



ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE THEIR
SUCCESS TO TAKE MORE RISKS,
NOT LESS: M NIGHT SHYAMALAN
pg 08

SILENCED IN CHINA: THE COVID 'TRUTH-
TELLERS' AND POLITICAL DISSENT pg 04

DIRECTOR KATE HERRON SAYS SHE
IS NOT RETURNING FOR 'LOKI' S2
pg 08



Summit TIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 181 | Gangtok | Sunday 18 July 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

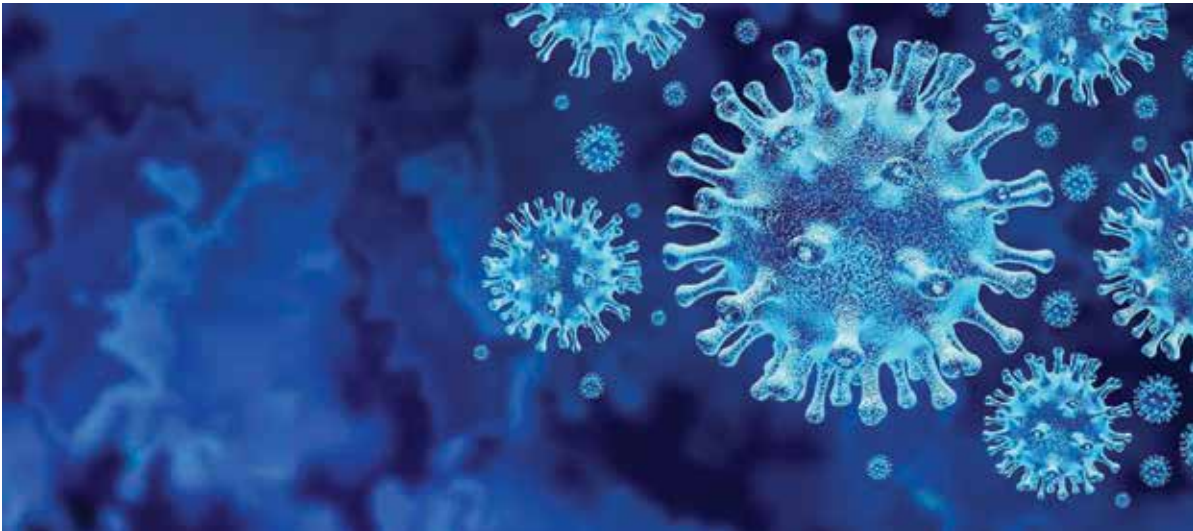
Pages 8 | Rs. 5

Covid claims two more, week's toll - 8

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 JUL:

Sikkim recorded two more COVID deaths in the last 24 hours taking the State's SARS CoV2 death toll to 321. This week [11-17 July], Sikkim lost eight lives to the virus even as 1,075 new cases were detected over the same period. In comparison, the previous week [04-10 July] had recorded five Covid deaths and 1,208 new cases.

Of the latest fatalities, while one death was reported from STNM hospital, another Covid-positive person passed away in home isolation in South District, the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released at 8AM this morning by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department informs.



The second wave, counted by this newspaper as beginning on 22 April, has thus far claimed 185 of the 321 Covid deaths and accounts for 16,079 of the 23,237 confirmed cases of Covid detected in Sikkim.

While the number of infections have been

high, the case fatality rate, even though the absolute numbers are high, has been lower in the second wave. The 185 deaths recorded in the second wave from the 16,079 cases, works out to a case fatality rate of 1.15%.

The case fatality rate in the first wave was

2.12%.

As for today's statistics, 157 new cases of novel coronavirus were reported in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 23,237. These new cases were detected from the testing of 1,014 samples on Friday giving Sikkim a

daily test positivity rate of 15.4%.

Sikkim's overall test positivity rate calculates to 13.04%, given that its 23,237 cases have been picked up from 1,78,087 tests conducted since 28 Feb, 2020.

Also today, Sikkim's count of recovered cases further improved to

20,400 with the discharge of 219 more formerly Covid-positive people from home and facility isolation on Friday after they made full recoveries.

As for the break up of the new cases, 71 were registered in East District, 30 in West District, 55 in South District and 01 in North District. While 96 samples returned positive from RT-PCR testing of 636 samples, 61 were also found positive for Covidin rapid antigen testing of 377 samples.

Hospitals saw 19 new admissions against the 157 new cases and there are currently a total of 97 Covid patients admitted in hospitals here, 14 of whom are in the ICU. Over all, there are 2,256 active Covidcases in the State.

Milching cows provided to supplement farmer incomes at Chongrang



GYALSHING, 17 JUL [IPR]: Distribution of Milching Cows in Chongrang Block to Supplement Farmer Income Under NEC Fund for the year 2020-21 was held at Chongrang BAC Premises under Yuk-somTashiding Constituency, West Sikkim, today.

The programme was graced by the Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services LokNath Sharma as the Chief Guest in special presence of the Deputy Speaker-cum-Area MLA Sangey Lepcha. The programme was organised by the Office of the District Collector West in coordination with the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department, Government of Sikkim. The distribution programme was followed by daylong inspection of various Milk Collection Centres and Departmental infrastructures under Yuk-somTashiding Constituency, West Sikkim.

The Minister handed over twenty cows of Jersey and Sahiwal Jersey Cross breed to the identified beneficiaries and began the distribution of One Hundred and Fifty Cows under Chongrang Block.

The distribution programme also had the presence of Advisor Ecclesiastical Department RS Bhutia, Chairman

Transport Department BasantTamang, Additional Political Secretary to HCM (West) Madhusudan Sharma; Secretary AH&VS Dr Sangey D Bhutia; District Collector West, Karma R Bonpo; Additional Director Feed and Fodder (HQ) Dr Karma T Bhutia; Additional Director (West) Dr Nara-dCintury; Joint Director Agriculture TN Bhutia; Joint Director Horticulture Karma Sherpa, Dy. General Manager (SMU) Dr NK Pradhan, SDM/ BDO Yuksom, BDO Chongrang, departmental officials, and panchayats.

The Minister articulated the vision of the ruling government to witness a paradigm shift in economic growth of rural population. Sharma highlighted the objectives behind the distribution of Milching Cows to uplift every dairy farming household towards self-reliant economy. He also extended congratulations to all the beneficiaries on behalf of the Chief Minister and shared his unrelenting efforts and concern in seeking numerous ways and means to uplift deprived rural population.

Addressing the farmers, Sharma elaborated the farmers friendly policies and programmes initiated by the ruling government and stated that

turn to pg02

Assam to get new rules for organ donation after probe finds 15 victims

GUWAHATI, 17 JUL [PTI]: Days after a kidney racket was busted in Assam's Morigaon district and the arrest of four people, at least 15 cases have been uncovered where victims from financially disadvantaged communities sold their kidneys in a widening organ-trafficking racket.

Speaking for the first time on the issue, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma admitted that the issue is sensitive and claimed that the police is making headway in the investigation.

He also informed that in the wake of this racket, the state government will change the rules for issuing clearances to organ transplant applicants.

"Police have registered cases; some people involved. We have found 15 victims so far. With further investigations, we can bust this racket further," Mr Sarma said.

"The victims have said they have been told about money. The law is clear that you cannot sell organs. This needs to be looked into. Our committee looks into the bank account and lifestyle and if they don't find anything suspicious, they issue the NOC (No-Objection Certificate). We will now issue a new SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for granting the NOC," he said.

"We have to find the people who received organs. It is a delicate issue. Some of the beneficiaries might be on their deathbed. We cannot investigate these cases like we investigate militant cases," the Chief Minister added.

BJP-Sikkim thanks Modi Govt for prioritizing NE in Cabinet expansion

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 JUL:

Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit convened a virtual meeting on Saturday chaired by the state president, DB Chauhan, and attended by BJP-Sikkim vice-presidents, general secretary and members of the state executive committee along with district and Mandal committee members.

A BJP press release issued by the party spokesperson, Dr Raju Giri, informs that the meeting discussed the importance given to the north-eastern region in the recent Union Cabinet expansion and further thanked the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the same.

In his address, Mr Chauhan expressed that the BJP government at the Centre has been committed to development and upliftment of the NER since inception.

He added that former



PM Atal Bihari Bajpayee had adopted a new Look East policy setting up the DoNER Ministry.

He added that after forming the government at the Centre in 2014, the Narendra Modi government has also been working for the North East on priority and has changed the perception of the people in how the region is seen.

He stressed that the Narendra Modi government has further strengthened participation of the North East in the recent Union Cabinet expansion.

The release mentions

that while presenting the thanksgiving resolution at the meeting, an executive member of the state committee, Bhupendra Giri, pointed out that the Cabinet now includes two MPs from the north-east and has three Ministers for State from the region.

He further said that such historic decisions of the Centre could play an important role in the development and empowerment of north-eastern region.

The thanksgiving resolution was seconded by BJP-Sikkim general secretary, Bharat Dulal.

Stan Swamy's death will "remain a stain" on india's Human Rights record: UN Expert

United Nations, 17 Jul [PTI]: A UN human rights expert has said that she is devastated to hear about the death of Stan Swamy in custody, saying there is no reason for a human rights defender to be denied his rights and that his death will forever remain a stain on India's human rights record.

Stan Swamy, 84, who was arrested last year under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, died at a Mumbai hospital on July 5.

In a statement issued on Thursday, UN Special Rapporteur Mary Lawlor said Father Swamy's case should remind all states that human rights defenders and all those detained without sufficient legal basis, should be released.

Ms Lawlor said the death in custody of Catholic priest Stan Swamy,

a renowned human rights and social justice advocate for over four decades, will forever remain a stain on India's human rights record.

"There is no excuse, ever, for a human rights defender to be smeared as a terrorist, and no reason they should ever die the way Father Swamy died, accused and detained, and denied his rights," she said.

India has rejected international criticism over the handling of Stan Swamy's case.

The Ministry of External Affairs has said the concerned authorities act against violations of law and do not restrain the legitimate exercise of rights.

It said India remains committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all its citizens and that the country's democratic polity is complemented by an

turn to pg02

Pilgrims arrive in Mecca for second pandemic Hajj

MECCA, 17 JUL [AFP]: Pilgrims began arriving in the holy city of Mecca on Saturday for the second downsized hajj staged during the coronavirus pandemic, circling Islam's holiest site in masks and on distanced paths.

The kingdom is allowing only 60,000 fully vaccinated residents to take part, seeking to repeat last year's success that saw no virus outbreak during the five-day ritual.

This year's hajj, with participants chosen through a lottery, is larger than the pared-down version staged in 2020 but drastically smaller than in normal times, stoking resentment among Muslims abroad who are barred once again.

After being loaded on buses and brought to Mecca's Grand Mosque, pilgrims began performing the "tawaf", the circum-



ambulation of the Kaaba, a large cubic structure draped in gold-embroidered black cloth, towards which Muslims around the world pray.

Many carried umbrellas to protect themselves from the scorching summer heat.

"Every three hours, 6,000 people enter to perform the tawaf of arrival," hajj ministry

spokesman Hisham al-Saeed told AFP. "After each group leaves, a sterilisation process is carried out at the sanctuary."

The hajj, usually one of the world's largest annual religious gatherings with some 2.5 million people taking part in 2019, is one of the five pillars of Islam and must be undertaken by all Muslims with the means at least

once in their lives.

It consists of a series of religious rites, formally starting on Sunday, which are completed over five days in Islam's holiest city and its surroundings in western Saudi Arabia.

GOLDEN TICKET

Among the chosen ones this year was Ameen, a 58-year-old Indian oil contractor based in the eastern city of Dammam, who was picked for the ritual along with his wife and three adult children.

"We are overjoyed," said Ameen.

"So many of our friends and relatives were rejected," he told AFP.

Earlier this month, the hajj ministry said it was working on the "highest levels of health precautions" in light of the pandemic and the emergence of new variants.

turn to pg02

JOIN TERRITORIAL ARMY AS AN OFFICER				
Applications are invited from gainfully employed young men and women to serve the Nation as Territorial Army Officers (Non Departmental).				
ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS				
➤ Nationality: Only citizens of India (male and female).				
➤ Age Limits: 18 to 42 years as on last day of filing of application i.e. 19 Aug 2021				
➤ Educational Qualification: Graduate from any recognized university.				
➤ Physical Standards: A candidate must be physically and medically fit in all respects.				
➤ Employment: Gainfully Employed.				
➤ DATE OF WRITTEN EXAM: 26 SEP 2021				
➤ HOW TO APPLY: Candidates are required to apply online by using the website www.jointerritorialarmy.gov.in . No other mode is allowed for submission of application.				
➤ SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS: The Online Registration and Applications can be filed from 20 JUL to 19 AUG 2021 till 11:59 PM after which the link will be disabled. Instructions will be available on website www.jointerritorialarmy.gov.in .				
➤ FEE DETAILS: Candidates are required to pay a fee of Rs 200/- (Rupees two hundred only). Details are available on website www.jointerritorialarmy.gov.in .				
➤ Syllabus of Written Exam :-				
Paper	Subject	Time Allotted	Number of Questions	Marks
❖ I	Part - 1 Reasoning	2 hrs	50	50
	Part - 2 Elementary Mathematics		50	50
	Part - 1 General Knowledge		50	50
❖ II	Part - 2 English	2 hrs	50	50
CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO APPLY ONLINE AT www.jointerritorialarmy.gov.in ONLY. NO OTHER MODE IS ALLOWED FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION.				
Davp 10120/11/0002/2122				

Next 100 to 125 days are critical in fight against Covid in India: Centre

NEW DELHI, 17 JUL: Union Health Ministry in its weekly press conference on Friday cautioned that the next 100 to 125 days are critical in the fight against COVID-19 in India.

