



**DADDY YANKEE ACHIEVES  
NEW BALANCE, READIES  
FOR HIS COMEBACK**

pg 08

**CHILDREN'S CLIMATE CHANGE CASE  
AT THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN  
RIGHTS: WHAT'S AT STAKE?**

04

**COUNTRY SINGER JAKE OWEN IS  
ENGAGED TO GIRLFRIEND ERICA HARTLEIN**

pg 08



# SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 317 | Gangtok | Sunday | 06 December 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

**Babus demand custom duty on Gold Medal from chess champ!**

**NEW DELHI, DEC 5 (PTI):** Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said that Indian chess player Srinath Narayanan will get a refund after he was asked to pay custom duty on the gold medal that he had won in the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad.

According to reports, Narayanan had to pay custom duty of Rs 6,300 to get the gold medal which he won in the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad in August this year.

Rijiju on Saturday said his office has contacted the player and the issue has been resolved.

"I'm very upset with this news. My office has already reached out to the athlete," he wrote on his official twitter handle.

"It was a case of misunderstanding between Customs and Courier company. The issue has been resolved. The company has acknowledged the slip up & will return the money to the athlete Srinath Narayanan."

On Wednesday, Narayanan took to social media to inform that he has received the medal but after paying custom duty for it.

"The medals are here! Thank you @FIDE\_chess. On the way to dispatch them to the rest of the team now. It wasn't easy getting it! It reached from Russia to India in three days, but took more than a week to reach from Bangalore to India, and had to pay customs duty!" Narayanan had tweeted.

## With 3 more deaths in a day, Sikkim's COVID toll climbs to 115

21 NEW DETECTIONS TAKE TALLY OF CASES TO 5168

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

Sikkim recorded three more COVID-19 related deaths taking the death toll here to 115 on Saturday.

The three lives lost are of a 53-year-old male from Development Area who had a co-morbid condition, a 56-year-old male from near Krishi Bhawan-Tadong and a 42-year-old man from below East DC Office-Sichey, neither of whom had any co-morbid conditions.

In the daily health bulletin on Saturday, Health Department State

IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia detailed that the 53-year-old man from Development Area passed away at around 8:40 AM this morning.

The patient had tested positive for COVID-19 on 19 November and was admitted to the COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital the next day. He informed that the patient was also suffering from chronic kidney disease.

The 56-year-old man from near Krishi Bhawan, Tadong was brought to the emergency ward of STNM Hospital with a medical complication yesterday, 04 Dec, and

passed away after some hours at around 9:50 AM.

His TrueNat screening returned positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia informed that the patient was diagnosed with acute respiratory distress syndrome and COVID-pneumonia and did not otherwise have any co-morbid conditions.

Similarly, the 42-year-old male from below DC Office in Sichey was rushed to STNM Hospital after developing some complications but was declared dead on arrival at around 4:25 PM on Friday evening.

He too tested positive for COVID-19 and had no co-morbidities.

Meanwhile, the number of active COVID cases in Sikkim increased to 367 with reports of 21 fresh cases in the last 24 hours on Saturday.

The State's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported so far now stands at 5,168, of whom 4,596 have already recovered and have been discharged from the facility and home isolation.

There are however six COVID-19 patients currently in the ICU facility of STNM Hospital.

In the daily health

bulletin on Saturday, Mr Bhutia informed that of the 21 new cases, 19 were reported from East District and two from West District from the screening of 173 samples. While 16 samples returned positive in RT-PCR testing of 117 samples, three were picked up in TrueNat testing of 17 samples and two from rapid antigen testing of 39 samples.

Of the new cases, five have been reported from Sichey in Gangtok - a person from below TNSSSS in Upper Sichey, two from Sichey but currently in Siliguri,

one from above Tamang Gumpa and one from below District Court.

Four more persons from Tadong area were found positive for COVID-19, of whom two persons are from 5th Mile, one from Daragaon, one from near Krishi Bhawan and a 24-year-old female from Tadong who could not be contacted over the phone number she provided during testing.

Also among the cases reported from in and around the capital is one person from Arithang, one from AG Quarters in Shyari, one from near the taxi stand at Ling-

ding and one from Upper Chandmari.

Similarly, one person from Manbay Dhanbari in Tumin, one from Rungdung Rhenock, one from Chewrebotey in Central Pendam and one from Aritar, Rhenock in East District also tested positive for COVID-19.

An army personnel returning from leave and currently in a quarantine facility, has also tested positive and he will be shifted to the Army hospital in Bagdorga on Sunday.

Two new cases have also been reported from Daramdin in West District.

**2342 LOAN DEFAULTERS OWE SBS RS 622 CR**

**Clear dues or will make names public, Nawin Kiran threatens**



### SAGAR CHETTRI

**GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

There are a total of 2342 loan defaulters of the State Bank of Sikkim [SBS] who collectively owe Rs 622,88,59,539 to the bank. The default

amount is from cases since 1968.

This was revealed by Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan who had filed an RTI query and received a 157-page list of

defaulters from the State Bank of Sikkim on 03 December.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Pradhan mentioned said that it was

**turn to pg 02**

**Farmers bring their own food, tea and water to meeting with govt, again**



**NEW DELHI, 05 DEC [PTI]:** Meeting the government for the fifth time on Saturday with their demands for scrapping the three new farm laws, union leaders decided to have their own tea and food, ferried from their langar (community kitchen) at Singhu border, where thousands of farmers are protesting for over a week.

The fifth round of talks began at 2.30 PM and was attended by 40 representatives of various farmer organisations.

Union leaders said they had their own food and tea during a break,

rather than having what was arranged by the government at Vigyan Bhawan, the meeting venue. During their last meeting on Thursday also, the farmer leaders had their own lunch, tea and even water.

Farmers' leaders had earlier on Thursday told the government to focus on resolving the issues instead of trying to be a good host by offering lunch.

Thousands of farmers have been camping at various borders of the national capital as part of their protest against the laws.

Union Agriculture Minister

Narendra Singh Tomar, Railways, Commerce and Food Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce Som Parkash, who is an MP from Punjab, are holding talks with the representatives of the farmer groups at the Vigyan Bhawan.

Enacted in September, the laws have been presented by the government as major reforms in the agriculture sector by removing middlemen and allowing farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have been worried that the new laws will eliminate the safety cushion of a Minimum Support Price (MSP) and procurement system, while rendering ineffective the mandi system that ensures earnings for various stakeholders in the farm sector.

On Wednesday, agitating farmers demanded that the Centre convene a special session of Parliament and repeal the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

**Mail us at [advertise@summittimes.com](mailto:advertise@summittimes.com)  
or call us at :03592-208698**

**Dr. Ambedkar Foundation**  
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment  
Government of India

## Babasaheb's Vision, Our Mission

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister

"Babasaheb stood for the upliftment of the weak, the oppressed and the excluded. And, he lifted us all to a higher cause in the service of humanity to build a future of justice, equality, opportunity and dignity for all humans, and peace among people."

**Tribute to Babasaheb by Developing Panchteerth Associated with his life**

- Dr. Ambedkar National Memorial, 26 Alipur Road, Delhi
- Chaitya Bhoomi, Dadar, Mumbai
- Janma Bhoomi, Mhow, Madhya Pradesh
- Dr. Ambedkar Memorial, London
- Deeksha Bhoomi, Nagpur

**Transforming India by ensuring all-inclusive Development**

**Housing for all:** Over 2.25 crore houses under PM Awas Yojana.

**Healthcare for all:** 50 crore beneficiaries covered under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

**Smoke-Free Life:** 8 crore poor women lead smoke-free lives due to Ujjwala.

**Life with Dignity:** Over 10 crore toilets constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission.

**Optical Fibre Connectivity:** 1.5 lakh gram panchayats connected with optical fibre cable.

**Social Security:**

- 61 Lakh SC beneficiaries under Post Matric Scholarship & 28 Lakh SC beneficiaries under Pre Matric Scholarship
- Income criteria increased from ₹2.5 Lakh to ₹8 Lakh under Dr. Ambedkar scheme of interest subsidy on educational loan for overseas studies for OBCs & EBCs
- Income criteria increased from ₹1 Lakh to ₹2.5 Lakh under for all OBC scholarship schemes
- Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY), launched to provide 50% capital subsidy for procurement and operation of mechanized cleaning equipments costing upto ₹5 Lakh
- A board constituted for the Welfare & Development of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities
- Dr Ambedkar International Centre, a world-class centre of excellence for research on Socio-Economic Transformation set up in Delhi

**A Grateful Nation Pays Homage to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on his Mahaparinirvan Diwas**

6 December, 2020

dayv 38101/13/0010/2021



*UN health chief: World can start dreaming of pandemic's end* (AP): The U.N. health chief declared Friday that positive results from coronavirus vaccine trials mean the world "can begin to dream about the end of the pandemic," but he said rich and powerful nations must not trample the poor and marginalized "in the stampede for vaccines."

In an address to the U.N. General Assembly's first high-level session on the pandemic, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus cautioned that while the virus can be stopped, "the path ahead remains treacherous."

The pandemic has shown humanity at "its best and worst," he said, pointing to "inspiring acts of compassion and self-sacrifice, breathtaking feats of science and innovation, and heart-warming demonstrations of solidarity, but also disturbing signs of self-interest, blame-shifting and divisions."

Referring to the current upsurge in infections and deaths, Tedros said without naming any countries that "where science is drowned out by conspiracy theories, where solidarity is undermined by division, where sacrifice is substituted with self interest, the virus thrives, the virus spreads."

He warned in a virtual address to the high-level meeting that a vaccine "will not address the vulnerabilities that lie at its root" -- poverty, hunger, inequality and climate change, which he said must be tackled once the pandemic ends.

"We cannot and we must not go back to the same exploitative patterns of production and consumption, the same disregard for the planet that sustains all life, the same cycle of panic and meddling and the same divisive politics that fueled this pandemic," he said.

On vaccines, Tedros said, "the light at the end of the tunnel is growing steadily brighter," but vaccines "must be shared equally as global public goods, not as private commodities that widen inequalities and become yet another reason some people are left behind."

He said WHO's ACT-Accelerator program to quickly develop and distribute vaccines fairly "is in danger of becoming no more than a noble gesture" without major new funding.

He said \$4.3 billion is needed immediately to lay the groundwork for mass procurement and delivery of vaccines and a further \$23.9 billion is required for 2021. That total, Tedros said, is less than one-half of 1 percent of the \$11 trillion in stimulus packages announced so far by the Group of 20, the world's richest countries.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres made a similar appeal for funding for the ACT-Accelerator at Thursday's opening of the two-day General Assembly session. U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said .

# MLA Football Challenge gets underway in Namcheybong



## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

**M**LA Football Challenge-2020 for under-19 girls and under-14 boys kicked off at Aho-Kisan School Ground under Namcheybong constituency in East District on Saturday.

The knock-out football tour-

namment is being organized by the East district unit of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's sports wing in collaboration with the party's sports wing for Namcheybong constituency.

On the inaugural day, Gnathang-Machong constituency beat Namcheybong in the

U-19 girls match-up, while Namcheybong outplayed Arithang in U-14 boys.

The finals are scheduled for 24 December.

The opening ceremony had SKM party's Nari Morcha state president, Kala Rai, as chief guest, while Namchey-

bong area MLA, Em Prasad Sharma, was present as guest of honour. The opening ceremony was also attended by Excise Department Chairman, G Bhutia, SKM sports wing president, Rinzing Wangyal Chopel among other dignitaries.

## Haryana health minister tests COVID positive, had got one shot of 2-dose trial of vaccine fortnight ago



### CHANDIGARH, DEC 5 (PTI):

Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij, who had got one shot of the two-dose trial of COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin a fortnight ago after he offered to be a volunteer, on Saturday said he has tested positive for the coronavirus.

Vij, 67, had offered to be the first volunteer in the phase three trials for Covaxin, an indigenous potential vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech against COVID-19. He was administered the dose on November 20 at the Civil Hospital in Ambala Cantonment, about 50 km from Chandigarh.

