



PRIYANKA CHOPRA REVEALS SHE DIDN'T TAKE NICK JONAS TEXTING HER "SERIOUSLY"
pg 08

TIME TO MAKE NATURE STUDIES A COMPULSORY SCHOOL SUBJECT – BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE
pg 04

HBO MAX ANNOUNCES DOCUMENTARY SERIES ON ACTOR BRITTANY MURPHY
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Over 40k coronavirus cases recorded in India, highest in 111 days

NEW DELHI, MAR 20 (PTI): India saw 40,953 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, the highest single-day rise recorded in 111 days, taking the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,15,55,284, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

Registering an increase for the tenth day in a row, the total active caseload has reached 2,88,394, which now comprises 2.49 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 96.12 per cent, the data stated.

India registered over one lakh cases in just three days. On Friday, 39,726 new cases were registered while 35,871 fresh cases were registered on Thursday. The daily rise in infections (40,953) was the highest recorded in 111 days, while the death toll increased to 1,59,558 with 188 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

On November 29, 41,810 new infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,11,07,332, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.38 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 760 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. According to ICMR, 23,24,31,517 samples have been tested up to March 19 with 10,60,971 samples being tested on Friday.

The 188 new fatalities include 70 deaths from Maharashtra, 38 from Punjab and 17 from Kerala.

So far, 1,59,558 deaths have been reported in the country, including 53,208 from Maharashtra, 12,582 from Tamil Nadu, 12,425 from Karnataka, 10,953 from Delhi, 10,301 from West Bengal, 8,757 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,187 from Andhra Pradesh. The Health Ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

5 new cases, 2576 more vaccinated against COVID

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:**

Five new cases of coronavirus have been reported in the last 24 hours in Sikkim taking the state tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 6204. Of the new five cases in the State, one is reported in East District and four from North District.

With just one recovery of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours the number of active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim stands at 53. The figure of recovered cases of COVID-19 is 5919.

In his daily health bulletin, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia mentioned that five new cases of coronavirus were found in the testing of 200 samples on Friday. He added that one case was detected in RT-PCR testing of 109 samples



and four in the rapid antigen testing of 91 samples.

While giving details of new cases in the State, he informed that one person from 8th Mile Lingdok in East District and four persons from Singhik, Mangan in North District tested positive for COVID-19. He added that samples of primary contacts of positive persons from North District were also taken and their residences have been contained.

Meanwhile, 2576 persons in Sikkim were provided COVID vaccines in different

parts of the State on Friday. Out of 2576 persons, 2051 have received the first dose of vaccine and 525 persons have completed the vaccine schedule with the second dose of vaccine in the State.

Mr Bhutia informed that 111 healthcare workers

[36 first dose & 75 second dose], 567 frontline workers [117 first dose & 450 second dose], 515 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years with comorbidities and 1383 persons in age group of 60 years and above were vaccinated yesterday in the State.

While giving details of district-wise figures, he further informed that 1374 persons [1036 first dose & 338 second dose] in East District, 1093 persons [908 first dose & 185 second dose] in West District, 89 persons [87 first dose & 02 second dose] in North District and 20 persons [all first dose] in South District were provided with vaccine shots.

As per break-up of vaccinations category-wise, East District has registered vaccination of 84 healthcare workers [28 first dose & 56 second dose], 341 frontline workers

[59 first dose & 282 second dose], 185 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 764 persons in age group of 60 years & above, while 24 healthcare workers [7 first dose & 17 second dose], 200 frontline workers [32 first dose & 168 second dose], 300 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 569 persons in age group of 60 years & above were also vaccinated for COVID-19 in West District.

Likewise, three healthcare workers [1 first dose & 2 second dose], 23 frontline workers, 27 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 36 persons in age group of 60 years & above were vaccinated in North District and three frontline workers, three persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 14 persons in age group of 60 years & above also received the COVID vaccine shots.

Can't be indifferent to Myanmar refugees: Mizoram CM to Centre

AIZAWL, 20 MAR [PTI]:

Urging the Centre to review its order to four Myanmar-bordering northeastern states including Mizoram to prevent illegal immigration from the neighbouring country and ensure expeditious deportation, Chief Minister Zoramthanga has asserted that the people of his state, who share ethnic ties with the refugees from Chin communities, can't remain indifferent to their plight.

The Mizo National Front (MNF) chief, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 18, requested him to personally intervene in the matter to provide asylum to the political refugees on humanitarian grounds, an official at the Chief Minister's Office said on Saturday.

He said the MHA's March 10 advisory to Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur was not acceptable to his state.

Though the MNF is a part of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), it does not have an alliance with the BJP in the state.

"This (MHA advisory) is not acceptable to Mizoram. I understand that there are certain foreign policy issues where India needs to proceed cautiously. However, we cannot ignore this humanitarian crisis," Zoramthanga said in the letter, a copy of which is available with the PTI.

He said the areas in Myanmar bordering Mizoram are inhabited by Chin communities who share ethnic ties and have had close contact with the people of the state even before India was independent.

Zoramthanga said a human catastrophe of gigantic proportions is happening in Myanmar and innocent citizens are being killed by the military, which is supposed to protect them.

Every day, terrified Myanmar people are struggling to cross over into Mizoram in search of shelter and protection, he said.

"Therefore, Mizoram cannot just remain indifferent to their sufferings. India cannot turn a blind eye to this humanitarian crisis unfolding right in front of us in our own backyard," the letter read.

Zoramthanga said that India, as the world's largest democracy and Myanmar's immediate neighbour, must act in this matter.

Meanwhile, Mizoram Rajya Sabha member K Vanlalvena told PTI that the number of Myanmar refugees taking shelter in the northeastern state has soared to over 1,000.

An officer in the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID), however, said that as per official records, a total of 547 Myanmar people have entered Mizoram since the coup on February 1. He said that the actual number may be higher as many Mizoram residents have accommodated Myanmar refugees without informing the authorities.

Myanmar people fleeing the coup have taken shelter in eight districts and most of them are being handled by local NGOs, he said.

Several outfits, including the state's apex student body Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), are raising money to support the refugees.



CM meets BJP president Nadda

NEW DELHI, 20 MAR [IPR]: Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang called on the National President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), JP Nadda at New Delhi, on 19 Mar, 2021.

During the meeting, they discussed various issues and develop-

mental projects of the state government. The Chief Minister reiterated the pending demands of Sikkim and Mr Nadda was patient enough to listen to the requests and assured of pursuing these demands with the Union Government.

Screening of COVID-19 "super-spreaders" begins in Ahmedabad

AHMEDABAD, 20 MAR [PTI]:

In a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus in Ahmedabad, one of the cities in Gujarat where the number of infection cases is rising, the civic body today said it has decided to once again launch its drive to screen the virus "super-spreaders".

"Super-spreaders" are those people, who are likely to spread the infection to a large number of people.

People such as vegetable vendors, medicine store owners, grocers, auto-rick-

shaw drivers, saloon owners, and masons will have to obtain identity cards after getting themselves tested for the virus across 18 urban health centres in the city, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) said. They will be screened through rapid antigen tests and issued COVID-19 negative identity cards, said the civic body in a release.

Apart from them, food delivery boys and those working in super markets will have to get their RT-PCR test done.

It will be up to the

agencies recruiting them or the units where they work which will be responsible for them to get their tests done at private laboratories, it further said. A list of private laboratories, where they can get their RT-PCR tests done are provided by the AMC on its website, it said.

The drive to identify the "super-spreaders" comes at a time when the city has witnessed a spike in daily cases of late, which took its number of active cases to 784, as per the update issued on Friday evening.

BJP "biggest extortionist" in the world: Mamata

Kolkata, 20 Mar [PTI]: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday slammed the BJP, branding it as the "biggest extortionist" in the world, which should never be allowed to rule the state.

Ms Banerjee, speaking at an election rally in Haldia in East Midnapore district, also accused the BJP of orchestrating riots, killing people and torturing Dalit girls.

"BJP is the biggest 'tolabaz' (extortionist) in the world... Just see the amount of money it collected under the PM Cares Fund. If the people of West Bengal want peace and a state free from riots, then the Trinamool Congress is the only option," she asserted.

"A party that creates riots to kill people should never be allowed to rule Bengal. Even women in the BJP are not safe," the TMC boss alleged.

Ms Banerjee said the BJP cannot fight elections in a democratic manner and it "thrives by giving threats". The eight-phase West Bengal Assembly polls will get underway on March 27.

The chief minister, bound to a wheelchair after suffering injuries during campaigning earlier in the month, also ac-

cused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of embarking on a "selling spree".

"The PM has sold everything. He has devastated the Indian economy. The government is already privatising the railways, coal sector, BSNL, the insurance space and banks. Someday, the Haldia dock might get sold, too," she said.

Ms Banerjee exhorted TMC supporters to guard the EVMs after the voting process is over in each phase.

"The EVMs should be tested 30 times before the start of the polls to ensure there is no foul play. But, if any machine develops faults, please remain calm until it is repaired," she said.

Ms Banerjee also said her government will construct a bridge between Haldia and Nandigram to boost connectivity.

"A centre for development of fish will be set up at Haldia. A deep-sea port at Tajpur is also being built at a cost of ₹ 15,000 crore, which will generate 25,000 jobs," the TMC supremo said.

The chief minister said financial assistance to farmers of the state will be raised from ₹ 6,000 to ₹ 10,000 per year and free ration delivered at their doorsteps.

"Dangerous Attack": Yale, MIT, Harvard academics on Pratap Bhanu Mehta's Ashoka exit

NEW DELHI, 20 MAR [NDTV]:

Around 150 renowned intellectuals from the world's best known centres of academic excellence have written an open letter to the trustees, administrators, and faculty of Ashoka University, Sonapat, expressing solidarity with Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta who recently quit the institution citing Founders' insecurities over his criticism of the government.

Signatories to the short letter, titled "A Dangerous Attack

on Academic Freedom" include Homi K Bhabha of Harvard University, Erwin Chemerinsky of the Berkeley School of Law, Rogers Smith of the University of Pennsylvania, Milan Vaishnav of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Kate O'Regan of Oxford University.

"A prominent critic of the current Indian government and defender of academic freedom, he had become a target for his writings. It seems that Ashoka's Trustees, who should have treated

defending him as their institutional duty, instead all but forced his resignation," the letter says.

"The university must be a home for fearless inquiry and criticism. We support Pratap Bhanu Mehta in his practice of the highest values of intellectual inquiry and public life," it says.

Mr Mehta, who had earlier quit as Ashoka University Vice-Chancellor in July 2019, abruptly resigned from his faculty position on Tuesday, saying, "...my association with the University may be con-

sidered a political liability."

Two days later, the Prime Minister's former Chief Economic Advisor, Arvind Subramanian, resigned as faculty at the institution, citing the circumstances under which his colleague had to quit.

Former Reserve Bank of India chief Raghuram Rajan, too, expressed solidarity with Mr Mehta. "Free speech is the soul of a great university. By compromising on it, the founders have bartered away its soul," he said.

