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SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 318 | Gangtok | Monday | 07 December 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

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CM meets former MLAs, invites them to support development

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 DEC:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang today hosted former MLAs at a function organized at Samman Bhawan on Sunday evening.

"While informing them that their experience is valuable for us, I added that our Government will extend all possible support and co-operation to our former legis-

latures who have contributed towards the welfare of Sikkim," the CM wrote about the meeting in a Facebook post.

While conferring with the former MLAs, he stressed that the SKM Government prioritises the interests of the Sikkimese people and was committed to safeguarding them without any discrimination.

"In brief, I stressed on how we can work in tandem for our people, keeping aside our political affiliations," he writes.

"I expressed my heartfelt gratitude to all for being present and was delighted to see familiar faces. I stated that our Government will always welcome their ideas and suggestions for the welfare of our homeland," the CM adds.

COVID-19 caseload in India rises to 96.44 lakh

NEW DELHI, DEC 6 (PTI): India's COVID-19 caseload rose to 96.44 lakh, while the total number of people who have recuperated from the disease crossed 91 lakh pushing the national recovery rate to 94.37 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The COVID-19 active caseload plunged to almost 4 lakh after 138 days.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 96,44,222 with 36,011 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll crossed to 1.40 lakh with 482 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 91,00,792 pushing the

national recovery rate to 94.37 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

There are 4,03,248 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 4.18 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20.

According to the ICMR, 14,69,86,575 samples have been tested up to December 5 with 11,01,063 samples being tested on Saturday.

Petrol price up 28 paise, diesel 29 paise a litre; rates touch 2-yr high

NEW DELHI, DEC 6 (PTI): Petrol price on Sunday was hiked by 28 paise per litre and diesel by 29 paise, the fifth straight day of increase in rates due to firming international oil prices. Petrol price in Delhi rose to Rs 83.41 per litre from Rs 83.13. Diesel rates went up from Rs 73.32 to Rs 73.61 per litre, according to a price notification of oil marketing companies.

Rates crossed Rs 90-mark for petrol and Rs 80 in case of diesel in Mumbai.

This is the fifth straight day of price hike and the 14th increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed daily price revision after nearly two-month hiatus.

Rates are now at the highest level since September 2018. In 17 days, the

petrol price has gone up by Rs 2.35 per litre and diesel rate has risen by Rs 3.15.

Brent crude oil has risen 34 per cent from USD 36.9 per barrel on October 30 to USD 49.5 on December 3 - the last trading day - on hopes that COVID-19 vaccines would lead to demand recovery.

Prior to the November 20 hike in rates in India, petrol prices had been static since September 22 and diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

27 new cases take Sikkim's COVID tally to 5,194

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 DEC:**

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 5,194 with the detection of 27 new cases on Sunday. No new deaths were reported today.

Of the 27 new cases, 21 are from East District and six from South Sikkim.

On the other hand, the number of discharged COVID-19 patients further improved to 4,602. There are now 384 active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim, of whom four are admitted in the ICU facility of COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital.

In the daily health bulletin on Sunday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the 27 new cases were reported from the test-

ing of 206 samples on Saturday.

While 20 of the cases were reported in RT-PCR testing of 166 samples, one person was found positive in TrueNat testing of 10 samples and six cases confirmed in rapid antigen testing of 30 samples.

Among the new cases reported from in and around Gangtok, are one person from Upper Chandmari, three from Manbir Colony, four from Development Area, one from near Tamang Gumpa in Upper Sichey and two from DPH Area, while new cases reported from Tadong area include one person from the PG Hostel above Central Referral Hospital, one from Gairi Gaon, one from near the Sikkim Milk Union quarters in Lumsey and one from near Greendale School.

Likewise, one person from Namcheybong, one from near 8th Mile near SBB camp Marchak, one from Tambutar, Ranipool and one from Rumtek in East District have also tested positive.

New cases reported from South District include one person from the IRB camp at Pipaley, one from near Bikmat Secondary School, two from Boomtar, Namchi, one from near Lal Bazaar in Rabongla and two students who had gone to attend an NCC camp at Kamrang and were tested in keeping with the COVID- protocol of the camp.

Mr Bhutia informed that one person from the West Bengal side of Rangpo also tested positive in TrueNat and the concerned authorities on the other side have also been informed.

RMRT central executive body calls on CM, thanks him and submits memorandum

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 DEC:**

Members of the Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum, the Sikkim Lepcha Association, central executive body called on Chief Minister PS Tamang at his official residence at Mintokgang on 05 December, Saturday, accompanied by Roads & Bridges Minister Samdup Lepcha.

During the visit, RMRT thanked the Chief Minister and felicitated him for his contributions towards the welfare of the Lepcha community and for declaring separate reservation for 5 Lepcha students of Dzongu under the Chief Minister's Free Scholarship

Scheme, appointment of appreciable numbers Advisors, Chairpersons and Additional Political Secretary under different departments of the state and also for renaming of Yuksam Sr Sec School as Punu Mun Solong Memorial Govt. Sr. Secondary school, a press release informs.

During the meeting, RMRT president, Chawang Norbu Lepcha, who is also the chairperson of the Primitive Tribal Welfare Board placed a brief report on RMRT's activities to the Chief Minister and submitted a memorandum listing grievances on behalf of the community.

The Chief Minister

extended his best wishes to all the members of the newly formed central executive body of the RMRT and ensured all necessary support from the Government for the upliftment of the community, the release adds.

The Chief Minister also stressed that RMRT take initiatives for the benefit of the marginalised section of the people who are deprived and hail from remote villages.

In conclusion, the CM extended warm greetings for the upcoming Lepcha new year (Nambun) and also launched a Lepcha almanac /calendar for the year 2021, it is informed.

SKM's North Sikkim sports and youth wing members reach remote Dzongu villages with aid and inspiration



**PRITAM LAMA
MANGAN, 06 DEC:**

A team representing Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's sports and youth wing reached the remote village of Pentong under Sakyong-Pentong GPU of Dzongu in North District with relief materials on Sunday, completing their three-day excursion to the area.

Pentong is about 35 KMs from Mangan and a three-hour hike from the road-head.

The SKM team comprised of the party's North District Sports Wing general secretary Topden W. Lachungpa, North District youth vice convener Ringzing Namgyal Bhutia, youth wing

organising secretary Pema Chopel Lepcha, North District Sports wing treasurer Ramesh Sharma, Sports Wing vice convener Palden Wangchuk Lachungpa, Dzongu Constituency Election frontal Organisation Secretary Zigme Wangchuk Lepcha, SKM North District Youth Vice Convener, Rinchen Dorjee Lepcha, SKM Social media secretary Shital Sotang, and social media District Secretary Nawang G. Bhutia.

Over the three days, the team visited villages under Sakyong-Pentong GPU and Tingvong GPU of Dzongu.

The villages, it may be recalled, have been cut

off from vehicular access June, 2020 by multiple slides along the road connecting the villages.

The visiting team, in their interactions with the residents, accused the previous SDF government of neglecting the area and contended that this had demoralized the people.

"After reaching the village we found that Sakyong-Pentong was abandoned by the previous SDF Government. Total negligence of SDF resulted in zero development in this corner of the state and residents were living in the dark ages without basic rights," said the SKM North District

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Welcome to 'Love Jihad' law times: Hindu woman heckled, Muslim husband arrested in UP

Moradabad, 06 Dec [NDTV]: A Muslim man and his brother have been arrested by the police in western Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad after he and a 22-year-old Hindu woman tried to get their marriage registered in the district's Kanth area.

The men were handed over to the police after a group of people from a right-wing group, the Bajrang Dal, accosted the trio at the marriage registration office and stopped them from going ahead with formalities, and then took all three to the local police station.

In a 1 minute and 11-second video that has gone viral on social media, the men surround the woman inside the premises of the Kanth police station in Moradabad.

"Show us the permission you have

from the DM (District Magistrate) to convert your religion," one of the men tells the woman, as at least two policemen, one of them with a lathi look on.

"Have you read the new law or not?" another man says, adding "Ye tum jaise logon ke liye banana pada hai (the law had to be made for people like you)".

The woman, however, told journalists she and the man were married with consent. "I am an adult, I am 22 years old. I got married of my own free will on the 24th of July. This is the fifth month that we have been married," the woman told journalists.

The police said the complaint in the case was filed by the mother of the Hindu woman who claimed the Muslim man had tricked her daughter into marriage and conversion. "We have

arrested both men and will investigate the case thoroughly," Vidya Sagar, a senior police official said in a statement.

It is not clear if the man or the woman had converted or were planning to do so. The arrested men have been booked under Section 3 of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance 2020, that deals with forced conversion. Both face between 1-5 years in prison if the charges against them hold in a court.

This case is the fifth to be filed in UP since the anti-conversion ordinance became law a week ago in the state amid heightened sensitivity about "Love Jihad", the right-wing conspiracy theory that Muslim men try to seduce Hindu women to have them convert their religion.

The term "love jihad is not defined by law", the Union Home Ministry had told parliament in February, adding that no such case had been reported by the central agencies. However, since last month, several BJP-ruled states have moved towards making a law against it.

Uttar Pradesh, which has a chunk of Muslim population, has been first off the block with an ordinance or executive order, which says religious conversions that use falsehood, force or an incentive, or take place solely for marriage will be declared a crime.

Those who plan to convert after marriage will have to give two months' notice to the district magistrate. The person converting will have to prove that it was not forced or for marriage. All cases will be non-bailable.

Haryana: 2 more JJP MLAs come out in support of farmers

CHANDIGARH, DEC 6 (PTI): Two more MLAs from the JJP, an alliance partner of the ruling BJP in Haryana, on Sunday came out in support of the farmers seeking the repeal of the Centre's new agri laws.

Jannayak Janta Party MLA Ram Kumar Gautam also demanded that a special assembly session be convened to bring a resolution urging the Centre to scrap the three laws.

Separately, JJP legislator Amarjeet Dhanda too came out in support of the farmers, saying he backs their agitation.

We hope the government will agree to their demands. I appeal to the Centre that they should listen to what the farmers are demanding and resolve the issue, Dhanda, an MLA from Julana constituency, said.

Earlier, two other JJP MLAs -- Jogi Ram Sihag and Ram Karan Kala -- had announced their support to the farmers and participated in an agitation in Haryana, going against their party's stand on the issue.

Sihag had also refused to accept his appointment by the state government as chief of the Haryana Housing Board.

In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, the BJP has 40 MLAs, JJP has 10 and the Congress has 31.

Seventy-four-year-old Gautam said the Centre and the M L Khattar government in Haryana have said that the laws will benefit the farmers, but asked why they were being forced upon them.

