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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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140 Tirupati staff test positive for coronavirus

TIRUPATI, JULY 16 (PTI): As many as 140 staff members of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) that governs Lord Venkateswara's shrine at Tirumala, near here, have tested positive for COVID-19 since June 11.

The temple was re-opened on that date due to the coronavirus lockdown, a top functionary of TTD said.

Speaking to reporters, TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy said 14 'archakas' (assistant priests), 16 workers in laddu-making kitchens and 56 security personnel were among the infected.

Of the 140 affected, 70 were discharged and the rest being provided treatment, he said.

However, the TTD would continue to allow entry of devotees less than 12,000 in number into the temple daily, he added.

India slams Pak over construction of dam in PoK

NEW DELHI, JUL 16 (PTI): India on Thursday said it has strongly protested with Pakistan against the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha dam in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and condemned Islamabad's continuous attempts to bring about material changes in Indian territories under its illegal occupation.

India's strong protest came after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday kicked off construction work at the Diamer-Bhasha dam in Chilas in Gilgit-Baltistan, notwithstanding New Delhi's objection to the China-backed mega project.

Asked about the development at the weekly briefing, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India had made its position on it clear earlier and it remains unchanged.

"The entire Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union territory of Ladakh, have been, are, and will be an integral and inalienable part of India. We have strongly protested against the construction of this dam to the government of Pakistan," Srivastava said.

"This dam will lead to submergence of a large part of land of the Indian union territories of J&K and Ladakh and we condemn the continuous attempts by Pakistan to bring about material changes in Indian territories under its illegal occupation," he said.

India has also consistently conveyed its protest
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With 13 new COVID cases, Sikkim's active count rises to 135

— GREF CONTRIBUTES 5 MORE CASES, ITS TOTAL REACHES 59 —

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL:

Sikkim's tally of COVID-19 positive cases reached 222 with 13 new cases reported on Thursday. There are now 135 active cases in the State with 87 people having made full recoveries and getting discharged from the hospital. The GREF camp at Rongli which has brought the virus into the resident community contributed 5 of the 11 cases. The total number of cases directly related to the GREF camp at Rongli now stands at 59.

Of the 13 new cases, 11 were detected from RT-PCR testing at the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital and two tested positive during Rapid Antigen Testing at Rangpo check-post.

In his daily health bulletin posted online on Thursday, Health Department DG-cum-Secretary, Dr Pem-



pa T Bhutia informed that

two persons tested positive out of the 110 samples tested by RAT at Rangpo check-post yesterday.

He informed that out of 300 samples tested by RT-PCR on Wednesday, reports of 11 samples re-

turned positive.

He mentioned that six of these were from people lodged at a facility

quarantine near Gangtok.

All six had returned from Siliguri on 07 July and their samples tested on

14 July. They have been moved to the isolation ward at STNM Hospital.

The remaining five cases, as mentioned earlier, all came from the GREF camp at Rongli.

The five were brought to the hospital after developing symptoms on 14 July and their samples collected and sent for testing the same day.

On a more positive note, Dr Bhutia informed that all samples of health workers, police and sanitization team from Rongli have returned negative. Sikkim was anxious about these tests after a PHC worker and a police personnel posted in Rongli had tested positive a few days back.

Also today, Rapid Antigen Testing has begun in Rongli and Rhenock.

Samples of CM and family collected for testing



GANGTOK, 16 JUL (IPR): The RT-PCR testing for COVID-19 was organised at the Chief Minister's residence in Lumsey today.

The samples of Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang along with Sarda Tamang and MLA, Aditya Tamang were collected, followed by the security personnel and residential staff. A total of 95 samples have been collected.

The sample for testing was collected by the Urban Sampling team led by Sampling In-charge,

Dr Kunzang Lepcha, Medical Officer from Urban PHC, Old STNM, Gangtok under the guidance of Health Authority, STNM, Hospital.

A team of Gangtok Municipal Corporation led by Senior Supervisor, RP Subba was also present to sanitize the premises.

Chief Minister congratulated the team and expressed gratitude to the entire Health workers and the COVID-19 warriors for their selfless dedication and uninterrupted service.

India records over 30,000 COVID-19 cases in single day for first time

NEW DELHI, JULY 16 (PTI): COVID-19 cases in India crossed the 30,000 mark in a single day for the first time pushing the tally to 9,68,876 on Thursday, while the death toll climbed to 24,915 with 606 people succumbing to the disease, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The country saw a record increase of 32,695 cases of coronavirus infections in a day, with Maharashtra (7,975), Tamil Nadu (4,496), Karnataka (3,176), Andhra Pradesh (2,432), Uttar Pradesh (1,659), Delhi (1,647), Telangana (1,597), West Bengal (1,589) and Bihar (1,328) contributing to around 80 per cent of the single-day spike, the updated data at 8 am showed.

With a steady rise, the number of recoveries stands at 6,12,814, while there are 3,31,146 active cases of coronavirus infection presently in the country.

"Thus, around 63.25 per cent of patients have recovered so far," an official said.

The total number of confirmed cases includes foreigners.

Of the 606 deaths reported in the last 24 hours, 233 are from

Maharashtra, 86 from Karnataka, 68 from Tamil Nadu, 44 from Andhra Pradesh, 41 from Delhi, 29 from Uttar Pradesh, 20 from West Bengal, 11 each from Jammu and Kashmir and Telangana, 10 from Gujarat and nine from Madhya Pradesh.

Punjab has reported eight fatalities followed by Haryana with seven deaths, Assam and Bihar six each, Rajasthan five, Odisha and Puducherry three each, Jharkhand two, while Chandigarh, Kerala, Tripura and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu have registered a fatality each.

Of the total 24,915 deaths reported so far, Maharashtra accounted for the highest 10,928 fatalities followed by Delhi with 3,487 deaths, Tamil Nadu 2,167, Gujarat 2,079, Uttar Pradesh 1,012, West Bengal 1,000, Karnataka 928, Madhya Pradesh 682 and Rajasthan 530.

So far 452 people have died of COVID-19 in Andhra Pradesh, 386 in Telangana, 319 in Haryana, 221 in Punjab, 206 in Jammu and Kashmir, 180 in Bihar, 77 in Odisha, 50 in Uttarakhand, 46 in

Assam, 38 in Jharkhand and 35 in Kerala. Chhattisgarh has registered 20 deaths, Puducherry 21, Goa 18, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh 11 each, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura three each, Meghalaya and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu two each, while Ladakh has reported one fatality.

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

Maharashtra has reported the highest number of cases at 2,75,640 followed by Tamil Nadu at 1,51,820, Delhi at 1,16,993, Karnataka at 47,253, Gujarat at 44,552, Uttar Pradesh at 41,383 and Telangana at 39,342.

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 35,451 in Andhra Pradesh, 34,427 in West Bengal, 26,437 in Rajasthan, 23,306 in Haryana, 20,612 in Bihar and 19,643 in Madhya Pradesh.

Assam has instances of 18,666 infections, Odisha 14,898 and Jammu and Kashmir 11,666 cases. Kerala has reported 9,553 novel

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People urged not to travel to Rangpo for free RAT-testing

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL:

Secretary, Health, Dr SPT Bhutia, today mentioned that some people have been travelling from within Sikkim to the Rangpo screening camp to undergo Rapid Antigen Testing for themselves. This test, the fastest available at present, returns results in less than half an hour and appears to have caught the fancy of some people who want to have their COVID-status checked.

Dr Bhutia today urged the people not to expose themselves to the risk of contracting the virus by going to the screening centre at Rangpo which has been receiving returnees from different parts of the country, many of them from COVID hotspots. There is a risk of exposure, he warns.

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Oli is beating India with its own stick

JIWAN RAI

Man's hunger for a divine relationship is undeniable. The dominant position that religions enjoy in human sensibilities is strong evidence of this. Nothing can really separate religion from humanity. Marxism was born in response to the monotonous hegemony of religious idealism. Marx argued that the only way to true human happiness was by way of emancipation of the poor from economic disparity. The economic struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was the single greatest problem facing humans. One of the significant things

Marxism did was to begin a process to banish religion to irrelevance.

Karl Marx went on to become one of the most influential figures in human history. Leftist political philosophy owes almost everything to him. Emerging as a prominent philosophy when it

did prior to the Indian Independence struggle, the timing could not have been more interesting. As the freedom fight was gathering steam, there were essentially three ways India could have gone - the Fascist way of Hitler and Mussolini, the Communist way that the USSR

and China had chosen or evangelical democracy that the USA was experimenting with. The Indian Congress party chose to go with the democratic way that approximates the American model.

In an intensely religious country like India, communist philosophy could not

have survived. Interestingly enough, the Communist party flourished in West Bengal, one of the most religious states in India. It is a state where there are major religious festivals every month. The communist leaders adopted a religion-friendly communism, being con-

veniently ignorant of the contradictory nature of their version of communism.

The communist party in Nepal is tailor made for Nepal, another extremely religious country. The perversion of communism in India and Nepal is so much beyond the permissible limit that Karl Marx must be rolling over in his grave. The current Prime Minister of Nepal, Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli (KP Oli) has taken this perversion to next level. This communist leader has decided to don the high priest's garments to represent the religious glory of his nation. More than that, he has taken it upon himself to fight for the religious pride of his nation.

turn to pg 02

VIEWPOINT

J-K: Record 1,500 domiciles issued in a day in Bhaderwah

BHADERWAH/JAMMU, JUL 16 (PTI): In a major rural outreach programme to provide villagers residing in far off areas with domicile certificates, the administration in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district on Thursday issued 1,500 such certificates to hamlet dwellers in a day at their doorsteps.

The programme was led by Tehsildar Bhaderwah, Zeeshan Tahir, who held a domicile certificate camp at Saringal village of Athkhar Valley in Doda district.

The day-long camp was primarily aimed at to provide the villagers residing in small and inaccessible hamlets of the Athkhar Valley hassle-free issuance of the much required domicile certificates at their doorsteps, officials said.

The camp started early in the morning at Higher Secondary school Saringal, with a 15-member revenue department team and panchayat members headed by Tahir scrutinising the applications.

"We are acting on the directions of the government to provide hassle-free facilities at the doorsteps of the villagers and this being the far off area of the valley, we disposed all the received applications and issued 1,500 domiciles during the day-long camp," Tahir said.

Villagers were seen standing in long queues while maintaining the required social distancing and wearing face covers to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

They expressed gratitude for the administration for organising the camp.

"We are very thankful to Tehsildar Bhaderwah, who choose our Panchayat for the much needed domicile camp at the most appropriate time, as this will surely help poor villagers especially youth, who have to fill their forms for the recently advertised government jobs," said Irshad Ahmed Lawai, sarpanch Saringal.

"I never thought this will be so easy as after submitting my form, I got five domicile certificates of my family within 10 minutes, which is commendable and for this I'm thankful to Tehsildar," said Swarna Devi of Kholra village.

100% clear Class X from Lingi Payong Secondary School

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL: Lingi Payong Secondary School has secured 100 percent pass record in the recently held All India Secondary School Examination (AISSE) 2020 conducted by CBSE in February-March 2020. The result for this year's examination was declared on 15 July by CBSE after some delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vivek Khatiwara emerged as school topper with 87% in aggregate followed by Norkit Lepcha and Leena Rai securing second and third positions respectively. Mickey Doma Lepcha scored 93 in vernacular to top the school.

The school was upgraded as secondary school in 2016 and this was the third batch pass-

ing out of the school. Earlier, the first batch of students appeared for their Class X exam registered through Assangthang SS in Namchi South Sikkim owing to delay in receiving the affiliation number from the board.

