



**WOMEN WHO MAKE
UNCONVENTIONAL CHOICES NEED
TO BE REPRESENTED IN FILMS:
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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USFC revival plans a foot



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 04 JAN:**

The management of United Sikkim Football Club has decided to revive the club with an aim to play Indian Super League in five years' time.

The founders of the club had shut down United Sikkim FC in September 2019 after a journey of 15 years and decided to just to focus more on grassroots football. United Sikkim Sporting Club was formed in 2004 later transforming into a professional club as United Sikkim FC in 2011.

A United Sikkim FC press release mentions

that plans are on to revive the club with the aim to play Indian Super League in five years' time.

United Sikkim FC senior manager, Arjun Rai said, "All our members, supporters and players wanted us to change the decision and continue running both senior and grassroots football. The club has decided to start lots of grassroots football from this year. It will also apply to the federation to play Under-13 and U-16 I-League this year."

USFC founder, Bhairav Bhutia stated that United Sikkim FC brought the I-League to

Sikkim and now the club wants to bring ISL to Sikkim in future.

"We want to have a long term plan so that we can reach ISL in few years. We will also have our own grounds and infrastructure in few years. We will continue to give platform to players from Sikkim and the region and also, we will be contributing to the development of Indian football," he added.

Bhairav mentioned that the club will play the State league from this year, build a young team and scout players from different parts of the region.

Mangars celebrate Barahimizong at Magarjung

**RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 04 JAN:**

The Mangar community of Sikkim celebrated Barahimizong at Magarjung under Soreng-Chyaklung constituency, West Sikkim, today.

The festival was organized by the All Sikkim Mangar Association (ASMA).

This year, Barahimizong festival was organized in a low key manner as per COVID-19 protocols.

At the outset, ASMA president (West Sikkim), TN Mangar informed that during Barahimizong, prayers are offered to the deities of Mangar community through a sacred ceremony for a healthy, prosperous and peaceful life.

He also presented the various features of the upcoming Mangsari



Mangarjung project being initiated by the state government. He said that the construction work of Mangsari Mangarjung project will start soon.

Mr Mangar said that the Mangsari Mangarjung project is a dream project for the Mangar community and fulfillment of the project would be a historic moment for the community.

Chairperson, Agriculture Board, CK Rana, was present as the chief guest along with MLA (Yangang Rangang), Raj Kumari Thapa, Advisor (press) to Chief Minister of Sikkim, CP Sharma, scholars of Mangar community and other dignitaries.

The chief guest, in his brief address, mentioned that cultural practices should be kept alive to preserve the distinct identity of a community. He appreciated the efforts of ASMA for preservation, promotion and propagation of Mangar community's distinct cultural heritage.

He called for unity among the Mangar community

turn to pg 02

Sunday pause delivers only one new case of COVID

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 JAN:**

Only one new case of novel coronavirus was reported in the state today after a resident of Yuksom, West Sikkim, tested positive in Rapid Antigen Testing.

It may be mentioned here that only 25 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours as the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital is shut on Sundays and no RTPCR tests were conducted. On regular days, Sikkim averages upwards of 200 tests. That said, the dip in numbers has been consistent over the past week except the outbreaks at the Namchi and Gangtok prisons.

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 has now reached 5921, in which 5212 have been discharged from facility and home isolation in the State. Three patients are currently admitted in the ICU facility of the COVID dedicated STNM hospital in Gangtok.

In his daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia mentioned that all nine samples tested by TrueNat were found negative for COVID-19, while one new case was detected in rapid antigen testing of 16 samples.

Paused by COVID-19, India's Arctic expedition to resume in June

Panaji, 04 Jan [PTI]: After a gap of a year due to COVID-19 pandemic, India's annual expedition to the Arctic will resume this year in the month of June, a senior Union government official said on Monday.

Talking to reporters in Vasco town, about 30 kms away from Panaji, M Ravichandran, Director, National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), said the annual expedition to the Arctic region will be held from June to October.

"Last year, the expedition was cancelled because of COVID-19 outbreak. This year, we are resuming the expedition. It will be held from June to October," he said.

He said about 150-200 crew from India would be participating in the expedition in the batches of 10 at a time.

India embarked upon the Arctic research by launching first scientific expedition to Arctic in the first week of August, 2007, using the international research facility in the Spitsbergen Island of Norway.

turn to pg 02

"Misogynistic": Trinamool on BJP leader's comments on Mamata Banerjee

KOLKATA, 04 JAN [PTI]: Women leaders of the Trinamool Congress have slammed BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, accusing him of posting a misogynistic tweet against West Bengal Chief Minister and party chief Mamata Banerjee.

Mr Vijayvargiya shared a photo of Ms Banerjee, in which she is seen cooking in a tribal village, on Twitter and, in an accompanying statement, said in Hindi, "Didi has already started doing the work she will have to do after 5 months."

Ms Banerjee's photo was taken at Ballavpur village where she had stopped for some time while returning to Kolkata from Birbhum district last week. The assembly election in the state is due in April-May this year.

Reacting sharply to Mr Vijayvargiya's post, TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar claimed that the country is filled with misogynists from the BJP who think the



place of a woman is in the kitchen. "If you are a woman and you have aspirations to join active politics, remember - our country is plagued with MISOGYNISTS from BJP like these who plan to send women back to the kitchen," Ghosh Dastidar tweeted.

"Can't imagine the lack of respect that women in Kailash Vijayvargiya family must be facing," the doctor turned politician said.

Actor turned party MP Nusrat Jahan said "Shri Kailash

Vijayvargiya's comments are OUTRIGHT MISOGYNISTIC! BJP crossed the mark by insulting every single woman who cooks, provides for families and has aspirations. Mamata Banerjee is the only female CM in India at present and once again, BJP targets and abuses her. #Shameful."

BJP Mahila Morcha state president Agnimitra Paul, however, wondered how that tweet of Vijayvargiya could be misogynistic.

"Cooking cannot be a de-

meaning job. Our mothers and grandmothers cooked for days to sustain the family. Millions of women - working or housewives - cook with passion for their near ones every day. There are thousands of male chefs who are proud of their work. How can the tweet be demeaning or misogynistic?" she told PTI.

Ms Paul, also a fashion designer, claimed that at a meeting in the past, TMC MP Abhisek Banerjee had asked the crowd if they will wear sari and bangle if attacked.

"Isn't that demeaning to Indian women? Wearing sari and bangle is the pride of Indian women. What would the TMC women MPs have to say about that?" Ms Paul asked.

Mamata Banerjee made a sudden detour and entered the tribal village while returning to Kolkata after wrapping up a two-day visit to Bolpur in Birbhum district on December 30.

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You Eat Your Food, We'll Eat Ours: Farmers refuse lunch with Ministers

New Delhi, 04 Jan [NDTV]: Farmer reps protesting the centre's agriculture laws refused to share a meal with Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Piyush Goyal and Som Prakash during the seventh round of talks today, declaring: "You eat your food and we will eat our food".

Photographs from inside Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan, where the talks were held, showed farmers sitting on chairs (and others squatting on the floor of the hall) with their lunch laid out on a nearby table. There was no headway in the talks and the next meeting will be held on Friday.

The luncheon break in each round of negotiation between the farmer leaders and the centre had emerged as a relative indicator of progress in resolving the weeks-long stand-off.

Last week headlines were made after the two sides agreed to break bread together.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Railways Minister Piyush Goyal were invited to share in the farmers' langar. Visuals showed the ministers being served rotis with lentils and vegetables.

Images of that lunch were widely seen as a soft breakthrough in discussions that have stalled over the farmers' core demands - scrapping of the agriculture laws and a legal guarantee for MSP.

The mood soured by day's end though, with the two sides still unable to agree on core issues.

The centre said it would not consider taking back the laws (calling the process "long and arduous"), but once again offered to form a committee to discuss these outstanding demands. It also offered farmers' a written guarantee for MSP, as opposed to the legal one they have been demanding.

The lunch break in each round of talks is seen as a relative indicator of progress in resolving the stand-off.

The farmers, who have repeatedly rebuffed both proposals (last month sources quoted union reps as saying "now is not the time for a committee"), said "we won't take back our movement".

Despite the continuing gulf between the two sides Mr Tomar later told reporters the meeting concluded on a "very good note", as he announced an "agreement" on two of four demands.

He said an amendment to the Electricity Bill would be withdrawn and that penal provisions for stubble burning would not be applicable to the farmers. However, both issues were seen as being already settled, with the centre having already indicated that it will accept these demands.

Tens of thousands of farmers across the country are up in arms over three laws passed amid chaos and pandemonium in September. They say the laws will deny them guaranteed prices (MSP) and leave them at the mercy of corporate firms looking to move into the agriculture space.

Sikkim Suraksha Samiti awareness campaign against fake CoIs

AARON RAI PAKYONG, 04 JAN:

Sikkim Suraksha Samiti concluded the state-level public awareness campaign against fake documents like Certificate of Identification at the Pakyong Community hall today. The programme was attended by representatives of civil so-

ciety, social workers and various organizations.

President of the organization, Madan Tamang gave details of the program, strategy, aims, objectives and achievements of the Samiti. He claimed that apart from fake CoIs, many other fake documents were also found as per the response of RTI applications.

Mr Tamang said that the rights of "original" Sikkimese have been violated and the state government should take legal action against fake CoI holders.

The administration has only cancelled the fake documents but has not taken any legal action against those in posses-

sion of such documents, he stated.

"Why is the government only after fake Facebook IDs and not after those holding fake CoIs?" asked Mr Tamang.

He also brought up the issue of subletting of trade licenses.

SSS general secretary, Tara Prasad Bhattarai,

Coordinator, Nationalist Sikkim United Organization, Dev Kumar Pradhan, SSS West District Organization president, Binod Limbu, and others also addressed the function.

Politician, Bharat Basnett, was the keynote speaker of the function and spoke on the history of Sikkim.

India records 16,504 new COVID-19 cases, 214 fresh fatalities

New Delhi, Jan 4 (PTI): Daily new COVID-19 cases in the country remained below 20,000 for the third consecutive day taking the virus caseload to 1,03,40,469, while the recoveries surged to 99.46 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

A total of 16,504 people tested positive for coronavirus infection in a day. The death toll increased to 1,49,649 with 214 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 99,46,867 pushing the national recovery rate to 96.19 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The COVID-19 active caseload remained below 3 lakh for the 14th consecutive day.

There are 2,43,953 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprise 2.36 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

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

on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 17,56,35,761 samples have been tested up to January 3 with 7,35,978 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 214 new fatalities include 35 from Maharashtra, 26 from West Bengal, 25 from Kerala, 16 from Uttar Pradesh and 14 each from Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

A total of 1,49,649 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 49,666 from Maharashtra followed by 12,156 from Tamil Nadu, 12,107 from Karnataka, 10,585 from Delhi, 9,792 from West Bengal, 8,403 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,115 from Andhra Pradesh and 5,376 from Punjab.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

US Congress passes "Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act" for Pakistani women

WASHINGTON. 04 JAN [PTI]: The US Congress has passed the "Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act" which will expand the number of scholarships available to Pakistani women to receive higher education under a merit and needs-based programme.

