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SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 26 | Gangtok | Thursday 28 January 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

R-Day in Sikkim with announcements, remembrances and stock-taking

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 JAN:**

The State Government will introduce One Rank-One Pension in the State from the year 2022 onwards, Chief Minister PS Tamang has announced in his Republic Day message to the people of Sikkim.

While on the topic of pension, he adds that the rate of pension has been increased by his Government in addition to the pension provided by the Government of India.

“The Government with the object to provide a sense of security to our women has also reduced the age limit for availing Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme from 40 years to 21 years,



while also enhancing the rate substantially. Likewise, the old-age pension has been increased from Rs 1000 to Rs 1500 for the age between 60-70, Rs 2000 from Rs 1500 for 70-80 and Rs 2500 for those

above 80,” he states in his message.

As for the One Rank-One Pension promise, he added on Tuesday that the State Government will issue a Notification to this effect shortly.

He added that the State government has also proposed to create a Sikkim Women’s Police Special Task Force and invited women to take benefit of this opportunity.

The CM further in-

formed that the State government was focusing on developing alternate modes of transport like tunnels, cable cars, etc which will substantially reduce the pressure

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NSUO challenges Passang Sherpa’s claim that ST status for left-out communities dilutes Art 371F

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

Nationalist Sikkim United Organizations [NSUO] has strongly challenged the statement issued by “I am 371F” coordinator, Passang Sherpa, that the recent government resolution seeking tribal status for the 12 left-out communities would dilute Article 371F.

Instead, NSUO has asserted that taking forward the issue of providing tribal status to left out communities was a historic move of the State government.

Mr Sherpa had given the statement at a public awareness programme organized by Sikkim Suraksha Samiti on 24 January at Rongli Bazaar in East Sikkim.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, NSUO chief coordinator, DK Pradhan, reiterated that NSUO wholeheartedly welcomes the move of the State government of taking forward the long-pending demand of the people of Sikkim.

This, he insisted,

was a historic move by the present government in taking the initiative promised in its election manifesto.

He asserted that every community should support the state government in this initiative. He further appealed to the people to stay ready to come out on streets if required in support of this demand.

Mr Pradhan added that NSUO welcomed the move of the state government to seek tribal status on the basis of the Article 371F.

He stated that the state government has taken the right decision as laws can be made for the protection of the people of Sikkim as per the provisions of clause[f] of the Article 371F.

He argues that when Article 371F was not diluted while providing tribal status to Bhutias and Lepchas in 1979 and then to Limboos and Tamangs in 2003, it was “totally wrong” to claim it will be diluted by providing tribal status to the left out communities.



CM donates to Ram Mandir project

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

The coordinator of Ram Janma Bhumi Tirtha Kshetra Nyas (Sikkim Branch), Som Nath Pandey, accompanied by the Advisor to the CM, Rohit Raj Ji Maharaj, and a team of the organization called on Chief Minister PS Tamang at Mintokgang on 26 Janu-

ary for a brief meeting, a press release from the Chief Minister’s Office informs. The Chief Minister also handed over a contribution towards the construction of Ram Mandir Tirtha Kshetra on behalf of his family and thanked the team and shared that he was delighted to be a part of such an extensive spiritual project.

Only one new case of Covid even as 273 more get vaccinated

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

A person from near the Power Station in DPH Area, Gangtok, was reported positive for COVID-19, on Wednesday becoming the only person to test positive for Novel Coronavirus in the State in the last 24 hours after the testing of 136 samples on Tuesday.

The state’s tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported so far

has now reached 6,079.

Meanwhile, three more patients recovered on Tuesday to further improve the number of recovered cases in Sikkim to 5,749. There are now only 102 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia informed that the one new case was picked up in the testing of 108 by RT-PCR,

while 11 samples tested by TrueNat testing and 17 samples by rapid antigen testing all returned negative for COVID-19.

About the ongoing COVID vaccination programme, he informed that a total of 273 health workers were vaccinated in the State on Wednesday - 78 at District Hospital, Singtam, 87 at Urban PHC, Gangtok, including health workers of ITBP and 108 at District Hospital, Namchi.

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Education Deptt begins coordination meetings and school visits in South Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 27 JAN:**

The Education Department office here in South District, as per directions received from the head office, organized a two-day coordination meeting and school visit program of officials from the head office accompanied by district administrative heads of the department, BDOs and the principal and faculty of DIET-Namchi and representative of SCERT-Namchi in the conference hall of Namchi District Administrative Centre today.

The meeting discussed ways and means to collect district education reports, make field visits, discuss implementation of new rules and regulations for the academic year and make education and extracurricular activities development plans for elementary, junior high, secondary and senior secondary schools for all government aided, private and missionary schools of South District.

The two-day coordination and schools visit programme was undertaken for the first time in South District after the



program was completed in West Sikkim.

The reports and data on accessibility reports of teachers and students have been the best in South Sikkim since its formation, said Director, Elementary School, SPD, Bhim Thatal.

During the program, the joint director of the Education Department of South Sikkim, DB Subba presented the south district educational report.

His brief presentation began with background details on the department in South Sikkim and presented details of activities of schools in South district during the lockdown and the various challenges that came along.

He said that alongside the cooperation of teachers, school heads and administrative personnel, the support and management made by

the head office played a major role to tide over the difficult time.

He also presented the future plans of the Department of South district.

The Director of School and Institution, Gangtok, Hondala Gyaltsen, in her address said that among all the areas of confirmed social associations and groups, education in the country have been hit and hampered the most by the pandemic and during such hardships, South district education department despite the shortage of system manpower have shown the best response of the system in the whole state with coverage of upto 75% of the syllabus, and a lot can be done in the future.

It’s performance has been ‘over the mark’, she commented.

turn to pg02

Chasok Tongnam Lokchum grateful towards CM for declaring Chasok Tongnam to declare Chasok Tongnam a gazetted holiday

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

Sukhim Yakthung Chasok Tongnam Lokchum [SYCTL], a cultural organization of the Limboo community, today expressed deep gratitude towards the State government and Chief Minister PS Tamang for declaring Chasok Tongnam, an important festival of the community, a gazetted holiday from this year onwards.

The organization held up the announcement as a historic declaration for the Limboo community not only in Sikkim but the world over.

Addressing a press conference here today, SYCTL chief coordinator, BPH Subba pointed out that Chasok Tongnam was an important festival of the Limboo com-

munity and that members of the community were grateful to the CM for declaring it a gazetted holiday.

He expressed that this was a big gift from the State government to members of the Limboo community and that this was historic because nowhere else in the world is a gazetted holiday enjoyed on a Limboo festival.

Mr Subba also informed that Sukhim Yakthung Chasok Tongnam Lokchum was formed in 2019 with the aim to make Chasok Tongnam celebrations an opportunity to preserve the culture, traditions and belief system of the community and educate the younger generation.

“Lokchum envisages to make the Chasok Tongnam not only a festival of Lim-

boos but also bring about integration of all other cultures and traditions prevalent in the State and the country as a whole, thereby making it an event to showcase university in diversity,” he said.

He informed that the Lokchum had placed a request that the festival be declared a gazetted holiday with the CM in 2019 during the first celebration of Chasok Tongnam by SYCTL held from 15 to 17 December.

He informed that the CM had agreed to the proposal and promised to look into the matter positively.

It was also informed that after thorough discussions, a meeting had unanimously decided to take the last day of Sencherengla as the date for Chasok

Tongnam holiday and the same was placed before the government for consideration and the CM made the announce-

during the Limboo month of ‘Sencherengla’ which falls in mid-November to mid-December of the Gregorian calendar.



ment on 14 December 2020 at Saramsa.

Chasok Tongnam is the harvest festival of the Limboo community and celebrated

In the past Chasok Tongnam was celebrated individually in the household as

turn to pg02

SSB marks National Girl Child Week in Gyalshing

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JAN:

The National Girl Child Week was celebrated by the 36th Battalion Sashastra Seema Bal from 21 to 26 Jan, 2021 at Gyalshing. Events like essay-writing, speeches to promote awareness, a rally highlighting the importance of girl education, health and nutrition in the schools adopted by SSB - Govt Senior Secondary School, Sakyong (Sikkim), Govt Primary School, Simphok (Sikkim) and Govt. Primary School Bhareng (Sikkim) of 36 Bn Sasashtra Seema Bal.

Young minds undertake cleanliness drive to celebrate R-Day

SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 27 JAN:

Young Mind Organisation celebrated the 72nd Republic Day with a daylong cleanliness drive at Padamchen ward under Rhenock constituency in East Sikkim on 26 January. The main idea behind organizing the drive was to spread wider awareness about cleanliness.

Minister Upreti visits party's Zonal office in Pakyong

SUMMIT REPORT

Gangtok, 27 Jan:

UD&HD Minister Arun Upreti visited Sikkim Krantikari's Zonal Party office at Pakyong, East Sikkim, after attending the Republic Day program at Pakyong Sub-Division on 26 Jan.

He was accompanied by SKM's vice president in-charge (Zone-I), Advisor Inchung Bhutia, general secretary (Press & Media), Boom Tshering Yonzon, youth secretary (Org), Gagan Gurung, and Sr Party Worker, ML Sharma.

The visit was to take stock of the constituency, collect grievances of the people, and analyze and discuss measures to strengthen the party and party activities in Sikkim.

During his visit, Mr Upreti interacted with party workers and took stock of situation of Pakyong Zone.

R-Day in Sikkim with announcements...

on the highway and lessen traffic woes.

He also urged every Sikkimese people to take full advantage of the opportunities being created to truly gain from the avenues that have been created by Government adding.

"Build your dreams and collectively work towards making the State and the Nation stronger and shine even brighter," he stressed.

The state-level Republic Day was celebrated at Paljor Stadium on Tuesday with Governor Ganga Prasad unfurling the Tricolor and reviewing the Republic Day parade by personnel from ITBP, SSB, SAP, 1st and 3rd IRBn, Army Pipe Band and Sikkim Police Pipe and Brass Band.

Chief Minister PS Tamang was present as the guest of honour.

The Governor, while congratulating the people on the occasion, also remembered the sacrifices of the uniformed personnel shared his deep sense of gratitude towards martyrs who laid down their lives maintaining the security and integrity of our country.

He also highlighted that the State Government, despite the hardships

SKM's Jan Sambadh Yatra covers Amba and Lower Bering

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JAN:

In its series of state-wide constituency-wise 'Jan Sambandh Yatra,' a team of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha senior office bearers headed by senior vice-president, Political Advisor to the CM TN Dhakal and general secretary [press & media], Boom Tshering Yonzon visited Amba GPU under Rhenock constituency and Lower Bering under Chujaachen constituency in East District on Tuesday.

The team took stock of the situation and issues being faced by the resident, an SKM press release inform.

The release adds



that a short coordination meeting was held at Amba GPK under Rhenock Constituency, which was also participated in by senior party worker, ML Sharma, Panchayat President,

Panchayat members, CLC executives, BLC, WLC and general public. During the course of interaction local public placed several grievances and demands and SKM team assured

to place all issues and grievances to the CM and concerned authorities for early solutions, it is informed.

The release adds that in his address, Mr Dhakal expressed that

the SKM government under the leadership of CM, PS Tamang took a historic step by adopting a government resolution in the State Assembly to provide tribal status to twelve left out communities of Sikkim.

