





*Directions passed to complete link road from TNHS to Bypass by 31 March*

#### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 25 FEB:**

Secretary, Urban Development Department, has directed the contractor engaged for the construction of the link road from Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School to Indira Bypass, to at least make the stretch a fair weather road by 31 March.

An official press release informs that the Secretary led a team of officials from the Department along with the contractor to an inspection of the work which links up to the bypass near Manbir Colony.

The release informs that road cutting on the Indira Bypass Road side has almost been completed and widening of the existing road on the TNHS side is under progress.

The presence of water supply lines, sewer lines, power lines etc have delayed progress and shifting of utilities is under process and will take about a month's time to complete, it is informed. The major pending work is the construction of culverts and cross drains, which are being constructed simultaneously with widening of the road after which carpeting will be completed before monsoon, the release adds.

The Department is confident that once the Adampool to Ban Jhakri Falls road is completed, residents of Upper Sichey, Development Area, Baluwakhani, etc, can bypass the vehicular jam of NH-10 and reach Adampool much faster.

#### CONTACT

**SUMMIT TIMES  
REPORTERS**

**SINGTAM**

**8170070813**

**MANGAN/ DIKCHU**

**9832612485/**

**9434011213**

**GANGTOK**

**9800571148**

**8116388176**

**9832424750**

**8016270440**

## ICAR Sikkim organizes training for Bihar farmers

**GANGTOK, 26 FEB (PIB):**

After a gap of nearly one year the first training for progressive farmers from outside Sikkim was organized by ICAR Sikkim Centre from 23-25 Feb.

Farmers, officers, students from both colleges and schools and organic farming practitioners/enthusiasts from 19 states and five UTs/Autonomous Councils of our country numbering above 1400 have acquired knowledge on organic farming through more than 90 self-sponsored customized training programmes between December 2014 and March 2020 at ICAR Sikkim Centre.

The ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong, Gangtok successfully organized three-day inter-state training program on "Organic Farming of Important Vegetable Crops" for the progressive farmers of ATMA, Kishanganj, Bihar during 23-25 Feb, 2021.

A team of 20 persons visited ICAR Sikkim Centre



to get equipped with recent advances in organic vegetable production techniques. During the program, Joint Director, Dr Ravikant Avasthe, ICAR Sikkim Centre highlighted the relevance of this training program for promoting the organic vegetable farming systems. He emphasized the need of good soil health in organic production system. He also discussed in detail the 'Concept of physico-chemical and microbiological properties of soil in relation to soil health' and the organic production standards.

He further said that we would look forward

for long term association with the farmers of Bihar in organizing more training programs of such kind. Joint Director further reiterated to adopt dairy farming and vermicompost technology for profitable organic vegetable farming in Kishanganj, Bihar.

Former CEO, Dr Yashoda Pradhan, Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency addressed the farmers and briefed about the journey of organic farming in Sikkim. She also detailed about the role of certification in organic farming which is mandatory for the export of organic produce and also to fetch better prices

in local market. Scientist SS (Soil Science), Dr Shanon Kr Das coordinated the program and talked on integrated organic nutrient management, soil sampling process along with plant nutrients functions, deficiency symptoms and their management.

Scientist SS (Fruit Science), Dr SK Dutta detailed on the organic nursery management and vegetable production techniques. Assistant Professor (Entomology), Dr P Bhumita, College of Horticulture, CAU, Ranipool delivered talk on 'insect pest management in organic vegetable crop production';

Scientist (Agronomy), Dr Amit Kumar explained the 'integrated organic farming system and conservation agricultural practices in Sikkim; and Scientist (Plant Breeding), Dr E Lamalakshmi Devi discussed the 'organic vegetable seed production techniques and varietal selection. Finally, Assistant Professor (Pathology), Dr D Talukdar, College of Horticulture, CAU, Ranipool briefly discussed the organic disease management in vegetable crops.

All the team members also visited the ICAR Sikkim Centre Research Farm and were briefed about the ongoing research and development activities. Giving the feedback of the program Program Manager, S Singh, ATMA, Kishanganj said that program was well organized. He also highly appreciated the efforts of ICAR Sikkim Centre in organizing the training program. Finally, the Joint Director also distributed the training certificates to the participants.

## Sikkim artists take part in NEZCC painting workshop



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

A four-day Painting workshop organised by North East Zonal Cultural Centre, Dimapur 22 to 25 Feb, 2021 came to an end today, a press release informs.

Ten artists from Sikkim (members of Oviya Art Circle Sikkim) attended the workshop. The artists who participated in this workshop were Sewon Rai, BK Subba, Phur Tsh Lepcha, Krishna Rai, Harka Mangar, Shiva Chettri, Kiran Gurung, Arpan Chettri, Anmol Rai and Senior Artist, Kishor Rai.

Program In-charge Officer, V Phesao says, "Because of Covid we couldn't organize one place for different NE state's artists. So, this time we have organized the workshop for one NE State at a time at NEZCC premises. So, Sikkim was the last chap-

ter (8th Chapter) from all NE states." They also mentioned that the artists of Sikkim painted very beautiful paintings which represented the culture of Sikkim.

The last day of the workshop was attended by Deputy Director of Nezcc, D Vashun, Deputy Director of NEZCC, M Sentinungsang Ao and Program In-charge, Mr Phesao who handed over the certificates to all the artists.

Artist and president of Oviya Art Circle Sikkim, Deepa Rai expressed gratitude to NEZCC Dimapur and Culture Department of Sikkim for giving such a platform for art enthusiasts to assemble and work together.

"Such initiatives facilitate artists to showcase their creativity, interact and encourage budding artists to open their talents for economic ventures," she said.

## Interschool Jr Olympics at Ranka

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

Like other parts of the State, block-level Inter School Junior Olympic Games, under the 'Sports for Peace and Development,' for Ranka block is underway at Khel Gaon, Reshithang in East District.

The event was inaugurated by Ranka GPU Panchayat President, Govind Bhattarai, on Thursday.

The four-day long event is being organised by the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, Ranka BAC and sponsored by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. Competitions are being held in eight disciplines for U-17 boys and girls and six disciplines in U-14 boys and girls.

Assistant Director, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Chungay Lepcha, who is also the in-charge of the event, informs that 355 athletes from different schools under Ranka block are participating.

He added that 174



participants, 133 boys and 42 girls, have registered in the U-17 category, while competitions in the under -14 category have 181 participants - 88 boys and 93 girls.

He informs that the main objective of the event is to spot young sporting talent from different parts of the block and take them to the higher levels by honing

their skills.

Mr Lepcha adds that the selected sportspersons and teams will be participating in the district-level and then further in state-level competitions.

He appreciated the enthusiastic participation from young students of different schools. The four-day long event is scheduled to end on 28 February.

## Awareness on women's health at Barfung Jarrong



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

Barfung Jarrong GPU organised a health awareness programme on women's health and menstrual hygiene at the Gram Prashasan Kendra today, a press release informs.

MO Rabong PHC, Dr Pallavi Pariyar, MLHD PHSC Jarrong, Denika Sharma, supervisor ICDS, Usha Rai, ASHA FF, Ja-

nuka Rai attended the programme as resources persons.

All AWW, ASHA, women from SHGs and other women attended the programme and benefited the knowledge about programme and health issues that included menstrual cycles, pregnancy, leprosy, TB and Covid-19 vaccination. A quiz competition was also held on the day.

## Police supposed to...

The plea also alleged that the police has chosen not to check the evidence which completely belies the case thrust upon the applicant/accused (Sidhu).

"Further, the CCTV footage of the Red Fort is already with the investigating agency which shows that the applicant/accused did not participate in any act of violence and rather he was helping the police in pacifying the crowd.

"Applicant/accused is apprehensive that the CCTV footage and the video will also not be considered by the police (CCTV footage of Red Fort from 10.00 AM to 4.00 PM). The applicant/accused has not committed any offence as alleged in the FIR and if the said record is not called, preserved and made part of the record, then it will be difficult for the applicant/accused to prove his innocence, further the ends justice would not be met," it claimed.

Additional Public Prosecutor Rajiv Kamboj, appearing for the police, opposed Mr Sidhu's plea saying the accused cannot guide the police to conduct investigation in a particular manner.

"Police is duty bound to conduct fair and impartial investigation. However, accused cannot be allowed to divert the investigation of the police from its path. By moving the present application, accused is trying to guide the investigation being done by the police," the public prosecutor claimed.

The court had on February 23 sent Mr Sidhu to judicial custody in the case. Police had earlier alleged he was one of the main instigators of the violent incidents at the Red Fort.

## Labour activist...

of Section 307, 332, 353 and 379-B IPC would be a debatable issue and to be considered during the trial, according to the order.

The Court observed, The petitioner is in custody since 12.1.2021. Albeit the matter is under investigation but that itself would not be sufficient ground to deny personal liberty to the petitioner.

Meanwhile, according to a medical examination report which was placed before the high court on Friday, Kaur had purplish bruises of around 10x7 cm present over LT (left) thigh, lateral aspect, bruises of around 5x6 cm over RT (right) buttock.

The court on February 24 had directed the State of Haryana to place on record the medical report of Kaur.

The medical examination of Kaur was conducted at Sonipat civil hospital on January 25 on the orders of a Sonipat court.

In her bail plea, the 23-year-old activist had claimed to have been severely beaten up at a police station after she was arrested by the Sonipat police on January 12.

The Haryana police however had denied the charge as "baseless".

Kaur had also claimed that she was falsely arraigned as accused in an FIR lodged under various sections, including 307 (attempt to murder), of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The activist had also claimed she was targeted and falsely implicated in the case as she was successful in generating massive support for the ongoing farmers' movement against the Centre's three contentious farm laws.

Kaur is lodged in Haryana's Karnal jail. She is a member of the Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan and a resident of Giadarh village in Punjab's Muktsar district.

On February 24, the high court had posted the hearing on her bail plea to Friday.

Earlier, a court in Sonipat had granted bail to Kaur in two separate cases of extortion, rioting and other charges.

Meanwhile, Kaur's family expressed happiness at the activist being granted bail.

Her sister Rajveer Kaur said the family was happy that she would be released from jail. "She had to spend one-and-a-half months in jail, said Rajveer who is pursuing PhD from Delhi University.

She said Naudeep will walk out of jail once necessary legal formalities regarding her bail order are completed.

Her mother Swarnjit Kaur said she was happy over the bail granted to Naudeep Kaur.

Being her mother, I am extremely happy. Now after she comes out of jail, we will be able to ask her what she has gone through, said Swarnjit Kaur.

She said she was not able to meet her daughter ever since she was in jail.

## PM-FME awareness programme held at DAC South

**NAMCHI, 26 FEB (IPR):** An awareness programme on 'Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME) Scheme' was held at the conference hall of DAC, today.

