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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## SIKKIM POLICE WANTS PEOPLE TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBLY Prakash Lee's FB post had potential to instigate disaffection against authorities: SP East

**SAGAR CHETTRI**  
**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Senior police officials addressed a press conference today to underline that people need to be extremely careful about the opinions and information they share on social media especially when they take an instigating tone to convey false or misleading information on sensitive and serious matters which have potential to create a law & order situation.

The press conference was called in connection with the arrest of known Sikkim Democratic Front supporter, Prakash Gurung ("Prakash Lee"), in connection with a case which has been playing out on Facebook for the past few days about one Bhim Bahadur Mukhia who had gone "missing" shortly after posting an 11-minute rant against the State Government



in which he also railed against the Chief Minister.

DIG [Range], Sikkim Police, Prawin Gurung, informed that Mr Mukhia's wife had filed a missing person's report about her husband at the Sadar Thana on 28 March. As

per the missing person's report, the family had not been able to trace Mr Mukhia since 26 March, the DIG-Range informed.

Two days after filing the report, the wife returned to Sadar Thana to inform that Mr

Mukhia had been found and the missing person's report was withdrawn on 31 March.

While this was playing out, announcements of his having gone missing and seeking help to trace him had started circulating widely on social media,

and on 01 April, Mr Prakash Gurung posted a cryptic message announcing that the said person who had spoken against the government had gone missing and that Sikkim Police should make finding him a priority. **turn to pg03**

**Chogyal's birth anniv marked with discussion on Art 371F**  
**RESOLUTIONS PASSED DEMANDING ILP FOR SIKKIM AND NO MORE HYDEL PROJECTS**

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Civil society members came together today to commemorate the birth anniversary of the late Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal and apart from paying homage to his memory, made the event more significant by convening a discussion on Article 371F of the Constitution of India which gives Sikkim its unique identity within India. On the occasion, members and representatives from different organisations and some individuals in their personal capacities deliberated on the topic, 'Evolution of Article 371F and its Significance Today'.

After a passionate session of discussions and deliberations, the meeting unanimously passed four resolutions and resolved to present these to the Central and the State governments. The day-long meeting was organised under the banner of Sikkim Nagrik Samaj.

Speaking on the resolutions, convenor, I Am 371F, Passang Sherpa, informed that the first resolution seeks implementation of Inner Line Permit in Sikkim to stop influx into the State and for national security and to keep Sikkim beyond the jurisdiction of laws like Citizenship Amendment Act.

Another resolution passed today demands that the order of the High Court of Sikkim on the fake Certificates of Identification case be strictly followed and implemented by the state government and all fake Sikkim Subject Certificates and COIs and other related documents be rejected. **turn to pg03**

## SDF was infested by power-brokers, will now promote collective leadership: Chamling

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Sikkim Democratic Front president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, today announced that the party was done with "opportunistic power-brokers" and will now institutionalise "collective leadership at all levels" and open channels of communication to ensure that people and party workers are genuinely empowered and heard.

Responding to a query on Facebook asking him to explain his declaration of "collective leadership," Mr Chamling admits that it was the party's "failure" in not realising that "many political brokers, opportunist and irresponsible so-called leaders had infested our party who were taking advantage of the people's trust."

"They used the people's trust to become MLAs, Chairpersons etc. Now we will have collective leadership at all levels and channels of communication will always be open," he states.

This, he explains, the party will attempt by strengthening "channels of communication with the grassroots and empower the people at the grassroots to voice their concerns and opinions."

The leaders at the grassroots will be empowered to participate in decision making.

The process, he adds, will begin with the party organising regular janta darbars where people will be invited to talk, criticize and make suggestions.

The "leaders," meanwhile, "will sit, listen and make notes." There will then be a "reverse janta darbar" where leaders will submit their reports back to the people.

Simultaneously, the party will develop a shadow cabinet and shadow opposition within the party to engage in civilized and frank discussions on policies, principles and internal democracy.

He adds that SDF will also place experts in the party leadership to make the party "relevant in all spheres of human life."

The experts will be engaged to discuss unemployment issues, grievances and the hardships of employees - both in the government and private sectors, entrepreneurship, press and media issues, he envisions.

He also wants the party to become "the most child-friendly, youth-friendly, elderly-friendly, housewife friendly, stay at home fathers friendly, differently-abled friendly party" and raise the level of green politics in Sikkim and make the party the greenest party in India.

"The SDF's collective leadership will finish the politics of power brokers and their 'barefaced deceit and duplicitous politics,'" he is convinced.

## CM joins Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Dandi March in Gujarat



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang participated in the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Dandi March on 03 April, along with his Cabinet colleagues, MLAs, officials and the students in Gujarat, a press communique from the Chief Minister's

Office informs.

The 12 Mile journey on foot began from Damman where he addressed the local gentry.

He expressed gratitude for the warm welcome accorded to the Sikkim contingent and asserted on building a strong relationship between the two states.

He paid homage to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi who had opposed the salt tax levied during the time and led the original Dandi March which is considered one of the historic moments of the pre-independence era.

Along the march, **turn to pg02**

**SER-THRI-NGA-SOL - 04 APRIL, 1965**

## Remembering the Coronation 56 years ago



Compiled by KIRAN RASIALY

**FOREIGN PRESS REVIEW**  
**DAILY TELEGRAPH, SUNDAY EXPRESS,**

**4th April, 1965**

Under the caption "Orchids Line Route as they Crown the King in the Himalayas", Judy Gendel wrote:-

The late King Farouk was wrong in his estimation that after 25 years there would be only five Kings - the playing card kings and the English monarch.

I would bring the number up to six - Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, England and Sikkim.

The new Chogyal or King, whose Coronation we have come to attend, is a man who is not only venerated by his people as kind of God but is worthy of their veneration.

He has dignity and humanity, a progressive outlook combined with the zeal of his early monastic training-he would probably have been a Buddhist monk had not his elder brother been killed in the air force in 1941.

The Chogyal has a pleasant and delightful face and it would be hard to find any one group in this small and beautiful country who is not devoted to him.

His marriage to the New York educated Hope Cooke has done him no harm despite early pessimistic forecasts.

Queen Hope La, as she is called here, has become Sikkimese in her clothes, her modulated speech-almost a whisper-and her outlook.

The strangers here are lodged in amazing comfort. Guest house have been built with running cold water, and endless servants provided to bring steaming buckets of hot water; day or night, to clean shoes, wash and press clothes, run errands and serve food and drinks.



Tomorrow they must walk across from the Palace to the Royal Monastery, a temple painted in splendid bold colours, with banners, wall painting, and a fretwork of silk inside. The King will be simply dressed, and gradually during the ceremony be robed in the grandeur of monarchy, much like our Queen.

**THE DAILY EXPRESS**  
**5TH APRIL, 1965**

In his dispatch David Dunn wrote:-

An 18ft. trumpet blew away evil spirits. Cymbals crashed. Prayer wheels turned.

And a 26-year old Hope Cooke and her husband were crowned King and Queen of Sikkim in a 1,200-year-old ceremony in Gangtok, the Capital today.

Maharaja Palden Thondup Namgyal and his Queen Hope Namgyal sat on the golden throne facing the auspicious direction. **turn to pg02**



## Kenya's Ruth Chepngetich smashes half marathon world record



**ISTANBUL, 04 APR [AFP]:** Kenya's Ruth Chepngetich smashed the women's half marathon world record on Sunday in a time of one hour four minutes and two seconds in Istanbul. The marathon world champion from Doha 2019 sliced almost half a minute off the previous mark of 1hr 4:31 set by Ethiopia's Ababel Yeshaneh in February 2020 in the United Arab Emirates.

Chepngetich, 26, was followed across the line in Turkey by Ethiopian Yalemzerf Yehualaw (1hr 4:40) with Kenya's two-time world 5000m champion Hellen Obiri third in 1hr 4:51.

This was the first time three women have finished inside 65 minutes in one half marathon.

Chepngetich pulled clear of Yehualaw in the final stages to seal her place in the record books and win the race for a third time, following 2017 and 2019.

A strong early pace was set chiefly by Brigid Kosgei, the Kenyan marathon record holder, who eventually came in fifth, almost two minutes adrift.

Chepngetich covered the first 10km in 30:21, maintaining her rhythm to the line despite the wet conditions.

Her compatriot and world record-holder

Kibiwott Kandie won the men's race in a course record of 59min 35sec.

This was well short of his world best mark of 57:32 established in Valencia in December.

The former world record holder Geoffrey Kamworor took second, three seconds behind with Roncer Kipkorir (59:46) completing an all-Kenyan podium.

Kandie, the world half-marathon silver medallist, had enough in the tank to hold off Kamworor inside the final kilometre.

He lowered by 15sec the course record set in 2018 by Amdework Walelegn, who crossed in fourth on Sunday.

## PM chairs high-level meet amid surge in Coronavirus cases

**NEW DELHI, 02 APR [NDTV]:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a high-level meeting today to review the Covid-related issues including the ongoing vaccination drive in the country as the infection is seeing a surge. All senior officers -- including the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Health Secretary participated in the meeting.

Over the last 24 hours, the country saw the biggest daily surge in Covid cases since mid-September, with 93,249 fresh infections, taking the tally to over 1.24 crore.

This is the highest since September 19, when 93,337 cases were recorded.

The health ministry has said that eight states account for 81.42 per cent

of the infections reported in the last 24 hours. The states are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Tam-



il Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

The Centre has already asked states to take strong action to enforce the safety measures among the masses including the use of mask and social distancing. The growing laxity in implementing the safety measures is the reason for the current spike, it maintains, though scientists have pointed to the proliferation of mutant strains.

Dr Randeep Guleria -- the chief of Delhi's All India Institute of Medical

Sciences and a top member of the government's Covid Task Force -- said it is time to place a bigger range of measures, including containment zones, lockdown areas, ramping up testing, tracing and isolation.

Earlier Dr Guleria had said the mutant strains are partly responsible for the spike.

Now he said there is a need to have more genome sequencing and the data should be compared to epidemiological data from the ground to identify particular areas where the surge is happening.

## CM joins Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav....

the Chief Minister was presented with mementos and also had a brief interaction with the people.

The march concluded at Navsari, where a cultural programme was organised in the presence of Minister of Tribal Development, Tourism, Forest, Women & Child Welfare, Ganpathsinh Vasava. The programme included performances from Gujarat and Sikkim.

The Chief Minister, in his brief address at the programme, stated that he, including the representatives from Sikkim, were fortunate to be part of this momentous occasion.

He added that Sikkim, in-spite of being a small state, has walked hand in hand with the nation and contributed to the process of nation building.

He added that Sikkim will continue to work in tandem with the nation and promote the Prime Minister's call for 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and under his able guidance, he believes the country will reach newer heights.

He extended an invitation to the people of Gujarat to visit Sikkim and experience the vibrant culture and tradition the state has to offer.

Further, he stressed on building a strong relationship between the two states for mutual benefit.

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# 5 runners bag medals at The Buddha Trails

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Five long distance runners from Sikkim have won medals at the second edition of a trail running competition, 'The Buddha Trails 2021' held at Sandakphu trail on the Indo-Nepal border in Darjeeling on Saturday. This is considered one of the toughest high altitude trail race in India.

Phurba Tamang finished first in women's category [65 kms] with a timing of 10 hours 12 minutes on the route started from Rimbick, Gurdung, Sandakphu [3736 m], Phalut

[3435 m], Samaden, Ramam, Shrikhola Bridge and again at Rimbick.

In 30 km categories, Nimsang Limboo also stood on the first position with a timing of 2 hours and 52 minutes, Bhutan Gurung on 2nd position with timing of 3 hours and 12 minutes and Dhan Kumar Manger on 3rd position with timing of 3 hours and 20 minutes.

All four runners are the students of Marathon Man Amar Subba.

Likewise, another runner from Sikkim, Neaha Rai, came first in 12 km category.



