



**BERNIE SANDERS' MITTENS,  
MEMES HELP RAISE  
\$1.8M FOR CHARITY**  
pg 08

**A UNIVERSAL INFLUENZA VACCINE MAY  
BE ONE STEP CLOSER**

pg 04

**CANNES FILM FESTIVAL,  
CANCELED IN 2020, IS  
POSTPONED TO JULY**

pg 08



# SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 29 | Gangtok | Saturday 30 January 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

**WE CARE**  
**Mechi Netralaya**  
**& Ophthalmic Research Center (P) Ltd.**  
Estd: 2007

Center of Excellence in  
Topical Phacoemulsification Cataract  
Surgeries & Vitreo-Retinal Surgeries.



**KAKARVITTA, Bahundangi Road, Mechi Nagar-6, NEPAL.**  
WhatsApp No-+91 9002709680/+977 9842718948  
Email:info@mechinetrallaya.org  
Website:www.mechinetralaya.org

## Sikkim turns the curve on Covid – new cases in single-digits, active cases drop to double-digits

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 JAN:**

The number of active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim dropped to double-digits on Friday from the above-100 number that has held for months. There are now 97 active cases of nCoV in Sikkim following the report that only one new case was detected today even as eight more patients of COVID-19 were discharged in the last 24 hours.

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed cases

of COVID-19 has now reached 6,085, of which 5,760 have already recovered.

In his daily health bulletin on Friday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia informed that the single case of novel coronavirus was reported from the testing of 179 samples on Thursday.

This case was found in the testing of 113 samples by RT-PCR testing, while eight samples tested by TrueNat and 58 samples by rapid

antigen testing all returned negative.

This one new case is a person from below the Helipad area in Burtuk, East District.

As for the vaccination drive, Mr Bhutia informed that on Friday, 274 more health workers from STNM Hospital, 90 from Central Referral Hospital, Tadong, 30 from West District and 64 from North District.

## CM inaugurates new building at school where he taught for 3 years

**AARON S RAI**

**GANGTOK, 29 JAN:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang today inaugurated an annexe building at Pema Rinzing Lama Government Senior Secondary School at Yangsum in West Sikkim. The building was constructed at a total cost of Rs 58,00,988.

Addressing the gathering, the CM shared that he was very happy to inaugurate the building, a moment made more special by his memories from the more than three years that he spent teaching here as a graduate teacher in the early nineties.

He reminisced about those years and said that there was a historical relationship between the school and himself given that it while stationed here that he took a life-changing decision.

He entered politics while he was serving at this school, he shared,



adding that when he decided to join politics while still teaching at the school, he received a lot of encouragement and support from people of the area.

He was visibly elated to be back at the school and admitted as much when he remarked that he was excited to be

present for the event.

In November 1994, he left school and joined active politics, but his bond with the school and the place remained strong, he stated.

While at the school, he also announced an allocation of Rs 5 lakh for the Pema Rinzing Football Academy, Yangsum, from

Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the football academy for the month of March and announced that the academy would henceforth be funded by the government.

While on education, the Chief Minister also announced that from next year onwards, 50 MBBS students who pass the NEET and hail from eco-

nomically underprivileged families will be given admission to Sikkim Manipal University free of cost.

As for Pema Rinzing Lama Government Senior Secondary School, he announced that he was adopting the school and will be looking after every requirement here.

*turn to pg02*

## Phase-1 of campus placement secures jobs for 60% eligible students at SMIT

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 28 JAN:**

Nearly 60% of the eligible students at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology have secured jobs in the first phase of campus placement at SMIT. This was as of 15 Jan, 2021, and the average salary commitment was Rs 5.4 LPA, an official press release from the institute informs. Hiring events are likely to be held regularly till June 2021, the release adds.

MNCs such as Microsoft, Dell, Shell, Boston Scientific, Medtronics, Wipro, Infosys, Cognizant, Capgemini, Keysight, Nomura Fintech, RSM Astute, LT Elevators, etc. have attended the campus placements events thus far, it is informed.

Among the standout hirings was that of student of BTech Comput-

er Science & Engineering Department, Arnab Biswas, who has bagged the most lucrative job opportunity this season with COMMMVAULT, an American data management software company with a global footprint.

The company is offering Arnab a salary compensation of Rs 24 lakh per annum which he will receive from July 2021. In addition, the company is supporting Arnab with Rs 40,000 per month as stipend from Feb to June 2021 while the student is in his Eighth semester programme, the release adds.

The final semester is dedicated to Industrial Internship and most of the companies offering job opportunities to SMIT students offer stipend of between Rs 10,000-25,000 during the final semester.

## CM inaugurates Cardiac Care Unit at Jorethang CHC



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 JAN:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang, while on his way to Yangsum in West Sikkim for a function, made a brief stopover at Jorethang where he inaugurated a Cardiac Care Centre at the Jorethang Community Health Centre and also halted at Legship where he inau-

gurated a branch of State Bank of Sikkim.

Writing about these events on his official Facebook page, the CM said: "I believe that these facilities will provide some form of relief and assist the public of these areas, saving their time and resources. In the coming days, we look forward to commence

similar facilities in other parts of the state as well."

The 3-bedded cardiac care centre at Jorethang CHC is a satellite centre under the Department of Cardiology at STNM Hospital and established to provide emergency treatment and regular monitoring for heart patients for whom this CHC is closer than Gangtok.



## 64 receive Covid vaccine in Dikchu

64 health and frontline workers received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, Covishield, at Dikchu PHC on Friday, 29 Jan. The vaccination drive was held under the supervision of Dr Anagha Chawdhary, a representative from WHO, Medical Office in-charge [Dikchu PHC], CNO (DHM) and DPM (DHM). [from WANGCHUK BHUTIA]

## Tadong School students bags 3rd position at **National Kala Utsav**

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 JAN:**

Grace Sundas, a student of Tadong Senior Secondary School, secured the third position at the national-level Kala Utsav competition held on virtual mode from 10 to 23 Jan.

A press release from Education Department informs that the valedictory function, which included the awards

ceremony, on Thursday had Union Minister for Education as chief guest.

Kala Utsav is an initiative of the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India to promote arts in education, by nurturing and showcasing the artistic talent of school students. It was launched in the year 2015 with

the objective to create awareness about India's rich cultural heritage and its vibrant diversity among the students.

"The entire family of Education Department congratulates the Winner and all the participants who took part in all the levels of the competition right from the district level," the release conveys.



## Serum Institute seeks India trial of a second Covid vaccine

**NEW DELHI, 29 JAN [REUTERS]:** The Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's biggest vaccine maker, has applied to authorities to conduct a small domestic trial of Novavax Inc's COVID-19 vaccine, which was found to be 89.3% effective in a UK trial.

Serum expected a decision on an Indian trial of Novavax's vaccine soon, Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla told Reuters on Friday, hours after the U.S. company reported the efficacy data.

"We have already applied to the drug control-

ler's office for the bridging trial, a few days ago," Poonawalla said. "So they should also give that approval soon now."

Novavax's UK trial, which enrolled 15,000 people aged 18 to 84, is expected to be used to apply for use in Britain, the European Union and other countries.

SII is already bulk producing a vaccine created by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, and Poonawalla told Reuters earlier this month that his company would manufacture "upwards of 40-50 million doses per

month" of the Novavax vaccine from around April.

Indian health officials say they generally ask for so-called bridging trials to determine if a vaccine is safe and generates an immune response in its citizens whose genetic makeup can be different from people in western nations.

There are, however, provisions under rules introduced in 2019 to waive such trials in certain conditions. Pfizer Inc requested an exception while seeking an

*turn to pg02*



# East Zilla Adhyaksha recommends that district plan focus on Animal Husbandry

WANGCHUK BHUTIA  
GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

East Zilla Adhyaksha, Shamsher Rai, in his address to the District Planning Committee meeting today, requested for focus on the animal husbandry sector. He also stressed that line departments work in co-ordination with the zilla panchayat.

Mr Rai was chairing the District Planning Committee meeting for East District zilla panchayat at the Zilla Bhawan conference hall here. The meeting was also attended by Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha, Addl Political Advisor to the CM, Sarika Pradhan, Addl Secretary RDD, Hemant Rai, ADC Dev, Sharmila Chettri, zilla Up-Adhyaksha, officials from line departments and the zilla panchayat members.

Zilla members of different Territorial pancha-



yats placed their advise and suggestions to the house during the open house discussion and sought allocation of 15% budget for office expenses and establishment of zilla office and its staff.

The District Planning Officer cum Member Secretary, Sonam Gyatso Bhutia presented a detailed report and reallocation of plans and funds

under 4th SFC improvement grant of last financial year of 2019-2020.

HK Chettri, Municipal Commissioner GMC, presented plans and proposals of the GMC while the MEO, Singtam/Rangpo Nagar Panchayat, Prakash Chandra Kharel submitted the plans for Singtam and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat.

The restructuring of

the Standing Committee was also announced by Joint Project Director, DR Sharma. The said committee has been formed under the chairmanship of Zilla Adhyaksha.

Ms. Pradhan, Addl Secretary, urged all the zilla members to make the public aware and ensure proper use of funds and also sought the suggestions from them. She

further informed that some norms have been changed regarding central guidelines and urged all the zilla members to work accordingly.

Likewise, the Addl Political Advisor to CM stressed that the Panchayats and the zilla members have a great responsibilities towards uplifting people from the grassroots level.

## Governor tours Beng-Phegyong GPU

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

Governor Ganga Prasad today toured Beng-Phegyong GPU in East district, a GPU which has been adopted by Raj Bhawan, and interacted with the panchayats there and directed officials from various departments accompanying him to complete projects identified for the area and to be funded by the Governor's office.

The Governor, a press release from Raj Bhawan informs, also inspected the site where a park is to be developed on a landfill near Topakhani.

He then chaired a programme at Sang Khola primary school with elected



representatives and officials accompanying him.

The Governor emphasised for the Gram Panchayat to initiate such programmes as will contribute to the society.

The Governor was accompanied by RDD Minister Sonam Lama, area MLA Sonam T. Ven-

chungpa, ACS, Raj Bhawan, Bhagwan Shankar, RDD Principal Secretary CS Rao, CCF Karma Legshey, Director [Panchayat] Prabhakar Rai, ADC-East [Dev] Radha Pradhan, and other officials from RDD, Forest, Education and Power Departments.

## Nisha returns with Miss Asia Continent crown



SAGAR CHHETRI  
GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

Sikkim's Nisha Subba has returned with the Miss Asia Continent 2021 title sitting pretty on her head. Nisha won the crown at the beauty pageant organized by Aman Gandhi Film Production on 22 January at Karol Bagh, Delhi.

Likewise, Pratiksha Darjee was crowned Miss Teen India Continent and Miss Himalaya 2021, while Yeshey Lhamu Moktan won the title of Miss Teen Asia Supermodel and Miss Akhand Bharat 2021 and Anju Subba was crowned Miss Teen Asia Continent in the same contest.

24-year-old Nisha Subba hails from Arithang, Gangtok, and is pursuing her Mas-

ters in Environment and Ecology from Sikkim Professional University. She is also the CEO of Sikkim Fashion Diva. She had won the title of Miss Bharat and Miss Bharat World-Wide 2020-21 held on 24 Nov and was then selected for the latest beauty pageant.

While speaking about her experience, Nisha expressed happiness and satisfaction on winning the title and shared that the event has opened other opportunities for contestants who received contracts for modelling and shooting assignments.

"Now, I wanted to work with aspiring models of Sikkim and guide and groom them to take them to higher levels in this field through my firm

Sikkim Fashion Diva," she said.

16-year-old Pratiksha Darjee is from Middle Shyari and studying in the 9th standard at Baha'i School, Tadong, while 16-year-old Yeshey Lhamu Moktan is from Lingding and presently in class 9 at Greendale School, Tadong.

18-year-old Anju Subba is from Adarsh Gaon, Singtam and studying in tenth standard at Sirwani Secondary School.

They also expressed their immense happiness on winning their respective titles in the competitive beauty pageant. They also shared their plans to continue their study and this sector together and to participate in other national and international beauty pageants.

