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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Labike innovator calls on CM



**GANGTOK, 14 MAR [IPR]:** Amit Bhatnagar, innovator of the Labike Health Dignostic System through Accuster Technologies Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, called on Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang at Mintokgang today.

During the interaction which followed, the State Government's vision to provide rural health service in Sikkim with an innovative Health Monitoring Scheme through this system was discussed thoroughly.

The Labike system is a unique approach and a scientific tool to provide a complete diagnostic centre for prevention of common diseases, including liver and kidney complications.

This system is certified with the Food & Drug Administration of USA and all Government of India parameters and certifications.

Health Minister Dr MK Sharma, along with two other members of the aforementioned organization, were also present for the visit.

## Bal Panchayat prez chairs Child Empowerment Day function at Barfung-Jarrong



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 14 MAR:**

Barfung-Jarrong GPU observed the first Child Empowerment Day today at the Gram Prashasan Kendra under the chairmanship of BalPanchayat president, Anjali Jogi.

The event was attended by the panchayats of the GPU, Bal-Panchayat members and other staff.

The SIRD Field Facilitator

UdayaChamling spoke on the importance of Child Empowerment Day and about the Child Empowerment Centre that is to be constructed.

Anjali Jogishared her experience of being president of the BalPanchayatand assured that still better works will be done by the BalPanchayat in the future.

An open discussion on two upcoming action plans of the BalPanchayat – a programme on

menstrual hygiene at Deythang Junior High School and Waste Management plans for Upper Burfung Bazar were discussed.

A screening of the Hindi movie, "TaareinZameen Par" was also held.

The Panchayat President of the GPU, Anil Rai, delivered the welcome address and presented the concluding remarks at today's programme.

## 2 killed, one missing in road mishap near Rabom

**WANGCHUK BHUTIA  
MANGAN, 14 MAR:**

Two people are dead, one missing and a fourth injured in a road mishap near Rabom on the Chungthang-Lachen axis in North Sikkim on the intervening night of 12-13 March.

The ill-fated vehicle, a Mahindra Scorpio bearing registration number SK-01P-3715, was coming down from Lachen when it veered off the road near Rabom and plunged into the Lachen Chu.

The driver, Pema Gurmey Lachenpa, and one occupant, Thupden Tenzing Lachenpa, are reported to have died on the spot. There were four occupants in the vehicle, including the driver, at the time of the mishap.

Dorjee Lachenpa was rescued from the spot and evacuated to the District Hospital at Mangan where he is currently under treatment while the fourth occupant, Tshering Wangyal Lachenpa, is still missing.

Search operations are still underway to trace him.

## No new Covid cases in Sikkim

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 14 MAR:**

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 held at 6,184 for a second consecutive day today with no new cases of novel coronavirus being reported in the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, with the recovery of one more patient, the number of so discharged Covid patients in Sikkim has improved to 5,906. There are currently

only 46 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State.

In his daily health bulletin, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia, also informed that all 152 samples tested on Saturday returned negative for COVID-19.

He informed that a total of 41,351 persons have been vaccinated against COVID-19 so far in Sikkim.

## Phurba from Lingmoo win's women's marathon in Kolkata



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 14 MAR:**

Long-distance runners from Sikkim and Darjeeling delivered an outstanding performance at the Ageas Federal Life Insurance Kolkata Marathon 2021 on Sunday.

Phurba Tamang from Lingmoo, South Sikkim, emerged champion of the women's full marathon [42.2 km] with a

timing of 3 hours and 58 minutes while Anish Majhi from Mirik, Darjeeling, stood 3rd in the half marathon [21.1 km] and Shiva Hang Limbu from West Sikkim ran in 4th in the full marathon of 42.2 km.

Likewise, Monang Limbu from Sikkim stood on the 6th position in 10 KMs and Passang Doma Bhutia from Darjeeling

finished the 21.1 KM marathon in 6th position.

Dr Sudarsan Tamang of Sikkim University stood second in men's category of the half marathon of 21.1 KM with a timing of one hour and 22 minutes.

Marathon Man, Amar Subba, himself stood fifth in the open category of the half marathon with a timing of 1:32 hours.

## Boxing c'ship of East dist Junior Olympics concludes



### SAGAR CHHETRI

**GANGTOK, 14 MAR:**

The district-level boxing championship under the 1st Inter School Junior Olympic Games 2020-21 for East Sikkim, organized under the 'Sports for Peace and Development' Vertical of Khelo India, concluded here at Paljor Stadium complex on Sunday.

The event was organized by the Department of Sports & Youth

Affairs on sponsorship by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.

50 pugilists from eleven blocks of East District had participated in the boxing championship held under the supervision of State Boxing Coach, Pratima Gooroo, who was also the venue in-charge.

Former international boxer, Ramanand, who is currently posted as boxing coach at SAI Namchi was present as guest

jury.

Ms Gooroo informed that boxers participated in U-14 and U-17 boys & girls categories competing in seven weight categories. Gold medalists from each weight category will represent the district in the upcoming state-level games.

The closing day of the championship had ultra-marathon runner, Allen Targain, as chief guest and Mrs Sikkim, Dawa Zangmu Bhutia, as guest of honour.

## Cop suspended by election body over Mamata Banerjee's injury at Nandigram

**NEW DELHI, 14 MAR [NDTV]:** The police officer in charge of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's security when she was injured during a visit to the state's Nandigram, just weeks before the elections, has been suspended by the Election Commission.

"Vivek Sahay IPS, Director Security shall be removed from the post of the Director Security and be placed under suspension immediately. The charges must be framed

against him within a week for grossly failing in discharge of his primary duty as Director Security to protect the Z+ protectee," the Election Commission said, soon after declaring that the incident was an accident and not attack.

The Commission, which held a meeting to discuss the issue after receiving a report on Friday, pointed out lapses on part of the Chief Minister's security personnel.

Security was "not properly handled" and the Chief Minister's

security protocol was violated, the Commission said. Mamata Banerjee, who has Z-Plus security, has to travel in a bullet-proof car, but she was not. Instead, the security in-charge was sitting in the bullet-proof car, the Commission said.

On Wednesday, Ms Banerjee had said she was pushed by four or five people against her car and had the door shut on her, during her visit to Nandigram. There were no police personnel around her at the time, she had said.

## Dentist, 29, camping at Delhi border for 3 months for Farmers' cause

**SHONAKSHI CHAKRAVARTY  
NEW DELHI, 14 MAR**

[NDTV]: 29-year-old Navkiran Natt had never thought that one day she would be spending her time camping at one of the Delhi borders - the site of the farmers' protest. She has been camping in a tent for three months now and running a makeshift library for the agitating farmers.

Ms Navkiran, who is a dentist by profession and also has a degree in film studies, says she could have certainly done a lot more with her time and life with all her work and educational experience but her heart lies with the cause of farmers and their protest which has been going on for over 100 days now.

"Books help me, books help us," said Ms Natt who is not only running the 'Bhagat Singh Library' but also helping in editing copies for the 'Trolley Times' a newspaper born out of the movement two months ago and founded by and for the farmers.

She, however, is not alone in this. Several youngsters can be spotted volunteering at the farmers' protest sites at Delhi borders.



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India records 25,320 fresh COVID-19 cases, biggest single-day jump in 84 days

**NEW DELHI, MAR 14 (PTI):** India on Sunday recorded 25,320 COVID-19 infections, the highest daily rise in 84 days, taking the case tally to 1,13,59,048, according to Union health ministry data

As many as 26,624 new infections were recorded on December 20

The death toll increased to 1,58,607 on Sunday with 161 new fatalities, the highest in 44 days, the data updated at 8 am showed

The country's active caseload increased to 2,10,544 and constitutes 1.85 per cent of the total infections. The recovery rate dropped to 96.75 per cent from 96.82 per cent on Saturday

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,09,89,897, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.40 per cent, the data stated

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 750 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, 22,67,03,641 samples had been tested up to March 13 with 8,64,368 being tested on Saturday

The 161 new fatalities include 88 from Maharashtra, 22 from Punjab and 12 from Kerala

So far, 1,58,607 deaths have been reported in the country including 52,811 from Maharashtra, 12,543 from Tamil Nadu, 12,387 from Karnataka, 10,939 from Delhi, 10,288 from West Bengal, 8,745 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,182 from Andhra Pradesh

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

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

# First Child Empowerment Day observed in North Sikkim



**MANGAN, 14 MAR [IPR]:** The 1st "Child Empowerment Day" was observed at Chungthang and Tingchim Chaday GPUs in North Sikkim on Sunday. ADC-Chungthang, Hem Sagar Kaphley, chaired the meeting at VAC Chungthang which was also attended by the Panchayat President Chungchung Lepcha who is also the VLCPC chairperson, DCPO-North, Wendy Lepcha, SIRD Field Facilitator and members of the Village Level Child Protection Committee of the GPU.

Mr Kaphley requested the committee to be proactive and work towards the protection of child rights.

He encouraged them to report and extended his full support on any issue pertaining to child rights.

The DCPO highlight-

ed provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and how the structures established under the Act function towards protection of child rights in the district.

The Panchayat President shared his intention to guide and lead the Village Child Protection Committee wholeheartedly and requested the members to work diligently as child protectors of the GPU.

Also today, the Village

Level Child Protection Committee of Tingchim Chaday GPU observed the day in the presence of Panchayat President and Chairperson, VLCPC, Sarki Bhutia, Chairperson, CWC-North, Mingma Doma Bhutia, members of the VLCPC and children of the GPU.

The roles and responsibilities of VLCPC and Child Welfare Committee and further plans to empower the GPU were

discussed.

The observance of Child Empowerment Day is an initiative of SIRD-North wherein the 25 GPUs of the State identified as "Child Empowering GPUs" are required to observe this day on the 14th of every month.

The VLCPC Committees established by the District Child Protection Units under the Child Protection Scheme take the responsibility to organize child-related ac-

tivities and programmes on this day.

The committees have to also ensure the setting up of "Child Empowerment Centres" for which 4 GPUs of the North District have been identified by State Institute of Rural Department and Panchayati Raj (SIRDPR), Rural Development Department in coordination with the District Child Protection Unit, North & Block Level Child Protection Committees under Child Protection Scheme, Social Justice and Welfare Department.

The Centre has been funded under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSAA), Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. The objective is to provide safe space for children of the GPU and to cater to their developmental, educational or other needs.

## Farmers' stir may continue till Dec: Rakesh Tikait

**ALLAHABAD, MAR 14 (PTI)** The Bhartiya Kisan Union-led farmer agitation against the three central farm laws may continue till December this year, the outfit national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said here on Sunday.

Tikait made the statement while talking to reports here after his recent visit to the poll-bound West Bengal.

This agitation possibly will stretch up to November or December this year, he said.

Talking about his Wes

Bengal visit, Tikait said during their poll campaigning there, the central government people have been asking farmers to give them one feastful of rice.

