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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Covid breather for Sikkim - New cases drop below 50 at 5.4% test positivity rate

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 AUG:

The number of active cases of Covid-19 in Sikkim dropped down below 1500 today with the State going under-50 new cases and more than three-times more recoveries in the past 24 hours. This should come as a relief to the State which was unsettled by a surge in cases yesterday when 147 new cases were reported after nearly a week of cases having received below hundred.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim issued by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, only 47 new cases were detected in the State in the past 24 hours against 180 new recoveries. There is some reassuring update on the positivity rate as well with the 47 new cases coming from



the screening of 870 samples, giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 5.4%, a count much lower than it has been recording in the second wave.

Of the 29,524 cases detected in the State thus far since 28 February last year, 27,461 patients have already made full recoveries and there are currently 1,415 active cases in the State.

Of these, only 102 are with symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization. Of those in hospital, only seven are under-18 years of age.

There were only five more hospitalizations in the past 24 hours and there are 14 Covid patients, none of them under-18 years of age, in the ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and CRH.

Of the new cases, 16 were detected in RT-PCR testing of 347 samples and 31 in rapid antigen testing of 517 samples.

While 20 of the new cases were registered in East District, 15 in West District, 12 in South District and none in North Sikkim.

On another reassuring note, Sikkim's Covid death toll held at 367 with

no new COVID deaths reported in the last two days.

The past week [19-25 Aug] has been mild in as much as Covid is concerned in Sikkim; while there have been four Covid deaths, there is also the fact that against the 543 new cases reported over these seven days, there have been 981 patients who made full recoveries.

India's active Covid cases increase to 3,22,327

NEW DELHI, AUG 25 (PTI):

India logged 37,593 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases increased marginally to 3,22,327, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The total tally of COVID-19 cases increased to 3,25,12,366 and the death toll climbed to 4,35,758 with 648 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The active cases comprise 0.99 per cent of the total infections.

The national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 97.67 per cent, the ministry said.

An increase of 2,776 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 17,92,755 tests were conducted on Tuesday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to

51,11,84,547.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.10 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for the last 30 days.

The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.92 per cent. It has been below three per cent for the last 61 days, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,17,54,281, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.34 per cent, the data stated.

Cumulative, 59.55 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered under the nationwide vaccination drive till Wednesday morning.

India's COVID-19 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 648 new fatalities include 288 from Maharashtra and 173 from Kerala.

A total of 4,35,758 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,36,355 from Maharashtra, 37,184 from Karnataka, 34,761 from Tamil Nadu, 25,079 from Delhi, 22,794 from Uttar Pradesh, 19,757 from Kerala and 18,383 from West Bengal.

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

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

UP withdrew 77 cases on Muzaffarnagar riots without giving any reasons

NEW DELHI, 25 AUG

[NDTV]: TheUttar Pradesh government has withdrawn 77 cases relating to the Muzaffarnagar riots without giving any reasons, the Supreme Court was told on Tuesday. This was part of a report that was filed by amicus curiae senior advocate Vijay Hansaria in a case relating to expediting cases against MPs and MLAs.

Besides Uttar Pradesh, several other states have also withdrawn a number of cases against legislators.

A bench led by Chief Justice NV Ramana will hear the matter today.

In his report, Mr Hansaria said 77 cases linked to Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013, for which the accused would have got life term in jail, were withdrawn by the Uttar Pradesh government without assigning any reason.

Mr Hansaria wants these 77 cases to be examined by the High Court. In its last hearing, the Supreme Court had directed that cases against MPs and MLAs cannot be closed without the permission of the High Court.

Altogether, 510 cases on the 2013 riots were registered against 6,869 accused after the riots, in which more than 60 people died and hundreds were

injured.

Of these, chargesheet was filed in 175 cases, final reports were submitted in 165 cases and 170 cases were expunged.

Mr Hansaria has also pointed out that the Karnataka government has withdrawn 62 cases without assigning any reason, Tamil Nadu has withdrawn four cases, Telangana has withdrawn 14 cases and

Kerala has withdrawn 36 cases.

In December last year, Uttar Pradesh had drawn up a list of leaders against whom cases were being withdrawn. The list included three BJP MLAs -- Sangeet Som, Suresh Rana, Kapil Dev - and right-wing leader Sadhvi Prachi.

The move came after Uttar Pradesh Governor Ram Naik signed off

a bill that sought to drop 20,000 cases against politicians. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the cases were "not serious" and were "pending for a very long time".

In March this year, cases against 12 BJP leaders -- Suresh Rana, Sangeet Som, and Sadhvi Prachi - were dropped, with the assent of a special court.

Sikkim runners to compete in 24-hour Stadium Run in Mumbai

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 25 AUG:

A team of long-distance runners from Sikkim will be competing in the 24-Hour Stadium Run scheduled to be held on 28 and 29 August at Wings Sports Centre, Bandra West, Mumbai.

A five-member team, led by Marathon Man Amar Subba, will leave on Thursday for the competition being organized by NEB Sports.

52-year-old Amar Subba is participating in stadium run in the veterans' category, while his students Pritam Rai, Dhan Kumar Mangar and Jatin Chettri in the 12-hour stadium run. Another long-distance runner from Sikkim, Shiva Hang Limboo, will compete in the 100 KM trail run for an upcoming international competition at this event.

The team is being supported to the competition by the sports wing of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha.

Amar Subba had covered 157 KMs in 24 Hours at the

stadium run held in Mumbai in 2018 and finished in third position. Similarly, Shiva Hang Limboo came second in the 12-Hour run held in Delhi in 2019 covering 119 KMs. Pritam Rai and Dhan Kumar Mangar along with Jatin Chettri of West Bengal police, are participating in such an event for the first time.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Subba thanked the SKM party and the Chief Minister for supporting the team to this international-level event.

He shared that the COVID pandemic had affected sports and sportspersons and the runners were looking forward to participating in a sporting event after a gap of nearly two years.

"It is also a big challenge for us to test our strength and stamina at such a big event after a gap of two years," he said.

The team, he informed, trained on the hilly terrain and trails of West Sikkim in preparation for the



competition.

"We have trained to the our best and are all set to give our best and very hopeful of returning with medals," Mr Subba said.

He mentioned that his students, Asha Phurba Tamang and Shanti Thapa have also been training hard for another 24-Hour Stadium Run to be held in Delhi in December later this year. He also thanked Nagaraj Adiga from NEB Sports

for having always supported runners from Sikkim and extending free entry to NEB Sports events.

SKM sports wing state president Rinzing Wangyal Chophel, conveyed best wishes to the team and shared that SKM has extended full support to the team because the party was committed to promoting sports and sportspersons.

The sports wing of the party has been working as a bridge

between the state government and sportspersons of the State for their development and betterment and to help them compete at national and international levels.

Mr Chophel also mentioned that the sports wing has already started preparations for the international-level, 'Sikkim Marathon', a 42 KM full marathon scheduled to be held in the month of December later this year.

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DC inaugurates Farm School at Tsalamthang

GANGTOK, 25 AUG [IPR]: District Collector, East, Ragul K, who is also the chairperson of ATMA, East, inaugurated a Farm School on Integrated Organic Farming System at Tsalamthang, Beyong-Phegyong GPU, today.

The programme was organized by the Agricultural Technology Management Agency, East, Agriculture Department, Government of Sikkim.

It may be mentioned that the Farm School was opened on the farm of Ruphan Lepcha, who is also the Farm School Teacher.

Farm School is a frontline demonstration of Integrated Farming which aims to educate twenty-four farmers on technical knowledge including the process from sowing to reaping in an innovative method for one year. The programme will also include educating the local farmers on issues such as technology use of farm tools, crop rotation, disease control and pest control in organic ways.

The DC extended his gratitude to the



concerned officials for setting up of Farm School and called it an important step towards self-reliance.

He said that with the Farm School being set up in rural areas will be convenient for farmers to get knowledge directly about farming and also help them in increasing agricultural production thereby supporting the State to achieve self sufficient in the farming sector.

Further, he asked

the local farmers to take advantage of various schemes provided by the State Government.

Additional Director, Agriculture Department, Bina Rai, spoke about various schemes of the Agriculture Department in the State and asked the farmers to utilise them properly.

Joint Director, Agriculture Department, Rachna Gurung, gave a brief presentation on the functions of ATMA, which is an autonomous

body under Agriculture Department.

In her address, she also emphasized that the farmers take the programme in a fruitful manner.

During the programme, farming tools were also provided to Mr Lepcha.

An interactive session between the farmers and farm scientists was also held during the programme.

The DC-East was accompanied by Zilla

Panchayat president, Byang Martam, Bishnu Maya Gadai, Zilla Panchayat members from concerned GPU, GPU President, Byeng Phegyong, Smt. Kusang Tamang, Joint Director, Horticulture Department, Passang Tamang, Block Development Officer, Martam, Sonam Palden, Agriculture Development Officer, Martam, Sushmita Lama, farm scientists, and officials from various line departments.

KB Kunwar takes charge as Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission chairperson



GANGTOK, 25 AUG [IPR]: KB Kunwar took charge as the Chairperson of Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SSERC) in the presence of Chief Secretary, SC Gupta, at Tashiling Secretariat today.

The Oath of Secrecy and Oath and Affirmation of Allegiance to the Constitution was administered to him by the Chief Secretary in a simple function held at Teesta Lounge,

Tashiling Secretariat. The appointment of KB Kunwar as Chairperson has been made by the provisions under Section 89 of the Electricity Act, 2003 and notified vide Notification No. 57/Home/2021 dated 20 Aug, 2021.

During his tenure as the PCE cum Secretary, Power Department, he was appointed in several significant capacities as Chairperson of

Eastern Region Power Committee, Government of India for the year 2019-20, Chairman of Sikkim Renewable Energy Development Agency, Managing Director of Sikkim Power Investment Corporation Ltd, Board Member of M/s Teesta Urja Ltd, Board Member of Teesta Valley Power Transmission Ltd, Board Member of Sikkim Power Development Corporation Ltd and Board Member of STCS.

BJP organizes training workshop for NHVC volunteers in Rongli



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 AUG:

The Bharatiya Janata Party organized a training workshop under the party's National Health Volunteer Campaign for booth-level volunteers from Rhenock, Chujachen and Gnathang Machong constituencies at Rongli today, a press release

informs.

The workshop was attended by BJP-Sikkim president DB Chauhan, general secretary Bharat Dulal, area MLA and vice president KB Rai, Kisan Morcha president Mohan Gurung, resource person Dr. Raju Giri, NHVC State Coordinator Bhupendra Giri along with district and Mandal level office

bearers of the party and trainees from the three constituencies.

