



**TAAPSEE PANNU, PAVAI GULATI
WRAP 'DOBAARAA' SHOOT**
pg 08

**TOXIC BOSSES SHOULD BE THE NEXT
TO FACE #METOO-TYPE REPRISALS**
pg 04

**EMERALD FENNELL TO PEN
SCRIPT FOR 'ZATANNA' MOVIE**
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Handyboy beaten up and set on fire at Jalipool

AARON RAI
GANGTOK, 23 MAR: Pawan Sharma, a handyboy from Central Pendam, East Sikkim, was attacked and set on fire by four persons on the evening of 21 March at Murda Hatti, Jalipool, East Sikkim. He is currently admitted at CRH Tadong and two of the four accused have been placed in police custody.

According to Pawan, the incident happened at around 6:30 pm at Jalipool where the truck he works on was parked. Four men came to him and asked him for cigarettes and then told him to hand in all the money he had. When he said he did not have anything, they beat him up and then poured diesel over him before setting him on fire. One of the four panicked and poured some water on him before running away.

Fortunately, some locals saw what happened and rushed him to the hospital. He is currently being treated at CRH Tadong but expenses have run high and he can no longer afford further treatment.

His sister, Sarita Sharma has urged people to support them as they are struggling to meet the hospital expenses.

An FIR against the four was lodged at Ranipool Police Station and the accused were subsequently arrested.

However, following investigation two accused Bishal Gurung and Satish Rai were taken into police custody and the other two released on bail after detention after direct culpability of only two was established during preliminary investigation, informed police sources.

No need for comorbidity certificate for those between 45-59 yrs

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 MAR:

Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia today informed that as per a communiqué received from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare there would be no need of comorbidity certificate for vaccination of persons in age group of 45 to 59 years from 01 April. He added that those who will attain 45 years on 01 January 2022 are eligible for the vaccination.

He further informed that as per another communiqué received from the Centre, the gap between two doses of the vaccines has also been increased from 4 to 6 weeks [29 to 42 days] to 6 to 8 weeks [42 to 56 days]. On the same, he urged the people who have been coming for second dose to come between 42 to 56 days and further appealed to coordinate with the concerned authorities before coming for the



second dose of vaccine. He also appealed to people to properly follow the COVID appropriate behaviour even those who have been vaccinated for COVID-19.

Meanwhile, two new cases of coronavirus have been reported in

the last 24 hours in Sikkim. Two persons near Tourism Office at Metro Point, Tadong in East District tested positive for COVID-19.

In his daily health bulletin on Tuesday, Mr Bhutia informed that two new cases were detected in testing of 150 samples on Monday and both cases were found in RT-PCR testing of 131 samples. He added that both are primary contacts of a family member who had tested positive for COVID-19 on 19 March.

On the other hand, the number of active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim has come down to 42 with nine more recoveries in the State. Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 stands at 6208, in which 5934 have

already recovered and released from isolation facilities in the State.

While giving details of COVID vaccination, he mentioned that 2930 persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 in different parts of the State on Monday. He added that out of 2930 persons, 1742 got the first shot of the vaccine and 1188 have completed their vaccine schedule with the second dose of the vaccine.

Mr Bhutia said that 189 healthcare workers [37 first dose & 152 second dose], 1316 frontline workers [1036 first dose & 280 second dose], 280 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years with comorbidities and 1324 persons in age group of 60 years & above were vaccinated yesterday in the State.

While seeing district-wise data, 1889 persons [1274 first dose & 615 second dose] in East District, 644 [356 first dose & 288 second dose] in West District and 424 [139 first dose & 285 second dose] in

South District have received COVID vaccine shots.

Likewise, if we see details of category-wise vaccination in districts, 108 healthcare workers [34 first dose & 74 second dose], 607 frontline workers [66 first dose & 541 second dose], 182 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 965 persons in age group of 60 years & above have received COVID vaccines in East District, while 3 healthcare workers [1 first dose & 2 second dose], 339 frontline workers [286 first dose & 53 second dose], 53 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 294 persons in age group of 60 years & above were also vaccinated for COVID-19 in West District.

Similarly, 78 healthcare workers [02 first dose and 76 second dose], 254 frontline workers [209 first dose & 45 second dose], 45 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 65 persons in age group of 60 years & above have also got COVID vaccine shots in South District.

Eastern Command ITBP ADG calls on CM



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 MAR:

Additional Director General of ITBP, Eastern Command, (Guwahati), A. M. Prasad called on the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at Mintokgang, today, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs. He was accompanied by DIG, SHQ, Gangtok, R. P. S. Raghuvanshi and other officers.

It was a courtesy call by the ADG during which several points related to the strengthening of security along the border areas of Sikkim were discussed.

The ADG briefed about various strategies and the prevailing issues related to the border, like setting up new border outposts and a training centre, which promotes adventure sports like mountaineering and others, that eventually

may also be supportive towards tourism in the State. He also informed about his endeavour to establish a battalion in the State.

The Chief Minister stated that National Security should be prioritised and also expressed his desire to work in co-operation and assured all possible support from the State Government. He expressed his gratitude towards the ADG and the team for their visit and the productive discussion.

It is also to be mentioned that the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) had posted its first officer ADG, A. M. Prasad in the month of August 2020; to head the newly created Guwahati based Eastern Command that oversees the deployment of border battalions in the region.

Vaccine for all above 45 years from April 1: Govt

NEW DELHI, MAR 23 (PTI): The government Tuesday announced that from April 1, all people above 45 years of age will be eligible to get COVID-19 vaccines and requested them to get registered for the inoculation.

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Cabinet after its meeting, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said now even people without comorbidities who are

more than 45 years of age can get vaccinated.

He requested people entitled to get themselves registered to take the jabs.

He said the Cabinet also decided that the second dose of the vaccine can be taken between four and eight weeks, on the advice of doctors. It was allowed to be taken between four to six weeks earlier, but scientists

turn to pg02

CM's wife inaugurates 4 medical units at Namchi Hospital

BIKASH CHETTRI
NAMCHI, 23 MAR:

Wife of Chief Minister, PS Tamang, Krishna Rai inaugurated four medical units in Namchi District Hospital today.

Endoscopy machine, two dental chairs (gifted to the hospital on the birthday of the Chief Minister), cardiology OPD unit and Garib Jankalyan Prakostha information centre were inaugurated during the hour-long visit of Ms Rai. She also visited units on the top four floors of Namchi District Hospital.

Garib Jankalyan Prakostha information centre is going to work for those in BPL category who need support for medical facilities in direct coordination with the Chief Minister's Office. The beneficiaries are going to be supported with medicines, am-



balance during referrals to STNM Gangtok and financial support for major illnesses.

During Ms Rai's visit, the CMO and DMS of Namchi District Hospital reported several facilities given to the patients and informed her of the requirement for stationery budget of the hospital.

Krishna Rai also attended the closing ceremony of a Mega Sale and Exhibition of handloom products from Ladakh, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Manipur, West Bengal and Sikkim in Upper Goom, South Sikkim, with South District Zilla Adakshya Tshering Dem, South District SKM In-charge,

Youth Wing and executive members of Nari Shakti, in the afternoon.

The event was organized by the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom Government of Sikkim and Sikkim Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited, a Government of Sikkim undertaking, and

was sponsored by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

SIRD Director, Bishal Mukhia was felicitated for his contribution in acquiring the funding from the World Bank for building Community Facility Centre in Goom, by the self-help groups of the village.

The chief guest of the program Krishna Rai applauded the hard work of the women of SHGs and said that Registration Card for participating in national exhibitions will be provided to them.

She also urged the self-help groups to work on the previous plan of tailoring uniforms for school children and spoke about the 'Skilled Youth Startup Scheme. For the attraction of the rural people of Goom, carom tournament was also organized by the Department.

States can bring in local restrictions, says Centre in new Covid rules

NEW DELHI, 23 MAR [NDTV]: States can bring in restrictions locally, based on their assessment, but no activity will be restricted outside containment zones, the government said today in new guidelines to tackle a spike in Covid cases in parts of the country.

All states must strictly enforce the test-track-treat protocol and ensure Covid-appropriate behavior to check the spread of the coronavirus, say the Home Ministry's new guidelines, effective for the month of April.

The centre has also asked states to rapidly step up vaccinations to cover all priority groups at the earliest. The vaccine drive has seen "uneven pace" across different States and Union Territories and the slow pace of vaccination in some states "is a matter of concern", says the home ministry.

"Vaccination against COVID-19, in the present scenario, is critical to break the chain of transmission. Therefore, all state/UT governments should rapidly step up the pace of vac-

cination, to cover all priority groups in an expeditious manner," it says.

States where the proportion of RT-PCR tests is less should rapidly increase them to 70 per cent or more, the Home Ministry says.

Based on the Covid-positive cases and the tracking of their contacts, district authorities will need to mark containment zones and notify them on websites.

States have been asked to consider fines or other similar action to strictly enforce Covid-appropriate behavior like masks, sanitizing and distancing in work places and in public, especially in crowded places.

The rules say there will be no restriction on inter-state and intra-state movement of people and goods.

All activities will be allowed outside the containment zones, with SOPs. This means the government will not stop trains, flights, metros, schools, colleges, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, multiplexes, parks, yoga centres, gyms and gatherings.

TMC youth project Ramesh Karadria as "independent" candidate from Darj



SMRITA KHAWAS
DARJEELING, 23 MAR:

Tirinamool Youth Congress convened an indoor meeting at the TMC party office here and unanimously decided to project Ramesh Karadria as their "independent" candidate from the Darjeeling constituency after what they see as negligent treatment from their alliance partners, the two factions of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha.

Palden Lama of the TMC informed a press conference today that even though the party president, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, had left the three

assembly seats in the Hills for the party's alliance partners, the two factions of the GJM were squabbling instead of trying to ensure victory for the alliance.

"Both groups have said often that they do not need TMC support and it feels like they are not even counting us in the Hills. To register our existence in the Hills and to keep TMC alive here, we have decided to field our youth leader as an independent candidate from Darjeeling so that everyone can see that we have the ability to make our CM's stand stronger," he said.

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Officials visit polling stations under NMC

NAMCHI, 23 MAR (IPR): Sector Magistrate, Chiran Rizal, Namchi Municipal Council and Sector Police Officer visited polling stations under Namchi Municipal Council (NMC) today. They checked the assured minimum facilities for the upcoming Municipal Elections 2021.

The scheduled date for the polls is on 31 Mar, 2021

The Booth Level Officers were also briefed about their roles and responsibilities prior to poll day which is on 30 March and on the poll day.

There are six polling stations and in all the stations the assured minimum facility were found satisfactory.

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Vendor Development Prog for SC/ST Entrepreneurs

GYALSHING, 23 MAR (IPR): Vendor Development Programme for SC/ST Entrepreneurs, organised by MSME Division of Commerce & Industries Department was held at the conference hall of Zilla Bhawan, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, today.

The programme had the presence of Chairman, Commerce and Industries Department, Man Bahadur Chettri, ADC West, Agawane Rohan Ramesh, Director/MSME, M. Ravikumar (IFS), AD/MSME, Bimala Chettri, DD/Education Department, Jiwan Prakash Chhetri, Principals and students from surrounding schools, entrepreneurs and public at large.

Addressing the gathering, Chairman briefed that the main objective of the programme was to boost market linkages and to help entrepreneurs and to expand their business. He added that the programme aims to develop linkages between small and large enterprises and provide opportunity to SMEs to showcase their capabilities.

He also apprised and encouraged the general youth on various avenues, scopes and schemes of the government to start their own businesses. He ensured that the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim and the Government is all ready to help the needy to establish their businesses.

