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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SC quashes skin-to-skin judgement of Bombay HC

NEW DELHI, NOV 18 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Thursday quashed the Bombay High Court verdict which had held that no offence of sexual assault under the POCSO Act is made out if there is no direct skin-to-skin contact between an accused and victim.

A bench headed by Justice U U Lalit set aside the high court judgement, and said the most important ingredient of constituting sexual assault is sexual intent and not skin-to-skin with the child.

Purpose of the law cannot be to allow the offender to escape the meshes of the law, the apex court said.

"We have held that when the legislature has expressed clear intention, the courts cannot create ambiguity in the provision. It is right that courts cannot be over-zealous in creating ambiguity," the bench, also comprising Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Bela M Trivedi, said.

The top court, which was hearing separate appeals of Attorney General and the National Commission for women (NCW), had on January 27 stayed the order which had acquitted a man under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act saying groping a minor's breast without 'skin to skin contact' cannot be termed as sexual assault.

The sessions court had sentenced the man to three years of imprisonment for the offences under the POCSO Act as also under IPC section 354. The sentences were to run concurrently.

The high court, however, acquitted him under the POCSO Act while upholding his conviction under IPC section 354.

Covid claims one more in Sikkim, toll reaches 402

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 NOV:**

Sikkim's Covid death toll reached 402 on Thursday with a patient passing away at the Central Referral Hospital here in the past 24 hours. The 401st Covid death in the State had been reported on 15 Nov.

In the meantime, nine new cases were reported in the past 24 hours from the testing of 352 samples to give Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 2.5%. Of these, seven cases were registered in East District and one each in West and South Districts. All the ten samples screened in North district yesterday returned negative.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department, while five cases were picked up in RT-PCR testing of 146 samples, four were detected in rapid antigen testing of 204 samples.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has now reached 32,129.

On the other hand, 13 more COVID patients were discharged from home isolation on Wednesday after making full recoveries to further improve the number of the recovered cases here to 31,287. Sikkim now has a recovery rate 98.4%.

There are 106 active cases of Covid in the State at present, of whom only 19 are in hospital and the rest are on their way to recovery under home isolation.

Of those in hospital, four are in ICU.

Meanwhile, in continuation of the vaccination drive, 1,099 people received Covishield shots yesterday, of whom 987 completed their vaccination schedule with the second dose and 112 received their first dose. 4,61,291 people, comprising 89.22% of Sikkim's adult population, are now fully vaccinated against the virus, having received both their Covishield shots.

Xth Sustainable Mountain Development Summit begins in Darjeeling

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 NOV:**

The Tenth Sustainable Mountain Development Summit, organized by the Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative (DHI) in collaboration Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI), got underway today with the inaugural session setting the tone and context for the theme of the Summit- "Towards One Health; Making our mountains resilient".

DHI president, Wing Commander (Retd.) Praful Rao, in his welcome address, emphasized the challenge of theme which was still "largely conceptual and lodged in the future" but due to the situation created by COVID 19 the Summit needed to be relevant.

PD Rai, the IMI president, in turn, reminded the participants of the just-concluded COP 26 and the relevance it holds for discussions in the Summit, especially with commitments made by India to go carbon-neutral by 2070.



He hoped that undertones of COP26 will be recurrent in the discussions of the Summit and emphasized the inclusive vision of IMI which is "Make India proud of our Mountains" where at the local level minds, hearts and hands of people have to come together.

BV Umadevi, Additional Secretary MoEFCC stated that One Health was an approach that the Government of India has taken up and outlined some of the measures being undertaken in this regard. Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Sci-

entist of World Health Organisation delivered a comprehensive keynote address and said the One Health approach must be multi-disciplinary and collaborative and emphasized on the need for scientific tools and data to be used and said that for this capacity building and empowerment at the local level is critical. Mr Pema Gyamtso Director General ICIMOD Kathmandu said that ICIMOD would be working closely with IMI and partners on such issues of relevance.

During the panel discussion Dr. Vandana

Shiva of Navdanya aptly opined that "Planetary health and human health is One Health because we are part of the planet. Biodiversity is the weave in the tapestry of One Health which begins with soil health. She also warned that we are in a planetary crisis and a health crisis".

Mr Ravi Singh CEO and Secretary General WWF spoke on the environmental issues of concern with regard to the planet and said that business as usual is no longer an option. According to Dr. Mathur, the Chairman of National Biodiversity Authority the clear message from the panel discussion was the interconnectedness of human health, animal health and the environmental health in order to address the planetary crisis we are in now.

In the next two days of the Summit there will be further deliberations on-One Health response to Zoonosis, Biodiversity and Ecosystems for One Health, Sustainable Food Systems, and Governance & Institutional processes that promote One Health. The other flagship programme in the Summit is the Mountain Legislators' Meet. This time the Plastic Waste in the Mountains will be discussed. Youth has been an important part of designing the Summit and youth perspectives on One Health will be another important part of the programme.

Mallika aces CSC Olympiad, bags all-India Rank 01 in Physics



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 18 NOV:**

Mallika Bhandari has secured the All India Rank 1st in Physics for Grade 11 in the Common Service Center [CSC] Olympiad for the year 2020-21. She secured 92% to top in Physics from among more than 16,000 students who took the exam.

Mallika, the daughter of Menuka and Mahadev Bhandari of Dentam, West District, is a student at Dentam Senior Secondary School.

At a brief function held here at the CSC Centre in Udisha Coaching on Thursday, CSC state coordinator, Tinku Das, handed over the certificate and a laptop to Mallika for her feat.

Speaking to SummitTimes, Mallika expressed happiness and satisfaction on securing the first position in all-India ranking in her first attempt itself.

"It was a very happy moment for me when I got a call from CSC head-office in Delhi congratulating me on securing the first position in the all India ranking in my subject," she said.

She further expressed that this achievement has motivated her to do even better in her academics. She has decided to sit for the Olympiad again later this year.

Mallika thanked her parents and family for their support and encouragement and CSC academy for providing her the opportunity.

The CSC state coordinator informed that the prize distribution ceremony was scheduled to be held earlier at the national level in Delhi, but because of the Covid guidelines, it was organised at the state level. He mentioned that the CSC Olympiad is held at the national level for students from Class III to XII. The objective is to create a competitive academic spirit among students and promote digital education.

He added that CSC academy has been working to prepare students for upcoming competitive examinations.

Mr Das mentioned that registration for the next CSC Olympiad is underway at present and called on students to register online at cscolympiad.com or by visiting their nearest CSC center. He informed that more than 2,000 students from Sikkim had participated in the last edition of the Olympiad.

INDUSTRIES MINISTER ATTENDS NE MSME CONCLAVE "Rate of credit finance to MSMEs only 4% in Sikkim"

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 NOV:**

The North East MSME Conclave on Promoting Opportunities for MSMEs in the North Eastern Region was held today in Guwahati, Assam, a press release informs.

The conclave was presided over by Union Minister for MSME, Narayan Rane, in which Chief Ministers, Ministers, Secretary Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India and Officials from the North East States and Sikkim participated.

As per the release, Minister, Commerce & Industries, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Sikkim, Bedu Singh Panth along with Additional Chief Secretary, Dr K. Jayakumar and Yashoda Chettri

were at the Conference presenting the progress made in the State of Sikkim in the MSME Sector and placing the needs, requirements and expectations of the entrepreneurs and enterprises from Sikkim.

Sikkim has taken it upon itself to usher in entrepreneurial culture that can propel the growth of MSME units, he stated.

Mr Panth appraised the forum that Sikkim offers an industry friendly environment, evidenced by the fact that 124 Industrial Units have already set up their operations and are functioning successfully. At present the profile and portfolio of Industries include pharmaceutical

companies, food processing units, handicrafts & handlooms, light engineering, organic agro produce, agro processed packaged food units, spices, ginger, buckwheat and horticultural crops.

He informed the gathering that there are 1087 MSME units registered under Udyam Portal in Sikkim with 734 units in East District, 47 units in North District, 179 units in South District and 127 units in West District.

He specifically pointed out that Sikkim is governed under the special dispensation of Article 371F of the Constitution of India and the fact that many laws which have been enacted in the past are being retained with improvements where

ever necessary by pursuing legislative and executive actions for fulfilment of requirements and compliances.

As regards ease of doing business, he appraised that workshops have been held with identification of processes which are being taken up for automation with re-engineered business processes, reducing the compliance burden and implementing a spate of measures - ranging from auto-renewals subject to required compliances, longer periods for registrations and licensing, simplified forms and reduced formalities for availing various services during the lifecycle of MSME units.

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2ND SIKKIM BUILD 2021 EXHIBITION

Quality Construction For Quality Infrastructure

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18

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November 2021

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CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING EXHIBITION

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INDUSTRIES MINISTER ATTENDS NE MSME CONCLAVE...

He appraised the members of the notification of the special economic zone at Namli 8th Mile Ranipool, East Sikkim, the flatted factory complex which has been approved under the Scheme for Promotion of MSMEs in the NE and Sikkim. The efforts taken to submit another proposal for flatted factory to be set up in Jorethang South Sikkim, three bamboo processing units at Poklok Kamrang in South Sikkim, Marchak in East Sikkim, was highlighted.

The progress in the setting up of the MSE Cluster Development Project being implemented for production of the unique Sikkim carpets at Okhrey and the projects that has been prepared for submission under the Sfruti Cluster Scheme of the Ministry of MSME, relating to Shitake Mushroom Projects at Soreng, Sumbuk and Namthang; Vermi-compost production at Soreng, Leisure water Sports at DANS Energy Dam Pipaley, South Sikkim, Ginseng Processing Unit at Upper Sadam, South Sikkim and a Handicraft cluster at Dong Poklok Kamrang, South Sikkim was mentioned by the Minister.

As regards Central Govt. efforts for accelerated growth of MSME units and specifying a target of 20% year on year growth in terms of credit flow to MSME units, the current rate for credit finances to MSME units is only 4% for the state of Sikkim.

He mentioned how entrepreneurs face challenges in respect of fulfilling documentation for proposals to be submitted to the financial institutions under the Schemes of the Central Govt such as StandUp India and Mudra Schemes.

He brought to the attention of the Union Minister the fact that pan India recruitment of bank officials is not giving fruitful results, since these officers consider their posting in hill areas as a compulsory mandated stint that they need to endure and try to avail leave, creating difficulties for the aspiring youth wanting to avail credit flows to establish their units.

He went on to mention that they do not have knowledge of local conditions, aspirations and challenges faced by the local population and suggested that it would be better if the Bank Managers are recruited locally in the NE States and Sikkim.

In his concluding remarks, he mentioned that the extension of NEIDS for another term of five years may not be adequate to attract investors in Sikkim, since it has subsidy cap of Rs 5 crores only.

He pointed to the fact that earlier all the CMs of North East have submitted proposal in one voice to the Prime Minister to extend NEIIPP for another term of 10 years with elaborate provisions of subsidies and many companies have raised this issue.

Advocacy program on PMVDY held at Soreng

GYALSHING, 18 Nov (IPR):

A sub-division level Advocacy program under the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana cum interactive session was organized by the Department of Cooperative at Soreng SDAC Conference Hall today.

