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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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**MYM  
breakfasts  
with the  
children of  
Bhimbar  
Snehashram**

**SUMMIT REPORT  
SILIGURI, 09 AUG:**  
Marwari Yuva Manch [MYM] Siliguri branch had breakfast with the children of Bhimbar Snehashram (Ashram of visually handicapped children) and spent a lot of time with them today. Branch President Yuva Manoj Agarwal said that the corona virus has put the whole world in trouble. In such a situation, along with the government, various organizations are also engaged in human service so that they can come out of the problem by uniting in this calamity. Branch Secretary Yuva Ashu Agarwal informed that Siliguri branch presented new clothes, sanitizers, masks, hand wash to the children of the ashram as per the daily requirement, to protect them from Covid. Program coordinator Yuva Kishan Mundra thanked all the children of Snehashram as well as Yuva Sovit Agarwal, Pranay Goyal, Adarsh Kandoi, Nishant Agarwal, Amit Goyal, Gitesh Jindal, Former president, Pawan Agarwal and senior member Rajesh Agarwal.

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## CM meets IT minister, requests increase in internet bandwidth and electronic services in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 AUG:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang today urged the Minister for Communications, Railways, Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnav, for increasing internet bandwidth in Sikkim and strengthening of electronic services at the block and village level in Sikkim as a step towards the government-at-the-doorstep initiative and "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas" vision of the Indian government. He said that this will be beneficial to Sikkim since it is prone to landslides, especially during the monsoon season where road connectivity often gets disrupted, adversely affecting public services.

The CM made the request when he called on the Union Minister today at his office in Rail Bhawan, New Delhi, a press release informs.

The CM extended his best



wishes to the Union Minister on being appointed as the Minister in charge of Communications, Railways, Electronics and Information Technology and wished him a success-

ful tenure.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister stated that Sikkim has benefited immensely from the support received via the flagship schemes of Digi-

tal India Initiative through the Ministry.

Further, he added that National Informatics Centre (NIC), Sikkim state unit has provided continuous support

in implementing all the Mission Mode and other e-Governance projects. Likewise, he stated that NIC has been crucial in maintaining a host of digital teaching and learning processes, online meetings from various districts, coordination of health services along with the other state services.

The CM also informed the Union Minister about the latest Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2019-2020 where Sikkim has performed relatively better than any other state. However, he added that there is an urgent need for easy availability of bandwidth and internet connections in the state, therefore he requested for the increase of bandwidth from the existing 10 Mbps to 1 Gbps and also for an independent and full-fledged BSNL circle for Sikkim.

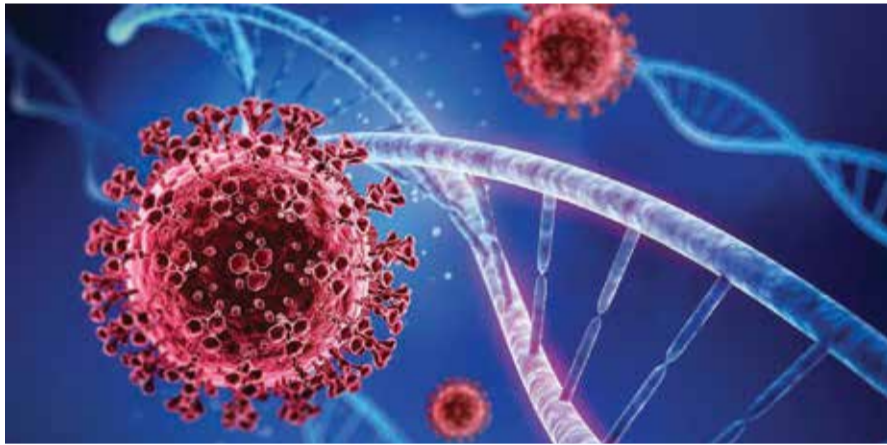
The Chief Minister expressed his gratitude for the

approval to establish a Special Economic Zone in the Information Technology Sector for which land has already been identified. Further, he also requested for expediting the process of establishment of NIC-Block Centre with NICNET backbone managed by permanent NIC technical manpower at each Block headquarter in Sikkim.

The Union Minister assured to provide and implement an independent BSNL circle for Sikkim by 31st August and also agreed to the request of the Chief Minister to construct the railway station based on Sikkimese design. Further, he asked the Chief Minister to contact him personally in case of any issues.

Ministers BS Panth, Dr MK Sharma, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling and Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal were also present during the meeting.

## Two days without Covid deaths and four with more recoveries than new cases in Sikkim



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 AUG:**

12 and 14 July Sikkim went a second consecutive day without any Covid deaths today and the toll held at 355. The last time that Sikkim had gone 48 hours without any deaths was on 13 and 14 July, nearly a month back. Significantly, the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released

by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department at 8AM this morning also informs that Sikkim has now gone four straight days with more number of recoveries than new cases.

A total of 225 formerly Covid-positive people made full recoveries and were discharged from home and facility isolation on Sunday. Sikkim's

count of recovered cases has further improved to 24,544

In comparison, only 48 new cases were detected from the testing of 698 samples on Sunday, giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 6.9%, its lowest in a long while. The number of new cases usually come in lower on Mondays since the labs work on reduced loads

on Sundays. That said, nearly 700 samples were still screened and the positivity rate still came in reassuringly low.

While a total of 27 new cases were reported in RT-PCR testing of 465, another 21 were found positive in rapid antigen testing of 231 samples.

Of the 48 new cases in the State, 27 were registered in East District, eight in West District and 13 in South District.

There were only eight new hospital admissions of COVID patients today and of the 2,731 active Covid cases in the State, only 105 are with symptoms severe enough to require hospitalisation. Nine of the Covid patients are currently admitted in ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

## CM calls on Union Power Minister



**NEW DELHI, 09 AUG [IPR]:** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang called on Union Minister of Power, New & Renewable Energy, Raj Kumar Singh, at his office in Shram Shakti Bhawan today.

The Chief Minister congratulated the Union Power Minister on taking charge of the office and extended his best wishes. He also expressed his gratitude to the Union Power Minister for his guidance and for assisting the Sikkim Power Investment Corporation Limited

[SPICL] by reducing the interest rate which has helped the state government to save a considerable amount payable to Power Finance Corporation (PFC).

He informed him about the power sale agreement signed by other states under its Power Purchase Centre with Power Trading Corporation (PTC) towards procurement of 200 MW and 340 MW capacity from Teesta Urja Limited (TUL) which has not yet materialised.

He mentioned that the Teesta Hydro Project-III has increased its capacity and reduced its interest rate and has shown improvement after the intervention of the Union Power Minister.

The Chief Minister also acknowledged the support provided by the Ministry and its Public Sector Undertaking towards enhancing the power sector in the state. The Chief Minister was accompanied by Ministers BS Pant, Dr MK Sharma, ACS (Finance) and Secretary to the CM.

## PLASTIC FREEDOM CHALLENGE LAUNCHED Himalayan states discuss eradication of single use plastics

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 AUG:**

Integrated Mountain Initiative and Zero Waste Himalaya organized an online meet of the Himalayan states to discuss eradication of single use plastics and Extended Producer Responsibility in the Himalaya. This was the second such meet of the states, the first one being organized in Gangtok, Sikkim, in May 2018, a press release informs.

The issue of single use plastics has become a grave concern everywhere. Specifically, for the mountain regions that have additional issues of geography and land availability and a high tourist traffic, the deluge of plastics has made waste management into a daunting task for managers. Plastics only flow into the mountains, and with no mechanisms to take them out or manage them sustainably, the waste keeps on accumulating in landfills, hillsides and waterbodies, polluting the fragile ecosystem. In addition there is a dramatic increase in multilayered plastic that is predominantly from food and personal care packaging that have no solutions.



With this backdrop, the online meet brought together Elected Representatives from Urban and Rural Bodies, Government Officials from Swachh Bharat Mission, State Pollution Control Board, Urban Development Department, Forest Department, edu-

cational institutions and others, as well as a host of civil society organisations working in the waste sector to discuss on strategies for eradicating single use plastics. The role that companies need to play for taking care of their waste in the mountains through the Extended Producer Responsibility framework was also an important part of the discussions.

Former Director of the Suchitwa Mission of Kerala, Dr K Vasuki was invited as a key speaker to share her experiences of doing away with single use plastics. She had through her award winning "Green Protocol" successfully carried out the National Games in 2015 in a plastic free manner and her insights on the steps that were needed to be taken were inspiring for all the participants. She also highlighted that the plastic crisis needed to be taken seriously and that it was still not late to act on it.

turn to pg02

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# Agri Minister chairs coordination meet on constituency-wise visit

**GANGTOK, 09 AUG (IPR):** Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services and Information and Public Relations Departments, Lok Nath Sharma, chaired a coordination meeting with the concerned departmental heads and officials at the Conference Hall of Tashiling Secretariat, today, to chalk out a comprehensive plan for the commencement of the constituency-wise visit.

The constituency-wise visit is scheduled to start from Daramdin constituency in West Sikkim on 12 August 2021 followed by Soreng-Chakhung constituency on 13 August 2021.

The Minister in his address said that the State Government has put in all efforts to strengthen the rural economy in the State through various schemes and programmes. He stressed on the need for generating massive awareness on these schemes so that the benefits percolate down to the grassroot people.

The Minister also directed to extensively highlight on the newly implemented Mukhya



Mantri Krishi Atmanirbhar Yojana amongst farmers, so that the objective of benefitting the farmers with notified financial incentives can be achieved. He also called for collaborative effort and active cooperation from line departments in ensuring benefits to the farming community throughout the State.

He further advised the concerned department to provide a special training programme to the field functionaries including Agriculture Development Officers, Horticulture Development Officers, VLWs and designated officials to

sensitize and apprise the farming community. He outlined the importance of agriculture, horticulture and livestock farming sectors and anticipated substantial growth of rural sector towards self-reliant State with the implementation of farmer-friendly policies.

The Minister also directed the Information and Public Relations Department to generate awareness of the various schemes of the government and also advised for wide publicity of success stories as well, so that the farmers could be motivated and encouraged. He informed that

the programme will be organised for Temi-Namphing and Namthang-Rateypani constituencies in South District after Soreng-Chakhung constituency visit.

The meeting was followed by an interactive session wherein the attendees had a detailed discussion on the availability of farming inputs to be given to the farmers in the upcoming scheduled programme.

The farmers are expected to receive varieties of inputs including power tiller, chaff cutter, community water tank (steel water tank), flexi water tank, fabricated

greenhouse, floricultural inputs, livestock under Rural Backyard Goat, Sheep and Piggery Scheme/ National Livestock Mission, etc.

The meeting was also attended by Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Horticulture, Yasodha Bhandari, Secretary, Agriculture, Rinzing C. Bhutia, Secretary, IPR, Siphorah G. Targain, PD-cum-Secretary, AH&VS, Dr. Sangey D. Bhutia, Director, Directorate of Fisheries, Jaswant Singh, Director, IPR, Benu Gurung, senior officials, Scheme In-charge and other officials of the line departments.

## Lok Sabha passes Bill to amend Scheduled Tribe List related to Arunachal Pradesh

**NEW DELHI, 09 AUG [PTI]:** Lok Sabha Monday passed through a voice vote The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to amend the constitutional list of Scheduled Tribes as recommended by Arunachal Pradesh.

The bill, which was passed by Rajya Sabha last week, was cleared by the lower house Monday amidst Opposition protest over the Pegasus snooping row and other issues.

While moving the bill for consideration and passage, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda said the Opposition was not participating in the debate on a bill so important for the welfare of the tribal population. It means, the Opposition does not care about the welfare of the tribals, Mr Munda alleged.

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said today is the World Tribal Day and his party wanted to congratulate and extend best wishes to the community.

He said the Opposition wanted to participate in the debate, but the government has been allegedly trying to suppress the voices of Opposition through its brute majority in the lower house.

