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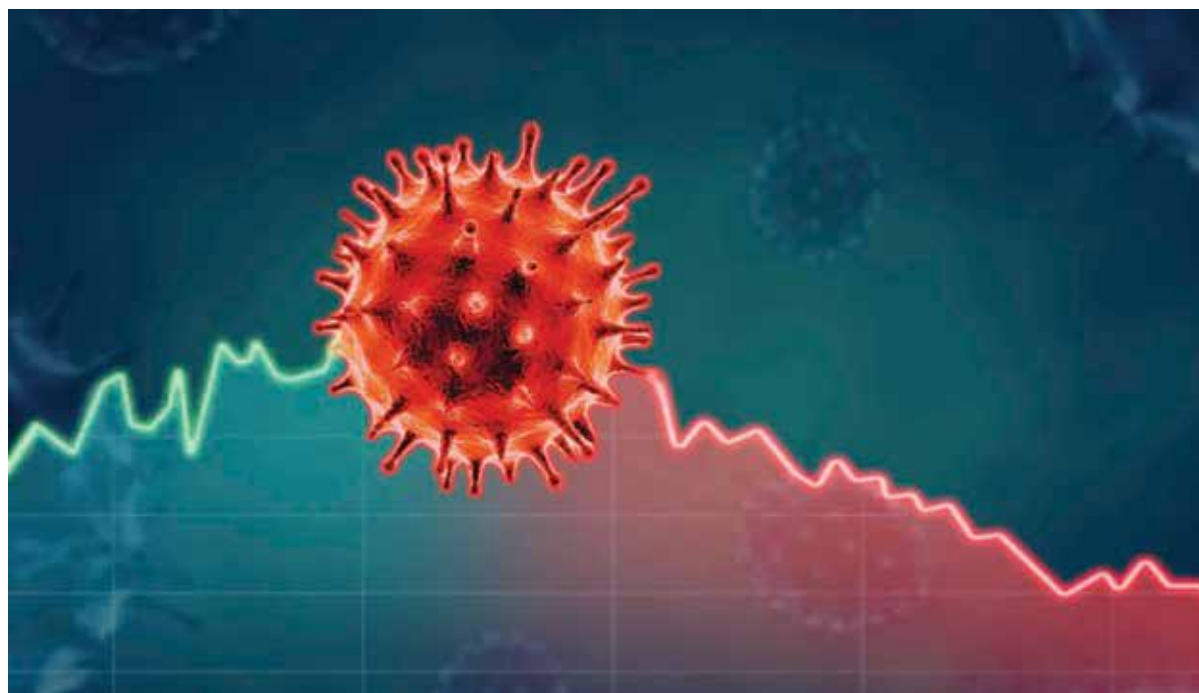
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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Active cases drop under 400 in Sikkim for first time in second wave



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 OCT:

Active cases of Covid-19 dipped below 400 today, counting in at 383 with 62 more people

making full recoveries and getting discharged from home and facility isolation in the past 24 hours.

The state's figure of fully recovered Covid

cases has accordingly improved to 30,498 and the recovery rate a notch higher at 97.5%.

In another positive update, Sikkim's Covid

death toll continues to hold at 388 with no new COVID deaths reported for the fourth straight day in the State.

As per the Daily Re-

port of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department, Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of Covid reported reached 31,585 24 new cases detected in the past 24 hours.

These 24 fresh cases were detected from the testing of 432 samples giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 5.5%. While 19 of the new cases were registered in East District, one was in West District and four in South District.

While most of the Covid-positive people are recovering under home and facility isolation, there are six admitted in ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and CRH-Tadong.

SKM has stripped Panchayats of powers and relevance, SDF rues



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 06 OCT:**

Sikkim Democratic Front's panchayat cell senior vice-president [in-charge], KN Rai, today contended that the SKM Government has been consistently stripping away the powers of panchayats and has relegated them to merely token presence with no authority of consequence.

He further alleged that schemes and works are being distributed without getting cleared at Gram Sabhas and urged the State govern-

ment to open its eyes to the greater relevance and role of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Rai spoke at length about the various steps taken by the SDF government, which he too had served as Rural Development Minister, to strengthen PRLs in Sikkim. The SDF Government had worked for power decentralization and devolution by transferring 29 subjects to Panchayats to strengthen the Panchayati Raj sys-

tem and to take the government to the people's doorsteps.

He added that the SDF government had constituted village planning forums and activity-mapping as a bottom-up approach to development planning.

The SKM Government has, however, constricted the functioning of panchayats and that the process of devolution of power has been abandoned.

He stressed that good governance was a right of

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Southwest Monsoon withdrawal begins

NEW DELHI, 06 OCT

[PTI]: The withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon commenced on Wednesday and it receded from some parts of West Rajasthan and adjoining Gujarat, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

This is the second-most delayed withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon since 1960. Monsoon withdrawal from northwest India in 2019 started on October 9, according to RK Jenamani, senior forecaster with the National Weather Forecasting Centre of the IMD.

The withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon from northwest India usually begins from September 17.

The wind system is expected to retreat from Delhi in three to four days.

"In view of the establishment of an anti-cyclonic circulation in the lower tropospheric levels over western parts of northwest India and substantial reduction in moisture content and rainfall, the withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon has commenced," the IMD said in a statement.

The Southwest Monsoon has withdrawn from some parts of West Rajasthan and adjoining Gujarat, it said, adding that the withdrawal line passes through Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jalore, Bhuj and Lat.

"Conditions are favourable for further withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon from some more parts of Gujarat, entire Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Jammu and

Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Madhya Pradesh during the next three to four days," the MeT Department said.

The monsoon withdrawal started on September 28 last year, October 9 in 2019, September 29 in 2018, September 27 in 2017 and September 15 in 2016, according to IMD data.

The country received "normal" rainfall during the four-month Southwest Monsoon season from June to September.

All India monsoon rainfall during June 1 to September 30 has been 87 cm against the Long Period Average of 88 cm of 1961-2010 (99 per cent of its LPA).

This is for the third consecutive year that the country has recorded rainfall in the normal or above normal category. Rainfall was above normal in 2019 and 2020.

The rainfall over the country as a whole was 110 per cent in June, 93 and 76 per cent in July and August respectively -- the months that bring the maximum rains. However, the shortfall of July and August was compensated in September which recorded rainfall 135 per cent of the LPA.

The Southwest Monsoon made its onset over Kerala on June 3, after a delay of two days. It rapidly covered central, west, east, northeast and south India by June 15.

It also covered many parts of north India, even Barmer and Jaisalmer, its last outposts, but the monsoon winds failed to reach Delhi, parts of Haryana and west Uttar Pradesh.

Lakhimpur Kheri violence hits local Sikh community hard

ARUNAV SINHA

LAKHIMPUR KHERI (UP), OCT 6 (PTI): The spot near Tikonia village where violence erupted on Sunday during a farmers' protest is amid an area linked to the life of Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism.

Granthi Baljeet Singh from Kaudiyawa Ghat Gurdwara says the Guru came here in 1554 and cured a person of kodh, or leprosy. The shrine gets its name from there.

The devout believe that a dip in the sarovar' of the gurdwara, located close to the spot where eight people were killed, can cure people of skin diseases.

Lakhimpur Kheri district and the adjoining areas in the Terai have been home to Sikh farmers for generations --- including those who came during the time of the Awadh nawabs, migrants from undivided Punjab and the more recent settlers.

On Sunday, Sikh farmers formed a sizeable number of those protesting over the visit of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. And all the four dead farmers had

Punjabi names. They were allegedly mowed down by a vehicle carrying BJP workers. The other four victims included two BJP workers, allegedly lynched by angry protesters.

Many farmers from Lakhimpur Kheri and the neighbouring areas in the Terai have been actively involved in the protests against the agri-marketing laws enacted at the Centre last year.

Many have made trips to the protest sites on Delhi's borders dominated by farmers from Punjab and Haryana -- where the agitation has been on for months now. They also attended the Kisan Mahapanchayat in Muzaffarnagar last month.

Bahraich, Shahjahanpur and Pilibhit are among the other Uttar Pradesh districts with a significant population of Sikh farmers.

Largest in area among the 75 UP districts, Lakhimpur Kheri is known for sugarcane cultivation, and there are nine sugar mills in the district.

Sarjit Singh, a retired sports teacher at a government school in

turn to pg02

Centre invokes border security to further dilute Forest Conservation Act

NEW DELHI, 06 OCT [PTI]: The Environment Ministry has proposed to amend the Forest Conservation Act to do away with the requirement of prior government approval for the development of border infrastructure on forest land, saying it causes delay in the implementation of critical projects.

The ministry has invited suggestions from states, union territories and all people concerned on the proposed amendments to the Act, within the next 15 days.

"Development of infrastructure along the international border areas is crucial for keeping our borders intact and to uphold the sovereignty of the country.

"Given the present scenario of obtaining approval for non-forestry use of forest land, many a times, strategic and security projects of national importance get delayed resulting in setback to development of such infrastructure



at critical locations," the ministry noted while proposing to exempt such projects from obtaining prior approval of the central government under the Act.

It also proposed to allow the states

to permit non-forest use of forest land for implementation of such strategic and security projects that are to be completed in a given time frame.

The ministry also plans to exempt

from prior government approval the lands which were acquired before 1980, when the FCA first came into existence, noting that it has caused resentment in public sector bodies, including railways and public works department (PWD).

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SIST inducts new students with workshop against addition and suicides

SUMMIT REPORT

CHISOPANI, 06 OCT:

Sikkim Institute of Science and Technology, Centre for Computers and Communication Technology and SARATHI jointly organized a workshop on "Anti-Drugs, Suicide Prevention and Moral Education" as part of the Student Induction Programme 2021 on 06 Oct.

The programme started with a welcome address by Director and Principal, SIST, Prof BB Pradhan, followed by an introduction to SARATHI by the organisation's State General Secretary, Pravin Dhungel.

Rohit Raj, Advisor to the Chief Minister, was present as chief guest.

'We're Farmers, Not Terrorists': Farm law stir, UP violence in Kolkata pandal

Kolkata, 06 Oct [PTI]: A local club in north Kolkata is celebrating the Durga Puja by honouring the struggle of farmers protesting against the farm laws for nearly a year. Massive art installations at the pandal portray the plight of the farmers while sharply criticising the violence in UP's Lakhimpur Kheri that left eight dead, including four farmers.

At the entrance of the Dum Dum Park Bharat Chakra pandal is a giant replica of a tractor used by farmers to till the land. A graffiti of a car and a farmer lying on its path adorn the sidewalk with a line in Bengali that reads "Mortorgari uray dhulo, niche pore chashigulo (While cars speed away raising a storm of dust, farmers come under their wheels)".

Hundreds of sandals on the ground symbolise the scenes from an agitation where protesters lose their shoes in stampedes due to police action. The main pandal has been decorated with paddy hanging from the roof.

Artist Anirban Das, who conceptualised the theme, told news agency PTI that the names of farmers who died in the course of the agitation have been written in chits of paper on the giant tractor which also has large wings. "The wings symbolise their wishes of being free from the bondage," he explained.

Another poster at the pandal in English reads, "We are farmers, not terrorists. Farmers are food soldiers."

