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SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 88 | Gangtok | Saturday 03 April 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Thank you candidates for making municipal elections so civil!

NGO FELICITATES GANGTOK CANDIDATES FOR CONTESTING AND MAKING ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY STRONGER

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 APR:

For the first time, Sikkim witnessed contesting candidates of the Gangtok Municipal Corporation mingling, exchanging views and ideas at a gathering hosted by Council for Democratic Civic Engagement [CDCE], a non-profit organization.

Twenty-seven candidates of the Gangtok Municipal Corporation attended the GMC Candidates Meet & Greet organised by CGCE at Hotel Tashi Delek today. The highlight of the evening, apart from the interactions, was a group photo of the candidates to capture the historic moment.

Although all the GMC candidates were invited, only 27 could make it for the event, the rest being unable to make it given the last minute nature of the invitation.

The aim of the event was to provide a space and occasion for candidates to sit down together, exchange views, get to know each other and bury any hostilities that the campaigning might have sown. And the candidates embraced the opportunity and even though the initial minutes were of polite nods and greetings, by the time they left, they were clearly enjoying each other's company and were relaxed around each other.

Apart from interacting with each other, the candidates also interacted with the media persons who had come in large numbers to cover the event.

The event was also held to thank the candidates for enriching democracy by standing for the election, which has been made partyless for the first time in the state and giving the voters more options.

Thanks were also due for the civil nature of the campaigning and the congenial environment they created in which voters became the primary focus unlike earlier urban body polls where political parties have dominated the narrative.

By filing their nominations for the elections, these candidates have displayed exemplary courage and commitment to support and reinforce democracy. By keeping the campaigning civil they also set a new benchmark for how politics can also be 'played'.



CDCE was overwhelmed by the response from the candidates despite the last minute invite.

The organization has also thanked Sonam Tashi Gyaltsen of Echostream for

providing the eco-friendly biodegradable khadas for the event, which were a big hit with the invitees. The organization thanks Sikkim Express, Summit Times and The Sikkim Today for agreeing to be media



partners for the Kura Kaani with Candidates series produced by CDCE.

CDCE is a registered non-profit organization found this year and is headed by Directors Pema Wangchuk Dorjee and

Tshering Eden. CDCE also has Ingsa Subba and Sherap Palmu who came in as interns but have now become indispensable as the Technical Director and Social Media Manager respectively.

Gangtok prepped to count municipal verdict of East Sikkim's three urban bodies

GANGTOK, 02 APR [IPR]: The Municipal Returning Officer [East], Ragul K., informs that all necessary preparations for counting of votes for Municipal Elections 2021 in East District on 03 April have been completed at the District Administrative Centre here.

A total of 24 wards [15 under Gangtok Municipal Corporation, 5 wards of Singtam Nagar Panchayat and 4 of Rangpo Nagar Panchayat] in East District went for polls on 31 March 2021.

It may be mentioned here that the five wards have already been declared uncontested, namely, Arithang-I, Deorali-Upper Syari, Lower Tadong-6th Mile, Upper Sichey under Gangtok Municipal Corporation and Chanatar ward of Rangpo Nagar Panchayat.

The Strong Room will be opened at 7:30AM on the counting day under the supervision of MRO East in the presence of Election Observers, Candidates and their Election agents.

Thereafter, the polled Electronic Voting Machines will be

shifted to the Counting Hall set up at DAC for counting process. The counting procedures will begin at 8AM sharp with postal ballots followed by counting of recorded votes in EVMs and compilation of data.

He further informed that a total of five tables have been set up at Counting Hall and the counting shall be taken up ward wise.

As many as 20 Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants shall be assigned to the respective counting tables for counting of votes along with their Incharge.

The officials and staff who are engaged on election duty, counting officials, candidates and Election agents who have been issued ID cards for counting and only they shall be allowed entry to the counting hall.

All necessary procedures of counting of votes will also be video-recorded and the results will be announced through Public Address System, he informed.

70 to flex for Mr Sukhim title



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 APR:

Around 70 aspirants are in the fray for the Mr Sukhim 2021 title at the upcoming 3rd Mr Sukhim & 2nd Junior Mr Sukhim Bodybuilding and Open Men & Women Physique Championship scheduled to be held on 10 April here at Manan Kendra.

The championship is being organized by Body Builders' Association of Sikkim [BBAS].

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, BBAS general secretary, Pema WD Bhutia, informed that aspiring bodybuilders from 35 BBAS-affiliated gyms in the State will be competing in the championship for the title of Mr Sukhim 2021.

He added that apart from participants from Sikkim, the Open Men & Women Physique Championship will have contestants from

different parts of North Bengal region as well. The championship will be judged by a panel of five judges comprising of international and national judges.

BBAS vice-president, Yogesh Rai mentioned that the championship carries a total prize money of Ts 2 lakh.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that winners of the championship will represent Sikkim at the upcoming 13th Mr India Men's Senior National Body Building & Physique Sports Championship 2021 to be held from 23 to 25 April at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

Sanjay Tamang is Mr Sukhim 2020, while Zimba Gyatso Bhutia holds the title of Junior Mr Sukhim 2020 and Bhawika Pradhan was the title winner in women's category and Subham Kumar Prasad was the winner of Men's physique 2020.

Union Power Secy meets CS, inspects NHPC projects in Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 APR:

Secretary (Power), Govt. of India, Alok Kumar, and the NHPC CMD, AK Singh, met Chief Secretary SC Gupta here on 01 April and apprised him on the status of under-construction projects and power station of NHPC in Sikkim.

The Chief Secretary appreciated the efforts being made in the state and assured expeditious action on clearance of Teesta-IV, an official press communique from NHPC informs.

It was also intimated that efforts are underway to handover some new projects in state, the release adds.

The Union Power Secretary also visited NHPC's 510 MW Teesta-V power station yesterday and was apprised about the status of ongoing activities in Sikkim by the CMD.

turn to pg02

Mangan prepares to count Nagar Panchayat verdict

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 02 APR:

The counting for the four wards of Mangan Nagar Panchayat will be held at the Zilla Bhawan here on Saturday starting 8AM. While the MNP has five wards, one has already been won uncontested.

The counting for the following four wards will be held tomorrow:

Upper Mangan Bazar (ST): The candidates are Zangmoo Bhutia, Ugen Palzor Kazi and Tshering Pinto Saring.

Power Colony (UR-W): The candidates are Nima Doma Lepcha and Premkit Lepcha.

Ringzing Namgyal Marg (ST): The candidates are Hangu Lachempa and Pema Wangchuk Bhutia.

Lower Mangan Bazar (UR-W): The candidates are Prativa Lama, Tenzing Chime Kazi and Tshering Doma Bhutia.

All the bar and liquor shops in the District shall remain closed tomorrow as well.

Norkit Lepcha has already been declared the uncontested winner from Pentok (ST-W).

Chamling chairs high level SDF meeting, discusses second stage of Kranti

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 APRIL: A high-level meeting of Sikkim Democratic Front party was held here at SDF bhawan on Friday. The meeting, which was chaired by SDF president and former Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, was attended by former MLAs, Ministers, Speaker and MPs along with senior leaders and office bearers of SDF party.

An SDF press release informs that the meeting

also discussed various future strategies and programmes of the party and decisions were taken to make administrative affairs, social media and other organizations of the party stronger and active.

The release mentions that the party president gave directions on various future programmes to the leaders and workers of the party. He stressed that the entire leadership of the party

needs to be responsible and accountable and give priority to the collective decision of the party.

He laid stress on strengthening youths and workers of the party and to correct mistakes of the party at every level to make the party more people-centric and youth-centric to take forward Sikkim and its people.

The party president stated that SDF was the party which took Sik-

kimese society on the right path and the party will start the second stage of Kranti.

Mr Chamling stated that politics should free people from injustice and exploitation and fulfill the hopes, aspirations and dreams of the people. He further asserted that everyone should move ahead together in politics to save people of Sikkim from autocratic rule of the present government, the release adds.

SAKO convenes AGM



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 APR:

Sikkim Association of Kickboxing Organisations [SAKO] convened its annual general body meeting here at Paljor Stadium on Friday.

The meeting, chaired

by SAKO president, Bhim Bahadur Subba, discussed different agendas and passed several resolutions and was also attended by general secretary, Bidhan Ballav Subba, and other executive members.

A SAKO press release

informs that the meeting deliberated on administrative matters of the organization and its future programmes and activities at the state and national levels.

The accounts report for the financial year of

2020-21 was also tabled during the meeting.

The meeting also decided to organize a state-level kickboxing championship in the month of September and also provide monthly training for coaches.

4 new cases, 2403 vaccinated

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 APR:

Sikkim recorded four new cases of coronavirus in the last 24 hours ending 8 AM Friday taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 here to 6,245.

On the other hand, the number of recovered cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim has further improved to 5,965 with the release of three more people from isolation. There are presently 46 active cases of coronavirus in Sikkim.

In his daily health bulletin on Friday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia informed that

all the four new cases were reported from East District. He added that these cases were reported from the testing of 259 samples on Thursday, in which two were detected in RT-PCR testing of 226 samples and two more were found in rapid antigen testing of 31 samples.

He mentioned that one person from Rai Gaon, Burtuk, one from 6th Mile Tadong and one from Rangpo, East District tested positive for COVID-19. He added that one 20-year-old woman from Samdur in East District also tested

positive for COVID-19 but her phone is continuously switched off so she has been urged to immediately contact the concerned authority.

Meanwhile, a total of 2403 more persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 in all different parts of Sikkim on Thursday. Out of 2403 persons, 2253 have received the first shot of the vaccine and 150 have completed their vaccine schedule with the second shots in the State.

In district-wise break-up of vaccination, Mr Bhutia informed 1569 persons [1451 first dose & 118 second dose] in East District, 76

persons [68 first dose & 08 second dose] in West District, 537 persons [513 first dose & 24 second dose] in North District and 221 persons in South District received the first dose of COVID vaccine.

In category-wise vaccination, 28 healthcare workers [14 first dose & 14 second dose], 138 frontline workers [55 first dose & 83 second dose], 1724 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years [1715 first dose & 09 second dose] and 513 persons in age group of 60 years & above [469 first dose and 44 second dose] have received vaccines.

If poll body doesn't wake up...: Congress on EVMs in Assam BJP MLA's car

NEW DELHI, 02 APR

[PTI]: The Congress on Friday questioned the Election Commission (EC) after a BJP candidate's vehicle was found transporting a polled EVM in Assam's Karimganj district and said if the poll body does not wake up now and remains "complicit", it will be fatal for democracy.

Violence broke out in Karimganj district on Thursday night after a mob spotted a BJP candidate's vehicle being used to transport a polled EVM to the strong room, forcing the police to fire in the air to bring the situation under control.