He alleged the people

of the country have been protesting against the policies of the government and it was "scared" of the people.

This government is arrogant and vindictive, Mr Chowdhury alleged.

Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Meghwal termed Mr Chowdhury's allegations baseless and said the PM Modi government is committed for the welfare of tribals.

Trinamool Congress leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay appealed to the government not to pass the bill amidst the din.

"We are supporting the bill but the passage of three bills in 10 minutes is very wrong," he said, referring to the passage of The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill 2021 and The Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill 2021 in quick succession earlier. DMK leader T R Baalu said the bill was very important it was not proper to rush it through while the Opposition was protesting.

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, who hails from Arunachal Pradesh, said many tribal communities from the state were not included in the list even after independence, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now decided to give them a new identity.

The bill will be beneficial for lakhs of tribals, he said and asked the Opposition not to shout slogans before a tribal minister.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi too countered the Opposition allegations and said the Modi government wants constructive, long and fruitful debate but the opposition was not allowing the House to function properly.

"Let there be peaceful debate, constructive suggestions. This is a bill for tribals. We want debate on the welfare of the tribals, OBCs and want cooperation from everyone," he said.

Subsequently, the bill was passed through the voice vote.

According to the bill, at present, there are 18 communities with their synonyms appearing in the illustrative list of Scheduled Tribes in respect of the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

On the basis of recommendations of the State of Arunachal Pradesh, the bill provides for modifying Part-XVIII of the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, relating to the state.

It provides for deletion of "Abor" (tribe) in serial No. 1, as it is the same as "Adi" in serial No. 16.

## Bengal Govt planning to bring slew of schemes for Darj Hills



**SMRITA KHAWAS**

**DARJEELING, 09 AUG:** A slew of State Government schemes are to be launched in the Darjeeling Hills, spokesperson of the Hill Trinamool Congress, NB Khawas, informed a press conference here today.

Many schemes have already been passed and a new scheme, "Duwarae Sarkar" [Government at the doorsteps], to ease the work of the public will be held every six months, starting on 16 August this year at all wards, blocks and Gram Panchayats here.

Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee's main

motive is to reach people in the time of need, he stressed.

Along with Duwarae Sarkar, another scheme to empower women - "Lakshmi Bhandar" - will be initiated soon, he informed. Under this scheme, women aged 25 to 60 who are not receiving any kind of help or benefitting any scheme of the government will receive Rs 1,000 [ST and SC] and Rs 500 [general category] per month.

For students, the student credit card scheme will help students access education loans of up to Rs 10 lakh for higher education.

## Bengal logs 557 new COVID-19 cases, 11 more deaths

**KOLKATA, AUG 9 (PTI):** The COVID-19 toll in West Bengal mounted to 18,240 on Monday after 11 more people succumbed to the disease, a bulletin issued by the health department said.

At least 557 more people tested positive for the infection, pushing the tally to 15,34,360, it said.

North 24 Parganas accounted for four deaths, while Paschim Medinipur and Nadia districts registered two fatalities each. They city did not report any CO-

VID-19 death in the past 24 hours.

As many as 719 more people recuperated from the disease in Bengal, which raised the total number of recoveries to 15,05,808. The discharge rate in the state stands at 98.14 per cent.

West Bengal currently has 10,312 active cases, the bulletin said.

Altogether 1,61,22,345 samples have been tested in the state thus far, including 30,153 on Sunday, it added.

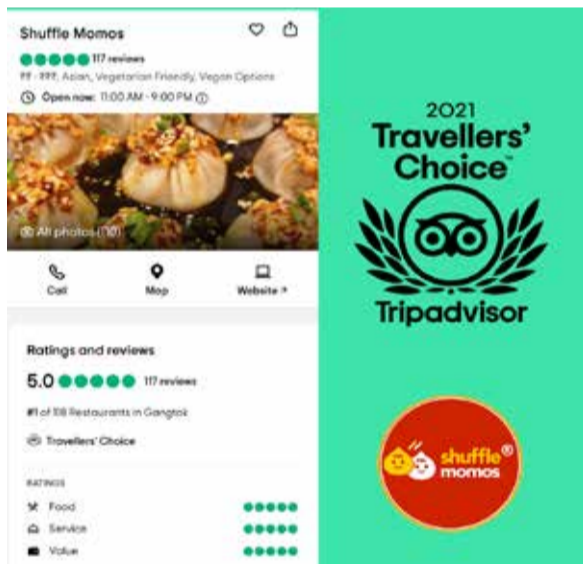
## Shuffle Momos in Tripadvisor's top-10% best restaurants worldwide

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 09 AUG:**

Tripadvisor has recently awarded Shuffle Momos with the 2021 Travelers' Choice Award in the category of Best Ranked Restaurant based on the reviews given by travelers and diners. This places Shuffle Momos among the top 10% of the best ranked restaurants worldwide.

This achievement celebrates businesses that consistently deliver fantastic experiences to diners around the globe, having earned great traveler reviews on Tripadvisor over the last 12 months.

"We are absolutely thrilled about the win. To be awarded with the Travelers' Choice is perhaps one of the



most satisfying win as it comes from genuine travelers and food lovers. Our heartfelt gratitude to our every diner and every traveler who have loved us and gave us the most amazing re-

views," said Lem Pandi Targain, Co-founder, Shuffle Momos.

Shuffle Momos started as a cloud kitchen and later opened a dine-in restaurant near Titanic Park, MG Marg, Gangtok.

## PM releases 9th installment of PM-KISAN financial benefit

**GANGTOK, 09 AUG (IPR):** Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi officially released the ninth installment of financial benefit under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme through video conferencing today.

The Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry Departments Lok Nath Sharma and Secretary, Agriculture Department Rinzing C Bhutia joined the meeting virtually from NIC, Gangtok.

The meeting also had the presence of Director Agriculture/RKVY Tilak Gazmer, Additional Director PMKSY /Marketing, Jagdish Pradhan, Additional Director Field Crops, Rajen Thapa and Joint Director RAD/RKVY Agriculture PD Lama.

Secretary Agriculture, Rinzing C Bhutia, informed that till date, a total of 10,007 farmers from the State have benefited with financial support of Rs.9 crore un-



der the scheme. He also added that around 4000 farmers have been included recently to receive the benefits in the State.

Under this scheme, the government deposits an installment of Rs.2,000 in the bank account of farmers every four months. Annually, Rs.6,000 is being directly transferred to the bank account of farmers.

The Prime Minister, in his address, congratulated the beneficiaries and informed that over Rs.19,000 crore were transferred in the bank account of Rs.9.5 crore farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme today.

The Prime Minister

emphasized on the significant role of farmers in a joint venture towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. He encouraged farmers to increase the production of edible oil and pulses and to be self-dependent on these particular produce.

He stressed upon the significant role of small and marginal farmers and articulated on various initiatives taken up by the government in strengthening the farming community in the country. He also urged the farmers to take advantage of new opportunities and challenges.

Earlier, the Prime Minister also interacted with the farmers of different states.

## PLASTIC FREEDOM...

Anoop Nautiyal of SDC Foundation, Uttarakhand shared his experiences of conducting a brand audit in 2018 which emphasized on the need for producers to do much more than simply green-washing steps.

Mr Nautiyal stated that "Companies need to be transparent about their efforts on dealing with the plastic waste reduction as well as how they are undertaking EPR which is completely lacking at the moment."

Speaking about their experience of working with Nestle, Mr Anoop mentioned that there needs to be consistency in their efforts. He mentioned that brand audits are a great tool but how the findings of the brand audit are to be used in the most effective manner is something that needs to be thought through carefully. He highlighted the environment concerns of what is passing as co-processing and recycling under EPR.

Aman Grover from Waste Warriors Uttarakhand, talked about their experiences of practically working in implementing EPR with producer companies, and the challenges. His presentation also focused on the draft EPR framework that has been proposed, and for mountains the process that has been proposed is difficult to implement.

Mr Grover stated that, "the current financial rates per kg of plastic collected being provided by companies are simply not enough for taking back waste in the mountains"; Mountain states should rally for having rates that are cognizant of the difficulties and ecological fragility of the mountains. He mentioned EPR is dictated by the companies who use loopholes that do not really address the issue of plastic pollution.

Various states also shared the status and challenges of single use plastics eradication and waste management in general. President Municipal Council of Leh, Dr Namgyal, Chair of Sikkim Pollution Control Board, Dr Thomas Chandy, Nodal person - NGT, Dr Brajakumar, Manipur, and Superintendent Engineer, Ravi Pandey, Urban Development Department, Uttarakhand spoke from the respective states. Dr Brajakumar mentioned that there was confusion around what all were included within the purview of single use plastics which needed to be cleared, and that the Government of India was taking a close look on what was happening in the states. Dr Chandy said that in Sikkim, plastic waste was very challenging as the Government had only one designated landfill site, mentioning that steps for reducing plastic waste through ban on single use

plastics such as non-woven polypropylene were in the pipeline. Ravi Pandey and Dr Namgyal spoke about some of the initiatives that were being tried out in their respective states for managing the plastic waste.

The polls that were conducted during the webinar threw some interesting insights on the waste management scenario. The poll to understand challenges faced by waste managers indicated that the topmost challenge was bringing behavioural change among people, followed by change in waste profiles, lack of clear policies and lack of political leadership.

When asked on the issue of whether single use plastics could be eradicated from the mountains, more than 64 per cent of the participants indicated that it was a possibility which was encouraging feedback. Some of the key action points that were indicated by the participants were on investing in long term behavioral change, mountain specific policies and plans and implementing extended producer responsibility. At the same time, participants indicated that technical capacities were low and needed to be built, awareness on updated rules and regulations were needed, along with working to build political will.

ZWH presented the top waste and brand audit results of The Himalayan Cleanup from Home 2021 highlighting that 85% of household waste from the audit was plastic, with 71.8% of it non-recyclable. The highest materials were from food packaging - 63% and personal care 16 % and mostly non-recyclable plastics, thus detrimental to human and planetary health. Hindustan Unilever, Nestle and PepsiCo India, Asian Thai Foods, Choudhary Group of Foods India, Hindustan Coke, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF or Amul), Parle Products, Indian Tobacco Company Ltd (ITC) and Parle Agro Pvt Ltd respectively emerged as the top ten brands whose plastic waste pollute the IHR.

The event also saw the launch of the Plastic Freedom Challenge which is in its 6th year. The challenge calls on people and organisations to not use plastics from August 8 to Independence Day thereby bringing about a reuse revolution that will reduce waste loads in the mountains.

The closing remarks were made by President IMI, PD Rai who spoke about the need for such forums to discuss the issue of waste, and also highlighted the importance of incorporating a mountain perspective in the EPR guidelines and rules.

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# MUSS Online Global Level Quiz Competition results declared

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 9 AUG:

Sikkim's Premjit Sharma and MridulMayankJha bagged the first place insenior category and junior category respectively in the Online Global Level Quiz Competition organized by the ManavUtthanSewaSamiti on 01 Aug. The results of the competition were announced on 09 August.

The Online Global Level Quiz competition, inspired by SatpaljiMaharaj founder of ManavUthanSewaSamiti and VibhujjiMaharaj, was organised by ManavUthanSewaSamiti under the initiative Mission Education on 01 Aug, 2021. In this competition 52,396 participants from around 63 countries including India, Nepal and Bhutan participated.

The competition wasorganised in junior and senior category, with 18,752 participants in ju-



nior category and 33,644 in senior category.

E-participation cer-

tificates were provided to each participant who took part in the competi-

tion. Three winners were selected from both categories from each state in India and Nepal. Three winners were selected from all other countries and awarded with various prizes and medals.

