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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Amit Shah convenes first Tripartite meet on “Gorkha issues,” next round in Nov

NEW DELHI, 12 OCT

[PIB]: Union Home Ministry began tripartite talks today with Gorkha representatives from the Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars region, and the Government of West Bengal.

The talks, aimed at resolving issues related to the Gorkhas, were chaired by the Union Minister of Home Affairs, Amit Shah. The Gorkha delegation was led by Darjeeling MP Raju Bisht

and highlighted various issues concerning the Gorkhas and the region.

The Minister of Home Affairs said that the Central Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was constantly making efforts to resolve issues related to the Gorkhas and of the region.

He heard out all the parties concerned and has decided to call for a second round of talks in

the presence of senior officials of the Government of West Bengal in November 2021.

The West Bengal Government has been specifically asked to send their senior officials for the next round of talks. The all-round development and prosperity of the Darjeeling hills, Terai and Dooars region is the top most priority of the Modi Government.

The meeting was

also attended by the Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, MoS Minority Affairs and MP from Alipurduar, John Barla, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Secretary Ministry of Tribal Affairs Anil Kumar Jha, the Registrar General of India Dr Vivek Joshi, the Principal Resident Commissioner of West Bengal Krishna Gupta and other senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

On behalf of the Gorkhas, the delegation comprised of the Darjeeling MLA Neeraj Zimba, Kurseong MLA BP Bajgain, Kalchini MLA Bishal Lama, GNLF chief Mann Ghising, Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists Chief RB Rai, Gorkha Rajya Nirman Morcha chief Dawa Pakhrin, Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League chief Pratap Khati and Sumeti Mukti Morcha Chief Binkash Rai.

Neeraj Adhikari defends PhD thesis on “Dynamics of Political Culture and Violence in Sikkim: 1974 to 2014”

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 12 OCT:

Doctoral scholar, Neeraj Adhikari, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management [PCSM], Sikkim University, defended his thesis, “Dynamics of Political Culture and Violence in Sikkim: 1974 to 2014” for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) successfully today.

Dr Adhikari was earlier awarded a Master of

Philosophy (MPhil) for his thesis, “Political Culture in Sikkim: Analysing Party Behavior and Violence” by the department of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management, Sikkim University.

He defended his Doctoral degree under the guidance and supervision of Prof Nawal K Paswan of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management, Sikkim University.

India logs 14,313 fresh Covid cases, 181 new deaths

NEW DELHI, OCT 12

(PTI) India recorded 14,313 fresh coronavirus cases, the lowest in 224 days, taking the infection tally to 3,39,85,920 on Tuesday, while the national Covid recovery rate increased to 98.04 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry's data.

The death toll reached 4,50,963 with 181 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 30,000 for 18 straight days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 107 consecutive days now.

The active cases have declined to 2,14,900 comprising 0.63 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national Covid recovery rate was recorded at 98.04 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the ministry said.

A decrease of 12,447 cases has been recorded in the active Covid caseload in a span of 24 hours.

A total of 11,81,766 tests were conducted on Monday, taking the number of cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 58,50,38,043.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.21 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for

the last 43 days.

The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.48 per cent. It has been below three per cent for the last 109 days, according to the Health Ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,33,20,057, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.33 per cent.

Over 95.89 crore Covid vaccine doses have been administered in the country so far under the nationwide vaccination drive.

India's Covid tally had crossed the 20 lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 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. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 181 new fatalities include 84 from Kerala, and 36 from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,50,963 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 1,39,578 from Maharashtra, 37,895 from Karnataka, 35,796 from Tamil Nadu, 26,342 from Kerala, 25,089 from Delhi, 22,896 from Uttar Pradesh, and 18,914 from West Bengal.

Justice Somadder sworn in as Chief Justice of Sikkim



GANGTOK, 12 OCT (IPR): Justice Biswanath Somadder was sworn in as Chief Justice of the High Court of Sikkim in a function held at Ashirwad Hall, Raj Bhawan, today.

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad administered the oath of office to the Chief Justice designate.

The function was attended by Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang, Judge, High Court of Sikkim, Justice Meenakshi

M. Rai, Judge, High Court of Sikkim, Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, L. B. Das, Deputy Speaker, SLA, Sangay Lepcha, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Heads of Departments, Dignitaries and guests from the Judiciary, and other officials.

Justice Biswanath Somadder signed the solemn oath/affirmation relating to his assumption of office which was duly attested by the Governor.

Earlier, Chief Secretary, S. C. Gupta read out the notification and the warrant of appointment of Justice Biswanath Somadder.

After the swearing in, the Chief Justice was congratulated by the Governor, the Chief Minister and a host of other invitees.

Justice Biswanath Somadder served as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya before his transfer to the High Court of Sikkim.

NECDC felicitated president and the secretary of SICA



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 12 OCT:

North East Cricket Development Committee [NECDC] felicitated the president and secretary of Sikkim Cricket Association [SICA] at Dimapur, Nagaland on Tuesday.

In a felicitation program held at Dimapur, Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio, who is also the Convenor of NECDC, handed over a Certificate of Appreciation to SICA President Lobzang G Tenzing and secretary Tshewang Lama in recognition of their service towards the development and promotion of cricket in the north eastern region, a SICA press release informs.

The release adds that the current state of cricket in Sikkim and the benefits the people of the state are now entitled to are a result of much hard work

and a direct byproduct of the work that has been put in by NECDC and its founding members.

To that effect Sikkim represented by president, Lobzang G Tenzing and secretary Tshewang Lama of SICA have also been major contributors to the cause, the release adds.

Sikkim, along with the other North Eastern states, today finds itself in a position of equal footing when compared with the rest of India, particularly with regard to the nature of its membership in the BCCL, the release states.

The SICA press release goes on to state that this was not the case till just a few years back and it was only through a concerted effort by the members of the NECDC that Sikkim along with the other North Eastern states were represented and our prayers heard.

Sikkim records first Covid death in 10 days

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 12 OCT:

Sikkim reported its first COVID death in ten days on Tuesday with the death of a patient admitted in Central Referral Hospital, Tadong. The state's COVID-19 related death toll has now reached 389.

The last COVID death was reported on 02 October.

In the meantime, the tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in the State has increased to 31,698 with 21 fresh cases of coronavirus in the State. Out of 21 new cases in the State, 12 were reported in East District, 01 in West, 01 in South and 07 in North District.

As per the daily COVID-19 report released by Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department, these 21 new cases of coronavirus were reported from the testing of 357 samples. A total of six new cases

were found in RT-PCR testing of 125 samples and 15 were reported in rapid antigen testing of 232 samples. The daily positivity rate recorded is 5.8%.

On the other hand, the number of active cases of coronavirus has further declined to 224 with 31 new recoveries in the State. The figure of recoveries has now improved to 30,767 and the state's current recovery rate stands at 98%.

Three COVID patients are currently admitted in ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital, while seven new COVID patients are hospitalized in the State.

In the vaccination drive against COVID-19, the State administered a total of 2,185 doses of Covishield vaccine on Monday. Out of 2,185 doses of vaccine, 2,106 persons have completed their vaccination schedule with the second dose and 79 persons received the first dose of their vaccine.

Bengal awards for Durga Puja pandals themed on citizenship row, farmer protests

KOLKATA, 12 OCT (PTI):

Durga pujas themed on the issues of National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the partition of the country in 1947 featured among the list of "Serar Sera Puraskar" (Best of the best award) announced by the West Bengal government on Monday.

A puja themed on the farmer's agitation was also selected for another category of the government's "Biswa Bangla Sharad Samman" award.

Organising the Durga puja on contemporary themes is prevalent in the state for the past several years.

Minister of State for Cultural Affairs Indranil Sen announced that 36 Durga puja committees will get the award in the "Best of the best" category for meeting the benchmark in aesthetics in every aspect.

The 36 pujas include those organised by Barisha Club, Naktala Udayan Sangha, Chetla Agrani, Ekdalia Evergreen in

south Kolkata and Kashi Bose Lane in north Kolkata.

Barisha Club in Behala area has themed its puja on the NRC.

Titled "Bhager Maa" (mother divided), the goddess is depicted as a mother who, with her four children, is being taken in a vehicle that looks like a cage. The marquee is divided into two parts, India and Bangladesh, and the mother and her children are in the no man's land.

In the 75th year of independence, Naktala Udayan Sangha has themed its pandal on the migration of refugees by train during the partition of the country.

A train of that era was recreated to represent the plight of refugees. The depiction drew references from Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" and Bengali author Atin Bandyopadhyay's "Neelkanth Pakhir Khoje" (In search of Neelkanth bird) - two famous novels on the partition of

the country.

The Durga puja theme of Dumdum Park Bharat Chakra in the eastern fringes of Kolkata is the farmers' agitation. The club is the sole entry in the list for the "Anyava Bhavna" (Different thinking) category of the award.

The club depicted the farmers' stir, placing a replica of a tractor on the path to the pandal. The tractor has two wings with the names of farmers killed in the agitation written on those.

The minister also announced the Biswa Bangla Awards in categories such as "best pandal", "best idea" and "Best Covid-19 awareness".

The Alipore Bodyguards line Durga Puja, organised by members and families of the Kolkata Police, got the Best Covid Warrior honour.

The Biswa Bangla Sharad Samman award in various categories would also be given to puja committees in 20 districts outside Kolkata.

Sikkim lifts curbs on inter-state travel; Schools to reopen for all on 18 Oct

GANGTOK, 12 OCT (PTI):

The Sikkim government today lifted inter-state travel restrictions in the festive season allowing people to enter the state without producing negative RT-PCR test reports or vaccination certificates at the border, as the COVID-19 situation has improved, according to a state notification.

The notification was issued by Sikkim's Home department, reported news agency

Press Trust of India.

This will help both homegrown and outstation tourists who want to travel during the festive season.

In another notification, the Education department of the Himalayan state said students from Lower KG to Class 8 can now attend offline classes from October 18.

Classroom teachings have already started for classes 9 to 12 from September 27.

"Initially only 50 per cent of the students should be called on alternate days with parental consent, which shall be further increased based on monitoring of the situation," the notification said.

The decision was taken "as it has been observed that positivity rate of COVID-19 has come down considerably and re-opening of all classes can now be considered", it said.

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MLA convenes joint SKM-BJP initiative for youth orientation and old-age pension distribution



BIKASH CHETTRI

NAMCHI, 12 OCT:

Barfung MLA, TT Bhutia, today organized a public meeting at his residence in Rabongla under the 'Youth Orientation Programme and Old Age Pension Distribution' today.

"Barfung constituency is running under a two-party alliance government and my workload is bigger because I have to lead the public of two different parties, SKM and BJP, as one," he

remarked, adding, "Under the able leadership of Chief Minister PS Golay, I have gained confidence like never before so I can work efficiently."

Present for the meeting were party leaders, workers and members

from both Sikkim Krantikari Morcha and Bharatiya Janata Party.

BJP Mandal, Pradeep Gurung, shared the various plans of the party for the public under the MLA Relief Fund of Barfung constituency.

Both BJP Mandal Pradeep Gurung and SKM Party State Chief Convenor Shadew Sharma also spoke on the schemes with special focus on entrepreneurship.

The four youth were feted with felicitation certificates and Rs 5,000 each for their many years of self-driven enterprises.

Elders aged 60 and above were handed over cheques of Rs 5,000 each through the MLA Relief Fund of Barfung constituency. It is informed that these beneficiaries are of Sikkimese origin but do not have Sikkim Subject Certificates or Certificates of Identification and therefore have not received the benefits from the government thus far.

SGAY house inaugurated at Aifaltar



NAMCHI, 12 OCT [IPR]: Area MLA, Tourism Minister BS Panth, inaugurated a Sikkim Garib Awas Yojna (SGAY) house at Aifaltar Ward at Temi today.

He was accompanied by Chairman Temi Tea Board, Tashi Tshering Bhutia, APS (South), Anjeeta Rajalim, ADC (Dev, Ravangla) Sunil Mothey, BDO (Temi) Prem K Subba alongside officials, panchayats and Public.

