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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM chairs wildlife board meeting, urges public hearings before initiative projects

INCENTIVE FOR NGO MEMBERS DOUBLED

Gangtok, 23 Aug [IPR]: The 23rd meeting of the State Board for Wildlife was held today at Samman Bhawan, chaired by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang who is also the chairperson of the Board. The meeting had the presence of the Minister for Forest and Environment Department, Karma Loday Bhutia, who is also the vice-chairperson of SBW, ACS-cum-PCCF, ML Srivastava, Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal, board members including MLAs, heads of various departments, retired forest officials and representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations along with representatives of the Army and paramilitary forces stationed in the State.

The house reviewed various agendas about the conservation of wildlife and diversity of the State that were put forward during the 22nd meeting of the SBW held on 25 November 2020.

In-depth analysis and discussions were deliberated upon by the concerned officials and board members during the open discussion with the main focus on the overall health of the ecosystem and the need for convergence of conservation measures and developmental requirements.



The Chief Minister, in his address, stressed the importance of bringing a balance between biodiversity conservation and infrastructure development in the State as both of these are equally important for the overall growth of the nation as a whole.

Speaking on national security and territorial integrity concerning the State of Sikkim, the Chief Minister urged the Army and

paramilitary forces to work in tandem with the State Forest Department towards strengthening the ecological task force while facilitating integration in various aspects of development.

The Chief Minister urged all concerned to hold public hearings before initiating any developmental project for getting clarity of the ground reality through consultations from the stakeholders.

He further directed

concerned Departments and the Army to appoint nodal officers for immediate address of confusion, if any.

During the meeting, it was also decided to enhance the incentive granted to the members of the NGOs and independent organizations attending the board meeting under the Forest Department to Rs 3,000 per day from the existing Rs 1,500 per day.

The Forest Minister also

addressed the meeting and extended gratitude to all for their active participation in the board meeting and also applauded the efforts and enthusiasm of the NGOs and independent organizations in the proper implementation of various environmental policies for wildlife conservation in the State.

Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by ACS-cum-PCCF, Forest Department, ML Srivastava.

Khaling files police complaint against SNS members, addresses allegations in forged FIR



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 23 AUG:**

Jacob Khaling, Political Secretary to the CM, who is also the spokesperson of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, today lashed out against Sikkimey Naagarik Samaj [SNS] office-bearers for trying to tarnish his image with false allegations based on a fake FIR and in doing so also toying with the dignity and honour of a woman.

This was in response to the SNS demand for police action on an FIR allegedly sent by speed-post by a party colleague of Mr Khaling accusing him of molestation and attempt to rape. The person to whom this FIR was ascribed to had rejected the FIR as a forgery yesterday and clarified that she had already given a statement to Sikkim Police on the matter last month itself.

Addressing a press conference today, Mr Khaling, flanked by a dais-full of women party workers of the SKM, informed that he has registered a general diary against SNS office bearers and others last evening at Sadar Thana itself and was currently preparing to file a defamation case against them.

He also appealed to the police administration to give justice to Doncee Lama by taking a strict action against all those who dragged her into this fake complaint as a result of which she has been targeted with vicious, vulgar and misogynist comments on social media. Ms Lama had also addressed a solo press conference yesterday and cleared the air on the matter.

Mr Khaling also took the opportunity to address contents of the said FIR and claimed that on the day that molestation is alleged to have taken place in his office [in his residence] in the FIR, he was not even present in Gangtok. He released news reports from the day which attest that he was at a party function in Soreng at the time and date claimed in the said FIR.

He went on claim that the Soreng meeting was also attended by Ministers MN Sherpa and Sanjit Kharel and MLAs Sunita Gazmer and Aditya Golay and other senior leaders of the party.

He further informed that he had left Gangtok a day earlier to attend a funeral at Hee-Gaon, West District, along with the CM and had stayed over at his house at Chumbung. He had returned to Gangtok a day after the date claimed in the said letter.

"I was compelled to come forward to place this truth and facts as some individuals with an infected mentality have tried to tarnish the party's and my image. These allegations have caused irreparable damage to my family in the society," he said.

Mr Khaling has registered a general diary against Passang Sherpa, Bharat Basnet, Tseten Tashi and Sonam Sherpa of SNS along with Avinash Yakha, Khushboo Kumari Verma, Anil Limboo and "Soreng Krantikari Annol" for defaming him with these false allegations.

"We have been working to file a strong defamation case against all these individuals in the court. I have full faith that the court would deliver justice to me," he said. He mentioned that the police were also investigating who and how this fake FIR was posted to the police.

Mr Khaling further speculated that the forged FIR might have been created by Passang Sherpa with the help of Bharat Basnet and Tseten Tashi.

Sunday reprieve brings daily new cases down to 26, but Covid claims two more lives

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 AUG:**

Sikkim entered a new week with a substantial drop in daily new cases of Covid-19 with only 26 people testing positive in the last 24 hours. Although the State has been recording fewer cases of late, today's low numbers are also because the RT-PCR labs work on much reduced capacity on Sundays. The 26 new cases, for instance, were picked up from the screening of 425 samples on Sunday, nearly half of

what the State has been averaging on weekdays. The test positivity rate was down to 6.1% today.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has now reached 29,340.

Today was also a sombre start to the week with news arriving of Covid having claimed two more lives in the State. These Covid deaths in the past 24 hours were reported from STNM Hospital, taking Sikkim's Covid toll to 367.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19

in Sikkim issued by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, while 20 people =tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 209 samples, five more cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 206 samples and one was reported in TruNat testing of 10 samples.

Out of the 26 new cases, seven were reported in East District, 15 in West District, four in South District and three in North District.

Meanwhile, Sikkim continues to record more recoveries than new cases and in the past 24 hours, 99 more people were discharged from home and facility isolation on Sunday after making full recoveries. Thus far, 27,185 people have made full recoveries in the State.

There are currently 1,507 active Covid cases in the State, of whom 14 are currently admitted in ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

BJP condemns heckling of its Tumin-Lingee MLA

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 AUG:**

Bharatiya Janata Party has condemned the heckling of its Tumin-Lingee MLA, Ugen T Gyatso Bhutia, while he was on a constituency visit yesterday. A BJP-Sikkim press release issued by its spokesperson, Dr Raju Giri, informs that the party learned "through various social media platforms that Mr Bhutia was obstructed by some locals during his visit to his constituency yesterday."

"BJP Sikkim condemns the incident as some locals stopped his vehicle during his visit to the area on a social responsibility," the release states.

"Creating such obstructions is a completely reprehensible thing in a democratic system and a civilized society," the release adds and has demanded that the state government, to which it is a partner, and administration prevent such incidents in the coming days to ensure the smooth functioning of the people's representatives by keeping a close watch on such issues."

Draw your favorite freedom fighter, design patriotic book covers, quiz your knowledge about freedom struggle - all as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav

NEW DELHI, 23 AUG [PIB]: The Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is coming up with several competitions to engage young minds in the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav activities. Under the spirit of Jan Bhagidari (public participation), these online events aim to connect the participants with the freedom struggle and making of New India.

The first is a Drawing Competition for children inviting them to draw their 'Favourite Freedom Hero'. This event hosted on MyGov platform starting today is open to participants of the age group 7-15 years. It aims to encourage children to know more about India's freedom fighters as they draw their "Favourite Freedom Hero", and at the same time explore their creative instinct. The last date for submission is 29th

August 2021.

The winning entries will be awarded suitably by the Publications Division. To participate in the competition, log on to: <https://www.mygov.in/task/draw-your-favourite-freedom-hero/>

A book is often judged by its cover and what better opportunity could the readers get to design one by themselves. Publications Division is bringing out a series of books celebrating the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav over the next year and will be crowd-sourcing for the cover designs of these prestigious and collectible titles. The participants of the Book Cover Design Competition will be able to submit the original designs according to the theme of the books on MyGov and this competition will be open to all.

Also in line are Online Quizzes on India's freedom struggle and growth story. Participants will be able to test their knowledge and awareness of the Amrit Mahotsav and win prizes.

This Iconic Week under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is a grand celebration by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which is showcasing the convergence of the values and glories of the freedom struggle of the past with the aspirations and dreams of a young, new and iconic India. This Mahotsav is dedicated to the people of India who have not only been instrumental in bringing India thus far in its evolutionary journey but also hold within them the power and potential to enable the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of activating India 2.0, fuelled by the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

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Minister shares govt's plans to make Sikkim self-sufficient in fish production

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 AUG:**

Minister to Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services, Loknath Sharma, contended today that the State government has been working tirelessly to bring positive change in the fisheries sector to make Sikkim self-sufficient in fisheries production.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, the Minister said that the present government has already taken some notable initiatives to promote and develop the fisheries sector and encourage more farmers and youth to take up this sector on a larger scale.

The Minister informed that the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojna [PMMSY] e-portal has been recently launched in the state to help interested fish farmers learn about all available schemes to encourage pisciculture. The PMMSY e-portal would now farmers save time and expedite the process for immediate



solution.

It is informed that interested farmers can now apply online without visiting the office and then the headquarter will forward the application to the district office and field officials deputed for field verification and applications approved within a month if all the criteria are met.

He said that a fish-farming training manual under the PMMSY was also released recently in the State and added that this training manual on trout and carp fish

farming will help farmers successfully culture fish thereby augmenting production in the State.

The Minister added that Fish Farmer Producers Organisations [FFPO] have also been launched recently in the State with the main objective to help fish farmers develop entrepreneurial skills.

He mentioned that Shreebadam FFPO and Regu FFPO have been created in which the former will cover West District and the latter

East and North Districts.

He mentioned that these FPPOs can avail schemes, benefits and subsidies to further strengthen fish farmers to a level where Sikkim can look at even exporting fish.

He stated that the Trout Farm cum Hatchery at Mementso Lake in East District was finally connected with electricity earlier this month, 47 years after its establishment. The first trout farm was established here in 1975 with

the objective to propagate the breeding and augmenting the population of brown trout, which was later developed into a mother hatchery for breeding and seed production of both rainbow and brown trout. He mentioned that this has been a historic milestone towards strengthening the fisheries sector in Sikkim.

Minister informed that for the first time, the state government of Fisheries, N Jaswant Singh.

NFDB-PMMSY- Group Accidental Insurance Scheme, under which beneficiaries will receive Rs 25,000 against accidental hospitalization, Rs 2,50,000 against permanent partial disability and Rs 5 lakh against death or permanent total disability.

He also spoke about the financial incentives notified under Mukhya Mantri Krishi Atmanirbhar Yojana and Mukhya Mantri Pashupalan Samridhi Yojana and urged farmers to take full benefit of these schemes.

He further shared details of the vision and planning of the government to make Sikkim a self-sufficient state in terms of production of indigenous species, particularly in meeting the high demand of freshly cultured trout and carp and its export.

The press conference was also addressed by Director of Directorate of Fisheries, N Jaswant Singh.