## No plans for NRC exercise in Bengal but will implement...: BJP leader

**KOLKATA, 04 APR [PTI]:**

Countering opposition claims that the BJP, if voted to power in Bengal, will update the National Register of Citizens (NRC), thereby "taking away the citizenship rights of people", Kailash Vijayvargiya, the BJP's national general secretary, on Sunday reaffirmed that no such plan is on the radar.

He, however, stated that the party intends to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and provide rights to refugees who fled religious persecution in neighbouring countries and moved to India.

"We are only looking forward to implementing the CAA after the elections, as promised in the manifesto. It is an important issue for us, as we strive to grant citizenship to the persecuted refugees. We do not have any plan of conducting the NRC exercise, even if we win the elections," he said.

According to state

BJP sources, the new citizenship law will benefit more than 1.5 crore people in India, including over 72 lakh in West Bengal.

Accusing the TMC of "running a disinformation campaign against the saffron camp, the 64-year-old leader wondered why the ruling party in the state is opposing the CAA, which could be of benefit to many.

Bengal has a sizeable population of Matuas, who had been migrating to the state since the 1950s, primarily due to religious persecution.

The community, with its three million members, influences at least four Lok Sabha seats and 30-40 assembly seats in Nadia, North and South-24 Parganas.

The TMC hopes to politically exploit the confusion over CAA implementation to curry favour with the Matua community, which had voted hands down in favour of the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Training his guns on Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her assertion that the "Election Commission was working at the behest of the BJP", Mr Vijayvargiya, who is also the BJP's Bengal minder, said it was an irony that the TMC boss pointed no finger at the poll panel when her party registered two successive electoral victories.

Contending that Ms Banerjee's "foolish claims" will yield no result, he said the TMC, sensing defeat, is levelling absurd allegations against the saffron party.

Mr Vijayvargiya also downplayed insinuations that the party could be at a disadvantage for not having projected a chief ministerial face in Bengal, and said "several leaders are capable of taking the reins of the state" and a decision would be taken only after the polls.

"We are fighting the elections under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. We have never projected a CM face

in poll-bound states. For us, ideology is important. Once voted to power, the legislative party in consultation with the top leaders will decide on the CM candidate," he said.

In an interview with PTI, the BJP's Bengal minder further claimed that the people of the state are waiting to witness "ashol poriborton" (real change), as they have long endured infiltration problems, corrupt practices and the politics of appeasement.

The call for "poriborton" was first given by the TMC during the 2011 assembly polls, as it sought to end the 34-year Left rule in the state.

Slamming the Mamata Banerjee camp over its "outsider versus insider" debate, the BJP's chief strategist in Bengal said that the ruling party in the state has nothing better to talk about, given its dismal performance in the last 10 years. The TMC has branded the BJP as a "party of outsiders" as its top leaders hail from other

states. "The TMC wants to make an emotional appeal with its "Bengal daughter" campaign. But I don't think Bengal would get swayed away by this. This is 2021, and such issues don't have much of an impact. As the party has no achievement in its bag,

it clings to this "outsider-insider" debate," he said.

Noting that people are fed up with the TMC's "syndicate culture, appeasement politics and politicisation and criminalisation of administration", Mr Vijayvargiya said "corruption has percolated to the grass-roots level, and that has angered the people of the state".

Insisting that the BJP is keen on securing India's eastern borders, which have turned into a "transit point for terror elements", he said infiltration is not just threatening national security but also taking a toll on the country's economy, as locals now have to compete with the illegal immigrants for jobs.

## Remembering the Coronation 56 years ago...

The direction, like the month, the days and the time, was considered auspicious by Buddhist astrologers.

During the 90 minute ceremony in the chapel the Maharaja was robed and offered emblems of Kingship and auspicious objects like a "gem stone from an elephant's head," and a 1,000 spoked golden wheel.

Queen Hope was given eight "gifts of bliss" -- a sacred wheel, a banner, an urn, a golden fish, a lotus flower, a noose, a special herb and a fruit.

Priests threw sacred water of five rivers and rice on the couple to give them long life and protect them.

WASHINGTON POST in its editorial of 6th April wrote:-

We have confidence in the Royal astrologers who picked the date for the Coronation of the King of Sikkim and his lovely American-born Queen. Everything else about the events that carried the former Hope Cooke to the side of the King PaldenThondup Namgyal has been touched with improbable magic. Here was a girl who dreamed about the Orient, becoming the Royal Bride of a King who wants to make Sikkim "a paradise on earth."

It is pleasant escapism to read some news about Asia without being concerned with military options or diplomatic signals. But television seems a jarring intrusion in the ceremony itself -- we much prefer the ancient Sikkimese custom of announcing the glad tidings with six-foot horns that echo through valleys. A coincidence of names lends enchantment to the occasion. Americans are well aware that Monaco is touched with Grace; now Sikkim is radiant with Hope.

**5TH APRIL, 1965**

PaldenThondupNamgyal, was today enthroned as the 12thChogyal (King) of Sikkim in a colourful ceremony in the Tsuk-Lak-Khang Royal Chapel in Gangtok. He is 41. His 25-year-old wife, former Miss Hope Cooke, of New York, became the Gyalmo (Queen) of Sikkim.

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS

In a dispatch published in CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, Desmond Doing wrote:-

In a ceremony colourful that flabbergasted spectators, the former Hope Cooke of Seal Harbour, Me., was consecrated Maharani of Sikkim here Sunday.

Also consecrated was Maharaja PaldenThondup Namgyal, her husband.

The ritual had everything-dazling pageantry from an elegant past, colour excitement, pathos, an ancient mystique and to cap it all nature was outrageously kind.

There were cloudless skies after weeks of rain, in answer, perhaps to the prayers of the Lamas, snow sparkled on nearby

mountains and the sacred peak of Kanchenjunga was flying a fresh plume of snow like the gossamer scarves traditionally presented to the Rulers of Sikkim after their consecration.

Gifts to the royal couple included the sort of things that have been by-passed by the modern age-bolts of antique Chinese and Russian brocades, carpets from the looms of Peking and Shigatse, rare incense, jade bowls, fragile porcelain and vessels of silver and gold.

At 9.22 Sunday morning the great monastery drums boomed and from the Victorian doll's house of a palace stepped the royal procession-the Maharaja in saffron and gold the colours of spiritual eminence and royalty, the Maharani in red with a jeweled cap on her auburn hair.

With them came members of the royal family- the handsome Dowager Maharani, the delicate sisters of the Maharaja and the royal children.

The scene around the royal couple was drenched in colour, shocking pink, turquoises, coral, emerald and moss green. It glowed from the murals, the tapestries, the brocaded hangings, the ornate altars and the jeweled deities-the compassionate Buddha, the Guru Rimpoche and DorjiSempa, the grimacing god whose purpose is to purify and protect.

**AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA**

Calcutta, 7th April, 1965

Coronation (Ser-thri-nga-sol in Sikkim) is a matter for rejoicing. For the young Ruler of the tiny but strategic Himalayan State, it is also acceptance of great responsibility when as never before in the history of Sikkim, her Ruler has to be concerned with an external threat not only to territorial integrity but also spiritual values, cherished through undisturbed centuries.

**THE ECONOMIST**

10th April, 1965

Magic worked in Gangtok on Sunday, April 4th. After days of drenching rain, dawn broke over a clear sky, in response, it seemed, to continuous prayers chanted by three Lamas appointed to the task. Maharaja PaldenThondup and his American wife, stepped out from the palace followed by members of the family in the fine dazzling procession.

At the hour fixed after anxious astrological calculations, their Highnesses took their seats in the chapel on gold-brocaded chairs, their feet resting on gilt stools. Soon the chanting stopped, signifying that purification was complete. Lamas led the couple to their carved thrones, each with 13 cushions standing for the 13 stages of perfection. They offered their new king various tokens of divine royalty, among them a thousand-spoked golden wheel.





**SINGTAM'S NEW NAGAR PANCHAYATS WILL HAVE THEIR HANDS FULL:** Singtam now has five new members elected to its Nagar Panchayat and the new "independents" will have their hands full when it comes to making the town better served. There is a lot of work that is pending and there is much that requires mending in the valley town. Swachh Singtam is only the first challenge, but an important one to begin addressing. [from YOGEN THATAL]

## Grand Fashion Fiesta auditions in Sikkim in May

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Karnataka-based Luxe Voguesion has brought the Grand Fashion Fiesta 2021 to Sikkim.

The beauty pageant, which seeks to cover Sikkim for the first time, will hold its auditions in May and shortlisted contestants from Sikkim will get entry into the grand finale scheduled to be held in June in Hyderabad.

The auditions will provide a platform to models, designers, western style dancers, classical dancer, singers, bands and comedy and mimicry artists.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Show Designer, Choreographer and Director of the event, Sushma Su-



nam Srivastav, informed that Grand Fashion Fiesta is a popular event and of how it was time for talent in Sikkim to get a chance to feature in it.

"I am happy to bring this event for the first time in my home State to provide opportunity and a bigger platform to local talents of Sikkim to take them

to the national levels. I am looking forward to the show bringing hidden talents of Sikkim to the higher levels," she said.

Auditions for West and South Districts will be held in Jorethang from 01 to 03 May followed by auditions for East and North Districts at Gangtok from 05 to 07 May.

This will be followed by the semifinals in Gangtok on 08 May.

Ms Srivastav added that the finalists will be taken by the organizers for the grand finale to be held from 10 to 12 June in Hyderabad.

She invited talented artists from different categories in Sikkim to register for the contest.

## Mr Himalayan Manhunt gets a logo



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

The official logo and promo of the upcoming event, Mr Himalayan Manhunt 2021, was released here on Sunday. Mr Himalayan Manhunt is introduced as the first national pageant from Sikkim and is being presented by Gangtok-based Sushma Production and powered by Sikkim Chronicle and Entertainment Chronicle.

The promotional event was attended by STDC Chairperson,

Lukendra Rasaily, Additional Political Secretary to the CM, Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha, Chairperson Transport Department, Basant Tamang, Special DGP, Akshay Sachdeva among other dignitaries and attendees.

Sushma Production founder, Sushma Gurung informs that such events have been helping promote local youth at national and international platforms.

Sushma Production CEO, Utsav Gurung, urged

youth to take full advantage of this opportunity to reach high levels.

Sikkim Chronicle co-founder, Yougen Tamang, in turn mentioned that Mr Sikkim Manhunt was launched in 2018 and has been successful in putting Sikkim on the beauty pageant map of the country with many contestants having bagged the chance to feature in movies, music albums and other projects over the year.

He added that Mr Himalayan Manhunt has been launched seeing

the impact of Mr Sikkim Manhunt and to elevate it to the national level.

He added that this was the first national pageant from Sikkim to open doors for aspiring models from Himalayan region to reach national and international arenas.

The STDC Chairperson appreciated the initiative and said that the state government has been providing platforms, opportunities and supporting local talent in different areas to reach national and international levels.

## Prakash Lee's FB post...

Apparently, this post was also widely shared and on 01 April, Mr Mukhia's wife was, as per the authorities, back at Sadar Thana to file a complaint that the speculations and exaggerations being shared about her husband on social media was traumatising the family and causing undue harassment.

The FIR was lodged and Mr Prakash Gurung called in for questioning on 01 April and subsequently taken into custody.

The DIG detailed that based on the FIR filed by Mr Mukhia's family, a case was registered at Sadar Thana under section 153A and 505 (2) of the IPC and Prakash Gurung booked.

SP [East], Dr Shiva Prasad Yellarsari, claimed that the Facebook post in question was based on false information since it was posted on 01 April, 48 hours after Mr Mukhia had been traced. He added that the tone of the Facebook post by Mr Prakash Gurung had potential to incite disaffection and violence against the authorities if Mr Mukhia had not been traced.

It is another matter that things did not come to such a pass, but the SP stressed that posting something without cross checking the facts suggested a dangerous ulterior motive which could have created a serious problem.

The DIG-Range echoed these sentiments and wondered aloud about a serious law and order situation could have been created if Mr Mukhia had not been traced.

