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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

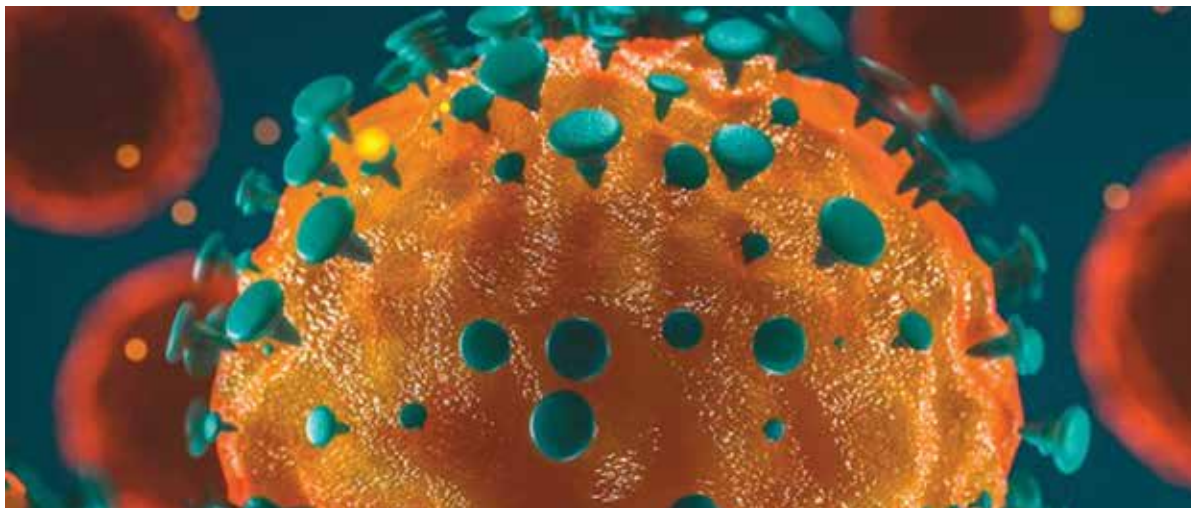
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Test positivity rate drops to 6%, even as Covid claims one more in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 SEPT:**

While infections have been coming down in absolute numbers in Sikkim, now, the daily test positivity rate has also dipped to 6% after having hovered above it thus far. At the same time, the virus continues to claim lives and one more fatality was recorded in the past 24 hours. Vaccination is also progressing on a smart clip in Sikkim, with more than 95% of the adult population reinforced with at least one shot of the vaccine while nearly 50% of the eligible population is already fully vaccinated.

As per daily the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department, Sikkim's daily test positivity rate came in at 6% on Wednesday with 42 persons testing positive from the screening of



700 samples. Of the new cases, 17 were registered in East District, 16 in West District and 09 in South District.

25 people were found positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 335 samples while 15 new cases were picked up in RT-PCR testing of 361 samples and two more persons tested positive in CBNAAT of four samples. With this, the tally of confirmed cases here has reached 30,738.

In the meantime, the number of active cases dropped slightly to 747 with 67 new recoveries recorded in the past 24 hours. The state's count of recovered Covid cases has further improved to 29,309 and the recovery rate inched up slightly to 96.3%.

On the other hand, Sikkim's COVID-19 death toll increased to 379 in the past 24 hours when a Covid-positive person passed away in home iso-

lation in rural East Sikkim. This is the second COVID death reported so far this week.

13 COVID patients were hospitalized in the State in the past 24 hours, taking the number of Covid patients in hospital to 65, four of whom are under 18 years of age. Meanwhile, there are 11 Covid patients, three of them under 18 years of age, admitted in ICU facilities of STNM Hospital and Central Re-

ferral Hospital.

When it comes to vaccination, Sikkim administered 16,992 more doses of Covishield on Tuesday, of which 792 received the first jab while 16,200 people completed their vaccine schedule with the second dose.

As per the IDSP report, 95.8% of the adult population of the State has received at least first jab of Covishield while 46.72% of the eligible population here is fully vaccinated.

Centre in a tight spot over interlocutor's position for Naga Talks

NEW DELHI, 15 SEPT [NDTV]: The Centre's attempts to resume the stalled talks with Naga rebels in India's northeast haven't borne fruit despite a potential new government interlocutor having been finalised. The reason: the incumbent is yet to relinquish the post.

The Centre hasn't been able to finalise the appointment of former Intelligence Bureau (IB) Special Director Akshaya Kumar Mishra in the position because former Nagaland Governor RN Ravi still holds charge as interlocutor.

While Mr Mishra is Union Home Minister Amit Shah's choice, Mr Ravi, a 1976-batch IPS officer of Kerala cadre who was also with the IB earlier, was handpicked for the job by National Security Advisor Ajit Kumar Doval in 2014.

"It's been more than one year now...he (Mr

Ravi) has not met anyone as an interlocutor. He was appointed Tamil Nadu Governor last week, but he still has not relinquished his charge as interlocutor," a source in the Ministry of Home Affairs disclosed.

"In the past two years, the trust deficit between the Governor and the Naga insurgent groups had deepened. It has led to a stalemate. He (Mr Ravi) was removed to restart the stalled process," the source explained.

Mr Ravi, according to the source, was made Nagaland Governor in 2019 despite opposition from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM), the key rebel group that the government is talking to.

Meanwhile, sources indicate, the Union Home Ministry is likely to announce the name of Mr Mishra, a 1987 batch IPS officer belonging to the Rajasthan cadre, as the

new interlocutor.

Since his retirement in April 2021, he is already advising the ministry on the Northeast. He has been dealing with the NSCN after relations between the NSCN's Thuingaleng Muivah and Mr Ravi deteriorated, a senior official said.

There are indications that Arvind Kumar, the IB Director, may also join Mr Mishra as an additional interlocutor for the Naga peace talks.

With Mr Mishra as Advisor, the ministry has, in the past couple of months, been able to sign a peace pact with NSCN and a peace accord with five armed groups based in Assam's Karbi-Anglong district.

"These are big achievements for the ministry and we hope that the stand-off between the Centre and the Naga insurgent groups gets dissolved, too," a senior official divulged.

Supreme Court slams Centre for "cherry picking" names for Tribunals

NEW DELHI, 15 SEPT [NDTV]: The Supreme Court today criticised the government for "cherry picking" from its recommendations for tribunals across the country. The government has been given two weeks to complete tribunal appointments with the Supreme Court sternly saying: "Return with the appointment letters...and if someone is not appointed, then cite the reason."

"We are a democratic country. You have to follow the rule of law," Chief Justice NV Ramana said during the hearing in a series of sharp remarks.

"I have seen the NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) appointments... more recommendations were made. But in (the) appointments, cherry picking was done. What kind of selection is this? And the same thing (has been) done with (the) ITAT (Income Tax Appellate Tribunal) members also. We are very unhappy with how the decisions are being taken," the Chief Justice said.

"I am also part of the NCLT Selection Committee. We interviewed 544 people... out of which we gave the names of 11 judicial members and 10 technical members. From all of these recommendations, only some of them were appointed by the government... rest of the names went to (the) wait list," he added. To this, Attorney General KK Venugopal replied: "The government is entitled to not follow certain recommendations".

Covid may become more manageable to handle in 6 months: Health Body Chief



NEW DELHI, 15 OCT [NDTV]: Covid will start becoming endemic in India in the next six months, a top expert has said, asserting that a new variant can't alone bring a third wave of infections.

"This pandemic has defied most of our predictions but in the next six months, we will approach endemic status," Sujat Singh, the Director of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) told NDTV in an exclusive interview.

Dr Singh said Covid becoming endemic would mean the infection becoming more manageable and easier on the health infrastructure.

"If the mortality and morbidity is under control, then we can manage the disease," he said, adding that Kerala, which had a large susceptible pool, is also emerging from the raging Covid crisis it was battling a few weeks ago.

Vaccination is the biggest protection against the coronavirus, stressed Dr Singh.

"75 crore people have been vaccinated. If vaccine effectiveness is 70 per cent, then around 50 crore people

in India have got immunity. A single dose gives 30-31% immunity. So the 30 crore people, who have received a single dose, are also immunised," he said.

The expert warned that even after vaccination people need to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour. Breakthrough infections, or fully-vaccinated people getting infected, will happen in 20-30 per cent of cases, Dr Singh said.

"Breakthrough infections are also because of the new variants. Scientists say within 70 to 100 days of vaccination the immunity level starts dropping," he explained.

It is through more exposure to the virus and vaccination that the infections would reduce, Dr Singh said.

According to the NCDC chief, there is no new variant in India. The C1.2 and Mu strains that are currently raising concern have not been found in the country.

"Just a new variant cannot cause a third wave. The factor will be a mix of behaviour and antibodies. There is some worry because of the festival season," Dr Singh said.



MANJUSRI PUBLIC SCHOOL

ADMISSIONS FOR 2022 ACADEMIC SESSION

Applications for admission are now being accepted for the 2022 academic session for Grades KG - IX. Last date for accepting of application is 30 September 2021 depending on availability of seats. Applications may be submitted online through the school website www.mpssikkim.edu.in or at the City Campus office, M.G Marg.

Telephone enquiries may be directed to
Mr. Christopher Rai: 03592 203093, 9474838324

Chungyal Complex, M G Marg, Gangtok, Sikkim 737101
Email: mpsadmin@mpssikkim.edu.in

Webinar on

"MAKING SIKKIM DISASTER & CLIMATE RESILIENT BY 2030"

September 18th, 2021

11 AM Onwards

Chief Guest

Shri. Kunga Nima Lepcha
Hon'ble Minister
Land Revenue & Disaster
Management, Education, Law,
Legislative & Parliamentary
Affairs, Sports & Youth Affairs
Government of Sikkim

State Disaster Risk Reduction Day, 2021

Guests of Honour

Shri. S.C. Gupta (IAS)
Chief Secretary
Government of Sikkim

Shri. K. Kishore
Member
NDMA

Dr. (Prof.) Rajib Shaw
Keio University
Japan

In Presence of

Prof. V.K. Sharma
Vice Chairman
SSDMA

Ms. Sarala Rai (IAS)
State Relief Commissioner
Cum Secretary
LR&DMD
Government of Sikkim

Guest Speakers

Dr. Sanjay Vashist
Director, CANSA

Dr. Anshu Sharma
Co-Founder, SEEDS

Web Link

URL: <https://bharatvc.nic.in/join/4250290108>
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Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department
Government of Sikkim
www.ssdma.nic.in
ssdma.lrd@sikkim.gov.in

R.O No. 124/ipr/pub/Dis/21-22
dated: 15.09.21

Gujarat Cabinet oath deferred, sources hint at differences over names

NEW DELHI, 15 SEPT [NDTV]: The oath ceremony of the new cabinet of Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel -- slated to be held today -- was deferred for tomorrow at the last minute after elaborate arrangements were made at the Governor's house and large hoardings were put up. Sources indicated that differences over the new council of ministers are at the bottom of the sudden reschedule.

A terse tweet from the Chief Minister's Office read: "The swearing-in ceremony of the new cabinet of CM Shri @Bhupendrabjp will take place tomorrow, September 16, 2021 at 1.30 pm at Raj Bhavan, Gandhinagar".

The entire Gujarat cabinet had resigned last week along with then Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

In line with the view that the BJP was aiming at a hard reboot in the state ahead of next year's assembly elections, there were reports that all 22 ministers will be dropped.

All of it was thought to have been an elaborate plan that was signed off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for their home state.

Now it appears that the local leaders are determined to have their say, if not their way as well.

