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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CHORUS GROWS TO REINSTATE FOUR STUDENTS

Civic organisations stand up for Gyalshing College's expelled students



"HISTORY WILL NOT REMEMBER EDUCATION MINISTER FAVOURABLY IF HE FAILS STUDENTS HE IS SUPPOSED TO A CUSTODIAN OF"

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 21 MAR:

Political and social activists and representatives from different civic organizations have stood up unitedly in support of the four Gyalshing Degree College students who were expelled recently for raising demands for better infrastructure at the college.

While extending their solidarity towards the expelled students,

these organisations have demanded that the college authorities immediately reinstate all four students and allow them to sit for their examinations which are scheduled to begin on 23 March.

They have also warned to take a "joint strong action" if the students were not taken back and allowed to give their examination.

Four students of

Gyalshing Degree College, it may be recalled, were expelled on 19 February earlier this year for, as per the college management's claims, 'repeated breach of institutional rules & regulations'.

Addressing a joint press conference here on Sunday, Sikkim Bhutia-Lepcha Apex Committee convener, Tseten Tashi Bhutia, sought the Chief Minister's immediate personal intervention in the matter to give justice to the expelled students by going to the roots of the matter.

He argued that no crime was committed by the students and that the excessive action of the college authorities was a blatant injustice meted out to the students and their families.

He insisted that only the cancellation of the expulsion order would deliver justice to the students.

He also asserted that no law can stop them from giving their examinations.

He also sought wider support for the four students and stressed that

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CM meets Sikkim patients undergoing treatment in Delhi

SUMMIT REPORT

NEW DELHI, 21 MAR:

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang hosted lunch for 37 patients and their family members at Sikkim House, New Delhi, today, a press communiqué from the CMO informs.

The CM personally interacted with the patients and enquired about the line of treatment being provided by the hospitals.

As a token of support, he provided financial assistance from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to them and assured every possible assistance from the Government and wished them speedy recovery and the best of



health in the days to follow.

Resident Commissioner Ashwini Chand and Special Commissioner Monalisha Das briefed

the Chief Minister about the patients and the facilities provided by the Office of the Resident Commissioner, New Delhi, the release adds.

The patients were escorted by the Patient Supervisor Hem Chandra Subba, Nurse Sarita Rai and the staff of DKK Bhawan.

5 states account for over 83% of new Covid cases: Health Ministry

NEW DELHI, 21 MAR [PTI]: As India witnessed the highest daily tally of COVID-19 cases this year,

the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday that Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh account for 83.14 per cent of the new infections.

Maharashtra reported the highest daily new cases at 27,126. It is followed by Punjab with 2,578

while Kerala reported 2,078 new cases. Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh reported 1,798, 1,565 and 1,308 infections in a day.

India recorded 43,846 new coronavirus cases in a day, the highest single-day rise so far

turn to pg02

Only 2 new Covid cases in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 MAR:

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 nudged up to 6,206 today with only two new cases of coronavirus being detected in the last 24 hours.

Of the two new cases, one person from Upper Arithang in Gangtok and one from Singhik in North District, who is a primary contact of a patient, were found positive for COVID-19.

In the meanwhile, the number of recovered cases of COVID-19 further improved to 5,920 with one more recovery on Saturday. There are currently 54 active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim.

In his daily health bulletin on Sunday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the two new cases were picked up in the testing of 173 samples on Saturday - one via RT-PCR [of 159 samples] and one through rapid antigen testing [of 12 samples].

Cricket 'awareness' reaches Dzongu through a fun fair

SUMMIT REPORT

DZONGU, 21 MAR:

After completion of the Cricket Fun Fair at Mangan on 20 March, the Fun Fair reached Dzongu today.

A pilot-project of Sikkim Cricket Association, "Cricket Fun Fair" is a two-pronged strategy involving "Cricket At Your Doorstep" which seeks to reach cricket awareness to the grass-root level and "Cricket As A Career" which aims to make school children and teachers aware about how a career in cricket pays rich dividends, a SICA press release explains.

Over 300 students from Dzongu schools gathered at Sonam Choda Lepcha Secondary School at Lingdong today for the event.

The fun-fair was



inaugurated by the Dzongu MLA Pintso Namgyal Lepcha who appreciated SICA's efforts in bringing cricket to Dzongu and also showed his willingness to partner with SICA to develop cricket in the region.

SICA president, Lobzang G Tenzing, also sanctioned a concrete pitch at the school and announced that a coaching camp will also be held for students in Dzongu soon.

The event was also attended by the

Chungden Lepcha, Panchayat President, Samten Lepcha, Principal, Sonam Choda Lepcha Secondary School, members of the School Managing Committee and teachers of neighbouring schools.

The event was a successful one and SICA will be looking forward to the same successful event tomorrow in Chungthang, where the fun-fair is scheduled to be organised at Phu-Phu Stadium, the release adds.

1573 more receive Covid vaccine shots, fresh consignment of One lakh doses arrive

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 MAR:

Sikkim received its fourth consignment of 10,000 vials [1,00,000 doses] of COVID-19 vaccine, Covishield, on Friday.

The consignment was received by the Universal Immunization Program [UIP] team at Bagdogra Airport and is stored in the Walk in Cooler, Cold Chain Section of the STNM Hospital complex, it is informed.

On the other hand,

1,573 more people received the vaccine for COVID-19 in different parts of the State on Saturday, of whom 1,300 received their first dose and 273 completed their vaccine schedule with the second dose.

While giving details of the vaccination, Mr Bhutia informed that 444 persons [441 first dose & three second dose] were covered in East District, 816 persons [638 first dose & 178 second dose] in

West District, 207 persons [115 first dose & 92 second dose] in North District and 106 in South District.

In the numbers today are 96 healthcare workers [18 first dose & 78 second dose], 314 frontline workers [119 first dose & 195 second dose], 239 persons in the 45 to 59 age-group with comorbidities and 924 above-60 year olds.

Looking at the district-wise break-up, seven healthcare workers

turn to pg02

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Mizoram CM holds talks with Myanmar's Foreign Minister amid coup

AIZAWL, 21 MAR [PTI]: Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga today held a meeting with Myanmar's Foreign Minister Zin Mar Aung on the current political situation and the hardships being faced by the Zo ethnic people in the neighbouring country, officials said. Speaking at the virtual meeting, in which US-based Mizo leaders also participated, Mr Zoramthanga expressed solidarity with the people of Myanmar.

"Had a fruitful meeting (online) this morning with Zin Mar Aung, Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Myanmar. Our thoughts and prayers are with Myanmar in these trying times," the chief minister tweeted.

"It is our prayer that your sufferings and mental distress died down very soon," he added.

The two leaders discussed the current political situation in Myanmar amid a coup in February, an official at the Chief Minister's Office said.

The meeting was to extend solidarity and call for peace among the Zo ethnic people of Myanmar who have become victims of "persecution and atrocities" after the military junta took power in the neighbouring country, he said.

Fleeing atrocities, over 500 people from the neighbouring country have crossed over to Mizoram in the last few weeks, even as the Centre directed the four Myanmar-bordering North-eastern states to prevent illegal immigration and ensure expeditious deportation.

Mizoram shares a 510-km-long unfenced and porous international border with Myanmar.

On March 18, Mr Zoramthanga had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking asylum and relief for the Myanmar nationals who have taken refuge in the country.

The chief minister said that India cannot turn a blind eye to the humanitarian crisis.

Most areas in Myanmar that share border with Mizoram are inhabited by the Chin communities, who share the same ancestry and ethnicity as the Mizos, he said, dismissing the Union Home Ministry's advisory of checking illegal influx as "not acceptable".

Most of the Myanmar nationals taking refuge in Mizoram belong to the Chin community and are being provided relief and shelter by the local NGOs, officials said.

The state's student body Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) in collaboration with four other outfits on Saturday organised charity concerts in different parts of Aizawl to raise money for the Myanmar-refugees.

Over ₹ 5.19 lakh was raised through the programme, MZP general secretary Lalnunmawia Pautu said.

MZP president B Vantana along with other leaders are visiting Delhi to raise the issue with the Centre.

Ashok Prasad leverages Lal Bazaar connection to enter GMC

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 MAR:

Ashok Kumar Prasad, a candidate for Lower MG Marg ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation, is keeping busy with a door-to-door campaign.

Speaking to media persons during his campaign on Sunday, Mr Prasad said, "I am born and brought up in Lal Bazaar so I know every person of the area personally and know about every issue and problem of the area. So, if the people give me a chance then I will work to resolve all issues and problems by working in the better co-



ordination with the concerned authorities. I will deliver on all my promises."

He assured to work as a bridge between the people and the government to reach the voice of the people to the right authority.

He further assured to work in the good co-ordination of the state government to take the development and progress to the people at the grassroots level and assured to take up all pending issues of the ward with the government to

resolve them.

Mr Prasad thanked the State government and the Chief Minister for creating an opportunity for more people to come forward to work for their wards by making the municipal elections non-partisan.

Binoy announces party candidates for Assembly elections



SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 21 MAR:

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha [Binoy faction] organised public meeting today at Mangpoo where its president, Binoy Tamang, announced Keshav Raj Pokhrel, Ruden Sada Lepcha and Tshering Lama Dahal as the party's candidates for Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong respectively for the upcoming Assembly elections.

Addressing the public meeting, Gorkhaland Territorial Administration chairperson, Anit Thapa, said, "The elections this time is not

about individual leaders and ambitions, but about the community. We have trusted and supported many from outside and given them power but received nothing and got betrayed. This time, we have changed for our betterment."

This point was reiterated by the GJMM [Binoy] president who stressed, "This time, we will choose one from our own community. Now we will walk on our own feet and fight our own battles. We will not make fake promises and have included only what the State can give us in our manifesto."

Medical camp at Barfung-Jarrong GPU



Namchi, 21 Mar [IPR]: The Gram Panchayat of Barfung Jarrong GPU organised a two-day medical camp at the Gram Prashashan Kendra on 20 and 21 March.

Pediatrician from Namchi District Hospital, Dr Roshan Poudyal, and MO, PHC Ravangla, Dr Pallavi Pariyar, were present on the first day and attended to 125 patients from the GPU who were provided health check-up and free medicines.

Screening under Ayushman Bharat was also carried out over the two days by technicians

from Namchi and Ravangla BAC and 43 families covered.

Area MLA, TT Bhutia, was present as the chief guest on the first day and handed over 15 golden cards to beneficiaries of the said scheme.

On the second day, sanitary kits were distributed in the presence of the MO, PHC Ravangla, during which 46 girls were provided sets of 12 sanitary napkins each.

The programme is an annual initiative of the GPU under its Child Friendly GPU initiatives being done through GPDP 2020-21.

1573 more receive...

[4 first dose & 3 second dose], one frontline worker, 67 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 369 persons in age group of 60 years & above in East District were vaccinated, while 20 healthcare workers, 172 frontline workers [10 first dose & 162 second dose], 135 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 489 persons in age group of 60 years & above in West District

have received their COVID vaccines.