"Fall in cases has slowed down. It's a warning signal. Next 100 to 125 days are critical for fight against COVID in India," says Dr VK Paul, Member-Health, Niti Aayog in a Health Ministry press conference.

Member Health, NITI Aayog shared a study conducted by ICMR that analyses the vaccine effectiveness in police personnel, a high-risk category

The study shows two doses of vaccine were successful in preventing 95 per cent of COVID-19 deaths in the Second Wave.

"One dose of vaccine was able to reduce the mortality rate by 82 per cent. Two doses of vaccine were successful in preventing 95 per cent of deaths due to COVID-19 during the second wave," he said.

"We are moving towards a set target to administer 50 crore doses before July. We are on the path to achieving it. Govt has ordered 66 crore doses of Covishield and Covaxin. Additionally, 22 crore doses will go to the private sector," he added.

Mr Paul also highlighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given them a target that there should be no third wave.

Union Health Ministry, Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said, "Analysis shows a projected decline in the use of face masks as we resume activities. We should incorporate the use of face masks in our lives as a new normal."

Mr Agarwal noted that daily new cases in the country continue to show a decline during the second wave.

"Average daily new cases declined from 3,87,029 cases between May 5-11 to 40,336 cases between July 14-July 16," the Joint Secretary said.

India records highest rise in children not getting DTP vaccine in 2020: UN



UNITED NATIONS, 17 JUL [PTI]: India recorded the greatest increase in the world in the number of children not receiving a first dose of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP) combined vaccine in 2020, the UN has said, noting with concern that 23 million children globally missed out on basic vaccines through routine immunisation services last year due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN children's agency UNICEF showed that 23 million children missed out on basic childhood vaccines through routine health services in 2020, the highest number since 2009 and 3.7 million more than in 2019.

This latest set of comprehensive worldwide childhood immunisation figures, the first official figures to reflect global service disruptions due to COVID-19, show a majority of countries last year experienced drops in childhood vaccination rates.

Concerningly, most of these up to 17 million children likely did not receive a single vaccine during the year, widening already immense inequities in vaccine access, it said, adding that most of these children live in communities affected by conflict, in under-served remote places, or in informal or slum settings

where they face multiple deprivations including limited access to basic health and key social services.

"Even as countries clamour to get their hands on COVID-19 vaccines, we have gone backwards on other vaccinations, leaving children at risk from devastating but preventable diseases like measles, polio or meningitis," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

"Multiple disease outbreaks would be catastrophic for communities and health systems already battling COVID-19, making it more urgent than ever to invest in childhood vaccination and ensure every child is reached," he said.

India recorded the greatest increase in the world in children not receiving a first dose of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis combined vaccine (DTP-1). In 2019, 1.4 million children in India did not receive the first dose of the DTP-1 vaccine and this number rose to 3 million in 2020, the UN said.

India is experiencing a particularly large drop, with DTP-3 coverage falling from 91 per cent to 85 per cent, the agencies said.

They added that disruptions in immunisation services were widespread in 2020, with the WHO Southeast Asian and Eastern Mediterranean Regions most af-

ected.

As access to health services and immunisation outreach were curtailed, the number of children not receiving even their very first vaccinations increased in all regions, they said.

As compared with 2019, 3.5 million more children missed their first dose of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (DTP-1), while 3 million more children missed their first measles dose.

This evidence should be a clear warning the COVID-19 pandemic and related disruptions cost us valuable ground we cannot afford to lose and the consequences will be paid in the lives and well being of the most vulnerable, said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director.

Even before the pandemic, there were worrying signs that we were beginning to lose ground in the fight to immunise children against preventable child illness, including with the widespread measles outbreaks two years ago. The pandemic has made a bad situation worse. With the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines at the forefront of everyone's minds, we must remember that vaccine distribution has always been inequitable, but it does not have to be, Henrietta Fore said.

CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine

Alliance, Seth Berkley said these are alarming numbers, suggesting the pandemic is unravelling years of progress in routine immunisation and exposing millions of children to deadly, preventable diseases.

This is a wake-up call we cannot allow a legacy of COVID-19 to be the resurgence of measles, polio and other killers. We all need to work together to help countries both defeat COVID-19, by ensuring global, equitable access to vaccines, and get routine immunisation programmes back on track. The future health and wellbeing of millions of children and their communities across the globe depends on it.

The UN agencies said that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, global childhood vaccination rates against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles and polio had stalled for several years at around 86 per cent. This rate is well below the 95 per cent recommended by WHO to protect against measles often the first disease to resurge when children are not reached with vaccines - and insufficient to stop other vaccine-preventable diseases.

With many resources and personnel diverted to support the COVID-19 response, there have been significant disruptions to immunisation service provision in

many parts of the world. In some countries, clinics have been closed or hours reduced, while people may have been reluctant to seek health-care because of fear of transmission or have experienced challenges reaching services due to lockdown measures and transportation disruptions, they said.

As countries work to recover lost ground due to COVID-19 related disruptions, UNICEF, WHO and partners like Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance are supporting efforts to strengthen immunisation systems by restoring services and vaccination campaigns so countries can safely deliver routine immunisation programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic and helping health workers and community leaders communicate actively with caregivers to explain the importance of vaccinations.

The agencies are working with countries and partners to deliver the ambitious targets of the global Immunisation Agenda 2030, which aims to achieve 90 per cent coverage for essential childhood vaccines; halve the number of entirely unvaccinated, or zero dose' children, and increase the uptake of newer lifesaving vaccines such as rotavirus or pneumococcus in low and middle-income countries, they said in a statement.

Stan Swamy's death...

independent judiciary and a range of national and state-level human rights commissions.

"Swamy was arrested and detained by the National Investigation Agency following due process under the law. Because of the specific nature of charges against him, his bail applications were rejected by the courts. Authorities in India act against violations of law and not against legitimate exercise of rights. All such actions are strictly in accordance with the law," the MEA said in a statement in New Delhi soon after Swamy's death.

It said Stan Swamy was receiving all possible medical attention at a private hospital where he was admitted since May 28. His health and medical treatment were being closely monitored by the courts. He passed away on July 5 following medical complications.

Ms Lawlor claimed Stan Swamy was jailed last October on "fabricated terrorism charges" and had been "subjected to harassment and repeated interrogations".

"I was devastated to hear that Father Stan, a Jesuit priest who had dedicated much of his life to defending the rights of indigenous peoples and the Adivasi minority, died in custody on July 5, despite many requests for his release as his health deteriorated in prison," she said.

She added that in early November 2020, UN experts joined her in raising his case with the Indian authorities, reminding them of their international human rights obligations. I now ask again why he wasn't released, and why he had to die in custody? she said.

Ms Lawlor added that Stan Swamy had been working for decades to protect the rights of Adivasi minority indigenous peoples and the Dalit minority, in particular violations involving forced displacement and illegal land acquisitions.

We know that defenders working on environmental, land or indigenous people's rights are among the most vulnerable to being targeted, claimed Ms Lawlor.

Ms Lawlor's call has been endorsed by Special Rapporteur on minority issues Fernand de Varennes, Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health Tlaleng Mofokeng.

Ms Lawlor of Ireland is the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. She is currently an Adjunct Professor of Business and Human Rights in Trinity College Dublin. She was previously Director of the Irish Office of Amnesty International from 1988 to 2000.

Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world.

Pilgrims arrive...

Like the other countries of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia is home to significant expatriate populations from South Asia, the Far East, Africa as well as the Middle East.

"I feel like I won a lottery," Egyptian pharmacist Mohammed El Eter said after being selected.

"This is a special, unforgettable moment in one's life. I thank God for granting me this chance, to be accepted among a lot of people who applied," the 31-year-old told AFP.

'RESTRICT EXPOSURE'

Chosen from more than 558,000 applicants through an online vetting system, the event is confined to those who have been fully vaccinated and are aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses, according to the hajj ministry.

Pilgrims will be divided into groups of just 20 "to restrict any exposure to only those 20, limiting the spread of infection", ministry undersecretary Mohammad al-Bijawi told official media.

Saudi Arabia has so far recorded more than 507,000 coronavirus infections, including over 8,000 deaths.

More than 20 million vaccine doses have been administered in the country of over 34 million people.

The hajj went ahead last year on the smallest scale in modern history. Authorities initially said only 1,000 pilgrims would be allowed, although local media said up to 10,000 eventually took part.

No infections were reported as authorities set up multiple health facilities, mobile clinics and ambulances to cater for the pilgrims, who were taken to the religious sites in small batches.

'BIGGEST CHALLENGE'

In normal years, the pilgrimage packs large crowds into congested religious sites, but even this year's downscaled events are seen as a potential mechanism for contagion.

"The biggest challenge of this hajj season will be for it to pass off without any Covid-19 infections," a doctor working at a hospital in Mecca told AFP by phone.

Worshippers were last year given amenity kits including sterilised pebbles for the "stoning of Satan" ritual, disinfectants, masks, a prayer rug and the ihram, a traditional seamless white hajj garment, made from a bacteria-resistant material.

Hosting the hajj is a matter of prestige for Saudi rulers, for whom the custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is their most powerful source of political legitimacy.

But barring overseas pilgrims has caused deep disappointment among Muslims worldwide, who typically save for years to take part.

The hajj ministry received anguished queries on Twitter from rejected applicants about the tightly-controlled government lottery.

"We are still anxiously waiting to be accepted, as though we're facing an exam," wrote one Twitter user.

And in addition to the many virus-related obstacles, the price of participating in this year's hajj, including official taxes, is 12,000 riyals (\$3,200).

Milching cows...

all concerned should be well aware of newly framed policies to sensitize, motivate and guide the farming community.

Correlating the distribution of Milching Cows and financial incentives of Rs. Eight, he said that the Dairy farming has become a primary source of livelihood in rural areas and the production of Milk has been increasing consistently and touching daily production of around Sixty Thousand Litres per day in organised sector because of growing interest and determination amongst the dairy farmers.

He informed that the Nine Milk Collection Centres of Chongrang are being presented Rupees Five Lakhs each for the establishment of Milk Producers Cooperative Society (MPCS) which he handed over to all concerned during the daylong visit. He urged all committee members for proper utilisation of the provided fund with utmost sincerity to ensure quality works in construction of the MPCS.

He also threw light on the mandatory guidelines to get the registration of the identified land for MPCS in the initial stage.

The Minister also underlined the Production Incentive Schemes and described rate of incentives for the crops/vegetables/ fruits as follows:

Cardamom - Rs 100/KG,Ginger - Rs 20/KG, Turmeric - Rs 10/KG, Buckwheat - Rs 10/KG, Orange - Rs 20/KG, Cherry Pepper - Rs 20/KG, Green Pea

- Rs 08/KG, Cauliflower - Rs 7/KG, Radish - Rs 07/KG, Carrot - Rs 07/KG, Cabbage - Rs 05/KG, Kiwi Fruit - Rs. 25/KG.

He also informed that the marketing shall be done through registered institutions namely, FPOs, SIMFED, Denzong Agriculture Cooperative Society or in facilitation of concerned VLWs, Field Assistants and designated officials.

He also elaborated upcoming Pig Production Incentives Scheme and informed that the amount of Rs. 15000/- will be presented for three pigs after they secured weight of 50kg each.

He also emphasized on the role of Cooperatives on aggregating and marketing farmers produce.

Deputy Speaker Sangey Lepcha, in his brief address, mentioned that the milching cows were distributed for socio-economic upliftment of the Chongrang cluster. He also urged every beneficiary to attend training and obtain technical skills in dairy farming in order to derive maximum benefit out of the available facilities. He expressed gratitude to the office of the District Collectorate West and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department for selecting Chongrang for the benefits.

Secretary AH&VS Department Dr Sangey D Bhutia urged beneficiaries to take optimum benefit of availed facilities and informed that the department will provide training to the beneficiaries in near future. He also urged beneficiaries to inform the concerned Veterinary Officer/Departmental field

functionaries against any complaints/constraints in service delivery.

Earlier, District Collector West, Karma R Bonpo marked the distribution of Milching Cows as one of the significant initiatives for the development of Chongrang block. The state government has given utmost importance to Dairy Farming, hence, the development of Chongrang block shall be geared up through the prioritized sector of Dairy farming. He advised beneficiaries to consider the token as a component for sustainable development but not as short-term benefits, so that the block can uplifted in socio-economic dimension. Further, he expressed hope that Chongrang would be the highest milk producing block in near future.

Thereafter, the Minister led field inspection in the YuksomTashiding Constituency and firstly visited Milk Collection Centre at Gerethang followed by Labing VLW Centre. The Visiting team then stopped at Labing Milk Producers Cooperative Society, where Sharma handed over Provisional Sanction Intimation of Rs. Five Lakhs to the MPCS Committee Members/Land Donor.

Thereafter, the visiting team stopped at Mangtabong Milk Collection Centre, where he handed over Sanctioned intimation of Five Lakhs each to both Mangtabong and Mangsabong MCC.

