



## COMPANY BEHIND SKOREAN HIT BAND BTS SOAR IN TRADING DEBUT

pg 08

## HOW DO PANDEMICS END? HISTORY SUGGESTS DISEASES FADE BUT ARE ALMOST NEVER TRULY GONE

pg 04

## GLENN CLOSE, AMY ADAMS STAR IN TRAILER FOR UPCOMING ADAPTATION OF 'HILLBILLY ELEGY'

pg 08



# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Youth dies after brutal assault, mother demands justice

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

The family of a youth who was brutally assaulted and succumbed to his injuries later have demanded justice.

On 19 Sept, 22-year-old Prem Kumar Ramudamu was beaten up by seven boys.

The next day, the family took him to CRH Tadong for treatment, but he succumbed to his injuries on 07 Oct.

The deceased and his family are residents of Sadhatam village under Martam Rumtek constituency in East Sikkim.

According to the youth's mother, she was told that her son had gone to a nearby shop where he asked for the phone number of a girl who was there. Soon after that, the brother and friends of the girl attacked her son and took him to a nearby jungle where they assaulted him through the

night, the mother has alleged.

Speaking to Summit Times, DIG Range, Pravin Gurung informed that two FIRs were received by Sadar Thana on 20 Sept from Ranka. One was about the assault on Prem Kumar Ramudamu and the other was about an assault on one Sangay Wangchuk Bhutia. The two cases were of assaults that took place at different locations, one near Ranka Senior Secondary School and the other at Sama Lingdum, he said.

However, according to Prem Kumar's mother, her son and Sangay Wangchuk were together and were both assaulted by the same gang of boys.

The DIG-Range meanwhile informs that after receiving the FIRs, cases under sections 325, 341, 34 of the IPC was filed against unknown persons. Later, the seven accused

were identified through CCTV footage and arrested. However, after Prem Kumar succumbed to his injuries, the charges against the seven accused has now changed to murder i.e section 302 of IPC.

"The seven accused are aged between 17-22 years. Out of the 7, six have been sent to judicial custody while the 17-year-old has been sent to juvenile detention," informed Mr Gurung.

Post mortem reports suggest that no weapons as such were used in the attack and the accused used blows and kicks to batter the victims.

Prem Kumar had sustained severe injuries to his internal organs especially his liver and kidney.

"We couldn't get a dying declaration from Prem Kumar since he was not in a condition to speak. However, we hope

to get the statement from the other victim," said the DIG.

He added that the other victim is also in a serious condition and is on dialysis since his kidneys have been damaged in the assault.

From what we know, the incident took place on 19 Sept between 6-7 pm, said Mr Gurung.

All Sikkim Scheduled Caste Association president, Shekhar Sewa met with the mother of the deceased today. Speaking to media persons, he said they are trying to find out if this was a case of discrimination against SC community since the deceased belonged to SC community.

"Right now all I can do is appeal to the authorities to provide justice to the victim and if need be, our association is ready to take the matter to the central leadership of our association as well," he stated.

## Proper school reopening to finally begin 02 Nov

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

Starting in a graded manner on 02 November, schools across the State are projected to reopen for students by 23 November. The State Government has also done away with the winter vacations, but this is still going to be an extremely truncated school year with the next academic session, which would have begun in normal times on 02 February, now resuming on 15 February, 2021.

The current academic session will now end on 13 February, 2021.

The Education Department has prepared a calendar for reopening as per which, Classes IX to XII will continue on voluntary basis and with written permission of the parents/ guardians to attend school. Classes VI to VIII will resume with students attending only on voluntary basis with the consent of their parents from 02 November onwards.

Further, Primary classes [Classes III to V] "may be started from November 23, 2020 subject to COVID-19 Pandemic situation prevailing at that time," the department has conveyed.

The Department has also listed various activities like formation of groups, compiling contact details of parents/ guardians, informing groups about SOPs and other arrangement like hand washing, cleanliness etc. which have been assigned to the respective district heads and school-heads to be completed by 19 October.

As per a press communiqué issued by Nodal Officer for Public Relations and Publicity, Education Department, Bhim Thatal, the standard operating procedures prescribed by the Union Ministries of Education and Health and the SOPs prepared by the Education Department here will be the basic guidelines for schools

and will have to be followed strictly.

The winter break has already been done away with completely and classes will function on all working days and half days on Saturdays, with the remaining half of Saturdays to be kept for cleaning etc.

The next academic session which was supposed to begin on February 02, 2021, will now begin on February 15, 2021. The current academic session shall end on February 13, 2021.

The release adds that the decision on reopening of schools was taken in line with instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs to open schools in a graded manner from 15 October onwards.

It may be recalled that Government Schools have already been functioning since 21 September with 50% staff and students from classes IX to XII attending on a voluntary basis.

## COVID-19 tally in India breaches 73-lakh mark

NEW DELHI, OCT 15

(PTI): India's COVID-19

tally of cases climbed to 73.07 lakh with 67,708 new cases in a day, while 63,83,441 people have recuperated so far pushing the national recovery rate to 87.35 per cent on Thursday, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 73,07,097 and the death toll climbed to 1,11,266 with the novel coronavirus virus claiming 680 lives in a span of 24 hours in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate has further declined to 1.52 per cent. There are 812390 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 11.11 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated. According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 9,12,26,305 samples have been tested up to October 14 with 11,36,183 samples being tested on Wednesday.

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

The 680 new fatalities include 158 from Maharashtra, 75 from Karnataka, 64 from West Bengal, 52 from Tamil Nadu, 44 from Delhi, 33 from Chhattisgarh, 31 from Punjab and 28 from Andhra Pradesh.

A total of 1,11,266 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 40,859 from Maharashtra followed by 10,423 from Tamil Nadu, 10,198 from Karnataka.

## With 41 new cases, Sikkim's COVID count reaches 3500

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

Sikkim recorded 41 fresh cases of novel coronavirus and the discharge of 54 COVID-19 patients in the 24 hours ending 8 AM Thursday. With this, the State's tally of the confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 3,500, of which 3,048 patients have already been discharged from isolation facilities.

There are now 312 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State, of whom four are currently admitted in the ICU facility of STNM Hospital.

148 samples were tested via RT-PCR at the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital on Wednesday, of which 32 returned positive, while nine more persons were found with the virus in rapid antigen testing of 53 samples.

All 17 samples put through TruNat were found negative for COVID-19.

Out of the 41 new cases, 35 have been reported from East District, one from West Sikkim and five from South District.



In the daily health bulletin on Thursday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam G Bhutia, informed that seven patients brought to the emergency ward of STNM hospital tested positive for COVID-19 in RT-PCR testing.

Further, three persons from Metro Point-Tadong, two from AG Quarters Shyari, four from near Girling Dara in Decheling, one from DPH area, one from Singhik Mangan, one from Tathangchen, one from near cooperative in Si-chey, one from near Greendale School in Tadong, one from Rong-neck, one from Melli

Gumpa, one from below Hospital Dara in DPH area, one from near Janta Bhan in DPH area and one from MG Marg were also reported COVID-19 positive.

Likewise, samples of two persons from Rhenock, one from Tarpin and one from Aritar taken at Singtam District Hospital returned positive for COVID-19 in RT-PCR testing, he added.

Mr Bhutia informed that a 23-year-old female who had given her address as Tathangchen and a 30-year-old female from Manan Kendra, who were found COVID-19 positive in RT-PCR could not be contacted on the phone numbers provided

by them. On the same, he urged them to contact health authorities on the toll-free number or text on the Health of Sikkim Facebook page.

He informed that one person from near primary school in Rolay, one from below the power house at Kazi Road and one from Rhenock in East District tested positive in rapid antigen testing.

Similarly, one person from Ralong, one from power colony in Jorethang and one from near power office in Namchi and a security staff of Gyalshing District Hospital in West District also tested positive in RAT, he said.

## Night curfew along Indo-Bangla border in Cachar

GUWAHATI, OCT 15 (PTI):

Night curfew was clamped along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Cachar district of Assam with immediate effect on Thursday after movement of extremists were detected besides unauthorised transportation of commodities, an official release said.

Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli promulgated the night curfew under Section 144 Cr PC along the Bangladesh border in the district for the next two months, an official release said.

"In view of the movement of extremist elements out to create law and order problems in the district and also unauthorised movement of commodities, including cattle from the district through areas surrounding the district borders, the order has been promulgated," it added.

Movement of individ-



uals will remain strictly prohibited between sunset and sunrise within one km radius of Indo-Bangladesh border, the order stated.

"No person shall move on Surma river and on its high bank within the limit of the territory in actual control of India in the district of Cachar between the hours of sunset to sunrise," it added.

The order stated that no person will be allowed to ply any boat in Surma even for fishing purposes and the permission for fishing has to be obtained from the circle officer of Katigora.

The prohibitory order further stated that no person shall carry any vehicle, handcart, rickshaw or in any other mode of transport, sugar, rice, wheat, edible oil, salt and other commodities between sunset and sunrise within five km inside the district boundary of Cachar along the Bangladesh border.

"Permit may be issued in this regard by the Katigora circle officer, who will only provide relaxation for specific purpose after verification from the local supply officials," the release added.

## Why Caste Defines Indian Life?

JIWAN RAI

Shashi Tharoor has become India's popstar author and politician who has glorified a bombastic version of the English language in India. His prominence went to the next level after his Oxford Union debate. He used the English language in England's most famous debate to lacerate British colonialism by his brilliant argumentation laced with the rarest of indubitable facts and figures. Later his speech was modified into a book – An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India. It is a masterclass for sure but I have a few objections.

In his passionate attack on the British colonialists, he argues that the caste system in the Indian subcontinent was not as divisive and

harmful before the colonialists "helped solidify and perpetuate the inequities of the caste system in India". He romanticizes the pre-British India where "caste had not been a particularly stable social structure". This is one of his weakest arguments which, among other things, exculpates the contemporary campaigners of the caste system. Holding the British responsible for scaling up the caste system in India diverts national frustration and anger to foreigners while the desi custodians and merchandisers of the caste system will, not only go scot free, but will get ample socio-cultural manure to flourish. Sadly, this is happening on an ongoing basis. India must generously concede that the caste system had always been an exceedingly and awfully dehumanizing practice

which crippled Indian civilizational growth in remarkably subtle ways. There are, quite possibly, very few other instances of human wisdom, knowledge, capacities and dignity being so thoroughly misused and wasted. Mahatma Gandhi realized that untouchability was a greater enemy than colonialism itself and appealed to his supporters to eliminate it before aspiring to independence. Ramachandra Guha, arguably the boldest historian of India says, "If you compare the Indian civilization with European or African civilizations, we historically perfected discrimination, stratification and hierarchy much more rigorously and systematically. There is no equivalent of the caste system anywhere". The ugliness of this inglorious system was never milder in the past. Its heinous-

ness is as old as its antiquity. Manusmriti, the most perniciously racist book ever conceived by the human mind was written in 2nd century BC. The book mirrors the civilizational inheritance, cultural technologies, social formation and religious wisdom that existed hundreds and hundreds of years before white racists landed on Indian shores.

I argue that the caste system in India is only going to worsen and here are my five reasons.

