are the most glaring in Sikkim – Cancer and Depression – are not only little understood, but also extremely expensive, as much in monetary terms as the trauma they impose on the entire family. Both can be detected before they reach the advanced stage when the suffering increases along with the chances of fatality.

While one is on issues of preventive healthcare, attention needs to also be drawn on the challenges posed by labour-intensive projects like hydel and other infrastructure. One needs to however first realise that increasing influx is invariably a direct indication of a region's developmental graph. Since just about everyone in Sikkim subscribes to the belief that "influx" is swamping Sikkim, then, by the same count, one could also safely assume that Sikkim is developing rather well. The increased influx has also caused an increased paranoia among the locals who want more stringent measures to keep "outsiders" out. How this can be achieved without upsetting the development cart is something for the policy-makers to figure out, for now, let's limit this to health concerns. Because the influx till some years ago, used to come in a trickle, it never really expressed itself as a health issue which needs to be addressed. But now that some major labour-intensive projects have gotten underway, Sikkim needs to work out how it will protect its health better. One does not attempt to claim here that the migrant population which follows large projects are "unhealthy" or that they are vectors of possible epidemics, it is just that precaution is always the more advisable option. Take for example the cholera outbreak at the Teesta Stage V dam-site in 2001, the disease obviously came out of the labour colony there. A preventive approach would have seen labour inspectors and department visit labour settlements and ensure proper sanitation and more frequent health check-ups. Nothing like that was ever attempted and the department continues to mix-up its priorities. The laws and rules are already in place. All that is required is empathy to undertake periodic and honest inspection of project sites to ensure that workers are housed in healthy environs. This is as important for health issues as for the basic human rights of the employees engaged there. These are not major undertakings and clear directions to the district authorities and patronage for earnest NGOs should get the job done. After all, people brought in to labour on projects from which Sikkim will eventually earn deserve to be treated better and ensured better health as well...

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Bitcoin: China's Crackdown Isn't Enough – only a global effort can stop crypto's monstrous energy demand

PETER HOWSON
THECONVERSATION.COM

Huge concrete data centres, permanently plugged into power plants and telephone exchanges, maintain much of online life. But the infrastructure behind internet-based cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin, dogecoin and ethereum is more like a rusty travelling circus. And right now, that circus is on the road.

Bitcoin relies on a network of millions of specialist machines, known as miners, around 70% of which are currently based in China. Like a never-ending game of Hungry Hippos, each player hammers their mining machines 24/7 to try and scoop up as many bitcoins as possible. With only a few hippos, its easy for everyone to be a winner. But with around 2.5 million miners chasing an ever-shrinking number of prizes, the game is becoming increasingly difficult.

Bitcoin's booming popularity has caused its electricity demand to swell. With no central planning, a perpetual arms race for equipment continues, creating 15,000 tonnes of burned out electronic waste annually.

To maximise profits, mining machines are often crammed into shipping containers, with operators ready to up sticks at a moment's notice to find the cheapest sources of energy. During China's summer rain season, hydro power plants in the south-western provinces generate so much energy that miners can mop up the leftovers. But in the winter dry season, many miners unplug and hit the road, heading for the coal-fired power plants scattered across China's vast northern territories.

Recent crypto price increases have encouraged some Chinese bitcoiners to mine coal and restart idle power plants without permission, endangering lives and threatening President Xi Jinping's climate goals.

Bitcoin's energy demand has more than doubled in a year from 55 terawatt-hours (TWh) to 125 TWh. The network now has a carbon footprint similar to the whole of Poland. Chinese regulators closed down all the country's crypto exchanges in 2017. Even so, rocketing demand for bitcoin elsewhere means the network's energy use in China is



predicted to peak by 2024 at around 300 TWh. That's equivalent to the total energy demand of the UK. With a crypto circus in tow, Beijing's commitments to cut carbon emissions by 65% before 2030 would be near impossible to meet.

BITCOIN IS NOT JUST CHINA'S PROBLEM

In an attempt to reduce bitcoin's environmental impacts in China, the coal-dependent province of Inner Mongolia recently banned bitcoin mining and set up a hotline to report suspected transgressors. But on average, mining just one bitcoin per day requires a US\$1.8 million (£1.3 million) investment in specialist equipment. Expulsions from the province could force some highly invested bitcoiners underground, while forcing others to find new places to park up in neighbouring countries which don't have China's seasonal glut of renewable energy.

To prevent an influx of Chinese miners chasing cheaper electricity, Iran's President recently clamped down on new oil-fuelled mining, which authorities blame for increasing urban smog. The Black Sea territory of Abkhazia is trying to hold back foreign miners as officials there are forced to introduce rolling blackouts due to energy shortages. Bitcoin mining has been blamed for overloaded electricity lines and power station fires, leaving some areas without power for days.

UK authorities have also paid the price for bitcoin's boom. In May 2021, officers from West Midlands Police in the UK, believing they were raiding an illegal cannabis farm in Sandwell, instead discovered around 100 bitcoin mining

machines running off an improvised connection to the electricity supply. The outdated machines were so inefficient that they could only turn a profit with stolen energy. These thefts raise energy prices for everyone else, causing fuel poverty and risking public safety.

ANTISOCIAL SIDE EFFECTS

Demand for mining machines has caused computer chip shortages, hurting more useful industries struggling back to work post-COVID. UK carmakers have cut production while smartphone companies have delayed future launches. The price of specialist chips used by the likes of Intel and Apple have increased by around 70% so far in 2021, with knock-on effects for UK consumers.

Even universities and hospitals are affected by bitcoin's second-order effects. According to the insurer, Hiscox, around 4,500 organisations fell victim to cyber attacks every day in the UK in 2018. Many of these involve ransomware payments, 98% of which are paid in bitcoin.

Some argue that to slow the increase in ransomware attacks, authorities need to crack down on cryptocurrency exchanges that enable bitcoin ransoms to be paid. Others claim that cryptocurrencies and ransomware are now so entwined that the only way to fight the latter is to ban cryptocurrencies altogether.

To clean up the crypto industry, a UN-backed Crypto Climate Accord and the Bitcoin Miners Council were established. These groups urge bitcoin miners in the US to only use leftover renewable energy. But it's not possible to give a higher price to bitcoins produced using only renewables, because bitcoins are de-

signed to be fully interchangeable. Research shows that new miners joining the competition in North America have encouraged miners where there are no renewables to use more machines and work harder, increasing the network's overall carbon footprint.

A GLOBAL RESPONSE

For regulatory purposes, bitcoin should be considered similar to the global trade in Chinese tiger parts. Banning tiger hunting in the UK is pointless, but banning the sale of tiger parts is useful. Likewise, when UK-based investors are allowed to speculate on bitcoin, they encourage an environmentally disastrous global industry that has so far failed to benefit anyone except criminals and some early speculators.

Cracking down on crypto exchanges or banning the import and use of mining equipment could be a relatively easy win for the UK as it prepares to host the 2021 UN climate summit. Doing nothing about the problem would negate the UK's progress in other areas. Thanks to tax relief schemes and infrastructure investment, electric car registrations increased by 41% in 2020, preventing the release of around 50 million tonnes of CO₂ a year. Meanwhile, bitcoin mining causes nearly 60 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.

China appears committed to putting its own house in order, but bitcoin's social and environmental impacts urgently need a global response.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in International Development, Northumbria University, Newcastle]

Is it time to give up on consciousness as 'the ghost in the machine'?

