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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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**COVID-19:**  
*Daily recoveries  
outnumber  
daily new cases*

**NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI):** India has reported more daily COVID-19 recoveries than the daily new infections in the last 24 hours leading to a net decline of 5,701 cases from the total active caseload which fell below the 4.5 per cent mark on Thursday, the Union health ministry said.

There are 4,22,943 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 4.44 per cent of the total caseload, the data showed.

While 35,551 people were found to be infected with COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, during the same period, 40,726 new recoveries were reported, the ministry said.

"It has led to a net decline of 5,701 cases from the total COVID-19 active caseload in a span of 24 hours. The new recoveries have overtaken the daily new cases continuously since the last six days," the ministry highlighted.

The national recovery rate has improved as well to 94.11 per cent while the total recovered cases stand at 89,73,373, the ministry said. "The gap between recoveries and active cases is steadily increasing and presently stands at 85,50,430," the ministry said.

It said 77.64 per cent of the new recovered cases are contributed by 10 states and Union Territories. At 5,924, the maximum recoveries were reported from Kerala, while Delhi saw 5,329 daily recoveries and Maharashtra 3,796 new recoveries.

The ministry said 10 states and UTs have contributed 75.5 per cent of the new COVID-19 cases.

While Kerala reported 6,316 cases in a span of 24 hours, Delhi recorded 3,944 new cases and Maharashtra registered 3,350 new cases, the ministry said.

According to the ministry, 79.28 per cent of the 526 case fatalities reported in a day are from 10 states and UTs while 21.10 per cent of the new fatalities reported are from Maharashtra which reported 111 deaths.

## Pakyong Thana ranked seventh best-performing in the nation

**INDIA'S 10 BEST PERFORMING POLICE STATIONS NAMED**

**NEW DELHI, 03 DEC [PTI]:** Nongpok Sekmai in Manipur's Thoubal district has been selected as the best performing police station in the country, followed by AWPS-Suramangalam in Tamil Nadu's Salem city and Kharsang in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district, the Union Home Ministry announced on Thursday.

Among the top 10 best performing police stations for 2020, selected from India's 16,671 police stations, are (rank-wise) Jhilmili (Bhaiya Thana) in Chhattisgarh, Sanguem in Goa, Kalighat in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Pakyong in Sikkim, Kanth (Moradabad) in Uttar Pradesh, Khanavel in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Jammikunta Town in Telangana's Karimnagar district.



ta Town in Telangana's Karimnagar district.

"The government of India selects the best performing police stations across the country every year, to incentivise more effective functioning of police stations and bring healthy competition among them," a statement issued by the home ministry said.

This has been done in accordance with the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, issued during the director generals of police conference in 2015 in Kutch, Gujarat.

The prime minister had directed that parameters should be laid down for grading police stations and assessing their performance based on feedback.

The announcement of the 10 best performing police stations was made at the ongoing virtual 55th annual DGPs and IGPs conference which is being attended by the prime minister, Union

Home Minister Amit Shah, among others.

This year's survey for the best police stations was conducted under challenging circumstances by the home ministry. It was difficult to access police stations located in remote areas during the coronavirus pandemic due to various restrictions on movement, the statement said.

Consequently, the survey was conducted in accordance with guidelines of the government, it said.

The home minister has said that a vast majority of police stations shortlisted from the thousands of police stations in the country are those located in small towns and rural areas.

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**INT'L DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

## CM announces hike in disability pension

**GANGTOK, 03 DEC (IPR):** Every year on this day, the United Nations observes the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. Likewise, Sikkim also celebrated The International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 2020 in grand manner at Manan Kendra, today.

This year's theme was "Not all Disabilities are Visible". The programme was organised by the Social Justice & Welfare Department.

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Also present at the programme were Dy Speaker (SLA), Sangay Lepcha; Minister for Social Justice & Welfare Department, MK Sharma;



Member of Parliament, Indra Hang Subba; Cabinet Ministers, Political Secretary to CM, MLAs, Chief Secretary, Heads of Departments, HODs, Senior officials and staffs of the various departments, representatives from various NGOs, Organization, students and teachers from in and around Gangtok.

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang, appreciated the efforts of social workers who serve the

disabled children of the state and expressed an honor on being part of the first state level celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. He said that a man is never disabled if he has the desire to achieve his goals which was proved by the talents shown by disabled children during the programme.

Chief Minister assured that no stone would be left unturned

by the State Government towards supporting disabled persons and NGOs who support them. He also highlighted upon the State government commitment towards following the mission laid down by the Government of India and work towards the empowerment of differently able persons through various Acts, policies institutions, organizations and schemes for their rehabilitations.

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## With 27 new cases, active Covid cases in Sikkim stand at 320

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 03 DEC:**

Sikkim's count of active COVID-19 cases climbed up to 320 on Thursday against the 300 it had a day earlier with the detection of 27 new cases and the discharge of seven from isolation.

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported so far stands at 5,100 while 4,579 people have made full recoveries and returned to normal life.

Of the 320 active cases, five patients are currently admitted in the ICU facility at the COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital here.

The 27 fresh cases were detected from the testing of 191 samples on Wednesday; of these 18 tested posi-

tive in RT-PCR testing of 129 samples, two in TrueNat testing of 26 samples and seven returned positive from rapid antigen testing of 36 samples.

In the daily health bulletin on Thursday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia, informed that while 16 of the new cases were reported from East District, nine were from West District and two in South Sikkim.

While providing the details of the new cases reported in last 24 hours, he shared that among these are five patients currently admitted in different wards of STNM Hospital - one patient of Melli-Chalisey admitted in the Orthopedic ward, one from near

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## 9th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 12 DEC:**

The Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) has announced the 9th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) to be held from the 11-14 Dec, 2020 and the 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit (IYHS) to be held from the 08-09 Dec, 2020.

"These flagship events are held annually,



and this year, the SMDS is being held on a virtual mode, bringing together

a host of eminent speakers, key voices from the

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## The Myth of Sisyphus in Darjeeling Politics

**JIWAN RAI**

Albert Camus wanted us to believe that there is no real meaning and purpose to human life and all of us, like Sisyphus, are destined to repeat the task of pushing the rock (life) up the clef. The universe is hopelessly irresponsible to us and instead of hoping to find a transcendent meaning of life, all we can do is just keep pushing the boulder back up the hill with a smile on our face. The dark idea of such a nihilistic philosophy is accepted by those who believe that there is no afterlife, God, heaven and hell.

Leaving the philosophical implications

aside, it is curious to note that sometimes people do look like Sisyphus - as they accept their destiny of pushing the boulder of their political support to their leaders. To me, Darjeeling's circuitous politics is a striking example of how politics makes people Sisyphus. Bimal Gurung's expected return to the hills will once again bring smiles to the faces of some as they push the boulder up the hill - only to see it roll down again after the 2021 elections.

Perhaps, politically speaking, as far as the separate statehood demand is concerned, the Darjeeling-Kalimpong people are banished to "political absurdism". All they can do is to repeat the politically

meaningless task of pushing upward "the Subash, Bimal, Binay leadership" against the 'unreasonable silence' of the political universe (New Delhi). There is perhaps no real meaning to these political maneuvers in the larger context of (unachievable) Gorkhaland. The absurdist philosopher, Albert Camus would say to the Gorkhas, "Look folks, the fundamental human aspiration of identity and self-determination as a community is notional. It is not real. However, you would live your (political) life better if you would just keep pushing these political rocks with a smile on your face."

The expected return of Bimal Gurung

to the hills since his disappearance in September 2017 will find many Sisyphuses ready to push the Bimal-rock upward again. When his sidekick, Roshan Giri, did a forerun on November 28, many supporters gathered to welcome him. I was interviewed by a Sikkimese journalist to comment on Bimal Gurung's migration from New Delhi to Kolkata. At the time, I said that technically and ideologically speaking, this move is antithetical to his political objective which, among other things, shows that he has lost his political plot. For any Gorkhaland supporting political party or leader, to leave the BJP which at least promised to fulfil the Gorkha dream

and to side with the TMC, which openly opposes the Gorkhaland movement, is suicidal as far as the demand of Gorkhaland is concerned. But the double standard and prolonged silence of the BJP does not offer any hope to Bimal and his colleagues who have been stranded outside the hills for so long. With the Gorkhaland demand looking unachievable in the near future, Bimal Gurung deciding to dissociate from BJP after a decade long partnership is an unashamedly pragmatic move and that hardly surprises anyone who knows how politics operate in India. He has over 120 cases filed against him. The BJP party taught

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**VIEWPOINT**



Pakyong Thana...

"This is also true for those police stations which have been ranked among the top 10. This indicates that while availability of resources is important, more important is the dedication and sincerity of our police personnel to prevent and control crime and serve the nation," Mr Shah said.

The objective was to rank the top 10 police stations out of the 16,671 police stations in the country through data analysis, direct observation and public feedback.

The ranking process started with shortlisting of the best performing police stations in each state on the basis of addressing property offences, crime against women, crime against weaker sections, missing persons, unidentified found person and unidentified bodies.

The last parameter was introduced this year.

The home ministry said that the number of police stations selected initially from each state was three, it was two from Delhi and one each from each of the union territories.

Seventy-five police stations were selected for the next stage of the ranking process.

In the final stage, 19 parameters were identified to evaluate the stan-

9th Sustainable...

mountains and delegates from across the Indian Himalayan Region," a press release informs.

SMDS IX is being hosted by the State Chapter of IMI, the Sustainable Development Forum of Uttarakhand in Dehradun. The summit will have participation and delegates from all the 10 mountain states, 2 Union territories and two hill districts of West Bengal that constitute the IHR.

The theme chosen this year is topical - Emerging Pathways for Building a resilient Post COVID19 Mountain Economy - Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration.

Under this broader theme, discussions on 6 separate sub themes are planned – Migration and the local economy, Water Security, Disaster Risk reduction, Innovative Farm Solutions, Green future & Digital Jobs. Action points will emerge in the synthesis panel which will draw on the outcomes of the panels but focus on Partnerships, Innovative funding and adaptive institutions.

The Summit will bring together policy makers, think tanks, government representatives, experts, academicians, practitioners, NGOs and students.

The Mountain Legislators' Meet, a The Myth of...

the GJMM a cardinal lesson which is this: 'in politics pragmatism is more important than idealism' by blatantly ignoring the Gorkha aspiration after every electoral win. The GJM supported three BJP MPs – Jaswant Singh 2009, SS Ahluwalia 2014, Raju Bista 2019 and all of them failed to deliver.

If the TMC wins the 2021 elections, the move will vindicate Bimal Gurung personally. The BimalGurung supporters will enjoy a symbolic victory. For now there will be a few reasons which will bring a smile to their faces as they start pushing the boulder upward afresh.

One, a vindictive passion (khuching pleasure) against the BJP for their blatant negligence of the Gorkha aspiration. The BJP played with the Gorkhas' emotions by hypnotizing them into supporting the BJP in three consecutive elections and doing absolutely nothing about it. Now the Bimal supporters can at least shout back at the BJP vindictively, "Na Jitunga, Na Jitne Dunga" and give a Nepali icing on the cake "Khuching"!

CM announces...

Also to create an enabling environment which provides such persons equal opportunities, protects their rights, and enables them to participate as independent and productive members of society.

Chief Minister made an announcement for differently abled children which includes incentive for class X and XII toppers (1st- Rs. 35,000, 2nd- Rs. 25,000, 3rd- Rs. 15,000) from next year. He also made another announcement where Substantial Allowance of Rs. 1,000 received by disabled employees would be raised to Rs. 1,500. And that the Substantial Allowances would be renamed as Chief Minister State Disability Pension for people with 40 to 80% disabilities.

