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INDRA NOOYI HAS MEMOIR
OUT IN SEPTEMBER**
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SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 75 | Gangtok | Friday 19 March 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

CM felicitates Tarundeep Rai



GANGTOK, 18 MAR (IPR): Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang today felicitated Padma Shree awardee, Tarundeep Rai, on qualifying for the Olympic Games scheduled to begin in Tokyo on 23 July, 2021.

At a programme hosted at Mintokgang, the Chief Minister extended his best wishes and congratulated the accomplished archer.

On the occasion, he also presented a cheque of Rs 5 lakh to Mr Rai on behalf of the Government of Sikkim as a token of support towards his endeavours.

The Chief Minister stated that sports has many benefits especially in terms of health and should be a fundamental part of our lives apart from being a great source of employment and

livelihood.

He urged the youth to draw inspiration from individuals like Tarundeep Rai and embark on their journey towards success.

Further, he added that playgrounds in each district will be upgraded according to the standard requirements and directed the officials of the concerned department to prioritise inter-house sports events in all the schools in the State.

Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Department Kunga Nima Lepcha, Political Secretary to the CM, Jacob Khaling, Secretary (CMO), Joint Secretary (CMO), Tarundeep Rai's wife and officials from the Sports Department were also present on the occasion.

Govt orders fresh COVID-19 restrictions

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

The State Government has ordered fresh restrictions in Sikkim for containment of COVID-19.

In an order issued today, the Home Department has imposed restrictions on vehicular movement as well as business establishments at night.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister, PS Tamang, had announced the restrictions on Wednesday itself after attending a video conference with Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

The conference, attended by Chief Ministers of all states including the heads of the Union Territories, had been called to discuss the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in the country.

Except for emergency purposes, no vehicular movement will be allowed after 10:30 pm till



6 am. These restrictions will not apply to commercial goods vehicles including LCVs and vehicles on emergency duty.

All commercial establishment including restaurants, bars, night clubs, discos, pubs, gyms, etc will have to close by

10 pm. Special drives will be carried out in schools, institutions and establishments to ensure that students, employees and customers continue to follow social distancing norms and wearing of masks.

The order also states

that the police will increase vigil in this regard and "strictly enforce the norms in public places."

The Chief Minister has appealed to the people of Sikkim to regularly wear masks and continue to follow social distancing and Covid proto-

cols to remain safe from the disease.

Daily Covid cases in Sikkim, meanwhile, have been on a steady decline. Today, for instance, the state reported only two new cases and yesterday, three fresh cases were reported in the State.

2 new cases, 2636 more vaccinated

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

COVID vaccination continues in Sikkim with 2636 persons receiving COVID vaccine shots in different parts of the State on Wednesday.

Of the 2636 people, 2271 received the first dose of the vaccine and 365 completed their vaccination schedule with the second dose today.

In his daily health bulletin on Thursday, Health Department State IEC Officer, SonamGyaltsen Bhutia informed that 118 healthcare workers [78 first dose & 40 second dose] and 476 frontline workers [151 first dose & 325 second dose] were vaccinated on Wednesday in the State.

Likewise, 420 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years with comorbidities and 1622 persons falling in the 60 years and above category also received the first dose of their COVID vaccine, he added.

Meanwhile, Sikkim



recorded only two new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours and with this the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 stands at 6196.

These two cases were picked up from the testing of 157 samples on Wednesday and both were found positive in RT-PCR testing [of 118 samples].

Mr Bhutia informed that one person from Melli Bazaar and another from NHPC quarter Dung

Dung tested positive for COVID-19.

On the other hand, the figure of recovered cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim is still at 5916 with no new recovery in the last 24 hours in the State. There are currently 48 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State.

On Wednesday, three new cases were detected in the State in the testing of 133 samples.

Two persons from Ranipool in East District and one person from

Melli Bazaar in South District had tested.

On the other hand, 2041 persons were provided the shield of COVID vaccines in the State on Tuesday, of whom 1771 persons have received the first dose of the vaccine and 270 persons have completed their vaccine schedule with the second shot.

While seeing further break-up of vaccinations, 155 healthcare workers [119 first dose and 36

second dose], 294 frontline workers [164 first dose and 130 second dose], 105 persons [102 first dose and 03 second dose] in age group of 45 to 59 years and 411 persons in age group 60 years and above were vaccinated for COVID-19 in East District.

In West District, 07 healthcare workers [5 first dose and 2 second dose], 102 frontline workers [3 first dose and 99 second dose], 149 in age group of 45 to 59 years and 502 persons in age group 60 years and above, while 22 persons in age group of 45 to 59 years and 102 persons in age group 60 years and above in North District were received their vaccine shots.

Likewise, 01 healthcare workers, 08 frontline workers, 02 person in age group of 45 to 59 years and 181 persons in age group 60 years and above in South District were also vaccinated for COVID-19.

VIEWPOINT

Why are Students Dropping Out of School?

JIWAN RAI

The Sikkim University Mass Communication department has designed and initiated an intriguingly novel project for its students. Various groups of students identify their respective villages and study local issues. They collect data, speak to local stakeholders, interview some of them, rope in local resource persons and design and implement basic remedial steps. Some of their findings are instantly striking. One thing that jumps out at you from all the groups' projects is the paucity of media attention rural issues get. The media is so annoyingly urban centric - as though human problems in villages have less human stake in them.

Out of all, it was their findings on students dropping out of school that particularly caught my attention. More than the number of students that drop out up to class X, the reasons behind their dropping out struck me harder. Most of their findings can be broadly categorized under two groups: namely practical consideration (marriage, responsibility to look after siblings) and financial crisis. Apparently, some school heads or teachers squarely blamed it on parents. "Parents do not send their children to school" was a standard line.

What worries me acutely is our lack of willingness to delve into the issue deeper. This is not to mean that students did not delve deeper. What I am saying here is that we as society and stakeholders do not have the honesty to own up to our shortcomings. There is a third reason behind children dropping out of school which is the most significant one and yet most ignored. It is called 'disillusionment with the system'. Schools, academicians, HRDD and educationists are either blissfully unaware, hopelessly inefficient or shamelessly indifferent to the fact that our school system is not competent and equipped to deal with the third reason. Our schools focus on their minds, completely ignoring their hearts. Students bring their heads to school but they do not leave their hearts at home. Students are as much learners with academic needs as they are growing humans with complicated emotional needs. Except for a few remarkably skilled teachers, the rest do not have the time and skill to deal with their emotional needs. Some of the best of teachers lack this skill. Some students perform well academically. For them, the institutional support is adequate. But many children need relational support as much as they need institutional support. It is here the system is bungled.

There is also our cultural setup that backfires. In India, an intensely competitive society, a spirit of competitiveness is severely critical. The weaker ones stand no chance. As if that is not alarming enough, our motivational tactics are harsh. We have adopted a reserve method. We humiliate them to make them feel motivated and vindictive so that they will attempt to raise their performance level. Some teachers coldly shame overage children by calling them 'uncle', 'aunt' and even 'grandfather/grandmother'. "You old fellow, look, your kids have caught up with you. Even your beard is graying" they say. They have equally demeaning things to say against below average and poorly performing students. Of course some teachers say these things with no malicious intention. However, such harsh words mercilessly kill their spirit.

Also, our schools are unequipped to deal with students with behavioural issues. Many schools have no effective method to deal with absenteeism or truancy. They fine them. They call their guardians. There is nothing beyond that. Schools do not know how to deal with students having substance abuse issues and alcoholism.

On the other hand, many parents think that schools have a magical wand to fix their children's issues. When their children do not like to go to school, they fully depend on schools to convince them. Children's disillusionment is tricky and complicated. Parents are also to blame for failing to inspire and motivate their kids to go to school. There are two extremes of pressuring children to perform beyond their ability and completely disregarding their ability. When children see that their parents do not care about building their own academic ability, they get disillusioned. When children see their parents obsessed with material gain and totally disinterested in reading and studying, they get disillusioned. They get disillusioned when their parents push them to achieve their own dreams that they could not achieve.

The silent pandemic of children dropping out of schools need intervention from all stakeholders. The Sikkim University students deserve social attention. It is time for the rest to pick up the ball and run.

Four Ministers get first shot of vaccine

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

About 47,000 people in the state have been vaccinated against COVID-19 so far, and today, four Ministers also got their first dose of the vaccine.

The Ministers who were vaccinated today at STNM Hospital are Health Minister, Dr. MK Sharma, Agriculture Minister, LN Nepal, Power Minister MN Sherpa and Tourism Minister, BS Panth.

Chief Minister PS Tamang was also told to get vaccinated but he could not do so today because he is slightly unwell, Dr Sharma informed.



SummitTIMES IN NEPALI



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Prakash Thapa assures development for Arithang II

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 MAR:**

A social worker from Arithang II, Prakash Thapa, who is popularly known as Jiwan in the area, is also in the fray for the upcoming municipal election. He is contesting from Arithang II ward of Gangtok Municipality Corporation with the symbol of Cake.

Speaking to media persons here today, Mr Thapa has said, if given a chance, he will work at the grassroot level and

act as a bridge between the people and the government.

Better roads, electricity and water supply, upgradation of jhoras and construction of foot-path and taxi stand in the area are some of the issues he plans to work on.

Mr Thapa also assured to work for the youth of the area. He appealed to the people to support him in this election to convert all his visions and agendas for the ward into reality.

South Election Observer visits Polling Booths

NAMCHI, 18 MAR (IPR):

The State Election Commission has appointed Secretary (Sikkim, Housing and Development Board) CK Chettri as Election Observer for all the wards of Namchi Municipal Council (NMC) and Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat (NJNP). He visited several polling booths under NMC and NJNP today. The Election Observer was accompanied by MEO (Namchi), Lakpa Sherpa and Booth Level Officers.

In Namchi he stopped by polling booths at Namchi Senior Secondary School Room Number I and II under Gang-

yap Ward; Namchi Old Primary School Room No I and II under Dambudara Ward; Namchi New Secondary School under Upper Ghurpisey Ward; Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Institute for the Visually Handicapped under Upper Boomtar Ward.

For Naya-Bazar Jorethang the Election Observer visited Senior Secondary School, Jorethang Booth II and III for Trikaleshwar and Daragaon Wards, respectively. The team also went to New SNT Terminus, Jorethang booth I and II for Majhigoan Ward and Naya-Bazar Junior High School for Naya-Bazar Ward.

ICAR-KVK East conducts field day on potato cultivation

GANGTOK, 17 MAR (PIB):

The potato crop has always been the 'common man's friend'. Potatoes are good source of carbohydrates and are used with many food preparations especially for vegetable purposes it has become one of the most popular crops in this country. It serves as source of low cost energy in the human diet. As potatoes have regular market demand one can get decent profits with proper cultivation practices. Selection of quality and disease-free tubers is the key factor for commercial success of the potato crops. Keeping in view above facts, potato variety Kufri Sindhuri was selected for demonstration in Sikkim due to its certain favorable characteristics for the region as Kufri Sindhuri is a moderately resistant to early blight, and tolerant to late blight disease.

ICAR-KVK, East Sikkim conducted a field day on Organic Potato Production Technology at Nandok village, East Sikkim on 16 Mar, 2021. The main aim of the programme was to showcase the success of potato cultivation in the farmers' field with the active participation of 33 nos. progressive farmers from four numbers of villages for food security.

The programme was organised under the leadership of Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong. He highlighted

about the importance of potato cultivation for livelihood improvement and mentioned that farmers can undertake seed storage of not only the potato but also other crops with scientific storage techniques. He also stressed that the technology transfer through farmers to farmers is better than the other extension techniques.

SMS (Plant Breeding) & In-charge Head, Dr JK Singh, KVK-East Sikkim briefed about the seed production of potato along with other crops and its storage which leads in self dependency for the seed requirement.

