



**BORAT SEQUEL DROPS EARLY  
AS RUDY GIULIANI SLAMS  
SACHA BARON COHEN OVER  
CONTROVERSIAL SCENE'**  
*pg 08*

**FIGURE OUT WHY...  
THE HOW WILL THEN  
FOLLOW**  
*pg 04*

**ARIANA GRANDE DROPS  
NEW MUSIC: WATCH  
THE "POSITIONS"  
MUSIC VIDEO NOW**  
*pg 08*



# SummitTIMES

## ICMR issues advisory for use of Feluda paper strip test

**NEW DELHI, OCT 22 (PTI):** The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has issued an advisory for the use of indigenously developed Feluda paper strip test, which is based on CRISPR-Cas9 technology for diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2, by laboratories.

The paper-strip uses cutting-edge CRISPR gene-editing technology to identify and target the genetic material of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 in less than an hour.

As claimed by the manufacturer, no further RT-PCR based confirmation is required for samples that are confirmed as positive or negative by the CRISPR SARS-CoV-2 test, the advisory issued on Thursday stated.

The test has been developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIRs) Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), Delhi, and has been validated by the National Centre for Biological Sciences and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

The test has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for use in the country.

"The test works by identifying SARS-CoV-2 virus strain and uses a Thermal Cycler instead of a qPCR machine for conducting the test. As claimed by the manufacturer, no further RT-PCR based confirmation is required for samples that are confirmed as positives or negatives by the CRISPR SARS-CoV-2 test," the ICMR said in its advisory.

Existing government or private laboratories already approved by the ICMR for SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR based testing may use this new CRISPR test if the laboratory desires to do so.

No further approval is required from the ICMR for existing laboratories.

New laboratories intending to initiate molecular testing of SARS-CoV-2 testing by any method will be required to seek approval as per the standard process laid down by the ICMR and NABL before initiating any kind of molecular testing, the advisory said.

Any prescription for RT-PCR, CRISPR, TRUENAT, CBNAAT may be considered equivalent.

All testing data should be essentially entered into the ICMR COVID-19 web portal on a real time basis.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan had recently said that based on tests in over 2,000 patients during the trials at the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB) and testing in private labs, the tests showed 96 per cent sensitivity and 98 per cent specificity.

This compares favourably to ICMR's current acceptance criteria of RT-PCR kit of at least 95 per cent sensitivity and at least 99 per cent specificity, he had stated.

## Phurba Lachenpa signs up with Mumbai City FC



**MUMBAI, OCT 23 (PTI):** Indian Super League franchise Mumbai City FC on Friday announced that it has signed young goalkeeper Phurba Lachenpa for the upcoming season.

The 22-year-old joins the franchise on a contract that will keep him at the club until 2024.

A graduate of the Shillong Lajong FC Academy, Lachenpa signed a professional contract with the Meghalaya-based club in 2015.

The Sikkimese shot-stopper made 24 appearances during his four seasons there, before signing for fellow I-League club Real Kashmir in 2019.

A regular starter in Real Kashmir's fourth-placed finish last season in the I-League, Lachenpa impressed as he kept 8 clean sheets in 19 appearances across all competitions, conceding only 17 goals in the process.

He will join goalkeeper Amrinder Singh in the goalkeeping contingent.

"It's a proud moment for me, taking the next step of my career and committing my future to a club of Mumbai City's stature. I've enjoyed my football and my journey so far but I'm only getting started," Lachpena was quoted as saying in a media release.

"I know I have to work harder and I am really looking forward to working with and learning from my teammates. It's a huge challenge and an even bigger opportunity for me and I am ready to give it my all," he added.

Head coach, Sergio Lobera said, Phurba was one of the best goalkeepers in the I-League last season.

"He is young and has tremendous potential to improve a lot in the future. Phurba's reflexes and command during the games is something that caught our eye, and we are hoping he can continue his development here at Mumbai City," he added.

## Not against taxi drivers but our demands genuine and for the common people, says SPYF

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 OCT:**

"Taxi fare from Uttarey in West Sikkim to Gangtok is now Rs 900 per person, so if a patient is to be brought to STNM Hospital here, the patient will have to be accompanied by at least one person, that will cost Rs 1,800. To and fro taxi fare will come to Rs 3,600. If a person who earns only from MG NREGA has to pay such fare, he will have to work for 18 days today, explaining how the hiked fare was impacting underprivileged families.

Members of the forum have been camping outside the Tashiling Secretariat since 22 Oct in hopes that their demands regarding removal of passenger limits

in taxis [due to which fares have been hiked and which has no scientific evidence to justify restrictions], resumption of bus service to villages and removal of restriction on pillion riders in two-wheelers.

According to the forum, the limit on number of passengers a taxi can carry and the subsequent hike in fares is burning a hole in the pockets of the common Sikkimese, especially the poor.

The lack of bus service in far-flung areas of the State leaves the poor with no option except to take taxis which have almost doubled the taxi fares due to the limit on carrying capacity.

SPYF has said that there are many people in the villages who have been forced to avoid treatment because of the high costs now involved in travelling and treatment.

They had earlier written to the Transport Department urging them to consider their demands. The Department had then responded by saying that the rules for passenger limits are in place as per guidelines from the centre.

To this SPYF today said that many other states

## Rs 5 lakh each for Shivalaya Mandir and Tashi Palden Monastery from CM Fund

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 OCT:**

State Housing Board Chairperson, Karma Tashi Bhutia, today handed over Rs 5 lakh each from the CM Fund to the committees of Shivalaya Mandir of Central Pendum and Tashi Palden Gumpa at Sajong under Rhenock constituency. This was in continuation of the assurance made by the Chief Minister to representatives of Shivalaya Mandir and Tashi Palden Gumpa.

An SKM press release issued by its secretary



[press & publicity], Ranjana Pradhan, informs that during the foundation stone laying ceremony at Pendum Gadi in East District on 17 October, the CM had visited monasteries and temples in Central Pendum.

It was during his interactions with committee members of Shivalaya Mandir and Tashi Palden Gumpa that he had promised the said funds from the CM Fund for extension and renovation works

at Shivalaya Mandir and Tashi Palden Gumpa.

The release adds that the committee members and area MLA, Speaker LB Das, have expressed deep gratitude towards the CM for fulfilling his promise so quickly.

## "Eating Rats and Snakes": Myanmar slums look for food in open drains

**YANGON, 23 OCT [REUTERS]:**

After the first wave of coronavirus hit Myanmar in March, 36-year-old Ma Suu closed her salad stall and pawned her jewelry and gold to buy food to eat

During the second wave, when the government issued a stay-home order in September for Yangon, Ma Suu shut her stall again and sold her clothes, plates and pots.

With nothing left to sell, her husband, an out of work construction labourer, has resorted to hunting for food in the open drains by the slum where they live on the outskirts of Myanmar's largest city.

"People are eating rats and snakes," Ma Suu said through tears. "Without an income, they need to eat like that to feed their children."

They live in Hlaing Thar Yar, one of Yangon's poorest neighborhoods, where residents shine flashlights in the undergrowth behind their homes, looking for some night creature to stave off their hunger.

While rats, reptiles and insects are often eaten by families in rural areas, people in some urban areas are now being reduced to getting nutrition however they can.

With more than 40,000 cases and 1,000 deaths, Myanmar is facing one



of Southeast Asia's worst coronavirus outbreaks, and the lockdown in Yangon has left hundreds of thousands of people, like Ma Suu, without work and precious little support.

Local administrator Nay Min Tun said in his part of Hlaing Thar Yar 40% of households had received aid but many workplaces were shut and people had become more desperate.

Myat Min Thu, the ruling party lawmaker for the area, said government aid and private donations was being

distributed but acknowledged not everyone could be covered.

The crisis has cast a shadow over a general election planned for Nov. 8, though Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is still expected to win by a comfortable margin.

NOTHING BUT THE MARKET

Even before the pandemic, a third of Myanmar's 53 million people were considered "highly vulnerable" to falling into poverty, despite recent gains following the country's emergence from decades of ruinous isolation under the

military junta.

The financial squeeze now threatens to plunge many back into poverty or squash their chances of getting out.

Poverty in the developing East Asia and Pacific region is set to rise for the first time in 20 years due to COVID-19, the World Bank said in September, with about 38 million expected to remain in or be pushed back into poverty.

Myanmar's government has offered poor households a one-off food package and three cash grants of \$15 each as part of its relief plan, but families

say it falls far short.

A survey by ONow Myanmar of more than 2,000 people across the country in April found 70% had stopped working and a quarter had taken out loans for food, medicine, and other essentials.

Sectors driving industrialisation in Myanmar - including garment work and tourism - have come to a halt while remittances have dried up, said Gerard McCarthy, a postdoctoral fellow at the Asia Research Institute in Singapore.

"Households already in dire debt from paying for medical treatment, schooling, sustaining the elderly and everyday survival...many will need to pay off these loans before they can begin spending on anything discretionary," he said.

Thant Myint-U, a Myanmar historian, rued the absence of a proper social safety net and the collapse of villages' traditional welfare systems.

"For tens of millions of Myanmar's poor, there is nothing other than the market, which in the good times provides opportunities for informal work in the cities or migration abroad but during a downturn is leaving the poorest with little more than the shirt on their backs," he said.



## Late Phulmaya Memorial Volleyball Tournament



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 23 OCT:** Social Worker cum Cultural Coordinator of Temi-Namphing, Srijana Subbaattended the Late Phulmaya Memorial Volleyball Tournament-2020 as chief guest today.

The first quarter match was played between Katuwal Six and Young Star wherein the match was won by Katuwal Six. In the match Anup Rai of Katuwal Six was awarded the best player medal by the guest of honour of the

program, social worker and former Panchayat, Chandru Dhakal.

Similarly, in the second match between Middle Sumin and Bardang, the latter won with Thendup Tempo Bhotia of Middle Sumin awarded the best

player medal.

The day's matches began with reception of the chief guest in a traditional way by offering khada in the presence of volleyball committee president along with other committee members.

## Relief distribution by Rotary Club of Siliguri



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 23 OCT:**

Rotary Club of Siliguri Metropolitan distributed new clothes and food on the occasion of Durga Puja celebration amongst 530 people at Mech Basti, Targhera Range, Oodlabari today, a press release informs.

Governor Dist 3240, Subashish Chatterjee, Assistant Governor Dist 3240, Zone 5, Sandeep Ghoshal along with President, Shiv Shankar Poddar, Secretary, Rakesh Garg, Co Project Chairman, Rajesh Agarwal and Project Chairmen, Jyoti Dey Sarhakar were present on the occasion.

## Amazon refuses to appear before Lok Sabha panel on data privacy – MP

**NIGAM PRUSTY**  
**NEW DELHI, 23 OCT (REUTERS):** Representatives of Amazon.com Inc in India have refused to appear before a parliamentary panel reviewing the country's privacy bill and that could lead to "coercive action" against the U.S. e-commerce giant, a lawmaker said on Friday.

A parliamentary panel headed by the lawmaker, Meenakshi Lekhi, is reviewing the Indian government's Personal

Data Protection Bill which some industry executives say could potentially hurt foreign tech firms and force them to change how they store data.

As part of the panel's deliberations, it regularly holds discussions with technology companies. On Friday, Lekhi told reporters Amazon had refused to appear before the panel on Oct. 28 and the committee had taken "serious objection to it".

