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PART SEASON FOUR**
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Paramilitary detachments directed to ensure proper quarantine regimen for returning soldiers



GANGTOK, 01 JUL [IPR]: In the backdrop of some reported positive cases in the armed forces, a meeting was summoned by Chief Secretary, SC Gupta with Sashastra Seema Bal, Indo-Tibetan Border Police and Border Roads Organization today to discuss the Standard Operating Procedure followed by them for quarantine of officers and jawans.

The meeting was also attended by Pr Secretary, K Sreenivasulu and Principal Directors of the Health Department. The Chief Secretary directed that the SOPs followed by SSB, ITBP and BRO should be shared with the Health Department for vetting by the Department's technical committee. This was acceded to by the organizations.

All three Organizations informed that their Officers and jawans are being quarantined in Siliguri for 14 days and the remaining 14 days in Sikkim. Those who are found to be showing symptoms are isolated and tested immediately.

One new COVID case raises tally to 37

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Secretary, Dr Pemba T Bhutia informed that one new COVID case has been reported in the State. There are now 37 active COVID19 cases in Sikkim.

The new patient was in a paid quarantine centre in Gangtok and had a roommate who has been shifted to another room, informed Dr Bhutia.

Three patients were

BRO informed that presently only their officers and jawans are entering the State, the labourers will be brought from August onwards. The Health Department would be informed about this, it was informed.

It was further informed that the quarantine centres in Sikkim are well guarded and the quarantines are not allowed to roam around freely.

SSB requested the Health Department to conduct random testing of the returnees. SSB was asked to send the request to the Health Department in writing.

The Chief Secretary also directed that the uniformed personnel in quarantine should, at no cost, be allowed to mingle with the civilian population, till completion of the period of quarantine. This will assist in avoiding the apprehension about the community spread of the COVID-19 infection. The officers present agreed to ensure in the meeting.

also shifted from Gyalshing hospital to STNM hospital, Gangtok, he added.

Regarding the new dialysis unit at Gyalshing hospital that is scheduled to be inaugurated on Thursday, the Health Secretary informed that once the unit is operational, 5 dialysis patients will be brought in from outside the state initially. The first 5 patients will be chosen on the basis of criteria like age, economic status, etc.

NATIONAL DOCTORS' DAY OBSERVED AT STNM HOSPITAL

CM credits health-workers for Sikkim's success against COVID, announces financial incentives for them
Gangtok, 01 Jul [IPR]: National Doctors' Day is celebrated every year on the 01 July in commemoration of the birth and death anniversary of Bharat Ratna, Dr BC Roy, an eminent doctor of extraordinary talent and acumen, who was also the second Chief Minister of West Bengal.

The national theme for this year's celebration is 'Lessen the mortality of COVID-19'.

To mark this important occasion and to honour the selfless contribution of doctors as health care providers and life savers, STNM Hospital organized a special programme in the Hospital auditorium today. The programme was graced by Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang as the Chief Guest.

The programme had the presence of Ministers, KN Lepcha, Dr MK Sharma, Arun Upreti, MN Sherpa and BS Pant, and MLAs: Aditya Golay Tamang and Pintso Namgyal Lep-



cha. The programme had the attendance of Principal Secretary, Health, DG cum Secretary Health, MS STNM, senior officers of Health Department and all the doctors of STNM Hospital.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang extended warm greetings to all the doctors and medical fraternity of the State on the occasion of National Doctors' Day. Highlighting on the significance of the day, he paid his tribute to

noted physician Dr BC Roy in whose memory this day is celebrated every year on the 01 July.

He said that doctors symbolize the epitome of service to mankind and that medicine is considered one of the noblest professions.

The Chief Minister attributed the success of Sikkim's fight against COVID-19 to the relentless effort of the entire medical fraternity and the supporting staff. He extended his gratitude to the medical team and support

staff lending their support from various quarters such as the screening centres, the quarantine centres, the sample collection centres, the contact tracing rendering their services at the COVID-19 wing of the STNM Hospital as well as in the Isolation wards in Namchi and Geyzing.

The Chief Minister further stated that the State Health Department accepted the challenges posed by the pandemic with all readiness and exhib-

ited high level of management skills to ensure that each and every COVID-19 patient is handled with utmost care and compassion. He said that the medical team has been quick to respond to the daily incidence of COVID-19 cases and in providing timely treatment. This has resulted in over 50 patients completely cured and discharged within a short span of time, he added.

The Chief Minister reiterated that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought out the best in the health workers in the State, and has signalled the possibility of Sikkim becoming a leading State in terms of providing quality health care.

The Chief Minister stated that the State Government has laid highest priority on the overall improvement of healthcare system in the State. He assured that the Government will make sure that the healthcare workers are not deprived of any necessary equipment or manpower, and added that all gaps would be fulfilled immediately.

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Gyalshing dialysis centre to be inaugurated today

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

Chief Minister, PS Tamang is scheduled to inaugurate a new Dialysis Centre at Gyalshing District Hospital on Thursday afternoon. Once this centre is functional, dialysis patients who are currently outside the state because of the lack of this facility, will be brought back.

Director General of State Health Services, Dr Pemba T Bhutia, informs that the Dialysis Centre will have five machines and will be functional soon, as all the technicians are undergoing training at present at STNM Hospital.

He added that Namchi District hospital has five machines which are operational and two more are on the way for which all the required formalities have been completed. There are plans to add 5 more dialysis machines at STNM hospital.

After STNM Hospital and Namchi District Hospital, the Gyalshing District hospital is the third hospital to have such facilities, informed Dr Bhutia.

Once all these centres become operational, it will be a relief for a large number of dialysis patients as they will not have to go outside the State, he said.

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STATE TASK FORCE MEETING DISCUSSES UNLOCK 2.0 Passingdang, Bey & Shipgyer residents to be relocated

GANGTOK, 01 JUL (IPR):

Chief Secretary, SC Gupta chaired the State Level Task Force Meeting at the Conference Hall of Tashiling Secretariat today to review the State Government's plan of action in line with the new guidelines for phased reopening (unlock 2.0) issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India dated 29 Jun, 2020.

The meeting was attended by members of the State Level Task Force and was joined by all District Collectors through video conference.

At the outset, the Chief Secretary informed that the fresh guidelines 2.0 on phased re-opening (unlocking) of activities issued recently is enforced from 01 to 31 Jul, 2020 in the State of Sikkim. He directed the officials for strict enforcement of the new guidelines.

The new guidelines were discussed in detail during the meeting, and specific directives issued.

The Chief Secretary also said that it is mandatory for the returnees



to get prior registration on covid-19sikkim.org and undergo compulsory quarantine as per the Health Department protocol.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that all the Government offices will now function with 50% of staff strength to ensure that all important works are attended to.

Thereafter, the Chief Secretary also convened a meeting with the Heads of various departments to prepare a comprehensive report on the damages caused due to natural calamities in the State.

The meeting also had the presence of Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, VB Pathak and DGP A Shankar Rao.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary made

assessment of various places which have been severely damaged by the recent flashfloods and landslides triggered by the incessant rainfall in the State. He also asked the concerned officers to identify the vulnerable and affected areas which needed immediate attention like Adarshgaon in Singtam, Tsong and Salley villages in West District, Passingdang, Bay, Shipgyer and Mangan in North District.

He directed the District Collector North to identify a safe place to shift approximately 35 to 40 households of Passingdang village in North District which has been severely damaged by the flashflood as the village is still in a vulnerable condition. The Chief

Secretary also directed DC North for re-location of the people in Bey and Shipgyer which are prone to natural calamities.

In the meeting, the Chief Secretary directed the heads of departments to prepare a detailed report on damages caused by the natural calamities and submit to the Secretary Coordination and Secretary cum Relief Commissioner, Land Revenue & Disaster Department for onward submission to the office of Chief Secretary by 05 Jul, 2020.

A thorough discussion on department wise plans and proposals on assessment and mitigation of natural calamities were also discussed during the meeting.

Impact of Covid-19 Lockdown in Sikkim: A Survey Report

SURAJIT DAS & ABDUL HANNAN

From a telephonic survey conducted during the first half of June in all the four (North, East, West and South) districts of Sikkim, it has been found out that the income has become less than half, on an average, for more than two-third families. As high as 90% people are expecting their income to fall in next six months as compared to their pre-lockdown average level of income. A universal employment guarantee scheme is the need of the hour. 40% families have not got free ration and more than 95% families have not got free gas cylinders or any money in Jan-Dhan accounts as was promised by the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana in March. 50% patients, other than Covid-19 ailment, faced problems in their treatments due to lockdown in the months of April and May. Some cash transfers along with costless quality healthcare services and efficient implementation of the government schemes are absolute essentials. Our sample is definitely not a representative sample; however, it gives us some hints about the ground level situation following the lockdown in the State.

In order to understand the economic impact of Covid-19 lockdown in Sikkim, we have made 150 phone calls to cover 693 people in the month of June, 2020. There were 23 migrant workers' families from Bihar, West Bengal, Assam and Nepal in our sample. Average monthly family income of our sample households came out to be around Rs.30 thousand ranging from Rs.2 thousand to Rs.2 lakh per month. The per capita income varied from Rs.525 to Rs.50 thousand with an average of Rs.7208 per month in the North-Eastern mountainous state of Sikkim. The 150 respondents were from diverse occupational backgrounds – farmers, small shop owners, barbers, mechanics, businessmen, mason, government employee, MGNREGS workers, ASHA workers, border traders, daily wage labourers, drivers, security guard, carpenters, homestay owner and so on. There were 44 female and 106 male respondents aged between 19 to 78 years. 26 of the respondents were Buddhists, 26 were Christians, 4 Muslims and 94 Hindus in our sample. 36 of the respondents were from scheduled tribe, 2 from

the most backward communities, 4 from the scheduled castes, 28 from general and the rest 80 respondents were from the other backward caste backgrounds. In 150 families, there were total 336 male and 358 female members and 174 male and 87 female earning members. The family size varied from 2 to 16 with an average family size of 4.6. The families had 1 to 3 earning members – there were 13 families with only female earning members.

One of the major findings of the study is that only 47 respondents out of total 150 (i.e. less than one-third) have reported that their income has not come down during the lockdown. For the rest 103 respondents (more than two-third), the income has become less than half (51% fall), on an average, as compared to their pre-lockdown average income. Five respondents have reported that their income has become absolutely zero during the months of April and May. Only 12 out of 150 respondents (i.e just 8%) are expecting their average monthly income would remain intact in next six months, after the lockdown gets over.

turn to pg 02

West officials meet to discuss monsoon preparedness

GYALSHING, 01 JUL [IPR]:

A District Disaster Management Authority meeting on monsoon preparedness was held at the West District Zilla Panchayat Bhawan here today chaired by Karma R. Bonpo, DC West accompanied by Tashi Wangyal, SP West; Tushar G. Nikhare, ADC (W); Karma L. Lepcha, ADC (W); Tshering T. Bhutia, SDM (Gyalshing). The meeting was also attended by RN Mishra, Commandant 36Bn SSB, SK Awadhya, Commandant 72 Bn SSB along with SDMs, BDOs, DPOs, Nodal officers from all line Depart-

ments and representatives from NHPC, Shiga Energy and NTPC. The objective of the meeting was to bring all the stakeholders together to strengthen and streamline the administrative response for an effective disaster preparedness initiative at the district level.

DC West in his address to the gathering on the importance of conducting such preparedness meeting on Disaster Management with regards to ensuring monsoon.

He urged the respective line departments and central agencies to be fully prepared for any natural

disaster that may occur due to the ensuing monsoon. He also stressed on the importance of making a disaster management plan for all departments and touched upon the need to prepare these plans for departments which haven't prepared disaster management plans yet.

He highlighted that disasters are unpredictable and hence urged the participants to be seriously prepared for any forthcoming disaster.

He also mentioned that all departments need to submit the damage as-

essment report due to the recent rains in the district at their earliest. He stated that all department need to take preventive measures to avert any future disasters. He also directed the Power Projects in the district to take proper SOPs and their safety measures are to be checked by the concerned SDMs. He further stressed on the designation of relief camps for Tsong area in Yuksam which needs to be set up as soon as possible which will be under the purview of the SDM Yuksam.