Organized jointly by DAC, South and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Division, Commerce and Industries Department had Chairman, Farmer Welfare Board, Phurden Lepcha as the Chief Guest, he was accompanied by Director State (MSME), Ravi Kumar, DC (South), M Bharani Kumar, AD (MSME), Bimla Chettri, General Manager, DIC (S/W), Sukmaya Subba, General Manager (SBI), Amit Lamichaney and local entrepreneurs.

Chairman, Farmer Welfare Board, Phurden Lepcha informed that this scheme aims to make India self-reliant by giving impetus to local manufacturing, local market, and local supply chain. He also spoke about the objective of this scheme which can strengthen capacities of the micro entrepreneurs and that this scheme can assist the individuals to adapt from the unorganized



sector to the formal sector. He also applauded the innovative ideas proposed by the young stakeholders and said that they should relentlessly work towards building up their occupation. He further asserted that the concerned department would aid in making their choice of profession a success as these young entrepreneurs can in future construct a mega corporation which can employ other masses from the state.

Director State (MSME), Ravi Kumar informed that the initiative of the scheme is to encourage the micro-entrepreneurs of the state and to generate equitable entrepreneurial opportunities in rural as well as urban areas of Sikkim, particularly among the educated unemployed to become

Self Employed by setting up Manufacturing, Services, Business and allied activities by availing loan. He added that this scheme has been launched under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PM-FME) Scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme and aims to enhance the competitiveness of existing individual as well as the upcoming micro-enterprises. He also gave a short presentation on MSME whereby he highlighted about the various potential possibilities that the budding individuals can build their business on, these businesses can vary from Organic Agriculture which can be Fruits and Vegetables, Floriculture, Ornamental Plant Nursery to Food

Processing which can include pickle, juice making and many more. He also updated about the loan and other subsidy available with the department as a part of this scheme. He added under the PM-FME scheme, capacity building is an important component, and the department will give necessary training as well.

DC (South), M Bharani Kumar spoke about the various opportunities that the entrepreneurs can explore in the State. He cited examples such as developing home-made wines, face mask, sanitizers and others that the entrepreneurs can create, market the products and generate revenue as well.

AD (MSME), Bimla Chettri explained in detail how the masses will get the benefits from this scheme. She also spoke about the eligibility criteria and other documents to be submitted by interested participants.

During the course of the programme an interactive session was so conducted in which the participants put forward their suggestions, queries to the officials from the department.

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# Inter School Junior Olympics Games for Gangtok Block

**SAGAR CHETTRI  
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

The block-level 1st Inter School Junior Olympics Games under 'Sports for Peace & Development' 2020-21 for Gangtok block was inaugurated by the Chairperson of Sikkim Khadi & Village Industries Board, Chung Chung Bhutia here at Paljor Stadium on Friday.

The four-day event for U-14 and U-17 boys and girls is being organised by Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, Gangtok Centre and sponsored by Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India.

The competition has eight sports disciplines for U-17 boys and girls and six disciplines for U-14 boys and girls at different venues in the capital. Paljor Stadium complex will host events of badminton, football,



table tennis, taekwondo and karate, while athletics will be held at Khel Gaon, Reshithang, archery at Archery Field, Tathangchen and boxing in White Hall complex. The closing function of the competition will be held on 01 March.

The inaugural function was also attended

by SKM sports wing state president, Rinzing Wangyal Chophel and SKM CLC [Gangtok] president, Sanjeev Gurung as guests of honour among other dignitaries.

In her address, the chief guest, Chung Chung Bhutia asserted that sports is very important along with academic ed-

ucation for the overall development of a child. She congratulated the department of Sports & Youth Affairs and its Minister KN Lepcha for taking a very good initiative from the block-level to bring out hidden talents. She also thanked the head of educational institutions under Gangtok block for sending

their students for the competition.

Ms Bhutia expressed her best wishes to all athletes and encouraged them to play in the spirit of the game. She also encouraged young athletes to work hard and with dedication to reach the national and international levels in their respective discipline.

Earlier, in his welcome address, SYA Department Assistant Director, SB Subba, who is also the in-charge of the event, mentioned that the department is organizing the event from the block level for the first time in the State. He added that the selected athletes and teams will participate at the district-level and then State level. He mentioned that the event aims to provide a platform to young children in games and sports.

## Coordination meeting for Global Film Fest in Sikkim



**GANGTOK, 26 FEB (IPR):** A coordination meeting regarding the Sikkim Global Film Festival 2021 was held at the conference hall, Tashiling Secretariat, today.

The meeting was chaired by Chief Secretary, SC Gupta and also had the presence of Advisor, IPR Department, Birendra Tamling, Chairperson, Sikkim Film Promotion Board, Pooja Sharma, Secretary, IPR Department, Siphorah

Targain, Director, IPR Department, Benu Gurung, Joint Director, IPR Department, Bishal Khawas along with senior officers from all line Departments.

The meeting was primarily conducted to discuss agendas and action plan for the forthcoming Sikkim Global Film Festival 2021 to be organised by Sikkim Film Promotion Board under IPR Department during the month of April 2021.

Various agendas including the date for programme, venue, and budget provision including nomination of Sikkim Film Promotion Board members and future actions to be taken were vitally discussed during the meeting.

Also, Sikkim Film Policy, Terms of Reference of SFPB and other important issues related to prevailing COVID-19 situation were discussed at length.

## CM's message on Bhumchu

**GANGTOK, 26 FEB (IPR):** The Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang has extended his warm greetings to the people of Sikkim, on the occasion of Bhumchu.

The festival is celebrated annually at Tashiding Monastery, West Sikkim on the 15th day of the first month of the Lunar calendar corresponding to the month of February/March. The opening of the vessel containing the holy water is the major highlight

of the festival. Each year, the vessel is opened to check the level of water which is believed to indicate Sikkim's fortune for the coming year.

Devotees from all over Sikkim, as well as neighboring countries also visit the state to be a part of it.

In his message, the Chief Minister prays that the auspicious day will bring along with it good fortune, peace, prosperity and best of health for Sikkim.

## Sensitisation on Adolescence Education in Namchi

**SUMMIT REPORT  
NAMCHI, 26 FEB:**

SCERT-Sikkim's Population Education Cell for Adolescence Education, supported by National Population Education Project NCERT, and in collaboration with Namchi Municipal Council organized a sensitization of the business community on Adolescent Education here today.

The programme was organized with the aim to share the programs and activities of Adolescence Education, understand

the perception of stakeholders on adolescent issues and concerns and to sort out the role of social support in the well being of adolescents.

Project head Ranju Pradhan, the State Project Coordinator of National Population Education Project made a power-point presentation on the theme of the day while MP Subba, a former Director-Education and currently Advisor to the Chief Minister for education, was present as chief guest.

## Team of officials visit Phamtam and Sada

**SUMMIT REPORT  
RAVANGLA, 26 FEB:**

Additional District Collector [Development] Ravangla under Rural Development Department, Sunil Mothey and Block Development Officer Ravangla, LB Rai visited Sada Ward and Phamtam Ward under Borong Phamtam GPU, South Sikkim, today.

The aim of the visit was to interact with the beneficiaries of Sikkim Gramin Aawas Yojana (SGAY) and inspect the site.

Sada village is the last village of South Sikkim on the border with West and North District. During this visit, the team visited SGAY site at Phamtam and Sada Ward and the bridge over Kisim Khola which falls between Sada and Phamtam Village.

The team also visited Sada Primary School

and Makerzong Lower Primary School of Phamtam Ward and interacted with school heads and teachers. Public of Sada and Phamtam thanked the team for their visit, informed Panchayat President, Borong Phamtam GPU, Rupa Gurung.

The visiting team also included Assistant Director Panchayati Raj Ravangla BAC, Sochen Bhutia, Assistant Engineer, Sheetal Rai, Junior Engineers, Babila Bhutia and Chhunkila Bhutia.

The visit was coordinated by Panchayat President Rupa Gurung along with Ward Panchayat Sada, Dhan Bahadur Rai, Phamtam Ward Panchayat, Duk Maya Rai, Lower Borong Panchayat, Regina Manger, Upper Polok Ward Panchayat, Pema Bhutia and Junior VAA, Damber Singh Gurung.

## SAATHI organizes Value Education Training for Teachers



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India (SAATHI) supported by Titan Company Ltd. organized the 1st Value Education Training for Teachers in Deorali Girls Senior Secondary School today.

With an objective to make students work with the right attitude and standards to face the outside world, Value Education Training was organized in which school teachers will learn about different values and how to incorporate those values in the

school education, a press release informs.

Teachers are usually the primary adults who participate in the life of children outside the family and who are the primary influencers in the life of children. Keeping this in mind, the training focused on equipping teachers with techniques required in everyday life in order to help students to become more responsible and sensible.

The first session was by Assistant Professor, SCERT, Dr Manorath Dahal, who explained the purpose of value educa-

tion, kinds of values and how to integrate the values in school to make an impact on a student's life.

The second session was by Head-Ethics Management, Sukanya Gopinath, Titan Company Ltd. She talked about different methods for teaching values & attitudes through story telling. She explained how our folktales or stories based on values can help to shape our young minds in the correct direction. She also explained how to use correct technique of story telling to incorporate values in students.

## Training for Presiding and Polling Officers

**GANGTOK, 26 FEB (IPR):** The concluding day of training programme of Presiding and Polling Officers-1 for the upcoming Municipal Elections 2021 was conducted at East District Zilla Bhawan, Sichey, today.

Additional District Collector, East, Tushar Nikhare facilitated the training for the Polling and Presiding Officers. He was joined by Sub-Divisional Magistrate HQ, Anand Sharma.

A total number of 67 trainees attended the training today out of which 30 were presiding officers and 37 were poll-



ing officers. The trainees were briefed about the importance of having a clean and efficient Municipal election.

Issues such as Dos and Don'ts were explained to the trainees in detail. Information about

the mechanism and workings of the EVMs and VVPATs were also explained.

The training also saw hands-on sessions where the trainees were allowed to get a firsthand experience on the EVMs.

## Cyber crime workshop for children

**NAMCHI, 26 FEB (IPR):** An online safety workshop for children on prevention of cybercrimes was conducted at DAC, Namchi by Sarvahitey a Delhi based Non-Governmental Organization. This workshop is an initiative of DC (South), M Bharani Kumar in collaboration with DCPO (South).

The workshop covered topics like Phishing, Cyber Bully, adverse effects of hate speech and comments on social media platforms. The workshop also explored various preventive measures



to avoid getting trapped in such crimes.

