



**TDILIP KUMAR,
BOLLYWOOD'S GREAT
'TRAGEDY KING,' DIES AT 98**

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CELEBRATE THE DALAI LAMA

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**BRITNEY SPEARS'
COURT-APPOINTED
ATTORNEY RESIGNS**

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SummitTIMES

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O N T O P O F T H E N E W S

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STATE-LEVEL 'DAY FOR MOTHER' EARTH CELEBRATED AT DENTAM

Will extend 7-min restriction on vehicular movement to entire Day for Mother Earth if people agree: CM

GYALSHING, 07 JUL (IPR): 'A Day for Mother Earth', an environmental initiative of the Government under the stewardship of Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang was observed today at Dentam, West Sikkim. The theme of the event was 'Celebrating Nature'. The state-level event was organized by the Forest & Environment Department, Government of Sikkim.

The Chief Minister joined his Cabinet colleagues, Deputy Speaker, SLA, MP Lok Sabha, dignitaries and senior officers of the Government in planting saplings to mark the important event.

It may be remembered that, since 2019, 7th July is celebrated every year as 'A Day for Mother Earth'. On this day, all vehicle movement throughout the State comes to a standstill for 7 minutes at 11am as a tribute to nature and an initiative to preserve and conserve the environment.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister highlighted

the objective behind celebrating 'A Day for Mother Earth' on 7th July every year. He said that the prime concern of the Government is the service towards society and nature. He said that the Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us of the importance of preserving the environment and keeping it clean. He added that the government has always protected the sanctity of the green zones and will continue with the same principles of environmental awareness and adopt measures to decrease pollution.

The Chief Minister suggested that the restriction on vehicular movement for seven minutes at 11am on 7th July every year could be extended for the whole day. He said that if there is consensus, this could be made a regular practice from 7th July, 2022 onwards.

The Chief Minister further shared the government's plan to streamline and initiate internal policies, norms and conditions in all the departments to bring uniformity. He further



urged the people of Sikkim to continue to abide by all the Covid-19 protocols and preventive measures to remain safe at all times.

In conclusion, the Chief Minister urged all to pledge to collectively make Sikkim

plastic-free and dedicatedly perform our responsibilities towards the environment.

One of the highlights of the event was the presentation of various awards to deserving individuals and organizations for their remarkable

contribution towards the preservation of the environment.

Following are the awards under various categories conferred upon individuals and organizations by the Chief Minister: *...turn Pg2*

124 new cases and two more Covid deaths in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Sikkim's COVID death toll reached 311 today with two more deaths being reported in the last 24 hours. Both COVID deaths were reported from STNM Hospital.

In the meantime, 170 more people tested positive over the same 24 hours, taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 21,573. These new cases were detected from the testing of 993 samples on Tuesday giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate comes to 17.1%.

Of these, 81 cases were reported in East District, 23 in West District, 65 in South District and one in North Sikkim.

Meanwhile, 87 people registered full re-

coveries and were discharged from facility and home isolation on Tuesday to further improve Sikkim's figure of recovered cases to 19,031.

At present, there are 1,975 active Covidcases in the State, of whom only 77 are in hospital, including eight admitted yesterday alone and 10 who are in ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department this morning, the 124 new cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 752 samples, another 45 in rapid antigen testing of 237 samples and one more case in TruNat testing of four samples.

Born in Tibet, have been longest guest of India, feel proud: Dalai Lama

HYDERABAD, 07 JUL

[PTI]: Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama today said he is the "longest guest" of India, who would never cause any trouble to his host.

In a virtual interactive session with GV Prasad, Co-Chairman and Managing Director of Dr Reddy's Laboratories and others, Dalai Lama said India which practices "Ahimsa and Karuna" (non violence and compassion) stands as a role model for other countries.

"As I always mentioned, India is my home. I was born in Tibet. But most of my life was spent in this country... I really feel proud that I am a guest of the Indian government. I think I am the longest guest of the Indian government. But at least that guest will not create a problem," he said.

He remarked that religious harmony in India was remarkable and there is "free media"

Describing India as a secular country, the Tibetan leader in exile said he has been promoting "Ahimsa and Compassion", which are intrinsic values of Indians that have been followed over thousands of years.

"With over a billion population, India is a perfect example of religious harmony. It is not because of any political reasons, but it is because of its people. Some of the countries need to follow India's principles of religious harmony," he said.

Dalai Lama advised the medical fraternity to be more compassionate while discharging their duties.

Wishes poured in from around the globe on the occasion of his 86th birthday on Tuesday.

Thanking everyone, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their wishes, Dalai Lama said he was determined that he must live at least 110 years.

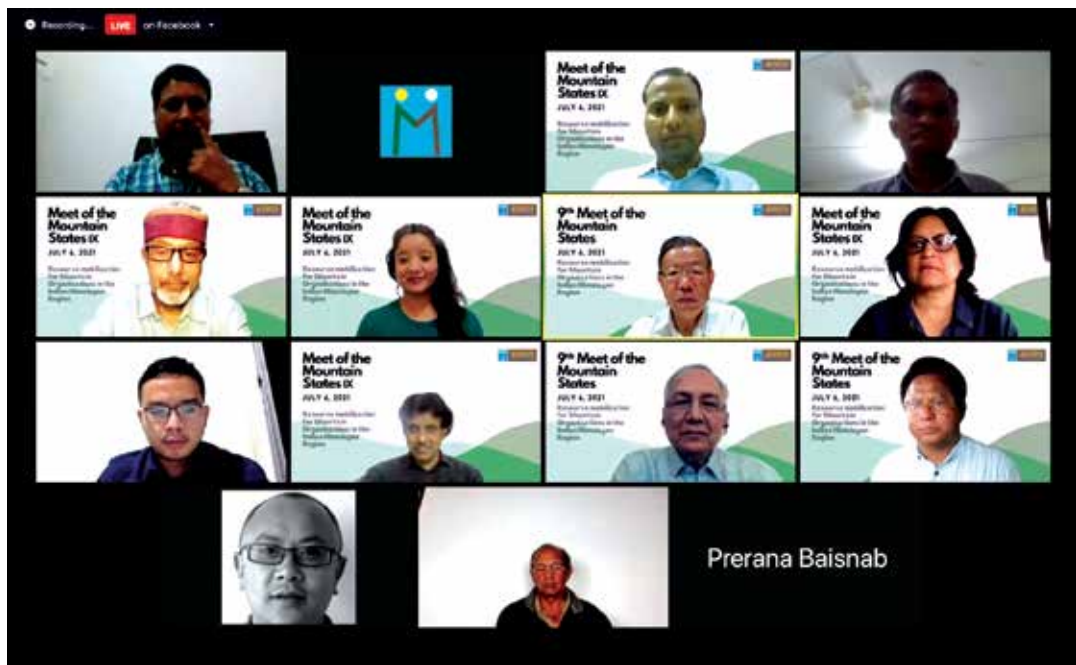
IMI hosts 9th Meet of Mountain States on resource mobilization

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

The 9th Meet of the Mountain States organised by IMI on 06 Jul, 2021 saw an engagement on the issue of "Resource mobilization for Mountain Organisations in the Indian Himalayan Region" to discuss strategies, adaptations, and trends in the context of a post CoVID scenario' with key stakeholders including CSR heads from the industry, development partners and local organisations in the Indian Himalayan Region, a press release informs.

The meet was hosted by President, PD Rai, IMI and Vice President, Dr Rajendra Dobhal. IMI and panelists included Founder and CEO, Sushil Ramola, B-Able; Advisor and Executive Editor, Company CSR, Dr Anil Jaggi; Titan Industries, NE Sridhar;



Deshpande Foundation, Sandeep Sabharwal; Chairman, Dr KK Upadhyaya, DNR Foundation and ex-CSR Head, FICCI; Groupd Head, Tara Chand,

CSR, Oaknorth India; and AGM-THDC India Ltd, Rajeshwaer Giri.

The panel during the discussion focused on the critical

issue of resource mobilisation for effective contribution to the vision of a resilient mountain economy in India. There is an urgent need to strengthen

organisations in the region by sharing information & building capacities, the release states.

President, PD Rai, IMI, in his address emphasised on the need to seek the participation of our CSR and Philanthropy community to join the collective efforts with the Global Call for Build Back Better.

The webinar was attended by various mountain organisations including IMI State chapters such as Sustainable Development Forum of Uttarakhand, Meghalaya Integrated Mountain Development Initiative, Sustainable Development Forum of Nagaland, Sustainable Development Forum of Arunachal Pradesh, Himmothan Society and others. The session ended on revisiting CSR for mountain concerns with IMI leading the role to celebrate the Indian Himalaya.

RK Ranjan - Manipur royal, an academic and MP - now a Minister of State

NEW DELHI, 07 JUL

[PTI]: Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, who was sworn in as Union Minister of State today, belongs to an erstwhile royal clan of Manipur and has worked for unity among the various tribes in his state.

RK Ranjan, as he is popularly known, was born on September 1, 1952 in Manipur's KongbaMakhaNandeibam-Leikai village. The academic-turned-politician is viewed as a unifier.

Son of Rajkumar-Manisana Singh, he is married to Debala Devi. After graduating from

Imphal's DhanaManjuri College, he earned his master's degree in Geography in 1972 from Guwahati University and later a PhD on "problems of land-use" in Manipur.

After teaching in the colleges of Manipur, he joined Manipur University (MU) as an assistant professor in the Department of Earth Sciences. He was appointed the registrar at the University and served from 2004 to 2008.

In 2013, he joined the BJP and contested the Lok Sabha elections in the

very next year. However, his debut was unsuccessful.

In the 17th Lok Sabha elections held in 2019, he was elected as to the Lok Sabha from the Inner Manipur parliamentary constituency on BJP's ticket.

He has been appointed as a member of several parliamentary committees, including the Standing Committee for Science and Technology, the Consultative Committee for DoNER and the Parliamentary Rules Committee.

Elgar case accused on hunger strike in jail over Stan Swamy's death

MUMBAI, 07 JUL [PTI]:

Ten accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case went on a one-day hunger strike in the Talaja jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai on Wednesday to protest against what they termed as an "institutional murder" of co-accused Jesuit priest Stan Swamy.

They also demanded action against officials of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is conducting a probe into the Elgar Parishad case, and former superintendent of the Talaja jail.

Stan Swamy, 84, was arrested by the NIA from Ranchi in October 2020 under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and lodged at the Talaja Central Jail in Navi Mumbai.

He suffered a cardiac arrest and died at a Mumbai hospital on Monday in the middle of his fight for bail on health grounds.