PETER HALLIGAN & DAVID A OAKLEY
THECONVERSATION.COM

As individuals, we feel that we know what consciousness is because we experience it daily. It's that intimate sense of personal awareness we carry around with us, and the accompanying feeling of ownership and control over our thoughts, emotions and memories.

But science has not yet reached a consensus on the nature of consciousness – which has important implications for our belief in free will and our approach to the study of the human mind.

Beliefs about consciousness can be roughly divided into two camps. There are those who believe consciousness is like a ghost in the machinery of our brains, meriting special attention and study in its own right. And there are those, like us, who challenge this, pointing out that what we call consciousness is just another output generated backstage by our efficient neural machinery.

Over the past 30 years, neuroscientific research has been gradually moving away from the first camp. Using research from cognitive neuropsychology and hypnosis, our recent paper argues in favour of the latter position, even though this seems to undermine the compelling sense of authorship we have over our consciousness.

And we argue this isn't simply a topic of mere academic interest. Giving up on the ghost of consciousness to focus scientific endeavour on the machinery of our brains could be an essential step we need to take to better understand the human mind.

IS CONSCIOUSNESS SPECIAL?

Our experience of consciousness places us firmly in the driver's seat, with a sense that we're in control of our psychological world. But seen from an objective perspective, it's not at all clear that this is how consciousness functions, and there's still much debate about the fundamental nature of consciousness itself.

One reason for this is that many of us, including scientists, have adopted a dualist position on the nature of consciousness. Dualism is a philo-

sophical view that draws a distinction between the mind and the body. Even though consciousness is generated by the brain – a part of the body – dualism claims that the mind is distinct from our physical features, and that consciousness cannot be understood through the study of the physical brain alone.

It's easy to see why we believe this to be the case. While every other process in the human body ticks and pulses away without our oversight, there is something uniquely transcendental about our experience of consciousness. It's no surprise that we've treated consciousness as something special, distinct from the automatic systems that keep us breathing and digesting.

But a growing body of evidence from the field of cognitive neuroscience – which studies the biological processes underpinning cognition – challenges this view. Such studies draw attention to the fact that many psychological functions are generated and carried out entirely outside of our subjective awareness, by a range of fast, efficient non-conscious brain systems.

Consider, for example, how effortlessly we regain consciousness each morning after losing it the night before, or how, with no deliberate effort, we instantly recognise and understand shapes, colours, patterns and faces we encounter.

Consider that we don't actually experience how our perceptions are created, how our thoughts and sentences are produced, how we recall our memories or how we control our muscles to walk and our tongues to talk. Simply put, we don't generate or control our thoughts, feelings or actions – we just seem to become aware of them.

BECOMING AWARE

The way we simply become aware of thoughts, feelings and the world around us suggests that our consciousness is generated and controlled backstage, by brain systems that we remain unaware of.

Our recent paper argues that consciousness

involves no separate independent psychological process distinct from the brain itself, just as there's no additional function to digestion that exists separately from the physical workings of the gut.

While it's clear that both the experience and content of consciousness are real, we argue that, from a science explanation, they are epiphenomenal: secondary phenomena based on the machinations of the physical brain itself. In other words, our subjective experience of consciousness is real, but the functions of control and ownership we attribute to that experience are not.

FUTURE STUDY OF THE BRAIN

Our position is neither obvious nor intuitive. But we contend that continuing to place consciousness in the driver's seat, above and beyond the physical workings of the brain, and attributing cognitive functions to it, risks confusion and delaying a better understanding of human psychology and behaviour.

To better align psychology with the rest of the natural sciences, and to be consistent with how we understand and study processes like digestion and respiration, we favour a perspective change. We should redirect our efforts to studying the non-conscious brain, and not the functions previously attributed to consciousness.

This doesn't of course exclude psychological investigation into the nature, origins and distribution of the belief in consciousness. But it does mean refocusing academic efforts on what happens beneath our awareness – where we argue the real neuro-psychological processes take place.

Our proposal feels personally and emotionally unsatisfying, but we believe it provides a future framework for the investigation of the human mind – one that looks at the brain's physical machinery rather than the ghost that we've traditionally called consciousness.

[Peter Halligan is Hon Professor of Neuropsychology, Cardiff University; David A Oakley is Emeritus Professor of Psychology, UCL]

World is supplying medical goods to Nepal. Concern is if they are being fairly distributed

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, 05 JUN [KATHMANDUPOST]: When Nepal witnessed the peak of a devastating second wave of the pandemic last month with people dying from a lack of oxygen and almost every second test returning positive, the world's eyes turned to the country. Much medical aid poured in.

From oxygen cylinders from China to antigen test kits from Switzerland, from oxygen concentrators from Spain to ventilators from the United States and United Kingdom, Nepal received much in coronavirus relief. More than two dozen countries have extended support to Nepal during the last one month alone to fight the pandemic.

But there were also reports of politicians taking oxygen cylinders to their constituencies, bypassing the government mechanism.

This has raised questions on whether the foreign aid is reaching places it is needed the most and put the spotlight on not only the government's process of distributing aid across the country but also donors' scrutiny on the utilisation of their support.

"Accountability should be established as we have heard that some politicians have misused these medical goods provided by foreign donors," Amod Pyakuryal, a medical sociologist, told the Post. "The medical support should not be seen as the optics and their arbitrary distribution should be discouraged."

According to serving and former government officials that the Post talked to, there is a system in place to disburse the aid and to audit the distribution system.

"We prepare a distribution plan every week and as per the plan we distribute the medical equipment to needy hospitals," Upendra Dhungana, a senior Health Ministry official who looks after logistical and management issues, told the Post. "We also send them to different provinces as per our plan which is based on demand from them."



Once medical assistance lands at Kathmandu airport, it is received by either the health minister or senior Foreign or Health Ministry officials. After the materials go through the customs, they go to a warehouse near Tribhuvan International Airport where the aid is logged into the electronic logistic management information system (eLMIS) of the Ministry of Health and Population, helped set up by the US Agency for International Development, and stored at the humanitarian aid staging area at Sinamangal.

The electronic logistics management system provides real-time information on medical supplies and commodities across Nepal's supply chain which starts in Kathmandu and includes the National Public Health Laboratory, nine central medical stores, 39 designated Covid-19 treatment hospitals, seven provincial warehouses and public health laboratories, 77 district health offices and 753 local government stores.

Every week the Management and Supply Division of the Health Ministry prepares a distribution plan as per the demands placed by various hospitals and provincial governments as well as part of its own arrangement.

"There is no chance of misuse of such foreign assistance because we have to later report each and every foreign

mission about their aid," said Dhungana. "We do not keep records of the distribution of small stuff like masks or gloves but all items donated by foreign missions are under our auditing purview."

But former Health Ministry officials say such aid does get misused.

"There is no exact data on how much of such donation or support goes unused or misused but around five to seven percent of medical support either the government has procured or received in grant is misused," former health secretary Kedar Bahadur Adhikari said. According to him, in his experience, a donor country or agency hardly seeks reports on deployment of its aid or assistance and the status of its utilisation.

"If they get third party information that their support or aid is being misused or has not come into use or left in limbo, then they pick up such issues during the meeting," Adhikari told the Post.

The Post contacted a number of Kathmandu-based diplomatic missions of donor countries to ask them how they are monitoring their pandemic aid to Nepal. Some responded, others didn't and some talked on condition of anonymity.

