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Summit TIMES

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ASSEMBLY SESSION CONCLUDES WITH PASSAGE OF 5 BILLS AND GENERAL BUDGET 2021-22

'Service Providers will replace Labour Contractors to make manpower management more transparent'

GANGTOK, 15 JUN [IPR]: The second and final day of the Budget Session 2021-22 began with the Legislative Business. The five Bills placed in the House on the first day of the Budget Session were moved for consideration by the concerned Ministers-in-charge.

Kunga Nima Lepcha, Minister, Education Department moved the Sikkim International University Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 13 of 2021) for consideration.

Replying to questions put forth by MLA D.T. Lepcha, the Minister-in-Charge of Education Department Kunga Nima Lepcha informed the House that the University is being built with 100% private sponsorship and the State Government will not incur any expenditure.

He said that the University will cater to the needs of the students of Sikkim seeking admission in various disciplines. He added that aspects like placement have been incorporated while signing the agreement with the University, and care has been taken not to keep any lacunae.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Ta-



mang while participating in the discussion on the Bill, said that the University is being established in Sribadam under Rinchonpong constituency in West Sikkim. He said that the University will open up vistas of opportunity for the aspirational young minds of Sikkim.

He added that young professionals from Sikkim who qualify the norms of UGC can get employment in the University.

The Chief Minister stressed that the MOU with the University have been duly vetted at multiple levels and have been passed by

the Cabinet. He further informed that the lease term for the University is thirty-three years, as per the norms of the Government.

After discussion and voting, the Bill was passed by the House.

Likewise, M.N. Sherpa, Minister, Labour Department moved

the Sikkim Labour (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 11 of 2021) for consideration of the House.

Replying to a question put forth by MLA D.T. Lepcha, the Minister-in-Charge of Labour De-

partment M.N. Sherpa informed the House that in order to bring transparency in manpower management in the State and to facilitate employment of local people in the private sector, the Government has devised a system of Service Providers in place of the erstwhile labour contractor system.

On the question regarding registration of labourers and skilled workers, the Minister informed the House that ID cards will be issued to each worker which will be valid for one year. The renewal of these ID Cards will be subject to re-verification of credentials.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, while participating in the discussions on the Bill, said that lack of data on labourers and other skilled workers in the State has led to petty crimes and other such activities. This Bill has been drafted with the intension to keep a tap on every individual labour working in any part of Sikkim. He said that the Bill, once passed by the House, will be immediately made into an ACT for early implementation.

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SFA urges Govt to include footballers in Priority Group for vaccination

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Sikkim Football Association has made a special request to the government through the Director General cum Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department, to include registered football players and referees of the state in State Specific Priority Group for COVID-19 vaccination.

A press release from SFA informs that a letter to this effect has been submitted by President, SFA, Menla Ethenpa. SFA has requested for vaccination of: a) Senior Division clubs - 8 clubs

- 25 players each; b) "B" Division clubs - 8 clubs - 25 players each; c) "C" Division clubs - 12 clubs - 25 players each; d) Women's team - 2 teams - 25 players each; and e) Referees - 12 referees.

Mr Ethenpa informs that all of the above fall under the age group of 18-44 years and a total number of 762 jabs of vaccination are required to cover the above requirement. This special request is being made since they are required to attend national level events representing the state in the immediate near future, he adds.

Assam's 'Vaccine Man' goes door to door to create awareness on Covid jabs

DHUBRI, 15 JUN [PTI]:

With the Centre and the state having stepped up the COVID-19 vaccination drive, a 36-year-old man in Assam's Dhubri district has taken it upon himself to convince people, especially those from the underprivileged sections, about the efficacy of the jabs amid reports that many were hesitant to get themselves inoculated.

Stating that he has taken a pledge to free Dhubri of coronavirus, Dipankar Mazumder, a medical representative by profession, is moving from one door

to another on his motorcycle trying to bust all myths surrounding the available COVID-19 vaccines Mr Mazumder, popularly known as the "vaccine man", told PTI that he has so far succeeded in persuading 80 people to visit nearby inoculation centres.

"There are some people who still do not own a smartphone and have no clue about the vaccination process. Many of them are scared of taking the vaccine either due to lack of awareness or because of the misinformation doing the rounds," he said.

Recoveries outnumber new cases for fifth day, but Covid fatalities return with 3 more deaths

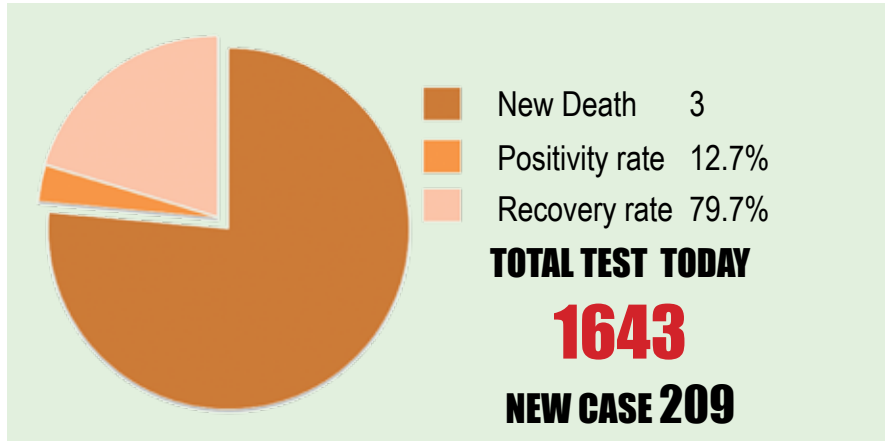
SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Sikkim recorded more recoveries than new cases for the fifth consecutive day today, but this reassuring update came tempered with the news that three more lives were lost to Covid-19 here over the same 24 hours.

272 more formerly COVID-positive people were discharged from home isolation on Monday after making full recoveries and having been without symptoms for the prescribed number of days to further improve the figure of recovered cases here to 14,887.

However, after three consecutive days of seeing no COVID deaths, the State recorded three deaths among Covid patients in the last 24 hours.



All three deaths were reported from STNM Hospital. With this, Sikkim's COVID death toll has increased to 284.

Meanwhile, 209 more people were found positive for COVID-19 in the last 24 hours during the testing of 1,643 samples on Monday. The state's daily positivity rate stands to 12.7%.

While 112 new cases

were picked up in RT-PCR testing of 579 samples, 97 tested positive in rapid antigen testing of 1,062 samples.

Out of the 209 new cases of novel coronavirus in the State, 83 were recorded in East District, 51 in West District, 72 in South District and three in North Sikkim.

The number of active cases of novel coronavi-

rus has further dipped to 3,239, of whom 14 are currently in ICU at STNM Hospital while there are none at the CRH ICU today.

Of all the active cases, there are only 150 admitted in hospital, while the rest are recuperating under home isolation.

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 has now reached 18,695.

CRH begins off-site Covid vaccination for pharma companies

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Central Referral Hospital (CRH) Manipal began off-site COVID-19 Vaccination from today and a total of 1200 persons (18-44 year olds) got their first dose of the vaccine today, a press release informs.

Off-site vaccination is being carried out at three pharmaceutical companies; Alkem, Samardung (South Sikkim) and Cipla & Zuventus at Kumrek (East Sikkim) for its employees and their families.

The total number of vaccinations that will be carried out in the coming days are 3000, 2200, 400 at Alkem, Cipla and Zuventus respectively. It is expect-

ed to be completed by 19 Jun, 2021.

Thereafter other private companies, viz. Lupin, Intas, Torrent, etc. are lined up for the jabs. CRH endeavours to provide vaccinations for all and in order to aid this, a new COVID Vaccine Session Site will also be set up at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT), Majhitar, East Sikkim.

"The process has already begun and we expect it to be operational by the end of this month," the release states.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 Vaccination Session Site at CRH, 5th Mile Tadong, East Sikkim commenced from Monday, 14 Jun, 2021 for Indian citizens of 18-44 years.

Report shows Covid impact on mental health of elderly

NEW DELHI, 15 JUN [NDTV]: Dhanesh Chandra Sharma, 88, has no hopes left after the deadly second wave of Covid infections took away his 54-year-old son and caregiver Sanjeev.

On May 1, when Delhi was going through a horrifying crisis of medical infrastructure that left people scrambling for hospital beds and oxygen cylinders, Sanjeev, a dentist with a clinic of his own, breathed his last before his father's eyes.

"I tried to get an ambulance for him but could not, because the last week of April and the first week of May was the worst time for any resource, whether it is oxygen or ambulance. He died uncared for. I could not even lift his body because I am 88. He was healthy," recounted Mr Sharma. He added that an NGO helped arrange

Sanjeev's cremation.

Mr Sharma's two other sons are settled in the US and Canada and his wife died 13 years back. Sanjeev's death has now forced the retired agricultural scientist to vacate his home and move to an old age home in south Delhi.

"I lived with Sanjeev at my house in east Delhi's Yojna Vihar. I had built that house with my life's savings. My wife had sold all her ornaments for it. Today it lies abandoned and has been ransacked by thieves multiple times. I have registered a police complaint but there is nothing more that I can do. I can't go and live there alone," he said.

According to a report released by HelpAge India today to mark "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day", 20.8 per cent of the surveyed elders lost their

family members or friends due to Covid-19.

The study, titled "The Silent Tormentor: Covid 19 and the Elderly", has surveyed 3,526 people across six cities -- Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai.

Asked what could have been done better to save these lives, 50.8 per cent said better medical and health infrastructure, 44.4 per cent said better availability of vaccines and 38.7 per cent said timely availability of medicines and injections.

About 42.1 per cent of the respondents said they were most worried of being hospitalised if they were infected and 34.2 per cent said they were worried of being isolated.

As many as 62.1 per cent of the senior citizens feel the pandemic has

increased the risk of elderly abuse.

The main abusers, according to the report, were sons (43.8 per cent) and daughters-in-law (27.8 per cent). As many as 14.2 per cent said that their abusers were their daughters.

Financial (61.6 per cent) was the main form of abuse, followed by emotional (60.1%) and physical (58.6%).

Satwant Mathur, a retired professor, has been living in an old age home for over six years now. She is 93 and always looks forward to life, but the pandemic broke her spirit.

She said, "It is this feeling of helplessness. You cannot even sit with your friend and console her after she has lost her husband. I called up my friend at 11.30 pm and she was howling because she was getting calls every

turn to pg02

Vi introduces fully managed Voice Service for Enterprise Customers

MUMBAI, 15 JUN: Vi Business, the enterprise arm of Vodafone Idea Ltd. (VIL), has introduced Managed SIP service for businesses for whom voice calls are a key business resource. Most Indian BPOs/KPOs, the BFSI and IT/ITES, telemarketers, VAS providers, conference service providers and similar sectors are currently relying on legacy TDM based PRI connections from multiple vendors and do not have a clear view on the efficacy of each service. With Vi's Managed SIP (MSIP), these organizations will now have the assurance of security as well as a window to monitor, measure and optimise their voice infrastructure. These services also help user clients get a complete view of their fixed telephony network, with best-in-class SLAs, voice analytics, quality scores and features to improve service efficiency.

For business verticals and functions where voice is a key business resource, fixed telephony is of utmost importance. Globally, fixed telephony has evolved from legacy TDM to SIP (Session Initiation Protocol). Requirements for more flexible networks that adapt to new age IP networks, unified communications and the extended Work

from Home scenario have triggered the growth of SIP Trunk services in recent months.

Announcing the launch of Managed SIP services for Enterprises in India, Abhijit Kishore, Chief Enterprise Busi-

ness Officer, Vodafone Idea Limited, said "With the introduction of Vi Managed SIP service, Vi Business is now in a position to be a single point facilitator of comprehensive fixed telephony solutions that enable businesses to gain better control of their overall voice infrastructure and the ability to garner meaningful insights on voice

performance for their clients/ internal stakeholders. I am confident that this significant addition to our basket of best in class, holistic communications solutions for Enterprises, will help our customer organisations transform the

Features:

- Proactive monitoring of last mile and voice traffic
- Availability of real time & historical reports on voice KPIs through portal
- Monitoring & management of Customer Premises Equipment (CPE)
- Dedicated Service desk

ness Officer, Vodafone Idea Limited, said "With the introduction of Vi Managed SIP service, Vi Business is now in a position to be a single point facilitator of comprehensive fixed telephony solutions that enable businesses to gain better control of their overall voice infrastructure and the ability to garner meaningful insights on voice

way they communicate with their customers".

