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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Namchi councilors introduced to town's Integrated Command & Control Center

**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 03 OCT:**

Namchi's councilors were today introduced to the Integrated Command & Control Center [ICCC] set up by the Namchi Smart City Ltd at the parking plaza here, an IPR press release informs.

Namchi Smart City officials explained the workings of the ICCC, which, the release informs, "not only manages safety and surveillance of the town but shall also hosts Smart Solutions for the town's Municipal Council."

Key features of the Centre such as video-walls for real-time monitoring, emergency response system, operations planning and other important functions were also explained the councillors.

The program had Namchi Municipal Council chairperson, Ganesh Rai, as chief guest accompanied by Namchi Smart City CEO, Thupden Gyasto Bhutia, and other officials.

Relay-run sees 13 teams race in 100 and 50 KM categories

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 OCT:**

Thirteen teams participated in the first-ever 100 KM and 50 KM Relay Run in Sikkim held at Reshithang in East District on Sunday.

The daylong event was organized by Sikkim Running Group and supported by the Sports & Youth Affairs Department. There were seven teams in the 50 KM relay run while six teams participated in the 100 KM category.

Daring Bulls emerged champions in the men's 50 KM relay run, while Sikkim Running Group finished first in the mixed category of the same event.

Likewise, Rocket Girls [Project Life] won the women's 100 KM relay run and Sikkim Running Group stood on top in the men's 100 KM relay run.

The valedictory programme had chairperson, Sikkim Khadi & Village Industries Board, Chung Chung Bhutia, as chief guest accompanied by Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Raju Basnet, Sikkim Olympic Association president Kuber Bhandari and general secretary Jasal Pradhan as guests of honour among other dignitaries.

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Second wave on the ebb, hospitalizations down-vaccinations up in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 SEPT:**

Even though Novel Coronavirus has proven to be unpredictable adversary, the numbers of late would have Sikkim breathe easier since infections continue to fall, and more importantly, hospitalizations of Covid-positive people and fatalities among Covid patients have dropped even more substantially.

The Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department on Sunday morning, for instance, inform that the daily test positivity rate in the State came in at 5% for the past 24 hours, new hospitalizations at barely six and no new Covid deaths.

Only 18 of the 354 samples screened for COVID-19 on Saturday returned positive. What is more, 127 people were discharged from home and facility isolation over the same 24 hours after beating the virus and making full recoveries.

This substantial difference



between new cases and recoveries has brought the number of active Covid cases down to 500 in Sikkim and now stands at 493.

Most of the Covid-positive people are on their way to recovery under home or facility isolation and there are only

47 Covid patients with symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization. Of these, six patients were admitted in the last 24 hours. Against all the fears of the virus affecting the young more severely, there are only seven under 18-year-olds in hospital, none of them

in the ICU. There are, however, nine adults admitted in ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and CRH-Tadong.

Meanwhile, against the 31,525 cases of Covid detected in the State since testing began on 28 Feb last year, 30,328 people have already

made full recoveries. With this, Sikkim also broke the 97% mark on recoveries and the recovery rate now stands at 97.1%.

While there were no new Covid deaths in the past 24 hours, the State has lost 338 lives to Covid thus far.

The IDSP report further details that of the 18 new cases, eight were detected in RT-PCR testing of 232 samples, nine in rapid antigen testing of 118 samples and one in TruNat testing of four samples.

13 cases new were registered in East District, 04 in South District and 01 in North District.

On the vaccination front, Sikkim has already ensured that the entire eligible section of the population has received at least one dose of the Covid vaccine. On Saturday, a total of 3,600 people received Covishield jabs, of whom 3,459 completed their vaccination schedule with the second dose and 141 received their first dose.

With nearly 3.95 lakh of the 5.17 lakh people who make up the adult population of the State having already received both their Covishield jabs, more than 76% of Sikkim's eligible population is now fully vaccinated against Covid.

Nar Bahadur Bhandari Jayanti celebrations continue at Soreng

GYALSHING, 03 OCT [IPR]:

The third day of the Nar Bahadur Bhandari Jayanti Celebration witnessed a series of semi-finals of the respective competitions including the ongoing volleyball tournament at the Soreng playground today.

Minister of Labour and Power Department, Mingma Norbu Sherpa, graced the occasion as the chief guest while PK Subba, Advisor, State Scheduled Tribe Welfare Board, joined him as the Guest of Honour. Accompanying him were the MLA, Aditya Golay, Panchayats and respective Official dignitaries from the Sub-division.

Addressing the audience, Minister Sherpa extended his warm



greetings to all. He briefly spoke about the contributions made by Late Bhandari towards his Community and the responsibilities he had taken up as the Leader of a State.

He took the opportunity to speak in-depth regarding the Labour laws, restrictions and information on Labour registration. He informed

that any migrant labour/worker entering the state has to be registered at the State border entry point.

Every labour entering will be authorized a One-year work permit that must be renewed yearly, he added.

He clarified that it is the concerned authorities' responsibility to issue

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ARuGi Puraskar conferred on Prem Thulung

**BIKASH CHETTRI
NAMCHI, 03 OCT:**

Writer Prem Thulung was conferred the 30th ARuGi Purashkar 2021 by ARuGi Sahitya Sansthan of Kurseong, West Bengal, today with the Sansthan members visiting the poet at his home here at Boomtar with the award.

The organizers inform that the senior writer and poet was awarded for his "outstanding works in Nepali language, creations, personality and lifestyle."

ARuGi Sahitya Sansthan president, Suk Bahadur Sunar, founder secretary Gyalpo Lama, patron Rukh Mani Chettri, executive member Devika Mangranti Rai and the



other members organized the award ceremony which was also attended by literary figures and enthusiasts from West and South Sikkim and Kalimpong.

The award includes a shawl, a memento, certificate and Rs 11,010 in cash.

Respected writer, Thiruprasad Nepal, was present as the chief guest and remarked that the award further cemented the strong connection

that binds Sikkim and Darjeeling and will dull the turmoil of many natural and man-made calamities.

Poet Prem Thulung, he added, was a forgotten literary figure of Sikkim, overlooked because of the personalized standard of awards controlled by people in Gangtok

ARuGi Sahitya Sansthan founder secretary, Gyalpo Lama, spoke

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All India Ball Badminton Tournament gets underway in Gangtok

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 03 OCT:**

All India Ball Badminton Tournament 2021 for men & women started here today at Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School on Sunday.

The three-day tournament is being organized by Sikkim State Ball Badminton Association [SSBBA]. Teams from five states - Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim - are in the fray for this national-level tournament, the organizers inform.

Gangtok MLA, YT Lepcha, declared the tournament open today.

The inaugural match was played between Sikkim and Bihar.

Speaking to media persons, SSBBA general secretary, Sun Maya Gurung, informed that ball badminton was introduced in Sikkim around



six months back and has already produced around 40 players.

Sikkim was hosting the tournament with the intention to popularize and promote the game in the State.

"This is just the start. We will work continuously for the development and promotion of ball badminton to produce national and international players from

Sikkim," Ms Gurung said.

Likewise, In-charge for North Eastern State Ball Badminton, Faisal Ahmad, informed that the federation chose Sikkim to host the tournament mainly for the promotion and development of ball badminton in the north-eastern region.

He added that it was an old game of the country and six players have already re-

ceived the prestigious Arjuna Award.

"Sikkim has already produced some talented and skillful players in this game so we have chosen Sikkim for this national championship to tap more talented players from the State. So this tournament is to promote ball badminton in the region and also to promote local players in the higher level," he said.

Fuel prices hiked for fourth straight day; Petrol touches new high

NEW DELHI, 03 OCT [NDTV]: The state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Sunday hiked fuel prices for the fourth consecutive day. With the latest price, petrol and diesel prices have touched new all-time highs across the country.

Petrol prices in Delhi stand at Rs.102.39 per litre, witnessing a hike of 25 paise, while diesel rates went up by 30 paise, currently standing at Rs. 90.77 per litre. At the same time, in Mumbai, petrol has reached an all-time high of Rs. 108.43 per litre, while diesel prices have touched Rs. 98.48 per litre, witnessing a price hike of 24 paise

and 32 paise, respectively.

As for other metro cities, petrol prices in Kolkata today have gone up to Rs.103.07 per litre, a hike of 30 paise, while diesel prices have touched Rs.93.87 per litre after receiving a hike of 30 paise.

Fuel rates are the most expensive in Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan where petrol currently stands at Rs.114.34 per litre, while diesel stands at Rs.104.64 a litre.

In Madhya Pradesh's Rewa and Anuppur districts, petrol prices have reached Rs. 113.30 a litre and Rs.113.70 a litre, while diesel rates have touched Rs.101.97 a litre

and Rs.102.34 a litre, respectively. Customers in Maharashtra's Parbhani district will now have to pay Rs.110.99 a litre and Rs.99.44 a litre for petrol and diesel, respectively.

Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum are the three leading oil marketing companies. Changes in fuel prices are implemented at 6 am every day. The prices are determined as per global benchmarks of crude oil rates, and by making changes in the foreign exchange rates into account. The fuel rates vary from state to state in the country due to the value-added tax or VAT.

Nothing good in SKM Govt, it is undoing all our contributions: Chamling

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 OCT:

Instead of doing anything worthwhile, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha government is undoing everything good delivered by the SDF Govt, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling alleged today in his weekly Facebook commentary.

The Sikkim Democratic Front president, Mr Chamling, rues that "great programs, laws, schemes and indica-

tors of good governance of the SDF government have been deserted, distorted and destroyed."

He opens his SKM take-down by pointing out that at a time when democracies collate and preserve records of achievements and contributions of previous government, the SKM Government burned 16 truckloads of books on the achievements of the SDF Government.

"Can you believe such

a thing? Such a regressive mind-set! Mr Chamling writes.

He then goes on to list out 15 initiatives of the SDF Government, which, he alleges, SKM has either reversed or sabotaged.

"We commissioned hydro power in Sikkim. They are selling them one by one. One BAD THING," he opens, while adding that where the SDF Govt constructed one of the best hospitals at Socheythang, SKM was

"selling the old STNM hospital to outsiders."