In North District, 69 healthcare workers [10 first & 59 second dose], 137 frontline workers [104 first dose & 33 second dose] and one person in age group of 45 to 59 years were vaccinated, while four frontline workers, 36 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 66 persons in age group of 60 years & above were vaccinated for COVID-19.

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5 states account for...

this year, taking the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,15,99,130.

Besides, 197 deaths were reported in a span 24 hours, the ministry said, adding six states account for 86.8 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (92). Punjab follows with 38 daily deaths. Kerala reported 15 deaths.

Delhi reported over 800 coronavirus cases for the first time this year on Saturday, while two more people died due to the pathogen.

The active cases rose to 3,409 from 3,165 a day ago. The positivity rate breached the 1 per cent-mark after over two months, according to the bulletin.

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat and Haryana are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases, according to the ministry.

India's total active caseload was recorded over 3.09 lakh (3,09,087) comprising 2.66 per cent of the total infections.

A net rise of 20,693 cases recorded from the total active caseload in a span of 24 hours.

According to experts, the biggest reason for the surge in cases is that people feel the pandemic is over and they are not following COVID-appropriate behaviour.

"There are multiple reasons for the surge, but the main reason is that there is change in people's attitude and they feel coronavirus is over. People should still restrict non-essential travel for some more time," AIIMS Director Ran-deep Guleria said.

Dr VK Paul, NITI Aayog member (Health) said to remain free of this virus, it is very important that Covid-appropriate behaviour, containment strategy, readiness from the health infrastructure point of view as well as vaccination has to be brought in to fight the pandemic.

He advised that in districts where COVID-19 cases are seemingly on the rise, vaccination of eligible individuals should be intensified and prioritised.

States and Union Territories showing an upsurge in daily new cases and with a high caseload of active cases have been advised by the centre to improve testing in districts reporting reduction in testing and increase the overall share of RT-PCR tests (more than 70 per cent), especially in districts dependent on high levels of antigen testing in line with the "Test, Track and

Treat" strategy of the government.

They have also been advised to carry out an average close contact tracing of minimum of 20 persons per positive case (in the first 72 hours) along with isolation and early treatment of the serious cases as per clinical protocol.

They have been asked to focus on surveillance and stringent containment of those areas in selected districts which are seeing cluster of cases and focus on clinical management in districts reporting higher deaths and that they should also follow up on sending samples for genome testing to track virus variants of concern, officials said.

All states and Union Territories have been tagged to 10 national labs under the INSACOG consortium with National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as the nodal institute.

They have been asked to limit the gathering in public places along with promoting Covid-appropriate behaviour through communication and enforcement and accelerate vaccination for priority population groups in districts reporting higher cases.

Accelerating the pace of vaccination has also been stressed upon, officials stated.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,11,30,288 on Sunday.

Seventeen states and Union Territories have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in a span of 24 hours. These are Rajasthan, Assam, Goa, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Jharkhand, Lakshadweep, Sikkim, Puducherry, Daman and Diu & Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Nagaland, Tripura, Ladakh (UT), Manipur, Mizoram, A&N Islands and Arunachal Pradesh.

Besides, over 4.4 crore (4,46,03,841) vaccine doses have been administered through 7,25,138 sessions, as per the provisional report till Sunday 7 am.

These include 77,79,985 healthcare workers (first dose), 48,77,356 healthcare workers (second dose), 80,84,311 frontline workers (first dose) and 26,01,298 frontline workers (second dose), 36,33,473 beneficiaries aged more than 45 years with specific co-morbidities (first dose) and 1,76,27,418 beneficiaries aged more than 60 years.

As on day-64 of the vaccination drive (March 20), more than 25 lakh (25,40,449) vaccine doses were given. Out of which, 22,83,157 beneficiaries were vaccinated across 38,669 sessions for 1st dose and 2,57,292 healthcare workers and frontline workers received second dose of the vaccine.

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Volleyball friendly for Nasha MukT Bharat

GYALSHING, 21 MAR [IPR]: Under the theme, 'Nasha MukT Bharat Abhiyaan,' a friendly volleyball match was organised at Lungzik Block, West Sikkim, today. SDM HQ, Anant Jain, was present as chief guest. The motive behind the event was to

send a message among the youth regarding the importance of physical activity in fighting the Drug menace. Along with the volleyball friendly match, local SHG groups were also felicitated for their efforts.

Odisha reports 98 new COVID-19 cases, tally at 3,38,817

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 21 (PTI): Odisha's COVID-19 tally on Sunday surged to 3,38,817 after 98 more people tested positive for the infection, while one more fatality, after a gap of eight days, pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 1,919, a health department official said.

Of the new cases, 58 were reported from different quarantine centres, while 40 fresh infections were detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district reported the highest number of new cases at 15, followed by Cuttack (9) and Mayurbhanj (8), he said.

"Regret to inform the demise of a 15 yr Male COVID-19 positive patient of Khurda who was also suffering from Diffuse Large B Cell Lymphoma with immunocompromised status," the Health and Family Welfare department tweeted.

With the new fatality, the coronavirus death toll in Khurda district mounted to 340.

Fifty-three COVID-19 patients have died in Odisha due to comorbidities, the official said.

The coastal state at present has 779 active COVID-19 cases while 3,36,066 patients have recovered from the infection.

As many as 87.88 lakh tests have been conducted for detection of coronavirus in the state, including 26,237 on Saturday.

Odishas positivity rate stands at 3.86 per cent, the data released by the Health and Family Welfare department said.

CJ on 2-day tour of South Sikkim



NAMCHI, 21 MAR [IPR]: Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheswari, is on a two-day visit to South District and stopped over at several places, including the Court of the Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Yangang Sub-division.

At the outset, he visited

ed and offered prayers at the Siddheshwara Dham complex.

Thereafter, he stopped by Sai Mandir at Assangthang and then headed to Temi Tea Garden.

The Chief Justice then made a visit to Tathagata Tsal at Rabongla.

He was accompanied

by Registrar General, KW Bhutia, SDPO [Rabongla], Sonam Thakarpa, and other officials.

The Chief Justice then visited the Court of Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate, Yangang Subdivision where he had a brief interaction with the staff of the Court.

CAT beats Challengers CC on day-02 of Khangchendzonga Shield



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 21 MAR:

On the second day of the ongoing B-Division League of Khangchendzonga Shield Men's at Reshithang, Cricket Association of Tatangchen took on Challengers Cricket Club of Singtam and emerged victorious.

Winning the toss CAT opted to bat first and scored 205 for 6 in 30 overs.

Captain Lee Yong Lepcha was the highest scorer at 64 not-out, Aamir Iqbal Bhutia (38), Phurba Tamang (30), Jyoti Prasad Bind (21) and Bhim Luitel (17).

For Challengers, Md Imran and Chandra Bahadur Timsina took 2 wickets each and Padam Bahadur Limboo took one.

Challenger Cricket Club lost early wickets but the middle-order salvaged the situation and ended the allotted 30 overs with the scoreboard reading a respectable 180 runs for the loss of 8 wickets.

Faiz Ahmed scored 61, Padam Bahadur Limboo (24), Ganga Ram

Nirola (16) not-out, Captain Bhumi Subba (14), Chandra Bahadur Timsina (13), and Santosh Prasad (12).

Md Aadil took 3 wickets, Sonam Tshering Bhutia two, Abhishek Kumar, Pritam and Bhim Luitel took one wicket each for CAT.

CAT won the match by 25 runs and Lee Yong Lepcha was adjudged Man of the Match.

The next match will be played between Royal Daragaon Cricket Club and Shaft Cricket Club on 22 March.

449 infra projects show cost overruns worth Rs 4.29 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, MAR 21 (PTI): As many as 449 infrastructure projects, each worth Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns totalling more than Rs 4.29 lakh crore, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above. Of the 1,736 such projects, 449 reported cost overruns and 547 were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,736 projects was Rs 22,32,019.72 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 26,61,205.74 crore," the ministry's latest report for February 2021 said.

According to the report, the cost overrun for completing these 449 projects works out to be Rs 4,29,186.02 crore. The expenditure incurred on these projects till February 2021 is Rs 12,78,270.71 crore, which is 48.03 per

cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. However, the report said the number of delayed projects decreases to 409 if delay is calculated on the basis of latest schedule of completion.

Further, for 930 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of 547 delayed projects, 109 projects have overall delay in the range of 1-12 months, 132 projects have delay of 13-24 months, 187 projects reflect delay in the range of 25-60 months and 119 projects show delays of 61 months and above.

The average time overrun in these 547 delayed projects is 44.59 months.

Reasons for time overruns as reported by various project implementing agencies include delay in land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and linkages.

Ashoka Univ acknowledges lapses in institutional processes over resignations of Mehta, Subramanian

NEW DELHI, MAR 21 (PTI): Ashoka University on Sunday acknowledged "lapses in institutional processes" and expressed "deep regret" at the recent events surrounding the resignations of political commentator Pratap Bhanu Mehta and noted economist Arvind Subramanian from its faculty.

Meanwhile, Mehta wrote a letter to students, urging them to not "press" for his return asserting that the circumstances that led to his resignation will not change in foreseeable future.

The university in Haryana's Sonapat became the centre of a controversy earlier this week, when Mehta, who had resigned as its vice chancellor two years back, chose to step down as professor, saying that the founders made it "abundantly clear" that his association with the institution was a "political liability".

Subramanian, the former chief economic advisor to the government, had resigned from the university two days later in solidarity with Mehta.

"We acknowledge that there have been some lapses in institutional processes which we will work to rectify in consultation with all stakeholders. This will reaffirm our commitment to academic

autonomy and freedom which have always been at the core of the Ashoka University ideals," the institution said in a statement.

"Ashoka has been privileged to have been led, guided and counselled by Pratap first as Vice Chancellor and then as senior faculty. Subramanian brought eminence, stature, fresh ideas and energy to the university and his exit leaves a void that will be hard to fill," it added.

The statement has been jointly issued by the university chancellor, vice chancellor and the chairman of Board of Trustees, along with Mehta and Subramanian.

"Pratap and Arvind would like to emphasize that Ashoka University is one of the most important projects in Indian higher education. They are sad to be leaving Ashoka, especially its outstanding students and faculty. They continue to believe strongly that Ashoka University should embody a liberal vision and commitment to academic freedom and autonomy.

"And they remain lifelong friends and well-wishers of the institution and are committed to its success wherever they are," the statement said, adding that the two professors will remain "available for advice and consulta-

tion to the university in the future".

The students have called for a two-day boycott of classes from Monday in protest over the developments. Mehta, however, said he wants to close this chapter.

"The underlying circumstances that led to the resignation will not change for the foreseeable future, in my case, at any rate. So I must close this chapter. I urge you not to press on this matter. I know you will be disappointed. But if I may exercise one last bit of professorial discretion: your mission is larger than the fate of two Professors, Mehta said in his letter addressed to the students.

"The poise and articulation with which your defended important values and demanded accountability should make anyone want to associate with this university. You are its beating heart and soul and nothing can damage that," he said.