One of the most perceptible and measurable benefits of using Vi Managed SIP service is in the form of measurable enhanced service quality:

- Single trunk has multiple pilot numbers- This helps customers having multiple businesses

to keep a tab on their expenses

- Unlimited voice channels/sessions on a single trunk- There's no maximum limit on the number of channels a single trunk can configure. This helps customers in maintaining a single connection no matter how many sessions they have, thereby simplifying operational management
- Digital experience portal to access real time reports and review the network
- Proactive monitoring of problems to track the efficiency of voice resources
- Auto ticketing for threshold breach of KPIs, ensuring reduction in mean time to repair. In case of fault, dedicated customer service desk will work proactively to address and plug the breach of SLA parameters
- Future ready technology to help customers reduce their operating cost on purchase of hardware and manpower for managing them, besides doing away with hardware obsolescence.

Myanmar's Chin state Chief Minister, 9,000 others take refuge in Mizoram: Report

AIZAWL, 15 JUN [PTI]: The chief minister of Myanmar's Chin state, Salai Lian Luai, is among 9,247 people who have taken refuge in Mizoram following a military coup in the neighbouring country in February, a senior police officer said on Tuesday.

Chin, a state in Western Myanmar, shares its Western border with Mizoram.

"The Chin state chief minister crossed the international border and entered Champhai town on Monday night," the officer told PTI on condition of anonymity.

He said that 24 lawmakers, including Luai, of Aung San Suu Kyis party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), have taken shelter in different parts of Mizoram. The Myanmar nationals are provided with shelter and food by civil society organisations and student bodies, while many are sheltered by the locals, the senior police officer said. A large section of those who have taken refuge in the state belong to the Chin, also known as the Zo community.

They share the same ancestry and culture as the Mizos of Mizoram. The data of Mizoram police's Crime Investigation Department (CID) showed on Tuesday that a total of 9,247 people of Myanmar are currently staying in at least 10 districts of the state with Champhai housing the largest number at 4,156.

Of the 9,247 Myanmarese nationals, details of 8,683 have been collected while those of 564 people are yet to be recorded, the police officer said.

According to the data, 1,633 people have taken refuge in the state capital Aizawl, 1,297 in Lawngtlai district, 633 in Siaha district, 478 in Hnahthial district, 167 in Lunglei district, 143 in Serchhip district, 112 in Saitual district, 36 in Kolasib district and 28 in Khawzawl district. Six Mizoram districts - Champhai, Siaha, Lawngtlai, Serchhip, Hnahthial and Saitual - share a 510 km long international border with Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Assam Rifles sources said that attempts were being made by the Myanmarese nationals on several occasions to cross the international border.

While many of them were prevented from entering the Indian territory, others managed to sneak into it through other routes, the sources said.

'Delta' variant of COVID-19 mutates into 'Delta Plus'

New Delhi, 15 Jun [NDTV]: The 'delta' variant of COVID-19 - a version first detected in India - has evolved to form the 'delta plus' or AY.1 variant. Scientists say it has acquired a mutation associated with escaping immunity but stress there is "no cause for concern yet".

The 'delta plus' variant is a mutated version of the more aggressive B.1.617.2 strain that drove the second wave of infections in India. It is characterised by the K417N mutation in the spike protein of the SARS-CoV2 virus that causes the COVID-19 disease.

The spike protein is what helps the virus enter and infect human cells, and the K417N mutation has been associated with immune escape, or evasion, that leaves it less susceptible, or more immune, to the vaccine or any form of drug therapy.

The government on Tuesday said the 'delta plus' variant had been around since March this year. It is not, however, a variant of concern at this point, Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, said. "Its presence had been detected and submitted to global data system," he added.

According to Public Health England, 63 B.1.617.2 genomes with the K417N mutation have been identified so far, six of which are from India. There are 36 confirmed 'delta plus' cases in the UK and it accounts for around six per cent of cases in the US. Two UK cases were registered more than 14 days after the second vaccine dose, making them 'breakthrough' infections.

However, there is no cause for concern as reports of the new variant are still low and there is no indication, as yet,

about the severity of the disease, Anurag Agrawal, Director of Delhi's CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), said. He also said blood plasma from a number of fully vaccinated individuals would have to be tested against this variant to establish if it shows any significant level of immune escape.

Vinod Scaria, another CSIR-IGIB scientist, said the K417N variant was more frequent in Europe, America and other Asian countries at this time. He also said travel histories were not immediately available, meaning it is unwise to assume how far it may have spread.

The 'delta plus' variant is resistant to the monoclonal antibody cocktail recently authorised in India. These cocktails - Casirivimab and Imdevimab - are designed to block the virus from attaching to human cells

and entering the body, and are similar to antibodies that the human body naturally produces to defend itself against the disease.

As a counterpoint, Vineeta Bal, a guest faculty at Pune's Institute of Science Education and Research, told PTI resistance to therapy did not indicate severity. She also said the quality and quantity of neutralising antibodies generated by an individual infected with the new variant is unlikely to be affected because of the mutation.

The 'delta' variant of COVID-19 - first reported in India in October last year - is already between 40 and 50 per cent more infectious than the 'alpha' version first reported from the UK and is, according to a (not yet peer-reviewed) study by AIIMS, likely behind the majority of breakthrough

infections in India.

Studies differ on just how effective vaccines currently in India - Covishield and Covaxin - are in protecting against the 'delta' variant. The AIIMS study indicated it might not protect people even after the second dose, while a research letter published in The Lancet said Covishield (the AstraZeneca shot) provided 79 per cent protection after two doses.

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'Service Providers will...

Speaking on the issue of the recent recruitment of porters, the Chief Minister informed the House that the Army had advertised for 600 posts out of which 400 eligible people from Sikkim were recruited. He added that since it concerned the Indian Army, there is no criteria to ensure that only Sikkimese people can be recruited. He urged the Members of the House to encourage the Sikkimese youth to come forward and avail of such opportunities. He maintained that the recruitment is for a period of six months, but the nature of work is challenging considering the high altitude and difficult terrains.

MLA Em Prasad Sharma also participated in the discussions on the Bill.

After discussion and voting, the Bill was passed by the House.

Kunga Nima Lepcha, Minister, Education Department, moved the Medhavi Skills University, Sikkim Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 12 of 2021) for consideration of the House.

Minister, Education, K.N. Lepcha, while replying to questions put forth by MLA D.T. Lepcha, said that the University is highly credible, which will not only ensure quality education, but also take care of placements. He added that the University will be established in Bermoik, West Sikkim, and will also address the need and aspirations of drop-out students.

After discussion and voting, the Bill was passed by the House.

The Sikkim Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (Amendment) Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 9 of 2021) moved by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, also the Min-

ister-in-Charge of Finance Department, was passed by the House.

Kunga Nima Lepcha, Minister, Education Department moved the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, Sikkim (Amendment) Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 14 of 2021) for consideration of the House.

Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha, while replying to questions put forth by MLA D.T. Lepcha, informed that the erstwhile EIILM University is being revived after thorough vetting. As per norms, the nomenclature of the University has been changed to Sikkim Alpine University. He reiterated that the University will be established in Kamrang, South Sikkim, and will focus on quality education and create quality human resource.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang also participated in the discussions on the Bill.

MLAs Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, K.S. Lepcha and Smt Raj Kumari Thapa also participated in the discussions on the Bill.

This was followed by discussion on Motion of Thanks on the Governor's address and General Budget 2021-22 which was participated by MLAs D.T. Lepcha, Sonam Tshering Venchungpa, Aditya Golay and Sonam Lama.

In his reply to the discussion on Motion of Thanks on Governor's address and General Budget 2021-22, Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department, Government of Sikkim, said that health and education sectors have remained the priority and main focus of the State government and added that the government will continue with its efforts

in upgrading these sectors.

Speaking about the dialysis centres created in Gangtok, Namchi and Gyalshing, the HCM said that the State government has also identified the SICB Centre at Karfector to be upgraded and modified into 50-bedded Covid-19 dedicated hospital for West and South districts. This is also being done as a preparatory measure in dealing with the possibility of the third wave of the pandemic, he added.

He also spoke about the Cancer Treatment Tertiary facility started at STNM Hospital in Gangtok and touched upon the upscaling of Namchi Hospital into new 300-bedded hospital which will be easily accessible for people of South and West districts.

He also informed about a 500L/min PSA Plant established by the State government at STNM Hospital to cater to oxygen supply demand of the State. In addition, the Union government also sanctioned an oxygen plant with a capacity of 1000L/min now installed at STNM Hospital at the request of the State government. Further, oxygen plants have also been set up at Gyalshing and Namchi District Hospitals with 200L/min capacity, Singtam District Hospital with 200L/min capacity with 10000L/min oxygen plant being set up at Mining area in Rangpo.

The HCM informed the House that the State government has entered an agreement with the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences for 50 fully free and 30 full payment MBBS seats for Sikkimese students for which the government will annually pay Rs.

4 crore and 50 lakhs. Speaking on the health insurance for government employees, the HCM said that the government has introduced health insurance coverage under Su-Swastha Yojana to the regular government employees which will cover insurance of Rs. 10 lakhs and Rs. 20 lakhs for critical cases and can be availed in nearly 400 designated hospitals in the country as per their choice.

Addressing the State government's policy of quality education in the State, the HCM said that the government will be constructing one model school in all four districts to encourage active participation of students. He further informed that the Chief Ministers Merit Scholarship will be extended to 55 students (five from Dzongu constituency) to study in well-known schools and colleges in and outside the State of Sikkim with the aim to inculcate a spirit of competitiveness for higher programmes in various disciplines in India and abroad.

Expressing the State government's commitment on the issue of Limboo Tamang seat reservations in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, the HCM said that the government has been in constant touch with the Union Ministry for consideration of the pending demand. He also added that the State government is determined and focused on achieving the tribal status for the 12 left out communities in Sikkim. The HCM also informed that the Government is committed to bring the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorji to Sikkim.

Steering the State government's efforts in livelihood and in-

come generation in tourism sector, the HCM informed about the Mega Homestay Project whereby each home will have three rooms and other amenities.

During the Financial Business, the Separate Demands for Grants of all the Government Departments were presented by the concerned Ministers-in-Charge. After discussion on the Separate Demands for Grants, they were put to vote, and passed by the House.

Thereafter, the Annual General Budget for the Financial Year 2021-22 which was presented in the House by Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department on 14th June, 2021, was passed by the House.

The House also passed the Appropriation Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 10 of 2021) for Annual General Budget 2021-22, introduced by Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-charge of Finance Department.

Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department, presented the Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of Government Food Preservation Factory (GFPF) for the Financial Year 2011-12 to 2017-18. The Chief Minister also presented the Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of the State Trading Corporation of Sikkim for the year ended 31st March, 2019. He also presented the Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of Sikkim Power Development Corporation Limited for the year ended 31st March, 2019.

Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department present-

ed the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan 2021-22 to 2023-24.

Speaker, L.B. Das presented the Annual Reports of Commission/ Departments in the House.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, in his valedictory remarks expressed his gratitude to the Governor of Sikkim for his address on the opening day of the Budget Session. He thanked the Speaker and Deputy Speaker for the smooth conduct of the two-day Assembly Session, and the Ministers and MLAs for their participation in the proceedings of the House.

He thanked the State Government Officials, officers of Sikkim State Legislative Assembly Secretariat, and everybody involved in making the two-day Session a success.

The Chief Minister thanked the Members of the House for participating in the discussions, and for passing the five Bills, Separate Demands for Grants and the General Budget for Financial Year 2021-22.

Speaker L.B. Das in his valedictory remarks thanked the Governor for his valuable address on the opening day. He thanked the Leader of the House and all Members for participating in all the discussions. He expressed his gratitude to all the Members for passing the General Budget 2021-22. He expressed hope that the Budget will reach every section of the people of Sikkim. He thanked the officers of the State Government for their contribution in making the Assembly Session a success.

The two-day Assembly Session came to an end with the Speaker adjourning the House Sine die.