First, the religious underpinning of the caste system is the strongest reason why the Indian caste system will never leave Indian life. The exclusive privilege of priesthood, bestowed upon the highest Brahmanical sect, has deeply divided humanity at its core. As preposterous as it

turn to pg 02





*Nagaland Govt. issues COVID-19 guidelines for campaigning during bye-election*

**KOHIMA, OCT 14 [NAGALANDPAGE]:** In view of the bye-elections in Nagaland – 14 Southern Angami-1 and 60 Pungro-Kiphire seats, the State Government has permitted political gatherings, outside the Containment Zones, beyond the existing limit of 100 persons with immediate effect in two Assembly constituencies.

In an order issued Wednesday, Chief Secretary, J Alam said the order has been issued in pursuance of the Ministry of Home Affairs order dated October 8 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 22 (2) (b) and Section 22 (2) (h) of the Disaster Management Act 2005, in the capacity of Chairperson, State Executive Committee till the permissible campaigning period.

He, however said that permit would be subject to strict compliance to the conditions and provisions as contained in the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which states:

In closed spaces, a maximum of 50% of the hall capacity will be allowed, with a ceiling of 200 persons, the order said, adding that wearing of face masks, maintaining social distancing, provision for thermal scanning and use of hand wash or hand sanitizer will be mandatory.

In open spaces, keeping the size of the ground/space view, and with strict observance of social distancing, mandatory wearing of face masks, provisions for thermal scanning and hand wash or sanitizer. Public gatherings and rallies can be conducted subject to strict adherence to existing COVID-19 guidelines, the Chief Secretary's order said.

The order asked the Deputy Commissioner of the respective district to identify in advance dedicated grounds for public gathering with clearly marked Entry/Exit points and also put markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees. Chief Medical Officer/District Health Officials should be involved in the process to ensure that all COVID-19 related guidelines are adhered to by all concerned in the district, it said.

Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police should ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed in Point No.1 above, he said.

The Deputy Commissioner should give suitable instructions and strictly monitor for ensuring that all COVID-19 related requirements like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning, etc. are fulfilled by the political parties and candidates concerned during each of these activities, he said.

On the Door to Door Campaign, the Chief Secretary said subject to any other restriction(s) including extant COVID-19 guidelines, a group of 5 persons including candidates, excluding security personnel, if any, is allowed to do door to door campaigning.

# SNPP celebrates 12th foundation day, wants LT seats from 17 general seats

**SAGAR CHETTRI**  
**GANGTOK, 15 OCT:**

Sikkim National People's Party (SNPP) president, Delay Namgyal Barfungpa reiterated the stand of the party to provide five seats to Limboo and Tamang communities from the 17 general seats in the State Assembly today. The party celebrated its 12th foundation day today in a function organized at MG Marg. SNPP was established in the year 2008.

On the occasion, Mr Barfungpa said that the State government needs to take a serious and clear stand on this long pending demand of Assembly seat reservation for LTs of Sikkim.

The celebration was chaired by two senior citizens from MG Marg, Motilal Bansal and Prem Goyal.

Speaking further on the LT seat issue, Mr Barfungpa stated that SNPP disagrees with the recommendation of the Bur-



man Report to reserve seats for LT by increasing the strength of the State Assembly from 32 to 40.

He mentioned that after getting tribal status, the representatives of LT community have been getting five seats from 17 seats in every election so now the government just has to allot them five seats officially.

Mr Barfungpa also said that the State government needs to come

up with economic relief for the people of Sikkim who are trying to come out from the economic crisis due to lockdown. He also suggested that the State government make a strong agreement in the interest of people of Sikkim in Teesta Stage IV project in North Sikkim.

While welcoming the State government's decision to make a cancer hospital in South Dis-

trict, he suggested that the government build a super specialty hospital at old STNM hospital premises and dedicate the STNM hospital at Socheygang for diabetes and related disease. He threatened to sit on dharna if the government uses the old STNM hospital premises for Smart City project.

"SNPP is now a registered and recognized political party of the coun-

try and this is the gift for the workers and supporters of the party on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the party," Mr Barfungpa said. He also thanked party workers and supporters for standing with the party all these years.

The function was also addressed by Bikash Karkidholi and party worker, Dhan Kumar Tamang of SNPP.

## SKM youth coordination meeting at Pakyong



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 15 OCT:**

The sixth day of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha youth coordination meeting cum introductory programme was held at Community Hall Pakyong for Gnathang Machong and Namcheybung Constituency today, a press release informs.

Transport Minister cum vice president In-charge of SKM, Sanjeet Kharel was the chief guest while secretary general cum UD&HD Minister, Arun Upreti and MLA Namcheybung cum Advisor, Excise Department and Incharge Social Service Wing, Em Prasad Sharma, attended the program as special guests.

The meeting focussed on strengthening the party and its objectives.

Transport Minister, Sanjeet Kharel stated that all party workers need to work on the suggestions given by Chief Minister

cum SKM president PS Tamang (Golay). He also said that no one should underestimate our leader. A silent lion does not mean that it cannot hunt, he added.

"We need to be very clear about the difference between the grant or relief and development. We do not believe in fooling the people. The previous government has fooled people and confused them about what is grant and development," said Mr Kharel.

He ended by wishing everyone a happy Dasain in advance.

UD&HD Minister and secretary general of the party, Arun Upreti, said that the party cadre needs to work as a bridge between the government and the grassroots.

"We are working on uplifting the youth. Every youth will be made independent and self-sufficient," he said.

## Tharoor's book on nationalism to be out next month

**NEW DELHI, OCT 15 (PTI):** Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said his "magnum opus" book on the theory, evolution and practice of nationalism will be out next month.

The announcement of the book's release on November 1 by the former Union minister, known for his penchant for using uncommon English words, was met with a sharp witted response from party colleague Jairam Ramesh, who said, "Congratulations. You are superprolificexpialidocious!!" The book titled 'The Battle of Belonging', Tharoor said, is among his most "solidly researched" and "passionately-argued" works.

"My next book is due

out next month -- my magnum opus on the theory, evolution & practice of nationalism, worldwide & especially in India #TheBattleOfBelonging," he tweeted along with the publisher's description of the book.

In the description, Aleph book company asked that there are over a billion Indians alive today, but are some Indians more Indian than others.

"To answer this question, one that is central to the identity of every man, woman and child who belongs to the modern Republic of India, eminent thinker and bestselling writer Shashi Tharoor explores hotly contested ideas of nationalism, patriotism, citizenship, and belonging," it said.

## District advisory committee for NYK meets in Namchi

**NAMCHI, 15 OCT (IPR):**

The first annual meeting of the District Advisory Committee for Youth Programme (DACYP) of Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Namchi, South Sikkim was conducted in the District Administrative Centre, Namchi today.

The meeting was chaired by District Collector cum Chairperson DACYP, Raghul K in presence of State Director NYKS, Sibashish Banerjee, SDM (Namchi), Agwane Rohan, District Youth Coordinator, NYKS, Muskan Rai along with members of board and concerned departmental officials.

During the meeting, annual programmes to be undertaken upto March 2021 were touched upon by the board, namely Atma Nirbhar Bharat, career guidance, career counseling, education in basic vocations, Establishing Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Teams, Training of youths on wellness, Fit India and cleanliness, promotion of sports, arts and culture in District and Block Levels. Besides, the meeting also conversed in youth club development and awareness on COVID-19, post lock-down intervention and Jal Shakti Mission.

Annual regular activities were highlighted by DYK, NYKS, Namchi, Mus-



kan Rai. He also briefly mentioned about youth mapping, skilling and handholding under Atma Nirbhar Bharat, wherein the objectives of the programme were discussed with the members in detail. He also informed that 129 organisations have been registered under NYKS Namchi in the District. Further, he briefed about initiation of action plan of youth clubs to be carried from the upcoming week.

Chairperson Raghul K urged for active participation of youths in nation-building activities at grassroot level, he stressed on the need of awareness on various opportunities which can enhance in developing personality and skills of youth. Further, he advised the board to form one organisation each in every Gram Panchayat Units in the district under NYKS Namchi. In addition, he also sug-

gested to arrange a quick response team in disaster prone areas under the district which would function under the supervision of District Disaster Management Authority, Government of Sikkim.

State Director, Sibashish Banerjee extended his gratitude to the District Administration for extending necessary support and coordination in the smooth functioning of NYKS. He also advised the administration to involve NYKS in various departmental activities for the successful implementation of developmental programmes and informed on various aspects and agendas of the programmes which is to advocate the youths while improving their livelihood to make them self-reliant.

The meeting also saw vibrant discussion on every topic which was kept forth during the course.

## SKM Ward Level Committees formed in Aho Yangtam

**SMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 15 OCT:**

SKM Ward Level Committee of different wards such as Kadamtam Ward, Senti Ward and Changey Ward of Aho Yangtam GPU under Namcheybung Constituency was formed today in the presence of Area MLA cum Advisor (Excise Deptt), Em Prasad Dulal, a press release informs.

The Area MLA emphasized on strengthening of organisation from ward level to constituency level. He also highlighted SKM Government's achievements, programmes and upcoming projects in



the constituency.

On the way to Changey Ward, Mr Dulal inspected incomplete project of road construction at Changey.

Similarly, on behalf of the Chief Minister, he handed over a cheque to an ailing person for med-

ical treatment which was provided from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund in the presence of party functionaries.

Lastly, he congratulated the newly formed WLC members and urged them to work together for betterment of society.

## Why Caste Defines...

may seem, India didn't bother to intervene until five years ago. Only in 2015 did the Supreme Court hold that caste and birth must never be considered a determining factor in the induction of priests in temples. Whether anyone is actually giving any heed to this court order is another issue. Religion is highly sacrosanct in a deeply religious country like India and it is therefore no wonder that Indian rationality hasn't outgrown some religious delusions. That Indian purity and impurity is based on caste is an amicably accepted religious reality.

Curiously, Indian Buddhists and Christians are intensely caste conscious. Buddha's renunciation of Hinduism was triggered by his skepticism and rejection of the authority of the Veda and caste system and yet his followers are happily hanging onto it. Sikkim Buddhism is one stark example. Caste is the single most important factor when it comes to doing rituals and choosing life partners. Many Christians as well are suffering from the ills of casteism indelibly ingrained in their racial genes while at the same time professing faith in Christ who taught that all humans are created equal in the image of God.

Secondly, cultural constructs necessitate the persistence of the caste system. An IIT professor, in a casual chat, told me that new generation students are open to having a romantic relationship with any caste but the vast majority will ultimately abandon that relationship to marry the person of their parents' choice (read 'same caste partner'). This trend is prevalent in non-Hindu Indian families as well. If that is the case in an elitist university, the situation in other universities can easily be construed. The dowry system is just as pervasive and rigorously practiced across the religious spectrum of the Indian population. Ironically, the most educated men fetch the highest dowry. Call it a 'gift' or whatever - the driving force is the greed for dowry.

Our social mindset, political ploys and the administrative structure are the last three points which enable and advance the caste simple but they need a much large space than the few lines the word limit of this article provides. We can continue to ponder and discuss the issue. In my future articles, I will discuss why India, as a nation, loves the caste system.

[To be continued...]

