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SummitTIMES

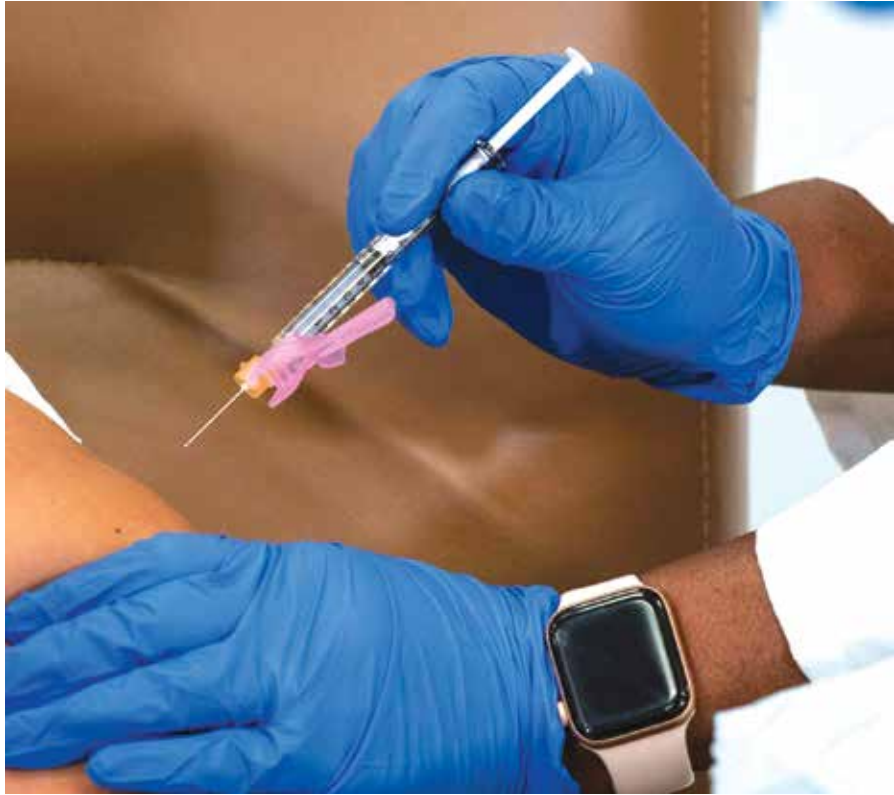
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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Sikkim sets new daily vaccination record after 3,951 more get innoculated



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 MAR:**

A total of 3,951 more people received their COVID vaccination shots at more than 35 sites across the State on Wednesday. This is also the highest number of the COVID vaccinations carried out in a single day so far in the State.

Of the 3,951, it is informed that 3,419 received their first dose of the vaccine while 532 got their second dose and thus completed their vaccine regimen.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia informed that 560 healthcare workers [119 receiving their first dose and 441 their second], 420 frontline workers [329 receiving first dose and 91 their second dose], 335 persons in age group 45 to 59 years with co-morbidities and 2,636 persons in the 60 and above age-group were vaccinated here today.

In the meantime, three new cases of novel coronavirus were reported in the last 24 hours in Sikkim taking the State's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to 6,178.

The number of recovered cases also improved slightly to 5,897 with four more COVID patients being discharged from isolation facilities.

There are currently 49 active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that the three new cases were picked up from the testing of 193 samples.

All the three cases were found in RT-PCR testing [of 160 samples].

Two persons from Sichey, Gangtok in East District and one from Sardang, Pelling in West District have tested positive.

Sahakar Bharati team calls on CM



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 MAR:**

Founder Member Sahakar Bharati cum Director, Central Board RBI, Satish Marathi and National General Secretary Sahakar Bharati, Dr. Uday Joshi along with the team of Sahakar Bharati called on the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at Mintokgang today.

During the meet, the Chief Minister thanked the team for visiting Sikkim and participating in the two-day Adhiveshan on cooperative awareness held at SICUN.

Several points on the augmentation of cooperative evolution and activities in Sikkim were discussed and some issues

apprised by the delegation were noted.

The Chief Minister assured every possible support for the progress and advancement of cooperative movement in Sikkim.

Similarly, President Sahakar Bharati Sikkim, Mangal Jit Rai, Patron Sahakar Bharati cum Chairman NAFCUB, Jyotendra Bhai Mehta, Organising Secretary, Sanjay Pachpor, Managing Director MCDFI, K.C. Supekar, All India Marketing Head Sahakar Bharati, Smt. Madhubala Saboo, Organizing Secretary, Gyalpo Tamang, General Secretary, L. P. Kafley, Treasurer Birendra Paudel were also present.

One withdraws, Ranipool now two-way contest



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 MAR:**

Sakun Tala Pradhan has withdrawn her candidature from Ranipool ward under Gangtok Municipal Corporation. Ranipool now becomes a two-way contest between

Yashoda Chettri and Asha Chettri. The last date of withdrawal is tomorrow i.e 11 March 2021.

Municipal Returning Officer East, Ragul K informed that Ms Pradhan withdrew from the election today.

Red Fest V auditions held in Gangtok

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 MAR:**

Musical bands from different parts of the State participated in the auditions of Red Fest V, Multi Media Campaign held in the capital on Wednesday. The popular event in the State is being organized by Sikkim State AIDS Control Society [SSACS] in collaboration with Recovering Users Network [RUN]. The audition has a four-judge panel comprising of Sachin Gurung, Neha Pradhan, Naeky Rai and Diwash Rai.

In his address, SSACS Project Director, Dr DS Kerongi mentioned that substance abuse is related to HIV/AIDS so SSACS has been working to address the issue of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS by creating wide awareness through different mediums.



ferent mediums.

He added that Red Fest is one such initiative to create mass awareness especially among the young crowd as music is an influential medium to reach out to teenagers and youths. He stated that SSACS is also providing a platform for young people to showcase their talent and also encourage other young-

sters towards productive and creative works.

Likewise, RUN president Robin Gurung mentioned that the event hopes to spread wide awareness and correct message on HIV/AIDS among youngsters through music. He expressed that such events would also help to encourage youth towards music and keep them

away from substance abuse and unproductive activities.

Top bands in this competition will also get a chance to participate in a regional music festival, he added.

The competition also carries cash prizes of Rs 70,000 to winner, Rs 50,000 to first runner-up and Rs 30,000 to second runner-up.

Bengal Governor visits Mamata Banerjee at hospital amid "Go Back" slogans

KOLKATA, 10 MAR [PTI]:

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar reached the state-run SSKM hospital on Wednesday night to see an injured Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, amid "go back" slogans shouted by hundreds of the TMC supporters gathered there.

Ms Banerjee is undergoing treatment at the SSKM Hospital for



injuries on her left leg after she was allegedly

pushed by unknown people during campaign in

Nandigram.

The Chief Minister alleged that neither the local police nor the SP were near her when four-five people deliberately pushed her causing the injury.

The Governor went inside the hospital amid slogan shouting against him by the Trinamool Congress supporters present there.

"There Were No Cops": Mamata Banerjee Injured, Says Pushed By 4-5 Men

NEW DELHI, 10 MAR

[NDTV]: Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she was attacked today while in Nandigram, where she had gone to file her nomination for the coming elections.

The Chief Minister said she was attacked by four or five people at a time when there was no police officer around her. Visuals from the spot showed security guards lifting and placing her on the backseat of a car. The 66-year-old -- who has sustained many an injury earlier, most notably in 1991 when she was attacked by CPM goons -- appeared pale, visibly shaken and in much pain.

Ms Banerjee told reporters that she was pushed by four or five men while she was trying to get into her car. Pointing to her leg, she added, "See how it is swelling up". Asked if it was a planned attack, she said, "Of course it is a conspiracy... there were no policemen around me".

Ms Banerjee, who was expected to spend the night in Nandigram, soon left for Kolkata, around 130 km away.

The attack came a day after the Election Commission replaced the Director General of Bengal Police, Mr Virender, amid concerns of violence voiced by the BJP. An IPS officer of the 1987 batch, P Niranjayan, has been named the new police chief.

Nandigram will be the site of the biggest battle in the state elections that begin by the end of this month. The Chief Minister has been challenged by her erstwhile aide Suwendu Adhikari, who is now representing the BJP.

Dubbed "outsider" by the supporters of Mr Adhikari -- who won the Nandigram seat in 2016 -- she had been campaigning relentlessly in the area, which had helped her come to power following the agitation against farmland acquisition.