"I have been tested Corona positive. I am admitted in Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt. All those who have come in close contact to me are advised to get themselves tested for corona (sic)," tweeted Vij who is also the state's home minister.

Bharat Biotech took to Twitter to allay any concerns over the efficacy of the vaccine, saying clinical trials are based on a two-dose schedule, given 28 days apart. The vaccine efficacy will be determined two weeks after the second dose, it said.

COVAXIN has been designed to be protective 2 weeks after volunteers receive the 2nd dose.

"The phase 3 trial is a double-blind study where volunteers have a 50 per cent chance of receiving either vaccine or placebo, the Hyderabad-based vaccine maker said.

Stressing that experts would know better about how the COVID vaccine works, Vij told PTI over

phone: "I was told that antibodies start to develop after the second dose, which is administered after 28 days of getting the first shot. And full antibodies are developed 14 days after the second dose is given. So, the complete cycle takes 42 days. In between there is no protection.

Asked about his condition, Vij said he has sore throat, fever and body ache.

"But overall I am okay, said Vij, who is a senior leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a legislator from Ambala Cantt assembly constituency.

The Union Health Ministry also stepped in to say that Covaxin is a two-dose anti-coronavirus vaccine and that he was given only the first dose.

"The antibodies against the infection build up in a human being only after a specific number of days pass after the second dose of the vaccine is taken. This is a two-dose vaccine. The minister in question has taken only one dose of the vaccine," the ministry said in a statement..

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain hoped the Centre will take cognisance of the "doubts raised about the efficacy of the vaccine and that it will be completely safe and effective".

Vij said he had gone to Panipat a few days ago where he spent 2-3 hours with a BJP leader, who too has tested positive for COVID-19.

"Later, I got myself tested, but the first test

returned negative. After some symptoms showed up, the second test was done which was positive today, he said.

A three-member delegation of the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), the BJP's coalition partner in Haryana, had met Vij on Friday and sought withdrawal of cases registered in the state against farmers participating in the 'Delhi Chalo' march against the Centre's farm laws.

The delegation was led by JJP's state unit chief Nishan Singh and senior party leader Digvijay Singh Chautala was also a part of it.

Yoga guru Ramdev too had met Vij on Tuesday in his office where some mediapersons were also present.

Chief Minister M L Khattar, Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, State Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta and a couple of ministers in the BJP-JJP government had earlier contracted the virus.

"I will be administered a trial dose of Coronavirus vaccine #Covaxin a Bharat Biotech product Tomorrow at 11 am at Civil hospital, Ambala Cantt under the expert supervision of a team of doctors from PGI Rohtak and Health Department," Vij had said in a tweet a day before he was inoculated.

"I have volunteered to take the trial dose," he added.

Covaxin is being developed indigenously by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

## I&B Ministry advisory on advertisements

### GANGTOK, 05 DEC (PIB):

Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has today issued advisory on Online Gaming, Fantasy Sports etc. The Ministry has advised broadcasters to adhere to the Guidelines issues by Advertising Standards Council of India. The

Ministry has also advised that the advertisements should not promote any activity prohibited by statute or law.

The detailed advisory can be accessed at the link below:

<https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/Advisory.pdf>

## SBJM to organize low-key Foundation Day celebration

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

Sikkim Bihari Jagran Manch [SBJM] has decided to celebrate their Foundation Day in a simple manner due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on 09 Dec, a press release informs.

Central Committee president of SBJM, Swaminath Prasad mentioned that the Foundation Day has been celebrated in a

grand manner every year since 1993 but this year the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled the manch to cancel the State Level Program.

He has appealed to all members to celebrate the Foundation Day at the branch level. The Central Committee team shall gather at Singtam Bihari Dharmshala on 09 Dec to organise a small function to mark the day, he informed.

## "People have a right to demonstrate peacefully": UN on Farmers' Protest

### UNITED NATIONS, 05 DEC [PTI]:

People have a right to demonstrate peacefully and authorities should let them do so, spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said on the farmers' protests in India.

India has called the remarks by foreign leaders on protests by farmers as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted" as the matter pertained to the internal affairs of a democratic country. As to the question of India, what I would say to you is what I've said to others when raising these issues is that people have a right to demonstrate peacefully, and authorities need to let them do so, Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said on Friday. Mr Dujarric was responding to a question on the farmers' protest in India.

Reacting to the comments by the foreign leaders, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava on Tuesday said, "We have seen some ill-informed comments relating to farmers in India. Such comments are unwarranted,

especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country."

In a terse message, the ministry further added that "it is also best that diplomatic conversations are not misrepresented for political purposes."

On Friday, India summoned Canadian High Commissioner and told him that the comments made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and others in his Cabinet on the farmers' protest constituted an "unacceptable interference" in the country's internal affairs and these actions, if continued, will have a "seriously damaging" impact on the bilateral ties.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and several other states have been protesting for the last nine days at the borders of Delhi against three farm laws. Dubbing these laws as "anti-farmer", these farmers claim that the newly enacted legislations would pave the way for dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

## Centre fails to end dead-lock with farmers, talks to resume next week

### NEW DELHI, 05 DEC (REUTERS):

The Central Government failed on Saturday to break a dead-lock with farmers protesting over agricultural reforms and will meet again on Wednesday, the agriculture minister and union leaders said.

Thousands of Indian farmers have demonstrated against the laws, which they say threaten their livelihoods, by camping on the outskirts of the capital New Delhi and blocking highways.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government says the new laws are meant to overhaul antiquated procurement procedures and give growers more options to sell their produce.

"Farmers made it clear to the ministers that they want the government to repeal the laws," Jagjit Singh Dhalewal, a senior farmers' leader, said after five hours of talks on Saturday.

Agriculture and farm-

ers' welfare minister Narendra Singh Tomar told reporters that talks will resume on Wednesday, adding the government is committed to farmers' welfare and is keen to examine and consider the issues raised.

Led by influential farming groups from the grain-producing states of Haryana and Punjab, the protests are a test of Modi's ability to reform the agricultural sector.

Agriculture makes up nearly 15% of India's \$2.9 trillion economy and employs around half of its 1.3 billion people.

Farmers fear the legislation will eventually dismantle India's regulated markets and stop the government from buying wheat and rice at guaranteed prices, leaving them to negotiate with private buyers.

They are calling for the government to repeal the laws and retain mandatory government purchases, among other demands.

## Clear dues or ...

really surprising to see such a huge default amount of around Rs 623 crores. He questioned the bank's inability to take action against the defaulters.

The bank should also make strong loan mechanisms to ensure every single paise of the bank is returned, he said further adding that the State government should also take strict action against defaulters to retrieve the loan amount.

Mr Pradhan mentioned that these default amounts have become non-performing assets of the bank and NPAs are the reason many banks of the country closed last year with many people losing their hard-earning money.

"We have decided to give one week to the loan defaulters to pay back the bank failing which we will make this list of defaulters public," he said. He urged defaulters to give undertaking to the bank within one week.

Mr Pradhan had filed an RTI in the SBS seeking information regarding loan defaulters on 10 February 2020 but did not get any response due to lockdown. He had then appealed to the First Appellate Authority of SBS on 03 June 2020 but the appeal was rejected by the First Appellate Authority. He further appealed to the State Information Commission the same month.

After four months, SIC passed an order to the SBS to provide the list of defaulters and their amounts, informed Mr Pradhan.

## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft  
Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak  
Price negotiable  
Contact : 6296366498,  
9641878315, 9593262407

### LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

### LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410

### FOR RENT

Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Bazaar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land sale at Lower Sichey, suitable for construction, good locality, near the road, Total size: 90x55ft, (30x55ft each plot ). genuine person may contact@9734122366.

### Building for sale

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50x40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS, South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable ). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.



## Decks cleared for Siliguri Tea Park and Inland Container Depot to become properly operational

**SUMMIT REPORT  
SILIGURI, 05 DEC:**

As Confederation of India Industry (CII) constantly works with the Government for industrial development in the Nation, two of the major issues faced by the Industrialists of North Bengal relating to Siliguri Tea Park and Inland Container Depot (ICD) have been sorted by the intervention of State Government and CII.

Around 300 industrialists have purchased land in Siliguri Tea Park from Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority (SJDA) back in 2008,

but the land could not be mortgaged for bank loans since the land belonging to Railways Department, NOC was not issued by the Railway Board.

After 12 long years of struggle, finally NOC has been issued by the Railway Board by the intervention of CII and State Government, creating a historic impact for the Industry of North Bengal. Now banks can provide loan to the organizations facilitating Industrial development in Siliguri Tea Park and also the ICD project can be operational within two months.

"An investment of

1000 Crores by 132 Investors in Siiguri Tea Park will facilitate to generate more than 5000 jobs and bring a huge development in the economy of North Bengal", said Chairman, Sanjit Saha, CII North Bengal Zonal Council in a press conference today in Siliguri.

Mr Saha also mentioned that now industrialists of North Bengal and surrounding areas can export and import products directly from ICD in Siliguri which will benefit them in reducing around 60% to 70% expenses on logistics and also minimize

the requirement of extra manpower and clearing agents.

Once ICD becomes operational, entrepreneurs of North Bengal will be able to explore Global Market. MSME's of North Bengal and North Eastern States can now package any kind of products starting from fruits and vegetables to heavy machineries in the containers which would be transported to any destination by Railways from ICD, Siliguri.

"ICD will open horizon for logistics, tourism, and transportation leading to economic develop-

ment of the region", said Vice Chairman, Sanjay Tibrewal, CII North Bengal Zonal Council. Mr Tibrewal appreciated the State Government's proactive action and applauded the Railway Board for issuing the NOC.

He also expressed his gratitude to all the Media Houses and stakeholders who have been a part of the movement. CII has been working on various projects initiated by State Government focusing on Rural Entrepreneurship Hub (REH) and more than 150 Industrial issues have been already solved in North Bengal.

## Kisan Gosthi and piglet distribution in Namthang



**BIKASH CHETTRI  
NAMCHI, 05 DEC:**

Kisan Gosthi cum Awareness Programme was organized by ICAR - Indian Veterinary Research Institute, ERS Kolkata and Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Namthang in KVK, Namthang, South District, today. 'World Soil Day' was also celebrated on the day.

The chief guest of the program was Transport Minister and Namthang-Rat-eypani MLA, Sanjit Kharel.

Mr Kharel visited some farms in the area and assured provision of livestock to KVK Namthang and Horticulture Department, Namthang. He also assured to look into demands for repair work and construction of horticulture office.

ERS, ICAR-IVRI, Kolkata was represented by three principal scientists; Dr PK Nanda, Dr B Mandal, Dr Dhanpat who addressed the gathered farmers, officers and dignitaries.

They presented the ICAR project report and spoke on livestock diseases, and prevention and control of zoonotic diseases.

"ICAR projects are underway in the country for the last 4 years and for more than 2 years in northeastern region with more than 20 programs. It is my greatest pleasure to announce that Sikkim has shown the best response to our project," Dr. Nanda said.

He added that the piglets being dis-

tributed this year were bought from farmers who had been provided pigs last year.

Soil Health Card was given to farmer Gopal Gurung in the second phase of Soil Health Card distribution.

According to Soil Science subject matter specialist of KVK Namthang, Basant Tamang, research has shown that the soil is dying, in other words the soil fertility is depleting of minerals and useful microorganisms are disappearing making the soil infertile.

KVK Animal Science subject matter specialist, Dr Chewang Norbu Bhutia explained about the breed of piglets to be distributed to the farmers of Ruchung village.

50 piglets (30 female, 20 male) distributed today are of HDK75 breed, which is 75% Hampshire and 25% local Assamese doom hybrid pigs.

Along with the piglets the other items distributed were; liquid supplement, liver tonic, antibiotics, ointments, anti-worm tablets and 50kilograms of pig feed per beneficiary.

Dr Bhutia also explained the vaccination of piglets, common diseases in pigs and benefits to the farmers.

The chief guest of the program, Minister Mr Kharel suggested cluster farming to be the best farming method instead of scattered individual farming.