The Elgar Parishad case is related to inflammatory speeches made at a conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017, which, the police claimed, triggered violence the next day near the Koregaon-Bhima war memorial located on the outskirts of the western Maharashtra city.

The police had claimed the conclave was organised by people with alleged Maoist links.

The other accused in the case termed Stan Swamy's death an "institutional murder" and held the "negligent jails, indifferent courts and malicious investigating agencies" responsible for it.

As a mark of protest, 10 of the co-accused in the case - Rona Wilson, Surendra Gadling, Sudhir Dhawale, Mahesh Raut, Arun Ferreira, Vernon Gonsalves, Gautam Navlakha, Anand Teltumbde, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar-

Gorkhe - went on a one-day fast in the Talaja jail on Wednesday.

They informed about the protest to their family members, who released a statement saying all Elgar case prisoners have blamed the NIA and the Talaja jail's former superintendent Kaustubh Kurlekar for the death of Father Stan Swamy.

They believe that "the separation of Stan Swamy from them is a deliberate institutional murder," the release said.

The statement alleged that the NIA and Kurlekar never missed a single opportunity to "harass" Stan Swamy, whether it was the "ghastly treatment" inside the jail, the haste to transfer him back from hospital to jail or even protesting against trivial things like a sipper (which Stan Swamy required due to his medical conditions).

"It is these that have caused

the death of Stan Swamy and therefore, for this institutional murder, NIA officials and Kurlekar should be tried under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code," the statement said, while demanding a judicial inquiry into his death.

The statement said the family members of the accused will submit these demands to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray through the Talaja jail administration.

It also said that though these accused were lodged in different barracks, they met on Tuesday and shared their memories of Father Stan Swamy, and also observed a two-minute silence as a mark of tribute to him.

Three women accused in the case- Sudha Bharadwaj, Shoma Sen and Jyoti Jagtap - are currently lodged at the Byculla prison in Mumbai.

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40 SDF families join SKM in Tinzir



SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 07 JUL:

Fourty families from Tinzir area joined Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party in the presence of SKM workers of Namchi-Singithang constituency today. The joining program was held in the Party Office where the newcomers were formerly welcomed. The

families left Sikkim Democratic Front party to join SKM.

During the program, Laxuman Rai said that he is related to the SKM president, PS Tamang, which had made it difficult to remain an SDF member.

"I'm not very experienced in politics as it is just my third year as-

panchayat, but there has not been any development in our area, and I can now take the matter up with the administration through the party leaders present," said Premshilla Rai.

The new members said that they have joined the party with hopes that their village will be developed.

Excise Department observes A Day for Mother Earth



GANGTOK, 07 JUL (IPR): A Day for Mother Earth' was observed by the officials of the Excise Department posted at Rangpo today. On the occasion, a plantation drive was organ-

ised at Chanatar, Rangpo, under the initiative of the Secretary Excise Department, Kuber Bhandari and Commissioner Excise Department, Binita Chettri.

The plantation was

done in the premises of the Excise laboratory and Excise Quarters.

The main objective of the drive was to take an initiative for the conservation of the environment.

'A Day for Mother Earth' observed in Soreng

SORENG, 07 JUL (IPR): A small celebratory event was held at the premises of Soreng Senior Secondary School, to mark the third edition of 'A Day for Mother Earth' today. Press Advisor to CM, CP Sharma in his brief address highlighted the theme of the day 'Celebrating Nature'. He said that the event is also being held to make people aware of the importance of nature and the need to preserve it. He thanked the Chief Minister for initiating and conceptualizing the idea.

The day was marked



by planting tree saplings by the Press Advisor,

SDM-Soreng, Ranjan Rai and few of the depart-

ment officials along with the employees of the For-

est and Environment Department.

A Day for Mother Earth observed in Pakyong



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

A Day for Mother Earth was observed in Pakyong, East Sikkim under the initiative of Forest Department, a press release informs.

The programme was attended by Are MLA, Bishnu Kumar Khatawara, government officials and SKM workers.

Earlier, a plantation drive was conducted in Pakyong Bazaar area in presence of the MLA. After the plantation drive a short program was held at Pakyong Territorial Range Forest Office premises.

Staff of Forest Department were felicitated as COVID Heroes for their

selfless work during the pandemic. MLA Mr Khatawara handed over certificates of appreciation to the COVID Heroes.

In his address, he talked about A Day for Mother Earth initiative of the government led by the Chief Minister, PS Tamang to dedicate ourselves towards the environment. He also stressed that everyone should come forward to this mass campaign to protect our nature and environment.

Edu Minister plants saplings to mark 'A Day for Mother Earth'



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Education Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha planted saplings in the office premises of Rongyek Chongye Yumi Tshogpa, a social organization based in Rongyek today. The event took place on the occasion of 'A Day for Mother Earth'.

Minister Lepcha planted saplings of azalea species in the program organized by Rongyek Chongye Yumi Tshogpa. The program was attended by the Block Development Officer of Nandok Block, local Panchayat member and other guests.

Members of the Chog-

pa also planted more than 200 different species of plants like Chaap, Azalea, Dhuppi, etc. After the plantation program, a special program was organized at the Village Administration Center where Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha was present as the chief guest.

STATE-LEVEL 'DAY FOR MOTHER' EARTH CELEBRATED AT DENTAM

I) Sikkim Rajya Van Samrakshan Evam Paryavaran Puraskar (RVSEPP): consisting of citation & cash award Rs. 5,000 each to three awardees. The Awardees of RVSEPP are as follows:

i. . Sohn Tshering Lepcha, Assistant Livestock Inspector, Himalayan Zoological Park, for his immense contribution in mitigating Man-Animal conflicts in the State for the past two decades.

ii. . Pirthi Man Limboo, Head Mali, Soreng Territorial Range, West Sikkim for providing field level leadership and team work in raising healthy and plantable saplings of indigenous and rare tree species. The nursery was also judged as the best nursery in the district.

iii. . Jeevan Chettri, Driver (Contract under JICA-SBFP) deputed to Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, East Wildlife Division for his valour and dedication during Man-Animal conflicts operations especially pertaining to Himalayan Black Bear in East Sikkim.

2) Certificate of Appreciation & Cash Award of Rs. 1,500 each (11 awardees) to:

i. . Thakur Ram Chettri, BO, Gangtok Territorial Range, East Sikkim a dedicated forester engaged in all forestry field related activities is also actively in emergency disaster related services for which he received a certificate of appreciation from the Land Revenue Department Government of Sikkim, during the year 2015.

ii. . Pema Lhendup Lachungpa, HFG Mangan Territorial Range, North Sikkim who along with his colleague Mr. Gyatso Lachungpa, FG exhibited valor and compassion to successfully rescue 4 (four) victims of car accident at Lapsi Dara near Manul along North Sikkim Highway on 1st October 2020.

iii. . Suraj Limboo, HFG, Namchi Territorial Range, South Sikkim posted at Dalep Forest Checkpost (FCP) with vigilance and team effort has led to detection and apprehension of forest offences/offenders leading to FCP generating the highest revenue under South District contributing in the division exceeding the target for the FY 2020-21.

iv. . Roshan Rai, HFG, Rabongla Territorial Range, South Sikkim is a vigilant and sincere field personnel who has always been prepared for any emergencies. He additionally supports the range of administrative work and has a great sense of teamwork.

v. . Gyatso Lachungpa, FG, Mangan Territorial Range, North Sikkim assisted Mr. Pema Lhendup Lachungpa, HFG exhibited valor and compassion to successfully rescue 4 (four) victims of car accident at Lapsi Dara near Manul along North Sikkim Highway on 1st October 2020.

vi. . Anjana Chettri, FG, Pakyong Territorial Range, East Sikkim through strict and efficient patrolling has reduced illicit activities and controlled Forest land encroachments at Amba-Tareythang. Further, under her supervision Avenue Plantation has been commendably raised at Amba, the Gram Panchayat Unit adopted by Chief Minister during 2020.

vii. . Tara Hang Subba, HFG, Tashiding Territorial Range, West Sikkim a dedicated and dynamic field staff who, despite dire shortage of trained manpower and resources, has established Forest Check Post at Tashiding bridge ensuring regulating transit of forest produce and enhancing revenue.

viii. . Sonam Thendup Bhutia, HFG, Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, East Sikkim is a knowledgeable and skilled wildlifer who during Man-Animal conflicts, has successfully tranquilized many dangerous straying wild animals, especially the Himalayan Black Bear.

ix. . Prem Kumar Subba, HFG, Sidkeong Tulku Bird Park, West Sikkim is a hardworking and dedicated frontline wildlife staff whose efforts has led to successful captive breeding of Golden and Yellow Pheasants at the Sidkeong Tulku Bird Park, Rabdentse, West Sikkim.

x. . Dipchand Biswakarma, FG, Gyalshing Territorial Range, West Sikkim is a dedicated field staff managing vast forest jurisdiction. His tenacity and diligence has led to apprehension of forest offences/offenders with one of the cases compounding for Rs. 4 Lakhs.

xi. . Preeti Rai, BO (Ad-hoc) Sericulture, presently functioning as Farm In-charge at Central Sericulture Farm at Mamring is a self-motivated and hardworking official whose efforts has led to record production of Cocoon even during COVID Pandemic period. She has been the main lead in efficient upkeep of the farm which has been recognised by different sectors.

II) Letter of Appreciation to Frontline staff (142 numbers): To recognize the contributions of the frontline staff and encourage their peers/colleagues, a letter of appreciation to forest frontline personnel who during 2020-21 were engaged/involved with Sikkim Police/District Administration in quarantine centres / Cremation for COVID-19 deaths.

The programme was also addressed by Minister, Forest & Environment Department, Karma Loday Bhutia. Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by PCCF-cum-Principal Secretary, Forest, M.L. Srivastava.

Policing compromised by current political masters, SDF alleges

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Sikkim Democratic Front spokesperson, JB Darnal, today alleged that the politician-police nexus was growing as an organised crime in the State. The police administration, instead of going after those who break the law, was harbouring criminals aligned with the ruling party, he contended.

For reference, he held up the alleged assault on a South Sikkim resident, Arun Limboo, and his family by SKM party members because he

has been complaining against illegal quarrying in Temi-Namphing constituency.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Darnal claimed that among the attackers were the SKM CLC youth convener and seven others.

He alleged that this was a pre-planned attack carried out in broad daylight to go after Arun Limboo for raising his voice on behalf of the people.

"He has been raising his voice against the illegal quarry and other

social issues frequently so this may be the reason behind the attack. He paid the price for raising his voice for the people," Mr Darnal said.