Amit Gupta from Sarvahitey shared Helpline numbers, websites to register complaints in situations detrimental for the well-being of children so that a secure online environment can be established.

Girls from Namchi Mayal Lyang Children's Home were the participants of today's workshop. It may be mentioned here that this is a first-of-its-kind workshop held for children to educate, protect as well as promote internet safety.

## Community outreach by SAATHI at Malangthang

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

SAATHI organized community outreach program with the support of Titan Company Limited at Malangthang ward, Ranka GPU with 24 participants today.

The objective of this program is to educate

people on ill effects of substance abuse and to inform them about various support services available in Sikkim, a press release informs.

Psychologist, Roshni Chettri was the resource person for the program wherein she highlighted various issues related to

substance abuse.

She explained that society can provide support by giving them a second chance to reintegrate with society and start a new life.

She also explained in detail the various signs one can identify if an individual is into substance abuse.

## SSCSOA felicitates 41 officers



**SUMMIT REPORT  
Gangtok, 26 Feb:**

Sikkim State Civil Services Officers Association (SSCSOA) today felicitated 18 retirees and 6 inducted IAS officers. The association also welcomed 17 officials who have been promoted as Under Secretaries.

President of the association, Tshewang Gyachho went on to express gratitude towards the Chief Minister, PS Tamang and the state government for promoting SCS officers to the post of Special Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries and Under Secretaries.

He went on to say that 44 Under Secretaries have been promoted to the post of Deputy Secretaries but there are still few of the same batch who have been left out. We are sure and hopeful that all such left out officers will also be promoted soon, he said.

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## 28 Feb, A Day for Sikkim Subjects

*Deliberate issues of identity, belonging and even denials*

There is still a day to go, and so we return to another idea that we have been plugging for a while - Sikkim should consider observing 28 February as Sikkim Subjects' Day to mark the significance that this date bears for Sikkim Subjects and a moment it could celebrate.

To recap, it was on 29 February 2008 that the then Union Finance Minister introduced an amendment to the Income Tax Act which allowed for Income Tax exemption for all "Sikkimese" from all incomes earned in the State. 2008 was a Leap Year, and since it will be too long a wait to mark the occasion only once every four years, the suggestion that the Day be celebrated on the 28th of February every year. And this celebration not because Sikkimese were exempted from paying Income Tax, but more importantly because this was the first time that "Sikkimese" were officially defined by the Union Government in an official document and Sikkim Subjects formally recognized as a unique population group of Sikkim.

The wording of the exemption was as special. The exemption was extended to all "Sikkimese", an identity explained in a footnote as those with their names included in the Sikkim Subjects Register and their descendents. It was a historic development and one without any recent precedence in the country because special treatment was announced for "a people" collectively, and not divided by community, caste, or religious denominations or economic privation. The Centre had reiterated the individuality of "Sikkim Subjects". Interestingly, neither the 8 May Tripartite Agreement of 1973, nor even Article 371F, makes any specific mention of "Sikkim Subjects". Delhi has never really acknowledged the people of Sikkim as a uniform group rising above ethnicities or castes and even leaders here have acquired the rhetoric which speaks of the people of Sikkim as belonging to the three ethnic communities of Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali (and now also the plainsfolk). Sikkim might claim the three communities to be united, but the segregation is obvious in how the references are made. Of course, even this Bhutia-Lepcha-Nepali coinage came into currency primarily with the Tripartite Agreement of 1973 and has continued to remain in circulation since then. These were always the underlying demarcations on which the Sikkimese were slotted. Of late, as mentioned earlier, the Byapari have been added in the mix as Old Settlers, but the point remains that the State is too small for such divisions and it is ironic that this message had to be driven home with an amendment of the same Bill which had, in 1994, cleaved Sikkim into perhaps its deepest ever communal divisions. It then took 14 years since that tumultuous confusion for Income Tax exemption to finally be extended to the Sikkimese as one people.

As far as the I-T exemption is concerned, it was citizenship [Sikkimese Subjecthood] which earned exemption, nothing else. The exemption can be looked at as a reward for everyone who decided to take on the risks of becoming subjects to a King because they loved the land or were so completely invested here that they did not consider any other option. Of course, like is the case with every privilege, there are sections which have been left out. For instance, Sikkim's old settlers or those who could not get enrolled in the Sikkim Subjects Register itself even though met the criteria for becoming Sikkim Subjects when it was first promulgated, but who either decided not to become Sikkimese at that time or did not have the wherewithal to get recorded. It also needs to be accepted that many who arrived in Sikkim after the "Old Settlers," but decided to become Sikkimese enjoy more privileges and exemptions than families of older antiquity in the State. In a way, the extension of special treatment also makes one wonder whether questions of identity and belonging are purely emotional or do material benefits and sops drive the passion? But then again, irrespective of the motivation, the claims and arguments cannot be ignored.

So, when the suggestion is floated that 28 February be celebrated as Sikkim Subjects' Day, it is more for people to discuss and deliberate issues of identity, belonging and history, not celebrate parochial and insular takes on what being Sikkimese means, which, unfortunately, seems to be the jingoism which dominates the public domain.

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# Work-life balance in a pandemic: a public health issue we cannot ignore

DAVE COOK, ANNA RUDNICKA & JOSEPH NEWBOLD  
*theconversation.com*

Before the pandemic, a common objection to remote working was the suspicion that staff would disengage and productivity levels would drop. But recent evidence suggests the opposite is true – working from home effectively means working more. In the UK, for example, many employees are reportedly putting in an extra two hours a day. It's even longer in the US.

Our survey also indicates that feeling fortunate to still be in work, the collapse of work-life boundaries, and the fear of being under surveillance from employers, have all led to people working harder for longer. Those juggling work and caring responsibilities are often struggling the most. A recent UK poll showed 71% of working mothers who requested furlough to look after their children were refused. The "sandwich generation", those managing childcare and caring for older relatives, are also having a hard time.

These factors all point to a future where overwork is normalised and work-life balance becomes nothing more than an aspiration. We must not allow this to happen.

But what is work-life balance precisely? It is a term so frequently dropped into conversation that it can sound vague and open to interpretation. According to Anna Cox, a professor of human-computer interaction at UCL, it means "feeling in control of how you balance the various demands of all aspects of life to enable wellbeing and avoid illness". It should involve "happiness, fulfilment and job satisfaction".

She adds: "Just because we can be connected to work all the time, doesn't mean we should be. Policymakers need to take concrete action to protect workers' rights to switch off."

The graphic below illustrates how a sense of wellbeing at work and the level of control one has over boundaries may interact.

Another disturbing trend that makes switching off so difficult is the emergence of so-called "bossware", controversial software that some companies use to monitor employees, under the guise of "productivity enhancement". In November 2020, there was uproar following reports that even Microsoft 365 gave bosses the ability to measure email activity and the use of shared documents.

Bossware – even the fear of it – encourages a culture of overwork. In our survey of 500 UK workers, respondents told us of their concerns over privacy during video calls, regularly interrupted

personal time and the constant ping of work notifications. One worker explained: "If I leave at 12.30 for a lunchtime walk, and later see my boss messaged me on Slack at 12.35, my heart sinks."

### TAKE A BREAK

Our work, as part of the eWorkLife project, also included in-depth interviews to investigate the transition to remote working. Another finding was that social norms around taking breaks from work – a colleague inviting you out for coffee or lunch – are vanishing. Expectations for workers to be avail-



able 24/7 were accelerating before the pandemic and, unchecked, they will become the norm.

It is vital to establish flexible social rituals around taking short breaks throughout the workday. But workers will gradually lose these healthy habits unless companies create work cultures and clear policies that encourage staff to take breaks. The government needs to take action to tackle these rapid social shifts, which should not be left to individual workers to navigate.

And although some companies are leading the way by regularly surveying employees, this is not the norm. Instead, trade unions are publishing research and pressing for change. (White-collar workers might feel joining a union is stigmatising, yet the pandemic has shown that any job can be precarious.) And when high-profile bosses talk of workers "playing the victim card" it's little wonder staff feel voiceless.

The immediate policy response should be to temporarily force companies to accept furlough

requests for those with caring responsibilities. Companies should also be strongly encouraged to update or publish flexible working policies.

Shockingly, 60% of US companies still haven't shared their remote working policies, and workers at all levels have had enough of inaction. One executive who quit due to spiralling workload confided to us: "Sure, employers are under huge pressure to survive this pandemic. But asking staff to carry the brunt through inhuman productivity rates is unsustainable."

A change of approach is essential. Since the arrival of the pandemic, large numbers of people are working longer and harder. And even with increased rates of vaccination, home working in some form is surely here to stay. Ensuring it continues in a balanced way should not be a responsibility that rests entirely on individuals.

The EU is now rightly urging its member states to implement policies that support work-life balance and the right to disconnect, and the eWorkLife project is urging the UK Government to take similar steps. Achieving a work-life balance is not just a worthwhile goal – it is an essential one. It is vital for mental health, physical health, and long-term economic success – and a task at which governments and businesses should be working much harder.

[Dave Cook is PhD Candidate in Anthropology, UCL; Anna Rudnicka is Research Fellow, UCL; Joseph Newbold is Lecturer in Human-computer interaction, Northumbria University, Newcastle]



## Daft Punk: How the Mystery Music Masterminds Used Their Robot Disguise to Take Over the World

DANIEL COOKNEY  
*theconversation.com*

While Daft Punk's break-up may have been unexpected, the enigmatic nature in how the public were notified was predictable. Announced via the electronic duo's YouTube channel, an upload titled Epilogue turned out to be a scene lifted from their 2006 Electroma film, alongside a vocal borrowed from a track on 2013's Random Access Memories album.

The pivotal desert scene features a prolonged trek by the duo in their instantly recognisable helmets and culminates in one self-destructing while the other walks away. Continuing then what is the pair's time-honoured preference for ambiguity, it indicates a finale while refraining from disclosing the explicit details.

Over the past 28 years, Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (the men behind the helmets) developed a complex and counterintuitive communication strategy. It was an approach that saw the pair hiding behind their alter-egos but going on to conquer the world of electronic music at the same time.

As the more vocal of the two, Bangalter has indicated that this method was fundamental to Daft Punk's self-preservation. "If you can stay protected and get noticed then it's all good", he told journalist Suzanne Ely in 2006. What began with Bangalter and de Homem-Christo using various masks to hide their discomfort within photoshoots – obscuring rather than projecting a specific image – was eventually resolved when they reinvented themselves as androids.

### Robot rock

Like the electronic group Kraftwerk before them, these cyborgs further celebrated the electronic, automated characteristics of their music, while at the same time orchestrated a mythology in conjunction with technology's all-pervasive influence.

