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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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*Two from
Sikkim receive
National
Teachers' Award
from Prez in
online event*

GANGTOK, 05 SEPT [IPR]: President of India, Ram Nath Kovind conferred the National Teachers' Awards to forty-four teachers from across the country on the occasion of Teachers' Day, in the National-level event organised in a virtual mode by the Ministry of Education, Government of India from New Delhi, today.

This year, two teachers from Sikkim namely Mingma Sherpa, Primary Teacher, Government Primary School Lum, North Sikkim and Prem Das Chhetri, PGT Physics, Sir Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School, Gangtok, have been selected for the prestigious National Teachers' Award have joined the event through video conferencing at NIC, Gangtok. The event was also joined by Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP. Upadhyay, Secretary Anil Raj Rai along with a host of Officials of the Education Department.

On behalf of the President, the Award, Certificates and Medals were conferred to the awardees by the Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, G.P. Upadhyay, today.

During the video conference, the President spoke in brief about the historical significance of Teacher's Day and also mentioned the importance of the role of teachers in one's life. He congratulated the awardees and urged them to continue working for a better future. He asked them to adopt innovative ways of teaching according to the needs and demands of the changing time.

The Additional Chief Secretary congratulated the awardees on bringing honour to the State and the Nation. He mentioned that Sikkim has been consistent in achieving more than one award in this sector for the past few years and expressed his gratitude to the officers of the department for carefully selecting and recommending these awardees to the Ministry of Education.

A documentary film on each of the forty-four awardee teachers was also shown during the virtual award ceremony.

The awardees also assured that they would continue doing their work with utmost sincerity.

It may be mentioned here that the State-level Teachers' Day function has been postponed till further notice as Sikkim is currently observing three-day-long state mourning as a mark of respect to former Deputy Chief Minister of Sikkim, late P.T. Lucksom.

Teachers' Day at Protest Site; Dharna gets more hunger-strikers, visits by students and civil society reps

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:

Protesting ad hoc teachers observed Teachers' Day at their protest site here outside the District Administrative Centre on Sunday with some more teachers joining the ongoing hunger strike for the day even as students visited them with greetings and later in the day, members of Sikkimey Naagarik Samaj also visited the teachers in solidarity.

Meanwhile, they also informed that the health of the five teachers on indefinite hunger strike at the site has been growing delicate and called for regular health check-up and standby for medical emergencies.

The teachers are protesting the continuing delay in interviews for their appointment and the refusal of the State Government to extend their contracts at least till the



interviews are held and results declared. The contract term for more than 800 adhoc teachers ended in June, and they have highlighted that even as their own immediate

future has been left uncertain, the students are also suffering in the absence of so many teachers.

On Teachers' Day today, the protesting group celebrat-

ed the day by joining the hunger strike for the day.

A teacher on protest, Dawa Doma, shared that Teachers Day was a special day for the teaching fraternity and rued that it

was unfortunate that so many of them were sitting in protest seeking justice on this day.

She underlined that not just teachers, but more so students were suffering due to

the current situation.

She also thanked students who visited the protest site this morning to wish them and expressed hope that the concerned authorities will see validity of their demand and resolve the situation.

Another teacher, Vivek Rai, informed that the health of teachers who have been on an indefinite hunger strike since Thursday has been deteriorating but there has been no response from the administration thus far.

He stated that neither has the administration provided any medical check-up for them nor enquired about them. Given the Education Department's studied silence on the matter, he appealed for organisations and individuals to support the teachers in their pursuit of justice.

Speaking to media persons, Rachel Lepcha added that the protest would continue until their demands were met by the department.

7,697 people receive vaccine jabs, 79 new cases, 93 recoveries and no new deaths in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:

A total of 7,697 people received Covid vaccines in Sikkim on Saturday. Of these, 570 received their first dose while 6,716 completed their vaccine schedule with the second dose in the State yesterday. As the State begins a new phase of reopening, these numbers should make everyone more confident about the process because even though infections have come down, they continue to remain substantially worrisome.

Sikkim recorded 79 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of the confirmed cases to 30,242. Out of these 79 new cas-

es, 20 were registered in East District, 41 in West District, 15 in South District and three in North District.

On the other hand, Sikkim's Covid death toll continue to hold at 373 with no new COVID deaths reported in the last 24 hours.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, the 79 cases were picked up from the testing of 666 samples on Saturday giving the state a daily test positivity rate to 11.8%.

While 44 of the cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 370 samples,

34 people tested positive in rapid antigen testing of 288 samples and one case was picked up in CBNAAT testing of eight samples.

On the other hand, the number of recovered cases further improved to 28,617 with the discharge of 93 people from home and facility isolation after making full recoveries.

The number of active Covid cases has also come down to 697 and there were only three new hospitalizations among COVID patients. Meanwhile, there are 10 COVID patients currently under treatment in ICU facilities at STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

BJP serve SKM Govt 48-hour ultimatum to resolve teacher-protest

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:

Bharatiya Janata Party, an ally of the SKM Government in Sikkim, today served a 48-hour ultimatum on the State Government to resolve the situation with the protesting adhoc teachers and announced that if the ultimatum went unheeded and no concrete steps were taken, BJP-Sikkim will come out more strongly on issue on 08 September.

Addressing a press conference here today, BJP state-unit spokesperson, Dr Raju Giri, highlighted that Teacher's Day was an occasion to honour teachers for their contributions and service and that it was unfortunate for Sikkim that on this day, a section of



teachers had been driven to sit in protest and struggle for their rights.

He remarked that if the government and the concerned department had offered an amicable solution in time, the adhoc teachers would not have been compelled to take to the streets seeking justice.

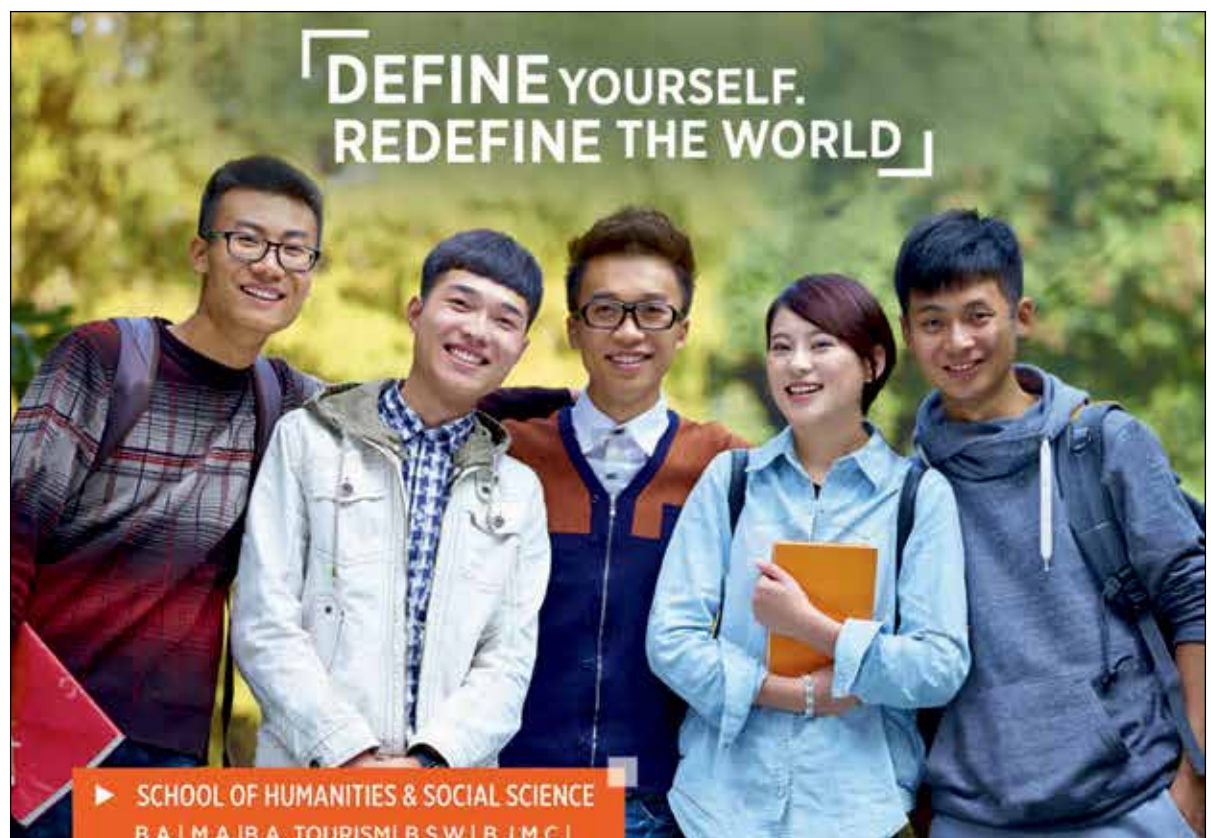
He also remarked at the irony of reopening schools on Monday even as teachers were on the road in protest. The government should take an

immediate decision in the interest of students and teachers, he said, pointing out that the priority for the Department should have been to get teachers to their respective stations by now.

Dr Giri added that as part of the State Government, BJP has been consistently advising the government and has already placed its opinion on the current issue with the government diplomatically even as BJP

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Nothing surprising in SKM Govt's insensitivity towards students and teachers: Chamling

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:**

Sikkim Democratic Front president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, in his weekly Facebook commentary today, shared that he was not surprised by the SKM Government's "obstinate and arbitrary ways" and its insensitivity towards students and teachers of late, and towards all Sikkimese in general.

Pointing out that he had always warned the people that Election 2019 was about "sav-

ing Sikkim" since the stakes were high and that it was this kind of misgovernance that he had been cautioning the people about.

"...I am surprised by the fact that the people themselves are surprised by the SKM government's way of functioning," he writes.

"They are party that is driven by anger, hatred, violence and an empty hunger for power," he adds, while contending that while the people were initially shell-shocked by the SKM Govt's attitude,

they had now become mute spectators.

The State Government took the silence as acceptance and endorsement, he writes further, while adding that the people were now speaking up.

As for Education Department's handling of the situation, he adds that its incompetence began with mishandling the situation and progressed to insensitivity and arrogance and the SKM Government complemented these by using the police to frighten victims in keeping with the party's

autocratic and undemocratic mentality.

Mr Chamling goes on to claim that "never was the Sikkim Police so badly misused by the government to quell the public voice, suppress truth and spread government propaganda."

Apart from accusing the Chief Minister of perpetuating nepotism and intimidation, he also criticized the Education Minister's lack of moral sense. Instead of having suspended the Education Department officials for having displayed extreme

insensitivity, the government was standing by silently while wrong decisions continue to be taken.

"But what can we expect from a government that expels students from college for the crime of wanting to meet the Education Minister?" he quips.

Mr Chamling then goes on to list the many ways in which the department and the government have failed students, teachers and education in Sikkim.

"A government that uses police force and

bureaucracy to humiliate and disgrace its citizen is a shame on democracy. Sikkim is facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. A bunch of angry administrators are mercilessly trampling upon the innocent citizens' human rights," he writes.

He has demanded a public apology from the State Government, particularly the Education Department, publicly apologise to the teachers for how it has treated them and to the students for having repeatedly failed them.

Sikkimey Naagarik Samaj launches app and website

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:**

The recently formed Sikkimey Naagarik Samaj [SNS] launched its mobile app, 'Hami Sikkimey,' and official website, 'www.hamisikkimey.com,' during a meeting held here on Sunday.

The meeting, which was chaired by former Chief Secretary of Sikkim, PK Pradhan, was attended by representatives from different sections of the society, it is informed.

On the occasion, the organisation also launched its online membership drive and SNS president Bharat Basnet officially registered himself as the first member of SNS. The meeting also appointed former CS PK Pradhan as advisor.

The meeting was also addressed by SNS chief coordinator Tseten Tashi

Bhutia, president Bharat Basnet and spokesperson Passang Sherpa along with former Minister KN Uprety and the former CS.

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, SNS spokesperson Passang Sherpa informed that the main objective behind the meeting was to explain the ideology and future programmes of SNS to the people of Sikkim.

He stated that the meeting reiterated that SNS was totally a non-political organization and towards that end resolved that any member wishing to engage in active politics first resign from SNS. He added that the meeting was also convened to seek suggestions and opinions from experienced and senior citizens of the State.

Fuel prices reduced by 15 paise

NEW DELHI, 05 SEPT [NDTV]: The state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Sunday marginally lowered fuel rates across the country. According to details listed on the Indian Oil Corporation's official website, petrol and diesel prices were reduced by up to 15 paise after remaining stable for three consecutive days.

With the latest revision, both petrol and diesel rates in the national capital Delhi dropped by 15 paise per litre, currently standing at ₹ 101.19 per litre and ₹ 88.62 per litre, respectively. In Mumbai, petrol prices stood at ₹ 107.26 per litre after seeing a drop of 13 paise, while diesel rates fell 14 paise to ₹ 96.19 per litre.