Earlier, the gathering paid homage to freedom fighter, INA Major Shaheed Durga Malla, on his Martyrdom Day and former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and BJP leader Late Kalyan Singh who passed away recently.

From 'Miyanganj' to 'Mayaganj', the latest in Uttar Pradesh's renaming roster

LUCKNOW, 25 AUG

[NDTV]: A gram panchayat or a local body in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao has proposed changing the name of a block in the district from 'Miyanganj' to 'Mayaganj' - the latest in a series of proposed name changes across Uttar Pradesh.

The term "Miyan" is sometimes used as a prefix or a suffix in Muslim names in India and elsewhere.

"The gram panchayat has suggested

changing the name to 'Mayaganj'. We have sent this proposal to the UP government for the next step," Ravindra Kumar, the District Magistrate of Unnao, a district less than 50 km from Uttar Pradesh's capital Lucknow, said in a video statement.

A letter by the Unnao District Magistrate to a senior official in Uttar Pradesh's Panchayati Raj department on Tuesday mentions that

the process of getting a name change proposal passed by the gram panchayat was initiated after a letter in July this year by Bamba Lal Diwakar, a BJP MLA in the area.

Hours after the 'Miyanganj' to 'Mayaganj' proposal, a state minister demanded the renaming of Mirzapur, an eastern UP district next to Varanasi, PM Modi's Lok Sabha seat. Mirzapur has the famous 'Maa Vindhya Vasini' Temple, a popular pilgrimage spot.

PIB webinar relives Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

GUWAHATI, 25 AUG

(PIB): 'Unsung Heroes of Freedom Struggle during Independence of India' are the edifice of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', experts opined in a Webinar organised by PIB, Guwahati on the topic 'Reliving Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav- the nationalistic fervour of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' here today.

Talking about 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and numerous 'Unsung Heroes of Freedom Struggle during Independence of India', Managing Director NERAMAC, Manoj Kumar Das said that history is replete with examples of august sons and daughters whose efforts are inspirational as well as motivational. He said that Independence struggle involved huge masses and common people working in tandem for the independence of India.

He said that national leaders motivated, guided and charted the outline of the struggle for independence, however it was the part played by innumerable unsung heroes at various levels who kept the fervour intact as the movement became almost total. He further said that it was the time for their recognition.

With emphasis on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his efforts in Independence of the country and referring to Indian National Army first flag hoisted in Indian soil at Moirang, HoD, Sunil Kalai, Department of Journalism and Communication, Tripura University said that 'Azadi

Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is celebrating the immense hard work, dedication and perseverance of towering personalities of the era.

Senior Official and Consultant working in joint project of Assam Government, Hemanta Rabha, National Youth Awardee (2003) and UNESCO General Conference Youth Forum Attendee in Paris (2003) talked about U Kiang Nangbah, Maniram Dewan, Kanaklata Barua, U Tirot Sing Syiemlieh, Haiou Jadonang, Paona Brajabashi, Bir Tikendrajit Singh, Rani Gaidinliu, Moje Riba, Pa Togan Sangma, Shoorvir Pasaltha, Hem Barua, Matmor Jamoh, among others. He said there are varied dimensions of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' such as Technology, Socio-economic development, Entrepreneurial ecosystem development, Culture, Scientific perspective, inter-alia the role of citizens in progress and growth of the nation.

Project Lead, Sayanika Deka, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati said that Woman empowerment and 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is reliving the moments where role of woman in societal ecosystem and particularly their efforts towards Independence of motherland are inspiring tales of patience and hard work.

Talking about 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and its relevance in celebration of 'Azadi Ka Amrit

Mahotsav', Senior Assistant Professor, Prof (Dr) Mohd Arif Khan, Department of Social Work, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh said that youth are the ambassadors of this growth journey of societal awareness. He said that sensitizing the youth about the efforts and contribution of towering personalities of Indian Independence Movement are telling and true stories to exemplify the dedication and devotion to the motherland and for its growth of the philosophy of nationalism.

Psychologist and Clinical Hypnotherapist, Sayantani Sinha said that the growth and development of a place happens with the psychological and societal development. She said that leaders and towering personalities of the Independence Movement has results in development of education system, societal and family value system, Indian Constitution by luminaries of the era are some of the pinnacles of success stories which motivates Citizenry.

The informative and knowledge webinar was planned and coordinated by Joint Director (M&C), Samrat Bandyopadhyay, PIB, Guwahati. Senior officers of PIB and Regional Outreach Bureau were present in the webinar. The webinar delved into details on the various aspects of the topic such as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' which ultimately led to 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', among others.

Such initiatives can be disastrous: "Waterman of India" on Odisha project

KENDRAPARA, 25 AUG

[PTI]: Renowned water conservationist Rajendra Singh has expressed solidarity with agitators protesting a water project in Odisha, saying such initiatives could "prove disastrous in future".

Mr Singh, dubbed the "waterman of India", visited the banks of Kharasrota in Kendrapara's Rajkanika block on Tuesday and opposed the district administration's move to divert river water for piped supply to neighbouring Bhadrak.

Expressing solidarity with a movement spearheaded by local outfit Kharasrota Bachao Sangram Samiti, he said at a public meeting in Achutapur, "Such projects could prove disastrous in future."

Rajkanika has been on the boil over the demand to scrap the ₹ 892-crore project to draw water from Kharasrota, a tributary of Brahmani River, for piped supply to Bhadrak.

Locals fear that the diversion would lead to the depletion of water levels in Kharasrota, causing a severe shortage of water for agrarian requirements in the region, where people are entirely dependent on farming for livelihood.

Mr Singh alleged that the government was turning a blind eye to the people's demand for water, while it was facilitating the mega industries to guzzle more water and generate pollution.

"The people of the neighbouring district need water. But diverting water from the Kharasrota to those areas is not the solution. The natural flow of the rivers should be protected," Mr Singh said.

He underlined that diversion of water from an already-deficient river basin would lead to the ingress of seawater upstream and harm the district's agricultural activities.

"The riverside villagers will become more vulnerable to saline intrusion due to the diversion of sweet water from the river for this mega drinking water project," Mr Singh said.

Debendra Sharma, the former Congress MLA of Aul, suggested that it would have been better if the state government built an in-stream barrage over the Kharasrota river and supplied water to Bhadrak.

"People in Bhadrak have the right to access clean drinking water. But that should not be at the cost of the larger interest of people living in Kendrapara," Mr Sharma said.

Congress leaders Sudrashan Das, Dharanidhar Nayak and former Aul legislator Dolagibinda Nayak, and advocate Khiroud Rout were among others who addressed the meeting.

There have been agitations across Kendrapara district over the past fortnight. Section 144 of CrPC has been clamped in Rajkanika's three gram panchayats till October 8 to douse the simmering protest.

The proposed project aims to provide safe drinking water to villages in Bhadrak district, where the groundwater table is heavily saline. The project requires 105 million litres of water per day and less than four per cent of the water inflow of the river will be diverted for the mega project, officials had said.

Kendrapara Sub-collector Niranjan Nehera had dismissed the apprehension expressed by people in Rajkanika as "unfounded".

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SKM begins constituency-level meetings in West Sikkim

PRITAM LAMA
GYALSHING, 25 AUG:

SKM kick-started its round of constituency-level coordination meetings with Yuksam and Tashiding constituencies today.

The party's district-level

headed by the party vice-president, SBS chairperson DB Gurung, is coordinating these meetings aimed at strengthening the party at the grassroots level.

Addressing the meetings, Mr Gurung informed that constituency-level

meetings were being held on the directions of the party president, Chief Minister PS Tamang to establish better coordination among party workers to ensure better implementation of developmental initiatives of the State Government.

New executive committee takes office at Lions Club of Rangpo



SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 25 AUG:

The swearing-in ceremony of the new executive committee of Lions Club of Rangpo for 2021-22 was held today,

a press release informs. After the swearing in, president Rakesh Agrawal thanked everyone for this important responsibility and

appreciated the role played by the members of the Club during the Covid pandemic last year. On the occasion, two new Club members were also introduced.

Jewish prayers held discreetly at contested Jerusalem shrine

JERUSALEM (AP): As police protected them, three Jewish men stepped forward, placed their hands out at chest level and began reciting prayers in low tones in the shadow of Jerusalem's golden Dome of the Rock.

Jewish prayers at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, were once unthinkable. But they have quietly become the new norm in recent years, flying in the face of longstanding convention, straining a delicate status quo and raising fears that they could trigger a new wave of violence in the Middle East.

"What is happening is a blatant and dangerous violation of the status quo," said Sheikh Omar al-Kiswani, a top official with the Waqf, the Jordanian-backed Islamic trust that administers the

site. "The Israeli police must stop providing protection to extremists."

The hilltop compound is the holiest site for Jews, revered as the location of two ancient temples destroyed in antiquity. Three times a day for 2,000 years, Jews have turned to face it during prayers. It also is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

Israel captured the hilltop, along with the rest of east Jerusalem and the walled Old City, in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed it, a move that was not recognized by most of the international community. The Palestinians seek east Jerusalem as capital of a future independent state.

The flashpoint site is the emotional epicenter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many rounds of deadly fighting in the decades-long conflict have erupted around

it. The most recent was in May, when an Israeli police crackdown on stone-throwing Palestinian protesters inside the mosque helped precipitate an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip and violent upheaval in Israeli cities.

Since 1967, a loose set of rules known as the "status quo" have governed day-to-day operations at the site. Any actual or perceived changes to the status quo has the potential to ignite violence.

For decades, Jews avoided worship at the site for religious reasons. Many leading rabbis, including the country's Chief Rabbinate, ruled after the 1967 war that Jews "should not enter the entire area of the Temple Mount" out of concern for ritual impurity and uncertainty over the exact location of the ancient Temple's holy of holies.

Neelam Tamang wins state-level Online Patriotic Song Competition at Sang

SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 25 AUG:

Neelam Tamang from Chisopani, East Sikkim, has won the State Level Online Patriotic Song Competition organized by the Independence Day Celebration Committee of Sang in association with Saphal Films at Community Hall, Sang, a press release informs.

Sajan Barailly and Krishna Dhungel from Uttaray and Bermoik-Namphing received the 1st and 2nd runners-up trophies.

The function had



Martam - Rumtek MLA, Sonam Tshering Venchungpa, as chief

guest and Joint Director, Forest Department, Blen Tshering Targain, as

guest of honour. The singing competition was held in

Gangtok Rotarians reach relief to burns patients



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 AUG:

Rotary Club of Gangtok donated a bouquet of items to burns patients admitted at STNM Hospital, Socheythang, today, a press release informs.

The donation contained energy drinks, blankets, bed sheets, towels, adult diapers etc.