With the theme 'Empowering Tribal Communities through Value Addition' the scheme has been sponsored by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) along with the Department of Science and Information Technology as the Nodal Agency and Department of Cooperative as the Implementing Agency.

The Chief Guest for the occasion was the Chairperson for Sikkim State Tribal Welfare Board, PK Subba and accompanying him were the Deputy Registrar (Cooperative Department), RH Subba; ADO (Agriculture, Soreng), Manish Pradhan; HDO (Horticulture, Soreng), DP Sharma, Officials from Forest Department, Manager (SISCO Bank), Paras Karki and the members from Self Help Groups (SGHs) and Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited (MPCS).

The program was then briefly addressed by the Chief Guest, PK Sub-



ba wherein he enlightened about the current Government's vision to make Sikkim a prosperous State. He said that such schemes will cater to those strata of society who are either facing financial hardships or are underprivileged. He further urged the stakeholders to benefit from such schemes and also help the State in becoming self-reliant. In his concluding remarks he expressed his sincere gratitude towards the organizing Department for the invitation and also warmly extended his greetings to everyone present.

The Guest Speaker, former Joint Registrar (South), DR Sharma spoke at length on the history of the Coopera-

tive Movement and its contribution to the socio-economic development of the State.

The program also included the celebration of the 68th All India Cooperative Week, 2021. The theme this year was 'Prosperity through Co-operation'.

Welcoming the gathered audiences, the Deputy Registrar (Cooperative Department), RH Subba spoke extensively about the scheme and the main benefactors. It is a pan India Scheme launched on April 2018 for socio-economic development of the Tribal population in the country by harnessing the wealth of the forest, he informed. He enumerated that a to-

tal of Eighty Van Dhan Vikash Kendras have been sanctioned for Sikkim wherein Twenty-two have been sanctioned for West and amongst it, Eleven Kendras have been duly sanctioned under Soreng Sub-Division.

Mr Subba stated that each Kendra consists of Fourteen SGHs and One MPCS. With a total of Three Hundred beneficiaries which includes Two Hundred and Eighty individuals from SGHs and Twenty members from MPCS and that at least 60 percent of the members must be of Tribal community. The personal data of each beneficiary including their bank account details will be uploaded on the Gov-

ernment portal by the authorized supervisor of each jurisdiction and also a sum of Rupees Fifteen Lakhs for each Kendra will be provided by the Central Government, he further added. To learn more about the scheme one can log onto the website www.trifed.tribal.gov.in.

Further briefing the audience, Durga Devi Chettri, Cooperative Inspector (Soreng) said that the scheme is an initiative targeting the livelihood generation for tribal gatherers who are dependent mostly on forest produces and transforming them into entrepreneurs. It is a large-scale systematic plan that will greatly help in improving the financial stature of the benefactors, she quoted. The Cooperative Inspector highlighted that under this scheme proper training and accessibility to required equipment will be provided for each Kendra.

Speaking about the occasion, Cooperative Inspector (Soreng), Sisir Raj Gurung briefed about the week-long celebration which commenced from 14 November has had a new topic for seven consecutive days.

The program concluded with a Vote of Thanks delivered by Senior Audit Officer (Soreng), Rohit Rasaily.

Basilakha farmers trained on orchid cultivation



Gangtok, 18 Nov (PIB):

A training program was conducted on "Practical guidance for successful orchid cultivation and vermicomposting" at ICAR-NRC for Orchids, Pakyong, East Sikkim under Tribal Sub Plan today.

Ten farmers (six women and four men) from Basilakha, East Sikkim participated in the training. Nodal officer, Tribal Sub Plan, Dr Siddhartha Sankar Biswas addressed the farmers on Orchid potting media

preparation, Nutrient management of Orchids and Vermicomposting and Co-nodal officer, Tribal Sub Plan, Kalaivanan NS on Orchid disease and pest management. The farmers were also provided with practical demonstration of Orchid cultivation and vermicomposting. At the end of the training programs some agricultural inputs like poly sheet, shade net, plastic pots, vermi beds, vermi worms were distributed to each farmer.

Legal Awareness on Gender Issues held at Namchi



BIKASH CHETTRI NAMCHI, 18 Nov:

Sikkim State Commission for Women organized One Day Legal Awareness Programme on "Gender and gender issues and other relevant provisions for Women and Child" at Sikkim Government College Namchi, today. The programme was funded by Ministry Law and Justice.

The awareness programme commenced with a welcome address by Principal of the college, Deepak Tiwari. Member secretary/Project Director, Yousa Lachenpa delivered an introductory note on the key elements of the Legal Awareness Programme.

Center Administrator, One Stop Center, Jorethang, Sangita Gurung spoke on the Domestic Violence Act and other relevant provisions for Women and Child. Like-

wise, Panel Advocate, District Sessions Court, Namchi, Sushila Thapa addressed the house on "Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace Act 2013, POCSO Act" other relevant provisions for Women and Child.

The programme ended with a brief speech on issues relating to gender and other relevant provisions for Women & Child by the Chairperson, Sikkim State Commission for Women, Chungkipu Lepcha.

Asst Professor Department of Commerce, Tshering C Lachhungpa, Member Gender Sensitisation Unit Namchi Government College delivered the vote of thanks.

The programme enlightened the house on the various Acts, laws, and provisions as a constitutional measure for the protection of rights of women and children.

Ajoy Edward asks supporters to choose name for new party

SMRITA KHAWAS DARJEELING, 18 Nov:

Approximately two months after resigning from Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), Ajoy Edward is all set to launch a new political party.

Mr Edward today announced that his team has shortlisted four names for his new party and urged supporters to convey their choice through WhatsApp or other messaging service.

The four names are Jan Shakti Party, Jan Kalyan Party, Jan Awaaz Party and Hamro Party.



"I want to request all my supporters and well-wishers to choose one name for our party and I will announce the final choice in Mirik on 25 November 2021 and on the same day we will release the party flag as well," said Mr Edward.

First SGAY house for Sangha beneficiaries inaugurated

WANGCHUK BHUTIA DIKCHU, 18 Nov:

The first Sikkim Garib Awas Yojna [SGAY] house constructed for a Sangha beneficiary was inaugurated by Sangha MLA and Rural Development Minister, Sonam Lama today. The house belongs to Phurzung Lepcha of Rakshay, East Sikkim, under Tumin-Lingee constituency.

Present on the occasion were ADC Development Gangtok, Radha Pradhan, BDO Tintek, Tshering Norgyal Theeng, Panchayats, AE BAC, Prasad Lamichaney, JE BAC, Anita Chettri, SKM Tumin-Lingee In-charge, Samdup Bhutia, SKM CLC president, Paras Nepal, and other officials.

The Minister also inaugurated three more houses belonging to Passang Lepcha of Lower Samdong, Khem Lall Gautam and Som Nath Gautam of Raley, East Sikkim. He also visited the Mani Lhakhang at 3rd Mile Rakshay and sanctioned Rs.8 lakh for the construction and upgradation of the Mani Lhakhang.

Likewise, he also sanctioned Rs.5 lakh on the spot for the construction of an additional structure at Katyani Mandir at Sokpay basti which was demanded by the Ward panchayat and the Mandir committee.

On his way to Raley, the Minister met the affected landowners of NHPC Teesta Stage V at Jang Village whose



houses have been severely damaged by the reservoir. Here, he stated that their demands are being considered and he is likely to conduct a coordination meeting with NHPC officials, DC East and the

affected landowners soon.

The Minister congratulated the beneficiaries and extended his gratitude to the Chief Minister on behalf of all the monks of Sikkim for awarding the scheme to underprivileged monks. He also

stated that this scheme was announced by the Chief Minister during the year 2014 for making Sikkim a poverty-free state.

The beneficiaries also expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister and SKM Area In-charge for the scheme.

Rakdong Monastery hosts prayers for new Mani Lhakhang

SUMMIT REPORT RAKDONG, 18 Nov:

A puja was held at the newly constructed Mani Lhakhang complex at Rakdong Monastery in East Sikkim today. Genjong Rinpoche presided over the function and dedicated the shrine.

The ceremony was also attended Minister RDD cum Sangha MLA, Sonam Lama, BDO Tintek, Tshering Norgyal Theeng, In-charge SKM Party Tumin-Lingee, Samdup Bhutia, lamas, panchayats, officials and devotees from different areas.

The organizing com-

mittee in coordination with RINA Association of Rakdong felicitated three lamas from Rakdong Monastery namely; Lama Thupden Samdup Lepcha, Lama Tshampa Tshering Lepcha and Lama Nima Tshering Lepcha for their contributions towards the monastery.

General Secretary, organizing committee, TS Lepcha expressed his gratitude on behalf of the monastery to all the devotees and well-wishers for their support.

The Rinpoche also offered "Mani Wang" to the devotees.



4 SGAY homes inaugurated in Lachen

SUMMIT REPORT

LACHEN, 18 NOV:

Four houses constructed under the Sikkim Garib Awaz Yojana in Lachen-Mangan constituency were inaugurated today by PWD Minister, Samdup Lepcha, who is also the area MLA.

The SGAY homes belong to Dorjee Lachenpa, Sonam Topden Lachenpa, Ongtey Lachenpa and Karma Thendup Lachenpa, all in Lachen.

After the inaugurations, the Minister met with the public to heard out their grievances and suggestions related to works.



Cabinet meets and sanctions

GANGTOK, 18 Nov [IPR]: During the recently conducted Cabinet Meeting at Tashiling Secretariat, following proposals have been approved and sanctioned by the Government.

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakhs as Grant – in – aid to the Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (SSOCA).

BUILDINGS & HOUSING DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs. 142.21 lakhs for replacement of roof, damp proof treatment and other allied works at Old Raj Bhawan, Gangtok, East Sikkim and financial sanction of Rs. 100 lakhs in the current financial year.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and en bloc financial sanction of Rs. 2,97,95,000/- as Grant – in – Aid to Sikkim Khadi and Village Industries Board and post facto confirmation of the financial sanction of Rs. 83,45,000/- released as Grant for the first quarter.

- Administrative approval and en bloc financial sanction of Rs. 8.00 Cr. As Grants – in – Aid to Temi Tea Estate for the financial year, 2021-22 and ex- post facto financial sanction of Rs. 1,84,49,000 released as grants for the first quarter.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Approval for upgradation of Lungzik Primary School to Lungzik Junior High School under West District.

- Approval for regularization of 4 (four) Resource Teachers/ Special Educators under Samagra Shiksha Project.

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 650.00 lakhs towards release of 2nd and final instalment of Grant – in – Aid to ATTC, Bardang and CCCT, Chisopani for the current financial year @ Rs. 325.00 lakhs each.

FOREST & ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 90.89 lakhs for implementation of Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme for the year 2021-22.

- Approval of the Annual Plan of Operations of JICA- assisted Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project for the year 2021-22 amounting to Rs. 61.91 Crores.

POWER DEPARTMENT

- Approval and financial sanction of 46.48 Lakhs for work "Diversification of 11KV Sichey/Ranka Trunk Line with Installation of 250 KVA, 11/0.43 KV Outdoor Type Dist Transformer for providing service connection to Medical College at Lower Sichey, Under Ranka S/D East Sikkim".

PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval for construction of new reservoir and dedicated water supply line to District Hospital, Singtam, East Sikkim at a total cost of Rs. 45.13 lakhs and financial sanction of Rs. 43.00 lakhs in the current financial year

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 26,46,141/- for permanent shifting of Raw Water Mains along Saleyley landslide zone of Ravangla Water Supply.

- Administrative approval of Rs. 106.00 lakhs for Augmentation/ Upgradation of water supply system to Pani House and Deorali Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim and financial sanction of Rs. 20.00 lakhs in the current financial year.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 28,85,970.00 for Strengthening

and Remodeling of the existing RCC Clear Water Reservoir at Ravangla, South Sikkim.

- Administrative approval of Rs. 138.49 lakhs for augmentation of Raw Water Mains of Namchi W/S and financial sanction of Rs. 30.00 lakhs in the current financial year.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval for the construction of Hostel and Boundary Fencing at Government Industrial Training Institute, Gyalshing, West Sikkim at a cost of Rs. 215.93 lakhs and financial sanction of Rs.202.00 lakhs in the current financial year.

TOURISM & CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs. 1153.48 lakh for development of tourism infrastructure at Temi in South Sikkim and financial sanction of Rs. 200.00 lakhs in the current financial year.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction for release of Rs. 150.00 lakhs to STDC as Grant-in-Aid partly for management of Helicopter Services and for payment of salary and wages.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and sanction of Rs. 48.82 Lakhs for providing three (3) phase power supply to New Shopping Complex at Lall Bazar, Singtam, East Sikkim.

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 195.53 lakhs for implementation of Sub- Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) for the year 2021-22.

- Approval and sanction of Rs.222.22 lakhs for implementation of Rainfed Area Development (RAD) scheme during 2021-22.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & VETERINARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 50.00 lakhs for construction of Veterinary Dispensary at Upper Rimbi, West Sikkim.

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 48.375 lakhs for Propagation of Backyard Broiler Poultry Farming in the State under National Livestock Mission.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 63.36 lakhs for distribution of Goat to economically backward farmers of Sikkim under National Livestock Mission.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 85.80 lakhs for distribution of Banpala Sheep to the economically backward farmers of Sikkim under National Livestock Mission- 2021-2022.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 262.64 lakhs for procurement of Shoes and Socks for school students for the Academic Session 2022.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 3342.29 lakhs for release of fund to Rural Local Bodies for the financial year 2021-22.

TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs. 223.39 lakhs for major renovation and revamping of Sikkim House at Middleton Street, Kolkata and financial sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakhs in the current financial year and administrative approval for undertaking the work departmentally.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval to carry out the "Basic Infrastructure Development and Beautification of Nayabazar in West Sikkim" at the

cost of Rs. 96.00 lakhs and financial sanction of Rs. 50.00 lakhs in the current financial year.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND VETERINARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs. 1398.72 lakhs for implementation of various activities for fisheries development under the scheme 'Blue Revolution – Integrated Development of Fisheries'; and financial sanction of Rs. 831.26 lakhs in the current financial year.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakhs for implementation of the Mukhya Mantri Matsya Utpadan Yojana for the year 2021-22.

COMMERCE & INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT

- Approval of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Policy, 2021.

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 50 lakhs to be released to Sikkim Industrial Development & Investment Corporation Limited (SIDICO) as Grant – in – Aid for the financial year 2021-22.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Approval for renaming of Sikkim University as Khangchendzonga State University, Sikkim through an Ordinance.

- Post facto approval and sanction of Rs. 1,33,16,560/- for Supply of Lab Equipments, Furnitures, Software and Library Items by SIMFED and release of balance payment of Rs. 69.05 lakhs.

FOOD & CIVIL SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT

- Approval for laying of Rules and Notifications before the State Legislative Assembly, as required under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 6.85 Crores for procurement of equipments for Super Specialty services at STNM Hospital and District Hospitals at Namchi and Gyalshing.

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 3.92 Crores for procurement of equipments for Dedicated Covid Care Hospital at SICB Karfector and District Hospital Namchi.

- Approval and sanction 223.72 lakhs for activities under National Ayush Mission and Operationalization of Ayush Health and Wellness Centres for the financial year 2021-22.

HOME DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 4,71,70,185/- for installation of CCTV Cameras in all Police Stations in Sikkim.

LAND REVENUE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

- Approval to introduce the Sikkim (Re- Organization of Districts) Bill, 2021 in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly

LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

- Approval of the Cabinet for recommending to the Governor for summoning the session of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

POWER DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 174.51 lakhs for Online Power Billing IT Services for the year 2020-2021.

PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of Rs. 460.59 lakhs for "Upgradation and Improvement of Water Supply Scheme of Soreng under Soreng Sub-Division" and financial sanction of Rs. 150.00 lakhs.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 57,28,920/- for implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Gram-

in.

- Approval and sanction of Rs.1147.94 lakhs for release to Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission for implementation of National Rural Livelihood Mission.

- Approval of the revised cost of Rs. 5,32,59,195/- with an additional administrative approval of Rs. 2,13,02,703/- for the project "Construction of 40 mtr span steel bridge over Takcham River along Rural Connectivity Road from Nandok to LLHP to Nandok Saureni in East Sikkim.

SPORTS & YOUTH AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval of the project cost of Rs. 756.55 lakhs for Upgradation of existing Football Stadium at Jorethang and financial sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakhs.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 3241.55 lakhs for implementation of Aganwadi Services (ICDS) Scheme in the State of Sikkim during financial year 2021-22.

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 481.45 lakhs for implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) Scheme in the State of Sikkim during financial year 2021-22.

- Administrative approval of Rs. 350.00 lakhs for construction of one SC Girls' Hostel at Government Degree College Rhenock at Rhenock Rungdung in East Sikkim under Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana and financial sanction of Rs. 155.00 lakhs.

- Approval for categorization of 'Chettri' and 'Bahun' communities under one single nomenclature of 'Khas'.

- Financial sanction of Rs. 137.50 lakhs from the Central Share and Rs. 17.50 lakhs from the State Share for construction of OBC Girls Hostel at Government Degree College, Burtuk, East Sikkim.

- Approval and financial sanction of Rs. 80.00 lakhs for release of one time grant under the scheme "Sikkim Grant of Award for Marriage with Disabled Persons".

TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval or Rs. 595.98 lakhs and financial sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakh for development of tourist amenities at Khecheperi in West Sikkim.

- Approval and sanction of Rs. 2,30,00,000/- for release as Grant – in – Aid to Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), Sajong, Rumtek.

- Administrative approval of Rs. 4960.64 lakhs for construction and beautification of Rolu Mandir in South Sikkim and financial sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakhs.

- Administrative approval of the total cost of Rs. 52166.55 lakh for Mega Home Stay Project.

- Proposal seeks administrative approval of Rs. 716.22 lakh for remodelling and upgradation of Burtuk Heliport in East Sikkim and financial sanction of Rs. 100.00 lakhs.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Administrative approval for revision of cost of the work "Extension of Central Park at Namchi, South Sikkim" from Rs. 2127.99 lakhs to Rs. 2650.25 lakhs.

- Administrative approval for revision of cost of work "Construction of Approach Road from Gumpa Dara via Leksey Colony to Bega in West Sikkim" from Rs. 287.46 lakhs to Rs. 473.33 lakhs and financial approval of Rs. 185.87 lakhs.

WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

- Approval of Rs. 519.00 lakhs for Restoration and Clearance of Defunct/ Partially Defunct Minor Irrigation Channels and financial sanction of Rs. 200.00 lakhs.

State level theme based role play and folk dance competition

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 NOV:

"State Level Theme Based Role Play and Folk Dance Competition" was organised by Population Education Cell of SCERT Sikkim on Wednesday, a press release informs.

The programme was chaired by Secretary, Anil Raj Rai, Education Department, Government of Sikkim as the chief guest in the presence of Director SCERT, Dr Rabin Chhetri, Joint Directors, Faculty members and Hols of SCERT, Principals of DIET, trainees of DIET Gangtok, students and teachers of participating school from four districts.

Director, SCERT, Dr Rabin Chhetri in his welcome address highlighted the background of the programme and thanked the chief guest and other dignitaries along with the schools for their participation in the programme.

A total of 12 schools selected from the district level competition in the above two categories participated in the competition. The format of the programme was slightly modified which included virtual screening of the videos of theme based folk dance and role play followed by one to one interaction of the judges with the participants. Substance abuse,



safe use of gadgets & internet, women empowerment, respect to elders and conservation of nature were some of the themes which were highlighted through the role plays and folk dances.

Govt SSS Tadong, Govt SS Passingdong and Tika Lal Niroula SSS Central Pendam secured 1st, 2nd and 3rd position respectively in the role play category whereas Govt. SSS Darap, Govt SS Deythang and Govt SSS Yuksom secured 1st, 2nd and 3rd position in folk dance category in the competition. From the above, the schools that secured first position in each category will represent the state in National level competition.

The competition was judged by Medical Officer, Dr Kuljan Lama, School Health, H&FW Department, Government of Sikkim, Mingma Tshering Lepcha, Artist,

Culture Department, Government of Sikkim and Artist & Choreographer, Anu Pradhan.

The programme also witnessed felicitation of Peon of NPE Cell, Prakash Rai, SCERT for the service rendered by him to the department and Dr Kuljan Lama for his contribution towards various programmes and activities of Adolescence Education. Dr Shanti Ram Adhikari gave a brief account of the services rendered by Prakash Rai since his appointment in the Population Education Cell from 1984 till date.

The chief guest in his address congratulated the participating teams and urged the participants and the coordinators to work upon improvement in the quality by relating it to the themes provided.

The programme was coordinated by Population Education Cell of SCERT.

SC quashes skin-to-skin judgement of Bombay HC

NEW DELHI, NOV 18 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Thursday quashed the Bombay High Court verdict which had held that no offence of sexual assault under the POCSO Act is made out if there is no direct skin-to-skin contact between an accused and victim.

A bench headed by Justice U U Lalit set aside the high court judgement, and said the most important ingredient of constituting sexual assault is sexual intent and not skin-to-skin with the child.


Purpose of the law cannot be to allow the offender to escape the meshes of the law, the apex court said. "We have held that when the legislature has expressed clear intention, the courts cannot create ambiguity in the provision. It is right that courts cannot be overzealous in creating ambiguity," the bench, also comprising Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Bela M Trivedi, said.

The top court, which was hearing separate appeals of Attorney General and the National Commission for women (NCW), had on January 27 stayed the order which had ac-

quitted a man under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act saying groping a minor's breast without 'skin to skin contact' cannot be termed as sexual assault.

The sessions court had sentenced the man to three years of imprisonment for the offences under the POCSO Act as also under IPC section 354. The sentences were to run concurrently.

The high court, however, acquitted him under the POCSO Act while upholding his conviction under IPC section 354.