Through the day today, there were meetings at different places and four or five ministers were said to have gathered at the home of Vijay Rupani. Sources said it will soon become clear if senior ministers like Nitin Patel, RC Faldu, Bhupendra Singh Chudasma, Kaushik Patel and a few others are retained or dropped.

Sources also indicated that it was unlikely that all ministers will be dropped. Even so, the new cabinet will have its fair share of young faces and women, they added.

PM Modi's hard reboot of the Union cabinet earlier this year was conducted after a detailed performance appraisal of the ministers. Many, who were considered to have done well, escaped the purge.

Others holding key portfolios, like Harsh Vardhan (Health), Ravi Shankar Prasad (Law and IT) and Prakash Javadekar (Environment), were dropped.

In Gujarat, Mr Rupani was said to have pushed himself out of office with what was seen as his mis-handling of the second wave of Covid this summer and some other administrative issues.

The shock resignation was followed by the equally unexpected selection of Bhupendra Patel for the top post. Even the candidate said he was in the dark. Two days later, Mr Patel -- said to be the compromise candidate amid several prominent names -- took oath in Gandhinagar in presence of Amit Shah.

Institution of Engineers celebrates 54th Engineers' Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT: Institution of Engineers (India) i.e., IE(I) of Sikkim State Centre in association with ATTC, Bardang, celebrated 54th Engineers' Day at ATTC campus today, a press release informs.

Chairman IE(I), retired Chief Engineer, GP Sharma, Government of Sikkim delivered the welcome address and also congratulated all awardees.

The annual report was presented by Honorary Secretary, Lochan K Adhikari, IE(I) and Vice Principal, ATTC. Emphasis was laid on membership of all engineers in the IE(I), Sikkim State Centre for the benefit of the society as a whole.

The keynote address was given by Prof (Dr) NS Chauhan of College of Agriculture and Post-Harvest Technology (CAEPHT), Ranipool, East Sikkim on the topic, "Engineers for Skill Development & Employment in combating COVID".

Three engineers from Sikkim were awarded for their meritorious service especially in the time of COVID-19, where they stepped forward to serve the state with utmost dedication.

Factory Manager, Er Rahul Kulkarni, Titan Company Limited, Majhitar, East Sikkim, Er Ravi Shekhar Chauhan, Biomedical Engineer as well as Er Anusha Sharma, Assistant Engineer, both from Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Sikkim were the three awardees who were presented with memento for their outstanding service to the state of Sikkim especially during COVID times.

An inter-departmental quiz competition was also conducted for ATTC students in a unique manner wherein students used their own mobile phones to answer fastest finger first questions. The winner of the quiz, Nishant Anand participated virtually from Bihar while the rest of the contestants were present on location. Anurag Mishra and Santosh Pradhan were the runners-up and were awarded cash prizes.

The 54th Engineers' Day was attended by faculty members of ATTC, Bardang, SMIT Majhitar and CAEPHT, Ranipool while practicing social distancing norms during the entire event.

The vote of thanks was given by ECE department, Dr Kushal Pokhrel, SMIT Majhitar who thanked everyone for participating in the celebration and wished the students good luck for their career ahead.



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Roads & Bridges Minister completes week-long tour of constituency

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 15 SEPT: On the last day of his week-long tour, Minister cum MLA Lachen Mangan, Samdup Lepcha met a large gathering of public at Upper Singhik Ward, Lower Singhik Ward, Upper Mangan Bazaar, Middle Mangan Bazaar, Lower Mangan Bazaar and Pakshek ward in North Sikkim today.

During his visit, the Area MLA held a fruitful meeting with the public of various wards, along with Sikkim Krantikari-

Morchaparty cadres to listen to their grievances.

Meanwhile, he also held an open discussion and gave assurances to resolve all the demands. He stressed that their major issues will be placed before the Chief Minister of Sikkim.

He urged the people to take advantage of the various schemes launched by the SKM government.

The public expressed their gratitude for his leadership and assured their cooperation.

Teesta-V Power Station observes Engineers' Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT: NHPC, Teesta-V Power Station, Sikkim, observed Engineers' Day on 15 September, at Balutar, East Sikkim, to commemorate the birthday of visionary Engineer "Bharat Ratna" Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, a press release informs.

Speaking on the occasion, Executive Director, Siliguri Region, S.P. Mukharjee, said that Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya was a prolific engineer who made significant contribution in creating infrastructure facilities and nation building in India.

He also said that engineers can transform vision into action, should have courage to think different and ability to provide optimum solutions to the problems.

He urged engineers to build "knowledge bank" with their expertise and to follow the morals of Sir Visvesvaraya which will help them to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Jitendra Kumar, General Manager (E), Yogeswar Majhi, General Manager (E), Engineers/ officers of Teesta-V Power Station & Teesta-VI HEP were present on the occasion.

50 selected for 3-month tourism training in Guwahati

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT: To bring out the best in the young, a workshop under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana [PMKVY] and Tourism & Hospitality Sector Skill Council [THSC] for recruitment, training and placement of wards of Ex-servicemen and youths of Sikkim was held today at Black Cat Defence Auditorium, Gangtok.

GOC Trishakti Corps, Lt Gen Ajai Kumar Singh, YSM, SM, VSM, gave the keynote address in the

workshop.

The course is fully sponsored by Oil India Ltd and the training partner is Pragati Edutech, Guwahati, Assam.

Out of 60 participants, 50 were selected to undergo three-month free training and hostel facilities at Skill Development Institute [SDI], Guwahati. Pragati Edutech Pvt Ltd, which has institutional ties in the tourism industry, will provide nearly 100% placement on completion of the course, the release informs.

KVK-East conducts training on seasonal vegetables for Anganwadi Workers

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT (PIB):

Nutrition is the most important factor in maintaining and keeping good health. Nutrition begins with food and includes everything that the body needs in order to live i.e., function and grow. Good nutrition is an important foundation for the holistic development of a society. Anganwadi workers perform a crucial role in motivating different households to design and develop nutrient efficient, energy rich balanced diet for all-inclusive nutrition.

Celebrating Poshan Maah-2021, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, East Sikkim organized a training programme on Seasonal Vegetables for Nutritional Security to the Anganwadi Workers on 14 Sept, 2021. The programme was graced by Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong as Chief Guest, Supervisor, Jerelina Lepcha, Anganwadi, 46 nos. of Anganwadi workers, Scientists and other staff of ICAR Sikkim Centre and KVK-East Sikkim.

During the inaugural programme Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR-



Sikkim Centre, Tadong highlighted the importance of balanced diet to improve an individual's health and well-being and reduces risks of major causes of diseases. Agriculture is the sector best placed to affect food production and consumption of nutritious foods needed for healthy and active lives. Principal Scientist (Veterinary Parasitology), Dr Ram Gopal Laha, ICAR Sikkim Centre spoke on interdependence of livestock and agri-horti farming for nutritional security. Livestock contribute to food supply by converting low-value materials, inedible or unpalatable for people, into milk, meat, and eggs.

Anganwadi Supervisor, Jerelina Lepcha expressing her gratitude towards ICAR Sikkim Centre for organizing a much needed training on seasonal vegetable for nu-

tritional security to the Anganwadi workers. She sought more help of KVK in training on nutritional gardening. Head (I/C), Dr JK Singh, KVK East Sikkim welcomed everyone to the programme and briefed about the genesis of Poshan Maah Celebrations. He also discussed the effect of balanced diet on health.

During the technical session, Scientist (Horticulture), Dr Sudip Kr Dutta, ICAR-Sikkim Centre explained about seasonal vegetable for nutritional security, Scientist (Plant Breeding), Dr Elamalakshmi briefed of biofortified crops varieties and its health benefits and Dr JK Singh spoke on Nutri-cereals and its role on human health.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks delivered by SMS (Agronomy), Dr Manoj Kumar, KVK-East Sikkim.

Parent-teacher meet organized by Lingi Payong School



SUMMIT REPORT

Gangtok, 15 Sept:

A parent-teacher meet was conducted in Lingi Payong Secondary School today to deliberate and discuss various issues related to students and school, a press release informs.

Parents/guardians of students studying in Class IX-X attended the meeting along with school staff.

The issues discussed were online/virtual class and performance of students and assessment, attendance and response of students in online class,

problems and issues faced during online class by teachers and students, new pattern of assessment by CBSE in 2021-22, issues related to smart-TV provided for e-learning, use of Sikkim Edutech App and other learning app for online learning, arrangement of offline class wherever and whenever possible.

Headmaster of school and In-charge, Satyendra Singh briefed the gathering about the issues. Few guardians also raised some queries on different issues and clarified their doubts. The minutes of the meeting were recorded by Arjun Koirala.

Put on record that Sikkimese Nepali are not immigrants, SRP challenges SNS



SAGARCHETTRI

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT:

Sikkim Republican Party president, KB Rai, today challenged Sikkim Naagrik Samaj [SNS] to place a proposal to the State government stating that the Sikkimese Nepali communities are original inhabitants of Sikkim and referring to them as immigrants and foreigners is wrong.

This was in response to a recent statement by SNS chief patron, Tseten Tashi Bhutia that the Sikkimese Nepali communities have been wrongly termed immigrants by some politicians for their selfish interests.

If SNS takes this matter up with the Centre and the Parliament in order to correct mistakes in various historical and other documents, Mr Rai announced that he will dissolve Sikkim Republic Party and join SNS.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Rai presented various documents and stated that Sikkimese Nepalis are still referred to as immigrants and foreigners in different historical and other documents and no one is using this word just for political benefit. He alleged that those who are saying

that the chapter on the immigrant tag has been closed are actually trying to silence the Sikkimese Nepalis.

Sikkimese Nepali have not been able to enjoy their rights fully just because of the immigrant tag in important historical documents, said Mr Rai further adding that Sikkimese Nepali would become refugees in their own land in the near future if nothing is done about it.

Mr Rai stressed that SNS should not only raise the issue of restoring Nepali seats in the state assembly but should be able to explain the reservation formula as well.

Until Sikkimese Nepali do not get proportionate seat reservation in the assembly, Article 371F will not protect all communities of Sikkim legally and constitutionally, state the SRP president.

He alleged that SNS president Bharat Basnet has been speaking on behalf of those people who do not want left-out communities of Sikkim to get tribal status. He further alleged that the feudal system still exists in the state and his party has been working towards bringing all communities of Sikkim together on the same platform.

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DOCUMENTS LOST:

I Leeyong Lepcha s/o Pempa Tsering Lepcha r/o Hee-Gyathang Lower Dzongu North Sikkim have lost my original copy of my class X CBSE 2019 marksheet bearing roll 3156358. My GD no is 106 dt.08.09.2021 at Mangan police station.

KUTSE SHEGU

The Kutse Shugu of Karma Choden Bhutia, who left for her heavenly abode on 30th July, 2021, falls on 16th September, 2021. We request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to join us in prayers for the departed soul at our residence in Dalapchand, Aritar, East Sikkim.

We would also like to thank all those who have been with us in our time of bereavement.



Dorjee Dadul Bhutia [father] 9932351351
Denden Bhutia [mother] 9593833603
Karma Gelay Bhutia [elder brother] 9593637006
Sonam Ongmu Bhutia [sister in law] 9564544180
Rinzing Thendup Bhutia [younger brother] 9775923050
Tshering Donka Bhutia [younger sister] 7797880770
Dorjee Layden Bhutia [younger sister] 9903218446
Sonam Ongdi Bhutia [brother in law] 9733084945

Training on Trout and Carp Farming at Majhitar concludes

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT (IPR): Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department, LokNath Sharma attended the Valedictory Session of the three-days long Skill Development Training Programme on Trout and Carp Farming at Atal Incubation Centre (AIC)-SMUTBI, Majhitar, East Sikkim, today.

