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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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22 new cases in Sikkim with only 5 requiring hospitalisation

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 16 APR:

The number of active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim increased to 241 on Friday with 22 new cases detected in the last 24 hours. Of the 22 new cases, 18 were reported from East District, one from West District and three from North District.

The spike in daily cases was expected with Covid being on a run-away spike across the country, but if it comes as any solace, only five people developed symptoms serious enough to require hospitalisation today [four at STNM Hospital and one at Namchi District Hospital].

Of the 241 currently active cases of Covid in the State, only 27 are in

hospital and still more reassuringly, no one is in the ICU. That, however, should not be taken to mean that infections are not severe and hence lead to irresponsible behaviour. Sikkim is lucky that it does not have complicated cases in this second cases yet, but that is not how things will necessarily remain. As the numbers increase, the law of probability dictates that there will be severe cases and the only way to avoid that traumatic experience is to observe Covid-safe conduct.

Meanwhile, the number of recovered cases also crossed the 6K mark today and now stands at 6,005 with ten new recoveries reported on

Thursday. Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases is 6,519.

In his daily health bulletin on Friday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the 22 cases were picked up in the testing of 312 samples on Thursday. While 15 cases were found in RT-PCR testing of 268 samples, seven more persons were found positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 43 samples.

About the new cases reported from in and around Gangtok, there are two persons from Development Area, one from Bojoghari, one from Chandmari and one from Arithang.

Disconcertingly, a 73-year-old male from

Sichey, a 38-year-old male from a hotel at Tibet Road and a 35-year-old male, who has given his address as "Gangtok," were not responding to calls made by the contact-tracing team to inform them about their Covid-positive status and brief them about what they need to do next. They have been urged to immediately contact the concerned authorities.

Elsewhere in Sikkim, a person from Tumin-Namrang, two from Bardang, one from Singtam, one from NHPC, one from Mining and one from Majhitar in East District and one person from Denchung, South District were also found positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that samples of three

persons from Lower Tingchim in North District have also returned positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia went on to add that three tourists who tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing have not been responding properly when called by the health team. On the same, he urged hoteliers to contact the authorities if any such tourist, one from Assam another from Delhi and one from Kolkata were in their hotels.

Also yesterday, 5,853 more persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 in different parts of the State. While 4,958 persons received the first dose of the vaccine, 895 completed their vaccine schedule with the second dose.

CS orders LWP for 11 senior officers found late without plausible reason

LIST INCLUDES AN ADDL CHIEF SECY RANK OFFICER

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 16 APR:

The administration is responding in earnest to the Chief Minister's recent tongue-lashing about absent punctuality in government offices. While most personnel are behaving like plaint students and offices are brimming with staff, some sections appear to still be having difficulty setting their watches to be on time. While that might be the case, the Chief Secretary's office appears to be taking its order about inspection and taking action very seriously.

The CM's admonishment was on Wednesday, on Thursday, HoDs spent hours checking atten-

dance registers and inspecting attendance and on Friday, the Chief Secretary had examined the list of officers reported to him as having been late on Thursday and then listed out 11 as having submitted implausible excuses for being late. These 11 will now be treated as having been on "Extra Ordinary Leave (without pay)" on 15 April, they day they were reported to the CS as having arrived late to work.

What is more, in this list of 11 is also an Additional Chief Secretary rank officer.

Tourism Department dominates this list with four of its officers in this list of late-latifis.

Power Department

comes in second with three officers in the list, with Education, Agriculture, Cooperation and Finance Departments contributing an officer each.

An order issued by the Chief Secretary today informs that explanations and clarifications were sought from the officers who were found to have arrived late to work and "upon careful examination/ clarifications thus received from the HoDs, none were found to be plausible."

Accordingly, these eleven officers became the first to lose a day's pay for being late in the latest drive to drive home punctuality in govt offices.

UCWSS endorses govt's new Covid guidelines, advices churches to limit Sunday Service to 50 at a time

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 16 APR:

A meeting of the executive committee of United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim [UCWSS] was held here at its office in Tadong on Friday.

The meeting, which was chaired by UCWSS president, Elder Patrus Gurung, opened with a welcome address by UCWSS general secretary, Rev Peter Samsher, followed by a mass prayer.

A UCWSS press release informs that the organisation's president said that many leaders of churches have enquired about the recent Covid-19 guidelines issued by the State government and stated that the state government has taken the correct decision amid this pandemic and urged leaders of different churches to strictly follow the guidelines of the government.

He put on record that the correct and timely steps by the government had saved the people of Sikkim from the pandemic last year.

Elder Gurung appealed to churches to strictly follow the guidelines limiting assembly to 50 persons, especially during Sunday service at churches and further suggested that churches having more than 50 members conduct their service in different sessions or area wise on Sunday.

He also urged the churches not to fall for rumours regarding COVID vaccination and encourage their members to immediately take the vaccine.

The release informs that the meeting also passed a resolution to buy two acres of land for a burial ground and appealed to churches to support the organization in this initiative.

South Korean investors explore options in Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 16 APR:

In the first-ever visit to Sikkim and India's North-East region, a South Korean mission comprising of senior officials of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, Korean Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), Korea Startup Center, K-Sure, and Korea India Research & Innovation Center (KRRI) today met the Commerce & Industries Minister Bedu Singh Panth to explore the feasibility of invest-

ment in multiple sectors in the state.

The delegation discussed economic and bilateral cooperation between Korea and the Sikkim Government with the Korean officials expressing keen interest in investment in renewable energy projects in the State as it has huge potential for power generation, which is largely untapped.

The two sides also explored the possibility of collaboration between the Korean companies

and the state in several other sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, and tourism. The Korean trade delegation promised to share the investment opportunity available in Sikkim with the Korean companies based in India as well as in Korea.

According to the commercial attache, Kwang Seok Yang, Embassy of the Republic of Korea, New Delhi, "Korea has invested mainly in automotive, electronics, and chemical

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NEW DELHI, 16 APR [AFP]: A seer has died from COVID-19 and 80 other holy men have tested positive after attending a vast religious festival where millions of pilgrims have been ignoring Covid-19 advice despite a national surge in infections.

The announcement from authorities in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, came as India recorded more than 2.17 lakh fresh cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of new infections to more than two million since April 1.

The festival of Kumbh Mela has long rung alarm bells among health experts who say it could turn into a "super-spreader" as pilgrims return home to their towns and villages all across India.

A gathering on the banks of the holy River Ganges in Haridwar happens every 12 years, and has attracted as many as 25 million people to

the site since January, including some 4.6 million on two auspicious days this week alone. The enormous crowds of pilgrims -- including cannabis-smoking holy men with dreadlocks -- taking a dip in the river have mostly ignored official advice to maintain distancing.

Earlier this week, Mahamandaleshwar Kapil Dev Das, 65, head of one of the Hindu akhadas or ascetic councils, was admitted to hospital and died from coronavirus on Thursday, officials said.

"We had around 2,000 positive cases since Monday during random testing of pilgrims at the Kumbh," Harbeer Singh, a top festival officer, told AFP.

"We are taking precautions and urging people to adhere to coronavirus prevention behaviours."

The officer said they had ramped up testing at the event's 600-hectare (1,500-acre) site and insisted they were strictly enforcing government

protocols, including requiring negative virus certificates. Two of the 13 Hindu ascetic councils that are part of the major get-together have now pulled out over soaring Covid cases in the city.

Mr Singh said more than 25,000 pilgrims were still visiting every day and they were expecting 2-3 million devotees on the last grand bathing event on April 27 before the festival concludes.

The Uttarakhand government has exempted the event from restrictions limiting gatherings to 200 people.

Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat said in early April that no devotees would be "unnecessarily harassed in the name of Covid-19 restrictions".

He too later tested positive for the virus, which has so far killed almost 175,000 Indians and infected 14.3 million, the second most in the world after the United States.

Five poll candidates test positive for Covid in Bengal

KOLKATA, 16 APR [PTI]: At least five candidates of different parties contesting the ongoing assembly election in West Bengal have tested positive for COVID-19, a health department official said on Friday. Out of the five candidates who tested positive, three are from the Trinamool Congress (TMC), and one each from the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he said.

RSP's Jangipur candidate, 73-year-old Pradip Kumar Nandi, tested positive on Wednesday and is now in home isolation, the official said.

BJP's candidate for Matigara-Naxalbari seat Anandamay Barman (38),

TMC's Gopalokhar nominee Mohammed Ghulam Rabbani, Tapan candidate Kalpana Kisku, and Jalpaiguri candidate Dr. Pradip Kumar Barma have tested COVID-19 positive, the health official said.

According to an official at the CEO, "The candidates who tested positive must immediately stop campaigning. Either they should isolate themselves at their homes or get themselves hospitalised depending on severity of the infection," he said.

Congress nominee from Samsheganj assembly constituency in Murshidabad district, Rezaul Haque, who had tested positive for COVID-19, died at a hospital here early on Thursday.

Baisakhi at Chewa-Bhanjyang with hopes of tourism

PRITAM LAMA GYALSHING, 15 APR:

Baisakhi, the Nepali New Year, was celebrated at Chewa-Bhanjyang on the India-Nepal border near Uttarey, West Sikkim on 14 April.

Around 500 people from Nepal and 150 from Sikkim joined in the joint celebrations at Chewa-Bhanjyang.

Nepal organises a cultural programme at Chewa-Bhanjyang every year to mark the beginning of Nepali New Year but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the celebration this year was low-key.

Milan Begha from Jhapa in Nepal, who visits Chewa-Bhanjyang every year to celebrate Baisakhi, remarked that the mountain pass has huge tourism potential and appealed to the Sikkimese people to step forward for the development and promotion of Chewa-Bhanjyang among visitors.



"We enjoy a shared culture and tradition with Sikkim. We feel like they are our own people and it's nice to celebrate Baisakhi with the people of Sikkim at the border," he said.

Santa Limboo, a social worker from a Nepal village near the border, added, "People from villages in Nepal located near the border at Che-

wa-Bhanjyang are ready to promote the pass as a tourist destination and we have already appealed our government for the same."

People from Panchthar, Taplejung and Illam districts of Nepal joined in the New Year celebrations at Chewa-Bhanjyang.

The celebration was held under

tight security. Sikkim police was also deployed along with Sikkim Forest officials, SSB personnel and Armed Police Force from Nepal.

Basanti Limboo, a homestay owner from Sophaka village, which is the closest Sikkimese village to the border, said she would be delighted if the government focused more attention to the development of tourism in the region.

Chief Minister PS Tamang has already assured to develop Chewa-Bhanjyang as a tourist destination.

Chewa-Bhanjyang is about 47 km from Gyalshing, the district headquarters of West Sikkim and 5 km from Sophaka village.

Yakling village is the nearest village in Nepal and takes about an hour to reach on foot. Other Nepal villages close to the border are Kharka Gaon while the nearest market town is Chayangthapu.

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Agri Minister launches Future is Farming scheme

NAMCHI, 16 APR (IPR): Minister Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services (AH&VS), L. N. Sharma attended Krishi cum Pashudhan Mela, 2021 for Rangang-Yanggang and Tumin Lingee constituencies at Paleythang today. He was accompanied by Secretary Animal Husbandry, Dr. Sangey Dorjee, Secretary Agriculture, Rinzing Chewang, Secretary Horticulture, M. T. Sherpa, MD Sikkim Milk Union, A. B. Karki representative from Bank, Officials and Public at large.

Addressing the gathering, Minister, L.N. Sharma said that the State Government has always aided the farmers and their produce. He exerted about the program and also spoke in brief regarding 'Future is Farming' scheme of the State Government which will give impetus to the farming community and market their produce.