## SpiceJet Boeing 737 makes hard landing, damages runway lights in Guwahati



**NEW DELHI, 05 DEC [NDTV]:** A SpiceJet Boeing 737-800 jetliner - SG-960 - on a flight between Bengaluru and Guwahati damaged three runway threshold lights as it touched down approximately 1,000 feet short of the normal landing zone on the runway.

There were 155 on board, including two pilots and four cabin crew.

"The flight was uneventful till approach and [the] aircraft was cleared to land on runway 2. As per the pilot in command, due to low clouds on short finals, he lost perception

of altitude causing [a] high descent rate which led to touchdown on threshold, causing a hard landing," said a source in the aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The aircraft was being flown by the co-pilot at the time of the incident. Both pilots have been de-rostered pending an investigation by the DGCA.

Cut marks have been observed on one of the tyres in the main landing gear after the aircraft was safely moved to a parking bay and inspected.

## Mumbai City FC eye third straight win against Odisha FC



**BAMBOLIM (GOA), DEC 5 (PTI):** With a well-oiled unit at their disposal, inform Mumbai City FC will be eyeing their third successive win when they take on Odisha FC in an Indian Super League game here on Sunday.

Mumbai first registered a 1-0 win against FC Goa and then routed SC East Bengal 3-0 in their last game.

Much will again depend on how strikers Adam Le Fonde and Bartholomew Ogbeche fare.

Fondre scored a brace in the game against East Bengal and would be raring to go one more time.

The team has utility mid-fielders like Ahmed Jahouh, Cy Goddard and their role as feeders will be important in the larger context of the game.

The head coach Sergio Lobera has multiple options to choose in mid-fielders Farukh Choudhary, Hugo Boumou, Hernan Santana, Raynier Fernandes, Rowlin Borges and Pranjal Bhumij among others.

Santana is also in prime form having net-

ted in the game against East Bengal.

Mumbai's defence have not conceded any goals in the last two matches and they have Mandar Rao Dessai, Sarthak Golui, Mohamad Rakip and Mourtaada Fall to choose from at the back.

On the other hand, Odisha FC are still winless in the tournament. They have drawn one and lost two of the three games they have played this season.

Odisha coach Stuart Buxar would be hoping that his team put up an improved show.

OFC have history on their side against Mumbai City FC as they had beaten them in both the games last season.

Although the team from Bhubaneswar lost their previous game, they had a lot of positives to take from that match, including creating more scoring opportunities than their opponents.

On paper, Mumbai certainly have the upper hand, but Odisha can spring a surprise.

## Union Edu Minister to attend NIT Sikkim convocation ceremony

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

National Institute of Technology Sikkim is going to observe its third Convocation Ceremony via virtual (online) mode on 07 Dec, a press release informs.

The chief guest of the

program will be Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' while Chief Secretary, SC Gupta, will be the guest of honour on behalf of Chief Minister of Sikkim.

This year a total of 242 students, who have

graduated in the years 2018 and 2019, will be awarded degrees. It includes 187 students for Bachelor of Technology, 37 students for Master of Technology, 15 students for Master of Science and 3 students for Doctor of Philosophy.

## Turkey announces vaccination plan for Chinese CoronaVac



**ISTANBUL (AP):** Turkey's health minister has announced a vaccination plan starting with an experimental "inactivated vaccine" later this month to combat the COVID-19 pandemic amid a surge in infections and deaths.

Fahrettin Koca had previously announced an agreement with Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac Biotech for 50 million doses of CoronaVac, which is currently in Phase 3 trials. Koca said in a statement late Wednesday that the first shipment of the inactivated vaccine will arrive in Turkey after Dec. 11.

Inactivated vaccines are made by growing the whole virus in a lab and then killing it. Safely brewing and then killing the virus can take longer than newer technologies. But inactivated vaccines give the body a sneak peek at the germ itself rather than just the single spike protein, which mediates the entry of the coronavirus.

The minister said early use authorization would be granted after Turkish labs confirm vaccine safety and initial results from Phase 3 trials are assessed.

"If developments continue positively as we expect, Turkey would be among the first countries in the world to begin vaccinations in the early phase," Koca said.

In November, The Lancet published a study about the efficacy of Sinovac's vaccine candidate based on initial Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials. The study said the efficacy was determined to be moderate, and that

the vaccine produced lower levels of antibodies than those that have been found in recovered COVID-19 patients.

"The protective efficacy of CoronaVac remains to be determined," the study said.

Candidates from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna have said that they have more than 90% efficacy rates. The U.K's AstraZeneca have an efficacy rate of 70-90%, again based on limited clinical trials.

Vaccination efforts would be rolled out in four stages, the minister said. The first group includes health care workers, citizens above age 65, and people living in homes for the elderly, disabled or other protective care homes.

Next would be essential workers and people above 50 with at least one chronic disease. Third, people younger than 50 with at least one chronic illness, young adults and other workers would be vaccinated. The fourth and final phase would be for the rest of the population.

The CoronaVac will be delivered in two doses per person.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Monday the vaccine would be administered free of charge. Other COVID-19 vaccines would be sold at pharmacies, according to the health minister.

"We will take delivery of at least 10 million doses of the vaccine in December and likely 20 million. Another 20 million doses in January and 10 million in February,"

Koca said earlier this week. Turkey's population is more than 83 million.

Koca had previously announced an agreement for 1 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to be delivered in December. He said Wednesday that negotiations were ongoing for more vaccines that introduce a so-called messenger RNA, or mRNA, sequence coded for a disease specific antigen, which prompts the body to have an immune response.

RNA vaccines work by introducing an mRNA sequence (the molecule which tells cells what to build) which is coded for a disease specific antigen, once produced within the body, the antigen is recognized by the immune system, preparing it to fight the real thing."

Turkey was included in the trial phases of both vaccines and is also developing a local vaccine. Vaccine trials usually take years but have been drastically sped-up in wake of the global pandemic.

Turkey has reported record fatalities for 10 consecutive days, with 193 new deaths Wednesday, bringing the total death toll in the country to 14,129.

The daily number of infections has also hit a record high of 31,923, as Turkey resumed reporting all positive cases last week after four months of only releasing the numbers of symptomatic patients. The new daily infection numbers put Turkey among the worst-hit in the world.

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

**GANGTOK DENTAL CLINIC**

**NOW OPEN**  
10AM to 7PM

**BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT**  
**82106 99271**

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

Near Shree Golai  
Below Greendale Hotel  
Gangtok, East Sikkim

**+91 8210699271**  
**+91 8768213966**

**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

**Symptoms of nCoV**

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

**Treatment**

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

**Precautions to Prevent nCoV**

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome, and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

If you seek help, you may call :

Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7028372100  
WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**



## No Cut & Paste Preparedness Plans, Please

### Customise Sikkim's response to disasters

A policy has been in the making for a while now to make earthquake resistant buildings a reality for the State. Earlier this week, a demonstration on Earthquake Onsite Early Warning and Security System was made for the concerned authorities. These are comforting signs that policy is being focused in the right direction.

Sikkim always knew that its narrow valleys sit on a seismically active zone, but it was when a Big One rattled through the State in September 2011 that people and policy-makers realized just how vulnerable everything here was. There had been major earthquakes in the past, but people and policy-makers tend to have short memories, which, in the past, have not even lasted as long as even the relief and rehabilitation efforts. But the temblor of 2011 and the Nepal quake shortly after appear to have forced some sustained seriousness on these matters; now to ensure that these valid concerns lead to more robust safety and preparedness measures.

The little over nine years that have passed since the 18 September Earthquake have been unevenly spent on taking stock, preparing repair and reconstruction proposals, sourcing funds and getting over the shock. Gangtok and the other urban centres of Sikkim no long sport any scars of the earthquake, but a visit to the interiors continues to throw up reminders of the harrowing episode from that year. There are still schools which have not received full repairs and roads remain fragile in the worst-hit areas of North Sikkim and no one has really done a proper drill on whether the communication networks have been reinforced adequately or not. The priorities in Gangtok, where all major decisions continue to be made, appear to have moved on from earnest disaster mitigation and settled back to the disconcerting disinterested tokenism which catches the State on the wrong foot every time a natural disaster or any significance strikes. Awareness campaigns continue to remain embarrassingly superficial and disaster drills have become events. Cut and paste presentations on disaster preparedness or the occasional drills and demos will not make Sikkim any safer. In fact, as more time and attention is diverted to these exercises, the eroding of traditional safety mechanisms will make Sikkim even more vulnerable.

The first step towards effective disaster preparedness will need to source resource persons from rural Sikkim. Ditto, by the way, for any preparatory efforts to cushion climate change impact here. Funding from UNDP and GoI are welcome, but these have to be invested in customizing Sikkim's response to the challenge of natural disasters. The traditional knowledge base, which has already been severely compromised by the impracticality of centralized planning, has to be salvaged and distilled to inform Sikkim's response to its perennial challenges posed by the land and the climate.

Natural disasters are not new to Sikkim, so a good place to begin will be the compilation of a proper data base and then linking it to how local societies have managed such challenges and/ or avoided them. This knowledge should then be crunched with scientific models now at hand and a collection of region and village specific disaster plans put together to bind the State's preparedness. The proposal to ensure earthquake-resistant construction practices needs to be evaluated with this in mind. There is no arguing the fact that earthquake resistant buildings should be made the norm for Sikkim, but the rules and laws for it need to be customized for Sikkimese realities and situation. They have to be practical and enforceable and then they should be made watertight for implementation. A cut and paste job borrowed from somewhere else will defeat a welcome policy intervention. Perhaps we are expecting too much from an administration which cuts and pastes blindly much to the embarrassment of all who have to watch from the sidelines, squirming at how entitlement has fostered disinterested planning.

### WRITE US:

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



## Children's climate change case at the European Court of Human Rights: what's at stake?

SAM VARVASTIAN  
*theconversation.com*

The European Court of Human Rights finally has the opportunity to take on climate change. And it is taking it seriously, thanks to a group of 8 to 21-year-olds.

In September 2020, four children and two young adults from Portugal – all witness to the extreme heat and wildfires that have ravaged their home region – submitted a historic complaint to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), the top institution dealing with human rights violations in Europe. Their complaint is against 33 European countries.

In a nutshell, the plaintiffs claim that they face unprecedented risks to their lives and livelihoods and accuse the defendants of contributing to climate change and failing to take any effective measures against it. This, the plaintiffs say, violates their rights to life, privacy and human rights discrimination under the European Convention on Human Rights. On November 30, the ECHR made headlines by asking the defendant countries to respond to the complaint.

### A WAVE OF CLIMATE ACTION

This is just one recent instance in a growing global wave of high-profile climate cases against governments around the world. Over the past 12 months, top courts in the Netherlands, Ireland, Switzerland, and Norway have all had to deal with rights-based climate cases. A similar case against the European Union is also currently pending in the EU Court of Justice. And the ECHR itself has to deal with another climate case, this time brought by a group of elderly Swiss women against the government of Switzerland.

But the Portuguese young people's climate case takes things to a completely new level. The magnitude of their complaint is unprecedented in that it goes after some of the world's largest greenhouse

gas emitters, including France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Turkey and the UK. The stakes are very high. But so are the risks.

The ECHR normally considers only those complaints that were previously brought before national courts. This is the so-called "exhaustion of domestic remedies" admissibility criterion, set in Article 35.1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. But in this case, the plaintiffs filed their complaint directly to the ECHR without first going through the Portuguese national courts.

The Portuguese young people argue that the 33 countries have shared international responsibility for contributing to climate change, and going through a lengthy and costly litigation in national courts is not the appropriate avenue. The nature of their complaint is much closer to the transnational action by a group of children, including Greta Thunberg, currently pending before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

### A PRIORITY CASE

So, what does the ECHR's November 30 announcement really mean? Quite a lot. First, by not immediately tossing out the case as inadmissible, the court has indicated its potential willingness to consider its merits. This is significant – only a small percentage of complaints to the ECHR make it to this stage. But not only that. The court also announced that it will deal with the case as a matter of priority according to Article 41 of the Rules of the Court:

In determining the order in which cases are to be dealt with, the Court shall have regard to the importance and urgency of the issues raised on the basis of criteria fixed by it. The Chamber, or its President, may, however, derogate from these criteria so as to give priority to a particular application.

