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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM calls on Maharastra Governor

GANGTOK, 04 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang paid a courtesy visit to the Governor of Maharashtra, Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, at his official residence at Raj Bhawan, Maharashtra, in Mumbai today. Tourism Minister, B.S. Panth was also present on the occasion.

Language teacher candidates reiterate appeal for stalled hiring process to be expedited



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 AUG:**

A section of candidates who appeared for interviews for primary language teachers and graduate language teachers in government schools have once again appealed to the State government to expedite the process for their appointment.

Regarding the issue, they also met the Chairman of the State Housing Board, Karma Tashi Bhutia, who is also the chief convener of the student's wing of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha on Tuesday, they inform.

Addressing a press conference

here today, the group informed that the meeting was fruitful and that the chairperson assured to take the matter to the Chief Minister, Education Minister and Education Department.

"We placed our issues and all details, and the Chairman assured to take the matter to all concerned authorities and asked for a week's time. We are very hopeful for a positive result at the earliest," they said.

The informed that the Sikkim State Teachers Recruitment Board held interviews for 572 posts of language teachers for primary, graduate and post graduates in 2017. Among them, post graduate

teachers have even completed the probation period of their service after their appointment and all formalities related to graduate teachers have also been completed and they were waiting for their results and written examination for primary teachers was also completed and they were still waiting for the classroom demonstration process.

"We have been waiting for the next process of our interviews for the last two years and are appealing to the state government to give justice at the earliest. We have full hope in the new government will take steps in our interest," they said.

217 new cases at 15% test positivity rate and one more Covid death in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 AUG:**

Sikkim recorded 217 fresh cases in the last 24 hours, taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 27,342. These new cases were detected from the testing of 1,441 samples on Tuesday giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 15%.

Unfortunately, the state's Covid death toll also went up to 349 after one more Covid patient passed away at STNM

Hospital over the same period.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, while 109 new cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 791 samples, 108 more persons tested positive in rapid antigen testing of 646 samples.

Of the 217 new cases, 80 were reported in East District, 78 in West District, 58 in South District

and 01 in North District.

In the meantime, 210 formerly Covid-positive people were discharged from home and facility isolation on Tuesday after making full recoveries and this further improved the figure of recovered Covid cases in Sikkim to 23,312.

Currently, there are 3,404 active cases of COVID-19 in the state, of whom only 124 are with symptoms severe enough to require hospi-

talization. 11 of the patients in hospital are in ICU.

Of the patients requiring round-the-clock medical supervision, STNM Hospital is handling the biggest case-load of 95 patients in its Covid ward, CRH has 18 Covid patients, Namchi District Hospital 8, Mangang District Hospital 2 and Gyalshing District Hospital has one Covid patient.

There were 12 new hospital admissions today.

ONORC has no connection to or impact on 371F or Old Laws: BJP Sikkim



**SAGAR CHHETTRI
GANGTOK, 04 AUG:**

Bharatiya Janata Party Sikkim Pradesh president, DB Chauhan, has insisted that the One Nation, One Ration Card [ONORC] scheme has no connection with Article 371F or the Old Laws of Sikkim. He alleged today that a section in the State has been deliberately trying to mislead the people on the issue.

Addressing a press conference this afternoon, Mr Chauhan mentioned that ONORC is a

scheme to ensure food security for migrant workers and underprivileged families of the country. He said that the scheme has also been extended to the State and deliberations on the scheme are welcome but a section has been trying to take the debate towards the wrong direction.

ONORC is for food security and has no connection with Article 371F or the old laws of Sikkim, he said.

"National Food Security Act was extended in

Sikkim along with other parts of the Country in 2016 during the SDF government in the State but it is a great irony that now the same party is trying to create confusion and misinformation on the scheme under the same Act," Mr Chauhan said.

He suggested that SDF and other opposition leaders properly examine and study the scheme before speaking on it. The Centre also intends to end corruption related to ration cards through this

scheme, he added.

He further stressed that this scheme would also check influx in the state and protesting ONORC is akin to protesting against the ration being provided to underprivileged families of the State.

"We also have Sikkim Subject and we are also serious and concerned about Article 371F. If any situation arises that threatens to dilute Article 371F then we would be the first to protest," he stressed.

Dear All,

Congratulations! SummitTimes turns FIVE on Thursday, 05 August, 2021!!

I would like to begin with an admission. Every anniversary comes as a welcome surprise. When we launched SummitTimes as an English daily on this day in 2016, it was not a very novel idea. Sikkim was already being serviced by a healthy shelf of newspapers. At the time, a newspaper was considered an impractical undertaking not only because the newsstands already over-crowded, but also because the audience was moving away and reading-habits, which were never encouraging, had already begun flagging. But then again, the news sector was never a lucrative "business."

We knew getting in that the bottom-line was never going to offer cause for celebration and ventured in with just one hope – that we are accepted for what we do.

In that aspect, we get reason to celebrate every day. We have been handsomely endorsed by the people and remain ever grateful for the recognition our work continues to receive. It is this endorsement that makes everything worthwhile makes this milestone we have arrived at so special. We have seen acceptance for our work grow every day and assure you that we respect the support and it is from this respect that we continue to adapt to new mediums, adopt more technology, experiment more options of communication and occasionally push some boundaries.

It is no secret that none of us at SummitTimes have any skills for any other profession and this makes our sense of gratitude even more earnest. We would not have been able to stay relevant had it not been for our readers, whether of the print edition or those on Facebook. Thank you for all your support! We hope we continue to receive your indulgence.

Thanks are also due to everyone who has worked with us at SummitTimes. Some of us have been together since before this venture, some have since moved on to other challenges and some new blood is always expressing an interest to work with us. Everyone has contributed to reaching us where we are today and deserve credit for all our successes. Thank you!

Thanks are also due to the news-makers without who we would be out of business. There are some of you who have believed in us throughout, many have fluctuated between "liking" us and despising us outright and still some more who still don't care. It is with some pride that we receive the passionate response we evoke in this group, and feel prouder still that none of these impressions have been permanent. The fact that we have still not been pigeonholed is hopefully proof enough of the fact that we remain true to our profession, and in doing so, serve the news-makers, the news-consumers and our tribe of journalists as honestly as we can. Thank you for allowing us the space and the motivation to remain the course.

And with that, thank you all once again. And congratulations once more!

PURAN TAMANG
Editor, Summit Times

TEAM SUMMIT TIMES



VIEWPOINT

Two years since abrogation of Article 370: Kashmir moves forward to development in its truest sense

ANOOP TAMANG

It has been two years since the present, PM Modi led NDA government on 05 Aug 2019, took a historical move by revoking decades long controversial Article 370 and Article 35A in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). All said and done, most importantly, the move ensured everyone in J&K to come at par with rest of the nation by securing all the rights and privileges accessible to the citizens of the country. The articles proved to be an inhibitor for the growth and development of the region, and with its annulment, the region is witnessing a rapid pace of all-round growth and development. Although, with regard to the overall political situation in Kashmir valley, some might argue that it has been a slow and long path since the abrogation of disputed articles, the recent all party meeting in New Delhi on 24 Jun, 2021 with PM Modi has given new hopes to all the stakeholders. However, at present, the centre is looking forward to start the next level of political transition- assembly elections- in the UT, and seek support for the legitimacy of the delimitation process.

Amidst all this, it is hard to overlook the positive changes in the social and economical fronts since the abrogation of the disputed articles. Gender equality, equal rights to West Pakistan refugees (WPR) along with equal rights to SC, ST and other backwards section of society have become major tools for development.

With regard to gender equality, things have changed a lot, wherein never to be thought of opportunities, have opened up for women in the region in a safer environment towards personal and social development. Now, every Kashmiri women are at par with Kashmiri men as

their 'State Subject Status' along with their right to property are in safe hands.

Looking at the refugees from West Pakistan, who were earlier been deprived of the citizenship of the state and were not issued the permanent resident certificate (PRC). Similarly, the sanitation workers brought in the state in 1953 to quell protests were also deprived of their citizenship rights. Abrogation of Article 370 ushered in a new ray of hope for these two marginalized sections of the society by providing them citizenship.

In this 'changing Kashmir', the youth have moved far from the 'stone-pelting Fridays' to talks of education, business and development. The unemployment rate has reduced significantly, wherein thousands of young aspiring entrepreneurs are taking advantage of the government's financial support. The central government has also taken stern steps in establishing premium Indian educational institutes like IIT, IIM and AIIMS in the region for betterment of youth and to channelize them towards education.

With regard to mega projects in the erstwhile state, the central government has sanctioned funds, which is essential for fast and sustained development in the region. As many as 15 power projects were inaugurated and foundation stone for 20 others worth Rupees ten thousand crore were laid which will take the power production capacity of J&K to 20,000 MW. Separately, the Jammu Baramulla Railway Line was fast-tracked and now is nearing its completion, wherein the world's highest railway bridge over river Chenab is being made, considered to be an engineering marvel. Also on 07 Jan, 2021, the central government gave approval for mega industrial development project worth Rupees 28,400 crore for the UT.

