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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Okhrey to host Homestay Congress 2021 in April

**SAGAR CHETTRI**  
**GANGTOK, 19 MAR:**

Homestay Association of Sikkim [HAS] today announced the 'Homestay Congress Okhrey 2021' to be held from 04 to 08 April at Okhrey in West Sikkim. The recently formed organization for homestays is organizing this five-day event with the support of Tourism & Civil Aviation Department.

While giving details of the event during a press conference here this afternoon, HAS president, Jigme Dorjee Bhutia mentioned that the event is being held for both existing homestay operators as well as those who are interested in starting a homestay.

Okhrey is one of the first places in Sikkim to start homestays in a



serious manner so the association decided to promote the area which has immensely contributed in the development of homestays in the State, he said. He added that homestays are not only a good source of income for the people but also a better platform to show-

case the culture and tradition of the State.

General secretary, Pintso Gyatso mentioned that the homestay congress is a seminar-cum-workshop on homestays to be held for the first time in Sikkim for existing and upcoming homestay operators.

He added that the five-day long event will have training, skill development, field exposure and other technical and practical sessions on homestays.

The event will also cover how homestays are operated and registered along with training on on-

line marketing and basic account keeping, he informed adding that the event would have representatives from finance companies to share their expertise on micro financing.

General secretary, Gyatso T Lepcha mentioned that the event will have local resource persons and experts in the field of butterfly, birds, waste management, trekking and other areas of homestays. He added that successful homestay operators will also take session to share their experience with the participants.

Registration for the event will start tomorrow and continue till 31 March and apart from online registration the association has also appointed officials in every district for registration.

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## AI Lab inaugurated at Kyongsa Girls School



**GYALSHING, 19 MAR (IPR):**

The District Collector of West Sikkim, Karma R. Bonpo along with Additional Director, Education Department, West, K.C Gyatso Bhutia, Principal of Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Kyongsa and Teachers officially inaugurated the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Lab at Government Girls' Senior Secondary School, Kyongsa, today.

Later, DC West interacted with the Students

and briefed about Artificial intelligence (AI) as one of the most important digital future topics which is currently experiencing a huge upward trend in all fields of science, economy, technology, health care and entertainment. He also added that a well-equipped AI lab has been set up at West District so he urged all the students to gain full advantage of the lab.

Further, DC informed the house, how AI can improve

our health care system and also how it has been a great asset to human to reduce human effort as much as possible while providing precision and accuracy.

Lastly, it was informed that all school faculty and students were extremely thankful and grateful towards Education Department, Government of Sikkim and DC West for their great efforts in providing well equipped AI Lab in their school.

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## At 3,062, Mumbai reports highest daily rise in Coronavirus Cases

**MUMBAI, 19 MAR [PTI]:** Mumbai has reported its biggest hike in coronavirus cases for the second consecutive day. The Maharashtra capital that had logged 2,877 cases yesterday, recorded 3,062 Covid cases in the last 24 hours, which is the city's highest single-day increment in its total cases ever.

With this, Mumbai's total of active cases has reached 20,140, whereas its overall coronavirus total is 3,55,897. The city's recovery rate settled at 91 percent; 1,334 people were discharged today.

10 people died in the last 24 hours because of the illness, taking the total count of deaths in the city to 11,565.

The daily figure in Maharashtra is slightly lower than yesterday. The state had logged 25,833 fresh cases on Thursday - highest since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. Today, it reported 25,681, which is over 60 per cent of the countrywide total of daily coronavirus cases.

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## 3 new cases, 3040 vaccinated

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 19 MAR:**

Three new cases of novel coronavirus were reported in Sikkim in the last 24 hours. Of the three new cases, one person from East District and two from West District were found positive for COVID-19 in the testing of 147 samples on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the State has witnessed two more recoveries to improve the figure of recovered cases in Sikkim to 5918. The state tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported so far has reached 6199 and there are now 49 active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim.

In his daily health bulletin on Friday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia informed that all three new cases were detected in rapid antigen testing of 30 samples, while 115 samples tested by RT-PCR and 02 by TrueNat testing were returned negative for COVID-19.

While giving details of new cases, he said that samples of one person from Metro Point, Tadong in East District and two from Dentam in West District were found positive for COVID-19.

On the other hand, 3040 persons received COVID vaccination shots in different parts of Sikkim on Thursday, in which 2515 persons received the first dose of the vaccine and 525 persons have completed the vaccination schedule with the second shot of the vaccine.

Mr Bhutia informed that 133 healthcare workers [72 first dose & 61 second dose] and 579 frontline workers [115 first dose and 464 second dose] received COVID vaccination yesterday in different parts of the State. He further added that 484 persons in the age group of 45 to 59 years with comorbidities and 1845 persons in age group of 60 years and above have also received the first dose of the vaccine.

In district-wise break-up, 1452 persons have received first dose of COVID vaccine and 274 were given second dose in East District, while 481 persons have got the first dose and 64 received the second dose of vaccine in West District.

In North District, 382 persons received the first dose of vaccine and 03 have completed the vaccination schedule with the second dose. In South, 254 persons received the first dose of vaccination and 184 got the second dose.

Also, 120 healthcare workers [62 first dose & 58 second dose], 308 frontline workers [92 first dose and 216 second dose], 167 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 1131 persons in age group of 60 years and above were vaccinated for COVID-19 in East District.

In West District, 02 healthcare workers [1 first dose & 1 second dose], 65 frontline workers [02 first dose and 63 second dose], 131 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 347 persons in age group of 60 years and above have received their vaccine shots.

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## Trinamool MPs go to Election Commission, claim free, fair polls a "distant reality"

**NEW DELHI, 19 MAR [PTI]:**

Alleging that fair elections in West Bengal are becoming a distant reality, a delegation of TMC MPs met the Election Commission on Friday to register their protest against the poll panel's reported decision to not permit state police personnel within 100 metres of polling stations.

The TMC parliamentary delegation, including Saugata Roy, Yashwant Sinha, Md Nadimul Haque, Pratima Mondal and Mahua Moitra, described the Election Commission's approach as partisan and biased.

"It is becoming in-



creasingly clear that free, fair and transparent elections in State of West Bengal is becoming a distant reality. This is evident from the partisan and biased approach taken by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in respect of the

ongoing elections in the State, a memorandum submitted to the top poll panel said.

"On the first count, it has been reported in media that the ECI has decided to not permit presence of State police within 100 m of polling

stations and only deploy Central Forces in such arena. If true, this decision is unprecedented and casts severe aspersions on the reputation of the police administration in the State of West Bengal," it added.

The memorandum

said this needs to be substantiated at the appropriate level.

Stating that the ECI's decision is only for West Bengal and not the other four poll-bound states in the country, the Trinamool Congress said the deployment of central forces should be to help the state government deal with law and order and "not deliberately demonise the state police personnel that have worked under different governments".

"Propriety demands that there should be proper coordination between the State and Central

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## CABINET SANCTIONS

The following decisions were approved during the Cabinet Meeting held at Tashiling Secretariat on the 15 March 2021.

### ROADS AND BRIDGES DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.2000.00 lakhs (Rupees twenty crores only) for permanent restoration work along various roads in all districts under the department.
- Revised administrative approval of Rs.5409.38 lakhs (Rupees fifty four crores nine lakhs and thirty eight thousand only) and additional financial sanction of Rs.2290.87 lakhs (Rupees twenty two crores ninety lakhs eighty seven thousand only) for up-gradation, widening and improvement of Budang-Chumbong-Chakung-Soreng road in West Sikkim.
- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.291.35 lakhs (Rupees two hundred ninety one lakhs thirty five thousand only) for carrying out Flood Damage Repair (FDR) on National Highways within the State of Sikkim.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.64.72 lakhs (Rupees sixty four lakhs seventy two thousand only) for payment towards supply of Laboratory equipments and electronic devices to Sikkim Government Science College.
- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.49.01 lakhs (Rupees forty nine lakhs and one thousand only) for payment to STCS towards supply of

Computer hardware to Dentam vocational college during the year 2017.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.45.29 lakhs (Rupees forty five lakhs twenty nine thousand only) for payment towards supply of computer hardware items to Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Tadong.
- Administrative approval for establishment of an Institute of Excellence at Chakung in West Sikkim at a cost of Rs.891 crores (Rupees eight hundred ninety one crores only), as per the mode, financing pattern
- Approval to sign Memorandum of Understanding between the Education Department and Shri Aurobindo Society for improvement of learning outcomes of Secondary School Students (SSS).
- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.1,93,45,000/- (Rupees one crore ninety three lakhs forty five thousand only) towards the State share of RUSA (Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan) as 10% state share.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs.59.02 Crores (Rupees fifty nine crores two lakhs only) for construction of Government Degree College Phase-II at Yangthang, Geyzing in West Sikkim.
- Approval and sanction for creation of 3(three) posts of Librarian in the UGC scale, to be posted at Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College (two) and Rhenock Degree College(one).

### AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

- Approval of Vision document 2020 formulated by Sikkim Organic Farming Development Agency (SOFDA) for transforming Sikkim's Agri-marketing cum post-harvest management ecosystem and to lay out road maps for tapping the true economic potential of Sikkim's Organic sector.

### DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.98,06,400/- (Rupees ninety eight lakhs six thousand and four hundred only) for settlement of bills for printing Sikkim Herald for the year 2017 to 2020.

### TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.21.75 lakhs (Rupees twenty one lakhs seventy five thousand only) to be released as Grant-in-aid to Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Eco-Tourism (IHCAE), Chemchey in South Sikkim.

### URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Post facto approval and financial sanction of Rs.1197.93 lakhs (Rupees eleven crores ninety seven lakhs ninety three thousand only) to be transferred to Urban Local Bodies as basic grants recommended by 14th Finance Commission for the year 2019-20.

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## Mary Kom Boxing Academy gets new infrastructure

**IMPHAL, MAR 19 (PTI):** Brand new sports infrastructure, kitchen and a dining hall, developed with the support of tyre major Goodyear, were inaugurated at the Mary Kom Boxing Academy here.

Francis Marwein, Regional Director SAI NERC Imphal and Guwahati handed over the completed project to London Olympic bronze medallist Mary Kom, the founder of the Mary Kom Regional Boxing Foundation (MKRBF), on Thursday.

In 2019-20, under the company's CSR initiative Goodyear supported the construction of a kitchen and dining Hall at Mary Kom's academy.

"Dreams are made real when we are determined, and with the support from others. My dream to set up a centre of sporting excellence will not be realised without support from the people, government and corporate sectors," said Mary Kom.

"This support of sports infrastructure from Goodyear is a motivation for me, my team and our athletes most importantly."

The elite indian boxer urged the athletes to make full use of the facilities available now.

"I was never fortunate enough when I started my boxing career and this kind of facilities and dining hall were far away. Therefore you need to make the best use of these entire infrastructures and be a champion by achieving more than what I have done."

## Tejashwi Prasad Yadav tables ADR report in Assembly

**PATNA, MAR 19 (PTI):** Leader of opposition in Bihar assembly Tejashwi Prasad Yadav on Friday said he has documentary proof according to which 18 out of 31 state ministers are facing serious criminal cases.

With Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha's permission during Zero Hour, the RJD leader referred to a report of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) according to which 18 ministers are facing criminal cases, including murder, kidnapping and robbery.

"Let the ADR report be made part of the proceedings. I want to table it on the floor of the House," he said, to which the Speaker replied, it is already in public domain and there is nothing new in it. The report even included cases relating to violation of the model code of conduct, Sinha said, adding that a 10-year old case of violation of model code of conduct is pending against the Speaker himself.

"There are many more people including you (Tejashwi) who may be facing such cases," he said while allowing him to table the ADR report in the Assembly but refused to make it part of the House proceedings. The RJD leader said, he had raised the issue during a debate a few days ago in the House that more than 64 per cent of ministers are facing criminal cases and "You (Speaker) had sought documentary proofs in support of my claim".

# Upper MG Marg candidate Sunita Sirohia releases 12-point manifesto

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 19 MAR:**

Sunita Sirohia, a candidate of Upper MG Marg ward under Gangtok Municipal Corporation, released her 12-point election manifesto here on Friday. She is the only woman candidate contesting from Upper MG Marg ward with the symbol of Flute.

Speaking to media persons on her 12-point agenda, Ms Sirohia said that she will be available 24x7 to serve the people of the ward and public service would be her first priority if elected.

She mentioned that proper sanitation, regular electricity supply and proper sewage and drainage system would be top-most priority. She



further assured to help people regarding residential certificates and trade and labour licenses and to install surveillance cameras in all public places in MG Marg. Ms Sirohia promised

to identify sitting areas for elderly people at MG Marg and more focus on setting up children's park and space for children to play and to construct disabled friendly infrastructure at MG Marg.

Campaigning is going on full-swing and women in the ward are happy to get a woman candidate in their area, she said.