At the outset the Minister inaugurated the first SGAY house of Chandravati Chettri. He also handed over ten number of house keys to individuals whose SGAY houses from the surrounding area has been already completed.

Addressed the gathering

Minister, BS Panth extended his warm wishes on the auspicious occasion of Dasai. Speaking about SGAY houses he said that the State Government aims to provide a well-constructed house along with the basic amenities to the beneficiaries of this locality. The main objective of this scheme is to improve the quality of living standard of deserving households.

Additionally, the Minister also appraised about 'Aama' scheme which he said was recently announced by the Chief Minister and added that this scheme will be implemented soon in the State as well as at Temi Namphing Constituency. He also highlighted various developmental projects

which will be initiated at the area including the foundation stone laying ceremony of Sikkim State University (SSU).

BDO (Temi) presented a brief report on SGAY houses its aim and objectives and underlined that SGAY is an initiative of the State Government to facilitate and augment in providing the basic housing facilities for selected beneficiaries.

The programme also saw a short brief on technical report of SGAY by representative of Mungpia Enterprises wherein it was informed that at the surrounding locality construction work has started in most of the SGAY houses.

Moreover, during the programme exorbitant cheques were also distributed.

High Court pulls up Delhi Govt on cases pending against juveniles

NEW DELHI, 12 OCT PTI]:

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday pulled up the Delhi government for not taking steps to comply with its order for terminating, with immediate effect, all cases where inquiries are pending against minors in alleged petty offences before the Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB), and have remained inconclusive for over a year.

The high court noted that the state has also not complied with its direction to apprise it of the number of cases where inquiries are pending in each Juvenile Justice Boards in Delhi for six months to one year, along with the date of institution of the inquiry and of the first production in each case.

When the court was informed that the government was waiting as some amendment was going on in the Rules and 10 days time was sought to produce juveniles before the Juvenile Justice Boards, a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup Jairam Bhambhani said, "Children can't wait. Juveniles can't wait. You take as much time as you want but children cannot be put on hold."

During the hearing, the Delhi government showed a chart to the court where there was a difference of 409 minors in the number of juveniles produced before the Juvenile Justice Boards and released thereafter.

"Where are these 409 juveniles? They have fallen through the cracks. These 409 (minors) will be lost in the system. We shudder to think what awaits us. What is happening? What happened to these 409 and where are they?" it asked.

The bench further said the government's conduct was not satisfactory and the court's September 29 judgment, which said the child must be produced before the Juvenile Justice Boards within 24 hours of becoming a subject of processes under the Juvenile Justice Act, was clear and had no ambiguity.

"You should follow 'Alice in the Wonderland' which says that if everybody minded their own business, the world would

go around a great deal faster than it does," it said.

The court allowed the government's plea and granted a week to file an affidavit elaborating the steps taken by them to comply with its previous order.

When the court asked when will all the juveniles, allegedly involved in petty offences and against whom inquiries are pending, be produced before the Juvenile Justice Boards, the government counsel said it will be done in 10 days.

"You should have done it by now. We are surprised with what Juvenile Justice Boards are doing. Are they not aware of our order? They must comply with our order. By now, the JJB should have directed the police to produce all juveniles before the board," the bench said.

It said, "we can understand the executive is finding it difficult to comply with our order but we cannot understand why JJB is finding it difficult to comply with our order. We cannot turn a blind eye to it."

When the government

counsel said the court's

September 29 order has

been a boon, the bench

shot back saying the order

has not yet been complied

with and how can it be a

boon to anyone.

The court said the au-

thorities cannot take the

ground of COVID-19 pan-

demic for not producing

the juveniles before the JJB

within 24 hours and said

when policing did not stop

in the pandemic, it must

also do all the documenta-

tion work.

Senior advocate HS

Phoolka, amicus curiae in

the matter, said the bench

may direct the registrar of

the court to send the order

to the Juvenile Justice

Boards for ensuring com-

pliance.

The earlier order was

passed keeping in view

the mandate of Section

14 of the Juvenile Justice

(Care and Protection of

Children) Act (JJ Act)

which says that the in-

quiry against a child who

has allegedly committed

a petty offence shall

conclude in four months

from the date of the first

production before the

board unless the period

is extended for a maxi-

mum of two months.

The Birds and Bees Talk launches helpline for adolescents



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 OCT:

The Birds and Bees Talk programme, organized by consumer healthcare brand Reckitt, celebrated World Mental Health Day in six states of North-East India; Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram, a press release informs.

As part of the initiative, Reckitt and Plan India [an NGO] hosted a webinar focusing on the relevance and importance of mental health for adolescents, the impact of Covid-19 and launch

of a helpline number that will give easy access and guidance around emotional and mental well-being.

The helpline will provide services to address common stressors with counselling sessions, clarification of general doubts and queries related to psychosocial support, the release mentions.

The service will be available under the guidance of Nitu Sana-sam, a renowned mental health practitioner working with Ya_All organization. Nitu has led

psychosocial support team, spearheading tele-counselling during the 2nd wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additionally, the webinar was also chaired by guest speakers: Assistant Director, Leishangthem Kamala, Directorate of Education, Manipur; Child Protection Officer, Mala Lisham, Social Welfare Department, Manipur; Psychiatrist, Dr Satish Rasaily, District Hospital Singtam, Govt of Sikkim.

Helpline 'Talking Birds' number: +919362894599

Citizens Foundation inaugurates Food Packaging Unit at Thekabong Pharka

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 OCT:

Citizens Foundation under SOULS (Sustainable Opportunities for Uplifting Livelihood in Sikkim) Project inaugurated the Spices and Pulses Enterprise Grading/Packaging unit at Thekabong Pharka GPU in East Sikkim today, a press release informs.

The unit was set up by the foundation under HDFC's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative

'Parivartan'. The project aims to cover 10 villages under Amba and Thekabong GPU.

The unit was inaugurated today by CEO Citizens Foundation, Ganesh Reddy, Zoo Department, Govt of Jharkhand, Jabbar Singh, Joint Commissioner Central GST, Rajiv Tripathi, Project Manager Souls Sangita Dahal and Souls Project team.

The Spices and Pulses Enterprise Grading/Pack-

aging unit has been constructed and set up at Bag-eswari village covering the 10-project villages and will be run by Producer Group members. A cutting tailoring unit has been set up at Thekabong Pharka GPU where a number of interested women are undergoing training.

The Producer Group members and villagers have conveyed their gratitude to Citizens Foundation and HDFC Bank CSR initiative.

Laser lights show at Kolkata's 'Burj Khalifa' stopped. Here's why

KOLKATA, 12 OCT

[NDTV]: A laser light show at a Kolkata Durga Puja pandal modelled on Dubai's Burj Khalifa was stopped today after the pandal started drawing huge crowds.

While there were reports that the laser lights were turned off after complaints from pilots operating flights at the nearby Kolkata international airport, airport sources NDTV spoke to said they were not aware of any official

complaint on this. Sreeb-humi Sporting Club, organisers of the Puja, denied that there had been complaints and said they switched off the laser strobe lights to prevent overcrowding. Currently, only still lights are on at the pandal in the Lake Town area of the city.

The 145-foot pandal modelled on the world's tallest building was built using about 6,000 acrylic sheets. It had been drawing crowds in tens and thousands, leading to fre-

quent traffic jams in the area. State fire minister Sujit Bose, who is on the Puja's organising committee, had earlier said they model their pandal on an iconic building every year.

"Last year, we built a replica of the Kedarnath Temple. This year our artist suggested Burj Khalifa. We sent him to Dubai to get every detail of the structure," he had said, adding that Covid parameters laid down by the state government had been followed while building it.

Liberty of individual sacrosanct, bail pleas must be taken up expeditiously: Supreme Court

NEW DELHI, 12 OCT

[PTI]: The liberty of an individual is "sacrosanct" and an application seeking bail must be taken up for hearing as expeditiously as possible, the Supreme Court has said.

No time limit can be fixed for applications seeking pre-arrest or post-arrest bail but the minimal which can be expected is that such pleas be heard at the earliest, the Supreme Court said.

A bench of Justices Ajay Rastogi and AS Oka said this while hearing a plea filed by an accused,

who was taken into custody in March this year in connection with a case registered at Patiala district in Punjab, urging the court that his application seeking bail which is pending before the Punjab and Haryana High Court be heard expeditiously. The bench noted that a sessions court had dismissed the bail application filed by the accused after which he had filed a plea seeking post-arrest bail before the high court on July 7.

The petitioner's counsel told the bench that the matter was listed before

the court several times but it could not be heard.

"We are not going into the issue at the moment, but liberty of an individual is sacrosanct and we expect that if an application is filed either pre or post arrest, under sections 438/439 of the CrPC, it must be taken up as expeditiously as possible," the bench said in its order passed last week.

"Although, no time limit can be fixed, but that is the minimal which can be expected to give an audience at the earliest," the top court said.



GANGTOK, 12 OCT

[PIB]: Special National Swachhta Campaign on 12 Oct was organized by ICAR-NRC for Orchids, Pakyong, at Dikling Senior Higher Secondary School.

Swachhta team of ICAR-NRCO with staff of Dikling Sr. Sec. School cleaned the premises and toilet of the school in the presence of East Dikling Ward Member, Buddhi Maya Subba.

Nodal Officer i/c (Swachh Bharat Mission), ICAR-NRCO, NS Kalaivanan sensitized the students of Class IX to XII about Kitchen Waste Management using Family Net Vessel Compost

Technique (FNVCT). Pamphlets on the EXCEL Decomposer capsule and decomposition technique of farm waste was also distributed.

The event was attended by 250 students, 30 teaching and non-teaching staff of the school and 35

NRCO staff. The event was coordinated by Vice Principal, Sonimith Lepcha.

Lecture on Kitchen Waste Management and Farm Waste Decomposition was delivered by NS Kalaivanan at ICAR-NRCO campus for the benefit of NRCO staff.

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Festive sale at Brand Factory

GANGTOK, 12 OCT Brand Factory at Tadong, Gangtok is offering 20-70% discount on all national & international brands, this festive season.

On offer are Super Shoe Sale, Buy 1 Get 1 Free on apparel brands and additional Rs.800 off on shopping of Rs.4000 and

above. SBI Card gives you 5% Instant Discount on minimum transaction of Rs.3500. Offer valid till 17 October.

Choose from a wide range of t-shirts, shirts, trousers, chinos, denims, tops, Kurta-Kurtis, skirts and other fashion wear from your much-loved brands such as Buffa-

lo, The Privilege Club, Iktara, Bare Denim, Bare Leisure, Lee Cooper, Umbro, John Miller, Knighthood, Ateesa, Hey, Scullers, Indigo Nation, John Miller, Hangout, Status Quo, Levi's, Crocodile, Killer, Zara, Colors, Srishti, Nayans, Zink, 612 league, Crimsoune Club and many more on Buy 1 Get 1 Free offer.

"No non-Hindus" posters put up by VHP at Garba venues in Madhya Pradesh

RATLAM, 12 OCT [PTI]: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has put up posters prohibiting the entry of "non-Hindus" in the pandals where Garba dance is performed hailing Goddess Durga during the ongoing Navratri festival in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district to avoid the repeat of "controversial incidents" of the last year, a functionary of the organisation said on Monday.

The VHP said it has placed the posters stating the "entry of non-Hindus is prohibited" across 56 pandals.

Chandan Sharma, VHP's Dharm Prachar Vibhag district secretary for Ratlam, said non-Hindu men indulge in objectionable activities by entering the garba pandals where dance is performed hailing Goddess Durga.

"The entry of non-Hindu youths had led to controversies at many places last year. By putting up such posters, non-Hindu people are being told not to enter the garba and Durga pandals so that such incidents can be avoided," he said. Mr Sharma said VHP workers are placing such posters with the consent of the festival organising committees.

Flying soon? A big change for rules for domestic flights



NEW DELHI, 12 OCT [NDTV]: Domestic airlines now can operate passenger flights without capacity restrictions, the Civil Aviation Ministry said Tuesday. The new order comes into effect from Monday, October 18.