Furthermore, the government has reiterated its focus on tourism for the land to be known as 'heaven on earth', by easing rules for both small businessmen and tourists on all fronts by approving a business revival package of Rupees 1,352.99 crore. The government also initiated the new Wool Processing, Handicrafts and Handloom Policy, 2020 to revive the horticulture and handicraft industries, which providing livelihood to about 30 lakh people directly and indirectly in Kashmir.

Moving our focus to terrorism, incidents of violence have reduced significantly in Kashmir valley. According to MHA report, security forces have achieved major success against terrorists and that terror-related activities have reduced to one-third in the valley after abrogation of Article 370. There has been a 40% decrease of involvement of local youth of Kashmir valley who were brainwashed and made to take up arms against India.

Although the road from abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A has been rough politically, due to many external and internal entities factoring in, the step of integration of people to people by revocation of the articles has proven to be a maiden step towards equality for citizens of J&K. This, not only ensures of providing equal rights to deprived sections, at par with citizens of rest of the country, but has also proved to be a milestone in assimilation of J&K with rest of India. This abrogation is acting as a foundation stone for new J&K along with a bridge connecting the region with rest of India in its truest sense.

[The writer is a Research Scholar of ICAI University and can be contacted on Email ID annop2017@gmail.com]

SFA mourns demise of Lalita Lama

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 AUG:

A well-known social worker and member of women's wing of Sikkim Football Association, Lalita Lama breathed her last in a nursing home at Siliguri on Wednesday morning. She was unwell for some time and undergoing treatment.

Sikkim Football Association conducted a virtual meeting of its



executive members this afternoon and observed two minutes of silence as a mark of respect to the

departed soul, informs an SFA press release.

In the meeting, SFA president, Menla Ethenpa expressed that Lalita Lama was a sincere and dedicated office bearer who was ready to shoulder any responsibility given to her at any point of time and she was ever smiling and obliging. "Being humble, helpful and a kind hearted woman, she also used to

run an NGO taking care of about 50 odd orphan children," the release informs.

It is further expressed that the football fraternity of Sikkim joins football lovers from all walks of life to pay respect to Late Lalita Lama.

"May almighty give strength to the bereaved family to overcome such a great loss," the release adds.

NITI Aayog workshop in Sikkim on SDG India Index 2020-21

GANGTOK, 04 AUG (IPR): A day-long State level workshop on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index 2020-21 and Multidimensional Poverty Index: Focus on the State was organised by NITI Aayog in coordination with the Government of Sikkim at a local hotel in Ranipool today.

The introductory session was chaired by Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim, SC Gupta, in the presence of Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP Upadhyaya, Secretary, Planning and Development, Rinzing Chewang Bhutia, Director General, DESME, Devika Sharma Chettri, and Advisor, NITI Aayog, Sanyukta Samaddar along with Heads of De-



partments and representatives of various line departments.

Chief Secretary, SC Gupta, in his brief address said that Sikkim has been performing judiciously well in most of the key sectors in the State in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and holds a remarkable posi-

tion in creating sustainable prosperity despite rising challenges.

Expressing concern in certain sectors, the Chief Secretary urged all the departments concerned to ensure proper implementation of various programmes for acceleration of SD goals in the State. He further

stressed on inclusion of all four districts for tracking progress and called for greater clarity in sustainable development reporting.

The introductory session was also addressed by Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP Upadhyaya, wherein he encouraged the Heads of Depart-

ments and officials concerned to provide updated and accurate data for reflection in the MIS portals of the Ministries concerned.

Advisor, NITI Aayog, Sanyukta Samaddar, presented a brief report on the details of the Sustainable Development Goal India Index and Dashboard 2020-21 and gave an overview of Sikkim's performance.

Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by Secretary, Planning and Development, Rinzing Chewang Bhutia.

The introductory session was followed by a technical session wherein reports on SD goals and indicators were presented by DESME and NITI Aayog representatives.

Uttarakhand Becomes First State To Launch Earthquake Alert App

DEHRADUN, 04 AUG [NDTV]: Uttarakhand becomes the first state to launch an earthquake alert app named 'Uttarakhand Bhookamp Alert'. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Wednesday launched the app and it is available for download on both Android and iOS platforms.

The app was developed by the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority and the Indian Institute of Tech-

nology-Roorkee.

This app will send early warning messages to people before the earthquake and it will also help in tracing the location of people who got stuck during the earthquake and will send the alert to the authorities concerned.

"Uttarakhand is an earthquake-prone state and hence this app will help the authorities to carry out the rescue operations during the

earthquake," said Mr Dhami during the app launch.

Mr Dhami further gave direction to the officials to raise awareness about this application among the people and to make a short film on this app to show it in schools and other places to create awareness.

He also gave various suggestions to the authorities concerned to add some features in the



app like, alerting the people who do not have any smartphone and different modes of alerting for different situations.

Disaster Management

Minister Dhan Singh Rawat, Dr. S.S. Sandhu, Chief Secretary, and various other officials were also present during the launch.

Met dept predicts more rainfall in flood-hit Bengal



KOLKATA, AUG 4 (PTI):

The already grim flood situation in south Bengal is likely to worsen with the Met department on Wednesday predicting heavy rainfall in the region owing to a cyclonic circulation over the north Bay of Bengal and the presence of an active monsoon trough.

Several districts, including South 24 Parganas, Howrah, East Midnapore and Hooghly, are reeling under flood woes following heavy rain and subsequent discharge of water from Damodar Valley Corporation dams.

"Due to a cyclonic circulation over north Bay of Bengal and its adjoining areas and the movement of a monsoon trough from Sriniketan,

Diamond Harbour to northeast Bay of Bengal, widespread rainfall activity is likely in the districts of Gangetic West Bengal from August 4 to 6," regional Met department director G K Das said.

He warned of heavy to very heavy rain at one or two places in North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur, Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman, Howrah and Hooghly districts till Thursday morning.

Heavy rain is expected to occur at one or two places in Kolkata, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum and Jhargram districts, the Met department said.

The downpour is likely to continue in South 24

Parganas and Purba Medinipur till Friday morning, and Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, Bankura and Purulia districts till Saturday morning, it said.

The weatherman also cautioned against rise in water level of rivers and inundation of low-lying areas in Gangetic West Bengal.

At least 15 people died, and over three lakh got displaced after heavy rain over the past few days, followed by release of water from DVC dams flooded large parts of six districts in the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned Chief Minister Banerjee earlier in the day to take stock of the flood situation, and assured her of central assistance.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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.
<h4>Treatment</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected 	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7028372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p> </div>

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**

Power Dept signs MoU with SISCO for loans to Grade C&D employees

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 AUG:

Power Department, a state-designated agency for promotion of energy-efficient appliances, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SISCO Bank for disbursement of loans to grade C and D government employees of West Sikkim as a pilot project, a press release informs. SISCO Bank will provide interest-free loan to procure 5-star label electric appliances to the limit of Rs 1 lakh.

This scheme is initiated by state Designated Agency, Sikkim, to encour-



age general public to adopt Energy Efficient appliances in day-to-day use. The Bureau Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India have provided

grant-in aid for State Energy Conservation Fund (SECF) as a revolving fund and same fund recovered by the bank shall be utilized for future program.

The MoU has

been signed by PCE-cum-Secretary, Power Department, Karun K Pradhan and Managing Director, SISCO Bank, Pema Chenzom, in the office of Secretary, Power Department on 04 Aug.

ment on 04 Aug.

Also present were Superintending Engineer-Cum-Nodal Officer, Pemba Lepcha, State Designated Agency, Deputy General Manager, KJ Lama, SISCO, Manager, Rinchen Dorjee Kaleon, Loan and Advance, Executive Engineer (SDA), Sigratha Pradhan, Account Officer, Prashant Pradhan, Power Department.

The scheme shall be launched officially in due course of time, till then the State Designated Agency will hold awareness cum sensitizing programs in the district headquarters.

Battery-operated sprayers and secateurs distributed to Chalamthang farmers

GANGTOK, 04 AUG (PIB):

Agricultural operation assisting inputs of battery operated sprayers and secateurs were distributed to farmers of Chalamthang village, Pakyong Sub-Division under Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) and Schedule Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) programme of ICAR-NRC for Orchids, Pakyong. A total of 14 battery operated sprayers and secateurs were given to 13 ST and



1 SC farmers of the village. The beneficiaries were explained about the operation procedure and maintenance of battery operated sprayers.

Nodal Officer (TSP), Dr SS Biswas and Nodal Officer (SCSP) Kalaivanan made the arrangement and co-ordinated the programme.



SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT CHILD PROTECTION SCHEME GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Walk-In-interview

No. 215/SJ&WD/CPS/2021

Dated: 30.07.2021.

NOTICE FOR FILLING UP VACANT POSITION(S) OF CHAIRPERSON / MEMBER(S) OF CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE (CWC) AND JUVENILE JUSTICE BOARD (JJB).