The EC suspended four poll officials and ordered a repolling at the booth as a video went viral on social media.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi took a swipe at the Election Commission, tweeting in Hindi that the "EC's car has broken down, the BJP's intentions are bad and the condition of democracy has worsened".

Congress general secretary and chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said that the "EVM fraud" was for everyone to see and asked whether the EC needed the BJP's help to carry EVMs.

"EVM fraud is for

everyone to see. EVMs found in the car of BJP MLA candidate Krishnendu Paul after the second phase of polling in Assam. Does the ECI need the BJP to carry the EVM's?"

"If the ECI doesn't wake up even now and remains mute or complicit, it is fatal for democracy," he said on Twitter.

Mr Surjewala alleged that the BJP was starting at a decisive defeat in the Assam Assembly elections and it has "panicked immeasurably".

"The last desperate measure is always EVM theft. Will the ECI reply - Why were EVM recov-

ered from BJP candidate Krishnendu Paul's car? Why were EVM found in the boot of a luxury car near Hatipura polling station in Diphu in Assam," he asked.

He posed several questions to the ECI, asking why were the officials carrying the EVM in Jamunukh without any security official accompanying them, in violation of the ECI mandate, and whether the voters in Kalaigaon complained of EVM disappearing from the booth.

"What enquiry was held? What action was taken," he asked in a series of tweets.

No plan for lockdown in Delhi, says Arvind Kejriwal amid Covid surge

NEW DELHI, 02 APR

[PTI]: Delhi will not go into lockdown again, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday, following a meeting with top officials over a huge spike in coronavirus cases.

"In the last few days, COVID-19 cases have been increasing exponentially in Delhi. However, there is no need to worry. We are monitoring the situation well. Despite a surge in daily cases, the situation is less serious than compared to the last waves due to a lower death rate," he said.

"Last year in October, there were nearly 40-50 deaths per day due to COVID-19. The situation is not the same now. The daily death toll due to the virus is around 10-12 persons. Thus, there is no need for a lockdown in Delhi," the Chief Minister said.

Mr Kejriwal had called the "urgent" meeting with the Health Minister and other officials on Thursday as the city reported 2,790 new coronavirus cases - its highest daily figure this year - along with nine deaths amid a spurt in COVID-19 infections in the country.

The Chief Minister

said that 3,583 new cases have been reported in Delhi in the last 24 hours - making it a new high this year and a 28 per cent jump over the day before. A day ago, cases had climbed 53 per cent.

Mr Kejriwal once again pushed for opening up the vaccination drive to all age groups, saying, "Centre should allow states to vaccinate everyone on war footing. Need to involve non-healthcare facilities in inoculation drive."

Vaccines are currently being given out to only frontline workers and those above 45.

India reported 81,466 new COVID-19 infections on Friday, the highest daily number in six months, as several states were hit by a new wave of the coronavirus.

Health ministry data showed the total number of cases surged to 1.23 crore, making India the third-most hit country from the virus after the United States and Brazil. The number of those dead rose by 469 to 1,63,396.

Vaccination drives have been intensified amid the recent surge of cases, and many states are considering imposing fresh curbs on movement of people.

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Forex reserves fall by USD 2.986 bn

MUMBAI, APR 2 (PTI):

The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by USD 2.986 billion to reach USD 579.285 billion in the week ended March 26, RBI data showed on Friday.

In the previous week ended March 19, the forex kitty had increased by USD 233 million to USD 582.271 billion. It had touched a record high of USD 590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021.

In the reporting week ended March 26, 2021, the fall in reserves was on account of a decrease in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCA declined by USD 3.226 billion to USD 537.953 billion, as

per weekly data by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

The gold reserves increased by USD 276 million to USD 34.907 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dipped by USD 9 million to USD 1.49 billion.

The country's reserve position with the IMF declined by USD 27 million to USD 4.935 billion in the reporting week, according to the data.

Union Power Secy meets CS....

The Union Power Secretary also interacted with young employees at the power house to understand the activities being done in power house operation. He appreciated the efforts being made by the team. CMD, Powergrid, was also present during the visit.

The Power Secretary also visited NHPC's 500 MW Teesta-VI Project on 02 April and inspected various components of the project like the barrage, head-race tunnel, underground power house, transformer cavern etc.

He also held detailed discussions on various activities being undertaken including jet grouting technique in an inquisitive manner. The drilling activity for start of excavation on face 1B in Head Race Tunnel was started in the presence of Secretary (Power) after the taking over of the project by NHPC. This marked the start of head race tunnel which had been stopped for many years.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Padam Bdr Tamang s/o Late K.L. Tamang age about 49 yrs r/o Subong, Rangli, Darjeeling, West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare an oath as follows:-

1. That my name has been recorded as Padam Bahadur Tamang in my Driving license bearing no. 7619920017914 dt. 30.4.1992 issued by Licensing Authority Darjeeling and also in other relevant documents.
2. That my name has been recorded as Rabden Tamang in my Voter Identity Card bearing no. LZS0531806 dt. 01.08.2007 issued by Election Commission of India and in my Aadhar Card bearing no. 909013937139 issued by Unique Identification Authority of India.
3. That I am swearing in this affidavit that the person by the name of "Padam Bdr. Tamang" and "Rabden Tamang" denotes to one and identical person i.e. myself

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3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D
8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

Lingtam School engages students in developing organic kitchen gardens

SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 02 APR:

As part of the ongoing "Fit India Movement," the House Teachers of Government Secondary School, Lingtam, have begun engaging the students in their respective organic kitchen gardens during the last two periods starting today.

Before the activity could begin, the plots were distributed to the houses through draw of lots.

Both, the teachers and the students, partic-



ipated with great enthusiasm, an official press release informs.

In the meanwhile, the vocational instructor Multi Skill Foundation

Course (MSFC), Tapasya Pradhan, also engaged students in practical work in the field guiding them with the available tools and equipment.

TNA contained after student tests positive for COVID

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 02 APR:

Tashi Namgyal Academy, Gangtok has been contained by the District Administration on Friday following the report of a student of the school testing positive for COVID-19.

As per the containment order issued by the administration, the entire premises of the school building along with boys'

hostel, girls' hostel and dining hall of the school have been contained.

It is informed that the list of primary contacts is being prepared for testing to be conducted by Tuesday. The TNA Principal has also decided to keep the school closed for all students till 14 April and only students appearing for Board Exams will be allowed.

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Injured Shreyas Iyer to go under the knife on April 8



MUMBAI, APR 2 (PTI): India batsman Shreyas Iyer is set to undergo a surgery on April 8 for his shoulder injury which had ruled him out of the last two ODIs against England and the entire IPL. The 26-year old Iyer had suffered the injury during the first ODI against England in Pune on March 23 when he dived on a drive hit by Jonny Bairstow off pacer Shardul Thakur.

He looked in tremendous pain as he left the field clutching his shoulder.

"Shreyas will get operated on April 8 for his shoulder injury," a source in the know of things told PTI.

Iyer is likely to be out of action for a minimum of four months. He had

signed up with Lancashire but now is unlikely to play for the English county side in their one-day tournament starting on July 23.

"You know what they say, the greater the setback, the stronger the comeback. I shall be back soon," Iyer had tweeted last week.

"I've been reading your messages and have been overwhelmed by all the outpouring of love and support. Thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone."

Iyer, who had led Delhi Capitals to the IPL final last year in UAE, was replaced by Rishabh Pant as skipper for the upcoming edition beginning on April 9.

100-year-old woman gets Covid-19 vaccine shot in Madhya Pradesh

INDORE, 02 APR [PTI]:

A 100-year-old woman was administered the COVID-19 vaccine in Madhya Pradesh's Indore today, an official said.

The vaccine was administered by a private

hospital at a camp organised by residents of an apartment complex in Mahalaxmi Nagar area of the city.

"This woman is one of the oldest beneficiaries of the vaccine in

the state," district vaccination officer Dr Tarun Gupta said.

On March 27, a 107-year-old man was also given the vaccine jab in the city, the official said.

Indore is among the

worst-affected districts of the state in the pandemic and the state government has set a target to administer 50,000 doses per day to eligible people in the region.

To speed up the vacci-

nation process, the local administration had decided to organise a "vaccination festival" today.

The district has so far recorded 70,991 cases of coronavirus and 965 casualties.

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority

Gangtok

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited from eligible local candidates for filling up the following post on temporary basis in the establishment of Sikkim State Legal Services Authority.

Details are as under:-

Sl.No.	Name of Post	No. of Posts	Pay in the Pay Matrix	Eligibility criteria	Syllabus
1.	Record Keeper	01	Rs. 21,700/- Cell I Level 7	Class XII passed from a recognized Board along with Diploma in Computer Applications	A. Written Examination (150 marks) Paper – I (100 marks, Duration: 2 hrs) English Language : Essay Writing, letter writing, idioms & phrases, common errors, prepositions, synonyms, antonyms, one word substitution. (40% will be the qualifying percentage) Paper-II (50 marks, Duration: 1 hr) General Knowledge: Current affairs, objective questions (40% will be the qualifying percentage) B. Viva Voce (50 marks)

Conditions of eligibility

- Should have attained the age of 18 years & should not have exceeded 40 years in terms of **Notification No: M(3)/(55)/GEN/DOP/Pt-III DT: 03/07/2017.**
- Candidates fulfilling the above criteria may apply for the post along with self attested supporting documents and address proof and 3(three) recent passport size photographs. Application received without supporting documents will be summarily rejected. **Candidates are also required to mention their proper address and mobile /contact numbers in their applications.**
- Other Requisites:-**
 - Candidates must be in possession of either Sikkim Subject Certificate or Certificate of Identification issued by the Competent Authority.
 - Candidate already in Government Service or in Public Sector Undertakings or similar Organizations, whether in permanent or temporary capacity or as Work-Charge employee shall submit their application along with **"No Objection Certificate"** from their present employer.
 - Candidate must possess valid employment card issued by DOPART.
 - SC/ST/OBC/MBC Certificate as the case may be.
- The application along with self attested copies of the documents mentioned above and Self Declaration Form in view of Notification bearing No. 52/Home/2018 dated 06.08.2018, issued by Home Department, Government of Sikkim, alongwith the form **Annexure-A** appended to the said Notification, should reach the Office of the Member Secretary, Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok on or before **03.05.2021 (Monday) between 10.00 a.m. to 4.45 p.m.**
- Application received after the last date i.e. **03.05.2021** shall not be entertained on any ground.
- The list of names of candidates found eligible to appear for written examination for the above post will be displayed on the Notice Board of the Sikkim State Legal Services Authority on 12.05.2021 (Wednesday).**
- Candidates found eligible on preliminary scrutiny of the applications shall be issued admit cards on **17.05.2021 (Monday)**
- The date for Viva-Voce for the selected candidates shall be intimated thereafter
- Candidates found eligible after written examination for the above post shall be intimated through sms in their mobile numbers mentioned in their applications for the viva-voce.**
- The State Legal Services Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any application, with or without any reason.
- Eligible candidates should appear with their original documents at the time of interview.
- No TA/DA shall be paid for appearing in the interview.

