



**FINN WOLFHARD WAS STALKED
BY 'STRANGER THINGS' FANS**
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**CORONAVIRUS IS A BREEDING GROUND
FOR CONSPIRACY THEORIES – HERE'S
WHY THAT'S A SERIOUS PROBLEM**

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**JAMES GUNN ANNOUNCES WRAP
ON 'THE SUICIDE SQUAD'**

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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566 recruits complete training, march out in Sikkim Police khakhis

Make us proud, serve with honesty: CM to passing out Sikkim Police personnel

NAMCHI, 01 MAR [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] today heralded Indian Reserve Battalion as a force providing immeasurable service which cannot be expressed adequately enough in words. He was addressing the passing out parade of Sikkim Police recruit constables at the 3rd IRBn Headquarters, Manglay Playground today.

He was accompanied by Cabinet Ministers BS Panth, LN Sharma, Chairperson, Director General of Police (DGP) A Shankar Rao, officials from Police Department, various government departments and public alike.

Addressing the gathering the Chief Minister congratulated the passing out recruits and wished them luck for their professional lives.

The recruits had been training for the last nine months at Mangley and Police Training Centre at Yangang.

He added that Indian Reserve Battalion was



one of the branches of the central government and expressed that the passing out recruits should try and bring laurels to the State and give honest service to the department as well as to the public.

The Chief Minister also remarked that the Police personnel have to follow the law and its various facets.

He said that the police personnel have to serve three-year tenures at the place of posting and added that the role of the force is to protect civilians as well as the state, which he said that

the Police officials of Sikkim are doing in an assiduous manner.

He emphasized that Sikkim Police should set an example in the country as a department which is peace loving, efficient, effective and accountable.

He underlined that the State Government was assisting the education of children of Police personnel posted outside of the state.

Promotion has been consistently looked after by the State Government from constable level to higher official

levels. He also spoke about why a Police Station was established at Yangang and urged the officials to relocate the Police Station in the near future since currently the station is running from a rented house.

The Chief Minister added that Sikkim has been plagued by increasing harmful effects of drug abuse. In this regard, he encouraged the Police personnel to take stringent action against culprits and extend support to victims of drug abuse as it's the Sikkim Police Department which plays a vital

role in eradicating this menace.

The Chief Minister added that grievances and other developmental projects put across by the DGP will be looked into at the earliest.

Speaking on the occasion, the DGP informed that a total of 566 recruits were passing out today out of which 130 are women constables.

He added that the recruits have been coached in the field of local and Special Acts. They have also been trained on various components of the law. Further, he presented, in detail, the various grievances faced by the training centre located here.

During the course of the program, a prize distribution ceremony was conducted wherein various recruits were provided with appreciation certificates and trophies in different categories namely best outdoor, best indoor, best shooter, overall best trainer and many more.

Film Fest concludes with deliberations on creating Film-Friendly Ecosystem in Sikkim



GANGTOK, 01 MAR [IPR]: A film facilitation workshop was organized by the Information & Public Relations Department on the concluding day of the Global Cinema Festival here at Manan Kendra today.

The workshop was organized in coordination with the Film Federation of India and the National Film Development Corporation to deliberate on creating an enabling environment for an effective Single-Window Ecosystem for films in Sikkim.

The objective of the workshop was to sensitize the Officials of the State Government and stakeholders on the

need for making a user-friendly environment for promoting filming in the State which will help develop the film industry here.

The workshop aimed to assist the state machinery and State Government line departments to create a 'Film Friendly Ecosystem' including setting up of Film Cell and develop a film industry in Sikkim.

The workshop was addressed by Supran Sen [Secretary General, Film Federation of India], Firdausal Hassan [Producer & President, Film Federation of India], Goutam Ghosh [filmmaker], Arindam Seal [filmmaker], Ravi Kotarakara [Secre-

tary, South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce and past President of FFI], Arijit Dutta [Film Distributor and Promoter], Tribeny Rai [independent filmmaker from Sikkim], Mandira Chettri [independent filmmaker from Sikkim], and Raj Sitaula [Line Producer from Sikkim].

The panel discussions were moderated by Vikramjit Roy, Head, Film Facilitation Office, NFDC, and Anita Gupta, Principal Advisor, Global Cinema Festival.

The topics deliberated up in the panel discussions were – The Role of the State towards developing a film eco-system and Industry;

turn to pg 02

Rural Sports plays out at all GPUs



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

With the objective to seek out and nurture sporting talents from different corners of the State, Rural Sports was held from 25 to 29 February at all gram panchayat units of the State. Valedictory functions for the various sports competitions were held on Saturday at the respec-

tive GPUs, it is informed.

The competition was organized by committees chaired by panchayat presidents formed at the GPU level under Rural Development Department in collaboration with Sports & Youth Affairs Department.

Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari, informs that it was the

desire of Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] to spend Rs 50,000 at each GPU for the promotion of sports through these meets. "In order to encourage games and sports and to hunt sports talent and also to create awareness about healthy lifestyles, the State Government directed that Rural Sports be held at the GPU-level," he informed.

Moderate intensity quake hits Shimla

SHIMLA, MAR 1 (PTI): A moderate intensity earthquake of magnitude 3.2 shook Himachal Pradesh's capital Shimla on Sunday morning, the Meteorological Department said.

There was no report of any casualty or damage to property.

The earthquake's epicentre was at a depth of 5 km north-east in Shimla, the department said, adding that tremors were felt in and around the district at 10.13 am.

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**We are grateful to the Honorable
Chief Minister of Sikkim
for launching the Sikkim
Film Policy 2020**

**With gratitude from Sikkim
Film Co-operative Society Ltd.
Deorali, Gangtok**



Sikkim Film Co-operative Society Ltd.

Police Station inaugurated in Yangang

NAMCHI, 01 MAR [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] inaugurated Yangang Police Station today.

The police station will be headed by Station House Officer, SI CK Subba, with a total staff of 10. It may be recalled

that during a meeting on 18 September at Tagataga Tsal in Rabongla, the Chief Minister had informed that the State Government was in the process of establishing a police station in Yangang.

The establishment of the station at Yangang



will assist in controlling crime and maintaining

public peace and order in the locality.

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SALE
(URGENT SALE)**

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Sports meet at Chota Samdong Arubotey GPU



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR: Chota Samdong Arubotey Rural Sports-II GPU Level Games and Sports concluded in the presence of BDO [Soreng], Sabita Rai, Panchayat President DK Limboo and all other Panchayat members, in-charge Govt. Senior Secondary School along

with its staff, the SKM CLC vice-convenor for Soreng-Chakung constituency, CK Rana, a press release informs. The sports meet was organized by the Chota Samdong Arubotey GPU in collaboration with the Sports & Youths Affairs Department at Chota Samdong School Playground.

Four bodies recovered from drains in northeast Delhi

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): Four more bodies were fished out from the drains in Gokalpuri and Shiv Vihar areas of violence-affected northeast Delhi, officials said.

However, it is yet to be ascertained if they are linked to the riots and authorities have not updated the death toll figure.

At 8.20 am, police received a PCR call about a body in Bhagirath drain.

Later in the afternoon, the second body was fished out from the same drain, police said, adding that the third body was recovered from a drain near the Gokalpuri police station.

The fourth body was pulled out from a drain in Shiv Vihar.

None of the recovered bodies have been identified so far, police said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Pope Francis expels Kerala priest convicted of rape

KOCHI, MAR 1 (PTI): Adhering to a policy of “zero tolerance” towards clergy who sexually exploit minors, Pope Francis has expelled a Kerala priest-convicted of rape from all priestly duties and rights, according to church officials.

Syro-Malabar Church priest Robin Vadakkumchery is currently serving a jail term for impregnating a 16-year-old girl in Mananthavady diocese.

“Vadakkumchery has been dispensed from the exercise of priestly duties and rights. That means he has been reduced to the state of a layman”, a Church official told PTI.

He was suspended from priestly duties soon after the news about his

crime was reported in early 2017.

A POCSO court in Thalassery last year had sentenced Vadakkumchery to 20 years of Rigorous Imprisonment and slapped a fine of Rs three lakh on him.

The priest, 50, was the vicar of the local church in Kottiyur in Kannur district and manager at the school where the victim was studying.

He was arrested two years ago while trying to flee to Canada.

The Vatican’s action came two years after Pope Francis made it clear that all bishops should adhere to a policy of “zero tolerance” for clergy who sexually exploit children.

Kerala CM seeks MEA help to bring back stranded Indian fishermen from Iran

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAR 1 (PTI): Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday appealed to the External Affairs Minister to take all necessary steps and arrange for safe return of hundreds of fishermen, including Keralites, trapped in Iran following coronavirus scare.

In a letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, he said the state government has received information that more than hundred people, including around 60 from Kerala, were trapped in Azalur in Iran.

“When contacted by state government officials, it has been stated by the persons trapped in Azalur that more than hundred persons are there out of which around 60 are reported to be from Kerala,” Vijayan said in the letter.

He said it was learnt that they were unable to return to India on account of the COVID-19 spread. “...I request you to direct the (Indian) Embassy officials (in Iran) to take necessary steps and arrange for the safe

return of these persons,” Vijayan wrote.

Earlier, the Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma had said the state government will take all necessary steps to bring fishermen from the state stranded in Iran.

She said the state government will collect details of Keralites trapped in Iran and coordinate with the Indian embassy there through NoRKA (Department of Non-Resident Keralite Affairs).

A video of the Kerala fishermen seeking help was forwarded to the families of the fishermen and media houses in the state.

One of them is heard saying in the video that they were unable to move out of their rooms due to the restrictions imposed by the Iran government due to the coronavirus scare.

“Like us many people are from India are stranded here.

We are short of food. We tried to contact our sponsor. But he asked us to contact the government authorities,” the man said.

Monthly GST lottery offer for B2C invoices to start from Apr 1

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The government is planning to launch lottery offer under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from April 1 by conducting lucky draws every month for invoices of all business to customer (B2C) transactions.

The lottery scheme is being envisaged by the revenue department to encourage customers to take bills for every purchase, which will in turn help the government in

curbing GST evasion.

Under the scheme, the revenue department will conduct monthly lucky draws which will have one bumper prize, while there would be second and third prizes state wise, an official told PTI.

“The lottery scheme is planned to be launched on April 1,” the official added.

A member in the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)

had last month said that the lottery offers would range between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.

The official said consumers will have to scan and upload any B2C invoice using a mobile app, which is being developed by GST Network (GSTN), which handles the technology backbone of GST.

The mobile app would be made available for both Android and iOS users by end of

this month.

There would not be any threshold on the invoice value to be eligible for lucky draw, the official added.

GST, which became effective from July 1, 2017, has subsumed over a dozen indirect taxes, like excise and service tax. However, revenue under the new indirect tax regime has not picked up as per expectations, mainly on account of evasion.

Officials expect the lottery scheme to incentivise customers to ask for bill or invoice while making purchases.

The GST Council is likely to vet the lottery scheme in its next meeting on March 14.

As per the plan, the money for the lottery scheme would come from the consumer welfare fund, where the proceeds of anti-profiteering cases are transferred.

