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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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No minister present, Punjab farmers boycott meeting on new farm laws

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, OCT 14 (PTI): Farmers' organisations from Punjab on Wednesday boycotted a meeting called by the Union agriculture ministry to resolve their concerns over new farm laws and accused the government of playing double standards with no minister present to hear them out.

Representatives from 29 farmers' organisations, including Joginder Singh-led Bharati Kissan Union, were miffed at the absence of Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Minister of State for Agriculture in the meeting.

The meeting was convened at the Krishi Bhavan amid police security to avoid any protest. After the meeting, agitated farmers' representatives were seen shouting slogans and tearing copies of new farm laws outside Krishi Bhavan.

More than 30 representatives, who had come in a bus, were mostly senior citizens but had not even worn face masks despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

"No proper discussion took place. Neither Union agriculture minister nor junior ministers were present to hear our concerns. We asked why the minister is not meeting us, why the government is playing double standards by calling us here and ministers holding virtual meetings in Punjab. There was no proper response," Darshan Pal, member of the coordination committee of 29 farmers' organisations, told PTI after the meeting.

Since there was no response from Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agrawal, who was chairing the meeting, farmers' organisations decided to boycott the meeting, he said.

"BJP leaders are holding virtual meetings in Punjab and talking against us. We are called to Delhi and no minister wants to listen to us," Pal, who also heads the Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab, added.

Harjinder Singh from Ajad Kisan Sangathan said, "The agriculture secretary had invited us to take our feedback on the new farm laws. We thought the agriculture minister would be there, but only the secretary was present."

The secretary tried to explain that the new laws are good and will yield good results in future, he said.

"We knew the secretary had no authority and there is no point discussing it with him. We decided to boycott," he added.

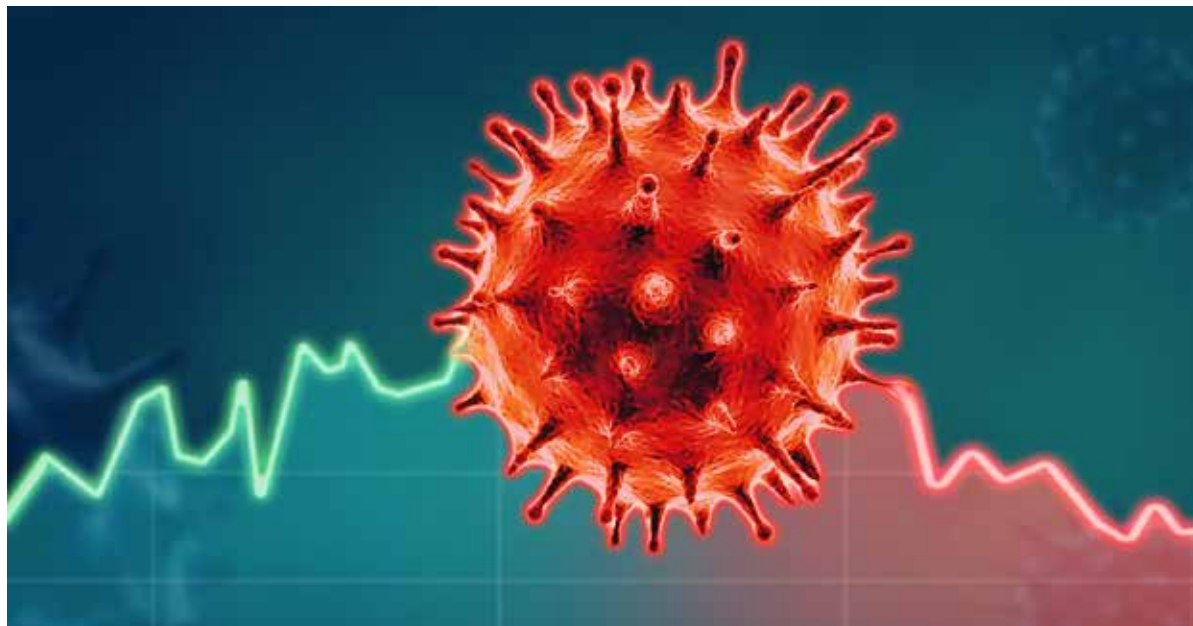
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Sikkim records 42 new COVID cases, tally reaches 3,459

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 OCT:**

A total of 61 patients have been discharged from isolation facilities on Tuesday to improve the figure of discharged patients of COVID-19 in Sikkim to 2994. In the meantime, Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported so far has reached 3459 with 42 new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours. There are now 325 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State, of which four are currently in the ICU facility of STNM hospital.

Thirty-one new cases of novel coronavirus were detected in the RT-PCR testing of 174 samples at VRD Lab in STNM hospital on Tuesday, while 11 more persons were found positive for COVID-19 in the rapid antigen testing of 57 samples. Likewise, all six samples tested by Tru-eNat were reported negative for COVID-19.



In the daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam G Bhutia mentioned that out of 42 new cases in the State, 41 cases have been reported in East District and 01 in South District]. While giving details of new cases in the State reported in RT-PCR, he informed three persons from the con-

tainment zone at Metro Point Tadong, two from 6th Mile Tadong, three from emergency ward of STNM hospital, five from Deorali School Road, two from near Swastik Gate and two from Mangley were found COVID-19 positive. Likewise, one person from Sumin, one from Ranipool, one from Namnang, one from Co-operative Road in Sichey,

one from Lower Sichey, one from Rinchenpong, one from Sichey, one from Bhanu Gram in DPH area, Gangtok, one from Lapha Dara in Pakyong, one staff of Samman Bhawan, one from SNT colony at Daragaon Tadong, one from Arithang, one from Singtam Bazaar and one from Namchi District Hospital were also found positive for

COVID-19 in RT-PCR testing, he said.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that six persons from AG quarters in Upper Sichey, one from above Metro Point Tadong, one from Indira Bypass, one from Middle Shyari and one from opposite Manipal gate at 5th Mile Tadong tested COVID-19 positive in the rapid antigen testing.

All students will get admission in college, Khaling assures

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 OCT:**

Jacob Khaling, Political Secretary to the CM, today assured that the State Government was very serious about ensuring that all Sikkimese students desirous of enrolling in colleges here were accommodated.

While conveying the message of Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] on the college admission issue, he said that the State government was aware of the issue and has been making arrangements so that all

students received admission.

He appealed to the students not to panic about their college admissions.

Mr Khaling was speaking as the chief guest at an SKM meeting held at the party's CLC office at Yangthang in West District on Wednesday.

An SKM press release informs that the meeting was chaired by West District vice-president [in-charge], DB Gurung, and attended by senior party leaders and workers of West District.

COVID-19 caseload in India rises to 72,39,389

NEW DELHI, OCT 14 (PTI): India's COVID-19 caseload rose to 72,39,389 with 63,509 infections being reported in a day, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease crossed 63 lakh pushing the recovery rate to 87.05 per cent, according to the Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The coronavirus death toll climbed to 1,10,586 with the virus claiming 730 lives in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

For six days in a row the active cases of COVID-19 remained below 9 lakh.

There are 8,26,876 active cases of coronavi-

rus infection in the country which comprises 11.42 per cent of the total caseload, while the recoveries have surged to 63,01,927, the data stated.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate was recorded at 1.53 per cent.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28 and crossed 70 lakh on October 11.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 9,00,90,122 samples have been tested up to October 13 with 11,45,015 samples being tested on Tuesday.

CM launches Rs 8 per litre incentive scheme for dairy farmers



Gangtok, 14 Oct (IPR): Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang launched the New Government incentive to dairy farmers of Sikkim at Rs 8 per litre of milk, an initiative towards Aatma Nirbhar Bharat at Chintan Bhawan today. The programme was organized by Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services in collaboration with the

Sikkim Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited.

The programme was also attended by the Deputy Speaker SLA, Sangay Lepcha, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Advisors, Chairmen, Chief Secretary Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, Heads of various departments, senior officials and dig-

nities.

The programme was held to introduce the government initiative of providing the dairy producers at Rs. 8/- per litre directly to their individual account by the State Government in addition to the prescribed rate applicable to them.

The Chief Minister in his address appreciated the

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Will continue struggle for restoration of Article 370, resolution of Kashmir issue: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, OCT 14 (PTI): Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, who was released from detention after 14 months, has vowed to continue her struggle for the restoration of Article 370 and the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

She said the Centre's decision of August 5 was a "daylight robbery".

"We all have to pledge that we will take back what was snatched illegally, undemocratically and unconstitutionally on August 5 last year. We

will also have to work for the resolution of Kashmir issue for which thousands of people have laid down their lives," Mehbooba said in an 83-second audio message on Twitter late on Tuesday night.

The PDP leader said it will not be an easy task as there will be difficulties in "this path but our steadfastness and determination will be our aides in this struggle".

The Centre had ended the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into union territories on August 5

last year. Mehbooba also demanded the release of Kashmiri people languishing in various jails.

"As I have been released, all other persons (from Kashmir) who are detained in various jails across the country should also be released," she said.

Mehbooba was released on Tuesday night after the Union Territory administration revoked the Public Safety Act charges against her; more than a year after she was detained following the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Calcutta HC orders private schools to offer minimum 20 pc reduction in fees

KOLKATA, OCT 13 (PTI): The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday ordered 145 private schools here to offer a minimum 20 per cent reduction in fees across the board, while directing that non-essential charges for use of facilities not availed of will not be permissible.

Guardians of students of the 145 schools, mostly in an around the city, had moved petitions seeking reduction in school fees since only on-line classes are being held during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Directing that there will be no increase in fees during the financial year 2020-21, the court ordered that from April, 2020 till the month following the one in which the schools reopen in the physical mode, all 145 schools will offer a minimum of 20 per cent reduction of fees across the board.

The division bench comprising justices Sanjib Banerjee and Moushumi Bhattacharya directed that non-essential charges for use of facilities like additional charges for laboratory, craft, sporting facilities or extracurricular activities or the like, which are not availed of, will not be permissible during the months that the schools have not functioned in the physical mode.

"There are many parents who are diverting a substantial part of their disposable resources, at great personal sacrifice, to get their children admitted to high-end schools with superior educational infrastructure and amenities," Justice Bhattacharya separately observed in the order.

The judge said that such guardians would greatly benefit from a relaxation in the quantum of fees under the current financially-stressed times. Session fees traditionally charged periodically will be permissible, the division bench directed, but said that it will be subject to a maximum of 80 per cent of the quantum charged for the corresponding period in the financial year 2019-20.

The minimum figure of 20 per cent reduction in the monthly tuition fees will be on the basis of the tuition fees charged for the corresponding month in the previous financial year, it said.

The court made it clear that there will be no refund of the fees already paid.

"However, to the extent fees have already been paid which are in excess of the directions contained herein, suitable adjustments will be made over the remaining months of the financial year, unless the parents agree in writing otherwise," the court directed.

The bench said that for the financial year 2020-21, a maximum of five per cent excess of revenue over expenditure will be permissible and the balance excess should be passed on by way of general concession or special concession in individual cases of extreme distress.

"If any school makes a loss as a consequence of following these directions, such loss can be made up in course of the next two financial years, 2021-22 and 2022-23, if normal physical functioning resumes by March 31, 2021," the court ordered.

