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# Summit TIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 151 | Gangtok | Tuesday 15 June 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | Rs. 5

**Amid a Black Flag protest, Lakshadweep's new administrator Praful Patel arrives**

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 14 JUN [NDTV]:** Hundreds of Lakshadweep's natives -- families and leaders -- are observing a Black Flag protest today as their new Administrator Praful Khoda Patel arrived in the island group. This is the first time he has gone there since his sweeping reforms, some of them proposed, sparked outrage in the Union Territory and in neighbouring Kerala some weeks ago.

Amid a lockdown, locals raised black flags at home, while many wore black masks or badges.

The protest was organised by the All-Party Save Lakshadweep Forum (SLF). Protesters raised slogans like "Roll back all weird anti-social and anti-public reforms" and "Praful Khoda Patel Go Back".

In a Facebook post, Lakshadweep Parliamentarian PP Mohammed Faizal said, "Democratic values are the highest tenets of our Constitution and any attack on the same will be fought against by the SLF."

This happened days after another protest against the alleged "anti-people and anti-democratic" draft orders of the Administrator.

"All people of Lakshadweep are united, irrespective of political leanings," said one such protester, remaining unidentified.

Dr Muneer Manikfan, the Vice Chairman of Minicoy Village Panchayat requested the central government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to call back Mr Patel and withdraw all controversial regulations.

In a Facebook post, Lakshadweep film-maker and activist Aisha Sultana displayed her photo in black attire and mask. Her post said: "No longer will we, the people of Lakshadweep, tolerate fascism." Ms Sultana has been booked for sedition and hate speech over her "bio-weapon" remark against the Central government made during a television news panel discussion.

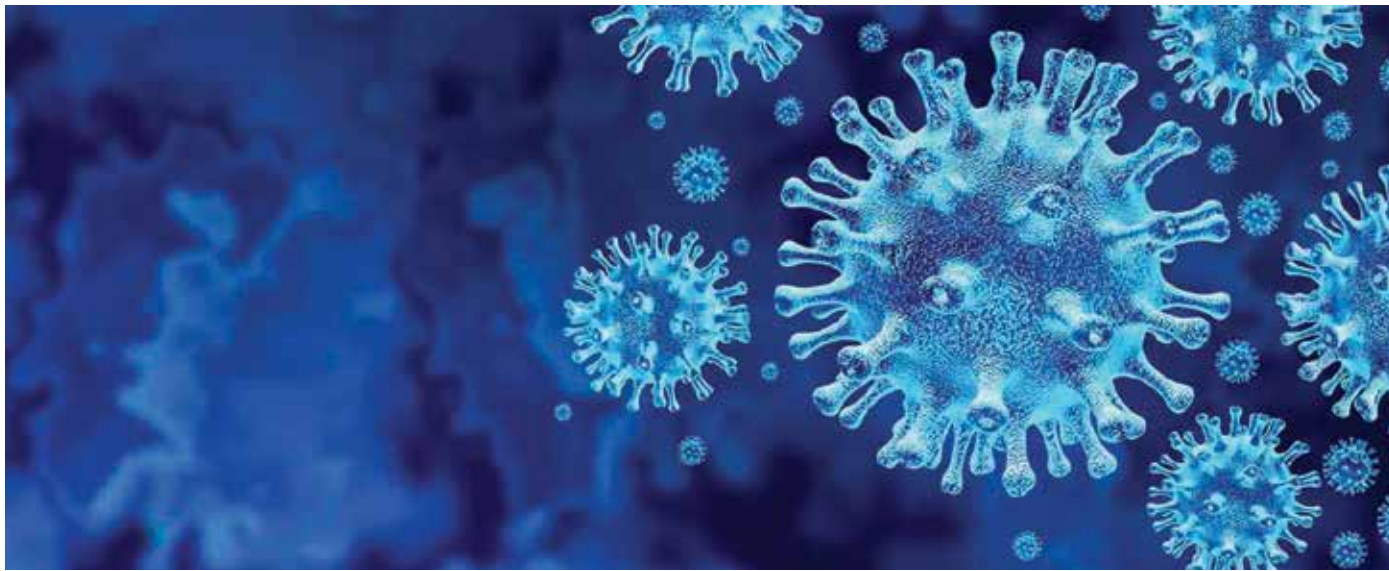
The filmmaker has since moved the Kerala High Court saying she has been "falsely implicated in the case with ulterior motives". The intent behind her comments was to expose the state's apathetic approach, he has said.

"There is no case that the statement of the applicant created disaffection towards the government or that there was imminent violence sparked by the words," her plea says.

## Sikkim records more recoveries than new cases for fourth consecutive day, three days without Covid deaths

**SAGAR CHHETRI GANGTOK, 14 JUN:**

The novel coronavirus has proven to be extremely unpredictable, so it is with a little caution that one should interpret data to suggest that its brutal second wave is on its way out. Hence, it is with finger crossed that this update is presented. That said, Sikkim has reason to cheer given that it has now gone four straight days with the number of recoveries substantially outnumbering the daily addition to the Covid caseload. Also bringing some more hope is confirmation that the State has witnessed no Covid deaths for three consecutive deaths. This must come as welcome relief after living through the second wave when three deaths a day had become routine and there was one exceptionally brutal day on 13 May when Sikkim lost nine lives to Covid.



As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 put out by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project of the Health Department at 8AM Monday, 281 formerly Covid-positive people made full recoveries and were discharged from home and facility isolation to resume their

normal lives. Over the same 24 hour period, only 36 new cases of Covid were reported in the State. One must bear in mind here that the both the VRD Labs in the State are closed on Sunday hence no RT-PCR tests were conducted yesterday.

Even with this caveat, the numbers have swung in Sikkim's favour. In the four days since 11 June, a total of 1,237 people have made full recoveries even as only 507 new cases were reported over the same period. For the significance of this number to sink in, remem-

ber that as recently as a fortnight back, on 28 May, Sikkim had reported 420 cases in a single day.

Sikkim's count of recovered cases now stands at 14,615 while the number of confirmed cases detected thus far clocks in at 18,450. It has also lost 281 lives to Covid.

What is also reassuring is that of the 3306 currently active cases of Covid in the State, only 173 have symptoms severe enough to require hospitalisation while the rest are either in facility or home isolation. While there were only 10 new hospitalisations in the past 24 hours, what remains a concern is that 25 Covid patients are in ICU at STNM Hospital and Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

In other data for the past 24 hours, the 36 new cases were picked up from the testing of 313 samples on Sunday. Of the new cases, 29 were registered in East District, six in West District and one in South District.

As per the IDSP daily report on Covid released yesterday, 157 new cases were detected even as 387 COVID patients were discharged from home isolation after making full recoveries.

## CM tables Rs 9,852.85 cr budget

**BILLS TO GREENLIGHT THREE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES PLACED**

**GANGTOK, 14 JUN (IPR):** The Fourth Session (Part III) of the Tenth Assembly of Sikkim Legislative Assembly commenced from today.

The Session began with the Speaker, SLA, LB Das welcoming the Governor and all the Members to the Session.

Governor, Ganga Prasad, began his address by extending his warm greetings and best wishes to the Speaker and all the members. He said that the State Government during this period of crisis has been working tirelessly and has effectively overcome the obstacles presented forth. There have been zero cut on salaries and developmental activities have been carried forward with utmost zeal and without any interruptions.

The Governor stated that the Budget for this year has been formed taking into consideration the impact of Covid-19 on the economy of the State, and has devised ways by which we shall remain shielded from its detrimental effects. He expressed his confidence that the Budget deliberations will address the needs of the evolving times and will usher in greater glory to allow Sikkim to reach its true potential.



The State Government has designed the Budget to substantially address the pertinent issues reflected in the Union Budget. It is development centric with special focus on healthcare, education, increasing agriculture and horticulture produce.

The Governor elaborated on some of the notable achievements and area of focus of the

State Government. He maintained that due fiscal priority has been accorded to development, health, education, social sector and infrastructure requirements. "So far we are moving in the right direction towards the growth and prosperity of the State and I am confident that the budget session will be in furtherance of this momentum," stated the Governor.

(The full address of the Governor is attached herewith).

Speaker LB Das reported the Governor's address on the floor of

the House. He announced that the businesses listed for Fourth Session – Part (III) of the Tenth Legislative Assembly, Budget 2021–22 will be taken up in two days. Due to the ongoing pandemic, Private Members Businesses i.e., Question Hour, Private Members Resolution and other Motions stand suspended. He further said that as a precautionary measure, Members are requested to continue wearing their face mask while deliberating on the floor of the House or otherwise as

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## Chamling applauds Dr Mechung and Dr Bina, condemns Govt

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 14 JUN:**

Former Chief Minister and president of Sikkim Democratic Front party, Pawan Chamling, has applauded Dr Mechung Bhutia and Dr Bina Basnet for their efforts to provide voluntary medical service.

In his Facebook page, Mr Chamling has accused

the state government of using the police to harass the duo.

Terming their endeavours to provide voluntary medical service a "global example", Mr Chamling has condemned "the utter lack of wisdom of the state government who, instead of supporting this duo is using the police to harass them."

"Far from refusing to

take the help of our own people, we should be willing to take even an enemy's help if that will save lives. But our government in Sikkim, on the other hand, has been so arrogantly harassing the volunteering medical doctors who have been providing free door to door service in Sikkim," he adds.

## Sisa Golai stretch to take a month's time for repairs

**ARPAN PRADHAN GANGTOK, 14 JUN:**

"Restoration of Sisa Golai stretch under National Highway-10 will take the whole of June. Construction of plumb walls and other works is being undertaken on a war footing," said Chief Engineer of the Roads & Bridges Department, KC Sharma.

The road near Sisa Golai in Gangtok had been damaged in the first week of June wherein construction below the road had made the slope unstable. A portion of the road had collapsed and vehicular movement along this stretch has also been stopped since then.

This had not only created fear amongst those living below the road but also those situated right above the road.

"We are happy with the work initiated by the concerned department. We were worried but the restoration and construction of protection wall below the road has made us hopeful. It has provided



some relief to us," said one local resident.

As per the information received from the department, the construction of two protection plumb walls has been completed as of now. Construction of two walls, one measuring 10 meter in length and 7.2 meter in height and another wall measuring 7 meter length and 3.4 meter height has been completed. However, more such walls need to be constructed.

CE, Mr. Sharma has informed that the construction of wall is taking time because of the steep slope and also because the area needs to be continuously

*turn to pg02*

## Tumin cluster of villages take online mode to get back in touch with nature

**SUMMIT REPORT LOWER TUMIN, 14 JUN:**

To mark World Environment Day, a group of self-motivated people of Tumin, Raley and Kokaley in East Sikkim have been taking on-line meetings with social leaders, retired officers, traditional practitioners and youth on the topic "Know Your Valuable Plants".

The idea behind this initiative is the recognition of socially and religiously valuable plants and identifying strategies to make this knowl-

edge-base accessible to lay people in the hope that this will trigger greater interest of the ecosystem and lead to better conservation.

Discussions are being organised to identify plants that were abundant earlier, but have gradually become scanty and often unavailable when they are needed for medicinal or social purposes, a press release informs.

The move is expected to spark new energy among the young to understand the place of these plants in the local ecosystem and also their

relationship with birds, wildlife, animals and human beings.

Noted plant conservators and traditional practitioners like MB Subba, BK Parsi, Yedu Gautam and retired officers have been connected via the online platform as guest speakers, it is informed.

The second meeting of the series was held on 13 June. Despite challenges of unfavourable weather and busy farming schedules, people have been encouraging the group to convene such discussions on a weekly basis.

The team believes that it is one idea to stay connected during this pandemic and a multi-dimensional approach to refresh knowledge on plants found in our surroundings that are of vital importance, the release explains.

The team is planning to organise such meetings in the near future involving social motivators and resource persons to address the community. Special efforts will be made to encourage participation of school students in these deliberations, they assure.





# Minister LN Sharma attends governing body meet of National Fisheries Development Board

**GANGTOK, 14 JUN [IPR]:** The 8th Governing Body Meeting of National Fisheries Development Board, was convened through Video Conference, today.

Minister LN Sharma attended the meeting along with, Director SSFS, N Jaswant and Additional Director SSFS, CS Rai, from NIC, Tashiling.