I have advised Bengal farmers to ask grain seekers to fix an MSP of Rs 1850 per quintal for paddy before giving them a single grain of rice, Tikait told reporters here.

He said after Bengal, he was planning to visit other parts of the country to press

for the enactment of a law guaranteeing an MSP for various crops.

In Bihar, the paddy is currently being bought by traders at an abysmally low rate of Rs 750 to Rs 800 per quintal. I want a law guaranteeing the minimum support price for various crops, said Tikait.

He said he was not going to sit in Delhi alone but was planning to visit all over the country, including Madhya Pradesh on March 14 and 15, Ganga Nagar in Rajasthan on March 17, Ghazipur's

UP Gate border in Delhi on March 18, Odisha on March 19 and Karnataka on March 21 and 22.

During his visit here, Tikait also garlanded a statue of his late father and farmer leader Mahendra Singh Tikait at Tikait Park in Jhalwa near here.

The BKKU spokesperson claimed the three central laws will lead to the closure of all small-time neighbourhood shops, leaving only big commercial malls to survive.

These farm laws will ruin traders and lead to the closure of small business utilities and the collapse of small industries. These laws will bring in big multinational firms like Walmart," claimed Tikait.

Had this government belonged to a political party, it would have talked to farmers and resolved the matter, Tikait said.

But this government is being run by big business houses. It is bent upon selling the entire country, he alleged.

## Sri Lanka to ban burqa, shut more than 1,000 Islamic schools

**COLOMBO, 14 MAR [AL-JAZEERA]:** Sri Lanka's government says it will ban the wearing of the burqa, a full-body veil that covers the face as well, and close more than 1,000 Islamic schools, the latest actions affecting the country's minority Muslim population.

Separately, the government on Saturday announced using a controversial anti-terror law to deal with religious "extremism" and gave itself sweeping powers to detain suspects for up to two years for "deradicalisation".

Minister for Public Security Sarath Weer-

asekera told a news conference he had signed a paper on Friday for cabinet approval to ban the burqa - an outer garment that covers the entire body and the face and is worn by some Muslim women - on "national security" grounds.

"In our early days, Muslim women and girls never wore the burqa," he said. "It is a sign of religious extremism that came about recently. We are definitely going to ban it."

The minister said he signed documents outlawing the burqa, but they need to be approved by the cabinet of ministers and Parliament

where the government has a two-thirds majority to see its bills through.

Weerasekera also said the government plans to ban more than 1,000 Islamic schools that he said were flouting national education policy.

"Nobody can open a school and teach whatever you want to the children," he said.

The government's moves on burqas and schools follow an order last year mandating the cremation of COVID-19 victims - against the wishes of Muslims, who bury their dead.

This ban was lifted earlier this year after

criticism from the United States and international rights groups.

Shreen Saroor, a Sri Lankan peace and women's rights activist, said the moves come "at a time when the Muslim community has been constantly targeted".

"It's part of the Islamophobic reaction in Sri Lanka," Saroor told Al Jazeera from the capital, Colombo.

"The compulsory cremation policy was revised, and now we hear so many other measures to some form of punishing the Muslim community," she added, noting that Muslims in the country were not consulted in

advance.

Citing the fact that the wearing of the mask has been made compulsory in the country during the coronavirus pandemic, Saroor said the burqa "looks [like] a very political revenge move".

The wearing of the burqa in the majority-Buddhist nation was temporarily banned in 2019 after the Easter Sunday bombing of churches and hotels by armed fighters that killed more than 250 people.

The move drew a mixed response, with activists saying it "violated Muslim women's right to practise their religion freely".

## New children's book to tell story of Raja Ravi Varma

**New Delhi, Mar 14 (PTI):** A new illustrated book, which brings alive the life and times of celebrated Indian artist Raja Ravi Varma, will hit the stands in April, announced publishing house Westland on Sunday.

The children's book, titled "Prince with a Paintbrush: The Story of Raja Ravi Varma", is written by author-poet Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan. Published under Westland's 'Red Panda' imprint, it aims to inspire young readers to learn about the famed artist and how he made his entry and mark in the art world.

When other children were busy playing hopscotch with friends, seven-year-old Ravi Varma -- born on April 29, 1848, in a village in Kerala --

was painting on the walls of his house. His love for painting, frowned upon by his elders, was nurtured by his uncle Raja Raja Varma, who took him to the court of the Maharaja of Travancore to study and practise art.

"The idea of a series on Indian artists had been percolating in my mind for a while and I was writing poems inspired by Raja Ravi Varma's art. As I saw it, here was a famous 19th century Indian painter who blended European aesthetics with Indian images and connected the world more than a century ago, and yet so few children seemed to know him," said Srinivasan, who has earlier authored children books like "Indi-Alphabet" and "How Many Lines in a Limerick?".

## NSCN-IM asks Centre to resolve Naga issue

**KOHIMA, MAR 14 (PTI):** Naga group NSCN-IM on Sunday appealed to the Central government to resolve the decades-long insurgency problem of Nagaland, but made it clear that any solution outside the purview of the 2015 Framework Agreement will not be acceptable to it.

In a statement, the NSCN-IM also asked the Centre to be "more positive and sincere" in finding a solution to their demands.

The NSCN-IM said it has been more than five years since the signing of the framework agreement in 2015 between the group's general secretary Thuingalen Mui-vah and central government's interlocutor R N Ravi, who is currently Nagaland Governor, in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As agreed, the group said that within this framework agreement, both the parties are required to work out the details and execution plans for early implementation.

"We call upon the Government of India to be more positive and sincere. We believe there is no human problem which cannot be resolved with human wis-

dom pregnant with mutual respect and equality as Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often quoted. We are for peace and progress," the statement said.

However, the NSCN-IM made it clear that "any formulation or proposal from any quarter which is outside the parameter of the framework agreement shall not be acceptable to the NSCN in particular and the Naga people in general".

The Central government recently had told Parliament that talks with the NSCN-IM and other Naga groups are at an advance stage but did not give details of the negotiations, nor any time-frame to complete the dialogue.

The framework agreement came after over 80 rounds of negotiations spanning 18 years, with the first breakthrough made in 1997 when the ceasefire agreement was sealed after decades of insurgency in Nagaland which started soon after India's Independence.

However, the talks with the NSCN-IM is currently going nowhere as the group has been insisting for a separate Naga flag and constitution, a demand rejected by the Central government.

## Forest fires totally contained & controlled: Odisha govt

**BHUBANESWAR/BARIPADA, MAR 14 (PTI):** The Odisha government on Sunday claimed that the forest fire situation in the state is "totally contained and controlled" while the opposition BJP alleged that the forest department was responsible for the widespread wildfire in different jungles.

The state government's Forest Fire Task Force chief Dr Sandeep Tripathy said the forest fire situation across Odisha including Similipal National Park as on Sunday is "totally contained and controlled".

He said: "There is no continuous fire in the state as of now. This has been possible because of immediate and proactive steps taken by the government to check and control forest fire in the state and massive inhibited support of local communities who have come all out and assisted the forest officials in fire extinguishing in the field".

On the forest fire incident at Barunei hills near Khurda town, about 25 km from Bhubaneswar, Tripathy said that the fire was spotted at about 12 noon and due to immediate intervention, the inferno was doused within some hours.

"No trees were affected at Barunei and only ground fire was seen which had been extinguished at 2 pm," Tripathy said.

However, considering that the major fire season is still left and fire activity increases with the rise in the temperature after the onset of summer season, the state government has asked the field officials to be on full alert to prevent any proliferation of fire in their areas.

The response of field officials is more than 95 per cent. As of now as per Forest Survey of India Alerts information, there is no ongoing continuous fire point in the state, Tripathy said, adding that the augmented manpower and infrastructure is effectively deployed in the field to continue mitigating prevailing fire situation effectively, particularly in identified vulnerable areas and hot spots.

Eight ODRAF teams with 25 members along with Fire Officials are being actively engaged in dousing forest fire along with forest staff, he said, adding that the Central Team after their visit to Similipal National Park and Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary on Sunday toured Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary.

The central team is scheduled to meet the state government officials on Monday, Tripathy informed.

Meanwhile, BJP's Sambalpur MLA and former minister JN Mishra, who led a 13-member party legislature team to Similipal National Park for verification of ground reality said: "During our visit, we found two major fires at Joranda and Chahala range inside Similipal National Park, one of the biggest biosphere in Asia."

Rejecting the state government's allegation that the local people set fire in forests in order to clear bushes for collection of Mahua flower and Kendu leaves, the BJP delegation said: "There is absolutely no coordination between the local people and forest department. The people are rather unhappy over the activities of forest department."

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# Painting workshop by SMD Art Foundation and Oviya Art Circle

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 14 MAR:

A painting workshop, organised under the auspices of SMD Art Foundation, Guwahati, and Oviya Arts Circle, Sikkim, was held at the White Memorial Hall here on Sunday.

President, Sikkim Akademi, SR Subba, was present as the chief guest.

In his address, Mr Subba said, "I do not belong to this stream, but I always supported art and literature."

"Art and literature advance society and the country and artists speak through their creations. They become immortal with their work. I don't

think there would have been any history without artists," he remarked.

Mintu Deka, Chairperson and founder of SMD Art Foundation, spoke on how an artist can keep growing and evolving and shared that he would be keen to continue his association with Sikkim through such workshops.

Speaking on the occasion, Oviya Arts Circle president, Deepa Rai, pointed out how Sikkim's 11th monarch, Chogyal Tashi Namgyal, was a keen and accomplished artist and of how Indradhanush Painting Institute, Namchi, has done commendable work.



The event was also addressed by Purna Yonjan, general secretary, Sikkim Akademi, and Kiday Lepcha, Co-Director, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Sikkim.

Artists from different

parts of the country participated in the workshop; some of them were Chaitali Chanda, Deepa Rai, Diwakar Lamichanay, Dhiraj Pradhan, Jaydeep Bhat-tacharya K. Parvati, Manoj Rai, Meenakshi

Barogohai, Mintu Deka, Parasmani Rai, Paresh Bhuiyan, Sagar Subba, Sanjay Rai, Santosh Kumar, Satya Birudharaju, Soumya Devnath, Shyamal Mukherjee, Sushant Sarkar, U. Bhijaya Kumar, Umakanta Khanadey etc.

## 40 strength-lifters to represent Sikkim at national c'ship in Cooch Behar

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 14 MAR:

A 40-member team of Sikkim Strength Lifting Association [SSLA] is all set to represent the State at the 30th Senior National Men's & Women's Strength Lifting and Inclined Bench Press Championship 2021 to be held from 17 to 20 March in Cooch Behar, West Bengal.

The State squad is made up of seven women and 33 men.

The team is being accompanied by Pema Dorjee Bhutia as chief coach and has Bijay Tewari as team manager.

At a function held here on Sunday, SSLA executive members welcomed the team success. The function had Sikkim Khadi & Village



Industries Board chairperson, Chung Chung Bhutia, as the chief guest, accompanied by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha sports wing advisor, Thakur Rai, as guest of honour.