She also thanked the Chief Minister for making the election non-political

to provide a chance to social workers to work for the people and the society.

"I believe in work and if people support me then I will be able to work more effectively for them," she said.

## SSDMA holds awareness programme on Disaster Preparedness

**GANGTOK, 19 MAR (IPR):** A day-long programme on Awareness and Sensitisation on Disaster Preparedness was organised by Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority,

Land Revenue & DM Department, Government of Sikkim at Modern Senior Secondary School Auditorium, Gangtok on 17 Mar, 2021. The objective of the programme was to enhance the capacities of students and community volunteers towards disaster prevention.

The programme was attended by students and Teachers of West Point, Tathangchen and Modern Schools, along with members of Freedom Rehab House, Yargay Members, Members of Helping Hands and local public.

The programme was attended by Secretary, Anil Raj Rai, Education Department as the Chief Guest. It was attended by Principal Modern SSS,

Mala Jigdal Dorjee, Principal of Westpoint SSS, Indira Poudyal, Additional Director and Joint Director, Education Department.

Joint Secretary, Subha Mukhia, SSDMA in her welcome address spoke on the relevance of the programme while laying importance on sensitising school children. She stressed that school children are force multipliers when it comes to sharing information which is of importance.

During the programme, resource persons made presentations on the following topics:

a) Presentation on Basics of Disaster Management -Training Officer SSDMA, Kessang Nima.

b) Presentation on Basics of First Aid -Human Resource Professional, SSDMA, Kunzang Bhutia.

c) Presentation on Covid Appropriate Behaviour -Health Educator, Dr Kusum Dahal.

d) Presentation on Shelter Management - Architect, Rubal Mehta.

A Demonstration on Fire safety and Safe Rescue was carried out by the Fire Department and State Disaster Response Force respectively.

A short quiz was also conducted and winners were given prizes.

The chief guest in his address congratulated SSDMA for organising the programme successfully. He also informed that educating school students would benefit everyone as they would be able to persuade others to prepare a Family Disaster Management Plan. He also opined that such programmes should be conducted at regular intervals.

The day's programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Under Secretary, SSDMA, Roshan Subba.

## Cong will not implement CAA in Assam: Rahul

**LAHOWAL (ASSAM), MAR 19 (PTI)** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Friday assured that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will not be implemented in Assam if the party is voted to power in the state in the coming Assembly poll.

It will be ensured in the state assembly that the CAA is not implemented in Assam, Gandhi told students of Lahowal College in Dibrugarh district.

"In the other states, we will stop it (CAA implementation) after we (Congress) come to power at the national level," he said.

Asked to comment on whether BJP is mixing religion and politics, he said that the saffron party does not use religion but hatred to create divisions among different sections of the society.

"No religion has asked to use hatred. Where is it written in Hinduism that there should be 'nafrat' (hatred)? It is BJP that spreads hatred to divide society and wherever they do it Congress goes there to promote love, brotherhood and harmony," he said. In an apparent reference to the RSS, the senior Congress leader said that there is

a force in Nagpur that is trying to control the entire country. But the youth of today should resist it with love and confidence as they are the future of democracy.

Twenty years ago Assam was hit by violence but after Congress came to power it ensured peace and development.

"BJP ka kaam hain todna, hamaara kaam hain jodna (BJP's work is to divide but our job is to unite people), he said.

Gandhi said there is a direct relation between hatred and unemployment. "If hatred increases, unemployment will increase and vice versa. Can two sections of the society fighting against each other do business together? For business and employment opportunities to thrive, there should be harmony and brotherhood".

He also accused the saffron party of selling off Assam's resources to outsiders like the tea companies in the state, the Guwahati airport to the Adanis and the tea companies.

The senior Congress leader said that at present the country has a 'Hum do, Hamare do ka Sarkar' (a government of two with two oth-

ers)- one in Parliament (apparently Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah) and two outside (Adani and Ambani likely).

"Assam's resources and wealth must go into the pockets of the Assamese. The state must be managed in the interest of the people here", the Congress leader said.

The erstwhile Congress government, he said, had laid the foundation for the country's future growth, employment and development by initiating several schemes, including MGNREGA and Food Security. "Can you name the schemes started by BJP? We had promised in Chattisgarh to waive off farm loans and we did it.

We have a record of not making promises in the air. We give guarantees", he asserted.

In Assam Congress has given '5 guarantees'. They are five lakh government jobs to youths in five years, upto 200 units of free electricity per household, Rs 365 daily wage to tea workers and Rs 2000 per month to housewives besides the assurance not to implement the CAA in the state, he said.

## IYC activists protesting fuel price hike detained

**NEW DELHI, MAR 19 (PTI):** Members of the Indian Youth Congress protesting the rise in fuel prices were detained on Friday by the police when they tried to head towards residences of Union ministers to present bicycles to them.

The activists led by IYC president Srinivas staged a protest at the organisation's headquarters over the hike in prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas.

They were stopped and detained by the police while they tried to head towards the residences of Union ministers, including Dharmendra Pradhan, Smriti Irani, Prakash Javadekar and Ravi Shankar Prasad, to present bicycles to them, said IYC spokesperson Rahul Rao.

"The BJP has kept mum over the unprec-

edented rise in prices although it used to come out in the streets on even a Rs 5 hike earlier," Srinivas said, claiming that LPG cylinder prices have been increased by Rs 225 since December 1, 2020.

The petrol prices have crossed Rs 100 per litre in many parts, diesel prices have crossed Rs 90 per litre and cooking gas prices are going up, yet the BJP is "shamefully" blaming the Congress for it, he charged.

He demanded lowering excise duty on petrol and diesel and decreasing cooking gas prices with immediate effect.

"The petroleum minister should resign if he can not do even this," said the IYC president. AICC incharge of IYC Krishna Allaveru too demanded relief for the people from increased fuel prices.

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### LOST

Class X Compartmental Examination Results 2019 of Lalit Majhi bearing roll no 3155198 from NTL Senior Secondary School, Vok South Sikkim.' If found, please contact: 91 97349 34585

### Okhrey to host...

While stating that registration is free, Mr Lepcha mentioned that the event aims to have around 150 participants. He appealed to interested operators and aspirants to be a part of this unique event.

It is informed that Sikkim Riders Club is also organising a health camp on 07 April at Okhrey during the event. Interested participants can contact the following numbers for registration at the homestay congress at 97332 69413 for West District, 83483 32721 for North District and 97492 31061 for East and South District.

### At 3,062, Mumbai..

The Maharashtra government today ordered that all theatres, auditoriums and offices in the state would operate at 50 per cent capacity.

"All private offices except related to health and other essential services to function at 50% capacity..." the order said.

It, however, allowed government and semi-government offices to take a call on staff attendance.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray today said that lockdown was an option to stem the growth of the virus in the state.

"I see lockdown as an option going ahead. But I trust people of the state to cooperate (and follow the COVID-19 norms voluntarily) like the last time," he said.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a virtual meeting of chief ministers, said that the country needs to stop the emerging second peak of the coronavirus. He asked them to increase testing and ensure that people follow Covid protocols.

### Trinamool MPs go...

forces to ensure free and fair elections and that combined groups of both State and Central Police forces be deployed within 100 m of the polling booths," the letter by the party said.

Despite several requests, it said, the apex poll panel had summarily dismissed the demand for tallying of all VVPAT machines, allegedly on account of the decision of the Supreme Court of India passed in March 2019.

According to the party, its detailed submissions on the matter had clearly not been factored in.

"We urge you to withdraw your decision to deploy only central forces within 100 m of the polling stations. Further, we reiterate our demand to tally 100% VVPAT machines with EVMs after polling is over, to reassure the voters that his/her choice has indeed been recorded, both electronically and physically," it said.

### 3 new cases...

In North District, 07 healthcare workers [5 first dose and 2 second dose], 16 frontline workers [15 first dose & 01 second dose], 85 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 223 persons in age group of 60 years and above have received vaccinations. In South, 4 healthcare workers, 190 frontline workers [06 first dose & 184 second dose], 100 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 144 persons in age group of 60 years and above were also vaccinated for COVID-19.

## South receives 20 EVMs



Namchi, 19 Mar (IPR): The South District Administration received 20 sets of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) from State Election Commission at 3.30pm today for the ensuing Municipal Elections of Namchi Municipal Council and Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat.

The EVMs were checked and stored in the strong room located at the annex building of the District Administra-

tive Centre, Namchi in the presence of District Collector (South), Additional District Collector (South), contesting candidates, their Polling Agents and other officials. The strong room is under 24x7 CC TV surveillance and guarded by Armed Police Personal.

The list of the EVM (CU&BU) containing the serial number were shared with the candidates/polling agents.

## North Police sensitizes public on COVID precautions



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 19 MAR:**

Following fresh restrictions imposed by the State Government, North district police sensitized the general public of North Sikkim regarding the importance of wear-

ing masks, social distancing and use of sanitizers in the District today.

The people were informed to carry on with everyday life but at the same time to take precaution and follow the norms and rules notified by the Govt.

## Training for Polling Personnel in South

**NAMCHI, 19 MAR (IPR):** Training for second batch of Polling Personnel II and III for the ensuing Municipal Elections, 2021 was held at the conference hall of District Administration Centre today.

The resource person for the training was SDM (HQ), Chiran Rizal and

(BDO, Sumbuk), Kiran Thatal. During the training various roles and responsibilities to be carried out by the polling personnels were deliberated. The polling personnel were oriented to the procedure to be followed and the operation of the Electronic Voting Machines.

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## Training on commissioning of EVMs

**GANGTOK, 19 MAR (IPR):** In view of upcoming Municipal Elections 2021, ADC East, Tushar G Nikhare along with Assistant Municipal Returning Officer for Singtam and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat, conducted a training on commissioning of Electronic Voting Machines for assigned officials and staff of District Collectorate East, at the Conference Hall of Zilla Bhawan, Gangtok today.

The meeting was attended by ADC Development Gangtok Smt Radha Pradhan, SDM Rongli, Samdup Bhutia and approx. thirty officials and staff.

During the training, conducting of the commissioning process of EVMs, things to prepare before commissioning along with familiarisation on sealing of EVMs were briefly elaborated.

ADC East in his power point presentation gave necessary suggestions to the trainees about the measures to be taken at the time of EVMs commissioning procedure.

He asked the officials to take necessary steps in the process of linking Control Unit with Ballot Unit, insertion of ballot papers and other procedures to be followed in the commissioning day. He also briefed on dos and don'ts and advised them to ensure clearing of mock polls before proper sealing of EVMs.

Later, a mock commissioning and mock poll was also conducted in order to familiarise the officials of the sealing process.

## Rawat 'apologises' but says wearing torn jeans not right

**DEHRADUN, MAR 19 (PTI):** Facing flak over his "ripped jeans" comment, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat on Friday said he apologises for the remark if it has hurt anybody.

But at the same time, he repeated his objection to ripped jeans, saying he has no problem with jeans with but wearing "torn" ones is "not right".

Referring to his remark made earlier this week, Rawat told the media that he had commented that nowadays children bring a costly jean home and then cut it with a scissor. He had only talked about the environment at home and this applies to him as well, Rawat said.

If we inculcate good values and discipline in children, they will never fail in future, the CM added, stressing that he had made the comment at a programme held to keep the children away from intoxicants and other evils.

Describing himself as a man from a rural background, Rawat on Friday said whenever his pant was torn in school days, he feared that his teacher would scold him. Due to discipline and values, we used cover it with a patch, he said.

Rawat had drawn flak after at an event earlier this week he said youngsters follow strange fashion trends due to a lack of values and consider themselves to be big shots after wearing jeans ripped at the knees. Women also follow such trends.

# Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants trained

**GANGTOK, 19 MAR (IPR):** The training for Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants for the Municipal Elections 2021 of East District was conducted at the conference hall of Zilla Bhawan today. The training was facilitated by ADC East, Tushar G Nikhare also the Assistant Municipal Returning Officer for Singtam and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat. ADC Development East, Radha Pradhan along with twenty trainees attended the session.

In the training, the AMRO in his power point presentation elaborated about the counting approach needed to be followed by the teams on that day and to maintain secrecy of counting till the completion of counting process. He briefed



them on the assigned roles and responsibilities on the process of counting which involves postal ballots and EVMs.

He also asked them to be well versed with the counting procedure and urged them to maintain secrecy of names in terms of postal ballots and to strictly follow other norms.

During the training, opening and closing procedures of EVMs (Control Unit) and how to check the serial numbers, paper seal, strip seal, special tag, how to open outer cover of the result section and to press result button was also demonstrated.

## Meeting on Poshan Abhiyaan held in West Sikkim

**GYALSHING, 19 MAR (IPR):** A meeting on Poshan Abhiyaan under West district was held in the office of District Collector, West today.

The meeting was chaired by the District Collector West, Karma R. Bonpo along with ADC West, Agawane Rohan Ramesh, ADC/Development, Surat Gurung, CMO West, Dr. Anusha Lama and HOD's from concerned departments.