## South Forum on TB meets



SUMMIT REPORT  
NAMCHI, 29 JAN:

The district-level forum on Tuberculosis under NTEP met today at DAC, Namchi, under the chairmanship of Zilla Adhyaksha Tsering Dem Bhutia and DC-South M Bharani Kumar. The forum was also attended by CMO South, DTO, DRCHO, DSO, MOICs from all

7 blocks, Officials from Line Departments, District TB cell & IEC team, a press communiqué from the District Hospital, Namchi, informs. District Tuberculosis Officer Dr Anju Rai briefed the forum members on the current status of TB cases in South District and the strategies being adopted to control and prevent TB.



## Srimad Bhagwad Katha Gyan Yagya at Rongli

SUMMIT REPORT  
RANGPO, 29 JAN:

The fourth day of the weeklong Srimad Bhagwad Katha Gyan Yagya underway at Rongli, East

Sikkim, was attended today by Ministers Sonam Lama and Arun Upreti accompanied by MLAs Bishnu Prasad Khatiwada and Sunita Gazmer.

## Horticulture training at Majhitara



SUMMIT REPORT  
RANGPO, 29 JAN:

Various types of vegetable production, fruit and spice farming training and awareness programs was organized by Horticulture Department at Majitar today.

The program was

organised under the presidentship of Executive Director, Padam Subba, Horticulture Department, an official release adds.

## CM inaugurates new...

Also today, the Mr Tamang took potshots at his predecessor and wondered where the former CM of 25 years was today. He said, in politics one has to accept the election results but Pawan Chamling has still not accepted or come to terms with his electoral defeat.

The Chief Minister said today that he has created an environment where the general public can meet the Chief Minister easily whereas under the previous government, there were too many formalities and protocol restrictions making access difficult.

Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha, who was present as a special guest for the event, thanked the Chief Minister and remarked that Mr Tamang can be compared to Nelson Mandela because he gave up everything, fought against injustice making many sacrifices and created an environment in which everyone in Sikkim can live free.

On the occasion, Pema Rinzing Senior Secondary School felicitated the Chief Minister for his service to the people of Sikkim.

Retired teacher Pema Doma Bhutia and retired health worker Merry Lakshit Lepcha were also felicitated by the school today their service to society.

Similarly, CBSE class-XII topper from the school Sukmit Subba and class X topper Ashika Subba and class toppers of each grade were gifted laptops.

## Start vaccination of frontline workers from Feb, Centre tells States

NEW DELHI, 29 JAN [PTI]: The Health Ministry has asked all states and union territories to initiate vaccination of frontline workers against COVID-19 from the first week of February.

Vaccination of healthcare providers that began on January 16 will continue simultaneously, the ministry said in a letter to states and union territories (UTs).

In the letter, Health Ministry Additional Secretary Manohar Agnani said the database of frontline workers is being updated by states and UTs in collaboration with the respective line ministries. As on date, the database of more than 61 lakh frontline workers has been uploaded on Co-WIN portal.

"In this regard, after due consultation with states and UTs, it is advised that the states and UTs shall initiate simultaneous vaccination of frontline workers and healthcare workers from the first week of February," Mr Agnani said.

A pan-India COVID-19 vaccination drive initiated on January 16 aims to cover healthcare and frontline workers in the initial phase. Till 8 AM on Friday, 29, 28,053 beneficiaries have received anti-coronavirus shots under the countrywide vaccination exercise.

## Clashes at farmers' protest site after group barges in, 2 cops injured

NEW DELHI, 29 JAN [NDTV]: A group of over 200 people threw stones and vandalised tents erected by farmers at the Delhi-Haryana border in Singhu, the epicenter of farmers' protests for over two months. Two police personnel were injured, one of them by a sword. The sudden violence this afternoon at the protest site, which has been tense since the Republic Day violence, prompted the police to use tear gas shells and resort to lathi-charge. Farmers too appealed for calm. Two people have been detained.

It is unclear how the large group of people managed to enter the site of the farmers' protest despite the area being blocked by the police. The people who entered the protest site also tried to vandalise other infrastructure such as farmers' washing machines, demanding that the farmers vacate the protest site. Both sides threw stones at each other.

The police was seen trying to keep the vandals away from the protesting farmers.

Two other key border points - Tikri and the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border at Ghazipur - have

also been placed under heavy security and remain tense. Shortly after the clashes at the Singhu border, similar scenes were reported from Tikri, another Delhi-Haryana border, where a group of people began opposing the farmers' protest and demanded they vacate the site. The people said they will not let the national flag be "insulted", referring to the Red Fort violence on Republic Day.

On Thursday, in Haryana's Karnal, about 96 km from Singhu, farmers who had been protesting for nearly two months in Karnal, were told to leave. A group of people gave them a 24-hour ultimatum, saying they were facing inconvenience because of the protests.

At the Ghazipur border in east Delhi, Rakesh Tikait's Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) has called a "Mahapanchayat" or meeting today amid a huge backlash over Tuesday's violence during their tractor rally. Last evening, the administration in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana ordered cops to remove thousands of farmers who have been protesting at various points outside Delhi against three central laws for over two months.

## Serum Institute seeks...

emergency-use authorisation for its vaccine developed with German partner BioNTech SE, a request the government has turned down.

The Pfizer vaccine has not been approved in India, whose immunisation campaign is using a home-grown one developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research, and the AstraZeneca/Oxford University vaccine.

## To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at

### GANGTOK:

For circulation details Contact: (Sandeep) 9734152451 & for Advertisement booking at 9933427505 or at office no 03592 208698. Mail us at advertise@summittimes.com

### SILIGURI:

Mr. Mani Rai, M/s. Space Ads, B.R. Ambedkar Building, Room No.7, 1st floor. Opp.

Ganga Hotel. Hill Cart Road. Siliguri - 03. Ph. 9832318644/ 9800682989/ 9153035100 or mail at mani\_siliguri@yahoo.co.in.

### KOLKATA OFFICE:

Irshad Ali/ Imteyaz. Synapse, 6, Madan Street, Mezzine - 2, 2nd floor. Kolkata - 700072. Ph. 033-22124348/ fax 033-22124337/ mob. 9830547774/ 983108397. E-mail: contact.synapse@gmail.com/ irshad\_ali123@rediffmail.com

## ADVISORY

We would like to draw your kind attention to the number of cases related to girls/ women befriending strangers on Facebook/social media and leaving their homes and going to far-off places like Delhi, Karnataka and Punjab, etc. to meet their so-called friends.

It is often seen that people with fake credentials prowl social media platforms solely with the intention of luring innocent womenfolk with false promises of a lucrative employment or marriage.

In light of the above cases, the State Women's Commission requests all to crosscheck the credentials of strangers befriended on social media platforms before trusting them blindly and leaving your homes to meet them. Your safety is our main priority and you are advised to contact the following numbers for any kind of help or in case of distress.

**181 women's helpline**  
**9883833188**  
**8900576356**  
**9547999722**  
**9775484447**

Chairperson  
Sikkim State Commission for Women



# 55 employees feted at SMU Pride awards

## SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

55 Employees were recognized across 14 categories of excellence and awarded trophies and certificates at the 3rd Sikkim Manipal University Pride Awards on 28 Jan.

The function recognized employees across SMU's constituent units and colleges who have made outstanding contributions to the University and have demonstrated excellence in service, an SMU press release informs.

The event was held adhering to strict Covid-19 safety protocols and was also live-streamed to all employees, the release adds.

The categories included Excellence in Academic and Not Teaching domains, Nightingale



Awards for Nursing caregivers, Shining Stars and Excellence in Research, Young Researcher, ACE for Junior and Senior Residents, Standing Ovation, Team Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, Outstanding Contribution Employees and the

prestigious TMA PAI Award.

The HR Head at SMU, Anil D'Souza, explained that the SMU Pride Awards are designed to reward the efforts and commitment of University employees across all

Units with the primary focus of the program on fostering high performance, appreciative work culture and an engaged workforce bringing excellence across all areas of operations, teaching and research and to enable

SMU as a leader in education and healthcare.

Prof Dr Rustom Ali Ahmed, Assistant Professor, Department of Information Technology, SMIT, was conferred the TMA Pai Award for Overall Excellence for 2020.

Prof Ahmed developed an online admission portal for SMIT along with an app for students, faculty and parents of SMIT, which became instrumental during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period when the University had to switch over to online methods for teaching, examination and admission. He was also involved in the development of a remote proctored based online exam system for SMU, which was designed and developed in a very short period of two months only.

## Two activists arrested at Assam airport on return from Delhi farmers' rally

**GUWAHATI, 29 JAN [NDTV]:** Two farmers' rights activists, who were among the dozen anti-farm law protesters from Assam to have attended the Delhi farmers' tractor rally on January 26, have been arrested by the Guwahati police.

The activists were arrested on Wednesday upon their return from the national capital. Interestingly, they were apprehended at Guwahati's LGBI Airport itself on charges of violating Covid safety protocols.

According to a police statement, the activists have been accused of violating COVID-19 protocols at the airport, trying to leave the airport without a test and obstructing officials from performing their duty.

In Assam, it is mandatory to either produce on arrival an RT-PCR Covid test report no older than 72 hours, or take a Covid test at the airport or railway station. The arrested activists have been identified as 56-year-old Dinesh Das and 50-year-old Jayanta Gogoi.

While Mr Das is a cultural activist and part of an independent peasant-workers' organization, the Sangrami Krishak Sramik Sangha, Mr Gogoi is the general secretary of Assam chapter of All India Kisan Sabha.

The activists' families said they were being targeted for taking part in the farmers' protests that descended into chaos after progressing peacefully for months.

Guwahati police commissioner told NDTV, "On January 27, we received a complaint from the Assam government's medical team at the Guwahati airport about a few persons creating chaos on being asked to take the mandatory covid test."

The police have registered a case and arrested two of them on the basis of a complaint by the health officials on duty, who alleged the accused tried to stop them from performing their official duty, he added. They will be produced in a local court today, police sources added on Friday.

## FCAS elects new executive body

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

The Federation of Consumer Associations of Sikkim [FCAS] elected its new executive body and convened its general body meeting today.

Rohit Pradhan was elected president by two vice-presidents in Shekhar Khatriwara and Srijana Kharka, with Praveen Pradhan as general secretary and Suresh K Lama as chief coordinator [State] among other office-bearers.

FCAS was rejuvenated in 2012 on the initiative of Jayshree



Prashan who is now the Advisor to the organisation and PK Pradhan the new patron.

"Being a responsible member of State's Consumer Protection Coun-

cil we have been giving our suggestions to the government on strengthening consumer rights," an FCAS press release conveys.

Sagar Mani Dhakal,

Reader to the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, was present as Returning Officer for the election to the new executive committee today.

## South task force for immunization meets to prep for Polio Sunday



### SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 29 JAN:

A meeting of the South District Task Force for Immunization on National Immunization Day for Polio was held today at DC-South's office in the presence of Zilla Adhakshya Tsering Dem Bhutia, CMO-South Dr DC Sharma, DRCHO South, officials from line departments and other health officials and staff from Namchi District Hospital, an official press communiqué from the district hospital informs.

Health workers, ASHAs and AWWs were briefed before the meeting to ensure successful implementation of the polio immunization programme on Polio Sunday, 31 Jan.

A district level monitoring team including District health officials, representatives from WHO & UNICEF, a block level monitoring team and a District Control Room were also formalized to oversee the vaccination programme.

## CBI raids 45 godowns in Punjab, samples of rice and wheat stocks seized

**CHANDIGARH, 29 JAN [NDTV]:** Amid the ongoing agitation by farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, the Central government has launched raids on some 45 warehouses in the two states, seizing samples of rice and wheat stocks. The Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) search operation has been on since last night and are being carried out with help of paramilitary forces, sources said.

The godowns being raided include those belonging to the Punjab Grains Procurement Corporation (PUNGRAIN), Punjab Warehousing, and a few of the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

"CBI teams are checking the quality and quantity of Central pool food grain stocks stores in these godowns. Samples of Central pool stocks of wheat and rice pertaining to crop year 2019-20 and 2020-21 stored in these godowns have been drawn," a statement issued by a CBI spokesperson said.

