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SummitTIMES

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SDF expels Chungthang Panchayat

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:**

Sikkim Democratic Front today expelled Chungthang panchayat president, Chung Chung Lepcha.

An SDF press release explains that Mr Lepcha's expulsion was necessitated because he had been working in contravention of SDF's principles, policies and discipline.

Mr Lepcha was elected unopposed as panchayat from Chungthang GPU on an SDF ticket in 2017.

The release also points out that the Garib Awas Yojana launched by the SKM Government today was just a renaming of the Mukhya Mantri Awas Yojana initiated by the SDF Government, which, even as it aimed to benefit the people, also respected the powers of panchayats. The SKM government, instead, has prepared a new list of beneficiaries by sidelining panchayats and transferring their powers to BDOs instead in blatant disregard for the essence of panchayati raj.

Mr Lepcha's expulsion is also linked to this development in that while he had filed a challenge to the powers of panchayats being transferred to BDOs in the High Court, he withdrew the case despite the anti-people credentials of the SKM government's decision.

COVID-19 cases in India breach 68-lakh mark

NEW DELHI, OCT 8 (PTI):

India saw a single-day rise of 78,524 COVID-19 cases taking the virus caseload to over 68 lakh, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 58,27,704, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 85.25 per cent.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 68,35,655, while the death toll climbed to 1,05,526 with 971 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The total recoveries have surged to 58,27,704 while there are 9,02,425 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 13.20 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate has dropped to 1.54 per cent.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16 and crossed 60 lakh on September 28.

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Tourism Deptt announces final SOP for Sikkim Tourism Unlock 1.0

COVID NEGATIVE CERTIFICATE MADE OPTIONAL FOR VISITORS

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:**

After a long gap, Sikkim is now ready to welcome tourists from 10 Oct. The State Tourism & Civil Aviation Department has come up with the standard operating procedures [SOP] for the re-opening of Sikkim Tourism. The department is ready with the final SOP, 'Sikkim Tourism Unlock 1.0' which will be officially notified by this evening or Friday.

The final SOP has a significant change in that the earlier mandatory COVID negative certificate issued within 72 hours prior to date of arrival has been made optional. This has been done due to apparent challenges of sift tourists from others entering the

state, the practical difficulties of checking and verifying documents at the check post amongst others.

Apart from that other requirements like that of pre-registration on Sikkim Tourism web portal, travel cards, need for hotels to pre-register with Sikkim Tourism have not been changed.

Speaking on the SOP, Tourism & Civil Aviation Department Additional Secretary, Kapil Meena informed that 75 travel cards have already been generated by families/groups visiting Sikkim.

He mentioned that SOP has been classified into different sectors like accommodation, travel agents, transport and others. He added that

stakeholders have also been suggested to make their own safety measures.

Hotels have been asked to have emergency isolation facility in case of any emergency, to display all emergency numbers and help-line numbers and do's and don'ts for tourists. He added that there were guidelines for tourist sites, tourism guides and drivers and for trekking and paragliding.

He further informed that there were also additional guidelines in the SOP like to have monitoring & enforcement teams, COVID care facility, COVID care vehicle, tourism information centres and control room.

STDC Chairman, Lukendra Rasaily mentioned that more

than 3 lakh people in Sikkim are directly and indirectly connected to the tourism sector. He added that tourism is the only source for lakhs of people in the State and they have suffered a lot without any income for the last nine months.

Tourism is also the mainstay of the state's economy and the government is taking the resumption of tourism seriously, he added.

Additional Chief Secretary Tourism & Civil Aviation Department, K Jayakumar mentioned that this whole initiative is about transforming the tourism sector in the State. He added that efforts have been made to make all operation and services digital and online.

He mentioned that re-

strictions on entry of tourists announced by local bodies in some parts of the State is a matter of concern but the department has been appealing to them to reconsider their decision as the entire State machinery is working to ensure safety of the people even as tourism resumes.

Likewise, Tourism & Civil Aviation Department Additional Secretary, Kapil Meena mentioned the department had conducted a series of meetings with the concerned stakeholders and organisations and officials of line departments and after thorough discussion and deliberation the department had brought out a draft SOP.

He mentioned that the guidelines in the draft were

again discussed with the stakeholders and in the State Task Force meetings. Finally, after thorough discussion and with some changes, the final SOP was finalised on Wednesday during the meeting of the State Task Force.

He informed that the State Task Force for reopening of tourism in Sikkim was also formed on the direction of the Chief Minister, which has officials from all line departments of the State government.

The State Task Force has already conducted a few meetings regarding various issues on reopening of tourism, he informed further adding that the STF will also review and monitor the resumption of tourism and make changes if required.

Sikkim loses 52nd life to COVID-19

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:**

Sikkim registered its 52nd COVID-19 related death on Thursday in an 82-year-old female from Bermiok, South District, who passed away shortly after testing positive for Novel Coronavirus.

In the daily health bulletin on Thursday evening, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam G Bhutia informed that the octogenarian was brought to the District Hospital at Singtam where she tested positive in Rapid Antigent Testing following which she was referred to STNM Hospital, the only COVID Hospital in the State.

Unfortunately, she passed away en route and was declared brought death at around 4:15 PM this evening on the arrival at STNM Hospital. She had the co-morbid condition of asthma.

Meanwhile, twelve fresh cases of COVID-19 were reported in the past 24 hours in Sikkim. For those who might see this as a huge dip in numbers, it needs to be pointed out that the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital is currently contained and no RT-PCR tests have been conducted in Sikkim since Monday. The lab was scheduled to resume operations on Thursday.

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Reconsider tourist bans, Tourism Deptt appeals to local bodies

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:**

Tourism Department issued an "appeal" to local bodies/panchayats today wherein it has said that the trend of local bodies restricting entry of tourists in their respective jurisdictions is "not in keeping with Government decision for Tourism Unlock 1.0".

This "appeal" comes after local bodies in various parts of the state announced their decision to ban entry of tourists in their area in the past few weeks. On the other hand, the state government has announced resumption of tourism in the state on 10 Oct 2020.

In the appeal, the Department has said that, "the state machinery is geared up to respond to any contingent situations/eventuality and if need be local restrictions and local containment areas would be enforced by the District Administrations."

The Department also informs that designated task forces have been constituted at two level. For monitoring tourist traffic, profiles of visitors and movements on Digital Portal Platform [Ph Nos: 8167332201, 9832786653, 9832781279, 7548943853 to be notified in case of gross and repeated violations of SOP/protocol by tourists or stakeholders]

A state level oversight tourism task force for policy review and intervention has also been constituted. [Ph Nos: Joint Secretary: 9832381355, Joint Secretary: 7076733489, Additional Secretary: 8370999269 to be notified, in the event of policy intervention]

The appeal further states that local bodies can consider constituting "watch and ward or neighbourhood watch committees" to exercise vigil and ensure masking, social distancing and hand hygiene among tourists and public.

Feral dogs sterilised and vaccinated in North Sikkim's High Himalaya

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:**

In the recent past, free-ranging dogs have emerged as one of the biggest threats for wildlife in the high-altitude areas of the Himalaya. In Sikkim too, the growing numbers of these feral dogs have been known to predate upon species like Tibetan gazelles, blue sheep, kiang, Tibetan argali and others and come in direct competition with other predators such as snow leopards and Tibetan wolves, a press communiqué from WWF-Sikkim highlights.

Besides hunting wildlife, these dogs also pose a threat to the livestock such as yaks and sheep that leads to significant losses for the pastoralist communities. In light of the present pandemic situation, there is also the increased risk of disease transmission from them to the local wildlife and domestic animals, the release adds.



To address this issue, WWF-India in collaboration with the Sikkim Anti Rabies and Animal Health Group (SARAH), and the GOI-GEF-UNDPSECURE Himalaya Project of the Forest and Environment Department is undertaking a massive sterilization drive in North and East.

This initiative is being conducted with the main aim of reducing wildlife

and livestock depredation from free ranging dogs in high altitude areas through control of dog population.

It is now accepted internationally that measures such as mass culling, impounding or relocation do not solve dog overpopulation problems. Sterilisation is along-term strategy adopted for control of animal populations and

it has to be undertaken using strict protocols, which have been developed by Wildlife Institute of India and implemented in other states.

Animal welfare during capture process and health monitoring of every individual are highly essential to be maintained during the operation. Along with sterilisation, responsible pet

turn to pg 02

Students left without colleges distresses Chamling

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:**

Sikkim Democratic Front party president, former CM Pawan Chamling, has rued that students across the state are distressed as a large number of them have not been able to get admission into colleges in Sikkim this year.

He points out that this development poses a big question-mark on the educational aspirations of thousands of Sikkimese students and has asked the government to ensure that all students get admission into institutes of higher education in the State.

An SDF press release conveying Mr Chamling's comments mentions that the party president has highlighted that it was "primary duty and responsibility" of the government to ensure education for all students desirous of pursuing higher education.

Gangtok's Biggest Agenda

JIWAN RAI

Post 2011, Gangtokians ritually feel a sense of fear on the eve of 18 September, reminding themselves of that historic earthquake. But hidden in our morbid nostalgia are a sense of guilt about our unchanged public attitude and a real fear of an impending disaster. Every sensible Gangtokian privately grapples with his or her unuttered fears. Often, the heavy, incessant rains make their hair curl in deep anxiety.

The fatal 2011 Himalayan earthquake is not the only terrifying memory of a natural disaster for Gangtok people. There have been several landslides and flashfloods that claimed human lives and property of Gangtokians in the past. Of course, these are not exclusively Gangtok's stories as other places in

Sikkim have had their own share of disasters. In this article I just want to highlight the plight of the Gangtok life that we so desperately want to forget and yet need to remember.

That the ever increasing population in the ever crowded unplanned hill city of Gangtok has been living with natural disasters hanging like a sword of Damocles over their heads is the biggest existential struggle for Gangtokians that has not been pondered upon as deeply as it demands. We, as individuals, have not taken the adequate steps we should and could have taken to prevent this disaster. We, as communities, have done literally nothing to make our settlements natural disaster proof. Yes, there is no human settlement that can be disaster-proof. However, the

Gangtok population (voters) has always preferred personal short term gain over long-term collective safety. This fact is an ugly example of the people of a particular community not taking collective measures to prevent natural calamities.

Knowing that nothing can be done to undo the unplanned crowding of human settlements in Gangtok, it is really hard to answer what actually can be done at this stage to prevent future calamities or mitigate present disasters. At least a process to explore ways of mitigation and prevention is the first thing that needs to be done. Ministers, areas MLAs, Councilors, politicians and aspirant leaders carrying out orchestrated visits for photo ops is the last thing Gangtok needs. Occasional cleanliness drives, rallies and

speeches are a good step in the right direction - but they are far too inadequate.

Since politics is Sikkim's supreme activity, making disaster mitigation and prevention a primary political agenda is the most important step. If Gangtok politics continues to be played around the posts, chairs and personal benefits of people, nothing will be able to save Gangtok from becoming ever more unlivable. It is not just the quality of life - the very safety of its citizens is hanging by an ever thinning thread. I have never heard of Gangtok's prominent people making it a major political agenda.