The Minister expressed happiness over the participation of youths entrepreneurs in the Skill Development Training on fisheries and anticipated a new dimension of success as an output of the training session.

He informed that at present the state records annual import of fish of around Rs 26-27 crore and now aspiring fisheries entrepreneurs have an absolute opportunity to grab the market with intensive trout/ carp farming at a large scale.

He urged trainees to be motivated in enhancing capacity and attitudinal predisposition to begin a new revolution in the fisheries sector. The sector would play an instrumental role in a joint venture of making Sikkim a self-reliant state.

He urged trainees to work with strong determination and added that the government is always ready to extend all possible support and cooperation.

He added that the State Government has formed two Fish Farmers



Producer Organizations (FFPOs) at Regu in East and Sribadam in West District and also highlighted various benefits entitled by these FFPOs.

The State Government has availed a 35% subsidy to the unemployed youths under the Skilled Youth Start-Up Scheme and advised emerging entrepreneurs to manage to use the opportunities for substantial growth in the fisheries and farming sector.

He also visited various units of Atal Incubation Centre, an independent entity supported by NITI Aayog and further appreciated technically skilled innovative designs like Vertical Farming Internet of Things (IOT).

He also informed that the State Fish Mela is tentatively scheduled for 29th and 30th September 2021.

Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Dr Sangey D. Bhutia expressed happiness on the feedback of the participants. He urged trainees to utilise the obtained inputs in fisheries farming and

share knowledge further with the interested farmers in the society. He also advised the Directorate of Fisheries to conduct such training programme on a periodical basis.

One of the notable participant entrepreneurs from Namchey-bong, DeewakarBasnett, made the session, educative and encouraging for the trainees, whereby the participants get to know the wide scope and opportunities in the fisheries sector. He also acknowledged growth in the farming sector.

SurajRai from Regu also shared his feedback and expressed gratitude to the Government for providing opportunities in building entrepreneurship skills in Carp and Trout Culture.

During the valedictory session, the Minister also handed over the Certificate of Participation to the trainees.

The programme began with the welcome address by CEO AIC/Majhitar, Dr TejChingtham concluded with the vote of thanks presented by the Director/ Directorate of Fisheries, N. Jaswant.



CM meets PhD student, awards financial assistance

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT:

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang met Deepa Rai, daughter of Govind Rai of Soreng, West Sikkim, at his official residence in Mintokgang, today.

A press release from the Chief Min-

ister's Office informs that she is the first person from Sikkim to clear the Research Eligibility Test (RET) conducted by Tripura University and will be pursuing her Ph.D. on the Impacts of Eco-Tourism in Sikkim.

The Chief Minister expressed his

best wishes to her for all future efforts and hoped she continues in the same spirit. As a token of support, he also provided financial assistance of Rs 2 lakhs from the Chief Minister's Discretionary Grant (CMDG) for her endeavours.

Awareness on organic quinoa cultivation by KVK

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT:

A day-long programme on "Cluster Frontline Demonstration on Quinoa and Awareness cum Input Distribution" was organized by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mangan, North Sikkim, in coordination with District Agriculture Division (East/West/North/South) at the Training Hall, SAMETI Office, Tadong on 15 Sept, 2021.

The programme had Director Agriculture, Tilak Gajemere as the chief guest and was attended by Senior Scientist cum Head KVK Mangan, North Sikkim, Tshering Thendup Bhutia and Joint Director, Agriculture (East), Rachna Gurung, Subject Matter Specialist, (Agronomy), Pusal Sharma and around 60 participants including HDOs, ADOs, Inspectors, VLW, Marketing Assistants, Field Assistants of Agriculture and Horticulture (East) Departments.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior Scientist cum Head KVK Mangan, North Sikkim, who was also the Resource Person of the programme, Tshering Thendup Bhutia, highlighted that quinoa is one of the best high value crops having the potential to grow in Sikkim's climatic condition. He stated that since the crop has commercial and various nutritious values, it is now in high demand in national and international market.



He mentioned that since 5-6 years, KVK Mangan, held adaptive trials on this crop at their farm and after observing the success of this crop, it is now in a phase to expand production to other parts of the state.

The Resource Person spoke about several important aspects of quinoa cultivation. Through his Power Point Presentation, he gave detailed Package of Practices on quinoa cultivation which included introduction of the crop, climate condition, soil condition, field preparation, seed rate and sowing, organic nutrient management, weed management, water management, pest management, disease management, harvesting and threshing and yield and storage.

Mentioning the potential of the said crop in Sikkim soil and observing the market value, the Resource Person said that quinoa cultivation is one of the best ways to increase farmer's income and a sustainable agriculture option.

At the outset, the

chief guest, Director Agriculture, Tilak Gajemere, in his key note address, applauded the resource person for providing such detailed information on quinoa cultivation. He stated that Quinoa is a super food since it has all nine essential amino acids and valuable minerals apart from other beneficial nutrients. He mentioned that since the crop is new to farmers, one must be careful and knowledgeable while introducing such crops at farmers' level.

Wishing all success to the participants, the chief guest mentioned that, it is a golden opportunity for the field functionaries to work in the quinoa production project for the betterment of farmers. Quinoa seeds were distributed to ten blocks of East District on the day.

The programme was also addressed by Joint Director Agriculture East, Rachna Gurung and the vote of thanks was delivered by Agriculture Development Officer, Hissey Doma Bhutia.

Kerala announces comprehensive Caravan Tourism policy

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEP 15 (PTI):

Rising to the demands and preferences of tourists in the post-pandemic world, Kerala on Thursday announced a comprehensive, stakeholder-friendly Caravan Tourism Policy, promising the visitors safe, customized and closest-to-nature travel experience.

This marks a paradigm shift in almost three decades after the state made it big with houseboat tourism that provided a unique experience to visitors and positioned the state as a major global destination, Tourism Minister P A Mohamed Riyas said while unveiling the policy, which offers attractive investment subsidies to Caravan operators.

Like other successful tourism products of Kerala launched since the 1990s, Caravan Tourism is also to be developed on PPP mode with private investors, tour operators and local communities being key stakeholders, Riyas said at a press conference here.

He said investment subsidy would be given to Caravan operators, the details of which would be announced soon.

The policy envisages laying down the broad framework for the development and encouragement of Caravan Tourism in Kerala, predominantly in the private sector through incentivizing the

purchase of caravans and for establishing caravan parks, chalking out the process and procedures for its operations and approvals, the Minister added.

On the occasion, Riyas also unveiled the logo of Caravan Tourism. The project will be rolled out in the next few months.

Caravan Tourism imparts an added thrust to the state's inclusive approach of leveraging the tourism potential of the entire state by bringing to attention many unexplored spots side-by-side the promotion of established destinations. Every unexplored destination can be made accessible with the roll out of this meticulously drawn up policy, said Venu V, Additional Chief Secretary of Tourism.

The two major components of this activity are Tourism Caravans and Caravan Parks. While the first involves specially-built vehicles for travel, leisure and stay, the Caravan Parks are designated places to park the vehicles and enable the visitors to spend a night or a day or station for an extended period to explore the destination.

Caravan Tourism will also promote Responsible Tourism activities for sustainable growth and for the benefit of the local communities, promote eco-friendly practices and market for local products.

Green Film Festival gets underway

GANGTOK, 15 SEPT (IPR): The three-day Green Film Festival and Forum on Environment and Wildlife commenced at Sidkeong Tulku Conference Hall of Forest Secretariat in Deorali today.

The event is being organized by SECURE Himalaya Project of UNDP with the support of Forest and Environment Department, Government of Sikkim and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India and CMS Vatavaran.

The festival was inaugurated by Additional Chief Secretary-cum-PCCF, Forest Department, ML Srivastava in the presence of Conservator of Forest, (Wildlife)-cum-nodal officer (SECURE Himalaya Project), Additional Director, Udai Gurung, Deputy Director, Rajni Bhandari, CMS Vatavaran, Sabyesachi Bharti, FTII faculty member, Ritesh Taksande, and UNDP representatives.

The programme was attended by participants including college students, professors and NGO members from Sikkim.

Addressing the gathering, ACS-cum-PCCF, Mr Srivastava stressed on the need for dynamic sensitisation on climate change and its effects with a major focus on the conservation of biodiversity. He added that it can be achieved by acknowledging a shift in habitual attitudes towards nature.

Highlighting the role of mass media in spreading mass awareness on environmental issues, he stated that the Green Film workshop will offer a great platform for the participants to understand and enhance their environmental storytelling skills for wider outreach.

The inaugural session was also addressed by Conservator of Forest, Udai Gurung, wherein he briefly spoke about the various components of the SECURE Himalaya Project and expressed hope that the workshop would be interactive and come to fruition while achieving the objective of spreading awareness on environmental issues.

The first two days of the Green Film Festival and Forum will feature a Green MOJO Filmmaking workshop on environmental filmmaking, mobile journalism and post-production along with practical works and evaluation, which will be conducted by faculty member, SKIFT at FTII, Mojo Educator and Film & Photography Educator, Ritesh Taksande.

The final day of the festival on 17 September will include a screening of around 11 national and international nominated and awarded as well as SECURE Himalaya films on environment and wildlife issues. The festival will conclude with a quiz competition followed by an award in the closing ceremony.

It may be mentioned here that the Green Film Festival and forum is part of the 9th CMS Vatavaran Travelling Film Festival and Forum being held in Uttarakhand, Ladakh, Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh. The idea behind this festival and forum is to support this unique green movement for conservation through the medium of films, festivals and forums and engage with a cross-section of stakeholders including the Government of India, media, conservation organizations, experts, academics, corporations, youth and the general public.

Single-dose Sputnik Light approved for Phase 3 bridging trials in India

NEW DELHI, 15 SEPT

[NDTV]: The single-dose COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik Light received approval from the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) today to conduct phase 3 bridging trials in India.

Last year, Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories had partnered with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to conduct phase 3 trials of the vaccine. After the company submitted safety, immunogenicity and effi-

cacy data, the SEC granted permission for conducting the trials in India, a statement by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation said.

"The committee noted that the firm has now presented the safety and immunogenicity along with the longevity of the antibodies which gives a measure of persistence of antibodies in the participants," the statement added.

In May, Dr Reddy's CEO Deepak Sapra told NDTV that the company

will have discussions with the government and the regulator in June for an immediate launch. But in July, the expert committee refused to grant emergency-use authorisation for Sputnik Light, ruling out third phase trials for the vaccine developed by Russia's Gamaleya Institute. The committee had said it did not find any "scientific rationale" for the trials to be conducted.