Two Sikkimese lads selected to represent India at AYIMUN 2021

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JUN:

Rishal Pandey Chettri (18 years) and Aditya Chettri (18 years) from Gangtok, Sikkim have been selected to represent India at Arab Youth International Model United Nations (AYIMUN), 2021 to be held at Marriott Al Jadaf, Dubai, the United Arab Emirates from 17 to 20 Sept, 2021, a press release informs.

The two lads have been selected to represent India in an international stage to discuss pressing world issues and current pandemic plaguing our world. Delegates from more than 50 countries will be participating in this international conference.

Rishal and Aditya have been selected from among 10,000 students worldwide.



Both Rishal and Aditya are students of Delhi Public School, Siliguri

and have completed their class 10 from Holy Cross School, Tadong.

AYIMUN is organised by Globalizon LLC, United States of America; an

organization committed to empowering youth in pursuit of global peace. This international conference will challenge delegates to debate on the rising global issues, draft resolutions in response to the problems, and collaborate with delegates from other countries about creating, understanding, and seeking solutions to drive a successful future.

"The duo believes that it will be an enriching experience for them as they will get a chance to discuss global issues with talented youths and young leaders from around the world together under one roof as youths are the key to global peace and equipping them with the right skills can help in creating a better world," the release mentions.

One out of 52 test positive in RAT at Nagi Karek GPU



NAMCHI, 15 JUN (IPR):

The team from Namthang Primary Health Centre led by Medical Officer, In-charge, Namthang PHC, Dr Mingyur D Lassopa, Dental Surgeons, Dr Su-

shmita Chettri and Dr Ayesha Chettri and ANM, Deepika Chettri conducted mass covid test under Nagi Karek GPU, today. The team conducted a total of 52 RAT test

at Kaizaley under Nagi Karek GPU, out of which one person from Lower Karek was detected positive. They also collected a total of 40 RT-PCR samples.

Congress asks Centre to break silence over Adani Group foreign investors' accounts

NEW DELHI, 15 JUN [PTI]:

The Congress on Tuesday asked the government to break its silence over the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) freezing the accounts of three foreign investor funds holding a sizeable stake in Adani Group companies and come out with the truth.

Congress spokesperson Gourav Vallabh demanded that the government also make public the beneficiaries of the foreign investor funds which have invested over 95 per cent of their funds in four Adani Group companies that made big gains in the past year.

This comes a day after shares of Adani Group companies plunged up to 25 per cent amid reports that the NSDL has frozen accounts of these three funds. The Adani Group, however, said the accounts had not been frozen and that any reports to the contrary were "blatantly erroneous and misleading".

According to news reports, Vallabh said, the NSDL, which is the central securities depository under the Ministry of Fi-

nance, has frozen the accounts of Adani Group's three foreign investor funds: Albula Investment Fund, Cresta Fund and APMS Investment Fund.

These three funds, which have the same registered address in Port Louis, Mauritius and have no websites of their own, together own over ₹ 43,500 crore worth of shares in four Adani Group companies, he said.

The funds derive more than 95 per cent of their net worth from their investments in the Adani Group companies, he added.

"The NSDL and the Finance Ministry need to break their silence and come out with the truth," Vallabh told reporters.

"The Congress party demands that SEBI and NSDL come out with a complete disclosure about the nature of these funds, ultimate beneficial ownership of these funds, the findings of their enquiry (if any), what securities these funds hold and why their accounts were frozen," he said.

The Congress spokesperson said Adani Enterprises came out with a

statement saying the demat account in which the aforesaid funds hold the shares were not frozen.

"But why has the NSDL, which is under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Finance, not come out with a public statement in the middle of all the confusion (on) whether accounts of these funds pertaining to the investments in the Adani Group companies have been frozen and which ones are active?" he asked.

Vallabh demanded that an ongoing investigation by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to ascertain whether the Adani Group manipulated its stock prices be handed over to the Enforcement Directorate.

"We also demand that if SEBI's ongoing investigation has revealed any irregularities with regards to price manipulation of Adani Group stocks, the government of India should transfer the investigation to the Enforcement Directorate to investigate the entire matter and come out with the truth for everyone to understand," he said.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2021: Impact of COVID-19 on the elderly

NEW DELHI, 15 JUN

[NDTV]: With COVID-19 and the lockdowns, the elderly among us have become even more vulnerable to abuse, violence and lack of care. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, observed on June 15, aims to address the issues of abuse and lack of care faced by the elderly.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is causing untold fear and suffering for older people across the world. Beyond its immediate health impact, the pandemic is putting older people at greater risk of poverty, discrimination and isolation. It is likely to have a particularly devastating impact on older people in developing countries," UN Secretary-General, Anto-

nio Guterres said in his message on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Older persons often face discrimination in life-saving therapies during the pandemic. The pandemic also forced healthcare agencies to prioritize when critical services not related to COVID-19 is concerned. The pandemic has also hit the incomes and economic conditions of the elderly.

"Violence, abuse and neglect of older persons have been brought into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic. Older persons are rights holders whose dignity and rights do not have an expiration date in later life," says UN expert on the rights of elderly people Claudia Mahler said.

Amit Shah meets MPs amid Cabinet expansion buzz

NEW DELHI, 15 JUN [PTI]: Union home minister Amit Shah's meeting with groups of BJP MPs, which generated speculation about a cabinet expansion, was part of an ongoing feedback exercise on the work of the government, Covid situation and other issues, sources said. Over the last five days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also held meetings with the ministers along with BJP chief JP Nadda.

Mr Shah had met MPs from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and some other states on Saturday and Sunday at his residence. Around 30 MPs and some ministers had visited him over the weekend.

Sources said political activities and physical meetings have resumed as the second wave of Covid has receded. The focus of the meetings this time is on the situation in the MPs' constituencies, the handling of Covid and their performance during the pandemic, and the grievances of the people. Also any reshuffle in the ministry is usually preceded by appraisal and stock taking.

Over the last weeks, there has been talk of cabinet expansion with 28 berths remaining vacant. One was vacated by the death of Lok Janshakti Party chief Ram Vilas Paswan, who was in charge of the Food and Public Distribution portfolio.

At present, there are 21 Cabinet ministers, nine ministers of state with independent charge, and 23 ministers of state besides PM Modi. An expansion is also expected to settle political tensions within the allies and giving due importance to states where the BJP came to power in assembly elections over the last two years. From Bihar, Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal United is expecting a cabinet berth. Another seat in the Council of Ministers should go to Mr Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party.

Rewards are also expected in Madhya Pradesh, which came into BJP grasp after the churn in the Congress and changing of camp by Jyotiraditya Scindia with a chunk of his followers. Mr Scindia has already been given a Rajya Sabha seat, but there is speculation about a cabinet berth for him as well.

Anand to feature in Croatia leg of Grand Chess Tour

CHENNAI, JUN 15 (PTI):

Former world champion Viswanathan Anand will participate in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz tournament to be held in Zagreb from July 5 to 12.

The tournament will be the third leg of the 2021 Grand Chess Tour. Apart from the Indian Grandmaster Anand, the event will also see former world champion Garry Kasparov, who will feature in the blitz section.

It will be the first across-the-board event for Anand (ELO rating 2753) in over a year as sporting schedules across the world have been hit owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions.

He had in 2020 helped India win the gold medal in the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad.

Russian Grandmaster Alex Grischuk, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan) and Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave are also in the fray. Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus-

sia), who will challenge Magnus Carlsen for the 2021 World Chess champion title, has entered the event as wild card, like Anand.

Dutch GM Anish Giri, Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Poland), Ivan Saric (Croatia), Anton Korobov (Ukraine) and Jorden Van Foreest (the Netherlands) are also in the fray.

Grand Chess Tour Executive Director Michael Khodarkovsky said, "Fans can expect five days of exhilarating chess demonstrated by the famed world champions, like Garry Kasparov and Vishy Anand, as well as a new wave of top players."

The tournament will see 10 elite Grandmasters competing over nine rounds of rapid chess and 18 rounds of blitz for a total prize fund of USD 150,000.

The Grand Chess Tour is a circuit of international events, each demonstrating the highest level of organisation for the world's best players.



SIKKIM STATE TEACHER'S RECRUITMENT BOARD (Constituted Vide Notification No. 933/HRDD, 2015) Upper Syari, Gangtok, East Sikkim

Memo No. 43/SSTRB/ADM

Date: 12/06/2021

NOTICE FOR DATE OF INTERVIEW FOR THE POST OF PRINCIPAL, SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Advertisements were issued vide Memo No. 38/SSTRB/ADM dated 12/04/2021 and Memo No. 40/SSTRB/ADM dated 27/04/2021 inviting applications from eligible candidates by online as well as offline mode for the post of Principals, Senior Secondary School under the Department of Education.

The SSTRB therefore announces that interview for the selection to post of Principals, Senior Secondary School under the Department of Education, shall be held from June 25, 2021 Friday to June 27, 2021, Sunday in the Conference Hall of the Sikkim State Teachers' Recruitment Board office located at Teachers' Guest House, Syari, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Following instructions are issued for the candidates while coming for the interview:

1. The SSTRB will issue Admit Cards to the eligible candidates through WhatsApp or Email provided by them with required further instructions. Candidates are therefore requested to keep on checking their e-mail and/or WhatsApp for this.
2. Candidates shall download the Admit Card and produce it, supported by a valid Identity Card, to secure entry into the Interview Hall.
3. Candidates shall bring self-attested or attested photocopies of such documents (as mentioned earlier vide Memo No. 38/SSTRB/ADM dated 12/04/2021) along with originals.
4. Syllabus of the interview is as per the advertisement vide Memo No. 38/SSTRB/ADM dated 12/04/2021.
5. No TA and DA shall be paid for attending the Interview.

For any assistance, please contact:
Mr MK Pradhan, Exams Officer, SSTRB
+917872861250
+919832043025
E-mail: sstrb2019@gmail.com

R.O. No. 60/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22
Date. 13.6.2021

(Secretary)
Sikkim State Teachers' Recruitment Board



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SIKKIM STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN GANGTOK

ADVISORY NOTICE

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was enacted to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment. As per the Act, all work places where there are more than 10 employees should set up an Internal Complaint Committee. Constitution of Internal Complaint Committee may be seen at: <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2013-14.pdf>.

It is also to mention here that the Internal Complaint Committee requires NGO members as third party in the said committee. Hence, any Social Worker/ member of NGO/Association/Person familiar with the issue of Sexual Harassment willing to attend training on Sexual Harassment at Workplace may contact the undersigned.

On the above backdrop, all organizations (State Department and Private Organizations/ Public Sector Undertaking/Companies) are directed to adhere to the above notice and submit a compliance report to the Office of the Sikkim State Commission for Women, Below Super Market, Old Secretariat, Contact Number - 9883833188/ 8348532458. Email Id - sscwsikkim@gmail.com within two week's time from the date of its publication in the local newspaper.

Sd/-
Chairperson
Sikkim State Commission for Women



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT UDYOG BHAWAN, TADONG- 737102, GANGTOK, SIKKIM.

RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited from bonafide Sikkimese for engagement as District Resource Persons under Prime Ministers Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises(PMFME) Scheme.

The details of the eligibility criteria qualifications and application format be referred and downloaded from the official webpage of Commerce & Industries Department www.industries.sikkim.gov.in. The filled up application to be submitted to the office of the Director, MSME, Commerce & Industries Department, Government of Sikkim, Udyog Bhawan, Tadong, Gangtok, East Sikkim. The last date for the receipt of the filled up application is 25.06.2021 by 4.30 PM.

R.O. No. 57/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22
Dt. 09.06.2021

(S/d)
Director (MSME)
Commerce & Industries Department
Government of Sikkim.

HAVE A STORY
TO SHARE?

