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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Indra Hang seeks NM-QTA funding for research in Sikkim



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 SEPT:**

Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba, met Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Science and Technology, Dr Harsh Vardhan in his office at Parliament House and submitted him a request seeking research grants for Sikkim University and other institutions of the State through National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications (NM-QTA).

The Govt of India has allocated Rs 8,000 crores for NM-QTA in the budget, it is informed.

The MP apprised him of how Sikkim was perfectly situated for research in various fields and apprised him of how research in various fields in Social Science, Basic Sciences, Applied Science, environment and Information Technology have been carried out here despite limited funding.

The Minister has assured to look into the matter seriously.

During the meeting, the MP apprised the Minister regarding pending issues of reservation of seats for Limboos and Tamangs and inclusion of left out communities in ST.

Dr Vardhan assured that he would write to the concerned ministry forwarding the letter MP submitted on behalf of the people of Sikkim.

Bengal reports 61 fresh COVID-19 deaths, 3,177 new cases

KOLKATA, SEP 20 (PTI): The COVID-19 toll in West Bengal rose to 4,359 on Sunday after 61 more patients succumbed to the disease, the health department said in a bulletin.

The case tally went up to 2,25,137 as 3,177 more people tested positive for the virus, it said.

The bulletin issued

Sunday evening said that 2,958 patients recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours, taking the discharge rate of the state to 87.05 per cent.

The number of active cases is now 24,806, the bulletin said.

Since Saturday, 45,656 samples were tested for COVID-19 in the state.

32,238 paramilitary personnel contracted COVID-19: Govt



NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): The government on Sunday said a total of 32,238 paramilitary personnel were infected by the Coronavirus so far. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in Lok Sabha that 9,158 personnel of the CRPF, 8,934 personnel of the BSF, 5,544 personnel of the CISF, 3,380 personnel of the ITBP, 3,251 personnel of the SSB, 1,746 personnel of the Assam Rifles and 225 personnel of the NSG were infected by the virus.

Among the infected, the highest recovery rate is reported in CRPF (84.4 per cent), followed by BSF (80.41 per cent) and CISF (75.25 per cent), he said replying a written reply.

Rai said the highest death rate has been reported in CISF (0.43 per cent), followed by

the Assam Rifles (0.40 per cent) CRPF (0.39 per cent).

The minister said the government has established COVID-19 Hospitals, Covid Care Centres and Dedicated COVID Health Centres (DCHC) for treatment and to support the recovery of paramilitary personnel, who are found positive for COVID-19.

In addition to normal benefits available to a paramilitary personnel on death, it has been decided to provide Rs 15 Lakh to next of kins through Bharat Ke Veer funds, in Cases any personnel dies due to COVID-19 infection contracted while deployed on Covid-19 related duties. Immediate grant for funeral expenses and support for Expeditious processing of family pension and other dues is provided, he said.

2-day-old baby beats COVID on a day when 49 more test positive

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 SEPT:**

The fog of worry wafting through Sikkim with COVID deaths almost every day of late was lifted to some extent with the heartwarming news that a two-day-old baby who had tested COVID-positive on 12 September earlier this month has beaten the virus and returned home.

This update was however the only uplifting news for Sikkim which continues to grapple with infections even among "VIPs" and containment orders becoming so frequent that most people are not even keeping track any more. There was also one more COVID-casualty reported today when a 54-year-old male from Chongey near Gangtok, who was admitted to STNM Hospital on 02 September, passed away

at around 7 AM this morning. The patient had co-morbid conditions of diabetes, chronic kidney disease and renal failure.

Today, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in Sikkim so far increased to 2,391 with 49 new cases recorded in the 24 hours ending 8 AM Sunday. South took over from East district today, cornering most of the new cases.

Of the 49 new cases, 11 were reported from East District, one from West District and 37 from South District, 30 of which were from Jorethang.

The number of active novel coronavirus cases in the State now stands at 469.

Meanwhile, with three patients discharged from isolation facilities yesterday, the number of people discharged from covid care centres

and the isolation wards at hospitals has risen to 1,894.

In the daily health bulletin on Sunday evening, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam G Bhutia mentioned that 45 new cases COVID-19 positive were detected in the testing of 314 samples by RT-PCR at VRD Lab in STNM hospital on Saturday. He added that two of 12 samples tested by TrueNat were found positive for COVID-19, while two other new cases of COVID-19 positive were reported in the rapid antigen testing of 28 samples.

While giving break-up of new cases found in RT-PCR testing, he informed that 37 new cases have been reported from South District including six staff of Jorethang CHC and six from Chisopani and one

police personnel from Melli.

Likewise, one person from near Lepcha garage on Bye-Pass Road-Gangtok, one from near PHSC Kopibari, three primary contacts from the containment zone in Development Area, one from PNG Road, one from Deorali Road and one from Kingstone, Rhenock were also found positive in RT-PCR testing.

He informed that one person from Daragaon, Tadong and a 23-year-old female from Bojoghari, who could not be contacted over phone to be informed of her test results, were found positive for COVID-19 in TrueNat testing.

Mr Bhutia informed that a person from Mandir area in Bojoghari and a person from Sombaria in West Sikkim were found positive in the rapid antigen testing.

India's coronavirus infections surge to 54 lakh

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT: India's coronavirus case tally surged to 54 lakh as it added 92,605 new infections in the last 24 hours, data from the health ministry showed on Sunday.

The country has posted the highest single-day caseload in the world since early August, and lags behind only the United States, which has 67 lakh cases in terms of total infections.

Meanwhile, a total of 1,113 people died of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, the health ministry said, taking mortalities to 86,752, which is a relatively low 1.6% of all cases.

India's single-day recoveries surpassed the number of new infections for the second consecutive day with 94,612 people getting discharged from isolation facilities.



A total of 94,612 people recovered from coronavirus in a span of 24 hours, taking the national "recovery" rate to 79.68 per cent.

The death toll climbed to 86,752 with the virus claiming 1,133 lives in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The total COVID-19 recoveries have surged to 43,03,043.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate was recorded at 1.61 per cent.

There are 10,10,824 active cases in the country which comprise 18.72 per cent of the

total caseload, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and it went past 50 lakh on September 16.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 6,36,61,060 samples have been tested up to September 19 with 12,06,806 samples being tested on Saturday.

Of the 1,133 new deaths, 425 are from Maharashtra, 114 from Karnataka, 84 from Uttar Pradesh, 66 from Tamil Nadu, 58 from Andhra Pradesh, 56 from West

Bengal, 49 from Punjab, 42 from Madhya Pradesh and 38 from Delhi.

Total 86,752 deaths reported so far in the country include 32,216 from Maharashtra followed by 8,751 from Tamil Nadu, 7,922 from Karnataka, 5,302 from Andhra Pradesh, 4,953 from Uttar Pradesh, 4,945 from Delhi, 4,298 from West Bengal, 3,302 from Gujarat, 2,757 from Punjab and 1,943 from Madhya Pradesh.

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

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

LS adjourned for an hour over social-distancing norms

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): Lok Sabha was adjourned for an hour on Sunday soon after it met for the day as Congress members demanded that the House proceedings should not take place till Rajya Sabha galleries are cleared of the agitating members of the Upper House. Due to social-distancing norms necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic, members of Lok Sabha have been allocated some seats in Rajya Sabha.

Congress and other opposition members of Rajya Sabha were sitting on a dharna inside the chamber, even after the

House was adjourned for the day, to protest farm sector bills passed by the Upper House earlier.

Rajya Sabha sitting ends at 1 pm, following which members from Lok Sabha occupy seats there at 3 PM.

Proceedings in Rajya Sabha were extended today for the passage of the farm bills.

As Lok Sabha met at 3 PM, Congress leader in the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury asked Speaker Om Birla to adjourn the House till the stalemate in Rajya Sabha ends.

To this, Birla said that Lok Sabha gallery is still empty and the members

who have been allotted seats in Rajya Sabha can take the vacant seats in the Lower House. He also said that even if one member of Lok Sabha is unable to attend, he will adjourn the House.

Birla further said that since COVID issue is listed for discussion in the House, if it is adjourned then it will not give a good signal.

Chowdhury said since the members sit in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha galleries to ensure social distancing due to COVID-19, the House should not function as members are not being allowed inside the Upper House.

Birla said that it has been a norm that discussion of the happenings in the other House will not be taken up in Lok Sabha. However, Chowdhury argued that with members occupying both the the Houses for sitting purposes it has now become "two-in-one". "Two Houses has now become one, hence this rule does not apply," the Congress leader contended.

TMC's Kalyan Banerjee suggested that Birla make a request to all the members stuck outside Rajya Sabha to come and sit in the vacant seats in Lok Sabha.

Missing girl brought back to Sikkim after two years



**SANJAY AGARWAL
RANGPO, 20 SEPT:**

A girl who had gone missing from Sikkim two years back was rescued and returned to the State from Uttar Pradesh today in an effort made successful by the combined efforts of Duars Express Mail, Sikkim Police, Railway GRP and Uttar Pradesh police.

The girl was spotted in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, a few days ago and even as police there was trying to send her safely back of Sikkim, she is reported to have gone missing again.

After this latest disappearance, some organizations in Ballia staged a sit-in demonstration demanding that she be traced and rescued.

Meanwhile, rumours went viral on social media that she had been burned alive in Ballia. The state administration also got involved in the rescue efforts and the rumours thankfully turned out to be false.

She was spotted by the Railwat GRP who then informed that she was safe and will be reached to Sikkim through Duars Express Mail.

The State administration contacted Duars Express Mail to discuss return. Duars Express Mail members travelled to Katihar, where the girl was under the care of Railway GRP police, and brought her safely to Rangpo check post.

Under the supervision of Sikkim Police, the Duars Express Mail team handed over the missing girl to the members of the State Women's Commission today. The One Stop Centre team also provided special support to this initiative.

The girl was taken to the screening centre by State Women's Commission and was sent on to quarantine today.

While speaking about the incident, Raju Nepali of Duars Express Mail highlighted that the mission was a success with the help of Duars Express Mail team, Sikkim Police, Administration of Sikkim State Government and Railway GRP.

Sukhbir Badal urges President not to sign farm Bills

CHANDIGARH, SEP 20 (PTI): SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Sunday urged the President not to sign the farm Bills, passed by the Rajya Sabha, and also requested him that they be returned to Parliament for reconsideration.

The Shiromani Akali Dal chief said the passage of the Bills marks a sad day for the country's millions and for democracy.