He also said that farmers are one of the front line warriors during the pandemic time as they were the ones who were sending the Vegetable to the markets thereby feeding an entire population of the State and thanked them for their services. He also encouraged the youths



to take up farming as a profession as farming is Self-reliant and it has the potential to have a perennial source of income. Moreover, he said that Sikkim and its citizens can take up farming and become 'Aatma Nirbhar'.

The Minister also apprised the gathering about the various schemes that the State Government has initiated for the benefit of farmers. He highlighted some of them which are Rainbow Rooster Scheme, Floriculture, Piggery and many more. He also said that the State Government is working on Rain Water Harvesting and on many more farmer wel-

fare schemes.

The Minister also launched 'Future is Farming' during the programme. The focal point of this project is Sikkim Agriculture with the subject 'Dive into farming and sell your farm fresh produce to shops, restaurants or directly to home'. Future is Farming will encourage one and all to practice Farming thereby transforming Sikkim into a self-sufficient farming state.

Secretaries of Animal Husbandry, Agriculture and Horticulture spoke about the various schemes available with the concerned departments. They all reiterate

that these schemes are meant for the elevation of the progressive farmers of the State. They also put forth various suggestions and other advices to assist the progressive farmers revolving around field, crops and cattle.

They all added that the Animal Husbandry, Agriculture and Horticulture departments is always ready to serve the people with inputs and other conveniences.

Progressive farmer cum President Organizing committee Krishi Mela, D. N. Dahal was also felicitated by the Minister, L.N. Sharma for his relentless work

and encouraging people in his vicinity to take up farming and its allied activities.

During the course of the programme, a cheque of Rs. 4.5 lakh was given to establish Lingmoo Milk Collection Centre. Additionally, Milk Can, Mineral Mixture and other amenities were also distributed on behalf of Sikkim Milk Union.

The mela saw a total of 18 stalls which had organic vegetable, flowers and various stuff produced by Self Help Groups and farmers. The Minister also distributed tokens and other equipments to various beneficiaries.

Centre's third order for Oxygen supply in 24 hours despite claims of no shortage

NEW DELHI, 16 APR [NDTV]: Less than 10 days after insisting there is no shortage of medical oxygen - even as hospitals across the country red-flagged low stocks and Covid patients died - the centre on Friday evening issued its third emergency order in 24 hours - this time to ensure the uninterrupted supply of cylinders across state borders, and to allow manufacturers and suppliers to serve hospitals across India.

The order, signed by Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, came hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed about the centre's efforts to rapidly scale up production and supply of oxygen cylinders in the face of a deeply alarming and persisting spike in Covid cases across India.

"... medical oxygen is an essential public health commodity... impediment in supplies may impact management of COVID-19 patients... ensure (i) no restriction is imposed on movement of medical oxygen between states/ UTs... (ii) no restrictions shall be imposed on oxygen manufacturers and suppliers to limit supplies only to hospitals of the state in which they are located... (iii) free movement of

oxygen carrying vehicles into the cities..." Mr Bhalla wrote in his order.

Oxygen supplies are key for hospitals treating people with advanced COVID-19 symptoms, who are often unable to breathe on their own and have to be put on ventilators or be otherwise assisted.

With the number of new Covid cases now increasing by over a lakh every day - over two lakh in each of the past two days - the lack of oxygen cylinders has made for grim headlines.

Several states, including worst-hit Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, have complained of a shortage, with some hospitals now refusing to admit people without families offering a signed undertaking - that they will not hold the facility legally responsible for the lack of oxygen.

From saying there is no shortage the centre - which says production is at capacity - is scrambling to boost supplies, particularly since demand is expected to spike even more within the coming fortnight.

On Thursday the centre identified a dozen states most likely to desperately need oxygen.

Maharashtra, Madhya

Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are to be given over 17,000 metric tonnes by April 30.

In that same order the centre also said a 100 new hospitals would get their own oxygen plants.

The centre has also decided to import oxygen - around 50,000 metric tonnes - from abroad, and permit industrial-purpose oxygen to be used to cover the shortfall.

The country's health infrastructure - already battered by the first Covid wave - is barely hanging on in many parts, with patients forced to share beds and medical equipment in some cities.

This morning 1,185 deaths linked to the virus were reported - a figure that is only marginally lower than the most recorded in single day, and a metric that has risen steadily since mid-March.

As the virus spreads, particularly the more aggressive variants, overburdened staff and hospitals will need all the help they can get - including resources and equipment - to try and win this war.

Monsoon to be normal this year, says IMD



NEW DELHI, APR 16 (PTI): The Southwest Monsoon, which brings more than 75 per cent of rainfall to the country, is expected to be normal this year, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday.

The Long Period Average (LPA) rainfall will be 98 per cent with an error margin of plus and minus 5 per cent, said M Rajeevan, secretary of

the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

He was releasing the first Long Range Forecast for the four-month rainfall period from June to September at a virtual press briefing.

"Monsoon will be 98 per cent of the LPA which is normal rainfall. It is really good news for the country and will help India have a good agriculture output," Rajeevan said.

South Korean...

sectors since the 1990s and now intends to expand its interest to various industries such as pharmaceutical, energy, Organic farming, food processing, and tourism. I hope, post this visit, multiple opportunities shall open up in Sikkim."

The Managing Director of KOTRA South Asia Region, Moon Young Kim said "Korean companies tend to be bold and try to be preemptive, so Sikkim can be one of the favourable destinations considering its various potentials. Based on this, we shall explore multiple opportunities with Korean companies operating in areas like renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, food processing, Organic Farming, and other sectors. We can leverage each other's strength for mutual benefit."

The Korean mission also donated Korean-made protection masks and thermometers to the Health & Family Welfare Department. Among them, 3D printing masks, which ICT Device Pangyo FAB/Songdo LAB provided, drew attention as these are reusable by changing filters and designed to minimise fatigue even when used for a long time.

Baisakhi at Chewa...

Pathibara, an important destination for pilgrimage, will be more convenient to reach from Sikkim if a check point were opened at Chewa-Bhanjyang.

Meanwhile, for the Sikkimese, it would be convenient for people here to reach pilgrimage destinations like Tingbong and Pokhari on the other side if the border was opened for tourism.

The Nepal Government is planning to open the route to Khangchendzonga base camp from villages in Nepal close to Indo-Nepal border at Chewa-Bhanjyang and if a check point is opened at Chewa-Bhanjyang two-way tourist traffic will be further boosted.

Nagaland govt holds meeting with tribal bodies on RIIN

KOHIMA, APR 16 (PTI): A consultative meeting of the Nagaland government with tribal bodies and civil societies of the state on Friday decided to form a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) to work out modalities to achieve the objective of the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN), a government spokesperson said.

The state government in June 2019 had launched the RIIN exercise to streamline the system of issuance of indigenous inhabitant certificates.

It would also help maintain a record of indigenous inhabitants, who settled in Nagaland before December 1, 1963, the day it became a full-fledged state, the Nagaland government had said.

The meeting which went on for over three hours had a "fruitful discussion" on the implementation of RIIN, government spokesperson and advisor Mmholnumo Kikon told reporters.

The JCC would be headed by the Home Commissioner, while the Commissioner Nagaland would be the member secretary.

Members would be drawn from Central Nagaland Tribes Council (CNTC), Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organisation (ENPO), and Tenyimi Peoples Organisation (TPO), the government spokesperson said.

The committee will be able to co-opt new members from the Nagaland Garo Tribal Council, Kuki Inpi Nagaland, and other non-Naga organisations, he said.

During the meeting

the tribal bodies and civil society organisations were of the view that they need to be given the Banuo Z Jamir Commissions report on RIIN, submitted to the government in October 2020, for examining it in detail and to make necessary recommendations, Kikon said. At the district level, the committee will be headed by respective deputy commissioners and will have members from different tribal bodies, he said.

An official notification will be issued soon, he said.

"RIIN is a sensitive issue and needs to be handled carefully," the spokesperson said.

The tribal bodies are being engaged and they will be involved in the final preparation of RIIN, he said.

State minister Neiba Kronu said, the government apprised the tribal bodies of the gist of the Banuo Z Jamir Commission's report.

It was decided that the entire report would be given to the tribal bodies so that they can go through it in detail and offer views and suggestions of the tribes on the implementation of RIIN.

Since tribal hohos and civil societies cannot meet very often, the state government also briefed them on the ongoing Naga political issue, land reforms, and Urban Local Bodies, the minister said.

Elaborating on land reforms in the state, he said, the government is contemplating bringing new land laws and such reforms involve the tribal hohos (organisations) as land in Nagaland be-

longs to the people. After emerging from the meeting, ENPO president Sashi Naga and general secretary Manlan Phom agreed that the Banuo Z Jamir Commission on RIIN had held discussions with the respective tribal bodies and submitted its report to the government.

However, Sashi Naga said that since they have not seen the final report it was difficult to arrive at any conclusion. Therefore, all the tribal bodies and the civil societies present in the meeting have sought the report.

We will study the report and suggest additions and omissions if necessary, he said.

Opposition Leader T R Zeliang, who attended the meeting, refused to comment, saying Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had stated in the Assembly that as and when the Commission on RIIN headed by former Chief Secretary Banuo Z Jamir brings out the report, he will table it on the floor of the House for further consultation and even amend some notifications or give a fresh notification for corrections.

So far the report has not been brought out or seen by anyone, so I will not comment on this issue, he said. Nonetheless, Zeliang asked the government to focus on the implementation of ILP in toto, which was amended in the assembly.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, Deputy CM Yanthungo Patton, cabinet ministers, legislators from both ruling and opposition as well as senior bureaucrats and deputy commissioners of all the districts were present in the meeting.

ICSE board exams for classes 10-12 deferred, new dates in June first week



NEW DELHI: The ICSE board exams for Classes 10 and 12 have been deferred amid the surge in COVID-19 cases across the country. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, which conducts the ICSE tests, in a statement said the new dates will be announced in the first week of June.

"The Covid situation will be closely monitored and the deferment of the ICSE and ISC 2021 examinations will be reviewed and a final decision on the conduct of the examinations will be taken by the first week of June

2021," the board said in a statement.


Class 10 board exams have been already cancelled and Class 12 exams have been deferred because of the nationwide Covid surge that had led to demands by parents, students, politicians and various states for a government rethink.

The big announcement affecting over 35 lakh students followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting on April 14 with the Education Minister and top officers.

Covid cases have been spiralling across the country in the dead-

ly second wave of infections. India in recent times reported over two lakh new coronavirus infections in the highest single-day rise so far.


Before the CBSE decision came, parents' groups had written to PM Modi requesting that students be assessed internally instead of them having to sit for exams physically. The India Wide Parents Association had pointed out in a letter that teachers and students had not been vaccinated yet and there was a higher chance of infection among them.



Government of Sikkim
Department of Information & Public Relations

"I appeal to everyone to get vaccinated for the safety of oneself and others against COVID-19"

- Ganga Prasad
Governor of Sikkim

<p>Do not believe in rumours being spread about the vaccine</p>	<p>GANGTOK</p> <p>Vaccine is safer</p>  <p>Thankyou Govt. of India for making this possible</p>	<p>#SikkimFightsCorona</p> <p>#VaccineSavesLives</p> <p>#Unite2FightCorona</p>
<p>Focus on the 5 fold strategy</p>	<p>Follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour</p>	<p>I did not hesitate</p>

Let's come together to make the Hon'ble Prime Minister's initiative **"Dawai Bhi Kadai Bhi"** successful and beat COVID-19

Minister chairs discussion on operation of rehab centre and old age home

GANGTOK, 16 APR(IPR): Minister for Social Justice and Welfare Department, Dr MK Sharma, chaired a meeting convened by the Department of Social Justice and Welfare at the conference hall of Health and Family Welfare Department, in Gangtok today.