"Second, it is not for me to intercede in this matter. But I imagine your voice will, in the long run make Ashoka a better university and get it to recommit to its ideals and values. So your outpouring is already a victory of sorts. You have taught us by example, what we were badly trying to teach you by lectures," he added.



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will get shallow jingoism*

Politics is increasingly becoming about identity, and while deeper enquiries into questions of identity and belonging are always welcome, when politics jumps the line on research or nuanced understanding, everything – from security to even ideas of identity – get compromised. Where politics and those who obsesses over it see everything in binary, there are some ideas like identity which are more layered and complex than the simplistic us and them or us and no one else version that suits politics. And that cannot serve any good, ever. We are learning this the hard way every day in our country as is the world with the rise of jingoistic nationalism and easy fear-mongering which are being peddled to sell everything from genocide to wars to rapes.

The region itself has been in the grips of identity assertion for some decades now, and while this has worked well to boost political careers and specific agendas, it has not succeeded in infusing confidence which any strong sense of identity should guarantee. It hence becomes important for the stakeholders to pause, step back and evaluate.

One of the problems with the current wave of claims of identity, belonging and rights is that these are sourced from selective reading and myopic interpretations. Anyone unfettered by political blinkers will immediately denounce superficial pigeon-holing of people and communities. But this is essentially what colonial and/ or monarchical texts did with easy alacrity. When a dash of traditionally held prejudices are added to these inaccurate and misleading records, confusion and paranoia result. It is thus required for scholars and researchers to deliver new narratives from fresh perspectives, narratives that are more nuanced and subaltern and also more invested with academic discipline and do a better job of explaining interconnectedness rather than reinforcing prejudices or isolating.

The process of rewriting these texts is however not new. Taking Sikkim's example, history has been reinterpreted several times, sometimes by the powers that be and sometimes by individual organizations and even proclaimed by political parties. While some 'inventions' have become accepted notions because they have been around for a long time, others invite only ridicule except from those who have a stake in the new theories. Both trends are unhealthy because both are misleading and incomplete. Histories are always contested and thus always open to fresh interpretations, but what separates claim from fact is the erudition, research and evidence that supports the latter. It is obvious that it is this fastidious obsession with supporting evidence that brings credibility to a scholar and only notoriety to the conspiracy theorist. One hopes that the deconstruction of established 'myths' and accepted histories start surfacing soon following the scholarly path and not continue on the current rantings and claims of half-baked notions.

But why are histories required? To borrow a term from an academic who has spared some thought on this - histories are increasingly required to prove the "situatedness" of a people; to establish that they belong. Take for instance the Indian Nepali community which has been standing at the crossroads of this journey for a while now, stuck more in an extended debate over nomenclature rather than "situating" its identity and belonging. It is obvious that a name cannot be imposed on a people and it is also accepted that no introduction of identity will be taken seriously if it comes from a fractured splinter of the constellation. To squabble over a name prioritizes the nomenclature rather than the introduction, and a name in itself is no guarantee to recognition, security or identity. But this is only one aspect of the understanding of identities and histories, there is so much more that needs to be researched and recorded, and the sooner a more disciplined approach is initiated, the better it will be for all with a stake in anything anywhere. But this exercise is safest in the hands of trained researchers instead of inspired political groups.

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Asians Are Good at Math? Why Dressing up Racism as a Compliment Just Doesn't Add Up

NIRAL SHAH
theconversation.com

The narrative that "Asians are good at math" is pervasive in the United States. Young children are aware of it. College students' academic performance can be affected by it.

On the surface, the "Asians are good at math" narrative sounds like a compliment. After all, what's wrong with saying that someone is good at something? But as I have explained in a journal article, there are two problems. First, the narrative is false. Second, it is racist. And in the midst of an upsurge in violent attacks against people identified as Asian, it's worth remembering that the core of anti-Asian racism has always been dehumanization.

I'm an experienced teacher and researcher of STEM education. Research tells us that racism is a part of students' classroom experiences in these subjects.

If we don't understand how racism works – even in supposedly "neutral" areas like STEM – we might unintentionally recycle racist ideas.

DEBUNKING THE MYTH

As with many racial stereotypes, people are genuinely curious whether the "Asians are good at math" narrative could be true. There are videos on YouTube with several million views asking that question.

Don't test scores prove the narrative? In fact, they don't. On international exams, it's true that Asian countries are among the top performers in math. But it's also true that other Asian nations rank 38th, 46th, 59th and 63rd. Interestingly, those top performers also lead in reading – but there isn't a narrative that "Asians are good at literature."

Domestically, it's the same story. Research shows considerable variation in mathematical performance among different Asian ethnic groups in the U.S. If all Asian people were innately gifted in math, we shouldn't see this kind of variation.

A better explanation has to do with education policy and federal immigration laws. Countries that invest in teacher education and high-quality curriculum do better on international tests. In the U.S.,

the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act gave preference to STEM professionals from Asia. That policy affected my own parents, who were able to immigrate to the U.S. under that law, not because South Asian people are naturally good doctors.

'MONGOLOID' TO 'MODEL MINORITY'

So if it's not true, why do we say it?

Today, Asians are often seen as the "model minority" – hardworking, academically talented and professionally successful – but it wasn't always that way.

In the 18th century, Asian people were classified as "mongoloids," a racist term based on the pseudoscience of craniometry. Whereas "caucasoids" (white people) were deemed full human beings with superior intellect, all people of color were considered underdeveloped.

From the late 19th century, a new image of Asian people was born: national threat. Chinese immigrants were seen as an economic threat to white American workers, and Japan became a military threat during World War II.

Asian people in the U.S. continue to experience racism even today. In fact, the "model minority" idea has always been a way to pit Asian people against supposedly "nonmodel" groups – in other words, non-Asians of color.

The implication is: If Asians can do it, why can't you?

PEOPLE, NOT ROBOTS

Even though the "Asians are good at math" narrative is false, it still has a real impact on people's lives. Like the "model minority" myth, it falsely positions non-Asians of color as mathematically inferior. It can also be a source of pressure for Asian students. But the real impact of the "Asians are good at math" narrative goes deeper.

Take, for example, a scene from an episode of the long-running adult cartoon "Family Guy."

The main character, Peter, is reminiscing about taking a math exam. As the shot pans over other students, each take out a calculator from their pocket. Peter pulls out a boy with Asian features, prods him with a pencil and says: "Do math!"

This might seem funny at first, but the underlying

message is clear: Asian people aren't seen as human beings; they are calculating machines. Asians are literally objectified, seen as capable of doing things at a speed and scale that "normal" people can't do. In other words, they are dehumanized.

Calculators are capable of only procedural tasks, not creativity. For Asian people, this implies that while they can succeed in the technical STEM subjects, the humanities and creative arts aren't for them.

Part of what's going on has to do with how society understands "good at math." Math is widely considered to be among the hardest subjects to learn. Those that can do it are often seen as "nerds." Movies about mathematicians like "A Beautiful Mind" and "The Imitation Game" usually portray them as antisocial. Mathematicians might be considered brilliant, but they aren't seen as "normal."

Usually we think about dehumanization in terms of intellectual deficit. For example, Americans in the 21st century still associate African American people with apes, a racist trope. What's happening with Asian people is different but still harmful. They become hyperintelligent robots.

RESISTING THE NARRATIVE

We all can play a role in resisting this false narrative.

Teachers can help by monitoring the kinds of learning opportunities they give Asian students. Do they treat them like calculators – only giving them rote procedural tasks – or do Asian students get to show their creativity and to present ideas in front of the class? To help teachers track biases, my research team has developed a free web app called EQUIP.

Most people easily recognize overtly racist behavior and language. But I believe we also need to learn how to spot racism in its more subtle forms. The next time you hear someone say "Asians are good at math," don't hear it as a joke – hear it as racism.

[the writer is Assistant Professor of Learning Sciences & Human Development, University of Washington]

Oil: Why Higher Prices Will Complicate the Energy Transition

JORGE GUIRA
theconversation.com

The oil price is on a rollercoaster. Having crashed into negative territory just last April, the price of Brent crude climbed all the way to US\$70 (£50) earlier in March. It has since slid below US\$64. So where is it heading and what are the implications?

There are several reasons why oil prices surged from their 2020 lows. One is a common belief in an imminent "commodity supercycle", in which an explosion in economic activity after the pandemic creates soaring oil demand.

Supply has been limited since Saudi Arabia and Russia cut production in spring 2020. The suspicion then and consensus now is that this sought to force down prices to drive less efficient US shale oil producers out of the market. It has substantially had that effect, with less shale entering the market as a result.

Prices have eased in the past couple of days amid fears that Europe's vaccine difficulties will slow global recovery, and thanks to a stronger dollar after the US Federal Reserve declined to curb rising Treasury bond yields at its most recent policy meeting on March 17.

Nonetheless, the direction of oil prices looks like it will be broadly upwards: most oil majors are signalling reductions in capital expenditure. Meanwhile, Opec, the 13-country cartel of oil nations, has a vested interest in continuing to restrain production to keep prices higher, while the whole framework of the Paris climate agreement aims to make oil production more expensive. This will be passed

on to consumers in the form of higher prices. As for oil demand, it is still expected to climb for many years, despite the rise of renewables. A recent study by BloombergNEF forecasts that the green agenda will only push oil into structural decline from 2035.

Admittedly, carbon taxes may soften demand by increasingly penalising companies for using fossil fuels – whether through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, the new China scheme, or the proposed London Voluntary Scheme or US scheme. But it will depend on how the rules develop. The EU scheme is the most advanced but includes lots of exceptions that currently minimise the requirements on numerous sectors.

OIL AND THE WIDER ECONOMY

The oil price and its relationship with the economic recovery, bond prices and inflation is going to be vital to the post-COVID world order. Oil prices are closely linked to inflation. This is because oil has a multiplier effect as it circulates through markets: for example, it is an unavoidable cost for companies that run vehicles, who then pass it on to consumers by increasing the price of their goods and services.

In the US, there are already substantial concerns about the inflationary impact of the US\$1.9 trillion stimulus package, particularly when the Federal Reserve has signalled that it will tolerate more inflation than previously. Rising oil prices feed into these concerns.

Long-term interest rates rise with inflation worries, and have duly been climbing sharply recently. If this continues, it could limit what the US government can borrow to spend

on infrastructure. At the same time, inflation is liable to make the infrastructure more expensive.

The Fed therefore has an incentive to keep interest rates as low as possible, and there has been much speculation about whether it will do this by buying more long-term Treasury bonds. But that could further stoke inflation, which could end up pushing oil prices up further, so it's a question of striking the right balance between over-stimulating and under-stimulating the economy. If inflation is held at bay, lower or at least stable oil prices may result, just like after the global financial crisis of 2007-09.

In the UK, the situation is a bit different. Inflation has remained low as oil prices have dropped. COVID-19 reduced demand for UK oil drastically and drilling activity has been negatively affected. Higher prices should help reverse this, depending on the oil demand from abroad – including from Europe.

In developing countries that depend on exporting oil and other natural resources, higher prices are definitely welcome. Many low to middle-income countries, including Nigeria and Indonesia, have seen government budgets taking a hit from the fall-off in demand during the pandemic.