He further stated that the SKM government has been working tirelessly in the interest of people of Sikkim since after forming the government. He stated that it was a long pending demand of the people of Sikkim but the previous SDF government failed to address this issue but SKM government took the historic step in the interest of 12 communities of Sikkim.

Republic Day celebrations at Teesta-V Power Station



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 JAN:

NHPC Ltd, Teesta-V Power Station, Balutar, East Sikkim celebrated 72nd Republic Day at its Football Ground in Balutar complex on 26 Jan.

The function was attended by all the employees of Teesta-V Power Station, IRBn, Home guards, teachers of KV

NHPC and local people with properly following COVID-19 guidelines.

To commemorate the day on which the Constitution of India came into effect, General Manager (I/c), Sahadev Khatua, Teesta-V PS & Teesta-IV Hydro Electric Project, remembered the sacrifices and contributions of freedom fighters and

paid tribute to the founding fathers of the Republic of India.

To rekindle the spirit of Nationalism and instill a sense of pride among employees, Mr Khatua inaugurated a gigantic tricolor on a 30mtr mast in its premises at Balutar. The celebrations included cultural programs & prize distribution to the performers.

Tiktok to shut down India business

PRASOON SRIVASTAVA

NEW DELHI, JAN 27 (PTI):

Chinese social media firm Bytedance, which owns Tiktok and Helo apps, has announced the closure of its India business following continued restrictions on its services in the country.

Tiktok's global interim head Vanessa Pappas and vice president for global business solutions Blake Chandlee in a joint email to employees have communicated the decision of the company that it is reducing team size and the decision will impact all employees in India.

The executives expressed uncertainty on the company's comeback to

India but expressed hope to do so in times to come. "While we don't know when we will make a comeback in India, we are confident in our resilience, and desire to do so in times to come," the email said.

According to a source at Bytedance, the company held a town hall on Wednesday where it communicated about the closure of India business.

When contacted Tiktok spokesperson said the company has worked steadfastly to comply with the government of India order issued on June 29, 2020 and continually strives to make its apps comply with local laws and regulations.

Republic Day held Subhaneydara

SUMMIT REPORT

SINGTAM, 27 JAN:

Samaj Sewa Youth Group, in coordination with Ebenezer Tui-tion Centre, organized a Republic Day celebration at Culture House, Ghattat-14th Premlakha Subaneydara GPU on 26 Jan, 2021.

Cultural programs and motivational speeches were highlights of the day. Panchayat member Pempa Sherpa of Subaneydara GPU was present as chief guest

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Research & Diagnostic Laboratory at STNM Hospital, Sochaygang which was established by the State Government while tests for the infectious disease were conducted free of cost.

The newly inaugurated 117 bedded ICU Hospital has been converted into a hospital for treatment of Covid-19.

In addition, the New STNM Hospital at Sochaygang has also been equipped with an Oncology Centre and an Oxygen Plant. Also, two Neurosurgeons have been appointed at the Hospital to provide the best of healthcare services. With these systems in place, the New STNM is fully well poised to benefit the people and provide state of the art healthcare facilities. Dialysis Centres are now fully functional at Gyalshing, Namchi and Gangtok. New ICUs are also operational at Gyalshing and Namchi Hospitals. Gyalshing Hospital now operates a 10 bedded ICUs Hospital as well as a new TB hospital and a Blood Bank. Under Ayushman Bharat, enrolment has increased by over 6 times since the formation of the State Government, he detailed.

COVID-19: Active cases only 1.65 per cent of total infections

New Delhi, Jan 27 (PTI):

The daily COVID-19 recovered cases in India have been surpassing daily new cases from the last 20 days, while the total active cases stand at 1,76,498 comprising just 1.65 per cent of the total infections, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

The cumulative recoveries have surged to 1,03,59,305 with 13,320 patients being discharged in a span of 24 hours. A total of 12,689 daily new cases were added to the national tally during the same period.

"India has one of the lowest daily COVID-19 new cases per Million population (69) in the last 7 days," the ministry highlighted.

These sustained encouraging results have been made possible with the Centre-led proactive and calibrated strategy of test, track, treat technology, the ministry underlined.

Early identification through high and aggressive testing, prompt surveillance and tracking, supervised home isolation combined with high quality medical care through Standard of Care protocol issued by the Centre have aided the sustained high number of recoveries, it stated.

There has been continued focus of the Union and state and UT governments on improved and effective clinical treatment in hospitals, supervised home isolation, use

of non-invasive oxygen support, use of steroids, anticoagulants, and improved services of the ambulances for ferrying patients for prompt and timely treatment.

The Union government has supported the state and UT governments with sufficient quantity of ventilators, PPE kits, drugs, etc. Tireless efforts of ASHA workers have ensured effective surveillance and tracking progress of the patients in supervised home isolation, the ministry underscored.

The 'eSanjeevani' digital platform has enabled telemedicine services which have been successful in containing the spread of COVID while simultaneously enabling provisions for non-COVID essential healthcare. The Centre has also focussed on building the clinical management capacities of the doctors manning the ICUs.

The 'National e-ICU on COVID-19 Management' exercise conducted by domain experts from AIIMS, New Delhi has substantially helped in this.

As on January 27, more than 20 lakh (20,29,480) beneficiaries have received the shots under the countrywide COVID-19 vaccination exercise.

In a span of 24 hours, 5,671 people were vaccinated across 194 sessions. A total of 36,572 sessions have been conducted so far, the ministry said.

Education Deptt begins...

She said that the students in the rural areas were more willing than the students of urban areas to attend classes during the last phase of the pandemic last year and still are.

She also informed that the notification for the education department system manpower for South District will be out in the near future and requested the officers to make the optimal use of 'edutech' and other websites prepared by the department to upload all activities at schools in their respective blocks and the data of the students on regular basis.

The Director of Elementary Schools cum SPD, Bhim Thatal, in his address, spoke about the two-day coordination meeting cum school visit program and focused on elementary school programs and Samagra Siksha mandates made by the government of India.

He said, for the corporate formula of 19/10 was incorporated officially/inofficially in the education administrative system in the state of Sikkim, documentation of all the activities made by the all the administrators and teachers of all the schools must be made which is essentially important for the data collection.

"The Education System of the state has to adapt in confirmative with administrative system of the state. No school in Sikkim, from any management, aid or administration should be left out from it, they all must come to our agreement," he said.

Chasok Tongnam Lokchum...

Chasok Thisok Fimma which the newly harvested crops were offered to the Goddess Yuma Mang and other household deities. With the passing of time and shift of people from agrarian to urban lifestyle, it became convenient for the people to come together and celebrate the festival at a social level which led to the Chasok Tongnam celebration.

The Lokchum aims to make Chasok Tongnam not only a local festival but an annual mega festival akin to the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland, which would attract both local and international tourists and research scholars.

Responding to media queries, Mr Subba mentioned that the organization has proposed to honour the CM for the historic declaration on behalf of the Limboo community.

He also thanked Minister Bhim Hang Subba, Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba, Namcheybong MLA, Em Prasad Sharma, Chairpersons and Advisors, different organizations and individuals for their support in achieving the historical goal.

BEFORE THE COURT OF SUB-DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE, PAKYONG. EAST SIKKIM.

AFFIDAVIT

WHEREAS, I YUDHISTER DHAKAL, S/O LILA RAM DHAKAL, by faith hindu religion, by occupation Self- employed, R/O permanent resident of Sumik Lingje, East Sikkim, P/O and P/S Singtam, East Sikkim. presently residing at Ganchung, P/O and P/S Pakyong, East Sikkim, hereby solemnly affirm and declare that as follows:-

1. That in certified of Identification issued by office of the District Collector, Gangtok, Govt. Of Sikkim, under Sikkim Subject Register SL No 193 Volume No I under Block Lingje, East Sikkim name has been found as "UDHISTER DHAKAL" in place of "YUDHISTER DHAKAL" and my father's name has been found as "LILA RAM SHARMA (DHAKAL)" in place of "LILA RAM DHAKAL".
2. That in my Birth certificate issued by office of the chief registrar, Bureau of economic & statistics, Govt. Of Sikkim bearing Regd. No 1996/13 dated 8.01.1996 name has been found as "YUDHISTER DHAKAL".
3. That in my school certificates and Mark-sheets name has been found as "YUDHISTER DHAKAL".
4. That hence, this affidavit is to declared that "YUDHISTER DHAKAL" actual name is "YUDHISTER DHAKAL" and "UDHISTIR DHAKAL" are one and same person i.e. Myself as deponent.
5. That hence, this affidavit is to declare that SHARMA is our caste and "DHAKAL" is our Title.
6. This affidavit is made bonafide.

DEPONENT

LOMCHEY

We would like to inform all that last year due to strict lockdown restrictions we could not

invite our friends, wellwishers & relatives during 49th day "Kutse Shegu" prayers of our beloved mother, Late Passang Lhamu Ethenpa popularly known as Passang Guruma of PN Girls School, Gangtok.

Her 1st death anniversary (LOMCHEY) falls on Thursday the 28th Jan 2021. Therefore, we request all our friends, well wishers & relatives to kindly join us in offering prayers at our residence at "Ethenpa Villa", Lower Tadong, Gangtok duly following COVID-19 protocols.

Mr. Menla T. Ethenpa & Dr. Sonam T. Ethenpa (Sons)
Mrs. Tshering Pem Ethenpa & Mrs. Chunki Ethenpa (Daughters-in-law)
Mrs. Diki Y. Ethenpa, Ms. Chopel S. Ethenpa & Mrs. Sangay P. Ethenpa (Daughters)
Mr. Karma Chankapa & Mr. Pemba Lama (Sons-in-law) & hosts of grand children and great grand children



Oviya Art Circle completes 12 years celebrating creativity

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

Gangtok-based art NGO, Oviya Art Circle-Sikkim, held its Annual General Meeting and get-together party to celebrate completion of 12 years of the establishment at 32 Mile Garden here on 26 Jan, a press release informs.

The programme was chaired by Sikkim Samman recipient, veteran artist of Indradhanush Chitrakala Sanstha, Namchi, Passang Sherpa and senior artist from the same organization, Sanjay Rai, as guest of honour.

Oviya Art Circle president, Deepa Rai, in her welcome note, highlighted some of the important agendas of the meeting like upcoming programs, seriousness in art, contributions and dedication of artists towards the organization, membership drive etc.

She highlighted that one has to be serious towards art and not just treat as a hobby. She added that, nowadays, people here were taking a keen interest not only in drawing and painting but also in other aspects of art and creativity like ceramic and sculpting.

She urged the artists to work hard and be sincere towards their creative work.



She also expressed her gratitude towards Passang Sherpa for being the backbone of Oviya Art Circle-Sikkim and extended sincere thanks towards Sikkim Akademi for its continuous support.

Likewise, the founder member of the organization, Dhiraj Pradhan reminisced about how Oviya Arts Circle-Sikkim came into existence and shared instances from the struggling phase of Oviya Art Circle Sikkim and how the then founder members sustained it.

Acknowledging the sincere support and guidance of senior artists, Dhiraj Pradhan

mentioned that it was because of the support and sincere guidance of senior artists, especially from Namchi and Sikkim Akademi, that today most of the artists from Oviya Art Circle-Sikkim were established names in the field of art.

He also highlighted the importance of art exhibitions. He suggested organising a special art exhibition in the coming days.