SDF's youth front meets

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 AUG:

Sikkim Democratic Front convened an interactive meeting of its youth front here at the party head-quarters on Monday. The meet was chaired by the party spokesperson, SDF vice-president [youth front], MK Subba, an SDF press release informs, and was attended by constituency-level conveners, general secretaries, secretaries and vice-conveners of the youth front from all districts along with women's front members.

As per the press release, appointments orders were provided to the new office bearers during the meeting and SDF vice-president [administration] Dev Gurung explained the responsibilities and duties of the new office

bearers.

Mr Subba urged the party youth to continue working hard for the Sikkimese society and in the interest of Sikkim and its people by taking their responsibilities seriously. He further urged them to take collective responsibility to save the future of Sikkim.

He contended that the soil, existence and dignity of the state were in the danger under the present government and asserted that there was huge challenge facing the youth to save the very existence of the state.

He said that SDF was the only regional party which can protect Sikkim's interests.

The release mentions that the meeting was also addressed by former MLA and vice-president of youth front, Dr Mechung Bhutia.

FM announces Rs 6 lakh cr asset monetisation pipeline

NEW DELHI, AUG 23

(PTI): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday announced a Rs 6 lakh crore National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) that will look to unlock value in infrastructure assets across sectors ranging from power to road and railways.

She also said the asset monetisation does not involve selling of land and it is about monetising brownfield assets.

Projects have been identified across sectors,

with roads, railways and power being the top segments.

"NMP estimates aggregate monetisation potential of Rs 6 lakh crores through core assets of central government over the four-year period from FY 2022 to FY 2025," she said. "Ownership of assets will remain with the government and there will be a mandatory hand-back."

Asset monetisation will unlock resources and lead to value unlocking, she said.

Allahabad, Uttarakhand High Courts quashing FIRs 'without applying mind': Supreme Court

NEW DELHI, 23 AUG

[PTI]: The Supreme Court today said that the Allahabad and Uttarakhand High Courts are passing orders one after the other "without application of their mind" for no coercive action or protection from arrest despite its earlier order asking them to use the inherent power sparingly.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah said, "We have seen two high courts Allahabad and Uttarakhand are passing these orders without application of mind even after our judgement in M/S Neeharika, Infrastructure versus State of Maharashtra in petitions for quashing of cases".

The Supreme Court's remarks came while hearing a petition against an order passed by the Uttarakhand High Court

on a plea for quashing the FIR in a murder case.

"This is a serious matter. The FIR was registered under section 302 of the Indian Penal Code. Just see the anxiety of the High Court, it directs that the person should surrender by August 10 and the bail be decided on the same day and if the bail application is rejected, then the Session Court should hear the bail plea the same day," the bench said.

"This is a shocking order", it said, adding that the high court recorded in its order that prayer of quashing of FIR is not pressed and other prayers before it are "innocuous" and therefore the accused should surrender before August 10 and a bail application, if presented, shall be considered and decided the same day.

The top court said it will examine the issue

and issued a notice to the Uttarakhand government on the plea challenging the high court order.

On April 13, the same bench of the Supreme Court had passed a slew of directions in Neeharika, Infrastructure versus Maharashtra case and said that police has the statutory right and duty under the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure to investigate into a cognizable offence and Courts would not thwart any investigation into the cognizable offences.

It had said that the power of quashing should be exercised sparingly with circumspection, in rare cases; only where no cognizable offence or offence of any kind is disclosed in the FIR that the Court will not permit an investigation to go on.

"While examining an FIR/complaint, quashing of which is sought, the

court cannot embark upon an enquiry as to the reliability or genuineness or otherwise of the allegations made in the FIR/complaint," the top court had said, adding that Criminal proceedings ought not to be scuttled at the initial stage.

It had pointed out that quashing of a complaint/FIR should be an exception rather than an ordinary rule, adding that "ordinarily, the courts are barred from usurping the jurisdiction of the police, since the two organs of the State operate in two specific spheres of activities and one ought not to tread over the other sphere".

The top court had said that extraordinary and inherent powers of the Court do not confer an arbitrary jurisdiction on the Court to act according to its whims or caprice.

No instant solution on whether to reopen schools amid Covid: Amartya Sen

KOLKATA, 23 AUG [PTI]:

There is no instant answer to the debate over the opening of school campuses amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said.

Speaking in an online discussion organised by Pratichi on Sunday, Mr Sen said that children are suffering a lot as schools are closed but also concerns over their health cannot be ignored if campuses reopen.

"In America, there is an ongoing debate between two groups on the same issue. In India, there are different opinions. But, what may be applicable in the east of Birbhum may not work in the west of Bankura. There cannot be a readymade reply, an instant reply at hand, the situation is not so," Mr Sen said.

On the evaluation model in the present scenario, the economist said acquiring and sharing knowledge is more important.

"Even if we put emphasis on the evaluation we must remember it is the last thing. Acquiring and sharing knowledge comes first. There are reasons to believe that the issue should be seen from different sides and perspectives," he said.

"When we learn something for the first time, when we first

comprehend the matter... is that linked with evaluation? We have to see. Evaluation will be certainly of use, but how much and in what way? We have to see if there is a link between evaluation and real education," Mr Sen pointed out.

Asked about the threats to the environment, he said that either the world is aware of the problems and knows the solution but not proceeding in the right path or there need to be threadbare discussions to find the directions to solve the crisis.

"Environment is an integral part of every work, every step taken by us," he reasoned.

Mr Sen, who is currently a Thomas W Lamont University Professor, and Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University, also stressed on tapping alternative energy resources such as solar and nuclear to protect the environment.

MIB officially recognises NBF's self-regulatory body

NEW DELHI, AUG 23

(PTI): The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has officially recognised the News Broadcasters Federation's (NBF) self-regulatory body.

In a press release, the NBF said that the granting of official status by the MIB to the NBF makes the body the only institution of its kind in the entire country to get the accreditation from the government of India.

"The NBF's self-regulatory body's emergence as the sole body to meet all criteria to be granted validation by the Union of India and be the only recognised body regulating the news media sector as on-date once again reiterates the commitment of the largest news broadcasters body to the fundamentals of transparency, accountability and strong

self-regulation," it said.

With the NBF's Professional News Broadcasters Standards Authority ('PNBSA') being recognised by the government of India, the body is set to build a robust system with the highest standards of transparency and accountability, and one that has set an unmatched precedent in the domain of news media vis-a-vis self-regulation, the NBF said.

Presently, the PNBSA is the only body in the country that has successfully demonstrated compliance with national standards in the domain of news media. As the only accredited self-regulatory body for news media, the PNBSA has undergone rigorous scrutiny, it said.

"The NBF has already established itself as a pillar for news media

organisations who have chosen to be members of the body and made it the largest-ever group of news broadcasters in India," it said.

On receiving the accreditation, NBF president Arnab Goswami said, "I want to thank all the members of the governing body of the NBF who have worked with me towards making this happen. The media has a pivotal role in strengthening our democracy and taking it to even greater heights. Strengthening the framework of the self-regulation of the media is a big step in that direction. And that's exactly what the NBF has been working round-the-clock towards."

"We look forward to working with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to further strengthen self-

regulation in our media," he said.

NBF Secretary General R Jai Krishna said, "We are privileged to be the first officially recognised self-regulatory body to be registered for TV news broadcasters. We are grateful to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and our members for reposing trust and faith."

"We ensure that we will take the news broadcasting of the country to great milestones with our democratic structure, excellence in self-regulation, and bringing the truth and reflections to the doorsteps across the country in maximum languages," he said.

The PNBSA has formally been registered as a self-regulatory body under the new amendments in the Cable Television Network Act.

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Tourism officials, with police backup, inspect Covid protocols at hotels and restaurants

GANGTOK, 23 AUG (IPR): A team of officials from Tourism and Civil Aviation Department along with police personnel from Sadar Police Station carried out a surprise inspection of hotels and restaurants in and around MG Marg, Gangtok, today. The main purpose of the inspection was to ensure compliance of the guidelines of the provision of Sikkim Public Health and Safety (COVID-19) Regulations within the State of Sikkim, and to check, whether the hotels, homestays, resorts and other tourist destinations are following the COVID-19 protocol respectively. The officials informed the hoteliers that the mandatory protocols of COVID-19 (Standard Operating Procedures) SOPs should be strictly followed by the hotel staff and guests. Here are the mandatory COVID Guidelines:



- 1)Occupancy of hotel guests should be 50%

2)Guests should have the certification of complete COVID-19 vaccination

3)Updation of the guest list regarding the RT-PCR Report is mandatory

4)Only 50% of Hotel staffs are allowed to work. And also, complete vaccination of the staff is compulsory
- 5)Availability of Mask, Sanitizers, Disinfectants, and social distancing floor marking is mandatory.

6)Dos and Dont's checklist of COVID Protocols should be mentioned in respective hotels and other tourist destinations

The team thoroughly checked the hotels and restaurants and fined 10-15 establishments
- for non-compliance of COVID Protocols (SOPs). The officials informed the hoteliers that, every employee should get vaccinated. They also stated that the guidelines about the rules and regulations for the isolation rooms in hotels should be followed. The surprise inspection of hotels, restaurants, homestay
- and resorts will be a continuous process, it was informed. The surprise inspection team was led by Joint Secretary (Legal), Marcus P Rai along with Joint Director (Hospitality), NT Bhutia, Senior Controller of Household Affairs (Hospitality), Vikash Rai and Assistant Director (Hospitality), Nirmal Cintury.

"Save Afghan women": Hundreds join protest at Jantar Mantar

NEW DELHI, 23 AUG [NDTV]: Nearly a hundred people gathered at Delhi's Jantar Mantar this evening to express their solidarity with the Afghan community in the country as the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan. Students, mostly women, raised slogans and carried posters demanding support for the Afghan women and children as Afghanistan's capital city Kabul fell to the militia last Sunday. With placards of "Save Afghan Women", they sought to raise their voices for the women who are on the brink of losing their hard-earned rights. Speaking to NDTV, one of the protesters Sadaf said, "I am here to raise my voice for the Afghan women who are in need. Their voices have been taken away by the Taliban. Whatever promises are made by the Taliban are all false. They are not allowed to work, not allowed to step out of the house without a man escorting them,



they are kept as sex slaves, married forcibly. The children and women are the most vulnerable." "I feel lucky and grateful that India has given us shelter and a place to stay. My relatives are stuck in Afghanistan. So many have been displaced," she said. Even as the Taliban, at a press conference last week, reassured the world that they have changed, their message of moderation was contradicted by the protesters whose families remain stuck in Afghanistan. Zara, an Afghan refugee living in Delhi, said, "My family is stuck in Kabul since last Sunday. Every day something new is happening. They (Taliban) are checking houses. People who have been working for 15-20 years with the US have been searched. This is their rule. If they find out someone is working with a foreign government, they will kill them." Speaking about the atrocities unleashed on her country by the militia, she said, "60%

of our people have been working with the US because they have been in Afghanistan for a long time. The Taliban find out about the men and kill them. They then marry the women off or keep them for themselves and kill the children." "Every day I get news that either my neighbor has been shot or a relative is dead. How can someone sleep at night peacefully or keep a straight mind when you're waiting for someone to knock

on the door and come shoot you in the head?" Last Thursday, an Afghan woman journalist said she was barred from working at her TV station after the Taliban took control of the country, and pleaded for help in a video posted online, reported news agency AFP. Wearing a hijab and showing her office card, well-known news anchor Shabnam Dawran said "our lives are under threat" in the clip on social media. Many countries, including India, have opened their borders for Afghans desperate to escape another Taliban rule. India has announced a new category of electronic visas - "e-Emergency X-Misc Visa" - to fast-track applications from Afghans who wish to leave the Taliban-controlled country. Thousands of people, desperate to flee the land-locked nation, have been thronging the Kabul Airport since August 15 after the Taliban seized the capital city.