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Left Out and Set Adrift

The pandemic will have hit the underprivileged the most

The socioeconomic indicators for Sikkim, as recorded in the Census 2011 data for household amenities and assets, show an impressive improvement when compared against the indices recorded ten years earlier in Census 2001. Safe to vouch then that this statistic will have improved some more in the decade that has passed since as well. That said, the past year and half have been brutal for the economy, with the unorganised sector which is almost everything not government in Sikkim getting devastated. It will surprise no one if, like the rest of the country, Sikkim too has people dislodged from reasonable financial security to near penury. With so much of the new economy, emergency education and even health-care now hinged on technology and availability of the people to spend on "gadgets," it becomes important for the policy makers to return to this data, even if it is of 2011 vintage, to gauge how deep the interventions could travel in Sikkim. The inexcusable disadvantage that rural folk were placed in when access to fast & reliable internet connections and smart phones became pre-requisites to get vaccinated and the continued ineffectuality of online education are only some indications of how necessary it is for plans to have an understanding of ground realities to have the desired impact. The data from 2011 had flagged several sectors which need special attention. While the socioeconomic improvements have been universal, in that the amelioration has been across the board, what remains a worry is that those who have been left out remain cut off from the most of amenities. The pandemic must have cut them adrift even more.

To begin with sanitation levels in the State, Sikkim was deservedly the first State to bag the Nirmal Rajya award for the total sanitation it achieved some years ago. There has been a qualitative improvement as well in this sector with 75% of the households having water closet latrines [with flush] as against 32.1% in 2001. Sikkim is the best performing State on this count, posting the best figures among the States with only the metropolitan union territory of Chandigarh doing better at 87.1%. This is obviously conversion from pit latrines to the better water closet option because the number of households with pit latrines has come down from 32.1% in 2001 to 12% now. If one were to focus just on the rural scenario, the numbers remain as impressive for Sikkim. The State, as its Nirmal Rajya award had already testified, tops the listings among State with 68.5% of the rural households having water closet latrines, a huge leap from the merely 24.3% in 2001. Against the 40.6% of the rural households which had no latrines in 2001, the number had come down to 15.9% in 2011. These statistics for urban Sikkim are also the best in the country with 91.8% of the urban households having water closet latrines, 3.3% having pit latrines, and 8.2% having no latrines. The overall figure for Sikkim reveals that against 36.6% of the households in Sikkim had no latrines in 2001, and as of 2011, only 12.8% were so disadvantaged. This is indeed a noteworthy achievement. A rural-urban comparison reveals that the improvements in sanitation levels has been more marked in rural Sikkim where the number of rural households without latrines has come down from 40.6% in 2001 to 15.9% in 2011. For urban Sikkim, the numbers have dropped from 8.2% in 2001 to 4.8% of the households now.

When the percentages are converted to numbers, one learns that of the 1,28,131 households in Sikkim, 16,400 households have no latrines. This denial is explained to the large migrant population in Sikkim and the less than adequate tenements available to them [39,208 families in Sikkim live in rented accommodations]. But what needs immediate attention is the worrying fact that only 1,922 households [of the 16,400 without latrines] have access to public toilets. The remaining 14,478 households have to rely on open latrines. And this is a worry. Most of the already underprivileged and denied section of the population here remains left out from access to proper sanitation with even public facilities not available to them. It is important that immediate measures are undertaken to expand the footprint of public toilets to ensure that this section of the people receive at least the most basic of amenities.

Another section of the 'left out' from the strides made in socioeconomic indicators are the 18.2% of the households here which have none of the "assets" common to the rest of Sikkim. 23,320 households here own neither a radio, nor TV, computer, telephone or a vehicle. But must surely have children who go to school. This section obviously needs to be prioritised in the release of whatever aids or grants released by the State Government. Admittedly, a substantial number of this group might not qualify to make it to the beneficiaries list, so the least that can be done is extend all civic amenities to them which they deserve by way of their residence in Sikkim. Undoubtedly, the entire lot of households without latrines will fall in this category as well.

Naomi Osaka's Withdrawal From the French Open Highlights How Prioritizing Mental Wellness Goes Against the Rules, on the court and off

DOROTHY CHIN & TAMRA BURNS LOEB
theconversation.com

Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka announced that she would withdraw from the French Open after she was fined and threatened with being disqualified for not speaking to media during the tournament to protect her mental health.

French Open officials and others initially reacted not with concern but by criticizing her for not fulfilling her obligations. This occurred despite the fact that her refusal came after a first-round win, unlike others fined for skipping press conferences after losses.

The evolving maelstrom that has followed weighs two priorities – the obligation to fulfill one's job requirements, which in Osaka's case includes talking to the press – and protecting one's mental wellness. While a physical injury is routinely accepted as a legitimate reason for not performing aspects of one's duties, mental or emotional injury has yet to reach the same level of attention or legitimacy. For instance, Anthony Davis of the Los Angeles Lakers did not speak to the press after suffering a groin strain earlier this week. This decision, while discussed in the media, was accepted. His injury even led to talk about whether athletes should have shorter seasons and lighter loads.

As research psychologists who study the effects of culture and trauma on mental health, we're taking note of how these issues play out in Osaka's predicament.

TAKING HEAT FOR PROTESTING

As a high-profile Black athlete, Osaka has taken a leading role protesting the death of George Floyd and other African Americans who died at the hands of police, wearing a mask with a different name on each match day at the 2020 U.S. Open. Elite athletes who speak out on social justice issues have often faced a backlash for their stances.

Osaka, who is Black, Asian and female, may have contended with an even greater sense of vulnerability this past year, in light of the Black Lives Matter protests and the increased violence against Asian Americans. Studies have shown that individuals suffer from vicarious trauma when members of their group are targeted and discriminated against. Adding to the complexity is the fact that the norms in Osaka's native Japanese culture frown upon speaking out, which could exacerbate anxiety and vulnerability.

Osaka's gender also may have contributed to the negative reaction following her refusal to do press conferences and her subsequent withdrawal. There may be an implicit expectation that women accommodate questioning no matter how inappropriate the questions or uncomfortable they may feel, while male athletes may be accommodated for remaining silent.

PRESSING PROBLEMS WITH STIGMA

For several years, even before the pandemic, Osaka has explained that speaking with members of the media during press conferences causes her

anxiety and sometimes feels like being bullied. She has alluded to being shy, even "really depressed" after losing a match. She has said she grew anxious "off the court, if I was ever thrown into a situation where I had to speak in front of 100 people, I feel like I would start shaking." She tweeted that she has experienced long bouts of depression and anxiety triggered by speaking to the press.

The misery and loss that many endured during the pandemic year are resulting in poorer mental



health, particularly for ethnic minorities. It's not surprising that this manifests in the workplace – in Osaka's case, a press conference – and needs to be reckoned with.

And, stigma surrounding mental health issues is more pronounced among African Americans and Asians, where personal concerns are expected to remain private.

There is a long-held notion that individuals suffering from mental distress should just get over it. The crux of the matter is that people don't think about mental challenges the same way as physical injury. For hundreds of years, society upheld the notion that the mentally ill were morally deficient or lacked character. Families banished mentally ill members and rendered them invisible.

BRINGING MENTAL HEALTH OUT OF THE CLOSET

Mental health is an essential part of one's overall health, and mental illnesses are extremely common, yet mental health is often overlooked, minimized or stigmatized. Approximately 20% of U.S. adults age 18 or older (nearly 47 million individuals) report having a mental illness. The prevalence of mental illness is higher among females than males, in part due to greater social and economic difficulties that women face.

Among people age 15-44, depression is the most common cause of disability in the United States. In addition, many individuals suffer from more than one mental illness, and depression and anxiety often occur together. In December, the U.S. Census

Bureau reported that 42% of U.S. adults experience symptoms of anxiety or depression, a six-fold increase during the pandemic. Finally, the prevalence of mental illness is highest among adults with more than one racial or ethnic affiliation.

ADDRESSING MENTAL WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Despite its common occurrence, about half of U.S. workers worry about discussing mental health challenges in the workplace, and are afraid of nega-

tive repercussions to if they ask for help.

We hope that Osaka's choice to make her mental health struggles public serves as an inflection point in how mental illness is perceived and addressed in professional settings. Among elite athletes in particular, the perception of invincibility may inhibit any disclosure of emotional struggles, which reinforces the idea that such struggles are a sign of weakness. Yes, talking to the press is currently part of the job, but perhaps the dimensions of the job need to be reexamined when they contribute to poor mental health, on par with discussions about physical health.

One suggestion is to provide players opportunities to participate in decisions about issues that affect the level of stress experienced in their profession. In general, workplace policy should be updated to reflect the importance of mental health as a key aspect of overall well-being. Wellness programs can screen for depression, anxiety and other sources of stress, provide support and facilitate linkages with appropriate treatment.

Naomi Osaka is just 23, but she has already won four major tournaments and emerged as a leader among her peers in social justice issues. That she has disclosed her experiences with depression and anxiety and is seeking to protect her well-being, in spite of the backlash, may be the ultimate reflection of her mental toughness.

[Dorothy Chin is Associate Research Psychologist, University of California, Los Angeles; Tamra Burns Loeb is Associate Adjunct Professor, University of California, Los Angeles]

Euro 2020: football's Promotion of Unhealthy Consumption Must End

ROBIN IRELAND & CHRISTOPHER BUNN
theconversation.com

The Euros are here – Europe's festival of football, featuring some of the best players on the planet in peak physical condition. Yet alongside this spectacle runs a carnival of corporate advertising – often marketing unhealthy products such as alcohol, junk food and gambling apps.

How is it that a showcase for health and fitness became so saturated with unhealthy messages? As Gareth Southgate has said, the tournament means a lot to players and fans alike. That means these games deliver millions of eager eyeballs. When Portugal beat France in Euro 2016, for instance, an estimated 284 million people were watching. Heineken, Euro 2020's leading sponsor, pays UEFA an estimated \$45 million (£31.8 million) annually for access to this audience.

But in the context of a pandemic, promoting unhealthy products to hundreds of millions of people feels particularly wrong. We know that health issues such as obesity and diabetes – often preventable with interventions – can contribute as comorbidities in severe COVID-19 cases. We know too that gambling addiction increases the risk of suicide.

For the sake of public health, now is the time for fans to reassess whether they want unhealthy products to surround the sport they love. And if they don't, there are ways to oust these advertisers in favour of healthier alternatives.

PANDEMIC ADVERTISING

If anything, the pandemic has only worsened the problem of unhealthy advertising in football, with the absence of in person fans in the English

Premier League last season exposing new spaces for advertisements.

Newcastle United used the space where fans usually sit to promote their principal sponsor, FUN88, a gambling company. Leicester City have three gambling partners currently showing on their website, while Arsenal have three alcohol sponsors. When fans did return, Tottenham Hotspur sat theirs in the upper tier, reportedly so that television cameras were able to capture lower-tier banners advertising energy drinks, a gambling company and unhealthy snacks.

That decision sparked outrage, but it's easy to see why it was made. Premier League television broadcasts reach an estimated 643 million households across the world. And in one game we researched, there were 716 gambling brand exposures alone, representing more than six logos per minute. Such heavy in-broadcast exposure is highly sought after by the world's biggest brands.

Through television broadcasts, Premier League club sponsors also eye the global market. Gambling companies often specifically target Asian audiences, with lettering on the pitch perimeter boards appearing in Chinese and Thai.

EURO 2020

The Euros are a sports mega-event with mass popular appeal across the world, attracting a total of 2 billion viewers in 2016. That's a prime opportunity for marketers.

It was in the 1970s that modern packages of sponsorship rights were first conceived and developed for the FIFA World Cup. Coca-Cola was first on board in 1975, while the tobacco company RJ Reynolds was a sponsor throughout the 1980s – until FIFA re-

sponded to the charge that this may not be an appropriate example to set young fans.

Associating unhealthy brands with sport is important to corporations because it provides a "health halo" effect designed to influence consumers' perceptions. As such, the early sponsors of sport were often alcohol and tobacco companies, which used an association with healthy lifestyles to promote and normalise their products while avoiding traditional advertising regulations.

CORPORATE POWER IN FOOTBALL

With the help of sport's governing bodies, corporations are finding ways to overcome national advertising restrictions to this day. At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, FIFA allegedly demanded that alcohol should be available at the matches despite being prohibited under Brazilian law. One FIFA official later complained about the "levels of drunkenness" in stadiums.

And at the last European Football Championships in 2016, Carlsberg reportedly found a way to get its message out there, despite France's national law prohibiting alcohol marketing at sports events. A study of alcohol marketing in general at Euro 2016 found an average of 122.94 alcohol marketing references per broadcast – roughly one every two minutes.