The puja committee's secretary Pratik Choudhury said they wanted to

highlight the exploitation of farmers.

"From the days of Tebhaga movement in 1946-47 to the recent agitation against the three pro-corporate farm bills, we have sought to narrate the story of the farmers who provide the food to us," he said.

"The recent incident in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri where four farmers were knocked down by a vehicle and killed during a protest happened when our pandal was almost ready. But, we incorporated it," Mr Choudhury added.

Farmers in the country have been protesting for nearly a year against three laws, which they say would benefit the big corporates. The government defends them, stating that reforms are needed for the sector. Several people have lost their lives during the course of the agitation.

On Sunday, four protesting farmers were allegedly crushed by vehicles driven by BJP workers in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri. Four others also died in the violence that followed, including BJP workers and a driver who were allegedly lynched by the protesters.

The Uttar Pradesh Police has registered a case against Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra's son Ashish but no arrest has been made so far.

Durga Puja pandals in Kolkata have always depicted the current socioeconomic and political issues. Last year, the Barisha Club in south Kolkata had erected a pandal on the migrants' crisis amid the nationwide coronavirus-induced lockdown.

Delhi Riots: "Police witness lying under oath", says court on contradictory statements

NEW DELHI, 06 OCT

[PTI]: One of the police witnesses in a north-east Delhi riots case is lying on oath, a Delhi court has said after one policeman identified three alleged rioters but another said that they could not be identified during the investigation.

"This is a very sorry state of affairs," Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav said, seeking a report from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) in this regard.

He made the observations after examination of four prosecution witnesses in the case, pertaining to the February 2020 riots in which 53 people had died and over 700 injured.

Notably, a Head Constable told the judge on oath in his evidence that he had identified rioters - Vikas Kashyap, Golu Kashyap, and Rinku Subziwala. He is one of the prosecution witnesses.

"I had been the beat officer of the concerned

area since the year 2019. I knew all the four accused persons and Vikas Kashyap, Golu Kashyap, and Rinku Subziwala by name and their appearance prior to the incident," he stated during the examination.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav noted that the policeman "categorically asserted" about their presence at the spot at the time of riots and identified them by their names as well as professions.

Lakhimpur Kheri...

Bahraich, says Sikh farmers from Punjab started buying forestland in the Terai districts because the same amount of money would get them bigger pieces of land than back home.

"Some sold their five bighas of land in Punjab and bought 25 bigha in Bahraich near the forests," he says.

But there have been settlers earlier as well.

Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, who has been a minister in UP and at the Centre, said Sikhs came to Lakhimpur Kheri from undivided Punjab in the 1940s.

Earlier, the nawabs of Awadh encouraged members of the community to settle in the area, and many bought land, he tells PTI.

"The first chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Govind Ballabh Pant, too had encouraged Sikhs to buy land in this area," says Ramoowalia, now a member of the UP legislative council from Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party.

According to an elderly Pyara Singh, there are three or four lakh Sikhs in Lakhimpur Kheri. Most farmers from the community are based in Palia,

Centre invokes...

establish rail line and roads. Part of the land was used for the purpose it was acquired before 1980 and the remaining part of the acquired land was left as such for future constructions/expansions," the ministry noted.

It said that trees or forest existing on the leftover acquired land were, thus, left as such (prior to 1980) and further the blank areas were planted under different government schemes.

"With the enactment of the Act and further clarification on its scope of applicability by the Supreme Court, all such land requires prior approval of the central government for the non-forestry use.

"Thus, a landholding agency (Rail, NHAI, PWD, etc) is required to take approval under the Act as well as pay stipulated compensatory levies such as Net Present Value (NPV), Compensatory Afforestation (CA), etc. for use of such land which was originally been acquired for non-forest purposes. Ministry is considering now to exempt such lands acquired before October 25, 1980 from the purview of the Act," the ministry said.

Nighasan and Gola tehsils in the district.

In Bahraich district, Nihinaurwa, Mihipurwa and Bichiya areas have a significant concentration of Sikhs in Bahraich district.

Of the four farmers killed on Sunday, Lovepreet Singh and Nachatar Singh hailed from Lakhimpur Kheri. Gurvinder Singh and Daljeet Singh were from Bahraich.

The community is represented in the Yogi Adityanath cabinet by Baldev Singh Aulakh. Ramoowalia was a minister during the SP term.

Lakhimpur farmers say they were angry with Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Mishra over a provocative speech he made after being shown black flags during his public meeting in his Kheri Lok Sabha constituency.

He said he could discipline such people in two minutes, the farmers say. Ashish Mishra, the minister's son, is named in an FIR registered over the farmers' deaths. But he claims he was nowhere near the trouble spot when the violence took place.

Under the FCA, central government approval is mandatory before any state or UT order on diversion, de-reservation and assignment of lease of any forest land or use of forest land for non-forest activities.

Noting that there have been several violations of the provisions of the Act, the ministry said it will make the punishment more stringent to discourage offences under the law. It proposed that the offences will be cognisable and non-bailable, and will entail a simple imprisonment for a period which may extend to one year.

The document also proposes removing zoos, safaris, forest training infrastructures from the definition of "non-forestry" activities.

"It is understood that activities which are ancillary to conservation of forests and wildlife should not be considered as non-forestry activities. Accordingly, it has been proposed that, establishment of zoos, safaris, forest training infrastructures, etc. should not come within the meaning of "non-forestry activity" for the purpose of Section 2(ii) of the Act," it said.

"Hit us, not bothered": Rahul Gandhi credits 'training that family gave'

NEW DELHI, 06 OCT

[PTI]: Rahul Gandhi, asked about Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's controversial arrest in Uttar Pradesh on Monday on her way to Lakhimpur Kheri, said he was "not bothered" by the alleged manhandling of his sister as they both are "trained" to face such attacks.

"Whether it is Priyanka or me - we are not bothered by manhandling. You can hit us, attack us...It is our training from years ago...that our family gives us," said Rahul Gandhi.

The Congress leader spoke to the media before heading to Lucknow, from where he plans to

drive around 100 km to Lakhimpur Kheri, where eight people, including four farmers, were killed in violence during a protest on Sunday.

The UP administration has banned several opposition politicians from visiting Lakhimpur Kheri to meet with the families of the dead farmers, citing a law and order problem and rules against four or more people gathering there. Rahul Gandhi has also been denied permission to go to the site with two Chief Ministers. We are only three persons."

Alleging a "systematic attack on farmers", Mr Gandhi also taunted

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for visiting Lucknow but not going to Lakhimpur Kheri. In the early hours of Monday, Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi and Deepinder Hooda were stopped at Sitapur near Lakhimpur Kheri and surrounded by police personnel.

Priyanka Gandhi was seen in a huge confrontation with the police as she demanded to see a warrant for her arrest. A video showed her lashing out at the cops as Mr Hooda was physically pushed. "Try touching me...", she was heard saying. "If you will put me in that car I will charge you with kidnapping

SKM has stripped...

the people and urged the government to take its responsibility towards the people seriously. SDF was ready to advice and support the government if required, he also offered.

Mr Rai pointed out that the SKM government had taken out a notification replacing the panchayats with BDOs in selecting beneficiaries and had to then withdraw it since it was clearly violative of the panchayati raj act. The attempt was made with the obvious intention of superseding the powers of elected panchayat representatives with bureaucrats, turning every intention of panchayat reforms on its head.

Mr Rai went on point out that the ill-advised attempt to cheat elected panchayats of their rights, responsibilities and powers continued and that although the government had withdrawn the notification, it issued an ordinance by which the committee to select beneficiaries from rural areas will have the senior-most government nominee as chairperson.

Mr Rai reminded the government that the executive cannot lead the legislative since it militates against the idea of democracy. The SKM Government doing so establishes that it does not fol-

Raid on cruise ship...

on September 21-22 and could be connected to the seizure of about 3,000 kilograms of heroin at Mundra Port, Malik claimed, asking the BJP to come clear on this person's credentials.

"The entire NCB is being used by the BJP to malign the Maharashtra government and Bollywood," he said, alleging that the anti-drug agency was targeting those who are against the saffron party.

Notably, Malik's son-in-law Sameer Khan had been arrested by the NCB on January 13, 2021, in an alleged drug case. He got bail in September.

In a statement, Deputy Inspector General of NCB Gyaneshwar Singh said "some allegations" leveled against agency were baseless, and might have been made "in retaliation against earlier legal actions" carried out by it.

Its procedure "has been and will continue to be professionally and legally transparent and unbiased," the statement said.

"Individuals named as Prabhakar Sail, Kiran Gosavi, Manish Bhanushali, Aubrey Gomez, Adil Usmani, V Waigan-

kar, Aparna Rane, Prakash Bahadur, Shohib Faiz and Muzammil Ibrahim were associated with NCB as independent witnesses (panchas)," the agency said.

Reacting to Malik's allegations, local BJP MLA Atul Bhatkalkar said during lockdown, the Uddhav Thackeray-led state government was the first to open liquor shops, it also decided to lift prohibition in Chandrapur, and now Nawab Malik has accused the NCB of being a drug lord.

Aryan Khan was represented by a senior criminal lawyer when he was produced in a court, Bhatkalkar said. "The reason why the court granted custody of Aryan Khan to NCB even after he (this lawyer) argued for defence is because of the solid evidence against him (Khan). Had there been no evidence, he would have been granted immediate bail, said the BJP leader.

Malik's allegations question the credibility of the court, he added. The BJP leader also asked whether Malik was targeting the NCB at the best of his son-in-law.

SSB CALLS WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR SPECIALISTS AND GDMOs ON CONTRACTUAL BASIS

Shashtra Seema Bal has released a notification for recruitment to the post of Specialists and General Duty Medical Officers for various locations/formations throughout the country. Interested candidates can apply to the posts through the prescribed format and appear for the walk-in-interview from 21 October 2021 onwards. The schedule for the interview is given below.

Walk-In-Interview: 21 to 26 October 2021

1) Specialist at CH Gorakhpur/ CH Bathnaha / CH Tezpur - 21 & 22 October 2021

2) GDMO at FTR Lucknow /FTR Patna/FTR Guwahati - 25 & 26 October 2021

SL/ No.	Posts	Vacancy	Monthly Remuneration
A. Specialists:			
1	Radiologists	02	Rs. 85,000/-
2	Medicine	02	
3	Obs & Gyne	02	
4	Anesthetist	01	
B. General Duty Medical Officer		44	Rs. 75,000/-
For eligibility, terms & conditions and venue/date of walk-in-interview, interested candidates may download detailed advertisement for above post from SSB recruitment website www.ssbrectt.gov.in .			

(Govind Kumar Thakur)
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UP's Lakhimpur Kheri killings show democracy being strangled: Trinamool Congress

KOLKATA, 06 Oct [PTI]: Trinamool Congress on Wednesday said the killings at Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh showed that democracy is being strangled in every BJP-ruled state.

The party in a tweet in its official website said "Democracy is repeatedly being STRANGULATED and BRUTALLY ATTACKED in every single @BJP4India ruled state!"

TMC attached a purported video of a car zooming past and hitting few men in its tweet and said, "The people of this country deserve better. The #KillingRaj of BJP must be stopped!"