Covid vaccine trial participants to be issued digital certificates through Co-WIN

NEW DELHI, AUG 23 (PTI): People who participated in COVID-19 vaccine trials will be issued digital certificates through the Co-WIN portal, the Union health ministry said on Monday. In a statement, the ministry said it received several requests from trial participants for issuing certificates through Co-WIN. "In a welcome initiative, digital #COVID19 vaccination certificates will now be issued to the clinical trial participants of COVISHIELD & COVAXIN through Co-WIN. The nation thanks them for their incredible commitment & contribution to COVID-19 vaccine research & treatment," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted. "The participants can download their



individual certificates through Co-WIN Portal, Aarogya Setu, Digilocker or the UMANG Application," he said. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in partnership with the Serum Institute of India (SII) had conducted phase II/III bridging studies of Covishield from August 2020. Phase III efficacy clinical trials for Covaxin were conducted by Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) from November 2020. The ministry said it was decided that vaccination certificates

may be issued to such participants who were administered the vaccines during these trials after the trials were unblinded. The ICMR was designated as the nodal agency for the collection of vaccination data for such participants by the ministry. "The ICMR had provided the data for 11,349 such persons to the MoHFW. Digital vaccination certificates have now been issued through Co-WIN to such persons who participated in these studies/trials of Covishield and Covaxin," the statement said.

Rights panel issues notices to Centre, Assam, Mizoram over state border clash

GUWAHATI, 23 AUG [NDTV]: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the centre, Assam and Mizoram governments over alleged rights violation during the border clash between the two neighbouring states recently. The panel said "grave violation of human rights" took place on the Assam-Mizoram border. The complaint was filed by Md Injamul Haque of Assam to the NHRC and acting on his complaint, the NHRC on Sunday issued notices to the Union Home Secretary and the chief secretaries of Assam and Mizoram. The NHRC asked them to file their reports within four weeks. "The commission has considered the

matter. The facts of the case are disturbing. The allegations made in the complaint are serious in nature involving deaths and injuries to public servants," the NHRC said. "The case, therefore, involves a grave violation of human rights of the dead and injured. Such types of cases are viewed very seriously by the commission. In these circumstances, let a notice be sent," it said. Accordingly, notices were issued and the matter will be put up before the full commission after four weeks. Six Assam Police personnel and a civilian were killed in a clash in Lailapur in Assam-Mizoram border on July 26. More than 50 were injured during the clash between the two neighbouring states.

Adil Hussain to chef at Mu Kimchi on Sept 11

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 AUG: Adil Hussain will be in Gangtok in the first week of September and cooking at Mu Kimchi, a Korean restaurant here on September 11. "We are delighted to host Adil Hussain, one

of the finest actors of present day. He is also a passionate cook. He would be cooking dishes from all over India. It would also be a great opportunity for the people of Gangtok to meet, greet and eat with the actor,"

Mu Kimchi's Nitesh Chamling conveys in a press release issued today. He added, "This will be a first of its kind of event in Sikkim" Bookings for the event start 24 August (Tuesday).



Patriotic classical dance to celebrate India at 75

GANGTOK, 23 AUG [IPR]: The Department of Culture has been observing the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav programme by organising a series of events and programmes to commemorate 75 years of India's independence. As part of the programme, an artist of Culture Department, Banita Laghun, presented a patriotic classical dance at Manan Hall today.

Vaccination compulsory for priests, 'dhakis' in Kolkata housing society Durga Pujas

KOLKATA, AUG 23 (PTI): Large housing complexes of Kolkata are gearing up to organise the Durga Puja this year, albeit in a low-key manner amid the Covid-19 pandemic, making vaccination compulsory for priests, 'dhakis' (drummers) and everyone associated with the four-day festival to be held in October. Though several housing societies have completed the 'khuti puja' - a ritual of worshipping a pole before putting up Durga puja pandals, they may have to alter some plans later as the threat of a possible third wave of the pandemic is there. "Priests, dhakis, pandal makers, electricians, those who will go through the nitty-gritty - all associated with the puja have to be inoculated with at least one dose of vaccine," Silver Spring housing complex secretary Indranil Choudhury said. Entry of visitors from outside during the

puja will be regulated and it has been made mandatory for them to get at least one jab of the vaccine or carry Covid-19 negative certificate, he said. "But we may have to make changes in the plans in case we are hit with the third wave (of the pandemic)," said the secretary of the housing society in East Kolkata where the "khuti puja" was held on Raksha Bandhan day on August 22 following covid norms. Only a certain number of puja committee members will have access inside the pandal, he said. Preparations for the puja, which will be held on a small scale, are in full swing in Urbana Housing Complex of south Kolkata, said its resident, film-maker Arindam Sil. "Of the 3000 residents in our society, there are more than 700 children. They were depressed for the past several months.

The occasion of khuti puja on August 15 broke that gloom," Sil said. The organisers are not taking any chances. They have made vaccination compulsory for all involved, keeping in mind the situation and the threat of the third wave, he said. "Entry of outsiders will be regulated and everyone present will have to wear masks. The puja will be held but the scale of celebrations will be decided later keeping in mind the situation in October," an organiser of the Central Enclave said. At Durganagar Government Housing in the northern fringes of the city, the cultural soiree has been scrapped like last year. The Durga Puja was held in a similar fashion in all these housing complexes last year when the pandemic struck. The Calcutta High Court last year declared all puja pandals across West Bengal no-entry zones to prevent the surge of Covid-19 cases.

Airports among \$81 billion of infrastructure to be sold by Centre: Report

NEW DELHI, 23 AUG [BLOOMBERG]: The Centre plans to raise ₹ 6 trillion (\$81 billion) from selling state-owned infrastructure assets over next four years to help bolster the government's finances and plug its budget deficit, according to people familiar with the matter. The plan will include sale of road and railway assets, airports, power transmission lines and gas pipelines, said the people who asked not to be identified as they aren't authorised to share the details. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to make the road-map public later Monday. The planned sales are in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategic divestment policy, under which the state will retain presence in only a few identified sectors with the rest privatized. The government has

budgeted as much as ₹ 1.75 trillion from such sales in the year through March 2022 to make up for the pandemic-linked drop in tax revenue. While broader divestment proposals this year include an initial public offering by Life Insurance Corp. of India as well as stake sales in companies such as Bharat Petroleum Corp. and Air India Ltd., Ms Sitharaman is expected to announce Monday plans only for monetizing infrastructure assets held by 11 ministries. Revenue from monetizing roads is pegged at ₹ 1.6 trillion, while that from railways is seen at ₹ 1.5 trillion, the people said. Power sector assets may fetch ₹ 1 trillion, gas pipelines ₹ 590 billion and telecommunication assets ₹ 400 billion, they said. A finance ministry spokesperson could not

be immediately reached for comment. Public warehouses, civil aviation and port infrastructure, sports stadiums and mining assets are expected to bring in another almost ₹ 1 trillion, the people said. The monetization plan, announced by Ms Sitharaman in her annual budget speech, will serve as a medium-term road map for the government's asset sale initiative, state-run think tank NITI Aayog said in a statement Sunday. The income from the asset sales is key to narrowing the nation's budget deficit, which Ms Sitharaman expects to be 6.8% of the gross domestic product in the financial year that began April 1, from 9.3% in the previous year. Several economists expect the country will miss that target due to economic disruptions caused by a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Taking Pot-Shots at Corruption

Easiest target. Empty bullets.

Corruption is the use of public office for private gain. The prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 defines bribery as “a public servant taking gratification other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act; a public servant obtaining a valuable thing, without consideration from the person concerned in proceeding or the business transacted by such a public servant; and criminal misconduct”. Typical bureaucratise, we know, and requiring more than one read to comprehend. Meanwhile, since Sikkim appears to be pursuing a record of sorts when it comes to making weekly corruption-related arrests, this would be as good a time as any to discuss this, as many have called it, necessary evil.

Speak to anyone on the streets, and they will insist - and one speaks of the country and not just the State here - that work just won't get done if there was no graft involved. Most would have us believe this, but is it really so? It shouldn't, but it is. And this is because the two common interpretations of corruption are skewed. First, let us take the example of how political parties see corruption. Corruption for parties the world over is something that the opposition does. Since in most democracies the reins of office change often, parties in Opposition will blame those in power and since the opposition is invariably a former government [or a government in waiting], graft charges become convenient ploys to pin down opponents. This is not necessarily because there are too many instances of corruption [given India's dismal track-record of convictions, there appears to be too little corruption in higher places], but because corruption allegations demand no substantiation. The people will believe the corruption charges because according to them everyone is corrupt and because the investigating agencies are controlled by the State, the investigations can be made to stretch ever longer and then the courts can take up more time. Few expect corruption charges to stick, but it at least keeps an opponent occupied on another front. Examples abound, the Hawala scandal, the Bofors issue, the coal and the 3G cases and while on it, also the steady march of Sikkim's leaders in-waiting making frequent trips to Delhi with corruption charges against the present dispensation. And the list keeps growing longer with still more cases, still more allegations still more complaints. The bottomline however is that corruption charges are just sticks with which to whip up headlines or witch-hunts depending upon who holds the whip. Now, let's see how the people understand corruption. For most, it is something that gets their work done. They feed the monster to make their own lives better. That said, they still see themselves as suffering because of the corruption, not as cogs of the nexus. Many who make a noise about corruption are either politically motivated or are offended because someone else benefited from the graft when even they were in the race. This then is a corrupt practice as well.

It goes without saying that corruption cannot survive without political patronage, but blaming politicians alone will not suffice. Since it is the electorate which made them powerful enough to sidestep rules and hoodwink due process, it is also the electorate's responsibility to keep them honest. No politician will continue being corrupt or continue looking the other way if the voters send out a clear signal that they will not tolerate it. Okay, maybe they won't turn honest overnight, but will at least begin by toning down the flamboyance with which ill-gotten gains are flaunted at present. Even that would at least be a beginning and from there could start the process of addressing corruption in more practical terms as against the rhetoric [which inflames passions but does not resolve] or the equally disconcerting chest-beating which speaks of corruption in comparative terms [as if being less corrupt was a virtue of some sorts]. One needs to accept that corruption cannot be graded since one is either corrupt or honest and there are no in-betweens. It is not about being less or more corrupt, because once someone is corrupt, then the scale of the scam is decided by the opportunity available and not the sensibilities of the corrupt person. That said, crackdowns cannot take refuge behind this argument because at least the authorities need to have a better sense of proportions so that the resources at their disposal are deployed for the best 'returns'.