This, the DIG stressed, was a serious crime while adding that Sikkim was a peaceful State but some individuals have been trying to besmirch this image by creating confusion among the people with negative and fake posts on social media.

He further urged the people to use social media platforms responsibly in the interest of the people and the society and also to properly check and verify information before sharing them.

Following Mr Prakash Gurung's arrest, it may be recalled, that his sister and advocate Nawin Kiran Pradhan had protest at the thana challenging the police action and accusing Sikkim Police of over-reacting and political targeting.

Mr Prakash Gurung, meanwhile, is now out on bail.

Responding to media queries on the repeated arrests of Mr Prakash Lee, the SP confirmed that there were seven criminal cases against him dating back to 2016 when the first case was registered against him. Cases against him are being investigated at Sadar Thana, Pakyong Police Station and CID branch of Sikkim Police.

# Citizens Foundation revamps 6 Aanganwadi Centres

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

An Aanganwadi Centre at Takshang Kaizaley ward [Amba GPU], revamped by Citizens Foundation, was inaugurated today.

The undertaking is supported by HDFC Parivartan's HRDP-SOULS project and will have Citizens Foundation Sikkim revamp six Aanganwadi Centres at Amba and Thekabong Parakha GPUs of Pakyong sub-division, East Sikkim, a press release informs.

Today's inauguration had social worker Ravi Shankar Kumar Singh as chief guest accompanied by Ganesh Reddy, Secretary and CEO, Citizens Foundation, Rajeev Kamal Bittu, and Amna Devi Basnett, ward panchayat and vice president of Amba GPU.

Also today, a student



from an underprivileged family who is appearing for class X board exam and the AWW were gifted solar lamps.

After the inauguration, Citizens Founda-

tion staff along with the guests visited the model farm developed under HDFC Parivartan at Bageswari ward of Thekabong Parakha GPU and interacted with the FPG members

and lead farmer.

Turmeric seeds were also donated to some farmers in a bid to promote organic spice cultivation under SOULS project, it is informed.

## Minors among 6 new Covid cases in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

Six new cases of novel coronavirus were reported in the last 24 hours in Sikkim taking the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 6,257. On the other hand, the number of recovered cases of COVID-19 here has further improved to 5,970 with three new recover-

ies on Saturday.

There are currently 51 active cases of coronavirus in Sikkim, of whom two are in the ICU facility of the COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital.

In his daily health bulletin on Sunday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia informed that the six new cases were report-

ed in the testing of 174 samples on Saturday and all were picked up in RT-PCR testing of 165 samples.

All the new cases are from East District.

Among the new cases from in and around the capital, are one person from the Indira Bye-Pass Area, one from Shyari and two from 6th Mile-Tadong [a 10 year old

and a four years old]. He added that a person from Assam Lingzey was found positive as well.

While giving details of COVID vaccination, Mr Bhutia informed a total of 920 persons aged 45 years & above were vaccinated for COVID-19 at different parts of the State on Saturday - 770 in South District and 150 in West District.

### RESOLUTIONS PASSED...

The third resolution seeks safeguard and strengthening the Registration of Companies (Sikkim) Act of 1961, an Old Law of Sikkim to protect local businessmen, workers and people of Sikkim, he said.

While condemning the recent meeting of the Chief Secretary and CMD of NHPC and its decision to revive the Teesta Stage IV hydel project and to start more hydel projects in Sikkim, Mr Sherpa said the fourth resolution wants Teesta Stage IV and other new hydel projects in Sikkim scrapped and seeks a review and re-evaluation of the existing hydel projects in Sikkim.

He added that efforts will be made to generate wider awareness on the resolutions passed today and discussions leading to them.

## COVID-19 patients can be categorised into three groups, say scientists

**WASHINGTON, APR 4**

(PTI): Scientists have identified three different types of COVID-19 disease traits in patients, depending on their comorbidities, complications, and clinical outcomes, an advance that may help target future interventions to the most risk-prone individuals.

The new study, published in the journal PLOS ONE, analysed

the electronic health records (EHRs) from 14 hospitals in the midwestern US and from 60 primary care clinics in the state of Minnesota.

According to the researchers, including those from the University of Minnesota in the US, the study included 7,538 patients with confirmed COVID-19 between March 7 and August 25, 2020, of

which 1,022 patients required hospitalisation.

Close to 60 per cent of the patients included in the research presented with what the researchers called "phenotype II."

They said about 23 per cent of the patients presented with "phenotype I," or the "adverse phenotype," which was associated with the worst clinical

outcomes.

The researchers said these patients had the highest level of comorbidities related to heart and kidney dysfunction.

According to the study, 173 patients, or 16.9 per cent presented with "phenotype III," or the "favorable phenotype," which the scientists said was associated with the best clinical outcomes.

## RUCHI DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

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**MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D**

9.30 am

**ORTHO AND GYNEA**

**CLINICS & O P D**

3.00 pm

**PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D**

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

**VACCINATION CLINIC**



## Resource-Rich, People-Poor

*The rent-seeking mentality needs to end*

An economist, while commenting on the reasons which hold back entrepreneurial success in these parts, blamed it on the rent-seeking mentality of the people. “Locals” of the region, he pointed out, might have inherited substantial largesse, earn well, even invest intelligently, but leverage very poorly, he explained. They will build a top-class hotel, but are more likely to give it out on lease rather operate it themselves and grow in the industry. This also explains why the “security” of government service is more aspired for than the independence, possibly better money and more job satisfaction, that private enterprise or the private sector might have to offer. This attitude continues even into government service where they prefer to remain anonymous pens pushing files when they could leverage their education and understanding of the land to set higher standards of governance.

In a sense then, they reflect the irony of their geography. The Himalaya is a belt that is rich in resources, but peopled by a population that is poor; a literal reality for a majority. As a mountain range, it is the Himalayas that shelter the subcontinent, bring it rain and mark its frontiers. As for resources, the mountains abound in glaciers which feed not only the rivers which have sustained successive civilizations through the ages, and are now the only alternative energy source available for mainstream India to power its development. The nation desperately requires more power and the only viable option as of now, definitely less ruinous than the fossil fuel option, is the hydel potential of the Himalayas. But look at the ground realities - the entire Himalayan belt from Kashmir to the northeast is debilitated either by strife or poverty or both. Sikkim remains an oasis of peace, but is also untouched by an economic boom in the real sense. Delhi controls the purse-strings and thus by extension, also, unfortunately, the aspirations of the people. The promoters of hydel power offered it up as the great deliverer of all economic woes. They promised infrastructure, employment and earnings from sale of surplus power as the channels which will usher economic boom. This might be true on paper, but the real picture often differs. Infrastructural development in these parts is almost always limited to certain pockets, and are themselves mired in corruption. Rarely do the roads outlast the commissioning of the projects for which they were primarily expanded. Jobs, real jobs, not the low-paying ones, remain scarce for locals and the hydro-earnings are yet to be quantified. Because most of the areas that possess the rivers with hydel potential don't possess a strong enough voice in New Delhi, they cannot strike a good enough bargain for themselves and the street-smart organizations that 'develop' the projects magnify the fine print the moment they have inked the deal. The attrition between affected people and already commissioned hydel projects is just one such example.

The resources could have been better harnessed than the leasing out approach that is common to the region. Commissioned projects could have been studied in closer detail and better benefits and deals struck. Human resource could have been, still can be, groomed to meet the future requirements. CSR regulations could have been studied better to ensure more than hand-washing awareness camps or another free health camp. And it is not just about hydel resources; Sikkim could pause, take stock and then marshal its other resources - from tourism to agriculture, the organic variant of it, better on its own, and by “own” one means the people and not government agencies alone.

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# ‘Godzilla vs. Kong’: Monster Movies Evoke Adventure but Also ‘Dangers’ of Tropics

PRISCILLA JOLLY  
THECONVERSATION.COM

For audiences stuck in their living rooms, the new monster film *Godzilla vs. Kong* offers an opportunity to do some armchair travelling. But before you imagine a tropical island getaway — perhaps a lounge-chair by a beach soaked in sunshine — this is a monster movie and so you must also make room for a scary lurking creature.

The duality of these images are with us partly because Hollywood movies have long leaned into colonial representations of the tropics: imagined as romantic palm-fringed coasts full of abundance and natural fertility, but also scary places full of pestilence, disease and primitiveness and previously “undiscovered” creatures.

Through stories of colonial exploration, tropical landscapes become places where the western explorer can experience the unbridled sensuality of nature as well as the thrill of danger from the unknown. In this view, the tropics become a landscape where nature towers over man, a power imbalance that monster films seek to address.

Though these films start with tropical locales, the threat posed by mega-creatures does not become real until they cross into the realms of the western world. For example, *Godzilla's* journey begins with former colonies and ends in New York.

The problem in these monster movies then becomes one of protecting western lands and people from exposure to strange lands and the “aberrant” creatures and people contained in those lands. Non-western landscapes and people thus become endowed with the burden of embodying these threats, magnified many times over in monster films. The same trajectory is also invoked with narratives of disease transmission: from a “primitive” space to the metropolitan centre.

Although *Godzilla* originated out of Japanese history and culture, when it crossed over into Hollywood,

the setting of the films relied on tropes from colonial history. So while monster films may be entertaining, they build on structures with long imperial histories and have implications for the way Hollywood audiences perceive the tropics.

‘SAVAGE WILDERNESS’

The narratives of tropics simultaneously containing possibilities for paradise and pestilence can be traced back to the beginning of colonial scientific exploration.

These ideas come alive in a 19th-century explorer's account of a journey to French Guiana. He writes about “virgin forests,” “tropical luxuriance,” “wild denizens” and their “gloomy recesses” and “the poetry of savage wilderness.”

The 19th-century British explorer, Joseph Banks, who accompanied cartographer James Cook on his voyage to the South Pacific, marvelled how nature had provided for the inhabitants of these lands in abundance. He even said the tropical land yielded fruit without labour. These perceptions shaped the idea of tropics as a place of natural abundance, and gave rise to the trope of tropical bounty.

The “discovery” of new lands was combined with the impulse to recreate the Biblical idea of an Eden, or paradise on Earth, a phenomenon which played out with colonial explorers on tropical islands.

THE YELLOW FILTER

Hollywood's monster films like *Godzilla* (1998, 2014) and *Kong: Skull Island* (2017) have used similar ideas. In all three films, the tropical island is an important setting, a place where the story is set in motion. All three films fall into similar patterns and use similar techniques to depict the tropics versus the west.

The opening sequences in the 1998 and 2014 versions of *Godzilla* rely on footage of sepia-toned palm lined beaches, Indigenous Peoples and a warmly lit mine next to a lush forest in the Philippines.

The sepia tone in the 1998 *Godzilla* resembles Hollywood's common

use of the yellow filter to show tropical locations. Critics like journalist Elisabeth Sherman have pointed out the use of the yellow filter as something western movie makers do to “depict warm, tropical, dry climates.” But she says, “it makes the landscape in question look jaundiced and unhealthy.” *Kong: Skull Island* also makes use of a warm yellow tinge for the scenes that unfold in the tropical jungle that is Kong's turf.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LENS

Modes of representation such as the camera and photography were part of the imperial apparatus. As technology brought by the white explorers, photography provided a means to capture the land, erase and arrange the people being looked at through the camera.

*Kong: Skull Island* features an “uncharted” island in the South Pacific. In the film, the inhabitants of the island are often shown through the photographer's camera. The residents are mute in the film; the audience and the rest of the team in *Skull Island* need the westerner's help to parse what they mean with their gestures.

DEPICTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS IN THE PAST

In *Kong: Skull Island*, expedition leader William Randa (played by John Goodman) tries to get funding for his trip to the uncharted island by describing it as a place “where God did not finish creation” or, in other words, a place where time has stood still.

Indeed, the inhabitants of *Skull Island* are situated squarely in a pre-historic time-frame, separate from the contemporary time inhabited by the explorers.

Building on the colonial imagination that casts Indigenous inhabitants as being close to nature, the 2021 film features an Indigenous girl from *Skull Island* as the sole contact between Kong and the rest of the world.