Democracy is not majority oppression but about consultation, conciliation and consensus, Badal said in a statement here.

All three democratic virtues were ignored in today's proceedings. This distortion can only be corrected with a presidential intervention, said Badal. The SAD chief also requested the President to grant a personal audience to a delegation of his party's senior leaders, all of whom are themselves farmers. The delegation will be led by Badal himself.

While requesting the President not to sign the Bills, Sukhbir said, Please stand by the farmers, 'kisan mazdoors', 'arhtiyas', mandi labour and Dalits.

They are facing exploitation and look up to you to exercise your discretion as the highest executive in the country. Come to their rescue by not signing these bills so that they do not acquire the finality of an act, said Sukhbir in a plea to the President.

Failing this, the poor, beleaguered classes and their future generations will never forgive us, he said.

Don't let the 'annadata' (farmers) starve or sleep on the roads, he added.

Badal requested the President to return the Bills to Parliament for reconsideration so that the hasty decisions taken in a fleeting moment of overzealous stubbornness do not leave permanent scars on the nation's psyche". Therefore, there is still time to reconsider this decision and undo the damage it threatens to cause to our overall national interests, especially at this critical juncture when the country's economy requires social stability, peace and harmony to recover from the traumatic after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.

The Constitution gives the President the power to withhold assent to certain categories of bills passed by Parliament.

Sukhbir said the founding fathers had made this constitutional provision after thorough consideration of all aspects.

Demand to regulate school fee raised in RS

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): A demand to regulate the fee charged by private schools was made in Rajya Sabha on Sunday by a Congress MP, who said schools were also charging high rates for books and dresses.

Raising the issue through a Zero Hour mention, Rajamani Patel of the Congress said “crores of rupees in commission” were being charged on school material and dresses that parents are forced to buy.

Schools are charging fees for even the holiday period, he said, adding the government should bring a bill to regulate fees charged by private

schools to prevent the poor from exploitation.

Biswaji Daimary (BPF) demanded that the government strengthen road infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh particularly from Itanagar to Tawang to facilitate easy troop movement to counter any misadventure by China.

“China will not bomb Arunachal Pradesh because they claim Arunachal Pradesh is their land. They will come in from land (route) and you have to protect it from land (route),” he said.

Saroj Pandey of the BJP raised the issue of

the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana not being fully implemented in Chhattisgarh.

The scheme provides free access to healthcare to the poor.

However, when she sought to criticise the Congress-ruled state government, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu reminded her that she should place her demand and not get into criticism of state governments.

K a n a k a m e d a l a Ravindra Kumar of the TDP demanded that the policy of devotees giving a declaration of their faith in Lord Balaji

before entering the famed Tirupati temple should continue.

Dinesh Trivedi of the TMC sought changes in dates for the NEET examination to be held between October 1 and 23, saying October 21, 22, and 23 are the most important days of the Durga puja festival.

“Kindly pre-pone or postpone the examination,” he said.

Naidu said the demand should be conveyed to the Education minister.

While Manoj Kumar Jha of the RJD raised the issue of Bihar facing a

double onslaught of COVID and floods, Akhilesh Pratap Singh of the Congress raised the issue of inmates in Bihar jails rising by 20 per cent to 50,000 due to bail hearings being impacted by curtailed court functioning amid COVID-19.

Kamakhya Prasad Tasa (BJP), through a special mention, demanded bus service between all northeastern states.

Dola Sen of the TMC raised the issue of removal of subjects such as secularism, demonetisation, and challenges to democracy from the syllabus.

Over Rs 70K crore worth of loans sanctioned to discoms under liquidity package: Govt

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): As much as Rs 70,590 crore worth of credit has been sanctioned to discoms under the liquidity package for payment of dues by these utilities, Parliament was informed on Sunday.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in May this year had announced a Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion into cash-strapped discoms for clearing their outstanding dues till March 2020.

Now, the government is in the process of enhancing this package to Rs 1.2 lakh crore factoring in discoms outstanding dues till June this year. Some states had urged the central government to hike this liquidity package by factoring in outstanding dues of April and May as well.

“As against Rs 90,000 crore of liquidity infusion package announced by the government, Rs 70,590 crore worth of loans have been



sanctioned and Rs 24,742 crore has already been disbursed/released till September 16, 2020,” said Power Minister R K Singh in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

The government is infusing liquidity in the power sector through Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC Ltd to enable the sector to maintain power supplies as cash flows had plummeted during lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Under this intervention, the REC and PFC are extending special long term transition loans of up

to 10 years to discoms for liquidating their outstanding dues of Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Generation (Genco) & Transmission Companies (Transcos), Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and Renewable Energy (RE) generators.

In separate reply to the House, the minister stated that power demand would increase from 1,399.91 billion units (BU) in 2019-20 to 2,047.43 BU in 2026-27.

He also told the House that the peak power demand would increase to 298.77GW in 2026-27 from 200.69GW in 2019-20.

Rahul Gandhi slams farm bills as ‘death warrants’

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said democracy has been shamed by the manner in which the government issued “death warrants” against farmers by passing two bills related to the agriculture sector.

The Rajya Sabha passed ‘The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020’, and ‘the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020’ on Sunday amid a din created by opposition members.

“The farmers grow gold from land, but the arrogance of the Modi government is making farmers shed tears of



blood,” Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

“Democracy has been shamed by the manner in which the government passed death warrants against farmers in the form of two farm bills in Rajya Sabha,” he tweeted.

Gandhi earlier termed the bills “anti-agriculture black laws” and asked how will minimum support price (MSP) be ensured

with the ending of the Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC) or farmers’ market.

Why is there no guarantee on MSP, he asked.

“Modi ji is making farmers ‘slaves’ of capitalists, the country will not allow this to succeed,” the former Congress chief tweeted in Hindi with the hashtag ‘Kisan Virodhi (anti-farmer) Narendra Modi’.

Overall COVID-19 deaths per million population in India low compared to other countries: Govt

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): The overall number of cases and deaths per million population due to COVID-19 in the country is low compared to similarly affected countries, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey told Rajya Sabha on Sunday.

Noting that there are no established pharmaceutical interventions that can break the chain of transmission, Choubey said non-pharmaceutical interventions such as hand and respiratory hygiene, wearing of mask/face cover, physical distancing measures, preventing large gatherings, etc are the only tools to suppress and break the chain of transmission.

This has to be in turn supported by heightened community awareness and behavioral change communication.

He was responding to a question on the reasons for spread of COVID-19 at



an increased rate despite lower numbers at the initial stage in India as compared to other countries.

“COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease. Many of the epidemiological parameters such as agent-host interaction, socio-cultural and environmental factors, modes of transmission, susceptibility of individuals, immune

response are still under research,” Choubey said in a written reply.

The Government of India since January, has followed a pre-emptive, graded and proactive approach for managing COVID-19, the minister said.

States have been supported in terms of logistics, funding and technical guidance right from the beginning.

To blunt the progression of cases in the country, the government had taken series of steps under Disaster Management Act, 2005 including lockdown, Choubey highlighted.

“This in effect reduced the growth rate of cases, increased community awareness, and the period was utilized

to upgrade health infrastructure and health staff capacities which has supported the country in terms of managing the disease.

“In effect, the overall number of cases and deaths per million population due to COVID-19 in the country is low compared to similarly affected countries,” Choubey said.

‘Piranesi’: A tale in isolation

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): Piranesi sees his friend on Tuesdays and Fridays but he prefers to be alone at home mostly, making notes of everything he explores. This is not a story of someone in quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic but the gist of English author Susanna Clarke’s new novel.

Named “Piranesi”, it is about a man named Piranesi who lives in ‘the House’. In his notebooks, day after day, he makes a clear and careful record of its wonders: the labyrinth of halls, the thousands upon thousands of statues, the tides which thunder up staircases, the clouds which move in slow procession through the upper halls.

He speaks to the birds; and brings tributes of food and water lilies to the House’s Dead. Once in a while, he sees his

friend, known as ‘the Other’. But mostly, he is alone.

The character is a mixture of innocence and wisdom. Clarke says Piranesi possesses the knowledge and the skills to live successfully in his particular world. For him, every day is busy and meant for doing meaningful work. He is a very informed person.

Clarke’s first novel “Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell” was published in October 2004. A tale of 19th-century England, where two magicians emerge to change history, it was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and shortlisted for the Whitbread First Novel Award.

“Piranesi”, published by Bloomsbury, is her second novel.

For Piranesi, precision is very important in the writing of his journals and Clarke

says in choosing words, in descriptions of places, people or emotions, one wants to be as specific as he or she is able to.

“In creating a piece of fiction I might start with an image and the image itself can be something quite small. C S Lewis said that all of the Narnia books began with the image of a faun in a snowy wood, carrying parcels. Or I might start with a character about which I know very little, just one or two things,” she says.

“The important thing is that the idea, whatever it is, has roots that it goes deep down into the imagination, into the unconscious. Because if it has roots, then it will, with a bit of watering and careful pruning, grow into something quite interesting,” Clarke adds.

Piranesi is a

scientist, loves being a scientist and wants to know everything he can about the House/World.

If he could, he would catalogue every statue, map every hall, take every measurement. But in the end he knows that the House is more than the sum of facts about it. For Piranesi, knowing the House itself is more important than knowing facts about the House, Clarke says.

“Piranesi” was conceived and written long before lockdown. Clarke says the lockdown has opened her life up at the same time as it closed down other people’s.

“Gatherings now take place on Zoom. I can take part from my sofa. I’m in regular contact with groups of people I couldn’t have dreamt of before lockdown. When people start to meet again in

the real world I shall be happy for them and for all of us, but I expect my world to get a little smaller,” she says.

She also loves to write in cafes as there is coffee, croissants and toast.

“People bring them to you. There’s usually a little bit of background noise which can be helpful. You’re surrounded by people working, making coffee, tidying up, working on laptops. I like the proximity of people doing their work, of people enjoying working,” Clarke says.

She even has apps of cafe sounds and rain sounds on her laptop which she finds useful when she is at home. She also listens to music.

She made three “Piranesi” playlists, a sort of soundtrack, which she listened to over and over again as she finished the book.

TCS sets up 11 COVID-19 isolation centres for staff, their dependents

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): India’s largest software services firm Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has set up 11 first-line COVID-19 isolation centres within its premises in various cities in India, including Mumbai, Indore and Nagpur.