Sd/-

MEMBER SECRETARY

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority
Development Area, Gangtok.

R.O. No : 276/IPR/PUB/Classi/20-21
Date : 31/03/2021

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority

Gangtok

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for filling up the following post on purely temporary basis in the Establishment of the Sikkim State Legal Services Authority and District Legal Services Authority (East) in the Pay in the Pay Matrix as indicated against the post plus other allowances as admissible from time to time:-

Sl. No.	Name of Post	No. of Posts	Pay in the Pay Matrix	Eligibility criteria	Syllabus
1.	Stenographer Grade-III	02	Rs. 33,700/- Cell I Level 11	Class XII passed from a recognized Board possessing Certificate in Computer from any Computer Centre and having a maximum speed of 80 w.p.m. in shorthand and 40 w.p.m. in typing	A. Written Examination Paper – I (100 marks, Duration: 2 hrs) English Language : Essay Writing, letter writing, idioms & phrases, common errors, prepositions, synonyms, antonyms, one word substitution. Paper-II (50 marks, Duration: 1 hr) General Knowledge: Current affairs, objective questions B. Practical Examination Written Examination (150 marks) a) Shorthand & Transcription Speed test will be 80 w.p.m. b) Typing Speed test will be 40 w.p.m.

Conditions of eligibility

- A candidate for appointment to the above post must be:
 - Citizen of India (preference will be given to persons possessing Sikkim Subject Certificate/Certificate of Identification.
 - Should have attained the age of 18 years & should not have exceeded 40 years in terms of **Notification No : M(3)/(55)/GEN/DOP/Pt-III DT : 03/07/2017**
- The application along with self attested copies of the documents mentioned above and Self Declaration Form in view of Notification bearing No. 52/Home/2018 dated 06.08.2018, issued by Home Department, Government of Sikkim, alongwith the form **Annexure-A** appended to the said Notification, should reach the Office of the Member Secretary, Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok on or before **03.05.2021 (Monday) between 10.00 a.m. to 4.45 p.m.**
- Candidates fulfilling the above conditions may apply for the post along with self attested supporting documents and address proof and 3(three) recent passport size photographs. Applications received without supporting documents will be summarily rejected. **Candidates are also required to mention their proper address and mobile/contact numbers in their applications.**
- Application received after the last date i.e. **03.05.2021** shall not be entertained on any ground.
- Those who are already in Government service shall apply through proper channel
- The list of names of candidates found eligible to appear for written and practical examination for the above posts will be displayed on the Notice Board of the Sikkim State Legal Service Authority on 12.05.2021 (Wednesday)**
- Candidates found eligible on preliminary scrutiny of the applications shall be issued admit cards on **17.05.2021 (Monday)**
- The examinations for the above vacant posts will be held in three phases:
 - Written Examination
 - Practical Examination (Shorthand, Transcription & Typing) and
 - Viva Voce.
- Candidates who qualify in the Written Examination will be selected and called for Practical examination (Shorthand, Transcription & Typing) as the case may be, and, the candidate who qualify both in (a) & (b) will be called for viva-voce. Final selection will be made on the basis of combined marks secured by the candidate in (a), (b) and (c) above.
- The Sikkim State Legal Services Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any application, with or without any reason.
- Eligible candidates should appear with their original documents at the time of interview.
- No TA/DA shall be paid for appearing in the interview.

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Institutionalize Engagement

For once, let's try genuine collaborations affected people

Projects, whether hydel, road or industrial, go through a lot of teething problems. Given their labour-intensive and landscape-ruining nature, they arrive neither with aspirational job openings nor pleasing environmental interventions. This is why mantras like “nation-building” and “development” are played out on a spool to win public endorsement. Speaking about Sikkim, experience also shows that the initial resistance to such projects is invariably tranquilized with handsome compensations, tall promises and political and administrative “pressure”. But these projects have a long gestation period and even longer construction phases which lead to a situation where the compensations, even along with the solatium component, are long spent before the project has been completed. Resentments then return, and every slight, even the perceived one, gets amplified, leading to a complete breakdown of trust between the local community and the project-investors and their personnel on site.

Sikkim has seen this cycle play out with just about every project, and occasionally the distrust manifests in gheraos and confrontations which then find mention in newspapers. Most of the times, however, the ill-will festers under a façade of apparent normalcy and acceptance. This is not a healthy situation because the bitterness does not always find release against the management of such units and sometimes erupts against the establishment and other agencies which the people feel did not look out enough for their interests. Surely, these are not developments that the planners or the executors originally had in mind. And yet these are situations which develop often.

In the latest instance, Sikkim saw “affected people” of pharma companies and the like lay out a litany of complaints against the company management. Similar complaints and allegations have been heard against hydel developers and the promoters of other “projects”. Like in those cases, this bushfire will also be addressed piecemeal, focused only on the immediate demands, but ignoring the larger issue of the lack of adequate consultations, information-sharing or over-watch. The problem, hence, will remain.

What is required is for every project to begin with a more transparent public hearing preceded by gram sabhas where every aspect and the fine print are discussed in detail. The state machinery should only provide information and not exert influence. Every project should have a project monitoring committee with affected people in majority representation and ex-officio posts for government officers and public representatives only holding secretarial responsibilities of taking the minutes and drafting resolutions. Proper schedules should be dictated to keep these committees updated on project components and these committees should then be required to brief the gram sabhas or other panchayat meetings on a regular basis. This way, not only transparency, but also accountability can be ensured, and once this is achieved, possible problems can be addressed in advance and issues resolved before things boil over. Such engagement will also reassure the local community and, in the long run, help the projects as well because once the people are involved in the decision-making process, even if it is only by way of regular and clear updates, they will develop a real sense of ownership and extend sage advice where the current system of things leaves them only with the option of registering condemnations.

It is important that the “developers” and the administration trust the affected people more and respect their capacity to even absorb bad news and setbacks. People understand that development comes at a cost, it is the unforeseen ones, more like the intentionally ignored aspects of it which offend them sow distrust.

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The End of the Pandemic is Coming – Just Don't Set a Date for the Party



AGNES ARNOLD-FORSTER
THECONVERSATION.COM

“After the pandemic is over” must be one of the most frequently uttered phrases of 2021. I am certainly guilty of this kind of optimism, longing for the day when I can get on a plane, have dinner with my friends, and cuddle all the new babies I know who have been born under the restrictive eye of COVID-19.

In February, the UK government unveiled a four-step plan to ease England's lockdown restrictions by June 21. While the prime minister has cautioned that the country's path out of the pandemic will be driven by “data not dates”, his restraint has had little impact, it seems, on the population's excitement levels. Memes and social media posts immediately proliferated, with people booking flights, planning parties, and taking time off work in anticipation of future freedom.

Looking ahead to the end of the pandemic is not confined to the UK, and as the vaccine rollout proceeds (albeit unevenly), people across the world are turning their attention to celebration and relief. However, history tells us that the end of pandemics are rarely – if ever – neat, uncomplicated, or even easy to date.

PAST PANDEMICS

The misleadingly named Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 was the deadliest in history. It infected around 500 million people worldwide and killed anywhere from 20 million to 50 million. Much like today, citizens were subjected to social restrictions and

ordered to wear masks. The pandemic abated, but identifying its precise end is almost impossible.

In 1920, several newspapers reported the reappearance of influenza. Around 5,000 cases were reported in Chicago in the space of six days, and theatres were ordered to close. Later that year, “drastic measures” were implemented to check the spread of flu in New York City after an emergency meeting of the transportation authorities, theatre and cinema owners, and the representatives of department stores. At around the same time, 60 people died from influenza in Paris.

Subsequent waves of the virus ripped through European and North American cities for years after the pandemic's supposed end. As late as 1925, and in the space of nine days, 201 people in Chicago died from what the newspapers called a “highly contagious influenza epidemic”. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there is little evidence in the historical record of parties to commemorate the end of the terrible virus.

Today's coronavirus pandemic is, of course, different to the march of influenza around the globe in 1918 – not least because we have several highly effective vaccines. The job is a powerful tool and so many people's hopes for COVID's end hang on this marvellous technology. However, while vaccines have played a crucial role in past efforts to control infectious disease, their ability to bring pandemics to a rapid and definitive

close is much more limited.

Take polio, for example. A vaccine was developed for the disease in the 1950s. Its inventor Jonas Salk became an almost immediate American hero, but it took almost three decades for polio to be brought under control in Britain and there were no celebratory holidays marking the last naturally acquired infection in 1984.

THE END OF FEAR

Historians of medicine know that pandemics and epidemics are social phenomena. As a result, their endings happen in two ways. There is the medical conclusion of a pandemic, when disease incidence goes down and death rates plummet. But there is also the social end, when fear of the infection decreases and social restrictions ease.

Crucially, you can have one without the other. The rates of coronavirus might go down, fewer people will be hospitalised and die, people's anxieties could ease, and life could return to normal – in that order. Or rates could stay the same, but people just get sick and tired of restrictions and launch themselves into the parties they had planned, regardless. Or rates could go down, but people remain fearful – anxious about returning to “normal life” and unable to let go of some of the precautions we have become accustomed to.

We also have to remember that coronavirus is a global disease and that different places will have varying social and medical conclusions to their respective versions of the pan-

demic.

UNEVEN GEOGRAPHY

HIV/AIDS swept through Europe and North America in the 1980s and 90s. Infection rates have since dropped dramatically, and many HIV-positive people live long and healthy lives in developing countries. And yet, as of 2019, almost 40 million people are infected with HIV worldwide and we are still experiencing what the World Health Organization calls a “global epidemic”, it is just that the geographical scope of the disease has shifted.

As wealthier nations continue to vaccinate themselves out of restrictions, the ending of their pandemics might come relatively quickly. But what about the rest of the world? When will developing countries see a similar conclusion?

Wherever you look, there is unlikely to be a precise end date for the pandemic. We have only managed to successfully eradicate one disease (smallpox), and for every other epidemic or pandemic in history, their endings have been messy, protracted and uneven. While we all might need a dose of optimism, rather than planning parties or holidays, perhaps our time now would be better spent thinking about what kind of future we want to look forward to and how we put the lessons we have learned this past year into practice.

[the writer is Researcher, History of Medicine and Healthcare, University of Bristol]

How Can all Schools Safely Reopen?