Hitting out at the Narendra Modi government, Gautam asked, If the farmers don't want these laws, why are they being thrust upon them? What is their (Centre) compulsion?

He demanded that the state government convene a special session of the state assembly and urged all the political parties of Haryana to join hands and bring a resolution urging the Centre to repeal the laws.

I want to tell the Khattar government that a special session should be summoned immediately and all parties should join hands to bring a resolution urging Modi ji (Centre) to repeal these three laws before it is too late, the legislator from Narnaund constituency in Hissar district, told reporters.

Meanwhile, another JJP MLA and senior leader Ishwar Singh said the Centre is engaged in talks with the farmers and everyone is hopeful that a solution will be found at the earliest. Singh said that he stood with the farmers and nobody was against them.

Congress legislature party leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda had on Friday said that the party will seek the convening of a special session of the assembly to bring a no-confidence motion against the BJP-led state government.

Hooda had claimed that the Khattar government had lost the confidence of both the people and the House.

More than 200 former SDF supporters switch to SKM at Namthang Rateypani



BIKASH CHHETRI NAMCHI, 06 DEC:

A party-joining program was organized at Namthang-Rateypani constituency by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's constituency level committee

at Tingley Viewpoint on Sunday.

More than 200 families from Niz-Rameng and Chuba-Phong earlier aligned with the SDF quit the party and joined SKM today.

Political Advisor to

the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling, was present as the chief guest for the event and stressed that SKM and its government were working diligently to bring Sikkim together and heal it of the divisive

politics perpetuated by the SDF.

The area MLA, Sanjit Kharel, who was present as a special guest, also lashed out against SDF president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

During the program, sports gifts were also distributed to Amariyoti Club of Tingley, a sound system to Tendong Sunakhari Club, and Rs One lakh each in cash to Sai Samiti and Sewa Samiti.

Fit India at Chakung



GYALSHING, 06 DEC [IPR]: The Prabhat-Pheri leg of the Fit India Movement Campaign 2020 on the theme "Fitness Ka Doze Aadha Ghanta Roz" concluded at Chakung School Playground under Soreng Sub-Division on

Sunday.

The program had BDO Chumbong, Kailash Gurung, as chief guest, accompanied by AD, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Mamita Gurung, teachers and students of Senior Sec

School Chakung, youth from Chakung, Mendog-aon, Chumbong, Samsing and Gelling.

The Prabhat-Pheri started from the school ground and continued till the bazar and returned to the school.

Bank unions lend support to farmers' agitation against agri laws



NEW DELHI, DEC 6 (PTI): A number of bank unions have expressed their solidarity with farmers protesting against recently passed agri laws and requested the government to resolve the issue at the earliest.

The All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBE) in a statement said the government should come forward and resolve their demands in the interest of the nation and farmers.

Officer unions All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), All India Bank Officers' Association (AIBOA) and Indian National Bank Officers' Congress (INBOC) have also requested the government to initiate meaningful dialogue to

resolve the impasse by referring the bills to a select committee by a special Presidential Order.

The farming community has expressed apprehension that three new laws -- Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 -- would pave the way for dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

Enacted in September, the laws have been projected by the government as major reforms

in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

"Our nation needs peace and main stakeholders of the nation should not be made to suffer, as the agriculture sector alone performed positively in the COVID-19 pandemic, which reflects the inherent strength of the sector," three officers' unions said in a joint statement.

The peasants constitute 80 per cent of the customer base of the public sector banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks and old generation private banks and thus are major stakeholders of India's banking system, it said.

BJP supporters raise slogans against Biplab Deb; Party says all okay

AGARTALA, 06 DEC [NDTV]: Amid "Biplab Hatao, BJP Bachao (Remove Biplab Deb, save BJP)" slogans being raised by a crowd today believed to be consisting of the ruling party's supporters, BJP's newly appointed national secretary and its central observer for Tripura Vinod Kumar Sonkar said there are "no differences" within the party.

A crowd of over hundred people had gathered in and around the state Guest House where Mr Sonkar was interacting with the party's leaders and MLAs and started raising the slogans "Biplab Hatao, BJP Bachao", perceived to be against Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb.

The demonstrations on Sunday are being perceived as a sign of dissidence that had been brewing within the party due to alleged lack of management by Biplab Deb-led BJP-IPFT alliance government.

There had been a stark discontent between the incumbent regime and MLA Sudip Dev Barman, a BJP heavyweight who was ousted from Health portfolio in June last year.

When Mr Sonkar, after completing his meetings came out, the crowd had obstructed him and did a demonstration for some time obstructing his vehicle.

Police had to intervene and managed to clear an exit and escorted Mr Sonkar's convoy to the party office.

Mr Sonkar, a two-time Lok Sabha member

from Uttar Pradesh's Kaushambi who had arrived for the first time in Tripura on Saturday for a two-day state visit after being appointed as the party's central observer last month, held a series of meetings with Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, state President Manik Saha and a host of MLAs and senior leaders and discussed various affairs of the party.

Mr Sonkar, before leaving for Delhi from Agartala on Sunday afternoon, said, "There are issues like cabinet expansion and organisational revamp. I have discussed every matter with the ministers, MLAs and party functionaries. The discussion would continue in future too to strengthen the party in Tripura and better coordination between the party and the government."

54-year-old Sudip Dev Barman, son of former Chief Minister and Congress leader Samir Ranjan Barman was the one who had led seven MLAs to join the BJP in June 2017 from the Trinamool Congress along with scores of party leaders and workers to BJP and was also considered instrumental in inking alliance with IPFT (Indigenous People's Front of Tripura).

According to local media speculations, a group of about 10 MLAs and several state leaders, allegedly, led by Mr Barman had visited Delhi in October to discuss issues with the central leadership.

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Over 2,500 court complexes to get video conference cabins: Centre

NEW DELHI, 06 DEC [PTI]: Seeking to boost the capability of the lower judiciary to hear cases online, funds have been released to set up "video conference cabins" in 2,506 court complexes across India, Law Ministry officials said.

While funds to the tune of ₹ 5.21 crore were released in September to set up video conference cabins, another ₹ 28.86 crore were given in October to buy additional video conference equipment, including hardware, cables and monitors, the officials.

The funds were provided by the e-committee of the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice in the Law Ministry.

While India has 3,288 court complexes, which house thousands of subordinate courts, the funds have been released for 2,506 court complexes to set up video conference cabins.

Bigger court complexes with a large number of courtrooms would get multiple cabins as compared to smaller complexes.

The size of a court complex, including the

number of courts it houses, depends upon the size or population of the state.

As courts continue to hear cases online amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has procured 1,500 additional video conferencing licences at an approximate cost of rupees nine crore for providing the facility for high courts and district courts.

While the procurement has been completed, the process of installation is on, an official said.

Such licences are required for legal and extended use of the video conference facility software, the official said.

From the day the nationwide lockdown was imposed to check the spread of coronavirus in till October 28, high courts and district courts across India have heard over 49.67 lakh cases virtually, according to data collated by the Law Ministry. The Centre had imposed the lockdown from March 25 to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. From June 8, it started gradually relaxing restrictions under "Unlock".

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.Com

SKM's North Sikkim...

Youth convenor Tashi Norbu Lachungpa.

He called upon the resident to connect with the SKM Government for their rights and support. He assured to place their demands for drinking water with the concerned department.

Sakyong-Pentong residents are currently facing acute drinking water shortages since the supply lines were washed out by landslides, said a local.

The visiting team also informed residents about the various capacity-building training and employment opportunities available for unemployed youth.

A mobile tower is another demand of Sakyong-Pentong residents to improve telecom connectivity.

While Pentong has 32 families, Sakyong has 22 households.

The SKM team also distributed poly pipes, tarpaulins, flash lamps and essential commodities to the residents.

A similar program was also held at Kussong ward under Tingvong GPU.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

FOR RENT

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Building for sale

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

ATMA-East hosts Kisan Gosthi at Rey

SUBASH RAI

GANGTOK, 06 DEC:

Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), East, organized a Farmer-Scientist Interaction and Kisan Gosthi at Rey village under Rey-Mindu GPU of Ranka Block on Saturday. The programme was chaired by Rey Ward Panchayat member, Jumthi Lepcha.

More than 70 people participated in the interaction programme including MAs, OFAs from Rumtek, Ranka and Rey Mindu, farmers from Rey ward and members of the SHGs.

The programme began with a welcome speech by Block Technology Manager [BTM], Ranka Block, Geeta Sharma followed by the keynote address by Joint Director, Agriculture, Rachana Gurung, who is also the Deputy Project Director, ATMA East.

She appraised the gathering on the motive of FSI and Kisan Gosthi.

A fruitful interaction session followed with



all the queries of the farmers answered by resource persons from the line departments.

The KVK Programme Coordinator appraised the farmers about the process of poultry farming while the consultant from IFFCO gave details on crop insurance and its benefits to the farmers. He urged the participants to insure the recommended crops for future security.

During the pro-

gramme 10 SHGs were given honorarium for their organic stall exhibits in appreciation of displays in their respective stalls.

Chief guest Ms Lepcha, in her address, expressed gratitude towards ATMA and all line departments for making the programme successful and urged all the participants to seize the opportunity provided by the department and use it judiciously.

President of United

Progressive Organization of Sikkim, Nima Lepcha, called on the Horticulture Department to construct a cold storage at Rey Mindu GPU and assured the department that he would donate the land required for the purpose.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks by Assistance Technology Manager, Ranka Block.

The programme was also attended by Joint Di-

rector Horticulture, Pas-sang Tamang, Deputy Director Horticulture, Yogesh Sharma, Deputy Director Animal Husbandry, Dr Renuka Sharma, Programme Coordinator KVK [East], Prashant Pathak, IFFCO TOKIO Consultant, Bikash Sharma, ADO, HDO of Ranka Block, HI Ranka, HI Rey Rumtek, VLW Ranka, FA Agriculture from Rumtek, Incharge ADO of Rey Model Village and VLW Rey Mindu.

Chunnilal Ghimirey's 12th title released

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 DEC:

Chunnilal Ghimirey's, 'Ma Ubhiyeko Dhar-ti' [the land on which I stand], was released at a programme organized by Sikkim Kalakar Sangh, Gangtok, here at Nepali Sahitya Parishad on Sunday. For Mr Ghimirey, a senior theatre artist, director and litterateur, this is his 12th literary work.

The programme also included felicitation of several personalities in recognition of their contributions towards music, art and children's literature.

The programme, which was chaired by Press Advisor to the CM, CP Bhattarai, had UD&HD Minister, Arun Uprety as the chief guest.