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SGSS supports Shantinagar Anganwadi Centre

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:

Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti, Singtam donated four chairs and a table to the Anganwadi Centre of Shantinagar on the eve of Poshan Pakhawada today, a press release informs. An awareness program on the use of Ayush principles and eradication of malnutrition was also held.

Music festival to celebrate inclusivity

NEW DELHI, MAR 20 (PTI): In an attempt to highlight the importance of community and celebrate inclusiveness, a music festival on Sunday will offer a day-long experience of Hindustani classical, sufi, folk, and qawwali music at the Sunder Nursery here.

Presented by JodhpurRIFF and the British Council, in association with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the event titled "Classic Bagh Festival" promises to be a "a unique and intimate festival" headlined by artistes like Smita Bellur, Jasleen Kaur Monga, Ustad Saeed Zafar Khan, and the Warsi Brothers.

"Designed as an immersive and environmentally conscious experience, the free one-day festival has been developed as a site-conscious response to the lush green setting of the Sunder Nursery and its broader location within Nizamuddin, celebrating Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's vision of pluralism and kindness, and the legacy and contribution to Hindustani music of his favourite disciple, father of Qawwali and Urdu literature, Hazrat Ameer Khusrau, festival organisers said in a statement.

The festival strives to engender an atmosphere of inner quietude, peace and a calm and a gracious respect for nature; the new normal for the future. It hopes to highlight the importance of community and celebrate inclusiveness, it added.

Split into three periods, the festival will open with a lakeside dawn chorus (6 am-9 am) of vocal recitals from the Hindustani, Sufi, Bhajan, Shabad and Qawwali traditions by singers Smita Bellur and Jasleen Kaur Monga. Later in the morning (9.30 am-1.30 pm), in the heritage monument-straddled garden north of the amphitheatre, a short set by the Langa Ensemble will flag off the session, followed by Delhi's own renowned qawwali singer Dhruv Sangari Bilal Chishti followed by a series of classical-sufi-folk covers by emerging Delhi artist Bawari Basanti.

The festival will draw to a close later in the evening (6 pm-10 pm) with an eclectic set - a special Jangda recital from the Manganiyar tradition led by Barkat Khan, ghazals by emerging artist Sraboni Chaudhary and soul-stirring performances by renowned masters Ustad Saeed Zafar Khan, now the Khalifa of the Dilli Gharana, and Qawaal Bachchey Warsi Brothers, performing in Sunder Nursery's amphitheatre.

Chief Justice visits District and Sessions Court Namchi



NAMCHI, 20 MAR (IPR): Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheswari visited District and Sessions Court at Namchi and Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate at Jorethang today. He was accompanied

by Registrar General, KW Bhutia, ADC (South), Satyan Kr Pradhan, SP (South), Thakur Thapa and other officials.

Upon his arrival at Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate at Jorethang sub-division, he was

given warm welcome by District and Sessions Judge (South), Jiwan Kharka, Chief Judicial Magistrate (South), Ranjita Pradhan, Senior Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate (South), Jwala D Thapa, Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate, Rohi-

ni Rai and other officials. A guard of honour was also presented at Jorethang Court.

Thereafter, the Chief Justice visited District and Sessions Court at Namchi wherein he stopped by the various sections of the Court and interacted with the officials and Staff. He also inspected Alternate Dispute Resolution Centre at the court premises.

It may be noted that the Chief Justice High Court of Sikkim, Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheswari is on a two-day long tour of South District. He will also be visiting the Court of Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate, Yangang Subdivision on 21 March.

"Must unitedly defeat" BJP in Assam, says jailed activist Akhil Gogoi

GUWAHATI, 20 MAR [PTI]: Jailed Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi today through an open letter appealed to the people of Assam to vote for the strongest non-BJP candidate in every constituency in the upcoming assembly election to "save Assam".

Akhil Gogoi, contesting from the Sibsagar constituency, sent from jail an open letter that was read out by his political outfit's advisor Dr Sitath Kahkar at a press conference.

"I am sending this letter from jail to save Assam and its people's future from the anti-democratic BJP," Akhil Gogoi said. Asserting that the future of Assam and its people is "dark under BJP rule", the Rajior Dal leader urged all those who oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the BJP to unitedly vote against the BJP in this 2021 assembly election.

"Assam's future will depend on the people and they have to take the final decision to save the state. If Assam is to be saved then do not vote for BJP or those in favour of CAA," he appealed.

"This party has sold the assets of Assam and kept the future of the state in custody of Delhi. Therefore, we must unitedly defeat BJP and its alliance partners in the election. It is the call of the times and our duty to do so. It is a matter of life and death," Akhil Gogoi said.

He said before the elections discussions were held with anti-CAA political parties, including Congress and newly formed Assam Jatiya Parishad and decisions were even taken to field joint candidates "but suddenly they turned around and they put up their own contestants having failed to hear the voice of the people and perceive their hopes and aspirations".

Akhil Gogoi said that since BJP came to power in 2016, "they have kept me in jail for nearly two years of their five-year term."

"I am spending extreme mental and physical trauma in jail during this period. Don't know what my future holds but understood that the future of Assam and its people is dark under BJP rule," he claimed.

Rotary Club of Siliguri Awards Ceremony



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:

Rotary Club of Siliguri organized Awards Ceremony for the Rotary Year 2019-20 today, a press release informs.

Assistant Governor (2020-21) Sandeep Ghosal, Assistant Governor (2019-20) Amitava Bose, Club President Shiv

Shankar Sarkar, Club Secretary Rakesh Garg and other members from the club were present in the awards ceremony.

Former President, Vikash Dugarwal addressed the house with his welcome speech and appreciated the hard work and efforts of all the members during the rotary year 2019-20. To-

ken of appreciation was given to members for the exceptional work.

Jyoti Dey Sarkar was recognised as the Rotarian of the year for 2019-20.

The program was conducted by Yogesh and ended with vote of thanks by & Club Secretary 2019-20, Rajesh Agarwal.

Vaccines should give protection from COVID-19 for 8-10 months: AIIMS Director

NEW DELHI: The COVID-19 vaccine should be able to give good protection from the infection for eight to ten months, AIIMS director Randeep Guleria said today. He also said that no major side-effect of the vaccine has been recorded.

The COVID-19 vaccine should be able to give good protection from the infection for eight to ten months and maybe, even more, Dr Guleria said at an event organised by the IPS (Central) Association.

He said the biggest reason for the surge in cases is that people feel the pandemic is over and they are not following COVID-appropriate behaviour.

"There are multiple reasons for the surge, but the main reason is that there is change in people's attitude and they feel coronavirus is over. People should still restrict non-essential travel for some more time," the official asserted.

NITI Aayog member (Health) VK Paul said the chain of transmission has to be stopped and for that vaccine is one tool but another is containment and surveillance strategy.

"Not following COVID-19 behaviour and



laxity is major reason for the surge," he said.

Responding to a question on vaccinating more people, Paul said the issue is vaccines are limited and that is why, prioritisation has been done.

"If we had unlimited supply, we would open the vaccination for everyone. That is the reason, not everyone, is getting vaccinated. Most countries in the world are not able to go beyond priority group because of this reason," he said.

The NITI Aayog member also said that the highest mortality was seen among people with co-morbidities and older age groups.

"These people must not delay taking the vaccine. So the message is that they need it more

than others. That is the reason they have been prioritised for getting the COVID-19 vaccine," he said.

Talking about the effectiveness of the available COVID-19 vaccines, Covaxin and Covishield, Dr Guleria said, "If we look at the two vaccines, they produce equal antibodies and are very robust. We should take the vaccine available to us because both are equally effective in terms of efficacy and long-term protection.

Over four crore people in the country have been vaccinated against the disease till now. Under the current phase of the inoculation drive, people above 60 years of age and those in the 45-59 years age bracket with co-morbidities, are being vaccinated.

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CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

State-level yoga competition held

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:

The state level yoga competition organized under the aegis of Sikkim Yoga Sports Association concluded today. The semi-finals of the competition were held on 14 Mar.

In the first phase, more than 50 contestants participated in this yoga competition out of which seven contestants reached the semi-finals. After the final round, 6 contestants were selected for the national level



competition.

The organising committee has informed that the finals of the yoga competition will be held online under the aus-

pices of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, India and the National Yoga Association Sports Association, from 24-26 Mar, 2021.

Oral Health Day observed at Ringhim Monastic School

MANGAN, 20 MAR (IPR): On World Oral Health Day, District Nodal Officer (Dental) of District Hospital Mangan, Dr Tenzing Chewang Lepcha along with Health Educator, Rinchen Namgyal and the dental surgeons of DHM organized a dental screening and oral health camp at Ringhim Monastic School, North Sikkim, today.

The World Oral Health Day is observed on 20 March every year to spread awareness about oral diseases and hygiene and on how to keep your teeth healthy. Stated by World Dental Federation (FDI) the three-year theme for World Oral Health Day is, "Be Proud of Your Mouth."

The dental surgeons from DHM conducted oral examinations and distributed medication to those in need. Dental hygiene products like toothpaste, toothbrush along with soaps and masks were also distributed. The necessity to look after oral health, regardless of age and information on gum diseases, tooth decay, cavities etc. were also explained to the gathering.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?
email us: news@summittimes.com

Cricket Fun Fair held at Mangan



MANGAN, 20 MAR (IPR): Cricket Fun Fair was organized by Sikkim Cricket Association at Mangan Senior Secondary School Playground today. The chief guest for the event was the Panchayat President, Sherap Bhutia, who was accompanied by President- Sikkim Cricket Association, Lobzang G Tenzing, School Managing Committee Mem-

ber - Pemzang Tenzing, Former SDM (Mangan), PW Lepcha and Principal Mangan Senior Secondary School.

Mr Lobzang said that the main objective behind the Cricket Fun Fair was to make sure that the children understand that the sport can be friendly and not necessarily competitive all the time. The idea is to make chil-

dren perceive cricket as a fun and friendly activity. He also said that this, in the long run would help identify and scout talents right from the grass-root level. Sikkim has the potential to produce professional sports personalities and events like this will help in recognition of future stars at an early stage.

More than 500 students from different schools from North Sikkim participated in the event. The event consisted of various activities like Hit the Target, Catching Contest and Fielding, Bowled-Out, Bowling Speed, Highest Run Getter and Raffle Draw. The winners were rewarded with the gifts.

Peer Educators Training for students by SAATHI

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 MAR:

SAATHI an NGO supported by Titan Company Ltd. organised a three-day Non- residential Peer Educators Training for students on different aspects of substance abuse and various Life Skills at Community Hall, Pakyong, East Sikkim from 18-20 Mar, 2021, a press release informs.

Students from 5 different Government Schools of Sikkim attended the training in which 50 students and 5 teachers participated. Schools that participated were Tareything Govt Secondary School, Padamchey Govt Secondary School, Bering Govt Secondary School, Amba Govt Secondary School and Pacheykhani Govt Secondary School.