Airlines and airport operators must, however, the ministry said, "ensure guidelines to contain the spread of COVID-19 are strictly adhered to and Covid-appropriate behaviour is strictly enforced".

The ministry said capacity restrictions had been removed after a review of the demand for air travel.

On October 9, airlines operated 2,340 flights, or 71.5 per cent of their combined pre-COVID capacity.

Earlier this month credit ratings agency ICRA said domestic air

passenger traffic increased by two to three per cent between August and September - up from 67 lakh to 69 lakh.

In September the government had increased capacity restrictions from 72.5 per cent to 85 per cent.

The government resumed domestic flight operations in May last year after a two-month break.

Airlines were initially allowed to operate a maximum of 33 per cent of all pre-Covid routes.

That cap was gradually increased to 80 per cent by December last year.

Occupancy rates, however, were reduced to 50 per cent in June this year after the country was battered by a second wave of infections and deaths.

The Civil Aviation Ministry said the deci-

sion had been taken "in view of the sudden surge in the number of active COVID-19 cases... decrease in passenger traffic and the passenger load..."

As caseloads stabilised the cap was increased to 65 per cent and then to 72.5 per cent in August.

The pandemic and the lockdown (both domestic and international) affected the aviation sector badly, with airlines losing billions of dollars.

However, with the easing of caseloads and a gradual resurgence of the economy, the long-term prospects seem brighter, as evinced by billionaire investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala's entry to this space.

Air Akasa yesterday received clearance from the Aviation Ministry and expects to start flying next year.

SICA celebrates inauguration of Sovima Cricket Ground in Dimapur

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 OCT:**

The Sovima Cricket Ground was inaugurated at Dimapur today, the venue also hosting the 7th Conclave of Northeast Cricket Development Committee.

Chief Minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio, was present as chief guest accompanied by Associate Vice President Athletics Federation of India Abu Metha along with executives of North East among other dignitaries.

Sikkim Cricket Association has heralded

the new ground as a historic day for cricket in the North East as it now finally brings access to proper opportunities and facilities.

The conclave serves to encourage growth, learning and sharing among the six Member State Associations which came together today to celebrate the inauguration. These are the very pillars on which NECDC was formed, a means to not just represent each one of us collectively but to encourage unity amongst our northeast-

ern states, a SICA press release states.

SICA president, Lobzang G Tenzing, adds that the Chief Minister of Nagaland has been a driving factor and has played an integral role in the existence of Northeast Cricket Development Committee.

"He has given us shelter when we needed one and has offered his guidance when we were lost," Mr Tenzing states. SICA has thanked the NCA and congratulated the entire NCA team for fantastically organizing the event.

ALKEM donates to Mayal Layang Orphanage



**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 12 OCT:**

ALKEM Foundation distributed gifts, including school bags with Alkem logos, blankets, water flasks and tiffin boxes to girls at Mayal Layang orphanage

at Namchi today. ALKEM has been supporting the orphanage through its CSR initiatives since last year with rent support, groceries and electricity charges, a press release informs.

There are 40 orphan

girls residing at this centre.

Alkem has dedicated this initiative as a tribute to its founder.

In-charge, Namchi Hospital, Hemanta Rai, was present as chief guest today.

Southwest monsoon withdraws from Gujarat: IMD

AHMEDABAD, OCT 12 (PTI): The southwest monsoon withdrew from Gujarat on Tuesday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, adding that this was the second most-delayed withdrawal of the SW monsoon since 1960.

Gujarat received 96.37 per cent of its long period average rainfall so far this season, according to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC).

The withdrawal of the monsoon commenced last Wednesday and it receded from some parts of west Rajasthan and Gujarat.

"The southwest monsoon has withdrawn from the entire Gujarat state today," the IMD's Ahmedabad centre said in its afternoon weather bulletin. Zone-wise, Saurashtra received the highest 115.87 per cent of its long average rainfall of 30 years this season, followed by Kutch-112.09 per cent, south Gujarat-94.56 per cent, east-central Gujarat-84.13 per cent and north Gujarat-71.92 per cent, the SEOC said.

District-wise, Devbhumi-Dwarka received the highest amount of rainfall at 143.57 per cent this season, followed by Jamnagar-140.34 per cent, Rajkot-135.80 per cent, Junagadh-130.03 per cent and Porbandar-125.17 per cent.

All these districts are located in the state's Saurashtra region.

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES ANSARI NAGAR, NEW DELHI - 110 608 EXAMINATION SECTION		
ADMISSION NOTICE NO.132/2021 Ref. No.FA/IMS/Exam.Sec./Advt./4-5/(INI-CET-PG-JAN-22)/2021 29.09.2021		
Institute of National Importance Combined Entrance Test (INI-CET) for admission to PG Courses for January 2022 session		
All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi invites online applications for Institute of National Importance Combined Entrance Test (INI-CET) January 2022 for admission to PG courses [MD/MS/M.Ch.(6years)/DM(6years)/MDS] of AIIMS, New Delhi, JIPMER Puducherry, NIMHANS Bengaluru, PGIMER Chandigarh & SCTIMST Trivandrum and other AIIMS (Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jodhpur, Nagpur, Patna, Raipur & Rishikesh etc.) for January 2022 session as per following schedule: -		
Online Registration for application • #Registration and Basic information [All applicants who have applied earlier and whose Basic Registration have been #ACCEPTED for January 2019, July 2019, January 2020, July 2020, January 2021 and July 2021 session for AIIMS, are not required to complete Registration and Basic information again. They will have to complete application form only after Generation of Examination Unique Code (EUC Code)] • Editing of Registration and Basic information	Start date 10.09.2021 (5:00 pm)	Closing Date 09.10.2021 (by 5:00 pm)
Status of Registration and Basic information and last date of correction of rejected Images	11.10.2021	13.10.2021 (by 5:00 pm)
Final Status of Accepted Registration and Basic information	14.10.2021 (by 5:00 pm)	
Date of uploading Prospectus including eligibility criteria alongwith seat position of Sponsored and Foreign National/OCI candidates: 04.10.2021		
• Generation of Examination Unique Code (EUC) [only for Accepted Registration and Basic information - Previous EUC code not valid for January 2022 session] • Completion of Application form (only for the candidates those have generated EUC code) • Editing of Registration and Basic information and completion of Application form (Change of category and city choice will not be allowed after payment of registration fee in any circumstance) • Uploading of valid Certificate/Card: SC/ST/OBC(NCL)/EWS/PwBD certificate and OCI Card • Date(s) of valid OBC(NCL) certificate: Should be issued between 17.10.2020 to 20.10.2021 (both dates inclusive) • Date(s) of valid EWS certificate: The EWS certificate must be valid for financial year 2021-2022 and issued on or after 01.04.2021 & on or before closing date of "Completion of Application form" based on income of year 2020-2021	04.10.2021 (05:00 pm)	20.10.2021 (05:00 pm)
Date(s) of checking status of Completion of application form & Last date of submission of required documents.	27.10.2021 (11:00 am)	30.10.2021 (05:00 pm)
Final Status of online Registration and uploading of admit card on AIIMS website	08.11.2021 (Monday)	
Date of Examination	Examination Timings	Examination Centers
Sunday, 14 th November, 2021	Medical and Dental Courses- 09:00 AM – 12:00 Noon	Cities all over India
Important: For Prospectus, detailed information etc. please visit the website www.aiimsexams.ac.in All applicants are required to visit the website regularly since all subsequent Corrigendum/Addendum/ Updates will only be uploaded on the website. Registration and Basic information is mandatory. Only those with accepted Registration & Basic information can proceed for Generation of EUC for completion of application form.		
Correction/edit of Registration: For candidates requiring correction in Registration & Basic candidate information OR Completion of application form, the edit panel will be available as per schedule only. It may kindly be noted that the editing shall be done only by the candidate. Candidate will be responsible for all corrections. No corrections allowed after closing date of editing i.e. 20.10.2021 by 05:00 pm. Applicants may note that further correspondence will NOT be entertained in this regard.		
Note: All applicant for which fees not paid will be summarily rejected and no correspondence will be entertained in this regard.		
PAAR		ASSTT. CONTROLLER (EXAMS)



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES (DIVYANGJAN)

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India
116, RAJPUR ROAD, DEHRADUN – 248001 UTTARAKHAND INDIA
Website: www.nivh.gov.in. Phone No: 0135-2744491, 2744578

AdvtNo. 5-2/2021-02 Advt
28.09.21

Dated :

WALK – IN- WRITTEN TEST/SKILL TEST

Eligible Candidates are invited to apply and attend the written test for the following post for CRC-Sikkim at SICUN (Sikkim State Cooperative Union), Information & Public Relations Dept., Govt of Sikkim, Assam Lingzey, Ranipool, East Sikkim – 737135 on 16th October, 2021 from 09.30 AM to 10.30 AM.

DETAILS	REQUIREMENT
Name of Post	Clinical Assistant (Speech Therapist) Consultant
Essential Qualification	i. B.Sc (Speech & Hearing) or equivalent ii. 2 Years relevant experience iii. Registration with RCI.
Consolidated Salary	Rs. 40,000/-PM (Fixed) with no other allowances.
Note: For further details please visit our Website www.nivh.gov.in Director, NIEPVD, Dehradun.	

This Dasain, Consider a Real Gift for Sikkim's Young

More than gadgets, the young need spaces

Dasain shopping, because of yearlong online discounts, has kind of lost its excitement and even Dhanteras acquisitions are projected to be dull this year because the economy has taken such a beating and keeping the vehicles running and the gas stoves lit are burning holes wider than the “positive” stories the Centre tries on spin on our privations. Firecrackers have been banned in Sikkim since much before the Court ordered silence for Diwali, so even that indulgence is not an option. Meanwhile, saffron boorishness has only acquired sidekicks and inconsistent partners in Sikkim thus far, so at least the traditional excesses of Dasain can be expected to continue for some more years in their traditional form and not the codified exclusionism that those with power over much of India would want. So, expect the family get-togethers, parties and picnics. Thankfully, the kids still retain some of their innocence, so this remains a time when the children of Sikkim are especially excited. This, after all, is that one time when the elders remember that there are children around. Now, with something to look forward to, like live classes, after the Dasain break, the kids should find some cheer if they can look up from the screens were fevicoled them to.

But here again we short-change the young.

After the mandatory new set of clothes and some rituals at home are over, the elders start indulging themselves. While fathers are likely to join their drinking buddies for some socially permitted binge gambling, the mothers would probably prefer to catch up with relatives and whatever rituals of the festival still survive. Yes, that sounds offensively sexist, but offense needs to be served up sometimes when we refuse to be more than our stereotypes. What this leaves us with then are children with their pocket money and their new set of clothes hunching over their smartphones or squinting into TV screens and/ or video games, munching on home-delivered snacks and treats. It is rare to even see them playing in the neighbourhood alley or take over the streets for some cricket or badminton practice [come on, they re-discovered kabaddi via TV as well some years back]. They might be squealing in delight or looking thrilled and occupied, but we would be fooling ourselves if we let ourselves believe that all is well. We got a two-year reprieve from our guilt when the virus kept the kids locked down, but now, even that excuse is not convincing enough anymore.

At least now we should wake up and recognise the presence and requirements of Sikkim's young. After having consistently proven ourselves as uncaring parents - given that issues related to the children are rarely taken up on priority - at least during festivals we should look into what they need... really need.

Take a look around, how many parks and playgrounds have we given our kids. Even the few that do exist are unsuitably designed and although they might look pretty, are not the best of spaces to let children play around unsupervised. The capital freed up two spaces from concrete and vehicles only to expose the concrete-inspired, contractor-driven and indulgence-serving monstrosities of even more concrete, more greed and possibly also the embarrassment of AstroTurf masquerading as grass and potted plants pretending to be a garden. This is hardly surprising from a system which has seen children either only as numbers leveraging which they can spend crores and pocket kick-backs or as a nuisance every time they were themselves - kids at play or young adults thumbing their noses at hierarchy and speaking their minds. Look around, the few parks landscaped to be children-friendly have watchers around to tell kids not to monkey around lest they mess up the manicured artificiality of the park and elsewhere there is an entire department which feels no guilt for having allowed students to be expelled and arrested.