ADC West in his briefing stated about the start-up scheme loan provided and its aim of the programme is to develop linkages between small and large enterprises. He informed that the objective is to provide an opportunity to SMEs to showcase their capabilities to various wings of organisations establishments, the second objective is to enable large-scale enterprises to identify suitable vendors in the MSME sector to forge 'vendor-vendee' relationships and the third objective is to inform the educated youth about the opportunities in the MSME sector. This programme therefore aims to develop potential SMEs as vendors. He added the government would offer low subsidy to imperative in the society so that the younger generation of Sikkim make optimum use of it to make

Hill parties must fight BJP together: Bimal Gurung

SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 23 MAR:

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha [Bimal faction] today announced the names of candidates for three constituencies for the upcoming elections. GJM chief, Bimal Gurung also sent out an appeal to regional parties to come together to fight BJP.

P.T Olla is the party's candidate from Darjeeling, Norbu G Lama from Kuersong and Dr Ram Bhujel from Kalimpong.

The announcement was made today from Malidhura in Takvar Darjeeling in which thousands of supporters along with the leaders were present.

Roshan Giri, general secretary of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (Bimal faction) addressing the



gathering today said, "Today we are very happy to announce our three candidates for the upcoming Vidhan Sabha election. And today I would like to remind everyone that we will never forget about Gorkhaland."

He said that this election is important and the

party candidates must win against the GJM [Binoy faction] and the BJP.

He accused the BJP of lying and using Gorkhaland to get votes.

"BJP has always lied to us and asked for vote in the name of Gorkhaland from 2009 till now. Even the 11 trib-

al status has not been passed. No promise has been fulfilled till now by BJP and because of that we cannot trust the BJP party for Permanent Political Solution (PPS)," said Mr Giri.

GJM chief, Bimal Gurung said, "Today, after three and a half years, I am

standing here to start anew by announcing the names of the candidates and hope these three candidates will never let me and our community down."

He further said that regional problems and parties must be kept alive.

All the BJP candidates announced today were in GJM before so I am not afraid of BJP because I believe that the party which cannot give their own candidates cannot win in our Hills," stated Mr Gurung.

He also pointed out that BJP has not fielded any candidate from its ally, GNLF and regional parties should remember this.

He also appealed to all the regional parties of the hills to fight BJP together.

West receives 7 EVM sets

GYALSHING, 23 MAR

(IPR): The West District

Administration, Rabdentse received 7 sets of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) comprising of Control Unit, Ballot Unit, Presiding Officer Diary, Voting compartment and other Elections materials from State Election Commission, Sikkim at 5:30 pm today for the forthcoming Municipal Elections 2021 pertaining to Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat. The EVMs were



checked and stored in the strong room located at District Administration Centre in the presence of Additional District Collector (West) cum Assistant Municipal Returning Officer Mr. Agawane Rohan Ra-

mesh alongwith the officials of Election Department and the contesting candidates/representatives. The strong room is under 24x7 CCTV Surveillance and is sealed and guarded by Police Department, West.

Farm School launched in Tathangchen

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 MAR:

A day-long program on the opening of Farm School on Scientific Management and Production of Vegetables Crops was launched by Agriculture Technology Management Agency, Agriculture Department at lower Tathangchen under Nandok block on 23 Mar, a press release informs.

Buddha Singh Ta-

mang, a progressive farmer was selected as Farm School Teacher with 25 farmer students of that area. Resource person Block Technology Manager, Pratima Cintury informed farmers about ATMA scheme and the importance of Farm School and the role of the Farm Teacher.

On the other hand, HDO, Hort Deptt, Laxmi Chettri highlighted on

various departmental schemes.

Simultaneously, Sr FA, Ganga Ram Sharma spoke on the uses and applications of organic bio pesticides. At the end, zucchini and capsicum seeds were given away to the Farm Teacher.

Also present were horticulture officials and OFOJ staff. Lastly the program concluded with vote of thanks by ATM.

ICAR-KVK East celebrates World Water Day 2021

Gangtok, 23 Mar (PIB): Water is a critical input for agricultural production and plays an important role in food security. Irrigated agriculture represents 20 percent of the total cultivated land and contributes 40 percent of the total food produced worldwide. Irrigated agriculture is, on average, at least twice as productive per unit of land as rainfed agriculture, thereby allowing for more production intensification and crop diversification. Due to population growth, urbanization, and climate change, competition for water resources is expected to increase, with particular impact on agriculture. Currently, agriculture accounts for 70 percent of all fresh-water withdrawals globally. Inter-sectoral water re-allocations and significant shifts of water away from agriculture will also need to be accompanied by improvements in water use efficiency and improvements in water delivery systems. Improving the efficiency of water use in agriculture will also depend on matching of improvements main system (off-farm) with appropriate incentives for on-farm investments aiming to improve soil and water management with the theme of valuing water. ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra-East Sikkim celebrated World Water Day at Zitlang village of Duga block, East Sikkim on 22 Mar, 2021. A total of 62 participants attended the celebration programme and out of which 41 Farmer and farmwomen, 08 Panchayat Members, 06 officials from ATMA, East and 07 Scientists and other officials from ICAR, Sikkim Centre.

The programme was graced by Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, ICAR, Sikkim Centre, Tadong as Chief Guest. During

his remark, he shared his ideas on the importance of water in day to day use in our life and also for use in irrigation for crop production in agriculture and allied sectors. He stressed to make water harvesting structures in every house for their future use.

In-charge KVK-East Sikkim, Dr JK Singh, Ranipool spoke on the use of less water requirement crops and their varieties for higher production and judicious use of harvested water.

Scientist, Dr Saurabh Saha, Agril Meteorology, deliberated on the role of water in agriculture and how to harvest and conserve the water for future use. He also elaborated on the use of water conservation technology for crop production.

Scientist, Dr Amit Kumar, Agronomy stated the importance of weeds in farming and to check the water loss through the use for different technologies like mulching, use of suitable crop variety, zero till cultivation etc.

SMS (Agronomy), Dr Manoj Kumar detailed about the cropping system and crop diversification with vegetable and pulses in rice fallow for enhancement of cropping intensity and income.

SMS (DAMU), Sh Debasis Saikia elaborate about the role and function of District Agro Meteorological Unit (DAMU) for agricultural crop production in the climate change scenario.

Panchayat President, Sh Dronacharya Sabkota, Duga shared his views about the scarcity of water faced by farmers and asked the institution for help to farming community.

The program ended with the vote of thanks proposed by Progressive farmer, Sh Upen Silal, Zitlang village, East Sikkim.

Vaccine for all...

have now said that taking the second dose between four and eight weeks gives improved results.

The union cabinet discussed about the vaccination drive which has already achieved speedy and good progress, Javadekar said.

"Today after discussion and on the advice of the task force and scientists, it was decided that from April 1 the vaccine will open for everybody above 45 years of age.

"We request that all eligible people should immediately register from April 1 and get vaccinated, as it is the shield against the disease," Javadekar told reporters.

He said till this day, 4.85 crore vaccines have been administered for COVID-19 and more than 32 lakh people administered the vaccine in last 24 hours.

Another decision taken, on the advice given by scientists and world scientist bodies, was that the second dose of vaccine can be administered between fourth and eighth week, particularly for Covishield, he said.

"Our appeal is that all above 45 years should take vaccine as early as possible, that will provide them the shield against coronavirus and they should register for getting vaccinated," the minister said.

Vaccines are available in enough number and there is no scarcity and the supply chains and supply line is intact, he said, adding that "I am sure everyone will welcome this decision and come forward to get vaccinated."

The minister said he was confident that vaccination will increase at a fast pace.

To a question on cases of COVID-19 rising in some states, he said, the central government is in touch with them and there will be effective management.

"We hope that virus would not be allowed to spread," he asserted.

On 80 per cent cases in Punjab found to have UK variant of the virus, Javadekar said, the virus is coming out in new variants and forms.

That is why getting vaccinated is important as that is the only shield, he said.

"One has to continue using masks and maintaining social distancing and washing hands is also important, but vaccination is the only shield," he noted.

The minister said the vaccine is available in adequate quantities and India takes pride that both its vaccines are successful. The prime minister himself took the Covaxin shot, he added, noting that one can take any of the two vaccines and take the second dose according to doctor's advice.

The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers getting inoculated and vaccination of the frontline workers started from February 2.

The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination commenced on March 1 for those who are over 60 years of age and for people aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions.

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SANSINGMA YAMBOK/ ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

Sansingma Yambok/ Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved brother Late Yalamber Subba, s/o Mrs Kamala Subba, who left us for the heavenly abode on 18th March 2021 afternoon, falls on 27th March 2021 [Saturday]. Sansingma Yambok/ Anthyesthi Kriya for the departed soul will be held at Chokasum Hall, Namnang, Gangtok and we request all our relatives, family, friends and well-wishers to kindly join us to offer prayers for the young soul who left us early.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our well-wishers who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

Amar, Lanam, Manghang, Yehang, Todi Young (Brothers)
Amrita, Anita, Sangita, Ningwa (Sisters), Sonam Doma Bhutia (sister-in-law)
Kalka Rai (sister-in-law)
Mecal O. Lepcha (sister-in-law) & family



ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

The 16 day Anthyesthi Kriya of late Munni Devi W/O Rama Shanker Prasad, Lall Market, Gangtok, East Sikkim who left for heavenly abode on 08.03.2021 falls on 25.03.2021. All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering pujas for the departed soul at CHOKASOM, NAMNAM, Gangtok East Sikkim.

also express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

Son
Ashok Kumar Prasad
Sanjay kumar Prasad
Manoj kumar Prasad
Raju kumar Prasad
Contact Number: +91 70016 81237
+91 81012 49712



SYF felicitates 60 Guiding Juniors volunteers

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 MAR:

Sikkim Youth Federation felicitated 60 students from different colleges and universities across the state and region on 23 Mar, 2021.

They were felicitated for their sincere service and dedication to enhance the well-being of the students of rural areas during the winter vacation of 2019-20 through the program Guiding Juniors organised by Sikkim Youth Federation, a press release informs.

Unlike the previous times, this time the certificates and khadas were sent through India Post due to the ongoing pandemic. The recipients had spent two weeks of their winter vacation guiding and nurturing the school going kids of rural areas across 20 centres which includes Lingthem in North Sikkim, Shyam



Pani in South Sikkim and Chungzong in West Sikkim among others.

The topics covered were Article 371F, History of Sikkim, Communication Skills, Personality development and Basics of English, Science and Mathematics. Recreational activities and Scholastic Competitions like quiz, debate, essay

writing and Career Counselling were also the major highlights of the program.

Guiding Juniors is an annual program of Sikkim Youth Federation which aims to provide voluntary education focusing on school students in rural areas of the state. Envisioned in the year 2017 it strives

at providing academic and career assistance to the school students and a rich platform for Undergraduates, Postgraduates and Research Scholars to connect with the juniors and assist them in their better career along with their self-upgradation with better experiences.

It may be noted that until now Sikkim Youth

Federation has successfully organised 'Guiding Juniors' for three consecutive times in 120 centres across the rural areas of Sikkim. About 1200 college and university students have volunteered in the said program successfully connecting with around 7500 school students of the far-flung areas.

Training cum workshop on Child Protection

GANGTOK, 23 MAR (IPR): Two-day training cum workshop on Child Protection, for Chairpersons and Members of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) commenced from at the conference hall of Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey today.

The Training programme is being organized by the State Child Protection Society under the Child Protection Scheme, Social Justice and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.

The inaugural session was chaired by Secretary, Social Justice and Welfare Department, Tshewang Gyachho.

In his keynote deliberation, Secretary Gyachho outlined the importance of the training programme as it concerned the vital issue of protection of children in need of special care and children in conflict with law. He explained that out of 22 posts of Chairpersons and Members, only 7 fulfilled the criteria of the rigorous selection process. He maintained that 65% of the vacancy still needs to be filled to make the CWC and JJB fully equipped. He spoke about the factors which lead to children being subject to numerous abuses, thus needing special care and protection. More often, these children go on to indulge in unscrupulous activities and thus come in conflict with law. In these circumstances, it is vital that the CWC and JJB offer their valuable service to help these children, he stated.