During the camp, the students were trained on physical, emotional and social effects of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and other substances; Effects of drugs and alcohol abuse in education, goals and future success; How to say "no" to drugs in practical situations and to have a positive attitude.

Various resource persons covered various

topics during the training like Dr Kulzan Lama MO, School Health took session on Medical Aspects of substance abuse, Counselling Psychologist, Roshni Chhetri took session on Decision Making, Problem Solving & Critical Thinking. Ashish Bangdel Rai covered the topic on Coping with emotion and stress/peer pressure.

Similarly, Legal Aspects on Substance Abuse was covered by Jigme W Bhutia, PI Pakyong Police Station, Amon Borris from Serenity Home shared his life experience with students, Kalden Gyatso Bhutia, Novelist & Storyteller took the session on Story Telling and techniques of writing and final session was on Awareness on usage of social media covered by Chief in Editor, Nirmal Mangar, Sikkim Chronicle.

A talent show was also organized to encourage and motivate children. The training camp concluded with thank you note to the students for attending and teacher for helping in organising the training successfully. Feedback was taken through Google form and certificates were distributed to the students.

Khangchendzonga Shield 'B' Division League begins



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 MAR:

After successful completion of 'C' Division League of Khangchendzonga Shield Men's 2021 in all four districts of Sikkim by Sikkim Cricket Association (SICA), the association has now initiated the 'B' Division League at Reshithang Khel Gaon, Gangtok, from today, a press release informs.

Total 10 teams from all over Sikkim will be competing in two pools. In Pool A - Sledzers

Cricket Club, Challengers Cricket Club, Cricket Association of Tathangchen, Royal Daragaon Cricket Club, and Shaft Cricket Club, will be competing against each other in Reshithang Khel Gaon, Gangtok. In Pool B - Meli Cricket Club, United Soreng Cricket Club, Majhitar Sporting Club, Denam Cricket Academy and Irises Cricket Club will be competing at Jorethang Public Ground.

Pool A matches will be played from 20 March onwards of 35 overs. The

first match was between Sledzers Cricket Club and Royal Daragaon Cricket Club. Royal Daragaon CC won the toss and opt to bat first. In the first innings they were all-out for 74 runs in 22.5 overs. Aznoor Ansari was the highest scorer for the side with 20 runs. Yadu Neopaney took 4 wickets for Sledzers CC, Akash Thapa 2 wickets, Purna Bahadur Bhattarai and Md Sahil took 1 wicket each.

In the second innings, Sledzers CC chased the target in 11.3 overs.

They scored 77 runs with the loss of 2 wickets, off which Akash Thapa made 39 runs and remained not-out, Sabin Chhetri 15 runs, and Netra Singh 6 runs (not-out). Md Shahzafar Ansari took 1 wicket and was the only bowler to take a wicket in the innings.

Sledzers Cricket Club won the match by 8 wickets. The next match will be played between Challengers Cricket Club and Cricket Association of Tathangchen (CAT) on 21 Mar, 2021.



SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

Development Area, Gangtok: Sikkim

Phone: 03592-207753, Fax : 03592-207753



"MESSAGE".

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority is organizing National Lok Adalat on Saturday the 11th April, 2020 for the following types of pre-litigation and pending cases viz:

Pre-Litigation

- N.I Act cases under Section 138;
- Money Recovery cases;
- Labour disputes cases;
- Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- Maintenance Cases.
- Other (Criminal Compoundable and other Civil dispute).

Pending in the Courts / Tribunals:

- Criminal Compoundable Offences;
- N.I. Act cases under Section 138;
- Money Recovery cases;
- MACT cases;
- Labour disputes cases;
- Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- Matrimonial disputes (except divorce);
- Land Acquisition cases;
- Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits;
- Revenue cases (pending in District Courts and High Courts only);
- Other civil cases (rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits) etc.

Any individual or any department having such matters either pending in Courts/Tribunals/Departments or in pre-litigation stage may approach directly before the Sikkim SLA, District Lok Adalats or Taluk Lok Adalats for settlement on or before 03.04.2021 at the following address:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slsa@live.com Phone No.03592-207753. | 2. High Court Legal Services Committee, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slsa@live.com Phone No. 03592-207753. |
| 3. District Legal Services Authority (East) District Court's Complex, Sichey Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462. | 4. Taluk Legal Services Committee (East), District Court's Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284131. |
| 5. District Legal Services Authority (North) District Court Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone No . 03592 234502. | 6. Taluk Legal Services Committee (North), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Pentok, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone no.03592 234383/234514. |
| 7. District Legal Services Authority (South) District Court Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone No . 03595 264356. | 8. Taluk Legal Services Committee (South), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone no.03595 263145. |
| 9. District Legal Services Authority (West) District Court Complex, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 250061. | 10. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone no.03595 250061. |
| 11. Taluk Legal Services Committee, Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Chungthang, Sub-Division, North Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 234502. | 12. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Soreng, Sub-Division, West Sikkim. Phone n o: 03592-253200. |

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GANGTOK SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT LIMITED, GANGTOK, EAST SIKKIM

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited,
Sokaythang, Gangtok,
Sikkim - 737102
E Mail - gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com
CIN - U930909WB2017SGC223807

Memo No: 993/GSCDL/2021

Dated: 18/03/2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL) is undertaking the work 'Improvement of Pedestrian Walkway/ Footpath (12 km approx. from Vajra Cinema Hall, Baluwakhani to Ranipool, Gangtok'.

However, it is observed that the public are requesting for changes after the work has been completed which is causing repetitive execution of the work resulting in time and cost overrun

Hence, this notice is issued to request the public to kindly inform GSCDL if any changes or suggestions are to be incorporated by sending mail to the following email address within one month of issue of this notice.

- gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com
- ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com
- sesmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com
- degscdl@gmail.com
- ae3smartcity@gmail.com

GSCDL shall not entertain any request for change after completion of work.

Sd/-
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
Gangtok Smart City Development Limited,
Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Save the Young from Obscurity

Demand better from education

A little over a decade ago, an obscure man, then in his mid-30s, hailing from a nondescript Andhra village, blazed a trail with his apparently crazy move. This “obscure man” was one called Narasing Lal Butt, and his “crazy move” was to claim “damages” through the human rights commission from his village school for its failure to provide him quality education. Education of even reasonable quality could have established him in life, but in his 30’s he found himself ill-equipped and under-prepared for anything worthwhile, hence the claim for damages.

Google searches lead nowhere when it comes to ferreting out what happened of his petition. Most probably nothing. In all probability, Narasing has withdrawn into his obscurity only to be occasionally invoked in publications in distant Sikkim. But his petition was obviously never really about receiving damages, and was always about holding up the mirror. A decade since, the mirror still reflects the same image of a broken education system which is still as listless and continues to mass-produce mediocrity. The litigant had sued his school for making him so, well, ‘obscure’. And although his complaint most probably secured him no reprieve, he “blazed a trail” in that he went to the human rights commission and not the consumer redressal courts. Even his incomplete education informed him well enough to recognise that education was not a commodity, but a Right, a human right.

Education, whether free, subsidized or exorbitantly paid for, should be better regulated and any lapses on this front should be seen as a violation of a whole generation’s human rights. Fact remains that too few people are paying enough attention to education. Yes, there are huge budgets, there are many schools and literacy is on the rise, but what are the schools really churning out? The success stories of Indian academics [which are only a minuscule proportion of the studying population] are fuelled by individual drive and not institutional support or grooming. To blame the teachers would be too easy, they are only part players in a system which is failing, policy interventions have remained ineffectual and uninspiring. It is worrying that education and schools continue to be seen as readying people for employment when the first priority should always have been learning. In the more worrying trends, new policies have also been destructive, trying to dismantle institutions to suit new moulds.

What the nation now needs are more Narasing Lal Butts; more people from the masses to take the policy framers and deliverers to task; to demand better. May be then things will start improving.



Time to make nature studies a compulsory school subject – before it’s too late

MATTHEW ADAMS
theconversation.com

The UK government is reported to be seriously considering making “nature studies” a compulsory subject for all pupils. It’s a move that was recommended in the recent government-commissioned Dasgupta review, a detailed analysis of the “economics of biodiversity”.

The review is long and technical, but in among the tables and statistics, there are some radical suggestions that go beyond a focus on economics alone, recommendations designed to transform our relationship with the natural world before it is too late. Among options for rethinking supply chains, measures of economic progress and financial regulation, right at the end is a brief focus on education:

“Every child in every country is owed the teaching of natural history, to be introduced to the awe and wonder of the natural world, to appreciate how it contributes to our lives.”

The review calls for environmental education programmes from primary school all the way through to university.

REDISCOVERING OUR CONNECTION TO NATURE

Would it really make any difference? As an academic who teaches, writes and undertakes research on the social and psychological significance of contact with nature, especially in the context of our ongoing ecological crisis, I believe there’s good reason to think it could.

Take the idea of an “extinction of experience”, which refers to how each subsequent generation has less sensory contact with diverse natural environments. As meaningful connection disappears, our sense of what is normal is gradually redefined – the “shifting baseline syndrome”, to borrow a related concept. As standard experiences of nature

become increasingly narrow and empty, the fear is that we also lose our ability to understand, care for and defend the natural world, and a rapid cycle of mutual decline is underway.

Experience-based environmental education could be an important tool for reversing this shift. Recent research confirms common sense in this regard – repeated, positive (which does not mean unchallenging) experiences of natural environments in early childhood underpin a deep and lifelong attachment to nature into adulthood.

To counter the extinction of experience, it makes sense to proactively design an education system that will foster an attachment to nature. There are positive precedents here already, not least the growth of Forest Schools, which originated in Scandinavia but are now a global movement advocating the social and educational value of spending part of the school day in nature. Continuing the study of ecology into adulthood also seems like a necessary step if we are to collectively address the shifting baseline syndrome, by actively facing up to what is being lost.

NATURE STUDIES FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE

Nature studies should not shy away from the fact that natural environments are in retreat as a result of human activities. In that sense, natural history is also social history, and nature studies is social studies. Many areas of a secondary curriculum could recognise this fact without necessarily introducing compulsory natural history lessons, but while still incorporating experiences of being in nature.

Also, when we start to think about human history and the kinds of activities responsible for the biodiversity and climate crisis, things get a little more complicated. Empire, colonialism, the slave trade, industrialism, capitalism, communism and intensive agriculture are all central to how “we

have transformed natural landscapes across the planet in the age of the “Anthropocene”.

Along the way, important practices and world-views that have sophisticated and deeply held understandings of nature have often been trampled upon and marginalised. These traditions continue in many indigenous communities, and inform collective resistance to environmentally destructive activities and a defence of the rights of nature.

“Nature studies” could learn a lot from these longer, deep-rooted and ongoing connections to nature, just as it could from people working with nature in different ways such as farmers, rangers, conservationists and activists. A key lesson we must learn is that nature is alive, and something we are a part of and depend upon – not an external and inert resource to plunder without consequence. Again, for me this seems to require a radical approach to education across the curriculum – science, history, literature, geography, economics, psychology, even religious studies – rather than something that can be contained within a compulsory subject.