 <p>GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM EDUCATION DEPARTMENT DIRECTORATE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION TASHILING, GANGTOK</p>	
No. GOS/DTE/2021/ 1683	Date : 17/11/2021
NOTICE	
<p>It is notified that the registered applicants for BSc. Nursing and B.Pharm State quota seats are required to fill-in their choices in State web portal www.statequota.sikkim.gov.in in view of the receipt of additional BSc. Nursing and B.Pharm seats from RIMS, Manipur and RIPANS, Aizawl. The date schedule for choice filling against the seats are indicated below :-</p>	
<p>(i) BSc. Nursing, RIMS, Manipur/BSc. Nursing, RIPANS Aizawl</p> <p>(a) Choice filling opens : 19th November from 10:00 a.m. (b) Choice locking closes : 23rd November 2021 at 4:30 p.m.</p>	
<p>(ii) B.Pharm, RIPANS, Aizawl</p> <p>(a) Choice filling opens : 19th November from 10:00 a.m. (b) Choice locking closes : 23rd November 2021 at 4:30 p.m.</p>	
<p>Please note that applicants who have not paid online registration fees of Rs. 150/- earlier are advised to pay the registration fees first and proceed for choice filling.</p>	
<p>No extension of dates for choice filling/choice locking is permissible.</p>	
<p>Online registration/choice filling does not confer applicant a right to quota seat. The allotment of seats will be purely on merit of the marks obtained in the qualifying examination vis a vis reservation and roster policy of the State Government.</p>	
<p>Candidates are advised to regularly log on to Education Department web portal www.sikkimhrdd.org where all information will be uploaded from time to time.</p>	
<p>Joint Secretary Technical Education Education Department Government of Sikkim</p>	

Committees Require Commitment

Their failure in basic tasks snowballs into across the board deficiencies

One understands that agencies and committees instituted by the government have only so much motivation, leeway, incentive or even interest in going after other agencies of the same establishment when it comes to fixing accountability. But something needs to be done if such committees are not delivering even on the basic task of keeping track or maintaining at least a semblance of an over-watch. The Annual Technical Report on Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies for the year ended 31 March 2016 by the Office of the Accountant General (Audit), Sikkim, tabled in the Legislative Assembly during the two-day session which concluded on Tuesday paints a rather dismal picture of the functioning of various committees constituted for smooth function of PRIs. And this is not the first time that such shortcomings have been flagged. In fact, the lethargy enumerated in the latest report have appeared in past reviews as well, but either no one is reading, or more worryingly, no one cares.

So, the State Government has constituted a string of such committees and appointed/ nominated people into them as well, but there is a big slip between the tasked assignments and performance on ground. For instance, anyone who lives in rural Sikkim would be aware of Social Audit-cum-Vigilance Committees which, on paper, are required to ensure that works are executed at Panchayat level as per estimate. They should also monitor the quality of works and are to be comprised of a “wide spectrum” of stakeholders, users and marginalized and vulnerable sections of society including women and senior citizens of the respective Gram Panchayats. The Audit Comment accompanying the report on “position of functioning” of this committee informs that it “simply certified” works executed by the GPs “without exercising any checks”. Adequate monitoring was not undertaken, hence quality of work “as envisaged in the estimate” was not ensured. As a result, the “certificate” issued by these committees were a “mere formality” so that payments could be released to the contractors. Then there are the important, but similarly inept Disaster Management Committees which have been found to be “largely ineffective” due to lack of training or involvement as a result of which “victims could not be given immediate relief at the time of need”. And really, when has anyone heard of the involvement of DMCs in the wake of any disaster in Sikkim. Sure, the district administration responds and delivers relief, but the disaster management committees surface only occasionally in press releases informing about meetings of drills. Then there is the Block Development Committee which might have a wider jurisdiction territorially than the Social Audit committees but that does not make them any more serious or effective. The Audit Comment for them refers to them as “largely non-functional”; this, due to absence of proper coordination among line departments, DPC and Block Office. And this comes at a cost because in its non-functionality, “identification, scrutiny, implementation of schemes and proper monitoring of schemes for overall development of the GP and Block could not be done”.

One would have thought that the State Government’s flagship CATCH programme and the State’s Total Sanitation status would have provided the required impetus to the Village Health Sanitation Committees to be better performing. But even that has not happened for these VHSCs which the Audit has found “not adequately functional”. Since these committees did not bother to carry out household surveys or analyse health issues and health conditions of the villages, sanitation facilities were not created adequately and community toilets were not maintained in hygienic condition. Everyone is aware of the result, now we also know why. There are, apparently, also District Technical Support Committees in Sikkim which are required to support the preparation of District Perspective Plans for each sector by coordinating with the PRIs and technical experts. What the Audit discovered was that estimates prepared by the GPs were not technically vetted by the DTSCs and this resulted in “deficiency in preparation of estimate and also execution of a number of works without preparation of estimates”. The litter abandoned and/ or over-budget projects across the state stand testimony to this. A frequent complaint received from the villages is of the lack of proper drinking water supply. Water Supply & Sanitation Committees exist for preparation of Village Action Plans deliver “source to mouth” water supply proposals. These committees have remained “largely ineffective” the Audit Comment puts on record but that is being polite since records show that preparation of proposal for submission to district authorities has not even been initiated.

In its recommendations to the State Government, the auditors have suggested that utilisation certificates be submitted in time to avoid delayed or short release of funds; financial management be strengthened to avoid diversion of funds and/ or extra and avoidable expenses; programme execution be strengthened and dedicated and effective monitoring systems be established. All of these can be achieved if only the already existing bouquet of committees were somehow convinced to their basic tasks effectively enough.

Adele 30: the psychology of why sad songs make us feel good



SIMON MCCARTHY-JONES
THECONVERSATION.COM

Adele’s new album, 30, is finally available. Last month, hundreds of millions of us streamed its first single, Easy On Me. This song evokes feelings not easily put into words. But we can probably agree it is a sad song.

It isn’t obvious that we should like sad music. Sadness is usually a feeling we try to avoid. An alien might expect us to find such music depressing and disliked.

Yet, sad music pulls us in and lifts us up. So, why does hearing sad music feel so good?

THE BIOLOGY OF SAD MUSIC

Let’s start with biological theories. When we experience real-life loss, or empathise with another’s pain, hormones such as prolactin and oxytocin are released within us. These help us cope with loss and pain. They do so by making us feel calmed, consoled, and supported.

Feeling Adele’s pain, or recalling our own, may cause such chemical changes within us. Clicking on Adele’s song may be like clicking on our own metaphorical morphine drip.

The jury is still out on this theory. One study found no evidence that sad music increases prolactin levels. Yet, other studies have hinted at a role for prolactin and oxytocin in making sad music feel good.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SAD MUSIC

A key reason we enjoy sad songs is because they profoundly “move” us. This experience is sometimes called kama muta, a Sanskrit term meaning “moved by love”. Feeling moved can involve chills, goosebumps, a flood of emotions (including romantic ones), a warmth in our chest, and elation.

But why do we feel moved? The American writer James Baldwin got at this when he reflected: “The things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.” Similarly, feeling moved can come from us suddenly feeling closer to other people.

This may explain why the people most likely to feel moved by sad music are those high in empathy. Indeed, when we have listened to 30 we may turn to reaction videos to see how others feel. This lets us share an emotional experience with others. A sense of communal sharing boosts our feeling of being moved and triggers feelings of comfort and belonging.

A related suggestion is that Adele’s sad music can be a friend to us. It can act as a social surrogate. Sad music can be experienced as an imaginary friend who provides support and empathy after loss.

Feeling moved can also result from memories being triggered of important moments of our lives. Adele’s songs are powerfully nostalgic. It may be nostalgia, rather than sadness, that we enjoy.

Indeed, when people listen to sad music, only around 25% say they actually feel sad. The remainder experience other, often related emotions, most commonly nostalgia. This feeling of nostalgia can help increase our sense of social connectedness, mitigate feelings of meaningless, and reduce anxiety.

A completely different type of psychological theory is that Adele’s songs are emotional gyms. They give us a safe, controlled space in which we can explore simulated sadness. They are the emotional equivalent of Neo sparring with Morpheus in the Matrix movie.

Simulated sadness lets us experiment with and learn from this emotion. We can enhance our empathy, learn to better see things from other people’s perspectives, and try out various responses to sadness. This may make us better prepared for when real loss strikes. Such learning experiences may have evolved to be pleasurable to encourage their use.

MAKING SENSE OF SADNESS

Alternatively, it could be that Adele’s songs aren’t pleasurable

because they are sad or nostalgic. They may be pleasurable simply because they are beautiful. Sadness might just happen to coincide with beauty. Indeed, seeing acts of moral virtue or beauty have been suggested to provoke feelings of elevation and can touch, move and inspire us.

We can also think at the cultural level. Here we can view the pleasure Adele’s songs gives us in terms of the meaning she helps us make. Adele takes hard life experiences and helps makes sense of them.

This is what much tragic art does. It takes the pain and the suffering and the sadness of the world and gives it meaning. As the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once put it, someone who has a why to live can bear almost any how.

Ultimately, Adele’s songs will mean something different to each of us. We listen to sad music when we want to reflect, belong, or relax. We listen to experience beauty, receive comfort or reminisce.

But to all of us Adele’s songs say: you are not alone in your pain. They let us feel her pain, share our suffering, and connect with others past and present. And in the sharedness of our humanity is beauty.

[the writer is Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology and Neuropsychology, Trinity College Dublin]

Coal: Why China and India aren’t the climate villains of COP26

DANIEL PARSONS & MARTIN TAYLOR
THECONVERSATION.COM

The Glasgow Climate Pact urges countries to “accelerate efforts towards phasing down”, rather than “phasing out”, coal power that isn’t mitigated by carbon capture and storage. This subtle change to the text surfaced at the end of COP26, the latest UN climate change conference, at the insistence of India and China. So are these two countries to blame for the summit’s disappointing outcome, as many are suggesting?

Largely formed from plants and animals buried in the Carboniferous period 359 to 299 million years ago, fossil fuels like coal and natural gas are found on every continent. But their global distribution is not even – India and China have significant coal resources, but comparatively little natural gas.

Providing 37% of the world’s energy, coal is the single largest source of electricity generation globally. It is projected to remain the leading energy source into the 2030s, particularly because its use in India in China is still growing.

The UK has reduced its carbon emissions by switching from coal power to natural gas. Coal generated 41% of the country’s electricity in 2012, while natural gas made up 25%. A decade later, coal is almost non-existent in the UK’s energy mix and natural gas is the largest source.

Over half of the 30% reduction in the UK’s carbon emissions during the past decade were due to this switch from coal to gas, with the rest driven by rapid increases in renewable generation.

Why natural gas burns cleaner than coal is due to a quirk of chemistry. The amount of CO₂ produced when a given fuel is burned is largely a function of the elements it’s comprised of. Natural gas is mostly carbon and hydrogen. This combination has a very high energy content relative to other fuels, and so, it produces relatively less CO₂ emissions for each unit of energy burning it generates.

Impurities such as sulphur, which are common in coal, increase how much CO₂ is generated for each unit of heat. This means even the highest quality coal produces double the CO₂



emissions of natural gas per unit of energy.

Energy demand is closely linked with productivity. As economies like China and India rapidly grow and develop, their energy demand is expected to rise in tandem. But their ability to follow the UK in switching from coal to natural gas as a primary source of electricity generation is limited because they have comparatively less natural gas. The UK produces over half its natural gas from the North Sea and has made a lot of progress in ditching coal.