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had earlier condemned the death of people in violence during farmers' protest in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. "Strongly condemn the barbaric incident in Lakhimpur Kheri. The apathy of @BJP4India towards our farmer brethren pains me deeply," Ms Banerjee, who is also the TMC supremo, had tweeted.

A delegation of Trinamool Congress MPs had dodged the police and visited the affected families in UP a day ago after being initially stopped by the state administration.

A five-member delegation of TMC leaders, who had allegedly identified themselves as tourists, had met the families of the deceased farmers in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri on Tuesday. This was the only delegation of Opposition leaders that managed to travel to violence-hit place amid prohibitory orders issued by the district administration.

Four farmers had died in Lakhimpur Kheri after they were allegedly run over by the convoy of Ashish Misra, the son of Ajay Misra, the union minister of state for home affairs, ahead of the visit by UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. Another four individuals, reportedly BJP workers, were killed in the violence that followed.

The farmer leaders had claimed that some cultivators were protesting against the Centre's contentious farm laws when the vehicle carrying BJP workers knocked down a few of them. But an official account said the incident took place when the farmers hurled stones at the vehicle and it overturned.

BJP MP Locket Chatterjee on Wednesday said while the UP administration is taking every step to deliver justice to the victims' families and allowed political parties to go to the spot, the TMC government in West Bengal did not allow leaders of the saffron party to meet those who were brutally attacked by miscreants supported by Mamata Banerjee's party.

Five debutantes and one champ in Sikkim's 6-member squad for national bodybuilding & physique championship

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 OCT:

Six athletes have been shortlisted to represent Sikkim at the upcoming World Fitness Federation, India's National Bodybuilding & Men's and Women's Physique Competition 2021 scheduled to be held on 14 and 15 December in Goa.

22-year-old Tula Ram Biswakarma and 26-year-old Wilson Abraham from Rangpo, 23-year-old Mendy Roy, 32-year-old Chandra Rai, 33-year-old Neelam Rai and 21-year-old Sachin Gurung from Namchi were selected from among 24 athletes who participated in the selection trial held at Rangpo on 02 October.

The trial was held under the supervision of



World Fitness Federation [WFF], Sikkim president, Sanjay Budhathoki.

It is informed that Chandra Rai is a gold medalist from the last edition of this national championship, while the remaining

five will making their debuts on the national stage.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Budhathoki informed that all six athletes had potential to go far in the bodybuilding

and physique network.

He informed that the six will train in their respective gyms and a special camp will be organized before the competition at Rangpo under his supervision.

Likewise, Mendy Roy

expressed happiness and excitement on receiving the opportunity to represent the state in a national competition. She had begun training in 2017 and won the title of Miss Ultimate Sikkim in 2019.

Namcheybung orchid growers felicitated by MoS on visit to ICAR-NRC for Orchids

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 OCT:

Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kailash Choudhary, today felicitated Jeewan Subba and Phip Raj Subba of Namcheybung, Basilakha, East Sikkim, for their keen interest in adoption of new technologies in orchid cultivation, an official press release informs.

The felicitation was held during the MoS Agriculture's visit to ICAR-NRC for Orchids at Pakyong. He was accompanied by Agriculture Minister, Sikkim,



Loknath Sharma, Lok Shaba MP, Indra Hang Subba, Rhenock MLA Bishnu Khatiwara and Gangtok MLA YT Lepcha.

The two farmers were

trained by ICAR-NRC for Orchids under Tribal Sub Plan for adoption of ICAR-NRCO's techniques in Orchid Cultivation, it is informed.

ICMR releases dementia research and assessment tool

NEW DELHI, OCT 6 (PTI): The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Wednesday released a dementia research and assessment tool in five languages.

The tool consisting of various tests and questionnaires is available in five Indian languages -- Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam -- and is freely accessible to professionals and researchers across the country, the ICMR said in a statement.

The Multilingual Dementia Research and Assessment Toolbox, or MUDRA Toolbox, was framed collectively by seven leading centres -- NIMHANS (Bengaluru), AIIMS (New Delhi), SC-TIMST (Thiruvananthapuram), NIMS (Hyderabad), Apollo Hospital (Kolkata), Manipal Hospital (Bengaluru) and Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College.

ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said, "This was one of the crucial needs for undertaking uniform, standardised dementia research in the country.

The toolbox includes various cognitive tests to assess different domains of cognition such as attention and executive function, memory, language, and visuospatial functions."

"The questionnaires assess depression, functionality, quality of life, prevalence of neuropsychiatric symptoms and informant questionnaire on cognitive decline in elderly. The ICMR has

decided to make this tool freely accessible to professionals and researchers across the country. We hope this would be used in quality longitudinal studies and for early and accurate diagnosis of dementia," he said.

The tool includes a five-minute cognitive screening instrument for the busy clinic, and a detailed version for more in-depth clinical testing or for research.

It is a pioneering initiative undertaken by ICMR Neuro Cognitive Tool Box (ICMR-NCTB) consortium to transform India's dementia and mild cognitive impairment research and clinical practices, according to the statement.

According to the Dementia India Report 2010 by Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI), there are approximately 5.29 million people living with dementia in India and this number is expected to increase to 7.61 million by 2030.

Dementia refers to a neurological disorder that causes a decline in a person's cognition and affects their ability to carry on with day-to-day activities.

Despite the high number of people with dementia in the country, only one in 10 people with dementia are diagnosed in India due to low awareness and the lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate tests that are essential for diagnosis, the ICMR said in the statement.

Active COVID-19 cases lowest in 203 days

New Delhi, Oct 6 (PTI): India added 18,833 new coronavirus infections taking the country's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,38,71,881, while the active cases declined to 2,46,687, the lowest in 203 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The death toll climbed to 4,49,538 with 278 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections remained below 30,000 for the 12th straight day.

The active cases comprise 0.73 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 97.94 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the ministry said.

A decrease of 6,215 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 14,09,825 tests were conducted on Tuesday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 57,68,03,867.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.34 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for last 37 days. The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.68 per cent. It has been below three per cent for the last 103 days, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged

to 3,31,75,656, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.33 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 92.17 crore.

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

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

The 278 new fatalities include 151 from Kerala and 39 from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,49,538 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,39,272 from Maharashtra, 37,845 from Karnataka, 35,682 from Tamil Nadu, 25,677 from Kerala and 25,088 from Delhi, 22,896 from Uttar Pradesh and 18,848 from West Bengal.

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

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

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ANTHEYESTI KRIYA

The Antheyesti Kriya of Late Dhanapati Kharel, who left for his heavenly abode on 30th September, 2021, falls on 12 October, 2021. We invite all friends, family and well-wishers to join us in prayers [13th day rites] for the departed soul at our residence in Rawtey Rumtek.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in our time of bereavement.



Dr M P Kharel, H P Kharel, Prakash Kharel (sons)
Kamala Devi Kharel, Tulashi Kharel, Indira Kharel, Sangita Kharel (daughters)
Bimala Kharel, Hima Kharel, Rajani Ratna Pandey (daughter in law)
Dr Hari Krishna Shiwakoti, D N Sharma, D R Thapa (son in law)
Vinod Kharel, Sunny Kharel (grandsons)
And entire Kharel Family.
Contact: 8918237123, 9434241044, 9434164765

Industries Secy checks into DIC-Jorethang on surprise visit



NAMCHI, 06 OCT [IPR]: Secretary Commerce & Industries, HK Sharma, paid a surprise visit to the District Industries Centre, South/ West, at Jorethang today.

The Head of the Department met and interacted with the staff and officers of DIC Jorethang and took stock of the programmes and schemes of the department such as Skilled

Youth Start-up Scheme (SYSS), PMPEGP, PM-FME, North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIP) among others.

He stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of government schemes after identifying the bottlenecks via monitoring and then taking due action.

He also stressed the importance of integrity

and punctuality at the workplace to expedite delivery of people-related schemes effectively.

During the course of his inspection, he gave a patient hearing to the grievances and issues shared by the employees and staff of the DIC.

Additionally, he also inspected the office premises and advocated cleanliness of the surroundings.

Dzongu women trained on cardamom fiber craft



WANGCHUK BHUTIA DIKCHU, 06 OCT:

Twenty five women from different Self Help Groups of Noom Panang village of Upper Dzongu were trained on Cardamom fiber craft by North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFi) in association

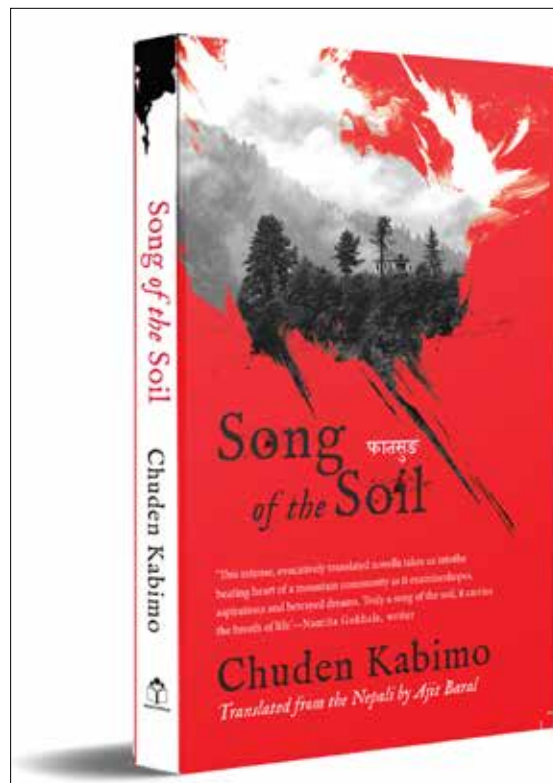
with Spices Board of India.

The ten-day training concluded today with ADC North, Sonam Lepcha, as chief guest accompanied by Karma Dorjee Lepcha, Zilla Panchayat, Safo Passingdang GPU as special guest.

NEDFi Assistant General Manager, AK Das,

urged trainees to come up with quality products and focus more on creativity. He also informed that stitching machines will also be provided.

The training was imparted by instructors Sheetal Tamang and Prakash Rai from Namchi.



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of the 1980s

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Organic Planning

To take things forward, address what is distressing farms

Sikkim is now into Phase-2 [or is already phase-3?] of its ambitious Organic Farming plans. Now, the State is even extending consultancy services to distant Ladakh. Given the havoc that chemical fertilisers and pesticides wreck on the environment and health, this was always a very laudable mission. It was clearly also a difficult task, given that nearly a decade and a half since it was first mooted and a change in government, one still hears the government complain of resistance being incited against the initiative. The new government too has been vacillating between questioning the initiative and celebrating it, and among farmers, let's accept it, the excitement that such a major paradigm shift is expected to invoke is not very palpable.