Paving the way for additional relief to parents facing financial distress in the current pandemic situation, the court directed that in addition to the across-the-board reduction, every school will entertain applications from parents or guardians for further reduction or waiver or exemption or delayed or instalment payments.

Every application in such regard must be supported by the financial statements of the parents or guardians so as to justify the request and these should be certified by any qualified auditor, the court said.

The bench directed that with effect from December 8, 2020 all schools will be entitled to disallow students whose fees have not been paid in full in terms of this order and those who have not applied for reduction or waiver, adding that schools should ensure that this extreme step is taken only after exercising due care and caution.

The fees payable for every month and the other periodic charges, like session fees, for the entire financial year 2020-21 should be indicated by the individual schools and put up on the website to be set up by the first petitioner in the matter by October 31, 2020.

Moving the court, parents and guardians had submitted that institutions cannot be allowed to charge the usual fees despite no classes being conducted for a considerable period and, thereafter, classes being resumed on the online mode in some cases with very limited resources being used by the schools.

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Hamro Chhahari Souvenir release on 18 Oct



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

Nepali-Gorkha singer, Dipa Narayan Jha will release the first souvenir of Nepali-Gorkha Seva Samiti's [Mumbai] mouthpiece, Hamro Chhahari in a program at Chembur Ashram on 18 Oct at 4.00pm. Dipa Narayan Jha, hailing from Kalimpong, is wife of famous singer Udit Narayan Jha.

A press release informs that this type of souvenir is probably the first attempt by Nepali speakers in the Mumbai metropolis. This souvenir has been published to commemorate the first year of the establishment of the Nepali-Gorkha Seva Samiti's original campaign, Hamro Chhahari.

The souvenir seeks to provide basic information about the institution, as well as literary taste, especially to members of Hamro Chhahari around the world.

In this souvenir, the newly established, newly formed and new creators have provided their designs and informative works in various literary and social subjects in Nepali, Hindi and English language, while some of the main themes of the institution have also been included in it. In the same way, the publication committee members have informed about the decision to release the first souvenir of women members around the world, because of the large number of women members in this organisation.

In view of the present COVID-19 situation, the souvenir is being released online through the digital medium 'Hamro Praja Shakti' - a daily newspaper of the Nepali world. The program will be attended by 10 guests from the country and abroad.

The program will be broadcast live on Facebook on 18 Oct from the Facebook and YouTube Channel of Hamro Prajashakti.

CM launches...

initiative of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services and Sikkim Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited. He thanked all the dairy producing farmers and their efforts in helping the Government to make such a historic initiative towards their benefit.

He mentioned that he can understand the plight of the efforts that go in making a living in the rural areas, and added that such unique initiative would encourage the farmers to excel. He urged the gathering to appreciate the roles and hard work put in by the farming community in providing food for all.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that Sikkim must realize the goal of being self-reliant in every spheres as desired by the Prime Minister of India. He urged all present to continue to enhance their production and added that the State Government would always aid them in every possible way.

He stated that the pandemic has caused delay in bringing such initiatives which would encourage the hard working farmers. However, the State Government will now continuously work on policies catered for the rural populous, he added.

The Chief Minister also stated that the amount for the incentives given to the farmers has already been ear-

Finance Minister launches Indian Bank's 'MSME Prerana'

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

'MSME Prerana', an on-line Business Mentoring Programme for MSMEs, an initiative by Indian Bank was launched today by Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, at the Bank's Corporate Centre in Chennai. Debashish Panda, Secretary, Financial Services, MOF participated by VC in the launch.

MSME Prerana is a first of its kind initiative by a Bank in the country for the MSME sector. This is for empowering entrepreneurs through skill development and capacity building workshops in the local language. The program is in collaboration with M/s Poornatha & Co, a firm that designs Entrepreneurial Development Programs in vernacular using online web based interactive sessions and case studies.

Spread over 12 sessions, "MSME Prerana" program enables MSME entrepreneurs to acquire expertise in handling Finance and Managerial skills, capacity to handle crises in business, understand the dynamics credit rating and risk management. While the sessions on Managerial and Financial skills will be handled by M/s Poor-



natha & Co, the Banking related topics will be handled by faculty from Indian Bank. On successful completion, all participants would get a Certificate, issued jointly by Indian Bank, Poornatha & Co and MADE (Michigan Academy for Developing Entrepreneurs), USA.

Launching the programme, Union Minister of Finance, Nirmala Sitharaman said that Indian Bank has taken an out-of-the-box initiative in launching MSME Prerana which will hold the entrepreneurs through a mentoring program. This novel initiative shall further inspire others in the banking sector to adopt similar measures. She appreciated the fact that the amalgamation process of Allahabad Bank into Indian Bank did not distract the

Bank from the care for customers. The Finance Minister complimented the Bank's leadership and management for this unique initiative.

Padmaja Chunduru, MD & CEO, Indian Bank said "During the outreach programs, webinars and interaction with our MSME units, one main takeaway was that there is still a lot of dependence on Chartered Accountants or Agents for these units to access bank loans and scale up their operations. The barrier was language, it was the jargon, the confusion about what the bank looks for when they approach for loans, how to manage cash flows, which schemes of government are available and suitable to them, how to register themselves for these etc. Many

units were remaining in the micro or small sector, despite opportunities to scale up due to the apprehension about the tax burden.

MSME Prerana is our effort to bridge this gap in the skill sets - it is a Business Mentoring Program that gives inputs in simple terms (no jargon) and in the local vernacular. The objective is to equip the entrepreneurs with business skills as well as communication & HR. The first two programs will be in Tamil for the Coimbatore clusters of Indian bank, then it will be scaled up across the country in Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Gujarati etc. work is already underway for this.

Debashish Panda, Secretary, Financial Services, MOF emphasized on the various initiatives taken by government

to support MSMEs and lauded the efforts of Indian Bank in launching a unique initiative in MSME Prerana. He also exhorted the bank and other financial institutions to reach out to new-to-credit customers and associate with fintech players to accelerate the credit flow.

The e-launch was attended by the Board of Directors of Indian Bank, Industry Associations, Customers of the Bank. Executive Directors of Indian Bank, M K Bhat-tacharya, V V Shenoy and J K Ramachandran along with General Managers also participated.

About Indian Bank: Established in 1907, Indian Bank is a premier Public Sector Bank with a dominant Pan-India presence. It provides varied and diversified banking services through multiple customer service points - branch network, ATMs and digital platform. Indian Bank also has overseas branches in Colombo and Singapore in addition to over 225 overseas correspondent banks. Over the years, Indian Bank has set new benchmarks in providing efficient banking services to its different client groups and has also emerged as a front runner in specialised banking.

Ladakh records 87 new COVID-19 cases, 79 more recoveries

LEH, OCT 14 (PTI): The Union Territory of Ladakh reported 87 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, pushing its infection tally to 5,238, an official bulletin said.

Seventy-nine more patients have recovered from the disease, it added.

The number of active cases in the region stands at 969 747 in Leh district and 222 in Kargil, the bulletin released by the directorate of health services said.

Ladakh has recorded 64 COVID-related deaths so far, while 4,205 patients have recovered from the disease.

The bulletin said 76 new cases were detected in Leh district and another 11 in Kargil.

Of the 79 new recoveries, 56 were in Leh and 23 in Kargil, it added.



Constituency level SKM Nari Shakti coordination meeting

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Nari Shakti held a coordination meeting at Rangang Yangang Constituency today, a press release informs.

The meeting was attended by Zilla Adhakshya, Tshering Dem Bhutia, South District as the chief guest who was joined by Advisor cum VP In-charge (South), Satish Chandra Rai, Additional Political Secretary

to CM (South), Sushri Anjeeta Rajalim, amongst others.

The meet also welcomed 56 Nari families from the constituency who quit SDF and join SKM, the release mentions.

marked which would be directly credited to the farmers account.

He also expressed his desire that the farming community should take benefit of such initiatives and upscale their produces in the coming days. The CM also mentioned that more stress would be given in the strengthening of Cooperative Societies in Sikkim which would help in the state being 'self-reliant'.

During the occasion, the Chief Minister made several announcement such as construction of two milk production centres every year, Rs. 10 Lakhs to the Sikkim Milk Union from Chief Minister's Discretion Fund, Rs. 2 Lakhs to the 'Milkman of the Year Award' to the farmer who produces maximum amount of milk in a year, payment to milk damages caused by road blockage, declaration of 'Gwala Day' as restricted holiday after the day will be finalised and emphasized on One Family Two Cows policy. He also informed that the requests put forward by the MPCS would be considered after evaluation.

The Chief Minister also urged and directed everyone to wear mask all the time, wash hands frequently and to maintain social distancing to minimize the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Minister for Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Lok Nath Shar-

ma in his address marked the day as historic, with a noteworthy achievement for the welfare of farmers. The newly launched initiatives of rupees eight per litre of milk is a unique, exemplary and encouraging financial support initiated by the State Government for the benefits of the farmers of Sikkim.

Besides, encouraging financial incentives, the recent enhancement of milk price raised by the State government, will certainly improve economic and social status of the farmers, he added.

The Minister also underlined immediate requirement of the technical manpower in the department to address the medical and technical issues in rural areas. He also drew light on the benefits of ongoing programme of 'Development through Credit' and informed that the programme will also be launched for East and North Sikkim after upcoming Dusshera festival. He also committed to provide high yielding variety of milch cow to the farmers in near future. Further, he also acknowledged the farmer's hardships and challenges faced by them in producing milk and it's products.

The Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, S.B. Subba in his brief address stated the dairy farm-

ers of Sikkim will be getting incentives of Rs. 8 per litre for the first time in the history of the State. He informed everyone about genetically enhanced livestock which will be introduced soon in the State. He also gave a brief informative overview on the various policies of the department and how the farmers and public can benefit from it.

The Chief Minister also handed over the cheques of the New Government Incentive @ 8/- per litre of milk to the beneficiaries for the months of April, May and June 2020 during the programme.

The programme also saw launching of Dairy Cooperative Song in honour of Dairy farmers of Sikkim written and composed by Dr. A. B. Karki, Managing Director Sikkim Milk Union.

Likewise, prize for the winners of lockdown poetry competition "Gwala" were also distributed.

The award for best suggestions from the employees of Sikkim Milk Union on the topic, "My role and responsibility on combating Covid-19" was also presented.

On the occasion, the 'Milk Man of the Year Award' of Rs. 2 Lakh was also handed over to Puspala Lal Sharma for being able to deliver 89 liters of milk per day.

No minister...

Bharati Kissan Union State President Joginder Singh in a representation made to the government has demanded the repeal of the recent farm laws, legally ensure minimum support price (MSP) for crops and the implementation of the Swaminathan Commission recommendations among others.

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana and other states are protesting against new farm laws which they feel will lead to procurement in the hands of corporates and the end of MSP.

In the meeting, only the agriculture secretary was present for holding talks with us even though farmers were assured that the Central government would talk to them, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burgill told PTI over the phone.

When we asked the secretary to whom he wanted us to talk to, he had no answer, said Burgill.

We said we wanted to hold talks with those who framed laws. We are here for table talks with Cabinet-rank ministers but they do not have time for us, said BKU (Kadiyan) president Harmeet Singh.

