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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM takes inspects preparations for Bhaichung Stadium inauguration

NAMCHI, 18 OCT [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang took stock of preparatory measures for the inauguration of the newly completed Bhaichung Stadium at Namchi today.

It may be mentioned here that the sports facility is all set to be inaugurated on 20 Oct, 2021, by the Vice-President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu.

At the outset, the Chief Minister interacted with the concerned department officials and other stakeholders, and assessed the progress of the activities undertaken for the inauguration day. He was briefed about the departmental arrangements and other security measures which shall be administered on the day.

Thereafter, he also chaired a brief meeting to enquire upon any short-



comings for the event. Wherein, he extended his suggestions and support for the grand success of the event.

The Chief Minister

was accompanied by Minister for PHE Department, Bhim Hang Limboo, Political Secretary, Jacob Khaling along with Chairperson NMC,

Ganesh Rai and other local gentry. The program also had the presence of DIG(Range), Prawin Gurung, DC(South), M Bharani Kumar, SP(South),

Thakur Thapa, Director Sports and Youth Affairs, Doma Tshering Bhutia alongside other concerned department officials.

2 deaths and 40 new cases over the Dasain break in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 OCT:

Sikkim lost two lives to Novel Coronavirus and 40 new cases in over the six days of the Dasain break from 13 to 18 Oct.

While a Covid patient passed away at STNM Hospital on 12 October [recorded in the Covid chart released of 13 October], the second fatality occurred on 14 October [recorded in the Covid chart for the next day]. Sikkim's Covid death toll currently stands at 391.

A total of 1,049 tests were conducted in the six days giving an average test positivity rate of 3.81% for the holidays.

Meanwhile, as per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, seven new cases were recorded in Sikkim in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of the confirmed cases to 31,756.

These 7 cases were picked up from the testing on 217 samples giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 3.2% on Monday.

While five cases were registered in

East District, two were in West District with South and North Sikkim recording no new cases from the 36 and 07 tests conducted there in the past 24 hours respectively.

While four cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 99 samples, two were found in rapid antigen testing of 110 samples and one in Trunat testing of eight samples.

The number of active cases of Covid-19 have also slipped below the 200-mark in Sikkim and currently stand at 165. As per the IDSP report, 16 new recoveries were recorded in the past 24 hours. The state's figure of recovered cases has now improved to 30,882 and the state recovery rate stands at 98.2%.

There are currently 29 Covid-positive patients admitted in hospital in Sikkim, of whom three are in ICU. Of the 29 in hospital, only two are under 18 years of age.

On the vaccination front, while the entire eligible population in the State has already received at least the first dose of the vaccine, a reassuring 81.63% of the adult population is now fully vaccinated.

India's recycling project bags Prince William's Earthshot Environment Prize

LONDON, 18 OCT [AFP]: Queen Elizabeth II's grandson Prince William presented the inaugural Earthshot prizes at a ceremony in London on Sunday, with projects from Costa Rica, Italy, the Bahamas and India picking up prizes.

The new annual awards were created by Prince William to reward efforts to save the planet in the face of climate change and global warming.

Five winners were announced, each receiving a million pounds (\$1.4 million).

The build-up to the televised event -- featuring the renowned naturalist David Attenborough and performances by Coldplay, Ed Sheeran and others -- was marked by royal displeasure at world leaders' inaction on climate change.

William hopes it will help propel the fight



against climate change leading up to the COP26 summit, which opens in Scotland at the end of the month, calling those on the shortlist "innovators, leaders and visionaries."

In a short film recorded for the ceremony in the London Eye and released ahead of the event on Sunday, William warns that the "actions we choose or choose not to take in the next 10 years will determine the fate of the planet for the next thousand".

"A decade doesn't seem long, but humankind has an outstanding

record of being able to solve the unsolvable," he says.

"The future is ours to determine. And if we set our minds to it, nothing is impossible."

The Republic of Costa Rica was one of the winners on Sunday picking up the "Protect and Restore Nature" award for its efforts to protect forests, plant trees and restore ecosystems.

"We receive this recognition with pride but humility, what we have achieved in this small country in Central America can be done

anywhere," said Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado.

Indian company Takachar won the "Clean our Air" prize for the creation of a portable machine which turns agricultural waste into fertiliser so that farmers do not burn the waste and cause air pollution

The other winners included Coral Vita, from the Bahamas, for a project to grow coral in tanks, 50 times quicker than coral normally grows.

The northern Italian city of Milan won the "Food Waste Hubs" award for collecting unused food and giving it to people who need it most.

The "Fix our Climate" laureate went to a joint Thai-German-Italian team for the AEM Electrolyzer, which uses renewable energy to make clean hydrogen by

splitting water into its constituent elements.

Each of the finalists -- chosen by experts from more than 750 nominations -- will be given help from companies to develop their projects.

Prince William announced that the 2022 edition of the Earthshot Prize will be held in the United States.

In a BBC interview this week, William took a potshot at wealthy space tourists, for neglecting problems closer to Earth, while his father and grandmother have also weighed in this week on climate change.

Opening the Welsh legislature in Cardiff on Thursday, the 95-year-old monarch was overheard upbraiding world leaders who "talk" but "don't do" enough about the planetary crisis.

Dalai Lama offers financial aid for flood relief efforts in Kerala

DHARAMSALA, 18 OCT [PTI]: The Dalai Lama today expressed sadness over the loss of lives and property due to the heavy rains and landslides in Kerala and offered financial assistance for the state's relief and rescue efforts.

In a letter to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the Tibetan spiritual leader said, "I offer

my condolences to you, to the families who have lost loved ones and to all affected by the devastation."

"I understand that the state government and concerned authorities are making every effort to provide help to those in need and that relief efforts are well underway. As a token of my sympathy, I would like to make

a donation from the Dalai Lama Trust towards the rescue and relief efforts," he wrote.

The death count in incidents related to heavy rains rose to 23 as of today morning. The casualties occurred on Saturday due to landslides and flash floods in the hilly areas of the Kottayam and Idukki districts following the heavy rains.

Fake date sheet for board exams being circulated, warns CBSE

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT [NDTV]: Ahead of the release of a time table of Class 10 and Class 12 term 1 board exams by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), a fake date sheet was circulated on social media websites today forcing the board to issue a clarification.

The official date sheet has not been released yet, the board said.

"It has come to the notice of CBSE that a fake date sheet is being

circulated on social media for the forthcoming term 1 exams in Nov 2021, to confuse students of class 10 and 12. It is clarified that the board has not released any official notification in this regard till now," the official handle of the CBSE tweeted.

The official time table will be available on the CBSE website, cbse.gov.in and the exams are expected to take place between November and December. Earlier, an official had said that it will be released today

(Monday) but an update is still awaited.

The first-term board examinations for Classes 10 and 12 will be conducted offline.

This year, the CBSE has divided the board exam into two terms. Term 1 exams will take place in November-December and questions will be objective-type. The Class 10 and Class 12 subjects have also been divided as minor and major -- exams will be held first for minor subjects, followed by the major subjects.

Amid rising fuel prices, cars with lower running costs likely to gain higher traction among buyers: Report

NEW DELHI, OCT 16 (PTI): With fuel prices going up by 35 per cent over the past 15 months thereby impacting overall vehicle running costs, cars that have higher fuel efficiency and lower maintenance costs are expected to gain higher traction among buyers in India, specially in the sub-Rs 10 lakh category, according to a report.

Considering the fact that 70 per cent of the passenger vehicles market in India is still accounted for by vehicles costing less than Rs 10 lakh, the development

augurs well for market leader Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL), said the report by HSBC Global Research.

"Over the past 15 months, fuel prices have gone up 35 per cent, impacting overall vehicle running costs...Our channel interactions suggest that customers are increasingly becoming considerate of the recent rise in fuel prices," it said.

Citing the example of Maruti Suzuki's Swift petrol, the report said for a compact passenger vehicle fuel now accounts for around 40 per cent

of the vehicle's life-time cost compared with 30 per cent in mid-2020.

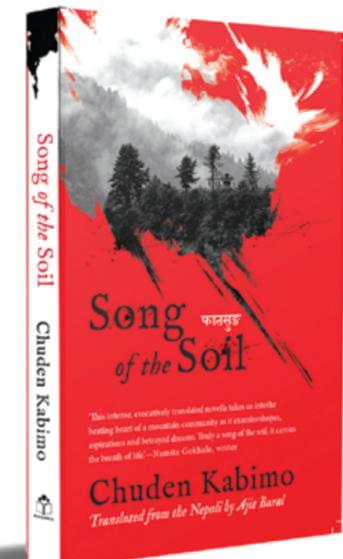
"In the current environment, we believe cars that have higher fuel efficiency and lower maintenance costs should gain relatively higher traction among buyers, especially in the less than Rs 10 lakh category, which is still 70 per cent of the market in India," it said.

Stating that MSIL continues to score well in that regard, HSBC Global Research said, "In our analysis, both in absolute terms and relative to competition, MSIL

remains the market leader in fuel efficiency and total cost of ownership (COO)."

MSIL's competitive positioning should remain compelling given the fact that it has around 65 per cent market share in the less-than-Rs 10 lakh price category, it added.

The report also pointed out that MSIL's fuel efficiency has improved by 15-30 per cent in the past 10 years, citing the examples of fuel efficiency of Swift/Swift Dzire, which was 18 km per litre (kmpl) nearly 10 years back to 23.3 kmpl.



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Former Minister Mohan Gurung retires from politics

PRITAM LAMA
YUKSAM, 18 OCT:

Veteran politician and former Minister, Mohan Gurung from Yuksam under Yuksam-Tashiding constituency, West Sikkim, has announced his retirement from politics.

Mr Gurung made the announcement on his 70th birthday on 15 October.

In a press release, he informs that he is retiring from politics considering his age and his desire to pursue the path of spirituality.

Mr Gurung has thanked former Chief Minister Sancha Man Limboo for providing him an opportunity to work for the state and the Sikkimese people as their representative. He has also extended his gratitude to the former Chief Ministers; Late LD Kazi, and Late Nar Bahadur Bhandari. He also thanked former Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling for giving him a political platform to work for the wellbeing of the Sikkimese people.



He has further thanked all those who were an integral part of his long political journey and stood by him.

Mohan Gurung had started his political career

from Jana-Andolan of 1973 and under the leadership of Nar Bahadur Khatiwada he contested the 1979 assembly election from Yuksam constituency. He lost the

election to former Chief Minister Sancha Man Limboo. However, Mohan Gurung held the post of a Minister in the state cabinet under the Sancha Man Limboo-led govern-

ment in 1994. For many decades, Mohan Gurung was actively involved in the state's politics and held various portfolios in regional political parties of the state.

Kisan Gosthi held at KVK West



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 OCT:

Eastern Regional Station, ICAR-IVRI, Kolkata in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra [KVK], West Sikkim conducted Kisan Gosthi cum Awareness Programme at KVK West Sikkim today, a press release informs.