To get an understanding of what Sikkim decided to go up against when it began the Organic Sikkim experiment in the year 2005, some perspective is required. As per the annual report of the Department of Food Security and Agriculture, Sikkim had consumed 3,429.6 metric tonnes of fertilisers in 2003-2004! That is a huge amount for tiny Sikkim and to really understand the shock this was delivering to the State, one has to see the 3,429.6 metric tonnes not just as consumption but also as procurement. This quantity of chemical fertilisers was sourced by the concerned departments and supplied onwards to the farmers. One is looking at massive handling of funds and issuing of work orders and all its attendant "arrangements", and expectedly, the first resistance to the proposal clearly came from within the departments themselves even if these were never overtly expressed. Apart from the dependence of the local farmers and local officers on non-organic fertilizers and pesticides, the policy makers in Sikkim also had to contend with a national policy which is structured to benefit the fertilizer-pesticide manufacturing cartel. Soil-poisoning, cancer-causing chemical fertilizers were given Rs. 12,000 crores in subsidy each year (as of 2005) by the Centre which makes them the cheaper option as against the more eco-friendly, but labour intensive hence also more expensive organic options. Much of the central subsidy makes its way to the fields in Sikkim by way of distribution schemes and subsidised supplies and this process leaked and wasted. But this was the convenient system in place and we should know by now how resistant we are to change. The job, hence, was easier said than done.

But Sikkim has pulled it off at least at the policy commitment level even if the practise has still not become as instinctive as would help the sector. Here, one needs to also recognise that the lethargy one sees in the farming sector is neither unique to Sikkim nor something caused by its shift away from chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This is a condition across the country caused as much by skewed economic-planning priorities and climate change. It would serve the Sikkim Government well to also look deeper into the high attrition rates from the farms of the State. Agriculture has been plagued by diminishing returns for decades now, and that is perhaps when it lost its sheen. Also, Sikkim was never known as a surplus agriculture society, and when farming is sustenance level for generations, every aspiration for a better life would have meant a move away from the fields. Agricultural plots in the hands of the actual farmers (as different from the landlords who are not active agriculturists) have traditionally been very small in Sikkim and this must have contributed towards the farms not becoming as bountiful as they might have potential for is the belonged to the hands that tilled them. Because of how the social hierarchies worked, farmers never ranked very high in the pecking order which is also probably why naukari was aspired for more than farming. Remember, the previous Government had banned import of vegetables into Sikkim. The intention was clearly to support local growers and encourage them to grow more. It is unlikely that it had any such impact beyond hurting kitchens here. If the Organic Mission is to become truly sustainable, the thrust should start from understanding what ails the farms and fields from a social, logistical and practical point of view. That way a more holistic approach could be fashioned and less disruptive, but more sustainable, course of action could be initiated.

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Why Taiwan Remains Calm in the Face of Unprecedented Military Pressure From China

WEN-TI SUNG
theconversation.com

China has been flying a record number of military aircrafts into Taiwan's "air defence identification zone" in recent days, heightening regional concerns about the risk of military escalation or even an outright war.

Taiwanese people are largely alert, but not alarmed. So, why are the Taiwanese not losing their minds over what seems to be intensifying "drums of war"?

It comes down to familiarity with China's pattern of military pressure tactics, as well as a general alarm fatigue from decades of exposure.

WHY IS CHINA FLYING SO MANY JETS NEAR TAIWAN?

Many Taiwanese see the Chinese military display as more of a show than a preparation for an all-out invasion. There are several reasons being China's "show of force" in recent days, pointing to short- and medium-term goals.

Domestically, the military pressure serves Chinese President Xi Jinping's propaganda and political agenda. Xi's defining political idea is promoting the "China Dream" to his people, which partly entails becoming "a strong nation with a strong army".

China had just had its National Day celebration on October 1, and a public show of force is a visual embodiment of that narrative. China's nationalist Global Times newspaper even went so far as to call the flight incursions a form of National Day "military parade".

Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party is at a key period in terms of its leadership reshuffle. Next month, it will hold its Sixth Plenum, an important meeting where party heavyweights will discuss and build consensus on forming a de facto shortlist for the next generation of party leadership (to be installed in late 2022).

At this critical juncture, as Xi faces significant internal dissent, a muscular show of force seems to be a natural instrument to generate pro-incumbent, rally-around-the-flag sentiment.

Xi will likely remain supreme leader no matter what. But such a nationalist display increases the chances his preferred proteges will be on the shortlist for other key positions just below him.

SHAPING THE CHINA POLICY OF TAIWAN'S OPPOSITION PARTY

Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomin-

tang (KMT), has also just elected a new leader after a party campaign focused primarily on Taiwan's policy towards China.

The new chairman, Eric Chu, who ran on an American-friendly foreign policy platform, won a humble victory with 45% of the votes in a tight, four-way race. Chu has since promised to be an unifier who will listen to other voices in his party, and has pledged to renew stalled talks with China.

As such, Beijing has good reason to impose military pressure at this moment in the hope of nudging the KMT's new policy in Beijing's preferred direction.

Notably, while Beijing sent a total of 149 military jets into Taiwan's vicinity from October 1-4, it reportedly sent only one on October 5 – the day the KMT's new leader assumed office.

MILITARY THREAT AGAINST TAIWAN FACES DIMINISHING RETURNS

Another reason why Taiwanese people are not very alarmed by the increasing number of Chinese warplanes is simply the law of diminishing impact over time.

People are used to this type of low-intensity Chinese military provocation. In fact, they been living in the near-constant presence of Chinese military and diplomatic pressure for over a quarter century.

In the run-up to Taiwan's first direct presidential election in 1996, China's People's Liberation Army conducted massive missile tests in the waters near Taiwan, which strongly hinted at a possible invasion.

Since then, China has frequently staged military exercises around Taiwan, including flying military jets into the island's vicinity. These are intended to underscore the risks of potential war and caution Taiwan against crossing Beijing's "red lines".

Chinese state television, for example, once published a video of the Zhurihe training drills of 2015, which included footage of Chinese soldiers assaulting a building that bore a remarkable resemblance to Taiwan's presidential office.

IS CHINA REALLY IN A HURRY TO INVADE TAIWAN?

This long-standing Chinese strategy of brinkmanship theatre has been a double-edged sword. It has encouraged pragmatism in Taiwan's pursuit of a stronger identity on the global stage, but it has also alienated many Taiwanese from Beijing.

For example, polls consistently show less than 10% of Taiwanese favour unification with China,

and a negligible 2.7% self-identify as primarily "Chinese" in their national identity.

Then why does Beijing still resort to these alienating tactics, if unification is the ultimate goal?

One explanation is Beijing places a higher priority on deterring Taiwan's further movement towards independence than promoting unification, so it is willing to trade the latter for the former. In other words, Beijing may simply not be as zealous about pursuing unification in the near-term.

Instead, keeping an eye on the long game, Beijing is willing to risk short- to medium-term costs in losing hearts and minds in Taiwan. The hope is, in time, it can eventually regain the initiative. For this reason, being able to deter further movement towards independence may be sufficient to buy China much-needed time.

SO WHAT IS BEIJING'S ULTIMATE PLAN?

According to hawkish General Qiao Liang, the plan is "strategic patience".

This means waiting until the cross-strait military balance tilts further in China's favour, using the military option only when it can comprehensively overwhelm Taiwan and disincentivise or even deny American military intervention.

And politically, Beijing aims to use the gravity of its economy to attract Taiwanese youth opinion leaders and slowly build back Taiwanese support for eventual unification. In this approach, economic incentives replace soft power, which Beijing is lacking at the moment.

This is in line with Marxist logic, which is fundamental to Chinese communism. In this line of thinking, connections built on "infrastructure" (material and economic common interests) are longer-lasting than connections based on "superstructure" (ideational or emotional alignment).

The challenge for Taiwan and like-minded societies in the west is both to prove the resiliency of their shared liberal democratic values and build a concerted voice that prevents China from mistaking Taiwan for a soft target.

Only through closer cooperation with other like-minded democracies can Taiwan mitigate the risk of military escalation and ensure China's development will remain peaceful into the future. This is ultimately in the interest not only of the region, but China itself.

[the writer is Sessional Lecturer, Taiwan Studies Programme, Australian National University]

Nobel Prize: Why Climate Modellers Deserved the Physics Award – they've been proved right again and again

DR. PUSHP RAJ TIWARI
theconversation.com

This year's Nobel prize in physics has been split between Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann and Giorgio Parisi. While Parisi is a theoretical physicist, the other two are climate modellers whose work laid the foundations of our understanding of how carbon dioxide would shape the climate.

This award couldn't be more timely, as the most recent IPCC report, based on state-of-the-art climate models, states unequivocally that humans are already influencing many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe.

A climate model is a computer program designed to simulate Earth's climate in order to understand and predict its behaviour. Climate models are largely based on a set of mathematical equations that describe the physical laws which govern the be-

haviour of the atmosphere and ocean, and their interactions with other parts of Earth's climate system such as land surface or ice sheets. (Think of how melting ice sheets mean less of the sun's energy is reflected back into space, thereby causing more warming and further melting and so on.)

In the 1960s, Manabe did some of the earliest climate modelling experiments to understand how carbon dioxide might cause a greenhouse effect. In an important 1967 paper, he along with his colleague Richard Wetherald showed how rising carbon dioxide levels would lead to a rise in the temperatures at Earth's surface.

The authors treated Earth's atmosphere as a simple one-dimensional column, and showed that if carbon dioxide levels doubled, global temperatures would rise by about 2.3°C – a finding that is remarkably similar to the answers given five de-

CADES later by high-powered computer models used in IPCC reports. No wonder one survey of scientists found it was the most influential climate change paper of all time

Research by Hasselmann in the 1980s showed how, despite the short-term variability of weather, climate models could be used to predict trends decades into the future. Back in the 80s we knew little about these longer term trends but now, thanks to Hasselmann's and Manabe's work, we can for instance state that the 2030s are likely going to involve more heat waves, floods and other climate extremes.

Being a climate modeller myself, I know their work has contributed to huge benefits for humankind, as it provides the solid physical foundation for our knowledge of Earth's climate. We can no longer say that we did not know – the climate models are unequivocal and have been proven right time and again.

Is Earth heating up (yes)? Is the cause the increased amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (yes)? Can this be explained solely by natural factors (no)? Are humanity's emissions the reason for the increasing temperature (yes)? All these questions and more have been answered by these state-of-the-art climate models.

These models have helped immensely as scientists seek to understand climate change and anticipate its risks. They provided the basis for predicting impacts, guiding adaptation decisions and setting mitigation targets. Latest developments involve ever more details of our earth system, providing precise information to enable robust decision-making in the face of rapidly amplifying climate change.

[the writer is University ECR Fellow, Centre for Atmospheric and Climate Physics Research, University of Hertfordshire]

Mamata Banerjee writes to PM Modi, seeks solution to "Man-Made" Bengal floods



Mamata Banerjee claimed that the reservoirs in Jharkhand have not been cleaned for the last 50 years, and warned of "massive protests" if dredging of dams and barrages was not done on an urgent basis to prevent the recurring floods.

Kolkata: With several districts of West Bengal getting flooded by water released from dams and barrages in Jharkhand and those maintained by the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking a permanent solution to the recurring problem.

In a four-page letter sent on Tuesday, the chief minister alleged that the floods were "man-made" and caused by "uncontrolled and unplanned" discharge of water from DVC dams in Jharkhand's Panchet and Maithon.