"Amazon is doing huge business in India

... If it doesn't appear before the committee, coercive action may be initiated against it," said Lekhi, without explaining what the action could be.

A spokeswoman for Amazon, which counts India as a key growth market, said it had no immediate comment on Lekhi's remarks.

Separately, Facebook representatives appeared before the committee on Friday. Twitter has been asked to appear on Oct. 28, while digital payments firm Paytm and Alphabet

Inc's Google are due to appear on Oct. 29, said another lawmaker who is on the panel but did not wish to be named.

India has been drafting several regulations for the technology sector which industry executives say could hurt investment plans of foreign technology giants.

The Indian government is also considering a new policy for the e-commerce sector and to regulate so-called "non-personal" data.

## Munoz in the lead and Woods with his worst score at Sherwood

**THOUSAND OAKS (US), OCT 23 (AP):** The scorecards of Sebastian Munoz and Tiger Woods were unusual for different reasons in the Zozo Championship at Sherwood. That was only good news for one of them.

Munoz twice holed out for eagle from a combined distance of 219 yards on Thursday. He also had eight birdies. Throw in a wild tee shot for double bogey, three bogeys and only five pars and it added to an 8-under 64 and a one-shot lead.

"Not a normal round," Munoz said.

That especially was the case for Woods. For the first time in his 1,277 rounds on the PGA Tour as a pro, he made bogey or worse on three par 5s in a single round. That led to a 4-over 76 by two shots his worst score in 49 rounds at Sherwood Country Club that left him 12 shots out of the lead and in no mood to talk.

Munoz, the Colombian who played his college golf at North Texas, finished off his bizarre round by saving par from a narrow section of the front bunker with a 15-foot putt on the 18th hole.

He was one shot

ahead of Tyrrell Hatton, the hottest golfer this month, and Justin Thomas, who had a hot finish. Hatton won the European Tour flagship event at Wentworth, flew to Las Vegas for the CJ Cup and tied for third. Thomas shot 29 on the back nine at Sherwood. They each had a 65.

Whether it was shocking to see Woods so far back on this course is a matter of perspective. He is a five-time winner at Sherwood, along with five runner-up finishes, against small fields in a holiday exhibition. He was playing only his third competitive round in the last seven weeks, and his first since missing the cut in the US Open a month ago.

The rust was evident, and a few bad breaks didn't help his cause. He pushed his tee shot on the par-5 11th to the right, normally not a big deal except the ball stopped rolling in the dirt between two trees about 18 inches apart. Woods couldn't believe it when he got to his ball and wasted no time inverting a sand wedge to hit out left-handed.

That didn't make it back to the fairway, and the rough is thicker than he ever saw it in the 12 previous times playing

Sherwood in December. The course recently overseeded with rye and the grass is thick, as it was at Shadow Creek. He laid up from there and made bogey.

On the par-5 13th, he sent his tee shot again to the right, partially blocked by a tree. He tried to gouge out a mid-iron and it didn't make it to the second section of fairway. Another vicious swing from thick grass advanced it only 130 yards to a bunker some 50 yards to the hole. The sand shot didn't quite reach the green. His putt from 55 feet didn't reach the hole. He made double bogey.

And then on the par-5 16th, a tee shot down the right side took a wild bounce to the right, and a marshal carefully going down the bank toward the creek was not a good sign. He took a penalty drop, laid up and sent wedge just over the green, forcing him to get up-and-down for bogey.

The one smile came on an 85-foot putt for birdie on the 14th. Smiles were rare on this day.

Munoz smiled in disbelief. His round began with a three-putt bogey from 7 feet. He followed with four birdies on the next five holes he

missed a 7-foot birdie putt on the par-5 fifth and then he hammered a 9-iron from 168 yards that faded gently toward the hole and rolled in for an eagle.

"Once you see the guy throw up the touchdown sign, it's good," Munoz said of a volunteer behind the green.

His other eagle looked like it might be a bogey. He hit 3-wood that crashed into a tree near the 16th green, and Munoz was waiting for it to splash down in the creek. Instead, it went backward into the fairway, 51 yards from the hole.

"My caddy was like, 'Be aggressive. You already took a risk on shot No. 2, so might as well just keep going.' All right, sure," he said.

"So I throw it up there and find the hole. It was pretty sweet."

Roughly half the 78-man field shot in the 60s on a pleasant day in the Conejo Valley. Woods wasn't the only one who didn't take advantage. Rory McIlroy two double bogeys sandwiched around two birdies at the end of his round of 73. Phil Mickelson, a winner last week on the 50-and-older circuit, needed four birdies on his last eight holes to shoot 72.

## Chamling extends Dussehra greetings

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 23 OCT:**

Former Chief Minister and SDF president, Pawan Chamling has conveyed his greetings on the occasion of Dussehra.

"Dussehra coming in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic will be of a completely different kind. The anxiety, sense of insecurity and uncertainty has ruled

people's hearts and minds. We have all been subjected to the fear, terror and challenges brought about by this unprecedented contagion. For many who have lost their dear ones, Dussehra is never going to be the same. My deepest condolences to all the bereaved families who are mourning the loss of their dear mother, father, wife, husband, child, sibling

or friend. Many dear souls are battling for their lives against the virus in hospital beds or at home. For many, the struggle is of different kind as they have lost jobs, businesses or other sources of income. What a tragic year this has been! I stand in solidarity with all who mourn or battle on the bed of sickness or loss of source of income and I

pray for their courage, fortitude, strength and encouragement," Mr Chamling has said.

Further, lauding the efforts of all frontline workers, he has expressed hope that people will be able to overcome the virus.

He has wished all Sikkimese a happy Dussehra and hoped that the festival will bring happiness, peace and prosperity.

## SKM Sports Wing coordination meet in South

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 23 OCT:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, Sports Wing, South District, organised a day-long coordination District Level Sports Committee formation at Rangang-Yangang Constituency today.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of SKM senior vice president, Raj Kumar Basnet, who was the chief guest.

Two veteran sportsmen Topden Pinto Bhutia [Ex National Footballer from Yangang] and Phurba Tshering Bhutia [State Gold medalist from Rinchenpong] were also felicitated during the event by SKM Sports Wing for their contributions to the State and the Nation in the field of sports.



## Will not raise national flag till J&K's own flag back: Mehbooba Mufti

**SRINAGAR, 23 OCT [NDTV]:** PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti - in her first press conference since being released from 14 months of detention - said she would not raise the national flag until Jammu and Kashmir's flag, constitution and status (as under Article 370) were restored. Ms Mufti also said "those who feel we have abandoned Kashmir are mistaken".

In a scathing attack on the centre - she called them "robbers" who had stolen constitutionally-guaranteed rights - Ms Mufti also said her party would not "abandon the constitutional battle" to reclaim special status withdrawn by the centre in a contentious decision taken in August last year.

"We will raise the national flag only once our state flag is back.

The national flag is here only because of this (the Jammu and Kashmir) flag and constitution. We are linked to the rest of the country because of this flag," Ms Mufti, a former Chief Minister, said.

"Those who feel we will abandon Kashmir are mistaken," she said, adding that she would not contest any election until Article 370 is restored. "I have contested elections under our own constitution. How can I contest elections when that constitution has been abolished," she said.

There were strong visual signals of Ms Mufti's intent at today's press conference. The former Chief Minister kept two flags on her desk as she addressed reporters - that of her party (the Peoples Democratic Republic) and the erstwhile flag of

J&K.

"A robber may be mighty but he has to return the stolen goods. They demolished the constitution... Parliament had no power to take away special status," she told reporters.

"Now it is time for leaders to sacrifice for the cause. Even if leaders need to shed their blood for the cause... Mehbooba Mufti will be the first to offer it," the PDP chief said, adding the fight would not be restricted to the restoration of article 370 but include the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

"One day they will fall at our feet and ask for resolution. It is a political fight and (we) will achieve (our) goal," Ms Mufti said.

After National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, also

a former chief minister, was released from a similarly prolonged period of detention, key political leaders in J&K - including the JKPC's Sajjad Lone - have come together to fight for the restoration of Article 370.

Called the "People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration", the freshly-minted grouping also seeks a dialogue between all stakeholders for a resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Political leaders from J&K, including Ms Mufti, Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar, were detained for months as part of measures taken by the centre to prevent backlash against announcing its decision to withdraw special status and bifurcate the former state into two union territories.

## Flipkart to buy 8% stake in Aditya Birla's fashion unit for \$204 million

**BENGALURU, 23 OCT (REUTERS):** Walmart Inc's Flipkart will buy a 7.8% stake in Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd for 15 billion rupees (\$204 million), the fashion retail company said, sending its shares up 6% on Friday.

The investment comes at a time when Amazon.com Inc, billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance

Industries and Flipkart are in a race to gain market share in India's fast-growing online market for food and groceries.

"Fashion retail in India is set for robust long-term growth due to strong fundamentals of a large and growing middle class... Rapid growth of technology infrastructure will further accelerate this

process," Aditya Birla Group Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla said.

With the COVID-19 pandemic keeping many people indoors, Indians are turning to online platforms for all purchases from bread to phones to clothes.

Media reports here had said both Amazon and Flipkart were in the race to pick a stake in Aditya Birla Fashion and

Retail, which owns and operates the Pantaloon retail chain and owns rights to sell Forever 21 merchandise in India.

Aditya Birla said it would use the money to strengthen its balance sheet as it scales up its businesses.

Shares of Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail surged as much as 6.5% to 163.45 rupees, their highest since March 30.

## Anthyesti Kriya

The Anthyesti Kriya of Retired Secretary - PHE, KK Rai who passed away on 21 Oct, 2020 after a short spell of illness is at our residence at Rai Cottage, Church Road, Gangtok on 26 Oct, 2020 (Monday). We are truly grateful to all our relatives and well-wishers who have supported us during this time of sadness and would like to make an appeal to follow all necessary protocols for COVID-19.



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# Zydus donates vehicle to Health Dept

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 OCT:**

Zydus Health Care Limited donated one vehicle (Maruti Alto) to the Health Department for the COVID-19 warriors today.

The vehicle was handed over to DG cum Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Dr. Pempa T. Bhutia.

Zydus Health Care Limited was represented by Sr. General Manager Operation, Suman Bag, DGM (HR and Admin), Kuldeep Singh Garlyaland Executive (HR and Administration), Anzan Pradhan.

This Maruti Alto was requested for the use as pool vehicle for Singtam District Hospital. Further one Ambulance for Mangan District Hospital is awaited from Cipla. The Health Department would like to thank Zydus Health Care Limited for their CSR support.



## Government imposes stock limits on onion traders

**NEW DELHI, 23 OCT [PTI]:** To boost domestic supply and provide relief to consumers from rising onion prices, the Centre on Friday imposed stock limits on both retailers and wholesalers with immediate effect till December 31.

Now, retailers can stock onion only up to 2 tonne, whereas wholesale traders are allowed to keep up to 25 tonne. This will check hoarding and blackmarketing, it said. Onion prices have shot up sharply to over ₹ 75 per kg in the past few weeks in the wake of damage to the standing kharif crop in producing areas due to heavy rainfall as well as hoarding.

Addressing media, Consumer Affairs Secretary Leena Nandan said, "This is a decisive step. We have imposed stock limits on onion traders with an immediate effect till December 31 after concerns that traders were releasing their stored stocks slowly, creating artificial price rise situation."

She said the

government had to invoke the recently passed Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, which provides regulation of agri-commodities "only" in the times of extraordinary price rise situation.