While contending that the previous government "beautified, upgraded and preserved the historic Ridge Park," SKM was "selling sites in the park for housing."

"We built multi-storied parking facilities in different locations in Gangtok and other towns of Sikkim. They started selling them. The one below the Police Headquarters has already been sold

to an outsider," he alleges further, adding, "We developed Mother Dairy Farms and built a Training Centre and Directorate of Capacity Building in Karfatar. They sold the whole land to an outsider."

He also goes on to accuse SKM and its government of unraveling Sikkim's peace and intimidating SDF supporter by misusing agencies of the State like transfers and UDD officials snooping for blueprint violations.

Mahatma taught us there's nothing cowardly about non-violence: UNGA President

NEW YORK, 03 OCT: Commemorating Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi's 152nd birth anniversary, UNGA 76th session's President Abdullah Shahid on Saturday said that he taught us there's nothing cowardly about non-violence.

Speaking at a virtual commemoration organised by India's Permanent Mission to UN on Saturday, Abdullah Shahid emphasised, "It is not by chance that this day, October 2, coincides with Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. In commemorating this day, we also celebrate the legacy of this remarkable man who taught us that there is nothing cowardly about non-violence."

Underlining Mahatma Gandhi's words he said that non-violence is a power that can be wielded equally by all provided if they have faith in God of love and equal love for all man-

kind. He emphasised that Mahatma Gandhi chose peace to confront injustice.

Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary is being celebrated worldwide as the International Day of Non-Violence. Various world leaders including global organisations are remembering his message of non-violence and tolerance. Several events are held in India and across the world to mark the occasion.

Born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar town of Gujarat, Mahatma Gandhi adopted a non-violent resistance and had been at the forefront of the freedom struggle against colonial British rule. This led to India finally achieving its independence in 1947. Fondly known as Babu, his unwavering belief in 'Swaraj' (self-governance) and 'Ahinsa' (non-violence) won him accolades across the world.

LIC to file draft Initial Public Offer papers with SEBI in Nov

Mumbai, 03 Oct [PTI]: The country's largest insurer, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), is likely to file draft papers with Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) by November for the largest initial public offer (IPO) in the country's history, a finance ministry official has said.

"We target to bring the IPO within this fiscal and we have set strict timelines. The draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) would be filed by November," the official said.

Once the DRHP is filed, merchant bankers will hold global and domestic roadshows for investors by January, the official informed further.

The government last month appointed 10 merchant bankers, including Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Private Limited, Citigroup Global Markets India Private Limited and Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities (India) Private Limited to manage the LIC IPO.

Other selected bankers are SBI Capital Market Limited, JM Financial Limited, Axis Capital Limited, BofA Securities, J P Morgan India Private Limited, ICICI Securities Limited and Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited.

Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has been appointed as legal adviser for the IPO.

The government is aiming to list the insurance behemoth within the current financial year.

The ministry is in the process of estimating the embedded value of the life insurer and once that is done, the ministerial panel on disinvestment will decide on the government stake that will be divested through IPO, the official said.

The government has appointed actuarial firm Milliman Advisors LLP India to compute the embedded value of LIC ahead of the initial public offering.

The government is also mulling allowing foreign investors to pick up stakes in country's largest insurer. As per SEBI rules, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are permitted to buy shares in a public offer. However, since the LIC Act has no provision for foreign investments, there is a need to align the proposed LIC IPO with SEBI norms regarding foreign investor participation.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had in July cleared the initial public offering proposal of Life Insurance Corporation of India.

The listing of LIC will be crucial for the government in meeting its disinvestment target of ₹ 1.75 lakh crore for 2021-22.

Sikheem Suraksha Samiti celebrates anniv with felicitation of Covid Warriors



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 OCT:

Sikheem Suraksha Samiti celebrated its first anniversary here today with a felicitation of Covid Warriors.

Attended by more than a hundred people from different parts of the State, retired Chief Secretary of Sikkim, PK Pradhan, was present as chief guest, accompanied by Prem Goyal and

Rudra Prasad Khanal as special guest.

The organisation's president, Madan Tamang, presented Sikheem Suraksha Samiti's annual report.

Fourteen Covid Warriors identified by the organization - Robin Sewa, SDM; Dillip Tamang, SDPO Rangpo; Shyam Rai, Assistant Director, Food & Civil Supplies Department; Arjun Chettri of Majhitar; Samir Prad-

han, SHO Rangpo; Rita Karki (Rangpo); Md Khalid (Rangpo); Dr Tempo Bhutia, District Hospital, Singtam; Sajjan Agarwal (Rangpo); M Deepak Shrestha (Rangpo); Kessang Dorjee Bhutia SDPO Namchi; and social workers Tek Bahadur Lamichhane, Rinzing Wangyal Chhopel and Tashi Bhutia were felicitated with Social Worker and Covid Warrior Samman.



East Zilla Panchayat Bhawan scrubbed

GANGTOK, 03 OCT: The East Zilla Panchayat Bhawan was scrubbed clean as part of the safai abhiyan undertaken there as part of Gandhi Jayanti celebrations on Saturday. Held under the supervision of East Zilla Adhakshya, the cleanliness drive was joined by officers and staff of the EDZP, it is informed.

Helpline for elderly logs over 3.39 lakh calls since May

NEW DELHI, OCT 3 (PTI): The government's senior citizen helpline, Elderline, has received over 3.39 lakh calls since May, with more than 79,000 of them from Uttar Pradesh.

The national helpline launched by the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry in collaboration with Tata Trusts aims to reach out to the elderly seeking assistance.

Among states, the highest number of calls were received from Uttar Pradesh at 79,542 followed by Uttarakhand at 54,432, Telangana at 42,610, Tamil Nadu at 27,708 and Karnataka at 22,711.

More men than women reached out to Elderline seeking help.

According to the data, 23,390 men called the helpline while the number stood at 8,178 for women.

The top reasons for reaching out to the helpline included Covid support (13,496), pension (8,952), abuse (1890), health-related support (1202), rescue (423) and queries related to old age homes (632), according to the data.

However, out of the 3,39,879 calls received since May 1, as many as 3,02,195 calls were non serviceable calls which include non genuine requests like nuisance calls, calls with out of scope requests for non elderly among others, ac-

cording to the data shared by the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry.

While out of 37,684 genuine calls, 17,933 calls (47.59 per cent) were related to COVID-19 related support, vaccination information and voluntary services among others.

About 11,209 calls (29.75 per cent) were looking for guidance in subjects of legal counsel, direction for social security and pension related issues.

As many as 5,550 calls (14.73 per cent) were seeking information that includes calls which provides details of old age homes, caregivers, day care centres, hospitals, doctors among others.

While 2,313 calls (6.14 per cent) were for seeking field interventions when caller was seeking support for rescue of a homeless elderly or care for an abused elderly.

About 679 calls (1.80 per cent) were also received for seeking emotional support where callers were counselled.

An official said in some cases these calls were directed to mental health professionals with experience in geriatric therapy and counselling for in person support.

The official said the call pattern in the helpline can help the government in giving it direction for policy decisions for elderly.

Legal awareness at Yangang



NAMCHI, 03 OCT: As part of the Pan India Awareness and Outreach programme on the occasion of NALSA 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav,' the Taluk Legal Ser-

vices Committee, Yangang, organized a special session at Yangang Haat Bazar today. The outreach programme will continue till 14 November, an official

press release received from IPR Department informs. Around 50 people visited the stall and interacted with the resource persons there, it is informed.

Active COVID-19 cases in country lowest in 199 days

NEW DELHI, OCT 3 (PTI): India added 22,842 new coronavirus infections taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,38,13,903, while the active cases declined to 2,70,557, the lowest in 199 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The death toll climbed to 4,48,817 with 244 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The active cases comprise 0.80 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 97.87 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the ministry said.

A decrease of 3,332 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 14,29,258 tests were conducted on Saturday taking the total cumulative tests con-

ducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 57,19,94,990.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.80 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for last 34 days. The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.66 per cent. It has been below three per cent for the last 100 days, according to the ministry. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,30,94,529, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.33 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 90.51 crore.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20

and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 244 new fatalities include 121 from Kerala, and 49 from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,48,817 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,39,166 from Maharashtra, 37,811 from Karnataka, 35,627 from Tamil Nadu, 25,303 from Kerala and 25,088 from Delhi, 22,894 from Uttar Pradesh and 18,815 from West Bengal.

The ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Relay-run sees...

Speaking to the media, the State Chief Athletic Coach, Basant Pradhan, whose brainchild this event was, pointed out that although running is an individual event, the concept of relay running would help promote club culture and team spirit.

He shared that participation of enthusiasts very young in age along with

the elderly has made the organizers very hopeful about the future of the sport here.

"In our recent relay running from Kolkata to Gangtok, we realized the importance of a team. So, if we train ourselves in a team especially in long distance running, it would be very beneficial," he said.

ARuGi Puraskar...

about the organization and its activities and informed that the award was instituted in 1990 and was not awarded only in 2017 and 2020 owing to the political upheaval of Darjeeling and the pandemic respectively.

Mr Thulung is the third litterateur from Sikkim to be conferred the ARuGi Sahityik Purashkar.

The 83-year-old Mr Thulung, in his short address, reminisced about his days as an officer of the Education Department and his journey as a writer.

The awards ceremony also included poetry recitals by Devika Mangranti,

Sarojini Dewan, Mina Lama Rai and Deoraj Mukhia,

ARuGi Sahitya Sansthan takes its name from three eminent Nepali poets from Kurseong - Accha Rai 'Rashik', Rupnarayan Sinha and Agamsingh Giri, and the award is given in the memory of the founding president of ARuGi Sahitya Sansthan, the late Prem Pradhan. Today's award ceremony was dedicated to the memory of Nepali literature enthusiasts, the late Padam Bahadur Subba of Kurseong and late Prem Pradhan, and was sponsored by the former's daughter, Sushila Subba.

Nar Bahadur Bhandari...

licenses for carrying out any form of business in the area. He highlighted the fact that due to the pandemic and lack of required documents, restrictions while entering the State for such workers have been made.