Premised raided in Punjab include nine godowns in Ludhiana, one each in Mansa

and Kapurthala. Those searched in Haryana include facilities in Shahbad and Sirsa, according to the CBI statement.

At FCI's Mansa godown, sources said, the stockists had sourced paddy from UP and Bihar to pass on the Centre, while at the same time selling good quality food grain in the open market. The CBI is probing the involvement of FCI officials in the racket that has led to supply of substandard rice being distributed at a large scale.

Piyush Goyal, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution, had recently said in an interview that the government will soon be doing quality checks of procured grains. The CBI had carried out similar raids a few years ago, too. The agency must be acting on a complaint, sources said.

The raids come amid a worsening of the face-off between the farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, and the Central government, particularly after the violence on Republic Day.

## 1st Bench Press and Deadlift Competition announced for 30 Jan

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 28 JAN:

Sikkim Powerlifting Association [SPA] has announced plans to organize the 1st Bench Press & Deadlift Competition 2021 on 30 January here at Arithang Community Hall.

The winners will earn the titles of 1st Ironman of Sikkim and 1st Ironwoman of Sikkim.

Similarly, the top-three contestants from different weight categories will receive the opportunity to represent Sikkim at the upcoming national championships.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, SPA general secretary, Devendra Basnet, informed that this was the first event of the newly formed body of SPA led by UD&HD Minister Arun Upreti as president.

Winners of the senior category will represent Sikkim at the Senior National Powerlifting Championship to be held from 17 to 21 February at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, while sub-junior and junior winners will participate in the Sub-Junior & Junior National [Men & Women]

Powerlifting Championship to be held from 17 to 21 March at Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh.

SPA treasurer, Sandhya Sundas, added that the association was expecting around 70 contestants for the championship which will have 23 weight categories and will be judged by four-member jury.

Three jury members will come in from West Bengal and with Devendra Basnet will be the only jury member from Sikkim at the championship.



## Request for Bids (Two-Envelope Bidding Process)

**Employer:** Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL)

**Project:** SIK-GAN-073 Construction of Link Road from Paljor Stadium to Indira Bye Pass.

Bid Value: Rs 4,76,71,920.00 Rupees Four Crore Seventy Six Lakhs Seventy One Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty only

RFB No: 005/GSCDL/2020, Project identification No: SIK-GAN-0073.

Issued on: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

1. The GSCDL is to receive financing under the Smart City Mission, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract "For this contract, the GSCDL shall process the payments as per the Company policy, terms and conditions laid in this Standard Procurement Document, subject to availability of funds.
2. The GSCDL now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the work "Construction of Link Road from Paljor Stadium to Indira Bye Pass" Gangtok, to be completed within a period of eighteen months, subject to providing the land free from encumbrances by the administrative Department.
3. Bidding will be conducted through competitive procurement using Request for Bids (RFB) as specified herein and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the given criteria.
4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the office of the Chief Technical Officer, GSCDL; email id – ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com document during office hours between 11:00 hrs to 15:00 hrs from Date: 01/02/2021 to 08/02/2021 at the address indicated below. Complete details may be seen in the websites indicated below.
5. The bidding document in English may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders during working days between 11:00 hrs to 15:00hrs 15/02/2021 to 18/02/2021 at the address indicated below, upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs. 30,000 (Rupees Thirty Thousand only). The method of payment will be through demand draft payable to Gangtok Smart City Development Limited. The DD should be issued by a Nationalised Bank and payable at Gangtok.
6. Bids must be delivered to the address indicated below, on or before 1300 hours on 01/03/2021. Late Bids will be rejected. The outer Bid envelopes marked "ORIGINAL BID", and the inner envelopes marked "TECHNICAL PART" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below at 1500 hrs on 01/03/2021. All envelopes marked "FINANCIAL PART" shall remain unopened and will be held in safe custody of the Employer until the second public Bid opening.
7. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of Rs. 11,92,000/- (Rupees Eleven Lakh Ninety Two Thousand only).
8. The address(es) referred to above is (are):

Chief Technical Officer  
Gangtok Smart City Development Limited, Sokaythang, -  
737102 Gangtok, Sikkim, India  
Email address: – ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com  
Website: <http://smartcitygangtok.com/> & <https://smartnet.niua.org/>

Sd/-  
C.E.O. Gangtok Smart City  
Development Ltd

## Specialized Dental Clinic of Siliguri (Sevoke Dental Clinic) Branch Open in Gangtok.

## GANGTOK DENTAL CLINIC



**NOW OPEN**

10AM to 7PM

**BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT**

**82106 99271**

**Dr. Anjali Gupta**  
BDS, Dental Surgeon

Near Sisa Golai  
Below Greendale Hotel  
Gangtok, East Sikkim

+91 8210699271  
+91 8768213966

Let the victory over polio continue with two drops of life.

**POLIO ROUND 31 January**

To know more, please contact ASHA/ A.N.M./Anganwadi Worker

**Health & Family Welfare Department Government of sikkim**



## In These Times of Tall Claims

*Enjoy the show, but...*

There is politics in the air. Most of the more scandalous stuff is still at the whisper-whisper stage, but there is also a lot that is streaming by way of press releases. If one takes this steady stream of press releases at face value, there are so many people joining so many, well, primarily two actually, parties every day that families across the State must be regretting the falling fertility rate. They would have had so many more to give to parties if only their families had not been so small. May be that is also why parties are increasingly counting their new converts by the families and not actual number of new members. That being the trend, now Sikkimese, like they acquire their religion and relatives through birth, will also be inheriting their political leanings through the same connections. Thankfully, the indoctrination is very casual, and takes but the switching of the flag on the roof to also switch sides and then feature, as a family, in a press release, again. Hmmm... If things are really that simple, one wonders why these moves are given so much credence. After all, who, except the “leaders” out to score political points actually goes through the tedium of officially resigning in Sikkim? And also, if supporters in the bastis don’t have a formal process of joining up, how could they know of the official processes of signing out? And so the cycle rolls on, with leaders ignoring the obvious and the coteries playing blind too, and the people, well, playing along.

Jokes apart, if speaking into their echo-chambers and gloating over the repeats keeps them occupied and satisfied, so be it, but that is not all that happens when politicking picks up. It appears that the season of vicious rumour-mongering and tasteless name-calling will also be arriving sooner than its traditional arriving around an assembly election cycle. The platforms might have grown from the poorly produced pamphlets to poorly written Facebook posts complimented with shoddily photoshopped images carried over from more juvenile days, but the messaging remains as crass. What the agents of such media-management seem to overlook is that rumours serve only one purpose - entertainment. They titillate, scandalise, and then evaporate. In most cases, receivers and circulators of such gossip know that no one is greatly perturbed by the rumours and that everyone is partaking in it only get over their boredom or to suppress their own insecurities depending on which side of the conversation they sit on.

It goes without saying that the best response to the rumour mill is to ignore it, but while it is easy to ignore something when it is only whispered in street corners, it becomes difficult to do so when they are palmed out with conviction in serious conversations. And that is bound to begin happening on a big scale, again, very soon in Sikkim as parties begin guarding turfs, claiming new ground and remaining relevant.

For the coming season of tall claims and wild allegations, bring out the salt, because we will need to be taking pinches of it very often just to remain sane. At the end of the day, the only weapon against self-serving rhetoric is the truth. Circulate it in the public domain and embarrass those who deal in rumours. Don’t do so effectively and don’t demand it vociferously enough, and soon the confusion will muddy away realities beyond salvaging. Then, Sikkim could find itself where America still dwells – the land of alternative facts where facts have retreated so deep that it is the truth that people become skeptical about even as they lap up every lie and untruth; a situation where attempts to debunk falsehoods often end up strengthening the lies in the eyes of the people.

### 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)



## Women’s Health is Better When Women Have More Control in Their Society

SIOBHÁN MATTISON, ADAM Z. REYNOLDS & KATHERINE WANDER  
*theconversation.com*

Gender disparities in health are not a phenomenon unique to the pandemic. Long before COVID-19, women made less money than men, had more child care responsibilities and were at increased risk of gender-based violence. But now, the pandemic has made them, and their children, even more vulnerable.

Women typically live longer than men but experience generally worse health, including higher risk for many chronic diseases, a phenomenon often referred to as the health-survival paradox. Many see this as due to biological differences between women and men. Female reproductive hormones affect many tissues in the body; pregnancy and childbirth come with additional risks to health.

But a large body of research suggests human health is strongly influenced by social circumstances. Living in societies that are more unequal is associated with negative health outcomes. Preferences for sons can cause neglect of daughters, which can lead to poor health and even death. What role, then, do gender norms play in subtler gender health disparities?

Two of us are anthropologists, the other an epidemiologist. Together our team developed a study to investigate how male-biased versus female-biased gender norms impact health.

### A UNIQUE COMPARISON

That study, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, was conducted in two farming communities in southwestern China. Both communities, part of the Mosuo ethnic minority, share a common language, religion and rites of passage. They differ, however, in one key way that made this unique study possible: kinship.

Some Mosuo pass land and other resources from mothers to daughters. Anthropologists call this system “matriliny.” The role of men in Mosuo

families is de-emphasized, although some take active roles as fathers and husbands. About 30% are in “walking marriages”: men and women are together at night, but do not formally marry. Instead, the men remain part of their mother’s or sister’s household. The men in matrilineal communities often provide financial support to women, and the walking marriages, though easy to dissolve, are often monogamous.

Compare this with a smaller, less well-known population of “patrilineal” Mosuo, who typically marry monogamously and pass inheritances from fathers to sons. They are more similar to many Euro-American families, where gender norms typically empower men.

With that as background, we began to wonder if the Mosuo would show evidence of improved health for women in matrilineal communities, where women have greater autonomy and access to resources. This has proved very difficult to test, because communities differing in kinship and degree of women’s autonomy also differ in other ways.

Our team traveled to hundreds of households in both the patrilineal and matrilineal communities of Mosuo. We asked participants about their social, economic and household circumstances. We measured their blood pressure and collected small specimens of blood for other health assessments. From that, we could compare matrilineal and patrilineal communities, and found this: Gender disparities in health were completely reversed in matrilineal communities.

### FOR WOMEN WITH GREATER AUTONOMY, BETTER HEALTH

Briefly, women’s health was poorer than men’s in patrilineal settings. But it was better than men’s in the matrilineal communities. There, women’s rates of chronic inflammation were roughly half of men’s, with rates of hypertension roughly 12% lower.

Both chronic inflammation and hypertension

are early indicators of long-term chronic disease. Both put people at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, neurodegenerative disorders and death. The poorer health that women experienced in the patrilineal Mosuo communities likely occurred due to differences in daily experiences, including stress that accumulated both in the short and long term.

Our findings challenge simplistic notions that biology is the only or primary determinant of gendered health differences. This is not a new revelation, but the study suggests an even stronger role for culture than previously evidenced.

This does not mean biology plays no role in the health differences between men and women. Virtually all diseases are biological at the cellular level. But emphasizing only biological differences assumes everything else between men and women is equal. This is rarely, if ever, the case.

Child care and household duties are easier when women have help and autonomy. Mosuo women in both matrilineal and patrilineal communities take on substantial responsibility for both. But those in matrilineal communities do so with greater autonomy and more support from relatives and childhood friends. Those in patrilineal communities are more isolated from their sisters and often take on household chores with less help.

These findings are relevant to women’s health, not just in Mosuo communities, but elsewhere. Everyone’s health is affected by their autonomy and access to support, even nonhumans. Now, with a better understanding of how kinship and gender norms can impact women’s health, we can work to lessen health disparities and decrease the ever-growing burden of chronic disease.

*[Siobhán Mattison is Associate Professor of Evolutionary Anthropology, University of New Mexico; Adam Z. Reynolds is Doctoral candidate, University of New Mexico; Katherine Wander is Assistant Professor, Binghamton University, State University of New York]*

## What is behind the EU’s dispute with AstraZeneca over COVID-19 vaccines?

ADITYA GOENKA  
*theconversation.com*

Hopes that rolling out vaccines would control the the pandemic have been dealt a blow by an emerging dispute between the EU and AstraZeneca. The manufacturer has said that because of production problems in Belgium, it will not be able to supply as many vaccines as expected to the EU, but that its supply to UK will be unaffected.