According to Sputnik Light makers, the vaccine has shown an efficacy of 79.4 per cent

अन्त्येष्टि कार्यको सूचना



हाम्रा दिवंगत पिताश्री मुकुन्द प्रसाद ढकालको १३ दिनको अन्त्येष्टि क्रिया ७ सेप्टेम्बर, २०२१, मंगलवारदेखि शुरु गरिएको छ। उहाँको अन्त्येष्टि क्रिया १९ सेप्टेम्बर, २०२१, आइतवारको दिन निज निवास लिङ्मो, मिडल कोल्थाङ, दक्षिण सिक्किममा हुने भएको छ। यस दुःखद घडीमा हामीलाई साथ अनि सान्त्वना दिनुहुने हाम्रा बन्धु-बान्धव, इष्ट-मित्र, शुभचिन्तक, आफन्तहरू सबैलाई अन्त्येष्टि कार्यमा उपस्थित भएर उहाँको आत्मा शान्तिको निम्ति श्रद्धाञ्जली अर्पण गरिदिनुहुन अनुरोध गर्दछौं।

अन्त्येष्टि कार्य (१३ दिने): १९ सेप्टेम्बर, २०२१ (आइतवार)
स्थान: लिङ्मो मिडल कोल्थाङ, दक्षिण सिक्किम

शोकालु परिवार:
छुबियावा ढकाल (आमा)
टिकामाय ढकाल (पत्नी)
दुर्गाप्रसाद ढकाल (बाबु)
गोपाल ढकाल/तारा ढकाल (छोरा-बुहारी)
उमा शर्मा/ योगेन निरौला (छोरी-ज्वाइँ)
दिमा शर्मा/ प्रकाश अधिकारी (छोरी-ज्वाइँ)
नम्रता शर्मा/ रविन गण्डारी (छोरी-ज्वाइँ) तिला शर्मा (छोरी)
सम्पर्क: 9733134776 / 9064893511 / 9593377644

आउनुहोस्, निशुल्क 'आयुष्मान कार्ड' बनाउनुहोस् अनि रु 5 लाख सम्मको निशुल्क उपचार पाउनुहोस्।

आपके द्वारा आयुष्मान: सेप्टेम्बर २०२१ देखि शुरु निशुल्क कार्ड बनाउन हेतु याम विकास केन्द्र, सीएससी केन्द्र, PAN सेवा केन्द्र जिला अस्पताल, एस टी एन एम अस्पताल र मनपा अस्पताल मा संपर्क गर्नुहोस्।

अधिक जानकारीको निम्ति - 18001928663 / 14555 मा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्।

प्रधान मंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना स्वास्थ्य र परिवार कल्याण विभाग, सिक्किम सरकार

Wildlife Worries

The wildlife numbers might be healthy, but what about their actual health

Deer stumble into villages along the edge of forests diseased and suffering from open sores. Sometimes, dogs set upon the sick animal and bring her down and at other times people try to care for the animal and make its final hours as comfortable as possible. Elsewhere, farmers are reporting raids by wild boars even in North Sikkim. Even the wilds along Tsomgo now have wild boar populations competing with the wildlife there for the scarce resources. Parts of West and South Sikkim have been grappling with increased incidence of wild boar raids for a while now and these packs are clearly now expanding to new terrains. Both incidents are playing out due to half-cock policy interventions. It is “proper” to ban hunting, but even the half-educated know that forest dwellers and traditional hunting are allowed even when a strict hunting ban is in place. Not so in Sikkim. What should actually have been a strictly enforced ban on recreational hunting has instead banned this traditional activity altogether from Sikkim. Traditional hunting, apart from providing the much-needed protein supplement for communities living along forest belts, also played the important role of culling the sick and the weak from animal herds before they infected the rest. Accept it, no matter how good a hunter someone is, they are only good enough to bring down the weakest of the pack. Rural pragmatism also ensured that such hunting was also regulated and almost honorable in the manner it was carried out and had worked a fine arrangement to maintain the balance. But then Gangtok banned it for all of Sikkim (except the privileged for whom the laws don’t apply equally). What this has resulted in is an unbalanced growth. And nature does not like that. Also, in the case of wild boars, it is not just farms that are being dug up, but even bigger, but solitary, animals like the bears being chased out of their traditional haunts. Okay, this last one is speculative, but it is not as far out as some might argue. The point being made is that while it is wonderful that Sikkim’s wildlife population is supposedly growing, it is important now to find out whether it is also healthier and whether some informed decisions need to be made to ensure that better health returns to the wildlife.

About hunting... Has anyone ever heard of anyone reasonably well-heeled ever get picked up for poaching in Sikkim. And yes, since even traditional hunting practices are no longer allowed in Sikkim, all hunting is poaching irrespective of those with bog caliber guns and searchlights on their vehicles might say. For far too long, Sikkim has heard of only lay villagers getting rounded up for wildlife offences and the only confiscations have been primitive guns and even more primitive traps. Hunting by the well-connected was an open secret and conveniently ignored much to Sikkim’s disadvantage.

And now, let’s return to the wildlife and even turn the initial observation on its head. Even though few people like to admit it, with hardly any predators around, and given the fact that nearly 50% of the land in Sikkim is officially recorded as being under forest cover, the wildlife density, or at least its visibility, is not half teeming as the laws and maps would lead one to believe. The biodiversity hotspot that Sikkim is introduced as, should manifest itself in more obvious displays, on would expect. While the loss of contiguous forest belts to human encroachment could have resulted in some depletion in wildlife numbers, it is unfortunate that even areas where wildlife was abundant even till recent times, have fewer animals left. These numbers, as mentioned earlier, should have multiplied given the anti-hunting laws and absence of predators. It is also possible that the animals have been driven deeper into the forests, but even that needs to be authenticated because Sikkim is a very small state and the forests here run only so deep before they start touching a habitation on the other side. By a lay thumb rule, sightings should have been much more frequent.

And, to end with the argument this piece began with - let us have a proper wildlife census commissioned for Sikkim and along with it, also a proper, scientific study on how well the wildlife is keeping.

WRITE US:

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



Pew’s new global survey of climate change attitudes finds promising trends but deep divides

KATE T. LUONG, ED MAIBACH & JOHN KOTCHER
theconversation.com

People’s views about climate change, from how worried they are about it affecting them to how willing they are to do something about it, have shifted in developed countries around the world in recent years, a new survey by the Pew Research Center finds.

The study polled more than 16,000 adults in 17 countries considered to be advanced economies. Many of these countries have been large contributors to climate change and will be expected to lead the way in fixing it.

In general, the survey found that a majority of people are concerned about global climate change and are willing to make lifestyle changes to reduce its effects.

However, underneath this broad pattern lie more complicated trends, such as doubt that the international community can effectively reduce climate change and deep ideological divides that can hinder the transition to cleaner energy and a climate-friendly world. The survey also reveals an important disconnect between people’s attitudes and the enormity of the challenge climate change poses.

Here’s what stood out to us as professionals who study the public’s response to climate change. **STRONG CONCERN AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ACTION**

In all the countries surveyed in early 2021 except Sweden, between 60% and 90% of the citizens reported feeling somewhat or very concerned about the harm they would personally face from climate change. While there was a clear increase in concern in several countries between 2015, when Pew conducted the same survey, and 2021, this number did not change significantly in the U.S.

Similarly, in all countries except Japan, at least 7 out of 10 people said they are willing to make some or a lot of changes in how they live and work to help address global climate change.

Across most countries, young people were much more likely than older generations to report higher levels of both concern about climate change and willingness to change their behaviors.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

Clearly, on a global level, people are highly con-

cerned about this existential threat and are willing to change their everyday behaviors to mitigate its impacts. However, focusing on changing individual behaviors alone will not stop global warming.

In the U.S., for example, about 74% of greenhouse gas emissions are from fossil fuel combustion. People can switch to driving electric vehicles or taking electric buses and trains, but those still need power. To pressure utilities to shift to renewable energy requires policy-level changes, both domestically and internationally.

When we look at people’s attitudes regarding how their own country is handling climate change and how effective international actions would be, the results painted a more complex picture.

On average, most people evaluated their own government’s handling of climate change as “somewhat good,” with the highest approval numbers in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Singapore and New Zealand. However, data shows that such positive evaluations are not actually warranted. The 2020 U.N. Emissions Gap Report found that greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise. Many countries, including the U.S., are projected to miss their target commitments to reduce emissions by 2030; and even if all countries achieve their targets, annual emissions need to be reduced much further to reach the goals set by the Paris climate agreement.

When it comes to confidence in international actions to address climate change, the survey respondents were more skeptical overall. Although the majority of people in Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea and Singapore felt confident that the international community can significantly reduce climate change, most respondents in the rest of the countries surveyed did not. France and Sweden had the lowest levels of confidence with more than 6 in 10 people being unconvinced.

Together, these results suggest that people generally believe climate change to be a problem that can be solved by individual people and governments. Most people say they are willing to change their lifestyles, but they may not have an accurate perception of the scale of actions needed to effectively address global climate change. Overall, people may be overly optimistic about their own country’s capability and commitment to reduce emissions and fight climate change, and at the same time, underestimate the value and effectiveness of international actions.

These perceptions may reflect the fact that the conversation surrounding climate change so far has been dominated by calls to change individual behaviors instead of emphasizing the necessity of collective and policy-level actions. Addressing these gaps is an important goal for people who are working in climate communication and trying to increase public support for stronger domestic policies and international collaborations.

DEEP IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE IN CLIMATE ATTITUDES

As with most surveys about climate change attitudes, the new Pew report reveals a deep ideological divide in several countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the U.S. leads in ideological differences for all but one question. In the U.S., 87% of liberals are somewhat or very concerned about the personal harms from climate change, compared to only 28% of conservatives – a stark 59-point difference. This difference persists for willingness to change one’s lifestyle (49-point difference), evaluation of government’s handling of climate change (41-point difference), and perceived economic impacts of international actions (41-point difference).

And the U.S. is not alone; large ideological differences were also found in Canada, Australia and the Netherlands. In fact, only Australians were more divided than Americans on how their government is handling the climate crisis.

This ideological divide is not new, but the size of the gap between people on the two ends of the ideological spectrum is astounding. The differences lie not only in how to handle the issue or who should be responsible but also in the scope and severity of climate change in the first place. Such massive, entrenched differences in public understanding and acceptance of the scientific facts regarding climate change will present significant challenges in enacting much-needed policy changes.

Better understanding of the cultural, political and media dynamics that shape those differences might reveal helpful insights that could ease the path toward progress in slowing climate change.

[Kate T. Luong is Postdoctoral Research Fellow, George Mason University; Ed Maibach is Director of Center for Climate Communication, George Mason University; John Kotcher is Assistant Professor of Communications, George Mason University]

Poverty got worse in 2020 as many low-wage workers took the brunt of the economic blows

ELENA DELAVEGA
theconversation.com

Poverty in the U.S. increased in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic hammered the economy and unemployment soared. Those at the bottom of the economic ladder were hit hardest, new figures confirm, suggesting that the recession may have widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

The share of Americans living below the poverty line – pegged at US\$26,695 for a family of four – increased by about 1 percentage point to 11.4% from 10.5% a year earlier, the U.S. Census Bureau announced on Sept. 14, 2021.

This metric includes wages and other sources of income, such as Social Security payments and, quite significantly in 2020, unemployment benefits. Without the massive boost in unemployment

benefits that flowed to millions of jobless Americans for more than a year, the poverty rate would surely have climbed much higher.

As a social scientist who researches poverty, I’m concerned about the severe income loss some Americans experienced and signs that the nation’s extreme income inequality only got worse in 2020.

LOW-INCOME WORKERS HIT HARDEST

Those at the bottom of the economic scale, hit much harder by the coronavirus recession, are finding it harder to bounce back, according to additional data the Census Bureau released. It’s what has been termed a K-shaped recovery.

Consider what happened with typical household income, which decreased by 2.9% in inflation-adjusted terms to \$67,521 in 2020, from \$69,560 in 2019.

At the same time, full-time year-round workers saw their real median earnings increase 6.9% from 2019 levels – indicating that losses were borne primarily by part-time workers and people who aren’t employed throughout the whole year.

What’s more, the share of aggregate income – the sum of all incomes generated in the whole country – for the lowest-income households declined by 3.4%, while it increased by 0.7% among the highest-income households.

In another sign that low-income workers were hit the hardest in 2020, 53% of all jobs lost were held by workers earning less than \$34,000 per year.

It’s unclear whether these inequality-exacerbating trends are continuing in 2021 or will be sustained in the years to come. But in June 2021, employment for low-

wage workers had fallen by 21% from January 2020 levels, while employment for high-income workers had gained 9.6%.