"Under this law, normally, we would not be regulating agri-food stuff like cereals and onion. But, in times of extraordinary price rise, we can regulate if the retail price breaches the trigger levels specified in the law," she said.

In case of onion, the average all-India retail price of onion of ₹ 55.60 per kg that prevailed on October 21 breached the trigger level as per the formula specified under the EC Amendment Act, she said.

The all-India average retail price of ₹ 55.60 per kg was higher by 22.12 per cent compared with last year's rates of ₹ 45.33 per kg and by 114.96 per cent as against average rate that prevailed in past five years. So, the retail price had actually more than doubled and, therefore,

decided to impose the stock limits on the commodity, she added.

Later, Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted that the Modi government has taken third step to curb hoarding and check prices. Stock limits have been imposed on retailers and wholesale traders of onion.

The government said action under the Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980, would be taken to prevent any hoarding, black marketing of onions by unscrupulous elements.

Highlighting other measures taken to cool down the spiralling trend in onion prices, the secretary said the government has decided to augment domestic supplies through imports for which state-owned MMTC would soon float a tender for red onions to meet the demand supply gap.

Recently, the government relaxed fumigation and

phytosanitary norms for import of onion and activated Indian consulates to facilitate trade, she said.

The secretary said the government had taken a pre-emptive step by announcing a ban on onion export on September 14 itself so as to ensure availability to domestic consumers at reasonable rates, before the expected arrival of kharif onion from next month.

"Thus, the retail price rise was moderated to some extent but recent reports of heavy rainfall in the onion-growing districts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have created concerns about damage to kharif crop," she said.

She also said the developments on the weather front have contributed to the sharp increase in onion prices.

However, to tide over the present situation, the government has stepped up offloading of onion from its buffer stock of 1 lakh tonne created in 2019-

20, which is being carried out swiftly but in a calibrated manner from the second half of September, she said.

The secretary further said onion from the government's buffer stock is being sold in major mandis as well as retail suppliers such as Safal, Kendriya Bhandar, NCCF, and NAFED outlets in major cities and also via states.

Currently, Assam and Kerala governments are being supplied from the retail disposal mechanism. Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Lakshadweep have also placed their requisition for onions, which are being dispatched, she said.

Further, onions are also being disposed of through open market sales and this will be stepped up further to bring down the price rise.

The government said kharif crop is likely to hit mandis from next month. The estimated arrival of 37 lakh tonne of kharif onion crop will improve availability, she added.

## 1 held with leopard skins in Jalpaiguri

**JALPAIGURI (WB), OCT 23 (PTI):** Two leopard skins were seized in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district and a man was arrested, officials said on Friday.

Officials of the Bichabhanga South

Range of Gorumara Wildlife Wing carried out a raid at Saili tea garden in Nagrakata Block on Thursday night and made the seizure and the arrest, they said.

The accused has been identified as Shani

Charua Oraon, said Ayan Chakraborty, the range officer of Gorumara South.

A manhunt is on to nab the other persons associated with the leopard skin smuggling racket, officials said.

## Real Madrid stunned in Champions League by Covid-hit Shakhtar Donetsk

**MADRID, 23 OCT [PA MEDIA]:** Real Madrid fell to a shock 3-2 defeat at home against an under-strength Shakhtar Donetsk in a stunning Champions League upset, after Federico Valverde's late equaliser was ruled out by VAR for an offside.

Shakhtar had to field a weakened team because of a number of coronavirus cases, but the Ukrainian underdogs tore Real to shreds as they raced into a 3-0 lead in an incredible first half. Luka Modric and Vinicius Júnior pulled goals back after the break but they were unable to avoid a humiliating defeat.

Valverde thought he had spared the hosts' blushes in stoppage time as his low shot from distance caught out the Shakhtar keeper Anatoliy Trubin – but Vinicius was ruled to be interfering with play from an offside position by standing in the teenage keeper's line of sight.

"We were lacking a bit of everything today but worst of all we were lacking confidence," the Real Madrid manager, Zinedine Zidane, said after the game. "It's difficult to think of what to say when you concede three goals in the first half. We made a mistake with their first goal and

from then on it was very difficult.

"I'm left with a very bad feeling because of everything that happened tonight. It's a bad game, a bad night but I'm the coach and I'm the one who has to find solutions. I didn't find them tonight and it's a very difficult moment for the players."

With building work still ongoing at the Bernabéu, Real were playing at their 6,000-capacity Alfredo Di Stéfano training ground where they lost 1-0 against Cádiz in La Liga at the weekend. Shakhtar gave them a scare after 15 minutes when Marlos burst through one-on-one with Thibaut Courtois, but the keeper saved with his legs.

Courtois could do nothing to prevent Tetê opening the scoring with a low finish just before the half-hour, after a strong run from the full-back Viktor Korniyenko. It was a deserved lead for Luis Castro's side, who were without 10 players including the goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov and the Brazilian stars Taison, Alan Patrick and Júnior Moraes.

Three minutes later the visitors had a second,

Courtois parrying Tetê's shot only for the defender Raphaël Varane to prod the rebound into his own net. Manor Solomon capped a remarkable first half with the third, latching on to Tetê's backheel and rolling the ball into the bottom corner.

Zidane threw on Karim Benzema at the break and they pulled one back eight minutes into the second half with a fantastic curling finish from Modric. The substitute Vinicius then scored within seconds of joining the action with a blistering finish.

Shakhtar had a chance to extend their lead but Courtois denied Tetê before Marlos had a goal ruled out for offside. With time running out, Benzema was denied by a last-ditch block and Éder Militão fired over before Valverde's late leveller was chalked off following a VAR check.

"In the first half we were not worthy of this competition," Modric said after the game. "It's obvious we need to improve, we lacked confidence today, especially in the first half, but we have to move on. We can't waste any time regretting what has happened."

## 140 new COVID-19 cases in Nagaland; tally rises to 8,436

**KOHIMA, OCT 23 (PTI):** The COVID-19 tally of Nagaland rose to 8,436 as 140 more people tested positive for the virus on Friday, a health department official said.

The state now has 1,837 active COVID-19 cases, the official said.

"140 positive cases of COVID-19 detected today Dimapur 118, Kohima 16, Mokokchung and Zunheboto two each, Wokha and Tuensang

one each," said Minister for Health and Family Welfare, S Pangnyu Phom.

"Also, 101 patients have recovered Kohima 52, Dimapur 46, Longleng 3," he said.

Of the total 8,436 COVID-19 cases, 1,837 are active cases, while 6,500 have recovered from the disease, said Additional Director of Health Department, Dr Denis Hangsing in the daily COVID-19 bulletin.

The COVID-19 recovery rate

in the state now is 77.05 per cent, he said.

So far 29 COVID-19 infected patients have died in the state, he said, adding that 22 have died of contagion, and six deaths are not related to COVID-19 and another is still under investigation.

Altogether 70 COVID-19 patients have migrated to other states, he said.

Dimapur district has the highest number of COVID-19

cases at 4,677 followed by Kohima (2,528), Mon (451), Peren (305), Zunheboto (132), Tuensang (142), Mokokchung (107), Phek (36), Wokha (27), Longleng (16), and Kiphire district (15).

Of the total cases in the state, 3,737 are armed forces or security personnel, 2,671 traced contacts, 1,629 returnees from other states and 399 frontline workers, he said.

## Trial of Russian in alleged bitcoin fraud to wrap in Paris

**PARIS (AP):** A court in Paris is wrapping up a trial Friday against Alexander Vinnik, who is accused of using ransomware in a 135 million-euro (\$160 million) fraud using the cryptocurrency bitcoin.

The 41-year-old Russian, who is also wanted in the United States and Russia, faces up to ten years in prison in France over charges of extortion, money laundering and criminal association.

A series of attacks on French businesses and organizations between 2016 and 2018 led to 20 victims paying ransom demands issued in bitcoin, one of the more widely used cryptocurrencies.

French prosecutors say Vinnik was one of the creators of the malicious software called "Locky" that was delivered through email. If downloaded, the recipient's data was

encrypted and they were asked to pay ransom in bitcoin to free it.

During an often tense week of court hearings, Vinnik's main line of defense was that he was only a technical operator carrying out the instructions of directors.

The verdict will come at a later date.

Vinnik was arrested in the summer of 2017 while on a family holiday in northern Greece, at the request of U.S. authorities. France, Russia and the United States had asked Greece earlier this year to extradite him to France, so that he would be within the legal borders of the European Union.

Vinnik went on hunger strike for 100 days while detained in Greece, he said, "to draw attention to our problems and the violation of my rights." He said he had been hospitalized "after having passed from 82 to 56 kg."

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**No.204/SJ&WD/CPS/2020** **Dated: 21.10.2020**

**ADDENDUM**

In continuation of our previous employment NOTICE No.117/SJ&WD/CPS/2020 dated 07/09/2020, the vacant post of 01 Member is added for Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), East-District. Hence the total number of vacant posts, for Member, JJB, East – District is 02(two).

The "TERMS AND CONDITIONS" and "OTHER REQUIREMENTS" have been indicated in the afore-mentioned NOTICE.

As prescribed by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Childred) Act 2015/ Rules, the CWC/JJB Members, are required to sit on all working days unless the case pendency is less. Furthermore, the CWC Members are required to hold atleast 20 sittings in a month.

The last date for receipt of applications for the NOTICE No. 117/SJ&WD/CPS/2020 dated 07/09/2020 and this ADDENDUM has been extended to 13/11/2020(Friday) till 4.30 pm.

Please visit [www.sikkimsocialwelfare.gov.in](http://www.sikkimsocialwelfare.gov.in)

**Sd/-**  
**Additional Secretary cum Director**  
**Social Justice & Welfare Department**  
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**R.O. NO. 117/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21**  
**Date. 21.10.2020**



# SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

## For Education

*Figure out why... the how will then follow*

The definition of literacy in India is grossly under-achieving. Anyone with an elementary knowledge to the alphabets is counted as literate; at times, even just being able to write and read their names is considered enough, and that is hardly what literacy should be about. If this were the yardstick to measure literacy, then handing over smartphones to the unlettered will get the job done. It is after all not rare to find preschool toddlers who have figured out how the play and pause commands on video games look different and work their way around it.

So, aiming for literacy is really aiming too low.

The aim has to be to deliver learning even if it does not include reading and writing so that the quality of human resource is improved. Governments choose the easier option of literacy when the more productive and necessary approach should be to create better educated citizens. Do that, and one need not even worry too much about employable skills, because if education does its job well, it will infuse an inquisitiveness and a confidence which will make the “educated” ready for every job and every challenge. And this has to be approach with which the education policy is approached.

Sikkim is thankfully on track since there are deep meditations and consultations underway to understand what is missing from its schools, what works and what needs to be done to inject quality into the school system here.

Education has been held up as a thrust area of governmental engagement, with ‘quality’ as the watch word. It is heartening for Sikkim to learn that education is receiving a relook. The density of schools in Sikkim leaves no room for complaint and the free textbooks and uniform scheme of the government ensure that at least the costumed required to remain in school are in place. Schemes like the mid-day meal are pegged as incentives to keep students in school, but the only effective incentive long-term will be the quality of education that is imparted in the classrooms, not the quality of food served during breaks or the quality of uniforms.