Passed by the House of Representatives in March 2020, the bill was passed by the United States Senate by a voice vote on January 1. The bill now heads to the White House for US President Donald Trump to sign into law.

The bill requires the US Agency for International Development to award at least 50 per cent of scholarships under a Pakistan-based higher education scholarship programme to Pakistani women, from 2020 to 2022, across a range of academic disciplines and in accordance with existing eligibility criteria.

The bill also requires USAID to consult with and leverage investments by the Pakistani private sector and Pakistanis residing in the United States to improve and expand access to education programmes in Pakistan.

Among other thing, it

requires USAID to brief Congress annually on the number of scholarships awarded under the programme, including breakdowns by gender, discipline, and degree type; the percentage of recipients who were involuntarily pushed out of the programme for failure to meet programme requirements; and the percentage of recipients who dropped out of school, including due to retaliation for seeking education.

On October 10, 2014, Malala shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi for her "struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education". In October 2012, Malala was shot in the head by Pakistani Taliban on her way home from school. In late 2008, she began making the case for access to education for women and girls despite objections from the Pakistani Taliban.

Since 2010, the USAID has awarded more than 6,000 scholarships for young women to receive higher education in Pakistan. The bill expands this programme.

UPSC recommends 89 more candidates for civil services

NEW DELHI, JAN 4 (PTI): The UPSC has recommended 89 candidates for different civil services from its reserve list drawn on the basis of the 2019 civil services examination, according to an official statement issued on Monday.

The result of the 2019 civil services examination was declared on August 4 in 2020, recommending 829 candidates in order of merit for appointment to IAS, IFS, IPS and other Group A' and Group B' central services against 927 vacancies.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), in accordance with rules,

also maintained a consolidated reserve list in order of merit below the last recommended candidate under the respective categories, said the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry.

As sought by the Department of Personnel & Training, the commission has now recommended 89 candidates -- 73 General, 14 OBC, 1 EWS and 1 SC -- to fill up the remaining posts based on the 2019 civil services examination, it said.

The list of the 89 candidates is also available on the UPSC website -- <http://www.upsc.gov.in>.

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Mangars celebrate ...

for preservation and promotion of Mangar cultural heritage saying that due to lack of knowledge and sensitization, culture and traditions of Mangar community were facing risk of extinction.

Mr Rana accused the former SDF government of betraying the Mangar community by leaving the Mangsari Mangarjung project incomplete.

He alleged that even after submission of tender for the project several times, the former SDF government failed to start the project.

MLA Raj Kumari Thapa said that the Mangar community should get united under one platform keeping personal interests aside to work for upliftment of the community as a whole.

Cultural programmes and prayer session were held during the festival.

The organizing committee felicitated State Award recipient, teacher Deepa Alley and others for their contributions in various fields.

Paused by COVID-19...

Subsequently, India has been sending scientific teams every summer and winter for carrying out studies in the Arctic, primarily in the fields of glaciology, hydrochemistry, microbiology, and atmospheric sciences.

Mr Ravichandran said the crew will embark on the mission by flight.

"There's a science village in the Arctic where representatives of seven countries would stay together," Mr Ravichandran said.

He said the crew for the expedition will go in batches as the capacity of the Indian station in the Arctic is ten.

"Once ten people return, another batch of ten members will go," he added.

Mr Ravichandran and other senior officials of the NCPOR were in Vasco on Monday to give a send-off to India's scientific expedition to Antarctica.

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LAND FOR SALE

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LAND FOR SALE

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

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

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Building for sale

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

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Leopard stuck in wire mesh rescued in Darj

DARJEELING, 04 JAN [PTI]: A leopard that got entangled in a wire mesh in Darjeeling's Margarets Hope Tea Garden was rescued and taken to a nearby facility for further treatment, said a forest official on Sunday.

Forest official J Fareed Sekh said that the leopard has been taken

to Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park for further treatment.

"On receipt of information from the public, the forest staff from Senchal West Range immediately responded and reached the spot and assessed the situation. The tranquillisation team from Sukna and the

veterinary team from the PNHZP were mobilized for the rescue," he said.

"A safety perimeter was established with nylon nets and tranquillisation was done. The operation was completed successfully by 3:30 PM and the leopard was taken to the PNHZP for further treatment," he added.

Nali Fungwa Yakthung Sappsokiba Chumboo celebrates foundation day

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 JAN:

Nali Fungwa Yakthung Sappsokiba Chumboo celebrated its foundation day today at Sombaria, West Sikkim.

A press release informs that Nali Fungwa Yakthung Sappsokiba Chumboo was established on 04 January 2016.

On the day, cultural programmes, essay writing, poetry and story writing competitions were held. The winners and runners up were awarded trophies and certificates by retired Joint Director [Language], Education Department, SB Mangmoo, who was present as the chief guest.

In his address, Mr



Mangmoo gave brief history of Limboo language and its development. He talked about renowned writers of Daramdin constituency such as Lt. M.B

Nembang and Lt. T.B Nembang amongst others.

Chumboo president, BL Sawden gave a short welcome speech while general secretary, HB Pandhak gave

a brief speech about the development of Chumboo.

A book by Bhim Prashad Setling [Assistant Professor of Namchi Govt. College] titled "The

Worships and Rituals in Limboo Community" was also released on the day.

Vice general secretary of the Chumboo gave the vote of thanks.

Another luxury hotel in Chennai becomes Covid cluster, 20 staff positive

CHENNAI, 04 JAN [NDTV]: Twenty staff members at Chennai's star hotel, the Leela Palace, have tested positive for COVID-19, health authorities said on Monday.

This is Chennai's second luxury hotel to have emerged as a COVID-19 cluster after the ITC Grand Chola.

On Saturday, at least 85 staff of the ITC hotel, their family members and neighbours were declared positive for the novel coronavirus infection. Though the hotel officials said they are following all state-directed standard operating procedures (SOPs), in addition to their own hygiene protocol, the Tamil Nadu health authorities ordered a saturation test covering all members of the establishment and across hotels in the city.

At the Leela Palace, 232 staff members were tested and results of about 10 per cent showed they had the coronavirus disease, a senior health official said.

According to officials,

a total of 6,416 people are directly employed at hotels across Chennai. Of them, almost 68 per cent, or 4,392 staff members were tested for coronavirus.

Overall 125, close to 3 per cent, hotel employees have tested positive, and results of another 491 are awaited, the senior official said. All business meetings, events in city's hotels are being closely monitored, he added.

"Hotels in Chennai are being periodically screened and sensitised. The Chennai Corporation was asked to conduct a saturation test for all the residents of the hotel," Tamil Nadu Health Secretary J Radhakrishnan had said earlier.

This is the third instance of a high-profile COVID-19 cluster outbreak in Chennai in the recent months.

The first was detected at IIT-Madras in mid-December last year. Over 100 students got COVID-19 within a week's time and the campus had to be put under temporary lockdown.

ED attaches Rs 2.7-cr worth assets of Surat BJP leader

NEW DELHI, JAN 4 (PTI): The Enforcement Directorate has attached assets worth Rs 2.7 crore of a Surat-based BJP leader and a media firm linked to him in connection with a money laundering case against them, the agency said on Monday.

It said a provisional order for attachment has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against PVS Sarma, Sanket Media Pvt Ltd in which he is a director, his wife Annapurna Sarma and son P Sushant Sarma. All the attached immovable properties are located in the diamond city and they include seven shops located in Savera complex, two flats in Nova complex, a shop and a plot located in western business park and Karunasagar area, land and a building in the Palsana area and Rs 24 lakh in fixed deposits.

These assets are worth Rs 2.70 crore while their market value is estimated to be Rs 8 crore, the agency said in a statement.

Sarma, 57, was removed as the BJP vice president of Surat soon after the Income Tax

department raided him in October last year on charges of alleged tax evasion. He has earlier worked in the Income Tax department.

Sarma was arrested by the ED in November under sections of the PMLA and he is in custody at present. The ED had booked Sarma, the media company (Sanket) and the others after studying a Gujarat Police FIR that was filed against him by the Income Tax department.

Sanket Media Pvt Ltd publishes 'Satyam Times' newspaper in Gujarati and English.

The ED had earlier said in a statement that the probe found that "though the circulation of the newspapers was shown at 23,500 and 6,000-6,300 copies daily for the Gujarati and English editions respectively, actual circulation was only around 300-600 and 0-290".

"Inflated figures of circulation were shown to attract more advertising agencies including the Directorate of Advertisement and Visual Publicity (DAVP) and other private advertising companies to publish their advertisements in the said newspaper," it had alleged.

Anthology of poems "Sidha Baato" released



SHRAVAN CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 04 JAN:

An anthology of poems by Punya Psd Koirala titled "Sidha Baato" was released at Durga Mandir hall at Gangtok today. This is Mr Koirala's fourth book.

The two-hour event

was chaired by president Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Rudra Poudyal while Retired Teacher, Laxman Nepal was the chief guest. Litterateurs ML Nepal and Chakrapani Bhattarai were present as special guests.

The event kicked off with poetry recital by poets Bhim Rawat, Jivika Khatiwara and Prem Neopaney. In his address, Mr. Koirala thanked his colleagues and teachers for helping him to achieve his dreams.

TN govt allows full capacity in cinemas



CHENNAI, JAN 4 (PTI): The Tamil Nadu government on Monday permitted 100 per cent seating capacity in cinema theatres from the present 50 per cent and directed them to follow the Standard Operating Procedure prescribed to prevent spread of coronavirus.

The relaxation comes after owners of cinema halls made a representation appealing to the government to allow them to screen films with full seating capacity.

The state government had earlier allowed reopening of the theatres, which remained closed since the national COVID-19 lockdown came into force in March last year, from November 10 with 50 per cent seating capacity.

However, a big chunk of cinema theatres had been shut though the government allowed resumption of screening of films while many movie halls that are already open too witnessed less number of footfalls.

In its order on Monday, the government said messages on precautionary measures to avoid the virus spread shall also be screened during the show time in cinema theatres to create awareness among the public.

"Based on the decrease in the COVID-19 cases day by day, the theatre owners association have represented to the government to increase the seating capacity of cinemas, theatres and multiplexes," the GO said.

On the basis of the representation, the government has allowed the increase in the seating capacity, it said.

Asked on the continued closure of a section of theatres and how the order allowing 100 per cent capacity would make a difference, Joint Secretary of Tamil Nadu Theatre Owners Association S Srither said they expected films that would be released coinciding with Pongal festivities later this month would bring in more people.

He said the industry as a whole thanked Chief Minister K Palaniswami for accepting their plea.

