



APPARENTLY, AVATAR 2 FILMING AGAIN IS CAUSING SOME DRAMA IN NEW ZEALAND
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COVID-19'S DEADLINE FOR MEN IS REVEALING WHY RESEARCHERS SHOULD HAVE BEEN STUDYING IMMUNE SYSTEM SEX DIFFERENCES YEARS AGO
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AVA DUVERNAY AMONG SIX OTHERS ELECTED AS FIRST-TIME ACADEMY BOARD OF GOVERNORS
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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2 more COVID patients test negative, will be discharged after final test

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 JUN:

Sikkim's first COVID positive patient tested negative on Wednesday but he will have to undergo another test to be officially declared fully recovered [this is the prescribed process]. The second person to test positive for COVID in Sikkim also tested negative today and will also have to undergo another test for confirmation.

When these two patients test negative again, as is almost always the case, the number of active cases in the state, as things stand, will come down to 8, informed Health Secretary, Dr PT Bhutia in his daily health bulletin.

Meanwhile, the two women from South Sikkim, who had tested negative for COVID-19, have been discharged from the hospital on Thursday.

Another patient who had also tested negative with them is being kept under observation at the STNM hospital for a few days.



The COVID patient from Denchung, South Sikkim, who was discharged from STNM Hospital today received a warm welcome from the BDO, President of Poklok-Denchung GPU, SKM youth and concerned ASHA worker on reaching Denchung. The patient was offered flowers and khada duly maintaining social distancing protocol. She will be kept under strict home quarantine for 14 days along with her family under the supervision of the concerned Panchayat, ASHA workers and BDO, a release informs.

At the moment, ten COVID positive patients, including the two who tested negative in their first screening test today, are

lodged in the isolation ward.

It is also informed that nine persons are in the Tri-age facility of STNM Hospital.

The first COVID patient of the state is a Delhi returnee from South Sikkim who was brought from a quarantine

centre at Rabongla, South Sikkim. The second COVID patient was a Delhi returnee from East Sikkim, who was brought from

a quarantine centre at Mining Rangpo in East Sikkim.

Dr Bhutia mentioned that the second test will be con-

ducted within 24 hours of the first test and if the two test negative they will be discharged from the hospital and that will bring down the number of active cases in Sikkim to eight.

He expressed that the recovery of positive patients of the State shows the hard work and efficiency of the team of doctors and health workers of the State.

He congratulated the team of doctors and health workers for their hard work and dedication for making this possible. He also thanked the team of Microbiology Department for giving reports of more than 300 samples every day.

Likewise, he also appealed to the people to stay home and not to come out unless necessary and to always wear a mask, maintain social distancing and follow safety etiquette to support the efforts of the State government in order to make Sikkim free from COVID-19 again.

Racism hurtful, it's due to ignorance: Chhetri



NEW DELHI, JUN 11 (PTI): Indian football captain Sunil Chhetri on Thursday said racism is rooted in ignorance as he offered his views on the raging issue that has triggered violent protests across the world following African-American George Floyd's death in the US.

Asked about his thoughts on incidents of racism, Chhetri said, "It hurts me like anyone lese. It is bad. But most of time, it is due to ignorance, it is because of not knowing.

"If you catch a person who is talking these things (racist remarks) you will find he is ignorant and not knowing the things," Chhetri said during a Live Chat on Indian football team Facebook page.

"You are looking down somebody on the

basis of colour or caste or religion, it does not make any sense. There is no logic or truth in that, it should not be done," he added.

Several international cricketers like the West Indies duo of former World Cup-winning captain Darren Sammy and star batsman Chris Gayle have come forward and alleged racial abuse after Floyd's death at the hands of a white police officer.

Sammy, while commenting on the protests, had spoken about being called 'Kalu' -- a derogatory word to describe black people -- while playing in the Indian Premier League.

Chhetri said said if more people are made aware and educated about the issue, the incidents of abuse will also go down.

Sikkim's COVID warriors welcomed home with 'Aayo Corona' insults

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 11 JUN:

In a disturbing incident, COVID warriors of Sikkim who were on their way to a facility quarantine centre after returning to Sikkim were taunted by people shouting "Aayo Corona" in West Sikkim on Tuesday.

These health workers had quit their jobs in Siliguri to work in hospitals here in Sikkim. In the group were dialysis technicians and nurses, both of whom are desperately needed in Sikkim.

SummitTimes spoke to the returnees about their harrowing experience wherein they shared that they were deeply hurt by the incident.

The health workers had entered the state via Melli checkpost as



all of them were from West Sikkim. After being screened they headed towards a quarantine centre at Gyalshing and on the way, at 4-5 spots between Legship and Gyalshing people shouted 'Aayo Corona' implying that they were bringing

the virus to their area. "We felt really bad. We were not expecting to hear such things from our own people," said one of the returnees while speaking to SummitTimes.

He informed that they were a group of 5

persons, 2 of whom are nurses and 3 are dialysis technicians. They were working in hospitals in Siliguri and had got offers to work here in Sikkim, so they had quit their jobs to return home.

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India is not in community transmission stage, says ICMR

NEW DELHI, JUN 11 (PTI): India's first sero-survey on COVID-19 spread has found that lockdown and containment measures were successful in preventing a rapid rise in infections, but a large proportion of the population still remains susceptible, the government said on Thursday, asserting that the country is not in the community transmission stage. The sero-survey has two parts, the first being, estimate fraction of population that has been infected with SARS-CoV-2 in general population and the second being, estimate fraction of population that has been infected with the coronavirus in containment zones of hotspot cities, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Director General Balram Bhargava said at a media briefing

The first part has been completed and the second is ongoing, he said, adding that the survey was launched in May by the ICMR in collaboration with state health departments, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Bhargava said the study involves surveying of a total of 83 districts with 26,400 people enrolling for it. The figure that was shared with the media stated that data from 65 districts has been compiled till now.

The sero-survey has found that 0.73 per cent of the population in the districts surveyed had evidence of past exposure to SARS-CoV-2, Bhargava said.

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Sikkim's Isolation is Essential

JIWAN RAI

Little did we realize that the year 2020 would be a year that would all of a sudden clip the wings of our existence the way it did. It is up to individuals to remember the year as they like. The shocking slumping of the economy, the closing down of educational institutes, the complete shutdown of transportation, the packing up of the entertainment industry, the emptying of sports stadia -- our 'hot and happening' world was relegated to a coma.

Sikkim, like any other society, had an unprecedented opportunity to take

a deep look at its core advantages and disadvantages. We would fail our future generations terribly if we do not leverage these findings for the rebuilding of our society.

To me personally, one of the biggest realizations has been the advantage of our landlocked status, which the lockdown made only starker. Never before had I realised that our isolated location is such a tremendous blessing -- in fact, on the contrary, I had always viewed it as the exact opposite. A landlocked status comes with many hardships but the flipside to it is rewarding. Sikkim, cut off as it is from the rest of world physi-

cally, has helped us filter out a lot of potential problems. In a profound sense, our physical isolation has been a mirror image of our emotional aloofness in the country. Not that Sikkim doesn't accept its Indian nationality wholeheartedly -- but Sikkim prefers much more to accentuate the distinctive nature of the transition of Sikkimese nationality into Indian nationality.

That explains why Sikkim is inherently an identity-sensitive state. Its merger (annexation) history in India is central to our socio-political characteristics. It might come across as ultra-regionalism at times and Sikkim does need to ponder a lot of issues. However, no one can downplay Sikkim's need to preserve her Sikkimese distinctiveness in the larger Indian context. The trauma of the merger continues to haunt her. Any thought of a complete assimilation of the Sikkimese distinct identity into

India re-stirs the trauma -- as it does to many other NE states.

Sikkim must own up to the fact that the great democratic values that she has imbibed and benefitted from have been the greatest of all blessings accruing from her merger with India. Sikkim would have never seen the kind of academic, economic and political freedom and the benefits thereof outside of India. Also, the possibility of Chinese militaristic interference in Sikkim's border cannot be negated. Sikkim, by virtue of its location in such a strategically significant position between two Asian giants was hardly destined to preserve her territorial integrity. Nehru's romantic ideas about Sikkim were predictably notional.

Now that the inevitable has happened, Sikkim has prioritized a complete acceptance of Indian nationality with the all important caveat of preserving her

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Thank You!

Trump: No change at bases named for Confederate officers

WASHINGTON, JUN 11 (AP): President Donald Trump on Wednesday said his administration will not even consider changing the name of any of the 10 Army bases that are named for Confederate Army officers.

Two days earlier, Defense Secretary Mark Esper indicated that he was open to a broad discussion of such changes.

These Monumental and very Powerful Bases have become part of a Great American Heritage, a history of Winning, Victory, and Freedom, Trump wrote.

The United States of America trained and deployed our HEROES on these Hallowed Grounds, and won two World Wars. Therefore, my Administration will not even consider the renaming of these Magnificent and Fabled Military Installations.

Name changes have not been proposed by the Army or the Pentagon, but on Monday, Esper and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy indicated in response to questions from reporters that they were open to a bipartisan discussion of renaming bases such as Fort Bragg in North Carolina and Fort Benning in Georgia.

Supporters of disassociating military bases from Confederate Army officers argue that they represent the racism and divisiveness of the Civil War era and glorify men who fought against the United States. To amplify Trump's view, his press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, read his tweets to reporters in the White House briefing room. She said he is fervently opposed to changing the base names and believes that doing so would amount to complete disrespect for soldiers who trained there over the years.

The possibility of renaming the bases, McEnany said, is an absolute non-starter for Trump.

If Congress were to pass legislation requiring name changes, he would not sign it, she said. The US military recently began rethinking its traditional connection to Confederate Army symbols, including the Army base names, mindful of their divisiveness at a time the nation is wrestling with questions of race after the death of George Floyd in police hands.

The Navy and the Marine Corps are now banning public displays of the Confederate Army battle flag on their installations, casting their decision as necessary to preserve cohesion within the ranks. Ten major Army installations are named for Confederate Army officers, mostly senior generals, including Robert E. Lee. Among the 10 is Fort Benning, the namesake of Confederate Army Gen. Henry L. Benning, who was a leader of Georgia's secessionist movement and an advocate of preserving slavery.

Others are in Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Texas and Louisiana. The naming was done mostly after World War I and in the 1940s, in some cases as gestures of conciliation to the South.

IBSD Sikkim provides essentials to VRDL STNM Hospital

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

Institute of Bio Resources and Sustainable Development (DBT-IBSD), Regional centre, Sikkim has provided essential consumables to VRDL STNM Hospital as per the requirement to support Government of Sikkim's effort to fight the corona virus pandemic, a press release informs.

The initiative of distribution of the above items was taken up by Scientist of IBSD Sikkim centre under the guidance of Director of the institute, Prof Pulok K Mukherjee. IBSD contribution of the consumables was made in view of the requirement for the newly established state's first Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (VRDL) at STNM hospital, Gangtok.

PI VRDL STNM Hospital, Dr Tara D Sharma expressed her sincere thanks to Director, Prof Pulok Mukherjee, IBSD and Department of Biotechnology, Government of India for their kind support.



"IBSD team is ready to extend any possible help with the available resources at the institute for fighting the COVID-19. Director

of our Institute would like to congratulate the whole team of State Health department and VRDL STNM Hospital who are doing yeoman's service in this tough time of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic," the release states.

Earlier, DBT-IBSD, Sikkim Centre has also

distributed hand sanitizer and surface disinfectant to frontline workers of Sikkim. It may be mentioned that IBSD centers in different parts of North East India are actively contributing in their respective state by assisting in COVID-19 testing by providing

equipments facility and consumables apart from distributing hand sanitizer to fight the pandemic.

DBT-IBSD is an autonomous institute under Department of Biotechnology, Government of India with head office at Imphal and Centre's at Gangtok, Aizawl and Shillong.