On the occasion,

Padmashree Sanu Lama, former Ministers T Lachungpa and RC Poudyal and senior architect and artist, Kiran Rasaily, were felicitated for their contributions towards music and art.

Likewise, Bal Sahitya Akademi Puraskar winners, Dr Shanta Chettri, SD Dhakal and Bhim Pradhan were felicitated for their contributions to literature.

TMC schemes do not cater to needs of people: Dilip Ghosh

KOLKATA, DEC 6 (PTI):

Continuing his tirade against the ruling TMC, BJP state president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday said the social welfare projects launched by the state government does not provide any "real benefit" to the public.

Addressing a rally in East Midnapore, Ghosh said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced schemes with big names but they haven't catered to the needs of people.

"There are so many shrees, so many sathis... we are losing count of them. But how many people are getting real benefits? Under the Sabujasathi scheme, defective bicycles were distributed, while the

Swasthya Sathi is a non-starter. Same with all other projects," the Midnapore MP claimed.

Ghosh further said that the state, after failing to utilise central grants of over Rs 2,000 crore for Cyclone Amphan relief, is now writing to the Union government for allocation of Rs 8,500 crore, but "no one trusts Didi (Mamata Banerjee) anymore." "None trusts Didi will use the amount judiciously.

Everyone has seen how Amphan relief money went into the account of local leaders from her party, from panchayat pradhan to other chieftains. And once the matter came to public knowledge, Didi said it was an exception, a mis-

take. Is it really a mistake! We know that after May 2021 such mistakes won't recur anymore." Ghosh said.

Pointing out that leaders and activists of the ruling TMC are now revolting against the leadership, Ghosh said "every other day someone is deserting party, which is slowly turning into a crumbling edifice."

"The ruling party is withdrawing security of leaders who have left the TMC and slapping false cases on opponents.

This will stop after six months," he said.

Ghosh predicted that the BJP will win 200 seats in the upcoming assembly elections, and TMC won't be able to bag more than 50.

Late headers give Juventus dramatic derby win over Torino

TURIN, 06 DEC (REUTERS):

Champions Juventus scored two almost identical headed goals in the final quarter of an hour as they came from behind to beat smaller neighbours Torino 2-1 in a dramatic Derby della Mole in Serie A on Saturday.

Torino stunned the hosts when Nicolas Nkoulou scored from close range in the ninth minute and they were 12 minutes from their first away win against Juventus for 25 years before their resistance finally collapsed.

Substitute Weston McKennie headed the equaliser from a Juan Cuadrado cross in the 78th minute and defender Leonardo Bonucci grabbed the winner with one minute left.

The win lifted Juventus to second place with 20 points from 10 games, two ahead of Inter Milan, who were at home to Bologna later on Saturday, and Sassuolo, who visit AS Roma on Sunday.

Torino, with only one win this season, are 18th with six points.

Juve produced one of the worst first half displays of the season and, despite dominating possession, took until the 43rd minute to muster their first shot on target.

Torino went ahead when a corner was played low to the near post, Juventus failed to clear and the ball rebounded to Nkoulou who reacted quickly to score from close range.

RELATED COVERAGE

Pirlo delighted with Juve win but not first-half display.

The Bulls should have added a second goal shortly afterwards when Andrea Belotti sent Simone Zaza clean through but his left-foot shot was too predictable and Wojciech Szczesny did well to save it.

Karol Linetty also got away from the Juve defence but was shouldered off the ball by Matthijs de Ligt.

Juventus came out stronger after the break and thought they had equalised in the 57th minute when Cuadrado's volley from the edge of the area found its way through a forest of legs and into the net.

But after a long VAR review, it was disallowed for offside against Bonucci who was judged to have been interfering with play.

The pressure was starting to show, however, as Torino struggled to keep possession and there was an air of inevitability about the finale.

A Juventus corner was played to Cuadrado who sent over an inswinging cross and McKennie got to the ball first to score his first Serie A goal with a powerful downward header.

Eleven minutes later, Cuadrado swung over another cross and this time Bonucci met it to take the three points as Juve continued their dominance in the fixture.

Auditions begin for Miss India 2020



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 06 DEC:

More than 50 aspirants from different parts of the State participated in the first audition round of Miss Sikkim 2020 held here on Sunday.

The beauty pageant is an annual event organized by

Gangtok-based event management company, Positude.

The audition was judged by Positude CEO, Gyurmila Bhutia, Positude Managing Director, Ritu Chamling and former Miss Sikkim contestant, Sumana Gurung.

Positude CEO in-

formed that the contestants registered online for the auditions.

Positude's Miss Sikkim winner Reetika Chettri is a finalist for the upcoming Femina Miss India and Positude is also the talent partner of VLCC Femina Miss India.



The term of the Nagar Panchayat has run out and there are no representatives currently in office at Singtam Nagar Panchayat. What is still there however is garbage and litter sits ugly on the banks of the rongi chu. [from YOGEN THATAL]

Kenya's Kandie smashes half marathon world record in Valencia

VALENCIA, 06 DEC (REUTERS) - Kenya's Kibiwott Kandie smashed the half marathon world record by 29 seconds on Sunday, becoming the first person to break 58 minutes at the Valencia Half Marathon.

Kandie, who finished second at the world half marathon championships in Gdynia in October, finished the Spanish annual race in 57 minutes and 32 seconds, breaking

the previous record of 58:01 set by compatriot Geoffrey Kamworor in September 2019.

The top four men all ran under the previous world best, with Jacob Kiplimo of Uganda finishing second in 57:37, Kenyan Rhonex Kipruto third in 57:49 and Kenyan Alexander Mutiso taking fourth place in 57:59.

Kandie, 24, led the chasing pack, which in-

cluded reigning world champion Kiplimo, through the 15-kilometre mark in 41:10.

The pair traded the lead over the next six km before Kandie made the decisive move, to finish more than a minute off his previous personal best of 58:37.

Ethiopia's Genzebe Dibaba won the women's race in 1:05:18, setting the fastest time for a debut over the distance.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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

If you seek help, you may call :

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

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

Waste Does Not Understand

...but should we be dumb too

Readers would have noticed the occasional surfacing of news-reports on awareness sessions being held at the GPU and ward levels around Sikkim in pursuit of zero-waste status.

This is welcome and urgently required.

It was after all not fair that lavish budgets were expended on waste management limited to the urban sprawls at the cost of 75% of the population which resides in rural Sikkim. 4.55 lakh of Sikkim's population of 6.07 lakh resides in rural areas. This, as per the 'Provisional Population Totals' [paper 2, volume 2 of 2011] Rural-Urban Distribution of Population Sikkim [series 12] released by the Directorate of Census Operations, Sikkim. And this is after the urban spread was significantly expanded in Sikkim some years back. The point being made here is that the 75% population which resides in rural Sikkim lives more or less the same lifestyle as families in urban areas, following similar patterns of consumption, and hence generating similar waste. They should thus be provided matching organizational and infrastructural arrangements to manage their waste. The traditional modes of disposal will not deliver for the non-biodegradable and excessive nature of contemporary waste. Most village homes have a pit to dispose their waste. When this waste was organic in nature, the 'pit' approach worked well, but kids no longer buy loose balls of 'Anda' mithai wrapped in paper anymore and their sweets come in plastic wrappers and guests at social gatherings are no longer served in plates stitched from 'malatho' or banana leaves and even drink water from Styrofoam cups (sorry, scratch that since Styrofoam is now thankfully banned in the State, but it is still poor plastic cups) now.

The traditional waste management system, which focused only on household level disposal and had no need for segregation, collection and organized disposal, just won't do anymore. The rural areas generate the same waste as urban zones, hence it is necessary that they are extended matching systems of collection and disposal. This requirement becomes even more urgent as more areas start hosting tourists and village tourism becomes the new mantra for development here. Look around, most tourist spots even in the outskirts of Sikkim do not have any semblance of waste disposal or collection. Sure, they have their rabbit and panda bins, but those are but fig leaves when it comes to waste management. Look into the backyards, and a study on consumption patterns is laid out strewn along the slopes. Sikkim is now an organic state, inorganic waste encroaching into its fields and ghors does not sit well with this status. It is no longer even about appearances. Proper waste disposal systems, and the once a week garbage truck runs to ship away waste is not even close to proper; are an urgent requirement in the bastis and at all tourists spots. The sooner the planners start working out sustainable plans and projects to deliver this, the better it will be for Sikkim and its environment.

WRITE US:

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

Social Norms and Poor Services Drive Petty Corruption in East Africa's health sector

SABA KASSA, CLAUDIA BAEZ CAMARGO & JACOPO COSTA
theconversation.com

In East Africa, there are concerns over widespread petty corruption in some of the countries' health and medical services. This makes access to them conditional on who you know or who you can pay, to the detriment of everyone else who doesn't have the money or connections.

In Uganda and Tanzania health service providers are ranked as some of the most bribery-prone institutions in the country. By contrast, health and medical services in Rwanda are ranked as the least bribery prone.

We wanted to understand the behavioural drivers, such as the role of social norms and beliefs, in spurring petty corruption. To do this, we investigated the decisions of those seeking medical treatment and of health service providers that fuel petty corruption in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda.

We focused on these three East African countries, which share a common border west of Lake Victoria, because we wanted the opportunity to compare attitudes and experiences. All three countries have robust anti-corruption legislation and institutions in place but all yielded different results.

Our research found evidence that social norms and shared beliefs spur corruption. For example, people are swayed by social pressure to help relatives, share contacts or reciprocate favours received from their networks. Many also believe that corruption is normal.

This was very evident in Uganda and Tanzania, but to a much lesser extent in Rwanda. This highlights our findings on why this behaviour comes about in the first place: people engage in corruption when health services are less available or accessible.

In Rwanda effective government social programmes exist. For example Ubudehe provides targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The programme has reduced the reliance of citizens on informal social networks by ensuring access to public services and social benefits.

We hope that our research provides insights into the importance of incorporating behavioural insights into anti-corruption policymaking that conventional measures have largely failed to address.

However, unless basic problems of accessibility and quality of public services are addressed, it will

be extremely difficult to eradicate informal strategies to obtain the desired healthcare.

SOCIAL NORMS AND NETWORKS

The research was conducted between January 2016 and August 2017 in Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

For our research we carried out interviews, focus group discussions and surveys. Our target communities were providers and receivers of healthcare. For those seeking treatment, we targeted women of child bearing age, young men, and elderly and disabled people.

The evidence suggests that social norms and networks play a role in fuelling and reproducing practices of petty corruption. Users of public health facilities in Uganda and Tanzania often turned to their social network, family, friends, friends of friends, when seeking medical services.