Some countries like Australia extend

support directly to the local and international non-governmental organisations they have partnerships with.

On May 21, the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu announced an additional 7 million Australian dollars (NPR 635 million) in funding to Nepal to support the response to Covid-19.

"This funding will be delivered to our trusted and established partners working on the ground across Nepal, in coordination with the work being undertaken by other donors including the US, UK, Japan and UN agencies," the Australian Embassy said in a statement issued earlier.

According to Dhungana, when foreign donors have their preferences, the Nepal government channels the aid as per those preferences when it goes through the Health Ministry.

In an email response, the US Embassy in Kathmandu said that USAID keeps track of the commodities from the time they are unloaded upon arrival into the country until they reach their end user.

"We are also supporting Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population through additional human resources as they take the following steps to track the commodities and make sure that they end up where they are most needed," the US Embassy said.

The United States says it has three steps to

keep track of its aid.

The first is counting the incoming shipments of commodities to make sure the quantities and items match what was expected; the second is feeding the information on the incoming items and quantities into logistics management software (eLMIS); and the third is making and following a distribution plan for moving the commodities rapidly and efficiently to where they are needed the most.

The plan uses information on stock levels and requirements in different areas to decide where, when, and in what quantities to ship commodities, the embassy said.

During the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, China has donated the largest amount of medical support from its mainland and provincial governments.

But the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, despite repeated calls and messages from the Post, said that it had "no comment" over whether the Chinese medical support to Nepal is properly used or not and on whether it is following up with the government of Nepal or not.

On the other hand, in an email response to the Post, the European Delegation to Nepal said that the EU is keeping track of the status of medical equipment and supplies provided by the EU member states through the govern-

ment system.

"All these can be tracked in eLMIS," it said.

But foreign donors are also aware of misuse.

"At the ground level, we are planning to request our project partners to monitor the use of the equipment and supplies," said the European Union Delegation to Nepal in the email.

A senior official of a western embassy told the Post, on condition of anonymity, that it is very difficult to get updates on its aid from the government side.

"So we have adopted the multi-pronged strategy," the official said, referring to its disbursement of aid through the government as well as its development partners.

An official of another diplomatic mission, however, said that they do not have the authority to monitor the government of Nepal so they follow up after delivering the support.

But the agency does express concern if it gets reports of misuse.

"Once we hand over the medical support to the government, that comes under the purview of Nepal government but if we read news or get information that our support has gone useless or misused, we do raise the concern with the relevant government agencies," he told the post on condition of anonymity.

Dhungana of the Health Ministry, however, said that the government will let the donors know how and where their aid was utilised.

"Once this Covid-19 pandemic situation gets normalised, we will then send reports on where their medical assistance has gone," he said. "There is no chance of misuse of such foreign assistance because we have to later report to each and every foreign mission about their aid."

But Adhikari, the former health secretary, is sceptical about Dhungana's claims.

"There is no culture of informing donors about their support or of donors asking us about the status of implementation," said Adhikari.

Nagaland to have 200-bed acute care hospital at Dimapur



KOHIMA, JUN 5 (PTI): In view of the emergent requirement of ICU and oxygen supported beds for COVID-19 patients, Nagaland will soon have a 200-bed acute care hospital at Dimapur.

The 200-bed acute care hospital is being set up at Christian Institute of Health Sciences and Research (CIHSR) Dimapur by the state government at a cost of Rs 30 crore.

"We are also in the process of setting up a 200-bed acute care facility at the CIHSR campus on a war footing," Health Minister S Pangnyu Phom told reporters here on Friday.

This will be a pre-engineered modern structure, which will continue to be used as a medical facility after we are done with COVID-19, he said, adding that this will be an additional asset to Dimapur and Nagaland.

Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Department, Amardeep S Bhatia said the hospital is being created as the concept of a make-shift or field hospital was not considered suitable and a temporary facility could not be put to future use.

Accordingly, the proposal for a pre-engineered hospital with the most modern acute care facilities has been considered and completed in a few weeks after obtaining the necessary approvals.

In view of the emergency, approvals for the hospital have been fast tracked by invoking provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, said Bhatia.

The decision to locate the hospital in the CIHSR was taken because of the availability of the land and to converge the human resources already available with CIHSR Dimapur, he said.

The hospital is a smart acute care hospital and the structure will be made of steel and tempered glass, he said. The structure is not

a "tentage" but the guaranteed life of the building shall be 20 years and can last much longer with proper care and maintenance, he said.

The initial proposal of the hospital was for 176 beds but it has been expanded to 200-beds by including a 24 bed Pediatric ICU ward.

This has been done keeping in view the predicted third wave that may affect children, he said.

Thus, the hospital will meet the immediate needs of the COVID-19 patients and would also function as a full-fledged acute care hospital to deliver high quality tertiary care post pandemic as well.

On the capacity of COVID-19 Hospitals in Nagaland, State Nodal Officer for Integrated Disease Surveillance Project, Dr Nyanthung Kikon said there are 378 non-oxygen beds, oxygen supported beds are 535 and total ICU beds are 101 across the state.

Bed occupancy as on June 3 is 29 per cent of oxygen supported beds and 28 per cent of ICU beds, he said.

Total beds in COVID Care Centers are 1,332 and occupancy is 14 per cent, he said.

Giving details of oxygen availability in the state, Dr Kikon said there are 1,931 D Type cylinders, 2,594 B Type, 512 A Type and 852 Oxygen Concentrators.

On Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants in the state, he said the plants are presently operational in Dimapur and Kohima, while installation is completed in Mokokchung and 8 more districts will soon be covered by PSA plants 6 from UNICEF and 2 from UNDP for which civil works are in progress.

One each 1000 litre per minute plants from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Naga Hospital Authority Kohima and CIHSR Dimapur are in the pipeline, Dr Kikon informed.

Abhishek Banerjee, Mamata Banerjee Nephew, Is Trinamool General Secretary

KOLKATA, 05 JUN [NDTV]: The Trinamool Congress has promoted Lok Sabha MP Abhishek Banerjee to the General Secretary post, it was announced Saturday after senior leaders of Bengal's ruling party held an organisational meeting in Kolkata - the first since their decisive victory over the BJP in the April-May election.

The party has also appointed MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar as President of its women's wing, and actor Saayoni Ghosh, who unsuccessfully contested last month's election, as head of the youth wing.

Abhishek Banerjee, who is also Chief Minister Mamata Ba-

nerjee's nephew, previously led the youth wing but will stand down from that post after his promotion, with the party following a "one person, one position formula", senior leader Partha Chatterjee told reporters after the meeting.

Mr Chatterjee also said the party is planning on "expanding the organisation outside Bengal" - a potentially significant remark with Assembly elections due in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat next year, and Lok Sabha elections due in three years' time.

Sudip Bandopadhyay and Derek O'Brien have been retained as the party's parliamentary lead-

ers.

Another decision taken at today's meeting was the banning of red beacons on minister's cars.

Abhishek Banerjee was widely seen as having played a key role in the Trinamool's win, particularly since he was instrumental in hiring master poll strategist Prashant Kishor.

The appointment also indicates his growing influence within the party - something many senior ex-Trinamool leaders were unhappy with before they quit ahead of the election.

That list includes Suvendu Adhikari, Ms Banerjee's former right-hand man who contested against the Chief Minister from the Nandigram seat and emerged victorious.