The function was attended by Rotary Gangtok president Mira Oberoi along with a few other members and was organized by Dr Choden of STNM Hospital and was also attended by Addl MS Dr Suresh Rasaily, the son of a founder member of Rotary Club of Gangtok, the late MM Rasaily, the release adds.

1 new COVID-19 case in Andamans, tally rises to 7,560

PORT BLAIR, AUG 25 (PTI): The COVID-19 tally of Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 7,560 on Wednesday as one more person tested positive for the infection, a health bulletin said.

The Union territory now has 10 active cases, while 7,421 people have been cured of the disease so far, including one in the last 24 hours.

The coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 129 as no fresh fatality was reported. The administration has tested over 4.72 lakh samples

for COVID-19 thus far, the bulletin said. A total of 3.34 lakh people have been vaccinated to date, of whom over 1 lakh have received both doses.

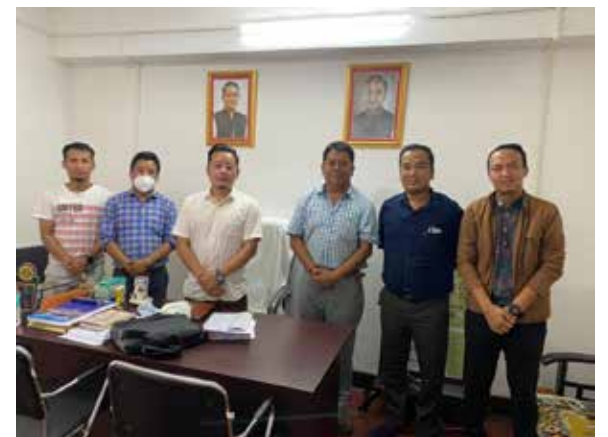
Chujachen Sports Academy execs call on APS to CM, inform him of danger to hostel by highway extension work

Summit Report
Gangtok, 25 Aug:

Executive members of Chujachen Sports Academy called on the Additional Political Secretary to the CM [East], Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha, here on Wednesday to brief him about the activities, achievements and other issues of the academy, a press release informs.

The team comprised of CSA president GL Bhutia, general secretary Biren Gurung, treasurer Rohit Tamang, coach Dinesh Rai and boxing in-charge GM Rai.

Chujachen Sports Academy was formed in the year 2011 and has been a registered body since 2014 coaching youth in cricket, boxing, football and other sports. The academy



also provides free hostel facilities to youth taken up for training in these sports.

The team members apprised Mr Lepcha that several cricketers trained at the academy have already participated in various tournaments and 27 got selected for the upcoming domestic tournament and will qualify for national tournaments like

prestigious Ranji Trophy if they perform well in the tournament.

However, the highway extension project of NHICDL, they inform, has imperiled the hostel and cricket pitch.

On the same, the APS assured the CSA team that he will apprise the Chief Minister about the issue and also assured for further assistance to the academy.

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Book explores various facets of Banaras

NEW DELHI, AUG 25 (PTI): A new book traces the journey of Banaras through time and space, history and mythology, architecture and structure, as well as its geology and geography. In "Banaras: Of Gods, Humans and Stories", author-filmmaker Nilosree Biswas and photographer Irfan Nabi discern the engaging narrative of a unique chromosome that makes Banaras.

Traversing within the maze, its sacred topography, craft traditions, and gastronomic plethora, the book, brought out by Niyogi Books, examines the tenets of its weave.

According to Biswas, Banaras is primarily a people's narrative.

"It's a story that also has a built-in city space consisting of a sacred landscape, an imagined topography, designed and created



through the combination of restructured symbolism, political and cultural stakes, shaping its most noted temples, venerated sites, shrines, fort-palaces, ghats and private houses on the river-front, around which the city exists till date," she writes.

A city that has been visited, revisited, discussed, and written about umpteen times, what more could be said about it? Yet, Biswas found it "invigorating and complex enough to probe again".

Biswas, through her words, and Nabi, with his camera, have tried captured the essence of

the city - the connection between its clay and its clan; its past and present; its food, the eateries, the halwaais, and the myriad visitors tasting the flavours of Banaras; its temples and the pilgrims; its shops, markets, and tourists; its numerous ghats, budgerows, and boats; and between life and death on its cremation grounds.

Invoking the myths around the river goddess Ganga, the author calls her the 'showstopper' among the many marvels that the city offers.

"There is no veneration, no everyday reality, no living, no death,


and no imagination of Banaras without the Ganges," she says.

Nabi's photographic visuals of the numerous worshippers taking a dip or the everyday bathers plunging into the holy waters complement her descriptions beautifully.

Biswas also identifies the historical and cultural significance of the temples standing tall on the ghats along the body of the long-running river.

The book also traces the journey of the traders of Banaras and how they have survived the ravages of time and technology: the wooden toy makers, musical instrument makers, minakaris, flower sellers, paanwalas, snacks sellers, the dairy product sellers, the wrestlers and their akharas, and the weavers of Banarasis.

The famous food items of the place: thandai, paan, malai toast, and more, also find place in the book.

|  HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|-------------------|
| No: 01/H&FWD/EC/21 | | | Dated: 24.08.2021 | | |
| NOTICE INVITING TENDER | | | | | |
| On behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, Additional Chief Engineer, Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim invites percentage rate bids in two system through e-procurement from appropriate contractor class registered with the SPWD, Government of Sikkim. The bids should be submitted online through the website www.sikkimtebder.gov.in for the work as listed below: | | | | | |
| Package No. | Name of works | Bid security 2.5% of the bid value (Rs. In Lakhs) | Bid value (Rs. In Lakhs) | Cost of tender/ bid form (Rs. In Lakhs) | Completion period |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | Construction of Urban Primary Health & Wellness Center (UPH&WC) in Darap, West Sikkim | 7.51 | 300.54 | 0.50 | 18 months. |
| The bidders should have necessary portal enrolment with his/her own Digital Certificate. The Bank Receipt/ Demand Draft & EMD in the form of hardcopy for tender fee is to be submitted to the Sr. Accounts Officer, Health & FW Department latest by 23.09.2021 by 4.30 pm. Those bids even if submitted online but whose hard copy is not received by the Sr. Accounts Officer within the given time frame will not be considered for bidding. The date and time of pre-paid meeting, submission of completed bid document is as under: | | | | | |
| i) | Publishing of Online Tender in e-procurement portal | : | 25 th August, 2021 | | |
| ii) | Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal | : | 25 th August, 2021 | | |
| iii) | Last date & time for seeking clarification regarding bids | : | 14 th September, 2021 till 1500 Hrs. | | |
| iv) | Last date for online Submission of completed bids | : | 25 th September, 2021 till 1600 Hrs. | | |
| v) | Date of opening of Technical bids | : | 27 th September, 2021 at 1100 Hrs. | | |
| vi) | Place of opening of bids | : | Office of Additional Chief Engineer, Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, Secretariat Block-B, East Sikkim. | | |
| For all details on the bid visit www.sikkimtender.gov.in. | | | | | |
| Sd/- Additional Chief Engineer Health & Family welfare Department Government of Sikkim. | | | | | |
| R.O. No. 155/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22 Date: 24.08.2021 | | | | | |

Drug Related

Not more laws and more policing, Sikkim needs more social engagement

Drug busts form a staple of the diet of social-media news-posts in Sikkim. A substantial drug haul on a chance routine inspection at the check-posts is a routine occurrence, and occasionally, much chest-thumping is expended when more senior officers oversee more elaborate raids. Addiction, however, continues to claim more converts because Sikkim is no different from other parts of the world which realized long back that policing, especially when in the hands of a poorly trained and rarely inspired personnel and clueless officers, is really no defence against addiction.

Prescription drugs continue to be the preferred substances of abuse even though more hardcore “drugs” are also obviously being peddled. The former is in much higher circulation and continues to remain the more pressing concern for Sikkim due to its easy availability and deep percolation among the youth. In fact, because the peddling of these prescription drugs was not covered under the then laws against “drugs”, like the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, the Sikkim Government framed the Sikkim Anti-Drugs Act in the year 2006. SADA was envisioned as a law which would strengthen the hands of the law enforcement agencies in its efforts to curtail the supply and peddling of these substances. Until SADA came about, a peddler could not even be kept locked up overnight since the pre-SADA laws, even on conviction, delivered only a minor fine as punishment... not even a slap on the wrists. All that the confiscation of big hauls at the check-posts succeeded in achieving was pushing up the street price of the prescription drugs of abuse because the peddlers would try to make up for the lost consignments. When SADA arrived, peddlers faced a jail-term and stiff punishments. In its original form, SADA tried to make a clear differentiation between peddlers and addicts and also took on a social responsibility by working in rehabilitation of addicts into sections of the law. In the ten years that SADA has been around, however, more people than anyone could have imagined to be peddlers have been convicted and it will not come as a surprise if some addicts have also become history-sheeters as peddlers. The nature of addiction is such that there is a very fine line dividing peddlers from addicts and it is not rare for the latter to sometimes crossover to the peddling business to finance their addictions. The original draft of SADA appeared to understand these nuances. Unfortunately, in the past decade, it has become only a policing tool and has lost all its more humane aspects. It would however be wrong to blame the police for this Frankenstein. Like the State’s drug problem, even SADA becoming so much lesser than what it had potential for, is because the society continues to fail its young. It is worrying that the only agency involved in the battle against drugs is the Police. Cops are responsible for law & order and invariably treat the people who come to them or whom they chase down, as victims or criminals. Substance abuse, unfortunately, is not as black & white as the police is trained to see cases. It is for the grey areas to be addressed with empathy and long-term impact that one needs the society at large to step up. Social organizations need to have a more involved presence in the efforts against addiction. One should read more about counseling and awareness sessions than drug-busts and arrests. No, the cops should not stop what they are doing, but that cannot be the only thing Sikkim is doing to address the problem of substance abuse. Addiction cannot be solved by locking up all the peddlers and addicts. Sikkim should have understood that by now because 15 years since a specialist law was brought in to address a Sikkim-specific drug problems, there has not been any dip in either addiction levels or peddling or the cost that addiction extracts from families, homes and the State.

And all this failure because the social engagement, the wider collaborations and the community feeling required to build more resolute defences against substances of abuse have not be created. Left to Sikkim Police alone, apart from some exceptions when a compassionate officer comes along, this social challenge will continue receive only law & order response and that insensitive approach will be targeting drugs, not addiction, and the two are not the same thing.

Afghanistan’s Panjshir Valley: The Last Stronghold of Resistance to Taliban Rule

KAWEH KERAMI
THECONVERSATION.COM

After a stunningly rapid offensive, the Taliban has occupied Kabul with minimal resistance and is consolidating its power across Afghanistan. But one unconquered area remains – Panjshir province in the country’s northwest, which has – over more than four decades – proved stubbornly resistant to outside interference and remains defiant in the face of Taliban dominance.

