



**WHY JULIANNE MOORE
SAYS IT'S "TOTALLY SEXIST"
TO SAY A WOMAN IS
AGING "GRACEFULLY"**
PG.08

**HEAL AND RESTORE LOST
YOUTH**
pg 04

**AMBER HEARD IS MOM
'ON MY OWN TERMS' OF
NEW BABY GIRL OONAGH**
pg 08



SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue168 | Gangtok | Sunday | 04 July 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | RS. 5

CM CHAIRS MEETING WITH WELFARE AND ECCLESIASTICAL DEPTTS

Monitor old-age pensions properly, ensure no one left out, CM directs



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 JUL:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang chaired a coordination meeting with the Social Justice & Welfare Department and the Ecclesiastical Department at Samman Bhawan, Gangtok, today, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

In the meeting with the Department of Social Justice & Welfare, Old Age pension, Maternal & Child Services, Orphan Child Welfare, Child Education and Services, Human Resources, Financial Management, enhancement of necessary infrastructure, Child-care homes, Scheduled Caste/Tribe Welfare Schemes, economic balance, protection of people's rights and various scholarship were thoroughly discussed.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to monitor the old-age pensions and ensure the beneficiaries receive them and are not misused.

Likewise, he also urged them to raise awareness about their welfare schemes so a maximum number of people can benefit from them. Matters related to land and relocation of various

premises were also discussed during the meeting.

Similarly, in the meeting with the Ecclesiastical department, the officials informed about the number of employees, Monastic schools and Sanskrit pathshala in the state apart from various expenses of the department.

They placed their grievances regarding office space as they have to share a confined space with three other departments with limited space to store valuable texts, assets and others. They brought up the issues of having a Monastic Board and introducing reforms for suitably regulating the department. Issues related to renovation and fencing of their properties, enhancement of the number of nunneries and Sanskrit pathshalas, were also deliberated upon.

The Chief Minister directed the department to find out ways to preserve and sustain traditional art forms. He also provided his suggestions and views and assured support for their endeavours.

The concerned Ministers, Secretaries and other officials were present during the meeting.

No new deaths for second consecutive day and Sikkim also records more recoveries than new cases

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 JUL:**

Sikkim's COVID death toll held at 308 for the second consecutive day with no new COVID deaths reported in the last 24 hours. On the other hand, 182 more persons were discharged from home isolation after making full recoveries to further improve the figure of recovered cases to 18,336.

As per Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme [IDPS] of the Health Department at 8AM Saturday, Sikkim recorded 178 new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of



COVID-19 to 20,955.

These 178 new cases were detected in the testing of 966 samples on Friday, giving Sikkim a test positivity rate of 18.4% today.

Of the new cases, 60

were registered in East District, 64 in West District, 51 in South District and 03 in North District.

There are 2,058 active cases of coronavirus in the State

at present, of whom eight are admitted in the ICU at STNM Hospital.

Against the 178 new cases, there were only 15 new hospitalisations today and there

are currently 94 Covid patients in hospital, the rest are either in facility or home isolation with symptoms mild enough not to require hospitalisation.

SDF condemns GRC's Sikkim-Darj merger proposal

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 JUL:**

Sikkim Democratic Front spokesperson, MK Subba has condemned the Sikkim-Darjeeling merger issue brought up by the Gorkha Rashtriya Congress recently.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Subba stated that Sikkim

handed over the ownership of Darjeeling to the British government in 1835. He mentioned that those areas which were a part of Sikkim were given back when Sikkim became a part of India in 1975 with the 36th amendment of the Constitution of India.

Likewise, he added that Article 1 of

Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 cancels all official agreements between Sikkim and British India which automatically dilutes all relationship between Sikkim and Darjeeling.

Responding to a media query, he said that the white paper issued by the West Bengal government in 1986 claiming that Darjeeling

was a part of West Bengal was unconstitutional and added that only the Parliament of India has the right to make such claims.

Another query on the King of Sikkim accepting lease amount for Darjeeling, he stated that it was not lease amount but British India had actually provided money for the

development of Sikkim.

He added that the State government and SKM party have also registered their protest but failed to do so in an effective manner.

Mr Subba expressed hope that the dream of separate state of Gorkhaland would be fulfilled soon.



In-depth meeting takes stock of Eco-Tourism Pilgrimage Complex at Dodak

DODAK, 03 JUL [IPR]:

An in-depth meeting at the construction site of the on-going Eco-Tourism Pilgrimage Complex at Dodak was held today. The meeting was attended by Minister MN Sherpa, Advisor to the CM, Rohit Raj Maharaj, who is also president of the Sri Dham Vrindhavan Sewa Samiti, and Chairperson SBS, DB Gurung, Chairperson, Sikkim Tribal Welfare Board, PK Subba, Advisor to IPR Department, Birendra Tamling, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Soreng, Ranjan Rai along with various department officials and the members of the Sewa Samiti.

The general secretary of Vrindhavan Sewa Samiti, Santosh Chettri, gave an introductory speech by welcoming and thanking the individual



attendees for taking out time to attend the meeting. He specially thanked the Advisor to the CM, Rohit Raj Maharaj, for his commitment towards the project.

Superintendent Engineer, Mahesh Chettri, briefed the meeting about the technical specification of the project. He said that continuous monitoring of the work-in-progress is being done. He also added that no civil construction has started yet because of shortage of construction

workers. At present, the ground levelling work is under progress, he informed.

This was followed by an open house discussion in which the concerned officers and contractor placed their views.

Minister Sherpa, in his address, extended warm greetings to all the dignitaries and said that any labourer entering the State must follow the newly laid rules & regulations and that the employer has to adhere to the current labour laws.

He reminded all present to strictly follow the precautionary norms and standard of Covid prevention. He urged the Panchayats to play an active role and be involved at every stage of the construction of the Dham.

He suggested encouragement of local employment through dairy farming and works on water supply management. In conclusion, he shared his thoughts on possible construction of a Gurukul inside the complex where students can gain more knowledge and also focus on self-discipline.

The meeting was then addressed by the Advisor to the CM, Rohit Raj Maharaj, who warmly welcomed all the guests and members and also thanked them for their presence.

He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Chief Minister for his constant motivation and support. He said that the completion of the Eco-Tourism Pilgrimage is a dream of not just one person but of the entire state.

He congratulated everyone involved for their contribution in turning the dream into reality.

He said that it has taken dedication and perseverance of many for this day to arrive therefore no compromise will be accepted in the quality of the work that is to be done. He ended his address saying that the construction of the Pilgrimage centre will provide a huge boost to tourism in the State.

The meeting ended with a resolve to monitor the progress of the work on a regular basis.

SRM UNIVERSITY – AP

EMBARK ON THE AVENUES TO EXCELLENCE

1st INDIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY TO ACHIEVE TWIN INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENTS

in its maiden graduating batch with a package of **₹50,00,000** per annum each at **PVP Inc Japan**, a strategic partner of **Google Japan**

Rajarshi and Saptarshi

It has been a wonderful four-year journey at SRM-AP. Every moment has defined our life 'to see and to be seen', including exciting academics and research, 24/7 working in the student-run Next Tech Lab, Semester Abroad to UC Berkeley, USA on Design, Innovation and Entrepreneurship and winning a Hackathon in Bay Area, competing with MIT, Stanford and Carnegie Mellon. Now, we are starting our new life in Japan. - **Rajarshi and Saptarshi, B.Tech (CSE)**

WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICES

OUR PLACEMENT RECORD SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

100% students placed	600+ companies recruiting	ENGINEERING	Highest Salary – ₹50 Lakhs CSE Average – ₹8 Lakhs Overall Average – ₹7 Lakhs
71% students got Marquee, Super Dream and Dream offers of 20L+, 10L+ and 5+ Lakhs respectively	1500 current intake of students	LIBERAL ARTS AND BBA	Highest Salary – ₹10 Lakhs Average – ₹6 Lakhs

Top Recruiters

SRM UNIVERSITY AP
Andhra Pradesh

Contact: +91-863-2343000 / 1800-599-2233 (Toll-Free)
Email: admissions@srmap.edu.in | Website: www.srmap.edu.in

Congress questions centre's silence on Covaxin pricing controversy in Brazil

NEW DELHI, 03 JUL: The Congress Party on Friday cornered the central government over the Covaxin pricing controversy in Brazil and asked the Centre why it is “conspicuously silent” on the matter.

Briefing medipersons, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said, “It is important for us to raise these questions because Bharat Biotech may be a private entity, but, the public fund was diverted for the development of this vaccine. Taxpayers' money was put into this and which is why we have a right to question: what has happened with that money and why is the government conspicuously silent on it?”

The Congress leader said Bharat Biotech had made an agreement with Precisa Medicamentos of Brazil and they had signed a contract to supply 20 million doses to the country. However, according to media reports, Bharat Biotech allegedly had quoted a price of USD 1.34 per dose of Covaxin which was jacked up to USD 15 per dose. The Brazilian opposition and the senate have raised the issue following which criminal investigative agencies are probing the matter. Brazilian agencies are also probing an offshore possible fund diversion by an entity called Madison Biotech related to Bharat Biotech.

She further said that the question is that ICMR was slated to get 5 per cent of the profit from the sale of Covaxin. But, allegations are that Bharat Biotech was selling the vaccine to Madison Biotech at a lower price.

“Madison was garnering the lion's share of the profit. We really want to know, what is the relationship between Madison Biotech and Bharat Biotech. These allegations are of a very serious nature and if Bharat Biotech was selling according to the allegations at a lower price then obviously ICMR's own proceeds get depressed,” she stated.

“The allegations are that a USD 45 million offshore payment was asked by Madison Biotech. Why is this ‘partner’ of Bharat Biotech asking for this sort of money? It is illegal as it is not a part of the contract signed between Bharat Biotech, Precisa Medicamentos and the Brazilian government,” she said.

SICUN holds 51st board meeting

GANGTOK, 03 JUL (IPR): The 51st Board Meeting of Sikkim State Cooperative Union (SICUN) was held at the conference hall of SICUN, Assam Lingzey today.

The meeting was chaired by Chairman, SICUN, L.P. Kafley, and had the presence and participation of Vice Chairman along with the Board Members of SICUN and the government nominated official from the Finance Department, Linus Rai, and Joint Secretary, Planning Department, Tshering Lachungpa.

The meeting discussed the last Board Meeting of Sikkim State Cooperative Union (SICUN) which was held on 12th January, 2021, and the action taken on the agendas of the meeting were deliberated upon.

The meeting continued with discussion on



the approval of Utilization Certificate of Rs. 3.75 lakhs, the GIA received during the year 2020-21 and the approval and sanction of Grant in Aid for the year 2021-22 by the Government.

The Board Meeting with the permission of the chair further contin-

ued with the discussion on the following agendas:

1) Approval of notification for regularization of staff as per SICUN staff service rule 2018.

2) Approval for running a banquet hall in the ground floor of the administrative building to generate additional

income for the fund required to regularize staff.

3) Approval for rural mart in the canteen block of the complex.

4) Approval of three-phase power line connection with demand charge of 50KVA in the capacity of 200 KVA transformer and generator set.

5) Confirmation of the date of the next AGM.

6) Inaugural of complex during cooperative week celebration.

7) Establishment of Library and photo gallery.

8) State level cooperative conference to be organised.