The program was attended by Advisor An-

imal Husbandry, Durga Prasad Pradhan as chief guest along with In-charge IVRI, Kolkata, Dr PS Banerjee, Principal Scientist, IVRI, Dr S Bandyopadhyay, Principal Scientist, IVRI, Dr P Dandapat, Senior Scientist & Head, SMSs and other officials of KVK along with 25 progressive farmers of Rafang village.

The In-charge IVRI

and other dignitaries highlighted the advantages and scope of piggery farming in Sikkim and encouraged the farmers to take up piggery farming on a larger scale.

The program was followed by farmers-scientist interaction. Later in the program, 50 piglets along with feed and medicine were distributed to the participants.

MYM National president visits West Bengal and Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 OCT:

National president, All India Marwadi Yuva Manch Yuva [AIMYMY], Kapil Lakhota, is on an official visit of Marwadi Yuva Manch [MYM] branches in West Bengal and Sikkim.

MYM Siliguri Professionals Branch and MYM Siliguri Sparsh Arnav Sakha jointly organised an interactive session with the national president and All India MYM and State president for West Bengal and Sikkim, Ashish Agarwal at a hotel in Siliguri

today, a press release informs.

Kapil Lakhota briefed the members of both the branches about the current and forthcoming mission & objectives of the organisation. He laid stress on adopting a girl child to complete her education, participating in different types of national and state programs of the organisation, etc.

President of Siliguri Professionals, Yuva Sandeep Ghoshal and president of Siliguri Sparsh Arnav Sakha, Yuva CA, Manish Agarwal briefed the

national president about their ongoing branch activities and future projects.

Yuva leaders from National and State forum like Bipul Sharma, Gopal Sharma, Anand Agarwal, Lalit Agarwal, Dhiraj Agarwal and Umesh Garg were also present in the meeting.

Secretary, Siliguri Professionals branch, Sanjay Sharma, moderated the program and Secretary, Siliguri Sparsh Arnav Branch, Ajay Agarwal, delivered the vote of thanks.

Active Covid cases in India lowest in 221 days

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

(PTI): India added 13,596 new coronavirus infections taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,40,81,315, while the active cases declined to 1,89,694, the lowest in 221 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The death toll climbed to 4,52,290 with 166 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am. The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 30,000 for 24 straight days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 113 consecutive days now.

The active cases comprise 0.56 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.12 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the ministry said.

A decrease of 6,152 cases has been recorded



in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 9,89,493 tests were conducted on Sunday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 59,19,24,874.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.37 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for last 49 days. The weekly

positivity rate was also recorded at 1.37 per cent. It has been below three per cent for the last 115 days, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,34,39,331, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.33 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the

country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 97.79 crore.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20

and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 166 new fatalities include 74 from Kerala and 29 from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,52,290 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,39,789 from Maharashtra, 37,941 from Karnataka, 35,899 from Tamil Nadu, 26,865 from Kerala, 25,089 from Delhi, 22,898 from Uttar Pradesh and 18,977 from West Bengal.

The 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.

Right-wing activists barge into Karnataka Church, sing bhajans

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

[INDTV]: Activists of the Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad forced their way into a makeshift church in Karnataka's Hubballi on Sunday morning and sang bhajans or Hindu prayer songs as a protest, alleging forced religious conversions there.

A video of the incident showed dozens of women and men sitting inside the Bairidevar-koppa Church in Hubballi around 11 am singing bhajans with folded hands over their heads.

Later, the local BJP MLA Arvind Bellad blocked a highway demanding the arrest of pastor Somu Avaradhi.

Both sides - members of the church and the activists of the right-wing organisations - alleged that they were attacked over the incident. Pastor Somu and some of his associates were admitted to hospital with minor injuries.

The pastor and oth-

ers have been named in a complaint under the law for protection of Scheduled Castes and Tribes as well as one against "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings". He has been arrested and three others were let off after questioning.

The church authorities said they filed a complaint in the matter on Monday as well. Labu Ram, the Commissioner of Police for Hubli-Dhadwad, confirmed the incident and said, "The investigation is going on. Only Somu Avaradhi has been arrested. So far, we have not received any complaint from the church."

Raghu Sakleshpora, the State Convenor of the Bjrang Dal, said, "A man called Vishvanath was taken there for conversion. He went to the police station from the church and filed a complaint against the Pastor Somu and others. Later,

our members assembled inside the church and in order to protest, started singing Hindu bhajans."

"We haven't done anything wrong in this," said Shashi, a senior Bajrang Dal activist.

Vishvanath, who filed the case against the pastor and others, alleging forced conversions also accused of pastor of abusing him in the makeshift church when he chanted Hindu prayers instead of the church prayer.

The church authorities, however, denied any conversion attempt by them.

"When they (the right-wing activists) started chanting bhajan in our church, the pastor Somu Avaradhi came. He was gheroad by them. A few ladies were also there who sustained injury during the heated situation and the pushing pulling," said reverend Cedric Jacob, a senior member of the church.

Madhya Pradesh to hold quiz on Ramayana. This is what winners will get

BHOPAL, 18 OCT [PTI]:

The BJP government in Madhya Pradesh will hold a general knowledge competition based on the Hindu epic "Ramayana" and winners will get a chance to travel by air to Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya, where a grand Ram temple is being constructed, MP's Tourism, Culture and Spirituality Minister Usha Thakur has said.

A general knowledge competition based on the "Ramayana" will be organised at national and international levels, an official statement on Sunday said quoting the minister.

"The winners of the competition will get an opportunity to travel by air to Ayodhya," the statement said, without divulging when the competition would be held and how many winners would be selected.

Ms Thakur made the announcement while inaugurating another general knowledge competition based on instances

of value creation depicted in "Ayodhya Kand", one of the chapters of the epic "Ramcharitmanas", at Dr BR Ambedkar University of Social Science in Mhow town of Indore district on Sunday evening.

A total of eight people, including four students, will be selected from each district of the state on the basis of the competition which the minister inaugurated on Sunday. It is being organised by Madhya Pradesh's culture department.

On the occasion, Ms Thakur also inaugurated a picture exhibition on Shabri, a character from "Ramayana" who was an ardent devotee of Lord Ram.

Mandakini Ramkinkar, a scholar who delivers discourse on "Ramayana" and other prominent citizens were also present at the event.

Last month, MP's Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav had announced that the first-year students of grad-

uation courses in state colleges and universities will be offered the epic "Ramcharitmanas" as an elective subject under philosophy discipline in the art stream.

The MP government has in this year's state budget also earmarked a sum of ₹ one crore for the preparation of feasibility and detailed project reports of the "Ram Van Gaman Path" project, which seeks to retrace the route taken by Lord Ram on his way to exile.

The project will be undertaken by the Madhya Pradesh Spirituality Department and MP Road Development Corporation and constructed from Chitrakoot to Amarkantak through Satna, Panna, Amanganj, Katni, Jabalpur, Mandla, Dindori and Shahdol districts.

During the last MP Assembly elections, the Congress in its poll manifesto had also announced the implementation of the Ram Van Gaman Path project in the state.

Computer Baba hurt in accident in Madhya Pradesh, calls it "conspiracy"

BHOPAL, 18 OCT

[NDTV]: Self-styled godman Namdeo Das Tyagi, popularly known as Computer Baba, was injured in a car accident in Madhya Pradesh today, which he called a "conspiracy" and demanded investigation.

Mr Tyagi's car collided with a trolley on the Indore-Ichhapur state highway early this morning when he was on his way to attend former chief minister Kamal Nath's rally ahead of Khandwa bypolls. He suffered minor injuries, officials said.

Computer Baba called the incident a "conspiracy" and not an accident, and said it should be investigated.

Bypolls were necessitated in Khandwa due to the death of BJP MP Nandkumar Singh Chouhan recently. The BJP has pitted Gyaneshwar Patil against Congress candidate Rajnarayan Singh Purni.

Computer Baba was earlier appointed chairman of a river conservation trust by the previous Kamal Nath-led Congress government and enjoyed the status of Minister of State. Before that, the BJP government too had given him MoS rank.

He later fell out with the BJP. In the run-up to November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly seats in the state, he had dubbed 22 rebel Congress MLAs who joined the BJP as "traitors".

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BK Roka elected SKKA president

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 OCT: Sikkim Kho Kho Association [SKKA] president, BK Roka, has been elected as the vice-president of North East Zone Kho Kho Federation.

He was elected during the general council meeting of East Zone Committee of Kho Kho Federation of India held recently at Guwahati. SKKA former general secretary, Anup Chakraborty, who

is also the state coach, has also been nominated as tournament committee convener during the meeting.

As per an SKKA press release, president, BK Roka and former general secretary, Anup Chakraborty had represented Sikkim in the meeting held to decide various issues relating to restructuring and re-organization of East zone and take decisions to re-arrange the north east

zone. States of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were declared as the NE Zone, it is informed.

The release mentions that the meeting also discussed the conduct of state and zonal tournaments at the earliest and informing the Kho Kho Federation of India about date and venue of the next zonal national tournaments.

CHANDIGARH, 18 OCT [NDTV]: Dera Sacha Sauda head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and four others have been sentenced to life imprisonment in the murder of manager Ranjit Singh nearly two decades ago. The four others are Krishan Lal, Jasbir Singh, Avtar Singh and Sabdil.

Ram Rahim will also pay a ₹ 31 lakh fine. The other convicts will also pay fines - Abdil has been told to pay ₹ 1.5 lakh, Krishnan and Jasbir must pay ₹ 1.25 lakh each and Avtar must pay ₹ 75,000.

Fifty per cent of this amount will go to Ranjit Singh's family.

A sixth accused in the case died a year ago.

Earlier this month the

special CBI court in Haryana's Panchkula found all five guilty.

Ram Rahim, who has been lodged in Sunaria Jail in Rohtak district since his 2017 conviction for the rape of two followers, appeared through video-conferencing; the others were present in the court.

Police had tightened security in Panchkula and Sirsa (where the sect is headquartered) in anticipation of possible violence after the court handed down its sentence.

However, the matter was deferred to today after counsel for the defence sought time to



examine some of the arguments the prosecution had made during the sentencing hearing.

Ranjit Singh, who was the manager and also a follower of the sect, was shot dead in 2002.

He was murdered for

his suspected role in the circulation of an anonymous letter that narrated how women were being sexually exploited by Ram Rahim.

According to the CBI's charge sheet, Ram Rahim then hatched a conspira-

cy to kill him.

Apart from the 20-year sentence for the rape (handed down in 2017), Ram Rahim has also been given another life-term - this time for the murder of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati.

Punjab Chief Minister burns power bills as he waives off unpaid dues

CHANDIGARH, 18 OCT [NDTV]: Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi today burnt copies of power bills as a symbol of their waiver. "We promised and we delivered," he tweeted as the Punjab government's decision to waive off the unpaid electricity payments was put into effect today.