Some spaces that Sikkim had have since been converted into parking lots for the excesses that we indulge in or were apportioned away as building sites for a connected few or converted into government offices, and now Malls. There are no spaces, private or public, designed solely for the kids. Even the occasional melas which the children looked forward to have been taken over by the adults with the emphasis more on “games of chance” and drinking than the thrills and escapes of a fete. The schools were brainwashing institutes when they were open and continue to look only at results and not at the holistic grooming of the students. After school, we burden them with tuition classes. And then there is the television and now the smartphones juiced up on cheap bandwidth. We even protest the times when the children let loose at MG Marg when the vehicles are pulled off so that grown-ups can loiter undisturbed.

Surely the kids deserve better.

This Dasain, maybe we should figure out what the children would really cherish and require and give it to them.

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

Nobel Economics Prize Winners Showed Economists How to Turn the Real World Into Their Laboratory

DAVID A. JAEGER
theconversation.com

The Nobel committee's decision to award its economics prize for 2021 to David Card, Josh Angrist and Guido Imbens marks the culmination of a revolution in the way economists approach the world that began more than 30 years ago. Until the 1980s, experiments were uncommon in economics. Most economists who worked on the applied side of the field relied on data from surveys (like the census) or administrative sources (like social security).

Around the late 1980s, labour economists in particular started thinking deeply about how to better estimate the effects of phenomena like immigration or the minimum wage. In a similar way to how, say, pharmaceutical companies test a new drug, they wanted to do it in a way that screened out other variables that could be causing the same effects. Along with this came a new focus on data and measuring individuals and their behaviour.

It is no accident that Card (1983) and Angrist (1989) both completed their PhDs at Princeton. Both had Orley Ashenfelter as their doctoral advisor, and Ashenfelter deserves substantial credit along with Card for pushing labour economics and empirical economics towards mimicking the traditional sciences.

Economists knew there was a problem in trying to understand the exact relationship between two economic variables - say, education and wages. Just because, on average, those with higher levels of education also earn higher wages does not mean that higher wages are caused by more education. Other factors, like a privileged family background or higher innate ability, could also be associated with both higher levels of education and higher wages.

In a drug test, you can isolate the effects of the drug as opposed to other potential effects through a randomised experiment: you split the people taking part in your trial into two groups at random, giving the drug to one group and giving the other group a placebo but not telling anyone whether they are taking the real drug.

DAVID CARD AND THE REAL-WORLD LABORATORY

Ashenfelter and Card saw the potential to do something similar in economics using “natural experiments”, which are real-life economic phenomena that only happen to some people. By comparing two groups where only one has experienced a phenomenon - at random as it were - researchers would get a clearer picture of cause and effect.

Two of David Card's most influential papers employed natural experiments to great effect. In the first, published in 1990, he examined how more than 120,000 migrants who left the port of Mariel in Cuba during a period in 1980 affected the Miami labour market.

A simple “before and after” comparison of wages and unemployment in Miami would have ignored the fact that the US economy was booming in 1979 and tanking in 1981 for reasons that had nothing to do with these migrants. Card's answer was to analyse the average change in wages and unemployment between the late 1970s and 1980s in Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, and Tampa-St Petersburg.

This provided a so-called “counterfactual outcome”

- meaning what would probably have happened in Miami without the influx of immigrants. By subtracting this change from the change in labour market outcomes in Miami, Card was able to (arguably) calculate the effect of the influx of immigrants on wages and unemployment in the city.

Card found, remarkably, that this influx had virtually no effect on the wages of lower-skilled non-Cubans in Miami, and did not increase unemployment among black people or non-Cubans either. This result was controversial 31 years ago and is still controversial today,



but Card's approach remains highly influential.

The second of Card's most important papers was a collaboration with the late Alan Krueger, Card's and Ashenfelter's colleague at Princeton, who tragically died aged 58 in 2019. This 1993 work examined the effect of the minimum wage on employment, testing the idea from standard economic theory that imposing a minimum wage should generally have a negative effect on employment.

Aware that New Jersey would be raising its minimum wage from US\$4.25 to US\$5.05 an hour on April 1 1992, they gathered data from fast-food restaurants in New Jersey - and, as a counterfactual, Pennsylvania - before and after the change in New Jersey's minimum wage. This revealed that employment actually went up in New Jersey's fast-food restaurants relative to Pennsylvania - meaning that raising the minimum wage increased employment.

JOSH ANGRIST AND SCHOOLING

Josh Angrist is another product of the fertile environment at the industrial relations section at Princeton of the 1980s. The Nobel award cites Angrist's work in econometrics - the application of statistical methods to explain economic phenomena - although his work on the economics of education is equally important. One of Angrist's most influential contributions is a 1991 paper with Alan Krueger, who unquestionably would have shared this prize were he still alive.

In trying to tease out the effect of schooling on earnings, Angrist and Krueger needed to screen out other factors such as an individual's innate ability or their family background. These might have been correlated with students' level of schooling but there was no data available to check.

Instead, Angrist and Krueger observed that US law said that students had to start school in the calendar

year in which they turned six but could drop out as soon as they reached 16. This meant that a student born on December 31 would have to spend a year longer than one born on January 1, for example.

Angrist and Krueger then used when individuals were born in the year to predict how much schooling they would get. Because when you are born in the year is presumed to be unrelated to your family background or innate ability, this enabled them to remove the influence of these things in the analysis.

What they found when they looked at a large cohort

was as surprising as the work by Card and Krueger - they estimated that the effect of schooling on earnings was actually greater than previous estimates using conventional methods. There is still some controversy over whether these results are fully reliable, but Angrist and Krueger's paper indisputably set the standard for this kind of analysis.

GUIDO IMBENS AND METHODOLOGY

Guido Imbens, who did his PhD at Brown University (1991), has refined the tools academics use to estimate causal effects - or to know when there are limits in how they can interpret their results. This has been enormously influential in framing how we evaluate policy options.

Imbens' most influential paper, from 1996, is co-authored with Angrist and Donald Rubin, a statistician at Harvard who could also easily have shared this Nobel. It lays out a framework that helps us to evaluate policies when some individuals refuse an intervention and some individuals always take it up - for example, the effect of a jobs training programme on wages.

In another extremely influential paper, Angrist and Imbens define exactly for whom causal estimates hold. For example, Angrist's and Krueger's results on schooling are relevant only for those who were forced to stay in school until the age of 16 but would have left earlier if they could - and this may actually explain why the results were different to previous estimates.

For Card, Angrist and Imbens, the “credibility revolution” in economics is about providing defensible estimates of causal effects - even if those estimates run counter to conventional economic theory. They fundamentally believe that data from the “real world” will reveal the truth, and have developed methods for showing us that truth.

[the writer is Professor of Economics, University of St Andrews]

Another Round? What really happens when you microdose alcohol

HARRY SUMNALL
theconversation.com

In Danish director Thomas Vinterberg's latest film, *Another Round*, friends Martin, Tommy, Peter and Nikolaj agree to conduct a little experiment: they will stay moderately drunk throughout the day to see how it affects their social and professional performance.

The four middle-aged men are dissatisfied with their jobs as teachers at a gymnasium school in Copenhagen. At Nikolaj's 40th birthday, they discuss Norwegian psychiatrist Finn Skårderud, who alleges that people have a natural alcohol deficiency, and that having a blood alcohol content of 0.05% makes you more creative and relaxed.

The band of friends embark on the experiment, recording their “findings” in an essay. The ground rules - initially - are that blood alcohol should not fall below 0.05% and drinking should only take place during work hours. The teachers cite Hemingway and Churchill as their inspirations.

“I haven't felt this good in ages,” Martin (Mads Mikkelsen) says in the early stages of their experiment. But things don't stay that way. Soon the men increase their dose and things get out of hand, with one of the men - Tommy (Thomas Larsen) - drinking way too much.

Another Round is undoubtedly good entertainment, but for those looking for a productivity or creati-

ty boost, Skårderud was originally making a light-hearted (and alcohol-inspired) point that he was quick to clarify after the film's release.

But what if you could stick to the Another Round protocol - effectively microdosing small amounts of alcohol during working hours to improve performance? What would happen?

Blood alcohol concentration is affected by many things, including the alcohol content of the drink, how fast you drink, your sex, your body mass index, and the health of your liver. But 0.05% is approximately equivalent to a 70kg man drinking one pint (568ml) of 4% beer or a large glass (250ml) of wine.

As alcohol is a toxin, the body works to excrete it via breath, sweat and urine, and so maintaining a 0.05% concentration would be difficult. It would require regular measured consumption across the day, meaning that daily and weekly unit intake would soon exceed the maximum recommended levels.

Low doses of alcohol may have some positive effects. While alcohol culture in countries like the UK can sometimes seem excessive, small amounts may increase sociability, helping people to create and maintain new friendship bonds and professional networks.

Laboratory studies have shown that at low doses the increases in relaxation and feelings of self-confidence that alcohol produce, and the loss of cognitive focus that comes with mild intoxication, may lead to

more creative and diverse problem-solving strategies, improved foreign language skills, sharper memory recall, and a better ability to process some types of information. In contrast, analytical problem-solving skills, such as those needed in most workplaces, suffer across all levels of consumption.

If all this sounds good, before you think about trying this experiment yourself, remember that these were all controlled lab studies administering single doses of alcohol, and there are some questions about how relevant the tests and assessments are to the real world of work.

Also, although there is individual variation, tolerance to the psychological and physiological effects of alcohol quickly develops even at low doses, which means that over time more of the drug is needed to achieve the same effects.

Alcohol “microdosing” may become ineffective, or soon turn into alcohol “macro dosing”, with more having to be drunk to maintain even larger blood-alcohol concentrations. This is not only expensive, but most employers will have policies covering alcohol use in the workplace, with some safety-critical occupations having zero-tolerance approaches.

The harms of regular alcohol are well known. It is linked to a range of cancers, digestive diseases, and other health and social harms to both the drinker and others.

There is longstanding academic debate about whether drinking mod-

erate amounts of alcohol is good for your health, protecting against conditions such as heart disease. Some researchers have proposed that there is a J-shaped relationship between the amount of alcohol consumed and some types of harm, whereby there is a “sweet spot” of consumption that is beneficial. But this idea is one that is often promoted by the alcohol industry for commercial benefit, and is undermined by weak evidence. However, other researchers think there is no safe level of alcohol consumption - any amount is bad for your health.

Personal enhancement through alcohol is not a new idea. The ancient Greeks notably promoted wine as an aid to debate, poetry and philosophical discussion, but perhaps wisely suggested a three-drink limit, as consuming any more meant overstepping personal capabilities.

Great figures in history - artists, writers, politicians, composers, scientists and industry leaders - have been famous tipplers. Churchill, for example, would start the day with a whisky and water, and end it with a few glasses of scotch, champagne and a highball. But the creativity and success of notable people came despite their use of alcohol. For those of us with more modest talents, alcohol use is more likely to lead to a hangover and empty wallet than professional reward.

[the writer is Professor in Substance Use, Liverpool John Moores University]

Thunder GM Presti urges patience for fans used to winning

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP): The Oklahoma City Thunder aren't talking about the playoffs, wins or losses.

A franchise that had missed the playoffs just once in the previous 11 seasons ended last season in the draft lottery with a 22-50 record. General manager Sam Presti's focus is on helping a group of talented young players led by Shai Gilgeous-Alexander flourish so the Thunder can be competitive again — eventually.

"This year for us is as much about anything as getting a baseline of where we're at, now that we have a grouping of young players that will compete to figure out who will be here for the long term and who can help us cultivate the next era of Thunder basketball," Presti said. "I think that's incredibly exciting, but I also think it's necessary."