Other metro cities also witnessed a similar trend in fuel rates. Buyers in Kolkata will now

have to pay ₹ 101.72 a litre for petrol and ₹ 91.71 a litre for diesel. In Chennai, fuel rates were reduced by 12 paise, as petrol now stands at ₹ 98.96 a litre, while diesel retails at ₹ 93.26 a litre. The two auto fuels in Bengaluru now cost ₹ 104.70 per litre and ₹ 94.04 per litre for petrol and diesel respectively.

The fuel rates vary from state to state in the country due to the value-added tax or VAT. Rajasthan levies the highest VAT on fuel, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum are the three leading oil marketing companies. They revise domestic fuel prices with global benchmarks by taking into account alterations in the foreign exchange rates accordingly.

CM begins weekly interactions with party-workers and public



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang today began his weekly interactions with party workers, functionaries, supporters and public at Mintokgang, an SKM press release informs.

He will be hosting such sessions for three days per week and will address individual and collective grievances, the release adds.

The main objective behind these meetings is to have personal interactions and connect with the public, especially those belonging to the grassroots level and weaker sections of society, the release states while adding that the Chief Minister "strives to build a strong rapport with the people and work towards their welfare and upliftment."

While Mr Tamang had

wanted to hold these interactions earlier, Covid restrictions had disallowed the same, the release explains.

Today, he interacted with 100 people, the press release issued by SKM's chief coordinator [media cell], Bikash Basnet, informs.

BJP's Brahmin Outreach Programme ahead of UP polls draws Opposition flak

LUCKNOW, 05 SEPT [PTI]: The BJP's Brahmin outreach programme in Uttar Pradesh drew flak from the Opposition Saturday with the BSP and the Congress alleging the community faced "oppression" in the past four years of BJP rule, and the party is remembering them now with an eye on the upcoming state polls.

The BJP has announced a series of conferences for the "enlightened class" in all the 403 assembly constituencies of Uttar Pradesh beginning today. During the programme, the BJP plans to reach out to people from different walks of life including teachers, engineers, doctors, litterateurs and deliberate on the works and schemes its governments at the Centre and in the state have launched for the masses.

Taking a potshot at the BJP, the BSP, which began holding similar programmes from July 23 in its attempt to return to power with the support of all sections of society as it did in 2007, accused the ruling party of "copying" its idea.

The success of the BSP's "Prabuddh Varg Sammelan" (meeting of intellectuals) has troubled the BJP, BSP chief Mayawati said Friday.

In a significant symbolic move, the BSP started its campaign, led by its national general

secretary Satish Chandra Misra, from Ayodhya to reach out to Brahmin voters assuring their interests will be safeguarded if the party comes to power.

Like the BSP, the Samajwadi Party, too, has been holding a series of meetings of intellectuals since August 23.

With the BSP, the Samajwadi Party and now the BJP making clear their plans to go all out to woo the Brahmins, who constitute 13% of the state's population, the Congress alleged that the parties started talking about the Brahmin community with just the election in mind.

"If the BJP, BSP as well as SP have so much love for the Brahmins, why don't they project a Brahmin face as the chief ministerial candidate in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly elections?" UP Congress media convenor Lalan Kumar said.

"The reality is that the Congress has given Uttar Pradesh the most number of Brahmin chief ministers - six. The parties which are doing all kinds of drama to woo the Brahmins should tell how many Brahmin chief ministers they have given," Lalan Kumar said.

The Congress leader also alleged that the Brahmins have faced maximum "oppression" under the present BJP government.

Amid rising Covid cases, Kerala faces new challenges with Nipah virus

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/KOZHIKODE, 05 SEPT [NDTV]: As Kerala reeled under a daily increase of nearly 30,000 cases of COVID-19, the deadly Nipah virus has come as another thorn in its side, prompting the state to further heighten the alertness of its health machinery to prevent an outbreak of a different infection.

The southern state, which already saw a localised outbreak of 63 cases of Zika virus in July that were mostly confined to Thiruvananthapuram, however, need not be concerned about the spread of Nipah infection as preventive measures like use of masks and PPE kits -- are already in place due to COVID-19 and intensive contact tracing was going on, state health minister Veena George said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the central government has rushed a team from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to provide support to the state, where a 12 year-old boy died due to Nipah on Sunday and two others displayed symptoms of the virus infection.

However, experts, like Dr Amar Fettle, Dr TS Anish and Dr TN Suresh, said that there was less cause for concern at present as the state has already dealt with the Nipah virus twice in the past -- when it reared its head in 2018 and 2019 -- and the risk of transmission would be less this time round as protective measures, like wearing of masks and PPE kits, are already in place.

They also said that Nipah infections are usually confined to small clusters or areas.

The experts said that "intensive

contact tracing" and quarantine of all primary contacts were the two main steps to be taken to ensure effective control over spread of the infection. Dr Fettle, the nodal officer for H1N1, said that the Nipah infection is very pathogenic, but it is more likely to spread once the patient's condition becomes severe -- when they are hospitalised.

He said that risk of the infection spreading would, therefore, be higher in the hospital than at community level.

Hence, while doing contact tracing, people who may have come into contact with the patient at the hospitals should be "meticulously traced", he said.

He said that steps taken by the state to tackle COVID-19, like preparing a time stamped route map of patients, would come in handy here also as it would help public health authorities inform people about the places visited by the infected person and at what times.

This will let people know as to who all need to quarantine themselves or come forward for testing if they exhibit symptoms and would avoid widespread panic in the district or state, he said.

Dr Anish, a specialist in Community medicine, and Dr Suresh, general secretary of the Kerala Government Medical Officers Association, were also of a similar view that contact tracing and quarantine of primary contacts were the two most important steps presently. Dr Anish said that Nipah usually remains confined to smaller areas or clusters and its numbers remain very few and hardly ever crosses even 50. Dr Suresh said that the state has already dealt with the vi-

rus twice in the past and therefore, it already has a model in place to "effectively" tackle it.

Moreover, due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, people are already taking preventive steps like wearing masks and kits, and therefore, the spread of Nipah may be less. Also, due to COVID-19, the victim's list of contacts would be limited, he said and added that local containment activities are already in motion.

He said the primary contacts would be kept in quarantine and if they display symptoms, they would be tested. Subsequently, based on the results, supportive medical care would be provided.

All of the experts said that supportive care was the only mode of treatment as there is no cure or vaccine for Nipah.

They also said that the likelihood of both Nipah and COVID-19 infecting patients was less.

The state health minister, earlier in the day, told the media that information regarding the infection status of the boy was received late, but as soon as they got to know about it, the department swung into action and held an emergency meeting Saturday night itself to formulate an action plan.

She said that a special team was formed on that night to carry out contact tracing and identify primary contacts and it was effectively carrying out that work.

Preparations have been made to isolate or quarantine those in the primary contacts list and subsequently, after another meeting at Kozhikode Medical College, a treatment protocol would be decided, the minister said.

Centre warns states about fake vaccines, explains how to identify

NEW DELHI, 05 SEPT [NDTV]: With reports of counterfeit versions of Covishield vaccines circulating in the international market, a concern flagged by even the World Health Organization, the Centre on Saturday shared a list of parameters to identify the authenticity of the Covid vaccines being used in the country.

The parameters will help identify whether the vaccine is fake or genuine, the Health Ministry said in a letter written to the states, adding that it was prepared with information from the companies manufacturing Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V - the three vaccines currently being used in the Indian market.

The note sent to the states has details on the label, colour and other details used by the vaccine manufacturer.

Various reports have emerged recently claiming that counterfeit versions of Covishield, India's primary anti-COVID-19 vaccine, had been seized in Southeast Asia and Africa. Some of the counterfeit versions are also being sold across the country, media reports have claimed.

The World Health Organisation has issued an

alert over the counterfeit versions of coronavirus vaccines.

The government has also launched an inquiry based on these reports.

"It has been claimed that duplicate versions of Covishield vaccine were sold in the country. The Indian government is probing this claim and will take action if it found any substance to the allegations," Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had said last month.

Mr Mandaviya, who was recently elevated as health minister, also said that three more vaccines for adults would be available in India soon.

"At present, three vaccines are available in India - Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik. In the coming days, three more vaccines would arrive, including one from Zyndus Cadila. The other two will be from Genova and Biological Evans," he said.

Since the start of the vaccination drive in January, the government has administered vaccine doses to 68 crore beneficiaries, with more than 62.25 lakh vaccine doses being administered on Saturday. India has been running the largest vaccination drive against COVID-19 since January 16 this year.

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BJP serve SKM...

MLA DR Thapa has spoken publicly on the issue.

Responding to media queries, he stated that the government can easily work out the demands of the adhoc teachers and prevent the situation from escalating.

He suggested that the concerned department confer with the teachers on protest and resolve the issue.

Governor inaugurates Farmers Facilitation Centre at Leh and commends work done by SSOCA

Gangtok, 05 Sept: Governor Ganga Prasad inaugurated SSOCA's Farmers Facilitation Center in Leh, Ladakh, on Saturday, a press release from the Raj Bhavan informs.

The program was hosted in the conference hall of The Grand Dragon Hotel in Leh by the Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (SSOCA) in collaboration with Department of Agriculture, Ladakh.

Governor Ganga Prasad, who was present as the chief guest, was accompanied by Lt. Governor of Ladakh, RK Mathur, as guest of honour of the event. Also in attendance were Jama-yang Tshering Namgyal, the Lok Sabha MP from Ladakh, Chairman cum CEC, LAHDC-Leh Advocate Tashi Gyalson, along with Executive Councilor (Agriculture) Leh Stanzin Chosphel and Executive Councilor (Agriculture) Kargil Mohsin Ali, Secretary to Governor of Sikkim Raj Yadav, Ravindra Kumar, Director DIHAR O.P. Chaurisha, CEO-SSOCA Sudhir Giri, DC-Leh Shrikant B. Suse.

Farmers from Igoo and Shera villages of Leh and departmental officials of Leh and Kargil district were present for the programme along with officials from DIHAR, KVKs and SKUAT.

Secretary Agriculture Ravinder Kumar welcomed all the dignitaries, guests and farmers from two districts of Ladakh. He also briefed about the activities done under the organic farming project in Ladakh by the Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (SSOCA). MP (LS) Jamayang Namgyal informed about the initiation of the Mission Organic Development Ini-



tiative (MODI) in Leh district since 2019. He also made emphasis on conversion of entire UT into Organic UT by 2025. He praised the work done by SSOCA in UT of Ladakh and expressed gratitude to Governor of Sikkim and Sikkim Government and assured this association will go long way and for the entire period of converting UT of Ladakh into organic.

Chairman cum CEC, LAHDC-Leh Advocate Tashi Gyalson briefed about the existing scenario of agriculture in Ladakh and made focus on sustainable farming system for future. He said and requested Governor of Sikkim to allow the team of His Council i.e. LAHDC-Leh and also LAHDC-Kargil to visit Sikkim in December 2021 to see the commendable job done by Sikkim in Organic Agriculture field.

Lt. Governor of Ladakh R.K. Mathur also made emphasis on growing organic produce in UT of Ladakh. In his speech he advised for production of organic crops on large scale for better marketing opportunities. He said the recently it was proved that Tourism Sector are uncertain and have to look for sustainable livelihood. He thanked Governor of Sikkim for his visit of Ladakh and Inaugurat-

ing the Organic Farmers Facilitation Centre In Leh and Kargil districts and requested for more co-operation from Sikkim in future.

Governor of Sikkim Ganga Prasad in his chief guest speech briefed about the work done in Sikkim under organic farming and Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (SSOCA). Sikkim being the first organic State of India has won the Oscar Award of Organic. International Society and Various Organization like FAO, UNO has recognized the achievement done by Sikkim. He informed about the benefits of Organic farming to the farmers of Ladakh in terms of better price of their produce as well as increase of tourism sector which contributes in economy of the state. He said Sikkim is the role model for this and Green Himalayan Economy is the mantra of present time. Organic Agriculture is the best way of getting sustainable livelihood, we saw that Tourism Sector struggled a lot in last two years but Agriculture and especially Organic Agriculture is continuously growing. The initiative taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Agriculture and all the farmers of country is really unique and farmers centric. He

informed about the various initiatives taken by Sikkim Government from providing Rs.8/- per litre subsidy to the Dairy Farmers and celebrating Gwala Diwas. He stated that with this initiative taken by HCM P.S. Golay (Tamang) the milk production has increased from 35000 litre to 55000 per litre per day. He said Sikkim Government is providing all possible incentives, benefits and facilitating the farmers in each and every field. He wishes for better association of SSOCA, Govt of Sikkim and UT of Ladakh for this noble cause and invited the team of UT of Ladakh to Sikkim for better understanding and visiting the organic field of Sikkim.