The Punjab government had last month announced to waive power bills of those having electricity connection of up to 2 kW. It had also decided that disconnected electricity connections

of consumers who could not pay their bills will also be restored without any penalty.

The waiver will put an additional burden of ₹ 1,200 crore on the state exchequer.

The Punjab cabinet has also decided to waive water bill arrears of consumers in urban and rural areas.

The waivers, one of the poll promises of the new Chief Minister, hold significance as they come ahead of the state assembly polls next year.

Mr Channi had earlier said that disconnected

electricity connections of consumers who could not pay their bills will also be restored without any penalty.

He also said that after touring villages and towns, he came to know that the biggest grievance of people was related to power bills.

"There are 53 lakh consumers who have up to 2 kW load in the state. Their arrears till their last bill will be waived. The arrears may be of months or years that will be borne by the state government," he had said in a reply to a question.

Colin Powell: First Black US State Secretary, public face of 1991 Iraq War

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT [AFP]: Colin Powell, the son of Jamaican immigrants who became a US war hero and the first Black secretary of state but saw his legacy tarnished when he made the case for war in Iraq in 2003, died on Monday of Covid-19 complications. He was 84.

The retired four-star general and former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who served four presidents made his reputation as a man of honor distant from the political fray -- an asset in the corridors of power.

"General Powell is an American hero, an American example, and a great American story," George W. Bush said as he announced Powell's nomination as secretary of state in 2000.

"In directness of speech, his towering integrity, his deep respect for our democracy, and his soldier's sense of duty and honor, Colin Powell demonstrates ... qualities that will make him a great representative of all the people of this country."

But he found it hard to live down his infamous February 2003 speech to the United Nations Security Council about the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq -- the evidence he presented was later proven to be false.

"It's a blot... and will always be a part of my record. It was painful. It's

painful now," Powell said in a 2005 interview with ABC News.

From Harlem to Vietnam

Born April 5, 1937 in Harlem, Powell's "American Journey" - the title of his autobiography - started in New York, where he grew up and earned a degree in geology.

He also participated in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in college, and upon his graduation in June 1958, he received a commission as a second lieutenant in the US Army, and was posted in what was then West Germany. Powell completed two tours of duty in Vietnam -- in 1962-63 as one of John F Kennedy's thousands of military advisors, and again in 1968-69 to investigate the My Lai massacre.

He earned a Purple Heart, but also faced questions about the tone of his report into the hundreds of deaths at My Lai, which to some seemed to dismiss any claims of wrongdoing.

"I was in a unit that was responsible for My Lai. I got there after My Lai happened," he told interviewer Larry King in 2004.

"So, in war, these sorts of horrible things happen every now and again, but they are still to be deplored."

Born to serve
Back in Washington,

he quickly rose through the ranks to the pinnacle of the national security establishment, serving Ronald Reagan as national security advisor, and both George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton as chairman of the Joint Chiefs from 1989-93.

Powell's experiences in Vietnam as a young soldier led him to develop the so-called "Powell Doctrine," which said that if the United States must intervene in a foreign conflict, it should deploy overwhelming force based on clear political objectives.

For many Americans, he was the public face of the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq.

Powell was initially lukewarm about going into the country, but his reputation soared in the aftermath of the blitzkrieg that ejected Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait.

For a while, he even considered a run for the presidency.

But after retiring

from the army in 1993, Powell devoted himself to working on behalf of disadvantaged young people as chairman of America's Promise, a youth advocacy group.

For a while, he fended off new questions on his desire for public office, until George W. Bush came calling for the popular military man to lead the State Department as the 65th secretary of state.

History at State and war in Iraq

"I hope it will give inspiration to young African Americans," Powell said in his nomination acceptance speech in 2000, telling them: "There are no limitations upon you."

His four years at Foggy Bottom (2001-04) were forever marked by the decision to invade Iraq in 2003.

Beforehand, Powell sought a more prudent policy, struggling for traction against hawks in the Bush cabinet while trying to sway allies for their support -- all to no avail.

India urges Qatar to expedite delivery of natural gas cargo

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT [REUTERS]: India, grappling with its worst power crisis in five years, has asked Qatar to expedite delivery of 58 delayed liquefied natural gas (LNG) cargoes, two sources familiar with the matter said. Asia's third largest economy is suffering its worst power shortage since March 2016 due to a crippling coal shortage amid high global energy prices.

Infrastructure maintenance at supplier Qatargas prevented it from delivering 50 LNG cargoes to India this year, the sources said, prompting the Petroleum Ministry last week to write a letter seeking delivery of those cargoes.

The ministry is also

seeking eight additional cargoes which were delayed last year at New Delhi's request after COVID-induced lockdowns lowered demand for the super-cooled fuel, they said.

The sources declined to be named as they are not authorised to speak to media. Country's top gas importer, Petronet LNG, has long-term deals to buy 7.5 million tonnes per year (mtpa) of LNG from Qatar and 1.44 mtpa from Exxon's Gorgon project in Australia.

LNG under those long-term deals costs about \$11-\$12 per million British thermal units (mmBtu), versus more than \$38 per mmBtu on Asia's spot gas market currently and a record

high of over \$56 hit earlier this month. Indian customers in August started deferring imports of spot LNG due to high prices, Petronet LNG CEO A K Singh said at the time.

He said the Indian power sector reduces its intake of LNG once prices rise above about \$10/mmBtu. India has 24 gigawatts (GW) of gas-fired power generation capacity of which about 14 GW has been stranded for more than 10 years due to non-availability of gas, while the remaining plants are operating at very low capacity.

Petroleum Ministry, Qatargas and its parent company Qatar Energy did not respond to Reuters emails seeking comment.

Bitcoin scammers targeting iPhone users via dating apps like Tinder, Bumble: Report

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT [NDTV]: Sophos cybersecurity researchers identified a Bitcoin wallet filled with tokens worth \$1.4 million (roughly Rs. 10 crores) that were collected through scams. The crypto scammers were targeting iPhone users on popular dating apps such as Bumble and Tinder.

Along with ripping off people's cryptocurrency, the hackers were also compromising the personal details of their victims to cyber risks, Sophos claimed. The threat triggered by these scammers has been code-named "CryptoRom" by Sophos.

"Once they've made contact with a target, the attackers suggest continuing the conversation on a messaging platform. They then try to persuade the target to install and invest in a fake cryptocurrency trading app," said Jagdeesh Chandraiah, senior threat researcher, Sophos.

As per the report, these un-identified crypto-scammers have been targeting people in Asia

and are now expanding their activities in Europe as well as the US.

According to Sophos, the attackers also managed to take control of victims' iPhone models by accessing their profiles on fake crypto-trading apps. These unverified and malicious apps were distributed on the Web via fake websites that looked familiar to bank sites.

"From news reports, we learned one victim lost \$87,000 (roughly Rs. 65 crores). There are additional news reports in UK of these scams, with one victim losing \$45,000 (roughly Rs. 33.8 lakhs) to a scammer who contacted them through Facebook, and another who lost \$25,000 (roughly Rs. 18.2 lakhs) after being scammed by someone who contacted through Grindr," the Sophos report said, highlighting the vulnerability of crypto investors.

Researchers have warned crypto investors to only use verified exchange and trading sites available on the Apple

Store in order to facilitate secure crypto transactions.

Earlier in April, a report had revealed that the total crypto crime in 2020 has amounted to around \$10.52 billion (roughly Rs. 79,194 crores).

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Director
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Wildlife Weak

Inform the young before Red Pandas become just stuffed toys

Any reference to Sikkim, and the qualifying sentence invariably makes mention of the fact that it is a biodiversity "hot-spot". We have all read reams after reams on the various geographical zones that Sikkim packs into its 7,096 square kilometres. Experts tell us that Sikkim has 4,000 varieties of flowering plants and herbs, 450 species of orchids, 300 species of ferns, nine species of conifers, 550 species of birds, 600 types of butterflies and a list of fauna that outstrips any other area its size.

This is what one has read.

Few would have seen even a sliver of it.

But wait, the Wildlife Week for the year is already a week in the past, its observance, never significant, rendered further superficial and token by the pandemic and Covid protocols. That week got lost in the build-up to the unlocked tourist season and the general incongruity of making people care for and understand wildlife when for the rest of the year concerted efforts are made to keep them away for each other. Also, the irony of celebrating wildlife through printed-on-flex announcements cannot be missed. Flex banners are the rage. But they should not be in an Organic State given that it is Poly Vinyl Chloride, the PVC that is the building block for all non-biodegradable plastic/ polythene. And it is in insensitivities such as this that wildlife becomes weak even in otherwise Green Sikkim.

The past few years have seen a rise in human-wildlife conflicts [with the wildlife at the suffering end], but these have been limited to bear attacks and sightings, and the rare clouded leopard incident, beyond that, even the bastis have not been spying on too much biodiversity. Deer populations are on the rise one is told, but in the absence of any scientific study, this could be credited as much to the wiping out of the predator population as to the ban on hunting. And then there are the cases of disease in the deer population in parts of Sikkim which has still not been satisfactorily explained. That said, sightings of wildlife diversity remain rare. May be the fauna has retreated deeper into the forests; but even that is unlikely because Sikkim's small size ensures that even the thickest of forests has but a constricted sweep with either a habitation or a road encroaching the forest cover. What this results in is that there are very few core-forest areas for the wildlife to retreat beyond human contact. Admittedly, in the absence of any statistics [current or otherwise], the suggestion that wildlife or flora is not very abundant is as unlettered as the frequent claims of Sikkim being a biodiversity paradise. This is not to challenge claims or Sikkim's position in biodiversity rankings, but to underline the need for more detailed, from the field contemporary studies on Sikkim's flora and fauna. Any such effort will obviously begin with a genuine stirring for something on these lines by the Forest Department and then a parallel effort to excite interest on such matters among the young, for it will be they who inherit whatever is left and will hopefully grow up to understand the state of Sikkim's wilds. But that will take more than the tokenism still offered to special Days and Weeks; the kind of tokenism through which the planners escape any real commitment to resolving real issues the rest of the year round.

But even in their tokenism, such days have a role to play – in exciting the interest of the young since it is invariably they who get pulled out of classrooms to join rallies and raise placards. In the context of wildlife, one such occasion had arrived in the first week of October when the Wildlife Week played out. The first week of October is over now, but wildlife has not made any news, even by way of events.

Events for the Wildlife Week should be organised in way and in the belief that what the younger generation sees, it will protect. The observance of Wildlife Week should provide the impetus to take the introduction of Sikkim's young to their environment to the next level. The universal greed for "progress" is apparent, if not even more amplified in Sikkim. Sikkim, to its credit, can stake claim to having segregated areas as wildlife reserves much ahead of even India, but now the time has come to reaffirm this commitment. The State has already lost animals like the Takin, the Pygmy Hog and the Sikkim Stag to the bracket which records "extinct animals" and has placed more in the "endangered list." Someone, and only the Forest Department comes to mind, has to now take the responsibility of educating the younger generation on the inventory of animals that the State still has with it. Sponsored visits to wildlife sanctuaries and tours conducted by experts are the need of the hour. Then, the young will see what Sikkim has and will become more committed to protecting it. Ignorance can prove fatal, because then no one will even notice the loss until it is too late. There might actually come a time when the young grow up believing that the Red Panda is a stuffed toy and not a real animal. Conservation will not be possible once that stage is reached...