With its unknown creatures and lush forests, *Skull Island* occupies a different space-time. These senti-

ments of the Indigenous populations and flora and fauna were commonly expressed by colonial explorers. Ernst Haeckel, the famous naturalist and proponent of Darwinism, on his visit to Sri Lanka said the flora of the land reminded him of fossils from earlier geological ages.

Reminiscent of the competition between various colonial powers to map “unknown” lands and resources, what gets Randa his funding is the assurance that Americans will “discover” the uncharted island first.

OLD TEXTS STILL HAVE EVERYDAY IMPACT

*Kong: Skull Island* builds on the long history of colonial literature. Two characters in the film: the tracker, named Conrad (played by Tom Hiddleston), and Marlow (John C. Reilly) are a nod to the literary journey up the Congo river in the novel, *Heart of Darkness* about an explorer named Marlow and written by Joseph Conrad. The novel's premise that the journey up the Congo river is a journey into darkness has raised many debates about the racism in Conrad's text.

Though the new *Godzilla vs. Kong* offers the two mega-creatures a common enemy, the film still traffics in established tropes of monster films.

For decades, these landscapes have been characterized as sites of abundance but also disease outbreaks. At the same time, they also become places full of resources that need extraction. In Hollywood and colonial literature imaginations, the tropics hold cures for disease, alternative medicines and other geological resources, building on the long history of collaboration between scientists and the colonial enterprise.

Even though these tropes came into being centuries ago as a result of colonial expeditions, they still underpin how space gets imagined in contemporary pop culture, revealing the everyday impact of old literary texts.

*[The writer is PhD student, Department of English, Concordia University]*

# Too Much Sitting is Bad for You — but Some Types are Better Than Others

WUYOU SUI & HARRY PRAPAVESSIS  
THECONVERSATION.COM

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a number of new behaviours into daily routines, like physical distancing, mask-wearing and hand sanitizing. Meanwhile, many old behaviours such as attending events, eating out and seeing friends have been put on hold.

However, one old behaviour that has persisted, and has arguably been amplified due to COVID-19, is sitting — and it is not surprising to see why. Whether sitting during transportation, work, screen time or even meals, everyday environments and activities are tailored nearly exclusively to prolonged sitting. As such, sedentary behaviours, like sitting, make up the vast majority of our waking day.

Pre-COVID-19 estimates place the average Canadian adult's sedentary behaviour at around 9.5 hours per day. Current daily sedentary time is likely even higher as a result of stay-at-home orders, limitations on businesses and recreational facilities, and elevated health anxieties.

HEALTH vs. WELL-BEING

This is a problem, given that chronic excessive levels of sedentary time have been linked to greater risk of diabetes, heart disease, mortality and even some cancers. However, for many people, their own judgments and feelings about their quality of life (also known as subjective well-being) may be more important and relevant for informing their health decisions and behaviours than potentially developing chronic diseases.

Subjective well-being encompasses an individual's own evaluation of their quality of life. It includes concepts like affect (positive and negative feelings) and life satisfaction. Interestingly, these evaluations can conflict with physical health outcomes. For example, a person could have diabetes but still report good subjective well-being, while someone with no physical health conditions may report poor subjective well-being.

This is important, as it means how an individual feels about their own health may not always align with what their body may demonstrate. That's why evaluating subjective well-being is vital for painting a holistic picture of health.

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF SITTING

Relatively little research has examined the relationships between sedentary behaviour and subjective well-being. Exploring these relation-



ships is important, as different contexts of sitting — such as socializing versus screen time — may yield different feelings or judgments of subjective well-being, unlike relationships between physical health and sedentary behaviour, which tend to be more consistent.

As health psychologists focused on physical activity and sedentary behaviour, we reviewed the scientific literature describing relationships between measures of sedentary behaviours such as physical inactivity and screen time, and subjective well-being as reflected by affect, life satisfaction and overall subjective well-being.

Our review highlights three main findings. First, sedentary behaviour, physical inactivity and screen time demonstrated weak but statistically significant correlations with subjective well-being. In other words, those who reported sitting more often and spending longer periods with no physical activity reported lower positive affect, higher negative affect and lower life satisfaction than those who sat less and moved more.

We also found that this relationship was most apparent in studies that compared people who were very sedentary to those who had more active lifestyles.

NOT ALL SITTING IS BAD SITTING

Our second main finding relates to the context of the sedentary behaviour. While many studies examined overall sedentary behaviour and physical inactivity, some studies looked at specific contexts or domains of sitting and its relationship with subjective well-being. These studies revealed that different domains of sedentary behaviour have

unique relationships with subjective well-being.

For example, screen time was consistently and negatively associated with subjective well-being. However, domains like socializing, playing an instrument and reading actually demonstrated positive associations with subjective well-being. These results differ from the traditional health-related sedentary behaviour research, in which all sedentary behaviour is viewed as harmful to health.

Our review suggests that some types of sedentary behaviour may be beneficial to quality of life. Rather, not all sitting is the same in terms of subjective well-being. So when people work towards reducing their sitting time, they should consider not just how much to reduce, but what kind to reduce.

LESS SITTING IS GOOD FOR EVERYONE

Our third main finding concerns overall sitting and self-perceived levels of sedentary behaviour. Most studies found a weak statistically significant association between higher overall sedentary time and lower subjective well-being. However, in studies where participants were asked to compare their sedentary behaviour to how much they normally sit, those who perceived themselves as more sedentary than usual reported significantly poorer subjective well-being.

These findings suggest that how much an individual sits overall may not be as important as how much an individual sits compared to their usual level of sitting. This infers that anyone, regardless of how much they normally sit or are physically active, may potentially benefit from sitting less.

COVID-19 continues to influence daily life and routines. Even as businesses and gyms eventually reopen, and we feel more comfortable gathering with others and eventually stop wearing masks, we will almost certainly continue to sit and sitting will continue to change how we feel. While we may not be able to eliminate all of our sitting, we can all be mindful of both how much we can reduce it and where we can reduce it from to be healthier and feel better.

*[Wuyou Sui is Postdoctoral fellow, Behavioural Medicine Lab, School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, University of Victoria; Harry Prapavessis is Professor, Kinesiology, Western University]*



## Assam Cong demands suspension of poll in Tamulpur seat

**GUWAHATI, APR 4 (PTI):** The Congress has demanded suspension of election in Tamulpur constituency in the third phase of the Assam assembly elections on April 6 as its ally Bodoland People's Front (BPF) candidate from the seat Rangja Khungur Basumatary joined the BJP in the middle of the ongoing polls.

The Election Commission heard the matter on Saturday in the presence of returning officer for the constituency Sanjiv Sarma, but no decision has been announced so far, sources in the poll panel told PTI.

The BPF had lodged a complaint with the EC after its candidate from the Tamulpur assembly segment in Baksa district of the Bodoland Territorial Region had joined the BJP on April 1.

In a complaint submitted to the chief electoral officer here on Saturday night, Assam Congress chief Ri-



pun Bora urged him to take appropriate action against Basumatary.

He also requested the poll panel to take stringent action against Assam minister and senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma who held a meeting with the BPF candidate before he switched over to the saffron party.

"It is evident that there has been a gross violation of the Election Commission of India's model code of conduct as well as several provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

"Under such circumstances, I request your

honour to take prompt and necessary action against Basumatary and Himanta Biswa Sarma. I further request you to stop the election process in Tamulpur constituency immediately," Bora said.

Following the development, which was not seen before as per the officials, the opposition parties accused the BJP of indulging in the pre-poll "horse-trading".

Basumatary had reportedly gone missing for two days and at around midnight on March 31, he met Sarma.

The senior BJP leader had written on Twit-

ter that he met Basumatary who would join the saffron party.

Basumatary told a local TV channel that he had decided to quit the BPF as the party did not lend any helping hand to him to fund his campaign.

The BPF candidate had said he couldn't withdraw himself from the contest now due to some technical issues, but he would be supporting BJP's ally United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) nominee Leho Ram Boro in the seat.

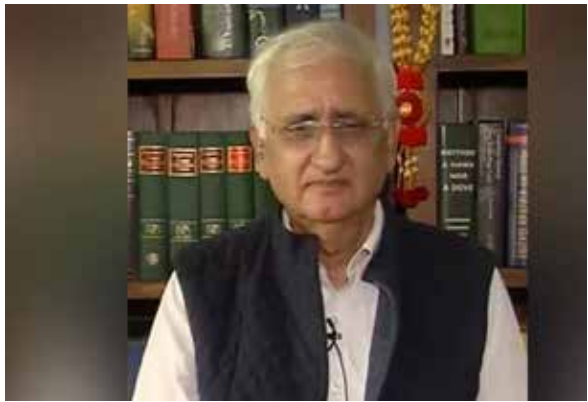
The first phase of the Assam assembly elections was held on March 27, and the second phase on April 1.

## Congress committed to correct BJP's governance of division in Assam: Salman Khurshid

**GUWAHATI, 04 APR [PTI]:** Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid Saturday said his party is committed to correct BJP's governance of division, distortion and deceit if voted to power in Assam.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, the former Union Minister alleged that the BJP has throughout its poll campaign attempted to destroy tenets of democracy and Assamese identity.

"The BJP believes in division, distortion and deceit. Five years of its



rule in Assam has put a stamp on this," he said.

Asserting that the Congress treats everyone equally and fairly, he said, "BJP's politics is

centred around hatred. Last five years have seen unprecedented downfall in Assam's economic prowess, peace in the state and severe damage

to Assamese identity."

Mr Khurshid said the "writing is on the wall" for the BJP after the support Congress" Grand Alliance received from the people of the state for its "Five Guarantees".

All India Mahila Congress president and former MP from Assam, Sushmita Dev, said recent developments have been black days for the democracy of Assam, with BJP "resorting to everything that could be categorised as undemocratic - from blackmailing and threatening to stealing EVMs".

## BJP's Himanta Sarma, attacked over "mask" comment, replies to rivals

**GUWAHATI, 04 APR [NDTV]:** Assam minister and senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma hit back Sunday morning after his comment - there is "no Covid in Assam... (so) there is no need to wear a face mask" - led to a row.

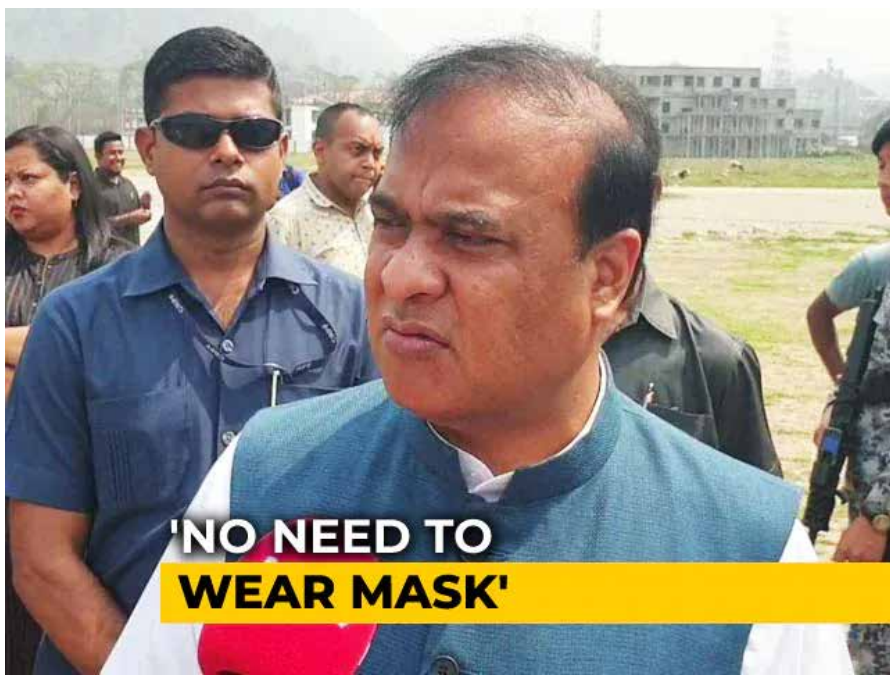
"Those who are making fun on my statement on masks must come to Assam and see how we have contained COVID-19, compared to states like Delhi, Kerala and Maharashtra... along with impressive recovery of economy," he tweeted.