## Minister visits SNT complex in Siliguri

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 14 OCT:**

Transport Minister Sanjeet Kharel visited the Sikkim Nationalised Transport complex in Siliguri on 13 Oct accompanied by SNT General Manager Karma Namgyal Bhutia, Co-Manager Bhupinder Chhetri, and other senior officials of the department stationed there.

The main purpose of the Siliguri-visit, a press release informs, was for

the Minister to check on facilities in place at the complex to ensure that tourists headed for Sikkim were made to feel welcome.

During the meeting with the officials, the Minister highlighted how the State was now open for tourists and keen to ensure that tourism rebounded quickly in the State and that a smooth and welcome process for tourists would help this process.

## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft  
Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak  
Price negotiable  
Contact : 6296366498,  
9641878315, 9593262407

### LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

### LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410

### FOR RENT

Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Baazar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General roadside land for sale measuring 30 by 45 square feet near smile land below apica garden. Contact no. 7797885351/9733538899.

### Building for sale

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50x40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS, South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.



# DISHA meeting for North Sikkim



**MANGAN, 15 OCT [IPR]:** The District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee [DISHA] meeting was held in conference hall, NDZP, Mangan today.

The meeting was chaired by the Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba who was accompanied by Minister for Road & Bridges Samdup Lepcha, Forest Minister Karma Loday Bhutia, Dzongu MLA Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, Zilla Adhakshya Namday Lepcha, District

Collector (N), Tenzing T Kaleon, Sikkim Welfare Commission chairperson Nim Tsh Lepcha, ADM (Dev) RB Bhandari, SP Ongmu Bhutia and officers from various line departments.

The programme was started by offering khadas and bouquets to chief guest and distinguished guest by District collector, North Sikkim. District Magistrate briefed prime objectives of the meeting (DISHA).

The programme also

includes details on various schemes presented by various departments of North Sikkim.

The programme details on various schemes presented are as follows: ADC (Dev) presented PPT on topic like Reconstruction of Earthquake Damaged Rural Houses (REDRH), Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY-G), Sikkim

Garib Awaas Yojana (S-GAY), Swachha Bharat Mission (SBM), Open Defecation Free (ODF) and

Total Job Card Issued. Similarly DE (PMGSY) presented PPT on Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) objectives, impact of implementation of PMGSY programme, long span bridge sanction under North Sikkim, Roads sanctioned under PMGSY-II and quality monitoring.

SE (Power) presented PPT on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY), Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS), ob-

jectives of DDUGJY and benefits of the scheme. AE (Social Justice and Welfare Department) presented PPT on Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram. DCSO (Food and civil supplies Department) on Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMKAY), One Nation One Ration Card. CDPO (Mangan) on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) and Poshan Abhiyaan. Assistant Project Coordinator S.S on Samagra Shiksha.

Departments like Road and Bridges, Sports, Tourism and Water Resource also interacted with MP and expressed their problems faced by their respective departments.

Lastly Chairman (DISHA) Indra Hang Subba, MP interacted with officials from various line departments and directed them to conduct proper programmes, implement every schemes for the development of Rural areas. He also expressed his best wishes to everyone for Durga Puja.

# Online coaching for boxing concludes in Mangshila



**MANGAN, 15 OCT [IPR]:** The closing programme of Online Boxing Coaching took place at Pan-chayat Bhawan, Mangshila, North Sikkim on Thursday. Sports & Youth Affairs Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha, was present as the chief guest accompanied by Secretary Sports as guest of honour with other dignitaries and locals of North District and the Boxing Coaches of Sports Dept. & SAI.

The programme started with a welcome address by the organizing member of Amateur Boxing Club of Mangshila and also briefed about how the Boxing got started in their locality. Followed by words of encouragement from President, NDBA, Arjuna awardee Jasral Pradhan in his words encouraged the organizers for their efforts on giving Boxing as a priority sports by installing standard Boxing ring at Mangshila.

The programme includes an inauguration of new standard Boxing

Ring stalled by the organizers, funded by the Sports & YA Department. The Chief Guest of the function in presence of other dignitaries inaugurated the said Boxing Ring and further, Prabin Limboo, a voluntarily serving as a Coach in that area was presented with letter of Appreciation by organizers through Chief Guest for his remarkable and outstanding contribution for promoting of Boxing in North District. Followed by cash prize distribution to the winners of Online Boxing Competiton, recently organized and funded by the department of Sports & YA.

Secretary Sports, Kuber Bhandari in his words appreciated the organizing committee for the installation of standard International Boxing ring, further he informed the gathering that the Mangshila is the first place in Sikkim to stall such a standard Boxing Ring. He also highlighted some upcoming plan for the promotion of

advance Boxing coaching in Sikkim under the Khe-lo India Centre scheme.

Minister who was present as a Chief Guest also appreciated the organizers and the locals in his words for their efforts on promoting Boxing as a priority Sports. He further assured to fulfill all the pending works of the Mangshila block and will always support the area for their progressive efforts. He expressed his gratitude to the land donors, contributed for the promotion of sports at Mangshila.

Programme concludes with some presentable cultural items and Vote of Thanks by the Organizers.

After the conclusion of the programme, the team of Sports & YA department led by Secretary Sports with the locals inspected the land for the construction of Boxing hall. Secretary Sports directed the Engineering cell and the Technical line of the department to process with plan.

## SKVIB hold awareness program on PMEGB at Sumbuk



**NAMCHI, 15 OCT (IPR):** Sumbuk block level awareness program by Sikkim Khadi and Village Industries Board (SKVIB) on Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) was held at the hall of BAC, Sumbuk today. Organized by BAC, Sumbuk the Chief Guest for the program was chairperson

(SKVIB), Chung Chung Bhutia. Also present amongst others were BDO (Sumbuk), Kiran Thatal, Sumbuk Panchayat President, Radha Sharma, resource persons, Panchayat members of various Gram Panchayat Unit and entrepreneurs of the locality.

Addressing, the gathering Chief Guest, Chung Chung Bhutia spoke about the importance of this board and underlined that SKVIB is working to link the masses especially from rural areas to various schemes available with the board.

She gave an overview regarding the schemes and added that it is the vision of the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang to connect the youths particularly who are entrepreneurs with SKVIB and provide them with op-

portunities wherein they can explore their innovative ideas thereby making the youths self-reliant. The Chairperson also assured that the board will extend necessary assistance for Sikkimese business-person.

Resource Person CEO (KVIB), Gyurmic Yousal spoke in detail about PMEGP which he said is a credit linkage subsidy with the objective for establishing of micro enterprises which will be tiny hubs of employment.

He further informed that these enterprises can be in the form of factories, production units, trade, shops and service sectors in rural as well as in urban areas. In, Sikkim this scheme is being implemented via SKVIB and the government subsidy under this scheme will be routed through identified banks for distribution to the beneficiaries said the resource person.

Moreover, he elucidated that there are two kinds of assistance under this scheme one is manufacturing sector and the other one is business or service sector of which the unit admissible is Rs. 25 lakh and Rs. 10 Lakh respectively.

Mr Yousal also mentioned that in Sikkim currently service sector project is booming and industries such as pickle making, bakery, tissue paper and mineral water manufacturing units are on the rise. He also notified that due to the pandemic the application can be submitted via online mode along with the detailed project report.

Similarly, resource person complex In-charge (SKVIB), Shiva Prasad Sharma spoke in brief about apiculture which can be honed in Sumbuk area. He characterized the benefits of apiculture in Sikkim and urged the attendees to practice basic traditional beekeeping techniques and methods as beekeeping helps in proper functioning of ecosystem and can be a source of rural livelihoods. He also cited examples of successful beekeepers from Melli and urged the entrepreneurs to follow those successful beekeepers direction.

BDO (Sumbuk), Kiran Thatal outlined regarding the awareness program and encouraged the congregated to utilized the schemes provided by SKVIB as these schemes has the potential to attract the younger generation to the khadi sector for livelihood opportunities which can last a lifetime.

During the course of the program an interaction session was held in which the participants shared their queries, experience with the officials of SKVIB.

## Governor pays homage to former President Abdul Kalam



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 15 OCT:**

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad paid homage to former President of India, Bharat Ratna, APJ Abdul Kalam, on his birth anniversary today at Raj Bhavan, a press release informs. The Governor offered floral

tribute to a portrait of the 'Missile Man of India'. The Governor stated that Dr Kalam was "an embodiment of compassion, wisdom and strength" and his words and works, has inspired millions across the globe to believe in their dreams.

## SKM South District welcomes new party functionaries

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 15 OCT:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha South District held a Party Functionaries Introductory Programme at Namchi, South Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The meeting was organised with the primary objective of welcoming Area In-charges, CLC presidents, the newly appointed executives and inducting them into their respective Frontal Organisations.

The meeting was being held under the chairmanship of CEC Member, BT Tamang who was also joined by Sr Party vice president, Bhoj Raj Rai, South District vice president In-charge, Satish Rai, CEC VP, Dichen Phigu Bhutia, CEC VP, Tilak Basnet, CEC VP, Raj Kumar

Basnet, CEC VP, Samdup Bhutia, CEC VP, Taramani Moktan, South District president, Tenny Doma Bhutia, South District general secretary (Organisation), Arjun Sedai, general secretary (In-charge), SJ Lepcha, South District Nari Convenor, Babita Limboo, CLC presidents from eight constituencies under South District, Central Executive Committee representatives, District Executive Committee Representatives and Constituency Executive Committee members appointed to various frontal organisations.

During the meeting prominent party representatives addressed the gathering about the roadmap to be introduced for further strengthening the party activities under South District.

## SKM CEC members convene meeting in Maneybong-Dentam

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 15 OCT:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha CEC members continued their tour of party offices in West Sikkim with a coordination meeting held at Maneybong-Dentam constituency on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by Political Secretary to the CM, Jacob Khaling, SBS Chairperson, DB Gurung,

vice-president [organization], Lalit Sharma and other senior leaders of the party, a press release informs.

At the meeting, 200 families from six wards under Sankhu Radukhandu GPU left SDF and joined SKM, the release claims.

Earlier, in the morning, SKM party workers led by Mr Khaling, and accompanied by Maney-

bong-Dentam in-charge, Purna Hang Subba and others, visited the house of an active party worker, Manorath Dahal [Dahal Babai] and apprised him about the State government scheme to construct homes worth Rs 17.51 lakh, the release adds.

The release states that Mr Dahal expressed happiness with the scheme.

No. V.25011/213/2015-HR(Part-I)  
Government of India  
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare  
Department of Health Research  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Indian Red Cross Society Building  
1, Red Cross Road, New Delhi - 110001

Subject: Call for research proposals for financial support under "HRD Scheme for Health Research in the emerging fields of Medical/ Clinical/ Health Sciences" in year 2020-21.

It has been decided to call online applications for full-length proposals under Human Resource Development Scheme for Health Research in the emerging fields of Medical/ Clinical/ Health Sciences for the financial year 2020-21.

More details including eligibility criteria, procedures for application and guidelines of the Scheme are available on [www.dhr.gov.in](http://www.dhr.gov.in) and [www.dhrschemes.in](http://www.dhrschemes.in).

Last Date for submission of Application: 16.11.2020.