NEW DELHI, 10 MAR

[NDTV]: The farmers protesting against the Centre's farm laws have called an all-India strike on March 26. A joint convention will be organised with trade unions and other mass organisations for planning the Bharat Bandh, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body to farmer unions, has said.

March 26 marks the completion of four months of the protest at the Delhi borders, which started on November 26. On January 26, as the protest completed two months, the farmers had held a tractor rally which had ended in violence as the protesters over-ran the iconic Mughal-era Red Fort.

The synergy with trade unions and other mass organisations is part of the farmers' plan to broaden the base of the agitation against the Centre. The farmers -- whose protest has crossed 100 days -- have come up

with a protest calendar that also includes an "anti-corporate day" and an "anti-government day" on March 15.

On March 23, the martyrdom day of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, youngsters from all over the country will join the farmers' protests in Delhi borders. On March 28, anti-farmer laws will be burnt as part of Holi dahan across the country, the farmer unions said.

The farmers' body also spoke of today's no-confidence motion in Haryana moved by the Congress, which was defeated by the BJP-led government.

"The anti-farmer face of the JJP (Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janata Party), which describes themselves as a party belonging to the farming community, has been completely exposed. These MLAs have no political future because of the ongoing movement," the SKM said in a statement.

SummitTIMES IN NEPALI



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Thank You



Health talk on TB at Greendale School

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 MAR:

An interactive health awareness programme on "Tuberculosis" was organised by Central Referral Hospital (CRH) under Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) for the students of Greendale Senior Secondary School, Tadong, East Sikkim on 09 March 2021.

Dr Prakash Koirala, HOD & Consultant Pulmonologist, Department of Respiratory Medicine, CRH delivered the awareness talk on Tuberculosis: types, sign and symptoms, causes, treat-



ment etc, a press release informs.

Principal Greendale Senior Secondary

School, Tabita Pradhan expressed her gratitude towards CRH for the programme and said that

more such interactive sessions on different health topics should be held in the near future.

Interschool Aatma Nirbhar Sikkim competition concludes in West Sikkim

GYALSHING, 09 MAR (IPR):

Aatma Nirbhar Sikkim, a joint initiative of the West District Administration and Nehru Yuva Kendra, West Sikkim, was organized from 05 to 07 Mar with 18 schools from all over the district.

At least two schools from each block participated in this three-day interschool competition.

The program aims to inculcate entrepreneurial skills among the students to make them self-reliant and capable of creating jobs which is the main theme of government flagship program "Aatma Nirbar Bharat".

Each team comprised of 10 students from classes XI and XII with two nodal teachers to assist them.

The initial investment required to set up the food stall was completely borne by the students with each student contributing Rs 500 from own pocket and thus each team having initial capital of Rs 5000.

These schools then operated the food stalls for three days to generate revenues so to learn the concept of running a business. At the end of the three days, the team with the maximum profit would be declared as winner.

Chief Minister PS



Tamang [Golay] also visited the stall of Hee-Yangthang Senior Secondary School on the first day.

He encouraged the students to learn about running a business and to dream about starting their own venture in future. He congratulated the students for their hard work in preparing for the event. He also appreciated the efforts of District Administration, Gyalshing and Nehru Yuva Kendra, West Sikkim for taking this first of its kind initiative to develop entrepreneurial skills among the students and encouraged them to continue doing the good work.

All the teams were instructed to maintain proper account books, revenue & expenditure

statements, and purchase receipts so that they learn the basics of accounting also in the process. These statements and receipts would also be used by the jury to verify the profit calculation of each team and reconfirm it with the actual cash balance submitted at the end of three days.

Teams were guided on all the safety protocols to be followed during the event. In addition to this, teams were also instructed to maintain proper hygiene and follow all the COVID-19 protocols so as to inculcate a sense of cleanliness and hygiene among them.

The total business done by all the schools combined in these three days amounted to Rs 3,45,000/-. The profits

earned by each team varied between Rs 2,200/- and Rs 25,000/- and none of the team faced any loss.

The winner of the competition will be declared shortly.

In the next step, students interested in starting their own businesses in the future will be provided hand-holding support through District Administration, Gyalshing and Nehru Yuva Kendra, West Sikkim to start their venture.

An awareness camp regarding various Government schemes for encouraging start-ups would also be conducted in Gyalshing in the month of March in partnership with MSME department to make students aware of the funding opportunities.

Namchi Sr Sec School wins State Level Sci, Math and Env Exhibition

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 MAR:

State Council of Educational Research and Training, Education Department, Govt. of Sikkim organised the State Level Science Mathematics and Environment Exhibition 2020-21 on 09 March 2021 at NBB College, Tadong.

A press release informs that the theme of the exhibition was 'Technology and Toys' and sub-themes included: Eco Friendly Material; Health Hygiene and Cleanliness; Interactive Software; Historical Development and Mathematical Modelling.

Due to the pandemic situation, the event was organised in an online mode beginning from district level to state level following the SOP prepared by the Government. Judges evaluated the pre-submitted videos of the schools and interacted with the participants related to their exhibits through Google meet/telephone.

The district level exhibitions were held on 23 and 25 Feb 2021. A total of 73 schools - 23



schools from East, 13 schools from North, 18 schools from South and 19 schools from West district, participated in the programme. Twenty best exhibits of the district level exhibition were selected by the panel of Judges for the state level exhibition.

At state level, the videos submitted by the 20 district level winning schools were screened followed by interaction round with the judges - Samdup Bhutia, Additional Director, (IT) Education Department, Dr. Sarala Khaling, Regional Director (Eastern Himalayas/ North-east India) of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) and Dr.

Madan Mani Dhakal, Joint Director, National Health Mission.

Namchi SSS, Namchi Girls' SSS and Dikling SSS were awarded the first, second and third position respectively. The remaining seven schools selected for representing the state at National level were Bermiok Tokal SSS, Samdong SSS, Rangpo SSS, Kamrang SS, Ranka SSS, Dentam SSS and Mangan SSS.

Education Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha was the chief guest for the day. In his address, the Minister emphasised on the need to develop a conscientious attitude towards the preservation of environment and conservation of water. In this, he highlighted the responsibility of the

youth as ambassadors for protecting our environment from man-made disasters and called them the torchbearers for the cause.

The gathering was also addressed by G.P. Upadhyaya, Additional Chief Secretary Education Department. He appreciated the confidence level and efforts put up by all the participating schools.

Dr. Rabin Chhetri, Director SCERT informed the gathering that, this was the first occasion to have exhibition on blended mode. He also appreciated the thinking level of the students and expressed his best wishes to students selected to participate in the National Level Science Exhibition.

A report on district level exhibition was presented by Parijit Sutradhar, Head of Science Dept, SCERT. Other dignitaries present in the programme were Directors-Planning, MDM, Languages, Secondary Education, Samagra Shiksha, Joint Director (East) and Deputy Director (North).

CRH observes No Smoking Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 MAR:

Central Referral Hospital observed No Smoking Day on 10 March with Tobacco Cessation Counselling at the Hospital.

The importance of Counsellors was highlighted to mark the occasion as they help prepare clients for the irritability, anxiety and other discomfort that they are



likely to experience when they attempt to stop smoking cigarettes, a press communiqué from CRH details.

No Smoking Day is observed the world over

on the second Wednesday of March to help smokers who want to quit smoking and also to raise awareness about the health effects of smoking.

It is widely accepted that the nicotine in cigarettes is highly addictive, but people struggling with mental health issues often turn to cigarettes for reasons that go beyond their addictive qualities.

This year, the theme is, "Commit to quit" with the aim to urge smokers to make a commitment to quit.

Int'l Women's Day celebrated in Mangan

SUMMIT REPORT

MANGAN, 10 MAR:

Sikkim State Commission for Women (SSCW) organized International Women's Day 2021 at the conference hall of Zilla Bhawan, Mangan, today.

Sponsored by National Commission for Women, Government of India, the programme had Minister for Roads & Bridges and Culture Department cum area MLA Lachen Mangan, Samdup Lepcha as the chief guest.

He was accompanied by Chairperson, Sikkim State Commission for Women, Chung Kipu Lepcha, District Collector (North), Tenzing.T. Kaleon, Principal Director-Social Justice & Welfare Department, Phuchung Bhutia and SP (North), Ongmu Bhutia. Members of Sikkim State Commission for Women, Officers and staff of Social Justice & Welfare Department and students attended the event.

The theme for the event was "Men For Women", an initiative to recognize and appreciate men who work for the safety and welfare of women.