Speaking on the occasion, senior artist, Paras Rai, proposed the documentation of some of the famous artists of the State.

Regarding the Plein

Air Watercolour Workshop, he suggested that such a workshop be held every second Saturday, instead of every Saturday of the month.

The general secretary of the organization, Diwaker Lamichaney shed light on the importance of knowledge and education in art.

The Chairman, Passang Sherpa in his key note address expressed happiness over the strides made by Oviya Art Circle-Sikkim over the years.

He shared his experiences and hardships in running an organization and urged the

artists to support Sikkim Art and introduce Sikkim to higher levels in the field of art.

He welcomed the proposal of documentation of artists of the State. He also suggested keeping local artists as resource persons for the upcoming art work under Sikkim Akademi and emphasised the need for discipline in the organization.

During the programme, two eminent artists Arpan Chettri from Pakyong and Tshering Namgyal Bhutia from Gangtok were welcomed and registered in the organisation.

Shantinagar celebrates Republic Day with AGM and felicitations

**SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 26 JAN:**

The 72nd Republic Day was celebrated by Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti at the Badminton Court near the Rani Khola Walkway on Tuesday.

Also on the day, the Annual General Meeting of the organization was held along with the launch of the Samiti's Calendar and felicitation of distinguished personalities of the society.

AD, SK Rai, Singtam Food Godown, was present as chief guest while SHO, SB Gurung, Singtam Police Station, was the guest of honour.

Former SGSS vice president, Devika Lamichaney was felicitated for her contributions towards the upliftment of the society and others felicitated on the occasion



were: SGSS Youth Icon Male – Prakash Pradhan, SGSS Youth Icon Female – Rita Sherpa, Ranjit Ram (working as a cobbler at Singtam since 1967), Lallan Thakur (working as barber in Singtam since 1970), Penjor Bhutia (Social Worker), Lomas Dhungel (National Teacher Awardee 2020) and Roshan Prasad (International Philatelic Medalist).

Meritorious Student Scholarship for Class X

students from SGSS was also initiated.

Rinchen Sherpa, studying in Class XI was selected as its first recipient. He received an annual scholarship of Rs 5,000 sponsored by LN Pradhan, Chief Advisor, SGSS.

More than 30 members of Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti were presented with congratulatory certificates for their selfless support and involvement in different activities of the Samiti.

Bikers for Road Safety



**BIKASH CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

Thirty bikers rode in a motorcycle rally held on Tuesday in a bid to generate wider awareness about road safety.

The rally, which was flagged off by Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba, from MG Marg, travelled to Namchi, where they received a warm welcome from a team of Motor Vehicle Division, Namchi, led by ARTO Krishna Lamichaney at Namchi bazaar, and rode back to Gangtok.

The motorcycle rally

was part of the ongoing National Road Safety Month on the theme, 'Sadak Suraksha-Jeevan Raksha', which started on 18 January and will continue till 17 February.

The motorcycle rally was organized by the Transport Department and supported by the Royal Enfield Showroom at Gangtok and the Motor Vehicle Division, Namchi.

It is informed that during the month-long road safety awareness drive, the Motor Vehicle Division will look into various parameters

of vehicles plying in the State.

It is added that vehicles will be thoroughly checked for registration certificates, insurance and driving licenses, condition of tyres, modification in vehicles, fancy HSRP plates, norms, modified silencers, lights and indicators, first-aid box, fire extinguishers, bonnet paintings, display of area of operation in local taxis as per route permit, display of taxi numbers on dash board and fare chart inside the vehicles and installation of garbage bags in taxi vehicles.

R-Day at Indo-Nepal border



**PRITAM LAMA
GYALSHING, 27 JAN:**

The 72bn of Sahasra Seema Bal celebrated the 72nd Republic Day with full gusto and colour at its Border Operation Post,

Bajradhara, close to the Indo-Nepal border at Chewabhanjyang in West Sikkim. 72Bn SSB Inspector, Amrit Kumar and his SSB Jawans troops at Bajradhara Border Operation Post.

Daramdin VC wins the Inter Himalayan Knock Out Volleyball Tourney



**SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 27 JAN:**

Daramdin Volleyball Club has won the Inter-Himalayan Knock Out Volleyball Tournament outplaying Mamring Boys at the finals played here at Rangpo Bazar Playground on Tuesday as part of the Republic Day celebrations.

Organised by the group Border XI, the tournament carried a

cash prize of Rs 60,000 for the winners and Rs 30,000 for the runners-up.

The president of the organising committee, Badru Ashwin, informs that the finals had Reeta Karki as chief guest followed and Harka Bahadur Chettri as special guest.

A total of 11 teams had participated in the tournament.

SAATHI puts together peer educator training for students

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 JAN:**

Peer Educator Training was organized by Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India (SAATHI) supported by Titan Company via digital platform.

The three-day training, held from 25 to 27 Jan, was attended by 95 students representing various private schools namely Tashi Namgyal Academy, Greendale Academy, Holy Cross School, Mount Sinai Secondary School, St Francis' School, JNV Rothak, JNV Pakyong, Daffodil's Homes and Bahai Senior Secondary School.

In most societies, young people often find it difficult to obtain clear and correct information on issues that concern especially mental health.

Many times, information is available but it may be given in a manner that is authoritarian, judgmental, or non-adapted to the young people's values,



viewpoints and lifestyle.

One effective way of dealing with these issues is peer education, because it is a dialogue between equals. It involves members of a particular group educating others of the same group. Hence, this training was organized to empower young minds with various life skills and aware them about harmful effects of substance abuse.

Research Scholar and Counseling Psychologist, Roshni Chettri, was present as a resource person and conducted a session on decision-making, problem-solving and critical-thinking.

Project Coordinator,

Uden Bhutia, conducted a session on solid waste management while Senior Psychiatrist of STNM hospital, Dr Bhubushan Dahal spoke on medical aspects of substance abuse.

Advocate and Co-founder of Accelerator and Eastern Himalayan News Services, Pragma Parametta spoke on awareness and usage of social media. Motivational Speaker, Ashish Bangdel taught them various ways to cope with stress and emotion and Coordinator of Sikkim Drug Users Forum, Prashant Sharma spoke about harmful effects of substance abuse and treatment available for it.

SSLSA celebrates 72nd Republic Day



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 JAN:**

The Sikkim State Legal Services Authority [SSLSA] celebrated the 72nd Republic Day in the Office premises of the Authority at Development Area, Gangtok, today, strictly complying with the social

distancing norms.

Judge, Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, High Court of Sikkim and Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLA hoisted the National Flag which was followed by the rendition of the National Anthem presented by the Staff of Sikkim SLA. Also

present during the ceremony were former Judge, Justice AP Subba, High Court of Sikkim and Chairperson, Sikkim Lokayukta, Ld Judicial Officers, Senior Advocates, High Court of Sikkim, Senior Panel Advocates of Sikkim SLA and Media personnel.

China: Military flights warn against interference in Taiwan

BEIJING, JAN 27 (AP): The Chinese government said Wednesday that actions like its warplanes flying near Taiwan last weekend are a warning against both foreign interference in Taiwan and any independence moves by the island.

Asked about the flights, Zhu Fenglian, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said China's military drills are to show the nation's resolution to protect its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"They are a stern warning against external

interference and provocation from separatist forces advocating for Taiwan independence, she said at a regular briefing, giving the Chinese government's first official comment on the recent flights. China sent eight bombers and four fighter jets into Taiwan's air defense identification zone on Saturday, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry. Taiwan scrambled fighters to monitor the activity.

The US State Department later issued a statement urging China to cease its military, dip-

lomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan following China's sizeable show of force.

China then sent 16 military aircraft into the same area on Sunday, Taiwan said. Taiwan is a self-governing island about 160 kilometers (100 miles) off China's east coast. The Chinese government regards it as a renegade province that should be united with mainland China.

Zhu said that China would not renounce the use of force to guard against separatist moves and foreign interference.

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Chauvinism is Bad. Period

*Amplified claims of superiority
mask incompetence*

The present is always challenging, the past rosy and the future uncertain. One grows up living and learning this and even as it becomes obvious that these are but tricks of perception, people tend to become obsessively celebratory about the past, and before even they have noticed, become unretractably regressive. Being nostalgic about the past is natural, but to dwell in it is unhealthy; it blinds the future. To contend that the past was better than the present is to condemn the human race's ability to learn and adapt and improve. The present, after all, is structured from past events and if it is not good enough, then the foundation must have been poor. How could times that delivered such unsteady foundations have been good then? If the best things reside in the past, then what contribution has the present generation made? The worst thing a people can do to themselves is stop the clock on the progression of ideas, changes in mindsets, attitudes and approaches. A generation does this and soon the next one starts aspiring backwards while everyone else passes them by.

Agreed, this speaking from the pulpit approach might appear condescending and even offensive because of the obviousness of its premise. But that is the present that we have dragged ourselves into, as in-your-face chauvinism has taken over politics and public attitudes. Take a look around, from what the Donald is trumping down people's throats in his land and the world over to what most of the world is withdrawing into, we live in a time when it has become normal to be regressive, parochial and insular. Closer home, we have seen the gau-rakshaks get away with violent crimes, educational institutions of repute get attacked with infiltrations reminiscent of China's "cultural revolution", democratic expressions get convoluted into fascist endorsements and catastrophic undertakings like demonetization get slipped through despite its weak legs with calls to national interest and farmers ambushed with laws they did not want for themselves and accused of many things which seek to reduce them to binaries when all people contain multitudes.

All these extreme situations powered through on the shoulders of chauvinistic call to arms. And the trend continues in how Court orders were first ignored when it came to river water sharing, then how the practice of Jallikattu was forced to continue despite court directives ordering otherwise and of how women's reservation in urban local bodies was stonewalled despite its obvious necessity. Even as the groups which pulled off all these affronts to basic decency and propriety congratulate each other, they fail to realize that they have opened the doors for anarchy, because that is what roils in once chauvinism has set roots.

Chauvinism can be simply explained as a prejudiced belief in the superiority of one's own gender, group, or kind. Obviously, because it is prejudiced, it is also untested and what this reflects on those who hold chauvinism close is not only unfortunate ignorance, but also an almost passionate refusal to get informed better. It is also obvious that the chauvinists lack empathy, and with this handicap added to the mix, we stare at a lot which is immature and perennially insecure. They try and make up for this with amplified claims to national superiority and glory. This also makes them intemperate, inconsiderate and finally, incompetent. Where is the glory in that?

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Incitement to Violence is Rarely Explicit – Here Are Some Techniques People Use to Breed Hate

H. COLLEEN SINCLAIR
theconversation.com

As senators plan for an impeachment trial in which former President Donald Trump is accused of inciting his supporters to mount a deadly insurrection at the Capitol, global concern is growing about threats of violent unrest in multiple countries, including the U.S. The United Nations reports the proliferation of dangerous speech online represents a "new era" in conflict.

Dangerous speech is defined as communication encouraging an audience to condone or inflict harm. Usually this harm is directed by an "ingroup" (us) against an "outgroup" (them) – though it can also provoke self-harm in suicide cults.

U.S. law reflects the assumption that dangerous speech must contain explicit calls to criminal action. But scholars who study speeches and propaganda that precede acts of violence find direct commands to violence are rare.

Other elements are more common. Here are some of the red flags.