Referring to an earlier letter she had written on August 4 in this connection, Mamata Banerjee said, "I had highlighted the structural factors that give birth to grave man-made flood situation in southern Bengal, repeatedly, pitifully and tragically. Unless the Government of India addresses the basic underlying structural and managerial issues, both on a short term and

on a long-term basis, the disasters will continue unmitigated in our lower riparian state."

The Trinamool chief said she hasn't received any reply to her previous letter.

"The issues that I raised affect millions of lives, and I request that the Government of India should get into some serious actions without further delay," the letter read.

Mamata Banerjee also alleged that the DVC authorities did not pay heed to IMD warnings of heavy rainfall, and "kept the water discharge from the dams at a low level and when there was heavy rainfall,

it discharged about 10 lakh acre-feet of water between September 30 and October 2, which caused serious devastation in lower Damodar region before the festive season".

She has also given a date-wise list of water discharged from Maithon and Panchet dams.

"This annual problem requires immediate short-term and long-term measures so that the sufferings of the people are mitigated and the national loss in terms of loss of life and property is avoided."

"I seek your kind immediate intervention so that the Ministry concerned of the Gov-

ernment of India is requested to engage with the Governments of West Bengal and Jharkhand and the authorities of the DVC, to help in arriving at a permanent solution to this problem of our state occurring year after year," she said.

Incidentally, parts of south Bengal were flooded in early August, and Mamata Banerjee had alleged that the "man-made" disaster was caused due to excessive release of water by the DVC, claiming 16 lives and affecting lakhs of farmers.

Last week, Ms Banerjee had held the Jharkhand government and the DVC responsible for the current flood situation in the southern part of West Bengal.

She contended that it was caused due to unplanned and enhanced discharge of water from dams and barrages in Jharkhand without prior information to her administration.

Mamata Banerjee claimed that the reservoirs in Jharkhand have not been cleaned for the last 50 years, and warned of "massive protests" if dredging of dams and barrages was not done on an urgent basis to prevent the recurring floods.

Woman abducted, raped in UP



MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP), Oct 6 (PTI): A 20-year-old woman was allegedly abducted and raped by two men in the New Mandi area here, police said on Wednesday.

The woman, a student, was abducted when she was returning home

from school on Tuesday. She was taken to a nearby place where she was raped by accused Sagar and Pawan Kumar, they said.

A case was registered against the two men, who are absconding, police said, adding the medical

examination of the victim was carried out. According to the complaint filed by the woman's family, the accused offered her a lift in their car when she was returning from school.

Later, she narrated the incident to her parents, police said.

2-year-old girl found dead in UP's Aligarh

ALIGARH (UP), Oct 6 (PTI): Security has been tightened at Khair town, around 25 kilometres from here, after the dead body of a two-year-old girl was found in a drain around 200 metres from her house, police said on Wednesday.

The girl had gone missing from home on Sunday night, and a complaint was lodged by her family the next day, they said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kalanidhi Naithani said a post-mortem examination indicated that the child had died of drowning and there were no visible injury marks.

Many people are being questioned in this connection, the police said.

Considering the sensitivity of the case, police have tightened security in the area, the SSP said.

Odisha: SJTA deposits 500 kg silver in district treasury

PURI, Oct 6 (PTI): The Sri Jagannath Temple Administration has deposited 500 kg of silver in the Puri district treasury for storing it till the next Rathajatra in 2022, when the metal would be used for refurbishing an inner door of the 12th century shine.

Eight gates of the temple would be coated with 2,500 kg of silver ingots, of which 1,300 kg was donated by a Mumbai-based devotee, SJTA

sources said.

A total of 500 kg of silver is kept in 11 boxes, both in shape of plane plates and the designed format. The metal will be brought to the temple during the next Rathajatra for renovation of the Kalahata Dwar', an official said.

Since the deities are inside the temple, it will be difficult to undertake the silver plating work during normal days, he added.

Michail Antonio to skip Jamaica's World Cup qualifier at US

AUSTIN, Texas (AP): West Ham striker Michail Antonio will not travel to Jamaica's World Cup qualifier against the United States in Austin, Texas.

Antonio, the Premier League player of the month for August, will remain in England.

"I can confirm that, unfortunately, I will not be joining up with the Jamaica national squad for the World Cup qualifying matches this week," Antonio said in a statement issued Tuesday by the Jamaica Football Federation.

"Myself, West Ham United, and Jamaica have

all agreed that, given the logistical and travel difficulties involved at present, it is better for me to remain with the club in London at this time," he said. "I remain fully committed to Jamaica and look forward to representing my country in the future."

Antonio's parents are from Jamaica. The 31-year-old made his national team debut in a 3-0 loss to Panama in Kingston on Sept. 5.

Also, Jamaica said goalkeeper Jeadine White has replaced Dennis Taylor on the Reggae Boyz roster.

Bhubaneswar civic body revises COVID norms for weddings

BHUBANESWAR, Oct 6 (PTI): Revising its COVID-related guideline amid protests, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) said maximum 50 people are allowed to be present at functions such as weddings and funerals at any given point of time.

Earlier, the BMC capped the number of attendees at 50, but this modification would help guests go to such functions in batches with a maximum of 50 people at the venue at any given

point of time, officials said. "In a closed space only 50% of the hall capacity will be allowed for use subject to maximum ceiling of 50 persons at any given point of time," the new order issued on Tuesday said.

The ceiling of 50 persons will be applicable to other official or business-related functions in the city as well, it said.

The BMC stated that the order will be in place till October 31.

The civic body said the modification was

made to obviate some confusion in the earlier order.

As per the COVID-related guidelines for October, the state government has allowed the participation of 250 people in such functions across the state. The BMC, however, restricted it to 50.

The revised order was issued after tent houses, florists, decorators, band party owners and others associated with the sector staged a demonstration in front of the BMC office here.

German Greens aim for new government with center-left leader



BERLIN (AP): Germany's environmentalist Greens said Wednesday they want to hold negotiations on a new governing coalition under the leadership of outgoing Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left Social Democrats, who narrowly won the country's election.

The Sept. 26 election left two parties as likely kingmakers: the Greens, who finished third, and the business-friendly Free Democrats, who finished fourth. Those two parties could team up with either the Social Democrats or the center-right Union bloc of outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel for a parliamentary majority.

The Greens traditionally lean to the left, while the Free Democrats in recent decades have mostly allied with the Union. All four parties have held bilateral meetings with each other in recent days.

The Greens' leaders said they have now proposed to the Free Democrats that the two parties go into three-way talks with Scholz's Social Democrats.

That combination appears to offer the "biggest overlaps in terms of content," though there are "significant open questions and differences," co-leader Robert Habeck.

He stressed that the door wasn't completely slammed on a coalition with the Union.

"We have seen the Union really made an effort," he added, but his party's differences with the center-right bloc are bigger.

Questions have been raised over whether the Union is in any state to lead a new government after its candidate for chancellor, North Rhine-Westphalia state governor Armin Laschet, led it to its worst-ever result in the election.

The Free Democrats were expected to make a statement later Wednesday.

"I'm Your Baby Daddy": Angad Bedi shares mushy pic with Neha Dhupia taken in hospital

Love is in the air for Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi, who welcomed their second child on Sunday.

New Delhi: Love is in the air for Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi, who welcomed their second child, a baby boy, on Sunday. The actor painted Instagram red on Wednesday by sharing a mushy post for his wife. He posted two pictures of themselves from the hospital and it appears they were clicked few minutes before Neha Dhupia gave birth to her baby son. Sharing the photo, Angad Bedi, who married Neha Dhupia in 2018, adorably wrote: "I'm your baby daddy!! Thank you for everything Mrs Bedi! You complete me, Neha Dhupia." And guess what Neha Dhupia replied to her husband in the comments section? "My (heart icon)," read her comment. Was pretty obvious, no?

The couple are also parents to a little daughter named Mehr, who

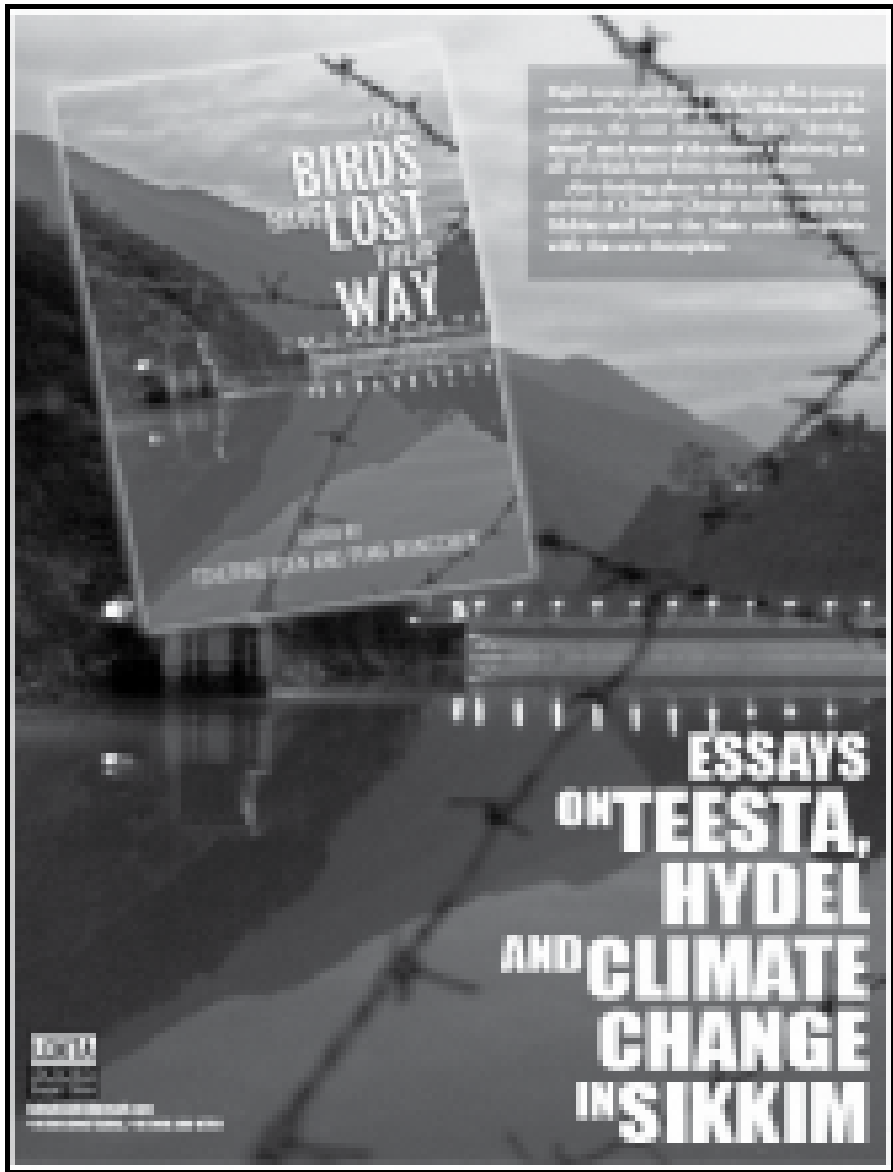


was born in 2018.