Plantation campaign begins in West Sikkim



**RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 11 JUN:**

An afforestation campaign has begun in West Sikkim wherein plantation drives are being carried out in areas around educational institutions, students' hostels and other public infrastructure. The campaign began from Girls' Hostel premises of Pelling Senior Secondary School under Yangthang constituency today.

PHE Minister cum area MLA, Bhim Hang Subba attended the first day of the plantation drive which will continue throughout the monsoon

season. Officials from forest department and locals also participated in the plantation drive today which was organized by the Forest department.

It was informed that as per the direction of Chief Minister, PS Tamang, area MLAs of all the respective constituencies of the state should initiate plantation drive in their constituency as a move towards afforestation of each constituency in the state.

Flowering plants like Rhododendron, Angelica and a medicinal plant that is rare to Sikkim 'Ti-

nospora Cordifolia' were planted today around the girls' hostel premises.

Forest department officials informed that the target is to plant 1000 plants of distinct varieties ranging from flowering plants, medicinal herbs and others in each constituency of West Sikkim during rainy season.

Minister Subba urged individuals and groups to carry out plantation drives in their locality.

DFO, Tenzing Norbu Bhutia informed that the department is ready to provide saplings to those interested.

Corbett, Rajaji to open for eco-tourism activities



RISHIKESH, JUN 11 (PTI): Uttarakhand Chief Wildlife Warden Rajiv Bhartari has given his consent for conditional opening of the Corbett and the Rajaji tiger reserves for eco-tourism activities, officials said on Thursday.

The permission is subject to strict compliance of guidelines issued by the Centre and the state government in view

of the coronavirus pandemic, they said.

The facilities were closed due to the nationwide lockdown.

All eco-tourists, guides and drivers have to be screened at the entry points of the reserves. If their body temperature is found to be higher than normal, they will have to be isolated immediately and evacuated to the

nearest health facility, the officials said.

Wearing masks, practising social distancing and sanitising vehicles used for eco tourism activities at the parks are mandatory, an order, dated June 10, said.

However, the reserves are going to be open just for a few days as they are closed for the monsoon every year on June 15.

Lockdown shaves 50% off Transport Deptt's revenue

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

Sikkim Nationalised Transport has recorded barely 50% of its average earning during the nearly three months of the lockdown.

Speaking to this correspondent, Principal Engineer and Secretary, Transport Department, Raju Basnett, informed that under normal circumstances, the transport department earned Rs 80 crore in revenue annually. This works out to about Rs 6-7 crore per month. Since March, this has dropped to Rs 3 crore per month.

The SNT division has always stepped up during crisis situations, whether the current pandemic or bandhs and blockades in the neighbouring state in

the past. The Secretary alluded to as much and pointed out that SNT play a key role in ensuring movement of people and shipment of goods and supplies in landlocked Sikkim.

During the current lockdown, the SNT Division brought home more than 6,200 stranded Sikkimese in last month and the service rendered by the bus drivers deserve applause and gratitude, he said, adding that transport division has not let a single stone unturned to ensure supply of essential commodities.

The SNT bus service was a free service provided to returnees thus far, and now the State Government plans to charge the usual ticket price on the journey from 18 June onwards.

Sensex slumps 709 pts as Fed punctures equity euphoria

MUMBAI, JUN 11 (PTI): Equity benchmarks finished with heavy losses on Thursday, in tandem with global markets, as the Fed's sombre assessment of the US economy prompted investors to prune their exposure to risky assets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 708.68 points, or 2.07 per cent, to close at 33,538.37. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 214.15 points, or 2.12 per cent, to 9,902.

Global markets crashed after the Federal Reserve said the US faces a "long road" to recovery, even as concerns mounted about a second wave of coronavirus cases.

The central bank projected the US economy would shrink 6.5 per cent this year and signalled holding rates at near zero through 2022. The Fed also said it will keep buying bonds to maintain low borrowing rates. A depreciating rupee and profit booking in banking and finance counters further weighed on domestic markets, traders said.

SBI was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, dropping 5.64 per cent, followed by Sun Pharma, Maruti, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel and

Axis Bank. Only five index constituents closed in the green -- IndusInd Bank, Hero MotoCorp, PowerGrid, M&M and Nestle India, spurring up to 4.49 per cent.

"Indian equity markets posted their biggest single-day drop in three weeks. Weak global cues, adverse comments by Supreme Court in AGR case and widespread profit taking on weekly F&O expiry day pulled indices lower," said Deepak Jasani, Head Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

The Supreme Court on Thursday termed as 'totally impermissible' the demand by Department of Telecom for dues of Rs 4 lakh crore in Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) from PSUs. It also asked private telecom operators to file affidavits giving details as to how they will pay the AGR dues.

All sectoral indices ended in the red, with BSE telecom index sinking 4.04 per cent, followed by metal, bankex, finance and teck. Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices too plunged up to 1.41 per cent. In rest of Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul skidded up to 3 per cent.

Sikkim's COVID...

"We hear of people from here facing racism and discrimination in other states but it happened to us in our home state. We have been deeply hurt. One of the nurses even cried," he stated.

Meanwhile, the DC West has said that they have not received any such report and the matter will be investigated.

Sikkim's Isolation...

own identity. To which the Indian establishment has agreed as enshrined in Article 371 F. Sikkim should never forget to be alert about the following.

Demography: Sikkim, like any other Indian state must welcome fellow citizens. Social, cultural, educational and commercial engagement is a must and is healthy for Sikkim. However, when and if non-Sikkimese voters outnumber Sikkimese voters, a drastic political shift will be an undeniable possibility. The exodus of people from other states into Sikkim is an ever intensifying phenomenon. The changing nature of the voter-list is worrying from a Sikkimese perspective. To make it even more worrying, the decreasing fertility of the Sikkimese adds to the speed of Sikkim's demography changing.

Commercial monopoly: Sikkim may have been one of the fastest growing economies in India, ranking third in the NSDP per capita for 2018-19 after Goa and Delhi, but Sikkim is not fully ready to exploit the economic boom. One glaring example is the hospitality industry. Sikkimese people in general are only enjoying the benefits that trickle down from major commercial activities, pharmaceutical companies, supplies, tourism etc. This is not to instil a sense of resentment against those non-Sikkimese people who have been major players. In fact, Sikkim, in a sense, owes them for what they do. However, Sikkim must ready herself to block further incursion into her commercial arena. More than that, Sikkim has to find ways to change these potentialities into actualities.

In a sense, Sikkim would do well to remain isolated in a manner that will help her grow into her fullness as a resoundingly strong, self-confident Indian state.

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India is not...

Lockdown and containment (measures) have been successful in keeping it low and preventing rapid spread," he said, citing the survey.

However, it means that a large proportion of the population is still susceptible and risk is higher in urban areas (1.09 times) and urban slums (1.89 times) than rural areas, Bhargava said.

It found that infection fatality rate is very low at 0.08 per cent and infection in containment zones were found to be high with significant variations, but the survey is still ongoing, he said.

Since, a large proportion of the population is susceptible and infection can spread, non-pharmacological interventions such as physical distancing, use of face mask or cover, hand hygiene, cough etiquette must be followed strictly, Bhargava said.

Urban slums are highly vulnerable for the spread of the infection and local lockdown measures need to continue as already advised by the government, he said.

Elderly, chronic morbidities, pregnant women and children less 10 years of age need to be protected as they fall in the high-risk category susceptible to COVID-19, he said.

Efforts to limit the scale and spread of the disease will have to be continued by strong implementation of containment strategies by states. The states cannot lower their guard and need to keep on implementing effective surveillance and containment strategies," Bhargava said.

"India is not in community transmission. We have to continue with our strategy of testing, tracing, tracking, quarantine and containment measures; we should not give up our guard on these," he said.

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

SRMIST 2020 E-Counselling admissions begin

SUMMIT REPORT

KATTANKULATHUR, 11 JUN:

E-counselling and Interview based admissions has started at SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur for MTech, MBA, BBA, Education, Hotel Management, Allied Health Sciences (Except Medicine and Dental) and Science & Humanities UG and PG programs due COVID-19 pandemic. Aspiring students can Apply and fill Application online visiting www.srmist.edu.in.

The online process is made simple for candidates to upload all the required documents through the application portal. Selection would be based on eligibility, ZOOM or Tele Interview by faculty experts. On selection, the candidate can remit the Fee online and down load the Provisional Admission Letter (PAL). Scholarships will



be offered to meritorious and deserving students in line with the University policy. All MTech students will get a monthly Scholarship/Assistantship of Rs 12,500/-.

The classes for the freshers are scheduled to commence in September

2020, as per Government guidelines. This year, SRMIST has created an incredible record in placement with 8500+ job offers, 625 + companies recruiting, and Rs. 41.6L top salary, the highest ever by any university in India. To enable the students to join

companies on graduation, the online classes and examinations are planned and progressing well.

In case of BTech program, Admission is only through the common entrance exam, SRMJEEE, to be held from 30 July to 04 Aug, 2020, in 127

Indian cities and 5 countries abroad, in Dubai, Doha, Muscat, Bahrain and Kuwait. The joint Counseling is slated to be held in the 2nd or 3rd week of August, 2020. The students will be chosen based on their SRMJEEE rank.

3,607 new coronavirus cases in Maharashtra, 152 deaths

MUMBAI, JUN 11 (PTI): As many as 3,607 new coronavirus patients were reported in Maharashtra on Thursday, taking the tally of cases to 97,648, said a state health official.

The number of deaths due to the pandemic rose to 3,590 with 152 fatalities recorded.

Hospitals in the state

also discharged 1,561 patients, taking the number of recovered coronavirus patients to 46,078, the official said.

M a h a r a s h t r a COVID-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases 97,648, new cases 3,607, deaths 3,590, discharged 46,078, active cases 47,968, people tested so far 6,09,317.

Medicos continue stir over attack, make fresh demand

HYDERABAD, JUNE 11 (PTI): Junior doctors, agitating over the attack on a senior doctor allegedly by the kin of a virus patient who died, continued their stir on Thursday demanding decentralisation of the Gandhi hospital here.

The medicos demanded the decentralisation as the state-run hospital was the only government hospital where COVID-19 positive cases were being treated.

Health Minister E Rajender, condemning the attack on the duty doctor on Tuesday, held talks with the junior doctors the day after, an official press release said. The

Minister said a decision on decentralisation would be taken after discussing the matter with the Chief Minister Chandrasekhar Rao.

He had told them that he would meet the representatives of the junior doctors every week and extended an assurance on solving their problems, including the issue over decentralisation.

Reacting to this, the medicos said they would call off the agitation.

However, a leader of the junior doctors said the stir would continue till their main demand for decentralisation is not met.

Navy ship brings back 233 stranded Indians from Iran

AHMEDABAD, JUN 11 (PTI): Under the Indian Navy's 'Samudra Setu' operation, naval ship 'INS Shardul' on Thursday brought back 233 Indians to Gujarat from Iran, where they were stranded due to travel restrictions in view of the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

The ship set sail from Bandar Abbas port of Iran on June 8 with these 233 Indians, mostly fishermen from Valsad district of the state, and arrived at Porbandar port on Thursday, said defence PRO for Gujarat, Puneet Chadha.

"The ship is docked at Porbandar port and passengers are being deboarded. The local administration has made arrangements to send

them to their respective native places," said Chadha. He said safety protocols, including pre-boarding health check-up and social distancing during the journey, were followed on the ship to stop the spread of coronavirus.

He added that doctors and nutritionists along with life-saving equipment were kept on the naval ship to deal with any emergency during the journey.

Earlier, naval ships 'Jalashwa' and 'Magar' had evacuated 2,874 Indians from the Maldives and Sri Lanka to ports of Kochi and Tuticorin under 'Samudra Setu' operation, launched to bring back Indians stranded abroad following the lockdown.