FIRING UP EMOTIONS

Psychologists have analyzed the speeches of rousing leaders like Hitler and Gandhi for their emotional content, assessing how much fear, joy, sadness and so on were present. They then tested whether the levels of emotion could predict whether a certain speech preceded violence or nonviolence.

They discovered the following emotions, particularly combined, could ignite violence:

- Anger: The speaker gives the audience reasons to be angry, often pointing out who should be held responsible for that anger.
- Contempt: The outgroup is deemed inferior to the ingroup, and thus unworthy of respect.
- Disgust: The outgroup is described as so revolting they are undeserving of even basic human treatment.

CONSTRUCTING THE THREAT

By studying political speeches and propaganda that have inspired violence, researchers have identified themes that can stir these powerful emotions.

Targets of dangerous speech are often dehumanized, depicted as fundamentally lacking qualities – empathy, intelligence, values, abilities, self-control – at the core of being human. Commonly, outgroups are depicted as evil, due to their alleged lack of morality. Alternatively, they may be portrayed as animalistic or worse. During the Rwandan genocide, Tutsis were referred to as cockroaches in Hutu propaganda.

To build a "story of hate," a good guy is needed to counter the villain. So whatever dehumanizing quality is present in the outgroup, the opposite is present in the ingroup. If "they" are the Antichrist, "we" are the children of God.

Alleged past wrongdoings of the outgroup against the ingroup are used to position the outgroup as a threat. In cases of ongoing conflict between groups, such as between Israelis and Palestinians, there may well be examples of past wrongs on both sides. Effective dangerous speech omits, minimizes or justifies past wrongs by the ingroup members, while exacerbating past wrongs of the outgroup.

"Competitive victimhood" is used to portray the ingroup as the "real" victim – especially if ingroup "innocents" like women and children have been harmed by the outgroup. Sometimes past acts of the outgroups are fabricated and used as scapegoats for the ingroup's past misfortunes. For instance, Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany losing World War I.

A particularly dangerous fabrication is when outgroups are accused of plotting against the ingroup the very deeds the ingroup is planning, if not actually committing, against the outgroup. Researchers coined the term "accusations in a mirror" after this strategy was explicitly described in a Hutu propaganda handbook following the Rwandan genocide.

DISENGAGING ONE'S MORAL COMPASS

Effective dangerous speech gets people to overcome internal resistance to inflicting harm.

This can be accomplished by making it seem like no other options remain to defend the ingroup from the threat presented by the outgroup. Less ex-

treme options are dismissed as exhausted or ineffective. The outgroup can't be "saved."

Simultaneously, speakers deploy "euphemistic labeling" to provide more palatable terms for violence, like "cleansing" or "defense" instead of "murder." Or they may use "virtue-talk" to play up honor in fighting – and dishonor in not. After directing his followers to kill their children and themselves, cult leader Jim Jones called it "an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world."

Sometimes, the ingroup suffers from an illusion of invulnerability and does not even consider the possibility of negative consequences from their actions, because they are so confident in the righteousness of their group and cause. If thought is given to life post-violence, it is portrayed as only good for the ingroup.

By contrast, if the outgroup is allowed to remain, obtain control or enact their alleged devious plans, the future looks grim; it will mean the destruction of everything the ingroup holds dear, if not the end of the ingroup itself.

These are just some of the hallmarks of dangerous speech identified through decades of research by historians and social scientists studying genocide, cults, intergroup conflict and propaganda. It is not an exhaustive list. Nor do all these elements need to be present for a speech to promote harm. There is also no guarantee the presence of these factors definitely leads to harm – just as there is no guarantee that smoking leads to cancer, though it certainly increases the risk.

The persuasiveness of a speech also depends on other variables, like the charisma of the speaker, the receptivity of the audience, the medium by which the message is delivered and the context in which the message is being received.

However, the elements described above are warning signs a speech is intended to promote and justify inflicting harm. People can resist calls to violence by recognizing these themes. Prevention is possible.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Social Psychology, Mississippi State University]

Why COVID-19 Won't Kill Cities

theconversation.com

For those of you who live in cities, ask yourself: What it is about your urban lifestyle that makes it worth it despite the pollution, the noise and the traffic? Perhaps it's the hundreds of unique restaurants that you like to dine at. Or the density that fosters a vibrant night life and cosmopolitan cultural scene. Maybe it's the parks, the museums, the tall buildings, the mass transit.

What if much of that went away? Would you still want to live there?

That possibility is worrying many as the pandemic chips away at the foundations of much of what makes cities special. Restaurants, small businesses and even big brand-name retail chains are closing in record numbers. Mass transit systems, like New York City's, are warning of severe cuts in service if they don't get aid soon as state and local tax revenue plunges. Many have fled to rural or suburban areas. And the situation appears likely to only worsen.

Despite these challenges, two scholars who study cities explain why they think urban areas will endure – even if they don't get the aid from Congress that now seems more likely.

WHY SOME CITIES WILL SURVIVE – AND THRIVE

JOHN RENNIE SHORT, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

The death of the city is regularly predicted. But, like Mark Twain's premature obituary, it is greatly exaggerated.

The city was thought to be redundant when the telephone was introduced to the world in 1876 and then the first personal computer in 1971. What was the point of cities when people could communicate over the phone or through the internet? The future was imagined as a global village of electronic cottages.

In fact, the future was and continues to be giant metro areas and dense cities.

After 9/11, some thought that the

threat of terrorism would lead to the suburbanization of financial services and a drift away from the city. In the two decades that followed, New York City continued to grow and prosper as a global financial center.

And today, many cities will survive the pandemic for the same reasons they survived the telephone, internet and terrorist attacks. That's because there are powerful economic forces at work.

As early as 1922, British economist Alfred Marshall pointed out three key traits of cities:

The pools of skilled labor allow the transfer of information, knowledge and skill.

The presence of so many companies generates more business for peripheral industries – such as how a big banking sector creates work for accountants and lawyers.

The proximity of people facilitates contact that leads to the maintenance of trust and the exchange of information.

These forces are even more powerful for the more dynamic sectors of the economy, particularly banking and financial services, advertising and a vast range of cultural and creative industries – all built around face-to-face contact.

I believe the cities that generate this type of "cognitive capitalism," such as San Francisco, New York and San Jose, will bounce back. Those that have more routine industries that can be done anywhere, like Detroit, Baltimore and Buffalo, may not. This is a trend that is already occurring across the U.S. over the past 30 years as cities focused on the knowledge economy have grown faster than those that are not.

Despite the long tradition of anti-urbanism in the U.S. that always seems to see the demise of cities just around the corner, they will survive because they are one of humanity's greatest inventions.

THE POWER OF CITIES: SHAR-

ING, MATCHING AND LEARNING

MICHAEL ORLANDO, University of Colorado Denver

Density is what makes a city special. A place can support a dizzying array of cultural delights only where significant numbers of people live in close proximity to one another.

But in a pandemic, density is the last thing you want, which is why many people have moved from the urban core and office buildings sit empty.

This won't last forever. Soon, I believe, new vaccines and improved treatments will end this pandemic. And when density is no longer cursed by contagion, cities will reassert their magic, through their ability to enhance sharing, matching and learning.

Economists refer to these three mechanisms as types of agglomeration economies because they represent benefits of concentration. They are the incentives that lead people and production to exist side by side, enduring the high cost of dense urban areas. Economies of sharing, matching and learning explain why cities form and grow.

Economies of sharing refer to economies of scale. For example, businesses that specialize in high-quality instrument repair and intellectual property law provide important services, but they are consumed only infrequently and sporadically. These businesses prefer to locate in large cities where fixed cost of operations can be spread over many customers, making it more likely their services are always in demand.

Economies of matching refer to the cost and time savings in searching for goods, services and jobs in a large city compared with a less populous area. Workers such as piano tuners and patent attorneys, for example, possess a narrow set of skills that are of great value to particular employers that regularly need these unique services. So workers with these specialized skills will prefer to locate in large-

er cities, where they are more likely to be matched to a job – and quickly find another if they lose it.

Economies of learning refer to the value derived from serendipitous interactions. People learn from each other, through both intentional meetings and chance encounters. Learning through intentional meetings may occur wherever people seek each other out. But learning through chance encounters will happen more frequently in dense urban areas where there are simply better odds of encountering other people. As a result, companies and workers will prefer to locate in cities where they can command higher profits and wages associated with the learning that occurs through serendipitous interactions.

Companies for whom knowledge and ideas are particularly important may engineer such chance encounters by strategically locating co-workers from different departments so that they might interact, seemingly, at random. Similarly, by locating in cities, workers and businesses engineer chance encounters with those from other companies.

In research on the economic geography of innovation, my co-authors and I have found that knowledge-intensive workers do disproportionately locate in cities. The share of workers with a bachelor's degree is highest in the most populous county areas. And patents per capita correlate to the share of workers with a bachelor's degree across dense urban areas.

The risks and costs of contagion will fade. And then workers and companies will be unable to resist the benefits of sharing, matching and learning that arise in densely populated areas. These are the factors that explain the lure of cities.

[John Rennie is Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Michael J. Orlando is Lecturer, Finance and Politics, Global Energy Management Program, University of Colorado Denver]



In a first, Kolkata gets boat library

KOLKATA, JAN 27 (PTI): The West Bengal Transport Corporation in collaboration with a heritage book store here has launched a children's library on a boat, the first of its kind initiative, an official said.

The idea behind the boat library is that one can read books while appreciating the beauty of Kolkata, cruising on the Hooghly

river, he said. Children will be able to choose from a selection of 500 titles in English and Bengali on the Young Readers' Boat Library.

"The boat library would take people on a three-hour- long trip," the official said.

The trip will start at Millenium Park, and the boat will travel to Belur Math jetty and return, he said. There will be three

trips on all weekdays, he said on Tuesday.

The boat has a free wifi facility as well. A ride on the boat would cost Rs 100 for adults and Rs 50 for children.

The library will host activities such as storytelling, dramatised readings, poetry sessions, book launches, music and more, he said.

One fresh COVID-19 case in Arunachal, tally at 16,821

Itanagar, Jan 27 (PTI): The COVID-19 caseload in Arunachal Pradesh rose to 16,821 as one more person has tested positive for the disease, a health department official said on Wednesday.

The fresh case was reported from the Capital Complex Region and detected through RT-PCR test, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Two more persons were cured of the disease on Tuesday, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 16,751, he said.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state is currently at 99.58 per cent.

Altogether 7,087 health workers have been vaccinated so far, State Immunisation Offi-

cer (SIO) Dr Dimong Padung said.

Seven cases of adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) have been reported, the official said.

The health department has been conducting the inoculation drive on four days a week - Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The state has received 32,000 doses of Covishield vaccine from the Centre till now, Padung said.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 14 active cases, while 56 people have succumbed to the infection.

The state has so far conducted 3,90,552 sample tests, including 178 on Tuesday, and the positivity rate currently stands at 0.08 per cent.

Assam: 4 drown as boat capsizes in Brahmaputra

JORHAT (ASSAM), JAN 27 (PTI): At least four people, including two minors, have drowned after a country boat capsized in the Brahmaputra river in Assam's Jorhat district, officials said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday when a few members of a picnic party went for a river cruise on a country boat, they said.

SDRF's Jorhat station officer Bidyut Gogoi said around 12 people were on the boat when it capsized. Locals rescued some people on another country boat, of whom two are undergoing treatment at Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH). The bodies of

four people were recovered near Baghmora picnic spot on Wednesday morning, Jorhat Deputy Commissioner Roshni Aparanji Korati said.