During the event PGS-Green certificates were distributed to the farmers of Igoo and Shera Villages of Leh district. In this programme an appreciation certificate with a mementos was also awarded to four persons including MP of Ladakh for his visionary initiative towards organic farming and certification in Ladakh, Mission Director (MODI) cum Chief Agriculture Officer Tashi Tsetan for his contribution in implementation of organic farming project in UT of Ladakh, CEO SSOCA Sudhir Giri for his exemplary work

in Organic Certification, establishing and taking SSOCA to new height and overall management and work in the field of organic farming not only in Sikkim but in UT of Ladakh and lastly to Quality Manager/Addl Director SSOCA Ms. Binita Chhetri for her overall contribution, commitment and dedication in the operations of Organic projects and for her legal expertise in Organic Field not only in Sikkim and UT of Ladakh but also in other parts of India.

The First half of event was ended with the vote of Thanks by the CEO SSOCA Sudhir Giri to Governor of Sikkim Ganga Prasad for taking all the pain coming from Sikkim to Leh for the inauguration of Farmers Facilitation Centre and encouraging and motivating the Sikkim's own Government agency and certification body SSOCA. He also thanked LG of UT of Ladakh for his continuous support in implementing organic projects in Ladakh. Giri also thanked and expressed gratitude on behalf all organic farmers to MP (LS) Jamayang Namgyal for his visionary initiative, policy and work initiated in 2018. CEO-SSOCA also expressed his gratitude to CEC, ECs, Secretary to Governor of Sikkim Raj Yadav, IAS. CEO,SSOCA thanked Secretary Agriculture, UT of Ladakh Ravindra Kumar, IAS and Mission Director(MODI) cum CAO Tashi Tsetan and his team and all the officers of Agriculture and Horticulture Department, Farmers, youth of Nehru Yuva Kendra, Leh, Media persons and all the distinguish guests and participants.

SPYF writes to Education Minister seeking end to disruption caused by Deptt's refusal to grant extension to adhoc teachers

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:

Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum has written to Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha to intervene and direct his department to extend the services of adhoc teachers till the wk-in interview process was completed.

Contracts of these teachers, numbering more than 800, had ended in June but the Department, instead of extending their services, decided to hold fresh interviews which have now been announced for 03 October after some pre-

vious dates were missed.

The letter points out to the Education Minister that most of these adhoc teachers were serving in rural and remote schools, serving students from economically weak families. The letter adds that with board exams scheduled for November-December, this disruption to their education was especially worrisome.

The interview and selection process is bound to drag on for longer than the students should have to wait for teachers, the letter highlights while adding that there was also the question of the livelihood

of the affected teachers.

"Moreover, teachers are one of the most important components of the society with a pivotal role in society's progress, the continued suffering of the teachers in the eve of national teachers day has brought great harm in the image of our state in front of the whole world," SPYF writes.

The Minister has been requested to provide extension to teachers in their respective schools until the walk-in interviews and other formalities are completed by Sikkim State Teachers Recruiting Board.

Tokyo Paralympics: Krishna secures gold, Suhas clinches silver in badminton

Tokyo, Sep 5 (PTI): Krishna Nagar secured a second gold medal in badminton after Suhas Yathiraj claimed a silver as it turned out to be a Super Sunday for the Indian badminton contingent at the Tokyo Paralympics here.

The 22-year-old Nagar, seeded second, defeated Hong Kong's Chu Man Kai 21-17 16-21 21-17 in the men's singles SH6 class final to retain his unbeaten run at the Games and join compatriot Pramod Bhagat in the gold medal winning list.

Bhagat had claimed India's first gold in badminton in SL3 class on Saturday.

"This is a dream come true. I want to thank my father, mother, uncle, auntie, God, my coaches," said Nagar after winning India's fifth gold at the Games.

"This is the first time that badminton has been added to the Paralympics and I hope that India will keep winning and doing their best at upcoming Games."

Suhas ended his campaign with a silver after going down fighting against top seed Lucas Mazur of France in the men's singles SL4 class final.

The 38-year-old Noida district magistrate, who has an impairment in one of his ankles, produced an entertaining performance before narrowly going down 21-15 17-21 15-21 to two-time world champion Mazur in the summit clash.

Bhagat and Palak Kohli, however, lost 21-23 19-21 in mixed doubles SL3-SU5 class bronze medal playoff.

Nagar, who has a short stature impairment, picked up the sport after being encouraged by his cousin.

However, he started playing the sport seriously only four years back and ended up winning a bronze at Para Asian Games before claiming a bronze and silver at 2019 World Championships in singles and doubles respectively.

The world No. 2 also

won a silver in Brazil and two gold medals in singles and doubles in Peru last year. He also claimed two gold medals at the Dubai Para Badminton International in April this year.

Nagar, who last played Chu Man Kai in the Thailand para badminton two years ago, came into the match with a 2-1 head-to-head advantage.

It turned out to be a pulsating contest as the duo fought tooth and nail but the Indian showed better nerves to come up trumps in the end.

The duo played short rallies initially and Nagar managed to lead 4-2 and 8-6 before Chu Man clawed back and led 11-9 at the break after the Indian hit wide.

Chu Man continued in the same vein and soon opened up a 16-11 lead. But Nagar tightened his net play and covered the court well to draw parity at 16-16 before winning another rally with a backhand return.

Another backhand flick gave him three game points and he sealed it when his rival went to net.

Chu Man recovered to lead 11-7 in the second game after an initial close battle. The Thai player stayed ahead and eventually unleashed a smash to take the match to the decider.

Nagar got his act together in the decider, cruising to 5-1 lead before moving to 7-2 with Chu Man struggling with his finishing.

The Indian led 11-7 with a looping forehand return before moving to 13-8 after resumption. However, errors crept in his game, allowing Chu Man to level at 13-13.

Nagar stepped up his game in the final stages and unleashed a series of smashes.

He grabbed four match points with another superb return, squandered one before rushing into the arms of coach Gaurav Khanna in celebration after his rival went wide again.

Earlier, unseeded Suhas, the district mag-

istrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida), became the first-ever IAS officer to win a medal at the Paralympics.

"I'm quite happy with the performance but I should have finished it off in the second game," he said.

"So I'm a little disappointed that I didn't finish it off because I had a handsome lead in the second game. But congratulations to Lucas. Whoever played better is the winner."

In SL4 class, shuttlers have lower limb impairment/severe and they play standing.

In bronze medal play-off, second seed Tarun Dhillon, however, went down 17-21 11-21 to Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan in 32 minutes.

In his gold medal match, Suhas stepped it up on the big stage and dominated the proceedings early on.

Suhas led 11-8 at the first break. Playing with a smile, the Indian controlled the proceedings with Mazur looking jaded. He grabbed five game points and next pushed one at the backline to pocket the first game.

However, Mazur dug in and led at 6-5 in the second game before Suhas again led 11-8. The Indian maintained his lead at 15-12 but Mazur grabbed nine of the last 11 points to roar back into the contest.

Suhas rode on his flurry of smashes to make a superb start to the decider but Mazur again levelled at 9-9 before eking out a three-point lead at 17-13. He sealed the contest when the Indian went to the net.

A computer engineer, Suhas went on to become an IAS officer and was at the forefront in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic as a Noida DM.

On the court, he has won gold medals at 2017 BWF Turkish Para badminton championship in men's singles and men's doubles. He also won gold in 2016 Asia championships, besides a bronze at 2018 Asia Para Games.

Kharga Nisani Kali Trust felicitates SD Dhakal



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 SEPT:

Kharga Nisani Kali Trust of Pendambudang felicitated its chief trustee, Shankar Deo Dhakal, on being conferred with the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award and for his service,

direction and contributions towards the society, a press release informs. A representative group of the trust presented the Letter of Appreciation along with a shawl and a daka-topi to Mr Dhakal, who is also the Secretary to the CM.

Pope hopes many nations take Afghan refugees and young are educated

VATICAN CITY, 05 SEPT

[REUTERS]: Pope Francis said on Sunday that he was praying that many countries take Afghan refugees and, in an apparent reference to the Taliban's past restrictions on schooling for women, said it is essential that young Afghans receive an education. "In these moments of upheaval, in which Afghans are seeking refuge, I pray for the most vulnerable among them," he told hundreds of people in St. Peter's Square for his weekly blessing.

"I pray that many

countries welcome them and protect those who are seeking a new life."

The pope is a strong supporter of the rights of refugees and migrants.

Thousands of Afghans evacuated by the United States are waiting in so-called transit hubs in countries such as Qatar, Germany and Italy. Thousands of others are trying to leave via land crossings with neighbouring countries such as Pakistan. "I also pray for the internally displaced so that they have help and necessary protection.

Supreme Court stays proceedings in new case against scribes in Bengal

New Delhi, 05 Sept [PTI]: The Supreme Court has stayed further proceedings in a fresh case filed in West Bengal against some people, including editors of a news web portal, in connection with articles published by them. The court also made the protection granted in an interim order of last year to Nupur J Sharma, the editor of English language Opindia.com, and others including its founder and CEO, as absolute.

A bench of justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and MM Sundresh, while dealing with the fresh FIR said, "Further proceedings in pursuance of FIR No...registered at Bhadreswar Police Station shall remain stayed."

It said that interim orders passed on June 26, 2020 in the main writ petition filed last year are made absolute and posted the next hearing in November.

"Interim orders are made absolute. Liberty to the petitioners to file additional documents. The parties to file short synopsis running into not more than two pages each. List on a non-miscellaneous Tuesday in the month of November 2021," the bench said in its order passed on September 3. On June 26 last year, the top court had stayed further proceedings in three FIRs lodged in West Bengal against petitioners.

In their intervention application, Nupur J Sharma and others said that they are constrained to move the top court due to "persistent hounding" and "victimisation" by the West Bengal government, "who in its endeavour to scuttle inconvenient media reports registered multiple FIRs against them".

The application further said, "That the order dated June 26, 2020 came as a respite to the petitioners whose honour, life and liberty were sought to be repeatedly undermined by the state..."

However, "it appears that the respondents are unrelenting in the efforts to persecute the petitioners/ap-

plicants as the petitioners/applicants have recently on August 5, been served with a notice under section 41A of the CrPC from CID, West Bengal in relation to FIR registered with Bhadreswar police station", it said. It said that the FIR relates to media reports published in opindia.com about Telenipara communal riots of May 2020 and were registered contemporaneously around the same time as FIRs, which forms the subject matter of the writ petition.

The petitioners said that the FIR came to their notice only on the receipt of the notice under section 41CrPC on August 5 requiring them to appear before the investigating officer on August 13 but later the investigating officer through an email dated August 12 asked the petitioner to appear on August 23. They sought a stay on the investigation emanating from the FIR registered at Bhadreswar police station and the notice issued to them for appearing before investigating officer.

The petitioners also sought quashing of the FIR. On June 26 last year, the Supreme Court had, while staying the three FIRs, issued notices to the West Bengal government and the Centre seeking their replies on the plea.

The main writ petition filed by Nupur Sharma and others including the founder and CEO of the news portal and editor of its Hindi language publications claimed that the West Bengal government and its "authoritarian Kolkata Police" are misusing FIRs and "brute police powers" to intimidate journalists. "The petitioners are constrained to invoke the extraordinary writ jurisdiction of this court under Article 32 of the Constitution against the patently extortionist and mala fide actions of the Government of West Bengal to impose illegal censorship in the state by threatening, scuttling, and gagging honest media houses through misuse of state police," the plea has claimed.

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Cannot Afford to Forget

Indulge the habitual amnesia at your own peril

Next Saturday will mark the tenth anniversary of 18 September Earthquake, that monumental event which pulled a wicked surprise on Sikkim, not an easy trick to play on a region which has lived for centuries with extreme weather conditions and temperamental plate tectonics. After the temblor had coursed through Sikkim, around 8,000 homes had been rendered too dangerous to be habitable anymore and heritage, both tangible and intangible, had been damaged beyond salvaging. Several of the monasteries are still in the process of reconstruction, the administrative headquarters of the State had moved into a borrowed facility and has still not completely moved out, many of the destroyed rural homes are still being “reconstructed” under the ambitious REDRH project and the most ambitious hydel project in the State which was on ground zero is now has since been commissioned, having finally shaken off the earthquake setback.

Since the earthquake reminded Sikkim of the tectonic realities which lie underneath, Sikkim has been reintroduced to some other extremes of its setting – from flashfloods, to forest fires to landslides to GLOFs, over the past five years, the Sikkimese have experience the whole spectrum of the Sikkim experience – at one time luxuriating at nature at its most indulgent and at others cowering under nature at its most devastating.

