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# SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 66 | Gangtok | Tuesday 09 March 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

## Covid gives Sikkim a Sunday breather and 3,625 more vaccinated on Monday

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

The number of active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim held at 50 on Monday with no new cases being detected and no new recoveries reported in the last 24 hours in the State. The vaccination is picking up pace in the State with a handsome 3,625 people being inoculated against the virus on Monday alone.

All 15 samples screened for Covid on Sunday returned negative for COVID-19.

The number of tests was low because the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital where the RTPCR tests are conducted remains

closed on Sundays.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 continues to stand at 6,174, of which 5,892 patients have already recovered and have been discharged from isolation facilities.

In his daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that six samples tested by Tru-eNat and nine through rapid antigen testing all came negative on Sunday.

Meanwhile, a total of 3,625 people received Covid vaccination shots on Monday at 24 vaccination sites spread across the State - STNM hospital, Central Referral

Hospital-Tadong, District Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and Primary Health Sub Centres across the State.

Among the 3,625 are 992 healthcare workers, 362 frontline workers, 334 people in the 45 to 59 year age-group with comorbidities and 1,937 people who are 60 and above.

The State had seen a marginal increase in daily cases, still under 10 per day towards the end of last week after having remained below-5 per day for more than a month and the number of active cases having dipped below 50 and stayed there for more than a fortnight.

## Anil Kumar Yadav defends PhD thesis

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Anil Kumar Yadav, a bureaucrat scholar from Sikkim holding a Limca record for the most number of Post Graduate degrees [more than 14 such degrees from upwards on nine Universities on last count], can now also write Dr against his name after having successfully defended his PhD thesis from the Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University [VMSU], Tadong, on 25 Feb, 2021.

An alumni of St Xavi-



er's School, Pakyong, and Sikkim Government College, Tadong, Mr Yadav completed his PhD research work on 'Mergers and Acquisitions in Scheduled Commercial Banks in India: Multidimensional SWOT Analysis.'

His dissertation was supervised by Dr Sudha Jha and Prof Jaswant Sokhi.

The PhD in Management degree will be awarded to him at the next convocation of the university.

## COVID-19: India records 18,599 new cases

**NEW DELHI, MAR 8 (PTI):** New cases of coronavirus infection in India were recorded above 18,000 for the third consecutive day taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,12,29,398, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The active cases also registered an increase for the sixth consecutive day and the COVID-19 active caseload increased to 1,88,747 which now comprises 1.68 per cent of the total infections.

The recovery rate has dropped further to 96.91 per cent, the data stated.

A total of 18,599 new infections were registered in a day, while the death toll increased to 1,57,853 with 97 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

On January 29, 18,855 new infections



were recorded in a span of 24 hours.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,08,82,798 which translates to a national COVID-19 recovery rate of 96.91 per cent, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.41 per cent.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23,

40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 22,19,68,271 samples have been tested up to March 7 with 5,37,764 samples being tested on Sunday.

## CM hosts reception dinner for newly-inducted former SDF leaders

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha hosted a reception dinner here at Samman Bhawan on Monday for those who recently joined the party. The programme was chaired by the SKM president, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang.

An SKM press release issued by its secretary [press & publicity] Ranjana Pradhan, informs that while addressing the gathering, the CM heartily welcomed the new cross-overs and commended them for having chosen SKM by recognizing and accepting its policies, programmes and principles.

While speaking about upcoming urban body elections, he highlighted that these have been kept away from party politics from this year.

On the same, he added that politicizing of panchayat and municipal

elections had divided the society which was why the SKM government decided to make them non-partisan. He hoped that candidates with a good track record of working for their areas and community go on to win the elections.

The CM mentioned that SKM was the party which has been showing the right path to the people and providing equal opportunity to everyone.

He highlighted that a person can become a Minister or MLA only twice under SKM and added that even the CM's office can be held only twice consecutively.

He expressed confidence that such a practice will provide equal opportunity to many in the party to grow to become leaders and even CM.

Addressing the newly inducted leaders of the party, Mr Tamang assured that the party will

not differentiate between new and old members.

He added that SKM will work without hold any prejudices unlike Sikkim Democratic Front.

He also added that the SKM government will give continuity to all the good projects started by the earlier government and also urged the new inductees, which include experienced leaders, former Ministers and Panchayats to support and advice the government with their experience.

The CM mentioned that Sikkim has not witnessed any violence, injustice or exploitation so far in the 21 months of SKM government in the State.

He added that SKM does not have the culture to take undue credit for good works and accuse others for wrongdoings like was the habit of the previous Chief Minister.

On the same, he assured to give credit to the

entire team for all good works.

The release adds that SKM general secretary, Arun Upreti, stated that Sikkim has witnessed many unprecedented works so far in a very short time that SKM has been office and added that this has been attracting leaders from other parties to SKM.

He added that the CM has been working to strengthen communal harmony and inclusive politics in the State and urged the former Ministers to use their experience to accelerate development in Sikkim.

Former Rajya Sabha MP, OT Lepcha assured to extend full support to the present SKM government.

"We have joined SKM party without any personal agenda and will work in the party without any post," he assured. He further assured to

bring other members to SKM to make the party even stronger.

Likewise, former Minister RB Subba stated that by ensuring that Aditya Golay won in the 2019 election, he had made good on a debt to the present CM who had supported him to victory in 1999.

The programme was also attended by former Speaker, CB Subba, former Ministers Menlom Lepcha and KB Chamling, former Chairpersons, Phurba Sherpa and Kintup Tshering Bhutia, former Advisor, Sher Hang Subba, former Zilla Upadhyaksha, Buddha Hang Subba, sitting panchayats, Zilla Adhyaksha, former councillors and others.

The meeting was also attended by Ministers, Bhim Hang Subba, Sanjit Kharel, BS Panth, KN Lepcha, MLA Sunita Gazmer among others.

## 42 file nominations on last day in East

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR (IPR):** On the last day of filing nominations, a total of forty-two candidates of different wards under Gangtok Municipal Corporation, Singtam Nagar Panchayat and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat of East District have filed their nominations for Municipal Election 2021 at the Office of Municipal Returning Officer, East today.

The nominations process was also overseen by the Election Observers for all wards

of Gangtok Municipal Corporation, Secretary Social Justice and Welfare Department, Tshewang Gyachho and all wards for Rangpo and Singtam Nagar Panchayat, Secretary Excise Department, Kuber Bhandari. It may be mentioned that the scrutiny of nominations will be done on 09 Mar, 2021 at 11.00am and the last date for withdrawal of candidature (if any) is until on 11 Mar, 2021 3.00pm.



## As Ministers talk end of pandemic, a strong warning from doctors' body

**NEW DELHI, 08 MAR [NDTV]:** After statements by Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan and Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain about nearing the "end of the pandemic", the Indian Medical Association has cautioned politicians and the government about invoking a "false sense of security".

"It is painful to note the discussion on endemic vs pandemic status of diseases is

echoing in the political corridors, however it ought to be substantiated by scientific evidence by the World Health Organisation or ICMR only," the top doctors' body said in a statement.

Highlighting the deaths of 740 of its frontline workers to COVID-19, the IMA has urged "fellow citizens to be vigilant" about wearing masks and physical distancing.

"The last one week has shown 35 to 40 per

cent increase in the number of cases from different parts of the state and even in capital India the daily average has risen up from 100 to 140 patients," the IMA said.

"Let us not boast or trumpet ourselves," the association said, warning about "unauthorized political statements".

The medical body's strong warning comes after Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said In-

dia is in the "endgame of the novel coronavirus pandemic" Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the pandemic is nearing the endemic phase in the national capital.

A pandemic is the spread of a disease beyond national borders, across a continent or even around the world while an endemic is the usual persistence of an infectious disease in a given region and af-

fects a large part of the population.

Delhi has witnessed a marginal spike in the daily cases over the past few weeks while states like Maharashtra have warned of an "alarming" situation possible lockdowns in some districts.

India reported more than 18,000 daily cases for the third consecutive day on Monday with eight big states continuing to report a spike.

## Women farmers take centre stage at protest sites

**NEW DELHI, MAR 8 (PTI):** Thousands of women farmers held protest marches and delivered speeches at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur protest sites at Delhi's borders on International Women's Day.

Noting that women contribute significantly to the country's farming sector, the organisers have laid out elaborate plans to let

women farmers manage the stage, arrange food and security and share tales of their struggles on the occasion.

"The stage is being managed by women, the speakers are all women and the issues that are being discussed are of both farming and women farmers more specifically," farmer leader Kavitha Kuruganti told

PTI on Monday.

"The discourse of the debate is focusing on women farmers. The debate is also on the contribution of women in this movement," said Kuruganti, who is also a member of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha.

She added that the participation of women has increased significantly with the arrival of "thousands of

women".

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at the Delhi border points for over 100 days, demanding the repeal of farm laws and a legal guarantee on the minimum support price for their crops.

International Women's Day is celebrated across the world on March 8 and it is a day

when women are recognised for their achievements, according to the United Nations.

This year's theme -- 'Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world' -- celebrates the tremendous efforts by women in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the pandemic, and highlights the gaps that remain, the UN Women stated.

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in Nepali**



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**Thank You!**





# 11 candidates for 5 wards of MNP, 1 uncontested

## SUMMIT REPORT

**MANGAN, 08 MAR (IPR):**

On the final day of filing for nominations, one nomination was filed by Tshering Pintso Saring for Upper Mangan Bazar (ST) under 7 Mangan Nagar Panchayat for the upcoming Municipal Elections 2021 at the office of the Municipal Returning Officer (North) today.

A total of eleven (11)

candidates have filed for nominations under five wards of 7 Mangan Nagar Panchayat. The details are as follows:

Upper Mangan Bazar (ST) - 3 candidates.  
Pentok (ST-W) - 1 candidate.

Power Colony (UR-W) - 2 candidates.

Rinzing Namgyal Marg (ST) - 2 candidates.

Lower Mangan Bazar (UR-W) - 3 candidates.



## West Sikkim NGO celebrates Women's Day at Soreng

### RUDRA KAUSHIK

**GYALSHING, 08 MAR:**

Sikkim Sisters (SS), a West Sikkim based non-governmental organization in coordination with Drishti Foundation on Monday celebrated International Women's Day here at the community hall of Soreng bazaar, West Sikkim.

The event was attended by Sarda Tamang, spouse of Chief Minister, PS Tamang as chief guest. Press advisor to Chief Minister, CP Sharma, state president of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Somnath Pandey and other dignitaries.

On the occasion, Sikkim Sisters felicitated sanitation workers, medical staff of Soreng community health centre and



ASHA workers along with other women personalities working in various fields. Senior journalists Nita Nirash, Kabita Sharma, educationist Deepa Ghisingh and advocate Pooja Lamichaney were also felicitated by Sikkim Sisters along with other women as recognition of their commitment and social services in their respective fields.

President of SS, Jangmu Sherpa in her brief

address informed that SS as a non-profit organization was working on various social issues concerning women and children.

"On the occasion of International Women's Day, we feel happy to felicitate women and other personalities who have given so much for the society and they have been an inspiration for many. Felicitations are part of recognizing their selfless

service towards the society," Jangmu Sherpa said.

Sarda Tamang spoke on women centric issues and expressed that women's empowerment in the true sense is a necessity in the modern world. She appreciated Sikkim Sisters for coming up with an initiative to felicitate deserving women on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Calling for self-reliance, Sarda Tamang expressed that economic emancipation of women is necessary for ensuring proper upliftment of women. She added that next year's international women's day should be celebrated in a comprehensive way and assured support from her side.

## Menstrual Hygiene Awareness program by SMIT

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

The Computer Science and Engineering Department of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Majhitara in collaboration with the Pinkishe Foundation organized a Sanitary Pad Distribution and Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Program in the campus on the occasion of International Women's Day today, a press release informs.