Poshan Abhiyaan is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia and low birth weight. It aims to improve nutritional

outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

DC West suggested to conduct a joint training for Anganwadi and ASHA workers and asked to complete it by March and April 2021. He also suggested conducting a refresher training for supervisor as well. He said that coordination between ICDS, Health and other line departments must be there.

He asked to tally the data of Health and NFHS (National Family Health Survey) and also to cross check all the data of hospitals and Sub Centers and stated that both the data should be matched.

He exhorted to identify all the Anganwadi Centers with availability of plot land for Poshan Vatika and Nutri Garden.

He advised to use manpower from OFOJ for plantation, watering and caring of Poshan Vatika and Nutri Garden. He asked to submit the list of Anganwadi Centres and ICDS without electrification and water connection and ensure to provide water connection under Jal Jiwan Mission.

During the course of the meeting an interactive session with the officials was also conducted wherein feedbacks and requirements were discussed in details.

## State Level Meeting of Malaria Task Force Committee

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 19 MAR:**

The National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme Wing of Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim organized a State Level Meeting of Malaria Task Force Committee for Malaria Elimination, (National Framework for Malaria Elimination) at STNM Hospital Auditorium, Sichey, today, a press release from the Health Department informs.

The meeting was chaired by Principal Secretary H&FW Department, K Srinivasulu and

attended by PD-I, PD II, PDHS cum MD (NHM), MS, Director Health Services, SPOs of various programmes under NHM, representatives from various departments also the member of State Task Force, AMS, Senior Doctors from STNM and Senior Health Officials from the Districts, Staff of IDSP/NVBDCP/SIECB.

The programme were conducted by State IEC Officer (SIECB) and welcomed by JDHS/NVBDCP and the Vector Borne scenario of Sikkim was highlighted by DHS/SPO (NVBDCP).

Resource Person from RoH&FW, Sr Regional Director spoke on the National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) and the steps to be taken up by various stakeholders (intra-departmental/Defense/NGOs/Religious institutions) to achieve certification for Malaria Elimination in Sikkim.

The Chairperson addressed the gathering to be alert and vigilant in regard to the steps to be undertaken by the stakeholders i.e., the 3Ts Testing, Treating and Tracking and also urged all to keep their surrounding clean as Malaria Elimination starts from home.

## ASSOCHAM meeting discusses Food Processing in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAR:**

A meeting on 'Developing Integrated Food Processing Units for Sikkim Produce' focus on Prime Minister Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme [PMFME] was inaugurated by the Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Husbandry, Lok Nath Sharma here on Friday.

The day-long meet was organized by ASSOCHAM in association with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The meet discussed development of Integrated Food Processing Units for Sikkim produce and agendas like linking local farmers with companies to strengthen access to domestic and global markets and to promote economic vibrancy of the state in terms of trade and commerce, organic mission and other areas for sustainable and inclusive development of Sikkim.

In his inaugural address, the Minister mentioned that the department has been working seriously to arrange separate market for local organic produce of Sikkim to get them the right price with value addition in the national and

international market.

Mr Sharma mentioned that the State government has been working hard to support local farmers through various schemes and incentives. Minister urged ASSOCHAM to support local farmers in value addition and processing of local organic produce to get the right price and value.

Secretary, Horticulture Department, MT Sherpa stressed upon food processing and value addition to get the right value and price of local produce. He encouraged farmers to adopt the technology present for better returns and growth of the state economy.

FPOs can play a vital role in bringing farmers together in setting up micro units for processing, he said. He stressed that everyone needs to come together to fulfill the demand of the market and to take advantage of all available opportunities.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Chairman, ASSOCHAM Agri Input Council, Eastern Region, Ranjan D Sen stated that although Sikkim has been declared as the first organic state of the country, it has still not been able to get full benefit of an organic state.

On the same, he stated that the

scheme like Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme of the government will encourage farmers and small entrepreneurs to work on credit linkage programme. He stressed that the convergence scheme would bring all stakeholders together to work effectively.

Likewise, General Manager-cum-Oic, NABARD Sikkim, Dr Diwakar Hegde congratulated ASSOCHAM for organizing a unique meeting in Sikkim. He stated that Sikkim was the land of agriculture but it has different challenges due to less land holding for farming and it was also facing challenges of processing, marketing and branding of its produce.

On the same, he stressed that it was important to work together and to bring all related activities under one umbrella to address these challenges.

Dr Hegde spoke about various activities and schemes of NABARD in Sikkim to support local farmers and other stakeholders. He encouraged concerned beneficiaries to take full advantage of schemes of NABARD.

The inaugural function was followed by technical sessions.

## SOA fetes Tarundeep on selection for Tokyo Olympics

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAR:**

Sikkim Olympic Association [SOA] today congratulated and conveyed its best wishes to Padma Shree Tarundeep Rai on being selected to represent the country in the Tokyo Olympics.

At a function held here on Thursday, SOA executive members and representatives from other sports associations extended their best wishes to archer Tarundeep for representing the country yet



again in the Olympics in both, the singles and team events, informs an SOA press release.

On behalf of all sports associations, SOA president, Kuber Bhandari,

conveyed best wishes to the the archer and expressed confidence that Tarundeep's experience of the past two Olympics - at Athens and London - and other international

championships will definitely help him bring laurels to the country.

Tarundeep thanked SOA and other sports associations for their support and motivation.



## GANGTOK SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT LIMITED, GANGTOK, EAST SIKKIM

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited,  
Sokaythang, Gangtok,  
Sikkim - 737102  
E Mail - [gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com](mailto:gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com)  
CIN - U9309090WB2017SGC223807

**Memo No: 993/GSCDL/2021**

**Dated: 18/03/2021**

## PUBLIC NOTICE

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

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

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

- [gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com](mailto:gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com)
- [ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com](mailto:ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com)
- [sesmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com](mailto:sesmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com)
- [degscdl@gmail.com](mailto:degscdl@gmail.com)
- [ae3smartcity@gmail.com](mailto:ae3smartcity@gmail.com)

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

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

## RUCHI DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Behind telephone Exchange Near Old STNM Hospital. Gangtok

PH: 03592-203333, 204876, 8509373970

### EXISTING FACILITIES:

- ULTRASOUND
- DIGITAL X-RAY
- ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY
- COLOR DOPPLER
- PATHOLOGY
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- B M D
- E C G
- DENTAL O P G
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- PAEDIATRIC CLINIC
- MEDICAL CLINIC
- ORTHO CLINIC
- E N T CLINIC
- GYNEA CLINIC
- PHYSIOTHERAPY
- SPECIALISED TESTS

### BLOOD COLLECTION CENTRES AT :

- Sushruta Medical, Ranipool.
- Arihant Medical, Opp. CRH gate, 5th Mile.

### COMPLETE E N T FACILITIES UNDER ONE ROOF

**ENT O P D Monday to Friday**  
10.00 am to 2.30 pm

1. ENT OPD CLINIC
2. ENT ENDOSCOPIES
3. MICROSCOPIC PROCEDURES
4. MINOR O T PROCEDURES
5. VERTIGO MANAGEMENT
6. AUDIOMETRY, TYMPANOMETRY AND HEARING AIDS.

**CONSULTANT ENT SURGEON**  
DR. ONGDEN GYATSO, MS (AIIMS)

**GASTRO CLINIC & O P D**  
8.00 am to 9.00 am

**MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D**  
9.30 am

**ORTHO AND GYNEA CLINICS & O P D**  
3.00 pm

**PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D**  
8.00 am And 6.00 pm

**VACCINATION CLINIC**



## Instill Conservation by Cultivating Pride

*Invite collaborations instead of talking down*

Coming up on 21 March is World Forestry Day. Given these times of resurgent muscle-flexing as the way to confront the virus, expect it to pass without much ado in Sikkim unless, of course, the powers that be seriously believe that locking everyone in for the night is defence enough. That said, just like the other Days on the official calendars when a lot of superficial concern and generic rhetoric is pompously delivered, don't expect any outpouring of genuine 'concern' and committed activity telescoped even into a once-a-year routine.

What can Sikkim do on World Forestry Day?

It might undertake a lot of plantation (but it's too early for that), some seminars and an odd workshop or two depending on what the budget allows and reams and reams of press releases and messages. Such initiatives, well-meaning though they might be, mean little and achieve even lesser. The State's biodiversity hotspot credentials are much touted and often compromised and one needs to only look out of the window to notice the abundance of green and may be even surmise that forests are doing rather well here and do not really need a Day to flag worries and concern. But like most surmises, this would be a superficial solace as well.

The forests are under stress, as much from the Machiavellian demands of "development" and obsessed-with-cement "vikas" as from the sheer stress of population growth in a small area. That said, Sikkim is lucky that it is snuggled in the horseshoe that gives it a bio-diversity that few places its size can boast of. One could carry on endlessly about the variety of flora and fauna that are abundant in Sikkim, but that is exactly what we are striving to make a point against.

No, not the flora and fauna, but the tokenism that goes by way of concern on ecology-related issues in Sikkim. What is most ironic about environment-related issues in this Himalayan State is that all initiatives are taken by the government voluntarily. The environment cess for example, as also the clause proposed to be added to work orders for all civil works which will require contractors to undertake plantation works around their work sites (which remained a proposal and was never followed-through), the ban on plastics and the legislations protecting jhoras from dumping. All these decisions were taken by the government on its own. Even the environmental impact assessments for major projects are taken up by an arm of the government and over-watch maintained by another arm. Apart from the physical impossibility of one arm twisting the other if it misbehaves, there is also too much overlap and too many "considerations" which make such supervision inconsequential.

And there is more that is askew with this picture?

All these decisions emanate from public pressure in other places, but here they flow top-down which is not always the best option. When people pressurise governments to initiate well-meaning policy decisions, they do so after they have informed themselves better and decided to get engaged. When government agencies take the initiative, they talk down to the people and that does not always lead to an informed populace. Sikkim should still consider itself lucky that all these measures have come its way voluntarily. What is after all obvious is that no one would have missed them if the government had decided to ignore these initiatives.

But conservation can never succeed when it is forced or dictated. It has to be a collaborative effort which should involve everybody. Before the government announces another pro-environment legislation, it should perhaps direct the Human Resource Development Department to prepare Sikkim-specific text books for Environment Studies [a subject already in the syllabus] at least till class VIII for all schools in Sikkim. If this is done and some activity-based topics included in the curriculum, then the generation still in schools will understand the environment they live in better. If they understand it, they will also appreciate its uniqueness and will soon start taking pride in it. No one will then have to lecture them about conservation anymore because the pride of living in Sikkim will automatically imbibe it into their mindsets. Sikkim, its ecology and its people will then be safe forever.

### WRITE US:

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

# Halting Vaccine Rollout: Is Allowing Harm Worse Than Doing Harm?

STEPHEN JOHN  
*theconversation.com*

The UK and EU were recently engaged in a heated disagreement over the safety of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Germany, France and other EU states halted the AstraZeneca vaccine rollout while the European Medicines Agency (EMA) investigated the possibility that the vaccine might cause a rare, sometimes fatal, blood clot called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST).

In the latest announcement, the EMA says that no causal link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and CVST has been proved. Their report admits that there is still a possible link to the rare blood clots, which deserves further analysis, but in the absence of proven causality rollout should continue.

Some commentators framed the disagreement between the UK and EU as reflecting bad blood and division over Brexit. Others stressed disputes over how to interpret statistical patterns. Underlying these disagreements, though, was a remarkable agreement. Both UK and EU commentators seemed to agree that if the vaccine causes clots, we should stop using it. They disagreed over whether we have evidence the vaccine causes clots, not over how we should respond if it does.

The claim that if the vaccine causes deadly blood clots, then we must stop using it may be compelling to many, but it is also tricky because stopping the vaccine rollout has costs. We have excellent evidence that the AstraZeneca vaccine is effective at stopping symptoms and probably transmission. So stopping using the vaccine is equivalent to letting many people unnecessarily contract COVID-19, with potentially fatal consequences for them or others.

### FIRST, DO NO HARM

Even if the vaccine has fatal side-effects in a few cases, vaccinating the population might save many more lives than it costs. So why the apparent agreement that if the vaccine has fatal side-effects, we should halt the rollout?

A core principle of medical ethics is "first, do no harm". This can seem a peculiar principle – of

course we don't want doctors going around harming patients. It gets some bite if we spell it out more fully: "Do no harm, even if doing harm would lead to more benefit."

Consider this deliberately grotesque example lecturers often use to make this point more vivid to



bored students: a doctor could remove a heart and lungs from a healthy patient and use the heart to save one patient, the lungs to save another. The net result of this operation would be "positive": two lives saved for one life lost. Still, it seems obvious that the doctor shouldn't go around cutting open healthy patients, regardless of this "net benefit". "First, do no harm" captures that thought.