SOME SUCCESS FOR STIMULUS AND RELIEF MEASURES

The impact of the stimulus and supports is much more apparent in the Supplemental Poverty Measure rate, which takes into account additional sources of income, such as tax credits and other government benefits.

Without the series of relief and stimulus packages implemented between March 2020 and the end of the year, the supplemental poverty rate would have reached 12.7%, the Census said. Instead it stood at only 9.1%, 2.6 percentile points lower than what it otherwise would have been.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Memphis]

Nagaland wants amicable solution to border dispute with Assam: Official

Assam-Nagaland border dispute: The decision was taken during the first meeting of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly select committee which was constituted in August to examine the border issue.

Kohima: Nagaland wants an amicable settlement of the long standing inter-state border dispute with Assam and has entrusted its border affairs department to work out modalities for discussions with the government of the neighbouring state, an official said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken during the first meeting of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) select committee which was constituted in August to examine the border issue.

"The border dispute lies in the Supreme Court but we (Nagaland) are for settlement of the issue outside the court," advisor for Border affairs MhathungYanthan told reporters after coming out of the meeting.

"We had discussions on the background and genesis of the problem to understand the entire issue," he said about the meeting.

MrYanthan said that varied suggestions and opinions were given by the members, who also stressed on the need to have regular discussions before meeting the Assam government for amicable settlement of the issue.

For this the border affairs department has been entrusted to work out the modalities to settle the border issue by having proper discussion with the Assam government outside the court, he said.

Committee co-convenor, T R Zeliang, who is also the leader of Naga People's Front (NPF), said that the meeting deliberated on the past failures in respect of an amicable settlement between the two states.

In the past, Assam government had depended on the court, which cannot demarcate the boundary line between the two states, he said.

MrZeliang said Nagaland government has been attempting to settle the border dispute amicably with the involvement of the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2014 and 2015 during his tenure as chief minister but the then Assam chief minister TarunGogoi was not friendly with the Nagas, he said.

"Chief Minister HimantaBiswaSarma has a friendly relationship with Nagaland and in view of it we believe that both the states can come together to discuss the matter and settle it amicably," he said.

The ruling Democratic Alliance of Nagaland is a state level coalition of political parties of which BJP is a part. MrSarma is the most important leader of the saffron party in the north east.

MrZeliang said that the select committee meeting during the day decided that both the states should form local bodies composed of indigenous people in the border areas to sit together at the advice of the state governments.

The meeting, he said, decided to propose to bring in a neutral person - either Union Home Minister Amit Shah or Prime Minister NarendraModi - to review the past interim agreements signed between Nagaland and Assam.

"The interim agreements were one-sided and we hope to have a concrete decision between the two states soon," MrZeliang added.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio is the convenor of the select committee, while Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton and Zeliang are its co-convenors. Nagaland ministers P PaiwangKonyak and Jacob Zhimomi, and NPF MLA AmenbaYaden besides MrYanthan, are its members.

RajyaSabha MP from Nagaland K G Kenye and LokSabha MP TokhehoYepthomi are special invitees and Commissioner Nagaland and secretary in-charge of border affairs, RovilatuoMor is the select committee secretary.

The committee will submit its report to the Assembly within three months from the date of its formation, which is August 5.

Pondy sees 124 new COVID-19 cases, 2 deaths

PUDUCHERRY, SEPT 15 (PTI):Puducherry clocked 124 fresh coronavirus infections during the last 24 hours ending 10 a.m. on Wednesday, raising the overall tally to 1,25,063.

The fresh cases were identified at the end of examination of 5,345 samples and they were spread over Puducherry 87, Karaikal 29, Mahe and Yanam regions four each.

Two more patients hailing from Puducherry succumbed to the viral infection, raising the toll to 1,825.

Director of the Department of Health G Sri ramulu said there were 900 active cases of whom 170 patients were undergoing treatment in hospitals while the remaining 730 patients were in home isolation.

While 80 patients recovered and were discharged in the last twenty-four hours the overall recoveries were 1,22,338.

The Department of Health has tested so far 17.16 lakh samples and has found 14.56 lakh out of them to be negative.

The test positivity rate was 2.32 percent while fatality and recovery rates were 1.46 percent and 97.82 percent respectively.

The Director said the department has vaccinated 38,193 health care workers and 23,005 front line workers against the pandemic. He said 5.90 lakh people coming under the category of either senior citizens or those above 45 years with co morbidities have been inoculated so far. In all, 8.77 lakh people including those who received the second vaccination have been inoculated in the Union Territory so far.

Mizoram reports 1,185 new COVID cases, 2 more fatalities

AIZAWL, SEP 15 (PTI): Mizoram on Wednesday reported 1,185 new COVID-19 cases, 317 less than the previous day, with the tally increasing to 74,068, a bulletin said.

At least 240 children, five Central Reserve Police Force personnel and a health worker were among the newly infected people, it said.

The death toll rose to 246 as two more fatalities due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours, the bulletin issued by the Information and Public Relations Department said.

The single-day positivity rate was at 12.65 per cent as the 1,185 fresh cases were detected from 9,368 sample tests.

Aizawl district reported the highest number of new cases at 620, followed by Lunglei at 116 and Kolasib at 92.

Five fresh patients have travel history, while the remaining 1,180 were found to have contracted the disease locally, it said, adding that 610 have developed symptoms of COVID-19.

Mizoram now has 13,525 active cases, while 1,024 people were cured of the disease on Tuesday, taking the total number of recoveries to 60,297.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients currently stands at 81.40 per cent.

The northeastern state has conducted more than 9.83 lakh sample tests for COVID-19 till date.

According to state immunisation officer DrLalzawmi, over 6.65 lakh people have been inoculated till Tuesday, with 3.21 of them having received both doses of the vaccines.

SIKKIM JUDICIAL ACADEMY

Sokeythang, Gangtok

Ref No 12/SJA

Dated: 15.09.2021

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for filling eligible candidate for filling up of the following posts in Group ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ in the establishment of the Sikkim Judicial Academy.

Name of the post	No of vacancies	Education Qualification and other requirements.
Software Programmer Level 12 (Group B)	01	-> Bachelor of Engineering. -> Or a Bachelor in Technology. -> Or a Master in Computer Application in Information Technology or Computer Science with at least 2 years experience in Software Development. -> The candidates should be able to work in open source programming language and in Ubuntu-Linux platform.
Hardware/ Network Engineer Level 12 (Group B)	01	-> Bachelor of Engineering. -> Or a Bachelor in Technology. -> Or a Master in Computer Application in Information Technology or Computer Science or Electronic and Communication Technology with at least 2 years experience in Server Administration, Network Administration, and Hardware Trouble Shooting. Preference will be given to those candidates who have knowledge and experience in: * Ulbuntu-Linux platform. *Management of computer Network system, Local Area Netwrok, and Wide Area Network having Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol skills. * web servers, library servers. * maintenance of hardware and software devices. * Digital Library, implementing network security, firewall, router etc.
Personal Assistant, Grade II/Stenographer Level 12 (Group B)	01	-> Graduate from a recognized University. -> Have minimum sped of 80 w p m in shorthand and 40 w m p in typing and a certificate in Computer Science from any recognized Computer Centre. -> Should communicate in English both in writing as well as speaking.
Head Assistant Level 11 (Group C)	01	-> Graduate from any recognized university an possessing a certificate in Computer Science from any recognized Computer Centre.
Assistant Librarian Level 10 (Group C)	01	-> Graduate from any recognized University with a degree in Library Science from any recognized University. -> Should communicate in English both in writing as well as speaking. -> Desirable: i. Experience of restoration of documents in a library. ii. Experience in computerization of library.
Lower Division Assistant Level 7 (Group C)	03	-> Graduate from any recognized university an possessing a certificate in Computer Science from any recognized Computer Centre. -> Should have knowledge of typewriting at a minimum speed of 40 word per minute.
Account Clerk Level 7 (Group C)	01	-> Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting and finance. -> or Bachelor of Commerce in Accountancy. -> or Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting & Taxation.
Lineman Level 7 (Group C)	01	-> Class VI pass from a recognized School/Board. -> Experience in electrical works.
Driver Level 6(Group C)	02	-> Class VIII passed from a recognized school/Board. -> possessing a license in driving light vehicles with minimum experience of 3 years.
Book Binder Level 5 (Group C)	01	-> Class XII passed from a recognized School/Board with 5 years experience in Book Binding work.
Peon Level 4 (Group D)	03	-> Class VIII passed from a recognized School/Board.
Mali Level 4 (Group D)	01	-> Class V passed from a recognized School/Board.
Chowkidar Level 4 (Group D)	01	-> Class V passed from a recognized School/Board.
Sweeper Level 4 (Group D)	02	-> Class V passed from a recognized School/Board.

1.

Applicant for appointment to the above post must be citizen of India. Should have sound health, should be fit for service. Applicant should have good moral character, should have adequate knowledge of computer (if required). Applicant should be physically and mentally capable of performing . discharging his/her duties. Should be able to communicate either in Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha or any other Official languages of the State.

2.

No person shall be eligible for appointment to the services of the Academy if he/she has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for any offence under the law by a competent Authority.

3.

No person shall be eligible for appointment to the services of the Academy if he/she has more than one wife/husband living or has married a person who already has wife or husband unless the Chief Justice for special reasons exempts such person from the operation of the this Rule.

4.

No person shall be eligible for appointment to the services of the Academy by direct recruitment, unless he/she acquires the minimum qualifying marks in each of the papers in the written examination , if required to sit for it.

5.

Applicant must not be less than 18 years of age as on the 1st day of January, 2021 and not more than 40 years of age on the last day of submission of the application for all communities.

6.

Applicant fulfilling the above criteria may apply for the post by a written application addressed to the Director, Sikkim Judicial Academy, Sokeythang along with all supporting documents duly attested/ self attested as the case may be. The self attested copies of the testimonials regarding educational qualification(s), computer qualification(s), date of birth, working experiences(s) etc, as sought for, and if required should be submitted along with the application. Applicant will also submit 3(three) recent passport size photographs.

7.

Applicant will provide his/her proper address, mobile number and email address (if any) in the application.

8.

The last date for submission of application is 8th November, 2021 (Monday before 3 pm).

9.

Applications received after 8th November, 2021 (Monday after 3 pm) shall not be entertained on any ground.

10.

Applicant already in Government service or in public sector undertaking, or similar organization, whether in permanent or temporary capacity, or as work charge employee will submit their application along with No Objection Certificate from their present employer(s).

11.

Applicant will have to submit a declaration along with his/her application. The Declaration should state that he/she fulfills all the conditions/criteria; that he/she does not suffer from any of the disqualifications and he/she posses the educational qualification(s) and other requirements.

12.

There shall be a preliminary scrutiny of the applications, and candidates found eligible on preliminary scrutiny shall be issued admit cards for appearing in the written examination followed by practical examination, and the viva-voce for the posts in Group B; written examination followed by viva-voce for the posts in Group C, excluding the posts of the Lineman and Driver; practical test followed by viva-voce for the post of Lineman; Driving test followed by viva-voce for the post of Driver; and only viva-voce for the posts on Group D, respectively. List of names of candidates found eligible after preliminary scrutiny will be uploaded and displayed in the websites (www.sikkimjudicialacademy.nic.in; www.hcs.gov.in; and www.districts.ecourts.gov.in); and the notice boards of Sikkim Judicial Academy, High Court of Sikkim, and the Districts Courts of Sikkim, respectively, on 22nd November , 2021 (Monday).

13.

Dates of issuance of admit card will be intimated through sms, and be uploaded in the websites, and the notice boards.

14.