Presti said fans need to be patient because Oklahoma City is not a prime free agent destination, and there are no quick fixes for medium- and small-market teams. He said immediately recreating the glory days with Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook that included an NBA Finals appearance and four trips to the Western Conference Finals is unrealistic.

"If you want to lower your expectations, you can change the way you build and be a little bit more short-term oriented," he said. "But if you want to have high aspirations and high-perform-



ing teams of years upon years, you can't do that and think you can do it quickly or with short-cuts."

There is potential. Gilgeous-Alexander led the team last season with 23.7 points and 5.9 assists per game. He shot 51% from the field and 42% on 3-pointers. He is healed from the torn plantar fascia that kept him out the final two months of last season. He signed a max deal in the offseason, and he's ready to show he deserves it.

"It was a dream come true," he said. "Super proud of it, super happy about it, obviously. But I know for me, the job is not done, work is not done. It's just one milestone I get to cross off my list, but I still have 90% of my list, so I won't stop."

Forward Darius Bazley averaged 13.7 points and 7.2 rebounds last season. Guard Luguentz Dort is a shutdown defender who emerged as

an offensive player late last season and averaged 24.4 points and 5.3 rebounds on 46% shooting from the field in April.

Presti believes things are heading in the right direction. "I think ultimately, when we are playing really high level basketball in Oklahoma City and the arena is on fire and we're in the post-season and fans have witnessed the come-up and understand the time, they're going to look back on a few things," he said.

GIDDEY FOR GIDDEY Australian guard Josh Giddey, the sixth overall pick in the 2021 draft, is a 6-foot-8 point guard who looked ready for the league in his debut. He scored 18 points on 8-for-12 shooting and had seven rebounds and three assists in the preseason opener Oct. 4 against Charlotte.

"The stats tonight didn't really worry me," he said after the game. "It was more about just getting a feel for the NBA league, getting adjusted

to the pace and physicality of the game."

DERRICK FAVORS Favors, a 6-foot-10 big man, arrives with a chance to provide leadership and steady play. The 12-year NBA veteran has career averages of 10.8 points, 7.2 rebounds and 1.2 blocks per game. The Thunder acquired him and a future first-round draft pick from the Jazz in July in exchange for a 2027 second-round draft pick and cash considerations. Favors gets a look at his immediate past right away: The Thunder season opener is Oct. 20 at Utah.

BULKIER BAZLEY Bazley said he's been focused on adding strength in the offseason. He was slender his first two seasons, but now, he has some power to go with his exceptional leaping ability.

"I took, like, two weeks off after the season ended and then got straight to it," he said. "Me and the strength coaches,

we had a plan, and we stuck to it. ... It makes me feel good that the work is paying off. I definitely was in the weight room trying to get bigger and get stronger for this upcoming season."

YEAR TWO Theo Maledon and Aleksei Pokusevski, who played significant minutes as rookies last year, are back.

Maledon, a point guard from France, started 49 games at point guard and averaged 10.1 points and 3.5 assists. Pokusevski, a 7-foot wing player from Serbia, averaged 8.2 points and 4.7 rebounds. He scored 29 points in his final regular-season game last season against the Los Angeles Clippers.

DECK'S OLYMPICS Forward Gabriel Deck played for Argentina at the Olympics. He averaged 11.8 points, 7.5 rebounds and 2.3 assists for a squad that lost to Australia in the quarter-finals.

Odisha plans Hirakud Mahotsav on Mahanadi river bank

SAMBALPUR (ODISHA), OCT 12 (PTI): In a bid to boost the tourism potential of the western region of Odisha, full of natural beauty, the state government has planned a festival on the line of the Konark Dance Festival and Dhuli-Kalinga Mahotsav at Hirakud Dam Reservoir here in February next year, an official said.

The Tourism Department of the Odisha Government will organise the festival, Hirakud Mahotsav along the Hirakud Reservoir on the bank of Mahanadi, the longest river of the state.

A decision to organise the festival has already been taken by the government, the official said.

"We also received a letter in this regard recently. Though the 3-day-long festival has been planned to be organised near the Hirakud Reservoir, the exact venue for the festival is yet to be finalized," he said.

Official sources said, since Hirakud Reservoir is one of the most beautiful places of this region, the state government has planned to organise the festival along the reservoir. The objective of the festival is to promote the art and culture of Western Odisha besides to attract tourists from across the country.

Pondy witnesses 56 new coronavirus cases

PUDUCHERRY, OCT 12 (PTI): Puducherry added 56 new cases to its COVID-19 tally, which climbed to 1,27,151 on Tuesday.

The fresh cases were identified at the end of examination of 4,537 samples and they were spread over Puducherry 27, Karaikal 17 and Mahe 12.

No new fatality was reported from any of the four regions of Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam and the fatalities remained 1848.

Director of the Health Department G Sriramulu said there were 617 ac-



tive cases of whom 95 were in hospitals and the remaining 522 patients in home isolation.

While 78 patients recovered and were discharged during last 24 hours the overall recoveries stood at 1,24,686.

The Department of Health has tested so far 18.48 lakh samples and found 15.67 lakh out of

them to be negative. The test positivity rate was 1.23 percent while fatality and recovery rates were 1.45 percent and 98.06 percent respectively.

The Director said the department had administered 10,59,066 doses so far which comprised 7,08,229 first doses and remaining 3,50,837 second doses.

Nagaland govt revokes order to shift Dimapur DC office

KOHIMA, OCT 12 (PTI): The Nagaland government has revoked its order to shift the deputy commissioner's office of Dimapur district, amid protests by various civil society organisations against the move.

Principal Secretary (Home) Abhijit Sinha,

in a notification issued late on Monday, said the instructions regarding shifting of branches and cells to the new deputy commissioner's office complex "stand revoked" with immediate effect.

The state cabinet had on March 11 decided to

move the DC's office, Dimapur, to the new complex in Chumukedima.

However, following the directive, several Dimapur-based civil society organisations appealed to the state government to withdraw the order, and launched a series of protests.

Andaman & Nicobar reports one new COVID-19 case

PORT BLAIR, OCT 12 (PTI): Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported one new COVID-19 case, pushing the tally in the union territory to 7,634, a health department official said on Tuesday.

The new case was detected during testing of passengers at the Veer Savarkar Airport here, he said. The archipelago now has 10 active COVID-19 cases and all the patients are in the South Andaman district of which the capital Port Blair is also a part. The other two districts - North and Middle Andaman and Nicobar - are coronavirus free, the official said.

One more person recuperated from the

disease, taking the total number of COVID-19 recoveries to 7,495.

The COVID-19 death toll in the union territory remained at 129 as no fresh fatality has been reported in the last 24 hours, he said.

The administration has so far tested 5,70,492 samples for COVID-19 and the cumulative test positivity rate is 1.34 percent.

A total of 4,57,965 beneficiaries have been inoculated so far in the union territory, of which 2,91,469 beneficiaries have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 1,66,496 have received both doses of the vaccine, he added.

3 Maoists gunned down in Odisha's Malkangiri district

BHUBANESWAR, OCT 12 (PTI): At least three Maoists, including two women, were gunned down in an exchange of fire in Tulasi Forest Range in Odisha's Malkangiri district, a top police officer said on Tuesday. Acting on intelligence inputs, a joint team of the special operation group and Malkangiri district voluntary force had launched a combing operation in the area, DGP Abhay said.

Upon learning about

the presence of jawans in the forests near Kerimiti village along the border of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, they opened fire and the security personnel retaliated, he said.

All the three Maoists died on the spot, he said, adding, their bodies have been recovered along with two guns.

The DGP said the combing operation is still underway as close to 30-40 Naxals are suspected to be present in the area.

First day of Durga puja festival celebrated in Bengal

KOLKATA, OCT 11 (PTI): West Bengal celebrated Mahasasti, the first day of the Durga puja festival, amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, on Monday.

On the occasion of Mahasasti, life is instilled in the idol in a ritual known as 'PranPrathistha'.

In the evening, the face of the idol was unveiled as a part of the age-old custom called 'Bodhon'.

People in large numbers, many of whom were seen violating the Covid-19 protocols by not wearing masks, visited puja pandals.



The physical distancing norm also went for a toss as police had a difficult time managing the crowd.

A huge rush was seen towards those puja pandals, mostly in the southern part of the city, that won accolades be-

cause of their innovative themes.

Incidentally, the West Bengal government has given relaxations to night curfew for a brief period (October 10 to 20) so that puja enthusiasts do not face any problem while pandal hopping.

4 vehicles used for sand mining seized in Jammu

JAMMU, OCT 12 (PTI): The police here have seized four vehicles used for illegal mining of sand in violation of directions of Jammu and Kashmir High Court, officials said Tuesday.

In order to strictly implement the drive against illegal mining and to tight-

en the noose against violators of the law, Jammu police have initiated strict action against the offenders, they said.

Police teams intercepted four vehicles involved in illegal mining of sand in Belicharana, Jhajar Kotli and Pounichak areas of Jammu and seized them on Monday.

1 fresh COVID-19 case in Ladakh

LEH, OCT 12 (PTI): The number of active cases in Ladakh went down to 46 Tuesday as the union territory recorded only one COVID-19 case in the last 24 hours, officials said.

The new case took the virus tally to 20,853, they said. There was no

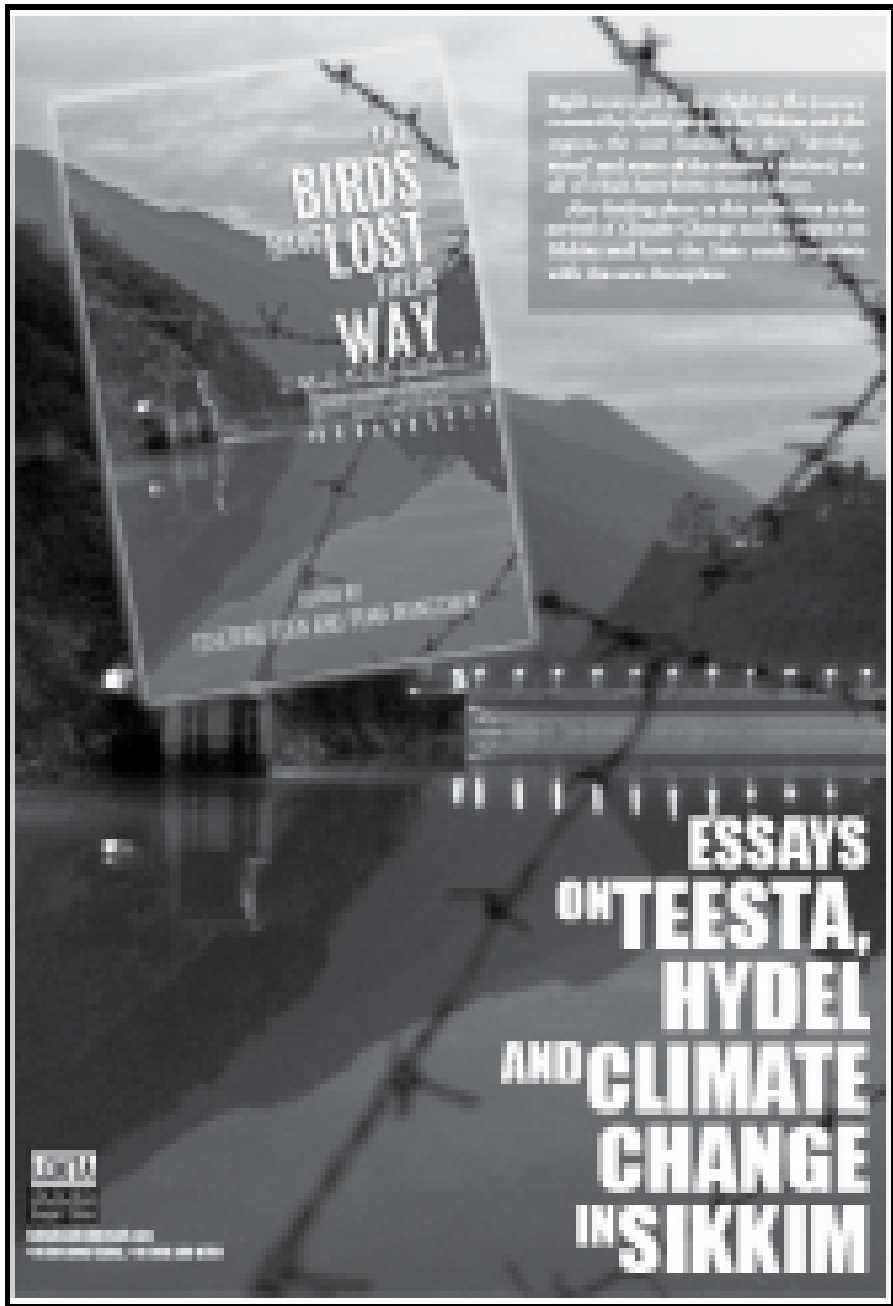
death reported due to Covid in Ladakh on Monday, they said.