On Sunday, Angad Bedi announced the birth of their baby son by sharing a stunning picture of himself and Neha Dhupia from her maternity photoshoot and captioning it: "BEDIS BOY is here! The almighty today blessed us with a baby boy. Both Neha and the baby are well. Mehr is ready to pass on the 'baby' title to the new arrival. Waheguru mehrkare. Neha Dhupia, thank you for being such a warrior through this journey. Let's make it a memorable one for all 4 of us now. #bedisboy." Neha Dh-

upia and Angad Bedi's new baby has brought them "so much joy" and her first post after the birth of her son proves it. "Oh boy!... you have brought us so much joy," she wrote in the caption.

Neha Dhupia has worked in several films like Singh Is Kinng, Tumhari Sulu, Hindi Medium and Lust Stories. She was last seen in Priyanka Banerjee's short film Devi, in which she co-starred with Kajol, Shruti Haasan, Neena Kulkarni and Shivani Raghuvanshi. Neha also judged reality show Roadies.



National
player alleges
sexual abuse
in Australian
soccer

SYDNEY (AP): Soccer authorities in Australia have urged players to make formal complaints in any cases of sexual abuse or misconduct after one of the country's leading international goal scorers alleged she'd been groomed and harassed by senior players early in her career.

Lisa De Vanna, who played 150 games for Australia and was second on the list of all-time of scorers for the women's national team with 47 goals, said she first experienced harassment, abuse and bullying in 2001 when she joined a national women's squad at age 17.

She told Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper she'd been pulled down from behind by a few teammates and "I fought my way off the floor kicking and screaming."

"They thought it was funny. I was just a young kid from Perth, I didn't know any different. I ... wanted to punch them," De Vanna said. "As a youngster and a player I didn't know how to address this ... but it is still happening across all levels and it's time to speak up."

De Vanna went public with her allegations in the wake of the scandal in the United States, where the National Women's Soccer League called off games on the weekend and its commissioner quit amid a sexual harassment and misconduct allegations involving a longtime coach.

The NWSL was rocked last week when two former players came forward with allegations of harassment, including sexual coercion, against North Carolina Courage coach Paul Riley.

Riley was immediately fired by the Courage, and both FIFA and U.S. Soccer opened investigations into why he was able to continue coaching even after the players brought their concerns to the league. Riley told The Athletic the allegations were "completely untrue."

De Vanna initially reacted on social media to a tweet from U.S. soccer great Megan Rapinoe, who posted the message "Men protecting men, who are abusing Women" in response to the NWSL scandal.

De Vanna posted that she agreed with Rapinoe, but she'd also witnessed "women protecting women who abuse women" and "players protecting senior players who abuse younger players" and organizations protecting "coaches/players" who abuse players.

"Abuse is abuse. Poor behavior is poor across all boards!" In the Daily Telegraph story, De Vanna said she'd seen "cultural problems at all levels — from men and women — and girls coming through need to be brave, and also the girls that have been through this also need to be brave and know they are not alone." "In any sporting organization and in any environment, grooming, preying and unprofessional behavior makes me sick."

Indians dominate FIH Annual Hockey Awards, Men's Olympic Champions Belgium "Very Disappointed"

FIH ANNUAL AWARDS: Gurjit-Kaur (Women) and Harmanpreet Singh (Men) fetched Player of the Year honour in their respective categories.

India swept the International Hockey Federation's (FIH) annual awards on Wednesday, claiming the top honours in all the categories based on a system of voting which was lambasted as a "failure" by men's Olympic champions Belgium. Five Indian players and the head coaches of both the men's and women's teams in Tokyo claimed the top honours across different categories after fetching the maximum votes. The Indian men's team had won a bronze, its first in 41 years, in the Tokyo Olympics, while the women's side had finished an unprecedented fourth in the showpiece.

Harmanpreet Singh won the men's "Player of the Year" award and Gurjit-Kaur was recognised as the best player in the women's section. Veteran P R Sreejesh and SavitaPunia won the best goalkeeper awards in the men's and women's section, while young striker Sharmila Devi (women) and VivekSagar Prasad (men) were adjudged best rising stars.

The drag-click duo of Harmanpreet and Gurjit were the top-scorers in their respective team's stellar run at the Games.

Men's team coach Graham Reid and women's coach SjoerdMarijne were also voted the best. While Reid is still with the team, Marijne's tenure ended after the Tokyo Games.



Hockey Belgium reacted sharply to the announcement of the winners and questioned the process as none of their Tokyo Games champions managed to win an award.

"Hockey Belgium is very disappointed with the outcome of @FIH_Hockey Star Awards. A gold winning team with multiple nominees in all categories but doesn't win a single award demonstrates failure of the voting system. We will work with FIH to ensure a fairer system in the future," it tweeted.

The sentiment was shared by the team's official handle as well. "We fully agree! This is not normal! The credibility and image of our sport is once again facing hard times. It's a pity (sic) @FIH," stated the Red Lions.

Votes from National Associations -- represented by their respective national captains and coaches -- accounted for 50 per cent of the overall result, while fans and players (25 per cent) as well as media (25 per cent) made

the other half of the votes.

In all, 79 National Associations voted (Africa: 11 out of 25 Member Associations; Asia: 29 out of 33; Europe: 19 out of 42; Oceania: 3 out of 8; Pan America: 17 out of 30), said a statement from FIH.

"And with a record number of almost 300,000 fans casting their votes, fan participation in the FIH Hockey Stars Awards has been exceptional," it added.

The nominations from Belgium (men) and the Netherlands (women), who were not only crowned Olympic

Champions but also won the 2020-21 FIH Hockey Pro League, finished behind the Indians once the votes were counted.

Belgium duo of Alexander Hendrickx and Arthur van Doren were voted second and third best players respectively among men, with Vincent Vanasch (Belgium) named second best goalkeeper and Shane McLeod of New Zealand second best coach.

Among women, Eva de Goede and Frederique Matla of the Netherlands clinched the

respective second and third places in the Player of the Year awards while Alyson Annan of Australia finished second for the FIH Coach of the Year Award.

Great Britain goalkeeper MaddieHinch, rising star Fiona Crackles and coach Mark Hager of Australia all were third in their respective categories.

With the FIH Hockey Stars Awards skipped in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 global health pandemic on the international calendar, this year's awards covered the period from January 2020 through to the conclusion of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, the FIH said.

"The voting process started on 23 August and concluded on 15 September 2021. Votes from National Associations - represented by their respective national captains and coaches - counted for 50 per cent of the overall result, while fans and players (25 per cent) as well as media (25 per cent) made the other half of the votes," it added.

Hockey India President GyanendroNingombam congratulated the winners.

"This is a great moment for Indian hockey as all our Indian nominees for the FIH Stars Awards have been announced winners.

"After the historic performances in Tokyo by both Indian Men and Women's Hockey teams, the support from Indian fans from across the globe has been overwhelming," he said.

Australia women vs India women: Expecting really tough challenge from india in T20I series, says Australia Skipper Meg Lanning



Australia skipper Meg Lanning on Wednesday said that she is expecting opponents India to give a really tough challenge in the upcoming T20I series, beginning Thursday.

Australia skipper Meg Lanning on Wednesday said that she is expecting opponents India to give a really tough challenge in the upcoming T20I series, beginning Thursday. Currently, Australia leads the multi-format series 6-4 and India would be required to win all the three T20Is in order to register a victory in the series. "India has players who can take you down and also really good depth in their squad. We were expecting a really tough challenge from them and we've certainly got that. It's a good test for our group. Everyone

found the last week of the Test a challenge in different ways. It's a format we don't play a lot and have experience in different situations," ESPNcricinfo quoted Lanning as saying. "You have so many unknowns and aren't really sure how to approach situations if you haven't been there before. Now coming into the T20 format it's something we know reasonably well and everyone is pretty clear on what their role is," she added.

Further talking about the series, Lanning said, "All our all-rounders are pretty good with the bat, they could be batters in their own right, so that's a bit of a luxury for us. Balance is important, having that variety with the ball is important and matching that with conditions. We feel like we

have really good depth in those areas, just need to make sure we get those selections right."

"It was a challenge in the twilight period, but not really an excuse and I was the prime culprit in dropping a lot of those," Lanning said.

"They were ones we should have taken. Certainly looking to be better in the field, even in the ODIs we didn't quite nail it. It's something we pride ourselves on," she added.

Australia and India settled for a draw in the pink-ball Test as the time ran out on the final day in Carrara on Sunday.

Both teams earned two points each, meaning Australia leads the multi-format series with 6 points heading into the three T20Is, while India is on 4.

IPL 2021: Jimmy Neeshamnets Basketball from 30 Yards, internet can't keep calm

The video of Jimmy Neesham netting a basketball from 30 yards away was shared by Mumbai Indians on Instagram.

After last night's win against Rajasthan Royals in an Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 clash, Mumbai Indians have a lot to celebrate. Rohit Sharma's team defeated the Sanju Samson-led side by chasing down the low total of 90 runs in just 8.2 overs. MI recently posted a video from their session off the field on Instagram. In the video, MI's New Zealand all-rounder Jimmy Neesham can be seen throwing a basketball into the net from a distance of 30 yards. The Kiwi International's basketball skills have surprised his teammates and netizens alike.

MI wicketkeeper IshanKishan can also be seen, in the video, shouting in excitement and then hugging Neesham. "These are the kind of things you tell your friends and they be like: Kyafektahainbey... But we got proof on camera," the caption read.

Fans too cheered the unbelievable throw with one of them even comparing Neesham to Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra. "Real I'd se aa-oNeeraj Chopra (Log in from your read account, Neeraj Chopra)," the user wrote.

Digital creator VirajGhelani commented with the pun, "Jimmy throwsham". While some



others suggested him an alternate career in basketball.

A user said the throw reminded him of Chris Hemsworth's character Thor in the Avengers series.

People also commented on Kishan's reaction with one fan comparing Ishan's excitement to that of an enthusiastic child.

Apart from the Thor-like throw, Neesham also had a memorable game last night. Playing

his first match for the franchise in the UAE leg of the Indian Premier League, the New Zealand all-rounder took three wickets for just 12 runs in his quota of four overs.

This helped MI restrict the Royals to 90 runs, which was chased down easily by the Rohit Sharma-led side with 70 balls to spare and eight wickets in hand.

The defending champions have struggled in IPL 2021, and are in a close fight with Kolkata Knight Riders for the last spot in the playoffs with both teams having secured 12 points from 13 matches. Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Capitals, and Royal Challengers Bangalore have already qualified for the playoffs.

Mumbai Indians will face Sunrisers Hyderabad in their last group stage encounter on Friday, October 8. The match will commence at 7:30 pm.

IPL 2021, RCB vs SRH: When and where to watch match, live telecast, live streaming

RCB vs SRH: Royal Challengers and SunRisers Hyderabad will face off in Match 52 of IPL 2021 on Wednesday at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

ViratKohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) will take on SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH) in Match 52 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) on Wednesday at Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi. Bangalore are the third place in the points table while Hyderabad are out of the tournament and at the last spot. RCB have already qualified for the play-offs but they will fight to make the top-two finish in the points table. SRH have lost their last two games against

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) while RCB come into this game on the back of three consecutive victories against Punjab Kings (PBKS), Rajasthan Royals (RR) and Mumbai Indians (MI).

