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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Youth killed in bear attack in Jalpaiguri tea garden

JALPAIGURI, NOV 25 (PTI): An 18-year-old youth was allegedly killed by a Himalayan Black Bear in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, following which irate locals beat the animal to death, a forest officer said on Thursday.

The incident took place in Meteli tea garden when class 11 student Dinesh Khalkho was visiting home from Nagrakata Eklavya Residential School on Wednesday to see his ailing father, he said.

Locals found the student's mutilated body in the tea garden, and later saw the bear roaming in the area, suspecting that the animal had killed him, the officer said.

A few policemen and forest personnel went to the area but they could not prevent the mob from attacking and killing the Himalayan Black Bear, which is a vulnerable species, he said.

A huge police contingent under the Malbazar SDPO was then sent to the area to bring the situation under control.

Active COVID-19 cases in country lowest in 539 days

NEW DELHI, NOV 25 (PTI): India logged 9,119 new coronavirus infections taking the country's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,45,44,882, while the active cases declined to 1,09,940, the lowest in 539 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll climbed to 4,66,980 with 396 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 20,000 for 48 straight days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 151 consecutive days now.

The active cases comprise 0.32 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.33 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the health ministry said.

A decrease of 1,541 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

Covid infections remain erratic, come in at 7.3% a day after registering 0.87% TPR

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 25 NOV:

Covid infections continue to post erratic positivity rates in the State and came in at a high 7.3% today, 24 hours after the daily test positivity rate was recorded at 0.87%. What Sikkim can draw comfort from is that hospitalization of Covid patients remains low and complete double-vaccination coverage today went past 90% in the State.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department this morning, 19 people tested positive from the 259 samples screened for the

virus in the preceding 24 hours. A day earlier, only 3 of the 357 samples tested for Covid had returned positive.

Of the 19 new cases, 18 were registered in East District from 138 people tested and one in West District from 91 samples screened. All the 24 tests conducted in South Sikkim and six in North district returned negative for Covid.

While 17 of the new cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 113 samples, one each in TruNat testing of 17 samples and rapid antigen testing of 144 samples returned positive.

With these new cases, the number of confirmed cases of

COVID-19 [since testing began on 28 Feb, 2020] inched up to 32,198.

Sikkim's count of recovered cases also recorded a slight improvement to 31,336 with the discharge of eight COVID patients from home isolation after making full recoveries giving Sikkim a current recovery rate of 98.30%.

There are 125 active Covid cases in the State at present, 109 of whom are on their way to recovery under home isolation and only 16 are with symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization. There is no under 18 year old admitted in hospital with Covid.

Reassuringly, no Covid death

was recorded in the State in the past 24 hours and the Covid toll continues to hold at 403.

The drop in Covid fatalities and low hospitalization can be ascribed to the vaccination coverage in Sikkim.

Significantly, today, the proportion of fully vaccinated adult population of Sikkim crossed the 90% mark and now stands at 90.04%. 4,65,554 of the 5,17,000 adult population [18+] of Sikkim has now received both doses of Covidshield.

Yesterday, 505 people received the vaccine jab, 478 completing their vaccine schedule with the second dose and 27 getting their first jab.

Meeting discusses how Film Policy can be made more attractive

GANGTOK, 25 Nov [IPR]: Chief Secretary SC Gupta chaired a meeting regarding Sikkim Film Policy 2021 today at Tashiling Secretariat.

The Chief Secretary said that the main focus should be on how to execute the Policy during Pre and post shooting schedule. He further inquired about the assistance that will be provided by the Sikkim Film Promotion Board on certain areas. He said that the Board should be like an umbrella organisation depending on the resources available with all the categories defined specifically.

The Chief Secretary further said that the Board should promote local cinema too with the infrastructure and to



provide hands on access to websites for talent pool and all the shooting destinations.

A detailed presentation of the draft of the Sikkim Film Policy 2021 was presented by Director, IPR Department, Benu Gurung, wherein

she threw light on various aspects about the management and implementation.

The meeting also reviewed the Film Policy of 2020 with the allied departments and stakeholders and after a series of detailed discussion

additional issues were incorporated to make it more accessible and feasible to the filmmakers to come and invest in Sikkim.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Home Department, R Telang, Chairperson, Sikkim Film Promo-

tion Board, Pooja Sharma along with Heads of Departments and representatives of the allied Departments.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by the Joint Director (Films), IPR Department, Bishal Khawas.

Ajoy Edward launches Hamro Party



SMRITA KHAWAS DARJEELING, 25 Nov:

Ajoy Edward today announced Hamro Party as the name for the new political party he is launching. He had earlier asked people to select one of the four names that had been shortlisted for his new party.

Mr Edward had said that he will be launching a new party after resigning from Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF).

"I am very happy to inform everyone that

with the highest demand and votes we have got "Hamro Party" as the name for our new party," he stated.

Further stating that many have accused him of running after power, Mr Edward said that he is in fact running after power but to serve the people of the Hills who want change.

"I want to become the change for Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars," he said.

The party's flag was also revealed on the occasion.

BJP building airports only to sell them off: Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW, 25 Nov [PTI]: Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday said the BJP is laying the foundation stone of Noida International airport while selling other existing airports in the country.

Addressing a rally organised by Janwadi Party (Socialist), an SP ally, near Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport in Lucknow, Akhilesh Yadav said, "How can the BJP be believed when on one hand it is making new airports, and on the other hand selling the existing ones?"

The Lucknow airport was given on lease to a private company earlier.

The SP chief's comments came on the day when Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the Jewar International Airport in Greater Noida.

"One government airport was sold and the other is being made. I fail to understand the reason.

"BJP said the poor with slippers will travel in aircraft, the poor should let the BJP know

how many of them have travelled in planes," he said.

He said the BJP government is engaged in disposing of airports and asked who is profiting from these airports, when even the Delhi Airport is suffering losses.

He asked what will happen to the "rights and honour" of the people in a country where public property is sold off.

"In a country where things are sold off, government institutions are sold off, what will happen to the rights and honour for which Ambedkar gave us the Constitution, what will happen to the future generations? Who will give them jobs, livelihood and reservation?" said the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister at the 'Janwadi Jankranti Maharally'.

During his address, he asked the Chauhan community to extend its support to him, saying if it comes along the BJP will suffer a "historic defeat" in the upcoming elections.

JPS is considered to have an influence over voters of Nonia community, concentrated largely

in 15 districts of Purvanchal, including Ghazipur, Chandauli, Azamgarh, Mau and Ballia region.

There are around 1.26 per cent Nonia voters in the state.

JPS president Sanjay Singh Chauhan had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections on an SP ticket against BJP's Mahendra Nath Pandey and had lost by a margin of around 14,000 votes.

Mr Chauhan had bagged more than 4 lakh 96 thousand votes in the Lok Sabha Elections.

Akhilesh Yadav also criticized the BJP-ruled UP government for publishing "big advertisements" but failing to address people's issues.

He attacked the government over its pre-poll promise of doubling farmers' income by 2022, asking whether it has been done. He also asked it whether it was able to provide fertilizers to the farmers and procure their paddy. He raised the issue of rising prices of fuel across the country to accuse the BJP of prioritizing "big industrialists" over the common man.

DoNER MoS inspects Rs 6,211 lakh Gangtok-Rumtek-Sang Road, returns satisfied



GANGTOK, Nov 25 (IPR):

Minister of State, Ministry of DoNER and Co-operation, BL Verma, inspected the Gangtok-Rumtek-Sang Road today.

The 24 KM road was funded by the Ministry of DoNER and completed on 31 March, 2021, for Rs. 6,211.82 lakhs. The road rises from opposite Mayfair Hotel near Ranipool and traverses through Adampool, Sajong, Rumtek and ends at Sang Bazar and is designated a State Highway.

The main objective of the project was the upgradation of the road from single lane to intermediate standard.

The Minister expressed satisfaction at the completion of the project and congratulated the State Government. He said that the Ministry will further support the upgradation of road beyond Sang, for which a DPR is to be sent.

The Minister was accompanied in the visit by officers and engineers of the Roads and Bridges Department, Government of Sikkim.

Later, the Minister

of State visited STNM Hospital at Sochyangang where he inspected the annexe building which has been partly funded by the Ministry of DoNER. He also inspected the Covid Ward and Oxygen Plants established in the Hospital. The Minister interacted with the doctors and medical staff and enquired about the management of Covid-19 in the State.

Earlier in the day, the Minister visited Nathula pass and interacted with the officers of the Army. He also visited the Baba Harbhajan Shrine near Nathula and offered prayers.

In the evening, the MoS met the President and Members of the Sikkim Film Cooperative Society and assured support in their endeavors.

Summing up his three-day visit to Sikkim, the Minister of State lauded the State Government for the timely implementation of developmental projects. He further assured full support to the State from the Ministry of DoNER for all upcoming projects.

Commerce & Industries Deptt includes fisheries and allied activities under SYSS

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 25 Nov:

The Commerce & Industries Department vide notification No.387/MSME/CNI/2021 dated 19/11/2021 has included "Fish Activities" under the Skilled Youth Start-Up Scheme (SYSS) with the objective of promoting entrepreneurship in the field of fisheries, a press release informs.

These fisheries-related activities include the construction of raceways/ponds for intensive Trout and Carp fish farming, Re-circulatory Aquaculture System (RAS), Bio-flock, fish kiosk (including mobile fish kiosk), etc. with the project cost up to Rs.5 lakh.

To avail the benefits under the Scheme the fish farmers, fishermen

and the fish entrepreneurs may approach the District Industries Centre (DIC) located at Jorethang for South and West Districts and at Tadong, Udyog Bhawan for East and North Districts.

The Directorate of Fisheries will extend support to all the fishermen, fish farmers and fish entrepreneurs interested in availing the benefits under the Skilled Youth Start-Up Scheme in-coordination with the Commerce & Industries Department and in preparation with DPR.

For any support and further clarification of the benefits, the applicant may visit the nearest Fisheries Office or call on the Fisheries Helpline no. 03592-200008.

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Mock exercise on earthquake induced disaster at Namchi

NAMCHI, 25 Nov (IPR): A mock exercise on earthquake induced disaster was organized at Central Park, Namchi, South Sikkim today.

Police Department, Fire & Emergency Services, Quick Response Team (DDMA, South Sikkim), Health Department and 2nd BN National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel participated in the mock exercise.

The Control Room was set up at Office of District Collector (South) and all communications were done through a wireless communication sets citing complete failure of telecommunication lines during the entire exercise. Rescue operations were carried out by Quick Response



Team (DDMA) and NDRF. Demonstration of Search & Rescue which involved scene secure, utility cut off, triage, search and rescue, accessibility to the victims, stabilization of victims and transporting

victims to hospital was demonstrated. The mock exercise commenced at 2:00pm officially and concluded at 3:30pm.

Later, debriefing session was organized at 4:00pm wherein experi-

ence sharing and short comings/limitations were discussed amongst the personnel. The Incident Commander for the said exercise was Addl District Collector (South), Anant Jain.