He also claimed that Arun Limboo was not an SDF party member and has never spoken for the party.

Speaking on behalf of the party, Mr Darnal condemned the assault and wondered aloud how convincingly Sikkim Police will deliver when it comes to investigation and bringing the culprits to book.

Mr Darnal also com-

mented on the expulsion of four students from Gyalshing College, the recent adhoc teachers issue and the resignation of the SUSA president. He contended that the state government was neither serious nor sensitive towards education, students or teachers.

He also alleged that despite many complaints lodged by SDF functionaries, no action has been taken by the police in any case. Instead, the police has kept busy with taking action only against SDF functionaries in different cases.

Tashi Bhutia remembered on fourth death anniv of martyrdom for Gorkhaland

SMRITAKHAWAS DARJEELING, 07 JUL:

Shingsha Bhutia Buddhist Tribal Tsokpa remembered Tashi Bhutia on his fourth death anniversary here at Sonada. The youth had sacrificed his life during the 2017 Gorkhaland agitation.

The SBBTT president, Dawangla Bhutia, said, "Today, on the 4th death anniversary of martyr Tashi Bhutia, we, the Tsokpa members along with the entire



Gorkha community, remember our martyr for Gorkhaland. Because of Covid-19 many of our members could not attend

this ceremony."

"Unfortunately, our martyr has still not received justice. Gorkhaland has become a toy in the hands of

politicians," he said, while adding that the people should do their bit by ensuring communal harmony and unity in the Hills.

A Day for Mother Earth celebrated in Gyalshing

GYALSHING, 07 JUL (IPR): The District Administration Centre, West, carried out a plantation and cleanliness drive at DAC premises today to mark 'A Day for Mother Earth' programme of the Government.

The program was carried out in the presence of Agawane Rohan Ramesh, ADC, West alongwith S.K. Alley, SDM, Gyalshing, Head of the Departments of West District, and officials and staff of DAC, West.

ADC Ramesh in his brief address highlighted on the importance of the program which is being conducted in all parts of the State and also spoke about the importance of such a massive exercise towards nature and cleanliness which is required during this pandemic.



The saplings of Rhododendron and Cherry were planted along the roadside entering to the DAC premises and the garbage collected were

also disposed safely.

Likewise, Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat in collaboration with HDFC Bank Gyalshing and local NGOs also planted 200

tree saplings today at Baydong Goucharan forest and Lower Kyongsa. The plantation was carried out to observe 'A day for Mother Earth 2021'

ICAR Sikkim adopts Lower Dzongu for technology demonstration



GANGTOK, 07 JUL (PIB): The ICAR Sikkim Centre, Tadong initiated technology demonstration through conducting training programs and supportive input distribution for livelihood improvement by undertaking Integrated Organic Farming System (IOFS) at Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim district.

Tribal inhabitants of four Gram Panchayat Units (GPUs) viz. Lower-Lingdong, Upper-

Lingdong, Samdong and Hee-Gyathang participated in the demonstration programme organized on 6th July 2021.

Initially, Joint Director, ICAR RC for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Dr RK Avasthe greeted the gathering and described the potential benefits of Integrated Organic Farming System for securing food and nutritional security and livelihood improvement of tribal

farmers in Sikkim Himalaya region.

Scientist (Agronomy), DrAmit Kumar demonstrated potential organic nutrient management practices for increasing net farm productivity at Research Farm of ICAR RC for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre. Scientist (Plant Breeding), Dr E Lamalaxmi Devi brief about the techniques of quality seed production in Sikkim. Input distribution programme was orga-

nized for ensured supply of vegetable seeds, Nalpak, phytonem, tracer, vermicompost unit, jalkund, shade net, sulphur powder, COC and polythene mulch to all the participants.

In addition, 18 numbers of cattle and 2479 number of DOCs were distributed. Finally, Nodal Officer, TSP, Dr Sau-ravSahadeldelivered a formal vote of thanks and wished success for all the participant's future endeavour towards economic prosperity.

India records 43,733 more Covidcases

NEW DELHI, JULY 7 (PTI): India added 43,733 new cases of coronavirus taking the total infection tally to 3,06,63,665, while the active cases further declined to 4,59,920, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday. The death toll climbed to 4,04,211 with 930 daily fatalities.

The active cases have further declined to 4,59,920 and comprise 1.50 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 97.18 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Also, 19,07,216 tests were conducted on Tuesday taking the total cu-

mulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 42,33,32,097.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.29 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for 16 consecutive days, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate has declined to 2.39 per cent.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 55th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,97,99,534, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.32 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7,

30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The ministry also said that cumulative vaccine doses administered so far has reached 36.13 crore under the Nationwide Vaccination Drive.

The 930 new fatalities include 395 from Maharashtra, 142 from Kerala and 92 from Karnataka.

A total of 4,04,211 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,23,531 from Maharashtra, 35,526 from Karnataka, 33,132 from Tamil Nadu, 25,001 from Delhi, 22,656 from Uttar Pradesh, 17,834 from West Bengal and 16,131 from Punjab.

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

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

Meeting discusses internet and phone connectivity issues in North

WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 07 JUL:

A meeting was held today as per the memorandum submitted by MLA Dzongu, Pinto Namgyal Lepcha regarding poor internet and mobile connectivity in North Sikkim.

As per the minutes of the meeting, the following points were discussed and field visit shall be made

and the MLA Dzongu shall be a part of the team.

1. Requirement of IT services for Dzongu Constituency has been taken by Department of Telecom, Government of India.

2. Requirements can be fulfilled through Government of India's BharatNet Project.

3. Work has al-

ready been started and stopped due to lack of funds and contractors stopped the work due to pending payments.

4. Now the DPR of the project has been approved and funds will be released in the month of July by Govt. of India.

5. Information shared to all the contractors and they agreed to start the work once

the payments are received.

6. If everything goes smoothly it can be completed within a year.

Apart from this, BSNL has introduced Bharath Air fibre for broad band services through Radio network which is suitable to the demography of Sikkim. It can be provided to the customers covering 4Kms area from the distribution point each.

Namcheybong MLA visits PHSCs in his constituency

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Area MLA, Em Prasad Sharma visited five PHSCs (Basilakha PHSC, Changay PHSC, Assam Lingzey PHSC, Aho PHSC and Sumin PHSC) under Namcheybong Constituency, today, a press release informs.

He was accompanied by Chairman, Excise Department, Ganza Denzongpa, Chairman, Cooperation Department, BB Chettri, OSD under Agriculture Department, PK Subba and SKM party workers.

The purpose of the visit was to get acquainted with the current status and requirements of the PHSCs.

He interacted with the staff of PHSCs and asked about the major demands of PHSCs as well as to ensure whether all the PHSCs are following the IPHC norms or not.

Also, he distributed some health kits like oximeters, masks, PPE kits etc. to the above mentioned PHSCs and assured to meet all the de-



mands they have made. He then inspected the landslide area of Chan-

gay Road and some damaged houses of Assam Lingzey GPU.

South District Forest Department observes 'A Day For Mother Earth'

BIKASH CHETTRI NAMCHI, 07 JUL:

Forest Department of South District in collaboration with all the departments of District Administrative Centre organized a district level 'A Day For Mother Earth' in Namchi with the theme 'Celebrating Nature: Let Us Conserve and Protect our Rich Natural Environment at our individual Capacity in our surrounding areas'.

The chief guest of the event was Zilla Adakshya South, Tshering Dem Bhutia and the guest of honor, NMC Vice Councilor, Sabita Tamang.

The plantation of ornamental flowers of



rhododendron and azalea was done in Ngadak Monastery in the first part of the event while appreciation letters were distributed to 23 Forest Territorial Rangers in Namchi Officers' Club in the second half of the event.

Speaking to the me-

dia, DFO, Environment and Soil Conservation Division, South District, Palzor Ongda Bhutia, said that the program was started on the same date in the year 2019 while adding that the main objective of the program was to conduct activities for preventing climate

change and contributing to environmental movements. He said that decreasing the usage of vehicles and walking whenever possible would be a great start along with the plantation drive.

The chief guest of the program, Tshering Dem Bhutia said, "Sikkim is

safe from pollution and severe levels of COVID-19 because of the good forest coverage we have." She suggested that the Forest Department of South District should look after the growth of the newly planted trees as the public will not be able to do the job regularly.

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:03592-208698

CHANGE OF NAME

I PEMA PRADHAN wife of No 10375121Y HAV DEEPAK PRADHAN of Unit 107 Inf Bn (TA) 11 GR resident of Vill -LOWER NAZI BUSTY P.O - KOLBONG PS - PULBAZAR-DIST-DARJEELING have changed my Surname from PEMA PRADHAN to PEMA LAMU SHERPA Vide affidavit dated 21/06/2021 before Executive Magistrate (Darjeeling).

Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau
(MHA), Govt. India
Balwakhani, Rajbhawan
Gangtok, Sikkim - 737103

AUCTION NOTICE

No.01/2021

Date : 06.07.2021

Open bidders are invited for disposal of old furniture/fixtures, utensils and other misc. Stores held by SIB Gangtok. The bidders are required to deposit Earnest money of Rs.10,000/- in cash (refundable). Interested bidders having GST no. may inspect the items on any working day w.e.f 26.7.2021 to 28.7.2021 from 11 am to 4 pm. The open bidding will be started at 11 am on 29.7.2021 in presence of the board members in the premises of O/O the Deputy Director SIB MHA, Balwakhani, Gangtok. Highest bidders shall have to deposit minimum 25% of the auction value in cash on the spot. The goods shall be handed over to the successful bidder only after receiving the balance amount and GST receipt as applicable as per rules. The decision of the authority shall be final.

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Celebrate the Dalai Lama

...because he inspires openness

The Dalai Lama turned 86 on Tuesday. The pandemic has put paid to plans for grand celebrations as every moment that His Holiness, as the people prefer to refer to him, remains among his people. What did happen though were geopolitical shifts which saw the Prime Minister of India publicly greet him on his birthday, a gesture whose significance cannot be ignored given how India has traditionally bent over backwards to appease China by ignoring Tibet, Tibetans and their Kundun. After a long while, on the birthday of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetans and those who support the Tibetan cause, have one more reason than the continuing good health of the Dalai Lama to celebrate. The 14th Dalai Lama has now been around to comfort and guide Tibetans at home and in exile for longer than any other Dalai Lama. The only other Dalai Lama to live past 80 was the First who lived till he was 83, but then he was recognised as a Dalai Lama in retrospect and the people thus could not seek solace from him during his lifetime.