According to an email to employees, these centres will provide medical support to

associates and their dependents (spouse, children and parents / parents-in-law) who are asymptomatic or mildly COVID-19 positive with no other co-morbidities or medical history/ complications.

All the centres will have 24/7 medical cover, along with daily monitoring by

trained professionals. The patients can even connect with a counsellor virtually during their treatment.

When contacted, TCS in an emailed response said: “Amidst the tumult of the last few months, our priority has always been to safeguard the health and well-being of our employees.”

“TCS Health Centres in our campuses will provide isolation, comfort and treatment by the health professionals to our employees and their dependents, who are asymptomatic or have mild (COVID-19) symptoms,” the statement added.

These centres, which will function as per the various guidelines laid down by the Centre

and state governments, have been set up in TCS facilities in Chennai, Kochi, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Bhubaneswar, Indore and Nagpur.

TCS has collaborated with various entities to provide medical and hospitality support at these centres that have around 20-50 beds.

BUILDING FOR SALE

A two storey house building constructed on plot area 50×40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS , South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 56 Lakhs (Negotiable). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

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LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak Price negotiable Contact : 6296366498, 9641878315, 9593262407

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

FOR RENT

Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Bazaar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General roadside land for sale measuring 30 by 45 square feet near smile land below apica garden . Contact no.7797885351/9733538899.

GMC locked down for a week

GANGTOK, 20 SEPT (IPR): The Government of Sikkim has recently declared to lockdown the Gangtok Municipal Corporation area for a period of one week as precautionary measures to contain COVID-19 in the area.

In the recent Order issued from the Home Department, it was mentioned that the areas under the purview of the Gangtok Municipal Corporation would be adhering strict lockdown from 21 Sept (Monday) to 27 Sept (Sunday), 2020 wherein all movement of private and commercial vehicles would not be allowed to ply, the vehicles carrying persons responsible for carrying



out essential activities shall be exempted on production of valid ID-cards or other relevant document to the Police personnel on duty.

Business establishments, restaurants, bars and eateries would be closed and only ration shops, medicine shops and groceries would be open

for the public.

The Department of Information and Public Relations (IPR) with regard to the above mentioned order carried

out the miking of the information at various places of the GMC areas in and around Gangtok on 19th and 20th September to provide a clear message to the people.

The other important information mentioned in the Home Department Order 33/Home/2020 dated 19 Sept, 2020 was also disseminated through miking by the Department.

The areas covered by the miking were Ranipool, 6th Mile, 5th Mile, Lumsey, Tadong, Deorali, Gangtok, Chandmari, Vajra, Tashi View Point, Burtuk, DC Office Sichey, Arithang, Lalbazar, Tibet Road, Kazi Road, Convoy Ground, Development area and other areas.

Antarastriya Sewa Dal Diwas observed



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 SEPT: Different branches of SARI Satya Sai Sewa Organisation

Sikkim organised social programs marking Antarastriya Sewa Dal Diwas today. Singlebong and

Pachak Mandali under Cheuribhotay Samiti of Rongli organised a cleanliness and repairs drive in their area.

Richenpong reception for Mahindra Gurung to celebrate appointment as chairperson

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 SEPT Richenpong constituency in West Sikkim organized a reception to welcome Mahindra Gurung on his appointment as chairperson, Sikkim Medicinal Plant Board.

The reception programme started at the SKM party head office at Mangalbaria where office bearers and supporters received him. The final reception was held at his native place at Sribadam,



West Sikkim.

During the course of meetings, the gatherings also offered prayers on the passing away of Topzang Bhutia.

Online Boxing Training-cum-Competition concludes

GANGTOK, 20 SEPT [IPR]: The closing ceremony of the 1st Online Boxing Training-cum-Competition, organised by the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, was held on 17 Sept with Secretary, Kuber Bhandari, as chief guest accompanied by president, Sikkim Amateur Boxing Association, Jaslal

Pradhan, as guest of honour. The ceremony was also attended online by national coach Blas Iglesias Fernandis, SAI coaches Ramanand and Vijay Kumar and international boxer and coach Hardeep Singh.

The Secretary interacted with the participants, parents and coaches.

He thanked the

national coaches for their time and for taking sessions with upcoming boxers of the state. He encouraged the youngsters to pursue their passion and cautioned them that "quitters can never be winners."

The Online Boxing training-cum-competition had received registration of 77

under-14 boys and girls and the training focused on shadow-boxing, straight plank hold, and reach hold.

The training was held under the supervision of Boxing Coach, Pratima Gooroo and national coaches also took training sessions. An Online Competition was also held at the end of the training.

In the girls category

Aashira Singh Lohar, Kanchan Limbu and Yuna Limbu were declared first, second and third respectively.

In the boys category Samir Limbu, Anmol Rai and Saroj Chhetri were declared first, second and third positions respectively. They were awarded cash prizes of Rs 3,000, Rs 2,000 and Rs 1,000 respectively.

SAATHI life-skills training for fourth batch of students

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 SEPT:

A three-day online training on life-skills was organized by SAATHI for students from seven schools of the State, a press release informs.

The training was held from 17-19 September and was attended by students from Mangshila Sr. Sec. School, Kalzang Gyatso Sr. Sec. School(Kabi), Kewzing Sr. Sec. School(Sreebadam), Dentam Sr. Sec. School, Kitam Sr. Sec. School, Enchey Sr. Sec. School and Middle Geyzing Sec. School.

The objective of this camp was to provide knowledge about various life-skills required on



everyday basis, the release explains.

The sessions covered were career guidance by Dr. Satyadeep S. Chhetri, Associate Professor, N.B. Bhandari

Govt. Degree College and Interpersonal Relationship

Teamwork by Ms. Roshni Chhetri, Research Scholar & Counselling

Psychologist. Coping with emotion and stress by Mr. Pragyan Dewan, Counselling Psychologist and Communication Skills & Time Management by Mr. Manorath Dahal, Professor, HoD(Dept. of Social Science), SCERT. Awareness & usage of social media by Mrs. Pragya Parameeta, Advocate, Co-founder of Accelerator & Eastern Himalayan News Services and Mr. Prashant Sharma, Coordinator, Sikkim Drug Users Forum had shared his life experience with the students.

Bill seeking to amend FCRA introduced in LS

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): A bill that seeks to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), under which providing the Aadhar numbers of the office-bearers of any NGO will be mandatory for registration and public servants will be barred from receiving funds from abroad, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Sunday.

The Foreign Contribution Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2020, introduced in the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, also proposes to enable the Centre to allow an NGO or association to surrender its FCRA certificate.

Introducing the bill, Rai said, "There would be no discrimination. The permission which was given

earlier to religious institutions for foreign contributions under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 will continue. But these institutions should not deviate from their objective and not be a threat to the country's security."

The draft bill proposes that not more than 20 per cent of the total foreign funds received could be spent on administrative expenses. Presently, the limit is 50 per cent.

Manish Tewari of the Congress objected to the bill and made a request to the government to relax the provisions of the FCRA.

Saugata Roy of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) also opposed the bill, saying it is an attempt to stop foreign contributions.

"The idea should be to deregulate and not over-regulate foreign contributions," he said.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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





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Allow Students to Think

Open doors, don't spoon-feed

At least some movement appears being taken towards reopening schools, finally. Admittedly, it is not an easy decision to take and there are too many variables complicating things even further. For those who remain in the make-believe world where online education is a viable option, banish that thought and accept it that online classes are a big fail. Take that out of the equation when deciding policy and SOPs moving forward. And while we wait for classrooms to reopen, let's pine some more about what schools should deliver.

What Sikkim requires its schools to create are sensible citizens who can think for themselves, weigh options and make practical decisions. In these times of fake news and manufactured consent, an open mind willing to learn and analyse will be required to side-step the shackles of time-serving mediocrity. And we would all wish that for the next generation, won't we? The one place where clear thought can be honed into an instinct is the classroom – allow the education system to adopt genuinely learning-friendly practices and future generations will dazzle with their confidence and carry Sikkim forward. Don't do so, and a majority will remain hesitant and unsure, seeking out charlatans to form their beliefs, ideologies and pursuits.

If education was approached with the aim to open minds, not suppress inquisitiveness, the quality that everyone seeks to infuse into the system will become a reality. What the present system delivers, and this is a national malaise, is infectious indecisiveness. Students are not encouraged to enquire or seek clarifications and every effort is made to drill them into an army of monotony, their uniqueness and differences brushed over by soul-sapping rigour and mind-numbing routine. It is rare to find students with wide-ranging interests any more. In fact, the syllabus and pattern of education does not even allow children the space to develop any meaningful interests any more. Even when these interests are displayed at annual day functions they are mostly hobbies decided for them by the teachers or “talents” singled out by them for display. Student projects for interschool competitions are prepared by teachers and every intonation of a poetry recital for competition dictated to them. We just won't allow them to make their mistakes and learn from them or stand by the side in case assistance is required; we believe that we are serving them by hand-holding them through their years in school, college, university, and if we have the “contact”, even their employment.

More and more teachers are so scared that students will “fail” them that they end up spoon-feeding them. At the other extreme are teachers who see no hope in their students so they don't get involved at all. In both scenarios, the student meets the same fate – a confidence stamped down even before it could develop. A good way to start delivering Sikkim a more confident generation would be to allow students to discover more things by themselves and in doing so, they will also discover the confidence required to think and decide for themselves later in life.

Disney's Mulan tells women to know their place



SIN WEN LAU & SHIH-WEN SUE CHEN

THECONVERSATION.COM

Disney's live-action adaptation of Mulan was released last week amid much controversy. Accusations of Disney bowing to the Chinese Communist Party emerged when the trailer was released.

Many were outraged to learn the movie was partially filmed in Xinjiang, where at least one million Uighurs have been forced into internment camps. They also objected to actress Liu Yifei's reported support of the Hong Kong police during the 2019 protests.

Criticisms of the movie include its historical and geographical inaccuracies, an undertone of Islamophobia, and a misrepresentation of qi (life force).

Also concerning, but less visible, is how Disney's Mulan is a more conservative telling of an ancient story – and the place of women – than some historical Chinese renditions. While Mulan might claim to be a tale of female empowerment, ultimately this film is about how women will only be rewarded if they know their place.

A 1,500-YEAR-OLD TALE

The 2020 adaptation of Mulan follows the basic plot of the 1998 Disney animation. The dutiful heroine cross-dresses as a man to take her father's place in the army. She returns victorious.