The Video Conference was chaired by Chairman NFDB and Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Girija Singh.

Minister, L. N. Sharma in his address, expressed his gratitude to NFDB for supporting the Directorate of Fisheries in organising the First Fish Mela on 20th & 21st of April, which was the first of its kind in Sikkim. He informed that the Fish Mela was a success with the participation of over 40 fish farmers, fishermen and 6 fish feed production, medicines and equipment entrepreneurs.

Minister, L. N. Sharma in-



formed that Sikkim has a vision to increase Cold water Fish production, thereby making the State self-sufficient by 2025 with the support from Central Government through

PMMSY. The State also plans for effective conservation & protection of 38 indigenous local fishes, found in the lakes, rivers and dams of Sikkim.

Minister put forth his re-

quest to the NFDB to establish an office with technical expertise in Sikkim to support Directorate of Fisheries, continuously. He also requested NFDB to send an expert team to the

State for enumeration of indigenous fishes in natural water bodies for better planning of conservation.

Concluding his address, Minister L. N. Sharma mentioned that improved varieties of trout and carp fishes are necessary to introduce to the farmers for high intensity culturing and shortening of the production cycle, for which he requested support from NFDB in introducing improved varieties of fishes. He also requested NFDB to depute experts to the state as consultants for drafting the action plan for 5 years as per the actual field conditions of the State.

Minister also informed that Directorate of Fisheries, Government of Sikkim, has submitted project plan to Government of India, which includes the Mini Aqua Park, while the proposal for Fish Eco-Tourism Village and Organic Aqua Culture are in its phase of submission.

## All Sikkimese Bhutia Assoc donates blood



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 14 JUN:**

On the occasion of World Blood Donation Day, an indoor mini blood donation camp was held at Namchi District Blood Bank today. It was organized by All Sikkimese Bhutia Association [ASBA] South District in association with Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim (VB-DAS) and District Blood Bank Namchi. As per a press release, a total of 26 units of blood has been collected from donors who came from Upper Ghurpisey, in and around Namchi and Namthang.

The camp was attended by the president of All Sikkimese Bhutia Association South

District, Samten Bhutia along with other executive members, VBDAS State General Secretary, Som Bahadur Rai, Advisor Chhewang Pintso Thakarpa, officials and technical staff of Namchi District Blood Bank.

After the completion of blood donation camp, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Namchi District Hospital, Dr DC Sharma thanked all the donors and presented Certificate of Appreciation to ASBA, Amardeep Club Rubdi Karek and Church of God Toribari Karek for their active participation in the field of blood donation.

ASBA South District also contributed Rs 11,000 to Mankind Group Sikkim, he release adds.

## 100 District Prison Namchi inmates vaccinated

**NAMCHI, 13 JUN (IPR):** As per the State Government's directive to cover one and all with regards to Covid Vaccination the Medical Team from Namchi District Hospital vaccinated a total of 100 inmates, who belonged to 18 to 44 categories at District Prison Namchi on 13 Jun, 2021.

It may be mentioned that as of yesterday a total of 13,260 people in the category of 18 to 44 were vaccinated in 81 Covid vaccination centres across south district.

Online slots are available and will be open for general citizens between 18 to 44 age group from 8.00am onwards. The slots will be open / available a day prior to the vaccination date. Citizens besides the priority group mentioned by the State Government need to apply for appointments online,

to get themselves vaccinated and these online appointments are available only in Namchi.

It is to inform those with online appointments to attend the covid vaccination session at Bhaichung Stadium. It maybe noted that for people who are 45 years and above, both first and second dose, session has been kept at Namchi District Hospital, they can walk in and get registered for Vaccination.

In the PHCs only priority group are being vaccinated and in the PHSCs all citizens beside the priority group are being vaccinated.

It has been requested by the staff of Namchi District Hospital to people who are in the queue to get vaccinated to maintain social distancing as it is very much possible to get infected due to crowding.

## 'Journalists targeted, contrary to PM's speech at G7': Editors Guild

**NEW DELHI, 14 JUN [PTI]:**

Journalists and cartoonists are being targeted in India, contrary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global stance on free speech and fostering democratic values in cyberspace, the Editors Guild of India said today. The government itself heaps pressure on these professionals if and when their views are critical of the establishment, the journalists' body said.

"Journalists and cartoonists critical of the government are being targeted on social media, as pressures are being mounted by the government on these platforms to remove such critical journalists on the specious ground that they are violating the law of the land," the Editors Guild said.



"All of this is contrary to the commitments that Prime Minister Narendra Modi made at the G7 Summit to democracy, openness, and against authoritarianism," it said in a press statement today.

The media release expressed shock at the Uttar Pradesh Police "cavalier" treatment of

the mysterious death of journalist Sulabh Srivastava yesterday. The Pratapgarh-based television reporter died Sunday night in what the police have called a "motorcycle accident", a day after he wrote to senior police officials saying he felt threatened following his recent reportage on liquor mafia.

The Guild's observations came a day after PM Modi, while addressing the G7 Summit's Outreach Session 'Building Back Together - Open Societies and Economies' as the lead speaker, stressed on the need to ensure that cyberspace remains an avenue for advancing democratic values and not of subverting it.

## Relief materials to 200 needy families

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 13 JUN:**

More than 200 needy families under Dokan Dara, Maney Khola and Maney Dara were provided with essential relief materials amid in pandemic period on Sunday. In the joint initiative taken by

Sikkim Himalayan Sporting Club, Rongneck Maney Dara Panchaya member and Amarbeli Samajik Sanstha distributed 25kgs of rice, 1kg of cereal, 1kg tomato, 3kgs potatoes, 2kgs of onion and 1liter cooking oil were provided to each family.

## Sisa Golai stretch to take..

cleared during the construction. After the completion of the construction of wall, the surface work of the road will start, he informed.

Keeping in mind, the problem faced by local residents and people of Gangtok in commuting, the department has been putting in extra effort and a huge number of laborers have been working at the site, informed another departmental officer.

It may be mentioned here that traffic into Gangtok town has been diverted via Namnang and Sichey Road because of the repair work at Sisa Golai.

"We are facing a lot of problem due to the traffic diversion because of Sisa Golai Road, as we have to take a round and have to drive 2-3 kilometers extra than normal. It is not only wasting our money but also our valuable time. At the same time, we are happy that the restoration work is going on," said a local resident, DT Bhutia.

## CM tables Rs 9,852.85..

per the advice of the State level Task Force on Covid-19 Management. He said that the country is leaving no stone unturned to contain the Second Wave of the Covid-19 virus, despite speedy vaccination drive and phases of unlock, safety Protocols are still in effect.

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang, in his motion of thanks on the Governor's address, said that the Members of Sikkim Legislative Assembly assembled in the Session are deeply grateful to the Governor of Sikkim for his address which he has been pleased to deliver today, the 14 June, 2021.

The Motion of Thanks on the Governor's address was seconded by Member Sonam T Venchungpa.

The discussion and voting on the Motion of Thanks on Governor's Address will be taken up tomorrow, the 15 Jun, 2021.

During the Financial Business, Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department presented the General Budget of the Government of Sikkim for the financial year 2021-22.

The Chief Minister, while delivering his Budget Speech, highlighted the key areas of the Budget for the financial year 2021-22 along with the budgetary profile.

Against a gross expenditure provision of Rs.9852.85 crore, (Rupees nine thousand eight hundred fifty-two crores eighty-five lakh) the net outgo comes to Rs.9588.65 crore (Rupees nine thousand five hundred eighty-eight crores sixty-five lakh) after taking into account recoveries amounting to Rs.264.20 crore (Rupees two hundred sixty-four crore twenty lakh).

He acknowledged the support of the very committed legislators and minister colleagues, officials, doctors, nurses, health workers, police personnel, community organizations, civil society members and the media to deal with the pandemic. Being located within the boundaries of the international borders, national security is our prime consideration and had to deal with the pandemic with a unique approach.

He said that despite serious financial constraints and severe geographical handicaps and also suddenness of the spread of pandemic across the world and in India, the State Government has been able to put together a considerable level of physical infrastructures and facilities to deal with the COVID-19. He gave a brief outline of the economic losses incurred by the State Government in all sectors due to the lock-down induced by the pandemic. He said that the State Government is determined to minimise the adverse impact, provide maximum possible relief to all the stakeholders and people in general by consistently making major strategies to revive and rebuild our economy. In fact, the economy had already started showing signs of recovery during the short period of August 2020 to March 2021, he added.

The Chief Minister once again expressed his thanks to the people of Sikkim, frontline warriors, doctors, nurses, officials, police personnel, home guards, safaikarmacharis, Dhobi, Medical attendant and all supporting staffs, volunteers, civil society organisation, political workers, media, farmers,

daily wage workers, drivers, businessmen, tourism industry stakeholders and all others for their patience, forbearance, cooperation and support during both waves of the pandemic in Sikkim.

He also thanked the Governor of Sikkim for being an extraordinary source of encouragement, moral support and guiding light during these tough and burdensome times.

In the end, the Chief Minister appealed to all to once again march forward to fulfill our goals based on sustainable development policies for the benefit of the people of Sikkim. "Let us re-dedicate ourselves to further peace and tranquility and ensure that the State grows to become an example of innovation and progress," he stated.

(The full budget speech of the Chief Minister is attached herewith).

The discussion and voting on the General Budget 2021-22 will be taken up tomorrow, the 15 Jun, 2021.

During the Legislative Business, the following Bills were placed in the House by the concerned Minister-in-Charge:

1. The Sikkim International University Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 13 of 2021) was introduced by Minister of Education Department, Kunga Nima Lepcha.

As per the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill, the State government has deemed it expedient to establish a self-financing Private University in the name of "Sikkim International University" in the State of Sikkim sponsored by the Research and Gyan for Noble Upliftment Trust at Sreebadam in West Sikkim.

The aim for establishing the University is to provide high quality education supplemented with industrial internship and professional training, education in the area of Engineering, Medical, Technical, Accounting, Finance, Commerce, Agriculture and many others through regular, online, part time and distance education mode. It also aims to create higher level of intellectual abilities. Further, establishment of the University in West Sikkim will provide necessary momentum for overall development of the area. The Bill has been framed with these objectives in view.

2. The Sikkim Labour (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 11 of 2021) was introduced by Minister of Labour Department, Mingma Norbu Sherpa.

The State government has deemed it necessary to have a comprehensive database by making it legally mandatory for registration of the entire spectrum of workforce, intermediaries or service providers or sub service providers, owner, employers and establishments and annual licensing of service providers or sub service providers and establishments, to enable the various programme implementing agencies to effectively execute the plethora of existing welfare schemes and also to capacitate the State government to formulate informed policies and programmes for improving the working and living conditions of labourers and also to protect them from exploitation by their employers. It is equally necessary to list out the duties and responsibilities

of the employers and to document the legally necessary working conditions including wages of the workers. With these objectives in view, the Bill has been framed.

3. Similarly, the Medhavi Skills University, Sikkim Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 12 of 2021) was introduced by Minister of Education Department, Kunga Nima Lepcha.

The State government has deemed it expedient to establish a self-financing Private University under the name of "The Medhavi Skills University, Sikkim" in the State of Sikkim sponsored by Medhavi Foundation at Bermiok in West Sikkim.

The aim for establishing the University is to promote quality skill education and entrepreneurship in an integrated manner with higher education to meet the qualified skilled manpower requirements of a growing national economy and to develop qualified youth with skilled proficiencies. Further, establishment of the University in West Sikkim will provide necessary momentum for overall development of the area. The Bill has been framed with these objectives in view.

4. Likewise, the Sikkim Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (Amendment) Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 9 of 2021) was introduced by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, who is also the Minister In-charge of Finance Department.

The State government has felt it necessary to amend the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2010 in view of the decision of the Government of India to allow more fiscal space to the State government from the financial year 2021-22 to 2025-26

as per the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission.

5. Lastly, the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, Sikkim (Amendment) Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 14 of 2021) was introduced by Minister of Education Department, Kunga Nima Lepcha.

The State government has deemed it expedient to revive the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management (EILM) University by changing the name of the University to Sikkim Alpine University and sponsoring body from Malvika Foundation to AMOGH Advanced Education and Research Foundation.