While the reasons for the Tibetans to celebrate of the Dalai Lama's birthday are obvious, even the nonbelievers should join the celebrations because the Dalai Lama's contributions to the secular world are as profound as his hierarchical position in Tibetan affairs is supreme, the transfer of all his administrative and political powers to an elected body notwithstanding. He is of advanced age, and yet he exudes a rare compassion and frank forthrightness. Now that he is no longer the political leader of his people and only their religious head, no one would fault him if he narrowed his priorities down to the welfare of his faith and his people. But he continues to use his influence and following to speak for those whom most others have forsaken and people whose plight remains largely unaddressed. Belonging to a people who have been refugees for more than six decades now, it can only be warm empathy that equips him with the faculties to call on fellow Buddhist nations Sri Lanka and Myanmar to stop violence against Hindu Tamils and Muslim Rohingyas respectively. This appeal, the Dalai Lama had made while addressing people at Leh in Ladakh on his birthday some years back but is definitely a sentiment he still holds close even if fellow Buddhists opt to ignore him. He could continue to speak only about the situation in Tibet and the issues of faith and Tibetan refugees and no one would have found anything amiss. But he has continually exuded compassion for everyone, an option too many seem to be comfortable ignoring. It for such gestures and much more that the world needs to join the Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhists in celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday.

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual king of a displaced people, who, when it comes to their longings for home, have only received denials and token support. In times when many religious leaders prey on faith and paranoia for varied reasons ranging from expanding their flock to foisting purity [and hence hate], the Dalai Lama has been open and accommodating. This quality, already refreshing in any leader, becomes even more significant when the Dalai Lama lives and promotes it because he has the rare knack of inspiring people. In the years that he has led the Tibetan people in exile, he has been firm without being shrill and kept the hopes of his people alive with his logical and clear thinking. Few leaders can claim to bring such succour to their people. Although he dismisses any reference to himself as a 'God King', the Dalai Lama's contribution to how the world conducts itself cannot be ignored. The Tibetan issue could have snowballed into a cold-war incinerator and imploded like Afghanistan had it not been for the Dalai Lama's commitment to peace and rational approach to a historical wrong.

The Dalai Lama was barely 24 when he was thrown into the outside world, of which, not only he, but most Tibetans who joined him in exile, knew little. While this culture shock would have been too much for lesser minds to handle, the Dalai Lama conducted himself well. Not only did he learn and adapt well, he also kept his people together, focussed and optimistic; not an easy task because the world has not performed too well in healing refugees beyond providing them asylum. His leadership also sustained Tibetan identity and way of life even in exile even as it was being edged out inside Tibet and communities around the world are losing their ways without even realising it. For a man who has seen his people suffer in the hands of Communists, he displays no prejudice and has consistently endorsed that of all the modern economic theories, the economic system of Marxism is founded on moral principles.

The Dalai is now universally respected as a unifier, saviour and a man of peace. Few can deny him this recognition and China still fears the influence he commands not only over Tibetans in exile, but also those at home. Where other leaders would have disintegrated, the Dalai Lama has adapted, improvised and grown and even though the people who have gained most from this attitude have been the Tibetans, the world at large too has learnt much from him.

The world does not have enough people like the Dalai Lama around, which is why it is so important that he stays around for as long as is possible. He will probably not live to see a Free Tibet, he might not see peace prevail in the world in his lifetime, but every day that the Dalai Lama lives among us, he keeps hope alive. In a world grappling with the rise of extreme rightwing posturing, the Dalai Lama also takes the lead in making organized religions adopt less regressive stands. Even as most religious leaders promote more and more parochial interpretations of their scriptures, the Dalai Lama keeps an open mind. In times when leaders, even the initially popular ones, have to be forced out of office, he has volunteered more power into the people's hands. The Dalai Lama opens many windows to and for the world and inspires respect with his openness...

LISA PONCET
THECONVERSATION.COM

Our last common ancestor with the octopus existed more than 500 million years ago. So why is it that they seem to show such peculiar similarities with humans, while at the same time appearing so alien? Perhaps because despite their tentacles covered with suckers and their lack of bones, their eyes, brains and even their curiosity remind us our own thirst for knowledge.

In ethology, the study of behaviour, we explore this intelligence, which we classify as individual "cognitive abilities". These are the mechanisms through which information from the environment is perceived, processed, transformed, remembered and used to take decisions and act.

From a behavioural point of view, the flexibility with which an animal can adapt itself and adjust its behaviour to novel situations is a good indicator of its cognitive abilities. Numerous studies indicate the octopuses possess great flexibility in their behaviours, whether they express them in their natural environment or inside a tank in a laboratory.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

So what makes octopuses so smart?

Let's focus first on their defence mechanisms. Faced with multiple predators – including fish, birds and whales – octopuses are masters of camouflage. They can imitate their environment by modifying the colour and even the texture of their skin.

Without a shell, octopuses are vulnerable, and always try to remain hidden in a shelter such as a

cavity or the space beneath a rock. Some species maintain their shelter by removing sand and adding pebbles and shells. Some prefer to wrap themselves in shells and pebbles, while others transport their shelter in their arms. This is the case for the coconut octopus, which, true to its name, has been observed carrying coconut shells around to hide within in case of danger.

Octopuses are also formidable predators themselves, and their attack mechanisms are suited to the wide variety of prey they consume, including seashells, crustaceans, fish and even other cephalopods. They can use their vision and camouflage skills to hunt, and their arms to explore, touch and taste their environment to seize every bit of food within reach.

The octopus is a thoughtful hunter. It can cooperate with other species such as groupers to hunt hidden prey. It can learn to avoid crabs bearing poisonous anemones or find a way to cautiously attack them while avoiding being stung.

Octopuses use different techniques to consume seashells and molluscs, either pulling apart the shell by force and placing a small stone inside to keep it open, or drilling into the shell to inject a paralyzing toxin which will make the prey open up. This toxin is injected into a very precise muscle under the shell, and octopuses learn and remember the drilling site of each seashell they consume.

BONELESS, NOT BRAINLESS

We can test the cognitive abilities of octopuses in the lab. In our EthoS laboratory, we are currently working on the memory and future planning abilities of the common octopus. They are complex animals

to study, because of their astonishing abilities.

Their incredible strength allows them to easily destroy our lab tools: be careful with underwater cameras, they can open the waterproof box to drown them! And because octopuses are boneless, they can easily escape their tanks through the smallest of openings. They are also extremely curious and will spend their time catching hands, nets or any other object introduced to their tank. From there, it is up to them to decide when to release their catch.

The opening of jars, while impressive and often used to illustrate octopus intelligence, is not their most remarkable ability. This is mostly a matter of dexterity and gripping, and octopuses are quite slow when executing this task: even when over-trained, an octopus always takes more than a minute to open a jar. A better example of their impressive intelligence is their ability to manipulate an L-shaped object so it can pass through a small square opening in a wall.

Octopuses also excel in discriminative learning: confronted with two objects, they learn to attack one of them in exchange for a reward, basing their choice on characteristics such as colour, shape, texture or taste, and they can retain this information for several months. They can also generalise, a complex thought process in which they need to spontaneously apply a previously learned rule to new objects. For example, octopuses who have previously learnt to attack a real ball can go on to attack a virtual ball on a screen.

Octopuses can also use conditional discrimination, that is, they can modify their choice depending

on the context. For example, they can learn to attack an object only in the presence of bubbles. They can also use spatial learning, and find an hidden shelter by remembering its position, or use visual cues to know how to orient their arm inside an opaque T-shaped apparatus.

Last but not least, octopuses can learn by watching other octopuses carry out tasks, such as choosing one specific object over another. This is surprising, because they are mainly solitary creatures.

GRADE: SEA MINUS

Octopuses meet every criteria for the definition of intelligence: they show a great flexibility in obtaining information (using several senses and learning socially), in processing it (through discriminative and conditional learning), in storing it (through long-term memory) and in applying it toward both predators and prey.

Despite their obvious abilities, octopuses are oddly erratic in their responses, especially in visual discrimination tasks, in which they carry out the correct response around 80% of the time, while other animals succeed almost perfectly.

And do not be mistaken: octopuses may be clever, but in the classroom of cephalopods they would be the bright but unruly pupil, and the cuttlefish would be top of the class.

The humble cuttlefish is less familiar, but is the subject of numerous research projects worldwide. Less disruptive than octopuses, they possess exceptional learning abilities, can pick up complex rules in no time and apply them perfectly.

[the writer is Doctorante en neuroéthologie, Université de Caen Normandie]

Global Evidence Links Rise in Extreme Precipitation to Human-Driven Climate Change



GAVIN D. MADAKUMBURA
THECONVERSATION.COM

Human activities, such as burning fossil fuels for transportation and electricity, have worsened the intensity of extreme rainfall and snowfall over land in recent decades, not just in a few areas but on a global scale, new research shows.

Past studies were able to attribute individual extreme events and long-term changes in some regions to climate change, but global assessments have been more difficult. We used a new technique to analyze precipitation records from around the world and found conclusive evidence of human influence on extreme precipitation in every one.

Scientists have been warning that rising global temperatures will lead to more extreme precipitation in the future, mainly because warm air "holds" more water vapor in the atmosphere, fueling storms.

With Earth already about 1 degree Celsius (1.8 F) warmer since the start of the industrial era, we wanted to find out if that change had already started.

Past attempts to detect the human influence in historical precipitation records typically required long time series with many consecutive years of data. But precipitation is difficult to monitor over long periods from land or space, so those records are rare. We found another way.

We used artificial neural networks, a type of machine learning, to find patterns of ex-

treme precipitation in weather records. Once those neural networks understood what to look for, we could analyze shorter and more disparate observational records.

The result is multiple lines of evidence that human activity has intensified extreme precipitation during recent decades. Even when the data sets were widely different, we were able to see the human influence.

The findings were published July 6, 2021, in the journal Nature Communications.

WHY IT MATTERS

Understanding how humans influence extreme precipitation is important for interpreting climate events today and for preparing cities and protective infrastructure for the changing world ahead.

In recent years, devastating flooding has made headlines after extraordinary rainfall that historically would have been extremely rare. The 2017 hurricane season in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico and the extreme monsoon rains over India and Bangladesh in 2017 are two examples. Our results indicate that, as a general rule, precipitation has become more extreme around the world in recent decades.

Perhaps more importantly, our results indicate that further warming of the planet through the 21st century is likely to continue to intensify the most extreme precipitation events. Climate models project such an intensification will happen this century, and they suggest that a similar but less-rapid in-

tensification occurred in the 20th Century, based on how much the planet has already warmed. Our results validate that finding.

With greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere still increasing, the planet is projected to continue warming through the 21st century. How much it warms will depend on choices made today about fossil fuel use and other major contributors to climate change. That 1 degree of warming could be 4 degrees by the end of the century if emissions continue at a high rate.

WHAT'S NEXT

While we clearly identified the influence of humans on extreme precipitation in the past, we haven't yet isolated how much each type of human activity has contributed. Greenhouse gas emissions, aerosols and changes in land use can all have an influence. We plan to modify our machine learning method in the future to home in on those sources.

The machine learning method we used is also currently learning from data alone. We can take this up a notch by bringing climate physics into the algorithm. By doing that, the machine would learn the physical processes that lead to intensifying extreme precipitation. Other climate variables could be included, such as winds, clouds and radiation, helping to answer not just whether extreme precipitation is intensifying, but why.

[the writer is Ph.D. candidate in Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles]

In Nepal, illegal mobile phones to become unusable from July 16

KRISHANAPRASAIN

KATHMANDU, 07 JUL [KATHMANDUPOST]: Come July 16, all mobile sets bought without a bill or imported into the country without paying customs duty will become unusable when the Mobile Device Management System kicks in.

The Nepal Telecommunications Authority will implement the scheme from the beginning of the new fiscal year which will secure and keep track of all cell phones in the country in a bid to prevent misuse and grey market imports, officials said.

“As we have observed that the Integrated Data Centre of the government can make real time observation of mobile devices’ genuineness, we decided to make a soft launch,” said Purushottam Khanal, chairman of the telecom regulator.

According to him, travellers entering Nepal will be permitted to bring only one mobile set along with the purchase bill once the system is enforced.

“If they bring more than one set, customs duty will be charged on the extra sets,” he said. “The phones will need to be registered too.” Illegal mobile devices will be blocked from use in Nepal.

Currently, migrant workers and foreign travellers are allowed to bring more than one mobile set with them.

From Friday, travellers bringing cell phones will have to register them with Nepal Telecom by filling out a form to make them operational.

According to the Mobile Device Management System Bylaws 2018, individuals importing a device for personal use in accordance with customs regulation will be required to register online its In-



ternational Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI), Equipment Serial Number (ESN) and the Mobile Equipment Identifier (MEID) with the Mobile Device Management System during the application process.

According to the bylaws, mobile users will be notified to register with a notification of denial of service by the operators after 15 days from the first detection of the unregistered set after it is used with SIM or RUIM cards.

The guideline says that a one-time registration fee for each mobile device imported into Nepal, either by authorised importers or by an individual for personal use, may be applicable as prescribed by the authority.

The Mobile Device Management System will consist of white, grey and black lists of IMEI codes and provide interfaces to importers, customs and law enforcement agencies, mobile operators, the general public and the Nepal Telecommunications Authority.

It is also expected to con-

trol criminal activities, according to the regulator. The system will enable the registration of mobile devices, verification of IMEI, ESN, MEID and identification of non-compliant mobile devices.

The budget statement for the fiscal year 2021-22 also declared that the Mobile Device Management System would come into operation from July 16.

Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Poudel, while presenting the budget, said that the new provision would control the use of illegal mobile sets and also control criminal activities through the use of mobile phones.

The telecom regulator said the system was being built at a cost of Rs650 million.

The system will be synced to a database called the Equipment Identity Register that contains records of legal and illegal mobile devices in the country. The device management system is also expected to identify cloned, low-cost copy versions of branded

phones with fake registration numbers.

“It might take one and a half months to get the system working in a full fledged manner,” Khanal said, adding that the installation of the system would be 95 percent complete by then.

The telecom regulatory authority moved to develop the system four years ago after the Mobile Device Management System Bylaws 2018 was issued.

Khanal said that due to Covid-19 and the lockdown, introducing the system was delayed as solution providers had to arrive from third countries, and it took a long time to have goods released from the ports due to the pandemic.

The mobile connectivity of telecom operators like Nepal Telecom, Ncell and Smart Telecom will need to be connected to the system that will be operated from a new building built in Chabahil.

The authority prepared the bylaws for the implementation of the Equipment Identity Reg-

ister system to ensure national and consumer security, to identify genuine mobile handsets and make fake and non-genuine handsets inoperable in Nepal to enable tracking or blocking of mobile handsets that are lost or stolen, to encourage the import and sales of genuine mobile handsets, and to eradicate the grey market.

Once the system is implemented, if a mobile device is lost or stolen, the owner can apply online to track or block its use with any SIM or RUIM card as applicable.

The customs will release only those mobile devices which are already approved by the authority and ensure that the IMEI, ESN and MEID numbers of imported mobile devices are registered and verified by the system.

According to the Department of Customs, the country imported mobile phones worth Rs34.14 billion in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year as against the import of Rs15.74 billion in the same period of the last fiscal year.

Mobile phone dealers have long been complaining about falling sales because of a rampant grey market. The Mobile Device Management System will bring smartphones under the registration net, making it easier for authorities to monitor them, according to Nepal Telecommunications Authority.

Grey market mobile phones enter the country, especially from India, in hand baggage, and no customs duty is paid on them. Many returning travellers also bring phones for their friends and relatives, according to domestic mobile dealers.

“ModiBabu, Petrol Bekabu”: Bengal Minister cycles 38KMs to protest fuel price hike

NEW DELHI, 07 JUL [NDTV]: West Bengal Labour Minister rode a cycle for 38 km today to protest against the rising fuel prices in the country. Becharam Manna, a Trinamool Congress leader, cycled from his home in Hooghly’s Singur to reach the state assembly in Kolkata on a day when petrol prices touched the ₹ 100-mark in the state capital.

Accompanied by party workers also on cycles, the Singur MLA’s cycle was armed a Trinamool flag with placards that read, “ModiBabu, Petrol Bekabu” in Bengali which translates to ‘Mr Modi, petrol is out of control’.

Mr Manna shared photographs of the ‘cycle march’ on Twitter. Petrol in Kolkata is now priced at ₹ 100.23 per litre.

The minister, who had risen to prominence during the Tata Nano factory protest in 2008, left home at 8 am and reached the assembly building in Kolkata around 12.30 pm to attend the ongoing session, news agency PTI reported.

“Steep rise in fuel prices is the latest failure of the NarendraMo-

di government. Petrol price crossed the century-mark in Kolkata and we are protesting against this,” he told reporters.

The Centre’s BJP-led government is squeezing the common man in every way, the minister claimed and added that the Bengal government is trying to help the common man with its welfare projects.

Petrol and diesel prices touched new highs across the four metro cities on Wednesday. In Delhi, petrol is now priced at ₹ 100.21. In Mumbai, the revised petrol and diesel prices stand at ₹ 106.25 per litre and ₹ 97.09 per litre.

The fuel prices have been hiked four times in July, according to the Indian Oil Corporation. The prices were increased 16 times in June. Fuel rates vary across the states in India due to value-added tax.

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the rising fuel prices in the country. She said the “cruel hikes” in prices have “brought great distress” to the people.

TMC likely to conduct organisational reshuffle next week

KOLKATA, JULY 6 (PTI): The ruling TMC in West Bengal is likely to carry out a major organisational reshuffle next week, probably before its annual Martyrs Day rally on July 21, with the poll performance of various leaders and the theory of “one person, one post” to be the deciding factor in the exercise, sources said.

The rejig is likely to take place at district levels with several district presidents, who are presently holding portfolios in the state cabinet, likely to face the axe.

“At the district level, state level, and front-line organisation, there are several vacancies as many had switched over to the BJP. And then, several leaders

are holding dual portfolios, such as those of the district president and state minister. As per the one person, one post theory, many district presidents are expected to be changed this time,” a senior TMC leader said.

The TMC medical cell is also likely to witness major changes.

The TMC leadership recently elevated MP and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s nephew Abhishek Banerjee as the party’s national general secretary and Kunal Ghosh as the state general secretary.

The Trinamool Congress stormed back to power for the third consecutive time this May by winning 213 of the 292 seats that had gone to the polls.

Nagaland Congress protest against fuel price hike

KOHIMA, JUL 7 (PTI): The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) on Wednesday joined the nationwide Congress protest against skyrocketing fuel prices and increasing inflation.

NPCC working president Khriedi Theunuo said that common people are suffering due to the unprecedented hike in prices of essential commodities, including petrol and diesel amid the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

He said that the 10-day protest programme is being conducted out of concern for the general public considering the

economic suffering of the people.

He said that the government of the day should be considerate towards the welfare of the people but has been ignoring the plight of the common people.

The hike in petroleum products is the root cause behind the unprecedented increase in prices of essential commodities, he claimed.

The state government also is responsible for the price rise as the state taxes on petroleum products is also very high, he said.

In Nagaland the price of diesel and petrol is rising daily and has reached Rs 100 per litre in every



district, he said.

The NPCC working president expressed hope that the campaign will spread awareness among the public to join

the movement for the overall welfare of the common people.

Kohima District Congress Committee president Kevi Vizo said Con-

gress volunteers would put up posters and banners in all the petrol pumps and strategic locations in the state capital.

5.2 magnitude earthquake hits Assam

GUWAHATI, JUL 7 (PTI): An earthquake of 5.2 magnitude hit Assam on Wednesday morning with tremors being felt in neighbouring Meghalaya and northern parts of West Bengal, besides Bangladesh.

A National Center for Seismology report said the quake was recorded at 8.45 am, having an epicentre at Goalpara in Lower Assam at a depth of 14 km.

Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) Deputy Director Sanjay O’neil Shaw said the place of occurrence was 71 km north of Tura in Meghalaya and the tremors were felt there too.

People in the districts

of Lower Assam, including Guwahati, and Meghalaya ran out of their homes in panic.

The tremors were also felt in northern districts of West Bengal, including Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri.

Parts of Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Gai-bandha, Bogura and Rajshahi, also felt the jolt, local media reported.

There was no immediate report of any injury to anyone or damage to any property, officials said.

Northeastern India falls in the high seismic zone, making earthquakes frequently hit the region.

A 6.4 magnitude quake had shaken the region on April 28.

5 new COVID-19 cases push Andamans tally at 7,487

PORT BLAIR, JUL 7 (PTI): The union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported five new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the tally to 7,487, a health department official said on Wednesday.

The death toll remained at 128 as no fresh fatality due to the contagion was reported in the last 24 hours, the official said.

The archipelago now has only 16 active COVID-19 cases, of which 15 are in the South Andaman dis-

trict and one in North and Middle Andaman district, he said, adding that the Nicobar district is now COVID-19 free as it has no active cases.

Four more persons recuperated from COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 7,343.