In response, the EU has said it should be given a share of AstraZeneca doses manufactured in Britain, and politicians have suggested it could control exports of other vaccines – such as Pfizer’s – out of the bloc. This is despite the European Medicines Agency not yet having authorised the AstraZeneca vaccine, although approval is expected soon. But the EU still faces questions over its slow vaccine rollout.

It was clear from the outset that it would take a very long time to make enough vaccines to meet demand. In this context, the EU, UK, USA and Canada ordered enough doses to vaccinate their populations several times over. These orders were placed as a way of hedging bets, as it wasn’t clear which vaccines would be successful.

But on January 22 2021, AstraZeneca revealed that the order placed by the EU would come up short. In the first quarter of 2021, AstraZeneca said it would deliver 31 million vaccine doses to the bloc, rather than 80 million as stated previously. The EU president and health commissioner immediately pushed back against the decision.

On January 26, AstraZeneca CEO

Pascal Soriot gave an interview to the Italian newspaper La Repubblica, explaining the situation in more detail. There are two stages to vaccine production, he said: the production of the drug substance (the vaccine itself) and production of the final product (putting the vaccine in vials for use). These steps are carried out in different locations in different countries.

Mr Soriot said that there have been teething problems with the first step, as the yield of the vaccine-production process is often not high enough. This has been resolved in UK plants, as they started production earlier due to the UK signing its supply agreement with AstraZeneca three months before the EU. But these issues are yet to be resolved at the Belgian plant supplying Europe.

However, AstraZeneca feels that issues with the production of the drug substance will be resolved. From February, it estimates global production will increase to 100 million doses a month, with EU facilities accounting for 17% of this supply. But in the meantime, it is continuing to scale up production in the UK to 2 million doses a week, with Britain’s schedule not expected to be affected by problems elsewhere.

Despite meetings with AstraZeneca to understand the delayed deliveries, EU officials are not satisfied with this. Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides has said: “We reject the logic of first come, first served. That may work at the neighbourhood butcher’s, but not in contracts and not in our advanced purchase agreements.”

The EU has implied that the short-

fall in vaccine availability is due to AstraZeneca selling vaccines to other countries, and that it should make good the shortfall by restricting supply to UK.

### BUT WHAT EXACTLY WAS AGREED?

The EU hasn’t disclosed exactly what its advanced purchase agreement with AstraZeneca is. The agreement secures a number of doses, and individual member states can order these once the vaccine’s use has been authorised. In AstraZeneca’s view, it agreed to supply vaccines according to its “best effort”, rather than committing to delivering a certain number of doses by a certain date. It expects to meet its future quarterly targets for the EU, should the European Medicines Agency authorise the vaccine.

Some, such as Germany’s health minister Jens Spahn, have said that in the meantime the EU should stop exporting other vaccines made on the continent, such as the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. For now the EU is only upping requirements as far as making manufacturers declare their exports. But export bans may follow.

It may seem strange that the EU is getting worried about a vaccine that it hasn’t yet approved, especially as there are concerns in Europe about its efficacy. But there are factors at play in the background. The US is not exporting vaccine doses manufactured domestically, as Donald Trump signed an executive order to restrict the use of US-produced vaccines to the US alone. The current push for vaccination under Pres-

ident Joe Biden suggests that the US will not be backtracking on exporting vaccine doses any time soon.

Pfizer has also reduced supply of its vaccine in Europe as it looks to upscale its production capacity. Meanwhile, vaccine development by the Louis Pasteur Institute and Merck in France has been abandoned, while the French medical giant Sanofi is also struggling with its programme. The EU is seeing multiple hedged bets failing.

The EU is lagging behind the US and UK in vaccinating its population. Part of this is due to its slowness in ordering and approving vaccines, but to some extent it’s also down to potential over-reliance on the AstraZeneca vaccine. With civil unrest in Netherlands against lockdown, there’s growing pressure to increase the rate of vaccination in order to lift such restrictions.

There’s also an edge to this controversy because the UK’s delivery of AstraZeneca vaccines is unaffected. In the aftermath of Brexit, it’s easier for the EU to pick on the supply chain that’s working for UK rather than targeting, say, the one that’s working for the US. There are already export bans on medicines from the UK to EU and a trade war may be brewing.

But the question of who should get the vaccine, the UK or the EU, is really a controversy that should be avoided. Vaccine nationalism that one feared would happen is clearly here, and if left unchecked, is going to create new stress points that will hinder the coordinated pandemic response.

*[the writer is Professor of Economics, University of Birmingham]*



# Orchid conservation efforts in U'khand bearing fruit

**GOPESHWAR (U'KHAND), JAN 29 (PTI):** Orchid conservation efforts by the Uttarakhand Forest Department have begun to bear fruit with rare varieties of flowers found in the Himalayan region blooming in full glory at the Orchid Park developed in Mandal valley famous for its association with the Chipko movement.

More than 25 local varieties of orchids have been grown at the park developed on a barren stretch of land in Khalla village van panchayat around 13 km from the Chamoli district headquarters.

Conducive conditions were created at the park in-situ by the research wing of the state forest department for the natural growth of orchids by conserving the baanj forests in the area.

Range officer Harish Negi who has been associated with the research and development of the park said one hectare of land in Mandal valley was identified for the project



an year ago and more than 25 local varieties of orchid have so far been developed there during the period out of which many have blossomed.

There are at least 67 varieties of orchids in Mandal valley which

alone constitutes 30 per cent of the total varieties of flowers found in Uttarakhand, Negi said.

The colour diversity of orchid flowers, their varying shapes and enduring freshness are the biggest speciality of this

vegetation which makes it the centre of attraction of flower lovers all over the world, Negi said.

Rich in medicinal qualities, the orchid vegetation which needs special climatic conditions to grow is considered an

essential part of the ecological system and plays an important role in horticulture. Orchid plants found in the Himalayan meadows are recognised for their medicinal virtues, Negi said, adding 'salam panja' is its leading example.

Considering the importance of orchids in the ecological system, the results of the initiative taken by the research wing of the state forest department are really encouraging, Chief Coordinator of CPB Environment and Development Centre Vinay Semwal said.

According to forest department data, Uttarakhand is home to around 238 varieties of orchids.

Locals put orchid plants to a variety of uses including 'mangal snan', a preliminary marriage ritual in addition to other cultural and religious ceremonies, noted environment activist Murari Lal said.

Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are the leading states in the country growing orchids on a large scale.

## 3 new cases push Arunachal's COVID-19 tally to 16,827

**ITANAGAR, JAN 29 (PTI):** Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 tally rose to 16,827 on Friday as three more people, including an Army jawan, tested positive for the infection, a senior health official said.

The fresh cases were reported in the Capital Complex region and West Kameng and Changlang districts, State Surveillance Officer Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Three more people have been cured of the disease, taking the recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state to 99.57 per cent, he said.

The state now has 15 active cases, while

16,756 people have recovered from the disease and 56 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, he said.

Arunachal Pradesh has so far tested over 3.91 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 640 on Thursday, the official said.

Meanwhile, 15,741 health workers have received the first dose of the COVID vaccine in the state so far, including 8,654 on Thursday, State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Padung said.

The Health Department is carrying out the inoculation drive every Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, he said.

## Power theft worth Rs 3.5 cr detected in UP's Bareilly

**BAREILLY (UP), JAN 29 (PTI):** Power theft worth about Rs 3.5 crore was detected in a rice mill in Richha area here following a raid, a senior electricity department official said on Friday.

The raid was carried out at Bismillah rice mill on Thursday night and it was found that the

owner was indulging in power theft with the help of an electronic device installed there, Superintending Engineer (rural), Syed Tariq Jalil said.

The power supply to the mill was cut and an inquiry into the functioning of the departmental staff deployed in the area has been launched, Jalil said.

## Shah to address two rallies in Bengal on weekend

**NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI):** Union Home Minister Amit Shah will address two rallies in West Bengal on Saturday and Sunday, and attend several programmes as the BJP steps up its campaign in the poll-bound state where assembly elections are expected to be held in April-May.

BJP sources said Shah will arrive in Kolkata on Friday night and start his public programmes on Saturday with a visit to ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness) in Mayapur and later address a rally at Thakurnagar. He will also address his party's social media volunteers in Kolkata in the

evening. Shah is scheduled to address another rally at Dumurjala in Howrah on Sunday. He will also visit Aurbindo Bhawan and Belur Math on the day.

Party leaders said he is expected to have lunch at the house of a jute mill worker in Belur on Sunday.

The saffron party has emerged as the main challenger to the ruling Trinamool Congress, headed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in the state. The party is pulling out all stops to end her 10-year-old reign and has deputed a number of senior leaders, including Union ministers, to its state campaign.

## Hours after quitting as MLA, Trinamool's Rajib Banerjee resigns from party



**KOLKATA, 29 JAN [NDTV]:** Hours after Trinamool leader Rajib Banerjee resigned as the party's MLA from Domjur, and days after he quit Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's cabinet, he also resigned from the ruling party.

In a brief letter to the Chief Minister, Mr Banerjee wrote: "I do hereby tender my resignation as a member of the All India Trinamool Congress, as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and its associates, with immediate effect."

"I am thankful for all the challenges and opportunities that has been afforded to me and I will always value my time spent as a member of the party," Mr Banerjee added.

Mr Banerjee is widely expected to join the opposition BJP on Sunday - in the presence of Home Minister Amit Shah, who is scheduled to hold a huge rally in Howrah district.

Hours earlier he was quoted by news agency PTI as saying: "I have resigned as the MLA of the state assembly. I submitted my resignation letter to the speaker. I thank my party supremo Mamata Banerjee for providing me the opportunity to serve the masses."

Last week, after he resigned from the cabinet,

the BJP issued a welcome mat for Mr Banerjee.

"He is like my younger brother and I am telling him BJP's doors are open," Arjun Singh, also a former Trinamool, and now a BJP MP, said.

The former Forest Minister, who burst into tears in front of the press after submitting his resignation letter to Governor Jagdeep Thakur, is set to become the latest in a series of high-profile exits from the ruling Trinamool with just weeks to go for Assembly polls.

He is also the third minister to resign his post in the last six weeks.

The first was Suvendu Adhikari, the former MLA from Nandigram and the man widely seen as instrumental in Mamata Banerjee's rise to power, and he has joined BJP.

The second was Laxmi Ratan Shukla, cricketer turned minister of state for sports. Mr Shukla, though, remains an MLA and member of the Trinamool.

Mr Adhikari, Mr Shukla and Mr Banerjee were MLAs from the Howrah district, which will be the site of Amit Shah's massive rally this weekend.

Last week the party also lost Shantipur MLA Arindam Bhattacharya - the first exit from Nadia

district. A week earlier, Mr Bhattacharya shared stage with Ms Banerjee at an event in his district.

The Trinamool, which faces a real challenge in its attempt to win re-election, has feigned indifference to the exits of senior leaders and dozens of junior members.

Suvendu Adhikari has rapidly become the Chief Minister's worst nightmare in her bid for a third term in Bengal, having drawn several dissidents to the BJP since he crossed over.

Officially, Mamata Banerjee has maintained that those wishing to quit the party are free to do so. But in recent weeks, the party has managed to ward off just the one prominent exit - movie star-turned-politician Shatabdi Roy changed her mind after being offered a key post.

The ruling party, however, has brushed off suggestions the exit makes it re-election bid harder.

"The Trinamool is like an ocean. A couple of mugs of water taken out of it make no difference, a couple of leaves falling off a giant tree don't matter. There will be new leaves," Partha Chatterjee, a senior party leader and minister, said last week.

## "Hurt": Mamata Banerjee on Jharkhand CM's Bengal rally

**JHARGRAM, 29 JAN [PTI]:** Jharkhand Chief Minister and JMM working president Hemant Soren on Thursday held a rally in Jhargram in poll-bound West Bengal's Jhargram district, demanding establishment of an autonomous council for the tribal-dominated Western part of the state.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that she was "hurt" that Mr Soren came to Jhargram for political purposes and advised him to take care of his own state.

