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CANDACE CAMERON BURE REVEALS WHY SHE FELT "SICK TO MY STOMACH" ABOUT THE RELEASE OF HER LATEST MOVIE
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Go Electric Campaign launched in Sikkim



AARON RAI
GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Power Department started its 'Go Electric Campaign' today at MG Marg where an electric vehicle was displayed and a brief awareness program was held.

The Power Department is the State Designated Agency for promoting Energy Conservation policies formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India in the state.

Students from different schools were invited for the demo of the electric vehicle.

The key features of the campaign are to push the country towards 100%

e-mobility, to create awareness at PAN-India and reduce the import dependence of the country and to move ahead on the path of low carbon economy, thereby saving the country and the planet from the adverse impact of climate change.

Superintendent Engineer of Power Department, Pemba Lepcha chaired today's programme.

While talking to SummitTIMES he said, "We are not promoting the vehicle or a company, but we are doing an awareness campaign to help reduce pollution and encourage electrification of public transport as an economical and eco-friendly option."

Spike in daily COVID-19 cases, India registers 23,285 new infections



NEW DELHI, MAR 12 (PTI): India recorded 23,285 cases of coronavirus infection in a day, the highest in around 78 days, taking the total of COVID-19 cases to 1,13,08,846, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The death toll increased to 1,58,306 with 117 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The total active caseload increased to 1,97,237, which now comprises 1.74 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has dropped to 96.86 per cent.

On December 24, 24,712 new infections were reported in a span of 24 hours.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,09,53,303, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.40 per cent, the data stated.

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

According to the ICMR, 22,49,98,638 samples have been tested up to March 11 with 7,40,345 samples being tested on Thursday.

The 117 new fatalities include 57 from Ma-

harashtra, 18 from Punjab and 13 from Kerala.

A total of 1,58,306 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 52,667 from Maharashtra followed by 12,535 from Tamil Nadu, 12,381 from Karnataka, 10,934 from Delhi, 10,286 from West Bengal, 8,741 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,179 from Andhra Pradesh.

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

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

Former MLA returns to SKM fold along with 131 more from 3 constituencies

FREEDING LOCAL BODIES FROM POLITICAL PARTIES, SKM'S BIGGEST DECISION: CM

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 MARCH:

The process of leaders and supporters leaving their parties and joining Sikkim Krantikari Morcha continued today with former Upper Tadong MLA, Timothy William Basnet, and 131 others from different constituencies joining SKM at an event organized here at Samman Bhawan on Friday. The joining ceremony was chaired by SKM president, Chief Minister PS Tamang, who welcomed the new inductees with Khadas.

While Mr Basnet had contested from Upper Tadong on an SKM ticket in 2014, he had subsequently joined the SDF. Among others joining SKM today were people from Chujachen, Gangtok and Upper Tadong constituencies.

An SKM press release issued by its secretary [press & publicity], Ranjana Pradhan, informs that the SKM president, in his address, said that former Ministers and MLAs, sitting and former panchayat members



and leaders have been joining SKM after seeing and evaluating the work achieved by the SKM government so far.

The release goes on to state that the CM stressed that SKM was not pressurizing anyone to join the party and asserted that everyone needs to contribute and work together for the further development and progress of the State which was why SKM was welcoming everyone into the party.

Mr Tamang said that SKM believes in inclusive

politics.

He also made special mention of the SKM government's commitment to create a pleasant environment in the State for people to contest the upcoming local body elections which was why it kept these bodies free from politics and political parties.

The CM went on to hold the decision to free local body elections from partisan politics as SKM's the "biggest decision" taken by the party.

Also at the function today, the CM announced

plans to construct a Mini Secretariat at Lumsey to decongest Gangtok.

He added that the state government has also working hard to provide some benefits to people who have been residing in Sikkim since before 1975 but are not Sikkim Subjects.

The release informs that the joining programme was also addressed by Upper Tadong MLA, GT Dhungel, who appreciated the environment of inclusive politics established in the State by

SKM and appealed to the people to support the government.

He expressed confidence that SKM's popularity among the people will continue to grow and secure it all the 32 seats in the 2024 Assembly elections.

The programme, which was conducted by Minister Arun Upreti, had started with a welcome address by vice-president [HQ] Uttam Lepcha and concluded with vote of thanks proposed by youth convener Sahdev Sharma.

75 years of Independence celebrations kick off with photo exhibition at Titanic Park

GANGTOK, 12 MAR (PIB): As a part of nation-wide celebration of 75 years of India's Independence, "Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav", a pictorial exhibition began at Titanic Park in Gangtok today.

The Adviser to DIPR, Government of Sikkim, Birendra Tamling, also the chief guest, formally inaugurated the event. The exhibition, after a day's show at the Titanic Park would continue for the public at the premises of the Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim's office at Metro Point in the city till 16th of this month.

The programme has been jointly organised by Regional Outreach Bureau, Government of India, Siliguri and Guwahati in association with the Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim.



Speaking on this occasion, Shri Birendra Tamling said this kind of events are very important to kindle the spirit of nationalism and to make people aware of the sacrifices of our freedom fighters.

Director, Ajay Mhamia, PIB appealed to the citizens to accompany younger children and the youth to this five-day show both on MG Marg and Metro Point, Tadong. He thanked the State administration for their

whole-hearted cooperation extended to hold the programme.

Secretary IPR, Siphorah Targain and top officials of her Department welcomed the chief guest and other dignitaries. A large number of publics from all walks of life thronged the exhibition park throughout the day, today.

This exhibition features the major landmarks of India's struggle for Independence, depicting the pictorial history of the struggle including Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement etc. with special focus on Gandhiji's Dandi March. Most of the 32 photo panels in this exhibition depict Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sardar Patel, and other national leaders of our freedom movement.

Tribal status for left-out communities does not violate Art 317F. Leaving them out violates it: Nawin Kiran

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan, has appealed to the Central government and State governments of Sikkim and West Bengal to take "positive steps" to provide scheduled tribe status to the 12 leftout communities at the earliest.

He asserted that the Article 342 (2) of the Constitution of India has empowered the Parliament to include or exclude communities from the Scheduled Tribe list. He further alleged that "some individuals" have been trying to create confusion among the people on this matter through misinformation.

Addressing a press conference here

today, Mr Pradhan pointed out that tribal status to leftout communities has been a long-pending demand and that the people had been hopeful that the Centre will provide this ahead of Assembly elections in West Bengal.

"Now, with the imposition of the model code of conduct, this appears unlikely before the election in West Bengal and the people have been left saddened," he said.

He mentioned that the 1973 agitation in Sikkim was for equality and even the 8th May Agreement and the Article 371F ensured equality for all the communities of Sikkim.

He alleged that some individuals have been trying to create confusion among the

people by circulating wrong information on the tribal status issue.

He countered that if Article 371F was not violated while providing tribal status to Bhutias, Lepchas, Limboos and Tamangs in the past, then how will it diluted in providing tribal status to leftout communities.

"In my perception, providing tribal status to leftout communities will not violate Article 371F. In fact, injustice to the communities by leaving them out of the ST list was a violation of Article 371F because this Article of the Constitution promised equality to every community of Sikkim. So, every Sikkimese should come forward and support the demand seeking tribal status for the leftout communities," Mr Pradhan said.

SummitTIMES IN NEPALI



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Thank You

1st District Level Junior Olympic Games concludes in North

MANGAN, 12 MARCH (IPR):

The closing ceremony of the 1st District level Inter School Junior Olympic Games under Sports for Peace and Development, Khelo India 2020-21 was held in Mangan Senior Secondary School playground Mangan today. The event was organized by the Sports and Youth Affairs Department (North).

The chief guest for the event was the Minister for Road and Bridges and Culture Department, Samdup Lepcha. He was accompanied by Additional Political Secretary to CM(North), Tshering Wangyal Bhutia, DC (North) Tenzing T Kaleon, SP (North) Ongmu Bhutia, ADM (North) Sonam Lepcha, SDPO (North) Tseten P Bhutia, Principal Mangan Senior Secondary School, Officers from various line departments and School staff.

The Minister said that the main objective of Khelo India is to stay fit and healthy and asked everybody to follow the same. He stated that In-



dia has the advantage of having a huge population, which creates a potential for the country to produce world-class athletes. Keeping this in mind, the PM of India Shri Narendra Modi and his Cabinet Ministers created the idea of Khelo India. This will not only help recognize talents all over the country but also help in scouting promising young talents and give them a platform to excel in their respective fields. He urged the students to participate actively, which will help them stay healthy physically, mentally and will bring about

discipline in their lives.

He also stated that engaging in sporting activities would help young people stay away from social evils like substance abuse, alcohol and smoking, which in turn would bring about a healthy lifestyle.

Deputy Director (Sports & Youth Affairs, North) informed that the 1st District level Inter School Junior Olympic Games started from GPU level, which then moved to the Block level and was concluded at the District level. The games were played under 14 and 17 categories for both boys and girls.

One of the objectives of organizing the games is to uplift the athletes at the grass-root level and to develop personality and to stay healthy.

The event also had karate demonstrations, cultural dances, zumba dance and a song by the students of Mangan Senior Secondary School.

The football final was played between Mangan Block and Dzongu Block, wherein Mangan Block won the match and were declared the Team Champion of the District.

The event concluded with the distribution of medals, certificate and cash prize to the winners.

Will tackle road condition first, says Chandmari candidate

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 MAR:**

Chungkela Lepcha, a candidate from Chandmari ward under Gangtok Municipal Corporation, expressed her enthusiasm to work for the overall development of the area to transform Chandmari into a Model Municipal Ward in the State. She also shared her plans and agendas to create more opportunities for the people of the area to make themselves self-reliant.

Ms Lepcha is the daughter of a social worker from Chandmari, Wangdi Lepcha. She has been allotted with the symbol of 'whistle' for this municipality election.

She said that she wants be the voice of the people of the ward and to work as a bridge between the people and the



government for the development of the area.

Speaking to media persons here on Friday, Ms Lepcha expressed her gratitude to the State government for making the local body election non-partisan to provide opportunities especially to youth to work for the society and its people. She further thanked the government for reserving

Chandmari seat for women to provide opportunities for women from the area to come forward to work for the ward to lead it on the path of development.

"My father has been serving the people of the area through social work for around three decades now and he is the real inspiration and role model behind my decision to contest

this election," she expressed.

While talking about her plans and programmes for Chandmari ward, Ms Lepcha said that the first thing she would work on is to improve the life-line of Chandmari, the road and its drainage system. Proper waste management in the area is also related to this, she added.

Retail inflation accelerated to three-month high in Feb amid rising fuel prices

NEW DELHI, 12 MAR [PTI]:

Rising 5.03 per cent last month, the retail inflation — or the rate of increase in the prices that consumers pay for a group of items, accelerated to a three-month high in February 2021, due to higher fuel prices, which is likely to challenge the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) accommodative stance. The central bank adopted record low key policy rates to boost the pandemic-hit economy. The retail inflation rate registered last month was higher than estimates of a recent poll conducted by news agency Reuters. In the poll, more than 50 economists estimated that retail inflation rose 4.83 per cent in February, jumping from 4.06

per cent in January. (Also Read: Retail Inflation Rises To 5.03% In February Amid Rise In Food, Fuel Prices)

Retail inflation was also driven by rising food prices or food inflation. The retail food prices which comprise nearly half of the country's inflation basket, increased 3.87 per cent in February, compared to 1.96 per cent in January. The government does not release official core inflation data.

Additionally, the core inflation, excluding food and fuel costs, was estimated in the range of 5.61 per cent-5.9 per cent for the month by four economists, compared to 5.5 per cent-5.7 per cent in January 2021. The central bank tracks

the consumer inflation data primarily for formulating its monetary policy.

The retail petrol prices in the national capital have gone up by almost nine per cent so far this year, while diesel prices are up over 10 per cent amid rising global crude oil prices. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which unanimously decided to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged at four per cent last month, is expected to keep the rates steady at its next meeting in April. After slashing the repo rate by 115 basis points to sustain the economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the central bank has kept the policy rate unchanged since May 2020.

According to analysts, the high commodity prices will continue to affect inflation in the next few months. The economy is projected to contract eight per cent in the current financial year ending in March before growing at around 11 per cent next financial year.