18 new COVID-19 cases in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

PORT BLAIR, JUN 5 (PTI): Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported 18 new COVID-19 cases, pushing the coronavirus tally in the union territory to 7,088, a health official said on Saturday.

The COVID-19 death toll to 121 as two more persons succumbed to the infection in the last 24 hours, he said.

Of the 18 new cases, 15 were detected during contact tracing while three were airport arrivals, he said.

All passengers arriving by flight have to go undergo a mandatory Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) before they are allowed entry into the islands, the official said.

Thirty-two more people have been cured of the disease, taking the total number of recover-

ies in the archipelago to 6,852, the official said.

The union territory now has 115 active COVID-19 cases of which 107 are in South Andaman district and eight in North and Middle Andaman district, he said, adding that the Nicobar district of the archipelago is now coronavirus free as it has no active cases.

The administration has so far tested 3,89,152 samples for COVID-19 and the cumulative test positivity rate is 1.82 per cent.

A total of 1,10,202 people have received the first dose of the COVID vaccine, while 17,386 people have been administered both doses of the vaccine. The union territory has a total population of 4 lakh people.

Meanwhile, the Information, Publicity and Tourism, secretary of Andaman and Nicobar administration, S K Singh in a press conference on Friday said that it is encouraging to see COVID-19 cases are starting to fall due to lockdown restrictions.

"Signs of marginal dip in the number of COVID-19 positive case are visible but the rate of reduction is slow and we cannot be complacent until the islands are free from the virus," he said.

"We cannot relax as the drop in cases is slow and the numbers could quickly move the other way if we are careless", the secretary said.

Singh urged the people to follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour and get vaccinated.

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Home crowd now backs No. 2 Medvedev, because of French coach

PARIS, JUN 5 (AP):Daniil Medvedev had never been past the first round at the French Open before. And his surprise reward for reaching the fourth round now is that he's carrying the hopes of the French crowd. Why?

Because there are no French players left in the men's or women's draw, and Medvedev happens to have a very successful French coach.

Gilles Cervara has helped the 25-year-old Russian win 10 titles on the ATP Tour and reach No. 2 in the rankings.

After Medvedev's 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 win against American Reilly Opelka, he conducted his interview on Court Suzanne-Lenglen in French. He was told by the interviewer he'll now get huge support at Roland Garros because of Cervara.

The crowd then broke out into spontaneous chants of Daniil, Daniil and Medvedev, who speaks English and French fluently, waved and thanked them.

I hope you will be with me up until the final, he said, grinning.

Thanks for supporting me today.

Big-serving and big-swinging, Medvedev has lost major finals at this year's Australian Open and the 2019 U.S. Open on hard and fast surfaces.

Clay never suited him before, but people change.

When I was young I never ate fish, like I hated it. Now I love tuna, he said.

"So, yeah, this year I'm en-



joying myself in Roland Garros. I don't hide it."

He next faces No. 22 Cristian Garin of Chile.

SLIDING SUCCESS

Serena Williams is far more dominant on grass than clay, winning seven titles at Wimbledon compared with three at the French Open.

But that doesn't change her enjoyment at Roland Garros.

I love sliding. I love the speed ... I feel like I have more time to get to balls," she said after a 6-4, 6-4 win against American countrywoman Danielle Collins on Court Philippe-Chatrier.

Another thing that pleases Williams about playing on clay is contrast.

I was looking at some pictures and its just so cool to see the feet next to this dirt, she said.

The dirt looks so uneven and yet it's so smooth. It's really cool.

The seventh-seeded Williams, who won her most recent Roland Garros title in 2015, is chasing a 24th major to move level with Margaret Court for the most singles championships for women or men in the Open era.

The 39-year-old American faces 21st-seeded Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan in the fourth round.

COLD FEET

Tamara Zidansek might have been tackling the slopes at the Winter Olympics in snowboarding, rather than swinging a racket at Roland Garros.

There's a simple reason the Slovenian chose tennis instead. Because I was really cold

snowboarding. Oh my God, I don't like the cold weather at all," the 23-year-old Zidansek said after beating Katerina Sinikova 0-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2.

This is the farthest Zidansek has gone at any major tournament.

When she was growing up, she was far closer to snow than clay.

We lived like 20 minutes away from a ski resort. It was just normal for us to go there every weekend, Zidansek said.

It was fun to do at first, and then I saw an opportunity to make something out of (tennis). So I just went for it.

Now she's one win away from the quarterfinals.

SIDELINED

American Taylor Fritz says he'll require surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his right

knee, and he hopes to recover in time to play at Wimbledon.

Fritz was hurt on the final point of his second-round loss to Dominik Koepfer at the French Open, and he left the court in a wheelchair.

I came down from a forehand on match point and heard a pop in my knee, he said Friday on Twitter. After that I could barely limp my way to the net to shake hands, and when I tried to stand back up I wasn't able to.

Fritz is ranked 33rd.

FRUSTRATED FOGNINI

Fabio Fognini hurt himself with his hot temper during a third-round loss to Federico Delbonis.

The 27th-seeded Fognini required treatment from a trainer after bloodying his right hand -- his playing hand -- by punching his racket strings in frustration multiple times early in the second set of the 6-4, 6-1, 6-3 defeat.

That came after the Italian was warned by the chair umpire for foul language during the first set.

Today I played poorly at tennis and he played well, and it's only fair that I lost the match, Fognini said.

Karen Khachanov was the victim of a similar incident on Wednesday, cutting his right middle finger by hitting his racket strings in anger during a five-set loss to Kei Nishikori.

Delbonis reached the fourth round of a Grand Slam for the first time in his career, in his 27th major.

Tennis player released from custody in match-fixing case



PARIS, JUN 5 (AP): The Russian tennis player arrested on suspicion of match-fixing at last year's French Open was released from police custody, judicial officials told The Associated Press.

Yana Sizikova, who was arrested Thursday in Paris after competing in a French Open doubles match, was not formally charged after questioning but remains under investigation, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

The 26-year-old Sizikova denies the allegations, according to her lawyer, Frederic Belot. He told the AP that Sizikova wants to file a complaint for defamation.

The prosecutor's office said Sizikova was arrested for sports bribery and organized fraud for acts likely to have been committed in September 2020."

The case was opened last October by a French police unit specializing in betting fraud and match-fixing. It has previously worked with Belgian authorities investigating suspect matches at the lower levels of professional tennis.

The French tennis federation said it could not provide further information because the investigation is ongoing.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency, which investigates match-fixing in the sport, declined to comment on the details of the case but said in a message to the AP that there has been ongoing liaison between the ITIA and law enforcement in France."

Speaking to the AP in a phone interview, her lawyer said Sizikova was extremely shocked."

She was placed in custody like a criminal. She says she is innocent and did not want me to assist her

during her questioning because she considers herself like a victim," Belot said.

Belot said he only started representing Sizikova on Friday after he was approached by the player's parents. He said Sizikova had contacted the ITIA when the case was opened last year to deny any wrongdoing.

The prosecutor's office said the probe centered on suspicions about one match at Roland Garros last year. It did not specify the match. German newspaper Die Welt and French sports daily L'Equipe said at the time there were suspicious betting patterns in the first round of a women's doubles match on Sept. 30.

On that day, Sizikova and partner Madison Brengle of the United States played on Court No. 10 against Romanian players Andreea Mitu and Patricia Maria Tig. Sizikova was broken to love serving in the fifth game of the second set, during which she double-faulted twice.