Sources in the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) said that the party is keen to fight in a number of seats in the West Bengal assembly elections due in April-May this year and Thursday's well-attended public meeting is its show of strength in Jangal Mahal region.

Raking up an old demand of the tribal people of the area for setting up an autonomous council for the Western part of the state, Mr Soren said,

"The JMM will fight for the interests of the Adivasi people of West Bengal."

The JMM leader also attacked the BJP-led government at the Centre claiming that it has done nothing the tribal population.

The BJP is also selling off the assets of the country, he claimed.

The BJP had bagged the Jhargram seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

"A Paschimanchal Autonomous Council should be formed under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. We are sure that the people here will actively fight to get what is due to them," he told the meeting held at Jamda area of Jhargram.

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas as well as of Scheduled Tribes residing in any state other than certain states in the North Eastern region.

Following the demand for an autonomous

council, the Left Front government has set up Paschimanchal Unnayan Parishad in 2000 for the development of the 74 blocks in five districts in the western part of the state. A Department of Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs was also created in July, 2006.

The JMM has some influence in at least three constituencies in Jangal Mahal but it had never won any seat in the state.

Reacting to Mr Soren's demand, Mamata Banerjee, who is also the Trinamool Congress supremo, said, "I felt hurt. I had gone to Hemant Soren's swearing-in as chief minister (in 2019) and had supported him a lot."

Ms Banerjee said that if the JMM working president can come to West Bengal and seek votes of the tribal people, she can also go to Jharkhand where a large number of Bengalis live and ask for their votes.

"We do everything for the people living in the state," she said.

## Mamata warns against attempts to spark riots with fake videos

**KOLKATA, 29 JAN [PTI]:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday warned against attempts by some people to instigate riots through fake videos on social media.

Ms Banerjee, who was addressing a government function at Netaji Indoor Stadium here, urged police constables, homeguards and civic volunteers present at the programme to be on guard against any possible attempt to spread doctored videos through fake WhatsApp groups.

"There can be many WhatsApp groups which spread fake messages to engineer riots. Be always on guard against any such attempt to foment trouble," she told the gathering. "They (the groups) are saying whatever they like without verifying facts. They spread falsehoods. Remember they had also branded the agitating farmers in Delhi as terrorists in the past," Ms Banerjee said without naming anyone.

The chief minister announced that 680 former linkmen of terror outfit Kamtapur Liberation Organisation and

420 former Maoists who have surrendered and joined the mainstream are being recruited as homeguards.

"You had been with different organisations opposed to the government for ideological reasons. Now when you will be donning the uniform and wearing the cap I know you will be forever alert to serve the nation, the people," she said.

Ms Banerjee said the next of family of 530 Maoists and KLO activists, who are either dead in violence or missing, will also be recruited as special home guards.

Complimenting the police force for its tireless sacrifice during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, she said 75 police personnel had died due to the contagion. "The government gave ₹ 10 lakh to the families of each of the dead policeman and a job to the next of family. But no monetary compensation can make up the irreparable loss."

She said the family of each of the 16,000 police personnel infected by coronavirus had been given ₹ one lakh each. The

chief minister said 162 new police stations came up in nine and half years of Trinamool Congress rule and 30 cyber police stations had been set up.

Ms Banerjee said there will be 10 per cent quota for civic volunteers to the posts of home guards. "Our police men are the best in the country - firm in their duty but with a human face. They had donated blood everyday during the peak COVID-19 period when there was a dearth of blood camps. They had risked their lives," she said.

The chief minister inaugurated virtually a slew of development projects for the poor and marginalised people under "Jagroto Bangla" programme - a new initiative of the state government.

The projects included the Adivasi Bhavan for tribals, Lepcha Bhavan and Bonorini Market Complex at Bonhooghly in the city. She also handed over keys and ownership deeds to the shop owners and building named "Mahatoron" at the pilgrim town of Tara-pith, apart from giving employment to sports persons in Jangalmahal area of south Bengal.

SHIRIM SCAN | CapitalTIMES | Neighbourhood WATCH | Sports & Specials | Elsewhere | EICETERA

*It's easy to relax... When you can trust the News.*

**To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at**

**BANGKOK:** For circulation details contact: +91-9749897699, +91-964702692  
 & for advertisement booking at +91-993427900 or at office no 03592  
 208/68, Mail us at advertise@summittimes.com

**SILIGURI:** Mr. Mani Rai, M/s. Space Ads, B.R. Ambedkar Building, Room No.7, Tel: 983083997, E-mail: contact.synapse@gmail.com/irshad\_elit23@rediffmail.com

**floor:** Opp. Banga Hotel, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri - 03. Ph. +91-9832318644/  
 9806824897/9153035100 or mail at mani\_silguri@yahoo.co.in

**KOLKATA OFFICE:** Irshad Ali/Interyes, Synapse, & Madan Street, Mesine - 2, 2nd floor: Kolkata - 700072. Ph. 033-22124348/ fax 033-22124337/ mob. +91-9830547714/ +91-9830547714

**Phone**  
 03592-208498  
 +91-9832556698  
 +91-9832080753

**www.summittimes.com**  
 news@summittimes.com  
 summittimes6@gmail.com  
 advertise@summittimes.com

**Address:**  
 Santa Bhawan Complex, Church Road  
 Near Diesel Power House (DPH)  
 Gengtok, East Sikkim, 737001

**VIDEO NEWS SECTION**

facebook.com/SummitTimesGlobe

**SUMMITTIMES**



# Premier League: 10 things to look out for this weekend

London, 29 Jan [theGuardian]: West Ham and Liverpool battle for fourth, Tuchel makes Kanté central to his plans and how does José compare to Jiménez?

1) **ARSENAL LEARNING TO LIFT BURDEN ON AUBAMEYANG**

Arsenal hope Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang can face Manchester United, although the priority is his mother's recovery from the illness that led him to miss the two games against Southampton. His teammates dedicated their victory on Tuesday night to him and, inadvertently, his absencetold something interesting. There have been plenty of questions about Arsenal's capacity to find goals and take points while missing their captain, whose form has picked up in recent weeks after a bleak run, but at St Mary's they exuded menace and managed three goals through different scorers. The ascent of Emile Smith Rowe, recovery of Thomas Partey and continued excellence of Bukayo Saka mean they look a far smoother, more cohesive attacking unit than at any time in the past year and it may lessen the burden upon the prolific – but put upon – Aubameyang. His presence would be a welcome boost in another fixture that tests the strength of Arsenal's recent revival, but they are beginning to show they can tackle big assignments with or without him.

Arsenal v Manchester United, Saturday 5.30pm (all times GMT)  
2) **REBORN CANCELO STEPPING FROM CITY SHADOWS**

The visit of Sheffield United on Saturday feelspivotal in the title race, after the Blades' shock win at Old Trafford put Manchester City in the driving seat. City can move four points clear of Manchester United before their tea-time game at Arsenal kicks off, capping a dramatic turnaround since these teams met at Bramall Lane on Halloween, when Kyle Walker's winner helped lift City into the top half. Rúben Dias' contribution has been immense, but Pep Guardiola has also squeezed more out of his squad. Players who had drifted from the first-team picture – John Stones, Ilkay Gundogan and João Cancelo – have become vital cogs. Cancelo joined in August 2019 but struggled to displace Walker from his preferred right-back slot. While his versatility initially prevented him from holding down a first-team place, he is now an in-



dispensable auxiliary man, drifting into midfield regularly and joining attacks down either flank. Against West Brom he was arguably City's standout performer, setting up the first goal and scoring the second with a ruthless finish. Expect more of the same on Sunday.

Manchester City v Sheffield United, Saturday 3pm  
3) **HAMMERS AND LIVERPOOL BATTLE FOR FOURTH**

Quiz question: when did West Ham last sit above Liverpool in the league table withhalf of the season played, as they were before Jürgen Klopp's team's victory at Tottenham. Answer: 2016. It is certainly interesting that the Hammers are doing well and the Reds poorly, but let's not get overexcited. At the start of that year West Ham beat Liverpool 2-0 at home, and five members of that starting XI (Cresswell, Ogbonna, Noble, Lanzini, Antonio) could feature again on Sunday. Liverpool meanwhile have as many members of that 2016 West Ham squad in their first-team setup at the moment as of their own (one each: Adrián and Firmino). David Moyes is currently getting plaudits for transforming his squad, while Liverpool are being criticised for an unwillingness to decisively alter theirs. SB

West Ham v Liverpool, Sunday 4.30pm

4) **RELEGATION MAKE-OR-BREAK AT HAWTHORNS**

Sam Allardyce has made little secret of his concern about West Brom's home form. How do you tighten up a side that has conced-

ed 22 goals in its last five home games? Perhaps by facing Fulham, whose shyness in front of goal is in danger of making their survival prospects almost as sketchy. Fulham could have smashed and grabbed their way to a late win at Brighton but had to settle for a drab point that keeps 17th place within sight. Theylook hard to beat but they have only scored four in their last nine games – three of them coming, a touch perversely, against Liverpool, Spurs and Manchester United – and there is little sign of a proven internal solution unless Scott Parker finds a way to accommodate Aleksandar Mitrovic. West Brom seem the perfect opponents for a confidence boost but the stakes are likely to dictate another cagey affair. Another pasting for Alldardyce's team would suggest their cause is almost impossible.

West Brom v Fulham, Saturday 3pm

5) **NEWCASTLE IDEAL FOR PEP-PIPING UP CALVERT-LEWIN**

After a two-game winning run was brought to a shuddering halt at Elland Road in December, Steve Bruce remarked that for Newcastle, "getting to 20 points by Christmas would be an achievement". It was a laughably modest target, and one they failed to achieve. Almost six weeks on, they are stuck on 19 and getting slowly drawn into the relegation battle. Newcastle's chances of reaching that magic 20-point marker on Saturday appear slim; they haven't won at Goodison since 2011 and will take on an Everton team back in top-

four contention. In recent weeks, Bruce's side have proved agreeable opponents, so this game represents a good chance for Dominic Calvert-Lewin to break his barren league run. After scoring 11 goals in his first 11 matches this season, the forward has failed to score in the league since. He will be eager to rediscover that early-season form with England returning to competitive action in March.

Everton v Newcastle, Saturday 12.30pm

6) **STATS SUGGEST JOSÉ MAY STRUGGLE TO REPLACE JIMÉNEZ**

Willian José stands to make his full debut at Selhurst Park, after a cameo off the bench in Wednesday's goalless draw at Chelsea, and with Wolves on a run of seven league matches without a win (though they have beaten Palace in the FA Cup in that time) and struggling to adapt to life without Raúl Jiménez, an instant impact would be appreciated. The two players are the same age and a similar build, Jiménez being six months older and a centimetre shorter, but other comparisons are not so even: the Mexican took 114 shots last season, placing him 12th in Europe's top five leagues (the top four in order: Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Robert Lewandowski, Mo Salah) while the previous season he was 16th, with 113 (the top four in order: Ronaldo, Messi, Lewandowski, Salah). Jiménez is quite simply a prodigious taker of shots, a person never slow to buy a ticket, while in 2019-20 Willian José was joint 131st, with 58, and

in 2018-19 he was joint-255th, with 48. Since the start of last season Jiménez has attempted 133 dribbles (José has attempted five), won 44 tackles (seven), attempted 1,272 passes (595). José is a fine player, but patience is likely required. SB

Crystal Palace v Wolves, Saturday 3pm

7) **TUCHEL AIMS TO MAKE KANTÉ THE EPICENTRE**

Having led Paris Saint-Germain to the Champions League final, Thomas Tuchel knows a thing or two about finding the right balance in a team front-loaded with attacking talent; something his Chelsea predecessor, Frank Lampard, struggled with. Midway through the 2019-20 season, the German switched to a double-pivot system at PSG, two holding midfielders making room for a quartet of creative players ahead. Tuchel has already stated his intention to use the system at Chelsea to get the best out of N'Golo Kanté. "I think he is the strongest in the double-six, in the heart of the game," Tuchel said. "We can use his energy, his range, his ability to recover the ball." Kanté, who could return from a hamstring injury against Burnley, was pushed further forward by Maurizio Sarri to accommodate Jorginho, then returned to the base of a midfield three by Lampard. Neither manager found room for Kanté and Jorginho in holding midfield, but Tuchel may see things differently.