He also said theatres that opened following the 50 per cent seating capacity permission could not generate decent revenues and the occupancy was less than 10 per cent.

"Since quality films did not get released and as spectators did not turn up, sixty per cent of theatres are closed down in Tamil Nadu," Srither told PTI adding Tamil Nadu has 1,104 screens.

Films of popular actors Vijay and Simbu 'Master' and 'Easwaran' respectively are slated to be released on January 13 and 14 and the new flicks would help closed movie halls to reopen, he said.

To a question on virus related apprehensions, Srither said, "we assure the government and the audience that we will strictly follow all the stipulated safety measures."

People would be thermal screened and sanitisers would be provided and if movie lovers arrive without a mask they would be provided mask free of cost, he said.

"We will also sanitise the premises between each show," he said.

Transport Minister provides tents to 10 NGOs



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 JAN:

Transport Minister and Area MLA, Sanjit Kharel provided one tent each to 10 NGOs of Namthang Ratepani constituency today.

A press release informs that the tents were provided to Upper Ratepani, Palitam, Lower Katyang Mamring, Turung, Kanchanganga Youth,

Mayal Mutanchi, Sunakhari, Take Youth Club and churches of the area.

These tents were presented in the presence of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha CLC president, RS Tamang and other executive committee members.

Minister Kharel mentioned that the vision of SKM party president cum Chief Minister, PS Ta-

mang has made this type of initiative possible and successful.

He has appealed to all the institutions to use the tents properly and pay special attention for its maintenance.

Meanwhile, SDF youth, Krishna Tamang joined SKM during the function today, the release mentions.

Air Force continues operations to douse Dzouko wildfire along Manipur-Nagaland border

KOIHMA, 04 JAN: Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters continued operations to douse the fire in Dzouko Valley near Kohima on Monday.

"Continuation of Operations #DzoukoValley. IAF helicopters resumed Bambi Bucket operations today towards dousing the fire in Dzouko Valley near Kohima. Four Mi-17 helicopters have been

deployed at Dimapur and Rangapahar for the task," IAF wrote on Twitter.

Sixty personnel of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were deployed on Saturday at the wildfire site at Dzouko valley which lies on the Manipur-Nagaland border, according to Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday had

assured of assistance to Singh in containing the wildfire. Director-General of NDRF Satya Pradhan updated that teamwork of all the agencies along with support from the Centre and the state government helped in fighting the wildfire. This valley is located at the state borders of Manipur and Nagaland and is a popular tourist spot.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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

If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7028372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Death Due to Disengagement

When a society refuses to engage, the shocking becomes the new normal

Suicides have become so frequent, and the general response to them so uninvolved that this newspaper has stopped reporting on suicides on a day to day basis, fearful that the commonplace nature of such deaths will convince those contemplating such ends that this is a “normal” means to opt out. But there is nothing normal about a suicide. It is a traumatic experience for everyone touched by it – the victim, the families, the friends and even the police personnel who have to recover the bodies and draft reports about the incident. Why, even journalists who have to report on these incidents are left disturbed. Why then is it that suicides do not figure in public and political discussions? Is it not worrying that something which can be addressed and is yet allowed to take away so many lives from Sikkim’s midst is not attracting the attention of leaders beyond the occasional lip-service?

Speak to any cop, especially the ones posted at the more remote out-posts where they respond more to recover bodies of suicide victims than law & order situations, bringing down limp bodies of lives that could have been saved and one does not sense disinterest from the routineness of the matter but a frustration over why lives end in this manner so often in Sikkim. They return to this thankless task every day, reporting to their beats knowing that their policing of yesterday has made no dent in the nexus of disinterest and insensitiveness that spawns suicides in Sikkim. What is worse, the society at large is not only disinterested, but also complacently dismissive, reading of social challenges like suicides and drug busts with shallow comments of this being caused by corruption and materialism.

This is a dangerously uninvolved attitude. These are social challenges, situations that need to be met with social engagement and supported by a political will which creates the enabling laws and environment to redress the situation. Those who pass superficial judgements, blaming these societal trends on law & order failures and not the society, are causing perhaps even more damage than the indifference with which the community at large is responding to the challenges. Among all the factors that sustain substance abuse, societal indifference contributes the most. Suicides in Sikkim manifest in the failure of adequate awareness, or even interest, about mental health. Economic destitution has not claimed lives here yet. Lives are being lost and put in harm’s way because a civil society refuses to come together in Sikkim.

Community engagement, when genuinely crafted, automatically leads to spontaneous involvement. And one is referring here not only to substance abuse and suicides. Look at how consistently mute the people and their organisations have remained in Sikkim in the face of every situation that has confronted the State. There is neither any spontaneity in jubilant celebrations nor any instinctive revulsion when misfortune comes visiting. The only voices that find comment indulge in rounds of condemnations and counters and are exclusively politically inspired. The lay citizens remain aloof because they have not cobbled together organisations which are not only not politically compromised, but also neither forceful nor forthright. In this vacuum, issues are manufactured and forced on the people and genuine problems remain unaddressed. Also manifesting because of this involvement deficit are social challenges which grow ever more staggering and confounding. Superficiality and token gestures do not solve any problem, and the situation with suicides is much too pervasive to even be called a “problem” any more – they have become the new normal for Sikkim. Unless the society invests some real involvement, this “normalcy” will keep getting worse and the State the poorer.

And no, don’t look at the government to solve this problem. It cannot do so on its own because those who are harm’s way are around families and their immediate circle of friends and only they can catch the warning signs in time. The government could help by arranging proper awareness and access to experts, but it will have to be the lay people who walk the way to help and encourage others to do the same. Given how things have been, even the first step has not been taken. As a result, by the time you finish reading this, chances are, that a panic call has gone through to another police outpost reporting an unidentified body found hanging in a neighbourhood somewhere in Sikkim...

WRITE US:

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

Outdoor Education at Universities Can be a Positive Legacy of COVID-19

JEAN-PHILIPPE AYOTTE-BEAUDET
theconversation.com

Universities have faced major planning challenges due to COVID-19. While there has been significant media coverage about universities offering students online learning, what has been less discussed is how some activities have continued in face-to-face settings.

My research is concerned with outdoor science education so I have long been engaged in studying outdoor learning. At the Université de Sherbrooke, among our measures to promote student and staff safety during the pandemic was setting up outdoor sheltered and amphitheatre-style learning environments. Since the university was already planning to develop outdoor spaces that could be used for teaching, the pandemic provided an opportunity for pilot testing.

To develop our outdoor learning environments, we appointed a committee with diverse expertise in learning and teaching, health and safety and a variety of logistical and technical considerations such as managing audiovisual resources. Together, we created a guide to support outdoor education in higher education in Canada during the context of COVID-19.

TEACHING AND LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

In times of pandemic, outdoor classes allow students to meet their professor or classmates in person, when they would not otherwise have had the chance to do so. However, even during regular non-pandemic times, outdoor classes may also allow professors to incorporate outdoor education into their lessons directly on campus.

Outdoor learning environments should be used only when activities have an added value. In other words, not all courses have to be held there. They can be used in a complementary manner with indoor or online learning when they support the learning objectives.

In a university context, outdoor education can have several benefits. It provides the opportunity to draw on the environment to explore different disciplinary knowledge. For example, students

might engage with the outdoor environment to learn more about social behaviours on campus; they might explore natural phenomena or examine technical phenomena such as building construction.

Open spaces can also encourage teachers to combine physical activity with educational content. Activities that put students physically in action are associated with the potential to increase academic achievement.

In the university context, where appropriate student accommodations can be made when necessary, this could include field activities with classmates or a guided walk with the teacher to explore the surrounding area.

Some research suggests that for people without attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) “inattention and impulsivity are reduced after exposure to natural views and settings,” but it is unclear what these findings could mean for students with ADHD. It is important to consider accessibility when planning to create an inclusive gathering space for all students.

STUDENT AND FACULTY EXPERIENCES

This fall, a total of 57 teachers made 137 reservations in the 10 outdoor classrooms. Of the 1,275 students who had at least one outdoor activity, 94 per cent were at the undergraduate level. Fifty-seven per cent of them were entering their first year at the university. These outdoor activities allowed them to experience the campus during this time of physical distancing.

The faculty of education and the faculty of arts and humanities were the most represented. Instructors led courses in a wide variety of fields, such as primary science education, drama and film writing, physical activity anatomy, psychology and research methodology.

We conducted a survey to better understand the students’ experience. Most striking was the potentially positive and negative effects of outdoor learning environments on concentration.

While some students mentioned that the outdoors allowed them to be more focused, others mentioned the opposite. These insights highlight

the importance of selecting locations that enhance positive stimuli (for example, feeling the warmth of the sun or being surrounded by nature) while reducing nuisance stimuli such as passers-by and ambient noise.

These preliminary observations will lead to first adjustments when our outdoor learning environments reopen in May 2021.

LOOKING FORWARD

While education at all levels has been shaken over the past months, the pandemic is an opportunity to think about new learning environments. Outdoor settings were an opportunity for students to discover the campus, meet their teacher and develop relationships with new fellow students. Paradoxically, the current context does not allow teachers to fully benefit from one of the important principles of outdoor education: active teaching methods.

Since teachers in higher education institutions are generally not familiar with teaching outdoors, it is essential to develop training or offer a community of practice within the institution to support them. This process must be embedded in a broader change from a paradigm centred on teaching to one centred on student learning.

Much research is being conducted to better understand the effects of experiences with nature on cognitive, physical, mental and educational components for students between kindergarten to Grade 12. In higher education, we still need to develop a co-ordinated research agenda to answer important questions. How can outdoor learning promote inclusiveness in higher education? What teaching methods are most conducive to outdoor learning in higher education?

At Université de Sherbrooke, outdoor learning environments will be a legacy of the pandemic, in terms of both infrastructure and pedagogical practices. I invite all those interested to join us in these new avenues of research.

[the writer is Professor, Department of Preschool and Primary Education, Université de Sherbrooke]



New Year’s resolution tips for 2021: Focus on getting to the end of COVID-19

KATHERINE ARBUTHNOTT
theconversation.com

Welcoming the new year may feel a bit different this year, given the challenges of 2020 and the inability to celebrate together.

For many people, the yearly date change — adding one more year to life’s tally — puts a greater focus on long-term goals than busy lives usually allow. For many, this leads to the tradition of New Year’s resolutions, a chance to consider our progress on becoming the “ideal self” many people hope to achieve by the end of their days.

Even with the knowledge that the focus will shift back to the short-term demands of day-to-day by mid-January, it is valuable to consider those longer-term aspirations, if for no other reason than for people to remind themselves that there’s more to them than the harried exhausted person who, at the end of the day, wants nothing more than to get into their PJs and play a video game, binge-watch a favourite TV serial, or read a current novel.