When personal connections are absent, offers of unsolicited bribes and gifts are used to create a relationship with the provider. The expectation is that having a "provider friend" helps facilitate access to treatment.

Social norms even dictate how large a bribe should be. In both Uganda and Tanzania, for those that were close – like family members – it would be a small gift or bribe. But for those more socially distant, like friends of friends, they were asked to pay more.

PRESSURE FROM RELATIVES

The research also illustrated how corruption was perpetuated by relatives working within the health industry. The duty to help and provide for one's relatives was an essential, unquestionable premise of social life in the three countries.

A health sector district official in Tanzania explained that: "It's not that we have a lot of money to help five or six relatives, but...whatever you get you share with others."

The imperatives of helping out, and sharing with, the family results in practices of favouritism as explained by a health provider in Kampala, Uganda, who observed that, "Your relative must be given priority if there is not an emergency. My mother, father, son or daughter come first."

In some cases, family pressures pushed public servants to abuse their positions and engage in illegal acts, such as embezzlement of public funds or misuse of public resources. For example, focus group discussions in Tanzania showed that the misuse of public resources was motivated by the

need to contribute to family duties such as paying for children's school fees, weddings and funeral costs.

Another big driver of corruption in Tanzania and Uganda was the belief that corruption is commonplace, and is expected and accepted. This stereotype is used to justify corrupt behaviours and those of the doctors, nurses and pharmacists.

RWANDA CASE

Our research in Rwanda suggests that accessing health services by relying on networks is much less and limited to those very close to health staff.

This is predominantly associated with the fact that you don't need special connections or money to have access to good quality health services. The East Africa Bribery Index illustrates this point: the least probability for the request or offer for bribery was recorded at Rwanda's medical and health services.

Our research suggests that this is because it's less socially accepted. And it is partially helped by authorities publicly shaming those caught engaging in corruption, preventing it from becoming a norm.

TRADITIONAL MEASURES

Conventional anti-corruption measures and approaches often seek to scale up penalties and, by so doing, increase deterrence. Some focus on better laws, regulations and education and awareness campaigns about the negative effects of corruption. But these aren't necessarily effective in addressing root issues.

Integrating behavioural insights into anti-corruption programming can provide complementary avenues to strengthen these endeavours. They pay attention to social norms and beliefs that have supported the persistence of corrupt practices to begin with.

We are exploring this in detail by developing an intervention that works with social networks and community opinion leaders. It uses behavioural techniques – such as environmental nudges which would encourage a certain type of behaviour, like anti-corruption posters – to address the social norm of accepted use of bribery in the provision of health services.

[Saba Kassa is Public Governance Specialist, Basel Institute, University of Basel; Claudia Baez Camargo is Head of Public Governance, Basel Institute, University of Basel; Jacopo Costa is Senior Research Fellow, University of Basel]



This DIY Contact Tracing App Helps People Exposed to COVID-19 Remember Who They Met

IAN JASON LEE
theconversation.com

Imagine you begin to feel ill on Thursday, a few days after returning from a trip. You're afraid it's COVID-19, so you get tested on Friday. Even under good circumstances, it will probably be at least Monday before a contact tracer calls from the health department. And then some phone tag may ensue before you speak with anyone – if you get a call at all.

Once a contact tracer does reach you, you will be asked to remember all the people you were in close contact with, starting two days before you began feeling symptoms. That means recalling all the places you went and the people you saw over the past week.

It isn't easy. As time passes, memories fade. Unfortunately, your contacts, unaware they were exposed to the coronavirus, may have already infected others.

Concerned about those delays, three of us and our colleague Ronald Fisher, all psychology professors with expertise in memory, developed a way for people who have been exposed to COVID-19 to effectively trace their recent contacts on their own.

Self-driven contact tracing shouldn't replace health department efforts. Professional teams of trained contact tracers are critical for locating the people you came in contact with but don't know, such as at a restaurant or on an airplane, and

then tracing the next ring of contacts. However, jump-starting the effort on your own can improve your chances of remembering and allow you to warn your contacts sooner.

NOTIFYING CONTACTS FASTER

Contact tracing, along with testing and isolating people who are infected, is considered crucial for controlling the coronavirus's spread until a vaccine becomes widely available.

Health department contact tracers try to notify and interview anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more. Studies show that, to be effective, that notification needs to happen within a few days of the person's symptoms appearing. But case numbers have gotten so high, it's become impossible for many states and counties to keep up. Some, including in Alaska, Missouri and Wisconsin, have urged residents to start notifying contacts on their own.

We created CogTracer as a free online tool to help people start tracing those contacts using best-practice interviewing methods.

With DIY contact tracing, the time-table changes. For example, while you're waiting for your test, you can be given the link to the website and start walking yourself through a contact tracing interview.

HOW PSYCHOLOGY CAN HELP JOG YOUR MEMORY

CogTracer uses prompts, in words and photos, to spark your memory

for as many contacts and locations visited as possible. It urges you to look back at places that might have evidence of your movements that week, such as social media posts and credit card records, and it provides scientifically supported interviewing techniques to reduce the chances of forgetting a contact. Research in investigative interviewing shows that people can effectively remember events on their own when they have scientifically supported methods.

One technique for remembering is known as context reinstatement. It involves putting yourself back in a specific time and place.

For example, if you attended a family gathering over the holidays, you might mentally recreate the event. You could think back on how you arrived and departed, what you wore, who was there, what you ate, what you heard and what you saw. The technique encourages closing your eyes during this process to help you concentrate.

"Reliving" this experience should make it easier to remember your close contacts at the event.

Another important way to improve memory is varied retrieval. When you search your memory only once, or in the same way over and over, it is likely that something will be forgotten. What you recall depends on how you cue your memory. If you prompt your memory in different ways, you'll recall different things.

CogTracer takes advantage of re-

peated and varied recall by including broad category cues, such as "people you interact with in homes" or words such as "babysitter," that may trigger memories of nonroutine activities that may otherwise be forgotten.

Applying these proven methods should result in more complete recall of those who could be at risk for contracting COVID-19.

ONLINE TOOLS CAN OVERCOME OTHER BARRIERS, TOO

This DIY approach can also help overcome other barriers to effective and timely contact tracing.

Because many people put a high premium on privacy, some are resistant to providing information to contact tracers. CogTracer is anonymous and private – you don't enter any information, and you make your own lists. This provides a way for those who otherwise would not engage in the process to contribute to contact tracing efforts on their own terms. Additionally, non-English speakers may require an interpreter, further delaying the contact tracing process. Online interviews can more quickly bridge these language gaps.

As the pandemic rages, public health workers are engaged in Herculean efforts to fight this disease. By reimagining contact tracing and applying the science of memory, we can leverage the power of individuals to attack the problem from as many fronts as possible.

[the writer is Doctoral Student, Florida International University]

Sing when you're winning? Home support doesn't really help football teams



JAMIE DOWARD

LONDON, 06 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: It's the question that fans have been debating ever since the pandemic forced football to be played behind closed doors: is home advantage no longer so advantageous?

Well, perhaps to the chagrin of those fans – and as a limited number of home supporters are allowed back into stadiums – a comprehensive new study suggests that their absence has had barely any impact on results.

This is not to say, however, that the coronavirus has had no influence on what happens on the pitch.

The study finds that, with no fans, referees are far less likely to dole out yellow cards to visiting teams.

An analysis of 6,481 matches, played in 23 professional leagues and 17 countries during the 2019/20 season, found that matches played behind closed

doors were only around three percentage points less likely to result in a home win.

The authors of the report acknowledge such fine margins could lead to substantially different league outcomes, such as relegation.

But Professor James Reade, head of the department of economics at the University of Reading, who carried out the analysis with colleague Carl Singleton and Professor Peter Dolton of the University of Sussex Business School, said the data showed that the absence of crowds had not really helped level the playing field for visiting teams, despite what many believe.

"People still think there is a reduced home advantage and that's seeping into the discussion about the return of fans with people saying, 'Well, it's not fair.' But from what we are seeing here, there is no clear and

obvious effect on the match outcomes," Reade said.

The economists examined a range of outcomes, including goal difference and total goals scored, and concluded that only one – the number of yellow cards issued behind closed doors – was statistically significant.

They found that the absence of a crowd reduced the number of yellow cards issued to a visiting team by between a third and almost half a card per match.

This led them to conclude that, without a home crowd, the social pressure on referees to "punish" the away team more harshly was reduced, leading to "fairer" decisions.

Some have suggested that teams may play differently behind closed doors and that player behaviour, not the decisions of referees, is responsible for the drop in yellow cards issued.

But the study suggests this

is unlikely since the final scorelines of matches were not particularly different without fans.

"It does point us to the conclusion that maybe it is a referee effect," Reade said.

While the reduction in yellow cards being issued might not affect the results of individual matches, it can still have a bearing on where a team finishes at the end of a season.

"If you are picking up more and more yellow cards per game, then you are likely to end up with suspensions and weaker squads, so there is an effect on this even if yellow cards don't affect the outcome on the day of the match," Reade said.

The findings have potentially wide implications not just for football but for many sports.

The economists said those running sport businesses had a responsibility to ensure fans, who pay substantial sums for season tickets and TV subscriptions, watch high-quality contests that are neutrally refereed.

Ultimately, though, maybe the main takeaway from the study was that referees, so often the objects of derision, need all the help they can get.

"The study suggests it isn't that referees are terrible and they need to have more training, it's that they need to have more support," Reade said.

"As much as we dislike VAR [video assistant referees] and the way it's having an impact on the game, one thing it does is slow things down and gives the referee more time to make their decision."

SC East Bengal coach Fowler wants VAR in ISL



VASCO, DEC 6 (PTI): Unhappy with what he called some "blatant" refereeing decisions against his side, SC East Bengal head coach Robbie Fowler has called for the introduction of video assistant referral (VAR) in the Indian Super League.

SC East Bengal suffered their third defeat on the trot on Saturday, going down to NorthEast United 0-2, and Fowler claimed that two refereeing decisions went against his side.

"I thought the decision (of not giving penalties) were blatant. Certainly the first one in the first half was clear-cut. The second one, for me, was clear cut as well," Fowler said.

In the 20th minute Maghoma, after taking a touch in the box, was tripped by NorthEast

United FC's Mehta but the referee waved play on.

At the hour mark, SCEB had another penalty claim when Anthony Pilkington's shot at goal seemed to have brushed a NEUFC defender's arm before being parried by the keeper.

"Referees might need a bit of help, I know they are doing a tough job. When you get two blatant penalties wrong like that, it is tough to take for a manager. I'm going to say 'yes' (for VAR)," Fowler said.