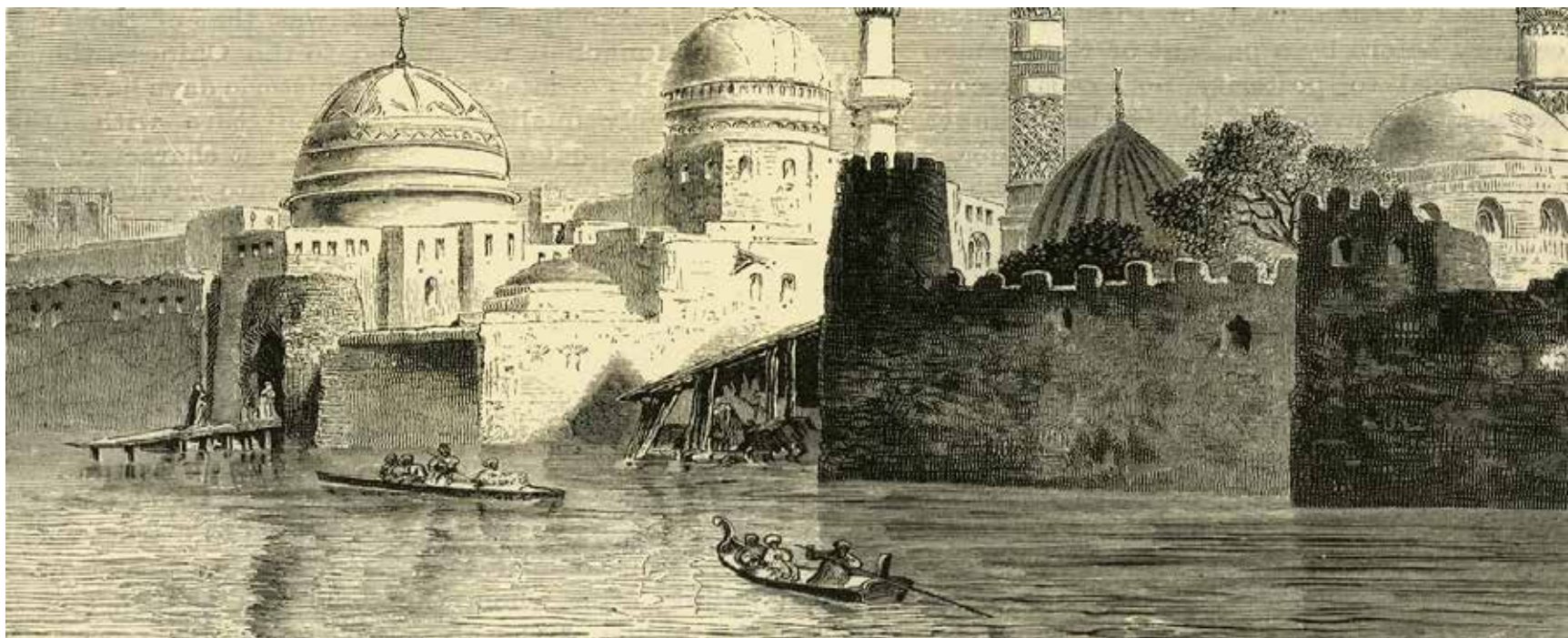
Against this backdrop, disaster preparedness should receive a relook, hopefully a more nuanced retouch given the significance of the upcoming weekend. Sikkim should not forget that the surprise of 18/09/11 stemmed not so much from the unprecedented scale of the earthquake as from the inexcusable fact that Sikkim forgot that it occupies among the more disaster-prone sectors of the subcontinent. As for the earthquake itself, the only surprise it can stake claim to is in its confirmation that Sikkim harboured tectonic potential to push a 6.8 scale earthquake. Through the recorded history of earthquakes in the region, the big ones of the past century and a half [which wreaked substantial damage in Sikkim as well] had been earthquakes with their epicentres at “established/ identified” trouble-spots - fault-lines many hundred kilometres away from Sikkim. In some warped sense of misplaced security, this had apparently convinced people and policy-makers at a subconscious level that the State could do very little to cushion the impact of the next big one and that Sikkim’s distance from the expected ground zeros would absorb some of the ferocity and dissipate the impact. This was admittedly wrong because no one can prevent an earthquake, but everyone can and should work towards mitigating it. And now, even the excuse of distance is no longer available with the tectonic plates on which Sikkim sits broadcasting in very clear terms that even they can pack a mean punch. In effect then, natural disasters are no longer about ‘if’ and ‘when’ and have now become ‘here and now’.

And now, as the amplified fury of end-monsoon showers are battering the highways and patches of patchy hill slopes, it’s not just about earthquakes, but a host of other challenges like landslides, cloud-bursts, GLOFs etc and if the winter runs dry, there will be forest fires and man-animal conflicts as well. Natural disasters do not play in isolation and when these incidents achieve disaster proportions, they work in combinations. Five years since the devastation of September 2011, after Sikkim has recollected the experience and taken stock of repairs and restoration, it should test the practicability and resoluteness of its proposed responses for future calamities. Modern lifestyles have a way of blindsiding obvious realities, and if any lesson is to be learnt from the 18 September horror, it should be in rediscovering the traditional knowledge base. Centuries of living in a particular region grooms people to instinctively respect the brute force of nature and adopt lifestyles which mitigate the impact of the nature of disasters indigenous to a particular region. Sikkim obviously had this, but lost it in the past fifty years or so. These need to be re-remembered and all disaster preparedness plans should respect the knowhow of resident populations and reinforce traditional practices with scientific verification and planning.

This anniversary, Sikkim should make sure that it does not forget – not just the earthquake and the affected – but also the traditional knowledge base which served its people well in the past.

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Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com



Islam’s deep traditions of art and science have had a global influence

KALPANA JAIN
theconversation.com

In the previous installment of this series, you learned about the different Muslim sects and the interesting ways they mix in the United States. This article will take you through the historical contributions of Islam and its influence on other faiths across geographical regions.

Your understanding of Islam is perhaps incomplete without a deeper appreciation of its cultural and intellectual history. History books in the U.S. can give an incomplete picture about the richness of its past, so many students may fail to appreciate the importance of this history.

Islamic scholars contributed to early developments in astronomy, medicine and mathematics. Their work was crucial to Renaissance scientists who built on some of the existing scholarship.

For example, the 11th-century astronomer al-Qabisi, one in a line of famous Islamic astronomers, helped formulate a critique of the then-prevalent notion that the Earth was at the center of the universe. As scholar of Middle Eastern studies Stephennie Mulder writes, that model later informed the view of Nicholas Copernicus, a Renaissance astronomer.

Important works of mathematics were written by Islamic scholars, including substantial contributions to algebra and a commentary on the fourth-century B.C. Greek mathematician Euclid that was later translated into Latin. An early description of surgery to remove cataracts was written by Islamic ophthalmologists in the year 1010.

Many of these scholars were based in Mosul in modern-day Iraq, a city that was occupied by the Islamic State from 2014 to 2017. Mosul was a key center on the Silk Road – a network of trade routes – which also contributed to its rich diversity of people and traditions. As Mulder notes, “The city was home to a diverse group of people: Arabs and Kurds, Yazidis, Jews and Christians, Sunnis and Shiites, Sufis and dozens of saints holy to many faiths.”

Among the Islamic State’s destruction of architectural sites in Mosul was the tomb of the Prophet Jonah, a figure revered by all three Abrahamic faiths. Jews venerate Jonah as a symbol of repentance. In the Islamic faith, Jonah, also known as Yūnus, is seen to be an exemplary model for human behavior. In the Christian faith, Jonah’s story appears in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Influence of Islam was seen in the cultural history of many countries. Scholar Kishwar Rizvi explains that in medieval Spain, for example, the troubadour poets who were known for their lyrical poetry “borrowed their lyrical beauty from Arabic.” Until the 15th century, as Rizvi says, Arabic was the courtly language of southern Spain.

The exchange between Islam and other Abrahamic faiths extended to architecture. The famous 12th-century Palatine Chapel in Sicily takes some of its architectural style from the Fatimids, the Shiite rulers of Egypt between the 10th and 12th centuries.

“Such exchanges were common, thanks to the mobility of people as well as ideas,” writes Rizvi.

Understanding the rich history of Islamic art can help counter many presumptions about Islam today. In explaining how different religious views were accommodated within Islam, scholar Ana Silkatcheva points to a 19th-century tile from Iran depicting a crucified Jesus surrounded by the Twelve Apostles.

“In Islamic understanding, Jesus was a prophet, granted the same respect as Muhammad, but did not die on the cross,” Silkatcheva said. “This is evidently a tile made for or by the Christian community in Persia under Islamic rule.”

Art history can be revealing to many Muslims as well. For most Muslims, the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad is considered to be forbidden. However, Silkatcheva writes about a 17th-century manuscript folio that depicts the prophet, suggesting that visual depictions of the prophet were acceptable in the past.

Rizvi offers a reminder from the poetry of 13th-century Muslim mystic Rumi that sums up this belief in peaceful coexistence:

“All religions, all this singing, one song. The differences are just illusion and vanity.”

Fact: The Dutch painter Rembrandt collected miniature paintings from the Mughals, a Muslim dynasty that ruled the Indian subcontinent for over 300 years. Silks from the Safavid empire (the Iranian dynasty from the 16th to 18th century) were so popular that Polish kings had their coats of arms woven in Isfahan. – From an article written by Kishwar Rizvi, Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at Yale University.

[the writer is Senior Religion + Ethics Editor]

Tattoos have a long history going back to the ancient world – and also to colonialism

ALLISON HAWN
theconversation.com

While most of us would likely care to forget the pandemic as soon as is possible, a few have opted for a permanent reminder of the health crisis – in the shape of a tattoo. Some of these tattoos are meant to serve as a reminder of the year gone by, depicting motifs around toilet paper shortages, social distancing and other pandemic-related messages. But those who lost loved ones to the disease are also using tattoos to create memorials.

This is not a recent phenomenon – tattoos have long served as a way for people to express their emotions.

As a tattoo historian, I often enjoy asking people where they think tattoos originated. I hear the mention of countries such as China, Japan, “somewhere in Africa or South America,” or Polynesia. What is interesting is that in the past five years of holding these conversations, no one thus far has answered that tattoos could have originated in Europe or North America.

What geographical areas these answers include, and what they miss, speak to a deeper truth about the history of tattoos: What we know and think about tattoos is heavily influenced by oppression, racism and colonialism.

HISTORY OF TATTOOS

Tattooing practices were common in many parts of the ancient world.

There were tattoos in both ancient Japan and Egypt. The Māori of New Zealand have been practicing sacred Ta Mōko tattooing for centuries as a way to indicate who they are as individuals as well as who their community is.

However, no one culture can lay the claim to first inventing the

art form. Tattooing practices were known in Europe and North America since times of antiquity. The Greeks depicted their tattooed Thracian neighbors, the Indo-European-speaking people, on their pottery. The Picts, the indigenous people of what is today northern Scotland, were documented by Roman historians as having complex tattoos.

The oldest preserved tattoos come from Ötzi the Iceman, a 5,300-year-old mummified body frozen in ice discovered in the mountains of Italy in 1991. In 2019, researchers identified 2,000-year-old tattoo needles from southeastern Utah’s Pueblo archaeological sites. The cactus spines bound with yucca leaves still had the remnants of tattoo ink on them.

COLONIZATION AND TATTOOS

Tattoo historian Steve Gilbert explains that the word “tattoo” itself is a combination of Marquesan and Samoan words – tatau and tatu – to describe these practices. The sailors who explored these Polynesian islands combined the words as they traded stories of their experiences.

The question then arises, if tattoos existed in Europe and North America since times of antiquity, why did Western cultures appropriate and combine these two words instead of using words that already existed in their own?

As I found in my research, somewhere around the 1400s tattoos became an easy way to draw a line between European colonizers and those colonized, who were seen as “uncivilized.”

Tattooing was still being practiced in Europe and North America, but many of those tattooing practices had been driven underground by the time European colonization was in full swing.

That was in part the result of attempts to “Christianize” parts of Europe by purging towns and villages of “pagan” and nonconformist, nonreligious practices – including tattooing. As Catholic churches expanded their influence via missionaries and campaigns of assimilation beginning in A.D. 391, tattoos were frowned upon as “un-Christian.”

NOT LIKE US

As Western colonizers pushed into places like Africa, the Pacific Islands and North and South America in the 1400s and 1500s, they found entire groups of native peoples who were tattooed.

These tattooed individuals were often pointed to as proof that the “untamed natives” needed the help of “good, God-fearing” Europeans to become fully human. Tattooed individuals from these cultures were even brought back and paraded through Europe for profit.

A tattooed Indigenous mother and son, kidnapped by explorers in the late 1600s from an unknown location in Canada, were two such victims. An advertisement handbill of the time read: “Let us thank Almighty God for this beneficence, that he has declared himself to us by his Word, so that we are not like these savages and man-eaters.”

People would pay to gawk at these enslaved human beings, making their captors a healthy profit and reaffirming in the minds of the audience the need for European expansion, whatever the human cost.

This kidnapping of tattooed persons had destructive effects on the cultures they were taken from, as often the most tattooed individuals, and therefore the most likely to be taken, were the leaders and holy persons.