Rural Sports Meet ends in South Sikkim



NAMCHI, 01 MAR [IPR]: The five-day Rural Sports Meet 2020 concluded in South District. This meet was held at all the Gram Panchayat Units by the South District Sports & Youth Affairs Department in

collaboration with various stakeholders. This meet was open to all categories and various sports events - football, volleyball, badminton, athletics, tug of war, musical chairs and archery - were organized.

Situation peaceful but tense in Delhi

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): A week after deadly communal violence erupted in northeast Delhi, the situation in riots-hit areas remained peaceful but tense on Sunday, though there was movement of more people and vehicles on main roads amid a heavy police deployment.

“The situation is under control now. There is adequate force deployed in all areas of northeast district. We are holding talks with locals and trying to rebuild confidence,” a senior police official said.

No untoward incident

has been reported from the northeast district over the past three days, he said, adding police are urging residents to not pay attention to rumours and report them to authorities.

The violence in Jafraabad, Maujpur, Babarpur, Chand Bagh, Shiv Vihar, Bhajan Pura, Yamuna Vihar and Mustafabad areas of northeast Delhi claimed at least 42 lives and left over 200 injured.

A large number of properties were damaged. Frenzied mobs torched houses, shops, vehicles, a petrol pump

and pelted stones at locals and police personnel.

Even days after the violence, there was an eerie silence in the streets that once used to be teeming with people and hawkers. In Shiv Vihar, among the worst hit areas, the lanes were deserted and almost all the houses locked. In Mustafabad, people were wary of stepping out of their homes in narrow bylanes.

“Though there is police presence, tension is lingering. We celebrated Eid, Holi, Diwali together. I have

never faced such a situation in my life. There is grief, mistrust, disbelief. Those who indulged in violence did not belong to the area, they came from outside,” said Mohammad Yunus, 45.

Yunus, who owns a garment store in Shiv Vihar, said he was saved by his Hindu neighbours during the violence and they tore the shop name-board outside to save the business from rioters.

Acting Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava visited DCP Amit Sharma, undergoing treatment

at a hospital in Patparganj after suffering serious injuries during the violence in Gokulpuri on February 24. A 2010-batch IPS officer, Sharma has undergone brain surgery.

Soon after taking charge as police chief on Saturday, Shrivastava said his priority is to restore peace and ensure communal harmony in the national capital. Police have started a massive outreach programme and senior officers have been meeting with people to build confidence among them.

India has developed proactive defence policy: Amit Shah

KOLKATA, MAR 1 (PTI): Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the country has zero tolerance towards terrorism and has developed a “proactive” defence policy under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Shah also said that India has now joined the league of countries like the US and Israel that can carry out surgical strikes.

“We have zero tolerance towards terrorism. India had no proactive defence policy. Now, after Modiji became the PM, we have developed a proactive security policy that is distinct from the foreign policy,” he said in Rajarhat here after inaugurating the 29 Special Composite Group complex of the National Security Guard (NSG).

Shah said the NSG

is a globally recognised counter-terror force.

“India did not carry out any attack on its own in 10,000 years of history. But if one enters our soil and dares to attack our citizens and jawans, we will give them a befitting reply,” he said.

The home minister said the central government is working on a policy to improve the “housing satisfaction ratio” to enable jawans to stay with their families for at least 100 days in a year.

Hailing NSG personnel for fighting terrorism, Shah said, “We have taken measures to make it the best force in the world.”

There should always be efforts to “neutralise terrorists in the minimum possible time” during an operation, he said.

Shah said he had seen two anti-terror operations, the 2002 Akshardham temple attack and the 2008 Mumbai attack, from very close quarters as he was the then home minister of Gujarat.

The home minister inaugurated the 29 Special Composite Group complex of the NSG here and the force’s residential clusters in Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai.

He said all the projects together entailed an expense of Rs 245 crore.

Shah later inspected a mock drill by NSG commandos that included rescuing people trapped in a high rise.

He arrived here earlier in the day amid protests by opposition parties against the Citizenship (Amendment)

Act.

The protests were held in various parts of the city, including areas in the vicinity of the Shaheed Minar Ground, where Shah addressed a rally later in the day.

NSG Director General Anup Kumar Singh said Shah has a “strong personality and vision and the ability to take decision” which has given new direction to the security force.

He said after the Mumbai attack, a decision was taken to set up five regional NSG hubs for reaching out to any spot in the quickest time. “Another hub is coming up,” he said.

The NSG hub in Kolkata caters to several north-eastern states apart from Bihar and West Bengal, an official said.

MVA govt like unbreakable wall, says Ajit Pawar

MUMBAI, MAR 1 (PTI): Ruling out any fissures in the Shiv Sena-led coalition government in Maharashtra, senior NCP leader and deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Sunday invoked a popular television commercial on unbreakable wall to underline the unity of the ruling constituents.

Pawar’s comments at the convention of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) here came against the backdrop of statements by some BJP leaders that the ruling dispensation comprising the Sena, the NCP and the Congress might not last long owing to contrasting view points of the mem-

ber parties.

Recently, senior RSS leader Suresh ‘Bhaiyyaji’ Joshi caused a flutter saying that former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis of BJP will not remain in opposition for long.

“Some people are talking about when the wall of the Maha Vikas Aghadi will develop cracks. But that wall is unbreakable due to the strongly cemented bonds (among the three parties).”

“Yeh Diwar Tutati kyu NahiYe Mahavikas Aghadi ki Diwar tutegi kaise? Ambuja.Narmada...ACC cement se jo bani hai. (‘Why this wall of the Maha Vikas Aghadi is not breaking’.

How will it break because it is made up of Ambuja, ACC and Birla cement,” Pawar said while mimicking the television commercial.

The Sharad Pawar-led NCP shares power with the Sena and the Congress in the state.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar had repeatedly asserted that the state government will last its full term.

The Sena, a former ally of the BJP, joined hands with the two ideologically opposite parties after the state assembly elections in 2019 to form a government.

At the convention, the NCP flagged off its “Mission BMC 2022” in view of the upcoming elections to the Mumbai civic body.

The party has put banners across the metropolis highlighting the “Mission 2022”.

On the occasion, Pawar put the target for his party to win 50-60 seats in the 227-member Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in the elections. The NCP has 8 corporators in the civic body.

The BMC has been ruled by the Sena.

He also said the NCP should win at least 10 seats from Mumbai in the next assembly elections.

CBI makes first arrests in Yogesh Gowda murder case

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The CBI has arrested and detained some suspects in connection with the killing of BJP worker Yogesh Gowda in Karnataka’s Dharwad in 2016, officials said on Sunday.

These are the first arrests in the case, they said.

The agency sources said that its operation of further rounding up of suspects based on questioning of detained and arrested persons is spread across various states and is likely to continue during the night, hence the details cannot be shared.

Gowda, a BJP zilla panchayat member, was killed in his gym on June 15, 2016 by unidentified men, they said.

The agency took over the probe on the recommendation of the Karnataka government, they said.

It is alleged that Gowda was running a gym at Sathapura in Dharwad. He was a friend of Basavaraj Shivappa Muttagi, the prime accused, for the last 10 years with different political inclinations.

Gowda came to know about a land purchase deal by Muttagi. Gowda had threatened Muttagi that he should not purchase the land as it was under the former’s custody and if he still proceeded, he would kill him.

The Karnataka police had already completed the probe and filed a charge sheet against six accused on September 9, 2016.

It is alleged that Muttagi hatched a criminal conspiracy to kill Gowda.

When Gowda came to his gym on June 15, 2016, accomplices of Muttagi sprinkled chilli powder on his face and hacked him to death.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

Film Fest concludes...

The Perspective from Ground Zero/ requirements from the State; Creating a Film Friendly Eco-system; The FFO Eco-System and the Integration with Sikkim; and Marketing Sikkim as a Filming destination.

Earlier, the Principal Advisor, Global Cinema Festival, briefed the audience about the objective of the workshop and the role of various agencies in working towards an enabling environment for filmmaking in Sikkim.

The workshop was attended by nodal officers representing various government departments, executive members of the Sikkim Film Cooperative Society, and officers of FFI, NFDC and IPR Department.

The three-day Global Cinema Festival concluded on a high note with highly acclaimed films from around the world being screened throughout the day. A total of four films from Sikkim were screened today.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

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National Science Day at Lingi Payong School



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

The Science Club of Lingi Payong Secondary School organised a daylong programme to mark National Science Day on 28 Feb, a press release informs.

The theme for this year's celebration was "Women in Science."

Some of the major activities were speeches on National Science

Day and its theme, model presentation by students from Classes VI to X.

The programme was coordinated by Goma Sharma, Coordinator, Science Club, and the program was conducted by Astha Rai of Class X.

National Science Day is celebrated in India on 28 February to mark the discovery of the Raman Effect by

Physicist Sir CV Raman on this day in 1928. For his discovery, Sir CV Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.

National Science Day is observed to reinforce the importance of science in daily lives and to give an opportunity to students with a scientific bent of mind to explore and popularize science and technology.

19TH CHIEF MINISTER'S GOLD CUP ARCHERY TOURNAMENT [COMPOUND] Lachung United beat Samtse Friends



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Lachung United proceeded to the next round of the ongoing 19th Chief Minister's Gold Cup Archery Tournament [Compound] here at Archery Shoot-

ing Range of Tenzing Namgyal Memorial Ground at Tathangchen beating Samtse Friends of Bhutan 67-13. On Monday, Helping Bhutan will take on Maenamla as the tournament continues.

Delhi riots "targeted structural violence": Owaisi

Hyderabad, March 1 (PTI): Calling the Delhi riots as "targeted structural violence," AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday said the responsibility lies at the doorstep of the BJP government and appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the affected areas.

Addressing a public meeting on AIMIM's 62nd foundation day here, the Hyderabad MP reiterated his charge that the violence happened due to the speeches made by BJP leaders.

"This communal riot happened with full planning and preparation. An atmosphere of hatred was created. It cannot be called a communal riot but it is pogrom," he alleged.

"We were hopeful that you (Prime Minister) might have taken some lesson from 2002 (Gujarat riots) and ensure such thing would not recur..." Owaisi said.

Referring to slogans raised by some youths in Metro stations in Delhi, he said, "... who are these people telling 'goli maaro desh ke gaddaron ko' (shoot the traitors). Prime Minister this riot happened with planning.

This is targeted structural violence and its responsibility is on you."

The responsibility of Delhi riots lies at the doorstep of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, he said.

Appealing to Modi to visit the riot-hit areas in the national capital, Owaisi wondered whether the Prime Minister would "narrate our pain in monthly radio programme, Mann ki Baat."

He said the Prime Minister did not make a mention of the Delhi violence in his speech in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday though he dwelt on 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'.

Lashing out at Delhi police, Owaisi charged them with not responding to the calls of Muslims affected by the violence, which rocked parts of northeast Delhi last week claiming at least 42 lives and leaving over 200 injured.

Owaisi further said elected representatives of AIMIM would donate one month salary to the families of those killed in Delhi violence.

He said AIMIM would urge Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao not to allow NPR exercise in the state.

Three killed in collision between two goods train in MP

SINGRAULI (MP), MAR 1 (PTI): Three people were killed after two goods trains collided near a village in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli district on early Sunday morning, police said.