2 kidnapped persons rescued in Manipur

IMPHAL, JUN 11 (PTI): A day after they were kidnapped, two persons were rescued from the house of the alleged mastermind of the crime in Thoubal district of Manipur on Thursday, police said.

After receiving information that ransom of Rs 50 lakh was to be handed over to the kidnappers, several commando units, with the assistance of cyber crime unit, launched an operation to rescue the kidnapped persons, Thoubal Superintendent of Police Soibam Ibom-

cha Singh told reporters. The kidnapped persons were rescued from the residence of one K Jadumani Singh at Charangpat Mamang locality in Thoubal district at 11.45 am, he said.

The persons had been kidnapped on Wednesday evening. "Four persons, including two women, have been arrested and a foreign made pistol with five live rounds has been recovered," the SP told reporters.

On Thursday, the police detected a vehicle moving under suspicious

circumstances at Charangpat area and chased the car for about one and a half kilometres when it failed to stop, the SP said.

Preliminary interrogation of the three occupants of the car provided vital information which led to the rescue of the two kidnapped non-Manipuris, from the house of the mastermind of the kidnapping, he said.

Ibomcha Singh has appealed to people not to indulge in illegal and unfair means with the intention of getting easy money.

South-West monsoon advances into most parts of Telangana

HYDERABAD, JUN 11 (PTI): The South-West Monsoon 2020 has advanced into most parts of Telangana on Thursday, the weather office here said and forecast heavy rainfall during the next three days in some parts of the state.

Conditions are becoming favourable for further advance of South West Monsoon into remaining parts of Telangana during next 48 hours, IMD's Meteorological Centre here said. Accord-

ing to data on state-wise chief amount of rainfall during 24 hours, recorded at 8.30 am on Thursday, Dornakal in Mahabubabad district received 14 cm of rainfall, followed by 13 cm at Garla in the same district. Hanamkonda (Warangal Urban district), Yadagirigutta (Yadadri-Bhongir district) received 12 cm and 11 cm of rainfall respectively.

In its forecast for Telangana during the next three days, the Met Cen-

tre said heavy to very heavy rain at few places, with extremely heavy rain at isolated places, is very likely to occur over the state from June 11 to 12.

From June 12 to June 13, heavy to very heavy and at times extremely heavy rain at isolated places is very likely to occur over the state.

From June 13 to 14, heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places over Telangana, it added.

Pandoh Dam releases water, warning issued to tourists



HAMIRPUR (HP), JUN 11 (PTI): Authorities on Thursday warned people, especially tourists, against going to the Beas river as huge water was released from the Pandoh Dam in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district in view of the alarming situation of the silt in the reservoir due to heavy rains.

The mighty Beas flows through the districts of Kullu, Mandi, Hamirpur and Kangra and ultimately its water goes into the Pong Dam, also known as Maharaja Pratap Sagar, located on the boundaries of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab near Talwara township. It originates from

Beas Kund near Rohtang pass of Kullu district and from there goes into the Pandoh Dam and also flows towards the Mandi district on the way to Kangra and Hamirpur districts.

A spokesperson of the district administration has advised people not to go near the river.

Governor condoles passing of Santosh Nirash and Hemlata Chettri

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 JUN:

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has expressed deep sadness and grief on the demise of two women stalwarts of the State namely Hemlata Chettri, the first woman Legislator of Sikkim and Santosh Nirash, the first woman journalist of the State who had set benchmark in their respective field of work by their courage and determination.

Their inspiring work in their chosen domain of service have paved way for a new beginning in Sikkimese society and ignited many aspiring Sikkimese especially womenfolk to embark on the

on the sad demise of two distinguished women personality namely Hemlata Chettri, the first woman Legislator of Sikkim and Santosh Nirash, the first woman journalist of the State who had set benchmark in their respective field of work by their courage and determination.

Their inspiring work in their chosen domain of service have paved way for a new beginning in Sikkimese society and ignited many aspiring Sikkimese especially womenfolk to embark on the

sphere of work which was traditionally helmed by menfolk at that time. The service rendered by Lt. Hemlata Chettri and Lt. Santosh Nirash during the initial phase of State's transition into democracy is etched in history and will be remembered for posterity.

At this time of bereavement, I offer my deepest condolences and pray to the almighty for bestowing strength to the family members of both the departed soul to cope with this irreparable loss."

28 CRPF personnel posted in Kashmir test COVID positive

SRINAGAR, JUN 10 (PTI): As many as 28 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel posted in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, officials said.

They said the personnel were found infected during a contact-tracing exercise after the death of a 44-year-old coronavirus-infected constable on June 6.

The officials said they had collected samples of 75 personnel from the 90th battalion

where the deceased constable, a nursing assistant, was posted.

The reports 28 of them returned positive for coronavirus on Wednesday, the officials said.

All the affected personnel have been isolated and other results are awaited, they said.

A further contact-tracing exercise has commenced and the troops have been asked to immediately report if they feel any illness with COVID-19-like symp-

toms, a senior official said. The battalion is situated at Uralhall in south Kashmir.

There have been four COVID-19 deaths in the country's largest paramilitary force having 3.25 lakh personnel.

It has 516 coronavirus cases till now out of which 353 personnel have recovered, as per latest data.

Seven other positive coronavirus cases were also reported from various other units of the force on Wednesday.

India rejects US govt report on religious freedom

NEW DELHI, JUN 11 (PTI): India on Thursday rejected a US government report that raised concerns over alleged attacks and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities in the country.

"Our principled position remains that we see no locus standi for a foreign entity to pronounce on the state of our citizens' constitutionally protected rights," Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Anurag Srivastava said.

He was replying to a question on the report at an online media briefing.

Mandated by the US Congress, the '2019 International Religious Freedom Report' that documents major instances of the violation of religious freedom across the world was

released by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday.


"India's vibrant democratic traditions and practices are evident to the world. The people and government of India are proud of our country's democratic traditions," the spokesperson said. "We have a robust public discourse in India and constitutionally mandated institutions that guarantee protection of religious freedom and rule of law," he added.

The India section of the report said that the US government officials underscored the importance of respecting religious freedom, promoting tolerance and mutual respect with the ruling and opposition parties and religious leaders belonging to various

communities. In their engagement with government officials, media, interfaith harmony organizations and NGOs, US officials emphasised the need to address the legitimate concerns of the country's religious minorities, condemn communal rhetoric, and ensure full protection of minorities, it said.

The report also referred to the revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir last August and the parliament passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December as major highlights for India last year.

"The report is published annually by the department of state as part of its legal requirement to the US Congress and is an internal document of the US government," Srivastava said.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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

If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104

District surveillance Officer

EAST : 7029372100



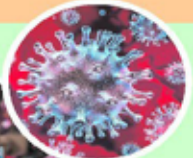
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NORTH : 9641957468

SOUTH : 7407691463

New STNM

AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Change Approach to Addressing Climate Change

Sikkim needs to accept Climate Change as the challenge that it is

A study by a team of geographers and glaciologists has projected that over 70% of the glacial volume in the Everest region could be lost by 2100! And that is the lower end of their estimate!! If greenhouse-gas emissions continue to rise and global warming comes true to predictions, even up to 99% of the glacier volume of the Everest region could be lost by 2100!! And no, the lockdown reprieve is not enough to turn things around because the challenge is much larger.

A team of researchers in Nepal, France and the Netherlands have found that Everest glaciers could be very sensitive to future warming, and that sustained ice loss through the 21st century is likely. The research has been published in “The Cryosphere”, an open access journal of the European Geosciences Union (EGU) some years ago, but the message still resonates. “The signal of future glacier change in the region is clear: continued and possibly accelerated mass loss from glaciers is likely given the projected increase in temperatures,” says Joseph Shea, a glacier hydrologist at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal, and leader of the study. The glacier model used by Shea and his team shows that glacier volume could reduce between 70% and 99% by 2100. The results depend on how much greenhouse-gas emissions continue to rise, and on how this will affect temperature, snowfall and rainfall in the area. Just to drive home a point – it is not as if the loss will manifest suddenly in the year 2100, it will play out through the years, obviously accelerating the already noticeable trend in the merely eighty-five years left till it is 2100.

The lead scientist has underlined that the results indicate that these glaciers may be highly sensitive to changes in temperature, and that increases in precipitation are not enough to offset the increased melt. Increased temperatures will not only increase the rates of snow and ice melt, but can also result in a change of precipitation from snow to rain at critical elevations, where glaciers are concentrated. Together, these act to reduce glacier growth and increase the area exposed to melt.

Reflect these findings and projections against Sikkim and talk to stakeholders here and even they will vouch that parts of North Sikkim which used to receive only snow [and no rain] have been inundated by sleet and rain in the recent years. Global warming is a reality for Sikkim as well and reports of rain in formerly only snowed regions and the advance of lower hill plants into the higher reaches provide the more obvious evidence. The report mentioned here speaks exclusively of glaciers in the Everest region, but that zone is not very far or separated from the Sikkim Himalaya and if anything, Sikkim’s glacial areas are even closer to the tropics, hence more affected by warming, than the ice of Everest. It becomes necessary then that Sikkim work on its preparedness for climate change with more seriousness than just adding “climate change” to the name of one of its departments, or putting out an action plan without any real plan of action.

A study of Sikkim’s glaciers had been commissioned some years ago which had reported that the glaciers here were in good health. Welcome as this update was, given the rather short duration of the study and the general lack of adequately reliable base-data, future projections could not have been very detailed. It is learnt that the study of Sikkim’s glaciers, including observations of glacial lakes is being undertaken in earnest and there is already a very real GLOF fear here as well. This study should be expanded to academics beyond the jurisdiction of government departments not only so that their analysis is based only on hard data and not influenced by other considerations, but also so that more minds are applied to aspects which could have a very telling effect on how the Sikkimese live in the very near future. And the study needs to be expanded to features beyond glaciers and made to include the mountain springs, catchment areas and lakes of the State as well. Changes in the hydrology of the State, whether induced by climate change or direct human interference, will impact the availability of water for drinking [think Ratey Chu for Gangtok], will bear consequences on agriculture and also hydropower.

GLOFs have struck Sikkim even in the recent past but have gone largely under-reported because they were born in remote valleys and did not cause too much damage. That will however not always be the case. Glacial retreat will further aggravate the situation as it will result in the formation and growth of more lakes dammed by glacial debris and landslides. This level of reasoning even casual online browsing can inform, which is why when experts are marshalled to prep Sikkim for climate change, more specifics and more clearly spelled out plans of action should result.

COVID-19’s deadliness for men is revealing why researchers should have been studying immune system sex differences years ago

ADAM MOESER
theconversation.com

When it comes to surviving critical cases of COVID-19, it appears that men draw the short straw.

Initial reports from China revealed the early evidence of increased male mortality associated with COVID. According to the Global Health 50/50 research initiative, nearly every country is now reporting significantly higher COVID-19-related mortality rates in males than in females as of June 4. Yet, current data suggest similar infection rates for men and women. In other words, while men and women are being infected with COVID-19 at similar rates, a significantly higher proportion of men succumb to the disease than women, across groups of similar age. Why is it then that more men are dying from COVID-19? Or rather, should we be asking why are more women surviving?

I am an immunologist, and I explore how stress and biological sex can impact a person’s vulnerability to immune-mediated disease. I study a specific immune cell called the mast cell. Mast cells play a pivotal role in our immune systems as they act as first responders to pathogens and orchestrate immune responses that help clear the invading pathogens.

Our research shows that mast cells from females are able to initiate a more active immune response, which may help females fight off infectious diseases better than men. But the trade-off may be that women are at higher risk for allergic and inflammatory diseases. Recent evidence indicates that mast cells are activated by SARS-CoV-2 which causes COVID-19.

Some clues to why females have higher survival rates may be found in our current understanding of differences in the immune systems of men versus women.

COULD SEX DIFFERENCES IN IMMUNE SYSTEM PLAY A ROLE?