Despite these reservations, I still think an experience-based nature studies education, woven into a progressive curriculum, is a fantastic idea. Meaningful human-nature interactions are a much stronger foundation for action than lecturing people about why they should care for nature.

It could be part of an essential toolkit for a sustainable future, and for creating a groundswell of people willing to care for and actively defend nature. If it really were compulsory, who knows how powerful the collective nurturing of a childhood sense of awe and wonder, and a deep, secure, attachment to nature might be, were it allowed to bloom and flourish?

[the writer is Principal Lecturer in Psychology, University of Brighton]

What is a hate crime? The narrow legal definition makes it hard to charge and convict

JEANNINE BELL
theconversation.com

A white man travels to one business and kills several workers. He then kills more people at a similar business.

Six of the eight people he killed are Asian women, leading many people to call for him to be charged under the new state hate crime law. Authorities resist, saying they aren’t sure that racial bias motivated the man’s crimes.

That’s the situation unfolding in the Atlanta area in Georgia, right now. But there is often a gap between public opinion and law enforcement when people believe a hate crime has been committed, whether against LGBTQ people, racial minorities or Jewish people.

Hate crimes and hate murders are rising across the U.S., but long-term polling data suggests that most Americans are horrified by bias-motivated violence. They also support hate crime legislation, an effort to deter such attacks.

Yet officials often resist the quick classification of incidents as a hate crime. Hate crimes have precise qualities, which must be met in order to satisfy legal requirements. And even when police and prosecutors believe the elements of a hate crime are present, such crimes can be difficult to prove in court.

WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?

I have studied hate crime and police for over 20 years.

Hate crimes are crimes motivated by bias on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity. In some states, gender, age and gender identity are also included. Hate crime laws have been passed by 47 states and the federal government since the 1980s, when activists first be-

gan to press state legislatures to recognize the role of bias in violence against minority groups. Today, only Arkansas, South Carolina and Wyoming do not have hate crime laws.

In order to be charged as a hate crime, attacks – whether assault, killings or van-

that they may not win in court.

It can and does happen, though. In June 2020, Shepard Hoehn placed a burning cross and a sign with racial slurs and epithets facing the construction site where his new neighbor, who is Black, was build-



dalism – must be directed at individuals because of the prohibited biases. Hate crimes, in other words, punish motive; the prosecutor must convince the judge or jury that the victim was targeted because of their race, religion, sexual orientation or other protected characteristic.

If the defendant is found to have acted with bias motivation, hate crimes often add an additional penalty to the underlying charge. Charging people with a hate crime, then, presents additional layers of complexity to what may otherwise be a straightforward case for prosecutors. Bias motivation can be hard to prove, and prosecutors can be reluctant to take cases that

ing a house.

Hoehn was charged with and later pleaded guilty to federal hate crime charges in Indiana. A few months later, Maurice Diggins was convicted by a federal jury of a 2018 hate crime for breaking the jaw of a Sudanese man in Maine while shouting racial epithets.

HOW TO CHARGE A HATE CRIME

The first use of the term “hate crime” in federal legislation was the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990. This was not a criminal statute but rather a data-gathering requirement that mandated that the U.S. attorney general collect data on crimes that “evidenced prejudice based on race,

religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.”

Soon, states began passing their own laws recognizing bias crimes. But hate crime legislation has not led to as many charges and convictions as activists may have hoped.

Law enforcement struggle to identify hate crime and prosecute the offenders. Even though 47 states have hate crime laws, 86.1% of law enforcement agencies reported to the FBI that not a single hate crime had occurred in their jurisdiction in 2019, according to the latest FBI data collected.

In many cases, police have received inadequate training in making hate crime classification.

“What weights do you give to race, dope, territory? These things are 90% gray – there are no black-and-white incidents,” said one 20-year veteran police officer in a 1996 study of hate crime.

But I’ve also found that police departments are rarely organized in a way that allows them to develop the expertise necessary to effectively investigate hate crimes. When police departments have specialized police units and prosecutors who are committed to taking on hate crime, they can develop the routines that allow them to investigate hate crime in a manner that supports victims.

In the late 1990s I studied a specialized police hate crime unit in a city I called, for the purposes of anonymity, “Center City.” My study revealed that those detectives could distinguish non-hate crimes – for instance, when the perpetrator angrily used the n-word in a fight – from cases that are truly hate crimes, as when the perpetrator used it during a targeted attack on a Black person.

Without the right training and organizational structure, officers are unclear about common markers of bias motiva-

tion, and tend to assume that they must go to extraordinary lengths to figure out why suspects committed the crime.

“We don’t have time to psychoanalyze people,” said the same veteran police officer in 1996.

Even law enforcement officers specifically trained in bias crime identification still may not name incidents as hate crime that, to the general public, seem obviously bias-driven. This may be the result of police bias.

LIMITS OF THE LAW

Advocates for hate crime victims maintain that police and prosecutors can do much more to identify and punish hate crimes.

Empirical evidence supports their claims. The FBI’s 2019 report contains 8,559 bias crimes reported by law enforcement agencies. But in the National Crime Victimization Survey, victims say that they experienced, on average, more than 200,000 hate crimes each year. This suggests that police are missing many hate crimes that have occurred.

Distrust of police, especially in Black communities, may dissuade minorities from even calling the police when they are victimized by hate crime for fear they could also become victims of police violence.

All this means that perpetrators of hate crimes may not be caught and can reoffend, further victimizing communities that are meant to be protected by hate crime laws.

Hate crime laws reflect American ideals of fairness, justice and equity. But if crimes motivated by bias aren’t reported, well investigated, charged or brought to trial, it matters little what state law says.

[the writer is Professor of Law, Maurer School of Law, Indiana University]

46th APPPA organized by SSDMA

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:
The 46th Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration (APPPA) was organized in the state capital on 18 March by Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), a press release from Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department informs.

APPA is a flagship programme conducted by IIPA every year. It is a long-term education and training programme designed for senior officers of the Indian Administrative services, Central services and Defence Services, the release mentions.

The programme had the participation of 33 senior officers in the rank of Joint Secretaries (Central



Ministries), Brigadiers and similarly ranked officers, Director General of IIPA, and Programme Director of APPA.

The programme was attended by Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim, SC Gupta, as the chief guest. The programme also had the presence of Director, Department of Science and Technology, Dhiren Shrestha.

Special Secretary,

Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department, Government of Sikkim, Diki Yangzum in her welcome address gave a brief insight on achievements and progress of various state government initiatives.

A presentation on "Promotion of Organic farming: Initiative of Sikkim Government" was made by CEO, Dr Anbalagan, Sikkim Organic

Farming Development Agency, Agriculture Department, Government of Sikkim.

Likewise, a presentation on "Disaster Risk Reduction: Innovative Management Practices for GLOF Hazard" was made by Shri. Keshav Koirala, DMS and Training Officer, Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority, Land Revenue and DM Department, Government of Sikkim.

This was followed by an interactive session. Chief Secretary, SC Gupta congratulated SSDMA for organising the programme successfully. He also recalled his time as an APPA trainee and shared some anecdotes.

He spoke of Sikkim's progress in various critical parameters and informed the audience of future projects with relation to town planning and others. He also answered all questions posed by the participants.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Additional Director, Phigu Bhutia, SSDMA, Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department.

The programme was moderated by Deputy Secretary, Navita Pradhan, Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department.

Oral Health Day observed at JNMIH Boomtar

NAMCHI, 20 MAR [IPR]: Along with the rest of the globe, World Oral Health Day, 2021 themed 'Be Proud of your mouth' was observed at Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Handicapped at Boomtar, today. Organized by Namchi District Hospital, the programme had the presence of HoD Dental Department Dr. L. M. Rai, Oral Surgeon Dr. N. K. Sharma along with dental surgeons.

The dental surgeon informed in detail about the importance of oral health. They also shared different ways to protect our mouth which can be done through regular dental check-ups as well as by brushing of teeth in



an order manner.

Resource Persons Dr. Yogendra Rawat and Dr. Deepsika Pradhan also shared their expert opinions on topics 'be proud of mouth' and 'the importance of oral health and ways to maintain it'.

It may be mentioned that the programme has been sponsored by In-

formation Education and Communication (Health Department) and Kasturi Diagnostic Centre, Namchi.

To mark the World Oral Health Day, the team also distributed Oral Health kits and sanitary Products. A total of 31 students from the institute took part in the programme.

WSOS conducts NEEV at Tareythang



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:
Wandering Souls of Sikkim conducted NEEV: A foundation for better future -an Inter School Scholastic Festival at Tareythang Secondary School on 19 Mar, 2021. Eight schools participated in the event supported by Biring-Tareythang & Amba GPU.

The event was at-

tended by BDO Pakyong, Nilakantha Bhandari as chief guest along with AD Education BAC Pakyong, BP Sharma as a special guest, along with Zilla Panchayat, panchayats, teachers, students and others.

More than 100 students participated in 5 events namely Quiz, Elocution, Poetry, Spell Bee, and Creative writing competitions.

India carrying out uranium exploration in Arunachal



HYDERABAD, MAR 20 (PTI): Uranium exploration has been taken up in Arunachal Pradesh by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research, a senior official has said.

AMD is a constituent unit of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

"AMD is carrying out detailed geological investigations for uranium in parts of Arunachal Pradesh," AMD director D K Sinha told PTI in an email response.

Uranium is used as fuel in nuclear reactors.

Singa was responding to reports about AMD taking up uranium exploration in the north-eastern state, near the India-China border.

The AMD has a mandate to identify and evaluate mineral resources of uranium, thorium, zirconium, titanium and others and rare earths containing uranium and thorium in the potential geological domains of the country, Sinha said.

A seminar on "Radiation and Environment"

was organised here recently under the aegis of the Indian Nuclear Society (INS) in the premises of AMD.

Sinha, Chairman of Indian Nuclear Society, Hyderabad Chapter, said the seminar was organised to spread awareness in society on the benefits of nuclear science and technology to mankind and removing the myths on its environmental impact. Scientists and academicians, who attended the seminar, felt that nuclear energy is a "long term" source of green energy.

It would be required in future to achieve the desired goal of low-carbon footprint and others, an official release said.

For implementing its mandate to identify and evaluate uranium resources, the AMD takes up investigations across the country from Regional Exploration and Research Centres located at New Delhi, Bengaluru, Jamshedpur, Shillong, Jaipur, Nagpur and Hyderabad.

SU Mass Comm students complete Rural Communication project

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAR:
Third semester students from Department of Mass Communication of Sikkim University had worked on a project 'Rural Communication' to understand the problems related to communication for rural development. Students divided into different groups had carried out the six-month long study under the guidance of Assistant Professor Dr Pooja Basnett.

The project started in September last year and was completed recently on 17 March this year. Students had adopted Bhusuk, Lower Borong, Namin and Lower Barbing for their field visits and collected data from primary sources after observation, interviews and discussions during the field visits.

The main purpose for the research was to understand the gaps in communication for rural



development.