"It is a worry on both front, CPI after staying at 4% level for 2 months has risen to over 5% in the month of February. The rise in inflation is on account of elevated food, vegetable prices, core inflation at 5.88% is a concern. The rising crude price and its impact on retail fuel prices are a risk to inflation going forward," said Nish Bhatt, Founder and CEO, Millwood Kane International.

First training for Polling officers in West

GYALSHING, 12 MAR (IPR):

A prolong first level training for Polling officer-I and Presiding Officers of West District for the forthcoming Municipal Election 2021 was held at the conference hall of Emergency Operating Centre, Rabdentse today.

Deputy Director, Education Department, West, Santosh Alley was the Resource Person-Cum- Master Trainer of the training. He briefed the officials present on the various roles and responsibilities of the presiding and polling officers to conduct the upcoming Municipal Election systematically.

He apprised the house about the significance of conducting



Mock Poll of Electronics Voting Machine (EVM) at the polling station before starting the actual poll and all the imperative procedures pertaining to the polling process were demonstrated prevalently.

Further, he explained in detail about filling of different forms related to poll day and emphasised on the methods of closing and sealing of the EVMs adequately.

The functioning of the Electronic Voting Machine (Control and Ballot Unit) was also explained comprehensively, and a hands-on training session was conducted to familiarize the trainees with EVM equipments.

Deputy Secretary, Election Department, West, Saptika Rai presided over the training.

The training programme had the presence of about 16 trainees.

SKM donates blankets to Yuksam PHC

PRITAM LAMA

YUKSAM, 12 MAR:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha donated 10 blankets to the primary health centre at Yuksam today. The donation was made by SKM West District Coordinator Nandu Gurung in the presence of SKM sports Wing West Dis-



trict General Secretary Sonam Chewang Bhutia, SKM CLC vice president NB Limboo.

Maha Shivratri at Lower Bermiok Ratomatey



GYALSHING, 12 MAR [IPR]:

Minister Lok Nath Sharma attended the Maha Shivaratri Festival Celebration at Lower Bermiok/ Ratomatey under Gyalshing Bermiok constituency today. The annual function of the Mandir Committee was also held as a part of the programme.

The Minister in his address, appreciated the spiritual initiative of Mandir Committee and

recalled the contributions made by the State government.

He also noted the demands placed by the committee and acknowledged everyone's contribution for the construction of the temple. The Minister also shared about various programmes, farming centric activities and welfare schemes.

Earlier, president of

Mandir Committee, Yam Kr. Mishra expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang and the Area MLA for extending tremendous support in establishment of mandir and other infrastructure.

The Mandir Committee also felicitated the Minister for his contributions and also presented the souvenir to every supporting members.

Mamata discharged from hospital after condition improves

KOLKATA, MAR 12 (PTI):

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was discharged from state-run SSKM Hospital here on Friday evening after doctors found her recovery to be "satisfactory".

Doctors took the decision after the 66-year-old TMC supremo repeatedly requested them to discharge her from the medical establishment.

Banerjee, seated on a wheelchair with her left foot plastered, greeted several party activists gathered outside the Woodburn Block of the hospital.

She left the hospital in her vehicle for her Kalighat residence.

Her nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee, party colleagues and state minister Firhad Hakim were present at

the medical establishment.

"Her condition has improved a lot and she repeatedly insisted to be discharged from the hospital. She will be able to move with restrictions but she needs to come back for another round of check-up within a week," the doctor said.

Ruckus in Odisha assembly over paddy procurement issue

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 12 (PTI):

The opening day of the second phase of Odisha Assembly's budget session on Friday witnessed noisy protests by the opposition BJP and Congress members over alleged mismanagement in paddy procurement across the state.

Members of both the opposition parties rushed to the well of the House as soon as it assembled for the question hour at 10.30 over the issue.

Unable to run the proceedings, Speaker SN Patro adjourned the proceeding first till 11.30 am and later till 4 pm.

The second leg of the budget session of the assembly will continue till April 9.

"We will not allow the house to function till paddy are procured from farmers at different mandis across the state.

The Speaker should give a ruling for immediate paddy procurement," said Congress whip Taraprasad Bahinipati outside the house.

Bahinipati and other Congress members staged protest in the well.

"The government has cheated people and the opposition by not lifting the paddy from different mandis despite a decision taken in the all party meeting during the first phase of the budget session," Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra said.

Amit Shah to campaign in Bengal, Assam on March 14, 15

NEW DELHI, 12 MAR:

With electioneering picking up pace in West Bengal and Assam ahead of first poll polling on March 27, Home Minister Amit Shah will campaign in the two states on March 14, 15.

On March 14, he will hold a roadshow in West Bengal's Kharagpur, and will address two rallies in the state a day later. The rallies will be held in Jhargram and in Ranibandh in Bankura district.

In Assam, Mr Shah will address poll rallies in Margherita in Tinsukia district and in Nazira in Sivasagar on March 14. The former BJP chief will address a townhall programme in Guwahati on March 15.

BJP is in power in Assam and is seeking to come to power in West Bengal.

Lost

I, Sujit Kr. Thapa son of Late H.B. Thapa resident of Namchi, South Sikkim has lost a SALEDEED paper of Land registration Plot No. 111/8561 situated at Kamrang, South Sikkim which was registered in my name in 13.05.1994. If found contact : 9733067817. My GD No. 09 time : 12.40 dt. 12.03.2021 at Namchi Police Station.

KUTSE SHEGU



The 49th days kutse Shegu of Lt. Tashi Doma Bhutia of Upper Gharipsey, Namchi South Sikkim who left her heavenly abode on 26th January 2021 falls on 15th March 2021.

All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence Upper Gharipsey, Namchi.

We also express our sincere gratitude to all those who extended their support during our time of bereavement.

Mr. Norden Bhutia (husband),
Mr. I Sonam Topagay Bhutia (son)
Ms. Tshering Denka Bhutia (daughter)
Ms. Pema Choden Bhutia (daughter).

SU Horticulture students visit CP Bhattarai Model integrated organic farm



SUMMIT REPORT RANGPO, 12 MAR:

Seventh semester students of BSc Horticulture, Sikkim University, visited the CP Bhattarai Model Integrated Organic Farm at Kamarey village under Rhenock con-

stituency in East Sikkim today. The students were accompanied by Dr Manju Rana, Dr Rajesh Kumar (Assistant Professor) and two JRF Karan Luitel and Suren Subba (Department of Horticulture) Sikkim University.

JB Rai transferred as District & Sessions Judge

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

High Court of Sikkim has transferred and posted Judicial Officers of Sikkim Superior Judicial Cadre on 11 March afternoon and directed them to join their respective place of postings on 17 March adding that all the judgment or orders reserved shall be pronounced on or before the joining in new place of posting.

The High Court of Sikkim has recalled its Legal Remembrancer cum Law Secretary, Jagat Bahadur Rai and transferred him as District & Sessions Judge, Special Division-I at Gangtok and assigned him additional charge of Special Division-II and Fast Track Court (East & North) at Gangtok.

District & Sessions

Judge, Suraj Chettri, Special Division-I at Gangtok has been transferred and posted as Legal Remembrancer cum Law Secretary vice Jagat Bahadur Rai.

Similarly, Director, Samita Sharma, Sikkim Judicial Academy is relieved from additional charge of the Court of the District & Sessions Judge, Special Division-II and Fast Track Court (East & North) at Gangtok.

Registrar, Jyoti Kharka, High Court of Sikkim has been given additional charge of Family Court, East Sikkim in addition to her own duties. The office order further said that Ms Kharka shall discharge her duty every day at Family Court, East Sikkim at Gangtok as and when time permits.

Amar Subba leads runners to IDBI Kolkata Full Marathon

SUMMIT REPORT RANGPO, 12 MAR:

Runners from Sikkim and Darjeeling, led by the "Marathon Man of Sikkim," Amar Subba, left for Kolkata on Friday to participate in the IDBI Kolkata Full Marathon scheduled to be held on 14 March.

The members are confident of performing well at the marathon.

Significantly, this is the first major marathon in the country since the Covid lockdown.

Mr Subba thanked the organisers - NEB - for waiving the entry fee for runners from the re-



gion and extended special gratitude towards Sikkimese footballers

Bikash Jairu and Sanju Pradhan, Mr Sikkim 2019, Bishal Chettri and

Darap Srijunga president, Dhanrup Limbu for their support.

PM launches Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav



GANGTOK, 12 MAR (IPR):

To commemorate 75 years of India's Independence, 'Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav' event was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi today.

In Sikkim, the Culture Department, Government of Sikkim is organising a series of programmes to mark the event. As a part of the event, the Department

also organised a programme at Mini Hall in Manan Kendra today, to pay homage to the Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi on this day on 1930.

Advisor Culture Department, Bhim Kumari Sharma attended the function as the chief guest while Chairman, Cultural Heritage and Communal Harmony Board, Sonam Sherpa was the guest of honour.

The programme was also attended by Secretary Culture Department, Sherap Shenga, officials and staff.

The artistes of Culture Department showcased a brilliant skit on the theme 'Dandi March or Salt Satyagraha.'

On the 3rd floor of Manan Kendra, Culture Department also displayed an exclusive photo exhibition on the historic Dandi March.

It may be mentioned that 91 years ago, the historic Dandi March was led by Mahatma Gandhiji from the Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi on Gujarat on 12th March 1930. Commemorating the 91st anniversary of this historic march, a landmark in the struggle for India's Independence, the day was celebrated with zeal and national fervour, today, across the country, including Sikkim.

Sensitization program on Tribal Rights under NALSA



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Under the directions of Executive Chairperson, Sikkim State Legal Services Authority (Sikkim SLSA), Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, a sensitization program on Tribal Rights under NALSA (Protection and Enforcement of Tribal Rights) Scheme, 2015, on the occasion of the launching of "Bharat Ka Amrut Mahotsav", was conducted at the Labour Office, 7th Mile, East Sikkim, today, duly complying with all social distancing norms as laid down under COVID-19 protocols, by the Member Secretary, Sikkim SLSA.

A press release informs that similar sensitization programmes were also conducted by the District Legal Services Authorities of East, West, South and North Sikkim, in their respective Districts.

The sensitization programmes were conducted in compliance with the instructions received from National Legal Services Authority, wherein, as a part of commemoration of 75 years of Inde-

pendence, Government of India is celebrating "Bharat Ka Amrut Mahotsav" in 2021.

The Resource Person for today's programme at the Labour Office was Sonam Palden Bhutia, Member Secretary, Sikkim SLSA. The sensitization programme was attended by the Panchayat Members and local gentry of the area.

The topics covered under today's programme were (a) NALSA (Protection and Enforcement of Tribal Rights) Scheme, 2015, (b) Various State/Central Government Welfare Schemes pertaining to Rights of Tribal (c) the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, (d) Sikkim Compensation to Victims or his Dependents Schemes, 2011 (as amended in 2016), (e) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, (f) the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, (g) Rights of Women and Children, etc.

The programme ended with interaction of Resource Person with the participants.

Mobility Skill Training at JNIMIH Boomtar

NAMCHI, 12 MAR (IPR):

The valedictory ceremony of four-week 'Life and Mobility Skill Training' program was held at Jawaharlal Nehru Institute for the Visually Handicapped (JNIMIH) Blind School in Boomtar, South Sikkim, today.

Social Justice and Welfare Department Secretary, Tshewang Gyacho Bhutia was presented as the chief guest in presence of DC (South), M. Bharani Kumar as the Guest of Honour. Also present amongst others were ADC (Gyalang) Agawane Rohan, Deputy Director (SJ&WD), Nakul Rawat, RC CRC Sikkim, Moirangthem Irish and Principal (JNIMIH), Samuel Subba, along with students and teachers.

The four-week long program was organised by JNIMIH, Blind School Namchi and District Administration South Sikkim in collaboration with National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), Dehradun



and Composite Regional Centre (CRC) For Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Persons with Disability, Sikkim.