NO MITIGATION WITHOUT AID

Per person, emissions in both China and India are still substantially lower than almost all developed countries. India’s per person emissions are less than one-quarter of the global average, and roughly one-tenth of those of the US. Close to a quarter of all carbon emissions come from manufacturing products which are exported and consumed in other countries. Textiles and clothes exported from India and south Asia account for over 4% of global emissions.

Labelling India and China as the chief villains of COP26 is a convenient narrative. The financial aid which rich countries promised yet failed to

deliver as part of the Paris Agreement signed in 2015 was supposed to help developing countries dump coal for cleaner sources of energy. And while the world berated India and China for weakening the Glasgow Climate Pact’s coal resolution, few questioned the fossil fuel projects being floated in developed nations, like the UK’s Cambo oilfield and the Line 3 oil pipeline between Canada and the US.

Switching from coal to gas offers a quick and partial win for reducing CO₂ emissions, but doing it depends on geology and geography. A rapid switch to renewable energy sources is easier when energy demand isn’t growing as fast, like it is in rapidly developing countries. These countries need financial assistance from richer countries to make that leap. Until that is delivered, developed countries have no right to lay the disappointment of COP26 at the feet of China and India.

[Daniel Parsons is Professor of Sedimentology and Director, Energy & Environment Institute, University of Hull; Martin Taylor is Postdoctoral Research Associate in Energy and Environment, University of Hull]

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Heavy rains lash Puducherry; normal life hit

PUDUCHERRY, Nov 18 (PTI): Heavy rains lashed the union territory of Puducherry on Thursday disrupting normal life. Puducherry recorded 13.8 cm rainfall between 8.30 AM and 1 PM Thursday. Schools and college here and in Karaikal remained closed due to the incessant showers.

Chief Minister N Rangasamy visited the rain ravaged residential colonies and explained to the people about the steps taken to alleviate their sufferings.

District Collector Purva Garg who visited various rain-affected villages along with officials of the Revenue, Local Administration and other departments Thursday, said in a release that since the onset of the north-east monsoon on October 26, Puducherry has recorded 68.2 cm rainfall.

The Collector said Puducherry received heavy rains since Wednesday under the influence of low pressure area over the south-east and adjoining south west Bay of Bengal.



Control rooms were operating responding to the calls for help from the public, he added.

A young resident of Madukarai village near here drowned in the floods in Malattar river today. The Collector said the personnel of Fire Service Department retrieved the body in co-ordination with scuba divers of the Fisheries Department.

Garg said 62 huts were damaged due to the heavy downpour in Puducherry and 27 hous-

es bore the brunt of the torrential rain. She said that 194 relief shelters were opened to accommodate those affected.

An official said that food packets were distributed to the people accommodated in the centres. One team of National Disaster Response Force was positioned in Puducherry to respond in case of any emergency.

Karaikal experienced heavy rains and all precautionary measures were taken to prevent

damage.

Home and Education Minister A Namassivayam had declared a holiday for all schools and colleges in Puducherry and Karaikal regions on Thursday due to incessant rain.

The Chief Minister had announced various relief measures a few days ago when heavy rain started pounding Puducherry. He had also announced that cash relief of Rs 5,000 would be distributed to each of the families below the pover-

ty line.

Fishermen, construction workers and agricultural labourers would also be handed a similar relief to mitigate the sufferings they suffered because of heavy rain, he had said.

Several residential colonies in and around Puducherry were inundated.

The Public Works Department has come out with a master plan to repair the roads with an investment of Rs 500 crore, sources said.

Madras Sappers celebrates 241st Corps Day

BENGALURU, Nov 18 (PTI): Amid traditional fanfare, the Madras Sappers celebrated its 241st Corps Day on Thursday at Madras Engineer Group (MEG) and Centre here.

The event started with wreath laying ceremony at the War Memorial followed by a Ceremonial Parade reviewed by Brigadier T P S Wadhawa, Commandant, MEG and Centre.

On the occasion, Brigadier Wadhawa extended

his best wishes and compliments to all the Sappers for giving their best to meet the ever-rising challenges in operational and peacetime domains.

“The Sappers’ have a history dating back to the mid-eighteenth century. The Indian Army’s Corps of Engineers officially recognises its birth in 1780 when the oldest group of the Corps, The Madras Sappers, was raised.

Subsequently, the Groups of Bengal and

Bombay Sappers were formed in their respective presidencies, which were later merged on November 18, 1932 to form the Corps of Engineers, which is celebrated as the Corps of Engineers Day every year.

In the past 240 years of its glorious history, The Corps has not only done credible work within the nation but has also left indelible imprints on foreign lands earning an enviable reputation.

No fresh COVID-19 case in Andamans



PORT BLAIR, Nov 18 (PTI): The union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands did not record any new COVID-19 case for the third consecutive day, a health department official said on Thursday.

The COVID-19 tally remained at 7,674, he said.

The archipelago had recorded zero COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, Tuesday, and Monday, four cases on Sunday, zero cases on Saturday,

and two on Friday.

A total of 7,539 people have recuperated from COVID-19 so far, including three persons in the last 24 hours, the official said.

The union territory now has only six active COVID-19 cases and all the patients are in the South Andaman district while the other two districts - North and Middle Andaman and Nicobar - are coronavirus free, he said.

The COVID-19 death

toll remained at 129 as no fresh fatality was reported in the last 24 hours.

The administration has so far tested 6,20,619 samples for COVID-19 and the cumulative test positivity rate is 1.24 per cent.

A total of 5,26,368 beneficiaries have been inoculated with COVID-19 vaccine so far, of which 2,95,542 have received the first dose and 2,30,826 both doses of the vaccine, he said.

Turkey again cuts interest rates despite pinch of inflation

ANKARA, TURKEY (AP): Turkey’s Central Bank cut interest rates again Thursday, a day after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke out against high borrowing rates and raising increasing concerns about the impact of soaring consumer prices on families and businesses.

The bank’s monetary committee announced it was reducing the policy rate to 15% from 16%, even as inflation runs at close to 20%. It was the bank’s third interest rate cut in as many months. The rate cuts have raised concerns over the bank’s independence from Erdogan, who, contrary to traditional economic theory, argues

that steep interest rates cause inflation and has declared himself an “enemy” of high borrowing costs.

The lira dropped to about 10.89 against the U.S. dollar following the bank’s announcement — down 2.46% from Wednesday’s close — continuing a long run of losses. The lira has lost more than 30% of its value since the start of the year, severely eroding Turkish consumers’ purchasing power.

Erdogan told ruling party lawmakers Wednesday in Parliament that he would continue to fight high interest rates as long as he remains in office. The Turkish leader, who has

grown increasingly authoritarian, also suggested he would part ways with any official who defends high interest rates.

“Interest rate is the cause, inflation is the consequence,” Erdogan said. “We will remove the high interest burden from the back of our people.”

The leaders of two opposition parties have accused Erdogan of severe mismanagement of the economy and have called for early general elections. Erdogan insists that elections will be held in 2023 as scheduled.

The president has fired three Central Bank governors since 2019 amid concerns over the bank’s independence.

Three new eco-tourist spots on anvil in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, Nov 18 (PTI): The Odisha government has decided to set up three new eco-tourist spots in the state and employ a community-based management (CBM) approach to operate them, as it has been successful in generating income for tribal families, an official release said on Thursday. Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, during a virtual meeting, asked the Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation to acquire non-forest plots near popular ecotourism centres, and develop them into tourism and hospitality units.

“The CBM has provided alternative and sustainable livelihood to many people who, otherwise, were dependent on forest. It has also empowered people and infused a sense of belongingness towards the forest and wildlife among them,” he said at the meeting.

Proposals were approved for developing the new eco-spots with night-stay facilities near Deomali -- the highest



mountain peak of Odisha -- in Koraput district, Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Kandhamal, and Nawana valley in Mayurbhanj.

Mohapatra directed the forest department to release funds immediately for developing the spots and maintaining their “pristine character with adequate sanitation measures”, according to the official release.

A proposal to form a high-level society for enhancing professionalism in the sector was

also discussed in the meeting, it stated.

Additional Chief Forest Secretary Mona Sharma said eco-retreat activities usually invoked private investment in the sector.

“Hospitality centres and hotels have already come up near Daringibadi and Konark. Some investors have also expressed interest in starting private ventures in areas like Deomali,” the official said.

Wildlife Principal Chief Conservator of

Forest Sashi Paul said 47 ecotourism destinations have been made operational across 18 districts of Odisha since the launch of the CBM model in 2016.

It has added to the income of many tribal families in the districts, Paul stated.

Among the new spots that were developed this year are Nrusinghanath in Bargarh, Koraput pine forest and Patora dam in Nuapada.

The number of visitors to these eco-destinations has increased

from 11,500 in 2016-17 to around 57,000 in 2020-21. Tourists from 18 countries have visited the eco-spots with night halts, the release said.

Revenue generated from ecotourism increased from Rs 1.57 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 8.32 crore in 2020-21, it noted.

Under the CBM model, around 90 per cent of the revenue generated from the eco-spots is shared with members of the respective communities managing the spots.

Odisha logs 229 new COVID-19 cases, 3 fatalities

BHUBANESWAR, Nov 18 (PTI): Odisha on Thursday logged 229 new COVID-19 cases, including 29 children and adolescents, taking the state’s tally to 10,46,317 while three fresh fatalities pushed the coronavirus death toll to 8,386, a health department official said.

The new infections were detected in 19 districts while the remaining 11 districts did not report any new cases.

The state on Wednesday had reported 226 new infections while it was 206 on Tuesday and 185 on Monday.

Of the new cases, Khurda district of which the state capital Bhu-



baneswar is a part reported the highest of 113 fresh infections, followed by Cuttack (18).

The rate of infection among children and adolescents in the age group of 0 to 18 years was 12.66 per cent against

the previous day’s 14.60 per cent.

As 229 people tested positive for infection out of 57,649 samples tested on Wednesday, the daily test positivity rate is 0.39 per cent against the previous day’s 0.37 per cent.

The TPR was 0.41 per cent on Tuesday and 0.32 per cent on Monday.

Meanwhile, the state’s COVID-19 death toll touched 8,386 with three more deaths due to the deadly disease in the last 24 hours. The fresh fatalities

were reported from Khurda, Puri and Sundargarh districts.

The state currently has 2,616 active COVID-19 cases while 10,35,262 patients have so far recovered from the highly infectious disease, including 267 on Wednesday.

Odisha has thus far conducted over 2.30 crore sample tests including 57,649 on Wednesday. The state’s positivity rate now is 4.53 per cent.

As many as 1,39,58,009 people have been fully inoculated with double doses of COVID-19 vaccine, the data released by the Health and Family Welfare department said.

Arunachal Pradesh reports two new COVID-19 cases

ITANAGAR, Nov 18 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh’s COVID-19 tally rose to 55,232 after two more persons tested positive for the infection, a senior health official said here on Thursday.

The coronavirus death toll in the state remained unchanged at 280 as no fresh fatality was registered in the last 24 hours, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

The northeastern

state now has 48 active COVID-19 cases, while 54,904 people have recovered from the disease so far, including four on Wednesday, the official said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state now is 99.41 per cent.

Tawang district has the highest number of active cases at nine, followed by West Kameng and East Siang at eight each and Capital Complex region comprising

Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, at seven cases.