In general, females have a more robust immune response than men which may help females fight off infections better than males. This could be a result of genetic factors or sex hormones such as estrogen and testosterone.

Biological females have two copies of the X chromosome, which contains more immune genes. While the genes on one X chromosome are mostly inactive, some immune genes can escape this inactivation, leading to double the number of immune-related genes and thus double the quantity of certain immune proteins compared with biological men who have only one X chromosome.

Sex hormones such as estrogen and testosterone can also impact the immune response. In one study, researchers showed that activating the estrogen receptor in female mice provided them protection against SARS-CoV. And there is an approved clinical trial that will examine the effects of estrogen patches on the severity of COVID-19 symptoms.

It is, however, interesting that the current data

showing that women have better survival rates than men applies to even men and women in the 80-plus age group, when hormone levels in both sexes equalize. This suggests that factors other than adult sex hormone levels are contributing to sex differences in COVID-19 mortality.

Androgens, a group of hormones - including testosterone - that are best known to stimulate the development of male characteristics and can cause hair loss, have also received recent attention as a risk factor for COVID-19 in males. In a study conducted in Italy, prostate cancer diagnosis increased the risk for COVID-19. However, prostate cancer patients who were receiving androgen-deprivation therapy (ADT), a treatment that suppresses the production of androgens which fuels prostate cancer cell growth, had a significantly lower risk for SARS-CoV-2 infection. This suggests that blocking androgens in men was protective against SARS-CoV-2 infection.

It is unknown how ADT works to reduce infec-



tion rates in men and whether this has been shown in other countries has yet to be determined. Testosterone, which is an androgen hormone has immune-suppressive effects so one explanation could be that ADT might boost the immune system to combat SARS-CoV-2 infection.

There is also evidence that males and females have different quantities of certain receptors that recognize pathogens or that serve as an invasion point for viruses like SARS-CoV-2. One example is the quantity of angiotensin converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptors, which SARS-CoV-2 binds to in order to infect cells. While there is currently no conclusive evidence for a role of ACE2 receptors impacting sex differences and the severity of COVID-19 disease, it remains a potential contributing factor.

GENDER, SEX AND COVID-19 RISK

A number of factors can interact with biological sex to increase or decrease one’s susceptibility to COVID-19. Another major factor is gender, which refers to social behaviors or cultural norms that society deems appropriate. Males may be at increased risk for severe disease, because in general, they

tend to smoke and drink more, wash their hands less frequently and often delay seeking medical attention. All of these gender specific behaviors may put men at higher risk. While there is no current data yet on how gender plays a role in COVID-19, it will be a critically important factor to account for in order to understand sex differences in mortality.

Age, psychological stress level, coexisting conditions such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease can also interact with biological sex to increase disease.

While COVID-19 highlights the importance of biological sex in disease risk, sex biases in disease in general is not a new concept. COVID-19 is just another example of a disease that will be added to the growing list of diseases for which males or females are at increased risk.

A HISTORY OF MALE-BIASED RESEARCH

You might be wondering that if biological sex is so important, then why don’t we know what is causing disparities in disease prevalence between the sexes and why are there no sex-specific therapies?

One major reason is when it comes to being included in scientific research, it is mostly males who have been studied.

This disparity between biological sex differences in research has only recently been remedied. It has only been in the last five years that the National Institutes of Health has required sex difference data to be collected for all newly funded pre-clinical research grants.

While there may be several reasons for choosing one sex over the other in research, the huge disparity that now exists is likely a major reason why we still know relatively little about sex differences in immunity, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This has clearly hindered advancement of women’s health, but also has negative consequences for men’s health. For example, given the biological differences between the sexes, it is very possible that drugs and therapies will have different effects in females than males.

Biological sex is clearly a major factor determining disease outcomes in COVID-19. Precisely how your biological sex makes you more or less resilient to diseases such as COVID-19 remains to be elucidated. Future basic research with animals and clinical trials in people need to consider biological sex as well as interactions with gender as an important variable.

[the writer is Matilda R. Wilson Endowed Chair, Associate Professor of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, Michigan State University]

Workplaces are turning to devices to monitor social distancing, but does the tech respect privacy?

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As we emerge from the coronavirus lockdown, those of us who still have a workplace may not recognize it. Businesses, eager to limit liability for employees and customers, are considering a variety of emerging technologies for limiting pandemic spread.

These technologies can be loosely divided into two types: one based on cellphone technologies and the other using wearable devices like electronic bracelets and watches. Both approaches focus on maintaining social distancing, nominally six feet between any two workers based on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and supported by some modeling.

Most workers will have little choice whether to participate in their employer’s risk mitigation. As a networking and security researcher, I believe that it is essential that both employees and employers understand the technologies in use, their effectiveness at reducing risk of infection and the risks they may pose to the privacy and well-being of all involved.

THE TECHNOLOGIES

Social distancing technologies are designed to warn workers when they get too close to each other, typically relying on communications that can travel only short distances. In this way, if your device can “hear” someone else’s device, you’re considered too close to the other person and potentially infected.

Perhaps the most promising communication technology for social distancing is ultra-wideband, which enables precise distance measurements between devices. A more common medium is Bluetooth Low Energy, which is used for headphones and portable speakers, though it may pro-

duce less consistently accurate distance information depending on the environment.

Finally, sound itself can be used to determine distance to other people, much like bats use echoes to identify obstacles in their flight paths, with the advantage that it respects wall and door boundaries just like the coronavirus.

Modern cellphones typically can communicate through both Bluetooth Low Energy technologies and sound. Late model iPhones also support ultra-wideband communications.

Contact tracing apps, which are used to alert people when they’ve been exposed to an infected person, generally use these media while loosely adhering to a common design. They include approaches focusing on privacy and security, or precise distance measurements using sound outside of the human hearing range. More recently, Apple and Google jumped into the fray with their own approach that also solves some of the technical challenges that appear to require the cooperation of the two tech giants.

Wearables, which are more limited devices that a person can wear like a bracelet or a ring, can also be used for social distancing. Popular workplace wearables can be programmed to buzz or otherwise alert employees when they get within six feet of each other. These include Halo, Estimote and Covid Radius. Other devices monitor health indicators such as pulse, body temperature or movement.

WILL THIS HELP?

Workplace social distancing products are designed to monitor the six-foot separation guideline of the CDC. This is a crude measure that is complicated in practice. How long are people in contact? What kind of air patterns surrounded them?

Were they wearing masks? Were they singing?

Although some modeling suggests that even crude social distancing can help spread out infection rates over time to help with hospital load, digital contact tracing faces serious challenges of adoption – in order for an infectious contact to be recorded, both parties must be using the technology.

This means, for example, that if 50% of people in a work area – including mail deliverers, IT support and plumbers – adopt the technology, then approximately 25% of the infectious contacts might be identified. If the workplace is already a hot spot for infection, say a meatpacking facility, then the technology only tells workers what they already know: There is widespread infection risk.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?

Employers can already legally read employee emails, monitor calls and record video of employees. What additional risk does contact tracing present?

The location data that is used by some contact tracing solutions can be intensely personal. It can identify, for example, with whom workers eat lunch or even what they purchased at the lunch counter. It can identify what fraction of the workday is spent by the water cooler, and even how often and for how long workers go to the bathroom. Without explicit safeguards, employees are forced to choose between keeping their jobs and maintaining their privacy.

Fortunately, some of the solutions do attempt to safeguard privacy in a variety of ways.

OPEN TECH, LIMITED DATA

It is important that data shared with the employer – or any other third party – should be anonymous and not tied to personal information. Indeed, several of the cellphone-based solu-

tions only share randomly generated data that is useful only for contact tracing apps that tell the cellphone’s owner about potential exposures. Furthermore, some of the wearables do not use a central repository, instead sharing data only among themselves and deleting it after the infection window, typically 14 days.

Some of the technologies prevent employers from accessing employee contact history. In these approaches, only employees who have been near an infected individual are alerted, either through physical feedback like a vibrating buzz or through alerts on their smartphones. Employers are naturally anxious to get a broad picture of worker health, but the greater insight necessarily intrudes on privacy. I believe the ideal scenario is where the worker – and no one else – knows only that he has been exposed to the virus at some recent time, not when, where or by whom.

It may be very difficult for employees to understand what kind of privacy a social distancing system provides without knowing how it operates. Many of the existing products on the market are open-source, meaning that anyone can view and analyze at least some of their code. Some also make all contact information publicly visible, albeit obfuscated, so that there is no mystery about what data is being collected and used.

At the end of the day, social distancing technologies can help protect employees in a post-COVID world. However, absent well-crafted privacy law, both employees and employers must understand broadly how these technologies work, their limitations and their capabilities.

[the writer is Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Systems Engineering, and Computer Science, Boston University]

Calcutta HC reopens doors after over two months

KOLKATA, JUN 11 (PTI): The Calcutta High Court reopened its doors for the physical hearing of cases on Thursday after a gap of over two and half months since normal functioning was stopped owing to the COVID-19 crisis.

A few cases were heard before the division bench presided by Chief Justice T B N Radhakrishnan and other benches with some advocates present, as most lawyers stayed away from attending the court for physical hearing following a decision by the Calcutta High Court Bar Association not to attend proceedings citing safety issues over the pandemic.

The lawyers appeared in white shirts and white collars band as per a new dress code owing to the COVID-19 disease.

Thermal scanners were used at the entry gates for checking body temperature of lawyers,



litigants and court staff.

The high court authorities have arranged for state-run buses for transporting its staff to and from the court.

The high court, which has been hearing extremely urgent matters through video confer-

encing, has, however, allowed the system to continue parallel to physical hearings through a notification issued on Wednesday.

The Bar Association, which took the decision on Sunday not to attend proceedings in

courtrooms, had then expressed their willingness to plead matters through video conferencing.

The Bar Association said that in a webinar-cum-general meeting held on Sunday, a large number of advocates expressed fear

and apprehension that restarting physical functioning of courts at this juncture would not only endanger the lives of the lawyers, but also affect the professional career of more than 80 per cent of the advocates.

The June 5 notification said that the physical functioning of the Calcutta High Court will be resumed with a fewer number of benches on an experimental basis to ensure regular functioning of courts but with much less footfall in the court arena, both of lawyers and staff.

"Physical courts shall be resumed on a small scale and on an experimental basis from June 11," it said.

In the week beginning June 8, the physical court sittings will be on Thursday and in the next week beginning June 15, the physical courts will be on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, it said.

Lalu turns 73, RJD decides no cake cutting

PATNA/RANCHI, JUN 11 (PTI): Jailed RJD supremo Lalu Prasad turned 73 on Thursday, but there was no cake cutting on his birthday as decided by the party in view of the pains suffered by migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prasad is serving jail sentences in fodder scam cases and is currently lodged in a Ranchi hospital on account of his poor health.

It used to be a big occasion for the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in the past, but the party decided that it will not cut a cake on Prasad's birthday this year and instead, observe it as "Garib Saman Diwas".

Prasad's wife and former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi greeted her husband on his birthday while Tejashwi Yadav, the couple's younger son, visited the RJD supremo at the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi.

Elder son Tej Pratap Yadav offered prayers at the Badi Patan Devi temple in Patna for his father's well-being.

Several RJD leaders and workers, who gathered at Rabri Devi's 10, Circular Road residence in Patna, wished good health and happiness to the ailing party chief.

Meanwhile, a photograph posted on the social media showed Prasad cutting a cake at the RIMS in the presence of Tejashwi.

Tejashwi has been chosen as Prasad's heir apparent and the RJD's chief ministerial candidate in the upcoming Bihar Assembly election.

A report from Ranchi said the young leader met his father at the RIMS and took his blessings on the occasion.

"Tejashwi, who reached Ranchi on Wednesday evening, has met his father at the RIMS and taken his blessings," RJD leader from Jharkhand Asutosh Ranjan said.