What a baker from ancient Pompeii can teach us about happiness

NADEJDA WILLIAMS
THECONVERSATION.COM

In a testament to its resiliency, happiness, according to this year's World Happiness Report, remained remarkably stable around the world, despite a pandemic that upended the lives of billions of people. As a classicist, I find such discussions of happiness in the midst of personal or societal crisis to be nothing new.

“Hic habitat felicitas” – “Here dwells happiness” – confidently proclaims an inscription found in a Pompeian bakery nearly 2,000 years after its owner lived and possibly died in the eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed the city in A.D. 79.

What did happiness mean to this Pompeian baker? And how does considering the Roman view of felicitas help our search for happiness today?

HAPPINESS FOR ME BUT NOT FOR THEE

The Romans saw both Felicitas and Fortuna – a related word that means “luck” – as goddesses. Each had temples in Rome, where those seeking the divinities' favor could place offerings and make vows. Felicitas was also portrayed on Roman coins from the first century B.C. to the fourth century, suggesting its connection to financial prosperity of the state. Coins minted by emperors, furthermore, connect her to themselves. “Felicitas Augusti,” for example, was seen on the golden coin of the emperor Valerian, iconography that suggested he was the happiest man in the empire, favored by the gods.

By claiming felicitas for his own abode and business, therefore, the Pompeian baker could have been exercising a name-it-claim-it philosophy, hoping for such blessings of happiness for his

business and life.

But just beyond this view of money and power as a source of happiness, there was a cruel irony.

Felicitas and Felix were commonly used names for female and male enslaved persons. For instance, Antonius Felix, the governor of Judaea in the first century, was an ex-slave – clearly, his luck turned around – while Felicitas was the name of the enslaved woman famously martyred with Perpetua in A.D. 203.

Romans perceived enslaved people to be proof of their masters' higher status and the embodiment of their happiness. Viewed in this light, happiness appears as a zero-sum game, intertwined with power, prosperity and domination. Felicitas in the Roman world had a price, and enslaved people paid it to confer happiness on their owners.

Suffice it to say that for the enslaved, wherever happiness dwelled, it was not in the Roman Empire.

WHERE DOES HAPPINESS REALLY DWELL?

In today's society, can happiness exist only at the expense of someone else? Where does happiness dwell, as rates of depression and other mental illness soar, and work days get longer?

Over the past two decades, American workers have been working more and more hours. A 2020 Gallup poll found that 44% of full-time employees were working over 45 hours a week, while 17% of people were working 60 or more hours weekly.

The result of this overworked culture is that happiness and success really do seem to be a zero-sum equation. There is a cost, often a human one, with work and family playing tug-of-war for time and attention, and with personal

happiness the victim either way. This was true long before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Studies of happiness seem to become more popular during periods of high societal stress. It is perhaps no coincidence that the longest-running study of happiness, administered by Harvard University, originated during the Great Depression. In 1938, researchers measured physical and mental health of 268 then-sophomores and, for 80 years, tracked these men and some of their descendants.

Their main finding? “Close relationships, more than money or fame ... keep people happy throughout their lives.” This includes both a happy marriage and family, and a close community of supportive friends. Importantly, the relationships highlighted in the study are those based on love, care and equality, rather than abuse and exploitation.

Just as the Great Depression motivated Harvard's study, the current pandemic inspired social scientist Arthur Brooks to launch, in April 2020, a weekly column on happiness titled “How to Build a Life.” In his first article for the series, Brooks loops in research showing faith and meaningful work – in addition to close relationships – can enhance happiness.

FINDING HAPPINESS IN CHAOS AND DISORDER

Brooks' advice correlates with those findings in the World 2021 Happiness Report, which noted “a roughly 10% increase in the number of people who said they were worried or sad the previous day.”

Faith, relationships and meaningful work all contribute to feelings of safety and stability. All of them were victims of the pandemic. The Pompeian baker,

who chose to place his plaque in his place of business, likely would have agreed about the significant connection among happiness, work and faith. And while he was not, as far as historians can tell, living through a pandemic, he was no stranger to societal stress.

It's possible his choice of décor reflected an undercurrent of anxiety – understandable, given some of the political turmoil in Pompeii and in the empire at large in the last 20 years of the city's existence. At the time of the final volcanic eruption of A.D. 79, we know that some Pompeians were still rebuilding and restoring from the earthquake of A.D. 62. The baker's life must have been filled with reminders of instability and looming disaster. Perhaps the plaque was an attempt to combat these fears.

After all, would truly happy people feel the need to place a sign proclaiming the presence of happiness in their home?

Or maybe I'm overanalyzing this object, and it was simply a mass-made trinket – a first century version of a “Home Sweet Home” or “Live, Laugh, Love” placard – that the baker or his wife picked up on a whim.

And yet the plaque reminds of an important truth: people in antiquity had dreams of and aspirations for happiness, much like people do today. Vesuvius may have put an end to our baker's dreams, but the pandemic need not have such a permanent impact on ours. And while the stress of the past year-and-a-half feels may feel overwhelming, there has been no better time to re-evaluate priorities, and remember to put people and relationships first.

[the writer is Professor of Ancient History, University of West Georgia]

Metabolism may not slow after 20 – so why do we still gain weight?

JANET CADE
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For a long time, it was believed that after the age of 20 your metabolism decreased dramatically – making it harder to lose weight and keep in shape. But a recent study has shown our metabolism – also known as energy expenditure – stays relatively stable between the ages of 20 and 60, before decreasing at older ages.

The researchers looked at existing studies on energy expenditure from 29 different countries. In total, they looked at data on around 6,400 people from birth to 95 years of age. Each study measured energy expenditure using a method called doubly labelled water. This has participants drink a special type of water, in which a safe, non-radioactive marker has been added. The marker identifies the hydrogen and oxygen present in the water, which allows researchers to track how quickly the body processes both. Urine samples are then taken from each person to track the rate they've both travelled through the body. This gives researchers an accurate measure of a person's metabolic rate – the amount of energy they used in a day.

The analysis showed that energy expenditure (metabolism) rapidly increased from birth to one year. After this, energy expenditure gradually decreased until the age of 20, at which point it became stable until age 60 – even during pregnancy. After 60 was when energy expenditure begins to fall. These findings were true even when researchers took into account different factors – such as physical activity and body composition (how much fat or muscle a person had and how much they weighed) – which can affect a person's metabolism.

This study builds on our understanding of the human metabolism. Knowing how our metabolism may (or may not) change during our lives can be important for knowing how diseases – such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and even some cancers – can be treated.

But one problem with the study's findings is that they didn't take into account a person's energy intake. Many people still see their weight increase as they get older, despite their metabolism staying relatively the same throughout their life.



This suggests that weight gain isn't a result of a slowing metabolism. Rather, it's more likely to be due to eating more food (energy) than our body uses.

ENERGY AND WEIGHT GAIN

Metabolism is affected by many factors – including the amount of food we eat, how much physical activity we get, weight, and whether we have a lot of muscle. Metabolism can also affect how energy is obtained from foods. For example, when we eat more than we need, the body is more likely to use carbohydrates and protein from these foods as fuel, and store the fat – causing weight gain. Weight gain and obesity are both linked to metabolic rate, caused by eating more energy than we use.

With so many things to keep track of, it can be difficult to understand how best to manage one's weight. This is why experts have created national recommendations of how many calories people of different ages and activity levels should get. These recommendations are made using data on energy expenditure – rather than energy intake. This is because measuring expenditure is thought to be more accurate than measuring energy intake, which is usually done by asking people to self-report what they eat daily.

But the problem with using data on energy expenditure is that these recommendations are made using an average value – so what works for some may not work for everyone. For example, some people who are not very active may need to eat less than guidelines recommend. This may also be why we're seeing such a mismatch with energy expenditure levels and reported energy intakes in

British adults. In fact, some studies suggest they are eating well below what the daily recommendations are – and yet we're still seeing more people becoming overweight and obese in the UK every year.

Why people appear to be eating below the national recommendations could be due to a number of reasons. For example, research on energy intake shows that some participants may misreport how much they eat daily in surveys. Under-reporting may not be the whole story. Even apps which measure food intake in detail also give lower values of the amount people eat compared to recommendations. This can make it look like people are actually eating less than they need. Other things, such as amount of activity and body size can affect how much energy we need. Recommendations may not take these things adequately into account.

What is promising about the data from this study is that it used a more accurate measure of energy expenditure with people of all ages than some studies have used in the past. This study shows us that energy needs don't appear to change dramatically over an adult's life, so these findings may well be useful for adjusting our current recommendations for energy requirements. But it will be key to match new recommendations on energy intakes to how requirements can vary from each person according to their activity levels and body weight. It will also be important to develop better ways of personalising recommendations, so that each person can manage their weight most effectively.

But there are still many simple ways a person can prevent weight gain throughout their life. Keeping physically active and having a healthy diet are both important. Although there can be some margin of error, recording food intake daily can help track how much you're eating, and can be useful for knowing where you may need to cut back if your weight increases.

[the writer is Professor of Nutritional Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Leeds]

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More than 300 schools reopen in Mizoram



AIZAWL, AUG 23 (PTI): More than 300 schools in COVID-19 free areas in Mizoram have been allowed to reopen for the new academic session 2021-2022, an official of the School Education department said.

The new COVID-19 guidelines issued by the state government on August 8 had allowed the re-opening of schools in areas outside the Aizawl Municipal Corporation's jurisdiction where there is no coronavirus case, the official said on Sunday.

The school education department had on August 9 issued an order allowing re-opening of schools for primary to higher secondary level in COVID-19 free towns and villages subject to prior consultation with deputy commissioners.

A standard operating procedure (SOP) issued by the department shall be strictly followed, the order had said.

School Education department director James Lalrinchhana told PTI that at least 376 schools in seven districts, including Aizawl district,

have been allowed to re-open for the new academic session 2021-2022.

Majority of the permitted schools have already started regular classes, while 27 more schools in Khawzawl district will be re-opened from Monday, he said.

He said that the School Education department is currently undertaking identification of schools in COVID-19 free areas and more schools will be re-opened in the next few days.

At least 49 schools have so far been allowed to re-open in Aizawl district, 151 in Champhai, 74 in Serchhip, 47 in Lawngtlai, 11 in Siaha, 20 in Saitual and 27 in Khawzawl district, he said.

Of the 11 districts, four districts - Lunglei, Kolasib, Mamit and Hnahthial are yet to submit list of COVID-19 free villages where re-opening of school can be allowed, according to Lalrinchhana.

He said the schools, which have been permitted to re-open, are mostly located in remote

rural villages where internet connectivity is very poor.

The re-opening of school in such villages has immensely helped students, who could not get good internet access, he said.

Online classes are still going on for schools in COVID-19 areas, he said.

So far, no student has been infected with COVID-19 in such villages where schools were re-opened, he said.

Unlike previous years, the new academic session (for 2021-2022) was delayed by a month due to COVID-19 and the academic calendar commenced from May.