It is worth noting that most captives did not live longer than a few months after arriving in Europe, succumbing to foreign illness or malnourishment when their slavers did not feed them.

This “tattooed savage” narrative was pushed even further as tattooed individuals began to display themselves in carnival and circus “freak shows.”

These performers not only pushed the narrative of tattoos being “savage” or “othering” by performing as freaks, they also invented tragic backstories. The performers claimed they were attacked and forcibly tattooed by marginalized people, such as Native Americans, whom the public at large regarded as “savages.”

One such performer was the American Nora Hildebrandt. Nora weaved an account of being captured by Native Americans who forcibly tattooed her.

This was a more harrowing tale than the reality that her longtime partner, Martin Hildebrandt, had been her tattoo artist. Her tale was particularly baffling, as Nora Hildebrandt’s tattoos were mostly of patriotic symbols, like the American flag.

The voices of colonizers echo into the present. Tattoos carry a certain amount of stigma in Western societies. They can often end up being called a “poor life choice” or “trashy.” Studies as recent as 2014 discuss the persistence of the stigma.

I see tattoos as art and a way of communicating identity. In answering the question “where do tattoos come from?” I would argue that they come from all of us, regardless of what early colonizers may have wanted people to believe.

[the writer is Instructional Faculty, Arizona State University]

Two more accused injured in separate police encounters in Assam

GUWAHATI, 05 SEPT [PTI]: Two persons accused of different crimes were injured in police encounters in Assam's Guwahati and Dhemaji when they "tried to escape from custody", a senior officer said on Sunday.

Special Director General of Police (Law and Order) Gyanendra Pratap Singh said sleuths in Guwahati had to open fire on one accused in self-defence when he tried to flee custody.

The person, who sustained a bullet injury on his leg, was recently arrested from Delhi for allegedly supplying cocaine in a rave party in Guwahati last month, he said in a tweet.

Talking about the other case, Mr Singh said a man accused of attacking a college girl, who later succumbed to her injuries, tried to snatch a police weapon in Dhemaji district on Saturday evening.

He was injured in police firing, Mr Singh added.

Since May, at least 23



suspected militants and criminals were shot dead in police encounters in the state as they reportedly tried to snatch service weapons or attempted to escape from custody, while 38 accused were injured along with some policemen.

The rising number of shoot-outs has whipped up a political furor with the opposition alleging that the Assam Police has turned "trig-

ger happy" under the Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma-led regime, which assumed charge on May 10.

Unfazed by the criticism, Mr Sarma had on July 15 said in the Assam Assembly that the state police has "full operational liberty" to fight against the criminals within the ambit of law.

At the first ever face-to-face meeting with the

officers in-charge (OCs) of all police stations of Assam on July 5, Mr Sarma had said that shooting at criminals "should be the pattern" if they attempt to escape from custody or try to snatch arms from the police to fire at them.

Taking suo moto cognizance, the Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) on July 7 asked the state government to institute an enquiry into

the circumstances that led to the death and injury of the accused in police encounters over the past two months.

Earlier, a Delhi-based lawyer from Assam, Arif Jwadder, had filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) against the Assam Police for the series of encounters that have taken place since Mr Sarma took charge.

COVID-19 recoveries edge out fresh cases in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, SEP 5 (PTI): The COVID-19 recovery rate in Arunachal Pradesh improved to 98.07 per cent after 114 people were discharged in a single day, a senior health department official said on Sunday.

The northeastern state now has 762 active cases, and a total of 52,276 patients have so far recovered from the disease, he said.

The Capital Complex Region - comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas - has the highest number of active cases at 143, fol-

lowed by Lower Subansiri (104), West Kameng (52) and Lower Dibang Valley (50).

Arunachal Pradesh's coronavirus tally rose to 53,302 with 85 fresh infections, while two more fatalities pushed the death toll to 264, the official said. Altogether, 10,71,513 samples have been tested in the frontier state, including 2,993 since Saturday.

Meanwhile, State Immunisation Officer Dimong Padung said 9,96,954 people have been administered COVID-19 vaccines thus far.

3 fresh COVID-19 cases take Ladakh's tally to 20,578

LEH, SEP 5 (PTI): Ladakh's COVID-19 tally increased to 20,578 with three fresh cases, while the active caseload came down to 59 as 13 more patients recovered from the disease, officials said on Sunday.

All the fresh cases were reported from Leh district, they said.

So far, Ladakh has recorded 207 Covid-

related deaths -- 149 in Leh and 58 in Kargil. Seven patients were discharged from hospitals in Leh after recovering from COVID-19 and six in Kargil the previous day. With this, 20,312 patients have recovered till date in Ladakh, the officials said.

Of the 59 active cases in the union territory, 47 are in Leh and 12 in Kargil, they said.

Heroin worth Rs 8 cr seized in Assam, one held



DIPHU (ASSAM), SEP 5 (PTI): One person was arrested on Sunday in Assam's Karbi Anglong district for possessing heroin worth around Rs 8 crore, a police officer said.

Acting on a tip off, a police team, led by Bokajan sub-divisional police officer Jon Das, launched a search operation at Balijan Forest Gate Ti-

niali around 6.30 am, and intercepted an autorickshaw bearing Nagaland registration.

One kg of heroin packed into 78 soap cases were found stacked inside the vehicle, Das said.

A person, hailing from Morigaon district of Assam, was arrested along with the contraband drugs, he added.

Bihar MLA spotted on train in undergarments booked

Patna, Sep 5 (PTI): An MLA of the ruling JD(U) in Bihar, who hit the headlines for travelling by a New Delhi-bound train in undergarments and quarrelling with co-passengers when they took umbrage, has been booked under various sections of the IPC besides the SC/ST Act, officials said here on Sunday.

They said the FIR was lodged on Saturday at the GRP police station in Ara, based on a complaint lodged against the MLA Gopal Mandal.

The complainant, Prahlad Paswan, had recorded his statement at GRP New Delhi on Friday soon after the train reached its destination.

He alleged that he was traveling in the same compartment of Tejas Express as the legislator and had expressed his discomfort when he saw Mandal going towards the toilet in his vest and underpants.

Paswan has alleged that he was physically attacked by the MLA and his cohorts, who asked him to disclose his name and abused him making reference to his caste. Paswan has also alleged that the attackers robbed him of some valuables, which included a finger ring, and forced him to drink water drawn from the lavatory tap.

A zero FIR was lodged on the basis of

Paswan's complaint at New Delhi which was forwarded to authorities concerned here.

The MLA, who represents Gopalpur constituency of Bhagalpur district, has so far not reacted to the various allegations made in the FIR though he had responded to the public outcry with the claim that he was suffering from dysentery and had felt the urge to relieve himself as soon as the train chugged off from Patna on Thursday evening.

When asked for his comments, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who is the de facto leader of the JD(U), said he would not like to say anything till investigation was on.

"Knew it was my last chance": Rohit Sharma on opening in Tests in 2019

London, 05 Sept [AFP]: India batsman Rohit Sharma on Saturday said he knew that the decision of opening the batting in Test matches back in 2019 was his "last chance" to prove his mettle in the longest format of the game. Rohit scored his first overseas Test ton on Saturday as India ended day three of the ongoing fourth Test at 270/3.

"In the back of my mind, I knew it was the last chance for me as well, trying another position in the batting order. When the offer came to open the batting, I was very much aware of it because the talks were happening within the management about me opening the innings at some stage," Rohit said in a virtual press conference after the end of the day's play.

"So... mentally, I was ready to take on that challenge, to see if I could do well up the order. I know I batted in the middle order before and things didn't turn out the way I wanted to but

I knew this was going to be my last opportunity, you know, trying whatever the management is thinking," he said.

"When you are playing a sport you always have to take those chances, those risks... Yeah, you can say that it was my last opportunity, if I hadn't succeeded, anything could have happened," he added.

Further elaborating his point, Rohit pointed out that it was him who thought the chance of opening the batting was his last attempt to prove his worth in Test.

"And to say that in 2019 that was my last chance, it was my feeling. I don't know about the others and the team management because the team management clearly told me you'll have a long run when you open the innings," said Rohit.

"But for me, I wanted to think in a way where this is it, I have to make good use of this opportunity. ODI and Tests have a massive difference, I focused a lot on being

disciplined off the field in nets whether it is about leaving the ball or doing a solid tight defense," he added.

Rohit (127 off 256) also became the first visiting cricketer to hit tons in all three formats while opening in England. The Indian batsman completed 3000 runs in the longest format of the game on Saturday.

"Most pleasing thing was that I was able to pay 250 balls. If you look at all the Test matches (this series) I have nearly played 100 balls in every innings. That to me was a goal," said Rohit.

"The first goal was to play balls, see how I can stay on the pitch for as long as possible because we do know that things start to get easier when you spend time in the middle, when you see what the bowlers are doing and get the hang of it and get the feel of the entire situation. Spending time in the middle was the biggest takeaway for me in the four Test matches," he signed off.

Sloane Stephens reveals torrent of online abuse received after US Open loss

NEW YORK, 05 SEPT [THEGUARDIAN]: American Sloane Stephens received a torrent of angry messages on social media, including racist and sexist abuse, following her third round loss to Angelique Kerber at the US Open, the tournament's 2017 champion said on Saturday.

Stephens, who is Black, said she got over 2,000 messages of abuse after Friday's 5-7 6-2 6-3 defeat.

"It's so hard to read messages like these, but I'll post a few so you guys can see what it's like after a loss," she wrote in an Instagram story.

What followed was a series of racist and sexist messages aimed at the 28-year-old Stephens.

"This type of hate is so exhausting and never

ending," she said.

"This isn't talked about enough, but it really freaking sucks... I'm happy to have people in my corner who support me. I'm choosing positive vibes over negative ones.

"I choose to show you guys happiness on here, but it's not always smiles and roses."

Stephens, who has been ranked as high as world number three, then posted supportive messages she received from her team after the loss, the people she called "the only ones who matter".

"Tough one yesterday but let me say I really like the way Sloane is progressing and where we are heading to," one message said.

"Feel super confident about the next steps.

Let's get ready to win Indian Wells and finish the year strong and start preparing to win majors and come back to the top 10."

The WTA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Stephens entered this year's season-ending grand slam at Flushing Meadows ranked 66th despite reaching the last 16 at Roland Garros and the third round at Wimbledon.

Defying her unextraordinary singles record of 15 wins and 14 losses on the year, the American fought from behind on Monday afternoon in a third-set tiebreaker to see off Madison Keys before upsetting No 21 seed Coco Gauff in a night-session match in Arthur Ashe Stadium on Wednesday.

World Cup roundup: France stumble again but Martial earns point in Ukraine

London, 05 Sept [the-Guardian]: France's winless streak stretched to five games as Les Bleus were held to a 1-1 draw away to Ukraine in their World Cup qualifier in Group D.

The world champions fell behind when Mykola Shaparenko found the back of the net after 44 minutes before Anthony Martial restored parity early in the second half.

France still top the group on nine points from five games after a 1-1 draw against Bosnia-Herzegovina on Wednesday and three days before hosting second-placed Finland, who beat Kazakhstan 1-0.

Ukraine are third behind the Finns, who also have five points, with Bosnia and Kazakhstan both on two points.

Didier Deschamps, the France coach, said: "It was much better in the second half and we have regrets in the first as we conceded the goal just after missing a chance. Playing all these matches in a row is tricky and very demanding but I'm not looking for excuses."

Martial, who scored his second international goal and his first since September 2016, said:

"It was a tough game for us today but at least we managed to equalise in a very important game."

Jonas Wind struck the only goal five minutes from time as Denmark struggled to a 1-0 win away to a stubborn Faroe Islands side in Group F. Kasper Hjulmand made nine changes from the team that beat Scotland 2-0 in midweek, giving some younger players a start in a game the Danes were expected to win comfortably but the Faroes held them scoreless through the first 45 minutes.

Wind had the ball in the net in first-half stoppage time but his effort was ruled out for offside after a VAR review. The Faroes put on a tremendous defensive display before losing Rene Jorgensen to a second booking in the 84th, with Wind heading the winning goal a minute later.