In order to revive the University, the State government has deemed it necessary to make changes in the nomenclature of the Act and in the nomenclature of the sponsoring body and insert sub-section (5) and sub-section (6) in section 47 of the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, Sikkim Act, 2006. With these objects in view, the Bill has been framed.

The discussion and voting on the Bills will be taken up tomorrow, the 15 Jun, 2021.

MLA and Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, Aditya Golay (Tamang) presented the Reports of the Committee on the floor of the House. The MLA put on record his gratitude and appreciation towards the State Government for creating a separate budget heads for Soreng Sub-Division and Pakyong Sub-Division. He said that this will ease out administration and benefit the people of these two sub-divisions.



# "Apologies": Zerodha founder nikhil kamath on "unfair" chess win vs Viswanathan

**NEW DELHI, JUN 14 (PTI):** The national capital recorded 131 new COVID-19 cases, the lowest since February 22, and 16 fatalities on Monday while the positivity rate dropped to 0.22 per cent, according to a health department bulletin.

Delhi had recorded 128 cases on February 22.

The 16 latest deaths are the lowest since April 5, when 15 people had succumbed to the disease.

There are 3,226 active COVID-19 cases in the city. As many as 960 patients are in home isolation.

Delhi's COVID-19 caseload stands at 14,31,270 while the death toll stands at 24,839. Over 14.03 lakh patients have recovered from the infection, according to the latest bulletin.

Delhi had recorded 255 cases on Sunday, 213



cases on Saturday, 238 cases on Friday, 305 cases on Thursday and 337 cases on Wednesday.

The city had recorded 23 deaths on Sunday, 28 on Saturday, 24 on Friday, 44 on Thursday and 36 on Wednesday.

The positivity rate stood at 0.4 per cent on Sunday, 0.3 per cent on Saturday and Friday,

0.4 per cent on Thursday and 0.5 per cent on Wednesday, according to government data.

A total of 59,556 tests, including 47,357 RT-PCR tests, were conducted the previous day, the bulletin stated.

Delhi is reeling from a brutal second wave of the pandemic that swept the country, claiming a

large number of lives.

On April 20, Delhi had recorded 28,395 cases, the highest daily rise since the beginning of the pandemic last year. On April 22 the case positivity rate was 36.2 per cent, the highest so far.

At 448, the national capital had recorded the highest daily toll on May 3. With the positivity rate

remaining below 1 per cent for two weeks, the Delhi government had on Sunday announced the partial lifting of curbs on restaurants and weekly markets from Monday.

While restaurants can open at 50 per cent capacity, one weekly market per municipal zone is allowed.

Salons, beauty parlours and barbershops, closed since the imposition of lockdown on April 19, also reopened from Monday, officials said.

However, schools, colleges, educational and coaching institutes, cinema halls, multiplexes, theatres, gyms, spas, yoga institutes, swimming pools, auditoriums, banquet halls, amusement and water parks, and public parks and gardens will continue to be closed till 5 am on June 21, according to an order issued by Delhi Disaster Management Authority.

## All shopkeepers of Chuba Phong GPU test negative



**NAMCHI, 14 JUN (IPR):** The team from Namthang Primary Health Centre led by Medical Officer, In-charge, Namthang PHC, Dr Mingyur D Lassopa, Dental Surgeons, Dr Sushmita Chettri and Dr Ayesha Chettri and ANM Deepika Chettri

conducted Rapid Antigen Test under Chuba Phong GPU today.

A total of 51 shopkeepers were tested of which everyone was detected as negative. The team also collected a total of 35 RT-PCR samples from the villagers.

## 5 trapped for 14 days in Meghalaya mine, Navy joins rescue efforts

**SHILLONG, 14 JUN [PTI]:** The Indian Navy, which was able to pull out three bodies from a flooded mine in Meghalaya using a sophisticated machine in 2019, on Sunday joined operations to rescue five miners trapped for 14 days in another such illegal coal mine in the state, an official said.

The water level in the mine at Umpleng in East Jaintia Hills district, which was decreasing for the past few days due to dewatering exercise, has gone up again following rain affecting rescue operation.

Armed with remotely operated vehicles (ROV) and handheld sonar, the team of Navy personnel arrived at Khliehriat, the district headquarters, on Saturday night and have built camps at the accident site.

During the day, the Navy personnel completed an exercise to ascertain the depth of the water level inside the mine, district deputy commissioner E Kharmalki said.

The Indian Navy per-

sonnel will use their ROV on Monday to explore the depth of the cave, the official said. Around 60 personnel of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and various state agencies are waiting for the water level to come down to about 10 meters in the 152-metre deep pit, as that is the maximum level in which they can work.

Using the ROV, a team of the Indian Navy personnel had managed to locate three bodies weeks after the shaft of another mine at Lumthari in the same district was filled with water from a river on December 13, 2018. The unmanned ROV was sent down the flooded rat-hole coal mine to determine visibility inside it.

At least five people have been identified by the district administration - four from Assam and one from Tripura - who got stuck somewhere inside the rat-hole mine at Umpleng, about 20 km from Khliehriat, after it was flooded following a dynamite ex-

plosion on May 30. Hazardous rat-hole coal mining is not permitted in Meghalaya after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned it in 2014.

A deep vertical shaft is dug till coal seams are found in the rat-hole mining. Once the seams are found, coal is taken out through small holes along the horizontal line of the coal seams.

Six co-workers of the trapped miners escaped the tragedy as they were outside the mine at the time of the incident and they have been escorted to their homes in Assam.

The police arrested the owner of the coal mine, Shining Langtang, and charged him with violation of the NGT order banning unscientific mining and transportation of coal.

The "Sordar" (mine manager) is on the run and a lookout notice has been issued since he was the one who brought migrant workers from Assam and Tripura to work in the illegal mine, a senior police officer said.

## Home Stay Assoc distributes relief to 50 families



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 14 JUN:**

Home Stay Association, West Sikkim, distributed food relief materials along with mask and sanitisers to 50 economically backward families at Rameydhm, Rinchebong Samasty and Salley Village, Yangthang Samasty today.

The event took place in the presence of association secretary, Ganesh Chettri and other executive members. Along with the distribution, the event ended with an announcement of Govt guidelines with an appeal to follow them in order to fight the pandemic.

## Road to Saffo blocked at three places



### WANGCHUK BHUTIA

**MANGAN, 14 JUN:**

In order to ascertain the status of road connectivity to Saffo ward in Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim, the SDM Dzongu, Dr Sonam Rinchen Lepcha along with the Quick Response Team (QRT) visited the spot which falls under Chungthang Sub Division today.

A short meeting was held at the office of ADC (Dev) Chungthang to discuss measures to help the public of Saffo and part of Shipgyer. The SDM also visited Ramom village to take stock of road con-

nectivity of Saffo.

The road to Saffo is blocked at 3 places; (1) near Ship-Gyer, (2) above Ramom village (3) near Saffo. The road near Shipgyer is restored now but due to fragile condition of the land, there may be blockage again if rain continues.

Approximately 200m span of road above Ramom on the way to Saffo is totally damaged and may take more than 15 to 20 days for repairs.

The SDM has also directed the 107 GREF to take action at the earliest.

## Restoration work in progress at Rangpo check post bridge



**GANGTOK, 13 JUN (IPR):** Following reports of shaking of Rangpo Check Post Bridge with the movement of heavy vehicles, District Collector, East, Ragul K along with concerned officers inspected the Bridge on Tuesday, the 08 June. Officers of NHIDCL, both from Sikkim and West Bengal side, were called for the inspection.

On inspection, it was found that the supports given to the bridge have been dislocated. NHIDCL was instructed to take up immediate restoration work.

Until then, it was directed that only vehicles up to 20 tons are to be allowed on the bridge.

Subsequently, the Superintendent of Police, East, has issued an Order to this effect.

## 280 in 18-44 age group get vaccinated at CRH

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 14 JUN:**

The COVID-19 Vaccine Session Site at Central Referral Hospital (CRH) Manipal Vaccine Session Site 5th Mile Tadong, East Sikkim, began the vaccination drive today for Indian citizens of 18-45 years.

As per a press release, a total of 280 persons received the Covishield vaccine on the first day today. Despite the inclement weather, there was an overwhelming response from the public for the jobs.

The vaccination slots, which opened at 8 AM today, have been fully booked for 15-17



Jun, 2021.

The vaccine is priced at Rs.780 per dose (as per the guidelines of the National COVID Vaccination programme). There will be no Walk-In facility and in order to avail vaccination, citizens will

have to use the CoWIN (<https://cowin.gov.in>) platform for pre-booking vaccination appointments. The facility will be available from Monday to Saturday (except designated holidays), 9.30am to 4.00pm.



## SIKKIM STATE TEACHER'S RECRUITMENT BOARD (Constituted Vide Notification No. 933/HRDD, 2015) Upper Syari, Gangtok, East Sikkim

Memo No. 43/SSTRB/ADM

Date: 12/06/ 2021

## NOTICE FOR DATE OF INTERVIEW FOR THE POST OF PRINCIPAL, SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Advertisements were issued vide Memo No. 38/SSTRB/ADM dated 12/04/2021 and Memo No. 40/SSTRB/ADM dated 27/04/2021 inviting applications from eligible candidates by online as well as offline mode for the post of Principals, Senior Secondary School under the Department of Education.

The SSTRB therefore announces that interview for the selection to post of Principals, Senior Secondary School under the Department of Education, shall be held from June 25, 2021 Friday to June 27, 2021, Sunday in the Conference Hall of the Sikkim State Teachers' Recruitment Board office located at Teachers' Guest House, Syari, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Following instructions are issued for the candidates while coming for the interview:.

1. The SSTRB will issue Admit Cards to the eligible candidates through WhatsApp or Email provided by them with required further instructions. Candidates are therefore requested to keep on checking their e-mail and/or WhatsApp for this.
2. Candidates shall download the Admit Card and produce it, supported by a valid Identity Card, to secure entry into the Interview Hall.
3. Candidates shall bring self-attested or attested photocopies of such documents (as mentioned earlier vide Memo No. 38/SSTRB/ADM dated 12/04/2021) along with originals.
4. Syllabus of the interview is as per the advertisement vide Memo No. 38/SSTRB/ADM dated 12/04/2021.
5. No TA and DA shall be paid for attending the Interview.

For any assistance, please contact:  
Mr MK Pradhan, Exams Officer, SSTRB  
+917872861250  
+919832043025  
E-mail: sstrb2019@gmail.com

R.O. No. 60/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22  
Date. 13.6.2021

(Secretary)  
Sikkim State Teachers' Recruitment Board



## GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SIKKIM STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN GANGTOK

### ADVISORY NOTICE

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was enacted to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment. As per the Act, all work places where there are more than 10 employees should set up an Internal Complaint Committee. Constitution of Internal Complaint Committee may be seen at: <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2013-14.pdf>.

It is also to mention here that the Internal Complaint Committee requires NGO members as third party in the said committee. Hence, any Social Worker/ member of NGO/Association/Person familiar with the issue of Sexual Harassment willing to attend training on Sexual Harassment at Workplace may contact the undersigned.

On the above backdrop, all organizations (State Department and Private Organizations/ Public Sector Undertaking/Companies) are directed to adhere to the above notice and submit a compliance report to the Office of the Sikkim State Commission for Women, Below Super Market, Old Secretariat, Contact Number - 9883833188/ 8348532458. Email Id - sscwsikkim@gmail.com within two week's time from the date of its publication in the local newspaper.

Sd/-  
Chairperson  
Sikkim State Commission for Women



## GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT UDYOG BHAWAN, TADONG- 737102, GANGTOK, SIKKIM.

### RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited from bonafide Sikkimese for engagement as District Resource Persons under Prime Ministers Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises(PMFME) Scheme.

The details of the eligibility criteria qualifications and application format be referred and downloaded from the official webpage of Commerce & Industries Department [www.industries.sikkim.gov.in](http://www.industries.sikkim.gov.in). The filled up application to be submitted to the office of the Director, MSME, Commerce & Industries Department, Government of Sikkim, Udyog Bhawan, Tadong, Gangtok, East Sikkim. The last date for the receipt of the filled up application is 25.06.2021 by 4.30 PM.