Schools and other educational institutions have been closed for about 15 months starting from March last year due to the spread of COVID-19.

Following the dip in COVID-19 cases from around November last year, schools were reopened for certain classes on January 22 this year but have been shut again since April with the onset of the second wave of COVID-19.

Assam police accused of theft by neighbouring Mizoram

Assam has denied the allegation saying Mizoram was trying to divert attention from the "illegal construction" on Assam soil.

Guwahati: A day after accusing the Assam police of "stealing" construction material in Kolasib district which shares the border with the neighbouring state's Hailakandi, Mizoram has withdrawn a case filed in the matter. The matter was settled after the "stolen" materials were returned Sunday evening, sources have said.

Both states have decided to pull back the additional forces deployed at site following the incident, officials said.

The incident took place on Friday after the Assam police personnel entered Mizoram's Zophai area in Kolasib's Bairabi subdivision, where a bridge is being built, District Deputy Commissioner H Lalthlangliana has informed Rohan Jha, his Hailakandi counterpart.

"Assam police created problems for the workers on the site and even stole some construction materials, including pieces of iron rods...A police case of theft of construction materials has been filed against them at the Bairabi Police Station,"



Mr Lalthlangliana has said in a letter written yesterday to Mr Jha. He has also conveyed the information over a phone call, officials said.

The Assam government alleged on Sunday that Mizoram officials had entered its territory in Hailakandi and begun constructing a bridge, PTI reported.

"The Officer In-Charge (OC) of Ramnathpur police station and his patrolling team immediately reached the spot and stopped the construction work, calling it a trespass by Mizoram as they had no authority to build a bridge on the Assam side," Hailakandi

Superintendent of Police Gaurav Upadhyay told the news agency.

"In order to assert the position of Assam and to ask Mizoram forces to retreat from the Assam side of the bridge, a party of around 200 Assam police personnel and commandos under my leadership and other senior officials reached Kachurthal on Sunday morning."

He rubbished the allegation of theft saying the neighbouring state was trying to divert attention from the "main issue, that is illegal construction by Mizoram authorities on Assam soil."

"The allegation of

any theft by a disciplined force like Assam Police is absolutely concocted, baseless, malafide and devoid of any facts," Mr Upadhyay said.

Three districts of Mizoram -- Kolasib, Aizawl, and Mamit -- share a 165 kilometre border with three of Assam's in the Barak Valley -- Hailakandi, Cachar, and Karimganj. The border is disputed in at least five spots.

After central paramilitary forces were deputed in the disputed area between Cachar and Kolasib following an inter-state police clash in July, in which six Assam personnel died and around 60 were injured,

the dispute has shifted, of late, to Hailakandi-Kolasib.

Some persons had bombed an empty school in the area; the Assam police, too, were engaged in alleged gun battles with those claiming to be Mizo civilians.

Mr Lalthlangliana, however, said Friday's incident may not be considered a boundary issue as it was a site under construction to connect roads.

"However, government servants committing an act that can be interpreted as theft of government property is very disappointing and considered very serious," said Mr Lalthlangliana.

Ex-Trinamool Minister who joined BJP arrested in cheating case

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls.

Bishnupur (West Bengal): Former West Bengal Minister Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was arrested on Sunday for allegedly misappropriating government funds during his tenure as chairman in Bishnupur Municipality. "Shyama Prasad

Mukherjee has been arrested for alleged misappropriation of funds during his tenure as chairman in Bishnupur Municipality," Bankura police official Dhritiman Sarkar said.

The BJP leader was produced before Bishnupur court today and sent to four days of police custody.

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, former chairman of Bishnupur Municipality, joined the



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls.

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's arrest came after Bankura Police received a complaint

from Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Bishnupur against the BJP leader for alleged financial misappropriation during his tenure as Chairman in Bishnupur Municipality.

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was also the Textile Minister in Trinamool Congress-led state government. However, he switched to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) just before the assembly elections.

U'khand assembly pays tribute to Hridayesh



DEHRADUN, AUG 23 (PTI): The monsoon session of Uttarakhand assembly began here on Monday with members paying tributes to senior Congress leader Indira Hridayesh, former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh and five other leaders who passed away recently.

Offering his tribute to Hridayesh who was the Leader of Opposition in Uttarakhand assembly at the time of her death, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said he found it hard to believe that she was no more.

"Having been a member of the Uttar Pradesh legislative council and Uttarakhand assembly several times, she had a profound knowledge of legislative proceedings and was of great help to newcomers like me," Dhami said.

Her sudden death

has created a big void, he said.

Remembering Kalyan Singh, Dhami spoke about his significant contribution to the Ram temple movement saying he had sacrificed his government for the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Leader of Opposition in Uttarakhand assembly Pritam Singh also paid tribute to Hridayesh saying she was a rare politician who was happy to give the benefit of her experience to her younger colleagues irrespective of their party affiliations.

Others who were paid tribute by the assembly were former MP and Union minister Bachchi Singh Rawat, Gangotri MLA Gopal Singh Rawat, former minister Narendra Singh Bhandari, former MLAs Amrish Kumar and Shri

Chand.

Paying tribute to Bachchi Singh Rawat, the chief minister said his simplicity was striking.

"Though he occupied eminent positions, Bachda, as we called him affectionately, pulled no airs. He was so simple and down-to-earth. He had no political enemies," Dhami said.

Dhami remembered Gangotri MLA Gopal Singh Rawat as a sober, polite and affectionate person who was dedicated to the development of his constituency.

Before entering the assembly all the members of the House offered flowers at a picture of noted environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna who passed away in May. Bahuguna was one of the architects of the Chipko movement.

No fresh Covid case recorded in Ladakh

LEH, AUG 23 (PTI): No new COVID-19 case was reported from Ladakh where seven people were cured from the infection, taking the overall recoveries so far to 20,223, officials said on Monday.

The total number of COVID-19 cases in Ladakh stands at 20,491, they said, adding the number of active cases in the union territory stands at 61 -- 55 in Leh and six in Kargil district.

Officials said no new Covid case was reported in Ladakh on Sunday.

The death toll due to COVID-19 in Ladakh stands at 207 -- 149 in Leh and 58 in Kargil, officials said. A total of 1,637 sample reports, including 716 from Leh and 921 from Kargil, were found negative, they said.

No Covid-related death was recorded in Ladakh on Sunday.

All the patients who were discharged after recovering from the infection were from Leh, officials said.

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Rod Pampling wins Boeing Classic for first Champions title

SNOQUALMIE, Wash. (AP): Rod Pampling won the Boeing Classic on Sunday for his first PGA Tour Champions victory when Jim Furyk and Woody Austin failed to get up-and-down for birdie from greenside bunkers on the par-5 18th.

Pampling, playing five groups ahead of Furyk and Austin at Snoqualmie Ridge, shot a 6-under 66 to finish at 12-under 204. The 51-year-old Australian won three times on the PGA Tour, the last in 2017 in Las Vegas, and has two PGA Tour of Australasia wins.

“It’s fantastic,” Pampling said. “You look at all the Hall of Famers are just phenomenal out here. There’s so many and they still play really good golf, which people think they don’t, but I’ll tell you what, they play so good. It’s just not quite as far off the tee anymore, but everything else is still really good. To get a win you’ve got to play good and thankfully I did today.”

Furyk dropped a stroke back with a bogey on the par-3 17th after hitting well short of the green and chipping 8 feet past. He hit left into a greenside bunker on 18, sent his third across the green nearly to the fringe and missed a 20-footer.

“Today on the way in everyone kind of ended up making some bogeys and went the other way,” Furyk said. “It’s just kind of that type of golf course. There’s some holes where there’s just no bail-out, so you fly it at the pin and if you hit a good shot, great. If not, you make bogey. There’s a few of those holes.”

Austin, the second-round leader, took two to get out of a right-side bunker and made a bogey to drop to 10 under.

Anna Nordqvist wins Women’s British Open for 3rd major title

C A R N O U S T I E , SCOTLAND (AP): Anna Nordqvist stayed out of trouble to make a routine par at the last and win the Women’s British Open for her third major title.

For playing partner Nanna Koerstz Madsen, her 72nd hole of the tournament could hardly have been more traumatic.

The Scandinavians were tied for the lead at 12 under as they made their way down the No. 18 at Carnoustie on Sunday. After Nordqvist landed her approach from the middle of the fairway safely on the green and 25 feet from the pin, Koerstz Madsen turned away in disgust as she pushed her shot from the light rough on the left into a horseshoe-shaped greenside bunker on the right.

Facing a plugged ball and a downhill lie at the back of the bunker, Koerstz Madsen shanked a shot that flew sideways and almost out-of-bounds at the back of the green.

The Danish player’s chip from straggly rough fell short and left of the cup, leaving Nordqvist with two putts for the title. The second was a tap-in from a couple of inches, securing a one-shot victory.

Nordqvist closed with a 3-under 69. Lizette Salas (69), 2018 champion Georgia Hall (67) and Madelene Sagstrom (68) tied for second, with a double bogey at the last dropping Koerstz Madsen (71) into a tie for fifth with Minjee Lee (66).

By adding the Women’s Open to her victories at the 2009 LPGA Championship and the 2017 Evian Championship, the 34-year-old Swede



became just the third European woman — after Annika Sorenstam and Laura Davies — to have won three or more majors. She earned \$870,000 from the \$5.8 million purse, the largest in women’s golf.

PGA TOUR

JERSEY CITY, N.J. (AP) — Liberty National avoided the brunt of the wind from Hurricane Henri, but not the rain that forced the final round of The Northern Trust to finish on Monday.

That was the hope, anyway. If the weather or the conditions don’t cooperate, the tournament could go to Tuesday.

In a memo sent to players Sunday night, PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said he is amending the bad weather guidelines to allow for a Tuesday finish regardless of how much golf is played Monday. Monahan cited the importance and the sequential nature of the FedEx Cup playoffs in making an exception to the guidelines.

The tour said spectators would not be allowed for the final round because of some 6 inches of rain — with the possibility of more

overnight — that has left walking routes impassable.

Jon Rahm and Cameron Smith finished the third round Saturday tied for the lead at 16-under 197, one shot ahead of Erik van Rooyen.

The PGA Tour decided before the third round even began that Henri posed too much danger for players, spectators and volunteers to be at Liberty National on Sunday.

PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS

SNOQUALMIE, Wash. (AP) — Rod Pampling won the Boeing Classic for his first PGA Tour Champions victory when Jim Furyk and Woody Austin failed to get up-and-down for birdie from greenside bunkers on the par-5 18th.

Pampling, playing five groups ahead of Furyk and Austin at Snoqualmie Ridge, shot a 6-under 66 to finish at 12-under 204. The 51-year-old Australian won three times on the PGA Tour, the last in 2017 in Las Vegas, and has two PGA Tour of Australasia wins.

Furyk dropped a stroke back with a

shot 66.

EUROPEAN TOUR

VYSOKY UJEZD, Czech Republic (AP) — Johannes Veerman won the Czech Masters for his first European Tour title, closing with a 4-under 68 for a two-stroke victory.