In Nigeria, the government has been forced to devalue the naira to stimulate the economy. In such circumstances, rising oil prices can be a relief – including for exporters of other commodities such as industrial metals, whose prices are linked to oil.

Meanwhile, other developing countries lose out as oil prices rise – especially oil importers such as Thai-

land and Turkey. The Turkish central bank has just raised interest rates by two percentage points, partly to curb inflation.

THE NET ZERO THREAT

The oil price has implications for the ability of nations to meet the net zero emissions targets required under the Paris Agreement.

More expensive oil should hasten the tipping point where renewables become the cheapest way of generating electricity and powering transport. The lower cost of renewables compared to fossil fuels has already been helping to make them more attractive.

Yet paradoxically, higher oil prices also provide incentives to oil companies to spend more on exploration and production – a potential step in the wrong direction for achieving net zero emissions. And in developing countries that depend heavily on oil exports, higher prices mean more money for spending on society, which boosts government popularity. So they too may prioritise greater oil exploration and production, potentially at the expense of developing renewables and meeting nationally defined carbon targets.

This is not to say that higher oil prices will negatively affect the scope or pace of renewables spending overall. But they have to be further developed and built, so higher oil prices certainly risk progress in developing countries. This means that being able to keep oil prices from getting too high will play a key role in the pace and scope of the energy transition.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Law and Finance, University of Reading]

Over 5 lakh taxpayers hit by pandemic get tax waiver worth over Rs 2 billion in Nepal

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA KATHMANDU, 21 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Over 500,000 entrepreneurs affected by Covid-19 have received an income tax exemption of over Rs2 billion, the tax authority has said.

Section 25 of the Financial Act 2020-21 provisions tax exemption for taxpayers depending on the size of their annual transactions.

According to the Inland Revenue Department, the government waived the income tax amounting to Rs2.16 billion for 512,753 taxpayers under this scheme.

"They were given an opportunity till mid-March this year to pay a certain portion of their tax liability of the last fiscal year and get the rest of their tax liabilities waived off," said Arjun Dhakal, information officer at the department.

The first category of taxpayers receiving the discount are those whose annual transaction is up to Rs2 million or those whose annual income is up to Rs200,000 and need to pay the tax. As per the Financial Act, they are supposed to get an exemption of 75 percent of the total tax liability in fiscal year 2019-20.

According to the Inland Revenue Department, a total of 443,075 taxpayers falling under this category received



the exemption for Rs1.5 billion.

The second category of taxpayers to receive the exemption are those whose annual transaction is Rs2 to 5 million. They are supposed to get a 50 percent waiver of their total tax liability in the fiscal year 2019-20, according to the Financial Act (2020-21).

According to the department, a total of 19,700 taxpayers under this category enjoyed this facility, getting an exemption of Rs208.5 million in tax dues.

The third category of taxpayers to receive the exemption are those whose annual transactions are up to Rs10 million. As per the Financial Act, they are supposed to get a tax waiver of 25 percent on the tax liability in the last fiscal year.

According to the tax authority, a total of

49,700 taxpayers get a tax waiver of Rs393.2 million.

The fourth category of taxpayers to receive the waiver under the scheme are entrepreneurs involved in the tourism sector including hotel, travel, trekking, transport and aviation sectors. People in these sectors having annual transactions over Rs 10 million are supposed to get a 20 percent tax waiver.

According to the tax authority, a total of 278 taxpayers from this category got a waiver of Rs56.29 million in total from their tax liabilities of last fiscal year. Information Officer Dhakal said businesses and tourism sectors were badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic last fiscal year and the government introduced the scheme as relief mea-

sures to affected sectors.

Particularly, this scheme aims to address the plight of small enterprises and the tourism industry, which suffered badly from the pandemic.

A survey report released by Nepal Rastra Bank in August revealed the grave condition of the micro, small and medium enterprises with a majority of them being closed completely compared to bigger enterprises during the nearly four-month long lockdown.

Over 60 percent of micro and small enterprises were fully closed during the lockdown compared to less than 50 percent enterprises above medium enterprises were closed fully, according to the survey. Over 95 percent small and cottage industries had responded saying that their business went down by over 73 percent,

according to the survey. The lockdown was imposed from March 24 to July 21 last year.

Another survey report released by the International Finance Corporation in September last year also found that over 80 percent of micro, small and medium enterprises suffered from a slump in sales amid the lockdown. Besides small enterprises, the tourism industry as a whole, irrespective of the size of businesses, suffered badly from the pandemic as domestic and international tourist movements were halted almost completely.

Small entrepreneurs say despite the tax exemption and cheap loans provisioned for small enterprises, many are still deprived of these facilities. Many such facilities are delivered too late and the measures were not enough to rescue many small enterprises.

"The cash flow suddenly stopped for small enterprises after the lockdown imposed last year and they failed to pay even the house rent," said DB Basnet, chairperson of the cottage and small industry committee at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"Many small enterprises would have survived had the government contributed to the house rent payment."

Airtel adds 6.9 mn active users in Jan, extends gain: TRAI data

NEW DELHI, MAR 21 (PTI): Telecom operator Bharti Airtel added 6.9 million active users in January, extending its market lead on this count even as Jio's active subscribers tally declined by about 3.4 million, according to TRAI data.

With this, Bharti's active subscribers rose to 336 million, most of which was driven by total net adds, thereby indicating the improving quality of user addition, ICICI Securities said in a note crunching January telecom subscription numbers released by the sector regulator.

While Bharti and Jio's VLR (active) subscriber counts have remained "neck and neck" in recent months, Bharti's VLR subscriber count shot up to 336 million at the end of January (up 6.9 million month on month), compared to 325 million of Jio (down 3.4 million), UBS report said.

Active subscribers declined for Jio after rising in the previous two months -- an addition of 3.2 million in December and 5.4 million in November, observed JM Financial note.

"While we cannot definitely conclude, the jump in VLR additions in Nov'20 and Dec'20 could



have been driven by migrant workers coming back to cities, the effect of which could have normalised in January 21," it said. Going ahead, active subscriber addition would be a key monitorable for Jio, it pointed out.

Active subscribers are calculated based on reported Visitor Location Register (VLR) - the key metric reflects the number of active users on a mobile network.

It is pertinent to mention here that on an overall basis, Reliance Jio continues to be the largest telecom operator in the country with subscriber base of 410.7 million, while Bharti Airtel is second in the pecking order with 344.6 million users as on January 2021.

Although TRAI numbers pegged Vodafone Idea's total mobile subscriber base at 285.9 million, with net additions at 1.7 million, the company has stated it had found

an "inadvertent error" in the subscriber data reported to the regulator, and has now corrected and submitted revised information.

In a clarification posted on company website, VIL said: "We noted an inadvertent error in the subscriber data for January '21 submitted to TRAI in regular course."

"We have corrected the same and duly reported the revised data to TRAI," it added.

The statement by the company came after Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) subscriber data for January 2021 showed spike in UP (West) circle.

While the company statement did not divulge details of the error, market watchers said that the fault appeared to be in the subscriber numbers for UP (West), where customer net adds were reported at 3.7 million users for January.

No new COVID-19 case in Andamans

PORT BLAIR, MAR 21 (PTI): No new COVID-19 case was reported in Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Sunday, a health official said.

The Union territory's caseload stands at 5,038, of which seven are active cases, while 4,969 people have recovered from the disease and 62 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, he said.

The administration has so far tested over 3.02 lakh samples for COVID-19, the official said.

A total of 12,374 health workers and frontline personnel have been vaccinated so far, of whom 4,774 have received the second dose. Around 2,606 people above 45 years of age have also been inoculated, he added.

No new COVID-19 case in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, MAR 21 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh did not report any new COVID-19 case in the last two days, a senior health official said on Sunday.

The northeastern state's caseload stands at 16,842, of which three are active cases, while 16,783 people have recovered from the disease and 56 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, State Surveillance Officer Dr Lobsang Jam-

pa said. The recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state stands at 99.64 per cent, he said.

The state has so far tested over 4.11 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 234 on Saturday, Jampa said.

A total of 61,063 people have been vaccinated in Arunachal Pradesh to date, State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Paldung said.

Priyanka attacks Modi on lack of empathy for Assam

JORHAT (ASSAM), MAR 21 (PTI) Launching a frontal attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday alleged he is sad about a tweet by a 22-year-old woman but not for the flood-ravaged people of Assam.

A day after Modi raised the toolkit issue and alleged Congress conspiracy in it at a poll rally in Chabua in Assam, the daughter of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, lamented that Modi was silent on peoples' suffering during perennial floods. Last year's flooding of the Brahmaputra during the pandemic affected some 2.8 million people.

"I was listening to the Prime Minister's speech yesterday. He very seriously said that he was very sad about a development. I thought he would

speak about Assam's development or how BJP worked in Assam. "But I was shocked to hear that the PM was talking about a tweet by a 22-year-old woman (Disha Ravi). He said Congress conspired to finish the tea industry of Assam. He was also sad about Congress mistakenly putting two wrong pictures on social media," Vadra said.

She questioned Modi why he was not sad for the people affected by the flood and the anti-CAA movement, in which five youths were killed.

"Why didn't you come to Assam when people were drowning? Why were you not sad when all the big promises by BJP were not fulfilled? Did you go to tea gardens and talk to workers about their problems?" the Congress leader asked of Modi. Talking

about the Prime Minister's famous statement of "double-engined" government in Assam, Vadra made fun of it saying the state currently has "two chief ministers", in an apparent reference to rumours of powerful minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal acting as rival power centres.

"The PM said you have a double-engine government but Assam has two CMs. I don't know which fuel runs which engine. The Assam government is not run in Assam... God save you!" she added.

The Congress leader also alleged that all segments of the society, including Youths, farmers and tea garden workers, have been cheated by the BJP government as it did not fulfil any of its promises made five years ago.

NEW DELHI, 21 MAR [NDTV]: In view of the rising number of Coronavirus infections in the country, the Centre on Sunday directed Uttarakhand to follow stringent measures to control the spread of COVID-19 during Kumbh Mela, during which pilgrims from across the country are expected to visit the state. The note was sent after a high-level team sent to the state raised concerns after reviewing medical care and public health arrangements for the Kumbh Mela.

Based on the findings of the team, Uttarakhand has been asked to increase the number of Covid testing as per the ICMR guidelines to ensure that the pilgrims and local population is appropriately tested, the Health Ministry said in a statement.

The secretary also noted that as per the report of the central team, 10-20 pilgrims and 10-20 locals are being reported positive every day. This positivity rate has the potential to rapidly turning to an upsurge in cases, given the expected large

tential high transmission areas are among other measures directed by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan in his letter to the Uttarakhand Chief Secretary.

The Union Health Secretary has also observed that currently more than 12 states in India have shown a surge in Covid cases during past few weeks, and pilgrims expected to visit Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela could also be from these states. "It has been noted that there is a potential of an upsurge in cases in the local population after the auspicious Shahi Snan days during the Kumbh Mela," the Health Ministry said in a statement.