The VAR was introduced by the world football governing body in 2018 and since then it has copied questions whether it was improving or damaging the beautiful game.

The Liverpool legend, however, admitted that

he was "not a huge fan of VAR".

"I think it slows the game at times," he said.

Fowler also came down heavily on their defence especially in the closing stages when they conceded a sloppy goal from NEUFC substitute Rochhazela.

"Sometimes it is schoolboy football (while defending). Probably our worst performance so far, we have lacked dynamics but we hope to get it right," the Englishman said.

"When you are a professional footballer, you need to realise what's at stake. We will work on that on the training pitch."

Yet to open their account, bottom-placed SCEB will next face Jamshedpur FC on December 10.

Nagaland reports 39 new COVID-19 cases, 1 fresh fatality

KOHIMA, DEC 6 (PTI): Nagaland's COVID-19 tally mounted to 11,379 on Sunday as 39 more people tested positive for the infection, while one fresh fatality pushed the northeastern state's coronavirus death toll to 69, health officials said.

Kohima district reported the highest number of new cases at 28, followed by Dimapur (five) and Wokha and Tuensang (two each), Health Minister S Pang-

nyu Phom said. Out of the 69 coronavirus fatalities reported so far, 59 were due to the contagion, seven due to comorbidities, and an investigation is underway to ascertain the cause of three other deaths, Health Department Director Dr Denis Hangsing said.

The state now has 544 active coronavirus cases, while 10,653 people have been cured of the disease and 113 patients have migrated to

other states, he said. The recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state stands at 93.61 per cent, the official said.

Kohima has the highest number of active cases at 311, followed by Dimapur (148) and Tuensang (32), he said.

The state has so far conducted 1.14 lakh COVID-19 tests, including 69,940 RT-PCR, 36,154 TrueNat and 8,461 rapid antigen tests, Hangsing added.

Real Kashmir start IFA Shield with 2-1 win over Peerless



KOLKATA, DEC 6 (PTI): Real Kashmir began their pre-season with a comeback 2-1 win against Peerless SC in the 123rd IFA Shield at the East Bengal ground here on Sunday.

A solid build-up play by Sujay Dutta and a strong header by Uttam Rai gave Peerless a 20th minute lead.

Real Kashmir stepped up their attack and Danish Farooq first set up Chesterpoul to find an equaliser in the 25th minute before finding the back of the net in the 32nd minute to seal three points for his team.

"I would like to dedicate this goal to my fam-

ily who supported me and also the owner of the club. Please support us through thick and thin. Thank you," Farooq, who was named Man-of-the-Match, said.

Real Kashmir will next play Aryan Club at the Kalyani Stadium on December 9.

At the Mohun Bagan ground, Indian Arrows were held to a 1-1 draw by Southern Samity.

Sujit Saren put Southern Samity in the lead against the run of play in the 27th minute, but the AIFF developmental outfit fought back in the second-half to level the scores with Gurki-

rat Singh's 79th minute strike. Fresh from their promotion into the I-League, Mohammedan Sporting started their IFA Shield campaign with a bang, thrashing Kirdipore SC 4-0 at the Saltlake Stadium.

At the Kalyani Stadium, United SC pipped Gokulam Kerala by a solitary goal.

Results:

Real Kashmir FC 2 bt Peerless SC 1; Mohammedan Sporting 4 bt Kid-dipore SC 0; Indian Arrows 1 (Sujit Soren 27th) drew with Southern Samity 1 (Gurkirat Singh 79th); United Sports Club 1 bt Gokulam Kerala 0.

Odisha logs 393 new COVID-19 cases, six more deaths

BHUBANESWAR, DEC 6 (PTI): Odisha's COVID-19 tally on Sunday mounted to 3,21,196 after 393 more people tested positive for the infection, while six fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 1,771, a health department official said.

Of the 393 new cases, 229 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the rest detected during contact tracing, the official said.

Khurda district, of

which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the maximum number of new cases at 49, followed by Sundargarh at 45 and Mayurbhanj at 32.

Two districts, Boudh and Subarnapur, did not report any new case in the last 24 hours, he said.

According to the official, Khurda reported two fresh casualties, which one each succumbed to the infection in Balasore, Bolangir, Kalahandi and

Nuapada districts.

Odisha currently has 4,102 active cases, while as many as 3,15,270 patients have recovered.

Fifty-three COVID-19 patients in the state have died due to comorbidities.

The positivity rate in the coastal state stands at 5.23 per cent, the official said.

Over 61.43 lakh samples have been examined so far, including 41,110 on Saturday, he added.

Nagaland reports 39 new COVID-19 cases, 1 fresh fatality

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The state has so far conducted 1.14 lakh COVID-19 tests, including 69,940 RT-PCR, 36,154 TrueNat and 8,461 rapid antigen tests, Hangsing added.

Arunachal Pradesh reports 17 new COVID-19 cases



ITANAGAR, DEC 6 (PTI): Seventeen more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, pushing the tally in the state to 16,384, a senior health department official said here on Sunday.

Of the 17 fresh cases, six were reported from the Capital Complex region, three from Tawang and two from Upper Siang, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

One case each was also recorded in West Kameng, Lower Subansiri, Tirap, Changlang, East Siang and Anjaw, he said.

Fifteen infections were detected through rapid antigen tests while one each was diagnosed through RT-PCR and True NAT tests, the SSO said.

The state now has 748 active coronavirus cases.

Twenty more patients were cured of the disease, taking the total number of recoveries to 15,581.

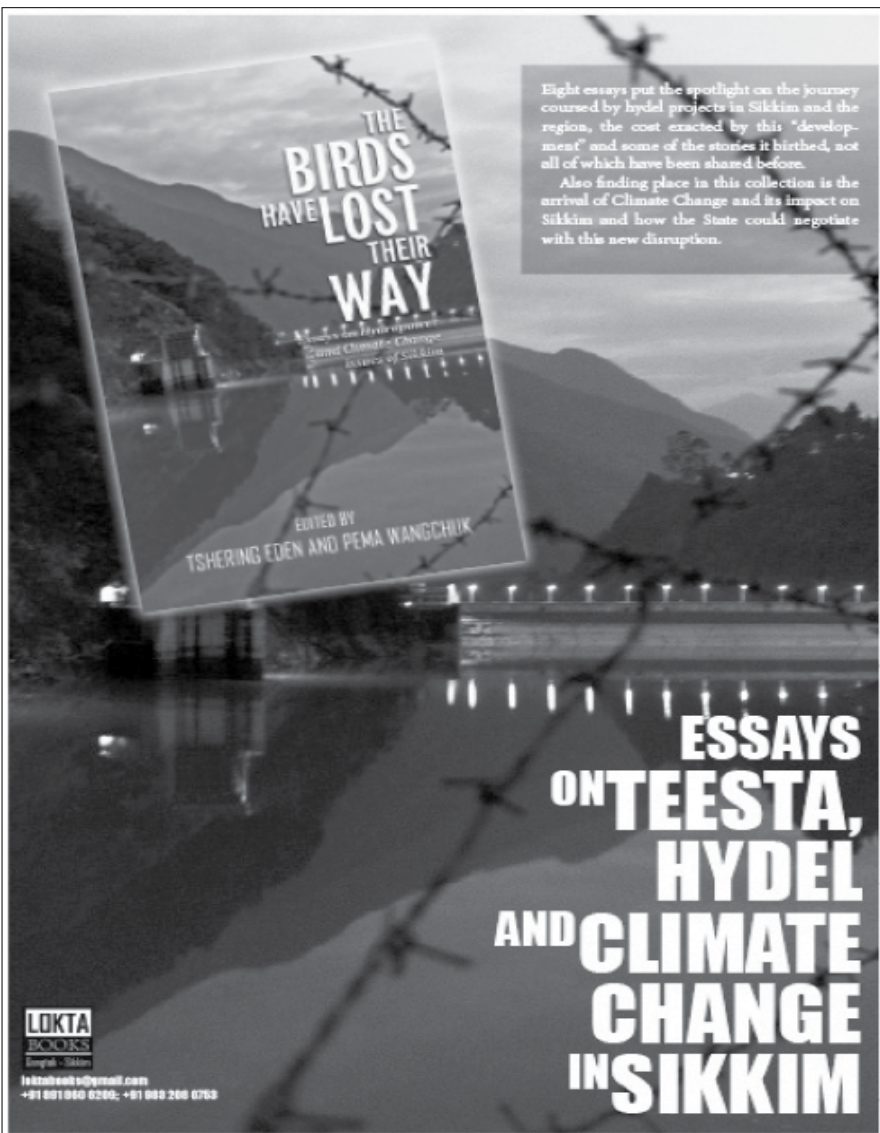
The recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state stands at 95.09 per cent, he said.

A total of 55 patients have died of COVID-19 so far, the official said.

The state's positivity and fatality rates stand at 4.91 per cent and 0.33 per cent respectively, Dr Jampa said.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, has the highest number of active cases at 552, followed by West Kameng (55) and Changlang (18).

The state has so far tested 3,63,953 samples for COVID-19, including 891 on Saturday, he added.



Kean on the spot as PSG open up four-point lead in Ligue 1

PARIS, 06 DEC (REUTERS): Moise Kean scored his fifth goal in seven Ligue 1 appearances to inspire Paris St Germain to a 3-1 win at Montpellier as the French champions opened up a four-point lead at the top of the table on Saturday.

Italy striker Kean struck in the second half after Stephy Mavididi had cancelled out Colin Dagba's opener ahead of the break, before Kylian Mbappe wrapped up the game in stoppage time with his 100th goal for PSG.

PSG have 28 points from 13 games but second-placed Olympique de Marseille have two games in hand, and third-placed Lille have an opportunity to narrow the gap to two points when they host Monaco on Sunday.

Montpellier are sixth on 23 points, two ahead of seventh-placed RC Lens who beat Stade Rennais 2-0 away earlier on Saturday.

Thomas Tuchel fielded a surprising 5-3-2 formation with Angel Di Maria and Kean up front as Mbappe started on the bench and Neymar was rested ahead of Tuesday's key Champions League game against Istanbul Basaksehir.

Dagba put the visitors ahead in the 33rd minute, scoring from inside the box from Di Maria's cutback.

Montpellier hit back four minutes before the interval when Mavididi beat Keylor Navas at the far post after Dagba had saved the Englishman's first attempt on his goal line.

PSG had three chances early in the second half but Idrissa Gueye and Kean, twice, lacked accuracy.

Di Maria came closer in the 69th with a low shot but Jonas Omlin fully stretched to deny the Argentine as PSG struggled to make their domination count.