The fact that the ECHR considers its first climate case to be so important and urgent as to require the fast-track procedure is quite telling. As is

the fact that in its communication, the court went beyond the complaint by requesting the defendant countries also provide information on the potential violations of the right not to be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment, and of the right to property.

Courts all around the world have been inclining towards greater consideration of climate change in their cases for some time now. Some of the most recent wins include:

- An order by the Irish supreme court in July, quashing a toothless national climate change mitigation plan.
- A ruling by the New South Wales Land and Environment Court in Australia, requesting expert testimony on climate change in a case brought by bushfire survivors against the environmental protection authorities.
- A ruling by Canada's Superior Court of Justice, allowing a children's case against the province of Ontario's weak emissions reduction targets to proceed.
- A November 19 order of Conseil d'État – the French Supreme Administrative Court – giving the government three months to justify the achievability of the country's commitments to reduce emissions.

In their complaint to the ECHR, the Portuguese young people referred to the 2019 UN Production Gap Report, measuring the discrepancy between the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C warming goal and countries' planned production of fossil fuels.

Just two days after the ECHR announcement, the 2020 edition was published. The latest report confirms that the world is nowhere near being on track to achieving the critical transition from fossil fuels that would prevent disastrous climate change. It may well be that the fate of these plaintiffs now rests in the hands of the ECHR.

*[the writer is PhD Researcher, Cardiff University]*

## Intimate partner violence has increased during pandemic, emerging evidence suggests

MEGAN STUBBS-RICHARDSON  
& H. COLLEEN SINCLAIR  
*theconversation.com*

As we face rising COVID infection rates, the possibility of additional quarantines rises. Although stay-at-home orders might protect individuals from the virus, home isn't safe for everyone. Studies show that domestic violence calls to police and shelters in the U.S. have risen between 6% and 21% (variation depending on data source) since the start of the pandemic, with the largest increase happening the first five weeks of quarantine.

Calls to shelters and hotlines have also increased. Google searches for information about domestic violence hotlines have also gone up, with spikes last April, a time when most of the U.S. was under stay-at-home orders.

This is not surprising to those of us who study domestic violence. With COVID-19 came higher unemployment and financial strain, both correlated with domestic violence. As quarantines and social distancing continue, isolation increases, social support lessens, mobility decreases, access to resources is strained, and stress from the changes in routine, like work and school closures, rises. Life is turned upside down.

As researchers who study intimate partner violence, we know the pandemic has only exacerbated many of the risk factors for the escalation of violence. One example: Partners' spending more time together than usual, such as during the holidays, increases risks of family violence.

Stress, economic hardship, a lack of social support, gun ownership,

lower educational status, and drug or alcohol abuse are risk factors for intimate partner violence. All of these factors are exacerbated during a pandemic.

### GETTING RELIABLE DATA

All of these factors are red flags, indicating that victims may be at heightened risk during these trying

likely underestimates the problem. Interactions with police officers are down overall, in part, because of social distancing policies and practices. However, even before the outbreak, domestic violence was an underreported crime.

The increase in calls appears to be coming largely from households

to escape or reach shelters that are often in urban locations. These issues have only been heightened by the pandemic.

### WHAT CAN HELP

One possible way to improve response is to let victims report abuse in nontraditional spaces, like pharmacies. This approach has been used successfully in France and Spain. For instance, in Spain, victims use a code word – "Mask 19" – when speaking to pharmacists to identify the need for help. Traditional sources, like hotlines and 911, could allow for coded reporting also. With shelters less available during the pandemic, hotels have been used to house victims.

Social media outlets could offer innovative ways to make reporting easier; for instance, private features, such as hidden "customer service" chat rooms on platforms that link to the national hotline, could benefit victims trying to reach out while their abuser is nearby. Shortening the hotline number to three digits – a more memorable, quicker dial – could also help. All of these changes, particularly now, can help victims find the privacy they need so they can safely report the abuse.

*[Megan Stubbs-Richardson is Assistant Research Professor, Mississippi State University; H. Colleen Sinclair is Associate Professor of Social Psychology, Mississippi State University]*



times. However, getting data during a pandemic is particularly difficult. Under the best of circumstances, data must be collected, processed, and analyzed before numbers can be presented to the public. That always takes time. A pandemic complicates things even more. Right now, we do not have updated national statistics on victim reports of domestic violence during the pandemic. That's why, to get immediate numbers, we rely largely on the police call or shelter call data.

But that 6% to 21% jump in calls

where police have not made contact before and those in rental complexes, perhaps a result of neighbors reporting because, in spending more time at home, they are more likely to be witnesses. In contrast, incidents in rural communities where housing is spaced far apart are likely underrepresented in our current data. Even before COVID-19, the severity of domestic physical abuse was worse in rural areas compared with urban. The lack of public transportation in rural areas adds to the problem because it is more difficult for victims



# Army unveils statues of 1962 India-China war heroes in Arunachal

**ITANAGAR, 05 DEC [SHILLONGTIMES]:** The Army has installed statues of the "Kumaoni Soldier" at the Hut of Remembrance at Kibithu and at Walong War Memorial in Arunachal Pradesh to remember the sacrifice and valour of the soldiers who fought in the India-China war in 1962, a Defence spokesman said on Saturday.

Lieutenant General R.P. Kalita, General Officer Commanding Spear Corps, Colonel of the Kumaon and Naga Regiments and the Kumaon Scouts, unveiled the statues of the "Kumaoni Soldier" on Friday.

Defence spokesman Lt. Col P. Khongsai said that Walong, the eastern-most valley in Arunachal Pradesh, witnessed the bloodiest battle better known as the "Battle of Walong" during the 1962 war. "The battle is remembered for the steely resolve, valour and unparalleled bravery displayed by the soldiers of the Indian Army despite



numerous challenges."

Friday's event was made memorable by the presence of 79-year-old Subedar (Honorary Captain) K.S. Takuli (Retired), a braveheart of 6 Kumaon Regiment, who gallantly fought at this very location 58 years ago.

Lt. Col Khongsai said that the presence of the war veteran along with dignitaries from civil administration, local headmen of Meyor and Mishmi villages, veterans of the Kumaon Regiment and a number of senior Army officers and Jawans was a befitting tribute to

the valiant soldiers of 6 Kumaon regiment.

Lieutenant General Kalita while interacting with the media brought out the significance of the event and said that 6 Kumaon Regiment was one of the five Infantry battalions which played a major role during that

battle. "These statues symbolise the daredevilry of the bravehearts of 6 Kumaon who surpassed all limits of human endurance and soldierly valour while facing a formidable enemy in treacherous terrain and hostile weather conditions," he added.

## BJP's Mukul Roy named in supplementary chargesheet in Trinamool leader murder

**KOLKATA, 05 DEC [PTI]:** BJP national vice president Mukul Roy has been named in a supplementary chargesheet filed by the West Bengal CID in connection with the murder of TMC MLA from Krishnaganj, Satyajit Biswas, sources said.

The supplementary chargesheet was filed in a court in Nadia district on Saturday afternoon, they said.

"(Mukul) Roy's active involvement, primarily as a conspirator" in the killing of Biswas was found during the investigation, they said.

CID sleuths had, earlier, questioned the BJP leader in this connection. However, the state agency did not name him in its first chargesheet filed in May last year.

When contacted, Mukul Roy rubbished the charges and said that he

had never believed in politics of violence.

"At least 45 cases are pending against me. I do not believe in politics of violence and never indulge in such things. I challenge Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is also the police minister to say in the public that I have such kind of taste.

"I was not involved in such things when I was with her party and not even now when I am a member of another political party," Mukul Roy told PTI. CID sleuths had also named BJP MP Jagannath Sarkar in another supplementary chargesheet filed in September this year in connection with the case.

Mr Biswas, the state's ruling party MLA, was shot dead during a Saraswati Puja programme in Nadia district in February 2019.

## 25 new COVID-19 cases in Mizoram; tally rises to 3,913

**AIZAWL, DEC 5 (PTI):** At least 25 people, including six Border Security Force (BSF) jawans, have tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, taking the state's tally to 3,913, an official said on Saturday. He said that seven cases were confirmed at RT-PCR lab in Zoram Medical College (ZMC), 12 cases at TrueNat labs in district hospitals and six cases were detected through Rapid Antigen Test from various districts.

Of the 25 fresh cases, 10 cases each were reported from Aizawl and Lunglei districts, two each from Mamit and Lawngtlai and one case was reported from Kolasib district, he said.

Three patients have developed symptoms of COVID-19 and the rest 22 patients were asymptomatic, the official said.

According to the state health department, there are 217 active COVID-19 cases in the state while 3,690 people have recovered from the virus.

At least 35 people were discharged from various Covid-19 Care Centres on Friday after they were declared recovered, it said. Mizoram has so far reported six COVID-19 deaths, all from Aizawl district.

The death rate in the state is only 0.16 per cent. The state has tested 1,55,507 samples for COVID-19 till date, including 1,350 on Friday.

Meanwhile, the state government has decided that no more lockdown will be announced in the state unless COVID-19 cases abruptly increases, an official said.

The meeting of officials, doctors, churches and NGOs chaired by Health minister Dr R Lalthangliana on Friday denounced rumours about the proposed lockdown in Aizawl.

The meeting observed that the previous lockdown and the ongoing no tolerance drive have significantly curtailed the rising cases of COVID-19.

## Arunachal Pradesh reports 18 new COVID-19 cases

**ITANAGAR, DEC 5 (PTI):** Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 caseload rose to 16,367 as 18 more people tested positive for the virus, a health department official said here on Saturday.

One more person succumbed to the infection on Thursday, pushing the number of fatalities in the northeastern state to 55, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

The 80-year-old man died due to septic shock at the Dedicated Covid Hospital (DCH) at Chimpu near here. He was suffering from diabetes mellitus with hypertension, the official said.

Of the 18 fresh cases, six were reported from

the Capital Complex region, three each from Papumpare and West Kameng and one each from West Siang, Lohit, East Siang, Upper Siang, Changlang and Lower Dibang Valley district respectively, the SSO said.

Sixteen cases were diagnosed through rapid antigen tests and two were detected through True Nat tests.

Barring seven all the patients are asymptomatic and shifted to Covid Care Centres, he said.

Thirty-six more people recovered from COVID-19, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 15,561.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 751 active coronavirus cases, the

official said.

The recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state has climbed to 95.07 per cent, he said.

The positivity and fatality rates stand at 4.93 per cent and 0.33 per cent respectively, Dr Jampa said.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, has the highest number of active cases at 553, followed by West Kameng (54), Changlang (17) and Lepa Rada (16), the official said.

The state has so far tested 3,63,062 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 794 on Friday, he added.

## Baghjan blowout well finally abandoned, says OIL



**GUWAHATI, 05 DEC [SHILLONGTIMES]:** Oil India Limited (OIL) has announced that all jobs pertaining to capping, killing and final abandonment of the blowout well at Baghjan was successfully completed on Thursday evening.

"Consequent upon uncontrolled flow of natural gas and blowout at Baghjan well number 5 on 27th May, 2020, OIL declared an emergency situation for its internal control purposes. Today, after final abandonment of the well, the emergency declaration has been withdrawn with immediate effect," an official statement said late Thursday evening. The blowout well

was successfully "killed" on November 15 last after over five months since it caught fire.

The OIL management acknowledged the support from stakeholders during the period, especially the team from Alert Disaster Control, CMT (crisis management team) personnel from ONGCL, Indian Army, Indian Air Force, Tinsukia district administration, Assam Police, NDRF and SDRF, who were directly or indirectly involved in the control operations.

"OIL management is indebted to the constant guidance and support received from the government of Assam, central

government and the ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoP&NG) in particular. OIL management expresses its gratitude to the brave Oilindians who laid down their lives while performing their duties at Baghjan," the statement said.

The central public sector undertaking further expressed its gratitude to the residents of the nearby areas around the blowout site for their patience and support during the period.

"We can assure all stakeholders that OIL will remain a people's company with support of the residents of its operational areas," it said.