Le Parisien reported Friday that tens of thousands of euros (dollars) were bet with several operators in different countries on the Romanian players winning that game.

The newspaper said Sizikova, who is ranked 101st in doubles and 765th in singles, was arrested Thursday after losing in the first round of the doubles tournament at Roland Garros. The newspaper said authorities searched Sizikova's hotel room.

Last year's French Open, delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic, was played in late September and early October.

Spain, Portugal draw 0-0 in front of nearly 15,000 in Madrid

MADRID, JUN 5 (AP): Watched by almost 15,000 fans, Spain and Portugal drew 0-0 in Madrid in a warm-up match for the European Championship which attracted the biggest crowd for any event in Spain since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a festive atmosphere not seen in soccer matches in the country in more than a year, the 14,743 fans at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium chanted and waved flags, and jeered nearly every time Portugal great Cristiano Ronaldo touched the ball.

There had been smaller crowds at other events and matches across Spain, including the Madrid Open tennis tournament in May. No more than 5,000 fans had been allowed at some Spanish league soccer matches at the end of the season in regions where the pandemic was more under control.

The last time fans were allowed at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano was in a Spanish league match in March 2020.

Spain has been one of the hardest-hit countries by the pandemic, and its vaccination campaign only recently has picked up pace.

It was beautiful, Spain's Pablo Sarabia said.

Fans are a crucial part of soccer. It had been strange to play in empty stadiums. It's amazing to have the crowds back with us.

Spanish officials initially said up to 30% of the 68,000-capacity sta-



dium more than 20,000 could be filled, but later the total number of fans was reduced to 15,000 based on guidance from health authorities.

Spain's national team hadn't played in front of its home fans since November 2019, when it defeated Romania 5-0 at the Wanda Metropolitano in qualifying for Euro 2020.

It was about time they started allowing fans to return to the stadiums, said Ramon Moya, a 28-year-old Barcelona fan who lives in Madrid.

This crisis has been going on for a long time and the people need to start going back to their normal lives.

There were different time slots for the arrival of fans on Friday, and they had to wear masks at all times. Smoking, eating and drinking was not be permitted in the stands, and social distancing had to be respected inside the

stadium.

A few hundred Portugal fans were loudly heard early on at the Wanda Metropolitano. There was a mix of jeers and cheers all loud when Ronaldo, the former Real Madrid star, first came on the field to warm up.

The 36-year-old forward remained six goals away from tying the all-time scoring record for a men's national team. The record of 109 goals is held by former Iran striker Ali Daei, the only other male soccer player to surpass the 100-goal milestone. Ronaldo's best chance of scoring on Friday was with a header that just missed in the 67th minute.

It was mostly a lackluster match, with neither team creating many scoring opportunities. There was more action in the second half but nobody could capitalize on their opportunities.

Portugal had a goal by Jos Fonte disallowed

in the 22nd for a foul by the defender before he headed the ball into the net. Ivaro Morata missed chances for Spain in the second half, hitting the crossbar in a breakaway in stoppage time.

Defender Aymeric Laporte made his debut with Spain after having played for France's youth squads.

It wasn't the result we wanted, but we did some things well, Laporte said.

Portugal is a great team, it has great players. It was a good warm-up match that will help us a lot.

Spain's final warm-up match for Euro 2020 will be on Tuesday against Lithuania at the Butarque Stadium in Legan s, just outside Madrid. Defending European champion Portugal will host Israel on Wednesday to close out its preparations.

Portugal will play in a difficult Group F that also includes Germany, France and Hungary, which edged Cyprus 1-0.

Spain is in Group E along with Sweden, Po-

land and Slovakia.

Before the match, players from both teams posed for a photo wearing T-shirts promoting Portugal's and Spain's joint bid to host the 2030 World Cup. Top government officials from both countries were at the stadium, signing an agreement for the bid.

CONVINCING ITALY

Italy put on a convincing display in its last warm-up match before Euro 2020 with a 4-0 win over the Czech Republic.

Ciro Immobile provided Italy's opener in the 23rd when the Lazio forward controlled a loose ball and fired it in with his right foot. Nicolò Barella doubled the lead three minutes before halftime with a shot that took a deflection off a defender before finding the net.

Immobile set up Lorenzo Insigne to make it 3-0 in the 66th before Domenico Berardi added a fourth.

Roberto Mancini's Italy faces Switzerland, Turkey and Wales in Group A at Euro 2020.

Giacomo Raspadori made his debut for Italy when the 21-year-old Sassuolo forward came on as a substitute.

The Czechs are in Group D with England, Croatia and Scotland.

Finland lost 1-0 to Estonia before it plays in Group B against Belgium, Denmark and Russia.

North Macedonia routed Kazakhstan 4-0 as it gets ready to face Austria, Netherlands and Ukraine in Group C.

In matchups of teams not playing at Euro 2020, Slovenia routed Gibraltar 6-0, Kosovo beat Malta 2-1, Latvia beat Lithuania 3-1, and Iceland edged the Faroe Islands 1-0.

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SummitTIMES

Florida scientists find rare bee species in new locations.

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP): Florida Museum of Natural History scientists have found the first nest of Florida's extraordinarily rare blue calamintha bee and added a new location to its known range: the Ocala National Forest. They also confirmed the insect feeds on a second, but highly endangered, host plant. Researchers made the discoveries during their second field season tracking the obscure bee in Central Florida's sand pine scrub habitats. Their findings will help inform conservation and land management efforts and a federal assessment on whether the blue calamintha bee qualifies for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

"The ultimate goal is to keep this bee around for the foreseeable future," said Jarret Daniels, Florida Museum curator of Lepidoptera and the project's principal investigator. "Studying and understanding more about individual species is most impactful for us when it leads to steps for helping conserve the organism."

A marked blue calamintha bee collects pollen from Ashe's calamint.

First described in 2011, the blue calamintha bee, *Osmiacalaminthae*, was known from only four locations on Lake Wales Ridge until museum researcher Chase Kimmel documented new populations in 2020. Over the past two field seasons, Kimmel and field technician

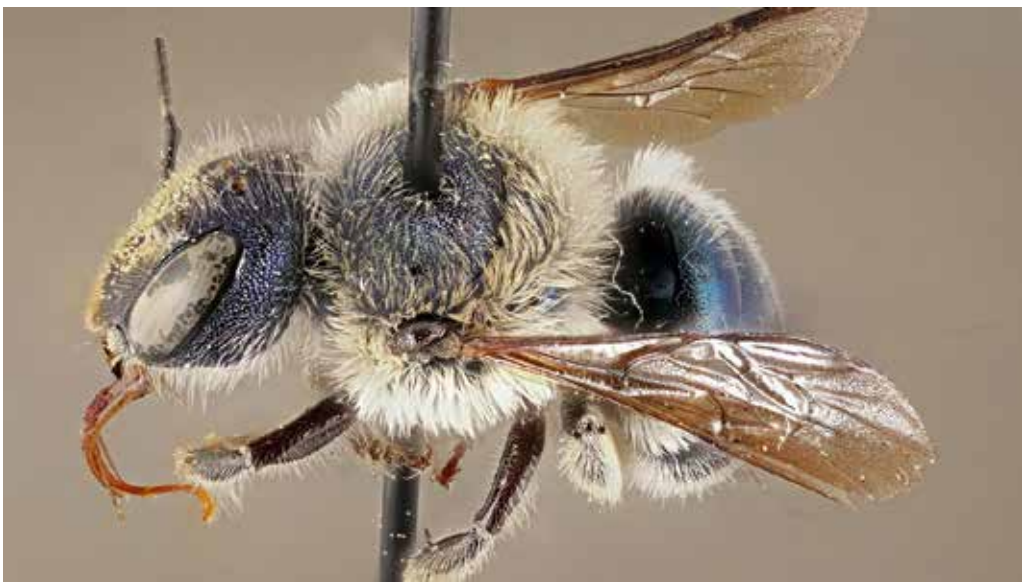
Clint Gibson have observed the bee at 11 new locations, including the Ocala National Forest, giving scientists valuable insight into the species' potential range.