"An improvement in overall performance was expected from the students, but this is great. We are proud of our students and their hard work and determination," said the school headmaster while congratulating the students.

The headmaster thanked all the teachers, parents, guardians, SMC members and other well wishers for their support and guidance to the students. Altogether, there were four boys and thirteen girls who sat for the exam.



SDF lashes out against Govt for COVID spread



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL: Sikkim Democratic Front chief spokesperson, MK Subba today blamed the "careless and lackadaisical" approach of the State Government for COVID-19 now reaching the community in the state.

While alleging that the State government does not have any plan to manage COVID-19 in the State, he stated that the Centre cannot babysit Sikkim for long now. He also suggested that the state government should take help from World Health Organisation if it cannot handle the situation.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Subba expressed that we need to think seriously on where the State went wrong to land in the present situation.

He claimed that SDF had suggested setting up of a testing facility at the borders repeatedly but it was set up only after the situation worsened.

The District Collector [East] knew that GREF camp at Rongli was a transit point and there was movement of people even after positive cases were reported from the camp but the DC failed to take appropriate action, alleged Mr Subba. He demanded clarification from the DC on the present situation at Rongli.

He alleged that the ruling party has violated all guidelines issued by its government on Unlock 2.0 by conducting political gatherings in different parts of the State without any social distancing.

While mentioning that companies like Cipla and Glenmark have

taken out anti-viral medicines in the market, he suggested that the State government enter into agreement with these companies in the State to have enough stock of these anti-viral medicines for the people of Sikkim.

He also asked the State government to make testing free for all in the State to encourage people to come forward for testing by following the guidelines of ICMR. He stated that around 14,000 samples have been tested so far in Sikkim which is the lowest in the country.

Mr Subba suggested that the government should immediately constitute an Expert Medical Advisory Committee to tackle the present situation effectively in the State.

SHO suspended in Kanpur technician kidnapping case

KANPUR (UP), JUL 16 (PTI): The Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday suspended an SHO on charges of negligence in connection with the kidnapping of a lab technician in Kanpur.

The case pertains to kidnapping of S Yadav on June 22, with his family alleging that they paid a ransom of Rs 30 lakh in the presence of police, but the captors did not free the man.

Station House Officer (SHO), Barra Police Station, Ranjit Rai has been suspended and asked to hand over the charge to Inspector Harmeet Singh, a police spokesperson said. Rai has also been instructed to report at Reserve Police Lines immediately, he said.

S Yadav's family had on Monday claimed he was kidnapped on June 22, and they paid the ransom money, but his captors did not free him. They said they threw a bag containing the money on a railway track, as asked.

However, Yadav's sister Ruchi told reporters in Kanpur on Wednesday, "There was no money in the bag. We talked about the money as someone suggested us to do so. We were upset as my brother could not be traced. I hope police will trace him soon.

But, later in the day, Ruchi said she made the U-turn under duress. She also named a

crime branch official, who she alleged visited her home and convinced her to say that no ransom was paid.

An FIR in the case has been registered at the Barra Police Station in Kanpur.

"The claim of payment of Rs 30 lakh is not true. When they were asked about the source of money, they could not give satisfactory answers. As the family is disturbed, we have adopted a sympathetic attitude towards them. Police teams are working to trace the missing man, Superintendent of Police, South, Aprana Gupta had said. On Tuesday, Kanpur SSP Dinesh Kumar P had said, "I am taking cognisance of media report in which payment of ransom of Rs 30 lakh has come to the fore. I am talking to the aggrieved family. If anyone is wrong, they will be punished.

He had also assured the aggrieved family about the safe return of the victim. We have been trying to find the man. If any ransom was paid, it will be recovered, the official added.

Citing the kidnapping case, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had flayed the Yogi Adityanath government over the alleged deteriorating law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh.

India slams...

and shared concerns with both China and Pakistan on all such projects in the Indian territories under Pakistan's illegal occupation where it has no locus standi, the MEA spokesperson said.

The Pakistan government in May had signed a whopping Rs 442 billion contract with a joint venture of a Chinese state-run firm and a commercial arm of Pakistan's powerful military for the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha dam.

Asked about reports of Pakistan allowing Afghan goods to be exported via Wagah, Srivastava said it was another example of Pakistan's creation of a mirage of goodwill.

"Let us be clear on this, Pakistan is not allowing Afghan trucks to carry Afghan goods and is seeking monopolistic transport practices. It is not allowing Afghanistan two-way transit rights as committed under article 3 of the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (also known as APTTA)," he said.

"So, Pakistan has been following a policy of creating captive markets by denying full transit access to Afghanistan by restricting products from India and other countries. It is failing to fulfil its own commitments under APTTA," Srivastava said.

Pakistan has even denied transit of humanitarian grant assistance, including wheat from India, to Afghanistan, he said.

India records...

coronavirus infections so far, while Punjab has 8,799 cases

A total of 4,539 have been infected by the virus in Chhattisgarh, 4,320 in Jharkhand, 3,785 in Uttarakhand, 2,951 in Goa, 2,268 in Tripura, 1,700 in Manipur, 1,596 in Puducherry, 1,341 in Himachal Pradesh and 1,142 in Ladakh

Nagaland has recorded 902 COVID-19 cases, Chandigarh 625 and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu together have reported 539 cases.

Arunachal Pradesh reported 462 cases, Meghalaya 346, Mizoram 238, Sikkim has registered 220 infections so far, while Andaman and Nicobar Islands has recorded 176 cases

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said, adding that 1,285 cases are being reassigned to states

State-wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, it added.

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ANTHYESTI KRIYA

The Anthyesti Kriya of our beloved father, Lt DB Shrestha who left for his heavenly abode on 10 July falls on 22 Jul, 2020 (Wednesday).

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our friends, relatives and well wishers who have stood by us during our time of bereavement and request all to pray for the departed soul of our beloved father.

The Anthyesti Kriya will be held at Shrestha Building (our residence), Below Janta Bhawan, DPH Area, Gangtok.

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LAND FOR SALE

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

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Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Bazaar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General roadside land for sale measuring 30 by 45 square feet near smile land below apica garden. Contact no. 7797885351/9733538899.

Oli is beating...

His claim that Ayodhya is in Nepal and Ram was Nepali, not Indian, catapulted him into the highest point of his public prominence in recent times. He has become one of the worst trolled personalities in India right now. He has also been trolled for his remarks that gravity was not discovered by Isaac Newton, but by Jotish Bhaskaracharya.

In a profound sense, India has forfeited its moral right to criticize the embattled Nepalese Prime Minister, KP Oli for these outrageous remarks. KP Oli has only discovered the simple truth that, in this part of the globe, territorial integrity and religious sentiments work wonders in terms of stoking public sentiments. Don't we have a history of these twin issues becoming the central agenda in our general elections? Nepal's political instability is unexampled. During a period of ten years from 2008 to 2018, Nepal changed its Prime Ministers 11 times – on an average more than once every year. The Prime Minister of a country with a failing economy and almost every topmost leader wanting to

snatch his post needed to invent some magical agenda to seem indispensable. Waxing eloquent on Marxism would hardly resonate with a people whose existential beliefs are far removed from the ideals of communism. He must have thought to himself – "What do the Indian national politicians do to look like national heroes? Oh, they have Pakistan and religious issues to fight over." But Oli did not have Pakistan. And so, he whipped out the delicate but hitherto untouched Lipulekh-Kalapani-Limpiyadhura issue. Nepalese people had been living with a latent anti-India sentiment, largely formed by the narrative of India's big-brotherly attitude towards Nepal. Oli needed a tangible issue to inflame these pre-existing emotions. For now, he has partially succeeded in finding Nepal's version of Kashmir in the Lipulekh-Kalapani-Limpiyadhura issue. This is how he is scripting his heroic story by projecting India as the biggest threat to Nepal's territorial integrity. India to Nepal is what Pakistan is to India – that's Oli's project.

The second political trick that has been working in India for ages is religion – a fact which Oli is now replicating in the wildest possible manner. Of course, it is a well-established fact that there has been a long-standing battle over the birth place of Gautam Buddha. Although Nepal's claim looks historically more tenable, Indian intelligentsia and political leadership continue to project India as Buddha's birth place. Oli's "Ram is a Nepali" claim is not too outrageous when juxtaposed with the Buddha birthplace issue. If he really said that gravity was discovered by a Hindu sage, why is that surprising? Here Oli is simply learning famous Indian trick. Our Prime Minister Modi claimed that Karna's birth is proof of genetic engineering practiced in ancient India. Ganesha is proof of plastic surgery. Scientist KJ Krishnan, had said that the gravitational wave will soon be called the Modi wave. Education minister of Rajasthan, Vasudev Devani said that gravity was discovered, not by Newton, but by an Indian scientist,

Brahmagupta II, one thousand years ago. Uttarakhand CM, TS Rawat claimed that cows inhale and exhale oxygen and heal TB. Justice Mahesh Chandra Sharma claimed that peacocks impregnate peahens through their tears - they do not mate. Pragya Thakur says that cow urine cures cancer. Andhra University vice-chancellor, G Nageswara Rao, professor of inorganic chemistry says that the Kauravas were test tube babies and Ravana had 24 aircrafts. BJP MP, M Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said that Indian sage, Kanad conducted nuclear test thousands of years ago. Minister of state, Shripad Naik says that yoga can cure cancer. Ramdev ji claims that eggs are chicken poop. Defence minister, Rajnath Singh says that cows and humans are almost similar.

Everybody knows that Ram was born in India. But apart from Ram, Oli's political tactics and stunts were also born in our own land. He is only sneakily stealing them. The more Oli shouts, the starker becomes the proof that he took his training from India.

Regional Service Award to Rotarian Prakash Sundas

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL:

Secretary, Rotary Club of Gangtok South, Prakash Sundas, was conferred with "Regional Service Award for a Polio Free World" by Rotary International for his dedication and hardwork in Polio Eradication Programme of Rotary International, a press release informs. He has been working in the field of Polio Eradication in the state of Sikkim since 1998.

He volunteered in the Polio Vaccination camp organised by Rotary Club of Gangtok at Lall Bazaar Area (Kanchanjunga



Shopping Complex Area), Gangtok. He visited each

and every house of Lall Market and motivated the

general public to educate them the importance of

Polio Vaccination.

Prakash Sundas was nominated as Chairman Polio Plus Committee of Rotary Club of Gangtok South, during his chairmanship club started Polio Booth at Transit Camp i.e. Private Bus Stand, Near Old West Point School. He also supervised 7 areas of Gangtok for 3 years. He attended many state level workshops and seminars on Polio Eradication organised by the Health Department, Government of Sikkim.

Rotary Club of Gangtok South has wished him congratulations and best wishes for his achievements.

Gangtok MLA tests negative for COVID-19



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL:

Gangtok MLA, YT Lepcha has tested negative for COVID-19 in the Rapid Antigen Testing at Rangpo. Mr Lepcha

along with all the Ministers, MLAs, and security personnel underwent antigen testing in Rangpo.

MLA Lepcha said that public representatives

have to meet and interact with large number of people regularly and so this kind of test was important. He expressed happiness on testing negative for the virus.

Dalit couple beaten up: Six cops suspended

BHOPAL, JUL 16 (PTI):

After shunting out the collector, Superintendent of Police (SP) of Guna district and Inspector General (IG) of Gwalior range over the beating of a Dalit couple at Guna, the Madhya Pradesh government on Thursday suspended six police personnel allegedly involved in the incident.

Outgoing Guna SP Tarun Nayak issued orders suspending six police personnel including two women cops, official sources said.