## Filmmaker Jahnu Barua to make Hindi movie on Lachit Borphukan

**GUWAHATI, 05 DEC [SHILLONGTIMES]:** Eminent filmmaker Jahnu Barua will direct a Hindi film on legendary Ahom general Lachit Borphukan in a bid to project the exploits of Assam's war hero in the national and global limelight.

The film to be produced by the Guwahati-based Dream House Productionz, besides top production houses of the country, is expected to hit the screens by the end of 2022.

"For well over 20-years, I have been living with this dream of doing a film on, my favourite war-hero Lachit. There were a number of government initiatives to this effect, including proposal from two former Governors, but because of budgetary constraint the production of such a mega project could not be taken up," Barua, a 12-time national film award winning filmmaker, said.

The film will have a leading actor of the country playing the role of the Ahom general who defeated the Mughal army in the Battle of Saraighat in 1671.



"It will be after more than seven decades of independent India that Assam's war hero and pride of India will get his overdue limelight on the national and international stage," he said.

Barua now wants to depict the story of Borphukan's life and times across India through a Hindi film because he was a national hero.

In Assam, the legendary warrior is eulogised and revered for his leadership and heroism.

The work on the film has already begun and the production on the film is likely to start by October 2021.

Barua also said that research on the project has already begun, under the guidance of Prof JN Phukan, a scholar

and former head of the Department of History, Gauhati University, to depict with accuracy the events leading to the Battle of Saraighat, which captured the Ahom General to the status of a legend.

The 68-year-old filmmaker, who has been conferred Padma Shri (2003) and Padma Bhushan (2015), has written and directed a number of Assamese and Hindi films.

Some of his popular films include Halodhia Choraye Baodhan Khai (1987), Firingoti (1992), Xagoroloi Bohu Door (1995), Maine Gandhi Ko Nahi Mara (2005), Konikar Ramdhenu (2003), Baandhon (2012), and Ajeyo (2014) among other movies.

## Kolkata Police to reimpose "No Helmet no petrol" rule from Dec 8

**KOLKATA, DEC 5 (PTI):** Kolkata Police has decided to re-impose the "no helmet no petrol" rule forbidding petrol pumps from selling fuel to motorcyclists without helmets, a senior officer said.

The "no helmet no petrol" rule would start from December 8 and will continue for 60 days, the officer said.

"It has been observed that several instances of two wheeler riders riding without helmet as well as carrying pillion riders without helmet have been reported and occurrences of such infringement of rules have increased manifold", Kolkata Police Commissioner Anuj Sharma said in the order issued on Friday.

It said that "In spite of several prosecutions in such cases being drawn up by the law enforcement agency, the appre-

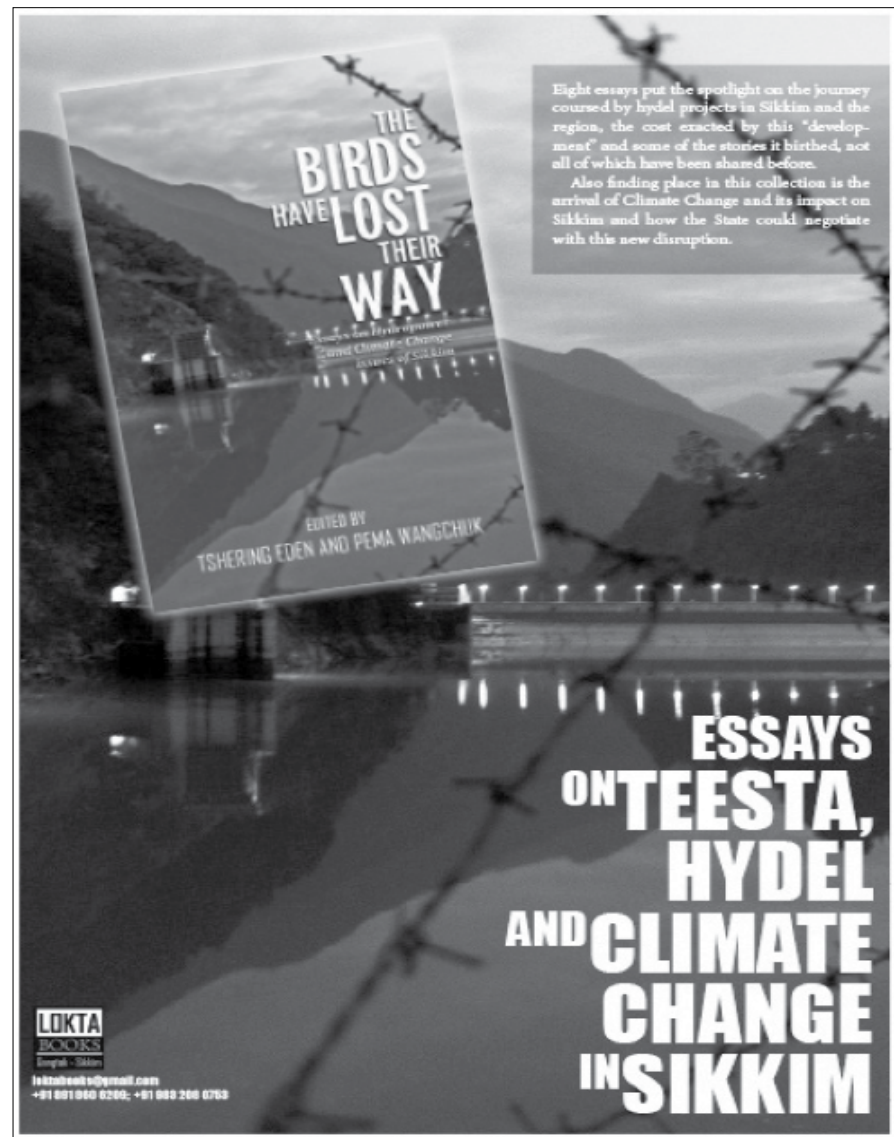


hension and possibility of untoward incidents/accidents arising out of riding two wheelers without helmet always remains. In order to ensure better road discipline and deter such violators of traffic laws, stringent actions need to be taken in accordance with law".

"No Helmet No Petrol shall be enforced within the jurisdiction of Kolkata Police to the effect that no petrol pump shall henceforth sell petrol to any such two wheeler rider who arrives at the

petrol pump riding two-wheeler without wearing helmet as well as carries pillion rider without helmet in contravention of provisions as enumerated under relevant sections of the Motor Vehicles Act", the order read.

In July 2016, the city police, following Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressing her displeasure over motorcyclists not wearing helmets, had imposed similar "no helmet no petrol" rule forbidding petrol pumps from selling fuel to motorcyclists without helmets.





*Jadeja is grossly underrated and deserves more respect: Kaif*

**SYDNEY, DEC 5 (PTI):** Former India batsman Mohammad Kaif feels that Ravindra Jadeja's all-round skills has been "grossly underrated" and the team will miss him in the remainder two games of the three-match T20I series against Australia.

Jadeja was ruled out of the remaining two T20 International matches after he got hit on the head during the series opener in Canberra on Friday.

"For two successive games, Ravindra Jadeja showed why he is of so much value to India in white-ball cricket as he provides much needed balance.

"Even after 11 years, he continues to be grossly underrated and deserves a lot more respect than he gets. Feel India will miss him dearly," Kaif tweeted.

Over the last few years, Jadeja has provided the much-needed balance to the side, and it was not lost on Kaif, who is currently IPL franchise Delhi Capitals' assistant coach.

Jadeja smashed 44 off 23 balls in the first T20I before being hit on his helmet by a Mitchell Starc bouncer, paving the way for leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal's inclusion in the second innings as a concussion substitute.

## FC Goa, Kerala Blasters seek first win of ISL season

**MARGAO, DEC 5 (PTI):** A win eluding them in previous three outings, both FC Goa and Kerala Blasters will be desperate to grab their first three points when they face off in an Indian Super League match here on Sunday.

Both sides have faced each other 12 times earlier with FC Goa having won on eight occasions while losing thrice.

The Gaurs are also on a six-match unbeaten run against Kerala and will aim to continue that at the home venue Fatorda Stadium.

However, both sides find themselves in the bottom half of the table with just two points each. And there is a lot to worry about for both the coaches as they head into this contest.

While Kerala have dominated possession against all their opponents so far, they haven't been efficient in the final third of the pitch and have struggled to create chances.

Kerala are yet to score a goal from open play this season. Both their goals so far have come from set-pieces. At the back, Kibu Vicuna's side has appeared shaky. The two-time finalists have also been dealt a huge blow with captain Sergio Cidoncha likely to be out of action for a while.

"Every team is a different challenge. It's true we have more similarities with FC Goa because of a similar style of play," said Vicuna.

"It's going to be a battle to have more of the ball. But they are going to play their cards and so will we."

# Dilemmas to face at every turn from the illogical, dangerous beauty of sport

**BARNEY RONAY**

**LONDON, 05 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** If you haven't seen the new TV advert for Jacamo clothing I highly recommend doing so. It's an exhilarating thing. First up we see the Jacamo models: stern, powerful men dressed in comfortable nylon leisurewear. These pictures are cut with a reel of stirring images. Rutting stags. A priapic wind tower. A spurting volcano. A craning lighthouse drenched in surf. Stallion power! Jackets! Masculineness! Rain, wind and fire!

This kind of imagery should not be taken lightly. The Jacamo advert is so exciting that just catching a glimpse of it – perhaps during a break in the Sri Lankan Premier League highlights – can induce an urge to rub yourself down with gravel, paint your face with woad and run out into the street roaring with untamed Zeus-energy, actions that might seem inappropriate under the current lockdown tiers.

But it felt significant, in an oblique way, that this ode to the joys of Extreme Human Power was on constant rotation this week around two sporting stories that seem to be shouting in at the modern world from an increasingly difficult place.

Last weekend I watched Daniel Dubois spend 10 painful rounds having his head snapped back by Joe Joyce's jab. This was followed by sustained analysis during which a majority of experts concluded Dubois had basically sinned against his sport by refusing to allow an 18-stone heavyweight to keep pounding away at his broken left eye socket. As a boxing fan, I was quietly appalled. How dare he quit?

Then on Sunday I watched David Luiz clash heads with Raúl Jiménez, before playing on for half an hour after a short medical check. This was followed by widespread disquiet, and concern that an on-field Q&A – basically: are you concussed, David Luiz? – is no way to deal with a head injury. As a football fan, I was quietly appalled. How dare he not quit?

There are some obvious prob-



lems here. Firstly, I'm clearly an idiot on some basic level, too consumed by the spectacle, too buzzed up on Big Jacamo Energy to have a logically consistent opinion on the damage done to human brains in the name of sport.

Secondly, it is clear now that Dubois was entirely right to stop, as was David Luiz to carry on. Both men were to a degree betrayed by their corners, asked to self-diagnose through a fog of pain and adrenaline.

There is a wider point here. Professional sport is increasingly crashing up against the modern world, in a way that makes some parts of it look unsustainable. Much can be done in the way of mitigation. But look at it closely enough and sport basically falls apart.

Collisions, aggression, Big Jacamo Energy! This is a species-wide fascination. History tells us all types of human – men, women, children, confrontational people on the internet – want on some level to be gush-

ing volcanos, to butt footballs, to dish out the chin music, to feel and induce extremes of pain and pleasure.

It is a relatively recent idea that we also need to be careful of one another while we're doing this, that we are not, it turns out, replaceable machine parts. Most sports were codified in the 19th century, at a time when medical science was very different, when the masses were essentially fodder and when violent collisions were key to the spectacle.

There have been huge textural changes and an entire universe of welfare and medical care. But what we're left with was still conceived by people with entirely different priorities, and quite a lot of this stuff looks ridiculous now in isolation.

Rugby, for example, is a non-starter. This is a sport that will literally change the appearance of your face over time, such is its accumulated force. Safety measures and the endless care taken at junior levels are all essential. But the fact remains

full contact rugby wouldn't get past its opening pitch these days.

The same goes for heading a football. Let's be honest, we pretty much know what it does. So why do it at all? The idea you don't head the ball in training, just in matches, is absurd. As is the suggestion from Sean Dyche that this is just about heading "properly" using your massive invincible forehead (Big Dyche Energy).