Chelsea v Burnley, Sunday 12pm

8) **SAINTS AND VILLANS TRY TO STOP WOBBLES**

Two teams tied together in mid-table, 10th and 11th, level on points if not games played (Villa have one in hand), meet in a battle of upward-trajectory sides having a wobble: Southampton have won one of their last seven in the league, Villa one of their last five. Villa have only used 20 players in the league this season, the lowest total in the Premier League, but Southampton were only just above them until Tuesday, when Jake Vokins and Caleb Watts made their first Premier League appearances and Yan Valery his first start of the campaign in the 3-1 defeat to Arsenal, suggesting an unusual degree of churn though Ryan Bertrand should return from suspension to replace Vokins. When the teams last met, Southampton recorded a

season's low for touches, successful dribbles, crosses, corners, passes attempted and passes completed. They had four shots on target, an xG of 0.9, and won 4-3.

Southampton v Aston Villa, Saturday 8pm

9) **TIELEMANS AND NDIDI KEY FOR RODGERS**

In a season of dramatic rises and falls in the Premier League table, Leicester have stayed largely on track; Brendan Rodgers' side have spent every week in the top six, and now have a foothold in the top four. Leeds' visit looks a good opportunity to cement their Champions League ambitions, given the Foxes won 4-1 at Elland Road in October. That said, both teams have more away wins than at home this season. Leeds' last five away games have featured two 3-0 losses (one to fourth-tier Crawley), a 6-2 defeat, a 5-0 win and Tuesday's hard-fought victory over Newcastle. Leicester had looked prone to inconsistency earlier in the season, but have now lost just once in 10 league games, a run that has coincided with Wilfred Ndidi's return. Leicester are yet to lose a league game when Ndidi has partnered Youri Tielemans in central midfield. If both are available on Sunday, the result feels more predictable. NMc

Leicester v Leeds United, Sunday 2pm

10) **PLAYING WELL NOT ENOUGH TO SAVE BRIGHTON**

Given that they play well enough in most games, it is slightly astonishing that Brighton are now without a win in 14 fixtures at the Amex. They are well organised, work the ball nicely enough and reliably create a chance or two – but unless that starts translating itself into home points it will count for nothing. Brighton announced a record loss of £67.2m this week and cannot afford to slide into the Championship on the back of a series of respectable close-run things. Tottenham are hardly ideal opponents for a breaking of their hex, although the north London side will have unhappy memories of their most recent visit. That was in October 2019; an Aaron Connolly-inspired Brighton trounced them 3-0 and Mauricio Pochettino, gone within six weeks, was left to air futile promises that his Spurs team would bounce back.

Brighton v Tottenham, Sunday 7.15pm

## Anish Giri aiming for rare victory at Wijk while Magnus Carlsen trails

LEONARD BARDEN

**WIJK, 29 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** Anish Giri, the Netherlands No 1, has several times narrowly missed first place at Tata Steel Wijk aan Zee, and the 26-year-old now has his best chance yet for victory in the "chess Wimbledon" where no Dutchman has won since 1985.

Giri leads a closely packed group of front runners by half a point, although he still has to meet his nemesis, the world champion, Magnus Carlsen, who trails in sixth place with only a slender chance even if he wins his last three games. And the first of this trio of tests is Giri against Carlsen in round 11 on Friday.

Scores after 10 of the 13 rounds were Giri (Netherlands) 7, Alireza Firouzja, Andrey Esipenko (Russia) and Fabiano Caruana (US) 6.5, Jorden van Foreest (Netherlands) 6, Carlsen (Norway) 5.5.

Friday's and Saturday's rounds 11 and 12, which start at 1pm, plus the decisive final round 13 at midday on Sunday, can be watched free and live with grandmaster commentary on the official platform or on major



chess websites. It should be a tense occasion and possibly a historic one, depending on the result.

Carlsen's defeat by 18-year-old Esipenko has been the major shock. The world champion began with a fine win against Firouzja, then drew his next six. In round 10, he also halved with Caruana in a hard-fought game after defeating the early Swedish leader Nils Grandelius. The loss to Esipenko was thus an outlier, even more from the poor quality of Black's play than the result. The champion fell for a simple early tactic where Esipenko's queen forked a c6 knight and a h8 rook and after that it was just a matter of keeping calm and avoiding Carlsen's shallow traps.

It was Carlsen's first defeat in classical chess to an opponent born in the 21st century, and his first loss to a sub-2700 rated player since 2015, while the result pushed Esipenko's official Fide rating above 2700, the yardstick figure for the global elite. After 10 rounds, the 18-year-old Russian remains unbeaten.

However, Esipenko's statistics pall beside those of Firouzja, a year younger, who has lost only to Carlsen and has continued to play in the complex, imaginative and innovative style which brought him second prize behind Carlsen at Stavanger in October.

With 2758 Fide points in the live ratings, Firouzja has jumped to No 14 in the world.

His new surge has surpassed the former world champions Vlad Kramnik and Vishy Anand and the 2016 challenger Sergey Karjakin, and puts him only six rating points away from the super-elite of the top 10. That represents a speed of improvement achieved in the past at age 15-17 by Bobby Fischer, Garry Kasparov and Carlsen, and probably by nobody else.

Carlsen v Firouzja for the world crown looks a serious possibility in 2023 or 2025, although the eight-player candidates tournament which decides the challenger is a hazard which almost trapped Carlsen in 2012.

3708: 1 Bxf3 Qxf3 2 Rxe3! dxe3 3 Qb2+! wins a rook.

## Why we don't see viral routines like Nia Dennis's in the Olympics

BRYAN ARMEN GRAHAM

**LONDON, 29 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** The latest entry in the surprisingly robust YouTube subgenre of viral college gymnastics routines dropped over the weekend, flooding timelines everywhere and generating national media attention rare for the parochial sport. The footage of UCLA senior Nia Dennis tumbling and swaying in a shimmering blue leotard to a high-energy mashup of Kendrick Lamar, Beyoncé, Missy Elliott, Megan Thee Stallion, Soulja Boy and Tupac Shakur from Saturday's dual meet against Arizona State was instantly hailed as a tribute to Black Excellence, racking up more than 10 million views in a matter of days while earning shout-outs from Michelle Obama, Janet Jackson, Kerry Washington and Ms Supa Dupa Fly herself.

The two-minute clip is not the first collegiate floor routine to bubble up into the mainstream. It's not even Dennis's first: the Ohio native's Homecoming-themed floor exercise from a meet last season has been watched more than 30 million times and landed her on Ellen in March. And it's not a coincidence that so many of them have come under the cultivation of UCLA's longtime coach Valorie Kondos Field, the former classical dancer who in the three decades until her recent retirement transformed the Bruins into one of America's most decorated programs. Whenever one of these crowd-pleasing performances backed by popular music breaks

through – whether it was Louisiana State's Lloimincia Hall in 2014, UCLA's Sophina DeJesus in 2016 or Katelyn Ohashi two years ago – there's an overwhelmingly common question among a public that mostly only watches gymnastics once every four (or five) years: Why you don't see routines like these at the Olympics?

College gymnastics, which operates under different and more accessible rules than what you see in the Olympics, is a step down from the elite circuit, but the fewer difficulty requirements leave gymnasts more time (and stamina) for choreography and showmanship. The gulf between the two classes has only become more pronounced since Simone Biles came along and raised the bar for everyone: these days every single thing an Olympic gymnast does on the floor has to add difficulty. It's almost a different sport altogether.

There's also a less restrained, more team-oriented culture in NCAA gymnastics that permits the athletes to express themselves more. Where Olympians are more prone to safer musical choices, at times verging on Muzak, that go for a more timeless feel and won't distract from their skills, this freedom of expression on the college level allows the gymnasts to curate performances that are unmistakably bound to the cultural moment and, increasingly over the last decade, reverse-engineered and fine-tuned for maximum viral impact. "The Black Lives Matter protests

were pretty much the foundation," Dennis told Washington Post publication The Lily, adding that she wanted the routine to "be a celebration of everything [black people] can do, everything we can overcome".

"Every single song is a major black artist, musician, from different time periods. They had a huge impact on black culture, which has also had a huge impact on me. So I'm just literally celebrating what they've done and having the time of my life," the 21-year-old added.

The secret sauce, and why these routines will continue to connect with people even if the skills aren't according-to-Hoyle "elite", is the unbridled exuberance on display. Not only in the figure of Dennis herself, but in the delirious reactions of her teammates watching from the sidelines and hanging on every step and maneuver. For a sport where the Olympic narrative is too often one of monastic hard work, sacrifice and individualism, the college level offers a welcome reminder that gymnastics is fun.

Ohashi, a one-time prodigy who had been earmarked for Olympic stardom as a 14-year-old junior gymnast before injuries and burnout intervened, is a classic example of someone who rediscovered the joy of enjoying the sport on her own terms and thrived on college level, becoming a national sensation. Dennis, a former US national team member whose own dreams of competing in Rio were undone by an achilles injury, is following the same path. And she's doing it her way.



## Myanmar election commission rejects military's fraud claims

**NAYPYITAW, MYANMAR (AP):** Myanmar's election commission rejected allegations by the military that fraud played a significant role in determining the outcome of November's elections, which delivered a landslide victory to Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party.

The decision, announced Thursday, came amid heightened tensions after the military, which had ruled Myanmar for five decades until 2015, refused to rule out the possibility of a coup if their complaints were ignored.

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party captured 396 out of 476 seats in the Nov. 8 polls, allowing them to form the government for another five years. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party won only 33 seats.

The military has been calling on the government and the Union Election Commission to review the results. It says it has found 8.6 million irregularities in voter lists in 314 townships that could have let voters cast multiple ballots or commit other "voting malpractice," but the election commission said there was no evidence to support these claims.

On Tuesday, a military spokesperson declined to rule out a coup, saying the military would continue to file complaints about alleged irregularities in line with laws and the constitution.

Myanmar's military chief Min Aung Hlaing on Wednesday told senior officers in a speech that the constitution could be revoked if the laws are not being properly enforced.

"The constitution is the mother law for all laws. So we all need to abide by the constitution. If one does not follow the law, such law must be revoked. If it is the constitution, it is necessary to revoke the constitution," he said.

The party of Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace prize laureate, won the previous elections in 2015 also in a landslide. But her ability to run the country has been hamstrung by a clause in the 2008 army-drafted constitution giving the military 25% of the seats in parliament that allows it to block constitutional reforms.

Khin Zaw Win, a political analyst in Yangon and former political prisoner, suggested the military was signaling its intention to intervene in the country's politics.

"The military's course of action is much clearer now. As illogical as it sounds, military chief Min Aung Hlaing's argument is meant to soften the blow of abrogating the 2008 constitution," he said.

"By doing so, he aims to do away with the election results and the impending NLD government. At the same time he wants to win public support for scrapping the unpopular constitution," he added.

# Dubai blamed for virus cases abroad; questions swirl at home

**DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP):** After opening itself to New Year's revelers, Dubai is now being blamed by several countries for spreading the coronavirus abroad, even as questions swirl about the city-state's ability to handle reported record spikes in virus cases.

The government's Dubai Media Office says the sheikhdom is doing all it can to handle the pandemic, though it has repeatedly declined to answer questions from The Associated Press about its hospital capacity.

"After a year of managing the pandemic, we can confidently say the current situation is under control and we have our plans to surge any capacity in the health care system should a need rise," it said.

However, Nasser al-Shaikh, Dubai's former finance minister, offered a different assessment Thursday on Twitter and asked authorities to take control of a spiraling caseload.

"The leadership bases its decisions on recommendations from the team, the wrong recommendations which put human souls in danger and negatively affect our society," he wrote, adding that "our economy requires accountability."

Dubai, known for its long-haul carrier Emirates, the world's tallest building and its beaches and bars, in July became one of the first travel destinations to describe itself as open for business. The move staunchly the bleeding of its crucial tourism and real estate sectors after lockdowns and curfews cratered its economy.