The Secretary appealed to the Chairpersons and Members to deliver quick justice through regular meetings, instead of waiting for the cases to pile up. He added that the action and decision of the CWC and JJB pave the way for the children to overcome their problems and come out into the mainstream and become successful.

He said that the CWC and JJB could come across peculiar cases due to the evolving nature of society. In these circumstances, he suggested that such cases may immediately be reported to the Department to intervene and carry out special case studies.

Secretary Gyachho also spoke about the need to upgrade the Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to meet all the specifications prescribed by the Government. He added that eminent persons from the civil society are roped in to carry out regular monitoring of the CCIs. He further stated that all CCIs should be registered with the State Government.

Speaking about the importance of training, the Secretary said that they raise issues and concerns and help the stakeholders understand and appreciate child rights. He maintained that learning is a continuous process and it leads to effective implementation of laws and rules, and helps pass on the knowledge further down to the CCI staff at every level.

He stated that the ultimate aim of the CWC and JJB is to reunite the children with their parents or guardians or foster parents

as the case may be, and to the mainstream. He also stressed on the need to establish Vocational Education and in-house training in all CCIs so that the children can sustain their livelihood after passing out from school. The Secretary concluded his address by wishing the participants a meaningful and successful training programme.

Earlier, Special Secretary cum Director, Child Protection Scheme, SJ&WD, Gloria Namchu in her opening remarks said that this was the first time the Department is organizing a full-fledged training programme to address the issues related to child protection and has been designed to cover all the key topics. She thanked all the Chairpersons and Members of CWC and JJB and all the resource persons for their presence and participation.

In the session, Legal-cum-Probation Officer, Pema Wangmu Bhutia threw light on POCSO Act 2012 and latest Amendment Rules.

Joint Labour Commissioner, Labour Department, KR Limboo made a presentation on Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.

Likewise, Programme Manager, SARA, Laxana Subedi made a deliberation on Adoption Regulation, 2017.

During the interactive session, the resource persons replied to the queries put forth by the participants.

The programme was conducted by Deputy Secretary, CPS, Sapna Thapa.

SKM should call itself Sikkim Kayar Morcha: HSP

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 MAR:

Hamro Sikkim Party today said that rusticating and barring students of Gyalshing college from appearing for their exams for questioning the authorities is the most cowardly act by a ruling government in the history of Sikkim.

In a press release issued today, HSP has said that the SKM led government should find other good reasons to please their masters in the centre, not by playing with the poor student's future.

Further accusing the SKM government of turning a deaf ear to every voice coming from the civil society, HSP has said that this is a very dangerous sign in a democratic setup.

"They should immediately reinstate the students and conduct their exams before the voices start echoing so loud shaking the very existence of their 'Sikkim Kayar Morcha' Party led government," the release states.

ED seeks quashing of FIR against officials

KOCHI, MAR 23 (PTI):

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday moved the Kerala High Court seeking to quash the FIR registered against its officials by Kerala police for allegedly forcing Swapna Suresh, key accused in the gold smuggling case, to give statements against chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

In its plea, the ED alleged the FIR was registered against its unnamed officials with "ulterior motive of derailing the statutory investigation" under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) into a large economic offence of smuggling of huge quantities of gold.

In its prayer, the ED submitted that the FIR filed be quashed or the investigation be transferred from the state police to the CBI to ensure an impartial investigation.

Quiz competition by Culture Department

GANGTOK, 23 MAR

(IPR): In a series of programme under "Aazadi ka Amrut Mahotsav", the Culture Department, Government of Sikkim conducted a quiz competition among the students of Ranka Senior Secondary School, Sichey Senior Secondary School, Rumtek Senior Secondary School, Biraspati Parsai Senior Secondary School, Luving Senior Secondary School, Pabyuk Senior Secondary School, Namcheybong Senior Secondary School and Assam Lingzey Senior Secondary School at Mini Hall, Manan Bhawan, Gangtok today.

Advisor of the Culture Department, Bhim Kumari Sharma graced the



programme as the Chief Guest and was attended by the officials of Culture Department, the escort teachers and children from various schools surrounding Gangtok.

The Advisor in her address said that such programme provides additional knowledge to the students and help them to get through various competitive examination and make their career perspective. She thanked the teachers

and students for their participation and urged the students to involve in such activities in future as well. She also extended gratitude to the Department for organizing educative programmes involving the children of Schools.

It may be mentioned that the department has also conducted same type of programme with the students of various other schools in coordination with NIC earlier.

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SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 MAR:

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Memo No: 993/GSCDL/2021

Dated: 18/03/2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL) is undertaking the work 'Improvement of Pedestrian Walkway/ Footpath (12 km approx. from Vajra Cinema Hall, Baluwakhani to Ranipool, Gangtok'.

However, it is observed that the public are requesting for changes after the work has been completed which is causing repetitive execution of the work resulting in time and cost overrun

Hence, this notice is issued to request the public to kindly inform GSCDL if any changes or suggestions are to be incorporated by sending mail to the following email address within one month of issue of this notice.

1. gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com
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3. sesmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com
4. degscdl@gmail.com
5. ae3smartcity@gmail.com

GSCDL shall not entertain any request for change after completion of work.

Sd/-
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
Gangtok Smart City Development Limited,
Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Need to Always be All Ready

Monsoon preparedness should be a year-round effort

Here are the basics, in Geographical terms - the South-East quadrant of Sikkim, its footprint spreading across the alignment from Mangan to Dikchu, also sweeping through Rabong, and then to Gangtok up to Rongli, is the maximum rainfall zone of the State. The South-West corner around Hilley in West Sikkim is the other wetter-than-normal zone and between the two sits the dry-to-the-extent-of drought-prone spread of Namchi and its immediate surroundings.

This much, anyone who has lived in Sikkim for a decent stretch of years will know instinctively. Ironically, this obvious fact has remained blindsided for far too long in the State, catching its people and planners on the wrong foot every time the skies open up, which is very often. Readers of this newspaper would have noticed that all four districts have been going through the motions of monsoon preparedness, but most of these have been limited to clearing jhoras and drains, with the connectivity and supplies situation receiving only nominal attention. Perhaps the reasonably tame monsoons of the past few years have inflicted some somnolence, but then again as any resident will point out, monsoons play in cycles of three years in Sikkim – three years of normal or less than normal rains and then three years of ferocity. The last monsoon was normal, and if past trends, also recognized by experts are any indication, Sikkim is being set up for a strong wave of rains this year. News reports about monsoon preparedness are included in the paper as much to inform people of the preparedness plans as for them to check back when the slides begin.

The concerned departments getting into monsoon readiness mode is a welcome sign, but what cannot be ignored is that monsoons become a challenge essentially because the drier months are allowed to pass without enough preparedness work getting done. For instance, meteorological data informs that Sikkim has an average of 160 days of rainfall every year (for Gangtok, this is 184 days!). That is a staggering number of wet days, but the data also reveals that the capital has almost as many days without rain and for a region kept on tenterhooks with what the clouds bear, the dry months need to be used well – to reinforce, repair, rebuild and restore. And yet, planners in the various civil works agencies of the State and Central governments refuse to make use of the dry months to get done with their digging and scrapping. It goes without saying that any work which, in any way, weakens slopes and alignments should be banned safely ahead of the monsoons because Sikkim's slopes have a tendency to come down like dominos at the slightest disruption once the monsoon sets in. With slightly over half the year spent with rainfall [albeit of varying intensities], planning here should be with the wet weather in mind. In these days of climate change, this becomes even more important because while the number of days with rainfall might come down, the intensity is projected to increase and that is even more destructive.

One needs to also bear in mind is that the rash of freak weather that Sikkim has been experiencing in recent years is no longer 'freakish' because it is consistent with climate change patterns. Sikkim now has a Department of Science & Technology with a longer name which includes "Climate Change". The policy-makers should realign the focus of this department to counsel other arms of the government on climate change adjustments and preparedness. Any student who has prepared for an essay/ debate competition on climate change will tell you that the intensity of climatic phenomenon is projected to reach extreme levels with climate change. Sikkim is already experiencing this. There might be fewer days of rainfall, but the days when it rains, it will pour. Departments working on civil projects like roads, hydel projects or construction should be the ones who get briefed on what to expect in the coming years and adjust their designs and work schedules accordingly. Storm drains, for example, should not be designed to just receive 8 cm of rain over an entire day in May, but to evacuate this inundation within an hour. Having been caught off-guard should not be accepted as an excuse anymore. Water conservation, an important issue around the word as in Sikkim, needs to be approached in a more pragmatic and interdisciplinary manner with intelligent and informed plantation efforts because a hill/ slope which conserves water well is also less prone to slip away. Done right, the spring rejuvenation mission should not only address the future needs of water supply, but also stabilise the slopes of Sikkim which have been debased by too much 'development' and too little respect for traditional knowledge...

WRITE US:

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

Toxic Bosses Should be the Next to Face #MeToo-type Reprisals

ERICA MILDNER
theconversation.com

Many of us have had the misfortune of working in a toxic workplace. We've experienced demeaning comments from a supervisor, verbal aggression, surveillance and sometimes even physical threats or intimidation. But what if these behaviours were treated as seriously as other forms of workplace misconduct?

In Canada, the emphasis on workers' right to a safe and healthy workplace in the wake of former governor general Julie Payette's resignation provides a rare opportunity to expand the definition of workplace harassment and hold toxic bosses to account — just as serial sexual abusers have been outed and held responsible during the #MeToo movement.

This is an especially opportune time to do so, given many employees could soon be heading back to the office due to COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Payette resigned in January after an independent investigation revealed widespread allegations of harassment at Rideau Hall. The investigation detailed reports of physical intimidation and public humiliation, leading some employees to take medical leave or resign.

While this environment certainly sounds toxic, the Policy on Harassment Prevention and Resolution provides strict standards to determine when toxic behaviour amounts to legal harassment. A "poisoned workplace environment" featuring hostile and offensive behaviours only qualifies as harassment if directed at one individual or is tied to a legal basis for discrimination, including race, gender and religion.

Following these guidelines, the independent report concluded that staffers' allegations did not meet the formal definition of harassment, despite finding that many of the alleged behaviours could have led to a toxic workplace.

It's striking then, that in response to Payette's resignation, Dominic LeBlanc, the intergovernmental affairs minister who spoke on behalf of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, stressed Canadians' "right to work in a healthy, safe, harassment-free workplace." In her resignation statement, even Payette herself emphasized workers' "right to a healthy and safe work environment."

The framing of toxic workplace behaviours as

an occupational safety issue, one that could amount to harassment, recognizes the psychological trauma that these environments inflict. If you were required to work in a literal toxic workplace, filled with noxious gases, you would expect a gas mask. Workers who face daily dehumanizing and hostile treatment deserve similar guarantees of protection.

TOUGH vs. TOXIC

A quick look across the border reveals how the characterization of toxic behaviour can have significant consequences for accountability. The week Payette resigned, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar took centre stage at President Joe Biden's inauguration, delivering opening remarks. There was no mention of the multiple investigative reports that Klobuchar has repeatedly engaged in abusive behaviour, including throwing binders and phones at her aides.

Perhaps most memorably, an allegation surfaced that Klobuchar publicly humiliated a staffer who forgot utensils for her salad, and demanded that the employee clean her comb after she used it as a makeshift fork.

Klobuchar did not deny these accounts, but insisted that she is "tough" and pushes people because she has "high expectations."

Others have noted the parallels between these cases and dismissed the divergent consequences for Payette's and Klobuchar's political careers. The difference, one writer argued, is that the governor general "does not actually have any important work to do."

FEAR, TRAUMA

Regardless, the impact on workers remains the same: fear, humiliation and sometimes trauma. Whether someone works for an abusive supervisor at a fast-food restaurant or in the hallowed halls of Parliament, that supervisor is still responsible for their behaviour. Abuse is still abuse, and no one deserves to feel unsafe and frightened at work.