Kean, however, restored the capital side's advantage on 77 minutes with a powerful crossed shot at the end of a counter attack before being substituted by Mbappe, who tapped in from Layvin Kurzawa's cross to put the result beyond doubt.

The home side pushed harder in the finale but PSG remained compact at the back to claim their first league victory in three games.

Papa Bouba Diop's winner against France was Senegal's Maradona moment

JONATHAN WILSON

LONDON, 06 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: There are a handful of goals that are universal, that resonate with almost everybody who follows the game. Diego Maradona scored two of them in the space of five minutes against England in the World Cup quarter-final in 1986 – goals much better remembered, in Argentina, in England, everywhere, than either of his brilliant goals in the semi-final or than any of the five goals in the final. What makes a goal indelible is far more to do with context and narrative than the quality of the strike or even the stage at which it is scored.

There are very few truly universal goals. How many, really, could you mention to a fan in Beijing or Baltimore, Jakarta or Johannesburg, in the realistic expectation they could describe it? Maybe it is a facet of ageing, but as the volume of football on television has increased, such strikes seem to have become fewer and further between.

Zinedine Zidane's headbutt and, some way behind, Luis Suárez's handball are probably the biggest World Cup moments of the past 20 years. Goals, it turns out, are overrated, but it may be that the most memorable in the World Cup in the 21st century was the first: Papa Bouba Diop's winner for Senegal against France in the opening game of the 2002 finals.

Diop died last Sunday, four days after Maradona, aged 42. His passing was respectfully marked, and Ademola Lookman celebrated scoring for Fulham against Leicester with his Senegal No 19 shirt, but there was nothing like the



same outpouring of emotion. Why would there be? Maradona was one of a handful of all-time greats; Diop was a popular and diligent midfielder for Fulham and Portsmouth. Even in that Senegal side in 2002, Diop was overshadowed by El-Hadji Diouf and Salif Diao. Yet he, too, had his moment.

Omar Daf catches Youri Djourkaeff in possession and slides a pass down the left for Diouf to chase. He beats a lunging Frank Leboeuf and cuts the ball back along the edge of the six-yard box. Diop arrives in front of Emmanuel Petit and although Fabien Barthez saves his initial shot the ball rebounds back to him as he slides towards the line, allowing him to hook it in as Bixente Lizerazu appeals vainly for offside. Diop is on

his feet immediately, running to the corner flag, where he lays his shirt on the ground and orchestrates a dance around it.

That passage from Daf winning the ball to the celebration in the corner are, globally speaking, probably the most famous 20 seconds in Senegal's history – not Senegalese football's history, but the history of the nation. Ask somebody in Britain to name anyone from Senegal and while some may know the musician Youssou N'Dour, far more will be able to name Diouf or Diop – or, more recently, Sadio Mané.

For some players – Lionel Messi at times, for instance – that can become a terrible burden, but it's also an extraordinary opportunity. It is easy, in the face of the vapid

laughter of a million adverts and Fifa's cant about the football family, to become cynical, but no cultural pursuit is so universal. (In 2002, without realising who he was until half-time, I sat next to N'Dour during Senegal's Cup of Nations quarter-final against DR Congo in Mali, exchanging the odd polite comment about the football.)

Diop was born in Rufisque, once a thriving port but now run-down and subsumed into Dakar. At 18, he started playing in the Senegalese top flight. At 21, he secured a move to Switzerland, fulfilling the dream of a lucrative European move. In January 2002, just after joining Lens, he was part of the Senegal squad at the Africa Cup of Nations.

There were already whippers this was a special side.

They kept themselves apart, booking out a small hotel while every other side based in Bamako, Mali's capital, stayed in the huge concrete Hôtel L'Amitié. There was a mood about them that is particular to a national side tasting significant success for the first time, or for the first time in a long while, at least: a mixture of excitement, pride and disbelief.

While those in the hotel seemed stuck on the familiar players' treadmill of bedroom-dining room-training, Senegal's players relaxed in the garden. They were probably the best side at the tournament, but lost on penalties in the final to Cameroon.

Diouf, also at Lens, was the ebullient and charismatic face of the squad, but Diop was there in the background.

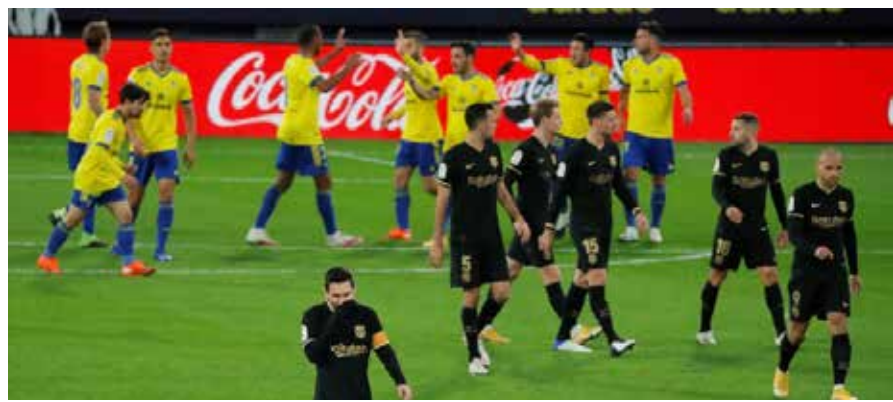
When the left-back Habib Beye described him as a giant it wasn't just his physique he was talking about. The defender Alassane N'Dour, another member of the squad, described Diop as "a partner, a role model, a friend, a brother and a patriot", as though being "a fantastic and extraordinary player" was incidental.

But Diop was a fine player, so influential that, by 2008, Tom Vernon, who ran an academy near Accra in Ghana, was complaining of the "Papa Bouba Diop template", of European clubs coming to west Africa only interested in signing defensive midfielders in his image, just as they had once gone to South America to sign No 10s.

The irony is that a player so adept at breaking up opposing attacks should be most famous for a goal he scored. To those who wanted to see it, there was symbolism in a winner against the former colonial master – although there was no animosity: 21 of Senegal's 23-man squad had played in France and most said they happily supported France in tournaments they were not involved in. More immediately relevant was it was the goal that beat the world and European champions, a goal that made people, perhaps for the first time, take notice of Senegal.

There, again, the breadth of the World Cup's appeal is made clear. The last week of last month was marked by the deaths of two players from very different but similarly humble backgrounds, who conditioned how the rest of the world regarded their nation.

Barca slump to shock loss at Cadiz after Ter Stegen gaffe



CADIZ, SPAIN (REUTERS)

- Barcelona conceded two embarrassing goals as they suffered a shock 2-1 defeat away to Cadiz in La Liga on Saturday.

The Catalans fell behind in the eighth minute when centre back Oscar Mingueza headed the ball towards his own goal and although keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen got a hand to the ball, Cadiz forward Alvaro Gimenez helped it over the line.

Barca drew level with a fortuitous goal of their own in the 57th when Cadiz defender Pedro Alcala diverted a Jordi Alba cross into the net, flummoxing his impressive goalkeeper Jeremias Ledesma who had been keeping Barca at bay.

Cadiz restored their lead six minutes later, however, when Alvaro Negredo capitalised on a calamitous mix-up between Barca defenders Alba and Clement Lenglet following a throw-in.

Alba aimed the throw towards Lenglet but the Frenchman could not control the ball and Ne-

gredo, on the pitch for less than a minute, ran to press Ter Stegen, blocked his kick out and dribbled the ball past the diving Frenkie de Jong and into the unguarded net.

Barca's fourth defeat of the season left them seventh in the standings on 14 points after 10 games, 12 points behind leaders Atletico, and Ronald Koeman's side have failed to win their last four away matches.

The Dutch coach criticised the attitude of his players.

"It's incredible that we lost because of a goal like that, it's an error you do not expect this team to make. It shows we were not concentrating," he said.

"The attitude was not good tonight. I'm very disappointed."

Barca midfielder Sergio Busquets said individual errors had cost them a lot of points this season.

"You cannot question the team's attitude or commitment, but when you start like we did today it makes the game

very difficult," he said.

Cadiz, who recorded their first home win since returning to the top flight, moved above them into fifth place on 18 points. The Andalusians also beat champions Real Madrid 1-0 away from home earlier in the campaign.

Barca captain Lionel Messi had a frustrating night despite being rested for the Champions League win at Ferencváros in midweek and was repeatedly thwarted by fellow Argentine and Rosario native Ledesma in the Cadiz goal.

Ledesma also kept out a stinging shot from Miralem Pjanic late on and a close-range effort from Antoine Griezmann.

Cadiz should have put the game out of Barca's reach when Bobby Adekanye raced towards goal unchallenged but failed to beat Ter Stegen.

However, their defence stood tall and they pulled off another huge win in their first season back in the top flight for 14 years.

Fans return to the EPL as Chelsea, Man U enjoy comeback wins

LONDON, DEC 6 (AP) They filed into the stadiums for the first time in nine months, clutching treasured match tickets and with their masks partially hiding the glee on their faces.

What once might have been taken for granted going to watch their teams play in the English Premier League felt like a huge privilege Saturday for the fortunate 4,000 given the honor of being the first soccer supporters to be allowed into games in England's top division since the outbreak of the coronavirus in March.

The fans 2,000 from West Ham, 2,000 from Chelsea had contrasting experiences on opposite sides of London.

West Ham imploded at its Olympic Stadium, squandering a 1-0 halftime lead against Manchester United as substitutes Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford inspired the visitors to a 3-1 win.

Chelsea's players treated their select group of attending fans to a comeback of their own at Stamford Bridge. The hosts rebounded from conceding a fourth-minute goal from former player Patrick Bamford to beat Leeds 3-1 thanks to goals from Olivier Giroud, Kurt Zouma and Christian Pulisic.

England is the first of the major soccer nations to allow some supporters back into games during COVID-19's second wave now that its national lockdown has ended.

Only half of the Premier League's stadiums are allowed to welcome back a limited number of fans. Teams from the cities and towns under the toughest coronavirus restrictions must still shut out their supporters.

For that reason, Manchester City played in an empty stadium for its 2-0 win over Fulham and

Burnley's Turf Moor also had no spectators for the team's 1-1 draw with Everton.

SUPER SUBS

Carrying minor injuries amid a packed schedule of games, Fernandes and Rashford were left out of the starting lineup by United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, who hoped he wouldn't have to call upon two of his star players.

On they came for the second half, however, after United was given the runaround in the first 45 minutes by a West Ham team that should have been further ahead than 1-0. Tomas Soucek scored that goal in the 38th.