Date, Time , Venue and the details of the admit card for written examination, practical examination, interview/viva-voce will be intimated through sms and shall be uploaded in the websites, and the notice boards, respectively.

15.

Eligible applicants should appear with their original document(s) at the time of interview/ viva-voce.

16.

Sikkim Judicial Academy reserves the right to accept or reject any application with or without assigning any reasons.

17.

Please note that no separate calling letters will issued to applicants eligble for written examination, practical examination, interview/vive-voce.

18.

Information submitted by an application in his/her Application, and Declaration will bind the applicant, and if found to be false, his/ her candidature will be cancelled, forthwith. No TA/DA shall be paid for appearing in the written examination/viva-voce including such other practical tests.

19.

The applicant must ensure that all necessary details and requirements sought for in this Employment Notice, the detailed Advertisement, as well as the Sikkim Judicial Academy Employees (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Conduct) Rules, 2020 as uploaded, and displayed in the Websites, and the Notice boards, respectively are fulfilled.

Address : Sikkim Judicial Academy, Above DESME (Adhaar Office),
Lingding Road, Sokeythang, Gangtok
Phone :No: 03592-231541: 03592-231542.

R.O. No. 201/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22
Date: 15.09.2021

Sd/-
Director
Sikkim Judicial Academy

Alyssa Healy wants to replicate Rohit Sharma's success across formats

BRISBANE, SEP 15 (PTI): Top Australian cricketer Alyssa Healy says she seeks inspiration from Rohit Sharma and wants to replicate the flamboyant Indian opener's success across all three formats.

The wicketkeeper batswoman is gearing up for the multi-format series against India comprising three ODIs, a day-night Test and three T20s, starting on September 21.

Having played only four Test matches, Healy says she will approach the "tricky" pink ball fixture, which will be played from September 30 to October 3 in Canberra, like an ODI.

"It's a tricky one because I've only played four Tests so I wouldn't say I'm overly comfortable with how to play or how to approach a Test," Healy was quoted as saying at a 'Fox Cricket' launch event for the series.

"From my point of view, I don't think it's going to change too much from my ODI batting. I think the ability to give yourself more time is such a blessing.

"I look at the modern



Test game and see how it's changed quite a lot. I look at someone like Rohit Sharma who is one of the most devastating white-ball batters in the world and yet he's a really successful opener in Test cricket."

After dominating the white ball game, the Indian limited overs vice-captain has proved his mettle in the red-ball format as well. Opening the batting, Rohit has played a key role during India's

tour of Australia and England.

"So for me, I said look at somebody like him and think about how he translates those skills across all the formats, could I potentially replicate that somehow?" she added.

The two sides have developed a fierce rivalry over the years. India had knocked Australia out in the semifinal of the 2017 World Cup thanks to Harmanpreet Kaur's



171 off 115.

At the women's T20 World Cup last year, India had drawn first blood taking the opening match on the back of senior spinner Poonam Yadav's brilliant spell.

However, Australia had made a strong comeback in the final, handing India a 85-run defeat.

Talking about the series ahead, Healy said the unpredictable nature of the Indian team makes them dangerous.

"Sometimes a bit of the unknown and the unpredictable nature of India makes them incredibly dangerous. They've picked a few new players that we haven't seen before on this tour," Healy said.

"So they always love throwing something new at us, even if it is Poonam Yadav, she always has something new to throw at us, just to kick us off track again," she added.

Lukaku seals Chelsea win over Zenit to start CL defense

LONDON, SEP 15 (AP): Four games. Four goals.

Just what was expected of Romelu Lukaku. Just what Chelsea missed so often last season. And just what he couldn't produce in his first spell at Stamford Bridge.

The striker who couldn't even get on the field in the Champions League a decade ago for Chelsea is back as the leading targetman.

On his European debut for the club, the 28-year-old Belgian ensured Chelsea made a successful start to its Champions League title defense by clinching a 1-0 victory over Zenit St. Petersburg on Tuesday.

The goal showed why Chelsea invested a club-record 115 million euros (135 million in August) in signing from Inter Milan the player it offloaded in 2014 as a peripheral figure.

Lukaku darted into space in the penalty area, evading the defense, to

meet a cross from Cesar Azpilicueta and head it into the net in the 69th minute against the Russian champions.

That is why he is here," Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel said.

It is another step ahead, because winning and another clean sheet is super important for the belief and for our process. We are not finished, but are in a good place to improve.

It added to the three goals including two in Saturday's win over Aston Villa Lukaku has already scored in the Premier League this season.

We have to keep growing. Today was a better performance than the weekend, Lukaku said.

It was a beautiful ball from Cesar. I just had to get my timing right and then place the ball in the corner.

Juventus' goals means it has the early edge in Group H after beating

Malmö 3-0.

As European Cup wins go, Chelsea's triumph has seemed understated, just as beating Manchester City in the final in May was unexpected.

Coronavirus restrictions denied Chelsea a victory parade in May. There wasn't even the parading of the trophy around Stamford Bridge before the start of the title defense on Tuesday.

There were, however, individual European season awards handed out to players and Tuchel by UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin after an explosion of fireworks above the main stand.

The head of European football received a smattering of jeers from the Chelsea fans, although this isn't a club with a great grievance against UEFA. Especially as Chelsea fans protested the club's ill-fated pursuit of a Super League in April that Ceferin opposed.

New stars, old problems for Man United in Champions League



BERN, SWITZERLAND (AP): With Cristiano Ronaldo back at Manchester United, missing out on the Champions League knockout rounds for a third straight season is unthinkable.

Yet the same kind of problems carried over from last season's failed campaign to the one that started badly Tuesday in Switzerland — errors in defense plus lapses of discipline leading to an ill-timed red card.

Even new signings Ronaldo and Raphaël Varane — four-time Champions League winners together at Real Madrid — could not save the stellar and expensively assembled Man United team from defeat against unheralded Young Boys.

Instead, it was another 2-1 loss at the lowest-ranked team in its group.

"We did that last year in Europe," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjær said, recalling "two sloppy counter attacks against (Istanbul) Başakşehir. And we lost that game (Tuesday) in the last seconds."

A slack backpass in stoppage time by Jesse Lingard, a substitute who replaced Ronaldo, gifted the chance that American forward Jordan Siebatcheu took to win the game for Young Boys.

"That's football for

you at the highest level," Solskjær said. "Lack of concentration, make a mistake and you get punished."

The Premier League leaders had been under pressure from the 35th minute when defender Aaron Wan-Bissaka was sent off for a hard foul. Leading 1-0 from Ronaldo's 13th-minute strike, Man United failed to get a shot on goal the rest of the way.

The red card helped tilt the game away from the three-time European champions just as it did last year when midfielder Fred was sent off against Paris Saint-Germain. That turned an evenly poised game into a 3-1 loss at Old Trafford last November, and gave back the gains from starting the group by winning in Paris.

"Everyone thought we were through after two games last year," recalled Solskjær, whose team also routed Leipzig 5-0 last October then lost the decisive last group game in Germany.

The story of Solskjær's managing in the Champions League has been highs and lows with little middle ground. His team was twice triumphant at PSG — including in the round of 16 in March 2019 — but has now lost seven of 11

matches.

"We know we have given ourselves a more difficult task than what we did last year," Solskjær said. "You need 10, maybe 12 points. You need to win your home games. We have got two home games next and we have got to focus on them."

That next opponent on Sept. 29 is a Unai Emery-coached Villarreal team unlikely to be intimidated after beating Man United in the Europa League final in May. A switch to the second-tier competition was the consequence for placing third behind PSG and Leipzig.

Ronaldo has never played in the Europa League for Man United, Real Madrid or Juventus. He did play two games in its predecessor, the UEFA Cup, in 2002 as a 17-year-old youngster for Sporting Lisbon.

Now with a Champions League record 135 goals in a record-equaling 177 games, Ronaldo has time to steer his teammates back on course in a competition he helped the club win in 2008.

"It's fortunate that it is the first game of the group," United captain Harry Maguire said, "and we have loads of time to bounce back from it."

Cantlay too busy concentrating to think of celebrating

WASHINGTON, SEP 15 (AP): Even with the kind of season that earned him the PGA Tour vote as player of the year, Patrick Cantlay doesn't watch a lot of his golf highlights on television.

And when he does, there are some things he doesn't remember or can't explain.

Take the tongue, for example.

Cantlay typically is the model of concentration over every shot. Every now and then, his tongue will cover his upper lip as he prepares to hit a shot.

"I am who I am, and so if I watch on TV and I see myself do something my tongue's sticking out or something I don't even really realize in the moment I'm doing it, and so I'm maybe seeing it as other people are seeing it for the first time. I try to just embrace who I am, and if my tongue sticks out a bunch, we'll see. I can have a competition with MJ."

That would be Michael Jordan, whose tongue wags on the court, not the course.

It speaks to a quiet appeal of players who deliver big moments without big fist pumps.

David Duval was like that, except for his putt to shoot 59. Dustin Johnson is similar (he points to a birdie putt at Medinah in the 2012 Ryder Cup as his big moment). Cantlay lightly pumped his fist twice when he made the winning birdie putt in his six-hole play-off victory at the BMW Championship (and then a third time after picking the ball out of the cup). That was big.

Has he ever totally lost all control of his emotions?

"I'm sure I have," he said. "To be perfectly honest, I really am just so focused on what I need to do that I almost ... by the time I'm there picking the ball up out of the hole, I even forget that I'm supposed to have done a fist pump or anything like that."

LPGA STATISTICS

Three months after the LPGA Tour introduced a statistical model called the "KPMG Performance Insights," it's ready to roll out some of the results this week during the Golf Channel telecast of the Cambia Portland Classic.

Without the overwhelming financial cost of having laser data for every shot by every player (ShotLink on the PGA Tour), the LPGA is relying on caddies to share distances to provide an idea of how they compare with the field. That's the statistic known as "strokes gained" developed by Mark Broadie of Columbia University.

Some of the statistics that analytics specialist Justin Ray of "Twenty First Group" compiled were not surprising. For example, Nelly Korda is really good and Inbee Park can really putt.

Korda, the No. 1 player in the world,

leads the LPGA Tour in strokes gained off the tee. She is sixth in approach shots and she has been among the top 30 in putting dating to the LPGA Mediheal Championship in June.

According to the LPGA data, players make 28% of their putts from 10 feet to 15 feet. Since the KPMG Performance Insights tracking began, Park is making 64% from that range.

The data can also help illustrate a particular round, and Madeline Sagstrom was singled out from the first day of the AIG Women's British Open at Carnoustie. She made nine putts of 10 feet or longer and six of 20 feet or longer. It added up to 7.19 strokes gained in putting against the field, the single best performance since tracking began in June.

KORN FERRY TOUR

The Korn Ferry Tour is getting back to a regular schedule with 26 tournaments set for 2022 and increased prize money.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Korn Ferry Tour had one season over two years, with no advancement to the PGA Tour in between and no international events.

The Korn Ferry Tour on Tuesday released a schedule that again starts with back-to-back weeks in the Bahamas in January, followed by tournaments in Panama and Colombia, and a stretch of 17 events in 19 weeks from early May until the season-ending Korn Ferry Tour Championship the first weekend in September.

Most notable is the minimum prize money of 750,000 (135,000 to the winner) that goes up to 850,000 for the final regular-season event at the Pinnacle Bank Championship in Nebraska, with the three Korn Ferry Tour Finals events at 1 million each.

The tour said purses will be at 1 million in 2023, with 1.25 million for the final regular-season event and 1.5 million for the KFT Finals.

Even with golf disrupted for three months during the pandemic, the Korn Ferry Tour still managed 46 events over the last two years.