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Meeting on 2nd Phase of Teyongsi Sirijunga Statue project

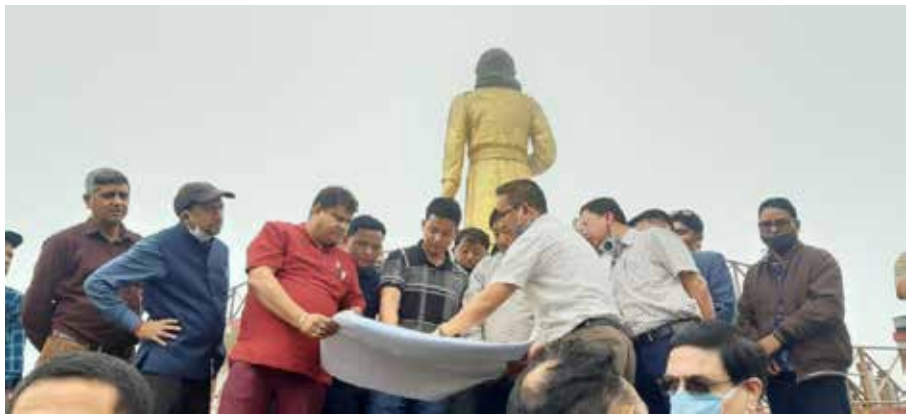
SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

A meeting regarding the construction of 2nd Phase of Teyongsi Sirijunga Statue project of Yumang Thegu, Hee-Patal was held at Hee-GPU, West Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

In the meeting, Landup Bhutia (Architecture) explained the DPR of the project in details through PowerPoint Presentation.

After the meeting was successfully concluded, the official team led by Member of Parliament, Indra Hang Subba visited the



Teyongsi Sirijunga statue.

The meeting was attended by Minister (Roads and Bridges Department), Samdup Lepcha, Minister (Buildings and Housing Department), Sanjit Kharel, Min-

ister (Public Health Engineering Department), Bhim Hang Subba, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Indra Hang Subba, Administrative Advisor to HCM, MP Phurumboo, Chairman (SBS), DB Gurung,

Area-Incharge, Purna Hang Subba, CLC President, TB Thapa, SDM (Dentam), NK Karki, BDO (Dentam), Bijoy Subba, Engineering Team, Architect Team and the Executives of different NGOs of Limboo Community.

Pune civic body set to start rapid antigen tests

PUNE, JULY 1 (PTI): The Pune civic body in Maharashtra has decided to conduct rapid antigen detection tests for diagnosis of COVID-19 after a couple of days, a top official said on Wednesday.

He said the move will decrease burden on the National Institute of Virology (NIV) and other laboratories.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has received one lakh rapid antigen testing kits, he said.

As of June 30, Pune has seen 17,000 COVID-19 cases and 643 fatalities.

The introduction of the rapid antigen detection test might see a rise in the daily number of cases in Pune.

"We had placed an order of antigen rapid test-

ing kits and received one lakh such kits. We will start conducting this test in the next couple of days after providing hands-on training to our staff posted in swab collection centres in the city," said PMC commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad.

He said the accuracy rate of the rapid antigen test is 90 per cent which gives out results within 30 minutes.

The antigen-based test uses nasal swab samples and enables quicker diagnosis.

"The test is cost-effective one and there is no need for laboratory examination of the samples," Gaikwad said.

As the tests cover a larger population and throw quick results, it enables authorities to

modify the testing and logistical strategies.

It is a test on swabbed nasal samples that detects antigens (foreign substances that induce an immune response in the body) that are found on or within the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Gaikwad further said that the positive results will be included in the daily count of cases.

"Since the antigen test gives out fast results, the number of swab samples sent to laboratories will decrease and the burden on the National Institute of Virology (NIV) and other labs will be minimised," he added.

Gaikwad said the use of the rapid antigen detection test will also cut down the lodging and food expenses of people.

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Agri Deptt officers oriented for Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana

GANGTOK, 01 JUL

[IPR]: An orientation-cum-awareness

programme for the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) "Per Drop More Crop" and other schemes under Agriculture and Horticulture Departments was held at the conference hall of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services (AH&VS) Department, Sokaythang, Gangtok, today.

The Minister, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services (AH&VS), Lok Nath Sharma graced the occasion as the Chief Guest in special presence of the Principal Secretary Agriculture and Horticulture Department, R Telang, Secretary Horticulture, MT Sherpa, Principal Directors and senior officials of both the departments. The programme also had an active participation of Engineers of Agriculture, Agriculture Development Officers (ADOs), Horticulture Development Officers (HDOs), and the field functionaries from South and West Districts.

Minister, Lok Nath Sharma, in his address, highlighted the pivotal role of the field functionaries and the prime purpose to embrace the targeted goal of the department so that the

farmers would be uplifted economically and socially. He motivated the participants to be actively involved in doubling the productivity of the farmers through proper implementations of the programme, directives and the issued guidelines. Further, he urged everyone to take pro-active steps to bring about a paradigm shift in the farming sector.

The Minister also showed concern over the age group of majority of working farmers and directed to encourage the youths towards agricultural profession. Field officers also need to evaluate their activities on a monthly basis and to address the limitations through output analysis to ensure consistent improvement in the field, he added.

He also advised field officials to be more responsible and accountable to address the existing challenges in the field. The Minister Mr. Sharma reiterated his commitment to revive the VLW centres and urged to develop every farm as a model to attract and encourage farmers. The department needs to act practically on the selected cluster of PMKSY and to follow the issued guidelines and directives with utmost sincerity. The hardworking and

deserving farmers need to be benefited, independently, he added.

The Minister also stressed to be more pragmatic while collecting data from the field and submit it to the department for preparing an action plan, accordingly, in a time bound manner for onward action. Speaking in the context of credit loan, he informed that a large number of youth have come forward to initiate farming and also touched upon department wise monitoring to meet up the objectives behind subsidised loan.

Encouraging the field functionaries, he announced to reward the best performing ADO and HDO on annual basis and directed them to show notable improvement in following the directives of the concerned authority and timely distribution of inputs like seeds, production of crops, cereals, fruits, vegetables, growth of farmers income, implementation of Governmental schemes etc.

Principal Secretary, R Telang, interacted with the field functionaries to know the feedback, based on their experiences and observation in terms of germination, yielding, pest resistance, seeds, use of nutrients and technical aspects etc.

He acknowledged the individual potential

of the participants and spoke on the need to institutionalize their invaluable knowledge and expertise.

Further, he urged everyone to work collectively as a team to achieve a common goal of the department. He also suggested to encourage dignified farming and to work for technical intervention in the field. He also emphasized upon the need to introspect on the outcome of the assigned responsibilities and thereby providing benefits to the farmers. He also advised to maintain proper coordination at the community level and the concerned authority to ensure smooth flow of the activities without any hindrance and obstructions.

Secretary Horticulture, MT Sherpa appreciated the efforts being made by the field functionaries and advised for demand based technological intervention to ensure required benefits to the deserving farmers. He also stressed on the need for synchronizing the activities like conservation of water and channeling with the concerned department so that the farmers would get optimum benefits of

available resources.

ADOs and HDOs also outlined the ongoing departmental activities, work progress and implementation of schemes in the field. ADO, Suraj Chettri, Hee Martam Block represented the West district while HDO, Geetanjali Pradhan, Yangyang Block represented the participants from South District.

Additional Chief Engineers, Jeewan K Chettri spoke on the technical aspects of PMKSY scheme. He threw lights on the other interventions like source development, conveyance pipe-line, storage facilities in command areas and the application of irrigation water through sprinkler and drip irrigation systems.

Earlier, Additional Director PMKSY, Jagdish Pradhan proposed welcome address and gave an overview of the PMKSY programme, which is a flagship programme of Government of India launched during the year 2015-16. He also touched upon various components of the scheme and drew lights on implementation strategy, administrative setup, and procedure for selection of clusters and farmers under the scheme.

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Impact of Covid-19 Lockdown....

None of the migrant labourers want to go back to their native places as there is very few employment opportunities there. 115 respondents (more than 75%) feel that there is an essential need of an employment of last resort programmes like the MGNREGS in the urban areas also amidst extreme job insecurity and income vulnerabilities. More than one-third respondents in our sample already have the MGNREGS job cards and some of them have expressed satisfaction also regarding the provision of these jobs. However, people from urban areas obviously do not have such employment guarantee and most of them want one such scheme to be there in place. 34 respondents have reported that there were some cases of ailments, apart from Covid-19, in their families during the months of April and May and out of them 17 respondents (50%) have reported that there was difficulty in their treatments due to the lockdown.

As far as the 3 concrete promises made in the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana in March, the respondents were asked whether they have got free ration, money (Rs.500) in their Jan-Dhan account and free gas cylinder. There are only two families with per capita monthly income of more than Rs.24 thousand in our sample, however, more than 40% (62 out of 150) respondents have reported that they have not received free ration during the lockdown even after two months of the announcement. Only 7 respondents have reported that they have received money in their Jan-Dhan account and the others have either said that they do not have any such account in their families or they have not received any money. Only 2 out of 150 persons have said that they have received free gas cylinder during the lockdown in Sikkim.

The inter-state border trade and the tourism sectors have suffered badly because of the non-movement of cross-border vehicles during the lockdown. The vehicle owners and the drivers engaged in trade and tourism business have incurred huge losses and they are unable to repay their EMIs and the vehicle loans. The banks and other financial institutions may be asked to provide some relaxation vis-à-vis repayment of loans until the situation becomes normal. There is a strong demand for cash transfer particularly to the poor and the needy to reduce their debt burdens. Payment of house rent and rent for the shops under this crisis has caused huge problem for many and there is a demand for government intervention - there is a demand for providing model house for the poor people. There is a demand that the government should set-up free Coronavirus testing laboratories everywhere in the state - the facilities in isolation centres for the Covid-19 patients should be improved.

People are seeking some kind of employment guarantee for all including that for the educated youth. There is a serious demand for MGNREGS wage rate enhancement along with the universalisation of the scheme. There is a demand for reducing the cost of health and educational services in private institutions. Many are suggesting for supplying food and other essential commodities including masks and sanitizers to the poor and needy in the remote areas, too. There is a strong demand for strengthening a corruption free public distribution system. There is an urgent appeal from the farmers to provide free seeds and adequate facilities under this vulnerable situation. Proper management of transportation facilities for commodities and the people during the lockdown is one of the prominent demands. There is an opinion that the government should make sure that all the policies and schemes get effectively implemented on the ground. Small businesses badly need support to become self-sufficient again. People are suggesting that the government should have proper strategy and people should be made aware of the plan clearly, in order to fight both the health and the economic battles under the current crisis simultaneously. Hope, their voices would be heard sooner than the later!

[Surajit Das is an assistant professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Abdul Hannan is an assistant professor at the Department of Geography, Sikkim University, Gangtok.]

[The authors are immensely grateful to Nirjala Rai, Kessang Choden Sherpa and Chetraj Sharma for their impeccable research support.]

Singtam citizen spreads COVID awareness



YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 01 JUL:

Every morning, Gopal Chettri, an employee of District Hospital, Singtam, makes announcements for the public regarding social distance practices and proper maintenance of hygiene.

LAND FOR SALE

Riverside land [General] along Ranipool-Rumtek Highway near Adam Pool, stretching from the roadside down till the river bank. Total area measuring 0.2348 Hectares [approximately 25,274 sq ft]. Ideal for developing a Resort. Parties interested in purchasing the entire plot can contact 9083826462 and 9832556698. Brokers will not be entertained.

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

In loving memory of our beloved MOTHER Late.SHANTI DEVI who left for her heavenly abode on 27.06.2020 fall on 13.07.2020.



All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to attend for last offering of prayers for the departed soul at our own residence at Rangpo-Chanatar, Oppt.to Rangpo Sec. School, East Sikkim.

Dhiraj Prasad (Son)
Raju Prasad (Son)
Ravi Prasad (Son)
Roshan Soni (Grand Son)
Deepak Soni (Grand Son)
And Entire Prasad Family...
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LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available - 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft
Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak
Price negotiable
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9641878315, 9593262407

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).
Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

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

Sikkim Univ pays homage to Galwan Valley Martyrs

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

Sikkim University paid homage to the 20 martyrs who sacrificed their lives while defending the country's territorial integrity against Chinese incursion at Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh.

A wreath-laying ceremony was held at the Kanchendzonga Administrative Block of the University at 12.30 p.m., an official press communiqué informs. The ceremony was attended



by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Avinash Khare, and other functionaries of the University. In

staff at various locations were requested to pay their homage at their respective places.