On August 15, as the Taliban were closing in on Kabul, the president, Ashraf Ghani – who had previously promised to “fight to the death” – quietly fled the country, which precipitated the government’s collapse. His vice-president, Amrullah Saleh – a fierce critic of the Taliban – decided to stay on and move to his birthplace, Panjshir.

Panjshir Valley, nearly 150km north of Kabul, is home to a largely ethnic Tajik population and through four decades of civil war and Taliban insurgency has been a centre of resistance. Panjshir resisted the Soviet invasion in the 1980s and Taliban rule during the late 1990s. In the past 20 years, it was the only province that the predominantly ethnic Pashtun Taliban seemed unable to penetrate.

Panjshir’s elites have played an important role in the post-2001 political order put in place by the US-led intervention. It has been a stronghold to all main opposition presidential contenders since 2004, including Abdullah Abdullah, a senior official in the ousted government. But the widespread allegations of fraud after the elections of 2014 and 2019 have damaged local people’s trust in Kabul leadership, making

them suspicious of the central government’s interventions.

THE SHAPE OF RESISTANCE
Panjshir’s resistance is mobilising behind Ahmad Massoud, the 32-year-old son of the charismatic leader Ahmad Shah Massoud – dubbed the “Afghan Napoleon” in a recent biography by veteran UK journalist Sandy Gall. Massoud led the campaign of resistance against the Russians, but was assassinated in 2001 by al-Qaeda agents posing as journalists – just two days before the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Massoud junior is attempting to mobilise local forces, but still has to prove himself as an honest and competent leader to his support base. There is disdain among locals for some of the Panjshiri leaders – including Saleh and Abdullah – who held senior government positions in Kabul but did little to nothing to serve their communities.

But things have changed in ways that will challenge the resistance in Panjshir. Supply lines to the province have been narrowed and Panjshir is effectively under siege. This has created the problem of how to get military and humanitarian supplies into the valley if hostilities break out into open warfare.

There has also been a shift in the region’s political dynamics which will help the Taliban. Importantly – and despite being a fundamentalist Sunni movement – the Taliban has improved its relationship with the theocratic Iranian regime, which once supported the anti-Taliban forces.

But there are also opportunities. The ease of its capture of Kabul appears to

have convinced the Taliban to reimpose its conception of an emirate driven on a narrow and fundamentalist understanding of Islamic sharia law. This might please the Taliban’s support base in rural, Pashtun-dominated areas. But it would be consequential for popular support within Afghanistan as well as the prospect of receiving foreign aid and international recognition of the new regime.

It would also create an opportunity for the resistance to present itself as a better and more popular alternative. Incidents such as the violence that greeted anti-Taliban and nationalist protests in the eastern city of Jalalabad recently can only help unite the resistance movement.

IS A SETTLEMENT POSSIBLE?
Both the Taliban and the leaders of the resistance have called for negotiations aimed at establishing an “inclusive government” in Kabul. In this case, the challenge will be to strike a consensus on what “inclusive” means. Many are interpreting the Taliban’s calls for inclusivity as a bid to gain international recognition and access to aid.

But if this is the case – and inclusivity functions as tactical window dressing by co-opting a few weak political elites into the state apparatus – it is unlikely to ensure stability. You only have to look at the failures of the past 20 years to see the flaws in this. Inclusivity should instead mean exactly that, involving women, young people and should adequately involve Afghanistan’s many cultural groups to reflecting the country’s complex ethnic-linguistic mosaic.

The sheer speed of the Taliban’s advance and takeover

of Kabul makes a peace deal less likely. It presently holds most of the bargaining chips, which makes it hard for a depleted resistance to call for a democratic political system, decentralisation and equal rights to all citizens. Why would the Taliban leaders in the seat of power give in to such demands? But at the same time, for Massoud and his colleagues to negotiate what will effectively be a surrender is hard to imagine.

THE WORLD WATCHES

This is where the international community could play an important role. To avoid the eruption of a potential civil war, the UN should broker a “no-war, no-peace agreement” between the two parties along the lines of the Good Friday agreement, with the principal aim of halting any armed conflict and paving the way for a just and durable political settlement.

The fate of Panjshir is consequential not only for anti-Taliban resistance forces but also for the stability and security of Afghanistan, the region and the west. If Panjshir falls to the Taliban, it makes a rollback of post-2001 gains appear inevitable, with all that implies for the people of Afghanistan.

For the rest of the world, meanwhile, it means losing the last force that can put a check on an Islamic fundamentalist regime that has demonstrated in the past that it can pose a severe threat to global security.

[the writer is PhD Candidate in Development Studies, SOAS, University of London]

How Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts infused one of the greatest rock ‘n’ roll bands with a little jazz

VICTOR COELHO
THECONVERSATION.COM

In an era when rock drummers were larger-than-life showmen with big kits and egos to match, Charlie Watts remained the quiet man behind a modest drum set. But Watts wasn’t your typical rock drummer.

Part of the Rolling Stones setup from 1963 until his death on Aug. 24, 2021, Watts provided the back-beat to their greatest hits by injecting jazz sensibilities – and swing – into the Stones’ sound.

As a musicologist and co-editor of the Cambridge Companion to the Rolling Stones – as well as a fan who has seen the Stones live more than 20 times over the past five decades – I see Watts as being integral to the band’s success.

Like Ringo Starr and other drummers who emerged during the 1960s British pop explosion, Watts was influenced by the swing and big band sound that was hugely popular in the U.K. in the 1940s and 1950s.

MODEST WITH THE STICKS

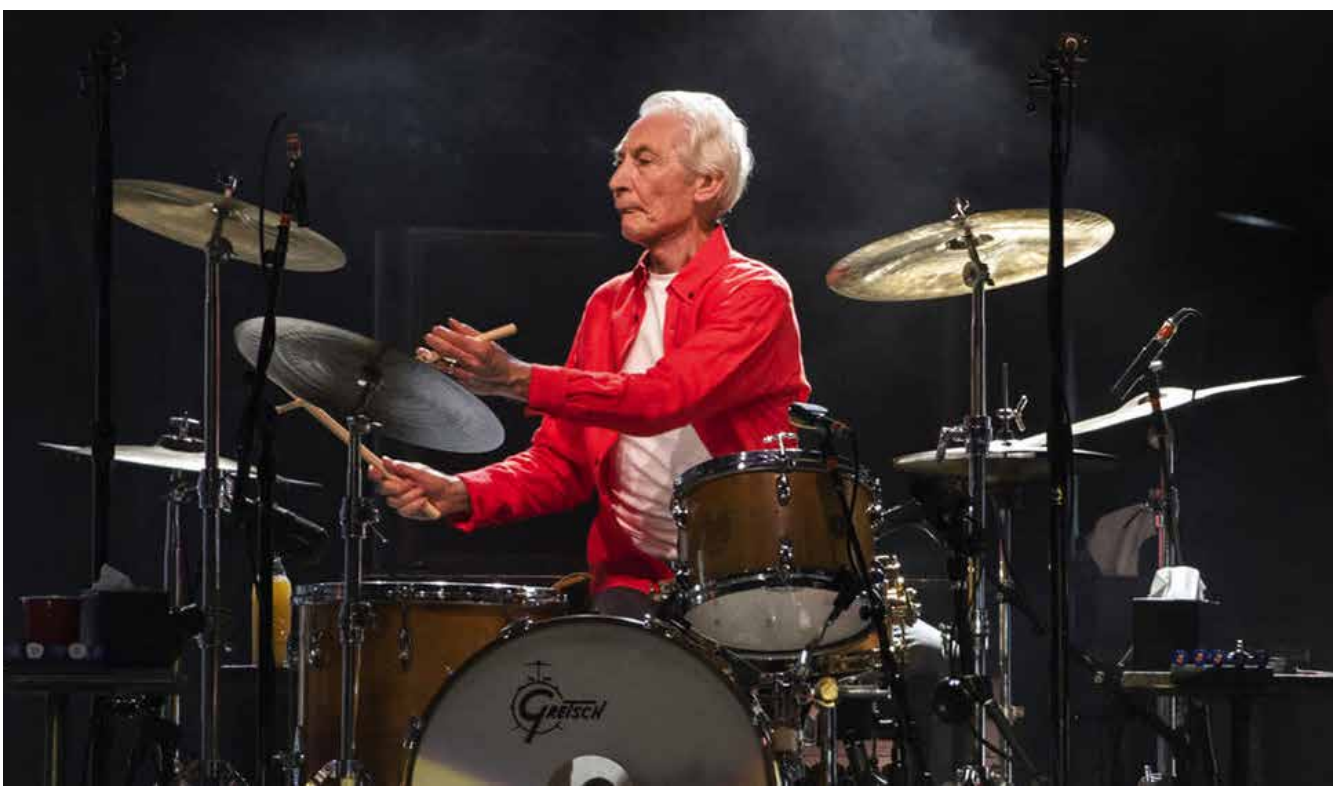
Watts wasn’t formally trained as a jazz drummer, but jazz musicians like Jelly Roll Morton, Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk were early influences.

In a 2012 interview with the New Yorker, he recalled how their records informed his playing style.

“I bought a banjo, and I didn’t like the dots on the neck,” Watts said. “So I took the neck off, and at the same time I heard a drummer called Chico Hamilton, who played with Gerry Mulligan, and I wanted to play like that, with brushes. I didn’t have a snare drum, so I put the banjo head on a stand.”

Watts’ first group, the Jo Jones All Stars, were a jazz band. And elements of jazz remained throughout his Stones career, providing Watts with a wide stylistic versatility that was critical to the Stones’ forays beyond blues and rock to country, reggae, disco, funk and even punk.

There was a modesty in his playing that came from his jazz learning. There are no big rock drum



solos. He made sure the attention was never on him or his drumming – his role was keeping the songs going forward, giving them movement.

He also didn’t use a big kit – no gongs, no scaffolding. He kept a modest one more typically found in jazz quartets and quintets.

Likewise, Watts’ occasional use of brushes over sticks – such as in “Melody” from 1976’s “Black and Blue” – more explicitly shows his debt to jazz drummers.

But he didn’t come in with one style. Watts was trained to adapt, while keeping elements of jazz. You can hear it in the R’n’ B of “(I can’t Get No) Satisfaction,” to the infernal samba-like rhythm of “Sympathy For The Devil” – two songs in which Watts’ contribution is central.