SMS (Agronomy), Dr Manoj Kumar explained the organic potato production technology and storage of potato seed which can be used for next season. Scientist (Agronomy), Dr Amit Kumar deliberated upon nutrient and weed management in potato cultivation for higher production and income. Panchayat Member, Doma Lepcha, Lower Nandok told that all the technology given by the KVK is successful and widely acceptable for enhancement of the farmers income. Progressive potato grower, Ghanshyam Chettri, Nandok village shared his experience about the cultivation of potato and storage techniques of potato for future use.

The programme, potato crop harvesting was conducted with the assistance of SRF, Bina Tamang, NICRA project.

GANGTOK, 18 MAR [IPR]:

A virtual meeting of the 'State Task Force on Immunization' was held today under the chairmanship of Principal Secretary, Health Department, K Shrinivasulu.

The meeting, attended by State Immunization Officer, Dr PhumzayDenzongpa, officers from line departments, DRCHOs from all four

districts and Urban PHC, and officers from the World Health Organization, deliberated on four broad topics - Intensified Mission Indradhanush, review of Routine Immunization Programme, Vaccine Preventable Disease Surveillance and the status of Covid-19 Vaccination. The State Immunization Officer informed the meeting that the second round of Intensified Mission Indradha-

Minister inaugurates CRC at Lachung

MANGAN, 18 MAR (IPR):

Minister of PWD Department, Samdup Lepcha inaugurated the Community Recreation Centre (CRC) at Bitchu, Lachung today. He was accompanied by DC (North), Tenzing.T.Kaleon, ADM (North), Sonam Lepcha, SDM Chungthang, Lachung Pipon and (NDZP) engineers.

Also present in the gathering were the local public and various representatives from areas in the north district.

The Minister also visited the Lachung-Chuba



Monastery, where he offered prayers for the well-being of Sikkim and its people. Understanding the scope of pilgrimage tourism, the Minister inspected the premises

of the monastery.

Discussing technical details with the engineers, he suggested that a beautification process with the aim to turn the monastery into a proper

pilgrimage site with necessary amenities such as parking spaces, cafeterias etc. would draw in not only the devotees but also tourists seeking for aesthetics.

New ICDS centre inaugurated at Assam Lingzey

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

New ICDS centre was inaugurated at Gairigaon Ward of Assam Lingzey GP under Namcheybong Constituency in the presence of area MLA, Em Prasad Sharma, today.

A press release informs that the centre was running from various locations but now the centre has been allocated land donated by



Dhanapati Sharma. The total cost of building is Rs. 5 lakhs which is funded through Social Justice and Empowerment De-

partment (Women and Child Division).

The programme included felicitation of the land donor, other per-

sons who had provided shelter to the ICDS earlier, presentation of journey and hardships of ICDS centre, planting of medicinal plants in the premises, songs by children and Poshan Pledge.

The programme was attended by Chairman-Excise, Ganza Bhutia, CDPO (Gangtok), Samdup Bhutia, Panchayats, Zilla Panchayat and other members of the society.

Residential Training by National Productivity Council

GANGTOK, 18 MAR (PIB):

Effective Office Administration (EOA) and Financial Management (FM) are sine-qua-non for the success of any organization in today's competitive world. Some of the important skills required for EOA can be identified as leadership qualities, communication skills, human resource management, financial management, etc.

In the globalised era, it has become imperative for all employees to upgrade their knowledge and skills on a regular basis to attain higher organizational as well as personal excellence. A major managerial challenge is to build a pro-

ductive team and also to effectively manage and utilize available human resources so that individuals function efficiently.

In an effort to upgrade the skills of various officials from Central & State Government Departments, Academic Institutions, PSUs, etc., National Productivity Council (NPC) a national level organization under Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India organizing various Residential Training Program in different locations throughout the country. Economic Services Group of NPC will be conducting one such Residential Training Program on "Effective Office

Administration & Financial Management" scheduled at Gangtok, Sikkim from 22-26 Mar, 2021.

There will be around 12 participants from different Ministries, Academic institutes, Corporations and various other centre and state departments.

Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya, Education Department will be Chief Guest during the formal opening ceremony function on 23 Mar, 2021.

Director (Economic Services), Rajesh Sund, NPC, who is coordinator of the program and also faculty for Financial Management has specified that this Training Pro-

gram has been conceptualized with the objective that participants will get insight into leadership, communication skills, trends and challenges in Office Management, Organizational Communication and Team Performance, Roles & Responsibilities. There will be sessions on Decisions regarding estimating investments, leading and directing projects and teams. Participants will also be able to use of qualitative and quantitative tools and measures to distinguish the key financial risks, Valuation techniques and tools for learning & developing unique strategies, implement correctly and set financial targets.

East receives 80 EVMs for civic polls

GANGTOK, 18 MAR (IPR):

As informed by the Municipal Returning Officer East, Ragul K, a total of eighty Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) both Control Units and Ballot Units along with other polling materials were received from State Election Commission, Sikkim by Deputy Director, Disaster Management,



District Collectorate and team today. The EVMs were kept

Singtam prepares for its first TT tournament

SUMMIT REPORT

SINGTAM, 18 MAR:

The second coordination meeting of the 1st TR Rana Memorial Table Tennis Championship was held on 16 Mar, 2021.

CL Rai (Advisor), Sundar Rai (President), Krishna Chettri (Vice President), Jinod Tamang (Joint Secretary), Prital Shilal and Zarina Rana (Technical team) and other members of the ad-hoc committee attended the meeting.

With this event, the town of Singtam will



make its debut in organizing a state level table tennis tournament.

The two-day state level tournament will be conducted at the Indoor Sports Complex, Lal Bazaar, Singtam, on 23 & 24

Apr, 2021.

Following events shall be held: U-12 Boys/Girls (Cadet), U-14 Boys/Girls (Sub - Junior), U-17 Boys/Girls (Junior), Open Men's & Women's (18-39 years) and Veteran Men's & Women's (above 40s).

IMI and the road ahead was made by SMO, World Health Organization, Dr Subhendu Ray.

He shared the data of immunization coverage so far and called for the need to upscale the Mission to reach out to the target population.

Principal Secretary, Health, Mr Shrinivasulu, who also chairs the State Task Force for Immunization, urged the nodal offi-

cers from the concerned departments to gear up for the 2nd round of IMI. He solicited support from Departments like Social Welfare, Education and Rural Development Department to cover the left-out group.

It was discussed in the meeting that all the safety protocol for the containment of Covid-19 should be strictly adhered to during the immunization programme.

CM meets Arunachal counterpart



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 MAR:

Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu called on the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang at Mintokgang on 17 Mar, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs. It was a courtesy call by the Arunachal Pradesh CM who is on a personal tour of Sikkim.

During the meeting, they discussed current issues in the region and

the country. Further, they deliberated on the exchange of ideas related to organic farming and talked about working in close tandem to boost tourism in both the states.

Chief Minister, Mr Tamang expressed his gratitude towards the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh for his visit and wished him success in his endeavours and expressed his desire to visit Arunachal Pradesh in days to come.

Children's Parliament formed for 3 Kabi schools



MANGAN, 17 MAR (IPR):

The Village Level Children's Parliament of Lingdok-Nampang GPU under Kabi block was formed for children of all three schools within the GPU on 17 Mar, 2021. The programme was organized by the District Child Protection Unit, North under Child Protection Scheme, Social Justice & Welfare Department in coordination with the Village level Child Protection Committee of the GPU.

The Zilla Panchayat member,Devi Khatiwara provided her guidance and support to the children and administered the oath taking of the child parliamentarians. The Chairperson of the Committee Bishnu Bhakta Sharma encouraged the children to utilize their services and welcomed them to the child-friendly room that has been established for the Chil-

dren of the GPU. The programme also involved sensitization of the children on child rights and child related legislations.

The DCPO North, Wendy Lepcha, sensitized the children on the various legislations and schemes formulated for the protection of child rights and encouraged them to report if any case of any violation of their rights occurs, on the Helpline Numbers Board installed in the GPU. She informed them of the Village Level Child Protection Committee that has been formed in the GPU for them, to assist and protect them from any form of abuse. The Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, North, Mingma Bhutia highlighted on safe-unsafe touch and requested the newly formed child Parliamentarians to use this platform for their overall benefit.

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CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

Amrit appeals to MG Marg electorate to vote wisely

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 MAR:**

At 37 years of age, Amrit Singhi is the youngest candidate contesting for the Upper MG Marg ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation.

He has been allotted the 'table' as his election symbol and is keeping a busy election campaign.

Speaking to media persons today, Mr Singhi expressed gratitude towards the Chief Minister



for making the municipal non-partisan and hence

providing an opportunity to the youth to contest unencumbered by the presence of political parties.

As for the focus of his campaign, he said that apart from working on the basic necessities of the people, he would also work to ensure better health facilities for people in the area and work towards youth empowerment.

"If given the chance by the people, I will work to create opportunities for the youth to be self-reliant and empowered," he said.

"I appeal to the people of the ward to give a chance to a youth and vote wisely. I am young and energetic and if I get the chance, then I will prove that the people have chosen the right person," he said.

Sikkim donors to join blood donation campaign 'Samvedna'

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 MAR:**

Blood donors from Sikkim are also joining the international-level blood donation campaign, 'Samvedna' of the National Integrated Forum of Artists & Activists [NIFAA] to be held on 23 March. NIFAA, Sikkim unit has been working hard to collect more than 650 units of bloods at eight different venues in all four districts in this campaign.

NIFAA is a social, art and cultural-based organization formed in year 2000 in Haryana, which has been working to promote participation of youth in volunteerism and social service sector

as well as art and cultural activities and use them as a tool for social reformation. NIFAA, Sikkim unit was started in 2018 and has been working especially in creating awareness in blood donation and to provide blood to those in need in Sikkim and other States.

Addressing a press conference, NIFAA, Sikkim chief advisor, Bikash Pradhan mentioned that Samvedna is a campaign to collect 1.5 lakhs units of blood in 1500 venues in 28 states and 08 union territories and even by Indians residing in eight other countries. He mentioned that the campaign coincided with the 90th Martyrdom Day of Bhagat



Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, who were hanged to death on 23 March in 1931. He stated that the country has witnessed scarcity in blood due to the COVID-19 pandemic so the campaign targets to address this scarcity of blood across the country.

Mr Pradhan stated that the campaign also targets wide awareness among local people to come forward in this noble cause of blood donation not only on 23 March but

to donate blood regularly. He mentioned that donors would also be provided with certificates having digital signatures of renowned personalities of the country and the same would be provided to social organizations that support the campaign.

The campaign plans to get into the Guinness Book of World Records in order to create awareness on blood donation across the globe, he added. Blood donation

campus are being organized with the support of blood banks of STNM hospital, CRH, Tadong and district hospitals, he informed.

NIFAA, Sikkim president, Praveen Pradhan mentioned that blood donation camps would be organized at eight different venues at MG Marg, Singtam District Hospital, Namchi District Hospital, Gyalshing District Hospital, Mangan District Hospital, Jorethang and Melli.

He stated that the state unit aims to collect more than 650 units of bloods from Sikkim. He appealed to the people of Sikkim to voluntarily donate blood to save lives.

Photo exhibition on freedom fighters at Tadong School

GANGTOK, 17 MAR (IPR):

The Regional Outreach Bureau, Bureau of Outreach and Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Guwahati in collaboration with the Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Sikkim organised a photo exhibition on Indian freedom fighters at Tadong Senior Secondary School today as a part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' in view of commemorating

75 years of India's Independence.

President, Press Club of Sikkim, Joseph Lepcha graced the event as the Chief Guest in the presence of Principal, Tadong SSS, S Khadka, Assistant Director (Photo), IPR, Keshap Chettri and ROB representative, Anshuman Malakar, along with IPR staff and Class XII students of Tadong SSS.