The original ballad Mulan shi (“The Ballad of Mulan”) dates

back to the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534), a period of warfare and instability. Readers of this poem are exposed to the painful emotions that surround Mulan's decision to go to war.

In early renditions, Mulan was a Northerner of unspecified ethnicity, and some retellings cast her as a resistor to the imperial court.

Scholars have likened Mulan to a blank canvas. The freedom to tell her story in different ways has contributed to its popularity. By the 20th century, the ethnicity of this female warrior was designated as Han, and her loyalty allied with the central government.

In Mulan Joins the Army (1939), Mulan's filial piety was emphasised as a service to the country.

Similar themes were explored in Lady General Hua Mu-lan (1964) and Mulan: Rise of a Warrior (2009). Disney's 1998 animation was the first major non-Chinese adaptation of the Mulan story.

In these retellings, Mulan had fully transformed into a defender of the state.

‘KNOW YOUR PLACE’

Early in the new film, the village matchmaker tells 16-year-old Mulan (Liu Yifei) a good wife is “composed, graceful, polite” and “when a wife serves her husband, she must be silent, invisible.”

Mulan fails to embody these long-held virtues of an ideal Chinese girl, and her father exhorts Mulan to

hide her special qi. This masculine power has no place in a girl's life. The only way she can honour her family is through marriage.

However, Mulan ultimately brings honour to her family by demonstrating that she is “loyal, brave and true” – qualities engraved on her father's sword. Mulan knows her crippled father will die in battle if he is conscripted into the army. Taking his place, she leaves home in the middle of the night with the sword.

As a reward for her courage and leadership in saving the Emperor, he bestows her an official position in the imperial guard, but Mulan rejects the offer in order to return home.

The Emperor sends his men to offer Mulan a new sword. In addition to the three qualities, the new sword is engraved with a fourth virtue, xiao (“filial piety,” translated in the film as “devotion to family”). The men urge her to reconsider the Emperor's offer and join the guard.

The film ends with the phoenix, Mulan's ancestral guardian, circling above her. This creature has been her guide and its reappearance signals her acceptance of the offer. Because her love interest, Honghui, is an imperial soldier, it is implied she will fulfil her romantic desires as well.

Mulan is rewarded for knowing her place and for her xiao: by working within the dominant

patriarchal system, she is a woman who “can have it all.”

A 17TH CENTURY BAND OF SISTERS

Within the film, the villain Xianniang (Gong Li) provides a powerful contrast to Mulan.

Xianniang invites Mulan to join forces and rebel against the Emperor. She wants to build a kingdom where strong women like them are accepted for who they are, but Mulan responds, “I know my place” – emphasising her duty is to serve her Emperor.

Ultimately, Xianniang sacrifices herself to save Mulan. By refusing to work within the system, Xianniang's death signifies the failure of her radical approach.

Rather than being a story of female empowerment, Mulan promotes the idea that women must put male authority figures before themselves to achieve recognition.

The story of Mulan hasn't always sent this message. In a version by the 17th century author Chu Renhuo, set at the end of the Sui Dynasty (581-618), Xianniang is a warrior princess who becomes Mulan's sworn sister. They lead a group of women soldiers and travel together. This friendship is absent from the Disney film.

[Sin Wen Lau is Senior Lecturer in China Studies, University of Otago; Shih-Wen Sue Chen is Senior Lecturer in Writing and Literature, Deakin University]

Kids, masks & back-to-school FAQs: Are cloth masks best to protect against COVID-19? How often should masks be washed?

DASANTILA GOLEMI-KOTRA

THECONVERSATION.COM

With kids heading back to school in masks this year, many parents are wondering about different types of masks and how to care for them. Here are answers to some of the most common mask questions.

ARE CLOTH OR DISPOSABLE MASKS BEST FOR ALL-DAY WEAR?

When considering the best choice of face covering for a child to wear for the duration of a school day, one should look at the mask fabric, whether it absorbs sweat and oil secreted from the skin and is not irritating to the skin, and the size of the face mask and whether it fits well on the child's face.

Both cloth and disposable face masks, when worn properly on the face with little to no gaps around the nose, cheeks or underneath the chin, perform equally well in terms of reducing the respiratory droplets expelled by the wearer. Therefore, it is reasonable to look out for cloth masks that may offer the wearer less face irritation. However, it is important to pay attention to the fabric, design and fit of the cloth face masks.

Tests have shown cotton, flannel and polyester face masks with two or more layers filter out 80 per cent of the respiratory droplets, but neck gaiters did not filter out the respiratory droplets. On the contrary, neck gaiters appear to increase the number of micro-droplets filtered through them, likely by breaking up larger droplets.

In addition, cloth masks are offered in different sizes (adult, youth and kid sizes) and disposable masks (made from plastic material such as polypropylene) may only come in a single size, which is often too big for children. Hence, cloth masks could be



the best option for children.

However, it should be recognized that wearing a face mask, no matter how comfortable it may be, still does not come naturally to any of us and can cause discomfort when worn for long hours at a stretch, especially for young children. It's a good idea to take breaks from it whenever possible, such as during lunch and recesses.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD CLOTH MASKS BE WASHED?

And do I have to wash them separately from other laundry?

For cloth masks, the frequency of washing depends on the use of the mask. If you wear the mask indoors or outdoors where you are exposed to close interactions with other people, interactions with many people or for long hours, consider washing the mask at the end of the day or put it aside and wash it later.

Laundry detergent will destroy the virus particles. You can think of virus particles like oil stains on your clothes. The effect that a detergent has on oil stains is similar to its effect on the virus particles: it will break the virus particles apart and render them non-infectious. As such, it is safe to wash your cloth masks with the other clothes.

To add an extra assurance that the virus particles are completely destroyed,

you can dry masks in the dryer together with other clothes. Research has shown that heat (60-95C) destroys the virus particles. Make sure the fabric of your masks can sustain the heat of the dryer.

Cloth face masks can also be washed very effectively by hand using soap (or dishwashing detergent) and hot water. Let them air dry in a clean place, and iron them once they are dry to offer a similar effect to the dryer.

If a face mask is used only for an hour or two, and it is handled carefully and is not touched or removed very often, it can be re-used for a second day if it's stored in a cloth bag or cardboard box (a porous material, not plastic, so it can dry out). This might be a better option for high school students than younger children.

WHERE SHOULD KIDS PUT THEIR MASK WHEN THEY TAKE IT OFF?

And, is it safe to put it back on after lunch or recess, or do kids need more than one mask per day?

How the face mask is treated during the intermittent breaks from it, such as during lunch and recesses, is also very important.

To remove the mask, first wash or sanitize hands. Then carefully remove the mask from the face, fold it inward in two and place it in a cloth bag or inside a clean plastic box that can be washed or disinfected, respectively.

It is very safe to use the same cloth face mask again the same day, provided that it is stored properly and it is not soiled or damaged.

Face masks should be personal protective gear, not to be shared with (or handled by) anyone else. It is advisable to provide children with two face masks, so they will have a spare in case one gets compromised (soiled, damaged or lost).

HOW SHOULD MASKS BE MANAGED AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY?

School kids will be in contact, albeit at a safe distance, with a number of kids from the same cohort. In addition, they will probably touch their face mask often in order to remove it and put it back on as they go through different parts of the day at school, such as lunch, recesses and outside teaching. They will likely be breathing through the masks for several hours, although not at a stretch.

Considering these factors, cloth masks must be washed at the end of the school day or put aside (safely) to be washed when possible with other laundry. Think of the face mask the same way you would underwear: wash after wearing for a day.

However, if children are using a disposable face mask, this mask should be properly disposed of at the end of the day.

In the case of the cloth face mask, at the end of the school day (or at the end of the school bus ride, or taking public transit) the mask should be put in a resealable bag (labelled “soiled mask”) and either washed upon arrival at home, or put safely with other laundry and washed when time permits.

I would recommend equipping children with two bags: one to be used for the clean face masks (where the spare mask can be kept), and the other to carry the used one (this could be a resealable

bag).

CAN I CLIP MY CHILD'S MASK TO HER SLEEVE OR BAG?

Absolutely not! One only needs to see how much “cleaning” the child's sleeves do by the end of the day; you do not want the child to breathe in all that dirt.

We should be concerned not only about COVID-19, but also about other potential diseases, including respiratory diseases, that kids are prone to, such as strep infection, pneumonia and flu, to name a few. If carrying a cloth bag around the shoulder, for storing the face mask when outside for recess, is not something that your child feels comfortable with, then use clothing (pants or shirts) that have pockets (deep enough) to carry the face mask.

Children should be taught to fold the mask inward, in two, when storing (in a cloth bag, box, resealable bag or pocket), so the inner portion of the mask is protected from dirt and contamination as much as possible (and ask the child to keep their mask pocket clean and not use it for any other items).

A lot of attention is placed on face masks, but we should not forget the clothing that kids wear at school. Although transmission of SARS-CoV-2 through contaminated surfaces (including clothes) poses lesser risk than transmission of the virus through respiratory droplets, the hygiene of the clothes that kids wear is very important too, especially when kids live with elderly family members. I strongly recommend that children wash their hands and remove their school clothes upon arrival at home and change into clothes designated to be used at home only.

[the writer is Professor, Biology, York University, Canada]

‘GoI-NSCN (IM) giving final touches to competencies for solution’

KOHIMA, SEPT 19 [NAGALANDPAGE]: Amid report of stalemate over a separate flag and the constitution, the Union Government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) are trying to give final touch to all the competencies which have been already agreed.

While flag and constitution for the NSCN (Isak-Muivah) has remained a contentious subject; sources said the negotiating parties are meeting on daily basis to finalize the competencies, which runs over 30 pages. Although the Naga groups would agree for Naga Regional Territorial Council (NRTC) for Nagas of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur; NSCN (IM)'s demand for a separate flag and the constitution is likely

to delay inking of final pact. The NSCN (IM) has reiterated that flag and constitution would not be compromised.

According to sources, the NSCN (IM) has put the ball in the Centre's court on the issue of flag and the constitution. Whereas back home in Nagaland, some civil society organizations have been putting pressure on Naga groups to sign the final agreement and pursue pending matters, democratically, in later days. This assertion seemingly has not convinced the NSCN (IM) in view of incomplete or non-fulfillment of past agreements by the Government of India.

Currently the Central Government has deputed top brass from the Intelligence Bureau (IB) – as a fast track – to

negotiate with the NSCN (IM) Chief Negotiator, Thuingaleng Muivah. Chairman, Q. Tuccu and Vice Chairman, Tongmeth Wangnao, along with several senior functionaries have recently joined team Muivah in New Delhi.