But this year, thinking about the long-term is much more difficult. The pandemic has given us all a different experience of time. The pandemic has not only served as a visceral reminder that something unexpected can land in our well-envisioned path,

halting all progress. It has also made the path beyond the pandemic unclear.

As many pundits are noting, a “return to normal” — meaning life exactly as it was before COVID-19 entered our vocabulary — is highly unlikely. The future has become less predictable, which also means that setting long-term goals is much more difficult. It’s hard to imagine an ideal self without knowing what that self will be experiencing.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

As a psychologist, I think resolutions for 2021 should be much more short-term than usual. It is probably challenging enough to figure out what’s needed to make it through the months until everyone is vaccinated and can start to make their way back into a more social world.

You might be thinking that this hardly seems like a good use of once-a-year resolutions, but even though these goals will be very short-term, this is valuable given that public health leaders are warning that these particular months are likely to be the hardest of the pandemic. So even though these goals will likely only be needed for a few months, they can be vital for determining our state when the pandemic comes to an end.

Living through several months of pandemic uncertainty and restrictions has likely given many people a

pretty good idea of which personal vulnerabilities this constrained life chafes against. Some people may be struggling to keep their emotional balance. For others, the absence of friends and even casual acquaintances may be driving them mad. Others might be panting to get back to the gym.

These personal points of pain can give people some idea of what resolutions they might make. Addressing those specific points may help enable people to care for themselves well enough to arrive at the pandemic’s end with some semblance of good physical and mental health.

Reviewing the advice that mental health professionals gave at the beginning of the pandemic may be helpful in figuring out your specific short-term resolutions to deal with personal challenges. Or you, like many others, might have discovered the healing properties of nature during this time, as documented in a preprint (not yet peer reviewed) study. If so, your resolutions could be about making sure you continue those activities and visiting your favourite nature spots during these winter months. My own resolution, for instance, is to spend at least five minutes each day appreciating the birds in my yard, which never fails to lift my spirits.

PANDEMIC LESSONS

For those who can’t resist think-

ing about long-term goals, despite the uncertainty that this pandemic year has introduced into the world, you could review what you’ve learned during the pandemic. Long-term resolutions could be based on consideration of three things:

1. What do I want to keep from changes I made to cope with the pandemic?
2. What do I want to reclaim from the pre-pandemic time?
3. How would I “build back better” if I were in charge of the world or my neighbourhood?

Each of these things will require some long-term goal focus, and can help you imagine a new ideal self for the post-pandemic times.

Like Christmas 2020, New Year’s 2021 is likely to be unique in many people’s memories. Many people have gone out of their way to make these moments as tolerable as possible, given the circumstances, but these new ways to commemorate the holidays are unlikely to become traditions, or things people will want to repeat in subsequent years.

Approaching 2021 resolutions by harvesting any bright spots or treasures that have revealed themselves during this unusual time may help illuminate a new path to follow once the pandemic has ended.

[the writer is Professor of Psychology, University of Regina]

SRMJEEE 2021 registration begins for B Tech courses

SUMMIT REPORT

KATTANKULATHUR, 04 JAN: SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur, (earlier known as SRM University) begins the online registration process for its BTech entrance exam, SRMJEEE (SRM Joint Engineering Entrance Examination). Qualifying in SRMJEEE provides entry to all the campuses of SRMIST located at Kattankulathur (Main Campus), Vadapalani, Ramapuram, and Delhi – NCR; SRM University, Andhra Pradesh; SRM University, Sonapat– Haryana and SRM University, Sikkim. For further details visit www.srmist.edu.in.

Admissions to B Tech program is only through the common entrance exam, SRMJEEE 2021, which is scheduled to be held in the second week of April, 2021 in 127 Indian cities and 5 countries (Dubai, Doha, Muscat, Bahrain, and Kuwait). Last year, there was an overwhelming 1.52 lakhs of candidates who participated to gain entry to India's No.1 multi-stream university.

Entrance examination date and joint counselling dates will be announced in due course as



per AICTE, UGC and Government notifications.

Candidates applying should have secured a minimum aggregate of 50 percent in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry/Biology for all campuses except for SRM University, Andhra Pradesh which requires the minimum aggregate of 60 percent in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics in Class 12 or other equivalent qualifying examinations. The admission would be based on SRMJEEE rank,

subject to the eligibility criteria.

Indians and Non-Resident Indians can apply for SRMJEEE 2021. NRI candidates who qualify in SRMJEEE 2021 and those who also go through regular counselling will be treated as domestic applicants for all the four years. NRI candidates appearing for SRMJEEE 2021 can switch to direct admission under International Category in case of being unable to secure the desired course in the joint counselling by paying International fee.

NRI candidates also have the option of directly applying under the International Admission Category to get admission to any program without taking SRMJEEE 2021 by paying the international tuition and other fees.

SRMIST has an enviable track record of 8500+ Job Offers with a top salary of Rs 41.6 LPA, the highest pay by any university for the graduating batch 2019-20. Around 625+ Top-notch companies, including Microsoft, Amazon, IBM,

CISCO, Siemens, PayPal, Accenture, Capgemini, Hewlett Packard, TCS, Infosys, Cognizant, Wipro, ABB, L&T, Ford, TVS, Schneider, Renault Nissan, Cerner, GT Strategies, Ford, Bioclinica, and Zifo among many others, visit SRMIST every year to recruit our students.

The university offers a wide range of scholarships to the tune of Rs 35 Crores making studying in the university affordable to all. To apply and for more details, kindly visit: www.srmist.edu.in.

Nepal's Covid-19 toll reaches 1,885 with seven more deaths; national tally reaches 262,262 with 403 new infections

KATHMANDU, 04 JAN [KATHMANDUPOST]: Nepal on Monday reported seven more Covid-19-related fatalities, pushing the death toll to 1,885. The country also recorded 403 new cases.

The overall infection tally has reached 262,262 with 5,289 active cases.

According to the Ministry of Health and Population, 255,088 infected people have recovered from the disease so far; of them 594 in the past 24 hours.

Kathmandu Valley recorded 185 new infections in the past 24 hours. Of them, 140 cases were confirmed in Kathmandu, 24 in Bhaktapur and 21 in Lalitpur.

As of Monday, the number of confirmed cases in the Valley has reached 122,041. While Kathmandu has reported 475 Covid-19-related fatalities so far, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur have

recorded 147 and 107 deaths respectively.

According to the ministry, 940 individuals from Bagmati Province, 238 from Lumbini Province, 217 from Province 1, 215 from Province 2, 188 from Gandaki Province, 62 from Sudurpashchim Province, and 25 from Karnali Province have died of Covid-19 so far.

As of Monday, 1,952,903 PCR tests have been carried out across the country.

A total of 4,401 PCR tests were performed in the past 24 hours, according to the data released by the ministry.

In the past 24 hours, 13 new infections were reported in Province 1, 16 in Province 2, and 221 in Bagmati Province.

Similarly, Gandaki, Lumbini and Sudurpashchim provinces reported 45, 70 and 38 cases respectively. Karnali Province

did not record any cases today.

While Kathmandu has more than 500 active cases, Sunsari, Solukhumbu and Mugu districts do not have any active cases, according to the ministry.

While 209 individuals infected with the virus are being treated in intensive care units across the country, 34 others—14 in Bagmati Province, 10 in Lumbini, seven in Gandaki and one each in Province 1, Karnali and Sudurpashchim—are on ventilator support.

Nepal on Sunday reported eight Covid-19-related fatalities and 421 new cases. The country had recorded six Covid-19 related deaths and 419 new cases on Saturday. Similarly, eight deaths and 426 new cases were recorded on Friday and nine deaths and 534 new infections on Thursday.

Nepal's Human Rights Commission draws gov't's attention to Ganga Maya Adhikari's deteriorating health



KATHMANDU, 04 JAN [KATHMANDUPOST]: The National Human Rights Commission has drawn the attention of the government to the worsening health condition of Ganga Maya Adhikari, who has been on a hunger strike for over two weeks, demanding justice for the murder of her son Krishna Prasad Adhikari 16 years ago.

Issuing a statement after meeting Adhikari on Monday, the commission said her health condition is deteriorating fast.

"The commission would like to draw the attention of the government to her poor health," reads the statement.

"The commission also urges the government to address her demand for right to justice."

Adhikari, who has been holding protests regularly since January 2013, started yet another fast-unto-death on December 21 at the National Trauma Centre.

Adhikari, who is in her mid-60s, has already staged several rounds of hunger strike seeking justice for the murder of her son.

Her son Krishna Prasad was murdered during the Maoist insurgency on June 6, 2004.

Adhikari and her husband, Nanda Prasad, had first begun their hunger strike in front of the

prime minister's official residence in Baluwatar in January 2013.

They started their second hunger strike a few months later after the court released the accused murderer of their son.

Nanda Prasad died after 329 days of the hunger strike on September 22, 2014. His body is in a mortuary at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, as the family has refused to receive it and perform the last rites.

The Chitwan District Court, in September 2018, acquitted all 12 accused in Krishna Prasad's murder citing lack of evidence.

Sovan Chatterjee skips BJP roadshow in Kolkata

KOLKATA, JAN 4 (PTI): BJP's Kolkata zone observer and former city mayor Sovan Chatterjee on Monday skipped a party roadshow that he was scheduled to lead in the metropolis.

Chatterjee could not attend the rally due to the sudden illness of his friend Baisakhi Banerjee, BJP sources said.

The roadshow, led by senior BJP leaders Kailash Vijayvargiya, Mukul Roy and Arjun Singh, came face-to-face with a TMC street-corner meeting near Kidderpore.

The BJP alleged that TMC activists hurled shoes towards the convoy of the saffron party leaders' cars and chairs at the party workers.

The police, which gave verbal permission for the rally, prevented a flare-up by stopping some activists of the BJP's youth wing Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) from approaching towards the TMC members.

One new COVID-19 case in Andamans; tally rises to 4,948

PORT BLAIR, JAN 4 (PTI): One more person tested positive for COVID-19 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, pushing the tally in the union territory to 4,948, a health official said on Monday.

The new case was detected during contact tracing, he said.

Nine more people have recovered from the infection, taking the total number of recoveries in the union territory to

4,846, the official said.

The archipelago now has 40 active cases, while 62 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, he said.

Of the 40 active COVID-19 cases, 39 are in South Andaman district and one in North and Middle Andaman district.

The administration has so far tested over 1,84,955 samples for COVID-19, the official added.

Nepal's provincial assemblies too can be dissolved: Minister Tumbahangphe



BIRATNAGAR, JAN 4 [MYREPUBLICA]: Nepal's Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Shivamaya Tumbahangphe on Monday said that the provincial assemblies, too, could be dissolved.

Speaking at a press conference in Biratnagar Monday morning, the minister, who is close to the Oli-led faction in the ruling Nepal Communist Party, said that the provincial assemblies could be dissolved in line with the constitution and provincial laws as the national politics has already started showing its impact on the provincial governments.