Ashok Singh Kushwaha, Rajendra Sharma, Pavan Yadav, Narendra Rawat, Neetu Yadav and Rani Raghuvanshi were suspended.

The incident at Guna town comes ahead of bypolls to 25 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh.

Taking the matter seriously, the BJP government on Wednesday night transferred collector S Vishwnathan, SP Nayak and IG Rajababu Singh, a senior official said.

Home minister Narottam Mishra also informed that a high-level probe had been ordered by Chief Minister Shrivraj Singh Chouhan into the incident.

On Tuesday, a Dalit couple drank pesticide when officials tried to evict them from a piece of government land in Guna city, allotted for a college, which they were cultivating. Their condition was now said to be stable.

Rajkumar Ahirwar (38) and his wife Savitri (35) had reportedly leased the land from those who had encroached on it, officials said. Police were compelled to use force against them as they resisted the eviction and refused to go to hospital after drinking pesticide, officials said.

A video which went viral on social media showed the police beating the man with batons severely.

Opposition Congress slammed the use of force and demanded action against those responsible for the incident.

Madhya Pradesh BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma alleged that Gabbu Pardi who had allegedly encroached on the land was a Congress worker who was close to a senior Congress leader. "It is a very unfortunate incident. The gov-

ernment has taken it very seriously and removed the Collector, SP and IG," he said.

State Congress working president and former minister Jitu Patwari termed Sharmas allegations as "baseless" and alleged that Pardi was a BJP worker.

State Congress spokesman, Bhupendra Gupta demanded a probe by a sitting judge in the matter and also suspension of senior officials.

Dalit couple beaten up: Six cops suspended

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NE Taxi launches new venture NE Origins



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 JUL:

The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone and especially small businesses all over the world. NE Taxi, a car rental company started by Sikkim's Rewaj Chettri, has started a new venture in view of the losses the company was suffering due to the pandemic.

It has launched NE Origins, an online mar-

ketplace for products from North East India.

NE origins is for "people who have a heart for the North East of India, those who miss their homes staying away from home, who have a knack for beautiful north eastern patterns and fabrics, silks and woollens," a press release mentions.

The website has already been launched and the launching sale on the

website will start on the 17 July 2020 with 10% discount on all products.

"We have gathered artisans, farmers, SHGs, cottage industries and entrepreneurs of the north east, each state, each city, and provided roof to their products on our website @ www.neorigins.com," the release mentions.

Sellers can register their company and products free of cost.

Maharashtra's BAC meet likely next week on COVID-19, monsoon session

MUMBAI, JUL 16 (PTI):

The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of both Houses of the Maharashtra Legislature is likely to meet next week to discuss the COVID-19 situation in the state and on holding the monsoon session of the Legislature, Assembly Speaker Nana Patole said on Thursday.

The monsoon session, which was earlier scheduled to start from

June 22, was deferred to August 3 in view of the pandemic.

Patole told PTI that the BAC is likely to meet next week to discuss the prevailing situation.

Nearly 1,500 people, including legislators and other staff, are present at a time in the Vidhan Bhavan when the Legislature session is in progress.

The Vidhan Bhavan has a total staff strength of 750, Patole said.

"At the BAC meet, the prevailing situation would be reviewed and views of the government and the opposition would be sought," he said.

The budget session of the Legislature had been cut short by a week in March after the outbreak of COVID-19 in the state.

Till Wednesday, Maharashtra reported 2,75,640 COVID-19 cases and 10,928 deaths due to the disease.

Sanitiser - a fire HAZARD!

Hand sanitisers, now part of everyday life, can also be a fire hazard if used carelessly. There are different types.

One comes with Isopropyl alcohol base and the other with ethyl alcohol base. Many are a mixture of both. They readily evaporate at room temperature into an ignitable vapour. When sanitiser evaporates in a confined area, like a car, it only takes a spark to start a fire. They are inflammable and people should be aware. They should be kept in safe and cool places. Exposure to extreme heat can alter the chemical composition. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be rubbed over hands and other surfaces until it evaporates and dries up. Even a small quantity of alcohol on your hands exposes yourself to fire risks while cooking or smoking.

While sanitizing your vehicle, never use alcohol based sanitisers on hot or running vehicles, they can be sanitized with hypochlorite solutions type sanitisers.

-Sikkim Fire & Emergency Service-

First woman chief of Maha poll panel dies of COVID-19

MUMBAI, JUL 16 (PTI):

Former Maharashtra State Election Commissioner Neela Satyanarayan died of COVID-19 at a hospital here on Thursday morning, hospital authorities said.

She was 72. The 1972-batch IAS officer was the state's first woman election commissioner.

She died at Seven Hills Hospital in suburban Andheri around 4 am, the medical facility's dean Dr Balkrishna Adsul said.

Her husband and son are also undergoing treatment for COVID-19 at the hospital, he said.

The Seven Hills Hospital is a dedicated facility for coronavirus treatment.

Satyanarayan retired as additional chief secretary of the state's revenue department in 2009.

After retirement, she served as the State Election Commissioner between 2009 and 2014.

She authored several books and was also a singer.

While serving as a bureaucrat, she had raised

her voice against women IAS officers not being given important postings in the state secretariat.

Later, she was posted in the state revenue and Home departments.

During her posting in the Home department, she handled administration of prisons where she encouraged artistic skills of women inmates.

Political leaders, including Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and NCP president Sharad Pawar, paid glowing tributes to Satyanarayan.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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

If you seek help, you may call :

- Toll free no. 104
- District surveillance Officer
- EAST : 7029372100
- WEST : 9593297808
- NORTH : 9641957468
- SOUTH : 7407691463
- New STNM
- AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

The Nightmare's Here

Don't allow it to stupefy

COVID has taught many lessons in the seven months that it has held the world hostage. Among the more significant lessons has been the fact that it takes the smallest of slip-ups for the virus to wrest control. Think the South Korean super-spreader who attended a religious congregation despite knowing her positive status and infected many more than even an undetected carrier can manage. We also have our own experience of the surprise lockdown and how that sent too many more thousands to the rural hinterlands and put their less than limited health infrastructure under tremendous stress. The numbers coming in are still primarily from the urban centres, but that is clearly because testing has still not reached the rural areas. The ostrich that is the sarkar has buried its head in the sand and probably praying that basti-wallah resilience will keep the cases asymptomatic and wash over the country without the official numbers reflecting what the situation on ground actually is. For now, let's leave that worry to agencies which claim to know what they are doing.

Turning the focus on Sikkim, Novel Coronavirus in the resident population started with one case of a driver who got it from the people he ferried to quarantine centres. The authorities here should have woken up then itself to the fact that the honeymoon of no local transmission was not going to last forever. By then, cases among army and paramilitary personnel reporting for duty in Sikkim had begun spiking. Officially, however, only token meetings continued. Even as the health workers did well by ramping up testing, managing the limited human resource at their disposal, overcome by the North Bengal Medical College let-down and ensuring that those in the isolation ward are attended to properly, the civilian agencies failed Sikkim, displaying neither empathy nor even any awareness of what was happening and what could transpire. For instance, the quarantine centres come under the district administration's watch and while doctors and other health workers risk infection to screen returnees and recommend the nature of quarantine, the district administration could not even streamline lodging. One cannot call it a "quarantine" if two strangers are made to share a room or if the entire facility has to share bathrooms. As a result, Rongli happened. Yes, GREF is to blame for the more than 50 infections its camp at Rongli caused, but so is the disconnectedness of the administration here and its failure to coordinate effectively. Unfortunately, all the task forces continue to believe that COVID can be contained through notifications. If they still think so after more than four months of the lockdown and infections still setting daily records, they will never learn. Sikkim, then, has to manage the COVID situation despite them. Let them keep playing their "we are in a meeting" notification-notification game or call centre tasks to allow unauthorized entries while the rest of the State rolls up its sleeves and does what is required.

Because the Health Department began preparing in time, Sikkim has enjoyed the luxury of keeping even asymptomatic COVID-positive people in isolation wards under 24x7 medical watch. As the numbers rise, and they are bound to, it will not be able to sustain this gesture. It has to begin planning for a situation when only symptomatic cases can be brought to the hospital. Elsewhere in the country and the world over, asymptomatic people are already being told to recover at home. This is not an easy decision to make because many will see this as the health workers shirking their responsibilities. It would be wrong to think so. By keeping health-workers on COVID isolation ward duty when the patients are not actually "sick" runs the risk of tiring them out before the challenge has begun in earnest. Sikkim is already under-staffed and cannot risk its frontline workers burning out and fatigue setting in before the war has begun. Health experts should consider this option and make projections on whether such an option should be considered. Should it be considered, dedicated quarantine centres should also be established for people who test positive but do not have the luxury of space and/or support to stay safely isolated by themselves. Adequate support staff, coordinated with civil society organizations, private practitioners and volunteers can be arranged for such centres.

And now that the number of COVID-positive people is relatively high, something more needs to be done for them beyond the emergency healthcare support system arranged for them. Almost all the cases are asymptomatic, which means that these patients, while they are not physically suffering, have too much time at hand and that can lead to anxiety and other mental conditions to set in. They are receiving counseling and are helping each other out while they recuperate, but it is now time for the society at large to engage with them and keep them engaged. The number of positive cases is now high enough for a special programme to be initiated for them. Start something. Begin with a Facebook community group open to all who have contracted COVID in Sikkim. Let them talk and discuss and support each other. Consider opening a WhatsApp group as well. Include doctors in these groups. It is also time that some corporate group organized an online contest, even online tambola is an idea, for them. These gestures will do more than distract them from their worries and will also reassure them that they are not forgotten. Such connections will also help educate the wider community and humanize the situation for them. There is still, unfortunately, a lot of stigma attached to the virus which is inexcusable.

Ending the pandemic will take global access to COVID-19 treatment and vaccines – which means putting ethics before profits

NICOLE HASSOUN
theconversation.com

As COVID-19 surges in the United States and worldwide, even the richest and best insured Americans understand, possibly for the first time, what it's like not to have the medicines they need to survive if they get sick. There is no coronavirus vaccine, and the best known treatment, remdesivir, only reduces hospital recovery time by 30% and only for patients with certain forms of the disease.

Poorer people have always had trouble accessing essential medicines, however – even when good drugs exist to prevent and treat their conditions.

In the U.S., where there is no legal right to health, insurance is usually necessary for medical treatment. Remdesivir costs about US\$3,200 for a typical treatment course of six vials, though critics argue its manufacturer, Gilead, could make a profit off much less. Internationally, high drug prices mean that critical medicines are often available only to the richest patients.

Access to medicines, in other words, is usually an ethical problem – not a scientific one. And that's going to complicate the global coronavirus fight. Experts worry that any COVID-19 vaccine is likely to have a high price tag and, as a result, be unequally distributed according to countries' purchasing power, not need.

With a little imagination, this challenge can be overcome. My new book "Global Health Impact: Extending Access to Essential Medicines" documents how in past epidemics, from polio and Ebola to HIV, the international community managed to get life-saving drugs to patients – no matter where they lived or how much they earned.

PAST WINS

It took years for scientists to identify an effective treatment for HIV. But by 1997, most people diagnosed with HIV in Europe and the U.S. were living long and productive lives thanks to antiretroviral drugs.

Meanwhile, the disease was still killing 2.2 million people each year in sub-Saharan Africa because pharmaceutical companies claimed it was impossible to lower the US\$10,000 to \$15,000 annual cost

per patient for antiretrovirals.

In response, human rights activists galvanized a global AIDS campaign, educating African patients about antiretrovirals, giving them the tools they required to demand treatment and even suing drug companies. Eventually, mass protests erupted in South Africa and elsewhere, shifting public opinion on access to medicines.