The programme was addressed by Professor JP Tamang, Registrar TK Kaul and the Vice-Chancellor.

A two-minute silence was also observed in honour of the departed souls.

This programme was organised by Security Consultant of the University, Capt PW Dukpa along with his team of security personnel.

view of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure social distancing norms all faculties, students and

Sikkim Chemists Association opens state office in Dev Area

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

Sikkim Chemists Association president, Ramesh Periwal, along with other executive body members formally inaugurated the new office complex of the association at Development Area here on Sunday, a press release informs.

The 750 sq feet office has been procured with the help of the association's national body, All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists, the release adds.

SCA was affiliated to the national body in 2001. SCA is the smallest constituent of the national body with around 170 members.

Sikkim Chemists Association has been included in many state-level committees by the Government and is presently a member of the Sikkim Pharmacy Council, State Advisory board on Disability, State Disaster Management Authority, Ethical committee on Medical research, State council of Clinical Establishment, etc and is also a part of Helping Hands umbrella social organization in Gangtok.

SCA has also been inducted as a part of the Dist. Task Force on COVID-19 with the SCA president, Ramesh Periwal, given a berth in the district high level committee, the release informs.

Lions Club of Rangpo celebrates National Doctors Day



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

Lions Club of Rangpo celebrated National Doctors Day at the COVID-19 Screening Centre at Rangpo Bazaar Playground, a press release informs.

Lions Club members presented khadas, token of love and sweets to all the doctors, medical staffs,

police, NDRF, drivers, and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat.

Chitramani Khawas mentioned that this program is organised under One District-One Project of Lions Club 322F, and similar program is also being celebrated in all the branches of North Bengal, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, etc.

From Summit Times Facebook page

In this section we will share comments on news items posted on the Summit Times Facebook page. "Can't the cabinet be more transparent pre-hand, why do they have to wait for everything to turn into some chaos? If the cabinet cannot take stern decisions, why do they even come up with some

vague ones? Now this is some means to appease the already angered masses of the sanskrit faculty.

Moreover, the authorities from political parties does press conferences only when they are getting pressurized by one political party and vice versa, not when

there are confusions regarding notifications, and not when people are feeling that they're suffering from injustice and they need justifications and explanations. Are the government and the opposition political parties just for one another?"

- Aditya Chhetri

Assam lab isolates COVID-19 virus

GUWAHATI, JUL 1 (PTI):

The Regional Medical Research Centre for NE Region at Dibrugarh in Assam has become the fourth laboratory in the country to successfully isolate SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus which can be used in the production of vaccine against the contagion in future, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday.

Scientists at the RMRC have isolated the COVID-19 virus in VE-

RO-CCL81 cell line in the BSL-3 level lab available at the institute, he told a press conference here.

RMRC, Dibrugarh is the third government laboratory in the country, after NIV (ICMR Lab), Pune and CCMB (CSIR lab), Hyderabad and fourth overall after Bharat Biotech, a private biotechnology laboratory in Hyderabad), to isolate the virus in tissue culture.

The scientists used

an immortal cell line VE-RO-CCL81, derived from kidney epithelial cell lines from green African monkey, which expresses the important ACE2 receptor needed by SARS-CoV-2 for cellular entry, Sarma said quoting the researchers.

"In layman's term, the significance of the COVID-19 virus isolation by the team of scientists from RMRC, Dibrugarh, is that live and viable SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 virus) can

now be produced in the laboratory in abundance and as and when required," he said.

This is important for development of COVID-19 vaccine where virus grown in laboratory are inactivated by heat or chemical and purified for use as vaccines after pre-clinical and clinical trials, he said.

Till date, the centre has conducted almost 50,000 diagnostic test reports of COVID-19 for the people of the northeast.

ARPAN PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 01 JUL:

The Ecclesiastical Affairs Department launched a special plantation drive from Do Drul Chorten here at Deorali and plans to take it to all the monasteries in Sikkim.

The drive was led by Sangha MLA, Minister Sonam Lama who launched the drive by planting fruit sapling.

The programme was also attended by Secretary, Ecclesiastical Affairs

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Department, ST Tamang, officers and staff of the concerned department who also took part in the plantation drive.

The Minister informed that the State government has initiated a special drive to plant trees across the State to

make Sikkim a Green & Clean State.

More than one hundred saplings were planted today, officials inform.

Indian Navy repatriates over 600 Indians from Iran

TUTICORIN, JUL 1 (PTI):

The Indian Navy on Wednesday repatriated over 600 Indians from Iran as part of the Centre's "Samudra Setu" mission to evacuate stranded Indian citizens from abroad.

Indian Navy Ship Jalashwa repatriated 687 Indian nationals from Iran and arrived at the VOC Port here today.

It had left Bandar Abbas in Iran on June 25.

Those who arrived on

Wednesday hailed from Tamil Nadu and Kerala, officials said.

On arrival, the evacuees were screened by the Port Health officials and their luggage was sanitised as per COVID-19 protocol.

Self-declaration forms were obtained from the passengers and after completion of Immigration and Customs formalities, they were taken to their respective districts by buses.

The Indian Navy

has deployed its ships 'Jalashwa' and 'Airawat' to carry stranded Indians from different parts of the world like Maldives and Sri Lanka and has so far repatriated about 4,000 such persons, Defence sources said.

VIEWPOINT

Skeptic is not always a moron

SALEM LEPCHA

Whilst negotiating the institutional indoctrination in an asylum dubbed school, I was more reticent than gregarious. Only time I was bit more vivacious was during the lecture hour. At a slightest opportunity with pretension I would sprung up on bi-pedals to answer. It was an avenue for a boy shy as me to show the class what a smartass I was as a way to compensate for not having the balls to say even hello to the fairer gender. For me to strike up a conversation with females of the lot was egregious. It would betray my ambition of becoming upright in my conduct. For at least for me coming across as gentlemanly (whatever that means) was the pinnacle of manliness. Growing up I always wanted to be loved by all and was averse to offending anyone (especially my dad) more so to get their validation than the likelihood of getting smacked-bottom (and smacked we three siblings were and got more than our fair share. Speaking of which I am reminded of one smacking day after unsparing whipping from my dad I was left out in the verandah naked crying hoarse with bloodshot eyes when the girl I had a crush on saw me whilst on her errands summarily ending any chance I had nursed of dating her).

I made sure I do the right thing and was bent on carving a niche around my behavior- the paragon of virtue of sort that people could identify me as. Only time I was ballsy enough in my entire programming days to bunk my class was when I unwittingly joined the escapades of my adventurous co-subjects. This single breach in my schooling career was quite a smear. The guilt later was morally roiling and I am not even exaggerating. Validation from loved ones was prized. And so this enduring process of fashioning a good boy image sort of got entrenched. So much that I was more agreeable than it was normal. And why shouldn't I be? It was convenient. People would like me. The status quo was bliss. Or so I thought.

As the tide of time ebbed away my agreeableness stunted into unthinking. I didn't know that I had turned into a people-pleasing retard at the expense of my self-respect

(didn't even know that agreeableness already had a doppelganger in political correctness). With unthinking my adolescence and young-adulthood went by doing less head-cracking on worthy intellectual pursuits. I said and did what a person next to me and the world said and did. Unthinking was prime in my life (which sometimes still is like most of my fellow humans). I was one among "it's on the internet, so it must be true" generation. Akin was I to a generation for which the basic structure of their lives is founded upon the philosophies that emerge from the hallowed corridors of whatsapp and facebook universities. Life was honky-dory, but, within my own small bubble with my thinking in suspension. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to me such cognitive bias had hijacked my critical thinking. Understanding life's googly from the lens of reasoning and critical thinking was or more appropriately put had become alien. Its shadowy self though had remained. The eventuality of such way of life was not that I had bargained for. Suppression of reasoned voices in the face of well-that's-what-all-are-saying was pricking me. It wasn't comfortable. The bandwagon effect had got me. And I have never been so enraged. Perhaps, to be at the receiving end of it is not pretty. And fortunately, for me as I realized, it wasn't. The convenience I was so used to had been unseated by the cruel jolt of reality that living a life not thinking for myself was not what I wanted.

Apparently, trying to sugarcoat ones relation with agreeableness was not idiosyncratic of me. It was as pandemic as Covid freaking 19 is. The unthinking seems contagious and widespread as fallacies are in the rumble and grumble of so called arm chair experts that decide on how the masses should think or comply from the comfy air-conditioned news studio. Yuri Bezmenov calls it "the rape of mind by an unelected". The dung of blame however, shouldn't only stop at the media but equally responsible are the masses that have exported their thinking to the self appointed gate keepers of facts and ideas. When such mindset dominates the ecology of ideas the latter becomes an idea in ecology. A certain

idea within the ecology then gets reiterated long enough to become norms and socially accepted regardless their merit. And the masses en masse would turn into the echo chamber of such a "grand idea" (yawn yawn). Soon enough one finds trumpeting in unison with the cognitively automated masses. This malaise homogenizes the diversity of ideas and individuals are reduced into a blandness of commonality which is not always a value. Once identity gets blurred a sense of individuality is lost which is scary. Oscar Wilde succinctly asserts, "Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation". At this age when majority holds premium over individual, much incoherent babble drown out the reasoned articulation of a lone voice. One who thinks very aptly puts it this way, "The world is enslaved by repeaters who parrot other people's opinions as their own without ever bothering to question or research for themselves".

We derive our sense of being from who we are. Who we are is the palimpsest of opinion, beliefs, biases, perception, ideals and abstractions - that uniqueness which one ascribe to that makes one stand apart from the crowd. But, in this pop culture of keeping-up-with-the-joneses; idea of not playing to the gallery is an intellectual risqué no one wants to afford. Anonymity is sought after. Live and let live sounds cool. But, remember Nazi Germany? Or did collective amnesia get you? Justifying superiority based on race was idiocy of epic proportions that the most educated and sophisticated culture of that era bought precisely because their education and common sense remain muted against the rhetorical moral posturing parlayed by the Furher. The bandwagon effect was so entrenched and when some sane individuals realized the gruesome travesty of such reasoning it was too late. It exemplified the power of homogeneity in thinking that can justify the unjustifiable, rationalize the unreasonable and make the veritable circus of us as thinking specie. Hence, as an aside, to the optimism obsessed world- skepticism is not always a vice and skeptic not always a moron.

West officials meet...

He directed the Roads Department to make assessments of all Fair Weather Roads (FWR) in the district and review them at the earliest. These roads can cause potential harm to the public. Therefore, protection walls and preventive measures needs to be carried out. Further all the District Line Officials were directed to remain on high alert since the monsoons are disastrous period in the West District.

DCSO was instructed to stock supplies of food grains along with buffer stock for food grains to be kept at Storage facilities where at least 3 months rations should be stocked for far off villages in case of any hindrance of vehicular movement. Relief centers to be designated with rations available for the victims in case of occurrence of natural calamities. Criticalities of various departments discussed.

SP West also provided valuable inputs and placed positive feedback and suggestions during the meeting. He mentioned that the West Sikkim Police is working on the road safety and urged all department to work in coordination with them in the coming days. He also stressed on the importance of road signs and barricades which are life savers for the drivers.

ADC (W) Tushar G. Nikhare took detailed stock of the equipment and preparedness of various line departments and private companies. He also directed all departments to have more participation in regards to Disaster management. He further urged the Roads Department to be a crucial players during such situation and reaction from them is needed. Similarly, he also asked all departments to work in coordination with each other to make the District team efficient during crucial times.

Agriculture and Horticulture department were also advised to make assessment of the crop damages in their concerned areas. They were further directed to visit the areas of crop damages and conduct inspections with the Revenue officials.

Various key issues on disaster mitigation like clearing of clogged drains and jhoras, streamlining water pipelines and water leakages, maintaining inventory lists of equipment, quick clearance of internal roads within the district, restoration of electricity during the ensuing monsoon, assessment and insurance of crops, maintenance of building and housing and dissemination of information were discussed at length.

Later, a meeting regarding the One Family One Job and the selection of 3 members committee was also discussed in the presence of DC West. The meeting was mainly for the HoDs of West District Administration to understand how to sort the different criteria of OFOJ employees in their individual departments. The DC West explained in detail the procedure and the system in which the concerned HoD needs to file the report in order to cross-check the data given to them by the concerned authority regarding the employees.