DoNER MoS inspects Gangtok-Rumtek-Sang road construction

GANGTOK, 25 Nov (PIB):

The MoS, MDoNER, BL Verma inspected the upgradation & construction work of Gangtok-Rumtek-Sang (GRS) Route in Sikkim today. The project is being built at a cost of more than Rs.62 crores and has a stretch of 24Km which will not only give a better access to the area but will also help in boosting the economy.



Supreme Court re-imposes construction ban in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 25 Nov

[NDTV]: The Supreme Court reimposed the ban on construction activities in Delhi on Wednesday after taking note of air quality. Non-polluting activities relating to construction like plumbing work, interior decoration, electrical work, and carpentry are allowed to be continued.

The Court also directed states to use funds collected as cess under The Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996, to help construction workers who would suffer job losses due to the ban to sustain themselves.

The order read, "... as an interim measure, and until further orders, we re-impose the ban on the construction activities in the NCR subject to the following two conditions:-

(i) Non-polluting activities relating to construction such as the plumbing work, interior decoration, electrical work and carpentry are allowed to be continued; (ii) The States shall use the funds which have been collected as labour cess for the welfare of construction workers to provide them subsistence for the period during which construc-

tion activities are prohibited and pay wages notified under the Minimum Wages Act for the respective categories of workers".

The Delhi government had on Monday lifted the ban on construction and demolition activities as the air quality showed improvement. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had submitted that the ban on construction activities in the national capital was lifted as the air quality showed slight improvement. Air Quality Index of Delhi this morning was 290, as compared to 403 last week.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said today that only trucks and tempos that run on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), barring those engaged in essential services, will be allowed to enter Delhi from November 27.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas met on November 21 and took the decision to lift the ban.

The bench that passed the order comprised Chief Justice of India NV Ramana, Justice DY Chandrachud, and Justice Surya Kant.

BJP MP "locked" inside UP stadium over reward money, rescued by police

SHAHJAHANPUR, 25 Nov

[PTI]: BJP MP from Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur Arun Kumar Sagar was on Thursday locked inside the premises of a stadium by local sportspersons protesting against the non-payment of promised reward money to winning teams.

With the stadium gates locked by the sportspersons, Mr Sagar had to remain confined inside the premises until the police rescued him.

During Mr Sagar's visit to the stadium to attend an event, the

protesters raised slogans and tore banners and posters put up to welcome him, the police said.

They also locked the stadium gates from outside for some time, forcing the MP to stay inside. He was taken out by a police team, they said.

Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Kumar said a police force was sent to the stadium after information came about the protests.

"The sportspersons were pacified and the MP was taken from

there," the ASP said.

Mr Sagar, however, did not appear to mind his confinement by sportspersons and said, "The sportspersons were in enthusiasm".

He also denied non-payment of promised money to winning teams, saying: "Those who won got the award. The winners and losers are decided by officers."

The protesters, however, alleged, despite promises by the MP, their winning teams have not been receiving any money.

"The MP had promised that the winning team at the tehsil level

will get a chance to play in Shahjahanpur and they will get award money from ₹ 11,000 to ₹ 51,000 but we were not awarded," said Rajdev, a local sportsperson.

"We have been coming to play here for the past five days. We are not even served food here. We come here to play despite being scolded at home. ₹ 51,000 award money promised to every team was not given due to which we stopped the MP in the stadium here."

On availability of food, the MP said, "Food packets are still available."

Issue fresh summons to Isha Foundation: HC

CHENNAI, NOV 24 (PTI):

Upholding the powers of the Tamil Nadu Commission for Protection of Child Rights to initiate proceedings on its own against Isha Foundation in Coimbatore, the Madras High Court has directed it to approach the Commission with its defence materials, afresh.

Justice S M Subramaniam gave the direction recently while disposing of a writ petition from the Foundation, represented by its administrator, in Velliangi-ri in Coimbatore.

The Foundation was started by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev in 1992. Among other things, it was running schools for children.

The Commission had earlier issued summons under a relevant section of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 alleging deprivation and violation of child rights, in 2016.

Hence, the present petition.

The judge said the competent authorities are bound to conduct an enquiry in a free and

fair manner and by providing opportunity to the writ petitioner to establish their case in the manner known to law.

"Thus, the petitioner has to submit their explanation/objections along with the relevant documents to establish that they have not violated any of the provisions of the Statutes or infringing any of the rights of the children under the Act," the judge said and directed the Commission to issue fresh summons

to Isha Foundation, fixing date and time, enabling the writ petitioner to appear and submit their explanations/objections along with documents, if any, within four weeks under the provisions of the TN Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.

The authorities shall conduct an enquiry by affording opportunity to the writ petitioner and pass orders on merits and in accordance with law within eight weeks, the judge said.

Mahila Sabha held at Barfung-Jarrong GPU

BIKASH CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 25 Nov:

Barfung-Jarrong GPU conducted Mahila Sabha on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 Nov, 2021.

During the program, SIRD PR, Udaya Chamling dealt with the objective of the program, Advocates, Reshma Tiwari and Punam Rai dwelt on various aspects of Violence Against Women,

SHO Rabong, Rajive Bhujel spoke on legal assistance available for women while MO Rabong, Dr Pallavi Pariyar



dwelt on women's health and sanitation.

Panchayats, Anil Rai, Sarita Thatal and Madan Rai expressed gratitude on behalf of the GPU to

the resource persons.

Keynote address was presented by Zilla Panchayat, Tika Maya Chettri who was present on the occasion as

chief guest. SHG members, ASHAs, teachers and senior girl students of CMRSS and GPK staff also attended the programme.

Mahila Sabha held at Tharpu



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 Nov:

A Mahila Sabha on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was organised by Tharpu GPK, under Soreng

BAC, West Sikkim, a press release informs.

The programme was supported by SIRD & Panchayati Raj, Rural Development Department.

Resources person

Jyotsna Gurung (PI) from Soreng Police Station highlighted the topic of Legal Assistance /Provision related to violence against women whereas Resource

Person Tek Maya Sharma from Women and Child Development Department (DCPU South) spoke on violence against women and women's empowerment.

In a first, more women than men in India, shows Government survey

NEW DELHI, 25 Nov

[PTI]: Indicating a demographic shift, the number of women surpassed men for the first time in India with the sex ratio being 1,020:1,000, according to findings of the National Family and Health Survey-5.

"With this, we can say India moves in the league of the developed countries - as the sex ratio crosses 1000," a health ministry official said, attributing it to measures taken for women empowerment such as financial inclusion and for combating gender bias and disparities.

The sex ratio at birth also improved from 919 in 2015-16 to 929 in 2019-20, indicating positive impact of measures like implementation of the PC and PNDT Act and various other interventions.

According to NFHS-3, conducted in 2005-06, the sex ratio was 1000:1000 and in 2015-16 (NFHS-4), it declined to 991:1000.

On November 24, the Union health ministry released NFHS-5 (2019-21) results for India and 14 phase-II states and union territories in the form of fact-sheets of key indicators on population, reproductive and child health, family welfare, nutrition and other health related areas.

The findings of NFHS-5 in respect of 22 states and union territories covered in phase-I were released in December, 2020.

According to NFHS-5, 88.6 per cent of the births (in the 5 years before the survey) in the country were delivered in a health facility. A significant rise since NFHS-4



(78.9 per cent) is a proof that India is marching towards achieving universal institutional births, officials said.

"Assistance by properly trained health personnel working within an enabling environment is needed to eliminate preventable maternal and newborn deaths. A key strategy to ensure skilled care during childbirth is to that all births take place in health facilities in which obstetric complications can be treated when they arise," the official said.

Nearly four-fifth (78 per cent) mothers received postnatal care from health personnel (doctor/nurse/LHV/ANM/midwife/other health personnel) within two days of delivery in the country, a significant rise from 62.4 percent in NFHS-4.

This would result in reducing the maternal and infant mortality rates in the country. The days and weeks following childbirth - the post-natal period, are a critical phase in the lives of mothers and newborn babies. Most maternal and infant deaths occur in the first month after birth. Thus, it is recommended to receive post-natal care from health personnel within the first 48 hours (2 days) of delivery, the official said.

The survey findings

stated total fertility rate (children per woman) in the country has reached the replacement level of fertility, a significant demographic milestone. The TFR for India in 2019-21 has reached 2.0 children per woman compared to 2.2 in 2015-16.

This means women are giving lesser number of births in their reproductive period compared to earlier. This also indicates better knowledge and use of family planning services, late entry into marriage/union, etc, the ministry official said.

The birth registration (with the civil authority) for children under age 5 years has increased from 79.7 per cent (NFHS-4, 2015-16) to 89.1 per cent.

In 41 per cent of the households, at least one usual member is covered under a health insurance/financing scheme, a rise from 28.7 per cent in the last round. This indicates a larger reach and greater acceptance of health insurance/financing scheme in India.

Health insurances

provide coverage for medical expenses and prevents out-of-pocket-expenditures and catastrophic health expenditures especially from the marginalized households. It is to be noted here that, the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PM-

JAY) was not fully rolled out in the country during the period of survey and its coverage may not have been factored in the factsheets, the official explained.

Besides, two-third (66.7%) of the currently married women aged 15-49 years in the country use any method of family planning to delay or limit pregnancies as per NFHS-5 compared to only 53.5 per cent in NFHS-4.

"This is a significant rise since the last round. Use of contraception prevents pregnancy-related health risks for women, especially for adolescent girls, and properly planned intervals between births prevent infant mortality," the official said.

The unmet need for family planning among currently married women aged 15-49 years in the country has declined from 12.9 per cent in 2015-16 to 9.4 per cent in 2019-21.

According to the findings, more than three-fourth (76.4 per cent) of the children age 12-23 months are fully vaccinated (with BCG, measles-containing vaccine (MCV)/MR/MMR/Measles, and 3 doses each of polio excluding polio vaccine given at birth and DPT or pentavalent vaccine) based on information from either vaccination card or mother's recall.

The survey found nutritional status of children under 5 years of age has improved marginally in the country since the last round. However, specific targeted interventions are required to address these challenges in the country.

CRH Manipal Cares Multi-speciality Polyclinic launched

GANGTOK, 25 NOV (IPR):

The CRH Manipal Cares Multi-speciality Polyclinic, Pharmacy and Wellness Centre was officially launched today in a press conference held at the conference hall of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences, Sikkim Manipal University in 5th Mile, Tadong.

The conference was chaired by Vice Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University, Lt. Gen. (Dr) Rajan S. Grewal, AVSM, VSM, and Medical Superintendent, CRH, Dr. Yogesh Verma, along with Officiating Dean, SMIMS, Dr. Sudip Dutta, Registrar, SMU, Dr. Karma Sonam Sherpa, Director, Directorate of Research, SMU, Dr. Bidita Khandelwal, Professor, Surgery, Dr. Kumar Nishant, Associate Professor, ENT, Dr. Mohonish Chettri, and Deputy Registrar, SMU, Dr. Remon Chettri.