ROOKIE PERKS

Will Zalatoris finally has a PGA Tour card, and one of the perks is being able to set a schedule without knowing for certain when he will get a sponsor exemption. Unlike other players who have a card for the first time, that schedule already includes the Masters.

Zalatoris is a different kind of first-time PGA Tour member.

He was voted PGA Tour rookie of the year despite having only special temporary membership. Key to that success was a tie sixth in the U.S. Open and a runner-up finish at Augusta National, which earned him

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North Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles into eastern waters

SEOUL, SEP 15 (AP): North Korea fired two ballistic missiles into waters off its eastern coast Wednesday afternoon, two days after claiming to have tested a newly developed missile in a resumption of its weapons displays after a six-month lull.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were launched from central North Korea on Wednesday afternoon.

Japan's coast guard says they landed outside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone in the waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula. Seoul said South Korean and US intelligence authorities are analyzing more details about the North Korean launches.

South Korean and US intelligence authorities are analyzing more details about the North Korean launches, the joint chiefs' statement said, adding that South Korea has boosted its anti-North Korea surveillance posture.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said the missiles landed outside of the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone in the waters between northwestern Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

The firings threaten the peace and safety of Japan and the region and are absolutely outrageous, Suga said. The government of Japan is determined to further step up our vigilance and surveillance to



be prepared for any contingencies, he said.

Japan's coast guard said no ships or aircraft reported damage due to the North Korean launches.

North Korea had said Monday it tested a newly developed cruise missile twice over the weekend. North Korea's state media described the missile as a strategic weapon of great significance, implying they were developed with the intent to arm them with nuclear warheads.

According to North Korean accounts, the missile flew about 1,500 kilometers (930 miles), a distance putting all of

Japan and US military installations there within reach.

Many experts say the weekend tests suggested North Korea is pushing to bolster its weapons arsenal amid a deadlock in nuclear diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington.

Wednesday's launches came as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Seoul for meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and other senior officials to discuss the stalled nuclear diplomacy with the North.

It's unusual for North Korea to make provocative launches when China, its last

major ally and biggest aid provider, is engaged in a major diplomatic event.

Moon's office said Moon told Wang that he appreciates China's role in the international diplomatic push to resolve the North Korean nuclear standoff and asked for Beijing's continuing support of such efforts. Wang called for further development in bilateral relations between Beijing and Seoul, but it wasn't known if Wang specifically addressed the North Korea issue.

Moon's office said the government plans to hold an unscheduled national se-

curity council meeting later Wednesday.

The nuclear diplomacy between the United States and North Korea has stalled since 2019, when the Americans rejected the North's demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for dismantling an aging nuclear facility. Kim's government has so far threatened to build high-tech weapons targeting the United States and rejected the Biden administration's overtures for dialogue, demanding that Washington abandon its hostile policies first.

The North's resumption of testing activity is likely an attempt at pressuring the Biden administration over the diplomatic freeze after Kim failed to leverage his arsenal for economic benefits during the presidency of Donald Trump.

North Korea ended a yearlong pause in ballistic tests in March by firing two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea, continuing a tradition of testing new US administrations with weapons demonstrations aimed at measuring Washington's response and wresting concessions.

North Korea still maintains a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests, a sign that it may not want to completely scuttle the nuclear negotiations with the United States.

Flash flood submerges southern French villages, fields

PARIS (AP): Emergency workers rescued or evacuated hundreds of people in southern France as flash flooding abruptly turned roads and fields into rivers and lakes.

No casualties have been reported, but new heavy rainfall threatened the area Wednesday. Local authorities said the rains caused significant damage to homes and infrastructure across towns and villages between Nîmes and Montpellier.

A man who had been believed swept down the Rhony River was found safe after he had taken refuge nearby, the local administration for the Gard region tweeted Wednesday.

One person was hit by lightning but survived, and a supermarket roof collapsed under the pounding water, according to the regional emergency service.

People evacuated from a campground described on BFM television that they watched waters surge toward their campers. About 800

firefighters were mobilized to rescue people via helicopter and other means.

Schools across the region and a major highway and other roads were closed Wednesday as cleanup work started in some towns.

The flooding comes after a season of extreme weather that saw devastating wildfires near the French Riviera and around the Mediterranean, record-breaking flooding in Germany and Belgium and droughts or heat waves in other areas around the world. Scientists say such events are expected but happen more frequently now as the planet is warming because of human-caused climate change.

The government will declare the floods a natural catastrophe to free up aid and insurance payments, government spokesman Gabriel Attal said Wednesday. He promised help for residents and others who suffered damages "to heal the wounds of this flood."

China imposes local lockdowns as COVID-19 cases surge

BEIJING, SEP 15 (AP): China tightened lockdowns and increased orders for mass testing in cities along its east coast Wednesday amid the latest surge in COVID-19 cases.

Checks have been set up in toll stations around the city of Putian in Fujian province, with a dozen of them closed entirely.

The nearby cities of Xiamen and Quanzhou have also restricted travel as the delta variant spreads through the region.

The National Health Commission on Wednesday said an additional 50 cases had been diagnosed in various parts of Fujian, most of them in the Putian region.

Since the start of the pandemic, first detected in late 2019 in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, China

has imposed strict testing, lockdowns, quarantines and mask wearing requirements. Fujian has seen at least 152 new cases in recent days, prompting stay-at-home orders and the closure of entertainment, dining and fitness venues, along with the cancellation of group activities including those for the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival holiday.

Long-distance bus service to other parts of the province has been suspended.

China has largely stopped the spread of COVID-19 but new outbreaks continue to occur in various parts of the country. A delta variant outbreak in July and August spread to several provinces, raising concern about new and more contagious variants.

Zimbabwe's older people often sent to homes amid pandemic

HARARE, ZIMBABWE (AP): Banana bread was served at a recent birthday party at Melfort Old People's home, where a group of residents mustered a raspy happy birthday tune.

Just a week after arriving at the facility, Rodrick Bhatare, in his 90s, said he felt a bittersweet moment at the celebration for a 103-year-old fellow resident.

"I haven't been this happy in a very long time," he said. "I just wished I was doing it with my family." Hard-hit by the pandemic, his family could no longer provide for him, he said.

The economic ravages of COVID-19 are forcing some families in Zimbabwe to abandon the age-old tradition of taking care of older people.

Some roam the streets. The lucky ones end up at facilities for older people—once widely viewed by many Zimbabweans as "un-African" and against the social bonds that have held extended families together for generations.

Rarely talked about, older people are "silent victims" of the pandemic, said Priscilla Gavi, executive director of HelpAge Zimbabwe.

"Parents or elderly relatives have become an extra strain in this pandemic so although it goes against our culture, many people are finding old people's homes as the only option," Gavi said.

Zimbabwe's care homes have experienced a 60% increase in admissions since the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in March 2020, and most of the country's more than 170 facilities for older people are full, she said.

COVID-19 has increased the risk of abuse and neglect of older people across Africa and around the world, according to a report by HelpAge International.

In addition to being one of the groups most at risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19, older people are chronically neglected in response and recovery efforts, especially in lower-income countries, according to the report, "Bearing the Brunt."

For the older people in care institutions, the experience is both a saving grace and a source of anguish.

Bhatare said that after he retired from work as a quarry miner about two



decades ago "all was well" as he alternately stayed with his two daughters and other relatives.

He was living with a married niece and four of her children when COVID-19 hit and their income from selling goods on the street dropped. Food in the home became scarce, tensions rose, and to survive Bhatare began foraging for meals on the streets until concerned neighbors alerted HelpAge, which found him a place in the Melfort home, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) east of Harare, the capital.

"My daughters are married but they are also struggling. I had become a strain to everybody," he said.

Zimbabwe's economy was already battered before the pandemic and now more than 80% of urban households are struggling to buy basic food supplies, while large numbers of rural families are also sinking into hunger, according to the World Food Program.

People age 70 and above make up less than 3% of Zimbabwe's population of about 15 million and often became casualties of belt-tightening.

"They are not bringing in any income in an environment where even young children are working to contribute towards household incomes. The elderly are becoming the sacrificial lambs. COVID-19 has really knocked

them down," said Phillip Pasirayi, a sociologist and director of the Center for Community Development in Zimbabwe.

Feeling "abandoned" by their families can be a shock for many older people at care facilities, he said.

"It doesn't really resonate with what we are accustomed to as Africans. You want to spend your last days surrounded by family. That is the tradition," Pasirayi said.

"When they are forced into old people's homes, many go into depression, into dementia ... they are confused that their children or relatives have abandoned them," said Daniel Francis, the administrator at Melfort Old People's home.

Some families resort to tricks to remove their older relatives, he said.

"With the pandemic, some people take an elderly relative to a faraway place. They buy them a drink at the shops, tell them 'We are coming back,' and they go for good. Elderly persons are being dumped and they are forgotten," Francis said. Police take such people to the social welfare department.

"The social welfare department doesn't have a home so they come to us," said Francis, whose facility has a capacity for 40 resident. But in the pandemic it limits numbers to 22 to allow more physical distance between residents.

The care homes that don't charge their residents, and are funded by charities and churches, are under strain.

The Melfort home would find it difficult to return to full capacity, he said, as its donations have dropped by more than 60% in the pandemic, he said.

Times are even tougher at the Society for the Destitute Aged's care home in Harare's Highfield township. Princess Diana opened an accommodation wing amid much fanfare in 1993. But today paint is peeling off the walls, ceilings are falling in and bees have taken over the out-of-service 200-liter (53-gallon) water heater.

The home has no vehicle so when a resident needs medical care, manager Emilia Mukaratirwa must risk crowded public taxis or, when money permits, hire a small car to rush a retiree to a hospital.

"The whole place needs a makeover, but for now just getting bread is like Christmas. That's how desperately we need help," Mukaratirwa said.

Despite the disappointment of not being with family, Bhatare at the Melfort Old People's home is adjusting to his new reality.

"These strangers have become my family, they treat me well," he said. "I still love my real family but I don't want to be a burden to them."



Apple to bring iPhone 13 lineup to India from Sep 24 with prices starting at Rs 69,900

NEW DELHI, SEP 15 (PTI): Apple enthusiasts will be able to get their hands on the latest line-up of iPhones -- iPhone 13, iPhone 13 mini, iPhone 13 Pro and iPhone 13 Pro Max -- with prices starting at Rs 69,900 onwards later this month.

"Customers in Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, the UK, the US, and more than 30 other countries and regions will be able to pre-order iPhone 13 Pro and iPhone 13 Pro Max... availability beginning Friday, September 24," Apple said in a statement.

Customers can get iPhone 13 Pro for Rs 1,19,900 (onwards) and iPhone 13 Pro Max for Rs 1,29,900 (onwards) from Apple's online store, it added.

The iPhone 13 will be available for Rs 79,900, while iPhone 13 mini will be priced at Rs 69,900.

The phones will also be available through Apple Authorised Resellers and select carriers, the statement said.

"Our Pro lineup pushes the limits with our most advanced technologies for users who want the very best iPhone. Best in class performance, best in class camera experience, great durability, larger displays and incredible design. This year, we build on that in a major way," Apple CEO Tim Cook said during the launch event on late Tuesday night.

The iPhone 13 Pro and iPhone 13 Pro Max also include 5G with more bands for better coverage.

According to Counterpoint Research Director TarunPathak, Apple now has a very aggressive entry point, starting with iPhone SE 2020, going till iPhone 13 Pro Max.

"However, we believe that it's the iPhone 12 series that is likely to gain traction in India and take on the baton from iPhone 11, that until last quarter captured around 60 per cent of the overall iPhone sales. Apple is likely to capture a 2.4 per cent share in the coming Q4 2021 and will end the year as its highest ever crossing 4 million shipments," he added.