The local administration has been strict to contain the spread of the disease and has adopted an approach of tracking, testing and treating, he said, adding that people arriving

here from the mainland are mandatorily required to undergo COVID test.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has so far tested 4,15,066 samples for COVID-19 and the positivity rate stands at 1.80 per cent, the official said.

A total of 1,99,338 people have been inoculated, of which 1,60,014 have received the first dose and 39,324 have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, he added.

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SummitTIMES

Italy beats Spain on penalties, reaches Euro 2020 final

LONDON (AP): Facing a wall of nervous blue-and-white clad Italy fans behind the goal, Jorginho took his trademark hop and skip before calmly stroking in the winning penalty. So much for the pressure of a shootout in the European Championship semifinals. A dash of Italian panache completed a 4-2 penalty-shootout win over Spain at Wembley Stadium on Tuesday, setting up a title match against either England or Denmark back at the same stadium on Sunday.

The match finished 1-1 after extra time and provided Italy with its toughest test of the tournament, with Spain controlling possession for long periods. Federico Chiesa scored for Italy with a curling shot in the 60th minute but substitute Alvaro Morata equalized for Spain in the 80th.

Morata, dropped from the starting lineup for the first time in a tournament during which he has received verbal abuse and even death threats from his own fans, will go down as Spain's scapegoat once again after having a penalty saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma in the next-to-last kick of the shootout.

As he walked back to the center circle with his head bowed, Jorginho

made the opposite journey and didn't make the same mistake.

The Chelsea midfielder has his own style when it comes to taking penalties and he didn't abandon it when it mattered most, sparking a throng of celebrations as Italy's players sprinted from the halfway line.

Jorginho was mobbed. Italy coach Roberto Mancini was hugged by the rest of coaching staff. The players lined up on the edge of the area and ran together, holding hands, toward the fans.

Leonardo Bonucci went further, leaping over the advertising hoardings to get even closer to the crazed supporters whose loud cheering had lifted the team in their most difficult moments.

"We're delighted we could provide this wonderful entertainment to the Italian people," Mancini said. "One game to go."

Riding a national record unbeaten run of 33 games, Italy will play in its fourth European final and look to win the title for a second time, after 1968.

It's quite the redemption story for a country which failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

"This group is amazing," Mancini said. "Everyone wants to win, but this group of players



wanted to do something special."

They have had the aura of champions since Day 1 of the tournament and they'll be sticking around until the last day, too. But it's at the home of English soccer where the team has had its toughest matches.

Against Austria in the round of 16, the Italians were taken to extra time at Wembley and they had to go the distance, too, against Spain.

Spain's striker-free formation initially flummoxed the Azzurri, who have become a more progressive team under Mancini but were given a clinic at times in ball possession and movement in midfield.

Experienced center backs Giorgio Chiellini and Bonucci looked

uncertain at times, not knowing whether to drop back or follow deep-lying forward Dani Olmo — who started ahead of Morata — into the center of midfield.

Spain's pressing also drew some rash clearances from the back from Italy. That created the team's best chance in the first half with Ferran Torres' shot requiring a low save from Donnarumma.

The Italians had even more problems when Morata came on as a substitute but, by then, Chiesa had put them ahead after latching onto a loose ball, cutting inside and curling a shot into the far corner. It was his second goal at Wembley in this tournament, having scored just as impressively against

Austria.

Morata's movement stretched Italy's defense to set up chances for Mikel Oyarzabal and Olmo. Then he scored for the third time at Euro 2020.

For a player often accused of wasting chances when he has too much time in front of goal, Morata showed calmness to sidefoot in a left-footed shot after exchanging passes with Olmo at the edge of the area.

Morata grabbed a camera behind the goal and thrust his face into it. But he had nowhere to hide after becoming the second Spain player to miss in the shootout — after Olmo — following 30 minutes of extra time.

"He really has a lot of personality," Spain coach Luis Enrique said of Mo-

rata. "He wanted to take a penalty even though he's been through some tough times in this competition."

Italy started the shootout with Manuel Locatelli's shot saved by Unai Simon, but Andrea Belotti, Bonucci and Federico Bernardeschi all scored before Jorginho.

Spain, a three-time European champion, beat Switzerland in a penalty shootout just to get to Wembley. Having also been taken to extra time by Croatia in the last 16, the Spanish certainly took the long route to the semifinals but their journey ended there.

"Everyone made Italy big favorites," Spain midfielder Sergio Busquets said, "but we demonstrated we were superior to them."

Olympic travel a big challenge for some Pacific Island teams

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP): Famous athletes in sports like tennis and golf heading to the Tokyo Olympics will probably arrive in Japan at the front of the plane.

It's a style to which the athletes of the Pacific Islands are unaccustomed. Fiji's gold medal-winning men's rugby sevens team will arrive in Tokyo along with the other members of their national team on Thursday on a cargo/freight flight which is hauling mostly frozen fish.

Commercial passenger flights to and from Pacific nations have become scarce during the pandemic. Lorraine Mar, the chief executive of the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee, said Wednesday that arranging travel for the Fiji team to Tokyo has been a "logistical challenge."

Mar said around 51 athletes and officials, mostly the Fiji men's and women's sevens squad, will be on Thursday's flight from Fiji's principal international airport at Nadi. It's a regularly-scheduled freight flight which has some capacity for passengers.

The sevens teams recently have been based in Australia where the Fiji men won the Oceania Sevens title in Townsville, Queensland two weeks ago. The men's team gave Fiji its first-ever Olympic gold medal when it won the inaugural Olympic rugby sevens tournament in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

The Fiji teams were originally expected to fly directly from Australia to Tokyo, but plans were changed at the last minute due to new COVID-19-related restrictions in Asia.

Apart from the sevens teams, the Fiji team includes one track and field athlete, two swimmers, a female table tennis player and a judo competitor who currently is based in Japan.

Mar said dealing with athletes' departures from Japan also is a challenge. The IOC requires athletes to vacate the Olympic village within 48 hours of the conclusion of their events.

Fiji has a flight booked from Tokyo to Nadi on July 29, after the sevens tournament has concluded and which could also carry other athletes who have been eliminated or have finished competing. Another flight is booked on Aug. 10.

Mar hopes the IOC will grant dispensation for athletes who are unable to immediately obtain flights home to remain in the village until travel is available.

Among other Pacific Island nations, Samoa has already withdrawn its three-member weightlifting from the games because all are based in Samoa and the Samoa government is concerned about the spread of COVID-19 in Japan. Eight Samoan athletes who are based overseas will still compete.

They comprise two boxers based in Australia, four sailors and canoeists based in New Zealand, a track athlete based in the United States and a judoka based in Japan.

Tonga will send six competitors, all but two of whom are based overseas. They include Pita Taufatofua — the "naked Tongan" — who was a bare-chested sensation when he carried the Tongan flag in the opening ceremony of the Rio games.

Paul carries Suns past Giannis, Bucks in NBA Finals opener

PHOENIX (AP): Chris Paul waited 16 years to get to the NBA Finals, bringing with him a team starving for its first championship.

The setting was entirely new. The performance was same ol' Chris Paul.

"Just knew he's ready," Phoenix forward Mikal Bridges said. "He's prepared his whole life for this moment and it shows out there on the court."

Paul had 32 points and nine assists in an NBA Finals debut that was well worth the wait, Devin Booker scored 27 points and the Suns beat the returning Giannis Antetokounmpo and his Milwaukee Bucks 118-105 on Tuesday night in Game 1.

Paul scored 16 points during a sensational third quarter that had Phoenix fans who waited 28 years to see the NBA Finals again screaming in delight.

"Every time he shoots it we think it's going in," Booker said.

It almost did in the third quarter, when Paul was 6 for 7 and made all three 3-pointers.

Finally playing for the title in his 16th season, the star point guard has the Suns in the NBA Finals for only the third time, and it sure looked as if they could make this ending different than the other two.

"We've been building all season long for these moments," Paul said.

"We're going to keep playing. This is just one game. We've got to stay locked in."

Deandre Ayton added 22 points and 19 rebounds to continue his breakout stretch of play in his first postseason.

Antetokounmpo had 20 points and 17 rebounds after missing two games with a hyperextended left knee. Khris Middleton scored 29 points, but the Bucks will have to play from behind again after dropping Game 1 for the third straight series.

"We know it's not going to be easy. We know it's going to be tough," Middleton said. "There's times where we're going to be down in this series. But this series isn't over. We're down. We've still got to keep competing and just playing."

The series opener was the first NBA Finals game in Phoenix since Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls won their third straight championship here in Game 6 in 1993. The Suns, who came into the NBA with the Bucks in 1968, made their only other finals appearance in 1976.

They hadn't even made the playoffs since 2010 and just two years ago were last in the Western Conference with a 19-63 record.

But Booker was already headed for stardom by then, and 2018 No. 1 pick Ayton has played at that level in the postseason. Paul has been steady as always

since his arrival in an off-season trade.

Now 36 and a 10-time All-NBA selection, he is on the list of best players to never win a championship. It appeared he might never even get to play for one until Oklahoma City dealt him to a team of Suns on the rise, and he might be the final piece that takes them all the way to the top.

Despite so many debuts on the finals stage — the Suns' Jae Crowder was the only player who had appeared in them, and that was for Miami at a neutral site last year — there didn't appear to be many first-time jitters.

But Paul shifted the Suns into another gear in the third. His opening jumper provided the first double-digit lead of the game, and he followed with a four-point play for the Suns' next basket.

He scored eight straight Phoenix points later in the period, hitting a 3-pointer, dancing around Bobby Portis for a layup and then hitting another 3. He then fired a pass to Ayton, who was fouled and made both free throws to make it 88-68 with 2:20 left.

"Their pick-and-roll game is tough to guard," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "I think we've just got to keep getting better. We'll look at the film. We'll see how we can maybe take away some of the rhythm."

The Bucks cut it down to seven near the midpoint of the fourth

before Paul helped the Suns restore a safe margin. He found Booker for a 3-pointer, stole the ball from Middleton and then hit a jumper to make it 106-94.

Milwaukee also is making its third finals appearance, having won the title in 1971 but not getting another chance since losing in 1974. The Bucks got a boost for this appearance when Antetokounmpo worked his way back quickly from an injury that looked serious when it happened.

The two-time MVP missed the final two games of the Eastern Conference finals. He was listed as doubtful for the opener, but he was upgraded to questionable Tuesday and then inserted into the starting lineup after he worked out on the court before the game.

"I'm just happy that I'm out there and I'm able to help my team in any way possible and participate in my first NBA Finals," Antetokounmpo said.

The Bucks threw a lob to Antetokounmpo on their first possession — a play similar to the one he was defending when he was injured in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference finals against Atlanta — and he seemed to attack the basket just as forcefully as always.