Ladakh has registered 208 Covid-related deaths 150 in Leh and 58 in Kargil since the outbreak of the pandemic last year.

Seven patients were

cured and discharged from hospitals, thereby taking the number of recoveries to 20,599, they said.

A total of 638 sample reports in Ladakh 332 in Leh and 306 in Kargil were tested negative, they said.



Top-seeded Pliskova upset in 2 sets at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, CALIF. (AP): Top-seeded Karolina Pliskova was upset by Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-3, 7-5 Monday at the BNP Paribas Open.

Haddad Maia got into the main draw as a lucky loser. She lost in the final round of qualifying and got in when No. 29 seed Nadia Podoroska withdrew with a thigh injury. Haddad Maia inherited Podoroska's first-round bye and then beat Mayr-Sherif in the second round.

Ranked 115th, the Brazilian reached the round of 16 at a WTA 1000 event for the first time.

On a windy day at the Indian Wells Tennis Gardne, Pliskova held serve to tie the second set 5-5. Haddad Maia held and then broke Pliskova in the final game to wrap up the win in just over two hours.

No. 10 Angelique Kerber defeated 20th-seeded Daria Kasatkina 6-2, 1-6, 6-4.

No. 16 seed Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 champion, lost to 18th-seeded Anett Kontaveit 7-6 (5), 6-3.

On the men's side, No. 6 Casper Ruud outlasted Lloyd Harris 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-4 and No. 10 Diego Schwartzman beat Daniel Evans 5-7, 6-4, 6-0. No. 16 Reilly Opelka lost to 23rd-ranked Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 6-4.

Madrasa teacher booked on rape charges in UP

BAREILLY (UP), OCT 11 (PTI): A madrasa teacher has been booked on rape charges in Sheeshgarh area of the district, police said on Sunday.

According to a complaint filed by the victim, she came to the madrasa four years ago. The accused used to study with her, but he later started teaching at the madrasa.

The woman alleged that both of them fell in love with each other, Senior Superintendent of Police Rohit Singh Sajwan said.

She, however, claimed that she was repeatedly raped by the accused on the pretext of marriage and was forced to undergo abortion.

Subsequently when the woman went to the house of the youth, she was given death threat and asked to leave the place, the officer said.

Sajwan said a case was registered against the teacher on Saturday.

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Bucks begin their title defense after abbreviated offseason

MILWAUKEE (AP): The Milwaukee Bucks sure didn't get much time to celebrate their first NBA championship in a half-century.

Just three months after Giannis Antetokounmpo's 50-point performance secured a title-clinching victory over the Phoenix Suns in Game 6 of the NBA Finals, the Bucks will be raising their championship banner and beginning a new season on Oct. 19.

The offseason was particularly brief for Khristian Middleton and Jrue Holiday, who left for Tokyo shortly after the championship parade and won gold medals with the U.S. Olympic team.

"It was crazy," Holiday said.

They got just a little time to come home and rest before beginning the process of trying to repeat. They realize the necessity of maintaining the same tenacity that helped carry them to the franchise's first championship since 1971.

The Bucks open the season against the Brooklyn Nets, who would have eliminated them in the second round of the 2021 playoffs if Kevin Durant's foot hadn't crept across the 3-point arc while making a shot in Game 7.

"It's a challenge," Middleton said. "I think we have to find a way to stay hungry, not be satisfied by what we accomplished last year, to find a way to do it again."

Throughout their championship run, the Bucks were



driven by their past postseason failures. The Bucks no longer have that as incentive but say they'll remain as motivated as ever.

"Teams are going to be coming for us," Antetokounmpo said. "But we have to have that hunter mentality ourselves."

Milwaukee returned most of the key players from last season, though P.J. Tucker left for the Miami Heat and Bryn Forbes rejoined the San Antonio Spurs. They added Grayson Allen, Semi Ojeleye and George Hill to their bench. That depth could be tested.

The Bucks may need to monitor their top players early in the season because they

had so little rest during this abbreviated offseason.

Antetokounmpo, who hyperextended his left knee in the Eastern Conference finals, says he feels good but will be careful with his knee early in the season. The Bucks also must make sure they don't overwork Holiday and Middleton after their busy offseason.

"They're usually pretty good at being able to read guys and their bodies," Holiday said. "Not only that, they're good at maintenance and maintaining."

Milwaukee hopes preaching caution early leads to another memorable finish.

"It was a storybook ending

for us, right?" guard Pat Connaughton said. "But stories have sequels. Stories have trilogies. At the end of the day, it's about continuing the next story, continuing the next book."

DIVINCENZO'S COMEBACK

The Bucks are banking on a successful return from Donte DiVincenzo, who tore a left ankle ligament in a first-round playoff series with Miami and missed the rest of the postseason. DiVincenzo started 66 games and averaged 10.4 points last season.

WELCOMING ALLEN

Allen didn't exactly get a warm reception from local fans when the Bucks acquired

him from Memphis during the offseason. They remember how Allen ruined Wisconsin's national championship dreams by scoring 16 points as Duke beat the Badgers 68-63 in the 2015 NCAA Tournament final.

"When I was first traded, 30 minutes later, I would say about 80% of my mentions were angry Wisconsin fans not happy I was coming to Milwaukee," Allen said.

HILL'S RETURN

This marks Hill's second stint in Milwaukee. He played for the Bucks from 2018-20 and provided quality 3-point shooting off the bench before getting included in the four-team trade that brought Holi-

day to Milwaukee. "They had to make that trade to get a guy like Jrue, which is a no-brainer in every situation," Hill said. "He's the best point guard in the league in many people's eyes. There's no hard feelings."

Hill also was one of the leaders of the Bucks' 2020 protest in the bubble that led to a temporary postponement of NBA playoff games.

PUTTING UP POINTS

The Bucks are coming off a season in which they scored 120.1 points per game. That made them the NBA's highest-scoring team since 1983-84, when the Denver Nuggets and San Antonio Spurs both exceeded that average.

FAMILIAR TERRITORY FOR BUDENHOLZER

Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer knows the demands involved in trying to win a second straight NBA title. Budenholzer was part of four NBA championship teams with San Antonio while working as an assistant on Gregg Popovich's staff from 1996-2013. Those Spurs teams never won back-to-back titles.

"You acknowledge that, yes, it is different," Budenholzer said. "There are going to be things that are a little bit unique following a championship. But there's going to be a lot of things that are very much the same — the competitive nature of the league, the way people are going to come after you. I think our players always embrace that competition and the need to kind of raise to that level."

Costa Rica's Campbell, Ortiz to miss WCup qualifier at US

COLUMBUS, OHIO (AP): Costa Rican forward Joel Campbell will miss Wednesday night's World Cup qualifier against the United States because of a sprained right ankle.

Forward José Guillermo Ortiz will not play in the game because of a positive COVID-19 test, the Costa Rican Football Federation said Monday.

Christian Bolaños, a 37-year-old winger with Saprissa, replaced Campbell on the roster. Álvaro Saborío, a 39-year-old forward with San Carlos, took Ortiz's spot.

Campbell has 21 goals in 107 international appearances, including

a pair in the 4-0 win over the visiting United States in a November 2016 qualifier, the last match before the U.S. Soccer Federation fired Jurgen Klinsmann and replaced him with Bruce Arena.

Campbell played the entire match in Sunday's 2-1 win over visiting El Salvador. He was diagnosed with a grade 3 sprain by Dr. Alejandro Ramírez following an MRI, and Campbell was not on the Ticos charter flight Monday to Columbus.

Ortiz played until the 75th minute and developed COVID-19 symptoms after the match. His infection was confirmed

by an antigen test and a PCR test. The federation said all other players and staff tested negative on Oct. 3, 6 and 9, and they were given antigen and PCR tests Monday before the flight.

Costa Rica has six points from five games in the 14-game final round of North and Central America and the Caribbean qualifying, trailing Mexico (11), the U.S. and Panama (eight each) and Canada (seven). The top three nations qualify for next year's World Cup and the fourth-place nation in the eight-team group advances to a playoff.

Rabada's form is a concern for Delhi, feels Brian Lara

NEW DELHI, OCT 12 (PTI): Legendary West Indian batsman Brian Lara reckons Delhi Capitals' South African pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada could be an anxious man right now given his poor form in the IPL.

Rabada, who was the tournament's highest wicket taker last edition, has struggled to replicate the terrific form in the second leg of the ongoing season.

"Yes (his form is a concern for Delhi), he is an exceptional talent," Lara said on Star Sports' 'Select Dugout.'

"He played a very big part in them getting to the finals, he got a lot of wickets in the middle and back end overs with slower balls and that is



not been happening for him off late," he added.

A key bowler for the Delhi franchise alongside compatriot Anrich Nortje, Rabada has gone wicketless in the last four games. "So, yeah, when you got Anrich Nortje doing the business upfront, you want a world-class bowler who can do what he did in the previous tournaments, which he hasn't."

"And this has caused him a little bit of anx-

iousness. I suppose Delhi Capital will love to see Rabada back in form," Lara said.

The Capitals had reached their maiden finals last season, losing the summit clash to Mumbai Indians.

They will take on former champions Kolkata Knight Riders for a place in this season's final against Chennai Super Kings in the second qualifier in Sharjah on Wednesday.

Pacers hope Brogdon plays lead role in return to playoffs

INDIANAPOLIS (AP): Kevin Pritchard made his offseason desire clear: The Indiana Pacers president of basketball operations wanted someone to emerge as a locker room leader and he wasn't sure whether that player was on the roster at the end of last season.

By the time training camp opened, Pritchard thought he had found an answer in Malcolm Brogdon.

"Over the summer, I think one started to emerge," he said. "We had a few players get together a couple of times this summer and one player kind of organized that. That was Malcolm. We don't have that, we call it an alpha guy, out there, whose pounding the table on anything but I think we'll have a bunch of guys step up and it will be more team leadership, community leadership."

New coach Rick Carlisle believes Brogdon is a natural in the leading role.

Brogdon's great grandfather was a pastor and civil rights advocate. His grandfather marched with Martin Luther King Jr. His father, Mitchell, is a lawyer and mediator, and his mother, Jann Adams, is an associate vice president at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Brogdon's resume includes a master's degree in public policy and leadership from the University of Virginia and a charitable foundation that promotes education and clean water in Africa.

It just took some time for Brogdon to find his opening on the court. He wasn't a regular starter in Milwaukee until his third season, and when he arrived in Indiana, two-time All-Star Victor Oladipo was the Pacers' voice.

When Oladipo was traded away in January, the Pacers suddenly had a leadership void — one Pritchard believed went unfilled in part because COVID-19 restrictions prevented players from get-



ting together in large gatherings.

All that changed almost as soon as Pritchard uttered those words in his season-ending news conference and Brogdon wasted no time jumping in.

"I'm trying to take a more hands-on approach," he said. "That's something we need to continue to build on, being together, just spending quality time together. I think that's the way you build trust. Like I told the guys when we were in Los Angeles, there are select teams that do that type of team-building and those are the teams that have the most success."