Burgill said he told the agriculture secretary that on one side, you have called us for the meeting here and on the other, several union ministers have been holding rallies and doing propaganda in Punjab. These are double standards.

Thereafter, we boycotted the meeting, said Burgill. Eight union ministers including Hardeep Singh Puri have been deputed to hold virtual rallies over eight days from October 13 onwards to "address apprehensions of farmers in Punjab.

Union minister of state for Agriculture Kailash Choudhary held a virtual meeting on Wednesday with farmers of Sangrur and Barnala districts.

Farmers, however, submitted their charter of demands including scrapping new farm laws.

Farmers said they would announce their next course of action on October 15 in a meeting in Chandigarh.

Farmers in Punjab have been demanding the repeal of the three laws passed by Parliament recently.

Besides blocking rail tracks, farmers have laid siege to toll plazas, fuel pumps, shopping malls of some corporates and staged sit-in outside the residences of several BJP leaders.

Farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws will pave a way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporates.

The government, however, has been saying that the laws passed by Parliament recently amid a vociferous protest will raise farmers' income, free them from the clutches of the middlemen and usher in new technology in farming.

The central ministers are also reaching out to farmers, scientists and agricultural professionals in Congress-ruled Punjab to clear misgivings about new farm laws.

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LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available - 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak Price negotiable Contact : 6296366498, 9641878315, 9593262407

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

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

FOR RENT

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General roadside land for sale measuring 30 by 45 square feet near smile land below apica garden. Contact no. 7797885351/ 9733538899.

Building for sale

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

SRM University Sikkim celebrates Annual Research Day

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

KHOJ 2020, the 2nd Annual Research Day at SRM University Sikkim, was observed on 10 Oct in a series of parallel online sessions, a press release informs.

During the event, PG students, research scholars and faculty members from all departments: Management, Commerce, IT, Basic Sciences, Social Sciences and English, presented papers on a variety of topics.

A total of 50 papers were presented, and the best paper in each category was awarded.

The event also witnessed the felicitation of teachers whose research papers and books were published. Eighteen research papers were published this year by faculty



members in renowned national and international journals. One book, an edited volume, was published by an international press.

The University also submitted 8 research proposals for funded

projects out of which one has already been granted and others are in the pipeline, reported the Coordinator of the Research Cell.

Speaking at the valedictory function, the Vice

Chancellor, Prof Ch Satish Kumar said, 'Research is the backbone of all academic endeavour at SRM University Sikkim and we will do everything possible to create a spirit and atmosphere of research

in our institution.' Providing a further fillip to these efforts, Prof Ch Satish Kumar announced that the proceedings of the 2nd Annual Day would be published as a volume within the year.

Lanco Teesta signs agreement with Jaiprakash Associates

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

The Contract Agreement of Civil Package (LOT-I) of 500 MW Teesta-VI HE Project, Sikkim was signed between Lanco Teesta Hydro Power Limited (LTHPL) & M/s Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) at Balutar, East Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The agreement was signed by CEO, LTHPL, Sahadev Khatua, on behalf of LTHPL and Joint Managing Director, M/s JAL, Pankaj Gaur, on behalf of M/s Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL). Speaking on the occasion, Sahadev Khatua said that Lanco Teesta Hydro Power Limited (LTHPL) is a wholly owned subsidiary of NHPC Limited, has awarded the Lot-I package of Construction of Balance Civil Works Package to Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) on 31 Mar, 2020 for a contract price of Rs. 1710 crore.

This package includes

construction of Balance Civil Works for Barrage, Desilting Basins, SFT, Intake Structure, Part of HRT-I & HRT-II and other associated Structures etc. The work is expected to be complete by 08 Aug, 2024.

He thanked Govt of Sikkim for all kind co-operation & support to LTHPL. He expressed his faith on M/s Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) for completing the project in time in view of their vast experience in Hydro Projects construction.

Though COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the start of work, CEO, Sahadev Khatua emphasised that the team is geared up to make up the loss of time. On start of the work, there will be lot of employment avenues for local people including Skill Development opportunities. Construction of this work will also increase realisation of various taxes for Govt of Sikkim.

SRM University Sikkim celebrates World Tourism Day

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

The School of Hospitality & Management, SRM University Sikkim, under the stewardship of the Associate Dean, Basic Sciences, Dr Govind Pratap Singh, celebrated World Tourism Day 2020 on 13 Oct. The theme of the event was 'Tourism and Rural Development', a press release informs.

Delivering the keynote address at the

two-hour event, Vice Chancellor, Prof Ch Satish Kumar said that most of the sites which draw tourists fall in rural neighbourhoods and emphasized the need to develop ancillary sites to improve footfall and tourists' comfort.

Associate Professor, Prof Prashant Kumar Gautam, University Institute of Hotel & Tourism Management, Punjab University, delivered a special lecture on the occasion on how

tourism impacts rural development in the hilly states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Prof Gautam also described the interventions which are needed to alleviate the adverse effects of the pandemic on the tourism sector.

Award-winning mountain biker, Asim Sharma and restaurateur, Titus Rai, both students of the HTM department, were also felicitated during the event.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

SKM coordination meeting held for Khamdong-Singtam and Tumin-Lingee

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 OCT:

A coordination meeting of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha for Khamdong-Singtam and Tumin-Lingee constituencies was held at Makha Bazaar in East District on Wednesday. The meeting had Khamdong-Singtam MLA and Health Minister, Dr MK Sharma, Transport Minister, Sanjeet Kharel, Tumin-Lingee incharge, Samdup Tshering Bhutia and Tumin-Lingee CLC president, Paras Pandey along with leaders and workers of SKM party.

An SKM press re-

lease issued by secretary [press & publicity], Ranjana Pradhan informed that Khamdong-Singtam MLA, Dr MK Sharma highlighted various developmental work that have taken place in the State after the formation of SKM government. He mentioned that SKM government has been working in the education and health sectors on priority basis and has never politicized the education and health sectors.

The release mentions that the Transport Minister said that benefits and developments

are two different things and further added that the earlier government had given benefits by branding it as development but SKM would give clear concept of development and benefit to the people with its works.

The Minister also mentioned that SKM government has been able to work for just seven months due to the COVID-19 pandemic even though it has been in power for 15 months. However, he said that the government has been able to do work of seven years in these seven months.

Mumbai City FC ropes in defender Mandar Rao Dessai

MUMBAI, OCT 14 (PTI): ISL side Mumbai City FC on Wednesday announced the signing of India defender Mandar Rao Dessai ahead of the upcoming season.

The 28-year-old has signed a two-year contract with an option to extend for a further year.

Dessai is an experienced campaigner having featured for and captained ISL side FC Goa for the last six seasons, winning the League Shield and the Su-

per Cup. The Goan player clocked in 100 appearances for his former side across all competitions, scoring six goals and providing 11 assists.

The left-back also made his debut in the Indian senior national side in 2019 and has five caps to his name.

"It was an easy decision for me to make with the ambitious project we have here at Mumbai City, and a chance to reunite with head coach (Ser-

gio) Lobera in my new colours certainly helped. I'm looking forward to linking up with my new teammates, and I hope we have a successful year for us and for our fans back home in Mumbai," said the defender. Head coach Sergio Lobera said Mandar's leadership skills will help the team.

"A player of Mandar's calibre is going to bring in a lot to this team that we're trying to build here at Mumbai City.

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR
RABDENTSE, WEST SIKKIM

Memo No. 168 / DCW Dated: 14/10/2020.

Section 3G
Office of Competent Authority for Land Acquisition
under National Highways Act, 1956

In the matter of Award of Compensation u/s 3G & 3H of the National Highways Act 1956, in respect of acquisition of land for development of National/State Highway from Nayabazar to Legship; Stretch from Km 0.00 to km 24.00; Village: Nayabazar to Legship; Tehsil Soreng District West. State: Sikkim.

Order

Whereas the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India, has decided to undertake development of a State Highway (Nayabazar to Legship) in the State of Sikkim, which requires acquisition of land for the said State Highway infrastructure project, and the undersigned was appointed as the Competent Authority for Land Acquisition u/s 3a of the National Highways Act, 1956, vide Gazette of India Notification S.O. No. 3229, dated 16/08/2018

2. Whereas the Central Government, after being satisfied that land was required for a public purpose i.e. the building, maintenance, management or operation of the National/State Highway (Nayabazar to Legship), Stretch from Km 0.00 to km 24.0, declared its intention to acquire such land measuring **3.7040 Hectares** u/s 3A (1) of the NH Act, 1956, vide Gazette of India Notification S.O. No. 2700 dated 19/08/2019. The said notification was also published in the newspapers, namely, **Summit Times** and **Anugamini** both dated 3/2/2019 respectively, whereby an opportunity was afforded to the landowners to file their objections under Section 3 (C), if any.

3. A total of 0 objections were received in the office of the undersigned by the due date and time. However, minor doubts of land owner were clarified on 02/03/2019.

4. Whereas, on receipt of the report from the Competent Authority, the Central Government declared that the subject land, as specified in the Schedule, should be acquired in terms of Section 3D, vide Gazette Notification bearing No. **3393** dated 17/10/2019. On the publication of the said declaration under Section 3D, the land described in the Schedule attached thereto vested absolutely in the Central Government free from all encumbrances;

Now, therefore, in compliance of sub-section (3) of Section 3G, the Competent Authority hereby invites all the land owners or persons interested in the land being acquired under these proceedings to submit their claims in respect to the land mentioned in the **Schedule** given here-in-below within a period of 15 days (till 31/11/2020, 4:00pm), from the date of publication of this Public Notice, in the office of the Competent Authority i.e. **OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE District Administrative Centre Rabdentse, West Sikkim -737113**

All the persons interested [owner of the lands and other interested person(s)] in the lands specified in the **Schedule** given below are hereby called upon to **submit their claims in the said land** (their share, area of land, any assets attached thereto e.g. structures / trees etc. and state the nature of the respective interest in such lands along with relevant records. The said landowners or persons interested therein shall **also furnish the particulars of their Bank Accounts to which they would like their compensation amount to be credited.** The claims may be submitted in the following indicative format:

Name of village/ Town	Name of the Landowner / interested person	Field Survey No.	Area of land in his share	Any structures/ trees/ tubewell attached to the land	Name of the Bank & Branch in which he/she holds the Account	Particulars of the Bank Account No. IFSC Code of the Bank Branch

SCHEDULE of the same has been published in the Gazette of India: Extraordinary vide notification no. 3393 dated: 17/10/2019.

DISTRICT MAGISTRATE
District Administrative Centre
Rabdentse, West Sikkim -737113

Norway says Russia is behind hacker attack on parliament

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK (AP): Norway's foreign minister said Russia is behind a break-in into the Norwegian Parliament's email system in August, calling the intrusion "a serious incident that affects our most important democratic institution."

"It is our assessment that Russia is behind this activity," Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soeride said.

In a Facebook post, the Russian Embassy in Oslo retorted that "no evidence had been presented" and that "such allegations are unacceptable."

"We consider what happened as a serious deliberate provocation, destructive of bilateral relations," the embassy said.