Addressing the press and media, the VC said that the launch of the Multi-speciality Polyclinic along with Pharmacy and a Wellness Centre is an initiative of the Sikkim Manipal University that offers a one-stop destination for multi-speciality consultations, a walk-in



pharmacy and laboratory tests. The polyclinic that has been set up at Ladakh Building, opposite SMU main gate, 5th Mile will provide facilities of efficient registration and reception, lab investigations and health check-ups thereby extending the benefit of ease of access to specialised tertiary healthcare services for the citizens of the State of Sikkim, he added.

He informed that the Multi-speciality Polyclinic offers a wide range of OPD services including Medicine, Paediatrics, Obstetrics, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics, Surgery, ENT, Ophthalmology, Psychiatry, Dermatology and a Diet & Nutrition Clinic.

He further mentioned that the regular OPD services will be open from 9am to 5pm on all working days and that the facilities for private consultations with specific specialists will be commenced at the earliest.

"The CRH Manipal Cares Multi-speciality Polyclinic envisages to act as a quantum force multiplier in providing healthcare OPD solutions through user-friendly and patient-focused approach under one roof that will especially benefit the elderly populace, the differently enabled patients and children and pregnant women," the VC stated.

Stressing on the im-

portance of wellness as an embodiment of a perfect harmony between one's physical welfare, mental equilibrium, emotional quotient along with lifestyle and nutrition aspects, the VC said that the Wellness Centre co-located with the Multi-speciality Polyclinic has been established to encompass health solutions of healing through traditional and holistic methods of treatment including Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Homeopathy and other traditional medicine and therapies unique to the State of Sikkim.

He added that the Multi-speciality Polyclinic will bridge the gap between hospital visits,

reduce the consultation time and provide patients with more value added, accessible and efficiently coordinated OPD care.

Reiterating the commitment of CRH, SMIMS and SMU to provide high standards of specialised tertiary healthcare in the State, the VC shared the future growth prospects of the infrastructure for amplifying health services at the multi-speciality polyclinic. The VC expressed that the SMU team will keep striving to be the preferred destination for multi-speciality consultations, lab tests, pharmacy needs and quality healthcare services for the benefit of the people of the State.



Demo held on transferring bee colonies from traditional to movable hives

SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 25 NOV:

Krishni Vigyan Kendra (PIA), Gyalshing, and West District Collectorate held a two-day "Practical Demonstration" on transferring bees from traditional hives to movable frame hives at Tashiding and Gerethang on 24 and 25 Nov, a press release informs. The initiative is part of the North East Council's efforts to promote cluster formation for organic farming and promotion of beekeeping in Chongrang BAC.

IN THE COURT OF THE DTRICT JUDGE, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK

Ref No. 70 DJ(E)

Date: 10.11.2021

Civil Execution Case No. 02 of 2020

(Ghanashyam Sharma v. Yognidhi Nirola)
NOTICE TO SHOW CAUSE WHY ORDER FOR ATTACHMENT SHOULD NOT ISSUE

(O.XXI.R.16)

To,
Yognidhi Nirola (Judgement Debtor)
S/o Somdutta Nirola,
Assistant Professor,
Sikkim Government College, Burtuk
East Sikkim
P.O. Pakyong, Amba. P.O. & P.S. Pakyong, East Sikkim
A/P Manbir Colony, Burtuk, P.O. & P.S. Gangtok, East Sikkim.

WHEREAS, the Decree Holder named above has made an application to this Court for execution of Decree in Money Suit No. 272 of 2018 (Ghanashyam Sharma Plaintiff v. Yognidhi Nirola, Defendant) by way of attachment of your salary. AND WHEREAS, you have failed to appear before the Court on several dates and also failed to satisfy the decretal amount.

You are hereby directed to appear before the Court on 22.12.2021 at 10 o'clock in the forenoon and to show-cause as to why an order for attachment of your salary should not be passed in execution of the above decree.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this the 11th day of November, 2021.

Sd/-
(Prajwal Khatiwada)
District Judge
East Sikkim at Gangtok.

Inter State Training on Organic Crop Production by ICAR

GANGTOK, 25 NOV (PIB):

After a gap of nearly eight months the first training for progressive farmers from outside Sikkim was again organized.

The ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong, Gangtok successfully organized three-day inter-state training program on "Organic Farming of Important Crops" for the progressive farmers of ATMA, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab during 22-24 Nov, 2021.

A team of 13 persons visited ICAR Sikkim Centre to get equipped with recent advances in organic production techniques. During the program, Joint Director, Dr Ramgopal Laha, ICAR Sikkim Centre highlighted the relevance of this training program for promoting the organic farming systems. He emphasized the need of good soil health in organic production system. He also discussed in detail the 'promising technologies developed by the ICAR-Sikkim Centre'.

He further said that we would look forward for long term association



tion with the farmers of Punjab in organizing more training programs of such kind. The Joint Director further reiterated to adopt dairy farming and vermicompost technology for profitable organic farming in Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab. Scientist SS (Soil Science), Dr Shaon Kr Das coordinated the training program and talked on integrated organic nutrient management, soil sampling process along with plant nutrients functions, deficiency symptoms and their management.

Scientist SS (Fruit Science), Dr SK Dutta shared some views on the organic nursery management and fruit production techniques. Scientist (Vegetable Science), Dr TL Bhutia delivered a lecture on organic vegetable production technology. Scientist, Dr SS Bora, Spices Board (Entomology), delivered a talk on 'insect pest management in organic vegetable crop production'; SMS (Plant Breeding), Dr JK Singh discussed the 'organic seed production techniques and

varietal selection. Finally, Assistant Professor (Pathology), Dr Rupert, CAEPHT, Ranipool briefly discussed the organic disease management in vegetable crops.

All the team members also visited the ICAR Sikkim Centre Research Farm and were briefed about the ongoing research and development activities. Giving the feedback of the program the Project Director, ATMA, Fatehgarh Sahib said that program was well organized. He also highly appreciated the efforts of ICAR Sikkim Centre in organizing the training program. Finally, the Joint Director also distributed the training certificates to the participants. The program was ended through vote of thanks by Scientist SS (Soil Science), Dr Shaon Kr Das.

5-member pickleball team to participate in two national tournaments

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 NOV:

A five-member pickleball team from Sikkim will be participating in the Indian Master Open to be held in Mumbai on 26-28 Nov and Indian Ranking tournament to be held from 04-05 Dec also in Mumbai, a press release informs.

The team consists of Deepash Chhetri, Ashis Sharma, Adarsh Sharma, Suraj Gupta and



Coach Swagat Lepcha who will also be playing in the tournaments.

This was informed by Pickleball Association of Sikkim which is led by Karma Sherpa as president, Hemant Gurung as advisor and Swagat Lepcha as chief coach.

BEFORE THE LEARNED OATH COMMISSIONER, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK

AFFIDAVIT

I, resident Ram Bahadur Subba, son of Late Hem Karna Subba, of Suhim Portico, Upper Sichey, P.O. P.S Gangtok, Sadar, East Sikkim declare on oath as follows:-

1. That my Original Parcha bearing Khatiyani No. 117, plot no.57/98/177, with an area of 0.03 acres situated at Pioneer Reserve, Gangtok Revenue Circle, East Sikkim has been actually lost.
2. That for the purpose of my bonafide use, the Revenue Officer, Gangtok, East Sikkim has issued the duplicate parcha of the above mentioned plot number in my name.
3. That this affidavit is made bonafide and I sign this affidavit on this the 22nd day of November, 2021 at Gangtok, East Sikkim.

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Khabar Patrikas

What makes a good newspaper

Television, then the march of cable TV, then the web of internet and now social media, or just SM as the need for speed has everything shortened. Newspapers, the print and ink on paper, have survived these threats over the years so it goes without saying that they are here to stay, survive and may be even thrive. These alone, however, do not a newspaper make. So what makes a good newspaper? Opinions on these will undoubtedly differ, but here are some points for the readers to mull over.

For starters, good newspapers are unwavering in their commitment to their community and this “community” can be the national audience, a big city or even a small town. They serve as a kind of glue that provides various factions with the same information so that they can unite or divide based on their views and takeaways. By inference thus, newspapers don’t decide, they provide the people with all the required information from all the varied points of view and let the people decide. Newspapers are linchpins for change in the sense that they guide change and moderate the opposing views on the course of this change. They don’t themselves bring about the change. That is for the people to do. Newspapers and journalists who believe themselves to be the activists of change credit themselves with too much more intelligence and importance than is healthy.

But then again, journalism has also always been about judgement. Things, however, go wrong when some working at newspapers believe that the only view that matters is their own. That approach is misguided and dangerous. As individuals, or even institutions, we can only contribute to change and maybe even participate, not force it. These qualities are not always overtly expressed in a newspaper’s pages, but flow naturally when newspapers succeed in shining the light on real problems and explaining real issues. Apart from reporting on issues they provide insight into the issues that face a community. If, after reading a newspaper, you feel that you have understood an issue better, it is a sign that the papers are succeeding. Similarly, one should see his or her concerns and experiences reflected in the pages. That’s a must, because that provides the connection between the publication and the readers.

It also goes without saying that newspapers are expected to play it straight. And when doubts surface, they explain their actions without being either arrogant or defensive. When a mistake is made, they own it up and when a truth is questioned, they stand by it. Finally, good newspapers are like a relative. They prompt a wide range of emotions that run the gamut from love to hate depending on the day. But still, you want them around, just like the relative because you need them.

All that said, because you read this in an ink and paper product, there is an obvious bias towards that medium, but it is also becoming increasingly obvious that news and journalism is not so much about the material as the matter. The medium might change and evolve, but the basic tenets of the profession remain unchanged if they are to inform and not just entertain. And then again, information and understanding are not just about current and immediate requirements, not just about the now, but also necessary records easily accessed for posterity.

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If we all choose the fastest mode of travel in a city, the whole city gets slower – and more congested

RAFAEL PRIETO CURIEL & JUAN PABLO ORJUELA
THECONVERSATION.COM

People in cities often choose how to travel based on how long it will take. In recent years, navigation apps such as Google Maps and CityMapper have enabled people to decide between various modes of transport by seeing which one most quickly gets them where they want to go.

Cities of course have long dedicated a disproportionate amount of space to cars. Although in some parts of the global north – and in certain demographics – car use is declining, elsewhere it has, unsurprisingly, increased.

In a recent study, we modelled what would happen to average travelling times in a city if people were given only one other option – using the car or using another mode of transport – and if they acted only in their own interest (getting to their destination as fast as possible).

We wanted to see what would happen if everyone acted selfishly. How would that compare, we wondered, with a theoretical case in which people chose their mode to minimise travel times for society as a whole and not only for themselves. CITY SPACES

Using mathematical modelling, we found that if all travellers behave selfishly, and if we have a system that not only makes it relatively inexpensive to use a car, but also allows congestion to affect non-car users (cyclists, public transport us-

ers, pedestrians etc), collectively we all end up taking longer to get where we need to go – whether we’re driving a car or not.