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SummitTIMES

Denials of Identity, Independence and Inheritance

Real women's empowerment still awaited in Sikkim

Social indicators across the board suggest that Sikkimese women enjoy a better status than women in most other parts of the country. But that should hardly be a comparison to gloat over. While the shame of female foeticide remains unheard of, and dowry related harassments have not reached worrisome levels, there still remain other issues which hamstringing equality for women even in Sikkim. Given that Sikkim has had a largely peaceful and consistently stable past two decades, one would have expected it to have made stronger strides towards gender equality and empowerment. There will be those who will not agree, but let's face it, gender equality evades Sikkim. The State Government has initiated several policy decisions to bring women's issues to centre-stage and has even attempted some forward-thinking legislations within the space available to it, but the societal engagement required to see such plans through and institutionalise gender equality have unfortunately not come about yet.

Empowerments that governance can deliver on its own have made rapid strides in Sikkim. For instance, female literacy rate has nearly quadrupled in the past three decades from 22% in 1981 to 76% as of 2011, and now Sikkim is fully literate. This leap has been even more substantial in rural Sikkim where female literacy has gone up from 18% in 1981 to 73% in 2011! While literacy among women is still 11% below males (87%), the gender gap in this indicator has halved from the 22% recorded in 1981. What also bodes well for the future is that literacy levels are handsomely higher among women aged between 15 to 24 years, around 95% of whom are literate (as per State Govt records as of 2007-08). Impressively for Sikkim, the gender parity index in enrolment for higher education and professional courses on government nomination has been tilting in favour of women of late. As per data released by the Human Resource Development Department of the Government of Sikkim, 54% of the students nominated for higher studies by the State Government were women in 2005. In 2010, this share had slipped but was still higher than males at 52%.

What this improvement could help achieve for Sikkim is a stronger representation of women in the organised workforce. As things stand though, even though there is 30% job reservation for women in State Government employment, women represent only 21% of the total officers in the Groups A and B category. Even here, they are seen more in the traditionally established vocations for women in the State Agricultural Engineering Service, Health Services and Education. In recent years though, women have managed to outgrow the quota by occupying 34% of the posts in the State Civil Services. It helps their ambition to know that the first Sikkimese to clear the UPSC exams to become an IAS officer was a woman – Rinchen Ongmu, IAS batch of 1979, who retired some years ago as the Chief Secretary to the Government of Sikkim and has since been appointed the Chief Administrator of the State. And yes, she was the first lady to become CS in Sikkim, and thus far, also the only one.

This is not a condescending paean to woman power in Sikkim, but an effort to highlight that the fact that they are reaching higher despite a societal indifference to their rights. They manage all this despite a legacy of rules, old laws and practices which are regressively sexist. The linking of a woman's status and identity as a Sikkimese to her father and husband, and refusing her the right to pass on her independent identity to her children is unfair and discriminatory. Similarly, women in Sikkim are particularly discriminated against in that they do not enjoy any legal rights to family property, neither of their parents' nor of their husband's. They can acquire a share of family property only by way of a gift or through a will, but cannot otherwise make any claims to it as a matter of right under law. Yes, a small step towards ensuring some measure of equal property rights at least for unmarried daughters and surviving wives was attempted by the State Government in the year 2008 with the introduction of the Sikkim Succession Bill. Someone should ask what's happening with that and also read up on how offensive the Married Women's Property Regulation of 1962 is.

No one expects the past to be anything but regressive, but to perpetuate the same attitudes without concerted efforts to amend things, despite a governmental hint at more forward-thinking changes, is disheartening. These issues are still to receive any traction in the public domain. Perhaps the young will ask for better.

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China and AI: What the world can learn and what it should be wary of

HESSY ELLIOTT

THECONVERSATION.COM

China announced in 2017 its ambition to become the world leader in artificial intelligence (AI) by 2030. While the US still leads in absolute terms, China appears to be making more rapid progress than either the US or the EU, and central and local government spending on AI in China is estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars.

The move has led – at least in the West – to warnings of a global AI arms race and concerns about the growing reach of China's authoritarian surveillance state. But treating China as a “villain” in this way is both overly simplistic and potentially costly. While there are undoubtedly aspects of the Chinese government's approach to AI that are highly concerning and rightly should be condemned, it's important that this does not cloud all analysis of China's AI innovation.

The world needs to engage seriously with China's AI development and take a closer look at what's really going on. The story is complex and it's important to highlight where China is making promising advances in useful AI applications and to challenge common misconceptions, as well as to caution against problematic uses.

Nesta has explored the broad spectrum of AI activity in China – the good, the bad and the unexpected.

THE GOOD

China's approach to AI development and implementation is fast-paced and pragmatic, oriented towards finding applications which can help solve real-world problems. Rapid progress is being made in the field of healthcare, for example, as China grapples with providing easy access to affordable and high-quality services for its ageing population.

Applications include “AI doctor” chatbots, which help to connect communities in remote areas with experienced consultants via telemedicine; machine learning to speed up pharmaceutical research; and the use of deep learning for medical image



processing, which can help with the early detection of cancer and other diseases.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, medical AI applications have surged as Chinese researchers and tech companies have rushed to try and combat the virus by speeding up screening, diagnosis and new drug development. AI tools used in Wuhan, China, to tackle COVID-19 – by helping accelerate CT scan diagnosis – are now being used in Italy and have been also offered to the NHS in the UK.

THE BAD

But there are also elements of China's use of AI which are seriously concerning. Positive advances in practical AI applications which are benefiting citizens and society don't detract from the fact that China's authoritarian government is also using AI and citizens' data in ways that violate privacy and civil liberties.

Most disturbingly, reports and leaked documents have revealed the government's use of facial recognition technologies to enable the surveillance and detention of Muslim ethnic minorities in China's Xinjiang province.

The emergence of opaque social governance systems which lack ac-

countability mechanisms are also a cause for concern.

In Shanghai's “smart court” system, for example, AI-generated assessments are used to help with sentencing decisions. But it is difficult for defendants to assess the tool's potential biases, the quality of the data and the soundness of the algorithm, making it hard for them to challenge the decisions made.

China's experience reminds us of the need for transparency and accountability when it comes to AI in public services. Systems must be designed and implemented in ways that are inclusive and protect citizens' digital rights.

THE UNEXPECTED

Commentators have often interpreted the State Council's 2017 Artificial Intelligence Development Plan as an indication that China's AI mobilisation is a top-down, centrally planned strategy.

But a closer look at the dynamics of China's AI development reveals the importance of local government in implementing innovation policy. Municipal and provincial governments across China are establishing

cross-sector partnerships with research institutions and tech companies to create local AI innovation ecosystems and drive rapid research and development.

Beyond the thriving major cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, efforts to develop successful innovation hubs are also underway in other regions. A promising example is the city of Hangzhou, in Zhejiang Province, which has established an “AI Town”, clustering together the tech company Alibaba, Zhejiang University and local businesses to work collaboratively on AI development. China's local ecosystem approach could offer interesting insights to policymakers in the UK aiming to boost research and innovation outside the capital and tackle longstanding regional economic imbalances.

China's accelerating AI innovation deserves the world's full attention, but it is unhelpful to reduce all the many developments into a simplistic narrative about China as a threat or a villain. Observers outside China need to engage seriously with the debate and make more of an effort to understand – and learn from – the nuances of what's really happening.

[the writer is Researcher, Nesta]

TikTok teens and the Trump campaign: How social media amplifies political activism and threatens election integrity

ANJANA SUSARLA

THECONVERSATION.COM

The lower-than-expected attendance at President Trump's rally in Tulsa on June 20 was attributed, at least in part, to an online army of K-pop fans who used the social network TikTok to organize and reserve tickets for the rally as a means of pranking the campaign.

Similarly, the historically unprecedented scale of the George Floyd protests can be attributed in part to social media. By some estimates 25 million Americans participated at protests.

Social media has proven itself as a tool for political activism, from online boycotts to offline gatherings. It also has implications for how political campaigns operate. Social media can aid campaigns with voter targeting efforts, but it can also make the electoral process vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation, including from foreign actors.

HIJACKING HASHTAGS

Social media has enabled protests and meaningful political action by capturing public attention, and by its decentralized nature, which makes it easier for activists to evade censorship and coordinate actions. K-pop fans' action through TikTok spanned more than a week and stayed off the radar of mainstream media.

TikTok teens and K-pop fans took over anti-Black Lives Matter hashtags such as #WhiteLivesMatter and drowned out the anti-Black Lives Matter messages with GIFs and memes. When people on social media platforms look for these hashtags, they're met with seemingly unending images and fan videos of popular K-pop groups such as Twice and EXO.

This, in turn, leads algorithms on social media platforms to classify such trending hashtags as K-pop trends rather than political trends, thwarting the anti-Black Lives Matter activists who tried to use the hashtags to promote their messages.

K-pop fans likewise responded to a call from the Dallas Police Department, who were trying to collect information about Black Lives Matter protesters from social media, and bombarded them with images and videos of their favorite K-pop stars.

INFLUENCERS AND LIKE-MINDED CONNECTIONS

My own research shows that there are two mechanisms that make social media influential in



digital activism.

First, social media gives an opinion-making role to a few influencers – people who have extensive social media networks. The furor companies such as Uber and United Airlines aroused on social media for misbehaving was initiated by a handful of individuals.

Second, on social media people engage with like-minded people, a phenomenon called homophily.

Together, these mechanisms provide a wide audience to both influencers and their followers who are enmeshed in densely connected online networks. As my research shows, once a meme, hashtag or video goes viral, passive sharing can turn into active broadcasting of the trending idea.

For example, when celebrity Jane tweets in support of a viral hashtag such as #BlackOutTuesday, if fan Alyssa retweets this, it is more likely to be retweeted by people like Alyssa. Jane's influence is magnified by Alyssa's ability to influence her social connections. The resulting activism spirals into a large-scale online movement that is hard to ignore.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

Social media's opinion-making power and preference for like-minded connections also lead to online filter bubbles, echo chambers that amplify information people are predisposed to agree with and filter out information that contradicts people's points of view. Recent elections in the U.S. and the Brexit vote in the U.K. might have been influenced by filter bubbles.

Social media also makes it easier to narrowly target classes of voters. In 2016 Hilary Clinton's presidential campaign significantly outspent Donald Trump's campaign, and the effectiveness of the Trump campaign has been attributed to its ability to target specific groups of Clinton voters with negative ads.

With online advertising in general, and with the ability to micro-target voters via social media based on detailed demographic data, social media can both help and hinder political campaigns' ability to target their voters.

Also, political campaigns need good data to create models of likely voters, which they use to get voters to turn out and persuade likely voters to vote for their candidates. It looks like TikTok users produced a deluge of bad data for the Trump campaign. This kind of activity forces campaigns to spend time and money cleaning up their data.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTION INTEGRITY

The power of social media also poses a challenge for election integrity. An entity linked to the Russian government was reportedly responsible for spreading a massive disinformation campaign that likely influenced the 2016 elections. A Senate committee concluded that “these operatives used targeted advertisements, intentionally falsified news articles, self-generated content, and social media platform tools” to intentionally manipulate the perceptions of millions of Americans.

Likewise, the Tulsa phenomenon underscores that if it's this easy for a group of teens to influence turnout in a campaign rally, how easy would it be for a foreign actor to interfere in the election process? The election process, including how campaigns and observers gather political information, is vulnerable to misinformation and coordinated trolling.

Social media amplifies both the reach and range of actions available to well-organized, engaged and networked political actors, whatever their intentions. With the pandemic significantly increasing society's dependence on the internet, these concerns are likely to increase. The question is, when combined with algorithmic filters and disinformation, how will these forces shape the politics of protest and democratic action in the years ahead?

[the writer is Associate Professor of Information Systems, Michigan State University]

Corona: A Star is Unborn

DR AALOK'KOVID' & JAYSHREE SHRIVASTAVA

We do not wish to look at a genuine human issue of anxiety, stress and depression leading to SUICIDE as an economic factor or financial constraint. But we may be inclined to believe the 'Economics' thinking, especially during the ongoing Corona wave that "Wants are unlimited but the means to satisfy these are limited". Also the tenets of Public Finance say-"Cut your coat according to cloth". In private domain, however, we do not observe it sometimes. And there lies the root cause of our miseries and challenges.