As tourism restarted, daily reported coronavirus case numbers slowly grew but mostly remained stable through the fall.

But then came New Year's Eve — a major draw for travelers from countries otherwise shut down over



the virus who partied without face masks in bars and on yachts. For the last 17 days, the United Arab Emirates as a whole has reported record daily coronavirus case numbers as lines at Dubai testing facilities grow.

In Israel, more than 900 travelers returning from Dubai have been infected with the coronavirus, according to the military, which conducts contact tracing. The returnees created a chain of infections numbering more than 4,000 people, it said.

Tens of thousands of Israelis had flocked to the UAE since the two countries normalized relations in September. Israeli Health Ministry expert Dr. Sharon Alroy-Preis was quoted by Channel 13 TV as complaining in a call with other officials that a few weeks of travel had been more deadly than decades of no relations with the Arab nation.

Since late December, Israel has required those coming from the UAE to go into a two-week quarantine. Israel later shut down its main international airport through the end of

the month over rising cases.

In the United Kingdom, tabloids have splashed shots of bikini-clad British influencers partying in Dubai while the country struggled through lockdowns trying to control the virus. Britain in mid-January closed a travel corridor to Dubai that had allowed travelers to skip quarantine over what was described as a significant acceleration in the number of imported cases from the UAE.

"International travel, right now, should not be happening unless it's absolutely necessary," Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the BBC this week. "No parties in Paris or weekends in Dubai. That is not on and in most cases, it's against the law."

Meanwhile, mutated strains of the coronavirus have been linked back to Dubai. The U.K. instituted a travel ban Friday barring direct flights to the UAE over the spread of a South African variant of the coronavirus.

Denmark already discovered one traveler coming from Dubai who

tested positive for the South African variant, the first such discovery there. Like Britain, Danish celebrities similarly traveled to Dubai for the New Year.

In the Philippines, health authorities say they discovered a British strain infecting a Filipino who made a business trip to Dubai on Dec. 27. He returned to the Philippines on Jan. 7 and tested positive.

He "had no exposure to a confirmed case prior to their departure to Dubai," the Philippines Department of Health said. In the time since, Filipino authorities have discovered at least 16 other cases of the British variant, including two coming from Lebanon.

As daily reported coronavirus cases near 4,000, Dubai has fired the head of its government health agency without explanation. It stopped live entertainment at bars, halted nonessential surgeries, limited wedding sizes and ordered gyms to increase space between those working out. It also now requires coronavirus

testing for all those flying into its airport. The UAE had pinned its hopes on mass vaccinations, with Abu Dhabi distributing a Chinese vaccine by Sinopharm and Dubai offering Pfizer-BioNTech's inoculation. The UAE says it has given 2.8 million doses so far, ranking it among the top countries in the world.

However, people including al-Shaikh now question Dubai's capacity to handle the increasing cases. Hospitals contacted by the AP largely referred questions back to Dubai's government, which repeatedly declined to comment. Dubai's Saudi German Hospital responded saying it was "hoping to read the real news," without elaborating.

Dr. Santosh Kumar Sharma, the medical director of Dubai's NMC Royal Hospital, told the AP "the number of cases (is) ever rising," with over half its beds occupied by coronavirus patients.

The World Health Organization said that before the pandemic, the UAE had nearly 13,250 hospital beds for a country of over 9 million people. It said Dubai and the UAE's northern emirates built field hospitals amid the pandemic with some 5,000 beds, with Abu Dhabi building more.

But Dubai closed its 3,000-bed field hospital in July — the same day it reopened for tourism. Both Dubai and the UAE's Health Ministry now advertise for nurses on Instagram.

"The sad thing is that great efforts have been made since January 2020 for us to come and undermine them with our own hands," al-Shaikh wrote. "What makes things worse is the lack of transparency."

Yet that came after the UAE's autocratic government told those worried earlier this week to "refrain from questioning the efforts of all those who have worked to contain this pandemic."

## Tanzania's leader denies COVID. Now countrymen push back

**NAIROBI, KENYA (AP):** Tanzania's president says God has eliminated COVID-19 in his country. His own church now begs to differ.

From the local Catholic authority warning this week of a new wave of coronavirus infections, to government institutions now requiring staffers to take precautions, populist President John Magufuli is being openly questioned as the African continent fights a strong resurgence in cases and deaths.

"We are not an island," the Catholic secretariat of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference said in a widely shared statement this week. It urged followers, which include the president, to pray but also to adopt measures long practiced in the rest of the world, including avoiding public gatherings and close personal contact.

Tanzania has tried to be an island since April, when the East African country of 60 million people stopped updating its number of virus infections at 509 cases. Some health officials who questioned Magufuli's stance that COVID-19 had been defeated were fired. The government promoted international tourism, eager to avoid the economic pain of neighbors who imposed lockdowns and curfews.

The president even praised Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi for not wearing a face mask during a visit this month, calling it another sign that Tanzania is free of the virus. But pandemic concerns have returned to the spotlight in Tanzania as the world focuses on the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines.

While other African countries seek millions of doses, Magufuli this week accused people who had been vaccinated overseas of bringing the virus back into Tanzania. He also questioned whether the vaccines work.

"If the white man was able to come up with vaccinations, then vaccinations for AIDS would have been brought, tuberculosis would be a thing of the past, vaccines for malaria and cancer would have been found," he said on Wednesday. "Be firm," he added. "Vaccines



are inappropriate." He urged the health ministry not to rush into vaccinations without being satisfied about their safety. He offered no evidence for his claims.

African health officials were already worried about misinformation campaigns around COVID-19 vaccines as the first doses begin arriving on the continent of 1.3 billion people. Magufuli's stance contrasts sharply with other African heads of state like President Wavel Ramkalawan of the Seychelles, who publicly received his first vaccine shot this month and urged citizens to do the same.

Asked about Tanzania on Thursday, Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director John Nkengasong told reporters that "if we do not fight this as a collective on the continent, we will be doomed."

The World Health Organization's Africa chief, Matshidiso Moeti, told reporters that "we are re-initiating communication at the highest level of leadership" in Tanzania and seeking the government's collaboration "for the sake of the people of the country and neighboring countries, as well as for the sake of the world."

She urged Tanzania to prepare for COVID-19 vaccines, and to share its virus data with the WHO.

Some Tanzanians, from longtime critics of the president to civil society leaders, have issued a new round of exasperated warnings against trying to ignore a glob-

al pandemic. "Tanzanians have the right to vaccination against COVID," opposition leader Zitto Kabwe tweeted after the president's comments, saying a government that doesn't protect its citizens lacks legitimacy. He and others had watched as people took few to no virus precautions during a deeply flawed election that returned Magufuli to power last year.

Others worry that Tanzania is hurting itself and its economy, warning of travel bans against its citizens, the loss of tourism revenue and dangerous health implications for years.

"By denying the pandemic, Tanzania may well have put itself at the back of a very long waiting list" for vaccines, Aidan Eyakuze, who leads the Twaweza East Africa initiative promoting government transparency, wrote this month for The Citizen local newspaper. While Magufuli shows little sign of changing his stance on COVID-19, his own colleagues appear to be moving ahead to tackle infections.

Government institutions are issuing circulars requiring employees to cut down on meetings and communicate with management remotely. The finance minister has thanked God for protecting the country but now tells colleagues to listen to science as well. The health ministry did not respond to a request for comment — but it recently raised prices for coronavirus testing. Many health workers remain hesitant to speak openly.

## Fire at Romanian hospital treating virus patients kills 4

**BUCHAREST, ROMANIA (AP):** A fire early Friday at a key hospital in Bucharest that also treats COVID-19 patients killed at least four people, authorities said.

The fire broke out around 5a.m. (0400GMT) on the ground floor of the hospital and forced the evacuation of more than 100 people. Some hospital staff could be seen later still wearing protective suits and face masks after rushing out.

An unspecified number of people were injured before firefighters put out the blaze, Romanian emergency services said in a preliminary report. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire.

"We found open flame at the ground floor of the

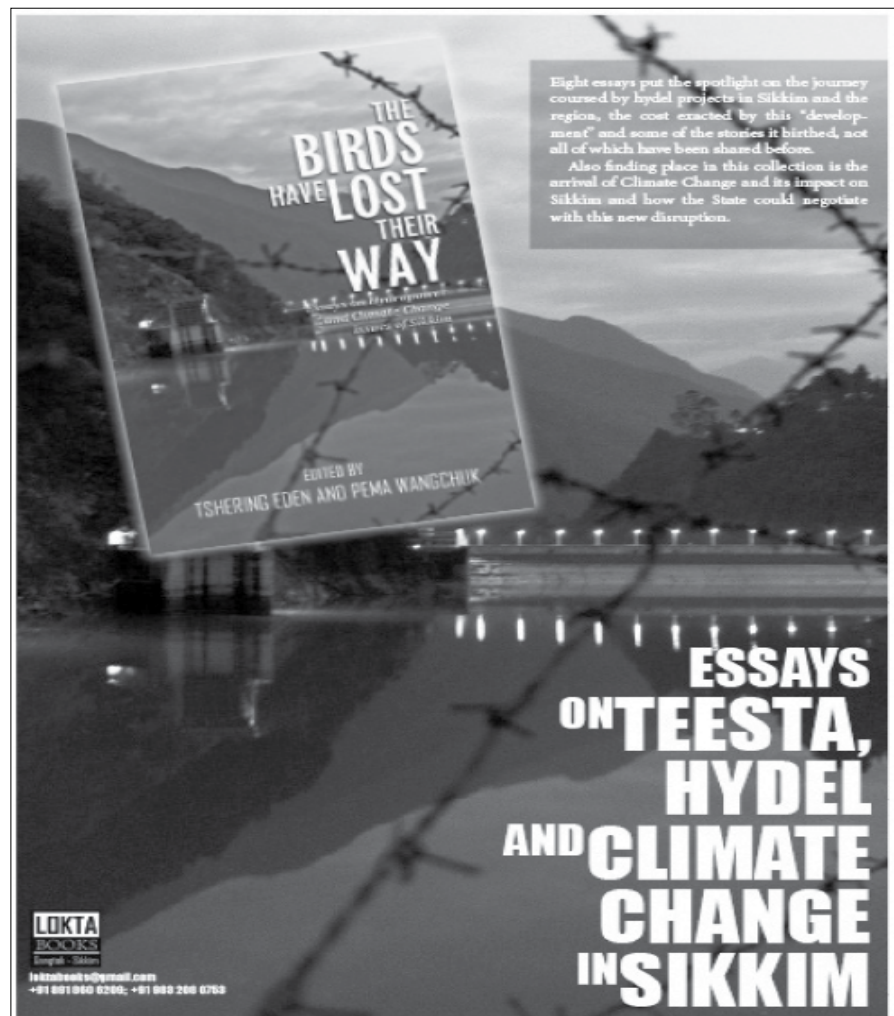


building. ... There was a lot of smoke, and there was a chance the fire would spread to the second floor," said Orlando Schiopu, the commander of the intervention unit at the scene.

Read Arafat, the emergency department chief, said the four victims were all hospital patients. Three of them were already dead when found while rescuers tried to resuscitate the

fourth victim but could not, he said. Hours later, charred balconies could be seen at the Matei Bals hospital, where health authorities organized the start of the anti-virus vaccination in Romania. Ambulances and firefighting vehicles could be seen parked outside the hospital.

The Balkan country of some 19 million people so far has reported more than 700,000 COVID-19 cases and 18,000 deaths.







**SWEATSUIT THROW BACK!** The reality tv star, Erika Jayne heads out in her monochromatic stunning 80's inspired sweatsuit.

## Noah Baumbach inks exclusive deal with Netflix, sets 'White Noise' as next project

**LOS ANGELES, JAN 29 (PTI):** Oscar-nominated filmmaker Noah Baumbach has signed a multi-year deal with streamer Netflix. As part of the new deal, the filmmaker's next feature for the streamer is "White Noise", an adaptation of Don DeLillo's seminal novel of the same name.