But Jrue Holiday, who played so well while Antetokounmpo was out, shot just 4 for 14 and scored 10 points.

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Bodies of plane crash victims found in Russia's Far East

MOSCOW (AP): Rescuers have found the bodies of 19 victims a day after a plane crash in a remote area in Russia's Far East, the authorities said.

An Antonov An-26 carrying 28 people crashed Tuesday near its destination town of Palana in the region of Kamchatka, apparently as it came in for a landing in bad weather. The plane was en route from the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky to Palana on Tuesday morning when it missed a scheduled communication and disappeared from radar.

Wreckage was found Tuesday evening on a coastal cliffside and in the sea, and the search and rescue operation was suspended until Wednesday morning after night fell, as the crash site was difficult to access in the dark.

The governor of Kam-

chatka, Vladimir Solodov, told the state Tass news agency that the "first bodies are being pulled out (of the water)." Russia's Emergency Ministry said that remains of 19 victims have been found so far, and one of them has been identified already.

Russian media reported Tuesday that none of the six crew members or 22 passengers on board had survived. The head of the local government in Palana, Olga Mokhireva, was among the passengers, spokespeople of the Kamchatka government said.

Solodov said Tuesday that a group of government officials including Transport Minister Vitaly Savelyev will head to Palana on Wednesday.

In the aftermath of the crash, the authori-



ties in Kamchatka have declared three days of mourning. Officials said that families of the victims will receive payments of more than 3.5 million rubles (about \$47,200) that will include compensation from the airline, an in-

surance payment and a subsidy from the regional government.

Police are investigating the incident, looking at three possible causes of the crash — bad weather, equipment malfunction or pilot error.

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday morning extended his condolences to the families of the victims.

In 2012, an Antonov An-28 plane belonging to Kamchatka Aviation Enterprise crashed into a mountain while

flying the same route as Tuesday's flight. A total of 14 people were on board and 10 of them were killed. Both pilots, who were among the dead, were found to have alcohol in their blood, Tass reported.

Australia's largest city Sydney locks down for third week

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP): Sydney's two-week lockdown has been extended for another week due to the vulnerability of an Australia population largely unvaccinated against COVID-19, officials said on Wednesday.

"The situation we're in now is largely because we haven't been able to get the vaccine that we need," New South Wales state Health Minister Brad Hazzard said.

The decision to extend the lockdown through July 16 was made on health advice, state Premier Gladys Berejickian said.

"The reason why we've extended the lockdown is because of a number of cases still infectious in the community and we extended the lockdown to give us the best chance of not having another lockdown," Berejickian said.

The extension of the lockdown, which covers Australia's largest city and some nearby communities, means most children will not return to school next week following their midyear break.

Of 27 new infections of the delta variant reported in latest 24-hour period on Wednesday, only 13 had been in isolation while infectious, officials said. The delta variant is considered more contagious than the original coronavirus or other variants.

Only 9% of Australian

adults are fully vaccinated, heightening fears that the delta variant could quickly spread beyond control.

Berejickian expected lockdowns would no longer be necessary once a large majority of Australians were vaccinated.

There have been more than 300 infections linked to a limousine driver who tested positive on June 16. He is thought to have been infected while transporting a U.S. flight crew from Sydney airport.

Last week, almost half Australia's population was locked down with cities on the east, west and north coasts tightening pandemic restrictions due to clusters. Some of those lockdowns were as short as three days.

Sydney and its surrounds are the only part of Australia still in lockdown.

Australia has been relatively successful in containing clusters throughout the pandemic, registering fewer than 31,000 cases and 910 deaths total.

Australia has recorded a single COVID-19 death since October: an 80-year-old man who died in April after being infected overseas and diagnosed in hotel quarantine.

But now there are 37 COVID-19 cases in Sydney hospitals. Of those, seven are in intensive care, the youngest in their 30s.

Chinese locks down border town as Myanmar battles outbreak

BEIJING (AP): Chinese authorities locked down a city bordering Myanmar on Wednesday, shutting most businesses and requiring residents to stay at home as a fresh outbreak of COVID-19 expanded.

Another 15 cases were found in Ruili in the last 24 hours, on top of six in the previous two days, health authorities in southwestern Yunnan province said. In addition, two people without COVID-19 symptoms have also tested positive for the virus.

The lockdown shut down all businesses and public institutions except hospitals, pharmacies and essential shops such as grocery stores, according to a notice posted online. It affects the urban part of Ruili, which like most Chinese cities includes surrounding rural areas in its jurisdiction.

Myanmar is battling a large outbreak with limited resources to contain it. The Southeast Asian nation reported 3,602 new cases in the last 24 hours, state media said Wednesday, its highest daily total since the pandemic began.

Ruili lies across a river from the city of Muse in Myanmar's Shan state. Chinese anti-virus measures have dealt a blow to the active cross-border trade between the two countries, China's

state-owned Global Times newspaper reported earlier this week.

Authorities had already banned unnecessary travel in and out of Ruili on Monday, after the first cases were reported.

All the cases have been reported in a Ruili community on the border called Jiegao, which has been designated a high-risk area. They include both Chinese and Myanmar nationals. The latest cases were discovered during mass testing, and authorities said they would step up border controls.

Elsewhere in China, 52 people who had arrived on a flight from Afghanistan five days ago tested positive for the virus, the Hubei provincial health commission said. Thirty have been classified as confirmed cases, while the other 22 did not show any COVID-19 symptoms. China does not include asymptomatic cases in its official tally.

China has regularly imported cases from travelers, but usually in smaller numbers. The July 2 Xiamen Air flight flew from Kabul to Wuhan, the city hit hard by the virus after it was first detected there in late 2019. Virtually all people arriving in China must quarantine for two weeks in a designated hotel.

In Uganda, disputes over bills mark chaotic COVID-19 care

KAMPALA, UGANDA (AP): Holding out for nearly \$9,000 in unpaid medical bills, one hospital in Uganda allegedly refused to hand over the dead body of a patient who had received oxygen therapy for several days. Tofa Tamale said he tried to reason with hospital managers, hoping for an arrangement that would preserve his mother's dignity. After a lawsuit was threatened, the body was released to the family but with no post-mortem report.

"The hospital didn't give us a single piece of documentation," said Tamale, who believes his mother had COVID-19 before she suffered a stroke.

The case, one of two publicly known as this East African country sees a surge in COVID-19 infections, has shocked many in a socially conservative society where bereavement customs are strictly observed.

"You can't say you're holding onto a dead body in order for you to get your fee. That's repugnant," said Joseph Luzige, an attorney who represented Tamale.

The case also highlights the sense of chaos in COVID-19 care as Ugandans grapple with the high cost of treatment. Some hospitals are accused of demanding



cash deposits upfront before admission. Others are said to demand security items such as title deeds in lieu of cash, drawing the attention of an anti-corruption investigator who says her office has received over 200 complaints.

Uganda has confirmed a total of 84,554 COVID-19 cases, including 1,995 deaths as of Wednesday. Authorities are reporting dozens of deaths a day.

As in many other African countries, the actual number of infections and

deaths are believed to be much higher because testing is not widely available. And now "the speed and scale of Africa's third wave is like nothing we've seen before," the World Health Organization's Africa director, Matshidiso Moeti, said last week.

The highly infectious delta variant is fueling Africa's new surge in cases, a worrying situation on a continent where just over 1% of the continent's 1.3 billion people are fully vaccinated.

In Uganda, where

less than 1% of the country's 44 million people have received even one shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine, hundreds of new cases daily are overwhelming public health centers and creating more business for private facilities, which traditionally accept cash.

Some hospitals with COVID-19 wards have charged nearly \$1,500 in daily treatment fees, a prohibitive sum for most Ugandans. Many are now self-medicating within their homes, ex-

perimenting with everything from traditional medicine to new herbal remedies.

"There are many Ugandans who are dying in their homes simply because they fear to face high-deposit hospital fees," Col. Edith Nakalema, leader of an anti-corruption unit under the presidency, said in a series of Twitter posts. "If you have not yet suffered this personally remember that you might suffer it soon."

Grace Kiwanuka, executive director of an

association of private health groups, said hospitals are caught "between a rock and a hard place" as they balance their obligations to patients and business concerns in an unprecedented pandemic. "The market is dictating certain prices we have to pay," she said, citing complicated COVID-19 cases of patients with kidney failure who stay in intensive care units for several days.

Some die, leaving hefty bills that hospital directors have to account for, she said: "I feel for these people. I really do. But the fact is, this is medicine."

The fear of detaining patients — dead or alive — over medical bills is a source of frustration, said Sarah Mirembe, who recently accused a hospital director of not honoring his word to waive certain fees.

Although her grandmother recovered from COVID-19, Mirembe said, the experience left her upset after the family had to sanitize the "filthy" room she was given. After threatening to take her grandmother elsewhere, she was able to negotiate the daily rate down to \$170 from \$714.

The total bill was \$4,000, she said.

"What if I didn't have this money?" she asked.

Shooting of star Dutch reporter raises European concern

AMSTERDAM (AP): European leaders and lawmakers expressed dismay Wednesday and rights advocates demanded justice after a veteran Dutch crime reporter was shot in the head in downtown Amsterdam following a TV appearance. Peter R. de Vries, a journalist celebrated for his courageous reporting on the Dutch underworld, was fighting for his life in an Amsterdam hospital after the Tuesday night shooting.

Two suspects remained in custody Wednesday, while a

third person detained Tuesday night was let go, according to a Dutch police statement. The motive for the attack was not disclosed.

Supporters brought flowers to the crime scene, still cordoned off by police.

The shooting shocked the Netherlands and prompted outrage from top Dutch officials, but it also struck a chord elsewhere in Europe, where such attacks are rare and where the killings of journalists in Slovakia and Malta in

recent years raised concerns about reporters' safety in developed, democratic societies.

"We might disagree with a lot we see in our media, but we have to agree that journalists investigating potential abuses of power are not a threat but an asset to our democracies and our societies," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told European Parliament lawmakers Wednesday.

European Council President Charles Michel called the

shooting "a crime against our fundamental value of freedom of the press."

De Vries, 64, had long been considered a possible target of the criminals he doggedly reported on. Police and prosecutors declined to comment on whether he received police protection.

De Vries won an International Emmy in 2008 for a television show he made about the disappearance of U.S. teenager Natalie Holloway while she was on holiday in the Dutch Caribbean

island of Aruba in 2005.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders expressed "full solidarity" with de Vries' family and all Dutch journalists on Wednesday, and called for those responsible for the shooting to be brought to justice.