Underlying this "do no harm" principle is a deeper claim that it is worse to do harm than to allow harm to happen. In the grotesque example, it is worse to kill someone than it is to let two people avoidably die from lack of an organ transplant. Or, in the real world case of the COVID jab, it is worse to cause some to suffer a blood clot than to let very many people die from lack of a vaccine.

Again, this distinction between what we "do" and what we "allow" can seem intuitive in some cases, such as killing one person to give her organs to other

ers. But it is contested – and for lots of good reasons.

First, some have argued that drawing a strong distinction between doing and allowing doesn't reflect some fundamental ethical difference, but is more like a psychological quirk of humans, grounded in a desire to avoid blame. Maybe we should just

bite the bullet and accept that sometimes we have to get our hands dirty.

Second, the dividing line between doing and allowing is itself blurry. Think about another COVID case, lockdown policies. A feature of lockdown was that vulnerable women were trapped with violent partners, sometimes with tragic consequences. These consequences were predictable. In implementing lockdown, did the government "cause" these harms, or merely "allow" them to happen?

Of course, there is debate over all of these issues. Some think we can distinguish "doing" and "allowing" and that this distinction is ethically important. What is clear, though, is that debates about vaccine safety go beyond scientific debates about when we can infer claims about cause and effect. Rather, these debates are grounded in ethical assumptions that we can, and should, question and contest.

*[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Public Health, University of Cambridge]*



# Racism is behind anti-Asian American violence, even when it's not a hate crime

PAWAN DHINGRA  
*theconversation.com*

Over the past year, attacks on Asian Americans have increased more than 150% over the previous year, including the March 16 murders of eight people, including six Asian American women, in Atlanta.

Some of these attacks may be classified as hate crimes. But whether they meet that legal definition or not, they all fit a long history of viewing Asian Americans in particular ways that make discrimination and violence against them more likely.

I have researched and taught on Asian America for 20 years, including on the pernicious effects of stereotypes and attacks on individuals. Race can play a role in violence and prejudice, even if the offender does not clearly express a racist intent.

Much remains unknown about the attacks in Atlanta, but the man charged with the murders has said he did not have a racial prejudice against people of Asian descent. Rather, he has claimed he has a sexual addiction. But that statement indicates that he assumed these women were prostitutes, whether that's true or not.

This assumption, and the resulting violence, is just one of many that Asian Americans have suffered through the years.

### A LONG HISTORY OF PREJUDICE

The presupposed connection between Asian women and sex dates back almost 150 years: In 1875, Congress passed the Page Act, which effectively barred Chinese women from

immigrating, because it was impossible to tell if they were traveling "for lewd and immoral purposes," including "for purposes of prostitution." The assumption that all Chinese women were of questionable moral character placed the burden on the women themselves to somehow prove they were not prostitutes before being allowed to immigrate.

The U.S. military contributed to this conception of Asian women as hypersexualized. During the wars in the Philippines at the start of the 19th century, and during the mid-20th-century wars in Korea and Vietnam, servicemen took advantage of women who had turned to sex work in response to their lives being wrecked by war.

In the 1960s, the U.S. government brokered a deal with Thailand to be a "rest and relaxation" center for military personnel fighting in Vietnam. That bolstered what became the foundations of Thailand's modern-day sex tourism industry, which attracts men from the United States and Europe.

This association of Asian women with men's sexual fantasies has permeated popular culture, such as a scene in the 1987 Stanley Kubrick movie "Full Metal Jacket" in which a Vietnamese woman entices two servicemen by saying, "Me love you long time," and regular themes in the animated comedy "Family Guy." This makes Asian women more desirable to sex traffickers, brought over to serve male desires in spas and massage parlors such as the ones at-

tacked in Atlanta.

This history of sexualization of Asian women, shaped by the U.S. military and patriarchy, creates the backdrop to the Atlanta shootings. It helped create the conditions for the Asian spas and massage parlors to be there in the first place. It presents Asian American women as submissive, responsive agents of sexual temptation.

Race and gender inform what happened, and the public response to it, whether the alleged shooter articulates racist motives or not.

### STEREOTYPES AND PERCEPTIONS MATTER

Other crimes against Asian Americans may also lack clear evidence of racial bias, but still echo anti-Asian American stereotypes.

For instance, many elderly Asian Americans have been shoved to the ground in recent weeks, and Vicha Ratanapakdee, an 84-year-old man, died in one such incident in February in San Francisco.

The public defender representing the accused perpetrator in Ratanapakdee's death denies that race motivated the crime. But that is different from saying race was not a factor at all.

Practically all Asian Americans, but elderly men in particular, are often viewed as nonaggressive, meek and unable or unwilling to fight back, in contrast to men of other races. They are easy targets.

### IT'S NOT ALWAYS A CRIME

Other anti-Asian American racism isn't criminal at all, but still fits with the nation's racist history. As

COVID-19 spread across the U.S., Asian-owned restaurants and stores were the first to experience declining revenue, even though most of the earliest cases in the U.S. came from Europe.

There is a long history of suspecting Asian Americans of carrying disease into the U.S., which made it seem natural for people to avoid Asian American-owned businesses. President Donald Trump's repeated public declarations that the "Kung Flu" virus came from China reinforced those feelings.

This race-based and erroneous assumption has resulted in Asian Americans having among the highest unemployment rates in the nation, though they had among the lowest before the pandemic.

It defies logic to claim that race isn't relevant in attacks on Asian Americans unless the perpetrator actively references it. Research has found that most Americans assume a person of Asian descent is foreign-born, unless there is some aspect of their appearance that clearly marks them as American – such as being overweight.

Asian Americans of all types experience this perception of being "forever foreigners" in a wide range of ways. Regardless of whether some or all – or none – of these latest assaults on Asian Americans are proved to be hate crimes or not, race plays a historic role.

*[the writer is Professor of Sociology and American Studies, Amherst College]*



# They started by documenting stupas, now they are restoring them

**SRIZU BAJRACHARYA**  
**KATHMANDU, 19 MAR [KATH-MANDUPost]:** Three years back, Bharat Shahi remembers every day being a whirlwind of confusion. He was trying to restore a worn out chiva chaitya in front of his house at Dallu Chowk and his days would always be busy. For the restoration process, he had to regularly go back and forth from the Department of Archeology’s office to the ward office and to the community’s people, trying to collect more voices for the restoration.

As days went by, he was exhausted and saw almost no hope that the monument he worshipped every day would be put back to its glory. He ultimately gave up entirely. “The stupa was dissipating, chunks of its body were severely cracked, and the layers of asphalt buried its foundation underneath, and for long nobody did anything,” he says.

The shrine, which locals believe dates back centuries, was one of the highlights of the neighbourhood and a major part of the daily rituals of the community. How the monument became forsaken is a long story, he says, one of how time works.

“The family’s elders passed away and their family moved out of the area and they didn’t know the condition of the shrine. While the community people still offer pujas and revere the shrine, nobody had the ownership to repair it and no one really cared enough to initiate its conservation, not even the community’s representatives,” he said.

But all that has changed now. The once half-buried and filmed in a layer of dust and grime stupa today stands tall in its renewed grandeur through the initiative of a social organisation Chiva Chaitya. And with the restoration work, football has increased multifold. And the milieu of the place has found a facelift, say the locals there. It has become chahakilo, bright in English, says Shahi.

“The people in Chiva Chaitya are doing great work of conserving the uniqueness of the Valley and re-strengthening people’s relationship with the shrines that have surrounded us,” he said. “These shrines are an important part of Kathmandu’s inheritance and culture, one that needs to be preserved,” said Shahi.

Chiva Chaitya’s chiva restoration project started as the country prepared to break from the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid the gloom of an economic collapse across the country, where the tourism industry suffered the most, the group found themselves determined to work on the protection of communal heritage to foster the distinct identity of the Valley’s culture and tourism and people’s relationship with tangible inheritance.

Before the organisation restored the chaitya in Dallu chowk, it was half buried and filmed in a layer of dust and grime. As a result of the organisation’s efforts, today the same chaitya, which locals believe dates back centuries, has been restored gloriously. Photo courtesy: Chiva Chaitya

Chaityas, or stupas, are a significant part of Kathmandu’s heritage and culture that goes beyond the Gregorian calendar, says Sumati Bajracharya, a 77-year-old Buddhist intellect and the author of the book ‘Chiva Chaitya’. And the people of the Valley for long have built chaityas wherever they have lived.

The shrines are worshipped on a day to day basis by different ethnic groups on different occasions representing the various phases of life, such as Janko, which is celebrated when an elderly person reaches a certain age, or death anniversaries. Chaityas are a significant part of all the rituals.

Chaityas are also an ode to the dead, made in remembrance of someone endeared. And in Buddhism, chaityas are also regarded

as a three-dimensional representation of the mandal that embodies the principle of life. They are also one of the distinctive highlights of baha and bahi monasteries.

“Chaityas have a long history. They existed even before Buddha’s time and the term initially was referred to as a place of resting or meditation, later it was referred to the idea of using, ‘chiti’ (ash) of the deceased to make a stupa in their memory,” said Bajracharya.

“The concept of chaitya has evolved with Buddhism. At first it was just made with earth, without the Pancha Buddhas or the gajur (pinnacle), but today we see all kinds of them, and in many ways their existence attributes to the uniqueness of our culture,” said Bajracharya. And even today, the culture of building chivas has continued in the Newa Buddhist community.

However, over the years, chiva chaityas, which are pieces of heritage and history, have been undermined and overlooked. “In terms of conservation and protecting what we have, people have not understood what these stone monuments mean in our culture—even archaeologically speaking,” said Amar Tuladhar, a board member and the treasurer of Chiva Chaitya.

These shrines have been damaged, shifted, demolished without properly understanding their value, said Bajracharya and Tuladhar, even more with the road construction projects underway. At Dallu, the layers of asphalt used haphazardly to make roads had buried half of its structure.

For the organisation, as they restore chaityas in the valley, confronting the indifference of the people and seeing how the government has not considered the importance of the chaityas has been frustrating. But in each of their restoration projects to date, they have made it a point to work closely with the local ward office, community people and the private owners of the monuments.

“We believe if we are to protect these chaityas, we need to establish ownership—only then, will people question and make more effort in the preservation of the chaityas and their culture,” said Prabin Shakya, the vice-president of the organisation.

Their first restoration project started in Swayambhu, where two chivas (chaitya in Nepalbhasa) had been damaged when a tall tree had fallen over them. The chivas parts were stored in the office of Swayambhu Bikash Kosh for quite some time and nobody knew the whereabouts of the chiva chaityas, said Tuladhar. “The owners of the chaityas had also filed a police complaint, but we were told they were unable to find it and then we went and searched in the Kosh’s store and we found the pieces—they were severely damaged,” he said.

Within a few days, their group dispersed to get permission from authorities, mainly the ward office. Then they managed all resources and brought together the concerned people of the shrine to work on restoring the chaitya.

The restoration cost came to be around Rs85,000, says Tuladhar. But at Dallu, where they had to dismantle the chaitya, replace parts and build the foundation of the shrine, the cost was more.

“The cost depends on how much of the chaitya needs to be restored and how. And with that the size of the chaitya, the work-force needed, and the logistics required,” says Tuladhar. “For these operations, we usually collect money from our friends and benefactors. But oftentimes, the community people have stepped in to contribute to the restoration. It happened in Dallu and even at Dhoka-tole near Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square,” he said.

In the past five months, the group has restored about five chaityas, and they plan to cover at least six more this year. Just a week back at Dhalko Ward No. 17, next

to the Indrayani temple, the organisation restored a terracotta chaitya which they believe to be over hundreds of years old. “A tree was growing from underneath the chaitya, and in the process was tearing down the chaitya’s structure, so we had to dismantle the parts and take out the tree,” said Tuladhar.

Before and after pictures of a terracotta chaitya that was restored by the organisation in Dhalko, near the Indrayani temple, in Kathmandu. A tree was growing from underneath the chaitya which was tearing apart the chaitya’s structure (pictured in the inset photo). Beeju Maharjan/TKP and Chiva Chaitya

With each restoration, Tuladhar and his team have been gathering a lot of praise and support from people. Last year, they were also funded by the World Monument Fund that had also enlisted ‘chiva and chaityas’ of Kathmandu on their watchlist of 2020.

The group that was initiated by five friends—Prabodh Kasa, Prabin Shakya, Suban Tuladhar, Ashish Manandhar and Amar Tuladhar—has come a long way from just discussing the importance of the shrines to actually restoring them. Today, they understand that more than wishful thinking, one needs to take action to make way for the change they want to see.

“We started talking in 2012-13 about how these chaityas are mostly overlooked by the state and the people. We wanted to make people aware of how these shrines are important both culturally and socio-economically. We believe it can attract more tourists too,” said Shakya.