That said, enrolment is handsome in Sikkim’s schools and kids here can complete education if they so desire. But what also needs to be accepted is that nowadays, most kids are in school because their parents don’t know what else to do with them... because sending children to school is the done thing. Worryingly, most enroll in colleges for much the same reason (or rather, the lack of one). Not too many of us have really figured out why we send children to school. There are vague notions of “a better future” and employment, but come on, we should not be signing off the first two decades or more of our lives for pursuits without any clear idea of why. Hence, the first task for any enquiry into how schools can be improved should be to build consensus on why we have schools in the first place, and let’s scratch employment from the reasons because imparting “employable skills” does not require such a long time – you can prepare people for most jobs with a basic 3-month course and the rest they can learn on the job. Once Sikkim has figured out “why”, the how will be easy to work out.

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# Comics can teach readers how to identify fake news

ERIN STEUTER

THECONVERSATION.COM

At this point, most of us know the drill when it comes to COVID-19: proper hand hygiene, mask wearing and social distancing.

But does setting fire to cell towers make your list? Probably not. A conspiracy theory linking 5G mobile technology to the COVID-19 outbreak has ignited fears worldwide, prompting just this response from a few individuals in Québec, who set ablaze seven mobile towers.

Although such destructive responses are rare, thousands of digital consumers have absorbed aspects of this falsehood, pushing fringe beliefs into the mainstream despite refutations from the World Health Organization and multiple agencies in Canada and the United States. What started as a conspiracy turned into a real crisis for the people who immediately believed what they’d heard.

Get news that’s free, independent and based on evidence.

My research focuses on critical media studies and ideological representations in news and popular culture. I regularly offer workshops to schools and community groups that engage the public in contemporary media literacy issues. My book, *Won’t Get Fooled Again: A Graphic Guide To Fake News*, helps readers identify the underlying purpose of the messages they receive and learn how to do basic research before accepting the validity of what’s being presented to them.

DEALING WITH FAKE NEWS

Fake news is an increasingly pressing problem. In fact, a 2019 poll found 90 per cent of Canadians reported falling for false information online.

As consumers, we need to learn how to filter content and become our own educators, editors and fact-checkers to ensure the information we act upon is trustworthy. In a constantly changing informational and political environment, it’s

no wonder we often struggle to separate fact from fiction.

Research indicates people create misinformation for two primary reasons: money and ideology.

Articles, videos and other forms of content can generate large amounts of money for the websites that host these pieces. Most of their income comes from clicks on advertisements, so the more people who visit their sites, the better chances they have of boosting ad revenue. This feedback loop has led many publishers to lean on false information to drive traffic.

The threshold for making believable fake news has fallen as well. A conspiracy theorist, for example, can create a web page using a professional template with high-quality photos in just a few clicks. Once the content has been added, sharing it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms requires even less effort.

These misinformation and fake-news campaigns amplify and circulate through false digital accounts using automated programs known as bots that use certain keywords to influence and impact conversations among like-minded clusters of people. The results can foment discord on hot-button Canadian policy issues — like immigration and refugees — possibly disrupting election outcomes.

GENERATING ANXIETY AND UNDERMINING TRUTH

Canadians are expressing anxiety about the social impact of fake news, with 70 per cent fearing it could affect the outcome of a federal election. The Pew Research Center warns that fake news may even influence the core functions of the democratic system and contribute to “truth decay.”

Dubious and inflammatory content can undermine the quality of public debate, promote misconceptions, foster greater hostility toward political opponents and corrode trust in government and journalism.

The effects of misinformation have been evident throughout the COVID-19 epidemic, with many citizens confused as to whether a mask will decrease the chances of spreading the infection. Similar tactics are being levelled against Black Lives Matter protesters, such as labelling them all as rioters when videos and photos show most behaving peacefully.

Conspiracy theories about the “Chinese virus,” amplified by politicians in Canada and the U.S., have fanned the flames of anti-Asian sentiments following the spread of COVID-19. Data from law enforcement and Chinese-Canadian groups has shown an increase in anti-Asian hate incidents in Canada since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO AND HOW TO TRUST

Aside from a few social media platforms that identify misleading content and provide a brief explanation, most information online or in print can appear factual. So how can we figure out which sources to trust?

As a sociologist who focuses on critical media studies, I formed focus groups and collected input from my students to create a resource to guide readers through identifying fake news. While regulation and legislation are part of the solution, experts agree we must take swift action to teach students how to seek verification before acting on fake news.

In my findings, students identified several reasons why media outlets post or re-publish fake news, including making mistakes, being short-staffed, not fact-checking and actively seeking greater viewership by posting fake news.

The students pointed to holistic media literacy and critical thinking training as the best responses. This finding runs counter to the tactics currently used by publishers and tech companies to label or “fact-check” disputed news.

One student summarized this

mindset best: “As citizens and consumers, we have a responsibility to be critical. Don’t accept stories blindly. Hold those in power responsible for their actions!”

Getting multiple perspectives is a great way to expand our digest of viewpoints. Once we can see a story from more than one angle, separating truth from falsehood becomes much simpler.

At this point, I transitioned from recording perceptions of fake news to determining how to identify it. Providing students with information about the nature and agendas of fake news, in an immersive format, seemed to be a key step in engaging and cultivating their critical literacy capabilities. Information delivery was a key consideration.

ILLUSTRATING THE NARRATIVES

Researchers have shown graphic narratives can accelerate cognition by focusing the reader’s attention on crucial information. Images clarify complex content, especially for visual learners. Comic books require readers to create meaning using multiple factors that helps develop a complex, multi-modal literacy.

A major goal of my book involves unpacking the motivations behind the news we consume. Consider why a particular person was interviewed: Who do they represent? What do they want us to believe? Is another point of view missing?

*Won’t Get Fooled Again: A Graphic Guide to Fake News* is the culmination of my research and the insights drawn from media literacy scholarship. This guide helps readers understand what fake news is, where it comes from, and how to check its accuracy.

If there’s one habit my students and I hope everyone will develop, it’s this: pause before sharing news on social media. Double-check anything that immediately sparks anger or frustration and, remember, fake news creators want a reaction, not thoughtful reflection.

*[The writer is Professor of Sociology, Mount Allison University]*

## Young Nigerians rise up to demand a different kind of freedom

SAKIRU ADEBAYO

THECONVERSATION.COM

Two days after Nigeria celebrated its sixtieth year of independence, a video of a young man brazenly killed by a member of the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad or SARS caught the attention of netizens. The Twitter user who posted the viral video claimed the man’s body had been left at the side of the road and his Lexus stolen. It sparked a wave of protests across most of Nigeria’s urban metropolises. Under the moniker #ENDSARS, the protests have garnered support from Nigerian celebrities, Nigerians in the diaspora and even international stars such as John Boyega, Mesut Özil, Kanye West and Cardi B.

The protests could be said to fit neatly into the ongoing global campaign against police brutality, especially against black people. One could even argue that the restrictive context of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to tensions behind this sudden civil eruption. Whatever the case, one thing is sure: Nigerians have been driven up the wall by an autocratic political system disguised as a liberal democracy.

I argue that the protest placards demonstrate the idea that #ENDSARS on social media and on the streets is as much an expression of a will to modernity by Nigerian youths as it is a yearning to be treated with dignity.

(YOUNG) NIGERIAN LIVES MATTER

As a unit of the Nigeria Police Force, SARS was set up in 1992 to stem armed robbery, car snatching and kidnapping. It appears to have metamorphosed into a pernicious force, called out by Amnesty International as early as 2016. In fact, the #ENDSARS hashtag had been in circulation since at least 2017 and the Nigerian government has reportedly disbanded and reinstated SARS four times in the past four years.

Amid fury at SARS brutality and killings, protesters and online accounts also accuse the police unit of unfairly profiling young Nigerians – especially those who use iPhones, drive luxury cars and wear brands such as Nike or Adidas. The squad is also accused of having maltreated young people with piercings, tattoos and dreadlocks. In other words, Nigerian youths (once scornfully referred to as lazy by the nation’s president) are at the forefront of the #ENDSARS revolution precisely because they are

commonly the main targets of SARS’ violence.

Many of the #ENDSARS placards contain phrases such as, “To be modern is not a crime”; “iPhone, laptops, styled hair and living fresh isn’t a crime”; “We are techies not thieves”.

It is quite absurd that people get arrested and tortured simply because of how they look or what gadgets they possess, but this is the daily reality of many young Nigerians. In my view, the iconic #ENDSARS protest placards flooding social media have wider implications. One of these is that they reveal Nigeria’s ongoing and deep-seated struggle to establish itself as a modern democracy. They also point to a new generation of Nigerians (the ENDSARS generation?) rising to take their place in national affairs. This seemingly courageous and woke crop of young Nigerians use social (and traditional) media to make their voices heard to fight for their country’s endangered democracy.

TO BE MODERN IS NOT A CRIME

The placards raise many questions: Why is being modern criminalised in 21st century Nigeria? Why is it so important that Nigerian youths claim their right to be modern? What and whose modernity are they alluding to? These questions may seem peripheral in the face of the daily lived violence young Nigerians are subjected to but they are, in the long run, important.

The demand for the decriminalisation of modern sensibilities in the protests is not necessarily a demand for periodised modernity because, by many standards, Nigeria is a modern country. Also, it is not that SARS is pre-modern in its operation but rather that it is anti-modern in its persuasions. Hence, the expression of the will for modernity in the context of the protests is an ideological and ontological quest for freedom, rationalisation, professionalism and representative democracy as well as rejection of tradition.

The fact that SARS reportedly preyed on signs of ostentatiousness among young people is reflective of Nigeria’s still prevalent embrace of oppressive orthodoxies. It reflects paternalistic social relations and work culture – which extends to the entire Nigerian civil service – that fuel the infantilisation of Nigerian youths. It also partly explains the blanket disavowal of post-traditionalism and the demonisation of the technology and fashion

of progressive youth culture.

Put differently, the #ENDSARS movement is symbolic of many things, one of which is a generational divide in ideological posturing. The older generation seems intractably establishmentarian while the younger generation is becoming increasingly radical.

Also, at the heart of the issue is the policing of appearance and mannerism. In my view, SARS officers and the Nigerian government in general conflate the aesthetics of modernity – displayed among young Nigerians – with vices such as scamming, debauchery and insolence. The #ENDSARS protest is, among many other things, a yearning by young people to be respected as full human beings. It is also a wilful engagement in acts of civil disobedience as a way of fashioning a truly civil society.

‘A FREEDOM TO BE, TO DO’

As I write, SARS has been dissolved. The victory for the protesters came at a price. Some were reported dead and countless others injured at the hands of the police during the protests.

However, one cannot be celebratory when one considers that SARS has a history of reinventing itself. As we speak, SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics), a replacement for SARS, has been announced to the displeasure of many Nigerians.

The #ENDSARS revolution attests to the idea that the Nigerian people, especially young Nigerians, are capable of challenging the systemic failures and deteriorating public services that plague their country. The #ENDSARS protests (arguably the biggest civil revolt in Nigeria since the time of the last military regime in 1999) are still unfolding. Many hope they will form a social movement that marks the genesis of a long walk to radical change in the structures of governance in Nigeria.

Watching the protests, I am reminded of a scene in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, a novel which allegorically portrays the repressive regimes of former leaders Sani Abacha and Ibrahim Babangida in Nigeria. In it, the young protagonist, Kambili, longs for a different kind of freedom, “a freedom to be, to do”. In the same manner, the #ENDSARS protest is a yearning for freedom, a freedom to be, a freedom to do.