The conversation around toxic workplace behaviour requires an awareness of ingrained cultural stereotypes that women in power are aggressive, while their male counterparts are assertive.

Women also appear to pay a higher price for toxic behaviour, while men are given the benefit of the doubt until other allegations emerge.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has been accused of toxic leadership for years, for example, yet he is only facing public censure and an impeach-

ment investigation following recent sexual harassment allegations.

Both Payette and Klobuchar are high-profile female leaders, and have likely been on the receiving end of gender stereotypes. But at the same time, given the scope and severity of the allegations against them, it's clear these accounts cannot be attributed solely to bias. Confronting toxic behaviour without reinforcing misogyny will require acknowledgement and vigilance — a supervisor's gender is no excuse to neglect workers' well-being.

MULTIPLE FRONTS

Toxic environments can breed and compound other forms of discriminatory harassment. Workers with intersecting identities often face multiple fronts of abuse at once.

In Canada, for example, a former Rideau Hall employee recently came forward with allegations of racism, highlighting the intensified mistreatment of employees of colour.

This summer, a British KPMG executive resigned after he told employees to "stop moaning" about pay cuts, while also labelling the concept of unconscious bias as "crap."

If employers swiftly confront dehumanizing behaviour at its source, other forms of prohibited harassment will likely not be tolerated, emphasizing a culture of respect for all workers.

THE WAY FORWARD

Toxic workplace behaviour must be categorized as its own form of harassment. Fortunately, since Payette's resignation, the definition of workplace harassment for Canadian federal employees has been amended to include humiliation and psychological trauma in the workplace. Federal employers must also submit annual reports detailing harassment allegations.

While these are promising first steps, these regulations only apply to about 10 per cent of the Canadian workforce. For all workers to receive these protections, provinces must follow the federal government's lead.

Researchers have found that employees experiencing managerial abuse have a propensity to mistreat their co-workers, creating a toxic ripple effect. Alternatively, if we raise the bar for workplace standards, especially for those at the very top, we all stand to benefit.

[the writer is PhD Candidate, Sociology, University of British Columbia]

Fiction and memoirs were covering health way before the COVID-19 pandemic

CYNTHIA SPADA
theconversation.com

Beyond the viral contagion of COVID-19, the pandemic's accompanying social and economic hardships have challenged many people's physical and mental wellness. Over the past year of navigating living in a pandemic, it's become clear that relationships matter to health: relationships between body and mind, between neighbours and between individuals and their societies.

Literature was dissecting these connections long before the outbreak. Recent memoirs, non-fiction, fiction, poetry and graphic novels related to physical and mental health examine not just the fragility of individuals but how individuals relate to social and power structures like capitalism, racism or colonialism. Writers have also explored how people's social roles and identities shape their relationships to narrative itself. As American poet and memoirist Anne Boyer writes in her Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, *The Undying*, "I do not want to tell the story of cancer in the way that I have been taught to tell it."

For several years, I have been researching, writing about and teaching literary texts related to maladies like depression, substance abuse and cancer. I'm interested in how narratives about health published today explore the interdependence of bodies and their environments in a way that may teach us important lessons during the pandemic, and beyond it.

THE 'LITERATURE OF MADNESS'

Since the 1960s, critiques of medical education, medical ethics and the role of narrative in healing have meant an emerging awareness of how the medical field can be allied with literature.

Some medical schools are requiring students to take literature courses to become more adept with reading patients' stories; some students take my contemporary literature course at University of Victoria to satisfy a medical school course requirement. The convergence of these two fields is helping to disrupt the canonical "literature of madness."

Starting in the 1970s, mental illness became a hot topic in literature departments. Books like Shoshana

Felman's *Writing and Madness* and Lillian Feder's *Madness in Literature* marked the new interest.

In "Literature of Madness" courses at various universities, students studied Dostoyevsky's *The Double*, Charlotte Perkin Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Ken Kesey's *One*



Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*.

These health stories pit mentally ill characters against individual antagonists like husbands, mothers, doctors and nurses, or, fighting oneself as seen through the ancient literary theme of the double or doppelgänger (as in Dostoyevsky's tale). Yet some critics have also explored how these narratives examine individuals battling formidable but intangible foes, and thus comment on social ills: For example, patriarchy in *The Bell Jar* and "The Yellow Wallpaper."

SOCIAL ILLS

Many recent health narratives today are questioning how well-being is damaged by social determinants of health like income inequality and racism. They are also examining how health relates to phenomena like capitalism and climate change, which are elusive but all-pervasive.

For instance, Boyer damns the American health-care system, with its outrageous costs and lack of guaranteed sick leave, but also capitalism as a whole. For her, like Susan Sontag, cancer infuses culture as much as human bodies, but economic pressures also cast a huge shadow.

Blending personal experience

and big-picture analysis can be found in other recent health memoirs. In *The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath*, American writer Leslie Jamison discusses her own experiences of alcoholism as a white woman alongside the racism of the American criminal justice system. As she



observes: "White addicts get their suffering witnessed. Addicts of colour get punished."

The best-selling essay collection *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, by Tuscarora writer Alicia Elliott, examines how systematic oppression of Indigenous communities is linked to depression. Her settler therapist can't understand why she's depressed, and none of her self-help books actually help.

She writes of one, "There is nothing in the book about the importance of culture, nothing about intergenerational trauma, racism, sexism, colonialism, homophobia, transphobia."

This interest in the social determinants of health isn't limited to non-fiction. Sabrina by American cartoonist Nick Drnaso is a 2018 graphic novel that was longlisted for the 2018 Man Booker Prize. Sabrina takes stock of what appears to be PTSD and depression in a political climate of misinformation and conspiracy theories.

As one character fills out a daily wellness report, the reader may realize anyone would feel depression and anxiety in such a world.

HEALTH AMONG THE LIVING

Meanwhile, Fady Joudah, a Palestinian American poet and practising

doctor, weighs economic inequity and a lack of sustainability in "Corona Radiata," a poem about COVID-19 published last March. "Corona Radiata" argues that we need to understand health as contingent on relationships between humans — and between humans and other living things. Joudah suggests that:

"Far and near the virus awakens in us a responsibility to others who will not die our deaths, nor we theirs, though we might ..."

He's right, if hopeful. Until the vaccine is widely distributed, public health will depend on our ability to understand ourselves as part of an inconceivably vast network.

American novelist Richard Powers's *The Overstory*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2019, also unites health with responsibility. In the novel, characters challenged by physical disabilities and strokes find ways to communicate with and through nature. A scientist almost dies by suicide early in the novel before recommitting herself to loving as well as studying the trees. Environmental activism gives them purpose, even if it doesn't heal them.

FUTURE HEALTH STORIES

British writer Robert Macfarlane has proposed that the environmental crisis will continue to transform our literature and art. Many recent works support his idea. In particular, the latest health literature fuses various genres, including memoir, biography, reportage, literary and cultural criticism, science writing and prose poetry.

The new health literature also reminds us that our health and the planet's are inextricably linked. In the near future, this genre is likely to increasingly address the impact of climate change on our physical and mental well-being, such as the rise in eco-anxiety. I think we'll see a blending of literature, medicine and environmental studies more and more often.

Some researchers have noted a link between reading and longevity in individuals. Reading health literature may spur us to support longevity for the Earth too.

[the writer is Sessional Lecturer in the Department of English, University of Victoria]

Nepali politics is becoming devoid of principles, ethics and ideologies

TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, 23 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: A Parliamentary Party meeting of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) on March 16 decided to demand Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's resignation.

The Maoist Centre, which had merged with the CPN-UML, was revived by the Supreme Court on March 7 after a divisional bench of justices scrapped the Nepal Communist Party (NCP). The party was born out of a merger between the UML and the Maoist Centre in May 2018.

"Prime Minister Oli must resign on moral grounds since the Supreme Court overturned his decision to dissolve the House of Representatives," Barshaman Pun, a Maoist lawmaker, told the media after the March 16 Parliamentary Party meeting of his party. "The meeting has decided to demand his resignation."



With the revival of the UML, senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, a former prime minister, was left with no option than to return to his mother party.

Now a conflict is brewing in the UML, with Oli consolidating power in a bid to drive Nepal and some leaders into a corner.

Oli has been constantly challenging his opponents to come up with a no-confidence motion if they can.

The Maoist Centre, which currently has 49 members (four are with Oli) in the House, however, is saying that withdrawing support to Oli will allow him one whole month, as he has to seek a vote of confidence within 30 days. Maoist Centre leaders fear if Oli manages to rope in even the Janata Samajbadi Party, which currently has 32 seats in Parliament, he will survive, thereby leaving them scrambling.

"We don't want to be the cause of instability as we have been

fighting for stability for so long," said Haribol Gajurel, a Standing Committee member and lawmaker of the Maoist Centre. "We have not decided to withdraw support to Oli as such a move without ensuring an alternative government could lead to political instability."

The other way Oli will have to capitulate is that the Nepal faction takes a bold decision to defect, at the cost of losing their lawmakers' post. There are around 40 lawmakers from the Nepal faction and Oli controls around 80 lawmakers.

The UML had won 121 seats in the 2017 elections.

The Nepal faction leaders and lawmakers, however, are hesitant to make a move.

Political analysts say the way Maoist chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal had upped the rhetoric against Oli after the House dissolution, he should have by now withdrawn support to the government. And Nepal, who had sided with Dahal

to force Oli to resign, should have taken a bold political move, according to them.

Shyam Shrestha, a political commentator who has followed Nepal's leftist politics for decades, says the recent turn of events has once again exposed that Nepali politicians don't believe in ethical politics.

"It looked like both Dahal and Nepal were fighting for the system, procedure, ideology and principles when Oli dissolved the House," Shrestha told the Post. "But it has now become apparent that it was just rhetoric; their interest was in their personal and political gains."

When the Supreme Court on February 23 overturned Oli's House dissolution decision calling it unconstitutional, it asked authorities to call a meeting of the House within 13 days. Accordingly, the House meeting was called for March 7. Over the last two weeks, the House has been without a busi-

ness. Among the public, the understanding was those who were demanding Oli's resignation would use the Parliament to make him step down.

But neither Dahal nor Nepal has shown any signs of doing so.

Political observers say while Oli faces moral questions for failing to step down despite the court overturning his House dissolution decision, the Nepal faction as well as the Maoist Centre too face similar questions.

"It seems that Maoist leaders' claim that they were not fighting for power and position but for the system is just an eyewash," said Uddhab Pyakurel, a political analyst who writes for the Post's sister paper Kantipur. "If they were actually fighting against Oli's regressive move, what has stopped them from withdrawing its support?"

Now that Oli is initiating action against Nepal and other leaders of this party, he seems to be vindicat-

ed, as at one point of time Nepal backed Dahal in making every attempt to topple Oli.

According to Lokraj Baral, a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University, Nepali politicians rarely practice what they preach and for them, it is all about power.

"Instead of withdrawing support to the government, the Maoist Centre and other parties in the opposition are bargaining for power," Baral told the Post. "Ethical politics and procedures are not in the dictionary of Nepali politicians. Even Sher Bahadur Deuba has continued the post of party president despite the Nepali Congress facing a drubbing in the last elections."

The Congress party which currently controls 61 seats in Parliament holds the key in the new political equations. But Deuba has maintained silence, leaving everyone flabbergasted. The faction led by senior leader Ram Chandra Poudel, however, has been pressing Deuba to take the lead to unseat Oli.

A meeting of the office bearers of the Nepali Congress on Monday concluded that time is not ripe yet for the party to lead the government.

"The party is ready to lead the government but the situation is not favourable yet," Ramesh Lekhak told the Post on Monday evening after the Congress meeting. "We will make a decision when we think it's the right time to do so."

Deuba faces charges within his own party of having some kind of secret understanding with Oli on issues ranging from appointments to early elections. But many in the Nepali Congress believe that in the 2017 elections, people gave the party the mandate to stay in opposition so it should abide by the people's verdict.