The second doable step that the people of greater Gangtok must take is to usurp ownership of their community in a responsible manner. *turn to pg 02*

VIEWPOINT

Governor mourns passing away of Ram Vilas Paswan

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 OCT:

Governor Ganga Prasad has expressed grief over the demise of the Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan who passed away today at a hospital in New Delhi. He was 74.

"I am shocked at the news of the death of Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan ji. Paswan ji has played an important role in the upliftment of the poor, deprived and the exploited. May God give peace to the departed soul," the Governor conveys in his condolence message.

The Lok Janshakti Party founder and Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution was admitted to a private hospital in New Delhi for several weeks and had recently undergone a heart operation.

Tablighi case: Freedom of speech & expression most abused

right in recent times, says SC

NEW DELHI, OCT 8 (PTI): The Supreme Court Thursday said freedom of speech and expression is the most abused right in recent times.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, which was hearing pleas of Jamiat Ulama I Hind and others alleging that a section of media was spreading communal hatred over Tablighi Jamaat congregation during the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, pulled up the Centre for its "evasive" and "brazen" affidavit on the issue.

Freedom of speech and expression is the most abused right in recent times, the apex court said.

The bench observed this when senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for Jamaat, said the Centre in its affidavit has stated that petitioners are trying to muzzle freedom of speech and expression.

To this, the bench said, They are free to make any averment in their affidavit, like you are free to make any argument you want.

The bench was irked over the fact that instead of secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, an additional secretary filed the affidavit which contained unnecessary and nonsensical averments with regard to media reporting in Tablighi Jamaat issue.

You cannot treat this court the way you are doing in this case, said the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

The apex court sought an affidavit from the I&B secretary with details of steps taken in the past to stop motivated media reporting in such cases.

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Webinar deliberates conservation as underpinning for development

GANGTOK, 08 OCT (PIB): Growth and Development of 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat' is concomitant with Forest, Wildlife and biodiversity conservation, experts opined in a Webinar organised by Press Information Bureau, Guwahati on the topic here today. A galaxy of experts from Environment fraternity, Government sector along with academicians deliberated and discussed about the potential from growth, environment and policy perspective.

Padma Shri Dr Kushal Konwar Sarma, well-known as 'Elephant doctor of Assam' from Khanapara, Guwahati said that on 150 years of celebration of Mahatma Gandhi and celebration of 'Wildlife Week' it calls for a responsibility on all citizens of the country to be AtmaNirbhar with Sustainable Development of Environment Ecosystem.

Dr Sarma said that Project Elephant and Project Tiger are success stories which are encouraging and continuous efforts for Project Lion and Project Dolphin, biodiversity, protection of forest and conservation of wildlife are important aspects. He said that India is country which has 17 percent of world population and 2.4 percent land,

so along with growth and development of the country, wildlife and biodiversity conservation are equally imperative.

Padma Shri Jadav Payeng, well-known as the 'Forest man of India' from Majuli said that Forest is the mother of all living beings in the world. With grit and passion as he emphasised that forest ecosystem is important component of the value chain of development of the country. Shri Payeng said that Forest conservation and afforestation has to be dovetailed for sustainable growth of the country with awareness among people, particularly the youth. He further said that forest conservation is a process which is planned and coordinated effort with Environment Management for the benefit of the humans and the ecosystem. He said that forestry helps in proper environmental balance including rainfall, soil fertility and water level of the region.

Padma Shri Naresh Chander Lal, Ambassador of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, Andaman and Nicobar Island said that Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan is correlated with Country's Growth and Development and particular-

ly, with sustainable development of forest ecosystem. He said that pollution and deforestation has to be tackled in a planned manner by afforestation and utilisation of eco-friendly technology. Shri Lal said that problems such as desertification and soil erosion are some of the issues are impediments in the development of forest ecosystem. He said that Swachhta means behavioural and attitudinal change in individuals too because awareness is must when it comes to driving the message of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan. Shri Lal said that Andaman and Nicobar and Assam which has huge natural resources and diversity could leverage its competitive advantage for the eco-friendly growth and development of the country.

Dr Purnima Devi Barman, Nari Shakti Awardee from President of India and who is also Green Oscar Awardee for her efforts in conserving greater adjutant storks, said about International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species and role of Hargilas bird and the quintessential awareness to protect the scavenger bird. Dr. Barman said birds play a pivotal role in environment and forest ecosystem. She said that AtmaN-

irbhar Bharat is sustainable development with development with environmental balanced growth too. She said awareness in communities would help address most of the issues and leading to growth and development with equitable accessibility of services for all citizens of the country.

The entire webinar was planned and coordinated by Joint Director (M&C), Samrat Bandyopadhyay, PIB, Guwahati, Deputy Director, Pallav Chakravorty, PIB welcomed the experts as the webinar delved into details on various aspects of the topic such as environment management, wildlife and biodiversity and forestry.

The interactive Webinar had huge enthusiastic participation of students, academicians and environment fraternity of Assam and North East Region as they said that this information cum knowledge Webinar helped them in informed decision making and to be environment friendly.

Along with students, eminent journalists and other government senior officials from Doordarshan Guwahati, Regional Outreach Bureau, Guwahati, All India Radio Guwahati were also present on the occasion.

CM meets Inter-Ministerial Team, discusses rainfall damage



SUMMIT REPORT

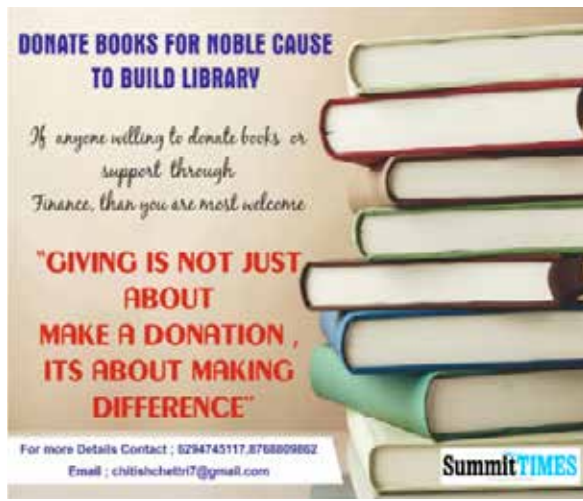
GANGTOK, 08 OCT:

Chief Minister, PS Tamang had a brief meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Team (IMCT) at Samman Bhawan today. The team is presently in Sikkim to assess the damages caused by heavy rainfall.

The team comprised of Brig. Ajay Gangwar (Advisor NDMA, New Delhi), Dr Virendra Singh (Director DRD, Patna), S.C Meena (Director FCD, Finance Ministry), Shiv Prakash (Superintending Engineer, CWC, Gangtok), Summit Goel (Deputy Director, Central Electricity Authority, Delhi), S.B Tew-

ari (Ministry of Rural Development), and Ankit Umroa (Asst. Executive Engineer (civil) MDRTH, Guwahati).

In a Facebook post, the CM wrote, "We highlighted the problems faced by Sikkim owing to the fragile mountainous terrain and several other issues arising due to calamities. The unprecedented damages in certain areas because of frequent landslides have created major difficulties for the State. The team put forward their suggestions in mitigating the problems and likewise, I briefed them about the steps taken by our Government to tackle the same."



COVID-19 cases...

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 8,34,65,975 samples have been tested up to October 7 with 11,94,321 samples being tested on Wednesday.

The 971 new fatalities include 355 from Maharashtra, 113 from Karnataka, 67 from Tamil Nadu, 58 from West Bengal, 47 from Uttar Pradesh, 35 from Delhi, 34 from Andhra Pradesh, 33 from Punjab and 30 Chhattisgarh.

A total of 1,05, 526 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 39,072 from Maharashtra followed by 9,984 from Tamil Nadu, 9,574 from Karnataka, 6,200 from Uttar Pradesh, 6,086 from Andhra Pradesh, 5, 616 from Delhi, 5,376 from West Bengal, 3,712 from Punjab and 3,531 from Gujarat.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

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

Gangtok's Biggest...

There are a few exemplary local NGOs within Gangtok that smartly combine the collective energy of the community for various socially beneficial activities like community hygiene, awareness on various issues, youth and children development, female empowerment, etc. The cruelest irony of heavily congested Gangtok is the deeply isolated families and individuals. Sadly, there is nothing much that joins Gangtokians socially. That Gangtok is a disjointed society can be seen in the way we have grabbed everything for our personal benefit. There is nothing social in Gangtok except social drinking, gambling, weddings and funerals.

The third step people must take is to become youth and children friendly as a community. Some of us may buy the best gifts for our kids, put them in the best of schools, give them the best of food and so on. But what they need essentially is OPEN SPACE. Look at the child friendly city initiatives of UNICEF. We are the most idiotic generation who has eaten into every available physical space (by selling and using our own land and furthermore, encroaching on government land) and pretend to cry at many of our young people falling victim to depression and all forms of addiction. I feel deeply anguished as I type these lines.

Finally, I appeal to the government to make every effort to spare the remaining available open spaces for future generations. Making tall buildings is the most foolish thing to do right now within Gangtok. Please be generous and develop parks, gardens and play grounds for city kids and youth. As I write this article, the only open space in Daragaon, SNT colony, is slowly and surely being turning into a housing colony. And I am tempted to say as the rest, "let it be!" Daragaon leaders, speak up. Daragaon people, speak up.

The smell of soil is a human fundamental right. Do not deprive future Gangtokians of this right.

Sikkim loses...

All the 12 cases were picked up in RAT from 38 samples screened. None of the 14 samples put through TruNat screening returned positive.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of novel coronavirus now stands at 3,246.

Of the 12 new cases, 10 are reported from East District and two from South Sikkim.

On the other hand, 32 more COVID-19 patients were discharged from isolation facilities in the State on Wednesday to boost the number of discharged patients in the State to 2,569. There are now 545 patients either in isolation or hospital in the State.

Eight COVID-19 patients are currently admitted in COVID ICU facility at STNM hospital.

While providing details of the new cases, Mr Bhutia informed that one person from below Paljor Stadium in Sichey, one from Dhakal Gaon in Lower Sichey, three from Development Area, one from near the junior high school in Lingding and one from 6th Mile Tadong were found positive.

He added that one person from Yangyang and two from Namthang Bazaar in South District and one staff member of Health Department from Adarsh Gaon in Singtam and one from Mamring were also found positive for COVID-19 today.

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Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Bazaar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General roadside land for sale measuring 30 by 45 square feet near smile land below apica garden. Contact no. 7797885351/9733538899.

Building for sale

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50x40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS, South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

Jan Andolan Campaign on COVID-19 launched



GANGTOK, 08 OCT (IPR):

With the launching of the 'Jan Andolan Campaign on COVID-19 - Appropriate Behavior' by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi today through Twitter, Information and Public Relations Department of the Government of Sikkim carried out a few activities to formally start the campaign in the State.

It may be informed that IPR Department has been designated as the Nodal Department to spearhead the campaign in coordination with the other departments and media organizations.

Secretary, IPR Department, Namrata Thapa administered the Campaign Pledge to all the officers and staff of the Department at the office premises, duly maintaining COVID-19 protocol.