In his brief address, Chief Guest, Joseph Lepcha, spoke on the significance of the Mahotsav. He further extended grati-



tude to the organisers for hosting the photo exhibition at Tadong SSS and encouraged the students to inculcate a spirit of patriotism and national integration among them.

The programme was also addressed by the Principal of Tadong SSS wherein she motivated the students to enhance their knowledge and awareness on the Indi-

an freedom fighters who dedicated their lives for the freedom of the nation and asked them to utilise the knowledge to their optimum advantage for the progress of the nation as a whole.

The event also featured a quiz contest that had the participation of Class XII students.

It may be mentioned that 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' is a series of events organized by the Government of India to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Independence of India.

Schools under Lingee Cluster to felicitate class toppers

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 MAR:**

A meeting of the Heads of schools under the Lingee Cluster was convened today at Government Senior Secondary School, Lingee, South Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The meeting discussed and deliberated on RTE-mandated SMC formation, admissions, dropouts, learning outcomes, improvement of performance of students and professional development of teachers.

The meeting also formulated an action plan for the year 2021 to develop the personality of the students through various activities, the release adds.

The main agenda of the meeting was to organise a felicitation programme for the top-three students of Classes I to VIII who excelled in the Cluster-Level Term End Exam held in February 2021.

Schools under Lingee SSS cluster had conducted common exam for all the elementary class-

es keeping in mind the Covid-required changes in teaching schedules and bring about uniformity in the syllabus, the release explains.

Felicitation of the toppers will be a first of its kind and will be organised through contributions from the schools heads, Principal, Lingee SSS, Prahlad Sharma, informs.

The meeting decided to provide certificates of appreciation and a memento to the students. The Heads of Schools

unanimously decided to contribute Rs 1,000 each to meet the expenses for the programme.

26 March was agreed upon as the tentative date for the felicitation programme subject to the availability of chief guest and other dignitaries. The programme will be held in the auditorium of Lingee Govt. Senior Secondary School, South Sikkim.

The meeting was attended by Prahlad Sharma (Principal, Lingee SSS), Suraj Kumar Sharma (HM Lingee Payong

SS), Tulshiram Adhikari (HM, Karjee JHS), Chhonom Lepcha (I/c Sokyap JHS), Premit Lepcha (HM, Badamtam PS), CL Adhikari (HM, Sumshee PS), Gambir Singh Rai (HM, Darakharka PS), YN Adhikari (Kaw PS) and CRC BK Subba.

The meeting also discussed issues like improvised teaching learning methods in the wake of changing global scenario, school twinning, cluster level sports meet, school visits by heads of schools under the cluster, etc.

Sikkim goes down to Mizoram by 4 runs

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 MAR:**

The second last match of the league was played between Sikkim and Mizoram at Alur Cricket Stadium III at Bengaluru wherein Sikkim won the toss and chose to field first.

In the first innings, Mizoram scored 178 runs with the loss of 9 wickets in 50 overs. Prajakta S was the highest scorer for the side with 61 runs, Captain Apurva Bhardwaj 47 runs, Buley Ruchita 41 runs. Shristi Rai took 2 wickets and Mariam Subba 1 wicket. Brilliant fielding was showcased by the team by making 6 run-

outs. In the second innings, Sikkim made 174 runs in 50 overs losing 7 wickets. Rinki Rajak was once again the highest scorer for the side with 80 runs and remained not-out, Captain Sarika Koli made 40 runs, Purni Maya Gurung 27 runs and Shristi Rai was not out at 2 runs in a thrilling encounter where Sikkim women's showcased a brilliant game sense but could not match the wits of the Mizoram women and finally lost the match with a margin of just 4 runs.

Sikkim will be playing its last match against Manipur on 19 March at the same venue.

Community outreach for career dev and life skills in Namchi

**SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 18 MAR:**

The Centre for Career Development and Placement of the Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU), Shillong, held a community outreach program on Career Guidance and Life Skills in collaboration with Sikkim Youth Foundation in Namchi today.

The program was conducted for students of Namchi Public School and New Light Academy.

Associate Dean of Students, MLCU, Dr Chelmelyne Dhar, and a faculty in the Department of English and Communication high-



lighted on the objectives and the importance of career guidance and life skills among students.

Faculty member Laribha Dohtdong, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, highlighted components of careers while Associate Dean of Academics and a faculty of the Department of Social Work, Ardonister

Lyngdoh emphasized on the importance of effective communication as a core component of life skills.

Founder, Sikkim Youth Foundation, Suresh K Lama, thanked MLCU-Shillong visiting professors for conducting the program for students here and also thanked both the Namchi schools for actively involving their students in this innovative workshop.

SYF members Roshmi Theeng, Dhana Chettri and Preeti Gupta coordinated the program on behalf of Sikkim Youth Foundation.

Imperial Talkies to resume screenings with Mumbai Saga



**BIKASH CHETTRI
NAMCHI, 18 MAR:**

Imperial Talkies Cafe & Lounge is gearing up for a grand return to business after nearly a year of having been forced shut by the Covid pandemic. Namchi's only movie hall will be taking in cine-goers from Friday with the simultaneous release of big-budget Bollywood film, 'Mumbai Saga; A shocking story behind Bombay becoming Mumbai'.

The movie theater

attached to the cafe & lounge is under the management of GBT Entertainment, Namchi.

As per the SOP for COVID-19, wearing of masks, use of hand sanitizers, social distancing and the checking of body temperature will be strictly followed, the management informs.

Other movies lined up for simultaneous release at Imperial Talkies are Bharat Maa Ka Laal, Radhe, 83, and Chehre to name a few.

Imperial Talkies, lo-

cated in the Namchi Municipal Council Building had begun operations in 2017 and boasts a handsome line-up of Nepali and South Indian movies premiering in the district. The hall has hosted Nepali movie star Dayahang Rai in the past and premiered the well-received Bhutia language movie 'Namshi' earlier this year.

GBT Entertainment has invited patrons to its follow Facebook page for regular updates on exciting things planned at the hall.

GANGTOK SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT LIMITED, GANGTOK, EAST SIKKIM



Gangtok Smart City Development Limited, Sokyathang, Gangtok, Sikkim – 737102

E Mail – gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com
CIN – U930909WB2017SGC223807

Memo No: 993/GSCDL/2021

Dated: 18/03/2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL) is undertaking the work 'Improvement of Pedestrian Walkway/ Footpath (12 km approx. from Vajra Cinema Hall, Baluwakhani to Ranipool, Gangtok'.

However, it is observed that the public are requesting for changes after the work has been completed which is causing repetitive execution of the work resulting in time and cost overrun

Hence, this notice is issued to request the public to kindly inform GSCDL if any changes or suggestions are to be incorporated by sending mail to the following email address within one month of issue of this notice.

1. gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com
2. ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com
3. sesmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com
4. degscdl@gmail.com
5. ae3smartcity@gmail.com

GSCDL shall not entertain any request for change after completion of work.

Sd/-
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
Gangtok Smart City Development Limited,
Gangtok, East Sikkim.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TASHILING, GANGTOK

Memo No. /RDD/JJM

Dated: 15/03/2021

Notice for Expression of Interest (Eoi)

Detailed Notice Inviting Expression of Interest (EOI) for empanelment of the Implementation Support Agencies (ISAs) to support the GP/ VWSCs in the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).

The Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, on behalf of State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM), intends to empanel implementation Support Agencies (ISAs) to support the GP/VWSx in implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). The Government of India has recently launched Jal jeevan Mission (JJM) which aims at providing Functional household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household by 2022. Community ownership and engagement in all phases of program i.e., planning, implementation and O&M is a fulcrum of the mission to ensure long term sustainability.

Enhancing community and village level institutional capacity for efficient planning, execution, monitoring and O&M is an important task. Hand holding of community and village level institutions throughout the project cycle is crucial for achieving desired results.

Interested eligible organizations may submit sealed in prescribed format along with necessary certificates and documents. All eligible organizations are requested to submit their Expression of Interest (Eoi) in a sealed envelope captioned "Empanelment of Implementation Support Agencies (ISAs)" under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to the Project Director, Jal Jeevan Mission, RDD, Gram Vikas Bhawan, Gangtok, East Sikkim – 737101 on or before 24.03.2021. The detailed EOI will be available on the State Government's website- www.sikki.gov.in.

Project Director, JJM
Rural Development Department
Gangtok.

Empanelment of Implementation Support Agencies (ISAs) under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) Sikkim.

R.O. No. 270/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21
Date: 16.03.2021

Public Domain is not Private Space

Deeper deliberations are missed because superficiality dominates

The public domain has become too easy a space to intrude. Dealing with news-starved publications, this was always an easy space to occupy, achieved with superficial observations put together as a press release, and now, with the explosion of Facebook usage in Sikkim, it has become even easier. It has also become more worrisome in that real-time access to the public domain and a general lack of depth in most claims and pronouncements has also made its usage more reckless. Even though the “public domain”, by its very name suggests openness and accessibility, the invitation should not be grabbed to make pronouncements about anything that catches the fancy or is heard on the grapevine.

Newspapers contribute a major portion of what ends up in this domain because despite the limited readerships, the fourth estate does command some amount of credibility, if for nothing else, then to at least reach statements from public representatives [as also those aspiring to become people’s representatives] to the public. It is, however, essentially a one-way traffic that the newspapers regulate because very little of the people’s response to messages addressed to them make it into the pages in follow-up. Allegations and counters are exchanged on what is printed in newspapers and rarely on how the people have responded or how they are affected. In the absence of any other platform to represent the public domain, newsprint plays the role. From time to time, newspapers too join the debate, sometimes to put things in perspective, at other times because they also want to have a say in things. Most of the times though issues remain confused because each participant in the debate opts for selective representation of facts to support individual claims. Unfortunately, because public response [or even involvement] in these debates remains un-calibrated, too many times the dialogue dis-integrates to puerile levels.

The point being stressed here is that too many people are making too many unreasoned comments in the public domain. They invariably paint themselves into a corner, but no one points it out and they dance out on the wings of another combination of outlandish claims and allegations. And, the people forget easily [or maybe they just don’t care]. It would have been fine if such dialogues remained shunted to the sidelines, with leaders frequently embarrassing themselves and keeping everyone entertained. But that is not the case and every public representative, from association leaders to forum office-bearers, have a role to play and a responsibility to live up to. This responsibility multiplies manifold given the fact that most people don’t bother with details and can react emotionally to most issues following slogans instead of reasoning. While the public has the right to react the way it deems fit, it is for their elders and leaders to put things in the correct perspective so that they make intelligent decisions.

And no, don’t mistake the likes and monosyllabic responses in the comments feed of Facebook posts to constitute engagement; involvement requires deeper meditations than the keypad of smartphones allow and wider deliberations than the refresh buttons have patience for.

Women Shouldn’t Have to Risk Trading Their Freedom for Safety

HANNAH BOWS

THECONVERSATION.COM

Earlier this month, Sarah Everard was allegedly abducted and killed while walking home from a friend’s house in London. In response to her disappearance, women were reportedly advised to avoid going out alone. Yet at the same time, the Metropolitan Police commissioner, Cressida Dick, sought to reassure women that incidences of abduction and murder are rare.

Heavy police presence and use of force during a recent gathering to remember Everard also raised issues about the way women are treated by authorities when demonstrating against sexual harassment and violence. It’s an issue which, in some circles, has led to demands for police reform and Dick’s resignation as commissioner. As one popular argument goes, penalising and physically handling women at a vigil didn’t just ignore some women’s fears of authorities, it suggested that women shouldn’t be speaking out at all.

These contradictory messages underscore the problems surrounding discussions about violence against women. On one hand, sexual harassment and violence by men is viewed as inevitable and we’re conditioned to believe the fear we live with is normal. On the other, women are often told they’re overreacting and that violence is rare. But how helpful are these approaches in terms of eradicating systemic violence against women? And do they keep us safer?