The meeting was held to discuss on various agendas related to operation and management of De-addiction cum Rehabilitation Centre set up at Kitchudumra and Old Age Home in Namchi.

The Minister was accompanied by Secretary, Social Justice and Welfare Department, TshewangGyaccho, Secretary, Skill Development Department, Ganga Pradhan, District Collector South, M Bharani Kumar, Superintendent of Police South, Thakur Thapa, Director (Health) Programme Director (SADA), Dr Tekendra Rai, HoD, Psychiatry Department, STNM, Dr CS Sharma, and SPO (Mental Health), Health and Family Welfare Department, Dr Madan Mani Dhakal, along with officials and representatives of line departments.

The meeting was also joined by representatives from the High Court of Sikkim and SSLSA via video conferencing.

Addressing the gathering, Minister said that



it is of utmost importance to carve out the guidelines and policies for the De-addiction cum Rehabilitation Centre, Kitchudumra and Old Age Home, Namchi to function efficiently which will require coordination and convergence of various departments and stakeholders for a holistic approach. He further stated that the summarisation of the meeting today, should encompass all the aspects pertaining to the goals of the centres which may also include customisation of various modules set up by both the State and Central governments.

Expressing the sectors concerning old age, disability and de-addiction as ODD areas, he encouraged the NGOs working in these fields to

continue extending their selfless dedication in making the odd sectors even by rendering as well as tendering to services with proper manpower management and maximum outreach while glorifying the purpose of their organisations. He congratulated the NGOs for receiving the grant-in-aid and reiterated the State government's acknowledgement for their efforts in the development of the society.

The meeting featured an open discussion session wherein the officials from the line departments indulged in an extensive discourse of ideas and suggestions for the operation and management of the De-addiction Centre at Kitchudumra and Old Age Home in Namchi.

During the discussion session, it was also suggested that the terminology for the people at these centres be changed from "inmates" to "residents" in order to maintain their self-respect and dignity.

At the onset of the programme, Minister Dr MK Sharma handed over Grant-in-Aid to fourteen NGOs namely ASHI (Jagriti) - Gangtok, AhoDrishya Foundation - Aho (East Sikkim), Freedom Family Rehabilitation Centre - Tathangchen (East Sikkim), KalpataruPratishthan - SamdongKambal (East Sikkim), Mayalmu Sangh (Half Way Home) - Gangtok, Nawadeep Club - Lungsugaon, Yuk-som (West Sikkim), Old Age Home - Jalipool (East Sikkim), Sanjeevani Re-

hab Centre - Namthang (South Sikkim), Sikkim Rehabilitation and Detoxification Centre - Nimitar (East Sikkim), Sikkim ViklangSahayata Samiti - Sangh, TokalBermiok (South Sikkim), Saipatri Sangh - Upper Sadam (South Sikkim), Serenity Home - Burtuk (East Sikkim), Senior Citizens Society of Sikkim - Daragaon, Tadong (East Sikkim) and Tintek Lee Aal Sangh - Rakdong, Tintek (East Sikkim).

Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by Secretary, S and WD, TshewangGyaccho, wherein he highlighted on the need for resources, skill training, security and mobilization of various activities that would help the residents of these centres to adjust in the mainstream world.

UP records highest single-day spike with 27,426 new Covid cases

LUCKNOW, 16 APR [PTI]: Uttar Pradesh's daily COVID-19 cases surged to a record high of 27,426 on Friday, taking the state's cumulative tally to 7,93,720, according to an official. The death count climbed to 9,583 with 103 more fatalities, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad told reporters in Lucknow.

This is the third

straight day when the state has reported a record rise in COVID-19 cases. As many as 22,439 fresh cases were recorded on Thursday and 20,510 on Wednesday.

"In the past 24 hours, 27,426 fresh cases were reported while 6,429 people were discharged," Mr Prasad said.

Currently, there are 1,50,676 active cases in the state. Of these,

77,146 patients are in home isolation, 2,435 in private hospitals and the remaining in government hospitals, he said.

As many as 6,33,461 people have recovered from the infection so far, he added. On Thursday, 2.23 lakh samples were tested. With this, the total number of samples tested so far has risen to over 3.78 crore, Mr Prasad said.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT Samaj Kalyan, TADONG, GANGTOK

Memo No: 11/GOS/439/SJ&WD/EC/2021

Dated: 13.04.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Divisional Engineer, (N/E) Social Justice & Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim on behalf of Government of Sikkim, invites sealed tenders in percentage Rate basis from the eligible contractors of appropriate class Vide Notification No. 584/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 08.10.2018 vide Notification No. 515/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 12.06.2018 Notification No. 104/R&B Dated 08.10.2020 for the work(s) listed under:-

Sl. No.	Name of work	Value put to Tender (in Rs.)	Completion Time (in months)	Amount of Earnest Money @2.2% for issue of tender form (Rs)	Amount of Bank receipt for cost of tender documents (Rs.)	Constituency / GPU/Ward.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction of Community Centre at Pacheykhani in East Sikkim.	1,06,22,230.00	18 months	2,65,556.00	30,000.00	Dickling Chamthang GPU. 19 th Rhenock Constituency.

Time Schedule is as follows:-

1. Start Date for submission of application with Bank Receipt - 16th April 2021 to 20th April, 2021 (10.00 am to 4.30pm) for issue of Tender Documents (Excluding the tender form).
2. Last date for issue of tender form - 23rd April, 2021 (11:00hrs to 13:00hrs).
3. Date and Time for submission of Tender - 03rd May, 2021 (10:00 hrs to 13:00 hrs).
4. Date and Time of opening of Tender - 03rd May, 2021 (13:30 hrs to 16:30 hrs) in the respective GPU.

Note: The details of tender documents including tender form can be obtained from the office of the Divisional Engineer- (N/E) SJ&WD on production of receipt of deposit made to respective Ward.

1. Tender is open only to the eligible Contracts/Firms of appropriate Class/Area.
2. The intending tenders/contractors should apply in writing for issue of tender documents. The application would invariably be signed by the contractor himself/herself. The tender documents will not be issued to any person other than the INTENDING TENDER.
3. The applicants should enclose attested copies of the (a) Valid GSTIN Registration Certification, (b) Latest Income Tax Clearance Certificate as per the Indian Income Tax Act and (c) Validated Contractor Enlistment Certificate, and Professional Tax Clearance Certificate along with the application. It is mandatory to produce the original validated/updated Enlistment Certificate during sale/issue of the Tender Document for verification (d) PAN card.
4. The prescribed Non-Transferable Tender Documents (Excluding the Tender Form) can be obtained during the period specified in (As above from the office of the Addl. Chief Engineer/ Superintending Engineer of **Social Justice & Welfare Department, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim**, on production of receipt deposit to the revenue of the respective GPU.
5. Earnest Money Deposit @2.5% in the State Bank of Sikkim in the form of deposit receipt of schedules bank which includes in the form of temporary deposit receipts or fixed deposits receipts in favour of the Sr. Accounts Officer of the Department Tender Form shall be issued only on the production of the deposit receipt to the contractors who have obtained the tender documents, on production of deposit receipts of 2.5% earnest money.
6. The Tender document s including the Tender Form with quoted offer should be placed in a sealed cover with the name of the Tenderers and the name of the work superscripted on it. Supporting documents listed at SL 3(a), (b) and (c) above should be enclosed with the offer.
7. Sealed Tenders may be deposited in the Tender Box in the concerned GPK on the date and time indicated above.
8. Tenders will be opened by a Tender Opening Committee a prescribed by the Government in the presence of the tenderer on the date and time indicated above.
9. The Tender should sign on every page of the tender documents as Acceptance of the General Direction and Conditions of Contract and other laid down norms. The rate quoted should be both in figures and words and should be inclusive of GST and all other Taxes and Levies. Overwriting and correction should be avoided and if made should be authenticated. Incomplete/ Conditional tenders shall be rejected forthwith.
10. In case of any discrepancy in rate(s) printed in the Schedule of Rates and Quantities issued with the tender document, rates as per approved Schedule of Rates will be taken as correct. For items outside the SOR, the rates shall be as per the technically checked/estimate/analysis. Decision of the Add. Chief Engineer cum Secretary/Head of the Department will be final in this regard.
11. The Work Value, scope and quantum of work are subject to change, the contractor shall execute the work as per the directives of the Department. No claim on this account shall be entertained whatsoever. If any extra claim is made, it shall be as per the agreement rates.
12. Avoidable damages due to negligence of the contractor shall be at his own risk and cost. The Department shall not be liable for payment of such damages (if any), including accidents to laborer at site.
13. The offer shall remain valid for a period of 90 days. The work should commence within 15 days from the date of issue of work order.
14. The department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
15. Subletting of contract work is against the norms and if it comes to the notice, the original contract shall be cancelled and appropriate action shall be initiated as per the rules.
16. The Department also reserves the right to increase, decrease, alter or modify the item of works as indicated in the NIT without assigning any reason thereof.
17. The contractor will have to pay all taxes and duties as applicable and notified by the State/Central Government and no claim shall be entertained in this regard whatsoever.
18. The rate quoted shall be inclusive of prevailing taxes.
19. The department reserves the right to reject the incomplete tender without any reason there-off.
20. The Contactor has to submit the work program/ bar Chart may be submitted in the initial stage.

Sd/-
Divisional Engineer (N/E)
Social Justice & Welfare Department
Government of Sikkim..

R.O. No. 21/IPR/Pub/Classi/21-22 Date. 15.4.2021

Tyo Dara Paari is now a Youtube click away



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 16 APR:

A new Nepali music video, 'Tyo Dara Paari', by Gangtok-based production house, Silver Lining, was released here on Friday.

The featured song has lyrics, music and vocals by Raiba Subba and has Sangam Tamang directing, shooting and editing of the music video.

The music video, which has been produced by Nirmal Bhattarai, marks the debut appearance of Jeremy Rai and Preana Tamang as lead artists and also features child artists Nityan Bhattarai, and Aradhya Thapa.

With its official release, the music video is now also available on the offi-

cial YouTube channel of Silver Lining.

The release function had Chairperson, Rural Development Department, Sunita Gautam, Development Area councillor, Tshering Palden Bhutia, entrepreneur Sonam Choden Katsopa and other dignitaries as special guests.

In her address, Ms Gautam congratulated the team for providing an opportunity to local artists and encouraged them to continue with their efforts with more such projects in the near future.

The new Councillor, in her address, appreciated the effort while Ms Katsopa congratulated the entire team for coming up with a music video with local artists.