Among the senior students from Sikkim, Premjit Sharma of Arithang, Gangtok came first, SushmaRai of Sumbuk, South Sikkim came second and ChewangPaljorBhutia Deorali, Gangtok came third, while MridulMayankJha of Tadong, East Sikkim came first, BipanshikaSubedi of KewzingLingzu, South Sikkim came second and Rajat Kumar Gupta, Tibet Road, Gangtok came third in the junior category.

The winning students will be honored by the ManavUthanSewaSamiti, Sikkim by organizing a special program where attractive prizes will be presented.

## MUSS cleanliness drives at East district hospitals



SUMMIT REPORT  
RANGPO, 09 AUG:

Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti, Sikkim organized a day Long cleanliness drive in various hospitals under the district level cleanliness drive mission today. Press and Publicity Incharge, Sagar Mohra informed that the cleanliness campaign was organized in the Covid Vaccination Center Majhigaon by Rangpo

Tehsil, Old STNM Hospital by Gangtok Tehsil and Mangan Bazar in North Sikkim by, Mangan Tehsil. Along with the vaccination center, information has also been received about the cleanliness campaign being carried out in the surrounding areas. Just a month before Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti Rangpo Tehsil in the vaccination center in Rangpo Mazhigaon has rendered

a great service by adding table fans to the health workers and common civil society in the midst of the problem due to scorching heat. The cleanliness campaigns was Organised nationwide form and not only within Sikkim but throughout the country, have been organizing cleanliness campaigns in various Branches and Tehsil level from time to time.

## Quiz on “Aazadi ka Amrut Mahotsav” by AIR Gangtok

GANGTOK, 09 AUG [PIB]: The nation is celebrating “Amrut Mahotsav” of Independence. In the 75 week long national celebration, all the events related to freedom movement, the unsung heroes of the independence struggle, the distinguished history, culture, literature, music and manifold facets are being brought to light and reaching out to the people.

In this context, the regional news unit of All India Radio Gangtok in collaboration with the Department of Culture, Govt. of Sikkim, is organizing “Aazadi ka Amrut Mahotsav” quiz.

In the quiz which will start from 12 August, 2021, one question will be asked to the audience on every Monday

and Thursday after the regional news bulletin of 6.40 PM. Audience can send their answer in the email - airtgkquiz@gmail.com. Email must be sent the day after or on Tuesday and Friday by 12.00- PM. Among the emails received, the first email with right answer will be declared as winner.

The winner of the quiz will be announced in the regional news bulletin of Tuesday and Friday. The winner of every episode will be given an E-Certificate and award by Department of Culture, Govt. of Sikkim.

Department of Culture is hopeful that the citizens of the State and in particular the students will participate in this quiz enthusiastically.

### BUILDING SOLIDARITY FOR A REUSE REVOLUTION IN THE MOUNTAINS

Eradicating Single Use Plastics in the IHR

**AUGUST 7**  
**2.30 PM**

**ON THE AGENDA**

- Making Single Use Plastic Bans Possible - Lessons from Kerala for the Mountain States  
- Dr. Yasuki, Former Director, Sushirwa Mission, Kerala
- Waste and Brand Audits - Informing waste management strategies  
- Mr. Anand Nautiyal, SED Foundation
- EPR in the mountains: Challenges and Experiences  
- Mr. Anil Grover, Waste Warriors
- The Himalayan Cleanup Findings
- Sharing from the mountain states and key action points
- Launch of the 'Plastic Freedom Challenge'

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## Bharat Petroleum officials on Sikkim visit

SURAJ LIMBOO

GANGTOK, 09 AUG:

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited officials are on a three-day visit to Sikkim. Today they visited Bhagirathi & Sons fuel station at 6th Mile, Gangtok, where they met the owner and workers.

One of the officials said that their main aim behind visiting Sikkim is to know the fuel future of Sikkim and possibleexpansion of the fuel network in the state in order to provide better facilities to customers.

It is informed that BPCL outlets also have 'Fino' a micro ATM which transforms petrol pumps into banking points for the customers' convenience.



They also discussed various issues that owners of pumps are facing and they have assured to resolve them as soon as possible.

They also felicitated proprietor of the fuel station, Bimala

Bhattarai for being an honest dealer who maintains quality and quantity as per the standard specifications of Government of India and Amit Chettri as the best employee of the pump.

### GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

#### RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Tashiling, Gangtok- 737103, Sikkim.

#### E-Procurement Notice

Tender Reference No:- SKPMGSY(LSB)/BATCH1Retender(2).

Memo No: 94/RDD/PMGSY

Dated:05/08/2021

#### RE-TENDER

The Principal Chief Engineer, RDD on behalf of Governor of Sikkim invites percentages rates bids through e-procurement for “Construction of Long Span Steel (Composite & Bailey) Bridges in the State of Sikkim under Pradhan Mantir Gram Sadak Yojana”. The bid should be submitted online in web site [www.pmgstendersskm.gov.in](http://www.pmgstendersskm.gov.in) for construction of respective work by contractors of appropriate class with the state government vide notification No. 515/R&B/PWD/Secy Dated 12/06/2018 as detailed in the above website.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date of time for seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of tender
		From	To		
Pr. Chief Engineer, RDD	SKPMGSY(LSB)/BATCH1Retender(2) 2021_CESDA_112374 2021_CESDA_112344_1	06/08/2021 from 5.00 PM	16/08/2021 upto 10.00 AM	12/08/2021 upto 1.00 PM	16/08/2021 from 10.30 AM onwards.

The bank receipt in original form from State Bank of Sikkim as tender fee deposited to the head 0515-Other Rural Development Programme 800-Other receipts is to be submitted to the Finance Controller SRRDA Sikkim on 13/08/2021 from 12.00 to 3.00 PM. Those bids even if submitted online but whose hard copy is not received by Finance Controller during the time given, will not be considered for bidding.

Sd/  
Chief Engineer  
Rural Development Department  
Government of Sikkim.

**PKGI/RT2**

Sl.No.	Dis-trict	Block	Constitu-ency	Pkg No.	Road Name	LSB Name	Tender Value in Lakhs	Contr Eligibility Class	EMD in Lakhs	Tender Form cost in Rs.				
<b>BAILEY BRIDGE</b>														
1	East	Gangtok	Nam-cheybong	PKG I/ RT2	L047-Nimtar to Mangthang	20mtr Span Bailey Bridge over Nimtar Mangthang	168.63	1-AA	60.07	2,00,000.00				
2.	East	Gangtok	Kham-dong Singtam		L069-Dochung to Beng	30 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Ghattey	253.48							
3.	East	Rongli	Chu-jachen		L028-Chunbati bimbirey to Dokchin Talkhara	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Sisney Jhora	106.13							
4.	North	Mangan	Lachen Mangan		L037-Mangan Sankalan to Kazor	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Paki-Kyong- II	168.91							
5.	North	Mangan	Lachen Mangan		L037-Mangan Sankalan to Kazor	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over PakiKyong- Ili	169.16							
6	North	Mangan	Lachen Mangan		L069-DAC App Rd to ringhim Gumpa	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Rimit Khola	129.90							
7.	South	Namchi	Poklok Kamrang		Sikip- Pak-zer	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Mangda Jhora	129.05							
8.	South	Namchi	Poklok Kamrang		Sikip- Pak-zer	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Salam Jhora	168.32							
9.	West Sikkim	Gyalshing	Yangthang		L063 Kabirhang to Rato Matey School	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Andheri Khola	169.12							
10.	West Sikkim	Gyalshing	Yangthang		L063 Kabirhang to Rato Matey School	30 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Dantey Bari Khola	221.13							
11.	West Sikkim	Soreng	Rincheng-pong		L-039 Mangabaria to Aroobotay	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Gumpa Khola	169.27							
<b>COMPOSITE BRIDGE</b>														
12	North Sikkim	Mangan	Dzongu		L050-DSM To Katam-mantayam	30 mtr span Steel Bridge over MuoT-hung Khola	274.62							
13.	West Sikkim	Gyalshing	Maney-bong Dentam	L073-Dentam Pel-ling SPWD Road to legship via Majgaon Martam	30 mtr span steel bridge over Hee Khola	275.04								
							2,402.76							

**R.O. No. 137/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22**  
**Date: 6.8.2021**

Sd/  
Chief Engineer  
Rural Development Department  
Government of Sikkim.

## Awaiting Collaborations

*If people don't network, their issues will get hijacked*

Gangtok is cleaner than most State capitals in India, much cleaner than any other hill station. And the Gangtokians appear happy with that much because one is yet to see any community-level initiative to improve civic conditions any further. For instance, it had to be the State Government which gave the nod to a proposal which came from a foreign funding agency to declare MG Marg a “litter & spit free zone”. The declaration was easy, it was the implementation that tested the patience of the enforcers. It has succeeded, but again as a top-down initiative, and with it, much before the rest of India was told to go swachh, Sikkim had added another USP to its appeal. Of course, no tourist is going to come to Gangtok only to see a litter & spit free zone (which, admittedly, is under some stress already), but it will be initiatives like this that will add up to provide that larger argument which will convince visitors to choose Gangtok over, say a Shimla for their summer vacations. It would, however, have been so much more palatable and welcome if such a “zone” had come about on public initiative. Why did it have to be the State which had to enforce the new stipulations? Why couldn't a local NGO have pursued the concept and convinced the locals to stop littering and spitting at MG Marg?

The problem lies with the fact that Gangtok, although it is the most urban of spaces in the State, is still also closed and uninvolved, populated by Gangtokians who are isolated not only in their lifestyles, but also their thinking. They complain that the UD&HD garbage collection trucks do not detour to their residences often enough, but will never come together to work out a solution for locality garbage disposal problems on their own. They will be scandalised when reports of a fire in a school in South India hits the headlines and will worry about the safety of their children, but will wait for the State Government to draw up a legislation to make the schools safer. And then they will forget to keep track. They will not come together as parents and pressure the respective school managements to install the safety mechanisms. They will complain of drunken driving on weekends until one of their own gets challaned for driving under the influence of alcohol and then it will be about how overbearing the cops have become. And through all this, they will not convince their neighborhood bars to collect car keys and refuse to hand them over to inebriated drivers or unless the group has a sober hand for the wheels. They know that substance abuse is a problem as is juvenile delinquency and also suicides, but remain cocooned in the belief that all that is happening to someone else until the hammer hits home and then they will convince themselves it was an aberration.

What Gangtokians do not realize is that it does not take a rocket scientist to identify the problem areas and suggest remedial measures when it comes to working out how communities can work together to make living better. The oft-expressed need for a civil society in Gangtok is not misplaced, the problem is, it does not appear to be forming; not until Gangtokians stop reacting only to personal discomforts and ignoring community issues. The problem with such an attitude is that when real issues crop-up, because the people are not interested in understanding them in their entirety, they get hijacked by people we all know commonly as “vested interests.” When this happens, there is a lot of noise, but no resolution. It is for the people to decide whether they want to continue living in this cacophony or opt for saner collaborations.

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## In a world first, South Africa grants patent to an artificial intelligence system

MESHANDREN NAIDOO  
*theconversation.com*

At first glance, a recently granted South African patent relating to a “food container based on fractal geometry” seems fairly mundane. The innovation in question involves interlocking food containers that are easy for robots to grasp and stack.

On closer inspection, the patent is anything but mundane. That's because the inventor is not a human being – it is an artificial intelligence (AI) system called DABUS.

DABUS (which stands for “device for the autonomous bootstrapping of unified sentence”) is an AI system created by Stephen Thaler, a pioneer in the field of AI and programming. The system simulates human brainstorming and creates new inventions. DABUS is a particular type of AI, often referred to as “creativity machines” because they are capable of independent and complex functioning. This differs from everyday AI like Siri, the “voice” of Apple's iPhones.

The patent application listing DABUS as the inventor was filed in patent offices around the world, including the US, Europe, Australia, and South Africa. But only South Africa granted the patent (Australia followed suit a few days later after a court judgment gave the go-ahead).