By 2000, competition from generic drug manufacturers brought the price of antiretrovirals down to around \$350 per patient per year, allowing millions more worldwide to take them.

Around the same time, a similar story was playing out with tuberculosis, which had greatly diminished in the U.S. and Europe but remained deadly in many other places. The rise of drug-resistant strains – especially in the former Soviet Union and parts of Africa and Asia – posed a particularly terrible challenge.

Conventional wisdom held that people with drug-resistant TB couldn't be saved. The drugs were too expensive, treatment courses too long and disease management too complicated.

The organization Partners in Health disproved that excuse by successfully treating 50 tuberculosis patients in Peru, then one of the world's poorest countries. That project helped convince the World Health Organization to endorse multi-drug-resistant TB treatment. Global funding for TB treatment increased greatly and generic medicines were produced. Today more than 70% of people diagnosed with drug-resistant TB receive treatment

ENDING COVID-19 ETHICALLY

These health campaigns both demonstrate the virtue I call creative resolve, which is a fundamental commitment to overcoming apparent tragedy.

Other examples include the adoption of "ring vaccinations" in the 1960s – a contact tracing-based immunization strategy pioneered in the 1960s after mass vaccinations failed to stop smallpox – and a 2010 campaign to give children in Afghanistan their smallpox vaccinations at the circus.

Ending the global coronavirus pandemic will require similar creative resolve.

Recently, the U.S. agreed to pay \$1.2 billion for early access to a promising COVID-19 vaccine in the

United Kingdom and secured first access to another by the French pharmaceutical company Sanofi, enraging citizens of those countries. Such arrangements also harm manufacturing countries like Brazil, Egypt and India, whose people have little access to the medicines their factories pump out.

Unequal access to COVID-19 medicines isn't just a moral problem. In a global pandemic, an outbreak anywhere threatens people everywhere.

There is some creative resolve on display in the COVID-19 fight, though.

For example, the Medicines Patent Pool – a United Nations-backed organization that encourages companies to share their patents in order to speed up innovation – is pushing this method for advancing the research and development of COVID-19 drugs.

Other health experts are proposing new medicine distribution mechanisms that would send drugs and vaccines where they're most needed based on the net health benefits a population would receive.

That plan and others require smart data use. The Global Health Impact Project, a research collaboration that I direct, measures the effectiveness and availability of lifesaving medicines. The idea is that if we know which drugs are actually addressing pressing health needs and where, policymakers and health organizations can craft more targeted treatment access plans.

Such information could be also used creatively to reward drug companies for their global health impact. Governments could create an international prize, say, that awards funds to companies based on the lives saved by their COVID-19 drugs and other essential medicines. That could offset profit as the primary motivation for drug research, development and sales.

And if pharmaceutical companies don't voluntarily help people in poor countries, those governments can do what they've done in past health crises: let other companies produce generic versions of patented medicines, to protect the common good.

[the writer is Professor of Philosophy, Binghamton University, State University of New York]



Coronavirus: Why are some people experiencing long-term fatigue?

FRANCES WILLIAMS
theconversation.com

People who have been seriously unwell and treated on intensive care units can expect to take some months to recover fully, regardless of their ailment. However, with COVID-19, evidence is mounting that some people who have had relatively mild symptoms at home may also have a prolonged illness. Overwhelming fatigue, palpitations, muscle aches, pins and needles and many more symptoms are being reported as after-effects of the virus. Around 10% of the 3.9 million people contributing to the COVID Symptom Study app have effects lasting more than four weeks.

Chronic fatigue – classified as fatigue lasting more than six weeks – is recognised in many different clinical settings, from cancer treatment to inflammatory arthritis. It can be disabling. If 1% of the 290,000 or so people who have had COVID-19 in the UK remain under the weather at three months, this will mean thousands of people are unable to return to work. They will probably have complex needs that the NHS is ill-prepared to address at present.

COVID-19 is not the only cause of chronic fatigue. Prolonged fatigue is well recognised after other viral infections such as the Epstein-Barr virus, which causes infectious mononucleosis (also known as glandular

fever). Post-viral fatigue was also seen in a quarter of those infected with the original Sars virus in Hong Kong in 2003.

When it comes to treating chronic fatigue, the emphasis previously has been on effective treatment of the underlying disease, in the belief that this would diminish the fatigue. However, for most viral infections there is no specific treatment, and because COVID-19 is so new, we don't yet know how to manage post-COVID fatigue.

WHAT MIGHT BE CAUSING POST-COVID FATIGUE?

Although we know that lasting fatigue can sometimes follow other viral infections, detailed mechanistic insight is, for the most part, lacking. An ongoing viral infection in lung, brain, fat or other tissue may be one mechanism. A prolonged and inappropriate immune response after the infection has been cleared might be another.

However, a previous study has given us some insight. When a chemical called interferon-alpha was given to people as a treatment for hepatitis C, it generated a flu-like illness in many patients and post-viral fatigue in a few. Researchers have studied this "artificial infection response" as a model of chronic fatigue. They found that baseline levels of two molecules in the body that promote inflammation – interleukin-6 and interleukin-10 – predicted people's

subsequent development of chronic fatigue.

Of particular interest, these same pro-inflammatory molecules are seen in the "cytokine storm" of severely ill COVID-19 patients. This suggests there might be a pattern of immune system activation during the viral infection that is relevant to ongoing symptoms. Further support for interleukin-6 playing some sort of role comes from the successful use of tocilizumab – a treatment that lessens the impact of interleukin-6 and reduces inflammation – to treat severe COVID-19.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT

At TwinsUK at King's College London, we investigate the genetic and environmental factors that influence disease by studying twins. We're using the COVID Symptom Study app to examine the long-lasting symptoms being reported. We're sending out questionnaires to the volunteer adult twins on our database, many of whom were included previously in immune system studies long before the coronavirus epidemic. We aim to define "post-COVID syndrome" and look at markers in the blood to shed more light on the immune mechanisms contributing to long-term symptoms.

This will be a challenging study to design: people with COVID-19 have had more than just a viral infection in the normal run of things. Their illness has taken place during unprecedented

social change, restriction in movement, and a time of great anxiety and difficult-to-quantify risks – all accompanied by 24-hour rolling news. Some patients have been very sick at home and thought themselves close to death. For this reason, we'll also be examining post-traumatic stress, as the interpretation of reported symptoms must be set in context.

Chronic fatigue doesn't lie within the remit of a single medical speciality, so it's often overlooked on medical school curricula, and doctors are poorly trained in the diagnosis and management of chronic fatigue. But recent progress has been made and online training is available for doctors that covers how to care for at least those with the most severe symptoms.

Guidance for patients in managing chronic fatigue and how to conserve energy is also now available. The important thing to stress is that taking out a gym membership and pushing exercise is the wrong thing to do and can set people back considerably. Small efforts – mental or physical – should be followed by rest. Return to work, when it happens, should be a gradual and graded process. Learning to pace activities is very much the order of the day.

[the writer is Professor of Genomic Epidemiology and Hon Consultant Rheumatologist, King's College London]

Akhil Gogoi gets bail in 3 cases lodged by Assam Police

GUWAHATI, JUL 16 (PTI): Peasant leader Akhil Gogoi was on Thursday granted bail by the Gauhati High Court in three cases lodged by the Assam Police in connection with the violent anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests in December last year.

However, he will remain in jail for the cases being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Hearing the bail applications in the three cases registered at Chabua police station in Dibrugarh district, Justice Manash Ranjan Pathak granted bail to the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader.

Gogoi's advocate Santanu Borthakur said: "Now he has got bail in all cases, except the two NIA cases. The hearing in one of these two cases will start in the next few days. We hope the court will grant bail to him."

The three cases, for which Gogoi was arrested on May 29 while he was already in jail, were



related to burning of a post office, a circle office and a branch of the United Bank of India in Chabua during violent protests against the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

NIA is investigating two cases, which were initially registered at Chandmari and Chabua police stations, related to

the alleged role of Gogoi in the violent protests.

Gogoi, the adviser of KMSS, tested positive for COVID-19 inside Guwahati Central Jail on July 11 and is being treated at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) at present.

In the midst of the intense anti-CAA movement, Gogoi was arrested

on December 12 last year from Jorhat as a "preventive measure" in view of the deteriorating law and order situation in the state and his three colleagues were taken into custody the next day.

The four leaders were later arrested in a number of old cases registered across different police stations in Assam.

They have got bail in most of these cases.

The special NIA court had granted bail to Gogoi on March 17 in the Chandmari police station case and subsequently to others after the investigating agency failed to file a charge sheet within the specified period of 90 days. The Gauhati High Court later stayed the bail.

On May 29, the NIA filed the charge sheet against Gogoi and three of his colleagues for sedition and terror activities.

KMSS leader Bittu Sonowal, who was arrested by NIA along with Gogoi, was granted bail by a special NIA court on Wednesday.

On Monday, another KMSS leader Manash Konwar got bail by the special NIA court here and he was released from the jail on Tuesday.

The fourth associate, Dhaijya Konwar, has not yet received bail. He along with Gogoi and Sonowal are being treated at GMCH after testing positive for COVID-19.

Arunachal govt to launch sero survey in capital complex

ITANAGAR, JUL 16 (PTI): The Arunachal Pradesh government will launch extensive sero survey in the capital complex here for the primary and secondary contacts of COVID-19 cases including vulnerable groups, a health department official said here Thursday.

The department will perform rapid tests using antigen and elisa kits after the ongoing lockdown till July 20 is lifted. Rapid response teams have already been constituted for the purpose, Health Secretary P Parthiban told reporters in a virtual press conference here.

Our basic aim is to identify the primary and secondary contacts of the infected persons and to flatten the curve of the virus so that the pandemic can be contained, Parthiban said.

The rapid antigen tests began last week in

the capital complex after it witnessed a spurt in COVID-19 cases, he said adding the health authorities have so far conducted 968 antigen and 1867 elisa tests in the area.

Parthiban said that most of the cases were initially detected in quarantine facilities but in recent times they were also reported from other areas in the capital region.

It is due to the long incubation period of the virus as several cases which were negative earlier, tested positive at later stage. The need of the hour is to break the chain of transmission, the health secretary said.

Any decision of extension of lockdown in the capital complex will be taken after the cabinet meeting slated to be held on Friday. The meeting will assess the situation.

To a query on viola-

tion of lockdown norms by people in the capital region, Home Commissioner Kaling Tayeng said that deputy commissioners and the superintendents of police are doing their best to enforce it and several lockdown violation cases have been registered and fines imposed.

The Capital Complex comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa, has so far registered 205 cases, the highest in the state, followed by Changlang (33), Namsai (30), West Kameng (15), East Siang and Lower Subansiri 12 each.

As on Thursday Arunachal Pradesh reported 491 Covid-19 cases including 335 active cases. While 153 people have recovered, three persons have died of the pandemic, officials said.

Poet-activist Varavara Rao tests positive for COVID-19

MUMBAI, JUL 16 (PTI): Jailed poet and activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, has tested positive for COVID-19, a hospital official said on Thursday.

The 80-year-old, lodged in the Taloja jail in Navi Mumbai under judicial custody, was admitted to the state-run JJ Hospital here earlier this week. Rao is asymptomatic and has general weakness, said Dr Ranjeet Mankeshwar, dean of the JJ Hospital.

The poet-activist's medical report came on Thursday and he was found to be coronavirus positive, he said. "He has been found positive for COVID-19, but his condition is stable, no symptoms of COVID-19 have been found, he is having general weakness," said Mankeshwar.