Applications are invited from eligible local candidates for filling up the following posts for a period of three years under Child Protection Scheme in the Social Justice & Welfare Department, sponsored by the Ministry of Women & Child Development. The details of posts and eligibility criteria are as under:

Sl. No.	Name of the post	No. of post(s) District wise	Educational Qualifications	Sitting Allowance.
1	Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee (01 post)	North - 01	* Should have a minimum of 07 (seven) years of experience of working with children in the field of education, health, or welfare activities OR * Should be a practicing professional with a degree in Child psychology or Psychiatry of Social Work or Sociology or Human Development or in the field of Law OR * A retired judicial officer.	Rs. 1500/- per sitting.
2	Member, Child Welfare Committee (11 posts)	East - 02 West - 03 North - 04 South - 02	* Should have a minimum of 07 (seven) years of experience of working with children in the field of education, health, or welfare activities OR * Should be a practicing professional with a degree in Child psychology or Psychiatry of Social Work or Sociology or Human Development or in the field of Law OR * A retired judicial officer.	Rs. 1500/- per sitting
3	Member, Juvenile Justice Board (07 posts)	East - 02 West - 02 North - 02 South - 01	* Should have a minimum of 07 (seven) years of experience of working with children in the field of education, health, or welfare activities OR * Should be a practicing professional with a degree in Child psychology or Psychiatry or Sociology or in the field of Law	Rs. 1500/- per Sitting

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- These posts does not carry any pay scale or salary.
- The tenure of the posts is for a period of 03 years.
- The appointment shall not confer any right for regularization in future.
- The Members shall be selected through walk-in-interview of the eligible applicants.
- Only candidates fulfilling the above eligibility criteria as prescribed against each post shall apply.
- Candidates must be in good health and physically fit to discharge his/her duties.
- Applicants for the post of Chairperson and Member of CWC should be above the age of 27 (twenty seven) years at the time of submission of application or on the last date of submission of application.
- Applicants for the post of Member of JJB should not be less than 27 (twenty seven) years of age at the time of submission of application or on the last date of submission of application.
- Preference will be given to retired Government Officers having the required qualification(s).
- Selected candidates are liable to be posted in any district.
- As prescribed by the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, 2015/ rules, The CWC/JJB Members are required to sit on all working days unless the case pendency is less. Furthermore, CWC Members are required to hold at least 20 sittings in a month.
- No member shall be selected if he/she;
 - Is associated with any Child Care Institution, directly or indirectly, during his tenure as a member of the Board or Committee or have any other conflict of interest.
 - Has been involved in any immoral act or in act of child abuse. NOC from concerned thana required.

Application along with resume addressed to the Special Secretary-cum-Director, CPS, SJ&WD, with the following valid documents, email id and contact numbers must be submitted to the office of the Deputy Secretary, CPS, Social Justice & welfare Department, Lumsey, East Sikkim on or before 25/08/2021 latest by 4 p.m. Only those applications with prescribed and properly attested documents received within the stipulated date and time shall be entertained.

DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED:

- Attested Copy of requisite qualification from a recognized Board/University.
 - Attested copy of Sikkim Subject Certificate/Certificate of Identification from the Concerned Authority.
 - Attested copy of valid Local Employment Card.
 - No Objection Certification from the Secretary, Head of Department in case of employees serving in Government Departments.
 - Experience Certification duly certified by the relevant issuing Authority.
- Social Justice & Welfare Department reserves the right to reject any application not found fulfilling the above terms and conditions. No TA/DA shall be admissible for attending the interview.

Date of interview will be intimated later on.

This notice is also available in the departmental website www.sikkimsocialwelfare.gov.in and Sikkim Government website www.sikkim.gov.in.

Sd/-

Tshewang Gyachho, SCS,
Secretary

R.O. No.:127/IPR/PUB/Classi/21-22
Date: -02.08.2021

Social Justice & Welfare Department

CONTACT SUMMIT TIMES REPORTERS

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WORLD BREAST FEEDING WEEK

Date: 01st to 07th August 2021

Theme:

Protect Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility

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BREASTFEEDING WHILE COVID POSITIVE - FOLLOW 3 WS

1. Wear a Mask During Feeding.
2. Wash Hands With Soap Before And After Touching The Baby
3. Wipe And Disinfect Surfaces Regularly.



State IEC Bureau
Health & Family Welfare Department
Government of Sikkim



State Helpline No.102/108

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Begin Kneejerk, but Then See it Through

Something the Primitive Tribe Welfare Board could consider

The Lepchas of Sikkim were notified a Primitive Tribe of Sikkim around a decade and a half ago and now have a welfare board dedicated exclusively to their, well, welfare. A welfare board for the primitive tribe group was announced in the run-up to the election that came calling shortly after, and as expected, was received with some skepticism given the timing. The board itself has remained relatively low-key, and since no major interventions have been seen from it thus far, may be now will be as good a time as any to try and understand the significance and potential of the recognition.

It takes years of close dialogue and interaction to develop even a reasonable understanding of what shapes another's culture. If this statement were true, then one would expect social and socioeconomic interventions - which by definition aim to change the environment or behaviour of people - to be based on a deep understanding of the 'stakeholders'/'beneficiaries'. Of course, that does not always happen, but should at least be attempted.

Unfortunately, more and more such projects are conceived, planned and even executed from a distance. In our country, schemes and projects are invariably designed with the "bottleneck approach". Developmental analysts look for the bottleneck which is blocking their version of development from reaching the people and then try and ease the bottleneck. That is kind of like allopathy in targeting the symptoms instead of the ailment. Look around, a host of national flagship programmes float on this model and a sizeable number of community-specific demands and promises also mirror similar sentiments.

When it comes to what the Primitive Tribe Welfare Board could achieve for the Lepchas of Sikkim, they need to learn from an old intervention which has delivered only limited returns (and this might be highly contentious) - the system of a quota for every ill. Analysts, when India got Independence, wracked their brains on why the adivasis were not assimilating into the mainstream faster. Lack of education and opportunities was the obvious answer. So a quick-fire solution was worked out - reservation.

And sure enough many tribals started getting into premier institutes, some even completing their courses and going on to land plum jobs. Exulted with the results, the planners forgot part-b of the original plan - improving infrastructure in tribal areas. Education in the remote regions remains dismal and the system of reservation keeps getting extended. The fact that 71 years on, reservation still not only exists but now includes even more communities is proof that the magic formula was not all that it was made out to be.

What appears scary at this juncture, especially for Sikkim, is that the same formula continues to be applied and the same oversights continue. As things stand, all that the primitive tribe status has secured is an additional 5% reservation in higher education for the Lepchas, and while this access to exclusive quota in education is welcome, the next step needs to be taken and better educational infrastructure for the community created in their midst. And this is only one aspect of what can be attempted.

The welfare board for primitive tribes should begin its recommendations by proposing interventions beyond quotas; the Board should direct the creation of more, better and more relevant infrastructure for the community at every level whether they are at the school education level or skill development interventions or improved access to them. The scholarship for students from North Sikkim at Tashi Namgyal Academy has delivered a handsome crop of achievers. Imagine what could happen if such an institution was established in Dzongu itself! How many more futures could have been collectively improved? And it is never too late to attempt something on these lines. If the initiative was made a collaborative effort of the community, many more intangible benefits could also manifest. And that is the kind of role the Primitive Tribe Welfare Board should conceive and chaperone to completion...

EVE HAYES DE KALAF
THECONVERSATION.COM

The world has become interconnected at a level we never before imagined possible. States, banking, communications, transport, tech and international development organisations have all embraced digital identification. The current conversation hinges on the need to speed up registrations to ensure that every person on this planet has their own digital ID.

We have not stumbled into this new age of digital data management unwittingly. International organisations such as the World Bank and the UN have actively encouraged states to provide citizens with proof of their legal existence in an effort to combat structural poverty, statelessness and social exclusion.

To achieve this, social policy has deliberately targeted poor and vulnerable populations - including indigenous and Afro-descended people and women - to ensure they get an ID card to receive welfare payments. By aiming to include marginalised populations, they are targeting groups that historically have faced systematic exclusion and have been barred from formal recognition as citizens.

My research has revealed how states can weaponise internationally sponsored ID systems. The book that has come out of this work - Legal Identity, Race and Belonging in the Dominican Republic: From Citizen to Foreigner - highlights how, in parallel with World Bank programmes providing citizens with proof of their legal existence, the government introduced exclusionary mechanisms that systematically blocked black Haitian-descended populations from accessing and renewing their Dominican ID.

For years, people of Haitian ancestry born in the Dominican Republic have found themselves in a fierce battle to (re)obtain their ID. Officials claimed that for over 80 years they had erroneously provided people born to Haitian migrants with Dominican paperwork and now needed to rectify this mistake. These people say they are Domini-



can. They even have the paperwork to prove it. But the state doesn't agree.

These practices culminated in a landmark ruling in 2013 that stripped Haitian-descended people born in the country of their Dominican nationality, rendering them stateless. In response, a fight-back campaign called for the civil registry to provide all people of Haitian descent with their state-issued ID documents as Dominicans.

In a damning critique of global identification practices, my research has revealed how international organisations at the time "looked the other way" as the state began weeding out and then deliberately blocking Haitian-descended people from accessing their documentation.

Who was deemed eligible for inclusion in the civil registry (meaning Dominican citizens) and who was excluded as foreigners (the Haitian-descended) was considered a sovereign issue for the state to address. As a result, tens of thousands of people found themselves without documentation and subsequently excluded from essential healthcare services, welfare and education.