Sd/-  
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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

**Symptoms of nCoV**

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

**Treatment**

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccination available as of now
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

**Precautions to Prevent nCoV**

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome, and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

If you seek help, you may call :  
-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7029372100  
WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

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## Politics Demands Commitment

*...but slack accountability makes casual flirtations too easy*

Politics is an exciting engagement, one that evokes passionate stands and distracts very easily. Where Sikkim is concerned, its political milieu has been traditionally populated rather extensively by teachers and midlevel government servants. Nothing wrong with having political leanings, in fact that would be a healthy engagement in a democracy, but everyone knows that involvement here used to extend much beyond that. It is also difficult in a State as small as Sikkim for anyone of any significance to remain genuinely apolitical. And as mentioned earlier, unless politics is really “dirty”, there is nothing wrong in having a political position even if your job description requires you to stay detached. What is important though is for the people concerned to keep their responsibilities (as government servants or “social workers”) and interests and (political) beliefs in separate silos. Unfortunately, government servants, given the astoundingly slack concepts of accountability enforced by the administration, are easily tempted to flirt with politics. In systems where accountability is casually fixed and job-responsibilities poorly defined, it is easy to start dispensing favours and bending rules; and before one knows it, the administrators become rather deft political players themselves. Engagement with party level politics follows and then come political ambitions.

What blurs the line even more is the confusion with which politics is mixed up with administration and government mistaken for a party. Also, in a political environment thick with parties and slim on ideological differentiators, the decision to take the plunge comes easy because options never dry out and crossovers rarely need to be explained with any conviction. Not just government servants, but this situation makes it easy for everyone to ‘try out’ politics, move around political parties, taste all options and if nothing works out, step back into a supposedly “apolitical” life only to resurrect whenever occasion demands or opportunity arises. It is the facility with which this last option [the one of turning apolitical whenever it suits one] can be acquired that makes irresponsible dabbling in party politics so easy for most wannabes here.

Let us agree first that while ideological political positions are absolutely acceptable, and even welcome, it is the tendency to engage in ‘active’ politics, the one involving planning and negotiating, that vitiates work cultures and political engagements. This latter involvement diverts attention from the tasks they draw salaries for [in the case of government servants], and should they be aligning with factions opposed to the ruling party, could also lead to willful compromising of policy implementation. In the case of private people involved in “social work”, simultaneous political and social pursuits come at the cost of sabotaging their responsibilities towards society. And this cannot be dismissed as inconsequential even if they are volunteering their time and energies, because when one occupies a public space, one is required to remain earnest and not allow their priorities to get colored by political exigencies.

Politicians rarely suffer the fallout of such situations and the loss, in the long run, is burdened on the people whom the politicians, the government employees and the social workers should be serving first. Politics does not compromise governance or administration; it is the ambitious politicking that robs people of deserved delivery. For that reason alone, it is advisable to maintain a healthy interest in politics and also hold opinions, but leave the politicking to politicians; and if one is to engage actively, then doing so with full commitment.

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# How do pandemics end? History suggests diseases fade but are almost never truly gone

NÜKHET VARLIK  
*theconversation.com*

When will the pandemic end? All these months in, with over 37 million COVID-19 cases and more than 1 million deaths globally, you may be wondering, with increasing exasperation, how long this will continue.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, epidemiologists and public health specialists have been using mathematical models to forecast the future in an effort to curb the coronavirus’s spread. But infectious disease modeling is tricky. Epidemiologists warn that “[m]odels are not crystal balls,” and even sophisticated versions, like those that combine forecasts or use machine learning, can’t necessarily reveal when the pandemic will end or how many people will die.

As a historian who studies disease and public health, I suggest that instead of looking forward for clues, you can look back to see what brought past outbreaks to a close – or didn’t.

### WHERE WE ARE NOW IN THE COURSE OF THE PANDEMIC

In the early days of the pandemic, many people hoped the coronavirus would simply fade away. Some argued that it would disappear on its own with the summer heat. Others claimed that herd immunity would kick in once enough people had been infected. But none of that has happened.

A combination of public health efforts to contain and mitigate the pandemic – from rigorous testing and contact tracing to social distancing and wearing masks – have been proven to help. Given that the virus has spread almost everywhere in the world, though, such measures alone can’t bring the pandemic to an end. All eyes are now turned to vaccine development, which is being pursued at unprecedented speed.

Yet experts tell us that even with a successful vaccine and effective treatment, COVID-19 may never go away. Even if the pandemic is curbed in one part of the world, it will likely continue in other places, causing infections elsewhere. And even if it is no longer an immediate pandemic-level threat, the coronavirus will likely become endemic – meaning slow, sustained transmission will persist. The coronavirus will continue to cause smaller outbreaks, much like seasonal flu.

The history of pandemics is full of such frustrating examples.

### ONCE THEY EMERGE, DISEASES RARELY LEAVE

Whether bacterial, viral or parasitic, virtually every disease pathogen that has affected people over the last several thousand years is still with us, because it is nearly impossible to fully eradicate them.

The only disease that has been eradicated through vaccination is smallpox. Mass vaccination

campaigns led by the World Health Organization in the 1960s and 1970s were successful, and in 1980, smallpox was declared the first – and still, the only – human disease to be fully eradicated.

So success stories like smallpox are exceptional. It is rather the rule that diseases come to stay.

Take, for example, pathogens like malaria. Transmitted via parasite, it’s almost as old as humanity and still exacts a heavy disease burden today: There were about 228 million malaria cases and 405,000 deaths worldwide in 2018. Since 1955, global programs to eradicate malaria, assisted by the use of DDT and chloroquine, brought some success, but the disease is still endemic in



many countries of the Global South.

Similarly, diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy and measles have been with us for several millennia. And despite all efforts, immediate eradication is still not in sight.

Add to this mix relatively younger pathogens, such as HIV and Ebola virus, along with influenza and coronaviruses including SARS, MERS and SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19, and the overall epidemiological picture becomes clear. Research on the global burden of disease finds that annual mortality caused by infectious diseases – most of which occurs in the developing world – is nearly one-third of all deaths globally.

Today, in an age of global air travel, climate change and ecological disturbances, we are constantly exposed to the threat of emerging infectious diseases while continuing to suffer from much older diseases that remain alive and well.

Once added to the repertoire of pathogens that affect human societies, most infectious diseases are here to stay.

### PLAGUE CAUSED PAST PANDEMICS – AND STILL POPS UP

Even infections that now have effective vaccines and treatments continue to take lives. Perhaps no disease can help illustrate this point better than plague, the single most deadly infectious disease in human history. Its name continues to be synony-

mous with horror even today.

Plague is caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. There have been countless local outbreaks and at least three documented plague pandemics over the last 5,000 years, killing hundreds of millions of people. The most notorious of all pandemics was the Black Death of the mid-14th century.

Yet the Black Death was far from being an isolated outburst. Plague returned every decade or even more frequently, each time hitting already weakened societies and taking its toll during at least six centuries. Even before the sanitary revolution of the 19th century, each outbreak gradually died down over the course of months and some-

times years as a result of changes in temperature, humidity and the availability of hosts, vectors and a sufficient number of susceptible individuals.

Some societies recovered relatively quickly from their losses caused by the Black Death. Others never did. For example, medieval Egypt could not fully recover from the lingering effects of the pandemic, which particularly devastated its agricultural sector. The cumulative effects of declining populations became impossible to recoup. It led to the gradual decline of the Mamluk Sultanate and its conquest by the Ottomans within less than two centuries.

That very same state-wrecking plague bacterium remains with us even today, a reminder of the very long persistence and resilience of pathogens.

Hopefully COVID-19 will not persist for millennia. But until there’s a successful vaccine, and likely even after, no one is safe. Politics here are crucial: When vaccination programs are weakened, infections can come roaring back. Just look at measles and polio, which resurge as soon as vaccination efforts falter.

Given such historical and contemporary precedents, humanity can only hope that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 will prove to be a tractable and eradicable pathogen. But the history of pandemics teaches us to expect otherwise.

*[the writer is Associate Professor of History, University of South Carolina]*

# Coronavirus: Superspreading events could help make COVID-19 endemic

MORTEN SODEMANN  
*theconversation.com*

The COVID-19 coronavirus is not your average virus. During the pandemic, it has become increasingly clear that averages do not apply in understanding the paths the virus takes or when or where it attacks. What some scientists and specialists in infectious diseases may say in the morning will be ridiculed before sunset. Consequently, we must be scientifically humble in predicting what is likely to happen over the next year or two.

But from the limited data that we have have, it appears that clusters of transmission from one person to a potentially large group are particularly important to maintaining the virus’s spread. In fact, these so-called superspreading events could be so significant that – without highly effective testing and contact tracing – they could cause COVID-19 to become a constant feature of our lives, even if case numbers are brought to manageable lows.

Scientists and politicians have so far relied heavily on the calculated average contagiousness of the virus to track progress in dealing with the pandemic. This is represented by the “R number”, which basically indicates how many people an infected individual will pass the virus on to. If they infect more than one, then the number of cases will grow and we have a problem. If they infect less than one, we are safer because the number of cases will decrease as people recover.

But being an average measure, R tends to obscure the real picture of

a virus that typically spreads in clusters rather than from one person to one or two others. Indeed, sometimes an infected person will cause virtually no spread of the virus while another will infect almost everyone in a crowded room. When so many factors are involved outbreaks are not always predictable and this provides the basis for a future with endemic COVID-19 spread.

For example, a preprint (not yet peer reviewed) study has shown that some outbreaks in nursing homes only occurred after several new introductions of infection. This indicates that what can look like a single outbreak actually is a situation with multiple concurrent but independent introductions of COVID-19.

Another preprint study carried out in New Zealand used genetic sequencing to track how individual strains of the virus were being transmitted. It found that only one in five infections entering the country led to additional cases and most cases were linked to a single transmission cluster. Meanwhile, a single person in South Korea is thought to have infected more than 5,000 people in a large church cluster.

Such clusters of transmission appear to take place under certain conditions that enable the virus to disperse rapidly through a crowd. Crowded indoor places that are badly ventilated and where people are physically or vocally active for a relatively long period seem to create a particular risk. This may be because virus can accumulate in the air in rooms without proper ventilation and allow transmission even when

social distancing is taking place.

Research from China has confirmed that ventilation is particularly important. Buses that recirculated air were found to be linked with more cases than those not using recirculation. And, in one case of a transmission cluster in a restaurant, those who sat closest to the ventilation outlet all contracted COVID-19 while none of the customers near the ventilation inlet were infected.

However, what’s puzzling is that this doesn’t explain why some potential superspreading events don’t cause an outbreak, and why there are outbreaks that do not have the known characteristics of a superspreading event. This suggests there are other unknown factors. It looks as if some clusters provide valuable information while others don’t.

Our analysis is skewed by the fact that we only have data for relatively well-defined outbreaks where everybody involved were easily identified, such as tourists on cruise ships, choirs, Zumba dance groups or church congregations. But in real life most outbreaks occur without a clear social setting or in groups where some members are difficult to track down. Further genetic surveillance of outbreaks will probably help us develop our understanding.

It’s also harder to obtain the necessary information to track clusters of infections that come from certain social or cultural groups. For example, stigma or fear of the authorities could discourage some people from reporting their illness. Those taking part in secret or illicit parties might

underestimate the risk and consequences of their catching the virus.