In her address, Ms Bhutia congratulated the team on being selected to represent Sikkim and urged them to give their best to keep

the name of Sikkim shining with their spirit and discipline.

On behalf of the association, SSLA president, Tenzing D Denzongpa, expressed gratitude towards SKM sports wing for sponsoring the T-shirts for the State team for the championship.

He pointed out that

strength-lifters from Sikkim have already won medals and laurels at national and international events and expressed confidence that they will excel in Cooch Behar as well.

Earlier, SSLA chief coach, Pema Dorjee Bhutia, mentioned that the association has provided an opportunity

to young and new faces from different parts of the State in the State team.

He added that the team has undergone rigorous training and in peak form.

The function ended with a vote of thanks proposed by SSLA publicity secretary, Chandra Kala Pradhan.

## US protesters demand justice a year after Breonna Taylor killing

LOUISVILLE, 14 MAR

[ALJAZEERA]: Hundreds of demonstrators have rallied in the US city of Louisville, demanding justice on the anniversary of the death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman who was shot and killed by police during a botched raid of her apartment.

Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, led the crowds marching on Saturday behind a large purple banner with an illustration of the young woman's face, chanting "No justice, no peace."

"We got two different Americas. We got one for Black Americans and one for white Americans," Benjamin Crump, a lawyer representing Taylor's family, told the demonstrators.

"We got to get justice for all our people in America."

Taylor's death, along with the police killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, sparked huge protests against police abuses and racism across the United States last year. But 12 months after the killing, only one of three police officers involved in the raid has been charged,

and only for endangering Taylor's neighbours by firing wildly into an adjacent apartment.

US President Joe Biden on Saturday declared his support for police reforms.

"Breonna Taylor's death was a tragedy, a blow to her family, her community, and America," he said in a tweet. "As we continue to mourn her, we must press ahead to pass meaningful police reform in Congress. I remain committed to signing a landmark reform bill into law."

The Louisville rally came a day after Kenneth Walker, Taylor's boyfriend, filed a federal lawsuit against the city's Metro Police Department, alleging his constitutional rights were violated during last year's raid, news outlets reported.

Walker last year filed a continuing state lawsuit against the city and police, saying he was the victim of assault, battery, false arrest and malicious prosecution.

Taylor's front door was breached by Louisville officers as part of a drug raid in the early

morning hours of March 13, 2020. Walker fired his gun once, saying later that he feared an intruder was entering the apartment. One officer was struck, and he and two other officers fired 32 shots into the apartment, striking Taylor five times.

Taylor's death initially flew under the media radar, as the COVID-19 crisis shut down society, but Floyd's death in Minnesota and the release of a chilling 911 call from Walker in late May sparked interest in the case.

Police had a no-knock warrant but said they knocked and announced their presence before entering Taylor's apartment, a claim some witnesses have disputed. No drugs were found in Taylor's apartment.

A Kentucky judge last week signed an order permanently closing a criminal case against Walker for firing at the officer.

Walker referenced the closure of the case against him during Saturday's rally.

"I gotta say that's a nice start, but that's not

where we finish," Walker said. "We've got to keep going."

A continuing federal investigation could be wide-ranging and is regarded by many as the last chance for justice for Taylor's death. In a statement on Saturday, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said it has "made significant progress in the investigation" despite the COVID-19 pandemic presenting "several unexpected obstacles". The Bureau remained "steadfast in its commitment to bringing this investigation to its appropriate conclusion," the statement said.

Louisville Mayor Greg Fisher said his city has made significant reforms in policies and priorities, but that there was still "a good deal of work ahead".

Taylor's "death resonates still in our city and around the world, underscoring the need to reform systems and act more urgently to advance racial justice and equity," he said on Twitter.

Protests were also held in other US cities to mark Taylor's death,

including in Atlanta and New York.

Isaac Bryan, executive director of the UCLA Black Policy Project, told Al Jazeera the failure to indict the police officers involved in Taylor's death showed "how our justice system treats accountability differently for different communities".

"You can lose your life at home in your bed, and still have your partner have charges filed against them sooner than the law enforcement officers who misguidedly fired into your bedroom," he told Al Jazeera from Los Angeles in California. "And we need to think very critically about that."

Wide-ranging action was needed, he said. In addition to the passage of the police reform bill before the US Congress, "we have to elect, we have to support and defend progressive prosecutors and we have to elect progressives up and down the ballot," he said. "We need folks who will fight for justice, who have a history of fighting for justice. We need to be bold in the leadership we choose to represent us."

## CAEPHT displays farm equipment developed by it at Tech & Mech Dev Mela



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 MAR:

The College of Agricultural Engineering and Post Harvest Technology [CAEPHT] organized a Technology & Machinery Development Mela here at its Ranipool campus on Saturday.

The Mela is an attempt to showcase agricultural technologies and machines developed, designed, refined and modified by different All India Coordinated Research Projects [AICRPs].

Such exhibitions, CAEPHT informs, have been organized every year since 2015 by the cooperating centres of AICRPs and are sponsored by Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Also during the inaugural programme, a movie on the use of various farm equipment and machines developed by CAEPHT was also screened, a press release informs.

Dr Ram Pal, Director,

National Research Centre on Orchids, Pakyong, was present as the chief guest accompanied by Jeewan K. Chettri, Additional Chief Engineer, Department of Agriculture.

Space was also made at the Mela for exhibits by the College of Horticulture, Bermiok, NRC on Orchids, Pakyong, Spices Board, Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Ranipool and two suppliers of farm equipment and solar energy equipment.

## 7 states account for 87.73% of new COVID-19 cases reported in a day

NEW DELHI, 14 MAR

[PTI]: States like Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are showing a steep rise in the daily new COVID-19 cases and have accounted for 87.73 per cent of the new instances of the disease reported in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

Maharashtra registered the highest daily new cases at 15,602, followed by Kerala with 2,035 and Punjab 1,510 new cases.

India's total COVID-19 active caseload has reached 2.10 lakh, the ministry said adding Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab account for 76.93 per cent of India's total active cases.

The total number of recoveries in the country has surged to 1,09,89,897 with 16,637 people recuperating from the disease in a day. The ministry said 83.13 per cent of the new recovered cases are

observed to be concentrated in six states.

Maharashtra has reported a maximum number of 7,467 single-day recoveries.

The ministry said 161 deaths were reported in a day.

Six states account for 84.47 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties at 88. Punjab reported 22 fatalities and Kerala 12.

Fourteen states and Union Territories have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours. These are Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, Ladakh, Manipur, Mizoram, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the country is nearing 3 crore cumulative vaccination doses.

A total of 2,97,38,409 vaccine doses have been administered through

5,10,400 sessions, according to a provisional report till Sunday at 7 am.

Of these, 73,47,895 healthcare and 11,35,573 frontline workers were given the first dose, while 42,95,201 healthcare and 73,32,641 frontline workers were given the second dose.

Also, 14,40,092 beneficiaries aged more than 45 years with specific co-morbidities and 81,87,007 senior citizens have received the first dose of the vaccine so far.

As on day 57 of the vaccination drive, more than 15 lakh vaccine doses were given. Out of which, 12,32,131 beneficiaries were vaccinated across 24,086 sessions for the first dose and 2,87,821 healthcare and frontline workers received the second dose of vaccine.

Besides, 8,95,291 beneficiaries aged over 60 years and 1,85,624 individuals aged 45 to 60 years with comorbidities.

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## Banking Safe

***Deposits need to play back more robustly as credit into the local economy***

The past year has been about bad loans and non-performing assets. With the biggies having secured and digested impossibly large loans and not regurgitated anything back into either the economy or towards their EMIs, the banks were delivered a crippling blow; so crippling that even the demonetization-induced flood of cash is unlikely to tide them over. Even though Sikkim is far removed from the mechanizations of real economics and financial realities, living as it does in a bubble which is getting buffeted around but is yet to burst, people here are also suffering. For the past little over a year, the usually laidback banks (yes even banks become laidback when in Sikkim) have been on overdrive, reopening files to chase down missed EMIs and bad loans, serving notices and running from court to lok adalat and back to court to recover dues.

If one looks at the C:D ratio in the State, improved, on paper, in the past three years from an embarrassing 28.6% in 2014-15 to 42.6% in 2016-17. Banking norms advise the CDR to hover closer to the fifty per cent mark. This means that fifty per cent or more of the deposits made by account-holders should ideally be played back into the economy by way of loans and advances. This is as much to keep the economy buoyant as to trigger economic growth. Economies, one may add here, do not grow when earnings are saved. Economies boom when investments are risked. But, like with most things in Sikkim, even the euphoria over the loan boom might be misplaced. Agreed, a whole lot of individuals and families have managed to secure loans to build homes/ hotels and purchase vehicles with greater ease in recent years, but fact remains that these loans do not really do anything for the economy by way of creating jobs. And the data bears this preference out as well because the tertiary sector (in which housing and vehicle-purchase loans are counted) have notched up between 51% to 82% of the projected targets for loans in Sikkim. Consuming a lion's share of the loans are the miniscule industries in the State which were so favored in 2014-15 that they received 241% of the target projected for this sector. At whose cost, one may ask? The farming community who received only 22% of the loans they were expected to receive that year and in 2016-17, received only 15% of the loans the sector was in need of and expected to receive. Loans to outside agencies emptied out about 40% of the deposits in banks in Sikkim in the last fiscal, 2016-17, and that should attract some attention because that was available loans which could not go to local entrepreneurs.

For an economy to benefit from the presence of so many banks in the State – there are 34 banks in Sikkim which have a little over 140 branches between them here – the State needs to hear about more substantial loans being given to new enterprises here. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in Sikkim. The bigger loans in Sikkim continue to be secured by applicants based outside the State. Is it because the branches here do not have the authority or do not enjoy the confidence of the regional offices to process “big” local loans? Experience also shows that banks here are hesitant to take risks. And yes, Sikkim's poor repayment history is also partly to blame for this, after all, as of 30 June 2016, the recovery position of commercial banks in Sikkim had declined to 18.83% from 34.5% as on 30 June 2015. But come on, these things do not seem to stop banks from throwing thousands of crores behind already lost thousands of crores. Even when it comes to bad loans, it is not the banks that really suffer because they have ways of getting their money back, the real loss is suffered by Sikkim because nothing substantial is achieved for the local economy; not when only personal, housing or car loans are released or when loans go bad because none of these create opportunities or more money.

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# Bangladesh at 50: A nation created in violence and still bearing scars of a troubled birth

**TAZREENA SAJJAD**

**THECONVERSATION.COM**

March 26 marks 50 years since the start of Bangladesh's liberation war, a bloody nine-month campaign that culminated in the nation's independence on Dec. 16, 1971.

It was a violent birth, with some of its roots in the 1947 partition of India – when Pakistan was created as a separate nation.

As the British Empire left the subcontinent, an estimated 200,000 to 1.5 million people were killed in sectarian violence associated with the partition and 10 million to 15 million were forcibly displaced.