He also enumerated the schemes and policies that are available under the current Sikkim Labour Act. He talked about the importance of getting the labourers registered by the concerned Stakeholders. He urged all the BOCW (Building And Other Construction Workers) to get registered in order to avail the welfare policies and schemes under the State Government. He called on all the respective SDMs and BDOs to clarify such confusion regarding worker's registration.

The Minister also highlighted some of the developmental work of the current Government. He added that better health facilities will be made available in the coming future along with the appointment of technical personnel.

The Government is also focusing on improving the tourism sector for more local financial stability, he said. He briefly stated about the new district formation in Soreng and how it will benefit the local communities of Soreng, Rinchenpong, Daramdin and nearby areas. He expressed his gratitude towards MLA Aditya Golay for being the formidable force behind the District formation.

He finally ended his speech by addressing issues regarding power and electricity in urban and rural areas and the Government's initiative to solve major electricity problems. Speaking on the electricity shortage problems, he urged everyone to be more cautious while using electricity for day-to-day usage.

At the start of the programme, the MLA Aditya Golay welcomed the chief guest by presenting the traditional Nepali shawl and a souvenir as a token of appreciation.

Sikkim U19 women register fourth straight win in One-Day Trophy, sit on top-spot



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 OCT:

Sikkim's Under-19 Women's team registered its fourth straight win at the ongoing Women's Under 19 One Day Trophy today when it humbled Nagaland by 52 runs at KIIT Cricket Stadium,

Bhubaneswar, Odisha. With one match still left in the league round, Sikkim is leading the points table with 16 points.

Nagaland won the toss and sent in Sikkim to bat first. Sikkim scored 143 for 8 in 50 overs with Nandita Das top-scoring

at 33 runs. Pranita Chettri contributed 32, Nur Pandi Lepcha 16 not-out, Pretika Chettri 15, Yudenmit Lepcha 11 and Leezami Lepcha 3 not-out.

Chasing the target, Nagaland were all-out for 91 runs in 38.3 overs. Dikcha Gurung scalped 3

wickets for Sikkim, followed by Nur Pandi and Leezami who took 2 wickets each.

Sikkim Cricket Association president, Lobzang G. Tenzing, congratulated the team and conveyed, "No words can describe the 4 convinc-

ing wins in row. I'm simply thrilled by the super-duper performance. Go for the kill girls and be group toppers after all you all are the "CHAMPIONS".

Sikkim will be playing its last match of the league round against Arunachal Pradesh on Monday at Vikash Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar.

Meanwhile, the Under-19 Men's team is also going strong, having secured a second win at the Men's Under 19 Vinoo Mankad Trophy against Arunachal Pradesh at JSCA International Stadium, Ranchi, Jharkhand. Sikkim is currently placed second in the Plate Group.

Sikkim will be playing against Meghalaya on 04 October at OVAL Ground, Ranchi.

Clean-up at Rabongla SDM complex delivers 55 kilos of litter



SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 03 OCT:

A cleanliness drive at the SDM complex, BAC, Rabongla, as part of Gandhi Jayanti celebrations on Saturday, led to a haul of around 55 kilos of avoidable litter strewn around the complex.

An IPR press release informs that when "analysed" and segregated,

most of the waste comprised of wrappers, snack packets, plastic pet bottles, diapers, papers, glass bottles and face masks. The collected waste is to be disposed at the landfill at Sipchu in West Sikkim with the help of Rabongla Bazar Development Committee which manages solid waste in the town.

The function for Gandhi Jayanti was organized by the office of the ADC [Development], Rabongla, in collaboration with various offices in the SDM Office Complex and BAC here. Zilla Panchayat, Ralong-Borong territorial constituency, Tashi Dadul Bhutia, was present as chief guest, the release informs.

I2 launches molecular Iodine-based preventibe healthcare products

GANGTOK, 03 OCT: I2 Pvt Ltd, a broad spectrum anti-microbial active molecular iodine based biotechnology company, has launched a range it is promoting as "Covid Defense" products. These products, a press release informs, are in the categories of derma, ENT, dental and personal hygiene space.

During the height of the second wave, the

company released the I2 Bioshield lotion which was used by Uttarakhand Police during the Kumbh Mela and Delhi Police during the farmers agitation.

The company has since expanded its products to include I2 Nasal Spray, I2 Mouth Mist, I2 Gargle and I2 Eye Bath which claim to provide six hours of "complete protection" from the virus.

Safai Abhiyan by Northern Dhakal Pariwar



Mangan, 03 Oct: The Northern Dhakal Pariwar observed Swatantra Bharat Abhiyan on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti on

Saturday with a cleanliness drive undertaken from Namok Gairi to Mangshila GPK under Mangshila-Tibuk GPU, North Sikkim.

The day also marked the first anniversary of the formation of Northern Dhakal Pariwar. [from WANG-CHUK BHUTIA]

Upper Ghurpisey cleans up for Gandhi Jayanti

SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 03 OCT:

Ward-3 of Namchi Municipal Council, Upper Ghurpisey, undertook a cleanliness drive from Ngadak Monastery premises on the road leading to the Monastery and adjacent areas like ICDS, Parking Area, Play Ground, PHE etc on Saturday tomorok Gandhi Jayanti, a press release informs. The drive was led by ward



councilor, Pem Norbu Bhutia, who thanked Tashi Ethenpa, Dadul Bhutia, Hissey Dorjee Bhutia and Dikila Bhutia for providing lunch and refreshments for

those who joined the drive. The participants also pledged their support the CM's initiative of banning the use and sale of all plastic water bottles, a press release informs.

NHPC runs for Fit India at Balutar and Samdung



GANGTOK, 03 OCT: The Teesta Stage-V power station of the NHPC organized "Fit India Freedom Run 2.0" on Gandhi Jayanti at its Balutar and Samdung colonies as part of the Azadi ka Am-

rut Mahotsav, a press release informs.

The Run at Balutar covered 3KMs from the VIP Guest House to the football ground and was undertaken by around 80 participants.



Rotarians celebrate Gandhi Jayanti with health camp

GANGTOK, 03 OCT: Rotary Club of Gangtok South, in collaboration with Jan Kalyan Sangh of Chota Singtam in East Sikkim and Rotaract Club of Gangtok Hills, organized a free blood sugar and blood pressure

testing camp at Chota Singtam on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti on Saturday. 125 sugar tests were carried out. This was part of the Rotary India project to conduct 1 million sugar-test camps.

Legal awareness stalls at Jorethang haat



SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 03 OCT:

Taluk Legal Services Committee, Jorethang Sub-Division, in coordination with the Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, set up stalls at Jorethang Haat Bazar on 03 October as part of the Pan India Awareness and Outreach Campaign on the occasion of NALSA "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav," an official press release shared by IPR Department informs.

The stalls sought to

assist people seeking Free Legal Aid, registering people for various schemes of the State Government and Free Legal Services, State and Welfare Schemes for senior citizens, women, disabled etc provided by the Social Welfare Department.

Rohini Rai, ex-officio Chairperson, Taluk Legal Services Committee-Jorethang, panel advocates Vivek Chandra Rai and Nirmal Kumar Berdewa, para-legal volunteer Sanu Rai, social welfare mem-

ber Sikha Chettri (SWI) and DLSA and TLSC staff assisted the public, the release adds.

The Legal Aid Clinic was manned by para-legal volunteer, Sanu Rai who distributed awareness pamphlets on general legal awareness, legal aid helpline and mechanism of alternate dispute redressal resolution.

Around 27 people interacted with the representatives of the Departments at hand to address their problems.

Milching cows provided to Tsong and Chongrang farmers



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 OCT:

Beneficiaries from Tsong and Chongrang villages under Yuksom-Tashiding constituency of West Sikkim were handed over 24 milching cows and calves by the Animal Husbandry Department today at the SC Bhawan, Chongrang, an official press release informs.

The distribution was organized by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences in coordination with the Office of DC West, it is informed, and had the chairperson, Transport Department, Basant Tamang, as chief guest.

The beneficiaries were allotted the cows as per lottery system, it informed.

Additional Director (W), Dr NM Cintury, informed the farmers about components of the scheme from which they were being provided milching cows. They are being provided a 3-year insurance coverage and DBT of incentives for purchase of concentrates and additives.

He urged the farmers to derive maximum benefit from the Rs 8 per litre incentive scheme being provided by the Government and highlighted the piggery incentive scheme which will be

officially launched later this month.

The gathering was also informed that in order to reach service at the farmers doorstep, ADDO (W) shall be visiting the homes of each and every beneficiary of Chongrang block and record their progress in terms of milk-production and solving problems related to milk production as and when required.

With today's distribution, the 'Distribution of milching cows to farmers of Chongrang block to supplement farmers income under NEC Fund 2020-21' has come to an end, the release informs.

'Not possible to destroy cryptocurrencies': Elon Musk says governments can only crunch crypto growth rate

NEW DELHI, 03 OCT [NDTV]: In a message to governments around the world, Tesla CEO Elon Musk has said that while the advancement of cryptocurrencies can be slowed down, these digital assets cannot be destroyed now. The crypto-supporting tech mogul further went on to reportedly advise the US government to do "nothing" about regulating the crypto-space if the aim is to curb crypto-expansion. The statement by the 50-year-old multi-billionaire came as he was addressing the "Code 2021" conference in the Beverly Hills area of Los Angeles, US.

"I suppose cryptocurrency is fundamentally aimed at reducing the power of a centralized government. They don't like that," news portal decrypt.co quoted Musk

as saying on Wednesday, September 29. "It is not possible to, I think, destroy crypto, but it is possible for governments to slow down its advancement". Musk's suggestion to the governments battling for "no action" against crypto comes days after the world's most populated country, China, imposed a blanket ban on cryptocurrencies mining and trading.

Post China's ban, the crypto market has witnessed major fluctuations this week, with the prices of highly valued ones like Bitcoin and Ether witnessing more lows than highs.

"Part of it may actually be due to electricity shortages in many parts of China. A lot of South China right now is having random power outages because the power demand is higher than expected.

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Are We Sweeping Away a Legacy?