This was followed by visit at proposed construction site of Khyongtey

MPCS under YuksomDubdi GPU.

Later, the visiting team stopped at TsongDubdi MPCS and had a brief session, wherein the demand for transportation facilities was amicably resolved to ensure delivery of collected milk at Jorethang Milk Union via Pelling. It may be noted that four MPCS of the peripheries had transportation issues through the usual route via TashidingLegship that is currently affected due to landslide at Phamrung falls near Labing. Sharma also assured to provide Automatic Milk Collection Unit and other requirements like Milk Can.

Thereafter, the Minister had a brief halt at 13th Mile / ThinglingKhechuperi GPU and formed a committee for the registration of land of VLW Centre located at Thingling / Ward No.3. Sharma also handed over a Sanctioned document of Rs Five Lakhs each to both Thingling and Darapthang Milk Collection Centre. After listening to impressive procurement of around three hundred litres of Milk at Lamathang Milk Collection Centre and demands of dairy farmers, he assured to establish a Society House at the locality in view of dairy potential.

Later, the daylong inspection concluded with the visit at Melli Village Milk Collection Centre under Melli Aching GPU and Boom MPCS under RimbiTimbrong GPU.

The programmes and field visits were carried out with due adherence to Covid-19 protocol.

"Uncharitable Analysis": Chief Justice on projected 45 million case pendency in courts

NEW DELHI, 17 JUL [PTI]: The projected statistics that pendency in Indian courts has reached 45 million cases, which is perceived as the inability of the Indian judiciary to cope with the caseload, is an "overstatement" and an "uncharitable analysis" and one of the factors contributing to judicial delays is "luxurious litigation", Chief Justice of India N V Ramana said on Saturday.

He said conflicts are unavoidable in any society for various reasons, including political, economic, social, cultural and religious, and there is a need to develop mechanisms for conflict resolution and referred to the Mahabharata, providing an example of an early attempt at mediation as a conflict resolution tool.

Mediation is deeply embedded into the Indian ethos and was prevalent before the British adversarial system in India, various forms of mediation were being practised as a method of dispute resolution, he said.

Delivering his keynote address at the India-Singapore Mediation Summit "Making Mediation mainstream: Reflections from India and Singapore", Justice Ramana said many Asian countries have a long and rich tradition of collaborative and amicable settlement of disputes.

"The great Indian epic, the Mahabharata, actually provides an example of an early attempt at mediation as a conflict resolution tool, where Lord Krishna attempted to mediate the dispute between the Pandavas and Kauravas. It may be worthwhile

to recall that the failure of mediation led to disastrous consequences," he said.

He also shared a funny anecdote capturing the attitude of judges in this adversarial system, when a judge was sipping his early morning coffee, flipping through the newspaper and his granddaughter approached him and said, "Grandpa, my elder sister has taken away my toy." The judge's immediate response was "Do you have any evidence?"

"Mediation, as a concept, is deeply embedded into the Indian ethos. Long before the arrival of the British adversarial system in India, various forms of mediation were being practised as a method of dispute resolution. Disputes were often resolved by the chieftains or elders of the community

"However, the establishment of the British courts system, in 1775, marked the erosion of community-based indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms in India. The British judicial system has ultimately become the framework, with appropriate modifications, for the current judicial system in India," he said.

He said there are a few contributing factors that have revived the Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in India and one of them is related to judicial delays.

"The often-quoted statistic that "pendency" in Indian courts has reached 45 million cases, which is perceived as the inability of the Indian judiciary to cope with the caseload. This is an overstatement and an un-

charitable analysis.

"The term pendency is used to refer to all cases which have not yet been disposed of, without any reference to how long the case has spent in the judicial system. This would mean that a case which was filed yesterday gets added to the pendency statistics. This is, therefore, not a useful indicator of how well, or poorly, a system is doing," Justice Ramana said.

Admitting that the issue of judicial delays is a complex problem, not just in India, he said several factors contribute towards such a situation.

One of them is an Indian phenomenon called - "luxurious litigation", he said. "It is a specific type of litigation wherein parties with resources attempt to frustrate the judicial process and delay it by filing numerous proceedings across the judicial system. Undeniably, the prevailing pandemic has also contributed to our woes," the CJI said.

"Judges in India, particularly in the constitutional courts, often burn the midnight oil to meet their judicial and administrative case load," he said, adding that the second factor contributing to the growth of ADR relates to the increased access to justice here.

The CJI said nearly 70 per cent of the population are eligible for benefits under various schemes of legal service authorities.

"ADR mechanisms, particularly mediation and conciliation, can reduce pendency, save resources and time, and allow

litigants a degree of control over the process and outcome of their dispute resolution process...

"Apart from enhancing and clarifying the law as to mediation, the Supreme Court of India also made an active effort on the administrative side to improve the mediation landscape in India," he said and added that there are nearly 43,000 mediation centres here and since 2005, nearly 3.22 million cases have been referred and nearly 1 million cases have been settled by mediation up to March.

Justice Ramana asserted that given the growing scope of mediation, it is time for India to enter mission mode.

To popularise mediation as a cheaper and faster dispute resolution mechanism, a movement needs to be launched, he said.

"Prescribing mediation as a mandatory first step for resolution of every allowable dispute will go a long way in promoting mediation. Perhaps, an omnibus law in this regard is needed to fill the vacuum," he said.

Justice Ramana stressed on the need for mediators to undergo training sessions to keep themselves updated as their role has now evolved from that of a passive facilitator to a role involving advisory participation.

Chief Justice of Singapore Sundaresh Menon also delivered his keynote address at the event and congratulated Justice Ramana on his appointment as the CJI and said he looks forward to working on various initiatives taken by the courts.

Mass Covid testing drive at Rateypani



NAMCHI, 17 JUL (IPR): A mass testing drive was held at Upper and Lower Passi village under Rateypani Gram Panchayat Unit today.

The team from Namthang Primary Health Centre led by Medical Officer, In-charge, Namthang PHC,

Dr Mingyur D Lassopa, Dental Surgeons: Dr Sushmita Chettri and Dr Ayesha Chettri collected RT-PCR samples and did RAT test respectively.

A total of 35 RAT test was done whereas a total of 236 RT-PCR samples were collected. In RAT

test 27 people were found to be Covid-19 positive.

During the mass testing BDO (Namthang), Ram Tamang also carried an awareness drive on Covid-19 related appropriate behaviour amongst the general public.

Uttarakhand High Court questions ban on slaughterhouses in Haridwar district

Nainital, 17 Jul [PTI]: Questioning the constitutionality of a ban on slaughterhouses in Haridwar district, the Uttarakhand High Court has said a civilisation is judged by the way it treats its minorities.

Hearing a petition filed by residents of Manglaur challenging the ban on slaughterhouses in Haridwar district on Friday, a division bench of the High Court comprising Chief Justice R S Chauhan and Justice Alok Kumar Verma said, "Democracy means the protection of minorities. A civilisation is judged only by the way it treats its minorities and a ban like Haridwar's questions the extent to which the state can determine a citizen's options."

The petition said the prohibition goes against the right to privacy, the right to life, and the right to freely practice religion and discriminated against Muslims in Haridwar where towns

like Manglaur have a substantial Muslim population.

"Denying hygienic and fresh non-vegetarian food to people of Haridwar district across the limitations of religion and caste amounts to hostile discrimination," the petition said.

In March this year, the state had declared all areas of Haridwar "free from slaughterhouses" and cancelled the NOCs issued to slaughterhouses.

The petition claimed the ban was "arbitrary and unconstitutional". The petition challenged this for two reasons: a blanket ban on meat of any kind is unconstitutional, as is Section 237A that the Uttarakhand government had inserted into the Uttar Pradesh Municipalities Act, to give itself the power to declare an area under a municipal corporation, council or Nagar panchayat as a "slaughter-free" zone.

The court said the petition has raised "serious fundamental questions" and would involve a constitutional interpretation.

On similar issues, the Supreme Court had earlier raised concerns that "meat ban cannot be forced down the throat of anyone. Tomorrow, you will say nobody should eat meat," the High Court said.

Keeping this in mind, the High Court observed, "The question is whether a citizen has the right to decide his own diet or whether that will be decided by the state."

However, the court maintained that this is a constitutional issue not restricted by festivals and the case needed proper hearing and deliberations.

Hence, it is not possible to conclude it in time for Bakrid which falls on July 21, the court said, adding that the next hearing of the petition will be held on July 23.

No ICU beds in 60% of district hospitals in Assam: Minister

GUWAHATI, 17 JUL [NDTV]: As many as 60 per cent of district hospitals in Assam do not have ICU beds, and the facility is not available in any of the sub-divisional civil hospitals (SDCHs) in the state, Health and Family Welfare Minister Keshab Mahanta informed the assembly on Friday.

In response to a question by Congress member Nurul Huda, the minister said that out of 25 district hospitals in the state, only 10 have ICU beds. The total number of ICU beds in district hospitals is 178.

ICU beds are being arranged in seven such hospitals, he added.

There are no ICU beds in any of the 15 SDCHs in the state, Mr Mahanta said.

While 20 of the district hospitals have oxygen beds, eight SDCHs have that facility.

The number of oxygen beds in district hospitals is 458 and it is 63 in SDCHs, according to the minister.

Five district hospitals have neither ICU beds nor oxygen beds, while 11 have both facilities, which include one district hospital with semi-ICU beds. The state's district hospitals and SDCHs have 4,839 and 994 beds respectively, the minister said.

The minister also informed the House that 40 PSA (Pressure Swing Adsorption) Oxygen Generator Plants have been sanctioned by the Central government for the state, out of which nine have been commissioned.

Ten more PSA plants with foreign aid or under corporate social responsibility (CSR) of various organisations have also been proposed, of which one has already been in-

stalled.

The state government has proposed the installation of 14 PSA Oxygen Generator Plants, with a total output capacity of 7000 litres per minute (LPM), Mr Mahanta added.

Meanwhile, the minister said that Kamrup Metropolitan district which primarily comprises the city of Guwahati has recorded the highest number of Covid-19 cases and deaths in the second wave of the pandemic since April.

Kamrup Metro and West Karbi Anglong districts also have the highest and lowest number of vaccinated people respectively, Mr Mahanta said while replying to a question by BJP legislator Terash Gowalla.

Altogether 79,24,641 doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been administered in the state till July 11.

At the top of the vaccination list is Kamrup Metropolitan where 9,64,953 vaccine doses have been administered so far, followed by Dibrugarh with 4,40,150 doses and Nagaon with 4,26,149 doses.

Altogether 54,104 vaccine doses have been administered in West Karbi Anglong district till July 11, placing it at the bottom of the vaccination list. South Salmara Mankachar (56,053) and Dima Hasao (77,555) are the two districts above it.

As many as 3,13,672 new cases have been detected during the period in the state, Mr Mahanta said.

Kamrup Metropolitan has so far reported the highest number of cases at 55,744 in the second wave from April 1 to July 10. It is followed by Dibrugarh (21,616) and Kamrup Rural (18,486).

Blood Donation Camp held at Namthang



SUMMIT REPORT NAMTHANG, 17 JUL:

Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim (VBDAS) with the support of District Blood Bank Namchi conducted another Voluntary Blood Donation Camp at Namthang Primary

Health Centre (Health and Wellness Centre) on 16 July, a press release informs.

The camp collected 32 units of blood to support and fulfill the requirement of blood at District Hospital Namchi. Donors from Phongla,

Nagi, Kabrey, Karek, Namthang Alley, Palitam, Maneydara and Ruchung donated blood during the camp. On the occasion, VBDAS presented a token of love to Namthang PHC and letter of appreciation to Director of Services to Mankind, Sujit Pradhan.

Manipur imposes curfew for 10 days to control Covid situation

IMPHAL, 17 JUL [PTI]: To prevent a spike in Covid cases, the Manipur government today announced the imposition of curfew in the state from Sunday to July 27 with exemption to some essential services.

The declaration was made by Chief Secretary Rajesh Kumar, who is also chairman of the state disaster management authority.

An order was issued by the chief secretary in this connection, stating that the situation warrants stricter measures to bring down the spread of the infection.

Curfew has been imposed across the state from July 18 to July 27, he added.

Only essential services related to vaccination, Covid testing, medical services including hospitals, clinics and pharmacies, water supply, power supply, police, telecom and internet services, air travel, agriculture, horticulture, garbage clearance, Petrol pumps, LPG distributors and goods trucks are allowed, the order said.


Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with chief ministers of eight North-eastern states through video conferencing.

He had expressed concern over big crowds thronging hill stations and market areas without masks and social distancing.

He had also said the vaccination drive needs to be ramped up to combat the third wave of the pandemic.

The virtual meeting was attended by chief ministers of Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, and by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, among others.


Manipur recorded 1,128 new Covid cases Friday that took its tally of positive cases to 82,688. The Northeastern state has registered 1350 Covid deaths so far, and there are 9033 active cases in the state at present.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	Precautions to Prevent nCoV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome, and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
Treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7029372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p>



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Make Space for People in the Public Domain

Enough of dictating terms while pretending to confer

Certificates of Identification, Old Laws, land acquisition, statehood, identity chauvinism, territorial integrity, seat reservation, lockdown, unlock... these are some of the issues that have been in the news of late. There have been many comments issued in the public domain on these matters, but start scratching the nature of reactions and it quickly becomes apparent that most of the voices come out from the same bouquet of opinionators. Public opinion is claimed by those who have traditionally usurped the privilege to speak from the people, an empowerment which now allows them to dictate even though they might be claiming to be conferring and set the agenda even when they are supposedly trying to build consensus.