Newly independent Pakistan comprised two separate geographical areas separated by over a thousand miles of Indian terrain. While both regions included significant Muslim populations, West Pakistan was made up largely of Punjabi, Pashtuns, Sindhis, Baloch and other smaller ethnic groups. In contrast, the population of East Pakistan, which became modern-day Bangladesh, was predominantly ethnically Bengali, as the territory was formerly part of the Indian region of Bengal.

As a scholar of conflict, I argue that each of these factors – particularly the differences in language and political and economic inequities – laid the groundwork for Bangladesh's independence struggle. This history continues to have an impact today.

**DEEPENING FAULT LINES**

From early on, the issue of language was a difficult one. In 1948, the founding leader of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, emphasized that only Urdu, spoken by Muslims in the north and northwest in British India, should be the state language of the country. Bangla, spoken overwhelmingly by East Pakistanis, was considered by West Pakistani leadership as a “non-Muslim” language.

The Urdu-only policy aimed to create a single identity out of two culturally distinct regions united by a common religion – Islam. More broadly, it aimed to consolidate the national identity of the recently independent Pakistan.

In East Pakistan, the decla-

ration was followed by the banning of Bengali books, songs and poetry by Bengali Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Bangla language as the medium of education and primary mode of instruction was also banned.

All currency and official documents, including postal stamps and railway tickets, were printed in Urdu.

The language ban deepened tensions that had already emerged between West and East Pakistan. A major reason for this was significant economic disparities between the two regions. West Pakistan controlled the country's industry and commerce while East Pakistan was predominantly the supplier for raw materials, setting up a situation of unequal exchange.

In 1959-60 the per capita income in West Pakistan was 32% higher than in East Pakistan. By 1969-70, it was 81% higher in West Pakistan. Investment policies including in educational infrastructure consistently favored West Pakistan.

East Pakistanis had little access to the central government, which was located in the West Pakistani city of Islamabad. They were severely underrepresented in politics. West Pakistani political leadership did not see Bengalis as “real” Muslims. Both in political circles and socially, Bengali cultural practices were considered of a lower social status.

**MASS UPRISING**

The efforts to “Islamize” East Pakistanis through Urdu and “purify” Bengali culture from “Hindu influences” resulted in massive nonviolent demonstrations and strikes.

On Feb. 21, 1952, students and other activists launched a language movement called the “Bhasha Andolon,” which demanded Bangla be recognized as the state language for East Pakistan. Thousands of school and college students protested, defying Section 144 of the Criminal Procedural Code, which prohibited assembly of five or more people and holding of public meetings.

The crackdown that followed claimed several lives. From 1950 to 1969 it also galvanized a growing movement for autonomy across East Pakistan.

A mass uprising in 1969 was brutally put down by police and led to the imposition of martial law.

In 1970, a devastating cyclone called “Bhola” in East Pakistan claimed 300,000 to 500,000 lives. The indifferent response of the West Pakistan government further inflamed tensions.

A big turning point came the same year when the sole majority political party in East Pakistan, led by Bengali politician Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in national elections. The Pakistani leadership was reluctant to accept the results because it did not want an East Pakistani political party heading the federal government.

This resulted in the start of a civil disobedience movement in East Pakistan.

As the demand for Bengali autonomy grew, the Pakistani government launched Operation Searchlight, a military operation to crush the emerging movement. According to journalist Robert Payne, it killed at least 7,000 Bengali civilians – both Hindus and Muslims – in a single night.

On March 26, Bangladesh was declared independent and the liberation war began.

**THE VIOLENT BIRTH OF BANGLADESH**

The liberation war was fought mostly by civilians – men and women, Muslims, Hindus and non-Bengali Indigenous people.

Bangladesh's independence struggle took place in the broader context of the Cold War, which meant external actors were involved in the conflict. During the Cold War, India allied with the Soviet Union, while the U.S. allied with Pakistan to counter Soviet influence in South Asia and to protect its geostrategic interests vis-a-vis Afghanistan and China.

When the Pakistani military intensified its campaign to quell the independence movement, it did so with the knowledge and support of the Nixon administration.

The Pakistani military and its local collaborators specifically targeted Hindus, who in the 1961 census represented 18% of East Pakistan's population of 50 million.

An estimated 10 million Ben-

galis became refugees in India. A further 20 million were internally displaced. An estimated 200,000 to 400,000 Bengali women were systematically raped.

Independent research estimates 500,000 to 1 million people were killed in the genocidal campaign. The Bangladesh government maintains that 3 million Bengalis were killed in the war.

On Dec. 3, India officially entered the war on the side of Bangladesh.

Ten days later, in one of the last military operations, over 300 Bengali academics, doctors, engineers, journalists, artists and teachers – Hindus and Muslims alike – were massacred by Pakistani soldiers and their local collaborators.

On Dec. 16, 1971, the Pakistani military surrendered to the Indian Army, marking it as Bangladesh's Victory Day.

**CHALLENGES TODAY**

Soon after its independence, in a meeting between officials of the United States Agency for International Development and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Bangladesh was labeled a “basket case.” Years of economic inequities, the 1970 cyclone and the war had left over 70% of its population living below the poverty line.

However, in the 50 years since its independence, Bangladesh has made some significant strides. It has aggressively tackled infant mortality, gender inequity and economic development. Today, with a booming economy, it is on track to graduate from the United Nation's least developed country category.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh still faces enormous challenges. Violence against women and girls, corruption and lack of press freedoms remain serious concerns.

Founded on the principles of secularism, the country today faces a rise of Islamists.

The divide between those who participated in the independence struggle and those who collaborated with the Pakistani military continues to shape Bangladesh's political landscape today.

*[the writer is Senior Professorial Lecturer, American University School of International Service]*

# Holding on to hope is hard, even with the pandemic's end in sight – wisdom from poets through the ages

**RACHEL HADAS**

**THECONVERSATION.COM**

As we begin to glimpse what might be the beginning of the end of the pandemic, what does hope mean? It's hard not to sense the presence of hope, but how do we think of it?

Hope is fragile but tough, fugitive but tenacious, even adhesive. It sticks: Hope “stayed behind/in her impregnable home beneath the lip/ of the jar,” wrote the ancient Greek poet Hesiod in his poem “Works and Days.” While the evils released from the jar by Pandora fly out into the world, hope remains.

Written in the 19th century, poet Emily Dickinson's version of hope is “the thing with feathers” that “perches in the soul” and perseveres; it sings “and never stops at all.” Dickinson invites us to imagine Hope frail as a bird, fluttering. It doesn't fly away – but that verb “perches,” suggesting that it always might.

That Dickinson's hope “sings the tune without the words” might suggest that hope provides a general, even generic response rather than a specific remedy tailored to the occasion. Nevertheless, even in the sores storms, hope is available.

Which isn't to say that hope is always consoling. When we turn to hope, have recourse to hope or even hope against hope, it isn't at moments of triumph or complacency. Rather, we need hope at moments when things feel precarious.

Once we recognize this simple principle, the intuitive truth that hope is a companion of anxiety turns up everywhere.

**‘INTRINSICALLY INTERTWINED’**

In 2018, the Rubin Museum in New York City mounted a participatory art installation entitled “A Monument for the Anxious and Hopeful.” Artist Candy Chang and writer James A. Reeves asked “visitors to anonymously write their anxieties and hopes on vellum cards and display them on a 30' x 15' wall for others to see.”

Tracy A. Dennis-Tiway, a psychology and neu-

rosience scholar, notes that over 50,000 cards were submitted. The cards, writes Dennis-Tiway, “reflected ... immense optimism and fear. ... It was not obvious unless you looked closely, but the juxtaposition of the two card types revealed a pattern: the anxieties and hopes were often the same. ... The monument showed how anxiety and hope go hand in hand.”

Chang and Reeves write that “Anxiety and hope are defined by a moment that has yet to arrive.” Put another way, writes Dennis-Tiway, “when we imagine and prepare for the uncertain future, anxiety and hope are intrinsically intertwined, forever transforming from one to another.”

**LEAVING DESPAIR BEHIND**

The Athenian dramatist Euripides was a peerless psychologist with a particular interest in the stresses of decision-making. His play, “Iphigenia among the Taurians,” is less a tragedy than a melodrama or romance, with a happy ending against the odds.

In the following passage, the resourceful Iphigenia – a priestess whose job it is to sacrifice foreigners who land on the shores of her captor's island – is devising a complicated strategy to free at least one of her prisoners and thereby send a message to her family back home. She's unaware, at this point in the drama, that one of the captives whom she's supposed to sacrifice is her own brother Orestes. She has thought of a clever scheme, but the hope engendered by it, the very possibility of its success, also makes her anxious. Here's my translation:

“People in trouble do not have a prayer of calm once they have left behind despair and turned toward hope.”

As with the plot of any exciting movie, we're rooting for the good guys, and our hope is balanced by uneasiness. Suspense!

Iphigenia's next words to Orestes are also acute: “So this is what I fear:

that you, once you have sailed away from here, will forget about me, will ignore my heart's desire.”

Will the lucky winners, the survivors, forget about those who, having perhaps enabled them to escape, have been left behind?

This is Iphigenia's entirely reasonable worry. Even the hoped-for and possible success of her scheme may have a downside. As Chang, Reeves and Dennis-Tiway all point out, hope and anxiety are so closely intertwined that they may turn out to be different sides of the same coin.

**‘GREEN SHOOTS OF HOPE’**

Only two months after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, and less than two months after President Joe Biden's inauguration, hope is palpable; so is anxiety.

A year into the pandemic, spring is about to arrive. A recent New Yorker article notes that “here in the city there are green shoots ... who can't imagine that happier days may soon be here again?” The word hope isn't mentioned, but a hopeful aura pervades the passage.

Yet nothing is certain. Trump and Trumpism glower in the wings and also in the political arena. New viral variants abound. There may be a light at the end of the tunnel, no doubt – but how long will that tunnel be? Hope requires patience.

In a famous passage in Plato's “Republic,” Socrates evokes the limitations of human vision by using the allegory of an underground cave whose inhabitants have never seen the daylight. The passage never mentions hope, but it does mention the reluctance of the prisoners, whose lives have been spent underground, to be dragged into the light, which dazzles their eyes.

Hope doesn't go away, but it morphs and mutates. Have we become habituated to despair?

*[the writer is Professor of English, Rutgers University - Newark]*



## Morigaon DC, ADC replaced in Assam following EC orders

**Guwahati, Mar 14 (PTI):** The Assam government has replaced Morigaon deputy commissioner Leena Das and additional deputy commissioner Debajani Choudhury with immediate effect on the recommendations of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

According to an order by the Personnel Department on Saturday, Home Secretary Seema Rekha Bhuyan has been appointed as the new Morigaon deputy commissioner.

Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship department secretary Hanif Noorani has been transferred as the additional deputy commissioner of Morigaon.

The order did not mention the reason for the sudden transfer of the two senior bureaucrats by the ECI.