The 169-member

Storting parliament was targeted Aug. 24 by what it described as "a concerted cyberattack" and "a small number of MPs and members of staff had their email accounts hacked," according to Marianne Andreassen, the assembly's administrative head. She added "various quantities of data had been downloaded."

The cyberattack, which was immediately stopped, was reported to the police. The country's security service PST was investigating it.

The parliament later said private information such as social security numbers, bank information and other personal information plus contact data and preparatory political work "may have been lost."

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Wildlife Weak

Inform the young before Red Pandas become just stuffed toys

Any reference to Sikkim, and the qualifying sentence invariably makes mention of the fact that it is a biodiversity “hot-spot”. We have all read reams after reams on the various geographical zones that Sikkim packs into its 7,096 square kilometres. Experts tell us that Sikkim has 4,000 varieties of flowering plants and herbs, 450 species of orchids, 300 species of ferns, nine species of conifers, 550 species of birds, 600 types of butterflies and a list of fauna that outstrips any other area its size.

This is what one has read.

Few would have seen even a sliver of it.

But wait, the Wildlife Week for the year is already a week in the past, its observance, never significant, rendered further superficial and token by the pandemic and lockdown. That week got lost in the build-up to the Unlock and the general incongruity of making people care for and understand wildlife when for the rest of the year concerted efforts are made to keep them away for each other. Also, the irony of celebrating wildlife through printed-on-flex announcements cannot be missed. Flex banners are the rage. But they should not be in an Organic State given that it is Poly Vinyl Chloride, the PVC that is the building block for all non-biodegradable plastic/polythene. And it is in insensitivities such as this that wildlife becomes weak even in otherwise Green Sikkim.

The past few years have seen a rise in human-wildlife conflicts [with the wildlife at the suffering end], but these have been limited to bear attacks and sightings, and the rare clouded leopard incident, beyond that, even the bastis have not been spying on too much biodiversity. Deer populations are on the rise one is told, but in the absence of any scientific study, this could be credited as much to the wiping out of the predator population as to the ban on hunting. And then there are the cases of disease in the deer population in parts of Sikkim which has still not been satisfactorily explained. That said, sightings of wildlife diversity remain rare. May be the fauna has retreated deeper into the forests; but even that is unlikely because Sikkim’s small size ensures that even the thickest of forests has but a constricted sweep with either a habitation or a road encroaching the forest cover. What this results in is that there are very few core-forest areas for the wildlife to retreat beyond human contact. Admittedly, in the absence of any statistics [current or otherwise], the suggestion that wildlife or flora is not very abundant is as unlettered as the frequent claims of Sikkim being a biodiversity paradise. This is not to challenge claims or Sikkim’s position in biodiversity rankings, but to underline the need for more detailed, from the field contemporary studies on Sikkim’s flora and fauna. Any such effort will obviously begin with a genuine stirring for something on these lines by the Forest Department and then a parallel effort to excite interest on such matters among the young, for it will be they who inherit whatever is left and will hopefully grow up to understand the state of Sikkim’s wilds. But that will take more than the tokenism still offered to special Days and Weeks; the kind of tokenism through which the planners escape any real commitment to resolving real issues the rest of the year round.

But even in their tokenism, such days have a role to play – in exciting the interest of the young since it is invariably they who get pulled out of classrooms to join rallies and raise placards. In the context of wildlife, one such occasion had arrived in the first week of October when the Wildlife Week played out. The first week of October is over now, but wildlife has not made any news, even by way of events.

Events for the Wildlife Week should be organised in way and in the belief that what the younger generation sees, it will protect. The observance of Wildlife Week should provide the impetus to take the introduction of Sikkim’s young to their environment to the next level. The universal greed for “progress” is apparent, if not even more amplified in Sikkim. Sikkim, to its credit, can stake claim to having segregated areas as wildlife reserves much ahead of even India, but now the time has come to reaffirm this commitment. The State has already lost animals like the Takin, the Pygmy Hog and the Sikkim Stag to the bracket which records “extinct animals” and has placed more in the “endangered list.” Someone, and only the Forest Department comes to mind, has to now take the responsibility of educating the younger generation on the inventory of animals that the State still has with it. Sponsored visits to wildlife sanctuaries and tours conducted by experts are the need of the hour. Then, the young will see what Sikkim has and will become more committed to protecting it. Ignorance can prove fatal, because then no one will even notice the loss until it is too late. There might actually come a time when the young grow up believing that the Red Panda is a stuffed toy and not a real animal. Conservation will not be possible once that stage is reached...

Nobel Peace Prize spotlights the links between hunger and conflict

JESSICA EISE
theconversation.com

The 2020 Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to the United Nations World Food Program for its efforts to combat hunger, foster conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war. This choice starkly underscores growing concern about increasing global food insecurity and the clear connections between hunger and conflict.

Today, more than 820 million people – about 1 in 9 worldwide – do not have enough to eat. They suffer from food insecurity, or not having consistent access to the right foods to keep their bodies and brains healthy.

Humans need a varied diet that includes a range of critical nutrients. Food insecurity is especially important to young children and unborn babies because improper nutrition can permanently stunt brain development and growth.

Hunger has many causes. It can be a weapon of war; the result of a global pandemic like COVID-19 that disrupts production; or the result of climate change, as extreme weather events and shifting climates increase crop failures around the globe.

MEETING A GLOBAL NEED

The World Food Program was created in the early 1960s at the behest of U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower. “We must never forget that there are hundreds of millions of people, particularly in the less developed parts of the world, suffering from hunger and malnutrition, even though a number of countries, my own included, are producing food in surplus,” Eisenhower said in a 1960 speech to the U.N. General Assembly. “This paradox should not be allowed to continue.”

While the U.S. was already providing direct food aid to needy countries, Eisenhower urged other nations to join in creating a system to provide food to member states through the United Nations. The WFP is now one of the world’s largest humanitarian agencies. In 2019 it assisted 97 million people in 88 countries.

The WFP both provides direct assistance and works to strengthen individual countries’ capacity to meet their people’s basic needs. With its own fleet of trucks, ships and planes, the agency carries out emergency response missions and delivers

food and assistance directly to victims of war, civil conflict, droughts, floods, crop failures and other natural disasters.

When emergencies subside, WFP experts develop programs for relief and rehabilitation and provide developmental aid. Over 90% of its 17,000 staff members are based in countries where the agency provides assistance.

LINKS BETWEEN HUNGER AND CONFLICT



The Nobel award recognizes a key connection between hunger and global conflict. As the U.N. Security Council emphasized in a 2018 resolution, humankind can never eliminate hunger without first establishing peace. Conflict causes rampant food insecurity: It disrupts infrastructure and social stability, making it hard for supplies to get to people who need them. Too often, warring parties may deliberately use starvation as a strategy.

Food insecurity also perpetuates conflict, as it drives people from their homes, lands and jobs, deepening existing fault lines and fueling grievances. Conflict-driven hunger has been widespread in the past several years in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Yemen.

THE GROWING THREAT OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity is an urgent global challenge now and for the future. The WFP reports that unless urgent action is taken, the COVID-19 pandemic could almost double the number of people suffering from acute hunger by the end of 2020. Economic impacts of COVID-19 hit the world’s poorest people hardest: If they can’t work, they don’t have money to buy food.

In the longer term, climate change is an equally

urgent threat. Agriculture is one of the industries that is most exposed and vulnerable to a shifting climate. Think of it as a “Goldilocks industry”: The weather must be “just right” to grow crops, and conditions that are too hot, too cold, too rainy or too dry can mean poor harvests or total losses. All aspects of food security may be affected by climate change, including who ultimately gets the food, how much it costs and how much is wasted or lost along the way.

SEEDS OF CONFLICT

The best way to prevent future hunger crises is to take action before they develop. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many flaws in global political and economic systems and worsened food insecurity for the world’s poorest populations.

Eisenhower, who commanded U.S. forces in Europe during World War II, understood where such conditions could lead. “In vast stretches of the earth, men awoke today in hunger. They will spend the day in unceasing toil. And as the sun goes down they will still know hunger,” he observed in a 1958 speech. “They will see suffering in the eyes of their children. Many despair that their labor will ever decently shelter their families or protect them against disease. So long as this is so, peace and freedom will be in danger throughout our world. For wherever free men lose hope of progress, liberty will be weakened and the seeds of conflict will be sown.”

As the Nobel Peace Prize award makes clear, a world of peace and stability hinges upon everyone’s receiving the most basic of human dignities: the food they need to live.

[the writer is Postdoctoral Researcher, Purdue University]

Can we actually learn to live with coronavirus? Not until we have a vaccine

SARAH PITT
theconversation.com

As we move into the last quarter of 2020, the virus that has defined this troubled year is showing no signs of going away. In the absence of a vaccine or a broadly effective treatment, some are now saying that we must learn to live with COVID-19. But what does that actually look like?

It’s a complicated question that boils down to this: Should we allow SARS-CoV-2 to spread through most of the population while shielding all the elderly and those at high risk of serious disease, thus creating some level of underlying immunity in the population? Or is it better to keep up with the control measures and aim for the elimination of the virus?

In trying to answer the question, the concept of “herd immunity” – when around 60% of the population is immune to a disease – is often invoked. But this term is not well understood. Control of an infectious disease through build-up of natural immunity in the population has never been achieved before. Herd immunity works through targeted vaccination, and we do not yet have a vaccine for COVID-19.

VIRUSES AND IMMUNITY

Take the example of smallpox – a very infectious, scary disease and the only human virus we have ever eradicated. Unlike COVID-19, people who caught the virus always showed symptoms, so they could be found and isolated. Anyone who did not die would have life-long protection.

But we only completely rid the world of it through a coordinated vaccination campaign. This was the only way that high enough levels of protection could be achieved across the world to reach the threshold for herd immunity.

About a quarter of all common colds are caused by types of coronavirus. Since SARS-CoV-2 is also a coronavirus, could there be a similar protective crossover? We don’t know how long the protection to any coronavirus lasts after you recover, but we do know that it does not last forever.

One recent study, for example,

showed that some people can get ill with the same type of coronavirus more than once in the same winter season. This shows that natural immunity cannot be assumed as a fact of the human-coronavirus relationship, and herd immunity probably cannot happen naturally. Indeed, it would be remarkable if we could achieve natural immunity without a vaccine as this has never happened before.

CONTROLLING THE SPREAD

How about trying to get rid of SARS-CoV-2 through controlling its spread? This is what happened with its close relatives SARS-CoV, or Sars, and MERS-CoV, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome, which are both also related to bat coronaviruses. These diseases popped up in the 21st century, and presented a new pathogen for human immune systems to respond to, so they could be useful examples to predict what might happen with COVID-19.

Sars went round the world twice between November 2002 and May 2004 before disappearing altogether. This was thanks to stringent control measures, such as quarantine for contacts of people with the infection and regular deep cleaning of public areas.

A robust laboratory testing scheme was set up. People were encouraged to wear face masks and wash their hands often. These measures stopped the spread of the virus between people, leading to its extinction.

The advantage we had in trying to contain Sars was that most people who had the infection developed symptoms quite quickly, so they could be identified, given the medical help they needed and then isolated to prevent them from infecting others. Unfortunately, COVID-19 appears to be most infectious at the beginning of the disease while people have either mild or no symptoms, so we can’t do the same thing as effectively.