And a song like “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking” from 1971’s “Sticky Fingers” develops from one of Keith Richards’ highest caliber riffs into a long concluding instrumental section, unique in the Stones’ song catalog, of Santana-esque Latin jazz, containing some great syncopated rhythmic shots and tasteful hi-hat playing through which Watts drives the different musical sections.

You hear similar elements in “Gimme Shelter” and other classic Rolling Stones songs – it is perfectly placed drum fills and gestures that make the song and surprise you, always in the

background and never dominating.

POWERING THE ‘ENGINE ROOM’

So central was Watts to the Stones that when bassist Bill Wyman retired from the band after the 1989 “Steel Wheels” tour, it was Watts who was tasked with picking his replacement.

He needed a bass player that would fit his style. But his choice of Darryl Jones as Wyman’s replacement was not the only key partnership for Watts. He played off the beat, complementing Richards’ very syncopated, riff-driven guitar style. Watts and Richards set the groove for so many Stones songs, such as “Honky Tonk Women” or “Start Me Up.” If you watched them live, you’d notice Richards looking at Watts at all times – his eyes fixated on the drummer, searching for where the musical accents are, and matching their rhythmic “shots” and off-beats.

Watts did not aspire to be a virtuoso like John Bonham of Led Zeppelin or The Who’s Keith Moon – there was no drumming excess. From that initial jazz training, he kept his distance from outward gestures.

But for nearly six decades, he was the main occupant, as Richards put it, of the Rolling Stones’ legendary “engine room.”

[the writer is Professor of Music, Boston University]

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Cloudburst in U'khand village, flood water enters houses



DEHRADUN, AUG 25 (PTI): A cloudburst occurred near Satla Devi temple in Khabadwala village on the outskirts of the city in Uttarakhand, flooding rivers and streams. The flood water entered houses, electric poles and trees fell

down at places, and two-wheelers were swept away after the cloudburst late Tuesday night, state disaster management officials said on Wednesday. However, no casualty was reported anywhere, they said. Chief Minister

Pushkar Singh Dhama visited the area along with cabinet minister Ganesh Joshi on Wednesday to assess the damage and distributed relief material among affected people. He also asked the district magistrate to

prepare an action plan to prevent damage by natural disasters in the area in future. Heavy rains lashed Dehradun Tuesday night which flooded the Rispana and Bindal rivers besides causing heavy waterlogging in many areas.

Protest in Mizoram over 20% hike in power tariff

AIZAWL, AUG 25 (PTI): Youth Congress activists protested in Aizawl over the steep hike in power tariff, demanding the resignation of state power minister R Lalzirlana.

Leading the demonstration outside Vanapa Hall here on Tuesday, state Youth Congress president Lalmalsawma Nghaka accused the government of robbing the people by hiking power tariffs and issuing bogus power bills.

"The power minister should take responsibility for the hike and bogus bills and must oblige to resign from his office for failing to look after his department efficiently," he said.

He said the government has hiked power tariff by 20.7 per cent, which came into effect in April, at a time when people are facing hardship and livelihood crisis due to the pandemic.

Lalmalsawma claimed that power bills issued in August



were mostly high and some poor families, who consumed very less units, were asked to pay consumption charges ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 1 lakh.

The government should withdraw all the bogus bills and re-issue correct bills to the consumers, he said.

State power engineer-in-chief Lalduhzuala Sailo denied any lapse in the power bills.

"Although meter reading was not done due to the lockdown, bills were prepared and consumption charges were calculated by taking together the average net value of the unpaid months based on the net amount of the previous bill," he told PTI.

The bill amounts were high because they covered three months -- April to June, he said.

Sailo said power tariff

is decided by the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) for the states of Mizoram and Manipur, which as a procedure, hold a public hearing before a hike.

However, only representatives of a political party were present at the last hearing, which unanimously agreed to a 20.7 per cent hike effective from April 1, he said.

Man killed in suspected TMC factional fight in Bengal

BARDHAMAN (WB), AUG 24 (PTI): A 38-year-old man was killed in a suspected factional fight of the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district on Tuesday.

Superintendent of Police Kamanasis Sen said two persons were arrested in connection with the killing in Bardhaman town.

Mohammad Salim, former TMC councillor of Bardhaman Municipality, claimed that he was attacked with rods and sticks by a group of people owing allegiance to the party's district general secretary Sibsankar Ghosh.

Besides Salim, party workers Ashok Majhi and his wife were injured in the attack. Majhi succumbed to his injuries in a hospital later.

Ghosh denied that he was involved in the incident.

Bengal board to reduce class 10 syllabus by up to 35%

KOLKATA, AUG 25 (PTI): Syllabus for the class 10 board exams in 2022 will be substantially reduced, the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education announced.

Teachers said that the decision was taken as no classes were held on school campuses for over a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a statement, the board said on Tuesday there will be 30-35 per cent reduction in the curriculum of all seven subjects for class 10 students who will appear in the Madhyamik Pariksha next year.

The decision has been brought to the knowledge



of headmasters, teachers and students of all affiliated schools, it said.

The headmaster of a state-run school in Jadavpur said students

were facing difficulties due to the suspension of classes on campus, and online classes were less than adequate for an average student to

complete the entire syllabus.

"In such a situation, the board has taken a pragmatic decision," he said.

2 more injured in police encounters in Assam

GUWAHATI/GOALPARA, AUG 25 (PTI): Two more accused persons have been injured in police encounters in Assam's Nagaon and Goalpara districts, senior officers said on Wednesday.

The leader of an armed gang was injured in a cross-fire at number 1 Kandhulimari village in Nagaon district early on Wednesday when he was leading the police to his accomplices, Superintendent of Police Anand Mishra said.

The gang leader, who was nabbed at Ahomgaon in Dhing area on Tuesday, got injured when a bullet fired by one of his accomplices during the encounter hit him in the leg. They managed to escape from the spot, he said.

"This gang operates in a militia-style and is very ruthless. Its members are accused in many crimes including opening fire on common people and injuring several of them on August 22,"



Mishra told PTI, adding that the gang leader is undergoing treatment at a hospital.

In another incident, three members of an armed kidnapping gang accused in several cases were nabbed in Belpara area of Rongjuli in Goalpara district on Tuesday night and one 9 mm pistol, three cartridges and addictive pills were seized from their possession, Additional Superintendent of Police Mrinal Deka said.

While being taken to a police station, the gang leader tried to escape forcing law enforcers to shoot in his leg, the officer said, adding that he is being treated at Goalpara Civil Hospital and his two accomplices are in

custody.

With the latest incidents, at least 21 suspected militants and criminals have been shot dead and 33 others injured in police encounters while either trying to snatch service firearms or escape from custody since the Himanta Biswa Sarma government assumed charge in May.

The rising number of police encounters has whipped up a political furore with the opposition alleging that the Assam Police has turned "trigger happy" and is indulging in "open killings" under the second BJP government in the state.

Unfazed by criticism, Sarma had

said in Assam Assembly on July 15 that the state police has "full operational liberty" to fight criminals within the ambit of law.

In the first face-to-face meeting with the officers in-charge (OCs) of all police stations in the state on July 5, Sarma had said that shooting at criminals "should be the pattern" if they attempt to escape from custody or try to snatch firearms from law enforcers.

Taking suo moto cognisance, the Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) on July 7 asked the state government to institute an inquiry into the circumstances that led to the death and injury of the accused in police encounters.

Earlier, a New Delhi-based lawyer from Assam, Arif Jwadder, had filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) against the Assam Police for the series of encounters.

101 new cases push Arunachal's COVID-19 tally to 52,409

ITANAGAR, AUG 25 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 tally rose to 52,409 on Wednesday as 101 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior health official said.

The coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 259 as no fresh fatality was reported, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

The Capital Complex region recorded the highest number of fresh

cases at 32, followed by West Kameng (eight) and Upper Siang (seven).

The state now has 1,127 active cases, while 51,023 people have recovered from the disease so far, including 136 on Tuesday, he said.

The recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state stood at 97.35 per cent.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa

areas, has the highest number of active cases at 255, followed by Lower Subansiri (113) and West Kameng (105).

The state has thus far tested over 10.37 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 3,706 on Tuesday, the official said, adding that the positivity rate stood at 2.72 per cent.

State Immunisation Officer (SIO) Dr Dimong Padung said that over 9.35 lakh people have been inoculated so far.

Shah likely to visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands in mid-September

PORT BLAIR, AUG 25 (PTI): Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands on a three-day trip in mid-September, official sources here said on Wednesday.

During his visit, Shah is likely to visit the National Memorial Cellular Jail and hold a meeting with the local BJP leaders, they said.

The administration is making adequate security arrangements



and chalking out other programmes for the visit of the home minister, they added.

The administration has issued a circular

to all government departments to put on hold leave applications of the staff in the wake of the visit of the home minister.

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Paralympics: Indian paddlers Bhavinaben Patel and Sonalben lose opening round fixtures

TOKYO, AUG 25 (PTI): Indian paddlers Bhavinaben Patel and Sonalben Manubhai Patel began their campaigns with opening round defeats in their respective events at the Tokyo Paralympics, here on Wednesday.

Competing in the women's Class 3 category, Sonalben was ahead after the first three games but lost momentum to lose 11-9, 3-11, 17-15, 7-11 4-11 against Li Quan of China, world number four and the Rio Paralympics silver medallist, in a tightly-contested match.

On the other hand, Bhavinaben, who was also up against world number one Chinese paddler Zhou Ying, lost, went down tamely 3-11 9-11 2-11, in the women's singles Class 4 group A fixture.

Players in the Class 3 category have no trunk control, yet their arms are minimally affected by the impairment, while in class 4 competitors have fair sitting balance and fully functional arms and hands.

Their impairment may be due to a lower spinal-cord lesion or cerebral palsy.

Murray out of the Winston-Salem Open losing to Tiafoe in the second round

WINTER-SALEM (US), AUG 25 (AP): Former world number one Andy Murray was ousted from the ATP Winston-Salem event, falling to American Frances Tiafoe 6-7 (4/7), 3-6 in a second-round match at Wake Forest University.

The 34-year-old Murray has been battling injuries of late, including a groin problem that has limited his time on the court this season and resulted in him needing one of the four wild card spots to get into the Winston-Salem draw.

Murray now heads to the US Open, where he won the first of his three Grand Slam titles in 2012.

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12-member Indian contingent, including Jhajharia, departs for Tokyo Paralympics



NEW DELHI, AUG 25 (PTI): Veteran Devendra Jhajharia and reigning world champion Sandeep Chaudhary were among five javelin throwers in a 12-strong Indian contingent that left for Tokyo on Wednesday to compete in the Paralympics.

The contingent also included two high jumpers -- Nishad Kumar and Ram Pal -- and

discus thrower Yogesh Kathuniya.