City streets are often designed to make travelling by car faster and more efficient. And despite there being, for instance, an increasing amount of cycling infrastructure worldwide and higher satisfaction among people who commute by bike, it is still very common to see narrow, disconnected cycling lanes which result in congestion induced by private cars affecting cycling travel times too.

Mixed-use lanes – those that are used by both private cars and public buses, as opposed to dedicated bus lanes – have the same effect: car congestion affects bus users too. Without proper infrastructure, there are therefore no incentives to use public transport or active transport options, such as cycling and walking.

And even when there is a cycling path network or dedicated bus lanes, if these cross over or otherwise intermittently share space with the general road system, this also slows everybody down. It makes the system as a whole less efficient.

Similarly, free parking for private vehicles also results in longer travelling times for everyone – including non-car users – because they negate the benefits, for individuals, of not using a car if others still do.

We found that selfish behaviour

with such inadequate infrastructure results naturally in more cars, more congestion, and longer travel times. If using a car remains the easier and quicker option (on an individual level), people will keep using cars and cities will remain congested. By trying individually to win, we all lose.

COMPETING PRIORITIES

One alternative is to design more collaborative transport networks in which we all accept some personal delay to achieve a distribution that is better for society. We could, for example, include not only personal cost in some of the apps we use, but societal costs also. What if Google Maps told you not only where congestion is in real-time and what would be the quickest transport mode to choose for you as an individual, but which transport mode would offer the best results for your neighbourhood, your family, your colleagues, or your city?

Research has shown how difficult it is, however, to shift commuter behaviour. It also highlights the public opposition there has been to alternative measures such as limiting maximum speeds in order to lower traffic injuries, despite such measures saving lives.

Given this, it could prove difficult to convince some car users to sacrifice personal efficiency for the greater good. But we could start by at least making these trade-offs explicit.

Motorised private transport has a wide variety of impacts that

threaten a city’s sustainability, not least the wellbeing and health of its citizens. It contributes to air pollution and climate change through vehicle emissions and results in traffic injuries and nurtures sedentary lifestyles.

To encourage people to use more sustainable alternatives to car transport, cities need strong policies that steer people away from using their cars. So far, these have included low-traffic neighbourhoods and congestion charges that try to make car drivers pay for the congestion they are causing.

Elsewhere, systems have been implemented that attract people to transport modes, such as safe lanes for cycling, that typically have better environmental and social outcomes. These systems emphasise individualistic attitudes but target societal costs to those most responsible for them.

Ideally, we should create policies that help us act in the interest of our community. In the meantime, policies that push people away from their private cars could bring us closer to what would be optimal for the collective — even if we are all acting in our own interests.

[Rafael Prieto Curiel is Post-doctoral Research Fellow, the Bartlett Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, UCL; Juan Pablo Orjuela is Senior Research Associate and Executive Education Programme Director, University of Oxford]

Conspiracy theories about the pandemic are spreading offline as well as through social media

ROD DACOMBE
THECONVERSATION.COM

A consistent feature of the pandemic has been the presence of a relatively small but vocal number of conspiracy theorists who resist attempts to tackle COVID-19. Their views might seem marginal and extreme but recent research suggests that we should take them seriously.

Survey data shows that belief in conspiracy theories is associated with a lack of confidence in steps aimed at addressing the pandemic and risky health behaviours and that conspiracy adherents are more likely to refuse to socially distance, wear a mask or get vaccinated.

One reason for this is that conspiracy theories work differently to other forms of misinformation. Rather than simply trading in inaccurate or misleading information, conspiracy theorists believe they have discovered the hidden truth that world events result from the deliberate actions of unseen, malevolent actors.

This might mean blaming the emergence of COVID-19 on “big pharma” or believing that social distancing measures form part of an attempt by a hidden “world government” to restrict civil liberties. This kind of thinking provides a simple explanation for complex and unpredictable events. In a time of widespread uncertainty and fear it is easy to see the appeal in claims that the pandemic is deliberate and controlled.

When we think about how conspiracy theories like these spread, there is a tendency to focus on the role of social media. We’ve become accustomed to seeing fact checking and moderators working in these spaces to manage to problem.

But with colleagues, I’ve been exploring the offline space through an analysis of the Light, a monthly newspaper (and self-described “truthpaper”) delivered free of charge across the UK. It provides sceptical coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic and we’ve concluded that a significant proportion of its content can be seen as conspiracist in nature.

WHAT IS A “TRUTHPAPER”?

In terms of style and layout, the Light looks like a conventional newspaper. It has a masthead and banner headlines and each article is laid out in columns. The content varies in both style and topic, with opinion pieces and interviews appearing alongside news items.

Conspiracist articles are presented alongside other, unrelated material, so that overall, readers experience the variety of content that might be expected in a mainstream source of news. For instance, the same issue might include an article suggesting COVID vaccines could be used for mind control and a more conventional news item on Russian shipping.

As an example of the offline dissemination of conspiracy theories related to the pandemic,



the Light is important for a number of reasons. It seemingly has a wide reach, with claims of a print run of over 100,000 copies for each issue. It is produced and distributed by a network of activists, drawing on a closed Facebook group of more than 8,000 members.

CONSPIRACY AND ACTIVISM

However, the Light’s real significance is that it appears to be encouraging a highly participatory engagement with its content. Readers are encouraged to seek out, disseminate and act on the issues they are reading about rather than simply passively receiving the information. This approach means that the Light doesn’t just aim to broaden readers’ knowledge but to engage them in a process of discovery, revelation and action.

We found this happens in a number of ways. There are direct calls for action, for example, through articles encouraging readers to attend rallies and events, or promoting the refusal to wear face coverings.

Other articles promote the importance of “doing your own research”, directing readers to seek out content that challenges mainstream opinion on the pandemic. There are even puzzle features that require the reader to conduct research into conspiratorial content in order to be successfully completed.

Being “awake” is a central theme in conspiracist content. Readers are invited to join an in-group of conspiracy adherents who refute the “official narrative”. The state of being “awake” is often put across as being virtuous and exceptional, and readers are frequently encouraged to view their knowledge of the pandemic’s “true”

nature as a motivating factor to action.

Alongside this are frequent moral appeals to action which play upon readers’ emotions to drive them to act. This includes content written in language that draws on themes of war and conflict and emotive articles warning of the effects of public health measures on children.

WHY IT MATTERS

These calls to action are taking place in the context of an increasingly dangerous atmosphere. We already know that conspiracy theories have the potential to promote political polarisation, extremism and violence. Recent months have seen numerous examples of COVID-19 conspiracy theories influencing real-world activism.

Some of these might seem relatively trivial, such as sticker campaigns disputing the safety of the vaccination programme, or leaflets promoting unproven treatments posted through letterboxes. But there have also been protests at media organisations’ offices, attempts to disrupt the work of vaccination centres and even footage of threats of violence being made against public figures associated with the pandemic response.

Offline material like the Light is highly potent because readers experience a sense of agency when they pick it up. They are being offered a way to actively engage in public issues which is outside of mainstream forms of political participation. And it’s all happening without the automated warnings and links to more reliable sources which are now a mainstay of social media sites.

[the writer is Director of the Centre for British Politics and Government, King’s College London]

Send more forces to Tripura ASAP: Supreme Court to Centre amid civic polls

New Delhi, 25 Nov [NDTV]: Two additional companies of CAPF (central armed police forces) should be deployed in Tripura “as expeditiously as possible”, the Supreme Court said this morning, amid claims by opposition parties that workers of the ruling BJP were harassing and intimidating voters in the northeastern state.

These personnel will remain deployed till counting of votes on November 28, the court added.

Tripura is holding civic body polls today, voting for which began at 7 am.

However, the opposition, including the Trinamool Congress and the CPI(M) have alleged BJP workers are bullying their candidates, as well as not allowing all voters to enter polling booths. Gangs with masked faces are going door to door warning voters to stay home, the parties have alleged.

One video tweeted by the Trinamool shows a man in a black shirt brazenly walking up to a

woman trying to vote. He leans over the cardboard screen that is supposed to give the voter privacy, and seems to press a button on the EVM, after which the woman just walks away.

“In such circumstances we direct the MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) to deploy 2 additional companies of CAPF (Central Armed Police Force) as expeditiously as possible, having due regard to the fact the polling has commenced, so polling can take place without disruption,” the court said.

“SEC shall ensure every polling booth is manned by sufficient members of CAPF armed personnel to ensure free and fair elections,” the court also said.

Earlier, senior advocate Gopal Shankararayanan said: “Voting has started (and) in the last two-and-a-half hours itself we got several videos showing outsiders barging inside booths.”

“What is going on is absolute terrorism. I have videos to prove what I am saying. But I



am not in a position to show the videos to the bench...” he said.

Mr Shankararayanan requested the court to order the deployment of additional forces.

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani (appearing for the Tripura government) said: “Polling going on absolutely peacefully. Only hindrances are the petitioners and the intervenors.

“Instead of doing the anti-mortem and

post-mortem now, we’ll now direct MHA to immediately deploy 2 additional companies of any central armed forces,” the court declared.

The civic polls are being held virtually under the Supreme Court’s watch.

In an order on a Trinamool appeal last week, the court told the Tripura government to ensure the opposition was allowed to operate in the political space.

Trinamool MP Sush-

mita Dev went back to the court, accusing the Tripura government of contempt of court for violating its order and requested that the election should be deferred.

Elections were scheduled for 20 civic bodies, seven of which the BJP has won unopposed.

The Trinamool, a recent entrant into Tripura politics, has fielded candidates in all 51 wards of the civic body. The CPI(M) has skipped candidates in a few seats.

12 Meghalaya MLAs punch Congress hard, join TMC



SHILLONG, Nov 25 (PTI): Twelve of the 17 Congress MLAs in the Meghalaya Assembly on Thursday joined the Trinamool Congress, dealing a body blow to the grand old party in the northeastern state, their leader and former chief minister Mukul Sangma said.

He said the decision to shift allegiance to Mamata Banerjee’s party was taken after “exhaustive due diligence and

analysis about how best to serve the people.

“The decision has been taken with utmost sense of humility, responsibility and commitment towards fulfilling our responsibility to the people, the state and the nation,” he told a press conference.

In a massive jolt to the main opposition Congress, they had decided to join the TMC in a late night development

on Wednesday.

The breakthrough group had also submitted a list of MLAs crossing over to the TMC to state Assembly Speaker Metbah Lyngdoh and informed him about their decision.

The development is a major boost for West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, who has been trying to expand her party’s footprint beyond her native state.

Germany latest country to pass 100,000 deaths from COVID-19

BERLIN (AP): Official figures released Thursday show Germany has become the latest country to surpass 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 since the pandemic began.

Germany’s disease control agency said it recorded 351 additional deaths in connection with the coronavirus over the past 24 hours, taking the total toll to 100,119.