According to Carlsberg, its brand activation techniques at Euro 2016 raked in tens of millions in beer sales. One gambling operator claimed the same tournament drove record levels of betting. But to avoid criticism when this engagement leads to unhealthy outcomes, businesses tend to blame the consumer for buying unhealthy

products. Unfortunately, it's hard to be responsible when the marketing is telling you it's fun.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOTBALL

So, is this just another public health gripe to spoil a long-awaited tournament? Not when you have a passing knowledge of the state of the nation's health. There were over a million hospital admissions for obesity in England in 2019/20 – up 17% on the previous year. And excess weight, poor nutrition and alcohol consumption all directly influence the prevalence of cancer and heart disease, the most common causes of death – even during a pandemic.

Yet as audiences settle down to consume a fiesta of football over the next few weeks, advertisers will encourage them to order a pizza for half-time, have a flutter, and get the beers in.

On top of rightly addressing racism in the sport and in wider society, it's time for football to reconsider its unhealthy relationships with industries that prey on fans' passion for their sport to promote brand excitement and consumption.

Fans at Norwich City have shown it's possible to overturn a partnership with an unwelcome gambling sponsor. Fans showcased their collective clout in April 2021 to quash the European Super League. And fans can and should demand healthier brand partnerships from their teams and tournament organisers – which could help us all enjoy the football without having to wade through a flood of unhealthy messaging when we switch on the TV.

[Robin Ireland is PhD Candidate, Commercial Determinants of Health in Sport, University of Glasgow; Christopher Bunn is Lecturer in Sociology, University of Glasgow]

Centre should take nation into confidence over Galwan incident:

Sonia Gandhi

NEW DELHI, 15 JUN [PTI]: Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday asked the government to come clean on the Galwan Valley incident in which 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives a year ago and sought to know the progress made in restoring status quo ante at the border.

In a statement, she said no clarity is yet available on the Chinese transgressions at the border, which Prime minister Narendra Modi has denied.

Ms Gandhi said the Congress has patiently waited for the government to come clean and inform the nation about the circumstances in which the unprecedented incident happened and reassure the people that the sacrifice of our brave jawans was not in vain.

"The Congress party reiterates its concern that no clarity is yet available and the prime minister's last word on the subject a year ago was that no transgression had occurred," she said.

"We have repeatedly sought details of the episode in light of the PM's statement, as well as details of what progress has been made towards restoring the status quo ante prior to April 2020," she also said.

The Congress chief said that the disengagement agreement with China "appears to have worked entirely to India's disadvantage so far".

"The Congress party urges the government to take the nation into confidence and ensure that their performance is worthy of the commitment of our soldiers who are standing bravely and resolutely at the borders," she said in her statement.

Ms Gandhi also said "As we approach the first anniversary of the tragic loss of 20 brave soldiers of the Bihar Regiment, including their commanding officer, in the confrontation with PLA troops of China on the night of June 15-16, 2020, the Congress party joins a grateful nation in remembrance of their supreme sacrifice."

The 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives in clashes with PLA troops at the India-China border in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on the intervening night of June 15 and 16, 2020.

No let-up in cases of violence against women and children during lockdown

SHUVAM DHUNGANA

KATHMANDU, 15 JUN [KATH-MANDUPOST]: On Saturday, the Area Police Office, Chandrapur in Rautahat district arrested a 42-year-old man on the charge of throwing acid into the face of his 38-year-old wife.

According to police, the couple are residents of ward-4 of Chandrapur Municipality and during a fight, the man had attacked the woman with acid, which is used to clean gold by jewelers.

The woman was rushed to the Apollo City Hospital in Chure and further investigation into the case is underway, the police office said in a press statement.

In another case of crime against women, the Metropolitan Police Circle, Satdobato, Lalitpur arrested a 24-year-old man on Saturday morning on the charge of raping a woman of his age.

The accused, who is originally from Ramechhap district, lived in a rented room at ward 28 of Lalitpur Metropolitan City. Police said they are investigating the case.

These two incidents are the latest in a series of brutal attacks on women that have increased markedly during the pandemic.

According to the data provided by Nepal Police, in three months, from February 13 to May 14, a total of 4,773 cases of violence against women and children have been reported. As per the data on average 53 such cases are reported daily across the country.

The data include cases related to rape, attempted rape, allegations of witchcraft, polygamy, domestic violence, rape and murder and kidnapp-



ing. And 88 percent of the cases involved either domestic violence or rape.

Nepal Police spokesman Senior Superintendent Basanta Bahadur Kunwar said cases of violence against women and children have been rising every day despite most of the country remaining under prohibitory orders because the majority of perpetrators involved family members and acquaintances who saw the victims as easy targets.

"In the past, cases related to domestic violence and gender-based violence used to be underreported as many victims and their families would not come forward fearing for their reputation," said Kunwar.

"However, now there are many organisations supporting the victims and survivors, so more such cases are being reported," said Kunwar. "Considering the sensitivity of such

cases, Nepal Police has been using well-trained female officers to investigate the cases in a friendly environment while maintaining the privacy of the victims."

As per the Domestic Violence (Offense and Punishment) Act 2009, "Domestic violence refers to any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic harm perpetrated by a person to a person with whom he/she has a family relationship and this word also includes any acts of reprimand or emotional harm."

According to Kunwar, the victims can report a crime to the police by calling at 100 or 104. The complaints can also be lodged through the social media sites of Nepal Police like Twitter and Facebook.

Besides Nepal Police, various organisations such as Nepal Red Cross Society, Asha Crisis Centre, Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation

(TPO), WOREC and National Women Commission have been operating helpline services and offering counselling, legal services, therapy sessions through phone calls and social media for gender-based violence victims even during the pandemic.

According to an operator of 1145, a national helpline to report gender-based violence, as many as nine employees are available round-the-clock to provide counselling to victims.

"Majority of the calls we receive are related to husband-wife fight or rape cases," said the operator without mentioning their name as they are not allowed to speak to the media. "If an incident is recent and if we think the victim is in need of counselling, then we connect the victim to our psychosocial counselor and if we feel the victim is in immediate danger then we

notify the local police."

Even in normal times, cases of domestic and gender-based violence are considered highly underreported. So, there are concerns that this trend will continue also during the Covid-19 lockdown, which could make things worse, as women are stuck with the abusers and cannot reach police stations or shelter homes on their own for support.

According to WOREC, an organisation working to combat violence against women and children, during the first one month of the lockdown between April 29 and May 29, a total of 200 cases of violence against women and children from across the country have been recorded in the organisation. The organization recorded the cases through its hotlines, psychologists, women rights defenders, women's commu-

nity organizations and members working in 18 districts.

According to WOREC, this is a slight decline compared to a month prior to the lockdown when a total of 221 cases of violence against women and children were reported between March 14 and April 13.

For Sulochana Khanal, senior program officer at WOREC, the 200 cases, which were recorded during the lockdown through the phone alone, is a high number. "Most of our victims visit the nearest office to seek assistance from us and for counselling, however, during the lockdown all complaints were registered through phone and this figure is high," Khanal told the Post.

Khanal believes that as a majority of women are locked with their abusive husbands, many do not dare to file complaints with police or organisations out of fear.

WOREC has been analysing the crime data every 15 days and it has found that most of the complaints it receives include domestic violence. Among the 200 cases recorded, 45 percent were related to domestic violence.

"Women are often abused verbally, physically and mentally over dowry, or for giving birth to a girl child or being childless even after being married for years," said Khanal. "Many of these victims are also deprived of the most essential needs and services."

She said as many families have seen their incomes lost or reduced due to the pandemic and the lockdown and are under financial strain, disputes and quarrels involving husband and wife have increased.

Jharkhand logs 151 fresh COVID-19 cases, one new death

RANCHI, JUN 15 (PTI):

Jharkhand recorded only one COVID fatality during the last 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 5,085, a health department bulletin said on Tuesday.

The COVID-19 death was reported from East Singhbhum district.

The state also reported 151 new COVID-19 cases which took the tally 3,43,609, the bulletin said.

The new cases were reported from East Singhbhum (27), Dhanbad (23) and Hazaribag (15).

The mortality rate in the state dipped at 1.47 per cent but remained higher than the national average of 1.20 per cent.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state has improved to 97.62 per cent, better than the national average of 95.40 per cent.

The state now has 3,062 active COVID-19



cases, while 3,35,462 patients have recovered from the infection including 483 during the last 24 hours, the bulletin said.

Altogether, 91,40,410 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in Jharkhand, including

38,711 since Monday, it added. In a bid to combat the second wave of COVID-19, the government has extended the lockdown like restrictions in the state till June 17.

Several other restrictions, including seven-day mandatory quaran-

tine for people visiting the state, have been in place.

The state has also suspended the operation of the intra and inter-city bus services and restricted the maximum number of attendees in a wedding event to 11.

Assam governor gets higher education joint secretary

GUWAHATI, JUN 15 (PTI):

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma called on Governor Jagdish Mukhi on Thursday and apprised him of the several activities that the Assam government has undertaken for the welfare of the people of the state.

The governor and the chief minister discussed issues related to the qualitative improvement

of higher education and improving the functioning of the universities and colleges of the state, besides the modalities to transform them into centres of excellence.

During the discussion, Sarma said that a Joint Secretary, in charge of higher education, to the Governor of Assam will be appointed for improving the function-

ing of higher educational institutions, an official statement said.

The joint secretary shall have his office both at the secretariat and in Raj Bhavan.

The step has been taken to ensure perfect coordination between the universities, colleges and the Education Department, the statement said.

268 new COVID-19 cases push Mizoram's tally to 15,631

AIZAWL, JUN 15 (PTI): Mizoram's COVID-19 tally rose to 15,631 as 268 more people tested positive for the infection, an official said on Tuesday.

Of the 268 fresh cases, 200 cases were reported from Aizawl district and the rest from Kolasib, Lunglei, Siaha, Lawngtlai, Saitual, Mamit and Serchhip districts, he said.

More than 71 children and two Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were among the

newly infected people, he said.

Eleven patients have travel history and the rest 257 were found to have locally contracted the infection, the official said.

At least 144 patients have developed symptoms of COVID-19, he said.

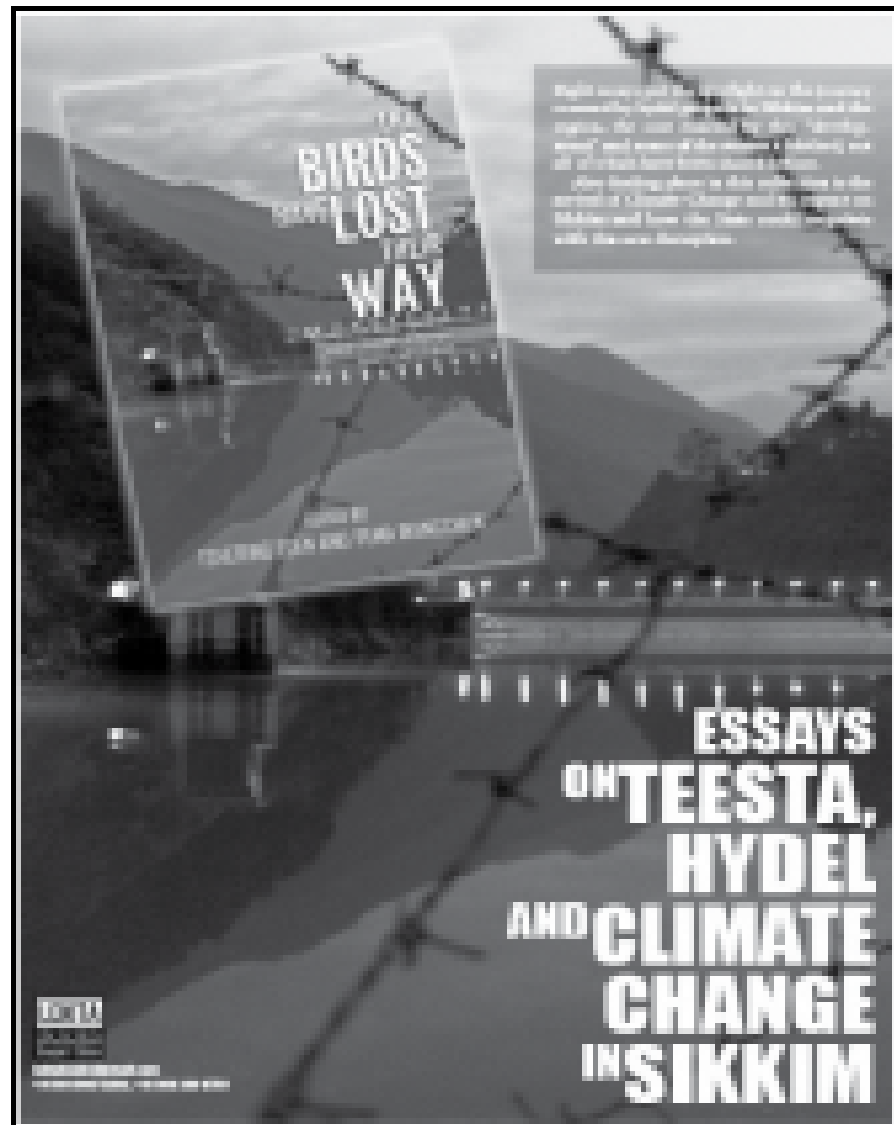
Mizoram now has 3,682 active COVID-19 active cases, while 11,879 people have recovered from the infection, including 131 people on Monday, he said.