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VIGYAN PRASAR
(An autonomous organisation of the Department of Science & Technology)

Vigyan Prasara, an autonomous organisation of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, engaged in developing communication material and strategies for Science and Technology outreach and large scale science popularisation & extension tasks, invites application on prescribed format for the following post:

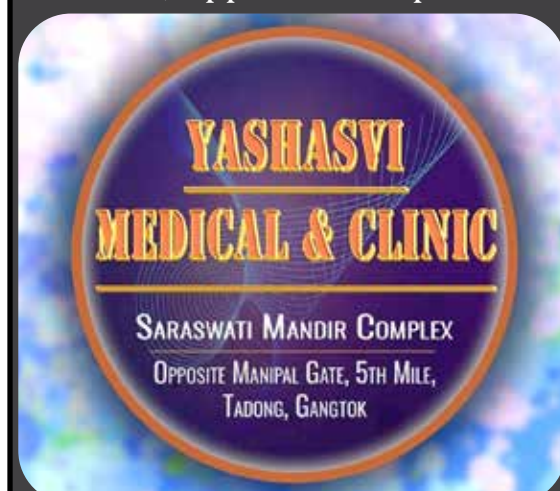
Name of the Post	No of Post	Pay Level	Category	Mode of Recruitment
Scientist D	01	Pay Level-12 (Rs. 78,800- 2,09,200)	OBC	Direct Recruitment/ Deputation/ Absorption

The last date of receipt of application will be 30 days from the date of publication of advertisement. For further details (In Hindi & English) related to Eligibility Criteria, application format and supporting documents to be submitted, please visit our website <https://vigyanprasara.gov.in>

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- 7.Medicine (Gastrointestinal Specialist) :5-6PM.

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GANGTOK SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT LIMITED

Sokaythang, Ngagtok,
Sikkim - 737102

e-mail: gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com CIN - U9309090WB2017SGC223807
FILE NI. 229/GSCDL/2019-20

Memo NO: 28/GSCDL/2021-22

Dated: 07/04/2021.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL) is undertaking the work 'Construction of Multi Level Car Park cum Shopping Hub' at old STNM Complex (below NH). The preliminary Drawings of the project is uploaded in our website <https://smartcitygangtok.com>

Architects, Urban Planners and the General Public are requested to give their valuable feedback and suggestions for improvement of the drawing. Changes that are feasible within the scope of the work shall be incorporate at the time of finalizing the Drawings. However, GSCDL reserves the right to incorporate the changes. Comments and suggestions may be sent by email to ae3smartcity@gmail.com within one month of issue of this public notice, please.

Sd/-
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.

Make Riverfront Cleanups More Meaningful

After force-engaging the young, allow them to get genuinely involved

This newspapers correspondent in Singtam is obsessed with reporting about the uncivic habits of his town's residents and the less than involved administration of the nagar panchayats when it comes to swachh Singtam. Interestingly, even more than the litter around town, it is the mess that the riverbanks [and Singtam has two rivers flowing along it] have been inundated with. It is no secret that he desperately wants these stretches to cleaned up and kept clean. A practical pessimist will come in here and point out that a nation which cannot clean up its holiest river despite having an Union Ministry dedicated to the task, the woes of correspondent in a town which is not even a full-fledged municipal area is a tall ask. That said, one look at the calendar and one will notice that very soon, funds permitting, Sikkim will go into an extensive riverfront cleanup drive. Gangtok, which does not have a river, will expend its budget on jhoras and keep such engagements as token as they have always been. That said, it is always a good idea to get the young engaged with real nature, and given the increasing stress that water bodies are under, exposing them to how recklessly we litter, pollute and obliterate the water courses is always a welcome initiative.

Sikkim if fortunate that it has riverfronts to cleanup, because all it takes is a drive down to Siliguri to realize that rivers, even ancient ones, are no longer perennial. They remain slushy dump-yards for most of the year, encroached and polluted, and then flood the encroachments when monsoon arrives. Clearly then, the move to take the young to streams which otherwise remain unnoticed, blocked out as they are by constructions and/or smartphone screens, should pay some dividends because the staggering loads of plastic removed from even out of the way streams will get the students thinking about the need to dispose more responsibly.

But that is still only the first step. Clearing riverfronts of litter is necessary, but it has to be a yearlong engagement and not just a once in a very long while picnic. Since the grown-ups and their departments are not doing much to address the clogging of streams, may be it will be a good idea to invite the young to form riverfront care clubs in their respective neighbourhoods. Community-level donations and grants from the government could easily sustain these initiatives and the involvement of the young just might deliver Sikkim a more durable solution to the stress runaway consumption is putting the State's water bodies under. These checks were part of the traditional lifestyles here as well, but these were snuffed out when governments took control of everything. Within two generations, the balance was upended in the hands of an uninformed and an uninspired bureaucracy, which, due its insecurities and compromises, has grown suspicious of traditional knowledge and community participation. That talking down can be chipped away by involving the young early, and since riverfront cleanup drives are the current pursuit, it should be taken a step further and a real sense of ownership instilled in the students.

It is also important that the cleanup drives do not end with the loading of trucks with the collected litter. These groups should be invited to accompany the garbage trucks to the garbage dump-yards so that they realize that most of our waste is not even biodegradable anymore and recognize that one area is cleaned at the cost of another areas health and ecology. When the children are taken to garbage dumps, they should not just get a tour of the facilities established there to "treat" waste, but also encouraged to interact with residents of the surrounding area to learn of how their daily lives have been affected just so that other towns and villages of Sikkim can be emptied of their filth. It is not enough to just hold your breath when your vehicle zooms past the Marchak garbage dump on the highway, and if the young learn about the condition there first hand, they will at least empathise with the situation and, in the long run, realize the need for less messy solutions. No one expects them to come up with a solution immediately, but at least they will be seized of the issue, and who knows, when they take charge in the future, will be able to factor in more considerations than just the civil engineering and land acquisition components for projects.

One also wonders whether the children realize that the streams and jhoras they so diligently clean once a year flow into rivers which were inexcusably allowed to be more harmfully polluted right under the watch of a subsidiary of the very organization which has been condescendingly reminding them of keeping rivers clean? Not so long ago, it took a High Court order to remind the pollution control board here that its responsibility is towards the environment and not industry. Pharmaceutical units along the Singtam-Rangpo axis, hearings during a case revealed, were not even meeting 60% of the pollution control requirements but were still allowed to operate and wantonly pollute in just about every production cycle. A High Court order led to the pollution control mechanisms at these units get inspected; what has still not happened though is a study on the scale of pollutants spewed into the Rani Khola and Teesta and may be even Rangeet and the damage it has caused the water bodies and the life it sustains. The young should ask these questions of the constitutional bodies which flaunt VIP sirens but display none of the responsibility on their charter of duties. Like it was said before, the young, after they are forced to get more engaged, should resolve to get more involved as well.

Colombia Gives Nearly 1 Million Venezuelan Migrants Legal Status and Right to Work

ERIKA FRYDENLUND, JOSE J. PADILLA & KATHERINE PALACIO
theconversation.com

Colombia will grant legal status to all Venezuelan migrants who fled there since 2016 to escape their country's economic collapse and political crisis.

The bold new policy – which will give nearly 1 million undocumented migrants rights to legal employment, health care, education and Colombian banking services for 10 years – is driven by both empathy and pragmatism, says Colombian president Ivan Duque.

"They'll likely stay for more than a decade," Duque told NPR on March 3, 2021. "So it's better to...open them the opportunity to contribute also to the Colombian economy."

Venezuelan arrivals to Colombia are not confined to refugee camps, so they live scattered across the country. Documenting and absorbing so many migrants – who often arrive on foot, with only a handful of personal belongings and no valid ID – has been a challenge. Even rich countries like the U.S. struggle to handle mass migration.

But in some ways Colombia – itself no stranger to political strife and displacement – is uniquely prepared for this migration crisis.

HISTORY OF CONFLICT

Colombia has received the brunt of the exodus from neighboring Venezuela since 2015.

When many other South American countries closed their borders with Venezuela, Colombia offered a series of two-year permits giving about 700,000 Venezuelans the right to work and access to health care between 2017 and 2020.

Together with the new legalization plan covering 1 million additional migrants, nearly all the roughly 1.7 million Venezuelans who have come to Colombia since 2015 will have some form of legal status. New arrivals who are legally processed in the next two years will also be covered.

Colombia is not wealthy. But Colombians understand better than many what it means to be driven from your home.

Over 8 million of Colombia's 50 million people have been displaced by ongoing civil conflict since the 1990s. At least 1 million moved into neighboring Venezuela, seeking safety and opportunity. A government peace agreement with the FARC guerrilla group in 2016

quelled but did not end violence in Colombia.

Because of this history, international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Food Program have worked in Colombia for decades. Today, the U.N.'s refugee agency and International Organization for Migration are leading a group of 73 international organizations and agencies to align their work with Colombia's national humanitarian efforts. The group works in 14 states across Colombia, providing assistance that ranges from distributing COVID-19 hygiene kits to enrolling migrant children in school.

HUMANITARIAN NETWORKS ADAPT

The Colombian government also has some 50 agencies dedicated to helping Colombians displaced by armed conflict. Now many are adapting that experience to help Venezuelan migrants.

Since 2019 we have interviewed over a dozen government officials, lawyers and civil society representatives in two Colombian "departments," or states, that have received high numbers of Venezuelan migrants: Atlántico and Norte de Santander. This work was part of a broader study on how countries manage mass migration.

At the religious charity Secretariado de Pastoral Social-Cáritas, part of the Catholic Archdiocese of the city of Barranquilla, in Atlántico, the longtime director said the migrant situation today looks a lot like it did decades ago when Colombia's civil conflict peaked in the Atlántico region, with people wandering around, not knowing anyone and not sure what to do or where to go. Then as now, they slept in the parks and on the streets.

"We already lived it in the '90s," said the director of Pastoral Social.

Back then, the group helped the Colombians displaced by fighting to find food and shelter. Now many of its clients are Venezuelan.

The nonprofit Opción Legal – an umbrella organization that manages refugee programs for the U.N. – has a similar origin story.

At its start 21 years ago, staffers worked in some of the most difficult conflict regions in Colombia, training the nonprofits that help displaced Colombians in accounting and legal processes, among other technical functions.

Now Opción Legal offers Venezuelan migrants free legal advice about getting Colombian health care and education, among other services. Using a nationwide network

of 22 Colombian universities developed over many years, it trains students and professors to extend the reach of its legal support programs to Venezuelan migrants.

TROUBLES AHEAD

In 2019, nearly 80 million people across the globe – mostly Syrians, Venezuelans, Afghans and South Sudanese – were driven from their homes by crime, climate change, chronic poverty, war, political instability and disaster, according to the U.N. – an all-time high. Many will spend years or decades waiting for a permanent solution, whether that be settling locally, returning home or finding a new country to make a life.

Colombia's new legalization plan reflects an assessment that Venezuela's collapse is a long-term challenge and that integrating migrants is a better solution, economically and socially, than trying to keep out or expel them.

Colombia is being internationally applauded for its humanitarianism. But equipping hospitals and schools to handle the needs of this rapidly growing and often very needy population will require a lot of money. And most of it will have to come from the international community, because Colombia does not have the money to do it single-handedly. Yet the Venezuelan migrant crisis is a chronically underfunded area of humanitarian work.

The legalization plan also risks inflaming anti-migrant sentiments in Colombia. Particularly in border areas, some blame rising violence on migration – though evidence shows Venezuelan migrants are more likely to be crime victims than perpetrators.

And Colombia still has domestic migration problems of its own. Dissident FARC members, other guerrilla groups, drug cartels and insurgencies continue to battle over territory and resources, displacing 70,865 more Colombians last year alone.

The Colombian government is betting that the U.N. and international agencies will help it fulfill its ambitious goal of welcoming 1.7 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

If it works, that money would improve government services for all Colombians, too.

[Erika Frydenlund is Research Assistant Professor, Old Dominion University; Jose J. Padilla is Research Associate Professor, Old Dominion University; Katherine Palacio is Assistant professor and data analyst, Universidad del Norte]

How to get COVID-19 vaccines to poor countries – and still keep patent benefits for drugmakers

DALINDYEBO SHABALALA
theconversation.com

The world has a COVID-19 vaccine access problem: Almost half of all doses administered so far have been in Europe and North America, while many poorer countries have vaccinated less than 1% of their populations.