Bangalter even presented an origins story in which he claimed that the duo's appearance was the result of an accident. Specifically, that the explosion of an electronic music sampler in 1999 had transformed them into their robot alter egos. Yet alongside this superhero version, Daft Punk also cited the conversion as being their response to fame.

"We don't believe in the star sys-

tem," Bangalter stated. "We want the focus to be on the music. If we have to create an image, it must be an artificial image. That combination hides our physicality and also shows our view of the star system. It is not a compromise."

### Anti-celebrity superstars

In this sense, I believe Daft Punk have become an example of an "anti-celebrity celebrity". Yet despite what they might have claimed, with arena tours and cameos in Disney movies, Bangalter and de Homem-Christo were far from being "anonymous".

Theirs was a stance fraught with contradiction – and one maybe familiar to many working in arts and culture who find their rejection of consumer culture operating within the same market-driven constraints. In Daft Punk's case, it resulted in often uneasy relationships such as the robots' involvement in global advertising campaigns, and many Daft Punk interviews issued by media outlets that repeatedly assured us that they rarely give interviews.

The pair's press engagement has been particularly cultivated to maintain this "media reluctance" narrative. And it became a mutually bene-

ficial arrangement, perpetuating Daft Punk's anti-stardom position while also enabling publications to claim they had an exclusive.

### Got lucky?

For an audience that may similarly be suspicious of media saturation – and what it can indicate in terms of "selling out" – this notion of Daft Punk's interaction being rare, intimate and indifferent to the supposed demands of industry may also have been attractive.

Perhaps French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu had it right when he said that profits can be derived from "disinterestedness". Indeed Daft Punk's marketing succeeded because of its highlighted rejection of the most obvious, unromantic mechanisms of commerce.

The Epilogue video message is then a fitting end, highlighting remoteness and attachment, anonymity and familiarity, and all delivered by a self-destructing robot with no accompanying press release. It aptly concludes Daft Punk's legacy of technology-assisted public engagement. Over and out.

[the writer is Lecturer in Graphic Design, University of Salford]



# "Is it on PM's suggestion?" Mamata Banerjee slams Bengal's marathon polls

**NEW DELHI, 26 FEB [NDTV]:** Shortly after election dates were announced for four states and a Union Territory, an outraged Mamata Banerjee alleged that the eight-phase voting in Bengal was part of a "conspiracy" by the Centre's ruling BJP.

"From BJP party sources, I have seen the list of poll dates they wanted. And now I have seen the list out in the public. They are the same. I am sorry. I am shocked. Are Bengal poll dates suggested by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah?" the Chief Minister questioned.

Bengal will begin voting on March 27 but unlike Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry, it will have eight phases spread over a record 33 days before the May 2 results.

"I am the only one woman chief minister in the country... I will win... and then Modi and Shah, you watch the battle in the 2024 general elections. We will fight it and how," Ms Banerjee said, adding, "you will face the music for this blunder."

Bengal voted in seven phases in the 2016 state election and in the 2019



national polls. The Election Commission said the reason for more phases was concerns over possible violence.

"When we have an assessment of law and order, we have an assessment based on several factors. We have to see movement of forces, we have to see current charges and counter charges. We have to find a way out," Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Aro- ra told reporters.

"In 2016 and 2019, the polls were held in seven phases. Eight phases in not such a big jump," he added.

Mamata Banerjee accused the BJP of dictating the poll schedule. "States with almost the same number of seats were

voting on a single day. Why is Bengal being humiliated", she wondered.

Among the issues that have particularly irked her is that polls will be held in some districts over several phases. She suspects a motive.

"South 24 Parganas will vote over three phases. Why? Because we are strong in that district? Why half-half district election every day? Is this on the advice of Modi and Shah? So that they can come and campaign here after they finish with Assam and Tamil Nadu? This is a khela (sport) but we will defeat you and turn you into ghosts. We are people of the grassroots," she declared. Her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee is

MP from Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district. BJP has been targeting him in their poll campaigns.

"I am Bengal's daughter. I am in politics for 40 years. I know every district, every assembly seat. Whatever you do, I will smash your conspiracy. People of Bengal will rule Bengal. People of Bengal will avenge this insult of eight phase polls," she added.

Beside multiple phase elections in many districts, what has angered Mamata Banerjee is the deployment of two special police observers to the state, including Vivek Dubey. "He was here in 2019 also and we know all the drama he did and games that he played."

she said. Around 1,200 central paramilitary troops are on patrol in Bengal already, which saw a spurt in political violence and killings ahead of the 2018 panchayat polls, violence that continued over the past two years.

The BJP welcomed the dates. The party has invested heavily in winning Bengal, especially after 2019, when it stunned the Trinamool Congress by scoring 18 of 42 Lok Sabha seats. That tally was 16 more than 2014. In the 2016 state polls, the BJP got just three seats and the Trinamool 211. But as per the 2019 results, the score was 124 assembly segments for the BJP and 164 for the Trinamool.

PM Modi and Amit Shah, besides other top BJP leaders, have prioritized Bengal in their campaign schedule. Most of these visits have seen large defections from the Trinamool Congress to the BJP.

BJP state chief Dilip Ghosh said, "Now that the model code of conduct will kick in and central security forces will be on the streets, please expect more defections from the Trinamool to the BJP. We are ready for the polls and victory in Bengal."

## India vs England: Expected pitch to hold on a little longer than it did, says England head coach



**AHMEDABAD, 26 FEB:** England head coach Chris Silverwood on Friday said that his side expected the pitch in the third Test against India to hold on a little longer than it did at the Narendra Modi Stadium. India defeated England within two days in the pink-ball Test to take a 2-1 lead in the four-match series. The match saw poor batsmen from both sides fail miserably on a spinning track, with majority of them getting out to deliveries that didn't turn and skidded through from the spinners.

"First and foremost, it's just a follow-up from what Joe Root said yesterday, he got 5/8 yesterday but at the same time, whatever the pitch did or it didn't do, India ultimately played better than us on that surface, probably they pushed us to the extremes which our players haven't experienced before," said Silverwood in a virtual press conference on Friday.

When asked about whether England would be talking to the ICC about the pitch used in the third Test, Silverwood replied: "Listen, we will be talking about certain things behind the scenes. But at the same time, we were really disappointed that we lost with three days of cricket left. We are where we are, from my point of

view, it's about heading into the next game and coming out fighting."

"We have spoken to Javagal (match referee), but it was not about the pitch. I think Joe and I need to have discussions about it really and see where we go from there. We have to accept that we need to get better on these pitches. You look at the first innings, we had an opportunity to score runs and make the best use of the pitch," he added.

England had opted to go in with just one spinner -- Jack Leach -- in the third Test. Root, who is normally a part-timer, picked his maiden five-wicket haul and Silverwood cited this performance to say that the visitors did not make a mistake in team selection.

"Joe Root got 5/8 so the second spinner did fine for us. We did expect the wicket to hold up a little longer than it did. Looking back in history in pink-ball Tests, the ball swung for us, Jimmy and all got movement during practice. With the experience we had and having two of our bowlers in the top ten in the rankings, we felt with this pink ball, it would have been an opportunity for seamers to make an impact for us.

"It's not that we did not think about it, there was logic, we had a look

at the stats and how we can use pink ball the best. Root works very hard on his bowling, I am always saying to him that he always under bowls himself. But Joe being Joe, he had to do it this time and he got 5/8," Silverwood said.

When asked about what type of pitch he would like in the fourth Test, Silverwood said: "I would like the pitch in the fourth Test to be a fit flatter, it would suit our gameplan. Yeah, I would like it to be flatter, but we will see what the wicket looks like in the coming days and we will take it from there really."

After both teams failed to shine in their first innings, England were bowled out for 81 in the second innings, setting India a target of just 49 runs. The hosts chased down the total without losing any wicket to go 2-1 up in the series.

With match getting over well inside two days, there was a lot of debate around the pitch once again, but India opener Rohit Sharma clarified that he did not think the pitch had any demons in it.

Even skipper Virat Kohli was vocal about the dreadful batting display from both the sides. Kohli said the quality of batting was to be blamed as most of the batsmen got out to balls that didn't turn.

## East Bengal and Odisha look to end season on a high

**BAMBOLIM, FEB 26 (PTI):** Languishing at the bottom half of the table, both SC East Bengal and Odisha FC will look to end their campaign at the Indian Super League on a high when they clash at the GMC Stadium here on Saturday.

While Odisha lie at the very bottom of the table, East Bengal haven't fared much better and are ninth.

However, ending the season with a convincing win could provide some relief to both sets of long-suffering supporters.

Robbie Fowler's side were always pegged down by the inability of their forwards to convert possession into goals.

Bright Enobakhare remains the only striker to have netted this season and SCEB lie at the very bottom of the goals scored list.

The club was also let down by the failure of their Indian forwards to fire. Despite boasting big names like Jeje Lalpekhlu, CK Vineeth and Balwant Singh, Fowler got zero shots on target from the trio.

Odisha has had similar woes throughout the

season. Except for Diego Mauricio, no other player stepped up in the goal scoring department.

Mauricio was responsible for 57 per cent of the goals that his team scored all season.

Odisha coach Steven Dias though believes that his team will learn from their mistakes and come back stronger in the next season.

"When you have a bad season there is always good to learn so many things out of this bad season. That's what we are all doing. This season isn't that good for us but there are so many things to learn from this season so we can get better next season," he said.

Odisha's winless run now stands at ten games and they have also lost the most games and kept the least clean sheets.

But despite the match featuring two teams who have nothing to play for but pride, Dias feels that both sets of players will not be short of motivation.

"They also didn't have a good season like us, Dias said. I think they will also come to win this match, we also want to win this match so we can end on a better note.

## Uttarakhand glacial disaster death toll climbs to 71



**GOPESHWAR, FEB 26 (PTI):** One more body was recovered from the banks of Alaknanda river in Kaleshwar on Friday taking the toll in the recent avalanche in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district to 71, officials said.

So far, 71 bodies and 30 human body parts have been recovered from different places in the avalanche hit areas

out of which 40 bodies and one human body part have been identified, Chamoli district police said.

DNA samples of bodies which have not been identified are being preserved.

Missing reports of 205 persons have been registered at Joshimath police station so far, the district police said. DNA

samples of 110 kin, 58 bodies and 28 human body parts have been sent to Forensic Science Laboratory in Dehradun for matching, it said.

Meanwhile, former Union minister Uma Bharti visited Tapovan to review the search operations which have been underway at the NTPC's damaged hydel project site for 19 days.

## Indian economy grows by 0.4 pc in Oct-Dec

**NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI):** After contracting for two quarters in a row, the Indian economy grew by 0.4 per cent in the October-December quarter amid coronavirus pandemic, official data showed on Friday.