"His treatment is going on," he said.

It was a routine swab check that was done on Tuesday after he was admitted to JJ Hospital and claims made by his family members that he is not getting proper medical

care were not true, the official maintained.

"We are providing best health facilities to him and by late (Thursday) night he may be shifted to St George Hospital (another state-run hospital) for further treatment," said Mankeshwar.

Rao, who hails from Telangana, was shifted to the government-run hospital in south Mumbai on Monday night after he complained of giddiness and was later admitted to its neurology department. Rao's family members along with several writers and activists had asked the Maharashtra government to immediately shift him to hospital for treatment, citing his deteriorating health condition.

NCP leader and minister Jitendra Awhad had also demanded that Rao be shifted to hospital.

Rao's family members on Sunday sought the jail authorities to provide him immediate medical care and claimed that when the veteran activist contacted them last week, he was in a "deliri-

ous state and hallucinating". Rao has been in jail for about 22 months and had earlier approached the special NIA court, seeking bail on medical grounds and the prevailing COVID-19 situation.

On Monday, Rao filed two petitions in the Bombay High Court, seeking temporary bail owing to his ill-health and a direction to the jail authorities to produce his medical records and admit him to a state-run or private hospital. Rao and nine other activists have been arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, which was initially probed by the Pune Police and later transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The case related to alleged inflammatory speeches made at the Elgar Parishad conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017, which the police claimed triggered violence the next day near the Koregaon-Bhima war memorial.

The police have also claimed the conclave was organised by people with alleged Maoist links.

29 fresh cases take Arunachal's COVID-19 tally to 491

ITANAGAR, JUL 16 (PTI): Twenty-nine more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday, taking the states tally to 491, a health department official said. Of the new cases, 14 were reported from Namsai district, two from Lepa Rada, one from Lower Siang and 12 from the Capital Complex region, he said.

"Eleven of the 12 cases in the Capital Complex were detected from various parts of the region. One patient was a returnee and detected from a quarantine centre," State Surveillance Officer Dr L Jampa said. Contact-tracing of the 11 patients in the region will be conducted on Thursday, he said.

All the fresh COVID-19 patients from three districts had recently returned from other states and were in quarantine facilities, Jampa said.

Barring one, all of them are asymptomatic and have been admitted to various COVID Care Centres, he said. The Capital Complex region comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas has so far registered 205 cases, the highest in the state, followed by Changlang (33), Namsai (30), West Kameng (15), East Siang (12) and Lower Subansiri (12).

Arunachal Pradesh now has 335 active cases, while 153 people have recovered from the disease and three patients died of it. A total of 34,619 samples have been tested so far in the state, he said. Arunachal Pradesh had remained virus-free till May 23.

It witnessed a spurt in COVID-19 cases after residents started returning from other parts of the country.

Odisha starts plasma therapy to treat COVID-19 patients

BHUBANESWAR, JUL 16 (PTI): The Odisha government on Thursday commenced plasma therapy for the treatment of COVID-19 patients at a hospital in Cuttack, an official said.

The procedure was conducted on a 48-year-old patient at the Ashwini Hospital for the first time in the state, technical advisor to the health department Dr Jayant Panda said. "The patient has been administered B-positive plasma," he said. The state government had earlier announced that the plasma therapy would also be introduced in the SUM Hospital and the Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences in Bhubaneswar.

In the plasma therapy, antibodies from blood of patients, who have recovered from coronavirus disease, are used to treat infected people.

It is aimed at assessing the efficacy of convalescent plasma to limit complications of COVID-19 patients. Meanwhile, a plasma bank has started functioning at the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack from Wednesday, a health department official said. "Four persons, including a doctor, who had recovered from COVID-19, have donated their plasma at the facility," he said.

According to sources, 300 more people, who were cured of the disease, have come forward to donate their plasma.

BJD's Salipur MLA Prasant Behera was among them, they said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had on Wednesday appealed to people who have recovered from COVID-19 to donate their plasma for treatment of critical patients.

Doctor dies due to COVID in Assam; tally climbs to 19,754, death toll to 48



GUWAHATI, JUL 15 (PTI): Two persons have died of COVID-19 and 1,099 fresh cases were reported on Wednesday in Assam where the total number of positive cases reached 19,754, Minister for Health and Family Welfare Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

A 75-year-old doctor, hailing from Tinsukia, died at the Assam Medical College in Dibrugarh while the other victim is a 45-year-old woman from Kamrup Metropolitan district.

The Death Audit Board has confirmed that both the deaths occurred due to the underlying cause of COVID-19, taking the death toll to 48 in the state.

The doctor from Tinsukia is the second fatality in the medical fraternity in the state due to the viral infection. A 56-year-old doctor, an Associate Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology of Gauhati Medical College Hospital, had died on Monday.

The state has reported 1,099 new cases and out of these 649 are from Guwahati city alone, the minister tweeted.

The total number of cases in Guwahati city has reached 8,307.

The 14-day lockdown imposed from June 28 in Kamrup Metropolitan district, under which Guwahati falls, was extended from 6 PM on Sunday by a week till July 19.

Meanwhile, 715 patients were discharged from various hospitals in the state, taking the total number of people who have recovered to 12,888, the minister said.

The total number of positive patients in the state has increased to 19,754 and out of these 6,815 are active cases, 12,888 have recovered, 48 have died and three migrated out of the state.

Sarma visited the Guwahati Central Jail, where 56 inmates have tested positive, on Wednesday and instructed officials to ensure best medical care, food and other facilities.

"After learning of the spread of #COVID19 in Central Jail, Guwahati I along with health department officials visited the site and reviewed the medical and other facilities," the minister tweeted.

The Kokrajhar district administration has also started random swab sampling of prisoners and jail staff from Wednesday to check spread of COVID-19 in Kokrajhar jail, Additional Deputy Commissioner Pranjal Das said.

Random swab sampling of all the 326 male and female jail inmates and staff of Kokrajhar jail will be done in a phased manner and they have been kept in isolation till collection of their reports.

The minister held a video conference with Principals and Super-

intendents of the seven medical colleges in the state.

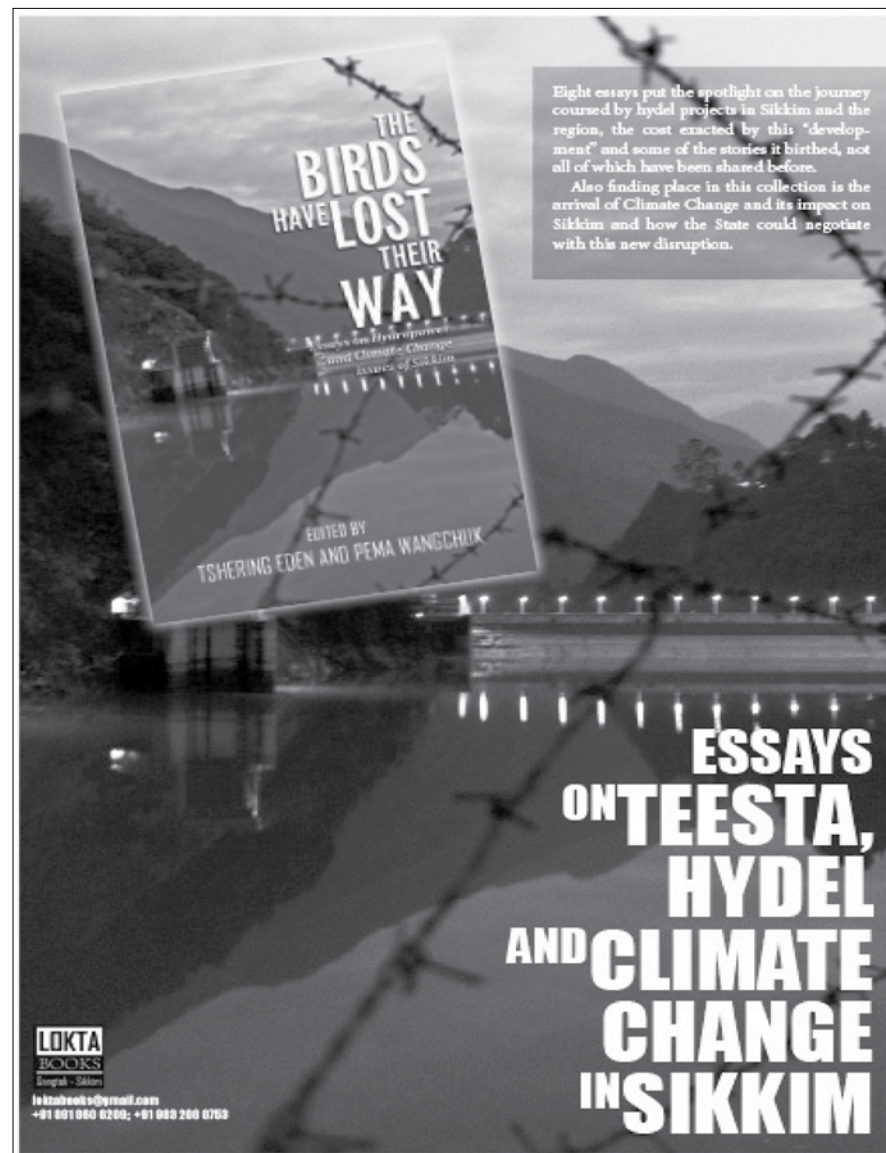
"Discussed various clinical protocols which include treatment of positive patients, organisation of plasma bank, laboratory functioning status and establishment of Covid Care Centres," the minister tweeted.

He also held a video conference with the Deputy Commissioners, Medical Superintendents and doctors to review the current COVID-9 situation in the state. "Among others, we analysed the threat perception and discussed if the containment measures are being adhered to in the right spirit," he said.

Altogther 654 police personnel have tested positive in the state till date out of whom one died and 287 have recovered, while 17 cops have rejoined duty after recovery, Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) G P Singh said.

The state has so far tested 5,89,202 samples in 13 government labs, 31 ward screening centres and a few outsourced laboratories, according to the daily bulletin issued by the state health department.

The number of persons in institutional quarantine facilities in the state is at present 12,714 and 1,41,850 are now under home quarantine tracking.



Humpty enters last four in Women's Speed Chess

CHENNAI, JUL 16 (PTI): India's top player Kone-ru Humpty defeated Valentina Gunina to reach the semifinals of the fourth and final leg of Women's Speed Chess Championships on Thursday.

The world rapid champion Humpty got the better of Russian 6-5 to set up a last four clash with world No.1 Hou Yifan of China.

The Indian, ranked no.2 in the world, started well and established an early lead before Gunina fought back. However, Humpty held her nerve to advance. Yifan, meanwhile, continued her good form, to post an easy 7.5-3.5 win over Zhansaya Abdumalik of Kazakhstan in the quarterfinal.

This is the final leg of the Grand Prix, with a total of 21 participants. Each of the 21 players participates in three out of four Grand Prix legs. Each GP is a 16-player knockout event.

In each Grand Prix leg, every player scores cumulative grand prix points according to the position in the final standings.

The two players who score the highest number of cumulative grand prix points in all three Grand Prix legs qualify for the Super Final to be held on July 20.

Rabada, Morris to miss 3TC Solidarity Cup encounter

JOHANNESBURG, JUL 16 (PTI): Premier South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada and all-rounder Chris Morris will miss the inaugural 3TeamCricket (3TC) Solidarity Cup, which will mark the resumption of live cricket in the country on Saturday in Centurion. Rabada, who was set to lead the the Kingfishers, and medium pacer Sisanda Magala has pulled out due to the deaths of immediate family members.