POLICE ADVICE

Just two years ago the police issued similar safety advice to women in response to a number of sexual assaults in London. They were told to avoid wearing headphones or using mobile phones in order to be “alert” in their surroundings. But this advice ignores that reality that many women already do this, and more, to avoid harassment and violence from men.

Recent research has documented the different types of “safety work” women routinely undertake to avoid the everyday intrusions from men in public. As a result of these precautions, women pay a price, a form of gender-specific tax – they must trade-off their freedom in exchange



for safety.

In reality, there is very little evidence that individual strategies reduce sexual violence. Nevertheless, failure to follow the safety advice almost inevitably means a woman is held at least partially responsible – the idea being that if she’d listened to advice, changed her behaviour or stayed home, she would have been safe.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSE

As news spread of Everard’s case, thousands of women took to social media to share the extensive precautions they make on a daily basis to avoid risks – including avoiding dark streets, not wearing headphones when out alone, crossing the road to get away from individual or groups of men, and holding keys in their hands should they need to defend themselves or open their front door quickly.

This practice of taking responsibility to protect oneself is nothing new. Women are told of the dangers in public places from a young age and that they should manage the risks that men pose by adapting their behaviour and restricting their movements accordingly. It’s advice that

women internalise, becoming hyper-vigilant of themselves, and others, in public spaces.

When women do speak out, they often experience aggressive backlashes, primarily from men who often argue that #NotAllMen engage in such behaviour. This common response to women’s experiences of harassment and violence serves to undermine their accounts, dismiss them, or suggest that it is they who are sexist by suggesting all men behave in harassing or violent ways. Yet the evidence indicates that harassment and violence by men in public spaces is disturbingly prevalent, some of which has come to light in recent years through the #MeToo and #EverydaySexism movements.

Although the more extreme physical manifestations of violence such as abduction or murder are relatively rare, almost all women experience sexual harassment in public spaces, and a significant proportion report being sexually assaulted. And when women are subjected to serious physical violence or murder, it is overwhelmingly men who perpetrate it. This is often despite extensive safety work from women.

These conflicting messages leave

women in a paradoxical situation whereby they have to change their behaviour to avoid the risk of harassment or violence, while also trying not to overreact to dangers they’re often told do not exist or aren’t common. They must have, what my colleague Fiona Vera-Gray has termed “the right amount of panic”. Because of this, the focus is always on what women do and do not do – and the problem of male violence remains obscured.

WOMEN NEED MEN TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOUR

While it’s true that not all men engage in these behaviours, if they do nothing about them, they are complicit in a society that normalises them. Safety advice rarely tells men not to harass or rape women. And if they do, they’re protected by the focus on what the woman failed to do to protect herself.

Following the outpouring of women’s stories on social media in response to Everard’s death, many men have acknowledged the privileges they enjoy in public spaces – such as freely being able to walk the streets at night without fear of sexual harassment or assault – things women cannot take for granted.

Some asked what they could do to help. Popular responses include giving women space, dropping back while walking behind a woman on her own or, ideally, crossing the road and walking ahead of her to reduce her sense of unease. Others involve men calling out sexual harassment when they see it or asking a woman if she’s OK if it appears that she’s being subjected to unwanted attention. Much of this advice comes from women, who yet again carry the burden of educating men.

If anything is going to change, a dramatic culture shift is needed. The widespread prevalence of violence and harassment also needs to be acknowledged – and challenged – without putting the responsibility on women. We don’t need more safety advice, nor do we need telling the risk to us is low. What we need is for men to change their behaviour and for society to hold them accountable.

[the writer is Associate Professor in Criminal Law, Durham University]

How do mRNA vaccines work – and why do you need a second dose?

THECONVERSATION.COM

Tens of millions of people across the world have received a coronavirus vaccine. So far, the majority of doses have been either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, both of which use mRNA to generate an immune response. These gene-based vaccines have been in the works for decades, but this is the first time they have been used widely in people.

mRNA vaccines are proving to be more effective than anyone had hoped, but as with any new medical advancement, people have a lot of questions. How do they work? Are they safe? Do I really need two shots? Why do they need to be kept so cold? And will this be the vaccine technology of the future? Below, we highlight five articles from The Conversation that will help answer your questions about mRNA vaccines.

1. A VACCINE REVOLUTION

“DNA and mRNA vaccines offer huge advantages over traditional types of vaccines, since they use only genetic code from a pathogen – rather than the entire virus or bacteria,” writes Deborah Fuller, a microbiologist at the University of Washington who has been working on gene-based vaccines for decades.

The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are proof that mRNA vaccines are ready for prime time – and far surpass their predecessors. “The hopes that gene-based vaccines could one day provide a vaccine for malaria or HIV, cure cancer, replace less effective traditional vaccines or be ready to stop the next pandemic before it gets started are no longer far-fetched,” explains Fuller.

2. HOW DOES AN MRNA VACCINE WORK?

These vaccines are not only effective, they work in a fundamentally different way from traditional vaccines, explains Sanjay Mishra, a staff scientist at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Traditional vaccines use an entire dead virus – or just a piece of one – to generate immunity. “But an mRNA vaccine is different,” writes Mishra, “because rather than having the viral protein injected, a person receives genetic material – mRNA – that encodes the viral protein. When these genetic in-



structions are injected into the upper arm, the muscle cells translate them to make the viral protein directly in the body.”

3. QUICK TO MARKET, BUT STILL SAFE

“Safety is the first and foremost goal for a vaccine,” says William Petri, a Professor of Medicine at the University of Virginia. A lot of people have expressed safety concerns based on how fast these vaccines were developed, approved and distributed.

According to Petri, the vaccines still went through every normal step – they just did them simultaneously.

“In my opinion, safety is not compromised by the speed of vaccine development and emergency use authorization. The reason that vaccines may be approved so quickly is that the large clinical trials to assess vaccine efficacy and safety are happening at the same time as the large-scale manufacturing preparation, funded by the federal government’s Operation Warp Speed program.”

4. WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO GET YOUR SEC-

OND SHOT

You got your first vaccine shot. But with shortages and supply problems, getting the second dose might be becoming a hassle. Does it really matter? Yes, explains William Petri in another article.

“The first dose primes the immune system and introduces the body to the germ of interest. This allows the immune system to prepare its defense. The second dose, or booster, provides the opportunity for the immune system to ramp up the quality and quantity of the antibodies used to fight the virus.”

Immunity is a complex process, and “if the booster isn’t given within the appropriate window, lower quantities of antibodies will be produced that may not provide as powerful protection from the virus,” writes Petri. So go get your second shot if you can, even if you have to get it a bit later than expected.

5. SUBZERO STORAGE MAKES DISTRIBUTION A CHALLENGE

For all of their amazing attributes, mRNA vaccines do have at least one weakness: “If they get too warm or too cold they spoil. And, just like fish, a spoiled vaccine must be thrown away,” explains Anna Nagurny, Professor of Operations Management at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who studies medical supply chains.

The mRNA molecule is very fragile, so vaccines need to be kept at extremely cold, very specific temperatures – a challenge for distribution. “The answer is something called the vaccine cold chain – a supply chain that can keep vaccines in tightly controlled temperatures from the moment they are made to the moment that they are administered to a person,” explains Nagurny. This cold supply chain is critical to getting vaccines where they need to go, and without it, no matter how good the vaccines are, they can’t make much of a difference.

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With a league of its own and experienced coach at helm, Nepal's women's football hopes to hit the target

PRAJWAL OLI

KATHMANDU, 18 MAR [KATH-MANDUPOST]: Nepali women's football witnessed two new things over the past couple of months. The first-ever proper domestic league for women, in a double round robin format, was held from January 20 to February 19 and the national women's team got as head coach an Australian, the first time a foreigner was appointed to the position.

Not only did the league indicate that there is interest in the women's game with enough talent there among players to have a proper league but also that the players have the desire to play with the spirit that the game demands.

"The main factor to applaud is that all seven teams of the league showed footballing sense which was the major factor lacking in non-departmental teams in the past," said Sanjeev Mishra, the league director at the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) and a football analyst.

Besides the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and Nepal Army teams, called departmental teams, four municipal teams—Biratnagar Metropolitan City, Chandrapur Municipality, Chaudandigadh Municipality and Waling Municipality—had participated in the league.

"The players [of the non-departmental teams] exhibited sound footballing knowledge in ball kicks, passing, positioning and even the defenders moved up to attacking third," said Mishra. "Al-



though one team [Chaudandigadhi Municipality] conceded nearly two dozen goals in one game, they were competitive in other matches and even took the lead in two games."

The league had a lot of young players who were still at school but there were some promising new players.

Four stood out.

Biratnagar Metropolitan City forward Kusum Khatiwada, Waling Municipality goalkeeper Sabitri Kisan, Armed Police Force midfielder Preeti Rai and Nepal Army defender Bimala BK showed they could stake a claim in the national team.

"For the first time, non-departmental teams played with courage and defeated the likes of Nepal Police, a team that trains round the year," said Mishra. "More encouraging was the fact that unlike men, they played truly spirited games."

Nepal's men footballers have at times been accused of not playing games with enough commitment

and dedication and sometimes even in a way that is detrimental to the team.

The All Nepal Football Association plans to make the women's league an annual affair.

But, to be sure, there are areas to improve on, according to Mishra.

The biggest was the lack of consistency in play of the non-departmental teams but this could be because of the short duration of the league with each team having to play 12 games in a month.

"There were also numerous flaws on the part of the coaches," said Mishra. "The main factor missing on part of the coaches was they lacked quality to study the strengths and weaknesses of their own teams and those of the opponents. Even a team like Chaudandigadhi, who finished without a point in the league, resorted to offensive play after taking the lead instead of defending the lead."

All the coaches of the seven teams were licensed ones.

However, Gary Phillips, the newly-appointed coach, is sufficiently impressed with Nepali players and sees brighter days ahead for the national team despite it never having won silverware before.

Nepal's women footballers first played international games in 1986 in the AFC Women's Championship Hong Kong. But it is in the past decade that it has come of age with the national team reaching nine finals since 2010 but have always fallen at the final hurdle.

"Three or four players possess the skills to play at a much higher level," Phillips told the Post in an interview. "Part of my job is to help these girls get to play at higher levels."

His first challenge will be to qualify for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022. The qualifiers will be held from September later this year.

The fact that the tournament, held every four years, is being ex-

panded to 12 teams from eight in past editions gives Nepal hope.

"With slight changes in what we are doing now, we can qualify for the top 12," he said.

The 57-year-old, who has been in coaching for more than two decades, said that he would try a new way of playing.

According to him, that new style would be with flair and the flexibility that allows all players to move forward to the attacking third while in possession and all behind the ball when the opponent has the ball.

"A 3-4-3 formation would be best for the philosophy, but it can be changed keeping the basic essence of this philosophy," said Phillips.

That despite the ideas the coach has, it is up to the players on the field who are the main actors is not lost on him.

"Sometimes coaching jobs are overrated. The main thing is we need players who can make better decisions on the field. For this they need to have more experience at a higher level," said Phillips.

Sadly, Nepal's star player Sabitra Bhandari, 25, of Armed Police Force, who has a record 38 international goals to her name, will be unavailable for a year with an

anterior cruciate ligament injury that she sustained during the league.

"Obviously, playing without Sabitra would be a huge blow to the country. For the national team it is like Barcelona playing without Lionel Messi. Without her, we have to find a different way of playing," said Phillips.

Besides the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022 qualifiers, the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) is expected to organise the Women's SAFF Championship later in the year.

There, Nepal's main challenge will be to overcome India against whom it has lost seven finals—three in the South Asian Games (SAG) and four in SAFF Championship finals. Two other finals Nepal have lost are against Myanmar in the Hero Gold Cup of India in 2019 and against Uzbekistan in the Nadezhda Cup of Kyrgyzstan in 2019.

