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# SummitTIMES

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## One more tests negative, 16 await final test to confirm recovery



### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JUN:

One more patient has recovered and was discharged from the hospital on Wednesday bringing down the total number of active cases of CO-

VID-19 in the State to 65.

Out of 70 cases of COVID-19 reported so far in Sikkim, five have already recovered and tested negative in repeat testing and have been discharged from

the hospital.

In his daily health bulletin on Thursday, Health Department DG-cum-Secretary, Dr Pem-pa Tshering Bhutia informed that a total of 208 RT-PCR tests were per-

formed in VRDL at STNM hospital on Wednesday which included repeat testing of 37 samples of admitted patients.

He mentioned that 21 patients tested positive again out of these 37

samples while remaining 16 tested negative. He added that if these 16 samples test negative again in the repeat testing to be conducted within 24 hours then these 16 patients will be discharged from the hospital. He informed that two tests were conducted by TrueNat on Wednesday and both came back negative.

While giving district-wise break-up of the 70 positive cases of COVID-19 reported so far in Sikkim, the Secretary informed that 20 cases are from East Sikkim, 21 from West Sikkim and 29 from South Sikkim. He added that 51 positive patients are currently admitted in the isolation ward of STNM hospital and 14 are admitted in isolation ward in Gyalshing, West Sikkim.

## CM grants equity grants to 28 FPOs



### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JUN:

In order to support and encourage Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in the State, the State Government has taken a unique step to provide equity grant to them. Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang handed over cheques of equity grant to 28 FPOs in a function organised at Samman Bhawan today.

The program had the presence of Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture Department, Lok Nath Sharma, Political Secretary to CM Jacob Khaling, Principal Secretary Agriculture and Horticulture Department R. Telang, Secretary, Agriculture Department

Rinzing Chewang Bhutia, Secretary, Horticulture Department, M.T. Sherpa, Chief Executive Officer, Sikkim Organic Mission, Dr. S. Anbalagan, and senior officers of the Agriculture Department.

The Chief Minister, in his address, stressed that agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry sectors are being given the highest priority by the Government in the form of incentives and constant support to the farming community. He informed that the Government will soon announce incentives in the agriculture and horticulture sectors similar to what is being provided to dairy farmers for select crops like turmeric, or-

ange, ginger, buckwheat and cardamom.

The Chief Minister lauded the Farmer Producer Organizations for their efforts to ensure continuous supply of vegetables to the consumers throughout the period of the lockdown. Without their active support, hard work and proper coordination, the people of Sikkim, especially the city dwellers could have faced acute shortage of vegetables, he maintained.

He said that it was encouraging to see many young and educated people actively engaged in the FPOs, and added that there are numerous opportunities which needed

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## Fuel prices hiked for 12th straight day

NEW DELHI, JUN 18 (PTI):

Petrol price on Thursday was hiked by 53 paise per litre and diesel by 64 paise a litre, the 12th straight day of increase in rates that now totals to Rs 6.55 for petrol and Rs 7.04 for diesel.

Petrol price in Delhi was hiked to Rs 77.81 per litre from Rs 77.28, while diesel rates were increased to Rs 76.43 a litre from Rs 75.79, according to a price notification of state oil marketing companies.

Rates have been increased across the country and vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

This is the 12th daily increase in rates in a row since oil companies on June 7 restarted revising prices in line with costs, after ending an 82-day hiatus in rate revision.

In 12 hikes, petrol price has gone up by Rs 6.55 per litre and diesel by Rs 7.04 a litre.

The freeze in rates was imposed in mid-March soon after the government hiked excise duty on petrol and diesel to shore up additional finances.

Oil PSUs Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) instead of passing on the excise duty hikes to customers adjusted them against the fall in the retail rates that was warranted because of fall in international oil prices to two decade low.

International oil prices have since rebounded and oil firms are now adjusting retail rates in line with them.

## 12,881 new cases, 334 deaths in last 24 hours; India's tally crosses 3.6 lakh

NEW DELHI, 18 JUN: The number of coronavirus disease cases reached India recorded 3,66,946 on Thursday after the country recorded 12,881 fresh cases in the last 24 hours.

The Union health ministry update at 8 am showed 334 deaths in the said period and the overall fatalities to be 12,237. There are 1,60,384 active cases and 1,94,324 cured or discharged.

The death toll surged after Delhi and Maharashtra took into account hundreds of fatalities that were pending review, officials have said.

The country had recorded its first fatality in March when the Covid-19 infection tally was a little over 70.

The first 5,000 fatalities took 80 days, the latest 5,000 deaths came in just 17 days, with more than 2,500 being re-

ported in the last week. India's case fatality rate (CFR) or the proportion of death to the total number of cases has gone up to 3.4% from 2.9% with the jump in the death toll.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held the second round of meeting with the chief ministers on the Covid-19 situation where he made it clear there will be not be any further lockdown in the country.

According to the chief ministers who attended the meeting, PM Modi said that they need to think about 'Unlock 2.0' and also ways to minimise infection.

The prime minister noted that the spread of Covid-19 is more in a few big states and cities and urged the chief ministers to make full use of their state's existing testing capacity and also work to augment health infra-

structure. An officer on special duty in the Union Health Ministry told the participants that there has been a continuous decline in growth rate of cases during the phases of lockdown and subsequently also in Unlock 1.0.

The OSD also informed that the number of cases and deaths per lakh of population in India are amongst the lowest in the world.

Home Minister Amit Shah, who also took part in the virtual meeting, said the country has so far been quite successful in the fight against the virus. He, however, cautioned that the "battle is far from over".

Chief ministers of Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were among those who attended the meeting on Wednesday.

## India asks China to confine its activities to its side of LAC

NEW DELHI, JUN 18 (PTI):

India on Thursday asked China to confine its activities to its side of the Line of Actual Control and that it must not take any unilateral action to alter it.

Referring to the Galwan Valley clash, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India was strongly committed to ensuring the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Speaking to reporters at an online media briefing, he also said that no Indian soldiers were missing since the Galwan Valley clash on Monday evening.

"Given its responsible approach to border management, India is very clear that all its activities are always within the Indian side of the LAC.

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## Some pots are merely calling the kettle black

JIWAN RAI

There's no such thing as insiders and outsiders and it's only the audience who decides who they like and don't. Film families, however big they are, can never have power to influence the audience and also don't forget that @karanjohar is becos (sic) people made him big and not himself. These are the words of Ram Gopal Verma, spoken in support of his colleague Karan Johar, who is being lacerated by netizens, post Sushant Singh's suicide.

Do Bollywood buffs even have a moral right to condemn nepotism in the film industry? Here are three reasons why I think sanctimonious Indians have forfeited that right long ago.

First, moviegoers in India, in general, utterly lack a creative sense to evaluate the quality

of movies. The majority of our blockbusters are an apology for a good movie. People just go in droves and watch them, expressing their undying devotion to their favourite film stars. Many of the so called 'megastars' mangle the art of acting - and yet people love them to pieces. They worship their favourite actors as if they were the gods and goddesses of their pantheon. Ram Gopal Verma is dead on when he says that it is the people who make them big. But what I would like to add is that they have made them big undeservedly. When people worship stars so fixatedly, why don't our film makers contribute to this obsession over them and thus discard other talented but less popular stars? Who gave pampered, incompetent actors the ill-gotten right to monopolize the market?

The same argument is true of

movie directors. Some of Karan Johar's movies are so childish and yet they are enormously popular. When he enjoys such unconditional public support it's not that surprising that he uses a monopolistic approach in his profession. People like him are made to believe that they are an alchemist who can turn anything into gold just by touching it.

Secondly, we are a society prone to engage in emotion-driven argument, almost devoid of deep-seated, intellectually thought through conviction. The debate on nepotism right now is a perfect example of how emotion drives the engine of our public discourse. Emotions are running high after the unfortunate death of a beleaguered actor. The debate will die the death of a thousand qualifications as public

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LAND FOR SALE

Riverside land [General] along Ranipool-Rumtek Highway near Adam Pool, stretching from the roadside down till the river bank. Total area measuring 0.2348 Hectares [approximately 25,274 sq ft].

Ideal for developing a Resort. Parties interested in purchasing the entire plot can contact 9083826462 and 9832556698. Brokers will not be entertained.

**SHORT TENDER NOTICE**

**Ref No: 2048/NBBDC/Ten/A-G/19-20** **Dated: 18.06.2020**

Sealed quotation are invited from manufacturer or their Authorized Distributer/ Authorized Dealers/franchisees for supply of Laboratory equipments, Chemicals, Glassware and General Supplies on behalf of Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College (NBBDC), Tadong for its Laboratories of various Academic Departments and the institutional general purpose requirements under RUSA assisted program. Department-wise separate tender forms, marked as Serial Number 1 to 7 in Table 1 below, can be downloaded from our website www.sgctadong.in . The time schedule has been furnished in Table 2.

Sl.No.	Tender Reference No	Particulars	On Behalf of	Cost of Tender form
1.	NBBDC/ Ten/A/19-20	Laboratory Equipment and other Peripherals	Physics Department, NBBDC	Rs.250/-
2.	NBBDC/ Ten/B/19-20	Lab Equipment, Chemical, And Glassware	Chemistry Department, NBBDC	Rs.250/-
3.	NBBDC/ Ten/C/19-20	Lab Equipment, Chemical, Glassware and other lab based miscellaneous items	Botany Department, NBBDC	Rs.250/-
4.	NBBDC/ Ten/D/19-20	Lab Equipment, Chemical, Glassware and other lab based miscellaneous items	Zoology Department, NBBDC	Rs.250/-
5.	NBBDC/ Ten/E/19-20	Lab. Equipments and other Peripherals	Phys.Edn. Department, NBBDC	Rs.250/-
6.	NBBDC/ Ten/F/19-20	Electronic & electric items	NBBDC	Rs.250/-
7.	NBBDC/ Ten/G/19-20	Non electronic Items and Gen Supplies	NBBDC	Rs.250/-

Table 2

Date of Issuing/Publishing	18 June 2020
Date and Time for submission of Bids	4 July 2020, 9.00am to 12.00 noon.
Date and Time for Opening of Bids	4 July 2020 1.00 pm onwards.

A Bidder can submit quotation (s) for any one or more or all the tenders mentioned in Table 1. The cost of each Tender form if Rs.250/- and it must be submitted in the form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of Principal, SGC, Tadong at the submission of Quotations.

Sd/-  
Principal  
Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College  
Tadong, Gangtok.

Mob No. 80011801199



## PM Modi launches auction process for 41 coal blocks for commercial mining

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 18 (PTI):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched the auction process for 41 coal blocks for commercial mining, a move that opens India's coal sector for private players, and termed it a major step in the direction of India achieving self-reliance.

Launching the auction of mines for commercial mining, that is expected to garner Rs 33,000 crore of capital investment in the country over next five to seven years, the Prime Minister said India will win the coronavirus war and turn this crisis into an opportunity, and the pandemic will make India self-reliant.

The launch of the auction process not only marks the beginning of unlocking of the country's coal sector from the lockdown of decades, but aims at making India the largest exporter of coal,

the Prime Minister said. Presently, despite being the world's fourth largest producer, he said India is the second largest importer of the dry-fuel. "Allowing private sector in commercial coal mining is unlocking resources of a nation with the world's fourth-largest reserves," he pointed out.

Major scams had taken place in coal auction earlier, but the system has been made "transparent" now, PM said lambasting past policies of keeping the sector closed.

The PM said that this auction process will result in major revenues to states and create employment besides developing the far-flung areas.

The commencement of auction process of these blocks, part of the series of announcements made under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan', is likely to contribute Rs 20,000 crore revenues annually to the state governments.