As for cricket, well, why is the ball rock hard and made out of wood? Most kids who play are terrified of it. Ditch the bloody thing. Bring us something plastic and soft so everyone can have a go.

And let's not even get started on boxing. This is a sport where the best people in the world at punching you in the head are encouraged to punch you in the head until you black out. Yes, it's a consensual activity with full awareness of the risks. But so is taking heroin or joining an evangelical death cult.

These are alarming things to think

about. But they do need to be flushed out into the open. Because the other side of this argument also needs to be heard; the fact that, for all its absurdities and anachronisms, sport is also magnificent, uplifting, and irresistible on a level that doesn't really deal in this kind of hard logic.

There is an unresolved conflict of reason and emotion here. The sentient brain can think, well, none of this really works. Inflicting harm in the name of entertainment is absurd. At the same time the untamed heart wants to be a breaking wave and a spurting volcano, to head footballs, to dodge bouncers, to be thrilled by the extremes of high-level boxing.

Many parts of sport will require revision to meet the standards we hold elsewhere. It seems likely profound change is coming over the next decade. But perhaps this last element – intangible, illogical beauty; a value in the extreme things people do – can have a place in that discussion too.

## India have unbelievable bowling attack, want to put them under pressure: Head



**SYDNEY, DEC 5 (PTI):** Australia batsman Travis Head said they will look to test their skills against India's "unbelievable" bowling attack and put the visitors under pressure during the first warm-up game starting Sunday.

Before the two teams face off in a much-anticipated four-Test series starting on December 17, Australia A are scheduled to play two three-day tour games against India A, which features Test specialists.

The 26-year-old, who was part of the 2018 Test series, will lead the Australia 'A' side in the first three-day warm-up game.

"Nice to have some memories and stuff from that series, but (they are) an unbelievable bowling attack and been well supported throughout the whole attack," Head said

in a virtual press conference, facilitated by official broadcasters Sony Networks.

"... you get through the new ball and someone like (Mohammed) Shami comes on and he's just so relentless on his length. There was just no rest that, you had to be on for every bowler.

"That is expected of Test cricket but that was my first real look at a quality attack like that. Those next spells are as strong as their first so you have to be on 100% of the time. Looking forward to that test again, again we have that chance."

While the first warm-up will be a red-ball affair, the second practice match scheduled to begin from December 11, will be played with a pink ball.

"... it is a great opportunity with the red ball,

the way we start that campaign in the same manner and we have three strong days and, I know the boys are really keen to start that three days and get leading into that test series," he said.

"(These are) really important couple of games for us, not just as Australian A squad but as Australian squad and we want to play our best foot forward and start putting the Indian guys under pressure."

He also said that the Australian A team has been strong in the last one and a half years.

"But again, like I said earlier the squad that has come together, (it) is a great squad and over the 12-18 months, its been a strong Australia A team, which in-turn make a strong Australian team, guys are fighting for positions and guys have had great season." Head, who

has played 17 Tests, said "it is a new opportunity to develop my leadership."

"...really looking forward to play with different guys and how different guys operate and working with them to hopefully have really good three days."

Head scored 237 runs, including two fifties, in the last home Test series against India.

Asked what lessons he took from that series against India two years back, Head said: "A lot of things, my game has developed a long way since then.

"I guess I had more test of Test cricket and I have had a couple of performances since that series, so you take confidence from everything you've done, you take experiences from every game you've played and every team you've come up against."

He said he had enough net sessions and was raring to go on Sunday. "I am raring to go. I feel I have done enough net sessions now and enough training and I am not tired, I am really refreshed."

"I am at perfect peak to get into the games and it is bit different to have this period off in the middle of the summer, it is going to be huge rest of the summer and huge test series," he signed off.

## Billy Joe Saunders retains world title the hard way against Martin Murray



**KEVIN MITCHELL LAS VEGAS, 05 DEC [THE-GUARDIAN]:** Billy Joe Saunders outclassed a proud but ageing Martin Murray over 12 rounds in London on Friday night to retain his WBO super-middleweight title and will take his 30-0 record into negotiations in pursuit of the biggest prize at 12st: a fight with Canelo Álvarez.

The Mexican, who was within days of signing to fight Saunders in March before boxing shut down under the weight of the pandemic, entertains Liverpool's undefeated Callum Smith on 19 December. If Smith were to spring the upset of the year, an all-British fight with Saunders would be a distinct possibility next summer, says Eddie Hearn, but Álvarez is the target for everyone at or around super-middleweight.

After outpointing the 38-year-old Murray, 120-109 twice and 118-110

in the third defence of his title, Saunders said: "I've just turned 31. I'm in my prime. I've been out a year and probably needed the rounds. It's very important for me to stay in the gym now, because I'm not getting any younger."

Hearn, his promoter, said: "The deal was done with Canelo and it was a massive blow when it was called off. We can't waste the opportunity to find out how good Billy is, but he's not yet mixing with the elite of the elite: [Gennady] Golovkin, Canelo, Smith."

Murray hinted he would retire, revealing he had hurt his back two weeks before the fight, an injury which flared in the eighth round, but said: "I lost to the better man." He will surely join the likes of Herol Graham and Kevin Mitchell as among the best British fighters never to win a world title, but he came desperately close, espe-

cially against the out-standing Sergio Martínez in Argentina in 2013.

Murray also took Golovkin 11 rounds, drew with Felix Sturm and lost a split decision to Arthur Abraham, all of them outstanding fighters. Saunders, though, had his measure in nearly every round.

"He's a cunning old fox," Saunders said. "He got through it and fair play to him. I hope he has a good Christmas."

Hearn was right to point out that Saunders was hard on himself after an impressive display against one of British boxing's best. There were no knockdowns, although Saunders reckoned he deserved one when Murray went over in the fourth; it was ruled a slip.

If a crowd had been allowed, they would have given both fighters a standing ovation at the end but, as Saunders pointed out, "it was like fighting in a cemetery".



# Ghana heads to polls next week as democracy tested in region

**ACCRA, GHANA (AP):** Ghanaians head to the polls for general elections Dec. 7 that many contend will be a close race between the current head of state and a former president who have faced off twice before in one of the continent's most politically stable countries.

The vote is also seen as a test of democracy for the West African nation whose regional neighbors Guinea and Ivory Coast saw leaders hold onto power for third terms after constitutional changes.

Though there are 12 candidates vying for the presidency, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the ruling New Patriotic Party is likely to see the greatest challenge from leading opposition candidate John Dramani Mahama, who won the 2012 election, but lost in 2016 to Akufo-Addo. If either of the two heavyweights win, they'll serve a second and final term under current constitutional limits.

Ghana has held peaceful, free, fair and transparent elections for nearly two decades — this will be the eighth consecutive election since the return to multi-party democracy in 1992.

Many hope this year's election will also be peaceful, although there have been reports of a



couple of armed attacks in the north and central region. Ghana Police Service has identified about 4,000 hotspots across the country, according to Jones Applerh, the executive secretary of the government body the Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, though only a few regions will need focused attention. The army has been deployed to the Volta Region.

A member of the governing board of the National Peace Council, Osofo Kofi Atabuatsi, has reassured voters there will be calm before during and after the polls.

Both President Akufo-Addo and former President Mahama have campaigned on anti-cor-

ruption platforms, while trading accusations against each other.

Mahama says the electoral commission has not demonstrated it is capable of conducting a free, fair and transparent election and has insisted that "we will not accept the result of a flawed election."

Akufo-Addo said "all Ghanaians are agreed that we have to work together to ensure that the elections will be transparent, free, fair, safe and credible."

Electoral Chairwoman Jean Mensa has pledged the elections will be conducted freely, transparently and fairly.

"I am very worried that there is likely to be some trouble during this

election," said Sitsofe Mifetu, a businessman in Accra. "We have heard of both parties training vigilante groups and it is possible these people will be used to caused disruptions at the polling centers."

First-time voter Abraham Thompson, 18, also indicated he felt unsettled.

"I am delighted to be casting my vote for the first time, but at the same time, I have this lingering fear that all may not be well," he said, without detailing what his fears are. "That will be sad for the country that has been hailed all over the world as the country with the best democratic credentials."

This year's elections are also faced with the

challenge of COVID-19, which the Ghanaian government has been making strides to fight. The electoral commission has said it is taking various protocols seriously, including turning away voters who aren't wearing masks.

Ghana has about 17 million people registered to vote at more than 33,000 polling stations for the president and 275 legislative seats.

Experts say it is likely Akufo-Addo will win the election, though he would have to get more than 50 percent of the vote to avoid a second round.

The electoral commission will announce results within 72 hours after the election.

## Swiss slopes buzz as those of neighbors sit idle in pandemic

**GENEVA (AP):** Two weeks after beating COVID-19, Thierry Salamin huffs as his ski boots crunch through Swiss snow near the Matterhorn peak, readying for a downhill run with his mood as bright as his blue and fluorescent yellow ski getup and the sun overhead.

The 31-year-old real estate agent from the southwestern Swiss region of Wallis can't believe he is skiing during a pandemic, let alone one that he personally endured — and which has driven a wedge between his country and its Alpine neighbors over where people can ski, and where they can't.

While the coronavirus resurgence has led Austria, France, and Italy to shut or severely restrict access to their ski stations this holiday season, Switzerland has kept its slopes open — a move that has fanned grumbling about an unlevel playing field when it comes to Alpine fun.

"It's true, we're privileged," said Salamin, enthusing about the "paradise" of the Zermatt slopes and gesturing over the ridgeline toward Italy. "It's too bad that people can't go skiing on the Italian side, because those slopes are magnificent."

The discord among countries during the worst pandemic in a century cuts across issues of health, business, economy, culture and wellbeing. But it also violates one of the key tenets that the World Health Organization promotes to help fight COVID-19: solidarity. The Swiss say they're taking reasonable action to fight the coronavirus. As across much of Europe, infection counts in Switzerland spiked in late October and peaked at more than 10,000 per day on two occasions about a month ago — a high tally for the country of 8.5 million.

Authorities require masks in ski lifts and queues, and recommend hand hygiene and physical distancing measures. These seem only minor concessions to the hundreds of faithful skiers who gleefully turned out for a weekday jaunt on the Swiss slopes near the Matterhorn on Thursday.

France's government is all but taking aim at Switzerland, which is not a member of the European Union, warning that any residents of France who come back from ski holidays could face

virus tests and quarantine orders. The French move is aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19, but it comes as some officials and business leaders in French Alpine towns have complained about unfair restrictions.

On Friday, amid such pressure, Swiss Health Minister Alain Berset announced a "hardening" of Switzerland's rules governing ski stations. Ski areas must now receive authorizations by the cantonal, or regional, authorities by Dec. 22 to continue operating.

His ministry said trains, gondolas and cable cars in ski areas will be limited to two-thirds of maximum capacity starting Wednesday. But the stepped-up restrictions are still fewer than in other countries.

Neighboring regions are seething. Just across the border from Zermatt, in Italy, the Valle d'Aosta regional council voted to defy the national government and open its ski lifts anyway, but the issue may get tied up in court.

Nicolas Rubin, mayor of the French town of Chatel, near the Swiss border, has had his city hall draped in Swiss flags to protest the directives from Paris. He told Swiss public television Wednesday he felt "no jealousy" toward Switzerland, saying Swiss officials had fully thought through their rules.

The European Union — which counts Austria, France and Italy as members — has stopped short of recommending a holiday season travel ban. But national authorities are taking precautions, leery of superspreading events like those earlier this year at ski resorts in those three countries that helped seed devastating outbreaks in Europe.

On Thursday, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte confirmed Italian ski lifts will remain closed through Jan. 7. France is still undecided, but looking at a mid-January restart at best. Austria will allow skiing to start on Dec. 24, but will limit the capacity of ski lifts until early January.

In Zermatt, this weekend — around the time of the start of the typical high winter season — could well be pivotal to see just how much the warnings from foreign politicians, and laments from wintertime business owners abroad, will register with would-be skiers.

## Japan awaits capsule's return with asteroid soil samples

**TOKYO (AP):** Japan's Hayabusa2 spacecraft successfully released a small capsule on Saturday and sent it toward Earth to deliver samples from a distant asteroid that could provide clues to the origin of the solar system and life on our planet, the country's space agency said.