"We will celebrate Bihu also with the same enthusiasm this year," he added.

On Saturday Mr Sarma, who is the state health minister, had said: "There is no Covid in Assam... there is no need to wear a face mask now in Assam... If there is a need I will inform the people..."

The remark - made to a reporter from online news website The Lallantop - came on a day India recorded nearly 90,000 new Covid cases in 24 hours - the most in a day since mid-September.

Assam's share in that spike is minimal - 68 new



cases and no deaths - but the alarming rate at which the virus is spreading elsewhere - the positivity rate has shot up from 2.2 per cent four weeks ago to 7.1 per cent today - and the potential of more infectious strains has worried the centre enough for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lead a high-level meeting this morning.

Among those to hit back at Mr Sarma, who received his first Covid vaccine dose early last month, was the Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi.

"We have the first state in the country... or rather the world... whose

Health Minister has declared it Covid-free and has advised no masks (or) Covid protocols to be followed... We must all celebrate the feat and get WHO (World Health Organization) to endorse it!" she tweeted.

Mr Sarma's comment is in contradiction to rules - which include the use of face masks when outdoors and the need to practice social distancing - laid down by the centre to contain the virus.

Face masks have also been strongly recommended by global health agencies like the WHO and the governments

of other countries, even for those who show no symptoms or have got the vaccine.

Assam has been widely praised for its ability, so far, to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

However, with the state holding Assembly elections - the third and final phase will be held on Tuesday - the sight of thousands of people without masks and standing shoulder-to-shoulder at poll rallies is a source of concern, with many wary of a renewed wave of infections in the weeks to come.

## Poll body slams Mamata Banerjee over Nandigram claims, warns of action

**NEW DELHI, 04 APR [NDTV]:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's conduct at a polling booth in Nandigram last week is under scanner, the Election Commission has indicated, dismissing her allegations of disruption of polling at the booth.

Calling Ms Banerjee's handwritten complaint "factually incorrect" and "devoid of substance", the Commission said it is contemplating action under the relevant sections of the Model Code of Conduct and the Representation of the People Act.

Ms Banerjee has been in a collision course with the Commission since it ordered an unprecedented, marathon eight-phase election in Bengal and replaced the state police chief. She has accused it of partisanship under orders of Union Home Minister Amit Shah - an accusation the Commission has vehemently denied.

Matters came to a head last week during the election at Nandigram, the epicentre of the battle for Bengal where the Chief Minister is taking of Suvendu Adhikari - her former protege; who is now in the BJP camp.

During polling, the Chief Minister -- who enjoys Z-plus security -- was caught up in a tense confrontation between the BJP and Trinamool supporters and had to stay cooped up inside a room for around two hours. She was later rescued by the security forces.

Ms Banerjee had accused the Election Commission of failing to maintain law and order during elections.



Today, the Commission said Ms Banerjee's action at the polling booth was fraught with "immense potential to have adverse effect on the law and order across West Bengal and maybe in some other states".

"It is a matter of deep regret that a media narrative was sought to be weaved hour after hour to misguide the biggest stakeholders which is the voters by a candidate who also happens to be the honourable CM... All this was done when the election process was/is on. There could not have been a greater misdemeanour," read the Commission's response.

"It is being separately examined whether happenings of 1.4.2021 merit any action under sections 131 and 123(2) of RP Act and/or under Model Code of Conduct," the Commission added before signing off.

Section 131 in the Representation of the People Act calls for penalty for disorderly conduct in or

near polling stations with a three-month jail term and/or a fine.

On Thursday, accusing the election body of taking orders from Union home minister Amit Shah, Mamata Banerjee said it had ignored the 63 complaints her party had filed since morning.

"We will move the court over it. This is unacceptable," she had said, sitting in her wheelchair outside the polling booth 7 in Boyal.

In its letter, the Commission said it has received seven complaints from Trinamool Congress. It also rejected Ms Banerjee's contention that the party's polling agent was not allowed to enter the polling booth by the BJP supporters or "outsiders, guns and goons".

"Barring a few people shouting slogans for and against Ms Banerjee, there was no report of any violence, nor was there any intimidation of voters," the Commission wrote.

There has been no response yet from Ms Banerjee or her party.

## Odisha cop interrogated over sexual abuse charge

**JAIPUR (ODISHA), APR 4 (PTI):** The police have launched an investigation into alleged sexual harassment of a woman by a senior officer in Odisha's Jajpur district, an official said on Sunday.

The woman, a resident of Katikata village, had gone to the Jhumhuri outpost with her family members to complain about some locals in connection with a land dispute case on March 16 and was sexually abused by the officer-in-charge there, Jajpur Superintendent of Police Rahul PR said.

Subsequently, she lodged a complaint against the police officer with the SP's office on March 31.

The woman alleged that the OC

of the police outpost had requested her family members to wait outside his room and enquired about her personal life.

She accused the officer of seeking sexual favours in return for registering her complaint.

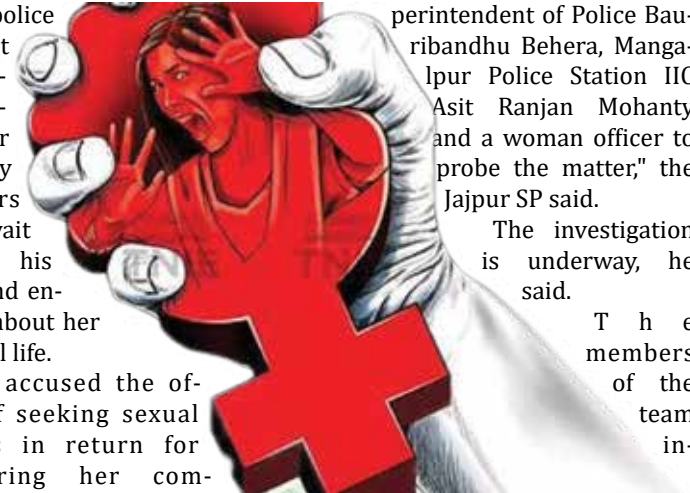
"We have formed a special team comprising Additional Su-

perintendent of Police Baubandhu Behera, Mangalpur Police Station IIC Asit Ranjan Mohanty and a woman officer to probe the matter," the Jajpur SP said.

The investigation is underway, he said.

The members of the team in-

terrogated the accused and visited the woman's house, Behera said.



## 3 fresh cases take Mizoram's COVID-19 tally to 4,490

**AIZAWL, APR 4 (PTI):** Three more persons have tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, taking the tally in the north-eastern state to 4,490, a health department official said on Sunday.

All the fresh cases were reported from Aizawl district, he said.

"Two of the three new patients are asymptomatic, and all of them have travel history," the official said.

Mizoram now has 40 active cases, while 4,439 people have recovered from the disease and 11 patients succumbed to the infection so far.



The state has thus far tested over 2.54 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 547 on Satur-

day. State Immunisation Officer Dr Lalzawmi said that 53,673 people have

received the first jab of the vaccine, while 14,655 have been administered the second dose.

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*Liverpool crisis is not over but win at Arsenal points to happier times ahead*



**JONATHAN WILSON**  
**LONDON, 04 APR [THEGUARDIAN]:** One performance, once result, of course, doesn't mean that everything is suddenly fine. Liverpool have been here often enough before this season, particularly in London, not to believe that the storm has now passed.

Nobody should be drawing sweeping conclusions, good or bad, from games against an Arsenal side that remains wildly inconsistent. But there was perhaps enough in Saturday's 3-0 win at the Emirates for Liverpool to begin to recover some faith in themselves and their methods.

But first the caveats. When Liverpool won 7-0 at Crystal Palace a week before Christmas, the feeling was that they had found their rhythm at last, that they'd worked through the scratchiness of the early part of the season. It turned out the scratchiness had been the good bit. They didn't win any of their next five, but then won impressively at Tottenham and West Ham, where Mohammed Salah scored one of the season's great goals. Blip over? It had barely begun: they lost six of their next seven in the league. So however dominant they were against Arsenal, it's probably worth reserving judgement for a while.

The fixture list shows a worrying absence of further league games in London, where they have dropped just two points in six games this season, although there could be a Champions League semi-final second leg at Stamford Bridge. (Memo to John W Henry: if you do decide to push ahead with this super league idea, maybe consider moving the franchise to the capital? Daniel Levy may have a stadium to offer you.)

But what happened on Saturday showed the quality that remains in this Liverpool side. The press looked sharp again to the point that Arsenal could barely get out of their half before the break, and it led directly to the third goal. Again it must be acknowledged that Arsenal are a side who regularly get themselves into trouble playing out from the back and that their structure might not have been so vulnerable had they not been without five key players, but still, the remorselessness of Liverpool, in the first half particularly, was a reminder of how, at their best, they can smother opponents.

Jürgen Klopp was delighted with that aspect of his side's play, noting "our counter-pressing was at the highest level... in general the defending of the whole team looked exactly how it should look." That should concern

Real Madrid, Liverpool's opponents in the Champions League quarter-final on Tuesday, given how rattled they were by Manchester City's press last season.

International week may have come at just the right time to refresh, reset and recharge. The three Brazilians, Nat Phillips, James Milner, Thiago Alcântara and, perhaps most crucially, Trent Alexander-Arnold - that is, seven of Saturday's starting line-up - remained in Liverpool. Perhaps even for those who were playing for their countries, the change of environment helped to break the cycle of negativity, but for so many of the squad to have a break before the final quarter of the season can only be beneficial.

The other huge positive for Klopp was the performance of Diogo Jota, who continued the goalscoring form he had demonstrated for Portugal with two further goals after coming off the bench, taking his tally to six from his last four games. Every time he plays offers a glimpse of what might have been this season.

The concentration of injuries at centre-back understandably, and rightly, draws most of the attention, but Liverpool have also been undermined by the absences for long spells of Thiago and Jota, who have still started only one league game together. They were supposed to be Liverpool's solution to the danger of entropy that haunts all sides who have been together for a protracted period, but particularly those who have completed a long-standing quest such as the league title.

Thiago changes the dynamic of the midfield, offering Liverpool the option to retain possession rather than playing always with the same ferocious tempo; Jota is an intelligent forward who can refresh the front three. Not only have both been injured themselves, but their integration has been hampered by injuries to others. Thiago especially, rather than being gradually introduced into a smoothly functioning machine, has been asked to hold together a mechanism in danger of falling apart. He may or may not be a success for Liverpool, but this is not the time to judge.

It was only Arsenal, and a sub-strength Arsenal at that. Nobody should think the crisis is over. But what Saturday showed was that there is still life in this season for Liverpool, and hope for the future beyond that.

The two potential targets that remain this season at least now are conceivable: chase down Chelsea and/or Leicester to finish in the top four, and then aim for glory in Istanbul.

# Neymar sent off, PSG title chase hit by loss to leader Lille

**Paris, Apr 4 (AP):** Neymar was sent off late and then tried to confront a player after the game as defending champion Paris Saint-Germain lost 1-0 at home to Lille, falling three points behind the new French league leader in a tense title race. PSG is only one point ahead of Monaco, which earlier beat Metz 4-0 to take third place. Lyon is fourth after drawing 1-1 at Lens.

Neymar was shown a second yellow card in the 90th minute for kicking right back Tiago Djalo off the ball, having been booked in the first half for shoving midfielder Benjamin Andre in the face. Djalo was also sent off and remonstrated angrily with the referee.

As both players argued as they walked back to the locker rooms, footage from broadcaster Canal Plus captured Neymar pushing Djalo on the shoulder and then trying to get past some security officials to confront him.

An angry Djalo also reacted, trying to reach Neymar, causing one security official to fall over, while another intervened swiftly to block Neymar and lead him away.