The state has thus far tested 11,94,893 samples for COVID-19, including 426 on Wednesday, the SSO said, adding that the positivity rate stood at 0.46 per cent.

State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Padung said that a total of 13,70,372 people have been inoculated thus far.

Wizards' GM Tommy Sheppard gets extension amid fast start

WASHINGTON (AP): Wizards general manager Tommy Sheppard has received a contract extension amid Washington's fast start to the season.

Monumental Sports & Entertainment announced Wednesday that Sheppard and Sashi Brown signed multiyear extensions and received promotions. Mike Thibault, coach and general manager of the WNBA's Washington Mystics, has also received an extension.

Sheppard now becomes president and GM of the Wizards. Brown, who has served as a chief planning and operations officer, is now president of Monumental Basketball and special advisor to the office of the CEO at Monumental Sports & Entertainment.

"Tommy has effectively improved our team each year of his tenure by following the plan he laid out to us as his vision when we hired him as general manager and Sashi has been instrumental in making us a leader in analytics, research and player engagement while efficiently streamlining operations across all of our basketball teams and venues," said Ted Leonis, the Wizards' owner and founder and CEO of MS&E.

The Wizards were 10-3 entering Wednesday night's game at Charlotte, the best record in the Eastern Conference and their best start since 1974-75.

Washington hired Wes Unseld Jr. as its new coach in the offseason and traded Russell Westbrook to the Los Angeles Lakers in a blockbuster that brought Kyle Kuzma, Montrezl Harrell and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope to the Wizards. Washington also acquired guard Spencer Dinwiddie in another move that's paid dividends.

"I am honored to represent this organization and tremendously grateful for the opportunity to continue building this team in order to use what we accomplish both on and off the court to uplift the community," Sheppard said. "Our staff, and their dedication to working together, has been essential to our success, and we will continue to work hard, follow our plan and make our fans proud of the team we put on the floor."

Sheppard is in his 19th season with the organization. Prior to being named GM, he was senior vice president of basketball operations from 2013-2019 and vice president of basketball operations from 2003-13.

Brown, a former GM of the NFL's Cleveland Browns, will lead various operations for the Wizards, the Mystics and the G League's Capital City Go-Go — including research and information systems, technology, equipment, team communications, finance, facilities, security and player engagement. He will also oversee MS&E's venue operations.

Antetokounmpo, Middleton help Bucks defeat Lakers 109-102

MILWAUKEE (AP): Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 47 points and Khris Middleton tied Milwaukee's franchise record for career 3-pointers as the Bucks beat the Los Angeles Lakers 109-102 on Wednesday night.

Middleton returned after missing eight games due to COVID-19 and made consecutive 3-pointers 30 seconds apart early in the fourth quarter to put the Bucks ahead for good. The second of those 3s was his 1,051st with the Bucks to match Ray Allen for first place on the team's all-time list.

Allen holds the NBA record with 2,973 3-pointers in a career that also included stints with the Seattle SuperSonics, Boston Celtics and Miami Heat.

LeBron James missed an eighth straight game for the Lakers due to an abdominal strain. The Lakers have gone 3-5 during that stretch.

Talen Horton-Tucker scored 25 points for the Lakers two nights after



getting a career-high 28 in a 121-103 loss to Chicago. Russell Westbrook had 19 points, Anthony Davis 18, Malik Monk 11 and Carmelo Anthony 10.

Antetokounmpo posted his highest point total since scoring 50 in a Game 6 Finals victory over the Phoenix Suns that clinched Milwaukee's first title since 1971.

Bobby Portis added 17 points for the Bucks. Middleton and Pat Connaughton had 16 each.

This marked just the third game this season in which the Bucks had their three top players — Antetokounmpo, Middleton and Jrue Holiday — all available. The only

other times were in a 127-104 season-opening victory over the Brooklyn Nets and a 121-111 triumph at San Antonio on Oct. 23.

Bucks center Brook Lopez hasn't played since that Nets game due to a back issue and guard Donte DiVincenzo still hasn't made his season debut. DiVin-

cenzo tore a ligament in his left ankle during the first round of the 2020-21 playoffs.

TIP-INS
Lakers: Coach Frank Vogel spoke pragmatically about the name change to the Lakers' home arena. The building known as Staples Center since its October 1999 opening will

become the Crypto.com Arena starting on Christmas Day. "It's tough, you know what I mean?" Vogel said. "Lakers fans and really sports fans in general I guess would know that building as Staples Center. I understand the disappointment the fans will have, but that's just the way of the world. This is the business we're in. Almost universally around the country, there's a business element to naming rights with arenas. It's really out of our control."

Bucks: This victory started a five-game home stand for the Bucks after they returned from a five-game road trip. The Bucks went 2-3 on the trip and ended it with losses at Boston and Atlanta.

UP NEXT
Lakers: At Boston on Friday in the second game of a five-game trip.
Bucks: Host Oklahoma City on Friday. The Bucks split two games with the Thunder last season.

Too early to comment on Dravid's coaching style: Ashwin

JAIPUR, NOV 18 (PTI): Ravichandran Ashwin says it's too early to comment on Rahul Dravid's coaching style but the premier India spinner is confident that happiness will be back in the dressing room under the stalwart's guidance.

Dravid replaced Ravi Shastri in the Indian set-up, beginning his stint with the ongoing India-New Zealand Twenty20 series.

Ashwin is back in the Indian limited overs squad after spending four years on the sidelines. Since mid-2017 the spinner did not get to play a single white-ball game and even warmed the benches in team's recent England Test tour.

The 35-year-old made a comeback at the recently concluded T20 World Cup when he played against Afghanistan and is now part of the team that is clashing with New Zealand, taking two wickets in the series opener.

"It's too early for me to comment on Rahul Dravid's coaching style, but he's put the hard yards in through the U-19 level," Ashwin told official broadcaster after India's five-wicket win on Wednesday.

"He won't leave much to chance, and he'll be all about preparation and process, so that we can bring the happiness back into the Indian dressing room," he added.

India has a new leadership in place with Dravid taking over from Shastri and Rohit Sharma replacing Virat Kohli as captain in T20s.

Talking about the first T20, Ashwin said he realised that taking the pace off the ball was working wonders.

"The slower you bowled, there was more purchase you got on this pitch. If you hit the seam and tossed it up, it did do things like Santner showed in the second innings," he said.

"It's tricky in T20s, you can't miss your lengths and you don't know when to toss it up but here it did help to give it some air."

Given a manageable 165-run target, Ashwin thought that they will cross the line quite early and the match would not drag to the final over.

"It was a slightly under-par score and we thought 170-180 would be par. We thought we would cruise home around the 15th over, but that's T20 cricket for you."

"I bowled the first over in the powerplay, and figuring out the pace to bowl is important and it took me some time to figure that out."

"It's about varying to pace and knowing when to vary it. It's important to take each of the 24 balls as an event, and look at each ball in isolation and as an opportunity," he said.

Coach Dennerby names squad of 23 for tour to Brazil

NEW DELHI, NOV 18 (PTI): Indian women's football team head coach Thomas Dennerby on Thursday announced a squad of 23 players that will travel to Manaus, Brazil to play in a four-nation tournament, where they will play against the hosts, Chile and Venezuela.

With the team set to depart on Saturday, Dennerby stated that all three matches will be tough as they are against "extremely technical" sides.

"Brazil are a really good team. No other team, since I have arrived, has tested our defence as much as Brazil will do next week," said Dennerby.

"In the second game, Chile is another extremely technical side, but with all the hard work we have been doing, we have also raised our levels. The game against Venezuela will also be a particularly tough one for us," the coach added.

The team, ranked 57 in the FIFA rankings, will face off against world No. 7 Brazil on November 25,



Chile (world No. 37) on November 28, and Venezuela (world No. 56) on December 1.

The Confederation of Brasileira de Desportos (CBF) has already named the full squad for Brazil, which also contains legends of the game like Marta da Silva and Formiga Mota.

Dennerby believes

that both the veteran Brazilians are brilliant role models for footballers worldwide and said the Indian players are looking forward to playing against them.

"They have a very good squad with stars like Marta and Formiga. The girls are all looking forward to it. It's the first time that they will play

a team of such stature, and it will be good experience for them all," Dennerby stated.

"For sure, when we meet them, we need to thank them for being the role models for football that they have been. They have shown that you don't need to quit football when you are 30-31. It's all about per-

formance and keep playing as long as you can. They are super good role models."

While the Indian team will face some difficult opponents, the players will approach the matches with no fear.

"I always tell the girls to show respect for all the opponents. They may be ranked number one

in the world or number 105, but we need to show everyone their due respect," stated Dennerby.

"But of course, I also tell them to never fear any opponent, regardless of their rank. Of course, the Brazil game will be much tougher than the Venezuela one, but we play hard in both of them."

Fixtures:
November 25: Brazil vs India
November 28: India vs Chile
December 1: India vs Venezuela

Squad:
Goalkeepers: Aditi Chauhan, M Linthoingambi Devi, Sowmiya Narayasamy.

Defenders: Dalima Chhibber, Sweetie Devi, Ritu Rani, Ashalata Devi, Manisa Panna, Shilky Devi, Ranjana Chanu, W Linthoingambi Devi.

Midfielders: Indumathi Kathiresan, Sanju, Anju Tamang, Martina Thokchom, Karthika Angamuthu, Kamala Devi.

Forwards: Manisha Kalyan, Pyari Xaxa, Renu, Dangmei Grace, Soumya Guguloth, Mariyammal Balamurugan.

Judge orders Ruggs back to court after missed alcohol test

LAS VEGAS (AP): A Las Vegas judge ordered former Raiders receiver Henry Ruggs III to appear before her on Monday after learning he missed a required alcohol test while on house arrest following a fatal crash he's accused of causing by driving drunk at speeds up to 156 mph.

Ruggs' lawyers told Justice of the Peace Suzan Baucum that Ruggs "self-tested" negative shortly after missing one of his calls for a breath test last weekend.

Ruggs' attorney, David Chesnoff, blamed the delay on trouble with testing equipment.

A note posted later in the court record shows Ruggs, 22, missed a test at 4:41 p.m. Saturday

and that he completed "a client initiated remote breath test" at 6:28 p.m.

The alcohol monitoring agency noted that it "cannot confirm Mr. Ruggs' sobriety during this point-in-time," and said Ruggs' attorney provided an updated phone number for text notifications for Ruggs' remote breath test.

Ruggs was not in court Wednesday for a brief hearing during which Baucum declined his lawyers' request for a court order to obtain fire department records about the Nov. 2 crash and fire. She said she'd reconsider if they can't get the records themselves.

Ruggs could face a return to jail. A judge who



set his bail at \$150,000 warned Ruggs directly that if he didn't comply with release restrictions he would face re-arrest.

Ruggs is under home confinement with electronic monitoring and four-times-a-day alcohol checks. He is required to respond to a telephone or text signal by blowing into a device that checks his blood-alcohol level. Records show he owns a \$1.1 million home not far from where the crash occurred.

Prosecutors have said Ruggs' blood-alcohol level after the crash was 0.16%, twice the legal limit for drivers in Nevada.

Authorities said he and his girlfriend, Kiara Je'nai Kilgo-Washington, were injured when Ruggs' Chevrolet Corvette slammed into the rear of Tina Tintor's Toyota Rav4, rupturing that vehicle's fuel tank.