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Our sense of wellbeing has been in decline for years – here's how to turn it around

PAUL ANAND

THECONVERSATION.COM

People's sense of wellbeing took a dive in the first year of the pandemic, according to new data published by the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS). As lockdowns took effect and people grew fearful about the future, their life satisfaction fell by an average of 4%, while their anxiety rose by 9%. People also became less happy and were more likely to feel that the things they were doing in life weren't worthwhile.

Lockdown restrictions on social and leisure activity, social-distancing practices in shops and public spaces, and increases in working from home meant that for many people, increased isolation has been inevitable and serious.

These results were based on surveys of some 320,000 people across the UK and there were inevitable variations between different regions. For example, the West Midlands and north-west England saw the greatest increases in anxiety, while the biggest falls in life satisfaction were in Northern Ireland and Yorkshire and The Humber.

But if these falls might be roughly what you would expect during an international pandemic, it is important to point out that people's wellbeing had already been in decline for the past couple of years. Life satisfaction, happiness and the sense of things being worthwhile were all at their best in 2018-19 according to the ONS, while anxiety levels have been rising since 2014-15.

This is echoed by a recent report by Carnegie UK, which also drew on ONS statistics to create an in-house metric known as Gross Domestic Wellbeing or GDWe. Both the ONS data and also the Carnegie UK report reflect a growing recognition by national and international bodies that you can't monitor people's well-



being by relying on Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Based on ten different dimensions of wellbeing, this report estimated that GDWe had actually been falling in the four years leading up to the pandemic – all years when UK GDP was increasing. This decline in wellbeing was due to people in the UK seeing a fall in their mental health status due to loneliness and isolation, which perhaps echoes the new ONS findings around anxiety.

One other interesting observation from the Carnegie report was that the biggest declines in 2019-20 in England – ahead of the damage from the pandemic – were actually for "the economy" and "governance".

The economy index seeks to represent macro-economic indicators such as income, public debt and inflation, while that for governance is based on voter turnout and trust in government. It is unsurprising that both indices fell during the period,

given the consequences of Brexit.

The early economic effects of the pandemic are presumably captured in the new ONS figures. But since the pandemic has caused a spike in public debt that will take years to reduce, plus a range of other problems such as rising prices and product shortages, we can probably expect economic concerns to keep dragging down the wellbeing data for years into the future.

Trust in government will probably have influenced the new ONS data too. It is likely to have followed the ups and downs of COVID and public reactions to the associated policy responses. In the first year of the pandemic, the government's decision-making over the first and second lockdowns was certainly seen as too slow.

MENTAL HEALTH

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) has for a decade published

an index of wellbeing and also includes wellbeing in much of its economic analysis. In its recent analysis of consequences of COVID and country responses, the OECD found people's mental health worsening to an unprecedented extent. It attributed this to financial insecurity, unemployment and fear, alongside a reduction in the kind of activities that keep people's mental health buoyant. These include social connections, access to physical exercise, health services and daily routine.

As a result, many countries have sought to scale up mental-health services while trying to protect people's jobs and income during the pandemic – even if mental health programmes in schools and workplaces have been disrupted and the implications of long-term remote working are yet to be fully understood.

It hasn't just been higher-income countries that have recognised such problems, as can be seen from the World Bank collaborating in this area with a range of countries in Africa and Asia. One of the themes emerging from all the major international organisations is the need for an integrated, economy-wide approach to mental-health protection – and the new ONS findings about rising anxiety provide an added justification for this.

The calls to build back and to level up are now familiar and demand concrete actions backed by new ways of thinking. Mental health and wellbeing deserves to be centre-stage, even if this calls for priorities at work and at home to be re-evaluated.

[the writer is Professor of Economics, The Open University]

Superman's not the first hero to be portrayed as bisexual, but he'll bring hope to LGBTQ+ fans

ALEX FITCH

THECONVERSATION.COM

Superman has come out as bisexual. Or more accurately, Superman's son – Jonathan Kent – who has recently taken on his father's role in DC Comics, has been depicted kissing another male character in a panel from a forthcoming comic.

Although the wider public has only recently been made aware of this, comic readers have suspected it for several months after a growing romance between Kent and journalist, Jay Nakamura, in recent issues of Superman: Son of Kal-El. And Kent has introduced his boyfriend to his parents in recent issues of the comic he stars in.

The revelation that a Superman is bisexual is a big deal in terms of superhero comics, but it hasn't gone down well with everyone. Former Superman actor Dean Cain claimed the move would have been brave 20 years ago but now was "bandwagoning".

Various Republican senators in the US have complained, including Arizona state senator Wendy Rogers who called him "a woke Superman". Josh Mandel, who is trying for a senate seat, said, "Bisexual comics for kids [are] trying to destroy America." And another Arizona Republican, Josh Barnett, asked "Why does Hollywood have to ruin everything?"

In the book *The Superhero Symbol*, which brings together superhero scholars from a range of disciplines, the authors note, "While Superman might profess his emblem means hope, the readily recognisable logo has also become a brand every bit as powerful as golden arches or a stylised swoosh." And his well-known "S shield", previously associated with a heterosexual cisgender man defending "truth, justice and the American way", is now connected with a young bisexual man.

Many people may have also been surprised to discover that Superman has a son. But this is not a new plot point and has been featured several times before – a notable example being in an out of continuity comic written by Alan Moore in 1986.

On-screen, a seven-year-old Jason Kent has also appeared in the film *Superman Returns* (2006), while the current TV series, *Superman & Lois*, provides the couple with two teen boys – Jonathan and Jordan – both with powers.



REFLECTING THE READERS

The sexuality of Superman's onscreen children is yet to be revealed, non-heterosexual superheroes are certainly not a new phenomenon. In Marvel Comics, a team of Young Avengers have existed since 2005, with most members of the group belonging to the LGBTQ+ community.

Some have started to appear in the Marvel Cinematic Universe in Disney+ shows, including Wiccan (in *WandaVision*), and Kid Loki (in *Loki*), while Miss America is set to be featured in the film *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* next year – as a lesbian, she is Marvel's first Latin-American LGBTQ+ character to star in an ongoing series.

In comics, the X-Men's Iceman, and the third male teenager to take on the role of Batman's Robin have both been given same-sex love interests in recent comics. But Marvel has been more circumspect about its more famous character Deadpool, who is identified as bi or pansexual more in word than deed.

Both Marvel and DC have included narratives about the difficulties of coming out in some stories. A younger version of Iceman,

for example, travelled from the 20th-century to the 21st-century so he could embrace his sexuality. Similarly, Batwoman is revealed to have been kicked out of military school, due to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the US before 2011, which barred openly gay, lesbian or bisexual people from military service.

A teen version of Superman was also featured in early seasons of the TV series *Smallville*. As was his fond bromance with a young Lex Luthor – which some viewers claimed was queer-baiting. This is when creators hint at, but never actually depict, same-sex romance. So for LGBTQ+ comic readers, seeing a character called Superman genuinely involved in a same-sex relationship is a profound moment.

While DC Comics haven't been brave enough to give Clark Kent himself a boyfriend, the storyline allows bisexual teens to see themselves reflected in a world-famous character. And seeing Jonathan Kent with an emblem of "hope" on his chest may well help many bisexual or bi-curious teenagers to feel more accepted too.

[the writer is Lecturer and PhD Researcher in Comics and Architecture, University of Brighton]

“Killing of migrant workers causing some panic”: Bihar Minister to NDTV

Four men from Bihar - two labourers and two street food vendors - are among 11 men and women who have been shot dead by terrorists in J&K this month

Patna: The killing of four Bihari migrant workers in J&K this month has created some panic among others from the state working in the Kashmir Valley, Labour Minister Jivesh Mishra told NDTV on Monday, while also defending the ruling JDU-BJP government from criticism over the compensation amount.

“These murders are a serious matter... It seems as if people from Bihar are being targeted and that is a worrying point. In this connection Home Minister Amit Shah has spoken the Lieutenant Governor (Manoj Sinha) and he has assured us that the guilty will be caught and punished,” Mr Mishra said.

Last evening Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also spoke to Manoj Sinha, he said.

“I have spoken to the J&K Lieutenant Governor and raised my concerns over the recent killings. Clearly some people are targeting those who have gone to J&K to work. We are hopeful measures will be taken for security



of migrants in J&K,” the Chief Minister had said.

The Nitish Kumar government has offered ₹ 2 lakh compensation to the families of those killed but questions have been raised over this amount; RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav tweeted pointing out that the state gives ₹ 4 lakh compensation to the families of those killed by snake bites.

Mr Mishra, however, pointed out, that apart from ₹ 2 lakh from the Bihar Chief Minister's Relief Fund, the families were also being compensated by the J&K admin-

istration.

They will also get ₹ 1 lakh from his department, he said, adding this was on a priority basis.

“Yesterday, Arbind Sah's body was brought back. I told officials to give compensation immediately... his family was given ₹ 50,000 cash and another ₹ 50,000 in cheque. J&K government will give ₹ 5 lakh and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced a compensation of ₹ 2 lakh,” Mr Mishra said.

In the case of Arbind Sah, the J&K administration has offered his fam-

ily an initial compensation of ₹ 1.25 lakh, with a stated sum of ₹ 4 lakh to follow.

This morning Tejashwi Yadav tweeted “destruction by injustice is the basic mantra of the government”.

Mr Mishra also dismissed talk of a reverse migration of Bihari labourers from J&K, although he admitted that “it is natural that people will be scared”. Blaming “those who can't tolerate that normalcy is returning (in J&K)”, he slammed the terrorists for “extreme cowardice in targeting

poor people”.

“It is a matter of great concern... but the central government won't tolerate terrorism. It is natural that people will be scared. Those who have tendencies of violence can't tolerate that normalcy is returning. This is extreme cowardice that they are targeting poor people,” he said.

He further denied any suggestion that people from Bihar were being forced to leave the state to look for employment opportunities; he said he was “confident the state can arrange livelihoods”.

“That is not correct... I am very confident the state can arrange livelihoods. People have been travelling across states for decades. Calling it migration is not right. Many people are coming to Bihar also for livelihoods. This can't be avoided,” he said.

Four men from Bihar - two labourers and two street food vendors - are among 11 men and women who have been shot dead by terrorists in J&K this month, in a rush of targeted civilian killings that has also led to frightened Kashmiri Pandit families quietly fleeing accommodations in transit camps.