Then, they were a social group that was recording and documenting chaityas in the Valley, trying to create an inventory through images, and their history. Alongside, they also promoted chaityas through community and school interactions, chaitya tours, cultural tourism conservation programmes

and cleaning activities. They registered as an organisation in 2019.

And as an organisation, these days they are also working to establish GPS locations of chaityas in the valley. Till date, they have recorded over 1,300 chaityas, but they estimate the count of chaityas in the Valley to be over 4,000, excluding well-known chaityas like Swayawambhu, Khasti, Namobudha, Dhando chaityas.

Although their work still mostly remains hidden in the larger conversation of heritage conservation, the group’s role has been crucial to start off ground-level mobilisation and motivation and to bring attention to the chaityas that we see in almost every neighbourhood of the Valley.

“This is just the beginning for us, and we believe this journey will continue and expand with people taking their first steps to be aware and then to making steps to protect monuments that already exist around us,” said Shakya, the vice-president.

Anjir Man Baniya, the site manager of the group, has also witnessed this optimism. He has seen the concern of people grow with their attempt to restore the monuments in their community. “A lot of people come asking what we are doing, and if we are doing the restoration in the right way,” he said. At Dallu, he saw about 13 local clubs come together to pull up the chaitya and restore its structure.

Today, the process for him and the team has been heartwarming. “When you first see what you have to fix, it feels like an unimaginable attempt with so much to do, but as the chaitya comes together, nothing beats the peace you find at the end,” he said.

“It’s gratifying to see how you are able to bring everyone together for a cause. The triumph for the team has been in raising concerns of a community in their ownership of the monuments they have lived with.”

## CABINET SANCTIONS...

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.32.43 lakhs (Rupees thirty two lakhs forty three thousand only) to be transferred to Sikkim Urban Development Agency (SUDA) for meeting up salary expenditure for the financial year 2020-21.

### COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.27,00,000/- (Rupees twenty seven lakhs only) for construction of Common Facility Centre at Okhray in West Sikkim, by way of recoupment of Industrial Development Fund.

### POWER DEPARTMENT

- Post facto approval and sanction of Rs.115.64 lakhs (Rupees one crore fifteen lakhs and sixty four thousand only) as Grant-in-aid to Sikkim Renewable Energy Development Agency (SREDA).
- Administrative approval and sanction of Rs.180.00 lakhs (Rupees one crore eighty lakhs only) as reimbursement of State Level Taxes paid by M/s PGCIL in respect of implementation of Sikkim Comprehensive Schemes.

### AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.219.99 lakhs (Rupees two hundred nineteen lakhs ninety nine thousand only) for implementation of Agricultural Mechanization under Krishi Kalyan Abhiyan-III for the year 2020-21 in Aspirational West District.

### ROADS AND BRIDGES DEPARTMENT

- Revised administrative approval of Rs.55.57 crores (Rupees fifty five crores fifty seven lakhs only) for the construction of road from Sopakha to Chewan-bhanyang in West Sikkim.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.30.00 lakhs (Rupees thirty lakhs only) for implementation of action plan under State fund for Persons with Disabilities for the financial year 2020-2021.

### DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.39,96,800/- (Rupees thirty nine lakhs ninety six thousand eight hundred only) for conducting Games and Sports activities within and outside the State.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.3,48,43,492/- (Rupees three crores forty eight lakhs forty three thousand four hundred ninety two only) towards procurement of textbooks, school stationeries and uniforms for the Academic Session 2021.
- Approval of the amendment of Section 8 (1) of the Sikkim Manipal University of Medical, Technological Sciences Amendment Bill, 2021.

### URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Approval to place “The Sikkim Municipalities (Amendment) Bill, 2021”, before the Sikkim Legislative Assembly in the forthcoming session.
- Revised administrative approval of Rs.233.47 lakhs (Rupees two crores thirty three lakhs forty sev-

en thousand only) and financial sanction of Rs.108.47 lakhs (Rupees one crore eight lakhs forty seven thousand only) for construction of Model Police Station at Naya Bazar in South Sikkim.

- Revised administrative approval of Rs.290.96 lakhs (Rupees two crores ninety lakhs ninety six thousand only) and financial sanction of Rs.165.96 lakhs (Rupees one crore sixty five lakhs ninety six thousand only) for construction of Model Police Station at Gyalshing in West Sikkim.

### AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.94.39 lakhs (Rupees ninety four lakhs thirty nine thousand only) for construction of Class-II quarter cum office along with protective wall and fencing at Ringhim Nampatan Model Village in North Sikkim.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.453.90 lakhs (Rupees four hundred fifty three lakhs ninety thousand only) for implementation of Soil Health Management (SHM) scheme during current financial year 2020-21.

### DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND VETERINARY SERVICES

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.40.00 lakhs (Rupees forty lakhs only) as Grant-in Aid to SARAH Division for implementation of state-wide anti-rabies, animal birth control, animal health, welfare activities and infrastructure development.

### POWER DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.50.00 lakhs (Rupees fifty lakhs only) for purchase of equipments for strengthening of Viral Research and diagnostic (VRD) Lab at New STNM Hospital.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Confirmation of administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.200.00 lakhs (Rupees two crores only) and approval and sanction of additional Rs.300.00 lakhs as state share under Samagra Shiksha.

- Approval and sanction of Rs.32,55,390 /- (Rupees thirty two lakhs fifty five thousand three hundred ninety only) for transportation of NCERT/CBSE books for the academic session-2021 from New Delhi to Sikkim.

### ROADS AND BRIDGES DEPARTMENT

- Revised administrative approval of Rs.6211.47 lakhs (Rupees sixty two crores eleven lakhs and forty seven thousand only) and financial sanction of additional Rs.2500.74 lakhs (Rupees twenty five crore and seventy four thousand only) for upgradation, widening and improvement of Namchi-Sikkip-Wok road in South Sikkim.
- Financial sanction of Rs.2,11,30,545.00 (Rupees two crores eleven lakhs thirty thousand five hundred and forty five only) for immediate restoration of wing wall at Kaw Khola Steel bridge along Kimbubotay Sokpay road under Yangang Sub Division in South Sikkim.

- Revised administrative approval of Rs.697.08 lakhs (Rupees six crores ninety seven lakhs and eight thousand only) and additional financial sanction of Rs.139.52

lakhs (Rupees one crore and thirty nine lakhs fifty two thousand only) for upgradation of road from Syari Cooperative to Lower Syari (km-1 to 5th) in East Sikkim.

### SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs.910.00 lakhs (Rupees nine hundred and ten lakhs only) and financial sanction of Rs.500.00 lakhs (Rupees five hundred lakhs only) for construction of Track and Field and Practice ground at Kyongsa, Gyalshing in West Sikkim.

- Administrative approval for revised project cost of Rs.6213.08 lakhs (Rupees sixty two crores thirteen lakhs eight thousand only) and additional financial sanction of Rs.1079.86 lakhs (Rupees ten crores seventy nine lakhs eighty six thousand only) for construction of Bhaichung Stadium at Namchi in South Sikkim.

### HOME DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.63,00,000/- (Rupees sixty three lakhs only) for construction of Firearms Range at 3rd IRBn at Manglay in South Sikkim.

- Approval for creation of a Directorate of Prosecution in the State under the administrative control of Home department for better co-ordination between the investigation and prosecution.

### HOME DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs.363.87 lakhs (Rupees three crores sixty three lakhs eighty seven thousand only) and financial sanction of Rs.197.48 lakhs (Rupees one crore ninety seven lakhs forty eight thousand only) for providing additional amenities for the Sikkim Judicial Academy at Sokeythang in East Sikkim.

### ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND VETERINARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.27.57 lakhs (Rupees twenty seven lakhs fifty seven thousand only) being the state share for implementation of National Programme for Dairy Development in North District of Sikkim by North District Cooperative Milk Producers Union Ltd.

### LAND REVENUE & DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.1,91,70,359/- (Rupees one crore ninety one lakhs seventy thousand three hundred and fifty nine only) for implementation of works under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

### SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT

- The proposal seeks administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.50.00 lakhs (Rupees fifty lakhs only) and transfer the same to the accounts of Senior Citizen’s Society for implementation of the State Action Plan for Senior Citizens.

### POWER DEPARTMENT

- Post-facto approval and financial sanction of Rs.2937.39 lakhs (Rupees twenty nine crores thirty seven lakhs thirty nine thousand only) for construction of transmission line from Sherathang sub-station to Bulbulay along with improvement and modernization of transmission and distribution lines of Rongay, Karki dara and Bojoghari areas in East Sikkim.

- Post-facto approval and sanction of revised project cost at Rs.5818.82 lakhs (Rupees fifty eight crores eighteen lakhs eighty two thousand only) with ex-post facto approval and sanction of Rs.2495.09 lakhs (Rupees twenty four crores ninety five lakhs nine thousand only) to execute the additional works related to system strengthening and energy meter in two circles of Gangtok (I&II) and Mangan town under Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS).

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.1.60 crores (Rupees one crore sixty lakhs only) to be transferred to PMGSY account as Maintenance Fund (e-Marg).

### HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.2,92,58,973/- (Rupees two crores ninety two lakhs fifty eight thousand nine hundred seventy three only) for Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC) of equipments and its accessories for the financial year 2019-20.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.151.205 lakhs (Rupees one crore fifty one lakhs twenty thousand and five hundred only) to be released as grant-in-aid to fourteen (14) private aided/unaided schools for the year 2019-20 having minority students under SPEMM (Scheme for Providing Education in Minorities and Madrasa).

### PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

- Revised administrative approval of Rs.4617.32 lakhs (Rupees forty six crores seventeen lakhs thirty two thousand only) and financial sanction of Rs.359.72 lakhs (Rupees three crores fifty nine lakhs and seventy two thousand only) for the work of providing drinking water supply for Sikkim University at Yangang in South Sikkim.

### CULTURE DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.31,70,496/- (Rupees thirty one lakhs seventy thousand four hundred ninety six only) towards creation of backup, preservation & storage of record of Sikkim State Archives.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.20,96,200/- (Rupees twenty lakhs ninety six thousand two hundred only) for repair and renovation of Mini Theatre at Manan Bhawan during the current financial year.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.46,53,000/- (Rupees forty six lakhs fifty three thousand only) for renovation of State Central Library at Manan Bhawan Main Auditorium at Manan Bhawan during the financial year 2019-20.

### FINANCE DEPARTMENT

- Approval of the Third Supplementary Demands for Grants-2020-21 and Vote of account-2021-2022 to be placed in the forthcoming Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

### POWER DEPARTMENT

- Approval to release Rs.194.08 lakhs (Rupees one crore ninety four lakhs eight thousand only) to Sikkim Renewable Energy Development Agency (SREDA) for the financial year



*Not disappointed with my dismissal, few things not in my control:*

**Suryakumar**

**AHMEDABAD, MAR 19 (PTI):** His terrific innings in only his second international outing was cut short by a controversial dismissal, but Suryakumar Yadav took it on his chin, saying few things are "not in my control".

Suryakumar smashed a blistering 57 off 31 balls to set up India's series-levelling eight-run win against England in the fourth T20 International against England here on Thursday night.

Just when he was looking to pile on England's misery, the Mumbai dasher was given out in a controversial fashion. "Regarding my dismissal, not really disappointed because few things are not in my control. Things that are in my control, I try to control that and things outside that, are not in my hands," Suryakumar said at the post-match press conference on Thursday.

He began his foray in international cricket with a stunning six off England pacer Jofra Archer.

"I am very happy with the way the things went. My plan was really clear when I went out to bat. I have seen Archer in the last two-three seasons in the IPL, I watched all of his games, whenever a new batsman comes in, what plans he has, obviously I had my plans as well," added Suryakumar. "It was a great opportunity for me to bat at number three for India. Yeah, I knew he will come a little short at me."

During India's innings, two umpiring seemed to have gone against the hosts. Suryakumar was dismissed by Sam Curran. The right-handed batsman tried to play a shot but Dawid Malan ended up taking the catch.

Replays indicated that the ball might have hit the ground when Malan was taking the catch. However, as the soft signal was out, the third umpire upheld the on-field call citing "lack of conclusive evidence".

Suryakumar was not included in India's squad for the white-ball series against Australia despite a stellar IPL and domestic season.

Speaking about how he prepared for the series against England, Suryakumar said, "I have always said that the passion for this game has always kept me going."

"I kept working hard, I only knew that I have one option and I try to do things that are in my control. I kept on working on my skills and fitness and I knew that when the time is right, an opportunity will come and I will grab it with both hands."

"There were some butterflies, I was happy when I got to know that I will be playing at three, I knew what I had done before, I just followed the same process which I do while playing for my franchise. "I knew this situation really well, I wanted to do the same things. I did not do anything different, I just expressed myself," he said.

# India-England series is a trailer for other teams to improve ahead of T20 WC: Ramiz

**KARACHI, MAR 19 (PTI):** Former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja has termed the ongoing series between India and England as a "trailer" for other teams, saying the five-match T20 rubber will help them to improve their skills and strategy ahead of the T20 World Cup later this year.