The track on which the accident occurred is managed by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) for coal transportation from Madhya Pradesh to Uttar Pradesh, a police officer said.

The accident occurred around 4.40 am when a coal-laden train heading towards Uttar Pradesh from Amlori mine in Madhya Pradesh collided with an empty goods train near Ghanhari village, located around seven kms from here, Singrauli Additional Superintendent of Police Pradeep Shende told PTI.

Thirteen wagons of one of the trains and an engine jumped off the tracks following

the collision.

Three bodies have been pulled out from the engine so far, the officer said.

The deceased were identified as Ramlakhan Bais (29), a local resident, Rasheed Ahmed (65) and Mandeep Kumar (26), both hailing from Uttar Pradesh, he said, adding that they seem to be the locomotive drivers of the trains and a points-man.

"The track on which the accident occurred is managed by the National Thermal Power Corporation for coal transportation from Madhya Pradesh to Uttar Pradesh," Shende said.

It seems the accident occurred either due to an error on part of the drivers or because of some fault in signaling, he said.

The mishap has not affected rail passenger traffic as it occurred on the track exclusively used by the NTPC to ferry coal for power generation, he added.



SOME PARIVARTAN FOR SUCH DANGERS TOO, PLEASE: In the lead up to the 2019 elections, SKM supporters would point out to dangerously ill-maintained electricity poles like this to drive home the negligent governance of the SDF. Now, a while since there has been a "parivartan" in the government, change is still awaited in attitudes which allow such eyesores and potential mishaps in-the-making to continue without any maintenance. [from YOGEN THATAL]

South Korea reports 376 more coronavirus cases, total 3,526

SEOUL, MAR 1 (AFP): South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Sunday the government was waging "all-out responses" to contain the novel coronavirus as the country reported 376 new cases, taking the total to 3,526.

South Korea has the largest national total in the world outside China, after it saw a rapid surge in the number of coronavirus cases in recent days.

Scores of events have been cancelled or postponed over the virus, while more than 70 countries raised their travel restrictions against South Korea.

"The government is now waging all-out responses after raising the crisis alert to the highest level," Moon said at a ceremony marking Independence Movement Day, scaled down due to the outbreak.

"We will be able to overcome the COVID-19 outbreak and revive our shrunken economy," he added. Nearly 90 per cent

of the cases were in Daegu, the centre of the country's outbreak, and its neighbouring North Gyeongsang province, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement. The country's death toll remains at 17. The national total is expected to rise further as authorities screen more than 260,000 members of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a secretive entity often accused of being a cult that is linked to around half of the country's cases.

A 61-year-old female member developed a fever on February 10, but attended at least four church services in Daegu -- the country's fourth-largest city with a population of 2.5 million -- before being diagnosed.

The streets of Daegu have been largely deserted for days, apart from long queues at the few shops with masks for sale.

Authorities have urged the public to exercise caution and anyone with a fever or respiratory symptoms to stay home.

But officials say they are not considering a citywide quarantine for the city in the manner of the lockdown imposed on the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the virus first emerged.

A surge in confirmed cases has led many events to be cancelled or postponed as the outbreak has hit the world's 12th-largest economy, including concerts by K-pop superstars BTS and the World Team Table Tennis Championships.

Auto giant Hyundai Motor also suspended operations at one of its Ulsan plants after an employee tested positive for the coronavirus.

The new school term start has been delayed one week nationwide and three weeks in Daegu, while the US and South Korean militaries have postponed forthcoming joint exercises.

Marwari Yuva Manch in Limca Book of World Records for car-bin distribution campaign



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

All India Marwari Yuva Manch has made it into the Limca Book of World Records for its impressive feat of distributing over one lakh car-bins all over

the country, including in Sikkim.

Under its Sanitation Campaign, the AIMYM launched a car-bins distribution drive from 26 May 2018 to 26 April 2019.

So far, more than one million car-bins have been distributed across the country, a press release informs, and the campaign is still running across the country.

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM BUILDINGS & HOUSING DEPARTMENT

No.41/ETENDER/BHD/2019-20

Dated: 26/02/2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

On behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, Chief Engineer, Buildings & Housing Department, Government of Sikkim invites percentage rate tenders from qualified Class I A contractors, within the state of Sikkim, enlisted with the SPWD in the cover system through e-procurement. The bids should be submitted online through the website www.sikkimtender.gov.in for the work as listed below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Bid security 2.5.% of the bid value (Rs. In lakhs)	Bid Value (Rs. In lakhs)	Cost of tender/bid form (Rs. In lakhs)	Completion Period.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Construction of Proposed Sikkim Civil Services Officers Institute Near Chintan Bhawan Gangtok East Sikkim.	34.08	1363.066	1.00	36 months.

IMPORTANT EVENT

1.	Publishing of Online Tender in e-procurement portal	26 th February 2020
2.	Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal	26 th February 2020
3.	Document download/Sale start date and time	26 th February 2020 1500 hrs onwards
4.	Last date & Time for seeking clarification regarding bids	4 th March 2020 upto 1500 Hrs.
5.	Last date for online submission of completed bids	16 th March, 2020 up to 1600 Hrs.
6.	Date for Submission of hard Copies (Tender fee and Bid security)	18 th March 2101 up to 1600 Hrs.
7.	Date of opening of Tender bids	19 th March 2020 at 1300 HRS.

For all details on the bid visit www.sikkimtender.gov.in.

R.O No. 383/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 27.2.2020

Sd/-
Chief Engineer
Buildings & Housing Department
Government of Sikkim.

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

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.

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.



If you seek help, you may call :
-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Westerly Disturbances Pour a Reminder

Water on the streets expose drained initiatives and opportunities

The persistent downpours of the past week and more are serving as timely reminders of everything that remains ignored in the capital. No sooner do the clouds open up that traffic grinds to a halt, roads having become rapids making one wonder what the capital has learned from the numerous slips and spillovers that descend on Gangtok every monsoon. The storm water drains cannot channel these short bursts of rain caused by westerly disturbances and that makes one wonder what the monsoon, which will be heavy this year if the present prequel is any indication, have in store for the capital.

What use are storm drains if they don't carry away thunderstorm waters? The only reassuring signs after every shower are the UB&HD workers struggling to unclog the drains, again and again and again. At least someone is responding quickly enough. But what continues to fail the capital is the science behind its jhoras and drains. Either the engineering deployed in their training is all wrong or the training itself is suspect because there is no way that one can be led to believe that the storm drains have consumed crores in construction and repairs and corrective works just to look pretty in fresh coats of cement. They are supposed to drain surface run off, not unleash torrents on the roads. When they do the latter, they not only expose the shortsighted planning that went into their training, but also damage and weaken roads ahead of the monsoons. One could also blame the carelessly "dropped" construction material and the occasional pile of overnight garbage for the clogging, but that can be easily remedied.

That said, what the failure of the jhoras and drains also expose is the quick exit civic enlightenment made the moment donor funding was no longer at hand to publicize citizen-initiatives to manage garbage disposal. Every jhora that spills over to the streets and every drain that finds itself blocked whenever water needs to channel through it, disgorge not just rain waters, but also everything that one calls garbage. The jhoras, unfortunately, continue to double as convenient waste bins and the water pipelines continue using these channels as convenient pathways from source to home. Then, of course, there are some sewage lines that still continue to open directly into jhoras greeting many mornings with a stench for everyone unlucky enough to be living near them.

The recent wave of evening downpours is welcome. They washed the dry hills and beat down the dust. Unfortunately, they might have come a little late for the farmers and the hail did not help either, but, if it reminds the Gangtokians [private and public] of all the responsibilities they continue to ignore, it can still be considered timely enough.

Coronavirus is a breeding ground for conspiracy theories – here's why that's a serious problem

DANIEL JOLLEY & PIA LAMBERTY
THECONVERSATION.COM

THE NOVEL coronavirus continues to spread around the world, with new cases being reported all the time. Spreading just as fast, it seems, are conspiracy theories that claim powerful actors are plotting something sinister to do with the virus. Our research into medical conspiracy theories shows that this has the potential to be just as dangerous for societies as the outbreak itself.

One conspiracy theory proposes that the coronavirus is actually a bio-weapon engineered by the CIA as a way to wage war on China. Others are convinced that the UK and US governments introduced the coronavirus as a way to make money from a potential vaccine.

Although many of these conspiracy theories seem far-fetched, the belief that evil powers are pursuing a secret plan is widespread in every society. Often these relate to health. A large 2019 YouGov poll found 16% of respondents in Spain believe that HIV was created and spread around the world on purpose by a secret group or organisation. And 27% of French and 12% of British respondents were convinced that "the truth about the harmful effects of vaccines is being deliberately hidden from the public".

The spread of fake news and conspiracy theories around the coronavirus is such a significant problem that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has created a "myth busters" webpage to try and tackle them.

SPREAD OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Research shows that conspiracy theories have a tendency to arise in relation to moments of crisis in society – like terrorist attacks, rapid political changes or economic crisis. Conspiracy theories bloom in periods of uncertainty and threat, where we seek to make sense of a chaotic world. These are the same conditions produced by virus outbreaks, which

explains the spread of conspiracy theories in relation to coronavirus.

Similar conditions occurred with the 2015-16 outbreak of Zika virus. Zika conspiracy theories proposed that the virus was a biological weapon rather than a natural occurrence. Research examining comments on Reddit during the Zika virus outbreak found conspiracy talk emerged as a way for people to cope with the extreme uncertainty they felt over Zika.

Trust in the recommendations from health professionals and organisations is an important resource for dealing with a health crisis. But people who believe in conspiracy theories generally do not trust groups they perceive as powerful, including managers, politicians and drug companies. If people do not trust, they are less likely to follow medical advice.

Researchers have shown that medical conspiracy theories have the power to increase distrust in medical authorities, which can impact people's willingness to protect themselves. People who endorse medical conspiracy theories are less likely to get vaccinated or use antibiotics and are more likely to take herbal supplements or vitamins. Plus, they are more likely to say they would trust medical advice from nonprofessionals such as friends and family.

SEVERE CONSEQUENCES

In light of these results, people who endorse conspiracy theories about the coronavirus may be less likely to follow health advice like frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap, or self-isolating after visiting at-risk areas.

Instead, these people may be more likely to have negative attitudes towards prevention behaviour or use dangerous alternatives as treatments. This would increase the likelihood of the virus spreading and put more people in danger.

Already, we can see "alternative healing approaches" to coronavirus



cropping up – some of them very dangerous. Promoters of the popular QAnon conspiracy theory, for example, have said the coronavirus was planned by the so-called "deep state" and claimed the virus can be ward off by drinking bleach.

The spread of medical conspiracy theories can also have severe consequences for other sections of society. For example, during the Black Death in Europe, Jews were scapegoated as responsible for the pandemic. These conspiracy theories led to violent attacks and massacres of Jewish communities all over Europe. The outbreak of the coronavirus has led to a worldwide increase in racist attacks targeted towards people perceived as East Asian.