One of the top medal prospects, Jhajharia had won the gold medal in Athens and Rio Paralympics.

The 40-year-old javelin thrower had rewritten his world record of 63.97m when he sent the spear to a distance of 65.71m in a qualifying event in June.

His main competition

comes from compatriots Ajit Singh and Sundar Gurjar. With a little bit of luck, India could grab all three medals in the men's F-46 category, which is for athletes with arm deficiency, impaired muscle power or impaired passive range of movement in arms while competing in a standing position.

After Neeraj Chopra's

historic performance at the Tokyo Olympics, javelin throwers have been in the limelight.

"Neeraj's gold medal has put the spotlight on javelin throwers and being the senior most of the lot, I can say this with assurance that after Tokyo Paralympics, javelin (throw) will be the second most popular game in this country

after cricket," Jhajharia said.

Focus will also be on Chaudhary and Sumit Antil in the men's F64 category in which they are ranked world number one and two respectively. The F-64 classification is for athletes with a leg amputation, who compete with prosthetics in a standing position.

Track and field events begin on August 27.

Nagal, Ramkumar bite dust in US Open qualifiers

NEW YORK, AUG 25 (PTI): Indian tennis players' struggle at the Grand Slam events continued as both Sumit Nagal and Ramkumar Ramanathan lost their respective first round singles matches to make an exit from the US Open qualifiers, here.

Nagal lost 5-7 6-4 3-6 to Argentina's Juan Pablo Ficovich in two hours and 22 minutes on Tuesday night.

Nagal had played in the Australian Open main draw early this year

and had lost in the first round. He could not qualify for the French Open and missed the Wimbledon qualifiers due to an unrevealed injury.

R a m k u m a r frittered away a one-set advantage to lose 6-4 6-7(1) 4-6 to Russia's Evgeny Donskoy in two hours and 35 minutes in his opening round.

It was Ramkumar's 21st attempt to qualify for the singles main draw of a Grand Slam since 2014.



Prajnesh Guneswaran is the only Indian left in the men's singles qualifiers. The left-

hander is up against Canadian Brayden Schnur.

Ankita Raina has also

exited after losing her first round in women's singles qualifiers to American Jamie Loeb.

Pakistan beats West Indies by 109 in 2nd test, levels series

KINGSTON (JAMAICA), AUG 25 (AP): Shaheen Afridi completed match figures of 10-94 as Pakistan endured a tense rain break before beating the West Indies by 109 runs on the final day of the second test to level the two-match series at 1-1.

Left-arm Shaheen took 4-43 to help Pakistan bowl out the West Indies for 219 in its second as it chased 329 to win. He claimed the last wicket of the match, sealing Pakistan's victory when he dismissed Joshua Da Silva after tea on the fifth day.

That gave the 21-year-old fast bowler, who took a career-best 6-51 in the first innings, a total of 18 wickets in the series at an average of 11.28.

"It's such a great day for us. It's a team effort," Shaheen said.

"The team needed me to step up and it was good for me that I delivered this time.

"It was tough," he continued.

"We got to the last day and the weather is really hot. As a team we knew they were one wicket down (at the start of the day) and the second wicket came straight away. As a team, we knew that if we gave a 100 percent effort we could win. We delivered as a bowling unit and the result came our way."

After losing four wickets in the first session, the West Indies had all but given up the chase for 329 and set

itself the equally difficult task of batting through the long fifth day when a drizzle began to fall near tea.

They were 159-7 at that point and, with more than 40 overs left in the day, rain and the possibility of bad light later were their best allies. But the break proved relatively brief: tea was taken early, the covers were dried and gingerly lifted, and the outfield was made fit for play to resume. Pakistan returned eagerly, refreshed by tea, to complete its series-squaring victory.

Shaheen claimed two of the three wickets Pakistan needed in the final session to level the series after the West Indies won the tense first test by one wicket.

The West Indies again were plagued by inconsistency. Their first test win was a breakthrough for a relatively young lineup but their chances of winning the series slumped when they were bowled out for only 150 in the first innings of the second test, replying to Pakistan's 302-9 declared.

The fault lay mostly

with their batsmen, who surpassed 200 in only two of four innings in the series.

"Obviously in this game the first innings total let us down," captain Kraigg Brathwaite said.

"We were behind the eight ball from then on.

"Confidence is what we need," he continued.

"I just think it is a mindset. Test cricket is never easy, it's just a mindset, and the sooner we get to that the better. Being able to get through tough periods is key for us."

The West Indies already were in a tough spot when they resumed Tuesday at 49-1, having lost opener Kieran Powell to a careless run-out in the 19 overs before stumps on day four.

Shaheen began by removing the n i g h t w a t c h m a n , Alzarri Joseph, for 17. Hasan Ali then quickly added the wickets of Nkrumah Bonner (2) and Roston Chase (0) to leave the West Indies on the back foot at 73-4. They were 113-5 at lunch after losing the vital wicket of Jermaine Blackwood for 25.

Kyle Mayers, out of

Three Indians in finals of Asian junior boxing in Dubai



NEW DELHI, AUG 25 (PTI): Three Indian boxers advanced to the finals of the Asian junior championships after notching up comprehensive victories in their last-four stage clashes in Dubai.

While Rohit Chamoli (48kg) and Bharat Joon (+81kg) made the junior boys finals, Muskan (46kg) entered the girls summit showdowns, on Tuesday night.

Joon defeated Kyrgyzstan's Emir-Khan Razhapov 5-0 and Chamoli got the better of Kazakhstan's Aidar Kadyrkhan by a similar scoreline.

Muskan sailed past Kazakhstan's Yelyanur Turganova, pulling off an unanimous victory.

However, Supriya Rawat (66kg) lost to Sanowar Bozorboeva 1-4 and Aarzoo (54kg) also endured a close loss to Uzbekistan's Guldana Tileuergen, going down

2-3. Devika Ghorpade (50kg) was defeated 0-5 by Uzbekistan's Shaina Nematovain in another girls semifinal.

Among boys, Ankush (66kg) was beaten 0-5 by Uzbekistan's Fazliddin Erkinboev in his last-four bout.

All four of them ended with bronze medals.

India's assured medal tally stood at over 20 on the day of the draws itself as many countries either skipped or fielded smaller squads due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

The gold medallists in the youth category will receive prize money of USD 6,000 while silver and bronze medallists will claim USD 3,000 and USD 1,500 respectively.

The junior champions will be awarded with USD 4,000 for gold and USD 2,000 and 1,000 for silver and bronze medallists respectively.

40 trains cancelled due to farmers' protest in UP's Moradabad

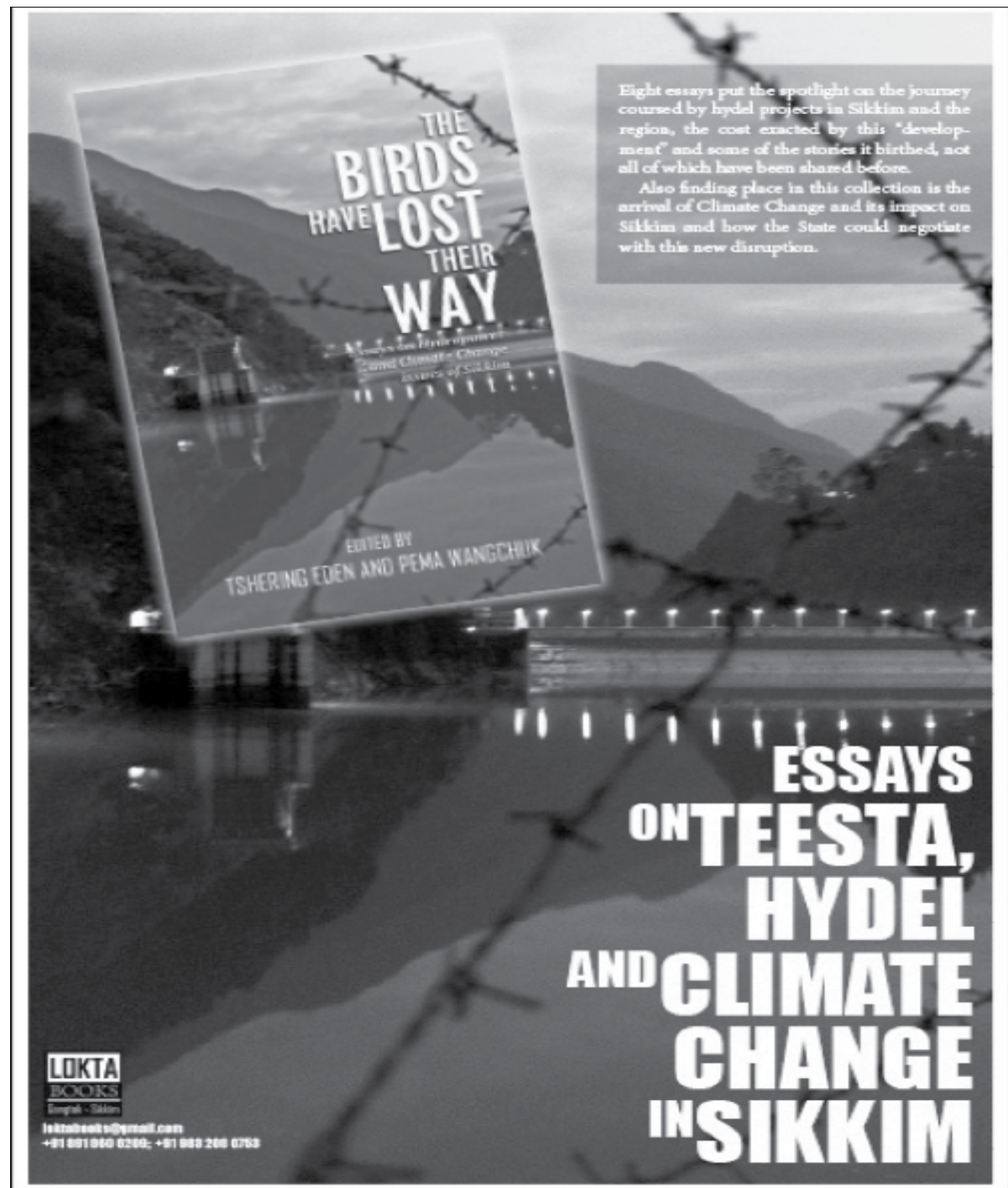
MORADABAD, 25 AUG: As many as 40 trains were cancelled on Tuesday in the wake of farmer protests on the railway track in Moradabad.

Speaking to ANI, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (DCM) of Moradabad Railway Division, Sudhir Singh said that all those who booked the tickets will get a refund.