The chief guest spoke about the challenges faced by women and said that Sikkim is blessed as women here have more opportunities and advantages as compared to other states and region. The government ensures high priority to women and provides them with security in all spheres, he



added. Chairperson, Chung Kipu Lepcha informed the gathering about how the celebration of International Women's Day began in the early 1900s and its historical significance in uplifting and empowering women throughout the world.

She spoke about how women's roles have shaped and changed political history of many countries and why women need greater attention and the importance of gender equality.

Phuchung Bhutia spoke in detail about the various beneficial schemes for women under the Social Justice & Welfare Department. He highlighted some significant schemes and projects like One Stop Centres that provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence both in public and private spaces under one roof and to facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency assistance to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counseling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.

Keeping the theme

in mind, four individuals who have contributed towards the welfare and protection of women were felicitated. They were:

1. Raju Baman from Duars Express Mail, West Bengal for his selfless and courageous service in rescuing women and girl child who often get caught in human trafficking.
2. Karma Chewang Nima who runs an NGO called Freedom Facility, that cater and rehabilitate women who suffer from substance abuse.
3. Nirmal Mangar, Senior Editor of Sikkim Chronicle for highlighting women related news in the media and for also becoming the medium to connect distressed women to organizations.
4. Deoraj Rai, Presi-

dent of Lungchok Kamaray GPU, South Sikkim for setting up a unique and innovative women and child empowerment centre in the GPU.

Minal Thapa from Netspek Solutions gave a presentation on Sikkim Sahayog mobile app, which is available on Google Play Store for android users. He provided details on how the app functions and the services and contacts it provides. He also said that the iOS version for the app would be launched soon.

Raju Baman held a short interactive counseling session with the students, where he advised them to be smart in dealing with online predators who target young children and manipulate them into making wrong decisions.

Inter School Boxing Tournament finals held in Mangshila

WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 10 MAR:

The finals of the Inter School Boxing Tournament for under 14 and under 16 boys and girls was held today at Mangshila in North Sikkim. The tournament is being organized by the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim Mangan.

The event was held under the banner of Khelo India Inter School Junior Olympic Games under "Sports for peace and development 2020-2021".

Deputy Director Sports Mangan, Janim Lepcha informed that the main motive behind



organizing the event was to give a platform to the underprivileged children from rural areas.

The function was attended by vice president Sikkim Boxing Association cum Joint Labor Commissioner, KR Limboo as chief guest in the

presence of BDO Mangan, DS Subba, Deputy Director Sports Mangan, Janim Lepcha, Zilla member, Mangshila-Tibuk GPU, Zomin Limboo, panchayat members, representatives of different schools and the general public.

The chief guest in his speech encouraged all the boxers to excel in their field and represent the state in national and international levels.

The welcome address was given by Panchayat President, Meena Limboo.

"There Were No Cops": Mamata Banerjee Injured, Says Pushed By 4-5 Men

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The Chief Minister said she was attacked by four or five people at a time when there was no police officer around her. Visuals from the spot showed security guards

lifting and placing her on the backseat of a car. The 66-year-old -- who has sustained many an injury earlier, most notably in 1991 when she was attacked by CPM goons -- appeared pale, visibly shaken and in much pain.

Ms Banerjee told reporters that she was pushed by four or five men while she was trying to get into her car. Pointing to her leg, she added, "See how it is swelling

up". Asked if it was a planned attack, she said, "Of course it is a conspiracy... there were no policemen around me".

Ms Banerjee, who was expected to spend the night in Nandigram, soon left for Kolkata, around 130 km away.

The attack came a day after the Election Commission replaced the Director General of Bengal Police, Mr Virender, amid con-

cerns of violence voiced the loudest by the BJP. An IPS officer of the 1987 batch, P Nirajayan, has been named the new police chief.

Nandigram will be the site of the biggest battle in the state elections that begin by the end of this month. The Chief Minister has been challenged by her erstwhile aide Suven-du Adhikari, who is now representing the BJP

KUTSE SHEGU



The 49th days kutse Shegu of Lt. Tashi Doma Bhutia of Upper Gharipsey, Namchi South Sikkim who left her heavenly abode on 26th January 2021 falls on 15th March 2021.

All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence Upper Gharipsey, Namchi.

We also express our sincere gratitude to all those who extended their support during our time of bereavement.

Mr. Norden Bhutia (husband),
Mr. I Sonam Topagay Bhutia (son)
Ms. Tshering Denka Bhutia (daughter)
Ms. Pema Choden Bhutia (daughter).

BBPLAS to host Strongest Man and Woman of Sikkim C'ship

SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 10 MAR:

Body Building & Power Lifting Association of Sikkim [BBPLAS] is gearing up to organize the 4th Strongest Man and 3rd Strongest Woman of Sikkim and Open Deadlift Championship 2021 on 28 March at Tata stand, Ranipool, in East District. The association is organizing the championship in collaboration with Hardcore Himalayan Gym, Ranipool.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, BBPLAS president, Pema WD Bhutia mentioned that this championship is the annual event of the association but it could not happen last year due to COVID-19 so the association decided to organize the event this year in collaboration with Hardcore Himalayan Gym.

He mentioned that the championship has events of squat, bench



press and deadlift in different weight categories. He added that champions of each weight category will again take on each other for the title of Strongest Man and Strongest Woman of Sikkim.

Mr Bhutia informed that the championship carries cash prizes, medals and trophies for winners. He mentioned that this state-level championship was also a trial for upcoming nationals as the association will select participants from the

championship for the upcoming national championships.

BBPLAS vice-president, Yogesh Rai mentioned that the online registration for participants has already begun and there will be spot registration for participants. He mentioned that tentatively there are five weight categories in men's event and four weight categories in women's event.

He informed that 4th Strongest Man and 3rd

Strongest Woman of Sikkim would be purely for participants from Sikkim, while Open Deadlift Championship will have participants from different parts of North Bengal region.

The press conference was also addressed by BBPLAS treasurer, Pema Paljor Bhutia.

Tashi Gyatso Lachungpa is the current title holder of Strongest Man of Sikkim and Lamin Theeng is the current title holder of Strongest Woman of Sikkim.

Sahakar Bharati Sikkim Rajya Adhiveshan

GANGTOK, 10 MAR (IPR):

The two-day "Sahakar Bharati Sikkim Rajya Adhiveshan" programme organised by Sahakar Bharati Sikkim State Unit at the SICUN auditorium in Assam Lingzey concluded today. The event was chaired by MLA/ Namcheybung constituency, Em Prasad Sharma, as chief guest. At the onset of the programme, National General Secretary, Sahakar Bharati, Dr. Uday Joshi, presented a brief overview of Sahakar Bharati at a glance which was followed by a SWOT analysis of the Cooperative Movement delivered by SICUN representative. The first half of the technical session on "Building youth entrepreneur through Cooperative Movement" had addresses presented by Bidyut Kr. Basu from NABARD on "Marketing through Cooperative" and Madhu Bala Sahu, Marketing Head of Simply Deshi on "Organic Marketing & Food Processing through Cooperative Society" while MD, Denzong Agricultural Co-operative Society Ltd. (DACS) gave an overview of DACS and its initiatives.

During the second half of the technical session, MD, Sikkim Milk Union, Dr. A.B. Karki, elucidated on rural economy and dairy cooperative while MD, Sikkim State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd. (SIMFED), Bhaskar Basnet spoke about various aspects of business and enterprise through SIMFED.

Likewise, MD, Sikkim State Co-operative Bank Ltd. (SISCO), Pema Chenzom, in her address, emphasized on banking operations through SISCO while Patron of Sahakar Bharati,



Jyotindra Bhai Mehta, elaborated on the role of youth in Cooperative Movements.

The Sahakar Bharati Sikkim Unit also formed its Central Executive Committee and Executive Committee today with Mangaljit Rai as its President, Tashi Ongdup Lepcha and Ms. Bishnu Maya Manger as its Vice Presidents and L.P. Kafley as its General Secretary.

Later, a press briefing was also held at the SICUN conference hall which was addressed by Chairman,

SICUN, LP Kafley, National General Secretary, Sahakar Bharati, Dr. Uday Joshi, and President, Sahakar Bharati, Sikkim Unit, Mangaljit Rai. It was informed that a charter of demands has been put forward to the State Government with regard to various reforms needed for the overall development of cooperative societies in the State.