In a separate order, another senior Assam Civil Services (ACS) officer Dipsikha Dey has been suspended, as per the poll panel's recommendation, for insubordination and negligence of duty.

In a separate case, Margherita circle officer Moonsoon Barkakati has been suspended with immediate effect for allegedly getting an OBC certificate "through unfair means".

Elaborating the reason for the action against Dey, the order dated March 12 said that the senior officer, who was serving as chief executive officer of Zilla Parishad in Cachar, was transferred to Sonitpur as the district development commissioner.

Accordingly, Dey handed over the charge as Cachar was her home district, but immediately applied for medical leave to "escape the task of joining at the new place and also did not inform the Personnel Department on time as to why she did not join.

"When contacted over phone, she informed to have proceeded on leave knowing fully well the importance of key officers in the districts due to election," the order stated.

When the matter was referred to the ECI, the apex poll body approved the proposal for disciplinary action against Dey.

Elections to the 126-member Assam assembly will be held in three phases on March 27, April 1 and April 6.

# As ginger prices plunge in India, Nepali farmers face huge losses

**PRADEEP MENYANGBO KATHMANDU, 14 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]:** Padam Rai, a ginger farmer from Sano Khaireni, Sunsari last year earned Rs800,000 last year selling ginger at Rs120 per kg. But this year his loss totalled Rs700,000.

Rai, a leader among farmers of Sano Khaireni, had planted 160 kgs of ginger on around three bighas (2 hectares) of land as he was hopeful of high returns like last year. Rai worked harder this year to increase ginger production.

The main reason for his loss was the decline in the price of Nepali ginger in the Indian market which went down by about 85 percent.

"Even though I incurred a loss, I sold ginger cheaply, but thousands of farmers like me left ginger in their fields rotting after not being able to reclaim even transportation costs," said Rai.

Even though India has kept exports open, ginger farmers have been told by wholesalers not to bring ginger to the market due to which ginger rotting in the fields, Rai said.

Bishnupaduka of Dharan Sub-metropolitan City, where Sano Khaireni is located, has been named as a major ginger producing zone by the government.



Rai planted 160 kg ginger seeds in three bighas of land investing Rs176,000 and spread manure on it and weeded the fields.

The price of ginger dropped to Rs20 per kg when it was being readied for sale which does not even raise the transportation cost, he said.

"The farmers have to bear the consequences of relying on Indian consumers and market prices for ginger exports," Rai said. "With the government not able to find the alternatives for the Indian market, ginger farmers are worried."

Farmers have no clue how long they will have to face the same problem.

Even though the

export of Nepali ginger is open in the Indian market, the wholesale price of ginger is only Rs25 per kg this season, which has led to investment of farmers and traders being wasted. Ginger produced in eastern Nepal could not be exported to India as it did not fetch a reasonable price.

"Wholesalers in the agricultural market are reluctant to buy ginger from farmers due to low prices in the Indian market," said Laxman Bhattarai, manager of the Dharan-based Agricultural Commodity Market.

About 90 percent of the ginger produced in Nepal—in some areas of Sunsari, Morang, the northern part of Udayapur, Khotang,

Panchthar, Terhathum and Sindhuli—is exported to the Indian market.

"It is the result of not finding the alternative market to the Indian market for the export of ginger produced in Nepal," said Bhattarai.

Three years ago, when there was a good harvest of the spice, India refused to import ginger saying it needed to be quarantined, but agreed to import only after there were talks between Nepal and India.

According to Bhattarai, when there was a problem in exporting ginger to India, the government showed the dream to farmers of finding alternatives to the Indian market and

exporting to third countries by setting up processing centers to make ginger spices, sweeteners, juices, essential oils, candies, other medicines as well as packaging, branding, labelling and marketing.

But this never materialised. According to the Agricultural Produce Market, ginger has the lowest price and lowest turnover this year of the last four years.

Bhattarai said that 8,542 tonnes of ginger were exported to the Indian market at a wholesale price of Rs80 in 2018-19. When the price increased to Rs120 per kg in the fiscal year 2019-20, the export increased to 10,589 tonnes.

Going by the trend, it was estimated that 11,000 metric tonnes of ginger would be exported from Dharan's Agriculture Commodity Market through Indian traders in the fiscal year 2020-21. However, due to the sudden fall in prices, it is estimated that 6,500 tonnes will be traded this time, said Bhattarai.

According to Bhattarai, the export of ginger last year was worth Rs1.32 billion. However, Nepali ginger farmers have to bear a loss of Rs1.18 billion as compared to last year as only Rs140 million worth of ginger was traded.

## With Australia still closed, Nepal's students find themselves in tough spot

**SHUVAM DHUNGANA KATHMANDU, 14 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]:** Acina Thapa was thrilled when she got a study visa for Australia last March. But her happiness was short-lived. Just a day after Thapa got her visa, Australia closed its borders to foreign travellers due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The country is yet to open for foreign visitors.

"I got the visa to study nursing in Southern Queensland University last year. I don't know when I will be able to go to Australia," 19-year-old Thapa told the Post.

Thapa's university fee for nursing is \$16,300 AUD per semester.

"Before applying for the visa, I thought I would work part-time jobs to ease the financial burden on my parents. The border closure has put me at my wits' end," said Thapa.

Unable to travel, Thapa decided to defer her classes which were being conducted online. She didn't want to pay a huge sum of money for online learning.

But in 2021, her second deferral request was not accepted by her college. She was told that the English language criteria had changed and that she needed to achieve a seven-band score in each module of IELTS (International English Language Testing System).

"Scoring seven band each in IELTS is very difficult," said Thapa. She is worried how her parents are going to pay her tuition for next semester if Australia continues to close its border for foreign visitors.

Like Thapa, there are hundreds of Nepali students currently stuck in Nepal despite getting the study visas. According to 9news, the international borders will remain closed for at least another three months till June 17, 2021.

"The latest extension means Australia's borders will now be closed to the world for almost 15 months," states the same report.

For Nepali students, the decision means financial burden on their parents. To educate their children in Australia or in any

other foreign countries, most parents have to take out loans.

"My parents had taken a loan of Rs 1.5 million for my college fees. They have to pay more than Rs 16,000 per month as interest and I'm still here in Nepal taking online classes," said Thapa.

Another student Anil Dotal has also been taking online classes while waiting for Australia to open its borders for foreigners.

"My annual tuition is 14,000 AUD. Paying the fees has become very difficult for my parents," said the 20-year-old who got his visa last March.

Dotal's parents had taken out a bank loan of Rs 3.5 million to pay for the first few years of their son's college tuition. They were hoping their son would work part-time jobs to pay for the rest of the years in college. But the pandemic upended their plan.

"We thought our son would get a good education in Australia. This is why we fulfilled his wish to go study abroad knowing it was going to be expensive," Dotal's mother told the post. "We have no idea how we are going to pay his next year's college fees if Australia's borders remain closed throughout 2021."

Australia is one of the most preferred education destinations for Nepali students.

Data from the Abroad Study Permission Section at the Ministry of Education show that a total of 17,218 students applied for No Objection Certificate (NOC) for abroad studies—3,015 for Australia—in the last six months of the current fiscal year despite the pandemic. Santosh Pyakurel, president of National Educational Consultancies' Association, said Australia is popular among Nepali students because of better part-time job opportunities and strong diaspora presence of Nepalis there.

"It's uncertain when Australia will open for international students. So until things are back to normal, I advise Nepali students to apply for study visas only if they have got a good scholarship to avoid financial troubles," Pyakurel told the Post.

## Cong to bag over 100 seats in Assam: Chhattisgarh CM

**DIBRUGARH, MAR 14 (PTI):** Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who is in Assam on a three-day visit to canvas for Congress candidates, criticised the ruling BJP on Sunday for its alleged failure to fulfil promises, and asserted that his party will bag more than 100 seats in the 126-member Assembly.

Baghel, who is also the senior observer of the Congress for Assam polls, said the saffron camp had vowed to take steps to seal the state's border with Bangladesh, and construct expressways on the two sides of the Brahmaputra river, but none of that happened in the last five years.

Hitting out at the



ruling party for "not having a development agenda", Baghel further claimed that members of the BJP are still confused if Sarabananda Sonowal is the state's chief minister or Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Baghel also accused

the BJP government of running a 'syndicate raj' and institutionalised corruption in various sectors such as coal supply and betel leaf trade.

"The BJP had promised to seal the Bangladesh border,

construct Expressways on both sides of Brahmaputra river and raise daily wages of tea garden workers but they failed to deliver. The way things are going, we are confident that our party get hundred plus seats in Assam," the Chhattisgarh

## Mamata participates in TMC's march on wheelchair

**KOLKATA, MAR 14 (PTI):** Four days after she was injured and hospitalised during election campaign in Nandigram, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee Sunday attended her first public event, as she led a road show in Kolkata on a wheelchair.

Accompanied by senior TMC leaders, Banerjee was seen greeting the crowd with folded hands, with security personnel pushing her wheelchair.

Banerjee joined the five km road show from Mayo Road to Hazra More, as part of observation of Nandigram Diwas to commemorate the killing of 14 villagers in police firing during the anti-land acquisition protest in 2007.

"We will continue to fight boldly! I'm still in a lot of pain, but I feel the pain of my people even more. In this fight to protect our revered land, we have suffered a lot and will suffer more but we will NEVER bow down to COWARDICE! Banerjee tweeted minutes before arriving at the venue.

Banerjee was injured on March 10 following which she was admitted to SSKM hospital in Kolkata. She was discharged on March 12.

Carrying posters and placards hailing Banerjee as the "daughter of Bengal", TMC supporters raised slogans against the BJP and called for "defeating the outsiders" in the assembly elections.

## Will never bow down before outsiders: TMC MP

**KOLKATA, MAR 14 (PTI):** TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday said his party will not bow down before "outsiders", and asserted that his aunt and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will win the election battle, no matter what challenges are thrown before her.

The TMC, which has made 'Bengali pride' its core poll plank, has tagged the BJP as a "party of outsiders", as its top leaders hail from outside the state.

The TMC MP, who took part in a rally here, also urged people to put up a united fight against the CPI(M) and its ally, the Congress, and claimed that the communist regime had perpetrated atrocities on the poor peasants of the state, citing the Nandi-

gram movement of 2007.

"We will not bow down before the BJP, we will not bow down before the outsiders," he said at the start of the rally, which was attended by Mamata Banerjee on a wheel chair.

The CM had sustained severe injuries during electioneering in Nandigram, where she has crossed swords with her protege-turned-adversary Suwendu Adhikari.

Shouting slogans such as 'Modi babu ashe Modi babu Jay, Bangla nijer meye-eke chay' (PM Modi may come and go, Bengal wants its daughter to rule the state), the Diamond Harbour MP said, "Despite her serious foot injury, our leader has joined the rally. She will conquer the battle notwithstanding her injuries.