Nonetheless, the political prob-

lem the country faces today is not because of the Congress but because of the communists who were initially UML and Maoist Centre and then the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) before returning to their old state, analysts say.

CK Lal, a political commentator and columnist for the Post, says it will be wrong to paint all Nepali politicians with the same brush, as the country has seen some leaders who are remembered for their integrity.

"The problem with communists is they believe everything lies in power," Lal told the Post. "They can go to any extent to gain power."

According to Lal, Dahal and Nepal had nothing to do with the system, procedure, principles, ethics or ideology when they upped their ante against Oli, even though the latter was equally wrong in his actions.

"After Oli refused to give what he had promised, they wanted to exert pressure on him," said Lal.

Even as the House has been reinstated, politics continues to remain deadlocked now. While Oli is trying to run his party, the UML, with an iron fist, the vacillations of his opponents, particularly Dahal and Nepal, have given him more power and strength.

"Political parties have failed democracy. Their struggles have no sense if they fail to institutionalise democratic gains. I don't see that to happen [sic]," Baral, the professor, wrote on Twitter on March 18.

Baral told the Post earlier this week that people now are losing hopes of ethical politics from Nepali politicians.

"They [Dahal and Nepal] could neither show maturity nor come up with any strategy as they lacked the principle," said Baral. "Due to the dilemma of the opposition leaders, Oli's one-man show seems to continue."

UP beefs up anti-Covid measures

LUCKNOW MAR 23 (PTI): Ahead of the Holi and upcoming Panchayat elections, the Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday ordered testing of people coming from other states seeing a spurt in coronavirus cases.

UP Chief Secretary RK Tiwari issued the directive a day after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a high-level meeting on the Covid situation in the state which on Monday had reported the coronavirus cases again crossing the 500-mark.

The fresh directive, while emphasising for strict implementation of the anti-Covid measures, also stipulated that no procession or public programmes would be allowed without prior administrative permission.

The directive issued to all district and division-level officers said the Covid testing of all those coming to UP during the Holi festival from the states reporting high numbers of infections will be necessary.

It mandated Covid tests for passengers at railway stations, bus stations and airports besides reactivating Covid helpdesks, running dedicated Covid hospitals in all districts and keeping other hospitals ready for any future needs.

The directive also emphasised identifying the suspected cases with the help of thermometers and oximeters.

Where do the children play?

RAMAN SHRESTHA

I took this photo of the two boys playing in my neighbourhood in Development Area in 2008. This was in the front yard of the Community Hall when it was being demolished for the construction of Manan Bhawan. I don't know who these boys in the photo are or what they are doing now, more than ten years later. By simple calculations, they must be completing their years of formal education and preparing to join the workforce.

In the meantime, I have become a father myself. My daughter is now three and a half years old. I am learning to look at the world through her curious eyes. Together, we explore our neighbourhood. We know the location of every jump-worthy puddle, watch insects go up and down tree trunks and cheer the elusive squirrels as they leap between electric poles and the remaining trees. We try to befriend every stray dog or cat that crosses our path. We build towers by stacking chipped bricks in the neighbourhood office parking lot. We marvel at the wild daisies growing on the retaining walls along the Development Area road. On days when we feel adventurous, we explore that little 'jungle' above the highway at the Development Area junction. There is a nest of ants there, the knowledge of which is our little secret.

She is lucky to have a

library in the neighbourhood, of which she became a member before she turned two. She is lucky to have a bookshop in the house. She is lucky to live close to Gangtok's sole functioning children's park, near Paljor Stadium. She visits it frequently with her mother for, as work-from-home parents we can raise our child hands-on. The park is a haven for children, the only one in a town of approximately 40,000 children, by a rough estimate. Once we get there it is quite a nice place for kids. But only if it doesn't rain for there are no shelters there.

With so much fortune, why should we grumble? Because we see how much time she still spends on the phone or the TV each day, in spite of our supervision. Because every time we walk the by-alleys, gullies, jhoras, staircases which pass for public spaces in this shining, congested, overbuilt city of ours, we see how bad a deal its children are receiving.

Even the children's park near the stadium is located in the single most hazardous location possible. We have to cross one of Gangtok's steepest roads near the Paljor Stadium - Si-chey junction. The entry is a hazard from any direction - especially when you are with an overexcited toddler. Was it designated a children's park because the land was too small, narrow and steep to be of any other use?

It wasn't always like this. There used to be open spaces between

buildings and in neighbourhoods. Those of us old enough can remember the other children's park in the heart of town and when it was bulldozed to build a taxi stand and shopping centre. Only its name remains - a mocking reminder. The visits to the magical Deer Park behind



the old Tashiling secretariat is another space from my childhood that I have such fond memories of. And who even remembers the Japanese Park with a pond you crossed jumping on the stepping stones below Mintokgang? Every other space with the potential to become a park for children have been gobbled by the Kisan Bazaars, Museums, Gyan Mandirs, Expos and Kendras - most of them not yet functional.

Compared to these mega structures, a chil-

dren's park is cheap to build. Is that the exact reason why they are ignored? Because there is no concrete involved, no estimates, no escalations, no tenders, no yearly revenue. Will a visiting dignitary consent to inaugurate a children's play area?

Children don't vote, their own jungle adventure stories. And the same imagination comes useful when you give them cardboard boxes and pillows as poor substitutes for the sprawling parks they see on TV. And to tell them, in so many words, that life is elsewhere.

Is that our defense then - that there is no point dedicating spaces to those content to play with mud and stones, paper and pillows? Gangtok's skyline is speedily, and some would say greedily, changing. My daughter is already noticing these changes as we do the rounds of the neighbourhood. In one swoop, so many trees have gone missing from the Millennium Park area, opposite Sadar Thana. The glare of the orange sodium flood light in that location is the new "moon" according to her. Kids from our area and their pets come out to play in the Manan Bhawan parking yard only after dinner time, after the vehicles have departed.

Looking around this town we call home, so much about the cityscape has changed. And yet, nothing about childhood in Gangtok has improved. As I lament over these things during one of the walks around the neighbourhood, I can sense my daughter release her hand from my hold and run, yelling excitedly - "Look Buwa, a cement mixer!" And I once again take another photograph of a child playing with a cement mixer, only now it is my own.

Citizenship Act will be implemented "in time," says JP Nadda in Assam

GUWAHATI, 23 MAR [PTI]: BJP President JP Nadda on Tuesday asserted that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has been passed by the Parliament and will be implemented "in time". Mr Nadda after releasing the party's manifesto for the Assam elections, said that the law is a central legislation and the Congress claim that they will not allow its implementation in the state, if voted to power, may be either "due to their ignorance or they are trying to fool the people of the state".

"I do not want to comment on the Congress' thinking but their approach is not only problematic but also dangerous for the state", he said.

The highly contentious CAA seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis entering India on or before December 31, 2014 from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after five years of residence here. Assam's identity is inextricably linked to Vaishnav saint Srimanta Sankaradeva, Bharat Ratna Dr Bhuben Hazarika and Gopinath Bordoloi and "now can we allow it to be linked with Badruddin Ajmal?"

The BJP is committed to protect and preserve the "identity and culture" of Assam, keeping the "natural process of cultural change intact," he said. Referring to the issue of infiltration, the BJP president said that the party is committed to strengthening and scien-

tific management of the international borders.

"Border management is a continuous process and we will continue to improve it", he said.

Asked about the implementation of the clause six of the Assam accord to ensure the constitutional safeguard of the linguistic, cultural, social identity and heritage of the Assamese people, Mr Nadda said, "it is under process and we are committed to it".

The BJP in its manifesto has made "ten commitments" for an "Atmanirbhar Assam" which include initiation of process of correction and reconciliation of the entries under the Supreme Court mandated National Register of Citizens to "protect genuine Indian citizens and exclude all illegal immigrants".

The BJP has also pledged to protect the political rights of the people of the state through a delimitation exercise.

The party also promised that Assam will be made free from the vagaries of flood by launching "Mission Brahmaputra" with a multi-pronged strategy involving the dredging of the river and building reservoirs to store excess water from Brahmaputra and its tributaries.

The party committed to enhance payments to women under the "Orunodoi" scheme to ₹ 3000 per month from the existing ₹ 830 for their economic empowerment and will cover 30 lakh women in a phased manner.

West Indies reach 268-7 to lead Sri Lanka by 99 in 1st test

NORTH POINT, MAR 23 (AP): Fast bowler Rahkeem Cornwall made an unbeaten half century and combined in a 90-run eighth wicket partnership with Joshua Da Silva which guided the West Indies to a 99-run lead over Sri Lanka on the second day of the first cricket test.

Cornwall was 60 not out at stumps, the first Antiguan to score a test half century at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

Wicketkeeper Da Silva made 46 and held together the West Indies lower middle order as they edged past Sri Lanka's first innings of 169. The home side matched that total with six wickets down and Cornwall and Da Silva carried them to 268-8 at stumps.

Da Silva's patient stand was the most important of the innings until it was surpassed by Cornwall. He steadied the West Indies when they were 133-5 and the match was still in the balance.

Cornwall had been determined to make a statement with the bat. He told a local reporter before the match to "tell the world I've come to make a score." The burly 1.96-meter paceman was as good as his word, reaching his first test 50 from 62 balls and breaking the mould on a day of slow scoring with nine fours and two sixes.

"I know I have good batting skills," Cornwall said. "I just tried at first to bat with Joshua, try to get us to a good score and just try to bat myself.

"I was confident. I've been putting in some work in the nets with the batting coach and I told myself I have to score some runs, I'm not doing as well as I can do with the bat." The partnership between Cornwall and Da Silva changed the course of the match. Earlier, Sri Lanka had bowled well to contain the West Indies' batsmen.

A 56-run second wicket partnership between John Campbell (42) and Nkrumah Bonner (31) was the best effort by the West Indies top order. But veteran Sri Lanka paceman Suranga Lakmal made inroads into the West Indies lineup, taking 5-45, his fourth five-wicket bag in tests.

Lakmal dismissed West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite (3), then removed Kyle Mayers when he looked dangerous on 45. He returned to bowl Jermaine Blackwood (2) and Jason Holder (19), leaving the West Indies 169-6. Alzarri Joseph (0) was his fifth wicket.

The West Indies were 261-7 when Joshua was out shortly before stumps, caught behind after being lured into a loose shot by a short ball from Dushmantha Chameera.

HOUSTON (AP): Stephen Silas walked off the court at halftime believing he'd seen a sign.

Danuel House Jr. swished a 51-footer at the buzzer, sending the Rockets to the locker room on a high after 20 straight games of nothing but lows.

"I was like, 'Whoa, maybe this is the night,'" the Rockets coach said. "It felt like something special had happened. For us, something special happening is a win after so many losses in a row."

The Rockets went on to snap their 20-game losing streak Monday night, as John Wall had his first triple-double in five years in a 117-99 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Houston's skid was tied for the ninth-worst in NBA history and the longest since Philadelphia's record-setting, 28-game losing streak across the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons.

But Wall had 19 points, 10 assists and 11 rebounds, his first triple-double since March 17, 2016. That helped the Rockets get their first win since Feb. 4.

"It's like indescribable for a win in March of this crazy season, but I'm just so proud of the guys," Silas said. "When you're going through it and fighting so hard and seeing the disappointment in the players' faces after loss after loss, and to go into the locker room after today's game and everybody is so happy and joyous is just super cool and great."

Wall found Silas after the game and gave him a big hug.

"I just told him, 'We finally got one,'" Wall said. "I told him I'm riding with him no matter what, and he



said the same thing to me. No coach wants to deal with all this adversity he's had to deal with in their first year. I'm happy for him."

Houston also handed the Raptors their ninth straight loss, which now represents the NBA's longest active losing streak.

All five Houston starters scored in double figures by midway through the third quarter. Jae'Sean Tate had 22 points, Sterling Brown added 20, Christian Wood scored 19 and House added 12.