The last time when the two sides met was in Match 6 this season where Bangalore pulled off a close victory by 6 runs.

Where will the RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match be played?

The RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match will be played at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi.

When will the RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match be played?

The RCB vs SRH IPL 2021

match will be played on Wednesday, October 6.

What time will the RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match begin?

The RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match will begin at 7:30 PM IST.

Which TV channels will broadcast the RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match?

The RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match will be broadcast live on the Star Sports Network.

Where to watch live streaming of the RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match?

The live streaming of the RCB vs SRH IPL 2021 match will be available on Hotstar. You can also follow live updates on sports.ndtv.com.

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Facing social unrest, Hong Kong looks to build more housing

HONG KONG (AP): Land-starved Hong Kong plans to build more affordable housing in response to public demands that have fueled social unrest.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam announced a major development project Wednesday for Hong Kong's border area with mainland China in the last annual policy address of her current term.

The "Northern Metropolis" plan aims to provide hundreds of thousands more homes and tens of thousands of jobs. It fits in with broader plans for closer ties across the border with mainland China.

Lam's administration is under pressure to ease a shortage of affordable homes that makes it difficult for some of Asia's best educated and most cosmopolitan citizens to find housing.

Public housing estates have not kept up with demand, and Hong Kong's property is among priciest in the world: it tied Zurich and Paris last year as the



most expensive city in a survey by the World Economic Forum.

Astronomical prices helped drive months of anti-government protests in 2019 that have prompted a major security crackdown by the central government in Beijing.

In her address, Lam repeatedly defended Hong Kong's National

Security Law, imposed by Beijing last year, along with changes to the election system that reduce the number of members of the local legislature elected by universal suffrage and establish a strict vetting system to screen out candidates considered insufficiently patriotic.

The law criminalizes subversion, secession,

terrorism and foreign collusion to interfere in the city's affairs. It has amounted to a crackdown on the political opposition and on free speech, rolling back freedoms promised to the former British colony when it was handed over to China in 1997.

Such measures led the U.S. to impose sanctions on Hong Kong and

Chinese officials.

Hong Kong is mostly perched on mountains and islands and it has more than 90,000 people per square mile (36,000 per square kilometer) in its urban core. Much of its 1,100 square kilometers (425 square miles) of wild space has not been developed.

Critics say the government restricted the

amount of land available for housing after the 1980s to help drive prices higher, providing a windfall for developers but pushing home ownership out of the reach of the average family.

The average household has 15 square meters (150 square feet) of living space per person, according to the territory's Census and Statistics Department. Most of the territory's 7.4 million people live in high-rise, government-owned apartment buildings.

Buying one of Hong Kong's cramped apartments costs an average of \$28,570 per square meter (\$2,850 per square foot), 2 1/2 times the price in mainland China and 1 1/2 times Japan's level, according to a survey by Global Property Guide.

While living costs are high and rising, Hong Kong's median income has fallen by about 6% since last year, according to the statistics department.

EU calls for relief funds to help energy price hit consumers

BRUSSELS (AP): The European Union on Wednesday urged member countries to provide relief funds to consumers and small businesses hit hardest by rising gas and electricity prices, as criticism mounts that the bloc's climate change fighting policies are fueling the problem.

In recent days, France and Spain have led the charge for change to the rules governing EU energy markets as the price surge ramps up already-high utility bills and increases pressure on many people already hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson said that "providing targeted support to consumers, direct payments to those most at risk of energy poverty, cutting energy taxes, shifting charges to general taxation, are all measures that can be taken very swiftly under EU rules."

"The immediate priority should be to mitigate social impacts and protect vulnerable households, ensuring that energy poverty is not aggravated," Simson told EU lawmakers. She said businesses "can be given relief through state aid or by facilitating longer term power purchase agreements."

The 27-country EU imports about 90% of its natural gas needs, compared to the U.S., which produces its own and where prices are lower.

Simson said the EU's executive branch, the European Commission, will present next week a "toolbox" of short- and medium-term measures

for countries to take. Some countries are interested in setting up a strategic gas reserve for use in emergencies.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban took aim at the commission's "Green Deal" policies for fighting climate change, which aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels and make the trading bloc carbon neutral by 2050.

"The reason why the prices are up is the fault of the commission. So, we have to change some regulations, otherwise everybody will suffer," Orban told reporters at an EU summit in Slovenia. He branded the Green Deal an "indirect taxation" on home and car owners.

But commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans said that "the EU climate law is our guiding principle, and we will not open that law again." He said that "the quicker we increase our renewable energy sources, the quicker we can protect our citizens against price hikes in the traditional energy area."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez urged the commission "to be brave."

"We are facing an unprecedented crisis that requires extraordinary, innovative and firm measures to be taken," Sánchez told reporters. He said the EU must "make a collective purchase of gas," and revise the price-setting system for electricity, which he claims is undermining renewable energy use.

Vatican judges in fraud trial agree defense rights violated



VATICAN CITY (AP): The Vatican tribunal hearing a landmark fraud case agreed Wednesday that the 10 defendants were deprived of their rights and ordered prosecutors to hand over key pieces of evidence and essentially start their investigation over for some of them.

Tribunal President Giuseppe Pignatone said there had been "lamentable violations" by the pope's prosecutors in failing to give the suspects the right to respond to all accusations against them during the preliminary phase of the investigation.

Pignatone also repeated his July 29 order for prosecutors to hand over the videotaped

recordings of a key suspect-turned-star witness whose testimony formed the basis for several of the charges in the indictment. He rejected arguments that the witness's privacy would be compromised if they provided the recordings.

The trial concerns the Holy See's 2013 investment in a London real estate venture that lost the Vatican tens of millions of euros, much of it donations from the faithful that were spent on fees to Italian brokers.

Prosecutors have accused the brokers of defrauding the Holy See, and several Vatican officials of abuse of office, corrup-

tion and other charges.

Defense lawyers had argued that procedural errors throughout the investigation were so harmful to the defendants that the charges should be thrown out entirely.

The three-judge tribunal declined to issue a blanket voiding of the indictment for all 10 suspects. But in a decision read aloud in court Wednesday, the tribunal said four people had to be interrogated on all charges, and identified certain charges to which the others must be given the chance to respond.

Defense attorneys said they were pleased with the outcome.

French senators arrive in Taiwan amid tensions with China

TAIPEI, TAIWAN (AP): A group of French senators arrived in Taiwan for a five-day visit Wednesday following a large Chinese show of force with fighter jets amid the highest tensions in decades between China and Taiwan.

The group, led by senator Alain Richard, will meet with President Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwanese economic and health officials and the Mainland Affairs Council. Richard, a former French defense minister, previously visited Taiwan in 2015 and 2018, according to Taiwan's semi-official Central News Agency,

and heads the Taiwan Friendship group in the French senate.

China tried to discourage Richard's visit, with its embassy in France saying ahead of the trip: "It will not only damage China's core interests and undermine China-French relations, but will also damage France's own reputation and interests."

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and therefore opposes any international engagement with the island such as visits by foreign government officials. It also has ag-

gressively poached Taiwan's remaining diplomatic allies.

In its most recent display of sustained military harassment, China flew fighter jets 149 times toward Taiwan over four days from Friday to Monday. The White House called the flights risky and destabilizing, while China responded that the U.S. selling weapons to Taiwan and its ships navigating the Taiwan Strait were provocative.

Taiwan's defense minister Chiu Kuocheng told legislators Wednesday that the

situation "is the most severe in the 40 years since I've enlisted." Chiu was answering questions as the legislature decides whether to approve a special budget for air and naval defense purchases.

China and Taiwan split amid civil war in 1949. Today they have extensive trade and investment ties but no official relations, and China has increasingly mobilized military, diplomatic and economic pressure to undermine Tsai's independence-leaning administration.

Coronavirus deaths in Russia surpass 900 a day for 1st time

MOSCOW (AP): Russia's daily toll of coronavirus deaths surpassed 900 for the first time of the pandemic Wednesday, a record that comes amid the country's low vaccination rate and the government's reluctance to impose tough restrictions to control new cases.

Russia's state coronavirus task force reported 929 new deaths on Wednesday, the fourth time this month that daily COVID-19 deaths reached record highs. The previous record, of 895 deaths, was registered Tuesday.

The task force also reported 25,133 new confirmed cases Wednesday.

The rise in infections and deaths began in late September. The Kremlin has blamed it too few Russians getting vaccinated. As of Tuesday, almost 33% of Russia's 146 million people had received at least one shot

of a coronavirus vaccine, and 29% was fully vaccinated.

Despite the surge, government officials rejected the idea of imposing a lockdown and said regional authorities would take steps to stem the spread of the virus.

A number of Russian regions have limited attendance at large public events and restricted access to theaters, restaurants and other places to people who have been vaccinated, recently recovered from COVID-19 or tested negative in the previous 72 hours.

In all, Russia's coronavirus task force has reported over 7.6 million confirmed cases and more than 212,000 deaths. However, reports by Russian state statistical service Rosstat that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality numbers.

German police raid ring suspected of laundering \$162 million

BERLIN (AP): German police carried out large-scale raids in 25 cities Wednesday in connection with a suspected money-laundering network alleged to have funneled millions in ill-gotten gains abroad.

Duesseldorf police said the raids, which began in the early hours, involved more than 1,000 officers and took place in the states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Bremen.

Eleven people were arrested, including a 39-year-old Syrian man who is accused of membership in Syria's Nusra Front extremist group, police said.

The raids are part of an investigation into a so-called hawala network widely used in

Muslim countries, in which individuals rather than banks act as brokers for money transfers.

Duesseldorf police said the money laundered since 2016 came from a broad range of sources, including criminal activity such as armed robbery and extortion. "According to initial estimates the volume of transactions in the period under investigation was about 140 million euros (\$162 million)," police said in a statement.

German public broadcaster WDR reported that the laundered money included funds from drug trafficking and at least some of it was sent to Turkey and Syria, where it may have been used to fund militant groups.



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BLACKPINK IN YOUR AREA! The K-Pop sensation, Jennie Kim is dressed in a red Chanel outfit while attending shows during Paris Fashion Week.

Billie Eilish becomes youngest star to headline Glastonbury

LONDON (AP): Nineteen-year-old pop singer Billie Eilish has broken numerous records in her short career. Now she will become the Glastonbury Festival's youngest-ever solo headliner when she takes the stage at the 2022 event.

Eilish teased the news on Sunday on Instagram, posing herself wearing a Glastonbury hoodie in a photo captioned "2022." The festival's organizers confirmed Monday that the American singer will perform on June 24.

"This feels like the perfect way for us to return and I cannot wait!" organizer Emily Eavis said. The festival was supposed to celebrate its 50th anniversary last year, but it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. This year it hosted a five-hour livestream event featuring Coldplay and Damon Albarn, among others.

Eilish has taken the world by storm since she broke onto the scene in 2015 with her debut single "Ocean Eyes." The young singer has since won Grammys for record of the year, album of the year, song of the year and best new artist.

Eilish made her Glastonbury debut in

2019 after her set was upgraded from a slot on the John Peel stage during the five-day music festival held in Somerset, southwest England.