Among the 14 matches played against India, Nepal have won one, lost 11 and drawn two matches. They have scored eight and conceded 36 goals.

Nepal are the second force in the subcontinent behind India and if Nepal are to make a mark in the higher level, they must get the better of India first.

Mamata releases TMC manifesto, promises income for all families, student credit card

KOLKATA, MAR 17 (PTI)

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday unveiled the party's manifesto for the assembly polls promising a monthly Universal Basic Income for all families, a credit card scheme for students to pursue higher studies and formation of a task force to examine the inclusion of several backward communities under the OBC category.

Amid the allegation by the BJP that the TMC is engaged in the politics of appeasement, the manifesto, unlike previous years, did not have any special scheme or project for the minority community, which has been a major support base of the party till the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

The manifesto also vowed to build a "model Nandigram" with the supply of electricity 24x7, piped water and well connected roads. Banerjee, who had announced this recently, is contesting the poll from the Nandigram seat where she has been pitted against her protégé-turned-adversary Suwendu Adhikari.

Claiming that her government has reduced poverty in the state by 40 per cent, the manifesto promised to increase annual financial aid to farmers from Rs 6,000 to Rs 10,000.

Christened as "Didi'r 10 Angikar (10 Resolutions of Didi)", the manifesto also listed projects for improving the economy and the health sector; creation of jobs, food security and providing affordable housing, electricity and piped drinking water to people.

The BJP, however, termed the manifesto as a "jumla" (false promise) to fool the people of the state ahead of the elections.

Taking a leaf out of the Congress's promise of Universal Basic Income promise during the Lok Sabha polls of 2019, Banerjee reached out to the 49 per cent women electorate of the state by promising that the woman guardian of every general category family will get Rs 500 every month, while the amount will be Rs 1,000 for SC/ST/OBC families.

The chief minister also announced a pension of Rs 1,000 to widows above 18 years of age.

"After forming the government, we helped lakhs of widows, senior citizens, and specially-abled people through monetary assistance. For the first time, every family in Bengal will be extended a minimum basic income. Under this (Universal Basic Income) scheme, the direct transfers will be made to the woman head of a family," Banerjee said.

Targeting the students' community and first-time voters, she said that a student credit card scheme will be introduced with a credit limit of Rs 10 lakh and an interest rate of only 4 per cent will be charged.

Reaching out to the Hindu backward communities and castes, which the BJP has been trying to tap, Banerjee said that a Special Task Force will be formed to examine and propose OBC status to communities that are not currently recognised as so.

It will help people belonging to communities such as Mahisya, Tili, Tamul, Sahas, the TMC boss said adding that they were part of the list of OBC communities recommended by the Mandal Commission.

"Along with this, expeditious closure will be



ensured for the demands of Kisan Jatis living as STs in parts of Malda district. I will also aggressively follow up with the Government of India for granting ST status to the Mahato community," she said.

Her statement came a day after BJP president J P Nadda promised that if voted to power in the state, the party will include all the 'left out' Hindu castes in the OBC list. Teli, Mahato and Mahisya are among such castes found in the state's Bankura and Purulia districts.

Asked if this announcement is a reply to the BJP's strategy to woo the Hindu backward castes, she said, "It is the other way round. Our manifesto was ready by March 9, but its release got delayed due to various reasons."

"Maybe the BJP has copied my manifesto from the Election Commission and are making promises. We all know that the EC is being guided by the BJP," the TMC supremo said.

On the politically crucial Darjeeling hills and North Bengal, Banerjee said for the holistic development of Terai-Doars region, the state government will set up a Special Development Board which will have proportional representation from all communities of the area.

The manifesto promised that in the coming days, a new facility under

the state governments Khadya Sathi scheme will ensure delivery of monthly ration to 1.5 crore families at their doorstep.

Amid the criticism that her government did not allow the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi in the state, Banerjee promised to increase the annual aid to 68 lakh small and marginal farmers from Rs 6,000 to Rs 10,000 under the Krishak Bandhu Scheme.

Under the central scheme, farmers get Rs 6,000 a year.

Promising 5 lakh jobs every year, the chief minister said that the TMC government in its third term would add 2,000 big industrial units to the existing base of 10,000 units in the next five years.

"We will set up 10 lakh new MSMEs and 2000 new big industrial units in the next five years. New investments worth Rs 5 lakh crore will come in the next five years," she said.

While promising affordable housing, the manifesto stated that under the Bengal Awas Yojana, an additional 25 lakh low-cost houses will be built, and each house will have tap water facility and an improved drainage system.

"Five lakh more low-cost houses will be built under the Banglar Bari scheme in urban areas to reduce slum population from 7 per cent to 3.65 per cent," it said.



SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
Development Area, Gangtok: Sikkim
Phone: 03592-207753, Fax : 03592-207753



"MESSAGE".

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority is organizing National Lok Adalat on Saturday the 11th April, 2020 for the following types of pre-litigation and pending cases viz:

Pre-Litigation

- N.I Act cases under Section 138;
- Money Recovery cases;
- Labour disputes cases;
- Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- Maintenance Cases.
- Other (Criminal Compoundable and other Civil dispute).

Pending in the Courts / Tribunals:

- Criminal Compoundable Offences;
- N.I. Act cases under Section 138;
- Money Recovery cases;
- MACT cases;
- Labour disputes cases;
- Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- Matrimonial disputes (except divorce);
- Land Acquisition cases;
- Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits;
- Revenue cases (pending in District Courts and High Courts only);
- Other civil cases (rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits) etc.

Any individual or any department having such matters either pending in Courts/Tribunals/Departments or in pre-litigation stage may approach directly before the Sikkim SLSA, District Lok Adalats or Taluk Lok Adalats for settlement on or before 03.04.2021 at the following address:

- Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slsa@live.com Phone No.03592-207753.
- High Court Legal Services Committee, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slsa@live.com Phone No. 03592-207753.
- District Legal Services Authority (East) District Court's Complex, Sichey Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (East), District Court's Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284131.
- District Legal Services Authority (North) District Court Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone No . 03592 234502.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (North), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Pentok, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone no.03592 234383/234514.
- District Legal Services Authority (South) District Court Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone No . 03595 264356.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (South), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone no.03595 263145.
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(published by Sikkim State Legal Services Authority).

R.O. No. 267/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21 Date, 11.03.2021.

Antetokounmpo lifts Bucks to 109-105 OT victory over 76ers

PHILADELPHIA (AP): Giannis Antetokounmpo came up big in overtime, and then took a seat — right on the court. Antetokounmpo scored 10 of his 32 points in the extra session to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 109-105 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Wednesday night in a matchup of two of the Eastern Conference's best teams.

After being hounded by Philadelphia All-Star Ben Simmons for most of the game, Antetokounmpo found his offense late with Simmons in foul trouble.

He scored 10 straight Bucks points, the last a 10-foot jumper in the lane that pushed Milwaukee's lead to 105-98 with 1:11 left in overtime. He sat on the court near the 76ers bench after the bucket, drawing boos from the fans.

"I haven't seen that, that's what I felt like I wanted to do at the time," he said. "I was just trying to have fun and enjoy the moment."

The 76ers weren't thrilled with the show of joy.

"I wanted to go and Stone Cold Stunner him, but I already had one tech," Philadelphia's Dwight Howard said. "He had a hell of a game. I don't want to talk trash or say anything negative, but we'll see him again."

With P.J. Tucker re-



portedly headed to Milwaukee in a trade with Houston, Donte DiVincenzo scored 20 points and Jrue Holiday added 19 for the Bucks, who have won five in a row and 10 of 11.

Milwaukee's D.J. Augustin and D.J. Wilson, who according to ESPN will be traded to the Rockets, did not play. Torrey Craig, reportedly headed to Phoenix in a separate deal to clear salary space for Tucker, also sat out.

Antetokounmpo finished with 15 rebounds and five assists, ending a streak of three straight triple-doubles. The two-time MVP had just four points and four shots, including a 3-point attempt that was woefully short, in the opening 24 minutes.

"I wasn't having fun," he said.

That changed in over-

time.

"I just tried to be aggressive," he said. "There are going to be times when I have to be aggressive and go downhill and there are times when I have to find my teammates."

Tobias Harris scored 19 points and Danny Green added 18 for Philadelphia, which had its six-game winning streak snapped. Philadelphia All-Star Joel Embiid sat for the third straight game with a bruised left knee. Simmons had 13 points and 12 assists and hit a late 3-pointer.

"They flipped the switch in the second half," Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers said.

The Bucks (26-14) pulled within 1 1/2 games of the East-leading 76ers (28-13).

SECOND-HALF SUCCESS

Milwaukee rallied from a 19-point second-half deficit and went ahead 91-84 on Holiday's corner 3 with 52.3 seconds left in regulation. The Bucks still led 93-90 on Khris Middleton's layup with 3 seconds left. After a timeout, Furkan Korkmaz drained a corner 3 with 0.4 seconds remaining to send the game to overtime.

FIRST-HALF FAILURE Milwaukee missed 16 of 17 3-point tries in the opening half and 33 of 45 shots overall, settling for a season-low 31 first-half points in addition to 13 turnovers. The Bucks' previous low in a first half was 41 points.

VETERAN HELP

Tucker has averaged 7.2 points and 5.8 rebounds in an 11-year career for Houston, Toronto and Phoenix. TIP-INS

Bucks: Improved to 11-9 on the road. ... DiVincenzo played his college ball at nearby Villanova.

76ers: Embiid, who watched from the bench in an orange hoodie and slippers, is expected to miss at least another week. ... Philly fell to 18-4 at home. ... Rivers offered words of support to former 76ers center Shawn Bradley, who was paralyzed in a bicycle accident in January. "Really saddened by it," Rivers said. "Just sending as much positivity to him and his family as we can." ... Seth Curry sprained his left ankle while driving to the basket with 7:23 left in the fourth. He hobbled to the locker room and didn't return.

UP NEXT

Bucks: Host San Antonio on Saturday. 76ers: Host Sacramento on Saturday.

Pick Six: Unusual teams hallmark of NCAA Tournament

INDIANAPOLIS (AP): One of the beauties of the NCAA Tournament is that every team has a story. Some are more unique than others.

Take the first-round matchup between third-seeded Arkansas and No. 14 seed Colgate, which pits two of the fastest teams in the country against each other in a game Friday that could easily approach triple-digits for scoring.

The Razorbacks are led by former NBA and Nevada coach Eric Musselman, whose dry humor and caustic wit makes his news conferences must-see viewing. Musselman has put together a dynamic roster heavily dependent on transfers — eight of the 15 players began their careers elsewhere, including three of their four leading scorers.

There's guard J.D. Notae, who spent two years at Jacksonville State. Justin Smith, who spent three just down the road from Indianapolis at Indiana. Jalen Tate spent four years at Northern Kentucky, where he made an NCAA Tournament appearance, and Connor Vanover, who began his season at California.

Vance Jackson had two stops before getting to Fayetteville, spending a season at UConn and two more at New Mexico. Abayomi Iyiola came from Stetson, Emeka Obukwelu from Texas-Tyler and Brandon Kimble from Mississippi Valley State.

On the flip side, Colgate lost only one game this season, regularly tops 100 points and returns several players from the group two years ago that took second-seeded Tennessee to the wire in a first-round loss.

"I think this group that experienced that a couple of years ago, that helps," Raiders coach Matt Langel said. "I think it's helped us every day since then. The guys have an understanding and a confidence and connectedness that when they



play together, they can play with any team there is."

You'll have to take his word for it. Colgate went 14-1 this season with all 15 games against just five opponents. Five of those games were wins against Boston, four were against Holy Cross and three came against Army.

Indeed, every team in this year's tournament has a story. Here are some of them:

TURN UP THE FLAMES

Liberty also has some NCAA Tournament experience, beating Mississippi State to reach the round of 32 a couple of years ago, and has gone 82-16 over the past three seasons despite having one of the smallest lineups in college hoops.