The deceased have been identified as Paban Rai (30), Rajiya Tigula (24), Sahil Chauhan (15) and Sufiyan Chauhan (9), she said.

"I have ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident and asked for submission of the report within 15 days," Korati told PTI.

"West Revenue Circle Officer Uday Shankar Dutta will find out the reasons behind this accident and ascertain whether there was any lapse on anybody's part," she added.

Huge quantity of arms and ammunition recovered in Assam

KOKRAJHAR (ASSAM), JAN 27 (PTI): A huge cache of arms and ammunition were recovered on Wednesday from Kokrajhar district, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, security personnel recovered the arms and ammunition from Lauti area near the India-Bhutan border, Kokrajhar Superintendent of Police Rakesh Raushan said.

A team, led by Additional Superintendent of Police Mukut Rabha, recovered 51 live ammunition of AK-47 series rifles, one AK-56 rifle, one AK-47 rifle, three AK magazines and one pistol along with a magazine.

Raushan said the arms and ammunition were buried under the soil and former BLT (Bodo Liberation Tigers) militants are believed to be involved in it.

Odisha Police arrest 5 cyber miscreants

BHAWANIPATNA (ODISHA), JAN 27 (PTI): Odisha Police on Wednesday arrested five cyber miscreants for allegedly withdrawing money from the bank account of a senior citizen of Kalahandi district, an official said.

An official statement issued by police said Gangadhar Subudhi, a resident of Bhawanipatna town received a phone call from a person claiming to be calling from a mobile service provider and informing Subudhi that he has won a smartphone and Rs 20,000 as

new year prize in a lucky draw. Kalahandi SP Saravana Vivek said Subudhi was asked to share his ID number on receipt of a message to receive the prize on January 11. He was also asked to download a software application on his mobile.

The victim shared the photograph of the debit card of his wife and followed all the instructions with the hope of getting the prize, he said.

This way the accused persons withdrew Rs 2,18,800 from the account of the wife of the complainant and Rs

45,591 from the account of the complainant.

On January 21, the five accused persons Avilash Singh (21), Parvej Ahamad (31), Wahid Khan (25), Saharuk Khan (19) and Juned Ahamad (39) all belonging to Bighna village under Bepar police station of Hamirpur district of UP were nabbed by the police. They were brought on transit remand here on Wednesday.

The police said that Rs 52,000 have been recovered from the possession of the gang members.

Ratan Tata, Amartya Sen to address Kerala conference

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 27 (PTI): Industry leaders Ratan Tata, Anand Mahindra and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen are among an impressive line-up of speakers expected to share their insights and suggestions at the ambitious global meet, Kerala Looks Ahead (KLA).

The three-day event, beginning on February 1 is envisaged to take the state forward by attracting investment from the country and outside in the post-pandemic era.

At a Special Industry session on February 3, other industry leaders who are expected to attend include Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Executive Chairperson of Biocon Limited, Kris Gopalakrishnan, Chairperson of Axiol Ventures, M A Yusuff Ali, Chairperson of Lulu Group, Ravi Pillai, Managing Director of RP Group and Azad Moopen, Chairperson and Managing Director of Aster Medcity, an official statement said here.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would inaugurate the conference on February 1.

Vijayan and Industries Minister E P Jayarajan would attend the special session, it said.

Organised by the Kerala State Planning Board, Nobel laureate

economist Joseph Stiglitz and WHO Chief Scientist, Soumya Swaminathan would be opening speakers of the meet on February 1, followed by two days of brainstorming on consolidating the core strengths of Kerala and adopting the best models for a bright future.

The state would showcase a broad range of its robust and resilient industry before business leaders and stakeholders at the special session on industry, besides highlighting the enhanced Ease of Doing business backed by a string of policy interventions, it said.

The session would also explore the government interventions to modernize the critical sectors of economy by channeling constructive suggestions emerging during the conclave.

"A defining feature of this conference is that it looks ahead to the views of industry veterans on laying down the road map for the state," said Planning Board Vice Chairperson, Dr V K Ramachandran.

The suggestions and consensus emerging from the deliberations could become vital inputs in strengthening our policy initiatives and addressing the gaps," he said.

Venu V IAS, Member Secretary of Kerala State Planning Board said Kerala was keen to follow a development model of expediting economic growth without jettisoning its storied social security and welfare commitments.

"It is important to note that the participating industry leaders are known for their larger concerns for the less privileged sections of the society.

This will make their views all the more significant in our context," he said.

In another session on industrial possibilities on February 2, Myungjae Moon, Director of Institute for Future Government Studies, Yonsei University, would speak on South Korean experience in promoting industrial development and the economic growth possibilities for Kerala in the emerging global order.

The session would see presentations by Rizwan Soomar, MD and CEO of DP World-Port and Logistics, V Ramgopal Rao, Director of Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, Daisy Chittilapilly, MD, Digital Transformation, CISCO and Tony Thomas, former CIO, Nissan Motor, the statement added.

Centre's insensitive attitude, indifference to be blamed: Mamata on Delhi violence

KOLKATA, JAN 26 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Tuesday that the Centre's "insensitive attitude" and indifference towards farmers are to be blamed for the violent protests in Delhi, maintaining that she was deeply disturbed by the situation.

Banerjee urged the Centre to engage with the farmers and repeal the new farm laws, which she termed draconian.

"Deeply disturbed by worrying and painful developments that have unfolded on the streets of Delhi. Centre's insensitive attitude and indifference towards our farmer brothers and sisters has to be blamed for this situation," she tweeted.

A tractor march meant to highlight farmers' demands dissolved into anarchy on the streets of the national capital as hordes of ram-paging protesters broke

through barriers, fought with police, overturned vehicles and delivered a national insult -- hoisting a religious flag from the rampart of Red Fort, a privilege reserved for India's tricolour.

Banerjee said, "First, these laws were passed without taking farmers in confidence. And then despite protests across India and farmers camping near Delhi for last 2 months, they've (Centre) been extremely casual in dealing with them."

"Centre should engage with the farmers and repeal the draconian laws," she added.

Tens of thousands of protesters clashed with police in multiple places, leading to chaos in well-known landmarks of Delhi and suburbs, amid waves of violence that ebbed and flowed through the day, leaving the farmers' two-month peaceful movement in tatters. Senior Congress

leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury alleged that the Delhi Police attacked the farmers without any provocation.

"This shows the unsympathetic attitude of the BJP government to the problems faced by the small and marginal farmers," he said.

Senior CPI(M) leader Md Salim said, "Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are responsible for today's turn of events for their unresponsive attitude to the justified demands of the farmers."

He said the Left will continue to be on the side of the agitating farmers.

State BJP leader Sovan Chatterjee said that no disrespect should be shown to the national flag.

"However, it has to be found out if there was any provocation from any quarter for such an act," he added.

Odisha logs 138 new COVID-19 cases, tally at 3,34,667



BHUBANESWAR, JAN 27 (PTI): Odisha's COVID-19 tally on Wednesday mounted to 3,34,667 as 138 more people tested positive for the disease, a health department official said.

Eighty-one new cases were reported from quarantine centres and 57 detected during contact tracing.

Cuttack district recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 26, followed by Nuapada and Sundargarh at 15 each.

Six districts -- Dhenkanal, Kandhamal, Kendrapara, Koraput, Nayagarh and Nabarangpur -- did not register any new case since Tuesday, the official said.

The death toll remained at 1,906 as no new fatality due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours, he said.

Altogether 1,77,090

health workers have already received COVID-19 vaccine and the next phase will cover another batch of about 1,73,836 people.

"The state has achieved a 92 per cent immunisation coverage and set a target to vaccinate 1,92,555 health-care workers in the first phase," Health and Family Welfare Director Bijay Panigrahi said.

He also said the next phase of the inoculation drive resumed in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday and will begin in other parts of the state on January 28.

A 27-year-old health-care worker of the Nuapada District Headquarters Hospital died on Tuesday, three days after taking the COVID-19 vaccine, while the state health department said his

death was not related to vaccination.

Of the 1,906 COVID-19 fatalities reported in the state so far, Khurda districts accounted for 335, followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (173), Cuttack (141) and Puri (117).

Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have also died due to comorbidity, the official said.

Odisha now has 1,281 active cases, while 3,31,427 people have recovered from the disease till Tuesday.

The government also started RT-PCR tests for servitors of the Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri from Wednesday.

The state has so far conducted over 76.12 lakh sample tests for COVID-19, including 24,110 on Tuesday, and the positivity rate stands at 4.4 per cent, he added.

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'The music stopped': Kobe Bryant remembered on anniversary of death

LOS ANGELES, 27 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Kobe Bryant wasn't in the bubble with the Los Angeles Lakers last October when they won the NBA championship. He wasn't at the All-Star weekend in Chicago where half the players wore his number on their uniforms, the other half wearing his daughter's jersey number. He wasn't there to hear the Basketball Hall of Fame announced that his career was worthy of enshrinement.

Yet his presence was so clearly felt in each of those moments.

"Everything stopped," Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr told reporters last week. "The music stopped. The players stopped. Nobody said a word. A lot of guys dropped to the floor and started crying. Nothing happened for 10 minutes. We all just sat there in silence. It was one of the worst moments of all our lives."

"Jarron Collins came over to me and whispered the news in my ear. I think it was the same thing where a couple people on our staff whispered it to a couple players on our team. We were all like a deer in the headlights, you know? We just froze and all tried to absorb the news and everything stopped."

Bryant, his daughter Gianna and the other seven people who climbed aboard that helicopter on a Sunday morning in southern California have been gone for exactly one year now – Tuesday marks the grim anniversary of the crash that took their lives.

Tears have been shed. Stories have been told. Tributes have been made.

And if there was any doubt about what kind of legacy Bryant – a five-time NBA champion, still the No 4 scorer in NBA history, a 20-year veteran of the league – left behind, it has been erased now. He still resonates, maybe more than ever.

"God rest his soul, God rest the soul of Gigi and the seven others that perished," said Miami assistant coach and former NBA player Caron Butler, who was close with Bryant for years. "The legacy that he left, man, he did it all. He inspired. When you think about being better, embracing the storm, having the right mentality and perspective about life and always trying to be better, he embodied it all and that's why his legacy will live forever."

Bryant is gone, but that doesn't mean Butler is wavering on a promise he made. Butler famously had a longtime affinity for Mountain Dew, even drinking it during games when others thought he was having Gatorade. When Butler played for the Lakers, Bryant strongly urged him to kick the habit.

Butler was taping an ad last year for Mountain Dew. He took a sip for the cameras. He then spit the drink out.

"Out of respect to my brother," Butler said.

Alistair Brownlee: 'I've got to make the most of it while I can'

SEAN INGLE LONDON, 27 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: "I've just been out training for three and a half hours and it has rained for every single second," says Alistair Brownlee, in a tone that almost veers into relish. "The weather is horrendous. Everywhere's flooded. You can hardly run anywhere because it's so muddy and wet." And yet the double Olympic triathlon champion still splishes and splashes on towards further glories, even in this bleakest of midwinters, having set his sights on an extraordinary double crescendo to cap his career.