South Africa's decision has received widespread backlash from intellectual property experts. Some have labelled it a mistake, or an oversight by the patent office. However, as a patent and AI scholar whose PhD aims to address the gaps in patent law created by AI inventorship, I suggest that the decision is supported by the government's policy environment in recent years. This has aimed to increase innovation, and views technology as a way to achieve this.

## CREATIVITY MACHINES

Creativity machines can process and critically analyse data, learning from it. This process is known as machine learning. Once the machine learning phase has occurred, the machine is able to “autonomously” create without human intervention. As has been seen in the COVID pandemic, as

just one example, AI is able to solve problems humans were unable to – and also much faster than people can.

Over the years there have been many kinds of creativity machines. Prior to DABUS, Thaler built another AI which created novel sheet music, and which he credited with inventing the cross-bristle toothbrush design. He filed a patent for the cross-bristle design, and it was granted – proving AI's ability to generate truly novel inventions that meet the standards for patents. However, Thaler listed himself, rather than the AI, as the inventor at that time.

When it came to the food container invention by DABUS, Thaler, assisted by Ryan Abbott of the University of Surrey, decided instead to list DABUS as the rightful inventor, as the invention was entirely devised by the AI. This was the start of their push for AI to be recognised as inventors the world over.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office and the European Patent Office rejected these applications in the formal examination phase. They gave three reasons. First, their respective patent laws only provide for human inventors – not AI – as indicated by the use of pronouns such as “him” and “her” in their text. Second, ideas, for the purposes of patents, require the element of “mental conception” – something of which only a human mind is capable. Finally, inventorship comes with rights, which AI is not legally capable of possessing.

Much to the surprise of the global community, South Africa's patent office, the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission, granted the patent, recognising DABUS as an inventor. It has not yet explained its reasons for doing so.

This patent was published in July 2021 in the South African Patent Journal, with major news agencies including The Times reporting on the matter.

The granting of the DABUS patent in South Africa has received widespread backlash from intellectual property experts. The critics argued that it was the incorrect decision in law, as AI lacks the necessary legal standing to qualify as an inven-

tor. Many have argued that the grant was simply an oversight on the part of the commission, which has been known in the past to be less than reliable. Many also saw this as an indictment of South Africa's patent procedures, which currently only consist of a formal examination step. This requires a check box sort of evaluation: ensuring that all the relevant forms have been submitted and are duly completed.

Critics feel that if South Africa instead had a substantive search and examination system in place, the DABUS patent application would have been rejected.

I disagree.

## ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT

While it is possible that the commission erred in granting the patent, South Africa's policy environment in recent years suggests otherwise.

The first relevant policy was the Intellectual Property Policy of the Republic of South Africa Phase I of 2018. It marked the beginning of patent reform in the country. Since then, from 2019 to 2021, three other notable instruments have been published: the Department of Science and Technology's White Paper on Science, Technology, and Innovation; the Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and the proposed National Data and Cloud Policy in terms of the Electronic Communications Act 36 of 2005.

The core message of all these documents is that South Africa's government wants to increase innovation to solve the country's socio-economic issues. There is clear worry about issues such as poor innovation levels, lack of funding and lack of suitable infrastructure which is necessary to really capitalise on the fourth industrial revolution.

Given the policy environment and the vast potential of AI, the granting of the patent makes sense. Perhaps this will turn out to be a strategic masterclass by the South African office which will lead to a much more innovative nation.

*[the writer is PhD Fellow and LexisNexis Legal Content Researcher and Editor, University of KwaZulu-Natal]*

## Olympics: Namibia's sprinters highlight a flawed testosterone testing system

NANA ADOM - ABOAGYE  
*theconversation.com*

Namibian athletes Christine Mboma and Beatrice Masilingi began to make headlines in 2021 for their exceptional 400-meter sprint times. In July, it was confirmed that the 18-year-old athletes had been barred from the 400m event at the Tokyo Olympics because of too-high natural testosterone levels according to World Athletics' track and field rules. (The rules don't apply to the 200-meter sprint and they both qualified for this, with Mboma finishing second.) This ongoing 'sex testing' controversy also dashed South African star Caster Semenya's hopes of defending her 800-meter Olympic title. Dr Nana Adom-Aboagye from the Centre for Sport Leadership at Maties Sport (Stellenbosch University) researches African women and gender equity in sport. We asked her what issues the tests raise for African athletes.

WHAT ARE THE TESTOSTERONE RULES?

Testosterone testing in sport is about gender verification. Gender verification of female athletes lends itself to the ongoing and rigid framework of socially constructed expectations about physiological sex.

To break it down, testosterone is a naturally occurring hormone, a chemical affecting the body's growth and development. Testosterone is associated with males, but men and women all have varying levels of testosterone. In recent years, discussions around the perceived advantage of high testosterone levels and their perceived impact on performance has placed the spotlight on female athletes in particular.

World Athletics (formerly the International Amateur Athletics Federation or IAAF) responded by designing rules (updated in 2018) to deal with the dilemma presented by female athletes who were born with

testosterone levels higher than the typical female range. These athletes are banned from competing at certain events unless they agree to artificially lower their testosterone through medication or surgery, an option for which there is currently no scientific data on the long-term effects.

The real question is how we got here. The debate and push for testosterone rules started over a decade ago, when a few within the athletics (track and field) fraternity started raising questions as to what it means to be 'female' and 'a woman' in sport. This has led to a fractious period, seemingly spearheaded by World Athletics, where, based on masculine-seeming features and good performances, women are being singled out and subjected to sex testing in order to verify their sex. Some of these women have naturally high occurring testosterone levels, such as the Namibian athletes. Others, like Caster Semenya, soon learn that they have Differences of Sexual Development – called DSD – and are considered intersex.

HOW HAVE THE RULES IMPACTED AFRICAN WOMEN ATHLETES?

There have been claims that high testosterone occurrence mostly affects women from Africa and South Asia. There is, however, not enough scientific data at present to justify these claims. The appearance of women with high testosterone coming from these areas is likely due to more women from these regions being identified for sex testing by athletics officials.

This raises two issues in particular around which there isn't clarity and that have not been explored in depth. Firstly, why do testosterone levels seemingly differ among women of different racial groups and different geographic regions? Secondly, why does World Athletics refuse to share their identifying criteria for choosing certain female athletes over

others when they enforce sex testing?

World Athletics also uses what some scholars and scientists deem to be flawed criteria in identifying which particular events should be included in a ban. This issue becomes even more strained and contentious as scholars and scientists – such as South Africa's world renowned sports scientist Ross Tucker – challenge that high testosterone alone cannot justify 'unfair' advantage among elite sportswomen. Tucker argues that the current debates around high levels of testosterone in female athletes is a complex issue that will challenge the scientific community with respect to ethical merits versus sound research. There is insufficient scientific proof supporting current testosterone rules.

What this has led to, is the appearance of World Athletics 'targeting' African women, based on their supposed masculine features, once they start excelling on the global stage. It seems especially true if they are from developing countries or marginalised backgrounds.

SO THIS IS ALSO A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE?

It is a human rights violation because many of these women – and, recently, young girls – are being subjected to public scrutiny and often ridiculed by sectors of society that do not know better. These females are either being forced into testing or not told what they are being tested for. This means, ethically, they have not given consent. All of this in order to justify their existence. And once their 'advantages' have been publicly shared, they are forced to alter their natural genetic make up, change athletics events or give up on athletics altogether, which many have chosen to do. This not only impacts on their means of earning a living, but on their mental health as well. All of this goes against the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The perceived infringement on

basic human rights and the legal implications and breach by World Athletics' testosterone rules led Professor Steve Cornelius from the University of Pretoria to tender his resignation as a member of the World Athletics (then IAAF) Disciplinary Tribunal. He went on to join Semenya's legal team in challenging the regulations.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE ABOUT IT?

The case of Beatrice Masilingi and Christine Mboma, the latest and youngest females to be targeted by this issue, just before the greatest moment in their careers, is indicative of a need for changes in sport, especially in World Athletics. Instead of having their performances heralded in the women's 200-meter final, global headlines are focusing on whether or not they should be allowed to be who they are.

What is needed, urgently, is a collective stand by African sport practitioners, scientists and scholars in lobbying the current issue as a political agenda. This could lead to much needed state support and involvement in challenging the direction that sporting history seems to be taking. A unified and lobbied approach from Africa, with government support, could highlight the urgency needed in requesting that the issue of testosterone levels in women's sport be explored in depth by a multidisciplinary, independent and representative team.

Education is also needed on what it truly means to have high levels of testosterone as a woman in (elite) sport. Through public education people become aware of the science of the issue, the human rights involved, and what is truly fair and unfair in sport. African sport can contribute towards hearing the voices of African female athletes in order for change to happen for future generations.

*[the writer is Postdoctoral research fellow, Stellenbosch University]*

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# "Won't merge with Trinamool, but will fight BJP": Assam leader AkhilGogoi

AkhilGogoi's remarks come days after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee proposed a joining of forces to take on the BJP in Assam and Tripura.

Guwahati: Assam activist and MLA AkhilGogoi has told NDTV that while a merger of his Rajjor Dal with Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress is not possible, the two parties are hoping to work together against the BJP and its ideological mentor, the RashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh (RSS).

MrGogoi's remarks come days after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee proposed a joining of forces to take on the BJP in Assam - where it retained power after the April-May election - and Tripura - where elections are due in 2023.

"We have held three rounds of meetings with the Trinamool so far... they proposed my party - Rajjor Dal - merge with them, and they wanted me to take charge as President of the Trinamool's Assam State Committee," MrGogoi, the MLA from Sivasagar, told NDTV.

"We are discussing all aspects internally... we will decide soon. (But) we will not merge with Trinamool. The Rajjor Dal is a regional political party," he said, adding, "We would like to

unite all regional forces in the country and unite against the BJP-RSS."

MrGogoi also said the two parties are working on a strategy for bypolls to five Assembly seats.

On Wednesday, AkhilGogoi - who was released from jail last month after spending more than 18 months on charges under "draconian" anti-terror law UAPA - said: "After I came out of the jail, Mamata Banerjee invited me to meet her. I visited Kolkata twice recently and met her too."

MrGogoi had been arrested during the anti-CAA agitation in December 2019.

Mamata Banerjee's invitation to merge comes as the Trinamool - boosted by a win over the BJP in Bengal - looks to expand its footprint and clout ahead of the 2024 general election.

The first steps on that path are Assam and Tripura - both ruled by the BJP and both home to large Bengali populations. AkhilGogoi and his Rajjor Dal, the party is hoping, will be a strong introduction to Assam, given common views on controversial subjects like the citizenship law.

Groundwork for the Tripura has already begun, with Ms Banerjee's nephew and Trinamool General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee visiting Agartala last week. Mr Banerjee's convoy was

allegedly attacked by BJP supporters, after which he told reporters his party could not be stopped.

"We will free the people of Tripura... If Bipplabbabu (Chief Minister Bipplab Deb) can stop us, let him try," Mr Banerjee said after the alleged attack.

In 2018, just ahead of the last Assembly election in Tripura - which the BJP swept - the Trinamool had six MLAs. They were, however, lured by then rebel leader Mukul Roy to the BJP.

Mr Roy has since rejoined the Trinamool and is working to bring them back.

"Won't merge with Trinamool, but will fight BJP": Assam leader AkhilGogoi

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Mr Roy has since rejoined the Trinamool and is working to bring them back.

# Mamata Banerjee says Amit Shah behind attacks on nephew, party workers in Tripura

Mamata Banerjee's allegation comes days after Abhishek Banerjee and Trinamool student activists were attacked in separate incidents in BJP-ruled Tripura, where her party hopes to expand its base ahead of the 2023 assembly elections.

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah was responsible for the recent attacks on her nephew and Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek

Banerjee and other party workers, and asserted that she won't be cowed down by such acts.