Minister MK Sharma while addressing the gathering said that today was a special to be focused on the people with disabilities living in the shadows. Talking about this year's theme "Not all Disabilities are Visible," he shed light

dards of service delivery and identify techniques of bringing improvement in policing.

This part constituted 80 per cent of weightage in overall scoring. The balance 20 per cent was based on infrastructure of the police station, approachability of personnel and feedback of citizens.

The categories of citizens included those from nearby residential areas, nearby markets and citizens leaving police stations. Citizens who were approached for feedback included 4,056 respondents, covering approximately 60 people at each shortlisted location.

Every state participated in this year's survey with full co-operation to complete it. The annual ranking of police stations recognises the hard work of police personnel, encourages police forces and also provides feedback on many aspects of policing in the country for future guidance.

It also provides a picture of the state of physical infrastructure, resources and deficiencies at the level of police stations. The annual exercise of ranking of police stations works as a constant guide for improvements, the statement said.

key feature of SMDS will also be held during the Summit. Discussion will centre around the pandemic and vaccine availability; and the Future of Tourism in the Mountains.

The Summit will also declare the winners of the Himalayan Photography Contest 2020 and conduct the Dr RS Tolia Memorial Award 2020 and special lecture.

The IMI has been working relentlessly for ushering Sustainable Development in the Indian Himalayan region for the past ten years. IMI has influenced policy makers on vital issues facing the Mountains. Understanding these concerns first amongst ourselves and then arguing it cogently to the policy makers forms part of IMI's playbook.

The Summit will present action research to help practitioners in the development sector to engage with the people and institutions. This will create a mountain collective to facilitate collaborative thinking, consensus building and coordinated action.

IMI urges all interested members of the Government, civil society and others to join the summit by registering in the link: <http://smds.mountaininitiative.in/>.

How Bimal Gurung's victim card will influence Indian Gorkhas' thinking towards the BJP at the national level will be interesting to see.

Two, the blessings of the state administration may work as oxygen for the agitation ravaged hills. A few more roads, a few more employment opportunities, renewed tourism activities, more schools, colleges and a university, a trickling down of some welfare schemes, the withdrawal of cases registered against GJMM supporters, the diversion of some developmental funds into the towns and villages across the hills - all these things will calm the souls for some years.

Three, some may even like to knock the sixth schedule door as an option. This will give some old Subash Ghising supporters a sense of nostalgia and notional victorious sense. "After all, our great Apa was right. If only we had listened to him". For a beleaguered janta, sometimes a little nostalgia over their admired leader of yesteryears can have a calming effect. And Darjeeling needs that.

on invisible disabilities like psychiatric problems, brain injury, learning disability, schizopenia, severe depression, epilepsy, attention deficit disorder etc. Further, he talked about ignorance of these kinds of invisible disabilities in our community and the need to focus on such issues and spread awareness and understanding of disabilities. It also means that a person is not inherently 'disabled' - disability is not a feature of a person, he added.

Secretary cum State Commissioner, SJ&WD, Tshewang Gyachho earlier briefed on the special day about the present status and implementation of Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016. He stated that the Act is all about the Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons. Non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with

Excise Dept interacts with IMFL retailers in West Sikkim



RUDRA KAUSHIK  
GYALSHING, 03 DEC:

The Excise department today convened a meeting and interactive session with Indian Made Foreign Liquors (IMFL) retailers of West Sikkim here at Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Secretary of Excise department, Kuber Bhandari, Commissioner, Binita Chettri, Deputy Commissioner, Bharat Bhandari and IMFL retailers from West Sikkim were also present in the meeting.

The Excise department took note of problems and hurdles being faced by the retailers and

heard their grievances. It was informed that the Excise department has been holding meetings with liquor shop owners of all four districts of the state to clear the air on problems the retailers are facing and also to find solutions to various issues.

Addressing the retailers, Secretary, Kuber Bhandari said, "We are here to hear your grievances. We are committed to serve the interests of the retailers but they should work in tandem with the concerned department."

The departmental officials urged the retailers

to abide by the norms and directed them not to open shops on dry and restricted days.

The retailers in the interactive session raised issues like licence subletting, problems relating to transportation of liquor, etc. The department officials assured to take stringent action against the defaulters and informed that rules and regulations would be implemented properly.

The retailers were also advised to keep their papers up to date and shared that defaulters may face legal consequences.

Transport Minister extends financial support to needy

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

RMLA cum Transport Minister, Sanjit Kharel has provided financial support to a school, Gumpa and three families of his constituency, a press release informs.

An amount of Rs 30,000 was provided to Netra Basnet and Darman Gumpa Purbing as financial assistance in purchasing a cow. Rs 50,000 was provided to the kin of Late Bal Bahadur Gurung for kitchen repair, Rs 8000 to Subba Baje who is undergoing



treatment at Namchi District Hospital and Rs 15,000 was provided to the Kabrey Secondary School for School repairs.

On behalf of the Minister, the cheques were handed over to all the beneficiaries by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha CLC president, RS Tamang.

Minister Kharel has said that the SKM party and the Government has decided to make every family Atma nirbhar and has started distributing different types of benefits to the needy families of the state. Such services will reach each and every needy family by 2024, he added.

Mamata announces 3% hike in Dearness Allowance

KOLKATA, 03 DEC [PTI]: Announcing a three per cent hike in dearness allowance (DA) from next month for government staff, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said the state's coffers would never run dry for its employees, although it was yet to receive dues of ₹ 85,000 crore from the Centre.

Ms Banerjee, during her address to members of TMC affiliated government employees' association at the state secretariat, said dues payable by the Cen-

tre to Bengal had been mounting over a period of time under several heads – UGC grant, GST and funds for COVID-19 battle among others.

"We had not been receiving our financial dues. At least ₹ 8,000 crore is due under GST. Despite financial constraints, we had met the recommendations of all previous pay commissions (Sixth Pay Commission). We will also provide three per cent hike in DA from January 2021," she said.

Ms Banerjee said the exercise will incur an ex-

pense of ₹ 2,200 crore on the state's exchequer.

"More than ₹ 85,000 crore dues are yet to be cleared by the Centre, but that will not prevent us from giving our people their dues," she said.

The chief minister, further said that 9.5 lakh students of 14,000 higher secondary schools and 636 madrasas will be given tablets for free for their online classes.

The state has also made arrangements to ensure RT-PCR tests are conducted at ₹ 950, she added.

Book seeks to answer life's 50 toughest questions

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): What is your life lesson? On a scale of 1 to 10, how much have you loved people and yourself? Does the world offend you or amaze you?

These are among the 50 questions posed by UNESCO Kindness Ambassador Deepak Ramola in his new book along with their answers.

"50 Toughest Questions of Life", published by Penguin Random House India imprint Ebury Press, is inspired by the lesson of a young girl Ramola met who told him, "Life is not about giving easy answers, but answering tough questions".

The author, a UN Action Plan Executor, a TED Talk speaker and founder of Project Fuel, asks thought-provoking as well as funny questions in the book which aims at making readers have a conversation with themselves about themselves.

Over the years, Ramola amassed life lessons from inspirational sources across the world: from the women of the Maasai tribe to young girls in Afghanistan and sex workers in Kamathipura; from the lessons of earthquake survivors in Nepal to Syrian refugees in Europe, among many more.

These 50 questions made him "pause, along with a bouquet of answers,

anecdotes, stories and notes from his journey of teaching human wisdom for a decade". "As I stood by the self-help section of a quaint, street-side bookstore in San Francisco, my mind swam through books and books of a condensed understanding of life by the renowned philosophers and thought leaders of our times," he says.

"Laced with poignant metaphors, moving imagery and stimulating quotes, for the first time, I was a bit lost and confused. I found myself enclosed in the safe barricades of answers upon answers," he adds.

Each book he picked up had many more answers and his mind raced to think that if these are the answers then what are the questions? "The seed of this book was sown exactly there - as I stood in the third row from the left, at the first corner of the self-help section in the San Francisco bookstore.

This wasn't the first time I had an epiphany about this, but I felt convinced and finally compelled to write this book and add meaning to our lives," Ramola writes. After condensing nearly 3,000 questions into a list of the top 50, he designed this as an exercise and a game to play with diverse shades of people over the past five years.

With 27 new...

Tamang Gump in Sichey currently admitted in the ENT ward, a patient from Phewa Basti, Tadong, one from Bhanu Path, Gangtok and one from the Gynae ward.

Two cases were reported from Pakyong, including a person from Nav Gaon and another from near St Xavier's School and a case was also detected from Sudunglakha nearby.

Likewise, new cases reported from in and around the capital include one from Bojoghari, one from Pani House, one from Development Area, one from Maney Gaon-Lower Shyari, one from Lower Sichey and one from MM Rasaily Road, Sichey. Two more cases were reported from Tadong - one from 5th Mile and another from 6th Mile.

Mr Bhutia further informed that two persons from Mangalbaria, four from Gyalshing District Hospital, one from Gyalshing, one from Yuksom and one from Gerethang in West District and one from Upper Boomtar and one from Tanzi Namthang in South District have also tested positive for COVID-19.

~ SummitTIMES ~

CLASSIFIEDS

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

FOR RENT

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Building for sale

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50×40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS , South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable ). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.



# Special Summary Revision of Photo Electoral Rolls

**GANGTOK, 03 DEC (IPR):** As per the directives of the Election Commission of India, the Special Summary Revision of Photo Electoral Rolls w.r.t. 1.1.2021 as the qualifying date has started w.e.f. 16.11.2020 to 15.12.2020.

The O/o the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, as part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program (SVEEP), flagged off a "Mobile Van campaign" on 3.12.2020 from the office premises for generating widespread awareness about the Special Summary Revision.

The Mobile van cam-



paign is aimed at spreading awareness through miking of information related to Special Summary revision and Special Campaign

dates. The mobile van campaign will cover areas in and around Gangtok area on 03 and 04 Dec, 2020.

The O/o the Chief

Electoral Officer, Sikkim is organizing special campaigns on 05 and 06 Dec, 2020 throughout the State of Sikkim

where the general public can visit their nearest Polling Station for filing of claims and objections in the Electoral Roll.

## Maharashtra Teacher Wins \$1 Million, Says Will Share Half With Finalists

**LONDON, 03 DEC [PTI]:** A primary school teacher from India was on Thursday named the winner of the \$1 million annual Global Teacher Prize 2020 in recognition of his efforts to promote girls' education and trigger a quick-response (QR) coded textbook revolution in India.

Ranjitsinh Disale, 32, from Paritewadi village in Maharashtra's Solapur district, emerged the winner among 10 finalists from across the world. The annual prize was founded by the Varkey Foundation in 2014 to recognise an exceptional teacher who has made outstanding contribution to the profession.

Mr Disale, who believes that teachers are the world's "real change-makers", announced that he will be sharing 50 per cent of his prize money with his fellow finalists to support their "incredible work".

"The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed education and the communities it serves in a multitude of ways. But, in this hard time, teachers are giving their best to make sure every student has access to their birthright of a good education," Mr Disale said.

"Teachers are the real changemakers who are changing the lives of their students with a mixture of chalk and challenges. They always believe in giving and sharing. Therefore, I am very pleased to announce that I will share 50 per cent of the prize money equally among my fellow top 10 finalists to support their incredible work. I believe, together, we can change this world because sharing is growing," he said.

His gesture means the other nine finalists will receive just over \$55,000 each, making history as the first winner to share his prize money.

"By sharing the prize money, you teach the world the importance of giving," said Indian education philanthropist Sunny Varkey, the founder of the prize.

"I now encourage you to use this platform to give all teachers a voice. There is not a moment to lose as it will fall on young people to find solutions to problems that their parents and grandparents have lacked the will to solve, including climate change, conflict and global pandemics," he said.