Similarly, the Secretary, along with Director IPR Department, Benu Gurung, launched the Campaign Poster in English and Nepali languages. The Secretary also delivered a video message informing about the formal launch of the Campaign and appealed to the people from all walks of life to join hands with the Government in educating and informing each other

on the appropriate behavior to be followed by all in our collective fight against COVID-19. She also outlined the three key messages of the campaign – Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, and Maintain Hand Hygiene. She reiterated in her message that we should abide by all the set guidelines and learn to live with COVID-19.

It is pertinent to mention that the State Government has consistently been on campaign mode since April 2020, educating and orienting people on various aspects of COVID-19. All the line departments and stakeholders have been advocating on safety norms established for the people from time to time.

The IPR Department will be simultaneously running the campaign in the State as per the guidelines prescribed by the Government of India. The Department will intensify its IEC activities to drive home the key messages of the campaign through all available modes such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Podcast and through interpersonal communication. Emphasis will be laid on reaching out to the rural population.

SMIMS holds intl conf on Basic and Applied Physiology



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 OCT:

The 6th Edition and 1st Virtual International Conference of Basic and Applied Physiology (V-ICONBAP-2020) on the theme "Environmental Physiology" was held here at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences on 06 and 07 Oct.

Organized by the Department of Physiology, SMIMS, SMU, the three-day conference was held through virtual mode on Microsoft Team platform.

The workshop highlighted the importance of neuro physiological & neuro imaging in Neurosurgical and Orthopaedic Surgeries. This intervention is a new technology which can help the surgeons in knowing the functional status of the patients during surgery. A total of 1,898 delegates were part of this workshop through virtual mode.

The Conference was inaugurated by Health Minister Dr MK Sharma with a video message.

SKM begins coordination meeting of CLCs in West Sikkim

PRITAM LAMA GURUNG GYALSHING, 08 OCT:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha began coordination meetings with constituency-level committees in the district with Yuksam yesterday.

The meeting, chaired by Deputy Speaker Sangay Lepcha who is also the area MLA, was attended by chairpersons DB Gurung, Hari Nayran Subedi, Basant Tamang, party general secretary (Organisation), Pavrita Manav, executive members of the party's various committees in the district and a large number of party supporters.

CLC coordinator, Keshar Khatiwada, emphasised the need for coordination between party workers and also placed demands of the people of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency and also aired their grievances for the party to address.

The party general secretary stressed the need for on inclusive politics while other speakers thanked the party high command and the party president, Chief Minister PS Tamang for the various interventions initiated by them to ensure development in the area.

The alarming rise of drug addiction among youth

SALIL GEWALI

When the desire for a sense-object overwhelms, the logical mind becomes unsteady. This subsequently might force the "feet" to take wrong steps. Sometimes such wrong steps are brutally detrimental. While the high society of Bollywood is now joyfully groping in the darkness of materialism, some section of actors is longing for a "quick high" and so they are doping themselves with intoxicants. The recent shocking revelation following the controversial suicide case of Sushant Singh Rajput has rocked the entire country. The media went overboard. The finding of the intricate network between the drug cartels and the actor Rhea Chakraborty, who was a former girlfriend of Sushant Singh, has brought forth what were less known earlier. Rhea Chakraborty has now been arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau, India. Many other are being interrogated, top actors of B-town are deeply involved. A senior psychiatrist from Pune says -- "what we have heard about the 'Bollywood's tryst with drugs' is just the tip of the iceberg. In the country, our youths, from lower to upper economic strata, are badly affected by the drug addiction."

Of course, while the drugs with various combinations and names have penetrated deeply into Indian society, the Government agencies and its police forces are practically caught between the devil and the deep sea. Well, with the cutting-edge technology at ones' command, the jaws of the menace have more teeth now, and thus it looks more ferocious and ominous. While, about 25-30 million people in USA are drug addicts and are mentally depressed, India is not far behind as the trend is catching on. High society apart, the addiction to various addictive substances among adolescent students in India have adversely affected the countless households. Any unsuspecting corners could be the hotspot while the WhatsApp and mobile messengers are the faithful interface. They easily help

pull off the dope deal anytime, anywhere.

One can put the blame on the flawed modern culture. The society usually advocate the "personal freedom" for the youngster at an age who can't even "distinguish" between good and bad, decent and indecent and nectar and poison. Not just that, in the thick delusion of the dope pleasure and its addiction, many have begun to see even the household members as their deadly enemies. A few week ago, a certain newspaper carried the news that a father was beaten black and blue by his own cannabis ad-

VIEWPOINT

dict son. The son, with his face masked, did this only to snatch away the money which the father was carrying after drawing the monthly salary. Just look at the degree of desperation that drives the addicted son to act so abnormally and with such cruelty. Procuring the addictive substance is his only goal, no matter how, no matter what.

There are countless mothers who have been constantly tormented by drug-dependent adolescent children. An increasing number of petty thefts, muggings, burglaries, lootings and a host of violent attacks on the roadsides, which often disrupt the peace in the society, have usually to do with those who have fallen victim to narcotics. It's reported that in a span of one year there is about 20% to 30% rise in the substance abuse in India. A worried social activists from Bangalore, Mr. Rajiv Iyer laments thus -- "Unemployment and availability of various kind of drugs are the main reasons for an upsurge in the menace. The frustrated lot is quite prone to seek escape and take refuge in substances which are made available by their peer groups." True, the saying -- 'the devil makes work for idle hands' should always make the government and the parents extra alert.

In this aspect what intensely upsets the police fraternity is NDPS act (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances). The act lets off the addict/seller

with less than 5 grams of drug. It is being heavily exploited to get the peddlers out of prison. Most of the hard-core peddlers, with the help of lawyers, peddle the stories of innocence too quickly and too easily. The addicted are fondly caressed; hence a peddler pretend to be the one!

With the increase in the drug abuse and its adverse impact on society, we should question the law practitioners that why the ethics are just thrown to the wind and put the soul up for sale! Many worried parents and also police officers have accounted how a bunch of

"lawyers" cleverly use the loopholes in the NDPS act to save the cruel peddlers having link with international drug cartels. One affluent businessman Mr. Ravi Mehta from Mumbai quips "Don't the lawyers know it is the narcotic peddlers who usually entice our unsuspecting children with the doses of opium/cocaine first and then push them into the pit of no-return? Do the lawyers have no grown-up children at home who might in a twist of fate be caught up by such peddlers and teach them this dangerous habit?" Ravi Mehta has only one son who had fallen victim of the drug addiction and is now in a rehab centre.

One of the police officers in Delhi, who put all efforts in arresting a good number of drug peddlers in two months, rues --- "all those arrested drug peddlers by our dedicated team were released on bails within no time. Many have again got into the same trade/habit. This fact alone discourages our police fraternity to hunt around for the peddlers on a war footing. Besides, we also have to go through lengthy procedures and papers formalities before arresting any peddlers." This is the ground really directly from the horse's mouth. One believes, why does the government not consider relieving the police of gathering the evidence and maintain the tedious paper work? For that let there be a separate

cell with narcotic experts in each state. The police job should end immediately with the arrest of the culprit. This way we can achieve a very good result, else, the society will be further afflicted with the scourge.

One of the concerned scholars from Mumbai says, "Parents these days feel happy about buying expensive mobiles for their children. Do they really care to know what other horrible activities that their grown-up children are getting done with the help of the devices? So far I know, the drug-related message and information is only one of the many vices." A secretary of a welfare organisation in Assam, Mr. Manish Patel, who has continuously asked this writer to write article about the rise of drug menace, quips -- "All should join hands to contain the drug menace. Especially the parents should not be complacent after sending their children to college and tuition armed with cell phones. Many outrageous things prop up to greet one right at the click of the cell phone." Indeed Mr. Patel is very correct that the "parents must be extra watchful" now than ever before. The vices now come and attack us in the "digital format" in various avatars for which we do not see any effective anti-vices being peddled by anyone and anywhere.

[A Shillong-based writer and researcher, Salil Gewali is best known for his research-based work entitled 'Great Minds on India' which has earned worldwide appreciations. Translated into Twelve languages, his book has been prefaced by a world-acclaimed NASA Chief scientist - Dr. Kamlesh Lulla of Houston, USA.]

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM & CIVIL AVIATION GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM PARVATAN BHAWAN, TADONG

Phone No: 03592-232218, Fax No/ 232216

G.M. No. ACS/DOT&CAV/11

Dated: 08.10.2020

Appeal to Local bodies/Panchayats

- In the context of the Government decision to permit Tourists under Tourism Unlock 1.0 from 10th Oct, 2020, it is observed that local bodies and panchayats are restricting movement of tourists in their respective jurisdictions.
- The Department notes this trend, as not in keeping with Government decision for Tourism Unblock 1.0
- It is to be acknowledge that livelihoods of several families and their sustenance depends on tourism operations.
- The effective solution for maintaining safety and health is in terms of prevention of Covid infections through (a) masking (b) social distancing and (c) hand hygiene.
- With strict adherence to such preventive measures, there is no severe threat to communities at large.
- Furthermore, the state machinery is geared up to respond to any contingent situations/eventuality and if need be local restrictions and local containment areas would be enforced by the District Administrations.
- Designated Task Forces have been constituted at two levels.
 - For monitoring tourist traffic, profiles or visitors and movements on digital Portal Platform (Ph nos: 81673-32201, 98327-86653, 9832781279, 7548943853 to be notified in case of gross and reported violations of SOP/protocol by tourists or stakeholders).
 - A state level oversight Tourism Task Force for policy review and intervention. (Ph nos Joint Secy: 9832381355, Joint Secy: 7076733489, Addl. Secy: 83709-99269 to be notified, in the event of Policy interventions).
- The Local bodies / Panchyats may consider constituting watch and ward or neighborhood watch committees to exercise vigil anensure masking, social distancing and hand hygiene among tourists, as also among public.
- Governments both at Centre and at State have taken note of fact that Communities and frontline workers have now become familiar with the knowledge of the disease management and have accordingly decided on progressive Unlock.
- There has been a time when industry suffered to ensure health and safety over the seven months of graded lockdowns. Now communities may consider offering solace and opportunity for the tourism industry to recover with progressive unlock.

sd/-

(Dr. Jayakumar) IAS

Additional Chief Secretary
Tourism & Civil Aviation Department

R.O. No. 99/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21
Date: 8/10/20

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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

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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

If you seek help, you may call :
-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

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

Crime and the City

Don't just blame growth and development

Sikkim is no stranger to burglaries. In fact, the festival season and the winter months are known as much for their celebrations as for the string of burglaries that are bound to happen. During these months, people take longer holidays, the nights are longer and neighbours too lazy to get out of cozy beds to investigate suspicious sounds and noises (provided they can hear it through their woolen caps or TV volumes). Unfortunately, ever so often, the sanitized distance of a surreptitiously carried out break-in is sullied by a violent home invasion. Yes, even those have happened here.