Govt's handling of ad-hoc teacher protest “authoritarian”: SDF

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 JUL: Sikkim Democratic Front today alleged that the state government's handling of the ad-hoc teacher issue was authoritarian

and the teachers should be given their rights.

Addressing a press conference here today, SDF spokesperson, JB Darnal alleged that the state government tried

to suppress the ad-hoc teachers' protest by stopping ad-hoc teachers at different places while they were on their way to Gangtok to press for their demands.

He expressed that

the SDF party objects the government's decision to make applicants for ad-hoc teacher post sit for interviews every year.

While demanding that the government should appoint teachers

for at least eight years after conducting the interview, he mentioned that after eight years of continuous service they should automatically be regularized as per the government rule.

Facebook takes down over 30 million posts in compliance with new IT Rules

NEW DELHI, 03 JUL [PTI]: Facebook “actioned” over 30 million content pieces across 10 violation categories during May 15-June 15 in the country, the social media giant said in its maiden monthly compliance report as mandated by the IT rules.

Instagram took action against about two million pieces across nine categories during the same period.

Under the new IT rules, large digital platforms (with over 5 million users) will have to publish periodic compliance reports every month, mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken thereon. The report is to also include the number of specific communication links or parts of information that the intermediary has removed or disabled access to in pursuance of any proactive monitoring conducted by using automated tools.

While Facebook actioned over 30 million content pieces across multiple categories during May 15-June 15, Instagram took action against about 2 million pieces.

A Facebook spokesperson said over the years, Facebook has consistently invested in technology, people and processes to further its

agenda of keeping users safe and secure online and enabling them to express themselves freely on its platform.

“We use a combination of artificial intelligence, reports from our community and review by our teams to identify and review content against our policies. We’ll continue to add more information and build on these efforts towards transparency as we evolve this report,” the spokesperson said in a statement to PTI.

Facebook said its next report will be published on July 15, containing details of user complaints received and action taken.

“We expect to publish subsequent editions of the report with a lag of 30-45 days after the reporting period to allow sufficient time for data collection and validation. We will continue to bring more transparency to our work and include more information about our efforts in future reports,” it added.

Earlier this week, Facebook had said it will publish an interim report on July 2 providing information on the number of content it removed proactively during May 15-June 15. The final report will be published on July 15, containing details of user complaints received

and action taken.

The July 15 report will also contain data related to WhatsApp, which is part of Facebook's family of apps.

Other major platforms that have made their reports public include Google and home-grown platform Koo.

In its report, Facebook said it had actioned over 30 million pieces of content across 10 categories during May 15-June 15. This includes content related to spam (25 million), violent and graphic content (2.5 million), adult nudity and sexual activity (1.8 million), and hate speech (311,000).

Other categories under which content was actioned include bullying and harassment (118,000), suicide and self-injury (589,000), dangerous organisations and individuals: terrorist propaganda (106,000) and dangerous organisations and Individuals: organised hate (75,000).

“Actioned” content refers to the number of pieces of content (such as posts, photos, videos or comments) where action has been taken for violation of standards. Taking action could include removing a piece of content from Facebook or Instagram or covering photos or videos that may be disturbing to some audiences with a

warning.

The proactive rate, which indicates the percentage of all content or accounts acted on which Facebook found and flagged using technology before users reported them, in most of these cases ranged between 96.4-99.9 per cent.

The proactive rate for removal of content related to bullying and harassment was 36.7 per cent as this content is contextual and highly personal by nature. In many instances, people need to report this behaviour to Facebook before it can identify or remove such content.

For Instagram, 2 million pieces of content were actioned across nine categories during May 15-June 15. This includes content related to suicide and self-injury (699,000), violent and graphic content (668,000), adult nudity and sexual activity (490,000), and bullying and harassment (108,000).

Other categories under which content was actioned include hate speech (53,000), dangerous organisations and individuals: terrorist propaganda (5,800), and dangerous organisations and individuals: organised hate (6,200).

Google had stated that 27,762 complaints were received by Google

and YouTube in April this year from individual users in India over alleged violation of local laws or personal rights, which resulted in removal of 59,350 pieces of content.

Koo, in its report, said it has proactively moderated 54,235 content pieces, while 5,502 posts were reported by its users during June.

According to the IT rules, significant social media intermediaries are also required to appoint a chief compliance officer, a nodal officer and a grievance officer and these officials are required to be resident in India.

Non-compliance with the IT rules would result in these platforms losing their intermediary status that provides them immunity from liabilities over any third-party data hosted by them. In other words, they could be liable for criminal action in case of complaints.

Facebook recently named Spoorthi Priya as its grievance officer in India.

India is a major market for global digital platforms. As per data cited by the government recently, India has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 41 crore Facebook subscribers, 21 crore Instagram clients, while 1.75 crore account holders are on microblogging platform Twitter.

SICUN celebrates International Day of Cooperatives



GANGTOK, 03 JUL (IPR): The International Day of Cooperatives was celebrated with the theme “Rebuild Better Together” at SICUN, Assam Lingzey, today.

B.B. Chettri, Chairman of Cooperation Department graced the programme as the chief guest. The programme had the presence of L.P. Kafley, Chairman SICUN, Tashi Ongdup Lepcha, Vice Chairman SICUN, Karma Ongmu, Additional Registrar Cooperation Department, officials from Finance Department, SISCO Bank, Sikkim Milk Union, SIMFED and staff of Sikkim State Cooperative Union.

Chairman, B.B. Chettri, in his address extended warm greetings to all the dignitaries presented in the event. He said that as the newly appointed Chairman of Cooperation Department he will deliver his duties with utmost sincerity.

Mr Chettri said that the aim of celebrating International Day of Cooperatives is to increase awareness on cooper-

ative functions and to highlight the complementary goals and objectives of the cooperative movement. He stated that the organisation will consider fully the potential of cooperatives for contributing to the socio-economic developmental strategies of the State Government.

He concluded by saying that SICUN is a steering organisation that helps people to build themselves in the society.

Each year, the first Saturday of July is celebrated as International Day of Cooperatives around the world.

With the theme “Rebuild Better Together” International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) calls on cooperators and partners around the world to get ready to celebrate and show the world how cooperative organisations can help communities to become stronger.

Earlier, oximeters, sanitizers and face masks were presented to five ASHA workers (front line workers) of Assam Lingzey.

No weekend curfew from next week as Karnataka relaxes Covid curbs

NEW DELHI, 03 JUL [NDTV]: Karnataka today announced the lifting of weekend curfews starting next week as it continues to tread cautiously despite a drop in daily Covid cases. The night curfew will, however, continue to be in place from 9 pm to 5 am, a government order said.

The state has announced more relaxations to lockdown-like restrictions from 6 am tomorrow in places outside the containment zones. However, all educational institutions, tutorial centres, and colleges will continue to remain shut until further orders.

Starting tomorrow, public transport will be allowed to operate up to their seating capacity.

Theaters, cinema halls, malls, restaurants, shops, and offices outside containment zones will be allowed to reopen.

Access to swimming pools has been granted for training purposes only with strict adherence to Covid safety protocols.

Sports complexes and stadiums will be allowed

to open for training but no spectators will be allowed inside.

Congregations and gatherings - social, political, religious, academic and cultural - will be allowed outside containment zones.

The state has now capped the number of guests at a wedding to 100 and those attending funerals to 20 with full compliance with Covid rules.

Places of worship have now been allowed to open to devotees for only darshan.

During the hours of the night curfew, only essential services will be allowed and the movement of individuals will continue to be restricted.

Public transport, private vehicles, and taxis will be allowed to run to and from airports, bus terminals, and railway stations. Those carrying valid travel documents and tickets will be allowed.

On Friday, Karnataka reported 2,984 cases of coronavirus in 24 hours with state capital Bengaluru logging 593 cases.

Swimming Federation of India nominates Tokyo-bound Sajan Prakash for Arjuna Award

NEW DELHI, 03 JUL [PTI]: Swimming Federation of India (SFI) for the second consecutive year nominated the name of Sajan Prakash for the Arjuna Award, and recommended the name of veteran Coach Kamlesh Nanavati for the Dhyani Chand Award for his contribution to Indian swimming over the past four decades.

SFI had earlier in June forwarded its nominations for the National Sports Awards 2021 under the various categories. Soon after the nomination, Sajan Prakash created history in Indian swimming by breaching the Olympic A qualification time which has eluded Indian

swimming for decades, and qualified for Tokyo Olympics.

“By making the A qualification for TOKYO 2020 in the 200-meter butterfly event, Sajan Prakash has broken the glass ceiling and goes down in the history of Indian swimming as the 1st Indian to have achieved this feat. His achievement will inspire many more swimmers in the time to come. We believe this achievement will place Sajan Prakash's nomination for the Arjuna Award at the forefront amongst equals,” Monal Chokshi, Secretary-General SFI said in a release.

SFI has also recommended the nomination of

Kamlesh Nanavati for the Dhyani Chand Award, for his lifetime achievements in aquatic sports. He represented India in water polo at many international competitions and subsequently as a swimming coach.

In a career spanning almost 4 decades, Kamlesh has produced numerous National medalists and National record holders.

He has also made a mark for himself in officiating as “Director of Competitions” at national and international meets and has remained on the technical committee of FINA for water polo.

“Kamlesh Nanavati has reason to be satisfied to-

day, as Maana Patel who he has coached for the better part of her career becomes the first swimmer from Gujarat to represent India at the Tokyo Olympics. Blessed is the coach who has the privilege to witness his or her protégée go on to represent the country at the biggest sports platform in the world,” SFI President RN Jayaprakash said.

Tapan Panigrahi has been nominated for the Dhronacharya Award (lifetime achievement) for his contribution towards producing many national and international champions in para-swimming as well as able-bodied category.

Amazon Prime's wide range of benefits

SILIGURI, 03 JUL: Amazon Prime has been a catalyst in providing an unparalleled combination of shopping and entertainment benefits to its members. Insights shared by Amazon India indicate that Prime members continue to adopt the program for its various benefits to add ease and convenience to their everyday lives. Apart from Kolkata and Siliguri, members in smaller towns such as Durgapur,

Howrah, Hooghly and Kharagpur are enjoying shopping and entertainment benefits with Amazon Prime.

For just Rs 329 for three months or Rs 999 a year, Prime members can enjoy unlimited free delivery on millions of eligible items, early and exclusive access to deals and sale events on Amazon.in, the largest selection from Amazon Prime Video of the latest and exclusive movies

and TV shows, popular Indian and Hollywood films, US TV series, and award-winning Amazon Originals; unlimited ad-free music anytime with downloads on Alexa on Amazon Prime Music. In addition, members get unlimited access to bestselling eBooks through Prime Reading. 18-24-year-old customers can also avail the Youth offer on Prime memberships and get 50% off through the two

choices of plans.

There are more than 32,000+ sellers from West Bengal sell on Amazon.in. In West Bengal, Amazon has 6 Fulfillment Centers and 2 Sort Centers. Across India, Amazon has built its delivery network to have a direct presence in every State and Union Territory. Over 200 million paid Prime members around the world enjoy the many benefits of Prime.

Border tension between Assam, Mizoram rise over piece of land



GUWAHATI, 03 JUL [NDTV]: After a lull of a few months, border tension between Assam and Mizoram has erupted once again, with police personnel from both the states clashing over a piece of land.