Her allegation comes days after Abhishek Banerjee and Trinamool student activists were attacked in separate incidents in BJP-ruled Tripura, where the party hopes to expand its base ahead of the 2023 assembly elections.

"The BJP is running an anarchic government in Tripura, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and wherever they are in power. We condemn the attacks on

Abhishek and our party activists in Tripura," she said after meeting injured Trinamool workers at state-run SSKM hospital in Kolkata.

"Such attacks would not have been possible without the Union home minister's active support. He is behind these attacks which were carried out in front of Tripura Police as it remained mute spectators. The Tripura chief minister doesn't have the audacity to order such attacks," she added.

# Taliban press on, take another Afghan provincial capital

**KABUL, AFGHANISTAN (AP):** The Taliban on Monday took control of another provincial capital in Afghanistan, an official said. The city's fall was the latest in a weeklong, relentless Taliban offensive as American and NATO forces finalize their pullout from the war-torn country.

The militants have ramped up their push across much of Afghanistan, turning their guns on provincial capitals after taking large swaths of land in the mostly rural countryside. At the same time, they have been waging an assassination campaign targeting senior government officials in the capital, Kabul.

The sweep comes despite condemnations by the international community and warnings from the United Nations that a military victory and takeover by the Taliban would not be recognized. The Taliban have also not heeded appeals to return to the negotiating table and continue long-stalled peace talks with the Afghan government.

According to Mohammad Noor Rahmani, the council chief of northern Sar-e Pul province, the Taliban overran the provincial capital after over a week of resistance by the Afghan security forces, after which the city of Sar-e Pul collapsed. The government forces have now completely withdrawn from the province, he said.

Several pro-government local militia commanders also surrendered to the Taliban without a fight, allowing the insurgents to gain control of the entire province, Rahmani added.

The city of Sar-e Pul joins three other provincial capitals now fully under Taliban control: Zaranj, the capital of western Nimroz province, the city of Shibirghan, the capital of northern Zawzjan province, and Taleqan, the capital of another northern province with the same name.

The Taliban are also fighting on for control of the city of Kunduz, the capital

of northern Kunduz province. On Sunday, they planted their flag in the city's main square, where it was seen flying atop a traffic police booth, a video obtained by The Associated Press showed.

Kunduz's capture would be a significant gain for the Taliban and a test of their ability to take and retain territory in their campaign against the Western-backed government. It is one of the country's larger cities with a population of more than 340,000, and was a key area defended against Taliban takeovers by Western troops over the years.

After billions of dollars spent in aiding, training and shoring up Afghan forces, many are at odds how to explain the surprising Taliban blitz that has threatened — and by now taken — several of the country's 34 provincial capitals.

Rahmani, the council chief in Sar-e Pul, said the provincial capital had been under siege by the militants for weeks, with no reinforcements being sent to the overstretched Afghan forces. A video circulating on social media Monday shows a number of Taliban fighters, standing in front of the Sar-e Pul governor's office and congratulating each other for the victory.

The country-wide Taliban offensive intensified as U.S. and NATO troops began to wrap up their withdrawal from Afghanistan this summer. With Taliban attacks increasing, Afghan security forces and government troops have retaliated with airstrikes aided by the United States. The fighting has also raised growing concerns about civilian casualties.

On Monday, UNICEF said it was shocked by the increasing number of casualties among children amid the escalating violence in Afghanistan. Over the past three days, at least 27 children have been killed in various provinces, including 20 in Kandahar, it said.

# Assam businessman named in rhino horn trade cases surrenders

MdRahimuddin, who had two cases pertaining to unlawful trade of rhino horns registered against him, was absconding for a long time, Forest Department sources said.

Golaghat/Guwahati: A prominent businessman from Assam's Hojai, wanted in cases of illegal rhino horn trade, has surrendered before forest officials in Golaghat district.

MdRahimuddin, who had two cases pertaining to unlawful trade of rhino horns registered against him, was on the run for a long time, Forest Department sources said.

He had managed to obtain pre-arrest bail in one case, but was arrested in connection with the other.

"As we closed the net around him, the suspect surrendered at Bokakhat on Sunday," they said.

Meanwhile, a country-made gun and deer meat were recovered inside West Margherita Range of DehingPatkai National Park in Tinsukia district by personnel from the department.

Following a tip-off regarding the presence of poachers inside the area, a search party was sent to apprehend them on Sunday, Divisional Forest Officer, Digboi, said.

The gang of poachers, however, jumped into the Dehingriver and escaped.

An offence under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, has been registered by the West Margherita Range and an FIR under the Arms Act was filed with Margherita Police Station.

"Investigation is underway... Samples of the seized meat will be sent for forensic analysis," the DFO added.

# HimantaBiswaSarmato meet PM Modi over Assam-Mizoram border dispute

The Assam Chief Minister HimantaBiswaSarma, accompanied by BJP MPs from Assam, will also meet other Union Ministers including Home Minister Amit Shah.

New Delhi: Assam Chief Minister HimantaBiswaSarma will meet Prime Minister NarendraModi on Monday to discuss the Assam-Mizoram border issue and the restoration of peace in the entire north-east.

The Chief Minister, accompanied by BJP MPs from Assam, will also meet other Union Minis-

ters including Home Minister Amit Shah.

According to sources, the ongoing unrest on the Assam-Mizoram border, as well as restoration of peace in the entire north-east will be the center of discussions during these meetings.

MrSarma, who is in New Delhi since Saturday, was unable to meet Mr Shah earlier due to some reasons.

Sources also said that the Assam Chief Minister also held one-on-one meetings with the state's BJP MPs on Sunday.

# China's wandering elephants may finally be heading home

**BEIJING (AP):** An elephant herd that fascinated locals and people around the world by making a yearlong journey into urbanized southwest China, raiding farms and even a retirement home for food, appears finally to be headed home.

Local authorities have deployed trucks, workers and drones to monitor the elephants, evacuated roads for them to pass safely and used food to steer them away from populated areas. Despite their entrance into villages and a close approach to the Yunnan provincial capital of Kunming, no animals or humans have been injured.

The 14 Asian elephants of various sizes

and ages were guided across the Yuanjiangriver in Yunnan on Sunday night and a path is being opened for them to return to the nature reserve where they lived in the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture.

The elephants left the reserve more than a year ago for unknown reasons and roamed more than 500 kilometers (300 miles) north. After reaching the outskirts of Kunming, a center for business and tourism, they turned south again, but still are far from the reserve.

One male that separated from the herd was subsequently tranquilized and returned to the reserve.

Asian elephants are

among the most highly protected animals in China and their population has grown to around 300, even while their habitat has shrunk because of expanded farming and urban growth.

As of Sunday night, the herd was still in Yuanjiang County, approximately 200 kilometers (125 miles) from the reserve.

However, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration said the animals were in a "suitable habitat" after crossing the river.

A notice issued by provincial government said the herd's progress was significant and it would continue to work on getting the elephants back in their natural habitat soon.

# Jharkhand court to monitor probe in judge's murder, says Supreme Court

District judge UttamAnand was killed on July 28 when an auto rammmed him while he was on his morning run.

New Delhi: The Jharkhand High Court will monitor the probe in the hit-and-run case of a judge in the state, the Supreme Court said today, adding that the CBI will submit its status report in the case to the state high court.

Chief Justice NV Ramana, heading a three-judge bench, referred to the sealed cover report submitted by the CBI and said, "Nothing is there in the sealed cover. We want something concrete: arrests made and seizing

of vehicles done by state. You (CBI) have not indicated anything about the intention or motive."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, said the investigation is underway and some people have been arrested but more cannot be divulged at this juncture.

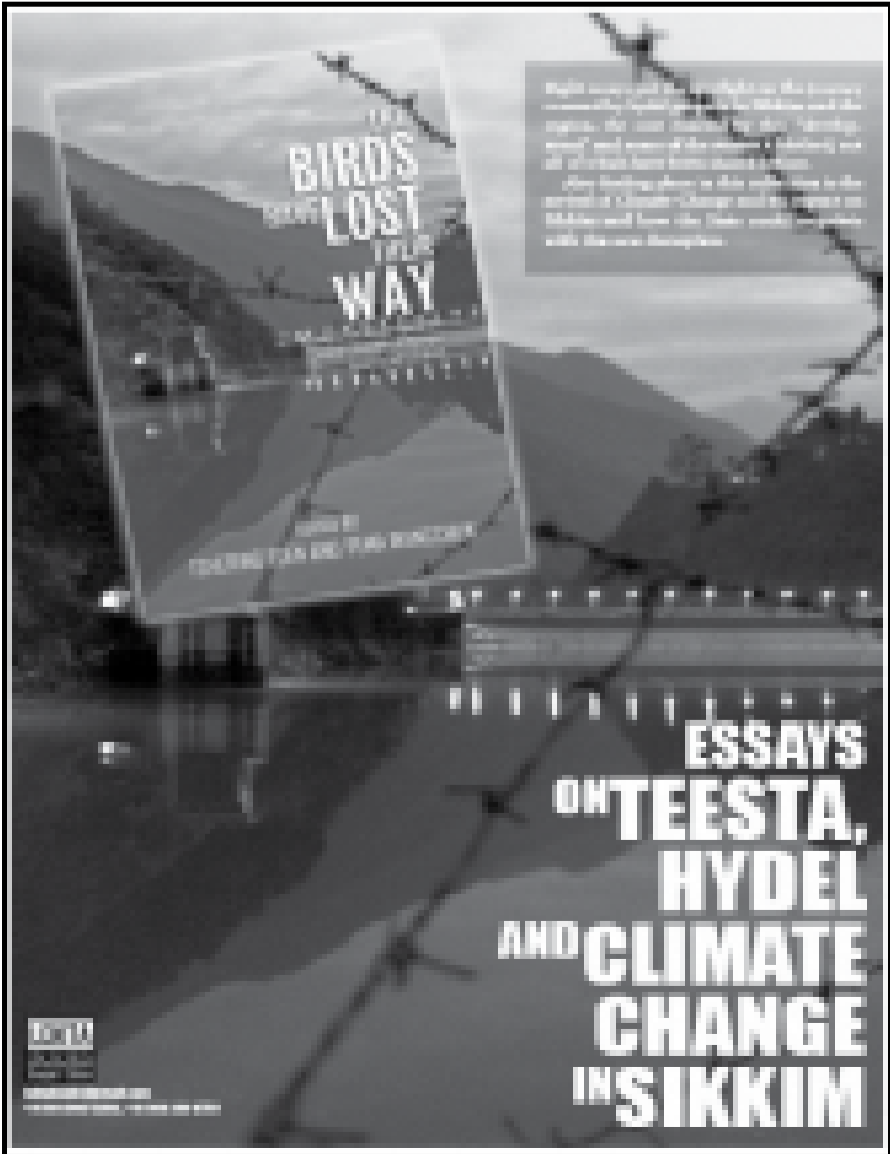
District judge UttamAnand was killed on July 28 when an auto rammmed him while he was on his morning run. He was 49.

What was first believed to be a hit-and-run turned out to be far more sinister as CCTV footage that emerged online showed the auto going straight for the judge

along a deserted stretch of road and knocking him down. On July 30, the top court took up the case on its own, saying it had "wider ramifications".

The Judge had been handling many cases of mafia killings in Dhanbad and had declined bail requests from two gangsters. He was also hearing a murder case involving an MLA's close aide.

The CBI, which has been probing the incident since August 4, took over the case from the Special Investigating Team (SIT) of Jharkhand police, constituted by the state government on the instruction of the Jharkhand High Court.



*Formula 2  
Championship  
driver  
Lundgaard  
making  
IndyCar debut*  
**INDIANAPOLIS (AP):** Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing will field a car for Formula 2 Championship driver Christian Lundgaard in Saturday's IndyCar road course race in Indianapolis.