Mers was first noticed in the Middle East in 2012. It causes a very serious illness and kills 34% of those who catch it. It seems to be less infectious than SARS and SARS-CoV-2 – to spread the disease people have to be in very close contact.

So patients with Mers tend to give it to those caring for them in hospital or their immediate families. This makes it easier to contain outbreaks and has stopped the disease becoming too widespread geographically. There are still large outbreaks, including 199 cases in Saudi Arabia in 2019.

Like Mers, and unlike Sars, we can expect outbreaks of COVID-19 to pop up even after we have it more or less under control. They key thing is to identify people who have the infection as soon as possible, through testing and contact tracing, to reduce the numbers affected by a particular incident. An effective and widely used vaccine would help to get to this stage sooner.

SETTLING DOWN

Comparisons with influenza outbreaks are also helpful in understanding what “living with” COVID-19 might look like. The 1918-20 Spanish flu is estimated to have infected 500 million people, and around 50 million people died. Between January 2009 and August 2010, at least 10% of the global population were probably infected with Mexican Swine flu, but the number of deaths, at just over a quarter of a million was similar to the expected rate for seasonal flu.

The 1918 and 2009 viruses are the same type of influenza A, called H1N1. So why was the death rate lower for Swine flu? That’s because in the 21st century, laboratory testing for influenza is a routine task, we had effective antiviral treatments (Tamiflu and Relenza) and a vaccine. The virus also mutated to become less dangerous. It settled down and joined all the other seasonal influenza strains, and is now known as H1N1pdm09.

Could the same happen for COVID-19? Unfortunately not. We do have accurate laboratory tests for SARS-CoV-2 but these were only invented in 2020. Testing has created extra work for the hospital microbiology laboratories while they still have to carry on with all their usual work.

The antiviral remdesivir is only used to treat people who are already in hospital with severe COVID-19. A

vaccine is unlikely to be ready before spring 2021. There are a few new strains of SARS-CoV-2, but unfortunately they are either about the same as the original or more infectious. This virus is not yet showing any sign of settling down.

THE WAY OUT

Most people who get COVID-19 recover, but around 3% of those who have tested positive around the world have died. We do not know what proportion of those who make some sort of recovery will go on to develop long-term side effects (known as long COVID), but it could be up to 10%. Studies of people infected with Sars in the early 2000s show that some of them still had lung problems 15 years later.

Faced with statistics like this, we should be trying to ensure that as many people as possible are protected from COVID-19 infection, not “learning to live with the virus”. We need to continue with day-to-day measures to stop coronavirus from passing between people as much as we can. During 2020, that has meant various degrees of government-imposed lockdown in most countries.

In the medium term, there does need to be a balance between restrictions on people’s freedom and allowing them to meet up with loved ones and earn a living. But SARS-CoV-2 is not like smallpox, not like Sars or Mers and not like the Spanish or Swine flus. There are lessons we can learn from these previous infectious diseases but this goes beyond poorly understood concepts of herd immunity, elimination or learning to live with a virus.

It looks as though outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 will be a fact of life for some time to come, but “learning to live with the virus” should not mean letting it infect large numbers of people. The plan should be to make sure that very few people get infected so that new outbreaks are small and rare.

[the writer Principal Lecturer, Microbiology and Biomedical Science Practice, Fellow of the Institute of Biomedical Science, University of Brighton]

Naga flag & Yehzabo are non-negotiable: NSCN (IM)

DIMAPUR, OCT 13 [NAGALANDPAGE]: The NSCN (IM) has made its stand clear that it detests any kind of piecemeal solution, short of Naga national flag and Yehzabo (constitution).

"We have stood our ground on these two non-negotiable issues and we shall continue to stand till the last man standing," said NSCN (IM) chairman, Q Tuccu in a press statement.

Tuccu stated that the Government of India and the NSCN has reached the threshold of striking the final deal but the sensitive issue of Naga flag and Naga constitution remains the sticking point.

"For the Naga people these two issues stand tall because they symbolize our political and national rights. The Government of India knows the political significance of these issues for the Naga people but come short of giving official recognition to be made a part of the final agreement. This is the crux of the ongoing Indo-Naga political talks and the reason why the going gets tough, leaving the NSCN negotiators with no option but to act tough," he said.

The NSCN (IM) chief maintained that Naga people cannot afford to forget the "political blunders" of the 16-Point Agreement and the Shil-



long Accord. "We cannot allow such agreement to repeat and flatter us again. We cannot be blinded to go by the ghost of another Naga People's Convention (NPC) that sold out our political rights and history. It will be an abhorrent act if we knowingly go against our history and political rights for which nearly 3 lakhs Nagas have given their lives. One wrong step taken at this decisive stage is enough to make ourselves a laughing stock before the world."

Stating that Na-

gas cannot forget the achievements made by leaders like late AZ Phizo, late Isak Chishi Swu, late Khodao Yanthan, late Gen Kholi Konyak and present general secretary Th Muivah, he said, "The people of Israel during the hard journey towards the promised land of Canaan stood the test of time under the leadership of Moses who steered his people not to waver and grumble but to trust in God. Today, the same God of Moses will deliver us, and flag and constitution should

be with us to glorify His name.' Citing milestones of Naga history beginning from the formation of the Naga Club in 1918, Tuccu reminded that in 16th May 1951 Plebiscite was conducted where 99.9% voted for sovereign Naga independent nation. Since then, we have never turned back but in the process paid heavy price defending our God given rights, he said.

"God never let down the Naga people as we have crossed many hurdles during the last 23 years, to take the In-

do-Naga political talks to this crucial point. The final testing time has come for the Naga people. We must exercise our courage and wisdom to know the political truth of God's creation of Naga Nation. As we stand at the fag-end of Indo-Naga political talks we must take the right decision," he stated, adding NSCN (IM) shall be failing before God and before the Naga people if we stumble at this moment of our history.

Tuccu maintained that Naga people cannot be lured into accepting "highly attractive economic packages at the expense of our exalted position with sovereign rights. We have to prove our worth as Naga by upholding our Flag and Yehzabo."

Stating that our joint struggle with Naga people from all walks of life including civil societies, churches, bureaucrats, politicians, etc for over seven decades to live in dignity and peace should be given a new meaning, the NSCN (IM) said, "It is now or never."

Appreciating contributions of Naga people towards Naga national cause, Tuccu urged Naga sons and daughters to give their concerted efforts till Naga people's rightful political destination is reached sooner than later.

Naga solution must include territorial integration: NSA



DIMAPUR, OCT 13 [NAGALANDPAGE]: The Naga Scholars' Association (NSA) has stated that any agreement on the Indo-Naga political issue should incorporate the core elements of Naga political national identity, particularly Naga flag, Naga constitution and territorial integration with national character.

Putting forth its position on Indo-Naga settlement in view of the consultative meeting called by the Government of Nagaland on October 15 at Kohima, the NSA said the Naga political issue is a geo-political and national

issue for self-determination, and therefore which ever political organization negotiates and decides for settlement should keep abreast the long cherished goal of the Naga nation, which the Nagas have struggled for.

The agreement should accord Nagalim with legislative, executive, judicial and financial powers outside the purview of the Constitution of India, said NSA president Dr Zuchamo Yanthan and general secretary Dr Lungthuiyang Riamei in a statement.

Stating that the Naga political groups should

make utmost effort to unite in the Naga national principle/goal for self-determination, the Association urged Naga legislators to seriously work to facilitate the process of uniting the Naga national political groups to pave way for realizing the desired aspiration.

"It is the bounden responsibility of the Naga people at large to contribute to the strengthening of the negotiation to achieve the Naga aspiration," it said adding Naga people must take collective responsibility today to decide the fate of the Nagas.

Mamata inaugurates Durga Puja in 69 places

KOLKATA, OCT 14 (PTI): Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday launched the festival season in West Bengal inaugurating Durga Puja in 69 places in the virtual mode and said though the festivities were not being held in many states the TMC government did not stop it in Bengal considering the people's sentiments. She inaugurated 69 pujas in the northern districts of the state and in Nadia.

Banerjee iterated her call to puja committees and to the people to celebrate the festival observing all COVID-19 regulations, including maintaining the required distance in the marquee.

"We will seek blessings from the goddess and worship her with all safety precautions... People have been under lots



of hardship and stress due to COVID-19 and lockdown. They are mentally under stress. Pray to Maa Durga to bring us out of the corona crisis" she said.

Durga Puja, Banerjee said, is a festival which unites people of different linguistic identities, different communities.

"It is the festival of people speaking in Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Ol chiki

and Kamtapuri who join hands to invoke the goddess. It is the festival of different communities," she said.

Banerjee asked the administration to provide help to Durga pujas organised by women.

She also inaugurated puja pandals of Nakta-la Udayan Sangha and Ahiritola Sarbojonin in south and north Kolkata respectively.

Two minors among 10 new COVID-19 cases in Mizoram



AIZAWL, OCTOBER 14 (PTI): At least 10 more people, including two minors, tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram on Wednesday, taking the state's tally to 2,212, a health department official said.

Of the fresh cases, seven were reported from Aizawl and one each from Champhai, Lawngtlai and Kolasib districts.

"Two minors, aged 5 and 10, are among the new coronavirus patients," the official said.

All the new cases from Aizawl district were

detected during contact tracing, he said.

Three of the 10 fresh patients are not residents of Mizoram and have come from other states, the official said.

The northeastern state now has 119 active cases, while 2,093 people have already recovered from the disease.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state currently stands at 94.62 per cent.

A total of 90,748 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in the state so far, he added.

ASSTOAD lifts ban on sand supply to Dimapur

DIMAPUR, OCT 13 [NAGALANDPAGE]: The Assam Sand Suppliers and Truck Owners Association Dimapur (ASSTOAD) on Tuesday lifted the total ban on the supply of sand in the district which it had imposed on September 30 in a bid to bring down the cost of sand being imported from Assam.

The officials of ASSTOAD made the announcement during an interaction with the media fraternity here in its office at Hotel Senti, Khermahal, Dimapur explaining that it has come to an understanding with 15 mahaldars in Assam and fixed the price per cft at source at Rs 32. They mentioned that only after a meeting with the District Administration on Wednesday, October

14, the price for the consumers would be fixed.

It may be mentioned that when the ban was imposed, with sand per cft costing at source Rs 110, it was informed that the Association would engage in dialogues with their Assam counterparts, mahaldars, and other stakeholders so as to come to a price which would be accepted by all and would keep the concerns of the public at the forefront.

During the interaction today, besides the ASSTOAD officials, mahaldars were also present who asserted that they are not part of any Association that has entered into agreements with the different sand suppliers in the district.

One of the mahaldars, Thang Teron said that during the last 6 months

their business have suffered much due to the pandemic as well as due to the bandh called by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), which was lifted on October 9, and added that the present price at source is subjected to change in future as the price depends on reaching the places with no roads working in symbiosis with the land owners and villages.

ASSTOAD finance secretary, Deon Swu said that from October 14, the suppliers can continue with their business but cautioned that suppliers should buy the sand from genuine mahaldars only.

Meanwhile, the ASSTOAD has again asked the truck owners who have not yet registered with the Association to do it by October 15.