The bee's primary home, Lake Wales Ridge, is a 150-mile-long sandy spine running down the center of the state, the remnant of ancient islands in Florida's distant past. The region harbors plant and animal species found nowhere else, but ranks among the nation's fastest-disappearing ecosystems, with pockets of natural habitat surrounded by citrus groves and suburban neighborhoods.

Florida Museum researcher Chase Kimmel holds a blue calamintha bee marked with paint. Kimmel and a team of scientists are tracking the rare insects to help inform conservation and management efforts.

Using Archbold Biological Station as a home base, Kimmel and Gibson logged hundreds of hours surveying conservation lands, but recorded blue calamintha bees fewer than 100 times, many of which could have been the same individuals.

When Kimmel marked individual bees to track their movements, he often saw them later in the same area – even at the same shrub. DNA analysis will help reveal how genetically isolated the bee's populations may have become over time. Sequencing its genome may also provide insights into other species within the *Osmia* genus, in-



cluding the blue orchard bee, which is an economically important pollinator in agriculture.

Kimmel said that while he gets "a little bummed" as he drives through the region, watching bulldozers overturn the ridge's fragile habitat, this year's field season also sounded a note of hope: The site at which the team confirmed the bee's second pollen host plant, the false rosemary, is a former citrus grove now restored to pine scrub.

"Those kinds of stories where we can restore and promote habitat for this bee really gets us excited, knowing we've got examples where we can actually make a difference," he said. "It's not just that we're going to study the decline of this bee. There are things we can actually do."

The bee's common name comes from its main host plant Ashe's

calaminthaashei, itself a threatened species in the state. False rosemary, *Conradinabrevifolia*, is even rarer, listed as endangered at both state and federal levels.

Researchers learned the blue calamintha bee visits false rosemary earlier in the year, before Ashe's calamint is in bloom, leading to concerns about food availability if warming temperatures decouple the timing of the plant's blossoming from the bee's emergence in February.

The team also collected pollen samples from blue calamintha bees to determine whether they visit other plant species.

"It's a story of a really rare bee using a really rare series of plants," Daniels said. "This bee could be closely tied to the pollination of these endangered plants."

The blue calamintha bee's underground nesting habits came as a surprise to the researchers, who expected it

to use hollow stems or holes in dead trees, as many of its close relatives do. Given how few bees the team observed and how fast they fly, the discovery of the nest was "just kind of pure luck," Kimmel said.

Gibson was assessing a site with blooming false rosemary at Lake Wales Ridge when he happened to see a bee zip toward a small sedge and disappear into the root structure, leading him to a nest.

He later found a second nest nearby, possibly made by the same bee as a way of spreading its resources and offspring, and researchers also located two nests at Ocala National Forest. Daniels said nesting within the sedge's root system might help stabilize the deep sugar sand that characterizes these ecosystems.

The revelation that the bee is a ground nester will help the team make recom-

mendations to local land managers, as pine scrub ecosystems evolved under a rhythm of fire and undergo prescribed burns today. While the blue calamintha bee's brood chamber may be deep enough underground to withstand the heat of a burn, some areas are converted to firebreaks by overturning top soil, which might disturb bee nests.

Ensuring burns happen in a mosaic pattern or on a rotational basis, which could also help preserve the food resources on which the bee relies, Kimmel said.

Last year's news that scientists had found the blue calamintha bee unexpectedly rocketed the insect to international celebrity status when many people were under COVID-19 lockdowns and spending more time outside.

Kimmel and Daniels' inboxes flooded with reports of blue bee sightings. None thus far have been confirmed as the blue calamintha bee – Florida is also home to a number of more common blue bee species – but the researchers were bowled over by the amount of public interest in such a little-known insect.

"People tend to think what entomologists do is kind of strange, so it's exciting to see the public get excited about this," Kimmel said. "I can't deny that it was a bit overwhelming at times, but there was also a reassuring sense that what I'm doing and my passion in life

for conserving, restoring and finding management practices that help organisms thrive has meaning. It feels good to have that support."

By mid-May, blue calamintha bees show the wear and tear of their springtime labor and, as many other bee species do, will eventually work themselves to death. For the rest of the year, all the action happens underground as eggs hatch and the larvae eat food reserves stored by the female bee before they emerge next year as adults. The research team hopes to be waiting for them.

Skeptics may ask whether all the hours tramping through pine scrub to see a handful of metallic blue bees are worth it. Daniels has a response.

"All species are important. Florida scrub is a highly endangered and declining habitat across the state, and ultimately, we don't know the role this bee plays in that system," he said. "We've learned a lot about it. What will we learn in the next decade? It's hard to be cavalier when you start thinking about losing species forever."

Bees observed in the research project were released unharmed.

Funding for the research is provided a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service State Wildlife Grant administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with additional support from the Florida Biodiversity Foundation.

ASEAN envoys meet Myanmar junta leader to press for dialogue

BANGKOK (AP): Representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations met with Myanmar's junta leader on Friday, six weeks after an emergency regional summit on the coup in the country drew promises of progress toward a solution but produced no tangible results.

State broadcaster MRTV showed Senior Gen. Min AungHlaing meeting with Brunei Second Foreign Minister ErywanYusof and ASEAN Secretary-General Lim Jock Hoi, but provided only a broad outline of their discussions.

Earlier this week, an Indonesian diplomat said the delegation's purpose was to seek Myanmar's approval of an ASEAN special envoy for the crisis, who is yet to be named. He said the choice of the envoy involved both sides, making progress slow.

Friday's meeting received a cool response from members of Myanmar's opposition shadow government. The National Unity Government said at a rare online news conference that ASEAN should meet with them as well, not just the military.

"Any discussions, any meeting about the future of the people of Myanmar must include the people of Myanmar, (their) voices must be heard," said spokesperson Sa Sa.

The appointment of an ASEAN envoy was one of five points agreed at the regional summit in Jakarta in April, which Min

AungHlaing attended over the objection of opponents who said the invitation legitimized his power grab. Shortly afterward, a spokesperson for the military government said it would only allow the envoy to visit after it had achieved security and stability in the country.

The military ousted the democratically elected government of Aung San SuuKy on Feb. 1, saying her party's landslide victory in elections last November resulted from massive voter fraud. It has not produced credible evidence to back its claim.

Security forces have brutally suppressed widespread popular protests against the military takeover, firing live ammunition into crowds and carrying out waves of arrests. As of Friday, 845 people have been killed in the crackdown, according to the independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners.