While 33-year-old Morris is also unavailable for the fixture at the SuperSport Park, according to 'ESPNCricinfo'.

Former South African pacer Makhaya Ntini's son, Thando Ntini (Kingfishers), Bjorn Fortuin (Eagles) and Gerald Coetzee (Kingfishers) have been named as the three replacements. In Rabada's absence, Heinrich Klaasen is set to lead the Kingfishers in 1the competition alongside AB de Villiers (Eagles) and Quinton de Kock (Kites).

The '3TCricket' competition was originally slated for June 27 but was postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Solidarity Cup will see 24 of South Africa's top cricketers feature in three teams -- The Eagles, Kingfishers and The Kites -- playing two halves in a single match.

Updated Squads:

Kites: Quinton De Kock (captain), Temba Bavuma, Jon-Jon Smuts, David Miller, Dwaine Pretorius, Lutho Sipamla, Beuran Hendricks, Anrich Nortje.

Kingfishers: Heinrich Klaasen (captain), Reeza Hendricks, Janneman Malan, Faf du Plessis, Thando Ntini, Gerald Coetzee, Glenton Stuurman, Tabraiz Shamsi.

Eagles: AB de Villiers (captain), Aiden Markram, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne, Andile Phehlukwayo, Bjorn Fortuin, Junior Dala, Lungi Ngidi.

Roli Books to publish Kobad Ghandy's memoir in 2021

NEW DELHI, JUL 16 (PTI): Activist and Marxist thinker Kobad Ghandy will come out with his memoir next year, chronicling his time as a student in London to his return to India and introduction to the Dalit Panthers and radical politics.

In the memoir, to be published by Roli Books, he will talk about his life working for Dalits and poor, his and his wife's involvement with the Naxalites, and his ongoing legal battles.

Ghandy, a Parsi from a privileged background was educated at Doon School and went to London to study CA. He took interest in leftist politics and quit his CA course to return to India to join the Naxalite movement. He was imprisoned in various jails around India for 10 years for charges ranging from sedition to

those under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). "In October 2019 when he was released, I immediately asked him to write his story. I am delighted to be publishing Kobad Ghandy's memoirs - not only because it is an important account of our justice and penal system but also because he writes beautifully," says Priya Kapoor, director of Roli Books.

The memoir will be published in the first quarter of 2021.

"The book traces the striving on my part and that of Anuradha, my late wife and inspiration, for a just and equal world. It is being brought out at a time the world is witnessing an earth-shattering experience, never witnessed before, of pandemics, environmental devastation and economic disaster," says Ghandy.

JONATHAN LIEW

LONDON, 16 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]: In a mixing studio somewhere deep in the Premier League's plague bunker, a young sound engineer was, one suspects, given only a moment's pause. Just what crowd effect do you play after an error by Virgil van Dijk? The Ride of the Valkyries? The gathering rainclouds of impending apocalypse? Perhaps sensibly, they went with the safe option of an Arsenal cheer, which managed to convey most of the home team's elation but very little of the seismic shock, the existential befuddlement: like being told there's no such thing as Belgium, or that potato waffles are actually made of fur.

For some time after conceding their unexpected equaliser, you could glimpse a similar wild psychosis in Liverpool's players, the baffled stupor of a team who had just had the very fabric of their reality ripped from around them. Shortly before half-time, their garlanded goalkeeper Alisson made an even worse error to gift Arsenal the lead. And though they recovered their moorings, reasserting their supremacy and putting Arsenal under increasing pressure as the second half went on, it was ultimately that sort of night: one on which new, screwball visions of the future fleetingly presented themselves.

Is this how champions eventually get dethroned? By tiny degrees, by an impercepti-



ble slip in standards? Certainly Liverpool's challengers would like to think so, that their uncharacteristic carelessness here was a portent of something larger, that in some important sense the starting gun on the 2020-21 campaign has already been fired. In truth, their lapses were largely a result of the inevitable drop in intensity that all title-winners undergo - remember West Brom 5-5 Manchester United? - and that even against a team with real, tangible goals to play for, an exhausted, soft-pedalling Liverpool side were still utterly dominant.

Meanwhile, for Arsenal this was the sort of victory that revealed very little of Mikel

Arteta's overarching vision. Unless, of course, that vision entails 31% possession, managing three shots and allowing 24, and defender Kieran Tierney completing just 42% of his passes. Waiting on errors from the world's best defender and one of the world's best goalkeepers is not the sort of sustainable strategy that tends to sway ambitious sporting directors these days.

And yet for all this there were at least signs of something: twitches of resilience, shoots of promise, the tactical deftness that saw Arteta switch to a withdrawn 5-2-1-2 in the second half with two wingers and no recognisable centre-forward.

Arteta realised that the sec-

ond half would feel radically different to the first, that Liverpool would invariably seek to build from the flanks, and that there was no point in installing a mannequin up front who would see virtually none of the ball. Further back, too, there were cautious signs of progress, of Arsenal players willing to put their bodies on the line, willing to maintain positional discipline in the face of the expected Liverpool onslaught. Well, mostly. There was a point in the second half when David Luiz ventured forward for an Arsenal corner, only for the goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez to order him back: "David! No! Where the fuck are you going?" And yet to single David Luiz

out would be to downplay the extent to which Arsenal are still collectively capable of orchestrating their own downfall. Liverpool's goal in the 20th minute was the perfect example of this: an unlikely accumulation of errors and infelicities that turned a perfectly innocuous situation into a certain Liverpool goal.

First Martínez was forced to kick long because neither David Luiz nor Tierney showed for the ball. Then Cédric Soares challenged for a header he could not possibly win, injuring himself in the process and putting him out of action while Andy Robertson bombed on. Then Lucas Torreira inexplicably tried to tackle fresh air. Then David Luiz abandoned his position to track the run of Robertson. By now Rob Holding, blindsided by Robertson's run, was effectively useless. By now Granit Xhaka had spotted the danger, but too late. That is how you turn a promising possession into a Sadio Mané tap-in seven yards out.

And for all the plaudits Arsenal will receive, that is the sort of thing that still seems to happen far too often. According to Jürgen Klopp, Arsenal are "proper challengers" again. They may even just scrape into Europe again this season. But forging them into a winning machine will require nothing less than a culture shift, and with only eight weeks until the start of next season, there are still few signs of it.

Khawaja, Maxwell in Australia's 26-member squad for planned tour of England

MELBOURNE, JUL 16 (PTI): Australia on Thursday announced a 26-strong preliminary squad for a yet-to-be-confirmed limited-overs tour of England, naming the likes of Glenn Maxwell and Usman Khawaja along with some uncapped players with an eye on the currently-uncertain T20 World Cup.

In a statement, CA said announcing the squad is "a positive step, albeit not a definitive one" as it works for a return to international cricket amid the COVID-19 pandemic. England have already hit the restart button with an ongoing Test series against the West Indies.

"A final decision on the tour has not been made and constructive discussions between Cricket Australia, the England and Wales Cricket Board and all relevant government agencies remain ongoing," the CA statement read.

A final squad will be announced if the tour, comprising three ODIs and three T20 Internationals, is confirmed for September.

The preliminary list features the regulars along with the likes of Maxwell, who hasn't played for the country since October last year



after taking a break to deal with some mental health issues.

Khawaja too has not been a particular favourite for a while now. He missed out on a CA contract for the first time in five years earlier in April.

National Selector Trevor Hohns said the squad is not just for the England tour but has also been picked with an eye on the T20 World Cup, which is looks set to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This preliminary list covers the contingencies of playing One-Day Internationals and T20 Internationals in bio-secure hubs with the likely prospect of not being able to bring in replacements should the tour proceed," he said.

"The preliminary list also has a view towards

the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup and in the longer term the 2023 ICC World Cup," he added.

The uncapped trio of Daniel Sams, Riley Meredith and Josh Philippe, all of whom have done well in the Big Bash League, were also named in the squad.

"The preliminary list includes several exciting young players who have recently excelled at state level and in the BBL. These emerging players are those we would like to develop further as we believe they have a bright future in Australian cricket," Hohns said.

Cricket Australia's Executive General Manager of National Teams Ben Oliver said CA is hopeful of the tour going ahead.

"The ECB are a long-standing and valued international cricket partner and we are

doing all we can to give the tour the best possible chance of taking place," he stated.

"In the meantime, the identification of a preliminary list will enable us to work with players and states more directly on the preparation for the tour in the hope it can proceed," he added.

The Squad:

Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Aaron Finch, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Ben McDermott, Riley Meredith, Michael Neser, Josh Philippe, Daniel Sams, D'Arcy Short, Kane Richardson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Andrew Tye, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Liverpool to be presented with EPL trophy on the Kop

LONDON, JUL 16 (AP): Liverpool's players will be presented with the Premier League trophy on a special podium built on the iconic Kop stand at Anfield after the team's match against Chelsea next week.

The league is describing it as a unique ceremony that has been designed because fans won't be able to celebrate the moment with the team, as matches are

being held in empty stadiums during the pandemic. Jordan Henderson will be the first Liverpool player to lift a league championship trophy in 30 years, and for the first time since the Premier League era began in 1992.

The specially erected podium will be surrounded by fan banners in the Kop at the July 22 match. Players have been involved in the

planning of the ceremony, with club great Kenny Dalglish -- the last manager to lead Liverpool to a league title -- among the trophy presentation party. The match against Chelsea will be shown on free-to-air TV in Britain, and Liverpool and the Premier League are urging fans to stay at home to watch it rather than congregate at Anfield.

LPGA Tour to resume with plenty of testing, maybe some fans

DUBLIN (OHIO), JUL 16 (AP): The LPGA Tour is ready to get back to work for the first time in nearly six months with a plan that includes saliva testing for the coronavirus and no illusions the rest of the year will go smoothly.

The LPGA Tour was last played on Feb. 16 when Inbee Park won the Women's Australian Open. Three tournaments in Asia were halted, and then the COVID-19 pandemic shut down sports.

Four of the five majors were moved to later in the year the Evian Championship in France was canceled and the tour already has lost 13 tournaments. Some of those canceled events, in a show of support for the tour, have pitched in financially to help those that can play.

I fully believe we'll lose another event or two or three along the way, Commissioner Mike Whan said Wednesday.

I couldn't really tell you which ones, but it would be probably naive of me to think we are just going to roll through our season and roll through different countries and be able to play exactly as we have slated.

But I'm excited about what we have.

Whan and his staff have been in constant contact with the PGA Tour, now in its sixth week back.

The LPGA Tour is to resume July 31 with the LPGA Drive On Championship, a one-time event with a 1 million purse at Inverness Club in Toledo, site of next year's Solheim Cup. It's where Paul Azinger won the PGA Championship in 1993.

The Marathon Classic follows in nearby Sylvania, and Whan hopes by the end of the week to learn whether it will have fans. The Memorial on the PGA Tour was supposed to be the first golf tournament with fans, a plan that was scrapped two weeks ago as cases spiked and players weren't comfortable with widening the bubble.

Whan said the Marathon Classic would have a small footprint no more than 2,000 fans and two pro-ams (one on a different course) in which all amateurs would be subject to testing.

Players, caddies and essential staff would have a saliva test a week before the tournament, and another when they arrive, along with thermal screening and health questionnaires.

The turnaround won't be as quick as it is on the PGA Tour, which has a mobile lab on site. The LPGA said a player tested Monday would get the result back by 3 p.m. Tuesday.

In the meantime, medical advisers said players would be fine to practice on the course, keeping their distance, while waiting on the results. Cambia Health Solutions, a corporate sponsor, is providing branded masks. The tour plans to announce additional partners with other health resources.