"We will be feeding at least 73,000 poor people on my father's birthday and will try to lessen their concerns. We will take Bihar out of all the problems, drawing inspiration from my father,"



Tejashwi said in a letter to people on his father's birthday.

Though there will be no cake cutting this time by the family or the RJD, if party workers feel, they can do so and distribute the cakes among the poor, he added.

"He (Prasad) is fighting unflinchingly and tirelessly against injustice to poor. I feel proud that I am also the part of his fight," the leader of opposition in the Bihar Assembly said.

Prasad, a former Bihar chief minister who also served as the railway minister in the UPA-1 government, has been behind bars since December, 2017 in cases related to the fodder scam in the 1990s in Bihar, when money was fraudulently withdrawn from treasuries in the name of supplying fodder to animals by the animal husbandry department.

Rabri Devi, who had succeeded his husband as the chief minister in 1997 and held the post till February 2005, extended her birthday greetings to Prasad on the occasion and prayed to the almighty for a long life of the RJD supremo.

"The conspirators had sent even Lord Krishna to jail. I pray to the almighty for your health and well-being and that you will continue with your fight for the right and honour of the poor," she said.

RJD's Jharkhand unit president Abhay Singh said the party workers have prepared a 73-pound cake to mark the occasion.

Another Jharkhand RJD leader Shyamdas Singh said the "Lalu Kitchen" set up to feed the needy during the lockdown has marked the day by serving food

to the poor.

Meanwhile, posters titled "Lalu Pariwar ka Sampattinama" (list of properties owned by Lalu Prasad's family) have come up in Patna.

The posters say in hindi: "On 73rd birthday, 73 properties series", which Prasad's family has allegedly acquired using its political clout.

According to the list, Prasad's family owns properties in Patna, Gopalganj and Muzaffarpur among other places.

Prasad hails from Phulwaria village in Gopalganj district.

JD(U) spokesperson Rajiv Ranjan Prasad, however, said the party has not released any such poster or pamphlet.

"They might have been issued by people who have been victims of the Lalu-Rabri regime of 15 years in Bihar," he said, adding that people have not forgotten those "black days" and might be venting their anger against them by such means.

The RJD ruled in Bihar continuously from 1990 to 2005. Towards the end of 2005, the NDA led by Nitish Kumar threw it out of power. Since then, Kumar has been the chief minister except for some months when he appointed Jitan Ram Manjhi to the post after his Janata Dal (United) suffered a severe drubbing in the 2014 parliamentary polls.

Kumar had severed ties with the BJP to join hands with Prasad in the 2015 Bihar election and formed the Grand Alliance government, along with the Congress.

But in July 2017, he left the coalition to join hands with the BJP again and has been at the helm of affairs in the state since then.

441 detained in Manipur for not wearing masks in public places

IMPHAL, JUN 11 (PTI): As many as 441 people have been detained in Manipur for not wearing masks and not maintaining social distancing in public places amid the COVID-19 outbreak, police said. A total of 467 vehicles were also seized from their possession, they said.

The accused were produced before courts on Wednesday and a total fine of Rs 71,300 was imposed on them, a release issued by Additional Director General of Police, L Kailun said.

Those violating the safety norms will face legal action under the National Disaster Management Act, 2005, it added.

A total of 311 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Manipur till Wednesday, of which 248 are active.

2 fresh COVID-19 cases in Nagaland; count rises to 130

KOHIMA, JUN 11 (PTI): Two more persons have tested positive for COVID-19 in Nagaland, taking the state's tally to 130 on Thursday, officials said. Both the new patients had recently returned to the state from other parts of the country and were placed under institutional quarantine in Kohima, they said.

"Two new cases of COVID-19 have been reported out of 293 samples tested, both cases are from Kohima Quarantine Centre," state Minister for Health and Family Welfare, S Pangnyu Phom tweeted.

Of the 130 cases, 108 are active while 22 persons have recovered, he said.

The highest number of cases has been reported in Dimapur district (100), followed by Kohima (24), Tuensang (5) and Peren (1).

5 doctors among 110 new COVID-19 cases in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, JUN 10 (PTI): As many as 110 more people, including five doctors, tested positive for COVID-19 in Odisha on Wednesday, raising the state's tally to 3,250, a health department official said.

Of the fresh cases, 97 were reported from quarantine centres where people returning from different states are lodged, while 13 others were detected in contract-tracing exercise, he said.

The five doctors -- four from AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, and one from Apollo Hospital -- were found to have been infected with the virus during the contact-tracing exercise, according to a statement issued by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed his concern over the front-line health workers getting infected with the coronavirus.

"I have been distressed to note that over the past few weeks there have been instances of service providers in health facilities getting infected with COVID," Patnaik said, adding that these incidents point to a probable breach in maintaining infection control



practices. Meanwhile, the chief district medical officer (CDMO) of Rayagada was put under home quarantine after a COVID-19 case was reported from his office.

The fresh cases were detected from 17 districts, the official said.

Thirty-three cases were detected in Jagatsinghpur district, followed by 20 in Cuttack, 14 in Khurda, 11 in Gajapati and seven in Puri.

Four cases each were reported in Raygada, Nayagarh, Kalahandi and Mayurbhanj, two in Bargarh and one case each in Jharsuguda, Bhadrak, Balangir, Kendrapada, Koraput, Keonjhar and Boudh districts.

The chief minister, however, congratulated the health workers as Odisha has the lowest

COVID-19 mortality rate and one of the highest recovery rates in the country. The state's recovery and mortality rates are now 70.21 per cent and 0.27 per cent, respectively.

A total of 149 patients recovered from the disease during the day, the official said, adding that overall 2,281 people have been cured of the infection.

With this, the number of active cases in the state decreased to 957.

Nine people have died of COVID-19 in the state. Two more patients had tested positive for the disease but they died of other reasons, the official said.

As many as 3,026 samples were tested for the disease on Tuesday, taking the total number

of tests conducted to 1,85,410, he said.

Eleven of the 30 districts in the state have reported more than 100 cases.

Ganjam district topped the COVID tally with 649 cases, followed by Jajpur (326), Khurda (290), Cuttack (209), Balasore (197), Kendrapara (170), Bhadrak (152), Jagatsinghpur (130), Bolangir (124), Sundergarh (118) and Puri (115).

As many as 1,273 Odia people returned to the state on Wednesday, taking the number of returnees to 5,15,900, a statement said.

The government has set up 16,813 temporary medical centres in 6,798 gram-panchayats with 7,62,091 beds, where the returnees are quarantined.

Odisha govt relaxes night curfew ahead of Raja festival

BHUBANESWAR, JUN 11 (PTI): The night curfew imposed by the Odisha government will be relaxed for a few hours on Friday to let people go shopping for the upcoming three-day Raja festival, an official said here on Thursday.

The Raja festival, which will begin on Sunday, celebrates womanhood amid the onset of the monsoon. It is based on the belief that 'Mother Earth' menstruates for these three days and she is given a ceremonial bath on the fourth day.

It is celebrated in the coastal and the tribal regions of the state.

On Thursday, the

state government, in a partial modification of its June 1 order, announced that the night curfew on June 12 will be enforced from 10 pm instead of 7 pm in order to enable people to do their pre-festival shopping.

In its June 1 order, the government imposed a curfew from 7 pm to 5 am till June 30, amid a spike in COVID-19 cases.

This apart, the government also introduced weekend shutdown in 11 districts.

However, all other conditions of the June 1 order and subsequent amendments remain unchanged, Chief Secre-

tary A K Tripathy said in the notification issued by the office of the Special Relief Commissioner.

Meanwhile, the district administrations of Khurda and Keonjhar imposed prohibitory orders in certain places to prevent congregation during the festival.

The Khurda administration has imposed prohibitory orders under section 144 around the temples of Goddess Barunei near Khurda town and Ugratara in Tangi from June 14 to June 20, an official notification said.

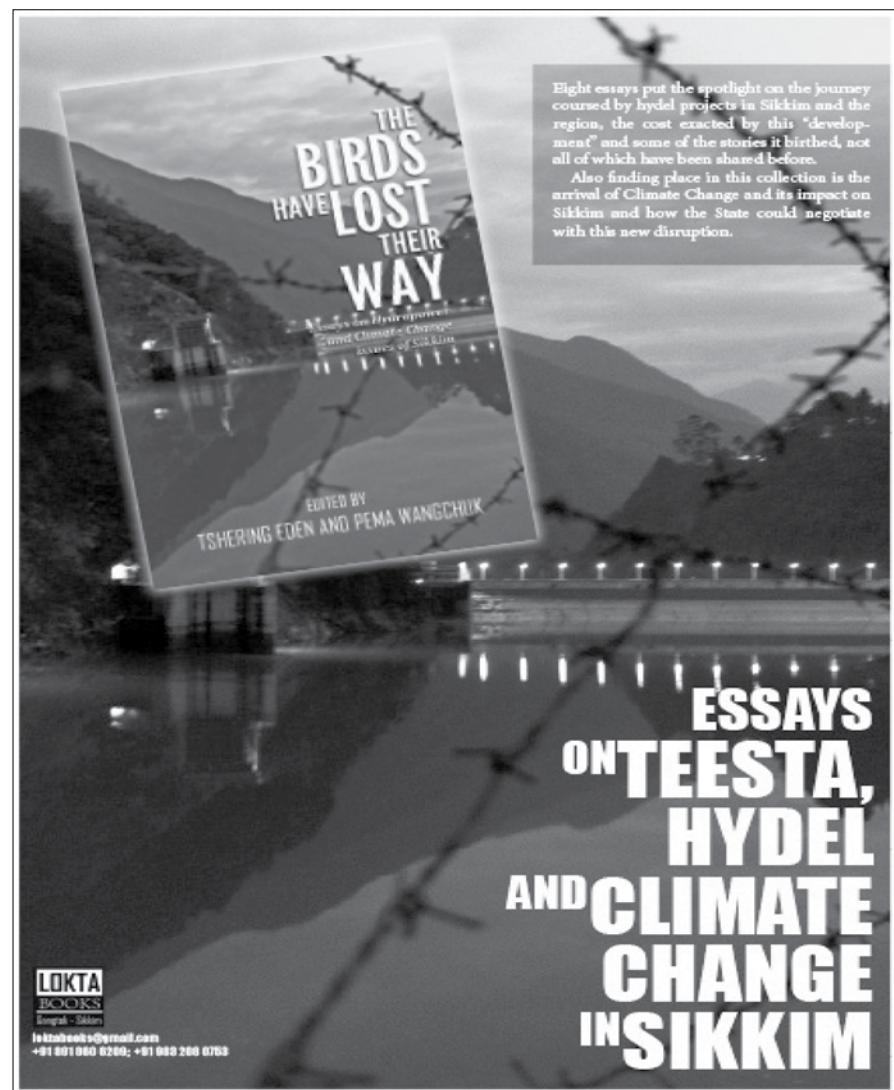
The restrictions were imposed keeping in view the gathering

of a large number of people at these shrines during the Raja festival.

The Keonjhar district administration also banned any type of congregation during the festival. Any gathering for celebrations like Raja Doli (swing), 'mela' (congregation), 'mahotsav' (festival), and feast and traditional games related to the Raja festival is strictly prohibited from June 11-16, an official order said.

Any violation will lead to strict action under the Epidemics Act and the Disaster Management Act, it said.

Odisha has so far reported 3,386 COVID-19 cases.



Mumbai City FC to participate in eSports challenge

MUMBAI, JUN 11 (PTI): Indian Super League franchise Mumbai City FC and its sister international clubs owned by City Football Group (CFG) will come together for the first time to host a group-wide global 'EA SPORTS FIFA 20' challenge on June 13.

According to a statement issued by Mumbai City FC on Thursday, the CFG FIFA Challenge will see pro-FIFA players and eSports teams alongside footballers from men's and women's teams across the Group take to the virtual pitch to test their skills.