The Resource Persons were namely Rajendra Negi (IT expert), Devi Lal (orientation mobility expert) and Bhopendra Singh Rana (orientation mobility expert) from NIEPVD Dehradun whereas Voshal Kanth Pandey (orientation mobility expert), Manish Kumar (Special Education) and Kaushalendra Kumar, Assistant Professor (Special Education) were from CRC, Sikkim.

Addressing the gathering, the chief guest congratulated the students and resource persons on the successful completion of the training course. Motivating, Mr Gyacho said that one should not give up to fulfill their dreams citing the example of India's first visually impaired IAS officer, Pranjal Patil who defeated all great odds in her life. Further, he urged them to make use of the knowledge of training efficiently to make their life easier.

He informed that the department shall further

looked into training modules and set trainings courses for students and teachers in collaboration with the CRC, Sikkim and also provide scholarship schemes for higher education for different disabled students in the state. He also said that a set of suchlike training programs shall be carried out in various special schools across the state which will reorient the students to learn new and well equipped in providing quality education.

DC, M. Bharani Kumar highlighted the importance of this training pro-

gram which was to help the students in gaining addition knowledge and foster their life enhancing skills. He thanked the resource persons for imparting the training program at the institute and former SDM Namchi, Agawane Rohan who took heed of conducting training.

Agawane Rohan also spoke behind the motive of organising the program at the institute which was to make the students achieve their optimum level of independence. He also motivated them to focus on their ambitions to make their dream come true.

During the program, brief report, challenges and opportunities on the training program were also shared by the resource persons. The program also saw presentation of songs performed by the students of the institute while Birman Tamang also shared his learning experience before the attendees.

Oli strips leaders close to Nepal of responsibilities

TIKA R PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, 12 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Prime Minister and CPN-UML chair KP Sharma Oli has started taking steps to keep the Madhav Kumar Nepal group within the party at bay.

Days after Nepal, along with other leaders who had sided with Pushpa Kamal Dahal, returned to the UML fold after the Supreme Court decision to revive the UML and Dahal's Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), Oli on

Friday stripped leaders close to Nepal of responsibilities.

Holding two back-to-back meetings of the party's Central Committee on Friday at Baluwatar, Oli amended the party's statute to accommodate leaders coming from other parties in the convention organising committee and scrapped the provision of office bearers except the general secretary.

The ninth gener-

al convention of the UML held in 2014 had elected five vice-chairs, two deputy general secretaries and five secretaries.

Bidya Devi Bhandari, the incumbent President, Bamdev Gautam, Yubraj Gyawali, Bhim Rawal, Asta Laxmi Shakya were vice-chairs, Ishwar Pokhrel was general secretary, Ghanashyam Bhusal and Bishnu Poudel were deputy general secretaries and Yogesh Bhattarai, Pradeep Gyawali, Bhim Acharya,

Prithvi Subba Gurung and Gokarna Bista were secretaries.

Gautam so far has chosen not to side with anyone—neither Oli nor Nepal. Yubraj Gyawali, Rawal, Shakya, Bhusal, Bhattarai, Acharya and Bista are close to Nepal. They did not attend Friday's meetings.

After the UML and the Maoist Centre merged in May 2018, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) decided not to give continuity to the officer bearers.

Bishnu Poudel, however, was elevated to the post of general secretary of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

"The 10th Central Committee meeting on Friday decided to amend the party statute," said Khagaraj Adhikary, a Central Committee member. "The 11th meeting was held a while after the first meeting. Leaders from the Madhav Nepal group did not attend the meeting as they were holding their own meeting."

4 test positive for Covid, Sikkim's total reaches 6,183

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reached 6,183 today with four new cases of novel coronavirus reported in the last 24 hours in the State.

With no one getting discharged from isolation today, the number of the recovered cases in Sikkim stands at 5,897.

There are now 54 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State.

In his daily health bulletin on Friday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the four new cases were picked up from the testing of 155 samples on Thursday.

Two persons from near Coopera-

tive in Sichey, one from Tintek and one from Pakyong have tested positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia informed that among the four new cases, one is a staff of Deorali Girls Senior Secondary School and following her positive report, all the classes she attended were sanitized and closed.

He further added that 33 primary contacts have been traced and screened for Covid and results of their test will be at hand on Saturday. Further course of action will depend on results of this screening.

Meanwhile, as per latest data provided by the Department, a total of 40,750 people, a little over 6% of the population, have been vaccinated against COVID-19 so far in Sikkim.

RUCHI DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Behind telephone Exchange Near Old STNM Hospital. Gangtok

PH: 03592-203333, 204876, 8509373970

EXISTING FACILITIES:

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

BLOOD COLLECTION CENTRES AT :

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

COMPLETE E N T FACILITIES UNDER ONE ROOF

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

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

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

GASTRO CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am to 9.00 am

MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D

9.30 am

ORTHO AND GYNEA CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

Small, Marginal and Ignored

The real farmers of Sikkim need some real engagements

So, as per the Agriculture Census of 2010-11, there were 74,928 farmers in Sikkim. It is anybody's guess whether this number has grown or fallen in the eight years since because at least as far as officials in departments which work with farmers, such matters as data, planning or preparation do not command much priority. The number of farmers, it appears, has been worked out from the number of land-holdings in the State and that offers some interesting insights. While the overall number of farmers in the State appears robust, when one break it down to how much land individual farmers have access to for cultivation, the bubble bursts. 40,476 of the farmers, 54% of the total lot, till barely 14% of the landholdings, managing with less than a hectare of farmland. This, in official records, makes them "small farmers". Next, 23% of the farmers have landholdings between one to two hectares making them "marginal farmers" in official records. Small and marginal farmers, accounting for 76% of the landholdings, possess only 33% of the agricultural land. The top-level, those with farming tracts of more than 4 hectares, count barely 780 (1.04% of the total number of farmers) but occupy 11.53% of the total arable land. The biggest portion of land available for agriculture in Sikkim, 55.46% of the landholding area, sits in the hands of big landholders owning between 2 to 4 hectares; there are 16,731 of them, roughly 22% of the farmers in Sikkim.

Of course, not everyone who "owns" farming land is a farmer, and very few, if any, of the two hectares and above owning "farmers" are actually hands-on agriculturists. What is clear is that agriculture and horticulture production in the State relies on the 76% small and marginal farmers of Sikkim who possess an average of 0.61 hectares. As their classification as "small and marginal" suggests, they are also ones most at risk of exploitation and short-changing by middlemen since they are also more at risk of suffering due to the vagaries of weather patterns. Any price support mechanism or addition of value to their produce would hence go a long way towards alleviating their condition. In this regard, the Organic Mission was best suited for them because it offered them an opportunity to earn more than their small fields. That would have required more than awareness camps on organic farming, they already know how to do that rather well except perhaps the bureaucratic procedures of getting organic certification. What they required with convincing that that organic route would fetch them higher returns, and for that they needed more focused marketing assistance instead of being talked down upon by service providers how good organic farming was for people's health and Sikkim's environment. That marketing support has been sorely lacking. Is still lacking despite the monopoly extended to them by the ban on non-organic farm produce in Sikkim.

What should also have arrived alongside the Organic push was credit support for them revitalize their farms and invest in their handkerchief size landholdings (because accept it, 0.61 hectares is not much farmland to work with). It would have been desired that credit support formed an integral part of the Organic Mission and increased alongside the mission engagement to make Sikkim organic. Unfortunately, that did not happen either. The State Focus Paper 2018-19 for Sikkim prepared by NABARD as a bank credit projection for the State reveals that credit flow to the agriculture sector has been low and erratic over the past three years. Banks achieved only 22.36% of the projected target for credit to agriculture in 2014-15, improved it dramatically to 40.87% of the target in 2015-16 and then collapsed to 15.37% in 2016-17. To get a perspective, here are some numbers- against Rs 16,725 lakh projected by NABARD for credit to agriculture in Sikkim, the banks released only Rs 3,739 lakh in 2014-15. Undeterred by this shortfall, NABARD projected a target of Rs 19,901 lakh for agriculture in 2016-17. The banks responded by releasing even less than the credit they had provided in 2014-15 and released only Rs 3,058 lakh by way of loans in 2016-17. Even factoring in the over-ambitious ideal-situation enthusiasm of such projections, concerned officials still expect at least 40% achievement of targets. Instead, banks in Sikkim gave agriculture 22%, 41% and 15% achievement over the past three years. Apart from disinterest among the banks, there were clearly no efforts at coordination by the State's agencies either. In contrast, industries received 241% of the projected credit potential in 2014-15 and even in 2016-17 received a handsome 60% of the projected credit flow for the sector. Housing and transport sector were also favoured by banks and maintained a high 70's percentage till 2016 which dipped to 51% in 2016-17, a drop perhaps forced by the demonetization experiment.

The point being made here is that Sikkim's small and marginal farmers need special attention, not romanticizing but some real engagements which address their issues and not just the requirements of everyone else who claims to be working for them.

South Africa's Goodwill Zwelithini: the Zulu king without a kingdom

GERHARD MARÉ

THECONVERSATION.COM

Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu, who has passed away at the age of 72, was the longest reigning of all Zulu kings on record. This was the 50th year of his incumbency.

His reign spanned turbulent decades in South Africa. He assumed the throne at the height of apartheid, and went on to rule through the country's violent and turbulent decades, a period which included contestation of the role of the Zulu monarchy. This spilled over into post-apartheid South Africa when the country's new constitution recognised traditional leaders along with its democratically elected representatives.

Chapter 12 – a single page – of the 1996 constitution of the democratic Republic of South Africa recognises traditional leaders, laws and customs in general terms. Subsequently, through specific and continually contested legislation, attempts were made to concretise such authority, despite discriminatory consequences for millions of South African citizens who were made subjects of this parallel system.

Kings and other traditional leaders have continued to demand lucrative recognition under this chapter.

Goodwill bore ideological power of value to himself and to others. Core was the repeated reminder that without a "predestined" king there would be no Zulu nation.

But kingship is an historical creation, wherever it is found.

So whom did his rule benefit? And at whose expense? Why, during apartheid and beyond, did politicians and economic interests rush to show support for this "king of goodwill", as his authorised biographers punned? Why was his actual, and not just symbolic, landlordship ensured, at the last minute, under apartheid by the Ingonyama Trust, which placed all kwaZulu land under Zwelithini as the only trustee? And why was this confirmed in the democratic period?

It is because such undemocratic centralised power is too big a temptation for those who seek to benefit. Access to – and manipulation of – such power explains the cynically justified acceptance over half a century of his political

influence and ideological authority by politicians and capitalists. It enabled human and material exploitation through association, control over people as workers, justification for exclusion, votes from a specific group, and, more recently, access to what lies beneath the land on which the subjects live.

THE HISTORY

Kingship and nation are inextricably linked. In this case it most commonly starts with Shaka, the warlord who defeated other clans, and became the original father of a Zulu nation, people of legendary courage and prowess in war.

The Zulus themselves had to be made subservient. In the 19th century this was initially through military defeat of Zulu armies and the kings who held them together. Defeats were inflicted by the trekboere – settlers who left the Cape to escape British rule, reaching kwaZulu Natal (Natal and Zululand) in the late 1830s – and then British colonial authority.

In the newly formed state, the Union of South Africa, from 1910, policy was less clear: white rule, yes, but what of the black majority?

Under the 1913 Land Act the country was divided into African residential occupancy areas and white controlled areas which housed big industry, including mines, and farming. Initially 87% of the land was designated to white control and the remainder was set aside as reserves for African people.

The idea was to ensure spatial separation in reserves, but economic integration through migrant labour. Migrant labour provided individual workers without their families the right to periodic employment in white controlled areas and farmlands.

But it was apartheid, and its policy of "separate development" from 1951, that step by step defined an essentially different approach to the inhabitants of these erstwhile reserves ("bantustans"). Determining who was going to be in charge became important. Ethnic nations would govern themselves, but under whom?

Enter a 23-year-old Goodwill Zwelithini. Through bizarre processes – described with naïve directness by his elder sister in the authorised

biography – he was installed on December 1 1971 into a Zulu Territorial Authority. This had been newly created in terms of the 1959 Promotion of Bantu (later Black) Self-Government Act. His relative, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, was already the chief executive officer.