Players who test positive will be given a 5,000 stipend during self-isolation. That compares with 75,000 for PGA Tour players who test positive. Whan said the goal was not to supplement income on lost opportunity from not playing, but to cover any costs associated with a positive test.

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Biden, Gates, other Twitter accounts hacked in Bitcoin scam

WASHINGTON, JUL 16 (AP): Unidentified hackers broke into the Twitter accounts of technology moguls, politicians, celebrities and major companies Wednesday in an apparent Bitcoin scam.

The ruse included bogus tweets from former President Barack Obama, Democratic presidential front-runner Joe Biden, Mike Bloomberg and a number of tech billionaires including Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

Celebrities Kanye West and his wife, Kim Kardashian West, were also hacked. The fake tweets offered to send USD 2,000 for every USD 1,000 sent to an anonymous Bitcoin address.

There is no evidence that the owners of these accounts were targeted themselves. Instead, the hacks appeared designed to lure their Twitter followers into sending money to an anonymous Bitcoin account.

The Biden campaign, for instance, said that Twitter's integrity team locked down the account within a few minutes of the breach and removed the related tweet.

Obama's office had no immediate comment. The FBI said it was aware of Twitter's security breach, but declined



further comment. In a tweet, Twitter noted that it was aware of a security incident impacting accounts on Twitter. The San Francisco company said it is investigating and promised an update shortly. It did not reply immediately to requests for comment.

The apparently fake tweets were all quickly deleted, although The Associated Press was able to capture screenshots of several before they disappeared. The security problem was severe enough for Twitter to warn that many of its more than 166 million daily users might be unable to tweet or reset their passwords while the company tried to

lock things down. Among the political figures targeted, the hack mostly appeared to target Democrats or other figures on the left, drawing comparisons to the 2016 campaign.

US intelligence agencies established that Russia engaged in coordinated attempts to interfere in those U.S. elections through social media tampering and various hacks, including targeting the various campaigns and major party organisations.

The hack might also be a simple demonstration of Twitter's weak security controls as the U.S. heads into the 2020 presidential election, a contest in which the ser-

vice is likely to play an influential role. The Bitcoin account mentioned in the fake tweets appears to have been created on Wednesday. By the end of the day, it had received almost 12.9 bitcoins, an amount currently valued at slightly more than 114,000. At some point during the day, roughly half that sum in bitcoin was withdrawn from the account. Bezos, Gates and Musk are among the 10 richest people in the world, with tens of millions of followers on Twitter. The three men are worth a combined 362 billion, according to the latest calculations by Forbes magazine.

The same bogus offer cropped up a second

time on Musk's account, which has a history of sometimes befuddling tweets from the eccentric billionaire. Tesla didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Gates, who has become one of the world's leading philanthropists since stepping down as Microsoft CEO, confirmed the tweet wasn't from him. This appears to be part of a larger issue that Twitter is facing," a spokesperson for the billionaire said in a statement.

This is hardly the first time hackers have created mischief on Twitter. Just last year, the account of Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey was broken into and used to tweet racist and vulgar comments.

The latest security breach prompted Sen. Josh Hawley, a Missouri Republican, to send a letter to Dorsey urging him to work with the FBI and the Justice Department on ways to improve Twitter's security. A successful attack on your system's servers represents a threat to all of your users' privacy and data security," Hawley wrote.

Investors also appeared to be concerned about potential fallout from the hack affecting Twitter's usage. Twitter's shares fell 3% in extended trading after news of the hack broke.

OPEC and allies to ease cuts, allow more oil production



NEW YORK, JUL 16 (AP): Ministers from the OPEC cartel have agreed to allow more oil to flow from the taps, saying demand for oil is growing as economies take steps to reopen.

But they also cautioned that they could revisit the decision in an emergency meeting if there are serious lockdowns that further reduce demand for oil.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other nations agreed to ease up on cuts during a video conference Wednesday.

They chose to stick with a production schedule they had crafted in a previous meeting which allows participating countries to produce more oil in August than they have in the past few months.

The OPEC nations and their allies will cut production by at least 7.7 million barrels per day in August, essentially putting about 2 million more barrels per day on the market than they did in July, analysts said.

We should not be complacent, said Abdelmadjid Attar, Algeria's minister of energy, during the meeting. Oil market balance is progressively improving... But risks and uncertainties are huge, be they related to the pandemic or to the economic consequences.

OPEC, which has 13 member states, is largely dominated by oil-rich Saudi Arabia. There are additional countries involved in the so-called

OPEC Plus group, which has been led by Russia.

Together, the oil-producing nations had agreed to cut production by nearly 10 million barrels per day, which amounts to about 10% of global oil supply, through the end of July.

Those deep cuts were enacted in April as the world stopped flying and commuting during the pandemic, cutting back dramatically on oil consumption.

It's unclear whether there's enough demand to warrant OPEC putting more oil on the market, said Jack Rousseau, managing director at Clearview Energy Partners. That seems a little big questionable to me, because there's so much uncertainty with all the different case counts rising, Rousseau said.

Cases of COVID-19 are rising rapidly in the US. The 14 states with the highest concentrations of cases in the US consume about 45 per cent of the nation's oil, he said.

Meanwhile, oil companies in countries that are not a part of OPEC have announced plans to increase production as well.

Oil demand has bounced back from the lows that saw daily drops of more than 20 million barrels per day in April, but it is still expected to witness an annual drop of 8.9 million barrels per day for the whole of 2020, said Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, secretary general of OPEC, during the meeting.

Given considerable

uncertainties, the expected rebound in 2021 will be short of covering the lost demand this year and will not reach pre-crisis levels of 100 million barrels per day soon.

Economic recovery also could bring renewed power struggles among OPEC and other oil-producing nations, where relationships are fragile.

If there's room in the market and the price goes up, the longer that happens, the longer you get into the dilemma of who's going to take that extra market share, said Amy Myers Jaffe, senior fellow at the Council for Foreign Relations.

The price of oil, which crashed below zero in April, has recovered some ground and was trading above USD 40 a barrel Wednesday. But that's still below what many producers need to break even.

The OPEC ministers also discussed the need for better compliance from some countries, such as Iraq and Nigeria, which have produced more oil than they were supposed to under past agreements. In recent months, compliance has improved, several ministers said.

Looking ahead, each of us now needs to double down on the unanimous decisions we have made, Barkindo said. We need to remember that strength, collaboration and positive outcomes come only through continuous effort and struggle from each and every participant.

China's economy grows 3.2% as virus lockdowns lifted

BEIJING, JUL 16 (AP): China's economy rebounded from a painful contraction to grow by 3.2 per cent over a year earlier in the latest quarter as anti-virus lockdowns were lifted and factories and stores reopened.

The expansion reported Thursday was a dramatic improvement over the previous quarter's 6.8 per cent contraction China's worst performance since at least the mid-1960s. But it still was the weakest positive figure since China started reporting quarterly growth in the early 1990s. China, where

the coronavirus pandemic began in December, was the first economy to shut down and the first to start the drawn-out process of recovery in March after the ruling Communist Party declared the disease under control.

Manufacturing and some other industries are almost back to normal operating levels. But consumer spending is weak due to public unease about possible job losses. Cinemas and some other businesses still are closed and restrictions on travel stay in place.

Michelle Obama to host podcast on health, relationships

LOS ANGELES (AP): Michelle Obama will let her own voice be heard on a new podcast.

The former first lady will host "The Michelle Obama Podcast" on the streaming service, the Obama's Higher Ground and Spotify announced Thursday. The podcast will exclusively debut on Spotify on July 29.

"My hope is that this series can be a place to explore meaningful topics together and sort through so many of the questions we're all trying to answer in our own lives," Obama said in a statement.

The new podcast is the first title in the ongoing collaboration between Spotify and Higher Ground, a production company founded by Barack and Michelle Obama. Last year, the former president and first lady partnered with Spotify to produce exclusive podcasts for the plat-



form. Michelle Obama's new podcast expects to hold candid and personal conversations with a focus on topics concerning relationships and health. She expects to have several guests on the series including talk-show host Conan O'Brien and Valerie Jarrett, business woman and former senior advisor to Barack Obama.

"Perhaps most of all, I hope this podcast will help listeners open up new conversations — and hard conversations

— with the people who matter most to them," she said. "That's how we can build more understanding and empathy for one another."

Obama released her Netflix documentary "Becoming" in May. The project was an extension of her 2018 best-selling memoir of the same name and a kind of authorized filmic portrait of Obama.

Last year, she embarked on a rock-star-style tour of more than 30 cities to promote her book.

Statue of Black UK protester removed from plinth in Bristol

BRISTOL, ENGLAND (AP): Officials in the English city of Bristol on Thursday removed a statue of a Black Lives Matter activist that was installed on a plinth once occupied by a monument to a 17th-century slave trader.

Artist Marc Quinn created the resin and steel likeness of Jen Reid, a protester photographed standing on the plinth after demonstrators pulled down the statue of Edward Colston and dumped it in Bristol's harbor on June 7.

It was erected before dawn on Wednesday without the approval of city authorities, but 24

hours later it was gone.

Bristol City Council said the sculpture "will be held at our museum for the artist to collect or donate to our collection."

Colston was a trader who made a fortune transporting enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas on Bristol-based ships. His money funded schools and charities in Bristol, 120 miles (195 kilometers) southwest of London.

The toppling of his statue was part of a worldwide reckoning with racism and slavery sparked by the death of a Black American man, George Floyd, at the

hands of police in Minneapolis in May.

City authorities fished the Colston statue out of the harbor and say it will be placed in a museum, along with placards from the Black Lives Matter demonstration.

Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees said the decision about what replaces it must be made by the people of Bristol.

"This is not about taking down a statue of Jen, who is a very impressive woman," Rees told the BBC. "This is about taking down a statue of a London-based artist who came and put it up without permission."

In an unusual coronavirus case, Australian patient became infectious in a day



The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, the country's peak decision-making body for public health emergency, said such a short incubation was 'unusual,' but 'not implausible'

CANBERRA: Australian authorities say a COVID-19 patient apparently became infectious within a day of contracting the coronavirus.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Michael Kidd gave no details of how the patient was infected in New South Wales state or whether that patient infected anyone else before COVID-19 was diagnosed. The Aus-

tralian Health Protection Principal Committee, the country's peak decision-making body for public health emergency, reported such a short incubation was "unusual," but "not implausible," Kidd said.

People usually develop symptoms within five to seven days but may become infectious a day or two before their symptoms develop, Kidd said.

A person becoming infectious within 24 hours was unlikely to be evidence of the virus changing, Kidd said. It more likely reflected differences in individual reactions to the virus, he said.

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MOTHER OF DOGS! The Game of Thrones actress, Emilia Clarke is seen walking her adorable dachshund in London.

BMC seals Zoya Akhtar's building, declares it containment zone after resident tests positive for coronavirus

Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar's residential building in the Bandstand area in Bandra has been sealed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and has been declared as a containment zone as one of the residents tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

This development took place after just a few days of veteran actress Rekha's bungalow being sealed by BMC. Rekha and Zoya are neighbours. BollywoodLife quoted a report saying that BMC has put up a notice at the gates of the building that read, "This area has been declared as Containment Area as a resident is found positive in coronavirus test. The entry to this area is restricted and violation of rules is punishable."

Reports state that Zoya's building shares a boundary with Rekha's bungalow Sea Springs which was also recently sealed by the BMC after her security guard had tested positive for COVID-19. A few days back Zoya had taken to her Instagram account and celebrated 9 years of

Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara. She had posted a behind the scene photo from the film featuring the lead cast Hrithik Roshan, Abhay Deol, and Farhan Akhtar.