His lawyers have said in court filings that a witness told them fire-

fighters were slow to extinguish flames. They have not identified the witness.

A Clark County spokesman has said there were no delays in the firefighting response or the attack on the fire.

Baucum has set a Dec. 16 preliminary hearing of evidence on two felony charges of driving under the influence causing death or serious injury. Each charge carries two years of mandatory prison time for a conviction, and as much as 20 years each.

Ruggs also faces two felony reckless driving counts and a misdemeanor weapon charge after police said a loaded handgun was found in his wrecked sports car.

COVID-19 deaths in Russia hit record for 2nd straight day

MOSCOW (AP): Coronavirus deaths in Russia hit record highs for the second straight day Thursday, while new daily cases appeared to be taking a downward trend but still remained higher than during previous waves of the pandemic. Russia's state coronavirus task force reported that 1,251 people died of COVID-19 since the day before, the most since Russia had its first virus outbreak in March 2020. The previous record of 1,247 deaths was recorded Wednesday.

The task force also reported 37,374 new confirmed cases. Until this week, Russian authorities had recorded higher daily case numbers since late October.

Health experts have blamed the latest surge in infections and deaths on low vaccination rates and lax public attitudes toward taking precautions. Fewer than 40% of Russia's nearly 146 million people have been fully vaccinated, even though the country ap-



proved a domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine months before most of the world.

To boost immunization rates, the government said new restrictions would take effect next year and limit access to many public places, as well as domestic and international trains and flights, to those who

have been fully vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 or are medically exempt from vaccination.

Officials have urged Russians to get vaccinated in the meantime.

In total, the coronavirus task force has reported over 9.2 million confirmed infections and more than 260,000 COVID-19 deaths, by far

the highest death toll in Europe. Some experts believe the true figure is even higher.

Reports by Russia's statistical service, Rosstat, that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality. They say 462,000 people with COVID-19 died between April 2020 and September of this

year.

Russian officials have said the task force only includes deaths for which COVID-19 was the main cause, and uses data from medical facilities. Rosstat uses wider criteria for counting virus-related deaths and takes its numbers from civil registry offices where registering a death is finalized.

Hong Kong declares wild boars fair game after animal attacks



HONG KONG (AP): Hong Kong authorities have had enough of wild boars. An increasing number of attacks by the animals, including one that bit a police officer last week, triggered an operation Wednesday night in a district less than half an hour's drive from Hong Kong's financial center. Experts used dart guns to capture seven wild boars, which were later put down via medicine injections, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said in a statement.

Wild boars are a common sight in Hong Kong along hiking trails. They are often fed by people despite appeals by authorities not to do so as they could transmit diseases and may gather in large numbers. Previous attempts to relocate and sterilize the boars "could not effectively control the wild pig nuisance," the department said.

"A large group of wild

pigs continued to wander and gather at the site, posing threats to members of the public and road users," the statement read.

Last week, a wild boar knocked down an auxiliary police officer and bit his leg before plunging to its death from a residential car park. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has since warned of stiffer penalties for those caught feeding the boars.

"I understand that a lot of Hong Kong people love the wetlands and nature. However, we also need to protect public safety," Lam said earlier this week at a regular news conference.

"There were about 30 cases of wild boars attacking humans, we can't simply sit on our hands while things deteriorate," she said.

Philanthropic group ADM Capital Foundation, the Hong Kong Veterinary Association and

other animal rights organizations have since sent an open letter to the government criticizing its shift in policy to cull the boars.

"Whilst it is recognized that the majority of the public do not feed wild pigs, the consequences of the relatively few that do are significant, and thus sufficient resources must be allocated to stopping the practice," the letter read.

A petition by groups including Hong Kong Animal Post and Hong Kong Wild Boar Concern Group said that the measures announced by the agriculture department to regularly capture and put down wild boars "ignores their right to live and considers their existence in urban areas as a capital offense. This approach is extremely unreasonable and contradicts previous animal management policy principles."

German lawmakers back new COVID measures after dire warnings

BERLIN (AP): German lawmakers approved new measures Thursday to rein in record coronavirus infections after the head of Germany's disease control agency warned the country could face a "really terrible Christmas."

The measures passed in the Bundestag with votes from the center-left Social Democrats, the environmentalist Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats. The three parties are currently negotiating to form a new government.

The legislation includes requirements for employees to prove they are vaccinated, recovered from COVID-19 or have tested negative for the virus in order to access communal workplaces. They still need to be approved by Germany's upper house of parliament, the Bundesrat.

Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats had wanted to extend existing rules that served as the basis for numerous national and state-wide restrictions. Due to expire this month, the rules were criticized for marginalizing parlia-



ment despite its central role in the German political system.

Germany's disease control agency, the The Robert Koch Institute, reported 65,371 new daily cases, shattering the previous 24-hour record and continuing an upward trend that experts have warned about for weeks.

"We are currently heading toward a serious emergency," institute director Lothar Wieler said during an online debate late

Wednesday. "We are going to have a really terrible Christmas if we don't take countermeasures now."

Wieler said Germany needs to increase its COVID-19 vaccination rate, which now stands at 67.7%, to significantly above 75%.

The eastern state of Saxony, which at 57.6% has the country's lowest immunization rate, is poised to impose a limited lockdown in response to soaring case numbers.

Governor Michael Kretschmer said the state government would decide on a "hard and clear wave breaker" Friday lasting two to three weeks.

Official figures show Saxony had more than 761 newly confirmed cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the past week, the highest infection rate in Germany.

Germany's independent vaccine advisory panel said Thursday that it recommends

booster shots for all people over 18. But it said people who are over 70, at risk for other reasons or who haven't received any vaccine yet should be prioritized.

Wieler warned that hospitals across Germany are struggling to find beds for COVID-19 patients and those with other illnesses.

Merkel was due to meet the governors of Germany's 16 states Thursday to discuss joint efforts against the pandemic.

Israeli couple is home after weeklong detention in Turkey

MODIIN, ISRAEL (AP): An Israeli couple held by Turkey on suspicion of espionage returned home on Thursday after they were released from a weeklong detention.

Mordi and Natalie Oknin arrived to their home in central Israel where they were greeted by family and a crowd of reporters. From her apartment's balcony, Natalie thanked all those involved in securing their release.

A statement by Israel's prime minister and foreign minister earlier announced the release and also expressed gratitude to the president and government of Turkey.

There was no official statement from Turkish officials on the release. Turkey's private DHA news agency reported that a Turkish citizen who was arrested along with the couple was also released.

Following the release, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and

Israeli President Isaac Herzog spoke, a rare outreach between the leaders of both countries with relations at a low in recent years.

Herzog, who holds a ceremonial role, thanked Erdogan "for his personal involvement and contribution" to securing the Oknins' release. According to both of their offices, Erdogan emphasized the importance of ties between the countries, and they both highlighted the need to focus on regional peace. The leaders agreed to remain in touch, Herzog's office said. Once robust regional allies, relations between Israel and Turkey have been at a nadir throughout Erdogan's rule, during which the Turkish leader has been an outspoken critic of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. The couple's arrest threatened to further weaken the relationship, but Israeli officials said the incident showed that the countries' diplo-

matic channels remained intact.

The couple was arrested for espionage last week after taking photographs of the Turkish president's residence in Istanbul, Turkey's official news agency reported at the time.

Anadolu Agency said a Turkish national was also arrested. Police detained the three individuals after a tip-off from an employee working in a radio and television tower on the Asian side of Istanbul.

The employee claimed the couple had been taking photographs of Erdogan's nearby home from the tower's restaurant.

They were formally arrested and awaiting trial for "political and military espionage" by an Istanbul court.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid denied after the detention that the couple worked for an Israeli agency.

SKorea sees record virus jump as thousands take college exam

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP): South Korea reported its biggest daily jump in coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic as hundreds of thousands of masked students flocked to schools on Thursday for the country's highly competitive college entrance exam amid growing concerns about the delta-driven spread.

About 509,000 students were taking the one-day exam at 1,395 sites across the nation, including hospitals and shelters. The annual exam, called "Suneung," or the College Scholastic Ability Test, is crucial in the education-obsessed country, where careers, social standings and even marriage prospects greatly depend on which university a person attends.

Students were required to have their temperatures taken before entering classrooms, and those with fevers were sent to separate testing areas. The Education Ministry said that 68 infected students and 105 others in self-quarantine took the hours-long test in isolation.

The 3,292 new cases reported by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Thursday marked the second straight day of over 3,000 cases. The agency said 29 patients died in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 3,187, while 506 others were in serious or critical condition.

To reduce noise, transportation authorities were planning to temporarily stop landings and



departures of planes at airports during the English-listening part of the test. Government offices and private companies had their

employees come in late, and the country's stock market delayed its opening by an hour to clear roads for test-takers.

"(Students) weren't given proper classes (because of COVID-19) and I often saw my child worrying much and struggling," said Seo Kwang-sun, a mother of a test-taker in Seoul.

While schools have been alternating between on-and-offline classes, the Education Ministry had planned a full return to classrooms starting next week to help reduce education gaps and align with the government's virus strategies. Officials eased social distancing rules starting this month in what they described as the first step toward restoring some pre-pandemic normalcy. In allowing larger social gatherings and longer indoor dining hours at restaurants,

officials cited concerns about the pandemic's impact on the economy and expressed hope that improving vaccination rates would keep hospitalizations and deaths down even if the virus continues to spread.

But there has been a rise in serious cases and fatalities among older people who rejected vaccines or whose immunities waned after being injected early in the mass immunization campaign that started in late February, prompting questions about whether the decision to loosen virus restrictions was premature.

So far, officials have issued no plans to re-impose stricter social distancing measures or postpone a full reopening of schools.

The Big Pic



BEACH BABE! Model Bella Hadid hit the sand in Miami.

Sanjay Gupta 'nervous, excited' to begin his next film



MUMBAI, NOV 18 (PTI): Filmmaker Sanjay Gupta on Thursday said he is set to begin work on his next film, which is a "complete departure" from his previous movies.

The 52-year-old director, whose debut feature was 1994's *Aatish: Feel the Fire*, is synonymous with crime-action and gangster films like *Kaante*, *Shootout series* and *Mumbai Saga*.

Gupta said he is both excited and nervous about his next film.

Off alone to Goa today to embark on a new and fascinating journey of my next film which is a complete departure from anything I've done so far. Anxious, nervous, excited..., he tweeted.

In a follow-up tweet, the filmmaker said he is looking forward to 2022 as he intends

to direct at least two films next year, besides producing multiple projects under his banner White Feather Films.

I am so looking forward to 2022. The plan is to make up for the time lost to both the pandemics. While White Feather Films is already producing multiple films, I am scheduled to direct two films next year. With the strong possibility of a third, he added.

Gupta last month announced his home production *Visfot*, a thriller starring Riteish Deshmukh and Fardeen Khan.

Directed by Kookie Gulati of *The Big Bull* fame, the movie is the official remake of the 2012 Venezuelan film *Rock, Paper, Scissors*.

Visfot is presented by Gupta and Bhushan Kumar-led T-Series.

as important as "we time", though. Make sure you get a few moments by yourself so you can meditate, contemplate and do the things you love.