POWER BATTLES

Over the next few years, there were struggles for control. These involved, on the one hand, the apartheid state and some of the Zulu middle class, on the other, the kwaZulu Legislative Assembly under Buthelezi.

Buthelezi increasingly had backers, and "sides" were taken by national and international supporters. One example was the sugar industry and Progressive Party sponsoring a major event in the 1980s to explore an integrated kwaZulu as an example of what South Africa could be.

Pretoria, and those who saw benefits in bantustan independence such as businesses wanting to operate outside the control of the apartheid government, desired an executive king as existed in Swaziland (now eSwatini). They found this in the person of the immature and malleable Goodwill. Buthelezi and most of the kwaZulu Legislative Assembly needed, for their purposes, kingship as a binding factor of the people over whom they governed, but certainly could not afford a contesting seat of authority.

They were helped by the fact that Goodwill, under the bantustan constitution, had limited powers, and was simply assigned the role of a cultural figurehead.

"Independence" would have boosted apartheid policy nationally and internationally. kwaZulu, most prominent of the bantustans, would then have been a state equivalent to Swaziland and Lesotho.

But Buthelezi had national political ambitions, which demanded resistance against such fragmentation. To safeguard himself against the apartheid state removing him, he established a political base by launching Inkatha in 1975. This provided him with a base from which to consolidate his popular power among Zulus. Goodwill's kingship provided important leverage for the organisation.

After Inkatha's break with the African National Congress (ANC) from 1979, Goodwill served in an alignment against the largest trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, as well as the United Democratic Front, a loose alliance mobilising against apartheid. The result was that the politics of Zulu kingship became deeply mired in a civil war over battles for popular support – for the time, as well as for the anticipated changes that were to come. These contestation grew during the transition from apartheid. Both positions – the ANC camp and the Inkatha camp – needed the support of Zulus through the king.

POWER DYNAMICS

Zwelithini could define kingship during his reign, but only while he had the support of whoever wielded wider power. From apartheid's bantustan schemes, to support for the politics of Inkatha and Buthelezi, and then to the new ruling party, he claimed to be a bearer of traditional authority.

For example, association with the Zulu kingship was important for the authority of South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma. His claim to be "100% Zulu" brought him votes and legitimised his behaviour as he pillaged the republic. King Goodwill costs millions of rands per year, but provided value through votes, through the "brand" he provided the tourist industry, and access to the mineral wealth under the Ingonyama Trust land. Battles continue over the trust.

But for Inkatha's push-back against homelands (bantustans), the apartheid state might have succeeded in installing Goodwill into a Sobhuza II equivalent (in other words an executive king) in kwaZulu. After all, the Swazi model of supreme monarchy was in the making by the end of 1971, following its constitutional independence from Britain in 1968.

By the time of his death King Goodwill was firmly established not as executive king, but certainly as powerful Ingonyama Trust landholder.

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Disasters Interrupt Schooling Regularly in Parts of Africa: Here's a Solution

MARGEE ENSIGN & JACOB UDO-UDO JACOB

THECONVERSATION.COM

Schools are among the worst institutional casualties of complex disasters. This has been the obvious case with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Boko Haram insurgency and other violent conflicts in Africa, which have caused the suspension and destruction of schools.

Countless schools have been damaged, closed or destroyed. Untold millions of students have been forced to suspend or to abandon their education because of violence or the pandemic. These disruptions have further blighted the already precarious educational foundation of the continent.

So what's the most cost-effective way to address this enormous challenge?

In an area confronting the Boko Haram uprising in north eastern Nigeria, we used a combination of radio and computer tablets to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of 22,000 children forced out of school.

Our findings show that radio and mobile technologies can support a swift and sensitive response to educational disruption. The outcomes are even more positive in contexts where girls have been most affected. The nature of instructional radio and technologies has a direct consequence on learning outcomes across variables such as gender and age.

The findings offer important implications and lessons for ongoing COVID-19 education continuity response programmes across the African continent.

THE PROJECT

We developed the Transactional Radio Instruction model as part of a USAID-funded Technology Enhanced Learning for All project at the American University of Nigeria in Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria at the height of the Boko Haram insurgency between 2015 and 2016. The region is one of the poorest and most illiterate in the country. Girls were particularly disadvantaged.

We randomly assigned beneficiaries into three different groups across 750 learning centres to test the impact of a blend of remote learning media on learning outcomes. We then conducted baseline standardised Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment tests to ascertain participants' literacy and numeracy levels prior to the intervention.

After six months of the programme, we conducted end-line tests on the same sample, again

using standardised tests. We observed an average improvement of 99.1% in literacy scores and an average improvement of 97.2% in numeracy scores. Even within the context of a regular classroom, these were extraordinary improvements. And within a very short time.

HOW WE DID IT

We designed the radio-based lessons as a radio drama series. This was accompanied by easy to memorise songs in Hausa, interspersed with English. Every episode sought to unpack and creatively confront obstacles that interfered with learning. We achieved this by weaving problem-based lessons into stories that helped learners overcome cognitive and cultural barriers to learning.

The programmes especially sought to confront the various religious and socio-cultural factors and practices responsible for female educational deprivation in northern Nigeria. We created more female characters in both the literacy and numeracy drama series. The radio teachers in both programmes were also female and three out of the four children on radio were girls. We observed a correlation between the gender of the radio characters, participation and learning outcomes.

We built a central character into the numeracy story line to play the role of a patriarch who wields enormous social influence. By characterising the patriarch as a co-learner and an advocate of education for all, we successfully built a cultural validation into the programme's structure. This was critical because, in northern Nigeria, the grandfather is responsible for maintaining cultural and religious norms in the family. We were hardly surprised when participants voted the patriarchal character as the most popular character on the show, over the class teacher.

LESSONS LEARNED

There are many lessons worth sharing. But we will focus on three salient ones.

First, it is crucial to clearly establish a connection between cognitive development activities and learners' lived experience in designing programmes. A problem-based learning approach is critical. Students learn better when they solve a coherent set of problems (based on clear prompts and hints) related to their lived context and among a group of peers. It means that their perception of the subject is derived from the everyday problems with which they might well be confronted, not from abstract ti-

tles, labels or calculations.

For example, if students' perception of geometry is derived from the real-world problems, they are more likely to be interested.

Second, the core objective should be to inspire a love for continuous learning. This is very important, particularly in societies where schools have been disrupted for a lengthy period.

Lastly, radio is a potent medium for teaching and learning. When creatively designed, radio instruction can provide an effective, swift, and low-cost solution to educational disruptions. Its reach and accessibility, particularly in Africa, can help meet the educational needs of large numbers of learners over a wide geographical area.

NEXT STEPS

USAID and the World Bank are proposing using our Transactional Radio Instruction model as part of a COVID-19 education continuity program to support some 500,000 learners in northeast Nigeria. When combined with tablets, even once a month, learning outcomes can improve significantly.

Children exposed to a combination of lessons on both radio and computer tablets once a month out-performed those exposed only to the radio programs by an average of 25%.

Moreover, in both literacy and numeracy tests, girls improved significantly more than boys – the difference being an average of 20% and 25%, respectively.

But this is just a first, small step.

There is need for an education intervention mechanism that assures education simultaneously with humanitarian protection and material assistance during complex disasters. It should seek to address the immediate educational needs of refugees, displaced persons and societies under siege, while a lasting solution is pursued.

This will require the involvement of a range of actors. These should include local education authorities, donor and national governments, international agencies, community-based organisations, academic experts and local leaders.

The future of Africa, and particularly a democratic Africa, can only be sustained with an educated population. Here is one cost-effective approach to building that future, that should be supported by the new Biden administration and other international donors.

[Margee Ensign is President, Dickinson College; Jacob Udo-Udo Jacob is Visiting International Scholar in International Studies & Political Science, Dickinson College]

Nepal's tea exports thrive despite Covid-19 pandemic

PARBAT PORTEL

KATHMANDU, 12 MAR [KATH-MANDUPOST]: Gorkha Tea Estate in Ilam, Fikkal has been exporting orthodox tea to Germany since 2009. The tea is sold under the brand name Sundarpani, which means beautiful water in Nepali, in 125 German cities.

Even amid the Covid-19-related restrictions last year, shipments of orthodox tea increased.

According to customs statistics, Nepal dispatched orthodox tea worth Rs52.7 million to Germany alone in the first six months of the current fiscal year (mid-July 2020 to mid-January 2021).

In the last fiscal year 2019-20, exports to Germany were valued at Rs46.5 million.

"There is huge demand for orthodox tea in Europe and the United States, but we have not been able to fulfil the requirement or meet their quality expectations," said Uday Chapagain, executive director of Gorkha Tea Estate.

Nepal grows two types of tea: Camellia assamica for crush, tear and curl (CTC) tea which grows at lower altitudes and in the hot and humid plains of Nepal, primarily in Jhapa district. This tea accounts for almost 95 percent of domestic consumption owing to its lower cost of production.

Camellia sinensis or orthodox tea is grown at altitudes of 3,000 to 7,000 feet. There are four eastern hill districts that are known for producing quality orthodox tea—Ilam, Panchthar, Dhankuta and Tehrathum.

Ideally, orthodox tea is produced from the top two leaves and a bud from each branch. 'Orthodox' refers to a traditional production process where the plucked tea leaf is partially dried ('withered'), rolled and then fermented to give a light colour, unique aroma and fruity flavour. It usually attracts a higher price than CTC tea in view of its quality, demand in the market and higher cost of production.

Apart from the shipments to Germany, orthodox tea worth Rs10.8 million was exported to Japan last year, according to Chapagain.

"We started exporting orthodox tea to Finland last year," he said. "About 60 percent of the orthodox tea produced in Nepal is exported to Europe and Japan," said Chapagain, who is also the founding president of the Himalayan Tea Producers Cooperative that was established with the objective of introducing Nepali tea to Europe and the US.

Nature Himalayan Tea, another tea company owned by Chapagain, exported tea worth around Rs30 million in the first seven months of the current fiscal year. "Europeans are health-conscious and are interested in scientifically certified and healthy tea," he said.

In recent years, Nepali orthodox tea has been gaining popularity in the international market mainly due to its quality, aroma and taste.

Gorkha and Nature Himalayan of Ilam, Gurase and Jun Tea Estate of Dhankuta, Kanchenjunga Tea Estate of Panchthar and Himalayan Shangrila of Ilam are exporting orthodox tea to the US, Germany, France, Canada, Finland



and Czech Republic, among other countries.

Gorkha Tea Estate alone exported about 41 tonnes of tea worth 500,000 euros to the European market last year. Himalayan Shangrila of Ilam shipped tea worth Rs26.8 million to the Russian market this year, said Chapagain.

Province 1 accounts for almost 95 percent of the tea produced in the country. Commercial tea production is being expanded to 13 districts besides the five districts in the eastern region.

According to the Mechi Customs Office, Kakarbhitta, tea worth Rs2.58 billion passed through the eastern border point during the period mid-July to mid-January of the current fiscal year.

Dhruba Raj Bishwokarma, chief customs officer at the Mechi Customs Office, said that most of this tea was destined for India. Only a small quantity is exported to the European, American and Japanese markets.

He said that out of the total exports valued at Rs2.58 billion, Rs90 million worth of tea went to countries other than India in the first seven months of the current fiscal year.

According to the Tea and Coffee Development Board, Nepal produces more than 25,000 tonnes of tea annually. Of the total production, CTC tea makes up 19,000 tonnes.

Commercial tea production is being expanded to Lalitpur, Lamjung, Nuwakot, Kaski, Bhojpur, Sankhuwasabha, Kabhre, Ramechhap, Dolakha and other districts, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.

The government has also launched a novel project, Sustainable Export Promotion Project of Nepali Tea, to promote Nepal's tea in the international market and improve its quality by using a system that tracks the product along the entire supply chain.

The innovative scheme follows the implementation of the trademark Nepal Tea Quality from the Himalayas last September.

Nepal's orthodox tea got its own trademark on September 22 last year, 157 years after the country started growing it. The trademark is expected to help Nepal brand and market its tea, which has been facing an identity crisis for over a century, in the international market.

According to a government report, Nepali teas are often exported to India where they are blended with Darjeeling tea as the two are very similar in terms of quality.