The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 3.3 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

In its second advance estimates of national accounts, the NSO has projected 8 per cent contraction in 2020-21. In its first advance estimates released in January, it had projected a con-



traction of 7.7 per cent for the current fiscal as against a growth of four per cent in 2019-20.

The economy had shrunk by an unprecedented 24.4 per cent in the first quarter this fiscal following the coronavirus pandemic and resultant

lockdowns. In the second quarter, the GDP declined 7.3 per cent due to a perk up in economic activities.

China's economy grew by 6.5 per cent in October-December 2020, faster than the 4.9 per cent growth in July-September 2020.

## 6 test positive for corona in Mizoram

**AIZAWL, FEB 26 (PTI):** At least six people, including three children aged between 1 and 11 years, have tested positive for novel coronavirus in Mizoram taking the state's tally to 4,419, a health department official said on Friday.

Of the six fresh cases, 4 cases were reported from Aizawl district and one each from Champhai and Saitual districts, he said.

While one patient had returned from Manipur,

the remaining four have no travel history, he said.

Three patients have developed symptoms of Covid-19, while the rest three were asymptomatic. According to the official, the number of active cases now stands at 27, while 4,382 people have already recovered from the virus.

The recovery rate is 99.17 per cent, he said.

The COVID-19 toll in the state is 10.

The state has also tested 2,30,420 samples

till date, including 995 on Thursday.

Of the total 4,419 cases, Aizawl district reported the highest at 2,894, followed by Lunglei district, which reported 418 cases.

With 20 cases Hnahthial district reported the least.

A total 20,955 people, including 9,608 frontline workers have been administered the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine till Thursday, the official said.

## No new COVID-19 case in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, FEB 26 (PTI):** Nagaland did not report any new COVID-19 case on Friday, while four more people recovered from the disease, Health Minister S Pangnyu Phom said. The state's caseload stands at 12,198, of which nine are active cases, 11,946 people have recovered from the disease, 91 patients have succumbed to the infection and 152 have migrated to other states, he said.

The recovery rate among the coronavi-

rus patients in the state stands at 97.93 per cent, a health bulletin said.

Nagaland has so far tested 1.29 lakh samples for COVID-19, it said.

Around 28,650 health workers and frontline personnel have so far been administered the COVID vaccine, of whom 5,425 received their second shots, State Immunisation Officer Dr Ritu Thurr said, adding that no case of adverse effects requiring medical intervention has been reported so far.

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# Stand or kneel? How Megan Rapinoe helped US Soccer change its tune

CAITLIN MURRAY

**LONDON, 26 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]:** It wasn't long after the death of George Floyd that the decision-makers at the US Soccer Federation realized they needed to make some changes – and one change was immediately obvious.

Years earlier, the federation had issued an edict requiring national team players to stand during the national anthem. It was targeted at Megan Rapinoe, who had been kneeling to protest systemic racism, and the federation framed its new policy as minimizing distractions and showing respect for the flag.

But in the aftermath of Floyd's death last summer, even many US Soccer board members who had originally voted in favor of the anthem requirement felt they had missed the point. They failed to see what Rapinoe was trying to highlight all along.

And so, about two weeks after Floyd's death, new US Soccer president Cindy Parlow Cone apologized to Rapinoe and asked the USWNT star to speak to the board about the policy.

"What I was asking them was: 'Where are we going? Where is the world going? What does this rule say to our black players and our black fans?'" Rapinoe recalled to the Guardian. "It was great to be able to have that open line of communication and get to speak to the board directly because that's not something that has happened before at all to my knowledge."

The board voted to repeal the policy last summer and the federation formally apologized, but the issue won't officially be settled until Saturday, when the rest of US Soccer's membership body will vote at its annual general meeting to affirm the repeal.

If that does happen, which insiders tell the Guardian is likely but not guaranteed, it will signal a remarkable turnaround from five years ago. When the policy was first introduced at US Soccer's 2017 annual meeting, the voting membership, which is overwhelm-



ingly white and male, didn't simply vote in favor of it – they gave it an enthusiastic standing ovation.

In some ways that shift in tone around US Soccer reflects a larger change in America. The stand-or-kneel debate felt different after the deaths of Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. For many, kneeling during the national anthem now looks less like disrespect for the flag and more like an acknowledgement that the American experience isn't the same for everyone.

But those connected to US Soccer say it's not only that – they cite a deliberate effort from its new leadership to right its past wrongs. Board members and staffers tell the Guardian they feel a difference in not just tone, but in action since Parlow Cone took over one year ago.

After all, repealing the anthem policy wasn't going to be popular. The board had passed the rule in 2017 unanimously, and Parlow Cone admits she knew its repeal wouldn't be unanimous. After hearing from US Soccer's non-white employees on an all-staff Zoom call, however, she felt she had to do it. That call, she says, was "an awakening".

"Having been a member of the national team, I never fully un-

derstood the struggles that my black and brown teammates went through on a daily basis because we never talked about it," says Parlow Cone, who played in two World Cups for the USWNT. "For me personally, it was a moment where I was like, 'OK, it's time for me to be a better teammate. I'm not on that team anymore, so what can I do now?'"

"I knew it was going to be a hard conversation," she adds of the repeal. "I knew that it was very going to be very divisive, not only within the board but publicly – but I felt like it was the right thing to do."

To be sure, the anthem policy is not the most important issue facing US Soccer.

If the federation is really serious about diversity and inclusion, there are better ways to make a lasting, tangible impact, including addressing its lack of diversity among its own staff and coaches. The federation says that is happening, and its new DEI Council is leading the way. But until US Soccer can point to concrete improvements, the anthem policy may serve as the best proxy to understand how US Soccer is evolving.

To that end, there's a clear contrast between how the policy was

handled five years ago compared to now.

In 2017, US Soccer's board, which was led by then-president Sunil Gulati, didn't speak to any black people about the issue, nor did anyone from the federation speak to Rapinoe, the only player kneeling at the time. "I felt like, I'm the one who's kneeling, so at least we should have a conversation about this going forward, but there was nothing," Rapinoe says, adding she only found out about the standing requirement after it had been approved.

In weighing the repeal, however, the board spoke to Rapinoe, former USMNT defender DaMarcus Beasley, who is black, and a member of the US men's Paralympic team who had served in the military. Board members now say that was the sort of dialogue that was missing in 2017.

Critics may be skeptical that anything has really changed at US Soccer though, and they can point to Parlow Cone sitting on the board during the passage of the new anthem policy and other past controversies as well. But as a rank-and-file board – an unpaid volunteer that participates in board meetings a few times per year – she was hardly in a position

of influence.

Now that Parlow Cone is calling the shots after being unexpectedly thrust into the presidency by Carlos Cordeiro's forced resignation, board members and staffers tell the Guardian she's different than the power-broker types who went out of their way to campaign for the presidency.

Even Rapinoe is "hesitantly" optimistic about change at US Soccer, but she says she still needs to see more. The repeal is not the end of the work US Soccer needs to do – it's only the beginning.

"It's absolutely a positive step moving forward," Rapinoe says of the repeal. "In the end, the willingness to apologize to their black players, fans and media alike, to say it was wrong and repeal the ban, to say, 'We have to do better; we realize that and we will commit to doing better going forward' – I think that's all you can ask for."

Rapinoe adds: "In terms of racial equality, yes, they've done a good job this year, but obviously they had a lot to pivot from. I think the board and the leadership is looking very different – that's becoming quite apparent. We just need to keep that energy and keep it a focus."

Now the question turns to what happens Saturday.

## I accidentally became a cricketer, says Ashwin

AHMEDABAD, FEB 26

**(PTI):** Called a modern day legend by his captain Virat Kohli, ace Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin says he is actually an accidental cricketer, who is living a dream with over 400 Test wickets under his belt.

Ashwin reached the milestone in the day-night third Test against England, which ended here on Thursday with India winning by 10 wickets inside two days. Ashwin picked up 7 in the match to take his overall tally to 401.

"I accidentally became a cricketer. I am actually a cricket lover who went on to become a cricketer. I am living my dream here, I never imagined that I will wear the Indian jersey one day and I will play," Ashwin told bcci.tv in an interview but did not elaborate on the remark.

According to Ashwin, being in the COVID-19 lockdown made him realise just how lucky he was to play for India.

"And every time I finish playing a game and if I give that winning result for the team, I just feel I am being given a blessing, but the COVID times made me feel how lucky I am to actually play for India.

"Even when I came back after the IPL, I never thought I will play in Australia, so that is what I said, everything has been a gift, for the love with which I play the game, the game is giving me back enough and more

laurels," he added.

Ashwin, who also became the second fastest bowler to reach the 400 Test wicket-mark after Sri Lankan spin legend Muttiah Muralitharan, said that he watched a lot of old videos of great individual performances in the lock-down helped improve his understanding of the game.

"I used to watch a lot of footage even before, but the understanding of the game has gone one notch higher...during the lockdown, I was watching a lot of cricket from the past, especially Sachin's hundred in Chepauk, all sort of stuff on Youtube," recalled the 34-year-old Chennai-born player.

Jofra Archer became Ashwin's 400th wicket during the second day of the third Test here, which India won by 10 wickets and he said it was only when the batsman had opted for DRS, he realised that he had reached the landmark.

"Initial feeling is quite empty to be honest, because we were under immense pressure...for me I was actually in the moment, only after he (Archer) had taken the DRS, I realised the 400th that happened," he said.

"...after they flashed 400 Test wickets on the board, the entire stadium was up, everybody was clapping, I don't know, I cannot put a finger and say how I feel about it, the last three months have been a complete fairy-tale," he added.

## Europa League: Arsenal, Manchester United through to last 16, Leicester knocked out

PARIS, 26 FEB [AFP]:

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice including a late winner as Arsenal qualified for the last 16 of the Europa League on Thursday with a 3-2 victory over Benfica in Greece, while Manchester United and Rangers cruised through to the next round. The Gabon striker put Arsenal ahead at the Karaiskakis stadium in Piraeus in their home leg of a tie relocated due to Covid-19 travel restrictions between Portugal and the United Kingdom. Diogo Goncalves levelled the contest with a magnificent free-kick and Rafa Silva gave Benfica a 2-1 lead on the night when he took advantage of an error from Dani Ceballos on the hour.

Kieran Tierney rifled in an equaliser and Aubameyang headed in the decisive goal from Bukayo Saka's cross on 87 minutes, earning the Gunners a 4-3 aggregate victory and saving them from an unusual away goals exit following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Rome.

"Everyone is happy tonight. This is what gives me power every day, take errors from the past and transform to strength," Aubameyang told BT Sport.

"The team showed a lot of character and we deserved the win. It was a hard game. What we showed tonight will be an example for the future."