R.O. No. 57/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22  
Dt. 09.06.2021

(s/d)  
Director (MSME)  
Commerce & Industries Department  
Government of Sikkim.



## Public Needs Transport

*...because 90% of Sikkim owns  
no mode of transportation*

Sikkim began unlocking on Monday, and people stuck in traffic jams were undoubtedly wishing that the lockdown, which had made even detours a breeze, had stayed on longer. Gangtok has been encircled with sinks and slips on the national highway and one arterial road, and just these two blockages have created choke-points along several other routes that vehicles have to negotiate from getting to any point A to any point B. Given an economy in the doldrums, fuel prices which appear to battling for climate change activists and a growing hesitation among banks to jump at every vehicle loan application, the experience of such traffic snarls must be convincing many to try out bicycles or two-wheelers. A host of factors came together in the past two decades to inject an explosion of vehicles in Sikkim, and while this might be all fine if one were looking at vehicle ownership as a sign of prosperity, the traffic jams here led to a mistaken notion that there were enough private vehicles in Sikkim to justify the absence of a decent public transport system here. But we are getting ahead of the story here. Let's begin with the vehicle ownership statistics in Sikkim as revealed in the data for households released by the Census of India [for 2011].

Sikkim had around 1.04 lakh households in 2001 and this grew to 1.28 lakh households in 2011. While the population grew at its slowest rate in recent times at 12.6% between 2001-2011 [against 33.6% growth between 1991-2001], four wheel vehicle ownership went up nearly four-fold. Where 2.3% of the families in Sikkim owned a car/jeep in 2001, the 2011 headcount revealed that this has now grown to 8.3%. Comparison against the national average for such ownership provides some interesting statistics. While back in 2001, car ownership in Sikkim at 2.3% was slightly lower than the national average of 2.5% of the households, in 2011, it was nearly double the national average of 4.7%. For those who would prefer real numbers, here it is: while 2,618 of the 1.04 lakh households in Sikkim owned a car in 2001, in 2011, this number had grown to 10,635 families out of the around 1.28 lakh households here. The increase, as mentioned, has been mind-boggling and the endless line of vehicles on the highway and town roads here also projects the mistaken notion that there are already too many vehicles on the road to also add the burden of a wider public transport system.

But the latter is a wrong inference, because while many more families in Sikkim now own cars, the number of Sikkim households without any mode of conveyance is also staggering at 89.2% of the households here. Interestingly, at the national level, while much fewer families on average own a car, only 44.1% of the households own no mode of transportation. Again, for those who would prefer actual numbers – the Census of 2011 found that 1,14,293 households in Sikkim do not own any form of conveyance, neither a car, nor a scooter nor even a bicycle. This number was 1,00,548 in 2001. The point being made here is that nearly 90% of the households are in a cheap and reliable mode of transportation. The road network in Sikkim is already expansive and there are jeeps available to and from every corner of the State. People have recourse to only an occasional SNT bus in most places and private jeep services are expectedly more expensive than what a state operated bus would charge for the same journey.

What is also sorely missed in Sikkim is a public transport option for shorter distances. Even the City Runner which has a well advised route connecting Gangtok to the suburbs and nearby towns has too few buses on the road compared the number of commuters who would use it if they were more frequent. The same applies to the districts. Fact remains that close to 90% of the population remains denied the option of using a state supported public transport, which, even if it were slower, would also be more reliable [against the tourist season vagaries of private operators], safer and cheaper. The policy makers should perhaps factor the interests of this sector in their future projections.

### WRITE US:

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



## Identity Fusion: Why Some People Will Go to Extremes for the Beliefs of a Group

ROGER WHITAKER  
*theconversation.com*

Football fans often become so deeply connected to their club and to other fans, as though they're related. They're willing to support the group on a lifelong basis, with unwavering pride even in the face of losses.

At first glance, it can seem puzzling when people align with groups or beliefs that involve a personal cost to themselves. It's even more puzzling when the group members aren't closely related and when the personal costs are extreme, both good and bad. Examples are well documented in history – from remarkable acts of positive in-group support such as football fans to suicidal acts of terrorism.

Over the past two decades, the concept of identity fusion has emerged as an important psychological theory. Originally, development of the theory was motivated by the 9/11 attacks in New York and the Madrid train bombings. Identity fusion presents the idea that our personal identity is porous, so it can become integrated with a group.

Research on identity fusion continues to gain pace. Recent advances include identifying precursors to identity fusion, understanding the neurological basis for fusion and the mechanisms that support fusion, such as extreme shared experiences.

However, much less well understood are the evolutionary origins of the concept itself. For example, where has it come from, and how has this phenomenon established itself in humans so strongly? These are big questions that span thousands of years of the human story and need innovative techniques for investigation.

### THE DONATION GAME

Motivated by these observations, my colleagues and I have started to consider how identity fusion might become promoted through evolutionary processes. Using high performance computing, we emulated thousands of evolutionary steps and observed the outcome under many different assumptions.

We used agent-based computer models. Agents are programmable software entities, like characters in a computer game, created with limited cognition but with some freedom to interact in a simple way that reflects elements of human behaviour, such as the disposition to help others.

In our latest study, we used the donation game to explore the way identity fusion comes about. In the game, each group member has the freedom to choose whether it helps another agent if asked, based on the other member's reputation. Helping is represented by a donation, involving a small cost to the donor but a much bigger benefit to the recipient.

Donations secure a strong reputation for the generous donor and all agents accrue a payoff, which they seek to maximise. After a period of interactions, evolution can be modelled where agents selfishly update their method by copying the strategies used by the agents getting the highest payoffs.

### FUSION LEVELS

We let agents pick the extent to which their reputation was governed by their own actions (personal identity) or from the group's reputation (group identity). Because an agent's reputation is central to its pursuit of survival and reward, it becomes hard to secure future donations with an identity that provides a weak reputation.

However, relying on the group reputation is not straightforward – it means putting trust in others

who have the opportunity to free ride. In other words, shirkers can use a strong group reputation to receive donations while not donating themselves.

Our experiments focused on examining the effect of agents that have sensitivity to hypocrites – those who falsely signal high levels of fusion towards a group, but are caught out with actions that don't support the group's reputation. In the human world, hypocrites are often perceived as particularly objectionable, causing cognitive dissonance that can motivate a restorative response. In our case we assume that agents just take the simplest route to restoring harmony – ignore the hypocrite.

We found that when fused agents are able to increasingly ignore others that appear hypocritical compared to themselves, in terms of whether they are helping group members, then identity fusion spreads.

When they're ignored, hypocritical agents lose opportunities to receive donations, and their strategies also have less chance of being copied by others and carried forward to the next generation. This disadvantages hypocrites meaning that being fused becomes aligned with stronger levels of payoff, making fusion an attractive strategy to pursue.

Interestingly, it appears not all of the fused population need to behave in this way. It's enough for only the most fused agents to act like this for identity fusion to take hold. This further helps the concept to be established.

Humans are instinctively sensitive in detecting, internalising and responding to hypocrites. Our results indicate this remarkable capacity could have a role to play in sustaining strongly held identities.

*[the writer is Professor of Collective Intelligence, Cardiff University]*

## Euro 2020 – A Football Tournament Where the Big Players Come From China and the US

SIMON CHADWICK & PAUL WIDDOP  
*theconversation.com*

With Euro 2020 now under way after a year of pandemic delay, football fans will be hoping for great performances from Europe's finest players. Some of us will watch the tournament unfold on our Hisense televisions, and many will choose to order in some half time refreshments, maybe via the Just Eat delivery service, possibly sent using a Vivo mobile phone.

Sustained by cans of Heineken, as goals are scored, supporters will upload celebration clips on to TikTok. And after the final, what better way to recharge than by arranging a holiday on Booking.com, perhaps flying on Qatar Airways.

For while fans will have their eyes firmly fixed on the efforts of players worth billions of pounds on the field, another big money game will be taking place off it. The Euros is one of the world's biggest sport events, and a bonanza for corporate sponsors and partners (just a few of which are mentioned above).

In return for being exposed to the eyes of the world, Euros sponsors pay huge amounts of money. Just how much is difficult to say, as fees are commercially sensitive data. But in one case – that of Alipay (part of the Alibaba empire) – it is believed the Chinese company paid £176 million for an eight year deal.

UEFA has sold these deals in three ways: National Team Football Official Sponsors, Euro 2020 Official Sponsors, and Euro 2020 Official Licensees. And the origins of the companies and brands sponsoring this year's event are a clear indication of how the beautiful game is valued by the corporate world. Alongside UEFA partners such as

FedEx and Konami, each of the national teams bring their own roster of sponsors, which makes for quite a cluttered selection of brands competing for attention. There's England's £50 million, five-year contract with BT, for example, while the Germans



will bring Lufthansa to the tournament, Carlsberg will promote its association with Denmark and South Korea's Hyundai will be represented by the Czech Republic.

The list goes on (and on). To capture the complex network of sponsors at Euro 2020 we created a network graphic of some of the most prominent and significant deals on show over the coming weeks. For reasons of clarity, we weren't able to include every sponsor, but the range on display is revealing.

What becomes immediately clear is that although the UEFA European Championship is a continental tournament, its commercial reach is truly global. A significant number of sponsors are either not European or else have divisions that operate way beyond the borders of Europe.

At the same time, the sponsorship portfolio shows us that football

is at the heart of the entertainment, lifestyle and digital economies. Gone are the days of motor-oil and office photocopier sponsorships. Instead we see a profusion of drinks brands, confectionery products and airlines.

In addition, the sponsorship of

sport sponsorship, and the country's businesses continue to derive significant commercial value from it.

In fact, the underdogs in this big-money corporate competition appear to be the Europeans themselves. For an event being staged in countries including England, Italy, Spain and Romania, UEFA draws very few of its sponsors from the continent. Instead, it is clear that organisations from China and the US have both the financial muscle and the tactical brains to successfully dominate the tournament.

This reflects broader global trends which indicate the declining presence of European industry. European companies account for a falling percentage of global output. The market capitalisation of European firms is way behind that of American corporations and is fast being caught by Chinese firms. And the world's technological hot spots are found in places such as Shenzhen and Silicon Valley, not in Europe.

Whether the footballing squad from France, Portugal or Switzerland lifts the trophy in July, there is no doubt that the UEFA tournament will be an on field triumph for Europe. But the forces of globalisation, digitalisation and politico-economic change, reflected in the Euros' portfolio of sponsors, will keep on playing long after the final whistle blows. And European industry could pay the penalty with a swift exit from the global industrial competition.

*[Simon Chadwick is Global Professor of Eurasian Sport | Director of Eurasian Sport, EM Lyon; Paul Widdop is Senior Lecturer in Sport Business, Leeds Beckett University]*

### EUROPE'S OWN GOAL

Equally, "Brand China" is now a major industrial and political power, and home to five of UEFA's biggest tournament sponsors (Alipay, Antchain, Hisense, TikTok and Vivo).

Corporate America continues to endure too, represented by the likes of Coca Cola and IMG. The US has always been the home of contemporary



# Authorities in Nepal 4 appear clueless about how to ease or lift lockdown

ARJUN POUDEL

**KATHMANDU, 14 JUNE [KATHMAN-  
DUPOST]:** For Nepali authorities, maintaining the status quo is the name of the game.

Even after 50 days of lockdown, which they have been calling “prohibitory orders”, imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus, they are yet to devise any modality on how to loosen or lift it. Nor is there any planning yet.

On Sunday, Kathmandu Valley authorities announced that the ongoing lockdown would continue for one more week. By that time, the Valley will have been under lockdown for almost two months.

Some minor changes, however, have been made to the existing modality.

Chief district officers of Kathmandu Valley said on Sunday that shops selling essential supplies, as well as bookshops and stationery shops, would be allowed to open until 11am. Agricultural work also will be allowed besides movements of people on foot. Authorities have also decided to allow printing presses to operate till 11am, shops selling construction materials from 4pm onwards and online and takeaway services for home delivery of essential goods until 7pm.

“We have taken the decision after holding a series of meetings with all chief district officers of all the districts where prohibitory orders are in place. We have also held discussions with various stakeholders from health, tourism and industry ministries,” Janak Raj Dahal, spokesman for the Home Ministry, told the Post. “All the districts will follow the modality of the three districts of Kathmandu Valley with minor changes according to their needs.”