Like film stars, who does not have ambition? Why should't we have? We deserve to breathe fresh air while being placed under human created & sustained state of pollution.

Atmospheric pollution, sometimes can be contained like under the current circumstances of Nobel Covid-2019 phase in majority of the urban conglomerates. But this could be a temporary phenomenon. When we face the brass stacks sooner or later, one can think of its devastating fallout!

POLLUTION INSIDE

Vis-a-vis Outer Pollution, Inner Pollution is a different ball game. One can wash hands with soap for 20 seconds, can change cloths more than once, upon self washing (for want of domestic help), one can wear a mask rightly or wrongly, one can actually be socially distant or pretend to be, to suit one's evil designs. But one can not cleanse the inner parts of body or mind so easily. It may require stability of mind, hard and sincere work, positive thinking, self determination, focussed goals, meditation AND giving time only to yourself for at least 40 minutes a day.

List can be endless. After all, we began with the premise that wants are unlimited but the means to satisfy these are limited.

NEED, GREED OR AMBITION?

One has to make a distinction between Need and Greed, what Mahatma Gandhi always stressed upon.

Our friend Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR) had many of the desired virtues but he decided or was he compelled to bid good bye to this mystical world so soon? Or if grapevine is to be believed, was there something fishy? It needs Thorough & Uninterrupted Investigation.

Suicide is no solution to the problem.

He is reported to have said

while delivering a dialogue decently towards the end of the movie 'Chhichhore'. But all the film trade Pundits say-"There is always a vast difference between the Reel and the Real World". Not everyone can imagine, comprehend or appreciate it.

QUALITIES POSSESSED

SSR had all the qualities of an ideal typical teenager or youngster who came to Mumbai from a city like Patna. He was a School Topper, winner of National Physics Olympiad (fond of telescopes), had cracked 11 Joint Engineering Entrance Tests (!) without being coached by the World famous Anand Kumar of Super 30 of Patna. He also pursued a Chemical Engineering course in Delhi Technological University.

SSR, perhaps was restless. Not satisfied with what he had achieved. His mind was elsewhere. He did not want to be prisoner of his own self creative acumen. He wished to ventilate his feelings & aspirations in his own ways. What the Czarinas of the electronic media have sarcastically stated-His background of small town (?) Readers may like to judge themselves, if ancient city of Patna or its precursor, Patliputra could be termed inferior to any of the metropolises or cosmopolitan cities or outfits of the 'Nation In Making', that India is.

DEPARTURE FROM THE WORLD OF ENGINEERING

Anyway, to revert, SSR joined Barry John Acting School after suddenly deciding to give up Engineering in the 3rd Year. He succeeded in getting pivotal roles in several dance performances (-Filmfare Awards Functions included). AND one fine day, he landed up with an important role in a TV. Serial called 'Kis Desh Mein Hai Meraa Dil'. A few more of attractive family sitcoms followed, such as, 'Pavitra Rista'.

TURNING POINT

The turning point came with the film-'KAI PO CHE' in 2013. Not only it was an instant HIT but the loveable 'next door boy' became a hit among the Box Office Wallas. One after another, films like Shudh Desi Romance, Drive, Byomkesh Bakshi, P.K., Chhichhore etc hit the box office. Looked as if he was on way to the pinnacle of his early Glory. Later it would be discovered that many "self-appointed guardians" and smugglers cum producers of the industry began disliking his gradual but certain rise.

MS DHONI: THE UNTOLD STORY

This Biopic blockbuster directed in 2016 by Neeraj Pandey made him a household name. Not only he was to transform from a star to an actor of repute like..... but he certainly established his credentials as a Winning Horse, without a Jockey.

ADVENT OF CORONA

As SSR was coping with a fresh feather in his cap, its effects and side effects, from nowhere, the dreaded and highly contagious Corona 'Auntie' invaded Mumbai and other parts of country. Initial restrictions led to Ultimate Lockdown. Like him all the actors, directors, producers, writers, music directors, technicians etc were rendered jobless. But not all of them were bereft of HOPE, perhaps due to their ever greedy and communal Mentors or Patrons.

While the majority took it in their stride, others found the going TOUGH. SSR, unfortunately fell in the latter category. Same has been confirmed after his sad demise from his Psychiatrist and a few 'close' friends.

SETBACKS

Days passed by. Many weeks had to be spent in tune with Lockdown, under a Veil of Uncertainty. No work, no outing, no refreshment, perhaps no Girl friend, even.

According to a prominent 'outsider' Maharashtra politician, SSR lost 7 films in the last 6 months..... after the grand success of Chhichhore.

CURTAIN COMES DOWN

And the D day finally arrived: Sunday the 14th June. He was reported to have taken the extreme and drastic step between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm, soon after sipping a glass of juice outside his Bandra building.

Thus he entered another Hall of 'Fame'--- noted film stars, such as, Guru Dutt, Divya Bharti, Silk Smitha, Nafisa Joseph, Parveen Babi, Kuljeet Randhwa, Zia Khan, Kushal Punjabi etc who took their own life between 1964 and 2019.

His being in Depression for nearly six months hit the head lines sooner than expected, so was the immediate impact of a very recent suicide of his own Manager.

It is pertinent to note that the Cinegoers generally have a tendency to forget or ignore similar depression spells of Meena Kumari, Silk Smitha, Deepika Padukone, Raj Kiran, Smriti Shetty, Sruti Hassan and many others. It has been gathered from the WHO that 70% of the mental health patients do not get treatment in India.

PERTINENT QUESTIONS.

Pertinent Questions that NEED TO BE ANSWERED are:

a) Was SSR A Victim of An Unfair Showbiz Industry Promoting Nepotism, Regionalism & Transparent Bias Against The Outsiders?

b) Once A City Of Dreams, Is It Becoming A Nightmare For The Genuinely Talented?

c) Is Conspiracy Factor Reigning Supreme Here, Thanks To Hypocrite, Insensitive And Double Faced Producers & Directors?

d) Will The Heroines Ever Have A Say In This Male Bastion?

e) How Long The Cocktail Of Maya Nagri And Media Play Havoc With The New Entrants?

f) A High Level Inquiry Commission Must Probe The Age Old Nexus Between The Gangsters And The Film Industry.

Writing an Obituary of a faded Star may not be a difficult proposition but one on a reigning one is not a Bed of Roses. IT IS THE GAME OF THE TIME CYCLE, a misfortune or the Destiny. A 62 approaching, retired & haggard Ex-Civil Servant & his spouse who have not been to a movie theatre for almost two decades, are attempting to write an Obituary of a 34 year old Film Star. Ironically, that too without seeing any one of his films.

Last Obituary we penned was on Rajesh Khanna in 2012. But not only many of his films were seen but He, being the first Super Star of Bollywood, commanded tremendous aura, publicity and following. Despite this, RK systematically destroyed his personal and family life. Was SSR following suit?

Sushant was not married even after tasting success for eight to nine years. Had it happened, he would not have met this gory end. Having lost his darling Mother 16 years ago, his simple & humble Father and four affectionate elder sisters might be having varied Expectations From Him. THOSE STAND BELIED.

The surviving outsiders of this charming dream destination may like to TAKE OFF from the point, he left.

Show Must Go On because it has to go on, whispered Raj Kapoor, long ago.

SSR, in his relatively short innings may have satisfied a few of his Passions but for his Inflated & Additional Urges' He Did Not Spare Time.

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE! AMEN!

(The writer is ex-Chief Secretary to the Govt of Sikkim)

Goa open to domestic tourists from July 2

PANAJI, JUL 1 (PTI): Goa Tourism Minister Manohar Ajaonkar on Wednesday announced that the coastal state will be open to tourists starting July 2, as 250 hotels have been granted permission to resume operations.

Goa, one of the country's most popular tourist destinations, has remained shut for travellers since the nationwide coronavirus-induced lockdown was imposed in March.

The decision to restart tourism activities was taken during a state cabinet meeting, the minister said.

The tourism department has so far granted permission to 250 hotels, which can operate in keeping with the standard operating procedures (SOPs) put in place



by the state government.

"We have decided to allow domestic travellers to enter Goa from July 2 onwards provided they comply with certain norms," the minister said.

It will be mandatory for tourists to pre-book their stay at hotels, which have received the tourism department's approval, he said.

Hotels and homestays that have not registered with the department to reopen business will not be allowed to entertain

guests or offer online bookings, Ajaonkar said.

Moreover, tourists will either have to carry COVID-19 negative certificates to enter the state, or will have to get tested at the border and undergo quarantine at a state-run facility till their results arrive, he said.

"People who test positive will be given the option of returning to their respective states or staying back in Goa for treatment," the minister added.

India among five bidders for 2027 Asian Cup



NEW DELHI, JUL 1 (PTI):

India has bid for the 2027 Asian Cup hosting rights along with four other countries, the Asian Football Federation (AFC) has revealed.

The other bidders for Asia's premier football tournament are Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan.

"The AFC will now work with each Bidding Member Association on the delivery of the necessary bidding documentation in accordance with the bidding process and will announce the host for the 19th edition of the AFC Asian Cup in 2021," said the AFC

in a statement late on Tuesday.

AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa thanked the five member associations for showcasing their support to the Asian Cup.

"On behalf of the Asian football family, I would like to thank all our Member Associations for stepping forward to express their desire and for sharing our ambitions to host a world-class stage for our players, teams, officials and fans and I wish all of them the very best in the bidding process," he said.

Of the five countries expressing an interest,

two nations have already hosted the tournament twice since its inception in 1956.

Reigning champions Qatar staged the competition in 1988 and 2011, as well as Iran, who are the only nation in Asian football history to have won the coveted crown twice on home soil in 1968 and 1976.

Three-time champions Saudi Arabia and India, who were recently awarded the hosting rights for the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup, as well as Uzbekistan, this year's host for the AFC U-19 Championship, are all vying to stage event for the first time.

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GNLF provides assistance to landslide affected



DARJEELING, 01 JUL:

Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) Social Service Campaign visited those affected by the landslide in the hills today.

GNLF representatives appealed to Chairman, Maan Ghising to help as much as possible. He also visited the landslide affected areas to provide assistance; the distribution of tarpaulins was carried out with the help of Darjeeling branch chairman, Ajay Edward and MLA, Niraj Zimba.

Secretary of Pulbi-janbari Samasthi GNLF Youth Unit, Amid Lakan-

masthi inspected the areas and distributed 12 tarpaulins.

The locals have expressed their gratitude to GNLF team. Similarly, a team of Raju Subba, Sahid Tamang and Chand Sharma have visited various places under the Leborg Bheli Samashti and inspected the landslide and damaged areas.

President of the group, Raju Subba said that the tarpaulins were distributed by Pokhrel Danda, Saureni Mul village, Chowki Danda and Kulung Danda to the families of the landslide victims.

Odisha's COVID-19 tally rises to 7,316



BHUBANESWAR, JUL 1

(PTI): Odisha reported 251 new COVID-19 patients, including an NDRF personnel, taking the state's tally to 7,316, a health department official said on Wednesday. A 52-year-old COVID-19 patient died in Ganjam district, but the state government attributed the death to terminal lung cancer.

"... to inform that a 52-year-old male COVID positive patient of Ganjam district passed away due to terminal cancer of the lungs with brain me-

tastasis," the department said in a statement.

Seven other coronavirus patients had died earlier and their deaths were attributed to "non-COVID reasons", the official said,

The state has so far confirmed 25 deaths due to coronavirus.

Ganjam, the worst-hit district, accounts for 14 fatalities, followed by five in Khurda, four in Cuttack, and one each in Bargarh and Puri, he said.

Of the total 251 fresh COVID-19 cases,

208 have been detected from quarantine centres where the people returning from different states are lodged for preliminary observation and care. Their contact tracing is underway, he said.

Ganjam district reported the highest of 102 new cases, followed by 32 in Cuttack, 26 in Khurda, 14 in Nayagarh, 12 each in Puri and Bargarh and 10 in Malkangiri. Twelve other districts reported single digit cases.

With another NDRF personnel contracting the infection, the number of disaster response personnel testing positive for the virus has risen to 294. The number of infections in the BSF is 53, the official said.

The total number of active cases in the state stands at 2,094, while 5,189 of the infected have been cured.

The state tested 5,247 samples in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of tests conducted so far to 2,70,678.