There is a small clutch of voices which occupies the public domain and while there is nothing wrong in holding opinions and broadcasting them, the quality of debate suffers in the absence of variety or new voices. The region, unfortunately, is afflicted by a paucity of representative voices which can claim to be genuinely speaking for a wide section of people. The public space is monopolised by political viewpoints, each comment anchored in the political position projecting the view. It does not help that political personalities and leanings infiltrate other organisations with ease and get their views echoed from there as well. The ruling and the Opposition groups and all sections and fronts aligned with either of them react on expected lines and never surprise with the positions they take and rarely enlighten with lucid explanations or justifications. And no, they stopped explaining their actions a long time ago.

The priority for them is to embarrass or dominate the other side and this they pursue with spite instead of reason. The media allows them the platform to exchange their barbs, and while all of this can be very entertaining, it is rarely informative. Refer to the short list with which this piece begins and it becomes obvious that though many allegations, counter allegations, justifications and claims have been made on these issues, the issues themselves remain largely under-explained and widely misunderstood. Because the political voices get so belligerent in these debates, the unattached voices hesitate from entering the discussions because that would attract immediate political branding which most apolitical stances would be uncomfortable with. It is time that this hesitation was overcome, because the people's right to know and understand is suffering as a result.

The process can be initiated if genuinely apolitical groups and organisations, even social organisations, overcame their passivity and engaged more energetically on issues that concerned the people, tried to understand them better and then shared their informed stands. Until that happens, as far as the people are concerned, they will view debates on all issues only as rants and counter-rants between political opponents, not as important discussions which could affect them.

WRITE US:

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

Silenced in China: the COVID 'truth-tellers' and political dissent

TAO ZHANG
theconversation.com

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan in early 2020, one focus of international reporting has been the Chinese authorities' handling of the story. The BBC, CNN, the New York Times, AP, among others, have investigated the attempt to construct an official narrative of the pandemic domestically and internationally.

These reports cite a number of Chinese whistleblowers – citizen journalists and archivists who save and republish articles deleted from websites and social media by the government – who have tried to expose the government's campaign of censorship over the outbreak in Wuhan.

Though rapidly suppressed, these "COVID truth-tellers" as they became known, provide a window through which to glimpse the nature of political dissent in China today, as well as the increasingly repressive nature of Xi Jinping's regime.

As China is poised to overtake the US to become the world's largest economy, while simultaneously projecting an increasingly ambitious and often rhetorically confrontational "wolf warrior" foreign policy stance, it is crucial to understand the sources of this internal dissent and potential opposition.

While scholars still debate the nature of civil activism in China, it's hard to deny the fundamental social shifts and growing objection to state control among many Chinese. US-based scholars Guobin Yang and Merle Goldman and Paris-based Sebastian Veg have all documented various forms of online activism, pro-democracy and environmental NGOs, rights activists and grassroots intellectuals in the past three decades. One demographic – young and educated urban activists – have become key players.

The "COVID truth-tellers" – mostly lawyers, journalists or NGO workers in their 20s or 30s – emerged from this constituency. Their reports and online posts are not isolated acts of single-issue activism, but broader signs of a melting of the "ice age" of political dissent in China.

A range of values, challenging to the party's official ideology, motivate the dissent of these activists: Christian belief, pre-communist Republican intellectual heritage and a liberal or democratic human rights stance. Such beliefs and values, distinct but overlapping in many ways, have resur-

faced since China's "open-door" policy ushered in an era of engagement with the rest of the world.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICAL DISSENT

Zhang Zhan is a citizen journalist with a distinctly Christian stance. A former lawyer, her legal licence was revoked due to her involvement in "rights defence" activities. Zhang's posts on Twitter and videos on YouTube – independently reporting on the outbreak in Wuhan – are accompanied by demands for freedom of speech alongside prayer for the redemption of the regime and intercession for its victims.

As a study by Lian Xi of Duke University in the US suggests, this is typical of how significant numbers of public intellectuals in China have, since the turn of the century, "discovered in their newfound Protestant faith, a sacred ground upon which they stand in opposition to the arbitrary powers of the Party-state".

Lian also places China's most prominent dissident, Liu Xiaobo, among these "cultural Christians". Liu's book *No Enemies, No Hatred* demonstrates the link between Christianity and his belief in non-violent struggle for democracy. Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2009 and died of liver cancer in jail in 2017 at the age of 61.

More recently, Xu Zhiyong, the leader of New Citizen Movement – a network of civil rights activists – has cited Christianity as a source of inspiration for peaceful civil activism in his book *To Build a Free China: A Citizen's Journey*. The movement's slogan, "Free, Righteous, Loving", captures the spirituality underpinning Zhang Zhan's courageous reporting of the Wuhan outbreak. Xu was detained in 2020 and charged with "subversion of state power". He faces life in prison if convicted.

REPUBLICAN LIBERTIES

Two other citizen journalists – Chen Qiushi, a lawyer, and Li Zehua, a vlogger – demonstrate a different source of political dissent in their accounts of the Wuhan outbreak. Chen's Tik-tok videos, reposted on Twitter, and Li's YouTube video showing his pursuit by police in Wuhan, both cite influential Republican intellectual figures – from the period after the last Emperor abdicated in 1912 to the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949 – as the "spine" of the nation.

This enthusiasm for pre-Communist cultural icons is linked to what Cambridge University scholars Zhang Qiang and Robert Weatherley call

"Republican fever". Their study explores how the Chinese Communist Party's calculated move since the 1980s to relax control of the discussion on the Republican period to enhance its own legitimacy has backfired.

Chen and Li are among the many who developed an appreciation of the civil liberties of the Republican period and began to see a Republican national identity as an alternative to the propagandised PRC national identity. Chen is under house arrest, while Li hasn't been seen since he uploaded a video to his YouTube channel in April 2020.

BATTLING FOR FREE SPEECH

Archivists Chen Mei and Cai Wei have preserved COVID information that had been deleted from Chinese websites and social media sites by the authorities. Although not so visible on social media, their opposition to official media censorship is supported by their commitment to human rights and civil liberty.

In an email exchange with Chen Kun, Chen Mei's brother who is in exile in France, he told me that Chen Mei's archival activism began in 2017 during his involvement in a New Citizen Movement action to help migrant workers in Beijing targeted by a campaign of government eviction.

Chen and Cai both adopted liberal values from Li Ren, an independent educational organisation – now shut down – associated with "cultural Christianity". Both are in custody and awaiting trial.

The COVID truth tellers, then, are motivated by various issues, but share a passion for freedom of speech and democracy. Their dedication to truth-telling and a peaceful transition to constitutionalism in China has led to severe punishment.

The ruthlessness of this suppression, as veteran China observer Andrew Nathan points out in his article on the CCP's 100th anniversary, derives from the CCP's anxiety over maintaining a monopoly on power. According to Nathan: "The CCP has made sure that there is no organised political alternative, so many Chinese believe that the party's collapse would mean chaos."

This – and the fate of those who dare to question the official narrative presented by the CCP – demonstrates the deep incompatibility between liberal democratic values and China's one-party regime.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer, School of Arts & Humanities, Nottingham Trent University]

COVID data is complex and changeable – expecting the public to heed it as restrictions ease is optimistic

MANUEL LEÓN URRUTIA
theconversation.com

Throughout the pandemic, public health decisions have been based on the government's interpretation of data. With COVID restrictions lifting in England on Monday July 19, that onus will now fall primarily on the general public – and the news media that keeps them informed.

The success of this shift from government responsibility to public responsibility will be a fundamental factor in how successfully the UK plots its path out of the pandemic. And at its heart it's a question of data literacy, or the ability of the public to understand and make informed decisions – about mask-wearing, self-isolation and home-working – based on the COVID data they're exposed to.

As an expert in data literacy, I've watched as data has assumed a central role in determining the degree of society's freedom since March 2020. Niche statistical jargon and data visualisations are now widespread in the public domain, with specialist data sites such as Johns Hopkins COVID-19 Map and the Worldometer's coronavirus page receiving a surge of traffic.

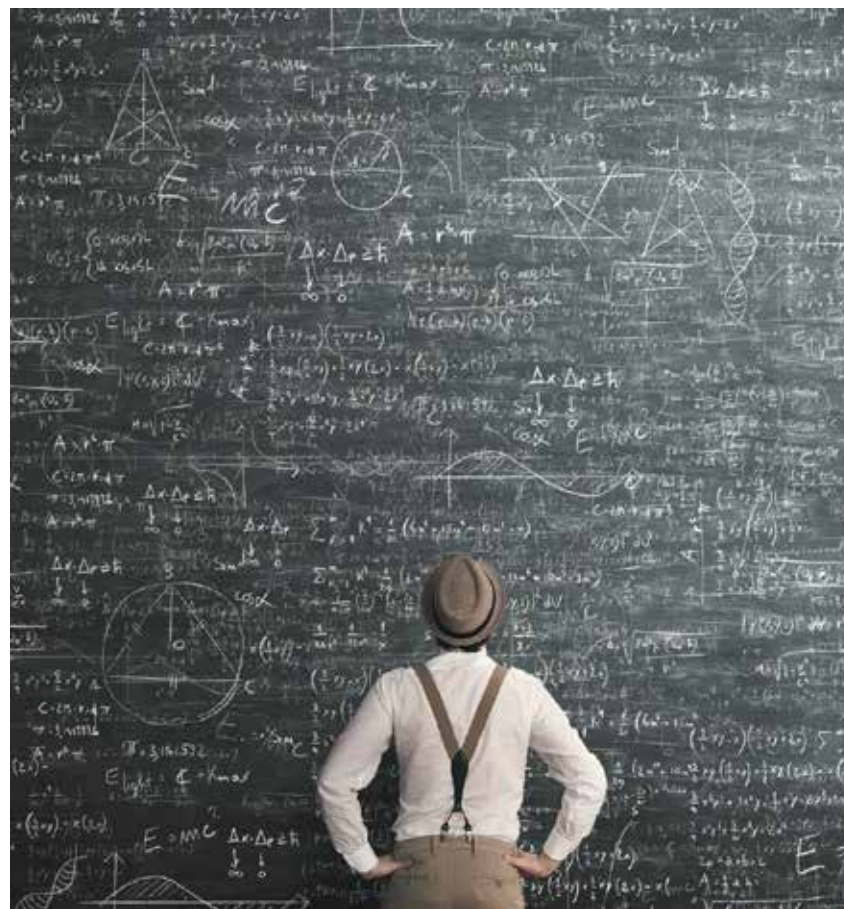
But are English people really ready to digest the deluge of COVID data on their own? One study has already suggested that lockdown ending will result in the public taking COVID-19 less seriously. Coupled with the fact that COVID data is complex and subject to constant change as new variants emerge and spread, it's unclear whether the general public is prepared to make informed, data-driven decisions after July 19.

DATA INDIGESTION

I find it tempting to celebrate the public's expanding access to data and familiarity with terms like "flattening the curve". After all, a better informed society is a successful society, and the provision of data-driven information to the public seems to contribute to the notion that together we can beat COVID.

But increased data visibility shouldn't necessarily be interpreted

as increased data literacy. For example, at the start of the pandemic it was found that the portrayal of COVID deaths in logarithmic graphs confused the public. Logarithmic graphs control for data that's growing exponentially by using a scale which increases by a factor of ten on the y, or



vertical axis. This led some people to radically underestimate the dramatic rise in COVID cases.

The vast amount of data we now have available doesn't even guarantee consensus. In fact, instead of solving the problem, this data deluge can contribute to the polarisation of public discourse. One study recently found that COVID sceptics use orthodox data presentation techniques to spread their controversial views, revealing how more data doesn't necessarily result in better understanding. Though data is supposed to be objective and empirical, it has assumed a political, subjective hue during the pandemic.

These examples show that data literacy must accompany data availability in the coming weeks and months. Only a data-literate public can make decisions that keep everyone as safe as possible. And empowering the public with this competency is in turn the responsibility of

journalists and educators. MAKING SENSE OF INFORMATION Journalists are vital conduits between the scientific community and the general public. Data journalism in particular, a relatively small subset of journalism before the pandemic, has been essential in communicating how the scientists who inform governments reached their decisions. Yet data journalists themselves may not be as data literate as the scientific community. Attempts by journalists to portray accurate accounts of the COVID situation are not always successful. Countries hit early by the

pandemic, such as Italy, were also the first to reveal the limitations of data journalism, and have since provided valuable reports on the lessons they learned. In 2019, there were only 20 data journalists in the whole of Italy.

This is where educators come in. The pandemic has only strengthened the case presented by academics for data literacy to be included in the curriculum at all educational levels, including primary. This could help citizens navigate our data-driven world, protecting them from harmful misinformation and journalistic malpractice.

Data literacy does in fact already feature in many higher education roadmaps in the UK, though I'd argue it's a skill the entire population should be equipped with from an early age. Misconceptions about vaccine efficacy and the severity of the coronavirus are often based on poorly presented, false or misinterpreted data. The "fake news" these misconceptions generate would spread less ferociously in a world of data literate citizens.