The program had



Associate Director (Academics), Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Jha as the chief guest along with the teaching and non-teaching staff of the institute.

Medical Staff, SMIT

Dispensary, Anupama Rai, addressed the gathering as a resource person on menstrual hygiene and the best practices to follow. Teacher Co-ordinator, ACCESS, Sanjoy

Ghatak, spoke about the role of women in society. He also credited this initiative to HOD, Prof (Dr) Kalpana Sharma, CSE Dept and thanked her for being the motivation behind the idea.

The chief guest for the occasion, Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Jha encouraged the gathering on girl child education and their role in the upliftment of society. Around 50 women were provided sanitary pads at the end of the program.

## Int'l Women's Day celebrated at Mangan



**MANGAN, 08 MAR (IPR):**

International Women's Day 2021 was celebrated in DAC Conference Hall, Mangan today on the theme "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal Future in a Covid-19 world". The event was organized by One Stop Centre-Mangan under by the Social Justice and Welfare Department.

The theme celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also aligned with the priority theme of the 65th session of the Commission on the status of women, "Women's full and effective participation and decision making in public life, as

well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls"; and the flagship generation equality campaign, which calls for women's right to decision making in all areas of life, equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end all forms of violence against women and girls, and healthcare services that respond to their needs. Women stand at the frontline of COVID-19 crisis, as healthcare workers, caregivers, innovators, community organizers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic.

The chief guest for the event was ADM (N),

Sonam Lepcha, SP(N) Ongmu Bhutia, CWC Chairperson, Mingma Doma Bhutia, Panchayat, Officers from SJ&W Department, members from NGOs, SHG and Police Personnel also attended the event.

A PPT was presented by the Centre Administrator OSC, Sonam P Bhutia on: One Stop Centre, Assistance to women in lodging FIR/NCR/DIR, Psychosocial support/Counseling, Legal Aid and Counseling, Medical Assistance and Shelter.

DCPO North, Wendy Mair Lepcha provided presentation and details on the following topics.

1. Juvenile Justice care and protection of children act 2000, now 2015.
2. Offences against chil-

dren (JJ Act 2015).

3. District child protection unit.
4. Child welfare committee.
5. Care, support and Rehabilitation services from ICPS including non-institutional services and institutional services.
6. The child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) amendment act, 2016.
7. Right to Education act, 2009.
8. Prohibition of child marriage act, 2006.
9. POCSO Amendment Act, 2019.

CWC Chairperson, Mingma Doma Bhutia shared her experience on Domestic Violence cases and encouraged women to speak and stand against all violence against them.

## 3 file nomination for Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat



**GYALSHING, 08 MAR (IPR):**

On the last day of filing nomination, a total number of three candidates under Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat have filed their nominations for the upcoming Municipal Election 2021 at the Of-

fice of Assistant Returning Officer, West today.

Kunta Sangmoo Bhutia, Menuka Chhetri and Rashmi Agrawal have filed their nominations for 04-Central Gyalshing ward. The said ward is reserved for (UR) Women.

## 37 candidates in South, 2 uncontested



**Namchi, 08 Mar (IPR):**

On the last and the final day of filing nominations a total fifteen candidates filed their nominations for Municipal Elections, 2021 at the office of the Municipal Returning Officer (South), today.

The nominations filed today under Namchi Municipal Council are as follows:

Saraswati Sharma, Khushboo Kumari Burma and Babita Gupta have filed their nominations from 01 Gangyap Ward. The said ward is reserved for UR (Woman) candidate.

Kamal Kumar Chettri and Sobha Pradhan have filed their nominations from 02 Dambudara ward. The said ward is reserved for OBC (State List) candidate.

Pema Norbu Bhutia and Phurba Tshering Bhutia have filed their nominations from 03 Upper Ghurpisey Ward. The said ward is reserved for ST candidate.

Devika Tamang has filed her nomination from 05 Upper Boomtar ward. The said ward is reserved for ST (Women) candidate

Ganesh Rai has filed his nomination from 06 Upper Singhithang Ward. The said ward is reserved for OBC (Central List) candidate.

The nominations filed today under Nayabazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat are as follows:

Ganesh Adhikari has filed his nomination from 01 Shantinagar ward. The said ward is reserved for UR candidate.

Pabitra Kumar Sharma and Ranu Chettri have filed their nomination from 03 Daragaon ward. The said ward is reserved for OBC (State List) candidate.

Tara Subba have filed her nomination from 04

Majigaon ward. The said ward is reserved for ST candidate.

Babita Sunwar and Saroja Khatri have filed their nomination from 05 Naya bazaar ward. The said ward is reserved for SC (Women) candidate.

The submitted nomination papers for the ensuing Municipal Elections, 2021 will be taken up for scrutiny at the office of Municipal Returning Officer (South) on 09 March at 11.00am. The last date of withdrawal of candidature is on 11 March till 3.00pm.

The final lists of candidates under Namchi Municipal Council are as follows:

01- Gangyap 6 candidates, 02- Dambudara 5 candidates, 03- Upper Ghurpisey, 4 candidates, 04- Lower Ghurpisey 1 candidate, 05- Upper Boomtar 3 candidates, 06- Upper Singhithang 2 candidates, 07- Purano Namchi 1 candidate.

Similarly, the final list of candidates under Nayabazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat are as follows:

01- Shantinagar 2 candidates, 02- Trikaleshwar 2 candidates, 03- Daragaon 4 candidates, 04- Majigaon 4 candidates, 05- Nayabazar 3 candidates.

The Municipal Election Observer appointed by State Election Commission, CK Chettri who shall be overseeing the election process for Namchi Municipal Council and Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat was also present during the last day of nominations.

He will be stationed at PWD Dak Bungalow, Namchi and can be contacted by the candidates at his mobile number 9832565059 for grievances and complaints.

## Women's Day celebrated at KVK South

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Krishna Vigyan Kendra, South Sikkim, organized a programme to acknowledge the contribution of women in agriculture and horticulture with the theme "Women leadership in agriculture: Entrepreneurship, Equity and Empowerment" on the occasion of International Women Day today, a press release informs.

The first half of the programme commenced with a webcast of the

virtual programme at ICAR Headquarters followed by online felicitation of woman farmer, Mala Sherpa of Rong Bul, South Sikkim by ICAR-National Centre for Integrated Pest Management (NCIPM) and by KVK South Sikkim, New Delhi.

Mala Sherpa, a very progressive farmer was felicitated for setting up a model Integrated Organic Farming System in her farm and being a source of motivation for other women farmers.

## ICAR- KVK East celebrates Int'l Women's Day

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR (PIB):**

Women of the world want and deserve an equal future free from stigma, stereotypes and violence; a future that's sustainable, peaceful, with equal rights and opportunities for all. To get us there, the world needs women at every table where decisions are being made. Women's full and effective participation and leadership in all areas of life drives progress for everyone.

Commemorating women's role in different walks of life, ICAR-Krishna Vigyan Kendra-East Sikkim celebrated International Women's day at ICAR- Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong on 08 Mar, 2021. Themed "Women in Leadership: Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Equality and Empowerment" this year's celebration brought together farmers, farm-women, Anganwadi workers and staff of the institute. A total of 74 participants attended the celebration programme and out of which 10 Anganwadi Workers along with a Supervisor from the Social Justice Empowerment and Welfare Department, Govt. of Sikkim, 43 farm women from Saureni, Timpyem, Assam Linzey and Nandok.

The programme was chaired by Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong. Sharing his own life experiences, he narrated how women progressed from down to earth to fly in the sky with limited resources and their hard work. He stressed that empowerment starts from the inner strength of the women and generation equality is focusing on issues facing women across generations, with young women and girls.

As Chief Guest of the programme Additional Director, Bina Rai, Dept of Agriculture, Govt. of Sikkim deliberated on the role of education in empowering women, developing entrepreneurs through the formation of SHG for a particular agricultural commodity for self-reliance. It is a known fact that despite some progress, real change has been excruciatingly slow for the majority of women and girls in the world.

## SDF women's wing celebrates Women's Day

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Sikkim Democratic Front party's Cheli Morcha celebrated International Women's Day here at the party head-quarters on Monday. The exchange of experiences and views on life as women amongst members of Cheli Morcha made the programme special, informs an SDF press release issued by its general secretary [Cheli morcha], Sakun Gurung.

The release informs

that cheli morcha general secretary, Karma Ongmu Bhutia highlighted the importance of International Women's Day, while cheli morcha vice-president, Neeru Sewa listed out various achievements made by Sikkimese women under the leadership of SDF president and former CM, Pawan Chamling and his government. The party has also extended best wishes to women of Sikkim on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Scientist (Plant Breeding), Dr Lamalakshmi wishing everyone on the occasion of International Women's day detailed about the origin of Women's Day observance. International Women's Day is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. She stated that International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women - while also marking a call to action for accelerating gender equality.

AAO, Manju Dural, ICAR Sikkim Centre, Tadong expressed her views for self-dependency of women through small entrepreneurship for their livelihood. Two progressive farmers namely Penkit Lepcha from Timpyem village and Tika Khanal from Saureni village shared their experience how they became agri-entrepreneur in agricultural and dairy sectors for their livelihood through the intervention of ICAR Sikkim Centre and KVK-East Sikkim.

Head (I/C), Dr Janak Singh, KVK East Sikkim spoke of the genesis of celebration of International Women's Day. The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in the International Women's Year, 1975. In 1996, the United Nations adopted theme-based celebration of International Women's Day every year on March 08.

The program ended with vote of thanks proposed by SMS (Agronomy), Dr Manoj Kumar, KVK East Sikkim.



During the programme other women were also felicitated for their contribution in agriculture and horticulture. The chief guest of the programme, HDO Namthang Farm, Saroja Tamang spoke on the importance of women

in agriculture and allied sectors.

Others present in the programme were Senior Scientist, and Head KVK South Sikkim, IP Shiva-koti, HI Namthang Farm, Chandrakala Sharma, officials of KVK and women farmers.



## SRM Univ announces SpellBound'21



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

SRM University Sikkim has announced SpellBound'21, the second edition of Spell Bee Contest for high-school and intermediate students, a press release

informs.

This edition of the contest is being held virtually on 11 Mar, 2021. After the success of the first edition, this year will see participation from schools in Sikkim and North Bengal,

the release mentions.

Interested schools may send nominations to Coordinator, Dr Smita Singh, SpellBound'21 at smita.m@srmus.edu.in. Only two students from one school can participate.

## BIS awareness on safety and standards of toys



### GANGTOK, 08 MAR (PIB):

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Kolkata in association with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Development Institute (MSME-DI), Gangtok organised a day long awareness programme on safety and standards related to toys in Gangtok today.

The main objective of BIS initiative is to make the MSME toy manufacturers aware about the standard for toys and importance in contributing to the safety of the product.

Director, M Ravi Kumar, MSME, Department of Commerce & Industries, Government of Sikkim as the Chief Guest of the event pointed out the health hazard to our children if toys which do not conform to the stan-

dards are manufactured and sold in the market. It is therefore necessary that toy manufacturers should upgrade their products to meet the Indian standards and obtain licence from BIS. This will help promotion of their product in the international market also as the standard will help them in improving the quality, he said. The Testing/Calibration facility will be available from MSME Testing Centre and may develop a testing centre in this region also.

Adding that there was a gap between production and demand and, hence, time to set up a toy unit to full fill the dream of our Prime Minister towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. Ravi Kumar assured that State Govt

will facilitate setting up of toy units under MSE-CDP/SFURTI Scheme.