Sources said most of the competencies have been finalized and that once the final agreement is signed there will be a joint monitoring team to implement the agreed points.

Further according to sources, the Centre has proposed for strengthening, and deletion of some clauses in the Article 371A of the Constitution of India, and upgrade Nagaland Assembly into bicameral, known as a Tatar Hoho. Lower House, known as Leacy Hoho will have 80

members and Upper House, known as Federal Hoho, with 46 members, with 6 years term. Also MPs in Lok Sabha would be increased to 4, and 1 to 3 seats in Rajya Sabha.

As for NRTC it will have a separate legislature, legislative executive and judicial powers, Acts of the State legislature on the entries enumerated under competencies of the council shall not be extended to council areas. The Governor shall take into account the advice of the council on all matters that have bearing on the area. The council will have a separate budgetary provisions directly distributed to the councils.

Article 371A will be extended to NRTC areas. Beside this, there

are slew of economic package for development of Naga inhabited areas.

As Naga peace process hangs in balance and uncertainty looms, political parties and some NGOs are on their heels to break the impasse. The Opposition Naga People's Front (NPF), under the banner Political Affairs Mission (PAM), is hectic meeting Naga groups and civil society organizations led by former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition, TR Zeliang.

Also led by the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), a team of mothers from Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam have landed in New Delhi to meet Central leaders. Before their departure the NMA had also met Naga groups.

211 new COVID-19 cases in Arunachal Pradesh, tally 7,250



ITANAGAR, SEP 20 (PTI): At least 211 more people, including 20 security personnel and a health care worker, have tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, taking the state's total virus count to 7,250, a senior health department official said on Sunday.

Barring 27, all of them are asymptomatic and have been shifted to COVID care centres, he said.

The state's Capital Complex region -- comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas -- reported the maximum number of fresh cases at 101, followed by Changlang at 19, Papumpare at 18, West

Siang at 15, Longding at 13 and East Siang at seven.

Six cases each were registered in Lower Dibang Valley, West Kameng and Lower Subansiri, four in East Kameng, three each in Pakke Kessang, Tirap and Namsai, two each in Upper Subansiri, Upper Siang and Lohit and one in Kurung Kumey.

"Twenty security personnel -- 12 from the Army, four from the state police force, and two each from Indian Reserve Battalion and Assam Rifles -- were among the new patients," State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang

Jampa said.

A health care worker was also found to have contracted the disease, he said.

As many as 140 people were discharged from hospitals on Saturday, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,280.

The recovery rate in the northeastern state stands at 72.82 per cent, Dr Jampa said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 1,957 active coronavirus cases, while 13 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, he said.

As many as 2,20,706 samples have been tested for COVID-19 so far, including 2,426 on Saturday, he added.

30 new COVID-19 cases in Mizoram; tally rises to 1,578

AIZAWL, SEP 20 (PTI): At least 30 people, including 17 Assam Rifles personnel in Mizoram, have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the state's tally to 1,578, an official said on Sunday.

Of the 30 new cases, 20 were reported from Lunglei district, 4 each from Kolasib and Lawngtlai, one each from Aizawl and Mamit

districts, the official said. He said that all the patients were asymptomatic and were out of danger.

Apart from a patient in Aizawl district, all the patients have come from other states and were placed under quarantine before they tested positive for COVID-19, he said.

According to the official, 17 Assam Rifles

personnel, who have been quarantined at Kawmzawl facility in Lunglei district, 4 construction workers of the Border Road Organisation (BRO) from Jharkhand who are currently in Lawngtlai district and 2 truck drivers, who have come from Assam, were among the 30 infected people.

Of the 30 new COVID-19 patients, only 4 were state residents while the remaining 26 were outsiders (non-state residents), he added.

Mizoram now has 588 active COVID-19 cases of which 153 are security personnel.

With 17 people discharged from hospitals on Saturday, at least 990 people

have recovered from the virus.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state is now 62.74 per cent, according to the health department.

Mizoram has not reported any COVID-19 death till date.

As many as 60,759 samples have been tested, including 1,744 samples on Saturday, the Health department said.

Centre forms committees for inspection of COVID hospitals

NEW DELHI, SEP 20 (PTI): The Centre has formed expert committees for inspection of government and other COVID facilities following directions of the Supreme Court, which took cognizance of shortcomings in the care of coronavirus patients in different hospitals in the country.

The expert committees constituted by the Ministry of Health have been tasked to inspect, supervise and guide government and other hospitals dedicated to COVID-19, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey told the Rajya Sabha on Sunday.

The Ministry of Health has written to all the states and union territories with regard to

prescribing reasonable rates for testing and treatment of COVID-19, Choubey said in a written reply.

He said the central government has issued an advisory to all states that dead bodies of suspected COVID patients be handed over to their relatives immediately without waiting for laboratory confirmation and the body be disposed of as per guidelines on dead body management issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Choubey was listing the response by the government to the observations made by the Supreme Court on the "callous and insensitive"

manner in which government hospitals in certain states were treating COVID-19 patients and handling cremation and burial of bodies of deceased patients.

Hospital infrastructure in the country for managing COVID-19 cases is being continuously monitored by the central government.

States have been advised to prepare for requisite surge capacities to manage cases in accordance with existing and projected growth rates. States have been supported in terms of logistic and financial requirements for setting up COVID treatment facilities.

Naga women delegation calls on NSCN (IM) leadership, appeal for inclusive settlement for peace

DIMAPUR, SEPT 20 [NAGALANDPAGE]: A 7-member Naga women peace delegation consisting of the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), Naga Women Union Manipur (NWMU), women representatives from Rengma Hills, Assam and Naga tribes of Arunachal held a meeting with the NSCN (IM) general secretary, Th Muivah, NSCN (IM) Chairman, Q Tuccu, Vice Chairman, Tongmeth and other top leaders of the Collective Leadership in New Delhi on Saturday and apprised them about the grave concerns of all Nagas at this crucial junction and the call for an early inclusive peaceful settlement.

The women delegation was supported by the Global Naga Forum.

The delegation appealed to the NSCN (IM) leadership for an early, inclusive settlement for peace, recognition of Naga

rights and history in all Naga areas and shared the impact of armed conflict on vulnerable sections of the communities, particularly it's women and younger generation.

The speakers from the women delegation were Prof. Rosemary Dzuovichu, Advisor, NMA, who also apprised the Leadership on the Global Naga Forum that consists of Nagas from all walks of life committed to the Naga cause, leaders of civil organizations academics, professionals including the Naga diaspora and formed to amplify the history of the Naga story and foster unity and better understanding among Nagas.

Muivah briefly narrated the history of peace dialogues with the Government of India over the years and the demand that the Naga flag and working Constitution that has

been agreed upon, which must be included in the settlement.

He also appreciated the courage and strength of Naga women in protecting Naga rights and acknowledge their role as peace makers.

Other speakers included Rtd.Gen VS Atem, Rh. Raising and others from the Collective Leadership.

The Naga Women Peace Delegation members consisted of Prof Rosemary Dzuovichu, Advisor, NMA and member GNF; Abeiu Meru, President ,NMA and member GNF; Asha Wungnam, President NWUM and member GNF; Ningreishon Tungshang, Former Convenor, NPMHR, Delhi and member GNF; Neikesanuo Sorhie, Former Convenor, NPMHR and Member GNF; Yutan Sunya ,Tirap, Arunachal, member GNF and Miriam Rengma, Rengma Hills, Assam, member GNF.

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‘That’s just me’:
Novak Djokovic
loses temper
again on court
at Italian Open



ROME, 20 SEPT [AP]: Less than two weeks after getting defaulted from the US Open, Novak Djokovic lost his cool again midway through a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 win over German qualifier Dominik Koepfer in the Italian Open quarter-finals on Saturday.

When Djokovic was broken at love to even the second set at 3-3, he slammed his racket to the red clay in anger. With the frame broken and the strings mangled, Djokovic was forced to get a new racket and received a warning from the chair umpire.

“It’s not the first nor the last racket that I’ll break in my career,” Djokovic said. “I’ve done it before and I’ll probably do it again. I don’t want to do it but when it comes, it happens.

“That’s how, I guess, I release sometimes my anger and it’s definitely not the best message out there, especially for the young tennis players looking at me, and I don’t encourage that – definitely.”

The top-ranked Djokovic was thrown out of the US Open for unintentionally hitting a line judge in the throat with a ball in a fit of anger. After his disqualification, Djokovic said he would address his behaviour going forward.

“I need to go back within and work on my disappointment and turn this all into a lesson for my growth and evolution as a player and human being,” he said at the time.

At the Foro Italico, Djokovic had already appeared frustrated during the game before he broke his racket, glaring in the direction of the umpire following a couple of overrules and a point that was ordered to be replayed.

“That’s just me,” Djokovic said. “Of course I’m not perfect and I’m doing my best.”

The 97th-ranked Koepfer, who screamed at himself in frustration throughout the match, was also warned for misbehavior early in the third set.

Djokovic is aiming for his fifth title in Rome, and his semi-final opponent will be Casper Ruud, who eliminated local favorite Matteo Berrettini 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 in a match that lasted 2 hours, 57 minutes. Nine-time Rome champion Rafael Nadal was playing Diego Schwartzman later in the other half of the draw.

Kohli begins hunt for elusive IPL title as RCB face Sunrisers

DUBAI, SEP 20 (PTI): Virat Kohli will begin his quest for an elusive IPL title when perennial under-achievers Royal Challengers Bangalore take on David Warner’s low profile but consistent Sunrisers Hyderabad in their opening IPL encounter here on Monday.

Both teams possess dangerous batsmen who can single-handedly take the game away from the opposition.

Kohli has always led from the front but he knows his search for a maiden title will remain incomplete if the team doesn’t perform in all departments.

The addition of Australian limited overs captain Aaron Finch to the squad gives the star-studded batting line up more firepower. Expectations are also high from highly rated young opener Devdutt Padikal.

On the other hand, Warner, whose exploits in the IPL include winning the ‘Orange Cap’ thrice and leading his side to a maiden title triumph in 2016, will once again pair up with the dangerous Jonny Bairstow.

The formidable opening duo, that shattered multiple records including

the highest opening partnership in IPL history against RCB last season, will hope to emulate the previous edition’s exploits. Sunrisers also have the batting prowess of Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey, Mitchell Marsh and Fabian Allen.