It may be mentioned here, the Sahakar Bharati Adhiveshan programme was organised by Sahakar Bharati Sikkim Unit

in collaboration with Co-operation Department, Government of Sikkim, National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India (NCDFI), Anand, Gujarat, Sikkim State Cooperative Union (SICUN), Sikkim State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd. (SIMFED), Denzong Agricultural Co-operative Society Ltd. (DACS), Sikkim State Co-operative Bank Ltd. (SISCO) and Sikkim Co-operative Milk Producers' Union (SCMPUL).



No. U.12026/03/2015-NE (Pt.-I)
Government of India
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
(North East Division)
Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi

VACANCY CIRCULAR

Fresh applications are invited from eligible candidates for the post of **Director, Regional Institute of Paramedical and Nursing Sciences (RIPANS), Aizawl, Mizoram (RIPANS)** an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, in the Pay Level 14 + Allowances as admissible (Pre-revised PB-4 Rs. 37400-67000 + GPRs. 10000).

For details regarding the job description, qualification, experience, format of application, etc. Please visit www.mohfw.gov.in

(Baidyanath Prasad)
Under Secretary to the Govt. Of India



HOLI CUP IN RANGPO: The Holi Cup Football Tournament organised by Pintso Bhutia & Group at Rangpo Bazar Playground completed ten days of matches today. Today, UFC Gangtok took on Pandam Football Academy with Gangtok MLA, YT Lepcha, and social worker Reeta Karki as chief guests. UFC-Gangtok won the match 2-0 and made it to the quarter-finals scheduled for 19 March. On 11 March, Melli FC will take on Sinolchu Football Club. [from SANJAY AGARWAL]



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GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

No.279/RDD/E-TEN

Dated: 05.03.2021

INVITATION FOR BIDS

1. The Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, on behalf of the Governor of Sikkim invites percentage from tender under single cover system from the eligible class of contractors (Class II B with District) enlisted with the SPWD for execution of work as detailed below:

Sl.No.	Name of work	Cost of Bidding documents	Bid security 2.5% of the bid value	Bid Value.
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Construction of Rurban Rurban Community Complex and Training Centre cum Cafeteria at Pegha Goan at Soreng in West Sikkim Under Shyam Parsad Mukharji Rurban Mission.	Rs. 50,000.00	Rs. 12,63,430.00	Rs. 5,05,37,227.00

The date and time of tender and submission of completed bid document are as under.

- Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal by the Department: 12/03/2021.
 - Last date for submission of bids online by the Bidders: 15/04/2021, 1600 hours.
 - Last Date of submission of hard copy of bid security: 16/04/2021.
 - Date of opening of bids: After the lifting of Code of Conduct for Municipal Election.
- Eligible Contractors having experience in the construction of building works may download the details and bidding documents from the e-procurement portal i.e. www.sikkimtender.gov.in w.e.f 12.03.2021.
 - The completed tender documents must be uploaded in the e-procurement portal on or before 15/04/2021, 1600 hours. All the relevant papers as per the bidding documents along with the cost of tender document and Earnest Money Deposit (EMC) in the form of challan / demand draft and TDR respectively drawn in favour Additional Director (Accounts), Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, should be upload in the portal.
 - The department reserves the right to accept or reject and bid without assigning any reason thereof.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

NAME OF WORK	1	Construction of Rurban Rurban Community Complex and Training Centre cum Cafeteria at Pegha Goan at Soreng in West Sikkim Under Shyam Parsad Mukharji Rurban Mission.
DATE OF UPLOADING OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS IN E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL	12/03/2021	
LAST DATE AND TIME FOR UPLOADING OF BIDS IN E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL	15/04/2021, 1600 hours	
DATE AND TIME OF OPENING OF BIDS		After the lifting of Code of Conduct for Mincipal Election.
PLACE OF OPENING OF BIDS		Office of the Assistant Engineer (P), Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok.
APPROVAL OF BID		After the lifting of Code of Conduct for Mincipal Election
COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL		After the lifting of Code of Conduct for Mincipal Election

Sd/-
Additioanl Chief Engineer (P)
RDD

RO. No. 262/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21
Dated: 08.03.2021

WORLD GLAUCOMA WEEK

7TH TO 13TH MARCH 2021



HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



Our Inherent Racisms

Because we are also victims of prejudices, let us resolve to be better ourselves

Remember the moment a few years back when the High Court of Delhi asked the Central Bureau of Investigation to ascertain whether “Chinki,” the term universally understood as a racist term used against people with Mongoloid features, had been notified as a casteist remark in laws and rules framed for the protection of scheduled tribes.

It is unlikely that the word has been officially registered as a derogatory or racist term even if that is how it is universally used. In fact it is unlikely that there is any updated list of racist or demeaning terms because even though the term Chinki has been derogatorily used for a long time now, babus move even slower it can be safely vouched that Chinki has still not made it into the list of such terms, i.e. if such a list even exists. That said, there is no doubting the fact that this moniker is almost always hurled to hurt and since everyone knows that, it should not matter whether it is officially listed as a slur-word or not and its use should be recognised as a racist attack. It is interesting that this judicial query arrives in April, must be the tomfoolery that we associate with the beginning of this month that silliness like the one which visited us at this time last year now play in a cycle. So, at almost exactly this time two years back, a spokesperson of a majoritarian party claimed that Indians were not racist. As evidence, he had argued that “we” continue to live with South Indians who are also black (like the Africans who suffer a string of attacks and prejudicial arrests in our country)!

After we are done laughing at such artless dodges claiming sensitivity, and wondering in which alternate reality clear everyday evidence of bigotry can be used to claim openness, we need to stare deep into the mirror and confront the monster that gets reflected back.

We need to begin by accepting that we all carry our prejudices around with us. Much of it, we have imbibed subconsciously through stray comments and smart quips which are thrown around in casual conversations. This conditioning, we share with the rest of humanity, because that is essentially how we engage with others – by pigeonholing them, caricaturizing them, even demonizing them. Eventually though, people grow up. They recognize the shallowness of their prejudices as they meet more people, more different people and get exposed to more diversity. Some also grow more confident, and as they grow in confidence, they stop being fearful of others. As for the prejudices we grow up with, most of these are harmless generalizations and misconceptions which even the first flush of education can correct, but when they remain the only introductions one is exposed to, they harden into beliefs and convictions. These convictions become a dangerous liability when the minds which hold them need to negotiate with the others. Africans in India are suffering what the Northeasterners face in the mainland and what the “Indians” experience in the North-East. Most of Delhi had remained an island of North Indianess until a few decades ago when the number of Chinkies arriving in the capital increased substantially. Neither the northeasterners, nor the North Indians were eased into each other’s company nor were they really informed in any detail about each other. We all brought along our prejudices though, so we began engaging with each other through these prisms. We remained ignorant and blundered about poorly informed and preferred to find our own communes even if it was possible to become cosmopolitan.

Our collective prejudices, our internalized instincts, often congealed into racist moments which primarily were to our detriment because they kept us ignorant, and often, when it found violent expressions pulled others into its blinkered vortex as well. The degrees and magnitude of this violence might differ from place to place, but they have happened everywhere – in Sikkim, in Nagaland, in Manipur, in Assam, in Maharastra, in Bengaluru, in Delhi, Mumbai... [do you get my point?]

We cannot, not as Indians, not as Northeasterners (whatever that means), not as Biharis, claim that we cannot be racist because we are and have been victims of racism ourselves. We have to instead resolve that because we have suffered prejudice, we need to be better – better informed, better behaved... better humans.

Coronavirus one year on: two countries that got it right, and three that got it wrong

DARREN LILLEKER

THECONVERSATION.COM

On March 11 2020, the World Health Organization declared that the COVID-19 public health emergency had become a pandemic: 114 countries were affected, there were 121,500 confirmed cases and more than 4,000 people had succumbed to the virus.

One year on, we have now seen 115 million confirmed cases globally and more than 2.5 million deaths from COVID-19.

“Pandemic is not a word to use lightly or carelessly,” said the Director-General of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on that day in 2020. But in the year since that announcement, the fates of many countries have depended on how leaders have chosen their words.

The impact of the pandemic was unprecedented and all governments faced challenges dealing with a severe but highly unpredictable threat to the lives of their citizens. And some governments responded better than others.

My colleagues and I recently carried out a comparative study of how 27 countries responded to the emergence of the virus and first wave, and how they communicated that response to their citizens.

We invited national experts to analyse their government’s communication style, the flow of information on coronavirus and the actions taken by civil society, mapping these responses onto the numbers of cases and deaths in the country in question. Our work reveals contrasting responses that reflect a nation’s internal politics, suggesting that a government’s handling of the pandemic

was embedded in existing patterns of leadership.