Canada forward Jonathan David scored Lille's goal in the 20th minute with a slightly deflected strike, as PSG slipped to a fifth home defeat and eighth overall, with a



tough trip to Bayern Munich on Wednesday in the Champions League.

"Each time we lose we say the same thing, that we lacked commitment. We shouldn't find any excuses," PSG captain Marquinhos said.

"We need to be stronger than that at home. A lot of teams have come here and won, which we're not used to. We're at an important point of the season and must improve."

PSG has been poor against the other sides in the top four, twice losing to Monaco, losing once to Lyon and drawing its other game against Lille 0-0.

"We need more consistency because there have been too many ups-and-downs," Marquinhos

said. "Our next match is one of the biggest."

Frustration got to Neymar, who now faces another suspension after getting red-carded against Marseille at the start of the campaign. Shortly after shoving Andre in the face, he fell to the ground in a failed bid to win a penalty.

Lille goalkeeper Mike Maignan, who came through PSG's youth ranks before leaving, kept out Neymar's shot on the hour mark and was relieved to see Neymar's diving header go wide in the 70th.

Starting his first game for two months after recovering from a torn adductor muscle, Neymar was wasteful, volleying a cross wide from a good position and

squandering two free kicks.

After Maignan got a hand to Kylian Mbappe's low shot in the 15th, Lille caught PSG cold five minutes later on a classic counterattack.

Jonathan Ikone found space down the right and pulled the ball back to David, whose shot from just inside the penalty area looped over goalkeeper Keylor Navas.

Andre and Boubakary Soumare, another promising player released by PSG, controlled midfield with relative ease in the absence of PSG's Marco Verratti.

With PSG camped in Lille's half, a counterattack was waiting to happen.

It arrived in the 78th as Timothy Weah squared the ball from the right to Turkey striker Burak Yilmaz, but Navas read his first-time shot well.

**COVID CONCERNS**  
Verratti, already ruled out with a thigh injury, tested positive for the coronavirus for the third time. He will miss the first leg against Bayern.

Two hours before facing Lille, right back Alessandro Florenzi was removed from PSG's squad as a precaution, even though he tested negative, the club said. He was on international duty for Italy recently with Verratti.

Lille was without attacking midfielder Yusuf Yazici, who has the virus.

LYON RALLIES

Lyon midfielder Lucas Paqueta equalized in the 81st after Lens right back Jonathan Clauss struck midway through the second half.

Lyon forward Karl Toko Ekambi saw his shot saved by goalkeeper Jean-Louis Leca in the 55th after going through on goal. Leca blocked Tino Kadewere's effort in the 63rd and Memphis Depay's low strike moments later.

**TOUGH TO BEAT**  
Monaco, which has now lost only once in 16 league games, struck a double blow early in the second half.

Former Spain midfielder Cesc Fabregas scored a penalty in the 49th minute after forward Stevan Jovetic was fouled, and striker Kevin Volland finished confidently two minutes later from Belgian midfielder Eliot Matazo's pass.

Striker Wissam Ben Yedder was surprisingly left on the bench but came on to notch a fine third when he cut inside a defender and thumped the ball under the crossbar in the 76th.

Ben Yedder was fouled by central defender John Boye and took the penalty to make it 4-0 in the 88th and move onto 15 league goals, one more than Volland.

## Carl Frampton confirms retirement after Jamel Herring ends title dream

**DONALD MCRAE**

**LONDON, 04 APR [THEGUARDIAN]:** Jamel Herring ended Carl Frampton's boxing career on Saturday night when, in a victory as clinical as it was brutal, he stopped the 34-year-old challenger from Belfast in the sixth round to retain his WBO super-featherweight world title. Frampton had hoped to make history in the unlikely setting of a desert resort in Dubai by becoming the first fighter from the island of Ireland to win a world title at three different weights. His dreams were ruined by the former US Marine who dominated the contest in a brilliant display.

Herring suffered a cut above his right eye in the fourth round but, despite blood pouring from the gash, he never looked in serious trouble - unlike Frampton who was outboxed and hurt long before the end. A minute into the sixth round Herring forced him to pause again with sharply accurate punches. Frampton tried to pressure the American but, with his back to the ropes, Herring landed the punch which in effect ended the contest with a withering left uppercut. The impact was so shocking that Frampton seemed to collapse in slow motion, like a building that had been detonated from the inside. It was a distressing sight as he hit the canvas hard.

Frampton was on his knees at the count of five. He looked straight



into the face of the referee as he heard "seven ... eight ..." and then, with glazed eyes, Frampton got up. He looked terribly unsteady as the referee asked if he was fit to continue. He nodded his assent but with a look of stunned resignation on his bruised and reddened face.

Herring steamed forward, knowing the end was near. Frampton threw a few desperate punches but it was a desolate cause. Herring soon landed another crunching left uppercut. The combinations flew from Herring and, when another big left hand jolted Frampton, his trainer Jamie Moore had seen enough. The towel fluttered mercifully into the ring.

The fight, and Frampton's career after 31 bouts and almost 12 years as a professional, was over.

Frampton held on to the ropes while he waited for his team to console him. On the opposite side of the ring, Herring screamed with delight before he sank on to his knees to say a tearful prayer.

The 35-year-old champion was always in control of his third defence of the title. He is a much bigger man than Frampton, with a much longer reach and a five-inch height advantage over the little Belfast fighter, who is only 5ft 5in. The difference was decisive from the outset. Herring won the first three rounds clearly as he boxed at range, spearing his jab into Frampton's face with depressing regularity for the Northern Irishman's vast army of fans watching him for the final time.

There were only a few brief moments of uncertainty for Herring when his eye was cut. He looked surprised as the blood ran down his face. Frampton was sufficiently encouraged to win the fourth and his only round of the fight. But Brian McIntyre and Red Spikes, in the American corner, bolstered Herring and the pattern of the contest resumed and then darkened. In round five Frampton was caught by a sweet left counter which dropped him for the first time. He saw out

the round but Herring was far ahead on points when the violent ending was sealed.

Herring has endured a great deal of pain in his life. He went on two tours of Iraq and his experiences of combat marked him. Surviving weeks under fire from mortar rounds and the deadly threat of snipers, Herring was then haunted by seeing a bomb disposal technician blown up. He endured PTSD but the bleakest time of his life began in July 2009 when he lost his daughter, Ariyanah, to sudden infant death syndrome. It took Herring years to recover but he has become one of the most humble and inspiring of world champions.

Frampton conceded: "I got beat by the better man." He was also close to tears when he said: "I'm deeply upset. I said I'd retire if I lost this fight and that is what I'll do. My wife and kids have made so many sacrifices. I have missed them so much. I just want to dedicate my life to my family. Boxing has been good to me. It's also been bad to me."



# Expats struggle to get vaccines in Kuwait, citizens come first

**DUBAI, APR 4 (AP):** In the tiny, oil-rich sheikhdom of Kuwait, the foreigners who power the country's economy, serve its society and make up 70 per cent of its population are struggling to get coronavirus vaccines.

Unlike other Gulf Arab states that have administered doses to masses of foreign workers in a race to reach herd immunity, Kuwait has come under fire for vaccinating its own people first.

That leaves legions of labourers from Asia, Africa and elsewhere, who clean Kuwaiti nationals' homes, care for their children, drive their cars and bag their groceries, still waiting for their first doses, despite bearing the brunt of the pandemic.

The only people I've seen at the vaccination center were Kuwaiti," said a 27-year-old Kuwaiti doctor, who like most people interviewed for this story spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of government reprisals. Kuwait has a citizens-first policy for everything, including when it comes to public health.

Kuwaiti authorities did not respond to repeated requests for comment from The Associated Press on their vaccination strategy.

When Kuwait's vaccination registration site went live in December, authorities declared that

health-care workers, older adults and those with underlying conditions would be first in line.

As weeks ticked by, however, it became increasingly clear the lion's share of doses was going to Kuwaitis, regardless of their age or health. Initially, some expat medical workers said they couldn't even get appointments.

Kuwait's labour system, which links migrants' residency status to their jobs and gives employers outsized power, prevails across the Gulf Arab states.

But hostility toward migrants long has burned hotter in Kuwait. The legacy of the 1991 Gulf War, which triggered mass deportations of Palestinian, Jordanian and Yemeni workers whose leaders had supported Iraq in the conflict, fuelled anxiety about the need for self-reliance in Kuwait that endures today even as Southeast Asian labourers rushed to fill the void.

A 30-year-old Indian woman who has spent her whole life in Kuwait watched her Instagram feed fill with celebratory photos of Kuwaiti teenagers getting the jab. Her father, a 62-year-old diabetic with high blood pressure, could not like the rest of her relatives living there.

All the Kuwaitis I know are vaccinated, she said. It's more than just annoying, it's a re-

alization that no, this is not cool, there is no way to feel like I belong here anymore.

Kuwait has vaccinated its citizens at a rate six times that of non-citizens, the Health Ministry revealed earlier this year. At the time, despite some 238,000 foreigners registering online to book an appointment, only 18,000 of them mostly doctors, nurses and well-connected workers in state oil companies were actually called in to receive the vaccine. Meanwhile, some 119,000 Kuwaitis were vaccinated.

With vaccine information only available in English or Arabic, advocates say that locks out scores of low-wage labourers from Southeast Asia who speak neither language.

The disparity set off a roiling debate on social media, with users decrying what they called the latest instance of xenophobia in Kuwait. They say the pandemic has magnified resentment of migrant workers, deepened social divides and hardened the government's resolve to protect its own people first. Medical professionals warned Kuwait's inoculation hierarchy damages public health.

Compared to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, among the world's fastest vaccinators per capita, Kuwait's drive has lagged.

While foreigners wait for shots, medical workers say Kuwaiti citizens remain reluctant to register because of vaccine conspiracy theories shared widely on social media. Infections have soared, prompting the government to impose a strict nightly curfew last month.

With pressure mounting on the Health Ministry, barriers eased in recent weeks, with a growing number of foreign residents 65 years of age and older reporting they were able to get vaccinated. Still, most expats insist the inequality in access remains striking.

We are waiting and waiting for the call, said a 55-year-old house cleaner from Sri Lanka. The moment I get the call, I will go. I need the vaccine to be safe.

The government has not released a demographic breakdown of vaccinated foreigners vs Kuwaitis since the outrage over the inequality erupted in mid-February, only overall vaccination statistics. As of this week, 500,000 people have received at least one dose of either Pfizer-BioNTech or Oxford-AstraZeneca, according to health authorities.

Even as the bulk of front-line workers in grocery stores and cafes remain unvaccinated, Kuwait is making plans to reopen society for the inoculated. Those who

can prove they got the jab will be able to attend schools in the fall, go to cinemas in the spring and skip quarantine after flying into the country, the government announced.

Foreign workers in Kuwait have felt this frustration before. When the pandemic first struck, lawmakers, talk show hosts and prominent actresses blamed migrants for the virus's spread.

As the coronavirus ripped through crowded districts and dormitories where many foreigners live, authorities imposed targeted lockdowns and published surging virus counts with a breakdown of nationalities. When infections among Kuwaitis rose, the government stopped releasing demographic data.

It's easy for migrants to be seen as the root of all problems in Kuwait," said Rohan Advani, a researcher of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Citizens don't have political or economic power, so when they don't like what's happening to their country, blaming foreigners becomes the main outlet.

Despite having an outspoken parliament, final power in Kuwait rests with the ruling emir. Kuwaiti citizens, who are guaranteed spots on the public payroll and reap the benefits of a cradle-to-grave welfare state, increasingly have clamored for policies that limit the flow of migrants.

## Jordan prince 'under house arrest' amid security crackdown

**AMMAN, 04 APR [ALJAZEERA]:** The half-brother of Jordan's King Abdullah II says he has been placed under house arrest and accused the kingdom's "ruling system" of corruption, incompetence and harassment.

Prince Hamzah bin Al Hussein's videotaped statement on Saturday came after Jordan's military denied reports of the former crown prince's arrest, but said he had been asked to "stop some movements and activities that are being used to target Jordan's security and stability".