BRANDON GUTHRIE
THECONVERSATION.COM

The question of when and how to open schools for full in-person learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most consequential the U.S. currently faces. A wealth of evidence suggests that schools can provide in-person instruction with a very low level of risk when safety protocols are successfully implemented.

So, what do school districts, teachers, families and students need to know? As an infectious disease epidemiologist with more than 15 years of research experience – and as co-editor of the COVID-19 Literature Situation Report, which produces a daily summary of the most relevant newly published and pre-print literature related to COVID-19 - I offer answers to some of the most urgent questions about how schools can safely resume in-person instruction. Some of this evidence is gleaned from preprint studies that may change after they are peer-reviewed.

WILL SCHOOL MAKE CHILDREN MORE LIKELY TO TRANSMIT COVID-19?

Infection with the COVID-19 virus has been less common in school-age children, especially those in elementary school, than among other age groups. Evidence from Florida, Utah, Missouri and elsewhere indicates that less than 1% of school-age children have had COVID-19, despite most being in school in person. Most cases have not been linked to school exposures.

While school outbreaks have occurred, most have been small in scale. Transmission from an infected student to others in the household or community has been rare.

While not definitively proved by scientific studies, indications are that elementary school-age children are less likely than older children and adults to transmit the COVID-19 virus to others.

WHAT ABOUT TEACHER AND STAFF VACCINATIONS?

Spread of COVID-19 through in-person K-12 schooling has been limited, even without vaccinations. Teachers are now eligible to be vaccinated in all states in the U.S., which means that the risk to teachers and staff who are vaccinated, as well as to students and others who may not be willing or able to be vaccinated, is greatly reduced. No studies give us a magic number for the proportion of teachers and staff who need to be vaccinated before in-person learning can be implemented. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that in-person learning can start safely as long as other mitigation protocols like mask-wearing and adequate ventilation are in place. Vaccines offer an added level of protection.

The vaccines currently approved for use in the

U.S. under emergency use authorization are all highly effective at preventing mild, moderate and severe COVID-19 disease, and they also prevent infections.

This means that these vaccines both protect the vaccinated person and reduce the risk of transmission from a vaccinated to an unvaccinated person. This is critical, because at this time there are no vaccines approved for use in those under the age of 16 in the U.S.

Pfizer and Moderna have trials underway in adolescents and hope to have results by late spring or early summer. In the meantime, to protect students from infection, it will help to vaccinate as many adults as possible in schools.

Transmission is far more common from teacher to student and teacher to teacher than from student to teacher. So far, research that has not yet been peer-reviewed shows that the vaccines approved for use in the U.S. have similar efficacy against the newly emerging variants of concern, especially in terms of preventing severe disease.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF PHYSICAL DISTANCING?

So long as people are wearing masks, there is no evidence that 6-foot physical distancing between students is more effective than 3-foot distancing. This led the CDC to shift its guidance to recommend a physical distancing of only 3 feet in classrooms. Three-foot distancing allows for much more flexibility in terms of classroom size and layout. Face masks are highly effective in reducing infection and transmission risk and are therefore a critical mitigation measure.

In addition, early research suggests that keeping students in groups, or cohorts, and limiting contact among cohorts may reduce the potential for widespread transmission if a case occurs in a school. Cohorting can also minimize the number of students who would need to be quarantined.

ON THE BUS OR OTHER TRANSPORTATION

Just as in the classroom, masks work when transporting students to and from school. Double-masking is probably best, especially in indoor spaces, including cars and buses. Ventilation with outside air – either by opening windows or avoiding ventilation that recirculates air – may help to reduce the risk of transmission in buses. Students should space out as much as possible, given the elevated risk of transmission seen among passengers sitting close to an infected individual on airplanes, although universal mask usage is likely to reduce the importance of physical spacing.

While droplet and airborne transmission of the COVID-19 virus appear to be the dominant modes of transmission, hand-washing and using hand sanitizers before entering buses and upon exit may help reduce

the risk of transmission through contact with contaminated surfaces.

THE GYM, RECESS AND AFTER-SCHOOL SPORTS

Growing evidence shows that kids can play sports and have recess if they are outdoors and players have no or low contact. Based on studies, including some that have not yet been peer-reviewed, activities such as soccer, tennis and cross-country are fine.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that athletes participating in indoor sports wear masks, except those participating in swimming and diving, cheerleading, gymnastics and wrestling, to prevent choking or suffocation. Some indoor sports, particularly wrestling and hockey, have been associated with large outbreaks. Also, outbreaks of COVID-19 have been associated with football teams.

An important finding from a number of investigations is that many of the cases of transmission, including on football teams, appear to be linked to activities not directly related to the sport itself, such as meetings in enclosed spaces without masks, eating together and parties and social events.

ARE MASKS STILL REQUIRED?

Masks are likely to be a critical part of protocols to prevent COVID-19 in schools, at least until vaccines are universally available, including for children. Even then, the potential emergence of new variants that are resistant to existing vaccines may make mask usage a necessity for some time. Schools that have provided in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, including during periods of high community transmission, have experienced few widespread outbreaks directly related to school transmission when masks are used.

This has been true in Florida, Massachusetts, Salt Lake City, England and elsewhere.

In contrast, not wearing masks was a problem in schools in Sweden. In this Scandinavian country, younger secondary-school students returned to full-time, in-person learning without masks and with few other mitigation measures. Older secondary-school students continued with remote learning. Students and staff who went to school in person and without masks or other safety measures had a somewhat higher likelihood of having COVID-19 compared with those learning remotely, although the absolute risk was still quite low.

HOW CRITICAL IS SOAP OR HAND SANITIZER?

While the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has been detected on surfaces, touching those surfaces doesn't appear to be the dominant route of transmission. Even so, hand-washing and using hand sanitizers are still good ideas. Face masks and physical distancing are more important, though.

[the writer is Assistant Professor of Global Health and Epidemiology, University of Washington]

West Bengal contributes highest to small savings schemes

NEW DELHI, APR 2 (PTI): West Bengal, which is the midst of a high-pitched assembly election, accounts for the highest collection of about Rs 90,000 crore from small savings schemes such as NSC and PPF among the states and union territories, which is about 15 per cent of the total corpus.

It is followed by Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in terms of population, with gross collection of Rs 69,660.70 crore out of the Rs 5.96 lakh crore garnered during 2017-18 (last updated), as per data collated by the National Savings Institute under the finance ministry.

The government on Thursday revoked a steep interest rate cut on small savings schemes announced the previous night.

The ministry's office memorandum to roll back cut in rates on small savings scheme came hours after the finance minister termed Wednesday's notification as an "oversight".

While the government routinely announces interest rates for small savings schemes at the



end of every quarter, Wednesday's decision to cut interest rates by up to 1.1 per cent across various small savings schemes, including Public Provident Fund (PPF) and National Savings Certificate (NSC), had come a day before the second phase of polling in West Bengal and Assam.

The rate of interest on various small savings schemes for the first quarter of 2021-22 starting from April 1 and ending on June 30, 2021 would remain unchanged from those notified for the fourth quarter (January 1 to March 31, 2021) of 2020-21, the finance ministry said in the office memorandum in suppression of its previous order.

As per the National

Savings Institute data, West Bengal has been leader in collections for the small savings schemes and the collection hovered around 12-15 per cent in the last few years.

The National Savings Institute is a body under the Department of Economic Affairs of the finance ministry.

Other poll-bound states like Assam garnered Rs 9,446.37 crore, Kerala Rs 14,763.01 crore, Puducherry Rs 1,082.40 crore and Tamil Nadu Rs 28,598.18 crore during 2017-18.

Voting for five assembly elections commenced on March 27, with Assam going to polls first and West Bengal concluding it with its eighth phase of voting on April 29.

Assembly elections in

Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry will be held in a single phase on April 6.

The counting of votes for the four states and one union territory Puducherry will be undertaken on May 2.

Opposition leaders have expressed apprehension that the rate cut would be imposed once the assembly elections are over.

Taking a dig at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman after she announced that the government will withdraw orders to cut interest rate on small savings schemes, the Congress on Thursday said one can imagine the functioning of the economy when such a duly approved order affecting crores of people can be issued by an "oversight".

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said when inflation is at about 6 per cent and expected to rise, the BJP government is offering interest rates below 6 per cent, hitting the savers and the middle class below the belt.

"The BJP government had decided to launch another assault on the

middle class by slashing the interest rates and profiting itself. When caught, the FM is putting forward the lame excuse of 'inadvertent error'," the former finance minister said on Twitter.

The Trinamool Congress also mocked the Centre. While Derek O'Brien and Mahua Moitra called it an April's Fool joke, Yashwant Sinha -- who recently switched to TMC from the BJP -- tweeted, "Roll back Modi".

CPM General Secretary Sitaram Yechury expressed apprehension that the government had only postponed the cuts in view of the assembly elections.

Uttar Pradesh is followed by Maharashtra at Rs 63,025.59 crore and Gujarat with gross collection of Rs 48,645.28 crore. Gross collection only accounts for inflow not redemption.

The gross collection data includes collections of small savings in post offices as well as banks.

Small savings scheme provide long-term funds to the government as most of the schemes have lock-in period. It helps in financing fiscal deficit.

Good Friday observed in Mizoram



AIZAWL, APR 2 (PTI): Special services were conducted in churches by following COVID-19 safety guidelines to mark Good Friday in Christian-majority Mizoram.

Indoor gatherings in the churches were capped at 50 per cent capacity, and it was mandatory for believers to wear face masks and maintain social distancing.

Last year with the nation-wide lockdown in place to check the spread of coronavirus, the sacred rites were observed behind closed doors.

All government offices, educational institutions and commercial banks were closed with the government declaring a public holiday on

Friday to mark the occasion.

Special services were held in churches of different Christian denominations, while members of the Roman Catholic Church held a mass and took out processions.

Holy Communion was served to the faithful, adhering to the Commandments of Jesus, who had instructed his disciple to do it a night before his crucifixion.

However, congregational service known as 'Zaikhawm', which forms an integral part of Good Friday, could not be held due to COVID-19 protocols.

In some rural villages, community feasts were organised to mark the occasion.

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Nepali-speaking people from Myanmar demonstrate in London against military coup

KATHMANDU, 02 APR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Nepali-speaking citizens of Myanmar have participated in a demonstration in London against a military coup in their country.

According to Namaraj Gyawali, vice president of Gurkha Society of Myanmar, UK, ethnic Nepalis took part in the demonstration outside the British parliament on Thursday along with 10 other ethnic communities from the country.

Since the military seized power in a coup against the democratically elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi there have been widespread protests across Myanmar. Security forces have used excessive



force against the protestors and killed more than 500 to quell the uprising but protests are continuing.