## SBI YONO app down, transactions impacted

**NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI):** State Bank of India (SBI) on Thursday said its mobile application YONO has been impacted due to a system outage and steps are being taken for restoration of uninterrupted services.

This comes on a day when HDFC Bank announced that the RBI has temporarily barred it from launching new digital banking initiatives or issuing new credit cards in view of service outages over the last two years.

In a message to its customers, SBI said the YONO app has been impacted due to a system outage. Steps are being taken for restoration of

uninterrupted service, it added. The lender requested customers to use net banking and the YONO Lite application for their banking needs.

"We request our esteemed customers to bear with us as we work towards restoring YONO SBI app to provide for an uninterrupted banking experience," it said.

The country's largest lender had to face the ire of customers earlier this week as well due to technical glitches and transaction failures. Last month too the bank's services were hit due to server issues.

In a tweet on November 24, SBI had said, "We

regret the inconvenience caused. There are intermittent connectivity issues with our Servers. Kindly bear with us as our team is on the job to resolve the issue at the earliest. In the meantime, we suggest you to use our other digital channels."

Meanwhile, some customers of another public sector lender Punjab National Bank (PNB) too faced problems on Thursday while using its digital channels.

"Dear customer, we regret for the inconvenience caused to you. Our Internet Banking, UPI, APP service(s) are facing glitches due to some technical difficulty.

Parkash Singh Badal returns Padma award over farm laws

Chandigarh, Dec 3 (PTI): Akali stalwart and former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday returned his Padma Vibhushan award in protest against the Centre's farm laws.

I am who I am because of the people, especially the common farmer. Today when he has lost more than his honour, I see no point in holding on to the Padma Vibhushan honour, the Shiromani Akali Dal leader said.

Parkash Badal today returned the Padma Vibhushan award in protest against the betrayal of the farmers by the Government of India and against the shocking indifference and contempt with which the government is treating the ongoing peaceful and democratic agitation of the

Specialized Dental Clinic of Siliguri  
(Sevoke Dental Clinic)

Branch Open in Gangtok.

**GANGTOK DENTAL CLINIC**



**NOW OPEN**

10AM to 7PM

**BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT**

**82106 99271**

**Dr. Anjali Gupta**  
BDS, Dental Surgeon

Near Sisa Golai  
Below Greendale Hotel  
Gangtok, East Sikkim

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

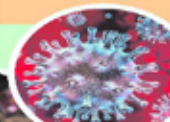
The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

### Symptoms of nCoV

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

### Treatment

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



If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7029372100  
WEST : 9593297808  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

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



**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**  
**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**  
**GANGTOK**

Ref. No: 72/DIR (HE)/EDN

Date: 26/11/2020

### EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

The Education Department, Government of Sikkim invites applications in a prescribed form from local eligible candidates for filling up of post of Assistant Professor Ad-hoc in various subjects in Sikkim Government Colleges. Last date of submission of application is **08.12.2020**. For further details please visit [www.sikkimhrdd.org](http://www.sikkimhrdd.org).



*Khushboo*  
DEPUTY SECRETARY,  
DIRECTORATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION,  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.



Ref. No. DST/KIRAN/GE-1/2019

**GATI**

Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions

Government of India  
Ministry of Science and Technology  
Department of Science and Technology  
Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI), KIRAN Division

### Call for Expression of Interest to Participate in Pilot

Universities, Research Institutions (of DST, CSIR, DBT, ICMR, ICAR etc.), Institutes of National Importance, and other autonomous S&T Institutions are invited to participate in the Pilot of *Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI)* launched by Government of India. GATI is a novel programme envisioned in mission mode to promote gender equity in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) domains.

The GATI Pilot Institutions will participate in a progressive action-oriented time-bound self-assessment process leading to accreditation with the GATI Award. The focus will be on synergetic development of enabling action plans. Institutional mentoring and facilitation will be provided by a team of experts. In addition, the selected institutions will be exposed to exemplary international practices on gender advancement.

**Eligibility:** Universities, Research Laboratories or Institutes, Institutes of National Importance, other autonomous S&T Institutions willing/volunteering to work in mission mode towards gender advancement in STEMM domains.

**Mode of Application:** Expression of Interest (EoI) Application for participating in the Pilot must be submitted in the prescribed format as a pdf file (*nameofinstitution.pdf*) via email to [gati-dst@nic.in](mailto:gati-dst@nic.in). Please read details available on [www.dst.gov.in](http://www.dst.gov.in) (<https://dst.gov.in/callforproposals/call-expression-interest-universities-and-research-institutions-participate-pilot>) carefully before applying. For further inquiries, please send email to: [chhama.awasthi@nic.in](mailto:chhama.awasthi@nic.in) or [pawan.kumar@nic.in](mailto:pawan.kumar@nic.in).

**Last Date of Application:** 30 days from the day of announcement

davp 36101/11/0009/2021

Released by Head, KIRAN Division, DST



No.26-16/2017-DD-III  
Government of India

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment  
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)

Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan,  
C.G.O. Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003

### CIRCULAR

**Appointment of Chairperson, National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.**

National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities is a statutory body constituted under Section 3(1) of the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (hereafter, "the Act"). The Trust has 22 Members and is chaired by the Chairperson.

2. Objectives of the Trust as given in Section 10 of the Act are:

- To enable and empower persons with disability to live as independently and as fully as possible within and as close to the community to which they belong;
- To strengthen facilities to provide support to persons with disability to live within their own families;
- To extend support to registered organizations to provide need based services during period of crisis in the family of persons with disability;
- To deal with problems of person with disability, who do not have family support;
- To promote measures for the care and protection with persons with disability in the event of death of their parents or guardians;
- To evolve procedure for the appointment of guardians and trustees for persons with disability requiring such protections;
- To facilitate and realization of equal opportunities protection of rights and full participation of person with disability; and
- To do any other act, which is incidental to the aforesaid objectives.

3. Powers and duties of the Chairperson, National Trust: As per National Trust Rules as amended from time to time.

4. As per Section 32 of the Act, all members, Chief Executive Officer, other officers and employees of the Trust shall be deemed, when acting or purporting to act in pursuance of any provision of this Act to be public servant within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal Code.

5. Term of Appointment as per Section 4 of the Act: Three years, from the date of appointment.

6. **Salary and allowances of the Chairperson:** Under Rule 4 and 5 of the National Trust Rules 2000, the salary of the Chairperson shall be equivalent to the basic pay of a Secretary to the Government of India. Dearness allowance and other allowance will be paid as per rules, applicable to a Secretary to the Government of India. Provided that where the Chairperson is a retired person, from the Central Government or a State Government or Union Territory Administration or semiGovernment body or Public Sector Undertaking or a recognized research institution or other autonomous or statutory body, the salary payable together with the pension or pensionary value of the terminable benefits or both received by him/her shall not exceed the basic pay of a Secretary to the Government of India.

7. **Age limit:** The applicant shall not be older than 62 years as on the closing date of receipt of applications.

8. **Eligibility:**

8.1 As per Section 3 (4) (a) of the Act, the Chairperson to be appointed by Central Government, shall be from amongst persons having expertise and experience in the field of autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities.

8.2 **Educational Qualifications and Experience:**

Educational qualification and experience for Chairperson of Board: Any person for being appointed as the Chairperson of the Board shall possess the following educational and other qualifications and experiences, namely:

(i) Master's degree from a recognized university:

Provided that preference shall be given to a person having:

(a) a postgraduate degree from a recognized University or Institute in one or more area of disability or community based disability rehabilitation, namely, autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, multiple disability or any other equivalent qualification in these fields which is recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India and registered as a personnel or professional with the Rehabilitation Council of India; or

(b) a postgraduate degree from a recognized University or Institute in any subject with diploma or degree in one or more area of disability or community based disability rehabilitation, namely, autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, multiple disability or any other equivalent qualification in these fields which is recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India and registered as a personnel or professional with the Rehabilitation Council of India; or

(c) His/her research papers published in any reputed professional journal; and

(i) minimum of ten years experience in the disability sector out of which not less than seven years shall be in autism or cerebral palsy or mental retardation or multiple disabilities; and

(ii) administrative experience of not less than three years as Chief Executive Officer or Chairperson or President or General Secretary of any NonGovernmental Organization which has been serving at least for ten years in the areas of autism cerebral palsy, mental retardation or multiple disabilities.

9. **Application procedure:**

(i) Candidates fulfilling the eligibility criteria mentioned in Paras 7 and 8 above may apply in the prescribed pro-forma, together with supporting documents, to Shri Sitaram Yadav, Deputy Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Room No.523, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, B-II, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan, C.G.O. Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003 within 30 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in employment news. Application form may be downloaded from this website: [www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in](http://www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in) (publication - download form).

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davp 38117/11/0034/2021



## Meet the Others

*Insularity is unfortunately a national malaise. Address it*

Identity, as in the perceptions of the outside, is a touchy issue among the marginalized communities. The ill-informed clichés, the pedantic, and almost always offensive generalizations remain sore points for the offended communities, and we live in a region that has lived with such broad-brush impoliteness for ever since we started interacting with the plains. And the brush paints both ways, one may add here.

While it is easy to take affront and fine to draft fresh introductions to correct the offending perceptions, it is definitely not okay to allow the chip on the shoulder to burden any heavier than is healthy. The more this perceived slight is allowed to fester, the more it diverts energy from pursuits that take communities forward. One refers to a “perceived slight” here because the clichés that hurt are products of ignorance and one should not really allow ignorance of others to justify withdrawals into cocoons by the othered. And defensive shells are not the best habitations from which to plan ahead because they keep thoughts and ideas rooted in a past that has lost its relevance for everyone except those who swoon in its fermented confusion. Also, while so enclosed, one fails to recognize changes elsewhere.

That said, it is important that the ignorance which has degenerated into disdain, mutual suspicion and distasteful stereotyping is lifted. One could argue that perceived slights are by nature pointless obsessions since they are born out of, well, perceptions which cannot really be tackled because, well again, they rest in perceptions and those are more difficult to address than actual instances of discrimination. They do, however, become worries when the perceptions start manifesting as actual attacks, like ones which triggered the exodus of NE people from the metros or the lynching which occurred in Nagaland a few years ago. And then there is the continuing parochialism everywhere else in the country and the reprehensible attempts at justifying such targeted attacks born out of Hate seeded in prejudices and stereotypes. These will repeat unless this country makes some earnest efforts at celebrating its much-vaunted diversity. More than 70 years as one nation and the citizens still don't behave as One People! This obviously needs to change, and the Supreme Court recently cracked the whip with its slew of directions, including the setting up of a three-member panel to “enhance the sense of security and inclusion of the people from the north-eastern states who faced violence and hate crimes”. The SC directive is the first step, an acceptance of sorts of a problem that exists. For it to be of any real consequence, wider, more collaborative initiatives will need to be taken.

The students provide the best opportunity to build the bridges which can span the chasms of mutual ignorance which feeds insularity among us. A simple and easily achieved course would be for the community/ state representative organisations of the students to become mediums which link communities, not strive to make them self-ensconced unit of self conscious groups. Take the freshers' welcome parties for instance. Instead of each community, each state or region hosting a welcome party for its own kind, they should use the funds to introduce the freshers to 'others' in the student community. Host the parties for 'your own' but invite guests from all other groups. Make celebrations the medium to proffer more congenial introductions and strike new friendships. Use the organisations to speak more often about the concerns of other groups and engage more earnestly in issues and challenges which face other communities. This openness is possible only with the idealism of youth, but is currently being stifled because student groups remain obsessively insular.

### WRITE US:

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



# COVID-19 Caution Fatigue: Why it Happens, and 3 Ways to Prevent it

DAVID J. A. DOZOIS  
[theconversation.com](#)

Many Canadians have wrestled with mental health issues during the COVID-19 outbreak. Research by Mental Health Research Canada found that the percentage of people experiencing high to extremely high anxiety quadrupled from what they reported prior to the pandemic. Follow-up surveys conducted in the summer and fall of 2020 suggest that these high levels have continued.