The military said the warning to Prince Hamza was part of a broader, continuing security investigation in which a former minister, a junior member of the royal family and unnamed others were detained.

The prince, however, insisted he was not part of any conspiracy and said in a video passed to the BBC by his lawyer that he "was not allowed to go out, to communicate with people or to meet with them".

Prince Hamzah said he had been informed he was being punished for taking part in meetings in which the king had been criticised, though he said he was not accused of joining in the criticism.

People were no longer allowed to criticise the authorities or express an opinion "without being bullied, harassed or threatened," he said, adding that the well being of Jordanians "has been put second by a ruling system that has

decided that its personal interests, financial interests, that its corruption is more important than the lives and dignity and future of the 10 million people who live here".

Earlier, army chief Yousef Huneiti denied reports the prince had been arrested but said he was told to "stop activities that are being exploited to target Jordan's security and stability".

He said an investigation is continuing and its results will be made public "in a transparent and clear form".

"No one is above the law and Jordan's security and stability are above all," he told the official Petra news agency.

Two people familiar with the situation told the Reuters news agency that security forces had arrived at the prince's small palace and begun an investigation. King Abdullah dismissed Prince Hamza as heir to the throne in 2004 in a move that consolidated his power.

Petra had earlier reported that Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, and Bassem Ibrahim Awadallah, a former head of the royal court, were detained. Awadallah also previously served as planning minister and finance minister and has private business interests throughout the Gulf region.

The Washington Post, citing a senior Middle Eastern intelligence official, said as many as 20 people were arrested. The detentions were part of an investigation into

an alleged plot to unseat King Abdullah, it said.

Known as the Herak, the tribal figures have in recent weeks called for protests against corruption in a country hit hard by the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, pushing unemployment to record levels and deepening poverty. The authorities had cracked down on several demonstrations, detaining dozens.

Dalia Fahmy, associate professor of political science at the US-based Long Island University, said the developments in Jordan were "reflective of a domestic internal rift".

She added, "Domestically, it's going to be a tough time for the king."

King Abdullah had chosen Hamzah as his crown prince hours after their father, King Hussein, died of cancer in February 1999, but stripped the young prince of the title in 2004, saying he had decided to "free" him "from the constraints of the position of crown prince in order to give [him] the freedom to work and undertake any mission or responsibility I entrust [him] with".

The current crown prince is Abdullah's oldest son, Prince Hussein, aged 26.

The US and several Arab countries voiced support for King Abdullah on Saturday.

The United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, as well as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council also said they stood by King Abdullah.

## Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan launch new Nile dam talks in DRC

**KINSHASA, 04 APR [ALJAZEERA]:** A new round of African Union-mediated talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan has begun aimed at resolving a years-long dispute over a massive dam built by Addis Ababa on the Blue Nile, a main tributary of the Nile river.

The three-day talks that kicked off on Saturday are taking place in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the current chair of the AU.

Foreign and irrigation ministers of the three nations were attending the talks over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), along with AU experts, according to Ethiopia's Irrigation Minister Seleshi Bekele.

A Sudanese diplomat was quoted as saying by The Associated Press news agency that the experts from the three countries and the AU met on Saturday, ahead of ministers who would meet on Sunday and Monday. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to brief media.

Egypt's foreign ministry said in a statement that Cairo wants the negotiations to eventually lead to a legally binding agreement over the operation and filling of the dam's giant reservoir.

Sudan said it would take part in the Kinshasa round with an aim of agreeing on a "negotiating approach" to ensure the talks would be constructive. That would include an Egyptian-backed Sudanese proposal for the United States, European Union and United Nations to actively mediate in the dispute, along with the AU.

Ethiopia has rejected the proposal, saying it "believes in resolving African problems by Africans".

The dispute centres on the speed at which a planned reservoir is filled behind the dam, the method of its annual replenishment and how much water Ethiopia will release downstream if a multi-year drought occurs. Another point of difference is how the three countries would settle any future disputes.

Downstream countries Egypt and Sudan want a legally binding agreement on the dam's filling and operation,



while Ethiopia insists on guidelines.

The three countries have been locked for almost a decade in inconclusive talks over the GERD, which broke ground in 2011.

The talks in Kinshasa come a few days after Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said his country's share of Nile River waters were "untouchable" – a stark warning apparently to Ethiopia, which is preparing for another stage of the dam's filling later this year.

El-Sisi warned on Tuesday of "instability that no one can imagine" in the region if the dam's reservoir is filled and operated without a legally binding agreement.

Bekele, the Ethiopian minister, said his country "as always is determined for principled, equitable and reasonable utilization without causing significant harm," according to Ethiopia's official news agency.

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country with more than 100 million people, depends on the Nile for almost all of its water needs. It fears that a quick fill would drastically reduce the river's flow, with potentially severe effects on its agriculture and other sectors.

Ethiopia says GERD is essential for its development, arguing that the vast majority of its population lacks electricity. The dam will generate more than 6,400 megawatts of electricity, a massive boost to the country's current production of 4,000 megawatts.

Sudan wants Ethiopia to coordinate and share data on the dam's operation to avoid flooding and protect its own power-generating dams on the Blue Nile.

The Blue Nile meets with the White Nile in central Sudan. From there the Nile winds northward through Egypt and flows into the Mediterranean Sea.

## Facebook data on more than 500M accounts found online



**NEW YORK, APR 4 (AP):** Details from more than 500 million Facebook users have been found available on a website for hackers.

The information appears to be several years old, but it is another example of the vast amount of information collected by Facebook and other social media sites, and the limits to how secure that information is.

The availability of the data set was first reported by Business Insider. According to that publication, it has information from 106 countries including phone numbers, Facebook IDs, full names, locations, birthdates, and email addresses.

Facebook has been grappling with data security issues for years. In 2018, the social media giant disabled a feature

that allowed users to search for one another via phone number following revelations that the political firm Cambridge Analytica had accessed information on up to 87 million Facebook users without their knowledge or consent.

In December 2019, a Ukrainian security researcher reported finding a database with the names, phone numbers and unique user IDs of more than 267 million Facebook users nearly all U.S.-based on the open internet. It is unclear if the current data dump is related to this database.

"This is old data that was previously reported on in 2019," the Menlo Park, California-based company said in a statement. "We found and fixed this issue in August 2019.

## New "Eek" variant known for reducing vaccine protection sparks fear in Japan

**TOKYO, 04 APR [REUTERS]:** Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said on Sunday that he would expand emergency measures as needed to contain a new wave of coronavirus infections, amid fears over the spread of virus mutations.

Suga, asked on a Fuji TV programme whether Tokyo might be added to a list of areas including the western metropolis of Osaka set to come under lockdown measures from Monday, said, "All possibilities are being

considered."

"It doesn't matter specifically where, we will act without hesitation if needed," he said.

Japan is grappling with a COVID-19 resurgence ahead of the summer Olympics scheduled to begin in July, with large-scale vaccinations of the general population yet to begin.

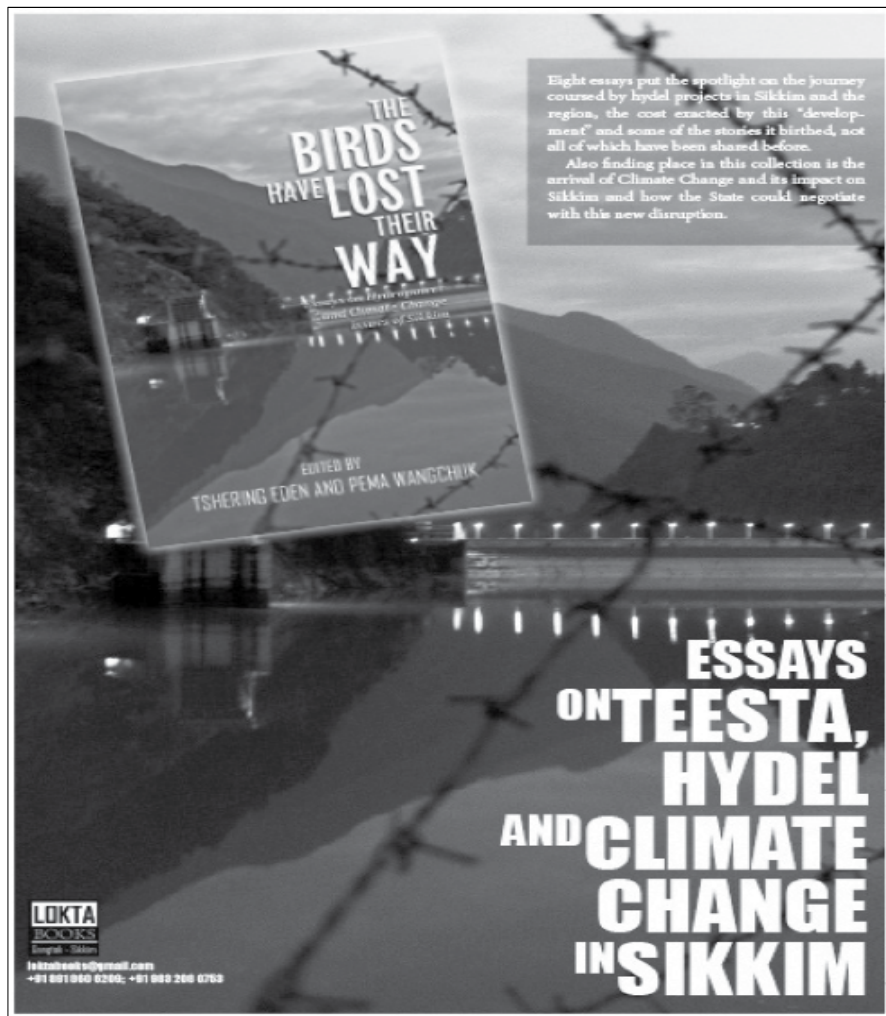
On Sunday, 355 new infections were reported in Tokyo, although that is still well below the peak of over 2,500 in January.

Health experts have been particularly con-

cerned about a surge in mutations among those who have recently tested positive around Osaka. The variant, known to have emerged in Britain, is feared to be highly transmissible.

A total of 594 new coronavirus cases were reported in Osaka prefecture on Sunday, a day after a record 666 were confirmed.

Variants of the virus have cropped up around the world since last year, including the E484 mutation detected in a growing number of cases in Tokyo, officials say.







**LEAN MACHINE!** Former Olympian Lindsey Vonn shows off her toned physique while out driving her new Land Rover Defender in L.A.

## Chaalbaaz In London: Shraddha Kapoor to play double role

Shraddha Kapoor, on Saturday, announced her new project titled Chaalbaaz In London and that's not it, she will play a double role in the film. Chaalbaaz In London will be directed by Pankaj Parashar, who also helmed the 1989 film Chaalbaaz, co-starring late actress Sridevi and Rajinikanth.

The project, which will be co-produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and Ahmed Khan's Paper Doll Entertainment, will mark Shraddha Kapoor's first film to feature her in a double role.

Making the title announcement, Shraddha Kapoor wrote: "CHAALBAAZ in London! Directed by the one and only Pankaj Parashar and produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Ahmed Khan and Shaira Khan."

The 1989 film also starred Sridevi in a double role alongside Rajinikanth and Bobby Deol.

Shraddha Kapoor, talking about playing a double role for the first time, said in a statement: "I feel blessed and fortunate that the makers thought of me for Chaalbaaz In London. This will be my first ever double role and it will definitely be challenging for any actor.

Although there's a huge responsibility on me, I'm happy that Bhushan sir and Ahmed sir feel that I will be able to pull it off. Also, it's a great opportunity and a learning experience for me to work with Pankaj Sir who has entertained us for so many years. Looking forward to this journey."

This will be Shraddha Kapoor's second film with Ahmed Khan after Baaghi 3.

The filmmaker, in a statement, opened up about casting Shraddha in the film: "Chaalbaaz In London is more like a dream project for me. Shraddha is a fabulous actor and she will play both the characters with equal ease and her comic timing is impeccable. I know how funny Shraddha can be, so she was our obvious choice and when we reached out to her, she obviously jumped at it."