The State has, and is, growing and acquiring all the ills of "growth" and urbanization at a much faster clip than the society at large is developing the capacity to manage. Burglaries have become so common that they do not even make it to newspapers too often anymore because either the thefts are too minor, or because no official complaint was filed because that process becomes a bigger nuisance to deal with than the actual loss. But, on rare occasions, a burglary ends up being a violent home invasion and it needs to then also attract a comment. It would be too simplistic to say that petty crimes and burglaries are bound to rise as populations grow. That would be suggesting that people are inherently vile and that whenever we receive even a thin shroud of anonymity we will become depraved forms of ourselves. Such an explanation would also be too pessimistic because if this was accepted as true for human nature, then the only solution available would be 24x7 surveillance, and that is the first step down for a democracy towards embracing totalitarianism. Kind of like being okay with cops and administration threatening "strict action" if people did not behave and not burst firecrackers during Diwali. When students went around requesting elders to not burst firecrackers because they were made by child labour toiling in deplorable conditions in Sivakasi, or because of the sound and air pollution it caused, it was heart-warming and welcome. Now, when the establishment says don't just because it has the power to do so and the leisure to enforce it, it should be cause for at least some worry. But, like always, we have digressed again.

Chances are that burglaries which end up in violence are from the hands of the rather young, because only a "green" criminal can get spooked into violence where the more hardened ones would know the ease with which they can flee. Juveniles dabbling in crime and turning delinquently violent is a disturbing worry because that reflects a societal failure. Youth can be unruly at times, but even in their excesses, they usually indulge in some harmless pranks on peers and elders. What desperation could their condition impose on them that their temperamental streak veers to crime and violence? There has to be something inherently very wrong with the priorities of a society where innocence is lost so young that crime becomes an option. There is no condoning a society that drives people to commit crimes so young, but pragmatism also requires one to accept these as the curses of modernity if instances of juvenile crime were aberrations and not the norm. In Sikkim, however, instances of juveniles figuring in criminal misconduct are becoming disconcertingly frequent. What must also be borne in mind is that what ends up getting reported in newspapers are instances that get recorded by the cops; there are many instances where "cases" are settled before they are officially entered into the crime data.

The police have a job to do and there are adequate laws and regulations in place to ensure that juveniles, even when picked up for cognizable offences, have a less traumatic run-in with the law. But the more important concern than how the police cracks down on juvenile crime, is how the society at large responds to it. It is not enough to just get shocked if the shock does not lead to worry and worry does not initiate deliberations and then societal engagement to understand the reasons behind increasing juvenile crimes and then doing something about correcting the situation. What every person needs to bear in mind is that thefts and burglaries are the gateway crimes from which the delinquents could graduate to more serious felonies if not course-corrected in time. The sequence of crime and punishment does not resolve the situation and societal disinterest makes the situation worse - a society which refuses to be moved into involvement by the shock of juvenile crime ends up creating misanthropes out of delinquents.

WRITE US:

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



Oxford is protecting students from China's national security law – other universities must follow suit

MICHAEL JOSEPH RICHARDSON
theconversation.com

Students at the University of Oxford will now submit some of their work on China anonymously. This, among other measures, is an important protection against China's new national security law in Hong Kong, which makes it risky for anyone that appears to be criticising the Chinese government. Other universities must follow suit with measures that allow freedom of expression for both students and academics studying China.

Introduced on June 30 this year, China's new national security law criminalises what it considers to be secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign or external forces. The details of this law were not released until after it was passed, with terminology so vague that it has many activists and academics scared of punishment for voicing any critique of the Chinese government.

The singing of songs, repeating of slogans and even the reading of newspapers have been framed by the law as separatist and undermining of the power of Hong Kong's government, as well as Beijing's influence over it. They could therefore be deemed acts of secession and subversion.

Quite what "collusion with foreign or external forces" means for people around the world who want to express solidarity with Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement remains to be seen. But these laws have an extraterritorial reach, which means they apply to everyone, everywhere.

For me, as a UK national that might not be so worrying. But, for academics and students from Hong Kong or mainland China, this makes what they say or write particularly risky. This threatens academic integrity and universities, as places where debate and freedom of expression are crucial, have a duty to protect these scholars. The identity and purpose of universities as spaces of free thinking depends on it.

TAKING ITS TOLL

As someone who researches Hong Kong, I've campaigned with colleagues including members of the British Association of Chinese Studies for a greater show of support from our universities on this issue. At best, we've found universities to be hesitant and, at worst, reluctant to take a stand against the new national security law. One aspect of an increased internationalisation of higher education is that it brings market pressures, with degree programmes as commodities and students as consumers.

One Hong Kong scholar based in the UK told me they felt like UK universities were kowtowing to Chinese money "at the expense of freedom of expression":

"The most disappointing part being that we aren't even talking about freedom of discussion or debate, but simply the more fundamental issue of expressing one's views."

Financial decisions should not compromise academic enquiry. While funding can be an enabler to the generation of knowledge, a threat of its withdrawal should not act as inhibitor, editor or censor to the formulation of ideas. Unfortunately, the national security law is already taking a toll on Hong Kong academics in the UK. Colleagues have told me the new law has made them fearful and hopeless, as well as concerned about censorship. One said:

I have actually noticed self-censorship on my part as well, since the national security law has come into force. I now tend to be extra careful when I present my work if I know there will be Chinese researchers in the audience.

A growing issue on campus is the fear that supporters of the Chinese government will report their peers. Battles have taken place between groups of pro-Beijing and pro-Hong Kong students in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. These clashes illustrate attempts to shut down debate, which in turn threatens free speech.

In the UK, similar incidents have taken place.

The student's union at the University of Warwick, for example, saw a motion to support the democratic and human rights of Hong Kongers voted down by unprecedented numbers of Chinese students voting in support of Beijing. The example serves as a warning of the mobilisation of nationalist sentiment in the name of student activism.

A major concern for critics of the Chinese government is getting filmed and the footage being shared with Chinese authorities. Hence, Oxford's new protection measures include a ban on recording classes or sharing the material from them with anyone outside the group, as well as making tutorials one-to-one, instead of groups, and work by students anonymous.

STANDING WITH HK

I've written about the long tradition of scholar-activism in my field of social and political geography, which involves engaging critically with those we work with and teach, and not just observing idly from the sidelines. Meaningful solidarity requires moving beyond symbolic gestures and actively challenging systems of oppression.

For my part, while the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has rendered much travel impossible, it is the deterioration of Hong Kong's political situation that put an end to my annual undergraduate field trip to the city, and the cancellation of my latest research visit. Without a prospect of return and with the monstrous reach of the national security law, I shall continue to stand in solidarity with Hong Kong from a distance.

I am grateful for Oxford's academic leadership in this regard, though if we are to make use of our privileged positions to defend academic freedom more resolutely, we need to call out injustice when we see it and we need others to follow. With the start of the academic year already upon us, this needs to happen fast.

[the writer is Lecturer of Human Geography, Newcastle University]

Can children really stop you catching a bad case of COVID-19?

GRACE C ROBERTS
theconversation.com

Having young children in your home may lower your risk of being hospitalised with COVID-19, according to a new study of NHS workers in Scotland.

Children often catch coughs and colds, and this includes seasonal coronaviruses that cause the common cold. Being of the same virus family, many have assumed the immune response to these common cold coronaviruses may provide some protection from COVID-19. Previous studies, however, have shown that the immune response to seasonal coronaviruses doesn't last long and that reinfections are common.

The latest study, which has yet to be peer-reviewed, found that adults in households with young children (aged up to 11 years) had a modestly reduced risk of catching SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19) and a reduced risk of hospitalisation. But adults in households with children aged 12 and older had no reduction in risk compared with adults living without children.

It is important to note that children can be infected with COVID-19, and those that show symptoms are just as infectious as adults. Anyone concerned about their child being potentially infectious should follow their local government guidelines.

SEVERAL LIMITATIONS

But there are several important considerations with this study that suggest these findings should be treated with caution.

Several limitations are highlighted by the authors, such as the fact that adults without children were older on average and more likely to

have existing health problems when compared with those in a household with children. It is well established that age and other illnesses, such as diabetes and kidney disease, can be a big factor in how severely ill a person with COVID-19 becomes. The authors acknowledge this. And when taking these factors into account in their statistical model, the child-induced



reduced risk effect was diminished – although the risk was still slightly lower than that of adults living without children.

Other factors that need to be considered include the fact that adults with children are more likely to work part-time or reduced hours due to childcare, and this may limit their exposure to COVID-19 through their work. Although the authors took this into consideration when performing their analysis, they concede that they did not have accurate data on the hours worked by the cohort during the study period.

The authors say that if exposure to cold-causing viruses is an important mechanism for protection, childcare providers and teachers might benefit from this exposure. However, before this study is taken as evidence to justify keeping schools open, it should be noted that a big limitation is the period in which data was collected. Data of COVID-19 infections and hos-

spite finding a link between young children in a household and an apparent reduced risk of SARS-CoV-2 infections for the adults, there is no proven mechanism for why this is happening. Many have hypothesised that those exposed to seasonal coronaviruses may have some level of immunity against COVID-19, through something called "cross-protection",



this is yet to be proved.

It is always important to remember that correlation does not mean causation – or, as the authors put it, "the observed inverse association may be a chance finding". It will be interesting to see whether further investigation results in this finding being observed in other populations and whether the cause of this perceived reduced infection risk is determined. Until that link is found, however, this study should be taken with a pinch of salt.

[the writer is Research Fellow in Virology, Queen's University Belfast]

Nagaland Govt issues guideline for Puja celebrations

DIMAPUR, Oct 07 [NAGALANDPAGE]: In view of the forthcoming Durga Puja festival in Nagaland, the state Home Department has issued guidelines which would be applicable to the entire state.

Principal Secretary, Home, R Ramakrishnan, IAS, said as the pandals and all such locations usually see congregation of a large number of people, it is imperative in view of the existing COVID-19 pandemic that suitable regulations are put in place and appropriate measures are taken during the celebration of the forthcoming Durga Puja festival so that the spread of COVID-19 is prevented.

As per the guidelines, puja pandals would be allowed to be set up only in temples (mandirs) and no temporary pandals would be allowed to be erected on and by the side of any street.

The timing for the visit of the devotees to the pandals would strictly be from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. There would be no Mela/Food Stall/Stalls selling any items, etc., in and around puja pandals.

A maximum of 30 persons including organizers and priests would be allowed to gather at



any time in the puja pandals. The puja organizers have been asked not to allow any person to enter the puja premises without face cover/mask and washing/sanitizing of hands. The puja organizers would be responsible for facilities for hand washing/sanitization at the entrances of puja premises.

As per guidelines, wet Prasad to devotees would not be served.

The organizers would ensure sanitizing the premises before opening and after closing and every 6 hours during the day. The Principal Secretary said that no per-

mission for any immersion procession would be given under any circumstances. Maximum of 10 persons would be allowed to complete the ritual of immersion.

All visitors to puja location would be subject to thermal scanning by puja organizers and no person with any symptom related to COVID-19 would be allowed to enter the puja pandals.

In case, any person/visitor to puja pandal is suspected to be COVID-19 symptomatic, it would be the responsibility of the puja organizers to inform the nearest Government medical facility and

arrange for shifting of such person to the nearest COVID-19 treatment centre, the Principal Secretary stated.

Persons above 65 years of age, children below 10 years of age, person with co-morbidities and pregnant women have been advised to avoid visiting the puja pandals.