Experts, however, are sceptical. According to them, ad-hoc decisions are not going to work and a studied decision is a must.

“Lockdown is being used by the government as the one and only measure to control the spread of coronavirus infections,” Dr Krishna Man Shakya, vice-president of Nepal Public Health Association, told the Post. “It has become an easy means for authorities, even if it is a nightmare for the public.”

Studies have shown lockdown



is a measure that provides an opportunity for the authorities to prepare against the pandemic by expanding testing, providing training for health workers, increasing hospital beds and arranging other necessary equipment like ventilators. A lockdown is meant to break the chain of infections so that authorities can set up more isolation and quarantine facilities and launch awareness drives, among others.

After ramping up tests following the sudden rise in coronavirus cases, the number of tests of late has come down. Many believe testing has decreased overall because the number of new infections has declined lately in the Valley.

Experts, however, say the growing concern now is that the virus has spread to rural areas.

“The infection rate has not declined, only the test numbers have,” said Shakya.

Test positivity rate still continues to remain stubbornly high.

On Sunday 7,517 tests were reported of which 1,694—or almost 23 percent—returned positive.

The Health Ministry reported 46 more Covid-19-related fatalities, taking the toll to 8,415. The number of active cases stands at 68,955.

Experts say little has been done from the public health perspective during the lockdown period so far.

Despite the pandemic being a public health issue, the Health

Ministry does not seem to be leading the way. But ministry officials say it’s not just its duty when it comes to fighting the virus.

“It is not just the responsibility of the Health Ministry,” said Dr Krishna Prasad Paudel, spokesperson for the Health Ministry. “Many other agencies must work equally seriously to check the spread of infections.” Paudel conceded that a lot of things, which could be done after enforcing the lockdown, were not done.

“We could not increase community testing and make contact tracing effective due to various reasons,” said Paudel.

The government introduced a Covid-19 Crisis Management Ordinance last month which provisions the formation of a Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre but it is headed by a retired lieutenant general and four of its seven members have the security services background.

It has one representative from the Ministry of Health and Population, although Balananda Sharma, coordinator of the Centre, told the Post that the problem is of public health.

“We cannot open everything immediately as that could increase the risk,” Sharma said. “An incremental relaxation of restrictions has been advised so that spread will be controlled while people won’t suffer much.”

He said that as the long term

solution is vaccines without which the virus could mutate, the foreign and health ministries are working to procure them. However, there has been little to show for their efforts. Just around two percent of the people have been vaccinated, most of them with vaccines given in grants by China, India and the COVAX facility led by the World Health Organization.

“No visible work has been done by the authorities to contain the spread of the infections,” said Shakya. “The focus of all three tiers of government seems to be on the treatment only.”

During the height of the second wave of the pandemic in the middle of last month, there were shortages of hospital beds, oxygen and equipment.

Officials say these supplies have been increased.

“The number of beds has been increased, and more ventilators and intensive care unit beds have been set up during the lockdown period,” said Paudel, the spokesperson.

But on the other hand, there is no sufficient manpower to operate ventilators and these equipment have remained unused in different parts of the country. The government should rather focus on checking the spread of infections, according to epidemiologists.

“Instead of focusing on all those things like testing and isolating the infected, authorities are trying to

contain the spread of infections by locking people inside their homes,” Dr Padam Bahadur Chand, an epidemiologist who served as chief of the Policy Planning and International Cooperation Division at the Health Ministry, told the Post.

With little more than lockdown as the means to check the spread of the virus, the consequences could be disastrous once the lockdown is lifted, experts say.

They say that authorities should have created a mechanism to monitor the movement of the infected people, upto the village level, ramp up testing, set up isolation and quarantine facilities, identify the green, yellow and red zones, address the basic needs of the people hit hard by the restrictions and provide relief materials.

“The chain of the infections, even if it is broken through the ongoing restrictions, will be joined, if they are lifted without preparations,” Dr Binjawala Shrestha, a public health expert who is also an assistant professor of Community Medicine at the Institute of Medicine, told the Post.

“What can we expect when chief district officers and businesspeople make decisions on lockdown without taking suggestions from experts in the related fields?”

Officials concede that infections could rise if restrictions are lifted.

“We are still aware that things could escalate if we reopen immediately so we will take further de-

cisions according to the situation,” said Dahal of the Home Ministry. “If the number of cases continues to go down we will further ease the restrictions.”

Although the number of daily infections has been coming down since the high of 9,317 cases across the country on May 11 and was 4,831 on April 29 when the prohibitory orders were imposed in the Valley, it is unclear at what point the restrictions will be lifted.

Doctors say at least 10 people come in contact with infected people and suggest that authorities lift the restrictions completely only if they have a capacity to conduct contact tracing of at least 3,000 people a day in the Valley.

“Even if the authorities are not doing anything, cases could decline after a certain time,” Su-shil Koirala, public health surveillance and research expert who has worked with the United Nations and international non-governmental organisations, told the Post.

While there are concerns that the cases could suddenly rise if the lockdown is lifted, the ongoing prohibitory orders are having a profound impact on the economy and the poor, especially those who have to earn daily for survival.

Sharma of the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre agrees.

“The issue is people have to make a living,” Sharma told the Post. For the authorities there are conflicting demands.

“The Health Ministry has been suggesting that restrictions should be in place but other ministries like industry and tourism have suggested restrictions should be relaxed soon,” said Dahal of the Home Ministry.

Given that there has been little progress on preventing the virus from spreading further, experts say that lockdown is the only measure authorities know although that is not the answer.

“It seems that authorities will again reinforce the lockdown if new cases start to go up,” Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of Clinical Research Unit at the Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, told the Post. “Until we do substantial work to contain the spread of the virus, the infection will not stop.”

## Ladakh reports 17 new COVID-19 cases

**LEH, JUNE 14 (PTI):** Ladakh recorded more Covid recoveries than new infections as 105 people got discharged from hospitals after battling coronavirus, while only 17 new cases were added.

As per the media bulletin released by the directorate of health services Ladakh, a total of 17 new positive sample reports of Covid were received on Sunday. Out of the total positive reports, 16 were reported in Leh and one in Kargil, they said.

A total of 2,651 sample reports in UT including 1,972 in Leh and 679 in Kargil were found negative, they said.

Officials said the latest update takes the Union Territory’s overall tally of cases to 19,561, including 16,161 in Leh and 3,400 in Kargil.

With this, the total number of Covid active cases in UT has come down to 658 including 538 in Leh and 120 in Kargil district.

A total of 197 people have died due to COVID-19 in the union territory so far which includes 143 in Leh and 54 in Kargil.

## LJP MPs join hands against Chirag Paswan



**NEW DELHI, JUN 14 (PTI):** Five of the six Lok Jan-shakti Party MPs in the Lok Sabha have joined hands against their leader Chirag Paswan and elected his paternal uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras in his place, causing a big churn in Bihar politics.

Paras on Monday lauded Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar as a good leader and “vikas purush” (development-oriented man), highlighting the deep fault lines within the party as his nephew Chirag Paswan has been a strong critic of the JD(U) president.

“I have not broken

the party but saved it,” Paras, MP from Hajipur, told reporters.

He asserted that 99 per cent of LJP workers were unhappy with the turn of events in Bihar as Chirag Paswan led his party against the JD(U) and fared poorly in the 2020 assembly polls.

Paras said his group will continue to be part of the BJP-led NDA, and said Chirag Paswan can remain part of the organisation.

The group of five MPs has conveyed their decision of electing Paras as the LJP leader in Lok Sabha to the Speaker.

There has been no

comment from Paswan on the issue.

Soon after Paras spoke to reporters, Paswan drove to his uncle’s residence in the national capital to meet him. Paswan’s cousin and MP Prince Raj also stays at the same address.

After spending over 90 minutes at the residence of Paras and Prince Raj, Paswan left without saying a word to the waiting media persons.

It is believed that neither of the two rebel MPs met him. A household help said the two were not at home when the LJP chief arrived.

While the rebel

group, which includes MPs Raj, Chandan Singh, Veena Devi and Mehboob Ali Kaiser, has long been unhappy with Chirag Paswan’s style of functioning, sources said, the LJP president has now been left virtually isolated at the top after taking on the mantle following his father Ram Vilas Paswan’s death in 2020.

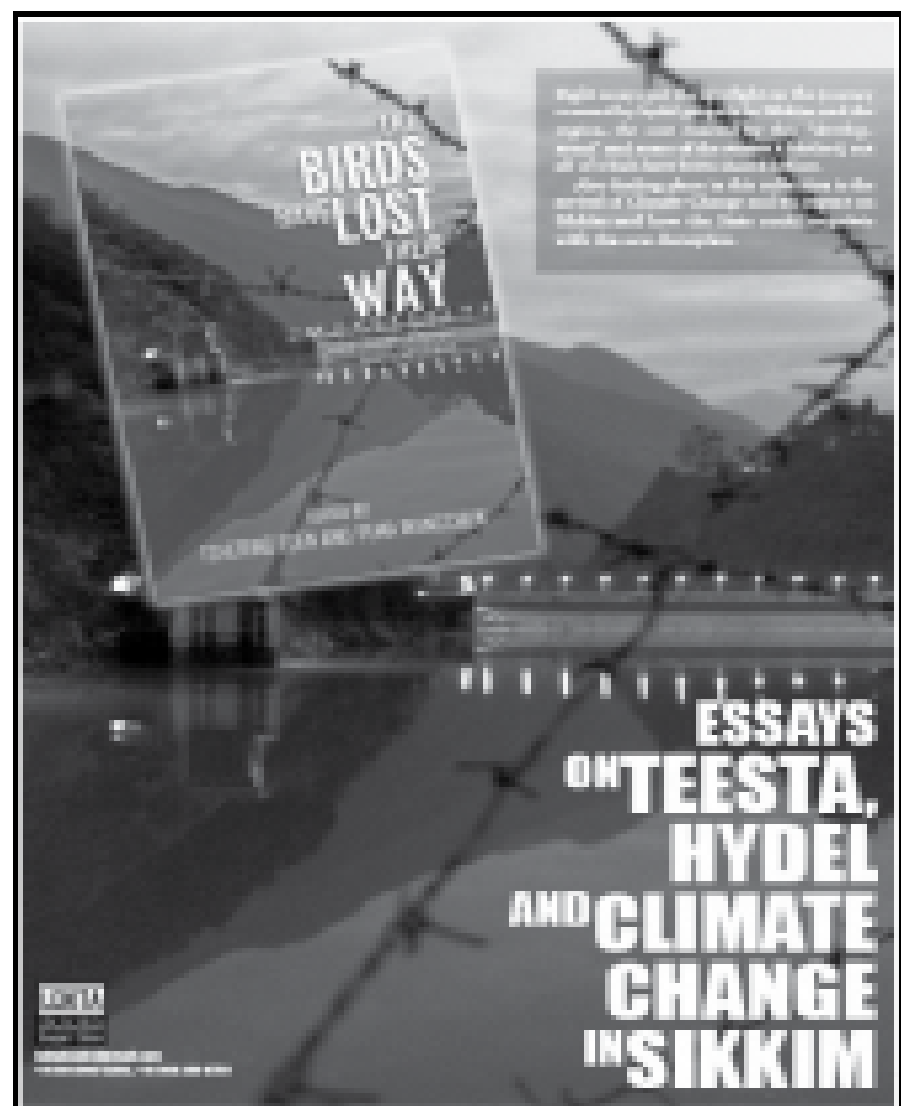
Sources close to him have blamed the JD(U) for the split, saying the party had long been working to isolate the LJP president after his decision to go all out against Chief Minister Kumar in the 2020 assembly polls.

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# Brazil opens Copa America with 3-0 win over Venezuela

**SAO PAULO, JUN 14 (AP):** Brazil kicked off a Copa America tournament that has been opposed by some members of its own team with a 3-0 win over Venezuela here.

Marquinhos, Neymar and Gabriel Barbosa scored in the opener at Man Garrincha stadium in Brasilia on Sunday, less than a day after several Venezuelan players tested positive for COVID-19.