"This used to be done on a large scale before, and is still being done to some extent."

Mumbai City FC, ATK Mohun Bagan face off in summit clash

MARGAO, MAR 12 (PTI):

As many as 114 games, 295 goals, 87,811 passes and 7307 tackles later, the Indian Super League 7 will culminate with a heavyweight summit showdown between Mumbai City FC and ATK Mohun Bagan here on Saturday.

The match that lends meaning to every single touch taken so far, in what has been an exciting Hero ISL season, will be played at the Fatorda Stadium.

When Mumbai City FC take on ATK Mohun Bagan in the summit clash, there will be no more complex equations in play. The winner takes home the trophy. It's as simple as that.

Few would argue that there is a better candidate for the final than these two -- both Bagan and Mumbai have been head and shoulders above the rest throughout the season.

Both the teams come into the final with identical records, 12 wins and just 4 defeats in the league stage.

Despite a nervy penalty-shootout win over FC Goa in the semifinal, it will be Mumbai who head into the final full of confidence.

They did the double over Bagan in the league



stage, the latter of those victories handing them the League Winners Shield.

For Mumbai, this will be a first-ever final, but coach Sergio Lobera, and a handful of his players have been here before when FC Goa lost to Bengaluru FC in 2018-19. The team though has looked confident under Lobera.

"They (ATK Mohun Bagan) are a very good team with good players and have the momentum. But the most important thing now is to put the focus on ourselves and try to do our best."

"We have no specific plan, only small details about the opponent. We need to work 100 percent on our style of play," said Lobera.

There will be few selection dilemmas for

Lobera, with the exception of figuring out Mandar Rao Dessai's replacement. The Goan will miss the final due to suspension.

In the other corner, there is Bagan, buoyed by Antonio Habas' almost superhuman record in knockout games. He has already tasted glory twice and has a chance to create history by winning his second straight title and third overall.

On the eve of the final, the Spaniard sounded as focused as ever.

"We have to compete and our idea is to win against our opponents. My team is prepared for winning," he said.

Habas dismissed that previous results had no bearing on the match but that his side was braced for a tough test.

"We have to analyse the match and control (our chances of) victory than (try to) control the way they play. The opponent will play and maybe, we have will difficulties."

The match will also decide the fate of the golden boot and golden glove winners.

While Bagan striker Roy Krishna and Goa's Igor Angulo are tied on 14 goals for the golden boot, a goal on Saturday will hand the award to the Fijian, who has played more minutes than the Spaniard.

The race for the golden glove award is between Mumbai custodian Amrinder Singh and ATKMB's Arindam Bhattacharja. Both the players have 10 clean sheets to their name. At the moment, Arindam is in pole position, having conceded fewer goals.

NSUI holds protest over rising unemployment

NEW DELHI, MAR 12

(PTI): The Congress party's student wing, National Student Union of India (NSUI), organised the "Chhatra Adhikar March" on Friday to protest against rising unemployment in the country.

Thousands of students and party workers from Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh gathered at the NSUI office here before beginning their march towards Parliament building raising slogans like "Naukri Do Ya Degree Wapis Lo" (give us jobs or take our

degrees back).

Demanding justice for the youth of India, who are "victims of increasing unemployment and no jobs scenario" in the country, the protest aimed at challenging the government's power and highlighting how it had failed the "expectations of the students", the NSUI said in a statement.

The speakers at the protest noted that the union government had been oblivious to the sufferings of the youth, caused by an all time high unemployment, scams in various exams, and inactive placement cells.

The Bihar and UP teacher recruitment issue, pending results of various exams including, SSC Gd 2016, were also among issues that were noted at the protest.

Addressing the protesters, Congress leader Udit Raj criticised the government's decision of "lateral entry" into central government departments, saying it was a "violent strike on the

employment aspect of the youth".

"There are 8-10 lakh students preparing for the IAS exams in Mukherjee Nagar. With lateral entry into government secretariats, not only reserved categories but the students of general category too will suffer," Raj said.

"You will have to protest against those as well. We won't allow lateral entry at any cost. The government is planning to take 400 IAS officers through lateral entry without any exams. They are ruining your future," he said.

As the protesters began their march towards parliament, they were stopped by the police on the Raisina Road in front of the NSUI headquarters. The road was barricaded at both ends.

Several protesters, including NSUI national president Neeraj Kundan, who climbed over the barricades, were detained by the police which used mild lathich-

arge to control the crowd.

"Around 150-200 protesters, including a team led by Neeraj Kundan, have been detained and taken to the Mandir Marg police station during a peaceful march towards parliament. The police lathicharged several students. Many have also been injured, NSUI national secretary Lokesh Chugh told PTI.

A senior police officer said 120 protestors were detained after they tried to jump the barricades and march towards parliament. The protesters were detained and sent to Mandir Marg police station from where they were released later, he said, adding that a case has also been registered in this regard.

The protest was also attended by senior congress leaders, including Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda, former railway minister Pawan Bansal, and party spokesperson Alka Lamba.

Meghalaya opp to table privilege motion against CM

SHILLONG, MARCH 11

(PTI): The opposition Congress in Meghalaya Thursday said it will table a privilege motion against Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma for allegedly misleading the House on the power purchase agreement signed with NTPC in 2007.

Leader of Opposition Mukul Sangma stating this regretted that the attempt to mislead and misinform the House has come from none other than the leader of the House.

He alleged that the chief minister had deliberately with a predetermined motive misinformed the House about the PPA signed by the then Congress-led government with the NTPC in 2007.

In order to prevent this precedent to carry on in the future, it requires the members of the House to come up with a complaint for breach of privilege. Therefore, we have decided to table a privilege motion against the chief minister, Mukul Sangma said.

... They (Conrad govt) were trying to play to

the gallery but the worst thing is that they have misinformed the House which amounts to breach of privilege of the House and with a sheer intent malafide and predetermined intent to hide the facts which requires their attention and correction.

The chief minister had alleged the then Congress-led government had signed a one-sided agreement due to which the state has to annually pay over Rs 130 crore to the NTPC despite not purchasing power from it for the past three years.

According to him, the government would have to pay Rs 3,300 crore approximately to the NTPC in the next 25 years.

Stating that this is not a case in isolation, Mukul Sangma said there were a numbers of such instances in the past and amounts to misinforming and misleading the House which attracts the provisions of the breach of privilege motion.

The chief minister had tried to misinform the people of the state through his misinformation inside the House saying that the state



government has to pay Rs 11 crore to the NTPC per month, Mukul Sangma claimed.

Where is that Rs 11 crore mentioned here (in the PPA)? You go para by para, you will not see (it) but you will only see what is based on the provision of the law, he added.

The Leader of Opposition also questioned the failure of the chief minister to cancel the PPA with NTPC during his tenure as power minister in 2008-2009.

When they say this PPA is so bad and that it was signed in September 2007, Conrad K sangma was minister of power in 2008-09. He must have read this... Why didn't he cancel at that point of time, he said

Stating that the PAA is a standard agreement, Mukul Sangma said it

was not signed only by the government of Meghalaya but by other states of the North East as well for drawing power from NTPCs Bongaigaon thermal power plant.

This is not an agreement formatted under the whims and fancies of individuals these are all mandated by the provisions of the law. Similar notifications have been issued to the Manipur government, Arunachal Pradesh government as that is the standard operative procedure to deal with the defaulters, he said while referring to load shedding being imposed in the state.

According to him, the regulations on tariff and the amount of power to be drawn by the beneficiary state are governed by the Electricity Act 2003. The tariff in re-

spect of the generation companies owned by the Government of India is being fixed by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission).

This tariff and quantum of power will determine how much is the fixed charges that will be payable by the beneficiary states in the event that you are not drawing the power or in the event that you are defaulting the payment, Mukul Sangma, also former chief minister said.

The present state government does not want to address the concerns of the people relating to the Meghalaya Energy Corporation Limited and alleged irregularities in the implementation of various important projects designed to create a turnaround in the energy sector, he said.

They don't want to correct that because they are the author of that mismanagement, I have said in the House it is a well scripted modus operandi. It also includes posting and transfer of different officers. Whoever says no they are transferred, he added.

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England must learn lessons from India tour but future still looks bright

EBONY FORD-BRENT LONDON, 12 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: Amid all the despair about England's heavy defeat in the Test series in India, it is important to keep some perspective: before the tour started almost everyone I spoke to was predicting a 4-0 defeat and, though it was in the end only a little less one-sided than that, Joe Root's side avoided a whitewash and managed to pull off one of their best away results in recent years.

India's record at home is incredible and they came into the series full of confidence after winning in Australia; England had an inexperienced batting lineup, particularly against spin, and badly needed a top-level, ready-to-go second spinner. The series threw up plenty of issues for them, areas they have to work on if they want to move towards being the best in the world, but I don't think the result was surprising. When you put it in perspective, it was probably about par.

Ravichandran Ashwin, India's wonderful 34-year-old spinner, was the man of the series but the players who stood out for me were their youngsters, which is a theme that continued from Australia. Washington Sundar, only 21, had played one Test before but averaged 90.50 in his three appearances and took a couple of wickets; the 23-year-old Rishabh Pant kept wicket well and batted excellently; Axar Patel, 27, played the first three Tests of his career and took 27 wickets at an average of 10.59.

These are players who have been brought



up in the IPL, which is a different type of cricket but means they are bred to handle pressure, so these moments don't faze them. This is the culture of Indian cricket and I think it could help them dominate the sport for a while. They have a very balanced side: in the past they didn't always have the seam bowlers, but now they've got Jasprit Bumrah, and when he couldn't play Mohammed Siraj came in and was outstanding. Then there's Virat Kohli: they won the series in Australia despite having their captain for only one game and against England he batted poorly, averaging 28.66, but once again they showed they don't rely on him. This is a great India squad full of options, high on confidence, and they were playing in ideal conditions. Losing to them in India is no disgrace, and no surprise.

There was lots of controversy about the state of the pitches. I don't think many people, even in India, would

disagree that the third Test, which finished in two days, was played on a poor wicket – India made full use of home advantage with that one and took it to an extreme. Overall, though, I don't think the pitches were a factor in winning or losing the series, particularly given England won three of the four tosses.

Only once did England take advantage of that good fortune, when a double century from Joe Root and good innings from Dom Sibley and Ben Stokes put them in control of the opening Test. On a flat wicket they were OK but as soon as it started to spin the lack of options was obvious. Players were repeatedly getting out bowled or lbw to balls that went straight, they weren't getting their bat out in front, and they were getting stuck in the danger zone rather than getting really forward or getting really back. Under extreme pressure an inexperienced lineup repeatedly crumbled.

The top order strug-

gled horribly. In eight innings England's opening partnership posted more than 10 runs only twice and only once did they get as many as 20. Other than the first innings of the series, the opening partnership lasted, on average, 18.6 deliveries, while across the entire series the second wicket lasted 25.4. This meant Root, batting at No 4, was coming in far too early: without a platform, he had an unbearable amount of pressure as he tried to make up for the deficiencies around him. Over the last 18 months or so England have been able to get early runs, but in spinning conditions that did not happen. As a result there is once again doubt about the best lineup, and players who feel they are on the verge of getting dropped will struggle to show their best.

England always have a packed diary, but when push comes to shove there are only two tours – India and Australia – where careers get made. If you can perform there, in the toughest conditions

for different reasons, on wickets ideal either for spin or for bounce and seam, you've made your name. But sometimes we do focus on specific tours rather than the bigger picture, on results in extreme conditions that we have to face only infrequently.

It will be interesting now to see how England bounce back in the summer, when there are two Tests against New Zealand and then five against India at home, probably with a few green-topped seaming pitches literally to swing things in their favour a little. If they can park this series just gone, realise they won't have to face this kind of challenge again for a while, get their batters firing again, help Jack Leach, their frontline spinner and the one English player who improved through the series, as he continues to develop, and refocus on the Test journey ahead, there is still a bright future there for the taking.

Now is the time to plan for the next cycle – start, for example, by looking after the seam bowlers, particularly Jofra Archer with his troublesome elbow and the overworked Ben Stokes, because come the Ashes next winter they are going to be vital and their workloads between now and then will have to be very carefully managed. The India series ended with a run of emphatic defeats and individual disappointments but playing these opponents in these conditions is probably the hardest of all cricketing arts to master. England should learn everything they can from this series and then draw a line under it.