CLOSING THE GLOBAL IDENTITY GAP

We are seeing similar cases

of this kind of exclusion erupting around world. In June 2021, I organised a conference at the University of London called (Re)Imagining Belonging in Latin America and Beyond: Access to Citizenship, Digital Identity and Rights. In collaboration with the Netherlands-based Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, the event explored the connections between identity and belonging, digital ID and citizenship rights.

It included a paper on the French citizens caught up in BUMIDOM - known as France's Windrush. We also heard about legal challenges brought by non-binary people in Peru, the experiences of non-domiciled Cubans rendered stateless, and the "anchor babies" debate over whether children born to undocumented migrants should be granted automatic access to US citizenship.

The event ended with an international roundtable that examined the use of digital ID registrations for discriminatory purposes in other parts of the world. This included discussions about vulnerable populations such as the people of Assam in India, the Rohingya in Myanmar and Somalis in Kenya.

Debates like these are only going to become more prevalent over the next 10 years: a homeless man

who can no longer travel on public transport because the bus company only takes card, not cash payments; an elderly African American woman blocked from voting because she cannot provide a federal-issued ID; or a woman told she has to stop working because the system has flagged her up as an "illegal" immigrant.

For people who find themselves excluded from this new digital age, daily life isn't just difficult, it is almost impossible.

And while the need to speed up digital ID registrations is pressing, in this post-pandemic world we need to take a step back and reflect. Calls for digital COVID passports, biometric ID cards and data-sharing track-and-trace systems are facilitating the policing not only of people crossing borders but also, increasingly, of the populations living within them.

It is high time we had a serious discussion about the potential pitfalls of digital ID systems and their far-reaching, life-altering impact.

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COVID: Why You Still Need to Wash Your Hands

FIDELMA FITZPATRICK
THECONVERSATION.COM

Hygiene was a significant part of the health measures to control the coronavirus at the start of the pandemic. But as evidence began to emerge of airborne spread, the focus switched to masks and, more recently, ventilation.

Indeed, for some the focus has switched so sharply from surface transmission to airborne transmission that they now view hygiene measures - such as hand gelling and deep cleaning handrails - as pointless. Derek Thomson, a writer for The Atlantic, coined the term "hygiene theatre" to describe these sorts of "rituals that make us feel safer but don't actually do much to reduce risk".

So are these hygiene measures really giving us a false sense of security? Are they a waste of time and money? And why do we even bother with hygiene when COVID mainly spreads through the air?

Since the days of Florence Nightingale, hygiene, and specifically hand hygiene, has been recognised as an effective measure to stop the spread of infectious disease. Over the last year, public health advice has recommended hand hygiene to break the cycle of COVID transmission along with other measures, such as distancing and mask wearing. There has been less focus on explaining how hands can act as an intermediary for infection transmission.

SARS-CoV-2 is one of the more resistant coronaviruses and can survive on glass, steel and both polymer and paper banknotes for up to 28 days, according to a recent review. We aren't certain what the minimum infectious dose of SARS-CoV-2 is, but recent reports suggest that only a few hundred virus particles (called "virions") are enough to infect a susceptible person. And our face is a handy portal for these viruses to enter our body.

Many infections begin when we touch our mouth, nose or eyes. Scientists researching this behaviour find that people are constantly touching their faces. Respiratory viruses, such as influenza and SARS-CoV-2, while spread primarily by respiratory droplets can also be spread by contaminated hands touching the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth and eyes.

The risk of this happening depends on sever-



al factors including the degree of hand contamination, the rate of hand contact with our nose, eyes and mouth, and the infectivity of the virus strain. This is particularly relevant at present as new variants, such as delta, with greater infectivity and transmissibility, continue to emerge.

The consequences of face touching as a potential for self-infection with respiratory viruses is not a new concept. Most recently, researchers observed 100 YouTube videos of random people and reported that the average facial contact was 22 contacts an hour - higher in men and increasing with fatigue and distraction. The researchers argued that changing personal behaviour is a simple and cost-effective way to reduce the risk of catching an infectious disease.

SWISS CHEESE MODEL

COVID control needs a multi-layered prevention approach comprising personal and shared interventions as outlined in the so-called Swiss cheese model of risk. No measure is perfect (it has holes, like a slice of Swiss cheese) but combining different measures has a much greater chance of stopping the virus from spreading.

The eyes, nose and mouth provide an easy route of entry to the body for a virus such as SARS-CoV-2. While respiratory droplet and airborne spread have been demonstrated to be the main mechanism of COVID spread, researchers continue to investigate the relative contribution of surfaces and hands to the COVID infection cycle.

And the World Health Organization has not ruled out surface spread of COVID. Even if it only accounts for a small percentage of transmission, a small percentage of a big number (about half a million new cases per day) is still a big number. Importantly, researchers need to understand if the newer variants of concern behave differently. Hygiene is not theatre, it's one component of infectious disease prevention and control, and a component people have control over. And, despite the takeover by COVID in all our communications, other infectious diseases still circulate and cause infection.

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Mamata Banerjee to visit Bengal's flood-hit areas, spoke to PM Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured all possible support from the Centre to help mitigate the flood situation. In Bengal, his office tweeted after his meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured all support to Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to battle the floods in the state, his office tweeted today. The Chief Minister had called PM Modi after the aerial survey of the flood-hit

areas she planned got cancelled due to bad weather.

Ms Banerjee is going by road to the some of the worst-hit areas in Udainarainpur, located in Kolkata's adjoining Howrah district.

"PM Narendra Modi spoke to WB CM Mamata Banerjee on the flood situation caused by water discharge from dams in parts of the state. PM assured all possible support from the Centre to help mitigate the situation. PM Modi prays for

the safety and wellbeing of those in affected areas," read the tweet from the official handle of the Prime Minister's Office.

At least 15 people have died, and around three lakh people got displaced after heavy rain over the last few days and the subsequent discharge of water from the dams of the Damodar Valley Corporation.

Major parts of several districts, including Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur, Hoogh-

ly, Howrah and South 24 Parganas have been affected. Several areas in the six affected districts are reeling under flood, with people struggling to wade through waist-deep water. The districts of Hooghly, Howrah and West Midnapore are among the worst affected, reported news agency Press Trust of India.

Since July 31, the Damodar Valley Corporation has released 5.43 lakh cusec of water till Tuesday evening.

2 Mizoram ministers, home secretary to engage in border talks with Assam: Report

ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER ROW: Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalnunmawia Chuaungo told PTI that the meeting of ministers and officials of the two states will be held at Aijal club at 11 am on Thursday.

Aizawl: Three representatives from Mizoram -- Home Minister Lalchamliana, Land Revenue and Settlement Minister Lalruatkima, and home department secretary Vanlalngaihaka -- will be engaging in talks with delegates from Assam to find a solution to the inter-state boundary dispute, a top official said on Wednesday.

Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalnunmawia Chuaungo told PTI that the meeting of ministers and officials of the two states will be held at Aijal club at 11 am on Thursday.

Sources in Assam said the Himanta Biswa Sarma government will be sending cabinet ministers Atul Bora and Ashok Singhal to participate in the talks.

A festering border dispute between the two



states had triggered a bloody conflict on July 26, leading to the death of six Assam Police personnel and one civilian. Over 50 people suffered injuries in the incident.

Taking to Twitter, Chief Minister Zoramthanga said that he was certain the meeting would help the two states arrive at a solution.

"Tomorrow that is 5th of August, 2021 representatives from Assam Govt. led by the senior minister will meet representatives of Mizoram Govt. led by a senior minister. I am sure important steps will be achieved for the solution of the border problem," he tweeted.

The two sides decided to hold talks to defuse the escalating tension following Union Home Minister Amit Shah's intervention, highly placed sources told news agency PTI.

Earlier, on Monday, Himanta Biswa Sarma had announced on the microblogging site that he will send two of his cabinet ministers to Aizawl to broker peace.

Himanta Biswa Sarma's announcement came hours after his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga declared on social media that he has directed the state police to withdraw cases filed against officials of

the neighbouring state.

The Assam chief minister subsequently said cases filed in his state against Kolasib Deputy Commissioner H Lalthlangliana and Sub-divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Tharte Hrangchal will also be withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the "unofficial" economic blockade, allegedly backed by the Assam government, on National Highway-306 in Cachar district entered its 10th day on Wednesday.

A senior police officer in Vairengte told PTI that no vehicle has entered the state from Assam since July 26.

Watch: Heavy rains in West Bengal, parts of Kolkata waterlogged

KOLKATA RAIN: Kolkata has been seeing heavy downpour for the last few days, which has resulted in waterlogging at several places.

Several parts of Kolkata reported waterlogging today following heavy rain in the city. Traffic congestion was also reported in parts of the city today. Kolkata and other parts of West Bengal have been seeing heavy downpour for the last few days, which has resulted in waterlogging at several places and disruption of rail and road transport.

The recent rain

occurred due to a low-pressure system over Bangladesh and West Bengal, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Intense spell of thunderstorm with lightning and moderate to heavy rainfall are likely to continue over Kolkata and suburban areas including Hooghly and Howrah today, the IMD Kolkata said.