The victory leaves Denmark top of the six-team group with a maximum 15 points, five ahead of second-placed Israel, while the Faroes are fifth on one point above Moldova on goal difference. Scotland beat Moldova 1-0, while Israel were

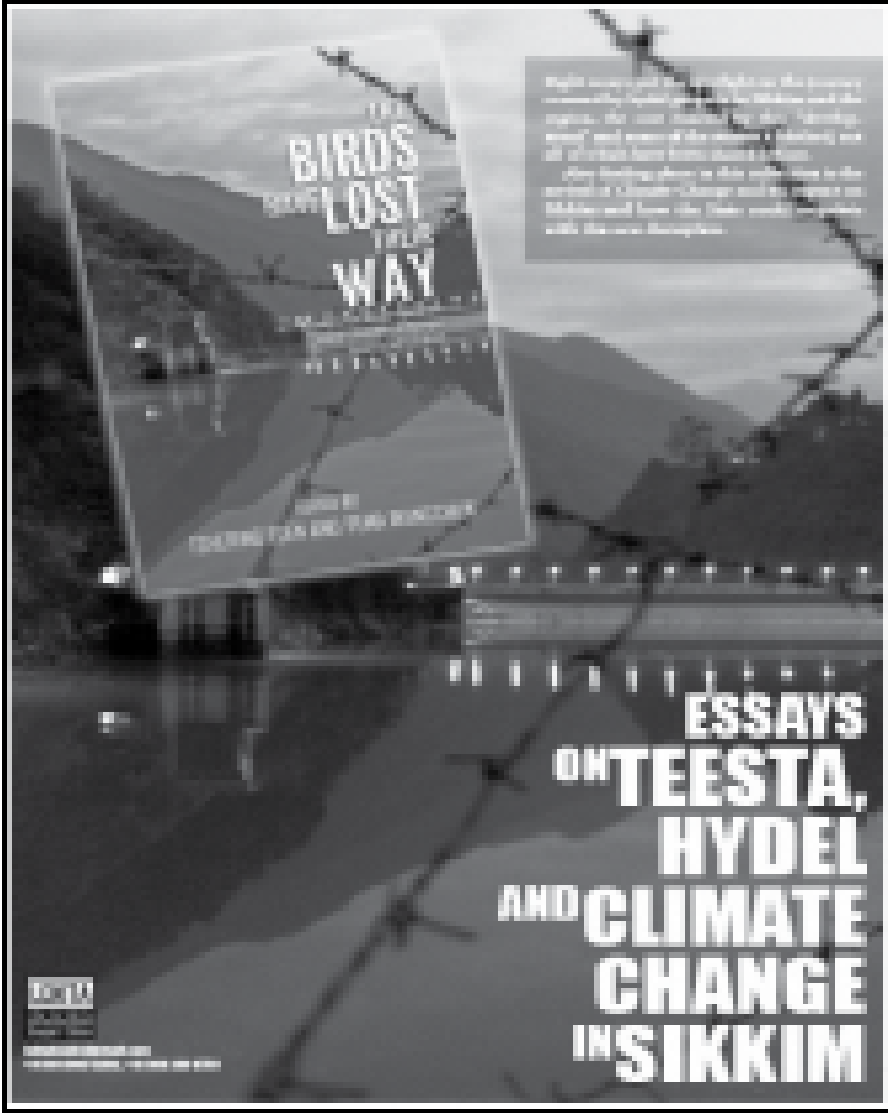
5-2 winners against Austria.

Memphis Depay scored twice to guide the Netherlands to a first win following the return of coach Louis van Gaal with an emphatic 4-0 victory over Montenegro in their Group G qualifier in Eindhoven. Depay slotted a first-half penalty and added a second goal after the break to take his recent tally to nine in as many games for the Dutch, who also scored through Georginio Wijnaldum and a first international strike for Cody Gakpo.

They are second in Group G midway through qualification with 10 points from five games, one point behind Turkey, who won 3-0 away to Gibraltar, and on the same number as third-placed Norway, who won 2-0 in Latvia.

Croatia won 1-0 in Slovenia thanks to Marcelo Brozovic's 86th minute goal and lead Group H along with Russia, who were 2-0 winners in Cyprus.

Fulham's Aleksandar Mitrovic scored twice in Serbia's 4-1 win over Luxembourg in Group A while Republic of Ireland and Azerbaijan drew 1-1.



Gareth Bale hopes fresh start at Real Madrid proves boost for Wales

BEN FISHER
MADRID, 05 SEPT [THEGUARDIAN]: Gareth Bale said he was reaping the rewards of a better environment at Real Madrid after featuring prominently under Carlo Ancelotti in the buildup to Wales's World Cup qualifiers.

Wales play Belarus in Russia on Sunday after the game was moved to Kazan because they are unable to fly into Minsk because of sanctions. Bale joked he was surprised Uefa did not pick Wembley as a neutral venue for the game because "everything else seems to be there".

On a more serious note, the captain made clear he would support his teammates by leading Wales off the pitch if they suffered racial abuse after England's victory in Hungary being marred by monkey chants and abuse. The game in Kazan will be played behind closed doors.

Robert Page, the Wales interim manager, said: "Uefa and Fifa have to step to the plate" and Bale also called for severe punishments, arguing teams guilty of abuse could be banned from competitions.

Bale said: "Action needs to be taken to stop it. If they keep repeatedly doing it, which seems to be what is happening, then you ban the country from the competition. That kicks it out straight away. If that country keeps making these horrible gestures, then maybe the best thing to do is to get rid of them, give them a suspension and hopefully they will learn their lesson.

"If anything happens to any of our players and they wanted to walk off the pitch, I'd be fully for it.

"Qualifiers are important but these matters come way above football. If we felt we weren't getting protection and being treated the right way by the governing bodies and the only way to get the best response was to walk off, I'd be fully for it." Bale has started all three of unbeaten Real's matches this season – starting three consecutive La Liga matches for the first time in two years – after returning from a loan spell at Tottenham, which he said helped him back to a happier place and provided some welcome respite. "I think that showed coming back with Wales in the Euros," Bale said. "I have brought that into Real Madrid this season, where there is a better environment for myself. Every player will tell you if they're in a happier place mentally, then physically they are going to feel better and perform better. I'm playing and a bit happier and a bit more comfortable with the playing style of Real Madrid."

Bale was reluctant to discuss his future before Euro 2020, fuelling rumours of retirement or a shock move from Madrid, but the 32-year-old is set to see out the final year of his contract in Spain after reuniting with Ancelotti, under whom he won his first Champions League.

Here we go! Inside story of the most incredible transfer window in history

FABRIZIO ROMANO

LONDON, 05 SEPT [THEGUARDIAN]: Impossible. Even just thinking of something like that. I have been repeating this to myself every day for weeks: if they had told me Cristiano Ronaldo, Leo Messi, Jack Grealish, Jadon Sancho, Sergio Ramos, Romelu Lukaku and many others would have moved in the same summer, would I have believed it? The answer is simple: no, absolutely not. I have had the privilege of experiencing the transfer market for years and it is the most beautiful thing in the world for a reason: you never know what will happen.

Every prediction can change in an instant, due to a fax, a commission, a late phone call. Everyone – agents, managers, club presidents and owners – had been repeating for months: it will be a very poor window, the clubs are in crisis and the stars will not move. Instead, it was the most incredible transfer window in history.

My summer started at half-time of a match with friends. It was the end of May, we were on vacation and it was late in the evening: I checked my phone but I didn't expect any news because it was 11pm. Two missed calls and a WhatsApp message: "Fabrizio, Zinedine Zidane has communicated to the team that he will leave Real Madrid. Tomorrow he will also notify Florentino Pérez. Do your checks."

The source is secret, but those checks were immediately positive. All true. The first breaking news of a crazy summer: at that moment I realised it would be a long three months, full of surprises and twists. Because of phone calls, messages and tweets my game ended in the 45th minute. Luckily, we were winning.

A few days later, two hours of work in the middle of the night – between 1am and 3am – to cover Georginio Wijnaldum's incredible change of mind. A verbal agreement had been reached with Barcelona, the club were preparing the medical



tests and the announcement ... then an offer arrived from Paris Saint-Germain to more than double his salary. "Gini has to decide tonight," my sources said. Phone calls, WhatsApp ... the incredible turnaround becomes reality.

My favourite feeling is when a transfer saga comes to an end with the club's official statement. A sense of liberation when fans celebrate new signings on social media. "Here we go," the same as scoring a goal in the 90th minute. Sancho's move to Manchester United was a negotiation born in February 2020 and concluded in July 2021 and I cannot begin to count how many messages I sent or phone calls I made covering this deal.

I received confirmation of the "done deal" for Raphaël Varane to Manchester United while I enjoyed one of my rare free evenings a concert by Paolo Conte, an Italian singer who accompanies my working nights with his songs, sometimes until 5am. In the middle of a song, I got two phone calls. I didn't answer, but WhatsApp saved me: "Varane OK." In

the morning I had the definitive confirmation, always key before sharing such important news.

In the Premier League, there were two record-breaking transfers: Grealish to Manchester City and Lukaku to Chelsea. I expected the first, even if it was a very tense negotiation because there was a deadline: agreement within a week or the England's player would renew his contract with Aston Villa. This was a deal when the management of those who led it was fundamental.

On the other hand, no one on the Internazionale board really expected Lukaku to leave. When I learned Inter were seriously considering Chelsea's first offer, it was a surprise that became reality very quickly.

There was fast timing also for Eduardo Camavinga at Real Madrid. I had a meeting in the afternoon of the penultimate day of the transfer market with one of my sources in Spanish football: he told me not to rule out a surprise deal for Camavinga – "it's not over yet".

In the evening while I was having dinner, I received confirmation of

Real Madrid's €31m offer (plus additions) for the Frenchman. I remember the surprised faces of those sitting at the table with me. "Offer accepted, all done: Camavinga to Real."

But I will surely never forget three particular moments. The first was a WhatsApp message I received at 11.59am on 10 August. "Everything finally signed. Hecho! [Done!]"

Messi to PSG was the hardest deal I have had to cover in my life. Every day there was different fake news: Messi is in Paris, Messi is in Ibiza, Barça are trying to keep him with a final proposal.

Every 30 minutes, I had to stress to my sources to be sure of every update. I will always carry the experience of this transfer with me: trust only your sources. From the incredible twist with Barcelona to the details of each step of the transfer to PSG. I saved that WhatsApp message in my iPhone favourites.

It will also be impossible to forget a tweet in the middle of the night in response to a Manchester United fan on the Ronaldo situation: "Yes, Jorge Mendes also had contact with United

for Cristiano." Nobody believed it. In the morning, all the sources close to the deal denied it.

Then, after three days of negotiations with Manchester City, Mendes started talking with United and the Ronaldo deal was done with impressive speed. A source told me about it in the evening when Mendes's idea was born. The next morning, the green light: "Manchester City have left the negotiations, Manchester United are closing the deal." I will not forget the emotions in reading the messages of incredulous fans.

But the craziest moment of an incredible window was the last few minutes. The Antoine Griezmann to Atlético, Saúl to Chelsea and Luuk de Jong to Barcelona deals were all linked. Each had to be finalised to allow the other deals to complete the domino effect. Everything was agreed verbally but all the contracts of a complicated triple negotiation had to be written down. Signatures did not arrive and in Spain there was talk of the deals for Griezmann and De Jong collapsing because there were problems for Saúl at Chelsea. The tension was high. Two of my sources stopped returning my calls; another kept telling me to stay "positive and calm".

After 12 exhausting hours, I received a message: "Saúl-Chelsea deal, done." Those few words at that moment were worth a whole summer. All done and signed, even Griezmann can go to Atlético and De Jong to Barça.

My tweet in that moment of tension made the fans crazy on social media, as if we were at the stadium celebrating a goal. It is impossible to forget those moments that only this work can give you.

All these complex deals taught me two great lessons: that anything can happen, but above all respecting anyone with the correct information. Sources, fans, players. Telling people what is happening is difficult and tiring – but sacred, the only real way to fall in love with this mad world. The one where reality surpasses fantasy. Arrivederci, my beloved transfer market. Here we go.

Djokovic lets emotions show at US Open as Grand Slam nears

NEW YORK, SEP 5 (AP): Novak Djokovic did not seek to keep his thoughts to himself on court, the way he mostly did through his first two U.S. Open matches. Instead, he let it all out, slapping his chest or sneering with a fist raised to celebrate success, pointing to his ear to ask the crowd for noise.

This was the Djokovic everyone is so accustomed to seeing yes, winning on the Grand Slam stage, of course, as he always does in this magical season, but also animated and into it, encouraging the spectators to join him for the ride on his path toward tennis history.

Taking another step in his bid to complete the first calendar-year Slam by a man in more than a half-century, Djokovic moved into the fourth round at Flushing Meadows for the 14th consecutive appearance, coming back to beat Kei Nishikori 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 on Saturday.

I don't plan to have those kind of emotional moments on the court, whether good or bad. It just happens, Djokovic said.

In the heat of the battle, when you feel like the moment is very important ... you just want to get those things out of yourself, out of your system try to, I guess, ride on that energy wave that you create, whether it's with yourself, whether it's with the crowd.

Djokovic, a 34-year-old from Serbia who is ranked No. 1, is now 24-0 in the



sport's four most important events this season, having won the Australian Open in February, the French Open in June and Wimbledon in July. The last man to go 4 for 4 at the majors was Rod Laver in 1969; Steffi Graf was the last woman, in 1988.

Win four more matches next week, and Djokovic also would earn his 21st career Slam trophy, breaking the men's mark he currently shares with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

I would not be honest fully if I told you I don't think or I don't believe or I don't visualize that I can win every single Grand Slam that I play in, Djokovic said.