A memorandum was handed over to British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab through a first secretary at the British Foreign Office after an hour-long demonstra-

tion in which the demonstrators carried placards with slogans calling for the protection of human rights in the country.

Baba Rayamajhi, Pooja Pandey and Gyawali had gone to the Foreign Ministry to hand over the memorandum on behalf of

the Gurkha Welfare Society.

A memorandum calls not to recognise the unconstitutionally established government in Myanmar, to take immediate global action to stop the sale of arms to the Myanmar army to prevent further casualties, and remind the au-

thorities of Myanmar of the United Nations principle of Responsibility to Protect.

"Even though we are in the UK, we are saddened to see bloodshed in our motherland," Gyawali told Kantipur. "The protests will continue until democracy that has been usurped by the military is restored. We will continue to show our solidarity against the protests."

According to Gyawali, the army has so far arrested 35 Nepali-speaking people and killed two.

There are about 120 Nepali-speaking Burmese households in the UK and they have sent more than 5,000 pounds from the UK to help treat the injured protesters, he said.

'Not your party's member': Mamata hits back at Modi over second seat contest dig

DINHATA (WB), APR 2 (PTI): Asserting that she was winning the election from Nandigram, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said that she does not need his "suggestion" on contesting from any other seat.

The prime minister had on Thursday asked Banerjee to clarify whether there is truth in the "rumours" that she was going to file the nomination for another seat going to the polls in the last phase, maintaining that the TMC chief has admitted defeat in Nandigram.

"I want to tell the prime minister to control his home

minister first and then try to control us. We are not your party's members that you will control us," Banerjee said at an election rally in Dinhata in the north Bengal district of Coochbehar.

"I am not your party's member that you will suggest me to contest from another seat. I have contested from Nandigram and will win from there," she added.

At a rally in Uluberia on Thursday, Modi said that the people of Bengal are prepared if she goes anywhere else to contest, anticipating defeat in Nandigram, where she was up against BJP's Suvendu Adhikari, her former close aide.



Banerjee, who began her north Bengal tour with the rally here, alleged that the election is not being conducted by the Election Commission but by Amit Shah, the Home Minister.

She alleged that the central forces were being used to intimidate the voters. "I want more than

200 seats, since anything less than that will mean they (BJP) will buy the 'gaddars' (traitors)," Banerjee said, apparently admitting that TMC MLAs may be up for grabs if her party wins by a slender margin in the elections for the 294-member assembly.

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1 new case takes COVID-19 tally of Andamans to 5,084

PORT BLAIR, APR 2 (PTI): The COVID-19 tally of Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 5,084 on Friday as one more person tested positive for the infection, a health official said.

Four more people have recovered from the disease, he said.

The archipelago now has 42 active cases, while 4,980 people have recovered from the disease and 62 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, he said.

The administration has thus far tested over 3.21 lakh samples for COVID-19, the official said.

A total of 12,628 health workers and 5,610 people above the age of 45 have been vaccinated to date, he added.

Major fire at central Kolkata highrise

KOLKATA, APR 2 (PTI): A major fire broke out at a highrise building located in central Kolkata's Lenin Sarani on Friday afternoon, officials said.

Nine fire tenders were rushed to douse the flames, they said.

Traffic movement on the road in the heart of the city was completely shut as firefighting operations were underway, police said.

Efforts were being made to prevent the flames from spreading to adjacent buildings in the congested area, they said.

The cause of the blaze is yet to be ascertained, fire officials said.

There were no reports of any casualty, they said.

Bengal polls: BJP candidate thrashed in Diamond Harbour, 2 arrested

BARUIPUR (WB), APR 2 (PTI): A BJP candidate and his supporters were allegedly thrashed in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas during their election campaign on Friday morning, police said.

BJP's Diamond Harbour candidate Dipak Halder was campaigning in the Haridebpur area around 9.30 am when his supporters got engaged in a war of words with a few people, they said.

Amid the verbal duel, Halder and his supporters were allegedly thrashed with

sticks, police said.

Halder, a TMC MLA who joined the BJP ahead of the elections, was admitted to a hospital following the attack.

"He complained of chest pain and other problems. He is being attended by the doctors," a senior police officer said.

Halder's injured supporters were also admitted to the hospital, he said.

Two persons have been arrested in connection with the attack, police said.

The BJP alleged that the TMC was behind

the attack, a charge dismissed by the ruling party.

The TMC claimed that the attack on the BJP candidate was a result of infighting as the party's old-timers were not happy with Halder's candidature.

Following the attack, BJP supporters also blocked the National Highway 117 but were promptly removed by the police.

Diamond Harbour is also the Lok Sabha constituency of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

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Iowa's Luka Garza named AP men's college player of the year



INDIANAPOLIS (AP): Luka Garza knew what everyone expected before returning for a final run as Iowa's unquestioned star.

Pressure? Garza felt it, all right, enough to know his mental health required the same attention as his game.

"I needed meditation to lean on, to be able to mainly just go out there and be myself and not worry about anything else," Garza said.

That best explains why the 6-foot-11, 265-pound senior is The Associated Press men's college basketball national player of the year after finishing second last season. He was the runaway choice for the award announced Thursday, receiving 50 of 63 votes from AP Top 25 voters.

Ayo Dosunmu, who led Illinois to the Big Ten Tournament title and a No. 1 NCAA seed, was second with six votes, followed by Oklahoma State freshman Cade Cunningham with three. Gonzaga's Corey Kispert and Baylor's Jared Butler each earned two votes.

Garza ranked second nationally by averaging 24.1 points with 8.7 rebounds. He improved shooting percentages across the board -- including going from 36% on 3-pointers last year to 44% -- and his assist-to-turnover ratio after working on passing ahead of double- and triple-teams he knew would come all season long.

Garza led the Hawkeyes to a No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament, then accounted for nearly half their points (36 of 80) in a second-round upset loss to Oregon. The native of Washington, D.C., finished as the career scoring leader (2,306) at Iowa, which will retire his No. 55 jersey.

"We may never see another one like him," coach Fran McCaffery said.

Sure, he had the big numbers and helped the Hawkeyes spend nearly the entire season in the top 10 nationally. But Garza figures the daily ritual of resetting his mind while focusing on something as simple as his breathing led to all of that -- particularly in a season altered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You had to be in your house quarantined, going to the gym, going home," Garza said. "There's no distraction. If you play

a bad game, that's all you're thinking about. So you need to be in a healthy mental space or you would just let it eat at you -- especially a person like me who thinks as much as I do.

"I needed it to be a daily thing because I faced this anxiety every single day. It definitely became something that helped me out a lot and contributed to my being able to be there and be in the moment every single game and every single day."

Garza was second to Dayton's Obi Toppin for last year's award. It was during that season that he began gameday meditation at the suggestion of his father, a former player at Idaho.

As Frank Garza put it: "It's worth taking the mind to the gym."

"Every player deals with that performance anxiety and overthinking, so he was not immune to it," the elder Garza said. "But what happened as the stakes got higher, and the performance requirement was higher, the pressure becomes at the same level. And if you're not dealing with it, that will consume you. That will eat you alive."

As a senior, Garza moved to daily meditation, typically 20 to 25 minutes via Zoom with his father and Frank's business partner, GuruGanesha Khalsa. Pre-game sessions sometimes included some teammates, and Luka also used the Calm meditation-and-sleep phone app.

"I got to a point where I was waking up and I did a meditation every single day throughout the season because it was a daily thing that I was dealing with," he said. "I'd turn on the TV and my name was being talked about. I needed to be able to just focus on what I wanted to accomplish as a team."

Some of that bled into games, too, with Garza practicing breathing exercises before free throws or during timeouts.

He's sticking with meditation, too, as he pursues an NBA career. He has all the proof he needs that it can work.

"There's a lot of things in life that you want to happen or want to go better than they are and everything like that," he said. "So it's going to hit somebody at some point, and it's just a very useful tool for really anybody."

A different Augusta National await newcomers from November

AUGUSTA, GA. (AP): Paul Casey needed only 11 holes to realize a Masters in November was an experience unlike any other at Augusta National. He had a 6-iron to a left pin on the par-5 second hole at Augusta National. Any other year -- any April, really -- he would have aimed well right of the flag. On this soft, autumn day, he took on the pin. The ball plopped down 6 feet away.

"You can't hit that shot in April," he said. "That shot in April would have one-hopped over into the patrons."

Consider that a warning.

For all but 19 players in the field, the Masters back in April should feel like it usually does. There are pins to attack. There are pins to avoid. It doesn't take much to get out of position.

For someone like Sebastian Munoz, who made his debut last year, it could be about starting over.

Munoz is among 13 players who played the Masters for the first time last November when it was postponed seven months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He had gone to Augusta National once before for a scouting trip after qualifying by winning the Sanderson Farms Championship. Just his luck, that practice round was in November, too.

"I think that's why I played good. I knew what to expect," Munoz said.

He was 9-under par through 54 holes until closing with a 75 to tie for 19th. Sungjae Im set the record for lowest score by a newcomer at 15-under 273, a score that would have won all but eight of the previous 84 Masters.

Munoz still recalls what Jon Rahm told him in the final round af-



ter one particular shot, a 4-iron into the par-5 15th that landed just in front of the hole and settled not far behind it: "Anything you learn today, this week, forget about it."

"I'm looking forward to it and debuting again," Munoz said with a laugh.

Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979 was the last player to win the Masters in his debut. Only three professionals -- Carlos Ortiz, Robert MacIntyre and Will Zalatoris -- and three amateurs are first-timers at this Masters.

As for the 13 who have never played in April? It's not like they didn't gain any experience at all.

"I don't think we played a golf course that was similar," said Max Homa, who missed the cut. "It was still nice to get out there and get the jitters over with. It's also a golf course I think everyone has watched more than any golf course on tour. You know a lot of spots where you need to leave it. You still saw where it can get you."

"I don't think it was rocket science that it was playing different," he said. "I threw a 3-iron into 15 and it stopped on a dime. We knew that would happen. The best players in the world are

really good at adapting."

The 15th hole gets most of the attention. That's where Rahm hit the 4-iron and Homa hit the 3-iron that stopped. Johnson spoke of one player in his group to hit a 3-wood that stopped where it landed, a shot he said that without an abundance of rain "is not possible."

Adam Scott considered what the newcomers learned last year, such as the severe slope on the 13th fairway with the ball above their feet (for right-handed players) and various lines off the tee.

"Certainly, they're going to be seeing a few new shots that they'll have an opportunity to play, and some that you absolutely can't play," he said.

The soft conditions of autumn -- along with rain that forced a three-hour delay at the start -- were reflected in the record scores, from the 20-under 268 by Johnson to the 1,122 birdies to the week.