Assam had recently dismantled makeshift huts which it claimed were encroaching forest land inside its territory in Dholaikhal area of Hailakandi district bordering Mizoram's Kolashib. Mizoram officials have now claimed the huts were part of a police camp and were well within its territory.

Visuals show the police personnel jostling and pushing each other in the border area.

Mizoram said it had

sent the police to guard and reserve its territory after the Assam police dismantled the huts. Assam said it had just cleared encroachment from its forest land.

"Neighbouring border areas are forest land which is under the purview of the (Assam) forest department. In this regard, the forest department has requisitioned a police force so that they can do the patrolling, and we have not crossed the border. When we found makeshift structures in the form of encroachment, we followed the Supreme Court order that reserved forest cannot have this kind of encroachment. So, we have removed them. If there are any differences in

perception of the border, officers from both states can meet and ascertain facts," said Niraj Verma, Principal Secretary (Home), Assam.

Countering the claim, Dr H Lalthlangliana, the Deputy Commissioner of Kolashib, said he has brought to the notice of his Hailakandi counterpart the recent tension at Aitlang zau (a piece of land at the Assam-Mizoram border), where the 'Assamese police' had dismantled the camps set up by the Mizoram police. He added that the Mizoram government has sent additional troops to the border to camp at the land.

Officials in Aizawl said that Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalnunmawia

Chuaungo and his Assam counterpart Jishnu Baruah will hold a meeting next week on border issues.

On Thursday, Gyanendra Dev, a senior Assam official, visited the disputed areas and talked to the local people and officials.

Mizoram's Aizawl, Kolashib and Mamit districts share borders with Assam's Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. There have been several instances of border dispute in these areas.

The Centre last year held high-level talks with the two state governments to work out a temporary solution to defuse the tension brewing at both sides due to violence.

Both doses of vaccine give 98% protection from death due to Covid: Centre

NEW DELHI, 03 JUL [NDTV]: Both the doses of Covid vaccine provide around 98 per cent protection from death due to the disease, while one dose gives nearly 92 per cent shield, the government said today citing a study conducted on police personnel in Punjab.

The study was done by the Post Graduate

Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh in collaboration with the Punjab government.

Sharing the data of the study, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr VK Paul said 4,868 police personnel were not vaccinated and out of them, 15 died due to coronavirus infection, which comes down to 3.08 incidence per thousand.

Then out of 35,856 police personnel who were administered one dose, nine died, which translates to 0.25 per thousand. A total of 42,720 received both doses of the vaccine and out of them two died, which translates to 0.05 incidence per thousand, he said at a press conference.

"Police personnel fall in high-risk group. From

these numbers, we find that one dose offers 92 per cent protection from death while both doses give 98 per cent protection," Mr Paul said.

"Such studies and their findings show that vaccination eliminates serious disease and deaths. So have faith in the vaccines as they are effective and vaccines should be embraced," he said.

88 from Karnataka.

A total of 4,01,050 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 1,22,353 from Maharashtra, 35,222 from Karnataka, 32,818 from Tamil Nadu, 24,983 from Delhi, 22,616 from Uttar Pradesh, 17,758 from West Bengal and 16,086 from Punjab, as per the data.

The ministry stressed that more than 70 percent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

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

Students climb "Network Tree" in Maharashtra village for online classes

Gondia, 03 Jul [NDTV]: Weak mobile internet connectivity has pushed several students in a village in Maharashtra's Gondia district to climb a "network tree" in search of uninterrupted signals for online classes.

Internet penetration is still a challenge in many rural areas which sits at odds with the Digital India narrative by the central government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking to beneficiaries of various schemes of Digital India programme at a recent event, said he believes this to be "India's techade".

Atul Gondhale, a student whose village

is 18 km away, walked through fields to reach a particular tree to find network for his online polytechnic college class. The villagers have named it "network tree".

"Every day one has to come near this tree to study. Often classes are missed due to heavy rain in monsoon. This is the only place where the network is good, other places have no network," says Atul Gondhale.

This tree, which is about 200 meters away from the lone mobile network tower in the area, is the only spot where students of the village say

they can access the internet. It has become the students' watering hole.

For the last 15 months, around 150 students of the village get their notebooks for online studies and reach here with a mobile phone, pens, headphones.

There is no internet available on the phone at home or other nearby places.

Those who do not want to come here, have to travel far to the next village.

"We can't attend online classes from home, and we have to bring books here. Sometimes there is a class at 8 or

8:30 at night. Yet we have to come here to study. There is no network available on our mobile phones. If we have to reach the teacher or pass on information by calling, that is not possible," says Mayur Hattimare, a student.

When the government decided to shut schools and introduce online classes due to the pandemic, it was seen as a move to save lives.

But the lack of necessary infrastructure, including poor internet reach in several parts of India, is now a huge challenge for students on the other side of the internet divide.

Seagram's Royal Stag brings a Make It Large story

SILIGURI, 03 JUL: Seagram's Royal Stag showcases the inspirational journey of a young mountaineer, Harshvardhan Joshi who climbed the Mt. Everest & reached the summit in his very first attempt.

Harshvardhan Joshi, though only 25, is a seasoned mountaineer from Vasai, Maharashtra who

found his calling for mountaineering at the age of 18. An engineer by profession, Harshvardhan became the youngest Indian to climb Stok Kangri (20K feet) solo, in 2016. Harshvardhan continued to follow his dream of conquering Mt. Everest with a passion to succeed. His goal was clear and in order to

achieve it, he followed a strict regime of endurance training for last 6 months.

Excited about Royal Stag's Make It Large Stories launch, Kartik Mohindra, CMO, Pernod Ricard India, said, "Royal Stag has always been an iconic brand that motivates people to dream, achieve and make it large in life. Giving life to this

belief, we are proud to bring alive the story of Harshvardhan Joshi & his quest to scale Mt. Everest and reach the summit." Harshvardhan Joshi said, "I could not think of better partners for my first attempt to scale Mt. Everest than Royal Stag. Their philosophy of 'Make it large' perfectly describes this expedition."

Elephant dies after getting stuck in wetland in Assam

GOLAGHAT, JUL 3 (PTI): A tusk-less adult elephant was found dead in a wetland in Assam's Golaghat district on Saturday, forest officials said.

The elephant had fallen into the Sungihola waterbody under Khumtai outpost of the district on Friday morning and after being stuck there for a day, it died, they said.

After a post-mortem was conducted, the body was buried in the vicinity, they added.



ADB PROJECT DIVISION ROADS & BRIDGES DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM NIRMAN BHAWAN CORRIGENDUM

With reference to E-Procurement Notice vide Ref. No. 01/E-Tender-GoS/R&B (ADB)/2021-22, dated: 22.06.2021, published vide R.O. No. 75/IPR/Classi./21-22, Dt: 22/06/2021.

E-Procurement Notice

The Project Director, ADB Cell, Roads and Bridges Department, on behalf of the Governor of Sikkim invites percentage rate bid through e-procurement online in the website www.sikimtender.gov.in by contractors of appropriate class registered with state government for execution of work. The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment with his/her own Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). The Original copies of EMD & tender fee must be delivered in hard copy to the Project Director (ADB), Roads and Bridges Department, Nirman Bhawan, Gangtok, personally on 02nd August 2021 up to 1600 Hrs. The bids whose hard copy is not received by Project Director (ABD) during the time given will be considered non responsive for bidding even if submitted online.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender Value/ bid Value (Rs.in Lakh)	Eligibility of Contractor	Bid Security (EMD) 2.5% of the Bid Value (Rs.inLakhs)	Cost of Tender Form (Bid Form (Rs. In Lakh)	Completion Period
1.	Restoration work along Melli-Nayabazar Road (SK-01) and along Nayabazar to Namchi (SK-02) South Sikkim.	1723.90	Class I-A	43.10	1.00	12 months.

The date and submission of completed bid document is as under;

1	Publication of online Tender in e-procurement portal	29.06.2021
2.	Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal	29.06.2021
3.	Date & time for seeking clarification w.r.t tenders	16.07.2021 at 1300 hrs.
4.	Last date of online submission of completed bids	29.07.2021 up to 1600 hours.
5.	Date of submission of hard copies (Tender Fee and Security Bid)	02.08.2021 up to 1600 hours.
6.	Date of opening of Tender bids	03.08.2021 at 1100 hours.
7.	Place of opening of bids	Office of the Project Director (ABD), Roads and Bridges Department, Nirman Bhawan Gangtok.

*Sd/-
Project Director, ADB
Roads and Bridges Department,
Gangtok*

**R.O. NO. 85/IPR/Pub/Classi/21-22
Date: 02.07.2021**

India records 44,111 new COVID-19 cases, 738 deaths

NEW DELHI, JUL 3 (PTI): India saw a single-day rise of 44,111 new coronavirus infections, raising its tally to 3,05,02,362, while the death toll climbed to 4,01,050 with 738 new fatalities, the lowest in 86 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

The active cases -- 4,95,533 -- were recorded below five lakh after 97 days and comprised 1.62 percent of the total infections. The national COVID-19 recovery rate improved to 97.06 percent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

A net decline of 14,104 cases has been recorded in active coronavirus infections in a span of 24 hours, it said.

Also, 18,76,036 tests

were conducted on Thursday, taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 41,64,16,463.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.35 percent. It has been less than 5 percent for 26 consecutive days, the ministry said.

The weekly positivity rate has declined to 2.50 percent, it added.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for 51st consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,96,05,779, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.31 percent, the data stated.

Cumulative vaccine

doses administered so far has reached 34.46 crore under the Nationwide Vaccination Drive, it said.

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

The country crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore cases on May 4 and 3 crore on June 23.

The Health Ministry said the 738 new fatalities include 156 from Maharashtra, 146 from Kerala, 97 from Tamil Nadu and

Heal and Restore Lost Youth

Solve underlying conditions leading to juvenile crime

It is not rare for police records to reveal that kids, some of them not yet 17, are often picked up at holding on to consignments substances of abuse. Often, the “drug busts” result from suspects being picked up for an unrelated incident, like lurking around “suspiciously” or spotted trying to burgle or steal unattended stuff like tyres from parked cars. Invariably, a body search leads to the recovery of prescription drugs of abuse, which we are told are large enough to peddle, but check with anyone who has battled addiction and they will attest that 100 capsules of Spasmo Proxyvon, which might appear to most as a “haul,” is barely a week’s supply for an advanced addict. Depending on what is recovered, the kids get booked under SADA or NDPS Act. Either way, given that most of these kids come from under-privileged families and have a history of getting into trouble, they receive convictions and rarely much help from even their families.

This situation is shared here because it flags the several issues which confront Sikkim at present, none of which are being addressed in earnest or with any success. Such youth are most of the times not peddlers but mules holding the consignment for someone else and often paid in kind with some free supplies for their addiction. In all probability, their addiction happened after their services were used. There is obviously always someone [not necessarily one person but could be a series of ‘seniors’] who initiates the young into the maze of addiction. May be these people even sponsor the habit initially and then use the control they have over the addiction to even use them as mules in a stereotypical process of the young getting sucked in and then left trapped in the vortex of addiction and then criminality.

The near instinctive reflex to seize an opportunity for petty crime, as is being displayed by too many youth, also suggests that they do not have other resources to feed their addiction – whether to drugs or gadgets.