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# Marvin Hagler, middle weight boxing’s towering champion, dies aged 66

**LAS VEGAS, 14 MAR [THE GUARDIAN]:** Marvelous Marvin Hagler stopped Thomas Hearns in a fight that lasted less than eight minutes yet was so epic that it still lives in boxing lore. Two years later he was so disgusted after losing a decision to Sugar Ray Leonard stolen, he claimed, by the judges that he never fought again.

One of the great middleweights in boxing history, Hagler died Saturday at the age of 66. His wife, Kay, announced his death on the Facebook page for Hagler’s fans.

“I am sorry to make a very sad announcement,” she wrote. “Today unfortunately my beloved husband Marvelous Marvin passed away unexpectedly at his home here in New Hampshire. Our family requests that you respect our privacy during this difficult time.”

Hagler fought on boxing’s biggest stages against its biggest names, as he, Leonard, Hearns and Roberto Duran dominated the middleweight classes during a golden time for boxing in the 1980s. Quiet with a brooding public persona, Hagler fought 67 times over 14 years as a pro out of Brockton, Massachusetts, finishing 62-3-2 with 52 knockouts.

“If they cut my bald head open, they will find one big boxing glove,” Hagler once said. “That’s all I am. I live it.”

Hagler was unmistakable in the ring, fighting out of a southpaw stance with his bald head glistening in the lights. He was relentless and he was vicious, stopping opponent after opponent during an eight year run that began with a disputed draw against Vito Antuofermo in 1979 that he later avenged.

He fought with a proverbial chip on his



shoulder, convinced that boxing fans and promoters alike didn’t give him his proper due. He was so upset that he wasn’t introduced before a 1982 fight by his nickname of Marvelous that he went to court to legally change his name.

“He was certainly one of the greatest middleweights ever but one of the greatest people that I’ve ever been around and promoted,” promoter Bob Arum said. “He was a real man, loyal and just fantastic person.”

Any doubts Hagler wasn’t indeed Marvelous were erased on a spring night in 1985. He and Hearns met in one of the era’s big middleweight clashes outdoors at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas and when the opening bell rang they traded punches for three minutes in an opening round many consider the best in boxing history.

Hagler would go on to stop Hearns in the third round, crumpling him to the canvas with a barrage of punches even as blood poured out of a large gash on his forehead that nearly caused the referee to stop the fight earlier in the round.

“When they stopped the fight to look at the cut, I realized they might

be playing games and I wasn’t going to let them take the title away,” Hagler said later. “It was a scary feeling. I thought, ‘Why are they stopping this fight?’ I didn’t realize I was bleeding. It wasn’t in my eyes. Then I knew I had to destroy this guy.”

Arum said Hagler simply willed himself to victory over Hearns, whose big right hand was feared in the division but couldn’t keep Hagler at bay.

“That was an unbelievable fight,” Arum said. “Probably the greatest fight ever.”

Hearns said Saturday he was thinking about Hagler and their historic fight. Hagler wore a baseball cap with the word ‘War’ while promoting it while on a 23-city tour with Hearns that Arum said made the fighters despise each other before they even entered the ring.

“I can’t take anything away from him,” Hearns told the Associated Press. “His awkwardness messed me up but I can’t take anything away from him. He fought his heart out and we put on a great show for all time.”

Hagler would fight only two more times, stopping John Mugabi a year later and then meeting Leonard,

who was coming off a three-year layoff from a detached retina, in his final fight in 1987. Hagler was favored going into the fight and many thought he would destroy Leonard but Leonard had other plans.

While Hagler pursued him around the ring, Leonard fought backing up, flicking out his left jab and throwing combinations that didn’t hurt Hagler but won him points on the ringside scorecards. Still, when the bell rang at the end of the 12th round, many thought Hagler had pulled out the fight only to lose a controversial split decision.

Hagler, who was paid \$19m, left the ring in disgust and never fought again. He moved to Italy to act, and never really looked back.

“I feel fortunate to get out of the ring with my faculties and my health,” he said a year later.

Hagler took the long route to greatness, fighting mostly in the Boston area before finally getting his chance at the 160lb title in 1979 against Antuofermo as a co-main event with Leonard fighting Wilfredo Benitez on the same card. Hagler bloodied Antuofermo and seemed to win the

fight, but when the scorecards were tallied he was denied the belt with a draw.

Hagler would travel to London the next year to stop Alan Minter to win the title at Wembley Arena, and he held it for the next seven years before his disputed loss to Leonard.

Arum remembered being at a black tie event honoring top fighters a year later that was attended by both Hagler and Leonard, among others. He said Leonard came up to him and pointed to Hagler across the room and suggested he go talk to him about a rematch that would have earned both fighters unbelievable purses.

“I went over to Marvin and said Ray is talking about a rematch,” Arum said. “He glared at me as only Marvin could and said, ‘Tell Ray to get a life.’”

Hagler was born in Newark, New Jersey, and moved with his family to Brockton in the late 1960s. He was discovered as an amateur by the Petronelli brothers, Goody and Pat, who ran a gym in Brockton and would go on to train Hagler for his entire pro career.

He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1983.

## Medvedev to meet doubles specialist Herbert in Open 13 final



**MARSEILLE, MAR 14 (AP):** Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev will bid for his 10th career title when he meets unseeded Pierre-Hugues Herbert in an unusual-looking Open 13 final.

Sunday’s decider pits two-time Grand Slam runner-up Medvedev against a player who owns all four majors in doubles but has never won a singles title, and is ranked 93rd.

Medvedev, who climbs to No. 2 in the rankings next week, led 6-4, 3-0 against qualifier Matthew Ebden when the Australian retired through an unspecified injury on Saturday.

“Really unfortunate to end the match like this. I knew that even with an injury I had to just continue playing, trying to win, Medvedev said.

You cannot give easy

points just because he’s injured. So I really sorry for him, hopefully he can recover fast and it’s nothing serious.

Boosted by his win over second-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas on Friday, Herbert brushed aside fourth-seeded Ugo Humbert 6-3, 6-2. He had nine aces and did not face a single break point in their all-French match.

The surprise final is a result of Herbert’s largely unexpected run. He beat former No.4-ranked Kei Nishikori earlier this week at the indoor tournament.

Medvedev, however, is heavy favorite considering that the Australian Open runner-up’s victory on Saturday means he has won 22 of his last 24 matches.

But Herbert’s serve-and-volley style could cause him some problems.

The 287th-ranked Ebden the lowest ranked semifinalist in the tournament’s 28-year-history disturbed Medvedev’s rhythm at times and Medvedev had to save three break points in the first set.

He’s a tough opponent to play, he does serve and volley, he plays (with) no rhythm, so that’s why it’s tough to say if I played well or not,” Medvedev said.

“But looking forward for tomorrow. Luckily this time no crowd, because a final against a French guy in Marseille with a crowd would be not an easy challenge.

When he climbs to No. 2 on Monday, Medvedev will be the first player outside the Big Four of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray to do so since Nadal in July 2005.

## Sassuolo beats Verona 3-2 in Serie A to boost European hopes

**MILAN, MAR 14 (AP):** Sassuolo boosted its chances of qualifying for the Europa League by beating Hellas Verona 3-2 to leapfrog its opponent into eighth place in Serie A.

Manuel Locatelli got Sassuolo off to the perfect start by firing the hosts in front in the fourth minute but Darko Lazovic leveled two minutes before halftime.

Filip uric restored Sassuolo’s lead shortly after the break. Federico Dimarco volleyed in another equalizer in the 79th but Hamed Traor

scored what was to prove the winner three minutes later.

It was a tense finale and Verona coach Ivan Juric was sent off for dissent in the dying minutes.

Sassuolo moved a point above Verona and eight points below sixth-place Napoli.

FIRST-HALF HAT TRICK

Du an Vlahovic scored a first-half hat trick to set Fiorentina on its way to a 4-1 victory at fellow struggler Benevento.

Vlahovic scored his

first goal with less than eight minutes on the clock, then doubled his tally in the 26th when he tapped in a rebound. The Serbia forward saved his best to last with a sensational curled effort from 25 yards in first-half stoppage time.

Artur Ionita headed in a consolation for Benevento 11 minutes after the break and the visitors had chances to reduce the deficit still further. But Valentin Eysseric sealed the match in the 75th.

## European roundup: Benzema rescues Real to close gap on Atlético

**MADRID, 14 MAR [REUTERS]:** Karim Benzema rescued Real Madrid again by scoring two late goals to snatch a 2-1 win at home to Elche in La Liga.

Elche took a shock lead just after the hour mark with a bullet header from Dani Calvo. Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane threw midfield duo Toni Kroos and Luka Modric on immediately after the goal and the change paid off as Kroos played a short corner to Modric who crossed for Benzema to head home in the 73rd minute. Benzema, who last week struck late to grab a 1-1 draw at leaders Atletico Madrid, then found the winner in stoppage time with a stunning strike just inside the area.

The result moved Real to within six points of leaders Atlético Madrid who drew 0-0 at struggling Getafe. Allan Nyom was shown a red card after a VAR review for a crunching tackle on Atletico’s Renan Lodi in the 70th minute but the visitors could not make

their advantage count with substitute Moussa Dembele missing two good chances. It means Barcelona can close the gap to Atletico to four points if they beat Huesca at home on Monday.

Álex converted an 84th-minute penalty to earn Cadiz a 1-1 draw at ten-man Alaves. Former Newcastle United striker Joselu gave Alaves the lead, also from the penalty spot in the first half before Manuel García was sent off for a second yellow card nine minutes from the end.

In Germany, Bayern Munich cruised to a 3-1 victory at Werder Bremen with striker Robert Lewandowski climbing to second place in the Bundesliga’s all-time scorers list as the champions opened up a five-point lead at the top.

Leon Goretzka headed Bayern into the lead in the 22nd minute with Thomas Mueller then delivering his 13th assist of the season for Serge Gnabry to slot in. Lewandowski twice hit the woodwork

early in the second half before tapping in for to make it 3-0 and join Klaus Fischer on 268 Bundesliga goals, second on the all-time scorers list only to Gerd Mueller and his astonishing 365-goal record.

Borussia Dortmund grabbed their third win in four games to climb to fifth, scoring twice in the second half in a 2-0 victory over visitors Hertha Berlin. Julian Brandt’s long-range effort flew through the hands of Hertha keeper Rune Jarstein in the 54th minute and 16-year-old Youssoufa Moukoko fired in from a tight angle in stoppage time for his third goal of the season.

Former Arsenal and Germany defender Shkodran Mustafi scored an own-goal as last-place Schalke moved another step closer to relegation with a 5-0 trouncing at Wolfsburg. Union Berlin captain Christopher Trimmel scored in a 2-1 come-from-behind win over Cologne and Mainz beat Freiburg 1-0.

# Garbiñe Muguruza’s mercurial gifts close to shining consistently at last

**TUMAINI CARAYOL**

**LONDON, 14 MAR**

**[THE GUARDIAN]:**

As the tennis season finally turned away from Australia and towards the Middle East this month, the Qatar Total Open produced a championship clash of titans. There stood Petra Kvitova and Garbiñe Muguruza, both of them six-foot forces and two-times grand slam champions who believe they can hit anybody off the court. Throughout her career, Kvitova has been described as one of the tour’s streakiest players but her dismantling of Muguruza revealed the truth: as the Czech lifted her 28th career title, the Spaniard remained with just seven.