Houston led 65-60 at halftime after House's heave from well behind the halfcourt line near the Raptors bench on the sideline. The Rockets closed out the third quarter with an 88-86 lead and opened the fourth quarter on a 9-1 run to pull away.

Houston overcame a rough first half where Wall received a technical foul for a third straight game, arguing with an official five minutes into the first quarter. Wood picked up his third personal foul less than three minutes into the second quarter and

was limited to just eight scoreless first-half minutes.

Fred VanVleet led Toronto with 27 points and was frustrated after the loss.

"If you're not going to play defense, you better score more than 99 points," VanVleet said.

Pascal Siakam scored 21 points, Normal Powell had 19 and Kyle Lowry added 17.

Brown made his first five shots, including three 3s, for 13 first-quarter points. He finished 7 of 10 and 4

of 7 from 3.

The Raptors led 28-27 at the end of the first quarter. In their losing streak, Houston led after the first quarter only three times, including on Feb. 26 when they led the Raptors 31-30.

TIP-INS

Raptors: DeAndre' Bembry was ejected from the game after receiving two back-to-back technical fouls in the fourth quarter. ... Toronto has lost seven straight on the road. ... Chris Boucher had 10 rebounds off the bench.

Rockets: SG Victor Oladipo was out with right quad injury maintenance. ... PG D.J. Augustin returned after a one-game absence with a stomach illness. ... PG Kevin Porter Jr. was sidelined with right quad soreness.

COACH SUPPORT

After Silas' postgame interview following Sunday's loss went viral for how visibly frustrated he appeared to be, the first-year coach said he heard from many coaches, including Rick Carlisle, Brad Stevens, Doc Rivers, Steve Kerr, Luke Walton, Doug Collins and Don Nelson, who talked about their losing streaks and offered support.

"What those guys did for me means the world to me, and I'm going to reach out to every, single one of those guys to tell them, 'Thank you,'" Silas said.

UP NEXT

Raptors: Return home Wednesday night for a three-game homestand starting with Denver.

Rockets: Host Charlotte on Wednesday night to close out a seven-game homestand.

Hasan returns two negative tests for COVID-19, will join camp on Tuesday

KARACHI, MAR 23 (PTI): Fast bowler Hasan Ali has returned two negative tests after initially testing positive for COVID-19 and will join the Pakistan training camp from Tuesday ahead of their tours of South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The PCB has carried out a relentless schedule of COVID-19 tests on all the players and officials selected to travel to South Africa and Zimbabwe and only Hasan had tested positive in the initial tests.

The pacer had apparently also tested positive a day before the Pakistan Super League 6 was postponed earlier this

month in Karachi due to rising cases of the infection among the franchise players and officials and even board employees.

Hasan is said to have tested positive after attending a small get together at which Islamabad United players were present, including Australian leg-spinner Fawad Ahmed.

Fawad had returned a positive test during the league and was only allowed to return home after completing a quarantine period at the hotel.

Hasan and Fawad are part of the Islamabad United outfit in the PSL which is set to resume in June. A reliable source

in the PCB said the relentless COVID-19 tests are being carried out in the Pakistan camp as the squad is due to leave on March 28 and the board does not want any problems to occur at the eve of departure.

The PCB is yet to confirm whether the entire Pakistan squad will travel to Johannesburg by a chartered flight or the players, who will only participate in the two-Test series in Zimbabwe, will join the rest of the team in mid-April.

Pakistan will play three ODIs and four T20 internationals in South Africa and two Tests and three T20s in Zimbabwe.

Sharjeel Khan's inclusion in Pakistan's playing XI will depend on his fitness

KARACHI, MAR 23 (PTI): Pakistan opener Sharjeel Khan has been told that his place in the playing eleven will depend on whether he can show some improvement in his fitness by April 9, a day before the T20 series begins in South Africa.

Sharjeel, who was picked in the Pakistan T20 squad for the four games in South Africa and another three in Zimbabwe, has also been told he will not play the intra-squad matches in Lahore before the team's departure for Johannesburg on 28th March.

"Sharjeel has been given a personal trainer and batting coach, Younis Khan himself. Fitness freak has been put in charge of his overall training in a bid to improve the opener's fitness before the T20 series in South Africa," a source aware of the developments said on Monday. Sharjeel's selection after he performed well in the recent Pakistan Super League 6 matches has been questioned by some former players and critics who believe his fitness is not up to the level required to play international cricket.

Sharjeel, who completed a two and a half year ban for spot-fixing before resuming his career last year, was seen doing laps and working hard on his fitness under the supervision of Younis

and the trainer at the Gaddafi stadium on Monday. A former Test batsman, who is close to the national selection committee, however, voiced his concern over the deadline set for Sharjeel.

"I am hearing he has been told to shed at least 10 kilograms weight by the deadline if this is true they don't realize losing weight means it will also affect his batting as batting also requires a lot of endurance, stamina and muscle power," the player said. He felt that instead of setting deadlines the team management should work on improving Sharjeel's fitness slowly so that he doesn't lose strength, stamina etc.

Chief selector, Muhammad Wasim had made it clear recently that Sharjeel was picked on the call of captain, Babar Azam and head coach, Misbah ul Haq, who felt he was an impact player in the T20 format and they could improve his fitness if he stayed with the squad.

During his last virtual press conference, Babar confirmed what Wasim had said and added that while Sharjeel was a bit on the healthy side but he would not be a liability on the field.

Many see Sharjeel as a key impact player as Pakistan start preparing for the World T20 Cup to be held in India in October.

Tamim lifts Bangladesh to 271-6 in 2nd ODI vs New Zealand

CHRISTCHURCH, MAR 23 (AP): Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal survived a contentious caught and bowled decision and fell to a bizarre run out Tuesday while compiling his 50th one-day international half century.

Tamim made 78 and led Bangladesh to 271-6 as it batted first after winning the toss in the second of three ODI matches against New Zealand, improving enormously on the series-opener when it made only 131 and was beaten by eight wickets.

On 34 and in the 15th over, Tamim offered a sharp return chance to the tall New Zealand paceman Kyle Jamieson. The 2.03 meter (6-foot-8) Jamieson stooped on his follow through to parcel the catch, then fell forward. As he did so, the ball held in his right hand touched the ground.

The on-field umpire immediately upheld New Zealand's appeal but Tamim referred the decision to the television umpire who, after studying several angles, ruled that Jamieson did not have full control of the ball. Tamim had earlier had a decision for caught behind overturned.

After a slow start, Tamim flourished on a pitch which provided good pace and sharp



bounce to reach his milestone half century from 84 balls. He spoke before the match of the the importance of Bangladesh demonstrating its batting strength.

His words were heeded and the Bangladesh innings was book-ended by his half century and another to Mohammad Mithun, who finished 73 not out.

There was less early swing Tuesday than in the first match of the series at Dunedin and the pitch at Hagley Oval was also on the slow side. New Zealand's bowlers were still able to contain the tourists early, restricting them to 26-1 after 10 overs and 84-1 after 20.

But Iqbal was able to play some superb shots

when he was set, using his feet and his position on the crease to disrupt the bowling. He struck several superb drives through cover and his innings in total contained 11 fours.

He was finally out in unusual circumstances in the 31st over. His partner Mushfiquur Rahim received a short ball from Jimmy Neesham which he defended and dropped at his feet.

After a brief glance, the batsmen went through for the single while the ball came to rest parallel with and close to the stumps. Neesham, following through, was ahead of Tamim and he showed soccer skills to kick the ball sideways into the stumps, leaving the Bangladesh captain

short of his ground.

Tamim had put on 81 for Bangladesh's second wicket with Soumya Sarkar after it lost opener Liton Das (0) in the second over. Soumya made a positive 32 from 46 balls before he was stumped down the leg side by Tom Latham from the bowling of Mitchell Santner.

Tamim then put on 48 with Mushfiquur, who made a solid start but fell for 34 in the 41st over when Bangladesh was aiming to accelerate.

Mithun paced the end of the innings with his sixth ODI half century from 42 balls, bringing up his 50 with a six from the bowling of Neesham. His 73 runs came from 57 balls with six fours and two sixes.

Lukaku allowed to leave Italy and join Belgium teammates

BRUSSELS, MAR 23 (AP): Inter Milan striker Romelu Lukaku has been given permission to leave Italy and join his Belgium teammates after returning a negative test for COVID-19 ahead of upcoming World Cup qualifying matches.

Lukaku was included in coach Roberto Martinez's squad last week but his availability had been unclear because of

virus outbreak at the Serie A club.

However, the Belgian team said the former Manchester United striker was able to join the rest of the group on Monday afternoon.

"He is now under the Belgian COVID-19 regulations, which means that like every professional sportsman he is allowed to train and play matches," said Stefan Van

Look, the team's press officer.

Belgium, which tops the FIFA rankings, starts its 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign on Wednesday against Wales before taking on the Czech Republic and Belarus. The Belgians will again be without Real Madrid playmaker Eden Hazard, who is sidelined by a muscle injury in his right leg.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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China, Russia officials meet in show of unity against EU, US

BEIJING, MAR 23 (AP): The foreign ministers of China and Russia displayed unity at their meeting Tuesday amid criticism and Western sanctions against them over human rights.

Wang Yi and Sergei Lavrov rejected outside sniping at their authoritarian political systems and said they were working to further global progress on issues from climate change to the coronavirus pandemic.

At their initial meeting in the southern Chinese city of Nanning on Monday, Wang and Lavrov accused the US of interference in other countries' affairs and urged it to rejoin the Iran nuclear agreement, something that President Joe Biden's new administration has approached cautiously. Russia and China both maintain close relations with Tehran.

The two officials continued that rhetoric at a news conference on Tuesday, where Wang sharply criticized coordinated sanctions brought



by the European Union, Britain, Canada and the United States against Chinese officials over human rights abuses in China's far western Xinjiang region.

Countries should stand together to oppose all forms of unilateral sanctions," Wang said. These measures will not be embraced by the international community."

China says members of the Uyghur and other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang have voluntarily taken part in job training and de-radicalization courses, denying charges that more than 1 million have been locked up in prison-like reeducation camps where they are forced to reject their native culture and pledge loyalty to the ruling Communist Party

and its leader Xi Jinping. Media outlets, foreign governments and activist groups say abuses, including forced labour and coerced birth control, are ongoing.

China responded immediately Monday to the EU's move by imposing sanctions on 10 European individuals and four institutions that it said

had damaged China's interests and maliciously spread lies and disinformation. They were barred from visiting mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao and banned from engaging in financial dealings with Chinese institutions.

Xinjiang had experienced anti-government violence, but Beijing claims its massive security crackdown brought peace in recent years.

China and Russia were rivals for leadership of the communist world during the Cold War but have built a strong relationship in recent years based on opposition to the U-led liberal order and cooperation in military affairs, technology and trade in natural resources.

China's ruling Communist Party allows no political opposition and keeps a tight hold on civil society, while Russian leader Vladimir Putin has cracked down heavily on citizens calling for a more open system.

Israel votes: Netanyahu's fate hangs on Tuesday's elections

JERUSALEM, MAR 23 (AP): Israelis began voting on Tuesday in the country's fourth parliamentary election in two years a highly charged referendum on the divisive rule of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Public opinion polls forecast a tight race between those who support Israel's longest-serving premier and those who want "anyone but Bibi, as he is widely known.

Facing an electorate worn down by a series of campaigns and the coronavirus pandemic, candidates made their final push in recent days with a series of TV interviews and public appearances at shopping malls and outdoor marketplaces.

The campaigns increasingly reached into people's personal space with a constant barrage of get-out-and-vote texts that made cell phones ding and buzz at all hours.

Netanyahu has portrayed himself as a global statesman uniquely qualified to lead the country through its many security and diplomatic challenges. He has made Israel's successful coronavirus-vaccination campaign the centerpiece of his reelection bid, and pointed to last year's diplomatic agreements with four Arab states.