It is possible to intervene and halt the spread of conspiracy theories, however. Research shows that campaigns promoting counterarguments to medical conspiracy the-

ories are likely to have some success in rectifying conspiracy beliefs. Games such as Bad News, in which people can take the role of a fake news producer, have been shown to improve people's ability to spot and resist misinformation.

Conspiracy theories can be very harmful for society. Not only can they influence people's health choices, they can interfere with how different groups relate to each other and increase hostility and violence towards those who are perceived to be "conspiring". So as well as acting to combat the spread of the coronavirus, governments should also act to stop misinformation and conspiracy theories relating to the virus from getting out of hand.

[Daniel Jolley is Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Northumbria University, Newcastle; Pia Lamberty is PhD Researcher in Social and Legal Psychology, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz]

Is basic income a good idea? Here's what the evidence from around the world says

MARCIA GIBSON

THECONVERSATION.COM

The idea of giving everybody an unconditional, regular income has become increasingly popular in the last few years, partly because employment has become less secure and people fear that increasing automation may cause job losses across many sectors.

There are many arguments for and against basic income. Some are concerned with fairness and justice, but many are based on competing ideas about the potential effects. Some argue people would stop working and become dependent on payments, while others believe it would free people to spend time on useful activities like volunteering or caring, and that many wouldn't work less because they wished to earn more or simply enjoyed it.

The only way to find out is to run pilot studies and measure the effects. To be sure that the effects are accurate, any study would have to meet as many of the criteria for a full basic income as possible: payments must be unconditional, cover the basic cost of living, and not be affected by other income. It is likely that effects would be different if basic income was universal and permanent, but pilot studies are usually small and short term.

People might be more likely to change the amount they work if the payments were not due to stop in two or three years. If everyone received payments, it could cause changes at a higher level. For instance, if people worked less, employers might have to increase wages. It is very difficult to measure these "spillover" effects if only a small number of people receive payments.

This means it is extremely challenging to design a study which could provide the evidence needed to decide whether basic income is a good idea. There are no programmes which meet all the criteria, but there are studies of schemes that meet some of them. We sought to find and objectively interrogate as many examples as we could. The programmes had to regularly give people money with no conditions attached, and meet at least one of the other criteria. They also had to be conducted



in upper-middle or high-income countries.

BASIC INCOME-STYLE SCHEMES

We found eight programmes (or "interventions") in North America and one in Iran (below). There were 27 studies on these, which included data on employment, education, health and social outcomes such as crime, as well as some evidence of spillover and higher-level effects. Some payments were universal and permanent, although not enough to cover basic living costs.

Five large studies of Negative Income Tax (NIT) – where people earning below a certain threshold received payments – were conducted in North America in the 1970s. For three to five years, low-income families were given enough money to live on with no conditions, but payments were reduced if they earned money.

The Ontario Basic Income Pilot began in 2018 but was cancelled by the new provincial government in 2019.

The Alaska Permanent Fund (APF) has given all residents (including children) a share of the state's oil dividends annually

since 1982.

A number of Native American tribes pay all tribal members dividends from casinos run on reservation land. They are paid annually, and young people receive childhood payments as a lump sum when they finish high school.

In 2010, the Iranian government introduced universal monthly payments to compensate for the removal of fuel subsidies. Initially, they were enough to live on, but the value was very quickly reduced by inflation.

LOOKING AT THE EVIDENCE

There was evidence on labour market activity for all the initiatives. Effects on men were mostly quite small, although one Alaskan study found that annual hours worked reduced by 11%. Women with young children and single parents reduced their hours by up to 33%, but these studies were in countries with no maternity pay. Women and self-employed men in Iran increased the amount they worked. Participants in Canadian studies reported that flexibility, security and being able to

work alongside health issues, education, or caring responsibilities without losing benefits were highly valued.

Effects on health were inconsistent, with some studies showing no effect on outcomes. However, several studies reported a large positive effects in terms of birth weight, hospital admissions, adult and child mental health and infant obesity. Evidence from some studies suggested that fewer worries about money and having enough to eat contributed to better health. In some studies where people received payments as large lump sums, there were increases in deaths and substance abuse.

There were some large increases in the proportion of teenagers completing high school and improved educational performance in the negative income tax studies and in a tribal dividend study. Divorce rates did not change in the NIT studies.

There was a similar finding in a tribal dividend study which also revealed large improvements in parent-child and parental relationships. Mothers of young chil-

dren spent less time in paid work but more time at home. People also reported spending more time caring for other relatives. Parents and teenagers in a tribal dividend study committed less crime, while immediately after receiving annual payments in Alaska, property crime decreased but substance-abuse related crime increased.

There is some tantalising evidence of spillover effects from several of the initiatives. In Alaska, there is a slight increase in men working after payments are made because the increase in spending means that there is higher demand for labour. There are reductions in mothers working and infant obesity, and it is likely that these are related. The projected savings on Alaskan health services are large.

In one Canadian programme, all residents were eligible for payments, although only 30% received any. Still, there was a large reduction in hospital admissions for accidents and mental health issues across the community, possibly because reduced financial stress led to less conflict and fewer mental health issues.

Changes like spending longer in education or reducing the incidence of low birth weight could have profound individual and social implications over the longer term. These factors are linked to higher incomes, better adult health, improved cognitive ability in older people and higher productivity.

None of the studies we looked at meet all the criteria for a basic income, so they can't provide definitive evidence for its effects. However, they do provide evidence of how people respond to unconditional cash payments, and there are some fascinating pointers for the possible effects if basic income schemes were scaled up.

To understand the effects of basic income, future studies need to replicate it as closely as possible. In particular, large universal schemes are required to measure higher-level and spillover effects. Whatever the effects, it is likely that a basic income would have a transformative impact on society.

[The writer is Investigator Scientist MRC/CSO Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow]

All refugees will be granted citizenship under CAA, says Amit Shah



KOLKATA, MAR 1 (PTI): Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday asserted that the Narendra Modi government will not stop until and unless all refugees in the country are granted citizenship under the CAA.

Shah, addressing a rally here, also exuded confidence that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will form the next government in Bengal with two-third majority after the 2021 assembly polls.

Accusing opposition parties, including the TMC, of misguiding the refugees and minorities, Shah said not a single

person will lose citizenship as a result of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"The opposition is terrorising minorities... I assure every person from the minority community that CAA only provides citizenship, does not take it away. It won't affect your citizenship," the home minister said.

"We will not stop until and unless all the refugees are granted citizenship," he added.

Shah also launched the BJP's 'Aar Noi Annay' (no more injustice) campaign in West Bengal at the rally.

Govt to infuse Rs 200 crore in IFCI next fiscal

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The government has decided to pump Rs 200 crore into IFCI, the country's oldest term lending institution, through the preferential allotment route next fiscal to shore up its capital and enhance operations, sources said.

Government of India holding in the non-banking finance company, which stood at 56.42 per cent at the end of December 2019, would increase after the capital infusion.

"The (Rs 200 crore) provision is for equity support to Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI) keeping in view the business programme and capital requirement," as per the Budget documents presented in Parliament last month.

For the current fiscal as well, the government has earmarked Rs 200 crore capital infusion for IFCI, as per the Revised Estimate.

Established in 1948 as a statutory corporation, IFCI currently has

subsidiaries and one associate under its fold.

By the early 1990s, it was recognised that there was need for greater flexibility to respond to the changing financial system. It was also felt that IFCI should directly access the capital markets for its funding needs.

It is with this objective that the constitution of IFCI was changed in 1993 from a statutory corporation to a company under the Indian Companies Act, 1956.

Subsequently, the name of the company was also changed to 'IFCI Ltd' with effect from October 1999.

However in 2015, the government again raised its stake in the firm to over 51 per cent, making it a public sector company.

For the third quarter ended December 2019, IFCI reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 335.38 crore as against a net loss of Rs 31.66 crore in October-December period of the previous fiscal.

Maha Speaker supports demand for caste-based Census

JALNA (MAHA), MAR 1 (PTI): Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Nana Patole on Sunday said he would support the demand of OBC leaders to boycott the exercise to conduct the General Census 2021 if a caste-based enumeration is not allowed.

Speaking at an event here, the Speaker said leaders cutting across the party lines had demanded that a delegation be sent to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for allowing the caste-based Census to find the population of people from Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

"OBC leaders have decided that if the caste Census is not conducted they would boycott the General Census (exercise) and I would support them."

"If a government does not follow the norms of the Constitution, then

an individual has the freedom to boycott (any exercise mandated by the government). We will follow the mantra of Mahatma Gandhi," he said.

Patole said since the prime minister belongs to a backward community (OBC) he should understand the pains of the people. The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on January 8 unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre for a caste-based Census to find out the population of OBCs across the country.

The resolution was moved suo moto ("on its own") by the Speaker.

Referring to that resolution, Patole said the state government can examine if a separate Census exercise can be undertaken in Maharashtra like the demands made in Tamil Nadu and Bihar. Patole also said a "right" decision would be taken on the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) in the state legislature which is currently in session.

Polish student asked to leave India after attending anti-CAA rally

KOLKATA, MAR 1 (PTI): A Polish student of Jadavpur University has been asked by the Foreigner Regional Registration Office (FRRO) to leave the country after he participated in an anti-CAA rally in the West Bengal capital, varsity sources said on Sunday.

The incident comes close on the heels of a Bangladeshi student of Visva Bharati University being issued a similar directive by the FRRO after she posted photographs of an anti-CAA demonstration, held on the campus, on social media.

A JU source told PTI that Kamil Siedcynski, a Polish student of Comparative Literature, was asked by the FRRO to visit its Kolkata office, which he did on February 22.

"Siedcynski was served a notice by the FRRO asking him to leave the country within a fortnight on receipt of the



notice for alleged conduct deemed inappropriate for a foreign national staying in India on a student visa," the source said.

The JU source said several teachers and Left-leaning students of the varsity were of the view that Siedcynski was

paying the price for attending an anti-CAA rally at Moulali area in the city in December last year where he was interviewed by a Bengali daily and a brief report on him was published the next day.

"Some people probably forwarded a copy

of the report to the FRRO. Siedcynski has no political leanings but his enthusiasm to attend the protest rally and click photographs landed him in trouble," the source said.

Siedcynski, who was supposed to write his third-semester examina-

tions this year, could not be contacted.

JU vice-chancellor Suranjan Das and Registrar Snehamanju Basu also did not take calls.

The Polish student had earlier studied Bengali at the Visva Bharati University.

Recently Afsara Anika Meem, a first-year Bangladeshi undergraduate student in the Fine Arts department of the Visva-Bharati University was served an FRRO notice for reportedly engaging in "anti-government" activities.

Both the foreign nationals have requested the FRRO to reconsider its decision and promised not to get involved in any such protests in the future, sources said.

The FRRO, in turn, has said that a final decision will be taken in Delhi, the source said quoting the two students.

BJP office-bearer wants Ghazipur to be made Gaadhipuri

LUCKNOW, MAR 1 (PTI): An office-bearer of the Uttar Pradesh unit of BJP has sought to change the name of Ghazipur district (in eastern UP) to Gaadhipuri.

UP BJP media co-convenor Navin Srivastava recently submitted a letter in this regard to the state's Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya.