Eight clubs -- Manchester City, New York City FC, Melbourne City FC, Yokohama F Marinos, Girona FC, Montevideo City Torque, Sichuan Jiuniu FC and Mumbai City FC -- will compete in a series of matches and gaming challenges.

Mumbai City FC will be represented by 28-year-old midfielder Rowlin Borges, along with three fans.

"We're happy to be able to extend our support to charities through this one-of-a-kind event," Borges said in the release.

Players will have to be mentally strong when international cricket resumes: Mushtaq Ahmed

KARACHI, JUN 11 (PTI): Spin consultant and mentor of the Pakistan team, Mushtaq Ahmed says more than the skills, the players' mental strength will matter when top-level cricket resumes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in England.

Ahmed, who recently joined the national set-up, said the series between England and the West Indies will provide lessons as the game is set to resume with that series, starting July 8.

"I think we are going to learn a lot from the West Indies and England series and in the Covid-19 conditions. More than the skills, the mental strength of players will matter a lot. In these difficult circumstances the role of mentors have become very important," he said.

The Pakistan team is likely to reach England around June 25 to start preparations for their Test and T20 series in a bio-secure environment including remaining in a 14-days quarantine and having nets and practice drills and matches in isolated conditions.

Ahmed also made it clear that the new-look management of the Pakistan team including head coach Misbah-ul-Haq, bowling coach Waqar Younis, batting coach, Younis Khan and he himself were all on the same page and realised the importance of playing in England.

"Players and coaches will require some time to adjust to the new playing conditions and playing in front of empty stadiums. I think the time we have in England before the series will be spent on preparing the players mentally for these challenges."

Liverpool need to rebuild but Werner may turn out to be a great non-signing

BARNEY RONAY

LONDON, 11 JUN [THEGUARDIAN]: Look out. Here comes everybody! Or at least, here come Kylian Mbappé, Ferran Torres, Ousmane Dembélé, Kalidou Koulibaly, Adama Traoré, Leroy Sané, Diego Carlos, Wout Weghorst, Tallés Magno, Tanguy Ndombele, Thomas Partey, Bukayo Saka and Eduardo Camavinga. Time for a paragraph break?

And we go again, with Aster Vranckx, Nicolò Zaniolo, Dominik Szoboszlai, Victor Osimhen, Boubakary Soumaré, Willian, Philippe Coutinho, Marcelo Brozovic, Milot Rashica, Kostas Tsimikas, Marcus Thuram, Raheem Sterling and Jadon Sancho.

What do these footballers have in common? All of them have been "linked with" a move to Liverpool. Even better, all of them have been linked with a move to Liverpool in the last two months, a list of suggested transactions that bears repeating only because it is so absurd. We can only hope for the sake of his own sleep patterns that Jürgen Klopp has turned off that Google alert on his phone.

There are of course significant caveats to this red-shirted shadow army. "Linked with" is weak gruel at the best of times, shorthand for hopeful agents and arm's-length bluff. And of course lockdown does funny things to all of us. Right now there is an empty space where football should be, tended by an industry that still needs to produce content.

But there is also an edge of reality buried beneath the mound of bodies, a shiver of anxiety as Liverpool's final step towards the league title looms closer. This is driven in part by the question of what comes next. Something is happening here. But what exactly?

The most recent near-miss isn't on that list. This is of course Timo Werner, who may or may not reach an agreement with Chelsea this



week, but who has already become a very public Liverpool non-signing. It is an interesting move in itself, failure to recruit a player presented by Klopp as an act rather than an omission, as a positive choice, another part of a commercially-sound team-building strategy.

At £53m Werner was simply the right man in the wrong moment of total economic collapse. Such is the level of trust in Klopp and the club's owners that this seems pretty reasonable. Footballing lore insists that great teams always build from a position of strength: a line that tends to overlook the wider truth that, weak or strong, in football you always need to be building, that even the finest teams exist in a state of constant disintegration.

It is this point that some supporters feel most keenly. Liverpool are champions of Europe. Liverpool spent the first six months of the season

marching the rest of the field around the Premier League in a headlock. Liverpool have the most resourceful elite-level manager in the world.

And yet, there is also an acceptance that a team built on coaching and chemistry is in need of some urgent re-freshing. Werner is a high-class player. His arrival would have reflected the success of recent methods, where large amounts have been spent, but on the right players in just the right spot.

There is still time. A high-class central defender and a versatile attacker (plenty on that shadow list) are still wanted. But teams are also fragile things. Time is passing. How often do these moments come around, when every element of an organisation aligns on the same course, when a wider generational success can be seen bedding into place?

And how often does such a moment coincide with a wider

economic collapse and a four-month pause in the workings of everyday life? Liverpool have, above all, been terribly unlucky with timing.

This misfortune applies to the recruitment cycle. The significant period of evolution for the current team was between summer 2017 and summer 2018. During that year Alisson, Fabinho, Andy Robertson, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Virgil van Dijk and Mohamed Salah all arrived, while Trent Alexander-Arnold emerged as a first-team player.

It has been a brilliant spell of team building. But by the time football returns it will be two years since Liverpool signed a significant player and 12 regular first-team squad members will be 28 or older. Alexander-Arnold is the only young player in the first XI. A period of renewal is due. Klopp knows this better than anyone. It was clearly coming this summer.

fully-grooved team chemistry, all of which have been interrupted. It is also a style built with the home crowd in mind, a way of playing that feeds on shared energy. Liverpool haven't lost a significant domestic match at Anfield in over two years. This is all part of the design, formulated within parameters that have now disappeared. Same for everyone. But how many others had cracked it to this degree?

The commercial landscape has also changed. Liverpool became the best club team on the planet by playing the existing rules perfectly. Klopp and Fenway Sports Group have been kings of the FFP era, obeying the rules of engagement and exploiting their own resources better than anyone else at that level in Europe.

Well, say goodbye to all that. It is fairly clear that financial fair play will be given minimal policing from here as football looks to rake in every penny it can. A club like Chelsea is suddenly back in that position of power, with access to a bottomless set of pockets, and prepared to spend speculatively.

The game has changed. Will Liverpool change with it?

Not so far, and rightly so. Be true to thine own self: the most Klopp-era thing Liverpool could have done at a time of falling revenues, pay cuts and social division was to walk away from a £200,000-a-week new signing.

There will no doubt be money to spend. But success to date has arrived hand in hand with being able to read the room, and in this case the commercial management has once again followed its instincts. Who knows, in time Werner-to-Liverpool might turn out to be one of the great non-signings, an era-defining non-signing. For now Klopp and FSG have earned the time and the space to find out.

Mexican soccer to resume play with no spectators July 24



MEXICO CITY, JUN 11

(AP): Mexico's first-division soccer teams said they will return to the field after four months without play because of the coronavirus pandemic, but there will be no spectators when the first matches resume July 24.

The MX League said Wednesday that the new season will run July 24-Dec. 12 and that four more teams will be able to qualify for post-season play, for a total of 12. The top four squads advance automatically, while the other eight will play knock-out rounds to qualify.

League President Enrique Bonilla, who himself tested positive for the coronavirus, said it was unclear when the teams would be allowed to play in front of fans.

He said the previous season's Tijuana-Monterrey Copa MX championship faceoff, which

was cancelled in March, will be played on Sept. 16 and 23. Mexico has not yet reached the peak of its coronavirus outbreak, and has seen 124,301 confirmed cases and at least 14,696 deaths.

To date, 33 first-division players have tested positive for the virus, though all were believed to be asymptomatic.

The league is requiring teams to be tested before resuming training sessions, which will initially be limited to six players at a time. Later, full-squad training sessions will begin. For games, there will be limits on greetings, celebrations and pre-match ceremonies. The league suspended play March 15, with 10 of 17 scheduled match dates having been played. It was the first time since the 1943-44 season that a season in Mexican top-division league play had been cancelled.

Golf passes initial test with no positive virus results

FORT WORTH (TEXAS), JUN 11 (AP): The PGA Tour is not simply picking up where it left off.

Very little about the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial resembles the opening round of The Players Championship on March 12, the last professional golf played before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down golf and most everything else.

Players return to a new set of rules, starting with mandatory tests for the coronavirus when they first arrive and having their temperatures taken before they can get to the parking lot.

The tour said all 487 tests of players, caddies and essential personnel were negative.

On the course, players are to make every effort to practice social distancing and show best practices for playing golf to our fans watching the telecast. Good thing Wednesday's activity wasn't shown on TV. Players and caddies exchanged clubs (players are supposed to handle the clubs themselves). Caddies were not wiping down the flagsticks or bunker rakes after use. Social distancing felt more like a guideline.

It was just like normal in a return that is supposed to be anything but that.

"It's going to be very easy to fall back into old habits because it's just what we've done," Rory McIlroy said Wednesday.

"I'd say for the viewing public just to give the players and caddies a little bit of leeway if they see something on TV that isn't quite right. We're having to



figure it out as we go along, as well." Of equal concern is what they do off the golf course, even with a designated hotel. Some are staying in houses. Justin Thomas, Rickie Fowler and Jason Dufner have their own chef.

The most obvious difference is no spectators on the course, making Colonial look like it does for the members except for ropes lining the fairway to give carts and mowers some guidance on where to drive.

Another difference is likely to be the number of people watching from home.

Golf is only the second major sport to return in the U.S. (motor sports are back in action), and a field featuring McIlroy, Thomas, Dustin Johnson, Jon Rahm and Brooks Koepka is appealing.

There also is the underly-

ing responsibility to show that returning at this time was the right move, and that golf can live up to its reputation as one of the safer sports.

"I think this week is very important because golf will be the center of the sports world, which it usually a few weeks a year is," McIlroy said.

"But for people to have something to watch on TV where they actually don't know the outcome I think is going to be nice for them. So I think that'll be a good thing."

"And I think it's an important week because golf can show that we can play in a socially distant manner," he said. "We can conduct a tournament and adhere to all the safety protocols that have been put in place."

Koepka made no apologies for working with caddie Ricky

Elliott the way he always does, mainly because his caddie is staying with him this week and both have been tested.

"You look at any other sport. I'm pretty sure LeBron James isn't going to worry about setting a pick. Football, you're not going to worry about tackling a guy because of social distancing," Koepka said.

But he recognized the importance of getting through this week without incident, so that golf can continue until just short of Christmas.

"I think it's important to make sure that we go through all these things because I want to play," Koepka said.

"I know everybody out here wants to play, I know the fans want to see us play, so we've got to take all those protocols seriously if we really want to be out here for the rest of the year.

And then there's the matter of birdies and bogeys.

McIlroy and Thomas are among those who have never played Colonial. Rahm has a mathematical chance of replacing McIlroy at No. 1 in the world. Koepka hasn't been the same since his knee injury late last year, and he believes the break did him a world of good. Jordan Spieth can only hope the same holds true for him.

All are eager to return, even in silence. Rickie Fowler hit a wedge to 4 feet on the seventh hole during a practice round and a passerby called out: Good shot. That will be the extent of feedback for the week.

Ancient eye-popping martial art gains popularity in modern Vietnam

In a sunny temple courtyard in Vietnam, Le Van Thang pushes an iron rod hard against his eye socket and tries to make it bend -- his dizzying strength honed through years of practising centuries-old martial art Thien Mon Dao. Thang, 28, is one of an increasing number of Vietnamese to find refuge in a sport that grew out of a need to protect the country from invaders, but now offers a route to mental wellbeing in the rapidly changing Communist nation.

Practitioners of Thien Mon Dao have long taken pride in the incredible shows of strength that form part of their routines. The eye-popping feats include bending metal against their bodies, carrying heavy objects using their throats and lying under the path of motorbikes.

Now many say they also take pleasure from how the sport -- which includes elements of self-defence, kung fu and weapons training -- has steered them on a new course. Thang, a furniture seller who first began practising



eight years ago, said he used to get into fights in high school and was also a gambler. "Once I stole money from my family but after that, I was brought to Thien Mon Dao by my family and I changed," he told AFP.