The Danish driver recently tested an Indy car for the first time with the team at Barber Motorsports Park.

He'll drive the No. 45 Honda for RLL. He has two Formula 2 podiums this season.

"There's been a lot of work to make this happen and prepare as best as possible, and I'm feeling ready for the challenge," he said. "I've actually watched all IndyCar races this year, so to be given the chance to line up on the grid is amazing."

*Japan's  
PM thanks  
people for  
safe Olympics  
during  
pandemic*

**TOKYO (AP):** Japan's prime minister thanked people for helping the country safely hold the Olympics despite the difficulties of the coronavirus pandemic.

He noted the Games were delayed by a year and held under tight restrictions, but "I believe we were able to fulfill our responsibility as the host nation," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said, thanking the people for their understanding and cooperation.

The 17-day Summer Olympics were played mostly without spectators. Athletes stayed in an isolation bubble, quickly donned masks off their field of play and had to leave Japan soon after their competitions ended.

But the Games were a testament to perseverance, and as Suga noted in praising Japanese athletes for the nation's record 58 medals, "Some won medals and others didn't, but all their performances were moving."

Suga spoke about the Olympics at a ceremony in Nagasaki on Monday that marked the 76th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of the Japanese city.

Suga has been criticized as forcing the Games on a Japanese public that didn't want them to be held during the pandemic.

Japan has counted 1 million infections and more than 15,700 deaths from COVID-19, faring better than many countries, but the delta variant is causing many recent cases and accelerating the spread of the virus.

Tokyo's new daily cases have more than doubled during the Olympics, with 2,884 recorded Monday for a prefectural total of 252,169 cases. With Tokyo hospitals filling up with serious cases, nearly 18,000 people with mild cases are isolating at home.

# Ericsson soars to victory in inaugural Music City Grand Prix

**NASHVILLE, TENN. (AP):** Marcus Ericsson used the slowed car in front of him as a launching ramp and shot up and over — with a dangling wing — Sebastien Bourdais' Chevrolet.

"I thought my race was over there," Ericsson said.

Not in this wreckfest. Call the latest IndyCar race winner Marcus Air-icsson.

Ericsson stuck the landing on his early race flight and avoided further disaster on the perilous city streets of Nashville on Sunday to win the inaugural Music City Grand Prix.

"I'm just trying to figure out how I ended up winning the race after flying and seeing the sky," he said.

Ericsson conserved fuel and survived hard-charging runs from Colton Herta and Scott Dixon and won his second race of the season. He moved to fifth in the IndyCar-points race with five race left — 79 points back of leader Alex Palou.

Ericsson doesn't have a deal with Chip Ganassi Racing for 2022 and said "I hope Chip was watching today."

"My biggest wish is continue here in the 8 car," Ericsson said.

He made the IndyCar highlight reel long before the checkered flag when he jumped the backside of Bourdais' Chevy and knocked the Frenchman out of the race. Ericsson's airborne Honda needed a new front wing only five laps into the race and said he thought the car was going to snap in half.

The 30-year-old Swede won as darkness fell in Nash-



ville with Dixon, the six-time IndyCar champion, making a late run.

Ericsson caught a break when Herta clobbered his car into the tire barriers with five laps left, ending his dominant weekend for Andretti Autosport. Herta topped the first two practice sessions, won the pole and his team was in "a league of our own." He was gaining on Ericsson and had a potential go-ahead pass on the horizon when he crushed his car. Herta buried his head in his hands in stunned disbelief.

"We had the car all weekend to win," Herta said. "I just

threw it away."

Dixon was second to give Chip Ganassi Racing a 1-2 finish. James Hinchcliffe, Ryan Hunter-Reay and Graham Rahal rounded out the top five.

The Grand Prix was the first new street course race added to the schedule in 10 years and enough fans to fill Nissan Stadium packed grandstands, partied near live music stages, and lined fences 10 rows deep with cameras raised to snap a picture of the fastest newcomers in town.

"If there's enough alcohol out there, it's going to be a good show no matter what," Dixon said.

The best seat in the house might have come without one, when fans stood high on the stadium concourse for a bird's-eye view of one of the 11 turns on the track.

The 2.17-mile course weaved through the stadium parking lot and over a 3,500-foot straightway that spanned over the Korean War Veterans Memorial Bridge and suspended 80 feet over the Cumberland River.

"The track going downtown was so cool to race on," Ericsson said.

Better safe than sorry, dive teams and boats were on standby in case of emergency.

The chaos was contained to the asphalt streets.

Team Penske drivers brought the race to a halt only a few laps later from Ericsson when Will Power dipped inside Simon Pagenaud and drove his teammate into the wall. That led to a massive 10-race pileup and the red flag was out for roughly 20 minutes.

There were nine cautions and two red flags in the race.

"There was no flow to the race. It was like we had six races," Dixon said.

**POINTS STANDINGS**  
Palou holds a 42-point lead in the standings over Dixon.

**JIMMIE'S DAY**

Jimmie Johnson continues to hit bumps in the road — or in his case, on a bridge — in his rookie season in IndyCar. Johnson destroyed his car in the morning practice session for his second wreck of the weekend and was forced to use a backup car. He used a backup car shared by teammate Palou. He was collected in the Penske crash and was disqualified when the No. 48 crew worked on his Honda — Johnson even helped carry spare parts — under the red flag, Johnson was 26th.

"I'm having a blast, I'm learning a ton and every week I'm getting better and better," Johnson said.

**ARROW EXPANSION**

McLaren Racing will purchase a majority stake of the Arrow McLaren SP race team by the end of 2021 and plans to add a third car to its IndyCar lineup.

The team fields cars this season for Pato O'Ward, who was second in the points standings headed into Sunday's Music City Grand Prix, and Felix Rosenqvist. Zak Brown, the CEO of McLaren Racing, said Sunday he would like to add another full-time car in 2023 — perhaps as early as next season "if we can find the right combination."

"We've got the resources, so the economics are not a concern, but we want to run three cars that win races and compete for the championship," he said.

**UP NEXT**

IndyCar returns Saturday to Indianapolis Motor Speedway and hits the road course.

## Fewer medals, more heart for US at a most unusual Olympics

**TOKYO (AP):** Kara Winger is the American record-holder in the javelin throw who just wrapped up her fourth Olympics. She has never finished higher than sixth place.

When she got the call over the weekend telling her she would be carrying the flag Sunday for the United States at the closing ceremony of the Tokyo Games, her first reaction was "shock."

"I expected tweets with people saying 'What has she done?'" Winger said.

Turns out, an awful lot over a career that has spanned two decades. That the American athletes chose her as flagbearer is a fitting lens through which to view the U.S. accomplishments at these Games.

The Americans won 113 medals, which, for the fifth straight Summer Games, was double-digits more than the nearest competition. It was, however, eight fewer than what they won five years ago in a Rio de Janeiro Olympics with fewer events.

When the athletes voted for Winger to represent them, they tapped into the core message resonating inside a fractured, fractious U.S. Olympic family over the last few years: The medals shouldn't matter more than the athletes who win them. Or sometimes not matter at all.

"We spent a ton of energy on creating an environment where people could be heard, and feel safe to be heard," said Sarah Hirshland, who came on as the CEO of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee in 2018.

She was tasked with repairing the damage from sexual-abuse cases that led athletes to wonder if they were valued for more than simply what they won.

If Winger as flagbearer is one sign that the USOPC has made some headway, then Simone Biles gets credit for making sure the message stayed front-and-center despite the hectic, pandemic-tainted run-up to an Olympics.



The willingness of the highest-profile athlete at the Games to step away because it didn't feel right, and to place her personal welfare over victory for herself and country, was startling at first.

Much more than costing medals, what Biles did was re-center the focus. As the Olympics moved into their second week, all but the most cynical observers started celebrating athletes for winning bronze — or nothing — even if they were picked to win gold.

"These are not the USOPC's medals, these are the athletes' medals," Hirshland explained as the Biles decision was still reverberating.

That was part of what Hirshland pitched as a new outlook for the USOPC.

Leading up to the Games, the USOPC introduced new mental-health offerings and created a new athlete-service division — first as a nod to the fallout from the sex-abuse cases, then as a resource to help athletes cope with a yearlong delay and the COVID pandemic.

Their offices stayed busy over the 17 days in Tokyo.

In the end, COVID-19 knocked out only four of the 600-plus athletes officially named to the team, a remarkable logistical challenge in a pandemic that came with its share of stumbles and critiques. Some ath-

letes who worked all their lives to get to this point were bitter that they couldn't share the trip with friends, family or fans.

That was largely a decision by local organizers that left the USOPC with limited options.

Still, Hirshland and the rest of the federation leaders are bound to hear their fair share of critiques — if not about Tokyo, then about what lies ahead.

The Beijing Games start a scant 180 days from Sunday's closing act in Tokyo. Much as the USOPC was forced into playing a lead role in changing the outlook on the IOC's rule banning demonstrations, it will be pressed by some to boycott those Games as a sign of protest of China's much-criticized human-rights record. The federation almost certainly won't go down that road, but the questions will persist.

So will doubts about its effectiveness in putting athletes first. A snapshot: One program designed to funnel more money into athletes' pockets through sponsorship deals has been lauded by some, but criticized by others in the tightly knit world of agents who deal with Olympic clients.

And the USOPC is still involved in a number of lawsuits stemming from abuse cases — so expect more negative headlines about the organization for months and years to come.

## Peyton's Place is Hall of Fame, with Woodson, Megatron

**CANTON, OHIO (AP):** Peyton's Place is now in Canton at the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The only five-time NFL MVP and a two-time Super Bowl winner who left the game five years ago with a slew of passing records was enshrined Sunday night with other members of the class of 2021. The stadium rocked with cheers from fans in Colts blue or Broncos orange — the two franchises he took to the top — when Manning was introduced.

The man who could spend seemingly endless moments changing plays at the line then jabbed at the time limits set by the hall because of 19 acceptance speeches this weekend. The 2020 class and a special centennial class had their enshrinements delayed a year by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The 2021 induction class wants to thank those previous inductees who gave long-winded acceptance speeches," said Manning, who was presented by his father, Archie, himself a College Football Hall of Fame member. "Forcing us to have a whopping six minutes to recap our football careers. I want to give a special thanks to my old rival Ray Lewis for being here tonight. Ray just finished giving his speech that he started in 2018."

Joining Manning in this year's class were two other first-time eligibles, defensive back Charles Woodson — who beat

out Manning for the 1997 Heisman Trophy — and receiver Calvin Johnson. Also in the class were safety John Lynch, a seven-time finalist before getting in; guard Alan Faneca, a premier blocker for 13 seasons, winning a Super Bowl with Pittsburgh and making six All-Pro teams; coach Tom Flores, who led the Raiders to two titles; Cowboys wide-out Drew Pearson, a 1970s NFL All-Decade player; and Steelers super scout Bill Nunn. Manning gave a shoutout to Tom Brady, who he invited to the ceremony, noting that it will be 2035 before Brady, now 44, will have been retired long enough to be enshrined.

As for the NFL itself, Manning urged anyone involved in the league to "ignite the future of the sport. If not, we are not doing football justice. It is about nurturing football to live another day, another year ... The future of this game is ours to shape."

His fellow entrants into the hall shape up pretty nicely in the pro football pantheon.

Flores, the first man to win Super Bowls as a player, assistant coach and head coach, was a backup quarterback for the Chiefs in the fourth Super Bowl, a Raiders assistant to John Madden in the 11th, and head coach when the Raiders won the 15th and 18th games.

Flores, of Mexican descent, long ago became a hero to the Latino community, a symbol of success on and off the field.

# Russia resumes flights to Egyptian resorts after 6 years

CAIRO (AP): Russia resumed flights to Egyptian Red Sea resorts on Monday, ending a ban that had lasted almost six years following the bombing of a Russian airliner that killed all 224 people onboard.