"I think it is a trailer for other teams on how to improve their skills, strategies for this format before the World Cup," he said in an interview on the Cricket Baaz YouTube channel.

"We have two of the best teams playing and I think England is the team to beat in the World Cup." Ramiz heaped praise on the England team for their meteoric rise in white-ball cricket. "Their rise in white ball cricket has been massively impressive given the fact that until some years back they didn't even give priority to ODIs or leave alone T20 cricket," he said.

"England are fearless now and playing attacking cricket in white ball format."

Ramiz also felt that England had shell shocked the quality top order of the Indian team with their express pace.

The former Pakistan batsman also described Misbah-



ul-Haq as the poor man's MS Dhoni, saying the Pakistan head coach needs to adopt a "modern thinking" approach to guide the team.

"Misbah's training and upbringing is different. Let me put it this way, he is the poor man's Dhoni. MS was also restrained, no expressions and not emotional. Misbah is also like this but I think now he has

to go on modern thinking," he said. "Misbah has to take a new direction because there is a need to set the GPS right for Pakistan cricket because aggression is in our DNA. I think at times he gets too protective and he gets cagey as soon as we lose a match. But if our products and talent is right we shouldn't be afraid of hiccups and setbacks." Asked

to compare Misbah with India's head coach Ravi Shastri, Ramiz made some interesting observations.

"When we played against Ravi we felt he was a misfit in Indian team because he had aggression, he was a go getter, team player ready to open bat down the order and his body language was different. We felt he wanted to be a Imran

Khan type player because we were like that. "I think he took this attitude to the Indian team and fortunately for him the captain, Virat Kohli is also like that aggressive and expressive and this has made a big difference to the Indian team."

Ramiz also called for the appointment of a chief executive for the Pakistan team who would oversee only technical

cricket matters related to the team selection, coaches, players etc. He also felt that time has come for Pakistan to stop reliance on foreign coaches.

"In the past I could understand we needed foreign coaches because we were young to this field but now we have grown ourselves in this area. "In fact I think there is no need to have permanent coaches with the team for all tours and we should only be appointing specialist coaches as required on tour to tour series to series basis.

"Appointment of coaches should be tour based and opposition based. Use their expertise for a series and move on rather than carry on with them for a long period."

Talking about the World Test Championship, Ramiz said: "The current format was lopsided and prolonged and it made no sense not having India and Pakistan series.

"Teams didn't play the same number of matches and even the points system was weird. Next time when the WTC is held no cricket should be held at that time, No ODIs or T20s, if you want to promote test cricket and infuse life into it and also attract sponsors to this format.

## Lahore court orders FIA to register case against Pakistan captain Babar Azam

**KARACHI, MAR 19 (PTI):** Pakistan captain Babar Azam's problems in his personal life continue to grow as a sessions court in Lahore has ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)'s Cyber Crime Circle to register a first information report (FIR) against him in a harassment case.

The order from Judge Hamid Hussain came on Thursday after a hearing in Lahore on a petition filed by a woman, Hamza Mukhtar who claimed she had been getting threatening messages on her WhatsApp, threatening her with dire consequences after she filed a case against the Pakistan captain.

At the hearing the FIA officials informed the court that after Hamiza filed a complaint with the Cyber Crime Cell and they started an inquiry they found one of the numbers used to send the threatening messages belonged to Babar Azam.

Hamiza has alleged that she was constantly receiving "threatening messages" from different mobile numbers on WhatsApp and that unknown persons also used to "threaten and blackmail her that they have



her objectionable pictures and videos and will upload (them) on social media in order to harm her reputation in society and ruin her life."

She said she had approached the FIA to trace the unknown numbers and they found one of them was registered to Babar Azam and two others to two women, Maryam Ahmed and Salme BB who were served notices to join the FIA's inquiry proceedings to record their version.

The court was told that of the three, only Ahmed appeared in front of the agency and denied knowing the petitioner or sending her abusive messages.

According to the report, Ahmed had stated that she would provide her mobile phone for technical analysis but she failed to do so.

The FIA said Babar's brother Faisal Azam ap-

peared on behalf of the cricketer and requested the FIA to "wait for some time" to record Babar's statement.

However, Babar has not yet appeared for the inquiry, the FIA report said.

In his order, the judge wrote that since a regular inquiry had already commenced on the petitioner's complaint, the "respondent is ordered to proceed further with respect to registration of FIR against the culprits within the stipulated time after [completion] of legal formalities".

Earlier this year, the Lahore High Court (LHC) had suspended the order by a sessions court to the Naseerabad police in Lahore to register a case against Babar Azam on Mukhtar's complaint.

Hamiza has also filed harassment, sexual abuse and other cases against Babar in the court.

## Top international shooter tests positive ahead of World Cup

**NEW DELHI, MAR 19 (PTI):** A top international shooter has tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of the ISSF World Cup here and is currently in isolation at a hospital. The name of the shooter has been withheld in line with protocols.

"A shooter has tested COVID positive before the start of the World Cup, and he has been shifted to the hospital," National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) secretary Rajiv Bhatia told PTI. His teammates and support staff have returned negative after COVID tests were performed on them.

The shooter in question was first tested at the airport and then again on Thursday. He is asymptomatic and the shooter has never visited the range, an NRAI official said. The tournament begins at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range on Friday.

As many as 53 countries have confirmed their entries, including Korea, Singapore, USA, United Kingdom, Iran, Ukraine, France, Hungary, Italy, Thailand and Turkey. As per the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) guidelines, no spectator will be

allowed inside the range for the tournament that carries ranking points. Shooters participating in the tournament are required to undergo three COVID-19 tests -- on arrival at the airport, 24 hours before their first competition and finally before leaving for their respective destinations.

As part of the SOP, all officials/media will be tested, wearing of masks is mandatory and there will be temperature checks at entry points. There will be isolation rooms and regular sanitisation will be done.

## Pogba returns from injury to help Man Utd beat Milan in EL

**MILAN, MAR 19 (AP):** Paul Pogba returned from injury to score the winner as Manchester United beat AC Milan 1-0 to reach the Europa League quarter-finals, while Mislav Oric netted a hat trick as Dinamo Zagreb stunned Tottenham 3-0 to eliminate the London team.

Pogba was brought on at halftime and had an immediate impact as he scored two minutes later to help United secure a 2-1 aggregate victory.

"Paul looked like he'd been out for six weeks. He's been working really hard but playing football is a different matter and you can see that he needs more time," United coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

"He couldn't play for more than 45 minutes and he'll get better and better which is fantastic for us for the rest of the season ... He's going to give us a big boost."

Arsenal, Roma, Ajax and Villarreal all went through as well. In Milan, former Manchester United forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic also made his comeback from injury as a substitute but saw his best effort saved as his powerful header was clawed away by goalkeeper Dean Henderson.

"There's so much disappointment, we played two matches well, today we just missed a goal," Ibrahimovic said. "We made an error at the back but that's football and if you don't take your chances it's more difficult to go through."

"But now I'll be back to help the team. ... We didn't deserve to go out tonight, but you also learn from negative moments to grow and we'll move forward."

Ibrahimovic played for United from 2016-18, helping it win the Europa League in 2017. That was the English side's last trophy.

After conceding a late equalizer in a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford, United started positively at San Siro but Milan slowly got into the match and had the best chance with the last kick of the first half as Rade Krunic volleyed wide of the left post.

Pogba had missed the past 10 matches but warmed up during halftime and replaced Marcus Rashford immediately after the



break. And he put United in front moments later. Milan failed to clear the ball following a shot by Daniel James and the ball eventually fell to Pogba, who fired into the roof of the net from close range.

Pogba almost set up a second for United three minutes later when he found Mason Greenwood but the forward's attempt was saved by Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Pogba also headed over shortly before full time in a dynamic performance from the Frenchman.

### SPURS STUNNED

Oric completed his hat trick with the winner in extra time as Dinamo Zagreb overturned a 2-0 deficit from the first leg to reach the quarterfinals 3-2 on aggregate.

Playing just three days after its coach was handed a prison sentence and resigned, Zagreb completed an unlikely turnaround in the 106th minute when Oric dribbled between two Tottenham defenders and fired in a shot from the edge of the area for his third goal.

Zoran Mamic quit as Dinamo coach on Monday after Croatia's Supreme Court confirmed his nearly five-year prison sentence for tax evasion and fraud. He was replaced by assistant Damir Krznar.

And Zagreb looked better organized throughout against a Tottenham team coached by Jose Mourinho, although the hosts needed more than an hour to break the deadlock.

"I feel more than sad," Mourinho said. "The basic of football is the attitude and they beat us on that."

### ARSENAL ADVANCES

Arsenal advanced despite a 1-0 loss at home to Olympiakos, progressing 3-2 on aggregate.

After a tight first half, Youssef El-Arabi, who also scored in the first leg, weaved through the box to score and give the Greek side hope after 51 minutes.

Arsenal missed a number of chances throughout the game, with captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang wasting a trio of opportunities, but the visitors' hopes were ended when Ousseynou Ba was sent off for a second booking seven minutes from time.

### OTHER MATCHES

Roma cruised through after a 2-1 win over Shakhtar Donetsk in Kiev completed a 5-1 victory on aggregate.

Spanish striker Borja Mayoral scored both goals for the Italian side either side of a reply from Junior Moraes.

It was equally comfortable for Ajax, which won 2-0 at Young Boys to progress 5-0 on aggregate.

Villarreal earned a second straight 2-0 win over Dynamo Kyiv, while fellow Spanish team Granada advanced 3-2 on aggregate despite losing 2-1 at Molde.

Slavia Prague won 2-0 at Scottish champion Rangers, which finished the match with nine men. The Czech team progressed 3-1 on aggregate.



# China to open first trial of Canadians held on spy charges

**DANDONG (CHINA), MAR 19 (AP):** China was expected to open the first trial Friday for one of two Canadians who have been held for more than two years in apparent retaliation for Canada's arrest of a senior Chinese telecom executive.

Canada said its consular officials were not given permission to attend the proceedings despite several requests. They have been notified that a court hearing for Michael Spavor would be held Friday, and one for Michael Kovrig would follow on Monday.

China has not publicly confirmed the court dates, and calls to the court in Dandong, the northeastern city where Spavor was charged, went unanswered.

Sidewalks were roped off with police tape and journalists were kept at a distance as police cars and vans with lights flashing entered the the court complex, located beside the Yalu River that divides China from North Korea.

The official notification received from Chinese authorities indicated that these trials are closed to both the public and the media," Canada



Global Affairs spokesperson Christelle Chartrand said.

Spavor and Kovrig were detained in December 2018, days after Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was arrested at the request of the US at the airport in Vancouver, British Columbia. The US is seeking her extradition to face fraud charges related to her company's dealings with Iran.

The two Canadians have been held ever since, while Meng has been released on bail. They were charged in June 2020 with spying

under China's national security laws. Spavor, an entrepreneur with North Korea-related business, was charged with spying for a foreign entity and illegally providing state secrets. Kovrig, an analyst and former diplomat, was charged with spying for state secrets and intelligence in collaboration with Spavor.

Prosecutors have not released details of the charges and trial proceedings in national security cases are generally held behind closed doors. The state-owned Global Times newspaper

said Kovrig was accused of having used an ordinary passport and business visa to enter China to steal sensitive information and intelligence through contacts in China since 2017, while Spavor was accused of being a key source of intelligence for Kovrig.

In Vancouver on Thursday, Meng's lawyers told an extradition hearing Canadian officials abused their power when they conspired with the US to arrest her. Defense lawyer Tony Paisana said Canadian Border Services Agen-

cy officers took Meng's phones, obtained their passwords, then handed to them to Canadian police so the data could be shared with the FBI.

Paisana said Meng was never told during questioning that she faced an arrest warrant in the US and would have immediately asked for a lawyer if so informed. British Columbia Supreme Court Associate Chief Justice Heather Holmes suggested border officers would have questioned Meng more rigorously if their exam was actually a covert criminal investigation, as her lawyers said.

China has demanded Meng's immediate and unconditional release, saying the US engineered her detention as part of a drive to contain China's growing rise. Canadian authorities say Kovrig and Spavor were arbitrarily arrested to put pressure on Ottawa and say they should be released without charge.

China has also restricted various Canadian exports, including canola oil seed, and handed death sentences to another four Canadians convicted of drug smuggling.

## Lebanese are gripped by worry as economic meltdown speeds up

**BEIRUT (AP):** Shops closing, companies going bankrupt and pharmacies with shelves emptying — in Lebanon these days, fistfights erupt in supermarkets as shoppers scramble to get to subsidized powdered milk, rice and cooking oil.

Like almost every other Lebanese, Nisrine Taha's life has been turned upside down in the past year under the weight of the country's crushing economic crisis. Anxiety for the future is eating at her.