DE-FENSE

The Pacers slid from third in points allowed per game to 25th last season, at 115.3 points. That's not acceptable to Carlisle, who already has made it clear he expects Indiana to be a much better defensive team.

"It's all about commitment," Brogdon said. "The best defenders in the world aren't the best athletes. They're not the guys who move the fastest or jump the highest. They're the guys who are the toughest, the guys that put in the effort, the guys that are really tenacious and relentless. That's what we have to be this year."

PLAYING BIG

Center Myles Turner and two-time All-Star Domantas Sabonis are back again this season and they're

already hearing the same, old question — can they play together? Carlisle insists they can while Turner and Sabonis insist they enjoy teaming up.

"We look for each other and I definitely know he's got my back defensively," Sabonis said.

INJURY UPDATE

Injuries have prevented the Pacers from reaching their full potential in recent years and they may already be starting to take a toll this season.

T.J. Warren, Indiana's top scorer in 2019-20, is out indefinitely as he continues to recover from left foot surgery and forward Caris LeVert was diagnosed with a stress fracture in his back.

Indiana hopes LeVert can play in the Oct. 20 season opener at Charlotte and Warren returns in weeks.

TOUGH START

Indiana will be challenged right out of the gate, too.

There's a four-game West Coast swing in early November with stops at Portland, Denver and Utah, followed by a home game against the 76ers and a three-game road trip against the East. The Pacers also face the Lakers and Milwaukee in Thanksgiving week. They visit Milwaukee on Dec. 15 — their third matchup against the defending champs in 66 days. The opener is Oct. 20 at Charlotte.

Europe court rejects case seeking to blame Vatican for abuse

ROME (AP): A European court agreed Tuesday that the Vatican couldn't be sued in a local court for sexual abuse committed by Catholic priests, affirming that it enjoys sovereign immunity and that the misconduct of priests and their superiors cannot be attributed to the Holy See.

The European Court of Human Rights dismissed a case brought by 24 people who said they were victims of abusive priests in Belgium. The 24 had argued the Holy See was liable due to the "structurally deficient" way the Catholic hierarchy had for decades covered up cases of priests who raped and molested children.

The 24 appealed to the Strasbourg-based court after Belgian courts ruled they had no jurisdiction given the Holy See's immunity as a sovereign state.

The European court said the Belgian judges were correct and that the victims hadn't been deprived of their right to have access to a court. It restated the Belgian court ruling that the Holy See enjoys sovereign immunity and that no exception to that rule applied since the misconduct of bishops in handling abuse cases couldn't be attributed to the Vatican.

Citing the Belgian decision, the European court said the



pope wasn't the "principal" of his bishops, "that the misconduct attributed directly to the Holy See had not been committed on Belgian territory but in Rome; and that neither the pope nor the Holy See had been present on Belgian territory when the misconduct attributed to the leaders of the church in Belgium had been

committed," according to a summary of the ruling.

The European court said it wasn't appropriate to substitute its own assessment since the Belgian decision hadn't been arbitrary or unreasonable.

Tuesday's ruling, the first time the Holy See's immunity was tested by the European

court, was a Chamber judgment. Both sides have three months to ask that the case be heard by the court's Grand Chamber for a final decision.

In a dissenting opinion, Judge Darian Pavli disputed the Belgian court's finding about the level of authority that the pope exercises over his bishops. He argued Bel-

gian judges hadn't considered evidence that the pope does in fact hire and fire bishops and that the Vatican as a policy had imposed a code of silence over the handling of abuse cases worldwide.

As a result, Pavli argued, the European tribunal should have found that Belgian judges did indeed deprive the victims of access to a court.

The Holy See has successfully argued in U.S. courts that the pope is not the boss of his bishops, blocking attempts by victims who have similarly tried to hold the Holy See and the pope liable for their abuse. More such lawsuits have been filed in recent years, including from victims of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was defrocked by Pope Francis in 2019 after a Vatican investigation found he sexually abused minors and adults.

These lawsuits have cited a Vatican-commissioned report published last year that found a series of popes, Holy See officials and bishops downplayed or dismissed reports of his sexual misconduct as he rose through the church hierarchy.

The Vatican declined to comment on the ruling. The victims' lawyers didn't immediately responded to an email seeking comment.

Report says UK's slow virus lockdown cost 1000s of lives

LONDON (AP): The British government waited too long to impose a lockdown in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, missing a chance to contain the disease and leading to thousands of unnecessary deaths, lawmakers concluded Tuesday in a hard-hitting report.

The deadly delay resulted from ministers' failure to question the recommendations of scientific advisers, resulting in a dangerous level of "groupthink" that caused them to dismiss the more aggressive strategies adopted in East and Southeast Asia, according to the joint report from the House of Commons' science and health committees.

It was only when Britain's National Health Service risked being overwhelmed by rapidly rising infections that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government finally ordered a lockdown. In late March 2020 "There was a desire to avoid a lockdown because of the immense harm it would entail to the economy, normal health services and society," the report said. "In the absence of other strategies such as rigorous case isolation, a meaningful test-and-trace operation, and robust border controls, a full lockdown was inevitable and should have come sooner."

Cabinet minister Stephen Barclay defended the government's response, saying "decisions were taken on the evidence and the scientific advice at the time."

"It was an unprecedented pandemic. We were learning about it as we went through, and of course with hindsight, there's things we know about it now that we didn't know at the time," Barclay told British broadcaster Sky News.

The U.K. parliamentary report comes amid frustration with the timetable for a formal public inquiry into the government's response

to COVID-19, which Johnson says will start next spring.

Lawmakers said their inquiry was designed to uncover why Britain performed "significantly worse" than many other countries during the early days of the pandemic. Britain has recorded more than 137,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe after Russia.

The 150-page report is based on testimony from 50 witnesses, including former Health Secretary Matt Hancock and former government insider Dominic Cummings. It was unanimously approved by 22 lawmakers from the three largest parties in Parliament: the governing Conservatives and the opposition Labour Party and the Scottish National Party.

The committees praised the government's early focus on vaccines as the ultimate way out of the pandemic and its decision to invest in vaccine development. These decisions led to Britain's successful inoculation program, which has seen almost 80% of people 12 and over now fully vaccinated.

"Millions of lives will ultimately be saved as a result of the global vaccine effort in which the U.K. has played a leading part," the committees said. But they also criticized the government's test-and-trace program, saying its slow, uncertain and often chaotic performance hampered Britain's response to the pandemic.

The government's strategy during the first three months of the crisis reflected official scientific advice that widespread infection was inevitable given that testing capacity was limited; that there was no immediate prospect for a vaccine; and the belief that the public wouldn't accept a lengthy lockdown, the report said. As a result, the government sought merely to manage the spread of the virus, instead of trying to stop it altogether.

Magnitude 6.3 earthquake jolts Greek island of Crete

ATHENS, GREECE (AP): A strong earthquake jolted the Greek island of Crete on Tuesday, three weeks after another temblor killed a man and damaged hundreds of buildings.

The Geodynamic Institute in Athens said the undersea earthquake had a preliminary magnitude of 6.3 and occurred at 12:24 p.m. local time (9:24 a.m. GMT) off the island's eastern coast.

Magnitude 4.1 and 4.6 quakes that are believed to be aftershocks took place minutes later, the institute said.

There were no immediate reports of serious damage or injuries. Authorities said police and fire crews were checking buildings in eastern Crete for damage and trying to reach several remote villages closer to the quake's epicenter.

"The quake was felt all over the island, and it did cause concern because we are still feeling the aftershocks from the previous quake," Crete's deputy regional governor, Yiannis Leondarakis, told Greece's state-run radio.

Hundreds of people from villages south of the island's largest city, Heraklion, remain homeless following a 5.8-magnitude quake that struck on Sept. 27. A man was killed while carrying out restoration work at a church that was damaged in the area. Residents whose homes were damaged were moved to hotels and tents set up by the army.

Leondarakis said of Tuesday's earthquake: "Fortunately, there does not appear to be any serious damage despite the fact that it was a strong event and occurred at a shallow depth."

Kim vows to build 'invincible' military while slamming US



SEOUL, Oct. 12 (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reviewed a rare exhibition of weapons systems and vowed to build an invincible military, as he accused the United States of creating tensions and not taking action to prove it has no hostile intent toward the North, state media reported Tuesday.

In an apparent continued effort to drive a wedge between Washington and Seoul, Kim also said his drive to build up his military isn't targeted at South Korea and that there shouldn't be another war pitting Korean people against each other.

Kim gave the speech Monday at the Defense Development Exhibition Self-Defense-2021, an event meant to mark the previous day's 76th birthday of the ruling Workers' Party. The event featured an array of new weapons, including intercontinental ballistic missiles that North Korea has already test-launched or displayed during a military parade.

The U.S. has frequently signaled it's not hostile to our state, but there is no action-based evidence to make us believe that they are not hostile, Kim said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. The U.S. is continuing to create tensions in the region with its wrong judgments and actions.

Calling the United States a

source of instability on the Korean Peninsula, Kim said his country's most important objective is possessing an invincible military capability that no one can dare challenge.

Kim accused South Korea of hypocrisy because it criticizes North Korea's weapons development as provocations while spending heavily to increase its own military capabilities, including purchasing advanced U.S. stealth fighters. But he still said his military doesn't target South Korea.

I say once again that South Korea isn't the one that our military forces have to fight against, Kim said. Surely, we aren't strengthening our defense capability because of South Korea. We shouldn't repeat a horrible history of compatriots using force against each other.

North Korean state media photos showed Kim, clad in a dark suit, walking on a red carpet lined with big missiles mounted on trucks, passing by a multiple rocket launch system and watching jets flying in a formation.

Seoul's Defense Ministry said South Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities were analyzing the North Korean weapons displayed but didn't elaborate. Seoul's Unification Ministry said Monday's exhibition was the first of its kind since Kim took

power in 2011.

Yang Wook, a military expert who teaches at South Korea's Hannam University, said the weapons shown in the photos were largely what the North has already displayed during military parades. Among them was what appears to be a new ICBM that North Korea disclosed during a military parade last year but hasn't test-fired, Yang said. That missile mounted on an 11-axle launch vehicle during the parade is considered to be the North's biggest- yet ICBM.

South Korean media reported Monday's exhibition also featured another ICBM and shorter-range missiles that North Korea has already test-launched.

Basically, North Korea wants to send this message: We'll continue to develop new weapons and arm ourselves with nuclear force, so don't slap sanctions with these as we can't agree on the double standards, Yang said.

North Korea has sent mixed signals toward its rivals in recent weeks.

Last month, North Korea performed its first missile tests in six months, including nuclear-capable weapons that could reach targets in South Korea and Japan, including U.S. military bases there. But North Korea still restored dormant phone and fax channels with South Korea and said it's open to restart-

ing official talks with South Korea if conditions are met.

Some experts say North Korea is attempting to use South Korea's desire to improve ties to pressure it to convince the United States to relax punishing economic sanctions on the North and make other concessions.

North Korea has long sought improved ties with the United States because it wants sanctions relief and a better security environment to focus on reviving its moribund economy. The high-stakes diplomacy between the countries fell apart in early 2019 after the Americans rejected North Korea's calls for extensive sanctions relief in return for partial disarmament steps.

The United States has recently repeatedly offered talks with North Korea anywhere and at any time without preconditions. Kim has called such an offer cunning attempt to conceal U.S. hostility against North Korea, as he wants Washington to ease the sanctions or suspend its regular military drills with Seoul first before the talks can resume.

Despite its recent missile tests, Kim still maintains a 2018 self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile tests directly targeting the American homeland, a sign that he still wants to keep alive chances for future talks with Washington.





ONSTAGE GLOW! The 'Every Kind of Way' singer, H.E.R. beams in a yellow plaid dress paired with combat boots while performing at the FirstBank Amphitheater in Franklin, Tennessee.

Akshay Kumar finishes filming 'Raksha Bandhan'



MUMBAI, OCT 12 (PTI): Superstar Akshay Kumar on Tuesday said he has concluded the shooting for filmmaker Aanand L Rai's movie "RakshaBandhan".