Scientist of BIS, Sab-yasachi Dhar on this occasion, gave a presentation on quality control order for toys while Scientist, Ramakant Sagarn explained the procedure of obtaining BIS licence for toy products.

Assistant Director, DR Sharma from MSME-DI, Gangtok deliberated on various schemes and activities of the institute. To mark the International Women's Day, Chimi Ongmu Bhutia and Mandira Chettri, both entrepreneurs were felicitated during the programme.

The next awareness programme will be held at State Institute of Rural Development Jorhang on 10 Mar, 2021.

## Special Gram Sabha at Lungchok Kamerey on Women's Day

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Lungchok Kamerey GPU, South District organized a special Gram Sabha on the theme 'Women in Leadership; Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World' at Lungchok Kamerey village administrative centre on Monday. The gram sabha was chaired by Panchayat Vice President, Mingma

Lhamu Sherpa.

A press release mentions that the main objective of the Gram Sabha was to empower women. It is added that the Sabha duly passed bills on VAC-Internal Committee to receive and redress sexual harassment at work place and Gram Panchayat Level 'Gender Empowerment and Women Welfare Committee' to fight against domestic violence and gender discrimination.

The Sabha also took post facto approval of Bal Panchayat ordinance on awareness program on Child Rights and Safety, awareness program on Drug Abuse and BAAL Mela and others. The above Bal Panchayat ordinance was passed by the Gram Panchayat during the tenure of One Day Panchayat President program which was held on 25 February 2021, it is informed.

## Awareness on girl child education kicks off at Chungthang

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

On the occasion of International Women's Day, BAC level community awareness for Primary School on Importance of Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment under "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" kicked off today at Chungthang BAC, North Sikkim, a press release from the Education Department informs.

The programme was organized by Samagra Shiksha, Education Department and was chaired by SHO



Chungthang PS, Pema Rana. The programme was attended by school heads, teachers, SMCs and PRIs and students.

During the programme, participants were sensitised and inspired for better education, child sex ratio, effective approach to girl child and issues related to health, hygiene and sanitation in the district.

A total of 8 primary school children spoke on the importance of girls' education and women's empowerment. Later, certificates were given to the school children.

## Ram Mandir fund raising ends in Sikkim, Rs 91.06 lakh collected

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra [SR-JTK], Sikkim has raised an amount of Rs 91.06 lakh from Sikkim under Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir Nirman-Nidhi Samarpan Abhiyan for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, a press release informs.

While declaring the successful completion of the campaign in Sikkim, SRJTK Sikkim coordinator, Dr Madan Mani Dhakal mentions that despite having few workers in Sikkim the campaign covered 119 GPUs to raise this amount.

SRJTK has thanked the Governor, Chief Minister, Ministers and every Sikkimese for their contribution in the success of the campaign and further apologized to the people for not being able to reach every doorstep in the State.

The release also clarifies that SRJTK will not collect funds now onwards for Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir and if anyone is found collecting funds it would be taken as fraud as the campaign has ended for the State. The release has appealed to interested persons to contribute online if they want.

## Bright Academy celebrates Women's Day



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Teachers and staff of Bright Academy organized a program to honour womanhood and mark International Women's Day today, a press release informs.

During the celebration, all the women employees working in the school were invited to join the celebration.

The event was conducted under the guidance of the Principal, Sandeep Ghosal.

## Women's Day at Mangalbaria Mahila Shakti Kendra

**GYALSHING, 08 MAR [IPR]:**

Mahila Shakti Kendra (West) observed International Women's Day at Mangalbaria, West Sikkim today.

The event was attended by Tara Sharma (PI Nayabazar) as a chief guest accompanied by Dr. Udit Pradhan (Medical Incharge, Mangalbaria), ASHA, Anganwadi workers, healthcare workers, police personnel and women.

The chief guest spoke on prevention of child marriages, human trafficking, POCOS cases, cybercrimes including neglected and unreported POCOS cases.

Dr. Udit Pradhan (Medical Incharge, Mangalbaria PHC) spoke on mental health, suicidal thoughts and suicide prevention.

District Coordinator MSK (West) spoke on various schemes under WCD, Welfare Division, Banking schemes and promoting local women entrepreneurs. He em-

phasised on BBBP, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, Domestic Violence Act, One Stop Centre, Women Helpline No-181, Childline No-1098, Swadhar Greh, Working Women Hostel and schemes under ICDS such as Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, SNP, Poshan Abhiyan, etc.

Furthermore, schemes under NHM such as Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, Janani Suraksha Yojana, and scholarships under HRDD and SJ&W Department were also discussed.

MSK (West) organized a sensitization programme followed by a general health check-up for rural women of Mangalbaria Block, with this year's Women's Day theme 'Choose to Challenge'.

The programme also witnessed interaction and discussion on live cases of cyberbullying, cybercrime and trafficking.

## International Women's Day at Namthang school



### SUMMIT REPORT

**NAMTHANG, 08 MAR:**

Namthang Senior Secondary School observed International Women's Day in collaboration with the school's NSS Wing I & II, Consumers Club, SAATHI, Red Ribbon Club on the theme "Choose to Challenge" today.

The program was attended by Vice Principal, BP Dhungel and all the teaching and non-teaching staff and students of

the school. On the occasion, poem recitation, essay writing and painting competition were held.

The program was addressed by teacher, Chanda Pradhan (chairperson of the day) and was hosted by Sudha Dahal.

During the program, PGT Economics, Srijana Khatri and students Mamta Tamang, Migdo Tamang and Avishek Chettri also presented poems and briefed about the importance of the day.

# National awards for Sikkim SHGs



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

Khanchendzonga Self Help Group from Rhenock block and Chalisey Ward Development Society, also from East Sikkim, were conferred the national award for best performing SHG and SHG federation respectively, a press release from Rural Development Department informs.

The Ministry of Rural

Development organized the awards ceremony through video conferencing on 08 March to mark International Women's Day, the release informs and was chaired by Minister of State for Rural Development, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti.

Presidents of Khanchendzonga SHG and Chalisey Ward Development Society represented their respective

organizations at the video conferencing session at the RDD office.

As part of the award, each SHG and WDS will receive a cash component of Rs One lakh along with a commemoration and a certificate of appreciation, which will be sent to the state for handing over to the award-winning SHG and SHG Federation, it is informed.

## 1st TR Rana Memorial TT C'ship coordination meet

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

First coordination meeting of the 1st TR Rana Memorial Table Tennis Championship was held at New Indoor Sports Complex, Singtam, today.

A press release informs that an ad-hoc body was also formed during the meeting. The ad-hoc body comprises



of Suresh Tamang (Patron), CL Rai & KB Baniya (Advisors), Sundar Kr Rai (President), Krishna Chettri and Sangay Bhutia (Vice Presidents),

Rajen Baniya (General Secretary), Jinod Tamang (Joint Secretary), Zari-na Rana and Mary Rana (Treasurers), and Pritam Shilal (Technical).

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## — Dying Young —

*Piecemeal won't do anymore, Sikkim needs a concerted awareness drive on mental health issues now*

What drives a 14-year-old to suicide? Her whole life ahead of her and yet she decides to end it. What could be the reason that another person, apparently “settled” in life decides to throw it all away and commit suicide leaving behind a child still in school and a wife stunned by the extreme step? Of course, there are underlying psychological conditions common to all cases of suicides, but while those may explain the incident, they do not justify the reality that these conditions are allowed to fester unattended (or not addressed in entirety) for so long the mind loses all hope.

Suicide is an aberration that returns to haunt Sikkim too often. Fathers, mothers, grandparents, even children; the State has too many from too many age-groups deciding to give up and end their lives. It is not enough to deduce that people end their lives because of problems they can't deal with any more or due to desperate poverty. These have not been the driving factors in most, if not all, cases reported here. Everyone has problems and many are poor, but only a few commit suicide. What is obviously happening is that the psychiatric help which keeps things in balance in one's mind is not adequately available in Sikkim. Contemplating suicide is one thing, to actually take the leap quite another. Obviously, not everyone does it, but those whose mental make-up has been debilitated by an unnoticed and untreated ailment are more wont to do it. Depression is rampant in Sikkim and although more people are coming forward nowadays to seek medical help, there are too many who still don't. Fact also remains that if everyone who requires psychiatric help started seeking medical help there simply won't be enough psychiatrists and counselors around to attend to anyone with any adequacy. And that is where paramedics, NGOs and social organizations will have to fill in.

With the comforting cushion of a large family gone, and a demanding work schedule to contend with, the pressures of modern lifestyles get the better of many and some snap under it. All this said and done, there is also a need to re-evaluate the awareness, or rather the lack of it, when it comes to mental health. It is not enough to have doctors at hand if the stigma that surrounds matters of mental health are not aggressively dispelled. For all the TB eradication, Leprosy and AIDS awareness hoardings and posters that occupy public spaces in Sikkim, there is not one addressing the looming challenge of mental health here. Sikkim now needs something as big as its CATCH programme to generate wider awareness about mental health issues. These should be directed as much at people directly in need of such attention as to their family and friends. Most people can still not differentiate between mood swings and acute depression. And even when they realize that someone among them is need of professional help, they do not know how to handle the situation or where to seek help.

Even if the State began the process of wider and more effective awareness generation on mental health issues, it would have taken a giant step forward towards saving more lives. It would be wonderful if some non-governmental agencies got the ball rolling, but that is unlikely to happen because that would require professionals and experience and long-term commitment. Most NGOs here do not have access to such resources and while they might be good for one-off awareness camps, these will not suffice anymore because Sikkim is now in desperate need of a statewide concerted effort on this front. That, only the State can deliver.

# No More Page 3: How a Feminist Collective Took on a Media Behemoth to Challenge Everyday Sexism

SARAH GLOZER & LAUREN MCCARTHY  
THECONVERSATION.COM

The daily image of a topless woman on page three of the Sun newspaper was considered by some to be a “British institution”. Yet it was also increasingly seen as a relic of institutionalised sexism in the media and society.

Then in 2015, nearly 50 years after it was first introduced, the feature was quietly removed from the publication. This decision was credited, in part, to the online campaign efforts of the “No More Page 3” (NMP3) movement, which gained the support of 140 members of parliament and numerous charities, including Women's Aid and Girlguiding. It also attracted more than 240,000 petition signatures.

The campaign, which helped to force change at one of the UK's most popular and powerful media companies, was widely acclaimed, described by one MP as a “seismic victory”. Activist Katherine Sladden wrote, “No other campaign has done as much to inspire a new generation of young feminists,” adding that it “became the gateway for women finding the courage to speak out on issues they care about”.

But beneath this success story lies a complex tale of how emotional energy sustained the NMP3 campaigners through personal and painful trolling.

Our research into the campaign reveals how supporters were met with online abuse on a daily basis. They regularly encountered rape and death threats aimed at themselves and their families.

Campaign founder Lucy-Anne Holmes has told how she suffered an “overwhelming feeling of helplessness” and “burnout”, recalling:

“It was terrifying. I was spent: financially, emotionally, creatively. Just going on Twitter with all of those voices coming at me would bring on a panic attack. I felt like I was being strangled by invisible hands.”

Her experience was far from unique. For while the liberating potential of social media to mobilise collective action is widely valued, the toxic climate many experience on social media is all too familiar, and can lead to stress, anxiety and depression.

Yet the relentless online abuse aimed at the NMP3 campaigners – who deliberately tried to engage with their opponents through reasoned and polite posts – was tempered by messages of encouragement, both from each other and from supporters of their cause.

This complex interplay of positive and negative emotions led us to dig deeper into the campaigners' survival story, and investigate the powerful techniques which kept them going in the face of such overwhelming adversity.

One important element was the underlying sense of solidarity which became a powerful force in helping the campaigners to recharge and replenish, sustaining momentum through emotional highs and lows. Faced with trolling and harassment, many campaigners felt energised simply by being online with other women with shared experiences. This feeling of alignment with others created a valuable store of emotional

energy.