Despite an increase in mental health problems and experts warning of an “echo pandemic,” another problem afflicts Canadians and contributes to an increase in case counts: caution fatigue. The longer the pandemic has gone on, the more Canadians struggle to adhere to the guidelines and conform to local, provincial and federal restrictions.

As a clinical psychologist whose research focuses on cognitive behavioural therapy, I'm very interested in the psychological reasons why people might experience caution fatigue, as well as ways to overcome this problem.

#### WHAT IS CAUTION FATIGUE?

Anxiety is a normal response to the pandemic. When anxious, the human body kicks in a response that is highly adaptive in the face of a threat: the person becomes vigilant and experiences physical symptoms (called the fight or flight response) that prepare them to immediately deal with the threat by facing the fear head on (fight) or getting the heck out of there (flight).

Early in the pandemic, many people were extremely concerned. They didn't know what COVID-19 was, how bad things would get and how to best deal with this issue. They received information from the Public Health Agency of Canada and local health authorities about how to manage this virus and stay safe; they took neces-

sary precautions.

As time passed many people experienced caution fatigue — feeling less motivated or inclined to follow expert advice about COVID-19 and growing more tired of physical distancing, maintaining good hand hygiene, following the arrows at local grocery stores and wearing masks. As good as the advice was to “stay the blazes home,” people wanted to get out and see friends and family.

#### WHY DO PEOPLE EXPERIENCE CAUTION FATIGUE?

Compelling research evidence suggests that the more people face their fears, the less anxiety they have. This is a great strategy for trying to overcome trepidation over public speaking or a fear of dogs. Cognitive behavioural therapy demonstrates that systematically facing fears improves anxiety — people habituate and acquire new evidence, recognizing that just because they feel anxious doesn't mean something bad will happen.

The effectiveness of exposure or facing fears is, however, a double-edged sword when it comes to COVID-19. During the pandemic, many people became habituated to news about the pandemic. Some became desensitized and started letting their guard down: getting together with more people, expanding their bubbles, neglecting to wear masks regularly, distancing less cautiously.

I think about when I visited Walmart at the beginning of the pandemic — people were maintaining distance and following the arrows; after a while, people were being less careful and not paying attention to the very things that were keeping them safe. When the pandemic first broke, the numbers weren't nearly as staggering as they are currently, yet most people feel less anxious now than they did at the beginning of the pandemic.

A second reason that people may be experiencing caution fatigue is because they can only remain

vigilant for so long before they start to become exhausted. In addition, people are social beings, wired to be loved, to love and to belong. It is no wonder that people are finding physical distancing so difficult.

#### PREVENTING CAUTION FATIGUE

1. Keep anxiety levels in check. Using evidence-based thinking means letting facts rather than feelings impact thoughts and behaviour. This can go both ways. It is easy to think that the sky is falling. Remember probabilities and don't be consumed by anxiety. Conversely, don't be nonchalant. As the pandemic continues, it is easy for people to feel as though COVID-19 won't affect them directly. See the risk for what it really is.

2. Act beyond the individual. Everyone needs to think beyond themselves and recognize that an individual's actions significantly affect those around them — especially those who are elderly or vulnerable — and maintain an attitude of social responsibility and altruism.

3. Better manage stress. The better people are able to manage stress in their own lives, the more energy they will have to fight against caution fatigue. One way to do this is to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is important to remember that this is a temporary normal; it is not the new normal. Things that can boost mental health include practising self-compassion, keeping active, maintaining a routine, keeping socially connected, putting things into perspective and attending to good sleep hygiene, diet and exercise.

Now is not the time to let our guard down. For the good of everyone's health and the well-being of the country, everyone needs to do their part to maintain an appropriate level of caution and re-flatten the curve.

*[the writer is Professor of Clinical Psychology, Western University]*

# Pfizer Vaccine Has Just Been Approved: Here's What the Next Few Months Will Look Like

MANAL MOHAMMED  
[theconversation.com](#)

The UK has become the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for widespread use. The government has ordered 40 million doses and the first batch of 800,000 doses is expected to be shipped from Belgium – where the vaccine is being made – in the next couple of days. It will be enough to immunise 400,000 people (two doses per person).

The UK drugs regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), is also started a rolling review of other vaccines in late-stage human trials, such as the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine and the Moderna vaccine. If these vaccines also meet the very high efficacy and safety standards set by the agency, they too will be approved for mass rollout.

The fastest a vaccine has ever been developed is the mumps vaccine, which took a mere four years from concept to market. These latest vaccines beat that record by some margin – taking less than a year to develop. But that doesn't mean any corners have been cut.

The MHRA has pored over the records of over 40,000 vaccine trial participants from diverse backgrounds. The efficacy of the vaccine – that is, how effective it is at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 under trial conditions – is 95%. (That figure is expected to fall slightly under real-world conditions.) And there were no serious side effects, although these will continue to be monitored as the vaccine is rolled out.

It is expected that healthcare workers will receive the vaccine first as they are one of the most vulnerable groups. Also, hospitals have the

ultra-cold freezers needed to store the vaccine – so, from a logistics standpoint, it's a good place to start.

#### DON'T DITCH THE MASK JUST YET

This is all fantastic news and a good reason to be optimistic about the future. But Peter Openshaw, a professor of experimental medicine

at Imperial College London, said it would be a “terrible mistake” to ease up on COVID control measures at this juncture.



cytes, is known as the primary response and it takes about two weeks to kick in. So for two weeks after getting the jab you are still at risk of getting ill from COVID.

Also, many COVID vaccines require two jabs to provide full protection. And the interval between the jabs varies from 21 to 28 days. So the vaccine will take about six weeks after the first jab to provide full protection against COVID-19 disease.

WE DON'T KNOW IF THE VAC-

the response from your immune system, generated by the B lympho-

protection against infection. White blood cells known as B lymphocytes first need to detect the antigen in the vaccine and then generate specific antibodies against it. If you get exposed to coronavirus, these antibodies latch onto the virus and neutralise it.

Although the vaccines in late-stage trials seem to be highly effective at preventing symptomatic COVID, we can't yet be sure that they prevent transmission of the virus.

For this, we would need a vaccine that provides so-called sterilising immunity. This is where immune cells can bind to the virus to prevent it from entering cells where it can start to replicate. So even six weeks after receiving the first jab, you may still get infected with the coronavirus – even if you don't get sick.

Studies from the preclinical phase of the Oxford vaccine found that rhesus macaques that were immunised with the vaccine were protected from serious disease and had no evidence of lung damage. But they still had coronavirus infection in their upper-respiratory tract and virus shedding from their noses. If this is the same with humans, it would suggest that while they will be protected from symptomatic disease, they might still spread the virus.

At this stage, we don't know if the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines stop transmission either, although further studies will hopefully tease this out.

Also, if you have been vaccinated, there is a small chance – at least one in twenty – that the vaccine won't protect you. So even if you have been vaccinated – and full rollout may not be complete till the summer of 2021 – you should still wear a mask, work from home if you can, and practice social distancing. As for good hand hygiene, let's try to keep that going – viruses, including probably SARS-CoV-2, will always be among us.

*[the writer is Lecturer, Medical Microbiology, University of Westminster]*



# Mamata stresses on need for inclusive growth

**KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, without naming anyone, on Thursday said that there is need for inclusive growth rather than polarisation in the COVID-19 pandemic scenario.

The pandemic had caused a lot of people to lose their jobs and their lives, Banerjee said while speaking at the virtual Infocom 2020, a business-technology event organised by a private group.

"We will have to wait for the vaccine (for COVID-19).

There must be some long-term plan on how to survive. Need to focus on the right priorities and in inclusive growth rather than polarisation," she said.

Banerjee respects each and every one, the chief minister said and quoted Rabindranath Tagore's famous poem "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ....".

She said that despite the pandemic situation,



West Bengal is moving ahead and though the state's earning is low, it is better than that in several other states.

Banerjee said that West Bengal is number one in growth in the state domestic product, self-governance, e-tendering, MSME, unorganised sector, steel, eradication of poverty, and ease of doing business.

The state has the

largest self-governance structure and around 1500 IT companies are working in it.

According to her, nearly 2.10 lakh IT professionals are working in the state and the proposed Silicon Valley hub in New Town, which has an investment outlay of Rs 3,000 crore and will provide jobs to 9,000 more people.

Expansion of the

functioning of IT companies like Wipro and TCS will add to the number of jobs, while 3,000 professionals will find employment opportunity at ITC Infotech whose project in New Town is almost complete.

Infosys will also set up its design centre for which it has taken land in New Town.

"Our talent need not go outside the state and

move around the world to look for jobs. The state has 65 industrial parks, 520 clusters and an animation academy," she added.

The Fintech hub, also in New Town area, is occupied by several banks like the State Bank of India and other financial institutions, she said.

"We want to be positive despite the negative scenario.

The state is the gateway to the northeast and other countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand and Singapore," Banerjee said.

Since May 2011 when the Trinamool Congress came to power in West Bengal, major indices like state GDP, plan expenditure, capital expenditure, social and physical infrastructure have shown remarkable growth, the chief minister said.

"Companies want to invest in the state. It was evident in the business summits held here," she said at Infocom 2020, an initiative of the ABP Group.

## Odisha reports 480 fresh COVID-19 cases, six new deaths



**BHUBANESWAR, DEC 2**

**(PTI):** Odisha's COVID-19 tally mounted to 3,19,583 on Wednesday as 480 more people tested positive for the disease, while six fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,750, a health department official said.

As many as 660 patients recovered from the infection taking the number of cured people to 3,13,394, which is 98.06 per cent of the state's caseload.

Of the new cases, 276 were reported from various quarantine centres and 204 detected during

contact tracing.

Khurda district recorded the maximum number of fresh cases at 51, followed by Angul at 41 and Mayurbhanj at 36.

Taking to Twitter, the health department said, "Regret to inform the demise of six COVID positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Ganjam district recorded two deaths, while Khurda, Balasore, Jharsuguda and Mayurbhanj reported one fatality each.

Odisha currently has 4386 active cases.

Fifty-three COVID-19

patients have died due to comorbidities, the official said.

The positivity rate stands at 5.35 per cent.

Over 59.77 lakh samples including 37,069 on Tuesday have so far been tested in the state.

With the state witnessing decline in detection of daily new positive cases, the state government asked district collectors to discontinue pasting of stickers indicating presence of COVID-19 patients under home isolation in front of their houses.

## 12 new cases push Mizoram's COVID-19 tally to 3,881

**AIZAWL, DEC 3 (PTI):** Mizoram's COVID-19 tally mounted to 3,881 on Thursday as 12 more people tested positive for the infection, a health official said.

Eight fresh infections were detected in Aizawl, two in Lawngtlai and one each in Lunglei and Kolasib districts, he said.

Twelve more people were cured of the disease, taking the state's recovery count to 3,584, the official said.

The recovery rate

among the coronavirus patients in the state stands at 92.35 per cent, he said.

Mizoram now has 291 active cases, of which Aizawl has the highest at 139, followed by Lunglei (74), the official said.

Six coronavirus patients have succumbed to the infection to date, he said.

The state has so far tested 1,53,180 samples for COVID-19, including 1,043 in the last 24 hours, the official added.

## Suspected cattle smuggler dies in BSF firing



**KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI):** A suspected cattle smuggler was shot dead by Border Security Force when clashes erupted between the smugglers and the border guards near the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, an officer of the paramilitary force said on Thursday.

The clashes broke out between a BSF patrol and a group of 150 cattle smugglers, near Sagarpara outpost area in Berhampore in the early hours of Wednesday, while they were trying to smuggle 50-60 cattle heads to the neighbouring country.