The Principal Secretary further said in addition to the usual authorities in the district giving necessary permissions to the puja committees/organizers for putting up pandals, the authority for giving the final clearance this

year would be the respective District Task Force headed by the Deputy Commissioner.

The DTF would also make necessary arrangements with the concerned puja committees/organizers to ensure that immersion of the idols is suitably staggered so as to avoid congestion and large gatherings at the immersion sites.

Any violation of the guidelines would attract action as per legal provisions against the puja committee/organizer or the individual/devotee as the case may be, the Principal Secretary stated.

'Sheer anxiety': Louisiana braces itself for Hurricane Delta

MORGAN CITY, La. (AP): Louisiana residents still recovering from the devastation of a powerful hurricane less than two months ago braced for another hit as Hurricane Delta steamed north through the Gulf on Thursday after swiping Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

Forecasters warned that the storm could blow ashore Friday with winds of up to 100 mph (160 kph) and a storm surge of up to 11 feet (3.4 meters). They placed most of Louisiana within Delta's path, including the southwest area of the state around Lake Charles, where Category 4 Hurricane Laura ripped houses from their foundations, peeled off roofs and tore trailers in half on Aug. 27.

Nearly six weeks later, 5,600 people remain in New Orleans hotels because their homes are too damaged to occupy. Trees, roofs and other debris left in Laura's wake still sit by roadsides waiting for pick-up even as forecasters warned that Delta could be a larger than average storm.

The large majority of structures damaged by Laura haven't been permanently repaired, Gov. John Bel Edwards noted on Wednesday.

"All that debris could become missiles in really strong wind," said Edwards, who also worried about the "sheer anxiety" the storm could cause already traumatized residents. "We don't want a hurricane to hit anywhere, but we know that the area that is least prepared and ready for a storm happens to be southwest Louisiana," he said.

Edwards said President Donald Trump approved his request to declare a federal emergency, which frees up federal resources. This is

the sixth time in the Atlantic hurricane season that people in Louisiana have been forced to flee the state's barrier islands and sail boats to safe harbor while emergency officials ramp up command centers and consider ordering evacuations.

Hurricane Delta is the 25th named storm of the Atlantic's unprecedented hurricane season. Delta hit Mexico as a Category 2 hurricane just south of the resort city of Cancun early Wednesday with high winds and heavy rain, cutting power to more than 260,000 customers and forcing tourists into storm shelters. No deaths or injuries were reported.

The storm weakened to a Category 1 storm Wednesday afternoon, but had already restrengthened to a Category 2 by Thursday morning, with sustained winds near 100 mph. The storm was expected to become a major hurricane by Thursday night, with some weakening forecast once Delta approaches the northern Gulf Coast on Friday.

Many residents said they have had enough.

"This has to be the worst year that I have experienced," said Andrius Vitto, 42, a food truck owner from Grammercy who helped feed hungry evacuees after Laura. After learning this week that his native New Iberia, just to the east of Laura's worst devastation, was in Hurricane Delta's sights, "the hair rolled up on my arms," he said. "To see all this happening in one year — you know with the wildfires, with the hurricanes, the rain, all the other stuff in the news — COVID — It's mind-boggling."

In Sulphur, across the Calcasieu River from Lake Charles, Ben Reynolds was deciding Wednesday whether to

leave or stay. He had to use a generator for power for a week after Hurricane Laura.

"It's depressing," Reynolds said. "It's scary as hell."

While New Orleans has been mostly spared by the weather and found itself outside Delta's cone Wednesday, constant vigilance and months as a COVID-19 hot spot have strained a vulnerable city still scarred by memories of 2005's Hurricane Katrina. Delta's shifting forecast track likely meant no need for a major evacuation, but the city's emergency officials were on alert.

"We've had five near misses. We need to watch this one very, very closely," New Orleans Emergency Director Collin Arnold said.

Along with getting hit by Hurricane Laura and escaping Hurricane Sally, Louisiana saw heavy flooding June 7 from Tropical Storm Cristobal. Tropical Storm Beta prompted tropical storm warnings in mid-September as it slowly crawled up the northeast Texas coast.

Tropical Storm Marco looked like it might deliver the first half of a hurricane double-blow with Laura, but nearly dissipated before hitting the state near the mouth of the Mississippi River on Aug. 24.

There are nearly eight weeks of hurricane season left, although forecasters at the National Weather Service office in New Orleans noted in a discussion Tuesday of this week's forecast that outside of Delta, the skies above the Gulf of Mexico look calm.

"Not seeing any signs of any additional tropical weather in the extended which is OK with us because we are SO DONE with Hurricane Season 2020," they wrote.

2 die of COVID-19 in Ladakh, 82 new cases reported

LEH, Oct 8 (PTI): Two people died of coronavirus in Kargil in Ladakh, taking the death toll in the Union Territory to 63, a bulletin said on Thursday.

Ladakh reported 82 new cases, taking the cumulative figure to 4,802, the bulletin released by the Directorate of Health Services said.

With 47 more patients cured of the disease, the number of discharged persons rose to

3,511, it said. The number of active cases in the region stands at 1,228 -- 953 in Leh district and 275 in Kargil district, the bulletin said.

It said of 82 people tested positive for COVID-19 -- 74 in Leh and eight in Kargil district during -- the past 24 hours.

The bulletin said 25 patients were discharged in Kargil and 22 in Leh on Wednesday after their successful treatment.

NCP to contest Bihar Assembly polls

MUMBAI, Oct 8 (PTI): The NCP on Thursday said it will contest the Bihar Assembly polls, and released a list of its 40 star campaigners for the elections.

The party in a statement said it will share details of its poll outing in the eastern state soon.

NCP president Sharad Pawar will be the party's key star campaigner for the polls, it said. Maha-

rashtra Minority Affairs Minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik, party MPs Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare, Supriya Sule and Fauzia Khan are among the other star campaigners.

Elections for the 243-member Bihar Assembly will be held in three phases on October 28, November 3 and November 7 and the counting of votes will take place on November 10.

Robots assist hospital staff serve COVID-19 patients

Bhubaneswar, Oct 8 (PTI): To protect the health workers from COVID-19 infection, the East Coast Railways Central Hospital here is using a Medical Robot called MeD ROBO to provide medicines, food and remote assistance to patients in the coronavirus ward, without any need for physical contact.

The MeD ROBO is operated through a unique mobile app that has been developed as part of the innovation, supported by the WiFi facility, an ECoR official said.

The robot is helping that hospital staff to serve food and medicines to COVID-19 patients while avoiding physical

contact. The robot's sensor can read a patient's body temperature and transmit the same for display on the smartphone. In case of any abnormal high-temperature reading, the MeD ROBO is capable of raising an alarm so as to alert the hospital staff attending to the patients.

This is an in-house innovation by East Coast Railway. Diesel Loco Shed at Visakhapatnam has fabricated this robot to assist hospital staff to serve COVID patients. Before being deployed for use in Central Railway Hospital at Mancheswar, the MeD ROBO underwent extensive trials and demonstrations, he said.

NE people less susceptible to COVID-19 due to 'gene'



NEW DELHI, Oct 07: The dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed more than 1 lakh lives in India alone and 10 times more globally, is affecting Northeastern states less compared to the western states like Maharashtra and Gujarat because of a particular 'gene', studies have shown.

A recent report published by European scientists in the journal Nature claims that genetics could play a big part ~ genes that some people have inherited from their Neanderthal ancestors may increase the likelihood of them suffering severe forms of COVID-19.

Modern humans and Neanderthals are known to have inter-bred at various points in history, resulting in an exchange of genes that can still be found today.

The studies also showed that people of Bangladesh descent have about two times higher risk of dying from COVID-19 than the general population. It is striking that the genetic heritage from the Neanderthals has such tragic consequences during the current pandemic.

The researchers, who work at the Karolinska Institute, in Sweden, and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, in Germany, say the prevalence of the

particular Neanderthal gene group is highest in people from Bangladesh, where 63% are estimated to carry a copy of the haplotype.

These genes are one of several risk factors for COVID-19, besides age, sex and pre-existing conditions like obesity, diabetes and heart problems.

Variation in genetic mutation among Indians may be the main reason behind the difference in the death rates due to COVID-19 across various states of the country, according to another recent study.

An international team led by researchers at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) analyzed mutations in the gene responsible for the expression of the Angiotensin Converting Enzyme-2 (ACE2), a protein on the surface of cells which is believed to act as a gateway for the novel Coronavirus into the human body.

The researchers observed that in India as well as in Bangladesh, the tribal populations have a higher frequency of this haplotype than the caste populations.

"If we look at castes vs tribes, tribal populations have a higher frequency than caste groups," Prof. Gyaneshwer Chaubey, Department of Zoology, in BHU, said, adding, "It

is likely that the tribal populations will be less susceptible than the caste populations to the viral disease."

He noted that, state-wise, Maharashtra and Gujarat have the lowest frequency of the gene mutation of about 30-40%, while the North Eastern region with a 75-100% mutation in the gene has the highest frequency.

"People in Western India are more susceptible to the disease than those in Central India or East India or South India or North East India," according to the study.

Since the beginning, it has been hypothesized, and later observed, that novel Coronavirus is affecting people differently.

Considered on a global scale, the researchers noted that the mutation among Indians is 60% and is 20% in Europeans; and this could imply that, as a whole, Indians are less susceptible to COVID-19 than Europeans and Americans.

Researchers determined that the genes belong to a group, or haplotype, which likely came from Neanderthals. The haplotype is found in about 16% of the population in Europe and half the population in South Asia, while in Africa and East Asia it is non-existent. (Courtesy: Shillong Times)

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Jadhav was sent ahead of Jadeja and Bravo as he could play spin well: Fleming

ABU DHABI, OCT 8 (PTI): Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming said Kedar Jadhav was sent ahead of Ravindra Jadeja and Dwayne Bravo in a tense run chase against Kolkata Knight Riders because of his ability to play spin well.

However, Jadhav laboured to seven off 12 balls as KKR won the game by 10 runs here on Wednesday.

"At the time, we thought that Kedar could play the spinner well and dominate, while Jadeja was there to come and finish. But in the end there was too much work to do and we fell short," Fleming said at the press-match conference.

Jadhav was trolled heavily on social media following the defeat.

The New Zealander rued that their batsmen let it "slip" despite having so much resources. The team added just 14 runs from 11-14 overs, a period when they lost both Shane Watson and an inform Ambati Rayudu.

"If we could have got one of those players to 75-plus and continued that partnership for another maybe four or five overs, the game might have been a lot different.

"Kolkata hung in there long enough to put pressure on us and we just couldn't accelerate. We feel disappointed that we let it slip."

The absence of Suresh Raina, who pulled out of IPL for personal reasons, was once again felt sorely in the middle but Fleming said they have a well-balanced side.

"But the performances like today, with the experience we have got, we should have put it away."

"We have got a lot of batsmen anyway so the balance is very good with the six bowlers. I don't think an extra batsman is going to help." Dinesh Karthik's ploy to hold his ace spinner Sunil Narine for the back-end of the innings paid dividends as he dismissed his 'bunny' Watson for ninth time in T20s.