As one campaigner told us: “It wasn't just a campaign ... it was a space where we could go and feel completely confident, we could share anything with each other, and work out what we thought about things.”

STEPPING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Interestingly, this solidarity led to the coordinated and tactical use of a relay system adopted by the team. An exhausted campaigner wrestling with a hostile social media thread would “pass the baton” on to a colleague via a system of online messaging or “tagging” across platforms.

This system became a vital part of keeping the campaign's momentum at times when some members felt the need to retreat from the front line. There was time and space for activists to step away from their screens, to disengage with the onslaught of social media.

Usually temporary, these moments of stepping away were deliberate and empowering – they offered protection. And in preserving individual wellbeing, they also ensured the continuation of the campaign.

Retreating, far from being seen as a form of weakness or defeat, was supported by the campaigners. It was a strategy which allowed for recovery of emotional energy and healing and, crucially, it rejuvenated the campaigners to return to campaigning.

A genuine connection to the roots of the campaign was also something that sustained the (mostly female) volunteers. They drew on their aligned personal experiences, often reminiscing about teenage

shame they experienced related to their bodies or of later episodes of sexual harassment. The emotions related to these experiences meant the campaigners didn't just “think” shame or anger, they felt it deeply.

One explained to us: “The feminist stuff still remains the thing that really lights me up.” She continued: “I feel it's personal, it's maternal, because I have a daughter, and a son who's affected by toxic masculinity. It's in my experience of abuse in relationship. I'm angry about it and passionate about it because it's personal to me and people that I love.”

Another said: “Standing up for what is right is enough to make your legs go weak, your voice grow hoarse, and your hands shake with rage.”

Six years on from the NMP3 victory, more action is needed to fight inequality in both our online and offline worlds – there is still plenty to campaign for. Digital platforms certainly need to better police social media channels which continue to tolerate and excuse trolling and hate speech, particularly that directed towards women.

But we should be encouraged by NMP3's story of grassroots collective strength, and its journey to success. And we should also consider the lessons it provides about activism and the common advice for women to always “lean in”. Sometimes, it seems, it's better to simply retreat, replenish and come back stronger.

[Sarah Glozer is Senior Lecturer in Marketing, Business & Society, University of Bath; Lauren McCarthy is Senior Lecturer in Strategy and Sustainability, Royal Holloway]

# How Female Coaches Can Help Bring Professional Men's American Football Into the 21st Century

PETE HOLMES

THECONVERSATION.COM

As the 2020 American NFL season drew to a close with Tom Brady winning his record seventh Super Bowl, it was interesting to note another sporting first: the three women involved in the game – two coaches and one official.

With eight women currently coaching in the NFL, there's still a long way to go when it comes to parity, but it does seem that women are finally breaking into elite men's sports coaching in the US.

Sadly, the same cannot be said about most major team sports in the UK. Many elite sports, including rugby and cricket have a poor record in this regard. But perhaps the most high profile sport yet to embrace female coaches is professional football (soccer).

One contributing factor may be that when experienced top flight female coaches are linked to men's football, the expectation seems to be that they should start at the bottom. Consider the case of Emma Hayes, the manager of Chelsea – the reigning Women's Super League champions. Despite this leading position, Hayes was recently linked with the vacant manager's job at the men's side AFC Wimbledon – a team which is currently struggling to clear the relegation zone of the third tier of English football in League One.

Hayes shot down the rumours and said they were an “insult” to the women's game, adding:

“I don't know why anyone would think women's football is a step down (in comparison to men's). The football world needs to wake up. While the game is played by a different gender, it's exactly the same sport.”

So while slow progress is being made in other areas of life, not a single woman has been welcomed into coaching in men's professional football in the UK to date.

But why? Numerous studies over the last decade or so have focused on the issue of power in men's football. In particular, they've highlighted the autocratic culture of dominance and subordination that has existed in certain clubs.

This is seen in coaches and managers controlling many aspects of the football environment and demanding total compliance from their players (particularly younger players), regardless of how this might sit with contemporary notions of equality, rights and inclusivity. For example, the studies cited coaches using aggressive language, humiliation and bullying as tactics to instil fear and create compliance in players. It is doubtful that such an environment would continue like this with female coaches around, as research shows their approach tends to be very different.

CYCLE OF MASCULINE IDEAS

Research in 2020 suggested that coaches begin to develop their coaching beliefs (that later turn into coaching practice) through their childhood and playing careers. In addition to playing experience, the coaching experience they gain at



lower or developmental levels – and the mentors they learn from – are often cited as major factors. These social and cultural experiences shape future coaches in significant and often unconscious ways.

Not surprisingly then, if male coaches play football as juniors in male environments, play professionally in the male game, coach at academy level for professional male teams and are mentored by other elite male coaches, their experiences of the power-dominated male football culture may predispose them to this form of autocratic coaching. So the men's game can become trapped in a cycle of power-dominated practice, with little room for manoeuvre.

Male coaches also dominated women's football in England until recently. Today, eight of the 12 managerial roles in the Women's Super League are filled by women. But only two years ago that figure stood at just four. At the national level, Sarina Wiegman, the current Netherlands head coach, is shortly set to take over the England Lionesses after the former England international, Phil Neville resigned.

Wiegman is one of few female coaches, worldwide, who has coached at the professional level in the men's game, having worked as an assistant coach for a single season at Sparta Rotterdam in the Dutch league in 2016.

WHAT FEMALE COACHES BRING

Female coaches, many of whom may have played a range of sports in addition to football, may have experienced very different environments to men and so have been shaped in very different ways.

According to a survey published in 2015, elite

female athletes want to be able to talk to their coaches about anything. They want to be comfortable in asking questions and receiving answers, with input, negotiation and flexibility. This is certainly what I have observed in my time as both a researcher and coach developer and appears to be in stark contrast to the autocratic male style of coaching highlighted by previous studies.

One of the few studies to consider this issue noted that female coaches (again, typically ex-elite athletes) were considered to have a higher quality of relationships with their athletes and greater empathy than male coaches.

Back across the Atlantic to American Football, Jennifer King broke additional new ground in 2020 when she became the first black female coach with a men's team with Washington when appointed as assistant running back coach. Of the 14 teams who made the NFL playoffs in 2020, six included female coaches among their staff. On this subject, King said:

“I don't think it's an oddity that those play-off teams had so many female coaches involved because those coaches created cultures of growth and inclusion and those things generally create wins.”

It might be hard to imagine now, but the qualities female coaches can bring – and the differences to what male coaches may currently provide – might just be the ingredient that professional football (not to mention other elite sports) has been missing to help bring the game in the UK fully into the 21st century.

[The writer is Senior Lecturer in Sport Coaching, Nottingham Trent University]

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# Women legislators in Bihar seek reservation in Assembly

**PATNA, MAR 8 (PTI):** Cutting across party lines, women lawmakers in Bihar on Monday sought reservation in Parliament and state legislatures.

As the Assembly session began at 11 am, Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha extended his greetings to women, on the occasion of International Women's Day, and said they will continue to play a constructive role in the nation's development.

Priority was given to women during the Question Hour.

They got a chance to ask their questions first during the session.

Several women MLAs of the ruling alliance and the opposition camp demanded 50 per cent reservation in Parliament and state assemblies, while some



others pushed for 33 per cent quota at the decision-making Houses as proposed in the Women's Reservation Bill, which is waiting Lok Sabha nod.

"India got its Independence in 1947 but Bihar's women got Independence only in 2005 when Nitish Kumar became the chief minister. At present, there are

1,17,717 women representatives in panchayat raj institutions and urban local bodies. This is our CM's achievement," JD(U) legislator Shalini Mishra said.

Opposition camp MLA and RJD member Rekha Yadav, on the occasion, thanked Kumar for reserving 50 per cent seats for women in local

bodies.

BJP member Bhagirathi Devi said that the CM should pitch for adequate representation of women in the Assembly.

"Today, women are happy (in Nitish Kumar's regime).

And I am thankful to the CM for this... Women in this state hold the CM in high regard for the

work he has undertaken for their growth and development," she said.

Energy minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav, while giving a reply during the Question Hour, asked in a lighter vein if there should be a special day to celebrate men and their contributions.

International Men's Day is celebrated every year on November 19.

During the Zero Hour, BJP member Pawan Jaiswal urged the Speaker to allow a woman MLA to become the "presiding officer" on the occasion.

Post lunch, Parliamentary Affairs minister Vijay Kumar Chowdhury also made the same request to the speaker, following which BJP's Gayatri Devi and HAM's Jyoti Devi were made the presiding officer in turns.

# Drug lab busted in Manipur, 3 arrested



**IMPHAL, MAR 8 (PTI):** A drug manufacturing laboratory has been busted in Manipur's Thoubal district and three persons have been arrested, police said on Monday.

A large quantity of drugs worth crores of rupees was seized during the raid at Li-

long Nungei Khunou Mamang locality on Sunday night, Superintendent of Police Sarangthem Ibomcha Singh said.

A total of 565 gm of refined brown sugar, 1,104.98 kg of crude heroin and brown sugar, 5 kg of opium, 131 litres of morphinated liq-

uid, ammonium chloride and four vehicles used for transportation of drugs were seized, he said.

A case has been registered against the three arrested persons and a manhunt launched to nab four others involved in the racket, the officer added.

## TMC seeks adjournment of Parliament session, cites elections in five states



**NEW DELHI, MAR 8 (PTI):** The Trinamool Congress on Monday sought an adjournment of the Parliament session citing assembly elections in five states of the country.

In a letter to the Rajya Sabha Chairman, TMC national spokesperson and RS member Derek O'Brien said due to the polls, MPs of his party would not be able to attend the Parliament session.

"I am writing to you as the Parliamentary Party leader (Rajya Sabha) for the All India Trinamool Congress. Sir, we urge you to consider the adjournment of the ensuing Parliament session, because of the declaration of elections in five states," he said.

"The Election Commission of India, on 26th February 2021, has announced election for five states, including Bengal. Due to the ongoing intensive election preparations in the State, the

Members of Parliament from the All India Trinamool Congress would find it difficult to attend the second part of the Budget Session beginning from 8th March 2021," he wrote in the letter.

TMC MP Sudeep Bandyopadhyay has also written to the Lok Sabha Speaker on the same issue, requesting that Parliament be adjourned due to the polls. While O'Brien's letter is dated March 8, Bandyopadhyay had written to the LS Speaker on February 6.

The second part of the Budget session of Parliament began on Monday but its duration is likely to be curtailed as most top politicians would be busy campaigning for assembly polls taking place in March-April.

As of now, the session will conclude on April 8.

O'Brien, in his letter, mentioned two precedents when Parliament sessions were

adjourned due to polls in states.

He cited the example of the 222nd session which commenced on February 21, 2011, and was scheduled to conclude on April 21, 2011. However, due to upcoming state assembly elections in five states -- Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the House was adjourned sine die on March 25, 2011, he said.

The second instance he provided was the 214th session which commenced on October 17, 2008, and was adjourned early on October 24, 2008, to meet again on 10 December 2008.

The session, as per the original schedule, was to continue up to November 21, 2008. However, due to upcoming state assembly elections in some states, the House was adjourned till December 10, 2008.

"I am optimistic you will consider this proposal of ours," the TMC leader said.

## TMC fudged data on crimes against women: BJP MP

**KOLKATA, MAR 8 (PTI):** Taking potshots at Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her party's 'Bengal wants its daughter' campaign, BJP MP Locket Chatterjee on Monday said the ruling camp, which had been manipulating crime statistics, has "suddenly woken up to the theme of daughterhood".