Fernandes and Rashford changed the game. Fernandes played a key part in goals scored by Paul Pogba a curling shot from the edge of the area and Mason Greenwood in the space of three minutes. Rashford then ran onto Juan Mata's through-ball and chipped the goalkeeper for the third goal in the 78th.

United came from two goals down to beat Southampton last weekend and has won all five of its away games so far.

GIROUD'S GOAL SPREE

What a week it has been for Giroud.

After scoring all of Chelsea's goals in a 4-0 win at Sevilla in the Champions League, the France striker was handed a first start in the Premier League this season and grabbed the equalizer against Leeds to cancel out Bamford's opener on the counterattack.

Zouma headed in a corner from Mason Mount, before Pulisic slid in to convert a cross from Timo Werner and complete Chelsea's comeback in stoppage time.

The match saw respective managers Frank Lampard, of Chelsea, and Marcelo Bielsa, of Leeds,

meet for the first time in the Premier League. The pair clashed two seasons ago in the second-tier Championship after Bielsa admitted to spying on a training session of Derby, the team managed at the time by Lampard.

CITY CREEPING UP

Perhaps it was only a matter of time, but Manchester City is moving ominously into view in the early stage of the title race.

The routine win over Fulham secured by an early strike by Raheem Sterling and a penalty from Kevin De Bruyne lifted City into striking distance of the top of the standings after a slow start to the season by Pep Guardiola's team.

City is four points behind Chelsea having played one game fewer.

Guardiola's team selections continue to be a source of interest as he seeks to keep his big squad on its toes. Sterling made a strong return after being a substitute in the last two games, while Aymeric Laporte supposedly a mainstay in central defense missed out for the fourth straight game.

Meanwhile, Guardiola didn't make a single substitution, at a time when he is pushing the Premier League to increase the number of replacements from three to five for player-welfare reasons.

CALVERT-LEWIN KEEPS GOING

Dominic Calvert-Lewin is not slowing up this season.

It's now 11 goals in 11 games for the Everton striker after scoring the equalizer in a 1-1 draw at Burnley. He is the top scorer in the league, with two more than the next player in the scoring list Tottenham's Son Heung-min.

Robbie Brady scored a third-minute opener for Burnley, which has just one win in 10 games so far and stayed in the bottom three.

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Iran sends biggest ever fleet of oil tankers to Venezuela

LONDON, 06 DEC [AL-JAZEERA]: Iran is sending its biggest fleet yet of tankers to Venezuela in defiance of U.S. sanctions to help the isolated nation weather a crippling fuel shortage, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

Some of the flotillas of about 10 Iranian vessels will also help export Venezuelan crude after discharging fuel, the people said, asking not to be named because the transaction is not public.

The Nicolas Maduro regime is widening its reliance on Iran as an ally of last resort after even Russia and China have avoided challenging the U.S. ban on trade with Venezuela.

The country's fuel crunch follows decades of mismanagement, corruption and under-investment at state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela since the time of Maduro's late mentor and predecessor, Hugo Chavez.

The country that was once a top supplier of crude to the U.S. and boasted one of the lowest domestic gasoline prices in the world, now can barely produce any fuel.

The last Iranian fuel shipments sent in early October on three vessels are running out, threatening steeper nationwide shortages with hours-long queues at gas stations.

The current fleet under sail is about double the size of the one that



first startled international observers in May, crossing a Caribbean Sea patrolled by the U.S. Navy, to be greeted by Maduro himself upon arrival.

"We're watching what Iran is doing and making sure that other shippers, insurers, ship owners, ship captains realize they must stay away from that trade," Elliott Abrams, the U.S. special representative for Iran and Venezuela, said in September.

Several vessels that transported fuel to Venezuela earlier this year, including Fortune and Horse, turned off their satellite signal at least ten days ago, according to Bloomberg tanker tracking data.

Turning off transponders is a commonly used method by ships hoping to avoid detection. In

other instances of Iranian aid to Venezuela, ship names were painted over and changed to obscure the vessel's registration.

The oil ministry in Tehran declined to comment on the matter. Messages sent to several officials at PDVSA, as Venezuela's state oil company is known, weren't immediately answered.

In addition to importing fuel, Venezuela also needs to export enough crude oil to free up storage space and prevent field stoppages, a task made more difficult by the sanctions against Maduro's regime.

Production at Venezuela's network of six refineries has gone into steady decline, with spills and accidents becoming routine. Maduro's government has increased pressure on the poorly-

maintained infrastructure to ensure output for local consumption.

Sanctions have made it difficult to import parts or hire contractors, and the Maduro regime is running out of cash.

Consequently, the two nations are also discussing ways for Iran to help Venezuela overhaul its Cardon refinery, the last fuel plant there to operate more or less regularly, people with knowledge of the situation said.

In 2018, Chinese oil companies also looked at helping Venezuela fix its refineries, but lost interest after a review of the installations, people familiar with those plans said.

It's unclear whether the Iranians would be able to achieve what the Chinese didn't. Venezu-

ela's refineries were built and operated for decades by U.S. and European oil majors until nationalization in the 1970s.

Even then, PDVSA relied on U.S. technology and parts for maintenance and expansions. This means the Iranians will need to make certain parts from scratch to carry out key repairs.

Some fixes made in June and July haven't been successful yet and four local contractors are still conducting repairs, said one of the people.

Maduro is under renewed international pressure after the opposition decided to boycott Dec. 6 National Assembly elections that are widely considered to be overseen by Maduro loyalists. Maduro is hoping for a big turnout to claim he has public support.

China prepares large-scale rollout of COVID-19 vaccines

TAIPEI, DEC 6 (AP): Provincial governments across China are placing orders for experimental, domestically made coronavirus vaccines, though health officials have yet to say how well they work or how they may reach the country's 1.4 billion people.

Developers are speeding up final testing, the Chinese foreign minister said Thursday during a UN meeting, as Britain issued approval for emergency use of Pfizer Inc.'s vaccine candidate and providers scrambled to set up distribution.

China's fledgling pharmaceutical industry has at least five vaccines from four producers being tested in more than a dozen countries including Russia, Egypt and Mexico.

Health experts say even if they are successful, the certification process for the United States, Europe, Japan and other developed countries might be too complex for them to be used there.

However, China said it will ensure the products are affordable for developing countries.

One developer, China National Pharmaceutical Group, known as Sinopharm, said in November it applied for final market approval for use of its vaccine in China.

Others have been approved for emergency use on health workers and other people deemed at high risk of infection.

We must be prepared for large-scale production, said Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, who has overseen much of the country's response, during a visit Wednesday to developers, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Sun visited one of Sinopharm's Beijing subsidiary companies; another producer, Sinovac,

and a research lab under the National Medical Products Administration, a regulatory agency that approves medical products for public use.

The government has yet to say how many people it plans to vaccinate.

Sun said plans call for vaccinating border personnel and other high-risk populations this month.

The companies are using more traditional techniques than Western developers.

They say unlike Pfizer's vaccine, which must be kept frozen at temperatures as low as minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 Fahrenheit), theirs can be stored at 2 to 8 C (36 to 46F).

The Chinese producers have yet to say how they might be distributed.

More than 1 million people in China have received experimental vaccines under emergency use approval. Health experts question why China is using them on such a vast scale now that the outbreak is largely under control within its borders. Health officials previously said China will be able to manufacture 610 million doses by the end of this year and ramp up to 1 billion doses next year.

The government of Jiangsu province, where the major city of Nanjing is located, issued a procurement notice for vaccines from Sinovac and Sinopharm on Wednesday for emergency use vaccinations.

Authorities in Sichuan province in the west, which has about 85 million people, announced Monday they were already buying vaccines.

An official newspaper in Anhui province, south-east of Beijing, said a local residential committee issued a notice asking whether residents want

a vaccine.

The Sichuan and Anhui announcements said the vaccine, given in two shots, would cost a total of 400 yuan (USD 60).

Vaccines from Sinovac and Sinopharm were approved for emergency use in July.

In October, Zhejiang province south of Shanghai offered the public vaccination under emergency use authorization.

It said people considered high-risk would get priority.

In November, the Communist Party secretary for Sinopharm said almost 1 million people had received its vaccine.

In September, Sinovac's CEO said about 3,000 of its employees had taken their vaccine.

He said the company provided tens of thousands of doses to the Beijing city government.

Developers have yet to disclose how effective their vaccines are and possible side effects.

Sinopharm has clinical trials under way in 10 countries including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Peru and Argentina with nearly 60,000 volunteers.

It has built two facilities in China capable of producing 200 million doses per year.

Sinovac has trials in Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia. Its most recent publicized data, a study in the science journal the Lancet, showed its candidate produced lower levels of antibodies in people than those who had recovered from COVID-19.

The company projects it will be able to produce a few hundred million doses of the vaccine by February or March of next year. Another producer, CanSino, is testing in Russia, Pakistan and Mexico and pursuing partnerships in Latin American countries.

Several COVID patients die in Pakistan after oxygen supply runs out

ISLAMABAD, 06 DEC [AL-JAZEERA]: Seven patients being treated for the coronavirus have died after one of the largest hospitals in the north-western Pakistani city of Peshawar ran out of oxygen supplies.

Farhad Khan, spokesman at Khyber Teaching Hospital, said on Sunday that the patients died on Saturday night when the vendor who supplies the hospital with medical oxygen failed to arrive in time.

The hospital, the second-largest in the north-western city of Peshawar, receives its oxygen cylinders from a vendor in Rawalpindi, a city about 190km (118 miles) away, Khan said.

Provincial Health Minister Taimur Jhagra tweeted about the incident, saying the hospital's board of governors had been ordered to complete an investigation into the incident and take action "within 48 hours" against those responsible.

He promised that "all facts of the case will be made public".

Pakistan, a country of approximately 220 million people, has recorded 58 COVID-19 deaths over the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of confirmed deaths from the virus to 8,361. The total tally confirmed cases in Pakistan stands at nearly 416,500 to date.

UK races to deport asylum seekers ahead of Brexit

MARK TOWNSEND

LONDON, 06 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Scores of vulnerable asylum seekers, including suspected victims of trafficking, are scheduled to be deported this week as the home secretary Priti Patel ramps up removal operations ahead of Brexit.

Three flights this week, two to Germany and one to France, with possible transfers to Austria, Poland, Spain and Lithuania, are planned amid opposition from campaigners who say they have evidence that cases are being "rushed" through to avoid Patel's own published policy on identifying trafficking victims.

The development comes days after Patel branded those calling for last week's deportation flight to Jamaica to be stopped as "do-gooding celebrities", a label that prompted victims of the Windrush scandal to describe the home secretary as "deeply insulting and patronising".