To tackle misinformation derived from the current data deluge, the European Commission has funded projects such as MediaFutures and YourDataStories. Media Futures aims to reshape how the media uses data, while YourDataStories aims to develop tools to bring data-driven information suppliers closer to journalists, with a focus on open data. The Commission also funds data literacy education across the EU, indicating how seriously public authorities are now taking data literacy.

Data literacy is the key to harnessing the value of data in order to make smart and safe decisions. Suppliers and consumers of COVID information have a shared responsibility to make sense of the data deluge as the UK government pulls pack and eases restrictions. But with data literacy still lacking, even among data journalists, efforts must now be made to educate the public about how best to read data.

[the writer is Senior Teaching Fellow, Department of Electronics and Computer Science, University of Southampton]

Mamoni Bazar - an exclusive market for women



SILCHAR, JUL 17 (PTI):

An exclusive market for women - 'Mamoni Bazar' - for the sale of products of Self Help Groups (SHGs) has been set up as a step towards their empowerment at Dinnathpur Bagicha in Assam's Cachar district.

This market is the first of its kind in Barak valley and the project is under a sustainable convergence project for the

village which is a model one, Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerti Jalli said while inaugurating the market on Friday.

"The step taken for building a mahila market is undoubtedly an enthusiastic one towards women empowerment and these should be opened in every nook and corner of the district", she said,

The work to set up women's market are al-

ready in progress in Dholai and Sonai, she added.

"It was decided to open a market exclusive for women as a woman is the backbone of her family who takes care of her children, cooks food, teaches her children and tries to save every single penny for the welfare of her family", Jalli said.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Gaon Panchayat president to

ensure that only women can sell products in this market.

She assured that the women of various Self Help Groups, who will sell their products in these markets, will be imparted training regularly to increase their production and sale.

Regular monitoring will be done by the concerned district heads of various departments

like agriculture, fishery, handloom and textile along with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).

The market will run on a daily basis and the operational cost will be very low, she said.

An amount of Rs 10 lakh was spent on the construction of the market shed under the District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT).

India records 38,079 fresh Covid cases, 560 deaths

New Delhi, Jul 17 (PTI): India recorded 38,079 new coronavirus cases, which took the infection tally to 3,10,64,908, while the death toll reached 4,13,091 with 560 more fatalities, according to Union health ministry data updated on Saturday.

The active cases have declined to 4,24,025 and comprise 1.36 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 97.31 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

It said that active COVID-19 cases have decreased by 6,397 in a span of 24 hours.

The ministry said that 19,98,715 tests were conducted on Friday, taking the total cumulative tests conducted for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 44,20,21,954.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.91 per cent and it has been

less than three per cent for 26 consecutive days, it said.

The weekly positivity rate stands at 2.10 per cent, according to the health ministry.

The number of people who have recovered from the disease has risen to 3,02,27,792, while the case fatality rate has increased to 1.33 per cent, the data stated.

The total vaccine doses administered has reached 39.96 crore under the nationwide vaccination drive.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20 lakh-mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16 last year.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore-mark on December 19 last year.

India crossed two crore cases on May 4 and three crore cases on June 23.

The 560 new fatalities included 167 deaths from Maharashtra and 130 from Kerala, the ministry said.

In total, 4,13,091 deaths have been reported in the country, including 1,26,727 from Maharashtra, 36,079 from Karnataka, 33,652 from Tamil Nadu, 25,023 from Delhi, 22,711 from Uttar Pradesh, 17,980 from West Bengal and 16,215 from Punjab.

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

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

Mizoram registers 483 new COVID-19 cases, one more death

AIZAWL, JULY 17 (PTI):

At least 483 more people, including 127 children, have tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, pushing the state's tally to 26,690, an official statement said on Saturday.

One more fatality pushed the toll to 120, the statement said.

Aizawl district reported the maximum number of new cases at 279, followed by Kolasib at 59, Lunglei at 52, Mamit at 36, Lawngtlai at 28 and Siaha at 27.

According to the statement, 58 new cases were detected through RT-PCR test at Zoram Medical College (ZMC) here, eight via TrueNat and 417 with the help of Rapid Antigen test.

One patient has travel history, while the remaining 482 were found to have contracted the infection locally.

Mizoram currently has 5,741 active cases, while 20,829 people have recovered from the



infection. The recovery rate stands at 78 per cent and the fatality rate at 0.44 per cent.

Over 5.51 lakh samples have been tested thus far, including 5,026 on Friday, the statement added.

State immunisation officer Dr Lalzawmi said as many as six lakh people have been inoculated in Mizoram, of which over 1.2 lakh have received both the doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Meanwhile, the state government has revised the discharge protocol.

A meeting of all stakeholders were held on Thursday, following which it was decided that a person, after 10 days of treatment, may be released from COVID care facilities without having to undergo the discharge test, provided he or she does not have fever or any other symptom in the last three days, official sources here said.

Earlier, it was mandatory for the patient to obtain a COVID-negative report to be able to secure his or her release from the care facility.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands report 4 new COVID-19 cases

PORT BLAIR, JUL 17 (PTI):

Four new COVID-19 cases were reported in Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the last 24 hours, pushing the tally in the union territory to 7,505, a health department official said on Saturday.

Two cases were detected during contact tracing and two were airport arrivals, the official said. All passengers arriving by flight have to undergo mandatory RT-PCR test before they are allowed entry into the islands, he said.

The COVID-19 death toll in the archipelago remained at 129 as no fresh fatality due to the contagion was reported in the last 24 hours, the official said.

The union territory now has 16 active COVID-19 cases and all the

patients are in the South Andaman district while the other two districts - North and Middle Andaman and Nicobar - are now COVID-19 free.

One more patient was cured of COVID-19, taking the total number of recoveries to 7,360.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has tested 4,23,910 samples for COVID-19 till date and the cumulative test positivity rate is 1.77 per cent, the official said.

A total of 2,51,493 people have been inoculated so far, of which 1,73,186 people have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 78,307 people have received both doses of the vaccine, he said, adding that the total population of the union territory is 4 lakh.

Assam Police rescues 9 girls trafficked to Kerala

GUWAHATI, JUL 17 (PTI):

The Assam Police has rescued nine girls who were trafficked to Kerala and arrested two persons, a senior officer said on Saturday.

The survivors and the accused are being brought back to Assam, Special Director General of Police G P Singh said.

"An information was received by @Hojai_Police about an illegal human trafficking racket operating from Assam, in which several girls belonging to various districts in Assam have been trafficked to Tham-

panoor, Kerala," Singh tweeted.

Based on specific inputs, a case was registered at Lanka police station in Hojai district on July 11 under several sections of the Indian Penal Code, and a team of eight police personnel left for Kerala on July 13 to rescue the victims and apprehend the accused, he said.

The girls hail from Hojai, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Morigaon and Kamrup Rural districts, while the accused are from Hojai and Nagaon, Singh added.

Assam needs 75 lakh doses per month to vaccinate population by Dec

GUWAHATI, 17 JUL [NDTV]:

Assam needs at least 75 lakh doses of anti-Covid vaccines every month to inoculate all eligible adults by December this year.

Assam Health Minister Keshab Mahanta said this while replying to a query raised by Leader of Opposition Debabrata Saikia during Question Hour of the Budget Session last Thursday.

According to the health department sources, Assam has been receiving an average of 25 lakh doses per month, at least 50 lakhs short than the required figure, since the Centre's revamped vaccine drive was launched on June 21. Before that, states had been procuring vaccines for those aged between 18-45 years on their



own. Assam has so far administered 86,38,873 doses as of July 16.

In his reply in the Assembly, Mr Mahanta said that Assam requires 4.62 crore doses of vaccines to inoculate its entire eligible population with both doses of vaccines - which means the state has so far achieved only 18 per cent of its target.

Vaccination for health and frontline workers in Assam had begun in mid-January along with the

rest of the country. For the 18-45 group, vaccination began on May 1. It was sped up from June 21, when the state government promised to vaccinate three lakh people every day.

The vaccination drive, however, hit a snag soon after a few days due to the shortage of doses

Currently, Assam has 2 lakh doses and it is in the process of procuring 3,89,678 more doses, Mr Mahanta said in his reply.

Foundation of Dibrugarh airport's runway extension laid

DIBRUGARH, JUL 17 (PTI): The foundation of Dibrugarh Airport's runway extension project was laid by the Airports Authority of India to mark the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav), officials said on Saturday. The foundation stone ceremony on Friday was attended by Dibrugarh Deputy Commissioner Pallav Gopal Jha as chief guest, Airport Director Ramjee Awasthi and other officials.

The project, with an estimated cost of Rs 35 crore, will increase the length of the runway of the Dibrugarh airport from the current 1,830 metre to 2,290 metre.

The deadline for completing the project is December 31, 2022.

Airport officials said that the project will enhance the safety of aircraft operation, lessen the load penalty to the aircraft apart from reducing the minima to operate in low visibility with CAT-I lighting system.

Currently, the construction work of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower and hanger is also going on at the airport at a cost of Rs 31 crore.

The ATC tower and hanger will be completed by March 31, 2022. The

new ATC tower with increased height, equipped with all modern facilities like fully air-conditioned lifts and LED lights will enhance air traffic management as well as overall safety at the Dibrugarh airport.

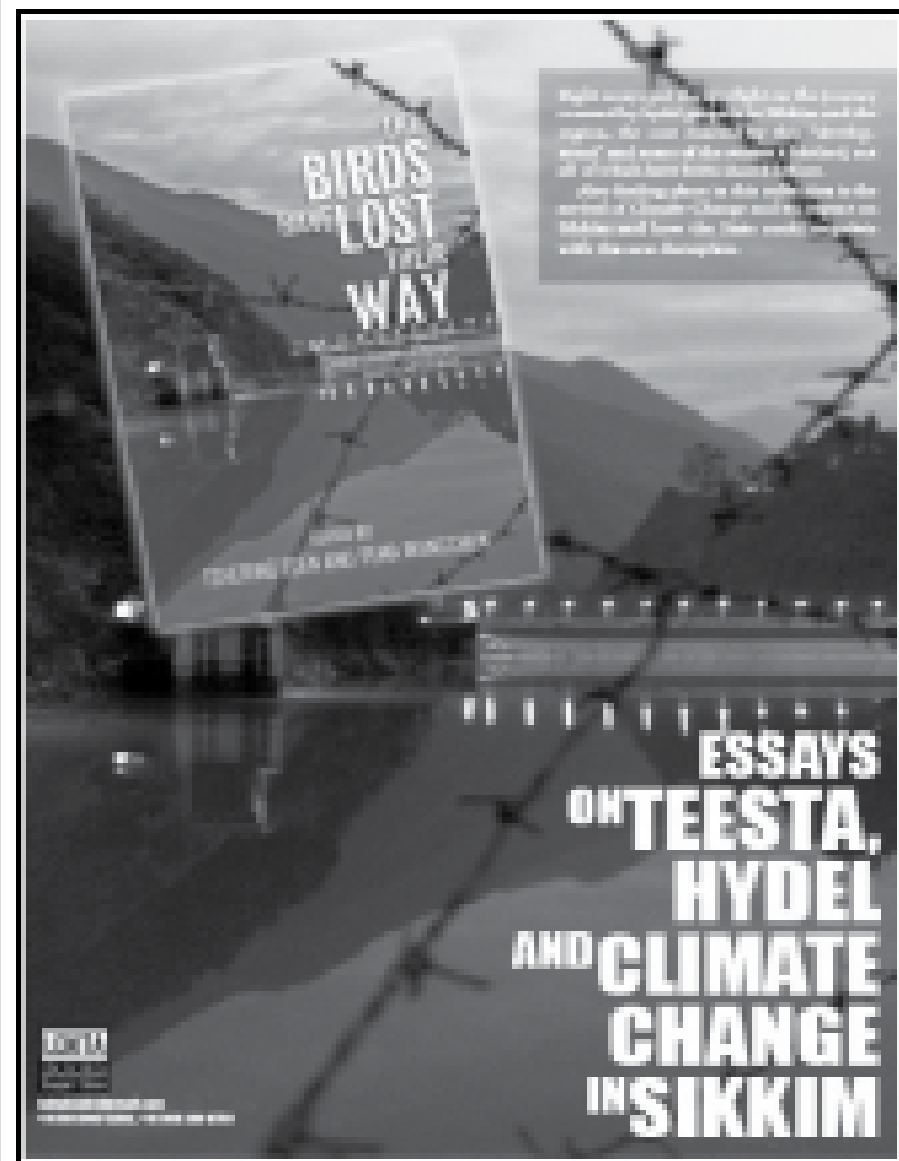
The easternmost airport of the country, the Dibrugarh airport, located at Mohanbari, 15-km away from Dibrugarh town was built in the early 1950s.

The airport is well linked through direct or indirect flights to all prime cities of the country and handles in excess of 3.5 lakh air passenger traffic annually. Over the last decade, the airport has witnessed a significant growth of around 112 per cent of passenger traffic, officials said.

In February 2009, the old Dibrugarh airport building was replaced by a state-of-the-art integrated terminal building.

Spread over 1,13,410 square feet, the terminal building has a seating capacity of 500 passengers, 10 check-in counters and 5 remote parking bays.