Among the best players of her generation, Muguruza’s inconsistency has no parallel. Seven years ago, she arrived in the spotlight almost fully formed. As she floated

up the rankings, her form would erupt for short periods on the biggest stages of major tournaments, but in the day-to-day grind of a 10-month season it never endured.

She won the French Open in 2016 aged 22 by smiting Serena Williams in the final, and in 2017 she triumphed at Wimbledon. The early successes were preceded by Muguruza’s hiring of the French coach Sam Sumyk in 2015. She had emerged as a simple, aggressive baseliner who smothered opponents with depth, early ball striking and her rare, exceptional ability to change the direction of any speeding ball, particularly with her backhand down the line. Sumyk made her a more rounded player with more topspin, improved defence and frequent forays to the net.

While her game was theoretically more consistent, the periods

when her forehand disintegrated and the rest of her game would follow remained. Still, as Muguruza rose to No 1 in September 2017, she had positioned herself as the sport’s new alpha. Like most great champions, the potency of her game was matched by her force of personality.

The negative points of Sumyk’s intense coaching approach were soon evident. Their on-court interactions were uncomfortable, veering from petty bickering to Muguruza staring into space for 30 seconds without uttering a word. In 2018, within seconds of entering the court in Zhuhai, Sumyk responded to Muguruza’s insolence by cursing her as he marched away. “Maybe in 10 years, if she keeps going like this, maybe she will feel burnt out,” Sumyk told the New York Times on the intensity of their partnership. “But for now, she’s fine.”

His timeline was

inaccurate. By 2019, Muguruza was a shadow of herself as she ended the season ranked 36th. Her fans were relieved when she announced their separation and joyful when she hired her countrywoman Conchita Martínez, the 1994 Wimbledon champion. Martínez contrasts sharply with Sumyk – a former player who can relate to Muguruza personally, a calm and positive influence, a friend. Her effectiveness was already clear at Wimbledon 2017 when she accompanied Muguruza after personal affairs forced Sumyk to coach from home. Muguruza left with the trophy. The decision to hire Martínez was instantly affirmed by Muguruza’s Australian Open final run last year. Martínez helped to re-establish her as the smothering baseliner of old, encouraging her to be more aggressive with her serve. Off the court, though, Muguruza was unusually subdued. “I’m just taking it easy after these two

years,” she said after her loss to Sofia Kenin in the final. “The media has been tough on me, I have to say. I don’t read a lot of things, but I really felt that people... Today people will say very good things about me, and the next week bad things if you lose. I kind of found myself less excited with how things work.”

Early into their second year together, Muguruza stands on the verge of achieving the consistency that has always eluded her. Over her past four tournaments, she has reached three finals and the one instance she failed yielded one of her most important results. In the Australian Open fourth round, Muguruza played a sublime, disciplined match to lead the eventual champion, Naomi Osaka, 5-3 and 15-40 in the third set with double match point. Rather than wallowing in the missed opportunity, she left Australia determined to build on the momentum.



# Myanmar: Acting civilian leader says people ‘must win the uprising’ against junta

**YANGON, 14 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** The acting leader of Myanmar’s parallel civilian government has said the people “must win the uprising” against the junta and that he will seek to give people the legal right to defend themselves against the military.

Mahn Win Khaing Than, who is in hiding along with most senior officials from the National League for Democracy party, which was ousted in the 1 February coup, addressed the public via Facebook, saying: “This is the darkest moment of the nation and the moment that the dawn is close.

“The federal democracy union ... is waiting for us in the near future if we move forward unitedly with invincibility,” he said, adding: “We must win the uprising.”

Mahn Win Khaing Than was appointed as the NLD’s acting leader when senior members of the party, including Aung Sang Suu Kyi, were arrested by the military. He and a group of elected MPs formed a shadow “parliament” called the Committee for Representing



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) – the Burmese word for the country’s governing bloc – to denounce the military regime.

In his address – his first appearance in his CRPH’s leadership position – he said the civilian government would “attempt to legislate the required laws so that the people have the right to defend themselves”.

The junta has declared CRPH illegal and said anyone involved with it could be charged with treason, which carries the death penalty.

Protests against the military continued on Sunday, with people in Mandalay carrying signs saying: “We don’t accept the military coup.”

More than 80 people had been killed as of Saturday in widespread protests against the military’s seizure of power, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners advocacy group said. Over 2,100 people have been arrested, it said.

At least 13 people were killed on Saturday, one of the bloodiest days since the coup, witnesses and domestic media said.

Five people were shot dead and several injured when police opened fire on a sit-in protest in Mandalay, Myanmar’s second-biggest city, witnesses told Reuters.

Two people were killed in the central town of Pyay and two died in police firing in the commercial

capital Yangon, where three were also killed overnight, domestic media reported.

“They are acting like they are in a war zone, with unarmed people,” said Mandalay-based activist Myat Thu. He said the dead included a 13-year-old child.

Si Thu Tun, another protester, said he saw two people shot, including a Buddhist monk. “One of them was hit in the pubic bone, another was shot to death terribly,” he said.

A truck driver in Chauk, a town in the central Magwe Region, died after being shot in the chest by police, a family friend said.

Saturday’s protests erupted after posters spread on social media

urging people to mark the death anniversary of Phone Maw, who was shot and killed by security forces in 1988 inside what was then known as the Rangoon Institute of Technology campus.

His shooting and that of another student who died a few weeks later sparked widespread protests against the military government known as the 8-8-88 campaign, because they peaked in August that year. An estimated 3,000 people were killed when the army crushed the uprising.

Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as a democracy icon during the movement and was kept under house arrest for nearly two decades.

She was released in 2010 as the military began democratic reforms. Her National League for Democracy won elections in 2015 and again in November last year.

This year, the generals overthrew her government and detained Aung San Suu Kyi and many of her cabinet colleagues, claiming fraud in the November elections.

# London police tactics at vigil for slain woman draw scrutiny

**SYLVIA HUI LONDON, MAR 14 (AP):** London’s police department is under scrutiny for the way officers handled some participants at an unofficial vigil Saturday night for a London woman whose death led to murder charges against a fellow officer and spurred a national conversation about violence against women in the UK.

Hundreds of people disregarded a judge’s ruling and police requests by gathering at Clapham Common in honour of Sarah Everard, 33, who last was seen alive near the south London park on March 3.

Demonstrators said they wanted to draw attention to the fear and danger many women see as a daily part of British life.

Everard disappeared while walking home from a friend’s apartment at about 10:30 p.m. and was found dead a week later. The slaying sent shockwaves across the UK because a Metropolitan Police officer is charged with her kidnapping and murder.

Video of Saturday’s informal vigil turned rally showed officers from the same police force tussling with participants as they pushed their way through the crowd. At one point, several male officers grabbed hold of several women and pulled them away in handcuffs to screaming and shouting from onlookers, Britain’s Press Association reported.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan decried the police actions. The police have a responsibility to enforce Covid laws, but from images I’ve seen it’s clear the response was at times neither appropriate nor proportionate, Khan said on Twitter.

Home Secretary Priti Patel tweeted that she had asked the Metropolitan Police for a full report on what happened.

The gathering happened hours after London constable Wayne Couzens, 48, appeared in court for the first time since his arrest in Everard’s death. As Metropolitan Police officers approached the Clapham Common bandstand on Saturday evening, boos, jeers and shouts of Shame on you came from the crowd, according to the Press Association.

Organisers had hoped to hold Reclaim the Streets vigils in Everard’s memory at the south London location and in other U.K. cities on Saturday but canceled the in-person events after a judge refused to grant an order allowing them to go on despite coronavirus restrictions that bar mass gatherings.

Hundreds of people showed up nonetheless. Before police moved in, many participants laid flowers at the park bandstand. Among them was Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, who was seen pausing for a moment in front of the sea of flowers.

Other people held signs reading We will not be silenced and She was just walking home, and the crowd chanted, Sisters united will never be defeated.

In the wake of Everard’s disappearance and killing, many women have taken to social media to share their own experiences of being threatened or attacked while walking outside.

A 33-year-old nurse who works in the Clapham area, Mel Clarke, said she felt very conflicted about

attending Saturday’s gathering because of pandemic restrictions, but in the end “just felt that I needed to be here.

I’m really pleased that there are a lot of men here. I hope that this is kind of an opportunity for men to learn how women feel, how vulnerable we are,” Clarke said. I hope that this is the start of justice being served for Sarah.

The Metropolitan Police has expressed shock and horror that one of its own was a suspect in the case. The London police force said Couzens joined its ranks in 2018 and most recently served in the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, an armed unit responsible for guarding embassies in the capital and Parliament.

During his court appearance earlier in the day, Couzens stood wearing a gray tracksuit as the charges were read to him. He was remanded into custody and has another appearance scheduled Tuesday at London’s Central Criminal Court.

Everard’s body was found hidden in an area of woodland in Kent, more than 50 miles southeast of London, on Wednesday, a week after she went missing. A post-mortem examination is underway, police said Friday.

TV and radio presenter Sandi Toksvig said at the start of a vigil held online Saturday that a cultural shift about how women are viewed and treated both in the public and private space was needed.

I am filled in equal measure with profound sorrow and rage, and I know there are many who share this rage, and I think it is entirely justifiable,” Toksvig said. “But I also know that it will harm rather than help us if we don’t try and direct that anger to good purpose.

# Ireland suspends AstraZeneca Covid vaccine over blood clot concerns

**SARAH BOSELEY LONDON, 14 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** Ireland is suspending use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine against Covid as a precautionary measure following further reports of blood clots in people who have received it, this time from Norway.

The deputy chief medical officer, Dr Ronan Glynn, said Ireland’s advisory body on vaccines had recommended that deployment of the AstraZeneca jab should be “temporarily deferred” with immediate effect. He stressed, though, that there was no proof that the vaccine had caused blood clots.

The first reports of blood clots in people receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine came out of Austria and caused a flurry of concern, leading to a number of European countries, including Denmark, pausing their use of it pending investigations.

Ireland cited the report into a death and three hospitalisations in Norway, which came out on Saturday.

“Following new information received from the Norwegian Medicines Agency on Saturday evening ... and following discussions with the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), the National Immunisation Advisory



Committee (NIAC) has recommended that the administration of Covid-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca be temporarily deferred from this morning, Sunday 14 March,” said Glynn.

“This recommendation has been made following a report from the Norwegian Medicines Agency of four new reports of serious blood clotting events in adults after vaccination with Covid-19 vaccine AstraZeneca.

“It has not been concluded that there is any link between the Covid-19 vaccine AstraZeneca and these cases. However, acting on the precautionary principle, and pending receipt of further information, the NIAC has recommended the temporary deferral of the Covid-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca vaccination programme in Ireland.