In Europe, Germany is the fifth country to pass that mark, after Russia, the United Kingdom, Italy and France.

The Robert Koch Institute, a federal agency that collects data from some 400 regional health

offices, said Germany also set a record for daily confirmed cases — 75,961 in a 24-hour period. Since the start of the outbreak, Germany has had more than 5.57 million confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The surge in cases prompted Germany’s government-in-waiting on Wednesday to announce the creation of a new permanent expert group to advise officials on how to tackle the pandemic.

While the number of daily infections is higher than that seen during the last winter surge, there are currently fewer daily deaths per confirmed case. Experts say this is

because of vaccinations, which they say reduces the likelihood of serious illness.

Still, hospitals have warned that intensive care beds are running out, and some facilities in the country’s south and east have begun transferring patients to other regions.

The government has urged people who were vaccinated more than six months ago to get boosters, and those who haven’t been inoculated at all yet to get their first shot. Officials say 68.1% of Germany’s 83 million inhabitants are fully vaccinated, far below the minimum level of 75% the government has aimed for.

Mathura girl raped in moving car, man arrested

MATHURA, Nov 25 (PTI): A 21-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a man in a moving car while coming back from Agra, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Tuesday, when the accused accompanied the girl to Agra for a sub-Inspector exam. He allegedly raped her during their return journey inside the car, a senior police officer said.

After the act, he dropped the girl in the outskirts of Kosi Kalan area of Mathura.

The main accused, Tejveer, was arrested by the police on Thursday, while his accomplice in the act, Digambar, is still on the run, Superintendent of Police (rural) Shrish Chandra said.



Both accused belong to Manpur Village of Palwal, Haryana, and two teams have been formed to nab the absconding second, he said.

According to police, Tejveer had met the victim through social media and won her confidence.

On the basis of an FIR filed by the brother

of the girl, a medical examination was conducted on the girl and her statement under section 161 of the Indian Penal Code was recorded, police said.

The car used in the incident has also been recovered.

Both the accused are 22-25 years old, police said.

Bihar: Bochahan MLA Musafir Paswan dies at 66

PATNA, Nov 25 (PTI): MLA of Bochahan in Bihar’s Muzaffarpur district Musafir Paswan died while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Delhi, party sources said on Thursday.

Paswan, an MLA of the Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP), was 66.

He was undergoing treatment at the Sir Gan-

ga Ram Hospital in Delhi where he breathed his last on Wednesday night, VIP president Mukesh Sahni said.

The VIP is a part of the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government, in which Sahni is the minister for Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

“He was not well for a long time and his treat-

ment was going on in Delhi, we all tried our best to save him. The news of his death is very sad. It is an irreparable loss for the entire state,” Sahni wrote on Facebook.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed grief over the demise of Paswan, describing him as a very popular social worker.

54 students of Odisha medical college down with COVID-19

BHUBANESWAR/SAMBALPUR, Nov 25 (PTI): The number of students detected with COVID-19 at Vimsar, a medical college and hospital in Odisha’s Sambalpur, climbed to 54 on Thursday, up from 34 the day before, an official said.

The infected students have been admitted to the COVID unit of the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (Vimsar), according to the official.

Authorities suspect that the infection might have spread during the institute’s annual function held recently. On Tuesday, 22 cases were reported from Vimsar and later it rose to 34.

The number of infections has surged to 54 now, Vimsar dean Jayshree Dora said.

Four hostels have been declared as mi-

cro-containment zones. Staff quarters and four other hostels of medical students have been declared as buffer zones, the professor said.

Physical classes have been suspended for 10 days from Tuesday.

Odisha Health Services Director Bijay Mohapatra said there was nothing to worry as it was reported in specific pockets and would be contained within four-five days.

Mohapatra suggested that people should undertake sample tests if they had symptoms.

Additional Chief Health Secretary R K Sharma advised all the district collectors to ensure the protocols are followed.

The coastal state, meanwhile, logged 335 more coronavirus cases, including 47 in the 0-18



age group, taking the tally to 10.48 lakh.

The toll rose to 8,401 with two more deaths in Khurda district. Fifty-three other patients have died due to comorbidities so far, official data stated.

Khurda, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, registered the highest number of new cases at

130 and the two fresh deaths.

Nine of the 30 districts did not record any new case, the Health Department said.

The state had registered 288 cases and three deaths on Wednesday.

The number of active cases rose to 2,403 from 2,221 the previous day, while over 10.37

lakh people, including 151 in the last 24 hours, have recovered, the bulletin stated.

As many as 62,619 samples were tested on Wednesday.

Over 2.74-crore people have taken the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, while nearly 1.47-crore people have been administered both the doses.

Eminent Assamese poet Sananta Tanty dies at 69

GUWAHATI, Nov 25 (PTI): Sahitya Akademi Award-winning poet Sananta Tanty died on Thursday at a private hospital in New Delhi after a prolonged illness. He was 69.

Tanty was suffering from cancer and was under treatment for a long time, his close associates said.

He is survived by wife and two sons.

Tanty received several awards and recognitions, including the Sahitya Akademi in 2018 for ‘Kailoir Dinto Amar Hobo’ (Tomorrow Will Be Ours), a collection of his poems in Assamese.

He started his professional career as an

employee of the Assam Tea Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation in Jorhat in 1971 and retired as Deputy Provident Fund Commissioner in 2012.

Union Minister of Shipping, Ports and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal mourned the death of Tanty and said ‘Kailoir Dinto

Amar Hobo’ with its unique poems enriched Assamese literature.

“His poems reflected realistic scenes of life and society. He played the role of a conscious citizen through his writings. A bright star has fallen with his demise,” he said in a statement.

Chief Minister Hi-

manta Biswa Sarma offered his condolences and said his contributions will always be remembered by the people of the state.

Assam Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah too paid his homage to Tanty and said it is an irreparable loss to the Assamese literary world.

BJP in HC as Kolkata civic polls announced

KOLKATA, Nov 25 (PTI): The BJP on Thursday mentioned before the Calcutta High Court that the poll schedule for Kolkata Municipal Corporation was announced by the State Election Commission despite a petition seeking that polls to all municipal bodies in West Bengal be held on a single day being heard by it.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Justice R Bharadwaj directed the lawyer for petitioner Pratap Banerjee, BJP West Bengal



vice-president, to state the grievances in the form of an affidavit.

It said that the hearing of the matter will be held on Monday as earlier scheduled.

BJP’s counsel submitted that the schedule for

the Kolkata Municipal Corporation election on December 19 was announced on Thursday despite its petition being heard before the high court.

The SEC announced the schedule for the polls

on the basis of a state government notification, declaring the date for the KMC election.

The BJP claimed that it amounted to disregard of the proceedings before the court, in which the hearing was first

held on November 16.

The division bench had on Wednesday said that it will hear the BJP’s petition on November 29.

Appearing for the state, Advocate General SN Mookherjee submitted that the SEC’s affidavit submitted before the court earlier this week contains everything regarding holding of elections to municipal bodies where it is pending.

He submitted that by April 30, 2022, the election process to all municipal bodies is intended to be completed.

Battling Bangladesh putting on brave face for Pakistan tests

CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH (AP): Bangladesh is putting on a brave face ahead of the two-test series against Pakistan starting on Friday in the absence of senior players such as ace allrounder Shakib Al Hasan and after recent Twenty20 failures.

Shakib has failed to recover in time from the hamstring injured during the T20 World Cup. Opener Tamim Iqbal has opted out of the series due to injury, and Mahmudullah, who hit 150 not out in Bangladesh's last test against Zimbabwe, has retired from this format.

Captain Mominul Haque said the young players in the team are motivated enough to fill the seniors' shoes.

"We have to play with whatever resources we have," Mominul said. "There's no point of thinking who is in the team and who is not. These seniors had a lot of contributions for Bangladesh cricket. But life goes on."

In the T20 series which finished on Monday, Bangladesh was swept by Pakistan 3-0, extending its losing streak in T20s to eight matches.

Mominul insisted they won't carry over the baggage from their dismal T20 record.

"I don't think that (T20 record) will have a negative impact as the format is completely different. In test cricket, you have to be consistent," he said with a straight face.

But Bangladesh's test record this year also is unconvincing. It lost two home tests against the West Indies from favorable positions. A two-test series in Sri Lanka was lost 1-0, then it beat Zimbabwe by 220 runs.

"In test cricket, the momentum could shift in just one session," Mominul said. "If you win 12 sessions in four days but then loss three sessions on the last day, you could end up losing the match."

"So what I want to say is we have to be very consistent throughout the five days. We have a plan which we will try to stick to. Whatever happened before this test is in the past and we are now focused on playing good cricket."

By comparison, Pakistan start the test series in high spirits and confidence. Pakistan won series against South Africa and Zimbabwe at home before drawing with the West Indies, which was its first series in the new world test championship cycle. Captain Babar Azam warned his side against complacency.

"The difference is that it is their home team and we cannot take them easily," said Babar, who also said something similar before the T20 series.

"It's true that they are a young team but they are playing in their home conditions. They can give us a tough time and we need to be focused."

He also emphasized switching into test mode quickly, only four days after T20s.

Unfazed by guilty verdict, Real Madrid relying on Benzema

BARCELONA, SPAIN (AP): Karim Benzema and the teams that employ him appear unfazed by his guilty verdict for having played a part in the sex tape blackmail plot against a former France teammate.

Hours after the conviction by a Versailles court on Wednesday, Benzema helped Real Madrid clinch a spot in the Champions League knockout phase for a 25th consecutive season by scoring in a 3-0 win at Sheriff in Moldavia.

Benzema should be back in action again on Sunday, when Madrid hosts Sevilla in a clash of two of the hottest teams in the Spanish league.

Benzema, who denied any wrongdoing, was found guilty of being involved in an attempt to blackmail Mathieu Valbuena in 2015 over a sex tape thought to have been stolen from Valbuena's mobile phone. But Benzema's one-year sentence was suspended, meaning he won't do prison time.

His reputation has undoubtedly been tarnished by the guilty verdict, but his playing career for club and country appears to be unaffected — for the time being.

Benzema did not speak following Madrid's win in Tiraspol, and coach Carlo Ancelotti said even he had not



brought up the case with his striker.

"We haven't spoken, but he's relaxed," Ancelotti said. "It's something that was spoken about some time ago. The player is totally focused on his job. He seems calm and he played really well today."

At age 33, Benzema is essential to Madrid.

Once criticized in the Spanish capital for not making the most of his talent, he has emerged from Cristiano Ronaldo's shadow to become one of Europe's most reliable scorers.

His goal against Sheriff was his 15th for Madrid this season, including a Spanish league-leading 12. That comes after he found the net 30 times last season.

France coach Didier Deschamps took notice in May when he recalled

Benzema in time for the European Championship after having ostracized him for nearly six years because of the sex tape case. In explaining the recall, Deschamps said, "I don't have the capacity and no one does, not even Karim, of going back and changing the past. The most important thing is today and the future."

The head of the French Football Federation said after the verdict that Benzema will remain eligible for the national team.