Tumbahangphe, who is also the immediate past law minister, said that the provinces can operate or dissolve their

assemblies on their own as per the provincial laws.

The federal minister's statement comes at a time when chief ministers of Province 1 and Bagmati Province are in trouble following the split in the ruling Nepal Communist Party two weeks ago after Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli dissolved the House of Representatives and announced midterm elections.

As a reflection of the vertical split in the ruling NCP in the center due to a rift between the two factions - one led by KP Oli and the other by Pushpa Kamal Dahal - the provincial governments have run into trouble.

Stating that the government has already turned into a caretaker one after the dissolution

of parliament, the minister argued that Prime Minister Oli expanded the Cabinet to smoothen the government's job.

Tumbahangphe said that Prime Minister Oli had decided to go for midterm elections to get a fresh mandate even though the constitution has not categorically stated about the dissolution of parliament by the prime minister. "The prime minister's move to dissolve parliament is as per the rule of law," she said.

Minister Tumbahangphe said that the government is working to conduct elections on the scheduled dates. "The government is working to hold elections on the announced dates. Preparations for the same are underway. Nobody should doubt this," she said.

Assam reports 15 new COVID-19 cases, one fresh death

GUWAHATI, JAN 4 (PTI): Assam's COVID-19 tally rose to 2,16,304 as 15 more people tested positive for the virus, while one more fatality pushed the death toll to 1,052, the National Health Mission said in a bulletin.

The overall positivity rate stood at 3.58 per cent against total testing of 60,47,033 samples so far.

The state reported 60 single-day recoveries, taking the total count to 2,12,129, NHM said late on Sunday.

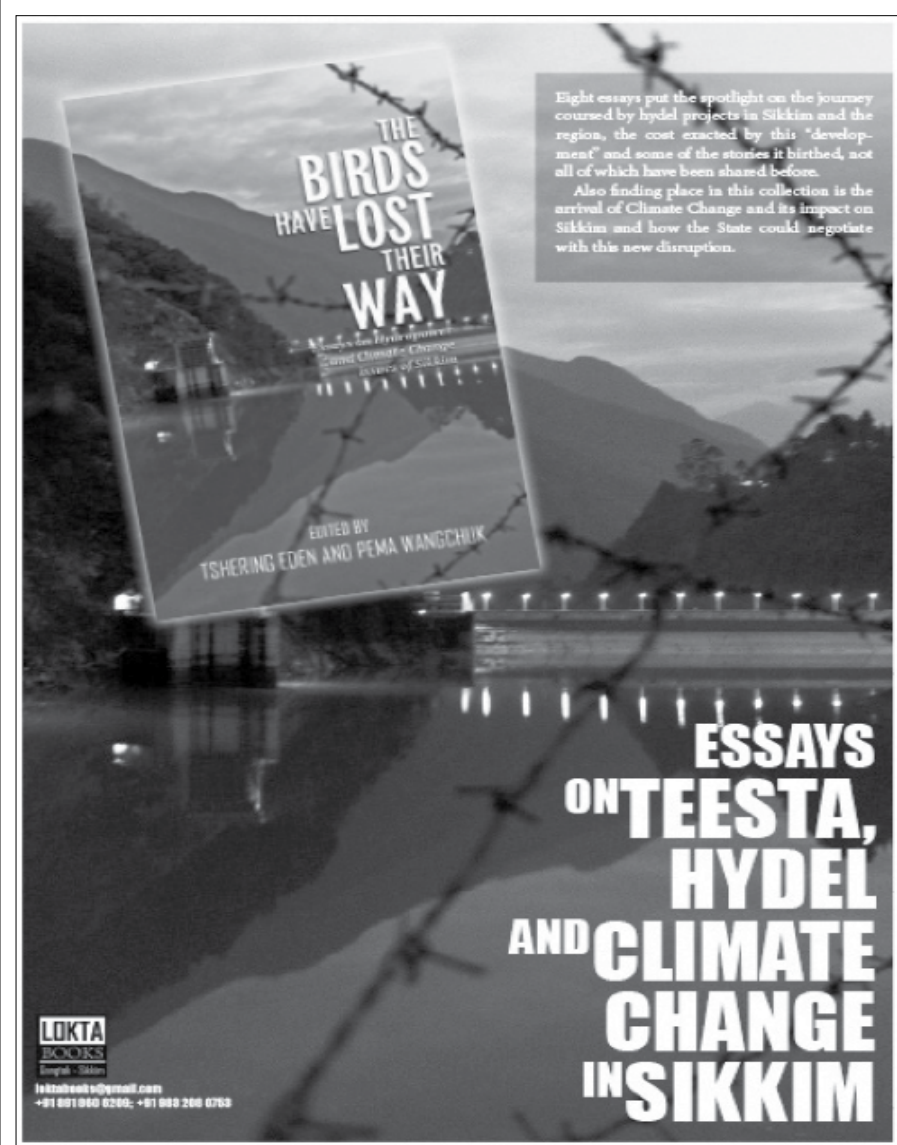
Assam currently has a total of 3,120 active COVID-19 cases and they are being treated at different hospitals and

Covid Care Centres (CCCs) across the state along with some being at home isolation.

Three COVID-19 patients have migrated to other states.

The bulletin said 1,347 more COVID-19 patients have died, but the state government's Death Audit Board has not included them in the tally of fatalities caused by the virus, as they had other ailments, too.

Of the total 2,16,304 COVID-19 cases reported in the state, nearly 54,000 have been reported from the state capital alone, it added.



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Ronaldo shines again as Juventus thump Udinese

TURIN, 04 JAN (REUTERS): Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice and created another goal as Juventus got back to winning ways in Serie A with a 4-1 victory over Udinese in Turin on Sunday, moving the champions up to fifth in the standings.

Ronaldo opened the scoring with a trademark drive, after latching on to Aaron Ramsey's pass in the 31st minute, before threading a perfect through ball into the path of Federico Chiesa to score Juve's second goal four minutes into the second half.

The VAR had a busy evening in Turin. First, the referee was asked to consult the pitch-side monitor before ruling out what Udinese thought was the opener for a handball early on, before Aaron Ramsey suffered the same fate when he was penalised for handball, after a second look.

Ronaldo's second goal put the result beyond any doubt as he took his goal tally to 14 league goals for the season -- two more than anyone else in Serie A -- in the 70th minute, with Marvin Zeegelaar scoring an injury-time consolation for Udinese.

There was still time for Paulo Dybala to score another goal for Juventus as Andrea Pirlo's side moved 10 points behind leaders AC Milan, with a game in hand, while Udinese drop to 13th and are without a win in their last four games.

Pirlo admitted his team had initially struggled to make an impact as the players were still haunted by memories of their shock 3-0 defeat by Fiorentina in their final game before the winter break.

"We started frightened after the match against Fiorentina, we were afraid of the depth of the opponents," Pirlo told Sky Sports.

"Little by little we grew up and in the second half we did better. It wasn't the best Juventus."

Juventus thought they had again fallen behind when Rodrigo de Paul fired home from close range.

Udinese celebrated, but the referee was asked to look again at whether De Paul had handled earlier in the move, before the goal was ruled out.

Ronaldo then took centre stage with his emphatic first-half finish, an even better pass for Juve's second and a fine third.

Welshman Ramsey thought he had scored his first goal of the season in the second half, but again it was ruled out for handball.

Dybala's injury-time strike completed a flattering scoreline for Juventus, given Udinese had hit the woodwork twice in the match and missed numerous other chances.

"Dybala ... was explosive," added Pirlo.

"He played one of the best games this year, he was more alive and eager and slowly he will find the best form. We need him and he needs us."

A Golden Year for Sport? 2021 is already looking like 2020 – with a bitter twist

SEAN INGLE

LONDON, 04 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Do you know how many days there are until the Olympic Games get under way? Precisely 200. Imagine it. The darkness of the Tokyo skyline. A lone runner scampering up a giant staircase, torch in hand. A roar from the 60,000 fans inside Japan's National Stadium. Then raging illumination. It will be some sight ... if it happens. Meanwhile this year's other sporting mega-event, football's European Championship, is barely five months away, but still there remains an expectation that millions of fans will be able to travel safely to 51 matches across 12 European cities.

Back in the real world, Japan has shut its borders until the end of the month, the Tokyo metropolitan government has asked the central government to declare a state of emergency, and most of Europe is in ever-tighter lockdown. Increasingly it feels like an act of faith, rather than science, to expect the Olympics and Euros to take place with every familiar frill, as if the last 12 months were just a bad dream. Already there are echoes of the great shutdown of 2020. The World Athletics Indoor Championships, scheduled for China in March, have been pushed back again.

The British Boxing Board of Control has cancelled all fights in January, while the English football fixture backlog is growing by the day. The Lions' tour to South Africa is also in doubt, with all parties agreeing that a tour without hordes of travelling fans is neither desirable nor commercially viable. In fact, as



we slip into a new year it is time to confront another hard truth. The sporting landscape is looking a lot more 2020 than we were expecting a month or two ago – but with a brutal twist: it looks like it will be those at the grassroots and community level, and the poorest and most marginalised, who will suffer most of all.

On the plus side, several sources inside the International Olympic Committee and British Olympic Association insist that the Tokyo Olympics will take place in some form in 2021, despite the challenges of 11,000 athletes from across the globe congregating in one place.

There is simply too much money at stake for it not to happen. The same surely applies to the Euros. But both events are likely to be pared back and stripped of many of the peripheral joys that make major sporting events such fun to attend.

But we should not be blind to the fact that Covid restrictions are hitting athletes from poorer countries hardest. In Papua New Guinea, for instance, there is only one high-performance training facility – which is currently a coronavirus isolation centre. It has meant that Dika Toua, a national hero who is hoping to become the first female weightlifter to compete at five

Olympics, has had to train in a makeshift shipping container with no roof, during her country's rainy season.

The situation is even worse for the country's best shooter Danny Wanma. He has been unable to get access to ammunition and so, for the best part of a year, he has been "dry firing" — practising the motions without actually shooting.

Meanwhile when it comes to grassroots activity in Britain, the situation is also bleak. We all know the benefits of exercise and activity for people's physical and mental health. Yet during the first lockdown, an Active Lives survey found that nearly 14 million people in England did

less than 30 minutes' exercise a week, a measure that includes everything from brisk walking to high intensity interval training. Worse still, that was a rise of three million compared with the same period a year before.

That survey also found that the pandemic had disproportionately affected certain marginalised parts of society, in particular Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and lower socio-economic groups. With much of the country back in tier 4, the figures for this winter are likely to be even worse.