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Messi scores 700th goal, Barcelona held 2-2 by Atl tico

BARCELONA, JUL 1 (AP): Lionel Messi scored his 700th career goal for club and country before Atletico Madrid came back to draw 2-2 in the Spanish league and deal Barcelona's title hopes a major blow.

Barcelona's third draw in four rounds left it in second place, one point behind leader Real Madrid. Madrid hosts Getafe on Thursday with a chance to open up a four-point lead with five more matches remaining.

Barcelona was two points ahead of Madrid when the league was halted in March because of the coronavirus outbreak.

While Madrid has won five of five since the resumption after a three-month stoppage, Barcelona has only won three of six. The pressure is increasing on coach Quique Setien, who took over the team in mid-season with the task of rekindling its attacking spirit.

"It is too bad because we keep dropping points and getting further and further away from the title," Setien said on Tuesday.

"But we have to keep fighting."

Barcelona struck first in the 11th minute on Tuesday when Atl



tico striker Diego Costa inadvertently redirected a corner by Messi into his own net.

Costa's night got worse shortly after when his penalty was blocked by Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Atletico, however, got to retake the spot kick when a video review determined that the Barcelona goalkeeper had moved off his line too early.

Salguez stepped up instead of Costa on the second attempt and converted to level the score in the 19th.

Messi restored the host's lead in 56th by coolly scoring a penalty in the "Panenka" style, chipping it softly past goalie Jan Oblak. The goal was Messi's 630th club goal to go with 70 for his Argentina. It was also his league-leading

22nd goal of the season.

Atletico responded again through the speed of forward Yannick Carrasco, who was tripped by Nelson Semedo and sent Salguez back to the spot. Ter Stegen got a hand on his penalty but not enough to keep it out.

Diego Simeone's Atletico remained undefeated in the six matches since the competition resumed. It stayed in third place, 12 points behind Madrid.

Simeone left forward Joao Felix on the bench until the second half in favor of the in-form midfielder Marcos Llorente, who is thriving in support of the attack.

Llorente led the attack early on, but Carrasco with his speed on the left flank proved to be the visitors' biggest weapon. Twice the Belgian forward

burst into the box on a counterattack and was taken down by late tackles from Arturo Vidal and Semedo.

"Carrasco came back from the stoppage in better shape, and is now back to playing at his best level," Simeone said about his forward, who is in his second stint with the club.

Setien opted for leaving Messi and Luis Suarez alone up front and adding an extra midfielder in youngster Riqui Puig, keeping forwards Antoine Griezmann and Ansu Fati on the bench. Puig had one of his best performances for Barcelona, showing his passing and ball control skills as he linked up well with Messi and his other teammates.

Messi helped put Barcelona ahead when he

struck a corner low and hard at the near post, where Costa tried to clear it but instead let it hit the inside of his leg. The ball bounced off the turf and left Oblak no chance.

Before his penalty, Messi almost curled in a shot from the right side that came inches from bending into the far corner of the goal.

Barcelona's best chance to get the winner came from Vidal, who fired a shot just by the post with 20 minutes to go.

SEVILLA WINS
Oliver Torres scored a brace as Sevilla eased to a 3-0 at relegation-threatened Leganes to strengthen its hold on fourth place and the last Champions League spot.

REKINDLED HOPE
Mallorca's 5-1 rout of Celta Vigo rekindled its hopes of avoiding relegation.

Mallorca's biggest victory of the season moved it into 18th place, five points behind Celta, which is clinging to safety in 17th.

Spanish league games are being played without fans due to the health regulations regarding COVID-19 and teams are playing every three nights to finish the competition by July 19.

Bruno Fernandes insists Manchester United can achieve Euro vision



PAUL WILSON LONDON, 01 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]: Bruno Fernandes insisted Manchester United can achieve Champions League football this season after his two goals at Brighton helped his side to stretch their unbeaten run to 15 games.

United moved up to fifth place ahead of Wolves on goal difference, but Fernandes said their much-improved defensive performance was key to their current mood of confidence.

"We didn't concede any goal once again," the man of the match said. "The defenders did an amazing job and the whole team deserved the result. We know if we keep this up we can make it into the Champions League placings."

Fernandes played alongside Paul Pogba in midfield though Nemanja Matic was arguably the most influential United player in that area of the pitch, helping to set up the third goal with an

instinctive volleyed pass to set Mason Greenwood free on the left.

Nevertheless the Fernandes-Pogba partnership dominated post-match conversations, to the extent that United's January signing expressed a little annoyance.

"Paul is an amazing player but I don't want to talk too much about me and him," Fernandes said. "We are a team, and this was a team performance. Talking about me and Paul isn't fair on the rest of the lads, I would rather talk about everyone."

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was also impressed with the defending after the 10th clean sheet in 15 matches.

"To come here and do that, to be able to leave a few players out and take other off after an hour, means it's been a great night for us," the United manager said. "The defence gives us a foundation to play from and David

de Gea made two tremendous saves when he was called on.

"Since the restart everyone has worked really hard, they have all been true to their word and the result is that we genuinely look fitter and stronger at the moment.

"I'm not saying this is going to be a special season at Manchester United, we are a bit too far off the pace for that, but I think everyone can see the team is improving and we are still in with a shout in the FA Cup and Europa League as well as the battle for a Champions League place."

Graham Potter, the Brighton manager, accepted defeat philosophically, after his side suffered their first defeat in three games since the restart. "We played a really good side tonight, United are really hard to contain with their movement up front. They have some very talented footballers and I have to admit the better team won."

Ronaldo's rocket powers Juventus to 3-1 win at Genoa

ROME, JUL 1 (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo scored with a long-range rocket on a night when each Juventus goal was more spectacular than the other in a 3-1 win at relegation-threatened Genoa.

Chasing a record-extending ninth straight Serie A title, the victory restored Juventus' four-point lead over Lazio, which won 2-1 at Torino earlier Tuesday.

Since losing the Italian Cup final to Napoli in a penalty shootout, Juventus has won all three of its league matches in the restart.

"We produced a ton of chances and we scored three beautiful goals," Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri said.

"That shows that our physical condition is improving."

Paulo Dybala opened the scoring shortly after the break by evading three defenders before firing in a low shot that Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin, who is on loan from Juventus, could only get a weak hand on.

Seven minutes later it was Ronaldo's turn.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner gathered a pass near midfield, charged toward the goal and unleashed a blistering effort from 22 yards (meters) into the top corner past the outstretched Perin.

It was Ronaldo's first goal in open play of the restart after converting penalties in his previous two matches, and it raised his total to 24 in 25 Serie A matches this season.

Not to be outdone, substitute Douglas Costa made it 3-0 by curling in a shot from beyond the area inside the far post as Genoa's defense looked on helplessly.

Andrea Pinamonti then pulled one back for Genoa from a tight angle.

Dybala and Ronaldo had scored while playing together only once before the break for the coronavirus pandemic. Since the restart, they've scored together in three out of three games.

"They're looking for each other more and they've realized that by helping each other they

can both become much more productive," Sarri said.

LAZIO COMEBACK
Three days after coming back to beat Fiorentina 2-1, Lazio did it again to beat Torino by the same score.

Ciro Immobile and Marco Parolo scored second-half goals to cancel out an early penalty from Andrea Belotti.

A handball from Immobile led to Belotti's penalty and means the striker will miss Saturday's game against AC Milan with a suspension.

But Immobile made up for his error with an expert finish shortly after the break to raise his total to 29 goals in 29 games -- on pace to break Gonzalo Higuain's Serie A record of 36 goals in 2015-16.

Immobile also matched his personal best for a Serie A season set two years ago.

Parolo scored the winner with a deflected shot from just beyond the area.

Torino is 14th, six points above the drop zone.

Baseball's minor leagues cancel 2020 seasons

NEW YORK, JUL 1 (AP): Baseball's minor leagues canceled their seasons because of the coronavirus pandemic, and the head of their governing body said more than half of the 160 teams were in danger of failing without government assistance or private equity injections.

The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minor league governing body founded in September 1901, made the long-expected announcement on Tuesday. The minors had never missed a season.

"We are a fans-in-the-stands business. We don't have national TV revenues," National Association president Pat O'Conner said during a digital news conference.

"There was a conversation at one point: Well, can we play without fans? And that was one of the shortest conversations in the last six months. It just doesn't make any sense."

O'Conner estimated 85-90 per cent of revenue was related to ticket money, concessions, parking and ballpark advertising. The minors



drew 41.5 million fans last year for 176 teams in 15 leagues, averaging 4,044 fans per game.

MLB teams are planning for a 60-game regular season and most of their revenue will derive from broadcast money.

"I had a conversation with the commissioner, and we weren't able to find a path that allowed us to play games," O'Conner said.

"It wasn't an acrimonious decision on our part."

O'Conner said many minor league teams had received money through the federal Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act.

"That was a Band-Aid on a hemorrhaging in-

dustry," he said.

"Many of our clubs have gone through one, two, maybe three rounds of furloughs. In our office here, we've had varying levels of pay cuts between senior management, staff, and we've furloughed some individuals, as well, and are just about to enter in a second round of furloughs."

He hopes for passage of H.R. 7023, which would provide 1 billion in 15-year federal loans from the Federal Reserve to businesses that had 2019 revenue of USD 35 million or less and "have contractual obligations for making lease, rent, or bond payments for publicly owned sports facilities, museums, and

community theaters."

In addition, the Professional Baseball Agreement between the majors and minors expires September 30, and MLB has proposed reducing the minimum affiliates from 160 to 120.

"There's no question that what the pandemic has done is made us somewhat weaker economically," O'Conner said.

"I don't think it's challenged our resolve. I don't think it's impacted our desire to stick together and get a good deal."

There have not been substantive talks for about six weeks.

"There are very many teams that are not liquid,

not solvent, not able to proceed under normal circumstances, and these are anything but normal circumstances given the PBA and the uncertainty of the future for some of these ballclubs," O'Conner said.

"So I think the coronavirus has really cut into many clubs' ability to make it. And I think that we're looking at without some government intervention, without doing something to take on equity partners, you might be looking at half of the 160 who are going to have serious problems."

MLB already has told clubs to retain expanded 60-player pools, of which 30 players can be active during the first two weeks of the season starting in late July.

Conner said the financial impact of the pathogen might extend until 2023.

"As serious as the threat from Major League Baseball was," O'Conner said, "this threat from the coronavirus, it transcends any list that anybody wants to make with respect to the possibility of teams not being around in the future.

Bowlers now up against better batting units, feels Jayawardene

NEW DELHI, JUN 30 (PTI): Sri Lankan great Mahela Jayawardene has tremendous respect for the legendary bowlers he faced in his heydays but feels the current lot of pacers and spinners is up against better batting units.

Former captain Jayawardene played as many as 652 international matches across formats during a career spanning close to two decades.

At the peak of his career, international cricket was flooded with world-class bowlers, something many feel is not the case now.

"We are yet to see if the current crop of bowlers will hit the numbers

that their predecessors did... The present bowlers are probably up against better batting units," Jayawardene said during an ESPNcricinfo videocast with Sanjay Manjrekar.

On facing bowling attacks across two decades, the legendary batsman said, "If you look at the top 10 wicket-takers in modern day cricket all of them played in that era (first half of his career)."

"I missed out on Walsh and Kapil as I started just after that.

"There was (Muttiah) Murali (Muralitharan), (Shane) Warne, (Glenn) McGrath, Anil (Kumble),

Bhaji (Harbhajan Singh), Saqlain (Mushtaq), Wasim (Akram), Waqar (Younis), their numbers speak for themselves.

"The bowlers I faced in my career improved tremendously over the years."

Jayawardene revealed that he started out in cricket as a fast bowler cum batsman and recalled the time when he was allowed by his parents to skip his exams to play in Hong Kong Sixes, a six-a-side slam-bang tournament in the pre-T20 era.

"I was really proud of my parents as that became my stepping stone because I performed well in that tournament.

"In school cricket I was a fast bowler and batted at number three, but unfortunately, like all youngsters that time we were not put through proper training and fitness programme... "... so later on when I improved and started playing first-class cricket, I had to give up fast bowling because I had some issues with my back. The advice was that I need to concentrate on my batting and not so much on my bowling, so I became a slow off-cutter."