"Due to the ongoing farmer protests, 40 trains have been cancelled and 21 trains have been terminated with immediate effect to ensure the safety of people. All those who booked the tickets online

will get a refund for the same. All those who purchased the ticket over the counter will also get a refund and separate arrangements are being made for them," Mr Singh told ANI.

Passengers left stranded with the cancellation of these trains. A passenger at the railway station said that he wanted to visit his family on an urgent basis but could not do so as his train got cancelled. Another passenger felt disturbed due to the ongoing problems.



Duterte confirms he'll run for Philippines VP next year

MANILA, PHILIPPINES (AP): Tough-talking Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has confirmed rumblings that he will run next year for vice president, in what critics say is an attempt at an end-run around constitutional term limits.

Duterte, who is notorious for his vulgar rhetoric and crackdown on illegal drugs, which has killed thousands of mostly petty suspects, said in comments broadcast Wednesday that he will run for vice president to "continue the crusade."

"I will run for vice president," he said. "I'm worried about the drugs, insurgency. Well, number one is insurgency, then criminality, drugs."

The Philippines has been struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic, with rising infections and death rates and a slow vaccination rollout, but Duterte's popularity ratings have remained high.

Polls suggest that running Duterte in tandem with his daughter, Sara Duterte, currently the mayor of Davao City, as the presidential candidate would be a strong pairing, said Manila-based political analyst Richard Heydarian.

The idea of the two running together has been discussed since 2019, he said, though Duterte advisers have

reportedly said that he has suggested he might not run for vice president if his daughter decides to announce a bid for president.

"The campaign for Sara Duterte has more or less kicked off, it seems, almost irrespective of what Duterte's position will be," Heydarian said. "A Duterte/Duterte tandem is increasingly looking like the formidable team to beat in the next year's elections."

Further muddying the waters, however, Sara Duterte posted on Facebook later Wednesday that her father had told her he would run for vice president with his former aide, Senator Christopher "Bong" Go running for president.

She did not address her own aspirations, but said her father and Go should announce publicly that they would run together if they have made that decision.

"I respectfully advise them to stop talking about me and make me the reason for them running or not running," she wrote.

Philippine presidents are limited by the 1987 Constitution to a single six-year term. At least two former presidents, Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, have made successful runs for lower public offices after serving as president, but not for



vice president.

If Duterte goes ahead with his run, it will likely face court challenges from the opposition, though Heydarian noted the Supreme Court has strongly supported the president's moves in the past.

A new opposition coalition, ISambayan, whose name means One Nation, said Duterte's decision came as "no surprise," and made the coalition "more determined in unifying the democratic forces in responding to the challenge."

"It shows a clear mockery of our constitution and democratic process," the group said. "The candidacy is both legally and morally wrong, and we trust that the Filipino people will realize his brazen, selfish and self-serving motives."

Duterte, 76, had

previously hinted that he may run for vice president, and his confirmation Wednesday came after a senior official of his PDP-Laban party on Tuesday said that the president had agreed to run as its candidate.

Duterte "agreed to make the sacrifice and heed the clamor of the people" to run in the May 9 national elections, said Karlo Nograles, PDP-Laban's executive vice president.

The vice president is elected separately from the president under Philippine law. Those who serve in the post could potentially be propelled to the top role if the president dies or is incapacitated for any reason.

If elected vice president, the move would be reminiscent of the machinations of Russian President

Vladimir Putin, who Duterte once called his "favorite hero," to hold on to power despite being constitutionally barred from seeking a third consecutive term as president in 2008.

Instead, Dmitry Medvedev was elected president and Putin assumed the nominally subservient position of prime minister from 2008 to 2012. Putin was then reelected president in 2012, and Medvedev slid into the prime minister role.

"This is not to say that, should Sara Duterte become the president, that she will be essentially proxy for the president," Heydarian said. "In Davao the two were together in charge (and) there were significant divergences in approaches and policy differences ... so we may see some iteration of that, if ever

the tandem makes it to the presidency."

After the news broke that Duterte said he would run, opposition Sen. Risa Hontiveros warned that electing Duterte as vice president would mean a continuation of his authoritarian policies.

"Next year a lot is really at stake," she said on the ABS-CBN News Channel.

"The president started his presidential run with a lot of drama, and it looks like he'll be leaving us the same way, trying to confuse us, and we the Filipino people still searching for a true leader."

In June, the International Criminal Court's outgoing chief prosecutor said that a preliminary examination found reason to believe crimes against humanity had been committed during Duterte's anti-drug crackdown, and the "shadow" of that and the discussion of possible sanctions against him also likely factor into Duterte's calculus, Heydarian said.

Still, he said, if the past is any guide, Duterte's true intentions might not be known for some time.

"Let's not forget that President Duterte is known for, or notorious for, his strategy of hedging until the 11th hour, or even past the 11th hour," Heydarian said.

Through four wars, toll mounts on a Gaza neighborhood

BEIT HANOUN, Gaza Strip (AP): The electricity is out again tonight in what's left of Zaki and Jawaher Nassir's neighborhood. But from the shell of their sitting room, its wall blown open by Israeli missiles, twilight and a neighbor's fire are enough to see by.

Here, down a narrow lane called Al-Baali, just over a mile from the heavily fortified border separating northern Gaza and Israel, cinderblock homes press against each other before opening to a modest courtyard below the Nassirs' perch.

Until this neighborhood was hammered by the fourth war in 13 years between Israel and Hamas militants, the Nassirs often sipped coffee by

a window, watching children play volleyball using a rope in place of a net. Other days, the couple looked out as relatives pulled fruit off the yard's fig and olive trees.

Now they spend day after day surveying the wreckage of the May 14 airstrike from broken plastic chairs while awaiting building inspectors, the gaping holes in surrounding homes serving as windows into their neighborhood's upheaval.

In the skeleton of one building, children play video games atop a slab of fallen concrete. In another, a man stares out from beside a bed covered in debris, ignoring the ceiling fan drooping overhead like a

dead flower. The smell of pulverized cement and plaster dust hangs in the air.

Each afternoon, demolition workers arrive to hack away at this real-life stage set so that the Nassirs and their neighbors can start rebuilding -- again.

"We have no peace in our lives and we expect that war can happen again at any time," says Zaki Nassir, who lost a nephew from the household across the yard in the first war, another from next door in this year's war, and whose home is still scarred by shelling during the third war.

The story of the Nassirs, their neighbors and the toll of four wars is Gaza's story.

51 evacuees from Afghanistan arrive in Uganda at US request

KAMPALA, AUG 25 (AP): Uganda's government said that 51 people evacuated from Afghanistan arrived Wednesday in the East African country at the request of the United States.

Authorities said in a statement that the group, transported to Uganda on a chartered flight, arrived early Wednesday.

The statement said they included men, women and children. No further details were immediately given on the evacuees' identities.

Ugandan officials said last week that the country would shelter up to 2,000 people fleeing the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. They said the Afghans would be brought to Uganda in small groups in a temporary arrangement before they are relocated elsewhere.

The decision to host those in need is informed by the government of Uganda's consistent policy of receiving refugees and persons in distress as well as playing a responsible

role in matters of international concern," the statement said.

Uganda has long been an ally of the US, especially on security matters in the region.

But some activists and opponents of President Yoweri Museveni, who was reelected in January, say the arrangement with the US is problematic because it appears blind to allegations of rights abuses and bad governance in a country that has never had a peaceful transfer of power.

Poland halts Afghan airlift over safety as US deadline looms

WARSAW, POLAND (AP): Poland said Wednesday it halted its airlift evacuations from Kabul's international airport over safety concerns, as Western nations prepare to end operations helping those fleeing the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan ahead of America's looming withdrawal.

The decision comes as U.S. President Joe Biden declared the day before that he is sticking to his Aug. 31 deadline for completing the risky airlift from Kabul.

The Taliban, who have wrested back control of the country nearly 20 years after being ousted in a U.S.-led invasion following the 9/11 attacks, have insisted the airlift must end on Aug. 31. Any decision by Biden to stay longer could reignite a war between the group and the approximately 5,800 American troops and other coalition forces who are executing the airlift at Kabul airport.

Marcin Przydacz, a Polish deputy foreign minister, said that a group taken from Kabul and now in Uzbekistan was the last evacuated by Poland. Another plane is on its way to Warsaw. He said his nation made its decision after consulting with the U.S. and British officials.

"After a long analysis of reports on the security situation we cannot risk the lives of our diplomats and of our soldiers any longer," Przydacz said.

A number of troops will remain briefly to carry out some procedures that include closing the base, Przydacz said.

Poland has used over a dozen planes to bring hundreds of evacuees to Warsaw. Some later traveled on to other countries.

The chaos at the airport has transfixed the world after the Taliban's blitz across Afghanistan saw it seize control of a nation that received hundreds of billions of dollars in reconstruction

aid and security support since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that followed the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

Afghans poured onto the tarmac last week, and some clung to a U.S. military transport plane as it took off, later plunging to their deaths. At least seven people died that day, and another seven died Sunday in a panicked stampede. An Afghan security force member was killed Monday in a gunfight under unclear circumstances.

Thousands have thronged the airport in the days since, with the Taliban firing into the air in an attempt to control the crowds.

European nations, including American allies Germany and the United Kingdom, had pressed for a longer window to continue evacuations past the deadline next week. CIA director William Burns even traveled to Kabul on Monday to meet the Taliban's top political leader. However, Biden has stuck to the deadline, even after an emergency online summit of the Group of Seven nations.

Patricia Lewis, director of the international security program at the Chatham House international affairs think-tank, said the practical deadline for the evacuations to stop was "the next couple of days."

"You can't just say, 'OK, midnight, we'll stop now, we'll just pack up gently,'" she said. "There's a huge amount of stuff that has to be done, including getting all the people out who are doing the job and all the equipment, all of the stuff that they need to get out, that they don't want the Taliban to get hold of."

"All of the allies are highly dependent on the U.S. for military cover, particularly air cover," Lewis said. "They can't put their own people at risk, so it really depends on when the U.S. starts packing up."

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Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

I'm just an actor who wants to excel: Samantha Akkineni



NEW DELHI, AUG 25 (PTI): South actor Samantha Akkineni, who became a pan-India sensation following the success of "The Family Man" season two, says she has never picked up roles based on her perceived image as a star. Taking up Amazon Prime Video's "The Family Man", a predominantly Hindi web series directed by Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK, was just another attempt at doing something she hasn't done before, she said.

"I don't think any of my decisions have been made based on my star image. I never made such calls. I don't even know what exactly my star image is. I'm just an actor who wants to excel.

"I'm a very greedy actor who wants to be offered everything, to constantly try evolving, trying to better my craft. Generally, I pick roles I don't think I can pull off. There's great fun in that," Akkineni told PTI in an interview.