Eilish is also the youngest performer to write and record a James Bond theme song. She was among the stars at the "No Time to Die" Bond film world premiere in London last week.

Eilish will be 20 years and 6 months old when she headlines the Glastonbury festival in June 2022.

BTS campaign with UN nets millions of dollars -- and tweets

NEW YORK (AP): K-pop superstars BTS have raised \$3.6 million and generated millions of tweets during four years of teaming up with the U.N. children's agency to fight violence, abuse and bullying and promote self-esteem in young people, the agency is announcing Wednesday.

The "Love Myself" campaign spread its message through means including social media hashtags, merchandise, the South Korean band's 2018-2019 "Love Yourself" world tour and a 2019 video for the children's agency, called UNICEF, urging people to "choose kindness." The "Love Myself" slogan was even emblazoned on dirigibles flown over the musicians' hometowns in 2017.

UNICEF had booths at BTS concerts, and the band members filmed a music video at the U.N. headquarters and repeatedly spoke there, most recently during the General Assembly's annual gathering of world leaders last month. When the coronavirus pandemic forced last year's meeting to be held almost entirely virtually, BTS members spoke by video

about how they dealt with the isolation and frustration brought on by pandemic shutdowns.

BTS said in a statement for Wednesday's announce-

power that allows them to love themselves." The campaign has helped the 76-year-old U.N. cultivate a more youthful image and capture eyeballs outside its usual

5 million tweets and over 50 million likes, retweets, replies and comments. "The groundbreaking way in which BTS has helped spark a positive message with its ARMY is sim-



ment that the band launched the "Love Myself" campaign to improve other young people's lives but strove to live by it themselves.

"We as a team and as individuals grew, as well," the seven-member band said. "We hope that many people felt how the love received from others can become the

circles — and inside BTS' fan base, known as the "ARMY." "Permission to Dance," a BTS music video filmed at the U.N. headquarters and released last month, counts over 27 million views on the U.N.'s YouTube channel, which has about 2 million subscribers. UNICEF says the "Love Myself" initiative spurred nearly

ply unmatched and incredibly invaluable," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said in a statement.

The money raised will go toward UNICEF's work to halt violence.

BTS said it hoped to keep the campaign going, "so we can help people find happiness and love."

Daniel Craig on bidding Bond goodbye in 'No Time to Die'

NEW YORK (AP): When Daniel Craig first got the gig, he felt like something had gone amiss. "You've got the wrong guy," he told the producers.

But Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson insisted. No, he was the one. He was James Bond.

Craig, then a rising performer but far from the expected choice, never had any ambitions to play James Bond. He had assumed he was being strung along as part of a massive casting machine, one of dozens of actors screen tested.

"Once I did find out, I was incredibly flattered and deeply confused," Craig recalled in an interview. "I just felt like I wasn't the right person."

Fifteen years and five films later, Craig's tenure as 007 is coming to a close. "No Time to Die," which opens in the U.S. on Friday after a 16-month delay due to the pandemic, is the last hurrah in Craig's celebrated Bond era, a stewardship that saw Craig remake and emotionally deepen the once retrograde superspy — with more than \$3 billion in box office along the way. Once derisively labeled "Blond Bond," Craig turned out to be a smash success.

"It paid off in spades," said Broccoli. "He's truly remarkable. He's reinvented it for the 21st century. He explored the inner-life of Bond."

But would Craig have ever gone through with it had he known what he was in for?

"If I had known more, I don't think I would have been able to do it. The less information I had back then, the better," said Craig, speaking by Zoom from New York. "The rest of it, the weight of it, how huge it all really is — I didn't know. I didn't really understand."

He pauses. "I don't suppose I really understand it now, either," Craig added.

"I pretend to understand. That's what getting older is all about. I pretend better than I did back then."

"No Time to Die," directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, is, with certainty, Craig's final turn in the tux. But it's also a culmination to where Craig has been driving Bond. His 007 is a character, not an icon, capable of grief and regret, and far from bulletproof. That evolution takes center stage in "No Time to Die."

"I always just felt: How do these things affect him? Within a Bond world. Not in, like, a Hamlet way. But in a Bond world," says Craig, who won't play Hamlet but Macbeth — a play about the perils of ambition — on Broadway next year.

"No Time to Die" started off unsteadily with writer-director Danny Boyle departing over creative differences. Fukunaga stepped in and the script was completely rewritten. That the film was even happening in the first place was, to some, surprising. After the previous entry, 2015's "Spectre," Craig had suggested he'd rather slit his wrists than make another. The physical toll of the films and the time commitment — "It's a year," he says of each film -- was wearing on him.

"I've often been criticized as moaning about it," said Craig, 53. "After 'Spectre' I went: I don't think I can do this anymore. I got to a point where it was like: The risk feels too great. That phone call home where I phone up and say I'm injured, I'm in the hospital -- it's not a nice phone call to make, and it's happened a lot over the years."

He chuckles. "It happened on this as well, but there you go."

During filming in Jamaica, Craig slipped while running on a wet dock and badly injured his ankle. The filmmakers could hardly know then that temporar-

ily losing their star would just be one of many headaches to come. Before the pandemic arrived, "No Time to Die" was slated to open in April 2020. Television ads ran. Craig hosted "Saturday Night Live." The film's theme, by Billie Eilish, was released, and won a Grammy months before the film's London premiere.

"No Time to Die" arrives at a crucial juncture for the movie business. Lately, some ticket sales have been reaching pre-pandemic levels. Bond is poised not just to save the world one more time but also give movie theaters a lift while he's at it. Sales in the U.K. over the weekend were on par with the opening for 2012's "Skyfall," which cleared \$1.1 billion at the box office.

But Craig's departure may test the franchise more than any previous 007 changing of the guard since Sean Connery exited. During his five films, Craig has shaped the overall series as much as he has the character, bringing in top-class filmmakers and raising the bar, overall.

"I asked them straight out. I said: Listen, the confidence I need to play this role — one of the most confident people in movie history, if not the most confident human being in movie history — I need to be able to take part," said Craig. "I need to be able to know what's going on, to have an opinion, to feel like I have a voice. They just said yes, we want you to be involved."

Expect to hear endless rumors and speculation of a successor to Craig for the next year. (The Onion wryly reports Wallace Shawn is in the mix.) Broccoli and Wilson, though, say their current focus is on celebrating Craig's swan song. They've set no parameters except to say that Bond is foundationally a male character.

Aries:
The new moon in Libra is awakening the gift of intuition for you. Trust what you're being shown in moments of silence. Trust what's coming through from the unseen and the unknown. You will be able to piece the puzzle together eventually, if not now. Partnerships of all kinds are also taking centre-stage at this time. You know they're the one, Aries. You know they're the one. Do what it takes to nurture the seed of this love.
Tip: Your intuition has been awakened.

Taurus:
Time and space heal everything, Taurus. Time and space heal everything. So, allow yourself to retreat into the void - the cosmic womb - the sacred place where you will be nurtured back to life. As you do, resist the urge to go back to somebody who has left you bruised in the most unimaginable places. Remembering that you are enough, and that everything you seek is within you will help you do what's right for you this time around.
Tip: Honour the need to retreat into your sacred space.

Gemini:
Sometimes, the perfect romance is right in front of our eyes. But our own delusions keep us from realising this. The good thing is, you are being given a second chance. You are being given a second chance, Gemini. Recognise how fortunate you are and do what it takes to nurture

the given connection. Something tells us growing old together is your idea of the perfect romance.

Tip: It's all coming together, beautiful.

Cancer:
When something is meant for you, it will work out against all odds. When something isn't, you will continue to face innumerable blocks. Recognise what the Universe is showing you, beautiful. Recognise that the boulders have been placed in your path for a reason. It's time to release your attachments with the past, Cancer. It's time to write a brand new chapter in collaboration with the Universe.
Tip: The boulders have been placed in your path for a reason.

Leo:
Soulmate relationships can be an intimidating place, mostly because of the tendency to mirror each other. This aspect of your relationship is going to be amplified under the influence of the Libra new moon. So, instead of moving into a space of denial, awaken to what the Universe is beginning to show you. You are a magician, baby! An alchemist blessed with the power to turn lead into gold. So, what are the aspects of 'the self' that you're being asked to transform today? Listen to the voice of wisdom and dedicate yourself to the inner work.
Tip: Pay attention to what is being mirrored back at you,

beautiful.

Virgo:

There is no transformation that takes place without its fair share of chaos. So, look beyond the illusion, Virgo. Accept everything as a gift from the Universe, including the so-called messy parts. Something tells us you're being propelled towards the future at jetspeed. The future you've always hoped for and dreamed of.
Tip: It's all happening for a reason, beautiful.

Libra:

Playing games is so last season, Libra. Playing games is so last season. The new moon in your sign is inspiring you to shed all that is false within and without, stand in your truth and own your place in this world. Remember, it's not your job to make everybody around you feel comfortable. It never was. Be who you've always been, boo, as you let those around you adjust.
Tip: It's time to stand in your truth like never before.

Scorpio:

This is a time of closing old cycles and releasing the threads of karma that were holding you back from living your path and purpose. Freedom is the operative word here, beautiful. But, that doesn't mean the transition to the new is going to be easy. You will be filled with rage and resentment every now. You will

find yourself wishing things had ended in a harmonious way. What Spirit wants you to recognise: there is order in chaos and chaos in order. Looking for the good in every situation will help you loosen the grip and face your True North.

Tip: This is a time of closing cycles.

Sagittarius:

The new moon in Libra is bringing in all kinds of surprises, and a deeper connection with your partner is certainly one of them. You are exactly where you need to be, Sagittarius. It's a wonderful feeling, isn't it? What's making your connection even more meaningful is the realisation that you have been brought together for a higher reason. So sync your forces, wild one, and pour your energy into making the work a better place. Magic is in the air for single archers too. What's meant to be yours will never pass you by. Get ready to see how the divine plan in action!
Tip: What is meant to be yours will never pass you by.

Capricorn:

This is a week of finding silver linings, Capricorn. A week of hope and endless possibilities. You're being asked to trust that there is light at the end of the tunnel as you continue to move forward with a spring in your step. You are so loved and so taken care of. Your guides are orchestrating many, many miracles behind the scenes for you.

Tip: Believe in miracles, and then some.

Aquarius:

This is a time of hope, magic, and synchronicities, Aquarius. A time of believing in infinite possibilities. Yes, the Universe is coming through for you big time, and helping you set things right with the beloved. If the play of karma has kept the two of you apart for some reason, trust that they will recognise the depth of your connection soon. We see a soulmate reunion on the cards, water bearer. A connection that will change you approach love *and* the world around.

Tip: Trust that and stay in the energy of love, no matter what.

Pisces:

The process of manifestation requires a deep, deep sense of surrender. An unyielding faith in the forces along with the inner knowing that they've got your back no matter what. So, when something doesn't work out in accordance with your expectations, know that you're being protected. And when something takes longer than you expect, know that you're being prepared to make space for miracles. Overheard at the cosmic conference: what is meant to be yours will always find its way into your Universe!

Tip: You're being prepared to make space for miracles, Pisces.