With new coronavirus variants raising the health risk, South Africa and India have proposed that the World Trade Organization temporarily waive intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines to help ramp up production.

The U.S., Britain and the European Union rejected the idea, arguing that intellectual property rights – which give vaccine creators the power to prevent other companies from reproducing their products – are necessary to ensure innovation and waiving them would not result in increased production. They are now under pressure to change their minds.

So, are there only two paths here? Patents remain inviolate, or patents are disregarded?

I have worked on legal issues related to access to medicines since 2004 and have been involved in these debates at the WTO and the World Intellectual Property Organization, working with civil society groups and developing countries. I believe there is a middle way: compulsory licensing.

GOVERNMENTS CAN ALREADY GET AROUND PATENTS

When a country approves a patent, it gives the patent holder a monopoly for a limited term, usually 20 years, for new and highly inventive ideas.

The promise of having a monopoly gives the patent holder more incentive to take on the risk of research and development and get a product to market. The company can charge a high price for a limited time to recoup that investment.

The key phrase is "limited time." This makes sure that once a patent runs out, others can make the product. Generic drugs are an example.

Competition typically lowers prices and ensures greater access for those who want or need the product.

For emergencies, the patent system has a series of safety valves that allow governments to intervene before that limited time is up. The most important safety valve for COVID-19 vaccine production is the compulsory license. Based on public needs – including health emergencies – a government can allow others to make the product, usually with a reasonable royalty, or fee, paid to the patent owner.

Today, any country that has issued a patent to a COVID-19 vaccine maker can use that patent simply by issuing a compulsory license to enable production by its own companies.

So, why doesn't this solve the COVID-19 vaccine access problem?

VACCINE PATENTS END AT THE BORDER

The same issue arose in the context of access to HIV medications during the late 1990s.

Just like with HIV drugs then, the capacity to manufacture vaccines today is unevenly distributed. The real issue isn't whether a country like Botswana can issue a compulsory license allowing its domestic companies to manufacture the vaccines – many countries don't have that kind of production facility and, in many cases, the drugs aren't even patented there.

The real issue is whether India or China or the Philippines – countries with thriving pharmaceutical industries and where drugs are much more likely to be patented – can issue a compulsory license that would allow their companies to export to Botswana.

Why isn't this happening under the existing rules?

Article 31 of the WTO's Agreement of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property, or TRIPS, limits compulsory licenses primarily to domestic production and use. It does not allow a country to issue a compulsory license to a company outside its territory. Countries also cannot issue compulsory licenses to companies within their territories to produce

products primarily for export.

There have been several attempts to solve this problem, including a change to the TRIPS Agreement approved in 2005. But only one country – Rwanda – has used that system to access drugs. After an almost two-year process, Rwanda was able to import 7 million doses from Canada. However, the Canadian generic producer, Apotex, declared that the system was economically unsustainable for a private company. During a 2010 review of the system, many developing countries noted how difficult it was to use, with several generic producers giving up in the middle of the process.

The process requires an agreement between the two countries issuing compulsory licenses. It also comes with a series of legal requirements, including producing only the amount ordered by the importing country; using entirely different packaging, coloring or shapes to distinguish the drug from regular production; and following special processes in the importing country to prevent the product from being diverted elsewhere. A different compulsory license and production line would be needed for each additional country.

For COVID-19, there is also another problem: The technologies in COVID-19 vaccines are complex and involve multiple patents, trade secrets and know-how. A compulsory licensing system would need to address not just patents but all related intellectual property.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

An international consortium called COVAX is trying to expand COVID-19 vaccine deliveries to low-income countries through agreements with vaccine producers, but it is struggling to reach its goal of providing 2 billion doses by the end of 2021.

To successfully expand vaccine production, countries need a relatively seamless system that allows a country like India to grant a single, blanket license allowing its compa-

nies to produce vaccines developed by U.S. or European companies for export to all countries that lack their own manufacturing capacity.

This is ideally what a properly functioning system of global compulsory licensing would enable, in my view. Compulsory licensing is not a violation of patent or intellectual property. The rights holder still gets compensated, and access is assured when it is most needed.

The proposed WTO waiver of intellectual property rights seeks to address this need, but it may be broader than necessary. A better solution as I see it would be to smooth the way for using compulsory licensing across all relevant intellectual property needed to expand vaccine manufacturing.

Removing the TRIPS limitations on production for export would allow a country like India, at the request of a qualifying country, to issue blanket compulsory licenses covering all COVID-19 vaccine technologies, set the compensation prices and allow the vaccines to be exported to multiple countries simultaneously.

The company would make the vaccine in its existing facilities and would be allowed to stockpile for future orders. Additional requests from other countries could be fulfilled from the same production line on the same basis, ensuring a sustainable business model. The patent owner – Moderna, for example – may lose control over the market, but it maintains its right to be compensated, as is normal for any compulsory license.

This is part of the bargain Moderna and Pfizer made when they received patent protection.

The result could be a fast increase in vaccine manufacturing that reaches countries that have been left out. Without global vaccinations, it's hard to see an end to this pandemic. This emergency is exactly what the patent system is designed for, if it's allowed to operate properly for the patent holder and for the public.

[the writer is Associate Professor, University of Dayton]

Curry scores 33, Warriors roll to 119-101 win over Cavaliers

CLEVELAND (AP): Stephen Curry scored 33 points — topping 30 for a career-best ninth consecutive game — and the Golden State Warriors pulled away for a 119-101 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Thursday night.

Curry, who made an NBA-record 29 3-pointers over the previous three games, is averaging 38.2 points during his torrid run. He missed his first eight attempts beyond the arc, finishing 4 of 13, and had five assists in leading Golden State to its season-high fourth straight win.

“He’s been incredible lately, even by Steph standards,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “It’s the result of a lifetime of training and hard work, but he just does it night after night. We’re in a very good place right now. The guys feel good about themselves.”

Andrew Wiggins scored 23 points, Juan Toscano-Anderson had 20 and Draymond Green added five points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for Golden State, which is ninth in the West. The Warriors led by 18 points in the second quarter and were up 22 in the fourth. “I just try to bring the team joy and a competitive fire,” Curry said. “We’ve got a ways to go, but developing different ways to win games is a good thing.”

“It’s amazing the way Curry plays,” Cavaliers center Jarrett Allen said, shaking his head in disbelief. “He literally makes



anything from half-court to the baseline.” Collin Sexton scored 30 points in his return from a two-game absence with a strained groin and Allen had 17 points and 14 rebounds for Cleveland. Darius Garland added 20 points and seven assists.

The Cavaliers have lost 16 of their last 17 to the Warriors with the lone win coming in Game 4 of the 2017 NBA Finals — the third of their unprecedented four straight matchups in the championship series.

“Steph and Draymond are so good and with

their experience, they’re just deadly,” Cleveland coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. “And the other guys play their role to a T.”

Golden State absorbed a major hit earlier in the day when rookie center James Wiseman was ruled out for the remainder of the season after undergoing right knee surgery. The No. 2 overall pick suffered a meniscal tear on April 10 against Houston.

“It’s tough because he was headed in the right direction, but I told him he needs to think big picture,” Curry said. “He can

use this to try and turn a negative into a positive.”

The Warriors checked into their downtown hotel at 3:30 a.m. after winning 147-109 in Oklahoma City on Wednesday. The Cavaliers also were playing back-to-back following a 103-90 victory in Charlotte.

TIP-INS
Warriors: G Kelly Oubre Jr. (left wrist soreness) missed his sixth consecutive game and will be re-evaluated Friday. Kerr said Oubre will perform some basketball drills before being examined. ... Wiggins was

the No. 1 pick in the 2014 draft by Cleveland, but was traded to Minnesota for F Kevin Love two months later. ... Assistant coach Mike Brown piloted the Cavaliers’ to their first NBA Finals appearance in 2007.

Cavaliers: G Damyean Dotson (left knee soreness) and G Dylan Windler (left knee soreness) were inactive. Dotson sat out his third straight game, while Windler last played on March 29. ... Rookie F Lamar Stevens had his two-way contract converted to a multi-year pact. Stevens went undrafted after playing four seasons at Penn State ... F Mfiondu Kabengele is on a 10-day contract that expires on April 19.

BACKUP PLAN
Wiseman ranks fifth among NBA rookies with an 11.5 scoring average and is third in rebounding at 5.8, but Kerr said Golden State doesn’t have to sign a center to replace him. “Adding size just for the sake of adding size isn’t something that you look to do,” Kerr said. “We’re going to play small-ball regardless. That’s the type of team we’ve been for a long time.” Wiseman is expected to return for the start of next season.

UP NEXT
Warriors: At Boston on Saturday for the second game on a season-high, five-game road trip that ends on April 21 at Washington. Cavaliers: At Chicago on Saturday. The Central Division foes will meet twice in a five-day span, completing the home-and-home set on April 21.

Jaylen Brown scores 40, Celtics beat Lakers 121-113



LOS ANGELES (AP): Jaylen Brown scored four of his 40 points in the final minute, and the Boston Celtics blew most of a 27-point lead in the fourth quarter before holding on for their fifth straight victory, 121-113 over the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday night.

Brown made 13 of his first 14 shots and hit three 3-pointers while falling two points shy of his career high for the Celtics, who have won eight of 11 despite an embarrassing finish at Staples Center. Boston led 113-86 with seven minutes to play, shortly after coach Brad Stevens pulled his starters. But Talen Horton-Tucker and Ben McLemore led a 24-2 run by the Lakers that forced Brown and Boston’s first string back into the game.

Brown hit a floater through contact and added a leaning jumper with 32 seconds left to squelch the Lakers’ rally, and Boston split the season series between these historic rivals.

“The Celtics-Lakers matchup is a matchup that kids dream about, so regardless of who’s on the floor, I’m excited to play,” Brown said. “Having that energy with those Lakers fans back in the arena, it feels good to get a win.”

Payton Pritchard and Marcus Smart added 15 points apiece for the Celtics, who never trailed despite committing 21 turnovers. Boston also won with just 14 points from Jayson Tatum,

whose streak of scoring 20 points in 11 consecutive games ended.

“We have a tendency to be loose with the ball, and we’ve got to stop that,” Stevens said. “It’ll bite us in time. You can’t keep playing like that and expect to win.”

Horton-Tucker scored 19 points and Marc Gasol had a season-high 18 for Los Angeles, which has alternated wins and losses since March 28. McLemore scored 15 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter of his home debut with the Lakers.

“Those guys came out and competed their tails off,” Lakers coach Frank Vogel said of his end-of-the-bench reserves and Horton-Tucker. “I wanted them to be able to get the ‘W,’ but that was awesome how they played.”

Along with the long-term absences of superstars Anthony Davis and LeBron James, the Lakers faced Boston without new center Andre Drummond, who has a bruised right big toe, and Markieff Morris, who has a sprained left ankle.

Dennis Schröder nearly sat out with an infection on the ball of his right foot, but contributed eight points and eight assists. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope also played through mid-game back spasms, and Gasol stayed in after dislocating his pinky finger, which got popped back into place during a timeout.

Boston carved up the Lakers’ starters in the first half while taking a 14-point lead. The Celtics hit 56% of their shots

against the NBA’s No. 1 defense, with Brown scoring his 21 points particularly easily.

“When those guys go out there and punch them in the mouth like that, it sets a tone for the whole game,” Pritchard said.