### BAD LUCK

Some of the worst initial outbreaks in Italy, China, Ecuador and other places may have been due to sheer bad luck: too many of the known factors occurring in the same place at the same time. It’s not a very clever or scientifically satisfying explanation, but that’s probably a feature of COVID-19 that we must live with for now.

But as Italy and Ecuador have shown, COVID-19 has the potential to turn bad luck into a disaster. This means that even if control measures such as social distancing help us to bring R below 1 and reduce ongoing community spread to relatively low levels, superspreading events can turn comfort into chaos in a few days.

Those countries that have successfully contained epidemic for significant periods of time, such as New Zealand, have done so through very rigorous contact tracing of the person that starts a cluster of transmission combined with strategic testing. But even in these cases, new outbreaks have occurred.

Countries that fail to develop adequate test and trace systems will have to live with low-grade spread and cluster outbreaks for years to come. In this way, the virus will become endemic, adding a further challenge to global efforts to tackle poverty and improve healthcare. It would be a shame if we let COVID-19 do that when we know how to prevent it.

*[the writer is Professor of Global and Migrant Health, University of Southern Denmark]*



# 10,000 ineligible names to be deleted from final NRC in Assam

**GUWAHATI, Oct 14 (PTI):** Around 10,000 names will be deleted from the final NRC in Assam as many “ineligible persons” and their descendants were included in the list, according to a directive issued by its state coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma and officials in the know of the decision.

Sarma wrote to all the Deputy Commissioners and District Registrar of Citizen Registration (DRCR) on Tuesday, directing them to issue speaking orders for the deletion of such names.

“...as per the reports received from your end through Webform, some names of ineligible persons belonging to the categories of DF (declared foreigners)/DV (‘D’ voters)/PFT (pending in Foreigners Tribunals) along with their descendants have found entry to the NRC,” he said.

Sarma directed the district officials to issue orders for deletion of such names from the NRC as per Clause 4(6) of the Schedule under the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 after “specifically ascertaining the identity of the person”.

Explaining the rule



and some other relevant clauses, Sarma pointed out that the authorities concerned can verify and include or exclude any name at any time before the publication of the final NRC.

Though the final National Register of Citizens for Assam was made public in August last year, it is yet to be notified by the Registrar General of India, leaving the historic and controversial document without any official validity.

“You are, therefore, requested to submit the list of such persons who are not eligible for having their names in the NRC

along with speaking order justifying reasons for each cases for necessary action for deletion of such names,” Sarma said in the letter.

A software application for submission of the reviewed results of such persons along with mechanism for uploading of the scanned freshly written speaking orders will be rolled out shortly, he added.

“The verification would mandatorily require the correct identity of the person so that no ambiguity arises in future as far as identification of the person is concerned,” the letter to

the districts said. Though the letter did not mention how many people will be excluded, persons in the know of the development said that around 10,000 people have been identified whose names were “wrongly included” in the final NRC and will now be excluded.

“This is a mix of all communities. The figure looks a bit big because it includes the descendants of the persons from the three categories mentioned in the letter,” a source said.

The final NRC was released on August 31 last year, excluding the names of 19,06,657 persons.

A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants.

After the publication of the final NRC, almost all stakeholders and political parties criticised it as a faulty document, alleging exclusion of indigenous people and the inclusion of illegal immigrants.

On August 31 this year, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said in the Assembly that the Assam government had submitted an affidavit in the Supreme Court for re-verification of 20 per cent names in districts bordering Bangladesh and 10 per cent in the rest.

## Few Bengal cinemas reopen after nearly 7-month hiatus

**KOLKATA, Oct 15 (PTI):** Only a few multiplexes and cinema halls in West Bengal reopened for movie-goers on Thursday after nearly a seven-month hiatus.

Authorities of the cinemas said they are strictly maintaining the COVID-19 protocol.

Other facilities will reopen gradually from Friday till October 21, a day before the commencement of the Durga Puja festivities.

“Two of our facilities have reopened today with strict adherence to the COVID-19 protocol, which includes movie screening with 50 per cent capacity of the halls by keeping alternate seats vacant, and marking circles on the floor near the ticket and food counters to ensure social distancing,” a spokesperson of multiplex chain INOX said.

Other facilities will be gradually reopened as per the operational readiness, she said.

Movie-enthusiasts are entering the halls using e- tickets and QR code scanners in the facilities in Swabhami in Kolkata and Madhyamgram in North 24 Parganas district, she said.

Thermal screening is being conducted at the entrance and those with fever symptoms are not being allowed to enter; the INOX spokesperson said.

The show timings, intermissions and movie-goers’ exit from halls are in a staggered man-

ner to ensure social distancing at all times, she said.

The SVF Cinemas, which owns 13 multiplexes in the city, will reopen its facilities from Friday with a contactless ticket purchasing system, seating arrangements ensuring social distancing and regular sanitisation before and after the shows, a spokesperson said.

Regional multiplex Jaya will start screening movies at its facilities in Kolkata’s Lake Town area and Barasat in North 24 Parganas district from Friday.

Sourav Bose, the owner of Basusree Cinema in Kalighat area, said Sushant Singh Rajput-starrer ‘Kedarnath’ will be screened from Friday with strict adherence to the COVID-19 protocol.

A maximum of 500 tickets will be sold against the seating capacity of 1,020, he said.

“During Durga Puja, we will screen new Bengali film ‘SOS Kolkata,’” Bose said.

Satadeep Saha, a prominent film distributor, said 22 single-screen theatres across the state are screening ‘Kedarnath’ from Thursday.

Navin Chokhani, the owner of Navina Cinema on Prince Anwar Shah Road in south Kolkata, said the popular single-screen theatre will reopen on October 21 as work is in progress to ensure all safety protocols.

There will be separate entry and exit, contactless ticketing system and movie-goers will be allowed to enter the hall after exhibiting an SMS sent to their mobile phones with details like price of the ticket and seat number, he said.

“There will be a gap of 30 minutes between each of the three shows to avoid crowding. Tickets will be sold for 400 seats, half of the hall’s capacity,” Chokhani said, adding ‘Dracula Sir’, a Durga Puja release, will be one of the films that will be screened.

Ratan Saha, the owner of Ajanta Multiplex and an office-bearer of the Eastern India Motion Pictures Association (EIMPA), said, “We will reopen from October 21 by adhering to the safety measures. The seating capacities in our two multiplexes have been reduced to 200 and 100.”

Most of the 250 single-screen theatres in the state will gradually reopen before October 22, when the Durga Puja festivities will begin, an EIMPA spokesperson said.

A total of 12 Bengali films have been lined up for screening during Durga Puja, with several of them being re-releases of movies that got decent footfalls before the imposition of the nationwide lockdown.

The cinemas in the state were shut on March 18 following the COVID-19 outbreak.

## Docs asked not to leave city during Durga Puja



**KOLKATA, Oct 15 (PTI):** Amid apprehensions of a probable surge of COVID-19 cases in the state during Durga Puja, the West Bengal Clinical Establishment Regulatory Commission (WB-CERC) has asked doctors not to leave the city during the four days of the festival.

The WBCERC has also urged private hospitals to keep a note of the contact details of the doctors so that they can be got in touch with in case of emergency, its chairman Justice (Retd) Ashim Kumar Banerjee said.

“Generally doctors remain very busy throughout the year and go out of the city during these four days of festivities. But this year at this hour of crisis, if the doctors, irre-

spective of their specialisation, stay in the city it will be of great help.

“We will also request private hospitals to prepare a database of contacts of the doctors as well as their addresses so that they can be reached if there is a crisis,” he said.

The Commission has also requested private hospitals to prepare a list of specialists of the eyes, ENT or skin and surgeons who do not treat corona-infected patients so that they can be engaged in case of urgent demand during the festive season, he said.

Private hospitals can also prepare lists of such doctors so that they can supplement the manpower in COVID wards of their respective hospitals in case of a sudden surge

in corona infections during the Durga Puja, Justice Banerjee said.

The Commission has also requested the private hospital authorities to prepare a list of patients who have recovered from the disease so that they can donate plasma and provide voluntary service at the hospitals for the coronavirus affected during the festival.

WBCERC has also asked private hospitals to charge patients for a day only after they complete staying there for 24 hours and not from a fixed hour of the day.

“However, in cases where the whole stay in hospital is less than 24 hours, the hospitals may charge for a day,” it said in an order.

## Mizoram outfit threatens strike over border dispute with Assam

**AIZAWL, Oct 14 (PTI):** Aizawl-based Joint Action Committee (JAC) on Inner Line Forest Reserve on Wednesday urged the Mizoram government to take steps to settle the decades-old border dispute with Assam, threatening an indefinite strike over the issue.

Addressing a press conference, JAC chairman F Ngurbiakvela said that a memorandum was submitted by it, NGOs in the state and the political parties to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit in November 2018, urging the Centre to settle the issue between Mizoram and Assam.

The Union Home Ministry subsequently sent letters to chief secretaries of Assam and Mizoram, and also Surveyor General of India, asking them for their views and comments on the matter, he said. However, the Mizoram government has failed to send its view on the matter despite reminders by the Centre on at least four occasions, he said.

Ngurbiakvela said that the decades-old boundary dispute between the two states could have been resolved

and the recent border tension in Mamit district averted had the boundary commission been set up.

A “farm house” located in an area claimed by both the states was torched by Assam officials last week, renewing the border standoff.

Ngurbiakvela said that if the state government does not respond to the Centre by October 21, they will go on a statewide indefinite strike.

State Home Secretary Lalbiaklangi said the government has held discussions with all NGOs and political parties on setting up a boundary commission but could not reach a consensus till date.

“I am totally unaware whether views or comments have been sent to the Centre on matters related to the boundary commission. However, I am pretty sure that we have held consultations with all civil society organisations and political parties on the issue. No consensus has been reached yet,” she told PTI. The Mizoram government is making all kinds of efforts to settle the border disputes with the neighbouring states, she added.

## Mizoram reports 8 new COVID-19 cases; tally 2,220

**AIZAWL, Oct 15 (PTI):** Mizoram’s COVID-19 caseload on Thursday reached 2,220 as eight more persons tested positive for the virus, an official statement said.

Of the eight fresh cases, seven were reported from Aizawl city area while one case was reported from Kolasib district near the Assam border, the Information and Public Relations department said. Seven cases were locally transmitted

while one patient has returned from Assam.

According to the health department, the number of active cases in the state now stands at 112, while 2,108 people have recovered from the virus. The COVID-19 recovery rate is 94.96 per cent.

Mizoram has not reported any fatality due to COVID-19 so far. A total of 92,151 samples have been tested for COVID-19 till date.

## 10 new cases push COVID-19 tally of Andamans to 4,046



**PORT BLAIR, Oct 15 (PTI):** The COVID-19 tally of Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 4,046 on Thursday as 10 more people tested positive for the infection, a health official said.

Three new patients have travel history, while seven fresh infections

were detected during contact tracing, he said.

Fourteen more people have been cured of the disease, taking the total number of recoveries in the archipelago to 3,796, the official said.

The Union territory now has 195 active

COVID-19 cases, while 55 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, he said.