"There are so many benefits: I learned how to express my ideas, how to walk properly and behave." Thien Mon Dao has roots going back to the 10th century, according to master Nguyen

Khac Phan, whose school trains in the complex of an ornate temple on the outskirts of Hanoi. But he says the first official practice of the sport was recorded in the 18th century. In recent years it's seen a surge in popularity, he adds, with up to three new clubs set up in the capital each year.

Vietnam currently has around 30,000 Thien Mon Dao practitioners across the country, Phan estimates, with occasional

public performances helping boost the sport's appeal. "People come for different purposes but mostly they want to improve their health and mental health," added Phan, who has been teaching the sport since the early 1990s. "Learning martial arts can help people see life in a better way, improve their strength... give up their mistakes to aim for better things," he said.

From tiny children who have barely started

school to people in their eighties, Thien Mon Dao embraces anyone who wants to kick their way up through 18 different levels and seven belts. Sixteen-year-old Vu Thi Ngoc Diep, one of around 10 women training at the temple compound, said the sport had also given her a way to fight gender stereotypes. "South-east Asian people think that girls should be gentle and not suitable for learning martial arts," she said. "But I see it differently."

Companies touting black lives matter face workforce scrutiny

SEATTLE, JUN 11 (AP): After hitting the streets to protest racial injustices, Sharon Chuter was disillusioned by the number of corporate brands posting glossy messages spouting support for black lives.

The 33-year-old founder of Uoma Beauty, a cosmetics company that caters to black women, came up with a social media challenge to test the sincerity of the companies: She launched the #pulluporshutup campaign on Instagram to push brands to reveal the racial makeup of their corporate workforce and executives.

The hashtag has since gone viral, amassing nearly 100,000 Instagram followers in a week. Chuter said it's a wake-up call for many businesses who couldn't see or didn't take seriously enough the silent racism and prejudices that hold black people back in their own workplaces.

Reflection is painful, Chuter said. The truth hurts and I just felt like brands didn't want to do it.

As protests over police brutality have erupted across the country over the past two weeks, The Associated Press reviewed the diversity reports of some of the biggest companies pledging solidarity with their black employees as well as the black community, and found that their efforts to recruit, maintain and promote minorities within their own ranks have fallen short.

Microsoft has been posting powerful quotes on Twitter from black employees describing how systemic racism takes a toll on their lives. One employee, Phil Terrill, talked about the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed black man who pleaded for air as a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee against Floyd's neck for

several minutes, sparking protests around the globe.

It should not take the death of Black people at this magnitude to inspire everyone to be an ally, Terrill is quoted as saying.

Only 4.4% of Microsoft's global workforce across all brands, including retail and warehouse workers, identify as black, and less than 3% of its U.S. executives, directors and managers are black, according to the company's 2019 diversity and inclusion report.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella addressed the issue in an email to employees, saying the company must change first if it wants to help change the world, and that it's investing in its talent pipeline by expanding connections with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

In order to be successful as a business in empowering everyone on the planet, we need to reflect the world we serve," Nadella said.

Amazon is prominently displaying Black lives matter on its platforms and its CEO Jeff Bezos has been posting on Instagram racist emails he's received from consumers who are unhappy with the company for taking a stance.

But the company itself has been accused of hypocrisy for the troubling conditions reported by warehouse workers during the coronavirus pandemic. An AP analysis found that more than 60% of warehouse and delivery workers in most cities are people of color.

Amazon's 2019 workforce data shows about 8% of its managers in the U.S. are black, compared to nearly the 60% of managers who are white.

Courtenay Brown, 29, who sorts packages at the Amazon fulfillment

center in Avenel, New Jersey, said she feels that Amazon's messages supporting justice and equal opportunity for blacks are not genuine.

She said that most of the employees she works with at the center are people of color, but the higher-ups are white.

As a black woman, I feel like it is empty words, she said.

They don't help our struggles. Everyone wants to join in and profit from us. In the U.S., black people account for 12% of the overall workforce, but only 8% of management jobs, said University of Virginia professor Laura Morgan Roberts. The number of black CEOs of Fortune 500 companies peaked in 2002 with 12. Today there are just four.

Roberts' research looking at the careers of Harvard business school graduates found black alumni got fewer prime opportunities, such as global assignments, than white graduates with the same degree.

They're saying, 'We've got the qualifications but we can't get into the inner circle,' Roberts said.

Adidas, which responded to Floyd's death and subsequent protests by crossing out the word Racism on an Instagram post, acknowledged its own shortcomings after a growing group of employees called out the company for its lack of diversity.

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Shuttered Zoom accounts raise China free speech fears

Several Zoom meetings involving Chinese users were "disrupted," the video messaging app acknowledged Thursday, after activists in the United States and Hong Kong revealed discussions on the platform of Beijing's deadly Tiananmen crackdown had been closed down.

The disclosure has sparked concerns that the American app, which has soared in popularity during the coronavirus pandemic, is bowing to the demands of authoritarian China at the expense of users in places where free speech is protected.

Unlike competitors such as Google and Facebook, Zoom is not banned in communist China, which uses its "Great Firewall" to scrub its internet and censor negative information.

But activists in the United States and Hong Kong complain they have been kicked out of their Zoom accounts after hosting online anniversary events marking Beijing's crushing of the pro-democracy uprising on June 4, 1989.

Zhou Fengsuo, a Tiananmen survivor now in living in the US, said Wednesday his account was suspended after his organisation Humanitarian China tried to connect more than 250 people, including users in the mainland, to commemorate the crackdown. His account was reinstated after media reporting.

On Thursday, Lee Cheuk-yan, the organiser of Hong Kong's annual vigil for the victims of the crackdown, said he had been locked out of his account since 22 May after his group tried to host an online discussion on China's influence around the world. "The account was suspended before the talk started. I've asked Zoom many times whether this is political censorship but it has never replied to me," Lee, chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance, told AFP.

His group is based in Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous city that has free speech liberties unseen on the mainland, but which has been upended by a year of pro-democracy protests that have infuriated China.

After Zhou's suspension became public, Zoom said it had to obey any laws in the jurisdictions it operates in.

In an updated statement to AFP on Thursday, Zoom said it was hosting "complex, cross-border conversations, for which the compliance with the laws of multiple countries is very difficult".

"We regret that a few recent meetings with participants both inside and outside of China were negatively impacted and important conversations were disrupted," it added.

The California-based company said it was "committed to modifying its processes to further protect its users from those who wish to stifle their communications" but declined to give further details.

PEN America, a group that defends free speech, said Zoom users outside of mainland China should not find themselves censored by Beijing.

"We wouldn't tolerate it if a phone company cut off service for someone expressing their views in a conference call; we shouldn't tolerate it in the digital space either," CEO Suzanne Nossel said.

Earlier this week Zoom reported its earnings had soared in the quarter ending April 30 as both businesses and consumers, cooped up inside due to COVID-19 lockdowns, embrace the platform to meet virtually.

Australia won't be 'intimidated' by China economic threats: PM

Australia warned Thursday it would not be intimidated by attempts at economic "coercion" after China threatened to undermine the multi-billion dollar flow of Chinese tourists and students to the country.

Beijing has issued warnings in recent days that Chinese should avoid Australia due to concerns about racist incidents targeting ethnic Asians during the coronavirus pandemic.

The comments were the latest salvo in a long-brewing diplomatic dispute between Australia and its largest trading partner.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison dismissed on Thursday allegations of racist treatment of Chinese as "rubbish".

"It's a ridiculous assertion and it's rejected," he said during a radio interview.

"We have an important trading relationship with China and I'd like to see that continue," Morrison said.

But he warned his government would "never be intimidated by threats" or "trade our values in response to

coercion from wherever it comes". During the pandemic racism toward Asians has reportedly increased, according to the New South Wales anti-discrimination commission.

Beijing defended its travel advice at a briefing on Thursday, saying it was "based on a large volume of facts".

"I don't know where the Australian leader's so-called "coercion" comes from," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters.

"We advise Australia to face up to the problem, reflect on itself, and take concrete measures to protect the safety and rights of Chinese nationals in Australia," she said.

Tensions have grown steadily in recent years between the two governments as Australia has moved to counter Chinese moves to build its influence both domestically and across the Pacific region.

More recently Canberra angered Beijing by leading calls for an international probe into the origin and handling of the coronavirus pandemic in central China.

China has since taken several steps targeting trade with Australia, including the attempts to discourage Chinese travellers, who represent the biggest groups of foreign tourists, and overseas students.

The effect of Beijing's travel advice will only be known once Australia's borders -- closed to all non-essential inbound and outbound travellers due to the pandemic -- reopen.

Education is Australia's fourth-largest export with more than 500,000 international students enrolled last year, bringing about Aus\$37 billion into the economy.

After Canberra's support for a virus inquiry, China's ambassador in Canberra threatened a widespread consumer boycott of Australian products -- a warning followed up by a bar on four major Australian beef exporters.

That was followed in May by an 80-per cent tariff on Australian barley over dumping allegations, a move grain growers say will cost at least Aus\$500 million (US\$350 million) a year.

Latin America logs 70,000 coronavirus deaths

More than 70,000 people have died from coronavirus in Latin America as the pandemic sweeps through the region, putting growing pressure on an already stretched healthcare system.

As the number of cases in the United States soared past two million, Central and South America has emerged as the new hotspot for a disease that has infected 7.4 million people around the globe. More than 415,000 of them have died. In Brazil, which accounts for well over half of the deaths in the region, hospitals were struggling to cope with the influx of sick and dying.

"Nursing was always an overworked profession, and this pandemic has just made things worse," nurse Hans Bossan told AFP.

"Nurses deal directly with patients, with the virus, we're on the front lines of the war," said Bossan, who is working 72 hours a week in three different jobs. Nurses have been hit particularly hard as Brazil has rocketed up the global charts to claim an unwanted third spot in the number of deaths, behind the United States and Britain.

Around 18,000 nurses there have been infected with COVID-19, and at least 181 have died -- among the highest numbers in the world, according to the International Council of Nurses.

Critics of Brazil's populist President Jair Bolsonaro say the epidemic has been worsened by a haphazard response that has seen the president repeatedly downplay the severity of the disease. He has agitated against the lockdowns that scientists say are necessary to tamp down the infection,

insisting the economic cost is too high. On Wednesday, and with infection rates still soaring, the economic capital Sao Paulo began reopening shops.

Malls were set to reopen in a slew of other cities on Thursday, the day before Brazilians celebrate Valentine's Day.

Reopening also gathered pace in the United States on Wednesday, with tourism-dependent Miami allowing people onto its beaches for the first time in three months. "I almost started crying as soon as I came out onto the beach," said travel agent Julie Isaacson.

The moves come despite the US infection tally tipping past the two million mark. Almost 113,000 Americans have died. Although they are now easing, shutdowns across the country have taken their toll on the economy.

Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell said despite a rebound expected next year, the longer-term outlook remains highly uncertain.

- 'Gradual and partial' reopening - The economic pain of the pandemic is being felt around the world.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) warned the global economy is on course to contract by at least six percent this year.

By the end of next year, the loss of income should surpass that of "any previous recession over the last 100 years outside wartime," the forecast warned.

The European Union ramped up efforts to dig itself out of the economic hole in which is languishing, announcing it hoped to open its borders to foreigners in July.

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Apparently, Avatar 2 Filming Again Is Causing Some Drama In New Zealand

Most film productions are still closed down and waiting for the all-clear following the global shutdown, but one movie is already on track to get back to work. Or rather, two movies are about to get back to work, since Avatar 2 and Avatar 3 are being filmed at the same time in New Zealand. We recently got word that the production in the island nation was getting back underway, but while Avatar fans are probably very excited the long-awaited film is coming, some politicians in New Zealand are less than thrilled.