Pathak noted that the share of the new iPhone within overall Apple sales during the launch quarter increases year-on-year and this year too, it will be the same - driven by iPhone 13.

Apple continues to go aggressive on trade-ins as well, he added.

"We think that iPhone 12 too will benefit from the price cut the most, even better than iPhone 11, and is likely to be the best seller for the festive season. This will also help the premium to reach a record share of the overall smartphone market in India with Apple likely to lead in the launch quarter," Pathak said.

India is among the key growth

drivers for Apple. Strong double-digit growth in markets like India and Latin America had helped the iPhone maker report double-digit revenue growth at USD 81.4 billion - a new record for the June quarter.

The company does not provide country-specific numbers.

Apple, which competes with players like Samsung and OnePlus in the premium smartphone segment, has been

iPhone 13 Pro Max make up our most pro-iPhone lineup ever with the biggest advancement for our camera system, the best battery life ever in an iPhone, and the fastest performance of any smartphone, setting a new standard for iPhone and enabling incredible experiences never before possible, Apple senior vice president of Worldwide Marketing Greg Joswiak said.

The new pro camera system offers



aggressively ramping up its presence in the Indian market.

In the past, Apple has talked about plans of setting up brick-and-mortar outlets in India in addition to its online store.

India is among the biggest smartphone markets globally and logging strong growth rates. Smartphone shipment in India grew by 82 per cent in the June 2021 quarter from the year-ago period to over 33 million units. The premium segment - although small - has been growing at a strong pace.

Devices priced under Rs 15,000 account for a significant volume share of the Indian market. Xiaomi (including POCO) accounted for a 28.4 per cent share of June quarter shipments, followed by Samsung (17.7 per cent), Vivo (15.1 per cent), Realme (14.6 per cent) and Oppo (10.4 per cent), as per data from research firm Counterpoint.

According to Apple India's website, iPhone 13 Pro (128GB) will be priced at Rs 1,19,900; 256GB at Rs 1,29,900; 512 GB at Rs 1,49,900; and 1TB at Rs 1,69,900.

The iPhone 13 Pro Max (128GB) will be priced at Rs 1,29,900; 256GB at Rs 1,39,900; 512 GB at Rs 1,59,900; and 1TB at Rs 1,79,900.

The iPhone 13 mini will be priced between Rs 69,900 to Rs 99,900 for 128GB, 256GB and 512GB variants, while iPhone 13 will be available at Rs 79,900-1,09,900 for 128GB, 256GB and 512GB models. iPhone 13 Pro and

even more pro photography capabilities like improved telephoto zoom, macro photography, photographic styles, cinematic mode, as well as ProRes and Dolby vision video, he added.

"The Super Retina XDR display with ProMotion is our best display ever; it intelligently responds to the content on your screen, offers fantastic graphics performance, and is perfect for any viewing experience, he said.

Apple has also introduced the new iPad (9th generation), featuring an A13 Bionic chip that packs even more performance and capability into the most popular iPad, all while retaining its all-day battery life. The new iPad features a 10.2-inch Retina display with True Tone, a 12MP Ultra Wide front camera with centre stage, support for Apple Pencil (1st generation) and Smart Keyboard, iPad OS 15, and twice the storage of the previous generation (starts with 64GB of storage).

The new iPad, priced at Rs 30,900 onwards, is available to order from Apple's website and will be available in stores from September 24. iPad has never been more essential for working, learning, and communicating, and we're excited to bring one of the biggest updates ever to our most popular iPad.

With the powerful A13 Bionic, more engaging video calls with Centre Stage, and double the storage, the new iPad delivers advanced capabilities, versatility, and simplicity at an incredible value, Joswiak said.



AFTER PARTY! The hot couple, Jacob Elordi&Kaia Gerber arrives at Justin Bieber's post-Met Gala party in New York.

Hulu renews 'Only Murders in the Building' for season two

LOS ANGELES, SEP 15 (PTI):Hulu has given a second season order for mystery comedy series "Only Murders in the Building", starring Steve Martin, Martin Short and Selena Gomez.

The show, created by Martin and John Hoffman, is currently halfway through its first season with the fifth episode dropping on Tuesday, reported Variety.

It follows three strangers, played by Martin, Short and Gomez, who share an obsession with a true crime podcast. After a murder in their building, the three neighbours decide to start their own show that covers their investigation of the crime.

"Everyone in our amazing 'Building' worked with such love and expertise through extraordinary times -- and with incredible support from Disney, Hulu and 20th TV -- to create a first season that might live up to our legendary cast, our beloved New York City, and to make a show about connection," Hoff-

man said. "To feel we've connected with our audience and hit the mark enough already to have the chance to continue and to carry on our show's wild ride of mystery-comedy-



empathy is too exciting for words. So I'll shut up now and just say a huge thanks to all and I can't wait for more," he added.

The project hails from 20th Century Fox Television and is executive produced by "This Is Us" creator Dan Fogelman.

Gomez also serves as executive producer alongside Martin, Hoffman, Short and Jess Rosenthal.

Christopher Nolan's next feature film lands at Universal

LOS ANGELES, SEP 15 (PTI): Filmmaker Christopher Nolan has chosen to partner with Universal Pictures for his new movie about American theoretical physicist J Robert Oppenheimer who helped develop the atomic bomb during World War II.

It was reported last week that Nolan and his representatives were in talks with major Hollywood studios for the untitled project, a move that signalled at the end of his collaboration with Warner Bros.

Since 2002's "Insomnia",

Nolan made all of his movies with Warner Bros and that included his critically-acclaimed "The Dark Knight" trilogy and the most recent feature "Tenet".

But relations between Nolan and Warner Bros had soured last year after the filmmaker expressed dissatisfaction with the studio for moving its 2021 slate to a day-and-date theatrical and HBO Max streaming release.

According to Deadline, the plot details are sketchy but the new movie will focus

on Oppenheimer, who is considered one of the fathers of the atom bomb.

He was a pivotal figure in the Manhattan Project -- the World War II undertaking that developed the first nuclear weapons.

Cillian Murphy, one of Nolan's frequent collaborators, is said to be a possible member of the ensemble, but casting has yet to take place.

Filming on the Oppenheimer picture is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2022.

The project will be produced by Nolan alongside his wife and longtime producing partner Emma Thomas for their Syncopy Inc. banner.

Nolan most recently directed spy thriller movie "Tenet", starring John David Washington, Robert Pattinson, Elizabeth Debicki, Dimple Kapadia, Michael Caine, and Kenneth Branagh.

"Tenet" was the first Hollywood tentpole to open in theatres after the coronavirus pandemic-forced shutdown.

Aries:
Everything needs time and space to evolve, and this includes your interpersonal relationships, Aries. Today, you're being asked to step back and play the role of the observer. In moments of utter and complete silence, you will have clarity on who is worth your time and who isn't. Yes, that means having to let certain people go, and that's okay. Remember, just because somebody is a good person doesn't mean they're good for you, beautiful.
Tip: Could it be time to let certain people go?

Taurus:
Not every relationship is meant to last forever. But, you don't need us to tell you that, do you, beautiful? The cards are urging you to acknowledge the connections that have lived past their expiration date, and to release them with love. Don't let the fear that you will never manifest somebody who loves you "this" much keep you stuck in an endless loop of pain and suffering. A good way to release what no longer serves you is to practice Ho'oponopono, Hawaiian prayer of forgiveness: "I am sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you." Consider repeating these words a few times everyday with the person (or situation) in your mind, or writing it down on paper with focused intention.
Tip: Feel, heal, and release.

Gemini:

What's that one thing that you've been yearning to do but never quite found the courage to? Whether you're thinking about getting Rihanna's hairdo from the 2000s, asking your co-worker out on a date or moving to a new country, now is the time to take a shot of courage. Remember, nothing is foolproof. There will be moments when you will find yourself walking through the darkness or wondering why you were "this" impulsive to begin with. But, what you will gain out of this experience is far greater than what you could potentially lose, beautiful.
Tip: It's time to live a life of no regrets.

Cancer:
The Universe speaks to us in mysterious ways. As the unofficial mystic of the zodiac, you would know all about that, wouldn't you, Cancer? So, pay attention to what's coming through from the unseen realms as you follow that inner guidance. Something tells us you are gaining deeper insights into your purpose and realigning with the path you're meant to walk in this lifetime.
Tip: Pay attention to what's coming through from the unseen realms.

Leo:
Some risks are worth taking, Leo, and you know exactly what we're talking about in this moment. So, follow your inner compass. Do that one thing you've been afraid to do. Know that the only way you can bring about a positive shift in your

life is by following your true path and purpose. Remember, you will "not" be handed a roadmap. There will be moments when you will feel like you are walking through a dark passage. Continue the journey nonetheless with the inner knowing that you are fully supported by the forces.
Tip: Some risks are worth taking, beautiful.

Virgo:
Your friends have been calling you out on certain patterns for a while now, Virgo. But, you don't need to explain your side of the story to any of them. What you do however need to focus on is coming clean to yourself. Yes, this means accepting that you are stuck in a loop and that you're most certainly settling for less. Coming out of denial can be painful. Earth-shattering even. But, unless you do away with the old, how will you make space for a relationship that holds space for you to blossom?
Tip: It's time to come out of denial, beautiful.

Libra:
Be whoever you can be, unless you can be a unicorn. Then, always be a unicorn. It's time to embrace your inner rebel, Libra. It's time to break the rules, including the ones that you have set for yourself. The world may or may not understand your need to follow the path of freedom, and that's on them. Don't let the insecurities of others keep you from honouring your truth, beautiful.
Tip: It's time to embrace your inner rebel.

Scorpio:
Virgo season sees you ushering in a new chapter of wealth and prosperity into your existence. The truth is, you haven't always enjoyed a healthy relationship with money, but you're transcending the lack mentality in order to make space for the abundance you truly deserve. The Universe is applauding your breakthrough and wants you to remember 'the best is yet to come'. What you're most grateful for in this moment: your ability to be able to share the harvest with those around you.

Sagittarius:
Let's admit it. Therapy may or may not be your thing, mostly because you're in the habit of looking inwards and healing your own patterns. But, that doesn't mean that you're not feeling vulnerable at this time. But, that doesn't mean the hurt and the pain isn't threatening to tear you apart. So, be present to what's coming up, Sagittarius. Be mindful of what your body is telling you in each moment. The path of dance and movement therapy will help you transmute those heavy emotions.
Tip: Dance through the pain, beautiful.

Capricorn:
Our body is always communicating with us, Capricorn. The real question is: are you willing to listen. Instead of following fad diets,

pay attention to the cues you are receiving from within. As you do, begin to eliminate the ingredients that are triggering a negative reaction. Remember, what we put on our plate affects us not just on a physical but mental and emotional level too. Working with an Ayurvedic doctor or a holistic nutritionist will help you understand what is best suited to your constitution.
Tip: Understand what works and doesn't work for your body type.

Aquarius:
If everything was rainbows, butterflies and unicorns at all times, we would not appreciate the highs. It is the lows that help us realise the value of bliss, ecstasy and joy. So, take a moment to be grateful for the so-called unpleasant experiences—including the things that threatened to break you. As you do, honour this as a cleansing period in your life that's enabling you to let go of that which no longer serves you.
Tip: It's all happening for a reason.

Pisces:
The only thing you need to fear is fear itself, Pisces. We repeat: the only thing you need to fear is fear itself. So, look them demons in the eyes. As you do, let them know they have no power over you. Coming out of denial can be a painful experience. Heart-wrenching even. Don't let that stop you from taking a shot of courage and doing that one thing that you're being called to do.
Tip: Take a shot of courage, beautiful.