Five months ago, she was laid off from her job at the real estate company where she had worked for years. Her daughter, who is 21, cannot find work, forcing the family to rely on her husband's monthly salary which has lost 90% of its value because of the collapse of the national currency.

The family hasn't been able to pay rent for seven months, and Taha worries their landlord's patience won't last forever. As the price of meat and chicken soared beyond their means, they changed their diet.

"Everything is very expensive," she said.

Taha's family is among hundreds of thousands of lower income and middle class Lebanese who have been plunged into sudden poverty by the crisis that started in late 2019 — a culmination of decades of corruption by a greedy political class that pillaged nearly every sector of the economy.

The Lebanese pound has lost more than 25% in value over the past weeks alone. Inflation and prices of basic goods have skyrocketed in a country that imports more than 80% of its basic goods. Purchasing power of salaries has dramatically declined and savings have evaporated — all on top of the coronavirus pandemic and a massive explosion last August at Beirut's port that damaged parts of the capital.

More than half the population now lives in poverty, according to the World Bank, while an intractable political crisis heralds further collapse.

Alia Moubayed, man-

aging director at Jefferies, a diversified financial services company, said the "sharp contraction in growth, coupled with hyperinflation and devaluation" has pushed more people into precarious employment, raised unemployment levels and brought more than 50% of the population below the poverty line, compared to an estimated third in 2018. Lebanon has been without a government since the last one resigned in August, with top politicians unwilling to compromise over the formation of a new Cabinet that could forge a path toward reforms and recovery. Street violence and sectarian tensions are on the rise.

"People are dying, and no one cares!" said Taha as she visited a cousin who owns a perfume shop in Beirut's commercial Hamra Street. Both wore masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Once a famous shopping district, known for its boutiques, bustling cafes and theaters, Hamra Street has changed amid the pandemic. On a recent day, many shops were closed, some because of lockdown measures, others permanently because of the economic crisis. Merchants in those still open complain they are selling almost nothing.

Beggars solicited passers-by for money. A woman and her child sat on the pavement next to a drawing on a wall with the words: "We are all beggars." "It cannot get worse," said Ibrahim Simmo, 59, who manages a clothes shop. Sales have dropped 90%, compared to previous years. He couldn't sell his winter stock during the nearly two-month-long virus lockdown earlier this year, and now the currency crash is making things worse.

Ibrahim Farshoukh, 28, said he barely pays the rent for his shop where he sells handmade leather bracelets and bags. Sometimes his wife stays behind while he takes to the streets, trying to sell bracelets to passers-by. "The situation is unbearable," he added. The vast majority of the population gets paid in Lebanese pounds,

meaning their incomes decline further while prices shoot up and pensions evaporate. The crisis has also depleted foreign reserves, prompting stark warnings the Central Bank can no longer finance subsidies of some basic commodities, including fuel.

Videos on social media show fistfights in supermarkets as shoppers try to get to subsidized products such as cooking oil or powdered milk. In one video, armed members of one of Lebanon's intelligence agencies check ID cards inside a supermarket before handing over a bag of subsidized rice.

People who once lived comfortably are now unable to pay school fees and insurance premiums, or even eat well.

"I don't remember the last time we ate meat. I cannot afford it," said Taha, whose husband is an airport maintenance employee. The family's diet now mainly consists of lentils, rice, and bulgur, she said.

The currency collapse has forced some grocery shops, pharmacies and other businesses to temporarily shut down, as officials warn of growing food insecurity.

Nabil Fahd, head of the supermarket owners' association, told the local MTV station that people are hoarding goods, which stores can no longer restock — once something is sold out, storeowners have to pay more in Lebanese pounds for new supplies. We are "in a very, very serious crisis," he said.

The price of bread, the country's main staple, was raised twice over the past year — and then, earlier this month, bakers reduced the weight of a pack of bread, without changing the price. Taha blames Lebanon's corrupt political class for bringing the small nation to near-bankruptcy.

Assem Shoueib quit his job at a leading newspaper in Beirut in 2000 and moved with his family to France, where he opened a Lebanese restaurant near Paris. Walking through Hamra Street on a recent visit back, the 59-year-old said he made the right decision.

## Myanmar factory attacks put focus on Chinese influence

**BANGKOK, MAR 19 (AP):** Confusion over what exactly happened during recent attacks on factories in Myanmar has highlighted the complex and troubled nature of the country's relations with China amid a broad public backlash against a February 1 coup.

Many in Myanmar suspect Beijing of supporting the military's takeover, and there has long been a deep vein of resentment against China's growing influence, but protesters insist they were not responsible for a spate of attacks on factories last weekend. Some say they suspect the military instigated attacks on the factories to justify imposing martial law in industrial zones that have been hotspots for protests against the junta.

Adding to the uncertainties, China has said it is prepared to do more to protect its extensive business investments in Myanmar, which include factories, pipelines and other big infrastructure projects.

China's state-run Global Times asserted that protesters incited by the West had attacked 32 factories, causing 240 million yuan (about 30 million) in damage.

Turmoil is bad for business and will deter investors, the Chinese state-owned broadcaster CGTN said in a commentary. But China won't allow its interests to be exposed to further aggression. If the authorities cannot deliver and the chaos continues to spread, China might be forced into taking more drastic action to protect its interests, CGTN said.

## Europe pause of AstraZeneca sends ripple of doubt elsewhere

**KAMPALA, UGANDA (AP):** The suspension of the AstraZeneca vaccine in several European countries over the past week could fuel skepticism about the shot far beyond their shores, potentially threatening the rollout of a vaccine that is key to the global strategy to stamp out the coronavirus pandemic, especially in developing nations.

As things stand, it's either AstraZeneca or nothing for some poorer countries. The vaccine from the Anglo-Swedish drug maker is cheaper and easier to store than many others. It will make up nearly all of the doses shipped in the first half of the year by COVAX, a consortium meant to ensure low- and middle-income countries receive vaccines.

With little other choice, most developing countries that had the AstraZeneca on hand pushed ahead with it even as major countries in Europe suspended its use over the past week after reports that unusual blood clots were found in some recipients of the shot — despite insistence from international health agencies that there was no evidence the vaccine was responsible.

But while governments in Africa and elsewhere expressed their determination to continue using the shot, not everyone is convinced.

"Why should I allow it to be used on me? Are we not human beings like those in Europe?" Peter Odongo, a resident of a town in northern Uganda, told the Daily Monitor newspaper this week.

The East African country has received 864,000 AstraZeneca doses via COVAX so far but had administered fewer than 3,000 by Tuesday. Authorities blamed logistical challenges in transporting the vaccines deep into the country, but newspaper reports cite resistance to the vaccine.

Even before the latest debate over AstraZeneca, vaccine skepticism had been a concern across the world, as many people are hesitant about shots developed in record time. African countries have faced particular hurdles on a continent wary of being a testing ground for the West. Some leaders

have pushed back against skepticism, while others, such as those in Burundi and Tanzania, have fed it by appearing to deny the seriousness of COVID-19.

"Unfortunate events" in Europe will "clearly not be helpful for our public confidence, in building public confidence and trust on the use of that particular vaccine and other vaccines for sure," John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters Thursday, as he encouraged African countries to continue their vaccinations.

That came hours before the European Union drug regulator gave the same message to its 27 members. The European Medicines Agency said its experts concluded that the vaccine is not linked to an overall increase in the risk of blood clots, though it could not definitively rule out a link to rare types of clots and the vaccine. In response, countries including Italy, France and Germany announced they would resume use of the shot.

Even before those reversals, several developing nations had said they would stick by the shot.

"We will continue the inoculations," said Lia Tadesse, health minister of Ethiopia, which received 2.2 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine last week.

Authorities in India — home to the vaccine manufacturer that will likely make a large portion of the doses destined for the developing world — said Wednesday they would continue AstraZeneca inoculations with "full vigor" as infections jumped in several parts of the country. After initially saying it would delay use of the vaccine, Thailand said Tuesday it would carry on with AstraZeneca, and the prime minister even got his shot in public.

Brazil's state-run Fiocruz institute delivered the first AstraZeneca shots bottled in Brazil on Wednesday as the Health Ministry sought to allay concerns about the blood clot reports, urging calm.

Very few developing countries bucked the trend. Congo, for instance, halted use of AstraZeneca, putting its vaccination campaign on hold even before it began since

it has no doses of anything else. Indonesia also initially paused the shot but then said Friday it would resume using it. European and other wealthy countries have several vaccines to choose from, but AstraZeneca is currently the linchpin in the strategy to vaccinate the rest of the world. Some developing countries have received doses of Chinese-made or Russian-made vaccines — often as donations — but, at least in Africa, these allotments have usually been relatively small. The Chinese and Russian vaccines have not yet been endorsed by WHO and so cannot be distributed by COVAX.

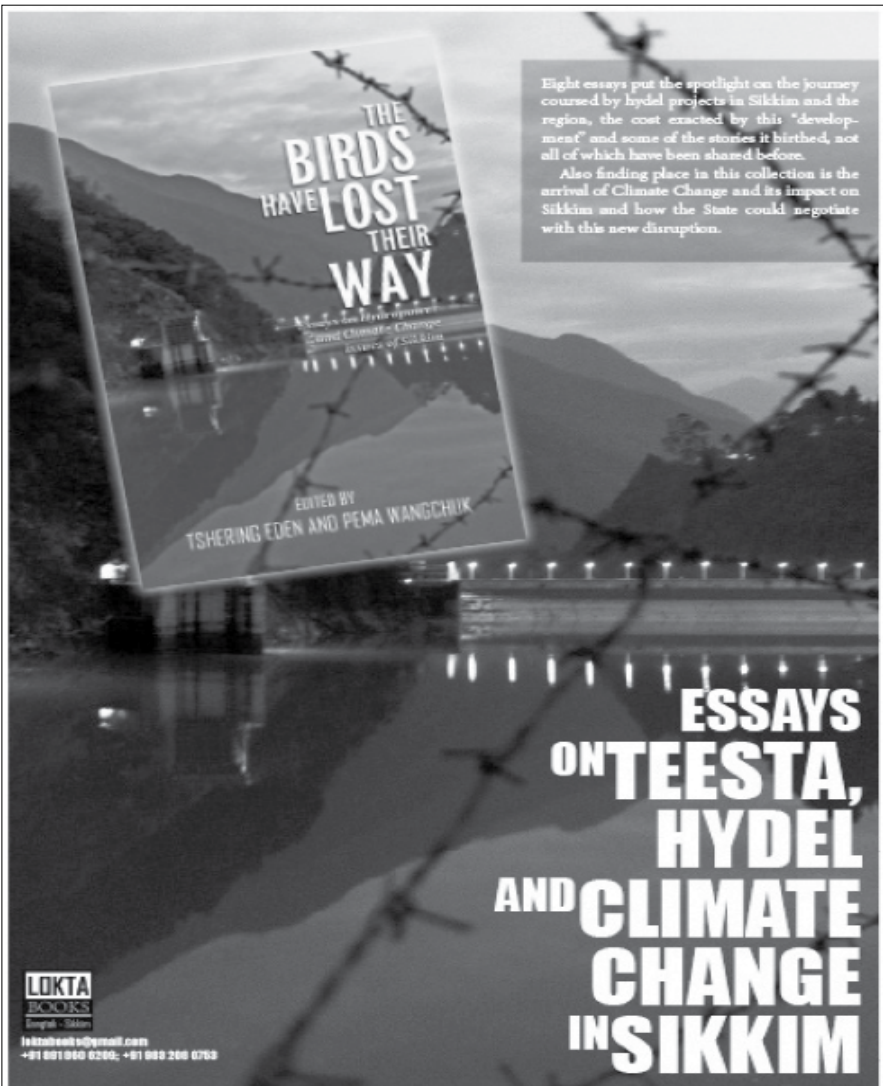
Africa, with a population of 1.3 billion, hopes to vaccinate 60% of its people by the end of 2022. That target almost certainly will not be met without widespread use of AstraZeneca. And experts have warned that until vaccinations rates are high the world over, the virus remains a threat everywhere.

The eroding confidence in the AstraZeneca vaccine only compounds the difficulties Africa will face in rolling out their inoculation campaigns. The continent is home to some of the world's weakest health systems. Nations there have struggled just to test enough people for the coronavirus, and the actual toll is unknown because of challenges in tracking cases and deaths. According to the Africa CDC, more than 4 million coronavirus cases have been confirmed across the continent, including over 108,000 deaths.

In an analysis released Thursday, the World Bank found that 85% of low- and middle-income countries had a plan to vaccinate but less than a third had public engagement strategies to combat hesitancy and misinformation about vaccines.

That means confusion like that caused by the pause in AstraZeneca across Europe can be hard to iron out.

"It complicates the situation," said Dr. Misaki Wayengera, head of a technical taskforce that's advising Uganda's pandemic response, referring to the suspension. "It's the best shot we have here, and we should be able to take it."