I'm not surprised when I win Slams and big tourna-

ments because that's always a goal."

It was in the fourth round last year that Djokovic's U.S. Open ended, defaulted late in the first set for hitting a ball after ceding a game and inadvertently hitting a line judge in the throat.

Now he'll play 20-year-old American wild-card entry Jenson Brooksby or 21st-seeded Aslan Karatsev, an Australian Open semifinalist this year.

Other players advancing on a sunny Saturday included Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini and No. 13 Jannik Sinner they gave Italy a pair of men in the U.S. Open's fourth round for the first time in the event's 140-year history along with

Olympic women's gold medalist Belinda Bencic, 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu, 2020 French Open champion Iga Swiatek, two-time major finalist Karolina Pliskova and 18-year-old Emma Raducanu of Britain.

No. 1 Ash Barty and Tokyo Games men's champion Alexander Zverev were scheduled to play in the night session.

After eliminating a couple of inexperienced opponents ranked 121st and 145th, Djokovic faced someone with a far better resume in Nishikori, who was the runner-up at the 2014 U.S. Open and has been as high as No. 4.

Here, though, was the problem for Nishikori heading

into this encounter: He'd lost his last 16 matches against Djokovic. And while Nishikori, to loud roars from the stands in Arthur Ashe Stadium, stole the first set, the march to No. 17 in a row was soon in progress.

I don't think I started off very well. I was quite passive. I was too far back in the court. He was dictating the play, Djokovic said.

He played much quicker and more aggressive than my opponents in the opening rounds did.

One key stat: Djokovic made 20 unforced errors in the first set, then reduced that to an average of 10 1/2 per set over the last three.

Here's more: Djokovic came up with a high-for-him

15 aces.

I couldn't break the wall, Nishikori said.

He's very tough 'til the end.

And Djokovic reacted to vital moments with joy, eliciting similar displays from fans, who were barred from the tournament in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The crowd was involved. It was loud. It was nice, Djokovic said.

I thrived on that.

When he broke to lead 2-1 in the second set by winning a fantastic point that ended with both men near the net, he spun around and yelled, mouth agape. In his guest box, his wife, Jelena, stood and shouted, Come on!

When Djokovic saved a break point in the third set, he indicated he wanted louder cheers by reaching for his right ear, then wagging his fingers. When he broke to go up 5-3, he pursed his lips to say, Ooh! In the next game, he reacted to a netted drop shot by tapping himself on the head with his racket three times, then screamed first toward one side of the stands, then another, when he claimed that set.

Djokovic described his improved play as the match wore on, stretching past 3 1/2 hours, as getting that groove back and getting that rhythm.

In other words, he might just be hitting his stride.

Maybe, Nishikori said, "he's feeling that inside a lot of pressure but I couldn't see that during the match.

Afghanistan: Panjshir forces claim hundreds of Taliban captured

KABUL, 05 SEPT [ALJAZEERA]: Taliban and opposition forces continue to battle to control the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul with resistance fighters saying they captured hundreds of Taliban troops.

The National Resistance Front (NRF) of Afghanistan, grouping forces loyal to local leader Ahmad Massoud, said on Sunday it surrounded “thousands of terrorists” in Khawak Pass and the Taliban abandoned vehicles and equipment in the Dashte Re-wak area.

NRF spokesman Fahim Dashti added “heavy clashes” were going on.

Al Jazeera’s Charles Stratford, based in the capital Kabul, reported sources on the ground said hundreds of Taliban fighters had been taken prisoner on Sunday.

“Sources within the valley are saying the NRF are claiming to have captured about 1,500 Taliban. Apparently, these fighters were surrounded,” said Stratford.

Dashti wrote on Twitter that Paryan district had been completely emptied of Taliban fighters.

Nearly 1,000 Taliban fighters were either killed, wound-



ed, or taken captive after the exit route behind them was closed off, Dashti said. The information could not be verified independently.

Meanwhile, Taliban spokesman Bilal Karimi said on Twitter on Sunday its forces seized five of the province’s seven districts. Karimi said Khinj and Unabah districts had been taken, he said.

“The Mujahideen [Taliban

fighters] are advancing toward the centre [of the province],” he wrote.

Panjshir is the last Afghan province holding out against the armed group that swept to power last month.

Both sides claimed to have the upper hand in Panjshir but neither could produce conclusive evidence to prove it. The Taliban was unable to control the valley when it ruled Af-

ghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

US General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underscored the tenuous situation.

“My military estimate is, is that the conditions are likely to develop of a civil war. I don’t know if the Taliban is going to be able to consolidate power and establish governance,” Milley said.

If the Taliban cannot quash

resistance, it will “in turn lead to a reconstitution of al-Qaeda or a growth of ISIS or other myriad of terrorist groups” over the next three years, said Milley.

Emergency, an Italian medical aid organisation, said Taliban forces had pushed further into the Panjshir Valley on Friday night, reaching the village of Anabah where the group has medical facilities.

Heavy gunfire heard in Guinea capital Conakry: Witnesses



CONAKRY, 05 SEPT [ALJAZEERA]: Heavy gunfire has been reported in the heart of Guinean capital Conakry near the presidential palace though it was unclear who was responsible.

A senior government official said on Sunday that President Alpha Conde was unharmed but gave no further details.

A military source told Reuters news agency the bridge connecting the rest of the city to the Kaloum neighbourhood, which houses most ministries and the presidential palace, had been sealed off and many soldiers were posted around the palace.

A witness said he saw a civilian with gunshot wounds.

Footage shared on social media showed heavy gunfire ringing out over the city, and vehicles full of soldiers approaching the central bank, close to the palace.

A Reuters reporter saw two convoys of armoured vehicles and pick-up trucks heading towards Conakry Autonomous Port, also near the palace. The convoy was accompanied by a white vehicle that appeared to be an ambulance.

Al Jazeera’s Nicolas Haque, reporting from

Dakar in neighbouring Senegal, said troops had been deployed in downtown Conakry and ordered residents over loudspeakers to remain indoors.

“President Alpha Conde early this morning went out towards Hotel Kaloum where he was suspectedly ambushed by people who started shooting at him. We know now that he is inside that hotel. He is safe and well. But there continues to be a gun battle in that district,” Haque said.

“This comes a week after the national parliament voted an increase in budget for the presidency and parliamentarians, but a substantial decrease for those working in the security services like the police and the military.”

Conde won a third presidential term in a violently disputed election last October. He ran after pushing through a new constitution in March 2020 which allowed him to sidestep the country’s two-term limit, provoking mass protests.

Dozens of people were killed during demonstrations, often in clashes with security forces. Hundreds were also arrested.

Fears of violence on Brazil’s streets as millions rally to back Bolsonaro

SINOP, 05 SEPT [THE GUARDIAN]: Jair Bolsonaro supporters aren’t hard to find in Sinop, an agricultural boomtown in the Brazilian Amazon where nearly 80% of voters backed the country’s ultra-conservative leader in the 2018 election.

“He’s a president of the people,” said Marcos Watanabe, the head of the city’s conservative association, sporting a T-shirt stamped with Bolsonaro’s name.

Few, however, are as passionate as the president of Sinop’s farmers’ union, Ilson José Redivo, who has placed a billboard of his leader outside its headquarters with the slogan: “We believe in God and we value the family. We’re with Bolsonaro.”

“He’s trying to change Brazil,” said the 64-year-old corn and soya bean farmer who hosted the rightwing populist in Sinop last year at an event attended by members of the region’s powerful agribusiness elite.

Redivo is one of millions of Bolsonaro devotees expected to hit the streets on 7 September for one in a series of mass rallies that have jolted Brazilian politics and left many citizens fretting over the future of their country’s young democracy.

“It will be the largest demonstration Brazil has ever seen,” Redivo claimed on Friday as he prepared to make the 780-mile journey to Brazil’s capital, Brasília, where one of the largest mobilisations will be held.

Redivo said at least 20 buses were setting off from the state capital, Cuiabá, as well as other towns and cities across the agricultural heartlands, where Bolsonaro’s dilution of environmental regulations and pro-development rhetoric

have made him a hero to many.

Another giant rally will be held at the heart of Brazil’s economic capital, São Paulo.

For Redivo, the marches – timed to coincide with the anniversary of Brazil’s independence from Portugal, on 7 September 1822 – are about championing an embattled leader whose ratings have nosedived as a result of a coronavirus outbreak that has killed more than 580,000 Brazilians and corruption allegations involving Bolsonaro’s family and government.

“I feel outrage about what they’re doing with the president of the republic,” Redivo said, denouncing the attacks on Bolsonaro by members of what he called Brazil’s “ruddy left”.

“It’s impossible to fathom how there are people denigrating the image of the very country they live in. These people aren’t even remotely patriotic or even in the slightest bit Brazilian,” the farmer fumed.

But the demonstrations have stoked anger and trepidation among Bolsonaro’s political foes, who fear there could be mayhem and violence as radicalised and potentially gun-wielding supporters, including from among the police, flood the streets.

Some worry that 7 September could turn out to be Brazil’s answer to 6 January, the day hardcore supporters of Donald Trump – Bolsonaro’s political idol – went on the rampage in Washington, leaving five dead. Others fear that Bolsonaro, a former soldier known for his admiration of authoritarian leaders, might even be plotting a self-coup, by which the democratically elected president tries to seize dictatorial powers.

Palestinian prisoner admitted to house arrest to give birth

OCCUPIED WEST BANK, PALESTINE, 05 SEPT [ALJAZEERA]: Following Palestinian outrage and a public campaign that went viral and drew international attention and condemnation, a heavily pregnant Palestinian detainee was released from an Israeli jail to house arrest to give birth at home.

Anhar al-Deek, 25, in her ninth month of pregnancy, was released from Israel’s Damon prison late on Thursday to house arrest in the village of Kafr Nai’ma in the Israeli occupied West Bank after paying a bond of more than \$12,000.

She was jailed after spending months in detention in Israel’s Hasharon prison in solitary confinement where she was interrogated and subjected to harsh conditions despite being pregnant.

Anhar was arrested

in March after entering an illegal Israeli settlement outpost near Kafr Nai’ma constructed on land belonging to the al-Deek family.

Following a confrontation with a dozen settlers, Anhar was arrested by Israeli soldiers who accused her of an attempted knifing attack.

As the impending birth of her child approached, the Israeli Prison Services (IPS) repeatedly denied requests by her family and lawyers for her release on humanitarian grounds so she could give birth surrounded by her family.

“Prior to her release, we had repeatedly asked ourselves why a sedated, pregnant woman giving birth would pose any security threat to the Israeli authorities and would need to be shackled,” said Ansari.

“The detention, in-

carceration and ill-treatment of pregnant women is in violation of international humanitarian law, specifically Article 76 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August, 1949, which requires that detained pregnant women and mothers having dependent infants ‘have their cases considered with the utmost priority.’”

UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders explicitly states: “Instruments of restraint shall never be used on women during labour, during birth and immediately after birth.”

Ansari said Hasharon Prison, where the majority of Anhar’s interrogation took place, was also known for its harsh conditions, said Ansari.

“The cells are small, there is a lack of medical staff, the food is not good and the women have no privacy while under 24-hour surveillance,” she added.

As Anhar’s prolonged detention continued, an enraged Palestinian public held protests in her village, in cities across the West Bank, in Gaza, as well as outside the prison in Israel where she was imprisoned.

Her family and supporters appealed for international intervention with the Palestinian Authority representative to the United Nations outlining to the international organisation the harsh conditions under which Anhar was jailed while the Palestinian health minister expressed concern.

The International Red Cross had also monitored developments.

Women march in Kabul to demand role in Taliban government

KABUL, , 04 SEPT [ALJAZEERA]: Dozens of women took to the streets of the capital on Saturday to demand their right to work, a role in any future government, and a seat at the table in discussions with the Taliban.

The protest began with 50 women marching towards the presidential palace.

However, Razia Barakzai, 26, said the women were stopped near the entrance to the finance ministry, where the Taliban “surrounded” them and kept them from continuing on their march towards the palace entrance.

Barakzai said the Taliban had employed both pepper spray and tear gas to try and disburse



the crowd. “We were calm and peaceful the entire time, but they just wanted to stop us at any cost,” she told Al Jazeera.

Saturday’s demonstration marks at least the fourth time women in Kabul and the western city of Herat have gathered to demand their rights in a future Taliban-led government. Barakzai said the Taliban which tried to encircle the protesters were

wearing red banners and carrying guns.

“These weren’t ordinary Taliban forces,” she said.

The crowd was surrounded on all four sides by the Taliban, who told them, according to Barakzai, “Go home, each of you one by one.” However, getting out proved to be just as difficult, since the Taliban continued to surround them.

“It was strange, they

didn’t want us to stay, but they also wouldn’t let us leave.”