Commenting on Zoya's post, Abhay Deol wrote, "Uff! I'd make this film all over again



just to be back on set." Hrithik Roshan, the film's other lead, wrote: "Things that make you wanna shout out 'I love you guys.' Truly the best times ever." While Farhan wrote, "Miss this shoot. Miss the crew. Miss their madness. Forever grateful to the universe for the experience of this film and for the love you continue to show it. Big hug. #9YearsOfZNMD."

Paradis, Ryder no longer appearing at Depp's libel case



LONDON (AP): Johnny Depp's former partners Vanessa Paradis and Winona Ryder will no longer be appearing as witnesses in the star's libel suit against a British tabloid newspaper that accused him of assaulting ex-wife Amber Heard, a lawyer said Thursday.

Depp is suing News Group Newspapers, publisher of The Sun, and the paper's executive editor, Dan Wootton, over an April 2018 article that called him a "wife-beater." He strongly denies abusing Heard.

Paradis and Ryder had been scheduled to testify as witnesses on Depp's behalf in the U.K. High Court case. Depp's lawyer, David Sherborne, said Thursday that he no longer needed to call them because The Sun does not contest Depp's claim that he never hit them.

Depp and French singer Paradis had two children during a 14-year relationship that ended in 2012. American actress Ryder dated Depp between 1990 and 1993.

In a written witness statement disclosed at a pretrial hearing, Ryder said Depp "was never, never violent towards me. He was never, never abu-

sive at all towards me."

Paradis said in a witness statement that she had always known Depp to be "a kind, attentive, generous, and non-violent person and father."

Depp, 57, and Heard, 34, met on the set of the 2011 comedy "The Rum Diary" and married in Los Angeles in February 2015. Heard filed for divorce the following year, and the divorce was finalized in 2017.

The Sun's defense relies on 14 allegations made by Heard of violence by Depp between 2013 and 2016, in settings including his private island in the Bahamas, a rented house in Australia and a private jet. He denies them all.

In a week and half of testimony, judge Andrew Nicol has heard from Depp — who has painted Heard as the aggressor in the relationship and accused her of compiling a dossier of fake claims against him — as well as several employees of Depp and Heard who have backed his version of events.

Heard is due to give her side of the story in evidence later in the trial, which is scheduled to last three weeks.

Diddy offers Nick Cannon job at Revolt following recent controversy

"We got your back and love you and what you have done for the culture"

Nick Cannon has been offered a job by Sean 'Diddy' Combs at his Revolt TV network following Cannon's recent controversy.

Media giant ViacomCBS severed ties with Cannon yesterday (July 15) following controversial comments the actor made on his podcast.

On the June 30 episode of his podcast Cannon's Class, Cannon made remarks which many criticised as anti-Semitic during his interview with former Public Enemy member Professor Griff. Griff was fired from Public Enemy in the late 1980s following an interview in which he claimed that "the Jews are wicked".

On Wednesday (July 14), Cannon issued a statement on Facebook responding to the criticism his comments had received.

"Anyone who knows me knows that I have no hate in my heart nor malice intentions," he said. "I do not condone hate speech nor the spread of hateful rhetoric. We are living in a time when it is more important than ever to promote unity and understanding."

Following the criticism, Diddy has offered Cannon a place at Revolt, writing: "@NickCannon come home to @REVOLTTV truly BLACK OWNED!!!"

"We got your back and love you and what you have done for the culture. We are for our people first!!! For



us! By US! Let's go!!!"

Cannon has hosted a number of shows on ViacomCBS' MTV and Nickelodeon networks throughout his career, including The Nick Cannon Show and TeenNick Top 10.

"ViacomCBS condemns bigotry of any kind and we categorically denounce all forms of anti-Semitism," the network said in a statement announcing that he would be let go from his contract.

"We have spoken with Nick Cannon about an episode of his podcast Cannon's Class on YouTube, which promoted hateful speech and spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories."

Rapper Kanye West files for Oklahoma presidential ballot

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP): Rap superstar Kanye West has qualified to appear on Oklahoma's presidential ballot, the first state where he met the requirements before the filing deadline. But confusion remains over whether he's actually running.

A representative for West filed the necessary paperwork and paid the \$35,000 filing Wednesday afternoon, which was the deadline for a spot on the state's Nov. 3 presidential ballot, said Oklahoma Board of Elections spokeswoman Misha Mohr. He was one of three independent presidential candidates to pay the filing fee prior to the deadline, she added. The others were concert pianist Jade Simmons and cryptocurrency entrepreneur Brock Pierce.

The filing came a day after New York Magazine's "Intelligencer" quoted West adviser Steve Kramer saying "he's out" and noting that the staff he had hired were disappointed. However, TMZ reported that the West campaign had filed a "Statement of Organization" Wednesday with the Federal Election Commission, stating that a Kanye 2020 committee would serve as principal campaign committee for a West candidacy.

West has already missed the deadline to qualify for the ballot in several states, and it's unclear if he is willing or able to collect enough signatures required to qualify in others. West, who is married to reality television star Kim Kardashian West, initially announced his candidacy on July 4. Days later, he told Forbes magazine that he, who once praised President Donald Trump and said the two share "dragon energy," was "taking the red hat off" — a reference to Trump's trademark red "Make America Great Again" cap.

West, who said that he had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, told the magazine that he planned to model his White House on the fictional land in "Black Panther" if he won the presidency, adding "Let's get back to Wakanda."

Rhea Chakraborty posts screenshot of rape, murder threat: Enough is enough

Rhea Chakraborty got rape and death threats on Instagram. The actress shared a screenshot of one of the messages and asked the cyber crime cell to take necessary action.

Rhea Chakraborty shared her first Instagram post since Sushant Singh Rajput's death on July 14, a month after the actor died by suicide. Rhea was being blamed for Sushant's death and was even being accused of using the 34-year-old actor by many social media users.

Today (July 16), Rhea Chakraborty shared a screenshot of the message that she received on Instagram where the user threatened to get her raped and killed. The actress wrote that she kept quiet when she was called a gold digger, murderer and was slut-shamed but no one has the right to tell her that they will get her raped and killed if she doesn't commit suicide.

She wrote, "I was called a gold digger ...I kept quiet. I was called a murdererI kept quiet. I was slut shamedI kept quiet. But how does my silence give you the right to tell me that you will get me RAPED and MURDERED if I don't commit suicide @mannu_raaut? (sic)."

She further asked the cyber cell to take necessary action against the Instagram user. She wrote, "Do you realize the seriousness of what you have said? These are crimes, and by law no one, I repeat NO ONE should be subjected to this kind of toxicity and harassment. I request @cyber_crime_helpline @cybercrimeindia to please take necessary action. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH (sic)."

ARIES:

That suffering is synonymous with the human plane of existence is not news to you. But does that mean pain and darkness is all that there is? Anything but, Aries. Despite the chaos that surrounds you, you're being asked to redirect your gaze to the light. Make a gratitude list consisting of all the things that are working out and supporting you in this moment. Know that by focusing on all that is positive, you will be changing your vibrations. Tip: Like attracts like.

TAURUS:

Our relationship with money is one of the many complicated relationships we will have in this lifetime, and our childhood experiences play a major role in determining how we approach our finances. As an earth sign, one that is associated with the planet Venus, you understand the importance of creating wealth and abundance around you. Yet you could be holding onto a conflicting belief such as 'money is the root of all evil', which in turn is coming in the way of manifesting what your heart truly desires. The first step to transforming this pattern is acknowledging its presence. Remember, there is more than enough to go around. Tip: Examine your relationship with money.

GEMINI:

This is a time of shifting from the material plane of existence to the one that is synonymous with inner illumination. It doesn't matter how 'busy' you are, Gemini. It takes about 20 minutes to reset, and you can meditate at any point during the day. The key is to move beyond the mind and experience that vast spaciousness where time seems to lose its meaning. Yes, the thoughts will come and go.

But over a period of time, you will be able to silence the monkey and listen to the voice of wisdom within. Tip: Ground yourself in your spiritual practice.

CANCER:

This is a time of mass awakening. Cancer, one that's inspiring all of us to let go of the masks and meet our true selves—that which is unchanging in an ever-changing world. Who are you if not who you were told to be? Let self-discovery pave the way forward. Meditation and creative visualisation are powerful tools that could assist you in this process of reprogramming your mind. Don't know where to start? Consider following your favourite self-help gurus in the virtual world. Tip: Consider meditation and creative visualisation.

LEO:

What do you need to feel safe and secure in this relationship? The first step is admitting you have needs. This will make it easier for you to express what's in your heart. Remember, you don't have to worry about finding 'the right language'. Those who truly appreciate your presence will be willing to meet you halfway. Some of you could require aid on the financial front. Allow yourself to receive the blessings that are coming through without bringing guilt or shame into the equation. Tip: It's time to be vocal about your needs.

VIRGO:

This is a time of inner illumination, Virgo. You're being able to balance your worldly responsibilities alongside the pursuits of the soul. You understand that the journey is ultimately from the self to the self, and that staying connected to the cosmic stream of consciousness will help you

attain liberation. Some of you could be delving into the world of mysteries at this time. Observe the forms of divination or healing modality that you feel drawn towards. Tip: Stay connected to that stream of consciousness.

LIBRA:

If there's anything your journey has taught you it's that nothing is inherently good or bad. It is our perception that colours our reality. In the days to come, you will learn to alter this perception as you understand the higher reason behind why things unfolded the way they did. While endings make way for new beginnings, pain becomes the portal to higher wisdom. Tip: Acknowledge each challenge as a learning lesson.

SCORPIO:

Healing is never a straight line, Scorpio. Some days you wake up feeling invincible. On other days, getting out of bed in itself is a colossal task. Instead of trying to make sense of what's going on (you won't be able to), become a witness of your emotions, the ebb and the flow and the silence in between. This will help you understand that you are not your feelings. You are that which is unchanging in a world that's ever-changing. Tip: Become a witness of your emotions.

SAGITTARIUS:

The road till here has been a rocky one, Sagittarius. You need a break. But, don't wait for the weekend to put your feet up. Indulge in your favourite self-care rituals today. Connecting with your tribe will also help uplift your spirit. Consider an intimate gathering or a virtual party—anything that reminds you of the importance of celebration. Some of you may be in the mood for a conscious gath-

ering. Call upon your coven to organise a healing circle. Tip: Connect with your soul tribe.

CAPRICORN:

The mysterious smile on your face reveals that there are big plans in the making, Capricorn. Know that this is not the time to play it small or safe. This is the time to take chances, display great daring, and outdo your past self. Oh, the doors that will open for you when you choose to live in alignment! What you need to be mindful of, though, is maintaining secrecy while things are in the nascent stage. Tip: This is a time of great daring.

AQUARIUS:

As the oldest air sign, you understand the importance of freedom. In fact, you value this virtue more than anything else in your life. Yet, when it comes to your closest ties, you tend to display possessiveness. Truth tea, Aquarius: love doesn't clip your wings. Nor does it dictate the parameters within which one must live their life. It's time for you to accept this situation for what it is instead of trying to change the other person. It is your acceptance that brings forth the energy of transformation. Tip: Love doesn't clip your wings.

PISCES:

What makes a guru, a guru? What makes a student, a student? What if we all play different roles at different points in our lifetime? Today, the cards are asking you to be cognisant of the interactions you are having as you let go of your ego self. There are pearls of wisdom hidden in the seemingly mundane conversations, if only you care to listen. Tip: Honour everybody who crosses your path as a teacher.