The administration has so far sent 71,624 samples for COVID-19 tests, of which 71,620 reports have been received and four are awaited, the official added.

## Naga Issue: Consultative meeting at Kohima on Oct 15

**DIMAPUR, Oct 14 [NAGALANDPAGE]:** As the stalemate in the Indo-Naga peace talks continues on the issue of Naga flag and Yehzabo (Naga constitution), a consultative meeting called by the Government of Nagaland will be held on October 15 to discuss ways of ending the impasse.

The consultative meeting of all stakehold-

ers, to be held at the State Banquet Hall, Chief Minister’s Residential Complex, Kohima, will discuss the Naga political issue and the ongoing peace talks between Naga National Political Organizations and the Government of India is scheduled on October 15, at 10 a.m.

The State Government has invited all tribal hohos, mass-based orga-

nizations, civil societies, church organizations, political parties, NGOs, prominent persons, etc. to the meeting.

“The State Government feels that the political issue needs to be addressed with utmost urgency by all sections of the people in orders to facilitate the early achievement of peace with all seriousness,” it said.

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# Son drives Spurs to the top of South Korean popularity stakes

**SEOUL, 15 OCT (REUTERS):** Son Heung-min has helped Tottenham Hotspur past Manchester United to become the most popular foreign club in South Korea with more than 20% of the nation now allied to the North London side, according to Nielsen Fan Insights.

In a graphic illustration of the selling power of a big name player, five years of Nielsen Fan Insights surveys show that Spurs had negligible support in the nation of 52 million before Son joined the club in 2015.

Since then, Son's rise to the top of the English game has been matched by the popularity of his club in his homeland with Spurs moving steadily past Arsenal, Chelsea, Real Madrid and Barcelona before eclipsing United in late 2018.

They have remained the most popular overseas club since and the most recent survey of South Koreans aged 16 to 69 gives them 21.4% support -- representing



some 11 million fans -- compared to 6.1% for the second most popular club, United.

"The popularity of Tottenham Hotspur in South Korea perfectly illustrates the positive impact a standout player can have on a sports franchise in a market halfway around the world," said Marco Nazzari, Managing Director, International at Nielsen Sports.

United's previous popularity was also driven by a player, with midfielder Park Ji-sung's arrival at Old Trafford in 2005 sparking major South Korean interest in the English top flight.

Although Park won a Champions League and four Premier League titles in seven years in Manchester, Son's individual profile has far outstripped his fellow South Korea international both in England and back home.

Son has scored 59 goals in 164 Premier League matches for Spurs and last month became the first player from Asia to score four goals in an English top flight match with a brilliant display against Southampton.

With figure skater Kim Yuna retired and swimmer Park Tae-hwan out of the picture, Son is now South Korea's number one sports personality and his face in advertisements and goals in the Spurs shirt are ubiquitous on local TV screens.

## Jota makes up for Ronaldo's absence as Portugal beats Sweden

**LISBON, OCT 15 (AP):** Diogo Jota scored two goals and set up another as Portugal defeated Sweden 3-0 in the Nations League in its first game since Cristiano Ronaldo had to be dropped from the squad after testing positive for the coronavirus.

Ronaldo went back to Italy earlier Wednesday to finish his isolation period after testing positive for COVID-19 on Monday.

Ronaldo had played in the national team's 0-0 draw at France on Sunday, and in the 0-0 draw against Spain in a friendly last week.

"We are not better without Ronaldo, but the team had shown before that it is capable of succeeding without him," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said.

"We were well-organized offensively."

The Juventus forward, who was said to be asymptomatic, posted a photo on his social media accounts with him wearing Portugal's jersey in front of a television set with the game on.

"It's as if I was there," he wrote.

Jota, who came into the lineup to help make up for Ronaldo's absence, set up Bernardo Silva's opening goal in the 21st minute and scored himself in the 44th. The new Liverpool forward finished off the scoring after going past a defender inside the area in the 72nd.

Some 5,000 fans were allowed to watch the match at the Jos Alvalade Stadium in Lisbon.

Nearly 2,500 had been in the stadium for the team's 0-0 friendly against Spain last week as authorities try to evaluate whether to allow fans back in local soccer competitions. The victory left defending Nations League champion Portugal at the top of Group 3 with 10 points.

# Liverpool and Everton braced for Merseyside derby with a difference



**PAUL WILSON LONDON, 15 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]:** For most of the last 30 years Liverpool have gone into Merseyside derbies as favourites, so it is ironic that now they are finally crossing Stanley Park as Premier League champions they are having to deal with Everton getting most of the pre-match attention.

We know enough about Carlo Ancelotti's side's perfect start, not just four league wins out of four but seven victories out of seven in all competitions. We know about Dominic Calvert-Lewin's goals, James Rodriguez's unlikely rehabilitation and Jordan Pickford's erratic displays. But what can be expected of Liverpool based on their season so far?

This time last year, back when things were normal and eight matches had been played, the prospective champions had recorded eight consecutive league wins and were just about to drop their first points of the season in being held to a draw at Old Trafford. It would be the end of February before Liverpool dropped any more, falling to unexpected defeat at Watford with the title all but confirmed after an incredible 26 wins plus the point from Manchester United.

So unanswerable was that sort of form and consistency that most people assumed it would be more of the same this season, with only Manchester City likely to be able to stay with the pace, but so far it has not quite turned out that way. The first defeat of the season arrived early, for a start, and anyone surprised at the 3-0 scoreline at Watford last season would have been flabbergasted by the 7-2 outcome at Villa Park.

There were some extenuating circumstances, Liverpool were missing Alisson through injury and Sadio Mané through testing positive for Covid-19, but not enough to wholly explain such a mauling

for newly crowned champions playing a side that only narrowly avoided relegation a few months earlier. While Liverpool's relentless consistency was their chief asset last season, their unique selling point when even sides as strong as Manchester City and Tottenham were wavering, the illusion of impregnability evaporated at Aston Villa.

Perhaps there were signs that all was not functioning completely correctly on the opening day of the season, when Liverpool shipped three goals in a 4-3 victory over newly promoted Leeds. Yet when that was followed by a clean sheet at Chelsea and a tidy home win against Arsenal a fairly testing start to the campaign seemed to have been successfully negotiated. The way things looked before a ball had been kicked Villa would be one of the less troublesome of the early fixtures, a respite between the two London clubs and the derby. Now the derby itself has taken on greater significance, with Everton top of the league and confidence high in the blue camp, the idea that Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool are a win machine switched to a permanently high setting no longer seems quite as persuasive.

Not that Liverpool are alone in falling to heavy defeats this season. Both Manchester clubs have also conceded five goals or more, amid a general feeling that this odd, spectator-free football has still to settle down into a pattern, never mind a predictable pattern. Adding to the uncertainty around Anfield have been no fewer than four coronavirus positives, two of them to key first-team performers in Mané and Naby Keita, and one to limit the contribution thus far by new signing Thiago Alcántara.

Liverpool have been unlucky also in losing their first choice goalkeeper -- although the initial prognosis was just a few weeks,

shoulder injuries are never good news for goalkeepers -- while off the field the club's owners have been revealed as central plotters in the dismal Project Big Picture scheme, something that will almost certainly sit uncomfortably with Klopp's egalitarian instincts.

In short, though it is only 12 weeks since Liverpool picked up their well-deserved prize at an empty Anfield, the landscape has already altered around the champions in ways that few would have anticipated. Suddenly there are questions to be asked and answered, with most Everton fans keen to commence the interrogation. Once again a Merseyside derby is being hyped as a potentially cataclysmic event when everyone knows they are usually nil-nil draws, or dull games enlivened by mere moments.

The last Goodison derby was supposed to see Liverpool win their long-awaited first Premier League title on their rivals' patch. Supporters had been counting down the days and working out the permutations for weeks -- nervously or excitedly, depending on allegiance -- though of course it didn't work out like that. A goalless draw simply cost Liverpool the chance to reach 100 points for the season and the opportunity to clinch the title in the next game at Anfield. Instead there was an off-stage coronation when Manchester City stumbled at Chelsea.

Derby matches are often like that, prosaic rather than pivotal. While the Merseyside version has managed to be more colourful than most in its long and proud history, the reality for the last few decades is that it has been essentially a private scrap, a localised issue of limited relevance to the rest of the game. This time, with Liverpool champions and Everton top of the league, it is different.

History suggests the derby will not be as open or as freakishly compelling as events at Villa Park last month -- a game apparently responsible for convincing Premier League officials they should be charging for such rich entertainment rather than airing it for free -- though outside interest will still be high. It is not often you see Liverpool beaten 7-2, defending champions or not, and anyone who missed it will be just as keen as those who watched it to see how they are going to react.

# Delhi's Nortje bowls fastest ball in IPL history

**DUBAI, 15 OCT [REUTERS]:** South African pace bowler Anrich Nortje bowled the fastest ball in Indian Premier League (IPL) history on Wednesday during his team Delhi Capitals' 13-run victory over Rajasthan Royals.

The 26-year-old eclipsed compatriot Dale Steyn's effort of 154.40 km per hour set in 2012, clocking 154.74 kph and 155.21 kph in the game at Dubai before his best effort of 156.22 kph was scooped for a boundary by Rajasthan's Jos Buttler.

Nortje responded immediately with another fiery delivery in the third over to bowl out the England batsman. He finished the match with figures of 2-33 from four overs to take his wicket tally for the season to 10 from eight games.

"I didn't know about it (the fastest ball). I've been working really hard to get the pace up ... but obviously you want to land it in the right areas. That's the most important thing," Nortje said in



an interview.

Rajasthan, who were chasing 162 for victory, fell short of their target making 148-8 in 20 overs with Australian batsman Steve Smith having another disappointing out-

run. Victory took Delhi to the top of the standings with 12 points after six wins from eight games, while Rajasthan are seventh with only Kings XI Punjab below them.

# Eriksen goal on 100th appearance gives Denmark win v England



**LONDON, OCT 15 (AP):** Christian Eriksen marked his 100th Denmark appearance by scoring the penalty that clinched a 1-0 victory over England in the UEFA Nations League.

England had already been reduced to 10 men on Wednesday after Harry Maguire was sent off by the time a disputed penalty was awarded for Kyle Walker's challenge on Thomas Delaney in a rare top-level game not using VAR.

Eriksen converted the penalty for his 34th international goal in the 35th minute at Wembley, where the Inter Milan playmaker became accustomed to scoring in his Premier League career when it was Tottenham's temporary home.

Unlike then, the stadium was empty as fans are still prevented from attending games in England due to a resurgence

in coronavirus cases.

Reece James' first England start ended with him being sent off after the final whistle for dissent toward the referee.

The result leaves Group 2 wide open heading into the final two rounds of matches in November. England dropped from first into third place behind Denmark and Belgium, which took the lead with a 2-1 victory over Iceland.

Three days after beating Belgium the world's top-ranked team England's good work was undone.

But it took quick reflexes from goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel to palm away Mason Mount's header and tip over a free kick from Reece James to prevent England leveling in the second half.

It had started to go wrong for England and Maguire after five

minutes. The defender earned his first booking for a sliding tackle on Yussuf Poulsen, but that didn't curb his recklessness.

When his overextended left foot caught Kasper Dolberg in the 31st minute, the referee had no option but to show Maguire a second yellow card.