Justin Thomas believes Johnson would have won in any conditions. He was playing that well. What stood out to Thomas was the number of newcomers who did so well. Along with Im sharing second

place, C.T. Pan tied for seventh and Abraham Ancer was in the mix until closing with a 76 to tie for 13th.

"I don't think it's a coincidence that some first-timers or younger guys played well, because a lot of the past experience was engrained in my memory," Thomas said. "But at the end of the day, everyone had the same amount of time to prepare. Everyone knew what the golf course was, and it just about execution. But you had to go about differently than you do in April when it gets firm and fast."

Lanto Griffin played the opening two rounds with former Masters champion Vijay Singh, with whom he plays and practices at home in Florida. The stories were familiar. Griffin spoke of a 5-iron from the rough on No. 5 that came out hot, landed in the middle of the green and rolled harmlessly to the fringe.

Singh told him that ball would have gone into the magnolia trees in April.

"I think it's easier when it goes from being really firm and fast to softer, versus soft and slow and then it speeds up," Griffin said. "I know this year will be a completely different animal."

At last, Oladipo finally gets his chance to play with Heat

MIAMI (AP): Victor Oladipo got swept out of the first round of the playoffs last season by Miami, and when that series concluded he had no doubt the Heat would end up in the NBA Finals.

He was right.

And now, he's got a chance to help them make this season's playoff push.

Oladipo has been an offseason Miami resident, and now, he's finally an in-season one as well. He started in his Heat debut Thursday night, helping Miami get over the .500 mark with a 116-109 win over the Golden State Warriors.

"He's a veteran guy, he's played in good programs on good teams, so he knows how to fit in," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "I think defensively, it's extremely natural, the fit. And offensively, he gives us that downhill attack, another guy that can make plays, another guy that can put pressure on opposing defenses in the paint."

It's a fit that has been a long time coming.

Oladipo is close with Miami legend Dwayne Wade -- Oladipo played at Indiana for Tom Crean, Wade's coach at Marquette -- and that's just



one of many hints that this pairing was inevitable. Oladipo trains in Miami, his name somehow always seems to get linked to the Heat in trade or free-agent talks, and above all else he sees himself as a fit for the Heat.

The buzzword they use in Miami is "culture." Spoelstra often says it's not for everybody. Oladipo has craved being a part of it.

"I come from high-cultural basketball: DeMatha Catholic High School, to Indiana University, and now being on the Heat," Oladipo said. "It's a culture. It's a way of life and it's playing for something bigger than yourself. It's sacrifice, it's winning

at the ultimate level. That's what I'm used to. That's what I flourish in.

"I feel like being a part of this and walking around that locker room every day and seeing those championships, and walking around and seeing what winning looks like, it's going to help me be a better player, be a better person, and help me help this team win at the highest level."

That, and he's already had a taste of that culture from the workouts he used to share with Wade. The three-time NBA champion with the Heat thought nothing of sharing secrets and advice with Oladipo, who soaked up every word.

IPL: KKR desperate to turn fortunes post tough transition



KOLKATA, APR 2 (PTI): Two-time IPL champions Kolkata Knight Riders will be striving for consistency in their bid to recreate old magic which has been lost during a difficult phase of rebuilding after Gautam Gambhir's departure.

Be it the opening combination, middle-order or finding a finisher, KKR struggled for stability in the last edition in the UAE, while a change of captaincy at the half-way stage did not help them either.

Add the floundering forms of their two biggest Caribbean stars -- a half-fit Andre Russell and Sunil Narine, who is not even half the bowler after being repeatedly called for suspect action, KKR missed the playoffs for a second time in a row in the Gambhir era.

Here's is a SWOT analysis of the side that will take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in their season-opener in Chennai on April 11.

STRENGTHS: In Eoin Morgan, his first stint as full-time KKR captain, the Purple Brigade have got one of the most astute brains of the white-ball format.

The English World Cup-winning skipper, who took over the role after seven games last season, was one of the brightspots for the team in 2020.

The left-hander struck 418 runs in 14 innings at an average of 41.80 and also hit the most sixes (24), giving impetus in the death overs with his cameos.

KKR have made some smart additions to their squad in the mini-auction, apart from retaining their core of the side -- 17 players -- despite a disappointing season.

By bringing back Bangladesh star all-rounder Shakib-Al-Hasan and signing 2016 IPL Final man-of-the-match Ben Cutting, they have got the much-needed back-ups for the Windies duo of Narine and Russell, who failed to fire last season.

KKR will also be buoyed by the smash-hit international debut of Prasidh Krishna, who took 4/54 in the first ODI against England in the recently-concluded series.

This would also mean KKR would have a settled pace attack spearheaded by Aussie superstar Pat Cummins with Lockie Ferguson as the back-up option.

WEAKNESSES: Once their strength, KKR of late has struggled in the spin department.

Left arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav is a shadow of his past and retuned with just one wicket in five matches, of which he was not given the ball in one.

One of the architects of their twin triumphs

in 2012 and 2014 under Gambhir, Sunil Narine is also floundering.

Narine's action once again came to haunt him in 2020 as he was warned of suspect action and went on to miss four matches. Before that he had to be pulled out of CPL final for Trinbago Knight Riders as he was found chucking.

It was another mystery spinner, Varun Chakravarthy a Tamil Naud architect-turned-cricketer who took up the responsibility in Narine's absence to finish with most wickets -- 17 -- for KKR.

But Chakravarthy's fitness has come under the scanner time and again as it remains to be seen how he shapes up for the IPL.

OPPORTUNITIES: Having decided to step away from being captain to "focus on his batting", Dinesh Karthik too will look to make amends in 2021.

Then there are the seasoned duo of Shakib-Al-Hasan and veteran Indian offspinner Harbhajan Singh who too will look to make most of the limited opportunities that come their way on slow tracks on offer in Delhi and Chennai.

KKR have two interesting uncapped new signings in Venkatesh Iyer and Vaibhav Arora, who too will look to grab their opportunities.

Left-hand Madhya Pradesh batsman Iyer is fresh from a blistering 146-ball 198 against Punjab in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Himachal Pradesh medium-pacer Arora is in the form of his life after taking a hat-trick on debut against Maharashtra in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

THREATS: KKR would need good start from opener Shubman Gill to give better starts this year in the Powerplay overs. Gill consumed a lot of deliveries upfront in most games which did create pressure on middle-order.

The Morgan-led side would look to ensure that they get a winning combination, something that eluded them last time as they would be desperate to make the cut.

KKR Squad: Eoin Morgan (c), Dinesh Karthik, Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Kuldeep Yadav, Shivam Mavi, Lockie Ferguson, Pat Cummins, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Rahul Tripathi, Varun Chakravarthy, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Harbhajan Singh, Karun Nair, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer and Pawan Negi.

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Israel's dilemma: Can the unvaccinated return to workplaces?

JERUSALEM (AP): After spending much of the past year in lockdown, Tel Aviv makeup artist Artyom Kavnavsky was ready to get back to work. But when he showed up for a recent photo shoot, his employer turned him away. The reason? He had not been vaccinated against the coronavirus. "He didn't take me because I didn't get vaccinated," Kavnavsky said. "It's discrimination, and it's not all right."

The breakneck pace of Israel's vaccination drive has made it one of the few countries able to return to much of its pre-pandemic routine. Bars and businesses, hotels and health clubs have all sprung back to life in Israel, where some 80% of the adult population is fully vaccinated and new infections and COVID-19 deaths have plummeted.

While Israel provides a glimpse of what may be possible with high immunization rates, it also offers insight into the problems that lie ahead: Workplaces and schools are now grappling with what to do with those who refuse to get vaccinated as the next phase in the pandemic again pits public health concerns against individual rights and possibly new questions of equity. One case has already ended up in court, and others are expected to.

Airlines are already considering if vaccination, or a recent negative test, might be required for travel, as is the European Union. Some officials in Britain and



the United States are exploring if proof of immunization could help large-scale gatherings to return, though there remains significant resistance to such measures in the U.S. Whether a shot is necessary to go back to work or class is an even thornier question.

In many countries, the decisions may raise the prospect of further dividing populations along the lines of wealth and vaccine access. While the vast majority of the 100,000 Palestinians who live in the West Bank and have Israeli work permits have been vaccinated, immunization drives in the West Bank and Gaza have lagged far behind. Many parts of the world have received few, if any, vaccines.

So far, Israel has relied primarily on a series of incentives meant to encourage people to get a vaccine. It has established a "green pass" for the fully vaccinated whose holders can at-

tend concerts, dine out, go to the gym or travel to popular vacation spots in places like Egypt, Cyprus and Greece. Those who do not have the pass are out of luck.

The system has worked well in areas of leisure and entertainment. But now, it is moving into other realms. Health officials have recommended barring unvaccinated workers who have not recently tested negative for COVID-19 from schools, elder care facilities and other high-risk workplaces.

Israel's health care system has also mandated that all employees — doctors, nurses, administrators, and support staff alike — receive the coronavirus vaccine. If they refuse, they will be transferred to jobs that do not involve contact with high-risk patients.

Rights groups have expressed concern that such regulations could jeopardize workers' income.

Similar concerns ex-

ist in education. Tel Aviv University, Israel's largest, has found an uneasy balance for now.

As the university resumes in-person classes, Eyal Zisser, its deputy rector, said that only students who are vaccinated can be physically present. Those who are not can continue to learn remotely.

"In the initial stages, we are bringing back some of the students according to the green pass and making lessons accessible to the rest of the students," said Zisser.

Even with Israel's success, hundreds of thousands of people remain unvaccinated — some who are opposed to vaccines in general but many who are hesitant to take a shot that was developed so quickly. U.N., U.S. and European health experts have said the vaccines authorized by Israel are safe and effective.

Kavnavsky, the makeup artist, objects to vaccines and modern medicine more broadly, saying

he doesn't want to put "any needles in my body." He is not alone. He is one of over 15,000 members of a Hebrew-language anti-vaccine Facebook group who are critical of what they see as forced immunization by the state.

Rappeh, a political party headed by outspoken anti-vaccine advocate Aryeh Avni, garnered over 17,000 votes in last week's recent parliamentary elections. That was not enough to get into parliament but illustrates the challenge for policymakers.

Israel's Health Ministry acknowledges its powers are limited.

"We cannot force people to vaccinate," said Einav Shimron, the ministry's deputy director for international relations.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, a nongovernmental organization that deals with labor issues, said that the long-term application of the green pass raises a potential civil rights issue, and has called on the government to pass legislation on the matter.

"If there is going to be a policy that infringes on the right to employment and on the right for a person to choose what to do with his or her body in order to be employed, then it needs to go through the legislative process," said spokeswoman Maya Fried. "There needs to be a public discussion."

In the meantime, the debate is already playing out in the courts.