Located at a height of 362 feet above sea level, the airport is equipped with night landing and aerobridge facilities, the official added.



HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

First resident of Olympic Village tests positive for COVID

TOKYO, JUL 17 (AP): The first resident of the Olympic Village has tested positive for COVID-19, Tokyo Olympic organizers said on Saturday.

Officials said it was not an athlete with the the Games opening in just under a week on July 23.

Tokyo officials including Seiko Hashimoto, the president of the organizing committee, confirmed the case and said the positive test was Friday.

Organizers say for confidentiality purposes they can only offer a vague description and few details.

In the current situation, that positive cases arise is something we must assume is possible, said Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the Tokyo organizing committee.

The person is identified simply as a games-concerned personnel. The person is also listed as a non-resident of Japan. Tokyo officials said the person was placed in a 14-day quarantine.

The Olympic Village on Tokyo Bay will house about 11,000 athletes during the Olympics and thousands of other staff.

IOC President Thomas Bach said this week there was zero risk of athletes in the village passing on the virus to Japanese or other resident of the village.

Organizers say since July 1 and as of Saturday, 44 people under their jurisdiction have tested positive. None involved people living in the village and most are identified as contractors for Tokyo 2020 and games-concerned personnel." The list includes one athlete who tested positive on July 14 and three members of the media.

Of the 44, only 12 are listed as non-resident of Japan.

Organizers say that athletes and staff who have been away from Tokyo at training camps are excluded from this list and their accounting.

Tokyo officials said they could not give an estimate of the number of people in the village as of Saturday.

New COVID-19 cases on Friday in Tokyo were reported at 1,271. They were 822 a week ago, and it marks the 27th straight day that cases were higher than a week previous. New cases on Thursday were reported at 1,308, which was the highest in six months.

Oosthuizen sets 36-hole Open record, stellar cast behind him

SANDWICH, ENGLAND (AP): Louis Oosthuizen set a 36-hole record at the British Open and is halfway to ending that run of near misses at the majors.

Now all he has to do is hold off a cast of major champions on the weekend at Royal St. George's.

On a day of pleasant summer weather that took the fear out of the links off Sandwich Bay, Oosthuizen broke away from a three-way tie with a birdie-birdie-eagle run from the 12th hole. He shrugged off his first bogey of the week for a 5-under 65 and a two-stroke lead on Friday.

Former PGA champion Collin Morikawa had a 64 in the morning and was two shots behind. Another shot back was Jordan Spieth (67), going after his fourth major.

Lurking was two-time major champion Dustin Johnson, the No. 1 player in the world who shot 65 and was tied for fourth, four strokes behind Oosthuizen.

"The game is good, but I know it's a really good leaderboard," Oosthuizen said. "I'll have to play good golf this weekend if I want to come out first."

Oosthuizen, looking as calm as the conditions, was at 11-under 129, breaking the 36-hole Open record first set by Nick Faldo in 1992 at Muirfield and matched by Brandt Snedeker in 2012 at Royal Lytham& St. Annes.

This will be the fifth time in the last nine rounds at a major that Oosthuizen, the 2010 Open champion at St. Andrews, has had at least a share of the lead. He was runner-up at the last two majors,



to Phil Mickelson at the the PGA Championship in May and to Jon Rahm the U.S. Open last month.

"I'm not really going to think about the second spots," said Oosthuizen, when asked what he'll do differently this time. "I know my game is in a good place."He'll also be aware of the quality of player behind him, though.

Morikawa, making quite a debut in links golf, made seven birdies in his first 14 holes as part of a clinic in iron play. He missed a 5-foot par putt on No. 15 — ending a 27-hole stretch without a bogey — and had a 10-foot birdie putt on the final hole catch the lip.

Spieth, four shots behind Morikawa when he teed off,

was tied for the lead after 12 holes and then played the last six holes in 1 over, a stretch he described as "frustrating." He had plenty of looks at birdie, but the putts didn't drop like they did on Thursday.

"I don't know, I think I need to bring more food on the golf course tomorrow," said Spieth, who has already lifted the claret jug before at Royal Birkdale in 2017. "I got really just in a weird head space, like fatigued there on like the 13th green as we were waiting and hitting putts."

Then there was Johnson, a runner-up at Royal St. George's in 2011, who stuck his approach at the last to 3 feet for a birdie and a round of 65, which left him at 7 under

with Dylan Frittelli of South Africa (67) and Scottie Scheffler (66). The weather is expected to stay benign over the weekend, potentially favoring Johnson if the fairways firm up and the ball runs longer and faster.

"I feel like I'm in a good position heading into the weekend," he said.

One shot behind an eclectic mix of players at 6 under — including two more South Africans in Justin Harding and Daniel Van Tonder as well as Germany's Marcel Siem, who qualified from a second-tier Challenge Tour event last week — were Rahm (64) and Brooks Koepka.

Koepka, a four-time major winner and seemingly always

in contention at golf's biggest events, made four birdies in his last five holes for a 66, then continued his petty feud with Bryson DeChambeau with perhaps the best shot of his round.

During a television interview, Koepka said he was driving it great, adding: "I love my driver" — a clear nod at DeChambeau, who complained on Thursday that his driver "sucks."

DeChambeau doesn't look like being a factor this weekend at Royal St. George's but he's sticking around after shooting a 70, which saw him make the cut on the number at 1 over.

Rory McIlroy will be, too, needing a birdie on the final

hole for another 70. He was 11 shots behind and set to stay on four majors until 2022. "That's sort of been the way for the last couple months," McIlroy said. "It's felt close, but it just hasn't quite been close enough."

Other big names weren't so lucky: No. 7 Patrick Cantlay, No. 9 Patrick Reed and former Open champions Francesco Molinari and Henrik Stenson were among those headed home.

A sign of the favorable weather that has confronted the world's best players this week — there was barely a drop of wind at times on Friday — is the fact the cut was at 1-over 141. The previous lowest cut at Royal St. George's was 143.

Sindhu has improved on her defence, worked on motion skills for Olympics: Park

NEW DELHI, JUL 17 (PTI): A weak defence was the reason behind P V Sindhu's slip in performance early in the year and the COVID-induced break has helped her address the flaw and also work on her motion skills ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, said India's foreign coach Park Tae-sang.

The 42-year-old, who was roped in for India's men's singles players in 2019, has been training Sindhu following the departure of fellow Korean coach Kim Ji Hyun after the Basel World Championship two years ago.

"Sindhu's defence is weak compared to her attack. So I have been focussing on her defence training before the Olympics," Park, who was the national coach with the Korean team from 2013 to 2018, told PTI.

"When Olympic was postponed, I thought it was an opportunity to work on her motion skills, and net training. All top players like Akane Yamaguchi, Tai Tzu Ying all know that Sindhu has got a strong attack, so they wait for her powerful smash.

"So we have tried to work on her defence which has been her weakness. So the idea was to help her get some variation from the back of the court, like playing more drops or tosses or half smashes."

Sindhu didn't get much success after returning to the court following the COVID-19 break. She exited at the first round and quarters of the first two Super 1000 events in Thailand and also failed to



reach the knockout stage at the World Tour Finals.

The Indian, however, made it to the finals of Swiss Open only to suffer a demoralising loss to Spain's Olympic champion Carolina Marin. She also went down without a fight against Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong in All England semifinals.

"I know a lot of people felt there was something not right with her physical strength when she lost in Thailand Open but it wasn't so. She reached the Swiss final, and All England semifinal and fitness has not been a problem," Park said.

"Her defence was the one only problem. (Carolina) Marin and Pornpawee (Chochuwong) are good attacking players, they were using a lot of half smash and straight smash, and when Sindhu's defence goes down

on a day, it affects her other skills as well, she gets nervous.

"But now she has improved a lot in her defence as well. Her endurance on the court is also good."

With Marin pulling out of the Games due to a knee injury, Park has no doubt that Tai Tzu would be Sindhu's biggest rival at the Olympics.

"Tai Tzu will be the number one rival of Sindhu at the Games. She also doesn't have a good record against Ratchanok. Both Tai Tzu and Ratchanok in Thanon have great pick up speed, they have great motion skills," he said.

"They make opponents run across the court with their deceptions and they are technically very strong."

So how do you prepare against such quality players training at the Gachibowli Stadium?

"We had 3-4 boys from Suchitra academy sparring with her every day. Sometimes it is 3 to 1, like one at the front and two at backcourt or some rotation for various durations like 5 to 10 minutes," he explains.

"I would instruct the boys to play some particular strokes to confuse Sindhu like a motion cross, slice smash, body smash so that it improves her defence.

"A lot of time is also spent watching old videos of the players and analysing their games."

Park is also aware of the problems that the Chinese duo of Chen Yu Fei and He Bing Jiao can pose to Sindhu, especially since they haven't played since the 2020 All England Championship.

"...we don't know their current conditions and styles. But they know Sindhu's style since she has participated in the tournaments this year,"

Park said.

"I am aware of this. So we are watching all old videos like the 2019 world championship or the World Tour Finals where she has played these players and then having open conversations about the games."

With the last three qualifiers being cancelled, will lack of match practice be an issue? "All players are sad that events got cancelled. Since All England no event was possible but this is a good chance ...it gave us a chance to work on Sindhu's motion skills.

"...the thing is opponent also don't know about Sindhu's new skills and we also don't know their skills. So same condition for all but I like to see it as an opportunity."

Park also feels lack of spectators at Tokyo due to COVID-19 will actually help Sindhu when she takes on the Japanese players.

"...Japan has a strong badminton contingent and Sindhu is likely to play against them in the knockout stage so they won't be able to cheer for their players, so good for Sindhu, there won't be any home advantage."

The Korean, who had participated in the 2004 Olympics, hasn't been home since February last year.

"My daughter is four now. I could just stay with them for 13 days. It is sad but training Sindhu has also been a great challenge and I hope I can help India win its first gold in badminton," he signed off.

UEFA compensates dropped Euro 2020 hosts with Europa finals

NYON, JUL 17 (AP): UEFA compensated Dublin and Bilbao on Friday for dropping them as European Championship hosts by awarding each city a future Europa League final.

Dublin will host the 2024 final and Bilbao the 2025 climax. The Basque region city will also stage the Women's Champions League final in 2024.

UEFA said its executive committee made the decisions as part of a settlement agreement recognizing the efforts and financial investment put by the two cities to prepare for Euro 2020.

Dublin and Bilbao were selected by UEFA in 2014 among 13 intended host cities. Both were dropped in April because local authorities could not guarantee to UEFA letting enough fans safely into the stadiums within restrictions enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Istanbul was also compensated after being stripped of hosting the Champions League final for the second straight year during the pandemic. Portugal stepped in both times, hosting at Lisbon then Porto. UEFA confirmed Istanbul will host the final in 2023, pushing Munich's scheduled turn back to 2025. Wembley Stadium in London retains the 2024 Champions League final despite chaotic organization of the Euro 2020 final there last Sunday.

CONTACT

SUMMIT TIMES
REPORTERS

SINGTAM

8170070813

MANGAN/ DIKCHU

9832612485/

9434011213

GANGTOK

9800571148

8116388176

9832424750

8016270440

Desperate for vaccines amid surge, Iranians flock to Armenia

YEREVAN, JUL 17 (AP): In Iran, the urgency of getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is growing by the day. A crush of new cases fueled by the fast-spreading delta variant has threatened to overwhelm Iranian hospitals with breathless patients too numerous to handle.

But as deaths mount, and the sense swells that protection for most citizens remains far-off, thousands of desperate Iranians are taking matters into their own hands: They're flocking to neighboring Armenia.

In the ex-Soviet Caucasus nation, where vaccine uptake has remained sluggish amid widespread vaccine hesitancy, authorities have been doling out free doses to foreign visitors a boon for Iranians afraid for their lives and sick of waiting.

I just want her to get the jab as soon as possible, said Ahmad Reza Bagheri, a 23-year-old jeweler at a bus stop in Tehran, gesturing to his diabetic mother who he was joining on the winding 20-hour road trip to Armenia's capital, Yerevan.

Bagheri's uncle had already received his first dose in the city and would soon get his second. Such stories have dominated Iranian social media in recent weeks, as hordes of Iranians head to Armenia by bus and plane.

Acting Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said last week that foreigners, including residents, have accounted for up to half of about 110,000 people who were vaccinated in the country. Armenia administers AstraZeneca, Russia's Sputnik V and China's



CoronaVac vaccines.

In Iran, which has the highest COVID-19 death toll in the Middle East, less than 2% of the country's 84 million people have received both doses, according to the scientific publication Our World in Data.

Although the sanctions-hit country has imported some Russian and Chinese vaccines, joined the U.N.-supported COVAX program for vaccine sharing and developed three of its own vaccines, doses remain scarce. Authorities have yet to inoculate nonmedical workers and those under age 60, promising that mass vaccinations will start in September.

I can't wait such a long time for vaccination," said Ali Saeedi, a 39-year-old garment trader also waiting to embark on the journey at a Tehran bus station. Officials have delayed their plans for public vaccination many times. I'm going

to Armenia to make it happen.

Others, like 27-year-old secretary Bahareh Khanai, see the trip as an act of national service, easing the daunting inoculation task facing Iranian authorities.