*[The writer is Postdoctoral fellow, University of the Witwatersrand]*



# Arunachal reports 165 new COVID-19 cases, tally 14,077

**ITANAGAR, OCT 23 (PTI):** At least 165 people, including three Army men, tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, pushing the caseload in the state to 14,077, a senior official said on Friday.

Barring 29, all new patients are asymptomatic and have been shifted to COVID care centres, he said.

A 59-year-old man succumbed to the

infection on Thursday, taking the total number of fatalities to 32, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

The deceased, a retired police officer, died at a dedicated COVID-19 hospital at Pasighat in East Siang.

Of the 165 new cases, 43 were reported from Lohit, 32 from the Capital Complex region, 23 from East Siang, 13

from Namsai, 10 from West Siang and eight from West Kameng.

Six cases were recorded in Upper Siang, five each in Tirap and Changlang, four each in Longding and Pakke Kessang, two each in Upper Subansiri, Tawang, Lower Dibang Valley, Siang and Papumpare and one each in Anjaw and Lower Siang.

“Three Army men

and 41 Border Roads Organisation (BRO) workers are among the new patients,” the SSO said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 2,638 active cases, while the number of those cured rose to 11,407, with 208 more recuperating from the disease. The recovery rate in the state now stands at 81.03 per cent, Dr Jampa said.

The Capital Complex region -- comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas -- has the highest number of active cases at 1,262, followed by West Siang at 264, East Siang at 198, Lohit at 124 and Changlang at 101.

As many as 3,03,101 samples were examined for COVID-19 so far, including 2,124 on Thursday, he added.

## Assam reports 508 new COVID-19 cases, seven more deaths

**GUWAHATI, OCT 22 (PTI):** Assam's COVID-19 death toll went up to 896 after seven more people succumbed to the disease on Thursday, while 508 new cases pushed the tally to 2,03,282, Health and Family Welfare Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Of the fresh fatalities, two were reported from Golaghat and one each from Kamrup Metropolitan, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Jorhat and Sonitpur, he said.

“Very sad and anguished to inform that seven more COVID

positive patients have succumbed to the disease...My condolences to all the families. We stand by you in this hour of grief,” Sarma said on Twitter.

The current fatality rate in the state stands at 0.44 per cent.

The 508 new cases include 101 from Kamrup Metropolitan district.

The northeastern state conducted 34,375 tests during the day, while the positivity rate is at 1.48 per cent.

Over 44.72 lakh sample tests for COVID-19 have been

conducted in the state so far.

Meanwhile, 1,584 patients were cured of the disease during the day, taking the total number of recoveries to 1,77,659, the minister said.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state has increased to 87.39 per cent.

Assam now has 24,724 active cases, and three have migrated out of the state.

Altogether 1,717 recovered patients have donated their plasma in the five plasma banks of the state.

## COVID insurance for puja pandal labourers, electricians

**KOLKATA, OCT 23 (PTI):** As the crisis caused by the pandemic continues to grow in West Bengal, several Durga puja committees in the metropolis have decided to provide COVID insurance to electricians and labourers, who have been engaged in setting up pandals and later dismantling them.

According to the city's to puja organisers, including Badamtala Asahar Sangha, 66 Pally, Dum Dum Sarbojanin, the labourers, many of them residents of faraway districts, toil hard for three months to give set up the pandals, bedeck it with decor and lights, with the committees making arrangements for their accommodation somewhere nearby.

“All puja plans have gone haywire amid the



pandemic.

In September, when it was decided that puja will be organised on a low scale, we initially had problems hiring labourers, as most of them had either left for their hometown or were unwilling to work due to the pandemic.

“That is when this

idea of providing COVID insurance to labourers first struck... Most organisers in the city have provided insurance to the labourers,” said Kajal Sarkar, the president of Forum for Durgostav -- an umbrella organisation representing the city's prominent pandals --

said.

Sandip Chakraborty of Badamtala Ashar Sangha in south Kolkata said the labourers, after dismantling the pandals, will have to undergo COVID-19 tests.

“If they test negative for the disease, they will be sent home. If any of

them is found to have contacted the disease, the insurance will come handy,” he maintained.

According to the organisers at Dum Dum Sarbojanin, the insurance has been extended to several labourers and four electricians at their marquee.

“We had initially thought of providing insurance only to the labourers. Later, we decided to extend the facility to four electricians who have been working at our pandal,” one of the organisers said.

Low-key celebrations will mark Durga puja this year, with the Calcutta High Court having declared all pandals no-entry zones for visitors, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bengal has more than 37,000 Durga Puja committees.

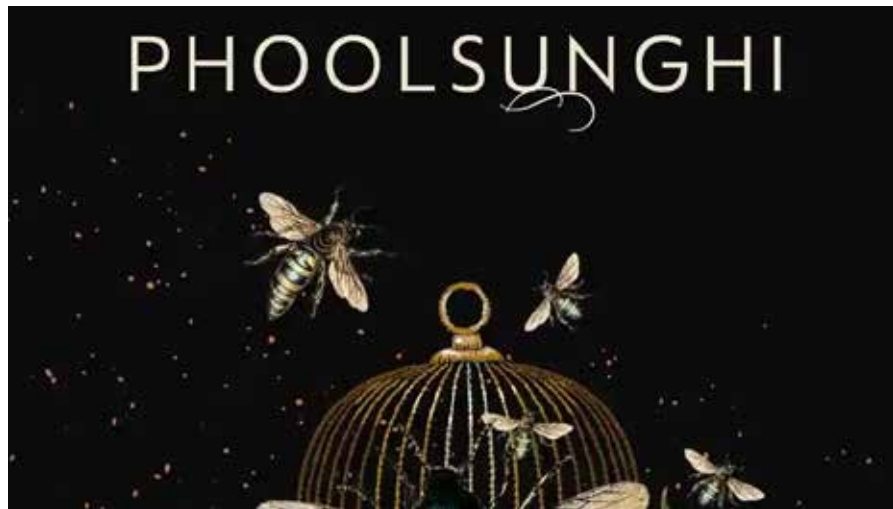
## ‘Phoolsunghi’: Famous Bhojpuri novel now in English

**NEW DELHI, OCT 23 (PTI):** The much-loved Bhojpuri historical novel “Phoolsunghi”, written by veteran Bhojpuri writer Pandey Kapil, has now been translated into English.

The book, touted to be the first ever Bhojpuri novel translated in English, will be published under Penguin Random House India's ‘Hamilton’ imprint next month. It is translated by academic-writer Gautam Choubey.

Set in colonial Bihar, it narrates the tale of an unfulfilled love between Mahendra Mishra, one of the most popular yet enigmatic Bhojpuri poets, and courtesan Dhehabai. The two protagonists are brought together by unexpected circumstances, but they also suffer due to them.

“I am absolutely thrilled that Penguin Random House India is going to publish the



English translation of ‘Phoolsunghi’. Translating this phenomenal novel brought together a community of authors, language scholars and Bhojpuri enthusiasts. I am glad the rest of the world would now be able to discover an aspect of Bhojpuri culture they had never imagined and hopefully appreciate its richness,” said Choubey.

According to the publisher, filled with mujras, mehfils, legal battles and intrigues, the 1977 novel makes for a gripping read and will bring alive the cultural ethos of a forgotten world.

“Ever since Phoolsunghi landed upon my desk, it has been an exciting journey of discovering the abundant literature of a language we do not know

enough about. Anyone who picks up this book will be charmed by the beauty of its lost world,” said Ananya Bhatia, associate commissioning editor, Penguin Random House India.

Even actor Manoj Bajpayee, two-time recipient of the National Film Award and an advocate for Bhojpuri, welcomed the English translation of Pandey Kapil's iconic novel and

said “Phoolsunghi's greatest triumph lies in bringing the pulsating soul of an artist to life.”

“I hope that this translation draws mainstream's attention towards the long neglected language, literature and culture of the Bhojpuri speaking people of the world,” he added.

It is currently available for pre-order on e-commerce websites.

## We didn't leak information about Sushant case: CBI to HC



**MUMBAI, OCT 23 (PTI):** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) which is probing actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death told the Bombay High Court on Friday that it had not leaked any information related to the case to the media.

Hearing PILs about “media trial” in the case, the court remarked that the media has become “polarised” and it was a question not of regulation but “checks and balances”.

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, representing the CBI, asserted that the Enforcement Directorate and Narcotics Control Bureau, which are also probing cases related to the actor's death by suicide in June, too had not leaked any information.

All the three central agencies had filed affidavits in the court stating that they had not leaked any probe-related information, he said.

“We know our responsibilities and there is no question of leaking information by any of the agencies,” the ASG added.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni was hearing final arguments on public interest litigations seeking that the media be asked to be restrained in its coverage of the probe into the actor's death.

The HC is hearing arguments on whether a statutory mechanism is required to control the TV news content.

At an earlier hearing, the petitioners, which include a group of retired police officers, had claimed that news channels were broadcasting sensitive information.

How were the channels getting access to such information, the petitioners asked, alleging that the probe agencies must have been their sources.

The Union government, National Broadcasting Standards Authority and the news channels which are party to the case told the HC that the electronic media has a self-regulatory mechanism and the state must not have any control over their content.

On Friday, as lawyers of news channels cited old judgments to argue against a statutory regulatory mechanism, the HC remarked that the media has changed.

“The media was neutral then (in the past). It is now highly polarised....This is not a question of regulation, this is a question of checks and balances. People forget where to draw lines. Do it within lines,” the judges said.

“You want to criticize the government, do it. The issue is someone has died and the allegation is you are interfering,” the HC said.

The hearing will continue next week.

## Bihar reports 1,093 new COVID-19 cases, 8 more deaths

**PATNA, OCT 23 (PTI):** Bihar on Friday reported 1,093 new cases of COVID-19, taking the state's tally to 2,10,388, as per a bulletin issued by the Health Department.

The state also recorded eight more COVID-19 deaths, following which the toll rose to 1,034, it said.

Two of the latest deaths were reported from Patna, while one each from Muzaffarpur, Nalanda, Jehanabad, Begusarai, Purnea and Saran, it said.

The Patna district, which has reported 34,055 cases so far with 2,532 patients undergoing treatment at present, has registered



the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the state at 256.

The recovery rate has increased to 94.32 per cent in the state, the bulletin said.

Total 1,41,869

samples were tested for COVID-19 on Thursday.

Among the new cases, Patna reported 229, followed by Muzaffarpur (96), Nalanda (78), Purnea (49) and Gopalganj (44).

In the last 24 hours,

1,244 people were cured of the disease, taking the total number of recoveries to 1,98,437, the bulletin said.

There are 10,917 active cases in the state at present.

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# Ross Barkley: ‘I knew I was ready to show how good I am’

**PAUL DOYLE**  
**LONDON, 23 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]:** A masterplan. That is how Ross Barkley describes the approach that helped Aston Villa to thrash Liverpool 7-2 on his debut for the club three weeks ago. Judging by how things have gone for him and Villa so far, the same word could apply to his decision this month to join Dean Smith’s side on loan from Chelsea for the rest of this season. His two appearances have yielded two wins for Villa and two goals for Barkley. They look made for each other.

“I couldn’t have asked for it to go any better so far,” Barkley says. “The game against Liverpool was the perfect way to get up and running. When it was 5-2, we were all saying: ‘We can go for more goals here, they’re up for the taking.’ It could have been a lot more but 7-2 against the champions is a statement to everyone else in the league that we’re ready to kick on this season.”