Speaking further on his move to give up fast bowling, he said, "I took the decision to give up bowling to have an effective

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America has almost 800 billionaires, a record high

The debate over whether the world's megarich are too rich is really a debate about whether America's megarich are too rich. America is now home to almost 800 billionaires, a record high that accounts for more than a quarter of the world's megarich. That rise of the billionaire class is made stark in a new report that paints their financial might in the most complete picture yet. It also serves as a vivid snapshot of American income inequality at a time when anti-billionaire sentiment is on the rise and fueling global backlash against ultra-wealthy elites from both the left and the right. So the debate over whether the world's megarich are too rich is really a debate about whether America's megarich are too rich.

The number of billionaires in the US reached 788 by the end of 2019, a 12 percent

increase from the prior year, according to the report from Wealth-X, which produces the comprehensive annual study. Those American billionaires now control \$3.4 trillion in total assets, 14 percent more than they did at the end of 2018.

The country with the next-highest number of billionaires, China, has fewer than half the number of the US. That \$3.4 trillion in American billionaires' net worth is more than the combined total net worths of the billionaires who reside in the next eight countries.

Only three years prior, at the end of 2016, America had 620 billionaires. Those billionaires controlled just \$2.6 trillion then. But the rise of Silicon Valley — and its tech giants, which have skyrocketed in value in the years since — has built out the American billionaire class.



The San Francisco area is the third-most-common home for billionaires, up from fifth place in 2016. The other US cities now among the biggest billionaire concentrations are New York (No. 1 overall, with 113) and Los Angeles (No. 7 overall, with 44).

And there are few signs that the tech boom is abating, or at least

impacting the bottom line of its billionaire leaders. As the coronavirus wrecks economies around the globe, threatening the lives of low-income and working-class people, the billionaires of the world are doing pretty okay. That's especially true in the tech sector, where there are 8.4 percent more billionaires around the globe as of May 2020 compared

with the end of 2019. That's the highest uptick of any sector.

That there are more American billionaires than ever helps explain why there is more backlash than we've seen in a long time to their war chests and influence. "Billionaire" became an insult in the Democratic presidential primary over the past year, with candidates even debat-

ing whether billionaires "should exist." Conservative populists have lumped in these billionaires as pursuing elite "globalist" policy goals that leave working-class Americans, such as those who voted for Donald Trump, out to dry. And a new chorus of critics have, with some success, flipped one of the assets of billionaires — their commitment to philanthropy — into a liability by turning it into a debate over tax avoidance.

This public interrogation of billionaires is not merely an academic exercise. It's having an impact. We now feel as negatively about billionaires as we did during the financial crisis in 2009. If America does enter a depression due to the coronavirus, it makes you wonder just how much worse we'll feel about the ultra-wealthy, especially now that they're around in record numbers.

Biden and Trump agree: November election could be corrupt

ATLANTA, JUL 1 (AP): President Donald Trump and his challenger, Joe Biden, have found something they agree on: The November election could be rife with corruption because of how officials handle the voting process.

Of course, the Republican incumbent and his Democratic rival place the prospective blame in different places. Each points at the other's party.

I really, really, really believe we're on the cusp of what could be the most corrupt process that we've seen in a general election if we don't monitor this every single second, Biden told donors Tuesday evening as he discussed Trump's and many Republicans' opposition to expanding early voting and mail-in voting amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

That's similar language to what Trump has tweeted to his millions of social media followers

in recent weeks. Mail-in voting will lead to the most corrupt election in USA history, Trump declared Sunday.

The president previously argued that mail-balloting allows voters to cheat. One such tweet drew a rare, special tag from Twitter that directed readers to mail-voting facts that rebutted the president's unsupported claims about voter fraud.

There are instances of voter fraud in the U.S., most often found in local or smaller jurisdictional elections, but there is no evidence of widespread fraud that would tilt statewide or national results.

Biden noted Tuesday that Trump himself has voted using mail ballots, most recently using Florida's absentee process to cast his Republican primary ballot in March.

Similar word choice aside, Biden's and Trump's disparate fram-



ing of voting by mail tracks the long-running, largely partisan fight over ballot access and election security.

Republicans nationally have pushed aggressive culling of voter rolls, identification requirements that are arduous for some voters, and strict signature and witness rules for absentee ballots. GOP officials cast such rules as necessary fraud prevention; Democrats call them systemic voter suppression.

We have got to keep ringing the bell about this all the way to the election, Biden said, adding that his campaign and the Democratic Party have put together a team of hundreds of lawyers and volunteers to focus on voter protection and education.

It's the greatest concern I have, Biden said, not just for my race, but for races up and down the ballot. Biden singled out Trump's opposition to injecting federal aid

into the U.S. Postal Service. He's talking about defunding the post office so they can't deliver mail-in ballots, Biden said.

The postal agency doesn't actually get direct taxpayer support for normal operations, as Biden's dig suggested. But COVID-19 has devastated its already precarious finances, and Congress has considered an aid package.

Trump's White House blocked one bailout effort earlier this year and

wants to attach strings to any taxpayer assistance.

At the time, Biden said that he believed Trump was pushing a narrative to cloud the results in November should the president lose. Biden went so far in that April 23 event as to suggest Trump might attempt to postpone the election. Biden offered no evidence of that claim.

Besides Trump's opposition to mail ballots, Biden declared Tuesday that dozens of proposals from state lawmakers around the country amount to Jim Crow-type efforts to restrict access to voting. He did not elaborate.

But he promised to restore the Voting Rights Act, the 1965 civil rights law that, until a 2013 Supreme Court ruling, required many Southern states and some counties outside the South to get federal approval for all changes to election rules and procedures.

Fauci, CDC chief raise concerns about full airline flights

WASHINGTON, JUL 1 (AP): The US government's top experts in infectious diseases have criticised American Airlines' decision to pack flights full while the coronavirus outbreak continues to grow across much of the United States.

"Obviously that is something that is of concern. I'm not sure what went into that decision making," Dr Anthony Fauci, infectious disease chief at the National Institutes of Health, told a Senate panel on Tuesday. "I think in the confines of an airplane that becomes even more problematic."

Several US airlines say they are limiting capacity on planes to between 60% and 67% of all seats. However, United Airlines never promised to leave seats empty, and American said last week that starting Wednesday it would drop its effort to keep half of all middle seats empty.

"When they announced that the other day obviously there was substantial disap-

pointment with American Airlines," said Dr Robert Redfield, director of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. I can say this is under critical review by us at CDC. We don't think it's the right message.

Fauci and Redfield made the comments in response to questioning by Senator Bernie Sanders during a Senate health committee hearing. Sanders, an independent from Vermont, pressed the officials on how full flights square with the message from public health experts that people should stay six feet apart to prevent transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.

American Airlines spokesman Ross Feinstein said the airline has multiple layers of protection in place for those who fly with us, including required face coverings, enhanced cleaning procedures, and a pre-flight COVID-19 symptom checklist.

He said American was also giving cus-



tomers the option of changing their ticket if their flight might be full.

The CEOs of American and United have said that even with middle seats empty, it is impossible to follow 6-foot social-distancing on a plane, so airlines rely on masks, deep cleaning and air-filtration systems on planes to prevent spreading the virus.

It's less about social distancing and it's more about the air and quality of air on board the airplane that makes people safe, said United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby, who add-

ed he had not seen the health officials' comments.

Airlines are desperate to increase revenue as they try to survive a plunge in air travel that reached 95% during April.

Many airline flights were nearly empty in the early weeks of the outbreak, with the average dipping to about 10 passengers, according to industry figures. Some days, there were fewer than 100,000 people flying in the US, a level not seen since the 1950s, except in the days following the September 2001 terror attacks.

Air travel has increased slowly since mid-April although it's still down 75% from normal and some flights have been packed.

American, which is based in Fort Worth, Texas, plans to increase flights by nearly 60% starting July 7 compared with June, which could help avoid full planes.

Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, Jet-Blue Airways and Alaska Airlines say they will continue to limit capacity, in some cases through September. Budget carrier Spirit Airlines does not.

NATIONAL DOCTORS' DAY...

He informed that the Government has allocated an enhanced budget of Rs. 40 crore for the health sector, with an additional Rs. 16 crore as buffer fund to meet any exigencies.

The Chief Minister also spoke about plans of the Government to establish Dialysis Units in the district hospitals as well as the sub-divisions. He informed that the Dialysis Unit in District Hospital Namchi is functional, and the one in Geyzing will be inaugurated tomorrow.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister made the following announcements:

1. A 'Mobile Village Clinic' service will be initiated in all the districts from the next financial year. He informed that the Mobile Village Clinic will have state-of-the-art equipment and will be manned by trained medical staff. Specialists will travel in the Mobile Clinic five days in a week to provide treatment and care to people in the villages and wards. He said that the Government will appoint required health workers, if necessary. He further informed that the Mobile Clinic will also be equipped with medicines. The Chief Minister stated that this initiative is being conceived to ensure that the people of Sikkim living in the villages and far flung areas will not have to travel to the District Hospitals for mild illnesses and routine tests. He directed the Health Department to submit a proposal to this effect immediately.

2. The Chief Minister announced financial incentives for all the COVID-19 frontline health workers as a token of love, respect and appreciation for their selfless service and dedication. He announced a one-time incentive of Rs. 20,000 for the doctors, Rs. 10,000 for the nursing staff, and Rs. 5000 for the supporting staff. He said that the incentives will be disbursed within fifteen days.

Minister Health Department, Dr MK Sharma began his address by remembering the selfless service of doctors around the country especially in the challenging crisis of COVID-19. He also initiated a two minutes silence for all members of the medical fraternity in the country who lost their lives while dealing with the pandemic.

The Minister lauded the efforts of the medical fraternity of STNM Hospital and the frontline health workers in other parts of the State, in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis with utmost efficiency.

Speaking on the theme of Doctors' Day Celebration, he called for the need to be highly vigilant and aware of asymptomatic hypoxia, to avoid deaths due to COVID-19.

The Minister also shared some of the experiences he has faced in the past as a professional doctor himself.

One of the highlights of the programme was the live video conferencing of the Chief Minister with the medical team (COVID-19 Warriors) of Isolation Wards in the COVID wing of STNM Hospital as well as the COVID warriors under quarantine. The Chief Minister extended his gratitude and Doctors' Day greetings to the COVID warriors. Though his encouraging words, the Chief Minister thanked the COVID warriors for setting a unique benchmark though their service.

Staff Nurse, Menuka Pradhan, STNM Hospital, who was among the first batch of health workers to serve the first COVID-patient, shared her experiences on the occasion. She thanked the Government of Sikkim for providing all the necessary support throughout.

Earlier, Medical Superintendent, STNM Hospital, Dr CS Sharma in his welcome address highlighted the vital services rendered by doctors even under the most challenging circumstances.

Head of Department, Forensic Medicines, Dr OT Lepcha highlighted the significance of Doctors' Day.

Likewise, Additional Medical Superintendent, STNM Hospital, Dr Yudok Bhutia presented the status report of COVID-19 Management in the State and the COVID dedicated wing of STNM Hospital. She explained in detail the timeline of COVID-19 and the steps taken by the State to combat the virus.

Also, during the programme, Senior Medical Officer, STNM Hospital, Dr Tara Gautam recited a poem titled 'Bimari Ko Bibasta' which she had coined after completing her duty at the COVID-19 Isolation Ward.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Head of Department, Dermatology, STNM Hospital, Dr Tshering Peggy.

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DAILY DOG WALK! The duo, Ben Affleck and Ana de Armas walked their dogs in Los Angeles.

K-Pop's BTS, BLACKPINK Are Grooving To Bollywood Tunes And It's A Banging Crossover

The internet is a treasure trove truly! Yes, there is the occasional (okay a little more than that) hate and trolling but one might unearth things from the creative conglomerate at work. You might have had your daily dose of topical news in mind when you went up the web but what you come back with is more than just that. From memes about the newest templates to GIFs from latest fan-favourite shows and more - cause the social media currency is always evolving - you never know what will hit you unless, you know you do! In fact, something similar has hit us and it is raining crossovers between Bollywood and K-Pop! Featuring bands like BTS and BLACKPINK, these videos are viral for a (and more) reasons.

Recently, BLACKPINK's 'How You Like That' dropped and fans were ecstatic to see the famous girl band's first studio album but it has now been replaced by sheer euphoria

of seeing them dancing to Pardesia. You heard it right; Jisoo, Lisa, Jennie and Rosé can be seen dancing to the groovy number thanks to the imaginative minds behind Instagram handle What The Cut? And you gotta see it to believe it.