"The troops challenged the smugglers and asked them to surrender. But they did not pay any heed and tried to assault BSF troops with lethal weapons and fired shots from country-made pistols and lobbed crude bombs. In self-defence, BSF personnel fired 4

rounds from pump action gun and 4 rounds from INSAS rifle," the BSF officer said.

Claiming that it is the "minimum force" applied by BSF troops against miscreants to discharge its mandated duty, the officer said, there was no injury or casualty to any miscreant at the site of the incident, the officer said.

"It was later learnt that in the evening, one person was taken to hospital by his accomplices, and was declared 'brought dead' by doctors. If this villager/miscreant was part of the gang, the possibility of his getting injured or death due to BSF firing cannot be ruled out. The police is investigating the incident," the officer said.

Four bovines were recovered from the spot.

Till now in 2020, BSF personnel of South Bengal Frontier have rescued 6,224 cattle from being smuggled to Bangladesh.

## I am a son of Bengal, will continue to serve the people: Suwendu



**TAMLUK (WB), DEC 3 (PTI):** Disgruntled TMC leader Suwendu Adhikari Thursday said he will continue to serve the people of the state as a "son of Bengal and India".

His comment came amidst speculations over his next political move following the impasse in the dialogue between him and the party, which had claimed that differences with him had been sorted out.

Adhikari, who resigned from the Mamata Banerjee cabinet last week, was seen on Thursday holding a rally here without banners or flags of the party.

The rally was held to mark the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Khudiram Bose in Tamruk sub-division of East Midnapore district. His supporters were seen carrying the national flag during the programme.

"The Constitution of our country speaks of government by the people, of the people and for the people. I am a son of Bengal and a son of India and will continue to serve the people of my state in that capacity," Adhikari told reporters when asked about his present political stand.

His statement comes a day after leaders close to him had rejected the TMC leadership's claim of a rapprochement with him as "false", and said he is unapacified as his grievances have not been addressed.

They said Adhikari,

an influential leader with a mass base who had resigned from the Mamata Banerjee cabinet and other positions that he held a few days ago, has maintained that it is "difficult for him to work with the party".

Meanwhile, according to TMC sources, the party leadership has sent Adhikari a message on Thursday morning stating that "the details of the meeting were disclosed after all the issues were discussed and resolved.

"Now if you have changed your stand, it is your decision," the message said.

Senior TMC leader Saugata Roy, who was among those who held talks with Adhikari to resolve the differences, said the "Party will not say anything more on the issue and now it is for him to speak up".

Adhikari is said to be miffed at the way senior TMC leaders went to town on Tuesday claiming all differences with him had been sorted out after a high-level meeting that he had with TMC MPs Abhishek Banerjee, Saugata Roy and Sudip Bandopadhyay, besides election strategist Prashant Kishor.

Sources close to Adhikari said he did not want the details of what transpired at the meeting during the backchannel talks to be leaked to the media.

He has been incommunicado after the Tues-

day night meeting. Repeated calls to the former minister for the last three days went unanswered.

All eyes are now on Adhikari's scheduled press conference on December 6 at his hometown Kanthi in East Midnapore district.

Adhikari, a mascot of the Nandigram movement that added to the political heft of Mamata Banerjee and catapulted her to power, had resigned as minister of transport, irrigation and waterways last week, setting off speculation that he may quit the ruling TMC ahead of the state assembly polls next year.

Several rounds of backchannel talks to pacify the leader, believed to be unhappy over organisational changes and the growing clout of Abhishek Banerjee and Kishor, have come to nought.

Himself a two-term former MP, Adhikari's father Sisir Adhikari and brother Dibyendu are sitting TMC MPs from Tamruk and Kanthi Lok Sabha constituencies respectively.

The family wields considerable influence in at least 40-45 assembly segments in West Midnapore, Bankura, Purulia, Jhargram, parts of Birbhum -- mainly in the Junglemahal region and areas in minority-dominated Murshidabad.

The state polls are likely to be held in April-May next year.

**KENDRAPARA (ODISHA), DEC 3 (PTI):** Pairs of olive ridley sea turtles have begun emerging on the swirling sea waters off Gahirmatha in Odisha, marking the commencement of the annual natural heritage of mass nesting, forest officials said on Thursday.

Forest personnel on patrolling drives have sighted pairs of mating turtles. For undisturbed breeding of the aquatic animals, prohibition on sea fishing continues to remain in force in the marine sanctuary, they said.

Gahirmatha beach in Kendrapara district is acclaimed as the world's largest-known nesting ground of these endangered marine species. Apart from Gahirmatha, these aquatic animals turn up at Rushikulya river mouth and Devi river mouth for mass nesting.

"On the serene surface of sea waters, the turtle surveying teams spotted hundreds of mating pairs along the Gahirmatha coast. Fishing prohibition is presently clamped in Gahirmatha zone to ensure disturbance-free mating of the

marine animals," said Divisional Forest Officer, Rajnagar Mangrove, Bikhari Chandra Dash.

After the end of the mating season, most of the male turtles usually return, leaving behind the female turtles to lay their eggs, he said.

The female turtles virtually invade the nesting beaches, usually at the dead of the night for laying eggs, the phenomenon described as 'arribada'.

After indulgence in instinctive egg-laying, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into the deep seawater. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days. It is a rare natural phenomenon where the babies grow without their mother, the officer said.

The ban on sea fishing remains in force round the year in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary as the seawater here is the most conducive habitat for these delicate species.

The rise in the mortality rate of mating turtles along the coastal water surface led to the clamping of prohibition as the gill nets used by

the trawls prove to be messengers of death for breeding turtles.

The mute species, accorded schedule-1 animal under Wildlife Protection Act for its highly threatened status, get entangled in the nets for prolonged periods and die of asphyxiation. Many turtles also perish after getting hit by the fast-moving propeller of the fishing trawlers, forest officials said.

The rate of mortality of these endangered species is quite high. An olive ridley usually lays about 120 to 150 eggs from which hatchlings emerge after about 45 to 60 days. But not all eggs remain intact as predators devour it.

Besides, eggs are also washed away by sea waves during high tide. The eggs are incubated in the nest and grow, sans mother, to emerge as hatchlings, they said.

Around 7.30 lakh olive ridley turtles had turned up for their annual sojourn of mass nesting in the 2019-20 season. The female turtles had emerged from the sea to crawl on to the serene beach and dig pits to lay millions of eggs.

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**Ronaldo returns to score 750th goal, Juventus beats Dynamo**

**TURIN (ITALY), DEC 3 (AP):** Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 750th career goal to help Juventus beat Dynamo Kyiv 3-0 and leave his team with a chance of securing top spot in its Champions League group.

Ronaldo scored Juve's second goal and also hit the bar after Federico Chiesa opened the scoring in the first half. Ivaro Morata completed the scoring in a game that saw St phanie Frappart became the first female referee to officiate a men's Champions League match.

Juventus remained second in Group G, three points behind Barcelona after the Catalan club won 3-0 at Ferencv ros. Both clubs had already sealed qualification to the round of 16 but a win for Juventus at Barcelona in the final round next week could see the Bianconeri snatch top spot.

The result and performance will ease some of the pressure on Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo. The 41-year-old former Juventus player is a few months into his first coaching job and has come in for criticism after several disappointing displays from his team.

I'm young and I know I have to improve like my players, but I'll go ahead with my work, Pirlo said.

I feel ready for the match at Barcelona, those were the easiest games to play in and I think they will be the same as a coach. Certain matches change your season in terms of confidence, we're going there to win.

Juventus had rested Ronaldo this past weekend and was held to a disappointing draw at Benevento in Serie A but made a big impact on his return.

Juventus broke the deadlock in the 21st minute when Chiesa rose high at the far post to head in Alex Sandro's cross from the left.

Alex Sandro created another great opportunity 10 minutes later, weaving past two defenders before setting up Ronaldo, but his effort cannoned off the crossbar.

Juventus almost conceded at the end of the first half as goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny had to come flying off his line to deny Viktor Tsyhankov.

Ronaldo did get on the scoresheet in the 57th for his 750th goal for club and country and one of the easiest. Chiesa raced down the right flank and whipped in a cross which the goalkeeper pushed onto Morata's leg before the ball bounced toward Ronaldo, who was left with the simplest of tap-ins at the far post.

Chiesa was also involved in Juve's third goal as he burst into the box and picked out Morata, who coolly slotted it into the bottom right corner.

It was Morata's sixth goal in the competition this season.

# Anthony Joshua ready to take pay cut if he can fight Tyson Fury in Britain

**DONALD MCRAE**

**LONDON, 03 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** Anthony Joshua would consider fighting Tyson Fury for less money next year if it ensured an anticipated world heavyweight unification title bout between the two current champions could be held in Britain.

"Yeah, why not?" he said on Wednesday afternoon during a press conference to publicise his IBF, WBA and WBO world title defence against Kubrat Pulev in London a week on Saturday. "I'm now fighting Pulev for a massive pay cut. Matchroom [Joshua's promoters] are taking pay cuts this year because we have to keep the sport alive.

"We are all doing our part at the minute so I wouldn't mind doing it again. It's not harming me, and it's for a bigger cause as well. It's a big fight, but the main objective is how do we get Fury in the ring?"

That last sentence was a typically canny caveat from Joshua which indicates that negotiations for the fight will be predictably complicated and protracted. While Joshua stressed that such significant contests should "always [be] for the fans", he also pointed out that economic realities will decide the location. "My management team are going to do what is financially viable and see what is going to get Fury to step in that ring. It's a balance."

The likelihood that the fight will be staged in the Mid-



dle East rather than Britain remains. Eddie Hearn, his promoter, made it clear he could not advise Joshua to fight in Britain if the money offered by a country such as Saudi Arabia is far more attractive. Joshua's last fight, when he won a rematch against Andy Ruiz Jr a year ago this week, was held in Saudi Arabia.

"You're damned if you do, damned if you don't," Joshua said over the choice of location. "The main objective is getting this fight done, but there is definitely the element that the fans are the most important and getting them together to watch a British classic. What finances can we gather to get Fury in the ring? It's a tough one but I would

definitely go for the fans this time around."

Joshua looked back to his Saudi excursion last year. "It was a great success. For me, losing the belts [to Ruiz in New York in June 2019] and then winning them back was my success. I focused on the training camp and winning the fight. In terms of the event itself it showcased Saudi as a country that is hospitable to people from around the world. They can put on events, so they were really happy."

Joshua and Hearn were criticised last year for failing to acknowledge Saudi's dismal human rights record but, in readiness for Pulev, the 31-year-old from Watford said: "I've been away for two

years but I'm back in the UK and I want to stay here as long as possible. I definitely want to go back to MSG [Madison Square Garden] to avenge that loss [against Ruiz]. Saudi, great hospitality, and feedback, is definitely an option. When I first turned professional I had offers from America, Germany, but I knew the UK was where I wanted to be. This is where my base is and this is always my priority.

"But fighters have to travel. Like Fury. He says: 'I've fought in Germany [when Fury beat Wladimir Klitschko], I've beaten [Deontay] Wilder in America.' There is a sense of a trail blazer, a road warrior, so I don't mind getting on the road. I did it last year and

I'll do it again."

It was announced on Wednesday that 1,000 fans will be allowed into the SSE Arena in Wembley to watch him fight Pulev, and Joshua said: "It's going to be nice for people because when will there be another chance to witness a heavyweight championship fight when there are only 1,000 people in the room?"

"It's going to be intimate, it's going to be closed circuit. You won't have to worry about your missus having a pint of beer chucked on her head or 15 guys by the side of you getting into a fight."