"As far as the federation is concerned, there is no change," federation president Noel Le Graet told L'Équipe. "This sanction does not change anything for me. He can be selected. He has the right to work. You can make a mistake, get a suspended

sentence and go back to work."

Benzema has not disappointed since returning to France's team. He scored four goals in four matches at the Euros. He helped France win the Nations League last month, scoring in both the semifinal against Belgium and the final against Spain, and seal its place in next year's World Cup.

Benzema will be among the favorites to win the Ballon d'Or on Nov. 29 in Paris. The night before the gala, Benzema will lead Madrid against Sevilla.

Madrid leads the league, with Sevilla only two points back in third place.

Sevilla kept alive its chances of joining Madrid in the Champions League round of 16 when it beat Wolfsburg 2-0 on

Tuesday.

Sevilla has boosted its attack this season. Newcomers Rafa Mir and Erik Lamela have combined for nine goals to lead the deep squad coached by former Madrid manager Julen Lopetegui.

Madrid defender David Alaba is doubtful for the match after being substituted against Sheriff following his opening goal because of a knee problem.

Second-placed Real Sociedad will be hoping for Madrid to stumble as it visits Espanyol on Sunday trailing Madrid by just one point.

CHAMPIONS TROUBLES

Like Sevilla, Barcelona, Atlético Madrid and Villarreal are also in danger of not advancing past the Champions League group stage with only one game remaining.

Atlético is facing a possible early exit after losing at home to AC Milan 1-0. Diego Simone's team will look to rebound at Cádiz on Sunday. The defending league champions are in fourth place, four points back.

Xavi Hernández will coach his third game for Barcelona when it visits Villarreal on Sunday. His debut was a 1-0 win over Espanyol last weekend followed by a 0-0 draw with Benfica at Camp Nou midweek.

James rallies Lakers past Pacers 124-116 after suspension

INDIANAPOLIS (AP): LeBron James missed his chance to shine at Madison Square Garden this season. So, he picked up his teammates in his return Wednesday night at Indiana.

After drawing the first suspension of his career because of a fracas Sunday in Detroit, James delivered tiebreaking and back-breaking 3-pointers in overtime and finished with 39 points to help the Los Angeles Lakers rally past Indiana, 124-116.

"I was excited about being in the lineup," he said. "Me not playing last night on the second night of a back to back, I knew I could kind of give our guys a boost of energy with me not playing last night."

James sat out Tuesday night in a loss at New York after striking Pistons center Isaiah Stewart in the face and drawing blood Sunday. James said he has not spoken with Stewart.

"I know he wanted to get this 'W,'" coach Frank Vogel said. "He really wanted to play in that Knicks game, he looks forward to that every year. So to bounce back tonight, to quarterback the defense and carry the offense the way he did, that's just a performance for the ages."

James was 13 of 29 from the field and had six assists and five rebounds. And with All-Star center Anthony Davis out because of flu-like defense, James also was in charge of calling the defensive assignments in a game the Lakers never led until Malik Monk's 3-pointer with 4:35 left in regulation.

But down the stretch, James was his usually dominant self as the Lakers won for the second time in six games.

"James is a great player, he got hot," Pacers coach Frank Vogel said. "We needed to do some things to limit his touches. We did not and we paid the price."

He bailed the Lakers out of a game that had all the trademarks of a pre-holiday contest at the end of a long trip — inconsistent play, sloppiness and at times bad basketball.

Yet James & Co. found a way to finally clean it

up and deliver the knockout blow.

He helped force overtime by scoring seven straight points to give the Lakers a 110-104 lead with 76 seconds left in regulation.

Russell Westbrook made two free throws with 22.6 seconds left to make it 112-109 and only an off-balance 3 by Chris Duarte and James' errant 3 as the buzzer prevented the Lakers from winning in regulation.

James didn't give the Pacers a second chance in overtime.

His first 3 made it 117-114 with 2:51 left. A minute later, he made the second to extend the margin to six and added a midrange jumper before Wayne Ellington closed it out. Indiana managed only one basket in the final three minutes.

TIP-INS
Lakers: Russell Westbrook had 20 points, seven rebounds and five assists. Monk had 17 points. Carmelo Anthony and Ellington each added 14. ... DeAndre Jordan had 11 rebounds and Dwight Howard had nine. ... Rajon Rondo and Kent Bazemore also did not play and were not on the pregame injury report.

Pacers: Brogdon added seven rebounds. ... Domantas Sabonis had 14 points, 12 rebounds and six assists while Myles Turner had 12 points, six rebounds and two blocks. Just Holiday scored 16 ... Indiana was 13 of 46 on 3s ... After committing only two turnovers in the first half, the Pacers started the second half with three in a row. They wound up with 11.

WARREN UPDATE
Pacers forward T.J. Warren continues to recover from a stress fracture in his left foot and he took another significant step Wednesday. Less than three weeks after ditching the walking boot, Warren did some spot shooting during the pregame shootaround, coach Rick Carlisle told reporters before the game.

"He's not moving that much but he is participating a little bit, which is heartwarming for us and I think for him, too," Carlisle said. "We'll see, I guess, on Tuesday where he's at and then we may have a timetable."

Durant moves into NBA's top 25, Nets beat Celtics 123-104

BOSTON (AP): Kevin Durant grew up in the Washington, D.C., area looking up to Allen Iverson as he led Georgetown to back-to-back trips to the NCAA Sweet 16.

Now the Nets forward is looking down at the Hall of Famer from the top 25 of the NBA's all-time scoring list.

"Iverson, he was in the Pantheon for me. One of those guys I emulated every time I went outside," Durant said on Wednesday night after surpassing Iverson's career total and leading Brooklyn to a 123-104 victory over the Boston Celtics.

"To pass him on the list, to end up there with some of the greats on that list is incredible," said Durant, who entered the night with 24,367 points, one behind Iverson, and passed him on a jumper in the first two minutes. "I've just got to keep going."

Patty Mills scored 23, and James Harden had 20 points and 11 assists for Brooklyn. LaMarcus Aldridge scored 17 points with nine rebounds for the Nets, who have won four in a row, seven out of eight and 12 of their last 14 games.

Marcus Smart had 20 points and eight as-

sists for Boston, which had won three in a row. Jayson Tatum had 15 points and eight rebounds for the Celtics, who cut a 29-point, third-quarter lead to 12 early in the fourth, but could get no closer.

It was Brooklyn's first visit to Boston since completing a Game 4 victory in the first round of last season's playoffs.

"It's a quality road win against a team that's been playing great basketball," Nets coach Steve Nash said.

The Nets opened an 11-point lead midway through the first quarter and led by as many as 17 in the second before taking a 62-49 lead into the half. They scored 18 of the first 21 points in the third and led 97-68 before Boston scored the last eight points of the quarter.

Boston scored the first eight points in the fourth to cut it to 97-85. But Mills assisted on James Johnson's jumper, then hit a 3-pointer to extend the lead.

KEEP IT DOWN

Nash had just finished explaining how these Nets were the quietest team he's ever had when a ruckus erupted from the coaches' locker room next door.

"Keep it down in there," guard James Harden said



with a laugh, banging on the wall as he followed Nash in the postgame news conference. "I'm doing media."

Nash said he is starting to feel his team become more vocal.

"They're one of the quietest teams I've ever been around," he said. "We're not a loud group, but the spirit is growing. The guys are starting to come together and find the joy in playing together."

OLD FRIENDS

The last time Brooklyn visited Boston, ex-Celtic Kyrie Irving was hit with a water bottle as the team left the court. Irving has not played this season due to his refusal to comply with COVID-19 vaccination mandates.

New Celtics coach

Ime Udoka was a Nets assistant last season. Harden stopped by the Boston bench before the game for a handshake, but Durant preferred to exchange trash talk with the coach who was also an assistant on the U.S. Olympic team.

"Coming into Boston's a tough place to play," Durant said. "Now that Ime's here makes it even sweeter."

MORE MILESTONES

Tatum went 1 for 9 from 3-point range, but his make gave him 650 in his career and moved him ahead of Larry Bird and into fifth on the Celtics' all-time list. Smart, who made three on Wednesday, is fourth with 702.

TIP-INS

Next up on the scoring list for Durant is Ray Allen, who has 24,505 points. ... Hall of Famer Bill Russell was at the game, sitting courtside under the basket at the Nets end of the court. ... Udoka picked up a technical foul leaving the court at halftime. Durant shot the free throw before the start of the third quarter, and missed it. ... Harden stopped by the Boston bench before the game to say hello to Udoka, who was a Nets assistant last season.

UP NEXT

Nets: Host Phoenix on Saturday.

Celtics: Play at San Antonio on Friday night.

Solid Gill gives India steady start in first Test

KANPUR, NOV 25 (PTI): Comeback man Shubman Gill settled down nicely after initial nervous moments to remain unbeaten on 52 as India reached 82 for one at lunch against New Zealand on the opening day of the first Test here.

Gill, who missed out on the England Test series due to a shin injury, played some delightful shots all round the wicket to reach his fourth

Test half-century but more importantly has put the New Zealand spinners on back-foot.

He has so far hit five boundaries and a six and his 50 came off 81 balls.

His fellow opening partner Mayank Agarwal (13 off 28 balls) wasted a God given opportunity when he nicked one from Kyle Jamieson (6-2-12-1) that moved a shade from length

to be caught by keeper Tom Blundell.

Cheteshwar Pujara (15 batting, 61 balls) was playing his own game but that didn't affect India as Gill, after seeing off Tim Southee's first spell, was severe on left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel (9-3-35-0) disturbing his length with both cuts and drives.

The duo has so far added 61 runs for the second wicket after In-

dia captain Ajinkya Rahane rightly decided to make first use of a Green Park track, where the ball has started keeping low with very little pace off the pitch.

Gill had in fact successfully appealed for a DRS when Southee had an on-field leg-before appeal reversed.

But once Patel came into the attack, one saw a different Gill in

action. Anything short was either square-cut or back-cut and whenever the Mumbai-born spinner tried to toss one up, Gill would swiftly come to the pitch of the delivery to drive him off length.

The straight six to a tossed up delivery from Patel was a treat to watch and the harsh treatment didn't change when Kane Williamson decided to switch the bowler's end.

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Europe's Christmas markets warily open as COVID cases rise

FRANKFURT, GERMANY (AP): The holiday tree is towering over the main square in this central German city, the chestnuts and sugared almonds are roasted, and kids are clambering aboard the merry-go-round just like they did before the pandemic. But a surge in coronavirus infections has left an uneasy feeling hanging over Frankfurt's Christmas market.

To savor a mug of mulled wine — a pleasurable rite of winter in pre-pandemic times — masked customers must pass through a one-way entrance to a fenced-off wine hut, stopping at the hand sanitizer station. Elsewhere, security officers check vaccination certificates before letting customers head for the steaming sausages and kebabs.