It remains unclear just how many Iranians have made the trip to get vaccinated, as Armenia also remains a popular summer getaway spot. But each day, dozens of buses, taxis and flights ferry an estimated 500 Iranians across the border. Airlines have added three weekly flights from Iran to Yerevan. The cost of bus tours has doubled as thousands devise plans. Travel agents who watched the pandemic ravage their industry have seen an unprecedented surge in business.

The number of our customers for the Armenia tour has tripled in recent weeks, said Ahmad, the manager of a tour agency in Tehran who declined to give his last

name for fear of reprisals.

The surge of Iranians has inundated Armenia's coronavirus testing centers, leaving scores stranded in the buffer zone, Iranian semi-official ILNA news agency reported, with several fainting from the heat. Roughly 160 kilometers (100 miles) away in Yerevan, hundreds of Iranians lined up to get a vaccine shot, with some sleeping on the streets to secure a place.

Hope sustains them through the long lines under an unforgiving sun, in the streets of the Armenian capital, Iranians cavort to Farsi music outside vaccine centers, clapping as they receive doses, videos show.

We couldn't expect that our humanitarian act would become popular and spread so much and that we would have a big flow of foreigners, Armenian Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan told reporters.

Our citizens are our priority, but I repeat again that the pandemic doesn't recognize citizenship."

But even as Armenian authorities encourage vaccination tourism, the sheer number of Iranians flooding vaccination centers has pushed Armenia to tighten the rules.

At first, Iranian vaccine-seekers headed for clinics in the southern border town of Meghri. A local doctor, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media, reported seeing at least 100 Iranians vaccinated there over the past few weeks.

But last week the government decreed that foreign visitors can only receive a jab at five designated AstraZeneca mobile clinics in Yerevan, and, in an apparent bid to boost the country's tourist sector, must spend at least 10 days in

Armenia before getting vaccinated.

Now, the profile of Iranian visitors is changing, as cross-border bus jaunts become extended vacations, with some flights routed through Qatar. The surge in interest has also pushed up the price, putting the journey out of reach for all but the wealthy.

Ethicists, who said they otherwise wouldn't take issue with needy foreigners securing excess shots shunned by citizens, say the price hike and new 10-day requirement exacerbates the stark inequalities in the pandemic.

"It increases the money and time required ... and so the inequity of who is going to be able to participate, said Alison Bateman-House, an assistant professor of medical ethics at New York University.

More broadly, she added, vaccination vacations, like all travel in a time of contagious virus variants, carries unintended consequences" and increases the possibility of disease transmission. A fairer alternative, she noted, would be for Armenia to transfer its surplus doses to the international COVAX initiative.

But for many in Iran, where scores are dying daily in an outbreak that has exhausted the health system and economy, the cost of waiting has grown too high.

Mohammad Seifpour, a 48-year-old Tehran resident, grimly surveyed the crowds of Iranians at the Yerevan vaccine clinic.

This is just because of the horrible situation we are facing," he said.

SKorea removes banners at Olympic village after IOC ruling

SEOUL, JUL 17 (AP): South Korea's Olympic committee said Saturday it has removed banners at the Olympic athletes' village in Tokyo that referred to a 16th-century war between Korea and Japan after the International Olympic Committee ruled it was provocative.

In agreeing to take down the banners, the South Koreans said they received a promise from the IOC that the displaying of the Japanese rising sun flag will be banned at stadiums and other Olympic venues. The flag, portraying a red sun with 16 rays extending outward, is resented by many people in South Korea and other parts of Asia who see it as a symbol of Japan's wartime past.

The South Korean banners, which drew protests from some Japanese far-right groups, had been hung at the balconies of South Korean athletes' rooms and collectively spelled out a message that read: I still have the support of 50 million Korean people.

This borrowed from the famous words of 16th-century Korean naval admiral Yi Sun-sin, who according to historical lore told King Seonjo of Korea's Joseon Kingdom I still have 12 battleships left before pulling off a crucial victory against a larger Japanese fleet during the 1592-1598 Japanese invasions of Korea.

South Korea's Olympic Committee said it was told by the IOC that the banners invoked images of war and went against Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which says no kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.

The committee said it agreed to remove the banners after the IOC promised to also apply the same

rules to the rising sun flags and ban them at all Olympic venues.

Under the agreement, the committee will not raise any further debate to allow athletes to fully focus on competition, while the IOC will ban the displaying of the rising sun flag at all Olympic venues so that no political problems would arise, the South Korean committee said in a statement.

South Korea had first formally requested the IOC to ban the rising sun flag at the Olympics in 2019, comparing it to the Nazi swastika. South Korean Olympic officials then said Tokyo's organizing committee rejected their demands for the flag to be banned, saying it was widely used in Japan and was not considered a political statement.

Many South Koreans still harbor animosity over Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, and the countries have seen their relations sink to new post-war lows in recent years with disputes over history, trade and military cooperation.

The countries have been trying to improve relations since the inauguration of U.S. President Joe Biden, who have called for stronger three-way cooperation with the traditional U.S. allies in face of the North Korean nuclear threat and challenges posed by China. But progress has been slow.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry on Saturday summoned Japanese Ambassador Koichi Aiboshi to protest remarks made by another senior Japanese diplomat who, according to a local broadcaster, used lewd language to ridicule South Korean President Moon Jae-in's efforts to improve bilateral ties while meeting with its reporters.

Pakistan parliament passes FATF-related bill

ISLAMABAD, JUL 17 (PTI): Pakistan's parliament has passed a bill for providing legal assistance in international criminal matters as part of efforts to fulfil the conditions set by the global financial watchdog FATF.

The Mutual Legal Assistance (Criminal Matters) Amendment Bill was passed by the Senate, the upper house, on Friday amidst protest by the Opposition.

Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in June, 2018 and was given a plan of action to complete it by October, 2019. Since then the country continues to be in that list due to its failure to comply with the FATF mandates.

According to the statement of objects and reasons of the bill, an increase in transnational organised crime has made it necessary for the international community and Pakistan to improve the effectiveness of legal instruments because lack of uniformity in law and weak coordination mechanism between countries affects combating

of crimes across borders.

To overcome these challenges, the essential legal cover is required, it said.

International cooperation in criminal matters through mutual legal assistance and extradition is intended to bridge existing gaps in respective countries toward effective law enforcement. The requested state will provide mutual legal support to the requesting state by executing necessary actions on its territory in any specific criminal case warranting shared assistance, it read.

However, Opposition parties tried to stop it by saying that it would give unhindered power to the government to hand over to other countries Pakistani citizens based on allegations.

Dawn reported that the amendments proposed by Mushtaq Ahmad of Jamaat-i-Islami, who said the bill was against fundamental rights, Constitution, principles of natural justice and national interest, were rejected by a voice vote.

The bill was passed by majority vote as the Opposition kept on

expressing its reservations.

Senator Ahmad called it a black day in the parliamentary history of the country and said the government could take action against a person by confiscating his property made through money laundering etc under the law without issuing him a notice and this was against the principles of justice.

He said the government would hand over Pakistani nationals to other countries without any notice.

He alleged that the government was paving way for the release of Shakeel Afridi, who helped the CIA track down Osama bin Laden in 2011, and Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav, through the proposed bill, an allegation rejected by the government later.

With Pakistan's continuation in the 'grey' list, it is increasingly becoming difficult for Islamabad to get financial aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Union, thus further enhancing problems for the debt-ridden nation.

Thailand tightens measures as daily cases cross 10,000

BANGKOK (AP): Thailand has tightened coronavirus restrictions and warned of further measures as daily cases surpassed 10,000 and the death toll hit a record 141 on Saturday despite an overnight curfew in Bangkok and several other provinces.

The surge since April has overwhelmed hospitals, strained the economy and thrown tourism recovery plans in doubt. The vaccine rollout, hindered by supply problems, is slugging with some 5% of the population fully vaccinated and 15% only partially.

"I would like everyone to realize our necessity to impose stricter measures soon. We all may get affected and be inconvenienced in many ways," Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha wrote on his Facebook page late on Friday.

Cases have been climbing particularly in Bangkok and surrounding provinces. The government imposed additional measures overnight including a ban on any gatherings and activities

that can spread the virus, including anti-government rallies that have criticized Prayuth's handling of the pandemic.

Violators face up to two years in prison and/or a fine of up to 40,000 baht (\$1,220).

Prayuth said the forthcoming additional measures seek to limit people's mobility as much as possible, close down virtually all non-essential places and implement strict work from home. He said the government's medical committee will discuss and study the lockdown measures in other countries carefully before approving the new ones.

To ease the pressure on hospitals, Prayuth said authorities are considering allowing people to test themselves at home with antigen test kits.

Thai health authorities said Wednesday they will seek to impose limits on exports of the locally produced AstraZeneca vaccine because the country doesn't have enough for its own needs. Production of the AstraZeneca

jabs at a Thai factory has fallen short of its target, likely delaying the government's plan to acquire a total of 61 million doses until next May.

"The government will speed up securing as many vaccines as we can from everywhere and we've never blocked the private sector from securing alternative vaccines," Prayuth said on Facebook, addressing some of the criticism of his management of the crisis.

He has earlier announced plans to allow the entry of vaccinated travelers without requiring them to quarantine on arrival starting in mid-October. Since July 1, the government has reopened the tourist island of Phuket to fully vaccinated tourists under strict health conditions including staying on the island for 14 days while being tested for COVID-19. It had previously vaccinated most Phuket residents.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Thailand has reported 391,989 confirmed cases and 3,240 fatalities.

Sun shining at Open, McIlroy opens with birdie

SANDWICH, ENGLAND (AP): The Latest on the British Open (all times local): 12 p.m.

Rory McIlroy has been finishing his rounds well at the British Open. Now he has started one well, too.

McIlroy opened his third round at Royal St. George's by rolling in a 10-foot putt for birdie at No. 1 and moved to 1 under overall. That earned the biggest roar so far on

a sunny morning at the links off Sandwich Bay.

Bryson DeChambeau opened his third round with eight straight pars. He remained at 1 over for the tournament.

Both players are a long way off the lead held by Louis Oosthuizen at 11-under 129. That's a 36-hole record at the British Open.

Oosthuizen is out at 3.55 p.m. local time with Collin Morikawa.



One should be able to use their success to take more risks, not less: M Night Shyamalan

NEW DELHI, JUL 17 (PTI): Indian-American filmmaker M Night Shyamalan, famed for his twist endings in Hollywood, says the initial success he achieved after "The Sixth Sense" started to feel like a trap as it blinded him with a desire to get accepted.

The filmmaker followed the 1999 movie's success with blockbusters -- "Unbreakable", "Signs" and "The Village" but his career saw a dip in the mid-2000s with critically panned "Lady in the Water", "The Last Airbender" and "After Earth".

Shyamalan, who is back with his latest thriller "Old" about a family's beach vacation gone wrong, says he cherishes the knowledge that came from those years as it allowed him to return to the kind of cinema he started with.

"I think for a time a period of about six years, I wanted to be accepted. And the moment that you're willing... whether it's in high school, on the job, or in a relationship, if one is willing to let go of who they are, to be accepted, they're on the wrong path and are going to be unhappy," Shyamalan told PTI in a Zoom interview.

It was the year 2015 that marked the writer-director's return to delivering critical and financial success with low-budget "The Visit" becoming his first big hit in almost seven years. There has been no looking back for Shyamalan ever since with blockbusters like "Split" (2017) and "Glass" (2019), the two films that complete his "Unbreakable" trilogy.

"The irony is, you won't get what you think you're going to get 'acceptance'. And then you realise that Wow, I was really powerful when I thought I wasn't powerful'. One should be able to use their success to take more risks, not less. What we often do is the exact opposite. We use our success to trap us. And now you can't do what you did when you first started."

The director said his aim now is to ensure that his name is synonymous with the feeling in the audience that they are going to experience something never-seen-before.

Citing an example of "Old", the director says that he is a firm believer in art representing the artist even if it doesn't lead to a golden run at the box office.

"If 'Old', goes out and doesn't do well at the box office, it's still a giant win. For me, it really is, because it's so specific, only I could have made it, and the audience will be more interested to come for

the next movie because it's so specific."

Shyamalan started his journey in Hollywood in the 1990s when diversity and inclusivity were not the hot topics they are today in the American culture and cinema.

For the Puducherry-born filmmaker, who had no connection to the world of entertainment with his parents working in the medical field, joining Hollywood was propelled by his desire to change

pra Jonas, DeepikaPadukone, Huma-Quereshi and Ali Fazal among others have made the cut in Hollywood by collaborating with the Wachowskis, D J Caruso, Zack Snyder and Kenneth Branagh, Shyamalan is yet to work with any of the artists from his home country.

The director said he is more than eager to work with Indian actors and keeps inquiring about them from his wife, an avid Indian cinema and televi-



what it needs to be an American.

"In my career, I have been an immigrant mainstream filmmaker in Hollywood for all this time, way before the world knew how to deal with it."

Shyamalan recalls how people in the American film industry were shocked and fascinated to have somebody who looked different but was telling their stories.

"It was a fascinating example of almost the kind of hey, I'm going to change what it needs to be you. So you're going to have to include me there."

With diversity in cinema, the definition of being an "American" has also expanded, bringing about a welcome change for Indian actors in Hollywood.

When he started, Shyamalan remembers none of the major mainstream Indian actors were part of big-budget Hollywood tentpole movies but now they are a perfect fit to play people of different ethnicities.