Groups monitoring the impending round of flights to the EU say that the Home Office's planned operation to remove potential trafficking and torture victims without proper screening is unlawful and breaches a recent interim high court order.

The flights are operating under the EU's Dublin convention legislation that allows states to return people to an EU country where they have already made an asylum claim – a right the UK retains during the Brexit transition period.

Soon, unless another transfer arrangement is agreed with the EU, the UK will no longer be able to forcibly deport asylum seekers who have passed through other EU countries.

Lawyers acting for those scheduled to be deported on this week's flights say they haven't been properly screened to identify serious

vulnerabilities or asked two key questions: "Why have you come to the UK?" and "Please outline your journey to the UK"

An interim high court ruling last month said the Home Office's failure to ask such questions was arguably "unlawful" and risked a "serious risk of injustice and irreversible harm." The ruling ordered the Home Office to reinstate the two questions for arriving asylum seekers.

However the Jesuit Refugee Service UK, an international Catholic group that operates inside Heathrow immigration detention centres, Colnbrook and Harmondsworth, said it had evidence that the Home Office was planning to deport individuals this week who hadn't been asked the questions.

Sarah Teather, director of JSR UK, said: "Under cover of Covid and the rush for Brexit, the government are subjecting survivors of trafficking and torture to brutal treatment."

"Skipping sections of your own due process to avoid listening to details of trafficking that would require a more careful approach to the person in front of you is staggeringly cynical."

Teather, whose group is representing eight asylum seekers due to be deported by charter flight this week, added: "They've been told this practice is unacceptable by the high court, yet they continue to rush people through the process regardless, perhaps safe in the knowledge that the most vulnerable and traumatised asylum seekers are struggling to access legal advice in detention right now. It demonstrates a complete disregard for human life and it is a shameful episode."

The JRS is currently supporting 11 men who recently crossed the Channel in small boats and

who have experienced trafficking, forced labour and torture on their journey to the UK.

One is from Syria and the rest from Sudan, a journey typically takes them through Libya, which is known to be rife with trafficking with numerous accounts of mistreatment and torture.

"Some have told us that they were sold between gangs, forced to work and never paid. Others were sold on repeatedly to other traffickers. Many bear the physical and mental scarring of this time," added Teather.

One of the Sudanese men supported by JRS UK had spent four years in such conditions in Libya, but could not explain this at his "screening" interview as it was cut short.

Six others have shared records of their screening interviews with all six confirming that officials skipped the key questions: "Why have you come to the UK?" and "Please outline your journey to the UK."

Four individuals whose screening interviews were cut short are scheduled to be removed on charter flights this week. A further four potential victims of trafficking have also removals scheduled for this week amid concerns from the organisation that they also have not been given full screening interviews.

All individuals held in immigration detention also have the right to legal advice, but Teather says legal access is currently erratic and she fears that some of those on this week's flights will have been unable to challenge their removal.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We remain determined to fix the broken asylum system so that it is firm and fair and make no apology for removing those with no right to remain in the UK.

China coal mine accident toll climbs to 23



KJM VARMA

BEIJING, DEC 6 (PTI): The death toll due to a carbon monoxide leak inside a coal mine in south-west China has gone up to 23, while one person has been rescued, officials said on Sunday.

The accident took place at around 5 pm (local time) on Friday at the closed Diaoshuidong colliery in Yongchuan district of Chongqing Municipality.

The dead are among 24 people trapped underground by excessive levels of carbon monoxide gas at the coal mine, where they were dismantling equipment in a pit.

The mine was suspended and shut down over two months ago. The cause of

the accident is being further investigated, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Sunday.

The Diaoshuidong coal mine, which was established in 1975 and became privately-owned in 1998, has an annual production capacity of 120,000 tonnes of coal, according to the local emergency management department.

In March 2013, hydrogen sulfide poisoning in the mine left three dead and two injured.

Though safety improvements have reduced deaths at coal mines in recent years, mining accidents are common in China, which is the world's largest coal producer. At least

16 people died in late September after high levels of carbon monoxide trapped miners at the Songzao coal mine in Chongqing.

China, which is both the world's largest producer and consumer of coal, has now reported more than 100 coal mining accidents in 2020.

In November, the government launched a year-long review of all working coal mines and coal-mining projects, focusing on infrastructure, risk prevention management and capabilities for emergency response and rescue.

Coal production in China typically ramps up between November and February in order to meet production targets.



RAINY NIGHT! Actress Hailee Steinfeld on the set of Hawkeye in New York City.

COVID-19 could push number of people living in extreme poverty to over 1 billion by 2030: UN

YOSHITA SINGH

UNITED NATIONS, DEC 6 (PTI): An additional 207 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to the severe long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic, bringing the total number of the world's extremely poor to more than a billion, a new study from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has found. The study assesses the impact of different COVID-19 recovery scenarios on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), evaluating the multidimensional effects of the pandemic over the next decade.

The study is part of a long-standing partnership between the UNDP and the Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver.

"Severe long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic could push an additional 207 million people into extreme poverty on top of the current pandemic trajectory, bringing the total to over 1 billion by 2030," noted the study.

The 'Baseline COVID' scenario, based on current mortality rates and the most recent growth projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), would result in 44 million more people living in extreme poverty by 2030 compared to the development trajectory the world was on before the pandemic.

Under a 'High Damage' scenario, where the recovery is protracted, COVID-19 is likely

to push an additional 207 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, and increase the female poverty headcount by an additional 102 million compared to that baseline, says the report.

The 'High Damage' scenario anticipates that 80 per cent of the COVID-induced economic crisis would persist in 10 years' time due to loss in productivity, preventing a full recovery to the growth trajectory seen before the pandemic.

However, the study also finds that a focused set of SDG investments over the next decade in social protection/welfare programmes, governance, digitalisation, and a green economy could not only prevent the rise of extreme poverty, but actually exceed the development trajectory the world was on before the pandemic.

"This ambitious, yet feasible SDG Push' scenario would lift an additional 146 million people out of extreme poverty, narrow the gender poverty gap, and reduce the female poverty headcount by 74 million, even taking into account the current impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic," UNDP said.

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner said as this new poverty research highlights, the COVID-19 pandemic is a tipping point, and the choices leaders take now could take the world in very different directions.

The Black Eyed Peas tops charts in move to Latin music



The Black Eyed Peas, whose music spans hip hop to soul to pop-rap, is topping the charts with the former quartet's first album in two years, featuring Latin pop artists such as Shakira.

"Translation" also has tracks created with other Latin stars like J. Balvin and

Maluma in a genre whose growth has outpaced the overall U.S. music market.

"I personally was inspired by this Latin movement," said Will.i.am, a member of the current trio. "It's the most streamed genre on Spotify. And to that, it is the definition of international pop."

The album is the group's second since Fergie left about three years ago.

"We have three No. 1's without, you know, the traditional lineup that you thought was responsible for the pop success. This record shows that it's the songs that contributed to (our success)," said

Will.i.am. One track, "Girl Like Me," was recorded in 2008 by Shakira and Will.i.am but only released this week.

The Black Eyed Peas, formed as a rap group in 1995, has sold over 50 million albums worldwide in genres that include pop, soul and electronic music.

Huge validation to headline movies: Bhumi Pednekar



Actor Bhumi Pednekar says headlining her upcoming "Durgamati" has given a boost to her confidence as it shows that producers trust her with shouldering a film alone.

The horror film, backed by superstar Akshay Kumar, revolves around a government officer who is made the victim of a major conspiracy involving powerful forces.

Pednekar said she considers the opportunity to front a film within five years of her career is an acknowledgement of her craft.

"It is a huge validation for me that I have started headlining projects. 'Durgamati' is a film that will always be special and I will always be proud of it because Akshay sir thought I could shoulder it on my own.

Directed by Ashok, "Durgamati" is the Hindi remake of Telugu horror film "Bhaagamathie", which featured "Baahubali" star Anushka Shetty.

The movie, which also stars Arshad Warsi, Jisshu Sengupta and Mahie Gill, is slated to premiere on December 11 on Amazon Prime Video.

Ava DuVernay developing 'Naomi' series at The CW

Filmmaker Ava DuVernay is collaborating with "Arrow" writer Jill Blankenship to develop a series based on DC Comics character Naomi.

The project, set up at The CW network, will be written and executive produce by DuVernay and Blankenship, reported Variety.

Designed to appeal to a younger-skewing broadcast network audience, the show will depict a teen girl's journey from her small Northwestern town to the heights of the multiverse following a

supernatural event in her home state of Oregon.

Naomi sets out to uncover its origins, and what she discovers will challenge everything we believe about our heroes.

The comic book series, which debuted in 2019, was co-written by Brian Michael Bendis and David F Walker, and illustrated by breakout artist Jamal Campbell.

Sarah Bremner and Paul Ganes of DuVernay's Array Filmworks will produce the series in association with Warner Bros Television.

Namit Das collaborates with rapper Slow Cheeta for track about crime against women

Actor-singer Namit Das has collaborated with rapper Slow Cheeta for the track "Aankhon Ka Tara".

The track is produced by Shaan Music, composed and written by Slow Cheeta. "Aankhon Ka Tara", performed by the rapper along with Das, had its video released on Saturday.

"Huge props to Slow Cheeta for writing and composing the song so beautifully. 'Aankhon Ka Tara' is all heart and I dedicate it to all the women, who are trying their best to be heard. This song is a reminder of the power of music," the 36-year-old actor added.

Das was recently seen on Netflix's "A Suitable Boy" and Sushmita Sen fronted crime-thriller "Arya".

He is currently awaiting the release of digital outing "Aafat-E-Ishq".

'Young Sheldon' stops filming after crew member contracts coronavirus

Production of popular sitcom "Young Sheldon" has been halted after a crew member tested positive for COVID-19.

According to Deadline, the positive result for the person, who was asymptomatic and currently in isolation, came through the rigorous regular testing implemented for all production employees. Post the test result, the producers took a call to suspend the production for a day.

They are currently evaluating when the show, currently in its fourth season, will resume shooting next week.

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

Tip: Two is the magic number, Aries!

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

Tip: Make a choice!

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

Tip: Here's to love and other intoxicants!

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

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

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

Tip: Flirt with all that life has to offer.

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

and that is that I know nothing at all."

Tip: Clean slate.

Libra:

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

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

Scorpio:

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

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

Sagittarius:

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

Tip: Turbulence on the emotional front is indicated.

Capricorn:

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

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

Aquarius:

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

Tip: Act from a space of empowerment.

Pisces:

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

Tip: Kismet is about to intervene, Pisces.