The 29-year-old American finished at 15-under 273 at Albatross Golf Resort near Prague.

Fellow American Sean Crocker (70) and Finland’s Tapio Pulkkanen (72) tied for second.

OTHER TOURS

Kazuki Higa won the Japan Golf Tour’s Shigeo Nagashima Invitational Segi Sammy Cup in Hokkaido. He closed with a 4-under 68 to finish at 20 under, two strokes ahead of Kunihiro Kamii. ...

Norway’s Espen Kofstad won the Challenge Tour’s Sydbank Esbjerg Challenge in Denmark, beating Scotland’s Ewen Ferguson with a birdie on the first hole of a playoff. Koftsad closed with a 4-under 67 to match Ferguson (69) at 11 under. ...

Denmark’s Thomas Bjorn won the Irish Legends for his first Legends Tour title, beating Wales’ Phillip Price with a birdie on the second hole of a playoff. Bjorn closed with a 6-under 65 to match Price (69) at 15 under at Rosapenna Hotel & Golf Resort. ...

Sakura Kobetsu won the Japan LPGA’s CAT Ladies for her fifth victory of the season and sixth overall. She shot a 1-under 71 in high wind to finish at 7 under, two strokes ahead of three players. ...

Lim Hee Jeong closed with a 3-under 69 for a one-stroke victory in the Korean LPGA’s HighOne Resort Ladies Open. She finished at 11 under.

Austin, the second-round leader, took two to get out of a right-side bunker and made a bogey to drop to 10 under.

Furyk had a 70 to tie for second with Tim Herron (67) and Billy Mayfair (69). Austin’s closing 72 left him tied for fifth with Alex Cejka (66).

KORN FERRY TOUR

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Greyson Sigg won the Albertsons Boise Open to open the Korn Ferry Tour finals, shooting a 6-under 65 for a one-stroke victory over J.J. Spaun and Aaron Rai.

Already headed to the PGA Tour next season as a top-25 finisher in the regular-season points race, Sigg finished at 19-under 265 at Hillcrest Country Club and earned \$180,000. The 26-year-old former Georgia player also won in Knoxville in May.

Playing partner Rai closed with a double bogey for a 67. Spaun

Pacquiao ponders ring retirement, political plans after loss

LAS VEGAS (AP): Manny Pacquiao sounded like a fighter on his way out and a politician on his way up.

He might have concealed his battered face behind big sunglasses, but Pacquiao didn’t hide behind excuses or denial after a discouraging unanimous-decision loss to Yordenis Ugás on Saturday night.

Yes, Pacquiao disclosed that his legs cramped throughout the fight on the Vegas Strip, depriving him of the mobility that has always made his power so dangerous.

The eight-division world champion still acknowledged the larger fact that was obvious even to most of his devoted fans around the world: He deserved his loss to Ugás, a talented opponent who probably wouldn’t have been much trouble for prime Pacman.

And that might be a good reason to walk away.

“This sport is my passion,” Pacquiao said. “That’s why I’m still here fighting at the age of 42. I’m enjoying it, but sometimes you have to think about the response of your body. ... My mind, my heart, it’s 100%. But my legs were cramping.”

In the moments after he returned from a two-year ring absence with the loss to the rangy, resilient Ugás, Pacquiao repeatedly hinted he is planning to retire from boxing.

He is still alongside Canelo Álvarez as the two biggest active stars in the sport, yet Pacquiao (67-8-2) has never spoken so frankly about leaving behind 26 years in the pro fight game.

“I’ve done a lot for boxing, and boxing has done a lot for me,” Pacquiao said. “I look forward to spending a lot of time thinking about

my future in boxing.”

Pacquiao’s postfight comments included a sprinkling of such catchy, pre-written phrases — sort of like a stump speech by a politician.

Indeed, the Filipino senator’s next fight is probably in the political ring: He is widely expected to enter the presidential race in the Philippines next month ahead of the May 2022 election.

“In my heart, I want to continue to fight,” Pacquiao said. “But the thing is, I also have to consider my body. I’ve put it through a lot of things. Especially back in my country, there’s a lot of things that I need to accomplish to help people. I want to be an inspiration to the Philippine people inside and outside the ring.”

Countless athletes have struggled mightily to find worthwhile ways to fill their time after retirement. That wouldn’t be a problem for Pacquiao: His chaotic life won’t get less busy, but it could be a bit more focused with only one career to consider.

If Pacquiao retires, he leaves boxing as one of the greats of his generation. Along with his stunning array of championship belts and his groundbreaking mobility across the sport’s weight classes, Pacquiao will be remembered for his utter fearlessness in taking on countless larger foes without blinking.

Freddie Roach, Pacquiao’s devoted trainer for most of the past two decades, acknowledged being “a little worried” about the champ.

“He’s boxed for a long time, and he’s the best guy I’ve ever had,” Roach said. “The best guy, the best fighter. I hate to see the day when he retires, but this could be it. We’ll see what Manny decides.”

PGA Tour hopes for best after rain soaks Liberty National

JERSEY CITY, N.J. (AP): Liberty National avoided the brunt of the wind from Hurricane Henri, but not the rain that forced the final round of The Northern Trust to finish on Monday.

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Cameron Smith finished the third round Saturday tied for the lead at 16-under 197, one shot ahead of Erik van Rooyen.

The PGA Tour decided before the third round even began that Henri posed too much danger for players, spectators and volunteers to be at Liberty National on Sunday. Officials came to the course along the Hudson River and found the course to be in reasonable shape.

“Really good for 5 inches of rain,” said John Mutch, the PGA Tour rules official overseeing the event. “They were working on the bunkers when I was there. There’s not a whole lot of standing water. I was pleased. I’ve seen a lot worse.”

A steady rain kept falling into early Sunday afternoon. The tour released tee times for 7:30 a.m. with threesomes starting on both sides.

The course was built on landfill and drains relatively well.

It was no small task

to prepare for Henri, which was downgraded to a tropical storm before it made landfall Sunday in Rhode Island.

Hours after Smith had set the course record with a 60 — he missed a 12-foot putt for a 59 — and Rahm finished with a par for a 67 to share the lead, workers at Liberty National worked well into Saturday night securing anything that might blow away.

The portable toilets were bundled and fastened. The ShotLink cameras that measure every shot on every hole were taken down. All the metal fences that formed lines for the ferry across the river to Manhattan or the walkway for players going to the practice range were secured.

Those need to be replaced before the final round can begin.

As for the players, it was a rare day off. They last had an entire washed out during the Zozo Championship outside Tokyo in the fall of 2019. The BMW Championship

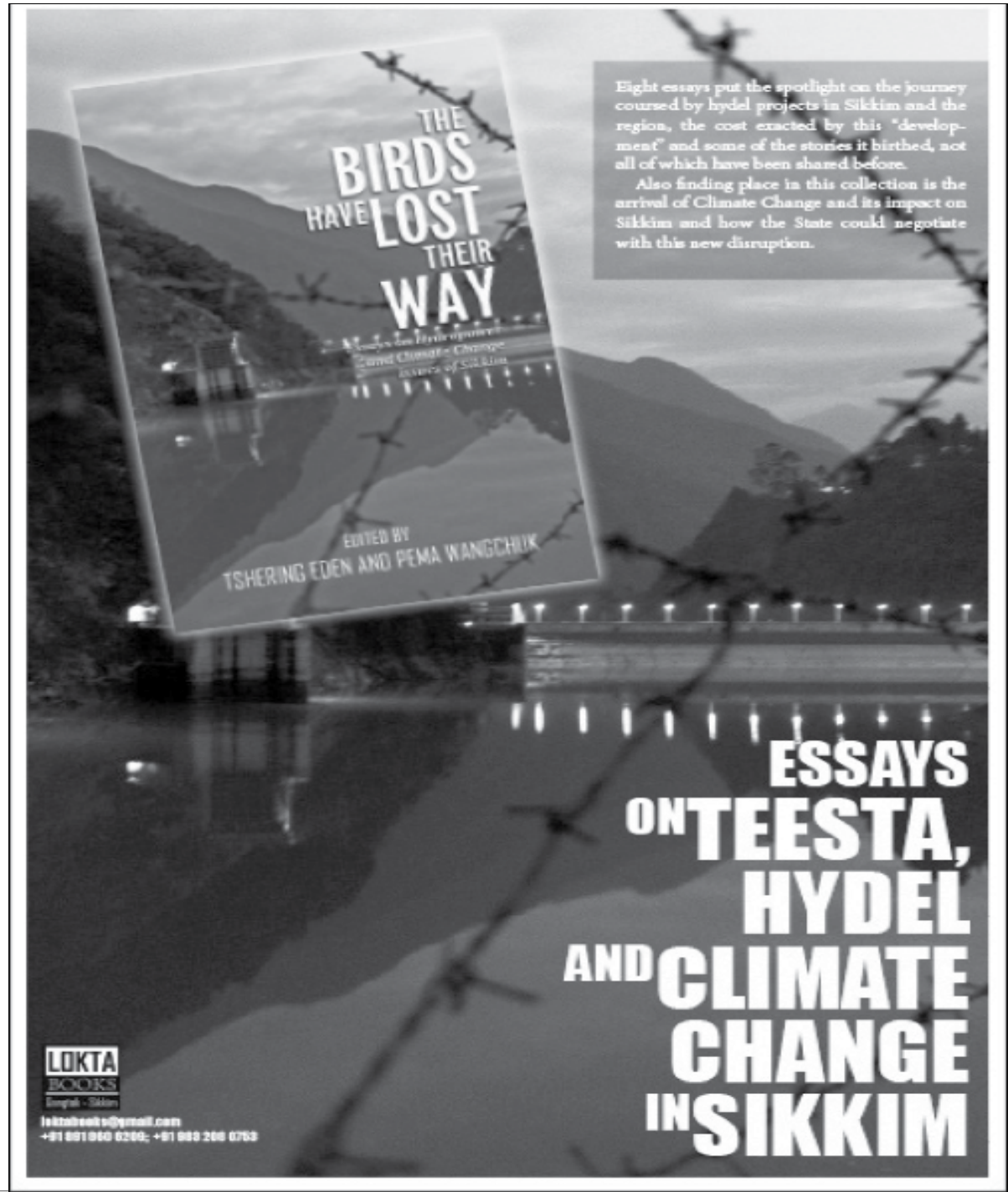
at Aronimink outside Philadelphia was washed out on Sunday, leading to a Monday finish. In that case, the decision to postpone was not announced in advance.

Several players were staying in Manhattan, ordinarily a good place to be to sit out a delay, except it was messy to get around.

There was plenty at stake in the PGA Tour postseason. The top 70 in the FedEx Cup standings after this tournament advance to the BMW Championship, which starts Thursday outside Baltimore.

Keith Mitchell was at No. 101. He is in a six-way tie for 11th place and currently is projected to move up to No. 69, which would get him into the BMW Championship. Tom Hoge was at No. 108 and in a three-way tie for sixth at Liberty National, projected to move to No. 57.

Van Rooyen was in position to win at one shot out of the lead, and his travel schedule suddenly became a lot less complicated.