"The secretary also noted that as per the report of the central team, 10-20 pilgrims and 10-20 locals are being reported positive every day. This positivity rate has the potential to rapidly turning to an upsurge in cases, given the expected large

footfall during Kumbh," the ministry said.

The state has been informed that the daily testing numbers reported in Haridwar -- 50,000 Rapid Antigen tests and 5,000 RT-PCR tests -- are not enough to effectively offset a huge number of expected pilgrim footfall. It has been advised that the share of RTPCR tests being conducted at present needs to be significantly increased as per the ICMR guidelines to ensure that the pilgrims and local population is appropriately tested, the note said.

This morning, India added 43,846 new coronavirus infections, setting another highest daily-high in nearly four months, amid a worrying surge in Covid cases that has prompted states like Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to consider return of school closures, restrictions on public gatherings and other virus-fighting measures, including lockdown in their worst-hit districts.

Sarma owns assets worth Rs 1.7cr; family income up by Rs 10cr in five yrs

GUWAHATI, MAR 20 (PTI): NEDA convenor and Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has only Rs 25,000 in cash, bank term deposits of over Rs 50 lakh, and no bonds, shares or insurance policies.

The minister, in his affidavit submitted as a BJP candidate for the Assam assembly polls from Jalukbari, declared that he does not own any immovable property or car, but has assets to the tune of Rs 1.72 crore - up from Rs 1.02 crore in 2016.

His family income, however, has increased by more than Rs 10 crore over the last five years, with his wife's assets alone having registered a hike of over Rs 9 crore.

The collective wealth of the minister's family of four, which includes his two children, is currently worth Rs 17.27 crore, up from Rs 6.38 crore five years ago.

The 52-year-old BJP leader's son, shown as a dependent, has property worth Rs 55.71

lakh, while his daughter, who had nothing to her credit in 2016, currently has movable assets to the tune of Rs 52 lakh.

His wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has assets, both movable and immovable taken together, worth Rs 14.47 crore.

In 2016, it stood at Rs 5.27 crore.

She has Rs 31,000 cash in hand, down from Rs 85,000 in 2016. Her bank deposits have increased ten times to Rs 99.64 lakh from over Rs 9 lakh.

Similarly, her investments in bonds, shares and mutual funds have soared to 7.22 crore from Rs 29.20 lakh.

The minister has not purchased any gold since 2016, and currently has 180 gm of yellow metal, the value of which has increased to Rs 7.74 lakh in 2021 from the earlier Rs 5 lakh in 2016.

Riniki's gold jewellery has doubled to 1459.21 gm, valued at over Rs 60 lakh, from

757 gm, which was worth Rs 22.70 lakh in 2016. She possesses two cars, one of which was added after the last polls, and four non-agricultural plots.

Their children own gold, precious stones and beads worth Rs 40 lakh each. The BJP strongman currently has liabilities, which include bank loans and advances from friends and families, to the tune of Rs 68.48 lakh as against Rs 8 lakh five years ago.

The couple have no unpaid dues and both of them have filed income taxes, with Sarma paying Rs 25 lakh and his wife Rs 2.97 crore for the year 2019-20.

Sarma, a doctorate from Gauhati University, has shown government coffers as his source of income, while his wife draws salary from Pride East Entertainment Private Limited as its chairperson-cum managing director.

The minister is contesting from Jalukbari constituency for the fifth consecutive term.

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Football Delhi Women's League to kick off from March 22

NEW DELHI, MAR 21 (PTI): The opening match of the Football Delhi Women's League 2020-21 will be played on Monday between Eves Sports Club and Frontier FC Delhi at the Ambedkar Stadium.

On the opening day there will be three matches, one at Nehru Stadium Complex and two games at the Ambedkar Stadium.

Women's League will be played on a league-cum-knock out format and on April 10 the final match will be played at the Ambedkar Stadium.

Football Delhi president Shaji Prabhakaran said, "This is a record number of teams participating in the Women's League, the biggest state level women's league as far number of teams are concerned which is an excellent situation for the growth of women's football in the capital city. "There is tremendous excitement among women players to be part of this league. Clubs deserves compliments for encouraging girls and giving these players competitive experience."

He further stated that the top two teams from Delhi will have the opportunity to play in IWL which would be a "very good platform for our women players to further boost their football careers and ultimately play for the national team".

The league will be organised by following COVID-19 protocols.

Indian team arrives in Pune for ODI leg

Pune, Mar 21 (PTI): The Indian cricket team arrived here for the final leg of the ongoing series against England, which comprises three ODIs, beginning with the first game on Tuesday. After claiming the four-Test series 3-1, which was played in Chennai and Ahmedabad, India on Saturday clinched the five-match T20 series by 3-2 margin at the refurbished Narendra Modi Stadium.

It is reliably learnt that the Indian team, led by skipper Virat Kohli, arrived here by a Chartered Flight from Ahmedabad at around 4.45 PM.

The three ODI matches are to be played at the MCA stadium in Gahunje, on the outskirts of the city, on March 23, 26 and 28, sans spectators.

Karnataka pacer Prasidh Krishna, all-rounder Krunal Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav were included in India's 18-member squad which was announced on Friday.

Apart from Kohli, the Indian squad also comprises Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant and bowlers led by Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

India had suffered a 1-2 loss in the ODI series in Australia last year.

Thomas Tuchel has got Chelsea smiling and revived Lampard's outcasts

JONATHAN WILSON

LONDON, 21 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: There was a sense on Wednesday night that it was almost too easy. As Chelsea held Atlético Madrid at arm's length with a performance of tremendous purpose and intelligence, the brain was tricked into believing this was just another curiously scheduled Premier League game. Or had they perhaps brought Sunday's FA Cup quarter-final against Sheffield United forward by a few days? Only the occasional close-up of Koke or Luis Suárez, or an increasingly despondent Diego Siméone prowling the touchline, offered a reminder that this was Atlético, the leaders of La Liga, experienced old Champions League campaigners, the gnarled scrappers who eliminated Liverpool last season.

Perhaps some caution is necessary. La Liga, its period of hegemony over (England pulled level with Spain at the top of the coefficient table on Thursday and the direction of travel is clear), has lapsed into decadence, debt-ridden and moribund, its football notably lacking in pace and verve. What Atlético did to Liverpool last season, as the Covid storm clouds brewed, the coming crisis ready to expose the shonky financial underpinning of the Spanish game, increasingly feels anachronistic, one final flailing of the old empire. Beating the presumptive Spanish champions is perhaps no longer quite the scalp it once was.

But still, there was something enormously impressive about the clinical nature of Chelsea's victory over both legs – and that despite the absences of Mason Mount and Jorginho through suspension on Wednesday. They dominated



ed possession in the first leg, effectively neutering Atlético, and then in the second were able to play a dual game, both controlling the ball, then looking devastating on the break when Atlético did occasionally advance. The late strike by Emerson Palmieri, perhaps, was nothing more than the sort of well-crafted counter-attack that often develops as a desperate side chases the game, but the first provided a glimpse of something far more exciting, of what Chelsea gained by replacing Frank Lampard with Thomas Tuchel.

Timo Werner was notionally the centre-forward, but the move begins with him half-blocking Kieran Trippier's cross several yards inside his own half on the Atlético right. His touch allows N'Golo Kanté to intercept, and from then everything is

done at lightning pace. Kai Havertz to Werner to Hakim Ziyech to the back of the net: a combination of three of the summer signings following the intervention of a player who had seemed out of sorts for a couple of years. It was a devastating goal, not just for what it meant in terms of the scoreline but for what it told Atlético about the danger of committing too many men forward.

But it was significant also in a broader sense. First, this sort of rapid counterattack is characteristic of Tuchel and the school of German football he represents. Jogi Löw may seem slightly old-fashioned now, but the national side's coach was important in establishing the foundations of the movement; Ziyech's goal resembled more than anything the sort of goal Löw's Germany kept scoring at the 2010

World Cup. The one major criticism of Tuchel so far has been a slight sterility about his Chelsea, a lack of flair, but this was evidence of the structures beginning to come together, of how dangerous they can be if teams leave space behind them.

Neither Werner nor Havertz have had easy starts to life in England. Havertz is only 21 and suffered a bout of Covid early in the season, so the doubts about him have at least been tempered with sympathy. But Werner's suitability for the Premier League has been openly questioned, notably by Harry Redknapp in the "did he bring the Germans in?" interview he gave the day after his nephew's sinking.

Werner had specialised in that sort of run from deep through the inside-left channel at RB Leipzig, but Lampard never used him in that

way, confining him either to a more traditional left-wing or centre-forward role. Wednesday was clear evidence of what the Germans can do (not just Havertz and Werner but also Antonio Rüdiger, whose relationship with Lampard was far from straightforward) with a clear plan.

Perhaps the previous absence of such a plan is simply evidence that the signings were made above Lampard's head, but it is little wonder that as Werner tried to adapt to a new team in a new league, his confidence disintegrated as he was asked to play in an unfamiliar way.

His goals return remains disappointing, and the way he snatched at a chance late on against Atlético when he probably should have squared it perhaps suggest it still weighs on him, but he is finally beginning to show

something approaching his best form.

He's not the only one. A host of players who had seemed surplus to Lampard have suddenly rediscovered their form under Tuchel. It's not just the three Germans who are suddenly playing with conviction. The shift to a back three suits Marcos Alonso, but he is now a regular after being exiled for the final four months of Lampard's reign.

And then there's Kanté, bumped out of position by Maurizio Sarri's Jorginho obsession and, perhaps distracted by an acrimonious legal battle over his image rights in France, a curiously diffident figure under Lampard. But on Wednesday he was back to his best, his reading of the game and his stamina once again combining to create the illusion that there is more than one of him, or that he has the capacity to teleport.

A project that was sinking under Lampard has been reinvigorated. When Lampard was sacked there was an outcry from those who, seduced by memories of him as a player, insisted he should have been given more time. Subsequent events, though, suggest if anything Chelsea would have benefited by replacing him earlier.

Thirteen games without defeat for Tuchel mean his side should finish in the top four. Porto will be an awkward quarter-final opponent in the Champions League, but Chelsea are clearly on the easier side of the draw. And on Sunday there's the FA Cup, a break from the priorities but an opportunity to cap a fine first half-season in the job with a trophy.

Man City into FA Cup semifinals, keeps quadruple dream alive

MANCHESTER, MAR 21 (AP) With an unprecedented quadruple still a possibility for Manchester City, the pressure on Pep Guardiola is intensifying heading into the final two months of the season.

So, as his superstar players head off around the world on international duty, the City manager is ready to switch off.

"This week," Guardiola said, "I promise I will not think about football. I will not watch games."

Few would begrudge him the break, with an intense 34-match, four-month stretch -- featuring games every three or four days -- concluding with a 2-0 win over Everton in the FA Cup quarterfinals on Saturday.

The goals came late through Ilkay Gundogan in the 84th minute and Kevin De Bruyne in the 90th but there was a certain inevitability about them inside an empty Goodison Park.

"We wanted to keep them uncomfortable we defended well, didn't concede space. We played the game we wanted to play," Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said.