United cemented their place in Friday's draw with a 0-0 draw at home to Real Sociedad, having effectively clinched the tie last week with an emphatic 4-0 win on neutral ground in Italy.

Mikel Oyarzabal's awful penalty miss represented the best chance at Old Trafford for La Real, while Bruno Fernandes rattled the crossbar and Axel Tu-



anzebe's header was disallowed for a foul. Leicester City, who are behind second-placed United in the Premier League only on goal difference, were knocked out after sliding to a 2-0 loss at home to Czech champions Slavia Prague. Lukas Provod fired Slavia in front just after half-time following a goalless draw in the first leg, and Senegalese teenager Abdallah Sima ensured the visitors extended their run in the competition.

"We didn't create enough over two legs. We didn't defend with any intensity. We gave away two disappointing goals. The better team won," said Leicester coach Brendan Rodgers.

Steven Gerrard's Rangers progressed following their 5-2 win over Belgian side Antwerp at Ibrox, with five different players on target for the Scottish league leaders.

After a dramatic 4-3 win in the first leg last week, goals from

Alfredo Morelos, Nathan Patterson and Ryan Kent put Rangers in control before late penalties from Borna Barisic and Cedric Itten wrapped up the tie 9-5 on aggregate.

"I'm very satisfied, the performance was outstanding in a lot of areas," said Gerrard.

"The first three were top high-level goals. But, as a perfectionist, we still have to look at the areas we went wrong to-night."

AC Milan squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals after a 1-1 draw in a clash of former European champions at the San Siro.

Franck Kessie's early penalty was enough to book Milan's place in the last 16 despite El Fardou Ben Nabouhane equalising as the tie finished 3-3 over the two legs.

Napoli's dismal run continued as they were knocked out 3-2 on aggregate by Granada de-

spite winning 2-1 in the return fixture in Italy. Ajax eliminated French Ligue 1 leaders Lille with a 2-1 victory in Amsterdam to complete a 4-2 overall win, while Gerard Moreno netted both goals as Villarreal dumped out Salzburg 4-1 on aggregate.

Egyptian forward Ahmed Hassan's 88th-minute strike in Eindhoven sent Olympiakos through at the expense of PSV 5-4 on aggregate, while Roma and Young Boys brushed aside Braga and Bayer Leverkusen respectively. Former winners Shakhtar Donetsk completed a 3-0 aggregate victory over Macabi Tel-Aviv, while Norwegians Molde dumped out Hoffenheim 5-3 on aggregate following a 2-0 win in Germany.

Dinamo Zagreb and Dynamo Kiev complete the line-up for the last 16, with Tottenham Hotspur also in the mix after destroying Wolfsberg of Austria by an aggregate score of 8-1 on

To affirm the repeal, all that's needed is simple majority vote from US Soccer's membership representatives, which cover all levels of soccer in all 50 states. Not everyone who cheered for the protest ban five years ago is likely to be converted. But Parlow Cone is hoping enough will be.

"I led this charge and I think it's past time to do it, but I do also have an understanding that this remains a very divisive issue in our country and among our membership," she says. "I'm hoping that, like me, others have been more educated on the topic and want to give the athletes the right to kneel if they choose."

In some ways, it's a bit of a moot issue.

Ever since US Soccer's board voted to repeal the anthem policy last summer, many USWNT players have chosen to kneel before games. Whether US Soccer's membership affirms the repeal Saturday or not, the federation has made it clear it won't punish players who kneel.

When the USWNT faced Argentina on Wednesday in the SheBelieves Cup finale, Rapinoe stood – by choice – for the first time in years, and all her teammates did the same. As Crystal Dunn, who is black, put it: "We are ready to move past the protesting phase and move into putting all of the talk into actual work."

But for Rapinoe, the final repeal remains important.

"You know, at the annual general meeting, it's not necessarily just Cindy or just the board – these are the people that are close to the kids and in the youth programs and spreading the US Soccer Federation message countrywide. That's not good if we have a bunch of people who are not respecting people's right to protest, first of all, and then don't really respect the reason that people are protesting.

"That's a massive problem for me personally. I think it's hugely important that it's repealed and it's off the books. Otherwise, that's a huge stain on the books of US Soccer."

## Delhi to host Vijay Hazare knockouts from March 7

MUMBAI, FEB 26 (PTI):

The knockout matches of the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy, the national ODI championship, will be held in Delhi from March 7.

The matches will be organised at the Arun Jaitley Stadium and the Palam Ground.

"...Kindly note that the knock-out stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2020-21 will be played at New Delhi from March 7," stated a mail sent from the BCCI secretary's office to all the affiliated state units on February 25, a copy of which is in possession of PTI.

Currently the league stage of the tournament is being played in bio-secure bubbles at different venues across the country.

The teams have been divided into five Elite Groups and one Plate Group.

As per the BCCI website, the pre-quarter final (Eliminator) will be played on March 7, while the quarter-finals will be played on March 8 and March 9.

The two semi-finals will be staged on March 11 while the summit clash will be played on March 14.

This is the second domestic tournament conducted by the BCCI in the curtailed 2020-21 domestic season, following the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the national T20 championship.



# Amnesty report describes Axum massacre in Ethiopia’s Tigray



**NAIROBI, KENYA (AP):** Soldiers from Eritrea systematically killed “many hundreds” of people, the large majority men, in a massacre in late November in the Ethiopian city of Axum, Amnesty International says in a new report, echoing the findings of an Associated Press story last week and citing more than 40 witnesses.

Crucially, the head of the government-established Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Daniel Bekele, says the Amnesty findings “should be taken very seriously.” The commission’s own preliminary findings “indicate the killing of an as yet unknown number of civilians by Eritrean soldiers” in Axum, its statement said.

The Amnesty report on what might be the deadliest massacre of Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict describes the soldiers gunning down civilians as they fled, lining up men and shooting them in the back, rounding up “hundreds, if not

thousands” of men for beatings and refusing to allow those grieving to bury the dead.

Over a period of about 24 hours, “Eritrean soldiers deliberately shot civilians on the street and carried out systematic house-to-house searches, extrajudicially executing men and boys,” the report released early Friday says. “The massacre was carried out in retaliation for an earlier attack by a small number of local militiamen, joined by local residents armed with sticks and stones.”

The “mass execution” of Axum civilians by Eritrean troops may amount to crimes against humanity, the report says, and it calls for a United Nations-led international investigation and full access to Tigray for human rights groups, journalists and humanitarian workers. The region has been largely cut off since fighting began in early November.

Ethiopia’s federal government has denied

the presence of soldiers from neighboring Eritrea, long an enemy of the Tigray region’s now-fugitive leaders, and Eritrea’s government dismissed the AP story on the Axum massacre as “outrageous lies.”

But even senior members of the Ethiopia-appointed interim government in Tigray have acknowledged the Eritrean soldiers’ presence and allegations of widespread looting and killing.

On Thursday, Ethiopia’s government acknowledged that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission was investigating “allegations relating to incidents in the city of Axum” in collaboration with unnamed international experts.

But Ethiopia’s ambassador to Belgium, Hirut Zemene, told a webinar on Thursday that the alleged massacre in November was a “very highly unlikely scenario” and “we suspect it’s a very, very crazy idea.”

No one knows how many thousands of ci-

vilians have been killed in the conflict between Ethiopian and allied forces and those of the Tigray regional government, which had long dominated Ethiopia’s government before Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018. Humanitarian officials have warned that a growing number of people might be starving to death as access, while improving, remains restricted.

The presence of Eritrean soldiers has brought some alarm. The United States has repeatedly urged Eritrea to withdraw its soldiers and cited credible reports of “grave” human rights abuses. On Wednesday it asked, “Does the Eritrean military have sufficient control over its troops to prevent them from committing human rights abuses?”

Witnesses of the massacre in Axum told Amnesty International that Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers jointly took control of the city but the Eritreans carried out the killings and then con-

ducted house-to-house raids for men and teenage boys. Bodies were left strewn in the streets after the events of Nov. 28 and 29, witnesses said.

“The next day, they did not allow us to pick the dead. The Eritrean soldiers said you cannot bury the dead before our dead soldiers are buried,” one woman told Amnesty International. With hospitals looted or health workers having fled, some witnesses said a number of people died from their wounds because of lack of care.

“Gathering the bodies and carrying out the funerals took days. Most of the dead appear to have been buried on 30 November, but witnesses said that people found many additional bodies in the days that followed,” the new report says.

After obtaining permission from Ethiopian soldiers to bury the dead, witnesses said they feared the killings would resume any moment, even as they piled bodies onto horse-drawn carts and took them to churches for burial, at times in mass graves.

The AP spoke with a deacon at one church, the Church of St. Mary of Zion, who said he helped count the bodies, gathered victims’ identity cards and assisted with burials. He believes some 800 people were killed that weekend around the city. After being left exposed for a day or more, the bodies had begun to rot, further traumatizing families and those who gathered to help.

The new report says satellite imagery shows newly “disturbed soil” beside churches.

# Pandemic leaves many Romanian patients without critical care



**BUCHAREST, ROMANIA (AP):** Andrei, a 32-year-old Romanian man who has been HIV positive since he was a baby, began missing his regular medical check-ups when the coronavirus pandemic hit a year ago.

“That was the first thing that led me to a general state of frustration and fear,” said Andrei. “After that, I got used to the idea of taking the antiretroviral treatment blindly without knowing if the parameters are OK or if the therapy works.”

A year ago this week, Romania reported its first case of COVID-19, prompting the country’s strapped medical system to turn its focus to treating COVID-19 patients. As a result, many patients with other conditions — including cancer — have either been denied critical care or have stopped going to their regular appointments, fearful of becoming infected.

“Many of my close associates lost their battle against their diseases due to the loss of access to treatment, hospitals and specialists,” Andrei, who didn’t want his full name used due to the stigma surrounding his condition, told The Associated Press.

Romania’s government is acknowledging the problem and has announced plans to reorganize the country’s hospitals so more non-COVID-19 patients can get access to health care.

The attempts to reform the health care system come as a third virus surge looms and as a vaccine rollout is proceeding slowly across the 27-member European Union, to which Romania belongs. “Patients who didn’t have COVID-19 didn’t seek medical care because they were afraid

of becoming infected,” Dr. Andreea Moldovan, a state secretary in the Health Ministry, told the AP.

Previously, she said, there was “a lot of pressure to have as many beds available for COVID-19 patients as possible.”

With a population of over 19 million, Romania has reported 792,000 COVID-19 infections and over 20,000 deaths.

Romania’s Health Ministry says its hospital reorganization scheme will aim to create separate red and green zones in hospitals so both non-COVID-19 patients and those infected with the disease can be segregated yet receive the medical care they require.