Rhino carcass found in Gorumara

JALPAIGURI (WB), OCT 14 (PTI): The carcass of a rhinoceros was found at the Gorumara National Park in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district on Wednesday, officials said.

It appeared that the male rhino, named

'Don', died due to its age, they said, adding that the animal was 35 years old.

The carcass was spotted during regular patrolling near Bamandanga tea garden in Malbazar subdivision's Nagrakata block, the officials said.

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Ukraine stun Spain in noisy stadium

KYIV, 14 OCT (REUTERS): Ukraine pulled off a shock 1-0 win at home to Spain in the UEFA Nations League on Tuesday at a raucous Olympic Stadium as fans savoured a first ever victory over the 2010 World Cup winners.

Andriy Shevchenko's side took the lead against the run of play in the 76th minute when Viktor Tsygankov took David de Gea by surprise by firing home from outside the area, after latching on to an outstanding reverse pass from Andriy Yarmolenko.

The goal was wildly celebrated by the whole Ukraine team and some 21,000 fans spaced out across the stadium, with the hosts taking advantage of UEFA regulations allowing 30% capacity at certain matches in an easing of coronavirus restrictions.

Ukraine had lost their last three outings, including a 4-0 reverse to Spain last month and a 7-1 thrashing at the hands of France in a friendly last week, after losing six players due to COVID-19 positives.

"I don't see myself as a hero. All our team are heroes," said match-winner Tsygankov.



The result shook up League A Group 4, giving Ukraine an outside chance of finishing top of the group with two games remaining.

Spain still lead with seven points, with Germany second on six, level with Ukraine in third, with Switzerland bottom with two points after their 3-3 draw with Germany.

"At the end of the game we entered into panic mode," said Spain coach Luis Enrique.

"I've lost many games like this in my career,

when you are playing better but the opponent grows in confidence then scores on the counterattack. But overall I liked what I saw from my players."

Spain took control of the play in the first half and practically monopolised possession, nearly going ahead with a Sergio Ramos free kick which struck the bar and when Ansu Fati caught a clear sight of goal but missed the target.

Ukraine were much better after the break and Oleksandr Zubkov

missed a golden chance to give them the lead when he deceived De Gea in the area but somehow missed the target with the goal gaping.

Spain then went for the jugular, as midfielder Rodri hit the post and Mikel Oyarzabal was thwarted by the outstanding Ukraine goalkeeper Georgiy Bushchan, who was making only his third appearance for his country after three other goalkeepers tested positive for the coronavirus.

Yet the visitors were

soon undone down the other end by some lax goalkeeping from De Gea and were left to dwell on a shock defeat in the stadium where they had beaten Italy 4-0 in the Euro 2012 final.

"We played with heart and absolute commitment. We had to defend a lot and wait for our chance," added Bushchan.

"Our plan worked 100% because we got what we wanted. All the team are heroes, they ran themselves into the ground."

Cristiano Ronaldo tests positive for coronavirus

LISBON, 14 OCT [THEGUARDIAN]: The Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo has tested positive for coronavirus, the Portuguese Football Federation has confirmed.

The 35-year-old is said to be "doing well, without symptoms, and in isolation", with no further positive tests reported in the squad before Portugal's Nations League match against Sweden on Wednesday.

The PFF confirmed in a statement: "Following the positive case, the remaining players underwent new tests this Tuesday morning, all with a negative result, and are available to Fernando Santos for training this afternoon, in Cidade do Futebol."

Ronaldo had played in both of Portugal's matches so far during the international break. The former Manchester United and Real Madrid forward started against Spain in Lisbon, coming off late on during the second half of the goalless draw, and then played all of the Nations League A3 fixture against France in Saint-Denis on Sunday. He had scored in each of his Serie A appear-



ances this season, including two goals in the 2-2 draw against Roma on 27 September.

Earlier this month Napoli failed to show up for a match at Juventus after their local health authority ordered players to stay at home following positive Covid-19 results returned by the club's Piotr Zielinski and Elif Elmas. Despite facing the prospect of a 3-0 walkover victory being awarded by

Serie A to Juve, legal representatives of Napoli said they would resist this outcome.

In the runup to that scheduled fixture, two non-playing or coaching staff members at Juventus went into isolation after testing positive. Those affected were outside the playing, technical and medical staff, who were all able to work in isolation after the results became known.

Neymar second only to Pelé on Brazil scoring list after hat-trick defeats Peru

LIMA, 14 OCT [AP]: Neymar is second only to Pelé among Brazil's all-time leading scorers after his hat-trick gave the team a 4-2 win in Peru and top spot in South American World Cup qualifying.

The 28-year-old striker has 64 goals for Brazil, overtaking Ronaldo. He celebrated one of his goals by mimicking the former No 9's celebration showing his index finger. An apparently more mature Neymar scored twice from the spot in Lima and once in added time as Brazil twice came from behind. He is 13 goals behind Pelé's tally.

Hours earlier Argentina beat Bolivia 2-1, winning in the altitude of La Paz for the first time since 2005. Brazil and Argentina each have six points from two games but Brazil have a superior goal difference after thrashing Bolivia 5-0 in São Paulo last week.

In other results, Colombia were held to a 2-2 draw in Chile, Uruguay lost 4-2 in Ecuador and Paraguay beat Venezuela 1-0 away.

Peru started against Brazil by imposing their aggressive style and reaped the benefits in the sixth minute when André Carrillo scored with a right-foot volley from the edge of the box. But Brazil recovered, continued to press and Neymar earned a first penalty, which he calmly converted in the 28th minute.

A Renato Tapia shot deflected by the substitute defender Rodrigo Caio put Peru ahead just before the hour but five minutes later Richarlison made it 2-2, following a close-range header by Roberto Firmino.

Brazil's pressure brought a second penalty, also converted by Neymar, who scored again in added time, swooping on a rebound after Everton Ribeiro's shot hit the post, shortly after the Peru defender Carlos Zambrano was sent off.

La Paz has old traumas for Argentina in World Cup qualifiers. The biggest was in 2009, when Bolivia had an astonishing 6-1 win, and in 2017 they lost 2-0 there.

History seemed set to repeat after Marcelo Martins opened the scoring for the hosts with an easy header in the 24th minute. But in first-half stoppage time Bolivia's José Carrasco failed to clear close to the line and the ball hit the right leg of Lautaro Martínez and went into the net.

The goal made Martínez the first Argentina player other than Messi to score in a World Cup qualifier since a 3-0 home win against Colombia in 2016. Seven matches took place in between.

Argentina, whose players were clearly taking their time to catch their breath, capitalised on another costly defensive mistake by Bolivia in the 79th minute. Messi found Martínez on the edge of the box and the Internazionale striker calmly assisted the unmarked Joaquin Correa, who scored with a left-foot shot.

"It was a great win in the altitude, where it costs more," Messi said on his social media channels.

Bolivia's national team are mired in a political fight between clubs and the sport's national governing body, and many of their main players are sitting out World Cup qualifiers.

Australian sport in mourning after death of women's footballer Barclay



MELBOURNE, 14 OCT (REUTERS): Australian sport was in mourning on Wednesday following revelations of the sudden death of women's footballer and former baseball star Jacinda Barclay at the age of 29.

Barclay, who played for the Greater Western Sydney Giants in the professional Australian Rules women's competition and represented the country at five baseball World Cups, died earlier this week, local media reported.

"Jacinda was a much-loved member of the Giants family and we are all devastated by her

passing," Giants Chief Executive David Matthews said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Jacinda gave up a great deal to follow her sporting dreams around the world and we are grateful that she called our club home for four years."

A talent in multiple sports, Barclay made her international baseball debut as a 17-year-old and won a silver medal at the 2010 World Cup.

"It's truly tragic news and we extend our thoughts to those close to Jacinda," Baseball Australia Chief Executive Cam Vale said. "Jacinda made

a significant contribution not only to our sport over a long period of time but a number of other sports, on and off the field."

She also had a stint playing American football and won a championship in the women's Legends Football League with Chicago Bliss.

"The news is devastating and our hearts are breaking," her former Chicago teammate Steph Mur wrote on social media.

"Jacinda lived a life that most people could only imagine. She was an elite multi-sport athlete constantly shredding boundaries around the world."

Germany recover twice in topsy-turvy 3-3 draw with Swiss

COLOGNE, 14 OCT (REUTERS): Germany twice had to come from behind to earn a rollercoaster 3-3 draw against visitors Switzerland in an exciting Nations League group game packed with incident on Tuesday.

The Swiss took an early lead through Mario Gavranovic and Remo Freuler added a second before goals from Timo Werner and Kai Havertz levelled the scores. Gavranovic then grabbed his second only for Serge Gnabry to earn Germany a point.

The result moves Germany within a point of League A Group Four leaders Spain, who remain on seven points after losing 1-0 away to a Ukraine side now on six points, while the Swiss, still without a win, stay bottom with two points.

Germany coach Joachim Loew reverted to a four-man defence for the game in an empty stadium, after they had led in the last four games only to concede equalisers in three of them.

But it remained their weak spot on Tuesday as they struggled with quick breaks from the Swiss who found far too much space.



"It was extremely intense. We started badly but showed great attitude in coming back," Loew said. "That was positive. In defence we made our share of mistakes which we have to stop. But we showed that the team is ready to fight."

The Swiss had stunned Germany

with Gavranovic's fifth minute header and doubled the lead in the 26th when they intercepted a pass from Toni Kroos, playing in his 100th international, and Freuler beat goalkeeper Manuel Neuer with a cool chip.

Werner hit back for the hosts two minutes later, wrongfooting keeper

Yann Sommer with a clever low shot, as the Germans maintained possession and kept pushing forward.

Robin Gosens' effort was tipped over the bar by Sommer late in the first half but the keeper was beaten when Havertz charged into the box and fired in the equaliser in the 55th.

But Germany's backline kept leaking goals as the Swiss went back in front in the 57th. Neuer made consecutive saves from Haris Seferovic but Gavranovic drilled in on the rebound.

A sensational Gnabry back heel flick on the hour pulled the home side level once more and rescued a point for Loew's team.

"We have to defend better, defend more intelligently and smarter," Havertz said. "But we kept coming back, we showed a strong mentality. We need more patience but today there were lots of good signs. We will keep working at it."

The Swiss finished with 10 men following the stoppage-time dismissal of defender Fabian Schaer for a second booking.

Russian-US crew launches on fast track to the space station

MOSCOW (AP): A trio of space travelers has launched successfully to the International Space Station, for the first time using a fast-track maneuver to reach the orbiting outpost in just three hours. NASA's Kate Rubins along with Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchkov of the Russian space agency Roscosmos lifted off as scheduled Wednesday morning from the Russia-leased Baikonur space launch facility in Kazakhstan for a six-month stint on the station.

For the first time, they are trying a two-orbit, three-hour approach to the orbiting space outpost. Previously it took twice as long for the crews to reach the station.

They will join the station's NASA commander, Chris Cassidy, and Roscosmos cosmonauts Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner, who have been aboard the complex since April and are scheduled to return to Earth in a week.

Speaking during Tuesday's pre-launch news conference at Baikonur, Rubins emphasized that the crew spent weeks in quarantine at the Star City training facility outside Moscow and then on Baikonur to avoid any threat from the coronavirus.