Despite the pandemic inconveniences, stall owners selling ornaments, roasted chestnuts and other holiday-themed items in Frankfurt and other European cities are relieved to be open at all for their first Christmas market in two years, especially with new restrictions taking effect in Germany, Austria and other countries as COVID-19 infections hit record highs. Merchants who have opened are hoping for at least a fraction of the pre-pandemic holiday sales that can make or break their businesses.

Others aren't so lucky. Many of the famous holiday events have been canceled in Germany and Austria. With the market closures goes the money that tourists would spend in restaurants, hotels and other businesses.

Jens Knauer, who crafts intricate, lighted Christmas-themed silhouettes that people can hang in windows, said his hope was simply that

the Frankfurt market "stays open as long as possible."

While Christmas is 40% of annual revenue for many retailers and restaurateurs, "with me, it's 100%," Knauer said. "If I can stay open for three weeks, I can make it through the year."

Purveyors are on edge after other Christmas markets were abruptly shut down in Germany's Bavaria region, which includes Nuremberg, home of one of the biggest and best-known markets. Stunned exhibitors in Dresden had to pack up their goods when authorities in the eastern Saxony region suddenly imposed new restrictions amid soaring infections. Austria's markets closed as a 10-day lockdown began Monday, with many stall owners hoping they can reopen if it's not extended.

Markets usually attract elbow-to-elbow crowds to row upon row of ornament and food sellers, foot traffic that spills over into revenue for surrounding hotels and restaurants. This year, the crowds at Frankfurt's market were vastly thinned out, with the stalls spread out over a larger area.

Heiner Roie, who runs a mulled wine hut in the shape of a wine barrel, said he's assuming he will see half the business he had in 2019. A shutdown would cause "immense financial damage — it could lead to complete ruin since we haven't made any income in two years, and at some point, the financial reserves are used up."

But if people have a little discipline and observe the health measures, "I think we'll manage it," he said.

Next door, Bettina Roie's guests are greeted with a sign asking them to show their



vaccination certificates at her stand serving Swiss raclette, a popular melted cheese dish.

The market "has a good concept because what we need is space, room, to keep some distance from each other," she said. "In contrast to a bricks-and-mortar restaurant, they have their building and their walls, but we can adjust ourselves to the circumstances."

The extended Roie family is a fifth-generation exhibitor business that also operates the merry-go-round on Frankfurt's central Roemerberg square, where the market opened Monday.

Roie said it was important to reopen "so that we can bring the people even during the pandemic a little joy — that's what we do, we bring back joy."

The latest spike in COVID-19 cases has unsettled prospects for Europe's economic recovery, leading some economists to hedge their expectations for growth in the final months of the year.

Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg Bank in London, has cut his forecast for the last three months

of the year in the 19 countries that use the euro from 0.7% to 0.5%. But he noted that the wave of infections is having less impact across the broad economy because vaccinations have reduced serious illnesses and many companies have learned to adjust.

That is cold comfort to Germany's DEHOGA restaurant and hotel association, which warned of a "hail of cancellations" and said members were reporting every second Christmas party or other special event was being called off.

Other European countries where the pandemic isn't hitting as hard are returning to old ways. The traditional Christmas market in Madrid's Plaza Mayor, in the heart of the Spanish capital, is slated to open Friday at the size it was before the pandemic.

It will have 104 stalls of nativity figures, decorations and traditional sweets in a country where 89% of those 12 or older are fully vaccinated. Last year, it had half the number of stalls and restricted the number of people allowed in the square. Masks and social distancing will re-

main mandatory, organizers said.

In Hungary's capital of Budapest, Christmas markets have been fenced off and visitors must show proof of vaccination to enter.

Gyorgy Nagy, a producer and seller of handmade glazed crockery, said the restrictions initially stirred worries of fewer shoppers. But business has been good so far.

"I don't think the fence is bad," he said. "At the beginning, we were scared of it, really scared, but I think it's fine. ... I don't think it will be a disadvantage."

Markets opening reflects a broader spectrum of loose restrictions in Hungary, even as new COVID-19 cases have exceeded peaks seen during a devastating surge last spring. More infections were confirmed last week than in other week since the pandemic started.

A representative for the Advent Bazilika Christmas market said a number of its measures go beyond government requirements, including that all vendors wear masks and those selling food and drinks be vaccinated.

Bea Lakatos, a seller of fragrant soaps and oils at the Budapest market, said that while sales have been a bit weaker than before the pandemic, "I wasn't expecting so many foreign visitors given the restrictions."

"I think things aren't that bad so far," she said this week. "The weekend started particularly strong."

In Vienna, markets were packed last weekend as people sought some Christmas cheer before Austria's lockdown. Merchants say closures last year and the new restrictions have had disastrous consequences.

"The main sales for the whole year are made at the Christmas markets — this pause is a huge financial loss," said Laura Brechmann who sold illuminated stars at the Spittelberg market before the lockdown began. "We hope things will reopen, but I personally don't really expect it."

In Austria's Salzkammergut region, home to ski resorts and the picturesque town of Hallstatt, the tourism industry hopes the national lockdown won't be extended past Dec. 13 and it can recover some much-needed revenue.

Last winter's extended lockdowns cost the tourism board alone 1 million euros (\$1.12 million) just in nightly tourist tax fees during that period — not to mention the huge financial losses sustained by hotels, restaurants and ski resorts.

"Overall, I do think that if things open up again before Christmas, we can save the winter season," said Christian Schirlbauer, head of tourism for the Dachstein-Salzkammergut region. "But it will depend on whether or not the case numbers go down."

Australia sending troops to Solomon Islands as unrest grows

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP): Australia announced Thursday it is sending police, troops and diplomats to the Solomon Islands to help after anti-government demonstrators defied lockdown orders and took to the streets for a second day in violent protests.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the deployment includes a detachment of 23 federal police officers and up to 50 more to provide security at critical infrastructure sites, as well as 43 defense force personnel, a patrol boat and at least five diplomats.

The first personnel left Australia on Thursday with more going on Friday, and the deployment was expected to last for a few weeks, Morrison said.

"Our purpose here is to provide stability and security," he said.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare declared a lockdown Wednesday after about 1,000 people gathered in protest in the capital, Honiara, demanding his resignation over a host of domestic issues.

The protesters breached the National Parliament building and burned the thatched roof of a nearby building, the government said. They also set fire to a police station and other build-

ings.

"They were intent on destroying our nation and ... the trust that was slowly building among our people," the government said in a statement.

Morrison said Sogavare requested assistance from Australia amid the violence under a bilateral security treaty.

"It is not the Australian government's intention in any way to intervene in the internal affairs of the Solomon Islands. That is for them to resolve," he said.

"Our presence there does not indicate any position on the internal issues of the Solomon Islands," Morrison added.

Australia led an international police and military force called the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands that restored peace in the country after bloody ethnic violence from 2003 until 2017.

Sogavare ordered the capital locked down from 7 p.m. Wednesday through 7 p.m. Friday after saying he had "witnessed another sad and unfortunate event aimed at bringing a democratically elected government down." "I had honestly thought that we had gone past the darkest days in the history of our country," he said. "However, today's events are a painful reminder that we have a long way to go."

Despite an announce-

ment from the Solomon Islands police force that they would be conducting increased patrols through Honiara amid the lockdown, protesters again took to the streets Thursday.

Local journalist Gina Kekea posted photos on Twitter of a bank, shops and a school in flames.

Morrison said he decided to send help after it became clear that police in the Solomon Islands were "stretched."

Sogavare angered many in 2019, particularly leaders of the Solomon Islands' most populous province, Malaita, when he cut the country's diplomatic ties with Taiwan, switching its diplomatic allegiance to China instead.

Local media reported that many of the protesters were from Malaita, whose premier, Daniel Suidani, has been at odds with Sogavare, whom he accuses of being too close to Beijing.

China expressed serious concern about attacks on some Chinese citizens and institutions, without providing details. "We believe that under the leadership of Prime Minister Sogavare, the Solomon Islands government can restore social order and stability as soon as possible," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing in Beijing.

Bangladesh sends hundreds more Rohingya refugees to island



DHAKA, BANGLADESH (AP): Bangladesh on Thursday began relocating hundreds of Rohingya refugees to an island in the Bay of Bengal, despite ongoing concerns from rights groups over the conditions on the vulnerable low-lying island and that no refugees should be sent forcibly.

The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic group, over 700,000 of whom fled persecution and violence in neighboring Myanmar in August 2017. Bangladesh has been sheltering 1.1 million of the refugees in crowded camps near its coast.

A U.N.-sponsored investigation in 2018 recommended the prosecution of Myanmar's top military commanders on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for the violence against the Rohingya.

A senior Bangladeshi official overseeing the relocation, Mohammad Shamsud Douza, said

that a navy ship would take 379 refugees from Chattogram city to the Bhashan Char Island which lies off the country's southeastern coast.

"They are going there voluntarily. All the 379 refugees have chosen to live there for a better and secure life," he told The Associated Press.

"Authorities will take care of everything — from food to medicine," he added.

The government began sending Rohingya refugees to the island eleven months ago, and says it can now accommodate up to 100,000.

Douza said a total of 1,500 refugees would be transported to the island in phases over the next few weeks. Previously, about 19,000 refugees were relocated to the island from Cox's Bazar where more than 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar live in crowded camps.

It was not clear when the next batch will travel

to the island.

The government says the relocation is a temporary arrangement and eventually they will have to return to their home country in Myanmar, although Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has also said she will not force the refugees to return.

In October, the U.N. signed an agreement with Bangladesh's government to facilitate sending refugees to the island. The U.N. and other groups had earlier criticized the relocation, saying the island, which is regularly submerged by monsoon rains, was not fit for habitation. The government has spent more than \$112 million on development, adding sea walls, hospitals, schools and mosques.

The U.N. agreement allows for close cooperation between the international body and the government to supply services and aid for the island's residents.

Rights groups, however, have continued to express concerns over the plans. This week, the International Federation of Red Cross urged in a statement that urgent action was needed to protect the refugees from cyclones and the COVID-19 pandemic on Bhashan Char Island. It said Bangladesh's Red Crescent has been working directly with the refugees so that lifesaving measures are in place ahead of the next big cyclone, as big storms regularly threaten the Bay of Bengal from September until December.

It said vaccinations have been underway for people aged over 55 on the island, and more doses are due for the remaining adults.

The Rohingya are not recognized as citizens in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, rendering them stateless, and face other forms of state-sanctioned discrimination and violence.

Al-Shabab blast by school in Somali capital kills at least 8

MOGADISHU, SOMALIA (AP): A large explosion outside a school in Somalia's capital on Thursday killed at least eight people, including students, witnesses said. The extremist group al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack.

The al-Qaida-linked group controls large parts of rural Somalia and continues to frustrate efforts at rebuilding the Horn of Africa nation after three decades of conflict.

The blast sent a plume of smoke above a busy part of Mogadishu during the morning rush hour. The blast shredded part of the school, with emergency workers looking through the collapsed roof beams and wooden benches.