With news of the spread of COVID-19 flowing across international borders, domestic preventative measures needed to be explained carefully. The WHO proved ill-equipped, provided equivocal and flawed advice regarding international travel, even from Hubei province, and equivocated on the efficacy of wearing masks. So much came down to how individual leaders communicated with their citizens about the risks they faced.

Experts in crisis management and social psychologists emphasise the importance of clarity and empathy in communicating during a health emergency.

So who did well and who missed the mark?

SOUTH KOREA AND GHANA

We found two major examples of this style of communication working well in practice. South Korea avoided a lockdown due to clearly communicating the threat of COVID-19 as early as January, encouraging the wearing of masks (which were common previously within the nation in response to an earlier Sars epidemic) and quickly rolling out a contact-tracing app.

Each change in official alert level, accompanied by new advice regarding social contact, was carefully communicated by Jung Eun-Kyung, the head of the country’s Centre for Disease Control, who used changes in her own life to demonstrate how new guidance should work in practice.

The transparency of this approach was echoed in the communication style of the Ghanaian president, Nana

Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo.

Akufo-Addo took responsibility for coronavirus policy and explained carefully each measure required, being honest about the challenges the nation faced. Simple demonstrations of empathy earned him acclaim within his nation and also around the world.

“We know how to bring the economy back to life. What we don’t know is how to bring people back to life,” he famously said.

BRAZIL, THE UK AND INDIA

South Korea and Ghana adopted a consistent tone highlighting the risks of the new pandemic and how they could be mitigated. Nations that fared less well encouraged complacency and gave out inconsistent messages about the threat of COVID-19.

In March 2020, just three weeks prior to placing the country under lockdown and catching COVID-19 himself, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson downplayed the threat, and said he had been shaking hands with infected people, against the recommendations of his expert advisers. Today, the UK has one of the highest per capita death rates from COVID in the world.

Avoiding a full initial lockdown, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro – who also contracted COVID-19 – called for normality to continue, challenging expert guidance and polarising opinion along partisan lines. Such practices led Brazilians to mistrust the official information and spread of misinformation, while adhering to containment measures became an ideological, rather than a public health, question.

Meanwhile, Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, announced a snap

lockdown with just four hours notice, which caused an internal migration crisis, with poor labourers leaving cities to walk hundreds or thousands of miles to their rural homes. Understandably, the labourers prioritised their fears of homelessness and starvation over the risk of spreading COVID-19 around the country.

None of these responses effectively considered the impact that coronavirus would have on society, or that credibility is earned through consistency. The poor outcomes in each case are a partial reflection of these leadership mistakes.

BAD LUCK OR BAD JUDGEMENT?

Of course, the unfolding of the pandemic was not solely down to good or bad communication from leaders. Health systems and demographics may also have played a role, and the worst impacted nations not only had strategic weaknesses but are also global transport hubs and popular destinations – London, New York, Paris and so on. With hindsight, closing borders would have been wise, despite the contrary advice from the World Health Organization.

Still, it’s evident that leaders who adopted clear, early, expert-led, coherent and empathic guidance fared well in terms of their standing with the public and were able to mitigate the worst effects of the virus.

On the other hand, those who politicised the virus, exhibited unrestrained optimism or took to last-minute decision-making oversaw some of the nations with the most cases and deaths.

[the writer is Professor of Political Communication, Bournemouth University]

Pandemic Babies: How COVID-19 Has Affected Child Development

SUNIL BHOPAL & PASCO FEARON

THECONVERSATION.COM

Babies born after March 11 2020 will have only known a world in the grip of a pandemic. They may never have met anyone who isn’t their parent, or they may only ever have seen their grandparents from a distance. They certainly will not have had the same opportunities to interact with other children as those born in the years before.

What are the implications for these pandemic children? While as researchers we do think that most babies will have had an opportunity to thrive, there’s still a lot we don’t know, and we are clear that the first months and years of life are vitally important for a child’s long-term health, development and wellbeing.

Development takes place at an extraordinary rate during a baby’s first year, when the brain doubles in size. This early development depends crucially on experience, and particularly social experience, which stimulates, tunes and hones the brain’s unfolding architecture.

A stimulating, varied and responsive environment supports the development of language, cognition and emotional and social competencies. This dependence on environmental input makes the brain exquisitely flexible and capable of adaptation. But, by the same token, it also means that babies are highly susceptible to the negative impacts of adversity.

One thing we also know with great certainty is that parental stress and mental health problems pose serious risks to children’s later development, affecting their language and cognitive development, their emotional wellbeing and putting them at risk of depression and anxiety themselves.

Unfortunately, support systems for babies and their families have been profoundly disrupted by the pandemic. As is sadly often the case, it is the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children who depend on these services and support networks the most.

For example, many health visitors, who provide advice and resources and who are often the main source of support and connection to health services for families with young babies, have been redeployed into the frontline COVID response during the pandemic. Those who remained have reported that their work with families was considerably affected by very high caseloads and the barriers created by social distancing measures.

Many expressed concerns about their ability to monitor children’s development and refer families to specialist support services when parents were experiencing mental health problems.

On top of that, friends and family have had their ability to visit loved ones and their babies drastically curtailed.

Social support from friends, family, community groups and professionals is normally considered



vital not only because it provides infants with variety, stimulation and opportunities for learning, but also because it is good for the wellbeing of parents, on whom babies are so dependent.

So in these circumstances, what can parents do to help their babies? The evidence suggests that the key to optimal development is play and stimulation, those back-and-forth interactions between caregivers and babies.

Following a child’s lead when they take an interest in some item, naming objects, talking, laughing, singing and reading – all simple, minimal-cost activities – keep babies learning and developing even when the world outside is in difficulty.

BABIES AT RISK

There are good reasons to be concerned about infant and early child development during this time and, like so many other things, these risks will not be evenly distributed.

The lack of support structures, the economic pressures and the drastic reduction in professional contact with health visitors and social workers during the pandemic is almost certainly placing large numbers of babies at greatly increased risk of harm, including risk of maltreatment and even death.

The effects of abuse on child development are profound and long-lasting, including long-term physical disability, emotional distress and mental health concerns. To give a striking example, nearly half of all adult mental health conditions are associated with a history of childhood maltreatment.

In normal times, maltreatment affects approximately 12%-23% of children, and children in economically disadvantaged circumstances are five times more likely to be subjected to abuse. In the UK, 51,510 children were on a child protection plan in March 2020 when the pandemic began.

During the pandemic, local authorities reported more than 300 serious incidents of injury and death involving children between April and October 2020 – up by a fifth on the same time last year.

An increased proportion (almost 40%) involved children under the age of one.

We also know that rates of domestic violence have increased greatly during the pandemic and babies are profoundly affected by this, both directly and indirectly.

Indeed, domestic violence is the single most common factor leading a child to be referred to a child protection service. We sadly under-invest in the most vulnerable children at the best of times. We should be extremely concerned about them in times like these.

THE BABY BLIND SPOT

Babies need stimulation, social contact and responsive caregiving, and all of these will have been affected during the pandemic in complex ways, but we lack good evidence about how this is playing out.

Oxford Brookes University has conducted a study focused on how the pandemic is affecting children of the youngest ages, and in due course will provide us with much-needed insights. But it’s a concern that even now, a year in, we have very poor information about how babies and preschoolers have been affected by the momentous events that have taken place.

This highlights a key point: despite babies being among the most vulnerable in society and most dependent on nurturing care and stimulation, their needs are almost always the last to be noticed. The recent Working for Babies report called this the “baby blind-spot”, with good reason.

At this point in the pandemic, we are desperately in need of good data to understand how babies have been affected, and may continue to be affected, in the coming years. It’s clear that the time has come to step up in our responsibility for all of the babies born into these strange times.

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69 new COVID-19 cases in Odisha, tally at 3,37,929

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 10 (PTI): Odisha's COVID-19 tally mounted to 3,37,929 on Wednesday as 69 more people tested positive for the infection, a health department official said.

Of the new cases, 41 were reported from quarantine centres and 28 detected during contact tracing.

Sundargarh district recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 14, followed by Cuttack (11) and Mayurbhanj (8).

The death toll remained unchanged at 1,917 as no new fatality has been reported in the last eight days, he said.

Fifty-three other COVID-19 patients have died due to comorbidities in the state, the official said.

Odisha now has 709 active cases and 3,35,250 people have so far recovered from the disease.