The only regular that stands taller than 6-foot-7 is Blake Anderson, and he doesn't break the tape by much. Leading scorer Darius McGee is a 5-9 sparkplug. His backcourt mate, Chris Parker, barley breaks 6 foot.

The Flames' first-round opponent, Oklahoma State, has five players that stand 6-8 or taller. That includes All-American forward Cade Cunningham, who at 6-8 often plays the point and is responsible for getting his offense going.

MONSTER EAGLE

Only rarely does a four-star prospect find his way to a smaller school like Winthrop, and even more rare when he's a 6-9, 275-pound dunking machine. But that's exactly what the Eagles have in Tennessee transfer D.J. Burns, who returned home to Rock Hill, South Carolina, after spending

his freshman season with the Vols.

Burns is a big reason — physically and production-wise — Winthrop lost a single game by two points all season, and why coach Pat Kelsey's team full of Palmetto State standouts has a live shot at upsetting No. 5 seed Villanova on Friday.

PLAYER(S) OF THE YEAR

Eastern Washington guard Jacob Davison was the Big Sky preseason player of the year, yet he doesn't even start for the Eagles. His teammate, Tanner Groves, wound up being league MVP — yet wasn't even an all-Big Sky pick before the season.

No wonder Kansas coach Bill Self was aghast upon seeing who his third-seeded Jayhawks played on Saturday.

"We didn't get any favors on this deal," he said. "They have five averaging in double figures and a sixth averaging 8.5 points a game. They can score. They can shoot. They can stretch it. They're a tough team to guard."

BIG MOMENTS, BIG SHOTS

Mount St. Mary's will likely be long gone by next week. Such is life as a No. 16 seed. But there's a good chance Damian Chong Qui will make at least a few people remember him before the Mountaineers are sent packing.

Nevermind his personal story — his mother was murdered, his father paralyzed — but Chong Qui has a knack for making big plays at big moments. He scored the final seven points to beat Central Connecticut State, then did the same thing against Long Island. He hit the shot that forced overtime against Fairleigh Dickinson, then did the same thing against St. Francis. In the Northeast Conference final, he scored 17 of 21 points after halftime to book an NCAA trip.

The Mountaineers face Texas Southern in a First Four game on Thursday night.

NASCAR to use COVID-detecting dogs at Atlanta Motor Speedway

MARCH 17 (UPI): NASCAR officials plan to use trained dogs to detect COVID-19 among essential personnel for Sunday's Cup Series race at Atlanta Motor Speedway. The procedure will be deployed on a trial basis as a potential first line of attack defense designed to limit the spread of the coronavirus. NASCAR said teams were notified of the plan Tuesday.

"We think that these dogs and this capability is going to allow us to rapidly confirm that all of those people entering the essential footprint

on Sunday -- that's race teams, that's NASCAR officials, that's the vendors that work inside the garage -- all those folks are COVID-free or not," said Tom Bryant, NASCAR managing director of racing operations.

"The ability to do that has kind of been the math problem that we have continuously tried to solve since March of last year."

NASCAR officials are working on the procedure with 360 K9 Group, which has training facilities in Anniston, Ala., and New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

Two teams of dogs will screen essential personnel, determining in less than 30 seconds whether an individual has been exposed to COVID-19. If the virus is detected, the dogs will alert their handlers.

After an alert, the individual in question will be isolated and subject to comprehensive secondary screening by the American Medical Response Safety Team's lead physicians, who will determine their status for Sunday's event in

Atlanta.

The K9 unit won't be used to screen Cup Series drivers or the limited number of fans in attendance.

The NBA's Miami Heat started using COVID-sniffing dogs to screen guests and employees for home games in January.

"They are amazing," Bryant said of the trained dogs. "This gives us essentially an ability to test that essential population on race day and know right away that those folks who have cleared this

enhanced screening process with a very high degree of confidence are COVID-free.

"We'll learn from what we do Sunday, and we'll figure the ways to best employ this capability moving forward to ensure that we're keeping the population as safe as we can, keeping the least amount of risk in the environment."

According to the 360 K9 Group, clinical studies have shown that dogs can locate the presence of COVID-19 in humans at an accuracy rate of 98%.

Zibanejad has 3 goals, 3 assists as Rangers rout Flyers 9-0

NEW YORK (AP): Mika Zibanejad had three goals and three assists in New York's seven-goal second period, and the Rangers beat the Philadelphia Flyers 9-0 Wednesday night.

Pavel Buchnevich had two goals and two assists — all in the second period — and Brendan Lemieux, Artemi Panarin, Jacob Trouba and Filip Chytil also scored in the Rangers' most decisive victory since beating New Jersey 9-0 on March 31, 1986. Alexander Georgiev stopped 26 shots for his sixth career shutout.

"I thought we were ready to go from the start," said Zibanejad. "It was a great effort, we really played together. ... Obviously, we got rewarded, especially in the second period. It was an amazing feeling and a nice win tonight."

The Rangers were without head coach David Quinn and assistants Jacques Martin, David Oliver and Greg Brown due to NHL COVID-19 protocols.

Hartford Wolf Pack head coach Kris Knoblauch and associate head coach Gord Murphy, and Rangers associate general manager Chris Drury were behind the bench.

"You didn't have much time to think about it," Knoblauch said when asked about pregame preparation as the acting head coach. "Everything was laid out for us from the coaching staff. When the game started there were some nerves, definitely some excitement. ... It's certainly a night that I will never forget."

Brian Elliott started in goal for Philadelphia and allowed five goals on 13 shots before being replaced midway through the second period as the Flyers lost for the third time in four games. Carter Hart finished with 12 saves.

"It was embarrassing to be playing on that ice tonight the way we played," Flyers' captain Claude Giroux said. "We didn't help our goalies at all. There's

not a lot of words to say. We know we got to wake up."

Zibanejad scored three consecutive goals in a 10:10 span of the second for his fifth career hat trick. The Swedish center also topped 400 career points.

Zibanejad converted a short-handed breakaway at 8:27 on the first shot Hart saw in relief of Elliott. Panarin found Zibanejad dashing through the offensive zone on the power play before Zibanejad lifted the puck over Hart's glove with 5:31 left in the period. Zibanejad completed the natural hat trick with an even-strength goal at with 1:23 remaining to make it 8-0.

Chytil capped the scoring with his fourth of the season a minute later.

"It was surreal, Georgiev said. "It felt like we were just doing all the right things. We did not play some crazy open hockey. We just made sure to wait for their mistakes. The guys played unreal

today. It was something special."

Both of Buchnevich's goals came early in the second to extend the Rangers' lead to 4-0 and key the big period. The Russian winger fired a shot from the slot after Zibanejad created a turnover behind the Flyers net at 1:38. Two minutes later, Buchnevich was the beneficiary of an odd bounce off Flyers defenseman Philippe Myers.

Myers and his defensive partner Travis Sanheim were on the ice for the Rangers' first five goals of the contest.

"Nothing about this game was any good," Flyers coach Alain Vigneault said. "We are going to throw it out, get ready for the next one."

Lemieux opened the scoring at 7:05 of the first. Adam Fox, back after a one-game absence due to COVID-19 protocol, made a nifty move at the blue line and delivered a cross-ice pass to set up Lemieux.

Panarin doubled the Rangers' first-period advantage with his second goal

in two games. Ryan Strome picked up a loose puck in the offensive zone and fed Panarin at 14:47.

Trouba netted his first of the season at 3:38 of the second to make it 3-0.

RECORD-SETTING PERFORMANCE

Zibanejad became the second player in NHL history to register six points in a period, joining Bryan Trottier, who accomplished the feat in 1978 for the New York Islanders against the Rangers.

OFFENSIVE EXPLOSION

The Rangers scored nine goals through the first two periods of a game for the second time in franchise history. The other came against the Hartford Whalers on Feb. 23, 1989.

YOUTH MOVEMENT

At least one Ranger who is 23 years old or younger has tallied a point on 28 of the team's 45 goals in the last 12 games (eight goals, 31 assists)

UP NEXT

Flyers: At the New York Islanders on Thursday night. Rangers: At Washington on Friday night.

Bank of England maintains rates amid positive economic news



LONDON (AP): The Bank of England says the news on near-term economic activity in the U.K. has been "positive" as it maintained its main interest rate at the record low of 0.1%.

In a statement Thursday, it said that all nine members of the rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee backed the

decision to keep monetary policy unchanged.

The decision had been widely predicted in financial markets following the sharp fall in new coronavirus infections over the past couple of months amid a lockdown and the speedy rollout of the U.K.'s vaccination program.

By Wednesday, more

than 25 million people in the U.K. had received a first dose of vaccine, nearly half of its eligible adult population.

The lockdowns across the four nations of the U.K. are slowly being eased and there are widespread hopes of a big pick-up in economic activity in the spring as restrictions are lifted.

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Suu Kyi pay-ments claimed as Myanmar junta raises pressure

MANDALAY, MYANMAR

(AP): A Myanmar construction magnate with links to military rulers said he personally gave more than half a million dollars in cash to deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a broadcast on state television aimed at discrediting the ousted civilian government.

The statement by Maung Waik could pave the way for more serious charges against Suu Kyi, who has been detained since the Feb. 1 military takeover while security forces increasingly use lethal force against a popular uprising demanding the restoration of democratically elected leaders.

The military has already tried to implicate Suu Kyi in corruption, alleging she was given \$600,000 plus gold bars by a political ally. She and President Win Myint have been charged so far with inciting unrest, possession of walkie-talkies and violating a pandemic order limiting public gatherings.

In the latest salvo of allegations, Maung Waik, who has previously been convicted of drug trafficking, told state TV he gave cash to government ministers to help his businesses. He said the money included \$100,000 given to Suu Kyi in 2018 for a charitable foundation named after her mother, \$150,000 in 2019 for which he did not specify a reason, \$50,000 last February and \$250,000 in April, again with no purpose specified.

The country's Anti-Corruption Commission is investigating the allegations and vowed to take action against Suu Kyi under the Anti-Corruption Law, the state-run newspaper Global New Light of Myanmar reported Thursday.

Meanwhile, a court has issued an arrest warrant for the country's U.N. ambassador, Kyaw Moe Tun, on charges of treason, the newspaper reported.

The charge stems from his remarks Feb. 26 at U.N. headquarters, in which he condemned the coup and appealed for "the strongest possible action from the international community" to restore democracy in his country.

Also charged with treason was Mahn Win Khaing Than, the civilian leader of Myanmar's government in hiding, the newspaper said. The acting vice president and member of Suu Kyi's political party on Saturday had vowed to continue supporting a "revolution" to eject the military from power. On Thursday, residents of a Yangon suburb set street barricades ablaze to block riot police.

Video showed large palls of smoke rising over the Tha Mine area in the city's Hlaing township, with another barricade burning fiercely in the middle of a residential area. One resident, who did not want to be named for fear of retaliation, told The Associated Press that protesters set them alight after hearing that a column of police trucks was on its way.

Armenia to hold early parliamentary election in June

YEREVAN, ARMENIA

(AP): Armenia's prime minister on Thursday set an early parliamentary election for June as he sought to defuse the country's political crisis.

The opposition, which has demanded Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation, demanded that he step down before the vote.

Armenia has been gripped by political tensions after suffering a humiliating defeat last year in an armed conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory within Azerbaijan that Armenia-backed separatists controlled for more than 25 years.

The opposition has pushed for Pashinyan's resignation, and its supporters have been blocking government buildings and barricaded streets to press the demand.

Pashinyan has refused to step down, defending a November peace deal that ended the six weeks of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh as the only way to prevent Azerbaijan from



overrunning the entire region.

More than 6,000 people were killed in the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, which lies within Azerbaijan but was under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994.

The Russia-brokered peace deal let Azerbaijan reclaim control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas.