Opponents accuse Netanyahu of bungling the management of the coronavirus pandemic for most of the past year. They say he failed to enforce lockdown restrictions on his ultra-Orthodox political allies, allowing the virus to spread, and point to the still-dire state of the economy and its double-digit unemployment rate.

They also say Netanyahu is unfit to rule at a time when he is on trial for multiple corruption charges, a case he dismisses as a witch hunt.

Up to 15 per cent of the electorate is expected to vote outside their home districts, a batch of

absentee balloting that's larger than usual to accommodate those with coronavirus or in quarantine. The government is dispatching special polling stations, including vehicles, to provide places for them to vote safely.

Those votes are tallied separately in Jerusalem, meaning final results may not be known for days. Given the tight race, the large number of undecided voters and a number of small parties struggling to cross the 3.25% threshold for entry into parliament, it could be difficult to predict the outcome before the final count is complete. Israelis vote for parties, not individual candidates. No single party list of candidates has been able to form a governing majority in Israel's 72-year history.

Netanyahu's Likud party and those led by his rivals will be looking to smaller, allied parties as potential coalition partners. The party that can cobble together a majority coalition gets to form the next government a process that is expected to take weeks.

Tuesday's election was triggered by the disintegration of an emergency government formed last May between Netanyahu and his chief rival to manage the coronavirus pandemic. The alliance was plagued by infighting, and elections were triggered by the government's failure in December to agree on a budget.

Netanyahu is hoping to form a government with his traditional religious and hard-line nationalist allies. These include a pair of ultra-Orthodox parties and a small religious party that includes openly racist and homophobic candidates. Netanyahu's rivals have accused him of causing the past two years of paralysis in hopes of forming a more favorable government that would grant him immunity or protect him from prosecution.

Colorado marks latest mass tragedy after 10 killed

BOULDER, COLO. (AP): A shooting at a crowded Colorado supermarket that killed 10 people, including the first police officer to arrive, sent terrorized shoppers and workers scrambling for safety and stunned a state that has grieved several mass killings. A lone suspect was in custody, authorities said.

Hundreds of police officers from throughout the Denver metropolitan area responded to the Monday afternoon attack, converging on a King Soopers supermarket in a busy shopping plaza in southern Boulder. SWAT officers carrying ballistic shields slowly approached the store as others quickly escorted frightened people away from the building, some of its windows shattered. Customers and employees fled through a back loading dock to safety. Others took refuge in nearby shops.

One suspect was in custody, a tearful Boulder Police Chief Maris Herold said late Monday. Authorities didn't identify the suspect, though Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty said the suspect was the only person injured and was receiving medical care.

Officers had escorted a shirtless man in handcuffs, blood running down his leg, from the store during the siege. Authorities would not say if he was the suspect. Foothills Hospital in Boulder was treating one person from the shooting scene but refused further comment, said Rich Sheehan, spokesman for Boulder Community Health, which operates the hospital.

"This is a tragedy and a nightmare for Boulder County," Dougherty said. "These were people going about their day, doing their shopping. I promise the victims and the people of the state of Colorado that we will secure

justice."

Herold identified the slain officer as Eric Talley, 51, who had been with Boulder police since 2010. He was the first to arrive after responding to a call about shots fired and someone carrying a rifle, she said.

"He was by all accounts one of the outstanding officers of the Boulder Police Department, and his life was cut too short," Dougherty said.

Dozens of police and emergency vehicles, their lights flashing, escorted an ambulance carrying the officer from the shooting scene after nightfall. Some residents stood along the route, their arms raised in salute. Identities of the other nine victims were not disclosed as police were still notifying their family members.

Dougherty said it was too early to speculate on a motive and that the investigation involving local, state and federal agencies would take days. The attack in Boulder, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) northwest of Denver and home to the University of Colorado, stunned a state that has seen several mass shootings, including the 1999 Columbine High School massacre and the 2012 Aurora movie theater shooting.

Monday's midafternoon attack was the seventh mass killing this year in the U.S., following the March 16 shooting that left eight people dead at three Atlanta-area massage businesses, according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University.

It follows a lull in mass killings during the pandemic in 2020, which had the smallest number of such attacks in more than a decade, according to the database, which

tracks mass killings defined as four or more dead, not including the shooter.

Dean Schiller said he had just left the supermarket when he heard gunshots. He saw three people lying face down — one in a doorway and two in the parking lot. Schiller said he couldn't tell if they were breathing.

Sarah Moonshadow and her son, Nicolas Edwards, had just bought strawberries when they heard gunfire. Moonshadow told The Denver Post they ducked and "just ran." Outside, Edwards said, arriving police pulled up next to a body in the parking lot.

"I knew we couldn't do anything for the guy," he said. "We had to go."

Video posted on YouTube showed one person on the floor inside the store and two more outside on the ground. What sounds like two gunshots are heard at the beginning of the video.

Investigators had just started sorting through the crime scene and conducting witness interviews, Dougherty said. Matthew Kirsch, the acting U.S. attorney for Colorado, pledged that "the full weight of federal law enforcement" will support the investigation. He said investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were at the crime scene, along with FBI agents.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki tweeted that President Joe Biden had been briefed on the shooting. Gov. Jared Polis, meanwhile, said in a statement that "Today we saw the face of evil. I am grieving with my community and all Coloradans." The King Soopers chain said in a statement that it was offering prayers and support "to our associates, customers, and the first responders who so bravely responded to this tragic situation."

Xi, Kim share messages reaffirming China-N. Korea alliance

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP): The leaders of China and North Korea are reaffirming their traditional alliance following contentious talks between top diplomats from Washington and Beijing and diplomatic isolation and economic problems in the North that have left it ever-more dependent on the Chinese.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday leader Kim Jong Un called for stronger "unity and cooperation" with China in the face of challenges posed by "hostile forces" while exchanging messages with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

According to KCNA and China's Xinhua news agency, Xi in his own message to Kim described bilateral relations as a "valuable asset" to both countries and vowed to make unspecified contributions to the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

KCNA said Xi also expressed a commitment to "provide the peoples of the two countries with better life." Some analysts saw this as an indication that China would soon provide North Korea with badly needed food, fertilizer and other aid that had been significantly reduced amid the pandemic border closures.

Xinhua said the leaders' messages were exchanged during a meeting between Chinese senior diplomat Song Tao and North Korean Ambassador to China Ri Ryong Nam during a meeting in Beijing on Monday.

The exchange between the leaders came as the Biden administration steps up diplomatic efforts to strengthen cooperation with Asian allies South Korea and Japan to deal with the North Korean nuclear threat and China's growing regional influence.

Top U.S. and Chinese officials traded sharp and unusually public barbs in Alaska last week in their first face-to-face meetings since President Joe Biden took office, where Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington is united with its allies in pushing back against Chinese authoritarianism.

The contentious talks in Anchorage came after Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin traveled to Japan and South Korea for talks that mainly focused on North Korea and China.

During his visit to Seoul, Blinken sternly criticized North Korea's nuclear ambitions and human rights record and pressed China to use its "tremendous influence" to convince the North to denuclearize.

The North has so far ignored Biden's administration's efforts to reach out, saying it won't engage in meaningful talks with the United States unless Washington abandons what Pyongyang sees as "hostile" policies, which clearly refers to the U.S.-led sanctions and pressure over its nuclear program.

KCNA said Kim addressed the state of the North's relations with the United States and South Korea and said communication between him and Xi was required in the face of changed "external situations and reality," apparently referring to the new U.S. administration.

Kim's message "stressed the need to

strengthen the unity and cooperation between the two parties and two countries to cope with the hostile forces' all-round challenges and obstructive moves," KCNA said.

Kim's message to Xi was clearly in response to last week's visits by Blinken and Lloyd to Japan and South Korea, which signaled the start of the Biden administration's efforts to create a coordinated approach with its allies on North Korea, said Cheong Seong-Chang, director of North Korea studies at South Korea's private Sejong Institute.

Cheong said it was notable that Xi did not publicly express his support for Kim's stated plans to expand the North's nuclear capabilities and instead stressed regional stability.

This shows that China prefers diplomacy over a revival of tensions in the Korean Peninsula, and despite its friction with the United States, could still endorse a resumption of talks between Washington and Pyongyang, he said.

China had advocated a "two-track approach" to the issue, whereby the U.S. would offer security guarantees to North Korea in exchange for Pyongyang abandoning its nuclear weapons programs.

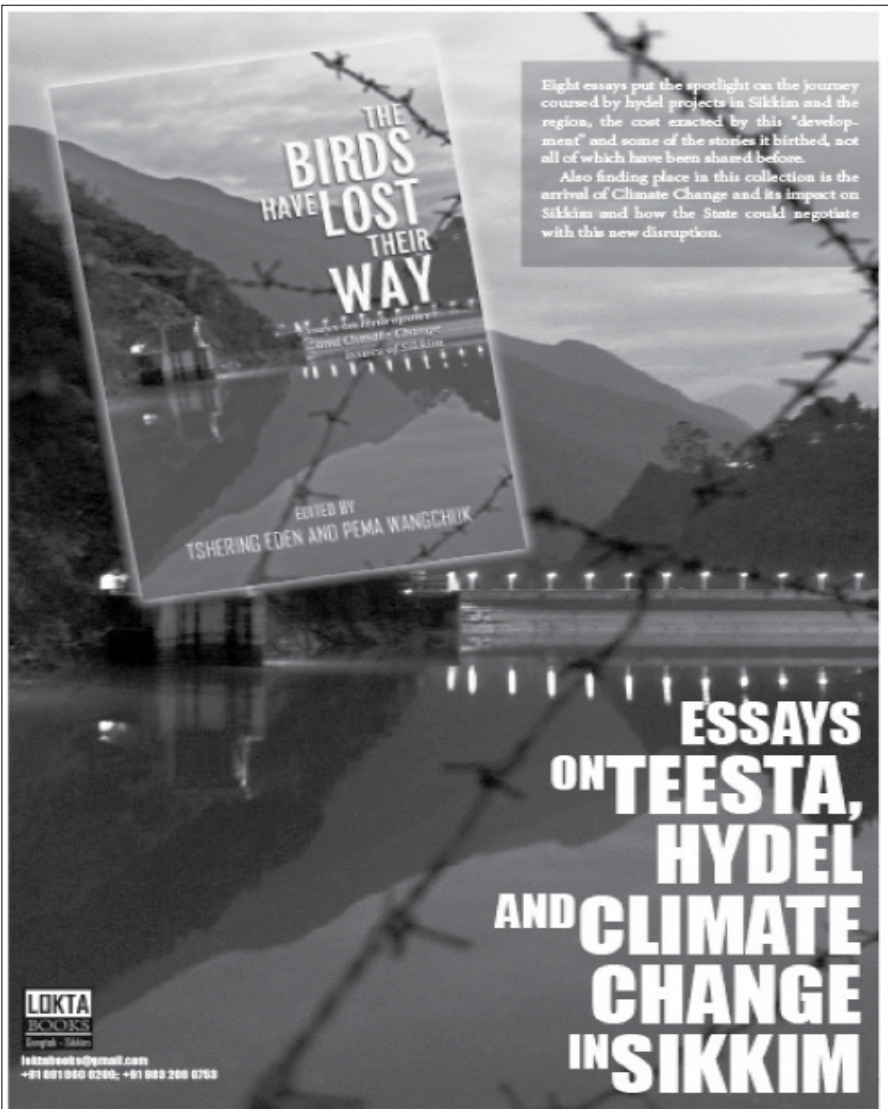
The meetings in Anchorage reflected increasingly troubled relations between the United States and China, which are at odds over a range of issues from trade to human rights in Tibet, Hong Kong and China's western Xinjiang region, as well as over Taiwan, China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and the coronavirus pandemic.

Responding to Blinken's criticism about his government, Communist Party foreign affairs chief Yang Jiechi said Beijing had no intention to back down on any issue and that the United States should stop pushing its own version of democracy at a time when America itself has been roiled by domestic discontent.