Milan draws 1-1 at Man United; Spurs, Arsenal win in EL



BERLIN, MAR 12 (AP): AC Milan defender Simon Kjör scored in injury time to secure a 1-1 draw at Manchester United in the first leg of the Europa League's round of 16.

Kjör capitalized on poor defending to head in a corner in the 92nd minute to give the Italian side a slight advantage ahead of the second leg next week.

Roma, Tottenham, Arsenal and Ajax all put one foot into the quarter-finals with comfortable wins. But the meeting of two former European heavyweights remains evenly poised.

United took the lead after 18-year-old substitute Amad Diallo scored his first European goal just five minutes after coming on. But the home team was disorganized for Rade Krunic's late corner and goalkeeper Dean Henderson was unable to keep out Kjör's thumping header.

We should have attacked the ball with the men we had there, United coach Ole Gunnar Solskjör said.

Milan had two early goals ruled out at Old Trafford. Rafael Leão was offside in the fifth minute, while Franck Kessi displayed brilliant technique to score in the 11th only to see the goal chalked off through VAR as the ball had struck his arm.

The visitors remained in control until United captain Harry Maguire somehow struck the post from point-blank range with the goal at his mercy after Bruno Fernandes headed on a corner in the 38th.

Fernandes was United's key player, providing a lofted ball over the top for Amad to head in the opener in the 50th minute.

KANE DELIVERS
Harry Kane scored twice to put Tottenham in a commanding position with a 2-0 home win over Dinamo Zagreb.

The England striker converted a rebound after Erik Lamela's effort hit the post in the 25th, and wrapped up the win in the 70th. Kieran Tierney-Catherine failed to deal with Serge Aurier's cross leaving Kane to score with a low finish.

ARSENAL COMFORTABLE

Mohamed Elneny put Arsenal in touching distance of the quarter-finals by sealing a 3-1 win over Olympiakos in Greece.

Martin de Gea opened the scoring with a thunderous long-range strike in the 34th but the visitors missed further chances in the first half.

Youssef El-Arabi capitalized on poor pass from Arsenal keeper Bernd Leno to equalize in the

58th.

Gabriel restored the visitors' lead in the 80th with a header, five minutes before Elneny made sure of the win when the home side failed to close him down and he let fly from outside the penalty area.

FANS IN THE STANDS
Spanish team Villarreal beat Dynamo Kyiv 2-0 in Ukraine despite several thousand vocal fans being allowed into the game.

Gerard Moreno set up defender Pau Torres to score after the home team failed to clear a corner in the 30th minute, and was involved again for the second. Villarreal captain Raúl Albiol scored on the rebound in the 52nd after Georgiy Bushchan saved Gerard's header.

OTHER GAMES
Stephan El Shaarawy scored his first goal for Roma since returning to the club in January, helping the Italian team to a 3-0 win over visiting Shakhtar Donetsk.

Scottish champion Rangers drew 1-1 at Slavia Prague, and Ajax eased to a 3-0 win at home over Swiss team Young Boys.

Modest Spanish club Granada earned a 2-0 win over Norwegian minnow Molde, which had Martin Ellingsen sent off with two bookings midway through the second half.

South Africa win toss, elect to field against India in 3rd women's ODI

LUCKNOW, MAR 12 (PTI): South Africa won the toss and elected to bowl first against India in the third women's ODI here on Friday.

South Africa skipper Sune Luus fell ill just before the toss and is not playing Friday's match. In her place Laura Wolvaardt will lead the visitors.

In total, South Africa has four changes. Tumi Sekhukhune, Anbne Bosch, Nondumiso Shange and Sinalo Jafta have

replaced Luus, injured Trisha Chetty, Nadine de Klerk and Nonkululeko Mlaba.

India, meanwhile, fielded an unchanged side.

The five-match series is currently poised at 1-1. While South Africa won the first ODI by eight wickets, India bounced back to level the series with an emphatic nine-wicket win in the second game.

Teams:
India: Smriti Mandha-

na, Jemimah Rodrigues, Punam Raut, Mithali Raj (capt), Harmanpreet Kaur, Deepti Sharma, Sushma Verma (wk), Jhulan Goswami, Poonam Yadav, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Mansi Joshi.

South Africa: Lizelle Lee, Laura Wolvaardt (capt), Anne Bosch, Lara Goodall, Mignon du Preez, Marizanne Kapp, Sinalo Jafta (wk), Ayabonga Khaka, Shabnim Ismail, Tumi Sekhukhune, Nondumiso Shange.

Bishan Singh Bedi back home after spending 3 weeks in hospital

NEW DELHI, MAR 12 (PTI): Legendary former India spinner Bishan Singh Bedi has been discharged after spending nearly three weeks at a city hospital here following a bypass surgery.

The 74-year-old former India captain had undergone a bypass surgery at the capital's Sir Gangaram Hospital last month after he complained of heart problems.

He subsequently also underwent an operation to remove blood clotting in his

brain.

According to a close friend and a former Delhi captain, Bedi has recovered significantly and was discharged from the hospital on Thursday evening.

"He has been discharged yesterday after the doctors found him fit enough to go home. He has been advised complete rest," the source told PTI.

Bedi, a premier left-arm orthodox spinner in his playing days, represented India in 67 Tests and 10 ODIs between 1967 and 1979,

scalping 266 and seven wickets respectively.

In December last year, he had protested against the Delhi and District Cricket Association's (DDCA) decision to name the Feroz Shah Kotla stadium after its late ex president and former union minister Arun Jaitley.

Bedi had demanded that his name be removed from a spectators' stand, named after him, if Jaitley's statue was to be installed. He had threatened to take legal action against the DDCA on the matter.

Shaken by pandemic, soccer avoids financial collapse

LIVERPOOL, MAR 12 (AP): Wandering around the concourses of the third tier of Anfield's main stand provides a glimpse into the past. To the last day of normality in English soccer, before the world changed. One year later, the betting boards are still filled with the odds for Liverpool's Champions League meeting with Atletico Madrid.

That game, on March 11, 2020, was the last time an English stadium had a capacity crowd. That same day, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

On the one-year anniversary, most games around Europe were still being played in empty stadiums. But after an initial total shutdown of soccer and fears that clubs may go bankrupt because of the loss of ticket revenues, the sport seems to have emerged largely intact. And with vaccine rollouts gathering pace across Europe, there is hope that fans will soon be back in the stands.

We are no longer in full crisis, Andrea Agnelli, the Juventus chairman who leads the European Club Association, said this week.

But it's been a year where soccer became directly intermingled

in the politics of trying to control the spread of the coronavirus.

The British government initially ruled out any restrictions on sports events, and the Liverpool-Atletico game went ahead with a capacity crowd of 52,267 fans. At that time, Spanish authorities had already imposed a ban on events in Madrid with more than 1,000 people.

In the end it was the Premier League itself that decided to pause for 100 days after prominent infections at Arsenal and Chelsea.

In France, the domestic league was abandoned entirely on government orders, while the other major leagues also took long breaks. The 2020 European Championship was postponed until 2021, as was the Copa America in South America. The Champions League wasn't completed until August in empty stadiums in Lisbon.

After the initial lockdown, fans were briefly allowed to return in pockets of Europe - Liverpool was allowed up to 2,000 supporters in December at Anfield but the second wave of infections and the spread of new variants sparked new lockdowns.

Especially at Liv-

erpool we missed (the fans) because we have the most special atmosphere probably in the world of football," Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp said this week. So it's clear it makes a massive difference.

At least there was no second complete shutdown of soccer in Europe, which helped prevent the financial apocalypse feared at the start of the pandemic.

But there has been a significant impact caused by the loss of matchday and commercial revenue, and rebates owed to broadcasters due to the disruptions to the schedule.

Accountancy firm KPMG assessed the finances of 43 clubs in Europe and found that total revenue dropped 1.2 billion euros (1.4 billion) or 13% last season.

Agnelli, the ECA head, warned in January that European football teams face losing up to 10 billion due to the pandemic.

Juventus has already revealed that losses more than doubled year-on-year to 113 million euros in the final six months of 2020. The Italian champion was among leading clubs to convince players to waive parts of their salaries. Arsenal

and Barcelona also got their millionaire stars to accept pay cuts.

Barcelona has still been one of the clubs hardest hit as the pandemic compounded its existing financial problems. The Catalan club currently has debts over 1 billion euros. The Premier League fears clubs are losing 100 million pounds (140 million) a month as long as the turnstiles remain locked.

The impact of the pandemic was noticeable in the January transfer window when spending across England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France dropped from almost 1 billion euros in 2020 to around 275 million euros this year.

I don't think the market will ever go back to where it was because the business models were sometimes too stretched, said Andrea Sartori, KPMG's global head of sports.

So I think the crisis has helped rethink the overall business model of football because it's hard to operate in an industry where many, many clubs are operating in a cost to revenue ratio which is well in excess of 65% like Barcelona.

Postponing Euro 2020 has already cost UEFA hundreds of millions of euros. That's why the governing body

is determined to have stadiums at least half-full when the tournament goes ahead across the continent in June and July.

The lingering financial damage caused by pandemic to the wider economy is also felt by soccer clubs, as it could have an impact on sponsorship deals and broadcasting revenue. The Premier League is in the midst of auctioning TV rights to the world's richest soccer competition and could be in for a shock.

There's certainly going to be a rights correction and it may be seen and interpreted by many as rights deflation, said Simon Green, the head of BT Sport, which airs Premier League games in England.

But the overall outlook is a lot more optimistic than it was when soccer was largely shut down across the continent, and no one knew for sure when it might resume.

We are now starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel, La Liga President Javier Tebas said.

In spite of loss of income of 2 billion euros, it could have been 7 billion euros. Especially the large clubs have been able to cope throughout this crisis.

Korea's LG to invest \$4.5 billion in its US battery business

NEW YORK (AP): LG Energy Solution says it will invest more than \$4.5 billion in its U.S. battery production business by 2025 as automakers ramp up production of electric vehicles.

The Korean company, which has a joint venture with U.S. automaker General Motors, said the investment will help create 10,000 jobs, including subcontractors.

GM and LG are currently building a \$2.3 billion battery factory in Lordstown, Ohio, near Cleveland, that will employ about 1,000 people when it is completed in 2022. The site is fairly close to GM's two other designated electric vehicle plants, one in Detroit and the other north of the city in Orion Township, Michigan. The companies hope to have a decision on a second site in the first half of the year.

General Motors has changed its corporate logo and launched an electric vehicle marketing campaign to reshape its image as clean vehicle company, rather than a builder of gas-powered pickups and SUVs. The 112-year-old Detroit automaker has promised to roll out 30 new battery-powered vehicles globally by the end of 2025 and said Friday that the new campaign will highlight its progressive vision for the future.

GM is likely to need far more battery capacity if it's able to deliver on a goal of converting all of its new passenger vehicles from internal combustion engines to electricity by 2035. The consulting firm LMC Automotive predicts that U.S. battery powered vehicle sales will hit over 1 million per year starting in 2023, reaching over 4 million by 2030.

Industry analysts have said that automakers face a global shortage of batteries as the industry moves away from gasoline powered vehicles. Most of the world's batteries are built in China and other countries.

LG's investment also comes as the President Joe Biden's administration has laid out its plans to tackle climate change which will likely include taking on oil and gas industry.

BAR ELIAS, LEBANON (AP): Mohammed Zakaria has lived in a plastic tent in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley for almost as long as war has raged in his native Syria. He and his family fled bombings in 2012, thinking it would be a short, temporary stay. His hometown of Homs was under siege, and subject to a ferocious Syrian military campaign. He didn't even bring his ID with him.

Almost 10 years later, the family still hasn't gone back. The 53-year-old Zakaria is among millions of Syrians unlikely to return in the foreseeable future, even as they face deteriorating living conditions abroad. On top of his displacement, Zakaria now struggles to survive Lebanon's financial meltdown and social implosion.

"We came on the assumption that we would come in and out," said Zakaria, sitting outside his tent on a cold day recently as his children walked around in worn-out slippers.