Police spokesman Abdifatah Adam Hassan said eight people were killed and 17 others wounded.

"This is a tragedy," said Abdulkadir Adan of the Amin ambulance service, which rushed people to a hospital.

The casualties were fewer than might have occurred since Thursday is part of the weekend in Somalia, an overwhelmingly Muslim nation.

Al-Shabab in a statement carried by its Andalus radio said it targeted Western officials being escorted by the African Union peacekeeping convoy. But a witness, Hassan Ali, told the AP that a private security company was escorting the officials and said he saw four of the security personnel wounded.

The attack occurred as Somalia faces major questions about its political and security future. The AU peacekeeping force was meant to withdraw from the country, but its mission could be extended amid concerns that Somali forces are not ready to assume responsibility for security. The U.S. early this year said its troop withdrawal from Somalia was complete.

A long-delayed presidential vote was meant to take place in February but now looks set to be held next year.

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Sunny Hinduja joins cast of 'Shehzada', begins filming



MUMBAI, Nov 25 (PTI): Actor Sunny Hinduja, best known for The Family Man, on Thursday said he is set to star in Shehzada, headlined by Kartik Aaryan. Billed as an action-packed, musical and family film, Shehzada is directed by Rohit Dhawan of Dishoom and Desi Boyz fame.

Hinduja, who attained popularity with TVF's Aspirants, took to social media to share the news about his new film on his birthday. He also said he has commenced shooting for the film.

I thought let me start my birthday with a

blast!! Super happy & excited to be a part of Shehzada, the actor wrote, alongside a picture of him holding the film's clapperboard.

Hinduja, however, didn't divulge details regarding his role.

The team started filming for the movie in October and Aaryan wrapped the first schedule earlier this month.

Shehzada also stars Paresh Rawal, Manisha Koirala, Ronit Roy and Sachin Khedekar.

Produced by Bhushan Kumar, Allu Arvind and Aman Gill, the film will be released theatrically on November 4, 2022.

Disney+ Hotstar sets premiere date for 'Aarya' season 2

MUMBAI, NOV 25 (PTI):

The second season of "Aarya", starring Sushmita Sen, will start streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from December 10.

Created by Ram Madhvani, the International Emmy-nominated show is an official adaption of the hit Dutch series Penzoa.

The first season of the series revolved around a happily married woman named Aarya, played by Sen, whose world turns upside down when her husband, pharma baron Tej Sareen (Chandrachur Singh) is shot and a threatens looms her family due to Tej's possible involvement in an illegal drug racket.

The upcoming season will follow the journey of Aarya, a mother combatting the dark world of crime and enemies closing in on her family and children, a press release issued by the streamer read.

"Will her family continue to be her strength or will her own trustworthy people turn against her?" is the question the new installment will explore.

The makers unveiled the trailer of Aarya season two on Thursday and also announced the release date of the show.

Madhvani, who is receiving praise for his latest film Dhamaka, said he is grateful to have collaborated with Disney+ Hotstar and Endemol Shine to reimagine the



journey of Aarya in season two.

Aarya will be presented in a new light in the second season, the director added.

Aarya, as a character, symbolises strength and vulnerability. She has to face her past so that she can save her family to protect her future.

In the first season, we saw her take the moral stand on the incidents around her life, this time we will see her emerge with a survival instinct like never before, Madhvani said in a statement.

Sen, who reprises the

titular role, said the new chapter of the show will be a fascinating revelation of her character and she hopes audiences warm up to her yet again.

After being nominated for the previous season for the International Emmy awards, we are supercharged for the second season. Season 2 is not just about Aarya, a strong woman but also a warrior.

The new chapter is a fascinating revelation of the character and has proved to be a huge learning for me as an actor. I challenged myself by donning Aarya in a new

avatar and I hope that the audiences will appreciate her fierce, unapologetic self in the second season, she said.

For the sophomore season, Sen is joined by actors Sikandar Kher, Vikas Kumar, Mayo Sarao, Ankur Bhatia, Akash Khurana, Dilnaz Irani among others.

The series is co-produced by Endemol Shine India and Ram Madhvani Films.

Aarya was nominated in the best drama category at the 2021 International Emmy Awards, where it was bested by Israeli thriller series Tehran.

Kanye "Ye" West Vows to "Restore" his family with Kim Kardashian as she dates Pete Davidson

Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, gave an impassioned speech about the importance of family while visiting the L.A. Mission homeless shelter.

Ye is vowing to be there for his family this holiday season.

On Wednesday, Nov. 24, the rapper, formerly known as Kanye West, said he wants to "restore" his family with estranged wife Kim Kardashian and their four kids, North, Saint, Chicago and Psalm. He shared his plans for a possible reconciliation while visiting the L.A. Mission, where he delivered an impassioned speech about the importance of being with loved ones.

"Now it's time to restore the families this Thanksgiving. It's all about restoring the family," he shared. "This morning I felt so blessed to wake up, to workout and be able to

drive to my house and see

my wife and my kids."

Ye continued, "That's right. I said my wife and my children, and I want everyone to pray for my family."

It seems the rapper is intent on getting back with Kim, who recently started dating Saturday Night Live comedian Pete Davidson. He said that he believes people can change, explaining, "The narrative that God wants is for you to see that everything can be redeemed in all these relationships. We made mistakes. I've made mistakes."

"I've publicly done things that were not acceptable as a husband," he admitted. "But I'm here to change that narrative."

Kim and Ye split up earlier this year, with the Keeping Up with the Kardashians alum keeping their \$23 million Hidden Hills home in the divorce proceedings. However, Ye

shared in his speech that he has a "house right next" to their former shared abode so he can be "next to my children as much as possible."

"I'm doing everything to be right next to the situation," the Donda performer said.

The Grammy nominee explained that he's trying to express himself in the "most sane" and "calm way possible," adding that he thinks it's important to discuss the subject so people see the importance of uniting families. "I am saying this because if the enemy can separate Kimye, there is going to be millions of families that feel like that separation is OK."

He continued, "When God, who has already wanted his soul, brings Kimye together, there's gonna be millions of families that are going

to be influenced and see that they can overcome, could work as a separation of trauma."

Ye previously said that he isn't ready to give up on his marriage to Kim. During an appearance on Revolt TV's Drink Champs podcast, he shared, "At the end of the day, I ain't got the paperwork yet, so I'm going to come on this joint and try to save my family and keep my family together."

He added that their four children "want their parents to stay together."

But a source close to Kim told E! News in November that the makeup mogul is ready to move on from their relationship. According to the insider, "There's no chance for reconciliation at this point."

A second source noted that Kim "tried for a long, long time" to make their marriage work but eventually "reached her breaking point."



DENIM DAZE! The actress and singer, Hailee Steinfeld visits Good Morning America in NYC.

ARIES:

We're all talking about manifestation, Aries. We're all talking about creating the life of our dreams. But, what differentiates an amateur manifestor from somebody who has achieved mastery is their unyielding faith in themselves. So, the real question, do you believe in your power to co-create, beautiful? PS: You're being advised to maintain a journal, and write your intentions down with clarity.

TAURUS:

You've made your way to the top, Taurus. You've made your way to a place where not too many people have gone before. In other words, you've earned the right to say 'yes' to what resonates with you and 'no' to what doesn't sit right with your soul. So, don't waste a single moment second guessing yourself. Begin to eliminate the projects or opportunities that do not take you closer to your long-term goals so you can make space for what does.

GEMINI:

We're so obsessed with making it big. With being recognised for every action we take. But, this is not about the world, Gemini. It's not about external validation either. It's

about doing your best and offering your work as a prayer to the Universe. Something tells us the best is yet to come. The best is yet to come, beautiful!

CANCER:

Property-related matters are showing up in your cards, Cancer. So, if you're struggling with some sort of dispute, get ready to find a resolution soon. If you haven't kickstarted the process yet, seek the counsel of a lawyer you trust. As such, domestic affairs are also likely to take centre-stage today. Prioritise spending quality time with the family. If you haven't called the crew over for dinner in a while, consider hosting an intimate gathering tonight.

LEO:

You've been following the rulebook closely, and it's making you a bit rigid, Leo. Time to shake things up a little. Time to find a new rhythm to flow with. Take this on as a challenge to do something for the first time, to flirt with discomfort or to commit to that one thing you've been resisting. Clichéd as it is, the growth you're seeking lies outside of your comfort, and you're being called to make space for it.

VIRGO:

Something tells us you're turning into a

chronic worrier, Virgo, and it's not solving any of your problems. On the other hand, it's adding to your burden and making it challenging for you to achieve the simple things too. It's time to practice some mind control. But, the way to your mind is through your body. So, go out. Go for a run. Sweat it out. Do a few dozen surya namaskars. And then, when you're physically exhausted, sit down in meditation.

LIBRA:

You love where you are, Libra, and you love what you have created for yourself. But that doesn't mean the monotony doesn't get to you once in a while. Today, you're being asked to change things up a little, to re-think your schedule, and make time for the things that bring you joy - cooking up a special meal, for instance, practicing ashtanga or tending to your garden. Some of you may be thinking about embarking upon an eat-pray-love journey of sorts. Joining a wellness retreat or visiting an ashram will definitely do you some good.

SCORPIO:

You've crossed a big hurdle, Scorpio, one that has been holding you back for lifetimes. Transmute whatever remains of this energy

as you will soon be entering a new cycle. A cycle where victory, success and recognition will come to you more easily. It's time to trust the signs you are receiving from the Universe, as you continue to march forward. Remember, you will need the support of your co-conspirators on this journey. So, cultivate good relationships and nurture the ones you have built over time.

SAGITTARIUS:

If we could do everything on our own, our lives would be a lot different, Sagittarius. Since we cannot, it's important to seek co-conspirators, and it is these co-conspirators that you're being asked to honour today. Start a dialogue about how you can improve the situation and/or do things differently. As you do, make it a point to highlight each of their strengths and encourage them to serve in the way that they serve best. Something tells us you're about to make magic together.

CAPRICORN:

You feel like you're living the same day over and over, and the monotony is beginning to get to you, Capricorn. Try to change things up a little. Bring a little more ease and flow into your routine so you can do the things you simply have to, whilst making some ex-

tra for the tasks that bring joy to you. Taking off on an adventure of sorts is also highly recommended at this point.

AQUARIUS:

Oddly enough, it is the people who are closest to us that end up causing the deepest of wounds. Yes, we're talking about people who know us intimately and understand our triggers. But, what if this trauma is a part of the great awakening? An opportunity to look within, to pluck out the weeds from our garden, and to rise from the murky waters of karma like a lotus? Rise above, beautiful. Look at your circumstances from a higher perspective.

PISCES:

We're still in the eclipse tunnel, Pisces, with a solar eclipse coming up on the 4th of December. In other words there is a lot that is hidden from us at this moment. A certain degree of caution is required for self-preservation. So, avoid making hasty decisions or jumping headfirst into something you're not completely sure of. Analyse situations well, and if drastic steps need to be taken, wait until the eclipse has passed.