“The NIAC is due to meet again this morning. A further statement will follow thereafter.”

Millions of people have already been given the AstraZeneca jab without any significant side-effects, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority in the UK has said. The numbers of blood clots and brain haemorrhages in people vaccinated recently is no more than is expected in that size of population.

Very rare events cannot be detected in clinical trials, however, which involve tens of thousands of people given a vaccine. Medical authorities around the world will want to investigate any reports of serious or unusual side-effects.

The Norwegian Medicines Agency is investigating the cases of four people under 50 who had the AstraZeneca

jab. One died and the others were admitted to hospital. All had a reduced number of blood platelets, the agency said.

It appealed for anyone in the same age group experiencing similar reactions to contact the health service. “People under the age of 50 who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine and feel increasingly unwell more than three days after vaccination, and who notice larger or smaller blue spots in the skin (skin haemorrhages) must consult a doctor or out-of-hours medical service as soon as possible,” it said in a statement.

“Similar incidents have been reported in other European countries, and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) is considering whether there may be an association with the coronavirus vaccines. So far, no conclusion has

been reached.”

The agencies would be looking for any reports of blood clots or bleeding in association with any of the coronavirus vaccines, it said.

AstraZeneca vaccinations make up almost 20% of the 570,000 shots administered in Ireland, mainly to healthcare workers after its use was not initially recommended for those over 70.

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# Akshay Kumar's 'Sooryavanshi' to release globally in April

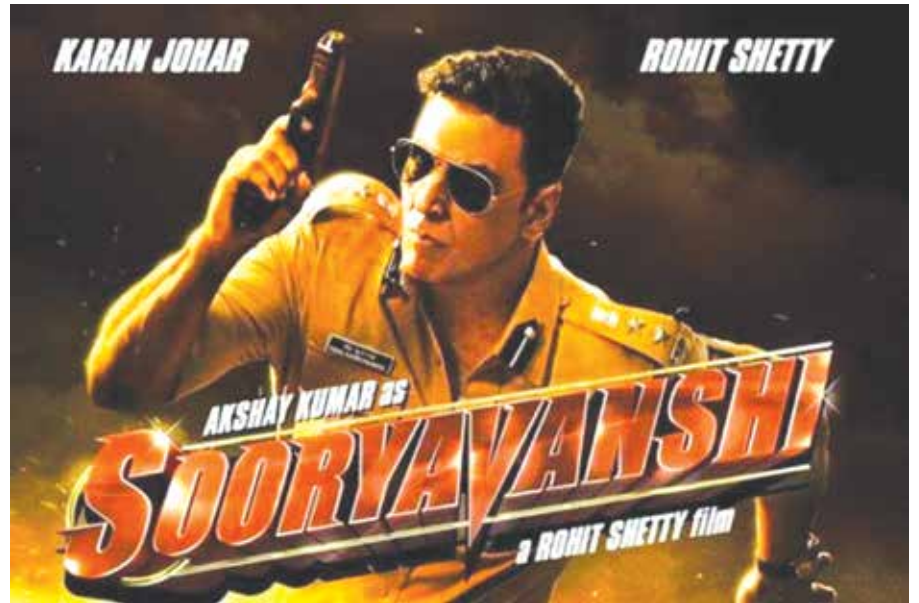
Akshay Kumar's much-awaited actioner "Sooryavanshi", directed by filmmaker Rohit Shetty, is set to open theatrically on April 30 worldwide, the makers announced Sunday.

The cop-action-drama was originally scheduled for a release on March 24 last year, but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, which led to theatres shutdown across the country.

Kumar took to Twitter to share the release date announcement video of the film.

"We promised you all a cinematic experience and that's what you will get. The wait is finally over! Aa Rahi Hai Police. #Sooryavanshi releasing worldwide in cinemas on 30th April 2021," Kumar captioned the video.

The new teaser of features footage from the trailer launch of the film -- attended by its cast, including Ajay Devgn, Ranveer Singh, Katrina Kaif and



producer Karan Johar -- held on March 2 last year.

"Sooryavanshi" is the fourth film

in Shetty's cop universe after Devgn's "Singham", "Singham Returns", and Singh's "Simmba".

## Lady Gucci is just the latest guise of the ever transmutable Lady Gaga

Like Lon Chaney, the great silent actor known as "The Man of a Thousand Faces", Lady Gaga has traversed roles, from music to fashion to film to politics, transmuting with creative fluidity but remaining -- sometimes with defiance -- the girl next door.

Last week, the 34-year-old star -- days after retrieving her two French bulldogs from a dognapping in which her walker was shot and injured -- posted a photo of herself beside actor Adam Driver in which she was wearing a white fur hat and was draped in gold jewellery. It was a publicity shot from Ridley Scott's House of Gucci, a forthcoming film based on the story of Patrizia Reggiani, aka the Black Widow (played by Gaga), who married -- and later had killed -- Maurizio Gucci, head of the luxury fashion house.

More than a 10th of Gaga's 40 million Instagram followers "hearted" the picture, not to speak of her 84 million followers on Twitter, and 56 million on Facebook. The legions of "Little Monsters", as Gaga fans are called, that first adopted her as a transnational symbol of authenticity and inclusivity are numerous. She used them to launch an Amazon cosmetics line, Haus Laboratories, that draws inspiration from her early days as an aspiring singer with a quirky, powerful presence on stage in the clubs of downtown New York.

"Colour is completely transformative -- it's powerful, it's beautiful, and it's how I found my voice with makeup," the singer told a trade magazine last year. Asked if she would ever bend her values to commercial



proposes, she responded flatly: "The answer is no. No deal. No message of self-acceptance, no deal."

But while Gaga's cosmetics line could turn her \$274m fortune into a billion dollar one, Gaga's voice itself remains key. It's carried her through numerous albums -- and an intimate Academy Awards performance of

the song Shallow (from her Oscar-nominated turn in A Star is Born) with Bradley Cooper; a rendition of the US national anthem at Joe Biden's inauguration in January; and a concert to celebrate Apple's new starship headquarters in Cupertino.

## The Weeknd pledges permanent Grammys boycott

The Weeknd, AKA Canadian pop star Abel Tesfaye, has pledged a permanent boycott of the Grammys, alleging corruption within its nomination process.

"Because of the secret committees," he told the New York Times, "I will no longer allow my label to submit my music to the Grammys."

The committees that Tesfaye mentions are selected by the Recording Academy to review the nominations by its huge voting membership. They retain executive power over who makes the official shortlists. They are also able to add artists who receive zero nominations in all but the four primary categories.

Despite having the biggest song of 2020 in Blinding Lights and a double-platinum album in After Hours, Tesfaye received no nominations for this year's Grammys. "The Grammys remain corrupt," he tweeted when the shortlists were unveiled in November. "You owe me, my fans and the industry transparency ..."



### CAPRICORN:

They call you when they need something, pretend to be close to you when it serves their fancy, and disappear as soon as you call upon them for help. This friendship had the word 'toxic' written all over it from the get-go. The cards are urging you to stop playing nice and recognise the relationships that are not serving you. It's time to protect your space fiercely and prioritise the most important person in your life--aka you!

### AQUARIUS:

Service is coming up as a big theme for you right now, and requires you to adopt selflessness as a virtue. That does not mean you have to change the course of your life or give up on what you have created. It simply means that it's time to expand your work in a way that includes and uplifts other people. Remember your soul's mission, Aquarius. You were sent here to inspire a major change in the collective.

### PISCES:

Reality check, Pisces: you are only living a percentage of your potential. There is so much you're yet to explore within yourself. The cards are urging you to stop playing small, take a deep dive and own the gifts that were given to you at birth. For some of you, this may be a time of stepping into a bigger role. Let 'lead by example' become your mantra, wild one.



**BIRTHDAY HUG!** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills - Kathy Hilton, Erika Jayne & Crystal Kung Minkoff - celebrate Kathy Hilton's birthday at Mr. Chow in Beverly Hills.

## Sam Smith excluded from gendered categories at 2021 Brit awards

Sam Smith, the pop singer whose gender identity is non-binary, has been excluded from the gendered categories at the 2021 Brit awards.

The awards system has maintained its usual artist categories, with prizes for British solo male and British solo female. That means there is no room for Smith, who uses they and them as their pronouns since coming out as non-binary in September 2019. They said at the time: "After a lifetime of being at war with my gender I've decided to embrace myself for who I am, inside and out."

Their album Love Goes is eligible for the British album of the year award. It reached No 2 in the UK chart on release in October 2020, and remained in the Top 40 until last week.

In a statement on Instagram, Smith said: "The Brits have been an important part of my career ... Music for me has always been about unification not division. I look forward to a time where awards shows can be reflective of the society we live in. Let's celebrate everybody, regardless of gender, race, age, ability, sexuality and class."



A Brit awards spokesperson later responded, saying: "Sam is an extraordinary British artist and we agree with what they have said today. The Brits are committed to evolving the show and the gendered categories are very much under review. But any changes made to be more inclusive need to be just that - if a change unintentionally leads to less inclusion then it risks being counterproductive to diversity and equality. We need to consult more widely before changes are made to make sure we get it right."

where you are, or to choose the path of expansion. Growth is on the cards, Cancer, and it requires you to say yes to the unknown. Don't shy away from taking that first step. There are many, many adventures that await you on this journey. Remember, the mysterious forces have your back.

### LEO:

Who says your dreams are too big or that what you're trying to achieve is way out of your reach? Beware of buying into the illusion created by your three dimensional reality. Now is not the time to repeat that old story. The cards are reminding you that there is a parallel reality available to you, where you can create the life you desire for yourself. Be mindful of the choices you make today and ensure they're in line with that big vision.

### VIRGO:

This decision is yours and yours alone. Nobody on the outside can put themselves in your shoes and decide what needs to be done here. So, go into that space of silence. Tune into your inner Oracle. Trust what's coming through from the unseen realms without letting your logical mind get in the way. Those who practice divination may feel inspired to turn to their tools for guidance.

### LIBRA:

We all have an idea of what love should look and feel

like. We all have an idea of what our ideal partner should be like. But what you're inviting into your reality is far better than all of your wildest dreams put together. So breathe out your inhibitions and breathe in the love. It's time to make space for magic, Libra. It's time to make space for what you truly deserve.

### SCORPIO:

That the past year has been hard for those who have their own businesses is not news to you, Scorpio. But, that doesn't mean it's all downhill from here. There is a new and exciting opportunity on the cards for you this week, and it requires you to play your cards strategically. Word for the wise: do what it takes to make it yours.

### SAGITTARIUS:

You've got love knocking on your door, Sagittarius, and it is not in any way being discreet. Open your heart and allow. Allow, allow, allow. Allow yourself to receive what has always been yours. Trust that connection is just as magical as you imagine it is. Yes, we know it's not always easy for you to let your vulnerable side show. Challenge yourself to embrace the virtue of openness nonetheless, and know that it will change your life forever.