## PM to launch Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan on 20 June

**DELHI, 18 JUN (PIB):** Government of India has decided to launch a massive rural public works scheme 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan' to empower and provide livelihood opportunities to the returnee migrant workers and rural citizens. PM Modi will launch this Abhiyaan on 20 Jun, 2020 at 11 am through Video-Conference in presence of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar. The Abhiyaan will be launched from Village - Telihar, Block- Beldaur of Khagaria District of Bihar. Further, the Chief Ministers of other five States and Union Ministers of concerned Ministries will also participate in the virtual launch. The villages across 116 districts in the six States will join this programme through the Common Service Centres and Krishi Vigyan Kendras,



maintaining the norms of social distancing in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This campaign of 125 days, which will work in mission mode, will involve intensified and focused implementation of 25 different types of works to provide employment to the migrant workers on one hand and create infrastructure in the rural regions of the

country on the other hand, with a resource envelope of Rs. 50,000 crore.

A total of 116 Districts with more than 25,000 returnee migrant workers across six States, namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha have been chosen for the campaign which includes 27 Aspirational Districts. These districts are estimated to cover about 2/3

of such migrant workers.

The Abhiyaan will be a coordinated effort between 12 different Ministries/Departments, namely, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Road Transport & Highways, Mines, Drinking Water & Sanitation, Environment, Railways, Petroleum & Natural Gas, New & Renewable Energy, Border Roads, Telecom and Agriculture.

## Upper Pachak Jan Seva Samiti completes plantation program



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JUN:**

The second phase of plantation program organized by Upper Pachak Jan Seva Samiti under Budong Kameray GPU, East Sikkim, concluded today, a press release informs.

The first phase was completed on 05 June on World Environment Day and had started from Upper Pachak Raji Golai

to Rapden Dokan Danda wherein 350 saplings of chaamp and guraans were planted.

In the second phase, 450 saplings each of chaamp and guraans were planted. Upper Pachak Jan Seva Samiti hast thanked RO Forest Singtam, Amnarayan Sharma, BO, Hari Prasad Sharma and social worker, Kinjong Bhutia for their support.

## Newar Guthi Singtam comes forward to help fire victims



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JUN:**

Newa Bhay Bowney-kuthi, Singtam Sakha of Sikkim Newar Guthi met the four affected families of the fire accident of Singtam and provided financial assistance, a press release informs. The affected families of Bir Bdr Subba, Binita Subba and Durga Pradhan were presented with the amount of Rs. 15,000 each while Manoj Prasad was given Rs. 5000 as a support.

Taking the advice of senior member Suresh Pradhan, a short meet-

ing was held between Chief Advisor, Advisors and executive members through mobile phones; it was decided that the Sakha Guthi needed to stand by the affected families at this hour of time and hence the financial assistance was also provided.

Singtam Sakha Guthi has thanked the police, fire fighters and others who supported the affected families. The release also thanks the CM, Minister cum Area MLA, Dr MK Sharma and other Ministers for visiting Singtam.

## Adrian Pradhan wins dance championship



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JUN:**

Adrian Pradhan was announced as the winner of all style dance championship which was organized by Verstyler Dance and Zumba fitness Centre, Rangpo, during the lockdown period, a press release informs.

Total of 12 dancers

were selected for the final round of the online dance competition and Adrian was announced as the winner in the final round.

In the finale, Dance Plus Season 5 contestant, Bhim Bahadur Chettri groomed the dancers. The winner was felicitated with trophy, mementoes and awards.

## Plantation drive at Rongli



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JUN:**

A plantation drive was held in Rongli Sub-Division, East Sikkim, today wherein the medicinal plant Tinospora Vordifolia was planted. SKM In-charge (Chu-

jachen constituency), Damber Kumar Pradhan was the chief guest of the programme where 1000 saplings were planted at Rongli, East Sikkim, in coordination with Rongli Territorial Sub Division.

**HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?**

news@summittimes.com

## Another accused deposes before CBI court in Babri case

**LUCKNOW, JUN 18 (PTI):** A special CBI court hearing the Babri demolition case on Thursday recorded the statement of accused Vinay Kumar Rai.

He was the 12th accused to depose before the court, which is conducting day-to-day proceedings in order to conclude the trial by August 31, as directed by the Supreme Court.

There are 32 people who are facing a trial for the conspiracy to demolish the disputed struc-

ture in Ayodhya in 1992.

Special Judge S K Yadav will hold proceedings on June 19 as well.

The court is recording statements of the accused under Section 313 of the CrPC, a stage in the trial which follows the completion of examination of prosecution witnesses.

The Babri Masjid was demolished in December 1992 by "kar sevaks" who claimed that the mosque in Ayodhya was built on the site of an ancient Ram temple.

### CM grants...

to be tapped. He stated that several schemes of the Government of India go unnoticed and unexplored each year and urged the members of the FPOs to avail of all these schemes as well as the opportunities being provided by the State Government.

He shared about the Skilled Youth Startup Scheme initiated by the State Government specifically for sectors like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and homestay tourism. He advised the members of the FPOs to start small business ventures like processing and packaging of agricultural products, which can meet the dual purpose of value addition and also provide employment opportunities at the local level. He assured that the Government will provide all the required support to the FPOs based on their performance.

The Chief Minister emphasised on the need to promote the local economy and work to attain self-sufficient state. He cited the example of the possibility of setting up of own Maize Seed Production Centre, instead of buying maize seeds from outside. Laying thrust on the idea of 'Green Economy', the Chief Minister called for the need to return to the roots and engage in activities like agriculture and animal husbandry.

Responding to demands placed by President of the South-West Organic Marketing Consortium, the Chief Minister announced that storage space will be made available to FPOs in all the market areas of Sikkim. Likewise, transport subsidy will be disbursed timely through concerned agencies and departments. He also maintained that efforts are being made to provide uninterrupted power supply.

In conclusion, the Chief Minister congratulated the members of the FPOs for receiving the equity grant from the Government to enhance their capacity. He urged the members of the FPOs and the farming community to continue with their activities, duly abiding by all the precautionary guidelines on COVID-19.

Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry, Lok Nath Sharma in his address thanked the Chief Minister for his continuous support for agriculture related initiatives and for his intervention towards the disbursement of equity grant to all the FPOs in the State.

The Minister reiterated the focus being laid by the Government on agriculture and allied activities to increase the GDP of the State. He called for a cooperative approach in farming to realize the vision of a self-reliant Sikkim. The Minister expressed his gratitude to the members of all the FPOs in the State for their hard work to ensure uninterrupted supply of vegetables to the local markets even during the challenging period of the lock down.

Earlier, Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Horticulture, R.Telang, in his welcome address, highlighted the role of FPOs as facilitators and aggregators to help the farmers derive optimum benefit from their agricultural produce.

He suggested the need to strengthen the FPOs further by enrolling youth and establishing a democratic setup within the organization. He suggested that local area seed production and distribution should be carried out by the respective FPOs to ensure the adaptability of the seed and seedlings to the local environment.

He said that this practice would ensure the right price for the seeds and seedlings. He added that cooperative farming is the way forward as it will solve a host of problems related to production and marketing. The Principal Secretary also informed that a proposal for formation of 28 additional FPOs in the State has been approved by the Government of India under the MOVCD-NER scheme.

The programme was also addressed by President, South West Organic Marketing Consortium, Mahendra Dahal, who gave a brief background and objectives of the FPOs.

During the programme, Secretary, Agriculture Department, Rinzing Chewang Bhutia handed over to the Chief Minister a cheque of the Department's contribution towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to combat COVID-19. It comprised of the one day salary of the officers and staff of Agriculture Department.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Secretary, Horticulture Department, M.T.Sherpa.

~ SummitTIMES ~  
**CLASSIFIEDS**

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

**Contact: 9800201335**

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### FLAT FOR SALE

4BHK flat, total area 2376 sq ft  
Ninety Bazaar, Near Paljor Stadium, Gangtok  
Contact: Sonam Darjee 9563083895



# Masks - a friend or a foe?

## ALL WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MASKS

GRACE KEREN GURUNG

Despite all the efforts to educate people on the right way to wear a face mask, we still see a lot of people covering their mouths but not their noses. Ever wondered why? You will have your answer, if you ever happen to walk uphill with your mouth and nose covered in scorching heat. Trust me, people who wear spectacles have it worse. Along with shortness of breath, they have their vision blurred with a thick fog accumulated in the lenses from heavy breathing. This little inconvenience is the price we have to pay to be safe and very much breathing.

Since evidence suggests that transmission of COVID-19, a respiratory disease is through respiratory droplets, the fear of us coming in contact with an infected person (directly or indirectly) has made us take various precautionary measures. On 10 May the Government of Sikkim passed the Sikkim Public Health and Safety (COVID-19) Regulations, 2020. It enforced compulsory face mask policies in public places and work places, along with strict order to practice social distancing. A fine of Rs. 300 is attracted by the person who violates the guidelines of these regulations. If the same person commits the offence the second time, the fine to be paid is thrice the amount specified. Better hang the face mask around the neck than to pay the fine, right?

While people and governments across the world are making masks mandatory, WHO suggests that, there is no evidence that a face mask (medical or non-medical) can lower a healthy individual's risk of becoming infected while wearing it. Wearing masks also creates a false sense of security, which leads to neglecting preventive measures such as physical distancing and proper hand hygiene. So why do we need to wear a mask? The main purpose of promoting the usage of face mask is source control. It is intended to prevent the infected from spreading the virus to others. Using masks also gives us an assurance that the transmission of the virus from asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases is minimized. In a community, if everybody wears a mask there is less chance of spreading the virus through respiratory droplets, but their use should be accompanied by frequent hand hygiene and

physical distancing.

WHO recommends that it's essential for the following people to use medical masks: front line health care workers, older adults and people with underlying health conditions, people in quarantine, the people in contact with an infected person and the infected individual. Medical masks are certified and designed for single use. So no, you mustn't wash and reuse it. It has initial filtration (at least 95% droplet filtration) and breathability.

The use of N95 respirators and medical mask is not advised for people at low risk like the general public. They can wear non-medical masks through risk based approach

we use. We must refrain from buying face masks from shops where many before you could have touched the face masks. Before purchasing a mask one must also check its effectiveness and authenticity. It would be best if you could consult a doctor on what kind of mask would be suitable for you.

Another solution could be the rational use of masks.

"I use the mask when I drive the vehicle filled with passengers. I don't use it until and unless I come in contact with people or when I am at a crowded space," said a person who drives a taxi.

He sets a good example for us to follow. As per many experts say, we could pull off the

### WHAT A MASK SHOULD HAVE ACCORDING TO WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

- An innermost layer of a hydrophilic material (e.g. Cotton)
- A middle hydrophobic layer of synthetic non-woven material (polypropylene) or a cotton layer which may enhance filtration or retain droplets.
- An outermost layer of hydrophobic material (e.g. Polypropylene, polyester) which may limit external contamination to the wearer's nose and mouth.

as WHO suggests, when they are not able to keep a physical distance of at least 1 meter (3.3 feet) in crowded areas. For non-medical masks, standard has been developed by the French Standardization Association (AFNOR group). It defines the minimum performance in terms of filtration (min 70%), particle filtration (solid\droplet) and breathability (maximum pressure difference of 0.6mbar\cm<sup>2</sup>). Because of its low filtration and breathability standards, WHO recommends the use of non-medical masks made out of woven fabric such as cloth or non-woven fabrics, should only be considered for source control and not for prevention.

The most common answer that we got from people, when asked why they weren't covering their noses was that they faced difficulty breathing. Wearing a mask frequently or for a prolonged time results in potential headaches and breathing difficulties. Self-contamination may occur if the mask is not changed when wet or soiled. It also results in development of facial skin lesions, irritation and dermatitis. Therefore, we have to be very cautious with the types of masks

mask when we're alone, not use it at home and only use it in crowded places where we may be in contact with another person. We also can limit our outdoor movement.