Joshua remembered the last time he fought in front of a small crowd. "It was Hungary [in February 2012]. It's not

bad. The pressure is off, you can get in your rhythm. And I think I need that sometimes. I am under a lot of pressure. I am physically good but mentally you have to stay strong. This year has been good to unload a lot of pressure and you have to take fighting in front of 1,000 fans as a positive. I am going to perform with no pressure and showcase the styles I have merged, which is sticking and moving and aggression and knockout power."

Joshua has watched a lot of boxing in lockdown. "It just isn't the same without seeing the fans' reaction and the noise but, at the same time, I've enjoyed it. It's been fun to sit back and watch it. We're all in lockdown together so even watching the fighters go through it is different – but they've adapted well."

He also said that lockdown has meant that "I've lived the life of an athlete for the first time. Since I turned pro we were straightaway selling out the O2, and with that there is pressure. Building the sport with my companies has meant putting myself forward. With [his various business ventures] shut down during the pandemic I have spent my time training. I have lived these nine months as an athlete and it has been a blessing. I have progressed a lot."

Next year, on condition he beats Pulev, Joshua's progression should face its most stringent test against Fury – most probably in the Middle East.

## BCCI to discuss adding two new teams to IPL

**NEW DELHI/MUMBAI,**

**03 DEC (REUTERS):** India's cricket board will consider adding two new teams to the popular Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise-based tournament, according to the agenda of the governing body's annual general meeting scheduled to be held later this month.

The IPL, which has an estimated brand value of \$6.8 billion, drew record television and digital viewership during its 2020 season amid the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Approval on inclusion of 2 (two) new teams to the Indian Premier League" was listed on the agenda seen by Reuters.

BCCI treasurer Arun Singh Dhumal told Reuters that the AGM will be held at the end of December with Indian media

reports saying the date of the meeting has been fixed for Dec. 24.

The IPL currently has eight franchises and its latest edition was held in the United Arab Emirates without fans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have been thinking in terms of a 10-team IPL for some time now, and we'd like to have two new teams from 2021, if possible," an IPL governing council member requesting anonymity told Reuters.

Local media has reported in the past that Indian conglomerates Adani Group and RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, which owned the Rising Pune Supergiant franchise for two IPL seasons, have shown interest in buying new teams.

Both companies did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

During the AGM, the BCCI will also discuss its stand on the possible inclusion of cricket in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Cricket featured at the 1900 Olympics and was played in the 1998 Commonwealth Games but has largely been absent from multi-sport events, which critics say has restricted the sport's growth beyond its traditional pockets.

The International Cricket Council, the world governing body of the sport, backs the idea of the sport's inclusion in the Olympics but the BCCI has been reluctant.

The BCCI, considered the world's most powerful and richest cricket board, fears losing its autonomy and being answerable to the country's Olympic committee if cricket joins other sports for the quadrennial Games.

## Maxwell defends 'switch-hit', asks bowlers to evolve

**MELBOURNE (REUTERS) -**

Glenn Maxwell defended the switch-hit after the audacious stroke once again drew criticism from pundits, the Australian all-rounder saying the onus was on bowlers to evolve and counter batsmen in the shorter formats of the game.

Right-handed Maxwell switches stance in a flash to transform into a left-hander with the bowler well into the delivery stride, making field setting impossible against the shot.

Maverick England batsman Kevin Pietersen was a regular proponent of the shot, which involves a combination

of skill and risk and was deemed legal in 2008 by the MCC, which acts as the custodian of cricket's laws. Maxwell smashed 59 from 38 balls at the Manuka Oval in Canberra during Australia's 13-run loss in the third and final ODI against India on Wednesday and his innings included a massive switch-hit against spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

"It's within the laws of the game," Maxwell told reporters. "I suppose it's up to the bowlers to try and combat that, and the skills of bowlers are being tested every day."

"They're having to come up with different change-ups and different

ways to stop batters, and with the way they shut down one side of the ground and what-not.

"I suppose the way that batting is evolving, I think bowling has got to evolve to the same stage."

Former Australian captain and commentator Ian Chappell feels batsmen take unfair advantage of field placements by switching stance at the last moment.

"It is very skilful, some of it's amazingly skilful - but it's not fair," Chappell told Wide World of Sports. "I'd love the administrators who made those laws to explain to me how that's fair."

## Olivier Giroud's fantastic four flattens Sevilla as Chelsea claim top spot



**SID LOWE**

**SEVILLE, 03 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** "Everyone loves Olivier Giroud," Jorginho said before this game and they were even more enamoured of him by the end of it. The man who scored the last-minute winner at Rennes last week got four more goals in Spain. Two delicate, classy finishes were followed by a superb header that completed a hat-trick, and then he scored a late penalty before being taken off to applause echoing around the stadium.

It had been a more enjoyable occasion than many had expected. Sure, first place was a target – a "trophy", according to Sevilla's sporting director – but with both sides through to the knockout stage there was little to play for, except football itself. And when it is like that, football is fun. Chelsea are too, even in the absence of their usual starters.

Frank Lampard made nine changes from the weekend but he insisted that the men coming in deserved to play, and they proved that. Besides, that was what allowed Giroud to make this his night, leaving bare-chested with the ball under his arm. Climbing the stairs behind him, the manager wore the broadest smile. "It was an amazing performance," Lampard said. "The individual quality of all the goals was [too]. Rightly he comes off the pitch to a standing ovation and I'm delighted for him.

He is the ultimate professional."

Ultimately Chelsea were just too good for Sevilla, inflicting their first European home defeat in two years. This hurt them, even if they too had made changes: seven were planned, an eighth enforced when Tomas Vaclik pulled out after the warm-up leaving the B team goalkeeper Alfonso Pastor to start. The 20-year-old was just 30 seconds into his debut when he pushed away a sharp shot from Kai Havertz, an indication of what was to come, Christian Pulisic hitting wide soon after and Chelsea taking the lead after eight minutes.

Pulisic found Giroud, who shifted and bent a neat finish into the far corner for a goal that would prove only the beginning. Chelsea's players appeared determined to enjoy the game and they seemed to find it easy too, Sevilla unexpectedly open. Pulisic and Havertz were a constant threat, the former denied by Pastor before Antonio Rudiger's header was cleared off the line. Not long after, the American bent past a post.

Sevilla had taken a step forward, though, and this was becoming a competitive game. By half-time the teams had racked up 17 shots between them. By the end the figure had climbed over 30, including Youssef En-Nesyri's attempt to catch out Édouard Mendy from inside the centre circle and three shooting opportunities for

Ivan Rakitic. Franco Vázquez, too, had a shot charged down. And all that before half-time.

Sevilla had not given up, although their resistance would not last much longer. An outrageous scooped pass from Jesús Navas saw Nemanja Gudelj start the second half with a vicious, swerving shot that flew just over. But it was Chelsea who struck soon after, effectively ending any hope for the home side, Mateo Kovacic nudging a clever ball with the outside of a foot through the gap for Giroud, inside the area. With Pastor advancing, he lifted it gently over the keeper, the ball floating into the net.

Chelsea had not finished. Giroud headed in the third to complete a perfect hat-trick – left foot, right foot, header – which still might not be enough to earn him a starting place against Leeds on Saturday. "I didn't know until two years ago that you called it a perfect hat-trick," he said later. "When I scored against Kyiv in the Europa League I said: 'What do you mean?'" Only one thing was missing here and that followed late on when he added a penalty which, like the rest, was perfectly taken.

Watching the last few minutes from the stands, at the final whistle Giroud handed his shirt to En-Nesyri and was heading off up the stairs when he remembered something and turned back to go and get the matchball.



# Australian leader seeks conciliation in dispute with China

**WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP):** A diplomatic war of words between Australia and China over a graphic tweet seemed to finally cool on Thursday as Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison struck a much more conciliatory tone. Morrison's change in approach came even after he was thwarted in getting his views out directly to Chinese people over the messaging app WeChat, after the Chinese company deleted his post on the grounds it could distort historical events and confuse the public.

China has angrily rejected Morrison's complaints, but its foreign ministry on Thursday declined to comment further on the controversy. Spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters at a daily briefing that WeChat's management had their "own rules and regulations, and they have the right to handle business concerning WeChat according to their own rules." Earlier this week, Morrison expressed indignation and anger



at the tweet posted by a Chinese official that showed a fake image of a grinning Australian soldier holding a bloodied knife to a child's throat. The post took aim at alleged unlawful killings and abuses by Australian soldiers during the conflict in Afghanistan. Morrison called the tweet "truly repugnant" and "deeply offensive" and demanded an apology from China. But China did not back down, saying that Australia should be the one examining its

actions. On Thursday, Morrison took a much different approach, telling reporters in Canberra that his aim was for the two countries to have a "happy coexistence." "My position and my government's position is to seek constructive engagement," he said. "The relationship with China is a mutually beneficial one. It supports both our countries, it is good for both of our countries." China is Australia's largest trading partner. Morrison said Aus-

tralia had made its views very clear on both the tweet and the WeChat message. WeChat is ubiquitous in China and is used for everything from getting news to making electronic payments. The company is held responsible for ensuring content doesn't attract negative attention, and censorship is relatively common. Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said he was disappointed about both the tweet and the deleted post. "What the

prime minister did in his WeChat message before it was disappointingly deleted was he made it very clear Australia is proud of its servicemen and women who wear the uniform," Frydenberg said. The rift between the two nations has grown since the Australian government called for an independent inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. China has since imposed tariffs and other restrictions on a number of Australian exports.

## Phishing ploy targets COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort

**BOSTON (AP):** IBM security researchers say they have detected a cyberespionage effort using targeted phishing emails to try to collect vital information on the World Health Organization's initiative for distributing COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries.

The researchers said they could not be sure who was behind the campaign, which began in September, or if it was successful. But the precision targeting and careful efforts to leave no tracks bore "the potential hallmarks of nation-state tradecraft," they said in a blog post Thursday. The campaign's targets, in countries including Germany, Italy, South Korea and Taiwan, are likely associated with the development of the "cold chain" needed to ensure coronavirus vaccines get the nonstop sterile refrigeration they need to be effective for the nearly 3 billion people who live where temperature-controlled storage is insufficient, IBM said.

"Think of it as the headline that will be supplying the most vital vaccines globally," said Claire Zaboeva, an IBM analyst involved in the detection.

Whoever is behind the operation could be motivated by a desire to learn how the vaccines are best able to be shipped and stored — the entire refrigeration process — in order to copy it, said Nick Rossmann, the IBM team's global threat intelligence lead. Or they might want to be able to undermine a vaccine's legitimacy or launch a disruptive or destructive attack, he added.

In the ploy, executives with groups likely associated with the initiative known as Co-

vax — created by the Gavi Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization and other U.N. agencies — were sent spoofed emails appearing to come from an executive of Haier Biomedical, a Chinese company considered the world's main cold-chain supplier, the analyst said.

The phishing emails had malicious attachments that prompted recipients to enter credentials that could have been used to harvest sensitive information about partners vital to the vaccine-delivery platform.

Targets included the European Commission's Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union and companies that make solar panels for powering portable vaccine refrigerators. Other targets were petrochemical companies, likely because they produce dry ice, which is used in the cold chain, Zaboeva said.

The EU agency has been busy revising new import and export regimes for coronavirus vaccines and would be a gold mine for hackers seeking stepping stones into partnering organizations, she said.

Covax has struggled to raise enough money to compete for vaccine contracts against the world's wealthiest nations in the race to secure doses as fast as they can be produced. But the UN and Gavi have invested millions in cold-chain equipment across Africa and Asia. The investment, in the works well before the pandemic, was accelerated to prepare for an eventual global rollout of coronavirus vaccines.

Whoever was behind the phishing operation likely sought "advanced insight into the purchase and movement of

a vaccine that can impact life and the global economy," the blog post said. Coronavirus vaccines will be one of the world's most sought-after products as they are distributed, so theft may also be a danger.