The state has conducted over 85.35 lakh sample tests for COVID-19, including 23,425 on Tuesday, and the positivity rate stands at 3.96 per cent, he added.

Denied poll tickets, 2 Assam BJP MLAs resign from party

GUWAHATI, MAR 10 (PTI): Two BJP MLAs of Assam on Wednesday said that they resigned from the party after they were denied tickets to contest the forthcoming assembly elections in the state.

The two legislators, former Deputy Speaker Dilip Kumar Paul and Shiladitya Dev, also alleged that conspiracies were hatched against them by some leaders in the saffron party.

On Sunday, BJP leader and cabinet minister Sum Ronghang joined the opposition Congress after he was denied ticket from the Diphu constituency.

Assam CM's assets increased by over 71% in 5 years

GUWAHATI, 10 MAR (PTI): The net worth of Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal's assets, both movable and immovable, have increased by over 71 per cent since the last assembly polls in 2016, despite not having bought any new immovable assets.

Sarbananda Sonowal, in his affidavit submitted as a BJP candidate from Majuli (Scheduled Tribe) candidate for the 2021 assembly polls in the state, has declared total assets worth over ₹ 3.17 crore as against over ₹ 1.85 crore in 2016, an increase of ₹ 1,32,26,475.

The 59-year old chief ministers movable assets have increased to more than ₹ 1.14 cr in 2021 as against more than ₹ 70.44 lakh in 2016 while the immovable assets have shown a rise from ₹ 1.15 crore submitted in the last polls to over ₹ 2.02 crore.

His bank deposits have escalated more than three-fold to ₹ 38,02,498 in 2021 from ₹ 12,13,320



in 2016 while the value of his insurance policies have swelled from ₹ 28,90,794 to ₹ 43,26,461.

The chief minister owned shares in Oil India Limited (OIL) worth ₹ 8,77,500 in 2016 whose worth has risen to ₹ 13,04,697 this year.

His current cash in hand has, however, decreased to ₹ 39,030 from the ₹ 94,597, he had in 2016.

Mr Sonowal has not bought any jewellery in

the last five years, declaring 30 gm of gold in both the polls whose value has however now increased to ₹ 1,35,000 from ₹ 1,00,000 in 2016.

In both the polls, the chief minister has declared household goods worth ₹ 1.90 lakh while he does not possess any vehicle as shown in the affidavits of both the assembly elections.

He has not acquired any new immovable assets since the last polls

and possesses both agricultural and non-agricultural lands in Dibrugarh and Guwahati, including both inherited and self-acquired property.

The value of his self-acquired assets have increased to ₹ 96,75,000 from ₹ 35,00,000 in 2016 while the worth of inherited properties have increased to ₹ 1,06,20,000 from ₹ 80,00,000 in the last polls.

The chief minister has liabilities amounting

to ₹ 27,29,460 as against ₹ 2,92,000 but has no government dues outstanding, including income, GST, municipality or property taxes.

He has declared his source of income as salary and has declared his occupation as MLA though in the 2016 polls, it was mentioned as consultant and agriculturist.

There are no pending cases against him and his educational qualifications have been listed as Bachelor of Law (LL.B) and Bachelor of Communication and Journalism, both from Gauhati University.

Mr Sonowal is contesting for the second consecutive term from Majuli (Scheduled Tribe) constituency, which goes to polls in the first phase on March 27. He filed his nomination papers for the seat on Tuesday.

Elections to the 126-member Assam legislative assembly will be held in three phases on March 27, April one and April six.

4 BJP MLAs marshalled out of Delhi Assembly



NEW DELHI, MAR 10 (PTI): Four BJP MLAs were marshalled out of the Delhi Assembly during the ongoing Budget Session on Wednesday.

The BJP MLAs demanded a discussion on alleged corruption in the procurement of buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC).

Speaker Ram Niwas Goel told them he will allow a discussion on the issue on Thursday, but they persisted with their demand to hold it on Wednesday itself.

Goel adjourned the

House for 15 minutes at 3.15 pm. As the House re-assembled, the lawmakers again raised the demand for a discussion on the issue on Wednesday, after which the speaker directed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Vijender Gupta to be marshalled out.

Subsequently, three other MLAs of the saffron party -- Mohan Singh Bisht, Jitendra Mahajan and OP Sharma -- were also marshalled out of the House.

The 70-member Delhi Assembly has eight BJP MLAs.

9,849 URLs, accounts, webpages blocked in 2020: Prasad

NEW DELHI, MAR 10 (PTI): More than 9,800 URLs, accounts or webpages were blocked in 2020, Union minister Ravi Shankar said on Wednesday.

The URLs (Uniform Resource Locators), accounts and webpages were blocked under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Wherever the situation warrants, under the provision of section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the government blocks unlawful and malicious online content in the interest of sovereignty of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states or public order, Prasad, who is in charge of IT ministry, said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

"Under this provision, 1,385, 2,799, 3,603 and 9,849 URLs/accounts/webpages were blocked during the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, re-

spectively," he added.

According to him, cyber space is a complex environment of people, software, hardware and services on the internet, and that global outreach of social media platforms -- that allow interaction among internet users for sharing, hosting, storing, transmitting user content -- has increased tremendously.

"Because of such features, specifically the option to remain anonymous, there are certain miscreants who use hateful and divisive language on social media platforms," he added.

Further, Prasad said the government has recently notified Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, in which many of these issues have been addressed.

The social media platforms are enjoined to develop a robust grievance redressal system, he added.

Meghalaya CM presents tax-free deficit budget

SHILLONG, MAR 10 (PTI): Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday presented a deficit budget for the financial year 2021-22 without proposing any new tax.

It is estimated that the total receipts will be Rs 17,509 crore including borrowings to the tune of Rs 2,247 crore, said Sangma who also holds the finance portfolio.

The total expenditure is expected to be Rs 17,603 crore which included repayment of loans of Rs 771 crore, interest payment of Rs 1,047 crore and pension payment of Rs 1,303 crore.

Though the amount of tax transfers from the Centre has been reduced owing to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chief minister said that the government has prudently managed the state finances and has ensured availability of resources



to all critical sectors.

"The budget estimates were Rs 5,999 crore, while the revised estimates were Rs 4,207 crore, a shortfall of Rs 1,792 crore," he said.

The chief minister informed the assembly that the 15th Finance Commission has submitted its final report to the Government of India and recommended Rs 39,012 crore for the state for the 2021-26 period.

"For 2021-22, the share of central taxes is estimated at Rs 5,105 crore and the revenue gap grant is Rs 1,279

crore," he said.

Excise taxes and tax from auction of 32 lakh metric ton of extracted coal are expected to fetch Rs 350 crore each but non-tax revenue collection is expected to be Rs 374 crore, a reduction of about 29 per cent from last year.

"Accordingly, I have estimated Rs 2,579 crore and Rs 694 crore for tax and non-tax revenue collection respectively," Sangma said.

He said that the state government is communicating with the Union Home Ministry for the

implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system in the state.

The ILP is a travel document required by outsiders, including people from other states of the country, to visit Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram.

The Centre decided to extend the ILP regime to Manipur in December 2019 to allay fears of the people of the north-eastern state about the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

The Meghalaya assembly had adopted a resolution demanding implementation of ILP in the state at that time.

"We are following up with the Government of India on this very important issue," Conrad told the Assembly.

The CM announced the year 2021-22 as the Year of the Youth and allocated Rs 10 crore for skill development of the youths of the state.

"Every youth of the state will be supported

to take up one skill and one talent. The skill and talent providers will also be from within the state leading to entrepreneurship and employment," he said.

Sangma announced incentives for athletes as provided in the sports policy and under this scheme, 264 athletes have been identified, he said.

On tourism, Sangma said that the state government is creating 500 high-value rooms in the next two years under the externally aided experiential eco-tourism project.

He also informed the house that the process of setting up Shillong Peak ropeway is underway and Rs 30 crore has been allocated for the project.

The state government also allocated Rs 820 crore for the health sector, 802 crore for the water supply sector and Rs 559 crore for the agriculture sector.

Tirath Singh Rawat sworn-in as new Uttarakhand CM

DEHRADUN, MAR 10 (PTI) BJP's surprise choice for the top job in Uttarakhand Tirath Singh Rawat was sworn-in as the state's new chief minister on Wednesday, replacing Trivenendra Singh Rawat ahead of next year's Assembly polls.

The oath of office was administered on Rawat by Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya at a simple function held at the Raj Bhawan here in the evening in the presence of a host of dignitaries.