The first part? Winning a third triathlon gold medal in Tokyo this summer. But then, Brownlee says, he intends to follow it up with something even more audacious: becoming the first man to complete an ironman sequence in less than seven hours. "I am not getting any younger," says Brownlee, who turns 33 in April. "So I've got to make the most of it while I can."

The best time for a full ironman distance – a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile cycle and 26.2-mile run – is 7hr 35min, by the German Jan Frodeno. However, in echoes of Eliud Kipchoge's sub two-hour marathon project, Brownlee's idea is to use technology to create history.

"It would be impossible under normal conditions," says Brownlee, who will make the attempt in the spring of 2022. "But like with the sub two-hour marathon, we are choosing the boundaries. We will have special HUUB



wetsuits that will be thicker than permitted under ironman rules, and provide more buoyancy and make us faster. While on the bike, we will draft off pacers like in the Tour de France. As the bike is over 112 miles, that's the obvious place to find the time."

It will be an almighty challenge, with organisers claiming Brownlee will need to swim at the pace of an Olympic open-water medallist, cycle at an average speed of more than 30mph and run a sub 2hr 30min marathon.

"What makes it so hard is that there are so many moving parts to an ironman, even when compared to an Olympic distance triathlon [1500m swim, 40km bike and 10km

run]," says Brownlee.

"You've got to fuel yourself correctly for seven hours, which is hard given we all get sick of gels. You have to get your fluids right. On the bike things like aerodynamics and helmet position are so important because if you save yourself five watts or 10 watts, that's a significant difference. And there is also that fear – have I gone five minutes too hard, and is that going to cost me?"

Brownlee knows just how painful it can get when things go wrong. The first time he raced an ironman, at the world championships in Kona in 2019, he blew up in the heat on the run and dropped from third place to 21st. "At

one point there was nothing on this planet that would have made me run at even a five-minutes-a-kilometre pace. There's no way I wasn't finishing but those final 10 miles were the worst of my life."

Six weeks later, though, Brownlee competed in another ironman race in Australia and won by more than 10 minutes and smashed the course record, finishing in 7hr 45min.

While Brownlee will attempt to go under seven hours in a yet-to-be-decided venue, another Briton, Lucy Charles-Barclay, will aim to become the first woman to dip under eight hours. Their attempt will be backed by the

Pho3nix Foundation, a Polish not-for-profit organisation that supports sporting participation among young people.

"They are all about inspiring activity and health and education in young people and I'm keen to use the vessel of triathlon to do that – as well as seeing how we can maximise human performance in terms of physiology," says Brownlee.

What does his brother Jonny, who won Olympic bronze and silver in 2012 and 2016 respectively, make of it? "He thinks it's mental," replies Alistair. "He doesn't know it yet but he's going to be helping me out on the swim and the run."

Isn't Brownlee a bit of a

masochist to keep torturing himself, given all the injuries he has endured? "Yeah, I definitely am to an extent," he replies, laughing.

Before then, however, Brownlee is focusing on qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics. And, having finished second behind the Frenchman Vincent Luis in a World Cup sprint triathlon in Valencia in November, he is confident his best form is looming into view. "I came the closest that anyone's come to beating him last year. If I can race like that obviously I'll qualify easily and be in with a shot at Tokyo."

That, of course, is assuming the Games take place. "As an athlete, I have to 100% believe it will go ahead. And I am sure the IOC will move heaven and earth to get it on. As we have seen, Covid is a movable beast. We're on the curve of things going badly, but by the summer things could look much more hopeful."

But should they go ahead if it means athletes flying in and out of Tokyo and competing in front of no crowds? "Any Olympics is better than no Olympics. And as long as the sport and the competition is on, stripping everything else out isn't too much of a problem."

As we finish I ask Brownlee his response to those who fear, as great as he has been, his most glorious days are behind him. "You might be right," he says, as a flicker of defiance comes across his face. "But I'm doing everything I can to prove them wrong – and myself wrong."

'A varied talent': can Martin Ødegaard make up for lost time at Arsenal?

SID LOWE MADRID, 27 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: The last time anyone saw Martin Ødegaard in a Real Madrid shirt he was running up the pitch at the Rosaleda, alone. Madrid had just lost the semi-final of the Spanish Super Cup to Athletic Bilbao in Málaga, but even as the minutes had slipped away and the final did too, as they chased a lifeline, desperately in need of creativity, Zinedine Zidane didn't call for the Norwegian. Ødegaard didn't even warm up, not setting foot on the grass until full time when he went out and trained on his own.

It had become a recurring theme. In December and January, he played 77 minutes at Shakhtar, five minutes against Celta, and that was it. When, four days later, the squad was named for the visit to Second Division B Alcoyano in the Copa del Rey, a tie which Madrid were to lose, Ødegaard wasn't in it. This time it was his choice. He had told Madrid he wanted to leave, to go somewhere he will actually play.

San Sebastián, say. Or, as it turns out, London. On Wednesday Arsenal confirmed Ødegaard's arrival on loan until the end of the season. His international manager, Ståle Solbakken, says: "Arsenal's play could fit him well: I like the style Mikel Arteta is trying to impose."

Playing at all is a start. Before that semi-final, Luka Modric had been asked about Ødegaard. "The last time I spoke to him, I told him I like him as a player and a person," the Croatian said. "He has to continue fighting for his place in this team, to make the difference when he plays, prove he deserves to be here. My advice would be: work and fight for your place." Modric, though, is part of the reason Ødegaard wasn't playing and he didn't

take heed. Instead of fight, there was flight, a search for opportunity elsewhere, a space to grow.

"It is easy to say it's my fault," Zidane had said and plenty have said just that, not least because Ødegaard is not the only young footballer given few opportunities at Madrid. But, the manager continued, the players have to earn them.

Zidane may note that Ødegaard was handed starts in the first two games of the season and there had even been a shift in formation to accommodate him, although he was taken off at half-time in the second. He may point out that Ødegaard returned to the team after recovering from his first calf injury. What he did say, publicly, was that the absences were "circumstantial", insisting: "He'll succeed here." But he won't, not yet. He leaves for six months – his fourth loan since joining Madrid six years ago aged 16.

In 2019 Ødegaard began a two-year stay at Real Sociedad but Madrid called him back a year early following their Champions League exit against Manchester City last August. Still 21, it wasn't what he had planned or wanted, and wasn't what Real Sociedad expected. "Martin is a talented player who can give the team a lot," Zidane said. "He has got better every year. He has to adapt and go bit by bit but I have no doubt about what a great player he is."

Ødegaard's optimism was cautious. Since rejoining Madrid, he has had a calf injury and coronavirus, returning from that enforced absence only to suffer a second injury. There has been bad luck, issues few foresaw. And Modric, at 35, has been better than anyone expected, every bit the man who won the Balon d'Or. And yet there is still a

feeling of lost opportunity and wasted time with Ødegaard, arrested development; a suspicion that there wasn't really a plan or place for him; a feeling, above all, of inevitability.

A year ago, Jorge Valdano was among many predicting this, writing: "When I say another year at Real Sociedad wouldn't be a bad thing, I'm not saying he lacks maturity, but right now Madrid's squad is too rich in resources. The context offers no guarantees for him to win a place in the team. When the squad, as a consequence of planning and age, starts to shed the prestigious competitors it has now, then Ødegaard can arrive with the status a crack like him deserves. At his age, better to play 50 games at Real Sociedad than to sit and wait at Madrid."

Valdano's point has been made. Ødegaard leaves having played only 367 minutes. He has scored no goals and provided no assists, not numbers to excite Arsenal supporters, nor reason for those in Madrid to really lament his leaving – so long as it's temporary. But if they want to know how good he is, beyond trust in Mikel Arteta's judgment, they need only look at the team he leaves, the immense quality of the players before him, and the other team that wanted to sign him – and at the very fact that they had to.

As soon as Ødegaard had told Madrid of his desire to go, he looked north towards Real Sociedad, the place that had been home. They wanted him, not just because of their fondness for him but the footballer they know he is. And no one knows "Martinxo" like they do.

Playing just to the right of the midfield or off the front, his season with Real Sociedad had been a revelation. Until lock-

down, it would be no exaggeration to suggest he might have been the best player in Spain, full of energy and invention, the ball describing implausible angles and discovering spaces no one saw, passing through gaps that weren't there. "He covers a lot of ground, understands the game, can clarify everything with threaded pass, dribble and shoot from mid-range," Valdano wrote. "A varied, practical, attractive talent."

Looked after, integrated into a young, exciting and mostly local team with a powerful collective identity, he said he felt like he was "another youth product", as if he had been there his whole life. He adapted, listened, followed but also took responsibility to lead. Thrived on it, in fact. They learned from him as he did from them. There were seven goals and nine assists as la Real reached the Copa del Rey final, beating Madrid 4-3 at the Bernabéu en route with the opening goal from Ødegaard, and also reached the Europa League after finishing sixth.

It had been some season; the problem was that it was just one. Ødegaard had been looking forward to a second and told his teammates he was staying, but then Zidane called.

There was a reason for that. Well, two: first, Madrid's needs, allied to a lack of money to buy with, and second, his extraordinary performances. This move would improve them; it would also damage Real Sociedad, his level reflected in how they reacted, the public sadness startling. "When they announced he was leaving, it left us reeling," admitted winger Portu. "We cried over his departure," said Miguel-Ángel Moyá. Reflected, too, in the quality of the replacement they chased: David Silva.

England cricket players arrive in Chennai for Test series



CHENNAI, JAN 27 (PTI): Members of the England cricket team including captain Joe Root arrived in the city on Wednesday for the four-match series against India with the first two Tests to be played here.

Some of the Indian players and members of the support staff also landed in this southern city, airport sources said.

Root and Co flew in from Sri Lanka at around 10.30 AM and headed to the hotel where members of the two teams will be put up as part of the bio-bubble, a Tamil Nadu Cricket Association official said.

The England team had on Monday completed a 2-0 series sweep of the Tests against Sri Lanka with Root slamming two big centuries.

Star all-rounder Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer had arrived in the city on Sunday and are in quarantine.

While a few Indian players including star batsman Rohit Sharma and Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane arrived

on Tuesday night, some others like Cheteshwar Pujara, Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant, star of the series clinching victory in the Brisbane Test, reached on Wednesday morning.

Team coach Ravi Shastri flew in from Mumbai as did several other players from destinations across the country.

Skipper Virat Kohli is scheduled to arrive later on Wednesday.

The players of the two teams will be staying at Hotel Leela Palace in a bio-bubble as part of quarantine protocols and will undergo testing for COVID-19, the TNCA official said.

"They will be in quarantine for six days and are set to start practising from February 2," the official added.

The first Test will be played at the M A Chidambaram stadium from February 5 and the second from February 13.

Chennai had last hosted a Test match in December 2016 against England.

Google says North Korea-backed hackers sought cyber research

SEOUL, JAN 27 (AP): Google says it believes hackers backed by the North Korean government have been posing as computer security bloggers and using fake accounts on social media while attempting to steal information from researchers in the field.

Google didn't specify how successful the hackers were or what kind of information could have been compromised. Experts say the attacks reflect North Korean efforts to improve its cyber skills and be able to breach widely used computer products, such as Google's Chrome internet browser and Microsoft's Windows 10 operating system.

While the country has denied involvement, North Korea has been linked to major cyberattacks, including a 2013 campaign that paralysed the servers of South Korean financial institutions, the 2014 hacking of Sony Pictures, and the WannaCry malware attack of 2017.