Six districts in West Bengal have been severely affected by floods, with 15 people dead and lakhs left homeless.

The floods due to

discharge of water from Damodar Valley Corporation dams and followed by heavy rain have severely affected Hooghly, Howrah and West Midnapore. Around 79,000 people have been affected in Hooghly district alone while the situation is worse in Kolkata's neighbouring Howrah district, where around 1.8 lakh people were affected.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured all support to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to battle the floods, his office tweeted

today.

"PM Narendra Modi spoke to WB CM Mamata Banerjee on the flood situation caused by water discharge from dams in parts of the state. PM assured all possible support from the Centre to help mitigate the situation. PM Modi prays for the safety and wellbeing of those in affected areas," Prime Minister's Office wrote in a tweet.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had earlier called PM Modi after the aerial survey of the flood-hit areas that she planned got cancelled owing to bad weather.

"Was deeply jaded": Omar Abdullah on his detention after Article 370 move

What was done on August 5, 2019, had come as a shock to most people who were affected by the "sudden, unexpected and unconstitutional blow", Omar Abdullah said.

SRINAGAR: Two years after Jammu And Kashmir's special status was scrapped and his 234-day detention began, National Conference leader Omar Abdullah said after initially being "deeply jaded", he realised that as a politician he didn't have the right to "mourn" for long and could not let down those who are struggling for their basic constitutional rights.

On the eve of the second anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, the former chief minister of the erstwhile state which has been bifurcated into Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, said that what was done on August 5 had come as a shock to most people who were affected by the "sudden, unexpected and unconstitutional blow".

Mr Abdullah, who spent seven months in detention, recalled, "I was a deeply jaded and disappointed individual. I found it difficult to motivate myself even to indulge in basic political activities in the prevailing situation. But as the saying goes 'if you want the rainbow, you have got to put up with rain'. So here I am doing the best I can for the people."

He said the workers and leaders of the National Conference (NC)



had made immense sacrifices for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Hundreds of our workers and several of our leaders have fallen to the bullets of terrorists. I thought of all this when a certain light inside me kept getting dimmer during my solitary confinement. I realised I could not just walk away," he told news agency PTI.

There is no doubt in Omar Abdullah's mind that the abrogation of Article 370 was unconstitutional. The move was challenged in the Supreme Court as such on behalf of his party. "I have hope and faith in the Supreme Court which had said that they could turn the clock back if merited. I am sure that someday justice will be done to the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh," the NC vice president said.

Speaking about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with mainstream leaders of Jammu and Kashmir on June 24, Mr Abdullah said that the

initiative needs to be followed up on the ground to produce meaningful results.

"The prime minister candidly spoke of reducing the "doori" (distance), both physical and mental, between Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir. We now await the start of the follow-up to that meeting," he said.

"There is so much talk of development. We would welcome that if it really happened. The administration needs to go beyond inaugurating projects for which work had begun during the time of elected governments," the NC leader said.

About the claims of substantial improvement in the law and order situation, he said, "You cannot gag the people and then claim all is well. In the last two years, people have not been allowed to even peacefully protest. The due process of law has been ignored. On the one hand, a rosy picture of the situation is being

painted and on the other, the Centre tells Parliament that statehood will be restored when the situation normalises."

In any case, the people cannot any longer continue to be deprived of an elected government through free and fair elections in a full-fledged state, Omar Abdullah emphasised.

The restoration of statehood and conducting early elections have been promised at the highest levels by the Centre. "That should be the order - restoration of full, undiluted statehood, followed by Assembly elections. There is no better way to reduce, to a large extent, the trust deficit to which the prime minister obliquely referred," he said.

Omar Abdullah was categorical that he will not contest elections in the foreseeable future but made it clear, "I will continue to be with our people and serve them even if I am not in the Assembly."

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Australia faces US in bid for 1st women’s soccer medal

KASHIMA, JAPAN (AP): Australia’s women’s soccer team has already made team history at the Tokyo Games. Now the Matildas want more.

The Australians have reached the medal round for the first time ever at an Olympics. They’ll face the United States in Kashima on Thursday for the bronze medal.

The Matildas have no intention of going home empty-handed in the team’s bid for a medal.

“Unless we go home with something around our neck, it’s going to be a disappointment for us,” forward Sam Kerr told reporters.

The Australians have an added incentive: They’re gearing up as co-hosts of the 2023 Women’s World Cup. A medal — no matter the color — elevates the team in advance of the tournament.

The Americans, meanwhile, are hoping to salvage what has largely been a disappointing tournament.

“I think what we’ve done good in this tournament is focus on ourselves. We can’t control where the U.S. is coming from or how they’re feeling. We’re focused on working on ourselves,” Matildas coach Tony Gustavsson said.



“We’ve said from Day One that and we believe in the process of getting one day better, and then the results take care of themselves.”

The Australians have already met the United States at these Olympics, holding the Americans to a scoreless draw in the final game of the group stage. Australia was also the only team to score on the Swedes, who are headed for the gold medal match Friday against Canada.

After getting past Britain 4-3 in the quarterfinals, Australia met Sweden again in the semifinals, this time losing 1-0.

Kerr, who is the top scorer still playing in the tournament with five goals, said legs are heavy at this point in the tournament, “but we get a buzz from there being a medal at stake. I’ll be ready come USA.”

The Matildas are the underdogs to the United States, the top-ranked

team in the world and the defending World Cup champions.

But the United States has struggled at times during the tournament, the most recent example being the 1-0 loss to the Canadians in the semifinals. Canada hadn’t beaten the Americans since 2001.

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski was asked by reporters if the Australians have more to play for on Thursday.

“We were aiming

for gold and we will always aim for gold, and that will never change, whether I’m in this spot or any coach, these players or any players. That has always been the goal for the team and will always be,” Andonovski said.

“But just because it didn’t happen doesn’t mean that it stops there. We’re going to go into every game to win. And at the end of the day, it’s a medal in the Olympics, we’re gonna do any-

thing possible to win.”

The U.S. team opened the tournament with a 3-0 loss to Sweden, snapping a 44-match unbeaten streak. After a rebound victory over New Zealand came the draw with Australia.

The Americans advanced 4-2 on penalties after a tough 2-2 draw with the Netherlands in the quarterfinals.

But they were thwarted in a quest for a fifth overall gold medal by their North American rivals. Jessie Fleming scored on a penalty kick in the 74th minute for the game’s lone goal.

The loss cost the Americans more than a gold: Goalkeeper Alyssa Naehrer injured her right knee and won’t be available for the final match.

Naehrer’s backup in Tokyo, Adrianna Franch, said no matter the medal, the United States is still playing to win in Japan.

“Every player that is in this tournament are competitors. We’re here to win and we’re here to take home a medal. Everyone is trying to take home a medal,” Franch said.

“We didn’t make it for the gold or the silver, but the bronze is just as important, because it’s what we have to fight for.”

Italy rallies past Denmark for dramatic team pursuit gold



IZU, JAPAN (AP): Filippo Ganna warned his teammates on the Italian team pursuit squad not to celebrate too much after setting a world record in reaching the Olympic finals, knowing full well that they still needed to race Denmark for gold.

Well, they can have a proper party now.

The squad of Ganna, Simone Consonni, Francesco Lamon and Jonathan Milan overcame a nearly half-second deficit over the final five laps of the 16-lap race to beat the reigning world champions by the slimmest of margins.

Italy stopped the clock in 3:42.032. The Danes finished in 3:42.203.

“We are so happy for this gold medal and so happy for this world record,” said Ganna, whose massive turn at the front allowed Italy to make up its deficit. “We have a beautiful team, like a family, so for me and us, it means a lot.”

As for the Danes? Total disappointment.

“It’s devastating,” Lasse Norman Hansen said.

Australia, the silver medalist in Rio, took the bronze. The Aussies were in a tight race with New Zealand before a touch of wheels sent one of the Kiwi riders to the ground and effectively eliminated them from contention.

The men’s team pursuit has been engulfed in controversy ever since the Danes stepped on the track for qualifying.

After setting an Olympic record with their ride, the British joined several other teams in lodging a protest over kinesiology tape that Denmark wore on their shins and aerodynamic vests under their jerseys. The tape in theory would disrupt air flow and give them an advantage while the Brits claimed the vests were not publicly available when they needed to be.

Denmark, which said it had gotten permission to use the tape, did not wear it for the rest of the rounds.

But their spot in the final was still put in jeopardy when the Danes faced three-time defending champion Britain in their heat. Denmark was so far ahead just after the halfway point that its leading rider, Frederik Madsen, collided with the trailing British rider, Charlie Tanfield, sending both to the ground and nearly touching off a fight.

Even though Madsen was at fault, officials declared that Denmark had caught Britain and effectively won the race.

“I was just frustrated at the situation,” Madsen said, “not at him, because he was doing his job and I was doing my job.”

The team of Madsen, Hansen, Niklas Larsen and Rasmus Pedersen trailed the first half of their final against Italy before pulling ahead, eventually building a half-second lead with 1,250 meters left in the 4,000-meter race.