"We spent two weeks at Star City and then 17 days at Baikonur in a very strict quarantine," Rubins said. "During all communications with crew members, we were wearing masks. We made PCR tests twice and we also made three times antigen fast tests."

She said she was looking forward to scientific experiments planned for the mission.

"We're planning to try some really interesting things like bio-printing tissues and growing cells in space and, of course, continuing our work on sequencing DNA," Rubins said.

Ryzhikov, who will be the station's skipper, said the crew will try to pinpoint the exact location of a leak at a station's Russian section that has slowly leaked oxygen. The small leak hasn't posed any immediate danger to the crew. "We will take with us additional equipment which will allow us to detect the place of this leak more precisely," he told reporters. "We will also take with us additional improved hermetic material which will allow to fix the leak."

In November, Rubins, Ryzhikov and Kud-Sverchkov are set to greet NASA's SpaceX first operational Crew Dragon mission, bringing NASA astronauts Mike Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi to the space station aboard the Crew Dragon vehicle. It follows a successful Demo-2 mission earlier this year.

The Crew Dragon mission was pushed back from Oct. 31 into November, and no new date has been set yet. The delay is intended to give SpaceX more time to conduct tests and review data from an aborted Falcon 9 launch earlier this month.

Japanese director known for single shots releases Zoom film

TOKYO (AP): The Japanese director who shot to stardom with a zombie movie featuring a delightfully long single shot has for his latest project turned to a video tool that's become an everyday part of this pandemic era: the Zoom call.

Shinichiro Ueda's new 26-minute film was filmed remotely — no one had to meet in person — and features footage shot by the actors themselves on their smartphones as well as recordings of meetings on the now ubiquitous video calling app Zoom.

A comedic horror film centered around teleworking, "One Cut of the Dead Mission: Remote" was released earlier this year and shared for free on YouTube. It features the same characters from his award-winning 2017 film "One Cut of the Dead," which has one shot that was 37-minutes long.

"All of Japan, the entire world, is feeling a bit stressed out over the fears about the coronavirus, and so I

just had a simple wish to cheer people up a bit through light-hearted entertainment," Ueda, 36, told The Associated Press in a recent interview that fittingly took place by Zoom.

"Watching entertainment has saved me, helped me cope often when I was depressed. I sensed a mission of sorts that I have to make this work now," Ueda said.

The backdrop for "One Cut of the Dead Mission: Remote" is the hopelessness artists, performers, musicians and filmmakers are feeling these days, when social distancing restrictions make it extremely hard to pursue their usual work and livelihood, something Ueda said he was feeling himself.

The plot centers around film cast and crew shooting a short movie about a mystery intruder who attacks by tickling victims so they can't stop laughing.

What results is a defiantly hilarious concoction of unsteady selfies, obvious edits and formulaic story-

telling. Yet the work communicates a powerful, moving message about creative people coming together, despite obstacles, and their unwavering devotion to filmmaking.

One sequence and the credit roll feature some of the more than 300 people, who sent in video clips of their smiling and dancing, from South Korea, Canada and various nations, responding to a social media request.

Ueda's style incorporates slapstick comedy and focuses on visual, rather than explanatory verbal storytelling, an approach relatively rare in contemporary Japanese film.

"I grew up on Hollywood films. I've watched more Americans movies than Japanese movies. The works I watched were all made on a global standard, not something just understood in Japan. That helped me develop the knack for pursuing works enjoyed by everyone in the world, works that deal with universal themes and primordial desires,"

he said. Ueda, wearing a "Citizen Kane" T-shirt for the interview, said his influences include works by Billy Wilder, Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Wes Anderson and Sidney Lumet.

In addition to directing, Ueda also writes the screenplays for his films and edits them himself. He frequently works on a shoestring budget.

His earlier film "One Cut of the Dead" had a budget of 3 million yen (\$28,000) but has won awards in the U.S., Europe and Japan. The Japanese title that film can be translated as "Keep that camera rolling," which is exactly what Ueda did for 37 minutes, or nearly half of the film.

Cannes award-winner Koji Fukada praised the earlier work as "a film that passes by in a flash of mesmerized joy over pieces of a puzzle that fit utterly perfectly." Variety said the film "captures all the craziness and exhilaration of movie-making on a minuscule budget." Ueda said he's

pretty sure a long uncut sequence will be a staple of his filmmaking.

"All the techniques, the filming, lighting, recording must continue without stopping. The actors must keep acting without stopping. What's being demanded is enormous. But that difficulty is what makes it fantastic. In a sense, everyone has to come together, to get that one shot," he said.

"All the wonders, meaning and legacy of filmmaking are packed in that single take."

Ueda has been making films since he was a teen, running around with a hand-held video camera. He said he's found the key to success is to just keep making films, lots of them.

"It's only after 200 or 300 bad films you will have that one great film," he said.

"I believe that what counts, beyond anything else, is that you just keep making films. Just keep making mistakes."

Nagorno-Karabakh fighting raises threat of deadly escalation

MOSCOW (AP): A Russian attempt to broker a cease-fire to end the worst outbreak of hostilities over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in more than a quarter-century has failed to get any traction, with rivals Azerbaijan and Armenia trading blame for new attacks.

The failure of the truce that was supposed to begin Saturday reflects the uncompromising positions of the two South Caucasus nations that have stymied decades of diplomatic efforts. The escalation of fighting raises the specter of a wider conflict that could draw in Russia and Turkey and threaten Caspian Sea energy exports.

A look at some military and geopolitical aspects of the conflict and its potential fallout:

ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

Nagorno-Karabakh, populated mostly by Armenians, was an autonomous region inside Azerbaijan during the Soviet era. Historic tensions between Christian Armenians and mostly Muslim Azerbaijanis, fueled by memories of the 1915 massacre of 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turks, exploded in the final years of the Soviet Union.

In 1988, the region sought to join Armenia, triggering hostilities that morphed into an all-out war as the USSR collapsed in 1991. By the time a 1994 cease-fire ended the fighting, an estimated 30,000 people had been killed and up to 1 million were displaced. Armenian forces not only held Nagorno-Karabakh itself but also seized substantial chunks of land outside the territory's borders.

Nagorno-Karabakh, a forested, mountainous territory that covers about 4,400 square kilometers (1,700 square miles), the size of the U.S. state of Delaware, has run its own affairs ever since, relying on Armenia's support.

FAILED PEACE INITIATIVES

Ever since Armenian forces routed Azerbaijani troops in the war, international mediators have sought a political settlement.

Russia, the United States and France, which co-sponsored the Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks under the aegis of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have put forward numerous peace initiatives, but Armenia's stiff resistance to surrendering any land has been a key stumbling block.

Azerbaijan, meanwhile, has relied on its oil wealth to modernize its military and now argues that it has the right to reclaim its land by force after nearly three decades of failed international mediation.

MILITARY DISPARITY

While separatist forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian military continue to rely mostly on aging Soviet-built weapons, Azerbaijan has completely revamped its arsenal with state-of-the-art attack drones and powerful long-range multiple rocket systems supplied by its neighbor and ally, Turkey.

More than two weeks of fighting has shown that Azerbaijan has clearly outgunned the Nagorno-Karabakh forces and put them on the defensive. Azerbaijani troops have made significant advances in several areas around Nagorno-Karabakh and showered its towns with rockets and artillery shells. Armenian forces have countered with Soviet-built howitzers, antiquated BM-21 rocket launchers and obsolete Tochka-U missiles that lack the punch and precision of Azerbaijan's more modern weapons.

TURKEY'S NEW ROLE

Unlike previous outbursts of hostilities over Nagorno-Karabakh, NATO-member Turkey, which has close ethnic, cultural

and historic bonds with Azerbaijan, took a higher profile and vowed to help Azerbaijan reclaim its territory. Turkey's newly assertive role reflects President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ambitions to expand his nation's clout.

Armenian officials say Turkey is directly involved in the conflict and is sending Syrian mercenaries to fight on Azerbaijan's side. Turkey has denied deploying combatants to the region, but a Syrian war monitor and Syria-based opposition activists have confirmed that Turkey has sent hundreds of Syrian opposition fighters to fight in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian authorities also charge that Turkey provides Azerbaijan with intelligence and even air cover, claiming that a Turkish F-16 fighter jet shot down an Armenian warplane. Turkey and Azerbaijan have denied the claim, but Azerbaijan's president admitted that Turkish F-16s have stayed on in Azerbaijan weeks after a joint military exercise. He insisted that they have remained grounded.

CONFLICTING GOALS

While Armenia aims to preserve the 1994 status quo in the region and desperately needs a cease-fire to contain the damage and regroup, Azerbaijan, with Turkey's blessing, clearly is bracing for a long fight, hoping to bleed Armenia and force it to make concessions.

The escalation of fighting is a major challenge for Russia, which has a military base in Armenia but also has sought to maintain good ties with Azerbaijan and avoid a showdown with Turkey. Russia and Turkey have learned to accommodate mutual interests in Syria and Libya and have developed strong economic ties, but the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh could now shatter their alliance.

Activist fined for dislodging African art from Paris museum



PARIS (AP): A Congolese activist was fined 2,000 euros (\$2,320) Wednesday for trying to take a 19th-century African funeral pole from a Paris museum in a protest against colonial-era injustice that he streamed online.

The Paris court convicted Emery Mwazulu Diyabanza and two other activists of attempted theft, but the sentence stopped far short of what they potentially faced for their actions at the Quai Branly Museum: 10 years in prison and 150,000 euros in fines.

Activists and defense lawyers viewed the case as a trial about how former empires should atone for past crimes. Diyabanza's museum ac-

tion took place in June, amid global protests against racial injustice and colonial-era wrongs unleashed by George Floyd's death on May 25 in the U.S. at the knee of a white policeman.

In the Quai Branly protest, Diyabanza and other activists dislodged the funeral pole from its perch while he gave a livestreamed speech about plundered African art. Guards quickly stopped them. The activists argue that they never planned to steal the work but just wanted to call attention to its origins.

The presiding judge insisted the trial should focus on the specific funeral pole incident and that his court wasn't

competent to judge France's colonial era.

French officials denounced the Quai Branly incident, saying it threatens ongoing negotiations with African countries launched by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 for legal, organized restitution efforts.

Diyabanza has staged similar actions in the Netherlands and the southern French city of Marseille. He accuses European museums of making millions on artworks taken from now-impooverished countries like his native Congo, and said the funeral pole, which came from current-day Chad, should be among the works returned to Africa.

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SWEET SUKI! The model, Suki Waterhouse steps out in a black and white dress while walking in Notting Hill, London.

Cate Blanchett boards Greek feature 'Apples' as executive producer

LOS ANGELES, OCT 14 (PTI): Oscar winner Cate Blanchett will serve as an executive producer on Greek filmmaker Christos Nikou's "Apples".

The movie was recently screened at Venice Film Festival's Orizzonti section and later toured the Telluride and Toronto International Film Festivals.

Blanchett boarded the project along with Andrew Upton, and Coco Francini of her banner Dirty Films, reported Deadline.

The Greek-language movie, which is a strong contender for Greece's official selection for the Oscars 2020, takes place amidst an unpredictable, sweeping pandemic that causes people to develop sudden amnesia.