Over interpretation?

Perhaps. But definitely close enough to the ground reality for a sizeable chunk of the youth in the region to warrant a concerted societal engagement. Petty crimes by young delinquents have noticeably increased in Sikkim and addiction has been building up as a major malady for a while now; and yet, at the non-governmental, non-police level there has been no response.

This is not about fixing blame, but an appeal to begin a social engagement to address the problem. It is also important that instead of pointing fingers, a collaborative effort is attempted to save the young. The present response to the situation punishes and excludes people, who, because of their young age, should be seen as victims in need of healing and inclusion. It is time to stop dealing with the symptoms of youth crime and put some community-based participatory effort into solving the underlying conditions.

Kids are using soft drinks to fake Covid-positive tests – Here’s the science and how to spot it

MARK LORCH
THECONVERSATION.COM

Children are always going to find cunning ways to bunk off school, and the latest trick is to fake a positive COVID-19 lateral flow test (LFT) using soft drinks. So how are fruit juices, cola and devious kids fooling the tests and is there a way to tell a fake positive result from a real one? I’ve tried to find out.

First, I thought it best to check the claims, so I cracked open bottles of cola and orange juice, then deposited a few drops directly onto LFTs. Sure enough, a few minutes later, two lines appeared on each test, supposedly indicating the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19.

It’s worth understanding how the tests work. If you open up an LFT device, you’ll find a strip of paper-like material, called nitrocellulose, and a small red pad, hidden under the plastic casing below the T-line. Absorbed to the red pad are antibodies that bind to the COVID-19 virus. They are also attached to gold nanoparticles (tiny particles of gold actually appear red), which allow us to see where the antibodies are on the device. When you do a test, you mix your sample with a liquid buffer solution, ensuring the sample stays at an optimum pH, before dripping it on the strip.

The fluid wicks up the nitrocellulose strip and picks up the gold and antibodies. The latter also bind to the virus, if present. Further up the strip, next to the T (for test), are more antibodies that bind the virus. But these antibodies are not free to move – they are stuck to the nitrocellulose. As the red smear of gold-labelled antibodies pass this second set of antibodies, these also grab hold of the virus. The virus is then bound to both sets of antibodies – leaving everything, including the gold, immobilised on a line next to the T on the device, indicating a positive test.

Gold antibodies that haven’t



bound to the virus carry on up the strip where they meet a third set of antibodies, not designed to pick up COVID-19, stuck at the C (for control) line. These trap the remaining gold particles, without having to do so via the virus. This final line is used to indicate the test has worked.

ACID TEST

So how can a soft drink cause the appearance of a red T line? One possibility is that the drinks contain something that the antibodies recognise and bind to, just as they do to the virus. But this is rather unlikely. The reason antibodies are used in tests like these is that they are incredibly fussy about what they bind to. There’s all sorts of stuff in the snot and saliva collected by the swabs you take from the nose and mouth, and the antibodies totally ignore this mess of protein, other viruses and remains of your breakfast. So they aren’t going to react to the ingredients of a soft drink.

A much more likely explanation is that something in the drinks is affecting the function of the antibodies. A range of fluids, from fruit juice to cola, have been used to fool the tests, but they all have one thing in

common – they are highly acidic. The citric acid in orange juice, phosphoric acid in cola and malic acid in apple juice give these beverages a pH between 2.5 and 4. These are pretty harsh conditions for antibodies, which have evolved to work largely within the bloodstream, with its almost neutral pH of about 7.4.

Maintaining an ideal pH for the antibodies is key to the correct function of the test, and that’s the job of the liquid buffer solution that you mix your sample with, provided with the test. The critical role of the buffer is highlighted by the fact that if you mix cola with the buffer – as shown in this debunking of an Austrian politician’s claim that mass testing is worthless – then the LFTs behave exactly as you’d expect: negative for COVID-19.

So without the buffer, the antibodies in the test are fully exposed to the acidic pH of the beverages. And this has a dramatic effect on their structure and function. Antibodies are proteins, which are comprised of amino acid building blocks, attached together to form long, linear chains. These chains fold up into very specific structures. Even a small change

to the chains can dramatically impact a protein’s function. These structures are maintained by a network of many thousands of interactions between the various parts of the protein. For example, negatively charged parts of a protein will be attracted to positively charged areas.

But in acidic conditions, the protein becomes increasingly positively charged. As a result, many of the interactions that hold the protein together are disrupted, the delicate structure of the protein is affected and it no longer functions correctly. In this case, the antibodies’ sensitivity to the virus is lost.

Given this, you might expect that the acidic drinks would result in completely blank tests. But denatured proteins are sticky beasts. All of those perfectly evolved interactions that would normally hold the protein together are now orphaned and looking for something to bind to. So a likely explanation is that the immobilised antibodies at the T-line stick directly to the gold particles as they pass by, producing the notorious cola-induced false positive result.

Is there then a way to spot a fake positive test? The antibodies (like most proteins) are capable of refolding and regaining their function when they are returned to more favourable conditions. So I tried washing a test that had been dripped with cola with buffer solution, and sure enough the immobilised antibodies at the T-line regained normal function and released the gold particles, revealing the true negative result on the test.

Children, I applaud your ingenuity, but now that I’ve found a way to uncover your trickery I suggest you use your cunning to devise a set of experiments and test my hypothesis. Then we can publish your results in a peer-reviewed journal.

[the writer is Professor of Science Communication and Chemistry, University of Hull]

Most buildings were designed for an earlier climate – here’s what will happen as global warming accelerates

RAN BOYDELL
THECONVERSATION.COM

Climate change will affect every aspect of our lives – including the buildings we live and work in. Most people in the US, for example, spend about 90% of their time indoors. Climate change is fundamentally altering the environmental conditions in which these buildings are designed to function.

Architects and engineers design buildings and other structures, like bridges, to operate within the parameters of the local climate. They’re built using materials and following design standards that can withstand the range of temperatures, rainfall, snow and wind that are expected, plus any geological issues such as earthquakes, subsidence and ground water levels.

When any of those parameters are exceeded, chances are some aspect of the building will fail. If there are high winds, some roof tiles may be ripped off. If, after days of heavy rain, the water table rises, the basement might flood. This is normal, and these problems cannot be designed out entirely. After the event has passed, the damage can be repaired and additional measures can reduce the risk of it happening again.

But climate change will breed conditions where these parameters are exceeded more often and to a far greater degree. Some changes, like higher average air temperatures and humidity, will become permanent. What were previously considered once in a century floods may become a regular occurrence.

Some of these impacts are fairly obvious. Houses will be more prone to overheating, putting the lives of residents at risk, which is what has happened during the recent “heat dome” over North America. Flooding will happen more often and inundate greater areas, to the point that some places might have to be abandoned. The village of Fairbourne in Wales has already been identified as a likely candidate. Failure to act on both of these threats in the UK was highlighted in a recent report by the Climate Change Committee.

To some extent, these impacts will be localised and containable, with fairly simple remedies. For example, overheating can be reduced by shading windows with awnings or blinds, good insulation, and ample ventilation. Perhaps more worrying are the insidious effects



of climate change which gradually undermine the core functions of a building in less obvious ways.

TERMITES AND MELTING ASPHALT

More intense wind and rain will cause external cladding to deteriorate more rapidly and leak more often. Higher temperatures will expand the regions where some insects can live. That includes timber-eating termites that can cause major structural damage, or malaria-carrying mosquitoes which living spaces must be redesigned to protect us from.

Materials expand as they get hotter, especially metals, which can cause them to buckle once their designed tolerance is exceeded. For one skyscraper in Shenzhen, China, high temperatures were partially blamed for causing the structure to shake, forcing its evacuation, as the steel frame stretched in the heat. Extreme temperatures can even cause materials to melt, resulting in roads “bleeding” as the surface layer

of bitumen softens.

Subsidence – when the ground below a structure gives way, causing it to crack or collapse – is also expected to happen more often in a warmer world. Buildings with foundations in clay soils are particularly vulnerable, as the soils swell when they absorb water, then harden and shrink as they dry out. Changing rainfall patterns will exacerbate this. Over the next 50 years, for example, more than 10% of properties in Britain will be affected by subsidence.

CONCRETE CANCER

Perhaps the biggest concern is how climate change will affect reinforced concrete, one of the most widely used materials on Earth. Used in everything from skyscrapers and bridges to the lintels above windows in homes, reinforced concrete is made by placing steel rods within a mould and pouring wet concrete in. Once dry, this produces incredibly strong structures.

But a warmer wetter climate will play havoc with the durability of this material. When the steel inside the concrete gets wet it rusts and expands, cracking the concrete and weakening the structure in a process sometimes referred to as “concrete cancer”.

Buildings in coastal areas are especially susceptible as the chloride in salt water accelerates rusting. Rising sea levels will raise the water table and make it saltier, affecting building foundations, while salt-spray will spread further on stronger winds.

At the same time, the concrete is affected by carbonation, a process where carbon dioxide from the air reacts with the cement to form a different chemical element, calcium carbonate. This lowers the pH of the concrete, making the steel even more prone to corrosion. Since the 1950s, global CO₂ levels have increased from about 300 parts per million in the atmosphere to well over 400. More CO₂ means more carbonation.

The tragic recent collapse of an apartment building in Miami in the US may be an early warning of this process gaining speed. While the exact cause of the collapse is still being investigated, some are suggesting it might be linked to climate change.

The local mayor, Charles Burkett, summed up the bewilderment many felt: “It just doesn’t happen. You don’t see buildings falling down in America.”

Whether or not the link to climate change proves to be true, it is nevertheless a wake up call to the fragility of our buildings. It should also be seen as a clear demonstration of a critical point: wealth does not protect against the effects of climate change. Rich nations have the financial clout to adapt more rapidly and to mitigate these impacts, but they can’t stop them at the border. Climate change is indiscriminate. Buildings are vulnerable to these impacts no matter where in the world they are, and if anything, the modern buildings of developed countries have more things in them that can go wrong than simpler traditional structures.

The only option is to begin adapting buildings to meet the changing parameters in which they are operating. The sooner we begin retrofitting existing buildings and constructing new ones that can withstand climate change, the better.

[the writer is Visiting Lecturer in Sustainable Development, Heriot-Watt University]

SG denies meeting West Bengal BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari

NEW DELHI, JUL 3 (PTI): Solicitor General Tushar Mehta has denied meeting West Bengal BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari at his official residence here after the Trinamool Congress wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his removal over the issue.

The letter to the prime minister was written by TMC MPs Derek O'Brien, Sukhendu Sekhar Roy and Mahua Maitra stating that the alleged meeting between Adhikari and the law officer "reeks of impropriety" as the BJP MLA is an accused in Narada and Saradha cases which are being investigated.

Shri Suvendu Adhikari did come to my residence cum office on Thursday at around 3:00 PM, unannounced. Since I was already in a pre-scheduled meeting



in my chamber, my staff requested him to sit in the waiting room of my office building and offered him a cup of tea.

When my meeting was over and thereaf-

ter my PPS informed me about his arrival, I requested my PPS to convey to Mr Adhikari my inability to meet him and apologise as he had to wait. Mr Adhikari

thanked my PPS and left without insisting to meet me. The question of my meeting with Mr Adhikari therefore did not arise, the law officer said.