Last month, Microsoft said it had detected mostly unsuccessful attempts by state-backed Russian and North Korean hackers to steal data from leading pharmaceutical companies and vaccine researchers. It gave no information on how many succeeded or how serious those breaches were. Chinese state-backed hackers have also targeted vaccine makers, the U.S. government said in announcing criminal charges in July. Microsoft said most of the targets — located in Canada, France, India, South Korea and the United States — were researching vaccines and COVID-19 treatments. It did not name the targets.

On Wednesday, Britain became the first to country to authorize a rigorously tested COVID-19 vaccine, the one developed by American drug-maker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech.

Other countries aren't far behind: Regulators not only in the U.S. but in the European Union and Canada also are vetting the Pfizer vaccine along with a shot made by Moderna Inc. British and Canadian regulators are also considering a vaccine made by AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

The logistical challenges of distributing vaccines globally are huge. The Pfizer-BioNTech one must be stored and shipped at ultra-cold temperatures of around minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit).

## S. Koreans take college entrance exam amid viral resurgence

**SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP):** Hundreds of thousands of masked students in South Korea, including 41 confirmed COVID-19 patients, took the highly competitive university entrance exam Thursday despite a viral resurgence that forced authorities to toughen social distancing rules.

About 426,340 students were taking the one-day exam at about 1,380 sites across the nation, including hospitals and other medical facilities where the 41 virus patients and hundreds of other test-takers in self-quarantine sat separately from others, according to the Education Ministry.

The annual exam, called "Suneung," or College Scholastic Ability Test, is crucial in the education-obsessed country, where job prospects, social standing and even who you marry can often depend on which university you attend.

Defense and land ministries said they temporarily banned military exercises and stopped air traffic to reduce noise during the English-language listening parts of Thursday's exam, as they did in past years. Government offices and many private companies asked their employees to come in late, and the country's stock market delayed its opening to clear roads for test-takers.

This year's exam had been originally scheduled for November but was delayed due to the virus outbreak. Experts say on-and-off online classes have widened the gap between high achievers and low performing students due to reduced interaction with teachers, digital distractions and technical difficulties. "If the exam had been delayed again, our kids

would have felt much more psychological pressure ... I think it's fortunate the exam is taking place now," said Kim Sun-wha, the mother of a test-taker. "I hope everyone will avoid making mistakes, do their best and get good results."

Mothers hugged their children and patted their backs before they entered a temporary exam site set up at a high school in Seoul. One shouted, "Don't be nervous! Do Well!" and another screamed "Cheer up!"

Students were required to have their temperature taken before entering the test sites, wear masks throughout the exam and maintain their distance from each other. They had to bring their own water and lunch because they weren't allowed to use water purifiers or drinking fountains at the sites or go outside to get meals. Those with a fever were to go to separate testing areas. There were a total of 1,383 sites, an increase of 198 from last year, according to the Education Ministry.

In recent days, the government has urged the public to stay home and avoid social gatherings as much as possible to provide a safe environment for those taking the exams. Park Yu-mi, an anti-virus official in Seoul, said authorities asked companies to have at least one-third of their employees work from home.

There are worries that the nationwide exam could accelerate the spread of the virus.

During a briefing Thursday, health official Lee Sang-won said he felt "really sorry" that he had to ask students to be vigilant and avoid gatherings even after the exam is over.

## France and UN rally aid for Lebanon, urge political reforms

**PARIS, DEC 3 (AP):** France and the United Nations vowed Wednesday to keep providing humanitarian aid to Lebanon but urged the country's leaders to form a new government as a political deadlock in Beirut has blocked billions of dollars in assistance for the cash-strapped country hit by multiple crises.

A meeting organised via videoconference by the U.N. and France was the second since the disastrous August 4 explosion that destroyed Beirut's port and wrecked large parts of the capital.

The blast, which killed over 200 people and wounded thousands, was caused by the detonation of nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrates that had been stored unsafely at a port warehouse for years.

The explosion came amid an unprecedented financial meltdown worsened by pandemic-related closures that has brought soaring inflation, poverty and unemployment.

French President Emmanuel Macron and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the creation of a fund handled by the World Bank, the U.N. and the European Union to provide support for Lebanon, including food, healthcare, education and the reconstruction of the Port of Beirut.

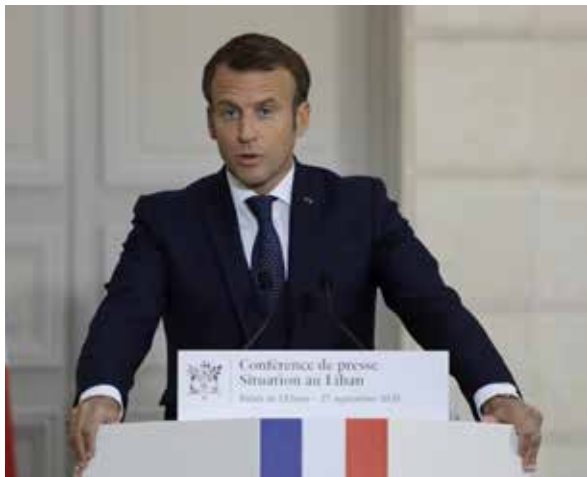
We can, together, help the Lebanese people move beyond the emergency phase and onto the path for longer-term recovery and reconstruction," Guterres said.

The plan also calls for a targeted set of reforms, which are essential to facilitate recovery and reconstruction," he added.

Macron said Wednesday's conference would make it possible to complete the emergency response and provide an early recovery response.

But the French leader warned that the promised aid won't replace the commitment of Lebanese political forces and institutions to form a government as quickly as possible and implement a roadmap for reforms without which the (long-term) international economic help won't be released."

In a dire report published Tuesday, the



World Bank said Lebanon's economy faces an arduous and prolonged depression, with real GDP projected to plunge by nearly 20 per cent because its politicians refuse to implement reforms that would speed up the country's recovery.

Macron, whose country once governed Lebanon as a protectorate, supported pushing ahead with an aid program despite frustration with the Lebanese ruling class. Lebanon's leaders continue to resist reforms and have been unable to form a government after the last one resigned in the wake of the explosion.

Commitments have not been met, Macron said.

Representatives from 27 countries participated in Wednesday's meeting, including 12 heads of state and local Lebanese aid groups which have a central role as trusted partners, according to the French presidency.

A new government would be the first step toward implementing a French roadmap for reforms to enable the release of billions of dollars of international aid. Another key international demand is a Central Bank audit.

U.S. consultancy firm Alvarez & Marsal withdrew last month from a forensic audit it was tasked with, saying it had not received the information required to carry out its work.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said that "despite the obstacles facing the French initiative, it must succeed because the crises the country is facing have reached their maximum.

I am determined, no matter what it costs, to follow through with the financial audit to the end to liberate the state from

the corrupt economic, political and administrative systems to which it has become hostage, he added.

Aoun said Lebanon is negotiating a USD 246 million loan from the World Bank to deal with the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic and Lebanon's emergency needs. The talks end this week.

The Aug 4 explosion, widely blamed on the negligence of Lebanese politicians and security agencies, has brought world attention to the corruption that has plagued the country for decades and left it on the brink of bankruptcy with hollowed out institutions.

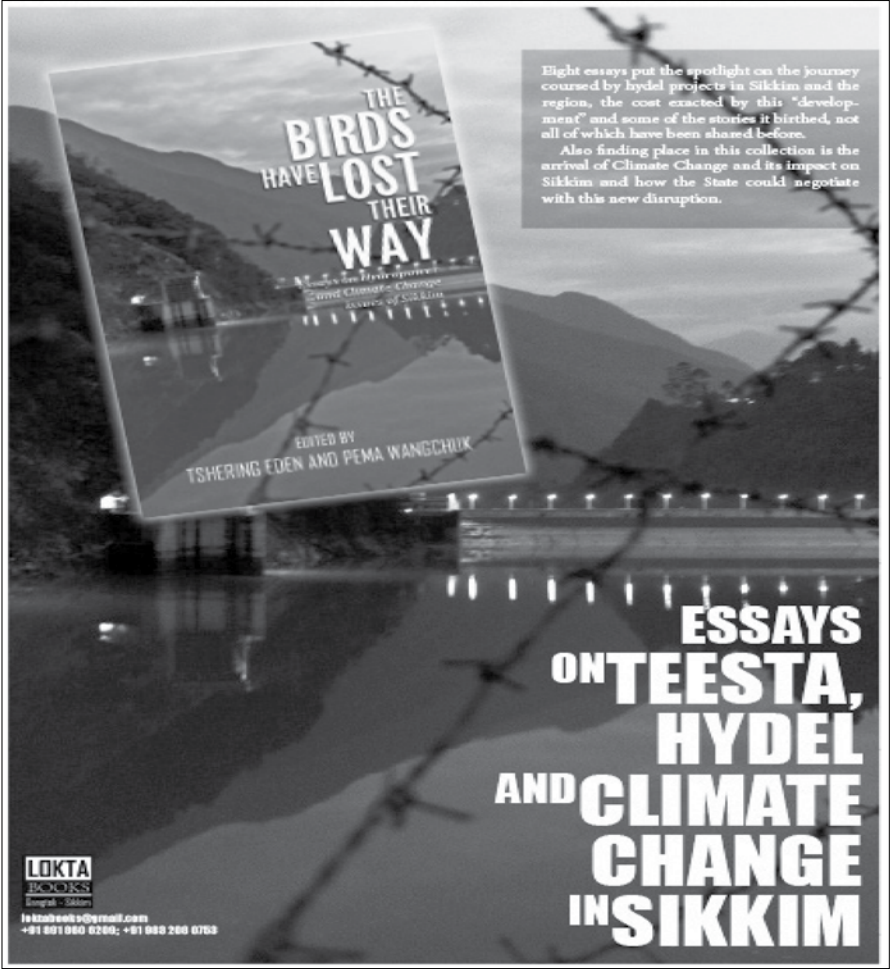
World leaders and international organizations pledged nearly USD 300 million in emergency humanitarian aid after the blast but warned that no money for rebuilding the capital will be made available until Lebanese authorities commit themselves to serious political and economic reforms.

The donors pledged the aid will be coordinated by the U.N. and delivered directly to the Lebanese people, in a clear rebuke of the country's entrenched and notoriously corrupt leaders.

The aid money is expected to go directly to NGOs and other organizations to distribute to the public, bypassing the Lebanese government.

Participants to the conference said in a final statement that the reconstruction of the Beirut port should be based on the principles of build back better, manage better, and decide in a transparent manner.

They reiterated the call for the formation of a credible government, effective and able to work in the general interest of the country.







**HOLIDAY SPIRIT!** The star, Brooke Burke is seen looking fit and fab in Malibu.

## Selena Gomez Accuses Facebook and Instagram of "Tolerating This Hate" Seen on Social Media

Selena Gomez tweeted that she is left "speechless" due to some of the accounts that are permitted to operate on Facebook and Instagram. Selena Gomez remains fed up with some of the content she's been seeing recently on social media.

The star shared her concerns on Twitter on Wednesday, Dec. 2 by retweeting a post from the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), a London-based nonprofit focused on lobbying tech firms to eliminate users who disseminate content that it perceives as harmful. The CCDH's Nov. 23 tweet included a number of accounts that the group refers to as "selling racist products on Facebook and Instagram." The message continued, "Facebook has left these pages online, despite being told about them 3 days ago. @Facebook, please remove this neo-Nazi network in full, now."

This prompted Selena to respond, "I'm speechless. @Facebook @Instagram how are you tolerating this hate? There's still accounts there even though you have been notified!!"

E! News has reached out to Facebook and

Instagram for comment.

This is not the first time that the UNICEF ambassador has expressed her ire regarding the social-media landscape. In September, she took to her Instagram Story to share a DM she had sent to Facebook executives Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg.