Pashinyan has

staunchly rejected the opposition's demand to step down before the vote. The 45-year-old former journalist has retained significant public backing despite the defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh, with thousands rallying in his support to counter the opposition-led pressure for his resignation.

On Thursday, Pashinyan rejected a court ruling that challenged his decision to dismiss the country's top military officer, a legal controversy

that deepened the nation's political crisis.

The administrative court in the capital, Yerevan, ruled Wednesday that the chief of the military's General Staff, Col. Gen. Onik Gasparyan, should stay on the job pending his appeal of the dismissal order.

A statement issued by Pashinyan's office dismissed the court's ruling as unlawful. Gasparyan, meanwhile, showed up at his workplace Thursday, according to his lawyer.

German church abuse report faults serving archbishop, others

COLOGNE, GERMANY (AP): A report commissioned by Germany's Cologne archdiocese on church officials' handling of past cases of sexual abuse by clergy has found 75 cases in which eight high-ranking church officials — among them a serving archbishop — neglected their duties.

Cologne's archbishop, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, infuriated many local Roman Catholics over recent months by keeping under wraps a first report on how local church officials reacted when priests were accused of sexual abuse under wraps, citing legal concerns. He commissioned a new report, which released Thursday.

Woelki himself was absolved from any neglect of duty toward abuse victims by the new report, an 800-page investigation based on church files that was put together by a German law firm.

However, Woelki's late predecessor, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, was accused of two dozen cases of neglecting his duty in abuse cases, which include such wrongdoings as failing to follow up on or report cases of abuse or sanctioning the perpetrators. Meisner retired in 2014 and died in 2017.

And current Hamburg Archbishop Stefan Hesse — who previously was a senior church official in Cologne — was faulted for 11 cases of neglecting duty. He de-



nies the accusations, German news agency dpa reported.

The lawyer in charge of the new report, Bjoern Gercke, told reporters in Cologne that his investigation touched on the cases of 314 abuse victims and 202 people accused of abuse in the Cologne diocese since 1975. The focus of the investigation wasn't so much on what the suspects had done to the victims, but more on whether those in charge of the church — former and current archbishops, the vicars-general and other high-ranking church officials — had responded correctly to accusations of abuse.

Altogether, the report found 75 cases in which eight high-ranking church officials — some of them no longer alive — neglected their duties

to either follow up on, report on or sanction abuse cases as well as neglecting to take care of the victims.

Gercke said that the first report Woelki had commissioned but then refused to publish at the time, backed up their own findings that he isn't accused of any wrongdoing when it comes to reporting sexual abuse of minors within the Catholic archdiocese of Cologne — the country's biggest.

The cardinal had cited legal concerns about publishing the first study which conducted by a law firm in Munich.

In a first response to the new report, Woelki said the investigation confirmed his fears that high-ranking officials were guilty of not having reported perpetrators and thereby preventing their prosecution.

Demian Bichir to star in vampire drama 'Let the Right One In'

LOS ANGELES, MAR 18

(PTI): Oscar-nominated actor Demian Bichir, known for "A Better Life" and "The Midnight Sky", is set to feature in "Let the Right One In", a vampire drama set up at Showtime.

The network has given a formal pilot green light to the long-gestating project, hailing from "Away" creator Andrew Hinderaker.

Hinderaker will serve as showrunner, with Seith Mann of "Homeland" set to direct, and Tomorrow Studios, the banner behind the show as the producer.

Inspired by the

best-selling 2004 novel by Swedish author John Ajvide Lindqvist and its 2008 Swedish film adaptation, the series centers on a father, Mark (Bichir) and his 12-year-old daughter whose lives were changed forever 10 years earlier when she was turned into a vampire.

According to the makers, "Let the Right One In" is billed as an elevated genre drama, which is turning a naturalistic lens on human frailty, strength and compassion.

Hinderaker said the series is both a love letter to the original film, and a story entirely

their own.

"And casting a true artist like Demian epitomizes our bold aspiration to be one of the most terrifying shows on TV, and one of the most moving," he added.

Amy Israel, Showtime's EVP, Scripted Programming, said the channel is excited about the potential of the "thrilling, high-stakes drama".

"Demian Bichir is one of the world's most dynamic and engrossing actors, and his charisma and vulnerability will surely bring Andrew Hinderaker's exquisite script to life, guided by Seith Mann's

deft direction," Israel said.

The pilot is executive produced by Hinderaker, Mann, and Marty Adelstein and Becky Clements for Tomorrow Studios, a partnership between Adelstein and ITV Studios.

Bichir, who will next be seen in "Godzilla Vs Kong", will also serve as a producer on the potential series.



Italy honors COVID dead on Bergamo army convoy anniversary



ROME (AP): Italy inaugurated a living monument to its COVID-19 dead Thursday as it marked the anniversary of one of the most haunting moments of the pandemic: when Bergamo's death toll reached such heights that an army convoy had to transport coffins out because its cemeteries and crematoriums were full.

Premier Mario Draghi visited the northern city on Thursday to commemorate a national day of mourning for Italy's coronavirus victims. Flags flew at half-staff around the country and public authorities observed a minute of silence.

Draghi laid a wreath at Bergamo's cemetery and inaugurated a forest named in honor of the more than 100,000 victims in Italy, the first country in the West to be hit by the outbreak.

"This wood doesn't only contain only the memory of the many victims," Draghi said. "This place is a symbol of the pain of an entire nation."

At the Wood of Memory, Bergamo Mayor Giorgio Gori said the city had decided against a memorial or a piece of artwork to commemorate its dead.

"We decided to honor

victims with a work that is alive, with a monument that breathes," he told the handful of dignitaries gathered on a windy lawn surrounded by the first 100 freshly planted saplings.

The anniversary came as much of Italy including Bergamo is under new lockdown, with schools and restaurants shuttered, amid a new surge of infections. And it comes as Italy's halting vaccination campaign has slowed down further because of the suspension of AstraZeneca shots pending review.

Draghi told the Bergamo gathering that whatever the European Medicines Agency decides, Italy would intensify its vaccination campaign and that expected increases in deliveries "will help compensate for the delays by pharmaceutical firms."

Footage of the army convoy snaking its way through Bergamo's roads on March 18, 2020 remains one of the most heart-wrenching and iconic images of the pandemic, in a year that saw many. It joined the photo of an exhausted Cremona nurse collapsed on her computer keyboard after a shift, and more recently, an image of a Rome-area bistro owner

sitting hunched over in her restaurant kitchen after the latest lockdown was imposed.

For Bergamo, though, the army convoy was early evidence of the outsized toll the first weeks of the outbreak had on what would become the hardest-hit province in the hardest-hit region of Lombardy: By March 18, 2020, Italy had recorded 2,978 deaths — nearly 2,000 of them in Lombardy.

By the end of March, the province of Bergamo had registered a 571% increase in deaths compared with the five-year monthly average — the biggest increase in Italy and one of the biggest localized increases in mortality rate in Europe.

Gori said Thursday that at least 670 people died in Bergamo city alone, and more than 6,000 in the surrounding Bergamo province. But he noted that only half of them feature into Italy's official toll since they were never tested for the virus because of laboratory limitations, and died at home or in nursing homes.

Prosecutors in Bergamo are investigating whether to lay any criminal blame for the toll, and whether a lack of pandemic preparedness had any role in it.

Putin points finger at US after Biden's 'killer' remark

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that U.S. President Joe Biden's remarks about him reflect U.S. own past and current problems.

Biden was asked in an interview whether he thought Russian President Vladimir Putin is a killer and said "I do." Russia on Wednesday announced it's recalling its ambassador in Washington for consultations.

Asked about Biden's remarks during a video call with residents of Crimea marking the anniversary of its 2014 annexation from Ukraine, Putin charged that they reflect the United States' own troubled past.

He added that Russia would still cooperate with the United States where it answers Moscow's interests.

Earlier story follows below.

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin on Thursday denounced U.S. President Joe Biden's remarks about Russian President Vladimir Putin, warning it would rethink its approach to relations with Washington.

Russia on Wednesday announced it's recalling its ambassador in Washington for consultations after Biden was asked in an interview whether he thought Russian President Vladimir Putin is a killer and said "I do."

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said it was a "very bad state-

ment by the U.S. president" that made it clear that "he doesn't want to normalize relations."

"We will proceed accordingly," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters, noting that "there was nothing like that in history." He wouldn't answer if Russia could go as far as to rupture diplomatic ties with the United States.

Konstantin Kosachev, a deputy speaker of the Russian parliament's upper house, said Biden's "boorish statement" marks a watershed.

"Such assessments are inadmissible for a statesman of his rank," Kosachev said. "Such statements are unacceptable under any circumstances. They inevitably lead to a sharp exacerbation of our bilateral ties."

Kosachev warned that Russia's response wouldn't be limited to recalling the Russian ambassador "if the American side fails to offer explanation and excuse." He wouldn't elaborate on what other action the Kremlin may take.

While announcing the decision to recall the Russian ambassador in Washington, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova blamed the U.S. for bringing bilateral ties to a "dead end," adding that "we are interested in preventing their

irreversible degradation, if the Americans are aware of the associated risks."

Commenting on the Russian move Wednesday, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki emphasized that "we will be direct, we will speak out on areas where we have concerns, and it will certainly be, as the president said last night — certainly, the Russians will be held accountable for the actions that they have taken."

The exchange of tough statements comes on the heels of a declassified report from the U.S. national intelligence director's office that finds President Vladimir Putin authorized influence operations to help Donald Trump in last November's presidential election.

"(Putin) will pay a price," Biden said in the interview, asked about the declassified report.

Russia's relations with the United States and the European Union already have plunged to post-Cold War lows after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, election meddling, hacking attacks and, most recently, the jailing of Russia's opposition leader Alexei Navalny that followed his poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. The Russian authorities rejected the accusations.

Lawyers for Johnny Depp appeal 'wife beater' ruling in UK

LONDON (AP): Lawyers for Johnny Depp moved to overturn a British court ruling that he assaulted his ex-wife, Amber Heard, by arguing Thursday that Heard did not donate all of her \$7 million divorce settlement to charity as she claimed.

The Hollywood star is seeking permission to appeal the November verdict in his libel lawsuit against The Sun newspaper for labeling him a "wife beater" in an April 2018 article. Depp lost the case following a three-week trial in July.

High Court Justice Andrew Nicol ruled that lawyers for Sun publisher News Group Newspapers proved during the trial that the allegations against Depp, made in a April 2018 article, were "substantially true."

The judge ruled that Depp, 57, assaulted Heard on a dozen occasions and put her in fear for her life three times.