Producing and selling stitched masks has become popular in Sikkim and many upcoming entrepreneurs are selling them online as well. But are the masks safe to use? Yes, if they meet the safety protocol recommended by the competent authority. WHO insists that a minimum of three layers is required with ideal combination of materials.

To stay safe we all must follow what a post on social media had to say:

"Treat your mask like underwear"

1. Do not touch or adjust (especially in public)
2. Do not borrow or lend.
3. Make sure it fits tight but comfortable
4. Make sure it's clean (daily or as needed)
5. Wear the right side out.
6. If there's a hole in it, throw it away.
7. If it's stained, throw it away.
8. If it's damp, change it.

## Governor mourns death of 20 Indian soldiers in Ladakh

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 JUN:

Ganga Prasad has expressed deep sadness and grief on the loss of 20 Army personnel including an officer during the clash with People Liberation Army of China at Galwan in Ladakh in the intervening night of 15-16 Jun, 2020, a Raj Bhavan press communiqué informs.

In his message, the Governor has said, "I am deeply anguished by the irreparable loss of lives of our soldiers during the clash with People Liberation Army of China in line

of their duty guarding the borders and securing the sovereignty and integrity of the nation along LAC in Ladakh. The supreme sacrifice made by soldiers has ignited our emotions as we as countrymen stand in solidarity with our Armed Forces to face any eventuality and adversity. As the country vow to secure every inch of its territory with every means and measures possible, we stand firm with the pursuits of our defence forces. The sacrifice on the call of national duty made by our brave martyrs shall remain in our mind and

heart till eternity.

At this time of national mourning, I join the people of Sikkim and my fellow countrymen to pay homage and highest respect to the brave martyrs and express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the soldiers. The families have given their son and kin to the nation for which the nation remains ever indebted. I pray to the almighty for bestowing strength to the family members to cope with this great loss. I also pray for the health and speedy recovery of all jawans who have been injured in this clash."

## Anti-China protests rock West Bengal

KOLKATA, JUN 18 (PTI): Anti-China protests erupted in various parts of West Bengal on Thursday against the killing of 20 Indian soldiers, including two from the state, in a clash with Chinese troops in Ladakh's Galwan Valley.

People came out on the streets in large numbers calling for boycott of Chinese products. Chinese flags and posters of Chinese President Xi Jinping were burnt in various parts of the state, amid slogans hailing the sacrifice of the Indian soldiers.

The state unit of Shiv Sena took out a protest march outside the Chinese consulate in the Salt Lake area here and destroyed Chinese products including mobile phones.

"We want the Indian government to put a complete ban on Chinese goods in the country. Using products made by China is an insult to the martyrdom of our jawans," Shiv Sena state president

Ashok Sarkar said. Carrying posters and placards reading Boycott Made in China goods, and hailing the Indian armed forces, Youth Congress workers took out a protest rally in central Kolkata and raised anti-China slogans.

Hundreds of people, irrespective of their political affiliations, staged protests in various parts of the state on against the killing of the jawans. Traders in Siliguri's famed Hong Kong Market, known for selling Chinese goods, said they were planning to change the name of the market and boycott products from the neighbouring country.

"We are planning to change the name of the Hong Kong Market. Some of the shop owners believe that they should stop selling Chinese products and rather sell locally-made goods," a member of the market association said.

## Model & Photographer Adhiraj shares his days in complete Lockdown

ADHIRAJ CHAKRABARTI

An Idle Mind is the devil's workshop - Remember the popular proverb we learnt when we were in school. My father had a strange habit of quoting proverbs to me when I was in school. Little did I understand why he kept saying proverbs to me ... I misinterpreted it thinking maybe he just likes saying proverbs! But at this juncture I realise ... the things he used to tell me often crosses my mind ... it had so much inner meaning!

In the current scenario when there is a complete lockdown, most of the things aren't working normally. It's very important that the opposite for me since these unexpected off days have started ... I have been reading a lot of positive things rather than indulging myself in the situation by repeatedly viewing news, videos and posts on social media. Although, it's important to be aware of what's happening in the world but not to a point of overindulgence leading us to read false news, negative remarks and criticisms!

Usually when we are in the grip of negativity a lot of us forget to be compassionate, which is an absolute essential character we should have ... and can't be missed especially during such times.

I have been practising, truthfulness, compassion and forbearance ...the basic principles of Falun Dafa, an ancient Cultivation practice for the mind and body. This break has really helped me do the five sets of exercises and meditation regularly ... I have managed to increase the duration of the practice and it has really helped my mind to be in a state of calm and peace. Also this practice helps boost immunity, so naturally I feel quite energetic and active even if I am always at home. Along with it reading the profound teachings of Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Dafa in the book Zhuan Falun has essentially been a strong guiding factor for me at all times. Since I was visiting my Mother when the lockdown happened, I have been able to teach her the exercises, which has also been beneficial for her.

Being a creative person and a self-taught photographer, I need to constantly evolve myself. Therefore, regularly setting aside time to expand my knowledge online, also constantly trying to further improve my editing and retouching skills. The other day I also found my bamboo flute at home ... so I have been trying to play some tunes that I have learned. Music is something which has deep connects with our inner side and listening to tranquil and peaceful music is always a part of

my daily life.

This is certainly a time when we need to reconnect with our inner self... I had given up on writing poetry a couple of years back and being in the confines of the four walls yet staying positive has been a help in reviving my creative side. Have managed to write a few poems and who knows by the end of all this maybe I will have enough of them to publish!

Lastly, how I view this entire scenario is that there are some greater causes behind everything that happens around us, we should definitely try to reflect on our own thoughts and actions. This moment has been given to us and we have the choice to either let evil breed in our idle minds or...

"We walk with glory heads held high, the distant miles of constant mirages, the piercing thorns from the cactus dry, the scorching heat of the dreary desert sun ... Yet, the shade awaits not so far, of soothing palms and blissful waters ... let's all return to the eternal oasis".

[The writer is Mr India finalist, a model and an emerging fashion photographer from Mumbai. He practices Falun Dafa (also known as Falun Gong), an ancient cultivation system of mind and body. To know more about Falun Dafa, please check: [www.falundafaindia.org](http://www.falundafaindia.org).]

### SHUTTER SHOT

Sikkim has proven itself to be the state of divinity and peace always and ever. Shriaadi Entertainments have come forward with a creative PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST to enhance the talent of photography in ourselves. The contest is also with an objective to set an example in the society of how a LOCKDOWN can be PRODUCTIVE!

For further details Like and Follow page Shriaadi Entertainments in Facebook and Instagram.

**Contact: +91-8145203427/+91-7586096313**



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

#### Symptoms of nCoV

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

#### Treatment

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

#### Precautions to Prevent nCoV

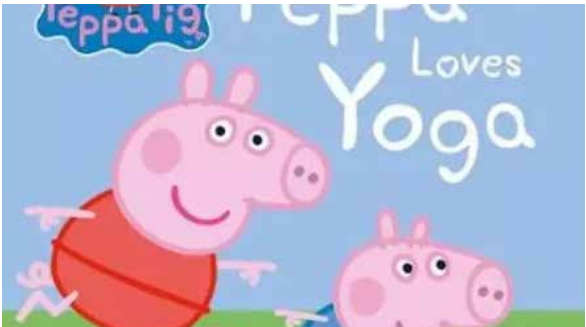
- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected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



If you seek help, you may call :  
-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7028372100  
WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

## When Peppa Pig enjoyed yoga with friends!



NEW DELHI, JUN 18 (PTI): What happens when Peppa Pig and her friends do yoga? They learn how to relax.

One morning, Peppa and her friends were at the playgroup when their teacher Madame Gazelle informed them about a visit by Miss Rabbit to teach them how to relax with yoga.

What's yoga, they ask. Madame Gazelle tells them that it is a way of relaxing. Soon Miss Rabbit arrives, greets Peppa and her friends with a namaste and teaches them yoga.

Sitting on mats with eyes closed they try several yoga postures and enjoy to their fullest.

"Peppa Loves Yoga" is a small illustrated book of 16 pages and is published by Penguin Random House imprint Ladybird Books to coincide with World Yoga Day on June 21.

Penguin Random House is bringing out another book on yoga for

kids. "Om the Yoga Dog: Fun and Easy Asanas for Happy Kids!" by Ira Trivedi is a mindful book aimed at helping children and adults get adjusted to this new normal being experienced now, the publishers said.

Aimed at tiny tots (and their adults), this fun book teaches yoga asanas with the help of step-by-step illustrations so that children can develop flexibility, strength, inner peace and mindfulness.

Along with Om, who teaches asanas like Surya Namaskar and roaring lion, there are also Prana the frog who teaches pranayama techniques like Anulom Vilom, and Moksha the elephant who teaches mindfulness exercises like yoga Nidra.

"In this book, we focus on asanas, but the benefits of yoga transcend the physical. The ultimate benefits of the practice are the concentration, focus and willpower that a young yogi develops," says Trivedi.



## Politics Stuck in Rerun Season

*...and one still blames people for being disinterested?*

The political space is hosting a rerun, again; playing out the same contest of allegations, counter-allegations, mudslinging and condemnations. The nature of the allegations and the quality of repartees, have remained underdeveloped ever since Sikkim made space for political disagreements.

Allegations of corruption, violence, dilution of Sikkim's special status, 'victimisation' of supporters and well-wishers and compromises in local protection make up the grist of all attacks from the Opposition camp, and reminders of the people's mandate and pointers to go over its track-record and achievements form the basis of all retorts from the camp in office.

While reiterations of the same allegations and counters might draw applause and sniggers from supporters and detractors respectively, for an unattached receiver of these exchanges, the content and approach arrive as reaffirmations of the lazy politics that Sikkim continues to receive and indulge. The same issues have been endlessly regurgitated, repackaged and redeployed, only the actors changing, and while political game-plans are for the respective players to chart out, having appropriated a public life for themselves, politicians owe more to the people by way of the quality of debate they bring to the public space. Corruption, protection of local laws and local people are not non-issues, and because they are important, they deserve stronger homework and more convincing arguments... and practical solutions. Just screaming that there is a problem is not enough, and neither is just claiming things could improve without sharing even a hint of how or fearing that things will turn for the worse without explaining how. Rhetoric works well for speeches, but when people need to be informed, public-speaking skills are not enough. And yet, this remains the approach. And then some wonder why Sikkim won't engage in any meaningful political debate.

Simply put, for change, whether in government or attitudes, to be considered an option, people need to be told about more than what needs to be changed; they need to be told of how (and it will take more than just voting different for anything to really change). Informed choices can be made only through information sharing which does not mock the intelligence of the people.

The ongoing exchange on these issues, it is obvious, is playing out to a bored audience since neither side has been able to excite passionate support among the lay people. The endorsement of supporters is automatic for each side, but as far as the general masses are concerned, they read, some even follow developments, many get confused, and none are really "informed" well enough to take a public stand on these issues. That is the failure of both, the ruling as well as the Opposition camps, because the lack of public engagement on these matters is not a manifestation of an informed choice, but a disinterest imposed by muddled polemics.

The argument that people in Sikkim do not get excited into participation easily is too superficial and one needs to only recall the thousands who poured into the streets on the call of a certain '27 Nov Committee' some years back and later in the support received by the protesting students from the lay people [until the more violently inclined hijacked everything and destroyed it], to realize how, with the right approach, public participation can become overwhelming in Sikkim.

Where the people might be failing though is in their active involvement to take democracy further by demanding more accountability, transparency and decency [accept it, language is turning increasingly unparliamentary], all virtues one would expect from people in public life, from their leaders.