U.N. spokesman StephaneDujarric in New York highlighted the impact of violence on public health workers. He said there have been at least 212 reported attacks on patients, health workers, ambulances and health care facilities, resulting in at least 14 deaths and 51 injuries since the coup.

"Our colleagues on the ground stress that hospitals are, and must remain, a place of sanctuary and unequivocal neutrality so that patients can seek care and health

professionals can provide care safely and without fear," he said.

The Jakarta summit also reached an agreement to immediately end the violence and start a dialogue between the contending parties with the help of the special envoy.

Brunei is taking the lead in negotiating with the Myanmar junta because it currently holds ASEAN's rotating chairmanship. ASEAN comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

In the online news conference, Sa Sa also said the number of people's militias taking up arms against the military government is set to rise rapidly in response to what he called a "reign of terror."

"There will be so many more forces will appear in the coming months," he said. "It will be out of control. That's why we say to the international community to help us to stop this coup. We need stability in Myanmar."

In recent weeks, civilian armed groups have appeared in several regions of the country, often using homemade weapons or old hunting rifles to engage the army and police, with some success.

Some groups of pro-democracy activists have fled to the jungles to receive combat training from battle-hardened ethnic armed groups who have been fighting for greater autonomy for decades.

Hawaii sets vaccine thresholds for lifting travel quarantine

HONOLULU (AP): Hawaii Gov. David Ige said Friday that the state will drop its quarantine and COVID-19 testing requirements for travelers once 70% of the state's population has been vaccinated against the disease. Hawaii will also lift its requirement that people wear masks indoors once that level has been reached, he said.

The state Department of Health website said 59% of Hawaii's population has had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 52% finished their dosing regimen.

The state is using its figures, and not those provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to calculate thresholds for lifting restrictions. Health Department Director Dr. Libby Char said that's because Hawaii's numbers are more accurate. She

said it appears the CDC has been counting some of Hawaii's doses twice.

Right now, travelers arriving from out of state must spend 10 days in quarantine or, to bypass that quarantine, they must show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken before departure for the islands.

Once 60% of Hawaii's population is vaccinated, Ige said, the state will al-

low travelers to bypass a quarantine requirement as long as they can prove they were vaccinated in the U.S.

Restrictions on travel between the islands will open up before that.

Ige said that as of June 15, people will be able to fly interisland without taking a COVID-19 test or showing proof of vaccination. Also on that date, those who have been

vaccinated in Hawaii may bypass quarantine when returning from a trip out of state.

To encourage more people to get vaccinated, the state announced it launched a website HIGotVaccinated.com where vaccinated people can enter to win prizes and learn about discounts at local retailers and restaurants.

Among the deals: A

\$3 bag of Zippy's chili for those who show their vaccination card. Among the prizes are 100,000 frequent flyer miles from Hawaiian Airlines.

So many people went to the website after the state announced its existence that the site crashed. Health Department spokesman Brooks Baehr said 500 people signed up for prizes in the first hour.



VIDEO NEWS SECTION



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Rachel Lindsay Says The Bachelorette's "Angry Black Female" Label "Still Follows" Her

On The View, Rachel Lindsay recalled the moment on The Bachelorette in which she was labeled "angry" because she decided to stand up for herself.

Rachel Lindsay is shutting down the "angry Black female" label once again.

The former lead of The Bachelorette appeared on the June 4 episode of The View, in which she weighed in on the situation surrounding Real Housewives of New York's Eboni K. Williams. In an episode that aired earlier this week, Eboni, the first Black cast member on RHONY, accused Luann de Lesseps of labeling her an angry Black woman during an argument over a previous conversation about sex. Following the discussion, Eboni announced on Instagram that she would be taking a short break from social media.

Rachel said she relates to Eboni's feelings about being called angry.

"In my season finale of The Bachelorette when I was sitting on stage with my runner up, my runner up told me that I was going to live a mediocre life if I didn't choose him and my response to him was, 'Actually I'm living my best life,'" Rachel said of her conversation with Peter Kraus. "When I came back from commercial break, the host [Chris Harrison] said to me, 'Rachel, you seem angry.' I looked and I said, 'That's a strong word.' And he said, 'Well, you seem upset.' I hadn't raised my voice, I hadn't yelled, I hadn't said any type of curse word."

When he was asked for an explanation as to why he felt attacked by Rachel, Peter couldn't offer one.

"I have been labeled an angry Black female -



male in Bachelor Nation," Rachel continued. "It follows me around to this day."

The attorney added, "If in 2020 we're supposed to be having these type of conversations, then we need to address micro-aggressions that are placed on Black women. We need to address these racial stereotypes. I think it's important that we continue

to do that."

Rachel, who was the first Black lead of The Bachelorette, is one of the most outspoken alum in terms of fighting for equality and representation within the franchise. Earlier this year, she and Chris engaged in a conversation about a former contestant, Rachel Kirkconnell, who was called out on social media for attending an antebellum-themed party, which many believe glorifies the institution of slavery. While Chris defended Rachael, the former Bachelorette reminded Chris of what she may have represented had she gone to the event.

Following the conversation, Rachel spoke to Extra TV's Billy Bush about the controversy.

"In 2020, it was all about people realizing things that they hadn't before. It was a level of awareness that was created that people hadn't necessarily recognized," she explained. "And out of that also came conversations that we should be having whether they're tough, uncomfortable, whatever it may be. Isn't that what this should be as well? It's bigger than just The Bachelor, it's bigger than just a reality TV show. There are a lot of issues that have come up because of this interview, and I think it's important that we continue the conversation, we continue to move forward. And I think that's the best thing that we can hope for out of all of this."

Chloe x Halle, H.E.R part of Apple Music Juneteenth playlist



NEW YORK (AP): Artists including Chloe x Halle, Black Thought of the Roots and H.E.R. have recorded songs honoring Juneteenth for Apple Music.

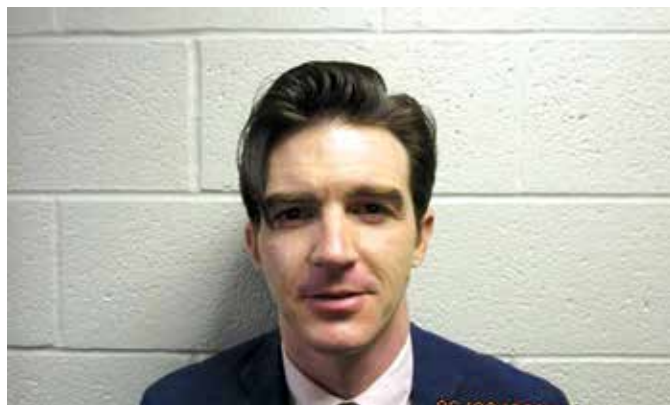
Some artists recorded cover songs, while others composed new tracks for the exclusive "Juneteenth 2021 Freedom Songs" playlist, which launches Friday on the streaming platform. It comes about two weeks ahead of the annual holiday, also known as Emancipation Day and Freedom Day, that commemorates when the last enslaved African Americans learned they were free on June 19.

The 20-song playlist also features country singers Kane Brown and Jimmie Allen, gospel performer Kirk Franklin, Panamanian singer Sech and rappers D Smoke and Saba.

H.E.R. covers Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)," Chloe x Halle takes on TLC's "Waterfalls" and Franklin re-works the classic gospel protest song "We Shall Overcome" to create "Overcome 2021" for the playlist. Black Thought, D Smoke, Sech, Saba and Hit-Boy produced original tracks.