In the first major de-

cision on the topic, a Tel Aviv labor court in March allowed a day care center to bar a teaching assistant who who refused to get vaccinated or undergo coronavirus testing. The decision is expected to be appealed.

Dr. Nadav Davidovitch, the head of Israel's association of public health physicians, said he believes people have an obligation to get vaccinated, particularly given the evidence that the vaccine not only prevents the worst outcomes from COVID-19 but also may reduce the spread of the virus. Israel, with 9.3 million people, has recorded at least 6,188 deaths since the pandemic began.

"We see vaccination as a solidarity act, not just an individual choice," he said.

Still, he said he opposes forced vaccinations or firing people for refusing. Instead, he favors alternative approaches, from education to persuasion. Those who continue to refuse can perhaps be given different jobs, work remotely or undergo frequent testing.

Davidovitch, a former military epidemiologist, has experience with the issue. He said that well over 90% of Israeli recruits who did not want to be vaccinated when they enlisted ended up agreeing once they were educated by medical experts.

"I think it's a bad idea to move quickly to compulsion," he said. "Most people are hesitant. They are not against vaccination in general."

Myanmar cuts wireless internet service amid coup protests

YANGON, MYANMAR (AP): Myanmar's wireless broadband internet services were shut down on Friday by order of the military, local providers said, as protesters continued to defy the threat of lethal violence to oppose the junta's takeover. A directive from the Ministry of Transport and Communications on Thursday instructed that "all wireless broadband data services be temporarily suspended until further notice," according to a statement posted online by local provider Ooredoo.

After weeks of overnight cutoffs of internet access, the military on Friday shut all links apart from those using fiber optic cable, whose speeds are drastically slower. Access to mobile networks and all wireless — the less costly options used by most people in the developing country — was blocked.

The Norwegian telecoms company Telenor, one of the biggest carriers in Myanmar, confirmed it could no longer offer wireless services. It was offering fiber optic service of up to 40 megabytes per second in its packages as of Friday, well below high-speed access that's at a minimum 100 Mbps.

The government has shut down all but a handful of fully military-controlled media outlets. Some of those banned or whose operations have been suspended have been continued to publish via social media or whatever methods they can find.

Facebook announced it was providing a safety feature to enable users in Myanmar to beef up security settings locking their profiles to prevent access by non-friends. That includes preventing non-friends from enlarging, sharing or downloading full-size profile and cover photos and seeing any posts on a person's timeline.

Facebook and other major social media platforms have banned members of the Myanmar military, also known as the Tatmadaw, and are blocking ads from most military-linked commercial entities.

Also Friday, a South Korean bank said it temporarily closed its branch in Yangon and was considering bringing its South Korean employees

back home after security forces fatally shot one of its Myanmar employees.

Noh Ji-young, a spokesperson for Shinhan Bank, said the woman was shot in the head while commuting home from work in a company car on Wednesday and was pronounced dead on Friday.

The bank did not disclose further personal details about her. South Korea's Foreign Ministry didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Meanwhile, German-based Giesecke+Devrient (G+D), which supplies raw materials, supplies and system components for making the kyat banknotes in Myanmar, said it was suspending all deliveries to the state-owned security printer, Security Print Works.

"This is a reaction to the ongoing violent clashes between the military and the civilian population," the company said in a statement. It said it had previously restricted business.

With its economy contracting under pressure from mass disruptions in reaction to the coup and from the pandemic, Myanmar's military leaders are expected to order an increase in the money supply by the central bank. It was unclear how much of an impact the German company's move would have.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch issued a report Friday saying that Myanmar's military has forcibly disappeared hundreds of people, including politicians, election officials, journalists, activists and protesters and refused to confirm their location or allow access to lawyers or family members in violation of international law.

"The military junta's widespread use of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances appears designed to strike fear in the hearts of anti-coup protesters," said Brad Adams, Human Rights Watch's Asia director. "Concerned governments should demand the release of everyone disappeared and impose targeted economic sanctions against junta leaders to finally hold this abusive military to account."

Italy may be in Easter lockdown, but the party's on at sea

ABOARD THE MSC GRANDIOSA (AP): Italy may be in a strict coronavirus lockdown this Easter with travel restricted between regions and new quarantines imposed. But a few miles offshore, guests aboard the MSC Grandiosa cruise ship are shimmying to Latin music on deck and sipping cocktails by the pool. In one of the anomalies of lockdowns that have shuttered hotels and resorts around the world, the Grandiosa has been plying the Mediterranean Sea this winter with seven-night cruises, a lonely flag-bearer of the global cruise industry.

After cruise ships were early sources of highly publicized coronavirus outbreaks, the Grandiosa has tried to chart a course through the pandemic with strict anti-virus protocols approved by Italian authorities that seek to create a "health bubble" on board.

Passengers and crew are tested before and during cruises. Mask mandates, temperature checks, contact-tracing wristbands and frequent cleaning of the ship are all designed to prevent outbreaks. Passengers from outside Italy must arrive with negative COVID-19 tests taken within 48 hours of their departures and only residents of Europe's Schengen countries plus Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria are permitted to book under COVID-19 insur-

ance policies.

On Wednesday, the Grandiosa left the Italian port of Civitavecchia for its weeklong Easter cruise, with 2,000 of its 6,000-passenger capacity and stops planned in Naples and Valletta, Malta, before returning to its home port in Genoa.

Passengers welcomed the semblance of normalcy brought on by the freedom to eat in a restaurant or sit poolside without a mask, even if the virus is still a present concern.

"After a year of restrictive measures, we thought we could take a break for a week and relax," said Stefania Battistoni, a 39-year-old teacher and single mother who drove all night from Bolzano, in northern Italy, with her two sons and mother to board the cruise.

The pandemic has plunged global cruise ship passenger numbers from a record 30 million in 2019 to over 350,000 since July 2020, according to Cruise Lines International, the world's largest cruise industry association representing 95% of ocean-going cruise capacity. Currently, fewer than 20 ships are operating globally, a small fraction of CLIA's members' fleets of 270 ships.

The United States could be among the last cruise ship markets to reopen, possibly not until fall and not un-

til 2022 in Alaska. Two Royal Caribbean cruise lines that normally sail out of Miami opted instead to launch sailings in June from the Caribbean, where governments are eager to revive their tourism-based economies.

MSC spokeswoman Lucy Ellis said positive virus cases have cropped up on board MSC ships, particularly during the fall surge.

"The important thing is we have never had an outbreak," she said. The Grandiosa is equipped with a medical center with molecular and antigen testing facilities, as well as a ventilator.

Extra cabins are set aside to isolate suspected virus cases. Because of the contact tracing wristbands, if a passenger tests positive, medical personnel can identify anyone with whom they were in contact. Once the situation is clear, anyone who is positive is transferred to the shore.

According to an independent consulting firm, Bermello Ajamii & Partners, just 23 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed on ships since the industry began its tentative relaunch last summer, for a passenger infection rate of 0.006%.

But cruise industry critics say the risk isn't worth it and add that cruise companies should have taken the pandemic timeout to address the industry's longstanding

environmental and labor problems.

"All large cruise ships burn huge volumes of the dirtiest, cheapest fuel available," said Jim Ace of environmental group Stand Earth, a member of the Global Cruise Activist Network. "Cruise ship companies could have used the COVID shutdown to address their impacts on public health and the environment. Instead, they scrapped a few of their oldest ships and raised cash to stay alive."

On board, though, passengers are relishing the chance to enjoy activities that have been mostly closed in Italy and much of Europe for a year: a theater, restaurant dining, duty-free shopping and live music in bars.

The rest of Italy is heading back into full lockdown over the Easter weekend, with shops closed and restaurants and bars open for take-out only to try to minimize holiday outbreaks. In addition, Italy's government imposed a five-day quarantine on people entering from other EU countries in a bid to deter Easter getaways.

"Let's say that after such a long time of restrictions and closures, this was a choice done for our mental health," said Federico Marzocchi, who joined the cruise with his wife and 10-year-old son Matteo.

The cruise industry

is hoping for a gradual opening this spring.

Cruises are circulating on Spain's Canary islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa, including the company AIDA catering to German tourists. Costa Cruises, which with MSC is one of Europe's largest cruise companies, will resume cruises on May 1, with seven-night Italy-only cruises. Costa plans to begin sailing in the western Mediterranean from mid-June.

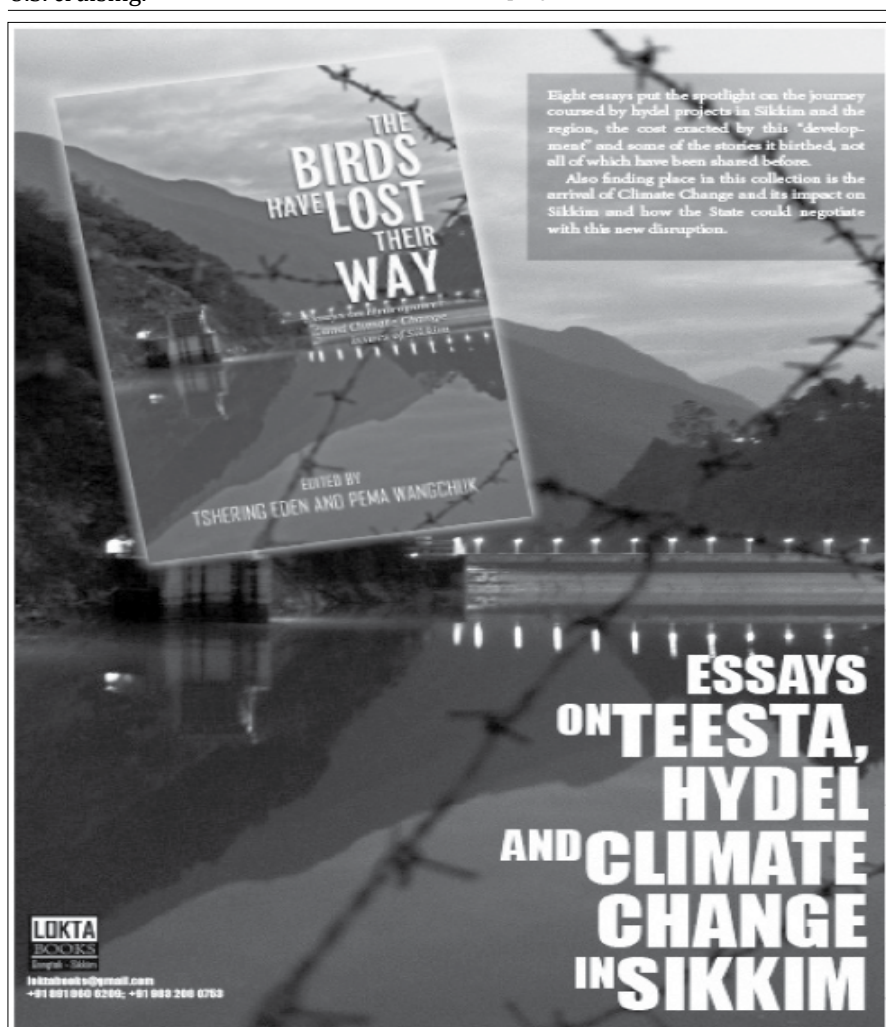
Britain is opening to cruise ships in May, with MSC and Viking launching cruises of the British Isles, among several companies offering at-sea "staycation" cruises aimed at capturing one of the most important cruise markets. The cruise industry is hoping Greece will open in mid-May, but the country hasn't yet announced when it will reopen tourism.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a "framework" for resuming cruises in the U.S., but the industry says the health agency hasn't spelled out the details that companies need to operate their ships. Once the CDC provides technical requirements, industry officials say it takes about 90 days to prepare a ship for sailing.