Politics is universally dismissed as "dirty", and this is primarily because the "virtues" mentioned earlier have become almost alien to political culture at the national level and its influence is rubbing off strong on Sikkim as well. But when was the last time one heard of an electorate standing its leaders against the wall and demanding accountability? Mudslinging, unrestrained criticism of opponents and the total lack of accountability for what one does or says, not just in private but also in public, have become routine. Rhetoric is entertaining and rehashing attracts fewer risks than deploying creativity to introduce something new to the public political discourse, but that demands complete immersion in ideology and a clear idea on how to promote it.

Such commitment, unfortunately, is now seen as a distraction from the pursuits which have made politics "dirty" in the people's eyes.

### WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: [news@summittimes.com](mailto:news@summittimes.com)



## How Tourist Destinations Can Rebuild After Coronavirus

ANNA LEASK  
*theconversation.com*

Tourism has virtually stopped thanks to the COVID-19 lockdowns. This is hitting many cities hard – see this report about New York galleries and museums losing millions of dollars, for example. Many tourist businesses are now contemplating a future without lucrative international visitors, having to rely instead on those closer to home.

In Scotland, where I am based, the chief executive of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions believes that 80% of the country's attractions may not survive the next 12 months. He thinks many will not be viable if you combine a massive drop in international numbers with the current rules about two-metre social distancing and other health and safety requirements.

Obviously, such damage would spread far beyond the tourist attractions. It threatens thousands of jobs and business closures in everything from hotels to ice cream vans, particularly since the pandemic has reduced the summer season, which generates a large portion of annual income for many companies.

Tourism businesses in Scotland now have a timeframe for reopening from the government – July 15, subject to infection rates. But industry leaders tell me that as things stand on social distancing, and given the lack of guidance on safe business practices for staff and visitors, many attractions may not open until much later in the year. Even when attractions do open, they are likely to be running at a loss.

### MISSION: DOMESTIC

To the extent that businesses can open, there is clearly an opportunity to attract more domestic visitors. As many as 63% of Scots intend to avoid travelling to Europe this summer and 75% will avoid long-haul, while growing numbers are talking about visiting Scottish attractions in the next three months. As for younger people with no children to entertain, the industry reckons they could flock to Scottish beaches and rural getaways.

Local residents, particularly in rural areas, will inevitably worry that visitors will import the virus and overwhelm the infrastructure. We have seen this reaction in England, where the lockdown has been eased more quickly. With news stories about crowds of people ignoring social-distancing guidelines, councils in places like Dorset in the south and Blackpool in the north-west have been keeping public facilities closed and telling visitors to stay away.

This is a new version of the overtourism problem that was bedevilling many popular tourist destinations long before COVID-19. The price of surging visitor numbers in cities from Edinburgh to Venice has been residents being priced out of their own cities; too much development; and large crowds compromising the visitor experience and putting intolerable strain on old buildings and streets.

Yet when it comes to addressing the risks of 2020-style overtourism, simply closing car parks and toilets is not a long-term solution. Councils and tourism associations should instead help to make facilities and attractions comply with the restrictions. This would maximise the economic benefits from tourism and enable people to re-engage with destinations while keeping local residents safe.

The challenge is to achieve this without completely sanitising the experience. Tourists should be sufficiently confident of their safety that they can still enjoy the visitor experience and service.

To this end, tourism associations in Scotland have produced webinars with reopening advice for local attractions. Topics include developing hygiene practices to reassure visitors; considering the whole customer journey to identify potential issues and opportunities; and offering virtual experiences such as those at the National Trust for Scotland.

Meanwhile, staff from recently reopened European attractions have been sharing ideas with Scottish operators on things like moving entrance systems to an online "touchless experience" where visitors pre-book a time slot and pre-purchase tickets, food and merchandise online. This is more

challenging for the 70% of attractions with no admission charge or online booking system, as they will need to invest in setting these up and administering them.

The travel guru Doug Lansky recently made some suggestions on how to make post-lockdown tourism workable as well. These included letting visitors know what they can do rather than what they can't, encouraging them to police themselves, and incentivising good behaviour by offering lottery tickets to those who act responsibly.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Another question is how to make local tourist attractions more attractive to domestic visitors. One priority should be getting people from the local community to manage and run attractions, since there is evidence that this can make them more culturally relevant to visitors from the same country.

This would potentially help recent efforts by places like Glasgow and Edinburgh to encourage residents to become "tourists in their own cities" once lockdown restrictions end. The beauty of domestic visitors, particularly local ones, is that they revisit, and tend to bring visiting friends and relatives. This makes them very valuable to tourism businesses, particularly in the period ahead.

Another way to attract domestic visitors is to get them to stay engaged for the long term. For instance, operators might offer new forms of membership. They might also consider commercial sponsorship, such as the retail chain Iceland's new tie-up with Chester zoo's penguins, which aims to raise the profile of the attraction and may encourage public support via donations and visits in the future.

At any rate, tourist destinations everywhere are still in the early stages of figuring out what the "new normal" should look like. We know that a year from now tourism could look very different to before. The challenge for the sector is to do everything it can to adapt.

*[the writer is Professor of Tourism Management, Edinburgh Napier University]*

## Coronavirus: Why it's dangerous to blindly 'follow the science' when there's no consensus yet

NEIL LEVY, ERIC SCHLIESSER  
& ERIC WINSBERG  
*theconversation.com*

The Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine are among the most influential scientific journals in the world. Both have recently had to retract studies on the effectiveness of COVID-19 treatments after doubts were raised about the underlying data. The scandal reveals the dangers of "fast science".

In the face of the virus emergency, research standards have been relaxed to encourage faster publication and mistakes become inevitable. This is risky. Ultimately, if expert advice on the pandemic turns out to be wrong, it will have dire consequences for how reliable scientific evidence is treated in other policy areas, such as climate change.

The pandemic has become politicised, pitting smug liberals versus reckless conservatives. There's also a move towards thinking about options in terms of science versus common sense. If we accept this framing, we risk causing people to believe that experts are no better than the rest of us at making predictions and providing explanations that can guide policy.

For example, some "lockdown sceptics" have responded to falling death rates by arguing that the lockdown wasn't necessary in the first place. Setting aside arguments over to what extent lockdowns saved lives, it is right to worry about the way this has cast aspersions on expertise more generally.

But we shouldn't see the epidemiologists advising governments as having the same standing – in re-

gard to the pandemic – as other experts have with regard to other hot-button issues that engage scientific consensus. It is misguided to think that, because epidemiology is a well-established science, the guidance it provides us with right now is necessarily perfectly reliable.

There is no reliable science – yet – of the novel coronavirus. Because it is novel, the models that the epidemiologists use must make assumptions based on incomplete data.

We have seen dramatic revisions in these models as some of the assumptions came to be seen to be completely off-base. Even now, there is good reason to worry that some of the models governments rely on may exaggerate the infection fatality rate. Testing has concentrated on the most sick – but if others infected with mild or no symptoms were factored into the calculations, the fatality rate would be smaller, by a currently unknown amount.

Part of the underlying problem is built into the way epidemiology is organised to deal with new, unfolding disease in a fast-moving environment. Leading epidemiologists see themselves as synthesisers of "many branches of science using many methods, approaches, and forms of evidence". But it takes time to collect and combine such evidence.

### LIVES VERSUS THE ECONOMY

Epidemiology is not the only discipline relevant to the response to the pandemic. Lockdowns themselves have costs, of an unknown magnitude. Too often, these costs are presented as economic costs, as if we faced a choice between a healthy economy and healthy people. But

people die from recessions.

We should frame the issue as one pitting lives against lives, not lives against the economy. Estimating the effects of lockdowns on future deaths and illness, physical and mental, is not a matter for epidemiologists alone but for a variety of disciplines – psychiatrists, sociologists, economists, educators, public health experts and many others.

Coming to a reliable consensus takes time and the input of many disciplines, especially because the consequences of any policy affect so many areas of life. There simply has not yet been enough time for such a consensus to emerge.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIMATE SCIENCE

Climate science looms over the pandemic debates and offers an example of the value of tested science in public policy debates. From the beginning of the crisis, many have worried that conceding anything to those with reservations about following the authority of science will play into the hands of climate sceptics.

There is every reason to believe that the strong consensus that exists with regard to climate science is fully justified. A central part of the reason that the consensus is trustworthy is that it has been stress-tested so many times from so many angles.

Scientific claims like "carbon emissions cause global heating" are not the province of any one discipline. Rather, the expertise of many disciplines is needed: physicists, paleoclimatologists, mathematicians, astronomers and many more have contributed to making climate science robust. All these experts are

required to identify mechanisms, rule out alternative explanations and make predictions.

Like epidemiology, climate science provides a reliable guide to policy. But it is reliable mainly because its predictions and assumptions are further tested and assessed by many disciplines beyond climate science proper.

We strongly advocate giving scientific input into policy significant weight. Though in this case that advice can reflect only some of the science and offers a partial picture. Taking that advice is taking a bet, and we should not be very surprised if we lose that bet in ways we only dimly understand in advance. The stakes of this bet are especially high when taking the advice requires suspending some civil rights.

If we do lose the bet, having framed the debate as one of experts versus sceptics will lead to a victory for that latter. That would set back our response to issues that rely on scientific certainty, especially climate change, by decades.

Science is our best guide to the world. But reliable science takes time and contributions by many different kinds of people, including the values of the public. We should celebrate the achievements of science, but recognise that not all science is equally warranted.

*[Neil Levy is Senior Research Fellow, Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, University of Oxford; Eric Schliesser is Professor of Political Science, University of Amsterdam; Eric Winsberg is Professor of Philosophy of Science, University of South Florida]*



# Assam reports one more COVID-19 death, 82 new cases

**GUWAHATI, JUN 18 (PTI):** One more person died of COVID-19 in Assam on Thursday, raising the death toll due to coronavirus in the state to nine, while 82 people tested positive taking the total number of cases to 4,777, Health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The person died in Diphu Medical College and Hospital and this is the second death from Karbi Anglong district.

Out of the nine deaths, three cancer patients succumbed to the infection.

Among the people who tested positive for the disease on Thursday, 22 are from Baksa, 14 from Karbi Anglong, 11 from Chirang, 9 from Dibrugarh, seven from Dhubri, five from Golaghat, two each from Sib-sagar, Nagaon, Barpeta and Kamrup (M) and one each from Bishwanath, Nalbari, Charaideo, Tinsukia, Kokrajhar and Dhemaji, the minister said.

Of the total 4,777 cases in Assam, nine people have died, 2,111 are active cases while three persons have migrated out, he said.

Meanwhile, 12 more patients were released late on Wednesday night



after they tested negative, taking the total number of patients discharged on Thursday to 243, he said.

The state's recovery rate has improved to over 57 per cent with the number of discharged people reaching 2,654, higher than the number of active cases, he said.

Meanwhile, the Assam Targeted Surveillance Program (ATSP), aiming to conduct more

than 50,000 random tests during a week, continued for the second day on Thursday.

"We aim to conduct more than 50,000 random testings in a weeks time, targeting vulnerable areas," he said.

Under the ATSP, samples of people working in locations such as truck parking places, loading and unloading centres, go-down areas, weigh bridges and dhabas will be col-

lected and tested. Staff of hotels used as institutional quarantine will also be tested along with frontline officials like police personnel, the minister said. The ATSP will also cover family members/co-residents of homes of persons who have been released from institutional quarantine, he added.

The minister said that the future course of action for containment of coronavirus pandem-

ic in Guwahati shall be based on the result of these tests. The entire exercise was expected to be completed by June 27 and shall involve the deputy commissioner of each district who will ensure the availability of adequate facilities, the minister said.

The number of samples tested in 12 laboratories of the state has reached 2,46,590, he said.

## Congress serves notice for removal of Manipur Speaker

**IMPHAL, JUN 18 (PTI):** The opposition Congress in Manipur on Thursday served a notice for the removal of Speaker Y Khemchand as the party emerged stronger after the rebellion of nine MLAs of the ruling BJP-led coalition.