In an interview at Bucharest’s Colentina Hospital, interim hospital manager Victor Cauni said health care services in the long term must adapt to life with COVID-19 and not “discriminate” against other patients.

“Whether we like it or not, we have more patients with many other illnesses compared to COVID patients,” he said. “We need to open for them at least partially. We’re discriminating against patients with serious conditions.”

Highlighting the problem, Cauni noted that the hospital’s urological ward used to perform from 400 to 500 medical interventions a month, but has barely had 50 in the past year.

“For the last year, patients did not have access to this hospital, and they were supposed to be transferred to different hospitals — but not many managed to find the required solutions,” Cauni said.

“You cannot just function as a COVID-19 hos-

pital,” he said. “We have many important wards here.” The organizational changes in Romania’s hospitals come amid growing concerns about new virus variants, including the variant first found in the U.K., which scientists say is both more transmissible and more deadly.

Romania faces these challenges as the EU nation with the lowest health care spending relative to GDP — 5.2%, compared with almost 10% on average in the bloc.

Romania already has the highest rate of avoidable deaths of under-75s in the EU, according to EU statistics.

Health Minister Vlad Voiculescu expressed his concerns in a video address last week to hospital managers and public health officials, explaining the hospital reorganization effort.

“The pandemic has not wiped out all other chronic or acute health problems,” Voiculescu said. “We need to make sure that all other patients have access to the medical services they need.”

Andrei, who became infected with HIV as a baby while being treated in a hospital, says he considers himself “one of the lucky ones.”

He has managed to pay privately for a few medical analyses in the past year. But he worries about his longer-term prospects if he doesn’t return to the close monitoring of his illness.

“The situation is critical,” he said. “If I keep blindly taking my treatment without proper monthly visits and analyses to check if the treatment is working ... there is only one outcome — the loss of life.”

## Boeing 777 makes emergency landing in Moscow

**MOSCOW (AP):** Russian media report that a Boeing 777 plane made an emergency landing in Moscow in the early hours of Friday after the pilot reported a problem with the engine.

The Interfax news agency cited an anonymous source saying that the pilot on the flight from Hong Kong to Madrid reported a failure of one of the left engine control channels and requested an emergency landing at the Moscow Sheremetyevo airport.

The plane landed safely and no one was injured, the report said. It was carrying out a “cargo-passenger” flight, Interfax said.

The flight tracking website Flightradar24 confirms that the plane operated by Russia’s state-funded Rossiya airline landed early Friday at the Moscow airport.

Earlier this month, a Boeing 777 operated by United Airlines had to make an emergency landing in Denver after one of its engines blew apart, spewing huge chunks of wreckage that landed in neighborhoods and sports fields.

# Myanmar security forces disperse anti-coup protesters

**YANGON, MYANMAR (AP):** Security forces in Myanmar’s largest city on Friday fired warning shots and beat truncheons against their shields while moving to disperse more than 1,000 anti-coup protesters. The demonstrators had gathered in front of a popular shopping mall in Yangon, holding placards and chanting slogans denouncing the Feb. 1 coup even as the security presence increased and a water-cannon truck was brought to the area.

When around 50 riot police moved against the protesters, warning shots could be heard, and at least one demonstrator was held by officers. Security forces chased the protesters off the main road and continued to pursue them in the nearby lanes, as some ducked into houses to hide. The confrontation underscored the rising tensions between a growing popular revolt and Myanmar’s generals who toppled the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in a takeover that shocked the international community and reversed years of slow progress toward democracy.

On Thursday, supporters of Myanmar’s junta attacked people protesting the military government, using slingshots, iron rods and knives to injure several of them. Photos and videos posted on social media showed groups attacking people in downtown Yangon as police stood by without intervening.

The violence erupted as hundreds marched in support of the coup. They carried banners in English with the slogans “We Stand With Our Defence Services” and



“We Stand With State Administration Council,” which is the official name of the junta. Late Thursday, police turned out in force in Yangon’s Tarmwe neighborhood where they tried to clear the streets of residents protesting the military’s appointment of a new administrator for one ward. Several arrests were made as people scattered in front of riot police who used flash bang grenades to disperse the crowd.

No pro-military rally appeared to be scheduled for Friday.

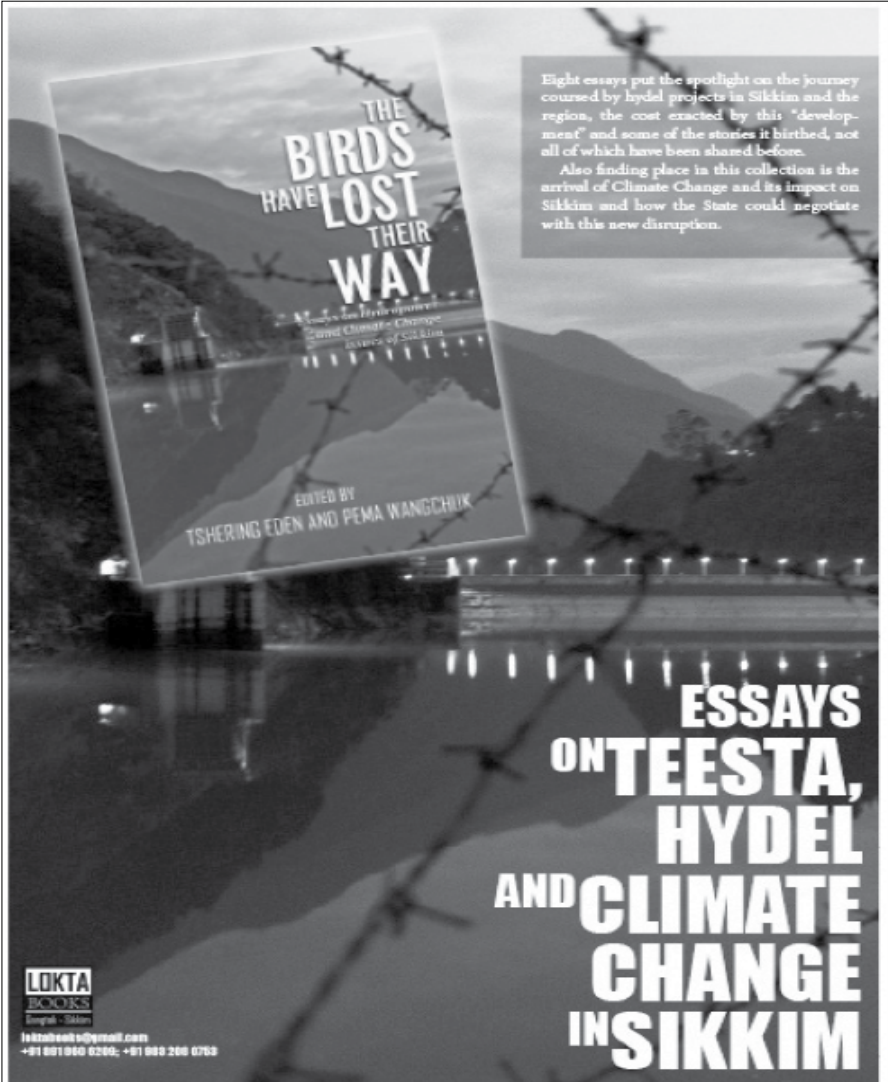
In Mandalay, the country’s second-largest city, anti-coup protesters also took to the streets Friday. They included a contingent of Buddhist nuns holding placards that read “We Immediately Need Action by Force from US Army.” Other demonstrators carried signs reading “Free our leader Aung San Suu Kyi,” “Pray for Myanmar,” and “Reject Military Coup.”

By midday, security forces had blocked the main road in downtown Mandalay to prevent the protesters from gathering. Suu Kyi has not been

seen since the coup. Around 50 of her supporters held a prayer Friday opposite her home in Yangon. The rambling mansion on University Avenue is where she spent many years under house arrest during previous military governments, and the residence has long had iconic status among her supporters.

“Because of the situation, on this day of the full moon we are sending love to, and reciting Buddha’s teachings for Mother Suu, President U Win Myint and all those unlawfully detained,” said Hmuu Sitt yan Naing, who joined the prayer group. It is believed Suu Kyi is currently being detained in the capital Naypyitaw. She is due to face a court on Monday on charges brought against her by the military junta that are widely seen as politically motivated.

Several Western countries have imposed or threatened sanctions against Myanmar’s military. On Thursday, Britain announced further measures against members of the ruling junta for “overseeing human rights violations since the coup.”







The  
**BIG**  
PICTURE

**LADIES WHO LUNCH!** The Selling Sunset stars, Mary Fitzgerald, Chrishell Stause & Heather Rae Young enjoy a meal together at a cafe on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood.

## Amelia Hamlin Responds to Accusations of “Blackfishing” in Instagram Photos



Amelia Hamlin responded to allegations that she intentionally tried to make her skin look darker in new Instagram photos by saying she was just more tan than usual.

Amelia Hamlin responded to accusations of “blackfishing” after a series of photos she shared on social media sparked controversy.

On Feb. 25, the model shared a series of photos of herself to Instagram. In the pics, she is wearing her hair in a long thin braid, and her skin tone appears several shades darker than in her other recent photos. She captioned the post, “whiplash got me like...”

Though the 19 year old’s comments are now turned off for this post, she took to her Instagram Story to share that she received negative comments about the photos, which accused her of “blackfishing.” The term “blackfishing” refers to when non-Black individuals use hair or makeup to create the look of certain features that make them look Black or more racially ambiguous. In this case, it was Amelia’s darkened complexion that made some question her intentions.

The star, who is dating Scott Disick, wrote

on her Story, “I’m receiving a lot of comments in regards to my latest photo. I am being told that I am ‘black fishing’ – thank you all for educating me on this topic. I recently went on vacation in the sun, and with my Italian heritage I tan very easily.”

She continued, “There is no self tanner involved. Or intention of looking darker than my own natural skin color. I had a lot of fun creating this look with no malice intention or offense.”

Blackfishing is part of a larger conversation around how Black culture is often appropriated by non-Black individuals. Other stars who have been accused of using Black culture as a fashion statement include Rita Ora and rapper Bhad Bhabie.

This isn’t the only time this month Amelia’s posts have stirred controversy. Amelia’s mother Lisa Rinna clapped back at haters in the Instagram comments of Amelia’s recent lingerie shoot. After one commenter called the pictures “disgusting,” the Real Housewives of Beverly Hills star wrote back, “What is wrong with you? This is my child.”

the secret to bringing about a magnificent shift. Remember, you do not have to do this alone. Turn to a healer or therapist who can safely hold space for this catharsis.

Tip: Choose love, trust, and surrender over everything else.