But with Ganna pulling hard at the front, the Italians closed a deficit of 55 thousandths of a second on the last lap to win the first gold medal for their country in the men’s team pursuit since the 1960 Rome Olympics.

The start of the women’s keirin also carried with it a hint of controversy.

Earlier in the program, the duo of Bao Shanjua and Zhong Tianshi wore pin badges of Communist China’s founding leader, Mao Zedong, after winning the team sprint gold medal. The IOC said Tuesday it was “looking into the matter” because the pins could be viewed as a breach of Olympic rules that prohibit political statements on the podium.

Bao and Zhong were back in action for the keirin, a discipline where riders followed a motorized bike called a derny as it slowly picks up speed, then they sprint for the finish line when the pacer ducks off the track.

Zhong was third in her heat, but advanced to Thursday’s quarterfinals when Britain’s Katy Marchant was relegated. Bao was fourth in her heat and was eliminated when she finished last in her repechage.

Marchant survived her repechage. So did Germany’s Emma Hinze, the reigning world champion.

The men’s sprint also got started with qualifying, where Dutch teammates Jeffrey Hoogland and Harrie Lavreysen tied for the Olympic record in 9.215 seconds, and the opening match races that began to whittle down the field.

Most of the heavy hitters advanced in the competition, including Jason Kenny, who is trying to break a tie with Chris Hoy for the most gold medals among Brits with his seventh. Kenny has won the past two Olympic finals.

“I’ve been struggling a bit. I just felt like every ride was a final,” Kenny said. “That’s it, really. Job’s done for today. Go get fueled up a bit and hopefully have another good day tomorrow.”

A restrictive Olympics has reminders of NBA, WNBA bubbles

SAITAMA, JAPAN (AP): Wake up. Take a coronavirus test. Go to an empty arena. Practice or play a game. Return to the hotel. FaceTime family and friends who they’ve been separated from for weeks. Watch other games on television. Sleep.

Such is the typical itinerary for basketball players at the Tokyo Olympics.

For those who were in the NBA and WNBA bubbles in Florida last summer, it seems familiar: That has no doubt played a role in both U.S. basketball teams reaching the Olympic semifinals.

There are clear similarities between what basketball players are having to endure at these Tokyo Olympics and what went on last summer for NBA players in Lake Buena Vista, Florida and WNBA players in Bradenton, Florida. The days have seemed a bit monotonous, there’s separation from loved ones and there’s hardly anyone in the buildings to cheer for them.

“The bubble was brutal,” said France guard Evan Fournier, who played in the NBA’s bubble with the Orlando Magic. “It was, it really was.”

The Olympics, in Fournier’s estimation, aren’t quite as difficult as the bubble was. The rules in Tokyo designed to keep everyone safe are restrictive, yes. But Fournier said there

are at least some opportunities to see other athletes, whether it was through taking part in the opening ceremony and then going to the Olympic village or simply by being able to get away from basketball by tuning into something else on television.

U.S. women’s player Breanna Stewart said the flashbacks to last summer are only natural to have.

“This is even more because we are in a foreign country,” Stewart said. “We go to the hotel, the practice gym, the arena and we’ve gone to the village a couple of times. We’re not getting out and we don’t have areas to just chill outside. That’s one thing that is unique to the Olympics, spending time inside cooped up.”

Stewart and the U.S. women have had familiar faces at some of their games at the Olympics. Those faces belong to the U.S. men, who have sent contingents to the arena to watch their fellow Americans on off days.

Typically at an Olympics, the NBA stars pop into some of the other big events — like swimming, track and field, gymnastics — whenever possible. It creates a stir, a buzz in the crowd and even the athletes in those sports have said it’s a big deal to have some of the best-known players in the world



in attendance.

In Tokyo, that’s just not an option.

“The restrictions don’t allow us to do that,” Durant said. “That was the fun part about the last few Olympics, is that we could go out and support other athletes, watch other sports that we probably never get a chance to watch, take in the whole Olympic experience. But again, it’s somewhat of a bubble and we can’t do that.”

Even without a bubble, at least not the same sort that the NBA and WNBA players had last summer, the restrictions in place this summer likely deterred some from coming to the Olympics. There are undoubtedly other factors on that front: the NBA, for example, saw its 2019-20 season resume in July 2020, go through October, resume in December and some players haven’t gotten much of a break since — which will be a talking point when NBA training camps start up again next month.

“If you put it frankly, it kind of sucks,” Australia

guard Joe Ingles said.

Put simply, nothing has been easy. And sometimes, it doesn’t seem fun. It can appear to be light-hearted at times — U.S. men’s coach Gregg Popovich is a well-known wine connoisseur, and getting wine into the famous staff dinners has been more of a challenge than usual, for example — but it’s a clear grind.

“A lot of them called me and wanted to play and then later, for whatever reason, said, ‘Hmm, I’m not so sure,’” USA Basketball men’s national team managing director Jerry Colangelo said. “I can understand it. I mean, there’s a lot of things going on. We’ve had to adjust, I mean, how would you like to get a group of guys coming to Japan and tell them they’re going to be in another bubble, basically, because that’s the way it is. That’s really challenging.”

Yet when the winners get their gold medals this coming weekend, it’ll all seem worth the trouble.

“We still get to do what we’re here for,” Ingles said.

Track records keep falling in fast Tokyo Games

TOKYO (AP): The Tokyo Games just keep producing some of the fastest moments the world has ever seen on the track.

A day after the men’s 400-meter hurdles staged possibly one of the greatest races ever run, the women put on their own show as one of the Games’ most anticipated rivalries lived up to the hype.

The United States’ Sydney McLaughlin smashed the world record and Dalilah Muhammad broke it as well in a sensational American 1-2 finish in the women’s 400 hurdles.

“Iron sharpening iron,” McLaughlin said of her latest showdown with Muhammad. “Every time we step on the track, it’s always something fast.”

This race sat on the razor’s edge for sure. McLaughlin came from behind after the last hurdle to claim the gold in 51.46 seconds, quicker than the 51.90 mark she set at the Olympic trials when she was the first woman to run under 52. Muhammad’s time of 51.58 also would have been a world record.

In this race, however, it was only good enough for second.

Expect these two to set more records between now and Paris in 2024. McLaughlin, 21, and Muhammad, 31, have been trading the record for two years.

Muhammad won the race in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. McLaughlin made the U.S. team but didn’t make the final that year.

“I made the mistake

in 2016 of letting the atmosphere get to me,” McLaughlin said. “Just being able to put the pieces together, I am really grateful.”

On the basketball court, the U.S. women advanced to the semifinal round with a 79-55 win over Australia behind a 23-point effort from Breanna Stewart. The Americans are now just one win away from playing in their seventh consecutive gold medal game. They will face Serbia on Friday. The Serbians, who won the bronze medal in 2016, beat China 77-70.

The U.S. has won six consecutive gold medals, and 53 consecutive games in Olympic tournaments since 1992. The Americans put on their best game of the tournament from a roster that didn’t get together until about three weeks before the Games.

“It’s do or die at this point,” Sue Bird said. “That helps.”

BASEBALL

Triston Casas hit his third home run of the Olympics, and the U.S. stayed in gold medal contention with a 3-1 win over the Dominican Republic. Tyler Austin, a former major leaguer in his home ballpark of the Central League’s Yokohama Bay Stars, added a solo home run in the fifth, his second long ball of the tournament.

The U.S. plays on Thursday night, meeting the loser of Wednesday night’s Japan-South Korea matchup for a berth in this weekend’s gold medal game.

British navy group: Hijackers have left vessel off UAE coast

FUJAIRAH, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): The hijackers who captured a vessel off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf of Oman left the targeted ship on Wednesday, the British navy reported, ending a ship seizure that revived fears of an escalation in Mideast waters. The incident, described by the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations the night before as a "potential hijack," ended with as much mystery as it began.

While the details of who briefly impounded the asphalt tanker and why remain unclear, the seizure once again reveals a region on edge as Iran and the United States seek to broker a resolution to their stand-off over Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Over the past years, the rising tensions have played out in the waters of the Persian Gulf, where just last week a drone attack on an oil tanker linked to an Israeli billionaire off the coast of Oman killed two crew members. The West blamed Iran for the raid, which marked the first known fatal assault in the yearslong shadow war targeting vessels in Mideast waters. Iran denied involvement.

Late on Tuesday, intruders boarded a Panama-flagged asphalt tanker called Asphalt Princess sailing off the coast of Fujairah, author-



ities said. The official news agency of Oman's military said it received reports that the Asphalt Princess had been hijacked and dispatched the Royal Air Force maritime patrol aircraft and naval vessels "to contribute to securing international waters."

Possible signs of trouble began to emerge that evening when six oil tankers off the coast of Fujairah announced around the same time via their Automatic Identification System trackers that they were "not under command," according to MarineTraffic.com. That typically means a vessel has lost power and can no longer steer.

Satellite-tracking data for the Asphalt Princess had showed it gradually heading toward Iranian waters off the port

of Jask early Wednesday, according to MarineTraffic.com. Hours later, however, it stopped and changed course toward Oman, just before the British navy group declared the hijackers had departed and the vessel was now "safe."