Gandhi valued cleanliness, but he was about much more

The Centre and its pliant state governments are going into a cleanliness hyper-drive. Given that our country could do with some saaf habits, this abhiyan is welcome. It is, however, this “missions” collateral damage [or maybe it was not an unintentional consequence] that makes one take pause and wish that a deeper abidance of the Gandhian Way was followed by those who coin the acronyms and slogans which dictate governance in the country.

It is important to realize that The Father of the Nation promoted cleanliness as a means to a larger end, and not the end itself. Filth, the physical kind, is clearly a result of unplanned urbanization and uncaring city administrators, and then these poor habits travelled back to villages which too had their sense of community responsibility erased by overbearing centralized planning. Now, the same disconnected offices are trying to guilt us into cleanliness drives. If our agencies and babus had done even half of what their charters required them to do, our settlements would have been clean and our citizens more participating than less suppliant. Too much inference? Probably. But it should be obvious to anyone that when Gandhi “enforced” cleanliness, it was not because his ashram was dirty, but because he wanted to promote dignity of labour, self-respect and self-reliance. Then, people could collaborate, shake off their prejudices and engage as equals. When we “organize” cleanliness drives because of a circular from the Home Department and make it a VIP event, complete with chief guests and brand new brooms, we turn Gandhi’s idea of its head. That, however, is only a small part of what we are losing.

Cleanliness was a tool that Gandhi devised to hammer away at the divisions he noticed among us. Shared menial tasks and community participation for cleanliness and hygiene, like team sports and praying together, bring people together and make them rely on each other. This builds up well towards what is Gandhi’s most important gift to the world – peaceful civil disobedience. Gandhi weaponised people with ahimsa and satyagrah. There is a very real danger that his essence will be reduced to cleanliness. Look around, we have become sycophants who celebrate intolerant governments which have gone after expressions of civil disobedience with a viciousness that competes with the disdain of the British and how they engaged with Gandhi for the longest time. Anti-dam protests, the Shaheen Bagh sit-in, activists working among exploited tribes, farmer protests, SPYF demonstrations on behalf of the people or the dharna by a section of the adhoc teachers; they have all come against official attitudes which clearly have no respect for Bapuji. In the end, we lost the Mahatma not to the violence of a colonial master, but to the intolerance of fellow free citizens. The misguided xenophobia which infected his assassin continues to be peddled. #Godse, did after all, trend on twitter on Gandhi Jayanti.

Gandhi was an ardent exponent of ahimsa and led us to Independence without a war. He was also a champion of the downtrodden, who, even as he led the Freedom struggle, refused to be distracted from the path of non-violence, even ending a non-cooperation movement once when he realised that not all Indians were completely committed to ahimsa just yet. What is more, even as he steered the struggle for Independence, he worked as tirelessly towards eradicating untouchability and powering other social reforms. He advocated religious tolerance and sowed the seeds of secularism which found roots in the Constitution. He stood for truth at all costs and was steadfast in his beliefs, refusing to make compromises even in the face of defeat or even ridicule. He believed in working with the people, taking them into confidence and leading them when he had won their endorsement and convinced them about the path to be taken. The basic Gandhian principle was to lead them away from conflicts of personal interests towards a community or community of interests. Gandhi’s goal was to bring about a community of interests by holding it up as the common good, by making Sarvodaya the motivation of all individual action.

And what have we done with that legacy? When he spoke of harmony, he did not mean conditional tolerance, but we have abandoned even the latter and are now more suspecting of the other. Where Gandhi spoke espoused rural empowerment, we have institutionalized disdain for rural pragmatism and talk down to citizens in general and the basti-wallahs in particular. We try to dovetail bhakti to a cult and majoritarianism even into national events like Safai Abhiyan, and we do insensitively in the name of the Mahatma. When Gandhi said, “I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet,” he clearly did not mean that his cleanliness was just about a safai abhiyan in government offices or neighbourhood mandirs.

Powerful, Local Stories Can Inspire Us to Take Action on Climate Change

KAMYAR RAZAVI
theconversation.com

The climate emergency has put the world in grave peril, but that is hard to tell when watching the news or looking at the overall global response to the climate crisis, which continues to be lax.

Climate change is a complex and difficult problem to communicate. It is slow-moving, it does not always feel urgent and there is often very little gratification for acting to mitigate it.

For decades, the assumption has been that members of the public, politicians and policy makers would take the matter more seriously if only there was more information about the impacts and consequences of a warming planet.

The science, now, is unequivocal. Humans are responsible for climate change and the extreme weather events it generates.

We need to rethink the way we communicate climate change. The best tool at our disposal is a simple one: storytelling. Stories have the power to transform complex subject matters into something that feels personal, local, relatable and solvable.

But stories about the climate crisis – for example, about how people are responding in real time and making a difference – are still few and far between.

That needs to change.

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS

Traditionally, emotions have been seen as separate from rational judgment. Sabine Roeser, an ethics researcher, investigates the role of emotions in communicating climate change: “Emotions are generally considered to be irrational states and are hence excluded from communication and political decision making.”

Emotions, Roeser argues, play a very important role in how people engage with risk. As urgent as it is, the climate crisis does not always garner the same attention as other topics, such as COVID-19 or the economy. Climate change can still feel abstract, personal and even distant.

But that is rapidly changing. Around the world, more people are starting to agree that the climate crisis is not just a distant threat, but one that will affect them personally and directly.

In Canada, concern about the personal impacts of climate change has risen seven percentage points over the past six years. In 2015, 27 per cent of Canadians felt “very concerned” that the climate crisis was going to affect them personally. This past spring, that had risen to 34 per cent.

This growing concern over the personal impacts of climate change represents an excellent opportunity for journalists, policy makers and environmental advocates to localize and personalize climate communication to engage people more effectively through the power of storytelling.

As important as it is to communicate information about the impacts of climate change, it is also important to include stories that people can relate to and draw inspiration from.

IMPROVING SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

Enric Sala spent years as a university professor, doing research on ocean life. He thought that his increasingly alarming reports on the state of the

world’s oceans would spur policy makers into action. But that did not happen so Sala left academia.

“When I was an academic, I thought that science was all we needed,” he said in an interview on the podcast Outrage and Optimism. “That if we continued providing the scientific papers, that for some miraculous reason, leaders would read the papers.”

Sala finally realized what science communicators already know: that the relationship between

That facts-based approach is necessary. As journalist Chris Hatch observes: “Most people still have a muddled understanding of climate breakdown – of its urgency, that it’s caused overwhelmingly by fossil fuel burning, and that carbon pollution from oil, gas and coal needs to be phased out entirely.”

Fear can also play a productive role, as there is still far too much complacency. Fear can mobilize action.

But what is consistent is the power storytelling



how much people know about the climate crisis and how they act is not necessarily linear.

“I thought that having enough information, leaders would be able to make rational decisions,” Sala said. But he quickly realized that “the world doesn’t work like this and most decisions are made in an irrational way.”

In their book *Thinking Fast and Slow*, psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky famously describe the interplay between the “System One” brain — the intuitive, emotive, non-analytic response mechanism in our brains — and the “System Two” brain — the analytic mechanism.

As journalist Dan Gardner succinctly puts it, the challenge for science communicators is to “help System 1 feel what System 2 calculates” — to make climate change feel personal, relatable and local.

ECOLOGICAL CRISIS STORIES

Most communication about the climate crisis builds on communicating facts and figures at people on the consequences and impacts of a warming planet.

What is missing are stories about ordinary people who are grappling with the crisis in deeply personal ways and doing something about it. Examples include stories of Indigenous communities fighting to protect environments from irreparable harm and students rallying for climate action.

These can be very mobilizing narratives about solutions to the climate crisis. They do not gloss over the fact that the world is in grave peril, or focus on technological quick fixes or hero worship. These stories both communicate facts and underscore the crisis the world faces.

has to engage.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Climate scientists — passionate about the work they do — are reacting with sadness and disbelief to the speed with which glaciers are receding in the Canadian Rockies. Coral researchers are emotionally worn out by witnessing drastic coral bleaching. And firefighters are reaching breaking points.

Stories can connect us to ecological crisis on a deeply personal level. Luckily, those personal and emotional connections are being made with increasing frequency in the news media, in documentary films and even on social media.

“I am an Incident Commander with the #BC-Wildfire Service,” Kyle Young of the B.C. Wildfire Service tweeted during this past wildfire season. “I am writing this post rather than sharing a video message because, frankly, it would be too emotional for me.”

Kyle described the physical and emotional toll the ever-intensifying wildfires in British Columbia had taken on him and his colleagues.

These stories of sacrifice and courage are among the many relatable and personalized narratives that can connect us to the climate crisis. Climate scientist Michael Mann observes that it took elementary and high school students protesting in the streets for the adults to finally take note of the urgency of the crisis.

It is no longer an abstraction. It is affecting people directly, and stories are one of the best ways to capture and communicate that urgency.

[the writer is PhD candidate in the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University]

How ‘deliberate listening’ builds bonds between managers and workers

FELICITY FU & JEFFREY YIP
theconversation.com

The digital transformation of the workplace has created greater opportunities for new forms of work arrangements — remote, hybrid, distributed and flexible work.

While in-person meetings create opportunities for conversation, employees in online meetings tend to drop off immediately at the end of the meeting and return to their work in a split-second.

Physically, we may no longer work in the same office, have hallway conversations or grab a quick lunch or coffee together. The spontaneous conversations that occur in a shared physical environment requires deliberate attention with remote work.

Even before the pandemic, research has shown that remote workers feel left out and are less engaged with their work.

They worry that colleagues talk behind their backs, or that their work is considered a lower priority in the eyes of their supervisors. It’s more difficult to interpret body gestures and facial expressions through a computer screen; the lack of informal yet physical nods of approval in the traditional setting can also let our negativity take over and paranoia hinder productivity.

These experiences have an impact on employees’ sense of a shared reality — the perceived commonalities with other people when it comes to

feelings, beliefs and concerns about the world. As researchers on listening, we provide some perspectives for managers to build this shared reality through what we call deliberate listening.