Congress MLA K Meghachandra submitted the notice to the Secretary of the Manipur Legislative Assembly under Article 179 (c) of the Constitution.

Article 179(c) provides that a Speaker (or Deputy Speaker) may be removed from his office by a resolution of the Assembly passed by a majority of all the then members of the Assembly.

Meghachandra said that the move was necessitated as the Speaker has "conducted himself in a manner unbecoming of the position held by him and actions" that are "unconstitutional and illegal".

Claiming the support of 10 members including former Deputy Chief Minister Y Joykumar Singh of the NPP, Meghachandra urged for the acceptance

of the notice. He said the next date for proceedings regarding the disqualification of seven Congress MLAs was fixed by the Speaker on June 22.

However, by a communication released on social media at 11 pm on Wednesday, it was pre-poned to June 18 without reasonable cause or explanation, he alleged.

The speaker "has conducted in an authoritarian manner which is opposed to well established practice and procedures of the House", Meghachandra alleged.

The seven Congress MLAs, who had crossed over to the BJP, are facing anti-defection cases under the 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution in the Speaker's Tribunal as well as in the High Court of Manipur.

The Speaker is a second-term BJP MLA.

Four ministers, including the deputy chief minister, quit the BJP-led N Biren Singh government on Wednesday. Tribal and Hills Area Development Minister N Kayishii, Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Letpao Haokip, and Health

and Family Welfare Minister L Jayanta Kumar Singh resigned.

Besides, BJP MLAs S Subhashchandra Singh, TT Haokip and Samuel Jendai resigned from the assembly and the party, following which the Congress claimed they have switched over. Further, the state's lone Trinamool Congress MLA T Robindro and Independent Shahabuddin withdrew support from the government.

The total strength against the chief minister is now 29 -- 20 from Congress, 4 from NPP, 3 from BJP (who quit on Wednesday), one from TMC and an Independent.

The figure in support of Biren Singh stood at 23, including 18 BJP MLAs, four of Naga People's Front (NPF) and one MLA from LJP.

One Congress MLA who joined the BJP-led government was disqualified from the membership of Manipur Legislative Assembly recently, reducing the strength of the house to 59. Assembly election in Manipur was held in 2017.

## Kolkata reports seven suicide incidents on Wednesday

**KOLKATA, JUN 17 (PTI):** The city on Wednesday witnessed seven incidents of alleged suicides by hanging from the ceiling from different divisions, a senior police officer said.

No suicide note was found in any of these incidents, police said.

While a 10-year-old boy was found hanging from an iron hook with the help of a rubber pipe projected from a window on the top floor of a G+3-storied residential building in Dhakuria, the bodies of two 19-year-old youths -- from Muchipara and Regent Park -- and a septuagenarian in Behala were also recovered, he said.

A 30-year-old man was found hanging inside the room where he was residing in Beliaghata

area in Eastern Suburban Division while another 40-year-old was found hanging in a similar fashion inside his room in the southern part of the city's Tollygunge area, the officer said.

Another 55-year-old man was found hanging from the ceiling fan with the help of a nylon in a residential building in Patuli area in the early hours of Wednesday, he added.

"In recent times, we have not seen such a number of suicides in a single day. We are waiting for the post-mortem reports but necessary investigations have been initiated into them. We do not know what were the reasons behind these incidents but it could be due to the stress because of the lockdown," the IPS officer said.

## Paswan appeals to people to boycott Chinese products



**NEW DELHI, JUN 18 (PTI):** Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Thursday appealed to people to boycott products from China and also directed officials of his ministry not to procure any Chinese products for day-to-day office use.

The comments from the Food and Consumer Affairs Minister come against the backdrop of heightened border tensions between India and China.

"I want to appeal to everyone that the way China is behaving, we boycott all Chinese products," Paswan said and emphasised that the

Centre would strictly implement the BIS quality rules on products imported from China.

Speaking to reporters, he expressed concerns over illegal imports of sub-standard Chinese products like diyas and furniture. The government would strictly implement the quality rules framed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

The BIS, under the aegis of the Consumer Affairs Ministry, has framed over 25,000 quality rules for different products so far.

"When our goods reach abroad, they are checked. Our Basmati rice exports get rejected,

but when their goods come to India, there is no strict quality control," the minister said.

The new BIS law, passed in Parliament in 2016, empowers the Centre and the BIS to promote a culture of quality of products and services through mandatory or voluntary compliance with Indian standards.

The law provides for widening the scope of conformity assessment, enhancing penalties and making offences compoundable besides recalling of the products including with ISI marked, but not conforming to relevant Indian Standards.

## 43 fresh COVID-19 cases in Tripura; count rises to 1,138

**AGARTALA, JUN 18 (PTI):** Forty-three fresh COVID-19 cases were reported in Tripura, taking the northeastern state's tally to 1,138 on Thursday, Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb said.

All but four new patients are from different battalions of the Border Security Force (BSF), he said.

Deb tweeted late on Wednesday night, "43 people found COVID-19 positive out of 1,250 samples tested. Majority of them have travel history & others were in contact of COVID-19



patients. Among them: 3 from 34 Bn BSF, 6 from Maharani BSF Camp, 4 from 120 Bn BSF, 26 from 74 BN BSF, 4 civilians."

Of the 1,138 cases, 582 are active while 556 people have recovered, officials said. A total of

50,273 samples have been tested till date, of which results of 49,135 have returned negative, they said, adding 537 people have been placed under institutional quarantine and 6,472 people are in home isolation.

## India U-16 boys get tough draw in AFC U-16 Championships



**NEW DELHI, JUN 18 (PTI):** In a tough draw, India were on Thursday clubbed with heavyweights such as Korea Republic, Australia and Uzbekistan in Group C for this year's AFC U-16 Championships.

The official draw for the tournament -- scheduled from September 16 to October 3 in Bahrain -- was held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur.

The four semi-finalists of the competition will earn a direct qualification to FIFA U-17 World Cup Peru 2021.

India qualified for the U-16 Finals when they finished as Group B champions in Tashkent from a pool which had Uzbekistan (hosts), Bahrain and Turkmenistan.

The Indian colts fin-

ished with seven points from three matches scoring 11 goals, while conceding 1.

This is India's third consecutive qualification in the AFC U-16 finals, and ninth overall.

India U-16 head coach Bibiano Fernandes stated that the "boys are looking forward" to the challenge.

"I don't like to preempt any expectations prior to the start of the competition. At this level all the teams are tough to play against. We as a team have improved over the years. I'm sure that the boys much like myself, are looking forward to it," he said.

The Indian boys had faced Uzbekistan in Tashkent in the qualifiers in 2019 where it had ended

1-1.

"When we last played Uzbekistan in Uzbekistan, we discovered that they were such a composed side. There's a long gap between the qualifiers and the U-16 finals and it's understandable that they have had ample time and opportunity to improve as a team. But we are ready for the challenge," Fernandes maintained.

In the last edition in 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, the U-16 boys stayed a win away from a direct qualification into the FIFA U-17 World Cup when they lost to Korea Republic by a solitary goal in the quarterfinals.

That was India's second entry into the quarterfinals, the earlier being in 2002.

## 9 fresh COVID-19 cases in Mizoram; count rises to 130



**AIZAWL, JUN 18 (PTI):** Nine more people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, taking the northeastern state's tally to 130, Health Minister Dr R Lalhangliana said on Thursday.

South Mizoram's Lawngtlai and Siahia districts have reported four new cases each while one case was reported from Lunglei district, he said.

Of the new cases, four each had returned from Delhi and Haryana while

one had come back from Maharashtra, the minister added.

Meanwhile, eight more people have recovered from the disease and will be discharged from the state-run Zoram Medical College on Friday, he said.

With this development, the number of active cases stands at 121 while nine people have been cured of the disease so far, the minister added.

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## Ronaldo can only watch as Napoli wins Italian Cup title

**ROME, JUN 18 (AP):** Cristiano Ronaldo never had a chance. Arkadiusz Milik converted the decisive spot kick in a penalty shootout as Napoli won its sixth Italian Cup following a 0-0 draw with Juventus.

Ronaldo was likely Juventus' last penalty taker but after Paulo Dybala had his shot saved and Danilo blasted high over the goal, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner could only stand at midfield and watch as Napoli won the shootout 4-2.

Afterward, Ronaldo appeared on the verge of tears.

"He was a little sad at the result," explained teammate Juan Cuadrado. "It's always a lottery when it goes to penalties."

Ronaldo had a good look at the goal five minutes in but his effort was pushed away by Napoli's second-choice goalkeeper Alex Meret. As the match wore on, he made less of an impact.

Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri said Ronaldo is struggling to regain his famous acceleration speed after the shutdown forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Unfortunately that's normal when you're not playing games," Sarri said.

The game went straight to penalties without extra time being played -- a precautionary measure for players still getting back into shape in only their second match of the restart.

In the first half, Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne hit the post with a free kick. Juventus controlled most of the possession but Napoli had the better chances as Juve's 42-year-old goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon made a series of difficult saves -- until the shootout.

Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso, still mourning the recent death of his younger sister, was visibly emotional afterward.

Napoli was in complete disarray when Gattuso was hired in December amid a player mutiny over a forced training camp ordered by club president Aurelio De Laurentiis.

"Life and especially football has given me so much more than I gave to it," said Gattuso, who besides a trophy-laden career with AC Milan also played on the Italy team that won the 2006 World Cup. "In life, you always think of your parents and family first, so naturally what happened is hard to accept. 'I have such passion for football, I know that I can't let go even for a second.'"

While it was played in an empty stadium, the final was another sign of the return to normalcy in a country hard-hit by the coronavirus. The nearly 35,000 who died from COVID-19 in Italy could have filled half of the 70,000-seat Stadio Olimpico.

In an impromptu awards ceremony, Napoli president Aurelio Del Laurentiis and Juventus counterpart Andrea Agnelli placed the medals around players' necks.

# AVP volleyball tour subs 3-event series for regular season

**WASHINGTON, JUN 18 (AP):** With her usual practice sites closed down, two-time Olympic medallist April Ross managed to build her own beach volleyball court with supplies she picked up at Home Depot.

What's proven to be a more difficult adjustment to the coronavirus pandemic: Remembering not to high-five her partner Alix Klineman during their workouts. "Alix and I are big huggers, so taking that out was hard. And then to not even high-five after stuff is even harder," Ross said in a telephone interview after their workout Wednesday.

"Alix and I take the pandemic very seriously. We wear masks everywhere except when we're on the court," she said.

"It's almost impossible not to (high-five). So we just try to make sure outside of the court we are making sure to be very safe."

A silver medallist in London in 2012 who picked up a bronze in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, Ross was aiming to return to Tokyo this summer with her third partner in as many Olympiads. The coronavirus not only postponed the Summer Games for a year, but it canceled many of the domestic and international tour events the players need to earn money.

The top U.S. tour, the AVP, announced Wednesday that it was replacing the suspended regular season with a three-week event in Long Beach,



California. The AVP Champions Cup Series will take place on successive weekends from July 18 to Aug. 2 with a total prize pool of 700,000.

No fans will be in attendance, but all matches will be streamed on Amazon Prime, and some will be broadcast by NBC.

"With the restrictions and regulations in place, we were forced to suspend all fan-attended events and refocus

on creating the best possible scenario to bring fans the sport they love so much and provide a meaningful way for our athletes to compete," tour owner Donald Sun said.

"The AVP Champions Cup Series allows us to keep our footprint small, regulate safety protocols and still provide top-flight beach volleyball competition for fans to watch." The courts will be set up on sand imported to a

parking lot, instead of the actual beach, so they can remain in place for all three weeks; this will require fewer workers, and lessen the chance of spreading the coronavirus.