The UN ecurity Council in 2019 estimated North Korea earned as much as USD 2 billion over several years through illicit cyber operations targeting cryptocurrency exchanges and other financial



transactions, generating income that is harder to trace and offsets capital lost to US-led economic sanctions over its nuclear weapons programme.

Adam Weidemann, a researcher from Google's Threat Analysis Group, said in the on-line report published late Monday that hackers supposedly backed by North Korea created a fake research blog and multiple Twitter profiles to build credibility and interact with the security researchers they targeted.

After connecting with researchers, the hackers would ask them if they wanted to collaborate on cyber-vulnerability research and share a tool that contained a

code designed to install malicious software on the targets' computers, which would then allow the hackers to control the device and steal information from it.

Several targeted researchers were compromised after following a Twitter link to a blog set up by the hackers, Weidemann said.

At the time of these visits, the victim systems were running fully patched and up-to-date Windows 10 and Chrome browser versions, Weidemann wrote. At this time we're unable to confirm the mechanism of compromise, but we welcome any information others might have.

Google published a list of social media ac-

counts and websites it said were controlled by the hackers, including 10 Twitter profiles and five LinkedIn profiles.

Simon Choi, a senior analyst at NSHC, a South Korean computer security firm, said cyberattacks linked to North Korea over the past few years have demonstrated an improving ability in identifying and exploiting vulnerabilities in computer security systems.

Before 2016, the North Koreans had mainly relied on methods used by Chinese or Russian hackers, he said.

It's notable that the computer security experts on Twitter who said they were approached by the hackers had been engaged in vulnerability

research for Chrome and Windows 10, Choi said.

It's that not easy to successfully penetrate these systems that are built with the latest security technologies. For the North Koreans, it makes more sense to steal the vulnerabilities already discovered by the researchers because developing their own ways to exploit these systems is harder.

In 2018, US federal prosecutors charged a computer programmer working for the North Korean government for his alleged involvement in the cyberattacks that hacked Sony Pictures and unleashed the WannaCry ransomware virus. Park Jin Hyok, who is believed to be in North Korea, conspired to conduct attacks that also stole 81 million from Bangladesh's central bank, according to the charges.

The 2014 Sony hack led to the release of tens of thousands of confidential Sony emails and business files. The WannaCry cyberattack in 2017 scrambled data on hundreds of thousands of computers at government agencies, banks and other businesses across the globe and crippled parts of the British health care system.



R-DAY AT NAMCHI JAIL

BIKASH CHETTRI.

NAMCHI, 27 JAN:

The 72nd Republic Day was celebrated with felicitation of two personnel and a cultural presentations by under trail inmates at the

District Prison, Namchi, on Tuesday.

Sub Jailor Raj Kumar Pradhan and Head Warden Sonam Sherpa recieved Best Employee and Frontline Covid Warrior awards respectively from the South District Administration.

Russian parliament OKs New START nuclear treaty extension

MOSCOW (AP): Russian lawmakers on Wednesday quickly approved the extension of the last remaining nuclear Russia-U.S. arms control, a fast-track action that comes just days before it's due to expire.

Both houses of parliament voted unanimously to extend the New START treaty for five years, a day after a phone call between U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Kremlin said they agreed to complete the necessary extension procedures in the next few days.

The pact's extension doesn't require congressional approval in the U.S., but Russian lawmakers must ratify the move and Putin has to sign the relevant bill into law.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told lawmakers that the extension will be validated by exchanging diplomatic notes once all the procedures are completed.

Upper house Speaker Valentina Matvienko said after the vote that the decision to extend the pact shows that Russia and the U.S. can reach agreements on major issues despite the tensions between them.

New START expires on Feb. 5. After taking office last week, Biden proposed extending the treaty for five years, and the Kremlin quickly welcomed the offer.

The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.

Biden indicated during the campaign that he favored the preservation

of the New START treaty, which was negotiated during his tenure as U.S. vice president.

Russia has long proposed prolonging the pact without any conditions or changes, but the Trump administration waited until last year to start talks and made the extension contingent on a set of demands. The talks stalled, and months of bargaining have failed to narrow differences.

The negotiations were also marred by tensions between Russia and the United States, which have been fueled by the Ukrainian crisis, Moscow's meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and other irritants.

After both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, New START is the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries.

Earlier this month, Russia announced that it would follow the U.S. in pulling out of the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed surveillance flights over military facilities, to help build trust and transparency between Russia and the West.

Before the Biden administration took office, Russia always had offered to extend New START for five years — a possibility that was envisaged by the pact at the time it was signed. But President Donald Trump charged that it put the U.S. at a disadvantage. Trump initially insisted that China be added to the treaty, an idea that Beijing bluntly dismissed.

The Trump administration then proposed to extend New START for just one year and also sought to expand it to include limits on battlefield nuclear weapons.

UN panel: Yemen's war being fuelled by economic profiteering

UNITED NATIONS, JAN 27 (AP): Economic profiteering is fueling the catastrophe in Yemen, where a six-year war has involved attacks on civilians, forced disappearances and other violations of human rights and international law, UN experts said in a new report. The experts estimate Houthi rebels diverted at least USD 1.8 billion in 2019 that was supposed to go to the government to pay salaries and provide basic services to citizens.

And they said the government implemented a scheme to illegally divert to traders USD 423 million of Saudi money meant to buy rice and other commodities for the Yemeni people.

The report obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press describes a deteriorating situation in Yemen, where the panel said the Houthis and the government appear to be indifferent to the devastating impact of the economy's downfall on its people while continuing to divert the country's economic and financial resources.

Six years of war between a US-backed Arab coalition supporting the internationally recognised government and the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have been catastrophic for Yemen, killing more than 112,000 people, creating the world's worst humanitarian crisis, bringing the country to the brink of famine and wrecking infrastructure.

It began with the 2014 Houthi takeover of the north, where the majority of Yemenis live, which prompted a de-

structive air campaign by the Saudi-led coalition, aimed at restoring the government. The panel said there is an increasing body of evidence suggesting that individuals and entities in Iran supply significant volumes of weapons and components to the Houthis. The panel said the government lost strategic territory to both the Houthis and the Southern Transitional Council, a separatist group backed by the United Arab Emirates.

In December, the coalition announced a power-sharing Cabinet including southern separatists, part of a deal to end a power struggle between the former allies.

The lack of a coherent strategy among anti-Houthi forces, demonstrated by infighting within them, and disagreements between their regional backers, has served to strengthen the Houthis, the experts said.

The report said the Houthis perform government functions including collecting taxes and other state revenue, a large portion of which is used to fund their war effort not to help the Yemeni people. The government of Yemen is, in some cases, engaging in money-laundering and corruption practices that adversely affect access to adequate food supplies for Yemenis, in violation of the right to food, the panel said.

In the USD 423 million scheme that illegally transferred public money to traders, 48 per cent was received by a single holding corporation, the Hayel Saeed Anam Group, the experts said.

Indonesian volcano unleashes river of lava in new eruption

YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA (AP): Indonesia's most active volcano erupted Wednesday with a river of lava and searing gas clouds flowing 1,600 meters (5,250 feet) down its slopes.

It was Mount Merapi's biggest lava flow since authorities raised its danger level in November, said Hanik Humaida, the head of Yogyakarta's Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Center.

After morning rain, ashfall turned into muck in several villages, where the sound of eruption could be heard 30 kilometers (18 away). Police and rescue services told miners to cease work along rivers but no one was evacuated.

Authorities in November had evacuated nearly 2,000 people liv-



ing on the mountain in Magelang and Sleman districts on Java Island but most have since returned.

The alert was being maintained at the second-highest level and authorities told people to stay out of the existing 5-kilometer (3-mile) danger zone around the crater as the local administrations in Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces closely monitor the situation.

The 2,968-meter (9,737-foot) volcano is on the densely popu-

lated island of Java and near the ancient city of Yogyakarta. It is the most active of dozens of Indonesian volcanoes and has repeatedly erupted with lava and gas clouds recently.

Merapi's last major eruption in 2010 killed 347 people.

Indonesia, an archipelago of 270 million people, is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity because it sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of seismic fault lines around the ocean.

Myanmar health workers receive first COVID-19 vaccinations

Yangon, Jan 27 (AP): Health workers in Myanmar on Wednesday became the first people in the Southeast Asian country to be vaccinated against COVID-19, five days after the first vaccines were delivered from India.

State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's leader, announced last week that front-line health workers would get priority for inoculations with the vaccine developed by Oxford University and the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

India, which manufactures the vaccine under license, donated 1.5 million doses to Myanmar, enough to inoculate

750,000 people.

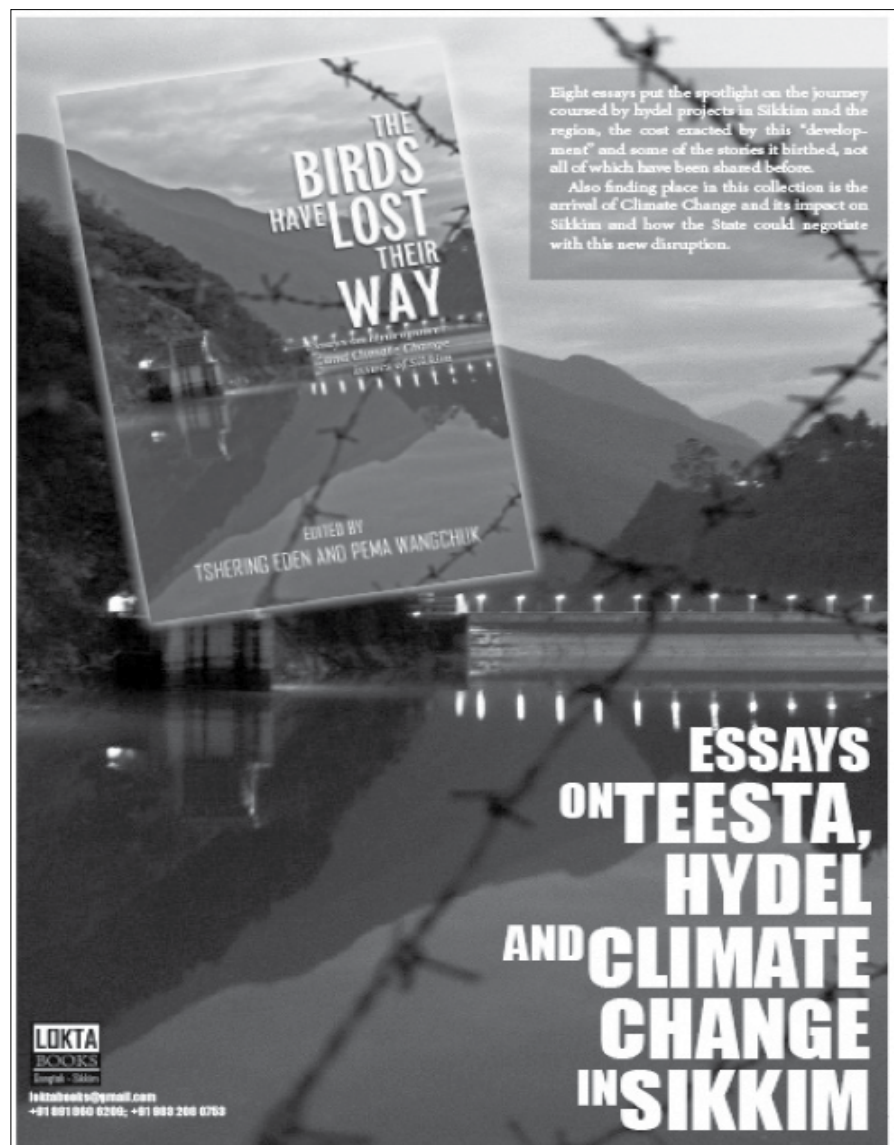
On Wednesday, Suu Kyi observed vaccinations at a hospital in the capital, Naypyitaw, and told reporters that the inoculation campaign must proceed carefully because the government does not have all the supplies it needs.