TIP-INS
Celtics: Robert Williams III missed the game with left knee soreness and swelling. Boston was 8-2 since he joined the starting lineup at the trade deadline after Daniel Theis was moved to Chicago. ... Evan Fournier missed his fifth straight game under the NBA’s health and safety protocols. Lakers: Davis has been cleared for full on-court activities, and Vogel is hopeful he can play next week. Davis hasn’t played since Feb. 14. “He’s tired of being a patient and ready to be a player again,” Vogel said.

FANS IN STANDS
The Lakers were welcomed back from a seven-game road trip by about 1,915 fans in the Staples Center stands comprising the building’s first significant sports crowd since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

“I know it’s not full capacity and where we want to be, but it was great to have our fans back and cheering us on,” Vogel said. “It just gave us a different level of energy and juice, and hopefully it continues to grow.”

UP NEXT
Celtics: Host Warriors on Saturday.
Lakers: Host Jazz on Saturday.

100-meter champ Coleman to miss Olympics despite reduced ban



GENEVA (AP): American sprinter Christian Coleman will miss the Tokyo Olympics after failing Friday in an appeal to overturn his ban for missed doping tests. The Court of Arbitration for Sport cut the 100-meter world champion’s ban from two years to 18 months, but it won’t expire until November, three months after the Olympics.

The panel of three judges said 18 months “was the appropriate sanction in the circumstances” because Coleman was not entirely at fault for one of his three missed tests in a one-year period.

They said it was “reasonable for the athlete to expect” a telephone call from a sample collection official to return to his apartment during the 60-minute period he said he would be available on Dec. 9, 2019. A call such as that is not required within the anti-doping rules, the judges acknowledged. One of the three CAS judges, German law professor Ulrich Haas, helped write the updated World Anti-Doping Code.

The court also noted Coleman “should have been on ‘high-alert’ on that day, given the two existing ‘whereabout’ failures against him.”

Coleman had challenged the two-year ban imposed last October by the Athletics Integrity Unit. Athletes can be banned for two years if they have three failures — missed tests or contact details not updated where officials can find them each day — within one year.

The 25-year-old Coleman will be clear to compete in the 2022 season, which includes the world championships in Eugene, Oregon.

Coleman won the 2019 world title in Doha, Qatar, after being cleared on a technicality to run because of missed tests.

“I’m just really blessed the situation was resolved,” Coleman said in September 2019 ahead of the worlds. “I’m just a regular guy who had talent and the wherewithal to be able to hone that into something I can make money doing.”

Head of Tokyo Olympics again says games will not be canceled

TOKYO (AP): The head of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday was again forced to assure the world that the postponed games will open in just over three months and not be canceled despite surging COVID-19 cases in Japan. Organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto was asked at a news conference if there were any conditions under which the Olympics would be canceled.

The question comes as the general secretary of ruling LDP political party, Toshihiro Nikai, raised the possibility the day before.

“There are a variety of concerns but as the Tokyo 2020 organizing committee we are not thinking about canceling the games,” Hashimoto said. Nikai, the No. 2 person in the LDP party, was asked on Thursday in an interview if cancellation was still an option.

“Of course,” he replied, adding that if the Tokyo Games caused a surge in infections “there would be no meaning to having the Olympics.”

Nikai tried to backtrack later, and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga issued a statement Thursday saying there is “no change to the government position to do everything to achieve safe and secure Olympics.” Hashimoto acknowledged Nikai’s concern and suggested it was probably shared by the Japanese public. Polls show as many as 80% in Japan oppose holding the Olympics during the pandemic.

“The fact that he (Nikai) is concerned is a point that we need to take seriously as Tokyo 2020,” she said. “His comment has reminded us of how tedious it was for us to feel confident or be fully prepared for delivering the games.” COVID-19 cases have been rising across Japan. Despite this, the International Olympic Committee and Tokyo organizers are pressing on. The IOC, which relies on selling broadcast rights for 73% of its income, has seen its cash flow stalled by the postponement. Japan has already invested at least \$15 billion to organize the Olympics, and national audits suggest it might be twice that

much. All but \$6.7 billion is public money. In an editorial this week, the British Medical Journal questioned Japan and the IOC going ahead with the Olympics. Organizers have said the Olympics will be “safe and secure,” which the editorial challenged.

“While the determination is encouraging, there has been a lack of transparency about the benefits and risk, and international mass gathering events such as Tokyo 2020 are still neither safe nor secure,” the editorial said.

On Thursday, the government minister in charge of Japan’s vaccine rollout, Taro Kono, said even if the Olympics go on, there may be no fans of any kind in the venues. He said it’s likely that the Olympics will have to be held in empty venues, particularly as cases surge across the country. Fans from abroad have already been barred.

Hashimoto, who had said previously that a decision on venues would come in April, seemed to push back that deadline. She was not asked about Kono’s suggestion and did not raise the issue or challenge it.

“Within April I would like to set the basis direction,” she said. “The final judgement time — this as well we need to monitor the situation of the pandemic and we need to remain flexible for that.” Organizers had hoped to generate \$800 million from ticket sales. Much of that revenue will be lost and the Japanese government will have to cover the shortfall.

No fans of any kind might simplify matters. Organizers can then focus solely on 15,400 Olympic and Paralympic athletes entering Japan, and keeping in a bubble in the Athletes Villages, the training sites, and at the competition venues. Tens of thousands of judges, officials, media and broadcasters will also have to enter Japan. The vaccine rollout in Japan has been slow with less than 1% having had the shot. The numbers will be better in three months, but will contrast sharply with non-Japanese entering the country. A large percentage of those are expected to be vaccinated, including athletes.

Trail Blazers general manager Neil Olshey praised Aldridge as one of the best players in the franchise’s history.

“During his nine seasons in Portland, LaMarcus battled through multiple injuries and health concerns but never once allowed them to affect his commitment to his teammates and coaches on the court or the people that benefited from his outreach in the community off the court,” Olshey said in a statement.

Aldridge went on to play 5 1/2 seasons with the Spurs and was a five-time All-NBA selection. San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich called Aldridge a “consummate professional with a unique skill set and a deep respect for the game.”

“We’re grateful for his contributions, both on and off the court, during his time here in San Antonio,” Popovich said. “I’m proud of him for making this difficult decision and we wish him and his family all of the best in the future.”

NEW YORK (AP): LaMarcus Aldridge retired from the NBA on Thursday after saying he experienced an irregular heartbeat during his final game with the Brooklyn Nets.

Aldridge, 35, posted a statement on social media saying the heart concerns he had during and after Brooklyn’s loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on Saturday were one of the “scariest things” he’s experienced.

Aldridge, who was diagnosed with Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome — an abnormality that can cause a rapid heartbeat — as a rookie in 2007, said he feels better now after getting it checked out but nevertheless decided to end his 15-year career.

“For 15 years I’ve put basketball first, and now, it is time to put my health and my family first,” Aldridge wrote.

The seven-time All-Star signed with the Nets on March 28 and he had become their starting

center. He missed the last two games with what the team had called a non-COVID-19 illness. Nets general manager Sean Marks said the team fully supported Aldridge’s decision. “We know this was not an easy decision for him, but after careful consideration and consultation with numerous medical experts, he made the best decision for him, his family and for his life after basketball,” Marks said.

Aldridge joined the Nets after reaching a buyout agreement with the San Antonio Spurs and provided his new team with an inside post presence that was one of the few things it was missing. The 6-foot-11 Aldridge had the best of his five games with the Nets in the one before his heart trouble, scoring 22 points in a victory over New Orleans on April 7.

The No. 2 pick in the 2006 draft was long one of the best at his position, averaging 19.4 points in a career that began with nine seasons in Portland.

Iran starts enriching uranium to 60%, its highest level ever

TEHRAN, IRAN (AP): Iran began enriching uranium up to 60% purity Friday, its highest level ever, after an attack targeted its Natanz nuclear site, the country's parliament speaker said.

The comment by Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, quoted by state television, did not elaborate on the amount Iran planned to enrich. However, it is likely to raise tensions even as Iran negotiates with world powers in Vienna over a way to allow the U.S. back into the agreement and lift the crushing economic sanctions it faces.

The announcement also marks a significant escalation after the sabotage that damaged centrifuges, an attack this past weekend suspected of having been carried out by Israel. While Israel has yet to claim it, the country is widely suspected of having carried out the still-unexplained sabotage at Natanz, Iran's main enrichment site.

"The will of the Iranian nation is a miracle-maker and it will defuse any conspiracy," state television quoted Qalibaf as saying. He said the enrichment began just after midnight Friday.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, the country's civilian nuclear arm, later acknowledged the move to 60%, according to state TV. Ali Akbar Salehi said more details would be forthcoming and declined to further elaborate.

It wasn't clear why the first announcement came from Qalibaf, a hard-line former leader in the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard already named as a potential presidential candidate in Iran's upcoming June election.

While 60% is higher than any level Iran previously enriched uranium, it is still lower than weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Iran had been enriching up to 20% — even that was a short technical step to weapons grade. The deal limited Iran's enrichment to 3.67%.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which monitors Iran's nuclear program, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Earlier this week, it sent its inspectors to Natanz and confirmed Iran was preparing to begin 60% enrichment at an above-ground facility at the site.

The heightened enrichment could inspire a further response from Israel amid a long-running shadow war between the nations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed never to allow Tehran to obtain a nuclear weapon and his country has twice preemptively bombed Middle East nations to stop their atomic programs.

Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, though the West and the IAEA say Tehran had an organized military nuclear program up until the end of 2003. An annual U.S. intelligence report released.

HONG KONG (AP): Nine of Hong Kong's leading pro-democracy advocates were sentenced to jail terms Friday for organizing a march during the 2019 anti-government protests that triggered an overwhelming crackdown from Beijing.

Those sentenced include the city's so-called "father of democracy" Martin Lee as well as pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai.

They were found guilty earlier this month of organizing and participating in a massive protest in August 2019, where an estimated 1.7 million people marched in opposition to a bill that would have allowed suspects to be extradited to mainland China for trial. The protest was not authorized by the police.

Their convictions and sentencing were the latest blow to the city's flagging democracy movement, amid an ongoing crackdown by Beijing and Hong Kong authorities on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Lee, an 82-year-old lawyer and former lawmaker known for his advocacy of human rights and democracy in the city, had his sentence of 11 months in prison suspended after his age was taken into consideration.

Lai, the founder of Hong Kong's Apple Daily tabloid, was sentenced to 12 months in prison. Prior to sentencing, he was remanded in jail on other charges, including collusion with foreign forces to intervene in the city's affairs — a new crime under a national security law imposed on the city in 2020 by the central government in Beijing.



Lee Cheuk-yan, a pro-democracy activist and former lawmaker known for helping to organize annual candlelight vigils in Hong Kong on the anniversary of the bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989, was sentenced to 12 months in prison.

Lawyers Albert Ho and Margaret Ng both had their 12-month jail sentences suspended. Former lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung was sentenced to 18 months, while another former legislator, Cyd Ho, was given a jail sentence of eight months.

Two other former lawmakers, Au Nok-hin and Leung Yiu-chung, who previously pleaded guilty were also given jail sentences. Au was sentenced to 10 months in prison, while Leung's eight-month jail term was suspended.

The earlier story follows: Seven of Hong Kong's lead-

ing pro-democracy advocates, including 82-year-old veteran activist Martin Lee and pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai, are expected to be sentenced Friday for organizing a march during the 2019 anti-government protests that triggered an overwhelming crackdown from Beijing.

They were found guilty earlier this month of organizing and participating in a massive protest in August 2019, where an estimated 1.7 million people marched in opposition to a bill that would have allowed suspects to be extradited to mainland China for trial. The seven are expected to submit pleas for more lenient punishment before sentencing is handed down. They face up to five years in prison.