Villa avoided relegation only on the final day last season but a new confidence is sweeping through the club and Barkley both feeds off it and fuels it.

As he talks at Villa’s training ground as the team prepare for Friday’s home clash with Leeds, he is nursing a sore knee, which has not prevented him from contributing to Villa’s 100% record: “It’s nothing too serious, a couple of weeks and it will be back to normal.” He explains that he feels this could be the season where Villa climb and he, at 26, shreds the tag of unfulfilled talent and regains his place not just in the England squad but in the starting XI in time for next summer’s European Championship. He alludes to the frustration of watching England play in major tournaments on TV or, even worse, from the bench, and refers to “the maturity that is now in my game” as he adds: “I have an obsession to

improve.” Barkley knows he will add to his 33 England caps only if he continues to thrive at Villa, which he fully expects to do. First, because Villa are even better than he thought they were before he arrived. That is not just because of other recent recruits such as Emiliano Martínez (“a brilliant goalkeeper, really top-class”) and the striker Ollie Watkins (“I heard even before I arrived that a few of the lads were surprised by just how good he is”) but because players who were rather thrown together after the club’s promotion from the Championship last year have found a groove.

“I’ve been surprised by the quality of the group of players, to be honest, for how low they finished last season. There are some really great players in the squad. Another thing I’ve noticed is that there are a lot of great communicators.”

That also goes for the rest of the staff. “I’ve had a lot of one-on-one meetings with the manager, talking about how we can improve, what we lacked last season and what he learned from last season,” Barkley says. “I’ve been through difficult spells with Everton previously where we were struggling and then something just changed. The manager explained to me that something clicked here towards the end of last season and I’ve seen that.

“There is a lot more understanding of how to win games in this league. We now have players who are established and we look really solid. Everyone is working really hard for each other. In training on Wednesday tackles were going in all over the place and players were getting angry because they wanted to win. That’s great to see. There will be difficult times ahead but we will stick together and this season will be 10 times better than last.”

He expects a similar



trend on an individual level, too. As satisfying as the win over Liverpool was, last weekend’s one at Leicester may have been even more auspicious for Barkley, as he struck the winning goal in stoppage time. Last season he probably would have left the action by then. Although he does not have a bad word to say about Chelsea, it is a fact that of his 21 league appearances last season, only four lasted 90 minutes. Smith has said he hopes to play a settled side as often as possible and that is music to Barkley’s ears.

“The other night I scored in the last minute, previously I would have come off around the 60th,” he says. “The last minutes of the game are when defenders get tired and that’s when the rewards are. By staying as fit as I can this season and playing every minute, I’m sure there will be many more goals to come.

“To put in consistent performances you need consistent game time. For me it was an exciting project to come here and play consistently because I haven’t had that for a couple of years. It was just stop-start constantly. Now I’m finding my rhythm and I feel really good. I’ve played two full 90s and I’m really looking

forward to the next game. Now I’ve got a clear mind and every game that comes I know what I need to do.”

He also knows how to do it. He says experience has made him better. “I’m 26. I understand the game a lot easier now. Understanding where the goals are, how to mix things up, when to run in behind, drop deep, shoot from distance, create goals from wide areas or central areas, play the ball out wide and go into the box, anticipate balls at the back post, make runs from both. Just an understanding of where the goals are. Because I’ve got that now, I know that for the rest of my career I’m going to score a lot more goals than I have previously.”

He has heard grumbles about his judgment in the past but does not believe that criticism is still valid. “My decision-making is much better than when I was younger,” he says. “Obviously if you’re trying to create, you’re not always going to be perfect but most times I do pull it off because of the maturity that’s in my game now. During the lockdown I watched a lot of my games. That’s just because I have an obsession to improve and I love football.”

That last point is worth elaborating on. Although Barkley is

sometimes labelled an underachiever, he is one of only three members of the England Under-17s team that won the European Championship in 2010 who play in the Premier League. Conor Coady and Jack Butland are the others, with the rest playing in lower leagues or no longer in the profession. So maybe Barkley deserves credit for what he has done.

“That’s from a young age, never changing how much I love the game. Nothing else comes in the way of that. Football and family, that’s all. Come to training and always work as hard as you can, always trying to improve. If you go through a difficult spell, accept it for what it is and try to learn from it. I’m always trying to improve, even on the mental side of the game. I’ve improved a lot over the years and I’m at the age now where ... even in the past couple of years I knew I was ready, if I get regular game time, to show how good I am.”

He yearns to show it at an international tournament. After featuring in all three group games at the 2014 World Cup, he was an unused squad member at Euro 2016 and injuries ruined his hopes of making the 2018 World Cup. “Playing for England should mean everything to every player from England. For this season the focus is to help Villa finish as high as possible and then to make the Euros squad and be playing.

“Watching from the bench is the worst because you believe you can help the team out but you’re not given the chance. But that gives you the hunger to go away and work harder and not let that happen again. I’ve been out of the squad recently because of a lack of game time but hopefully I’ll make the next one and kick on from there. I believe that if I keep putting in performances here, that will take care of itself.”

## Hakim Ziyech: ‘I’m not afraid to have my opinion, I speak from the heart’

**NICK AMES**  
**LONDON, 23 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]:** One moment, Hakim Ziyech had scored the goal that put a brilliant Ajax side 3-0 up against Tottenham on aggregate and seemingly guaranteed their place in the 2019 Champions League final. Just over an hour later he was left beating the ground in angst at the manner in which they had thrown it all away and, 18 months later, the pain needs little coaxing to the surface.

“For a child’s dream you just stole it down to the ground,” is what he thinks of the Lucas Moura-inspired comeback that took Spurs to what was, it turned out, a dull showpiece in Madrid. “It is hard, it is painful. It’s crazy what happened at that time, it’s hard to accept. You don’t always get what you deserve; you have to take that as a lesson and I did. Now I know always that the game is not over until the referee whistles.”

Ziyech will have to wait a few years for any chance to put that right in an Ajax shirt. He is now a Chelsea player and it seems a lifetime ago that, in February, he was announced as their first major signing of the Frank Lampard era. A knee injury stalled his start to the season and only in the past week, with substitute appearances against Southampton and Sevilla, has he taken his first meaningful steps at Stamford Bridge.

“I couldn’t be back sooner but also you have to think realistically, the season is still long, there are still a lot of games,” he says. “I’m only looking forward, just staying calm and doing my thing.”

His “thing” is unique. Ziyech is a left-footed playmaker who creates but can score prolifically, too; a sumptuous, borderline mercurial talent whose imagination

in possession has few parallels. He is 27 and outwardly it comes as a surprise, in an age of few secrets, that it has taken this long for him to leave the Netherlands.

Until the last couple of years there had, for all the impressive numbers, been question marks: Ziyech got into verbal dust-ups, clashed with coaches and sometimes fans, was prone to sulk and at one point was relieved of a short-lived captaincy at Twente. He once said Marco van Basten, his former manager at Heerenveen and another famous Ajax alumnus, was “a big name but not a top coach”. But he remains unapologetically himself and you sense that is an integral part of the package; there is certainly no feeling on Ziyech’s part that his character held him back.

“That was just the way I was looking at it,” he says in particular reference to the criticism of Van Basten, who later called him “stupid” for committing to Morocco ahead of the Netherlands. “I’m not afraid to have my opinion; I always speak from my heart and what I am feeling, I am just saying. They can take it how they want to take it. In the end I always believed in my own strengths.

“It didn’t really bother me what other clubs and people think. At the end of the day, if you perform on the pitch that’s why most of the clubs are buying you or not. I also took my time. I didn’t want to rush myself to go to another club at the youngest age. I took my time to improve, learn and grow as a person.”

During a difficult childhood in Dronten, 40 miles north-east of Amsterdam, Ziyech acquired the edge to complement his natural gifts. He would go home after school to his mother and eight older siblings,

his father having died when he was 10. Outside, he waged his earliest footballing battles on the streets.

“Things that happened when I was younger, all this stuff when you’re playing on the streets, it makes you hard as a person,” he says. “[It means that] when you get older you can play that hard as well, because when I was young and playing on the streets I always played against older guys and they didn’t back down. Even when you were too good for them they were just kicking, and those things make you hard. It helps you grow, and that mentality only helps you.”

Ziyech must earn his starting place among a Chelsea side for whom defensive balance has been a far greater issue than attacking thrust. He sees himself as a No 10, he says, but will happily operate out wide as he often did at Ajax. Any successful blend of Ziyech, Timo Werner, Christian Pulisic (he calls the American “a crazy winger”) and Kai Havertz would create dizzying possibilities; he believes Chelsea are on the way to creating a side that can make Ajax’s tears of last year a distant memory.

“Hopefully we are, and that is a process we are in right now,” he says. “In the beginning when I came to Ajax it was like good and bad, in the way of playing, so it is a process of building. We just have to be patient and everything will work out.”

Now that he is in England, would retribution against the team that destroyed a childhood fantasy make life even sweeter? “Even in Holland, they say: ‘Now you can take good revenge on Tottenham,’” he smiles. “But as a player you always want to win, even if it is Tottenham or whoever.”

## Azhar Ali may not go to New zealand as Pakistan Test captain: Sources



**KARACHI, OCT 23 (PTI):** Pakistan Test captain Azhar Ali may lose his job as leader of the side when the team tours New Zealand amidst speculations that either white-ball skipper Babar Azam or Muhammad Rizwan could replace him.

Azhar, who is the most Test capped player now in the national team with 81 appearances, is said to have lost favour with a influential member of the cricket committee while the PCB Chairman and CEO are also said to be having second thoughts about retaining him as captain. He was named Test

captain last year in October after sacking of Sarfaraz Ahmed as captain and player from all three formats.

With just 12 months in the job, Azhar saw the Pakistan team lose two-nil in Australia before securing home Test wins over Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Then they travelled to England where the team lost the three-match Test series 0-1.

Wicketkeeper-batsman, Muhammad Rizwan who is right now riding on a wave of popularity and recently led the KPK team to the National T20 Championship

title is said to be favourite to replace Azhar.

PCB CEO Wasim Khan told a television channel that a meeting could be held on November 11 to decide on Azhar’s future and find a new chief selector as head coach, Misbah ul Haq has relinquished the post.

It is not the first time that a captain could lose his job after just a year.

Azhar was captain of the One-day side for nearly two years after the 2015 World Cup before he decided to resign himself prompting the board asking Sarfaraz to take over as captain in all three formats.

## Gareth Bale helps Tottenham ease to Europa League win against Lask

**DAVID HYTNER**  
**LONDON, 23 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]:** José Mourinho had framed the beginning of Tottenham’s Europa League group stage adventure with trademark swagger. Holding three footballs in a photograph for Instagram, he posted that they signified the two Europa Leagues he already had in his pocket and the one he intends to go for this season. The shrinking violet’s record in the competition reads two entries and two trophies – with Porto and Manchester United.

The manager is determined to lead from the front in his mission to harden the squad’s mentality, to browbeat his charges into becoming winners and, after the shocking late implosion against West Ham on Sunday, this was more like it. The surrender of a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3 had drawn the inevitable Spursy jibes but this time they merely

scored three.

It was a performance of cutting edge allied to discipline against Lask, the team from Austria that had hammered Sporting Lisbon 4-1 to get here, and the statistics show that Spurs have scored 31 goals in 10 games this season.