The labourers - Raja Rishidev and Yogendra Rishidev - were killed Sunday in Kulgam district. One street food vendor - Arbind Kumar Shah, a golgappa seller - was shot in Srinagar on Saturday.

Two weeks ago, a Virender Paswan, who hails from Bihar's Bhagalpur and worked as a street food vendor in Srinagar's Lal Bazar area, was shot dead; his killing was hours after a prominent city chemist and member of the Kashmiri Pandit community - Makhan Lal Bindroo, 70 - was shot dead in his store.

Heavy rain in South Bengal districts till Tuesday: MeT

KOLKATA, OCT 18 (PTI): Inclement weather prevailed over most parts of south Bengal on Monday as continuous rain with one or two spells of heavy downpour caused by a low pressure system affected normal life in the city and several other places.

The Met department has forecast heavy rain in all the districts of south Bengal, including Kolkata on Monday and Tuesday.

The coastal districts of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas will receive very heavy rainfall till Wednesday morning, while districts of Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly are very likely to receive torrential rain on Tuesday, the weatherman said.

The Met department said that the inclement weather has been caused by a low pressure system over north Telangana and strong southeasterly wind from Bay of Bengal.

The districts in north Bengal are likely to receive heavy rain from Tuesday owing to the weather system, it said, adding that the sub-Hi-

malayan districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Alipurduar are very likely to receive heavier downpour.

The Met department warned of rise in water level in rivers, waterlogging in low-lying areas and landslides in the hill districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong owing to the downpour.

Standing crops in the field, with paddy being almost ready for harvest in several districts of the rice-growing state, may also suffer damage, it said.

Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea till Tuesday.

The seaside resort town of Digha received the heaviest rain in 24 hours till 8.30 am on Monday recording 117 mm rainfall, while the river port town of Canning received 108 mm rainfall, the Met said.

Kolkata received 22 mm rainfall, while Dum Dum in the northern outskirts of the city recorded 53 mm rainfall during the same period, it said.

Mizoram records dip in single-day COVID-19 cases

AIZAWL, OCT 18 (PTI): Mizoram on Monday registered 249 new COVID-19 cases, the lowest in two months, raising the tally to 1,12,84, while three fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 386, a health department official said.

On Sunday, the state had registered 948 new cases and the day before 932 infections.

According to the official, the single-day tally is usually less on Mondays as several testing centres, including the RT-PCR laboratory at Zoram Medical College (ZMC), remain closed on Sundays.

Mizoram, however,

has been recording below-1000 single-day infections over the past four days, bringing some relief to the administration and people.

As many as 1,389 people have recuperated from the disease since Sunday, taking the total number of recoveries to 1,00,829, the official said.

The average positivity rate stands at 12.62 per cent and the recovery rate at 89.34 per cent.

Of the 249 fresh cases 145 were recorded in Aizawl, 30 in Serchhip and 20 in Saitual.

At least 58 children are among the newly infected people.

Bengal Government asks district administrations to be alert after Bangladesh attacks

KOLKATA: The West Bengal government has alerted its district administrations, particularly those bordering Bangladesh, against the misuse of social media and circulation of fake news related to the recent spate of attacks during Durga puja in the neighbouring country, and urged them to take measures to maintain law and order, a top official said on Monday.

All state agencies have been asked to be on toes to combat any attempt to create disturbances anywhere in Bengal amid the ongoing idol immersion ceremonies and observance of Fateha-Dwaz-Daham, he said. “The government has asked district administrations, especially those bordering Bangladesh, to exercise caution against fake news circulation on the violence and vandalism in the neighbouring country. All agencies have been told to keep vigil and thwart attempts



to create tension,” the official added.

A similar word of caution was also issued to senior police officers by Additional Director General (Intelligence Branch).

“Since 13.10.21, social media platforms have been flooded with posts of vandalism of Durga Puja pandals in Bangladesh. Centering these issues, districts along Indo-Bangla border have become hyper sensitive and the leaders

of different Hindu fundamentalist organisations of India pro-active.

“...you are requested to sensitise you officers and men under your control and keep sharp vigil to avoid any untoward incident,” the message by the ADGP said.

On Sunday, the West Bengal Police had retweeted posts by the Asansol-Durgapur police and Purba Medinipur SP, warning people with the intention of spreading misinformation of severe

consequences as brawls were reported over multiple issues in the two areas.

“Some people are spreading wrong information that bombs were hurled at Puja pandals and damage was done, giving (the incidents) communal colour and trying to disturb peace in the area. Strong legal action will be taken for spreading such wrong and misleading information,” the tweet by the Asansol-Durgapur police said.

Hindus denounce violence amid new attacks in Bangladesh

DHAKA, BANGLADESH (AP): Protests continued Monday in Bangladesh's capital to denounce a wave of violence against Hindus following an image posted on social media that was perceived as insulting to the country's Muslim majority. New attacks took place Sunday night in a northern village, where unidentified people burned up to 26 homes of Hindus despite a warning by the government that such attacks would be firmly punished.

On Monday, the followers of the Hindu

group International Society for Krishna Consciousness were joined by students and teachers from Dhaka University in blocking a major intersection in Dhaka to demand justice. Several other Hindu groups also joined the peaceful protest at the Shahbagh intersection.

Attacks on Hindu temples have intensified since last Wednesday after a photo was posted on social media showing a copy of Islam's holy book, the Quran, at the feet of a statue at a Hindu temple in the eastern district of

Cumilla.

Local media reported that six Hindus were killed in separate attacks, but the figures could not be confirmed independently. Local media downplayed their coverage of the violence, apparently under pressure from the government to control any new attacks as Hindus celebrated their largest religious festival, Durga Puja, that ended Friday.

Muslims also held street protests after the images came out on social media, especially Facebook. Asif Hasan, chief government adminis-

trator of northern Rangpur district, said Monday that attackers torched the homes of Hindus in a fishing village on Sunday night. They also stole cash, cattle and other valuables during the attack, he said. Hasan said 42 people were arrested.

On Monday, the Ministry of Home Affairs transferred seven police officials from troubled areas for failing to control the violence.

About 9% of Bangladesh's 160 million people are Hindu. Bangladesh follows a largely secular legal system based on British common law.

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VIDEO NEWS SECTION



Uchimura, 5 new Olympic champs headline gymnastics worlds

TOKYO (AP): Kohei Uchimura will be aiming for a measure of redemption when the world championships begin in his hometown this week in what could be a competition finale for one of the greatest male gymnasts of all time. Stung by the disappointment of not qualifying for the horizontal bar final at the Tokyo Olympics, the 32-year-old Uchimura will be aiming to reclaim the world title on horizontal bar he last won in 2015.

The 50th artistic gymnastics world championships started Monday and will continue through Sunday in Kitakyushu, featuring more than 300 gymnasts representing 59 countries. The first medals will be awarded Thursday in the women's all-around.

Simone Biles and Sunisa Lee of the United States aren't taking part but five newly-minted Olympic gold medalists — Daiki Hashimoto of Japan, Rebeca Andrade of Brazil, South Korea's Shin Jea-hwan and Russians Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova — will give the event star power.

Uchimura is a six-time world all-around champion and a seven-time Olympic medalist. His fall from the horizontal bar at the Tokyo Games was not how he wanted to end his illustrious career.

"I know the word 'revenge' will be mentioned," Uchimura told Japanese online sports



site Sponichi Annex. "But to be able to hold the event in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, all I'm feeling is appreciation. So I want to turn in a performance that is full of appreciation."

Uchimura has been dealing with injuries in recent years and has said in the past that he wouldn't have continued competing if Tokyo hadn't hosted the Olympics.

His main challenger this week will be Hashimoto who, at 19, became the youngest man ever to win the Olympic all-around title at the Tokyo Olympics.

Hashimoto won the gold in the horizontal bar after Uchimura faltered, becoming the new face of the sport in Japan.

"It's always an honor

to compete with Kohei Uchimura in any kind of competition," Hashimoto said. "Of course, we are teammates, but I'm very excited to compete against him at the world championships, which means we are going to compete for world No. 1."

Hashimoto will be the clear favorite to take the men's all-around title. Defending champion Nikita Nagornyy of Russia is not competing. The only man who finished inside the Top 10 in the Tokyo all-around was eighth-place Ahmet Onder of Turkey.

This means there is an opportunity for young gymnasts such as Sergei Naidin of Russia, Ilya Kovtun of Ukraine and Adem Asil of Turkey.

Andrade, who took

gold on the women's vault in Tokyo and silver in the all-around, has elected to perform only on three apparatus this week and will not contend for the all-around title.

She suffered ACL tears in four years between 2015 and 2019.

"I don't want to be away from competition again due to injury or something like this," Andrade said. "So I'm listening to my body and what it is asking. I'm here, I'll be competing. Gymnastics is not only about the floor exercise, even though everyone likes it. I have three other apparatus and I will give my best."

Andrade's withdrawal, coupled with Mai Murakami's decision to only compete in balance

beam and floor exercise, leaves the woman's all-around competition wide open.

Potential title contenders include Tokyo 2020 Olympic all-around bronze medalist Melnikova and compatriot Urazova as well as newcomers Kayla DiCello of the United States and Wei Xiaoyuan of China.

The unusual timing of the event — Kitakyushu is the first gymnastics world championship to be held in an Olympic year since 1996 — provides a unique opportunity for Tokyo Olympians to add to their accomplishments while giving newcomers a chance to win medals on the road to Paris 2024.

Twelve world medals — seven for men and five for women — will be in play this week in Japan.

European court set to study soccer's homegrown player quotas

GENEVA (AP): A second soccer legal case is heading to the European Court of Justice, after the referral of the Super League clubs' dispute with UEFA.

A judge in Belgium has now asked the European Union's court in Luxembourg to examine if UEFA-backed homegrown player rules, designed to protect young local talents, comply with free movement of labor and competition law in the 27-nation bloc.

Rules shaped by UEFA since 2005 — with aims that include limiting wealthy clubs hoarding players from across Europe — and later applied in Belgium were challenged in that country as a restriction on recruitment and team selection options.

The referral decision was made Friday by a judge in the French-speaking court of first instance in Brussels.

The case was started last year by Royal Antwerp and its then-player Lior Refaelov, an Israel international. It challenges the Belgian soccer federation for setting quotas of homegrown players in a club's first-team squad and matchday team list.

A Belgian club's squad limit of 25 senior players over the age of 21 must include eight players who were developed in the country. At least six homegrown players must be among the starting lineup or substitutes for a game.

Lawyers for Royal Ant-

werp and the 35-year-old Refaelov argued their ability to recruit, be signed and make team selections have been limited, according to a Brussels court document seen by The Associated Press.

Among their arguments is that homegrown quotas favor higher population countries having a larger pool of potential players. Belgium's population is about 11.5 million.

The Belgian federation has applied homegrown quotas since 2011, at the start of a decade when the men's national team became the world's top-ranked and reached the 2018 World Cup semifinals.