Their convictions were the latest blow to the city's flagging democracy movement, amid an ongoing crackdown by Beijing and Hong Kong authorities on dissent in the

semi-autonomous Chinese city. Beijing had pledged to allow the city to retain civil liberties not permitted in mainland China for 50 years after the former British colony reverted to Chinese rule in 1997, but recently has ushered in a series of measures, including a national security legislation and electoral reforms, that many fear are a step closer to making Hong Kong no different from cities on the mainland.

Under the new rules, Hong Kong residents can be held legally liable for any speech opposing China's government and the ruling Communist Party or perceived colluding with hostile foreign political groups or individuals. Electoral changes mean just 20 out of 90 Legislative Council members will be directly elected and Beijing will retain even tighter control over the body that picks Hong Kong's future chief executives.

The seven expected to

receive sentencing Friday include Lee, a lawyer and former lawmaker known as Hong Kong's "father of democracy" for his advocacy of human rights and democracy in the city dating to the British colonial era; Lai, an entrepreneur and founder of Hong Kong's Apple Daily tabloid; and Lee Cheuk-yan, a pro-democracy activist and former lawmaker known for helping to organize annual candlelight vigils in Hong Kong on the anniversary of the bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

"I'm ready to face the penalty and sentencing and I'm proud that I can walk with the people of Hong Kong for this democracy," Lee Cheuk-yan said ahead of the court session, as supporters held up signs condemning political persecution. "We will walk together even in darkness, we will walk with hope in our hearts."

Lawyers Albert Ho and

Margaret Ng, as well as former lawmakers Leung Kwok-hung and Cyd Ho, were also among the seven found guilty.

According to their convictions, six of the seven defendants carried a banner that criticized police and called for reforms as they left Victoria Park and led a procession through the center of the city. The other defendant, Margaret Ng, joined them on the way and helped carry the banner.

Lai, together with Lee Cheuk-yan and a former lawmaker Yeung Sum, have also been convicted of taking part in another unauthorized assembly on Aug. 31, 2019. All three have pleaded guilty. They are expected to be sentenced later Friday, after the first case, and face up to five years in prison.

While Hong Kong's government dropped the extradition bill in the face of widespread opposition, demonstrators expanded their list of demands to include electoral reforms for the chief executive and an inquiry into police tactics targeting protesters. Those were sternly refused by the authorities and protests grew increasingly violent until the opposition prevailed in local district council elections.

Beijing then imposed a sweeping national security law, and Hong Kong authorities postponed elections for the Legislative Council, citing coronavirus precautions. Most opposition figures have since been jailed, intimidated into silence or sought asylum abroad and authorities have decreed that only those considered to be true Chinese patriots will be allowed to hold office in future.

How the Kremlin provides a safe harbor for ransomware

BOSTON (AP): A global epidemic of digital extortion known as ransomware is crippling local governments, hospitals, school districts and businesses by scrambling their data files until they pay up. Law enforcement has been largely powerless to stop it.

One big reason: Ransomware rackets are dominated by Russian-speaking cybercriminals who are shielded — and sometimes employed — by Russian intelligence agencies, according to security researchers, U.S. law enforcement, and now the Biden administration.

On Thursday, as the U.S. slapped sanctions on Russia for malign activities including state-backed hacking, the Treasury Department said Russian intelligence has enabled ransomware attacks by cultivating and co-opting criminal hackers and giving them safe harbor. With ransomware damages now well into the tens of billions of dollars, former British intelligence cyber chief Marcus Willett recently deemed the scourge "arguably more strategically damaging than state cyber-spying."

The value of Kremlin protection isn't lost on the cybercriminals themselves. Earlier this year, a Russian-language dark-web forum lit up with criticism of a ransomware purveyor known only as "Bugatti," whose gang had been caught in a rare U.S.-Europol sting. The assembled posters accused him of inviting the crackdown with technical sloppiness and by recruiting non-Russian affiliates who might be snitches or undercover cops.

Worst of all, in the view of one long-active forum member, Bugatti had allowed Western authorities to seize ransomware servers that could have been sheltered in Russia instead. "Mother Russia will help," that individual wrote. "Love

your country and nothing will happen to you." The conversation was captured by the security firm Advanced Intelligence, which shared it with the Associated Press.

"Like almost any major industry in Russia, (cybercriminals) work kind of with the tacit consent and sometimes explicit consent of the security services," said Michael van Landingham, a former CIA analyst who runs the consultancy Active Measures LLC. Russian authorities have a simple rule, said Karen Kazaryan, CEO of the software industry-supported Internet Research Institute in Moscow: "Just don't ever work against your country and businesses in this country. If you steal something from Americans, that's fine."

Unlike North Korea, there is no indication Russia's government benefits directly from ransomware crime, although Russian President Vladimir Putin may consider the resulting havoc a strategic bonus.

In the U.S. alone last year, ransomware struck more than a hundred federal, state and municipal agencies, upward of 500 hospitals and other health care centers, some 1,680 schools, colleges and universities and hundreds of businesses, according to the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft.

Damage in the public sector alone is measured in rerouted ambulances, postponed cancer treatments, interrupted municipal bill collection, canceled classes and rising insurance costs — all during the worst public health crisis in more than a century.

The idea behind these attacks is simple: Criminals infiltrate malicious data-scrambling software into computer networks, use it to "kidnap" an organization's data files, then demand huge payments, now as high as \$50 million, to restore them. The latest twist: if vic-

tims fail to pay up, the criminals may publish their unscrambled data on the open internet. In recent months, U.S. law enforcement has worked with partners including Ukraine and Bulgaria to bust up these networks. But with the criminal masterminds out of reach, such operations are generally little more than whac-a-mole.

Collusion between criminals and the government is nothing new in Russia, said Adam Hickey, a U.S. deputy assistant attorney general, who noted that cybercrime can provide good cover for espionage. Back in the 1990s, Russian intelligence frequently recruited hackers for that purpose, said Kazaryan. Now, he said, ransomware criminals are just as likely to be moonlighting state-employed hackers.

The Kremlin sometimes enlists arrested criminal hackers by offering them a choice between prison and working for the state, said Dmitri Alperovitch, former chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike. Sometimes the hackers use the same computer systems for state-sanctioned hacking and off-the-clock cybercrime for personal enrichment, he said. They may even mix state with personal business.

That's what happened in a 2014 hack of Yahoo that compromised more than 500 million user accounts, allegedly including those of Russian journalists and U.S. and Russian government officials. A U.S. investigation led to the 2017 indictment of four men, including two officers of Russia's FSB security service — a successor to the KGB. One of them, Dmitry Dokuchaev, worked in the same FSB office that cooperates with the FBI on computer crime. Another defendant, Alexsey Belan, allegedly used the hack for personal gain.

Giannis returns to Bucks after missing 6 games with knee

ATLANTA (AP): Two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo returned to the Milwaukee Bucks' lineup Thursday night after missing six games with an ailing left knee.

Antetokounmpo re-joined the Bucks as they visited Atlanta to take on the surging Hawks, who have won 16 of 21 games since Nate McMillan took over as interim coach.

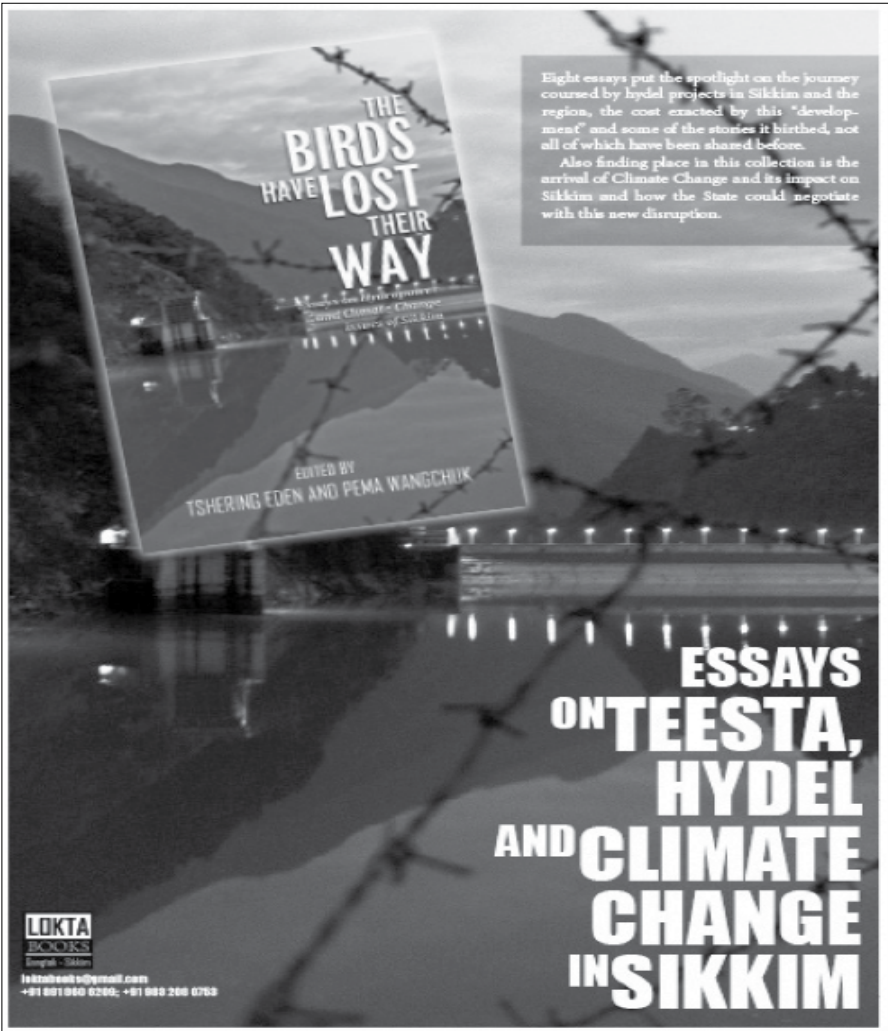
The Bucks went into the game holding down the third spot in the Eastern Conference, 5 1/2 games ahead of the



fourth-place Hawks. Milwaukee went 3-3 while their star was sidelined.

In an interesting twist, Antetokounmpo made his return at State Farm Arena, where he

was MVP of the All-Star Game last month after making all 16 of his shots for 35 points — the most baskets without a miss in the history of the mid-season showcase.



Marcia Gay Harden Apologizes to Judi Dench for "Misinterpreted" Oscars Remark

Marcia Gay Harden posted an apology to Instagram after her comments about winning a 2001 Oscar over Dame Judi Dench stirred controversy.

Marcia Gay Harden is clearing the air about her recent comments regarding her Oscars win.

The 61-year-old Fifty Shades of Grey actress took to Instagram this week to offer an apology. This follows remarks she made in a Vulture interview earlier this month that were interpreted as suggesting Dame Judi Dench wasn't happy to lose to Harden for the 2001 Best Supporting Actress trophy. "In a recent interview, one of my answers that related to Dame Judi Dench was misinterpreted," Harden wrote. "I have never met Ms. Dench - though if I had, I am certain I would have found her to be as generous and supportive as she is respected. I am deeply sorry for anything that would have led anyone to think otherwise."

During the Vulture interview that published April 7 and focused on Harden's Oscar-winning portrayal of artist Lee Krasner in the 2000 film Pollock, the Morning Show star remarked that one of her fellow nominees "seemingly wasn't so happy" to see her prevail. At the time, many awards pundits had expected Kate Hudson (Almost Famous) to win in the category that also included Dench (Chocolat), Frances McDormand (Almost Famous) and Julie Walters (Billy Elliot).