It's the latest setback for Maguire, who became the world's most expensive defender when he signed for Manchester United last year.

He was withdrawn by Southgate for last month's three England games after he was convicted in Greece of assaulting a police officer and attempted bribery while on holiday in August.

Hanging over Maguire is an appeal process against the conviction and suspended 21-month sentence.

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## EU leaders divided over new climate goals for 2030

**BRUSSELS (AP):** European Union leaders remain divided about a more ambitious target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions and will not reach an agreement at their summit starting Thursday.

According to a draft of the meeting's findings seen by The Associated Press, leaders will at this summit only start discussing the proposal to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, as put forward by the EU's executive Commission.

The goal is to reach an agreement in December ahead of the adoption of the first ever European climate law.

In proposing a reduction target of at least 55% by 2030 compared with the current target of 40%, EU commission President Ursula von der Leyen predicted in September that the new target would be "too much for some and not enough for others."

Supported by Germany, Von der Leyen's revised target needs to be endorsed by the 27 EU countries to make it legally binding. On Wednesday, a group of 11 countries including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden embraced her ambition in a joint statement published ahead of the summit in Brussels.

"Let us, as a Union, deliver a strong and credible response to the climate crisis and increase our 2030 climate target to at least 55%, leading to climate neutrality by 2050," they said in the statement.

But officials said there is no agreement across the bloc.

While the European Parliament pushes for an even greater 60% reduction in emissions, some eastern EU countries that depends on coal for much of their energy needs are less enthusiastic. They worry about the social, environmental and economic costs of the transition to a greener economy. Poland last year did not commit to the EU's 2050 climate neutrality goal and is asking for more details about the measures.

Von der Leyen has said she wants 37% of the 750 billion euros in the coronavirus recovery fund to be given to EU countries to spend on environmental objectives, while 30% of the bloc's regular budget should be used to tackling climate change.

World leaders agreed five years ago in Paris to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), ideally no more than 1.5 degrees C (2.7 F) by the end of the century. Scientists say countries will miss both of those goals by a wide margin unless drastic steps are taken to begin cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Under the Paris Agreement, countries are due to submit updated climate targets by the end of the year.

# Armenia, Azerbaijan tensions rise amid claims of new attacks

**YEREVAN, OCT 14 (AP):** The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated Wednesday, as both sides exchanged accusations and claims of new attacks over the separatist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, where heavy fighting continues for a third week despite a Russia-brokered cease-fire deal.

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, emphasizing the need to respect the truce that was violated immediately after taking effect Saturday. Putin also voiced concern about the involvement in the conflict by militants from the Middle East a reference to Turkey deploying Syrian fighters to combat Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Erdogan denied the deployment of combatants to the region in separate comments, but a Syrian war monitor and Syria-based opposition activists have confirmed that Turkey has sent hundreds of Syrian opposition fighters to Nagorno-Karabakh.

In a sign that the conflict was widening, Azerbaijan's military said it destroyed an Armenian missile system on the territory of Armenia that was positioned to target civilian areas. Armenia's Defense Ministry responded by stating that it reserves the right to target Azerbaijani military objects and troop movements.

So far, Armenia and Azer-



baijan have denied targeting each other's territory in the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, although each of the parties often contested the denials.

An expansion of hostilities beyond the separatist region could trigger a dangerous escalation of the decades-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is inside Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since the end of a separatist war in 1994. The Armenian forces also have controlled significant chunks of Azerbaijani territory outside the separatist region.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry condemned Azerbaijan's attempt at military aggression towards Armenia's sovereign territory and warned of irreversible military and political

consequences. The mutual accusations and threats raised concern about the safety of a strategic pipeline that carries Azerbaijan's Caspian Sea crude oil to Turkey and on to Western markets.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev threatened very heavy response, should Armenia carry out its plans to destroy oil and gas pipelines in Azerbaijan.

Officials in Nagorno-Karabakh accused Azerbaijan of firing at a hospital in the region and called it a war crime," but didn't elaborate on whether there were any casualties. Azerbaijan's military rejected the Armenian claim.

The recent fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces erupted on Sept. 27 and marked the biggest escalation of the conflict in more than a quarter-century.

It has killed hundreds despite numerous calls for peace.

Russia, which has a security pact with Armenia but also has cultivated warm ties with Azerbaijan, hosted top diplomats from Armenia and Azerbaijan for more than 10 hours of talks that ended with Saturday's cease-fire deal.

But the agreement buckled immediately, with both Armenia and Azerbaijan accusing each other of breaching it with continued attacks.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov voiced hope for a peace deal that would see Armenian forces surrender control over the regions of Azerbaijan outside Nagorno-Karabakh, while Azerbaijan would lift its blockade of Armenia. He suggested that Russia could deploy military observers to help end the hostilities, adding that both war-

ring sides obviously must accept it. Azerbaijan, however, has insisted it has the right to reclaim its land by force after efforts by the so-called Minsk group of international mediators that comprises Russia, the United States and France failed to yield any progress. It has actively pushed for its ally Turkey to take a prominent role in future peace talks.

What matters is for Turkey to be at this table. And it already is, Aliyev said in an interview broadcast Wednesday, pointing out that he discussed the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with both the Russian and the Turkish presidents, and Russia's defense minister has recently talked about it to the Turkish defense minister.

Turkey has publicly sided with Baku and vowed to help Azerbaijan reclaim its territo-

ry. Turkey's newly assertive role reflects Erdogan's ambitions to expand his nation's clout. In Wednesday's call with Putin, Erdogan accused Armenia of trying to make its occupation of Azerbaijan's lands "permanent, according to a statement from the Turkish leader's office.

Erdogan spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said in an interview Tuesday that Ankara would favor four-way peace talks involving Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Minsk group is not able to produce a solution for the past 30 years. Are we to wait another 30 years? In this case we need to think of another mechanism," Kalin said.

Turkey's highly visible role in the conflict raised painful memories in Armenia, where an estimated 1.5 million died in massacres, deportations and forced marches that began in 1915. The event is widely viewed by historians as genocide, but Turkey denies that.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian accused Azerbaijan and Turkey of continuing Turkey's genocidal policy toward Armenians.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington was making diplomatic efforts to help achieve a sustainable settlement to the conflict. We call on both countries to implement their agreed-upon commitments to a cease-fire, and stop targeting civilian areas, he said.

## Some European officials use virus as a cover to target Roma

**BURGAS, BULGARIA (AP):** In Bulgaria, Roma communities were sprayed with disinfectant from crop dusters this spring as coronavirus cases surged in the country. In Slovakia, their villages were the only ones where the army conducted testing. And across Central and Eastern Europe, reports of police using excessive force against Roma spiked as officers were deployed to enforce lockdowns in their towns.

Human rights activists and experts say local officials in several countries with significant Roma populations have used the pandemic to unlawfully target the minority group, which is Europe's largest and has faced centuries of severe discrimination. With COVID-19 cases now resurging across the continent, some experts fear the repression will return, too.

To make matters worse, activists say such discrimination often draws little opposition from other Europeans and the Roma are reluctant to speak about it, fearing repercussions.

One afternoon, Azime Ali Top-

chu, 48, said the police-enforced lockdown of her village in Burgas, on Bulgaria's Black Sea Coast, made her family "really sad."

"It was hard. Hard. For my whole family to go to work — for my husband and son they had to go, fill in the papers, so they could go through the police checks," she said, as her three grandchildren played near piles of neatly stacked wood.

But Topchu, who lives in a one-story brick house next to her son and daughter-in-law, was unwilling to go much further than that. The streets of their village were sprayed with disinfectant — though not from the sky — several months earlier.

Topchu said she considered the disinfecting "something that had to be done."

But other Roma villages — in Yambol, Kyustendil and elsewhere in Bulgaria — were showered with thousands of gallons of disinfectant from helicopters or planes usually used to fertilize crops in March and April, according to local authorities and Bulgarian Roma

activists. "That was clearly racist, because it was only done in Roma neighborhoods," said Radoslov Stoyanov of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, a human rights group. "The broader message that was sent to the non-Roma population was that the Roma are dangerous."

The Roma people are descended from tribes in northern India, and centuries of persecution and marginalization have left them some of the poorest and least educated people in Europe. Known pejoratively as "gypsies," many live in segregated neighborhoods, often with limited access to electricity, running water and health care. Many face discrimination in getting jobs, getting medical care and have a shorter average lifespan than non-Roma.

The stringent measures used against Roma communities come even though no big outbreak was ever reported among them — and echo the way some governments have used the pandemic as cover for repressive tactics. Many European countries do not track coronavirus cases among the Roma.

## European lawmakers won't be back in Strasbourg this month

**BRUSSELS (AP):** European lawmakers won't be returning to the French city of Strasbourg for next week's plenary session because of the COVID-19 resurgence in France, the European Parliament president said Thursday.

David Sassoli tweeted that the session will be held remotely. "The situation in France and Belgium is very serious and traveling is not advised," he said.

Plenary sessions scheduled in Strasbourg, which is the official seat

of the European Parliament — have been scrapped since March because of concerns related to the coronavirus. Staff and parliamentarians are mostly based in Brussels but almost all plenary sessions need to be held 450 kilometers (280 miles) away in Strasbourg, much to the chagrin of many legislators.

But French President Emmanuel Macron is a strong supporter of the Strasbourg sessions and recently said that the EU is "screwed" if the Euro-

pean Parliament stops meeting in Strasbourg. Macron also wrote to Sassoli asking him for a return of the plenary sessions to the Alsace city as soon as October.

But the health situation in France has since further deteriorated in France, prompting Macron to announce a night-time curfew in Paris and eight other cities to try to slow the spread of the virus.

"Strasbourg remains the home of (the European Parliament) and we will do everything we can to return," Sassoli said.

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## Glenn Close, Amy Adams Star in Trailer for Upcoming Adaptation of 'Hillbilly Elegy'

Netflix has released the new trailer for Ron Howard's adaptation of J.D. Vance's memoir about growing up in Appalachia, *Hillbilly Elegy*. The film will premiere on the streaming service November 24th.

The film stars Gabriel Basso as Vance and is set at the moment when the former Marine and current Yale Law student is on the cusp of getting his dream job. He's unfortunately forced to return home to southern Ohio to tend to a family crisis. As the trailer teases, the film seems to jump between past and present as Vance tries to help his mother, Bev (played by Amy Adams), who struggles with addiction, while drawing on the memories of his grandmother Mamaw (Glenn Close), who raised him.

Vance — who works primarily as a venture capitalist and got his start working at a firm owned by Peter Thiel — published *Hillbilly Elegy* in August 2016. While it became a bestseller upon its initial arrival, it saw a significant resurgence several months later, following the election of President Donald Trump.

The book earned plenty of plaudits for its depiction of life in Appalachia, and many turned to it as a way to understand what forces propelled Trump to victory in states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin.



However, the book had its fair share of critics, too, who pushed back against its narrow depiction of white Appalachia as well as Vance's conservative bent when discussing issues like poverty in the region (last year, several authors united to publish *Appalachian Reckoning*, an anthology response to *Hillbilly Elegy*).