Adhikari, the leader of the opposition in the West Bengal assembly, had also denied the meeting, saying that he had recently gone to Mehta's residence in Delhi regarding a case related to "post-poll violence" in the state but "could not meet him in person".

The TMC MPs had claimed that Adhikari was accused in various cases of cheating, bribery and illegal gratification related to the Narada sting operation and the Saradha scam.

"The meeting between Adhikari and the solicitor general not only reeks of impropriety, there is a direct conflict of interest and also taints the position of the second highest law officer of the country, the Solicitor General," the TMC lawmakers had said in the letter.

Dihing Patkai formally inaugurated as National Park

JEYPORE (ASSAM), JUL 3 (PTI): Assam Minister for Environment and Forest Parimal Suklabaidya on Saturday formally inaugurated the Dihing Patkai National Park. It is a red-letter day for Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts and the state as a whole that the Dihing Patkai has been created as the seventh National Park, the minister said at a function organised here to mark the occasion. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had declared Dihing Patkai as a National Park on June 5 - the World Environment Day- and the official process was completed with the publication of the notification on June 15.

Two national parks, including Raimona National Park in the Bodoland Territorial Region, have come up with-

in the first month of the second BJP government in the state.

The rich floral and faunal diversity of the park, well known for its rainforest, will soon attain the stature of one of the best national parks in the country, the minister said.

He called upon everyone to live in complete harmony with nature that 'provides us sustenance and keeps us alive'.

The government would take necessary steps for infrastructure development of the park to attract tourists and open up vistas of opportunities for the unemployed youths, he added.

Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries, Ramenwar Teli and legis-



lators of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts, and officials of both the district were present on the occasion.

Earlier, the Forest Minister handed over the formal notification of the park to the people's representatives and the Director of conservation

NGO, Nature's Beckon,

Soumyadeep Datta

He also unveiled the plaque at the main entrance of the park.

The Park which falls under the Jeypore range and Soraipung range of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts covers an area of 234.26 sq km.

Known all over for its rainforest, the last

remaining stretches of Assam Valley Tropical Wet Evergreen Forests, the park is home to elephants, hoolock gibbons, golden cat, clouded leopard and other animals.

Till date, 47 mammal species, 47 reptile species and 310 butterfly species have been recorded.

Odisha man kills brother with wooden plank



KENDRAPARA, JUL 3 (PTI): A 32-year-old man allegedly killed his younger brother in Odisha's Kendrapara district, police said on Saturday.

Surendra Samal attacked his younger brother Rajendra Sa-

mal (30) in a sudden fit of rage with a wooden plank at Sobala village on Friday night, an officer said.

The victim who sustained head injuries bled to death on the spot, Patamundai police station

inspector Rakesh Kumar Tripathy said.

The suspect fled after committing the crime and a search is on to arrest him. An investigation is underway to ascertain the exact cause behind the attack, he added.

One more arrested in vaccination scam in Kolkata

KOLKATA, JUL 3 (PTI): Kolkata Police has arrested another associate of Debanjan Deb, who was apprehended for allegedly masterminding fake vaccination camps in the metropolis, officials said on Saturday.

So far, nine people have been held in connection with the case, they said.

The man was arrest-

ed near the the Central Metro Station in B B Ganguly Street late on Friday.

"The accused is a resident of Tangra and had played a key role in organising a vaccination camp at City College," a senior police officer said.

Deb (28) was arrested last week for masquerading as a joint commissioner of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation

and organising dubious immunisation camps in the city, where people were administered fake vaccines, including TMC MP Mimi Chakraborty.

Six of his associates have already been apprehended.

Among other sections of the IPC, police has charged Deb and his aides with attempt to murder.

Bengal logs 1,422 new COVID-19 cases, 23 more fatalities

KOLKATA, JUL 2 (PTI): The COVID-19 toll in West Bengal rose to 17,158 after 23 fatalities were registered in the state on Friday, the health department said in its bulletin.

As many as 1,422 fresh cases pushed the tally to 15,02,706, the department said.

North 24 Parganas district accounted for eight deaths and the city for five fatalities, the bulletin said.

At least 1,840 more people recuperated from the disease since Thursday, raising the total number of recoveries to 14,65,219.

The discharge rate

currently stands at 97.51 per cent.

Bengal, at present, has 19,729 active cases, the bulletin said.

A total of 52,166 samples were tested in the state since Thursday, taking the number of such examinations conducted so far to 1,43,25,099.

Tripura extends COVID curfew till July 9



AGARTALA, JUL 3 (PTI): The Tripura government has extended the COVID curfew from 2 pm to 5 am in Agartala and eight other urban local bodies (ULBs) till July 9, a notification said.

However, the night curfew from 6 pm to 5 am has been lifted from the villages.

The COVID curfew in the ULBs, first imposed on May 16 and then re-

peatedly extended, was scheduled to end on July 2.

"The COVID curfew will remain in force in the jurisdiction of Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC) and eight other ULBs till July 9," the notification issued by Chief Secretary Kumar Alok said.

Besides Agartala, the restrictions have also been imposed in the mu-

nicipal councils of Ranirbazar, Udaipur, Kailashahar, Dharanagar, Khawai, Belonia, and nagar panchayats of Jirani and Panisagar.

Shopping malls and market complexes will remain closed at all times and bazaar committees shall deploy volunteers to ensure strict adherence to social distancing.

Vehicles can only ply between 5 am and 2 pm

for essential purposes. However, vehicles ferrying medical supplies will be allowed to ply even after 2 pm.

There shall be a total ban on the movement of individuals between 2 pm and 5 am except for prescribed exemptions, it said.

All government and private offices shall remain open till 4 pm with 50 per cent attendance.

Social, political, religious, academic, or other gatherings shall be prohibited. Only essential government meetings with a maximum of 20 participants will be allowed.

Movie theatres, multiplexes, gymnasiums, swimming pools, salons and bars shall remain closed at all times.

Restaurants will remain open only till 2 pm.

**DONATE BOOKS FOR NOBLE CAUSE
TO BUILD LIBRARY**

*If anyone willing to donate books or
support through
Finance, than you are most welcome*

**"GIVING IS NOT JUST
ABOUT
MAKE A DONATION,
ITS ABOUT MAKING
DIFFERENCE"**

For more Details Contact : 6294745117,8768809862

Email : chitishchetri7@gmail.com

SummitTIMES

Semenya misses Tokyo, may be forced out of Olympics for good

CAPE TOWN, JUL 3 (AP): This could be it for Caster Semenya and the Olympics. Forced out of her favorite race by World Athletics’ testosterone rules, the two-time Olympic champion in the 800 meters took a late shot at qualifying for Tokyo in the 5,000 meters, an event not affected by the hormone regulations. She came up short.

Now 30, Semenya’s hopes of making it back to the Olympics are dwindling. The South African once said she wanted to run at top track events until she was 40.

Now, her future ambitions depend on a final, long-shot legal appeal of the testosterone rules or transforming from the world’s dominant middle-distance runner into a successful long-distance athlete. That’s going to be hard for her.

Semenya is the athlete that has perhaps stoked the most controversy in track and field over the last decade. If there are no more appearances on the biggest stage, it’s been a career like no other.

In 12 years at the top, Semenya has won two Olympic golds and three world championship titles, but her success has come amid near-constant interference by track authorities. She has only competed free of restrictions of one type or another for three of those 12 years.

WHY CAN’T SEMENYA DEFEND HER 800 TITLE IN TOKYO?

In 2018, world track and field’s governing body introduced rules it said were aimed at female athletes with conditions called differences of sex development, or DSDs. The key for World Athletics is that these athletes have testosterone levels that are higher than the typical female range.

The track body argues that gives them an unfair advantage. Semenya is the highest-profile athlete affected by the regulations, but not the only one.

The rules demand that Semenya lower her testosterone levels artificially by either taking birth control pills daily, having hormone-blocking injections or undergoing surgery to be allowed to run in races from 400 meters to one mile.

Semenya has simply refused to do that, pointing out the irony that in a sport where doping is such a scourge, authorities want her to take drugs to be eligible to run at the Olympics.

“Why will I take drugs?” Semenya said in 2019.

“I’m a pure athlete. I don’t cheat. They should focus on doping, not us.”

BUT SHE CAN RUN THE 5,000?

Yes. Strangely, World Athletics decided to only enforce the testosterone rules for track events from 400 meters to one mile, raising criticism from Semenya’s camp that the regulations were specifically designed to target her because of her dominance.

It means Semenya can compete in the 100 and 200 meters and long-distance races without lowering her testosterone levels. Field events are also unregulated.

After a brief go at 200 meters, Semenya attempted to qualify for Tokyo in the 5,000 meters, running races in Pretoria and Durban in South Africa and, most recently, at international meets in Germany and Belgium last month. She never came within 20 seconds of the Olympic qualifying mark.

THE COURT BATTLE

Semenya continues to fight against the testosterone regulations in court. She has launched three legal appeals against the rules, calling them unfair and discriminatory, and appears determined to wage her legal fight to the very end.

Having failed in appeals at the Court of Arbitration for Sport and the Swiss supreme court, Semenya has now lodged an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights.

Semenya’s first appeal at sport’s highest court revealed a bitter battle between her and track authorities, centered on World Athletics’ claim in the closed-doors hearing that she was “biologically male.”

Semenya angrily refuted that, having been identified as female at birth and having identified as female her whole life. She called the assertion “deeply hurtful.”

OTHER ATHLETES AFFECTED

The issue won’t disappear with Semenya. Just this week, two 18-year-old female athletes from Namibia were barred from competing in the 400 meters at the Tokyo Olympics after they underwent medical tests and it was discovered they had high natural testosterone levels. One of them, Christine Mboma, is the world under-20 record holder.

The two runners that finished second and third behind Semenya at the 2016 Olympics, Francine Niyonsaba of Burundi and Margaret Wambui of Kenya, have said publicly they also are affected by the testosterone regulations and have been banned from the 800, too, unless they undergo medical intervention.

Niyonsaba has qualified for the Olympics in the 5,000 meters.

WHAT NOW?

Semenya has been clear that the rules won’t force her out of track and she’ll keep running and keep enjoying the sport, even if she can’t go to the biggest events.