"Ideally, you have one or two players bat through...Today with (Sunil) Narine holding overs back, it made it very difficult in the back-end," the former Kiwi skipper said. Fleming further said they have plenty of batting resources and on the day their ploy did not work out.

"We've got so much batting resources. Kedar is a late middle to late batter for India. We could have gone a whole lot of different ways. Today Kedar had some balls but that didn't work out.

"You always put players in different areas and that's just when you have so much batting talent to choose from. It's one of the things we look at, but it's all in hindsight."

CSK bowlers on the other hand stood up to stage a remarkable comeback in the back to bowl out KKR for 167.

In his first game of the season, legspinner Karn Sharma, who replaced Piyush Chawla in the XI, was the most economical of the lot and got CSK back into the game.

The Mankad was acceptable once so why does Ashwin get so much grief?

ANDY BULL

LONDON, 08 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]: To Dubai, and Ravi Ashwin's ongoing escapades for the Delhi Capitals. Over the past few months Ashwin has been running something of a one-man campaign to legitimise cricket's most nefarious means of dismissal, the Mankad. Which, if you need a gloss, is when the bowler runs out the batsman as he's backing up at the non-striker's end. Ashwin did it to Jos Buttler last season. "Disgraceful," said Shane Warne. "Completely out of order," said Michael Vaughan.

Ashwin was unapologetic. This year he has been coached by Ricky Ponting, who warned "we won't be doing that". Instead, Ponting said, he wanted Ashwin to "hold on to the ball and "tell the batsman to stay in his crease".

On Monday, that's exactly what Ashwin did. In his first over, he spun on his heel and ordered Aaron Finch back into his ground. After the match, Ashwin gave a friendly warning on Twitter: "Let's make it clear!! First and final warning for 2020. I am making it official and don't blame me later on."

The Mankad is, and always has been, allowed in cricket Laws. It is both a perfectly legal way of dismissing a batsman and an act that's apparently so heinous that one of the last men to do it, Keemo Paul, at the Under-19 World Cup in 2016, broke down in tears because he got so much abuse. Paul has sworn off doing it again. Seems the Mankad is only supposed to exist as a deterrent, the threat of it an incentive for the batsman to stay in line.

Which raises all sorts of interesting questions, about the orientation of Warne's moral compass, whether Vaughan really ought to be providing



lessons in dignity and exactly when Ponting became such a disciple of the spirit of the game.

But let's dive back in time instead, to look at the incident that started all this. Vinoo Mankad was the best all-rounder in the world, star turn in the Indian team that toured Australia in 1947-48. Mankad did it twice to the opener Bill Brown. The first was against an Australian XI at the SCG. In the fourth innings, the Australians needed 251 in two-and-a-half hours to win. Brown and his partner, Rex Rogers, had rattled off 60 in 30 minutes when Mankad stopped in his follow-through and warned Brown against leaving his crease. When Brown did it again, Mankad ran him out.

In the second Test, a month later, Brown was repeatedly leaving his

ground. So Mankad did it again. This time he didn't warn him, although Brown's partner, Arthur Morris, did. "Look out, Bill," Morris said, "you are doing the same thing again."

Mankad had warned Morris for doing it in the previous Test. It wasn't just that the batsmen were trying to sneak a couple of feet, Mankad explained, they were interfering with his peripheral vision. "He told me that it completely distracts him," reported the Courier-Mail's correspondent, "as he is half face-on to the moving Brown when the ball leaves his hand."

It was not the first time a bowler had done it. But the event was rare enough that when it happened to the England batsman Joe Hardstaff during a tour game against Sindh in 1937, the dismissal made the news

back in England, where the papers reported that the wicket "evoked the displeasure of the crowd" who "continually barracked" Khadim Hussain for doing it.

Brown's dismissal made news in Australia, too. "Shocking Display" ran the headline in the Melbourne Truth. Only – and here's the really interesting thing – it wasn't Mankad they were talking about. "Brown might feel aggrieved at Mankad's action but nobody would support him," the newspaper reported. "Brown's continuing offence in this matter is so blatant that he will have to give serious consideration to it if he desires to retain his position in the Australian XI."

It wasn't quite true that nobody supported him – the Indian batsman KS Duleepsinhji, who played for England, said it "left a bad taste".

But among the Australian press, the reaction was pretty unequivocal: it was Brown's fault. There was plenty of talk about the critics but, in print at least, precious little evidence of them apart from a reference to a "heated discussion in the members' stand" at the SCG.

"Brown was foolish to take liberties," said the Daily Telegraph. "It savours of squealing to accuse Mankad of bad sportsmanship," said the Adelaide News, which pointed out that "past and present cricketers and officials were unanimously on Vinoo Mankad's side".

The old cricketers in the press box agreed. "Mankad was over-generous in not having run him out [the first time]," wrote Arthur Mailey. "Mankad was quite entitled to do what he did and showed plenty of strength of character," wrote Bill O'Reilly. The columnists supported him, too. "The mental outlook of people who think he was guilty of sharp practice is hard to understand," wrote Harry Kneebone. "Brown deserved what he got," added HA de Lacy.

All of which makes you wonder what has changed, when, and why, the game became quite so precious about it all. Last word on it, for now, goes to Brown. He grew up to become afamous figure in Australian cricket. When he died, in 2008, Steve Waugh called him "the embodiment of everything great about the baggy green cap". Brown felt so bad about the controversy that he called Mankad to apologise, told him it was all his own fault and asked him out for beer. He was asked about it for a last time in an interview not long before he died. Brown said he owed his Mankad a debt: "He taught me to smarten myself up."

Cheptegei and Gidey smash world track records using controversial spikes

SEAN INGLE

VALENCIA, 08 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]: Two world records were smashed within an astonishing hour in Spain on Wednesday as Nike's controversial track spikes again proved a gamechanger for athletics.

The meeting in Valencia had been billed as "World Record Day" by organisers and it quickly delivered as the 22-year-old Ethiopian Letesenbet Gidey obliterated the women's 5,000m record held by Tirunesh Dibaba by more than four seconds in running 14min 6.62sec.

Shortly afterwards the 24-year-old Ugandan Joshua Cheptegei added the men's 10,000m world record to his 5,000m one obtained earlier in the summer with an astonishing display of controlled running. His time of 26min 11sec beat the previous best, held since 2005 by Kenenisa Bekele, by a scarcely believable six seconds.

Both records will inspire controversy and awe given that Gidey and Cheptegei were wearing Nike ZoomX Dragonly spikes that contain a carbon plate and a unique foam and have been billed as the "fastest shoes ever".

Batsmen let the team down: Dhoni

ABU DHABI, OCT 8 (PTI): Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni said the batsmen let the team down after a spirited comeback by the bowlers in their Indian Premier League game against Kolkata Knight Riders here.

Chasing 168, veteran opener Shane Watson struck his second successive fifty to give CSK a perfect start on Wednesday, but the team choked at the back end of the innings and was restricted to 157 for five to suffer its fourth defeat in five matches.

"In the middle overs, there was a phase when they bowled two-three good overs. Then we lost two-three wickets in a row. If our batting was different during that period, the result would have been different," Dhoni said at the post-match presentation ceremony. Earlier, 'Birthday Boy' Dwayne Bravo bowled a perfect final over to finish with figures of 3/37, while the trio of Sam Curran, Shradul Thakur and Karn Sharma claimed two each as CSK bowled KKR out for 167.

"Initially we gave away a few too many with the new ball. Karn (Sharma) did really well. The bowlers did well to bring them down to 160-odd. As a team we should have achieved the target but the batsmen let the bowlers down."

Dhoni promoted himself to No. 4 but was cleaned up by spinner Varun Chakravarthy, while Sam Curran became Andre Russell's victim after a brisk 11-ball 17. "Rotation of strike

is always important. At times we have to judge the deliveries. There were hardly any boundaries in the last three overs.

"You have to be slightly innovative in these scenarios. If someone is bowling just back of a length, you have to find a way to hit boundaries. We did not adapt well," Dhoni said.

Having returned to winning ways, KKR skipper Dinesh Karthik was all praise for his team, especially the duo of Sunil Narine (1/31 from four overs) and Andre Russell (1/18 from two overs) for their tidy bowling at the death.

"There are some key players for every team. Narine is one for us. Least we can do is back him. Two-three poor games don't matter," Karthik said.

Hamilton chases F1 record again as Schumacher's son debuts



NURBURG, OCT 8 (AP): Lewis Hamilton's bid to match the Formula One win record held by Michael Schumacher is back on, and he could achieve it in Schumacher's home country of Germany.

Hamilton was chasing a record-equaling 91st win two weeks ago in Russia before his race was ruined by penalties for breaching an obscure rule on where drivers can practice their starts before the race. His Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas took the win.

That sets the stage for Hamilton to try again in Germany. He'll have to do it in conditions which would have tested even Schumacher, who was nicknamed "Regenmeister" or Rain Master for his talent on wet tracks. Rain is likely on all three days and temperatures on race day may not reach 10 degrees (50 F).

Formula One is back at the N rburging, one of the most storied circuits in the series, for the first time since 2013. Officially, the German

Grand Prix is on hiatus this year, and this race a late replacement on the coronavirus-affected calendar is called the Eifel Grand Prix after a nearby mountain range.

As many as 20,000 fans could attend, making it the best attended race of the season apart from the Russian Grand Prix.

NEW GENERATION It's been eight years since Michael Schumacher's last F1 race, and now his son will officially be part of an F1 race weekend for the first time.

Mick Schumacher, 21, will take over Antonio Giovinazzi's Alfa Romeo for the first practice on Friday. That brings him another step closer to a full F1 drive, possibly even next season.

He already has experience of the paddock from racing in Formula Two, where he leads the championship, and doing demonstration runs in his father's old F1 cars before races.

Mick Schumacher has said he sees his fa-

ther as his idol, but he's been keen to forge his own path. He started out in kart racing under the surname Betsch, his mother's maiden name.

The Schumacher family's life changed forever in December 2013 when Michael and the then-14-year-old Mick were skiing together in the French Alps.

Michael Schumacher hit his head on a rock and sustained severe brain injuries which left him requiring constant care. The family is protective of his privacy and provides few details of his condition.

Mick Schumacher's F2 title rival, Callum Lott, will also drive in his first official F1 session on Friday, borrowing Romain Grosjean's Haas.

GERMANY'S DECLINE

A young Schumacher could be exactly what F1 needs to reignite its popularity in Germany.

When Hamilton and Michael Schumacher last raced together at the N rburging in 2011, there

were six Germans on the grid including then-world champion Sebastian Vettel. He will be the only German in Sunday's race.

The likes of Nico Rosberg and Timo Glock have long since moved on, though Nico Hakenberg lingers on the fringes. He was a two-race replacement when Sergio Perez tested positive for the coronavirus.

Despite Vettel's four titles, he doesn't command the same public profile in Germany that Schumacher did in his prime, and he hasn't been followed into F1 by a wave of young German drivers. If not for the pandemic, there wouldn't be a race in Germany this year.

Only two Germans have made their debut in F1 within the last decade. Andr Lotterer had a one-race cameo in 2014, and Pascal Wehrlein occasionally showed promise in 2016 and 2017 but is now Lotterer's teammate in electric racing series Formula E.