"I joke about it a bit here because our profile is ambiguous. Let's say they want to have someone of diversity in films or on TV, Indian actors cover a huge space on this spectrum."

While Indian actors Priyanka Cho-

sion viewer.

"My mind has gone there a few times. My wife loves watching TV. So when I sit on the couch with her and I see what she's watching, I'm like, 'that actor would be interesting'. So it's an eye-opener. I think it's coming soon, hopefully."

But he is not willing to name names.

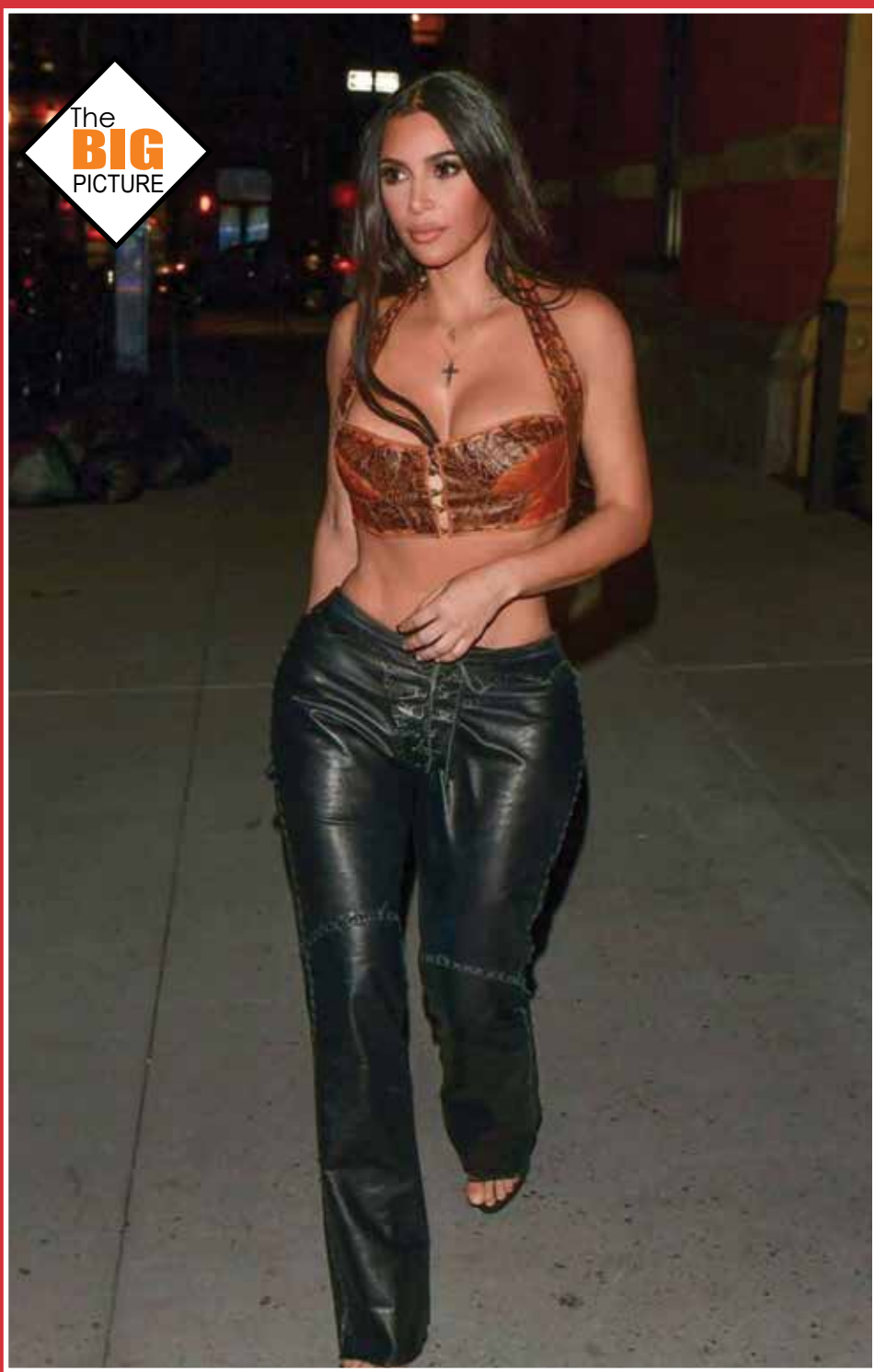
"There are a few actors I like, but I don't want to say so that others don't feel bad. I try to be careful about that. But there are a few who have been on my mind," he said.

A Universal Pictures movie "Old" is inspired by the graphic novel "Sandcastle", written by Pierre Oscar Levy and illustrated by artist FrederikPeeter.

It centres on the group of people who find themselves aging with horrifying alacrity on a beach. The film's trailer is already a hit.

Shyamalan has penned the movie adaptation, which features Mexican superstar Gael Garcia Bernal, Thomasin McKenzie, Vicky Krieps, Rufus Sewell and Ken Leung.

Nikki Amuka-Bird, Abbey Lee, Aaron Pierre, Alex Wolff, EmbethDavidtz, Eliza Scanlen, Emun Elliott, and Kathleen Chalfant round out the cast.



HEY KIM! The reality star, Kim Kardashian steps out in a brown halter top paired with leather pants at Carbone restaurant in New York City.

Director Kate Herron says she is not returning for 'Loki' S2

LOS ANGELES, JUL 17 (PTI): "Loki" season one director Kate Herrons says she is not part of the second season of the Marvel Studios series, starring Tom Hiddleston as the titular anti-hero.

The renewal was announced in the end credits for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) show's season one finale, when the God of Mischief's case file is branded with the stamp: "Loki will return in Season 2."

In an interview with Deadline, Herron said she is elated that the audience loved her work on the series, but she would now focus on other "stuff".

"I'm not returning. I always planned to be just on for this, and to be honest, Season 2 wasn't in the that's something that just came out, and I'm so excited. I'm really happy to watch it as a fan next season, but I just think I'm proud of what we did here and I've given it my all. I'm working on some other stuff yet to be announced," Herron said.

Asked if she will be working on any Marvel movie project, the filmmaker said she would love to work with the studio again.

"I'm just focused on my own stuff at the moment. I love Marvel and I'd love to work

with them again, but my outing with 'Loki' is what I've done with them," she added.

"Loki", Marvel Studios' third series at Disney Plus, centred on Hiddleston's witty master of magic, who lands at Time Variance Authority (TVA) following the events of 2019's feature film "Avengers: Endgame".

While the movies have mainly touched



upon Loki's mischievous side, the series gave an insight into what hides beneath the wickedness of the fan-favourite villain.

Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige served as executive producer on the show along with Herron.

"Loki" season one also featured Owen Wilson, GuguMbattha-Raw, Sophia Di Martino, WunmiMosaku and Richard E. Grant.

Michael Waldron was the head writer.

Dwayne Johnson wraps filming for 'Black Adam'

LOS ANGELES, JUL 17 (PTI): Production on Dwayne Johnson-led DC anti-hero movie "Black Adam" has concluded, the Hollywood star said.

Taking to Twitter, Johnson gave a shout out to the team of "Black Adam" and said shooting for the film was an "incredible journey".

"That a wrap on 'Black Adam'. Incredible journey. Hardest undertaking of my entire career physically & mentally. Worth every second," the Hollywood star tweeted on Friday.

"Boundless gratitude to my 1,000+ crew members, actors and director, Jaume Collet-Serra. The hierarchy of power in DC Universe is changing," he added.

"Black Adam" is a spin-off from Warner Bros and New Line Cinema's "Shazam!",

featuring Zachary Levi.

The character first appeared in DC Comics in the 1940s as a villain corrupted by power. He became an anti-hero in the early 2000s.

Jaume Collet-Serra, who has directed Johnson in the upcoming "Jungle Cruise", has directed "Black Adam".

The movie also features Aldis Hodge as Hawkman, Noah Centineo as Atom Smasher, Quintessa Swindell as Cyclone, and Pierce Brosnan as Dr Fate.

Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani wrote the latest draft of the script, from a previous draft by Adam Szykiel.

Johnson has also produced the movie with Dany Garcia and Hiram Garcia via their Seven Bucks Productions, and Beau Flynn through FlynnPictureCo.

James Gunn says 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3' is a heavier story

LOS ANGELES, JUL 17 (PTI): Filmmaker James Gunn has teased that the third chapter in the "Guardians of the Galaxy" movie series has a "heavier story".

Gunn previously directed "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 1" (2014) and "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2" (2017), featuring a ragtag group of superheroes from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

The director said he will start work on "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 3" after wrapping "Peacemaker", the HBO Max spin-off series to the upcoming DC movie "The Suicide Squad".

Aries:

In this physical reality of ours, change is a constant and continuous process. Summer gives way to autumn, and before you know it, it's winter once again. Let this be a reminder that it's okay to grow out of old jobs, old friends, old houses. It's okay to grow out of certain aspects of yourself that you once considered sacred. Unless you let go of the idea of how things should be, you will not be able to make space for new and wonderful things to come your way.

Tip: Let go.

Taurus:

Separation is an illusion, Taurus. You are a part of Source energy, and Source is dancing the dancing of life through you. It's time to remember this connection, beautiful. It's time to remember who you are and your truth. So, make a conscious effort to retreat into that space of silence. As you do, trust what is being revealed to you by your superconsciousness.

Tip: It's time to remember your truth.

Gemini:

There are people who calculate their wealth in terms of the digits in their bank, but you're not one of those people, Gemini. You understand that your true assets are love, abundance and happiness. Not to mention, the soul connections that bring joie de vivre to your

life and inspire you to be the best version of yourself.

So, offer a prayer of gratitude for all that you have and all that you are yet to receive from the Universe. PS: You are blessed in more ways than you can count, beautiful.

Tip: When the cup is about to runneth over.

Cancer:

It's been a rollercoaster ride, Cancer, with one karmic lesson after another. But it feels oh-so-good to be on the side! Yes, this is the calm after the storm, beautiful. Your official movement into balance. So, keep things simple this weekend. Take all the time out you need to integrate. Remember, you don't have to do it all alone. Your soul crew will be more than happy to render their support at a time like this.

Tip: This is the calm after the storm, beautiful.

Leo:

The trouble is, we try to control every aspect of our life. We play tug of war with the forces instead of accepting what's coming through. Just for today, you're being asked to let go of your idea of perfection. To accept where you are in your journey and what's being shown to you in this moment. What the cards want you to know: trusting the law of divine timing will help you make space for miracles.

Tip: Trust the law of divine timing instead of trying

to rush things.

Virgo:

It's been a roller coaster ride, Virgo, and a terribly exhausting one at that! So instead of pushing yourself to keep going further, hit the pause button. Take that much needed breather. A yin yoga session or a therapeutic massage are some of the ways in which you can unwind. If spending time outdoors is an option, reconnect with Mother Gaia. Meditating in the open is a good way to get your body and being into balance.

Tip: Take time to decompress.

Libra:

It's one of those days, Libra. You're one with the flow and are feeling inspired to bring a little more art and little more magic into everything you say and do. So, connect with your inner child in a conscious manner and know that joy and laughter are the most sacred gifts you can offer the Universe. As such, love and romance are also going to be important themes for you this weekend. Give yourself the permission to express what's in your heart freely, and know that your amour will be delighted to meet you halfway.

Tip: You're one with the flow.

Scorpio:

The brightest of days gives way to the night, and the

darkest of nights is followed by day. Both pleasure and pain exist in equal measure, Scorpio. So, accept the human experience in its entirety. Be grateful for all the colours in the spectrum—the good, bad and ugly. What the cards want you to remember is that you are on the brink of something beautiful, even though your physical reality will have you believe otherwise.

Tip: You are on the brink of something beautiful, beautiful.

Sagittarius:

The connection you share is both sensual and soulful—a rare and precious bond that cannot be put into words. So, stay open to where this connection is taking you, and know that your openness will hold space for your love to grow. Archers who've had to stay apart for certain reasons are being reminded that the Wheel of Fortune is turning in their favour. Trust the law of divine timing, beautiful. Trust that the Universe is working overtime to bring the two of you together.

Tip: Trust the law of divine timing.

Capricorn:

Your love is medicine, Capricorn. An elixir so sweet that it can bring hope to the lonely and the broken-hearted. But before you pour into the cup of another, fill your own. Making yourself a priority is an act of self-love, beautiful. As such, you're also feeling drawn

towards ancient rituals this week, especially the ones that focus on honouring the divine feminine energy within. Channel your inner medicine (wo)man and get creative in your apothecary. Make lotions and brew potions that make you feel good about yourself. If it brings a smile to your face, know that you're on the right track.

Tip: Making yourself a priority is an act of self-love, beautiful.

Aquarius:

Your words are your gift, Aquarius. Knowledge? Your light to the world. Today, you're being asked to step into the role of the teacher/mentor, and share what you have mastered with those who are walking in the same path. The more you give, the more your ability to receive will increase. Keep this in mind as you move forward and onwards.

Tip: Your knowledge is your light to the world.

Pisces:

If everything was rainbows and butterflies at all times, we would not appreciate the highs. It is the lows that make us realise the value of bliss, ecstasy and joy. So, take a moment to be grateful for them—including the things that threatened to break you. What the cards want you to know: you are rising from your ashes, beloved.

Tip: Take a moment to be grateful for it all.