CANCER:

You can’t keep working as a costume designer if you want to play the protagonist of a certain film. ‘Settling’ is a dirty word, Cancer. Betraying your truth? A way of dishonouring yourself. Today, you’re being asked to stop playing it small or waiting for somebody else to discover your hidden talents. It’s time to put yourself out there despite the risk this entails.

If you’ve been house-hunting for a while now, get ready to find that perfect apartment (or mansion)—one that’s straight out of your dreams. Those who are looking for a less permanent set-up are also likely to get lucky in the coming week. Others could be giving renovation and redecoration a thought. It’s a good idea to work with an architect or designer who understands your vision and will commit to bring it to life.

Tip: You’re likely to find (or move into) the house of your dreams.

## Christian Siriano offers mountain glam for 2nd pandemic show

**NEW YORK (AP):** Christian Siriano opened his second show of the pandemic Thursday with two ladies in bed, models who emerged flawless in black one-pieces, then dressed for all to see before hitting the runway.

It was a dreamy, color-saturated show during a tough time for fashion inspiration, Siriano said. He created an alternate reality inspired by a recent jaunt to Aspen, Colorado, to visit family for the first time in a year. While most designers have gone fully digital during an expanded New York Fashion Week that has stretched the traditional calendar, Siriano remains committed to the runway.

“If you take this away, and the glamour, then it’s like I’m just at the office talking about money all day, and that’s not what I want,” he told The Associated Press after the fall-winter show attended by about 75 in-person guests. “I wouldn’t want to do this job if I couldn’t have this world.”

In this world, shared on Instagram Live, there were looks for hidden parties and cocktail hours in the Colorado mountains, and silky evening dresses in fuchsia and chartreuse. There were cutouts, and ruffles and lace for ombre and peekaboo impact. And there was Siriano muse Coca Rocha camping it up for the cameras in a voluminous black gown with a plunging neckline — after she woke up to start the show.

Siriano included two thrifted pieces

he previously designed and found on the site thredUP, including a black fringe coat he made about seven years ago. He was pleasantly surprised it held up, both aesthetically and through its well-worn years. The other look was a plunging silk crepe dress in fuchsia washed many

plaid lames and cashmeres, melting into sunset-drenched oranges and pinks inspired by his Colorado vacation. He threw in some creams in a snakeskin print and bright winter whites, including a white jacket worn with loose fuchsia trousers for day. Siriano carried his check



times. “You shouldn’t do that because it’s silk, but it looked so cool. It looked worn but new. Hopefully it will show people we can do this in fashion,” Siriano said of the growing reuse movement. He partnered with thredUP after creating the universal logo for thrift, in the shape of a coat hanger.

As for his newly created clothes, there was an “homage to the lodge” in

lame print from a trouser set to a strapless cocktail gown to a loose, long-sleeve top with a plunge. There were psychedelic swirls of orange and brown in a pantsuit and an evening dress with a high slit.

What if, heaven forbid, he’s forced to design a third collection in a pandemic come the September show cycle, trying to wrangle staff working remotely while sourcing materials.

## Hulu sets Mike Tyson miniseries, but the boxer punches back

**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Hulu announced it has ordered a limited series dramatizing the life of boxing great Mike Tyson, who quickly slammed the production as “cultural misappropriation.”

In a press release Thursday, Hulu said “Iron Mike” will explore “the wild, tragic and controversial life and career” of a polarizing athlete.

Tyson, who is not involved in the project, criticized Hulu on social media, saying the series smacked of insensitivity.

“Hulu’s announcement to do an unauthorized mini-series of the Tyson story without compensation, although unfortunate, isn’t surprising,” Tyson said in an Instagram post. “This announcement on the heels of social disparities in our country is a prime example of how Hulu’s corporate greed led to this tone-deaf cultural misappropriation of the Tyson life story.”

Hulu didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

Tyson’s post further criticized the announcement’s timing — during Black History Month — and called on Hollywood to “be more sensitive to Black experiences, especially after all that has transpired in 2020.”

An “authorized” autobiographical project would be announced in the coming days, Tyson said.

The eight-episode “Iron Mike” is from the makers of “I, Tonya,” the 2017 movie that starred Margot Robbie as ice skater Tonya Harding.

## It’s a smash hit! Chinese return big-time to movie theaters

**BEIJING (AP):** The thrills and chills of the big screen are back big-time in the world’s largest film market.

With coronavirus well under control in China and cinemas running at half capacity, moviegoers are smashing China’s box office records, setting a new high mark for ticket sales in February, with domestic productions far outpacing their Hollywood competitors.

February marked China’s all-time biggest month for movie ticket sales, which have so far totaled 11.2 billion yuan (\$1.73 billion). China overtook the U.S. as the world’s biggest market for movie ticket sales last year as the American box office took a massive hit from the closure of cinemas because of the coronavirus pandemic. Chinese theaters were able to reopen by midyear and have seen steady audience growth since then. Local movies have also benefited from periodic unofficial “blackout” periods, when only domestic productions are allowed to be screened. A dearth of major Hollywood blockbusters over recent months appears to have also boosted the market for Chinese films.

“People were encouraged to stay in Beijing for the Lunar New Year, and so watching movies in the cinema became the top choice of entertainment,” said Chu Donglei, marketing manager at Poly Cinema’s Tiananmen branch in central Beijing. Mask-wearing is mandatory and moviegoers must register with a mobile phone app so they can be traced in the event of an outbreak. Only every other seat was allowed to be occupied, making it even harder to obtain tickets for the most popular films.

According to the China Movie Data Information Network, 95% of ticket sales came from the seven top-grossing films timed for release around the Lunar

New Year festival, which began this year on Feb. 12. “Hi, Mom,” a time-traveling comedy written, directed and starring Jia Ling, was the top earner with 4.36 billion yuan, followed by action comedy “Detective Chinatown 3,” with 4.13 billion yuan.

Wang Xiaoyu, 32, who works in the film industry, was only able to procure a ticket for “Hi, Mom” on Thursday and called the viewing experience “deeply moving.” “I know there are some movies that are released and streamed online. But I think the experience of watching movies online is not as good as that of watching in a cinema. I prefer going to the cinema to watch movies. The experience is different,” Wang said.

A lack of entertainment options had helped pump up ticket sales during the pandemic, foretelling a bright future for the Chinese film industry, Wang said.

College student Zhang Jiazhi, 21, said the live movie theater experience was a welcome break from staying at home watching videos. Successful online film promotion had also helped attract many viewers to brick-and-mortar cinemas, Zhang said.

“I’m bored, and you can’t stay at home watching (streaming service) Douyin all the time, so I came to the cinema to watch a movie. There’s nothing to do,” said Zhang, who is on winter break and came to the cinema to see “A Writer’s Odyssey,” a Chinese fantasy film which he said he didn’t quite understand.

China became the world’s biggest box office last year, selling an estimated \$2.7 billion in tickets compared to \$2.3 billion in the U.S., which saw an 80% drop in ticket sales. “The Eight Hundred,” an action drama glorifying China’s resistance to Japanese invaders in 1930s Shanghai, was the world’s biggest hit, making \$461.3 million at the box office, most of it within China.

ARIES:

The journey to where you are standing now has been full of compromises. But you regret nothing. You realise that every step along the way has brought you to this point in your existence. What you’re experiencing right now is a whole new level of security and stability. A prayer of gratitude is in order, Aries. On the cards this week: cultivating a deeper connection with your family and honouring the sacred threads that bind you together.

Tip: Family bonding is on the cards.

TAURUS:

Mercury retrograde may have passed us by, but we’re still under the influence of its shadow. Needless to say, issues related to communication could be weighing you down at the moment. The cards are urging you to change the approach a little. To look at every conversation as an opportunity for growth and transformation.

Tip: Address the issue from a neutral space.

GEMINI:

At any point of time, you have two options: to operate from a space of fear or to let love guide your decisions. Watch your inner demons, Gemini. Observe them without giving them the power to control your actions. Raising your vibrations is

Virgo:

We all have a little bit of madness and a little bit of chaos within us. It is this lethal combination that makes you, you. It is this lethal combination that inspires you to take life by the horns and make the most of what’s being offered by the Universe. So take yet another chance, Virgo. Flirt with life in the way that you’re being called to. You are on a journey towards personal freedom—and this journey will help you come home.

Tip: Flirt with life in a way you never have before.

LIBRA:

The cards are indicating a new and beautiful beginning in the realm of love, Libra. The real question is: will you open yourself to what’s coming through, or return to that old paradigm that’s synonymous with insecurity and fear? Know that choosing the latter will keep you stuck in a rut. Embracing the spirit of love, on the other hand, will help your soul evolve. So take a great risk, beloved, and know that the Universe will catch you if you fall.

Tip: Allow yourself to believe in love again.

SCORPIO:

This is a rather exhilarating time for you on the professional front. You’re not only moving forward at the right pace, but also attracting magnificent op-

portunities and gaining recognition for your work. But that’s not the real reason for the mysterious smile on your face. It’s the act of breaking past your past limitations that’s making you feel like the most invincible version of yourself. What the cards want you to remember: no matter what you’re struggling with, you will eventually emerge victorious.

Tip: You’re on the right track. Trust yourself and keep moving forward.

SAGITTARIUS:

“Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will create what you imagine, and at last, you create what you will.” Take a moment to reflect upon these powerful words by George Bernard Shaw. It’s time to get in alignment with your wildest dreams, Sagittarius. It’s time to sow the seeds that will add beauty and grace to your existence.

Tip: Get in alignment with your wildest dreams.

CAPRICORN:

You know what they say, Capricorn? Before you criticise a man, walk a mile in his shoes. The truth is, you know nothing about their journey, and you probably never will. It’s best to release the judgments, to live and to let live. If you’ve been comparing yourself to somebody else, it’s time to let go

of the comparisons too. Your script is completely different from theirs. Allow Destiny to reveal its grand plan to you.

Tip: Release the judgements.

AQUARIUS:

When things don’t turn out the way we imagined they would, we convince ourselves that the Universe is withholding our share of blessings. Take a moment to look back at the so-called failures in your life. Do you now understand why things unfolded in a certain way? The cards are asking you to practice patience and persistence. Your dreams are worth fighting for, just not in the manner that you are right now.

Tip: Take this rejection as a form of redirection.

PISCES:

“How can you be afraid to feel? Isn’t fear a feeling? If you’re feeling fear, you’ve felt one of the most negative emotions there is to feel. Everything else should be a piece of cake. Feel good, feel happy, feel love, feel abundant, feel creative, feel passionate, feel knowledgeable, feel powerful.” Words of wisdom by Bashar (channelled by Darryl Anka) that accurately describe the shift you are experiencing in this moment.

Tip: Stay in the energy of passion, wild one.