The issue is that, while New Zealand is reporting nothing but good things when it comes to the state of COVID-19 cases in the country, the borders are still closed. In order for the Avatar film crew to get back to work, they needed a waiver from the New Zealand government to get back in the country, which the production received. However, while the film production received the waiver, a lot of other industries inside New Zealand have not, which has some in the government making claims of "political favouritism."

According to New Zealand's Stuff, the vast majority of waiver requests, as many as nine out of every 10, have been denied, and some are claiming that large businesses like film productions are being treated differently and being given special treatment while local businesses continue

to suffer due to closure. There have actually been two waivers granted for film productions, one is for Avatar, the other is for an undisclosed film. Part of the reason the waiver for the unknown film was granted

ly gotten back to work quite yet. Those that made the trip over need to quarantine in their hotels for two weeks before they'll be allowed out to do the work of filming once again. The Avatar team ar-



was reportedly because of claims that, if the waiver wasn't granted, the film ran the risk of never being made at all, and thus not employing all the New Zealand locals the production would need, because key cast members would be committed elsewhere if the production was delayed any further.

For the most part, it doesn't appear there's necessarily a problem with the waivers being given to the film productions, it's rather that the same waivers aren't being given out evenly to other industries as well.

The Avatar films still haven't actual-

rived in New Zealand last week.

To some extent the argument that the film productions are receiving special treatment does appear to hold some water. Statements from various government officials have made it clear that the large economic benefit to New Zealand from the film productions was part of the reason the exemptions were given. Smaller local industries may simply be unable to provide the same level of economic impact, regardless of how important those business might be to the individuals directly involved in them.

Ava DuVernay among six others elected as first-time Academy Board of Governors

LOS ANGELES, JUN 11 (PTI): The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has announced its new members of the Board of Governors for the year 2020-21 and filmmaker Ava DuVernay has been elected to represent the director's branch. As a result of this move, the number of female governors has increased from 25 to 26, and people of colour rose to 12 from 11, including the three Governors-at-Large, the Academy said in a statement on Wednesday. The news comes amidst the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests over the custodial killing of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American man who was suffocated to death by a Minneapolis officer last month.

Last week, DuVernay and her "Selma" star David Oyelowo, who played Martin Luther King Jr in her 2014 directorial, revealed that multiple Oscar voters blacklisted the movie from awards consideration after the cast showed up at the film's New York City premiere wearing "I Can't Breathe" T-shirts following the police killing of Eric Garner.

The Academy took to Twitter to condemn the threats: "Ava & David, we hear you. Unacceptable. We're committed to progress."

Now reacting to her first-time election, the filmmaker tweeted, "Thank you to the members of the Directors Branch of @TheAcademy. Life is a funny, fascinating thing. You never know what's around the corner."

Besides DuVernay, five others elected for the first time to the 54-person board are -- Debra Zane (casting directors branch), Lynette Howell Taylor (producers branch) known for "A Star is Born", Stephen Rivkin (film editors branch), Linda Flowers (makeup artists and hairstylists branch), and Rob Bre-

dow (visual effects branch). The Board of Governors sets the Academy's strategic vision, preserves the organisation's financial health, and assures the fulfilment of its mission.

Incumbent governors who have been re-elected to the board include Whoopi Goldberg (actors branch), "Dolemite



Is My Name" scribe Larry Karaszewski (writers branch), Mandy Walker (cinematographers branch), Isis Mussen-den (costume designers branch), Kate Amend (documentary branch), Charles Bernstein (music branch), Wynn P Thomas (production design branch), Teri E Dorman (sound branch).

Jon Bloom representing the short films and feature animation branch is returning to the board after a hiatus. The Academy's 17 branches are each represented by three governors, who may serve up to three consecutive three-year terms.

In April, the Academy announced that it will allow only films streamed online for the forthcoming Oscars in the wake of the industry-wide shutdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

For the 93rd awards ceremony only, the films that had a planned theatrical release but are initially made available on a commercial streaming or video on-demand (VOD) service may qualify in the best picture, general entry and specialty categories.

Dianne Houston to helm 'The Melony Armstrong Story'

LOS ANGELES, JUN 11 (PTI): Filmmaker Dianne Houston is set to direct upcoming movie "The Melony Armstrong Story". Houston is best known for directing 1995 short "Tuesday Morning Ride", which was nominated at the 1996 Academy Awards.

The new movie will chronicle the inspiring and true story of Melony Armstrong, a mother who works at a shelter for battered women and decides to start a natural hair braiding business to achieve financial independence for herself and others. But to do so she must overcome unexpected obstacles imposed by a powerful cartel and the state of Mississippi.

The project hails from Moving Picture Institute with Lana Link, Rob Pfaltzgraff and Stacey Parks as the producers, reported Deadline. Armstrong and Nick Reid will serve as executive producers. The makers are planning to start production in early 2021.

Did not start producing to make movies for me to star in: Anushka Sharma

Anushka Sharma revealed that she did not start bankrolling films to star in them.

Anushka Sharma says her decision to turn producer at the age of 25 came from her position as a star, which she could leverage to produce innovative and disruptive content for women in Bollywood. She adds that she did not start bankrolling films to star in them.

"My decision to turn producer was because I wanted to leverage the position which I had, to produce good films.



READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL! Bachelor star Hannah Ann Sluss posed in a purple bikini and light blue linen top while holding a football in Tennessee.

JK Rowling responds to critics over her transgender comments

LOS ANGELES, JUN 11 (AP): Harry Potter" creator J.K. Rowling said she refuses to bow down" to criticism about her recent comments on transgender people.

Rowling published a lengthy post on her blog website Wednesday in response to the backlash and her concerns over new trans activism."

She has been under hefty scrutiny about her thoughts on transgender identity from the LGBTQ community along with Eddie Redmayne and Daniel Radcliffe, who starred in the Harry Potter film franchise.

I refuse to bow down to a movement that I believe is doing demonstrable harm in seeking to erode 'woman' as a political and biological class and offering cover to predators like few before it," she said.

Rowling drew outrage Saturday on Twitter when she criticized an opinion piece published by the website Devex, a media platform for the global development community, that used the phrase people who menstruate.

Rowling implied it should have said women. The famed author continued with another thread speaking about the concept of biological sex. She said she felt compelled to tweet her thoughts about her experience with domestic abuse and sexual assault.

I stand alongside the brave women and men, gay, straight and trans, who're standing up for freedom of speech and thought, and for

the rights and safety of some of the most vulnerable in our society: young gay kids, fragile teenagers, and women who're reliant on and wish to retain their single sex spaces," she said in her post Wednesday.

Rowling's tweets caused a firestorm of responses from the LGBTQ community and others who were upset with her words. A Harry Potter fan group tweeted its disapproval of Rowling's post and encouraged followers to donate to a group that supports back transgender women.

It seems JK is good at only one thing: writing fantasy," the advocacy group GLAAD said in a statement Wednesday. Her misinformed and dangerous missive about transgender people flies in the face of medical and psychological experts and devalues trans people accounts of their own lives."

Redmayne, who starred in two Fantastic Beasts" films of the Harry Potter prequel series, disagreed with Rowling's comments on Twitter. The Oscar-winning actor said that his transgender friends and colleagues are tired of the constant questioning of their identities.

Trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary identities are valid, said Redmayne, who played a transgender woman in the 2015 film The Danish Girl, which earned him an Oscar nomination. He joined Radcliffe who also disapproved of Rowling's thoughts on transgender identity.

ARIES:

You may find yourself at a crossroads today. But, why are you struggling to move forward, Aries? Could you be letting the voices of others mess with the voice of wisdom in your head? Something to consider when you find yourself weighed down by the clouds of confusion. Remember, choosing yourself is not an act of disservice. Not choosing yourself is. Tip: Listen to the voice of wisdom. You already know the best way forward.

TAURUS:

If things are starting to look picture-perfect on the personal front, it's because they are. Don't go into panic mode, which we tend to do every time things begin to take a turn for the better. Send out the energy of gratitude for all the blessings you are receiving now and the ones that are yet to come. Everything is taking place for your highest good. Trust. Tip: Everything is taking place for your highest good.

GEMINI:

What if we are not this or that? What if we're just energy in the purest, most unadulterated form? That would mean the body is basically a space suit, a costume we've chosen to put on for this drama on the earthly realm. So,

don't get attached to your identity. Free yourself from the idea of who you are supposed to be as you allow yourself to transform. Tip: Let go of the idea of who you are supposed to be in order to transform.

CANCER:

This is an especially confusing time in the Cancer HQ. What you want to beware of is foes masquerading as friends. Trust the niggling feeling—the voice of wisdom that's telling you things are not as they appear in the moment. If you haven't been able to figure what the hidden agenda is, you will soon. Be patient with yourself and the Universe. Resist the urge to make any bold moves. Tip: Always trust your gut.

LEO:

We're so obsessed with the idea of 'doing' that we forget we're known as human 'beings'. The cards are reminding you that there is no rush to be anywhere or to achieve anything. Be still. Listen to what your body and soul are telling you. It is by allowing yourself to disengage from the outside world that you will be able to tap into the wisdom within. Tip: Take a break.

VIRGO:

A Jordan Belfort quote to give you per-

spective: "If it doesn't bring you income, inspiration or orgasms, it doesn't belong in your life." Virgo, it's time to take stock of the things that are beginning to smell stale around here. The waning cycle of the moon is empowering you to cut the cords that no longer serve you.

Tip: A major cleanse and purge is on the cards.

LIBRA:

"If you do not breathe through writing, if you do not cry in writing or sing in writing, then don't write, because our culture has no use for it." Let these immortal words by Anaïs Nin inspire you to open that Pandora's box of raw and untamed emotions and create from a space of authenticity. You are no longer interested in playing a role assigned to you, or pandering to your audience in any way. Tip: Create from a space of authenticity.

SCORPIO:

Paulo Coelho once said, "You have to take risks. We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen." Your thoughts exactly, Scorpio. There's a deep awakening within you, one that is reminding you that miracles cannot be experienced by playing within your safe

zone. So give your fears a goodbye kiss as you grab life by the horns.

Tip: You're in the mood to play outside of your comfort zone.

SAGITTARIUS:

Is it time that heals our wounds, or the inner work we do within that given time that accelerates the process of healing and opens our hearts again? With old traumas resurfacing, you will find that shadow work is the need of the hour. Resist the urge to go into a space of denial or bury yourself under a pile of work. It's best to sit down with what's coming up and allow the wounds to reveal what they need to. Turning to a supportive friend or therapist could give you the perspective you need in these trying times. Tip: Be present to what's coming up.

CAPRICORN:

Embrace the unbecoming. Capricorn. Honour the process of shedding old skin and letting go of dated belief systems. Healing is never a straight road. But you have a way of making messy look beautiful. Oh, the revelations you will have when you sit down to converse with your wounds! This could also be a time of dramatic endings. We're never prepared for what life sends our way, yet we

somehow are. Release the old with gratitude knowing that you are making space for better. Tip: Listen to the hidden wisdom in your wounds.

AQUARIUS:

This is a time of financial stability. The road to where you are hasn't been easy, but you're learning to make your money work for you. Lay your trust in the mysterious forces above. Know that you will be taken care of as long as you honour your path. Self-realisation is also a big theme in the Aquarius HQ. It's easy to blame other people for what's going wrong. Tip: You're learning to trust the law of abundance as you honour your path.

PISCES:

Life is not a game of dumb charades, Pisces. If your loved ones are not being able to meet you where you are, it's because you aren't being clear. Step up. Speak up. Know that you deserve to be seen and heard. The cards are also asking you to keep your attitude in check. There is a tendency to glorify the pain—to categorise the script of your life as a tragedy. It's true that certain things are predestined, but don't forget that free will is also at play here. Tip: It's time to communicate your needs better.