Last week, the Save Our Sports campaign warned that much of the sport and activity sector – which employs

nearly 600,000 people in the UK and contributes £16bn to the economy annually – was struggling. According to the Sport and Recreation Alliance and unactive, there are thousands of swimming pools, leisure centres and gyms who fear they will not survive a prolonged period in tier 4 without government help. Of course the great unknown here is how quickly people can be vaccinated – although it hardly inspires confidence when the government repeatedly overpromises and under-delivers. The health secretary Matt Hancock has claimed life could get back to normal after Easter. But that would require around 2m vaccines a week, while at present about 300,000 are being provided.

A final point. Just before Christmas, the government gave UK Sport £352m to help British athletes prepare for the 2024 Paris Olympics. You can understand why. UK Sport has been a rare success story, and politicians love basking in the reflective glow that comes when a nation wins medals.

Yet even Olympians have to start somewhere, whether it is in poorly-lit pools or dingy sports halls. In October the government provided £100m to help publicly owned leisure facilities – many of which are in the poorest parts of the country – stay afloat. The fear is with national debt rising, and greater priorities elsewhere, it will not dip into its pockets again to help those most reliant on community provision – and thus will fail to reap significant social, physical and mental health return on investment that often flows from it.

Manchester City's experiment in fun is a lesson for Frank Lampard

BARNEY RONAY

LONDON, 04 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: With 43 minutes gone at Stamford Bridge Phil Foden could be seen gliding through the debris, the ruined city walls of Chelsea's right flank.

There were two sky blue shirts waiting inside him for an invitation to score. Foden skimmed the ball inside to Ilkay Gundogan, who chose that moment to perform a reverse-pirouette, mid-air heel-dink that pinged just past the post.

In that moment the game seemed to sag a little, to lose its clear edges. Manchester City were 3-0 up at the time. They were breezing along, exhilarated by their own movement. This was different, though. This was a Premier League team having fun. Actual fun. That's going to hurt.

Foden had already scored City's second goal, made by another surge down the left followed by two moments of brilliance. First he did something unusually clever, leaping back onside as Kevin De Bruyne's initial pass broke back to him.

De Bruyne then produced a moment of cruelty, waiting, waiting some more, then slipping the decisive pass through César Azpilicueta's legs. Foden scored with a pinged first-touch, the ball making a lovely crisp clang as it hit the pole in the corner of the net.

Either side of which City were exhilarating. They scored three goals in 16 minutes. They left Chelsea's full-backs wheeling in confusion. They romped and pranced. They had fun. And at times this looked like a real-time experiment: what happens when a long-term sporting project, with the same ideas, the same fully loaded plan at every level, meets a punt on talent and celebrity.

Two things happened here. The

key point, before wheeling out the great creaking finger of blame, is that City were wonderful, a fully networked team speaking to itself in some internalised high-speed code.

This looked like a Pep-tribute XI before kick-off as City lined up with six midfielders and one converted full-back. But this was something different, evidence of Guardiola's own changes this season. City took the minor share of possession. But they still had 11 shots on goal in the first half, and at times seemed to toy with their opponents.

Foden embodied this clarity of purpose. In the first half he touched the ball 18 times, but scored one, made one and romped up and down the left like a Labrador puppy. At half-time Guardiola could be seen babbling in Foden's ear as he walked off, spitting out tips, instructions, praise. This was showboat-coaching, the managerial equivalent of flicking the ball up on your knee before you volley it into an open goal. We get it, Pep. You can do this stuff.

The second thing that happened was Chelsea just fell away. City pressed and found – no resistance. Oh, Frank. Before this fixture Olivier Giroud had suggested Frank Lampard had been working on "every tactical part" of City's game. This, Giroud suggested, was a special project for Lampard, a chance to peer over the tactical pince-nez and lock brain-horns with the don of modern keep-ball.

In the event Lampard sent out his glitziest forward line, a high-grade Werner-Ziyech-Pulisic trident, albeit one with a combined six league goals this season. The idea seemed to be that Chelsea would break quickly and take advantage of spaces on the flanks. Guess what? The exact op-

posite happened. City broke into Chelsea's spaces, and twanged the holes in Chelsea's own flanks.

Lampard will perhaps be tempted to blame the "character" of his players once again. He might be better served taking his lessons. Defeats are also useful. They water the ground.

Was it a good idea to conjure an alternate front three that has barely played together yet, and with little success when it has? Why would you ask Azpilicueta to play as an exposed, half-speed right-back against the great over-loaders? Why not respond once it becomes clear your team are struggling to deal with three inside forwards and no No 9?

There were five high-priced Lampard-era starters in this team. The entire structure lacked intensity, their weak spots vulnerable to City's strengths. There was no adjustment as the light blue shirts began to twirl and dance through the lines.

City's third goal felt like the most painful moment for the pre-game Lampard tactical study group. De Bruyne headed a loose ball to Raheem Sterling and suddenly Sterling was off, Demba Ba-ing his way into vast open empty acres of green space. Where, you wondered, had the entire Chelsea team gone? De Bruyne ended up spanking the ball into the net.

All things being equal, Lampard is now in the blue zone for Chelsea managers, that phase where a profit and loss equation is applied to points and progress and money spent. If his name was Big Phil Scolari or Carlo Ancelotti he might be in trouble. For Chelsea and their manager this was a lesson. Will they find the time, and indeed the will, to take it on?

'It will go to the wire' – Jürgen Klopp predicts fierce Premier League title fight



LOUISE TAYLOR

LONDON, 04 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Jürgen Klopp has acknowledged this season's title race is too close to call and seems likely to go to the wire.

"This season is a tough one for the supporters," said Liverpool's manager as he prepared to take his defending champions to Southampton on Monday night. "If you are a neutral you will love it. Our season so far is good but I'm not surprised it is this close. This year is tough."

"I am pretty sure it will go right to the wire. It is tough for all of us [challenging teams], which is the reason why it's so close."

Liverpool lead Manchester United on goal difference before the match against Southampton, and a host of clubs are within touching distance of the top.

Thiago Alcántara, following a highly encouraging cameo performance after stepping off the bench in the 0-0 draw at Newcastle last Wednesday, is in contention to begin influencing Liverpool's fortunes for the better by potentially

starting at Southampton.

The Spain creative midfielder has made only three Premier League appearances for Liverpool since arriving from Bayern Munich, with a positive Covid-19 test, followed by a knee injury, limiting his availability.

Klopp remained understandably coy about the midfielder's likely role at Southampton. "Unfortunately I have not known Thiago that long. A few months only. He played 20 minutes for us [at Newcastle] which was special and was about creating, which is his best skill. He has only had two sessions with the team [since his injury]."

"We will see, he played 20 minutes against Newcastle and I don't know how he'll react. We will see. He has a chance. The boys who have done the job in midfield so far [in his absence] did exceptionally well so it is not that we cannot survive if Thiago does not start the next game. But it is very good he is now fit and obviously in contention. I like that a lot."

With Virgil van Dijk likely to miss the majority of the second half of

the season – if not all of it – after anterior cruciate ligament surgery in October, Joe Gomez likely to be sidelined until late spring by the after-effects of another knee operation and Joël Matip expected to miss Liverpool's next four games with groin trouble, Klopp is desperately short of central defensive options.

At Newcastle he fielded the versatile, but out-of-position, Fabinho and the inexperienced Nathaniel Phillips at the heart of his back four but Klopp – who also has the 19-year-old centre-back Rhys Williams in his squad – indicated he was unlikely to sign cover during the current transfer window and preferred to promote from within.

"We have solutions within the squad but, if we can do something in the window, I don't know," he said. "It is like that. It is a very difficult transfer window. Not all of the clubs have real money. Doing something makes no sense. Doing the right thing makes sense. So far we really liked what we have done. We have three centre-halves at the moment."

Malaysia coroner rules out others in French-Irish teen death



KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA (AP): A Malaysian coroner ruled Monday that the death of a French-Irish teen whose body was found near a Malaysian jungle resort where she vanished while on vacation was most likely a misadventure that didn't involve other people.

Coroner Maimoonah Aid ruled out homicide, natural death and suicide and said Nora Anne Quoirin likely got lost after leaving her family's cottage on her own.

The 15-year-old disappeared at the Dusun eco-resort in southern Negeri Sembilan state on Aug. 4, 2019, a day after the family arrived for a vacation. After a massive search, her naked body was found on Aug. 13 beside a stream on a palm oil estate about 2.5 kilometers (1.6 miles) from the resort.

Police believed she climbed out of the cottage window on her own, with no evidence of

any foul play. But the teen's parents said she was likely kidnapped because she had mental and physical disabilities and wouldn't have wandered off on her own. They told the inquest that a third party could have dumped her body in the area following the search operation for her.

The coroner described the family's suggestions as "nothing more than probably theory" with no evidence.

Nora Anne was clad only in underwear when she went missing, but her body was found naked. The coroner noted the family's contention that this lent credence to the possibility of sexual assault but said an extensive autopsy could find no such proof, nor evidence of struggle marks or smothering.

Maimoonah also said there were no suspicious circumstances prior to the teen's disappearance, no ransom request

and no signs of intrusion into the family cottage.

"I ruled that there was no one involved in the death of Nora Anne. It is more probable than not that she died by misadventure, i.e. that she had gone out of the (cottage) on her own and subsequently got lost in the abundant palm oil plantation," the coroner said.

Nora Anne's parents were listening to the online verdict from their home in London, but gave no immediate statement.

A British pathologist who performed a second autopsy on Nora Anne's body in the United Kingdom testified that he agreed with the Malaysian findings that she died of intestinal bleeding due to starvation and stress. However, he said he couldn't fully rule out sexual assault due to severe body decomposition.

Maimoonah said Nora Anne, who was sleeping in the loft with her siblings, could have

been woken by the heat or loud noises from a party at another cottage nearby and gone downstairs to find her parents.

But the coroner said the teenager may not have been able to open the heavy sliding door to her parents' bedroom and could have then gone out of the cottage. Her mother had testified that a cottage window, with a broken latch, was found opened the morning Nora Anne disappeared but the coroner said she could have pushed it open by accident.

Rescuers may have overlooked Nora's body due to the thick jungle terrain, Maimoonah added. The autopsy estimated that she died between two and four days before her body was discovered.

A total of 49 witnesses have testified over 24 days since August last year via video-conferencing due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Attacks on 2 villages in Niger kill at least 100 people

NIAMEY, JAN 4 (AP): Islamic extremists staged attacks on two villages in Niger near its border with Mali, killing at least 100 people, Niger's prime minister said on Sunday.

Prime Minister Brigi Rafini travelled to the two villages of Tchombangou and Zaroumdareye a day after the attack.

"We came to provide moral support and present the condolences of the president of the republic, the government and the entire Niger nation," he said.

The villages in the insecure Tillaberi region were attacked on Saturday after locals killed two fighters, local offi-

cials said, taking place the same day as the West African nation's electoral commission announced that presidential elections would be heading to a second round.

Niger has endured several attacks by Islamic extremists, including the Nigeria-based Boko Haram, and fighters linked to the Islamic State group and al-Qaida.