Not just them, even the Bangtan Boys aka BTS can be seen in a mashup where Akshay Kumar's Hookah Bar is playing in the background. And no, you can't unsee it.

Earlier, another video of the BTS gang had gone viral that had them shaking legs to Salman Khan-Sushmita Sen's Chunari Chunari and I don't know if it was imposed anymore.

Now, I don't know about you but I'm looking at a different genre altogether. It is definitely the flavour of the season, to say the least, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who is excited about it. No, seriously, where you at K-Pop fans?

Niki Caro to helm 'Beautiful Ruins' for Amblin Partners

LOS ANGELES, JUL 1 (PTI): Filmmaker Niki Caro is set to direct the upcoming feature "Beautiful Ruins" for Amblin Partners.

Caro most recently helmed Disney's live-action remake of "Mulan", which will hit the theatres in August this year. Her filmography also includes titles such as "Whale Rider", "Anne with an E" and "North Country".

"Beautiful Ruins" is an

adaptation of New York Times bestseller, written by Jess Walter.

Mark Hammer and Chiara Atik have penned the script from an earlier draft by Micah Fitzerman-Blue and Noah Harpster, reported Variety.

Set in an Italian seaside village in 1962, the story is about a charming young man who runs a hotel with no guests, until one day an American starlet, fresh from

the set of "Cleopatra" appears and captures his heart.

Five decades later in Hollywood, a jaded assistant to a once-powerhouse producer gets caught up in the magic of the Italian's story, and takes it upon herself to find a happy ending.

The project will be produced by Neal Street Productions' Pippa Harris, Sam Mendes and Julie Pastor, with Nicolas Brown as executive producer.

Alia Bhatt, Hrithik Roshan among 819 invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

LOS ANGELES, JUL 1 (PTI): Bollywood stars Alia Bhatt, Hrithik Roshan and costume designer Neeta Lulla are among the 819 artistes and executives who have received invitations to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

Bhatt's last movie, Zoya Akhtar-directed "Gully Boy" was India's official entry for best international feature category at the 2019 Oscars. However, the film had failed to make it to the final five.

Other prominent Indian names to receive invitations are casting director Nandini Shrikent, documentary filmmakers Nishtha Jain, Shirley Abraham, Amit Madheshiya, visual effects supervisors Vishal Anand and Sandeep Kamal.

In a statement, the Academy said the new invitees include 36 per cent of people of colour and 45 per cent women. Artists from 68 countries have been invited as members.

Those who accept the invitation will have voting rights at the 93rd Academy Awards, scheduled to be held on April 25, 2021.

"The Academy is delighted to welcome these distinguished fellow travellers in the motion picture arts and sciences. We have always embraced extraordinary talent that reflects the rich variety of our global film community, and never more so than now," Academy President David Rubin said.

The Academy has been actively



working to introduce more diversity in its voting to avoid a controversy like 2016 when the Oscars were dubbed "white" for failing to recognise talents of colour.

The 2020 batch boasts of major Hollywood names like Cynthia Erivo, John David Washington, Constance Wu, Zazie Beetz, Florence Pugh, Zendaya, Awkwafina, Yalitza Aparicio, Mackenzie Davis, Ana de Armas, Adele Haenel, Thomasin McKenzie, Olivia Wilde and others.

The stars of multiple Oscar-winning South Korean movie "Parasite" -- Jang Hye-Jin, Jo Yeo-Jeong, Park So-Dam and Lee Jung-Eun -- are among the invitees.

Directors Lulu Wang, Ari Aster, Terence Davies, Matthew Vaughn, Robert Eggers, Matt Reeves, Alma Har'el are on

the list as well.

The Academy has announced a new five-year plan that includes implementing inclusion standards for nominees.

"We take great pride in the strides we have made in exceeding our initial inclusion goals set back in 2016, but acknowledge the road ahead is a long one. We are committed to staying the course.

"We look forward to continuing to foster an Academy that reflects the world around us in our membership, our programs, our new Museum, and in our awards," Academy CEO Dawn Hudson said.

In 2019, the organisation had invited 842 new members which included Indian names such as filmmakers Zoya Akhtar, Anurag Kashyap and veteran actor Anupam Kher.

'Ozark' to end with two-part season four

LOS ANGELES, JUL 1 (PTI): Streamer Netflix has announced that its critically-acclaimed series "Ozark" will conclude with an expanded fourth season.

The drama, which stars Jason Bateman, Laura Linney and Julia Garner in the lead, will have 14 final episodes with the season split into two seven-episode parts, the streamer said in a post on Twitter.

"We're so happy Netflix recognized the importance of giving Ozark more time to end the Byrdes' saga right,"



Chris Mundy, who is returning as showrunner and executive producer, said.

"It's been such a great adventure for all of us, both on screen and off, so we're thrilled to get the

chance to bring it home in the most fulfilling way possible," he added.

The story is about Marty (Bateman) and Wendy Byrde (Linney), who relocates their family from the Chicago

suburb of Naperville to the summer resort community of Osage Beach, Missouri and get involved in the local criminal activities of the new town.

The new season will mark the final chapter in the Byrde family's journey from suburban Chicago life to their criminal enterprise in the Ozarks, particularly after that season three ending.

"A super-sized season means super-sized problems for the Byrdes. I'm excited to end with a bang(s)," Bateman said.

Vivek Oberoi turns producer with thriller 'Iti'

MUMBAI, 01 JUL (PTI): Actor Vivek Oberoi on Tuesday announced that he is set to make his debut as a producer with high-concept thriller titled "Iti- Can You Solve Your Own Murder".

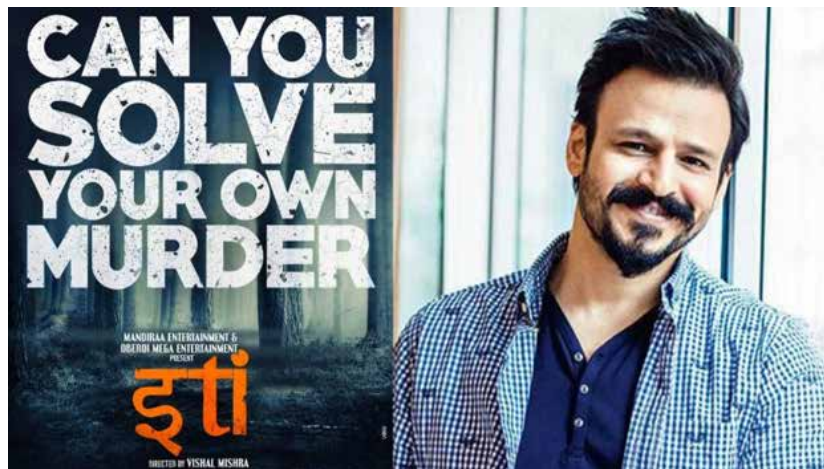
The whodunit thriller will be directed by Vishal Mishra, who has previously helmed on films "Coffee With D (2017)" and "Hotel Milan (2018)".

"Iti" will be produced by the actor's banner Oberoi Mega Entertainment and Girish Johar of Mandira Entertainment. It is creatively backed by Prerna Arora.

The 43-year-old actor said he trusts Vishal's vision and liked the idea so much that he decided to back the project.

"I'm sure it's going to be an exciting journey with Prerna, team Mandira and Girish. We hope to present an engaging piece of cinema to the audiences with this," Vivek said in a statement.

The film revolves around a woman who is racing against time to solve her own murder. The project is expected to go on floors by October and release in the first quarter of 2021.



I'm super excited and keen to share this story with our audiences. Vishal is a very gifted talent and we are pretty sure that with this film, we have a winner on our hands," Johar said.

Vivek's last Bollywood big screen appearance was in 2019's "PM Narendra Modi". He was also seen in season two of Amazon Prime Video's thriller "Inside Edge".

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ARIES:

Have you ever looked at your dreams and wondered, "What was I thinking? That seems impossible!" Not anymore, Aries. This phase of your life requires you to believe in the impossible and get into action mode. Watch how the circumstances align to support your growth. On the interpersonal front you're bringing peace and harmony. If there are any relationships that have been affected negatively by the retrograde energy, now is the time to work through the differences.

TAURUS:

Self-care is a big theme in the Taurus HQ. You are realising the importance of prioritising yourself. Being in a space of fullness helps you serve from a space of fullness. Sounds like a win-win! Love and romance are also big themes right now. Some of you could be feeling the spark with an old friend. Are you in love or merely infatuated? Only time will tell. Word for the wise: explore the connection but avoid making hasty decisions.

GEMINI:

Sometimes we settle for less because we don't believe we deserve better or because we're convinced the Universe isn't playing on our team. Spoiler alert, Gemini: there are bigger and better things on the horizon for you. The real question is: are you willing to let go of the things that are no longer supporting your growth? Those who have faced their fears will find that the doors that were once shut are now opening up. It's okay to not have the entire road map in front of you. Let 'one step at a time' become your mantra.

CANCER:

Every single day brings with itself a brand new opportunity. Will you live a life of passion or choose mediocrity? The cards are pointing towards your side gig, Cancer. What's keeping you from making it your main hustle? Is the fear of rejection getting in the way of you living an expanded life? Now is the time to stop playing rookie, believe in your dreams, and take the next big step. Leave the how and the why to the Universe. When we live in alignment with the grand plan, things have an uncanny way of working out.

LEO:

This may be an especially challenging time in the Leo HQ. You may feel like things are not working in your favour despite your best efforts. Instead of pushing against the flow, slow down. Let life reveal the grand plan to you. Drama and betrayal on the personal front could further push you down the rabbit hole. Resist the urge to shut down and reach out to your soul tribe.

VIRGO:

It's not that you haven't thought about giving up at different points. It's that you've learned to summon your higher self and acknowledge every challenge as the path to a greater learning. Wednesday finds you slaying yet another dragon and moving closer to the finish line. Trust that the Universe is your co-conspirator on this journey. On the personal front, however, conflict is showing up as a big theme. Let go of your need to be right at all times and listen to what others have to say. Bring forth the energy of peace.

LIBRA:

We spend so much time doubting our capabilities and wor-

rying about the judgements of others that we forget to notice all the ways in which we are born to shine. Your thoughts exactly, Libra. You're in the mood to take the cloak of invisibility off, grab the microphone, and share your message with the world. Some of you may feel inspired to step into a leadership position too. Given that we're in retrograde season, revisiting ideas and projects you've bookmarked for later could be a big theme. You'll recognise potential when you see it.

SCORPIO:

Surrendering is not an act of defeat. It is an act of wakeful collaboration with the Universe. Today, you're ready to let go of that energy of neediness. You trust that everything you need will come to you at the precise moment it is meant to. On the interpersonal front, however, you could find yourself dealing with boundary issues. In order to support the people in your life, you need to be able to support yourself first. Don't shy away from speaking your truth.

SAGITTARIUS:

Every time planets go into retrograde, the past comes up in a big way. But before you go around cursing this energy, take a moment to notice what the Universe is showing you. Chances are, there's a blessing in here for you, Sagittarius. Some of you are likely to experience this throwback moment in the realm of love and relationships. It's true that things didn't work out in the past for a reason. But you have evolved and so have they. Trust what your instinct is telling you about this situation.

CAPRICORN:

Your time away from the matrix has been enriching in so

many ways. You've taken time out to nurture your skills. The Universe is reminding you that you're just getting started. Continue to stay committed to your path. Set a certain number of hours aside every week for practice. This is a non-negotiable clause, Capricorn. Aim to be better at what you do everyday, but don't get hung up on the idea of perfection. Taking the losses and failures in your stride will ultimately open the door to success.

AQUARIUS:

We get so obsessed with the idea of how we should be, that we forget to notice all the ways in which we are growing and evolving right now. But, there's a deep inner alchemy within you, one that's inspiring radical self-love. Aquarius, you're celebrating who you are now. This new found self-confidence is helping you make bold moves in the realm of work. You're willing to move forward despite the fears, with the inner knowing that victory will ultimately be yours.

PISCES:

When we create from our small, three-dimensional selves, we face roadblocks at every step. However, when we make space for Spirit to step in, the path begins to clear out for us in miraculous ways. Where will you choose to vibrate at, Pisces? Who will you partner up with on this journey to greatness? Consider the 'less anxiety and more trust' mantra—just for today. On the personal front, let go of the need to be right at all times. Practice active listening and be receptive to what other people have to say. You won't be able to focus on what's important unless you get out of the ego space.