The COVID-19 death toll in the

state so far is 70. The COVID-19 recovery rate now is 75.99 per cent and the death rate is 0.44 per cent.

The state has tested 4,36,556 samples for COVID-19 till date, including 4,248 on Monday.

According to state immunisation officer Dr Lalzawmi, a total of 2,99,068 people have been inoculated in the state of which 2,45,823 have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 53,245 people have received both doses of the vaccine.



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Important that Australia build depth in squad like India, says Paine

MELBOURNE, JUN 15 (PTI): Australia need to emulate India in creating depth in the squad so that top players can be rested and kept fresh, says Test skipper Tim Paine.

India's top cricketers already in England for the WTC final and the subsequent England series but the country announced another 20-man squad, filled with several youngsters, for the white-ball series against Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, Australia are facing the prospect of its top cricketers opting out of upcoming tour of the West Indies.

Paine feels Australia needs to have youngsters who can step up at the international level, taking the load off senior players.

"It's important now we build depth in our squad so we can cover it. Ideally we don't have guys pulling out of tours but guys who are rested for a reason and we can plan ahead," Paine was quoted as saying by the



'Sydney Morning Herald.'

"We're seeing that with India at the moment. They're getting the balance absolutely spot on because they've got a real depth of talent who can step up and play Test cricket.

"We need to get to that stage so we can rest our best players so we can make sure when we've got them on the park they're fresh and playing at their best,"

Paine added.

Australian cricketers spent 14-days in quarantine in Sydney before reuniting with their families after the Indian Premier League was suspended last month.

They are again gearing up for limited-overs tour of the West Indies and unconfirmed T20 tour of Bangladesh.

The postponed IPL is set to resume in the UAE during September fol-

lowed by the T20 World Cup during October and early November after which the players from Down Under will have to quarantine upon returning home.

Australia then play a Test against Afghanistan in late November followed by the Ashes series starting December 8.

According to a media report, Steve Smith, David Warner, Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell Marcus

Stoinis, Jhye Richardson and Kane Richardson are all expected to miss the West Indies tour.

Paine said those players need support instead of criticism.

"It's certainly an issue, there's no doubt about that. Whether it's seven who are going to pull out, I'm not across all that, but it's certainly going to be one of the challenges of the modern-day player.

"I've seen some past players and commentators comment on it and I think it's a little unfair. Unless you're put in their shoes travelling away and coming back and having to do two weeks [hotel quarantine] either side, it can be quite draining.

"In our set-up in particular we've got guys who have done that six or seven times. That's 14 or 15 weeks out of a year sitting in a hotel room by yourself on top of any really busy schedule," Paine said.

Need for speed: Ledecky wins 400 but slower than expected

OMAHA (US), JUN 15 (AP): Katie Ledecky touched the wall far ahead of everyone else at the U.S. swimming trials.

No surprise there.

But she was taken aback by the time. It wasn't as fast as expected, raising the stakes for an expected showdown in Tokyo with the Aussie Terminator.

Ledecky earned a trip to her third Olympics with a never-in-doubt victory in the women's 400-meter freestyle Monday night.

She was a good five body lengths ahead of runner-up Paige Madden, touching the wall in 4 minutes, 1.27 seconds.

But the winning time was far off Ledecky's world record of 3:56.46, which she set almost five years ago at the Rio Olympics.

Another time on everyone's mind: Ariarne Titmus won the 400 free at the Australian trials on Sunday with the second-fastest performance in history 3:56.90.

Ledecky wasn't close to Titmus' performance, either.

Very much a blur, Ledecky said.

I thought I could go a little faster than that, so I'm a little surprised. But I'll take it for now.

Titmus, a 20-year-old known as The Terminator, has made it clear that she's not intimidated by Ledecky's longtime dominance in the distance events.

Titmus told reporters Down Under that the 24-year-old from the nation's capital is "not going to have it all her own way. I can't control what she does, (but) if I do the best I can and put myself in the position to win a gold medal, it's going to be a tough race.

Ledecky made only brief comments after her race in the virtual mixed zone, declining to attend the usual in-person news conference for those who make the Olympic team.

It was just good to be here and lock in my spot," she said, her muted comments a striking contrast to Titmus' bravado.

While Ledecky is a familiar face on the American team she's won five gold medals and one silver at the last two Summer Games the second night of the trials also signaled a changing of



the guard.

Two Olympic rookies locked up their spots for Tokyo. Teenager TorriHuske captured the women's 100 butterfly, while Michael Andrew held on to win the men's 100 breaststroke.

Huske was under world-record pace at the turn but faded just a bit on the return leg. Still, she touched first in 55.66 seconds, breaking the national mark of 55.78 that she set the previous night in the semifinals.

The 18-year-old from Arlington, Virginia, came up short of the world record (55.48) set by Sweden's Sarah Sjostrom in Rio.

I don't even know what to do, Huske said.

I've been thinking about this a lot. I feel like it hasn't really sunk in. It's really crazy.

An even younger swimmer, 16-year-old Claire Curzan of Cary, North Carolina, took the expected second spot on the Olympic team at 56.43.

It's so exciting to see some young swimmers coming up, Ledecky said.

I liked seeing Torri's ear-to-ear grin. It gave me chills in the warm-up pool.

Andrew has taken an unorthodox path to the Olympic team. He turned pro at age 14 and was trained by his father in a backyard pool, using methods that stressed short bursts

of sprint swimming over weight training and the grueling routine of endless laps.

It paid off in Omaha. The 22-year-old Andrew pulled ahead on the outward lap and desperately held on at the end, touching in 58.73 a bit slower than he went while setting two American records the day before.

After just missing the Olympic team in 2016, Andrew was overcome with emotion. He sat on the lane rope and looked skyward, raising both arms. He hugged his father, mom and sister after climbing from the pool.

It's still hard to believe it's real, Andrew said.

It's been five years in the making. Not making that team as a 17-year-old and to come back to kind of rectify that, I'm just honored and blessed."

Andrew Wilson was second, just one-hundredth of a second behind. He is also expected to make the Olympic team. Missing out was national team veteran Nic Fink, who settled for third in 58.80.

Huske and Curzan knocked off 2016 Olympian Kelsi Dahlia, who was known as Kelsi Worrell when she competed in Rio. Dahlia was fourth in the 100 fly 37-hundreds behind the 16-year-old.

Huske is one the swimmers

who benefited from an extra year of training when the Tokyo Olympics were postponed a year because of the pandemic.

She is set to attend Stanford in the fall.

I feel like (the one-year delay) really helped me because I was able to work on my strength training, Huske said. I feel like it makes a big difference in my second 50. I tend to fly and die how fast can I go out and hang on.

In other events Monday night, defending Olympic champions Lilly King and Ryan Murphy advanced from the semifinals with the top times in their respective events. King bounced through the 100 breaststroke in 1:04.72, while Murphy set the pace in the 100 backstroke in 52.22.

The 2012 Olympic champion, 36-year-old Matt Grevers, also advanced to the final, as did Andrew in his second event of the session.

Former world record-holder Regan Smith led the semis of the women's 100 back in 57.92, while Kieran Smith set himself up to make the Olympic team in a second event by leading the 200 free in 1:45.74.

Smith won the 400 free on the opening night of the meet to secure his first trip to the Olympics.

Leonard, George each score 31, Clippers tie series with Jazz



LOS ANGELES (AP): Kawhi Leonard and Paul George know it takes the two of them to make things go right if the Los Angeles Clippers are going to advance beyond the second round of the NBA playoffs for the first time. Both responded again on Monday night.

Leonard and George each scored 31 points Monday night to propel the Clippers to a 118-104 victory over the Utah Jazz and even their Western Conference second-round series at two games apiece.

"Myself and Kawhi got full trust in each other," said George, who was playing in his 100th career postseason game. "It's opportunities for us to score when we get switches, but then there's opportunities to allow our teammates to be aggressive and make plays for them when we can attack our mismatches. I think it's just a healthy mix."

Leonard and George also became fifth duo since the merger with 30 points each in back-to-back playoff games.

"These guys understand that we need them to be the head of the snake and be super aggressive," said Marcus Morris Sr., who had 24 points and was 5 of 6 on 3-pointers. "Those guys are our leaders. We go as they go and they understand that. Guys have just been picking up the slack behind them."

In a game that Los Angeles dominated all night, Leonard provided the highlight with his dunk late in the first half. He got the ball just beyond the 3-point line, drove past Royce O'Neale in the lane and then slammed it over Derrick Favors to give the Clippers a 62-38 lead with 1:24 remaining in the second quarter.

The dunk quickly went viral on social media and even caused Philadelphia star Joel Embiid to pause in the middle of his postgame remarks after the 76ers lost to the

Atlanta Hawks. "I'm sure you saw that, but that Kawhi dunk was crazy," Embiid said before going to back to discuss his team's loss.

Leonard — who avoids social media — said Ivica Zubac showed him Embiid's comments after the game.

"In that game and the heat of the moment, have to have that mentality," Leonard said of his dunk. "After that though (Joe) Ingles hit a wide open 3, so we still have room for improvement."

Game 5 is Wednesday night in Salt Lake City.

Utah won the tip and scored on Bogdanovic's dunk before the Clippers scored the next 10 points and never looked back as Leonard had five points during the early run.

LA's largest lead in the first quarter was 19 as it was 6 of 12 on 3-pointers and forced six Utah turnovers. The Jazz trailed 30-13 at the end of the first quarter as they were 6 of 21 from the floor and didn't make their first 3-pointer until 1:34 remaining.

"I thought it was our defense where we set the tone. We were able to get out in transition," Clippers coach Tyrone Lue said.

Donovan Mitchell led Utah with 37 points, making him the first player since Golden State's Stephen Curry in 2019 to have six straight 30-point games in the playoffs.

Ingles added 19 and Bojan Bogdanovic 18 for the top-seeded Jazz, who have lost back-to-back playoff games for the first time this year.

"I think we shot ourselves in the foot a few times with the turnovers. And that's really what kind of played into their taking advantage," Mitchell said. "When you allow a team to get out in transition, get going early, it's tough to come back after that."

Morris hit a pair of free throws with 5:21 remaining to put the Clip-

pers up 51-22, which was their largest lead of the night. They had a 24-point advantage at halftime (68-44), which is tied for their second biggest in postseason franchise history.

LA led 105-85 with 6:48 remaining before the Jazz countered with a 17-7 run to cut it in half with 2:10 left.

"We were playing hard. We were competing. We weren't playing smart in that we weren't connected," Utah coach Quin Snyder said. "We weren't putting ourselves in situations where we could have success, I think."

MORE DYNAMIC DUOS

Leonard and George have each scored at least 20 points in all 11 games this postseason. They are just the third duo in NBA history to do that in a team's first 11 playoff games and the first since Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant with the Lakers in 2003. Jerry West, who watched Monday's game from court-side, and Elgin Baylor were the other duo with the 1962 Lakers.

TIP-INS

Jazz: NBA Defensive Player of the Year Rudy Gobert was in foul trouble most of the night and finished with 11 points. ... Jordan Clarkson was only 3 of 12 from the field and 2 of 8 on 3-pointers after averaging 5.3 made from beyond the arc in the first three games. ... G Mike Conley remained out due to a right hamstring strain. Snyder did not have an updated timetable on when Conley could return.