Thousands of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands have been displaced, despite the presence of thousands of regional and international troops.

While jihadists in the region pose a growing threat, the West African country is expected to

see its first democratic transition of power since independence from France in 1960.

Some 7.4 million Nigeriens were registered to vote on December 27 to elect the successor to President Mahamadou Issoufou, who has served two terms and is stepping down.

According to results announced on Saturday, a second round will be needed after none of the 28 candidates won a majority.

Former Foreign Minister Mohamed Bazoum of the ruling party will face off with former President Mahamane Ousmane on February 21.

Nigerian scientist studies country's coronavirus variant

LAGOS, NIGERIA (AP): A Nigerian scientist has spent the holiday season in his laboratory doing genetic sequencing to learn more about the country's COVID-19 variant, as cases increase in the country.

Virologist Sunday Omilabu says the information he gathers about the variant will help battle the spread of the disease in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with 196 million people.

Nigeria has confirmed 89,163 COVID-19 cases, including 1,302 deaths, according to the figures Sunday from the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The variants discovered in the U.K. and South Africa, they are distantly different from the variants discovered in Nigeria," said Omilabu, who said it is not unusual for viruses to mutate and cause variants.

Nigeria is seeing more infections of COVID-19 but it is not yet certain if that is from the variant, said Omilabu, the director of the Center for Human and Zoonotic Virology at the Lagos University College of Medicine and Teaching Hospital.

"What we could say clinically is that we have more people coming down with severe signs and symptoms," he said, describing how one person can spread the disease to four or five family members, which is a higher rate of transmission than had been recorded earlier.

"That shows us that something is happening. There's a surge so we are recording that but we are yet to sequence any of those isolates," to determine if the increased transmissions are caused by the variant, said Omilabu.

"I think we need to calm our mind down, there are going to be more variants to come," he said.

"We need to be monitoring the virus,

we need to sequence. If we sequence then we would have more information about what is in circulation and then, of course, we need to continue with surveillance, we need to monitor how active the virus is in the environment ... so the public health experts, they have work to do and then government must support all these."

As lab work is being done to learn more about the variant, Nigerians should remain vigilant to avoid spreading the virus, he said.

"People still go and party. They still go to the club and without putting on face masks," he said. "We talk of social distancing, people are not respecting that. We talk of using face masks. People are not doing that. You see them in the market places, they are not doing that. So how do you now control it?"

With COVID-19 variants emerging in Nigeria and South Africa, the World Health Organization said Africa needs to do more genetic sequencing, such as what Omilabu is doing.

"The emergence of new COVID-19 variants is common. However, those with a higher speed of transmission or potentially increased pathogenicity are very concerning. Crucial investigations are underway to comprehensively understand the behavior of the new mutant virus and steer response accordingly," said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

The new variants have emerged as COVID-19 infections are on the rise in the 47 African countries, nearly reaching the peak the continent saw in July, she said. In the past 28 days, 10 countries — Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda — have reported the highest number of new cases, accounting for 90% of all the infections in Africa, she said.

China's manufacturing recovery weakens in December



BEIJING (AP): China's manufacturing activity improved in December but at its weakest rate in three months as the economy recovered from the coronavirus pandemic while its trading partners struggled with rising infections, according to two surveys.

A monthly purchasing managers' index issued Monday by a business magazine, Caixin, slipped to 53 from November's 54.9 on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 show activity expanding. A separate PMI by an official industry group, the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing, declined to 51.9 from the previous month's 52.1.

China is the only major economy on track to record positive economic growth in 2020 while the United States and Eu-

rope struggle with rising case numbers that have prompted governments to re-impose travel and business controls.

Sub-indices of exports and employment in both surveys rose but at a slower rate than December.

"We expect the economic recovery in the post-epidemic era to continue for several months," economist Wang Zhe of the Caixin Insight Group said in a statement.

Caixin said a sub-indicator of business confidence in its survey dipped to a three-month low.

"We need to pay attention to the mounting pressure on costs" due to higher raw material prices, Wang said. That is "particularly important" as regulators decide how to withdraw economic stimulus.

UK ramps up inoculations with Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine

LONDON (AP): Britain on Monday took another giant step in the fight against COVID-19, ramping up its immunization program by giving the first shots in the world from the vaccine created by Oxford University and pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca.

Dialysis patient Brian Pinker, 82, was the first to get the new vaccine shot, administered by the chief nurse at Oxford University Hospital. Pinker said he was so pleased and that he can "now really look forward to celebrating my 48th wedding anniversary with my wife Shirley later this year."

Since Dec. 8, Britain's National Health Service has been using a vaccine made by Pfizer and the German firm BioNTech to inoculate health care workers and nursing home residents and staff. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine boosts that arsenal and is cheaper and easier to use since it does not require the super-cold storage needed by the Pfizer vaccine.

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was being administered at a small number of U.K. hospitals for the first few days so authorities can watch out for any adverse reactions. But hundreds of new vaccination sites — at both hospitals as well as local

doctors' offices — will launch this week, joining the more than 700 already in operation, NHS England said.

In a shift from practices in the U.S. and elsewhere, Britain now plans to give people second doses of both vaccines within 12 weeks of the first shot rather than within 21 days, to accelerate immunizations across as many people as quickly as possible.

The government's deputy chief medical officer, Jonathan Van-Tam, said Sunday that decision is "the right thing to do for the nation as a whole."

The U.K. is in the midst of an acute outbreak, recording more than 50,000 new coronavirus infections a day over the past six days. On Sunday, it notched up another 54,990 cases and 454 more virus-related deaths to take its confirmed pandemic death toll total to 75,024, one of the worst in Europe.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned Sunday that more onerous lockdown restrictions in England are likely in the coming weeks as the country reels from a coronavirus variant that has pushed infection rates to their highest recorded levels.

Johnson, though, insisted he has "no doubt" that schools are safe and

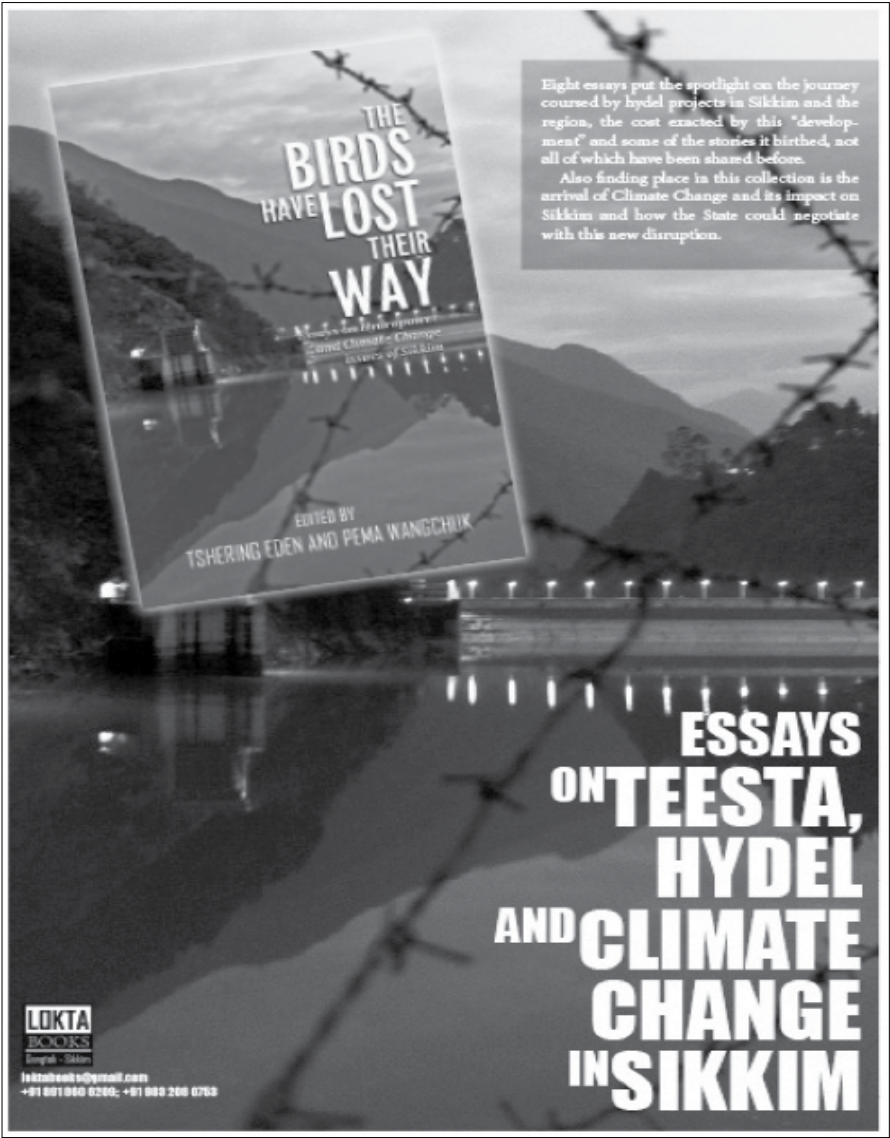
urged parents to send their children back into the classroom Monday in areas of England where schools plan to reopen. Unions representing teachers have called for schools to turn to remote learning for at least a couple of weeks more due to the variant, which officials have said is up to 70% more contagious.

"We are entirely reconciled to do what it takes to get the virus under control, that may involve tougher measures in the weeks ahead," Johnson told the BBC.

Johnson conceded that school closures, curfews and the total banning of household mixing could be on the agenda for areas under the most stress.

London and south-east England are facing extremely high levels of new infections and there's speculation that restrictions there will have to be tightened. Some areas in the region have more than 1,000 coronavirus cases per 100,000 people.

Johnson's Conservative government is using a tiered coronavirus restrictions system to try to stop the spread of the virus. Most of England is already at the highest Tier 4 level, which involves closing non-essential shops, gyms and recreation centers and going to at-home instruction.



Women who make unconventional choices need to be represented in films: Tribhanga dir Renuka Shahane

MUMBAI, JAN 4 (PTI): Actor Renuka Shahane, who is looking forward to the release of her film "Tribhanga: Tedhi Medhi Crazy", on Monday said the Netflix film explores dysfunctional family dynamics through three "fascinating" women of different generations and personalities.

The film, which derives its title from an Odissi dance pose, is described as a heartwarming storyline that looks at the importance of family in everyday lives.

Also written by Shahane, the film stars Tanvi Azmi as matriarch Nayan, a critically acclaimed Marathi litterateur; Kajol as her daughter Anu, a renowned classical dancer and actor; and granddaughter Masha played by Mithila Palkar.

Shahane, a well-known face in both cinema and television, said the beautiful yet asymmetrical Tribhanga dance pose has been used as a metaphor to represent the women in this film "who have their own quirks and idiosyncrasies, and yet are fascinating, beautiful and vibrant".