The movie, which will reportedly star Baumbach's partner Greta Gerwig and "Marriage Story" actor Adam Driver, will start production later this year.

Baumbach will produce the project alongside David Heyman, with whom he also produced 2019's "Marriage Story".

"When I started in the film industry I dreamed of having a home. It took me about 25 years but it was worth the wait. I couldn't be more thrilled to be making movies with Ted and Scott and everyone at Netflix, who are wonderful collaborators and friends and family," he said in a statement. Ted Sarandos, Co-CEO and Chief Content Officer at Netflix,

hailed Baumbach for making "some of the most personal and influential films in American cinema".

"When we started to work together

reviews from the critics at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival.

The filmmaker followed it up with "Marriage Story", starring Driver and



almost 4 years ago, he immediately felt like family and I'm thrilled we're finally making it official," he added.

Baumbach's collaboration with Netflix started with "The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)", starring Adam Sandler, Ben Stiller and Emma Thompson. The movie had premiered to rave

Scarlett Johansson in the lead. The critically-lauded movie was nominated for six Academy Awards at the 2020 Oscars, including two for Baumbach.

Actor Laura Dern had bagged the best supporting actress award at the ceremony for her portrayal of lawyer Nora Fanshaw in the movie.

## Cicely Tyson, groundbreaking actress, dead at 96

**NEW YORK, JAN 29 (AP):** Cicely Tyson, the pioneering Black actress who gained an Oscar nomination for her role as the sharecropper's wife in Sounder, a Tony Award in 2013 at age 88 and touched TV viewers' hearts in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, died Thursday at age 96.

Tyson's death was announced by her family, via her manager Larry Thompson, who did not immediately provide additional details.

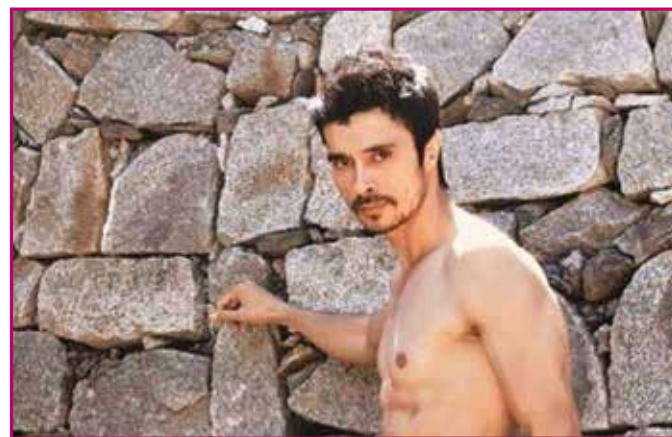
With heavy heart, the family of Miss Cicely Tyson announces her peaceful tran-

sition this afternoon. At this time, please allow the family their privacy, according to a statement issued through Thompson.

A onetime model, Tyson began her screen career with bit parts but gained fame in the early 1970s when Black women were finally starting to get starring roles. Besides her Oscar nomination, she won two Emmys for playing the 110-year-old former slave in the 1974 television drama The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman.

Tyson's memoir, Just As I Am, was published this week.

## Darshan Kumaar joins T-Series' R Madhavan-led suspense thriller



**MUMBAI, JAN 29 (PTI):** Actor Darshan Kumaar has been roped in to star alongside R Madhavan in a suspense thriller film, to be produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series.

The yet-to-be-titled film, directed by Kookie Gulati, also features actor Aparshakti Khurana.

Kumaar, known for his performance in movies like "Mary Kom", "NH10" and "Sarbjit", said 2021 has begun on a high note for him.

"I'm super excited to be part of the film. It is always

great when you get to work on a good script. But what makes the experience even more enriching is when you have great co-stars, too.

"Madhavan is one of the best actors in our industry, who always delivers out-of-the-box performances. I'm also looking forward to working with Aparshakti Khurana, who is a wonderful actor, the actor said in a statement.

The 34-year-old actor started shooting for the film recently. The movie also marks singer Khushali Kumar's acting debut.

## 'Kallu Mama' fame actor Saurabh Shukla comes up with one-man feature film

**KOLKATA, JAN 29 (PTI):** Actor Saurabh Shukla said the COVID-induced lockdown gave him an opportunity to read and reflect, more importantly get his creative juices flowing, and he ended up making a full-length one-man feature film where he donned the hat of a writer, director and the only character.

The 90-minute film, currently in its post-production stages, is funny, dark and thrilling, Shukla said, adding that he would be soon sending his latest movie for screening at festivals.

The veteran actor, all excited to work in Kaushik Ganguly's first Hindi flick 'Manohar Pandey', also said that Kolkata is his home, and he loves the city for his unique character, culture and food.

"Ganguly has made some amazing films. He is multi-talented, and can write direct and act equally well. This film has a soul, it has humour in it but you can't really brand it as just another comedy.

"Also, I will be sharing screen space with talented co-stars Supriya Pathak and Raghubir Yadav, and I am looking forward to it," the Bollywood



actor, who is in the city for shooting of the film, told PTI.

Shukla, also said that he would want to do a Bengali film someday.

Asked about his journey in the film industry -- from Shekhar Kapur's 'Bandit Queen' to 'Manohar Pandey' the National Award-winning actor underlined that the experience so far has been a fulfilling one, but not without a fair share of hiccups.

"I was overweight, and was usually cast in roles that amused the audience. Comedy also elicits pathos, but that concept wasn't there in Hindi films. We just want an overweight person to be funny.

"It was Sudhir Mishra, who gave me the role of a professional killer in 'Is Raat ki Subah Nahi', and my work was noticed and appreciated," the 57-year-old actor said.

Talking about the mushrooming OTT (over-the-top) sites, and the fear that it could overshadow big screen films, Shukla said that every new platform creates its own space, and can co-exist with other mediums.

He, however, expressed concern over the growing censorship over art and films in the country.

"Censorship has its pros and cons. It is, in some cases, necessary. But, objecting to anything and everything that is not suited to a particular taste and culture is not acceptable," he said.

On a lighter note, 'Kallu Mama' of Ram Gopal Varma's Satya also shared that he loves sports, and takes table tennis pretty seriously.

"As and when I visit a new city, especially for my shoots, I get in touch with the table tennis clubs there. I have had the opportunity to play with professionals, be it in Los Angeles, London or Lucknow. Not many know that Bengal has some very talented TT players.

"I got to play with some of them at a club in Bhawanipore here, and it has been an enriching experience," he signed off.

## Netflix's 'Lupin' will return with second part in summer 2021

**LOS ANGELES, JAN 29 (PTI):** Netflix's new breakout show "Lupin" will return with its second part in summer 2021, the streamer has announced.

The French-language mystery thriller, starring "The Intouchables" actor Omar Sy, became a breakout hit when it premiered on January 8 on the platform. Developed by George Kay and Francois Uzan, the show is based Maurice Leblanc's famous character Arsene Lupin.

It centres on Assane Diop, whose childhood was turned upside down when his father

died after being accused of a crime he didn't commit.

Twenty-five years later, Assane (Sy) uses "Arsene Lupin, Gentleman Burglar" as his inspiration to avenge his father.

The first five episodes that were released on January 8 were directed by Louis Leterrier and Marcela Said.

Part 2 of "Lupin" will consist of an additional five episodes. Episodes six and seven will be directed by Ludovic Bernard, while episodes eight, nine and ten will be directed by Hugo Gelin.

Aries:

A certain degree of solitude is required to put your best work forward. Read that again, Aries. Today, you're feeling all kinds of optimistic and are in the mood to create your best work yet. So, remember to keep the distractions at bay as you give the project at hand your undivided attention. The world of occult and magic is also likely to have an effect on you. For first timers, it's best to work under the guidance of a high priest(ess) you trust.

Tip: You're in the mood to get stuff done! Taurus:

You're in the mood to take all kinds of chances and adopt a no-holds-barred policy with your lover(s). It's time to tell it like it is, Taurus. It's time to bring in all the feels that you've been feeling for some time now. Trust that your forthcoming attitude will take your intimacy to a whole new level. Tip: Feel all the feels.

Gemini:

You've been in this territory for a while now, yet there was something that was keeping you from taking that giant leap of faith. However, you'll find that this full moon is full of possibilities and is clearing things up so you can move to the next level. The real question is: What will you manifest in your physical reality? Let 'thoughts to things' become your mantra, beloved.

Tip: From thoughts to things.

Cancer:

It's easy to be the giver in the relationship. It's easy to be the one who saves your friends when they're in trouble. There's something about being the saviour that strokes our ego like nothing else will. So, consider a bit of role reversal today. Instead of trying to heal or fix everything, allow yourself to receive love and kindness. PS: Your soul family is showing up for you in a whole new way.

Tip: Receive. Leo:

Just because you've been doing things a certain way doesn't mean you have to continue to. Today, you're in the mood to push your own boundaries and experiment in ways you never have before. Know that it is by responding to your creative urges that you will be able to bring your unique gifts to the fore. Expressing yourself through the language of words is also going to be an important theme for lions in the creative field. Be present to what's coming through without trying to control the flow. You'll have plenty of time to edit your thoughts later.

Tip: Respond to the creative urges of your soul.

Virgo:

You can't keep working as a costume designer if you want to be cast in the lead role of a block-

buster. Read that again, Virgo. 'Settling' is a dirty word, one that doesn't match your vibration at all. So, stop playing it small or waiting for somebody else to discover your hidden potential. The truth is, putting yourself out there is the only way to realise your larger-than-life goals. If this requires you to toot your own horn tastefully, so be it. What you will gain from taking initiative is minuscule in comparison to what you could possibly lose.

Tip: It's time to realise those larger-than-life goals. Libra:

As a descendant of Venus, you believe that beauty is the only religion and are committed to bringing refinement to everything around you. While there's a part of you that believes you are deserving of receiving abundance and grace from the Universe, there's another part of you that sabotages this actively. Today, you're being asked to offer both the guilt and the self-negating beliefs to the sacred fire. Trust that bringing about a shift within will have an effect on your outer reality soon enough.

Tip: Allow yourself to receive what the Universe has in store for you.

Scorpio:

So what if it didn't work out the first time? So what if you faced roadblocks at every step along the way? That doesn't mean the game is over for you, Scorpio. It simply means that you have

to reinvent yourself. Friday sees you working with a whole new strategy, one that involves re-writing the rules and taking the kind of risks that you've never taken before. If it doesn't inspire you to jump out of bed every morning, it isn't good enough, is it?

Tip: It's time to reinvent the game.

Sagittarius:

You've always had a way with words, haven't you? So, what's keeping you from putting pen to paper and allowing the words to flow? Channeling your inner Shakespeare is going to be a big theme for you, Sagittarius. So work on that movie script or book that you've been putting on the backburner for a while now, or simply journal for your own pleasure. While the former will exercise your creative muscles, the latter will prove to be deeply therapeutic.

Tip: Put pen to paper and allow the words to flow.

Capricorn:

Capricorn, you are where you need to be, and experiencing the kind of stability you once thought was a distant dream. But don't let that become the reason you get 'too comfortable' and forget to explore what's out there. The cards are talking about expanding your horizons—geographically too in certain cases. Tap into your existing network and trust that they will provide you with the leads you need to go forth and conquer the

world. For some of you, the opportunity to travel or relocate may also open up. Listen to what your heart is telling you about this one—this decision is yours and yours alone.

Tip: It's time to take your business to the next level.

Aquarius:

They're doing and saying all the right things. Yet you can't seem to shake off the feeling that something is amiss here. Vibes don't lie, Aquarius! Neither does that killer instinct of yours. So, if you want (to politely) refuse this opportunity, don't let others interfere. Remember, saying no to that which is not a vibrational match for you is the first step towards making space for what is.

Tip: If it's not a vibrational match for you, let it go.

Pisces:

The cards are indicating the completion of a significant cycle, which in turn is making space for another. Take a bow, and do so gracefully. You have earned your moment in the sun. That said, charging forward at this point may not be the best idea. So take a breather. Allow your body and mind to recuperate from the whirlwind of activity. When it's time to get back into the game, you'll just know, Pisces.

Tip: Rest and reboot.