The owner of the Asphalt Princess, listed as Emirati free zone-based Glory International, could not immediately be reached for comment.

The U.S. military's Mideast-based 5th Fleet and the British Defense Ministry also did not respond to requests for comment. The Emirati government did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

Apparently responding to Tuesday's ship seizure, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh came

out and denied that Iran played any role. He described the recent maritime attacks in the Persian Gulf as "completely suspicious."

The Gulf of Oman sits near the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil passes. Fujairah, on the UAE's eastern coast, is a main port in the region for ships to take on new oil cargo, pick up supplies or trade out crew.

For the past two years, after then-President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal in 2018 and imposed crushing sanctions, the waters off Fujairah have witnessed a series of explosions and hijackings. The U.S. Navy blamed Iran for a series of limpet mine attacks on vessels that damaged

tankers.

In the summer of 2019, Iran's Revolutionary Guard troops detained a British-flagged tanker, the Stena Impero, near the Strait of Hormuz. Last year, an oil tanker sought by the U.S. for allegedly circumventing sanctions on Iran was hijacked off the Emirati coast and later ended up in Iran, though Tehran never acknowledged the incident.

And in January, armed Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops stormed a South Korean tanker and forced the ship to change course and travel to Iran. While Iran claimed it detained the ship over pollution concerns, it appeared to link the seizure to negotiations over billions of dollars in Iranian assets frozen in South Korean banks.

Wildfires burn for 8th day in coastal areas of Turkey



MARMARIS, TURKEY (AP): Wildfires burned for an eighth day in Turkey's Mediterranean region Wednesday, prompting the evacuation of at least one more neighborhood and mounting criticism of the government's inability to subdue the blazes.

Scorching heat, low humidity and strong winds have fed the fires, which so far have killed eight people and countless animals and destroyed forests. Villagers have had to evacuate their homes and livestock, while tourists have fled in boats and cars.

Observers worry that fires in the seaside province of Mugla could jump to two thermal power plants. Flames came within a kilometer of the Kemerkoym thermal power in the district of Milas late Tuesday before the wind changed direction, helping avert a crisis there for the moment.

Firefighters and police water cannons, usually used during political protests, fought back the flames at night as other rescue officials dug ditches around the plant, according to reporters at the scene.

Milas Mayor Muhammet Tokat said Wednesday that the fire was under partial control and efforts to put out the flames in the thermal plant area continued. Tokat added that much-needed air support had finally arrived and said he hoped their assistance would continue to bring the fire under full control.

Videos from an adjacent neighborhood in Milas showed charred, decimated trees while firefighters continued dousing the area with water hoping to prevent another spark from reigniting the fire.

The defense ministry said it had sent two ships to the area to be used for sea evacuations, if needed.

Fires continued in six locations in Mugla, local forestry officials said. Another neighborhood in Antalya province was evacuated as of Wednesday morning.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government is under criticism for its inability to put down the fires, but the minister of agriculture and forestry, Bekir Pakdemirli tweeted that 160 fires in 34 provinces had been brought under control while 14 continued to rage in five provinces.

Thousands of firefighters and civilians are trying to douse the flames. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said late Tuesday that Turkey had hired four new helicopters that would be able to firefight after dark. They would be arriving from Ukraine. Planes sent from Spain and Croatia joined aircraft from Russia, Iran, Ukraine and Azerbaijan on Tuesday.

Authorities have launched investigations into the cause of the fires, including possible sabotage by Kurdish militants. Experts, however, mostly point to climate

change as the culprit, along with accidents caused by people.

A heat wave across southern Europe, fed by hot air from North Africa, has led to wildfires across the Mediterranean, including in Italy and Greece. Temperatures in Marmaris, in Mugla, reached an all-time high of 45.5 C (114 F) on Tuesday.

The Turkish meteorology authority warned that temperatures would rise between 4 and 8 degrees Celsius above seasonal norms around the country's Aegean and Mediterranean coasts.

Across the sea, in neighboring Greece, firefighting planes resumed operations at first light to tackle a major forest fire on the northern outskirts of Athens that forced thousands to flee their homes the previous day amid the country's worst heat wave in decades.

The fire in two suburbs of the Greek capital was the worst of 81 wildfires that broke out around the country in 24 hours from late Monday to late Tuesday. There were no reports of deaths or serious injuries. The fire burned homes, businesses and vehicles, and sent a large cloud of smoke over Athens on Tuesday night.

Two more major forest fires were still burning on the Greek island of Evia and one in the southwestern Peloponnese.

The heatwave is forecast to continue in Turkey and Greece until the end of the week.

Indonesia surpasses 100,000 deaths amid new virus wave

JAKARTA, INDONESIA (AP): Indonesia surpassed 100,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths on Wednesday, a grim milestone in a country struggling with its worst pandemic wave fueled by the delta variant, amid concerns the actual figure could be much higher.

It took 14 months for Indonesia to exceed the 50,000 death mark at the end of May, and just over nine weeks to double it. The Health Ministry recorded 1,747 new deaths of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 100,636.

Those figures are believed to be an undercount.

Since the beginning of June, more than 2,800 people have died during self-isolation at home, according to LaporCOVID-19, an independent virus data group that keeps track of deaths at home. Some of those deaths are reflected in official figures but others are not, he said.

"They were rejected by the hospitals, so they went back home and did the self-isolation at home with limited access to medicine, no oxygen and no monitoring from doctors until they died," said Ahmad Arif, one of the



LaporCOVID-19 founders.

WHO says hospitals are in need of isolation rooms, oxygen supplies, medical and personal protective equipment, as well as mobile field hospitals and body bags.

Lia Partakusuma, secretary general of the Indonesia Hospital Association, said intensive care beds continue to be in very short supply, especially outside of Java, where she said her association has received many reports of people dying at home.

"It is very rare that patients come and get into the ICU directly," she

said. "Many of them refuse to wait in the emergency unit, maybe they feel uncomfortable, so they decide to go back home."

In Bogor, south of Jakarta, Pramirtha Sudirman's infected brother and parents decided to isolate at home because local hospitals were too crowded in early July.

They consulted with a doctor ahead of time and had a plan to rush to the hospital if the symptoms got worse, the 32-year-old said.

"We knew the risk of doing self isolation," she said.

After seeming to be on the road to recovery, her father suddenly took a turn for the worse and died at home before they could get him to the emergency room. Her mother and brother have since recovered.

"We tried our best. We do not have any regret as we also know that the hospital was full too," she said.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, has recorded more than 3.5 million COVID-19 cases since March 2020. July was its deadliest month since the pandemic began, with more than 30,100 deaths — more than triple the 7,914 report-

ed in June. Its current per capita death rate is one of the worst in the region, second only to Myanmar.

In response, the government has stepped up its vaccination campaign, diverted most of the country's industrial oxygen production for medical use, built more isolation centers and field hospitals, and has increased supplies of medicine to hospitals.

The situation has eased somewhat in Jakarta, where patients were not being turned away like in the past, said Mahesa Paranadipa, the co-leader of the Risk Mitigation Team of the Indonesian Medical Association.

Mired in crises, Lebanon marks 1 year since horrific blast

BEIRUT (AP): Banks, businesses and government offices were shuttered Wednesday as Lebanon marks one year since the horrific explosion at the port of Beirut with a national day of mourning.

The grim anniversary comes amid an unprecedented economic and financial meltdown, and a political stalemate that has kept the country without a functioning government for a full year. United in grief and anger, families of the victims and other Lebanese were planning prayers and protests later in the day.

The explosion killed at least 214 people, according to official records, and injured thousands.

It was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history — the result of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate

igniting after a fire broke out. The explosion tore through the city with such force it caused a tremor across the entire country that was heard and felt as far away as the Mediterranean island of Cyprus more than 200 kilometers (180 miles) away.

It soon emerged in documents that the highly combustible nitrates had been haphazardly stored at a port warehouse alongside other flammable material since 2014, and that multiple high-level officials over the years knew of its presence and did nothing.

A year later, there has been no accountability, and the investigation has yet to answer questions such as who ordered the shipment of the chemicals and why officials ignored repeated internal warnings of their danger.

Families of the victims planned a memo-

rial and prayers at the still wrecked site of the blast at Beirut port later in the day. Mass protests were also expected. A huge metal gavel with the words "Act for Justice" was placed on a wall opposite the port with its shredded grain silos, near the words "My government did this" scrawled in black.

Flags flew at half-staff over government institutions and embassies and even medical labs and COVID-19 vaccination centers were closed to mark the day. Reflecting the raw anger at the country's ruling class, posters assailing authorities were hung on the facade of defaced buildings across from the port.

"Here starts your end and our beginning," read one poster that took up the space of five floors of a high-rise. "Hostages of a murderous state," read another.

The Big Pic



RED CARPET CHIC! Actress Margot Robbie rocked white at the Suicide Squad premiere in Los Angeles.

R. Kelly gained weight, lost money ahead of trial

NEW YORK (AP): R&B star R. Kelly gained weight and lost money while he awaits a sex-trafficking trial that starts in earnest next week, his lawyers said Tuesday at a court hearing.