Following a nightmarish 2019 season when they finished last, RCB seem to have much better balance but there ability to hit late in the innings is yet to be tested.

Sunrisers’ blind spot also lies in the lack of depth in their batting order. The franchise has invested in youngsters like Virat Singh, Abhishek Sharma, Priyam Garg, and Abdul Samad and the management in the hopes that one of them could become the vital cog in the middle order.

A team that is known for its depth and variation in bowling, Sunrisers’ core unit remains unchanged. Bhuvneshwar Kumar will spearhead the pace department with Sandeep Sharma, Siddharth Kaul and Basil Thampi playing secondary roles.

Armed with presence of the top T20 bowler Afghanistan leggie Rashid Khan and no.1 all-rounder in the format Mohammad Nabi, who



was in a terrific form in the recently-concluded CPL, Sunrisers have one of the best spin bowling attacks in the tournament. They also have left-armers Shahbaz Nadeem.

RCB also boasts of a potent spin unit, leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal will again be the key as he has been over the past seasons with Washington Sundar, Pawan Negi, Adam Zampa and Moeen Ali lending more options.

RCB have also addressed the issue of their weak death bowling that plagued their campaign last season. The franchise has bought South African bowling

all-rounder Chris Morris.

At the helm of both sides are Australians, Sunrisers have appointed Trevos Baylis, who guided England to their maiden ODI World Cup title last year, as coach, RCB has placed its faith in Simon Katich to lead them.

The Squads (From):
S u n r i s e r s
Hyderabad: David Warner (c), Jonny Bairstow, Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey, Shreevats Goswami, Virat Singh, Priyam Garg, Wriddhiman Saha, Abdul Samad, Vijay Shankar, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Mitchell Marsh, Abhishek Sharma,

Bavanaka Sandeep, Sanjay Yadav, Fabian Allen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, KhaleelAhmed, Sandeep Sharma, Shahbaz Nadeem, Siddharth Kaul, Billy Stanlake, TNatarajan, Basil Thampi.

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Aaron Finch, Devdutt Padikkal, Parthiv Patel, Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers, Gurkeerat Singh, Shivam Dube, Chris Morris, Washington Sundar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Navdeep Saini, Dale Steyn, Yuzvendra Chahal, Adam Zampa, Isuru Udana, Moeen Ali, Josh Philippe, Pawan Negi, Pavan Deshpande, Mohammad Siraj, Umesh Yadav.

No fans could be advantage for Wolff in US Open

WASHINGTON, SEP 20 (AP): Matthew Wolff deserved some cheers for the way he picked apart Winged Foot on Saturday afternoon to move into the lead of the U.S. Open.

Patrick Reed and Bryson DeChambeau deserved something, too, and rowdy New York fans would have been sure to give it to them had they been allowed to be there to watch.

They weren’t, of course, and the Open suffered because of it. So, likely, did the TV ratings, which already figured to take a hit because Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson were long gone.

No stars. No buzz. No fun, unless you like watching scenes of players studying maps on the greens like they were preparing for the invasion of Normandy.

“It’s like a zombie walk out there,’ NBC analyst Paul Azinger said.

Maybe not as scary, but just as quiet. Aside from an occasional fist bump between player and caddie it was hard to figure out who was playing well and who was spitting it up.

If the third round of the Open taught us anything, it’s that fans matter. And the lack of fans at Winged Foot could matter even more



on Sunday when the 21-year-old Wolff tries to win the Open in his first try.

Get this: He’s so new in professional golf that he’s never played in a major championship that actually had fans.

“I think coming down the stretch it maybe makes me a little more calm just to see less people,’ Wolff said. “But I really don’t think too much about it.’

Others do, which might be the one thing that will make Sunday’s final round interesting. Tiger Woods got help in winning some majors because the cheers for him intimidated other players, but there’s no crowd to fear or feed upon on historic Winged Foot.

“Right now it’s so quiet, it’s eerie, it’s weird,’ Xander Schauffele said.

“It’s not like anything anyone has experienced. It’s hard to feed off of

certain things. When you do go birdie-eagle or something, usually you kind of ride a wave and you can usually focus a little more and get in a zone, and right now it’s sort of like a college tournament almost where you’re doing your own thing.’

It’s not like this is new to golf. There haven’t been fans since the PGA Tour resumed, including at the PGA Championship last month in San Francisco when Wolff shot 65 in the final round and for a short time was the leader in the clubhouse.

But this is New York, where fans are legendary and tend to freely express their opinions as the day goes on and the beer flows freely.

In the 2002 Open at Bethpage they mocked Colin Montgomerie for (allegedly) looking like Mrs. Doubtfire, hounded Sergio Garcia for his quirky ways and howled

in glee every time they saw Woods do anything. In the last Open at Winged Foot in 2006 they nearly fell over each other trying to get near Mickelson as he hit it into a tent on the 18th hole on his way to blowing the tournament.

If not for the pandemic, they would have been quick this week to yell out quips about Reed being a cheater or DeChambeau looking way too bulked up for a golfer. They surely wouldn’t have been quiet when DeChambeau took forever to study charts and blades of grass and perhaps the rotation of the earth before hitting a 3-foot putt.

What that means for the TV broadcast couldn’t have been clearer Saturday as households around the country likely searched for better viewing options. What it means for Wolff in Sunday’s

final round won’t totally be known until the last putt is struck, but it should be noted that the Californian with a quirky swing isn’t that far removed from playing in college tournaments himself.

“Just makes it a touch easier for the guys at the top,’ said Rory McIlroy.

The way Wolff played the third round he doesn’t need any more advantages. He shot a 5-under 65 that was two shots better than anyone else could manage, finishing it off with a birdie on 18 after his drive got a lucky bounce and kicked out of the heavy rough.

He’s won only once but has only been playing professionally since last year. And in his first major last month at the PGA Championship, Wolff was a force down the stretch before finishing fourth.

Now he’s got a two-shot lead over DeChambeau and a ton of momentum. He’s not only in position to win the Open but to become the first player to win the championship in his Open debut since Francis Ouimet turned the trick in 1913.

Too bad there won’t be any fans around to watch. Because that could really be something to cheer about.

Slovenia celebrates likely 1-2 Tour de France victory

LJUBLJANA (SLOVENIA), SEP 20 (AP): Just minutes after two Slovenian riders effectively sealed their first and second places in the Tour de France, the president of Slovenia declared it a historic day for the tiny Alpine nation.

In a stunning climax to cycling’s most prestigious race, Tadej Pogacar crushed his older, fellow Slovenian Primož Roglic in the last stage before the largely ceremonial finish in Paris on Sunday.

It’s unimaginable, Slovenian President Borut Pahor said. I wouldn’t believe it if I didn’t see it.

Both Tadej and Primož deserve only admiration.

After the crucial stage on Saturday, Pahor hung a yellow flag on the presidential palace in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, in the color of the jersey worn by the overall Tour leader.

Today’s race is huge reason for national happiness and pride, Pahor said.

The win all but guarantees that Pogacar will become the youngest post-World War II winner in cycling’s showcase race and make the two Slovenians 1-2 in the overall standings.

The Tour has gripped Slovenes since Roglic won Stage 4, then became the first Slovenian rider to wear the yellow jersey after Stage 9.

Their race within a race has seen thousands of Slovenes wearing yellow jerseys, and wishing coronavirus-enforced travel restrictions weren’t preventing them from being in Paris on Sunday.

Pogacar will roll into the French capital on Sunday, the eve of his 22nd birthday, with a lead of 59 seconds over Roglic

in what is traditionally a ceremonial stage.

Pogacar was outstanding Saturday in an uphill time trial, devouring the 57-second lead that had made Roglic look impregnable before the showdown.

Pogacar will be the first rider from Slovenia to win the Tour.

Much of the nation of just two million people, known more for its alpine skiers, ski jumpers and basketball players than cyclists, came to a standstill on Saturday as it watched the crucial stage.

Most Slovenes were convinced wrongly that the much more experienced Roglic was likely to come out as the winner.

Appearing to defy coronavirus gathering rules, Pogacar’s home village celebrated the victory.

The mayor of Komenda, Stanislav Pogljajen, said he congratulated his parents.

For a week, I was on the verge of a heart attack, said Pogljajen.

At the beginning of the race, I didn’t believe that Tadej can make it. Primož was so strong during previous races.”

The mayor added that after 15 minutes he saw “how strong Tadej is.

Born just outside Komenda, north of Ljubljana, cycling was not Pogacar’s favorite sport. He liked soccer instead, but cycling appeared almost by accident as his elder brother started training with a local club.

I immediately wanted to imitate my brother, but unfortunately they didn’t have such a small bike for me, Pogacar said on his website.

However, that did not stop him and he hasn’t looked back since his first race in 2008.

Hope the youngsters translate their talent into performance: Warner

DUBAI, SEP 20 (PTI): Sunrisers Hyderabad captain David Warner is hoping the team’s young recruits “translate their talent into performance” in the 13th IPL and said gaining early momentum would do themselves a world of good.

The Sunrisers open their campaign in the 13th IPL with a game against the Virat Kohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore on Monday, and Warner’s message to his team is to go out and play freely without worrying too much about the result.

“We will try our best for that and if it doesn’t happen, will re-work our strategies and hope to go the distance in the IPL,” Warner said during a virtual media interaction. “Every team has a perfect mix of world-class overseas players and quality Indian players. Ours is a pretty good balanced side in all departments. “The boys have to just go out there and have fun, not take it too seriously. Like if you get angry you will tend to repeat the mistakes.”

Warner also spoke about the team’s youngsters. “Yes, it is good to have a lot of youngsters in the middle-order. They bring a lot of enthusiasm and show the right kind of

attitude, too. I have been hearing some very good reports about it on social media and hope they translate their talent into performances.”

The Australian is happy to have the presence of experienced campaigners such as Kane Williamson in the Sunrisers ranks.

“We have plenty of experience with the likes of Kane, (Jonny) Bairstow, Vijay Shankar to name a few. We got a job on our hand for sure,” he said.

Speaking about his opening partner Bairstow, Warner said, “We know when to take those calculated risks and it is time to go this year again.”

Asked if the spinners would play a big role, Warner said it depended on the kind of wickets on offer at the three venues of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

“Some of them might be flat, some might offer swing in the first session and some might assist the spinner in the second half of the games. We have three good spinning all-rounders in the team. So, let us wait and see how they shape up,” he said.

About new head coach Trevor Bayliss, Warner said he has helped build a relaxed environment.