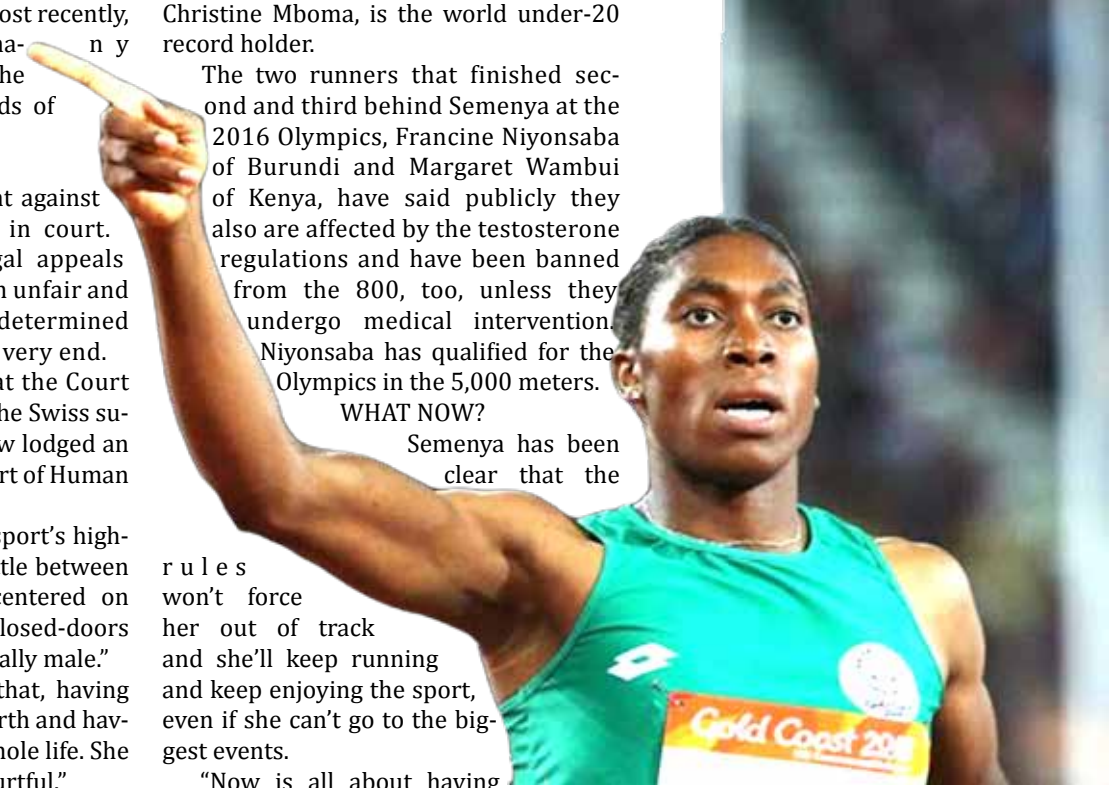
“Now is all about having

fun,” she said at a meet in South Africa in April.

“We’ve achieved everything that we wanted’ all the major titles’ inspiring the youth.”

“For me, it’s not about being at the Olympics,” she said.

“It’s being healthy and running good times and being in the field for the longest.



Simone’s Showcase; Biles bidding for history in Tokyo

WASHINGTON, JUL 3 (AP): Simone Biles is aware of the pressure. She welcomes it. Practically invites it. Look no further than the sequined goat she’s nicknamed Goldie that occasionally finds its way onto her competition leotard.

The symbol a play on the acronym for greatest of all-time is both a nod to her hard-earned status as the most talented gymnast (and maybe athlete) on the planet and the outsized expectations she faces, both internally and externally.

It’s a delicate dance, one that will take center stage when the 24-year-old American steps in front of the world in Tokyo. No pressure. All she has to do is somehow one-up her staggering performance in Rio de Janeiro, when she won five medals (including four gold) and entered the rarified air of Olympic royalty reserved for the likes of Michael Phelps, Usain Bolt and Nadia Comaneci.

Yes, it’s a lot. Then again, whatever bar is set for her by others pales in comparison to the bar Biles sets for herself. It’s why she found herself in tears at the U.S. Olympic Trials, when an off night in the finals left her frustrated and angry.

I feel like anything rather than my best will tick me off, Biles said.

It’s that drive that led Biles to return to the gym after a year off following her remarkable success in Brazil. New coaches Laurent and CecilleLandi helped her put together a plan that didn’t ask her to simply regain the skills that made her the best in the world, but build upon them.

She’s unveiled a series of boundary-pushing elements over the last four years, and her latest the Yurchenko



double-pike vault, which has only previously been done in international competition by men will become the latest to bear her name in the sport’s Code of Points if she’s able to land it in Japan.

Yes, Biles is well aware of her influence. She didn’t get into this trying to become a point of inspiration. Yet she’s hardly running from the responsibility.

When somebody is striving for perfection and doing her skills, it pushes other athletes to know that it’s possible and that they can do it, too, Biles said.

So, I feel like I would say we have reached a point where gymnastics is getting more difficult and more difficult and a little bit more dangerous. So we’re kind of walking on eggshells here, but it’s exciting to watch.

Other things to look for in Tokyo:

ABUSE SCANDALS

The competition floor isn’t the only place the sport is treading carefully.

Gymnastics has spent much of the last five years trying to address a culture of abuse at the elite level all over the globe. The scandal surrounding disgraced for-

mer U.S. national team doctor Larry Nassar who sexually abused athletes (Biles included) under the guise of medical treatment started a reckoning of sorts.

Federations from the U.S. to Great Britain to Australia have been grappling with how to create a healthier atmosphere for their elite athletes. Whether any real progress has been made won’t be known for years, though the top American women allow the vibe is more relaxed now than it was during former national team coordinator Martha Karolyi’s highly successful and highly divisive tenure.

I feel like it’s a lot more fun, said MyKayla Skinner, who will compete as an individual qualifier.

TALENT OVERLOAD

At least for the Americans, who are heavily favored to win their third straight Olympic title. Sure, having Biles helps. But the U.S. squad is as loaded as ever. Sunisa Lee, who actually outscored Biles in the all-around during the second day at Olympic Trials, is a revelation on uneven bars. Jordan Chiles steadiness in 2021 turned her from a fringe

Olympic candidate to a gymnast who may come back to the States with multiple medals.

There’s so much wiggle room, national team coordinator Tom Forster admitted he actually potentially sacrificed a few tenths of a point by choosing Grace McCallum to fill out the four-woman team instead of Skinner.

We’re so, so fortunate that our athletes are so strong that I don’t think it’s going to come down to tenths of a point in Tokyo, Forster said.

THE MEN

It might, however, in the men’s competition, where Russia, China and potentially host Japan figure to be in a fight for the top of the podium in the team event. Russian Nikita Nagornyy, the 2019 world all-around champion, leads the field in the men’s all around.

There has been a changing of the guard of sorts among the American men, who are trying to get back to the podium for the first time since the 2014 world championships. Brody Malone, a 20-year-old from northwest Georgia, supplanted six-time national champion and two-time Olympian Sam

Mikulak as the program’s standard-bearer after winning both the U.S. championships and the Olympic Trials.

ONE MORE TIME

The Games will also serve as a goodbye for a couple of Olympic legends. Two-time Olympic champion Kohei Uchimura of Japan in many ways, the men’s equivalent of Biles will get a chance to say take a bow in front of his homeland after qualifying as an individual. And 46-year-old Oksana Chusovitina of Uzbekistan will compete in her record eighth Olympics.

Chusovitina has pledged she’s ready to retire several times through the years. Yet this is likely her last stand. It may be for Biles, too. But maybe not. Her coaches are French, and she hasn’t ruled out a third Games as a way of thanking them for helping rekindle her love for the sport.

For now, however, Tokyo awaits.

I’m very relieved that Olympic Trials is over and we still have a lot of work to put in once we get over there,” she said.

But I’m super excited.”

So is everyone else.

Brazil calls striker Richarlison into Olympic soccer team

RIO DE JANEIRO, JUL 3 (AP): Defending champion Brazil have named striker Richarlison to its Olympic soccer team.

The 24-year-old is currently playing at Copa America with the senior team.

Richarlison said after Brazil’s 1-0 win against Chile in the Copa America quarterfinals that his club Everton had allowed him to play in Japan.

I picked up a fight there, I spent all day arguing with executives, I called the coach, Richarlison jokingly said.

It is very important for me to get this experience as the World Cup gets closer, I want to get more mature. When I heard Everton allowed

me to go it was a great joy.

Brazil’s soccer confederation said Friday it had made three changes in the original squad announced June 17 by coach Andre Jardine.

Olympique Marseille midfielder Gerson, Zenit winger Malcom and Flamengo striker Pedro were replaced by PAOK’s Douglas Augusto, Arsenal’s Gabriel Martinelli and Richarlison.

The clubs where Gerson, Malcom and Pedro play did not accept releasing them for the Olympics because the tournament is not listed on FIFA’s international match calendar. That was also the case of Paris Saint-Germain

with superstar Neymar, who also wanted to play in Japan.

Neymar led Brazil to Olympic gold at the Maracana Stadium in the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil also added another four players after FIFA authorized the move to Olympic teams; goalkeeper Lucas (Vasco da Gama), defender Bruno Fuchs (CSKA Moscow), Abner (Athletico Paranaense) and striker Reinier (Borussia Dortmund).

Men’s soccer kicks off ahead of the July 23 opening ceremony in Tokyo. Brazil’s first game in the Olympics is on July 22 against Germany in Yokohama.

Italy and Spain to meet again at a European Championship

London, Jul 3 (AP): Italy and Spain are going to meet at the European Championship for the fourth tournament in a row, and this time a place in the final will be on the line.

The match is scheduled for Tuesday at Wembley Stadium in London.

FORM

The first Euro 2020 semifinal matchup was determined Friday after Italy beat top-ranked Belgium 2-1 in Munich and Spain defeated Switzerland in a penalty shootout in St. Petersburg.

Italy is Europe’s hottest team, extending its unbeaten run to 32 matches and its winning streak to 13 with Friday’s result. By contrast, Spain is on a 12-match unbeaten run and drew its opening two group matches.

GOAL THREAT

The match will be a face-off between the tournament’s top-scoring teams, as it stands. Spain has found the net 12 times after opening

with a scoreless draw against Sweden, while Italy has 11 goals.

The goals have been shared throughout the teams with neither having a player who has scored more than two. Ciro Immobile, Matteo Pessina, Manuel Locatelli and Lorenzo Insigne have two each for Italy, and Pablo Sarabia, Ferran Torres and Alvaro Morata have the same amount for Spain.

HISTORY

Their most recent meetings came in qualifying for the 2018 World Cup. Italy’s loss and draw against Spain contributed to the team failing to qualify for the tournament for only the second time.

The last time either team reached a major tournament final was in 2012, when Spain beat Italy 4-0 to defend its European title.

Only two players from that match are in the lineups at Euro 2020. Spain still has midfielder Sergio Busquets, while Italy has veteran defenders

Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini.

Italy prevented Spain from winning a third consecutive European Championship by beating the defending champions 2-0 in the round of 16 at Euro 2016.

The Spanish beat Italy on penalties in the Euro 2008 quarterfinals before ending their 44-year trophy drought.

COACHES

Spain coach Luis Enrique was playing for his country at the 1994 World Cup when his nose was broken in the quarterfinals by Italy defender Mauro Tassotti.

Italy went on to reach the final that year, losing to Brazil on penalties.

Italy coach Roberto Mancini wasn’t part of his country’s squad at the 1994 World Cup because he opted out of international duty after not being sure of playing time. His return to the Italian national team only came in 2018, when he was hired as coach.

Afghan pullout has US spies reorienting in terrorism fight

WASHINGTON (AP): The two-decade war in Afghanistan has given U.S. spies a perch for keeping tabs on terrorist groups that might once again use the beleaguered nation to plan attacks against the U.S. homeland. But that will end soon.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan is leaving intelligence agencies scrambling for other ways to monitor and stop terrorists. They'll have to depend more on technology and their allies in the Afghan government — even as it faces an increasingly uncertain future once U.S. and NATO forces depart.

“You may not be blind, but you’re going to be legally blind,” said Rep. Mike Waltz, a Florida Republican and Green Beret who served in Afghanistan. Waltz said in an interview that while he believed American forces would still be able to detect threats, they would have to respond with lesser intelligence and more complex operations from bases outside the country.