Syria has been mired in civil war since 2011, when Syrians revolted against President Bashar Assad amid a wave of Arab Spring uprisings. The protests in Syria, which began in March that year, quickly turned into insurgency — and eventually a full-blown civil war — in response to a brutal military crackdown by Assad's security apparatus.



Nearly half a million people have been killed, and about 12,000 children have died or were injured in the conflict in the past decade, according to the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF. The conflict also resulted in the largest displacement crisis since World War II.

The Norwegian Refugee Council this week said that since the war began in 2011, an estimated 2.4 million people were displaced every year in and outside Syria. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians face continued displacement with each year that the conflict continues and economic conditions deteriorate.

The war has left Syria divided and in ruins. Nearly a million children have been born in exile.

Of the country's pre-war population of 23 million, nearly 5.6 million are refugees living in neighboring countries and Europe. Some 6.5 million are displaced within Syria, most of them for longer than five years.

Lebanon, a small Mediterranean country with a population of about 5 million, hosts the highest concentration of refugees per capita, estimated at around 1 million. Most of them live in informal makeshift tent settlements spread out across Lebanon's Bekaa, not far from the Syrian

border.

A former porter for a Homs construction company, Zakaria has struggled to provide for his family, even as it continues to grow in Lebanon. He has two wives and eight children, including two who were born in Lebanon. One of his children was only a year old when the family escaped Syria.

In Lebanon, jobs are hard to come by as an economic and financial crisis roils the country. Financial assistance is scarce and irregular. A currency crash sent inflation and prices soaring. Zakaria now tries to make ends meet by selling gas bottles used for heaters to other refugees in his settlement.

He makes 1,000 Lebanese pounds (about 10 cents) from each gas canister he sells. But this winter, his neighbors in the settlement, which houses around 200 Syrian refugee families, could hardly afford to buy enough gas to heat their tents.

Through the unprecedented economic crisis, Lebanon's currency has so far lost over 80% of its value.

"Life is expensive here," he said. "It is so expensive even for medicine or doctors."

When his wife needed urgent eye surgery, Zakariya arranged for her to be smuggled briefly back into Syria

to do the surgery there. The surgery was going to cost 22 million Lebanese pounds — about \$2,200 at the current market rate. They managed to get it done in Syria for 85,000 Lebanese pounds (\$850).

Zakaria said he feels great sadness for his younger three children who have no memories of Syria and their home in Homs. They have also not been to school, and don't know how to read and write.

According to UNICEF, nearly 750,000 Syrian children in neighboring countries, including Lebanon, are out of school.

"All of our memories are gone now," said Zakaria, watching his children run around, playing hopscotch. Two dirty street cats serve as their playmates.

"Now we have a generation — 10-year-olds are a new generation," he said. "I have young kids and ... they don't even know our neighbors" back home.

Many Syrians are unable to return because their homes were destroyed in the fighting, or because they fear military conscription or retribution from government forces.

Zakaria clings to the hope that he would one day go back to his home.

"God willing we will die in our country," he said. "Everyone should die in their own country."

Myanmar junta kills more protesters, adds Suu Kyi accusation

MANDALAY (MYANMAR), MAR 12 (AP): Myanmar's security forces shot to death at least 10 people protesting the military's coup Thursday, spurning a UN Security Council appeal to stop using lethal force and as an independent UN expert cited growing evidence of crimes against humanity.

The military also lodged a new allegation against the deposed government leader Aung San Suu Kyi, alleging that in 2017-18 she was illegally given USD 600,000 and gold bars worth slightly less by a political ally. She and President Win Myint have been detained on less serious allegations and the new accusation was clearly aimed at discrediting Suu Kyi and perhaps charging her with a serious crime.

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Zaw Min Tun said at a news conference in the capital that former Yangon Division Chief Minister Phyo Min Thein had admitted giving the money and gold to Suu Kyi, but presented no evidence.

Myanmar has been roiled by protests, strikes and other acts of civil disobedience since the coup toppled Suu Kyi's government Feb. 1 just as it was to start its second term. The takeover reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in the Southeast Asian nation after five decades of military rule.

Local press reports and posts on social media on Thursday said there were six deaths in Myaing, a town in the central Magway Region, and one each in Yangon, Mandalay, Bago and Taungoo. In many cases, photos of what were said to be the bodies of



the dead were posted online.

Security forces have attacked previous protests with live ammunition as well, leading to the deaths of at least 60 people. They have also employed tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannons and stun grenades. Many demonstrators have been brutally beaten.

On Wednesday, the UN Security Council unanimously called for reversing the coup and strongly condemned the violence against peaceful protesters. It also called for utmost restraint by the military.

An independent UN rights expert focusing on Myanmar told the the UN-backed Human Rights Council on Thursday that violence against protesters and even people sitting peacefully in their homes was rising. He said the junta was detaining dozens, sometimes hundreds, of people every day.

Thomas Andrews, a former US lawmaker, also pointed to growing evidence of crimes against humanity

being committed by security forces, citing murder, enforced disappearance, persecution, torture and imprisonment against basic rules of international law. He acknowledged a formal determination requires a full investigation and trial. He is working under a mandate from the council and does not speak for the UN.

The human rights group Amnesty International on Thursday issued a report saying Myanmar's military is using increasingly lethal tactics and weapons normally seen on the battlefield against peaceful protesters and bystanders across the country.

The London-based group said its examination of more than 50 videos from the crackdown confirmed that security forces appear to be implementing planned, systematic strategies including the ramped-up use of lethal force. Many of the killings documented amount to extrajudicial executions.

These are not the actions of overwhelmed, individual officers making poor decisions. These are unrepentant commanders already implicated in crimes against humanity, deploying their troops and murderous methods in the open, Joanne Mariner, its director of crisis response, said in a statement.

As widespread street protests against the coup continue, the junta is facing a new challenge from the country's ethnic guerrilla forces, which until recently had limited themselves to verbal denunciations of last month's coup.

Reports from Kachin, the northernmost state, said guerrilla forces from the Kachin ethnic minority attacked a government base on Thursday and were in turn attacked. The armed wing of the Kachin political movement is the Kachin Independence Army, or KIA.

This morning in Hpakan township, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO/KIA) attacked a military council battalion based in Sezin village, and the KIO/KIA's Hpakan-based 9th Brigade and 26 battalions were attacked by helicopter. Both sides are still investigating. The 74 Media reported on Twitter.

A Facebook page for the Kachin Liberation Media said the KIA had

overrun the government outpost and seized ammunition. It warned the government against using lethal force to break up anti-coup protests in the Kachin capital, Myitkyina, where two demonstrators were killed this week.

The reports could not be independently confirmed, and ethnic guerrilla armies as well as the government often release exaggerated information. However, even making such an announcement amounts to a sharp warning to the government.

The Kachin actions come a few days after another ethnic guerrilla force belonging to the Karen minority announced it would protect demonstrators in territory it controlled. The Karen National Union deployed armed combatants to guard a protest in Myanmar's southeastern Tanintharyi Region.

Myanmar has more than a dozen ethnic guerrilla armies, mostly in border areas, a legacy of decades-old struggles for greater autonomy from the central government. Many have formal or informal cease-fire agreements with the government, but armed clashes still occur.

There has been speculation that some ethnic groups could form a de facto alliance with the protest movement to pressure the government.

Iraqi woman who met the pope sees little chance for change

BAGHDAD (AP): The story of Doha Sabah Abdallah's personal tragedy and loss deeply resonated with Pope Francis during his historic visit last weekend to the northern Iraqi town of Qaraqosh, once devastated by Islamic State group militants.

Back in 2014, her son's death alerted the town's Christian community to the impending IS onslaught. A mortar shell fired by the militants as they approached Qaraqosh struck outside Abdallah's house, killing her son and two cousins playing in the front yard.

The pope heard Abdallah's testimony at a church ceremony in Qa-

raqosh last Sunday.

But just days after the pontiff's visit — meant to give hope to Iraq's dwindling Christian community and encourage its members to stay — Abdallah doubts the realities of life in Iraq will change.

She said she would also leave if given a chance.

"The pope doesn't have Moses' staff, he can't part the seas and solve our very difficult problems," she told The Associated Press over the phone on Thursday. "If I had the resources or if someone gave me the chance to leave this country, I would never come back."

Years after Iraqi forces declared victory over IS and drove militants from the area, Abdallah's disabled daughter still cannot attend proper schools, homes are still shattered and in ruins. Jobs are hard to come by, and none of Abdallah's relatives abroad plan to return.

Iraq's Christian population, which has existed since the time of Christ, has dwindled from around 1.5 million before the 2003 U.S.-led invasion to just a few hundred thousand today. Estimates put the current population between 250,000-500,000.

As churches and Christian

ties were increasingly targeted by extremist groups at the height of Iraq's sectarian war that followed the invasion, the country saw an exodus of Christians. Even more fled after the brutal 2014 IS onslaught that emptied out entire Christian villages across the northern plains of Ninevah.

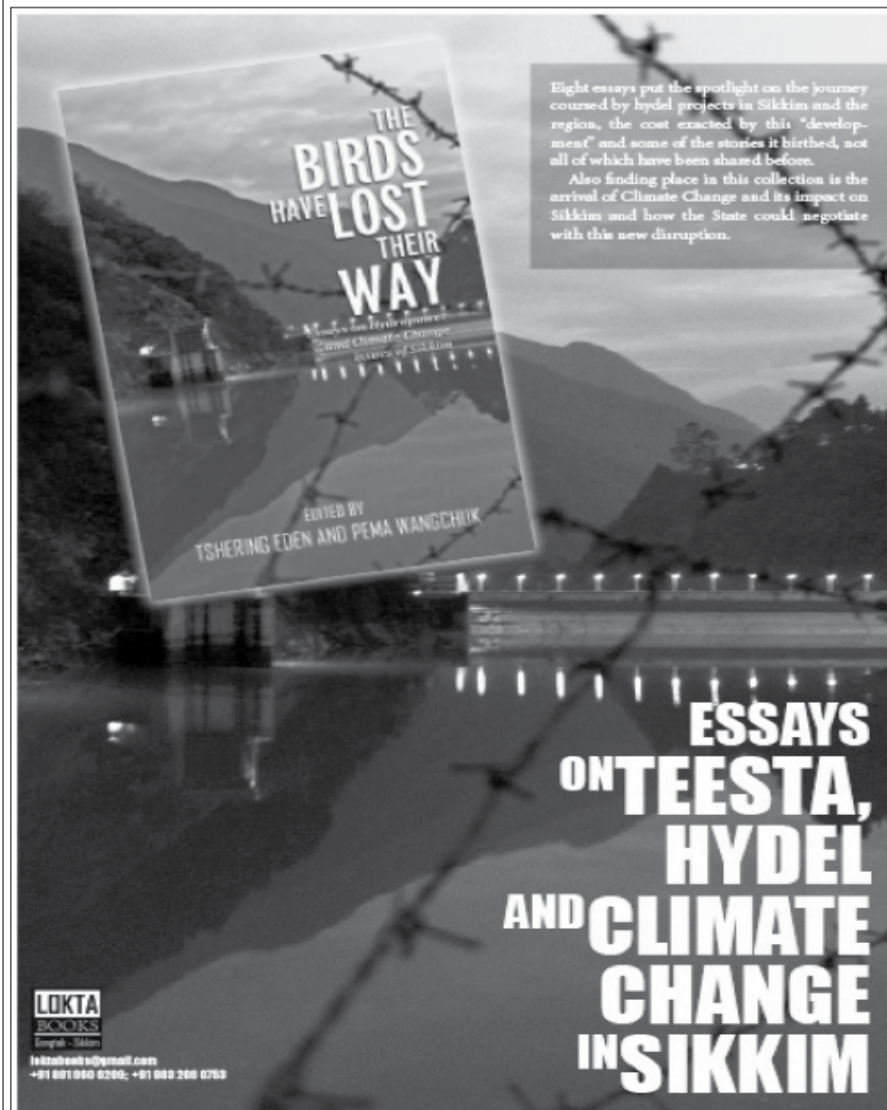
Francis's four-day visit to Iraq, including Qaraqosh, aimed to encourage Christians to stay, rebuild and restore what he called Iraq's "intricately designed carpet" of faiths and ethnic groups.