South American soccer's governing body, CONMEBOL, chose Brazil as host less than two weeks ago, despite its alarming COVID-19 figures, after Argentina and Colombia were dropped as co-hosts.

Despite his opposition to staging the tournament in his home country, Brazil captain Casemiro said the defending champions intended to retain their trophy.

"It could be a friendly, Copa America, World Cup qualifiers, we play it to win," he said.

"Venezuela had the idea of defending, they wanted a draw. But we were focused and we were aggressive in the last third of the pitch."

Venezuela summoned 15 new players at short notice after eight squad members tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, and the disruption showed on the field. The Sele o wasted opportunities but faced little resistance from Venezuela. Brazil opened the



scoring in the 23rd minute after a corner kick ended with Marquinhos striking from close range.

Brazil coach Tite who also opposed holding the tournament took Lucas Paquet off at halftime, but kept Roberto Firmino on the bench. Instead, Everton Ribeiro went on and provided more dynamism on the right flank.

Ribeiro found Danilo on the right edge of the box, and the Brazilian was pushed to the ground. Neymar calmly scored from the spot in the 63rd to make it 2-0. He looked to the right of Venezuelan goalkeeper Joel Graterol, but took his shot to the left.

Neymar dribbled past Graterol and crossed for Barbosa to chest the ball into the empty net in the 89th. A flop at Inter Milan and Benfica, Barbosa is a hero at Brazilian club Flamengo, which wants him on the national team more often.

Tite said he's experimenting with combinations, thinking ahead to the World Cup in Qatar next year.

"I am seeking tactical alternatives, positional alternatives. But operating on different functions," the Brazil coach said.

"The idea is not to lose our character, otherwise you break the links, the connections, you remove confidence from the athletes." Venezuela coach Jos Peseiro said he was impressed by his players overcoming so many difficulties.

"We could have done more, but I am proud of these boys. Some had their debuts for the national team. It was an important day, we wanted to dignify Copa America and the national team," Peseiro said.

"It is obvious that it (the COVID-19 outbreak) had an impact, but that doesn't stop me from being happy for their will, their effort."

Brazil and Venezuela are in Group B with Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Brazil and Colombia lead with three points each, but the defending champion is ahead by goal difference after Colombia's 1-0 win against Ecuador.

The four best teams in each group advance to the knockout stage.

Brazil's second match will be against Peru on Thursday at the Nilton Santos stadium in Rio de Janeiro. Venezuela will face Colombia on the same day at the Olimpico stadium in Goiania.

The final of the South American championship will be on July 10 at the historic Maracan stadium in Rio, which also hosted the final two years ago when Brazil beat Peru 3-1 to win its ninth title.

## Puducherry logs 309 fresh COVID-19 cases, 7 deaths

**PUDUCHERRY, JUN 14 (PTI):** The union territory of Puducherry continued to witness a decline in the number of fresh coronavirus cases with 309 new infections being reported on Monday as against 402 the previous day. The 309 new cases were identified at the end of the examination of 7,657 swabs during the last 24 hours ending 10 AM Monday, Director of Health S Mohan Kumar said. The overall tally of COVID-19 cases in the union territory stood at 1,12,837 while total recoveries were at 1,06,199 after 686 patients recovered and were discharged during the last 24 hours.

The new cases were spread over Puducherry (240), Karaikal (47), Mahe (14) and Yanam (8).

The number of fresh cases have stayed below 500 in the last three days.

The number of active cases stood at 4,947 with 802 in hospitals and the remaining 4,145 in home isolation, the Health department Director said.

Seven patients- four from Puducherry and three from Karaikal- succumbed to the virus, pushing the toll to 1,691.

Mohan Kumar said so far 11,73,519 samples were tested and it was found that 10,09,037 of them were negative.

He said the test positivity rate on Monday was 4.04 per cent while fatality and recovery rates were 1.50 per cent and 94.12 per cent respectively.

## Southampton curator aims for 'pace, bounce and carry' in WTC final pitch

**SOUTHAMPTON, JUN 14 (PTI):** Head groundsman at Southampton Simon Lee is aiming to produce a pacy and bouncy pitch for the World Test Championship final with some assistance for spinners later on in the game.

The final will be played between India and New Zealand from June 18.

"Pitch preparation for this Test is a little simpler as we are a neutral venue, we are guided by the ICC, but we all want is a good pitch that offers an even contest between the teams," Lee told ESPNcricinfo.

"For me personally I just want to get something out that has some pace, bounce and carry in the pitch.

"It can be a hard thing to do in England as the weather doesn't help us most of the time, but the forecast in the build-up is good with a lot of sun, so we are hopeful that we'll get some pace and a hard pitch without over-rolling it and killing it."

Both the teams have high quality pace bowlers and Lee wants them to be in the game at all times.

"Pace just makes red-ball cricket exciting, I'm a cricket fan and I want to produce a pitch where the cricket lovers have to watch every ball in case they miss something, be that some class batting or an amazing spell of bowling.

"A maiden over can be quite exciting if it's a battle of skill between both bowler and batter. So, yeah, if we can get some pace and bounce in the pitch, but not too one-sided towards seam movement, we'll be happy," he said.

In the spin department, India have the edge over New Zealand with Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja expected to be part of the playing eleven. Lee said spinners too would come into play eventually.

"As I said, the forecast is looking okay, the pitches dry out very quickly here as we do have some sand mixed into our cricket loam, which helped it hold together when the pitches were re-laid some 10 years ago, but it can help it spin as well.

"To get to that point we'll need the seamers to bowl, some runs scored, and make some rough along the way. The pitch will always get talked about a lot, but you need the players to play their part to make a good game," the curator said.

"...so if we produce a pitch that allows the players to show their skills at the top level and we have an entertaining game for the fans, we will be more than satisfied.



## Want to pay tribute to COVID warriors by winning medal in Tokyo: Manpreet

**BENGALURU, JUN 14 (PTI):** Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh says they will leave no stone unturned to end their four decade-long medal drought at the Tokyo Olympics and has vowed to dedicate the achievement to the country's COVID warriors.

Manpreet is determined to pay tribute to the country's frontline workers by finishing on the podium in the Tokyo Games to be held from July 23 to August 8.

"As we work hard towards the upcoming Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, we promise to fight all odds to win a medal for India," he said.

"And if we do get a medal, we would like to dedicate it to the true heroes of our country -- the doctors and frontline workers who have worked tirelessly to heal our country through these tough times and saved millions of lives. Thank you, Jai Hind," added Manpreet in a video released by Hockey India.

India have won eight Olympic gold medals in the past but their last top finish came way back in 1980 Moscow Games.

The skipper is delighted with the commitment and dedication being shown by each and every player in the ongoing selection trials at SAI Bengaluru centre.

"Everyone is pushing each other to give their best shot," said Manpreet.

## India have got enough time to prepare, how quickly they adapt will be key: Prasad

**NEW DELHI, JUN 14 (PTI):** Former pacer Venkatesh Prasad feels that a high-on-resources India has got all bases covered to get past a high-on-confidence New Zealand in the World Test Championship final beginning June 18 at Southampton.

Unlike his playing days, Prasad feels India now have a third or a fourth seamer who can maintain pressure built by the new ball bowlers. At the same time, he feels the team has the batting to put 350 runs on the board irrespective of the conditions.

"Two best teams are playing the final. India have got a lot of options as their bench is also very strong," Prasad told PTI on Monday.

"Be it a batting or seaming track, India have got the upper hand for the simple reason: In early 90s and later 2000s, there will be two good seamers but the team did have not a third or fourth option.

"Now the squad has got the strength of that and a couple of very good all rounders. We always had world class spinners but now we also have a world class pace attack."

Prasad formed the new ball pairing alongside the great Javagal Srinath in his heydays. Prasad said he expects India to dominate the game.

"And we also have the batting to 350 runs on the board. Now we have got everything covered. It doesn't matter what sort of a pitch it would be. It should be India all the way," he said.

New Zealand look like the team to beat after they humbled hosts England in a two-match series. It was their first triumph on English soil in 22 years.

Talking about the playing eleven, Prasad said it will be a straightforward decision for captain Virat Kohli.

He himself wants to play both R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja with three pacers -- Ishant Sharma, Mohammad Shami and Jasprit Bumrah. "Ashwin and Jadeja and three fast bowlers seem to be the best combination. Bumrah, Shami and Ishant Sharma have the experience of playing in different conditions, they know their roles very well.

"The strategy is very simple. Who can make use of the new ball better? Both Bumrah and Shami have got an amazing seam position and great control over line and length.

"I am surprised that Ishant is considered number three even after playing 100 Tests. He also has a lot of experience of playing county cricket in England."

Prasad said he rather not pay too much attention on the opposition's strengths. "I hope to see the game go to fifth day. Especially in India we didn't see it go beyond third or fourth day. It should reach day five but in English conditions, the Dukes ball does something more often than not.

"The batsmen will have to adapt quickly and the bowlers will need to figure out the end which is more suited to them," said the 51-year who played 33 Tests and 161 ODIs.

He also feels India have got enough time to prepare though New Zealand have a slight advantage having already played two Tests.

Asked if he too wants to see a best of three final like India head coach Ravi Shastri, Prasad added: "See most sports it is just one final. It is also about having the window to play three finals.

"If you do that it is going to 25 days of cricket with three days of gap in between. Where is the window to do that?" he asked.



## Messi eyes Copa America for "biggest dream" with Argentina



**SAO PAULO, JUN 14 (AP):** Lionel Messi has won it all with Barcelona in a decorated career. Winning a title with Argentina remains one of his biggest ambitions.

The 33-year-old Messi might have one of his final chances at the Copa America.

Argentina's campaign will begin on Monday against Chile at the Nilton Santos stadium in Rio de Janeiro. Copa America opened Sunday in emergency mode in Brazil, where the tournament was shifted after Colombia and Argentina were dropped as co-hosts.

"I am always available to my national team. My biggest dream is to win a title with this shirt," Messi told a news conference in Rio.

"I was very close m any times. It didn't happen, but I will keep trying. I will always fight for this dream."

Messi said most of the group had played together for a while and "the way this Argentina plays is very clear."

"That's why it is is time that we win this Copa," he said.

"We know it will be a special one, different because of all that the world is going through."

The Argentina captain also said he approves Rodrigo de Paul as a teammate who gives him protection and also helps in creating attack.

"Little by little we got to know each other and I feel well playing with him," Messi said.

In his 15 years playing for Argentina, Messi lost the 2014 World Cup final, plus two editions of Copa America in 2015 and 2016. Argentina hasn't won any major tournament since the 1993 South American championship.

That adds significance to every major event. There's more risk than usual with this edition of the Copa America. More than 485,000 people died in Brazil because of the virus, and 11 players have tested positive upon arrival for the tournament eight from Venezuela and three from Bolivia.

"It is a risk for all of us," Messi said.

"We are worried, we try to take care, do all that (we're) told.

"We will play other teams, there's also the risk of contagion. We will do everything we can for that not to happen, but many times it doesn't depend on us."

Argentina is in group A with Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay. The four best teams in each group advance to the knockout stage. The final will be on July 10 at the historic Maracan stadium in Rio.



## New Zealand apologises for 1970s raids on Pacific people

**WELLINGTON, JUN 14 (AP):** Aupito William Sio recalled the terrifying day during his childhood when police officers holding German shepherd dogs turned up at his family home before dawn and shined flashlights into their faces while his father stood there helpless.

Now the minister for Pacific peoples, Sio and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced Monday the government would formally apologise for an infamous part of the nation's history known as the Dawn Raids.

It's when Pacific Island people were targeted for deportation in the mid-1970s during aggressive home raids by authorities to find, convict and deport overstayers. The raids often took place very early in the morning or late at night.

Sio became emotional as he and Ardern discussed the apology at a news conference.

We felt as a community that we were invited to come to New Zealand. We responded to the call to fill the labor workforce that was needed, in the same way we responded to the call for soldiers in 1914," Sio said.

But he said the government then turned on the Pasifika community when it felt those workers were no longer needed.

Ardern said that at the time, people who didn't look like white New Zealanders were told they should carry identification to prove they weren't overstayers, and were often randomly stopped in the street, or even at schools or churches. She said Pacific people were often dragged before the courts in their pajamas and without proper representation.