As North Korea pursued diplomacy with the U.S. starting in 2018, it also worked to strengthen relations with China, its traditional ally and economic lifeline. But Kim has nothing to show for his ambitious summits with then-President Trump, which collapsed in 2019 over disagreements in exchanging the release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea and the North's disarmament steps.

The North's economic woes have been compounded by pandemic border closures and devastating natural disasters that wiped out crops last summer. At a ruling party congress in January, Kim vowed to further expand the North's nuclear program and urged his people to be resilient in the struggle for economic self-reliance.

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers late last year that North Korea's trade volume with China fell by 75% during the first 10 months of 2020. That led to a shortage of raw materials that plunged the North's factory operations to its lowest level since Kim took power in late 2011, and a jump in the prices of imported foods like sugar and seasonings.





FASHIONISTA! The Modern Family star, Sofia Vergara steps out in her very own Sofia jeans.

Farhan Akhtar has made a wonderful physique for 'Toofaan': Milkha Singh

NEW DELHI, MAR 23 (PTI): Legendary athlete Milkha Singh is all praise for actor Farhan Akhtar after watching the teaser of the upcoming sports drama "Toofaan" and said he is looking forward to the film.

Directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, the film stars Akhtar in the role of a boxer.

"Toofaan" marks the second collaboration for Akhtar and Mehra, who previously brought Singh's life story to the big screen in the 2013 biopic "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag".

The iconic athlete said he hopes the actor-director duo continue to make more inspiring sports-based films.

"I loved Farhan's look in the 'Toofaan' teaser. He has made a wonderful physique for the role of a boxer. My best wishes are with Farhan and Rakeysh. I will surely watch 'Toofaan'. I hope they make many more sports films in future," Singh told PTI in an interview.

The 91-year-old Padma Shri recipient, who missed an Olympic medal by a whisker at the 1960 Games, revealed "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag" was the first film he watched since the

1960s and remembered that people used to tell him that Akhtar looked exactly like him in the movie. "When 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' was released, no matter where I went -- Australia, England or Canada, people around the world



used to say Farhan is Milkha Singh's ditto copy. I even went to see Farhan train during the film's making and saw him run 100 metres in 11 seconds! He was not a professional athlete, but he trained hard to become one," Singh, who is also fondly called the 'Flying Sikh', added.

"Toofaan", also starring Mrunal Thakur and Paresh Rawal, will premiere on Amazon

Taapsee Pannu, Pavail Gulati wrap 'Dobaaraa' shoot

MUMBAI, MAR 23 (PTI): Actors Taapsee Pannu and Pavail Gulati have finished shooting for the thriller "Dobaaraa", directed by Anurag Kashyap.

Pannu and Gulati, who previously starred in the 2020 drama "Thappad", started work on the project last month.

"Twenty three days of pure honest energy on set and it's a wrap! #Dobaaraa," Pannu wrote on Instagram on Monday alongside a picture with Kashyap, who also directed her in "Manmarziyaan".

The actor said she and the director have made a bet, the content of which shall be disclosed later.

"... but for now just know if I win, he will have to do another film with me of my choice and if he wins, in the next movie we do together, I shall not argue with him on set. Point being, nevertheless, u shall see us together once again (sic)" she added.

The shooting of "Dobaaraa" was halted on March 3 after Income Tax Department's officials raided homes and offices of Pannu and Kashyap as well as his partners, who launched the now-shut-

tered production house Phantom Films. The searches, part of a tax evasion probe against Phantom Films, carried

captioned: "and we restart our shoot #DoBaaraa". "Dobaaraa" is backed by Ekta Kapoor's Cult Movies, a new divi-



out across 30 locations in Mumbai and Pune, also covered Reliance Entertainment group CEO Shibhasish Sarkar and some executives of celebrity and talent management companies KWAN and Exceed. Production resumed three days later, with Kashyap sharing a still from the film's sets on March 6 which was

sion under her Balaji Telefilms banner.

The film is penned by Nihit Bhave, who previously wrote Kashyap's 2020 Netflix movie "Choked".

Sunir Kheterpal's ATHENA and Gaurav Bose's The Vermillion World Production are also attached as producers.

Emerald Fennell to pen script for 'Zatanna' movie



LOS ANGELES, MAR 23 (PTI): Emerald Fennell, the breakout director of "Promising Young Woman", will be writing the script for DC Films' upcoming movie about superhero Zatanna.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the project hails from studio Warner Bros and filmmaker JJ Abrams' Bad Robot.

Created by writer Gardner Fox and artist Murphy Anderson in 1964, Zatanna is a magician like her father Zazara.

Zatanna has been involved with the Justice League, has had a childhood with Batman and was romantically linked to character John Constantine, the occult master who will be the subject of an

HBO Max series produced by Abrams.

The character was played by Serinda Swan for three seasons on the CW's "Smallville".

Fennell, who previously worked on critically-acclaimed series "Killing Eve" and also featured in Netflix royal drama "The Crown", made history earlier this month when her directorial debut movie "Promising Young Woman" bagged five Oscar nominations.

The filmmaker became first woman director to be nominated for best director for a directorial debut. Her film has also earned Academy Award nods for best picture, screenplay, editing and actress for Carey Mulligan.

Actor Kartik Aaryan tests positive for COVID-19

Mumbai, Mar 23 (PTI): Actor Kartik Aaryan on Monday said he has tested positive for COVID-19 and asked his fans to pray for him.

The 30-year-old actor, on Saturday, walked the ramp for designer Manish Malhotra at the ongoing Lakme Fashion Week, here.

He was joined by his upcoming "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2" co-star Kiara Advani.

Aaryan took to Twitter and shared a

picture of a first aid medical sign, writing, "I am positive. Pray for me."

The actor was also shooting for "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2" with Advani and Tabu, who joined the crew on March 15.

Aaryan began his portions for the horror-comedy earlier in March in Manali, Himachal Pradesh.

On Sunday, Mumbai reported 3,779 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the overall tally to 3,62,675. The death toll mounted to 11,586.

Jamie Foxx to portray Mike Tyson in new limited series

LOS ANGELES, MAR 23 (PTI): Oscar winner Jamie Foxx will be essaying the role of boxing legend Mike Tyson in an upcoming limited series.

Titled "Tyson", the show will be directed by "Southpaw" director Antoine Fuqua, reported Variety.

The series, which will span the whole of Tyson's life, is not currently set up at a network or streaming service.

Fuqua, known for movies such as "Training Day", "The Equaliser" and "Olympus Has Fallen", will executive produce the project alongside veteran filmmaker Martin Scorsese and Foxx.

Colin Preston wrote the pilot for "Tyson" and is currently working on writing the full series.

"I have been looking to tell my story for quite some time. With the recent launch of Legends Only League and the excitement from fans following my return to the ring, now feels like the perfect moment.

"I look forward to collaborating with Martin, Antoine, Jamie, and the entire creative team to bring audiences a series that not only captures my professional and personal journey but also inspires and entertains," Tyson said in a statement.

The former boxer and his wife Kiki Tyson will executive produce the show along with Sophie Watts and John Ryan Jr on behalf of Tyson's Legends Only League.

This isn't the only adaptation of the Tyson story in the works, with Hulu also developing "Iron Mike" with Margot Robbie as one of the executive producers. Tyson had blasted the makers of the show when it was announced, calling it a "tone-deaf cultural misappropriation" of his life story.

Aries:
We've become so action-oriented as a society, we have forgotten the simple act of 'being' and allowing what is ours into our experience. But you are undergoing a massive vibrational shift, Aries, one that's helping strike a balance between the doing and the non-doing. If you have done your bit, trust that what is yours will find a way into your existence. The wheel of fortune is turning and it's bringing huge blessings into your world. PS: Look out for a miracle on the love and romance front.

Tip: You are allowing what has always been yours into your existence.

Taurus:
Your career has your undivided attention right now. There's so much you want to achieve this week. It's best to keep the momentum going. On the downside, you could be using madness as a means to escape your personal issues. Who and what are you not confronting, Taurus? It's time to get real with yourself.

Tip: There are personal issues that need your attention.

Gemini:
Not all secrets are meant to be shared, especially not the ones that concern you. Seal your lips, Gemini. Reveal details about the project only once things have been set into motion. You don't want anybody stealing your idea and passing it off as theirs. If your competitors already

have a whiff of what you're doing, get cracking. Delaying things any further would give them the opportunity to unveil the given product/service before you.

Tip: Get cracking!

Cancer:

You've been seeing each other casually for a while, and that's going well. How about taking things to the next level in the coming week? The stars are blessing your relationship "and" encouraging you to figure out the practical details you have been avoiding for so long. Yes, that means treading into the tricky territory of finances. On the professional front, you're being reminded of Jim Rohn's famous quote, "If you don't like where you are, move! You are not a tree."

Tip: But first, let's talk about the practical details.

Leo:

It's time for a quick check in: does the given opportunity awaken your sense of joy? Does it provide you with a reason to jump out of bed every morning? If you answered these questions in the affirmative, know that you are on the right track. So, keep doing what you're doing, Leo. Immerse your whole being into the given practice until the 'I' disappears completely from the equation. Trust that this will prove to be the secret to your transcendence.

Tip: Immerse your whole being into the given practice.

Virgo:

It's true that things haven't turned out as per your expectations. However, replaying what went wrong, over and over, isn't going to do you any good, Virgo. For the sake of your sanity, forgive, forget, and move on. If you need to have a conversation with somebody, hold space for that today. Expressing how you feel is always a better option than suppressing your emotions.

Tip: Forgiveness will free you from carrying this pain around.

Libra:

"Believe in what you want so much that it has no choice but to materialise." An Abraham Hicks quote that accurately describes where you are in your journey. Look at you manifesting all the things that you once thought were elusive. Yes, you are a magician, Libra, and it's time for you to realise your powers fully. The next few days are rather significant. Pay attention to the cosmic cues you receive as they will make the path clearer to you.

Tip: You are a magician, Libra!

Scorpio:

Being yourself is never easy. After all, we've grown up believing that the only way we can be loved is by hiding behind a mask! Today, you're being asked to become aware of this persona. To become aware of all that is false. Stepping into the role of the observer will help you transcend the baggage of your past.

What the cards want you to remember is that you deserve to be loved for who you are, and not just a version of yourself!

Tip: Become aware of all that is false.

Sagittarius:

It's one of those days, Sagittarius. One of those days when everything that you thought was in order seems to be falling apart before your own eyes. You have two options at this point: to get thrown off by your circumstances or stay in your centre. The latter will help you understand the higher reason behind which things are unfolding the way that they are. Trust that there is a divine plan in place, and trust that this divine plan is "always" working in your favour.

Tip: Allow the false foundations to come crumbling down.

Capricorn:

Hello, and welcome to harvest season! It's time to devour the lush fruits of your labour. You've done good, Capricorn. So, give yourself the pat on the back you deserve (which you so often forget to). As you do, let go of your financial fears. The Gods of Abundance plan to shower their grace upon you for some time now. What's important for you to master in the coming days is the balancing act. There are multiple projects that are vying for your attention, and each of them is significant in its own way.

Tip: The Gods of Abundance will continue to shower their grace upon you.

Aquarius:

"Love is what we are born with. Fear is what we learn. The spiritual journey is the unlearning of fear and prejudices and the acceptance of love back in our hearts. Love is the essential reality and our purpose on earth." Marianne Williamson's quote to reflect upon, dear Aquarius. Become cognisant of how and where you are cutting yourself off from the stream of love. Become aware of how you are fortifying the walls you should have demolished a long time ago. This is a time of letting go of the false and making space for the divine blessings that are rightfully yours.

Tip: Unlearn the ways of the world.

Pisces:

This could be a time of hardships on the personal front. You gave your all to make this relationship work, but there is something amiss here. It's time to take the rose-tinted glasses off, Pisces. It's time to recognise this connection for what it is. If you need time off to process your emotions, so be it. Learning to communicate your needs to other people is an integral part of the growth and learning process.

Tip: Recognise this connection for what it is.