After several expeditions by the research team, it was decided that the study would focus on dropouts in higher education, understanding the problems related to literacy in relation to communication, understanding the perspectives of people on media coverage of their area and to solve issues related to communication and literacy.

Team members experienced rural life throughout the project and people were hesitant initially but regular visits and interactions led to people opening up to some extent.

At the end of the project, a webinar was also conducted on 17 March by Department of Mass Communication, which was attended by Special Secretary (RD) cum Project Director-MGN-REGA of Rural Development Department, Sarika Pradhan, State Project Officer of Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, Nima Tashi Bhutia, Chief Learning Officer of 24hrs Inspired, Dewaker Basnett and social and political commentator, Jiwan Rai and Assistant Professor from the Dept. of Sociology, Sikkim University, Binod Bhattacharai.

Odisha reports 120 new COVID-19 cases, tally at 3,38,719

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 20 (PTI): Odisha's COVID-19 tally rose to 3,38,719 on Saturday as 120 more people tested positive for the infection, a health department official said.

Of the new cases, 71 were reported from quarantine centres, while 49 detected during contact tracing.

Cuttack district reported the highest number of fresh cases at 20, followed by Sundargarh (16), Mayurbhanj (14) and Khurda (13).

Seventeen of the 20 new cases from Cuttack are students and staffers of a private school.

"Several students of the school are coming from other states. Guest teachers also visit this educational institution. There is a possibility that the 17 fresh patients might have infected with the new variant of COVID-19," Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) health officer Satyabrata Sahu said.

Efforts are being made to trace their con-

tacts and samples of the 17 people have been sent to Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC) in Bhubaneswar for further testing, he said.

"They have been quarantined in the school's hostel," the CMC officer said.

Twenty-five others from a college in Cuttack had tested positive for the disease in the last two days.

Meanwhile, Gajapati, Malkangiri and Boudh have turned "coronavirus free" as no active case exists there, he said.

The death toll remained at 1,918 as no fresh fatality due to the infection has been reported since March 13, he said.

Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have also died due to comorbidities. Odisha now has 754 active cases, and 3,35,994 patients have recovered from the disease.

The state has so far conducted over 87.62 lakh samples for

COVID-19, including 25,918 on Friday, and the positivity rate now stands at 3.88 per cent.

The Odisha government has decided to conduct more than 10,000 RT-PCR tests a day, the official said.

The health department's additional chief secretary PK Mohapatra has directed district authorities and municipal commissioners to increase the number of these tests.

Arrangements for RT-PCR tests have been made in 26 laboratories, including 10 private units.

As this specific testing facility is not available in all parts of the state, the healthcare workers have been asked to send samples to the RMRC from Boudh, Jajpur, Sonapur, Puri and Nayagarh.

Similarly, the authorities have directed to send samples to the SCB Medical College from Angul, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Keonjhar and Sundargarh for the same.

World Bank approves \$75 million for Nepal to buy Covid-19 vaccines

KATHMANDU, 20 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: The World Bank on Friday approved \$75 million from the International Development Association to support access to safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines and equitable vaccine distribution by strengthening Nepal's health and vaccination system.

The financing is expected to facilitate vaccination of at least one-third of the population through an equitable distribution plan.

"The pandemic presents immense challenges and an uncertain environment, particularly in the purchase, supply and distribution of vaccines," said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

"It is a testament to our strong partnership with Nepal that the Bank has been able to move quickly to support the government's ambitious plans to vaccinate at least 72 percent of the population."

The additional financing builds on the \$29 million for the original Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project that was approved in April 2020, the existing Bank-supported health programmes, and confirmed support of other development partners in the context of the government's overall Covid-19 response,

the multilateral funding agency said in a press statement.

Most of the new financing (90 percent) will go towards the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines and deployment for prioritized populations beyond the 20 percent that will be vaccinated through COVAX.

The rest of the financing will help strengthen the health system to support the Covid-19 vaccination effort and procure other Covid-19-related supplies such as diagnostic tests, laboratory equipment and therapeutics.

The additional financing also supports community engagement and risk communication, and strengthening existing digital technology-based pandemic data, surveillance and monitoring systems.

"This support is critical for Nepal to safeguard the physical health of its people and economic health of the nation," said Gail Richardson, World Bank Practice Manager for South Asia for the Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice.

"Providing fast and fair access to the approved Covid-19 vaccines for the most vulnerable people will expedite population-level immunity, which is central to resilient recovery from the devastating effects of Covid-19."

Meanwhile, Nepal

and the World Bank on Friday signed loan and grant agreements for the \$24 million Forests for Prosperity Project (\$6.1 million as grant and \$17.9 million as concessional loan) that will help Nepal advance sustainable forest management.

The project will contribute to transforming Nepal's forest sector by improving sustainable forest management and developing a strong forest-based private sector.

These activities will result in multiple benefits for forest-dependent people in selected municipalities in Province 2 and Lumbini Province, including inclusive economic benefits, ecosystem services, and greater climate resilience.

It will help strengthen ongoing community-based conservation efforts while promoting inclusive sustainable use.

"Strengthening local communities, for whom forests are a traditional safety net during times of crisis, is especially important in the Covid-19 era. In that same spirit, the project will facilitate Nepal's forest-based private sector to invest in jobs and reduce dependence on timber imports," said Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Finance Secretary.

"The project will also provide timely support to the institutions at the provincial and local levels to strengthen natural resource governance."

Nagaland gears up for Noksen byelection

KOHIMA, MAR 20 (PTI): Nagaland has geared up to conduct a free and fair byelection to the Noksen assembly seat, scheduled on April 17.

State Chief Electoral Officer Abhijit Sinha on Friday held closed-door meetings with representatives of political parties, officials of Tuensang district where the constituency is located, and journalists.

Filing of nominations will commence on March 23 and the last date for submission of the documents is March 30, Sinha told reporters.

The constituency has 11,819 electors, of which 11,788 are general voters (6,163 males and 5,625 females) and 31 are service electors.

There are 23 polling stations in the constitu-



ency with Yangpi polling station having the highest number of voters at 953 and Yukumsang compound polling station having the lowest number of electors at 113, Sinha said.

A total of 138 polling personnel will be requisitioned and 69 others will be kept on reserve. The

byelection was necessitated by the death of Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and Justice and Law, C M Chang on October 12 last year while undergoing treatment for COVID-19.

He is the only legislator in Nagaland to have succumbed to the infection so far.

CONTACT SUMMIT TIMES
REPORTERS
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9832048410,

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GANGTOK
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Harris, Karatsev continue upsets to set up Dubai final clash

DUBAI, MAR 20 (AP): Lloyd Harris continued his run of upsets at the Dubai Championships by beating the third-seeded Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (5), 6-4, 7-6 (6) in the semifinals on Saturday.

The 81st-ranked South African saved three of the four break points he faced for his seventh win in as many days, making him the first qualifier to reach the hard-court tournament's final. He had already defeated Dominic Thiem for the first top five win of his career.

Going for his first ti-

tle, Harris will need to overcome Aslan Karatsev in the final on Saturday.

Karatsev upset top-seeded Russian compatriot Andrey Rublev 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 to advance to his first final.

It was Karatsev's fourth consecutive win over a seeded player at the tournament. Karatsev soared up the rankings after reaching the Australian Open semifinals on his Grand Slam main draw debut last month. Since the start of February his only losses have come against Novak Djokovic and Thiem.

Koepka, Rose among 5 players not competing in Match Play



WASHINGTON, MAR 20 (AP): Brooks Koepka and past finalist Gary Woodland were among five players from the top 64 in the world who will not be playing in the Dell Technologies Match Play next week at Austin Country Club.

Koepka is recovering from a strain in his right leg. The Match Play, which starts Wednesday in Austin, Texas, will be the third straight tournament the four-time major champion has not been able to play.

Woodland, Adam Scott, Justin Rose and Tiger Woods are the others from the top 64 in the world ranking who will not play, the least surprising being Woods. He only returned home to Florida this week to resume a long recovery from serious leg injuries in a Feb. 23 single-car crash in Los Angeles.

They were replaced in the field by the next five available in this week's world ranking Ian Poulter, Erik van Rooyen, Adam Long, J.T. Poston and Dylan Frittelli, who played college golf at Texas.

Scott had said last

week he would not be playing. His final event ahead of the Masters is this week at the Honda Classic. Rose withdrew from Bay Hill and The Players Championship with back issues.

Woodland, who lost to Rory McIlroy in the championship match at Harding Park in 2015, tested positive for the coronavirus and had to withdraw from the Honda Classic. It was not clear if the 10-day isolation required under PGA Tour protocols would allow him to play the Match Play because of the Wednesday start.

According to tour regulations, a player must start the first match in group play to be eligible for the next two.

The tournament features three days of round-robin matches among 16 four-player groups, which are filled with players from the Nos. 1-16 seeds, Nos. 17-32, Nos. 33-48, and Nos. 49-64.

Dustin Johnson, who won at Austin Country Club over Jon Rahm in 2017, Justin Thomas, Rahm and Bryson DeChambeau are the top seeds.

Ronaldo named Serie A player of the year again

MILAN, MAR 20 (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo was named the Italian league player of the year on Friday for the second successive time.

Ronaldo won the prize in 2019 after his debut season at Juventus. The awards did not take place last year because of the coronavirus pandemic. Ronaldo scored 31 goals in 33 league matches last season and helped Juventus to a record-extending ninth successive Serie A title.

"At the beginning it was hard to play in empty stadiums, but the aim was to win, and we did it," the 36-year-old Ronaldo said.

"I am happy and lucky. Persistence, confidence, work ethic, passion -- those are all the secrets that allow me to

keep playing. I feel motivated and you have to be every year, otherwise you won't manage to win at 34, 35, 36 or 40 years old." Juventus forward Cristiana Girelli received the best female player award.

Atalanta's Gian Piero Gasperini took home the coach prize and his side was team of the year. Atalanta finished third in Serie A for the second straight season and also reached the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

The Gran Gal del Calcio awards, which are voted for by a mix of footballers, coaches, referees and journalists, are normally presented at a glittering ceremony. Amid the ongoing pandemic, they were presented in a televised show.

Revenue on track, reserves down in FIFA virus-era accounts

GENEVA, MAR 20 (AP): FIFA expects to hit its four-year revenue target of 6.44 billion up to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Total spending of 1.04 billion in 2020 included 270 million in grants to soccer bodies worldwide as part of a COVID-19 relief plan, FIFA's annual financial report said on Friday.

It also included a 10 million donation to the World Health Organization.

FIFA again awarded its president Gianni Infantino a 1 million annual bonus to raise his overall pre-tax pay above 3 million in 2020, matching his 2019 income.

The pandemic relief payments helped reduce FIFA's reserves by 705 million in 2020. They stood at almost 1.9 billion by the end of the year.

FIFA gets most of its money from the four-yearly men's World Cup, and said on Friday it already sealed 92% of its income target from broadcasting rights.

Contracted income from all sources to the end of 2020 was more than 5.1 billion, or 80% of revenue budgeted for the 2019-2022 financial period, according to the FIFA document. Fewer sponsor slots for the 2022 World Cup have been



sold compared to the same stage before previous editions of the tournament.