Greece wildfires: 2 new blazes break out amid strong winds

ATHENS, GREECE (AP): Greece’s fire department scrambled firefighting aircraft and ground forces as at least two new blazes broke out in areas already scarred by wildfires this summer, with strong winds complicating efforts to contain them.

The first broke out Monday morning in the south of Evia, Greece’s second-largest island, whose north was decimated earlier this month by a blaze that burned for more than 10 days. The second was burning in the Vilia area northwest of Athens, where a major blaze was brought under control Friday after burning for five days.

Authorities issued an evacuation order for Vilia, as some residents hosed down their gardens and homes, hoping to save them, while police halted traffic on a nearby highway.

“A new major battle has begun,” regional governor Giorgos Patoulis told Open TV.

This month, which began with Greece’s most severe heat wave in about three decades, is quickly turning into one of the country’s most destructive fire seasons,



with dozens of wildfires breaking out every day across the country.

Thousands of people have been forced to flee the flames, which have devoured forests, agricultural land, homes and businesses. Evia has been particularly badly hit, with a major blaze destroying tens of thousands of hectares from coast to coast.

One volunteer firefighter has died, and at least four others have been hospitalized with burn injuries.

The country’s firefighting capabilities have been stretched to the limit, leading the government to appeal for international help earlier this month as four major

fires burned in separate parts of the country.

The fire department said it was scrambling ground and air firefighting forces to the Vilia area, around 60 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of Athens.

Nearly 300 firefighters, including reinforcements sent from Romania, had already been in the area, operating at the site of the previous fire, which had burned large swathes of a pine forest and some homes.

Over the weekend, authorities maintained hundreds of firefighters, backed up by helicopters and water-dropping planes, in the area

to extinguish small flare-ups, fearing strong winds could rekindle the flames.

Meanwhile, the fire that broke out Monday morning in Evia was near its western coast. The fire department scrambled 64 firefighters with 26 vehicles, one ground team, nine helicopters and one water-dropping plane, and said the blaze was contained after several hours.

The coast guard said it had one lifeboat, one private boat and two ferries on standby in case a sea evacuation became necessary. In the earlier fire in Evia’s north, hundreds of people were evacuated by

sea from beaches and coastal villages as the fire raced down the hillsides toward them.

The causes of Greece’s wildfires haven’t yet been officially established, but more than a dozen people have been arrested on suspicion of arson, including a 14-year-old boy. On Friday, Citizens Protection Minister Michalis Chrisochoidis said a special prosecutor for organized crime cases was involved in the investigation.

Intense heat and wildfires have struck other Mediterranean countries.

Recent wildfires have killed at least 75 people in Algeria and 16 in Turkey, while in southern France 1,200 firefighters have been struggling to contain a major blaze that has forced thousands to flee, killed two people and injured 26.

Worsening drought and heat have also fueled wildfires in the western United States and in Russia’s northern Siberia region.

Scientists say there is little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving more extreme events.

Indonesia Cabinet minister gets 12 years in COVID-19 graft

JAKARTA, INDONESIA (AP): Indonesia’s anti-graft court sentenced a former Cabinet minister to 12 years in prison on Monday after finding him guilty of bribery related to the government’s distribution of coronavirus aid. Former Social Affairs Minister Juliari Peter Batubara was arrested in December after he turned himself in to the Corruption Eradication Commission, hours after its chairman publicly called on him to surrender.

His arrest came a day after the commission foiled an attempt to hand over seven suitcases and backpacks containing \$1.3 million in cash to ministry officials. He was immediately dismissed by President Joko Widodo.

The case drew a public outcry as Indonesia struggles to combat corruption and tackle the profound health and economic impact of the coronavirus.

The corruption court ruled that Batubara was guilty of abusing his power by enriching himself and other officials. It also ordered him to pay a 500 million rupiah (\$34,690) fine, and said he would be

subject to another six months’ imprisonment if he fails to pay.

“The defendant has legally and convincingly been proven guilty of corruption,” presiding Judge Muhammad Damis said. “The crime was committed at a time of COVID-19 pandemic hardship,” he said in explaining why Batubara deserved the punishment.

Batubara, 49, a former politician with the governing Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, accepted the bribes through two subordinates in charge of procuring goods for the government’s social aid program, Adi Wahyono and Matheus Joko Santoso, a court document said.

It said the suppliers were asked to set aside 70 cents for each package of basic food distributed to the poor for Batubara’s benefit. They collected up to 32.3 billion rupiah (\$2.2 million) on behalf of Batubara from 63 companies between May and December 2020, the court document said.

The project, supervised by the Social Affairs Ministry, is worth 5.9 trillion rupiah (\$407 million).

Wahyono and Santoso

are being tried separately at the same court.

Batubara was the second Cabinet member arrested for alleged graft in less than two weeks in December. Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Edhy Prabowo, who has since resigned, was arrested on suspicion of taking bribes in connection with exports of lobster larvae and allegedly used the money for a luxury shopping spree in the United States.

Prabowo was sentenced to five years in prison last month.

The cases have tarnished President Widodo’s credibility in fighting corruption. Two other Cabinet ministers, including Batubara’s predecessor, were also given prison terms in corruption cases.

Widodo campaigned in part on a pledge to run a clean government in a country that ranked 102th out of 180 nations in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International.

Indonesia has reported more than 3.9 million COVID-19 cases, including 126,372 deaths, the largest tally in Southeast Asia.

Gunfire at Kabul airport kills 1 amid chaotic evacuations

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN (AP): A firefight at one of the gates of Kabul’s international airport killed at least one Afghan soldier early Monday, German officials said, the latest chaos to engulf Western efforts to evacuate those fleeing the Taliban takeover of the country.

The shooting at the airport came as the Taliban sent fighters north of the capital to eliminate pockets of armed resistance to their lightning takeover earlier this month. The Taliban said they retook three districts seized by opponents the day before and had surrounded Panjshir, the last province that remains out of their control.

Afghanistan’s security forces collapsed in the face of the Taliban advance, despite 20 years of Western aid, training and assistance. Tens of thousands of Afghans have sought to flee the country since, fearing a return to the brutal rule the Taliban imposed the last time they ran Afghanistan. That has led to chaos at the airport in Kabul, the main route out of the country, where some Afghan troops are assisting Western evacuation efforts.

Gunfire broke out near one of the airport’s gates, where at least seven Afghans died a day earlier in a panicked stampede of thousands of people. The circumstances of the shooting, which occurred around dawn, remained unclear.

The German military tweeted that one member of the Afghan security forces was killed and three others were wounded by “unknown attackers.” It later clarified that it was



referring to “members of the Afghan army” involved in securing the airport.

Emergency, an Italian humanitarian organization that operates hospitals in Afghanistan, said it had treated six patients with bullet wounds from the airport, none of whom were in life-threatening condition.

The U.S. military and NATO did not immediately acknowledge the shooting. There was no comment from the Taliban.

The tragic scenes around the airport have transfixed the world. Afghans poured onto the tarmac last week and some clung to a U.S. military transport plane as it took off, later plunging to their deaths. At least seven people died that day, in addition to the seven killed Sunday.

The Taliban blame the chaotic evacuation on the U.S. military and say there’s no need for any Afghans to flee. They have pledged to bring peace and security after decades of war and say they won’t seek revenge

on those who worked with the U.S., NATO and the toppled Afghan government.

But their fighters have violently suppressed protests and beat people with batons as they try to control the crowds outside the airport perimeter. There have also been reports in recent days of the Taliban hunting down their former enemies. It’s unclear if Taliban leaders are saying one thing and doing another, or if fighters on the ground are taking matters into their own hands.

As the airlift continues, the U.S. government asked for 18 aircraft from U.S. commercial carriers to assist in transporting Afghan refugees to their final destinations after their initial evacuation. The request fell under the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program, which was born in the wake of the Berlin airlift and can add to the military’s capabilities during crises.

Early Monday, a Delta Air Lines flight landed in Dubai and later took off for Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, where evacuees are crowded into

hangars. A steady stream of military transport planes continue to fly people out of Kabul to airfields across the Mideast.

Since Aug. 14, the U.S. has evacuated or facilitated the evacuation of more than 30,000 people on military and coalition flights. Tens of thousands of people — Americans, other foreigners and Afghans who assisted in the war effort — are still waiting to join the airlift, which has been slowed by security issues and U.S. bureaucracy hurdles.

U.S. President Joe Biden said Sunday he would not rule out extending the evacuation beyond Aug. 31, the date he had set for completing the withdrawal of U.S. forces. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to press Biden for an extension.

But Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen, in an interview with Sky News, said Aug. 31 is a “red line” and that extending the American presence would “provoke a reaction.”

There are concerns that a local affiliate of the Islamic State group

might target the crowds outside the airport with suicide bombers or fire missiles at U.S. aircraft. Military planes have been executing corkscrew landings, and other aircraft have fired flares upon takeoff — both measures used to avoid missile attacks.

The Taliban and IS have different ideologies and have fought in recent years, but one concern about the Taliban’s takeover is that they could again shelter extremist groups. The Taliban harbored al-Qaida while it orchestrated the 9/11 attacks, leading to the U.S. invasion in 2001. The Taliban now say they will not allow Afghanistan to be a base for attacks on other countries.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, the Taliban have faced limited armed resistance from fighters in Baghlan province, some 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of Kabul. The anti-Taliban fighters claimed to have seized three districts in the Andarab Valley on Sunday, but the Taliban said Monday that they had cleared them out overnight.

Millions in Syria, Iraq losing access to water

BEIRUT (AP): Millions of people in Syria and Iraq are at risk of losing access to water, electricity and food amid rising temperatures, record low water levels due to lack of rainfall and drought, international aid groups warned Monday.

The two neighboring countries, both battered by years of conflict and mismanagement, are in need of rapid action to combat severe water shortages, the groups said. The drought is also disrupting electricity supplies as low water levels impact dams, which in turn impact essential infrastructure, including health facilities.

More than 12 million people in both countries are affected, including 5 million in Syria who are directly dependent on the Euphrates River. In Iraq, the loss of access to water from the Euphrates and Tigris River, and drought, threaten at least 7 million people.

Some 400 square kilometers (154 square miles) of agricultural land faces drought, the groups said, adding that two dams in northern Syria, supplying power to 3 million people, face imminent closure.

Carsten Hansen, regional director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the aid groups behind the warning, said that for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis still displaced and many more still fleeing for their lives in Syria, the unfolding water crisis “will soon become an unprecedented catastrophe pushing more into displacement.”

Other aid groups included Mercy Corps, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE international, ACTED and Action Against Hunger.

They warned that several Syrian provinces — including Hassakah, Aleppo and Raqqa in the north and Deir el-Zour in the east — have witnessed a rise in water-borne diseases. The areas include displacement settlements housing tens of thousands of people displaced in Syria’s 10-year conflict.

CARE’s regional chief for Mideast and North Africa, Nirvana Shawky, urged authorities and donor governments to act swiftly to save lives. The latest crisis comes on top of war, COVID-19 and severe economic decline, she said.