Pope commits to clean finances amid scandal in backyard

ROME (AP): Pope Francis told European anti-money laundering experts Thursday that the Vatican was committed to "clean finance," as he denounced financial speculation amid a spiraling corruption investigation in the heart of the Holy See.

It is rare for a head of state to meet with the Council of Europe's Moneyval teams, who make periodic on-site visits to member states to evaluate their adherence to international standards to fight money-laundering and terrorist financing.

But amid the Vatican's own financial scandal, which has exposed the Holy See's ineptitude in investing and managing donations from the faithful, Francis received the dozen members of the Moneyval team in a private audience in his library in the Apostolic Palace. Citing Jesus' efforts to cast out the "merchants from the temple," Francis praised the evaluators' work and policies aimed at "monitoring movements of money and of intervening in cases where irregular or even criminal activities are detected."

"The measures that you are evaluating are meant to promote a 'clean finance', in which the merchants are prevented from speculating in that sacred temple which, in accordance with the Creator's plan of love, is humanity," Francis said.

The pope didn't mention the scandal in his own backyard, but it couldn't have been far from the evaluators' minds given the headlines of recent weeks and months that have thrown the Vatican into chaos.

Francis last month fired the former No. 2 in the secretariat of state, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, after revelations that he wired 100,000 euros (\$117,000) in Holy See funds to a charity controlled by his brother. Becciu also recommended the Italian bishops' conference donate some 300,000 euros to the same fund. Becciu has admitted he sent the money and made the recommendation, but denied any wrongdoing and insisted that the money was meant for the charity, not his brother.

Becciu's ouster came amid an investigation by Vatican prosecutors into the secretariat of state's investment into a luxury London real estate venture that to date has cost the Vatican 350 million euros, much of it donations from the faithful.

Becciu was involved in the initial investment, but his successor - the current No. 2 in the secretariat of state - actually authorized payments of tens of millions of euros in fees to the allegedly unscrupulous middlemen most implicated in the venture.

Vatican prosecutors have been investigating the London investment for over a year, but haven't handed down any indictments. Given Vatican officials signed contracts giving voting control and management fees to the middlemen, it's unclear what if any crimes might have been committed.

'Catastrophically short of doctors': Virus wallops Ukraine

STEBNYK, UKRAINE (AP): Coronavirus infections in Ukraine began surging in late summer, and the ripples are now hitting towns like Stebnyk in the western part of the country, where Dr. Natalia Stetsik is watching the rising number of patients with alarm and anguish.

"It's incredibly difficult. We are catastrophically short of doctors," says Stetsik, the chief doctor at the only hospital in the town of 20,000 people. "It's very hard for a doctor to even see all the patients."

The hospital is supposed to accommodate 100 patients, but it's already stretched to the limit, treating 106 patients with COVID-19.

Early in the pandemic, Ukraine's ailing health care system struggled with the outbreak, and authorities introduced a tight lockdown in March to prevent hospitals from getting overwhelmed.

The number of cases slowed during the summer but began to rise again quickly, prompting the government at the end of August to close Ukraine's borders for a month. Despite that, the number of positive tests in the country reached a new peak of 4,661 a day in the first weekend of October.

Overall, COVID-19 infections in the country have nearly doubled in the past month, topping 234,000.

"The number of patients is rising, and an increasing share of them are in grave condition," Stetsik told The Associated Press of the situation in Stebnyk, a quiet town in the Lviv region. "The virus



is becoming more aggressive and more difficult to deal with."

She said many of those doing poorly are in their 30s, adding that an increasing number of them need expensive medication.

"There is a similar situation across entire Ukraine," she said, adding that hospitals have run out of funds to provide drugs, forcing patients in some areas to buy their own.

The World Health Organization warns that the number of infections in Ukraine could continue to grow and reach 7,000-9,000 a day.

The government wants to avoid imposing a new lockdown, but officials acknowledge that the rising number of infections could make it necessary. It has sought to introduce a more flexible approach to minimize the economic damage, dividing the country

into various zones, depending on the pace of infections.

At a meeting Monday with officials in Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy chastised them for failing to do enough to slow the spread and taking too long to provide necessary supplies.

"We spend weeks on doing things that must be done within days," he said.

Zelenskiy specifically urged them to move faster on ensuring that hospitals have enough supplementary oxygen, noting that only about 40% of beds for COVID-19 patients have access to it.

Ukraine's corruption-ridden economy has been drained by a six-year conflict with Russia-backed separatists in the eastern part of the country, and Zelenskiy's administration inherited health care reforms from his predecessor that slashed govern-

ment subsidies, leaving hospital workers underpaid and poorly equipped.

Last month, Zelenskiy ordered the government to increase wages for medical workers.

Official statistics show that 132 medical workers have died from the coronavirus, although the figure doesn't include those who tested negative but had symptoms typical for COVID-19.

One of them was Ivan Venzhynovych, a 51-year-old therapist from the western town of Pochaiv, who described the challenges of dealing with the outbreak in an interview with the AP in May.

Venzhynovych died last week of double pneumonia, which his colleagues believed was caused by the coronavirus, even though he tested negative for it.

"He certainly had

COVID-19," said Venzhynovych's widow, Iryna, a doctor at the hospital where he worked. "There are many infections among medical workers, some of them confirmed and others not."

The government pays the equivalent to \$56,000 to families of medical workers who die from the coronavirus. But Venzhynovych's widow can't receive the payment because he tested negative.

As the number of infections soars, many lawmakers and top officials are testing positive, including former President Petro Poroshenko, who was hospitalized in serious condition with virus-induced pneumonia.

Medical professionals want the government to bring back a sweeping lockdown, pointing to the scarce resources for the health care system.

"It's possible that Ukraine would need to return to a tight quarantine like in the spring. The number of patients is really big," said Dr. Andriy Gloshevskiy, a surgeon at the hospital in Stebnyk.

He blamed the new infections on public negligence.

"People are quite careless, and I feel sorry that they aren't impressed by numbers," he said.

Gloshevskiy said he had to switch to treating COVID-19 patients because of the personnel shortage.

"I had to change my specialty because my colleagues simply wouldn't be able to cope with it without me," he said.

Health Minister Maxim Stepanov acknowledged that the shortage of doctors and nurses is a big problem.

"We may increase the hospital capacity and improve oxygen supply, but we could just be simply short of doctors," he said. "Every system has its limit." A tight lockdown would be a severe blow to the already weakened economy, Stepanov said, warning that authorities could be forced to do it anyway.

"If the situation takes a menacing turn, the Health Ministry would propose to return to tough quarantine measures," he said.

At the Stebnyk hospital, some patients said they only realized the coronavirus threat after falling ill.

"I didn't believe in its existence until I became infected," said 43-year-old Natalia Bobyak. "When I got here I saw that people get sick en masse."

North Korea may show new missiles at weekend military parade

SEOUL, OCT 8 (AP): For months, North Korea has been relatively uncombative, as leader Kim Jong Un grapples with the coronavirus pandemic, natural disasters and the deepening economic pain under years of tough US-led sanctions.

But ahead of the 75th founding anniversary of his ruling party this weekend, speculation has risen that Kim may hold a massive military parade and unveil newly developed, powerful missiles.

The goal, experts say, would be to bolster internal unity and draw US attention amid deadlocked nuclear diplomacy between the countries. His people are considerably wearied and his economy is in trouble ... so Kim Jong Un would want to mobilise his people and stress a self-reliant policy to quell their complaints and draw their loyalty, Nam Sung-wook, a professor at Korea University in South Korea.

To do so, he would need new weapons, powerful weapons that would send a message to the entire world.

Recent satellite images showed thousands of troops assembling in formation along with vehicles in an apparent rehearsal at an

airfield on the outskirts of Pyongyang, where the North Koreans have practiced past parades.

South Korean Defence Minister Suh Wook told lawmakers Wednesday that North Korea is expected to unveil unspecified strategic weapons during a military parade marking the October 10 anniversary.

North Korea typically celebrates major state anniversaries with big military parades during years that end in zero and five. But it has sometimes made those parades less provocative when it was seeking better relations with the outside world.

During a parade marking the 70th birthday of its socialist government in September 2018, Kim didn't speak and avoided displaying any of his long-range missiles, as the event came three months after he held his first summit with President Donald Trump in Singapore on the future of his nuclear arsenal. In celebrations marking his late grandfather's birthday in 2012 and 2017, Kim still paraded his intercontinental ballistic missiles in a display of military might as he raised the stakes in the

standoff with the United States. Kim met Trump two more times, but their nuclear diplomacy has been stalled for more than a year because of disputes over exchanging sanctions relief and disarmament steps.

Kim entered 2020 declaring his intent to strengthen his nuclear deterrent and achieve a frontal breakthrough against US-led economic pressure. But the North's broken economy was further ravaged by border closures amid the coronavirus pandemic, which significantly reduced its trade with China, its major ally and economic lifeline. The heavy floods and strong typhoons that battered the North's major farming regions this summer will certainly worsen the country's chronic food shortages, outside observers say.

It's clear that the North is running out of foreign currency and the country could be approaching a point where it leads to instability in exchange rates and market prices, which would make people's everyday lives harder and thus create a political burden for Kim, Lim Soho, an analyst at Seoul's Institute for National Security Strategy, said.

Paris hospitals on emergency footing as virus cases rise

PARIS (AP): Paris region health authorities ordered hospitals to activate emergency measures starting Thursday to cope with fast-rising numbers of COVID-19 patients, who now fill 40% of the region's intensive care units.

The French health minister is expected to announce new restrictions for areas where hospitals are facing strain and infections are mounting, after shutting down bars in Paris and several cities and limiting private gatherings in recent weeks. The di-

rector of the Paris region public health agency, Aurelien Rousseau, tweeted Thursday that he ordered hospital directors to activate a special emergency plan to free up resources and protect medical staff. The move was necessary, he said, "given the pressure on intensive care units and on conventional hospital activity."

Each hospital's emergency plan can include such measures as adding hospital beds, postponing non-urgent surgery, transferring non-COVID-19

patients to other facilities or sending them home, recalling staff from vacation and soliciting help from volunteers, according to the health agency. Such measures were taken in March and April as the pandemic first swept across Europe.

While some regions are seeing infections slow after new virus rules were imposed, French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday urged more restrictions in areas where the epidemic is still spreading rapidly.

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FIT AND FAB! Actress Emily Ratajkowski showed off her toned abs in Nasty Gal's cropped power suit in New York City.

Letitia Wright to lead in anthology series 'I Am'

LOS ANGELES, OCT 8 (PTI): "Black Panther" breakout Letitia Wright will headline the cast of the critically-acclaimed, female-led anthology series "I Am".

The actor will star in the show created by award-winning writer-director Dominic Sav-

logue, the trilogy, set up at the UK network Channel 4, will draw these deeply personal themes out through moments of emotion, intimacy and anxiety. Wright, who has spoken about her battle with depression in public, said collaborating with Savage has been an amazing experience.

"His unique and sensitive style of directing has stretched me as an artist. I'm so proud that we came together on a story that we both felt was important to explore and share with the world," the actor said.