"But they are the best team in the world." Indeed, Guardiola's players are sweeping all before them this season, having also reached the final of the English League Cup, the quarterfinals of the Champions League and forged a 14-point lead in the Premier League.

Extra time loomed when Gundogan stooped to head the ball into an empty net after a shot from marauding City defender Aymeric Laporte was tipped onto the bar by goalkeeper Jo o Virg nia. It was the Germany midfielder's 12th goal



in all competitions in 2021, more than any other player in the Premier League. De Bruyne, who started the match on the bench, ensured City's progress to the last four with a goal in the 90th minute, running onto a pass by Rodri and switching the ball to his left foot before scoring with a composed finish.

"There will be a few more games like this, I think," Gundogan said, "but we have to be ready for them. If you want to win trophies and fight for everything, you have to find a way to win."

City also won the FA Cup in 2019 as part of a domestic treble under Guardiola. The team is trying to go one better this season, though the Champions League has so far proved elusive for City despite the club's heavy spending under its Abu Dhabi ownership over the past decade.

Guardiola refuses to entertain any questions about the possible quadruple, which has never been achieved in English soccer. All he wants now is for his players to return to the club fit and healthy after the upcoming international break. "Hopefully the (coronavirus) bubbles are controlled," Guar-

diola said. "I'm looking forward to everyone coming back safe."

Southampton is the other team through to the FA Cup semifinals after beating second-tier Bournemouth 3-0 earlier Saturday. The other quarterfinal games are on Sunday and both are all-Premier League matchups: Leicester vs. Manchester United and Chelsea vs. Sheffield United.

REDMOND SHINES

Southampton made it to the last four for the second time in four seasons, with Nathan Redmond scoring twice and setting up another goal against Bournemouth.

Redmond slipped in Moussa Djenepo for the opener in the 37th then scored a superb solo goal in first-half stoppage time, dribbling into the area and skirting a challenge before firing a shot into the top corner.

Redmond added the third in the 59th with a precise, angled shot into the bottom corner after an effort from outside the area by Stuart Armstrong came back off the post. Southampton also reached the semifinals in 2018, losing to Chelsea.

Yajat Sharma: The teenage trilogy author

New Delhi, Mar 21 (PTI):

In the times of 'Insta fame' and social media stardom, penning a fiction trilogy at the age of 14 may be a distant aspiration for many teenager, but Yajat Sharma plunged into the magical world of four friends to come up with a series which has become a hit on the online marketplace.

It started at the age of 12 in 2018 when Yajat authored first in the series "Quest For the Arcane Crown" a save-the-world genre fiction in which four children -- James, Matt, Daniel and Arthur -- race against the 'lord of death' to find pieces of arcane crown.

The children having powers of Water, Air, Earth and Fire try to save the earth by travelling to the dark world created by magician Lord Arcane which has been taken over by evil forces -- Deat Lord and Skull Warrior -- who want to capture earth.

Replete with emotions, magic, treachery, deceit and riddles, the fast-paced narration takes readers through high drama which ends with the triumph of friendship and sacrifice.

Son of Tripura-cadre IPS officer Anish Sharma, Yajat used his time during the COVID-19 lockdown to come up with the second edition of his maiden novel, followed by two successive parts of the trilogy.

At the age of 10, when siblings normally fight over TV remote and toys, Yajat and his sister used to compete in creative writing contests, and at home on who can come up with a better story.

"That was the spark," Yajat's father Anish Sharma, an Inspector General in the Tripura Police, told PTI. "Yajat would think of a plot and keep on typing for several days. When we (I and Ritu) saw his imagination, we were surprised. The storyline was amazing."

"We encouraged Yajat to complete his story to which he said it will take several books. We suggested him to divide the story into parts or episodes. Yajat divided the story in three segments. Thus, a TRILOGY was conceived."

On March 18, 2021, the three books touched top three spots in Amazon's bestseller rankings in two categories, the former CBI officer said.

The books can be downloaded for free on kindle on Amazon from March 21st to March 24 as part of the family's celebration of Yajat's success.

Asked how did Yajat inculcate affinity for books, Sharma said, "We kept both the children away from TV, video games, social media etc since their infancy. They used to get bored and

irritated, but we tried to push them into creative things to kill boredom."

From Yajat's infant days, his mother Ritu used to read him short stories till he reached the age of four years, he said.

"It was a daily routine which Ritu followed without fail. He used to listen to his mom's stories and fall asleep," he said.

Yajat's parents soon realised he could read books very fast and also narrate their contents with impeccable accuracy.

They soon started taking the siblings to various libraries in Delhi where Yajat and Jagriti became avid readers.

After the draft of Yajat's first book was complete, it was not easy to get it through publishers.

"We started searching for publishers but didn't get an encouraging experience. It was struggle all through. Despite the fact that we never wanted any commercial gains out of our child's work, we were not able to get the book published for a long time."

"There were several rejections and we took them in stride. There were moments of hope and dejection. Finally, Late Sh. Aashish Agarwal of the Rising Sun Publishers, New Delhi, accepted the script and published the book," he said.

Myanmar doctors kick off day of protests with dawn march

YANGON, 21 MAR [ALJAZEERA]: Doctors and healthcare workers in Myanmar's Mandalay kicked off another day of anti-coup demonstrations, staging a peaceful march at dawn in a bid to minimise the risk of confrontation with security forces.

Video posted by the Mizzima news portal showed hundreds of people, many of them in white coats, marching on deserted streets on Sunday, just as the sky was beginning to brighten.

"Failure of the military regime, our cause our cause," they chanted.

The rally came as the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a monitoring group, said at least 247 people have been killed during nationwide protests against the military's power grab on February 1.

Virtually all the dead have been shooting victims and, in many cases, have been shot in the head.

The death toll rose later on Sunday when security forces opened fire on a group setting up a barricade in the central town of Monywa, killing at least one man and wounding several others, a doctor there told the Reuters news agency.

Amid the escalating violence, the people of Myanmar – determined to resist a return to military rule – have thought up novel ways to show their opposition.

In addition to the doctors' dawn march, engineers in Mandalay held what has been dubbed a



"no-human strike", an increasingly popular tactic that involves lining up signboards in streets or other public areas as proxies for human protesters.

Meanwhile, protesters in nearly 20 locations across the country staged candle-lit protests on Saturday night and into Sunday, from the main city of Yangon to small communities in Kachin State in the north and the southernmost town of Kawthaung, according to a tally of social media posts.

Protesters in some places were joined by Buddhist monks holding candles while some people used candles to make the shape of the three-fingered protest salute.

The spokesman for the military government was not available for comment, but he has previously said security forces have used force only when necessary.

'Foreign insults' Western countries have repeatedly condemned the coup and the violence. Asian neighbours, who

have for years avoided criticising each other, have also begun speaking out.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo, in some of the strongest comments yet by a regional leader, said on Friday the violence should stop immediately. He called for an urgent meeting of Southeast Asia's regional grouping, of which Myanmar is a member.

Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin backed the call, saying he was appalled by the

persistent use of lethal violence against civilians. Singapore has also expressed disapproval.

The military has shown no sign of being pressed into back-tracking on its coup, which derailed a slow transition to democracy in a country that was under strict military rule from a 1962 coup until the generals initiated reforms a decade ago.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing justified the power grab claiming a November 8 election

that returned elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party to power was fraudulent – an accusation rejected by the electoral commission.

He has promised a new election but has not set a date.

On Saturday, the coup leader visited the Coco islands, one of Myanmar's most strategically important outposts, 400 km (250 miles) south of Yangon, and reminded members of the armed force there that their main duty was to defend the country against external threats.

The islands are near some of the world's most important shipping routes, in waters where China and India seek to project their power. Neither of the Asian giants has spoken out strongly against the coup and the violence.

The state-run Kyemon newspaper prominently featured a quote from independence hero Aung San, Suu Kyi's father, who in 1947 said: "It is everyone's duty to sacrifice their lives and defend and fight back against foreign countries' insults."

Aung San Suu Kyi, 75, faces accusations of bribery and other crimes that could see her banned from politics and jailed if convicted. Her lawyer says the charges are trumped up.

The resistance cause received support over the weekend from demonstrations in several places abroad, including Tokyo, Taipei in Taiwan and Times Square in New York City.

Saudi oil giant Aramco to scale back spending after 2020 profit slump

RIYADH, 21 MAR [REUTERS]: The COVID-19 pandemic took a heavy toll on the company and its global peers in 2020, but oil prices have rallied this year as economies recover from last year's downturn and after oil producers extended output cuts.

"We are pleased that there are signs of a recovery," Aramco CEO Amin Nasser told an earnings call. "China is also very close to pre-pandemic levels. So in Asia, East Asia in particular, there is strong pickup in demand." He said demand in Europe and United States would improve with more deployment of vaccines. Global oil demand is expected to reach 99 million barrels per day by the end of this year, he said.

Aramco lowered its guidance for capital expenditure in 2021 to around \$35 billion from a range of \$40 billion to \$45 billion previously, according to a disclosure to the kingdom's Tadawul bourse. Capital spending in 2020 was \$27 billion.

The world's largest oil exporter said net profit fell 44.4% to 183.76 billion riyals (\$49 billion) for the year ended Dec. 31, from 330.69 billion riyals a year earlier.

Analysts had expected a 2020 net profit of 186.1 billion riyals, according to the mean estimate of analysts in Refinitiv's Eikon.

Aramco declared a dividend of \$75 billion for 2020, but Nasser said there was no intention to increase the dividend this year from what's been pledged.

"The dividend is in line with expectations, which is what holders of Aramco will care about most, but lower capex

implies the company does not expect high oil prices to last for the long-term," said Hasnain Malik, head of equity research at Tellimer.

Aramco's shares were marginally down 0.6% after its results.

Through most of last year, Aramco's shares held up well against global oil companies in emerging and developed markets, but underperformed against the company's peers when oil prices recovered.

For a graphic on Global oil companies' stock price increases between March 2020 and March 2021:

BEARING THE BRUNT

"Looking ahead, our long-term strategy to optimize our oil and gas portfolio is on track," Nasser said.

Aramco's 44.4% drop in 2020 profit compares with a 30.7% decline in oil revenues last year for the Saudi government, with the steady dividends paid to the state despite lower oil prices contributing to Aramco bearing the brunt of the crisis more than the treasury, said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank.

Oil prices lost just over a fifth of their value in 2020. Brent crude last traded at \$64.53 a barrel on Friday compared with around \$51 in December.

Earnings of top western oil companies were hammered in 2020, with Royal Dutch Shell's profit dropping to its lowest in at least two decades and Exxon Mobil, the largest U.S. energy company, posting its first-ever annual loss.

Aramco said free cash flow fell to \$49 billion last year from \$78.3 billion in 2019.

N. Korean diplomats leaving Malaysia after ties are severed



KUALA LUMPUR, MAR 21 (AP): North Korean diplomats vacated their embassy in Malaysia and prepared to leave the country Sunday, after the two nations cut diplomatic relations in a spat over the extradition of a North Korean criminal suspect to the United States.