The revelations came as U.S. District Judge Ann M. Donnelly in New York made a series of rulings to narrow down what evidence can be shown to jurors. She mostly ruled for prosecutors but said some evidence will be excluded because it is too similar to other parts of the case aimed at showing Kelly engaged in racketeering in pursuit of women and girls he could abuse.

The Grammy-winning, multiplatinum-selling R&B singer is accused of leading an enterprise of managers, bodyguards and other employees who helped him recruit women and girls for sex, sometimes at concerts and other venues. He has pleaded not guilty to racketeering, bribery, coercion, enticement and sex trafficking.

Devereaux Cannick, one of his lawyers, told the judge that Kelly, born Robert Sylvester Kelly, needs to be measured for new clothing because he's gained so much weight in jail.

And he asked that court transcripts be provided at no cost because Kelly has been unable to work for two years.

"His funds are depleted," Cannick said of a client who left the courtroom after the hearing with his hands



cuffed.

"It's going to be a long trial," Donnelly said after prosecutors outlined their plans to call numerous witnesses, including women who say they were sexually abused, physically abused and coerced to do things for Kelly's pleasure.

The judge said the witnesses who allege abuse can testify with only their first name given to jurors, who will sit in the gallery rather than the jury box because of a reconfigured courtroom tied to coronavirus restrictions.

Donnelly also said she will generally not allow questions aimed at revealing if any of the women have had mental health treatment. She said she will not allow the jurors to be told that one witness had worked as an exotic

dancer years after she said she was abused.

Also likely to be excluded from the trial is any testimony about religious beliefs or that some of the women were directed to have sex with one another, the judge said.

Prospective jurors have already filled out questionnaires aimed at ensuring they have no biases that would affect their judgment. They will begin answering questions next Monday.

Kelly, is known for work including the 1996 hit "I Believe I Can Fly" and the cult classic "Trapped in the Closet," a multipart tale of sexual betrayal and intrigue.

Kelly's sex life has drawn scrutiny since the 1990s, and he also is facing sex-related charges in Illinois and Min-

nesota. He has pleaded not guilty.

The judge in New York ruled last week that the public and the media will be banned from the courtroom after 12 news organizations asked that six reporters be permitted inside because watching a portion of the courtroom on monitors in two overflow rooms was insufficient and might not constitute an open proceeding. She cited the coronavirus restrictions.

As he left the courthouse Tuesday, Cannick, one of Kelly's lawyers, was asked if the closing of the courtroom might be grounds for appeal if his client is convicted.

He smiled and said, "If there was a conviction, we'd use every error that was made" in an appeal.

NY report details CNN's Chris Cuomo's role advising brother



NEW YORK (AP): CNN anchor Chris Cuomo appeared to offer advice on a statement by his brother, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, addressing allegations of sexual harassment, according to a report issued on Tuesday.

The CNN prime-time personality testified to investigators looking into his older brother's behavior. His name appears four times in the 165-page report issued by New York Attorney General Letitia James as one of several outside advisers who were "regularly provided with confidential and often privileged information" that impacted the government despite having no "formal role, duty, or obligation to the State."

The report's appendix included a copy of

an email sent Feb. 27, 2021 by Chris Cuomo to his brother's advisers on a suggested public statement that the governor never intended to offend anyone or cause harm with his behavior. It was not clear whether Chris Cuomo had composed the statement himself or was reacting to suggestions by others.

In the email, it was suggested that Andrew Cuomo say that "sometimes I am playful and make jokes ... My only desire is to add some levity and banter to what is a very serious business."

CNN directed reporters to past statements it had made about Cuomo, and had no other immediate comment on Tuesday.

Macao orders closure of entertainment venues, mass-testing

HONG KONG (AP): Macao authorities on Wednesday ordered the closure of entertainment venues but not casinos, and coronavirus tests for its 600,000 residents, after the gambling city confirmed four new infections.

The closure covers gyms, bars, massage parlors and karaoke places.

The city also plans to test some 600,000 residents after a family of four tested positive for the more infectious delta coronavirus variant. The mass testing is expected to last three days.

The daughter had recently returned from an exchange trip to mainland China, where authorities believe she was infected.

Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat-seng said at

a news conference that if there are no new infections in the next 14 days, normal economic activities will resume.

Macao has reported only 59 coronavirus cases since the pandemic began, with no deaths.

The new cases have sparked concern about the economy of the city that is heavily reliant on tourism. It is the only Chinese city where casinos are legal. Since the pandemic began, casinos and hotels have been hit hard as travel restrictions led to a drastic reduction in the number of affluent visitors.

Authorities in nearby Hong Kong said they removed Macao from a travel program that exempts city arrivals from quarantine.

Sony's profits gain on 'Demon Slayer,' digital camera demand

TOKYO (AP): Sony's April-June profit rose 9% to 211.8 billion yen (\$1.9 billion) as the Japanese electronics and video game maker continued to benefit from a sales perk from the hit "Demon Slayer" animation film.

Healthy results in its music streaming business and robust demand for digital cameras, image sensors and the PlayStation 5 video game console helped Tokyo-based Sony Corp.'s quarterly sales grow 15% to 2.26 trillion yen (\$20.7 billion), the company said Wednesday.

Sony had posted a 193.6

billion yen quarterly profit the previous year. Sony raised its full year profit forecast to 700 billion yen (\$6.4 billion) from an earlier 660 billion yen (\$6 billion).

The higher projection is still a drop from the 1 trillion yen profit Sony had racked up the previous fiscal year, when its sales jumped as people stuck at home for the coronavirus pandemic turned to video games, including those from Sony.

The PlayStation 5 went on sale late last year ahead of the holiday shopping season, each machine costing about \$500. Production has not kept up

with demand, and it's often sold out. Sony said 2.3 million PlayStation 5 consoles were sold during the April-June period. Among Sony's top-selling music projects for the quarter were "Fine Line" by Harry Styles and "Singles: Sun Goes Down, Montero (Call Me By Your Name)" by Lil Nas X, while, in Japan, Nogizaka46 sold well.

In its movie division, "Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway," a 3D computer-animated comedy was a hit. The horror film "The Unholy" was also popular. Sony said some theatrical releases were delayed because of the pandemic.

ARIES:

You have a dynamic personality, Aries. With today's celestial energy, you should try to avoid expending your energy on pointless conversations. Try to be a little more pragmatic. Consider any possible compromises very carefully. If you stand strong, you will reach your objectives much more quickly.

TAURUS:

Today you could learn a lot from other people who are similar to you, Taurus. They have the ability to get involved easily and go straight to the heart of any problem. The world is in constant flux. You have to question yourself if you want to attain your objectives. Try to be open-minded, adapt to the situation, and act before it's too late.

GEMINI:

The stars will compel you to clarify your position within the collective, Gemini. You have a lot of power when you're part of a group, but you're sometimes clumsy about communication. You can't always succeed. The planets' positions will have a beneficial impact, and you will tend to put your life under the microscope.

CANCER:

Your mind is extra clear today, Cancer. Make sure you're helping yourself as well as others. Take care of any tasks that require a great deal of brainpower. You have a tremendous ability to figure out any mental problem. Communicate with confidence. Contact people you haven't heard from in a while. They will be pleasantly surprised to hear from you.

LEO:

You have the tendency to plan everything, Leo. You need to feel in charge of things. Today you should try to listen to others around you. Let yourself go for a while, even though you aren't used to it. Furthermore, you need to develop your personality. You can do this by opening up to others.

VIRGO:

You're attracted to eccentric individuals with very strong personalities. But realize that behind this attraction lies a very strong need for freedom, Virgo. In your life, freedom is more fantasy than reality. The time has come for you to do some soul searching. Try not to hide from the realities of your life.

LIBRA:

Today will destabilize you, Libra. You're trying to rebuild your life on new foundations. Perhaps should you try to change your point of view. Also, you need to preserve your perception, because it will allow you to adapt to all situations. You need to be fully alert and prepared at all times. Try not to become discouraged.

SCORPIO:

You have a tendency to get very involved in your projects, Scorpio. Today the stars will compel you to clarify your situation. It's already clear that you aren't afraid to work long hours to ensure that your projects end in success. But your entourage will probably have difficulties keeping up with you. You're too full of energy.

SAGITTARIUS:

Today the stars advise you to get back into the swing of things, Sagittarius. You will forget your past frame of mind and be able to prepare for a new adventure. Your vitality will be as strong as it has ever been. You will probably meet someone who has a beneficial influence in the days to come.

CAPRICORN:

There's a certain quality in your personal relationships that motivates you in life, Capricorn. This is one of the reasons why your emotions play an important role in the scheme of things. You're guided by your emotions. Today you will be in the best disposition to meet a lot of people who will give new impetus to your life.

AQUARIUS:

This period is full of difficulties and you will tend to question yourself, especially today. You will start thinking about your personality. Your ego risks bruising, and you will have the greatest difficulty turning your intention into real action. Your sensitivity prevents you from materializing your ideas.

PISCES:

It would be fair to say that you love being recognized, Pisces. Today will enable you to show off your leadership skills. You will organize the day. You will accept your responsibilities and your smarts will help you welcome the day's challenges. But stay humble and keep your actions simple, especially after intense emotions.