Here are three practices to deliberate listening:

LISTEN TO BRIDGE BOUNDARIES

The idea of shared reality arises from our fundamental need to bond with other people and to understand the world around us. We communicate in order to share our realities, which also form the basis of our thoughts.

Listening builds bridges between different experiences and perspectives. Co-workers and employees may hesitate to share their struggles at home or their conflict with colleagues if not asked. They often only talk about these experiences via deliberate listening.

Managers can engage in deliberate listening to acknowledge differences, reduce defensiveness and to bridge the gaps between “us and them.” Employees can express themselves more fully, expand their thinking and correct faulty generalizations.

Questions aimed at listening — such as a simple as “How are things at home?” or “What’s on your mind?” — can bridge these gaps and the invisible barriers created by distance.

LISTEN TO AFFIRM

Sharing our inner thoughts strengthens our social connections.

People tend to feel more connected if they have the same interpretation of events. American psychologist and researcher E. Tory Higgins introduced the idea that “sharing is believing” — people not only tweak what they say to fit with their communication partner’s attitude, they also subsequently remember the observations they share.

In order to listen well, managers can use external tools, like taking notes, to help them. Larry Bossidy, the former CEO of Honeywell, used the technique of dividing a sheet of paper and scribbling notes of what he heard on one side and his thoughts about the matter on the other.

Listeners can also intentionally adjust tones and descriptions to align with the attitude of their conversation partner. Sentences like “I feel the same way” and gestures such as nods build a two-way communication relationship in which interaction partners build on common beliefs and feel closer to each other.

Successful listening results in people feeling they clicked and fuels a desire to maintain this close relationship. That feeling can extend to other colleagues and thereby create a sense of cohesion at work.

LISTEN TO CHALLENGE

When others disclose negative emotions, mere listening as support offers minimal help, and can actually perpetuate the frustrating situation.

If the listener validates the nega-

tivity, the speaker can brood by immersing in the negativity and replaying the adverse reaction. The magic recipe for constructive listening is attentiveness plus some enlightenment.

Responses that gently challenge the validity of the aggrieved person’s feelings or their appraisal of a perceived problem are most effective for mitigating negativity. Such an approach can motivate people to re-evaluate their initial reaction to the problem and reposition themselves, cognitively and emotionally.

LISTENING BUILDS SHARED REALITY

Listening to others is often undervalued as only passive acceptance. But effective listening as people disclose details of both their professional and personal lives, including hardships and emotions that affect the workplace, takes dedication and skills.

Listening is not passive. It creates a shared reality — one that is crucial for understanding, collaboration and action.

By bridging, affirming and challenging, listeners can build a shared sense of belonging and understanding that shape the realities of our work and world around us. That’s regardless of whether we work in a physical office or online.

[Felicity Fu is Doctoral Student, Simon Fraser University; Jeffrey Yip is Assistant Professor, Simon Fraser University]

Mamata Banerjee secures Chief Minister's post with easy win in by-poll

KOLKATA, 03 OCT [NDTV]: Mamata Banerjee won a resounding victory in the bypoll from Kolkata today, which was crucial for her to continue as the Chief Minister following the defeat at Nandigram. She won with a record margin of 58,832 votes over her BJP rival.

The Chief Minister polled 84,709 votes at the Bhabanipur constituency in south Kolkata -- the seat from where she won in 2011 and 2016 as well -- breaking her own record of 54,213 votes of 2011. The seat was vacated for her by state minister Sovandeb Chattopadhyay, who won the April vote by a margin of 28,000-plus votes.

The Chief Minister hailed the results by flashing three fingers to mark the Trinamool's victory, not just at Bhabanipur but at the Shamsheganj and Jangipur Assembly elections as well. The polls there had been countermanded in April due to the death of a candidate in each of those seats.

"I am not doing a victory sign with two fingers. I am holding up three fingers. We fought three elections, we have



won all three today. I am not so selfish," Ms Banerjee said. "Ek, dui, teen, Ma Mati Manush kay dhonnobad din (One, two, three -- let's thank the people)," she added.

"We are grateful we won... I lost in Nandigram but the matter is in court," she said. "What is most heart-warming is, I have not lost in a single ward in the constituency. In 2016, I had trailed in a couple of wards. Today, I have won in all," she added.

Priyanka Tibrewal -- a lawyer and a long-time resident of the constituency -- whom the BJP fielded against Ms Banerjee, polled 24,396 votes.

The 41-year-old, who lost from Entally assembly seat in April and in a 2015 civic poll, she has become a familiar name as one of the petitioners in the post-poll violence case against the state government.

"As in every match, one loses, one wins. But not necessary that the man of the match is from the winning team. I am the man of the match," Ms Tibrewal said after the results were declared. "A little ant tries to climb through a door but falls a hundred times before it can make it. One shouldn't lose faith," she added.

BJP state chief Sukanata Majumdar said,

"I congratulate the chief minister. The BJP always accepts the people's verdict. But there is a question mark on how many people voted. Only 57 per cent. The rest didn't either because they didn't want to or could not. She said BJP would be erased from Bhabanipur. We are grateful for the support we got."

Mamata Banerjee, who lost the elections at Nandigram in the April-May polls, needed to be elected MLA before the end of six months to continue as the Chief Minister. She had chosen Nandigram -- where her agitation against land acquisition had catapulted

her to power a decade ago -- as a challenge to aide-turned-foe Supendu Adhikari of the BJP.

The challenge is viewed as a tonic for her party that was edgy ever since BJP won 18 seats in the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. Her defeat in Nandigram was the one blot on Trinamool Congress's stupendous victory for a third term in face of the BJP's powerful election machine.

In the other two assembly seats where results came out today, Trinamool candidate Amirul Islam led by over 10,000 votes at Shamsheganj and Jangipur's Trinamool candidate Jakir Hossain by 52,528 votes.

All eyes on Goa polls next year with entry of Trinamool, 2 new regional parties



PANAJI, 03 OCT [PTI]: The entry of Trinamool Congress (TMC) in Goa's political arena and the announcement by two regional outfits about fighting the next year's Assembly elections in Goa are sure to make it a multi-party and keenly-watched affair, where prominent players like the ruling BJP, opposition Congress, Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP and Shiv Sena are eyeing to fight the polls independently.

The two regional outfits that will be trying their luck for the first time are Revolutionary Goans and Goencho Avaaz.

Besides them, the Goa Forward Party (GFP) and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) are also there in the power game.

The BJP, which has been in power in the state since 2012 and is vying to continue to be at the helm for the third consecutive term, feels that the more number of parties there are in the fray, the better for it as it will cause division of opposition's votes.

The TMC, which is currently in power in West Bengal, recently said that it plans to contest all 40 seats in Goa.

Former Congress MLA Luizinho Faileiro joined the TMC a few days back. MGP's former legislator Lavu Mamlakar also joined the Mamata Banerjee-led party. But after that, no other influential local leader has done so.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which rules in Delhi, has also thrown its hat in the ring this time again. It had contested the 2017 Goa Assembly polls, but failed to open its account.

The opposition Congress, which has been vying to return to power, seems to be averse to start talks on alliance with like-minded parties.

"It's not my mandate. It is for the high command to decide," Goa Pradesh Congress Committee chief Girish Chodankar told reporters recently when asked about the alliance.

In 2017, the Congress had won the highest 17 seats in the 40-member House, restricting the BJP to 13. However,

er, surprising the Congress, the saffron party allied with regional parties and formed government under the leadership of senior leader Manohar Parrikar. The party currently has only four MLAs.

The GFP, which had initiated the talks of joining hands with the Congress, has also announced that the proposal was on hold.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) also has its presence in the state with its lone MLA Churchill Alemao.

A few days back, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said his party would contest 22 to 25 seats in Goa, where elections due in February next year. The party had fought the 2017 election in alliance with other political outfits, like the MGP, but failed to win any seat.

Some leaders feel that it was necessary for the opposition parties to come together in order to defeat the ruling BJP.

"Stitching a coalition of opposition parties is the way ahead to defeat BJP in the state. All the parties announcing to fight 40 seats individually will result in giving edge to BJP," Independent MLA Rohan Khaunte said.

The BJP, however, seems to be meticulously preparing itself for the big fight.

The party has already announced that its campaign would be led by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. It has been working in all the 40 assembly constituencies.

Former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has been made the party's election in-charge and he has held a number of meetings during his recent visit to the state.

Although the party is grappling with infighting, the intervention of leaders like Fadnavis seems to be helping it tide over the crisis.

"More entrants will be an advantage to the BJP as opposition's votes will get divided. But we are not banking on the division of votes as our aim is to strengthen the party in all the 40 constituencies," a party leader said.

Odisha logs 528 new COVID-19 cases, 5 more deaths

BHUBANESWAR, OCT 3 (PTI): At least 528 more people, including 73 children, tested positive for COVID-19 in Odisha, taking the tally to 10,27,959, while Boudh became the first coronavirus-free district in the state with no active case, an official said on Sunday.

The daily infection rate among people below 18 years of age was at 13.82, up from 11.92 per cent on Saturday, he said.

Khurda district, which comprises the state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 243, followed by Cuttack at 69.

Nine districts -- Bolangir, Boudh, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Kalahandi, Nua-pada and Rayagada -- did not report any new case in the last 24 hours.

"Boudh became the state's first COVID-free district as there was no active case for the last two days. It has so far re-

ported 12,594 infections, of which 12,482 patients have recuperated and 112 succumbed to the disease," the official said.

Five fresh fatalities -- two from Khurda and one each from Cuttack, Ganjam and Jajpur -- raised the coronavirus death toll in the state to 8,214, he said.

Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have so far died due to comorbidities.

Odisha now has 5,280 active cases, while 579 more people were cured of the disease in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 10,14,412, the official said.

The state has so far conducted over 2.01 crore sample tests, including 69,030 on Saturday, and the positivity rate now stands at 5.09 per cent.

Over 87 lakh people have received both doses of COVID vaccines, he added.

Traffic at Jammu Airport jumps after scrapping of load penalty



JAMMU, 03 OCT (PTI): Passenger traffic at the Jammu airport jumped soon after the load penalty for the strategically important airport was scrapped, allowing airlines to fly full capacity, officials said.