Rawat alone was sworn-in on Wednesday, which means the members of his Cabinet will be finalised and sworn-in later.

Rawat is currently the BJP MP from Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency as well as a national secretary of the party.

He was the president of the Uttarakhand BJP from 2013-15.

Known as a simple and down-to-earth leader, Rawat takes over the reins of power in Uttarakhand at a time when the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is preparing for the state Assembly polls due early next year. His principal challenge will be to ensure the party another term in office.

Earlier in the day, Rawat was elected as the leader of the Uttarakhand BJP legislature party, which came as a surprise to many as his name was not among the nearly half-a-dozen names doing the rounds in the media over the last few days as contenders for the top post.

Rawat's supporters burst into celebrations and lifted the 56-year-old leader on their shoulders amid the beating of drums as his name was announced by outgoing chief minister Trivenendra Singh Rawat as the leader of the legislature party



after its meeting at the state BJP office at Balbir Road.

After the celebrations at the state party office in the presence of senior leaders, MLAs and MPs, Rawat went to the Raj Bhawan to meet the governor and stake his claim to form the government.

After being congratulated by the outgoing chief minister and the BJP's central observer and national vice-president Raman Singh, Rawat thanked the top leadership of the saffron party for giving him the new responsibility.

"I am a small party worker from a village. I had never imagined that I

will be given an opportunity like this by the party. I hope that with everyone's cooperation and blessings, I will fulfil the expectations from me," he said.

Though Rawat has held important organisational positions both in the state and at the Centre, he is a first-time MP.

He defeated his political mentor and BJP veteran Bhuvan Chandra Khanduri's son Manish Khanduri of the Congress by over three lakh votes to win from the Pauri Garhwal seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Former Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh, whose report to the central leadership of

the party set in motion the process of leadership change in the hill state, said, "With the kind of challenges facing Uttarakhand, it has got a good leader."

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank", who was also being considered a contender for the post, said Rawat was a good choice.

"Tirath Singh Rawat is indeed a good choice. Now the BJP is sure to win the 2022 Assembly polls in Uttarakhand," he told reporters after coming out of the state party office.

Rawat's appointment as the new chief minister of Uttarakhand puts an end to the momentous political developments in the state over the last few days that started with a sudden meeting of the state BJP's core committee here in the presence of central party observers last Saturday, triggering the speculation about a change of leadership in the state.

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'He loves the chess aspect': is Rooney made to measure as a manager?



JAMIE JACKSON

LONDON, 10 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: To the question of why Wayne Rooney eschewed an easy retirement away from football's sharp end for the spotlight of management at Derby, Sven-Göran Eriksson has a simple answer. The Swede, who gave Rooney his England debut in 2003 as a 17-year-old prodigy, says: "He could play golf, but that would be boring. So I'm not surprised. I'm surprised every time a big player decides to not go to management. Like [David] Beckham, I thought he might do - but he has a lot of other things to do.

"A man like Wayne Rooney, he should go to management. It's great to be a player, but it's even better and more interesting sometimes to be a manager."

In January, Rooney called time on a career as his generation's finest English footballer. His CV shows him as Manchester United's and England's record goalscorer with a clean sweep of domestic and continental club honours whose outstanding displays at Euro 2004 came at only 18 and who was the PFA and FWA player of the year for 2009-10.

These are highlights in a vault of memories that can warm Rooney into his dotage. Now he hopes to add more from the dug-out. So far, the move is a success and suggests he may possess the managerial X factor.

He became permanent Derby manager on 15 January, having been appointed as one of a four-strong interim coaching staff in November before taking sole charge on a temporary basis after the 1-0 defeat against Bristol City a week later.

Before that defeat the Rams were bottom of the Championship with six points from 12 games, six from safety with a goal difference of -12. Rooney's record is nine wins and five draws from 22 league matches. Derby stand 19th, three places and six points above the drop zone but have lost their past two games and face high-flying Barnsley on Wednesday.

If there is surprise at his opting for management's relentless churn and a question remains regarding whether his genius football brain can adapt long term to coaching and motivating players, this was no snap decision according to Ben Olsen, Rooney's DC United coach from 2018-20.

"For the last few years he really started to change his focus and think about being a manager, how he's going to formulate his own team," says Olsen. "What I would say about Wayne is he's football mad. He's authentic. He was a great leader in the locker room and from my dealings with him he loves the chess aspect of the game.

"Those principles made him so successful throughout his career and give him a very good foundation. I look fondly on the time we had at DC United. In some ways, he pushed me as a manager - challenging me. He had a nice balance of asking questions and being inquisitive about the way I go about things or the league as a whole.

"He seemed to absolutely love the game - that's a good place to start. He was always evaluating: 'This is maybe what I would be doing in this scenario.' He probably disagreed with a lot of what we did, but he always came in and trained at a very high level."

Rooney arrived in Washington after a second spell at Everton, which was a single season back at his boyhood team. Nick Chadwick, who is three years older, witnessed Rooney coming through the ranks as a junior at the club and says he had a vision that marked him out and can aid his new career.

"It's going to be really interesting because the better footballers make the better decisions," says Chadwick, AFC Fylde's assistant coach. "Even at a young age he made good decisions on the pitch, which was why he was a sensational player.

"Coaching and management is about being able to transfer ideas to a group. There's some extremely talented footballers who didn't do this and that can lead to a sense of frustration. With Wayne and the people he's got round him, certainly at Derby, his success will depend on how he implements and gets across the undoubted football brain he's got. If he can translate this into the team he's leading, I'm sure he'll be a success."

Rooney left Everton for United in August 2004. He was 18 and already England's most valuable player, his storming of the summer's European Championship in Portugal one of the stories of the tournament.

Eriksson stated he was the best teenage talent since Pelé. When Rooney injured a metatarsal against the hosts in the quarter-finals England's tournament was in effect over, going on to lose on penalties.

His United debut came on a memorable September evening at Old Trafford against Fenerbahçe: Rooney scored a hat-trick and 13 success-laden years at the club began.

Chris Eagles was at United when Rooney arrived and agrees with Chadwick's point that great footballers are not always suited for management but he gives his former teammate every chance.

"Wayne understood the game," Eagles says. "If you watched him when he was at United, he was learning different positions. People will listen, respect him and [remember] how and where he played: centre-forward, No 10, midfield. He just knows what is happening. Wayne's done everything in the game."

Eagles identifies another prerequisite for any manager to succeed: Rooney's ease with differing personalities, in the dressing room and elsewhere. "He was very good at organising, things like that. You could always see it in him to become a manager because he's good with people. A lot of management is about managing the players and Wayne's definitely got that in him."

Eriksson, who has managed 16 clubs or national teams, including Benfica, Lazio and Ivory Coast, concurs. "He was very mature and understood football well when just 17 years old," the 73-year-old says. "When he came for his England debut and we spoke tactics - positions, defending, things like that - he understood everything. You didn't need to put him in any football school at all.

"I had a similar situation in Italy at Fiorentina when we bought Roberto Baggio. He was maybe 18, 19 and very clever. They were both mature, had intelligent football brains at a very early stage."

Eriksson, who won league and cup doubles in Sweden, Portugal and Italy, says: "Wayne has a lot to be a big manager. First of all, he understands football - he did when 17 and I'm quite sure his understanding is even better today. He has huge experience on a great level.

"Then, he has learned how to treat people, players, how to be a leader. He's been a captain for many years in different situations. He has everything to become a big manager, absolutely. You say 'Rooney' and that means respect. He's a big gun.

"Every manager has their own way to do things. Ferguson is one thing, Arsène Wenger another, Guardiola and Mourinho today. Wayne Rooney: I'm sure he will have his own way to be a manager."

He is making a promising start.

Ground rules for England to follow as Joe Root rebuilds his Test team



TIM DELISLE

LONDON, 10 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: This weekend England's cricketers, on tour far away, completed a whitewash. But you may have missed it, because England's other cricketers had just gone down to a heavy defeat. A resounding success for the women in New Zealand couldn't compete with another shocker from the men in India.

There are some sports-loving nations where people lose interest when their flagship sinks, but in Britain they're more likely to revel in it. On the Guardian's over-by-over coverage, the mailbag treats triumph and disaster just the same - with rueful ribaldry. You don't have to be a masochist to support England, but it definitely helps. Inside many cricket lovers lurks an old scold, and some of them are only after one thing: nagging rights.