If records were to be seen, incidents of rape, molestation and acid attack "have not declined, not even a wee bit, over the last 10 years", she told reporters here.

Alleging that the state government did not provide requisite data to NCRB on the crimes committed against women in the state, Chatterjee said that "this is the reason why the agency couldn't publish a comprehensive report on Bengal.

"From cases of trafficking in north Bengal to multiple murders in the state, just about a few incidents were reported," the senior BJP leader claimed.

Asked about the oft-repeated TMC criticism of the "plight of women in BJP-ruled states such as Uttar

Pradesh", the Lok Sabha MP said, "The honourable CM must first explain why those behind the gangrape-murder of a Kamduni girl have not been punished yet."

A 20-year-old college student was in 2013 abducted, gang-raped and murdered in Kamduni village, North 24 Parganas district, around 20 km from Kolkata

Talking about Banerjee's protests over the steep hike in fuel prices, Chatterjee said, "If she is so concerned, she should waive the cess of Rs 37 charged by her government on every litre of petrol. Why was just one rupee slashed as a token measure? The Centre is aware of people's sufferings and is doing its bit to serve them.

Slamming the TMC for its jibe at the Narendra Modi government over inclusion of his photograph in COVID-19 inoculation certificates ahead of assembly polls in five states, she said, "It's sad that Didi (Mamata Banerjee) did not refrain from politicising the vaccination drive. She always gives precedence to politics over people's interests.



**KOLKATA, MAR 8 (PTI):** The TMC on Monday decided to replace Sarala Murmu, its candidate for Malda district's Habibpur assembly constituency, with Pradeep Baskey, amid speculation that she might join the BJP after allegedly being denied a seat that she desired.

A senior TMC leader

said the party nominates a candidate for a particular constituency "based on his or her winning possibility and not personal desires".

A statement issued by the TMC said, "This is to inform that the candidate for Malda District's Habibpur Assembly Constituency, Sarala Murmu, had to

be replaced due to her ill health. Pradeep Baskey will be contesting the upcoming Assembly Elections from this constituency."

Murmu was not available for comment.

This is the first case of candidate replacement in the run-up to the political do-or-die contest for both the TMC and the BJP.

## 86.25% new COVID cases in 6 states: Govt

**NEW DELHI, MAR 8 (PTI):** Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are the six states that cumulatively account for 86.25 per cent of the new coronavirus cases reported in the past 24 hours, the Health Ministry said on Monday.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 11,141, followed by Kerala with 2,100 and Punjab with 1,043 new infections, the ministry said.

The Centre is regularly holding high-level review meetings with the states and Union territories showing a surge in

new daily cases and the health secretary is also holding weekly review meetings, it said.

"Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have been reporting a surge in the COVID daily new cases. They cumulatively account for 86.25 per cent of the new cases reported in the past 24 hours," the ministry said in a statement.

The Centre has recently rushed high-level public health teams to Maharashtra and Punjab to assist in COVID-19 control and containment measures in view of the recent spike in cases, it

added.

The central government said it had already deputed high-level teams to Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Jammu and Kashmir to support them in their fight against the recent spike in COVID-19 cases.

"These teams interact with the state/UT authorities and get a firsthand understanding of the challenges and issues being faced by them so as to strengthen their ongoing activities and remove bottlenecks, if any," the ministry said.

## Modi scalds Mamata, says instead of being 'Didi' to people she chose to be 'bua' to 'bhatija'

**KOLKATA, MAR 7 (PTI):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday launched a blistering attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, accusing her of "betraying and insulting" the people of the state who trusted she will bring about a change after the Left rule.

He also accused her of nepotism by choosing to play the limited role of "bua" (aunt) to her "bhatija" (nephew) instead of becoming "Didi" (elder sister) to the people.

Addressing a massive BJP rally at the Brigade

Parade Grounds, his first in West Bengal after the announcement of assembly polls, Modi hit out at his detractors who accuse him of favouring a handful of his business-men friends.

"You have betrayed and insulted the people of Bengal who trusted that you will be the harbinger of change after the end of the Left rule. You smashed to smithereens (chaknachoor) their hopes and dreams," he said, excoriating the TMC supremo.

He alleged Banerjee promoted nepotism

while neglecting the people who fondly called her 'Didi'.

"Bengal chose you in role of 'Didi' but you preferred being 'bua' to your 'bhatija'," he said.

The BJP has been accusing Banerjee of trying to install her nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek as the next chief minister.

Hitting back at rival leaders like former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Banerjee, who often accuse him of favouring his industrialist friends, Modi said given his humble background

he valued friendship.

"All 130 crore people of India are my friends, I work for them. I gave 90 lakh gas connections to my friends of Bengal. I have special affinity with tea, and the tea garden workers of Bengal are my friends for whom I have implemented a social security scheme," he said.

Modi has often spoken about how he used to sell tea at a railway station and on trains as a small boy.

He also attacked Banerjee for triggering the insider-outsider debate.

"When those believing in Marx and Lenin and a

party like the TMC, an offshoot of the Congress, are parties of insiders, how the BJP, for whose foundation Syama Prasad Mookerjee was the source of inspiration, can be a party of outsiders," he said.

The prime minister said he was committed to bringing about "asol parivartan" (real change) in West Bengal where all sections of people progress but nobody is appeased, and infiltration is stopped.

"Be it North Bengal or South Bengal, ordinary people or refugees...all will progress but nobody will be appeased.

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# Álvaro Morata, a happy accident of fate, rescues Juventus again

NICKY BANDINI

**LONDON, 08 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** With their title hopes hanging by a thread, Juventus turned once more to their Iberian saviour. You know the one: tall, dark hair, a repeat Champions League winner from his time at Real Madrid. A forward who has lifted silverware in Spain, Italy and England and who bangs in the goals for his country at a rate of one in every other game.

He had rescued them once already last week, coming off the bench to break a second-half stalemate at Spezia. On Saturday, he delivered a more remarkable rescue: setting up a goal then scoring two of his own to reverse a 1-0 deficit against top-four rivals Lazio. In the dugout, even Cristiano Ronaldo looked impressed.

Wait, you didn't think we were talking about Him, did you? The man rescuing Juventus this week cost only €10m, not €100m. Even in a difficult season, heading towards an uncertain conclusion, Álvaro Morata continues to look like a bargain.

He is Serie A's joint-leading provider of assists, with eight, and has scored seven times despite making only 15 starts. Even those numbers are the tip of the iceberg. Morata struck six times in the Champions League group stage, not including the hat-trick he had disallowed during the home defeat by Barcelona. That was hardly the

only time he got scuppered by a re-play official.

The Spaniard's knack for finding himself on the wrong side of marginal decisions became so persistent at one point that fans in Italy rechristened him as Ál(VAR) o Morata. In November, he told El Partidazo de Cope that his tally of disallowed goals was up to 13 for the year. One week later, he had another chalked off during a Nations League game against Germany.

Through all the frustrations, he persisted. Morata was determined to make a success of this second stay in Turin; not that anyone viewed his previous stop, between 2014 and 2016, as a failure. To the contrary, it was his success that made it impossible for him to stay back then: compelling Madrid to take up their buy-back option. The price was fixed, and his value had soared during two seasons in which he helped take Juventus to a Champions League final.

This club have always looked like a happy fit for Morata, off the pitch as well as on it. He met his wife, Alice Campello, during his first stay at Juventus and spoke in starry-eyed terms of how at home he was made to feel by veteran players in the changing room, drawing a contrast to what he perceived as a stricter hierarchy in Madrid. He scored 27 times in two seasons: hardly an overwhelming figure, yet so many of those seemed to come in the biggest



games.

Although Morata would enjoy some positive moments in his subsequent stays at Chelsea and Atlético Madrid, they always came interwoven with too many missed opportunities. The opportunity to return to Juventus this summer thrilled him, even if it did look from the outside as though he had been their fall-back option, after failed pursuits of Luis Suárez and Edin Dzeko.

Those three forwards could hardly be less alike in their footballing nature, raising questions about the club's scattershot recruitment. But if this was an accident of fate, it is turning out to be a very happy one.

When Ronaldo missed time with a coronavirus infection early in this campaign, it was Morata who filled the void, scoring or setting up every goal his team

managed during his teammate's absence. On other occasions, they have dovetailed together, the Spaniard setting up the Portuguese's opener in a win over Roma this January.

Never have Morata's contributions weighed heavier, though, than in this past week. Juventus looked like a team ready to give in to their own frustrations against Spezia on Tuesday, unable to break down dogged opponents for more than an hour until he came off the bench and scored within a minute. Juventus romped from there to a 3-0 win.

The situation against Lazio was more dire. Joaquín Correa had punctured Juventus in the 14th minute, and the champions looked close to a nervous implosion after being denied what looked like an obvious penalty for handball by Wesley Hoedt. Alex Sandro was

fortunate to escape without a red card soon afterwards, when he swung his forearm into the back of Correa's head.

Morata changed the complexion of the game when he released Adrien Rabiot into the box just before half-time. The Frenchman's near-post finish was ferocious, but only possible because his teammate had isolated Hoedt before threading a pass between him and Adam Marusic.

It was a goal that spoke to the versatility of Morata's performance. His greatest strength as a striker has always been what Italians like to call *profondità*, an ability to find and exploit spaces behind a defence. Most often, he likes to attack those spaces himself but at Juventus this season Andrea Pirlo has often required him to take up deeper positions and serve others.

There is room, though, to do both. Juventus's second goal felt more like classic Morata, accelerating away from defenders and beating the keeper at the end of a counter to a Lazio counter. The third came from the penalty spot, after Aaron Ramsey was felled.

Ronaldo did not even enter the game until the scoring was finished at 3-1. A more positive outing for Juventus is hard to imagine as they prepare for the return leg against Porto. They remain seven points behind Inter at the top of Serie A but, with equal games played,

there is at least a little pressure on the Nerazzuri now before their visit to Atalanta, who have scored 12 times in four games.

Morata was hardly the only Juventus player to impress on Saturday. Federico Chiesa, ever more the symbol of this team and their future, was magnificent, sending Lazio's defence into disarray with dribbles that combined furious force with spellbinding close control. Danilo excelled in an unfamiliar role as a holding midfielder.

Still, the Spaniard's contribution felt even more compelling when you consider his recent health struggles. Morata has been diagnosed with cytomegalovirus, a lifelong infection that typically shows no symptoms but can cause flare-ups and reportedly caused him a serious bout of faintness at the end of Juventus's first-leg defeat to Porto.

Pirlo has been reintroducing Morata slowly since and this was the first game he had started. "These have been three difficult weeks," said the player at full time. "I felt like I had lost all my strength in training and in matches. But now I'm recovering, I feel better."

Is there time yet for Juventus to do likewise in a season that seemed to be slipping away from them? Their situation remains precarious, both at home and in Europe, but a comeback win over a team as good as Lazio was a welcome shot in the arm.

## Lewes FC's Claire Rafferty: 'I hope one day every day is International Women's Day'

SUZANNE WRACK

**LONDON, 08 MAR**

**[THEGUARDIAN]:** "I hope one day we don't have to have special days and every single day is International Women's Day," says Claire Rafferty. It is a sentence that sums up the former England player's involvement with Lewes FC as a board member, because in their corner of East Sussex equality is not a gimmick or a T-shirt slogan; it is enshrined.

In 2017 the fan-owned club committed to equal investment, support and pay for their women's and men's teams. In 2021, 100 years after women's football was banned by the FA, and 50 years after the ban was lifted, Lewes are still the only club in Europe to have taken the stance. "It's shocking really, isn't it?," says Rafferty, who was a part-time analyst with Deutsche Bank when she played and now works for her former club Chelsea, in the commercial team. "I'm always very proud to say that I'm involved in Lewes because of it. It has been quite nice going back into training, and then just getting a gauge for the culture of the team and the environment, that's where you can see it working. It's easy to say



we're treating the teams equally on paper."