After a near-total shutdown of soccer worldwide last year, FIFA advanced money due to its 211 national member federations and the six continental governing bodies.

Hundreds of millions of dollars more was made available in grants and loans for specific projects.

FIFA made savings by the forced cancellations of youth tournaments, its annual con-

gress scheduled in Ethiopia, and the annual awards ceremony in Milan.

"Travel was reduced to the bare minimum, and a large-scale switch to online meetings and training produced significant cost savings," the FIFA financial report said.

Administration and governance spending of 169 million was 42 million less than the planned budget for 2020.

The FIFA document showed Infantino got a base salary of 1.95 million Swiss francs, (2.1

million) plus a bonus of just over 1 million Swiss francs (1.08 million).

The package totaled 3 million Swiss francs (3.2 million) the same as in 2019 when some allowances were added.

FIFA secretary general Fatma Samoura got a 50,000 Swiss francs (54,000) raise in her bonus from 2019 for a pre-tax package of more than 1.6 million Swiss francs (1.72 million).

The six continental presidents who sit on FIFA's ruling council each received a net in-

come of 300,000, plus some expenses. Other council members each got 250,000 after tax.

The highest paid committee members were audit and compliance chairman Toma Vesel and chief ethics investigator Maria Claudia Rojas, who each got 246,000. Vesel also chairs the compensation panel which oversees pay for senior management.

FIFA is one of the most transparent international sports bodies in publishing what it pays senior officials.

Real Kashmir FC and Punjab FC play for pride

KALYANI, MAR 20 (PTI)

Real Kashmir and Punjab FC will play for pride when they face each other in an I-League phase two match at the Kalyani Municipal Stadium here on Sunday.

Real Kashmir started the season with a flurry of great results and were unbeaten in the initial nine games but they haven't managed to deliver the desired results when the stakes were high.

As a result, they are out of the title race. The Snow Leopards now find themselves in the sixth spot with 18 points from 13 games.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, goalkeeping coach Jonathan Craig said, "A lot has happened over the past

few weeks and with a bit more luck we would have been way higher on the table. It has been a combination of a lot of injuries and tired bodies.

"We will be asking the same work ethic, fire, desire, and passion from the players for the next match. We want to finish the game with three points tomorrow so the work ethic is going to be very very important."

Punjab FC have played some quality football in the season but lately, results haven't gone their way. They haven't been able to produce what it takes to get the job done.

A lacklustre performance in their last match saw them lose 0-1 to TRAU and Punjab will

have to find the missing pieces in the jigsaw if they are to take all the three points against the Snow Leopards.

"I think we have made a statement in our first season, we have shown that we can be competitive in the I-League which we are very happy with. When we look back on the games, we could have won the championship," head coach Curtis Fleming said.

"This is not about just the one season. It is about what we want to achieve in the long run. I think till the last minute of this season everyone has to give everything for us and prepare for next season. I have no doubts that we are going to be stronger next season.

Turkey withdraws from European treaty protecting women

ISTANBUL (AP): Turkey has withdrawn from a landmark European treaty protecting women from violence that it was the first to sign 10 years ago and that bears the name of its largest city.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decree early Saturday annulling Turkey's ratification of the Istanbul Convention is a blow to women's rights advocates, who say the agreement is crucial to combating domestic violence. The Council of Europe's Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, called the decision "devastating."

"This move is a huge setback to these efforts and all the more deplorable because it compromises the protection of women in Turkey, across Europe and beyond," she said. The Istanbul Convention states that men and women have equal rights and obliges state authorities to take steps to prevent gender-based

violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators.

Some officials from Erdogan's Islam-oriented party have advocated a review of the agreement, arguing it encourages divorce and undermines the traditional family, which they say are contrary to the country's conservative values. Critics also claim the treaty promotes homosexuality through the use of categories like gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. They see that as a threat to Turkish families. Hate speech has been on the rise in Turkey, including the interior minister who described LGBT people as "perverts" in a tweet.

Women's groups and their allies who have been protesting to keep the convention intact immediately called for demonstrations across the country Saturday under the slogan "Withdraw the decision, apply the treaty." Violence against

and killing of women is on the rise in Turkey, according to rights groups.

A total of 77 women have been killed since the start of the year, according to the We Will Stop Femicide Platform. At least 409 women were killed in 2020, according to the group.

Turkey's minister for family, labor and social policies tweeted that women's rights are still protected by Turkish laws and the judicial system is "dynamic and strong enough" to enact new regulations. Zehra Zumrut Selcuk also tweeted that violence against women is a crime against humanity and the government would continue to have "zero tolerance" for it.

Turkey was the first country to sign the Council of Europe's "Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" at a committee of ministers meeting in Istanbul in 2011.

Sindhu wins battle of nerves to enter All England semifinals

Birmingham, Mar 20 (PTI): Reigning world champion P V Sindhu rallied to eke out a thrilling win over Japan's third seed Akane Yamaguchi in an intriguing women's singles quarterfinals of the prestigious All England Championships here.

Sindhu, seeded fifth, staged a remarkable comeback after losing the opening game to notch up a 16-21 21-16 21-19 win over world number five Yamaguchi in a pulsating contest that lasted an hour and 16 minutes to make only her second semifinals appearance at All England on Friday night.

The Indian had come into the match with a 10-7 head-to-head count against the Japanese even though she had lost the last three meetings. So, it was Sindhu's first win in last four meetings with Yamaguchi.

"I am playing against her after quite a long time, I think 2019. We haven't played at all. I'm sure she would have trained very hard. Today's match was a good, tough long match I would say," Sindhu, currently ranked world number seven, said after the match.

"In the first game I was making a lot of errors and hitting them out because I was on the side with the stronger drift. The second game, it was in my favour. A lot of long rallies. It was important to get that second game.

"In the third game, it was very crucial. My coach was very supportive, he was making sure I controlled the shuttle well. Each point was very important. Overall, it was anybody's game but I am happy to be on the winning side."

The Olympic silver medallist will face sixth seed Pornpawee Chochuwong for a place in the



final. The Indian has an overwhelming 4-1 lead against the world No. 11 from Thailand.

"I really fought hard to come to here. It's important to be focused and go back and rest myself to come back stronger. Pornpawee has been playing really well, so I'm sure I have to be very well prepared and give it 100 percent."

Sindhu, who had reached the finals at Swiss Open, played an aggressive game, matching Yamaguchi with her speed and retrieving skills but unforced errors allowed the Japanese to jump to a 11-6 lead.

Yamaguchi's precision held her in good stead as she led 17-11. Sindhu produced an angled return and a superb shot from the forehand corner to make it 15-18. However, the Japanese was a step ahead as pocketed the first game.

Both the players had an error-prone start to the second game before Sindhu moved to 6-2 with some superb shots, which swelled to a 8-4 with the Japanese missing the lines twice.

Yamaguchi then sent the shuttle to the net twice and then went long as Sindhu held a five point advantage at the interval. The Indian soon marched to a 14-8 over an erratic Yamaguchi.

She grabbed a couple of points at 11-17 but

Sindhu unleashed a cross court smash and moved to 19-13 when the Japanese went long. Another wide shot from Yamaguchi and it was five game points for Sindhu, who squandered one before making a roaring comeback.

The decider started on an even note as both the shuttlers engaged in some gruelling fast paced rallies, moving neck-and-neck from 2-2 to 7-7.

With the rallies getting longer, Sindhu seemed to struggle physically but she shrugged it off to grab a two point cushion at the break with Yamaguchi going wide twice at 9-9.

After the final change of ends, Sindhu made it 14-10 but Yamaguchi kept breathing down her neck, making it 13-15 with a cross court return.

A disguised return and a cross court smash helped Yamaguchi to make it 15-15.

The Japanese went to net and then hit long but Sindhu next missed the line as it was 17-16.

A net error saw Yamaguchi make it 17-17 and she then grabbed the lead with another superb return.

Sindhu then made it 19-18 with a couple of points and then grabbed the match points with Yamaguchi going wide. The Japanese then hit the net as Sindhu let out a cry of celebration.

Spectators from abroad to be barred from Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO (AP): Spectators from abroad will be barred from the Tokyo Olympics when they open in four months, the IOC and local organizers said Saturday.

The decision was announced after an online meeting of the International Olympic Committee, the Japanese government, the Tokyo government, the International Paralympic Committee, and local organizers.

The move was expected and rumored for several months. Officials said the risk was too great to admit ticket holders from overseas during a pandemic, an idea strongly opposed by the Japanese public. Japan has attributed about 8,800 deaths to COVID-19 and has controlled the virus better than most countries.

"In order to give clarity to ticket holders living overseas and to enable them to adjust their travel plans at this stage, the parties on the Japanese side have come to the conclusion that they will not be able to enter into Japan at the time of the Olympic and Paralympic Games," the Tokyo organizing committee said in a statement.

About 1 million tickets are reported to have been sold to fans from outside Japan. Organizers have promised refunds, but this will be determined by so-called Authorized Ticket Resellers that handle sales outside Japan. These dealers charge fees of up to 20% above the ticket price. It is not clear if the fees will be refunded.

"We could wait until the very last moment to decide, except for the spectators," said Seiko Hashimoto, the president of the organizing committee. "They have to secure accommodations and flights. So we have to decide early otherwise we will cause a lot of inconvenience from them. I know this is a very tough issue."

IOC President Thomas Bach called it a "difficult decision."

"We have to take decisions that may need sacrifice from everybody," he said. The financial burden of lost ticket sales falls on Japan. The local organizing committee budget called from \$800 million income from ticket sales, the third largest income source in the privately finance budget. Any shortfall in the budget will have to be made up by Japanese government entities.

Overall, Japan is officially spending \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics. Several government audits say the actual cost may be twice that much. All but \$6.7 billion is public money.

About 4.45 million tickets were sold to Japan residents. Organizers are expected next month to announce the capacity at venues, which will be filled by local residents.

The ban on fans from abroad comes just days before the Olympic torch relay starts Thursday from Fukushima prefecture in northeastern Japan.

Critics of Brazil's president being targeted by security law

SAO PAULO, MAR 20 (AP): Police in Brazil are starting to employ a dictatorship-era national security law against critics of President Jair Bolsonaro, while lawyers and activists rally to provide them with legal help and accuse the government of trying to silence dissent.

On Friday, demonstrators challenged police in the capital by parading with anti-Bolsonaro signs a day after four protesters were detained. They had called the president genocidal for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and displayed a cartoon depicting him as a Nazi. Officers took no action Friday as about 40 people protested for an hour.

The national security law, which dates from 1983, near the end of the country's military dictatorship, makes it a crime to harm the heads of the three branches of government or expose them to danger. The vague measure has recently been used to detain or investigate Bolsonaro critics.

Geography teacher Katia Garcia said she showed up in front of the president's office Friday because the arrests had inspired her.

They were jailed because the description 'genocidal' suits our president very well, Garcia said, wearing a face mask and face shield. He has contributed to our health care system collapsing, for the lack of vaccines. Police can't silence us.