Speaking to PTI, Srivastava said, "In ancient times, Gaadhipuri was the capital of King Gaadhi, the father of Maharshi Vishwamitra. Gaadhipuri had a glorious past. Later, the name of the city was changed after Ghazi - one of the commanders of Muslim invader Muhammad bin Tuglaq."

"I have been making efforts to restore the ancient glory of this place. In this context, I met UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya



and had submitted to him a letter in this regard," he added.

Srivastava also claimed that whenever any senior BJP leader comes to Ghazipur, party workers welcome them saying 'Raja Gaadhi ki nagri mein aapkaa swagat hai (King Gaadhi's city welcomes you)'.

According to the official website of the district administration of Ghazipur, it states that the word Ghazipur does not figure in ancient Indian history but according to some historians King Gaadhi was from this place.

The website further states that during ancient times, the place

was covered with dense forests and many ashrams were situated including Yamdagni (father of Parasuram) Ashram, Parasuram Ashram, Madan Van, etc.

Chinese traveller Huan Tsang mentions this locality as Chanchu meaning the soil of battlefields which is

signified by many important battles fought here, the website stated.

Reacting to the move made by the BJP office-bearer, convenor of UP Congress (media department) Lalan Kumar told PTI, "The Yogi Adityanath government is going to complete three years in office later this month. They have not done any work and hence draw solace by changing names of various places."

"The real problems of the youth, students, farmers are being conveniently ignored. The public of the state is watching all these very carefully and will give an appropriate answer in 2022," he added.

Adityanath has been an unsuccessful chief minister and BJP is always engaged in diverting people's attention from real issues, Kumar added.

Cong, CPI(M) stage rallies in Kolkata against Shah visit

KOLKATA, MAR 1 (PTI): Opposition parties of West Bengal, the Congress and the CPI(M), took out rallies in different parts of Kolkata in protest against the one-day visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to the city on Sunday.

As Shah arrived in the city in the morning, hundreds of Left and Congress protesters, carrying black flags and anti-CAA posters, demonstrated outside the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport and raised 'go back' slogans.

Later in the day, a minor scuffle broke out between police personnel and protesters in Esplanade area when agitators tried to break the barricade and enter Shahid Minar Ground where Shah is scheduled to hold a rally, a senior police officer said.

"Though nobody was arrested in the incident,

police will act strictly if the situation goes out of control," he said.

CPI(M) Legislature Party leader Sujan Chakraborty led a large rally in Santoshpur in south Kolkata while Congress activists took out a protest march from Beckbagan to Park Circus and burnt an effigy of the Union home minister.

CPI(M)-affiliated SFI and DYFI also took out rallies in Shyambazar, Gariahat, Behala, Kaikhali and Entally areas.

"Kolkata had shouted 'go back' slogans during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the city in January. We will not allow Shah to hold a rally here. He (Shah) is not welcome here. Hands of both these leaders are soaked in the blood of people killed in Gujarat riots. The Union home minister is equally responsible for the violence in Delhi," Chakraborty said.

The CPI(M) leader hit

out at the West Bengal government for granting permission for Shah's rally.

"The understanding between the Modi and the Mamata governments is the reason why permission was granted to hold a rally even when class 12 board examinations are around and blaring of loudspeakers is prohibited. This is a courtesy of the state government to Shah," Chakraborty said. At Shah's rally, state BJP leaders will felicitate him for the passage of the amended citizenship law in Parliament. BJP national president J P Nadda will also attend the public meeting.

"We have taken all forms of precautionary measures to counter any untoward incident during the Union home minister's visit to the city. Additional personnel have been deployed at all crucial points," a senior officer of Kolkata Police said.

Unsealing of Vatican archives will finally reveal truth about 'Hitler's pope'

HARRIET SHERWOOD Rome, 01 Mar [theGuardian]: New light will be shed on one of the most controversial periods of Vatican history on Monday when the archives on Pope Pius XII – accused by critics of being a Nazi sympathiser – are unsealed.

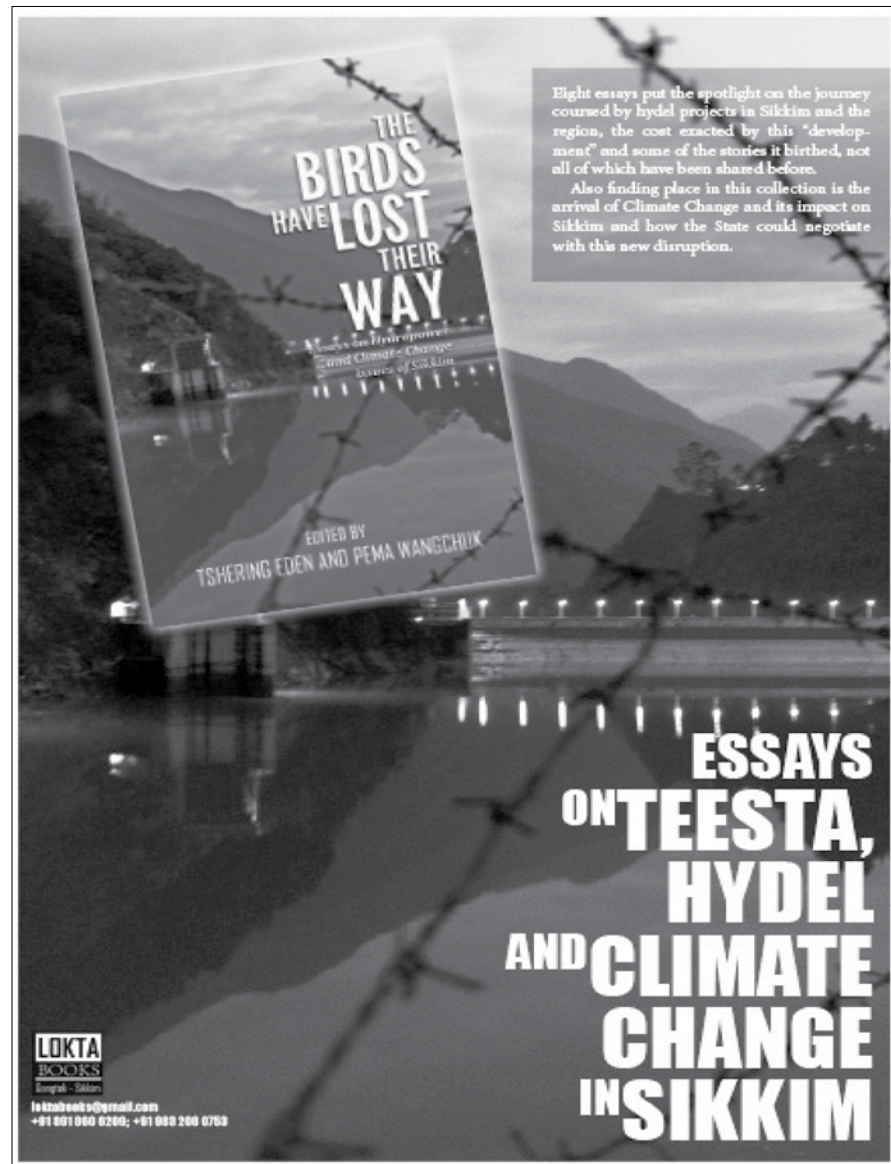
A year after Pope Francis announced the move, saying "the church isn't afraid of history", the documents from Pius XII's papacy, which began in 1939 on the brink of the second world war and ended in 1958, will be opened, initially to a small number of scholars.

Critics of Pius XII have accused him of remaining silent during the Holocaust, never publicly condemning the persecution and genocide of Jews and others. His defenders say that he quietly encouraged convents and other Catholic institutions to hide thousands of Jews, and that public criticism of the Nazis would have risked the lives of priests and nuns.

"The opening of the archives is decisive for the contemporary history of the church and the world," said Cardinal José Tolentino Calaza de Mendonça, the Vatican's archivist and librarian last week.

Bishop Sergio Pagano, the prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Archive, said scholars would have to make a "historical judgment". He added: "The good [that Pius did] was so great that it will dwarf the few shadows." Evaluating the millions of pages in the archives would take several years, he said.

More than 150 people have applied to access the archives, although only 60 can be accommodated in the offices at one time. Among the first to view the documents will be representatives of the Jewish community in Rome, and scholars from Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



Jürgen Klopp regards Watford loss as ‘rather positive’ for Liverpool

SACHIN NAKRANI
WATFORD, 01 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: Jürgen Klopp insisted Liverpool will “go again” after suffering their first Premier League defeat of the season at the hands of Watford, and went on to insist that it could actually prove a positive for his players as it frees them of the burden of attempting to win the title with an unbeaten record.

Liverpool arrived at Vicarage Road on the back of a run of 44 games unbeaten in the league, the last 18 of which were victories. A 19th here would have set a top-flight record and seemed a certainty given they were facing opponents who sat in the relegation zone at kick-off, having not won any of their last five league games. But instead Nigel Pearson’s men recorded a resounding and fully deserved victory, scoring all of their three goals in the second half, with Ismaila Sarr their undoubted star. The Senegal winger, making his first start in over a month having been sidelined with a hamstring injury, scored the hosts’ opening two goals before assisting Troy Deeney for the third.

“The most important thing is congratulations to Watford, well deserved,” said Klopp. “The first half there were football things that didn’t work out for us and overall we didn’t create enough and that’s what leads to a defeat. But it’s just one football game and we have to admit that Watford was the better team.”

Asked if he cared that Liverpool could no longer emulate Arsenal’s Invincibles of 2004, or indeed match or better their 49-game unbeaten run in the league, Klopp

said: “Not really, because I don’t think you can break records because you want to break records. You break records because you are 100% focused on each step.

“It was clear that at some time we would lose a game. We didn’t wait for it but it was clear that it would happen. Tonight it happened. I see it rather positive. Because from now on we can play free football again. We don’t have to defend or try to get the record we just can try to win football games again.”

Liverpool, who produced only one shot on target and defensively were poor, are still well on course to win the title given they sit 22 points clear of Manchester City – albeit having played a game more – and require only 12 points from their last 10 fixtures to be crowned champions for the first time since 1990. Their next league game is at home to Bournemouth on Saturday, while they visit Chelsea in the FA Cup on Tuesday.

For Watford, the priority is avoiding relegation and they will feel that is more than possible after this win, not only because of who it came against but also because it lifts them out of the bottom three, albeit on goal difference.

“To beat the best club side in the world is testament to how we played,” said Pearson, for whom the only negative of this game was the knee injury sustained in the first half by Gerard Deulofeu, which required him to go to hospital and is likely to keep him out of action for some time. “It’s very satisfying but it’s just one game. We’ve got 10 games left and we have got to try to emulate what we have done today in terms of performance.”

Nice to see Virat making errors under pressure, says Trent Boult

CHRISTCHURCH, MAR 1 (PTI): Forcing a world class batsman like Virat Kohli make errors after piling pressure on him was extremely satisfying, senior New Zealand pacer Trent Boult said on Sunday after his side took control of the second Test here.

Boult had figures of 3 for 12 as India were reduced to 90 for six in their second innings for an overall lead of 97 runs at the end of the second day.