The recruitment of Rafferty to the board and her more recent participation in the Championship side's training – "The majority of sessions I was just apologising for my poor passes and my lazy running" – shows Lewes are as ambitious on the pitch as they are off it. Sporting success is critical to the success of the equality project.

"It's absolutely key that we're now pushing our way up the table," says the club's general manager, Maggie Murphy. "We don't want to be thought of as an equality project that doesn't have football at its core. We are really serious about doing well. We already have more points now than we've ever had in any campaign previously."

Rafferty adds: "One thing Emma Hayes used to say was: 'If you're winning, it's easier for me to

ask the board for more.' People do listen more when you're winning and the product is of a higher quality."

Murphy, who worked in anti-corruption and human rights and is a co-founder of Equal Playing Field (an organisation that campaigns for sporting equality through the breaking of world records) was attracted to the club by its equality USP.

"For me, there wasn't any other football club that I was interested in joining. It wasn't really about football, it was about changing football," she says. "Joining the club, a little bit was about putting my money where my mouth was and to try and see if it's possible to create a better type of club. Lewes had already done all the hard work, they'd already established the equality principle in 2017. So for me, this was like, well, let's see where I can help to

take it next.

"Football has so much potential to influence and impact culture. If we don't engage with football as a vehicle for social change, we'll get there, we'll get wherever we're trying to go, but we might just get there 10 years later than if we had used football as that vehicle first, because in this country it is so powerful."

Lewes are thriving. A six-figure sponsorship from the clothing brand Lyle and Scott has been gamechanging. "The fact that they were willing to back us with such an investment in the middle of a pandemic was a huge validation for us of everything we've been putting into place for so many years," says Murphy. Fans have responded, keen to back companies that back their sport. "In the US, in the summer, fans were buying [NWSL sponsor] Budweiser to give to the Houston Dash players. Women's football fans are very loyal to brands that back the product," explains Murphy. Sponsorship is reaping rewards. "We're already planning for next season," says Murphy. "We are hoping to be in a position to be able to go full-time and really push

hard on being a contender for promotion. That's obviously good for our football and we hope it's good for our message that equality can drive performance on and off the pitch."

They are also looking to reinvent the club's pathway and academy structure. Building their own unconventional way means the small club are, to some extent, a thorn in the side of football. "Not because of our equal pay stance," Murphy says. "But for pointing out that we can do football differently and that we don't need to follow the same cookie-cutter model."

"Women's football is on a path to professionalism, and that professionalism looks like men's Premier League football. So there is quite a push for us to create a glossy, finished product that is ready for broadcast immediately, so we can be sellable in the way that we understand and see the Premier League as being sellable."

"The danger for that is that the more progress that women's football makes, the more dependent we become on men's football, because to finance some of the requirements we need capital upfront now."

## Derby defeat exposes old weaknesses in Guardiola's Manchester City

JONATHAN WILSON

**LONDON, 08 MAR**

**[THEGUARDIAN]:** It is

one defeat. It does not change the fundamental fact that Manchester City will win the league and look probably as well-positioned to win a quadruple as any side has at this stage of a season. There comes a point at which the precise number of wins in a row is irrelevant – the run ended at 21, but whether it had been 18 or 24, it would be a lot, far too many for most sides even to begin to contemplate. They remain a formidable team but they no longer appear invincible.

That happens. All teams have games when the breaks don't quite go their way – although United were deserved winners on Sunday. All sides have bad days. After three months of good days, perhaps City were simply due one. But still, the manner of United's victory at the Etihad will cause concern. We've seen this before: City rattled by a concession, vulnerable to balls in behind them, looking at a wall that opposes them with no real concept of where the door may be. When Pep Guardiola teams lose games, this is how they lose them. When Real Madrid appointed José Mourinho in 2010, it was with a specific brief to stop Guardiola, to do whatever it took to end his reign of glory at Barcelona. The Portuguese achieved it, after two grimly attritional seasons of eye-gouging and press-conference warfare, winning the league and forcing an exhausted Guardiola into resignation. Yet it turns out that had they merely wanted to challenge him on the pitch, the ideal candidate was the man who succeeded Mourinho at Old Trafford: Ole Gunnar Solskjær. There have been 68 managers who have faced Guardiola on four or more occasions; since City won at Anfield last month to level the score against

Jürgen Klopp, Solskjær is the only one to have a positive record against him – four wins and a draw from eight games.

His football, sitting men deep and looking to strike at pace on the counter, is not particularly sophisticated. It remains too dependent on brilliant individuals doing brilliant things at the right moment to bring sustained success. It can toil against well-organised and unambitious opponents (Crystal Palace, West Brom, Sheffield United). It will struggle against better sides who decide also to sit off (after a 6-1 defeat, a 1-0 defeat and five 0-0 draws, this was United's first win against a "Big Six" side this season). But it can hurt teams who leave space in behind them.

Guardiola sides over recent seasons have been vulnerable to that. It's how City lost twice to Wolves last season and to Norwich. For a while, that was how Guardiola teams lost in the Champions League, season after season. Then the cause of defeat became the attempts to prevent that kind of defeat: the weird team selections against Liverpool in 2018, Tottenham in 2019 and Lyon in 2020.

It's what Guardiola seemed to have resolved this season. The 5-2 defeat at home to Leicester was a perfect example of how finely honed his side are and the problems that can cause: pulling one of the more advanced central midfielders deeper to offer additional protection to the back four left Kevin De Bruyne isolated in the press, allowing Youri Tielemans and Nampalys Mendy to pick their way around him with relative ease. This is why the calls for Klopp to ease back on his approach as Liverpool's season collapses feel slightly misguided; when mechanisms are as precisely calibrated and interconnected as modern pressing systems are, enacting anything more than a minor tweak is hugely difficult.

## Mel Marshall: 'With equality and diversity, spectacular things can be achieved'

PAUL MACINNES

**LONDON, 08 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** Mel Marshall says Adam

Peaty is "bouncing around" at the prospect of competing in the Olympic Games this summer. "There's only so many things that can bring that kind of inspiration," she says. "The Olympics gives people something to look forward to, it's the next stage in our Covid recovery. The language should be 'let's make it happen' and it's a privilege to be part of it."

Peaty's coach is relishing the prospect of a games many fear are cursed. The pent-up athletic energy, she believes, could make it one of the greatest Games if it goes ahead. If you are looking

for doubt or diplomatic equivocation, you will not get it from the 39-year-old double Olympian turned ceiling-smashing coach.

Since Peaty came under her wing at the City of Derby Swimming Club aged 14, Marshall has formed a bond with him that has sent world records tumbling and left medals piling up. He calls her one of "the strongest people I've ever met" while she says at home she is a bit of a cricer. It is a rare dynamic, that of female coach and male athlete, and on International Women's Day, Marshall is here to argue for more of it.

"I think we listen well, I

think that we take time, I think that we care well, I think that we are diligent," Marshall says, describing what she believes are the common qualities of female coaches. "I think that we qualify ourselves, I think that we educate ourselves, I think that our CVs are full."

"I just think there's so many great traits to females and what we bring. There's feminine ways of doing things and there's masculine ways of doing things. I think it's the job of the female to exhibit feminine qualities and masculine qualities and the responsibility of the males to [do the same], and there's a responsibility on both to do better."

According to research by the coaching charity UK Coaching only 10% of elite coaching roles are held by women. Across the board, the share of female coaches in the workforce was under 50% and in decline, even before the pandemic. UK Coaching is calling for gender parity within five years, while UK Sport recently launched a leadership programme aimed at doubling female Olympic and Paralympic representation by Paris 2024.

Marshall is reluctant to discuss the barriers women may face in breaking into the top ranks of coaching. In fact, she is positively against it, insisting instead on amplifying a con-

structive message. "Rather than looking for faults and blame where it's not working, let's look at equality, 50/50, and how do we create more opportunities?"

Some of those opportunities admittedly are what she calls "platforms", ie jobs. But Marshall also wants better projection for female role models and greater encouragement for those on the way up; so they believe that they can achieve. "I was really lucky that I had a dad who was incredibly competitive and a mum that was incredibly supportive and so I was able to push through," she says. "But bring women and what they're doing well to the forefront and people will follow."



# Australia suspends defense training with Myanmar after coup

**YANGON, MYANMAR (AP):** Australia has suspended its defense co-operation with Myanmar and is redirecting humanitarian aid in the country because of last month’s military takeover of the government and the ongoing detention of an Australian citizen.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said Monday that diplomats and relatives had only been able to contact economic policy adviser Sean Turnell twice by phone since he was detained in early February. She described the access as “very limited consular support.”

Australia announced late Sunday that it had suspended a defense training program with Myanmar worth about 1.5 million Australian dollars (\$1.2 million) over five years. The program had been restricted to noncombat areas such as English-language training.

Australian humanitarian aid will be directed away from Myanmar government and government-related entities. Instead it will focus on the immediate humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable and poor in Myanmar, including the Rohingya and other ethnic



minorities, Payne said.

Also Monday, Myanmar security forces continued to clamp down on anti-coup protesters, firing tear gas to break up a crowd of around 1,000 people who were demonstrating in the capital, Naypyitaw. The protesters deployed fire extinguishers to create a smoke screen as they fled from authorities.

Meanwhile, thousands of protesters marching in Mandalay, the country’s second-largest city, dispersed on their own amid fears that soldiers and police were planning to use force to break up their demonstration.

Large-scale protests have occurred daily across many cities and towns in Myanmar since the country’s military

seized power in the Feb. 1 coup, and security forces have responded with ever greater use of lethal force and mass arrests.

On Sunday, police occupied hospitals and universities and reportedly arrested hundreds of people involved in protesting the military takeover.

In Myanmar’s largest city, Yangon, gunshots from heavy weapons rang out for a second straight night in several neighborhoods after the start of an 8 p.m. curfew. The sounds of what apparently were stun grenades could also be heard on videos posted on social media.

The purpose for security forces using such weapons when protesters had left the streets appeared to be part of a

strategy to strike fear in anyone who might think about defying the authorities. In a similar vein, many filmed incidents of police and soldiers in plain view showed them savagely beating protesters they had taken into custody.

Some of the shooting was heard near hospitals, where reports said neighborhood residents sought to block the entry of police and soldiers.

Security forces have often targeted medical personnel and facilities, attacking ambulances and their crews. Members of the medical profession launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, which is the nominal coordinator of the protests, frequently hailed on demonstrators’ signs by its CDM initials. Tak-

ing over hospitals would allow the authorities to easily arrest wounded people presumed to be protesters.

Meanwhile, a Canadian-Israeli lobbyist hired by Myanmar’s junta has said the ruling generals want to get out of politics and shift the nation away from China after they grabbed power in the widely-condemned coup against the nation’s civilian government.

Ari Ben-Menashe, who previously represented Sudan’s military leader and Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, spoke to The Associated Press on Sunday from the U.S. after returning from his second trip in the past month to Myanmar.

He said he was confident he can persuade the Biden administration to lift sanctions imposed on Burmese military leaders who directed the coup last month that deposed and detained Myanmar’s elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

He said the U.S. and others in the West have reduced Myanmar’s political conflict to a black and white tale of military repression against pro-democracy activists that ignores the fraudulent exclusion of millions of minorities from voting in last year’s election.

## Escalating violence raises pressure for Myanmar sanctions

**BANGKOK (AP):** The escalation of violence in Myanmar as authorities crack down on protests against the Feb. 1 coup is raising pressure for more sanctions against the junta, even as countries struggle over how to best sway military leaders injured to global condemnation.