The airport saw 1,403 embarkations (departures) and 1,679 disembarkation (arrivals) on September 29. On September 30, when the penalty was scrapped, the number of departures jumped to 1,524 and disembarkations to 2,140, officials aware of the matter said.

On October 1, traffic further increased to 1,953 embarkations and 2,748 disembarkations, they said.

Prior to the September 30 move, there was a 30 per cent load penalty, which meant that airlines could book only 70 per cent of the seats available on a flight.

The Indian Air Force, which controls the Jammu airport, on September 30 issued a NOTAM (notice to airmen) that led to the removal of the 30 per cent load penalty on the airport, officials said.

This meant airlines

could fly full loads or at 100 per cent capacity, they said, adding this should lead to lower fares and longer destinations.

Currently, Jammu airport handles 35 flights from different cities on a daily basis.

The load restriction meant that airlines either incur a loss on flying to Jammu or jack up fares to make up for the cost of keeping 30 per cent of seats empty.

The load restriction on airports is placed keeping in mind the length of the runway, its quality and heat factor.

Considering the importance of the airport, the administration under Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha proactively took up the issue with the DGCA, Airport Authority of India (AAI) and the Indian Air Force, leading to the issuance of the NOTAM on Thursday.

"The governance mindset has changed from lackadaisical to moving the needle," an official said. "The runway was extended and strengthened which allowed for night landings a couple of months back."

Also, the issue involved market dynamics as well as traveller perception about the safety of Jammu and Kashmir.

There has been a steady rise in passenger footfall at the Jammu airport situated at Satwari, officials said, adding besides religious tourism, the scrapping of Article 370 has led to more trade and business visits.

Jammu provides air connectivity to the sacred and highly revered Vaishno Devi shrine and Amarnath cave.

The removal of load penalty will result in the cost of operations to Jammu for an airline reducing immediately, resulting in ticket prices coming down.

"On the same variable cost, they can now fly more passengers and so their cost of operations will come down," an official explained.

While the NOTAM was issued by IAF, it involved coordination with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and AAI and the trigger for change came from the government of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Only 1 new Covid case in Andamans, tally rises to 7,622

PORT BLAIR, OCT 3 (PTI): The COVID-19 tally of Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 7,622 on Sunday as one more person tested positive for the infection, a health bulletin said.

The Union territory now has nine active cases, while 7,484 people have recovered from the disease, and 129 patients have succumbed to the infection to date.

The administration has thus far tested over 5.5 lakh samples for COVID-19, and inoculated over 2.89 lakh people, of whom 1.53 lakh have been fully vaccinated, it added.

Violence during protest against Ministers in UP; 2 killed, claim Farmers

LUCKNOW, 03 OCT [NDTV]: Violence has broken out in the Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh, where farmers were holding protests since this morning over the visit of Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Maurya and Union Minister of State for home Ajay Mishra.

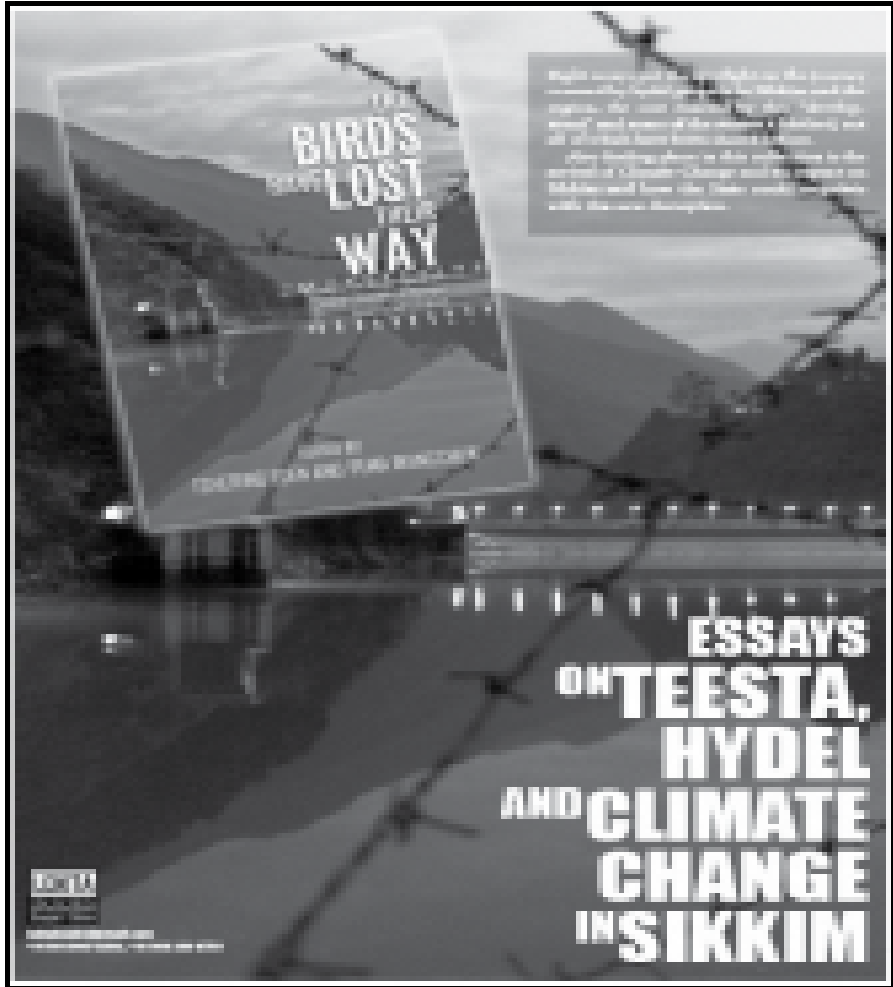
Farmers unions have said two of the protesters were allegedly run over by a vehicle in the convoy of the Union minister. Visuals from the area showed vehicles set on fire as a man, apparently injured, lies on the ground. There is heavy police presence in the area.

Farmer unions have claimed that eight farm-

ers were injured.

"In Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh, 2 farmers have died and 8 farmers were seriously injured after the vehicles of the ministers' convoy crushed the farmers standing on the side of the road, protesting against the programme of the Union Minister of State for Home," tweeted the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of farmers.

Deputy CM Maurya was on a visit to Kheri for government functions. Mr Mishra, who is from the area, was holding a function at his village which the Deputy Chief Minister was also supposed to attend.



ISSF Junior World Championship: Four golds take India to top of medal standing

NEW DELHI, 03 OCT [PTI]: Manu Bhaker shone bright as India claimed four gold medals out of the six on offer, along with two silvers, to surge to the top of the medal standings at the ISSF Junior World Championship on Sunday.

India swept the 10m air pistol medal events, including the mixed, women's and men's team competitions as well the 10m air rifle men's team gold, to end the day with six gold, six silver and two bronze medals. The USA are lying second with four gold, four silver and two bronze. Bhaker was at the heart of the Indian performance winning two more golds on the day.

She now has a total of three golds from the Championship. After partnering with Sarabjot Singh to win gold in the Pistol Mixed Team, she teamed up with Rhythm Sangwan and Shikha Narwal to win the 10m air pistol women's team event, beating Belarus 16-12 in the gold medal match.

The men's air pistol team then also struck gold with Naveen, Sarabjot Singh and Shiva Narwal putting it across the Belarussian men 16-14.

Earlier in the day, the junior men's 10m Air Rifle team had also won gold.

The women's 10m

air pistol team event saw India dominate as it had topped round one of qualification earlier with a combined 1722 after 180 shots and then round two on Saturday shooting 569 to Belarus' 568.

In the final, although it was even at the start, the Indians finished strong to seal the victory.

In the men's 10m air pistol team event, India were as dominating winning round one and round two before pulling off a tight gold medal match against Belarus yet again.

In the women's 10m air rifle team event India's Nisha Kanwar, Zeena Khitta and Atmika Gupta, did top the first qualification round but qualified for the gold match finishing second to the Hungarian trio of Eszter Mezaros, Eszter Denes and Lea Horvath, in round two.

The Hungarians maintained that superiority in the final to strike gold, their first of the competition.

It was also Atmika's second silver of the day as she had teamed up with Rajpreet Singh in the day's first medal event, the 10m air rifle mixed team, to finish second there as well.

Rajpreet, in fact, also now has one gold and one silver medal in his kitty.

Krunal Pandya faces fans' ire after another mediocre outing



NEW DELHI, 03 OCT [NDTV]: Mumbai Indians all-rounder Krunal Pandya has failed to live up to expectations in IPL 2021 and faced backlash from fans of the MI franchise after another mediocre outing against Delhi Capitals on Saturday. MI lost to Delhi Capitals (DC) by four wickets in Match 46 of the ongoing IPL 2021 at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. Similar to the rest of the MI batters, Krunal also failed to get going and remained not out at 13 runs off 15 balls as MI stuttered to a total of 129 runs in 20 overs. He then returned to register figures of 18 runs in 2.1 overs with one wicket in the bag.

Krunal has scored a total of 134 runs in 12 matches this season, averaging 14.88. He has taken just five wickets so far at an economy rate of 7.74.

He conceded a six off the first ball of the final over, with DC needed four runs to win and that too didn't go down well with some fans.

"Yes. It's a shame

that such a mediocre player gets to play all the games!."

"#KrunalPandya is a brilliant batsman ...He Just Struggle Against Playing Indian And Foreigner Bowling.Baaki Sab First Class Hai Kasam Se Baaki Sab Hai First Class."

"Why is MI still picking up Krunalwrist player?"

"#MlvsDC Krunal pandya scolding Mumbai Indians for playing against Delhi capitals."

After the loss, defending champions MI are placed seventh with five wins and seven losses and need to get their act together quickly if are to have any chance of qualifying for the playoffs.

Rajasthan Royals (RR), Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), Punjab Kings (PBKS) and MI have registered five wins each in their 12 games so far and the last playoffs spot could be up for grabs for any one of the above teams.

Mumbai Indians will next face RR on Tuesday in Sharjah.