The North Korean flag and embassy signage have been removed from the premise in a Kuala Lumpur suburb. Two buses ferried the diplomats and their families to the airport, where they were seen checking in for a flight to Shanghai.

Ties between North Korea and Malaysia have been virtually frozen since the 2017 assassination of the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Two days after Kuala Lumpur extradited a North Korean man to the U.S. to face money laundering charges, a furious North Korea on Friday announced it was terminating ties with Malaysia. Malaysia denounced the decision and in a tit-for-tat response, gave North Korean diplomats 48 hours to leave.

Kim Yu Song, the charg d'affaires and councilor in Kuala Lumpur, said Malaysia had committed an unpardonable crime." Echoing Pyongyang's earlier statement, he accused Malaysia of being subversive to the US and being part of a US conspiracy

aimed at isolating and suffocating" his country.

The Malaysian authority delivered our citizen to the US in the end, thus destroying the foundations of the bilateral relations based on respect of sovereignty," he said in a short statement outside the embassy, before heading to the airport.

North Korea has called the money laundering charges an absurd fabrication and (a) sheer plot orchestrated by the US and warned Washington will pay a due price."

Some experts say cutting ties with Malaysia was North Korea's way of showing anger with President Joe Biden's administration, without jeopardizing an eventual return to nuclear negotiations with Washington.

North Korea has insisted it won't engage in talks with Washington unless it abandons what Pyongyang's perceives as a hostile policy. But experts say North Korea will eventually seek to return to diplomacy to find ways to get sanctions relief and revive its moribund economy.

Malaysia has defended its move to extradite Mun Chol Myong, saying it was carried out only after all legal processes have been exhausted. A top court ruled Mun can be extradited after rejecting his appeal on grounds that the US charges were politically motivated.

Mun, who lived in Malaysia for a decade

and arrested in May 2019, has denied U.S. accusations that he was involved in supplying luxury goods from Singapore to North Korea in violation of UN sanctions while working in the city-state. He denied laundering funds through front companies and issuing fraudulent documents to support illicit shipments to his country.

North Korea has long used Malaysia as a crucial economic hub where it handled trade, labor exports and some illicit businesses in Southeast Asia, but their relations suffered major setbacks over the 2017 killing of Kim Jong Nam.

Two women one Indonesian and the other Vietnamese were charged with colluding with four North Koreans to murder Kim Jong Nam by smearing his face with VX nerve agent. The four North Koreans fled Malaysia the day Kim died. The two women were later released.

Malaysian officials never officially accused North Korea of involvement in Kim's death, but prosecutors made it clear throughout the trial that they suspected a North Korean connection.

North Korea denied the victim was Kim Jong Nam and disputed it had any role in the man's death. Longtime North Korea watchers believe Kim Jong Un ordered his brother's killing as part of efforts to remove potential rivals and cement his grip on power.

Philippines says 220 Chinese vessels spotted at disputed reef

MANILA, 21 MAR [ALJAZEERA]: The Philippines has expressed concern after spotting hundreds of Chinese military vessels at a reef claimed by both countries in the South China Sea, but did not immediately lodge a protest.

A government task force overseeing the disputed region said late on Saturday that about 220 vessels, believed to be crewed by Chinese maritime militia personnel, were seen moored at the Whitsun Reef on March 7.

The reef, which Manila calls Julian Felipe, is a boomerang-shaped and shallow coral region about 175 nautical miles (324 kilometers) west of Bataraza town in the western Philippine province of Palawan.

The National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea said the reef is well within Philippines's exclusive economic zone and it

"enjoys the exclusive right to exploit or conserve any resources" there. Foreign Minister Teodoro Locsin asked whether he would file a diplomatic protest over the ships' presence, told a journalist on Twitter: "Only if the generals tell me. In my watch foreign policy is the fist in the iron glove of the armed forces."

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Sunday.

An international tribunal in 2016 invalidated China's claim to 90 percent of the South China Sea, but Beijing does not recognise the ruling.

China in recent years has built islands in the disputed waters, putting airstrips on some of them.

Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei all claim parts of the sea. In January, the Philippines protested a new Chinese law allowing its coastguard

to fire on foreign vessels, describing it as a "threat of war".

The United States has repeatedly denounced what it called China's attempts to bully neighbours with competing interests, while Beijing has criticised Washington for what it calls interference in its internal affairs.

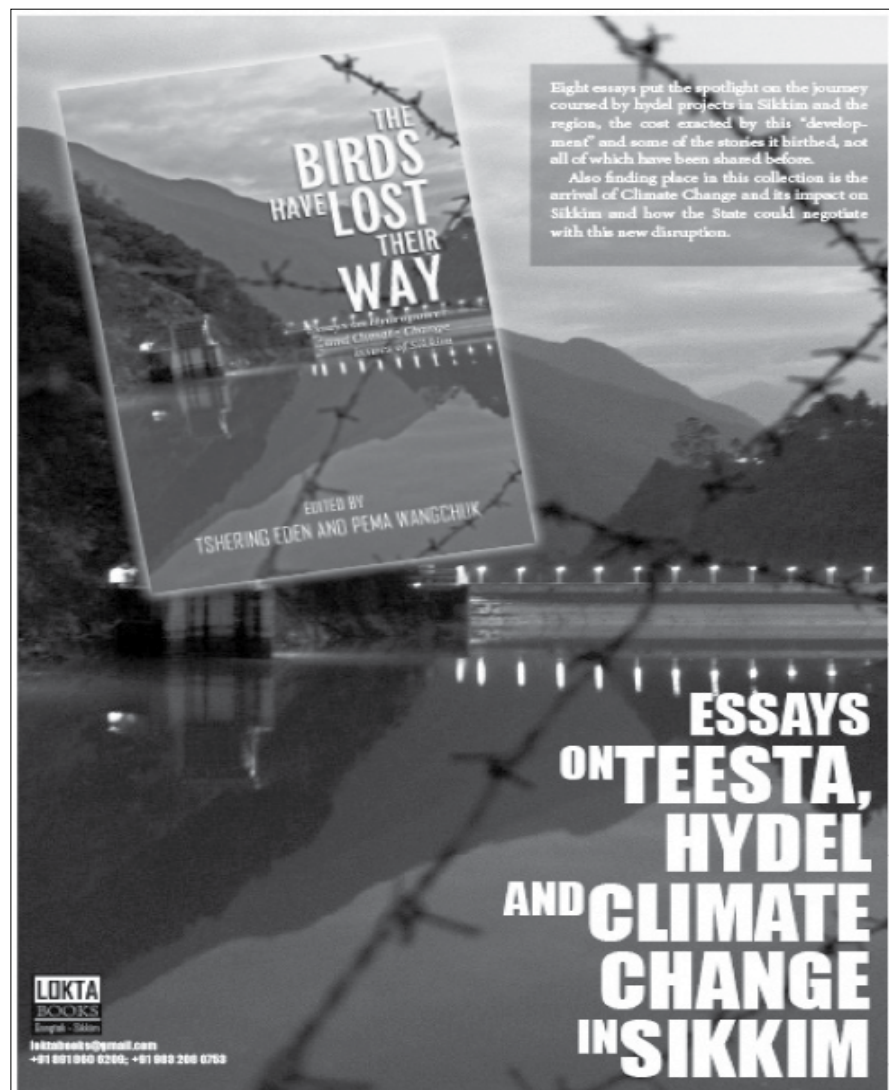
The Philippine task force said the large numbers of Chinese boats spotted the Whitsun reef are "a concern due to the possible overfishing and destruction of the marine environment, as well as risks to safety of navigation".

However, it added that the vessels were not fishing when sighted.

The body promised to monitor the situation and "to peacefully and proactively pursue its initiatives on environmental protection, food security and freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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"I Was So Scared": Priyanka Chopra To Oprah On Filmmaker Who Asked Her To Strip To Underwear

Priyanka Chopra, in a recent interview to Oprah Winfrey, revealed that she was once mistreated by a filmmaker on the sets of a film in her early day in Bollywood. The actress, who is now a global icon and has worked in many Hollywood projects also, said that her "regret" till date is that she didn't "stood up" to the filmmaker because she was "scared" at that point of time. Priyanka Chopra was asked to perform "a sultry dance and strip down to her underwear" by the filmmaker on the sets of a film, the name of which she didn't reveal in the interview. She quit the film the next day and when Oprah Winfrey asked her where she found the strength to stand up for herself, Priyanka Chopra said: "I have to say that comes from my upbringing. My parents always gave me that."

"My mom told me when I was nine years old, 'Whatever you do in your life, you will be financially independent.' I was told to have an opinion in a room that disagreed with me. I was always encouraged to have a voice. My regret with that incident is that I never said anything to that filmmaker. I was so scared. I was new in the entertainment business and girls are always told that 'you don't want to get a reputation of being hard to work with.' So, I worked within the system. And that's my regret is that I never stood up to him and said,

'What you did was wrong' because I was scared but the only way, I knew how to deal with it was just to step away from it and have grace under fire. And that's what I did," she added.

Priyanka Chopra was crowned Miss

Mary Kom, Fashion, Kaminey, 7 Khoon Maaf, Bajirao Mastani, The Sky Is Pink and Don.

Priyanka Chopra broke into American TV with Quantico, which she headlined. She then made her debut opposite



India and Miss World in 2000. Three years after her Miss World win, she made her acting debut with The Hero: Love Story Of A Spy, in which she co-starred with Sunny Deol and Preity Zinta. She then went on to deliver box-office hits like Andaaz and Mujhse Shaadi Karogi but her breakout role was in the 2004 thriller Aitraaz.

Priyanka Chopra has featured in several Hindi films like Dostana, Barfi!,

Dwayne The Rock Johnson in the film version of Baywatch. She is now preparing for Amazon Prime's multi-series Citadel (directed by the Russo Brothers), Keanu Reeves' Matrix 4 and a project with Late Night actress Mindy Kaling.

In the interview to Oprah Winfrey, Priyanka Chopra also talked about facing racial bullying at the age of 16 in her school, about her husband Nick Jonas, her wedding and her late father.

Elizabeth Lail joins 'Gossip Girl' reboot

"You" star Elizabeth Lail is the latest addition to the cast of HBO Max's "Gossip Girl" reboot.

Based on the book by Cecily von Ziegesar like the original, the new show is set eight years after the parent series and will follow a new generation of New York school teens who get to know about the social surveillance of the Gossip Girl site.

The 10-episode series also hails from original creators Josh Schwartz and Stephanie Savage, reported Deadline.

Lail joins an ensemble cast of the reboot that includes Jordan Alexander, Julien Callo-way, Whitney Peak, Thomas Doherty, Evan Mock, Eli Brown, Tavi Gevinson, Emily Alyn Lind, Zion Moreno and Savannah Lee Smith, among others.

Actor Kristen Bell is returning as the

voice of Gossip Girl. The new show will address just how much social media -- and the landscape of New York itself -- has changed in the intervening years.

Warner Bros Television and CBS



Television Studios are producing the reboot.