She said people would be monitored for side effects and be issued certificates that they have been vaccinated.

Suu Kyi, 75, is expected to be vaccinated Thursday.

Myanmar health authorities on Tuesday announced 411 new coronavirus cases, bringing the confirmed total to 138,368. The death toll increased by 13 to 3,082.

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HBO Max in early talks to make 'Harry Potter' series



LOS ANGELES, JAN 27 (PTI): Streaming platform HBO Max is reportedly planning to develop a live-action series based on author JK Rowling's classic "Harry Potter" book series.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the project is currently in fledgling stages at the WarnerMedia-owned streamer that is engaging with potential writers to bring the famed books alive on the small screen. Sources told the outlet that broad ideas have been discussed as part of the early-stage exploratory meetings. Rowling's books series, which chronicles the story of the eponymous teenage hero, were published between 1997 and 2007.

They have sold over 450 million copies worldwide, distributed in more than 200 territories and translated into 79 languages.

The series was previously made into a blockbuster film franchise led by Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint. The eight film series started with 2001's "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" and culminated with two back-to-back movies -- "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1" (2010) and "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2" (2011).

The franchise collectively earned over USD 7.7 billion at the box office and was universally praised by the critics. Warner Bros, the sister company of HBO Max, is currently making the third part in the spin-off franchise "Fantastic Beasts", which started with 2016's "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them".

Netflix buys world rights to Venice Film Festival winner 'The Disciple'

LOS ANGELES, JAN 27 (PTI): Streaming platform Netflix has picked up critically-acclaimed and award-winning musical drama "The Disciple", directed by Indian director Chaitanya Tamhane.

The Marathi language film, executive-produced by Oscar winner Alfonso Cuaron, made its European premiere at the 77th Venice Film Festival where it won the best screenplay award last year.

"The Disciple", also written and edited by Tamhane, follows Sharad Nerulkar (Aditya Modak), an Indian classical vocalist trying to achieve purity in his work as he has been raised on the stories of his father and guru about the masters of the past.

But as the years pass, Sharad will be forced to negotiate between the complex realities of life in contemporary Mumbai and his chosen path, leading him to find his true voice in music and in life.

According to Deadline, Endeavor Content made the deal with Netflix. New Europe Film Sales previously repped European sales.

Cuaron mentored Tamhane after he made his feature debut with 2014 festival favourite "Court", which saw the latter win the Lion Of The Future award in Venice.

Tamhane said he is happy the film is heading to Netflix and thanked his mentor Cuaron for his support.

"The story of 'The Disciple' came from my own search for excellence and direction. It's about how many of us follow all the rules and yet, sometimes, find that something is missing.

"I was honoured to get the oppor-

tunity to work with a creative genius (and my mentor) like Alfonso Cuaron - who directed 'Roma' and 'Gravity'. And now, not only has Netflix acquired it to stream to a discerning global audience. I'm truly grateful and humbled that global industry stalwarts have found

diences all around the world," he added.

Pratiksha Rao, Director, Content Acquisition, Netflix India, said the streaming platform wants to be the home for India's finest films and filmmakers.

"As we expand our film slate and tell more diverse stories from across the



this film worthy," the director said. His aim as a filmmaker, Tamhane said, has always been to tell his story "authentically within a dramatic framework".

"One also needs to afford the audience intelligence and intuition to be able to invest in your story, no matter what the cultural context may be. I'm glad this approach worked out well for "The Disciple"," he added.

Cuaron, whose multiple Oscar-winning Spanish-language film "Roma" was released on Netflix, said he is glad "The Disciple" will be able to reach a global audience.

"I believe Chaitanya is one of the most important new voices of contemporary cinema and I'm thrilled 'The Disciple' will be able to be enjoyed by au-

Varun Dhawan thanks fans for 'love and positivity' post marriage to Natasha Dalal

Mumbai, Jan 27 (PTI): Actor Varun Dhawan on Wednesday expressed gratitude to his fans for sending their best wishes to him and fashion designer Natasha Dalal after they got married.

The Bollywood star and his fiancée tied the knot in an intimate ceremony, attended by family and close friends, at Alibaug's luxurious resort The Mansion House on January 24. Taking

to Twitter, Dhawan said both him and Dalal were touched by the blessings coming their way post the wedding.

"The last few days me and Natasha have received so much love and positivity from everyone so just wanted to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart," the 33-year-old actor wrote.

Dhawan was planning to tie the knot with Dalal in May 2020 but due to

COVID-19 pandemic the wedding was pushed to 2021. Soon after the wedding ceremony, the "Coolie No 1" star shared two photographs from the wedding ceremony on his Instagram account.

"Life long love just became official," he captioned the pictures.

On the work front, Dhawan will next be seen in Jug Jug Jeeyo , alongside Anil Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor and Kiara Advani.

Yami Gautam wraps shoot of 'Bhoot Police'

MUMBAI, JAN 27 (PTI): Actor Yami Gautam on Wednesday said she has wrapped up shooting for her upcoming film "Bhoot Police".

Also starring Saif Ali Khan, Arjun Kapoor and Jacqueline Fernandez, the horror-comedy is directed by Pavan Kripalani of "Phobia" and "Ragini MMS" fame. Gautam, 32, took to Instagram to share the update.

"And it's a wrap #TeamBhootPolice #wehaveaookforeveryoccasion @jacquelinef143 @arjunkapoor #saifalikhan #PawanKripalani @akshaipuri @

jaya.taurani @sachinjigar @tips," she captioned the picture. "Bhoot Police" is produced by Tips and 12th Street Entertainment Production.

Besides this film, the actor is set to lead the thriller "A Thursday", to be produced by Ronnie Screwvala's banner RSVP Movies and Blue Monkey Films.

Written and directed by Behzad Khambata, the film will feature Gautam as Naina Jaiswal, an intelligent play-school teacher.

"A Thursday" will be released on an OTT platform.

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THE DAY AHEAD

Aries:

It doesn't matter who did what and where, Aries. The only thing that matters is your mental peace. So without further ado, release the old story as you stop seeing yourself as a victim in this narrative. You attracted the experiences you attracted in order to grow on a soul level. Remembering this will help you move forward gracefully. PS: Better things are on their way to you!

Tip: Make peace with the things that transpired in the past.

Taurus: We've all had our hearts broken at the hands of people we loved. We've all had our dreams shattered before our very eyes. Should that become the reason you lose hope and become the victim in your own narrative? Anything but, Taurus. This week, you're being encouraged to clear out the trash and replace failure with faith. You are so loved and so protected. Trust that only good things can happen for you now.

Tip: Clear the emotional trash can. Forgive the past.

Gemini: There's no doubt that you'll survive this journey called life even if you walk the path alone. But, it doesn't hurt to have a few people who love you deeply walking by your side. The soul connections you are experiencing right now are so deep and so magical, that they cannot be put into words.

Honour and acknowledge them as you send out a prayer of gratitude. Remember, nobody is perfect, and that includes you. Moving past that space of judgements will help you see the light and love in everybody.

Tip: The soul connections you are experiencing right now are truly transcendental.

Cancer: Aren't you tired of the mental gymnastics, Cancer?

Aren't you tired of trying to control every aspect of this narrative? Here's the truth: not everything is in your control. So, let go of the false beliefs as you learn to accept what life is showing you. Words of wisdom courtesy Eckhart Tolle that will empower you to get through this phase gracefully: "Sometimes surrender means giving up trying to understand and becoming comfortable with not knowing."

Tip: Practice the fine art of surrender, wild one.

Leo: When we're not in alignment with our soul's plan, we face blocks at each step. Despite our conviction to move forward, the doors we're trying to open refuse to budge an inch. When we are in alignment with the plan, however, we find a way to navigate despite the challenges. The help, resources, and guidance we need at every step come through in unexpected ways. Now, the real question is: Where are you in your journey, and what are the ways in which you are being called to realign gently?

Tip: Your spirit team is with you, helping you make the changes you need to at this point.

Virgo: Sometimes, we feel like we're screaming into the void. That our hopes and prayers are not being heard by anyone, and that the help we need continues to evade us. But that is far from the truth, Virgo. What you're trying to manifest in your reality will take form in due course of time. So, keep the long term goal in mind as you continue to move forward instead of focusing on short term gains. Remember the Dalai Lama's words when you feel down and out today: "Remember that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of luck."

Tip: Replace anxiety with faith.

Libra: You can spend a lifetime cursing the past or trying to fix what has already gone. You can spend a lifetime repeating the could've-should've-would've narrative and comparing your journey with those around you. But regret won't change a thing, Libra. We repeat: Regret won't change a thing. So, take charge of you Destiny, beloved, as you rise like a phoenix from your own ashes. You are being supported to write a brand new script, right now and in this moment. Tip: Take charge of your Destiny.

Scorpio: We all want the same things, Scorpio. To create a life that's beautiful and abundant, and allows us to live our highest potential. While there's a part of you that believes you're capable of creating this for yourself, there's another part of you that fears your own power—and this is the part that you're being asked to release today. So, replace each negative thought with a life-affirming one as you watch your outer reality transform with you.

Tip: You are worthy of the life you desire for yourself. Sagittarius: Just because it hasn't been done before doesn't mean it can't be done, Sagittarius. Today, you're being asked to embody the boldness and vivaciousness you're best known for as you learn to not give a damn about others. This is your script, honey, so you have the power to co-author it in the way that you want. PS: Trust that you'll look back at this phase with nothing but joy in your heart.

Tip: Embody the boldness and vivaciousness you're best known for. Capricorn: It's that kind of day, Capricorn. You feel like you're living your worst nightmare and that you're stuck in a room with a bunch of buffoons. At any point of time, you will have two options: to watch the show unfold (as you stifle your laughter), or get sucked into the portal of drama. Remembering that all the

world's a play will help you get through this. Besides, you'll have so much to share over dinner with your crew this weekend!

Tip: A sense of humour is the secret to surviving this chaos.

Aquarius: What if you chose to stop playing tug of war with the Universe? What if you accepted everything exactly the way it is? The fine art of surrender is something you will learn to master over the next few days. As always, remember to focus on your 'karma' or actions as you leave 'the how' and 'the why' to the mysterious forces who are supporting your earthly mission. The path of spirituality will empower you to make positive changes. So practice mindfulness. Spend some time in meditation. Know that inner stillness is the secret to dealing with life's myriad challenges.

Tip: Leave 'the how' and 'the why' to the mysterious forces above.

Pisces: It takes years to become an overnight success. Remember this now and for the rest of the year, Pisces, as you shift your focus from short term gains to the long term vision and continue to put in the work it takes. As you do, release the need to compare your journey with that of others. Your only competition is your past self.

Tip: Dedicate yourself to the hustle, wild one.