The federation followed UEFA, which got approval from national members in 2005 to create a rule designed to protect local-trained players in its club competitions like the Champions League.

"It also aims to counter the trend for hoarding players and to try to re-establish a 'local' identity at clubs," UEFA has said of its homegrown rule.

Since 2009, a club playing in UEFA competitions must name eight homegrown players of any nationality in a 25-player squad. There are no quotas on matchday team selection.

At least four of the homegrown players must have spent three years with the club between the ages of 15 and 21. Up to four could have

been trained at another club from the same country.

Because nationality is not a barrier, the UEFA rule was judged in 2008 by the European Commission in Brussels to allow free movement of labor.

Still, the judge in Brussels decided last week to ask for preliminary rulings from Luxembourg to interpret articles 45 and 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The European Court of Justice has a storied history with soccer and is currently studying the high-stakes Super League case. Clubs led by Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus are trying to end what they say is a UEFA-FIFA monopoly on organizing international competitions.

The court delivered the so-called Bosman Ruling in 1995 that had a seismic effect on soccer.

That verdict in favor of Belgian journeyman Jean-Marc Bosman freed out-of-contract players to join another club without a transfer fee and helped drive up salaries. It also ended nationality quotas which limited clubs hiring players from inside the EU.

One of Bosman's lawyers, Jean-Louis Dupont, is part of the team representing Royal Antwerp. He and another Belgian lawyer, Martin Hissel, are also working with the Super League clubs

Larson 1st into NASCAR's championship 4 in a comeback season

FORT WORTH, TEXAS (AP): The first driver in NASCAR's championship four is the one everyone else was already expecting to race for the Cup title in the season finale. Kyle Larson wasn't going to be so sure, even with all of those wins and his significant points lead, until it was a certainty.

"You know, (Kevin) Harvick had his issues last year and didn't make the final four," Larson said. "That will always be on my mind."

No such issues for Larson, who opened the round of eight in the playoffs Sunday with a dominating victory at Texas. It was the first opportunity for anyone to lock into one of the championship-contending spots.

There are now two races left, and seven drivers vying for the remaining three spots, before the season finale Nov. 7 in Phoenix.

Ryan Blaney, Denny Hamlin and Kyle Busch are above the cutline going next weekend to Kansas, where Busch won earlier this year. Defending Cup champion Chase Elliott is fifth, ahead of Brad Keselowski, Martin Truex Jr. and Joey Logano.

"I'll never get comfortable. I mean, you can have an issue in the first stage and all that's gone," Blaney said of being 17 points above the cutline. "You've just got to keep doing what you're doing. I don't think you can ever get comfortable unless you're the 5 car (Lar-

son). The next few races you just have to keep racing like you have."

Larson led 256 of 334 laps at the 1 1/2-mile Texas track for his eighth win this season, and third in seven playoff races. He led the final 218 laps, staying in front through all of those restarts.

This has been quite a comeback season for Larson, the 29-year-old California native who wasn't even racing in NASCAR at this time last year. He is in the championship four the first time, eight years after his Cup debut.

Larson was suspended by NASCAR and didn't race again last year after using a racial slur during a livestream while in a virtual race when on-track events were on pause during the pandemic. That cost him almost every sponsor, his seat with Chip Ganassi Racing and nearly his career before Rick Hendrick signed him before this season.

Along with his eight Cup wins and 16 other top-10 finishes this season, Larson also won at Texas in June, in the \$1 million, non-points All-Star race. He had also won in his previous All-Star race appearance, in 2019 while still with Ganassi, but missed last year's big-money exhibition while suspended.

Already 42 points above the cutline before Sunday's race, Larson said then that he wasn't exactly comfortable with that. Like he did after the race, he made

reference to Harvick, who last year went into the round of eight with an even bigger margin but didn't make the final four.

"It probably still would have been on my mind going to Kansas," Larson said. "I just was more worried about like if you get in the wall or something like Denny or Truex, or get caught up in a wreck, stuff like that, which now we don't have to worry about. So that's good"

Three of the late restarts Sunday came after incidents involving Hamlin, Truex and Logano. Hamlin twice had contact in the closing laps, and managed to stay on the lead lap even after having to pit and finished 11th.

"All the late race restarts at the end get so wild and crazy and you have no idea what is going to happen, and who is going to get checked up and stuff like that," Blaney said.

"It's insane. I think we ended up gaining a point over the cut, somehow. ... It's just a crazy day," Hamlin said. "The way these cars race where we are packed up for a couple laps, you just never know. It's going to be the same way at Kansas."

That is another 11/2-mile track, where Busch won in May. Eight of the last nine races in Kansas have been won by one of the seven remaining playoff contenders. Truex and Hamlin have both won twice in that span, with Blaney the only one of that group without a victory there.

Protestors disrupt flame lighting for Beijing Winter Games

ANCIENT OLYMPIA GREECE (AP): Three activists protesting human rights abuses in China broke into the archaeological site where the flame lighting ceremony for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics was held Monday and ran toward the newly lit torch holding a Tibetan flag and a banner that read "No genocide games."

The protesters climbed over a fence to enter the grounds and attempted to reach the Temple of Hera, where the ceremony was being held. They were thrown to the ground by police and detained.

"How can Beijing be allowed to host the Olympics given that they are committing a genocide against the Uyghurs?" one protester said, referring to the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China's northwest region of Xinjiang.

The flame was lit at the birthplace of the ancient Olympics in southern Greece under heavy police security.

With the public excluded amid pandemic safety measures, and a cloudless sky over the verdant site of Ancient Olympia, the flame was ceremoniously kindled using the rays of the sun before being carried off on a mini torch relay.

Earlier, other protesters were detained by Greek police be-

fore they could reach the site. Pro-democracy protests also had broken out during the lighting ceremony for the 2008 Beijing Summer Games.

Despite widespread international criticism of China's human rights record, the International Olympic Committee has shied away from the issue, saying it falls outside its remit.

In his speech in the ancient stadium of Olympia, where in antiquity male athletes competed naked during a special truce among their often-warring cities, IOC President Thomas Bach stressed that the modern Games must be "respected as politically neutral ground."

"Only this political neutrality ensures that the Olympic Games can stand above and beyond the political differences that exist in our times," he said. "The Olympic Games cannot address all the challenges in our world. But they set an example for a world where everyone respects the same rules and one another."

Tibetan rights activists said in a press release that China was trying to "sportswash" its human rights abuses "with the glamour and veneer of respectability the Olympic Games brings."

Commenting on the



protest, the Greek national Olympic committee said that while it respects freedom of expression, "it is disappointing that this traditional cultural event has been used by a few individuals for other purposes."

Beijing will become the first city to have hosted both winter and summer Olympics.

In a tightly choreographed performance shortly afterwards, a Greek actress playing the part of a pagan priestess knelt to light the Olympic flame, using a bowl-shaped mirror to focus the sun's rays on a fuel-filled torch.

Standing in front of the few remaining columns of the ruined, 2,600-year-old Temple of Hera, she offered a symbolic prayer for the ancient Greek god of light, Apollo, to light the flame.

"Mountains fall silent, birdsong cease," she intoned as a TV drone buzzed overhead and ranks of photographers clicked their shutters.

Shortly later, the protester's shouts were heard.

Yu Zaiqing, the vice president of the Beijing organizing committee, said the Games brought "confidence, warmth and hope" during the pandemic, which first appeared in China.

"We can and will deliver a streamlined, safe and splendid Olympic Games to the world," he said.

Police were much in evidence at and around the archaeological site where the ancient Games were held from 776 BC and for more than 1,000 years, until the Christians stamped them out. Anyone heading

Afghan Taliban's victory boosts Pakistan's radicals

PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN (AP): In Pakistan's rugged tribal regions along the border with Afghanistan, a quiet and persistent warning is circulating: The Taliban are returning. Pakistan's own Taliban movement, which had in years past waged a violent campaign against the Islamabad government, has been emboldened by the return to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

They seem to be preparing to retake control of the tribal regions that they lost nearly seven years ago in a major operation by Pakistan's military. Pakistani Taliban are already increasing their influence. Local contractors report Taliban-imposed surcharges on every contract and the killing of those who defy them.

In early September, for example, a contractor named Noor Islam Dawar built a small canal not far from the town of Mir Ali near the Afghan border. It wasn't worth more than \$5,000. Still, the Taliban came calling, demanding their share of \$1,100. Dawar had nothing to give and pleaded for their understanding, according to relatives and local activists. A week later he was dead, shot by unknown gunmen. His family blames the Taliban.

Pakistan's Taliban, known as the Tehrik-e-Taliban or TTP, is a

separate organization from Afghanistan's Taliban, though they share much of the same hardline ideology and are allied. The TTP arose in the early 2000s and launched a campaign of bombings and other attacks, vowing to bring down the Pakistani government and seizing control in many tribal areas. The military crackdown of the 2010s managed to repress it.

But the TTP was reorganizing in safe havens in Afghanistan even before the Afghan Taliban took over Kabul on Aug. 15.

"The Afghan Taliban's stunning success in defeating the American superpower has emboldened the Pakistani Taliban...They now seem to believe they too can wage a successful jihad against the Pakistani 'infidel' state and have returned to insurgency mode," said Brian Glyn Williams, Islamic history professor at the University of Massachusetts, who has written extensively on jihad movements.

The TTP has ramped up attacks in recent months. More than 300 Pakistanis have been killed in terrorist attacks since January, including 144 military personnel, according to the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies.

The events in Afghanistan have also



energized the scores of radical religious parties in Pakistan, said Amir Rana, executive director of the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies.

These parties openly revile minority Shiite Muslims as heretics and on occasion bring thousands on to the street to defend their hardline interpretation of Islam. One party, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, has a single agenda: to protect a controversial blasphemy law. The law has been used against minorities and opponents and can incite mobs to kill simply over an accusation of insulting Islam.

Already buffeted by a growing religiosity, Pa-

kistani society is at risk of transforming into one similar to Taliban-run Afghanistan, Rana warned.

A Gallup Pakistan poll released last week found 55% of Pakistanis would support an "Islamic government" like the one advocated by Afghanistan's Taliban. Gallup surveyed 2,170 Pakistanis soon after the Taliban takeover in Kabul.

Pakistan has shied away from offering unilateral recognition to the all-Taliban government in Afghanistan, but has been pushing for the world to engage with the new rulers. It has urged the United States to release funds to the Afghan government, while urging the

Taliban to open their ranks to minorities and non-Taliban.

Pakistan's relationship with the Afghan Taliban is a constant source of angst in America, where Republican senators have introduced a law that would sanction Islamabad for allegedly working against the U.S. to bring the Taliban to power. The charge has angered Pakistan, whose leaders say it was asked and delivered the Taliban to the negotiation table with the U.S., which eventually led to an agreement paving the way for America's final withdrawal.