There have been previous news-making charges against prominent critics of the president, including a newspaper



columnist, a political cartoonist and a popular YouTube star, but the law is increasingly being employed against ordinary citizens. Courts haven't upheld any of the arrests so far, but lawyers are expressing alarm that the tactic is becoming commonplace.

Both demonstrations in Brasilia called for Bolsonaro's impeachment due to his administration's alleged failings in the pandemic, which has caused almost 290,000 deaths in Brazil. The country has reported nearly 3,000 deaths each day this week.

On several instances, the president has complained that he is being unfairly vilified,

most recently Thursday night during a live Facebook broadcast.

They call me a dictator. I want you to point at one thing I did in two years and two months that was autocratic, he said while complaining about a newspaper column that used the word genocidal to describe him.

Brasilia police said Thursday that the four detained protesters violated the national security law as they showed a Swastika in association to the symbol of the president of the Republic. But Brazil's federal police force, which decides whether cases brought by local police de-

serve to go ahead in national security crimes, dismissed the case and released three of the four demonstrators. One was held on an outstanding warrant from a previous case.

Federal police have conducted more than 80 investigations under the security law during Bolsonaro's first two years, and more than 10 in the first 45 days of 2021, according to the newspaper O Globo. The yearly average before the conservative leader took office was 11.

The cases appear to almost entirely target Bolsonaro's critics, human rights organizations and activists say. One case last year involved

a sociologist and a businessman who paid for two billboards that insulted Bolsonaro by saying he wasn't worth a gnawed piece of fruit. That investigation was requested by Justice Minister Andr Mendonça, who called it a crime against the president's reputation. It was dismissed in October. On Friday night, unsuccessful presidential candidate Ciro Gomes said the federal police are investigating him for calling the president a thief in a radio interview in November. The request for the probe was signed by Bolsonaro himself, Gomes said on his social media channels.

I don't particularly care

about this act against me, but I think it is serious that Bolsonaro tries to intimidate opponents and adversaries, the left-leaning Gomes said.

On Monday, police invoked the national security law to force Felipe Neto, a popular YouTuber, to give testimony after he referred to Bolsonaro as "genocidal" in one of his broadcasts. Federal police dismissed the case two days later amid a public outcry.

Neto, who was named by Time magazine last year as one of the world's 100 most influential people, was also targeted in November with allegations of corrupting minors. Those charges were also dropped.

From the start, I knew that this attempt at intimidation was not aimed at scaring me. It was to scare the Brazilian people, Neto told The Associated Press by phone.

I have means to defend myself, but most teachers, journalists and members of civil society do not, added Neto, who this week set up a legal defense fund to help anyone who faces similar charges for criticizing Bolsonaro and needs an attorney.

O Globo said in an editorial Friday that the spirit of the national security law runs counter to Brazil's constitution in the promotion of civil liberties.

The national security law should be revoked and replaced by a more modern tool that is capable of reconciling the protection of the rule of law and the respect to individual rights, the newspaper said. Among those are the full and essential freedom of speech.

Striking Myanmar rail workers move out as protests continue

MANDALAY, MYANMAR (AP): Residents of Myanmar's second-biggest city helped striking railway workers move out of their state-supplied housing Saturday after the authorities said they would have to leave if they kept supporting the protest movement against last month's military coup.

Mandalay residents carried the workers' furniture and other household items to trucks, van and pickup trucks.

The state railway workers last month went on strike as key and early supporters of the civil disobedience movement against the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The military regime has sought to force them back to work through intimidation, which included a nighttime, gun-firing patrol last month through their housing area in Mandalay and a raid in the railway workers' housing area in Yangon.

Protests against the coup continued Saturday in cities and town across the country, including in Mandalay and Yangon.

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar after five decades of military rule. In the face of persistent strikes and protests against the takeover, the junta has responded with an increasingly violent crackdown and efforts to severely limit the information reaching the outside world.

Internet access has been severely restricted, private newspapers have been barred from publishing, and protesters,



journalists and politicians have been arrested in large numbers.

The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners has verified 235 deaths and has said the actual total — including ones where verification has been difficult — "is likely much higher." It said it has confirmed that 2,330 people have been arrested or charged since the coup, with 1,980 still detained or remaining charged.

In addition to using lethal force to try to break up demonstrations, the security forces have been carrying out a campaign of harassment, stealing from homes they raid, said the group, which also charged that security forces have used people they arrested as human shields as they sought to break up demonstrations.

Numerous reports on social media, including videos, have shown security forces vandalizing cars parked on the street.

The U.N. agencies UNICEF and UNESCO, along with the private humanitarian group Save the Children, on Friday

issued a statement criticizing the occupation of education facilities across Myanmar by security forces as a serious violation of children's rights. It said security forces have reportedly occupied more than 60 schools and university campuses in 13 states and regions.

"It will exacerbate the learning crisis for almost 12 million children and youth in Myanmar, which was already under tremendous pressure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing widespread school closures," said the statement. "Save the Children, UNESCO and UNICEF call on security forces to vacate occupied premises immediately and ensure that schools and educational facilities are not used by military or security personnel."

"Schools must be not used by security forces under any circumstances," it declared.

Calls for international action to halt the violence continue to mount.

"The junta can't defeat the people of Myanmar united in peaceful opposition," Tom An-

draws, the U.N.'s independent expert on human rights for Myanmar, wrote on Twitter on Friday. "Desperate, it launches ruthless attacks to provoke a violent response to try and justify even more violence. It's not working. The world must respond by cutting their access to money & weapons. Now." Unexpectedly strong statements were issued Friday by two of Myanmar's fellow countries in the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo urged a halt to violence and asked other regional leaders to hold a summit on the crisis.

Widodo's move came after ASEAN foreign ministers held a March 2 meeting that reached no consensus on the crisis.

Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin issued a statement supporting Widodo's call for as ASEAN summit, saying he was "appalled by the persistent use of lethal violence against unarmed civilians which has resulted in a high number of deaths and injuries, as well as suffering across the nation."

Pakistan records highest single-day spike in coronavirus cases this year

ISLAMABAD, MAR 20 (PTI): Pakistan on Saturday recorded its highest single-day increase in the coronavirus infections this year with 3,876 new cases as the positivity rate reached 9.4 per cent in the country.

The national tally of cases reached 623,135 while the death toll jumped to 13,799 as 40 patients died in the last 24 hours, the health ministry said. The data showed that 579,760 people recovered so far but some 2,122 were in a critical condition.

The Sindh province reported majority 262,796 cases, followed by Punjab with 195,087 cases, Khyber-Pakh-

tunkhwa 78,653, Islamabad 50,843, Balochistan 19,306, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 11,483 and Gilgit-Baltistan 4,967 cases. Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Hamza Shafqaat tweeted that 747 new coronavirus cases were detected in the capital on Friday, the highest number of daily infections ever recorded in the city.

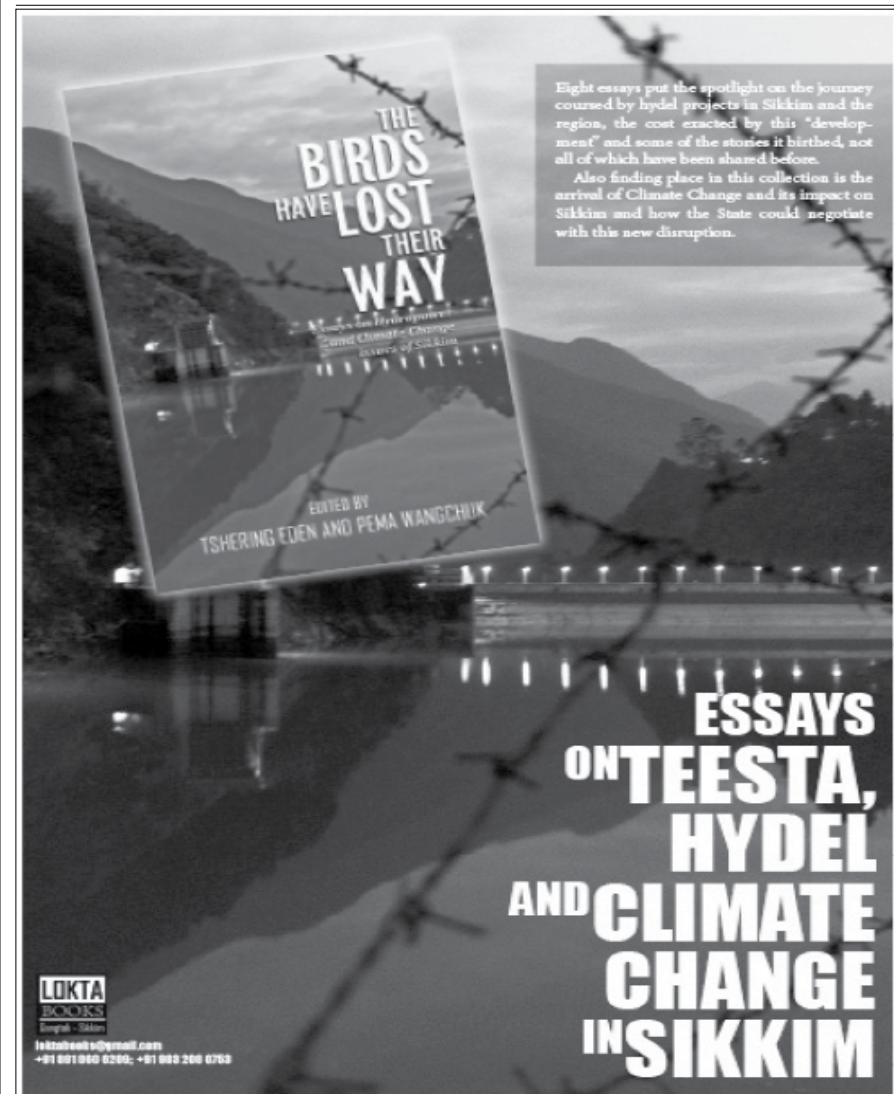
He said the district administration had started a crackdown on violations of SOP (standard operating procedures).

Islamabad district administration announced that both indoor and outdoor dining in restaurants of the capital will be closed after 10pm

along with all other commercial activities other than essential services link drug stores. However, takeaway services were allowed to keep the restaurants functional.

The measures came as the government announced plans to import one million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from China by the end of this month, according to Minister for Planning Asad Umar.

First consignment would reach by March 25 and the second one on March 30. The government will acquire more [COVID-19 vaccines] next month. We are bringing these vaccines from two different companies in China, he told Geo TV.



Priyanka Chopra Reveals She Didn't Take Nick Jonas Texting Her "Seriously"

Being "swept off" her feet by Nick Jonas is one of the many things Priyanka Chopra talked about in her interview with Oprah Winfrey for an upcoming episode of the talk show Super Soul. Talking to Oprah, Priyanka Chopra opened up about the first thoughts she had when Nick wanted to connect to her for the first time. Priyanka said she was apprehensive about dating the 28-year-old singer because of their age difference and that was just one of the many reasons: "I did really judge the book by its cover. I honestly didn't take it very seriously when Nick was texting me. I was 35 and I want to get married and I want to have kids. He is in his 20s... I don't know if that's something he would want to do. I did that to myself for a while till I actually went out with him."