Savage too said he loved working with Wright "in complete partnership and understanding". "We were so in tune with the story we were telling, and each day was purely instinctive, challenging, and always truthful. I'm proud to be able to bring this story of love with all its difficulties to the screen," he said.

Wright is receiving reviews for her work in "Mangrove", part of Steve McQueen's "Small Axe" anthology, that opened the BFI London Film Festival on Wednesday.

"I Am" became Channel 4's most successful new 10 pm drama in six years when it debuted in August 2019, with Vicky McClure starring in "I Am Nicola", Samantha Morton starring in "I Am Kirsty", and Gemma Chan starring in "I Am Hannah". Morton earned a BAFTA TV nod in the leading actress category this year for her performance in the series.



age and produced by Emmy-winning Me+You Productions, reported Variety. Titled "I Am Victoria", the new series consists of three hour-long episodes and also stars CJ Beckford, Sophia Brown, Suranne Jones and Ashley Walters.

Each episode is being developed and written by Savage in collaboration with a lead actor for whom, in each case, the story will have personal resonance. The series, described as authentic and thought-provoking, explores contemporary female experiences and themes, including trust, relationships and mental health. Featuring improvised dia-

'Churails' director says web series 'shut down' in Pakistan

MUMBAI/ LAHORE, OCT 8 (PTI): British-Pakistani director Asim Abbasi has alleged that his critically acclaimed Pakistani web series "Churails" has been "shut down in its country of origin".

The series, backed by Indian video on demand service Zee5, garnered favourable reviews in India with critics praising the show for a fresh feminist take on intersectional patriarchy.

"Churails" (witches), which started streaming on the digital platform from August 11, follows four Karachi women -- 'perfect wife' Sara (Sarwat Gilani), wedding planner Jugnu (Yasra Rizvi), boxer Zubaida (Mehar Bano) and ex-convict Batool (Nimra Bucha) -- start a detective agency for wives with cheating husbands.

Taking to Twitter on Wednesday, London-based Abbasi expressed dismay over "artistic freedom squashed" with his show's unavailability in the country.

"How strange for #Churails to be lauded internationally, and now be shut down in its country of origin. In the very country where hundreds of artists came together to create something that could initiate dialogue and open doors for new narratives," the director, also known for his dysfunctional family drama "Cake", wrote on Twitter.

Abbasi said the move is "predictable, and yet, still disappointing".

"Artistic freedom squashed because it is wrongly perceived by some as a moral threat. Predictable, and yet, still disappointing. For this is not just my loss. This is a loss for women and marginalised communities that this show meant to re-represent."

This is a loss for all actors, writers, directors and technicians across Pakistan, who were hoping for OTT platform to be their saviour, the filmmaker said.

"And it's a home-run for all the misogynists who have once again proven that they are the only voice that matters," he added.

A senior official of the Pakistan

diately respond to request for comment.

In a post-release interview for the web series with PTI, Abbasi said the reaction to "Churails" has been mostly positive in Pakistan though there were some "pockets of noise".

"But it's ok as long as there is a conversation. Art is a dialogue," he had said in September. Last month, Shailja Kejri-



Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) told PTI in Lahore that it had received complaints about "Churails" for having vulgar content but it does not come in the purview of the authority.

When contacted the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA), an official said "Churails" has been removed for viewers in Pakistan by the streamer.

"It's a decision by Zee5, and neither PTA nor any other local authority has anything to do with it," the PTA official said.

When contacted, Zee did not imme-

wal, Chief Creative Officer Special Projects, Zee Entertainment also told PTI that the success of "Churails" has inspired the team to unite for a second season though there is nothing official yet.

"Churails" is part of the re-launched Zindagi channel under Zee Entertainment, which paved way for immense popularity of Pakistani stars like Fawad Khan, Sanam Saeed and Mahira Khan by curating their hit dramas "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" and "Humsafar" upon its launch in 2014.

Relationship with Ellen DeGeneres cost me huge movie deal: Anne Heche



LOS ANGELES, OCT 8 (PTI): Hollywood actor Anne Heche has revealed that she suffered many career setbacks because of her decision to go public with her relationship with Ellen DeGeneres.

During a pre-recorded segment on US TV show "Dancing With the Stars", Heche, 51, revealed that the stigma attached with her relationship had a detrimental effect on her professional life.

"My story is a story that created change in the world, moved the needle for equal rights forward, when I fell in love with Ellen DeGeneres," the actor said.

Heche and DeGeneres had started dating in 1997 after meeting at a Vanity Fair party. She later decided to invite DeGeneres as her date for the premiere of her movie "Volcano", in which she starred opposite Tommy Lee Jones and Don Cheadle.

"My movie premiere for 'Volcano,' I had told them that I was taking Ellen as my date and I was told if I took Ellen I

would lose my Fox contract," she said.

"At that moment, she took my hand and said, 'Do what they say' and I said, 'No thanks.' I took Ellen to the premiere and I was ushered out before the movie even ended and was told I was not allowed to go to my own after party for fear that they would get pictures of me with a woman," Heche added.

Even after this, Heche said, she continued to suffer in the industry because of her relationship.

"I was in a relationship with Ellen DeGeneres for three and a half years, and the stigma attached to that relationship was so bad that I was fired from my multimillion-dollar picture deal, and I did not work in a studio picture for 10 years," the actor added.

Heche and DeGeneres parted ways in 2000. DeGeneres married Portia de Rossi in 2008, while Heche wed Coleman Laffoon in 2000 and filed for divorce in 2007. Heche and Laffoon share 18-year-old son Homer.

Netflix sets premiere date for 'Mank'

LOS ANGELES, OCT 8 (PTI): Upcoming biographical drama "Mank", based on the life of "Citizen Kane" screenwriter Herman J Mankiewicz, will be released on Netflix on December 4. According to Collider, the black-and-white film, featuring Oscar winner Gary Oldman in the title role, will head to the digital platform a month after it starts playing in select theatres.

The biopic, helmed by David Fincher, centres around Mankiewicz and his battles with "Citizen Kane" director and star Orson Welles over screenplay credit for the 1941 cinematic masterpiece. "Mank" is based on the script by Fincher's father, Jack, who had written the draft before his death in 2003.

"The Souvenir" star Tom Burke plays Welles, with Amanda Seyfried starring as yesteryear actor Marion Davis, Lily Collins as Mankiewicz's secretary Rita Alexander and Tupence Middleton as the scribe's wife Sara Mankiewicz. The film would be Fincher's first feature directorial since 2014's "Gone Girl".

Fincher will back the film alongside producing partner Cean Chaffin and Douglas Urbanski.

Considered to be one of the best films of all time, "Citizen Kane" managed to win just one Academy Award, which was for best original screenplay.

ARIES:

What brings the people around you joy may not necessarily be the cause for your happiness, Aries. Recognise the things that you have committed to simply because they are what's expected of you. This is a time of truth-telling—a time of consciously stepping away from your material reality in order to examine the inner landscape. Temporarily bidding adieu to the familiar can be daunting, but it will ultimately free you in a way nothing else can.

Tip: This is a time of truth-telling.

TAURUS:

The thing about the truth is that it doesn't always sound pleasant, yet it must be delivered. Pay attention to what you are being called to do, and all the ways in which you are being encouraged to stand up for yourself. Reclaiming your power may seem daunting in the beginning, but it will ultimately liberate you from the vicious cycle that you have been stuck in.

Tip: Stand up for the truth no matter how daunting this seems in the beginning.

GEMINI:

On the surface, it seems as if everything is as it should be. However, you can't seem to shake off the feeling that something is amiss. The cards are bringing your attention to the imbalance in this equation. Could you be giving more than you are receiving, or vice-versa? Stepping back to reassess will help you find the answers you're looking for.

Tip: It's time to restore the balance in this relationship.

CANCER:

You've been going back and forth on your decision for a

while, and no, it isn't helping your cause, Cancer. The oscillation is, in fact, draining you in more ways than one. So don't let the opinions of others make you doubt yourself. Step back and introspect. In moments of deep connection, you'll find the guidance you are looking for. Remember, you are not betraying anybody else by choosing yourself. Freeing yourself from the guilt narrative is the key to moving forward.

Tip: You know what you have to do.

LEO:

You're stepping into a time of joy, abundance and prosperity. Watch how everything comes together for you! This is your big moment, Leo. Get ready to take a bow. You'll find that the support of your tribe is enriching your life in more ways than you can imagine. A change in financial status may also be on the cards for some. Inheritance from the paternal side of your family is indicated.

Tip: A change in your financial status may be on the cards.

VIRGO:

You can plan with precision every detail of this story, yet what is about to take place will surprise both you and those around you. Destiny is stepping in, Virgo—and it has other plans for you this week. What to expect: synchronistic encounters and serendipitous openings. The doors that were once tightly secured are now unlocking themselves for you. The key is to believe in your own power and potential, and act when the time is right. You're going to love every bit of this adventure—we promise!

Tip: Destiny is about to pull some major strings on your behalf.

LIBRA:

You can love it or you can hate it, but you can't live without it—yes, we're talking about social media, Libra! Your time away from the matrix has made you rethink everything, including your virtual identity. Yet, you understand that 'putting yourself out there' is the only way to market your business and get the message across to a larger audience. So, how can you work with the given tools without descending into the rabbit hole? It's time to up the digital game. But first, you need to step away in order to gain perspective.

Tip: It's time to up your social game in a mindful manner.

SCORPIO:

Just when you think it's all going downhill, you will witness a sudden change in fortune. It's all coming together, Scorpio. Be patient with yourself and the Universe. What's more, if you feel like you are not being appreciated for the work you're putting in, you will witness a shift on that front too. Remember, the change begins with you. Start by reminding yourself who you are and what you're truly worth.

Tip: A big breakthrough is on the cards.

SAGITTARIUS:

This is all you've ever wanted, yet it's not putting your mind at ease. It is in fact triggering all sorts of negative emotions within you. It's time to look past the illusion, Sagittarius, and recognise what isn't good for you. Saying goodbye to something you're "this" invested in could seem daunting in the beginning, but it is what will ultimately liberate you from this turmoil.

Tip: Let go of your unhealthy attachments.

CAPRICORN:

The truth is, we don't know everything, even though we like to believe that about ourselves once in a while. A new work opportunity is on the cards for you, Capricorn, and it requires you to turn to a mentor for guidance. Keep your ego aside and do what's right for you here. You never know! The advice you receive could help you take your career to a whole new level.

Tip: Turn to your mentor for guidance.

AQUARIUS:

Duality is a way of life on the earthly realm. It's the light that chases away the darkness, and the ebb that ultimately makes way for the flow. This phase of your life requires you to embrace the yin or the 'nothingness' as a necessary part of the creative process. Know that stepping away from the illusion of the material world will enable you to go deeper within your own being and channel the most surreal ideas.

Tip: Withdraw from the outside world.

PISCES:

There's a difference between bragging about yourself and putting yourself out there. Tapping into the power of social media is important for your work/business. How you use the given tools will prove to be the game changer here. Hire an expert or an agency if you need to. Getting a third party perspective could be beneficial to your career. Remember, it's all about widening your reach and tapping into the right audience, Pisces. Word for wise: there is a way to achieve your targets without descending into the metaphorical rabbit hole.

Tip: Tap into the power of social media.