"Facebook and Instagram are being used to spread hate, misinformation, racism, and bigotry," Selena wrote in the post, according to Deadline. "I am calling you both to HELP STOP THIS. Please shut down groups and users focused on spreading hate speech violence and misinformation. Our future depends on it."

The 28-year-old "Lose You to Love Me" singer is the co-chair of When We

All Vote, a nonprofit aimed at increasing voter participation, and her September message to Facebook brass stressed the importance of everyone's voice being heard.

"We cannot afford to have misinformation about voting," she added at the time. "There has to be fact-checking and accountability. Hope to hear back from you ASAP."



## Sean Parker OK'd to buy stake in Peter Jackson's VFX studio

**WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP):** New Zealand authorities have approved tech billionaire Sean Parker's purchase of a one-third stake in film director Peter Jackson's visual effects studio.

Parker needed special permission from the Overseas Investment Office because he isn't a New Zealand resident and the Weta Digital studio is worth more than 100 million New Zealand dollars (\$71 million).

In a decision published on its website this week, the office said Parker and his business associates had the relevant experience and were "of good character." It said Weta Digital was raising money to grow its business.

Parker, who co-founded the file-sharing service Napster and is a former president of Facebook, said in June there was a huge, unmet demand for high-quality animated content.

"I have been a Weta superfan for the past two decades — I recall my sense of wonder when I first saw the character of Gollum brought to life, and later the surreal feeling of being transported to the alternate reality of

Pandora," Parker said, referring to the work Weta did on Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and James Cameron's "Avatar."

Parker's representative said Wednesday he had no further comment on the purchase.

of the company. Weta will issue new shares for Parker, diluting Jackson's stake. Jackson could not be reached for comment.

In June, Weta appointed Parker's business associate Prem Akkaraju as chief executive and said it would begin producing original content for the first



Weta employs about 1,550 people and is based in New Zealand's capital, Wellington. Company records indicate Jackson and collaborators Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens own just over two-thirds

time in its 25-year history. In 2016, Parker and Akkaraju founded a video-on-demand startup called Screening Room, which this year relaunched as SR Labs.

## Roddy Ricch has Apple Music's top album, song of 2020

**NEW YORK (AP):** Roddy Ricch is the king of Apple Music: The rapper has the music platform's most-streamed song and album of the year.

Apple announced Thursday that Ricch achieved the feat with his hit "The Box" and his debut album, "Please Excuse Me for Being Antisocial."

Rappers dominated the Top 5 most-streamed albums on Apple Music, with Lil Baby's "My Turn," Pop Smoke's "Shoot for the Stars Aim for the Moon" and Lil Uzi Vert's "Eternal Atake — LUV vs. The World 2" claiming spots two through four. R&B star Summer Walker's "Over It" came in fifth.

The Weeknd's "Blinding Lights" was the second most-streamed song of the year, followed by Australian

singer Tones and I's "Dance Monkey," DaBaby and Rich's "Rockstar" and "Life Is Good" by Future and Drake.

"Dance Monkey," originally released in 2019 but reached No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart this year, was the most Shazamed song of the year (Apple acquired Shazam in 2018). SAINT JHN's "Roses (Imanbek Remix)," the Weeknd's "Blinding Lights," Topic & A7S' "Breaking Me" and Regard's "Ride It" round out the Top 5.

Ranked by time spent viewing lyrics in Apple Music, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's raunchy hit "WAP" tops the list of most-read lyrics of 2020. Other songs in the Top 5 include "Dance Monkey," YOASOBI's "Yoru ni Kakeru," Ricch's "The Box" and Official HIGE DANDISM "Pretender."

## Gal Gadot to topline Skydance's spy movie 'Heart of Stone'

**LOS ANGELES, DEC 3 (PTI):** Actor Gal Gadot has found a new starring vehicle in upcoming Skydance spy film series "Heart of Stone". Tom Harper, who most recently directed Amazon's "The Aeronauts", will helm the movie, which is expected to launch a new franchise in the genre, reported Deadline.

Greg Rucka and Allison Schroeder have penned the script for the movie, which will be produced by David Ellis, Dana Goldberg and Don Granger.

The details of the plot have been kept under wraps but the studio aims to put a female spin on iconic action franchises like "Mission: Impossible"

and James Bond. Gadot, 35, will also produce the movie along with her Pilot Wave producing partner Jaron Varsano, Bonnie Curtis and Julie Lynn.

The actor currently awaits the release of her much-delayed superhero movie "Wonder Woman 1984", which will debut theatrically and on streamer HBO Max on December 25. Gadot will also star in the Kenneth Branagh-directed "Death on the Nile", alongside a star-studded cast.

She recently wrapped production on Netflix's "Red Notice", the Rawson Thurber Marshall-directed heist drama which also features Dwayne Johnson and Ryan Reynolds.

## Angira Dhar joins Amitabh Bachchan and Ajay Devgn in 'Mayday'



**MUMBAI, DEC 3 (PTI):** Actor Angira Dhar of "Love Per Square Foot" fame has been roped in for Ajay Devgn's next directorial venture "Mayday". Dhar, who has featured in web series "Bang Baaja Baaraat" and Vidyut Jamwal-starrer "Commando 3", will essay the role of a lawyer in the upcoming thriller-drama.

The 32-year-old actor said she is excited to come aboard the project and share the screen space with the likes of Devgn, megastar Amitabh Bachchan and actor Rakul Preet Singh.

"Absolutely thrilled and excited to be sharing the

screen with the true legends of our film industry Amitabh sir and Ajay sir. 'Mayday' is going to be one hell of a ride. (I) can't wait to be directed by Mr. Devgn himself," Dhar said in a statement.

Billed as an "edge-of-the-seat" drama, the film will feature Devgn as a pilot and Singh as his co-pilot. The details of Bachchan's character have been kept under wraps.

Devgn, who previously directed 2008's "U Me Aur Hum" and 2016's "Shivaay", will also produce "Mayday". The film will begin production in Hyderabad later this month.

## Jason Statham to star in crime feature 'Small Dark Look'

**LOS ANGELES, DEC 3 (PTI):** Hollywood star Jason Statham is being eyed for the lead role in upcoming crime drama "Small Dark Look".

According to Variety, the movie, which was earlier titled "Baby Cross", will be helmed by Danish filmmaker Martin Zandvliet.

The filmmaker, known for Oscar-nominated film "Land of Mine", recently replaced William Oldroyd, who had been attached to direct two years ago when the project

was first unveiled. Steven Knight, best known for creating acclaimed BBC series "Peaky Blinders", has penned the script, which centres around Russian mafia in London.

"Small Dark Look", which hails from Focus Features, will be produced by Paul Webster.

Statham, who has hits like "The Transporter" series, "The Meg" and "Hobbs & Shaw" to his credit, will next star in British filmmaker Guy Ritchie's untitled thriller.

Aries:

Aries, you are surrounded by the kind of people who could be lowering your vibrations by making you doubt your own power and potential. Take a moment to understand where they are coming from. Could somebody who is secure in their being convince another person that they are good for nothing? You already have the answer to this one. Today, you're being asked to filter out the stories you hear about yourself, and the world around you, as you pick and choose the ones that reinstate your faith in yourself. PS: the most important story you will hear is the one you tell yourself.

Tip: It's time to believe in your own power and potential.

Taurus:

There comes a point in every relationship where you are given the option to dive deeper or continue to swim closer to the surface. Which way will you go, Taurus? Will you let your fears and insecurities get in the way, or choose unconditional love over everything else? Something tells us you're about to cross an emotional threshold within yourself. Remember, no experience that's truly worth living comes without a risk. So go all in, beloved! It's going to be so, so worth it.

Tip: You are about to cross an emotional threshold within yourself.

Gemini:

The trouble is, we hold on to our material possessions tightly because we fear we may not have enough when we need it the most. Spirit wants you to know that you will be taken care of, now and for the rest of your life—that there will always be more than enough to go around. So, loosen your grip just a little bit. Redirect your attention from 'me' to 'we'. See how you can share your harvest with those around. Nothing will bring you more joy

than being in the energy of giving unconditionally.

Tip: Give with gratitude and grace.

Cancer:

There are points in our lives where we seem to be giving and giving the best we can without getting so much as a nod of appreciation in return. Could this be an issue you're struggling with, Cancer? Do you feel like you're the only one who is trying to heal, fix, and change everything around here? Just for today, loosen the grip a little. Allow Spirit to step in. As you do, reflect upon all the ways in which you would like to be supported by others, and communicate the same to them without an ounce of hesitation. Something tells us that remembering your own worth will help you bring about a cataclysmic shift.

Tip: Don't forget your own worth.

Leo:

The eclipse that took place earlier this week was wig-snatching for all of us—and you are no exception to the rule, Leo. The cards are urging you to acknowledge all the changes you have gone through internally and externally in this time period, as you give your body and being space to integrate. What you don't want to do today: play tug of war with the Universe, give yourself grief about not being productive enough, or obsess over that to-do list.

Tip: Give your body and being the time it needs to integrate.

Virgo:

When you repeat the story of loss and failure, that's what you give power to. On the other hand, when you narrate a tale of victory and breakthrough, you give Spirit the power to change the script around for you. But these drastic changes may or may not take place overnight, Virgo. This is something you want to remember now, and for the rest of the month. So continue to

affirm the good in your life (even if it makes you feel a wee-bit delusional in the beginning) and watch how the miracles begin to unfold before your own eyes.

Tip: Affirm the good in your life.

Libra:

Take a moment to reflect upon how receiving the things you love makes you feel. That mysterious smile on your face tells us that there are very few things in life that match up to the joy of being cared for. Now, wouldn't you want those you love to experience the same exhilaration that you have in the past? According to author Gary Chapman, there are five love languages, and they include words of affirmation, giving presents, acts of service, quality time, and physical touch. PS: Who knew there were so many ways to make the people in your life feel celebrated?

Tip: Give with all your heart.

Scorpio:

There is only one you in this world, Scorpio. Now, isn't that amazing! Today, the cards are urging you to acknowledge what makes you unique—what makes you, "you". You've spent way too much time trying to adhere to the script handed down by you. You've spent way too much time trying to live up to everybody else's expectations of you. What you haven't allowed yourself is the freedom to fully express your inherent wildness. PS: The time to come out of the shadows is now.

Tip: Celebrate what makes you unique. Celebrate what makes you, you.

Sagittarius:

There comes a point in every journey when things don't look as good as they did when you first started out, making you question why you're walking this path. The cards are urging you to ac-

knowledge the trepidation—to know that it's okay to be plagued by self-doubt once in a while. We all are! Should you give these fears the power to sabotage your game? Anything but. So take a moment to remember your true potential and continue to be loyal to what you love.

Tip: Continue to walk the path despite the fear and the self-doubt.

Capricorn:

You can spend a lifetime trying to figure out whose fault it was, and still not be able to come to a consensus. So why not start over, Capricorn? Why not look at your circumstances from a fresh perspective? All we're saying is, give peace a chance! PS: You'll be glad you did.

Tip: Give peace a chance.

Aquarius:

You had it all figured out, didn't you? And then, life decided to throw you a curveball. You have two options, Aquarius: to repeat the story in which you're the victim, or choose to see the silver lining. Everything is taking place in accordance with the divine plan—this we can promise. What Spirit wants you to remember: the darkest of nights is followed by the light of day. Trust that this too shall pass, beloved. This too shall pass.

Tip: Everything happens for a reason.

Pisces:

It may seem like everything is working against you at the moment. That Spirit is going out of its way to sabotage the game for you. But the truth is, you are where you need to be and you are protected and taken care of even if you cannot see it. Let 'trust' and 'surrender' become your magic words. You'll soon look back at this phase in your life as a turning point—we promise.

Tip: Spirit is working with, not against you.