The local branch of the Islamic State group said it downed the plane over Sinai in October 2015, shortly after the aircraft took off from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. At the time, Russian officials insisted that security procedures at Egyptian airports were insufficient.

Early on Monday morning, EgyptAir flight MS724 took off from Moscow with 300 tourists. Hours later, the Airbus A300-330 landed in Hurghada, a popular Red Sea destination, Egypt's national carrier said in a statement.

The Russian plane was welcomed by a ceremonial "water salute" on touchdown and Russian tourists, most of them wearing facemasks, were greeted with flowers and balloons upon disembarking.

The statement said EgyptAir would operate seven flights from the Russian capital to Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh, on the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The first EgyptAir flight from Moscow to Sharm el-Sheikh was scheduled for Tuesday, it said.

Egypt's envoy to Russia, Ihab Nasr, told a local TV station on Sunday that there would be 20 direct flights between Moscow and the two Red Sea resorts every week,



and that Egyptian and Russian officials were discussing additional flights.

The Russian state aviation agency, Rosaviatsiya, has cleared eight Russian airlines to operate flights to Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh from 43 cities across Russia. However, the list does not include St. Petersburg, the destination of the doomed Russian airliner downed over Sinai.

For now, Rossiya, a subsidiary of the Russia's state-owned flagship carrier Aeroflot, appears to be the only Russian airline with scheduled flights to the two Egyptian Red Sea resorts from Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport.

Its flight FV5361 landed in Hurghada early on Monday afternoon and the flight FV5633 was to land in Sharm el-Sheikh an hour and a half later.

Other Russian airlines cleared to operate flights from Moscow to Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh — such as Aeroflot's low-cost subsidiary Pobeda and S7 Airlines, Russia's largest privately owned carrier — have no flights scheduled for the coming days, according to their websites.

The development comes a month after Russian President Vladimir Putin canceled his order suspending the flights after the 2015 disaster.

Flights between Moscow and Cairo resumed in April 2018 after Egyptian officials beefed up security at Cairo's international airport, but talks about restoring direct air travel to Red Sea resorts had dragged on. In 2016, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi finally said the downing of the Russian airliner was a "terrorist attack."

Russia's ambassador to Egypt, Georgy Borisenko, said the decision to resume flights was not an easy one for Moscow.

"However, we ascertained that in recent years Egypt's airports and resorts have dramatically increased security mea-

sures. Therefore, we expect that Russian tourists, who remember the traditional Egyptian hospitality well and miss the Red Sea very much, will have a safe and comfortable stay," Borisenko was quoted by the state RIA Novosti news agency as saying.

Britain, another major source of visitors to Egypt which had also suspended flights to Sharm el-Sheikh in the wake of the bombing, lifted its restrictions in October 2019.

The 2015 attack was a serious blow to Egypt's vital tourism industry, which was also affected by the unrest following its 2011 Arab Spring uprising. Egyptian authorities have since spent millions of dollars upgrading security at the country's airports, hoping to get Moscow to change its mind.

The resumption of flights will be key for Egypt's tourism sector, which was dealt another blow by the coronavirus pandemic over the past year. Authorities have kept looser restrictions in Red Sea towns, trying to attract foreign visitors. But they have mandated vaccinations for workers in the tourism sector in Red Sea resorts, though a vaccination campaign has been slow elsewhere in Egypt. All foreign visitors, however, have to show a negative PCR test and wear facemasks.

Prior to the ban, Russians were the top visitors to Egypt, numbering about 3 million tourists in 2014.

## Nagasaki marks 76th anniversary of atomic bombing

TOKYO (AP): Nagasaki on Monday marked the 76th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of the Japanese city with its mayor urging Japan, the United States and Russia to do more to eliminate nuclear weapons.

In his speech at the Nagasaki Peace Park, Mayor Tomihisa Taue urged Japan's government to take the lead in creating a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia rather than staying under the U.S. nuclear umbrella — a reference to the U.S. promise to use its own nuclear weapons to defend allies without them.

Taue also singled out the United States and Russia — which have the biggest arsenals by far — to do more for nuclear disarmament, as he raised concern that nuclear states have backtracked from disarmament efforts and are upgrading and miniaturizing nuclear weapons.

"Please look into building a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Northeast Asia that would create a 'non-nuclear umbrella' instead of a 'nuclear umbrella' and be a step in the direction of a world free of nuclear weapons," Taue said as he urged Japan's government to do more to take action for nuclear disarmament.

At 11:02 a.m., the moment the B-29 bomber dropped a plutonium bomb, Nagasaki survivors and other participants in the ceremony stood in a minute of silence to honor more than

70,000 lives lost.

The Aug. 9, 1945, bombing came three days after the United States made the world's first atomic attack on Hiroshima, killing 140,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, ending World War II.

The mayor also called Japan's government and lawmakers to quickly sign the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that took effect in January.

Tokyo renounces its own possession, production or hosting of nuclear weapons, but as a U.S. ally Japan hosts 50,000 American troops and is protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The post-WWII security arrangement complicates the push to get Japan to sign the treaty as it beefs up its own military while stepping up defense cooperation with other nuclear-weapons states such as Britain and France, to deal with threats from North Korea and China, among others.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said the security environment is severe and that global views are deeply divided over nuclear disarmament, and that it is necessary to remove distrust by promoting dialogue and form a mutual ground for discussion.

Taue also called for a substantial progress toward nuclear disarmament made at next year's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference, "starting with greater steps by the U.S. and Russia to reduce nuclear weapons."

## Massive forest fire in Greece still burning for 7th day

ATHENS, GREECE (AP): Firefighters and residents battled a massive forest fire on Greece's second largest island for a seventh day Monday, fighting to save what they can from flames that have decimated vast tracts of pristine forest, destroyed homes and businesses and sent thousands fleeing.

The smoke and ash from the fire on Evia, a rugged island of forests and coves almost touching the Greek mainland, blocked out the sun, turning the sky orange as the blaze rampaged across the northern part of the island.

Evia's fire is the most severe of dozens that have broken out across Greece in the past week, after the country was baked by its worst heat wave in three decades which sent temperatures soaring to 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) for days. The heat, coming amid what has already been a particularly hot summer, has turned Greece's forests, including large areas of easily flammable pine trees, into bone-dry tinderboxes.

Other big fires have been burning forests and farmland in the southern Greek region of the Peloponnese, while a major blaze that burned through homes, businesses and forests on the northern fringes of Athens was on the wane. The wildfires have stretched Greece's firefighting capabilities to the limit, and the government has appealed for help from abroad. More than 20 countries in Europe and the Mideast have responded, sending planes, helicopters, vehicles and manpower.

But many residents

and local officials have complained of a lack of firefighters, and some have taken to calling in to Greek television networks to appeal for help, particularly from water-dropping planes and helicopters.

"We were completely forsaken. There were no fire brigades, there were no vehicles, nothing!" said David Angelou, who had been on Evia in the seaside village of Pefki and left the island by ferry to the mainland harbor of Arkitsa Sunday night.

"You could feel the enormous heat, there was also a lot of smoke. You could see the sun, a red ball, and then, nothing else around," he said.

Greece's Civil Protection chief, Nikos Hardalias, has stressed that firefighters have been doing everything they can. On Sunday, a small firefighting plane crashed on the western Greek island of Zakynthos while fighting a smaller fire there.

Massive fires have also raged for more than 10 days in neighboring Turkey, where firefighters were still trying to extinguish blazes in five locations in the coastal province of Mugla, in the country's southwest.

"The situation is improving," Agriculture and Forestry Minister Bekir Pakdemirli said late on Sunday. "It is too soon to say the fires are under control, but we are reaching that point."

On Evia overnight, residents and firefighters managed to save most of the village of Pefki, on the island's northern tip, where fast-moving flames entered the outskirts Saturday evening and destroyed at least one home.

## South Korea to release Samsung scion on parole

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP): South Korea will release billionaire Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong on parole this week after he spent 18 months in prison for his role in a massive corruption scandal that triggered nationwide protests and led to the ouster of the country's previous president.

The announcement Monday by the Justice Ministry, which came with a year left on Lee's 30-month sentence, extends a history of leniency toward major white-collar crime and preferential treatment for convicted tycoons. It tarnishes the reformist image of President Moon Jae-in, who after winning a presidential by-election in 2017 vowed to curb the excesses of "chaebol," South Korea's family-owned conglomerates, and end their cozy ties with the government.

Lee, who has been imprisoned since January, runs the Samsung group in his capacity as vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, one of the world's largest makers of computer memory chips and smartphones.

He was convicted of bribing then-President Park Geun-hye and her close confidante, who are serving lengthier prison terms, to win government support for a 2015 merger between two Samsung affiliates that tightened his control over the corporate empire.

Business leaders and key members of Moon's government and ruling party have endorsed Lee's early release in recent



months, citing Samsung's crucial role in the national economy and the increasing challenges it faces in the global semiconductor market.

Recent polls have indicated that South Koreans -- years removed from the angry rallies of 2016 and 2017 -- are largely in favor of Lee's release, showing Samsung's deep influence in a country where it provides the smartphones, TVs and credit cards people use, the apartments they live in and the hospitals where they are born or go to die.

Even with his release on Friday, legal risks still loom for Lee as he undergoes a trial on separate charges of stock price manipulation and auditing violations related to the 2015 merger. Lee's next court hearing in that case is set for Thursday at the Seoul Central District Court.

Justice Minister Park Beom-kye said the decision to grant parole to Lee, who will be released with about 800 other convicts on Friday, was based on concerns related to the

"national economic situation and the global economic environment" amid the prolonged COVID-19 crisis. Moon's office didn't immediately comment on Lee's release.

Lee, 53, was originally sentenced in 2017 to five years in prison on the corruption charges but was freed after 11 months in February 2018 following a Seoul High Court ruling that reduced his term to 2 ½ years and suspended his sentence, overturning key convictions and reducing the amount of his bribes.

The Supreme Court returned the case to the high court in 2019, ruling that the amount of Lee's bribes had been undervalued. Lee was sent back to jail in January this year following a retrial.

Samsung Electronics has shown no obvious sign of business trouble while Lee ran the company from behind bars, communicating his decisions through visiting company executives. The demand for its semiconductor chips, TVs and other products has surged as the

pandemic forced millions to stay at home. The company said last month that its operating profit for the second quarter increased by 54% from a year earlier to 12.57 trillion won (\$11 billion), driven by its dual strengths in components and finished products.

But there were also concerns that Lee's prison term was slowing Samsung's speed in major investments when it needs to spend aggressively to stay competitive in semiconductors and other technologies.

While Samsung remains dominant in memory chips, which are used to store information, there are views that it is increasingly falling behind rival Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. in the race for high-tech chips designed to perform a broader range of functions.

The demand for advanced chips is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years, driven by fifth generation (5G) wireless services, artificial intelligence and self-driving cars.





**TANGERINE DREAM!** Rapper Iggy Azalea wore a curve-hugging orange dress to a Vanderpump Dogs event.

## Dominic Fike, Minka Kelly added to season 2 of 'Euphoria'

**LOS ANGELES, AUG 9 (PTI):** Actors Dominic Fike, Minka Kelly and musical artiste Deme-trius 'Lil Meech' Flenory Jr are set to star in the second season of the acclaimed HBO series "Euphoria".

Revolving around a group of teenagers, an official synopsis of "Euphoria" says the show "follows a group of high school students as they navigate drugs, sex, identity, trauma, social media, love and friendship". It is based on a 2012 Israeli miniseries of the same name created by Ron Leshem and Daphna Levin.

The first season of the show stars Zendaya, Hunter Schafer, Jacob Elordi, and Maude Apatow.

Fike told Variety exclusively that his character is a "homie" who hangs out with Rue and Jules, played by Zendaya and Schafer.