The Afghanistan withdrawal was ordered by President Joe Biden. He has said it's time to end America's longest war after two decades of a conflict that killed 2,200 U.S. troops and 38,000 Afghan civilians, with a cost as much as \$1 trillion.

But that withdrawal comes with many uncertainties as a resurgent Taliban captures ground and fears mount that the country could soon fall into civil war. The U.S. is still working on agreements to base counterterrorism forces in the region and evacuate

thousands of interpreters and other Afghans who helped the American war effort.

CIA Director William Burns testified in April that fighters from al-Qaida and the Islamic State group are still operating in Afghanistan and “remain intent on recovering the ability to attack U.S. targets.”

“When the time comes for the U.S. military to withdraw, the U.S. government’s ability to collect and act on threats will diminish. That’s simply a fact,” Burns said. He added that the CIA and other U.S. agencies “retain a suite of capabilities” to monitor and stop threats.

Burns made a secret visit to Afghanistan in April and reassured Afghan officials that the U.S. would remain engaged in counterterrorism efforts, according to two officials familiar with the visit.

The CIA and Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment for this story.

The CIA has had a role in Afghanistan for more than 30 years, dating back to aiding rebels fighting the Soviet Union from 1979 to 1989. During the U.S. war, it is said to have carried out strikes against terror targets and trained Afghan fighters in groups known as Counter Terrorism Pursuit Teams. Those teams are feared by many Afghans and have been implicated in extrajudicial killings of civilians.

The Associated Press reported in April that the CIA was preparing to turn over control of those teams in six provinces to the Afghan intelligence



service, known as the National Directorate of Security. The closure of posts near Afghanistan's borders with Iran and Pakistan will make it harder to monitor hostile groups operating in those areas, and the withdrawal of Americans from Afghan agencies could worsen already troubling problems with corruption, experts said.

Washington has long struggled to gather intelligence even from its allies in Afghanistan. In the early years of the conflict, the U.S. was drawn into rivalries that resulted in targets that were driven by score-settling among factions in the country.

Retired Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, who led the Defense Intelligence Agency from 2017 to 2020, said U.S. authorities may be able to replace some of their lost footprint with intercepted communications as well as publicly available information posted on-

line, particularly with the growth of cellphone networks compared with the 1990s. And while Afghan forces have faltered against the Taliban, they can also provide valuable information, Ashley said. “We shouldn’t discount their ability to understand their ground truth,” said Ashley, now an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. “It’s their nature, it’s their culture, it’s their language.”

Former intelligence officials and experts noted that the CIA and other agencies already have to work without a military presence in other countries where militant groups threaten Americans.

Rep. Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat and former Army Ranger who served in Afghanistan, said human sources in Afghanistan were already limited and the U.S. has monitoring capabilities today that it didn’t have two decades ago.

“It’s still going to be very robust,” Crow said. “When you don’t have boots on the ground, it’s certainly more challenging, but we have capabilities and things that allow us to meet that challenge. It just becomes a little more difficult.”

Crow and Waltz are among a bipartisan group of lawmakers who have pushed the White House to quickly process visas for thousands of interpreters and other Afghans who helped American forces. More than 18,000 applications are pending. Senior U.S. officials have said the administration plans to carry out an evacuation later this summer but has not settled on a country or countries for what would likely be a temporary relocation.

Failing to protect Afghans waiting for visas could have “a huge chilling effect on people working with us going forward,” Waltz said.

Analysts differ on what to expect from the Taliban if it were to consolidate control over the country. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported in May that the Taliban’s “desires for foreign aid and legitimacy might marginally moderate its conduct over time,” driven in part by international attention and the proliferation of phones.

But Colin Clarke, director of policy and research at the Soufan Group, said he expected the Taliban to continue harboring al-Qaida and worried of a possible insurgency that could embolden extremists and become a regional conflict similar to what happened in Iraq after the American withdrawal there.

“I want us to pull out of Afghanistan in theory and be safe,” he said. “That’s just not from my analysis what’s going to happen.”

At least 19 missing as mudslide west of Tokyo hits houses

TOKYO, JUL 3 (AP): A powerful mudslide carrying a deluge of black water and debris crashed into rows of houses in a town west of Tokyo following heavy rains on Saturday, leaving at least 19 people missing, officials said.

Dozens of homes may have been buried in Atami, a town known for hot springs, said Shizuoka prefecture spokesman Takamichi Sugiyama.

Public broadcaster NHK gave the number of missing people at 20, but Sugiyama said the prefecture confirmed at least 19, although he said the number may grow.

Torrential rains have slammed parts of Japan starting earlier this week. Experts said dirt had been loosened, increasing landslide risks in a country filled with valleys and mountains.

Sugiyama said it had been raining hard in the area all morning. Self-defense forces will join fire-

fighters and police in the rescue operation, he added. Evacuation warnings were issued for a widespread area.

The landslides appeared to have struck multiple times, about as fast as a car.

Footage showed a powerful, black mudslide slide down a mountainside, knocking down and crushing houses and sweeping away cars in its way.

Helpless neighbours watched in horror, some recording on their phones.

NHK TV footage showed a part of a bridge had collapsed.

Atami is a quaint seaside resort area in Shizuoka prefecture, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

The area that was hit by the mudslide, Izusan, includes hot springs, residential areas, shopping streets and a famous shrine.

Matsuyama tests positive for COVID-19, withdrawn in Detroit

DETROIT, JUL 3 (AP): Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama was withdrawn from the Rocket Mortgage Classic after testing positive for COVID-19.

The PGA Tour made the announcement Friday just before Matsuyama was scheduled to start his second round. Tour officials were unable to say whether Matsuyama has been vaccinated. The PGA Tour, though, does not test fully vaccinated players.

I will take all the necessary precautions to ensure the health and safety of all others, he said in a statement.

I appreciate and thank everyone for their concern in advance. I look forward to full recovery and returning to competition as soon as possible.

Matsuyama shot an even-par 72 on Thursday, playing with PGA Championship winner Phil Mickelson and Rickie Fowler.

Mickelson and Fowler were informed of Matsuyama’s positive test

shortly before they began play Friday. According to the PGA Tour’s COVID-19 protocols, Mickelson and Fowler were not subject to contact tracing.

It’s certainly unsettling to know that I spent the entire day that close,” Mickelson said.

But also as I look back, I know that I kept my distance from everybody.

I’m very sorry that that happened to him and I hope he’s able to play the British. I also hope that Rickie and his caddie, Joey (Skovron) and myself and my brother that we’re OK, too.”

At least 35 players have had to withdraw because of a positive test and Matsuyama is the fifth in the middle of a tournament since the testing program began last June.

Soon, the world’s top golfers will no longer be required to test for COVID-19. The final PGA Tour event for testing, not including the majors, will be the Barbasol Championship on July 15-18.

Iran’s sole nuclear power plant up and running after closure

TEHRAN, IRAN (AP): Iran’s sole nuclear power plant is back online following an emergency shutdown two weeks ago, state TV reported Saturday.

The report quoted Mostafa Rajabi Mashahdi, spokesperson for the country’s energy ministry, as saying the Bushehr plant “returned to production energy” after the completion of needed maintenance.

Mashahdi did not elaborate but last week, Iran’s nuclear department said engineers were working to repair the plant’s broken generator.

Authorities earlier this year had warned of Bushehr’s possible closure because of American sanctions barring Iran from procuring equipment for repairs. Bushehr is fueled

by uranium produced in Russia, not Iran, and is monitored by the United Nations’ International Atomic Energy Agency. The IAEA acknowledged being aware of reports about the plant, but declined to comment.

Construction on Bushehr, on the coast of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf, began under Iran’s shah in the mid-1970s. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the plant was repeatedly targeted in the Iran-Iraq war. Russia later completed construction of the facility.

The 1,000-megawatt plant feeds the grid with enough energy for a tiny part of Iran’s nationwide 64,000-megawatt consumption.

Europe in vaccination race against COVID-19’s delta variant

LISBON (PORTUGAL), JUL 3 (AP): Countries across Europe are scrambling to accelerate coronavirus vaccinations and outpace the spread of the more infectious delta variant, in a high-stakes race to prevent hospital wards from filling up again with patients fighting for their lives. The urgency coincides with Europe’s summer holiday months, with fair weather bringing more social gatherings and governments reluctant to clamp down on them. Social distancing is commonly neglected, especially among the young, and some countries are scrapping the requirement to wear masks outdoors.

Incentives for people to get shots include free groceries, travel and entertainment vouchers, and prize drawings. The president of Cyprus even appealed to a sense of patriotism.

The risk of infection from the delta variant is high to very high for partially or unvaccinated communities, according to the European Centre for Disease Control, which monitors 30 countries on the continent. It estimates that by the end

of August, the variant will account for 90 per cent of cases in the European Union.

It is very important to progress with the vaccine rollout at a very high pace, the ECDC warned.

The World Health Organization is also concerned. The variant makes transmission growth exponential, according to Maria Van Kerkhove, its technical lead on COVID-19.

Daily new case numbers are already climbing sharply in countries like the United Kingdom, Portugal and Russia.

In the U.K., cases of the delta variant have increased fourfold in less than a month, with confirmed cases Friday up 46% on the previous week.

Portuguese health authorities this week reported a vertiginous rise in the prevalence of the delta variant, which accounted for only 4% of cases in May but almost 56 per cent in June. The country is reporting its highest number of daily cases since February, and the number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals has surpassed 500 for the first time since early April.

Reports of new infections in Russia more than doubled in June, topping 20,000 per day this week, and deaths hit 679 on Friday, the fourth day in a row that the death toll set a daily record.

Still, no one wants any lockdowns, said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov at a briefing, although he admitted that the virus situation in a number of Russian regions is tense.

In some countries, the virus is spreading much faster among younger people. In Spain, the national 14-day case notification rate per 100,000 people rose to 152 on Friday. But for the 20-29 age group, it shot up to 449.

Those numbers have triggered alarm across the continent.

The Dutch government is extending its vaccination programme to those aged 12-17 to help head off a feared new surge. Greece is offering young adults 150 euros (177) in credit after their first jab. Rome authorities are mulling the use of vans to vaccinate people at the beach. And Poland last week launched a

lottery open only to adults who are fully vaccinated, with new cars among the prizes.

Portuguese authorities have extended the hours of vaccination centers, created new walk-in clinics, called up armed forces personnel to help run operations, and reduced the period between taking the two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from 12 weeks to eight weeks.

We’re in a race against the clock, Cabinet Minister Mariana Vieira da Silva said.

In the fight against vaccine hesitancy across Europe, the appearance of variants has fed public uncertainty about how effective the shots are.

In Madrid this week, Claudia Aguilar, a 58-year-old archaeologist, got her second Pfizer-BioNTech jab at an auditorium that is expanding its working hours overnight.

Nevertheless, she said she is not sure I’ll really be immune against future variants.

I mean, I’m a bit skeptical that this is going to do any good, Aguilar said.

Bartender Yevgeniya Chernyshkova was lined up Thursday for a shot at Moscow’s GUM

department store just off Red Square after the government required vaccinations for workers in some sectors.

Now, it’s becoming mandatory and we all understand why because the third wave of the pandemic has started here, she said.

Fifteen months after WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, some governments appear more minded to reward public patience while thinking twice about bringing back restrictions.