Billed as a special tale which celebrates "relationships in the most beautiful way", the film is directed by Rai from a script by Himanshu Sharma and Kanika Dhillon.

As the 54-year-old star wrapped the filming on Monday night in Delhi, he penned an emotional note on social media stating it was a "bittersweet" moment.

"Here's to all I and @aanandrai did throughout the shoot of #RakshaBandhan - laugh like there's no tomorrow! Ironically, as we wrapped the film last night, there was a bittersweet tinge of sadness," he wrote on

Twitter, alongside a candid picture of him and Rai from the sets.

"RakshaBandhan", which went on floors in June, marks the second collaboration between Kumar and Rai after "Atrangi Re".

Without divulging details, Kumar further said he will start working on his next movie now. "Off to the next. New day, new roller coaster," he said.

Also starring Bhumi Pednekar, "Raksha-Bandhan" is set to release in theatres during Independence Day weekend on August 11, 2022.

The film is produced by Rai's Colour Yellow Productions, Zee Studios and Alka Hiranandani in association with Kumar's Cape Of Good Films.

Amitabh Bachchan thanks fans as he turns 79: I walk with pride of your love

MUMBAI, OCT 12 (PTI): As megastar Amitabh Bachchan turned 79 on Monday, the veteran actor said his heart was "throbbing with excitement" because of the love of his fans and well wishers.

Bachchan penned a blog post on Sunday night, writing that it would be impossible for him to acknowledge every wish but he was touched by the messages from his fans.

"The intensity of the greetings is abundant and wide and filled with the warmth of affection. This is held together by the fond remembrances that we share over the years... its bond is unbreakable, resolute and firm. For this my (heart)," he wrote.

Bachchan is arguably one of the biggest icons of Indian cinema who enjoys a massive, loyal fan following across all ages.

The actor has stayed relevant through decades, starting out as the on-screen Angry Young Man in the 70s, venturing into television in the early 2000s and experimenting with author backed roles created for him by current generation of writers and filmmakers.

Last year, he also made his streaming debut when his film "GulaboSitabo" became one of the first mainstream projects to premiere digitally due to the coronavirus-induced nationwide lockdown. Bachchan wrote each message

sent by his fans means a lot to him.

"Throbbing with the excitement of your love. It shall be impossible to acknowledge all of you in the personal equation. But I know you do understand that I understand your greeting and that

Hindi cinema in 2019. The same year, he also received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Indian cinema's highest honour, in a special ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Having made his debut with the



is eventually what matters. I walk with the pride of your following... and your love," he added.

The actor also took to Instagram and posted a picture of himself, writing, "walking into the 80th."

To which his daughter, Shweta Bachchan, replied, "79th" with a heart emoticon.

A recipient of four National Awards, Bachchan completed five decades in

Khwaja Ahmad Abbas-directed "Saat Hindustani" in 1969, the actor has given countless critically-acclaimed performances in films, including "Zanjeer", "Deewar", "Sholay", "Agneepath", "Black", "Paa", "Piku", "Pink" and "GulaboSitabo".

On the work front, Bachchan has a packed slate with films like "Jhund", "Brahmastra", "MayDay" and "Good Bye" among others.

I believe your work should do the talking: Supriya Pathak

MUMBAI, OCT 12 (PTI): Veteran actor Supriya Pathak says she isn't very ambitious about her career even today and only believes in pursuing roles that bring her joy.

Hailing from a family of some of the finest actors of Indian cinema including late mother Dina Pathak, sister Ratna Pathak Shah, brother-in-law Naseeruddin Shah and husband Pankaj Kapur, Supriya Pathak said her aim is to entertain the audience.

The 60-year-old actor has an enviable body of work to her credit ranging from films like Kalyug, Masoom, Bazaar, Mirch Masala, Wake Up Sid, Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela, Ramprasad Ki Tehrvi to shows Idhar Udhar, Mohandas B.A.L.L.B., Khichdi, and web-series Cartel.

I enjoy acting. I am not very career oriented even today. I don't really push myself or believe in it but I honestly just work because I enjoy my craft and if it does well then it is purely because I enjoy performing. I am not very ambitious (either). I am very happy with whatever I have, Supriya Pathak told PTI in an interview.

"I strongly believe in destiny and I do believe whatever work is meant for me will come to me. I am content with what I get. Like, I have two projects coming out soon 'Tabbar' and 'Rashmi Rocket' followed by 'Manohar-Pandey', and two-three more projects," she added.

She credits the audience for loving and accepting her work in her four decade-long career.

"I believe your work should do the talking. I don't think I am the greatest. Whatever I have achieved is because of the audience. I work only to make my audience happy. I work so I can entertain them and they feel good. It is because of the graciousness of the audience

that I get to work, she said. As someone who loves exploring different genres, the actor said she feels blessed to have received diverse opportunities throughout her career.

I don't like doing the same thing again and again. It is beautiful to be in a different space every time and therefore you can break away from typecasting. It is a great way to work. As an actor, all I can do is try to perform a character to the best of my capacity.

Supriya Pathak revealed she still gets nervous before taking up a new character.

I get nervous every time when I play a character or when I perform again. For every performance I get butterflies in my stomach, till I get a hang of the character. Every time I do a new thing, I am very worried and scared. However, if I have done my homework well then, I get into it quicker.

She is looking forward to her next project, a web-series titled Tabbar. The actor plays the role of a meek middle-class mother named Sargun in the thriller drama.

Directed by Ajitpal Singh of Fire in The Mountains fame, the show charts the journey of a retired police constable, played by Pavan Malhotra, who pushes the boundaries to save his family from the consequences of an unfortunate incident.

She is a woman who has her own dilemmas. She believes that her main purpose is to protect her family but through this journey of hers she realises that there are certain questions that you ask yourself for which you need answers, Supriya Pathak said about her character.

The web series also stars Ranvir Shorey, Gagan Arora, Paramvir Cheema, and Kanwaljit Singh.

Produced by Ajay Rai of Jar Pictures, "Tabbar" premieres on SonyLIV on October 15.

Wamiqa Gabbi begins shooting for Vishal Bhardwaj's 'Khufiya'

MUMBAI, OCT 11 (PTI): Actor Wamiqa Gabbi on Monday announced she has begun filming for Vishal Bhardwaj's spy thriller film "Khufiya". The Netflix project also stars Tabu, Ali Fazal and Ashish Vidyarthi. Gabbi, who is shooting for "Khufiya" in Delhi, took to Instagram and posted a video holding the film's script.

"Hush Hush Hush. I have some 'Khufiya' (secret) papers. #NewProject #Excited #NetflixIndia," she wrote.

The 28-year-old actor has featured in Punjabi, Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu films. She was most recently seen in the Disney+ Hotstar series "Graham". According to the streamer, "Khufiya" is inspired by true events and based on the popular espionage novel "Escape to Nowhere" by Amar Bhushan.

The film presents the story of Krishna Mehra, a RAW operative who is assigned to track down the mole selling India's defence secrets. All along, grappling with her dual identity of a spy and a lover: Gabbi is also reportedly set to star in the ambitious Netflix series "Baahubali: Before the Beginning", which chronicles the story of queen Sivagami from director SS Rajamouli's "Baahubali" film franchise.

Aries:
The theme of discord is showing up strongly in your cards, Aries. Here's what you need to keep in mind: matters may or may not resolve themselves immediately, and that's okay. Don't let that be the reason you don't make an effort. The good thing is, the opportunity to travel short-distance may show up for some. Say yes and figure everything else out later. This could be a good way to hit the reset button.

Tip: Say yes and figure everything else out later.

Taurus:
The Universe has a way of coming though unexpectedly. It all comes down to how receptive we are willing to be. Something tells us you're finally learning to acknowledge the signs and take action based on what you're being shown. Yes, the path you're fighting so hard for is no longer in alignment. Yes, it is time to redirect the course. It's a good idea to let your practical side take the reins this time around.

Tip: Taking practical decisions will serve you well.

Gemini:
Mercury retrograde has taken a toll on you, Gemini. But, it's all for the highest good. You've been shown what is and isn't in alignment with your highest good. So, trust your judgement fully, and move forward with strength and fortitude. Know that you are so loved and so protected.

Despite how you're feeling right now, you will find a way to figure things out in the days to come.

Tip: Take a moment to integrate the soul lessons.

Cancer:
Nothing in our life is without a purpose, especially not our closest ties. Today, you're being asked to honour both your family and your soul circle. The people who make your days a little more tolerable and give you a reason to stay hopeful in an otherwise dreary world. It's true that you are facing some differences on the interpersonal front, but these differences are merely an invitation to look within and do the work. Trust that the gift of unconditional love will heal and transform these bonds.

Tip: Honour your soul connections, beautiful.

Leo:
There's something fishy going on around here, and you don't need the cards to reaffirm this. Pay attention to who is and isn't showing up for. Pay attention to who is talking about you behind your back. Some of you may feel that sense of murkiness on the work front. If there's a coworker who is stealing credit for your work, it's time to take matters in your hands stat!

Tip: Standing up for yourself is important at a time like this.

Virgo:
The ancient alchemists were not concerned with turning

base metal into gold. What they were dedicated to is the art and science of inner transformation. The methods required in order to transmute the shadow aspects of our personality and move closer and closer to the light. This week, you are borrowing a page from their book, and turning all of the poison that's been poured into your cup into a sweet elixir. You have the strength and the courage required in order to delve into the so-called darkness. Trust yourself and move forward.

Tip: Turn the poison into a sweet elixir, baby!

Libra:
Libra, you're being asked to hit the pause button, to look back at the week that was, and consciously integrate the many lessons. Nothing in our lives is without a purpose, and this includes the so-called setbacks. If you're looking for a new career path, take a moment to analyse what has and hasn't worked for you. On deeper examination, you will realise you already know the answer to 'which way should I go from here?'

Tip: It's time to redirect your chariot, beautiful.

Scorpio:
The trouble is, you've convinced yourself that you cannot make money whilst doing something you love. But, this self-created limitation is keeping you from aligning yourself with the life you're meant to lead. So, visualise a parallel reality for yourself. A reality where you are sup-

ported financially, emotionally, spiritually and creatively. And then, begin to live your life as if you have already created a magnificent shift. Trust that your physical reality will have no option but to play catch up.

Tip: You can live a life that's financially, emotionally, spiritually and creatively all at once.

Sagittarius:
Consistency is key in all kinds of relationships, Sagittarius. So, if they say they love you but refuse to show up, you've got a real problem at hand here. Word for the wise: have the conversation you have been avoiding. Tell them how you really feel and how you would like to be supported in your journey. This will give you a good sense as to whether or not this relationship is worth investing in.

Tip: Make yourself vulnerable and talk about how you really feel.

Capricorn:
Given that we're in retrograde season, nostalgia is a big theme in the Capricorn HQ. You may find yourself missing the company of the friends you were once close to. Don't wait for them to make an effort, beautiful. You reach out and allow yourself to be vulnerable. A wholesome sharing circle will help lift your spirits "and" remind you of how far you have come.

Tip: Reconnect with the old friends you feel inspired to

reach out to.

Aquarius:
The cards are urging you to examine all that is toxic within and without. All the things that are keeping you from fully embracing your magic. This could be a relationship that has lived past its expiry date, a negative thought pattern, or an addiction that you cannot seem to rise above. Aquarians who are in a no-strings-attached kind of scenario are being asked to ponder upon the importance of emotional intimacy. It doesn't matter how you started off. You have evolved and so have your desires. Have the conversation you have been avoiding (with yourself first), beautiful one.

Tip: It's time to pluck the weeds out of your garden.

Pisces:
The decision at hand is not an easy one. It requires you to hit the pause button and glance into the rearview mirror. Your past experiences have shaped you, and will help you understand the path that will facilitate growth and evolution. Remember, your higher self is holding space for you, now and in every moment. So, tune into the wisdom that is available to you, and know that there is no such thing as the wrong step.

Tip: Your past experiences will help you figure which way you are meant to go from here.