The hosts have successfully kept the dangerous Kohli quiet throughout the Test series, as the India skipper failed to reach even 20 runs in the four completed innings.

“He (Kohli) is one of the best players in the world, no doubt about that,” Boult said, when asked about the secret of keeping Kohli under check.

He said his team’s strategy was to put pressure on Kohli by limiting the boundary balls.

“Obviously, he is a big player for them and we just tried to put enough pressure on him, keep him quiet and soak up those boundary balls, and it was nice to see him make a few errors. We were lucky to get two that lined up and hit him on the pads

nicely and it was a good feeling to see the back of him.”

Boult also seemed sympathetic with the Indian batting line-up’s woes against moving deliveries.

“Probably, they are used to playing on low and slow pitches in India and it took time for them to get adjusted. Just like if I bowl in India, it will be foreign conditions for me,” Boult said.

The 30-year-old said that conditions were favourable for seam bowling and he didn’t mind that the ball moved around through and through, which resulted in 16 wickets falling on the second day.

“Sixteen wickets, I am not sure if that’s up there with a record in Test cricket in terms of day two but the bowlers obviously pitched the ball up nicely and got rewards. Seeing the ball move around like it did, I feel we are in a decent position,” he said.

He said it augurs well for the team that the entire bowling department was contributing.

“We are all enjoying hunting out there as a pack, getting the ball to move around. I think the bowling unit is very clear about how they are trying to target the opposition.

Real Madrid embattled before clásico but Barcelona are barely better

SID LOWE
LONDON, 01 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: The Manchester City fans high in the north-east stand of the Bernabéu who belted out Blue Moon weren’t the only ones who had enjoyed watching Real Madrid lose on Wednesday night. For Barcelona supporters, any defeat for their rivals is to be celebrated and all the more so if it is inflicted by Pep Guardiola, but this carried still greater significance, bringing a surge of hope. As City fans sang in the stadium, 370 miles away Sport prepared its front page. The picture showed the manager pointing, by the headline: “Pep, you show us the way.”

Four days later Barcelona follow City into the same arena seeking the same outcome. From Guardiola to Lionel Messi, it is the stuff of nightmares for Madrid. Their vulnerability suddenly exposed, there were lessons for others to learn. Sport hoped so, certainly, and was not alone. Below the City fans, sitting in a glass-fronted box was Quique Setién and the Barcelona manager’s assistant, Eder Sarabia, working towards their first clásico.

At the end they headed to their hotel. A few kilometres north up the Castellana, the hotel stands where Madrid’s former training ground once did and towers over the city. It is where Barcelona stay; it is also where City stayed. Setién and Guardiola do not only share a footballing



philosophy. In the late summer, Setién spent time in the UK and visited Guardiola, attending the Etihad for the draw with Spurs in August. Late on Wednesday they shared a glass of wine and a long conversation. Setién and Sarabia flew back the next afternoon, armed with additional insight on their opponents.

There is much to analyse, not least what has happened to Madrid over the last month. They have won one of their last five games. They were knocked out of the Copa del Rey by Real Sociedad, conceding four at the Bernabéu, while a draw against Celta and a defeat at Levante last weekend produced a five-point swing in seven days and let Barcelona go two points clear. After defeat at Levante Zinedine Zidane said: “Our season is at stake this week” – first City, then Barcelona. It was a time for “tíos”, Sergio Ramos said: blokes, real men. Madrid had to “thump a fist on the desk”.

Birhanu wins for second year running at virus-hit Tokyo marathon

TOKYO, MAR 1 (AFP): Birhanu Legese of Ethiopia won the virus-hit Tokyo marathon reduced from a mass participation event of 38,000 runners to just elite athletes on Sunday because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The race, which doubled up as an trial for Japanese athletes hoping to run in their home Tokyo Olympics later this year, was limited to 200 participants including wheelchair racers.

Legese won his second successive Tokyo marathon in 2hr 4min 15sec with Lonah Chemtai Salpeter of Israel winning the women’s event in 2:17.45.

The Tokyo marathon is one of the biggest sporting events to be affected by the coronavirus in Japan, with the Olympic Games opening ceremony less than five months away.

Last week, the International Tennis Federation said Japan’s home Davis Cup tie against Ecuador in Miki next weekend will be played behind closed doors.

The Japanese Football Association has

postponed all top-flight J-League matches until March 15.

The International Olympic Committee said last week it was “fully committed” to holding the 2020 Games in Tokyo as planned, despite the widening new coronavirus outbreak.

The viral outbreak across Japan and dozens of other countries has fuelled concerns about the Summer Games, which open on July 24, after sports events were postponed or cancelled.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stepped up national measures to contain the virus, calling on organisers of large events to consider cancelling or delaying them.

Disruption caused by the virus has affected Olympic qualifying in several sports, including football, boxing, badminton, handball and wrestling and sailing.

Tokyo’s Olympic organisers have repeatedly said they are focused on holding a safe Olympics and Paralympics with the IOC’s full backing.

“The hour of truth has come,” Ramos added, but the truth hurt. With Setién watching, City beat them, the first part of the season at stake slipping away. Guardiola, whistled throughout, won at the Bernabéu for the sixth time. And now comes Messi. “If football was a religion, Messi would be our God,” Martin Braithwaite, the emergency signing from Leganés, said. For Madrid the Argentinian is the antichrist, the player who has done them more damage than anyone else ever.

At a time such as this, too. The memory of this time last season already lingered; now it is on their minds even more. A year ago Madrid lost it all in eight Bernabéu days, their season over three months early: knocked out of the cup by Barcelona and the Champions League by Ajax, they lost the clásico 1-0, extinguishing any hope in the league. It was a significant exaggeration when Marca called memories of that a “psychosis” on

Monday; it was less of one by Thursday.

The solidity and reliability that had defined Madrid, unbeaten in 15 league games until going to Levante, gave way to a vulnerability that is even more of a problem considering how few goals they are scoring: Karim Benzema has two in 13 games, Gareth Bale has three in 25, Luka Jovic two in 23, Vinicius three in 37. Eden Hazard, injured against Levante, will miss two months. On the same day Messi scored four and Barcelona fans discovered that Braithwaite might be useful after all.

Barcelona have scored 16 goals more in the league alone. The Bernabéu, where Jorge Valdano said opponents routinely suffered “strange fright”, is now a place where Ramos admits “the lack of tranquillity the fans have reaches players too”. Madrid have won only nine of 17 home games this season.

Nor is it only this season. Barcelona have

won their last four league visits, eight of their last 11 trips in all competitions. That run includes a 6-2, a 2-0, a 3-0, a 3-1 and a 4-0. Add another defeat and Madrid would be five points behind, plus the head-to-head record, with 12 games to go. As for Setién, this may be his first clásico but he has been to the Bernabéu three times and not lost, winning his last two visits with Betis.

All of this is being remembered now, thrown into the mental mix. Barcelona are presented with an opportunity to deliver a potentially decisive blow. Madrid are presented with an obligation, Marca calling this is a clásico “with no safety net”. Madrid cannot lose, just as they could not lose on Wednesday. “After a hard night I see two options: we can think about yesterday’s defeat or work towards tomorrow’s victory,” Ramos wrote on social media. “I chose the latter. Head and heart immersed in the clásico as of now.”

“White panic,” cheered the cover of El Mundo Deportivo. “Panic at the white house,” declared Sport, gleefully. Pride before a fall is a lesson they stubbornly refuse to learn and that euphoria had not been there the day before. City’s win brought a wave of optimism not provided by Barcelona’s own performance, a 1-1 draw at Napoli. The leaders, too, have their problems, more even than their rivals. It is not as

if they are reliable, still adapting to new methods having sacked a coach mid-season for the first time in 17 years.

These are old teams – a dozen over-30s between them – and at Barcelona the division between board and squad runs deep, the institutional crisis, too. “The team has propped up the club,” Gerard Piqué said. Doing so now is harder than ever. Piqué will play despite an ankle problem but Jordi Alba, Sergi Roberto, Luis Suárez and Ousmane Dembélé are out, leaving Barcelona with 16 first-team footballers; in the second leg against Napoli, it will be 13. “That’s the planning, unfortunately,” Sergio Busquets said, pointedly.

Messi admitted that at the moment Barcelona are not good enough to win the Champions League, where they have won two of their last 10 knockout games away. Wednesday posed the question of whether Madrid are either. For now the issue is more immediate: are they good enough to win the clásico? If “good” is the word. This is supposed to be the greatest game there is but neither team seems to fit that bill now. On Thursday night two radio shows ran the same debate. Not: “Who comes into the clásico in the better shape?” but “Who comes into the clásico in the worse shape?” Sunday’s meeting, Valdano suggested, is like a race between two injured men limping towards the finish line.

Djokovic eyes new win streak after capturing 79th career title

DUBAI, MAR 1 (AFP): Novak Djokovic set his sights on another marathon run of invincibility after capturing his 79th career title.

The world number one claimed the Dubai Championships for the fifth time, defeating Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-3, 6-4 in the final on Saturday.

Djokovic is now on an 18-0 winning run this season, and 21-0 overall since late 2019, as he ended an eight-match win streak for his Greek opponent, champion last weekend in Marseille.

Djokovic claimed his third trophy of 2020 after helping Serbia to the ATP Cup and winning an eighth Australian Open.

It is the seventh time that the 32-year-old Djokovic has won more than 20 matches on the trot.

His record is 43 set in 2010 and 2011 with a run of 28 his next best, achieved on two occasions in 2013-14 and 2015.

“This has been one of the best starts of all seasons I’ve had. I feel great on the court,” said Djokovic.

“I’m just grateful that I’m playing well, feeling well. I’ve won many matches now in a row. I’ll try to keep that run going.”

Next up for Djokovic will be the season’s first Masters events, back-to-back hard court assignments at Indian Wells and Miami.

After that will be



European clay and an eventual assault on a second French Open title and 18th major.

“Motivation is never lacking. Of course, I get inspired by the goals that I set. That’s why I compete.

“The season has started in a most perfect way possible. I am aware of the fact that most of the matches that I’m going to play, the players will not have much to lose.

“They will go out and try stop the streak.” Saturday’s victory, achieved in less than 90 minutes, also saw the Serbian awarded a “golden visa” by the UAE government.

The honour bestows a decade of residency in the tax-free emirate.

“Dubai has been a very important city in my career not just because of the tournament but because I’ve been actually coming as a tourist here and using this as a base for pre-season training,” he said.

- ‘DON’T FEEL MUCH’ -

Tsitsipas lost his second straight final in Dubai after going down to Roger Federer a year ago.

“It was close in both sets,” added Djokovic. “A few points decided it. I’m most proud of my consistency this week, especially on shots from the baseline.”

The top seed produced a straightforward win after a close-call semi-final where he saved three match points against Gael Monfils.

“I was just a point from going out, I might not have been here,” the winner said. “But it shows how quickly things can turn.”

Djokovic broke for 5-3 in the opening set and served it out moments later.

The second set was slightly tighter, with the Serbian losing a break as Tsitsipas levelled at 3-all.

But Djokovic came through again with a

break for 5-4 as his opponent hit the net.

A game later, Djokovic was lifting another trophy as he found the corner with a winner.