Qaraqosh, a majority Christian town in Ninevah, is just one of many

that was attacked by IS seven years ago. The militants overran the town, damaged its church and scrawled the proclamation "Islamic State will remain" on town walls.

The few Christians who returned after the liberation of Qaraqosh in 2016 found bullet-riddled mannequins and other signs that the militants had used the church premises as a firing range for target practice.

Many homes were leveled in the battles to oust the group and basic services have yet to be restored. Most of the town's Christians remain scattered elsewhere in Iraq or abroad.





WORKOUT STYLE! The model, Kendall Jenner shows off her fitness fashion as she leaves the gym in Beverly Hills.

‘Minari’ actor is nonchalant about new fame outside S. Korea

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP): When Youn Yuh-jung was asked how she felt about being called the “Meryl Streep of South Korea” in a recent interview, she said she’s flattered by the comparison. But she had her own introduction.

“I am just a Korean actress in Korea,” 73-year-old actor said. “My name is Yuh-jung Youn. So I like to be myself.”

Youn needs no introduction in South Korea, with a film career spanning over five decades. But she’s just being discovered by audiences outside the country through “Minari,” a semi-autobiographical film based on the childhood of Korean-American director Lee Isaac Chung about a family moving to rural Arkansas

to start a small farm.

Youn plays Soonja, who moves from Korea to join her daughter and step-son and develops a tender yet comical relationship with her grandson David (Alan Kim), the only member in the family born in the United States.

The film wowed at Sundance and has been a top contender during Hollywood’s awards season, winning best foreign language film at the Golden Globes and scooping up six nominations at the British Film Academy Awards.

When Oscar nominees are announced Monday, Youn is likely to be included in the supporting actress category. She’s said she hasn’t given much thought about scoring an award, saying it “would be something I can’t and won’t

imagine, so I don’t know... For me, an award means getting next work.”

Born in 1947, she shot to fame in South Korea with her 1971 debut “Fire Woman.” While at the peak of her career, she married popular singer Cho Young-nam, who convinced her to move to the U.S. together so he could perform at pastor Billy Graham’s church.

Youn said she was offered a role in a Christian film and stayed with a director in Florida for eight months to try to learn English. It didn’t work out.

“The project disappeared because I couldn’t speak English,” she said, laughing.

Youn lived in the U.S. for nearly a decade, not performing, before returning to South Korea, where she split from Cho and returned to acting.

Candace Cameron Bure reveals why she felt "Sick to My Stomach" about the release of her latest movie

Candace Cameron Bure has a long track record of success with films for the Hallmark Channel, but she still worries she’ll “slide off that pedestal.”

Candace Cameron Bure knows that maintaining her title as the “Queen of Christmas” is no small task.

The 44-year-old Fuller House actress—who has appeared in 26 different Hallmark Channel movies over the years, including many holiday-themed films—was a recent guest on podcast The Call to Mastery. During the episode, she told host Jordan Raynor she has experienced intense anxiety due to fears that her movies might not continue the high level of viewership and excitement to which she’s become accustomed.

Jordan asked Candace, who is also an accomplished children’s book author, whether she worries that her books will sell well. She replied that she doesn’t stress too much over her writing career because she sees it as a side gig.

“But on the flip side, I



worry all the time about my movies,” she shared. “I actually got sick to my stomach on this last Christmas movie that aired in November because I’ve created an anxiety for myself. Because my movies have been the top-performing movie seven years in a row, and you know one day, you’re going to slide off that pedestal.”

Candace has starred in nine Christmas flicks for

Hallmark, with her most recent being 2020’s If I Only Had Christmas. She has also played the lead in over a dozen Hallmark films in which she portrays crime-solving librarian Aurora Teagarden.

“And so every year, it kind of makes me sicker and sicker every time I have a movie to come out because I’m like, Is this going to be the year? Is this

it?” Candace revealed. “And I had to have a come-to-Jesus moment with myself in 2020 because I thought, Why are you doing this? Meaning, why are you making the movies? I had to bring it back to my why—my why that I set 12 years ago, coming back to the industry.”

Ultimately, the former Dancing With the Stars contestant has decided she shoots the films because she loves acting and the connections she makes, regardless of the ratings. Thankfully, this helped her feel better in the past year.

“I had to remind myself of my why and then let it go and just say, You know what, it doesn’t matter what those ratings are,” she added.

In a different podcast interview last month, Candace discussed the fact that making the movies might be more challenging than some people realize.

Luckily, now that the star has figured out how to focus less on the numbers, she can keep making these delightful films, and the rest of us can keep watching them.

Lack of diversity in Hollywood costs industry \$10B

NEW YORK (AP): For years, researchers have said a lack of diversity in Hollywood films doesn’t just poorly reflect demographics, it’s bad business. A new study by the consulting firm McKinsey & Company estimates just how much Hollywood is leaving on the table: \$10 billion.

The McKinsey report, released Thursday, analyzes how inequality shapes the industry and how much it ultimately costs its bottom line. The consulting firm deduced that the \$148 billion film and TV industry loses \$10 billion, or 7%, every year by undervaluing Black films, filmmakers and executives.

“Fewer Black-led stories get told, and when they are, these projects have been consistently underfunded and undervalued, despite often earning higher relative returns than other properties,” wrote the study’s authors: Jonathan Dunn, Sheldon Lyn, Nony Onyeador and Ammanuel Zegeye.

The study, spanning the years 2015-2019, was conducted over the last six months and drew on earlier research by the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Southern California and Nielsen. The BlackLight Collective, a coalition of Black executives and talent in the industry, collaborate with McKinsey researchers. The company also interviewed more than 50 executives, producers, agents, actors, directors and



writers anonymously.

McKinsey attributed at least some of Hollywood’s slow progress to its complex and multi-layered business — an ecosystem of production companies, networks, distributors, talent agencies and other separate but intertwined realms.

But the lack of Black representation in top positions of power plays a prominent role. The study found that 92% of film executives are white and 87% are in television. Agents and executives at the top three talent agencies are approximately 90% white — and a striking 97% among partners.

Researchers found that films with a Black lead or co-lead are budgeted 24% less than movies that don’t — a disparity that nearly doubles when there are two or more Black people working as director, producer or writer.

Among other measures, McKinsey recommends that a “well-funded, third-party organization” be created for a more comprehensive approach to racial equality. The film business, it said, is less diverse than industries such as energy, finance and transport.

Following the Black Lives Matter protests last year, McKinsey said it would dedicate \$200 million to pro-bono work to advance racial equality.

Tape that: Dutch inventor of audio cassette dies at age 94

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP): Lou Ottens, the Dutch inventor of the cassette tape, the medium of choice for millions of bedroom mix tapes, has died, said Philips, the company where he also helped develop the compact disc.

Ottens died Saturday at age 94, Philips confirmed.

A structural engineer who trained at the prestigious Technical University in Delft, he joined Philips in 1952 and was head of the Dutch company’s product development department when he began work on an alternative for

existing tape recorders with their cumbersome large spools of tape.

His goal was simple. Make tapes and their players far more portable and easier to use.

“During the development of the cassette tape, in the early 1960s, he had a wooden block made that fit exactly in his coat pocket,” said Olga Coolen, director of the Philips Museum in the southern city of Eindhoven. “This was how big the first Compact Cassette was to be, making it a lot handier than the bulky tape recorders in use at the time.”

ARIES:

You could live your life in accordance with the rules set by those before you, or you could follow the stirrings of your heart and go where your Destiny is taking you. Answer the call, Aries. We repeat: answer the call. Trust that your life will be completely transformed a few years down the line. Yes, you will have to let go of all things familiar. No, you will not have a roadmap to rely on. But you will learn to trust your instinct in both good and bad times, which will ultimately help you grow on the personal front.

TAURUS:

“The psyches and souls of women also have their own cycles and seasons of doing and solitude, running and staying, being involved and being removed, questing and resting, creating and incubating, being of the world and returning to the soul place.” Words of wisdom by Clarissa Pinkola Estés to remind you to retreat into that soul space. To unlearn the ways of the world and to be fully present to yourself. This is a time of deep healing, Taurus. A time of integrating the lessons you have learned in the recent past. The only question you want to ask yourself today: “How can I nurture myself better?”

GEMINI:

Medium Darryl Anka reveals, “Everything is energy and that’s all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want, and you cannot help but get that reality.” You’re resonating with his words a hundred per cent because this is where you are in your experience, Gemini. You are tapping into your ability as a master manifestor, working in harmony with the law of

attraction, and calling in a miracle—or 20. So stay dedicated to the inner work. Continue to work on your own energy. Every upgrade in your vibratory field will be mirrored back to you in your physical reality.

CANCER:

Elizabeth Gilbert once said, “I’ve never seen any transformation that didn’t begin with the person in question getting tired of their own BS.” Your thoughts exactly, Cancer. Today you’re in the mood to stop undermining yourself and grab a hold of the reins of your life. Let ‘bold and fearless’ be your mantra for the reason of the season—not that we would expect anything less from you! Remember, both ups and downs are bound to be a part of this journey that you’ve undertaken. Take both of them in your stride gracefully, and know that it is the failures that will make you invincible.

LEO:

Following the crowd is easy. It’s what tens and thousands of people before you have been doing. You know what requires an insane amount of courage? Challenging the status quo and forging your own path. Leo, trust that you have what it takes to strike out on your own. Remember, it’s not going to be easy. Yes, you will question your own ability on certain days. Stay committed to the path nonetheless. This is the only way for you to realise your true potential.

VIRGO:

We’re always in a rush to get somewhere or to achieve something. It’s safe to say that this goal-oriented approach has killed our mojo and turned us into robots who no longer understand what it’s like to be in the moment. Virgo, you’re being asked to

change the game a little. To unlearn the ways of the world and tune into the wisdom of your body and being. Remember, this doesn’t mean that you have to put everything on hold. It simply means that you have to find the elusive balance between ‘doing’ and ‘being’.

LIBRA:

It’s not about winning or losing. It’s not about asserting your dominance either. It’s about peace, love, and harmony. It’s about keeping your ego aside and finding a way to work together. Remember to act from a space of higher wisdom, Libra. Some of you may even find yourself in the midst of a fire you didn’t quite start. If you’re planning to play mediator, remember to have your boundaries in place first.

SCORPIO:

It’s a ‘find what you love and let it kill you’ kind of day in the Scorpio HQ. Bukowski’s golden words are inspiring you to immerse yourself in your art and become intoxicated by the process of creation. Remember, there is no ‘I’ in the equation. You are but a medium. A channel through which the divine forces express themselves here on earth. So, honour your intuition fully at this time.

SAGITTARIUS:

We spend way too much time in our heads, Sagittarius. We spend way too much time wondering about the repercussions of opening our hearts and expressing ourselves fully. Now, let us ask you this question: Would you rather deal with the pain associated with vulnerability, or look back at this chapter of your life with remorse in your eyes? Something tells us you already know the answer to this one.

CAPRICORN:

Don’t you love it when life comes full circle? This is a time of fruition, Capricorn. Your good karmas are contributing to the bounty in your world, reiterating your faith in poetic justice. So, kick back and allow yourself to savour the sweetness. Some of you may find yourself in a decision-making position today. The good thing is, you’re not one to give into your biases. Finding a consensus between your head and your heart will help you do what’s right for the collective.

AQUARIUS:

Who said you can’t have your cake and eat it too? Spirit is reminding you that there are no limitations when it comes to the manifestation game. So, let go of the need to be ‘realistic’ and ask for what you truly desire. You are about to see proof of your own co-creation abilities. This is a magnificent time on the professional front as well. Some of you feel inspired to invest in a business or project of your own. So, take the first step. That’s all! Know that the mysterious forces will catch you if you fall.

PISCES:

You deserve to be with somebody who understands and respects you, who sees you for who you really are rather than who you portray yourself to be. You deserve to be with somebody who falls in love with not just the parts of you that you celebrate, but the parts of you that you’ve hidden away too. Pisces, looks like the Universe is in the mood to grant your wish. The real question is: Will you open yourself to the possibilities or let your fears imprison you once again?