Not only were they targeted, they were targeted using a process and a practice that was really dehumanizing, that really terrorised people in their homes," Ardern said.

She said that when computerised immigration records were introduced in 1977, they showed that 40 per cent of overstayers were either British or American, groups that were never targeted for deportation.

The raids, and what they represented, created deep wounds, Ardern said. And while we cannot change our history, we can acknowledge it, and we can seek to right a wrong.

The formal apology will be held at a commemoration event on June 26 in Auckland. Ardern said it's just the third time the government has made such an apology.

The previous apologies were for imposing an entry tax on Chinese immigrants in the 1880s and for introducing the deadly influenza pandemic to Samoa in 1918, which killed more than one-fifth of the population.

# Myanmar puts Suu Kyi on trial on charges critics call bogus

**BANGKOK (AP):** Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi went on trial Monday on charges that many observers say are an attempt by the junta that deposed her to eliminate her as a political force, erase the country's democratic gains and cement the military's power.

Suu Kyi's prosecution poses yet another major setback for Myanmar, which had been making slow progress toward democracy when a February coup prevented elected lawmakers from her National League for Democracy party from taking office following last year's landslide victory.

Human Rights Watch said that the allegations being heard in a special court in the capital, Naypyitaw, are "bogus and politically motivated" with the intention of nullifying the victory and preventing Suu Kyi from running for office again.

"This trial is clearly the opening salvo in an overall strategy to neuter Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy party as a force that can challenge military rule in the future," said Phil Robertson, the organization's deputy Asia director.

The army seized power on Feb. 1 before the new lawmakers could be seated, and arrested Suu Kyi, who held the post of special counselor, President Win Myint and other members of her government and ruling party. The Southeast Asian country went seemingly overnight from an emerging democracy to the



international pariah it had been for decades while under military rule.

The army justified its coup by alleging the government failed to properly investigate accusations of voting irregularities. Since then it has said it has found evidence of fraud — an assertion contested by the independent Asian Network for Free Elections and many others. Junta officials have threatened to dissolve the National League for Democracy and any conviction for Suu Kyi could see her barred from politics.

The junta has claimed it will hold new elections within the next year or two, but the country's military

has a long history of promising elections and not following through. The military ruled Myanmar for 50 years after a coup in 1962, and kept Suu Kyi under house arrest for 15 years after a failed 1988 popular uprising.

The military's latest takeover sparked nationwide protests that continue despite a violent crackdown that has killed hundreds of people. Although street demonstrations have shrunk in number and scale, the junta now faces a low-level armed insurrection by opponents in both rural and urban areas.

The trial against the 75-year-old Suu Kyi is closed, but her lawyers

said at the end of the day's hearing that the prosecution began presenting its case.

Suu Kyi has been charged with illegally importing walkie-talkies for her bodyguards' use, unlicensed use of the radios and spreading information that could cause public alarm or unrest, as well as for two counts of violating the Natural Disaster Management Law for allegedly breaking pandemic restrictions during the 2020 election campaign, her lawyers said Sunday.

"All these charges should be dropped, resulting in her immediate and unconditional release," said Human Rights Watch's Robertson.

"But sadly, with the restrictions on access to her lawyers, and the case being heard in front of a court that is wholly beholden to the military junta, there is little likelihood she will receive a fair trial."

Government prosecutors will have until June 28 to finish their presentation, after which Suu Kyi's defense team will have until July 26 to present its case, Khin Maung Zaw, the team's senior member, said last week. Court sessions are due to be held on Monday and Tuesday each week.

Two other more serious charges against Suu Kyi are being handled separately: one for breaching the colonial-era Official Secrets Act, which carries a maximum 14-year prison term, and another for bribery, which has a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a fine.

Although Suu Kyi faced her first charge just days after the February coup, she not allowed her first face-to-face meeting with her lawyers until May 24, when she made her first actual appearance in court for a pre-trial hearing. Since then, she had another brief meeting with them before seeing them in court Monday.

A photo of her May 24 appearance released by state media showed her sitting straight-backed in a small courtroom, wearing a pink face-mask, her hands folded in her lap. Alongside her were her two co-defendants, the former president as well as the former mayor of Naypyitaw, Myo Aung.

## Some US allies near Russia are wary of Biden-Putin summit

**KYIV, UKRAINE (AP):** Central and Eastern European nations are anxious about the coming summit meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin, wary of what they see as hostile intentions from the Kremlin.

Some in the countries that once were part of the Soviet Union or the Moscow-led Warsaw Pact during the Cold War worry that Washington could scale down support for its allies in the region in a bid to secure a more stable and predictable relationship with Russia.

"I think there have been doubts as to the resoluteness of the present administration to face Russian aggressive actions in a decisive manner," said Witold Rodkiewicz, chief specialist on Russian politics at Warsaw's Center of Eastern Studies, a state-funded think tank that advises the Polish government.

Both Russia and the U.S. have sought to moderate expectations about Wednesday's summit in Geneva, ruling out any breakthroughs amid the worst tensions between the two powers since Soviet times, especially after Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, accusations of Russian interference with U.S. elections and hacking attacks, as well as other strains.

Rodkiewicz, however, noted the White House's decision to waive sanctions against the German company overseeing the prospective Russian-built Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline running under the Baltic Sea to Germany. That project could potentially allow Moscow to bypass Ukraine, Poland and other countries in Eastern and Central Europe that collect transit fees on the energy.

"In a clear, unequivocal way the administration signaled that for them, Europe is Germany basically, and German interests are going to be taken into account, while the interests of other players in Europe are going to be

sort of put on the back burner," Rodkiewicz told The Associated Press.

Nowhere else are worries about the summit more acute than in Ukraine. It has been locked in a tense tug-of-war with Russia ever since the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula following the ouster of Ukraine's Moscow-friendly president in 2014 and a Russia-backed separatist insurgency in the country's east — a conflict that has killed more than 14,000.

"Ukraine fears that agreements between Biden and Putin could turn it into a peripheral country," said Vadim Karasev, an independent Kyiv-based political analyst.

Kyiv worries that Nord Stream 2 would deprive it not only of transit fees for pumping Russian gas to Europe but also erode its strategic importance and weaken it politically.

A U.S. failure to block the pipeline would mark "a personal loss for President Biden" and a "serious geopolitical victory for the Russian Federation," said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He tried in vain to push for a meeting with Biden before the summit but has spoken with him by phone. Biden assured Zelenskyy of the unwavering U.S. support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Kyiv appeared overly eager to interpret the conversation in its favor. In its initial readout of the call, Zelenskyy's office claimed Biden emphasized the importance of offering Ukraine a specific roadmap for joining NATO. But it then changed that version to clarify it was Zelenskyy who pushed for providing Ukraine with a membership action plan; it said Biden promised that Kyiv's position will be taken into account when discussing strategic issues within NATO.

In an interview on Russian state television, Putin issued a strong, new warning that

the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO was unacceptable for Russia. He noted it would allow the alliance's missiles to reach Moscow and other key targets in western Russia in only seven minutes, a destabilizing situation that he said was comparable to Russia putting its missiles in Mexico or Canada.

In 2008, NATO promised that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually be welcome to join the alliance despite protests from Russia. Four months later, Russia routed Georgia in a five-day war that erupted when the Georgian leadership tried to reclaim control of a separatist region.

Earlier this year, Russia bolstered its forces near Ukraine and warned Kyiv that it could intervene militarily if Ukrainian authorities try to retake the rebel-controlled east. Moscow has since pulled back at least some of its troops, but Ukrainian officials say Russia has kept a massive contingent close to the border.

"The Kremlin has signaled that Ukraine's NATO bid is fraught with a new, hot conflict in Europe, something that Washington definitely doesn't want," Karasev said.

Alex Petriashvili, senior fellow at the Rondeli Foundation think tank in Tbilisi, Georgia, deplored the lack of consensus within NATO on granting Ukraine and Georgia clear plans for membership.

"It is certainly negatively affecting the aspirations of the two countries and gives the advantage to Russia, which is fiercely opposing their membership," Petriashvili said.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis argued that Russia seeks "to reestablish control of internal, foreign and security policies of the states in Central and Eastern Europe" that it considers part of its "privileged sphere of interests."

"Like in Soviet times, both

conventional and hybrid measures are used to assert control," he told AP.

Russia has rejected allegations it is trying to destabilize the countries or draw them back into its orbit. It has accused the European Union and NATO members that once were part of the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact of "Russophobia," casting them as key instigators of Western sanctions that limited Moscow's access to global capital markets and restricted imports of modern technology.

Landsbergis has shrugged off concerns that Washington could leave its Central and Eastern European allies in the cold.

"We have no reasons to doubt our closest trans-Atlantic ally," Landsbergis told AP. "The Biden administration has on numerous occasions underscored its commitment to work in close coordination with its European allies." Latvia's top diplomat, Edgars Rinkevics, has similarly emphasized that Washington "steadfastly remains the closest ally" and "plays a key role in European security."

Ondrej Ditrych, director of the Institute of International Relations think-tank, also said he expects Biden to take a firm stance in Geneva.

"Biden is not naive, even as ahead of the summit the administration seems to make overtures to make Russia amenable to discussing strategic issues in earnest," he said in Prague. "I would not be worried that a détente that would be detrimental to Central and Eastern Europe countries would be in the making."

Some others aren't so optimistic.

"The real reason to worry is that perhaps Putin might come out of this meeting encouraged by what he sees on the other side, and that might make him bolder to press his advantages in a regional context," said Rodkiewicz, the Warsaw-based analyst.

## Germany seeks to fine operators of Telegram messenger app

**BERLIN (AP):** German authorities have launched proceedings against Telegram that could see the messenger app's operators fined for failing to abide by laws requiring social media sites to police their users' actions.

German magazine Der Spiegel reported over the weekend that officials believe use of the Telegram app has reached a threshold where it can be treated in the same way as Facebook, Twitter and TikTok when it comes to requiring cooperation with German authorities.

A Justice Ministry

spokeswoman confirmed Monday that authorities have written to Telegram's operators in the United Arab Emirates over its failure to provide a channel for raising complaints and a contact person in Germany.

"The company now has the opportunity to respond," the spokeswoman, Rabea Boennighausen, told reporters in Berlin.

Der Spiegel reported that the company could face fines of up to 5.5 million euros (\$6.7 million) if it doesn't comply with the requirements.

Telegram couldn't immediately be reached for comment.



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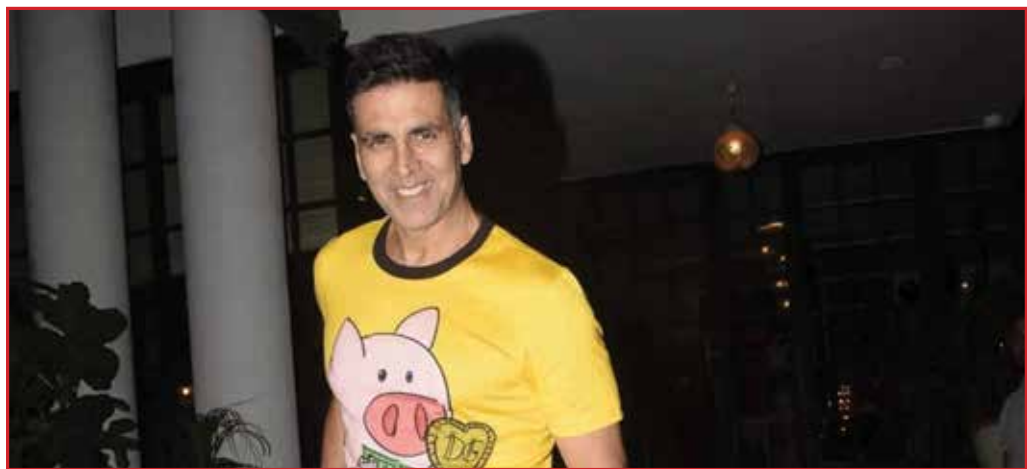
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**LITTLE BLACK DRESS!** Model Emily Ratajkowski rocked a LBD at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City.

## Akshay Kumar denies reports of slashing his fees for 'Bellbottom'



**MUMBAI, JUN 14 (PTI):** Superstar Akshay Kumar on Monday dismissed reports claiming that he has agreed to reduce his fees by Rs 30 crore for his upcoming film "Bellbottom" on the request of producer VashuBhagnani.