Having said that, Priyanka revealed that meeting Nick Jonas in person changed everything: "Nothing surprised me more than you know him. He's such a self-assured man, so sensible, so excited about my achievements, my dreams... you know. Such a true partnership he offers me everything that we do together."

Priyanka said that her relationship with Nick Jonas is a reflection of how

she saw her parents "build a life together" growing up: "I truly believe that my mom manifested him because that was her marriage. She had a marriage of partnership. They worked together, they lived together, they built a home together, they built a life together in equal

cars party in 2017, which was the first milestone in their forever love story. Following a brief meeting, Nick Jonas reached out to Priyanka on Twitter and the rest is history. Months later, they arrived at the Met Gala in May 2018 together, both wearing custom Ralph



partnership. And I saw that growing up. And I am just amazed that I found exactly what I grew up with, with Nick. I just kind of swept. I let it happen."

Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra met for the first time at the Vanity Fair Os-

Lauren ensembles. Within weeks, they clicked their first photo together at a baseball match in Dodger Stadium, Los Angeles. Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra had a fairy tale wedding in December 2018.

HBO Max announces documentary series on actor Brittany Murphy



LOS ANGELES, MAR 20 (PTI): Streamer HBO Max has given an order for a two-part documentary series on late actor Brittany Murphy.

The untitled documentary, which hails from Blumhouse Television and Pyramid Productions, will explore the life and career of Murphy, who featured in films such as "Clueless", "Girl, Interrupted", "Drop Dead Gorgeous", and "8 Mile".

She died in 2009, under mysterious circumstances, at the age of 32.

The documentary will present an in-depth, intimate character portrait exploring the life and career and mysterious circumstances surrounding the actor's tragic death.

The series will go beyond the conspiracy theories and headlines, featuring new interviews by those closest to Brittany and new archival footage.

Cynthia Hill will direct the series with Jason Blum, Chris McCumber, Jeremy Gold, Mary Lisio and James Buddy Day as the executive producers.

"I agreed to do this film because I think it's a shame that Brittany's promising life and career has been eclipsed by the circumstances of her death.

"I think it's important to celebrate Brittany's talent as we struggle to explain the tragic circumstances of her and Simon's deaths," Hill said in a statement.

Ayushmann Khurrana wraps up shoot for 'Anek'

MUMBAI, MAR 20 (PTI): Actor Ayushmann Khurrana has concluded shooting for his next feature film "Anek".

The action-thriller movie reunites Khurrana and filmmaker Anubhav Sinha after their 2019 critically-acclaimed feature "Article 15".

The 36-year-old actor took to Instagram on Friday evening to share the news alongside a series of photos from the sets of the film, including his last shot, a picture with the director and his core team.

"It's a wrap! #Anek is very very special. It's full of surprises. An untouched subject. A very important new

age cinema," Khurrana captioned the post.

"Why do I get emotional on the last day of shoot? Coz I will never get to play that character again. I will miss playing Joshua. I will miss North East, he wrote.

Backed by Sinha's Benaras Media Works and Bhushan Kumar's T-Series, the film is set to release on September 17.

Khurrana has also a romantic drama, titled "Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui", up for release in theatres on July 9. The Abhishek Kapoor-directed movie will also feature Vaani Kapoor.

'In the Heights' release date moved up to June 11

Los Angeles, Mar 20 (PTI): The film adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda's hit Broadway production "In the Heights" will be releasing a week early in the US.

Director Jon M Chu shared the news on Twitter, revealing that the film will hit the theatres as well as streamer HBO Max on June 11 instead of June 18.

"Surprise. We coming to Theatres one week earlier! There has been so much demand since our trailer release this week that we decided to get it out to you sooner. Let's go! See you soon. JUNE 11th

2021" he tweeted.

Miranda, who created the stage musical with Quiara Alegria Hudes, will appear in a small role in the movie, besides providing the music.

The movie is about a bodega owner (Anthony Ramos) who has mixed feelings about closing his store and retiring to the Dominican Republic after he inherits his grandmother's fortune.

It will also feature Corey Hawkins, Melissa Barrera, Leslie Grace, Jimmy Smits, Olga Merediz, Daphne Rubin-Vega, Stephanie Beatriz and Dascha Polanco.



FUN IN THE SUN! The former Bachelor winner, Hannah Ann Sluss looks ready for summer, wearing a sequined blue and purple bikini as she relaxes at Nikki Beach Club in Miami.

Dibakar Banerjee reunites with Ekta Kapoor for 'LSD 2'

MUMBAI, MAR 20 (PTI): Filmmaker Dibakar Banerjee and producer Ekta Kapoor are teaming up again after over a decade for the sequel of their critically-acclaimed drama Love Sex Aur Dhokha.

The 2010 film, which starred Nushrat Bharucha, Rajkummar Rao, Anshuman Jha, Neha Chauhan, Amit Sial, Herry Tangri and Ashish Sharma, featured three separate but inter-linked stories about honour killing, an MMS scandal and sting operations.

The film, that paved the way for unconventional storytelling in new age Indian cinema, clocked 11 years on Friday and the makers are hopeful to take the legacy forward with the second part.

Banerjee said Kapoor has been a game changer in the way narrative is being consumed in India and he is hopeful their second collaboration will be an unpredictable and a thrilling roller coaster ride.

LSD' was a moment of change in our lives captured through the voice of technology that was changing our souls. A decade later another wave of technology is changing the way we think, dream, live, love and hate. We are

changing again into something we don't quite know. LSD 2' will be a journey into those unknown depths, Banerjee said in a statement.

The 51-year-old director added that LSD 2 won't cater to the family audience.

It may be something we scare ourselves at night with. It could be a mirror of what we are becoming," Kapoor said LSD is best remembered for its riveting storytelling and with the sequel they aim to recreate the same magic.

Dibakar's craft and storytelling prowess is superlative and I am thrilled to associate with him yet again. We are hopeful to recreate the magic this time around as well and hope that the audience will laud and appreciate 'LSD 2' as much as they did the first part, she said. The film will be produced by Dibakar Banerjee Productions and Cult Movies, the new division started by Kapoor to promote edgy stories.

"LSD 2" is the second project being produced under the banner after Anurag Kashyap's thriller movie Dobaaraa, starring Taapsee Pannu.



THE DAY AHEAD

Aries: Know your worth. Demand a price accordingly. You're receiving that much-needed confidence boost this weekend, which is helping you ask for what you deserve without hesitation. On the interpersonal front, this is a time of security and stability. The solid foundation you have built is helping your relationship move to the next level. PS: Allow yourself to lean on them in times of need.

Tip: This weekend, you're getting that much-needed confidence boost.

Taurus: Everything in our life moves in circles. The winter makes space for summer and the night seamlessly merges into day. In a similar fashion, all that was dark and gloomy in your existence is now being replaced by hope and optimism. If that doesn't call for a celebration, what does, Taurus? This weekend, you're also likely to experience a shift in perspective when it comes to a certain somebody who's been in your life for a long time. Yes, they've made mistakes—plenty of them. But their willingness to make amends is helping you start afresh.

Tip: All that was dark and gloomy in your existence is now being replaced by hope and optimism.

Gemini:

The time to make a decision has come, Gemini. But, the real question is: what will your decision be guided by? Will you give in to the fears or choose love over everything else? Remember, you have nothing to prove to anybody. So, let go of the need to meet other people's expectations and follow what your heart is telling you at this moment. You won't regret a thing—we promise!

Tip: Let your decisions be guided by love.

Cancer:

This may not be the love you asked for, but it's the love you've got. The Universe works in mysterious ways, and knows exactly what's right for you in each moment. Listen to the voice inside your head that's telling you it's time to make space for a certain someone. Those who are already committed may feel inspired to take the next step. A weekend getaway with your beloved sounds like a good place to start.

Tip: The Universe knows what's best for you, Cancer.

Leo:

You're overworked, Leo, and there are no two ways about that. How do you plan to complete the given tasks without exhausting your reserves? The cards are urging you to step back and reassess the game plan. Asking for help may not be such a bad idea after all! Examining the emotional baggage you have been

carrying is also important at this point. If you've been slacking off when it comes to therapy, now is the time to get back to it.

Tip: Step back and reassess the game plan.

Virgo:

Here's the thing, honey: nobody's going to know how you feel unless you talk about it. The cards are urging you to start by being honest with yourself and then holding space for an open conversation with the other person. It may not be easy, but it's what you need at this moment. So, trust what your higher self is telling you and take the next step without hesitation.

Tip: Start by being honest with yourself.

Libra:

Is this the end of the road or the beginning of something brand new? Your higher self already knows the answer, Libra. So, take a moment to be grateful for what's gone as you open the door you feel called to. Don't be in a rush to move forward, though. Give yourself the chance to 'be' and integrate the soul lessons that you're being asked to.

Tip: This could be the beginning of something brand new.

Scorpio:

Take a deep breath and analyse the given situation carefully. Finding a balance between your head

and your heart is the key to making a decision that will serve the highest good. You've got this, Scorpio! Those who have been fighting a legal battle for some time now (an especially exhausting one), will find that the scales of justice are tipping in their favour, reiterating their faith in the benevolence of the Universe.

Tip: Justice will be served. Trust that and do what's right for you in this moment.

Sagittarius:

What if we said you are your own best friend *and* worst enemy? Become aware of how and where you are being unkind towards yourself. Yes, you've made a mistake—a grave one. But then again, you're only human, Sagittarius. So, forgive, forget, and make love where there has been war. It is only by releasing the burden of guilt and shame that you will be able to make space for the new to come in.

Tip: But first, forgive yourself.

Capricorn:

The time to make yet another significant decision has come. But, before you do, take a moment to look back at the trajectory of your life. Analyse the things that have worked for you and the things that haven't. This will give you a clear perspective on which way to go from here. Remember, this choice is yours and yours

alone. Don't let the judgements (or expectations) of others come in the way of following your heart.

Tip: Analyse the things that have worked for you and the things that haven't.

Aquarius:

What if we said this is the most important decision you will make and that your life will never look the same? Carefully consider your next step, Aquarius, and know that your instinct is guiding you in the right direction. You won't regret a thing—we promise! This is also a time of pushing your creative boundaries and experimenting with media you never have before. Freeing yourself from the idea of perfection will help you embrace the concept of play.

Tip: Your life will never look the same.

Pisces:

"I hope you will go out and let stories, that is life, happen to you, and that you will work with these stories... water them with your blood and tears and your laughter till they bloom, till you yourself burst into bloom." Wise words by Clarissa Pinkola Estés to inspire you to let go of the inhibitions and take life by the horns. This could be the start of a brand new adventure for you. Let your thirst for personal freedom guide all of your decisions from now on!

Tip: Let life happen to you, Pisces.