Without fans, the tournament will technically be more like a TV production than a sporting event.

Staff and players will be tested for COVID-19, and masked when they aren't playing. "This was the year,

it was supposed to be so big with the Olympics and the whole AVP season," Ross said.

"Now that we don't have the Olympics and our international season has been canceled, I think it's so amazing the AVP has figured out a way to get us on NBC and Amazon Prime and hold these events."

With its beach party backdrop and a DJ to geek up the crowd, beach volleyball is usually one of the liveliest

sports around -- especially at the usually staid Olympics, where it repeatedly ranks as one of the most-viewed sports of the Summer Games. Ross said it will be an adjustment to playing without fans, but she's excited to be playing before major U.S. sports like baseball, hockey and basketball have returned.

"The energy, we're going to figure it out," she said.

"Everybody is so excited to watch live sports at this time.

... To have a stage where maybe we can reach a wider audience, it's an opportunity to showcase how exciting beach volleyball is. Hopefully, we get a bunch more beach volleyball fans for life, for coming back and being one of the first sports back." Ross, 37, said the last three months have been one of the longest periods without playing volleyball of her life. She stayed in shape with some workout equipment she was allowed to take home and set up in her garage when the USOPC/USA Volleyball training center closed.

Ross and Klineman checked in at least once a week on Zoom -- and often more -- watching videos or consulting with their coach and sports psychologist. When the time came to return to the beach, Ross had to set up the nets herself.

"Not to pat myself on the back too hard, but I'm really impressed with how it turned out," she said.

## Ellie Carpenter makes Lyon move to rival Sam Kerr's European switch

Samantha Lewis

London, 18 Jun [theGuardian]: When Matildas skipper Sam Kerr announced her move to Chelsea in January, it was widely regarded as one of the biggest club moves in the history of Australian football.

Her transfer made international headlines, not just because the competition she was joining had recently become the first fully-professional women's league in the world, but also because she came with one of the biggest price-tags in the women's game.

The reported \$1m multi-season contract -- and the hype that came with it -- was a natural reflection of a once-in-a-generation talent receiving her just rewards.

Except Kerr is not a once-in-a-generation talent. Instead, she is part of a "golden generation" who, despite developing at a time when women's football was still considered an amateur endeavour, have become some of Australia's most loved and most popular athletes.

Ellie Carpenter, who was last year voted into the Guardian's Top 100 Female Footballers of 2019, is the latest Australian player to burst onto the international club scene after signing for European giants Olympique Lyonnais this week.

It is a move that arguably eclipses that of Kerr to Chelsea and of Caitlin Foord to Arsenal earlier this year based on the fact that Lyon is considered by many to be the best women's club on the planet.

Boasting superstars like Ada Hegerberg, Dzsenerifer Maroszn, Wendie Renard, Saki Kumagai and Lucy Bronze, Olympique Lyonnais have claimed 14 consecutive titles in France's top division as well as six Uefa Women's Champions Leagues trophies -- including four of the last five.

Off the field, Lyon's women's team -- including their girls' academy -- share many of the same facilities, resources, and personnel as their men's side. They also pay their players some of the best salaries in the world, with several athletes earning anywhere between \$16,000 and \$30,000 a month.

These are still paltry sums compared with their male counterparts, but such is the financial landscape of the

women's game that spending slightly more than your competitors can generate massive -- historic, even -- on-field results.

As New York Times football writer Rory Smith noted a year ago, "Such is its dominance that it is hard to think of a club team, anywhere in the world, whose résumé can compete. [President Jean-Michel] Aulas has compared Lyon to Real Madrid and Barcelona in the men's game, but the parallel sells his team short [...] It is the most dominant -- and possibly the best -- sports team on the planet."

And now there is an Australian there. Not just any Australian, either -- a 20-year-old woman from a country town whose first taste of professional football for Western Sydney Wanderers in the W-League was just five years ago. If we are to draw equivalences, as Aulas does, there is no Australian male player who has achieved a similar feat; there is no Socceroo at Real Madrid or Barcelona, and perhaps there never will be.

Carpenter's move to the biggest women's team in the history of the sport is not just testament to her individual talent, though; it is also further acknowledgement that -- following Kerr, Foord, and several other players who have made moves to Europe in the past 12 months -- Australia is producing some of the best women footballers in the world with far fewer domestic resources at its disposal.

The question becomes, then: what is Australian football capable of producing if more attention is paid to the development pathways of its women?

Currently, the W-League remains an under-utilised springboard for Australia's emerging talent. At just 14 rounds and a finals series, the competition has -- over the course of its 12 seasons -- needed to be paired with other domestic leagues if Australian women are to make a full-time career out of football, often leading to fatigue, injury and burn-out.

And for those who aren't able to make dream moves overseas, the only remaining option is to find a second job while maintaining fitness in the state-based National Premier Leagues competitions -- which over half of players from the most recent W-League season have done.

## Manchester City return in style as Arsenal pay for David Luiz's errors

JAMIE JACKSON

MANCHESTER, 18 JUN

[THEGUARDIAN]: Manchester City's impressive victory ensures Liverpool cannot break their 30-year title drought by beating Everton on Sunday and the sole sour note for the hosts was a nasty late injury to Eric García, who was clattered by Ederson, the keeper rushing out to head a through ball.

The game was delayed for 11 minutes before the 19-year-old was taken off on a stretcher, an oxygen mask fitted. "We are really concerned," said Pep Guardiola, City's manager. "He responded quite well but we have to wait. He is conscious which is a good sign. We will make another test because it is his head."

This 19th league win of the season was decorated by an imperious display from Kevin De Bruyne and suggests Pep Guardiola's team can be optimistic about retaining the FA Cup and their tilt at a first Champions League glory. Arsenal, though, look what they patently are: a work in progress under their relatively new manager, Mikel Arteta, who will lament the David Luiz mistakes that led to City's first two goals plus a red card for the second error. Notably, the manager had found no place in the 20 for Mesut Özil. "It was a tactical reason," said Arteta.

There had been hilarity beforehand at the empty stadium when the PA announcer stated: "Please welcome the Arsenal

goalkeepers for their warm-up." This was followed by a sheepish wave from them and sheepish applause from the watching media corps: a moment to sum up the quasi-surreal atmosphere. Then, before kick-off, rain poured hard and all 22 players plus officials took a knee to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Guardiola offered terse words. "We should send a thousand million messages for the black people," he said. "I'm embarrassed and ashamed of what the white people have done to the black people -- the last 400 years. How people can think they are different? Everything we can do to make it conscious [we should], it is not acceptable."

Raheem Sterling said of the kneeling: "I see it as a massive step for the Premier League to allow something like that to happen. It shows we're going in the right direction."

An incident-rich contest began with Granit Xhaka enduring a nightmare resumption to the season, having to go off injured, apparently the result of a collision with his teammate Matteo Guendouzi. This meant Dani Ceballos was on after eight minutes and Arteta had used one of the three allotted substitution windows.

After Kyle Walker's pace left Pablo Marí a statue, the latter was next to be forced off, pulling up sharply when chasing back -- David Luiz his replacement on 24 minutes

-- and this meant Arsenal had only one more opportunity for changes. When De Bruyne failed to find Riyad Mahrez along the right an agonised Guardiola "ooh" could be heard and as the half-hour passed it meant 120 minutes and zero goals, following the 0-0 draw in the day's opening match at Villa Park. Sterling came close to ending this when roving in from the left, hitting a curving shot Bernd Leno did well to steer out in a warning City were approaching high gear.

Sterling had not scored since December but on the stroke of half-time he did so. Walker found De Bruyne down the right and he flipped the ball towards the attacker. A classic David Luiz mis-kick allowed Sterling in and he smashed home his 12th league goal of the season.

This put City firmly in control and the sense was that with a second goal Arsenal would surely be sunk. They were yet to discover any real rhythm and when City instantly occupied their territory in the second half it did not augur well.

At the base of midfield Ilkay Gündogan hit balls left and right to Benjamin Mendy, Silva, De Bruyne and Mahrez and when David Luiz pulled down the last of these inside the area a double-whammy followed. Anthony Taylor pointed to the spot, then produced the red card. Off wandered the Brazilian and in went the penalty, De Bruyne hitting it to his right as Leno

guessed wrong.

From the restart City showed a ruthlessness that will have pleased Guardiola. Sterling snapped at Shkodran Mustafi and brought the defender down with a scream. Taylor was not interested in a booking and Mustafi could continue, but it was a long way back for the visitors. The sight of Leroy Sané, Sergio Agüero and Rodrigo warming up will hardly have cheered Arsenal, who were drifting into damage-limitation mode.

City were cruised. De Bruyne skated in from the right and unluckily slipped

then Sterling and Silva combined and Walker should have been put in down the right. De Bruyne -- as irrepressible as he can be -- was pulling strings only he can locate with clever passes or a glide past an opponent made to look static. "He was marvellous," said Guardiola.

City continued to steamroller Arsenal and the manager was able to take off De Bruyne and also protect Aymeric Laporte, following his injury-disrupted season. In added time the substitute Phil Foden slotted City's third.

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# Black Lives Matter network establishes \$12M grant fund

**NEW YORK, JUN 18 (AP):** The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation has established a fund worth more than 12 million to aid organizations fighting institutional racism, in the wake of the George Floyd protests.

On Wednesday, the foundation, which has been influential in the emergence of the broader Black Lives Matter movement, said it was setting aside 6 million in donations to support black-led grassroots organising groups.

Last week, it unveiled a separate 6.5 million fund for its network of affiliate chapters.

Beginning July 1, affiliated chapters can apply for unrestricted funding of up to 500,000 in multi-year grants, the foundation announced. Grants from both funds will be administered through a fiscal sponsor, said Kailee Scales, managing director of the foundation.

In this watershed moment for black power building ... it is critical that we democratize giving to ensure all of us have access to the resources we need to reverse centuries of disinvestment in black communities, and invest in a future where we can all be connected, represented and free, Scales said in a statement to The Associated Press.

According to the network's website, the organization has more than a dozen active chapters, including Boston, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Detroit, as well as in Canada. Its newest chapter is in South Bend, Indiana.

The foundation told the AP it has received more than 1.1 million



individual donations at an average of 33 per gift since the death of Floyd, a black man who died May 25 pleading for air as a white Minneapolis police officer held a knee to his neck for what prosecutors said was nearly nine minutes.

The surge of financial support adds to roughly 3.4 million in net assets the BLM Global Network had on hand last year, according to a 2019 financial statement of Thousand Currents, the fiscal sponsor which receives donations on the network's behalf and then releases money to the group.

Creation of the funds signals a growth in infrastructure for the network, which had been at odds with some local chapter organizers, who felt network leaders weren't providing enough financial support for initiatives such as rapid response to police brutality. Although there are many groups that use Black Lives Matter or BLM in their names, only 16 are considered affiliates of the global network.

For Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, the network's first official chapter, the fund will increase its capacity to support families in

need of legal aid, public communications strategy and other services after a loved one is killed by police, said organizer Melina Abdullah, who is a professor in the Pan-African Studies department at California State University, Los Angeles.

We've been struggling for seven years now with very limited resources, Abdullah told the AP. We're not paid. But we also have real costs, even if we're not taking salaries. Renewed energy in the BLM movement has created a need for more resources, she added.

This fund will allow us to move

forward in really strong ways. Racial justice groups across the U.S. have reported receiving tens of millions of dollars in donations, particularly for community bail funds posting bond for protesters arrested in demonstrations.

The wealth is being spread across younger grassroots organizations and legacy institutions, such as the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and the National Urban League.

The Black Lives Matter movement emerged in 2013 amid anger over the acquittal of George

Zimmerman, the Florida man who shot and killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2012. The network of chapters was formed in 2014, following what organizers called Ferguson October, a national mobilization in response to the police shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

I'm really proud of the work we've been able to do in the last seven years, Patrisse Cullors, co-founder and chairwoman of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, said in a statement.