The capsule successfully detached from 220,000 kilometers (136,700 miles) away in a challenging operation that required precision control, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said. The capsule — just 40 centimeters (15 inches) in diameter — is now descending and is expected to land Sunday in a remote, sparsely populated area of Woomera, Australia.

Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometers (180 million miles) away, a year ago. After it released the capsule, it moved away from Earth to capture images of the capsule descending toward the planet as it set off on a new expedition to another distant asteroid.

About two hours later, JAXA said it had successfully rerouted Hayabusa2 for its new mission, as beaming staff exchanged fist and elbow touches at the agency's command center in Sagamihara, near Tokyo.

"We've successfully come this far, and when we fulfill our final mission to recover the capsule, it will be perfect," mission manager Makoto Yoshikawa said from the command center during a livestreaming event.

Hayabusa2's return with the world's first asteroid subsurface samples comes weeks after NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft made a successful touch-and-go grab of surface samples

from asteroid Bennu. China, meanwhile, announced this week that its lunar lander collected underground samples and sealed them within the spacecraft for their return to Earth, as space developing nations compete in their missions.

Many Hayabusa2 fans gathered to watch the capsule's separation at public viewing events across Japan, including one at the Tokyo Dome stadium.

In the early hours of Sunday, the capsule, protected by a heat shield, will briefly turn into a fireball as it reenters the atmosphere 120 kilometers (75 miles) above Earth. At about 10 kilometers (6 miles) aboveground, a parachute will open to slow its fall and beacon signals will be transmitted to indicate its location.

JAXA staff have set up satellite dishes at several locations in the target area to receive the signals. They also will use a marine radar, drones and helicopters to assist in the search and retrieval of the pan-shaped capsule.

Australian National University space rock expert Trevor Ireland, who is in Woomera for the arrival of the capsule, said he expected the Ryugu samples to be similar to the meteorite that fell in Australia near Murchison in Victoria state more than 50 years ago.

"The Murchison meteorite opened a window on the origin of organics on Earth because these rocks were found to contain simple amino acids as well as abundant water," Ireland said. "We will examine whether Ryugu is a potential source of organic matter and water on Earth when the solar system was forming, and whether these still remain intact on the

asteroid." Scientists say they believe the samples, especially ones taken from under the asteroid's surface, contain valuable data unaffected by space radiation and other environmental factors. They are particularly interested in analyzing organic materials in the samples.

JAXA hopes to find clues to how the materials are distributed in the solar system and are related to life on Earth. Yoshikawa, the mission manager, said 0.1 gram of the dust would be enough to carry out all planned researches.

For Hayabusa2, it's not the end of the mission it started in 2014. It is now heading to a small asteroid called 1998KY26 on a journey slated to take 10 years one way, for possible research including finding ways to prevent meteorites from hitting Earth.

So far, its mission has been fully successful. It touched down twice on Ryugu despite the asteroid's extremely rocky surface, and successfully collected data and samples during the 1½ years it spent near Ryugu after arriving there in June 2018.

In its first touchdown in February 2019, it collected surface dust samples. In a more challenging mission in July that year, it collected underground samples from the asteroid for the first time in space history after landing in a crater that it created earlier by blasting the asteroid's surface.

Asteroids, which orbit the sun but are much smaller than planets, are among the oldest objects in the solar system and therefore may help explain how Earth evolved.

Ryugu in Japanese means "Dragon Palace," the name of a sea-bottom castle in a Japanese folk tale.

## One Good Thing: Hong Kong restaurant trains the disabled

**HONG KONG (AP):** Located smack in the middle of Hong Kong's bustling Mong Kok neighborhood, Dignity Kitchen offers an array of mouth-watering Singaporean fare — from piping-hot laksa (noodles in a spicy coconut milk broth) to fragrant slices of chiffon cake flavored with the essence of pandan leaves.

But what sets Dignity Kitchen apart from other restaurants in the city is that it is a social enterprise, almost entirely staffed by employees with physical or mental disabilities. The restaurant trains disabled employees to prep food and cook, as well as serve customers.

"It's important to help the disabled or the disadvantaged people, because they are at society's bottom of the pyramid," said the restaurant's founder, Koh Seng Choon, a sprightly 61-year-old Singaporean entrepreneur who launched the restaurant in January. "They are the people who need help. If we can get them a job, they will be out of the poverty cycle."

Ultimately, Dignity Kitchen aims to place its employees in other jobs

in the food and beverage sector so it can then welcome and train new groups of disabled people. Koh first came up with the concept in his hometown of Singapore, but later decided to do the same in Hong Kong after the city's government invited him to open a branch.

The kitchen is expansive, modeled after a food court in Singapore. The drink stall is operated by a deaf employee, and printed diagrams at the stall encourage customers to learn simple sign language when it comes to drink requests, or even to sign "thank you."

At the clappot rice stall, an employee with autism — who, according to Koh could barely communicate with strangers before his training — enthusiastically introduces the dish to customers who ask about it.

"We used to prepare a script for him," said Koh, smiling proudly. "But now, 8 months, 9 months later, he can't stop talking."

The training they get at Dignity Kitchen not only equips them with useful skills but also aids them in getting the self-respect and dignity that they may have lacked,

Koh said. Ming Chung, who has visual disabilities, found employment at Dignity Kitchen as an administrative assistant. Using voice-to-text technology, Chung co-ordinates with other organizations and handles email as well as phone inquiries.

"Director (Koh) told me that he doesn't care about our disabilities, he only focuses on our abilities," Chung said. "This really inspired me and touched my heart."

Others, like Carol Wong, who is mildly intellectually disabled, has picked up knife skills at the restaurant that could eventually be transferable to food preparation roles in the industry.

"At first I was afraid, but since I started working in this restaurant, I've become unafraid of chopping food," she said.

The kitchen has drawn customers in with its social mission and offers them the option of buying meals for the less fortunate in the city.

"I think this is very meaningful, so we've come to try," said Lisa Gu, a customer who visited Dignity Kitchen for a bowl of laksa. "The food is also delicious."

### Kuwait votes for parliament amid economic, virus challenges

**KUWAIT CITY (AP):** Kuwait began voting Saturday for its National Assembly, the first election since the death of its longtime ruling emir at a time the oil-rich nation struggles with serious economic problems during the coronavirus pandemic.

This tiny country's hundreds of thousands of voters will select lawmakers for 50 seats in the parliament, the freest and most-rambunctious of all of the Gulf Arab countries. However, Kuwait's parliament has tamped down opposition to its ruling Al Sabah family since the 2011 Arab Spring protests that saw demonstrators storm the chamber.

Parliaments typically don't serve out their full terms in the stalwart U.S. ally, but this one did.

Kuwaitis are voting across 102 schools in the nation the size of the U.S. state of New Jersey. Authorities said masks and social distancing will be required due to the pandemic. Several schools will take those with active cases of the virus, with the sick first receiving permission from the government to vote.

Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The vote comes after the death in September of Kuwait's ruler, the 91-year-old Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah. Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah, 83, quickly took power without any opposition. The outgoing parliament then approved Sheikh Nawaf's choice for crown prince, Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber, the 80-year-old

deputy head of Kuwait's National Guard

The new parliament will need to make decisions on a number of matters, perhaps none more important than Kuwait's economy.

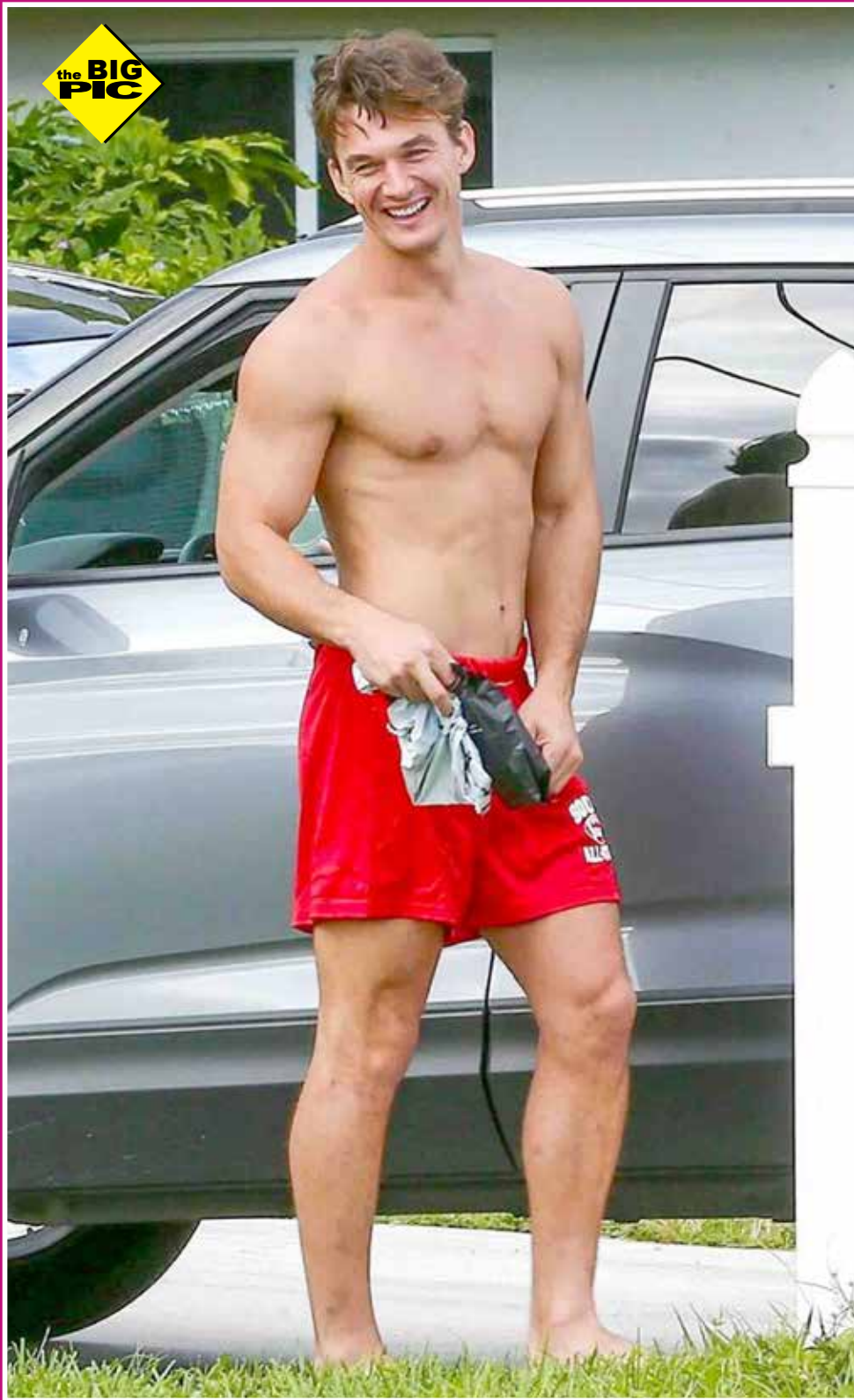
This fall, the ratings agency Moody's downgraded Kuwait for the first time in its history. The finance minister warned the government soon wouldn't be able to pay salaries. Kuwait's national bank said the country's deficit could hit 40% of its gross domestic product this year, the highest level since the financial devastation of the 1990 Iraqi invasion and subsequent Gulf War.

With crude oil prices just above \$45 a barrel, other nearby Arab states took on debt, trimmed subsidies or introduced taxes to sustain their spending. Kuwait, however, did none of that.

That's not to say Kuwait will be begging for aid at international summits anytime soon. The Kuwait Investment Authority holds assets of \$533 billion, according to the Las Vegas-based Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, making it the world's fourth-largest such fund.

The problem is Kuwait has no legal framework to deficit-spend beyond its current limit of \$33 billion. It needs the country's parliament to grant approval. But lawmakers likely will face a popular backlash as the public fears the money will be lost to corruption amid a series of high-profile cases shaking the country.