Other acts on the playlist include Terrace Martin, Brandee Younger, Maverick City Music, Honey Dijon, TobeNwigwe, Amaarae, Willie Jones, Zeal & Ardor, Tems, Jean Dawson and Madison Calley.

Ex-child actor Drake Bell accused of child endangerment



CLEVELAND (AP): One of the stars of the popular Nickelodeon children's show "Drake & Josh" faces criminal charges regarding a girl he had met online and who attended his 2017 concert in Ohio when she was 15.

Jared "Drake" Bell, 34, pleaded not guilty on Thursday in a Cleveland courtroom to a felony charge of attempted endangering children and a misdemeanor charge of disseminating matter harmful to juveniles.

"All facts will be revealed in a courtroom," Bell's attorney Ian Friedman said Friday, declining to comment further.

Bell was charged by information, which typically indicates a plea agreement has been reached. He is scheduled to appear before a judge on June 23.

Tyler Sinclair, spokesperson for Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley, said the girl filed a complaint with Canadian police in October 2018. Police there contacted Cleveland police, prompting an investigation.

The attempted endangering children charge relates to the concert, Sinclair said, where Bell "violated his duty of care" and created a risk of harm to the victim. He didn't elaborate further.

Bell and the girl had "developed a relationship" online several years prior to the concert, Sinclair said. The disseminating harmful material charge concerns Bell having sent the girl "inappropriate social media messages," Sinclair said.

Bell, also a singer, began acting as a child, but was catapulted to stardom as a teen with Nickelodeon's "The Amanda Show" and later "Drake & Josh," which debuted on the channel in January 2004. The final episode aired in September 2007. Bell and co-star Josh Beck also starred in two "Drake & Josh" movies.



FASHIONISTA! The gorgeous gal, Karlie Kloss rocks a black and white look on the streets of The Big Apple.

Donnie Yen joins Keanu Reeves in 'John Wick 4'

LOS ANGELES, JUN 5 (PTI): Actor-filmmaker Donnie Yen, best known for his roles in films such as "xXx: Return of Xander Cage" and the "IP Man" franchise, is all set to star with Keanu Reeves in Chad Stahelski-directed "John Wick 4".

Yen will play an old friend of Reeves' character of super-assassin John Wick in the Lionsgate movie. The friends share a similar history and many of the enemies, according to Deadline.

The actor, who is famous for his unique style of screen combat, is one of the most successful actor-filmmakers from the East.

"John Wick 4" is written by Shay Hatten and Michael Finch while Basil Iwanyk, Erica Lee and Stahelski are producing the film, with Reeves and Louise Rosner attached as executive producers.

Filming begins this year on location in France, Germany and Japan.

"We are very lucky to have Donnie Yen join the franchise. I am looking forward to working with him in this exciting new role," Stahelski said.

The filmmaker has directed all the three previous films in the Reeves-led franchise -- "John Wick" (2014), "John Wick: Chapter 2" (2017) and "John Wick: Chapter 3 Parabellum" (2019).



ARIES:

The weekend sees you honouring the energy of the Divine Mother by walking the path of art and creativity. You want to bring a little more beauty and a little more harmony within and without—and this is your ultimate prayer to Her. Some of you may feel inspired to upgrade your home and studio as well. So, update the vision board with reminders of who you are now and the dream you're in the process of weaving for yourself today.

TAURUS:

What makes you happy, Taurus? What are the things that awaken a song in your soul and bring a smile to your face? Today, you're being asked to pursue happiness with single-minded focus and reaffirm the good in your life. As such, you're also likely to feel the love and support of your circle, both inner and outer. Reach out to those you haven't had the chance to catch up with. Exchanging stories and empowering each other is just the therapy you need today.

GEMINI:

Weekly reminder: we are in the midst of the eclipse and retrograde season. Demons from our past are most alive at times like these. So, it's important to stay in your centre and take each step mindfully. The reason we're saying this is because you will be triggered. There's a hundred per cent chance those around you will project their shadows. However, when you look at each and every trigger as an invitation to look within, you hold space for your soul to evolve, Gemini.

CANCER:

You haven't always had a healthy relationship with money. But

that inner revolution within you is helping you understand that the more you have, the better you will be able to provide for others and serve the world. So, repeat the following affirmation as you go about your day: "I am increasingly magnetic to health, wealth, abundance, prosperity, and money." Even better, write it down on a piece of paper and stick it next to your work desk. Remember, raising your vibration is the secret to bringing about the shift you desire.

LEO:

As a collective, we tend to glorify the 'yang' aspects of creation. What we fail to realise is that magic actually begins to take form when we are in yin. So, allow yourself to be receptive to the ideas that are streaming down from a higher source of consciousness. Consider this as an invitation to honour the incubation period. Your social life is also in the limelight this weekend. Remember, just because physical movement is restricted, does not mean you cannot turn to the virtual in order to stay connected.

VIRGO:

"The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for." A Fyodor Dostoevsky quote to awaken you, Virgo. Where are you on your journey towards freedom? Are you merely going through the motions, or actively pursuing that which awakens your inner fire? Remember, it's never too late. Never too late to change the game around. What the cards are urging you to do today is take that first step. The art of improvisation will help you figure things out as you go along.

LIBRA:

Meditate on Bruce Lee's words as you sip on your herbal chai this morning: "Empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend." The truth is, the eclipse season has been anything but easy, and the cosmic currents are showing no signs of self-control now. The best thing you can do for yourself *and* others is to follow the path of least resistance and observe what's taking place as if it were a show whilst practicing the art of surrender.

SCORPIO:

The creative process is one that is synonymous with mysteries, and you're about to witness the madness first hand, Scorpio. It's a day of revelations and 'aha' moments. A day of downloading ideas and visions directly from a higher source of consciousness. Keeping your journal handy at all times is highly recommended. An Elizabeth Gilbert quote for when you find yourself doubting what is being shown to you in the moment: "Ideas are driven by a single impulse: to be made manifest."

SAGITTARIUS:

There are so many reasons why this alliance is a mistake. Multiple factors that state the future you're about to build stands on a shaky ground. But, optimism has always been your greatest gift, Sagittarius. So, follow your instinct and make peace where there has been war. Something tells us you have what it takes to bring the gifts of love and harmony into this relationship.

CAPRICORN:

Just because it hasn't been done before, doesn't mean it can't be done. Tapping into your inner DIY queen and making the most of the available resources is going to be a big theme in the Capricorn HQ. Something tells us your Pinterest board is about to come alive here. Speaking of resources, you're being asked to adopt a cautious approach with your finances as well. Redirecting your energy towards building your reserve will come in handy when you want to invest in your business later on.

AQUARIUS:

We all have good days and bad days—bad days and good days—and that's just the way life unfolds in the earthly realm. Instead of accepting one part of the experience and rejecting the other, embrace it all. Embrace the wholeness that is the human experience. This will make your journey through this time and space dimension much easier. If that feeling of isolation is something you're struggling with, reach out. Let those who are in your circle know how you would like to be supported. Free yourself from the shame that is associated with vulnerability, Aquarius.

PISCES:

We all have an idea of how we want things to turn out. But what happens when we become rigid about the given idea? The cards are urging you to reflect upon the ways in which you could be hindering your own growth here. It's a good idea to let go of the resistance and actively listen to what's being shared with you by key members. Who knows? You may end up learning something brand new in the process.