Pakistan's ties to many of the Afghan Taliban go back to the

1980s when Pakistan was the staging arena for a U.S.-backed fight against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. In particular, the Haqqani group, possibly Afghanistan's most powerful Taliban faction, has a long relationship with Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI.

Pakistan has turned to Sirajuddin Haqqani, the interior minister in Afghanistan's new Taliban government, for help in starting talks with the Pakistani Taliban, said Asfandiyar Mir, a senior expert at the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Some TTP figures in North Waziristan -- a rugged area the group once controlled -- are ready to negotiate. But

the most violent factions, led by Noor Wali Mehsud, are not interested in talks. Mehsud's Taliban want control of South Waziristan, said Mir.

It's not clear whether Haqqani will be able to get Mehsud to the table or whether Afghanistan's new rulers are ready to break their close ties with Pakistan's Taliban.

In the attempts to put together negotiations with Islamabad, the TTP is demanding control over parts of the tribal regions and rule by its strict interpretation of Islamic Shariah law in those areas, as well as the right to keep their weapons, according to two Pakistani figures familiar with the demands. They spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the media and because they fear retaliation.

Bill Roggio of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a U.S.-based think tank, said Pakistan is opening talks with the Taliban to stop the increasing attacks on its military, but he warned that "the government is opening Pandora's box."

"The TTP will not be satisfied with ruling a small portion of Pakistan, it will inevitably want more than what it is given," Roggio said. "Like the Afghan Taliban wanted to rule Afghanistan, the TTP wants to rule Pakistan."

Syria buries former lawmaker shot near Israeli border

DAMASCUS, SYRIA (AP): A former Syrian lawmaker allegedly felled by Israeli sniper fire was laid to rest Monday in an official funeral attended by hundreds of people near Damascus.

Midhat Saleh, a well-known figure in Syria, was fatally shot Saturday in Ein el-Tineh, a village along the Israeli border in the Golan Heights where he ran a Syrian government office. Syria said he was killed by Israeli sniper fire. Israeli military and other officials declined to comment on the charge.

Israeli media, however, said Saleh had been assisting the Iranian military presence against Israel. If the Syrian claims are confirmed, it would mark the first time that Israeli snipers are known to have killed someone identified as an Iranian-linked target across the border.

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed the area. Most of the world does not recognize the annexation, though the Trump administration declared the territory to be part of Israel.

On Monday, Saleh's coffin, wrapped in a Syrian flag, was brought in an ambulance from the Mamdouh Abaza hospital in Qunetira to Jaramana, on the outskirts of Damascus, for burial at a Druze cemetery. Hundreds of people attended, in addition to senior officials and Druze clerics.

Saleh was born in Majdal Shams, in the Israeli-controlled side of the Golan, and was jailed several times by Israel, most recently for 12 years until 1997. He later moved to Syria, was elected to parliament in 1998 and served as an adviser to the government on the Golan issue.

Saleh's son, Golan, a 17-year-old student, said that his father has always told him that the territory would return to Syria.

"I am proud that my father was martyred," he said.

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Myanmar leader says ASEAN blind to opposition's violence



BANGKOK (AP): The leader of Myanmar's military-installed government said Monday that other Southeast Asian countries should share responsibility for failing to help quell the violence that has engulfed his nation since the army seized power in February.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing in a speech broadcast on state television blamed groups that were organized to oppose the military takeover for the ongoing deadly unrest. He suggested that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had failed to recognize the responsibility of opposition groups for the violence and said his government was seeking to restore peace and stability.

Opposition to military rule initially took the form of nonviolent protests, but escalated to armed self-defense after security forces used deadly force to disperse

demonstrations. A detailed accounting by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners blames security forces for the killings of almost 1,200 civilians. The government now faces a growing insurgency in many parts of the country.

Min Aung Hlaing was commenting on ASEAN's decision on Friday to invite a non-political representative from Myanmar instead of a member of its ruling council to the bloc's summit meeting later this month.

The virtually unprecedented rebuke of one of its 10 members came after ASEAN's special envoy to Myanmar, Brunei Second Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof, abruptly canceled a long-delayed visit when he was told he would not be able to meet with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others as he had requested.

Suu Kyi, whose Na-

tional League for Democracy party was set to begin a second five-year term in office after winning last year's general election, has been detained since the takeover and is being tried on several charges that her supporters say are politically motivated.

ASEAN in April reached a "five-point consensus," to which Myanmar agreed, calling for the immediate cessation of violence, a dialogue among all concerned parties, mediation by an ASEAN special envoy, provision of humanitarian aid through ASEAN channels, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy to meet all concerned parties. ASEAN foreign ministers in August appointed Erywan as their special envoy.

Min Aung Hlaing in his speech said that while the agreement called for stopping the violence and restoring stability

through the cooperation of all parties, opposition groups had exacerbated the situation by carrying out "terrorism, robbery and killings."

"We are still dealing with this, right up to now, but no one has put serious obstructions in the way of their violence. We were asked to solve it and we are the ones clearing up the problem. I want to say that ASEAN needs to do something about it."

He specifically blamed the violence on the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, which consists of elected members of Parliament who were barred by the military from taking their seats, and the National Unity Government, an underground but popular organization that says it is the country's legitimate leadership.

He also blamed armed groups of ethnic minorities seeking greater autonomy, who are loosely allied with the shadow government.

In recent months, as security forces have continued their violent clampdown, opposition militants have fought back and carried out assassinations and sabotage in their struggle.

Referring to the ASEAN special envoy's aborted visit, Min Aung Hlaing said some points at issue were "non-negotiable." The government has previously said the envoy could not be allowed to meet with Suu Kyi because she faces criminal charges.

German reporters protest nixing of probe into tabloid editor

LONDON (AP): Journalists at one of Germany's largest newspaper groups have protested their publisher's decision to nix a lengthy investigation into alleged abuse of power by the chief editor of the country's top-selling tabloid newspaper.

A letter circulated on social media late Sunday accused Ippen.Media and its publisher, Dirk Ippen, of "breach of trust" for deciding to halt the report, which had been months in the making. The letter was dated Friday and the report was due to be published Sunday.

The investigation focused on Julian Reichelt, chief editor of daily Bild, who has faced scrutiny over his management style that allegedly included bullying and abusing his position of power toward female staff.

Reichelt, one of the mightiest figures in German media, was temporarily suspended from his post earlier this year but later reinstated, after Bild's publishing company Axel Springer SE said his actions didn't warrant dismissal.

In their letter, four leading members of Ippen's investigations team said their planned report would have brought "new and exclusive" information to light and had been thoroughly fact checked and approved by lawyers.

"The fact that you nevertheless decided not to let us publish the story runs counter to all the rules of independent reporting," the letter said. Its authenticity was confirmed by The Associated Press by a person at Ippen.Media who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak pub-

licly. Ippen.Media didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. The company, a rival of Axel Springer, owns numerous newspapers in Germany and last year acquired Buzzfeed's German brand.

The New York Times published a report Sunday containing further details of an internal probe into Reichelt's alleged affair with a trainee.

Axel Springer has successfully expanded its business in the United States in recent years. It owns online media company Insider and the business-oriented Morning Brew, and in August it announced a deal to buy the U.S.-based political news company Politico and the tech news site Protocol.

Axel Springer also didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Monday.

Swedish FM visits Israel to mend ties after diplomatic rift

JERUSALEM (AP): Sweden's foreign minister visited Israel on Monday in an effort to mend ties after years in which the two countries have been at odds over the conflict with the Palestinians.

Sweden's Social Democratic-led government recognized Palestinian statehood in 2014, making it the first large European country to do so since the end of the Cold War. Its former foreign minister's comments in support of the Palestinians drew angry responses from Israeli officials.

Ann Linde tweeted that her visit — the first by a Swedish foreign

minister in a decade — marks a "new beginning."

Linde began her trip with a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, where she placed a wreath in memory of the 6 million Jews who were killed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators.

"On behalf of Sweden I promise that we say — never again, and mean it. We will continue to take action to combat anti-Semitism in all its forms, to make sure that we never forget," she said.

Sweden hosted world leaders at the International Forum on Holo-

caust Remembrance in Malmo, the country's third-largest city, last week.

Linde also met with Israel's largely ceremonial president, Isaac Herzog, and met her Israeli counterpart, Yair Lapid, later in the day. The foreign ministers held their first phone call in seven years last month.

Linde was also expected to meet with Palestinian officials in the occupied West Bank.

Israel's new government coalition of parties from across its political spectrum, has looked to improve relations with

other countries following the long rule of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose nationalist policies strained ties with neighboring Jordan and some European countries, as well as with the Democratic party in the United States.

Israel's current prime minister, Naftali Bennett, is opposed to a Palestinian state, and past leaders have said the international community should not recognize such a state until a final agreement is negotiated between the two sides. There have been no substantive peace talks in over a decade.

The Big Pic



DREAM TEAM! Stylish co-stars Timothée Chalamet & Zendaya dazzle at the Dune Photocall in London.

Jennifer Coolidge to return for 'White Lotus' S2

LOS ANGELES, OCT 18 (PTI): Actor Jennifer Coolidge is returning for the second season of HBO's hit social satire "The White Lotus". The first season of the six-episode comedy-drama from writer, director and executive producer Mike White was set at an exclusive high-end resort and followed the exploits of various guests and employees over the week. Even though it was initially billed as a limited series, the popular show was expanded for a sophomore run following rave reviews and thunderous response from the audience.

According to Deadline, the second season

will leave Hawaii and follow a largely different group of vacationers as they jet to another White Lotus property and settle in temporarily amongst its inhabitants.

Coolidge emerged as a season one favourite courtesy her portrayal of Tanya McQuoid, a drunk, tragic middle-aged woman who books a trip to the hotel with the intention of scattering her dead mother's ashes.

Season one also starred Murray Bartlett, Connie Britton, Alexandra Daddario, Fred Hechinger, Jake Lacy, Brittany O'Grady, Natasha Rothwell, Sydney Sweeney and Steve Zahn.

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez skips probe agency's summons - Yet again

The Enforcement Directorate, which investigates financial crimes, had last recorded Jacqueline Fernandez statement as a witness in the case on August 30.

New Delhi: Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez, for the fourth time, skipped the summons by the Enforcement Directorate issued in connection with a money laundering case against fraudsters Sukesh Chandrasekar and

his actor-wife Leena Paul.

The agency, which investigates financial crimes, had last recorded her statement as a witness in the case on August 30.

Since then, the 36-year-old actress has skipped summons on September 25, October 15, 16 and today.

Jacqueline Fernandez cited "professional commitments" behind her no-show, as per sources.

Sukesh Chandrasekar and Leena Paul have already been

arrested by Delhi Police for allegedly duping the family of Fortis Healthcare promoter Shivinder Singh of around 200 crore.

The agency had earlier also questioned actor Nora Fatehi.