What is clear is that Black Lives Matter shares a name with a much larger movement and there are literally hundreds of organizations that do impactful racial and gender justice work who make up the fabric of this broader movement.

The foundation has already identified several movement organizations that it would like to support, said Cullors, who declined to name the groups. The foundation says it will prioritize mutual aid organizations, direct service and organizations focused on creating sustainable improvements in the material conditions for all black people.

It also looks to support black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender-led groups.

Over its nearly six years of existence, the BLM Global Network had received contributions from high-profile donors, including A-list entertainers such as Jay-Z, Beyoncé and Prince, who contributed to BLM mere weeks before his death in 2016.

## Mysterious 'UFO' captures imaginations in Japan

It's hardly the stuff of little green men, but a mysterious balloon-like object seen floating across the skies of northern Japan has captured national attention, even prompting questions to the government.

The unidentified flying object was first spotted on Wednesday morning when residents in northern Sendai city took to social media to post pictures and debate what they were seeing.

"This white thing isn't moving at all. What is it? Can anyone tell me?" wrote one user, with others chiming in using the hashtag "unidentified flying object" in Japanese.

Authorities said they were baffled by the object, which close-up images taken by local residents and media suggest is composed of a balloon-like object attached to crossed sticks with propellers.

"The object looks like a balloon for monitoring weather, but it's not ours," an official at the Sendai bureau of the Japan Meteorological Agency told AFP on Thursday.

Local police reportedly flew a helicopter to confirm the presence of the object, but also drew a blank on its identity -- even after consulting other authorities and organisations.

Kyushu University's aeronautics department publicly denied the device belonged to them, after public speculation.

Shinichiro Higashino, an associate professor at the department told Fuji TV that a close-up image suggested the object was equipped with solar panels.

"It's possible it could conduct scientific observations or monitor something," he said.

## Hong Kong's 'rebel' tycoon Jimmy Lai has no regrets

Millionaire media tycoon Jimmy Lai knows his support for Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests could soon land him behind bars, but the proudly self-described "troublemaker" says he has no regrets.

"I'm prepared for prison," the 72-year-old told AFP from the offices of Next Digital, Hong Kong's largest and most rambunctiously pro-democracy media group.

"If it comes, I will have the opportunity to read books I haven't read. The only thing I can do is to be positive."

Few Hong Kongers generate the level of vitriol from Beijing that Lai does.

For many residents of the restless semi-autonomous city, Lai is an unlikely hero -- a pugnacious, self-made tabloid owner and the only tycoon willing to criticise Beijing.

But in China's state media he is a "traitor", the biggest "black hand" behind last year's huge rallies and the head of a new "Gang of Four" conspiring with foreign nations to undermine the motherland.

For years a mysterious group of self-described "patriots" has picketed his mansion.

During AFP's visit, a man parked a van outside Lai's offices with a digital screen broadcasting various allegations and internet conspiracy theories suggesting Lai is an American stooge.

Lai said he had learned to meet such descriptions with laughter.

"Whatever they say I don't pay attention because they say whatever they like. The van, though, that's a new one," he said, chuckling.

- 'It feels right' -

Lai's life story is typical of many of the rags-to-riches journeys made by Hong Kong's tycoons.

He was born in mainland China's Guangdong province into a wealthy family who lost it all when the communists took power in 1949.

Smuggled into Hong Kong aged 12, Lai toiled in sweatshops, taught himself English and eventually founded the hugely successful Giordano clothing empire.

But his path diverged from those of his contemporaries in 1989, when China sent tanks to

crush pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

He founded his first publication shortly after and penned columns regularly criticising senior Chinese leaders.

Authorities began closing his mainland Chinese clothing stores, so Lai sold up and ploughed the money into a tabloid empire.

Asked why he didn't just keep quiet and enjoy his wealth like Hong Kong's other tycoons, Lai smiles.

"I just fell into it, but it feels right doing it," he said.

"Maybe I'm a born rebel, maybe I'm someone who needs a lot of meaning to live my life besides money."

- Prosecutions and payback -

Lai uses laughter to downplay the risks he faces. But he is in the crosshairs more than ever.

He is currently being prosecuted alongside 14 other prominent pro-democracy activists for taking part in last year's rallies, on charges that carry up to five years in jail.

He declined to discuss the case, for legal reasons, but said he was repentant about attending and supporting protests over the years.

"I'm a troublemaker. I came here with nothing, the freedom of this place has given me everything. Maybe it's time I paid back for that freedom by fighting for it," he said.

The newest threat is Beijing's plan to impose a new national security law on the city, which would outlaw subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign influence.

Allegations of Lai colluding with foreigners went into overdrive in state media last year, when he had a meeting with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Vice-President Mike Pence.

Lai described the proposed law as "a death knell for Hong Kong".

"It will supersede or destroy our rule of law and destroy our international financial status," he said.

He also fears for his journalists.

"Whatever we write, whatever we say can be subversion, can be sedition," he said.

- 'External enemies' -

His two primary titles -- the Apple Daily newspaper and the digital-only Next magazine -- are unapologetically pro-democracy

in a city where competitors either support Beijing or tread a far more cautious line.

Apple Daily's newsroom is crammed with pro-democracy slogans, cartoons and mascots.

The two publications have been largely devoid of advertisements for years as brands steer clear of incurring Beijing's wrath, Lai plugging the losses with his own cash.

But they are popular, offering a heady mix of celebrity news, sex scandals and genuine investigations such as a recent series looking at how the houses of some senior police officers violated building codes.

Lai also publishes a Taiwanese version of Apple that is vocally critical of Beijing.

China is at its weakest point in decades under President Xi Jinping, its once-booming economy threatened by the coronavirus, the trade war with Washington and rising international concerns about its ambitions, according to Lai.

"The communists, when they are in crisis internally, they need to create external enemies to unite the people," he said.

"That's why all of a sudden he (Xi) has become so aggressive and belligerent to Taiwan and is imposing a national security law in Hong Kong."

That leaves Hong Kong in a potentially precarious position. But Lai said he had no plans to leave the city, or moderate his views.

"The only thing we can do is persist, not to lose spirit or hope," he said.

"And to think that what is right will eventually prevail."

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## 'Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Amsterdam vandalised'

**AMSTERDAM, JUN 18 (PTI):** A statue of Mahatma Gandhi has been vandalised here in the capital of Netherlands by unknown miscreants with graffiti and spray painting, amid a wave of attacks on controversial figures following the protests around the world after the custodial killing of African-American George Floyd, according to media reports.

The statue of Gandhi on the Churchillaan in Amsterdam was covered with red paint and the pedestal has 'racist' and an abbreviation for an expletive against the police chalked on it, Metro, the Dutch newspaper, reported. According to alderman Rutger Groot Wassink, the municipality will file a declaration for daubing.

"Obviously, we are opposed to any form of

vandalism and daubing of these things is completely unacceptable," the city official was quoted as saying by the AD.nl.

"It is logical that we will file a declaration, the image will be cleaned," Wassink said. It is not yet known who is behind the daubing. An employee of the Kunstwacht, who provides maintenance and repairs, says that the cleaning work can take hours.

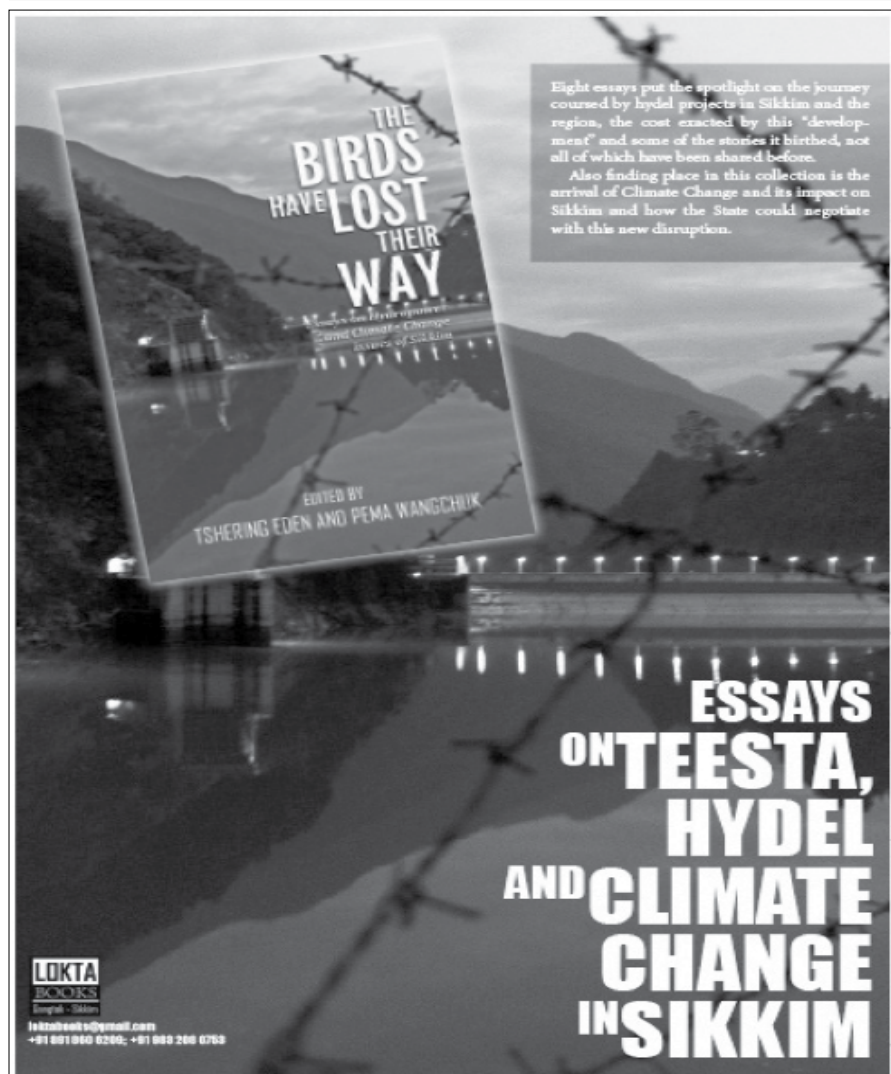
A 75-year-old man saw the daubs on Wednesday and called the municipality. I have lived here for forty years and I have never experienced this. I have been watching the statue for years," the man said.

Since the death of 46-year-old Floyd on May 25 in Minneapolis, US, and subsequent worldwide Black Lives Matter protests, there has been

much debate about street names and statues of people with a colonial past. All over the world, statues of controversial historical figures are brought down or defaced.

Recently, images and buildings have been defaced in various places that refer to the colonial past of the Netherlands, including the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the statue of Piet Hein in Rotterdam. These are anti-racist expressions that follow the death of Floyd through a white police officer, Metro reported.

Gandhi was known as a champion of human rights and non-violence. But in his twenties, which he spent in South Africa, he still called black people troublesome, very dirty and they live like beasts and found that the white people were the dominant race.







**POST WORKOUT!** The reality tv star, Harry Jowsey is out and about shirtless after a workout session.

## Chris D'Elia denies sexual misconduct, pursuing underage women



Chris D'Elia is denying any wrongdoing in light of accusations that he preyed upon underage women.

"I know I have said and done things that might have offended people during my career, but I have never knowingly pursued any underage women at any point," D'Elia, 40, told TMZ on Wednesday.

"All of my relationships have been both legal and consensual and I have never met or exchanged any inappropriate photos with the people who have tweeted about me."

Though the "You" actor maintained there were no truths to the allegations, he apologized for being "dumb."