The second season of the critically acclaimed show saw Akkineni in the role of Raji, a Sri Lankan Tamil liberation fighter, who faces off against the intelligence agent Srikant Tiwari, played by series lead Manoj Bajpayee.

Akkineni, whose credits include Telugu and Tamil films like "Eega", "Mahanati", "Mersal", and "Super

Deluxe", also addressed the controversy around "The Family Man".

Ahead of the release of the new chapter in June, there were calls for a boycott of the series in Tamil Nadu, including IT Minister T. Manoj Thangaraj, over its alleged depiction of Eelam Tamils.

While the show mostly received favourable reviews, especially for Akkineni's performance, many also slammed the makers for 'brown facing' the rather fair-skinned actor.

All in all, the Chennai-born star said she looks back on the experience "only with love".

"I did not play Raji as a villain. She was just on the wrong side of history. She was loyal to her cause and that was it. I did not even for one moment think of her as a villain.

"I just gave my 100 per cent. When the backlash and the trolling happened... a lot of people were asking me to comment. But I just wanted to wait for the show to come out and for people to see what we've done."

Akkineni said though her portrayal came from "a place of honesty", she apologised to those who took offence.

"If some of them still have any resentment I sincerely apologise for anything that I did that offended them.

I wasn't trying to offend anyone," she said.

Last week, Akkineni won the best actress award (series) for "The Family Man 2" at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne 2021. Bajpayee was named best actor (series) at the movie gala.

"This is my first award for my performance. This just feels very special," she said.

After "The Family Man", the quality of Hindi content being offered to her has improved "very much", the actor said.

"I'm very happy with the kind of content that is now being offered. Actors can dream of being offered such varied content and I'm extremely grateful for everything 'The Family Man' has given me and opened new doors for me. Thankful to the team and to everyone who thought of me to play this role."

Akkineni is on a break for a month or two, after which she plans to take on new scripts and challenges.

"I'm so happy that after 11 years I can finally say that I have nothing in the pipeline! I'm content where I am and now I'm just looking for what can surprise me next," she said.

The actor will next be seen in "Shaakuntalam" (Telugu) and "Kaathu Vaakula Rendu Kaadhal" (Tamil).



FIT AND FAB! The actress, Vanessa Hudgens is sure to keep fashion a priority while heading to her workout in West Hollywood.

Jake Gyllenhaal to headline film adaptation of 'Oblivion Song'

LOS ANGELES, AUG 25 (PTI): Hollywood star Jake Gyllenhaal is set to star in and produce "Oblivion Song", a big-screen adaptation of Robert Kirkman and Lorenzo De Felici's graphic novel of the same name.

Released by Image Comics in 2018, "Oblivion Song" follows the story of Nathan Cole, a man who makes daily trips to try and rescue those still living in Oblivion, an apocalyptic hellscape in Philadelphia that was lost a decade prior, along with 300,000 of its citizens.

According to Variety, Gyllenhaal will back the film via his Nine Stories banner along with Riva Marker and Kirkman, best known for co-creating "The Walking Dead" series, via his shingle Skybound Entertainment.

Kirkman, whose credits also include "Invincible" and Marvel Comics such as "Ultimate X-Men", said he is looking forward to Gyllenhaal bringing the story to life.

"We are so fortunate to have assembled a team that is as passionate about this comic as we are," he added. Marker, whose producing credits include "Beasts of No Nation" and "Wildlife", described "Oblivion Song" as a "mind-blowingly captivating series". "Just as Kirkman did with 'The Walking Dead' and 'Invincible', in 'Oblivion Song', he's created the potential for a franchise



that is profoundly entertaining, and the perfect opportunity to explore big questions we're reckoning with globally," she said.

Veteran producers Brian Oliver and Bradley Fischer of New Republic Pictures, which has optioned the rights to the story, said they are elated to collaborate with Nine Stories and Skybound to help bring Kirkman and De Felici's visionary comic to life. "Oblivion Song" is a rare combination of spectacle, originality, and masterful, multivolume storytelling, which is basically everything we love in the world," they said.

Gyllenhaal will next star in Antoine Fuqua's Netflix film "The Guilty", scheduled to have its world premiere at the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival in September, and Michael Bay's "Ambulance" for Universal.

Warner Bros reveals 'Matrix 4' title, first trailer at CinemaCon

Los Angeles, Aug 25 (PTI): The fourth chapter in the popular sci-fi film franchise "The Matrix" is titled "Resurrections", studio Warner Bros has announced. The studio also unveiled the first footage of the film, fronted by Hollywood star Keanu Reeves, at a downsized CinemaCon, billed as "the largest gathering of movie theater owners from around the world" in Las Vegas.

Lana Wachowski, one half of the Wachowskis who directed all the three films in the franchise with the sister Lilly, has penned and directed the new project. Besides Reeves, original trilogy star Carrie-Anne Moss also returns for the fourth installment.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the trailer was played for the

CinemaCon audiences but not released online.

The trailer began with Reeves' character Thomas Anderson, not Neo -- his name in the original trilogy -- in therapy, telling his therapist (Neil Patrick Harris), "I had dreams that weren't just dreams. Am I crazy?"

He senses something is off with the world, but has no memory of what The Matrix is. Later, he runs into a woman (Moss) at a coffee shop. They shake hands but neither one remembers the other. Meanwhile, Thomas spends his days taking prescription blue pills, and wondering why everyone is glued to their phones, him being the odd one out.

Thomas later runs into a mysterious man (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II) who is

reminiscent of Morpheus, the freedom fighter played by Laurence Fishburne in the original trilogy. The man hands Thomas a red pill, synonymous with the franchise's premise, and soon the footage of him with powers, seeing The Matrix for the fake reality that it is, plays out.

The CinemaCon presentation also saw closer looks at Warner Bros' other big-ticket films like "The Batman", starring Robert Pattinson; Denis Villeneuve's take on "Dune", James Wan's "Malignant", Clint Eastwood's neo-Western "Cry Macho", "The Sopranos" prequel "The Many Saints of Newark" and "King Richard", starring Will Smith.

CinemaCon is being viewed as Warner Bros' attempt to reassure the

exhibition industry that the company is still in the game of theatrical releases, eight months after its decision to debut its entire 2021 slate on the same date in theatres and on the WarnerMedia-owned streaming service HBO Max.

The December announcement sparked backlash theatre owners and talent, including director Christopher Nolan, who had a long-time relationship with the studio, and Villeneuve.

Under a deal made public earlier this month, Warner Bros will resume giving films an exclusive theatrical window next year, with its 2022 slate going into cinema halls for 45 days. Meanwhile, its upcoming DC superhero titles "Batgirl" and "Blue Beetle" will directly head to HBO Max.

ARIES:

It gets better from here, Aries. It gets better from here. You are stepping into a period of transition. So accept the changes in a graceful manner. The good thing is, you're not in this alone. You have the help and support of both your friends and co-workers. So accept what the Universe is sending your way without bringing your judgements to the table. You are safe and you will always be looked after.

TAURUS:

The worst is behind you, Taurus. The worst is behind you. Trust that you have emerged from the dark night of the soul as a stronger, more resilient version of yourself. So, continue to visualise the life you are creating for yourself as you move forward and onwards. The good thing is, you are stepping into a creatively fertile period. A potent time when you will be supported to create the kind of work you will be remembered for.

GEMINI:

This is it, Gemini! The big moment that you have been hoping and praying for. While you do not know what the future holds, you know it's going to be pretty damn good. You have

been exercising your manifesting skills and affirming all that is good, after all! Remember, the old ways will not serve you on the new path. So, free yourself from the burden of who you are supposed to be and allow yourself to experiment like you never have before. Bliss is your birth right, beautiful. So are joy, happiness, and abundance.

CANCER:

There was a time when you faced roadblocks on your path, no matter how much you tried to power through. But, now is "not" such a time in your life, Cancer. You are being aligned with your purpose, and attracting the kind of opportunities that were once a distant dream. Claim what is yours and know that you are deserving of the life you are being blessed with now.

LEO:

It's been a wild, wild ride through the multiverse, but it gets better from here. Oh, we promise it gets better from here, Leo! So keep affirming the good, even when you feel a little bit delusional on the inside. Your thoughts and words have the power to create miracles. The good thing is, your work is providing you with the kind of healthy distraction you need right

now. So, be the lion(ess) that you are and focus on building your empire.

VIRGO:

The cards are bringing your attention to money matters, Virgo. How are you feeling about your finances at this moment? Are you being remunerated fairly for your efforts? If there is an imbalance here, then it deserves to be addressed, beautiful. What the cards want you to remember is that if you don't show up for yourself fully, nobody will.

LIBRA:

Actions speak louder than words, Libra. We repeat: actions speak louder than words. So pay attention to how they're showing up for you (or not), for this is likely to tell you more about your relationship than grand gestures ever will. The good news is, everything else is looking picture-perfect in your world—well, almost! You are making time for the things that fulfil you on a soul level and surrounding yourself with the kind of people you love.

SCORPIO:

What brings you joy, Scorpio? The passions that give you a reason to wake up in the morning, day after day? The cards are bringing your

attention to something you have been dismissing as merely a hobby or a side hustle. Just for today, allow yourself to dream of a parallel reality where you are living your best life whilst doing that thing you love the most. This is the first step to welcoming a magnificent shift in your physical reality, one that will change the course of your life for the better. Remember, you deserve to live a life that's creatively and financially satisfying all the same.

SAGITTARIUS:

Here's the thing, Sagittarius: we're all going through our own trials and tribulations. We have little or no perspective on what the other person could be experiencing at this moment. So, it's best to leave our judgements at the door. What this phase of your life calls for: a little more love and a little more compassion. Trust that the gift of unconditional love will help you heal and transform even the most complex relationships.

CAPRICORN:

It wasn't easy, but you powered through. You choose to accept the ebb like you would the flow. You chose to turn the darkness into

light—and that is your greatest achievement, Capricorn. What the cards are reminding you is that you are stepping into a time of healing. A time when all the help and support you need in order to feel whole again will be made available to you.

AQUARIUS:

Aquarius, you're a humanitarian at heart. Working towards the upliftment of the collective is something you have always thrived on. So, hit the pause button and introspect on how you're being asked to make a difference. It's time to educate those around you and wield your power for the greatest good. Trust that the help and resources you need in order to make an impact will always be available to you.

PISCES:

You're stepping into the next big phase of your career. A time when you will receive the fruits of your labour. A time when you will be recognised for your contribution in the given field of work. But that doesn't mean you can take it easy hereon. There are oh-so-many mountains to move, and the time to start actively making a difference is now.