"I believe that women who make unconventional life choices and women with a wide range of personalities need to be represented in films. The idea for this film came from my experience of meeting someone who had a very acrimonious relationship with her mother, unlike my relationship with mine," the actor-director said in a statement.

"I wanted to capture the dysfunctional family dynamics when the core, the relationship with the mother, is shaky and unstable. I added three different generations to better reflect the intergenerational perspective in looking at the same event in three different ways," she added.

Kajol, who is making her digital de-

but with the film, said "Tribhanga" is a celebration of women and all their beautiful imperfections.

"We need to embrace these imperfections and live on our own terms, just the way Nayan, Anu, and Masha do in

but could not be more different. Renuka has beautifully and sensitively captured the intergenerational family dynamics and their struggles."

Though she is the youngest, Palkar said, her character Masha is the "calm-



this film. My character is outspoken and opinionated much like how the audience knows me, yet is completely different.

"As a mother I can vouch that there are challenges that women face daily as the smallest of things we do affect our children. Motherhood is a minefield of emotions captured extremely well by Renuka. I am very excited for the audience to see this film and hope it will resonate with people of all ages," she added.

Azmi said her character Nayan might be the oldest in the family, but her ideals are not.

"... she is constantly challenging the normal, ahead of its time. In essence, 'Tribhanga' showcases the twisted journeys of three women who are related

ing force among the three women".

"It has been such an enriching experience being a part of this film and working alongside stalwarts like Tanvi ma'am, Kajol ma'am and Renuka tai. 'Tribhanga' beautifully encapsulates the unconventional life choices of three women and how they deal with every situation that comes their way," she added.

The family drama also stars Kunaal Roy Kapur, Kanwaljeet Singh, Manav Gohil and Vaibhav Tatwawadi.

Backed by Kajol's husband, actor-producer Ajay Devgn, in collaboration with Bannijay Asia and Siddharth P Malhotra's Alchemy Films, "Tribhanga" is slated to start streaming from January 15.

Amitabh Bachchan announces Sonu Sood's film 'Kisaan'

MUMBAI, JAN 4 (PTI): Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Monday announced actor Sonu Sood's upcoming film "Kisaan", to be directed by E Niwas.

The movie will be produced by filmmaker Raaj Shaandilyaa, who made his directorial debut with the 2019 comedy "Dream Girl", starring Ayushmann Khurrana.

"All good wishes to film #Kisaan, directed by #ENiwas and acted by @SonuSood," Bachchan tweeted.

Further details about the film are yet

to be known.

Last month, Sood opened up about how filmmakers have started approaching him with lead roles in their films due to his philanthropic work for migrant workers during the coronavirus-induced lockdown last year.

Sood had said 2020 changed both his personal and professional life, especially his image of an actor, after playing antagonists in films such as "Simmba", "R... Rajkumar" and "Dabangg".

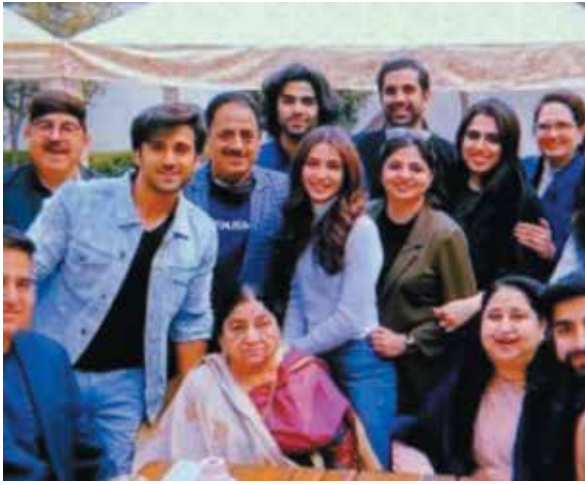
Ashanti announces she and family are free of COVID-19

LOS ANGELES, JAN 4 (PTI): Singer-songwriter Ashanti says she and her parents have recovered from coronavirus. The 40-year-old singer, best known for songs like "Foolish" and "Happy", shared her health update on Instagram on Saturday.

Starting off the new year Amazing and Covid free!!! Got my negative results back 2 days ago! Happy New Year y'all. My parents and I got our negative results back right in time to start off the New Year healthy, happy & loved. Wishing y'all an Amazing 2021WON," Ashanti wrote.

The singer had opened up about her COVID-19 diagnosis in December, following which webcast series Verzuz

postponed its much-anticipated battle between the Grammy-winning singer



and Keyshia Cole.

The broadcast is now scheduled to take place on January 9, 2021.

Hope farmers gets justice, will be relief to all: Dharmendra

MUMBAI, JAN 4 (PTI): Ahead of the seventh round of talks between the central government and protesting farmer unions, veteran actor and former MP Dharmendra on Monday said he prays with all his heart that the farmers agitating against the three farm laws get justice today.

Braving the cold and rains, thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana, are protesting at various borders of the national capital for more than a month against the new agri legislations.

"I hope today my farmer brothers get justice. I pray with all my heart. Every noble soul will get relief," Dharmendra, 84, wrote in Hindi on Twitter.

This is not the first time the screen icon has spoken up in the wake of the farmers crisis.

In December, Dharmendra urged the Centre to find a solution to the protests over the farm laws.

"I am in extreme pain to see the suffering of my farmer brothers. Government should do something fast," he had tweeted.

The government has presented these laws, enacted in September, as major agriculture reforms aimed at helping farmers and increasing their income, but the protesting unions fear that the new legislations has left them at the mercy of big corporates by weakening the MSP and mandi systems.



BEACH BABE! The model, Chantel Jeffries packs on the PDA while on vacation in Tulum, Mexico.

Film and game show on Rubik's Cube in the works

Los Angeles, Jan 4 (PTI): The Rubik's Cube, the best-selling puzzle toy, will be the subject of a new feature film and a game show.

Production banner Hyde Park Entertainment Group, owned by Ashok Amritraj, and Endeavor Content have joined hands to develop a movie with the eponymous brand based on the best-selling puzzle toy, reported Variety. Hyde Park is also working with Endeavor Content-backed "The Wall" producer Glassman Media for a game show based on the Rubik's Cube.

Details about the film are still sparse but it is known that the project will be produced by Ashok Amritraj and executive produced by Priya Amritraj and Addison Mehr for Hyde Park.

Whereas, Ashok Amritraj and Andrew Glassman of Glassman Media will serve as executive producers on the game show.

Ashok Amritraj said he has had a personal and nostalgic connection to the toy from his early days in India.

"I am thrilled to partner with Endeavor Content and Rubik's/Smiley and look forward to creating a wonderful and complex Rubik's universe."

"The Rubik's Cube is an iconic and family friendly brand. In partnership with Hyde Park we look forward to creating film, television,

and game show content for global audiences," Graham Taylor, co-president of Endeavor Content, added.

The Rubik's Cube is a 3-D combination puzzle invented in 1974 by Hungarian sculptor and professor of architecture Erno Rubik. Originally called the Magic Cube, the puzzle was licensed by Rubik to be sold by Ideal Toy



Corporation in 1980 via businessman Tibor Laczi and Seven Towns founder Tom Kremer.

The toy requires the player to unlock a web of six, mixed-up colours, twisting the cube to show just one colour on every side. Since 2018, amateur and professional "speed-cubers" have faced off at the Rubik's Cube World Championship Finals in Boston.

lowering your vibrations by making you doubt your own power and potential. Take a moment to understand where they are coming from. Could somebody who is insecure in their being convince another person that they are not good enough? You already have the answer to this one. Today, you're finally breaking the illusion and seeing your reality for what it is. From now on, be mindful of who you allow into your space as you filter out the stories you hear about yourself. Tip: It's time to believe in your own power and potential.

Leo: You have the larger plan in place and it's looking good. Now, it's time to go over the blueprint. A detail-oriented approach will serve you well at a time like this. What Spirit wants you to remember is that you are in the right place at the right time. So, focus on all that is good in your life, knowing that your intention will give the positive aspects of your life the power to grow. Tip: You are where you need to be and you are growing at the right pace.

Virgo: "Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting. Dance in your blood. Dance when you're perfectly free." Today, let Rumi's words inspire you to experience the magic of movement. It's time to put on some music and allow yourself to feel a sense of oneness with the rhythm of the Universe. All kinds of emotions are likely to resurface as a result, from anger to ecstasy. Your task is to move into the space of observation and let go of the need to attach a story. Tip: Just dance.

Libra:

The full moon has been intense for all of us, and there is a lot that has come up to be healed for you, Libra. Today, you're being called to set some time aside for shadow work. What are the things you are struggling to accept about yourself? What are all the ways in which you are doubting your own power and potential? Reflect upon the patterns you would like to clear from your subconscious and put them down on paper. A simple ritual to clear the old energy and help you start afresh: offer your letter to the flames as you visualise yourself rising from the ashes. Tip: Make way for change.

Scorpio: You've had your days of undermining your potential and mindlessly wasting your talent. The beginning of the year finds you in the mood for a drastic change, one that allows you to reach your fullest potential and experience a sense of freedom all the same. Some of you could be actively thinking about investing in your own venture. Yes, there will be many details to figure out, which could intimidate you. The key is to start with what you know, and figure out the rest of it as you go along. In the golden words of Alan Watts, "The only way to make sense of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance."

Tip: You may be inspired to invest in your own venture. Sagittarius: If we're all living in a simulation, why the hell do we get so serious about everything? Your thoughts exactly, Sagittarius. Today you're in the mood to unleash your inner child and/or connect with the little ones in your tribe. On your to-do list: making art. Making macrame. Making a mess. Trust that you will turn your home into a portal of good vibes in the process.

Tip: Sometimes making a mess is the most spiritual thing you can do.

Capricorn: Capricorn, you're in this world, but not of it. You are discovering that you are a multidimensional being, full of magical abilities that are waiting to be realised. The cards want you to know that this is a time of aligning with your true path and uncovering the jewels Spirit has buried deep within you. The transformation may seem daunting at first. Roll with it anyway. Yes, that means you are allowed to take up "too much" space and be a sorcerer/ess in a world full of muggles. Tip: You are coming into your magic.

Aquarius: What we resist, persists—a Universal law that's being revealed to you in this moment. So, pause, breathe, and understand the higher meaning behind your circumstances. The truth is, things are happening for you, not to you. This is the ultimate cleanse, Aquarius. What you will discover on the other side is freedom in the truest sense of the word. Tip: Accept what the present is offering you.

Pisces: Fertility, birth, growth, degeneration, and death—and so the cycle of life continues. But is death really the end, or simply a portal to the new? The metamorphosis you are experiencing is a testimony to the light that follows the darkest of night. So, take a moment to look back—at the good, the bad, and the ugly. They all helped shape you and make you the person you are today. If that doesn't call for a prayer of gratitude, what does, Pisces? Tip: You're grateful for it all.