CANCER: The trouble is, we hold on and we hold on. And then, we hold on some more. But, you cannot make space for the new with a fist that's tightly shut. So, open up. Open up to the idea of the life you want to create for yourself and who you want to share it with. Something tells us the soulmate you're manifesting is praying to the stars for your paths to cross as well.

LEO: Someone has deeper feelings for you than they are letting on. But how do "you" feel about them, Leo? The challenge here is to stay silent, clear the mental clutter and deep dive within. Spending more time in solitude is the only way to understand if this is a case of "absence makes the heart grow fonder" or "out of sight, out of mind."

VIRGO: This chapter of your life is bringing with it the realisation that you are seeking deeper connections. But, not everybody is comfortable with taking a deep dive into the emotional waters. Not everybody is capable of meeting you where you are. Instead of harping on about the state of affairs, make a choice. You can either let go of an unfulfilling connection or choose to accept it as it is by bringing in the gift of compassion to the table. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer.

Rapper Young Dolph fatally shot at Tennessee cookie shop

MEMPHIS, TENN. (AP): Rapper Young Dolph, widely admired in the hip-hop community for his authenticity and fierce independence, was shot and killed Wednesday inside a beloved local cookie shop in his hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, authorities said.

Police tweeted they had no information to release about a possible suspect in the shooting, which took place at Makeda's Cookies near Memphis International Airport.

"The tragic shooting death of rap artist Young Dolph serves as another reminder of the pain that violent crime brings with it," Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland said in a statement. The Daily Memphian newspaper reported that Young Dolph's cousin, Mareno Myers, said the 36-year-old rapper had been in town since Monday visiting an aunt who has cancer and was also giving out Thanksgiving turkeys.

"He was inside (Makeda's), and somebody just rolled up on him and took his life," Myers said.

Just last week, the cookie shop posted a video on Instagram of the rapper promoting the store's cookies, saying he returns to the store whenever he is in Memphis.

A large crowd gathered near the shop after the shooting. At a news conference Wednesday evening, Memphis Police Director Cerelyn "CJ" Davis asked the public to remain calm and recommended that residents stay home tonight. She did not say if police think other shootings under investigation Wednesday were related to the rapper's killing.

A city council member called for a curfew. Davis did not rule out issuing one at some point.

Like the Los Angeles rapper Nipsey Hussle, who was killed in 2019, Young Dolph pursued an independent approach to the music business.



His Paper Route Empire label retained control over his music. "I just got another vision for it — strictly 100 percent ownership," he said in 2018 mini-documentary co-produced by his label, titled "Turned Dirt Into Diamonds." "A lot of people, they can't see what I see."

"God bless Dolph," tweeted Chance the Rapper. "Real independent Memphis rapper born in Chicago. loved by millions of ppl."

Born in Chicago as Adolph Thornton Jr., he moved to Memphis when he was 2, according to The Commercial Appeal. He said in the documentary that he'd been raised by his grandmother and tried to help his parents "clean their life up" once he found success.

He released numerous mixtapes, starting with 2008's "Paper Route Campaign," and multiple studio albums, including his 2016 debut "King of Memphis." He also collaborated on other mixtapes and albums with fellow rappers Key Glock, Megan Thee Stallion, T.I., Gucci Mane, 2 Chainz and others.

Young Dolph had three albums reach the top 10 on the Billboard 200, with 2020's "Rich Slave" peaking at No. 4.

In his music, Young Dolph rapped about being a drug dealer and life on the streets in Memphis. He recently per-

formed at a concert at the University of Memphis and has performed during the halftime of a Memphis Grizzlies game. He was admired in Memphis as a torchbearer of the city's rap legends, Three 6 Mafia.

Young Dolph considered himself a workaholic and in recent years was focused on growing his business. "I'm a CEO first, then an artist," he told the writer Gary Suarez in a 2020 interview for Forbes, saying he'd strategically held off on signing with a major label. "As long as I keep going up and keep working, my value is going to increase."

"I know what the streets want to hear, I know what the street's going through, the lingo, the fashion, everything. It ain't nothing; it's my real life," he told Suarez.

Young Dolph had survived previous shootings. He was shot multiple times in September 2017 after a fight outside a Los Angeles hotel. In February of that year, his SUV was shot at in Charlotte, North Carolina, more than 100 times. The incident was the inspiration for the song "100 Shots." He said he survived because he had bulletproof panels in his vehicle, The Commercial Appeal reported.

Memphis officials, athletes and numerous members of the music industry posted their condolences on social media.

"R.I.P. to my friend Dolph this broke my heart," Gucci Mane posted on Twitter.

The rapper's talent agency, APA, said it was shocked and saddened by his death.

"The world has lost an icon, a great man and beloved artist who has been taken too soon," the agency said in a statement. "His dedication, drive, hard work and loyalty to all those around him always came first and he will be deeply missed."

In a post on his Twitter account on Oct. 20, Young Dolph said a doctor told him he needed some time to himself.

"I never knew what anxiety meant until My doctor just explained to me that I have it this morning," another tweet posted that day said.

In an August tweet, he said: "Still can't believe i got to where im at in life. still feel unreal."

It is the fourth high-profile shooting in the Memphis area in the past two months. Others include a school shooting in which a 13-year-old student wounded a classmate, the fatal shooting of two postal employees by a third postal worker who then killed himself, and a mass shooting at a Kroger grocery store in the Collierville suburb that left two people dead, including the shooter, and more than a dozen wounded.

Tadap' not an oversmart adaptation: Milan Luthria

MUMBAI, NOV 18 (PTI): Filmmaker Milan Luthria says his upcoming film "Tadap" retains the core of the original Telugu romantic action drama "RX 100" and the changes were made without trying to fix anything from the source material. The film marks the Bollywood debut of actor Suniel Shetty's son Ahan Shetty and also stars Tara Sutaria.

Luthria says he had connected with the "intensity" of the 2018 Telugu film, featuring Kartikeya Gummakonda

and Payal Rajput, and decided to adapt it.

"There is no point in buying a film and then changing it for the heck of it. We made certain changes for the pan India audience in terms of costumes, locations, few scenes--removed some, added some--but the core remained intact. Once we were done with the screenplay and dialogues, it looked like a nice, good adaptation, not trying to be oversmart with it," the filmmaker told PTI.

"Tadap" has been written

by his frequent collaborator, writer Rajat Arora, who had also penned the maker's "Once Upon a Time in Mumbai", "The Dirty Picture" and "Baadshaho", while "RX 100", one of the biggest hits of the year, was written and directed by Ajay Bhupathi, with dialogues credited to Syed. The director said though there can be changes in a story from the original work, it should not be counter productive. "We were clear that there was no point in changing it too much. Why fix something if it is not

broken? You are buying something (the film) because you like it, why should your ego come in the way. You should not think, 'Why should I do it the way he did it?' It is counter productive. You have to respect the filmmaker," he added. With "Tadap", the filmmaker said the team's aim is to make the viewers witness a "mad, raging romance". Luthria came on board when he got a call from producer Sajid Nadiadwala, asking him if he would be interested in helming a film starring Ahan.

ARIES:

Today, the Universe is bringing your attention to the concept of balance. Focus on those parts of your life where this balance exists and even more on those where it doesn't. If you are succeeding in one area of your life, there is, perhaps, another area where you are struggling. Instead of giving yourself grief about this, see how to get the two aspects to co-exist beautifully. And if you feel like you've been giving work all your energy, make time for play.

TAURUS:

Life force can be used to both create and destroy and we have a feeling you've been going down the self-destructive path lately. Consider the Serenity Prayer when you find yourself sweating the small stuff "Dear Universe, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." The good thing is, you have at least more than one person looking out for you at this point. Open yourself to help and support, Taurus.

GEMINI:

Everything is as it should be, and everything is perfect in this moment. Thursday sees you getting into the weekend mood early, sipping and swirling your Chardonnay, dancing under the stars and whispering sweet nothings in the ears of your beloved. The past few months haven't been easy. But, you survived it all with minimal damage, and that in itself calls for a celebration. "Me time" is just

as important as "we time", though. Make sure you get a few moments by yourself so you can meditate, contemplate and do the things you love.

CANCER: The trouble is, we hold on and we hold on. And then, we hold on some more. But, you cannot make space for the new with a fist that's tightly shut. So, open up. Open up to the idea of the life you want to create for yourself and who you want to share it with. Something tells us the soulmate you're manifesting is praying to the stars for your paths to cross as well.

LEO: Someone has deeper feelings for you than they are letting on. But how do "you" feel about them, Leo? The challenge here is to stay silent, clear the mental clutter and deep dive within. Spending more time in solitude is the only way to understand if this is a case of "absence makes the heart grow fonder" or "out of sight, out of mind."

VIRGO: This chapter of your life is bringing with it the realisation that you are seeking deeper connections. But, not everybody is comfortable with taking a deep dive into the emotional waters. Not everybody is capable of meeting you where you are. Instead of harping on about the state of affairs, make a choice. You can either let go of an unfulfilling connection or choose to accept it as it is by bringing in the gift of compassion to the table. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer.

LIBRA:

Like attracts like, Libra, and the vibe that you are currently sending out is that of scarcity. The fear of losing it all - money, connections, love, is preventing you from enjoying what you already possess - money, connections, love. An overly safe approach to life is only going to limit your experiences. Balance is something that you have aced, so apply it to your current circumstances as well. Know when to go all out and when it is okay to stay in your comfort zone.

SCORPIO:

New beginnings no longer mean starting from zero. Infact, everytime you move on to a new level, you are taking with you all the experiences and lessons learnt in the previous ones. As you get ready to level up once again, Scorpio, remember you are no longer a novice. You are now an experienced game player, skilled at navigating life's many challenges. So, breathe. Prepare a fresh strategy and know that you are fully supported by the divine forces.

SAGITTARIUS:

The Universe is offering you a hot and steamy adventure - just the way you ordered, Sagittarius. The only way to savour what's on the plate is by leaving your inhibitions at home. The suitor at hand may not be your usual type, but that's what makes this adventure an intoxicating one. For some of you, the opportunity to live your dream life is on the cards. Yes, there is so

much at stake here. But, some risks are worth sacrificing it all for.

CAPRICORN:

It's not about learning. It's about unlearning who and what you've been told to be. Capricorn, what you're undergoing right now is a process of metamorphosis. A period of stripping away the layers. It's time to show up for yourself fully, and hold space for the person you're meant to be, who you've always been. Your mission is bigger than it seems right now.

AQUARIUS:

Everybody talks about meeting "the other". The beloved. The soulmate. But, nobody talks about meeting yourself or seeking the union with the divine counterpart within. Think of this as a period of soul searching, Aquarius. A time of discovering the river beneath the river beneath the river... Oh, the treasures you will find once you begin to trust the wisdom of your inner guide!

PISCES:

You've had your share of on-again-off-again romances, Pisces, and you understand that they are oh-so-overrated! This chapter of your life is about building lasting foundations, especially in the realm of love. But, that doesn't mean it's always going to be easy. There will be times when the work gets too much and subsequently the urge to escape into your own little sanctuary. Stay aware. Stay present. As you begin to see the other as a reflection of you, you will make space for divine union.