"Bellbottom", which was earlier scheduled to be released theatrically in April, has been pushed indefinitely due to the pandemic.

With no new date locked and the uncertainty around its release, a recent report on an entertainment website stated that VashuBhagnani had asked Kumar to slash his fees to ensure the film remains within budget and the actor agreed.

Kumar took to Twitter and slammed the

portal for the "fake" news. "What waking up to fake scoops feels like," the actor wrote on the mircoblogging site.

VashuBhagnani also dismissed the report. "No truth to this news at all," the producer tweeted. VashuBhagnani is backing the espionage thriller along with JackkyBhagnani, DeepshikhaDeshmukh, MonishaAdvani, MadhuBhojwani and NikkhilAdvani.

Directed by Ranjit M Tewari, the film is set in the 1980s and revolves around one of India's forgotten heroes.

Written by AseemArrora and ParveezShaikh, "Bellbottom" also features Lara Dutta, HumaQureshi and VaaniKapoor.

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## Everything is out of my system now: Neena Gupta on her autobiography

**MUMBAI, JUN 14 (PTI):** Veteran actor-director Neena Gupta on Monday said her autobiography "SachKahunToh" is an honest tell-all tale about her life, chronicling her professional highs and personal lows.

Published by Random House India, the book touches upon several milestones of Gupta's life, from her unconventional pregnancy, single parenthood to a successful comeback in Bollywood.

During an Instagram video chat with actor Kareena-Kapoor Khan, who launched the book, Gupta said she has been writing the autobiography for 20 years and would often wonder if people were even interested in reading about her.

"I would start and wonder, 'What is there to write about my life? Why would people be interested in reading it?' Then the lockdown happened... And I did a lot of thinking about my life and decided to resume writing again.

"Everything is out of my system now. Things I was hiding for so many years. That's a big relief. I think, may be after reading the book, even if one person doesn't make the mistake which I did, if they feel 'yeah, we should not do this', it'll be worth it," Gupta said.

Kapoor Khan said she doesn't view the book as a document of Gupta's "mistakes", rather, a sincere effort to put forth a life "that has been lived with all heart."

"Too much heart! Gupta quipped. "What is nice about living from your heart, is that even if something goes wrong, you are content," the veteran added.

According to the publishing house,

the book will share Gupta's life story in the most "unapologetically honest" manner, from her time at National School of Drama (NSD) to moving to Bombay (Mumbai) in the 80s and her single parenthood.

The 62-year-old actor said, during the course of her writing the book in

trary to the perception that she has lived life on her own terms, she has simply accepted whatever has come her way and learnt to "move on".

"Whatever God gave me, wherever I went wrong, I accepted it and moved forward. I wanted to have a normal husband, children from the husband who's



Mukteshwar, Uttarakhand, where she stayed throughout the second wave of the pandemic she realised how she was without any lover in her prime.

Gupta was in a relationship with former West Indian cricketer Vivian Richards in the 1980s and had to face insensitive intrusion from media and public for her decision to raise her daughter, Masaba, as a single mother.

"While I was writing the book I realised that I've been alone most of my younger years, my prime years, without a lover or a husband. I came here, there were some inconsequential affairs, nothing really materialised. I was all alone most of the time. Vivian was living far away, he had his own life. We met very seldom," she said.

The "Badhaai Ho" actor said con-

living with me, my in-laws, grandparents...

"When I see other people, I do feel a little envious. But I didn't blame (anyone), didn't become an alcoholic or went in a wrong direction because I didn't get what I wanted."

The actor mentioned a story from her book, when a man she was in love with and was about to get married to, called off the wedding at the last minute.

"Till today I don't know why. I had no option but to move on... What you read about my life is actually not what I wanted my life to be," she added.

The book addresses issues like casting couch, film industry politics, and also talks about what it takes for a young actor to survive without a godfather or guide.

## Amitabh Bachchan, Neena Gupta resume shoot for 'Goodbye'

**MUMBAI, JUN 14 (PTI):** Amitabh Bachchan and Neena Gupta on Monday started work on their upcoming film "Goodbye", a week after the Maharashtra government allowed the film and TV industry to restart their production activities with COVID-19 protocols. Shooting on "Goodbye", backed by Balaji Telefilms, came to a halt due to the second wave of the pandemic in April.

According to a source close to the production banner, the actors resumed work on "Goodbye", which also features south star RashmikaMandanna. Bachchan took to Instagram and posted a selfie, wearing a mask.

"Seven AM... Driving to work... First day shooting after lockdown 2.0 on with the Pangolin mask...and the manifestation: 'every day in every way things will get better and better and better'," he wrote.

Gupta shared a video on Instagram that saw her entering her vanity van.

## Gone too soon: Friends and colleagues remember Sushant Singh Rajput

**MUMBAI, JUN 14 (PTI):** On the first death anniversary of Sushant Singh Rajput, Bollywood personalities Bhumi Pednekar, Rajkumar Rao, and directors Abhishek Kapoor and Mukesh Chhabra paid tributes to their "curious" and "inspirational" colleague.

Rajput, 34, was found dead at his Bandra residence on June 14, 2020.

A popular face on the Indian television courtesy the hit soap opera "Pavitra Rishta", Rajput made his feature debut in 2013 with "Kai Po Che!", directed by Kapoor. The duo went on to become friends, later re-teaming for 2018's "Kedarnath".

The director said he is yet to come to terms with Rajput's death.

"One year today... Still numb. #omnamahshivaya #sushantsinghrajput #superstar forever," Kapoor wrote on Instagram on Monday.

Rajput's friend and casting director Chhabra, who directed the actor in his last cinematic outing "Dil Bechara", shared Kapoor's sentiment.

"Nothing seems to be the same. The void you left behind still remains. Here's hoping I'll see you once again. Miss you brother. #stillnumb #sushantsinghrajput," he added.

Rao, who starred with the late actor in "Kai Po Che!", shared Rajput's picture on his Instagram Story, with the caption "Bhai (brother)."

Rajput's "Dil Bechara" co-star Sanjana Sanghi shared her photo with the late actor on her Instagram Story, captioning it: "A forever void. Miss you." In an emotional note,

Pednekar said she misses her "Sonchiriyaa" co-star and his questions. "From the stars to the things unknown, you showed me the world like I had never seen it before. I hope you've found your peace my curious sweet SSR...Om Shanti," she wrote on the photo-video sharing platform. Actor Tahir Raj Bhasin also shared a few photographs with Rajput on his Instagram Story.

"Remembering your insatiable curiosity and intelligence. Gone too soon. May you always remain interstellar," Bhasin said about his "Chhichhore" co-actor. Rajput's "Pavitra Rishta" co-star and former girlfriend Ankita Lokhande shared a montage of their pictures on the social media platform.

"This was our journey. Phir milenge chalte chalte (until next time)," she captioned the video. Pulkit Samrat, another TV actor who transitioned to films, said Rajput's death felt like "a personal loss". In a note, Samrat said the late star still exists as "an inspiration to those who dare to dream big". "You exist in the hopes and aspirations of every small town guy who dreams of making it big some day. You exist for everyone who wants to believe that humans are capable of kindness.

"You exist for everyone who dares to dream. I never got to know you in this lifetime, but if we live more than once, I would want to be a part of the world again where you exist, a world that is much kinder than this one. Sushant Singh Rajput, you are missed," the "Fukrey" actor said.

**Aries:** Some relationships are forever, Aries. Others come into our life for a reason or merely a season. So, instead of mourning about what's going, exploit your past experiences. Think of them as fodder for your creative explorations. Who knows? You could end up creating something you will be remembered for in the process. Tip: The saying 'turn your broken heart into art' holds true for where you are.

**Taurus:** Dreams, visions, symbols, and omens—things are getting trippy around here and you're not complaining. Taurus! You understand that inspiration has uncanny ways of finding us, and you want to do what it takes to transform 'thoughts to things'. Trust that the unseen forces are facilitating your creative explorations at this moment. PS: Don't be afraid to step into the unknown or express yourself through a medium that you were unsure of before. Tip: You are being supported in your creative explorations.

**Gemini:** Manifestation is not a ritual, it's a lifestyle. Read that again, Gemini. While you're trying to manifest that perfect house, perfect lover, and perfect job, what you're missing out on is the paradise you're in the midst of at this moment. So count your blessings, whisper words of praise

to the Universe, reaffirm all that is bright and beautiful, and celebrate the people in your life for their flawsomeness. Remember, you are creating your reality in each moment as you go along.

Tip: Reaffirm all that is good in your life as you whisper words of praise to the Universe.

**Cancer:** Today's cosmic climate brings the classic 'consumption versus creation' debate to the fore. What have you been pouring your energy into, Cancer? Have you been obsessed with productivity to a point that it is affecting your mental and emotional well-being? The cards are urging you to step back from your work desk and allow yourself to be present. To make time for Zen rituals and consume the kind of content that makes you feel rejuvenated.

Tip: Make time for Zen rituals.

**Leo:** The fear of being alone can be all kinds of dangerous. It makes us believe in the worst possible scenario and accept the kind of love that's both toxic and detrimental to our well-being. So don't let this insecurity come in the way of manifesting what you truly deserve. What the stars want you to remember: there is a parallel reality available to you, where you are being supported to become the most magnificent version of yourself.

Tip: Know your worth.

**Virgo:**

If your guides could come down and tell you what needs to be done, trust us, they would! But, they're a lot more creative than that, Virgo. So they're sending you signs and symbols from the unseen realm. Pay attention to what that bird on your windowsill is whispering to you today, or the angel numbers that choose to flash at opportune moments. PS: You are loved and supported in each and every moment.

Tip: Pay attention to what's coming through from the unseen realms.

**Libra:**

There are some people who have been sent to the earth with a special mission. A mission that requires them to spread laughter and be a conduit of miracles. You are one of those people, Libra. One of those people that makes the room light up merely with your presence. So, anchor the light in your body and your being as you consciously begin to create paradise.

Tip: You are a conduit of miracles, beautiful one.

**Scorpio:**

This is a time of inner transformation, Scorpio. A time of watching the phoenix rise from the ashes. So allow yourself to step back from what you are creating as you honour the process of alchemy. What the cards

want you to remember: you are going to become an indomitable version of yourself. As always, stay away from people who gaslight you into believing you are not good enough, or try to sabotage your growth. It is quite likely that seeing you step in your power could stir up a storm within them.

Tip: Honour the process of inner transformation.

**Sagittarius:**

You've always had a mind of your own. You've been fiercely independent in every way. So why compromise on your individuality in order to please somebody else? The cards are bringing your attention to toxic relationships that are stifling your growth. As always, you know what you have to do, Sagittarius. If you've had to cut cords during the eclipse season, give yourself time and space to heal without falling into the trap of toxic positivity.

Tip: Sometimes, you just have to give yourself time to grieve.

**Capricorn:**

Productivity is overrated. It's time to embrace the virtues of creativity, beautiful. Here are some ideas to kickstart the week within: 1. Channel your inner beatnik with some at-home tie-dye experiments. 2. Consider joining a book club online. 3. Experiment with a new recipe that's inspired by favourite food bloggers.

4. Record your own podcast and share your story with other people. 5. Try a new workout that brings out your inner Beyoncé. If it brings a smile to your face, know that you're on the right track.

Tip: Creativity over productivity—always!

**Aquarius:**

While the consumption of intoxicants and emotional eating can numb your pain, it is but a temporary fix to a bigger problem. Aquarius, it's time to tackle your demons head-on. Turning to a trusted friend, healer or therapist at this point could be beneficial in a multitude of ways. On the professional and creative front, you're being asked to let go of the cloak of invisibility. Allow yourself to be seen and heard. Give yourself the permission to step in the spotlight—where you belong!

Tip: It's time to tackle your demons head-on.

**Pisces:**

Duality is a way of life in the earthly realm. The highs are followed by the lows, and ups are followed by the downs. To expect everything to be perfect in every moment would be a tad bit unrealistic. So accept where you are now and what life is showing you. Stay in a space of humility and approach every task in a manner that's meditative. Trust that your Zen approach to life will lead to a major transformation.

Tip: Accept and allow.