Lil Meech, who is set to make his acting debut with the series, also described his character as a "degenerate" who reminds him of his younger self.

"Euphoria" began filming again earlier this year for its long-anticipated season two. It also stars AlexaDemie, Barbie Ferreira, Sydney Sweeney, Eric Dane, Algee Smith, and Austin Abrams.

The series is directed by Augustine Friz-

zell and written by Sam Levinson.

Late last year, the show put out two bonus episodes -- "Trouble Don't Last Always" and "F\*\*k Anyone Who's Not A Sea Blob", which earned "Euphoria" three Emmy nominations.

For her performance as Rue, a recovering teenage drug addict struggling to find



her place in the world, Zendaya became the youngest winner of the Primetime Emmy Award for outstanding lead actress in a drama series.

Zendaya, Levinson, Kevin Turen, Ravi Nandan, rapper Drake, Future the Prince, HadasMozes Lichtenstein, Leshem, Levin, TmiraYardeni, MiritToovi, YoramMokady and Gary Lennon executive produce the series, with Will Greenfield serving as a co-executive producer.

The second season of the show is expected to premiere in late 2021 or early 2022.

# Jury selection set to begin in R. Kelly sex trafficking case

**NEW YORK (AP):** After several delays, the first phase of the sex trafficking trial of R&B hitmaker R. Kelly will begin with jury selection Monday in New York City.

A judge in federal court in Brooklyn will question potential jurors about whether they can keep an open mind about Kelly two years after he was charged with abusing women and girls for nearly two decades. The proceeding will occur amid coronavirus pandemic precautions restricting the press and the public to overflow courtrooms with video feeds.

Kelly, 54, has been locked up since he was indicted, mostly housed in a federal jail in Chicago. He was moved last month to the federal Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn to face trial in a case that's further diminished his superstar status.

Last week, defense attorney DevereauxCannick told a judge that Kelly needs to be measured for new clothing because he's gained so much weight in jail. And he asked that court transcripts be provided at no cost because Kelly has been unable to work for two years, saying: "His funds are depleted."

The Grammy-winning, multiplatinum-selling singer has denied any wrongdoing and pleaded not guilty to charges accusing him of leading an enterprise of managers, bodyguards and other employees who helped him recruit women and girls for sex. Federal prosecutors say the group selected victims at concerts and other venues and arranged for them to travel to see Kelly.

Defense lawyers have said Kelly's alleged victims were groupies who turned up at his shows and made it known they "were dying to be with him." They only started accusing him of abuse years later when public sentiment shifted in the

#MeToo era, they said.

The trial had been expected to start earlier in the year. But opening statements were moved to Aug. 18 after Kelly fired his original defense team.

Jurors are expected to hear testimony from several of his accusers. A judge has ruled that the women will only be referred to by their first names.

Prosecutors have said the jury will

Number." She died in a plane crash in 2001 at age 22.

The case is only part of the legal peril facing the singer, born Robert Sylvester Kelly. He also has pleaded not guilty to sex-related charges in Illinois and Minnesota.

Kelly won multiple Grammys for "I Believe I Can Fly," a 1996 song that became an inspirational anthem played at



also hear evidence that Kelly schemed with others to pay for a fake ID for Aaliyah, a singer on the rise at 15 years old, in a secret ceremony in 1994.

Aaliyah is identified as "Jane Doe #1" in court papers because she was still a minor when Kelly began a sexual relationship with her and believed she had become pregnant, the papers say.

"As a result, in an effort to shield himself from criminal charges related to his illegal sexual relationship with Jane Doe #1, Kelly arranged to secretly marry her to prevent her from being compelled to testify against him in the future," the papers say.

Aaliyah, whose full name was Aaliyah Dana Haughton, worked with Kelly, who wrote and produced her 1994 debut album, "Age Ain't Nothing But A

school graduations, weddings, advertisements and elsewhere.

Nearly a decade later, he began releasing what eventually became 22 musical chapters of "Trapped in the Closet," a drama that spins a tale of sexual deceit and became a cult classic.

But Kelly has been trailed for decades by complaints and allegations about his sexual behavior, including a 2002 child pornography case in Chicago. He was acquitted in that case in 2008.

Scrutiny intensified again amid the #MeToo movement in recent years, with multiple women going public with accusations against the singer. The pressure intensified with the release of the Lifetime documentary "Surviving R. Kelly" in 2019.

Criminal charges soon followed.

## 'Modern Family' medicine: Bowen, sister help injured woman

**MOAB, UTAH (AP):** A woman who fainted and hit her head on a rock after stopping to rest in Utah's Arches National Park woke up to hear a familiar voice and wondered if she might be watching television.

Minnie John of Oradell, New Jersey, then questioned whether she might know the woman who was with the doctor helping her, or if she was famous, according to a post on Facebook.

"Her sister the doctor asked me to guess and I told her I just hit my head, I can't remember. She said smiling 'Modern Family' and I said of course!" John recounted about how she finally recognized Julie Bowen from her role on the long-running comedy series.

In her Aug. 3 post, John said she had been on a "bucket list" trip to Arches and hiking to see Delicate Arch, a four-story sandstone arch perched on the rim of a deep red rock canyon, for an hour and a half when she could not go any farther. She told her husband and son to go ahead as she rested along the trail, her head in her hands.

Julie Bowen and her sister Annie told her that their guide had seen her fall face forward on a rock, with her glasses break-

ing her fall, she said. They cleaned her up and gave her electrolytes as Julie Bowen assured her she was going to be OK, John said. They used her phone to call her son and some people selflessly ran ahead to find him, about 20 minutes ahead, to let them know what had happened, John



said. John said she fractured her nose and received five stitches later at the hospital. She expressed gratitude to God for sending people to help her.

"Daredevil or dumb as can be, I still consider this trek up the mountain as one of my proudest achievements in my life. Sometimes you need to take those chances in life to live to experience heights and depths," she wrote.

## Dave Chappelle, Jon Stewart to perform at 9/11 benefit show

**NEW YORK (AP):** Dave Chappelle, Jon Stewart, Jimmy Fallon and Amy Schumer are part of a star-studded group of comedians that will perform for one night only at Madison Square Garden to mark the 20th anniversary of 9/11. All proceeds from "NYC Still Rising After 20 Years: A Comedy Celebration" will benefit 9/11 charities. Proof of vaccination is required.

"We wanted to put on a fun celebration to honor this great city's resilience. It's nice to be able to do this with friends and people we love," Stewart said in a statement. The show is his brainchild with Pete Davidson, who will also perform.

A ticket pre-sale for the Sept. 12 show begins at noon Wednesday on Live Nation, Ticketmaster.com and MSG and runs until 10 p.m. Thursday, with general tickets on sale starting at noon Friday at Ticketmaster.com. Bill Burr, Colin Jost, Colin Quinn, Dave Attell, Jay Pharoah, John Mulaney, Michael Che, Ronny Chieng, Tom Segura and Wanda Sykes are also in the line up.

Aries:

While we glorify change endlessly, we don't always have the tools required to cope with it. Yet, what must be eliminated, must be eliminated. This is what transformation requires of us. So, cut the cords that are no longer serving you. Exit situations that are detrimental to your mental and emotional well-being. Remember that what you're making space for is far more magnificent than what you're leaving behind.

Tip: It's time to eliminate what no longer serves you.

Taurus:

It's all happening in the here and now. It's all happening in the here and now! This is where the magic is unfolding. Taurus. The prayers you prayed a long time ago are beginning to take form. The dreams you dreamed when you were in the midst of the darkness are helping you remember that you are a being of light. So, say a prayer. Say a gentle and loving prayer to the mysterious forces that have helped you get back on your feet. As you do, reclaim your power as the co-creator of your reality, for the change begins with you.

Tip: It's all coming together, beautiful.

Gemini:

Playing it cool is so last season. You're in the mood to bring your most passionate self into the bedroom (or wherever it is that you're meeting your lover at this mo-

ment). There's grand news for Gemini's who've been somewhat single too. That va-va-voom moment you have been manifesting is on the cards for this week. So, get out of those slouchy sweatpants and get your freak on! We're still in the energy of the Leo new moon, after all! Tip: Did somebody say va-va-voom?

Cancer:

This is a beautiful time in the Cancer HQ. You are moving closer and closer to fruition season. You're watching your labour of love come to life. So take a moment to gaze lovingly at the harvest. Take a moment to offer a prayer of gratitude to the mysterious forces. Remember, abundance, like happiness, multiplies when shared. So, celebrate your victory with your soul tribe in a manner that you feel called to.

Tip: It's all coming together, beautiful.

Leo:

We could do everything on our own, but, where's the fun in that, Leo? The cards are bringing your attention to fruitful collaborations. For those who are working within the confines of an organisation, 'dream team' is the word of the moment. So, sync your forces with those around you as you remember that you have attracted these connections into your life for a reason. When it comes to your creative processes, adopt a no holds barred policy. The more you give yourself the permission to 'play', the better

your product will be.

Tip: Sync your forces with those you feel that creative connect with.

Virgo:

The new moon is a time of magical beginnings. A time of planting the seeds of new, and working towards positive change systematics. Trust the ideas you're being called to work upon as they are coming from that place of wisdom within your soul. As you do, choose the path of least resistance. As long as you are giving your best to whatever you choose, you will always be protected and cared for. This is a promise from the mysterious forces above! Tip: New and magical beginnings!

Libra:

It's time for love and other intoxicants in the Libra HQ. It's time to break down the walls and bear your heart and soul to the beautiful being in front of you. Remember, fear will only keep you stuck in the old paradigm. Choosing to stay open, on the other hand, will help your soar to a whole new level. So, choose consciously. Walk with awareness. Something tells us the love you have attracted into your Universe is about to open the portal of divine healing. Tip: A love like no other love you have tasted before.

Scorpio:

Our outer reality is a reflection of our inner reality, and that's just how this physical reality of ours works. So, the

more you work on yourself, the more you work on transforming your shadows, the more alluring you become to the good stuff. The blessings that are unfolding all around you are proof of all the love that you have been pouring into your own cup, beautiful!

Tip: Make way for big magic.

Sagittarius:

The power of your words is immeasurable, Sagittarius. They have the ability to both heal "and" hurt other people. It all comes down to what you will choose today, and something tells us you're in the mood to choose the path of kindness. So, uplift yourself and those around you. Remind them of their power and what they're truly capable of. What you're being called to do today is become a catalyst of change for your soul squad.

Tip: Let your words uplift those around you.

Capricorn:

Writer and poet Kahilil Gibran's words to begin your day with, dear Scorpio: "No human relationship gives one possession in another—every two souls are absolutely different. In friendship or in love, the two side by side raise hands to find what one cannot reach alone." This chapter of your life is bringing with itself the lesson of non-attachment. How deep is your love, Capricorn, and is it capable of co-existing with freedom? Trust the connection(s) you have manifested in your world and trust that they will sur-

vive the test of time. The only question you want to ask yourself today is, "How can we grow together?"

Tip: Oh, to love without attachment!

Aquarius:

It's not just about what you say, but about how you say it too. Tap into the gift of the gab, Aquarius. Make a strong case for what you stand for and how you would like to be supported. The right dose of assertiveness and compassion will help you make a significant change. Some of you may be thinking about sharing your story publicly (without any filters). Others may feel inspired to take the motivation speaker route. Trust the guidance that is coming through from the higher realms and trust that it is leading you to the right direction.

Tip: The right dose of assertiveness and compassion will help you make a significant impact.

Pisces:

The process of manifestation requires non-attachment. The process of manifestation requires surrender. So, speak your intentions clearly and then allow the Universe to work its magic through you. What you're about to witness today: proof of your own power. For some of you, this could signify a change on the work and career front. Once you step into your power, there's nothing that's out of your reach, Pisces. Tip: The Universe knows what's best for you and will deliver it to you in the most unexpected of ways!