"It just felt great," Harden told Vulture about the victory. "And by the way,

I felt the girls were really happy for me as well. There was one I will not mention—but it wasn't Kate—who seemingly wasn't so happy."

The interviewer followed up by ask-

ing if the unhappy person was Walters, but Marcia specified that this wasn't the nominee in question. The reporter then commented that, out of McDormand or Dench, McDormand doesn't appear to give "a s--t about what awards she wins," and Harden agreed.

"Frances doesn't give a s--t," she replied. "But I don't want to say anything negative about anybody, honestly. It was my perception that somebody wasn't so happy, but you never know what people have going on. Whatever. However, I'm a big one for effusive congratulations. That's who I am. I'm just so happy for other people in their wins and their glo-

ries. For me, there's plenty of room at the top. Sometimes you just accept that life rolls along, and things come to you when they should."

For her part, Dench, who won Best



QUICK DIP! Victoria's Secret model Devon Windsor, took a dip in the ocean in Miami.

Jeffrey Dean Morgan Teases Son's Acting Role in The Walking Dead

In a "proud" papa moment, Jeffrey Dean Morgan revealed a first look at his 11-year-old son's debut on the last season of The Walking Dead. The actor wrote, "Can't wait for y'all to see him."

The Walking Dead is about to become an even bigger family affair.

Jeffrey Dean Morgan, who has starred as Negan on the series for the past five years, previously revealed that his 11-year-old son Augustus Dean Morgan will make his TV debut in the AMC show for its 11th and final season.

Now, fans are getting a sneak peek of Gus' big moment. Jeffrey posted a black-and-white, close-up photo of Gus' face with full zombie make-up on his Instagram account on Thursday, April 15.

"My kid. Just a peek... as a dad, I have to say, I'd be hard pressed to remember a time I've been more proud of this dude. Can't wait for y'all to see him in action," Jeffrey wrote, adding the hashtags #gusydean and #zombielife.

His partner of more than 10 years, Hilarie Burton, adorably commented her approval, saying, "I love my apocalyptic dudes" with three heart emojis. The couple also shares 3-year-old daughter George Virginia Morgan.

Fans will recall that Hilarie played Jeff's onscreen wife in the 2021 episode "Here's Negan" of The Walking Dead, so it only makes sense that Gus will become the third Morgan to add the show to his acting roster.

The final season is expected to include 24 episodes filmed over the next year in Georgia, with shooting ending in March 2022.

Jeffery, 54, appeared on The Late Late Show with James Corden on April 9 to talk all things The Walking Dead. "It's going good," the Watchmen star shared.

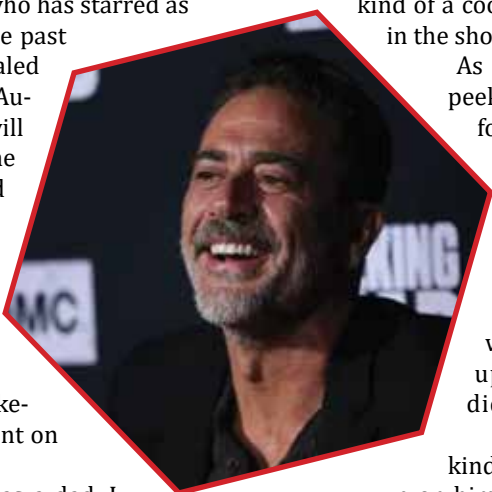
He explained that Gus will be a featured walker in episode five of season 11. "He is so pumped. It's ridiculous," he said. "It's kind of a cool role that he's doing in the show."

As we saw in the sneak peek pic, Gus was transformed into an undead creature with some heavy-duty decaying makeup. However, his dad admitted that Gus' past experience with zombie make-up a few years ago didn't go so well.

"Last time we did up on him, he looked at his reflection in the mirror and passed out. That just dawned on me today," Jeff said. "The makeup is going to be extensive and cool, but he's so excited."

Also unique about this season is the fact that, for the first time, his whole family is out in Georgia with him during production. He reflected, "It's great. I mean I love my family dearly, but I've never been with them this much. Since the pandemic began, we've all been together and Gus is going to school virtually still." He went on, "I think the difference is I've got a 3 year old attached to me. My wife calls her a barnacle."

As for his scenes with his wife last season, Jeffrey gushed, "It was awesome... It was like having a date with like 40 crew members around us."



J-Rod are done: Jennifer Lopez, Alex Rodriguez have split

LOS ANGELES (AP): J-Lo and A-Rod are no longer J-Rod — officially.

Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez told the "Today" show Thursday in a joint statement that they are calling off their two-year engagement.

"We have realized we are better as friends and look forward to remaining so. We will continue to work together and support each other on our shared businesses and projects," it said.

"We wish the best for each other and one another's children. Out of respect for them, the only other comment we have to say is thank you to everyone who has sent kind words and support."

The couple started dating in early 2017. They issued a statement in March that disputed reports they were breaking up. The couple was given the nickname "J-Rod" three years ago after they landed on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine.

Judge: R. Kelly to be moved to NYC for sex-trafficking trial

NEW YORK (AP): A federal judge gave the green light Thursday to move jailed R&B singer R. Kelly to New York City to go on trial this summer after several delays.

Kelly has been held in Chicago, where he's facing a potential second trial in the fall in a separate federal case related to a sprawling sex crimes investigation.

The trial in Brooklyn federal court had been put off because of the pandemic. But at a virtual hearing, U.S. District Judge Ann Donnelly told lawyers that there are courthouse protections in place that would allow it to finally go forward on Aug. 9.

The judge also said the

government should start preparations to move Kelly to a New York jail, most likely the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn. The exact timing was unclear.

Prosecutors in Brooklyn allege Kelly led an enterprise made up of his managers, bodyguards and other employees who helped him recruit women and girls for sex. A jury is expected to hear testimony from alleged victims, each identified in court papers only as "Jane Doe."

Kelly has denied the sex trafficking allegations. One of his attorneys, Steve Greenberg, said on Thursday that his client is looking forward to the trial.

Tribute planned for Adam Schlesinger, who died of COVID-19



NEW YORK (AP): Members of the Monkees, R.E.M., Dashboard Confessional and The Black Keys are turning out for a virtual tribute concert next month for Adam Schlesinger, who died of COVID-19 a year ago.

"Adam Schlesinger, A Musical Celebration, Virtual Show" will premiere May 5 on the Rolling Live platform, with proceeds going to MusiCares and the venue The Bowery Electric.

Schlesinger, a prolific songwriter, was best known for his band Fountains of Wayne but was a producer and writer for several projects, including the television series "Crazy Ex-Girlfriend," whose star, Rachel Bloom, is

booked for the tribute.

Others who will perform or pay tribute include Courtney Love, Sean Ono Lennon, Drew Carey, Chris Carrabba of Dashboard Confessional, Peter Dinklage of R.E.M., Patrick Carney of The Black Keys, Mickey Dolenz of the Monkees, James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins, Ben Lee and Taylor Hanson. The lineup is expected to expand.

The tribute is being organized by Jody Porter, Schlesinger's former bandmate in Fountains of Wayne.

"This is a proper musical send-off for my soul brother with a bunch of talented and groovy guests that would make Adam wince," Porter said.

Aries: Sometimes, we devote all of our time and energy to serving those around us. At other times, we withdraw into our own sacred space. Such is the law of balance, Aries. So honour where you are in this moment and honour what you need to do for yourself. If the cosmic cues are anything to go by, you're going to be having deep revelations about your truth and your sacred purpose here in the earthly realm.

Tip: Honour what you need to do for yourself.

Taurus:

What you're experiencing right now is the end of a major cycle, Taurus. No matter how hard you try, things will never go back to being the same again. So accept where you are. Accept what you're being shown at this moment. Know that if something is being taken away from you, it's because it is not in alignment with your sacred purpose.

Tip: This is the end of a major cycle.

Gemini:

What you're experiencing right now is a classic case of opposites attract. If you're the yin in this equation, they're the yang—and the complementary skills you bring to the table are taking your collaboration to a whole new level. Things on the interpersonal front

may or may not be looking so good, though. Give yourself the chance to feel the grief and the sadness in its entirety. Remembering the quote 'the only way out is through' will help you get through the turbulence you're experiencing at the moment.

Tip: Allow yourself to feel the grief and the sadness in its entirety.

Cancer:

Cancer, it's time to release yourself from the guilt and shame associated with the given incident. You did what you thought was best in that moment, and that is enough. Remembering that you're only human and that you're allowed to make mistakes will help you get through this storm. If you've been blaming somebody outside of yourself for what you're experiencing, observe the victim complex as you get to the root cause. Tip: You're only human after all!

Leo:

"Before you criticise a man, walk a mile in his shoes." Leo, you're being called to reflect upon Jack Handey's words when the judgements of the other person begin to get the better of you. Remembering that we're all an extension of Source energy will help you move past the blocks that have been standing in the way of healthy communication. If you're struggling to empathise no matter how hard you try, consider lis-

tening to their side of the story with a sense of openness. Who knows? You may end up discovering a little something about your own truth in the process. Tip: Approach the given conversation with a sense of openness.

Virgo:

Virgo, you're at an important juncture in your life, one that requires you to make a choice. It's not about what's right or what's wrong. It's about figuring out what is in alignment with "your" truth. Trust what your instinct is telling you and march forward. As you do, let go of the old story that things don't work out for you and believe in your own power and potential. PS: You've got this!

Tip: Let go of the old story that things don't work out.

Libra:

Libra, you've been around this block many, many times before, where you have doubted your own instinct and allowed the voices of others to get to you. Today, you're being asked to move past the duality and find that space of oneness within. Have an open and honest conversation with yourself. The truth is, you already know what you want and the steps you need to take in order to arrive at the given destination.

Tip: You know what you have to do for yourself.

Scorpio:

Here's the thing, Scorpio: you'll never fully understand the struggles of another person no matter how much you try, in the same way they may never have the complete picture of what you are going through. So, go easy on yourself and others. Put in that extra effort to understand where they are coming from. Who knows? You may end up uncovering another aspect of yourself in the process.

Tip: Drop the judgements.

Sagittarius:

Here's the thing, Sagittarius: you're not going to get things right the first time. You may not get things right the second or third time either. Do you really want to make the failure a regular feature in your story, though? It's time to shake the sadness and the melancholy off. Cue: African drum beats. As you do, remember who you are and what you came here to do. Something tells us that breakthrough moment is closer than you think.

Tip: Patience and persistence, wild one.

Capricorn:

What if we said you could be whoever you wanted to be? What if we said there is a parallel timeline available to you now and in each moment? Make that paradigm shift, Capricorn. Get in alignment with your

sacred purpose. Something tells us you're about to change the script of your life sooner than you think.

Tip: Get in alignment with your sacred purpose.

Aquarius:

You know what they say! Life does give us second chances and this is yours, Aquarius. So make the most of this opportunity knowing that you fully deserve it. Letting go of the self-doubt and the self-judgements will assist you in this process. For some of you, the past (or somebody associated with it) is coming back in a big way. The truth is, yes, they changed like they claim they have. There is potential for immense growth and learning in this relationship.

Tip: Life does give second chances.

Pisces:

This is a beautiful time in the Pisces HQ. Your vision board is taking form before your eyes, reaffirming your faith in the law of attraction and your own power to call in miracles. So, what do you want the next ten years of your life to look like? Work with the energy of the waxing moon to send out your sacred intentions as you surrender to the mysterious forces. PS: It only gets better from here—we promise!

Tip: Your vision board is taking form before your eyes.