“There is no time to

waste,” said Gerry Garvey of the Danish Refugee Council, adding that the water crisis is likely to increase conflict in an already destabilized region.

Severe water shortages have also hit Lebanon, which is mired in the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history, where more than 4 million people — mainly vulnerable children and families — face critical water shortages in the coming days, the U.N.’s children agency warned last week.

In Lebanon, severe fuel shortages have also halted the work of thousands of private generators long relied on for electricity in the corruption-plagued country.

UNICEF called for urgent restoration of the power supply to keep water services running.

Lebanon’s rivers are also heavily polluted. Activists have long warned about pollution levels caused by sewage and waste in the Litani River, the country’s longest and a major source for water supply, irrigation and hydroelectricity.

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Shahs of Sunset's Mike Shouhed Is Engaged to Paulina Ben-Cohen

During the Shahs of Sunset season nine reunion, Mike Shouhed revealed that he and girlfriend Paulina Ben-Cohen are engaged, and they showed off her ring. Mike Shouhed shared some very big news as part of Shahs of Sunset's tense season nine reunion.

During the first part of the reunion that aired on Sunday, Aug. 22, the 42-year-old star confirmed that he and Paulina Ben-Cohen are engaged after several years of dating, with the couple showing off her ring. He also mentioned that the pair is currently living together in the Los Angeles home they purchased back in May.

"I want to share something with you guys," Mike told his co-stars during the reunion, per Bravo. "We're engaged... And we wanted to share that with everybody today."

Mike went on to explain more about how he proposed in Hawaii to Paulina, who has two children from her previous marriage. "I actually asked her son his permission to marry his mommy, and I gave him the ring," Mike said. "And we were in Hawaii, and I planned with the concierge where the most beautiful



part of the beach was gonna be."

The couple surprised the other cast members by revealing they wouldn't be getting a prenuptial agreement, with Paulina making it clear she wouldn't feel comfortable signing one. "I would not marry someone if I felt that I need to protect myself," she said. "In my eyes, that's not a marriage. Then I'll just date someone."

She also shared about Mike, "The love and the

connection that we have with each other, like, I would not be able to live a day without him in my life."

Mike did not specify when the engagement took place, but he posted a photo to Instagram on July 17 of the two of them holding hands in Hawaii.

This season has featured plenty of drama involving the longtime couple, including Paulina finding sexts on his phone that were sent to other women.

During an exclusive

interview with E! News in May, Mike said he was looking forward to popping the question soon. "We've discussed moving forward in our relationship, hopefully getting engaged, getting married, having children, adding to the beautiful family we already have," the star said at the time.

Mike also told E! News back then that the sexting scandal "was a learning experience, and I realize that I shouldn't do that."

Tear gas hurled in Albania at Bosnian Serb singer's concert

TIRANA, ALBANIA (AP): Albanian police on Monday said they have arrested two people for allegedly hurling tear gas cannisters during a concert by a Bosnian Serb musician whom many in the country accuse of not condemning the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo.

A statement said Redon Leka, 21, was arrested after hurling a tear gas cannister while songwriter and

composer Goran Bregovic was performing Sunday night at the Korca Beer Fest, 165 kilometers (about 100 miles) southeast of the capital, Tirana.

Another man was arrested after trying to stop police from taking Leka away.

Bregovic didn't stop singing but the tear gas caused panic among some fans.

Bregovic's presence had sparked a nationalistic debate

with some condemning him for not speaking out against Serb atrocities on ethnic Albanians in neighboring Kosovo. Others have said an artist shouldn't get involved with politics.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, a decade after the 1998-1999 war with Serb forces. The war ended after a 78-day NATO air campaign drove Serb troops out and a

peacekeeping force moved in.

Most Western nations have recognized Kosovo, but Serbia and its allies Russia and China do not. Tensions over Kosovo remain a source of volatility in the Balkans.

Bregovic visited Albania in 2006 and held a concert, also receiving a symbolic key to Tirana by mayor Edi Rama, who is now Albania's prime minister. His presence then didn't spark a backlash.

Josephine Baker is 1st Black woman given Paris burial honor

PARIS (AP): The remains of American-born singer and dancer Josephine Baker will be reinterred at the Pantheon monument in Paris, making the entertainer who is a World War II hero in France the first Black woman to get the country's highest honor.

Le Parisien newspaper reported Sunday that French President Emmanuel Macron decided to organize a ceremony on Nov. 30 at the Paris monument, which houses the remains of scientist Marie Curie, French philosopher Voltaire, writer Victor Hugo and other French luminaries.

The presidential palace confirmed the newspaper's report.

After her death in 1975, Baker was buried in Monaco, dressed in a French military uniform with the medals she received for her role as

part of the French Resistance during the war.

Baker will be the fifth woman to be honored with a Pantheon burial and will also be the first entertainer honored.

Holocaust survivor Simone Veil, one of France's most revered politicians, was buried at the Pantheon in 2018. The other women are two who fought with the French Resistance during World War II — Germaine Tillion and Genevieve de Gaulle-Anthonioz — and Nobel Prize-winning chemist Curie.

The monument also holds the remains of 72 men.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Baker became a megastar in the 1930s, especially in France, where she moved in 1925 as she was seeking to flee racism and segregation in the United States.

Tabu resumes shoot of 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2'

MUMBAI, AUG 23 (PTI): National Award winner Tabu has resumed filming her upcoming horror comedy "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2", directed by Anees Bazmee.

Actor Kartik Aaryan took to Instagram late Sunday evening and shared that Tabu has joined him for the shoot.

"Begin Again #BhoolBhulaiyaa2," Aaryan captioned the picture with the 49-year-old actor.

Earlier this month, Bazmee had announced he was back on set to resume work on the film after its shoot was halted in

March when Aaryan tested positive for COVID-19.

Also starring Kiara Advani, "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2" -- written by Farhad Samji and Aakash Kaushik -- is a sequel to filmmaker Priyadarshan's 2007 film of the same name.

The film is produced by Bhushan Kumar and Krishan Kumar under their banner T-Series and Murad Khetani of Cine 1 Studios.

In February, the makers had announced that the film will be released on November 19, but there has been no update regarding the project's current release date.



SHINE BRIGHT! The singer Rihanna glows in a crystal choker and slip dress while out in Los Angeles.

Eric Stonestreet Is Engaged to Lindsay Schweitzer

Modern Family's Eric Stonestreet announced his engagement to nurse Lindsay Schweitzer on Aug. 22 by posting a carousel of photos showing off her ring.

Congratulations are in order for Modern Family alum Eric Stonestreet and his "people."

On Sunday, Aug. 22, the 49-year-old actor announced on Instagram that he and Lindsay Schweitzer are engaged after the star popped the question. He shared several photos of the happy couple that showed off her eye-popping diamond ring.

"She said, 'She'd have her people call my people,'" Eric humorously captioned the post.

Among his famous friends sharing support in the comments section was Gwyneth Paltrow, who wrote, "YAY!!! We are so happy for you." Rob Riggle—who has attended Kansas City-based sporting events with Eric, as both grew up in the area—posted, "Congratulations [champagne and party popper emojis] !!! This is awesome!!!"

Additionally, Zachary Levi commented, "Congrats duuuuuuuuuude!!!" Michael Bublé shared, "Congrats you beautiful couple you," adding a string of heart emojis. And Bethenny Frankel, who previously was romantically linked to Eric, simply wrote,



"YES."

Eric and Lindsay, a pediatric nurse, started dating after meeting at a Kansas City charity event in June 2016, according to People. In September 2017, he enthusiastically told Ellen DeGeneres about the relationship.

After Ellen told Eric it's good that Lindsay is a nurse "because you're a hypochondriac," the two-time Emmy winner replied, "I'm a big baby, too!" He went on to say, "She calms me. She calms my nerves! I'm a very high-strung person."

Back in April 2016, Eric told Ellen that he was on dating apps, and he admitted some of his friends had seemed surprised by this.

"Now I've done Bumble, and I've tried this other one, and the way I justify it, Ellen, is because I'm on TV, I shouldn't be eliminated from participating in what's going on in the world," he shared back then.

sake of restoring order. But this sense of calm rests on a shaky foundation, one that will give way eventually. Let's not get started on the collateral damage of this catastrophe. What the cards are urging you to do today is step back and reassess. Yes, it is time to own your truth and stand up for what you believe in. Your need to be assertive may stir up a storm in your surroundings. But it's all going to be for the greater good, beautiful.

CANCER:

The order for the day is to speak your truth, Cancer. It's to stand up for what you believe in. This is the only way to solve the inner conflict you are feeling right now. Remember, you cannot control how other people will perceive you as a result of this. You don't have to. Know that those who are meant to stay in your life will accept you as you are without subjecting you to their judgements.

LEO:

If Rumi's immortal words are anything to go by, then the wound is where the light enters, Leo. This is something your life experiences are likely to teach you in the days to come. So, observe what's coming up in your emo-

tional landscape without judging it or putting a label on it. Your inner light has the power to transform these wounds into wisdom. Your inner light has the power to help you rise from the ashes and emerge as the most empowered version of yourself.

VIRGO:

We love the challenge that comes with taking on something new. We thrive on the idea of making life an adventure of sorts. But, if we took on new tasks each and everyday, what would happen to the old ones? As an earth sign, you fully understand the importance of consistency. The week ahead sees you being grateful for what is already on your plate as you nurture each project with love and care.

LIBRA:

The week ahead is bringing with itself the reminder that you have the power to create a life that's creatively, spiritually, and financially abundant all at the same time. All you have to do is keep facing your True North, beautiful. What is making this chapter of your life worth remembering is the fact that

you are not creating magic alone. The presence of your co-conspirators is making the journey all the more inspiring.

SCORPIO:

The good news is, things on the financial front are taking a turn for the better. So if you've been struggling to pay off your debts, know that you will manifest the funds and resources you require for this. As such, things on the career front are taking off for you. Stagnant projects too are beginning to move.

SAGITTARIUS:

Kindness is cultivated, Sagittarius. So are gentleness, empathy and compassion. What the cards are reminding you of today is the power to stay open. The power to expand your heart space no matter what your external circumstances. Trust that it is this openness that will help you transform the challenges you are confronted with at the moment.

CAPRICORN:

You're stepping out of a period of stagnation and into a phase that can best be described as "Let the adventures begin!" Yes,

the things that have been on hold are likely to pick up pace too, reaffirming your faith in the chosen path. There may not be much time for decision-making, though. It's best to rely on your instinct at every point.

AQUARIUS:

If the Rule of Three is to be believed, then everything we put into the cosmos comes back to us threefold. The real question is: in what manner do "you" feel inspired to co-create? What are the seeds of change you want to plant today? The Universe is offering you a sacred cauldron, a bedazzled one at that, for you to brew a magical potion that will create a magnificent shift.

PISCES:

The most significant battles are the ones we fight silently. The ones that we do not receive any validation for in the world outside. Breaking a pattern, for instance, or overcoming issues related to self-confidence. It's time to make a note of all of these breakthroughs, big and small, and write yourself that love letter you've been thinking about. If you don't celebrate yourself fully, who will, Pisces?