The case was filed based on a complaint by Shivinder Singh's wife, Aditi Singh, who said a man posing as a senior Law Ministry official offered to help get bail for Mr Singh (then in jail) in return for money.

looking forward. It's true that things haven't been picture perfect, but you couldn't have asked for better, Cancer. You understand that everything took place for a reason, and that you were being taught important soul lessons. The good thing is, you can take that next step with your eyes wide open. As such, this period marks a new beginning in the realm of your career. Pay attention to the opportunities on the horizon. Laying a solid foundation will change the money game forever.

Tip: Pay attention to the opportunities on the horizon.

LEO:

Leo, you're feeling a little bit risky and a little bit frisky, and your partner certainly isn't complaining. It's time to explore your adventurous side, in the bedroom and outside, as you drop your inhibitions down to zero. Single lions are likely to meet somebody they share an undeniable chemistry with. Somebody who is just the right mix of compassion and courage. Stay in the present as you revel in what this moment is offering you. Now is not the time to worry about what the future may hold.

Tip: You're feeling a little bit risky and a little bit frisky.

VIRGO:

Pay attention to how you feel in the company of those you consider your inner circle. Do you feel refreshed and ready to take on the world post your interactions or drained in a way that you cannot put into words? That the latter is a red flag is not something you need us to validate. So, trust your inner compass. Trust what you're being shown by the Universe. If this means putting some distance between you and a certain somebody, so be it, Virgo.

Tip: Pay attention to the relationships that are depleting

your reserves.

LIBRA:

The cards are talking about drama with a capital "D". It's important to remember that what's unfolding has nothing to do with you. People are merely projecting their shadows and their unhealed wounds. What you don't want to do: say anything hurtful that could later be used against you. What you want to do: stay in your centre no matter what and look beyond the illusion of chaos.

Tip: Libra, what's unfolding has nothing to do with you.

SCORPIO:

Here's a radical idea: For the next ten days, give yourself the permission to be who you are in every situation and to say what you're feeling without dimming your light. It's time to express yourself fully, beautiful. To be the most radiant version of yourself as you move past the fear of how you may be perceived. This is also a time of honouring both your professional connections and your personal ties. There is power in numbers, Scorpio. So, instead of trying to do it all by yourself, focus on how you can co-create harmoniously with others.

Tip: You have the permission to express yourself fully.

SAGITTARIUS:

What's that one conversation you have been avoiding, Sagittarius, and why are you afraid of telling it like it is? It's time to honour your truth. It's time to stand up for what you believe despite the opposition you may face. No, this is not going to be easy. Yes, there is a chance those around you will refuse to see things from your perspective. Don't let that stop you from being the most authentic version of yourself.

Don't enjoy watching action films: Vidyut Jammwal

MUMBAI, OCT 18 (PTI): Vidyut Jammwal might have created an action star image with his high-octane and death-defying stunts in films like "Force" and the "Commando" series, but when it comes to watching movies the actor says his go-to genre is romance.

Jammwal, who has emerged as one of the leading action heroes of the Hindi film industry, said he prefers the adrenaline rush of performing stunts in films rather than sitting and watching an action movie.

"I don't enjoy watching action, the genre... It gives me a headache. There's too much 'dang-dhadang'. I like performing it. I have always enjoyed watching romantic movies more than anything else," the 40-year-old actor told PTI in an interview.

The actor also recalled experiencing a certain "high" when he would watch the films of legendary action star Jackie Chan in his growing up years.

Today as a performer, Jammwal, whose other movies credits are "Jungle" and "Khuda Haafiz", said his endeavour is to give his audience the same thrilling experience.

"Watching action films bores me. It's not because I think I can do better. It's just that... You love doing certain things and not watching them. This is that case. I love performing in them. I know the high.

"As a kid, when I would watch Jackie Chan, I used to enjoy the high of (watching) him doing crazy stuff. Now I'm giving that to other people and I enjoy that."

The actor currently can be seen in the hostage action drama "Sanak - Hope Under Siege", streaming on Disney+ Hotstar.

The Kanishk Varma-directed film, backed by filmmaker Vipul Amrutlal Shah and Zee Studios, also stars Rukmini Maitra, Neha Dhupia and Chandan Roy Sanyal.

"Sanak" is another addition to Jammwal's filmography which chronicles



stories mounted against the backdrop of action. But the actor said, the country lacks artistes who are genuinely interested in the craft of the genre.

"We don't have the actors to perform (such stunts), we don't have the directors to make it. We have people who believe they can make action films but they really don't have the ability to make. To be shooting an action film, you need to really enjoy the genre, how one does the kick and punch.

"You need to have some background in fighting. I'm not saying they have to be martial artistes but they need to understand human abilities. I don't think we have too many people here doing that," he pointed out.

Jammwal said few filmmakers like Varma, his "Khuda Haafiz" helmer Faruk Kabir and "Commando 3" director Aditya Datt are truly able to tap into the potential of the genre.

"If I find someone who understands it, I'll work with them. Action is the number one genre but we don't have don't directors with a vision like that,"

he added.

In July, the actor announced he was turning producer with the espionage thriller feature "IB 71", which features him as an intelligence officer.

To be backed by his aptly titled banner Action Hero Films, the film will be directed by Hyderabad-based filmmaker Sankalp Reddy.

Jammwal said the idea behind turning a producer was to give an opportunity to people who "nobody gives a chance to".

"I want to bet on the directors who genuinely have it in them (to make films) but don't have the ability to socialise and be out there in parties. I wanted to give a break to people like me and, by break, I don't mean I'm 'launching' them. I just wanted to bet on people because somebody had bet on me too."

The actor said he has finished a major shooting schedule of his upcoming actioner "Khuda Haafiz Chapter II". Once the film is wrapped up, he will begin work on "IB 71" and follow it up with an action adventure film directed by Datt.

Want to do films that represent women in dignified way: Jyotika

MUMBAI, OCT 18 (PTI): South star Jyotika says she grabbed the chance to play a "slightly older" character in her latest family drama "Udanpirappe" as she believes that such parts are rarely written for women in the movies.

The film chronicles the story of two siblings, Vairavan, played by actor Sasikumar and Mathangi (Jyotika) who attempt to unite the family as differences intensify over the years.

"Udanpirappe", currently streaming on Amazon Prime Video in Tamil and Telugu ("Raktha Sambandham"), marks her 50th film as an actor.

For Jyotika, star of acclaimed films like "Kushi", "Perazhagan", "Chandramukhi" and "Mozhi", the emotional tale of sibling love and family bond in "Udanpirappe" gave her a character graph she had never experienced before.

"It is so beautiful to play characters slightly older than your age. Everyone is in this rat race to look young. So, for a change, it is a beautiful learning that playing someone older also gives you that joy and an absolutely new experience. This is one of my nicest, most dignified characters I have ever played," the 43-year-old actor said in a group interview.

Jyotika said female artistes "seldom get a chance" to grow over a period of time with their film choices so it's "beautiful" when actors get roles where



they can play different age groups.

"It's a fulfilling experience to play such a deep rooted character," she added.

Directed and written by Era Saravanan, "Udanpirappe" also stars Samuthirakani. The movie is the second project to come out of the four-film collaboration between Amazon and south star Suriya's 2D Entertainment after "Raame Aandalum Raavane Aandalum".

Jyotika started her career with filmmaker Priyadarshan's romantic-drama "Doli Saja Ke Rakhna" in 1998 and emerged as one of the most acclaimed actors of the Tamil industry in the early 2000s.

After a brief hiatus from films in mid-2000s, Jyotika returned to cinemas with "36 Vayadhinile" in 2015 and followed it up with projects like "Magalir Mattum", "Naachiyaar", filmmaker Mani Ratnam's "Chekka Chivantha Vaanam" and last year's legal-drama "Ponmagal Vandhal".

The actor said currently she is at a

stage in her career where she wants to choose characters that authentically represent women.

"I want to do films where women walk into the theatres and feel extremely dignified watching themselves. I want women to feel they are watching a part of themselves on screen when they watch my films. Because seldom women are portrayed the way they are in actual life in films.

"Especially when we come to Tamil Nadu, most women are homebound and are different from what they are shown (as) on screen. Every time I sign a film, I make sure that the women who are watching it feel connected."

Which is why, Jyotika said, "Udanpirappe" became a project she had to be a part of because of the writing of its female characters, theme and "messaging."

"This is a grassroot level script which I haven't done before. It is not often that we get such powerful deep rooted roles to play. That attracted me.

"It is also a beautiful concept of brother-sister bond, their relationship. But above all, it was the power in the writing what attracted me the most," she added.

The film is produced by Jyotika and her husband Suriya, along with Rajsekhar Karpoorasundarapandian who is attached as a co-producer.

ARIES:

The trouble is, you've been saying yes to everything, Aries. You've been taking on more than you are prepared to handle. However, spreading yourself thin isn't serving you in any way. What it is doing is draining your resources and taking you down a negative thought spiral. So, draw some boundaries for yourself and others. Admit to your limitations. This will help you restore the balance that has gone astray.

Tip: Come clean about what you can and cannot do today.

TAURUS:

We tend to think of rules as blasé, but, the truth is, some amount of structure is required for us to flow better, to put our best foot forward, and create the kind of work we will be remembered for. So, honour the need to be disciplined, Taurus. Stay committed to your goals despite the personal challenges you may be faced with at this moment. We see a big breakthrough on the cards for you, and we see it rather soon.

Tip: Stay committed to your goals no matter what.

GEMINI:

As an air sign, you tend to waste so much time rationalising your feelings. But, the head has no business in matters of the heart. So, put yourself out there, Gemini. Say what you want to say exactly how you want to say it. Yes, we mean without editing a word. Don't let the fear of rejection keep you from vibrating at the frequency of love and making that bold move you've been contemplating for a while now.

Tip: Some risks are worth taking, beautiful.

CANCER:

The end of retrograde season has you looking back and

Tip: Honour your truth despite the consequences.

CAPRICORN:

The time has come to shed the past, Capricorn. The time has come to honour the stirrings of your heart. A new chapter in the realm of love and romance is about to begin for you. So, allow yourself to flow with the cosmic currents, beautiful. This is also an important period for you when it comes to career and creativity. You are finally receiving the rewards for all the work you have put in over the years and manifesting the level up you truly deserve.

Tip: Here's to love and other intoxicants.

AQUARIUS:

It's all or nothing, Aquarius. It's all or nothing. Pay attention to what your interpersonal relationships are mirroring back at you. If they've got one foot out of the door, it probably means they're not that into you. What you want to make space for: somebody who's actions match their words. What you want to let go of: the need to make excuses for somebody who's clearly making you feel like you're not enough.

Tip: Make space for somebody who shows up for you consistently, even when it's hard to.

PISCES:

Pisces, you've been doing and giving. Giving and doing. Being the beacon of light that you are and holding space for everybody around you. But, are those around you as invested in maintaining ties as you are? Something to think about as you sip on your morning tea, beautiful one. What you're being asked to focus on today: restoring balance in all of your relationships. Yes, that means allowing yourself to receive as much as you give.