**WINTER IN FLORIDA!** The Bachelorette, Tyler Cameron alum steps outside his house wearing only a pair of red shorts.

## Bad Girls Club Star Whitney Collings Dead at 33

Whitney Collings, who is known as "Boston" from season three of Bad Girls Club died on Thursday, Dec. 3. She was 33.

Bad Girls Club star Whitney Collings has passed away at the age of 33.

Whitney, known as "Boston" from season three of the Oxygen reality TV series, died on Thursday, Dec. 3 at a hospital near her Massachusetts hometown. Her cause of death is unknown at this time.

Her mother, Linda Houghton Collings, confirmed the news on Facebook, writing that she is "completely broken and will never get over this." She added, "Life is so unfair. She was kind with a big heart."

Friends of the reality star took to social media to express their condolences to the Collings family. Among the many people to speak out about her death was Amber Meade, who Whitney got into a physical altercation with on BGC, causing her removal from the series.

Amber wrote on Instagram, "I'm glad we were able to move past any differences we had all those years ago. My sympathies to those that knew Whitney and are feeling the loss today!"

She and Tanisha Thomas of season two discussed Whitney's death on Instagram,

with Tanisha sharing that she is "at a lost (sic) for words." Amber agreed, adding, "This is pretty insane—I can't believe she's gone—her poor momma!"

Darlen Escobar also expressed sadness over Whitney's death on Instagram. "God has gained another beautiful sweet angel," the former contestant said. "It's like everyday I get on Facebook or Instagram Heaven gains



another angel." In July, fellow Bad Girls Club alum Demitra "Mimi" Roche died at the age of 34. According to one of her friends, Mimi's death came "out of the blue."

Bad Girls Club finished its 17th and final season in 2017.

## Daddy Yankee achieves new balance, readies for his comeback

**NEW YORK (AP):** A year after a series of concerts in Puerto Rico that ended up being his last because of the pandemic, Daddy Yankee is bringing those performances to YouTube as a Christmas gift to his fans around the globe.

"DY2K20," the digital version of his show "Con Calma Pal' Choli," will be released in three parts on Yankee's YouTube channel, with the first installment out Friday. The others will drop on Dec. 14 and Dec. 21, respectively.

"I wanted to give a Christmas present to all my fans during the pandemic, bring the party to their homes free of charge, bring them joy in such difficult times," the reggaeton star told The Associated Press in a phone interview from Miami.

Yankee, who has stayed mostly out of the spotlight in 2020, said that while the pandemic has hit many very hard, it has also allowed him to do something he hadn't done in three decades: Focus on his health and rest.

It's something he had to gradually learn after gaining 40 pounds (almost 20 kilos) during the first months of quarantine.

"Maybe because of the anxiety... I started eating and eating and eating and I put on the pounds like never before. I got to weigh 230 pounds (105 kilos) ... But I recovered my normal weight from 10 years ago. That was my focus," said the "Despacito" and "Gasolina" singer, adding he achieved his goal by watching what he ate and exercising, a lot.

"I devoted myself to my health and to something that was unknown to me, which was rest," he said. "I started to learn how to live with calmness and to appreciate it... And I feel different, I feel in a new phase completely."

Now that he gained some balance in his life, he feels ready to reactivate his

nical problem on opening night resulted in a new business opportunity: Massive concerts in the daylight hours, something never seen before on the island.

After getting stuck on a platform over the stage, Yankee announced to the audience that he would give them an extra show for free, and it was a mati-



career. In addition to "DY2K20," he has another surprise for his fans: A new music collaboration he will release in the coming days, although he wouldn't provide details yet.

For now, he said he was blessed to finally share with the world the footage of a show staged at the Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot, which involved over 80 people who worked with "great passion, great creativity." It was well-received, going from two scheduled dates to a full residence, with 12 sold-out shows, or 170,000 tickets.

What many don't know is that a tech-

nee. He adjusted the content to make it family friendly, and ended up doing one more that way.

Another unique aspect of "Con Calma Pal' Choli," which featured artists like Ozuna, Wisin & Yandel and Nicky Jam, was the use of holograms to replace those who weren't there to perform live.

"I wanted the artists to be gigantic, on people's faces, so the audience could feel that they were in front of them and we achieved that," Yankee said. "It was a concert that became a residence, like if Las Vegas had moved to Puerto Rico."

## Country Singer Jake Owen Is Engaged to Girlfriend Erica Hartlein



Jake Owen announced on Instagram that he had popped the question to girlfriend Erica Hartlein. This year's trip to the Christmas tree lot was a little extra memorable for Jake Owen.

The country singer announced via Instagram on Friday, Dec. 4 that he is engaged to longtime girlfriend Erica Hartlein. He popped the question during the couple's Christmas tree outing and shared a number of photos from the special moment, including multiple glimpses at the ring.

"5 years ago we went and got our first Christmas Tree together...at this same spot," the 39-year-old "Barefoot Blue Jean Night" vocalist wrote. "This year, I asked her if she'd like to get Christmas Trees every year for the rest of our lives." The pics show that the couple's 19-month-old daughter Paris Hartley joined them to witness the exciting moment. Jake is also father to 8-year-old daughter Olive Pearl with ex-wife Lacey Buchanan.

"Our little Paris was there to witness the complete surprise," Jake continued. "So much of a surprise, Erica didn't have her nails done... (yes, I now know that's big deal I guess)." To celebrate the occasion, the pair grabbed a bite afterward at Chick-fil-A, which Jake referred to as his new fiancée's "favorite restaurant." He also quipped, "She was successful not getting Polynesian Sauce on that bling."

A number of Jake's famous pals were quick to offer their support. Shay Mooney, one half of Dan + Shay, wrote, "Congrats buddy!!!"

Golf star Rickie Fowler was particularly pleased with the restaurant selection. "Congrats bro!!!" he shared. "Chick fil a for the win!!!" The above proposal photo was taken by Jake's friend, photographer Matthew Paskert.

Jake and Erica first announced that they were expecting their little one in November 2018 on ABC's televised holiday special I'm Coming Home.

## Jennifer Garner Shares Recreation of Sexy Alias Pool Scene She Promised to "Never" Post

Jennifer Garner posted a hilarious and stunning reenactment of her iconic Alias pool scene that first aired nearly 18 years ago.

Jennifer Garner is making quite a splash with her reenactment of a memorably sexy scene from her past.

The star shared a video to Instagram on Friday, Dec. 4 that shows her slowly emerging from a pool in the same way that her character Sydney Bristow did in a classic scene from the ABC spy series Alias. The new video points out how silly the scene was, but it also reminds everyone that Jennifer looks as incredible as ever.

The 13 Going on 30 star juxtaposed the actual Alias moment above her current-day recreation for the perfect comparison, much to her representatives' apparent chagrin.

"I am awfully grateful for everyone in this community," she captioned the post. "To celebrate all 10 million of you, here is THE video I promised my manager (hi, @nksolaka) and my publicist (hi, @mereowass) I would never post."

The 48-year-old mother of three added, "At some point in 2021, Ladies, I will try to look cute just for you. #thankyou."

Among the celebs who commented on the hilarious footage was Gina Torres, who had a recurring role on Alias as rival spy Anna Espinosa. "The Best!" Torres wrote, adding laughing and heart emojis.

**Aries:**  
Partnerships of all kinds are blessed as a result of this cosmic jam. So, if you and your boo have been having trouble seeing eye to eye on certain matters, get ready to find common ground. Single rams, the butterflies in your stomach are onto something. It's time you stop denying your feelings about a certain someone. Nothing will free you like standing in your truth.

Tip: Two is the magic number, Aries!

**Taurus:**  
It's okay to not know where you are going. But, you're going to have to make a choice eventually. Your indecisiveness could cost you a lot—both personally and professionally. Speaking of the professional, it's time to revisit your to-do list as well. How many of these things require your urgent attention, and what are the things that are simply adding to the noise and the clutter? A thorough clean-up is in order, Taurus. This will help you redirect your energy towards the things that truly matter.

Tip: Make a choice!

**Gemini:**  
We all want to be with somebody who makes us feel like the most beautiful person in the world. We all want to be with somebody who loves us, flaws and all, and inspires us to be a better version of ourselves each and every day. Gemini, the suitor-at-hand promises to be all that and more. The only catch: they may not fit your description of an ideal partner. Look beyond your judgements and recognise what the Universe is offering you at the moment. You will be pleasantly surprised—we promise.

Tip: Here's to love and other intoxicants!

**Cancer:**  
Just when you thought, "Oh, I have it all figured out!", the Universe responds with a "Don't get too comfortable here!" A cataclysmic shift is on the cards. Cancer, one that is often referred to as a 'tower moment' in Tarot. So, what do you do when you have to throw your game plan out of the window? You think on your feet, reinvent yourself, and learn to respond to the cosmic currents in a spontaneous manner. Instead of thinking of this moment as a calamity, think of it as the beginning of a brand new adventure.

Tip: Replace the word 'calamity' with 'adventure'.

**Leo:**

The older we get, the more we become set in our ways, which in turn hinders growth and keeps us from flirting with all that life has to offer. How do you approach the new, Leo? Do you look at it through the lens of suspicion, or embrace every opportunity to grow? Today, the cards are urging you to leave the familiar behind, to venture into unknown territories, and allow yourself to be surprised. It's true that your risks haven't always paid off in the past. But there is no reason history needs to repeat itself.

Tip: Flirt with all that life has to offer.

**Virgo:**

The older we get, the more we become set in our ways, which in turn keeps us from embracing the new. How is this energy manifesting in your life, Virgo? Are you becoming rigid about the rules, or do you give yourself the permission to approach everything with a beginner's mind? Irrespective of what your modus operandi has been in the past, you are being asked to adopt the clean slate philosophy. In the golden words of Socrates, "I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing,

and that is that I know nothing at all."

Tip: Clean slate.

**Libra:**

Here's the thing, Libra: you will never agree about everything. And if you did, life would be incredibly boring! So embrace the differences. Embrace what makes the other person unique. The energy of acceptance and unconditional love will only make your bond grow stronger over a period of times. Single Venusians could be experiencing a classic case of opposites attract. They're not your usual type, yet there is something incredibly attractive about them. PS: Instead of looking for reasons to say no, give love a chance.

Tip: Think of the differences as an opportunity to grow.

**Scorpio:**

But, what about your inner circle, Scorpio? What about the people who remind you of your inherent magic? If you've been too caught up to make time for your loved ones, move a few things around. Make nurturing your heart-to-heart connections a priority today. Yes, that includes your siblings, especially the ones who have been vying for your attention. PS: How about setting up a dinner date?

Tip: Nurturing heart-to-heart connections is a priority today.

**Sagittarius:**

Not everybody is capable of loving us in the way that we desire to be loved, Sagittarius, and that's okay. Focus on being there for yourself right now. Focus on giving yourself the love and care you expect from the other person. In the days to come, you will become increasingly aware of how a certain relationship is no longer a vibrational match. Remembering that things are happening for, and not to you, will help you get through this.

Tip: Turbulence on the emotional front is indicated.

**Capricorn:**

If creating vision boards alone could help our dreams manifest in reality, our lives would look a lot different, Capricorn. The key to creating a shift is aligning action with intention. Not that we need to tell you the importance of putting in the work! What does pose as a challenge in your case is that false sense of control. The Universe doesn't like to be micromanaged. So, loosen the grip and learn to "allow".

Tip: Allow what is meant to be yours into your existence.

**Aquarius:**

Things on the financial front may be feeling a bit topsy-turvy right now. What do you do if life isn't working out according to the plan in your head? Do you play the victim card or take things in your stride? Remember, the more you act from a space of empowerment, the better you will have a handle on things. PS: Given the state of affairs, you may have to let go of certain members of your team in the weeks to come.

Tip: Act from a space of empowerment.

**Pisces:**

The Universe is in the mood to bring the past back in a "big" way—and that, for some of you, could mean the reappearance of 'the one who got away'. Isn't it amazing, what the passage of time can change! You may find yourself standing before this special someone wondering why things didn't work out in the first place. But it isn't too late now, is it? Say what's in your heart without bringing fear into the equation. Things have the potential to work out better than you ever imagined—trust.

Tip: Kismet is about to intervene, Pisces.