Hefty fines for COVID-19 quarantine breaches in England

LONDON, SEP 20 (PTI): The UK government on Sunday announced new rules, which make it a legal requirement for people with coronavirus to quarantine, with fines of up to 10,000 pounds imposed on repeat breaches of the stipulated 14-day self-isolation period to control the spread of the virus.

Downing Street said the new requirements, which will be enforced from September 28, also come with support payments of 500 pounds for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home, such as construction workers, and stand to lose income as a result of the mandatory self-isolation.

The rules come in as Prime Minister Boris Johnson considers further tougher measures after he warned that the UK may now be seeing a second wave coming in of the deadly virus, with the number of cases continuing to rise.

People who choose to ignore the rules will face significant fines. We need to do all we can to control the spread of this virus, to prevent the most vulnerable people

from becoming infected, and to protect the NHS (National Health Service) and save lives, said Johnson.

And while most people are doing their absolute level best to comply with the rules, I don't want to see a situation where people don't feel they are financially able to self-isolate. That's why we're also introducing a new GBP 500 Test and Trace Support payment for those on low incomes who are required by NHS Test and Trace to remain at home to help stop the spread of the virus, he said.

New fines for those breaching self-isolation rules will start at 1,000 pounds -- bringing this in line with the penalty for breaking quarantine after international travel -- but could increase to up to 10,000 pounds for repeat offences and for the most egregious breaches, including for those preventing others from self-isolating.

For example, this could include business owners who threaten self-isolating staff with redundancy if they do not come to work, sending a clear message that this is



now punishable by law.

"The best way we can fight this virus is by everyone following the rules and self-isolating if they're at risk of passing on coronavirus. And so nobody underestimates just how important this is, new regulations will mean you are legally obliged to do so if you have the virus or have been asked to do so by NHS Test and Trace, Johnson said.

Just under 4 million people who are in receipt of benefits in England will be eligible for the new Test and Trace Support payment.

Downing Street said that local authorities across England will be working to set up these self-isolation support schemes and it is expected that they will be in place by October 12. Those who start to self-

isolate from September 28 will receive backdated payments once the scheme is set up in their local authority.

The one-off payment of 500 pounds is above the country's statutory sick pay of 95.85 pounds per week and a previously-announced additional award of 182 pounds for those told to self-isolate in highest risk areas of intervention or areas under localised lockdowns.

A number of steps will be taken as part of the new legally-enforceable quarantine rules, including NHS Test and Trace call handlers making regular contact with those self-isolating and escalating any suspicion of non-compliance to Local Authorities and local police.

Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence. High-profile and egregious cases of non-compliance will be investigated and prosecuted. Action will be taken on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive but are not self-isolating.

The UK government says it hopes the new measures will be replicated in the devolved regions of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which have the authority to set their own coronavirus rules but largely follow government guidelines.

The latest set of tougher measures are announced as a further 4,422 new COVID-19 cases and 27 deaths were reported in the UK as of Saturday. The number of infections has been on the rise for a few weeks now, with the R number or the number of people an infected person will pass the virus on to rising to between 1.1 and 1.4, well beyond the outer threshold of one.

Virginia Commonwealth to remove Confederate names, symbols

RICHMOND (US), SEP 20 (AP): A university in the former capital of the Confederacy will remove building names, plaques and other symbols that honour several Confederate supporters.

The board of visitors at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond voted unanimously on Friday to remove 16 different references on campus. While the decision marks the latest action this year in Richmond and elsewhere to take down remembrances of the Confederacy, VCU's action was nearly three years in the making, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported.

School President Michael Rao formed a committee in 2017 to accumulate building names, busts, portraits and plaques that honour Confederate supporters, research their histories

Italians vote in 7 regional contests shaped by pandemic

ROME (AP): Italians in seven regions headed to the polls Sunday for two days of voting shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Voters were required to wear masks and maintain social distancing as they cast ballots in regional contests originally scheduled for the spring but delayed due to the pandemic. Italy's outbreak has claimed more than 35,600 lives — the second-worst confirmed death toll in Europe after Britain — and stricken 296,500 people since February.

For the first time, voters over 65 will have preferential access and will be guided to the front of any line by volunteers from Italy's civil protection agency.

Once inside, voters may lower their masks just long enough to confirm their identity against voting cards and ID documents. And in a change, voters leaving the voting booths will place the ballots inside the boxes themselves, instead of turning them over to poll workers.

Veneto Gov. Luca Zaia

and begin discussions.

A new committee was created in 2019 and tasked with making a recommendation to Rao. It gathered 3,000 public comments. This summer, when Confederate monuments in the city and elsewhere were toppled or removed following the death of George Floyd, the committee made its recommendation.

The VCU memorial landscape is dominated by ex-Confederates or those people who sought to perpetuate and revere the memory of the Confederacy, currently represented in the form of dedicated spaces, memorial names, plaques and statues, VCU history professor Kathryn Shively said.

Rao backed the board's move, saying VCU rightfully serves all human beings and we must be dedicated to the

of the right-wing League party is expected to win his third mandate handily after helping Veneto avoid the worst of the pandemic through targeted testing early on and protocols that took the pressure off intensive care wards.

In the region of 5 million people centered around Venice, confirmed virus deaths have numbered 2,158, compared with 16,917 in Lombardy, the epicenter of Italy's epidemic with a population of 10 million. The other races are considered a test of the strength of the right-wing opposition, led by League leader Matteo Salvini, against the ruling parties of the 5-Star Movement and the Democratic Party. The toughest contest is expected in Tuscany, where Salvini is betting his candidate can oust the Democratic Party from the left-wing stronghold.

Regional leadership is also being decided in Liguria, Le Marche, Campania, Puglia and Valle d'Aosta. Mayoral races also were being held in 1,000 towns and cities.

Desert communities told to evacuate as winds stoke flames

JUNIPER HILLS, CALIF. (AP): Strong winds stoked a wildfire burning for nearly two weeks in mountains northeast of Los Angeles, prompting authorities to issue new evacuation orders for desert communities that lost some homes a day earlier.

Meanwhile, officials were investigating the death of a firefighter on the lines of another Southern California wildfire that erupted earlier this month from a smoke-generating pyrotechnic device used by a couple to reveal their baby's gender.

The death occurred Thursday in San Bernardino National Forest as crews battled the El Dorado Fire about 75 miles (120 kilometers) east of Los Angeles, the U.S. Forest Service said in a statement.

In northern Los Angeles County, firefighters focused on protecting homes Saturday as increasingly erratic winds pushed the Bobcat Fire toward foothill communities in the Antelope Valley after churning all the way across the San Gabriel Mountains. An

evacuation order was issued Saturday for all residents in that zone as the fire burned toward Wrightwood, a mountain community of 4,000, said fire spokesman Andrew Mitchell.

The fire grew to 142 square miles (368 square kilometers) on Saturday when winds pushed the flames into Juniper Hills.

Some residents fled as blowing embers sparked spot fires, hitting some homes but sparing others. Bridget Lensing feared her family's house was lost on Friday after seeing on Twitter that a neighbor's house three doors down went up in flames.

The house stood when she made her way back Saturday afternoon but her neighbors' houses in the remote community were burned to the ground.

"Everything around us is gone," she said.

The extent of the destruction in the area about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northeast of downtown LA wasn't immediately clear. But, Los Angeles County park officials said the blaze destroyed the nature center at Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area,

a geological wonder that attracts some 130,000 visitors per year.

No injuries were reported.

On the south side of the Bobcat Fire, firefighters continued to protect Mount Wilson, which overlooks greater Los Angeles and has a historic observatory founded more than a century ago and numerous broadcast antennas serving Southern California.

The fire that started Sept. 6 had already doubled in size over the last week. It is 15% contained.

Officials said the fire has been challenging because it is burning in areas that have not burned in decades, and because the firestorms across California have limited resources. There were about 1,660 firefighters on the lines.

The name of the firefighter killed in the nearby El Dorado Fire was being withheld until family members are notified. The body was escorted down the mountain in a procession of first-responder vehicles. No other information was released

about the circumstances of the death.

A statement from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said it was the 26th death involving wildfires besieging the state.

A new blaze sparked by a vehicle that caught fire was growing in wilderness outside Palm Springs.

To the north, a fire burning for nearly a month in Sequoia National Forest roared to life again Friday and prompted evacuation orders for the central California mountain communities of Silver City and Mineral King.

More than 7,900 wildfires have burned more than 5,468 square miles (14,164 square kilometers) in California this year, including many since a mid-August barrage of dry lightning ignited parched vegetation.

The El Dorado Fire has burned more than 34 square miles (89 square kilometers) and was 59% contained, with 10 buildings destroyed and six damaged.

Cal Fire said earlier this month that the El Dorado Fire was ignited

Aid groups call Italy's blockade of rescue ship 'political'

MILAN (AP): The German humanitarian group Sea-Watch on Sunday condemned as politically motivated the blockade of its ship in the Sicilian port of Palermo by Italian authorities after an 11-hour inspection.

Philipp Hahn, head of the Sea-Watch 4 mission, called the justification "flimsy" and a "systematic move to prevent civil sea rescue operations in the central Mediterranean."

The main reason cited was that saving lives did not conform to the vessel's registration. Italian officials also said there were too many life jackets on board while at the same time that the



boat's sewage system was not adequate for the number of people rescued.

It is the fifth rescue ship blocked by Italian authorities in as many months. The Sea-Watch 4 is operated by four humanitarian groups, including Sea-Watch and Doctors Without Borders.

The vessel had rescued 354 people, including 98 unaccompanied minors, families, pregnant women and children.

It waited for days to be assigned a safe port, until survivors were transferred to a ferry for quarantine. The Sea-Watch 4 crew also underwent a two-week quarantine off Palermo.

"The Sea-Watch 4 is only at sea because of the absence of state-led search and rescue capacity at the world's deadliest sea border," Doctors Without Borders said. It accused Europe of "disregarding its legal and moral duty to save lives," also citing

policies to reinforce the Libyan Coast Guard to block smugglers' ships from leaving the country, which is not considered a safe haven and where many have reported torture.

So far this year, 379 people trying to reach Europe via lawless Libya have died or gone missing on the perilous Mediterranean Sea crossing, 111 of those in August, the group said.

Meanwhile, the German-flagged ship Alan Kurdi, operated by Sea-Eye, rescued 114 people Saturday in two operations. The Alan Kurdi was the first to be detained in early May after disembarking 150 people.