According to the official logline, a man finds himself enrolled in a recovery programme designed to help him build a new life. His treatment: performing daily tasks prescribed by his doctors on cassette tape, and capturing these new memories with a Polaroid camera.

"Apples' is an unforgettable, prescient

cinematic experience. Christos Nikou's film is a unique and beautiful fable about memory and loss which resonates deeply with the unrecognisable terrain in which we currently find ourselves. "We are invigorated to be in



creative dialogue with Christos and to help share his warmth, humour and his fascinating world view," Blanchett, Upton, and Francini said in a joint statement. Nikou co-wrote the film with Stavros Raptis.

Actor Aris Servetis plays the lead role in the movie, produced by Iraklis Mavroidis, Angelo Venetis, Aris Dagios, Mariusz Wlodarski, and Nikou.

'Two and a Half Men' star Conchata Ferrell dies at 77

LOS ANGELES (AP): Conchata Ferrell, who became known for her role as Berta the housekeeper on TV's "Two and a Half Men" after a long career as a character actor on stage and in movies, including "Mystic Pizza" and "Network," has died. She was 77.

Ferrell died Monday at Sherman Oaks Hospital in Los Angeles following cardiac arrest, according to publicist Cynthia Snyder.

Ferrell soldiered through more than a decade on "Two and a Half Men," playing opposite Charlie Sheen and Jon Cryer until Sheen was fired from the sitcom for erratic behavior that included publicly insulting producer Chuck Lorre.

The series, which debuted in 2003 on CBS, continued on the network with new star Ashton Kutcher until 2015. Ferrell was on board for the full run.

She was remembered by Cryer for the "joy she brought so many."

"Berta's gruff exterior was an invention of the writers. Chatty's warmth and vulnerability were her real strengths," he posted on Twitter.

In a tweet, Sheen described Ferrell

as "an absolute sweetheart, a consummate pro, a genuine friend," and called her loss painful.

Ferrell, a native of Charleston, West Virginia, and graduate of Marshall Uni-

versity, gained recognition and several theater awards in 1974 for her role in "The Sea Horse." Her work in Lanford Wilson's "Hot L Baltimore" led to a starring role in the Norman Lear sitcom of the same name.

She received two Emmy supporting

actress Emmy nominations for "Two and a Half Men," and a nod for her role as Susan Bloom on "L.A. Law."

Ferrell's other credits include the films "Heartland," "True Romance" and



Erin Brockovich," while her TV appearances came on "Good Times," "ER," "Grace and Frankie" and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," among other series.

She is survived by her husband, Arnie Anderson, and her daughter, Samantha.

'Driving While Black' shows history of US Black motorists

ALBUQUERQUE, NM (AP): A new film examines the history of African Americans driving on the road from the Great Depression to the height of the Civil Rights movement.

"Driving While Black," airing this week on most PBS stations in the U.S., show how the automobile liberated African Americans to move around the country while still navigating segregation and violence.

The film was inspired by Gretchen Sorin's 2019 book, "Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights." The book was a riveting story on how the automobile opened up opportunities for blacks in the U.S.

The car allowed African Americans to avoid segregated trains and buses throughout the American South and gave blacks a chance to travel across the country. Travel guides presented a modern-day Underground Railroad to show black travelers which hotels and restaurants would serve them. The free movement opened the window to migration across the land and away from Jim Crow, bring in the modern Civil Rights Movement.

The project is one of many recent



works examining travel by people of color despite discrimination and threats of racial violence. Candacy Taylor's "Overground Railroad: The Green Book & Roots of Black Travel in America," released last year, looks at how the Green Book, a travel guide for African Americans, helped black travelers navigate segregation and create a traveling network.

Billy Burke cast in Netflix series 'Maid'

LOS ANGELES, OCT 14 (PTI): "Revolution" star Billy Burke has joined Netflix's "Maid", a dramedy series headlined by Margaret Qualley.

The show will follow Qualley, who broke out with her role in "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", as Alex, a single mother who turns to housekeeping to make ends meet as she battles against poverty, homelessness, and bureaucracy.

Written by Molly Smith Metzler, "Maid" is inspired by Stephanie Land's bestselling memoir "Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive".

According to Deadline, Burk will play Hank, the father of Alex and the former husband of Paula (Andie MacDowell),

from whom he is estranged. A contractor whose life and career was hard hit by alcoholism and the recession, Hank has survived by becoming deeply religious and sobering up. Now remarried with twins, he denies any of the darkness in his past.

Also part of the cast are Nick Robinson, Anika Noni Rose, and Tracy Vilar.

Hollywood star Margot Robbie's banner LuckyChap Entertainment is attached to produce the series in collaboration with John Wells Productions and Warner Bros Television.

Metzler will serve as showrunner and executive producer along with John Wells, Erin Jontow, Robbie, Tom Ackersley, Brett Hedblom and Stephanie Land.

Jonah Hill, Gianna Santos call off their engagement

LOS ANGELES, OCT 14 (PTI): Hollywood star Jonah Hill and his fiancée Gianna Santos have parted ways.

The news comes just a year after Hill, 36, and Santos, 31, got engaged in September 2019.

A source close to the couple told Us magazine that the pair split about six weeks ago.

"The spark went in Jonah and Gianna's relationship," it added.

Hill and Santos were first linked in August 2018 after they were spotted strolling through New York City together. Throughout the course of their relationship, the couple had kept their romance out of the spotlight, only rarely being photographed in public.

Park Chan-wook to soon commence shooting for his next

LOS ANGELES, OCT 14 (PTI): Popular Korean filmmaker Park Chan-wook will start filming his next feature later this month. Park is best known for directing cult-hit movies like "Oldboy", "The Handmaiden" and "Thirst".

The new film, titled "Decision to Leave", will feature Chinese actor Tang Wei and "Memories of Murder" star Park Hae-il, reported Variety.

It follows a diligent and serious detective (Park Hye-il) who investigates a possible murder case in the mountainous countryside and begins to suspect the man's widow (Tang), for whom he also develops romantic feelings. The movie, which Park penned with his frequent collaborator Jeong Seo-kyeong, will also feature Lee Jung-hyun, Go Kyung-pyo and Park Yong-woo.

The project is being bankrolled by MoHo Film and distribution giant CJ Entertainment, which released the multiple Oscar-winning film "Parasite" in 2019 in South Korea.

ARIES:

The week ahead sees you making magic and experiencing a sense of oneness with the divine forces. Both creative and spiritual pursuits are taking centre stage in the Aries HQ, enhancing the quality of everything you do. On the downside, given that the Muse is "this" seductive, it will be easy for you to get consumed by your art. However, there are other people around you at this point of time—people who are vying for your attention. Find a balance between what you give to others and what you give to yourself.

Tip: Make time for love.

TAURUS:

You save everyone, but who's going to save you, Taurus? The cards are urging you to find a balance between the masculine and the feminine principle—the doing and the being. In doing so, you will be able to receive the love and support you're meant to receive from those around you. Healing your relationship with your father or a father figure in your life is also going to be an important theme in the coming days. It's time to release the soul contract that's keeping you from recognising the true essence of your bond.

Tip: Allow yourself to receive the help and support you deserve.

GEMINI:

We can complain about the lack of love in our lives endlessly, or the absence of a companion even, but the truth is that everything we create/manifest in the outside world is a reflection of our inner beliefs. So, the question remains: are you willing to receive the love you truly deserve, Gemini? If not, what's keeping you from opening that sacred space in your heart?

It's time for a paradigm shift, magical one—a shift that requires you to let go of the dated beliefs.

Tip: Allow yourself to receive the love you truly deserve.

CANCER:

The cards are bringing your attention to the 'me against the world' narrative. Why are you repeating the story in which you play the victim? Self-empowerment is a big theme around here, one that will help you stand up to bullies and protect yourself from the bad guys. Remember, nobody can save you but you. It's time to exercise a little more faith in your power and potential.

Tip: Change the narrative.

LEO:

Leo, you're no rookie. You are a sorcerer, an alchemist, and a magician. You possess the power to turn base metal into gold—to transform the most challenging circumstances in your favour. Yet, you doubt your own potential, which keeps you from thriving in the way you're meant to. Today, the cards are urging you to let go of the imposter syndrome once and for all, and to believe in yourself like you have never believed before. Trust that a shift in the microcosm will set the stage for change in your outer world.

Tip: It's time to reclaim your power, Leo.

VIRGO:

Your physical reality is a reflection of your inner landscape. In other words, the mind, body, and soul are not separate from each other. They work in unison. As a healer and lightworker, you understand that awakening those around you to the truth is a part of your sacred purpose. The week ahead sees you breaking free from the self-imposed prison and embracing your power in a way you never have before. It's time to rise

to the position of a mentor and loving guide to those who are walking on the same path as you.

Tip: You are a gifted mentor.

LIBRA:

What if all the world really is a stage? What if we are all just actors, technicians, and costume designers who have been hired to play a part? Today, you're being asked to consider the art of non-attachment. To adopt a non-serious approach to life, to work, and everything in between. Creating for the joy of creating (and nothing else) will bring a sense of ease and flow into everything you do and help you take a quantum leap into a new reality.

Tip: 'Non-attachment' is the magic word.

SCORPIO:

Scorpio, you've always been the sensitive one, the 'connected' one, the telepathic one. The one who is on first name basis with all of Gaia's creations—with a special affinity for flora and fauna. Today, the cards are urging you to acknowledge this relationship. To channel your inner shaman and medicine wo(man). Those who are living the nine-to-five life may feel inspired to adopt a simpler routine.

Tip: You're being called to channel your inner shaman.

SAGITTARIUS:

We're all connected to Source energy. We possess what I like to call a 'hotline with the divine'. Yet, we tend to forget this connection when we board the spaceship to the earthly realm. But you're no muggle, Sagittarius. You've never been one. This chapter of your life requires you to awaken to your own magic and find your way out of the matrix. Remember, the only force standing in the way of your ascension is you.

Tip: Let go of the illusion of separation.

CAPRICORN:

You are infinite potential in human form and you don't even know it, Capricorn! Realising that you possess the gift of the gab is an integral part of this transformation process, one that's inspiring you to plant the seeds for change. Some of you could be stepping into a mentorship role too. Trust yourself to guide those who are walking on the same path, and know that leading by example is the best thing you can do.

Tip: Discovering your magic will continue to be a big theme for you.

AQUARIUS:

We all possess a direct hotline with the divine. We are perfectly capable of receiving guidance from the divine forces—and you're no exception to this rule, Aquarius. Today, the cards are urging you to believe in the magic that surrounds you, and trust the messages that are coming through from the unseen realms. It's by letting go of the limitations created by your logical mind that you will be able to open yourself to the idea of channeling/mediumship.

Tip: Believe in magic.

PISCES:

Denial is an easy way out of the maze, Pisces, and so is indifference. Today, you're being asked to pay attention to the injustice that's unfolding around you. It's true that you cannot save the world. You are, however, capable of creating a paradigm shift. So, rise to your position as a healer and a lightworker. Plant the seeds for positive change and know that in your own special way, you are contributing to the collective.

Tip: Plant the seeds for change.