# Company behind SKorean hit band BTS soar in trading debut

SEOUL, South Korea (AP): South Korea's Big Hit Entertainment, the company that manages global pop sensation BTS, had a dynamite trading debut Thursday in Seoul, helped by the zeal of its loyal fans. Big Hit's shares nearly doubled after their initial public offering netted more than \$800 million. The strong start was widely expected by analysts given the huge fan base for the seven-member boy band that has been dominating Billboard charts. Its market value stood at about \$7.5 billion by the end of trading.

Despite the concert-killing COVID-19 pandemic, Big Hit has prospered thanks to huge demand for its online content, including livestreamed BTS concerts that reportedly attracted more than 1.7 million fans.

The company's shares opened at 270,000 won (\$236), about double their initial public offering price. They surged 30%, hitting the daily trading limit, before falling back and closing at 258,000 won (\$225), bringing the company's valuation to 8.7 trillion won (\$7.5 billion).

Big Hit has a tight grip over its revenue streams, with BTS merchandise and other products exclusively sold through its "Weverse" e-commerce platform.

Big Hit raised 926.6 billion won (\$841 million) in what was South Korea's largest IPO since 2017.

"The company has managed to grow beyond the traditional revenue sources of album sales and concerts and diversify its business through online channels," wrote Ahn Jin-ah, an analyst from South Korea's E-Best Investment and Securities, in a report that described Big Hit's stock market entrance as a "drop of dy-

namite." BTS accounted for more than 80% of the company's revenue during the first half of 2020, according to a separate report by Samsung Securities.

BTS launched in 2013 and has a legion of global supporters who call them-

fans through social media and often write their own lyrics. That personal touch is a huge part of their appeal, music experts say. BTS fans who apparently follow everything and anything about the band naturally took an interest in



selves the "Army." It became the first K-pop act to top Billboard's Hot 100 chart last month with their first all-English song "Dynamite."

The band — consisting of J-Hope, RM, Suga, Jungkook, V, Jin and Jimin — has performed in sold-out arenas around the world and was even invited to speak at the U.N. General Assembly last month.

BTS is a source of national pride, with some lawmakers even arguing that its members should be exempted from the 2-year military service that's mandatory for most able-bodied males, saying that the singers have already done much for the country.

Unlike many other K-pop artists whose carefully cultivated images are shaped by their management agencies, BTS members actively engage with their

Big Hit's stock market debut.

Sara Ali, a BTS fan from Sudan, said she had been talking with fellow Army members about Big Hit's business prospects and was hoping to buy a few shares herself. "I believe this is an excellent opportunity," she said through a text message. The company's shares began trading just days after Chinese nationalists erupted in anger at BTS after its leader RM thanked Korean War veterans for their sacrifices while receiving a reward for promoting U.S.-South Korea relations.

Chinese internet users and state media took RM's comments as a slap at China, whose soldiers fought alongside North Korea against South Korea and U.S.-led allied forces during the 1950-53 war that was halted by an armistice but no peace treaty. BTS has yet to respond to the comments.

## Post Malone owns Billboard Awards, Legend shines onstage

NEW YORK (AP): Walking into the show with 16 nominations, Post Malone won nine honors at the 2020 Billboard Music Awards, where John Legend gave a heartfelt performance that was dedicated to his wife.

With his voice aching as he sang passionately from the piano, Legend told viewers "this is for Chrissy" before singing "Never Break," which includes the lyrics "we will never break." The performance comes two weeks after Chrissy Teigen announced she had a miscarriage, explaining in a heart wrenching social media post that she and Legend drove "home from the hospital with no baby."

"John, that was so beautiful," host Kelly Clarkson said following his performance. "All my love to you and Chrissy."

It was one of several performances that were pre-taped for Wednesday's show. Other musicians attended and performed at the empty Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles during the three-hour event, which aired on NBC.

After announcing that Malone won the show's biggest honor, top artist, Clarkson wheeled out eight more trophies for the hitmaker.

"I'm honestly blown away by the love everyone's shown to me," said Malone, who also won top rap artist, top male artist and top rap album. "It's kind of big deal to me and everybody involved because we work our (butts) off"

He beat out Lil Nas X,

but she was still a winner, taking home top Billboard 200 album, top female artist and top new artist. The 18-year-old, wearing a face mask, told viewers to "please vote, please wear a mask, please wash your hands."

Others had similar messages. Khalid, who won five honors, told fans "your voice matters now more than ever." And Lizzo wore a black dress with "vote" printed across it.

She also gave an encouraging speech, telling viewers to find their voices and don't change to meet society standards.

"I just want to say I've been thinking a lot about suppression and the voices that refused to be suppressed. And I wonder, 'Would I be standing here right now if it weren't for the big Black women who refused to have their voices be suppressed?' And I just want to say right now, if you're at home watching this and you were thinking about changing yourself to feel worthy, this is your sign to remain true to who you are," Lizzo said onstage after winning top songs sales artist.

"Let me tell you all something — when people try to suppress something, it's normally because that thing holds power. They're afraid of your power. There's power in who you are. There's power in your voice. So whether it's through music, protest or your right to vote, use your power, use your voice and refuse to be suppressed."

Other winners included Lil Nas X,

who took home four honors and was on-hand to accept top Hot 100 song for "Old Town Road," which set the record for most weeks at No. 1. Kanye West, who released two gospel albums last year, also won four prizes: top gospel artist, top gospel song, top gospel album and top Christian album.

Luke Combs followed with three wins, and after his performance he offered positive words to his fans and the crew working on the Billboard Awards.

"I know that everybody has been through so much this year. I wanna thank the crew that is working on this show tonight because they have gone through some insane stuff to make this happen for you guys. I hope everybody is staying safe there at home," he said.

Garth Brooks accepted the Icon Award from Cher, who called the country star "a true music legend and my friend." Brooks, who is the only artist to have nine of his albums sell more than 10 million units each and reach diamond status, performed a medley of his hits.

Other performers included BTS, Alicia Keys, Kane Brown, Khalid, Swae Lee, Sia, Brandy, Bad Bunny, Doja Cat, SAINT JHN, En Vogue and Demi Lovato, who sang her new song aimed at President Donald Trump called "Commander In Chief."

Clarkson kicked off the show singing Steve Winwood's "Higher Love," which became a dance hit last year after Whitney Houston's cover of the song was remixed by Norwegian DJ-producer Kygo.

### ARIES:

The challenge you're faced with is not a new one, Aries. You've been here before. In other words, you know exactly how to triumph over your circumstances. Tap into your inner wisdom and know that victory will be yours. Reassessment is also a big theme for you, both personally and professionally. You are reflecting upon the trajectory of your life and deciding which parts of this narrative are worth weaving into the new story. Tip: Reassessment is a big theme right now.

### TAURUS:

You've spent too much time doubting your capabilities and giving away your power—up until now. This chapter of your life is all about reclaiming the reins and remembering who you are and what you came here to do. Remember, you were chosen for this role for a reason. Your protective side is also coming to the fore today, Taurus. Hold space for your tribe in these troubled times and let them know how loved they are. Tip: Reclaim your power.

### GEMINI:

The road to success is paved with failures, Gemini. Keep this in mind now, and for the rest of your life. The path you've chosen is one that's less trodden. It is but natural to feel lost and confused every once in a while, or feel like you're in the midst of an obstacle course. Despite what your circumstances are showing you, trust that you're on the right track and keep moving forward. Your patience and persistence will be rewarded greatly. Tip: Keep moving forward.

### CANCER:

Yes, we're in the midst of complete and utter chaos. But you're not powerless here. Every drop in the ocean is capable of cre-

ating a ripple of change. In other words, you have the power to alleviate pain, assist healing, and raise the collective consciousness. Let your inner spiritual warrior take the reins, Cancer. Know that you have what it takes to hold space for your co-passengers on this journey towards the light. Tip: Awaken your warrior spirit.

### LEO:

"Dancing is not just about getting up painlessly. Like a leaf blown on the wind; dancing is when you tear your heart out and rise out of your body to hang suspended between the world." Today, you're in the mood to seek inspiration from Rumi's words as you explore the art of movement meditation. Surrender to the cosmic rhythm, Leo, and experience that sense of oneness with the divine forces. Trust that all your worries will be transmuted in the process. Tip: Explore the art of movement meditation.

### VIRGO:

Today, you're in the mood to revisit the goals you set for yourself over the past few months. Given that we're in retrograde season, you may feel inspired to breathe new life into the old projects, and look at the ones you've been working on through a fresh lens. Trust that everything will begin to transform once you bring the gift of commitment to the table. Yes, there will be challenges, Virgo. Yes, they will throw you off. Get up and show up anyway, knowing that victory will ultimately be yours. Tip: Get up and show up.

### LIBRA:

Libra, what you're experiencing right now is a classic case of 'life has other plans'. Notice the gates that are opening up for you as a result of your own patience and persistence, and trust yourself

to move forward gracefully. You've earned this opportunity! With luck on your side, the right people will rush to your assistance too. The mentors you trust will provide you with the right advice. Keep your heart and mind open as you allow yourself to receive the many blessings.

Tip: You've earned this opportunity!

### SCORPIO:

Matters related to home and property are likely to take centre stage today. For some, repairs and renovation may be a theme. Others could be considering a new property or moving into the home of their dreams. Trust that the mysterious forces are helping you make a positive shift on this front. Like where you are but want to clear the energy that's been weighing you down? Consider a cleansing ritual with the assistance of crystals and herbs.

Tip: Expect positive changes on the home front.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Art, poetry, music and lyrics—the creative arts is where the magic is at, Sagittarius. You're having an intimate moment with the Muse and you want the world to see what you've just touched upon. Remember, perfection is but an illusion. Let your expression be raw and vulnerable—an extension of your true self. This is the secret to forging a deeper connection with your audience. Those who are drawn towards the entertainment industry are being encouraged to make the big move. Take the first step and know that the Universe will take ten steps towards you.

Tip: You're having an intimate moment with the Muse.

### CAPRICORN:

You can think, rethink, and overthink all of your decisions, but

where's the fun in that? Today, the cards are urging you to awaken your spontaneous nature, follow the stirrings of your heart, and surprise yourself by doing something you wouldn't have in the past. You won't come to regret this decision—we promise! Often, we shy away from following the path that resonates with us for the fear that we will be letting others down in the process. Acknowledge the guilt, but do not allow yourself to be weighed down by it. Victory will be yours once you embody courage. Tip: Follow the stirrings of your heart.

### AQUARIUS:

What works for you may not work for another person. What works for another person may not work for you. Let go of the weight of your expectations, Aquarius. Celebrate what makes you different. Celebrate what makes you, you. In doing so, you will be able to realign with your sacred purpose. Don't be in a rush to make any decisions, though. Breathe easy. Revel in what this moment is offering you. Finding a balance between the 'doing' and the 'being' will help you recalibrate your energies. Tip: Breathe easy.

### PISCES:

The cards are urging you to bring your attention to the balance between giving and receiving. Could you have overextended yourself to a point of no return? Have you given your energy so freely to others that you have nothing left for yourself? Truth is, your actions haven't made people value your presence or appreciate you any more than they did before. In fact, your generosity has been taken for granted here. It's time to realise what you are worth and put a price on your energy. 'Less is more' is a philosophy that will get you through these trying times. Tip: Put a price on your energy.