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SummitTIMES

Netflix developing 'The Hunt for Atlantis' adaptation

LOS ANGELES, SEP 20 (PTI): Netflix is working on the movie adaptation of author Andy McDermott's bestseller book "The Hunt for Atlantis".

According to Deadline, the streamer has acquired the rights for the book and plans to develop it as a potential franchise property.

Aaron Berg will pen the project which will be produced by Matt Reeves and Adam Kassan's 6th & Idaho banner.

"Years after the disappearance of her parents, brilliant NYU grad student Nina Wilde teams with cavalier ex-SAS British bodyguard Eddie Chase when a tech-billionaire sends them on a globe-trotting race to discover the legendary lost city," the official plotline read.

Subsequent titles in the book series, which started in 2007, revolved around the pursuit of the mythical sword Excalibur, the great hall of Valhalla, the Fountain of Youth and the golden



city of El Dorado.

Mike Landry and Berg will also produce the project with Berg, Reeves and Kassan, and Derek S. Jancisin serving as executive producer.

Blessed to have overcome coronavirus, says Malaika Arora

MUMBAI, SEP 20 (PTI): Expressing her gratitude towards healthcare workers, actor-host Malaika Arora on Sunday said she has overcome coronavirus with "minimum pain and discomfort".

The Bollywood diva, who announced her COVID-19 diagnosis on September 7, took to Instagram to give a health update to fans and followers.

"I'm finally out of my room after so many days, it feels like an outing in itself... I feel so blessed to have overcome this virus with minimum pain and discomfort (sic)," Arora, 46, wrote alongside her photograph.

"A big thanks to my doctors for their medical guidance, to BMC for making this process hassle-free, to my family for their immeasurable support and to all my friends, neighbours and fans for all their good wishes and the strength that I got from your messages and support," she added.



Arora also urged people to stay safe and take care in these difficult times.

Prior to her diagnosis, she was shooting for Sony TV's reality show "India's Best Dancer" on which she serves as a judge, that resumed after the government allowed film and TV

production to commence as a part of the Unlock procedure.

The production of the show, which also features Geeta Kapoor and Terence Lewis as judges, was put on hold earlier this month after some of the crew members tested positive for the virus.

Actor alleges Anurag Kashyap sexually harassed her, director calls the claims baseless

MUMBAI, SEP 20 (PTI): Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap on Sunday said the sexual harassment allegations levelled against him by actor Payal Ghosh are baseless.

On Saturday, Ghosh took to Twitter and wrote that the "Gangs of Wasseypur" director was sexually inappropriate towards her.

The 30-year-old actor tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi in her tweet, requesting him to take action against Kashyap.

"@anuragkashyap72 has forced himself on me and extremely badly. @PMOIndia @narendramodi ji, kindly take action and let the country see the demon behind this creative guy. I am aware that it can harm me and my security is at risk. Please help!" Ghosh wrote.

In a video released to ABN Telugu, Ghosh claimed that the incident happened in 2014-2015.

The actor, who made her Hindi

debut with Rishi Kapoor-Paresh Rawal starrer "Patel Ki Punjabi Shaadi", also claimed that Kashyap boasted about his connection with megastar Amitabh Bachchan and claimed that there were other female artistes who he got intimate with.

In a series of Twitter posts in Hindi, Kashyap dismissed the allegations, calling it an attempt to "silence" him.

The 48-year-old director has been vocal against the criticism and vilification of Bollywood by celebrities and trolls.

"Such a long time was taken to shut me up, never mind. (But) while shutting me up, you lied so much that you dragged other women also in it. Please maintain some dignity madam. All I will say is that all your allegations are baseless," Kashyap tweeted.

Refuting the claims, Kashyap said the video is a testimony of "how much truth and false" there is.

Jameela Jamil says former lovers have likened her to a 'memory foam mattress'

Jameela Jamil has revealed past lovers have described her as being like a 'memory foam mattress' in the bedroom. The TV presenter turned actor made the confession during a recent podcast appearance, in which she admitted to being "not amazing in bed" and described sex as "so stupid".

Talking on Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend recently, she said: "Sex in itself is so stupid. The thrusting? What are we doing?"

"I'm not amazing in bed. But I've got big boobs so I don't have to be.

"Some of the reviews I've had... I've been told by three separate men that making love to me - and I think

they meant this as a compliment - was like having sex with a memory foam mattress.

"I shift to any shape. It's not that I'm bendy, it's that I don't have muscles anywhere but my heart. I'm like a human marshmallow with nipples.

"Mostly if I can just stay silent that's enough because it's my trying to insert comedy in the bedroom that goes down badly."

Jamil was initially known in the UK for stints as a model and as a presenter for T4 and Radio 1.

However, she proved her versatility by moving into acting, landing a role in popular US comedy The Good Place

alongside Kristen Bell and Ted Danson.

She has been in a relationship with singer James Blake since 2015 and the experimental musician felt compelled to jump to Jamil's defence after she was the subject of intense social media criticism earlier this year.

Jamil had been called out by people who felt she was making up medical conditions to gain attention, accusations Blake called "sick".

He said: "You don't know what her life is and has been like.

"But I do and I'm not gonna stand by and let some total strangers try to push my girlfriend over the edge."



HOT OUT HERRE! Singer Nelly ditched his shirt as he left rehearsals for Dancing With the Stars in LA.

Kelvin Harrison Jr joins Peter Dinklage-led 'Cyrano'



upcoming musical drama "Cyrano".

The film is an official adaption of Edmond Rostand's 1897 play "Cyrano de Bergerac" that will see actor Peter Dinklage reprise the titular role he played onstage in 2019.

Harrison, known for movies such as "The Photograph" and "Covers", joins the cast that also includes actors Haley Bennett, Brian Tyree Henry and Ben Mendelsohn, according to Deadline.

British filmmaker Joe Wright will direct the movie from a script by Erica Schmidt, who wrote and directed the 2019 play.

Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner of Working Title, and Guy Heeley are producing.

LOS ANGELES, SEP 20 (PTI): Actor Kelvin Harrison Jr has boarded the cast of MGM's

ARIES:

You could stick to the rulebook and follow everything to a tee, but where's the fun in that? You're in the mood to push your own boundaries and experiment like never before. Know that it is by responding to your creative urges that you will be able to bring your unique gifts to the fore. Expressing yourself through the language of words is also going to be an important theme for rams in the creative field. Be present to what's coming through right now. You'll have plenty of time to edit your copy later.

TAURUS:

Here's the thing, Taurus: you already know. You already know what's good for you and what's not. Why are you shying away from stepping into the spotlight and sharing your unique gifts with the world? The time to take that cloak of invisibility off has come. The career opportunities that are showing up right now will take you to the next level. The only thing you need to be mindful of is not diluting your message in order to make it more palatable. Authenticity is a superpower that will

GEMINI:

Here's the thing, Gemini: you already know. You already know what's good for you and what's not. Why are you shying away from stepping into the spotlight and sharing your unique gifts with the world? The time to take that cloak of invisibility off has come. The career opportunities that are showing up right now will take you to the next level. The only thing you need to be mindful of is not diluting your message in order to make it more palatable. Authenticity is a superpower that will

make you shine in the face of competition.

CANCER:

You may feel like your life has turned into a bit of an obstacle course right now. What are the challenges telling you about yourself? That you possess both, the strength and the resilience required to overcome the obstacles. Besides, you've been here many times before. The cards are reminding you that you don't have to do this alone. Reach out to your soul tribe for support. Oh, the miracles a few words or encouragement can make way for!

LEO:

A brand new romance is indicated for single Leos. Wearing your heart on your sleeve is a superpower that will open many doors for you. Besides, 'playing it cool' is so pre-pandemic. Lions in the early stages of a relationship will find that their partner is saying and doing all the right things at the right time. Both, words of affirmation and physical touch, will be your love language.

VIRGO:

Virgo, you're known for your perfection and Monica Geller-level precision. Yet, you tend to hold onto things with sentimental value every once in a while. Where is your need to hoard stemming from, and what good is this habit bringing into your life? It's time to get real with yourself and let go of the things that have fulfilled their sacred purpose in your existence. You'll be surprised by how much space the process of decluttering will open up for you!

LIBRA:

It's amazing what keeping your thoughts positive can do, and you're beginning to see proof of this in your own reality. It's a count-your-blessings kind of day in the Libra HQ! You're grateful for all the ways in which the Universe has been benevolent towards you. Things are coming up roses on the love and romance front too. Is there a special somebody who's been on your radar for some time now? Wearing your heart on your sleeve could turn things around for you.

SCORPIO:

Spending time with the little ones in your tribe is going to be a big theme in the Scorpio HQ. It's amazing all the things you can learn from them without even trying! Things to do today: make art. Make macrame. Make a mess. Trust that you will turn your home into a portal of good vibes in the process. As such, home improvement will also be a big theme for you today. Don't try to do everything at once, though. Start small. Pick a corner that is in need for redecoration and then go around the house.

SAGITTARIUS:

Everything's coming up roses for you, Sagittarius, especially on the home and family front. Domestic bliss is indicated for coupled archers. Trust that this moon cycle will provide you with the opportunity to deepen your bond. Remembering that you both want the same things from a relationship will help you tide over your troubles. As such, this is a time of witnessing your dreams and desires take tangible form. The Universe wants you to

have your best life—this you can trust!

CAPRICORN:

The past few months have been anything but easy, Capricorn, however the new moon is bringing with itself a sense of hope and healing. New doors are opening up for you and you're positive they're taking you in the right direction. Be clear about what you're manifesting and trust that the Universe will meet you halfway. Connecting with the healing properties of water will also prove to be beneficial.

AQUARIUS:

You're leaving the past and all the turmoil associated with it behind. This is a time of transitions, Aquarius. Trust that you're being led towards calmer shores where peace and prosperity will be yours to keep. But, before you move on, take a moment to offer a prayer of gratitude to the mysterious forces for the not-so-good moments too. You know what they say! Both ups and downs have their place in the human experience. Tip: You're making place for a better tomorrow.

PISCES:

Dreams, visions, and downloads—your inner life is full of magic, Pisces, and you don't need a Hogwarts degree to tap into the unseen realms. Maintaining a psychic journal is a wonderful way to keep a track of these messages. This is a blessed time on the interpersonal front too. You and your loved ones are connecting with each other on a whole new level. Express gratitude for all the support you are receiving in your life right now. Tip: Your inner life is where the magic is at!