Djokovic will stay number one in the ATP rankings on Monday to start a 280th week atop the table.

He was playing the final in Dubai for a sixth time in 11 appearances. It was, however, his first final at the tournament since 2015 when he lost to Federer.

Coming into the championship match, the 21-year-old Tsitsipas had lost just one set this week.

“It (defeat) happened again (in a final here),” said Tsitsipas, the winner of the ATP Finals in November. “But it’s all a learning experience.

“It’s been a tiring week, that’s all I can say. I don’t really feel much honestly. I felt happier last year when I made the finals. But I’m proud of myself because I showed good discipline.

Slovakia election: seismic shift as public anger ousts Smer-SD party

BRATISLAVA, 01 MAR [AFP]: Slovak voters have handed a resounding victory to the centre-right, anti-graft OLaNO opposition party in an election dominated by an angry backlash over the 2018 murder of a journalist investigating corruption in the eurozone state.

Having vowed to immediately push through anti-corruption measures should he win office, the OLaNO party leader, Igor Matovic, galvanised voter outrage over the murder of Jan Kuciak and his fiancée and the high-level graft their deaths exposed.

“We will try to create the best government Slovakia has ever had, with the help of the other leaders of the democratic opposition,” Matovic told journalists as he claimed victory after the exit poll results were announced for Saturday’s general election.

“It was the death of Jan Kuciak and Martina Kusnirova that woke up Slovakia,” he added.

Outgoing prime minister Peter Pellegrini conceded defeat as partial official results showed OLaNO outpacing his populist-left Smer-SD by six percentage points. Smer-SD has won big in every election since 2006, and in 2016 it claimed 28.3% of the vote.

“Congratulations to the election winner, good health, good luck,” Pellegrini told Matovic, adding: “He has good marketing, but we will be interested in how he will handle his office.”

OLaNO took 24.87% of the vote ahead of 18.73% for Smer-SD party, while the conservative We Are Family scored 8.34%, the liberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) won 5.67% and the fellow liberal “For the People” of ex-president Andrej Kiska mustered 5.43% of the vote, according to returns from 82.76% of polling stations. The result suggests Smer-SD lacks obvious coalition partners, as it has ruled out teaming up with the far-right Our Slovakia LSNS party, which scored 8.27% support.

When asked by journalists about a possible coalition with OLaNO, Pellegrini quipped “never say never”.

“But you have to put this question to Igor Matovic whether he would be willing to do so or not,” he added.

Matovic told reporters that he had agreed via telephone to meet with president Zuzana Čaputová on “Monday or Tuesday” and that he would begin talks with leaders of other opposition parties that make it into parliament on Sunday.

Analysts have indicated that OLaNO will have the option of considering several opposition parties for a coalition.

“There is a chance that this new government will last until the end of its term,” said Slovakia analyst Tomáš Koziak, the rector of the University of Political Sciences based in Kutná Hora, Czech Republic.

“These parties have been in opposition for a very long time, therefore

Peace, but not at our cost: Afghan women fear Taliban return

KABUL, MAR 1 (AFP): As US troops prepare to leave Afghanistan, opening the door for a potential Taliban comeback, women across the war-torn country are nervous about losing their hard-won freedoms in the pursuit of peace.

The militants were in power for around five years until the US invasion of 2001. They ruled Afghanistan with an iron fist that turned women into virtual prisoners under a strict interpretation of sharia law.

The Taliban’s fall transformed women’s lives, much more so in urban areas like Kabul than in conservative rural Afghanistan.

But across the country, women remain wary of the insurgents, desperate to see an end to the violence, but fearful of paying a heavy price.

Under the Taliban, women were barred from seeking education or work -- rights that Afghan female professionals are fiercely protective of today.

In the western city of Herat, saleswoman Setara Akrimi, 32, told AFP: “I will be very happy if peace comes and the Taliban stop killing our people.” “But if the

Taliban come back to power... with their old mentality, it is a matter



of concern for me,” the divorced mother of three added.

“If they tell me to sit at home, I will not be able to support my family,” she said.

“There are thousands of women like me in Afghanistan, we are all worried.”

Akrimi’s anxieties are echoed by Kabul-based veterinarian Tahera Rezai, who believes “the arrival of the Taliban will affect women’s right to work, freedom and independence”.

“There has been no change in their mentality,” the 30-year-old told AFP.

Passionate about her career, Rezai said she was pessimistic about her prospects if the insurgents return to government, even in a truncated capacity.

“Looking at their history, I feel less hopeful... I

believe the situation will get harder for working women like me,” she said.

In the run-up to the US deal, the militants made a vague commitment to respect women’s rights in line with “Islamic values”, prompting warnings from activists that the pledge was mere lip service and open to broad interpretation.

The Taliban control large swathes of Afghanistan and while they now allow girls to attend primary school in some areas, occasional reports of floggings and even the public stoning of women persist, fuelling fears they will turn back the clock if they return to power.

Many ordinary Afghans are struggling to balance their desire for peace with their dread of the insurgents.

“Every family here is grieving because they

eration has changed, and will not allow the Taliban to enforce their old ideology upon us.”

For those who bore the brunt of the insurgents’ merciless rule, however, there is little doubt that a Taliban comeback will bring anything other than a repeat of “dark and painful memories”.

Factory worker Uzra, from the mainly Shiite Hazara ethnic minority, sobbed as she recounted life as a young mother, alone at home with her children when the Sunni-fundamentalist Taliban arrived in her village.

“I still vividly remember the day... They massacred all the men, and then came to my house,” the 40-year-old said, too frightened to give her full name.

The militants threatened to behead her then three-year-old daughter, she told AFP from her home in central Bamiyan province.

The family survived and fled to Pakistan, but her husband was disabled and traumatised by the brutal beatings he suffered.

“To this day, when the word ‘Taliban’ comes up, he starts crying,” she said.

“Everybody wants peace, but not if the Taliban returns. I don’t want this so-called peace.”

Coronavirus time bomb: America’s uninsured and brutal work culture

WASHINGTON, MAR 1 (AFP): Like many Americans, bartender Danjale Williams is worried about the growing threat of the novel coronavirus. What makes the 22-year-old in Washington even more frightened: The thought of medical bills she just can’t afford, as one of almost 27.5 million people in the United States who don’t have health insurance.

“I definitely would second guess before going to the doctor, because the doctor’s bill is crazy,” she said. “If it did come down to that, I don’t have enough savings to keep me healthy.” As the virus begins spreading in the west of the country, where the first death was reported Saturday, public health experts warned the US has several characteristics unique among wealthy nations that make it vulnerable.

These include a large and growing population without medical insurance, the 11 million or so undocumented migrants afraid to come into contact with authorities, and

a culture of “powering through” when sick for fear of losing one’s job.

“These are all things that can perpetuate the spread of a virus,” said Brandon Brown, an epidemiologist at UC Riverside.

The number of Americans without health insurance began falling from a high of 46.7 million in 2010 following the passage of Obamacare (the Affordable Care Act), but has risen again over the past two years.

The current figure is about 8.5 percent of the population.

Public health experts often worry about the destructive potential of a pandemic in poorer parts of the world like sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia.

These poverty-plagued regions have hospitals that are ill-equipped to stop the spread of infectious diseases, or to adequately care for patients needing breathing assistance, which the most severe cases of COVID-19 require.

By contrast, the US has some of the world’s best hospitals and medical staff, but those not lucky enough to have good insurance through their employer, and not poor enough to qualify for state insurance, often opt out of the system entirely.

A routine doctor’s visit can run into hundreds of dollars for those without coverage.

“I think that it’s possible if this has the sustained spread, that might highlight some of those health care disparities that we already know about and are trying to work on, but haven’t figured out a way to solve,” said Brian Garibaldi, the medical director of Johns Hopkins Hospital’s bio-containment unit.

That’s not to say uninsured people have no recourse if they fall seriously ill.

US law requires that people who are truly sick get the care they need, regardless of ability to pay.

Abigail Hansmeyer, a Minnesota resident who

along with her husband is uninsured, said that if she did fall ill, “we may seek out the emergency room for treatment.”

But being treated doesn’t mean the visit was free and the uninsured can be lumped with huge bills after.

“So we have to very carefully consider costs in every situation,” the 29-year-old said.

One of the key messages the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has put out about the coronavirus is to stay home if you have mild respiratory symptoms, except to go to the doctor once you have

called in and if they think you need to.

“But a lot of people, depending on their jobs, their position and their privilege, are not able to do that,” said Brown.

The US is alone among advanced countries in not offering any federally mandated paid sick leave.

Though private companies offer an average of eight days per year, only 30 percent of the lowest paid workers are able to earn sick days, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

For many of these people, missing even a day’s work can make a painful financial dent.

Israel in limbo as weary voters go to polls for third time in year

OLIVER HOLMES

JERUSALEM, 01 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: Israelis are due to vote on Monday in the country’s third election in 12 months, with many worried the result will be just as inconclusive as previous rounds, extending a painful political stalemate deep into 2020.

After two failed attempts to form a government, the country has been plunged into limbo, run by an interim administration without powers to pass significant legislation or even a budget.

Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is – once again – facing off against his former army chief of staff, Benny Gantz. Polls still suggest that neither side will have enough seats in Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, to end the crisis. The country may be dragged into yet another months-long election cycle.

While politicians bicker, Israel has remained on autopilot, and the stasis has already affected state-funded projects, not only building roads and classrooms, but also vital charity work.

Lior Finkel Perl, who heads an umbrella organisation for non-profit organisations (NGOs), the Israeli Civic Leadership Association, said the lack of a 2020 budget meant that no new government contracts had been handed out, while ongoing projects were also facing severe delays in getting funds, even cancelling some services due to the unpredictability.

“Basically, what happened is a lot of services that are very important are either being reduced or are being cut,” she said. “You can see it in different organisations that are dealing with important issues: those that are helping people in need; shelters for women who suffer from violence; organisations that are doing extra-curricular activities after school.”

The biggest issue, she said, was that NGOs could not plan ahead as it was not clear when the political crisis would end. “It’s a lost year.”

In one extreme case, 11,000 low-income families across Israel were told at the end of last year that they would stop receiving monthly coupons worth 500 shekels (around £112) for fruit and vegetables and other food, according to Avi Dabush, executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights, an organisation that helps run the project. While Israel’s economy remains strong, there are also growing concerns that if there is no concrete result this time, the country could see a dent in growth, and a larger-than-expected budget deficit could swell.

Professor Avi Weiss, an economist and president of the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, said the simple act of holding election after election also had a downside. Each one costs hundreds of millions of shekels to run, and in Israel, voting days are a national holiday, shutting down production.

“There is really no reason it should be a holiday, especially when you are doing it three times a year,” he said. “It would be nice if this would come to an end at some point.”

Meanwhile, new construction projects have been put on hold. Jewish religious seminaries, or Yeshivas, are also due to run out of money in several months, which could deeply affect the welfare-dependent religious community.

Gideon Rahat, a political science professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and senior fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute, said the repeat elections also presented a more fundamental problem – they were beginning to test the very foundations of the entire Israeli political system. The logic of the parliamentary model, he said, was based on the presumption that politicians would not voluntarily oust themselves after winning a gruelling election. Instead – and as usually happens – enough of them back a candidate, who then becomes prime minister.