The commissioner for human rights at the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović, tweeted, "Everything should be done to bring perpetrator(s) and mastermind(s) of this horrific crime to justice and ensure #Safety-Ofjournalists in #Europe."



MONOCHROMATIC! The model, Hailey Bieber stuns in her brown plaid pants and fuzzy brown top.

Chinese social media giant WeChat shuts LGBT accounts

BANGKOK, THAILAND (AP): China's most popular social media service has deleted accounts on LGBT topics run by university students and nongovernment groups, prompting concern the ruling Communist Party is tightening control over gay and lesbian content.

WeChat sent account holders a notice they violated rules but gave no details, according to the founder of an LGBT group, who asked not to be identified further out of fear of possible official retaliation. She said at least dozens of accounts were shut down, all at about 10 p.m. on Tuesday.

It wasn't clear whether the step was ordered by Chinese authorities, but it comes as the ruling party tightens political controls and tries to silence groups that might criticize its rule.

WeChat's operator, Tencent Holding Ltd., confirmed it received an email seeking comment but didn't immediately respond.

The Communist Party decriminalized homosexuality in 1997, but gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and other sexual minorities still face discrimination. There is more public discussion of such issues, but authorities have blocked some LGBT activities.



The official attitude is increasingly strict, the founder of the LGBT group said. Contents of the WeChat accounts, which included personal stories and photos of group events, were erased, according to the group founder.

The former operator of a different group for university students, who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation, called the step a devastating blow.

University officials asked students two months ago to shut down LGBT social media groups or to avoid mentioning their school names, according to the LGBT group founder. She said universities in the eastern province of Jiangsu were told by officials to investigate groups for women's rights and sexual minorities to "maintain stability."

Britney Spears' court-appointed attorney resigns

LOS ANGELES (AP): Britney Spears' court-appointed attorney on Tuesday filed documents to resign from her conservatorship, the latest of several such moves that have come in the fallout from the pop singer's comments in court decrying the legal arrangement that controls her money and affairs.

Samuel Ingham III filed documents in Los Angeles Superior Court requesting that the court appoint Spears a new attorney, and saying his resignation would take effect as soon as that happened.

During her June 23 speech in court, in which she condemned the conservatorship and asked Judge Brenda Penny to end it, Spears was critical of Ingham, and said she wished the court would allow her to hire a lawyer of her choice.

Last week, Bessemer Trust, the estate-management company that Spears had requested replace her father as conservator of her finances, filed its own documents withdrawing from the case. The filing said that circumstances had changed after Spears' comments in court on June 23.

At a hearing in November, Penny denied Spears' request to have her father replaced entirely, but said James Spears and Bessemer Trust could work together as co-conservators of her finances.

And on Monday, in a letter obtained



by entertainment industry publication Deadline, Britney Spears' longtime manager Larry Rudolph also resigned, saying she had no intention of resuming her career after a 2 1/2 year hiatus that has left him with no work to do for her.

A veteran probate attorney, Ingham was for years a largely silent figure in the conservatorship, at least publicly, but became a more vocal advocate for Britney Spears starting last year. His statements in court that she feared her father and would

not resume her career so long as he had power over it were an early crack in the presumed consensus among the figures involved in the conservatorship.

At the June 23 hearing, Ingham said that Britney Spears had not asked him to file a petition to end the conservatorship, but said he expected she might do so soon. In her remarks critical of Ingham, Spears said during the hearing that she hadn't known she could file such a petition, and she still has not.

Dilip Kumar, Bollywood's great 'Tragedy King,' dies at 98

NEW DELHI (AP): Bollywood icon Dilip Kumar, hailed as the "Tragedy King" and one of Hindi cinema's greatest actors, died Wednesday in a Mumbai hospital after a prolonged illness. He was 98.

The "Tragedy King" title came from Kumar's numerous serious roles. In several, his character died as a frustrated lover and a drunkard. He also was known as Bollywood's only Method actor for his expressive performances identifying a character's emotions.

Kumar was hospitalized twice last month after he complained of breathlessness, and his family tweeted "with a heavy heart and profound grief" the announcement of his passing.

"Dilip Kumar will be remembered as a cinematic legend. He was blessed with unparalleled brilliance, due to which audiences across generations were enthralled. His passing away is a loss to our cultural world," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet that also offered his condolences to Kumar's family and admirers.

"An institution has gone," Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan tweeted. "Whenever the history of Indian Cinema will be written, it shall always be 'before Dilip Kumar, and after Dilip Kumar'."

"It's the end of an era," filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar said.

He was born Muhammad Yusuf Khan, a Muslim, on Dec. 11, 1922. His Pathan family hailed from Peshawar, in what became Pakistan after the Partition, and he visited his ancestral home in the late 1980s.

Kumar was hugely popular among cinema lovers in Pakistan as well.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan



said he was saddened to learn of Kumar's death. "For my generation, Dilip Kumar was the greatest and most versatile actor," he tweeted.

Khan also recalled Kumar's generosity in helping to raise funds in Pakistan and London for a trust to set up cancer hospitals in his mother's memory.

He changed his name as he debuted in Bollywood, the Hindi-language film industry centered in Mumbai, with "Jwar Bhata," or "Sea Tides," in 1944.

His career spanned over six decades with over 60 films. His first major box-office hits were "Jugnu," or "Firefly," in 1947 in which he starred alongside Noor Jehan, and the 1948 film "Shaheed," or "Martyr."

He played a variety of characters — a romantic hero in "Andaz," a swashbuckler in "Aan," a dramatic drunkard in "Devdas," a comic role in "Azaad," a Muslim

prince in the historical epic "Mughal-e-Azam" and a robber in the social movie "Ganga Jamuna."

Mehboob Khan's blockbuster "Aan" in 1952 was his first film in Technicolor and was among a string of light-hearted roles he took at the suggestion of his psychiatrist to shed his "Tragedy King" image.

He starred in many social drama films like "Footpath," "Naya Daur" ("New Era"), "Musafir" ("Traveller") and "Paigham" ("Message") in 1950s.

His top female co-stars included Madhubala, Nargis, Nimmi, Meena Kumari, Kamini Kaushal and Vyjanthimala.

In 1966, Dilip Kumar married Saira Banu, who was 22 years younger than him, and the couple acted in "Gopi," "Sagina Mahato" and "Bairaag." They had no children.

ARIES:

It's been a long and lonely road, Aries. A period of cleansing and purging those inner demons. Given the experiences you have attracted, it will be easy to feel like it's all going downhill from here. But that is far from the truth. Take a moment to honour the experiences that helped you rise above the muddy water like a beautiful pink lotus. As you do, turn the negatives into positives, and trust that things will get better as you move forward.

TAURUS:

We live in a world that glorifies the masculine, whilst dishonouring the feminine. As a result, we carry a lot of shame around these aspects of our being and end up suppressing our spiritual, intuitive, and creative gifts. Pay attention to how this theme is playing out in your life, beloved. All the ways in which you are trying to stay on the top of the hamster wheel in order to receive external validation.

GEMINI:

Truth tea, Gemini: playing yes (wo)man isn't going to get you anywhere. Watch your need to take on too many roles and responsibilities—roles and responsibilities that are interfering with what you are meant to create in this lifetime. It's time to draw boundaries wherever necessary, and redirect your gaze towards tasks that need your immediate attention. Learning to prioritise will change the game for you permanently.

CANCER:

We're never really prepared for what life is about to send

our way, yet we are. Cancer season is bringing all kinds of significant changes into your life, beautiful. It's time to remember why you embarked upon this journey and recommit to your soul purpose. Don't expect everything to fall into place magically, though.

LEO:

The trouble is, you think you have to manage everything on your own. But, that is far from the truth. The divine support you need in each moment is available to you. All you have to do is ask, beloved. All you have to do is ask. PS: Know that the stray feathers that you have been finding and the angel numbers you have been repeatedly seeing are all signs from your guides.

VIRGO:

Listen up, honey: the Universe is *not* a fan of mixed signals. What you are doing by going back and forth on this decision is delaying the manifestation process. So come into a space of clarity about what you desire as you set your intentions with single-minded focus. If what you're asking for is meant for you and is in alignment with your highest good, there is no reason it will not make its way into your experience. Virgo, trust this and co-create with the mysterious forces.

LIBRA:

Listen up, Libra! Your need to always be in yang mode is borderline toxic. The law of balance states that you need to make friends with the yin aspects of yourself as well. That you need to learn to 'be' as much as you 'do'. This

may sound counterintuitive, but mastering this lesson will help you make big things happen with minimal effort. Now, let's move on to the most important question: How do you feel called to nurture yourself today?

SCORPIO:

Yes, there is a cure for that melancholic heart of yours, Scorpio, and it can be found out in the wild. Today, you're being asked to nurture your inherent connection with Mother Nature, to walk barefoot in the grass, breathe in the fresh air and sing songs with the birds. If you're somebody who enjoys an active lifestyle, consider putting on your running shoes and heading to the park.

SAGITTARIUS:

Sagittarius, you have to give yourself the permission to grow out of things that do not sit right with you anymore. This includes old jobs, projects, houses, relationships, and friendships. Reflect upon what you are holding onto tightly, and allow the cosmic currents to take you where you need to go. Remember, you are at a crossroads. Making mindful decisions will help redirect both the course of your life and your career.

CAPRICORN:

The could've-would've-should've narrative isn't going to get you anywhere, Capricorn. Let go of the need to point fingers or blame others. Take responsibility for where you are and consciously begin to release the past. The things that unfolded in your life were neither good nor bad. They simply were. So

accept everything as a learning lesson integral to your soul growth. Some of you may feel inspired to seek closure from another person, and that's okay. It's best to keep aside unrealistic expectations of the equation and approach them from a space of openness.

AQUARIUS:

If you've been complaining about the lack of focus, take a moment to observe your space. The clutter that surrounds you at the moment is beginning to have an adverse effect on your mental and physical well-being. So set some time aside for deep cleaning today. As you do, allow yourself to let go of the things that bear testimony to the old story or no longer spark joy. Trust that this simple exercise will not only free you, but also help you manifest what is truly in alignment with your highest good.

PISCES:

You have to let go of the idea of who you are in order to blossom into who you are meant to be. We repeat: you have to let go of the idea of who you are in order to blossom into who you are meant to be. Pay attention to what the signs are leading you towards. Chances are, a career transition is close at hand, Pisces. There's good news for those who are struggling with romantic relationships too. Yes, the cycle you're in is a karmic one. So, honour the lessons with grace and gratitude as you work towards finding greater harmony with your partner.