The original series, which ran from 2007 to 2012, starred Blake Lively, Penn Badgley, Taylor Momsen, Leighton Meester and Ed Westwick.

Fahadh Faasil to play antagonist in 'Pushpa'

Malayalam star Fahadh Faasil will play the villain opposite Telugu star Allu Arjun in "Pushpa", the upcoming multilingual action thriller movie.

Written and directed by Sukumar, the film chronicles the red sanders heist in the hills of Andhra and depicts the convoluted nexus that unfurls in the course of the narrative of a man who is taken by avarice.

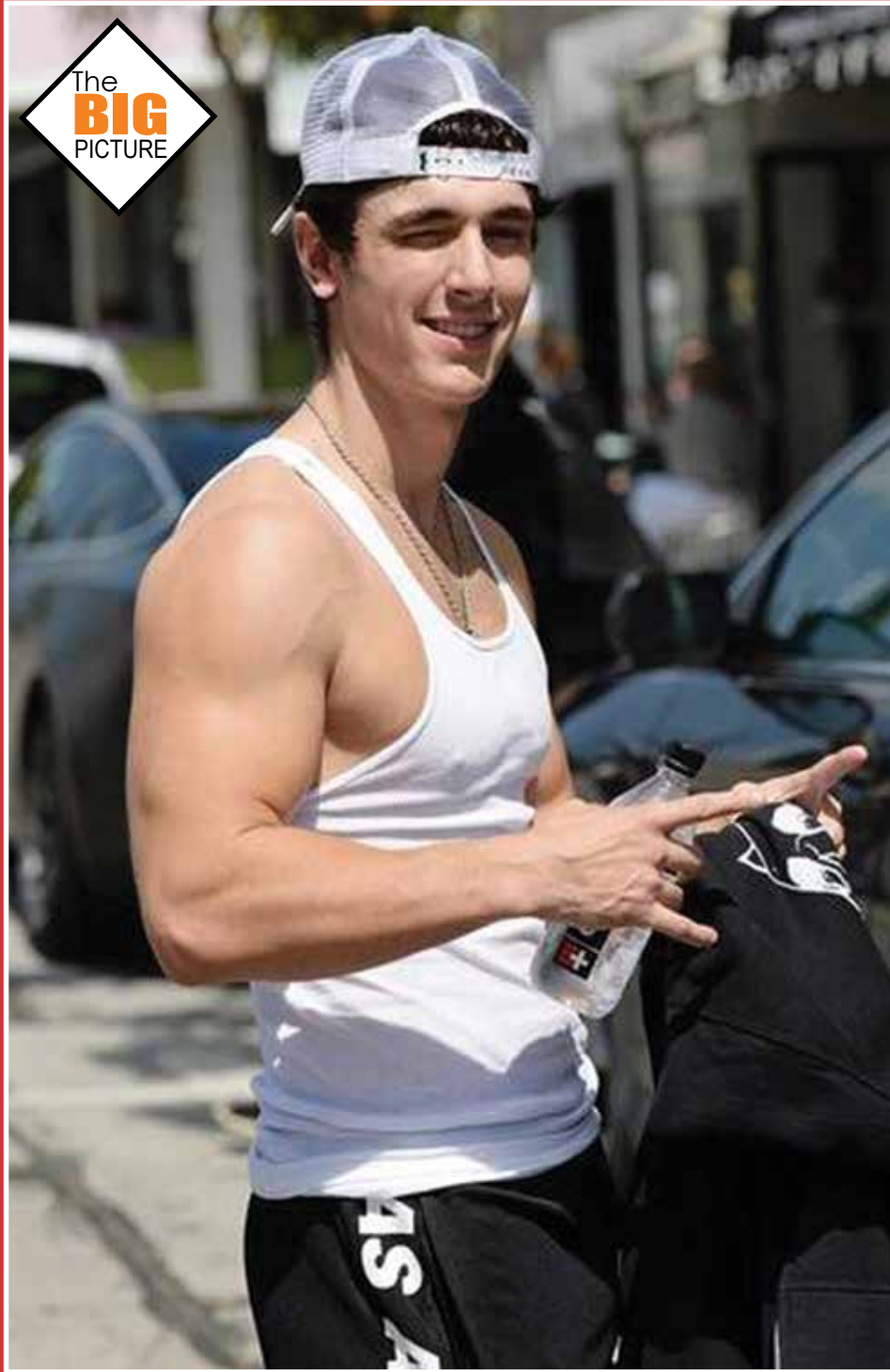
Producers Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar of Mythri Movie Makers praised Faasil for his versatility and welcomed the actor to the cast.

"Fahadh Faasil has entertained viewers with varied films and earned tremendous acclaim along with it. It

makes us very happy to welcome him into the world of 'Pushpa'. "We are confident that his portrayal of the villain will engage viewers in a way that's unique to his delivery of performance," the producers said in a statement.

Faasil has featured in acclaimed films like "Bangalore Days", "Kumbalangi Nights", "Super Deluxe", "Trance" and last year's lockdown project "C U Soon". "Pushpa" also stars Rashmika Mandanna, Dhananjay and Sunil.

Produced by Mythri Movie Makers in association with Muttamsetty Media, the film will have a theatrical release on August 13 in Telugu along with Tamil, Hindi, Kannada and Malayalam.



GUN SHOW! TikTok star Bryce Hall shows off his toned arms as he leaves the gym in L.A.

Justice League Snyder Cut breaks the internet



Something special happened this week in the world of superhero cinema. The Snyder Cut of Justice League - director Zack Snyder's original four-hour cut of the film - released online by popular demand from fans and even the film's stars. Among those who amplified the call for the Snyder Cut was actor Henry Cavill, Superman in the DC Films' series.

On Thursday, after the Snyder Cut had electrified the Internet and thrilled fans worldwide, Henry Cavill shared a post on Instagram for Zack Snyder.

He wrote: "Here's to you Zack. Congratulations! I know this has been an arduous journey for you, you kept fighting, though. I couldn't be happier to see your vision for Justice League realised. And what a movie it is!"

A set of pictures from the filming of the 2017 movie accompanied his words. What makes the release of the Snyder Cut momentous is that despite having directed Justice League, Zack Snyder has never seen the film in its final version, having quit the project after a heart-breaking personal loss and a long battle with Warner Bros, the studio distributing the movie.

Justice League languished in crisis after Mr Snyder's exit - until Joss Whedon, director of the first two Avengers films, crossed the thin red line between Marvel and DC to see Justice League into theatres. This involved significantly changing Zack Snyder's version of the film - reshooting and recutting. The movie received, at best, a lukewarm response at the time.

THE DAY AHEAD

Aries: Know your worth. Demand a price accordingly. You're receiving that much-needed confidence boost this weekend, which is helping you ask for what you deserve without hesitation. On the interpersonal front, this is a time of security and stability. The solid foundation you have built is helping your relationship move to the next level. PS: Allow yourself to lean on them in times of need.

Tip: This weekend, you're getting that much-needed confidence boost.

Taurus: Everything in our life moves in circles. The winter makes space for summer and the night seamlessly merges into day. In a similar fashion, all that was dark and gloomy in your existence is now being replaced by hope and optimism. If that doesn't call for a celebration, what does, Taurus? This weekend, you're also likely to experience a shift in perspective when it comes to a certain somebody who's been in your life for a long time. Yes, they've made mistakes—plenty of them. But their willingness to make amends is helping you start afresh.

Tip: All that was dark and gloomy in your existence is now being replaced by hope and optimism.

Gemini:

The time to make a decision has come, Gemini. But, the real question is: what will your decision be guided by? Will you give in to the fears or choose love over everything else? Remember, you have nothing to prove to anybody. So, let go of the need to meet other people's expectations and follow what your heart is telling you at this moment. You won't regret a thing—we promise!

Tip: Let your decisions be guided by love.

Cancer:

This may not be the love you asked for, but it's the love you've got. The Universe works in mysterious ways, and knows exactly what's right for you in each moment. Listen to the voice inside your head that's telling you it's time to make space for a certain someone. Those who are already committed may feel inspired to take the next step. A weekend getaway with your beloved sounds like a good place to start.

Tip: The Universe knows what's best for you, Cancer.

Leo:

You're overworked, Leo, and there are no two ways about that. How do you plan to complete the given tasks without exhausting your reserves? The cards are urging you to step back and reassess the game plan. Asking for help may not be such a bad idea after all! Examining the emotional baggage you have been

carrying is also important at this point. If you've been slacking off when it comes to therapy, now is the time to get back to it.

Tip: Step back and reassess the game plan.

Virgo:

Here's the thing, honey: nobody's going to know how you feel unless you talk about it. The cards are urging you to start by being honest with yourself and then holding space for an open conversation with the other person. It may not be easy, but it's what you need at this moment. So, trust what your higher self is telling you and take the next step without hesitation.

Tip: Start by being honest with yourself.

Libra:

Is this the end of the road or the beginning of something brand new? Your higher self already knows the answer, Libra. So, take a moment to be grateful for what's gone as you open the door you feel called to. Don't be in a rush to move forward, though. Give yourself the chance to 'be' and integrate the soul lessons that you're being asked to.

Tip: This could be the beginning of something brand new.

Scorpio:

Take a deep breath and analyse the given situation carefully. Finding a balance between your head

and your heart is the key to making a decision that will serve the highest good. You've got this, Scorpio! Those who have been fighting a legal battle for some time now (an especially exhausting one), will find that the scales of justice are tipping in their favour, reiterating their faith in the benevolence of the Universe.

Tip: Justice will be served. Trust that and do what's right for you in this moment.

Sagittarius:

What if we said you are your own best friend *and* worst enemy? Become aware of how and where you are being unkind towards yourself. Yes, you've made a mistake—a grave one. But then again, you're only human, Sagittarius. So, forgive, forget, and make love where there has been war. It is only by releasing the burden of guilt and shame that you will be able to make space for the new to come in.

Tip: But first, forgive yourself.

Capricorn:

The time to make yet another significant decision has come. But, before you do, take a moment to look back at the trajectory of your life. Analyse the things that have worked for you and the things that haven't. This will give you a clear perspective on which way to go from here. Remember, this choice is yours and yours

alone. Don't let the judgements (or expectations) of others come in the way of following your heart.

Tip: Analyse the things that have worked for you and the things that haven't.

Aquarius:

What if we said this is the most important decision you will make and that your life will never look the same? Carefully consider your next step, Aquarius, and know that your instinct is guiding you in the right direction. You won't regret a thing—we promise! This is also a time of pushing your creative boundaries and experimenting with media you never have before. Freeing yourself from the idea of perfection will help you embrace the concept of play.

Tip: Your life will never look the same.

Pisces:

"I hope you will go out and let stories, that is life, happen to you, and that you will work with these stories... water them with your blood and tears and your laughter till they bloom, till you yourself burst into bloom." Wise words by Clarissa Pinkola Estés to inspire you to let go of the inhibitions and take life by the horns. This could be the start of a brand new adventure for you. Let your thirst for personal freedom guide all of your decisions from now on!

Tip: Let life happen to you, Pisces.