Luis Suárez strikes as Atlético Madrid push Koeman closer to Barcelona exit

SID LOWE

MADRID, 03 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]: It had to be him. The man who was forced out of Barcelona and immediately brought the league title to Atlético Madrid may also have brought Ronald Koeman's brief and ultimately bitter time at the Camp Nou to a close that has long been coming.

On the night when the Metropolitan filled for the first time since he arrived, becoming the fans' idol even in their absence, Luis Suárez provided an assist and a goal to beat Barcelona 2-0 and pushed the Dutchman even closer to a door already held open for him, the roles reversed a year on.

Suárez remains angry at how he was treated by his former manager at Barcelona – "like a 15-year-old" as he put it this week. Instead, he is 34 but the fire still burns and the finishing is still deadly – for Koeman especially. Barcelona's president, Joan Laporta, claimed on the morning of this match that the result would not change anything, which was true in that the manager was already finished and this can only have made his inevitable demise more imminent, providing an end – if that is what it proves – that could have been scripted and was soon signed.

When Suárez followed up Thomas Lemar's opening goal with the second, the Uruguayan lifted his fingers to his ear, emulating a phone call. It still hurts him – and drives him – that Koeman had sent him to train alone and then dumped



him by phone. That conversation lasted barely 30 seconds; its consequences have lasted significantly longer. This was revenge of sorts, even if he refused to say so. And it was not the only call of a noisy night.

Suspended following a red card at Cádiz, Koeman was not on the bench for this but that did not make it easier to take. At one point in the first half cameras caught him shouting angrily, desperately down the phone, like a man whose taxi should have been here ages ago. Through the glass and out on the pitch below him, his team were already a goal down and did not wear the look of a side ready to rebel, so quick to collapse.

There was a lot of the ball

for Barcelona but not much presence, just a familiar fragility. Atlético could hardly be more different, Thomas Lemar and João Félix cutting right through them, both sending shots past the near post when the opener arrived. João Félix turned sharply inside to Suárez whose first-time pass could not have been better weighted to send Lemar away to lift it beyond Marc-André ter Stegen and into the net. The German was on his knee, again. Barcelona were soon on theirs.

Another lovely triangle, this time between Yannick Carrasco and João Félix, left Suárez one on one only to bend his shot wide. Suárez looked to the skies while Diego Simeone

held his head in his hands. That does not happen often and it would not happen next time.

Lemar and João Félix combined again, advancing from deep and almost without opposition, the Frenchman clipping a ball to Suárez alone deep inside the area.

Suárez controlled, slowed and waited, as if wanting to enjoy the moment before slipping in the knife, placing the ball into the corner. He resisted the urge to roar; instead raising his hands to offer an apology that was certainly not aimed at everyone he left behind in Catalonia.

Simeone's team, who have made a dangerous habit of conceding first this season, gifting opponents the opening

45 minutes of games, headed down the tunnel two ahead with a feeling of total control and the place bouncing. Barcelona were done, Gerard Piqué later saying they could have played for hours and they would not have scored. When they got a chance 15 minutes into the second half, Philippe Coutinho was denied by Jan Oblak, his slightly sad, insecure shot a portrait of his time at the club and his subsequent removal feeling almost like an act of mercy.

For Koeman there will be none. And when Suárez made way not long afterwards, by contrast it was an act of homage, his new home standing to applaud, and he departed, point made.

Chelsea seize top spot after dramatic win over Southampton

LONDON, 03 OCT [AFP]: Timo Werner fired Chelsea to the top of the Premier League as the German's late goal inspired a controversy-filled 3-1 win against 10-man Southampton on Saturday. Thomas Tuchel's side ended a frustrating week on a high note thanks to Werner's contribution to a dramatic finale at Stamford Bridge.

After successive 1-0 defeats against Manchester City and Juventus, the Blues were in danger of another disappointing result with just minutes remaining in rain-soaked west London. Trevoh Chalobah's early opener for Chelsea had been cancelled out by a James Ward-Prowse penalty in the second half.

But Ward-Prowse was sent off for an ugly lunge on Jorginho and Chelsea took full advantage as Werner restored their lead with six minutes left before Ben Chilwell wrapped up the points.

Chelsea sit two points clear of second-placed Liverpool, with Jurgen Klopp's side able to regain pole position if they beat champions Manchester City on Sunday.

Failure to defeat a Southampton side still seeking their first league win this season would have raised serious questions about the European champions.

So it was a huge relief for Tuchel to get back on track heading into the international break as Chelsea put one of their rare blips of the German's reign behind them.



"After two defeats we had to be careful that we didn't start being too sad or too worried," Tuchel said.

"It was important to have a better performance than the last two games, that we sharpened our mindset so that we are not afraid to lose.

"It was nice to play the way we did and get a deserved win."

Frustrated by what he labelled a "strange display" against Juventus on Wednesday and an equally lacklustre loss to City last weekend, Tuchel made five changes in a bid to shake up his "tired" team.

For a man who has hardly put a foot wrong since taking charge in January, Tuchel showed he had not lost his Midas touch as three of the players he brought into the team combined for the ninth-minute opener.

Ruben Loftus-Cheek towered above the Southampton defence to flick Chilwell's corner to the

far post, where Chalobah dived to head home from close range.

Werner thought he had doubled Chelsea's lead just before half-time when he rose above two defenders to head in from Callum Hudson-Odoi's cross.

But, with both teams back in position to kick off, a late VAR intervention convinced referee Martin Atkinson to rule that Cesar Azpilicueta had clipped Kyle Walker-Peters' heel much earlier in the build-up to the goal. It was a debatable decision and Tuchel was incandescent with rage, waving his arms in protest as he briefly marched into the pitch -- an incursion that earned a booking as boos cascaded down from the stands.

"I was very angry because I could never believe this could happen in the Premier League. It was a 50-50 that wasn't even in close connection to the goal," Tuchel said.

"I understood before

the season that we didn't want soft fouls, that we wanted a contact game."

Shaken by that controversial moment, Chelsea lost their grip and Southampton equalised in the 61st minute.

Teenage right-back Tino Livramento, who left Chelsea in the close-season, made an incisive raid that forced a panicked foul from Chilwell in the penalty area.

Atkinson pointed to the spot and Ward-Prowse stepped up to send Edouard Mendy the wrong way with the penalty. But Ward-Prowse could have no complaints when Atkinson sent him off for nasty foul that left Jorginho writhing in pain with 14 minutes left.

That proved the turning point and Chelsea went in front in the 84th minute.

Ross Barkley sprayed a fine pass out to Azpilicueta and his half-volleyed cross was perfect for Werner to drill home from close-range.

Outcry in Brazil over photos of people scavenging through animal carcasses

TOM PHILLIPS

RIO DE JANEIRO, 03 OCT [THE-GUARDIAN]: Heart-wrenching photographs of destitute Brazilians scavenging through a heap of animal carcasses for food have laid bare the hunger crisis blighting Latin America's most populous nation, where millions have been plunged into deprivation by the coronavirus pandemic and soaring inflation.

The images, taken in Rio last week by the prize-winning photojournalist Domingos Peixoto, show the group rummaging for scraps in the back of a lorry that had been transporting the discarded offal and bones to a factory that makes pet food and soap.

"Some days ... I want to cry," the lorry's driver, José Divino Santos, told the reporter Rafael Nascimento de Souza, who was covering the story with Peixoto for the Rio newspaper Extra.

"Before people would come and ask for a piece of bone for their dogs. These days they beg for bones to make food," added Santos, who distributes the scraps to Rio's needy after collecting them from supermarkets.

One 51-year-old scavenger, Denise da Silva, said she need-



ed to feed her five children and 12 grandchildren having recently lost her partner. "It's been so long since I saw a bit of meat, since before the pandemic ... I'm so grateful for this," Silva said of the fragments.

The images, one of which appeared on Extra's front page under the headline "Bra-

zil 2021: the pain of hunger", sparked an immediate outcry.

An estimated 19 million Brazilians have gone hungry since the start of a Covid outbreak that has killed 600,000 people. Elsewhere in the region the suffering is even more intense. Last week, a top Ven-

ezuelan university said nearly

77% of citizens there lived in extreme poverty, with crippling fuel shortages and Covid to blame for a 10% jump over the last year.

Thousands of protesters marched through the streets of Rio on Saturday to denounce a social calamity many blame on Brazil's rightwing president,

Jair Bolsonaro, whose Covid response has been globally condemned.

"It's inhumane," said Alex Frechette, a 43-year-old artist, who was carrying one of his paintings showing Bolsonaro chuckling beside three black children who clutched bowls filled with bones.

Canary Islands volcano 'much more aggressive' as new fissures erupt

La Palma, 03 Oct [AP]: The erupting volcano on Spain's Canary Islands has blown open two more fissures, with authorities reporting "intense" activity in the area.

The new fissures, about 15 metres (50 feet) apart, sent streaks of fiery red and orange molten rock down toward the sea, parallel to an earlier flow that reached the Atlantic Ocean earlier this week.

The Cumbre Vieja volcano was "much more aggressive", almost two weeks after it erupted on the island of La Palma, said Miguel Ángel Morcuende, the technical director of the Canary Islands' emergency volcano response department.

Overnight, scientists recorded eight new earthquakes up to magnitude 3.5.

The eruption was sending gas and ash up to 6,000 metres into the air, officials said.

The prompt evacuation of more than 6,000 people since the 19 September eruption helped

prevent casualties.

A new area of solidified lava where the molten rock is flowing into the sea extends over more than 20ha (50 acres).

Officials were monitoring air quality along the shoreline. Sulphur dioxide levels in the area rose but did not represent a health threat, La Palma's government said.

However, it advised local residents to stay indoors. It also recommended that people on the island wear face masks and eye protection against heavy falls of volcanic ash.

The volcano has so far emitted some 80m cubic metres of molten rock, scientists estimate – more than double the amount in the island's last eruption in 1971.

The lava has so far destroyed or partially destroyed more than 1,000 buildings, including homes and farming infrastructure, and entombed around 709ha on the Spanish archipelago off north-west Africa.

Tunisia police arrest MP and TV host who called president a traitor

Tunis, 03 Oct [Reuters]: Tunisian police have arrested a member of parliament and a television presenter who have been prominent critics of president Kais Saied since his seizure of power in July, their lawyer said.