"That being said, I really am truly sorry. I was a dumb guy who ABSOLUTELY let myself get caught up in my lifestyle," his statement continued. "That's MY fault. I own it. I've been

reflecting on this for some time now and I promise I will continue to do better."

The comedian came under fire when a woman named Simone Rossi came forward on Twitter with claims that D'Elia tried "grooming" her when she was just 16 years old and he was in his 30s.

"imagine being 16 and being groomed by a stand up comedian twice ur age and the only reason you never met up and never got physically m\*lested was because u had just gotten a boyfriend ur own age," Rossi wrote alongside screenshots of messages allegedly sent by D'Elia, who once played a pedophile on "Workaholics."

In response, other women came forward with screenshots of "creepy" conversations with the actor from when they were teenagers, claiming he'd beg for their phone numbers.

# Karthik Subbaraj: The premise of Penguin is attractive

Filmmaker Karthik Subbaraj has co-produced debutant director Eashvar Karthic's thriller Penguin, which stars Keerthy Suresh in the lead role. Penguin is set to premiere on Amazon Prime Video this Friday.

Excerpts from a conversation with Karthik Subbaraj:

What about Penguin clicked with you?

The premise of Penguin is attractive. A mother, who is also pregnant, in a situation in which she has to push herself to find her missing child sounded very interesting. The film also has a lot of other interesting elements, which makes us feel anxious about what is going to happen next. I told Eashvar Karthic that if he can make the movie exactly the way he narrated, it will be a big hit.

Did you watch the movie?

I saw the first cut and I really liked the film. I watched it without the background score and all. And I am sure Santhosh Narayanan would have done a great job.

For the movies you produce, do you also help fine-tune the screenplay?

I personally have a long discussion with directors, and I share my views about the scripts. If they take it, it is fine. Or if they have their points, they can convince me. It is a very healthy discussion. But, that's how far I go.

What quality of Eashvar Karthic as a filmmaker do you think will make him stand out from the rest?

I think Eashvar has very good technical sense. After writing the script, he knows how to pick the right location, visual tone, mood and costumes that fit it. He has a very good sense of filmmaking. He is also a talented writer. He is very good at writing lengthy scenes. He slowly builds up a scene to a high point of tension.

You are building an impressive resume with some great collaborations. How do you cast? Do you write after deciding on actors or you write first then

approach actors later?

I think only Petta, I specifically wrote for Thalaivar (Rajinikanth). When you are writing, you have a certain actor in mind. You know that that actor will be right for the script. I am talking about the main protagonist. When I started writing Jagame Thandhiram, I felt Dhanush would be the right pick. But, for other characters, we go through a lot of

several movies including one with Aishwarya Rajesh by a new director Gautham and another film with Vaibhav by (new-comer) director Ashok. But, when you take these movies to the market, there are challenges like finding theaters. If a movie doesn't fulfil some conventional parameters, then it is perceived as a risk in the theatrical circuit. I think OTT platforms will open up new avenues for



options and select them.

Do you think there is merit to the fear that OTT will eat into the traditional distribution model?

I don't think so. The chance seems thin. Anyway, people love to watch films in theaters. These are unprecedented times, and we can't talk about the future based on the current situation. During the lockdown, people are watching a lot of movies on television and OTT platforms. But, I think everyone wonders when theaters will open. When things are normal, everybody will go to the theater. I think I will be the first person to go and watch any film that is available in theaters. I think people are longing for that movie-watching experience.

Will the Tamil film industry start making movies exclusively for OTT platforms from now on?

I think it will be a welcome change. Say, for example, last year, we produced

filmmakers. Say, I like a script which is experimental. You don't know how it will work in theaters, but an OTT platform is ready, I can go ahead and produce it. It also creates a good balance. I don't think it is even possible for all movies to release directly on streaming platforms. There will be films made for theater. For example, we are waiting for theaters to open for my film Jagame Thandhiram. The producer has no idea to give the movie to an OTT platform. Things have to come back to normal at some point. It cannot go on like this.

But, aren't you worried about what the new normal will look like?

We are positive. Theaters are set to open in the UK from July. And theatrical release dates have been announced for (Christopher Nolan's) Tenet and (Niki Caro's) Mulan. These things give us hope that soon the cases will also reduce in our country and we will go back to normal.

## Kangana Ranaut lambasts Mukesh Bhatt for saying Sushant Singh Rajput was heading the Parveen Babi way

The day Sushant Singh Rajput died, filmmaker Mukesh Bhatt in an interview with Times Now had said that he saw it coming. He also said that the actor was a very disturbed soul and there's something that made him feel that he was not connected. Mukesh wondered if Sushant was also going Parveen Babi way.

Now slamming Mukesh for his statement is none other than Kangana Ranaut who is adamant that Sushant was forced to commit suicide as the industry ganged up against him since he was an outsider.

Lashing out at Mukesh Bhatt, Kangana told Pinkvilla, "Mukesh Bhatt is now claiming that Sushant was heading the 'Parveen Babi Way'. But what they did to Parveen Babi, everybody remembers"

She further added, "Mukesh is jumping into this whole thing and claiming that Sushant was turning Parveen Babi. Who is he to say that? Sushant was a rank holder; he also left a scholarship from Stanford University to pursue his dreams. Something that their (Bhatt) children cannot even think of. Tomorrow, if their children hang themselves on the roof and somebody jumps up and comments that it just hap-

pened because they were becoming like Parveen Babi, I want to see how they feel about it."

For the unversed, actress Parveen was a patient of paranoid schizophrenia and she died in 2005 at the age of 56.

Kangana further added that she had never interacted with Sushant personally but they had common close friends. "Sushant and I had never interacted – at least I don't remember it particularly – but we had many close friends like Sandip Singh and Kamal Jain. There were many people who were so close to Sushant. I pretty much knew what was going on in his life because they were very fond of him and very close to him. In fact, when this news came to me, I immediately called Kamal ji and I asked about him," the actress told the portal.

The 'Manikarnika' actress went on to say that she is ready to talk about everything openly if investigations are done. "Everyone knows how they ganged up to corner him (Sushant), everyone has seen. I am ready to talk about it openly. If the investigations are done, I will speak about it openly because there's enough proof in the media. Everyone knows who are the ones who ganged up on him," Kangana said.

## Michael Keaton set for streaming debut with Hulu series 'Dopesick'

**LOS ANGELES, JUN 18 (PTI):** Michael Keaton will be making his streaming debut with Hulu's upcoming opiod crisis series "Dopesick"

The show is based on a New York Times bestselling book by author Beth Macy with "Empire" co-creator Danny Strong penning the scripts and serving as showrunner, the streamer announced in a statement.

Oscar-winning director Barry Levinson will direct the eight-episode series which will be produced by Disney-owned Fox 21 TV Studios.

Described as an "ambitious, harrowing, and compelling look into the epicenter of America's struggle with Opioid addiction", the series will take viewers from a distressed Virginia mining community, to the hallways of the DEA, and to the opulence of "one percent" Big Pharma Manhattan.

### ARIES:

Aren't you tired of taking everything so seriously and carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders? The cards are urging you to change the approach a little, to think of the world as if it were a playground. You're here to have fun, make mistakes, and learn a few lessons along the way. So, don't get too attached to the outcome of what you are creating. As for the things you are struggling with, know that you will find creative solutions once you let go of your false sense of control.

Tip: Think of the world as your playground.

### TAURUS:

There are times in our lives when we try every trick in the book to no avail. The doors that are locked refuse to open and the people who are meant to assist us in the journey get caught up in their own trials and tribulations. And then there are times when pathways magically clear themselves, our desires manifest with minimal efforts and people we know little about become a catalyst for this positive shift. The Universe is playing for your team, baby! Tip: Spirit is about to manifest major miracles on your behalf!

### GEMINI:

You somehow manage to pick up your phone every time it is 11:11am/pm, your pizza delivery bill reads 'Rs 555' and you could swear the raven by your window this morning was here to deliver a message from the higher realms. No, you're not going crazy, Gemini. You're just upgrading to a whole new frequency. Welcome to the new normal! The things about signs and symbols is that they're entirely personal. You could turn to Google to make sense of what's you're coming through. But isn't it so much more powerful to listen to your intuition?

Tip: Trust the messages that are coming through from the higher realms. They are affirming your path.

### CANCER:

Your current circumstances bring John Rohn's famous quote to mind: "If you don't like where you are, move. You are not a tree." It's true that certain things are beyond your control, but how you respond to the given challenges is entirely up to you. Tap into the power of free will, Cancer.

Tip: You have the power to bring about change.

### LEO:

Anybody can be an influencer, Leo. There's nothing you cannot buy on the internet these days! But few people have what it takes to be the voice of their generation. Do you aspire to join the league of greatness? The secret to getting ahead in the game is staying true to your message rather than succumbing to the numbers game. You owe it to yourself, beautiful. Remember, most revolutionaries were misunderstood in their times. So, don't worry too much about what other people are saying or not saying about your progress! Tip: Wield your power for the greatest good.

### VIRGO:

There are times when everything works out effortlessly and then there are times when you push and push with no avail. The Universe is showing you duality at its best. Get ready to witness both ends of the spectrum today. What you need to keep in mind when things aren't working out though is that, at any point of time, your victories outweigh your failures. So be gentle with yourself, Virgo. Learn from your mistakes without giving yourself too much grief for them as you applaud your ability to show up, every single day,

despite life's many storms.

Tip: You're witnessing duality at its best.

### LIBRA:

Look at you transforming your negative beliefs about love and allowing yourself to receive what you have been giving so freely to others! This is a magical time in the Libra HQ, one that speaks of bliss, harmony, and togetherness. Say 'I do' if you haven't already, or exchange virtual promise rings. You don't have to look outside for a sign, wild one.

Tip: Let the rhythm of your heart guide you.

### SCORPIO:

Scorpio, you are experiencing deep, inner alchemy right now, one that is taking your self-love game to a whole new level. It's true that you've made plenty of mistakes. But then again, who hasn't? Bringing forth the gift of forgiveness is an integral part of this transformation process. Light the torch of awareness in the so-called dark places. Remember, we are not here to be perfect. We're here to be whole and integrated.

Tip: Be gentle with yourself.

### SAGITTARIUS:

A Jordan Belfort quote you want to remember now and forever: "If it doesn't bring you income, inspiration or orgasms, it doesn't belong in your life." Sagittarius, you're fully aware of the things that are beginning to smell stale around here. It's time for you to channel your inner dark goddess and cut the cords that are no longer serving you. If you're dealing with a toxic relationship at the moment, find the courage within you to break the cycle. The Universe knows you deserve better. The real question is: Do "you" believe that for yourself?

Tip: It's time to let go of all that is stale around you.

### CAPRICORN:

You are stepping into an important phase of your career, one that requires you to be consistent in your efforts. But the hustle is something you have never been afraid of. What you could potentially struggle with is the noise and distraction of the outside world. Word for the wise: establish boundaries at home and put your phone on flight mode. Going on a social media detox is a good way to stay distraction-free.

Tip: The project at hand needs your undivided attention.

### AQUARIUS:

Maybe you're not tired because you're doing too much. Maybe you're tired because you are doing so little of what sets your heart on fire. It's never too late to live a life that's purposeful; to find a middle ground between your passion and your profession. Take a moment to make a list of all the things you enjoyed when you were little. If money wasn't a concern, would you consider doing these things for the rest of your life?

Tip: What's the one thing you would do for the rest of your life if money was not a cause of concern?

### PISCES:

It's a 'make art, not war' kind of day in the Pisces HQ. You're in the mood to channel your emotions onto the canvas—anger, sadness, joy, ecstasy, and melancholy. For you, art is not just a medium of expression. It's a form of catharsis. A way of emotional release. Remember, you're not here to be perfect. You're here to be you. Stay true to your message and know that those who are meant to connect with it will find a way to align their path with yours.

Tip: Stay true to your message.