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DENIM DUO! Joe Jonas & Sophie Turner, the singer and Game of Thrones actress, step out for smoothies on a sunny afternoon in Los Angeles.

Finn Wolfhard was stalked by 'Stranger Things' fans

THE HAGUE, MAR 1 (PTI): Child star Finn Wolfhard has revealed that he was stalked by "Stranger Things" fans when he was barely 13.

The actor, now 17 years old, who plays Mike Wheeler in the hit Netflix sci-fi drama, recalled being "followed" home by adult fans for a selfie, soon after the first season of the show premiered.

"When I was 13, some adults followed me back to my condo when I was shooting 'It'. 'Stranger Things' had just come out, and I was by myself. As I walked faster, they walked faster, and I was getting a bit antsy by the time I got to the door.

"Suddenly, they were like, 'Hey, dude, can we get a selfie?' And I was like, 'No you can't have a selfie! How about don't follow children?'" Wolfhard told Mastermind magazine.

According to the actor, the stalking wasn't restricted to being followed while on the way home.

"I also had my taxi followed and, out of the taxi, the person continued to be pretty relentless," he added. Wolfhard said he even had to stop performing live with his band, The Aubreys, as people were "getting crushed" thanks to overexcited fans. He was also the frontman for Calpurnia before they split last year.



"I've had to stop shows because people were getting crushed, and Ryan Reynolds almost got injured in Brazil when he went to the barricade. It was lucky that the hundred people who fell over it weren't hurt," he said.

The actor will next be seen in "Ghostbusters: Afterlife".

James Gunn announces wrap on 'The Suicide Squad'

LOS ANGELES, MAR 1 (PTI):

It's a wrap for "The Suicide Squad", writer-director James Gunn has announced.

In an emotional Instagram post, the filmmaker said he shot for the film during a "hard" yet "most fulfilling" time in his personal life.

"And that's a wrap on #TheSuicideSquad," Gunn wrote.

"My father died two weeks before we started filming and my dog died two weeks before the end. It was a hard, hard time in my life and yet the most fulfilling time I've ever had making a movie. The professionalism, talent, compassion and kindness of this cast and crew inspired me every day," he continued.

The filmmaker thanked everyone involved in the film.

"I am grateful from the bottom of my heart for you all. You are why I make movies," he added.

The film will see Margot Robbie return as Harley Quinn, Viola Davis as Squad mastermind Amanda Waller, Jai Courtney as Captain Boomerang, and Joel Kinnaman as Rick Flag.

They will be joined by newcomers Idris Elba, John Cena, Nathan Fillion, Peter Capaldi, David Dastmalchian, Taika Waititi and Pete Davidson.



The project, being branded as a relaunch, will also mark Gunn's reunion with his "Guardian of the Galaxy" stars Michael Rooker and his brother Sean Gunn.

The 2016 original "Suicide Squad", directed by David Ayer and featuring the likes of Will Smith, Robbie and Davis, was met with poor reviews but managed to become a global box office hit.

The film will release in August 2021.

Proud to be known for action films: Rohit Shetty

MUMBAI, MAR 1 (PTI): Action-packed films are director Rohit Shetty's forte and the filmmaker says he is proud that his name is synonymous with high-octane stunt-laden movies.

Rohit, son of legendary stuntman-actor M B Shetty, said he always knew action was his calling.

"My father was doing it. My mother and I knew, I will also do it. I started at the age of 16, I am 45 today. Stunts and action have become my identity now. I never thought it would go up to this level.

"I am happy and proud about it. The only thing is even if others are doing action today, people say, it is 'Rohit Shetty' style. That makes me happy and proud," Rohit told PTI in an interview.

The director, best known for actioners such as "Singham" series, "Simmba", and action-comedies like "Golmaal" films, "All The Best: Fun Begins" and "Chennai Express", currently hosts action-adventure show "Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi".

Rohit said the Colors TV reality series, shot in Bulgaria, suits his personality.

"When I do a show like this it looks real as people relate it with me. It works for me as well. I enjoy it and look forward to it. Every year has been great. The action is great. I had explored Bulgaria in 'Dilwale' so I know the team and it became a bit easier to design the stunts this time," he added.

For the director, safety is the top priority while doing stunts.

"There is a lot of calculation that goes into designing a



stunt. You need to be calm and calculative, and that comes with experience. It is very important to be prepared both mentally and physically. We train ourselves physically but mental strength is more important," he said.

On the direction front, Rohit's next directorial venture is the much-awaited "Sooryavanshi", featuring Akshay Kumar and Katrina Kaif.

This is the third film in the filmmaker's cop universe, which will also see Ajay Devgn as Singham and Ranveer Singh as Simmba in special appearances.

"Sooryavanshi" is slated to be released on March 24.

Lady Gaga has 'completely quit' smoking

LOS ANGELES, MAR 1 (PTI): Pop star Lady Gaga has confessed that she has quit smoking and that going off her usual "40 cigarettes" a day was a "brutal" experience.

The singer, who was in conversation with Zane Lowe for Apple Music's New Music Daily, appealed to her fans to steer clear of smoking as she believes quitting was worse.

"I'm not smoking anymore, but I'd smoke 40 cigarettes all day long. I swear on my life I'm not smoking cigarettes. I completely quit - I quit cold turkey. But it was so hard," Gaga told Lowe.

"If you don't smoke, don't smoke! Because quitting is worse. It is so brutal. And I will never smoke again because I think I saw Jesus for an entire week. It was so awful," she added.

Last week, Gaga came out with the first single "Stupid Love", off her highly-anticipated sixth studio album. The release date and title of the LP are yet to be announced.

The Special Reason Jennifer Lopez Says She Isn't in a Rush to Marry Alex Rodriguez

When it comes to being with Alex Rodriguez, Jennifer Lopez is in it for the long haul.

Last March, the retired professional baseball player got down on one knee and proposed to J.Lo in a romantic beach-side setting. Just like that, the two lovebirds were engaged! However, the Hustlers actress recently made it clear that she's not in any "rush" to walk down the aisle.

On Saturday, the 50-year-old icon sat down with Oprah during her 2020 Vision: Your Life in Focus Tour in Los Angeles. During her panel, Lopez opened up about her special relationship with Rodriguez, how she introduced her two kids to him and her not-so-planned out wedding.

When asked if it matters when she marries Alex, J.Lo simply responded, "No, no... it doesn't."

"It's so funny because when we first got engaged I was like, 'Oooo, we're gonna get married in a couple months?!' You're old thinking comes right back, all that hopeless romantic [stuff] that made me get married three times," she shared, laughing.

"He's like, 'Whatever you want to do, we can talk about it. I said, 'But if we're going to be together for the rest of our lives, what is the rush,'" she explained. "If that's what we're really going to do, if we're really going to be partners."

She added, "If we're really going to try to build something together that we both never had or both never felt like we had—which was a family with a husband and a wife, and a mother and a father—and we embrace all of our children and we show them something that we didn't have."

ARIES: Michael Curtiz once said, "The only things you regret are the ones you don't do." Your thoughts exactly, Aries. You may have a bad rep for being impulsive, but you learned early that nothing worth remembering is ever created within the comfort zone. So throw the shoulders and musts out of the window.

Tip: Throw the rulebook out of the window.

TAURUS: There's always more milestones to achieve, Taurus. But how much is too much? Where does one draw the line? Your inner temple is calling for your attention. Put that to-do list away for a second and introspect on what it is that your soul needs to heal from. For some of you, this may be a time of delving deeper into the divine art by yourself or under the guidance of a mentor.

Tip: Prioritise healing.

GEMINI: Gratitude is the process of acknowledging all the good you have received, whether tangible or intangible. But is this just some kind of hippy-dippy practice or does it really have the power to change your reality? If the new-age gurus and the self-help books are to be believed, the practice boosts

positive emotions, improves health, empowers us to deal with adversity, and build stronger relationships. But there's nothing quite like direct experiences, is there?

Tip: Say a prayer of gratitude for a that you have and all that is yet to come.

CANCER: "The psyches and souls of women also have their own cycles and seasons of doing and solitude, running and staying, being involved and being removed, questing and resting, creating and incubating, being of the world and returning to the soul-place." A Clarissa Pinkola Estés to give you perspective on your journey.

Tip: Retreat into your sacred space.

LEO: French essayist Joseph Joubert wrote, "A part of kindness consists of loving people more than they deserve." Everybody is perfectly imperfect. Embracing this truth will bring about a greater degree of acceptance and help you open that sacred space within your heart. Creative visualisation is a good way to boost the process. Envision your heart as a cup that is about to runneth over with love and take this feeling with you

as you go out into the world.

Tip: Love, kindness and compassion.

VIRGO: Some decisions cannot be made by tossing a coin. There is need for clarity before you take appropriate action. But before you clear the mental clutter, take a look at your physical space. Have you been glorifying the mess as 'beautiful' or resisting the process of organising your stuff? Stop using work and social obligations as a means to shun responsibility and take charge

Tip: Clearing the physical clutter could be the key to sudden revelations.

LIBRA: This is the true test of your ability, Libra. You have done so much self-work to reach a higher plane of existence. Giving up now will undo all the effort you have put in. The obstacle here is of your own creation and the only way out is through. Let this be a learn-by-doing situation.

Tip: Rise to the occasion with faith in yourself and the Universe.

SCORPIO: This day isn't so much about taking action as it is about restoring, refuelling and receiving. Get into yin mode, Scor-

pio. Trust that the ideas you are seeking will come to you when you are replenishing your reserves. Connecting with your creative and spiritual side is another way to tap into your divine feminine.

Tip: Yin before you can yang.

SAGITTARIUS: Drama with a capital D! That's what you get for blurring the lines between personal and professional. If there's anything this phase of your life is teaching you, it's the importance of setting boundaries. Know where to place your trust, Sagittarius. Not everybody is playing for Team Nice. A good way to ground your energy is spending time outdoors. What are the activities that replenish you?

Tip: Know where to place your trust.

CAPRICORN: This is a time to regroup and reevaluate the game plan. Instead of playing blame, discover the blind spots and take corrective measures. You are the leader here, and only you can challenge the pessimism of your coworkers. When you act from a space of higher wisdom, they will be inspired to do the same. Some of you may

be stepping into bigger shoes, which can be exciting and intimidating all the same.

Tip: Act from a space of higher wisdom.

AQUARIUS: Sternberg's triarchic theory talks about three types of intelligence: practical, creative, and analytical. What you're being asked to tap into is the first kind: the ability to deal with real world environments in a resourceful manner. Aquarius, you're known to be quite the hustler, so the challenges you're faced with shouldn't intimidate you at all. PS: We're counting on you.

Tip: You are more resourceful than you give yourself credit for.

PISCES: Being at odds with the world just because things have not been so great personally will prove to be counterproductive, Pisces. Your power word for the day: reconciliation. Let bygones be bygones as you focus on building stronger and deeper connections with the crew. All of you want the same things, and as long as you focus on that, everything else will become background noise.

Tip: Focus on the highest goals.