This kind of free-wheeling is not supposed to happen under Mourinho and nor are Spurs supposed to have credible back-up for Harry Kane. They have it now.

Carlos Vinícius arrived just before the transfer deadline on loan from Benfica – there is an option to buy him for €42m (£38m) at the end of the season – and he made assists for the first and third goals, scored by the excellent Lucas Moura and the lethal Son Heung-min, who entered as a substitute. The South Korean has nine goals in six matches.

Mourinho could also enjoy getting an hour into

Gareth Bale’s legs and the winger, on his first start since his loan return from Real Madrid, was central to the second goal, his low cross panicking Andrés Andrade into turning the ball past his own goalkeeper.

Bale had played for 18 minutes against West Ham and it ought to be pointed out that the appearance had taken his minutes since the end of February to 253. His performance here was more about guile than explosiveness. He is plainly feeling his way back to top condition.

Vinícius ought to have scored in the early running and he was horrified when he fluffed a straightforward header when unmarked from close range, but he made amends almost immediately.

Ben Davies, who played on the left of a central defensive two and captained the team, dropped a ball over the top that Vinícius killed with a fine touch. He knew

what he had to do with his second, having seen Lucas dart for the middle, and he did it, executing the perfect low cross on the spin. Lucas finished coolly.

Spurs’ second was all about Sergio Reguilón and a storming run from the left-back which took him past three Lask players and away from a fourth but it had the added sprinkle of a first dividend from Bale on his return.

Reguilón found Erik Lamela, who played it wide right to Bale and then a jab with the outside of his left boot led to the own goal. Vinícius had looked offside in the centre. Happily for Spurs, the ball did not reach him.

Spurs enjoyed themselves in the first half, nobody more so than Lucas, who pulled a couple of high balls out of the sky with velvet touches and even showed off his spring to win a towering header inside the area.

There was a nutmeg from Bale and even one from Pierre-Emile



## US: Russian hackers targeting state, local networks

**WASHINGTON (AP):** U.S. officials said that Russian hackers have targeted the networks of dozens of state and local governments in the United States in recent days, stealing data from at least two servers. The warning, less than two weeks before the election, amplified fears of the potential for tampering with the vote and undermining confidence in the results. The advisory from the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity agency describes an onslaught of recent activity by a Russian state-sponsored hacking group against a broad range of networks, some of which were successfully compromised. The alert released Thursday functions as a reminder of Russia's potent capabilities and ongoing interference in the election even as U.S. officials publicly called out Iran on Wednesday night.

The advisory does not identify by name or location those who were targeted, but officials say they have no information that any election or government operations have been affected or that the integrity of elections data has been compromised.

"However, the actor may be seeking access to obtain future disruption options, to influence U.S. policies and actions, or to delegitimize (state and local) government entities," the advisory said.

U.S. officials have repeatedly said it would be extremely difficult for hackers to alter vote tallies in a meaningful way, but they have warned about other methods of interference that could disrupt the election,



including cyberattacks on networks meant to impede the voting process. The interference could continue during or after the tallying of ballots if Russians produce spoofed websites or fake content meant to confuse voters about election results and lead them to doubt the legitimacy of the outcome.

A broad concern, particularly at the local government level, has been that hackers could infiltrate a county network and then work their way over to election-related systems unless certain defenses, such as firewalls, are in place. This is especially true for smaller counties that don't have as much money and IT support as their bigger counterparts to fund security upgrades.

Officials have nonetheless sought to stress the integrity of the vote, with FBI Director Christopher Wray saying Wednesday, "You should be confident that your vote counts. Early, unverified claims to the contrary should be viewed with a healthy dose of skepticism."

On Thursday, Chris Krebs, the head of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and

Infrastructure Security Agency, said officials don't have reason to believe that hackers were looking for election infrastructure or election-related information, and aren't aware of any activity "that would allow them to come anywhere near a vote." He said the alert was issued in regard to the scanning of county networks for vulnerabilities, not specifically to the targeting of elections.

"The election-related risk is the fact that they were in or touching an election system," he said.

The threat from the Kremlin was mentioned but not especially emphasized during a hastily called news conference on Wednesday night, when officials said Russia and Iran had obtained voting registration information — though such data is sometimes easily accessible. But most of the focus was on Iran, which officials linked to a series of menacing but fake emails that purported to be from a far-right group and were aimed at intimidating voters in multiple battleground states.

John Ratcliffe, the director of national

intelligence, said the operation was aimed at harming President Donald Trump, though he didn't elaborate on how.

On Thursday, the Treasury Department announced sanctions against five Iranian entities, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, for attempting to influence U.S. elections.

Despite Iran's activities, Russia is widely regarded in the cybersecurity community as the bigger threat to the election. The U.S. has said that Russia, which interfered in the 2016 election by hacking Democratic email accounts and through a covert social media effort, is interfering again this year in part through a concerted effort to denigrate Trump's Democratic opponent, Joe Biden.

U.S. officials attribute the recent activity to a state-sponsored hacking group variously known as DragonFly and Energetic Bear in the cybersecurity community. The group appears to have been in operation since at least 2011 and is known to have engaged in cyberespionage on energy companies and power grid operators

in the U.S. and Europe, as well as on defense and aviation companies. Aviation networks are among the entities that officials say were recently targeted, according to Thursday's advisory.

According to the advisory, the hackers have obtained user and administrator credentials to enter the networks and moved laterally inside to locate what they felt would be "high-value" information to steal. In at least one breach, officials say, the hackers accessed documents related to network configurations and passwords, IT instructions and vendors and purchasing information.

As of October 1, the advisory said, the hackers have exfiltrated data from at least two servers.

John Hultquist, the director of threat intelligence at FireEye, said Energetic Bear moved to the top of his worry list when the cybersecurity firm observed it breaking into state and local governments in the U.S. that administer elections, due to it having targeted election systems in 2019.

Hultquist said he does not think Energetic Bear has the ability to directly affect the U.S. vote but fears it could disrupt local and state government networks proximate to the systems that process votes.

"The disruption may have little effect on the outcome. It may be entirely insignificant to the outcome — but it could be perceived as proof that the election outcome is in question," he said. "Just by getting access to these systems they may be preying on fears of the insecurity of the election."

denied involvement in Pell's conviction. His lawyer Fabio Viglione said Becciu had "never interfered with it in any way whatsoever."

## China vows retaliation if US proceeds with Taiwan arms sale

**BEIJING (AP):** China has vowed to retaliate if the U.S. proceeds with the sale of advanced weaponry to Taiwan worth more than a billion dollars.

The statement from China's defense ministry gave no specifics, but the development marks a further deterioration in ties between Beijing and Washington that have hit their lowest ebb in decades.

The statement issued late Thursday night demanded the cancellation of the sale and an end to all interactions between the U.S. and Taiwanese militaries in order to "avoid serious repercussions for relations between China and the U.S. and their armed forces and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

Failure to do so would "compel the Chinese side to fight back resolutely," the statement said.

The State Department

on Wednesday announced it had greenlighted the sale of 135 precision land attack missiles, associated equipment and training to Taiwan to improve its defense capabilities. The package is worth just over a billion dollars, it said in a statement. The missiles are made by Boeing.

China regards Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary and Washington maintains only unofficial relations with Taipei in deference to Beijing. However, U.S. law requires the government to ensure Taiwan can maintain a credible defense and recent years have seen an increase in both the quality and quantity of defensive arms sold to the island.

Those come as China has increased military activity around Taiwan in what it calls a deliberate attempt

to force political concessions from the pro-independence administration of President Tsai Ing-wen. The increase in Chinese incursions into Taiwanese airspace and military exercises seen as targeting U.S. and Taiwanese assets add to Beijing's years-long campaign of exerting economic and diplomatic pressure on the island, which has left it with just 15 formal diplomatic allies.

In a separate statement issued late Thursday, the Chinese Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office demanded Tsai's Democratic People's Party end its "plotting" with the U.S. to "refuse unification through arms."

"This can only seriously undermine peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and bring down a terrible disaster on the Taiwanese people," the statement said.

## French woman in Thailand may have acquired virus locally

**BANGKOK (AP):** A French woman on the Thai resort island of Samui has tested positive for the coronavirus and probably acquired it after arriving in Thailand in what could be one of few cases of local transmission, health officials said Friday.

The finding was announced the same week that Thailand began allowing some tourists to enter again after banning all commercial flights since early April. On Tuesday, 39 tourists from Shanghai flew into Bangkok under a special tourist visa program that allows in a limited number of visitors under tight restrictions, including a 14-day quarantine upon arrival.

The 57-year-old woman arrived in Bangkok with her husband and son on Sept. 30, and all three underwent the

mandatory 14-day quarantine, during which they tested negative twice for the disease, said Dr. Sophon Iamsirithaworn, director of the Bureau of General Communicable Diseases. The family flew on Oct. 15 to Samui, where they maintain a residence. The woman went to a hospital on Tuesday after experiencing coronavirus symptoms, and on Wednesday tested positive. Her family has been quarantined again but a new test gave negative results for them.

Also under quarantine were passengers and crew of the flight they took to Samui and 40 workers at the quarantine facility in Bangkok. Those test results are pending.

Thailand has had few cases of local transmission over the past several months. Almost all have been

found in Thais or foreign residents returning from abroad.

Earlier this week, the Health Ministry announced that five people in the town of Mae Sot, on the border with Myanmar, tested positive. The five, none of whom exhibited symptoms, were the first locally transmitted cases confirmed in Thailand since early September, when a prison inmate in the Bangkok area tested positive.

All five of the Mae Sot cases are members of a family of Myanmar nationals residing in Thailand. Myanmar has had a serious outbreak that began in August, causing Thai authorities to tighten controls along the border.

Thai health officials on Friday announced eight new confirmed cases, bringing the total to 3,727, including 59 deaths.

## Australian police not investigating Vatican money transfer

**CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP):** Australian state police said Friday they're not investigating the transfer of money from the Vatican to Australia, throwing doubt on Italian media speculation that it might be linked to the overturned convictions of Cardinal George Pell for child sex abuse.

Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera speculated in recent weeks that Vatican investigators were looking into whether Pell's nemesis at the Holy See, ousted Cardinal Angelo Becciu, wired 700,000 euros (\$823,000) in Vatican money to a bank account in Australia, and whether that money was tied to Pell's sex abuse trial.

Victoria Police, which in 2017 charged Pell with child sex abuse, said the Australian intelligence agency responsible for detecting international financial crime, AUSTRAC, had confirmed that Vatican money had been wired to Australia.

But AUSTRAC had "not advised Victoria Police of any suspicious activity related to these transactions," the police department said.

"In the absence of any other evidence or intelligence, Victoria Police has noted the advice from AUSTRAC. We are not at this time



conducting any further investigation," a police statement said.

But it does not rule out criminality or corruption in the money transfers.

Australian Federal Police said Wednesday it was "undertaking a review of the relevant information" provided by AUSTRAC. A review of evidence is a preliminary step toward an official criminal investigation.

Federal Police has also referred information to the Victorian Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, an anti-graft agency that investigates the state public sector, including police.

The commission has declined comment "for legal and operational reasons."

The Italian newspaper speculated that Becciu might have "bought" the testimony of Pell's accuser to get Pell out of the Vatican. Becciu and Pell were known to have clashed over Pell's financial clean-up efforts at the Holy See. Pell's accuser, who cannot be identified, has denied the allegation.