Other than Chaalbaaz In London, Shraddha Kapoor has also been roped in to portray the 'icchadhari nagin', a folklore character seen in movies such as Sridevi's 1986 film Nagina and its sequel Nigahen: Nagina Part 2, in a Naagin trilogy.



## Akshay Kumar tests positive for COVID-19

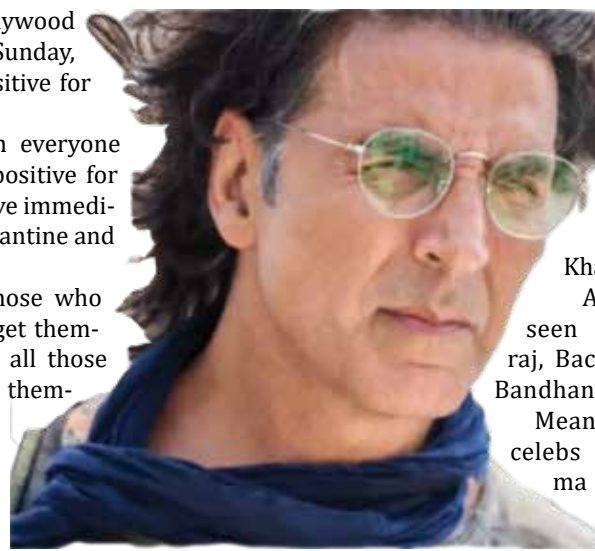
Actor Akshay Kumar is the latest Bollywood star to have contracted COVID-19. On Sunday, Akshay Kumar tweeted that he tested positive for the coronavirus this morning.

In a tweet, he wrote: "I wish to inform everyone that, earlier this morning, I have tested positive for COVID-19. Following all the protocols, I have immediately isolated myself. I'm under home quarantine and have sought necessary medical care."

In his tweet, Akshay Kumar asked those who were in his vicinity in the recent past to get themselves tested: "I would sincerely request all those that have come in contact with me to get themselves tested and take care."

The 53-year-old actor, who has an impressive line-up of upcoming films, added: "Back in action very soon."

Akshay Kumar's COVID-19 diagnosis happened at a time when he was busy with the shooting schedule of Ram Setu, in which he plays an archaeologist. Last month, Akshay, along with his co-stars Nushratt Baruccha and Jacqueline Fernandez travelled to



Ayodhya to attend a puja for the film.

Akshay Kumar joined the shooting schedule of Ram Setu after wrapping Atrangi Re, in which he co-stars with Dhanush and Sara Ali Khan.

Akshay Kumar will also be seen in films such as Prithviraj, Bachchan Pandey and Raksha Bandhan.

Meanwhile, in the recent past, celebs such as Alia Bhatt, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Kartik Aaryan, Paresh Rawal, Milind Soman, among others have tested positive for

COVID-19. Stars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Salman Khan, Sanjay Dutt and Malaika Arora, among others, have taken their COVID-19 vaccination.

## Anthony Ramos in talks for new 'Transformers' movie

Actor Anthony Ramos is in negotiations to play the lead role in the new "Transformers" movie.

The latest film, which hails from Paramount, eOne and Hasbro, has Steven Caple Jr of "Creed II" fame attached as the director, reported Variety.

The plot has been kept under wraps as the studio continues to search for the female lead to star opposite Ramos.

In January 2020, Paramount had decided to go for a soft revamp of the franchise, which has collectively made over USD 4 billion at the box office.

The studio was working on two different scripts from writers James Vanderbilt and Joby Harold.

Harold's take chosen as the next project and after that, Paramount began meeting with directors to hear their visions for it.



In the end, Caple was chosen to direct the new movie.

Paramount has also announced a new standalone film, which is not connected to the Michael Bay-directed movies or "Bumblebee" spinoff.

Angel Manuel Soto will direct the movie from a script by Marco Ramirez.

Ramos was first noticed when he featured Lin-Manuel Miranda's critically-lauded Broadway production "Hamilton". He played the dual roles of John Laurens and Philip Hamilton.

The actor has featured in movies such as "A Star Is Born" and "Godzilla: King of the Monsters".

He will next star in Miranda upcoming project, the adaptation of famed musical "In the Heights".

## 'Real Housewives' star pleads not guilty to fraud charges

**NEW YORK (AP):** A Utah woman with a star role in "The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City" reality show pleaded not guilty Friday to charges accusing her of ripping off hundreds of people in a nationwide telemarketing scheme.

A federal judge in New York City also imposed tighter bail conditions for Jennifer Shah during a virtual hearing after a prosecutor suggested she was still hiding illicit proceeds from the alleged fraud and is a flight risk. Agents searching her home found debit cards from the account of a shell company formed as part of the scheme, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Kiersten Fletcher.

"She's not demonstrated a willingness to disclose her assets," Fletcher said.

Shah will remain free under an order to post a \$1 million bond secured by

\$250,000 in cash or property and co-signed by two other people. Her lawyers had called the requirement to put up property excessive because she's too famous and eager to fight the charges to try to slip away.

At a previous hearing, Shah and a co-defendant, Stuart Smith, were released only on conditions barring contact with each other, traveling outside of Utah or engaging in telemarketing. Smith, who has appeared as Shah's assistant on the show, also pleaded not guilty on Friday.

Shah, 47, of Park City, Utah, is a high-profile member of the main cast of the Bravo program. She was often at the center of the show's most dramatic moments and threw a glass during an argument with one of her fellow cast members. She is married to Universi-

ty of Utah assistant football coach Sharrieff Shah.

She drew new attention earlier this week after authorities accused her and Smith of ripping off hundreds of people by offering fraud tax and other services in a scheme running from 2012 to 2021, prosecutors said in an indictment. Many of the victims were over 55 and didn't own computers, they said.

Shah and Smith's original arraignment was disrupted on Wednesday after Shah was unable to connect to the virtual hearing due to technical difficulties.

Shah and Smith tried to hide their role in the fraud by using third-party names for their business entities, telling victims to use encrypted messages to communicate with them and instructing people to send some payments to offshore bank accounts, the indictment said.

## Rapper DMX on life support after heart attack

DMX's longtime New York-based lawyer, Murray Richman, said the rapper was on life support Saturday evening at White Plains Hospital.

"He had a heart attack. He's quite ill," Richman said.

Richman said he could not confirm reports that DMX, 50, overdosed on drugs and was not sure what caused the heart attack.

"I'm very sad about it, extremely sad. He's like my son," Richman said.

"He's just a tremendous person, tremendous entertainer, tremendous human being. And so much to offer, so much to say. Not the run-of-the-mill rapper. A person of great depth."

DMX, whose real name is Earl Simmons, made a splash in rap music in 1998 with his first studio album "It's Dark and Hell is Hot," which debuted No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart. The multiplatinum selling album was anchored by several hits including "Ruff Ryders' Anthem," "Get At Me Dog" and "Stop Being Greedy."

The rapper had four other chart-topping albums including "...And Then There Was X," "Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood," "The Great Depression" and "Grand Champ." He has released seven albums and earned three Grammy nominations.

Along with his music career, DMX paved his way as an actor. He starred in the 1998 film "Belly" and appeared in "Romeo Must Die" a couple years later with Jet Li and the late singer Aaliyah. DMX and Aaliyah teamed up for the film's soundtrack song "Come Back in One Piece."

The rapper also starred in "Exit Wounds" with Steven Seagal and "Cradle 2 the Grave" with Li.

**Aries:** You've got work and career on your mind today, Aries. Gone are the days when you worked for love and love alone. The new you knows what he/she is worth and won't shy away from putting a price on their work. Entrepreneurs will find that this is an exceedingly good time with profits increasing at a steady pace. Word for the wise: focus on putting your coins in the bank.  
Tip: It's all about work and career in the Aries HQ.  
**Taurus:** Like the rams, you're prioritising work and career too, and you've got that big goals energy about you! Focus on hiring and training the right crew, who can help you take your vision forward. If you're single and in the mood to mingle, fate could unexpectedly align you with a power player, somebody who's adept at saying all the right things at the right time. They may or not be your usual type. But, hey, there's no harm in getting to know them, right?  
Tip: You've got that big goals energy about you.  
**Gemini:** What do you do when your best-laid plan falls apart? Do you moan and groan or accept this as an opportunity to be inventive and grow? Something tells us the ability to improvise is going to come in handy today. Remember,

things are happening for you, and not to you. Choosing to focus on the silver linings will help you get through it all.  
Tip: Spontaneity is a skill that will come in handy.  
**Cancer:** Sometimes, it's best to choose the path of silence and solitude in order to look at a given situation from a brand new perspective. Retreat into your sacred space even when the responsibilities are playing tug-of-war with you. You'll be so, so glad you did! For some of you, mental health could be a cause of concern at this point. What are you giving your attention to? Could you be magnifying your troubles by repeating a certain story in your head? It's a good idea to work with a healer or therapist.  
Tip: Get some distance.  
**Leo:** It's easy to get caught up in a space of emotions when you're \*this\* close to a certain situation. Challenge yourself to get some distance, anyway. This will not only give you perspective, but also help you put an end to the negative patterns that you have been repeating on loop. Boundary issues may be a prominent theme for some of you as well. There are things you're okay with, and then

there are things you're not. Leo, let go of the need to apologise for the things that make you uncomfortable.  
Tip: Boundary issues may be a theme for you right now.  
**Virgo:** Uh-oh! Mercury is in the mood to make mischief once again. Some of your best-laid plans could fall apart. Alternatively, you could face unexpected roadblocks. It will be easy for you to see yourself as the victim under these circumstances. Challenge yourself to rise above this complex anyway. Learning to pause and breathe will provide you with much-needed perspective.  
Tip: Pause and breathe.  
**Libra:** Libra, at any point you have two options: to choose to focus on the dark clouds that surround you, or shift your gaze towards the silver linings. The choice is and has always been yours. Something tells us you're in the mood to get your optimism on and call in a miracle or two. What the cards want you to know at this moment: you are surrounded by big manifestation energy, which is helping you take your career and creative projects to the next level.  
Tip: You are surrounded by big manifestation energy.

**Scorpio:** What if we're all a part of the divine consciousness? A manifestation of Source energy in human form? Look beyond the illusion of separation and recognise the love and light in each individual. This will help you rise above the judgements created by the monkey mind. As such, the path of meditation and contemplation will help you rise above the negative thought patterns that are weighing you down.  
Tip: We're all a part of the same divine consciousness.  
**Sagittarius:** There will always be more things to do and tens and thousands of deadlines to meet. You have to make the choice between allowing your worldly responsibilities to get the better of you, or balancing them alongside your spirituality. Find a way to bridge the gap between the two, Sagittarius. Start by setting aside more time for you to be by yourself today.  
Tip: Find a way to balance the material with the spiritual.  
**Capricorn:** You've fought long and hard for this, Capricorn. You've fought long and hard for this. Don't give up now. The cards are reminding

you that you're \*this\* close to the victory run and that the help and resources you need will be made available to you if you simply allow yourself to receive what has always been yours.  
Tip: Don't give up now!  
**Aquarius:** Spirituality is a big theme for you right now, Aquarius. You're tired of the trials and tribulations of the mundane world and wish to seek solace in something higher. It's a good idea to chant, meditate, practice yoga or reconnect with a practice that helps you stay grounded. Some of you may feel inspired to visit a place that facilitates the inward journey. Others may sign for a workshop or retreat.  
Tip: It's time to traverse within.  
**Pisces:** Uh-oh! Mercury is in retrograde again, making it hard for you to trust your own intuition. Go with your first instinct, which is usually right. Alternatively, you could make a list of pros and cons in order to assess your options carefully before you proceed. Some of you may have trouble expressing your truth once you have come to a conclusion. As always, keep in mind that those who love you unconditionally will never expect you to be anybody but yourself.  
Tip: Speak your truth unapologetically.