The challenge is made doubly difficult by fears of harming ordinary citizens who were already suffering from an economic slump worsened by the pandemic but are braving risks of arrest and injury to voice outrage over the military takeover. Still, activists and experts say there are ways to ramp up pressure on the regime, especially by cutting off sources of funding and access to the tools of repression.

The U.N. special envoy on Friday urged the Security Council to act to quell junta violence that this week killed about 50 demonstrators and injured scores more. More shootings were reported over the weekend, and a coalition of labor unions called a strike for Monday.

“There is an urgency for collective action,” Christine Schraner Burgener told the meeting. “How much more can we allow the Myanmar military to get away with?”

Coordinated U.N. action is difficult, however, since permanent Security Council members China and Russia would almost certainly veto it. Myanmar’s neighbors, its biggest trading partners and sources of investment, are likewise reluctant to resort to sanctions.

Some piecemeal actions have already been taken. The U.S., Britain and Canada have tight-

ened various restrictions on Myanmar’s army, their family members and other top leaders of the junta. The U.S. blocked an attempt by the military to access more than \$1 billion in Myanmar central bank funds being held in the U.S., the State Department confirmed Friday.

But most economic interests of the military remain “largely unchallenged,” Thomas Andrews, the U.N. special rapporteur on the rights situation in Myanmar, said in a report issued last week. Some governments have halted aid and the World Bank said it suspended funding and was reviewing its programs.

Its unclear whether the sanctions imposed so far, although symbolically important, will have much clout. Schraner Burgener told U.N. correspondents that the army shrugged off a warning of possible “huge strong measures” against the coup with the reply that, “We are used to sanctions and we survived those sanctions in the past.”

Andrews and other experts and human rights activists are calling for a ban on dealings with the many Myanmar companies associated with the military and an embargo on arms and technology, products and services that can be used by the authorities for surveillance and violence.

The activist group Justice for Myanmar issued a list of dozens of foreign companies that it says have supplied such potential tools of repression to the government, which is now entirely under military control.

It cited budget documents for the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Transport and

Communications that show purchases of forensic data, tracking, password recovery, drones and other equipment from the U.S., Israel, EU, Japan and other countries. Such technologies can have benign or even beneficial uses, such as fighting human trafficking. But they also are being used to track down protesters, both online and offline.

Restricting dealings with military-dominated conglomerates including Myanmar Economic Corp., Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd. and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise might also pack more punch, with a minimal impact on small, private companies and individuals.

One idea gaining support is to prevent the junta from accessing vital oil and gas revenues paid into and held in banks outside the country, Chris Sidoti, a former member of the U.N. Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, said in a news conference on Thursday.

Oil and gas are Myanmar’s biggest exports and a crucial source of foreign exchange needed to pay for imports. The country’s \$1.4 billion oil and gas and mining industries account for more than a third of exports and a large share of tax revenue.

“The money supply has to be cut off. That’s the most urgent priority and the most direct step that can be taken,” said Sidoti, one of the founding members of a newly established international group called the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar.

Unfortunately, such measures can take commitment and time, and “time is not on the side of

the people of Myanmar at a time when these atrocities are being committed,” he said.

Myanmar’s economy languished in isolation after a coup in 1962. Many of the sanctions imposed by Western governments in the decades that followed were lifted after the country began its troubled transition toward democracy in 2011. Some of those restrictions were restored after the army’s brutal operations in 2017 against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar’s northwest Rakhine state.

Australia said Monday it suspended defense cooperation with Myanmar and was redirecting humanitarian aid because of the coup and the detention of an Australian citizen. Sean Turnell, an advisor to leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is being held by the junta, was detained a few days after the coup.

The European Union has said it is reviewing its policies and stands ready to adopt restrictive measures against those directly responsible for the coup. Japan, likewise, has said it is considering what to do.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, convened a virtual meeting on March 2 to discuss Myanmar. Its chairman later issued a statement calling for an end to violence and for talks to try to reach a peaceful settlement.

But ASEAN admitted Myanmar as a member in 1997, long before the military, known as the Tatmadaw, initiated reforms that helped elect a quasi-civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi. Most ASEAN governments have authoritarian leaders or

# Pence to give speech in SC, his 1st since leaving office

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP):** In his first public address since the end of the Trump administration, former Vice President Mike Pence is traveling to South Carolina, set to speak to a conservative Christian nonprofit in the state that plays a crucial role in the presidential nominating process.

Next month, Pence will keynote a dinner hosted by the Palmetto Family Council, a Pence aide told The Associated Press on Sunday. The aide spoke on the condition of anonymity due to a lack of permission to discuss the plans publicly.

The Palmetto Family lobbies for what it considers to be “biblical values,” such as heterosexual marriage, and most recently helped push through a ban on most abortions in South Carolina. That law is now being challenged in court.

Pence, who since leaving the administration has been doing work with the Heritage Foundation and Young America’s Foundation, has not indicated if he plans

a future run for office, but his choice of making his post-administration debut in South Carolina helps set down a marker for a potential 2024 presidential bid. The state holds the first presidential primaries in the South, and candidates of both major parties typically spend more than a year in the state ahead of those votes, introducing themselves and trying to secure support.

As vice president, Pence made numerous trips to South Carolina, meeting several times with Gov. Henry McMaster for coronavirus-related forums. He also recently campaigned in the state for U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace.

Throughout his political career, beginning as an Indiana congressman-turned-governor, Pence has long advocated for restrictions on abortion and has voiced support for the overturn of Roe v. Wade. The speech to Palmetto Family is advantageous for Pence in a state that Republican candidates use as a prov-

ing ground to test their “pro-life” mettle.

The Pence aide described the former vice president’s speech as one that will focus on traditional conservative talking points but will also tout what Pence sees as the accomplishments of the Trump administration.

According to Dave Wilson, president of Palmetto Family, Pence will speak to between 450 and 600 guests at a ticketed, sponsored dinner at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center on April 29.

Wilson told AP that he considered Pence a “prime person” to address the organization due to the “level of faith” the former vice president embodied while in office.

“Vice President Mike Pence ... is very reflective of the ideas, policies and direction that we at Palmetto Family want to see in South Carolina: bringing faith to the forefront and growing the next generation of conservative leaders for our state,” Wilson said.

## Hong Kong leader ‘fully welcomes’ proposed electoral changes

**HONG KONG (AP):** Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Monday the city’s government “fully welcomes” changes to the city’s electoral system that will substantially increase central government control over Hong Kong politics and exclude Beijing’s critics.

Chinese authorities have said the draft decision before China’s National People’s Congress would mean the largely pro-Beijing committee that elects Hong Kong’s leader would also choose a large part of the legislature to ensure that the city is run by “patriots.” The Election Committee would also have the right to vet candidates for the Legislative Council, weeding out any suspected of being insufficiently loyal to China and the ruling Communist Party.

Currently, half of Hong Kong’s legislature is directly elected by voters, although the mass

resignation of opposition legislators to protest the expulsion of four of their colleagues for being “unpatriotic” means the the body is now entirely controlled by Beijing loyalists.

“There are loopholes in the electoral systems, there are also flaws in the systems in Hong Kong,” Lam said at a news conference after she returned from the meeting in Beijing. “I fully understand that this is not a matter that can be addressed entirely by the government.”

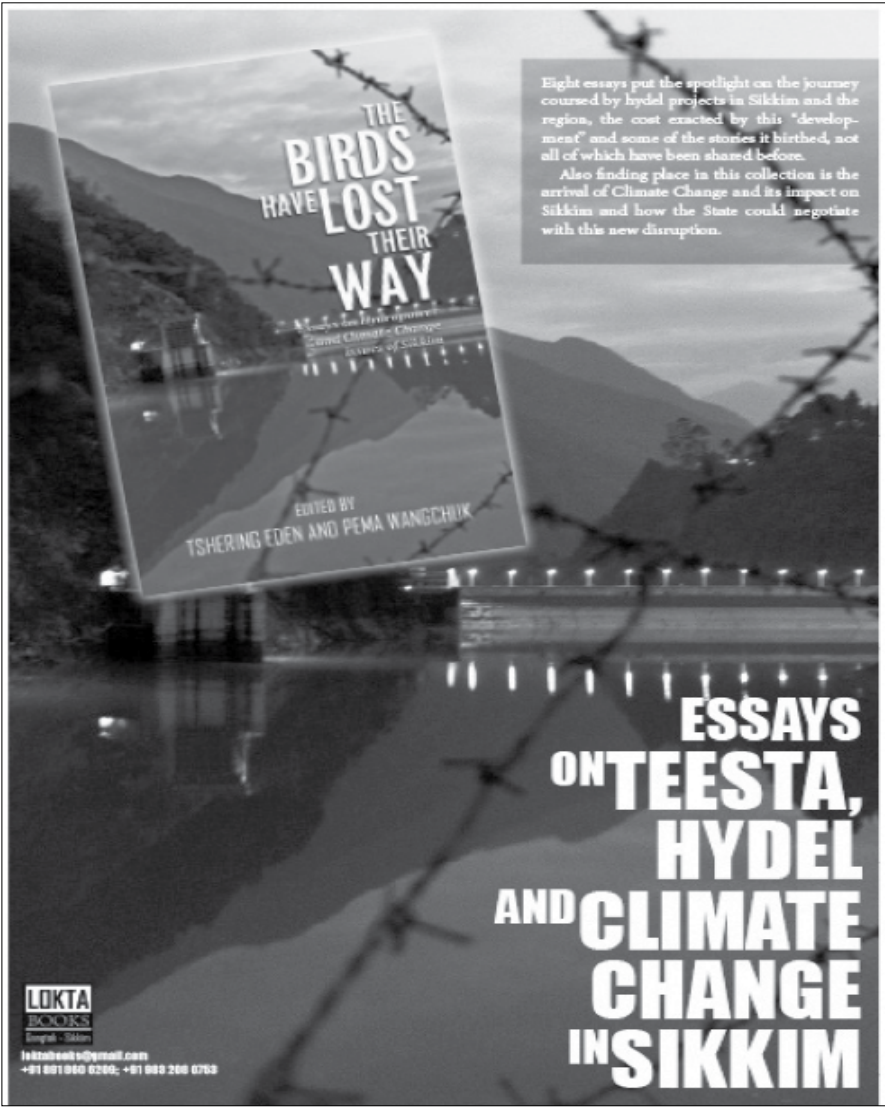
“I’m glad that the central authorities have, again, exercised its constitutional powers to help address this problem for Hong Kong,” she said.

She declined to elaborate on the views she had shared to the central authorities regarding the electoral reforms, and said many pieces

of legislation in Hong Kong would have to be amended. The NPC, China’s ceremonial legislature, will all but certainly endorse the draft decision, though it may not take immediate legal effect.

Unconfirmed reports say the legislation will also expand the size of the Legislative Council from 70 to 90 and the Election Committee from 1,200 to 1,500. Seats on the Election Committee now reserved for directly elected district counselors will also be eliminated, further cementing Beijing’s control over the body.

Lam also said she could not confirm whether legislative elections — already postponed for one year last September ostensibly because of the coronavirus pandemic — would be further deferred due to the electoral reforms.





# Olivia Wilde Congratulates Ex Jason Sudeikis After His Critics Choice Win

After Ted Lasso star Jason Sudeikis thanked ex Olivia Wilde in his Critics Choice Awards acceptance speech on March 7, she tweeted a message of support and teased him about his wardrobe.

The supportive feelings are mutual between exes Jason Sudeikis and Olivia Wilde following his big Critics Choice Awards moment.

After the Ted Lasso star surprisingly thanked Olivia while accepting the Best Actor in a Comedy Series prize on Sunday, March 7, she took to Twitter to congratulate him, in addition to adding a quip about his low-key awards looks.