Barakzai also said one of the women was struck by the Taliban. Social media images showed a young woman bleeding from the head, where she claimed the Taliban had struck her.

Al Jazeera could not independently verify exactly how she was injured.

Barakzai, who previously worked for a government office, said the latest action was in response to a recent statement by senior Taliban leader Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, who in an interview said there “may not” be a place for women in the higher echelons of a future Tal-



Fast And Furious 9 Review: Excess Drives Vin Diesel And Company's Enterprise

Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel) is pitted against his brother Jakob Toretto (John Cena) in Fast And Furious 9, a movie that spares no effort to live up to the long-running franchise's reputation. Excess drives the enterprise and gives it a frenzied tempo. It has no room for pitstops.

The plot broadly involves the male protagonist reuniting with his team to scuttle an evil conspiracy and smash everything in their way to shards. Daniel Casey and returning director Justin Lin's screenplay never veers away from formula. It conjures up gravity-defying stunts and electromagnetic mayhem that, in the pursuit of thrills, inevitably falls prey to the law of diminishing returns.

Dominic and Letty Ortiz (Michelle Rodriguez) are dragged out of a life of "peace and quiet" by their former mates. The mission is new, the tropes are old. The film takes them literally off the road and (in the case of a couple of the combatants) into outer space.

The action is unabashedly bonkers - cars drive through exploding landmines and over precipitous cliffs and often come out in one piece -and the fraternal animosity around which the plot is built is overly contrived.

A vehicle is stuck between two rock faces. As it slips towards the ground, it dangles over a landmine. The occupant wriggles out of the car in the nick of time. The landmine blows up. The automobile soars into the air and the mangled heap comes crashing down on the guy who has just escaped the blast. Or so it seems.

The man emerges unscathed from behind the billowing fumes. His mate asks: "How the hell are you not dead?" That is exactly the question that you, too, will be tempted to ask on a number of subsequent occasions to a number of the other characters caught in similar life-threatening situations. But this is Fast and Furious. So, no questions asked!

Roman Pearce (Tyrese Gibson) and Tej Parker (Ludacris) wonder at one point why they have emerged from so many dangerous missions without suffering so much as a scratch. Maybe we are not so normal, one of them concludes. Are you suggesting, Ramsey (Nathalie Emmanuel) interjects, that you two are invincible?

As the two hunky siblings whose muscles are far more expressive than their faces battle it out - one does everything in his power to protect the world, the other to control it - the film throws logic - and caution - to the wind.

Repeating a homily done to death, Helen Mirren's Queenie Shaw says to Dom, "There is nothing more powerful than love of family." If it turns into anger and resentment, the lady continues in the same breath, "there is nothing more dangerous".

That is the point that Fast And Furious 9 pivots around as Dom and his team - Letty, Tej, Ramsey and Roman - go all out to stop Dom's estranged brother

massive truck carrying an electromagnetic that sends vehicles in its path into wild flips and flops. If you still haven't got it, do not ask questions.

The anything-goes spirit that Ramsey, Tej and Roman bring to the table is a perfect commentary on Fast And Furious 9. These characters are human equivalents of the Pontiac Fiero fitted with a propulsion engine. They walk into bizarre situations with doubts



from getting his hands on a device that could spell doom for the world. Dom's sister Mia (Jordana Brewster) resurfaces. Reluctantly, big brother lets her join his team.

It turns into a veritable family affair. Dom's little curly-haired son Brian also pops up now and then to underscore the power of a domesticated Dom. Fast And Furious isn't only about fights and fitful muscularity. It is also about two brothers and one sister trying to mend the ties that snapped several decades ago in tragic and fiery circumstances.

Fast And Furious 9 holds nothing back. Crashes and explosions continue unabated as a multiplicity of other characters, expectedly, jump into the fray. Dom's pals come calling with an SOS signal they have received from Mr. Nobody (Kurt Russell).

The latter's plane has crashed in a militarized zone in South America. In the fuselage, Dom and his team find one-half of a device that can hack any computerised weapons system and cause havoc. But they quickly lose it when a private army led by Jakob ambushes them.

Dom has to reckon with two other adversaries - unflappable cyberterrorist Cipher (Charlize Theron) and "spoilt rich prick" Otto (Thue Ersted Rasmussen), who believes that the world is run by men of his ilk. But Dom has plenty of active assistance available, notably from hacker Ramsey, who, despite never having learnt to drive, takes control of a

in their minds but quickly, and merrily, shrug them off as the action engulfs them.

One character says to another, "If we follow the laws of physics, we'll be fine... it's all science and math." Take that with a fistful of salt and go along. Yes, the ride is dizzyingly bumpy and boggles and numbs the mind by turns.

Fast And Furious began all of two decades ago. It isn't 2001 anymore and the world has come a long way down the road. So, some of the action set-pieces that the film packs into its two and a half hours seem outdated, or at least do not take us by as much surprise as they did in the earlier films.

The changed times have had some impact on Fast And Furious 9 - the women are no longer mere props. The men still do most of the heavy lifting, but the girls, too, get their moment in the sun. Be it Rodriguez, Brewster, Emmanuel or newcomer Anna Sawai, none of them is a mere appendage.

Be aware of what Fast And Furious has become and where it is headed - that is precisely what Dom, too, wants to find out about a brother who has gone rogue - and you will probably not be unduly flummoxed by the heights of absurd exaggeration that the film reaches for.

Fast And Furious 9 is the first big Hollywood film to arrive in our cinemas in many months. Aren't we glad that Vin Diesel and company are back with all the deafening din and destruction that the franchise draws strength from?



PEACE, LOVE AND PILATES! Model Olivia Culpo is spotted after exiting her fitness class in West Hollywood.

From Arjun Kapoor In Kabir Singh To Saif Ali Khan In Race 3: Bollywood Celebs Who Were Mysteriously Replaced From Their Movies



When it comes to the Hindi film fraternity, time and again we have heard of instances where actors have been replaced. While some have come out in the open to talk about them being replacements, others have been reported by the media. While in some cases, we saw actors being replaced in the very first movie of the franchise, in certain cases, they have been replaced from the sequel of their own movies. So today, with respect to reports in BollywoodLife, we take a look at 3 such occasions

Arjun Kapoor: Media reports suggest that Arjun Kapoor was a hot choice for the movie but eventually, it was director Sandeep Reddy Vanga and the team who went ahead with Shahid Kapoor

Govinda: Govinda was removed from Ranbir Kapoor and Anurag Basu's Jagga Jasoos

despite having shot for the film. Ranbir was once quoted as saying, Unfortunately, the entire track has been chopped off; it is our fault, Basu, and mine. We had started this film very prematurely, without a complete script. The character had completely changed, and the film was taking so long. It is very irresponsible, and very unfair to cast a great legend like Govinda and not give justice to his role. It is very unfortunate the way things panned out. We are apologetic, but it is for the best of the film that we had to cut that track out

Saif Ali Khan: Saif is that one name that has been synonymous with the Race franchise for a long time until Race 3. However, eventually, things didn't work out and hence despite having been offered the same, Saif didn't connect with his role and hence had to skip

How Kanye West is following in Kim Kardashian's footsteps with his new project

Kanye West knows a "Devil in a New Dress" needs an equally fire humble abode.

The 44-year-old rapper, who recently released his 10th studio album, Donda, is already hard at work with an exciting new project—and it has nothing to do with music.

In fact, it appears Kanye will soon follow in the footsteps of Martha Stewart, Gwyneth

Paltrow and his ex Kim Kardashian.

According to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Yeezy designer is preparing to launch his very own lifestyle brand.

More specifically, the Jesus Is King rapper has set his sights on releasing a variety of home goods, with trademarked items such as

blankets, pillowcases, shower curtains, towels, place-mats, textile wall hangings (to name a few), as well as a range of children's homeware all bearing his name.

The "Flashing Lights" artist filed the trademark request on Aug. 27, public records show.

At this time, it's unclear when the rapper, who al-

ready owns the rights to use his name on apparel and music merchandise, plans to expand his empire and enter the lifestyle space. He has yet to publicly comment on his home goods line.

Kanye's upcoming venture comes exactly one year after E! News reported Kim was coming out with KKW Home, a home décor brand.

Aries:

This is a time of connecting with your sibling(s) on a deeper level, of moving past the differences and focusing on the sacred threads that bind you together. Some of you may be connecting with your old friends too, especially the ones you went to school or college with. On the work front, things may not be looking picture-perfect, though. We've got a 'bad boss' situation at hand or a case of colleagues who try to sabotage your growth. Word for the wise: protect your interests and set boundaries where you need to. Tip: This is a time of connecting with your sibling(s) on a deeper level.

Taurus:

When a brand new opportunity knocks at your door, don't waste time worrying about 'the how' and 'the why'. Simply say 'yes' and give yourself the permission to figure everything out as you go along. Remember, things that are slow to build have a way of delivering in the long run. Venusians who've been making space for love will find that this is a time of deepening your intimacy. A time of breaking past the barriers and allowing your beloved to see who you truly are. Tip: A brand new work opportunity could come knocking at your door.

Gemini:

Let's take a moment to revisit your monthly reading: love is not logical, Gemini. It's beautiful and messy all the same, and

in your case, it's challenging you to grow differently. It doesn't matter how many times you've been let down before or how many times you will be let down in the future. Stay present to this connection. Open, allow, and receive. Let your heart expand with love.

Tip: Be present to the connection the Universe is offering you in this moment.

Cancer:

Cancer, you've been down this road before, where you said yes to everything that came your way and took on more responsibility than you're equipped to handle—and the thing about this road is that it leads to utter and complete chaos. But, it's not too late now, is it? You still have the chance to unburden yourself. So, release the shame associated with being vulnerable as you make space for your fellow warriors to step in.

Tip: How much is too much?

Leo:

Today, the cards are urging you to celebrate your soul family. The Motley Crew that is attuned to your frequency, and shares a connection with you that goes beyond space and time. Pay attention to how they are showing up for you. The manner in which they are supporting your ascension and propelling you towards the light. Today, in your special way, let them know how their presence has enriched your life.

Tip: It's time to celebrate your Motley Crew, Leo!

Virgo:

You've got that big goal energy about you that reads 'the impossible is possible'. It's all about commitment and consistency in the Virgo HQ, coupled with the ability to take both success and failure in your stride. Besides, it's the things that don't work out that teach us more than our victories ever will. Acknowledging the contribution of your team members is also showing up as a big theme in your cards. Lead by example, wild one, and let both your actions and words reflect how grateful you are for their efforts.

Tip: It's all about that big goals energy here!

Libra:

You've been down this road, Libra. You've made the same mistakes over and over. Do you really want to get stuck in this endless loop once again, knowing how much it affects your mental and emotional health? Step back and reassess, beautiful. As you do, remember that you don't need anybody else to validate your efforts, tell you that you're worthy, or give you the pat on the back that you deserve.

Tip: Become aware of your tendency to repeat unhealthy patterns.

Scorpio:

It's transition time, baby! In other words, you're moving

away from the turbulent waters and making your way to calmer shores. It's been one helluva ride, hasn't it? But, you wouldn't trade your experiences for anything, as they have helped you deepen your awareness of the self and become the person you are today. So, take a moment to reflect upon the lessons from your past as you turn your knowledge into wisdom. It gets better from here—we promise.

Tip: It's transition time!

Sagittarius:

This is a wonderful time for you, Sagittarius. Those who have been fighting to be in the public eye will find that their big dream is finally taking concrete form. Ditto for those who have been working behind-the-scenes and are seeking recognition for their work. Don't let your glories make you complacent, though. There's a lot more to achieve this year. Even when things seem a bit slow on the outside, find the courage within you to keep moving forward.

Tip: You've got fame + recognition on your cards.

Capricorn:

Clarity is an integral part of the manifestation process. The clearer you are about what you're calling in, the easier it is for the Universe to deliver your share of blessings to you. Sending out mixed signals, on the other hand, is only going to attract the energy of chaos. So, step back

and reflect, Capricorn. As you do, ask yourself how and where you need to realign with your purpose. Remember: It's not for you to worry about 'the how' and 'the why'. Your job is simply to show up for what you love and to let the divine plan unfold as it must.

Tip: Set back, realign, and set focused intentions.

Aquarius:

The cards are pointing towards the ever elusive work-life balance. The idea that you can have a creatively, spiritually and emotionally fulfilling life whilst making a lot of money and serving humanity at large. Something tells us you are going to perfect the balancing act in the days to come. When it comes to decision making, the balance you need to strike is between your mind and your heart. Keeping the collective in mind will help you make an unbiased decision here.

Tip: Before you make the decision, find a balance between your head and your heart.

Pisces:

So what if it didn't work out the first time? So, what if you faced many, many challenges along your path? Beware of making failure and rejection a part of your story, especially when the Universe is presenting you with another reality. Motivate yourself to try a little harder this time around. If only you knew all the strings that were being pulled on your behalf!

Tip: The Universe has got your back!