The cruise companies complain that last fall's CDC framework is

outdated and should be scrapped. They say it was issued before vaccines were available and before the restart of cruises in Europe, which they say have safely carried nearly 400,000 passengers under new COVID-19 protocols. And they complain that cruising is the only part of the U.S. economy that remains shuttered by the pandemic.

The Cruise Lines International Association trade group is lobbying for an early July start to U.S. cruising.



Rajinikanth thanks fans, colleagues, political leaders for their wishes on Dadasaheb Phalke honour

CHENNAI, APR 2 (PTI): Superstar Rajinikanth, the recipient of prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, for the year 2019, has expressed his gratitude to fans, film fraternity colleagues and political leaders for their heartfelt wishes.

The Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar on Thursday announced that the award, which is Indian cinema's highest honour for an artiste, will be presented to Rajinikanth on May 3.

"For all the love, greetings & wishes I've received from eminent political leaders, my film fraternity friends & colleagues, well wishers, media, every person who took the time to wish me & my beloved fans from across India & all over the world... My deepest gratitude and thanks," the veteran actor said in a Twitter post on Friday.

On Thursday, in a statement posted on the microblogging site, the 70-year-old cinema icon had dedicated the award to his friend, bus driver Raj Bahadur, elder brother Sathyanarayana Rao Gaekwad and all those who made him the superstar that he is now.

"I dedicate this award to my friend and bus driver Raj Bahadur, who discovered my acting talent and encouraged me, my elder brother Sathyanarayana Rao Gaekwad, who sacrificed a lot to



make me an actor while struggling with poverty, my guru K Balachander, who created this Rajinikanth," he had said.

He also remembered his producers, directors, technicians, distributors, theatre owners, media, the Tamil people, "who have given me my life, and my fans across the world."

Rajinikanth, whose real name is Shivaji Rao Gaekwad, tried his hand at several odd jobs before landing as a bus conductor. He soon quit the job to pursue his acting dreams.

It was noted director K Balachander who spotted Rajinikanth at a film institute and roped him to star in his 1975 film "Apoorva Ragangal". The director also gave the actor his screen name Rajinikanth.

The cinema icon has delivered several superhit films such as "Billa", "Muthu", "Sivaji" and "Enthiran", among others.

He has also starred in Bollywood movies such as "Hum", "Andha Kanoon", "Bhagwaan Dada", "Aatank hi Aatank" and "Chaalbaaz".

Amitabh Bachchan receives COVID-19 vaccine

MUMBAI, APR 2 (PTI): Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Friday said he has received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine.

Taking to official blog, the 78-year-old actor revealed that every member of his family, except son Abhishek Bachchan, have received the first dose of coronavirus vaccine.

"Vaccination done... All well... Did COVID test for family and staff yesterday... results came today... All good, all negative... So done the vaccine," Amitabh Bachchan wrote. "All family done except Abhishek.. he be on location and shall do it on return soon in a few days."

The veteran actor also posted a picture of him receiving the vaccine at a vac-



centre.

Abhishek Bachchan has been filming for his upcoming social comedy "Dasvi" in Agra. The actor completed the shooting on Thursday.

Calling the vaccination



process "historic", Amitabh Bachchan said he will later pen a longer blog post about it.

"The entire procedure of taking the vaccination needs a rather detailed exclusive

blog... shall do so... later... it was historic," he added.

Last year, Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, actor-daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and his granddaughter Aaradhya Bachchan had tested positive for coronavirus.

Amitabh Bachchan is the latest Indian film celebrity to be vaccinated after Salman Khan, Sanjay Dutt, Sharmila Tagore, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Mohanlal, Jeetendra, Kamal Haasan, Nagarjuna, Rohit Shetty, Neena Gupta, Rakesh Roshan and Johnny Lever.

The Centre had announced that all people above 45 years of age would be eligible to get COVID-19 vaccines from April 1.

Anthony Ramos in talks for new 'Transformers' movie

LOS ANGELES, APR 2 (PTI): Actor Anthony Ramos is in negotiations to play the lead role in the new "Transformers" movie.

The latest film, which hails from Paramount, eOne and Hasbro, has Steven Caple Jr of "Creed II" fame attached as the director, reported Variety.

The plot has been kept under wraps as the studio continues to search for the female lead to star opposite Ramos.

In January 2020, Paramount had decided to go for a soft revamp of the franchise, which has collectively made over USD 4 billion at the box office.

The studio was working on two different scripts from writers James Vanderbilt and Joby Harold.

Harold's take chosen as the next project and after that, Paramount began meeting with directors to hear their visions for it.

In the end, Caple was chosen to direct the new movie.

Paramount has also announced a new standalone film, which is not connected to the Michael Bay-directed movies or "Bumblebee" spinoff.



Angel Manuel Soto will direct the movie from a script by Marco Ramirez.

Ramos was first noticed when he featured Lin-Manuel Miranda's critically-lauded Broadway production "Hamilton". He played the dual roles of John Laurens and Philip Hamilton.

The actor has featured in movies such as "A Star Is Born" and "Godzilla: King of the Monsters".

He will next star in Miranda upcoming project, the adaptation of famed musical "In the Heights".



LOS ANGELES, APR 2 (PTI): Oscar-nominated "Minari" actor Steven Yeun has boarded the cast of critically-acclaimed filmmaker Jordan Peele's yet-untitled thriller movie.

The cast also features actors Keke Palmer and Daniel Kaluuya.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Peele is writing, directing and producing the Universal Pictures project.

The filmmaker will produce via his Monkeypaw Productions alongside Ian

Cooper. The project is part of the the banner's five-year output deal with Universal.

The movie will be Peele's third collaboration with the studio following his directorial debut "Get Out" and thriller "Us".

It is scheduled to be released on July 22, 2022.

Senior vice president of production Sara Scott and creative executive Tony Ducret will oversee the project on behalf of Universal.

ARIES:

Change is never easy to deal with. But if nothing changed, everything would remain constant. And if everything remains constant, you begin to stagnate, and that is never a good place to be, Aries. So, welcome this change even if it is stirring up a storm within and without. Honour the relationships that have served their purpose and cut the cords where you need to. Trust that your higher self is holding space for this transition in each and every moment.

TAURUS:

The darkest of nights is followed by day. The brightest of days gives way to the night. To say that pleasure can exist without pain would be an act of ignorance, Taurus. So, accept the human experience in its entirety.

GEMINI:

What if time is merely an illusion and the past, present, and future exist in unison? The cards are urging you to awaken to your truth and uncover the jewels hidden deep within you. If you've dedicated your time and energy to learning a subject and polishing a skill in another lifetime, it means you have the potential to attain mastery in this one. Trust that and keep putting

in the work. Remembering where you will be a decade from now will motivate you to put in your all.

CANCER:

You've been around this block a few times, Cancer, and you've been indecisive each one of those times. Today, the cards are urging you to take a stance and do what feels right to you even if it does not make sense on paper. Remember, you do not have to explain your decisions to anybody else.

LEO:

Take the first step as you leave the 'why' to the Universe. Take the first step as you leave the 'how' to the Universe. Take the first step. That's all! You have manifested a magical opening, one that promises to take your career to the next level. Remember to keep your feet on the ground, though. The need of the hour: practical decisions.

VIRGO:

You need some sand and sea, Virgo. You need some sand, sea and salt therapy. If running off to the nearest beach isn't an option, consider a ritualistic bath at home, complete with essential oils and candles. Meditating with crystals such

as aquamarine and larimar is also a good way to connect with this energy. As such, this is a time of deep, deep healing and discovering your inherent psychic abilities. Get ready to receive insights on your journey and how you're meant to serve the world in this lifetime.

LIBRA:

This is the start of something brand new for you. This is the start of a magical journey. So, continue to look forward and onwards as you refuse to let others play buzzkill at your party. What the cards want you to know: this adventure is going to be just as exhilarating as you envisioned it to be. Remember, the only thing you want to be wary of is doing things the same way that you always have been. Staying open to new possibilities is the only way to achieve mind-blowing results.

SCORPIO:

This is a wonderful time in the Scorpio HQ—a time of looking back at the past and everything that it has taught you. You're grateful for it all—the good, bad, and ugly too—for they made you the person that you are today. Take a moment to reflect upon the trajectory of your career as

well. Pay extra attention to the so-called mistakes. In doing so, you will gain insights on how you can reinvent the game.

SAGITTARIUS:

It's time to own up to your habits—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Which of these habits are keeping you stuck in the hamster wheel? Remember, nobody can cut the cords for you. Challenging as it is, you're going to have to do the dirty work yourself. Trust that your higher self is holding space for you in the midst of this massive transformation. Some of you may be struggling as a result of a toxic work environment. What you need to keep in mind is that nothing is more important than your mental health.

CAPRICORN:

You're full of ideas and inspiration, Capricorn. Ideas and inspiration that are yearning to be put into practice. So pay attention to what your subconscious is telling you without bringing judgement or self-doubt into the equation. Something tells us you may just end up surprising yourself. If you're looking to turn the given project into a lucrative opportunity, look around for an

investor or a friend who's willing to lend a helping hand. The cards want you to remember that the support you need is available to you in this moment.

AQUARIUS:

Remember why you came here, Aquarius. Remember why you came here. What's playing out right now is a classic case of good versus evil. But standing by as a mere witness has never been your style. So put on your superhero cape and inspire others to do the same. The mission you have taken on is challenging. But that doesn't mean it's impossible.

Tip: You have what it takes to set things right despite what your physical reality is showing you at this moment.

PISCES:

Matters related to home and property are likely to take centre stage in the Pisces HQ today. For some, repairs and renovation may be a theme. Others may be considering investing in a new property or moving into their family home. Remember; if it makes the tribe happy, it's worth a shot. Neptunians who've been in a committed relationship for some time now may be thinking about sharing space.