"Congrats to Jason and the entire Ted Lasso family on your @CriticsChoice wins!" the Booksmart director wrote, tagging a few of Jason's colleagues. "So happy for you guys. I hope this means we all keep wearing hoodies when the ceremonies are in person next year."

Jason has been racking up the accolades for his Apple TV+ comedy series, for which he won a Golden Globe Award last weekend. At both virtual awards ceremonies, the actor was casually dressed in a comfy hoodie.



In addition, E! News has learned that Olivia and Jason are in a positive and drama-free place as they continue to successfully co-parent their children Otis Sudeikis, 6, and Daisy Sudeikis, 4. Their kids remain their top priority, now that both stars have moved on to new relationships.

During his virtual Critics Choice Awards acceptance speech, the SNL alum gave a shout-out to Olivia despite the news in November 2020 that the pair had ended their 10-year relationship.

"I want to thank my kids, Daisy, Otis,"

Jason said. "I want to thank their mom, Olivia, who had the initial idea to do this as a TV show."

He recalled Olivia previously telling him, "'You and Brendan [Hunt] and Joe [Kelly] love doing that so much, you should do it as a movie or TV show.' I was like, 'Nah'... She was right."

Olivia is currently in a relationship with Harry Styles, who stars in her upcoming thriller Don't Worry Darling. Meanwhile, fans have been busy picking up on clues about Jason's apparent romance with model Keeley Hazell.

## Chinese director of 'Nomadland' faces controversy at home

**TAIPEI, TAIWAN (AP):** Chloe Zhao's success — she's the first Asian woman and the second woman ever to win a Golden Globe for best director for her film "Nomadland" — has not been met with universal applause in her country of birth.

The Beijing-born filmmaker, now a leading Oscar contender, instead finds the news of her success overshadowed by a nationalist backlash regarding her citizenship and her identity. Censors have removed some social media posts about the film, which has raised questions about whether it will still be released in China.

Over the past week, Chinese web users questioned whether Zhao, who was educated in the U.K. and the U.S., was still a Chinese citizen and if she could be counted as Chinese given a critical comment she made about the country in 2013. Even as some celebrated her win, others dug up two interviews where Zhao said things that they considered an "insult to China."

Now publicity about the

film has been removed from social media, and at least two hashtags related to it have been disabled.

Searching for the hashtags "Nomadland has a release date" and "No land to rely on" (the film's Chinese title) on popular microblog platform Weibo results in a message: "According to the relevant laws, regulations and policies, the page is not found."

A post on Weibo from the government-backed National Arthouse Alliance of Cinemas that had featured a poster for the film no longer displays the poster.

On Douban, a popular app where many urban Chinese users discuss books, films and TV shows, the official Chinese poster for the movie as well as a release date in China were deleted Friday, according to Variety. The app's landing page for the movie, with comments and its English-language poster, remain visible.

At the heart of the controversy are two quotes from previous interviews done by Zhao. Online users circulated

screenshots from a 2013 interview with Filmmaker magazine where Zhao said, "It goes back to when I was a teenager in China, being in a place where there are lies everywhere." The interview no longer shows the quote, but archived versions of the webpage showed the original.

The second quote came from an interview Zhao did with an Australian website, news.com.au, in December last year where she said "the U.S. is now my country." Although the news site updated the story on March 3 to say they had misquoted Zhao, and that the article "has been updated to reflect she said (the U.S. is) 'not' her country," the uncorrected version of the story was the one circulating widely on the Chinese internet.

It is unclear if the film will still be released in China. It was slated to be released on April 23, according to Chinese media. The China Film Administration did not immediately respond to phone calls seeking comment.

The online debate has been split. Nationalist com-

mentators say Zhao betrayed her country, calling her "two-faced" and saying she left the country based on her father's wealth as a former CEO of a state-owned enterprise. Other observers called for the debate to remain focused on her movie, which follows the story of a woman who lives in a van after the company that was the economic engine of her town in Nevada shut its doors.

A popular film critic, Chu Mufeng, praised Zhao and her film on his Weibo where he has 3 million followers, noting that "not only was she the first ethnically Chinese female director to win best director, she was also the first Asian woman."

However, one of the top comments underneath his post said: "An American female film director, thanks, don't praise her too much."

Chu responded to the comment, saying, "If an ethnically Chinese chef was great at cooking, would you ask him where he was from? Treat a good movie as if it's a feast, all you need to do is enjoy."

## Dolce&Gabbana seeks over \$600M damages from 2 US bloggers

**MILAN (AP):** The Milan fashion house Dolce&Gabbana has filed a defamation suit in an Italian court seeking over \$600 million in damages from two U.S. fashion bloggers who reposted anti-Asian comments attributed to one of the designers that led to a boycott by Asian consumers.

The suit was filed in Milan civil court in 2019 but only became public this week when the bloggers posted about it on their Instagram account, Diet Prada. Their feed is widely followed in

the fashion world for its cutting commentary on unoriginality in designs and on social issues.

"This whole case is a way of trying to silence Diet Prada, and to silence Tony (Liu) and Lindsay (Schuyler) personally," said Susan Scafidì, director of the Fashion Law Institute at Fordham Law School, which is coordinating the bloggers' defense.

Lawyers for Dolce&Gabbana reached by the AP declined to comment on the case.

The case dates back to November 2018, when Dol-

ce&Gabbana faced a boycott in Asia after outrage over what were seen as culturally insensitive videos promoting a major runway show in Shanghai and subsequent posts of insulting comments in a private Instagram chat.

The show was canceled in the backlash, which included retailers pulling Dolce&Gabbana merchandise and Asian VIPs disavowing the brand.

Designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana initially

said that Gabbana's account had been hacked. The two later appeared in a video apologizing to the Chinese people.

"A public apology and a quiet lawsuit really cancel each other out in my mind," Scafidì told The Associated Press on Saturday.

Italian defense attorneys filed a brief this week in Milan civil court, arguing that Italy is not the correct venue for the case, given that the blog is produced in the United States and the alleged damages occurred in Asia.



**SPECTACULAR!** The singer, Rita Ora performs during the 43rd Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade in Sydney, Australia.

## Grammy performers: Taylor Swift, BTS, Cardi B, Billie Eilish



**NEW YORK (AP):** Taylor Swift, BTS, Cardi B and Billie Eilish are set to perform at next week's Grammy Awards. The Recording Academy announced Sunday that Harry Styles, Bad Bunny, Post Malone, Megan Thee Stallion and Dua Lipa will also hit the stage at the March 14 event. The show will air live from the Staples Center in Los Angeles on CBS and Para-

mount+.

The Grammys were originally supposed to take place on Jan. 31 but were delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic. The academy said in a statement that "artists will be coming together, while still safely apart, to play music for each other as a community and celebrate the music that unites us all."

Trevor Noah is hosting

the show for the first time. Other performers include Chris Martin, John Mayer, Doja Cat, Maren Morris, DaBaby, HAIM, Lil Baby, Brandi Carlile, Roddy Ricch, Brittany Howard, Miranda Lambert, Mickey Guyton and Black Pumas.

Beyoncé is leading nominee with nine, followed by Swift, Lipa and Ricch, who each earned six nominations.

### ARIES:

The trouble is, we spend too much time doing the tango between the past and the future. But the past cannot be fixed and the future is as uncertain as the results of a poker game. Why not stop, just for a second, and appreciate what is being offered to you in this moment? The present is where the magic is at—it's where it has been all along! As such, your soul ties are also taking centre stage today. You're able to see clearly the bonds that survived the test of time and tide, and you are grateful for them.

### TAURUS:

Spoiler alert, honey: there will always be deadlines to meet and clients to please. But do you really want to make your whole life about work, work, work? The cards are urging you to embrace the spirit of play and adventure. To set some time aside for your personal and creative pursuits, whether that's a basketball game with the neighbours or a cook-a-thon at home. Remember, staying in the energy of joy is the secret to inviting more joy and celebration into your world.

### GEMINI:

Yes, there is a way out, Gemini. The cards are urging you to take matters in your own hands and act immediately. Legal intervention may be the only

way out in some cases. If you're already fighting a battle in court, trust that the outcome will be in your favour. The cards are also bringing your attention to the Universal law of karma—the principle that states we are rewarded in proportion to our efforts. So, focus on planting the seeds of goodness despite how disillusioned you are feeling at this moment, and know that things will turn around for the better.

### CANCER:

In eastern religions such as Buddhism, the lotus is a synonymous enlightenment, providing us mere mortals with the hope that there is a way out of the murkiness. Closer home, it is depicted as the throne of deities such as Brahma and Saraswati, and is considered a symbol of beauty and purity. What does it signify in your reality, Cancer? How does it relate to where you are in your journey? Today, you're being asked to meditate whilst visualising the pastel-hued flower in your mind's eye. This will help you acknowledge all the ways in which you have risen above the old karmic cycle gracefully and blossomed in who you were almost meant to be.

### LEO:

This past year, though chaotic, has been enriching in so many ways. It held space for you to nurture your skills and pick up new ones along the way. What the cards want you to remember is that you're

just getting started! So, stay committed to your path. Dedicate a certain number of hours each week to your practice. Who knows where this journey may lead you towards a few years down the line? You know what they say... the Universe is full of surprises!

### VIRGO:

What if we said everything begins and ends with the spirit of play? What if we said that we are here to have fun, to create, and to spread joy and laughter? Virgo, quit taking everything so seriously! Learn the ways of the Divine Mother. As you do, observe the pathways that are opening up for you. Yes, you are being led into the unknown. Trust that your instinct will be your guide at every step along the way.

### LIBRA:

The trouble is, mediocre people get ahead in the game while great people waste their entire life repeating the story of failure and doubting their potential. On which end of the spectrum do you lie, Libra? How have you been actively sabotaging your life? What the cards want you to know: it's time to stop playing it small \*or\* safe. It's time to remember who you are, what you came here for, and demand a price that's in proportion to your efforts.

### SCORPIO:

It's time for a check-in, Scorpio. What are you giving your time and energy to, and are these activities fulfilling you? It's time to declutter your schedule. It's time to set your priorities in order and focus on your main goals. If that means saying 'no' to something or somebody, so be it. You can't please everybody anyway. Some of you may find that you are at an important juncture. Yes, the fruits of your labour are on their way. Take a moment to reflect upon what has worked for you thus far. This will help you decide upon the way forward.

### SAGITTARIUS:

If everything looked like rainbows and butterflies at all times, we would get comfortable. So comfortable that we wouldn't dare to look within or understand how we are holding ourselves back from realising our true potential. The cards are urging you to honour the chaos as an opportunity to move, let go of the old, and say yes to the unknown. It's true that the path you're about to choose is a less trodden one. Trust that your guides are holding space for you to spread your wings.

### CAPRICORN:

Here's the thing, Capricorn: it's not going to be easy, especially when your passion is your profession. There will be days when your heart will feel like it's being

torn apart. There will be days when you will want to give up on it all and go back to the old ways. Motivate yourself to keep moving forward nonetheless. There are silver linings—plenty of them. Choosing hope and optimism over everything will help create a paradigm shift.

### AQUARIUS:

There are times when we tempt fate, throw caution to the wind, and move forward confidently despite the risks this entails. And then there are times when we examine the plan of action thoroughly, calculate each move, and choose to play it safe. Now is such a time in your life, Aquarius. Remember, the goal is to not ruffle too many feathers, and to obey the rules. Working with the system at this point will prove to be the key to your success.

### PISCES:

There are people who always bring a smile to our face, no matter how down and out we are. And then, there are people who dump their emotional baggage on us and exhaust us with their presence. Pay attention to how you feel after each and every interaction. The Universe is helping you realise who your true friends are and all the ways in which they are showing up for you in these testing times.