Clippers: Morris Sr. is 16 of 27 (59.3%) on 3-pointers during LA's six postseason victories but is 7 of 33 (21.2%) in the five losses. ... Patrick Beverley had a postseason career-high four blocks. ... G Rajon Rondo was inactive due to right knee soreness. Lue said before the game that he planned to stick with a nine-player rotation moving forward.

India will emerge champions in WTC final: Australia Test skipper Paine

MELBOURNE, JUN 15 (PTI): Australia red-ball skipper Tim Paine has no doubt that India will trump New Zealand comfortably to emerge victorious in the inaugural World Test Championship final.

World's top-two Test teams will fight it out for the title at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton from June 18.

"My prediction is, India will win pretty comfortably if they play anywhere near their best," Paine said at a press conference in Brisbane.

Paine had captained Australia against both New Zealand and India. While Australia beat the Kiwis 3-0 at home in 2019, they suffered a 1-2 defeat against India when Virat Kohli's side travelled Down Under in early 2020.

New Zealand are coming into the match well-prepared, following their

1-0 series-win over hosts England but for Paine, it won't count for much as he believes the win came against a depleted home side.

England did not have all-rounders Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes and Moeen Ali in their line-up apart from missing Jos Buttler, pacer Jofra Archer and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes.

It's a fact which makes him believe that the Ashes series later in the summer would be an altogether different ball game.

"I think New Zealand are a good team, for one, and secondly if we're being realistic I think it's a really different team that we saw England out on the field to what we're probably going to see in the Ashes keeping it in perspective it certainly wasn't England's strongest team," he said.

Attacks target polio teams in east Afghanistan, 4 killed

KABUL, JUN 15 (AP): Gunmen on Tuesday targeted members of polio teams in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least four staffers, officials said.

No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks in the city of Jalalabad. Along with the four killed, at least three members of the polio vaccination teams were wounded, said Dr. Jan Mohammad, who coordinates the anti-polio drive for the country's east.

Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan are the only two remaining countries in the world where polio is endemic, after Nigeria was last year declared free of the virus.

In March, the Islamic State group said it shot and killed three women who were part of a polio vaccination team, also in Jalalabad, the capital of Afghanistan's Nangarhar province.

The IS affiliate is headquartered in eastern Afghanistan and while the Sunni militant group's numbers are believed to have gone down after recent government offensives and clashes with the rival Taliban, IS militants have lately stepped up attacks on minority Shiite Muslims.

IS has also taken responsibility for several targeted killings that have taken aim at the country's nascent civil society, as well as journalists and legal professionals.

The Afghan government in recent months, with the help of UNICEF, has sought to inoculate 9.6 million children against polio. In 2020, Afghanistan reported 54 new cases of polio.

The increased violence and chaos comes as the U.S. and NATO are completing their military withdrawal from Afghanistan. The estimated 2,500-3,500 U.S. soldiers and 7,000 NATO allied troops are to be gone by Sept. 11 at the latest, though there are projections they may be gone by mid July.

Though not uncommon in Afghanistan, attacks on polio vaccination teams are more frequent in Pakistan, where the Pakistani Taliban and other militants regularly stage attacks on polio teams and security forces escorting them.

They also target vaccination centers and health workers, claiming that anti-polio drives are part of an alleged Western conspiracy to sterilise children or collect intelligence.

Last week, two policemen who were providing security to polio vaccinators were shot and killed in northwest Pakistan.

These attacks increased after it was revealed that a fake hepatitis vaccination campaign was used as a ruse by the CIA in the hunt for al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was killed by U.S. commandos in 2011 in Pakistan.

New Israel government vows change, but not for Palestinians

BEITA (WEST BANK), JUN 15 (AP): Israel's fragile new government has shown little interest in addressing the decades-old conflict with the Palestinians, but it may not have a choice.

Jewish ultranationalists are already staging provocations aimed at splitting the coalition and bringing about a return to right-wing rule. In doing so, they risk escalating tensions with the Palestinians weeks after an 11-day Gaza war was halted by an informal cease-fire.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's best hope for maintaining his ruling coalition which consists of eight parties from across the political spectrum will be to manage the conflict, the same approach favored by his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, for most of his 12-year rule. But that method failed to prevent three Gaza wars and countless smaller eruptions.

That's because the status quo for Palestinians involves expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank, looming evictions in Jerusalem, home demolitions, deadly shootings and an array of discriminatory measures that two well-known human rights groups say amount to apartheid. In Gaza, which has been under a crippling blockade since the Hamas militant group seized power in 2007, it's even worse.

They talk about it being a government of change, but it's just going to entrench the sta-



tus quo," said WaleedAssaf, a Palestinian official who coordinates protests against West Bank settlements. Bennett is a copy of Netanyahu, and he might even be more radical.

Bennett said little about the Palestinians in a speech before being sworn in on Sunday. Violence will be met with a firm response, he warned, adding that security calm will lead to economic moves, which will lead to reducing friction and the conflict.

Environment Minister Tamar Zandberg, a member of the dovish Meretz party, told Israeli television's Channel 12 that she believes the peace process is important, but

that the new government has agreed, "at least at this stage, not to deal with it.

The government faces an early challenge on JabaSa-beeh, a hilltop in the northern West Bank where dozens of Jewish settlers rapidly established an outpost last month, paving roads and setting up living quarters that they say are now home to dozens of families.

The settlement, named Eviatar after an Israeli who was killed in an attack in 2013, was built without the permission of Israeli authorities on land the Palestinians say is privately owned. Israeli troops have evacuated set-

tlers from the site three times before, but they returned after an Israeli was killed in a shooting attack nearby early last month.

Clearing them out again would embarrass Bennett and other right-wing members of the coalition, who already face fierce criticism and even death threats for allying with centrist and left-wing factions to oust Netanyahu.

The government faces a similar dilemma over a parade through east Jerusalem organized by ultranationalists that is due to be held Tuesday. The march risks setting off the kind of protests and clashes that helped ignite last

month's Gaza war.

Meanwhile, Palestinians from the adjacent village of Beita have held regular protests against the settlement outpost. Demonstrators have thrown stones, and Israeli troops have fired tear gas and live ammunition. Three protesters have been killed, including 17-year-old Mohammed Hamayel, who was shot dead Friday. Initial reports said he was 15.

I always taught him you should stand up for your rights without infringing on the rights of others," his father, Said, said at a mourning event attended by dozens of villagers. He described his son as a popular teenager who got good grades and was a natural leader.

Thank God, I'm very proud of my son," he said. "Even in martyrdom he distinguished himself.

The villagers fear that if the outpost remains, it will eventually swallow up even more of their land, growing and merging with some of the more than 130 authorized settlements across the occupied West Bank, where nearly 500,000 settlers live.

We're not a political game in the hands of Bennett or Netanyahu," said Mohammed Khabeesa, a resident who says he owns land near the settler outpost that he can no longer access without a military permit.

The settlements are like a cancer," he said. "Everyone knows they begin small, and

then they take root and expand at people's expense until they reach our homes."

A spokeswoman for the settler organization behind the outpost did not respond to a request for comment.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza in the 1967 Mideast war, territories the Palestinians want for a future state. The settlements are seen by the Palestinians and much of the international community as a major obstacle to peace because they make it nearly impossible to create a contiguous, viable state of Palestine alongside Israel.

Every Israeli government since 1967 has expanded the settlements, and this one is unlikely to be an exception. Bennett briefly served as head of a major settler organization, and his party is one of three in the coalition that strongly support settlements.

HagitOfra, an expert on settlements with the Israeli rights group Peace Now, says the settlers have always used illegal outposts to challenge Israeli authorities, a trend she expects to accelerate under the new government.

Because the settlers feel this government is not their government, challenging it, psychologically, will be much, much easier, she said.

She hopes the new government will at least put the brakes on larger settlement projects, including massive infrastructure that will pave the way for future growth.

Hong Kong watching Chinese nuclear plant after leak reported

HONG KONG, JUN 15 (AP): Hong Kong's leader said Tuesday her government is closely watching a nearby Chinese nuclear power plant following a news report that it might be leaking.

The plant's operators have released few details, but nuclear experts say based on their brief public statement, the facility might be suffering a leak of gas from fuel rods inside a reactor.

Government data showed radiation levels in Hong Kong were normal Monday night, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said. Data on Tuesday from the Hong Kong Observatory showed radiation still normal.

A French company that helps manage the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant in Guangdong province said Monday it was dealing with a performance issue. It said the facility was operating within safe limits.

That followed a report by CNN that Framatome told U.S. authorities the power plant 135 kilometers (85 miles) west of Hong Kong might be leaking.

With regards to foreign media reports about a nuclear plant in Taishan, Guangzhou, the Hong Kong government attaches a high degree of importance to this," Lam said.

Lam said her government would ask authorities in Guangdong for information and tell the public about any devel-



opments. The Taishan plant, which began commercial operation in December 2018, is owned by China Guangdong Nuclear Power Group and Electricite de France, the majority owner of Framatome. A second reactor began operating in September 2019.

They are the first of a new type called European Pressurized Reactors. Two more are being built in Finland and France.

CNN reported Framatome wrote to the U.S. Department of Energy warning of an imminent radiological threat and accusing Chinese authorities of raising acceptable limits for radiation outside the plant to avoid having to shut it down.

U.S. officials believed there was no severe safety threat, CNN said.

The Department of Energy did not imme-

diately respond to an emailed request for comment.

The United Nation's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, told The Associated Press that it was aware of the issue and was awaiting information from contacts in China.

Electricite de France said Monday that it had been informed of the increase in concentration of certain rare gases in Taishan's reactor No. 1.

That suggests fuel rods are leaking noble gases, a byproduct of nuclear fission, according to Luk Bing-lam, an expert on nuclear engineering at the City University of Hong Kong.

If the leakage is more severe, then you will start seeing more radioactive material like cesium, rather than gas, said

Lam, who also is chairman of the Hong Kong Nuclear Society.

Such leaks happen every so often in China and plants usually can handle it themselves, Lam said. But he said this incident might be complicated by the fact that the Taishan plant might use U.S. technology that is covered by export restrictions.

China's major state-owned nuclear power companies are on Washington's entity list of companies that are barred from obtaining U.S. technology without government approval.

The French partner might be asking for U.S. approval because Framatome previously licensed technology from Westinghouse, Lam said.

With the situation now, that becomes diffi-

cult, said Lam. For even a small problem, they need U.S. government approval.

Lam, who has worked with Chinese nuclear power plant operators, said he asked the company for information about the leak but managers won't talk about it.

I suspect the leakage is far more widespread than just a single assembly, said Lam. Because of that, they probably need some special technology to resolve this leakage problem.

Previously, the Taishan facility leaked a small amount of radioactive gas on April 9, the National Nuclear Safety Administration said on its website. It said the event rated Level 0 on its safety scale, meaning it was without safety significance.

Emirates Air posts \$5.5B loss as virus disrupts travel

DUBAI, JUN 15 (AP): The Middle East's largest airline, Emirates, announced on Tuesday a net loss of USD 5.5 billion over the past year as revenue fell by more than 66% due to global travel restrictions sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Dubai-based airline said revenue had declined by USD 8.4 billion, largely due to the suspension of passenger

flights at its hub in March 2020 and ongoing restrictions on travel.

Emirates Group, which also operates dnata ground services at airports, reported a total loss of USD 6 billion, the first time ever it does not post a profit in more than three decades, the company said.

Dubai's government has stepped in to assist Emirates financially.



Adele Makes Rare Appearance to Mark 4th Anniversary of Fatal Grenfell Fire

On the fourth anniversary of the U.K.'s Grenfell Tower fire, Adele offered an emotional message to those continuing the fight for justice following the 2017 tragedy.

Adele is sharing support on the four-year anniversary of London's tragic Grenfell Tower fire.

The 33-year-old Grammy winner, who rarely makes public appearances, is featured delivering a powerful message in footage posted to YouTube on Monday, June 14. The video was shared by Grenfell United, a group comprised of families of victims and survivors from the 2017 fire that claimed 72 lives after a kitchen fire started a blaze in the 24-story building.