# Armie Hammer under sexual assault investigation

**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Actor Armie Hammer is under investigation for sexual assault, Los Angeles police said Thursday.

Hammer's attorney denied the allegation. Hammer is the main suspect in a sexual assault that was reported to police on Feb. 3, LAPD spokesman Officer Drake Madison said. Police would give no further details on the incident or who made the report.

Earlier Thursday at a video news conference, a woman said that on April 24, 2017, in Los Angeles, Hammer raped her for four hours, slammed her head against a wall and committed other violent acts against her.

The Associated Press does not generally identify alleged victims of sexual assault.

The woman appeared on camera but identified herself only by her first name, Effie.

"During those four hours I tried to get away but he wouldn't let me," she said through tears. "I thought that he was going to kill me. He then left with no concern for my well-being."

The woman's attorney, Gloria Allred, said they had given evidence to Los Angeles police, including photos of Effie's injuries. Allred declined to say when they made the report, and would not confirm that it was the one made in February that the LAPD is investigating.

Effie was 20 when she and Hammer met on Facebook and began a relationship in 2016, and they had their last contact last year, Allred said.

Hammer's attorney said in a statement that from the beginning he has maintained that all of his interactions with Effie and every other sexual part-

ner "have been completely consensual, discussed and agreed upon in advance, and mutually participatory." The statement called her allegations "attention seeking and ill-advised" and said "her own correspondence with Mr. Hammer

Most recently, Hammer starred in the Netflix remake of "Rebecca." A sequel to "Call Me by Your Name" with Timothée Chalamet has also been in development. Allegations of sexual violence in recent months have derailed Hammer's career.



undermines and refutes her outrageous allegations." "With the truth on his side, Mr. Hammer welcomes the opportunity to set the record straight," Andrew Brettler said. The statement included a screenshot that Brettler said was a text message exchange in July of last year between Hammer and Effie, in which she expresses a desire for rough, forceful sex with him, and he responds by saying he no longer wants a relationship with her.

The 34-year-old actor was married at the time to television personality Elizabeth Chambers. They divorced last year. Hammer first gained fame through playing twins in 2010's "The Social Network," and is best known for his starring roles in 2017's "Call Me By Your Name" and 2013's "The Lone Ranger."

Earlier this year, an Instagram account began posting screenshots of text messages allegedly from Hammer as far back as 2016. Allred would not comment on whether her client was behind that account, @houseofeffie. When those text messages began appearing in media reports, Hammer called them "vicious and spurious online attacks against me."

After those texts were published, Hammer departed the comedy "Shotgun Wedding," in which he was to star alongside Jennifer Lopez, shortly before production was to begin. He soon after departed the Paramount+ series "The Offer," about the making of "The Godfather."

Hammer was also dropped by his agency, WME.



**ICE CREAM OUTING!** Couple Dua Lipa and Anwar Hadid enjoyed ice cream in West Hollywood.

## Marvel's 'Falcon' promises action, explores race, patriotism

**NEW YORK (AP):** When Steve Rogers handed Sam Wilson his Captain America shield at the end of Marvel's massive 2019 event "Avengers: Endgame," Wilson tried it on for a beat. "How does it feel?" the wrinkled Rogers asked. "Like it's someone else's," Wilson responded. That reluctance and skepticism is front-and-center as Wilson's story continues in "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier," a new six-episode Disney+ series that promises an exploration of patriotism and race alongside its shootouts and soaring chase scenes. The series launches Friday.

While "Endgame" appeared to promise a quick transition for Anthony Mackie's Falcon to take up the Captain America mantle, as he has in the comics, the creator of "Falcon" promises only complications. Malcolm Spellman said the series will explore "the conflict for a Black man confronting those stars and stripes."

He said the Wilson/Falcon character is set to "emerge from this story as a hero of the times and a hero of the people today. And that journey of whether it's even appropriate to deal with the symbol, the Stars and Stripes, to me, felt super, super relevant and timely."

So will there be a Black Captain America by the time the final credits roll in April? Mackie, steeped in Marvel's renowned secret-keeping after playing Falcon since 2014's "Captain America: The Winter Soldier," will only say this: "I'm very happy with the end of 'Falcon,' and I feel like I have one of the most unique, coolest characters in all of comic book movies." Unlike the mostly insular "WandaVision," the first Marvel series launched after "Endgame," "Falcon" promis-

es a larger scope of globe-trotting adventure with implications for multiple characters in upcoming series and films. Spellman drew inspiration from race-conscious "buddy two-handers" like "Lethal Weapon," "48 Hours" and "The Defiant Ones," highlighting the warm chemistry between Mackie and Sebastian Stan, who joined Marvel movies as Bucky Barnes in 2011's "Captain America: The First Avenger." In comics, Barnes has also taken up Cap's shield, lending an inherent tension to the series titular pairing.

Stan says "Falcon" allowed the two actors to find new shadings to their roles, even after so many film appearances, by "honoring the things that we have understood about them so far in the movies and then also staying open to taking them down a new path and finding the middle ground between those things. Of course, the more time you have, the more interesting they can get."

Spellman, who was a producer and writer on the hit series "Empire," says he's looking to deal with potentially hot-button subjects honestly without alienating the audience. The story, featuring the return of Daniel Brühl as Zemo and Emily VanCamp as Sharon Carter, also introduces a character named John Walker, played by Wyatt Russell. In the comics, Walker becomes U.S. Agent, a sometime antagonist to Captain America who twists American patriotism to darker ends.

Mackie teases a plot that's "very timely and very important." And Spellman says he's looking to upend expectations. "I'll just promise everyone this: What you think is happening after 'Endgame' is not what's happening in this series," he said.

## Idris Elba inks multi-book deal with HarperCollins



**LOS ANGELES, MAR 19 (PTI):** Hollywood star Idris Elba has signed a deal with publisher HarperCollins to come out with a range of children's books inspired by his daughter Isan Elba.

As part of the multi-book deal, the actor will be publishing picture books and fiction that he developed in collaboration with his writing partner Robyn Charteris.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the books are set to launch in 2022.

"I feel privileged to have the opportunity to bring stories inspired by my daughter to life with my incredible partner Robyn Charteris, and the powerhouse team at HarperCollins," Elba said in a statement. Charteris has previously penned drama, pre-school and

animation TV shows, including the soap "Crossroads".

Ann-Janine Murtagh, executive publisher at HarperCollins Children's Books, hailed Elba as one of the most iconic and multi-talented creatives of his generation.

"I am delighted that he is joining the HarperCollins Children's Books list. From the outset, Idris had a very clear vision of the characters and stories he has imagined, and is passionate about creating books that will appeal to all children," she added.

On the film front, Elba will next be seen in James Gunn's "The Suicide Squad" and Netflix movie "Concrete Cowboy".

## Call of Duty among finalists for Video Game Hall of Fame

**ROCHESTER, NY (AP):** Voting is open for the next inductees into the World Video Game Hall of Fame, with Call of Duty, Guitar Hero and Animal Crossing among the 12 finalists.

Also on the ballot announced Thursday are: FarmVille, FIFA International Soccer, Mattel Football, Microsoft Flight Simulator, Pole Position, Portal, StarCraft, Tron and Where in the World is Carmen San Diego. "These finalists embody what it means to be a good game," said Jon-Paul Dyson, director of the International Center for the History of Electronic Games at The Strong museum, where the hall of fame is housed.

To be inducted, games have to have longevity, geographical reach and leave a mark on the industry and pop culture.

The winners are chosen by an international committee of journalists and scholars versed in video games and their role in society. Fans can weigh in as part of an online "Player's Choice" ballot through March 25.

The three inductees will take their place in the hall of fame during a virtual ceremony May 6, joining 28 past honorees that include Minecraft, Grand Theft Auto III, John Madden Football, Pac-Man and Microsoft Solitaire.

The hall inducted its first class in 2015 with the goal of recognizing electronic games of all types — arcade, console, computer, handheld, and mobile.

**Aries:** You are where you need to be, Aries, and what a beautiful place that is! Today, the cards are urging you to open your heart and allow yourself to receive all the love that is being sent your way. Remember, you are so adored and so protected. What could pose as a challenge at this point is your physical health. Your body is telling you what it is that requires your attention. So, don't ignore the aches and pains.

**Tip:** Your sacred vessel is calling for your attention.

**Taurus:** Eddie Cantor once said, "It takes 20 years to make an overnight success." Your thoughts exactly, Taurus. As an earth sign, you understand the importance of putting in the work and building something ground up. Yes, the given project has taken a lot out of you and it will probably continue to. But that little voice inside your head is telling you it's going to be so, so worth it! Word for the wise: let 'perseverance' continue to be your power word.

**Tip:** Perseverance is the secret to your success.

**Gemini:** It's time for a quick check in, Gemini: how many times have you snoozed your alarm in the past week, and what do you think is the reason behind this? Even though you're doing what you're meant to be doing, could you somehow be out of alignment? Today, instead of trying to

meet certain targets or pleasing everybody else, create from a space of love. Do what awakens a sense of joy within. Trust that this baby step in the right direction will help you reconnect with that lost sense of purpose.

**Tip:** Create from a space of joy.

**Cancer:** What if you chose to stop playing tug of war with the Universe? What if you accepted everything exactly the way it is? The fine art of surrender is something that you are being asked to learn in this moment. Remember, your task is to merely focus on the 'karma' or action. Leave 'the how' and 'the why' to the mysterious forces who are supporting your earthly mission. PS: Walking the path of truth will empower you to make positive changes.

**Tip:** It's all about trust and surrender.

**Leo:** You win some, you lose some, and that's just the way life unfolds. Instead of focusing heavily on the failures, honor them as learning lessons, and continue to face your true north. You have miles to go before you can sleep, Leo. In the realm of your interpersonal relationships, you're being encouraged to move beyond the ego space and ask for an apology where it is due. Remember, it's not about who's right and who's wrong. It's about healing, mending, and moving forward.

**Tip:** Let go of that failure narrative.

**Virgo:**

Worry doesn't change a thing. We repeat: worry doesn't change a thing. Be mindful of what you are giving your time and energy to and how this could be draining you. The time to surrender to the divine forces has come once again, Virgo. For some of you, physical health could be a cause of concern too. Remember our mind, body and soul work in unison. When we are disturbed mentally, it is bound to manifest on the physical front too.

**Tip:** Surrender, wild one.

**Libra:**

Compromise is a part and parcel of every relationship. You win some, you lose some, right? But if you're the only one giving, we've got a problem at hand, Libra. What the cards are urging you to do today: get some distance, care for yourself before you give to others, and say no when something just doesn't feel right to you. Trust that people will respect you a lot more once you have your boundaries in place.

**Tip:** Care for yourself before you give to others.

**Scorpio:**

It's easy to look at other people and feel like you have somehow missed your train or that success and recognition will never be a part of your story. But that is far from the truth, Scorpio. Take a moment to introspect. Notice how far you have come since you

first embarked upon this journey. This will give you perspective on your own victories. What the cards want you to remember: you've got miles to go before you can sleep. Let 'perseverance' continue to be your power word.

**Tip:** Notice how far you've come.

**Sagittarius:**

Here's the thing, Sagittarius: You're only looking at things from your perspective. But there are multiple forces at play here. Go easy on the pride, just for now. Try to understand what the signs are revealing to you. Love, empathy, and compassion will help you settle matters in a peaceful manner. A beautiful affirmation by Toni T Robinson you could consider repeating, "Today I let go of my human ego and embrace the divinity that is within me."

**Tip:** 'Love, empathy, and compassion' are your magic words.

**Capricorn:**

The past is weighing you down heavily and it's not allowing you to move forward. But is this something you really want to carry into the future? Time for some real talk, Capricorn: the Universe is giving you the chance to cleanse and purge, to let go of your excess baggage, and heal the relationships that stand on shaky ground. Ho'oponopono is a wonderful Hawaiian prayer that

will alleviate the process of forgiveness. "I am sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you." Consider repeating these words a few times everyday with the person in your mind, or writing it down on paper with focused intention.

**Tip:** Free yourself from the burden of the past.

**Aquarius:**

It takes years to become an overnight success. Read that again, Aquarius. So instead of comparing your journey to that of others or worrying about meeting Society's standards, master your craft. Spend your time and energy becoming a better version of yourself. Trust that your patience and perseverance will ultimately make you invincible.

**Tip:** Dedicate yourself to the hustle.

**Pisces:**

When was the last time you brewed yourself a cup of tulsi tea, curled up with your favourite book or watched the sunset in silence? The weekend is upon us, Pisces, and it wants you to adopt the slow life with a vengeance. One word: unplug. Now is also a good time to pay attention to your body temple and the cues it is giving you. Is there a certain part of your vessel that's asking for healing? Consider setting up an appointment with a practitioner you trust.

**Tip:** Slow down.