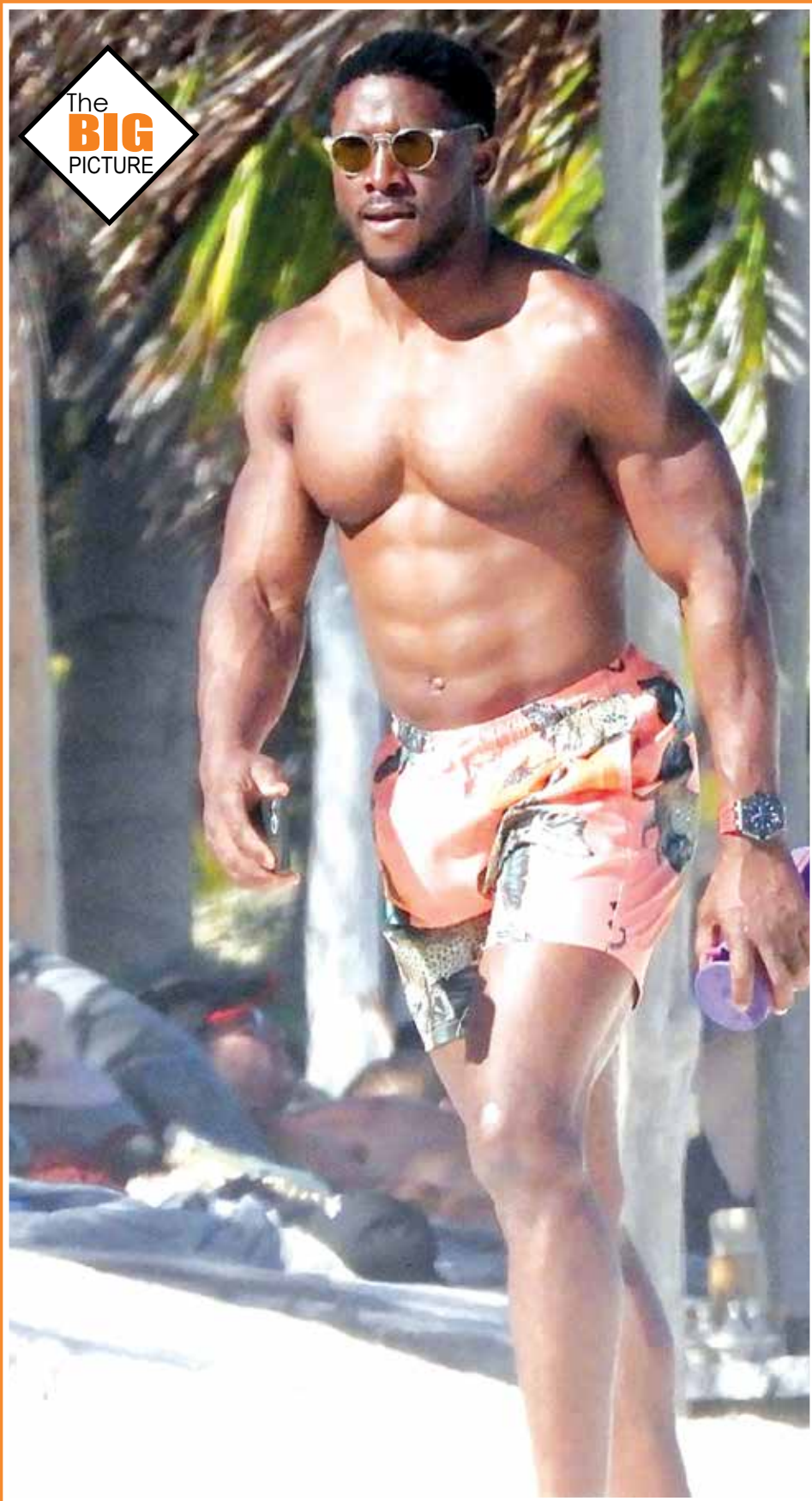
On Thursday, Depp's lawyers argued for an appeal based on what they said was fresh evidence that Heard did not donate the entire amount of her \$7-million divorce settlement to two charities.

Lawyer Andrew Caldecott

said the donation claims gave Heard a "considerable boost to her credibility as a person" and that they had "tipped the scales against Mr. Depp from the very beginning."

"It's a false plus to her and a false minus to him," he told the judge.

Neither Depp nor Heard were present for the hearing in London.



RIPPED REGGIE! Athlete Reggie Bush showed off his toned torso on the beach in Tulum, Mexico.

Chrissy Teigen Shuts Down "Absolutely Lame" Internet Troll After Debate About Her Photos

Chrissy Teigen wasn't having it after a Twitter user shared negative comments in response to the star's March 15 post about photo shoots.

Chrissy Teigen is clapping back after a social media user tried to start an argument over the star's post about photo shoots.

The 35-year-old model took to Twitter on Monday, March 15 to offer commentary about other public figures who frequently seem to pose for professional photos that they later post to Instagram.

"I seriously do not get how so many people I follow on Instagram have so many photos of themselves," Chrissy tweeted.

She later clarified to a fan, "I get selfies and casual pics but I'm talking legit magazine like photo shoots I do not know how they have so many good professional shoots. It's gotta be like two shoots a day for some."

When a follower wrote that "selfies cost \$0 to make," Chrissy replied, "not even talking about selfies. Like full legit photo shoots."

A different user replied to this with,



"chrissy lol you literally do this for a living, pls stop."

This led Chrissy to respond, "'Pls stop' excuse me sir?"

This same user then posted a screenshot of Chrissy responding to the "\$0" remark and wrote in part, "can we talk about this? and the context of the person tweeting about this?"

Chrissy's response suggested that she had apparently been following this person's account until recently. "I think you are mad I unfollowed but go off," the Lip Sync Battle co-host wrote. "start a whole convo!"

The individual then replied to Chrissy with, "is this a convo worth having? do you think so? that is the question. ... or are you creeping Twitter profiles of random people while thinking you're exempt from those with opposing views? please advise."

Chrissy fired back, "the fragility. trying to get people riled up about me in your thread, then getting mad when I see it when responding (creeping? lol) how absolutely lame."

Long story short, a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes it takes a sharply phrased Twitter retort to properly do the job.

Former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi has memoir out in September

NEW YORK (AP): Former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi has a memoir coming out this fall that her publisher is calling an "unvarnished take" on her rise to becoming one of the world's most powerful women.

"My Life in Full: Work, Family and Our Future" will be published Sept. 28, Portfolio Books announced Monday. Nooyi, 65, will trace her life from her childhood in India to her experiences as an immigrant at Yale University's business school to her many achievements as the rare woman and person of color in the upper echelons of the corporate world.

She worked at PepsiCo for 24 years, 12 of them as CEO, before stepping down in 2018. While she was CEO, PepsiCo's revenues grew from \$35 billion to \$63.5 billion and she became

known for promoting such "good for you" snacks as Baked Lay's potato chips and Naked juices made of fruits and vegetables.

The mother of two children, she also spoke candidly while at PepsiCo of the difficulties in balancing commitments.

"As I wrote 'My Life in Full,' I saw how my own story relates to our evolving global economy and how it may inform our progress on better integrating work and family in the

years ahead," Nooyi said in a statement

Monday. "I hope this book inspires business leaders, policymakers and all women and men passionate about easing the work-and-family burden to come together and create change."

Portfolio is an imprint at Penguin Random House. Financial terms for Nooyi's book were not disclosed. She was represented by Washington attorney Robert Barnett, whose clients range from former President Barack Obama to Nike co-founder Phil Knight.



'World of Dance' cancelled after four seasons

LOS ANGELES, MAR 18 (PTI): "World of Dance", the reality competition series featuring and executive produced by Jennifer Lopez, will not return for a fifth season at NBC.

The nonscripted show featured dance performers, including solo acts and larger groups, representing any style of dance, competing for a grand prize of USD 1 million.

According to Deadline, the network did not renew "World of Dance" in its summer scheduling plans, after it unveiled the premiere dates for shows such as Amy Poehler and Nick Offerman's "Making It", the comeback of "American Ninja Warrior" and "America's Got Talent".

Unlike its first three seasons, the fourth chapter of "World of Dance", which aired last year, did not score much on the ratings.

The show, which was launched in 2017, was the first big launch of an ambitious new slate of NBC's in-house reality efforts.

Lopez, Ne-Yo and Derek Hough served as judges, with Jenna Dewan



hosting the first two seasons and Scott Evans hosting the third and fourth.

It was created in partnership with the World of Dance enterprise, which produces dance competitions and events in more than 25 countries. The show premiered in May 2017.

Lopez, Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas

and Benny Medina executive produce for Nuyorican Productions. The series is produced by Universal Television Alternative Studio in association with Nuyorican Productions and World of Dance.

The format has also been remade in a number of territories globally including Thailand, Philippines and Poland.

ARIES:

Here's the thing, Aries: you're stuck on how things should be and shouldn't be. As a result, you're paralysed by your fears. The cards want you to remember that there is always more than one way to navigate any given situation. So, move beyond the ego space and let love prevail. By doing so, the solutions you seek will come to you in an unexpected way.

TAURUS:

The trouble is, we're too stuck on the idea of how things should and shouldn't be. As a result, we get obsessed with the need for perfection. Today, the cards are urging you to be gentle with yourself. To replace the judgements with love, empathy, and compassion. You did what you thought was best at that point of time, and that is enough. Honour your mistakes as learning lessons. The time to move forward and onwards has come.

GEMINI:

Gemini, be warned: things are about to get ugly around here. What you need to keep in mind when you find yourself in the midst of the drama is that everybody is simply projecting their shadows onto one another—shadows that have nothing to do with you to begin with. Try not to take anything personally. At the same time, let go of the need to temper your words in order to protect other people. The truth must be spoken and it must be spoken today. You've got to trust what your higher wisdom is telling you in this moment.

CANCER:

Both the past and the future are an illusion, Cancer; a figment of your imagination, if you may. All you truly have is the now. So, be present to what this moment is offering you rather than fixating on what has been taken away from you. This will help you realise that you are where you need to be, and that everything is taking place for your highest good.

LEO:

The relationship we share with ourselves is the most important relationship we will nurture in this lifetime. Yet, we have the tendency to play the role of our own worst enemies. Today, the cards are bringing your attention to your solar plexus and the self-worth issues you could be battling with in private. Consider beginning your day with this simple exercise: visualise a luminescent yellow-golden ball of light spinning clockwise until it grows in size. Feel the radiance of this light clear away the blocks standing in your way. With every exhale, release the fears and replace them with the light of love. An affirmation to repeat when you need that extra-boost: "I am ambitious, capable, and ready to fulfill my purpose."

VIRGO:

The trouble is, you're only looking at things from your perspective. But, there are multiple sides to this story, Virgo. Shift your gaze, just a little. Try to understand how the other person could be feeling as a result of your words or actions. Moving beyond the ego space is the secret to bringing about a drastic

change within and without.

LIBRA:

There's no such thing as coincidences, Libra. The divine plan is flawless and scripted to perfection. All you have to do is be present in order to experience the miracles. So be cognisant of what's being shown to you now. A great change is on the cards, Libra, and it will transform your life in ways you could've never imagined.

SCORPIO:

There's a great transformation taking place within you, one that's shifting your gaze from 'me' to 'we'. So, take a moment, look inwards and ask yourself the question, "How can I serve better?" In silence, you will find what you seek. The cards are urging you to put your financial worries aside too. As long as you're focused on serving the collective consciousness, trust that you will always be taken care of.

SAGITTARIUS:

As humans, we're gifted with two voices: the voice of reason and the voice of wisdom. Our ego self tends to rely on the 'facts' and 'information', and there's nothing wrong with that. However, there is only so much we can access by operating from our small, three-dimensional selves. Today, the cards are urging you to open yourself up to your own intuition and trust what's coming through from the unseen realms. The decision you're being guided to make may not make sense logically, yet it is what is in alignment with your highest good.

CAPRICORN:

Often, we allow other people to influence our decisions instead of listening to the voice of wisdom within. As a result, we end up betraying ourselves and dishonouring the truth. Could this hold true for where you are, Capricorn? Today, the cards are urging you to tune in. With the help of breathwork, meditation and journaling, tap into the space of wisdom within. Remember, it's never too late to take a step in the right direction. Trust that Spirit is holding your hand through the transition process.

AQUARIUS:

The forces are bringing your attention to your third chakra—the 'solar plexus'. This chakra is associated with that sense of 'I'. When it is in balance, it helps us feel confident in our abilities and go after what we believe in. When it is blocked, however, it makes us question our power and potential and keeps us from taking action. Word for the wise: work on strengthening this chakra and addressing the self-worth issues that are resurfacing at the moment.

PISCES:

This life of ours is truly magical, and tends to move in circles. Every time we feel we're going down under, the stars align to help us back up once again. Trust that this isn't rock bottom, Pisces. Trust that you're about to make a fresh start. Don't let the mental clutter keep you from believing in the magic that surrounds you. Trust your instinct, follow the signs, and keep moving forward.