The newspaper report had no sourcing, attributions or detail and appeared to be more an effort to discredit Becciu and distract attention from the shortcomings of the Vatican prosecutors' primary investigation into a London real estate venture.

The Australian newspaper reported on Thursday that Vatican investigators were examining four transfers to Australia between February 2017 and June 2018 of more than 1,050,000 euros (\$1.24

million). The newspaper cited no sources.

Pell was convicted by a Victoria court jury in 2018 on allegations he molested two choirboys in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne while he was archbishop in the 1990s, but was ultimately absolved by Australia's High Court.

Pell was brought in by Pope Francis to bring accountability and transparency to the Vatican's opaque finances in 2014.

He returned to the Vatican this month for a meeting with Francis and to clear out his apartment after Becciu was fired over allegations that he wired 100,000 euros (\$118,000) in Vatican funds to a charity headed by his brother. Becciu has denied wrongdoing.

Becciu has repeatedly

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**LEATHER GAME!** The model, Irina Shayk stuns in an orange sweater and matching leather shorts, purse, and boots while out in NYC.

## Mira Nair's Monsoon Wedding' musical to open in India next year



**LOS ANGELES, OCT 23 (PTI):** Celebrated filmmaker Mira Nair's stage musical adaptation of her 2001 movie Monsoon Wedding will premiere in India in November, 2021.

During a virtual masterclass at Busan Film Festival, Nair said the musical will first open in India and then in Singapore, Dubai and London.

We are going to open next year, November 2021. First in India, and then in Singapore, and Dubai, perhaps, and then bring it to London and the United States. It's a wonderful musical with music from Vishal Bhardwaj, one of our great composers, 21 new songs, said Nair.

According to Variety, the musical based on the 2001 Venice Golden Lion winning film was scheduled to open earlier this year in the UK at the Leeds Playhouse and London's

Roundhouse, but the premiere got delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The 63-year-old director said the musical beautifully captures the spirit of the film.

It is very, very close to the film in spirit, but it's a stage musical. And that's the something that I have been working on very painstakingly for 10-11 years. So now we are ready. And we're looking for COVID to leave us so that we can open on the big stages, Nair added.

Monsoon Wedding centred around a dysfunctional Indian family as they prepare for their daughter's wedding. The film featured Naseeruddin Shah, LilliteDubey, Shefali Shah, and Vasundhara Das.

The film had its world premiere as a stage musical at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in 2017.

## Ariana Grande Drops New Music: Watch the "Positions" Music Video Now

Superstar Ariana Grande is stepping into position, as she debuted the music video for her latest single, "Positions," on Friday. Listen to her hit-in-the-making below.

Ariana Grande is once again proving that god is a woman and her name is Ari.

The Grammy winner dropped the lead single of her long-awaited sixth album on Friday, Oct. 23. She also treated fans to the "Positions" music video directed by Dave Meyers.

"Switchin' the positions for you / Cookin' in the kitchen and I'm in the bedroom / I'm in the Olympics, way I'm jumpin' through hoops," she sings. "Know my love infinite, nothin' I wouldn't do / That I won't do, switchin' for you."

Ariana tweeted out a hint ahead of the debut, writing, "heaven sent u to me."

She first tipped fans off to the upcoming album on Oct. 14 when she wrote, "i can't wait to give u my album this month." The 27-year-old also teased the new song on Instagram this week, after revealing the name of the album with a video of herself typing "Positions" on a green-lit keyboard. It's expected to come out on Oct. 30.

Her brother Frankie Grande is just as excited as we are, as he wrote on his Instagram Story, "So proud of my little sister and can't wait for the world to hear #Positions."

Positions follows Ari's back-to-back albums Sweetener in August 2018 and Thank U, Next in February 2019, which was all about her very public split with Saturday Night Live star Pete Davidson.



The "Into You" singer has moved on and made her relationship with Dalton Gomez Instagram official in June, ahead of her 27th birthday. She posted a smiley face with a snuggling selfie of the pair. Ari celebrated her birthday with a proper party, too, channeling Florence Pugh in the film Midsommar by wearing a bright flower crown.

Fans got a small peek at Ariana and Dalton's love story back in May when

they made an appearance in the "Stuck With U" music video alongside other A-list couples like Justin Bieber and Hailey Bieber.

On top of "Stuck With U," Ari already released another song this year: the little-known dance number "Rain on Me." In August, she performed the girl-power duet with Lady Gaga at the MTV VMAs, where each artist was rightly nominated for nine awards.

## Borat Sequel Drops Early as Rudy Giuliani Slams Sacha Baron Cohen Over Controversial Scene

The Borat sequel is released early on Amazon Prime, one day after Rudy Giuliani called his controversial scene in the Sacha Baron Cohen mockumentary "a complete fabrication."

Don't feel like watching President Donald Trump and Vice President Joe Biden's third and final debate? Sacha Baron Cohen has you covered.

The Borat sequel, Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan, dropped on Amazon Prime just moments before the final 2020 presidential debate kicked off. It was originally scheduled to premiere on Friday, Oct. 23, but what difference does a few hours make?

Meanwhile, Rudy Giuliani is decrying his portrayal in the sequel.

According to NBC News, which previewed the mockumentary prior to its release, the politician appears in the film, having fallen "for an embarrassing" prank staged by Cohen. The outlet describes Giuliani "reclining on a bed and then putting his hand down his pants and moving it around for what appears to be a few seconds while the actress playing Borat's teenage daughter, Maria Bakalova, 24, who is pretending to be a television reporter, stands in front of him."

Cohen, dressed as Borat, then walks in the room and offers himself to the politician, who responds, "I don't want you."

NBC News noted that it's unclear what happened before or after the



incident allegedly took place in the movie.

But Giuliani has spoken out about the controversial scene. On Wednesday, Oct. 22, the former mayor of New York City tweeted that the scene in which he appears is a "complete fabrication."

"I was tucking in my shirt after taking off the recording equipment," he claimed. "At no time before, during, or after the interview was I ever inappropriate. If Sacha Baron Cohen implies otherwise he is a stone-cold liar."

Giuliani continued, "In fact, the NY

Post today reports 'it looks to me like an exaggeration through editing.' As soon as I realized it was a set up I called the police, which has been noted in THR article on July 8th."

For Cohen's part, he responded to Giuliani's claims as Borat, saying in a video, "What was an innocent sexy-time encounter with a consenting man and my 15-year-old daughter has been turned into something disgusting by fake news media. I warn you, anyone else try this and Rudolph will not hesitate to reach into his legal briefs and whip out his subpoenas."

### ARIES:

Given that we're in the midst of Mercury retrograde, you may find that things around you are getting wild—and by wild, I mean chaotic. 'Not my circus, not my monkeys' is a proverb you want to remember now, and for the rest of the season. But that doesn't mean you're going to put the big stuff on hold, are you? Step into the role of the (somewhat reluctant) mediator and keep the long term goals in mind as you do. Acting as if you're on everybody's team is going to work wonders for you, Aries.

### TAURUS:

There's no such thing as coincidences, Taurus. You have attracted these circumstances into your life for a very specific reason. They're meant to awaken you to your truth and help you move beyond the illusion. So challenge yourself to look at things from a higher perspective despite the excruciating pain. In doing so, you will soon understand that you are not being abandoned. On a side note, could the fear of abandonment be a recurring theme in your life, one that's sabotaging all of your relationships? It's time to address the deep, dark wounds, wild one, knowing that it is the light of awareness that will help you liberate yourself from this cycle.

### GEMINI:

The world of art, beauty, and aesthetics is where your attention is at, Gemini. You're in the mood to bring some of that goddess essence into your world, and into the lives of those around you. Consider supporting the artists and designers you love, which will be especially useful for them at a time like this. You're also in the mood to embody your truth and be the most badass version of yourself. There was a time when seeing others flying

high made you feel inadequate. But the 2.0 version of you is comfortable in your own skin and knows that you are about to go places.

### CANCER:

Our conditioning plays a major role in determining who we are and how we respond to the world around us. Pay attention to these responses today. Are they coming from a space of love, or is fear the trigger behind these actions? Upon deeper examination, you will understand how the root of this trauma lies in your childhood, and has become the reason for your self-sabotaging patterns. Word for the wise: it's time to release the old narrative and strengthen your connection with your divine self.

### LEO:

The cards are warning you against addictive behavioral patterns. What are \*you\* addicted to, Leo, and is it helping you fill the growing void within yourself? Perhaps it's time to have an open and honest conversation with your demons and recognise how they are sabotaging you from ascending to the next level. Working with a healer, therapist or holistic nutritionist will prove to be helpful at a time like this. Bottom-line: the inside-out approach is the secret to healing on a mind, body, and soul level.

### VIRGO:

You save everyone, but who's going to save you, Virgo? The cards are urging you to find a balance between the masculine and the feminine principle—the doing and the being. In doing so, you will be able to receive the love and support you're meant to from friends and strangers alike. You're also being encouraged to include 'playfulness' on your agenda, now and for the rest of the retrograde season. Worry doesn't solve a thing, does it? It's time to

remember that laughter indeed is the best medicine.

### LIBRA:

Libra, you're known for your loving, compassionate, and generous ways. Some would even call you an empath by nature. But, here's the thing to remember: there is such a thing as too much. By giving others more than you're giving yourself, you're not doing yourself any favours. Word for the wise: seek that metaphorical balance you are best known for.

### SCORPIO:

The past few weeks have felt like a wild, wild ride through the multiverse, but you couldn't be more grateful for the revelations you've had. They've helped you break out of the old, and get ready for Scorpio season. The weekend sees you looking back at the trajectory of your life and integrating the soul lessons. You could also find yourself rethinking your purpose and your place in the world. But first, you must remember that it's never about the destination. Commit to showing up for your goals every single day, and before you know it, you will have moved mountains.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Hello and welcome to Scorpio season! A time of rising from your own ashes and becoming the most indomitable version of yourself. The true essence of alchemy, as you have learned, has little to do with base metal, and a lot to do with the transformation of your own personality into gold. But the process of transmuting your shadows is something you've never been afraid of. PS: The cards are urging you to continue walking the path (even though it doesn't always make sense logically), and trust that the rewards will be immense.

### CAPRICORN:

It's easy to judge people, Capricorn. It's easy to have an opinion on their life story, of which we know nothing about. Could this negative mental chatter be coming in the way of your relationships? Something to think about. What you want to add to your vocabulary this weekend: 'more love and more compassion'. Remember, we are in the midst of retrograde season and everybody's going through their own trials and tribulations. Like Virgos, you're being asked to add 'playfulness' to your agenda too. Worrying doesn't solve a thing. Having good humour, on the other hand, can get you through the turbulence without losing your bearings.

### AQUARIUS:

Adulting is overrated. You're in the mood to cancel your subscription and tap into that space of childlike playfulness within. Start by looking at everything around you through a fresh lens and finding magic in the mundane. Things to do today: Make art. Make love. Make a mess. Sing at the top of your voice. Dance under the stars. Read bedtime stories about witches, goblins, unicorns, and faeries. What you will realise in the process: we never run out of miracles!

### PISCES:

The cards are bringing your attention to conflicting beliefs that are standing in the way of your own growth and evolution. For instance, being passionate about starting your own venture, and yet terrified of the risks it may entail. Reflect on your self-sabotaging ways, wild one, and remember that you always have more than one option. The real question is: Will you live a life that screams 'mediocrity', or find the courage to follow your passion? PS: Something tells us you're about to stir up a storm (in a good way!), one that could lead to permanent change.