The lawyer, Samir Ben Omar, said the military judiciary had ordered the arrests, accusing the pair of conspiring against state security and insulting the army after they broadcast a programme on Zaytouna television station.

Aloui Abdellatif is an MP for the conservative religious Karama party and Ameer Ayed a presenter on Zaytouna. In the programme, they strongly criticised Saied and called him a traitor.

Neither the police nor army were immediately available for comment.

In July, Saied suspended parliament, lifted the immunity of its members and assumed executive authority before saying last month he would ignore most of the constitution and rule by decree for a period of "exceptional measures" with no set end.

His intervention, following years of economic stagnation and political paralysis, was welcomed by many Tunisians but has cast doubt on Tun-

isia's democratic gains since the 2011 revolution that ended autocratic rule and triggered the Arab spring.

Saied has said he will not become a dictator and has promised to uphold rights and freedoms. Since July, a small number of parliamentarians have been detained on old charges that were activated when their immunity was lifted.

Many other politicians and business leaders have been subjected to travel bans, though Saied said these would be imposed only on people facing judicial summons or warrants.

However, there has been no widespread campaign of arrests so far and the media have been able to continue to publish stories critical of Saied and the authorities.

Most of Tunisia's political elite have urged him to say how and when he will get out of the crisis. Two protests have taken place against his actions over the past two weekends.

On Sunday, Saied's supporters are expected to rally in Tunis to show their backing for his intervention, which they see as necessary to reset a political system that did not respond to the needs of Tunisians.

Qatar wraps up legislative polls, no women candidates elected

DOHA, 03 OCT [ALJAZEERA]: The results of Qatar's first legislative council election have been announced, with none of the 26 female candidates winning at the polls.

Qatari citizens voted on Saturday in the Gulf Arab state's first legislative elections for two-thirds of the advisory Shura Council, a process that has stirred domestic debate about electoral inclusion and citizenship.

The Shura Council has legislative authority and approves general state policies and the budget but has no say in the setting of defence, security, economic and investment policy for the small but wealthy gas producer, which bans political parties.

Turnout for the election of 30 members of the 45-seat body was 63.5 percent, the interior ministry said in a statement on Sunday. The emir will continue to appoint the remaining 15 Council members.

Results showed



none of the women who were part of the polls was elected, disappointing candidates who had wanted to lend a voice for women and other Qataris in the country's political process.

"To have all men is not the vision of Qatar," said Aisha Hamam al-Jasim, 59, a nursing manager who ran in the capital Doha's Markhiya district.

She urged Qatari women to start "voicing what they believe in" and vote for strong women

candidates in the future.

Several female candidates had been seeking to improve the integration into Qatari society of children of Qatari mothers married to foreigners who, like in other Gulf states, cannot pass their Qatari nationality to their children.

Candidate Al-Maha Al-Majid, a 34-year-old industrial engineer, took part in the election to change mindsets.

"To convince the males [to vote for women], yes, we may have to

put in work or extra effort... I'm willing to take this extra effort in order to be in and to convince this society that the women can do so," she said.

The elections stirred domestic debate about electoral inclusion and citizenship.

Tribal sensitivities were stirred after some members of a main tribe were ineligible to vote under a law restricting voting to Qataris whose family was present in the country before 1930.

Tens of thousands of women march for abortion rights in US

NEW YORK, 03 OCT [ALJAZEERA]: Tens of thousands of women have marched across cities in the United States to protest increasing restrictions on abortion.

The 660 demonstrations around the US on Saturday, including on the steps of the Supreme Court in Washington DC, were largely sparked by a Texas law that bans abortions after six weeks of pregnancy.

The measure, which went into effect last month, is the most restrictive in the country.

In Washington, DC, protesters filled the streets surrounding the Supreme Court, shouting: "My body, my choice," and cheering loudly to the beat of drums.

They carried signs that said: "Mind your own uterus," "I love someone who had an abortion" and "Abortion is a personal choice,

not a legal debate." Some wore T-shirts reading simply "1973", a reference to the landmark Roe v Wade decision, which made abortion legal for generations of American women.

"No matter where you live, no matter where you are, this moment is dark," Alexis McGill Johnson, president of Planned Parenthood, told the crowd at the Rally for Abortion Justice in Washington, DC.

She spoke of women who have been forced to drive for many hours across state lines – sometimes multiple state lines – to end pregnancies since the Texas law went into effect. "No matter where you are, this fight is at your doorstep right now," McGill Johnson said. "This moment is dark, but that is why we are here."

The so-called "heartbeat" law

signed by Governor Greg Abbott bans abortion after cardiac activity is detected in the embryo, usually around six weeks. That is before most women know they are pregnant and earlier than 85 percent to 90 percent of all abortions are carried out, experts say.

The law relies on ordinary citizens to enforce the ban, which makes no exceptions for rape or incest, rewarding them at least \$10,000 if they successfully sue anyone who helped provide an illegal abortion.

"I don't think that old men, politicians should be making the decision on what I can and can't do with my body," Alejandra Marquez, a protester in Austin, the capital of Texas, told Al Jazeera. "I think every woman should have the right to decide when they want to have kids, and how, and how many."

Chinese planes fly over Taiwan defence zone in second day of record show of force

TAIWAN, 03 OCT [THE-GUARDIAN]: China has for the second day in a row flown more than 30 military planes towards Taiwan in yet another record show of force.

Taiwan's defence ministry said 39 aircraft entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone in two sorties on Saturday, one during the day and one at night. That followed a similar pattern on Friday, when 38 planes flew into the area south of the self-governing island.

The ministry said 20 planes took part in the daytime flights on Saturday and another 19 at night. It identified most of them as J-17 and SU-30 fighter jets.

Taiwan's premier, Su Tseng-chang, spoke out

on Saturday against the first day's flights.

"China has always conducted brutal and barbarian actions to jeopardise regional peace," he said. China has been sending military planes into the area south of Taiwan on a frequent basis for more than a year. The 38 and 39 planes on Friday and Saturday were the most in a single day since Taiwan began releasing reports on the flights, Taiwan's Central News Agency said.

The show of force on China's national day on Friday near Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory, came in the same week it accused Britain of sending a warship into the Taiwan strait with "evil intentions".

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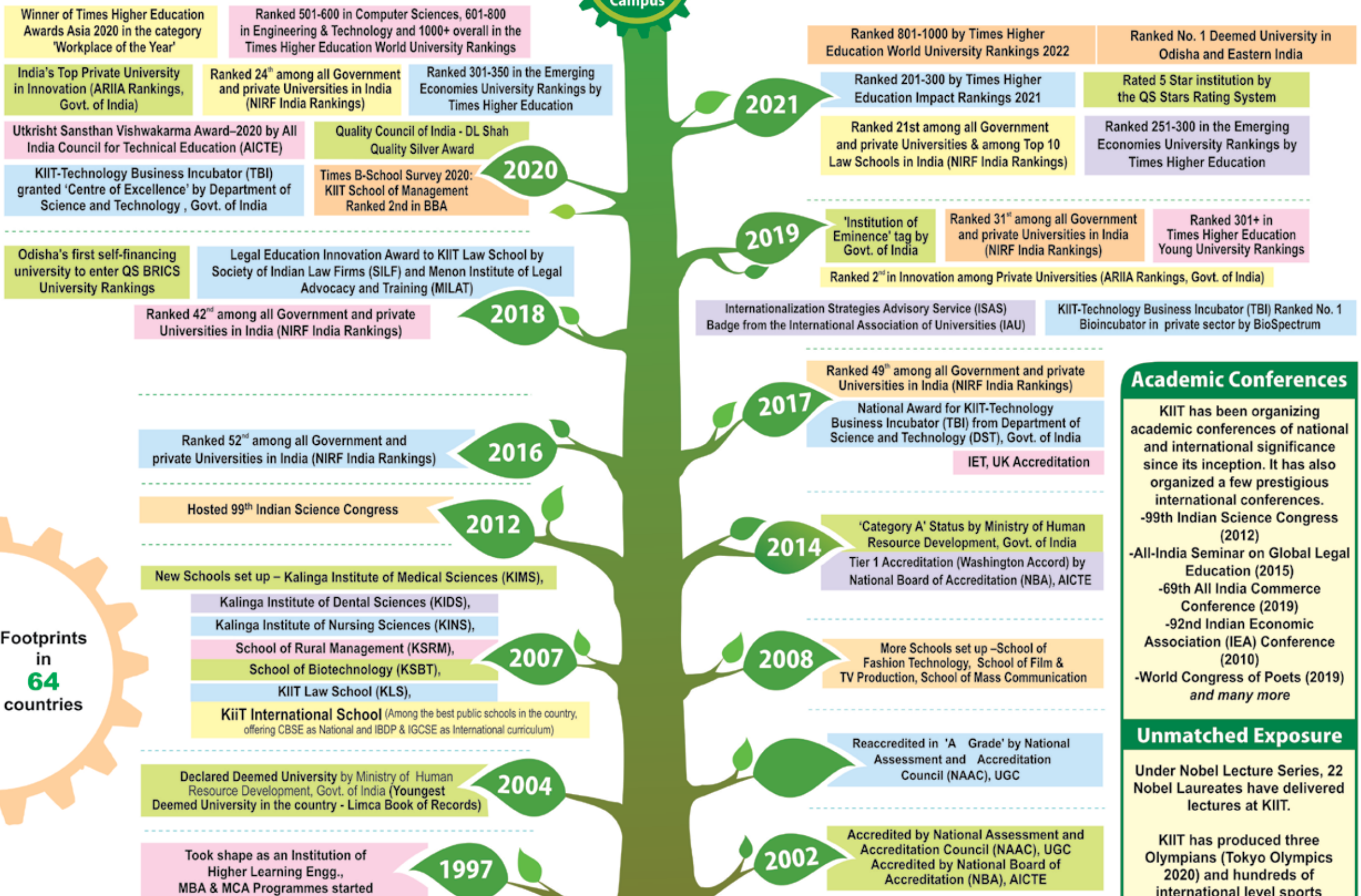
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