Some 40,000 fans went to England’s European Championship soccer match against Germany at London’s Wembley Stadium last week. In Portugal, new restrictions have been half-hearted, such as limiting restaurant opening hours on weekend nights.

In Moscow, however, restaurants, bars and cafes on Monday began admitting only customers who have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 in the past six months or can provide a negative test in the previous 72 hours.

France lifted the last of its major restrictions Wednesday, allowing unlimited crowds in restaurants, at weddings and most cultural events de-

The Big Pic



FEELING VIBRANT! The singer, Adam Levine opts for a bright outfit while heading to the gym at Miami Beach.

Amber Heard is mom ‘on my own terms’ of new baby girl Oonagh

LOS ANGELES (AP): Amber Heard says she has become a mom and did it “on my own terms,” as a single parent.

In an Instagram post, the actor said she welcomed daughter Oonagh Paige Heard on April 8. A photo of Heard with the baby nestled against her accompanied Thursday’s announcement.

“I now appreciate how radical it is for us as women to think about one of the most fundamental parts of our destinies in this way,” Heard said in the post. “I hope we arrive at a point in which it’s normalized to not want a ring in order to have a crib.”

She wrote that “a part of me wants to uphold that my private life is none of anyone’s business,” but added the nature of her job “compels me to take control of this” by revealing the birth.

“She’s the beginning of the rest of my life,” Heard said.

The actor has faced a tumultuous period of her life, with her 2015 to 2017 marriage to Johnny Depp involving a spate of legal actions.

Last year, Depp lost a libel case against a



British newspaper that accused him of domestic violence, with a judge ruling the allegations were “substantially correct.” In March, a British court refused Depp permission to appeal the ruling that he assaulted Heard, saying his attempt to overturn the decision had “no real prospect of success.”

Depp also is suing Heard for \$50 million in Virginia over a Washington Post op-ed essay that she wrote about domestic violence. The trial in that case was recently delayed until April 2022.

you does not give people the permission to dump their emotional load onto you. Have that conversation you’ve been avoiding, and fearlessly so.

CANCER: Want to hear a cliché? What doesn’t break you makes you stronger, Cancer. This is the week to give thanks for the challenges you have overcome, and all the challenges you are yet to overcome. You have the strength, courage, and resilience required to power through. Remember, this is no reason you will not triumph over your demons this time around.

LEO: We have all kinds of people in our lives. People who awaken a song in our soul with their mere presence, and people who make our lives a living hell. The funny thing is, we have a choice. We always have a choice to decide who we want to invest in and who we want to cut cords with. The old soul contracts are coming to a closure. So, take this opportunity to pull the weeds out of the garden and build a community that supports your growth on every level.

VIRGO: June 2021 has been quite the month, Virgo, and that look on your face reveals you’re terribly exhausted! So instead of pushing yourself to keep going further, hit the pause button. Take some time out to decompress. A yin yoga session or a therapeutic massage are some of the ways in which you can unwind this week. If spending time outdoors is an option, reconnect with Mother Nature.

Why Julianne Moore Says It’s “Totally Sexist” To Say a Woman Is Aging “Gracefully”



Julianne Moore reflected on the way people speak about women aging, remarking, “It’s about time things change.”

Julianne Moore wants to redefine how we speak about aging, especially as it pertains to women.

The 60-year-old actress is one of many Hollywood stars who have been praised for their appearances as they grow older and, frankly, Julianne is over it. She tells *As If* magazine that it’s “totally sexist” to say a woman is “aging gracefully.”

“There’s so much judgement inherent in the term ‘aging gracefully,’” she remarked. “Is there an ungraceful way to age? We

don’t have an option of course. No one has an option about aging, so it’s not a positive or a negative thing, it just is. It’s part of the human condition, so why are we always talking about it as if it is something that we have control over?”

The actress added she’s a follower of Helen Mirren’s belief that “aging is a requirement of life, you either grow old or die young.”

So, Julianne said she wants people to think about aging from a different perspective, remarking, “Shouldn’t aging be about inner growth?”

“I think we are given a narrative as children that we keep growing through school, maybe go to college then, after school is finished, the idea of growth is done,” Julianne continued. “But, we have all this life left to live. How do we continue to challenge ourselves, to interest ourselves, learn new things, be more helpful to other people, be the person that your friends and family need or want? How do we continue to evolve? How do we navigate life to have even deeper experiences? That’s what aging should be about.”

And the actress remarked that lessons like these shouldn’t just apply to Hollywood, but the world at large. As she put it, “I think it’s about time things change, and it’s fantastic that these behaviors are no longer being tolerated. The old hierarchy is being disassembled.”

Julianne previously spoke about sexism in Hollywood when she revealed she doesn’t receive equal pay in comparison to her male counterparts. She explained to *The Telegraph* in 2019 that part of the disparity is because of antiquated beliefs, but a character’s importance is a factor, too.

“So if there are people who have bigger parts and are bigger stars, they’ll be paid more,” she said. “But I think the question everyone is asking is, well, even if it is hierarchical, and you have actors of equal stature and equal parts, then they should be paid the same. But obviously it’s very challenging.”

Megan Fox Says She Is “Overlooked” for “Comedy” Roles Due to Her Looks

For years, Megan Fox was unfairly seen only for her looks, instead of everything else she was bringing to the table.

Megan Fox built a career off playing the “hot mean girl” in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* and *Jennifer’s Body*, but she’s definitely more than her looks.

Like Paris Hilton, Britney Spears and more who were victims to the pervading misogyny of the early oughts, Fox is now being viewed in a new light drastically different than decades ago. The 35-year-old addressed people underestimating her in a new *Washington Post* article.

“I think there has been a pervasive perception of me as a shallow succubus, if that makes any sense, for at least the first decade of my career,” she explained. “And then that started to change more

recently as people revisited my interviews, listened to me speak and started to see me in a different way.”

The way in which people viewed Fox definitely got to her.

“I was so lost and trying to understand, like, how am I supposed to feel value or find purpose in this horrendous, patriarchal, misogynistic hell that was Hollywood at the time,” she wondered. “Because I had already been speaking out against it and everyone, including other women, received me in a very negative way for doing it.”

Because people just regarded her as someone who was attractive, Fox said, “I was never really established as having been talented.”

She felt a shift when she played her *New Girl* character Reagan.

“People were surprised that I was funny at all,” she remarked. “More than

being overlooked for my ability to handle comedy sometimes, I’ve always been surprised by how easy it was for people to overlook that I’m relatively intelligent.”

She continued, “I was like, how does that get so lost when there’s ridiculous amounts of material that can educate you otherwise?”

The *Transformers* actress previously opened up about how she began to internalize the criticism she received in an interview with *Refinery29*.

As she told the outlet, “You’re speaking words over real people, who are permeable, who have hearts. Your negativity can influence them. Especially the sensitive ones! I’ll call myself one of them. We’re the ones who are influenced by your negativity because we’re so open. I’m not closed off. Those things affect me really deeply.”

Vanessa Williams to honor Juneteenth at July 4 festivities

NEW YORK (AP): When Vanessa Williams hosts this year’s televised Capitol Fourth celebration, she will not only honor the nation’s traditional independence day, but also the country’s newly designated holiday — Juneteenth.

Williams, who was the first Black woman to be crowned Miss America, will sing “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” which has served as the Black National Anthem.

“It’s in celebration of the wonderful opportunity that we now have to celebrate Juneteenth. So we are reflective of the times,” she told the Associated Press on Thursday while promoting this year’s show.

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of African American slaves and has been celebrated annually on June 19 in various parts of the United States. It was made a federal holiday this year.

“A Capitol Fourth” is marking 41 years on the air. The show is broadcast to millions of viewers on PBS and streaming platforms as well as troops around the globe.

Williams serves as host this year but it’s not the first time that she’s brought current social changes to the festivities. At last year’s show, Williams said her musical selections expressed the angst that Black women — especially mothers — were feeling.

She sang the Stephen Sondheim song, “Not While I’m Around,” from his musical “*Sweeney Todd*,” an attempt to communicate what she was feeling as the mother of a Black son.

The song “talked about just the connection that you have with your child and wanting to protect them, which was definitely reflective of George Floyd and how everybody felt that pain,” Williams said.

ARIES:

Transformation is a constant and continuous process, Aries. In other words, you are not the same person you were yesterday. It would be unrealistic to expect your dreams to be. So, give yourself the chance to grow differently, even if that means giving up on the old way of life. Remember, you are at an important juncture where you are being presented with the opportunity to realign the course of your life.

TAURUS:

Pause and breathe, Taurus. Pause and breathe. You are where you need to be. So, honour the journey which is just as beautiful as the destination. Those around you may or may not understand your need to work at your own pace, and that’s okay. You don’t owe anybody an explanation for your choices. If fatigue has been a constant this week, give yourself the permission to put your feet up. Taking the time off to decompress will actually help you return to your work desk fully energised, and with a truckload of optimism.

GEMINI:

It’s true that you’ve been working on your boundaries for a while now, but it doesn’t hurt to reaffirm them every now and then. So, communicate your need for space in a manner that you feel called to, and know that the people in your life will not love you any less because you need to take care of yourself. As such, the cards are also urging you to examine your closest ties. Being intimate with

Meditating in the open is a good way to get your body going and bring you into balance.

LIBRA:

This world of Maya is created in a way that it takes us away from ourselves. It takes us away from our soul. But, you’re at a point in your journey where you’re able to distinguish the truth from what’s false, and show up for your spiritual practice consistently, no matter what the cost. Your commitment to self-growth is clearing away the blockages in your energy, and helping you make space for more lightness in your life.

SCORPIO:

It’s easy to doubt yourself, Scorpio. It’s easy to think that you’re losing out on your opportunity to shine while others are getting ahead of you. But, this is a part of the illusion. The illusion that’s keeping you from vibrating at a higher frequency and calling in the energy of miracles. You are where you need to be and you are progressing at the right pace. Trusting the path will help create a paradigm shift.

SAGITTARIUS:

Duality is a way of life in the earthly realm. Darkness follows the light, and the dark night is followed by the light of day. Instead of repeating the story of what went wrong and why, process the sadness, the grief, the loneliness, and the melancholy. Trust that the trials and tribulations are coming to an end soon and that the light at the end of the tunnel is not a myth. What your spirit guides want you to know: they’re going to be showing up for you

in a whole new way.

CAPRICORN:

It’s one of those days, Capricorn. You feel like you’re accessing subtle realms and travelling through time and space. Pay attention to what’s coming through to you in these moments, for none of the information that is being revealed is a figment of your imagination. Those who actively connect with their ancestors, spirit guides and totems will find that the veil is thinner than it has ever been. Feel their love, beautiful, and know that you are supported in a multitude of ways.

AQUARIUS:

You thrive in a group setting, Aquarius. The idea of community gathering is very important to you. You are at a point in your journey where you are actively finding ways to communicate and connect with like-minded people who share your interests. Consider joining a book club, a meditation circle or an art workshop. Remember, there are plenty of options available in the virtual world as well.

PISCES:

Disillusionment is showing up as a big theme right now. But, where do you think this feeling is stemming from, and what are you being shown by the divine forces? No, there is no such thing as wrong turns. You are where you need to be and you are progressing at the right pace. So, trust the chosen path and keep going. PS: A little bit of perspective will make a big difference.