"Today marks four years since the Grenfell Tower fire, and still, there are so many unanswered questions," Adele shared. "Still, the trial is taking way too long, and still, no one has been accountable for that night's events. And yet, Grenfell United is still out here, fighting tirelessly for the justice and for the change that not only they deserve, that their community deserve, that the whole country deserves."

She continued, "And for that, I'd like

to thank you. Thank you for putting your pain aside for all of these years to fight the fight. I can't imagine the kind of personal consequences that has on you. I really hope that this time next year, you will have the answers that you will need

Last year, on the third anniversary of the tragic events, Meghan Markle shared a message of gratitude from herself and husband Prince Harry for the Hubb Community Kitchen, a group providing food and resources for those impacted



to finally, finally be able to breathe together. I love you, I'll see you soon, stay strong. We're all with you."

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry, an official review of the events ordered by then-Prime Minister Theresa May on the day after the fire, remains ongoing, according to the BBC, due in part to delays stemming from the coronavirus pandemic.

by the fire.

"I'm so proud of you, so is Harry, and we are sending so much love to you from across the pond and thinking of you today, as I'm sure it's a difficult day," she said in part. "But also one where you can look at how much you've accomplished in the past three years, and how you continue to give back and be an example for all of those around you."

Alex Rodriguez Was Spotted Leaving Katie Holmes' Building, But It's Not What You Think

At first, it seemed like Alex Rodriguez connected with Katie Holmes over the weekend at her NYC apartment building. But, according to her rep, they don't know each other. So, what happened?

It's like a bad joke: J.Lo's ex walks into an apartment complex where Tom Cruise's ex also lives.

An eyewitness tells E! News that's exactly what happened on Sunday, June 13, when Alex Rodriguez was spotted stopping by the Manhattan apartment building that Katie Holmes calls home, along with her 15-year-old daughter, Suri Cruise. Fans filled in the blanks, albeit prematurely.

Are you ready for the punchline? Katie's rep tells E! News: "She doesn't know him."

The coincidence initially seemed like a saucy development in the aftermath of Alex and Jennifer Lopez's split this spring. Remember, the "Let's Get Loud" singer, 51, has already moved on—literally, even deciding to move from Miami to Los Angeles to be closer to her current boyfriend, Ben Affleck (try to keep up).

So, when Alex, 45, was seen at Katie's place in New York over the weekend, fans speculated that the Yankees star was actually there to meet up with the Jack and Jill actress, who is also newly single.

Katie, 42, separated from Emilio Vitolo Jr. last month, but proved the exes are on good terms when she congratulated him on the premiere of his short film, *Almost a Year*, at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival on Wednesday, June 9.

"Congratulations to the very talented and amazing cast," she wrote, tagging Emilio and adding a champagne emoji. Katie, a producer of the film, shared, "I am so excited for the start of the @tribecafilmmfestival today!!!! I am so honored to have been a part of the making of ALMOST A YEAR."

According to her rep, we now know Alex's recent visit to her building had nothing to do

with Katie. The eyewitness also noted that the baseball player was recently spotted coming out of a tattoo shop that's located "right next door" to the building. Page Six reports that he's apartment hunting in the area, perhaps explaining why he's been out and about in NYC.

However, Katie is not the first celeb that has got the rumor mill spinning about Alex's love life. He referred to his ex-wife, Cynthia Scurtis, a "world class mommy" in a new Instagram post on June 12, which obviously raised some eyebrows. The pair, who were married from 2002 to 2008, are parents to daughters Natasha, 16, and Ella, 13.

So, to recap: Katie Holmes and her ex? Friendly. Alex Rodriguez and his ex? Friendly. Jennifer Lopez and her ex? More than friendly. J.Lo was engaged to Ben Affleck from 2002 to 2004, and the Gigli co-stars are now giving their relationship another chance nearly two decades (and five kids, from their separate marriages) later.

A source told E! News last week, "She will be between L.A. and the Hamptons this summer, but L.A. will be her base," while also noting that she's looking at schools in California for her 13-year-old twins, Emme and Max.

As the insider shared, "She is excited about a fresh start and pursuing things with Ben. They will be at their L.A. home soon."

Their plans appear to be underway as we speak. Ben, Jennifer and the twins were all seen together enjoying dinner at Nobu in Malibu on Sunday, June 13, suggesting things are moving right along for the couple. Not to mention, they were photographed locking lips during the meal!

"Ben and Jen sat next to each other and Max and Emme were on each side of them," a separate eyewitness revealed to E! News. "Ben was grinning ear to ear. He sipped a diet coke and was laughing across the table with everyone. He fit in well and everyone seemed to love having him around."

Mexican band Los Bukis to reunite for 1st tour in 25 years

LOS ANGELES (AP): The Mexican band Los Bukis are reuniting for a concert tour that will bring them together for the first time in 25 years.

Five of its members — Marco Antonio Solis, Jose Javier Solis, Roberto Guadarrama, Eusebio "El Chivo" Cortez, and Pedro Sánchez — attended the announcement made at Los Angeles' Sofi Stadium Monday, while members Joel Solis and José "Pepe" Guadarrama joined remotely via video.

Considered one of Latin music's most iconic bands, the group will start its three-concert tour in Los Angeles on Aug. 27, followed by a performance in Chicago's Soldier Field on Sept. 4 and a final night on Sept. 15th at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Lead singer Marco Antonio Solis told reporters at the news conference that the pandemic had given him and his teammates much time for reflection and allowed them to go "deep into our conscience and see what was there." "It was there from where this idea came from," he added.

Tickets to "Una Historia Cantada," or the "History Sung" tour, will be available for presale beginning Tuesday at 10 a.m. through Citi Entertainment.

Tickets go on sale to the general public starting Friday at 10 a.m. local.



HOLLYWOOD GLAM! Mhe actress, Bella Thorne is seen rocking a mini white dress with pink sunglasses as she leaves lunch at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

California man gets prison for coercing women for sex films

SAN DIEGO (AP): A producer for a now-defunct California porn website was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison Monday for coercing or tricking women into appearing in sex videos.

Ruben Andre Garcia, 31, was sentenced for conspiracy and sex trafficking involving San Diego-based GirlsDoPorn.com.

Prosecutors said that Garcia was a recruiter, producer and actor in movies for the website from 2013 to 2017.

He falsely promised models who answered ads that they would remain anonymous and their videos wouldn't be distributed on the internet but only on privately-sold DVDs overseas, prosecutors said.

In fact, Garcia knew the videos were being posted on fee-based websites and that excerpts were being posted on free sites, including popular sites that received millions of views, prosecutors said.

Some women also alleged that they were coerced or threatened into doing sex scenes.

Garcia and others sometimes coerced victims into finishing sex videos by threatening

"to sue the victims, cancel flights home, and post the videos online," according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office. "Hotel room doors were at times blocked by camera and recording equipment, and the victims felt powerless and unable to leave."

"This defendant lured one victim after another with fake modeling ads, false promises and deceptive front companies, ultimately devolving to threats to coerce these women into making sex videos," authorities said.

"Even when victims told Garcia how the scheme had devastated their lives, he showed no regard for their well-being," acting U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman said. "The crime was utterly callous in nature and there is no excuse or justification for his conduct, which was driven purely by greed."

Garcia pleaded guilty to federal charges last December. He was among six people charged. Most have pleaded guilty to federal charges. The site's co-creator, Michael James Pratt, remains at large. A reward of up to \$50,000 has been offered for information leading to his arrest.



Aries:

Animal spirits play an important role in ancient cultures across the world. The eagle, for instance, is revered by the Native American as a sign of rising above your 'worldly troubles' and gaining a brand new perspective. In the Yogic tradition, the serpent is seen as a sign of the Kundalini rising or the Great Awakening. What are the totems that make their presence felt—both in your waking and dream state? Pay attention to them, dear Aries, as they have important messages from the other side to share with you today.

Tip: Pay attention to the animal spirits around you and what they signify.

Taurus:

How do "you" perceive yourself, Taurus? Do you see yourself as strong, independent and confident or feel weighed down by crippling self-doubt? Remember, no amount of external validation can change your perception. So dedicate yourself to the inner work. Confront the past wounds and the negative self-beliefs that are making you question yourself. PS: Working with stones as tiger's eye, pyrite, and yellow calcite could assist you in making that paradigm shift.

Tip: It's time to address the wounds that are causing you to question yourself.

Gemini:

Daily reminder, Gemini: Manifestation is not a ritual, it's a lifestyle. So is abundance. Instead of complaining about what you don't have and giving the lack more power, work with the law of attraction consistently. Burn away the old negative beliefs that are keeping you from recognising your power as a co-creator and reaffirm the good in your life. Remember, heaven is not a faraway concept. It can be created right here, right now, in this time and space reality.

Tip: Recognise your power as a co-creator and reaffirm all that is good in your life.

Cancer:

It's easy to say that you're being underappreciated. But the truth is that this physical reality of ours is simply a reflection of our inner world. The people and situations we attract mirror our beliefs back to us. So instead of playing the blame game, pay attention to what needs to be shifted within. Remember your worth and put a price on it. There is no shift in the microcosm that does not have an effect on the Whole.

Tip: Your outer reality is a reflection of the inner world.

Leo:

It's one of those days, Leo. You're feeling 100 per cent optimistic despite what your physical reality is showing you. You know that staying in the energy of miracles is the secret to calling in more miracles, and you truly be-

lieve that you have the divine support required to get through. In the realm of romance, you're being reminded that playing games is overrated. So is following the rules. Word for the wise: why not follow your inner guidance and make that first move?

Tip: Hello, sunshine!

Virgo:

Your journey towards personal freedom begins the minute you start questioning everything you have grown up with. Read that again, Virgo, and ask yourself the question, "How am I stuck in a loop?" In moments of silence, the answers you seek will be revealed to you. What the cards are urging you to do today is honour the stirrings of your heart and take a step in the right direction even when you cannot explain your impulses logically. There is a rainbow after every storm and that rainbow is going to make itself visible soon.

Tip: It's time to honour the stirrings of your heart and trust what they are taking you towards.

Libra:

It's one of those days, Libra. You're lounging in your favourite kaftan, lighting incense and calling in the good juju. There was a time when you worried about meeting unrealistic goals and fulfilling the expectations of other people, but life on the hamster wheel doesn't appeal to you anymore. You'd rather do things at your own pace

and call in the energy of miracles. A good way to stay connected to the divine forces today: set some time aside for meditation or your yoga practice.

Tip: It's a downward dog kind of day!

Scorpio:

Remember when ups and downs like these would throw you off your game, Scorpio? You're no longer triggered by the same things that lower your vibration. The metaphor of the phoenix rising from its ashes holds true for you today. It's time to hit the pause button and acknowledge all the ways in which you have grown over the past few months.

Tip: Think of yourself as a phoenix rising from its ashes.

Sagittarius:

Spoiler alert, Sagittarius: no amount of external validation is going to work as an antidote for that crippling self-doubt. So take an inside-out approach. Work through the wounds that have convinced you that you are not good enough. A journaling session addressing the negative beliefs is a good way to start an inner dialogue.

Tip: It's time to address the negative self-beliefs that are keeping you from believing in your power and potential.

Capricorn:

It's one of those days, Capricorn. You wake up feeling like a million bucks and recognise that you have "so" much working for you. It's time to burn those self-negating be-

liefs. It's time to believe in your power and potential like never before. Besides, Mission World Domination is not a distant dream! In the realm of love, you're being asked to adopt a playful approach. Don't wait for them to reach out to you. Follow your inner compass and make that first move.

Tip: Flirt like nobody's watching, baby!

Aquarius:

Oops, you did it again! You got attached to an emotionally unavailable somebody, and now you're dealing with a serious case of inner turmoil. It's time to start an inner dialogue, Aquarius. To ask yourself whether or not this relationship is worth your time, and if it is, what is the best way to work things out. Remember, when you take one step towards them, they will take ten steps towards you.

Tip: It's not that complicated.

Pisces:

The solar eclipse may have passed us by, but we're still under its spell, Pisces. As a result, secrets that have been buried are beginning to come to the fore. Given your intuitive abilities, you will be able to smell trouble from a mile away. Try not to go down that rabbit hole of investigation, though. Hold space for an open and honest conversation and allow the other person to share their perspective. This is the best way to resolve any crisis situation.

Tip: Don't snoop, ask.