The most asked question in cricket is, of course: "Howzat?" The second most asked question may well be: "Where do England go from here?" For most of the players, the answer this time is home, thankfully: let's not play down the burdens of the biosecure bubble. For others, it's nowhere: on Friday, Ben Stokes and Jonny Bairstow are due back in the Ahmedabad enormodome for the first of five Twenty20 matches.

The one thing that was novel in England's approach to this series was rotation, which is being blamed in some quarters for their defeat (morning, Sir Geoffrey). But it wasn't rotation wot lost it. On those dusty tracks, the wheels would surely have come off anyway. To bounce back from 1-0 down, India had to go to extremes. They prepared extreme pitches, making sure the endgame began on the first day (this is not a complaint: for entertainment, a dustbowl beats a shirtfront every time).

India also produced extreme performances. The award for player of the series, given to Ravichandran Ashwin, could just as well have gone to Rohit Sharma or Rishabh Pant, for their match-winning masterpieces, or to Axar Patel, whose debut-series haul - 27 wickets at 10 - felt like revenge at last for Fred Trueman taking 29 at 13 to torment India in 1952.

Joe Root has now captained England in 50 Tests, exactly half of them at home, which makes the percentages plain to see. At home he has won 16 Tests and lost six; on tour he has won 10 and lost 12. Of those 10 away wins, nine have come against teams below England in the ICC Test Championship. The victory at Chennai was Root's first as captain in any of the

top three nations in the Test world - India, New Zealand or Australia. It was a leap forward, even if it was followed by three steps back.

Captains are often judged by win percentage, which is hard on those who played in the age of the draw, up to and including Alastair Cook. A better yardstick, fiddly as it sounds, is wins divided by losses (W/L). For Root that figure is 1.44, which places him well below the four great England men's Test captains since the 1970s - Mike Brearley, Ray Illingworth, Michael Vaughan and Andrew Strauss, all on at least 2.18. Root is well above some other big names - Cook, Graham Gooch, Mike Atherton, Tony Greig, David Gower and Botham, who managed not a single victory.

In terms of results, the captain Root most resembles is the man he once impersonated on telly: Bob Willis. Root's W/L is 2.67 at home and 0.83 away. It looks bad, but is actually typical of Test cricket today. Even before the pandemic, touring teams were arriving undercooked and leaving, a month later, overwhelmed. In India, England didn't even have an intra-squad warm-up.

There has to be some rotation for all-format players, given the bubble and the packed programme. But England are new to it and, as Root said afterwards, they need to finesse it. In India they rotated a lot for the Tests and not at all for the T20s (the one-day international squad has still to be announced), which was patently unfair on Root. Eoin Morgan is a better captain, with a more settled side, and a place already booked in the pantheon. Of course England want to win the T20 World Cup in October, but not at all costs.

The rotation policy handled Stokes the right way, letting him skip Sri Lanka, the lesser of the Test series. That probably led the management to offer Jos Buttler, Root's other lieutenant, a different "block of rest", as they call it. In hindsight, it would have been better to leave Root with Jimmy Anderson as vice-captain in Sri Lanka than to leave him without Buttler for three Tests in India. In a low-scoring game, a counter-attack can make all the difference, as Pant gleefully showed.

Buttler's strategic acumen could have saved England from picking too many seamers for one Test and too few for the next. Although he's a better white-ball than red-ball player, Buttler's brains are needed more in Tests. He might even have come up with a plan B, something Chris Silverwood seemed to lack once his bat-long mantra was spun to smithereens.

Out of the ashes of defeat, and before the Ashes of 2021-22, En-

gland could do with some rules of thumb. Here are The Spin's:

1) Don't leave big players out of big series.

2) Don't fly anyone out and back and out again. Instead, commit to halving England's air miles - cricket's carbon footprint is a scandal.

3) Give the management some leeway, to hang on to a player in form (Bairstow, Moeen Ali) or excuse one who's busy doing nothing.

4) Cut down on the backroom staff. To have one batting coach may be considered a necessity; to have four looks like confusion. Let's have two: one for the batsmen, the other on a mission to find the all-rounder in Jofra Archer.

5) If you're going to have travelling reserves, use them. What are three spare spinners for if they can't get arrested when Dom Bess has lost his length?

6) Consider horses for courses. England badly missed Keaton Jennings, who averages 44 in Asia. They're in danger of doing the same with someone who averages 42 in Australia: Dawid Malan.

7) Accept that Test cricket is now a game of two squads. India's victories against Australia and England came about because their understudies stepped up. Washington Sundar has more runs in four Tests this winter than Virat Kohli has in five. Even sorcerers need apprentices.

8) If in doubt, turn to Samuel Beckett. Rotate again. Rotate better.

If you had to pick a team now for the first Test against New Zealand on 2 June, what would it look like? Maybe not very different, if we want to offer a shot at redemption to all the young batsmen currently nursing bruised averages.

That's assuming Root can't be persuaded to go back to No 3 and Stokes, Buttler, Moeen and Archer don't reach the IPL final on 30 May. If Buttler's not there, the gloves go to James Bracey, a Test novice but already a bubble veteran. If Moeen is unavailable, Leach keeps his place and Woakes pips Broad on the strength of his batting. Against India in August, it's the same XII but Leach squeezes out Broad in the unlikely event of a dry surface.

For Brisbane in December, Burns returns, edging out Sibley with his back-foot game and an Ashes hundred in the bank. Malan comes in at No 3, adding grit and leaving Pope and Lawrence to tussle for No 6. Pope, like Malan, is one of the few England players who do better abroad, a quality that Andrew Strauss earmarked as vital when he was running the show. England spinners barely register at the Gabba, so Leach can bide his time.

Hitesh Sharma signs two-year extension with Hyderabad FC

HYDERABAD, MAR 10 (PTI): Young midfielder Hitesh Sharma has signed a two-year contract extension with Indian Super League (ISL) side Hyderabad FC, the club said on Wednesday. "I am really proud and happy to have signed this contract with Hyderabad FC," said Hitesh.

"I believe that we have the best players, the best management and the best coaches we can ask for at the club and I hope to continue the hard work for years to come," he added.

The 23-year-old, who joined Hyderabad FC in January 2020, played a



crucial role in the side's fight for a place in the top-4 this league campaign.

The youngster made 15 appearances (13 starts) and grew into a regular in the first team under head coach Mano-lo Marquez this season.

He played a total of 1,060 minutes in the sea-

son, which remains his busiest league campaign in his career.

"Hitesh is a really smart player, who understands the game very well," said Manolo.

"He has a great attitude, is calm in possession and always seems to know to do the correct thing in every moment. I

am sure he will grow into a better player next season as well," he added.

Hitesh, who had made a couple of appearances for the India, was also named in the probabilities list by national team coach Igor Stimac for the upcoming friendlies against Oman and UAE.

"The plan is to continue the hard work and improve as a player, even in the off-season. I want to become a better player individually and I hope that we can improve as a team and take the next step in the upcoming ISL campaign," Hitesh signed off.

‘Shoot till they are dead’: Police who fled Myanmar reveal orders

NEW DELHI, 10 MAR [ALJAZEERA]: When Tha Peng was ordered to shoot at protesters with his sub-machine gun to disperse them in the Myanmar town of Khampat on February 27, the police lance corporal said he refused to do so. “The next day, an officer called to ask me if I will shoot,” he said. The 27-year-old refused again and then resigned from the force.

On March 1, he said he left his home and family behind in Khampat and travelled for three days, mostly at night to avoid detection, before crossing into India’s north-eastern Mizoram state.

“I had no choice,” Tha Peng told the Reuters news agency in an interview on Tuesday, speaking via a translator. He gave only part of his name to protect his identity. Reuters saw his police and national ID cards which confirmed the name.

Tha Peng said he and six colleagues all disobeyed the February 27 order from a superior officer, whom he did not name.

Reuters could not independently verify his or other accounts gathered near the Myanmar-India border.

The description of events was similar to that given to police in Mizoram on March 1 by another Myanmar police lance corporal and three constables who crossed into India, according to a classified internal police document seen by Reuters.

The document was written by Mizoram police officials and gives biographical details of the four individuals and their account of why

they fled. It was not addressed to specific people.

“As the Civil Disobedience Movement is gaining momentum and protest(s) held by anti-coup protesters at different places we are instructed to shoot at the protesters,” they said in a joint statement to Mizoram police.

“In such a scenario, we don’t have the guts to shoot at our own people who are peaceful demonstrators,” they said.

Deaths and detentions Myanmar’s military, which detained members of the country’s elected government and staged a coup on February 1, did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The military has said it is acting with restraint in handling what it has described as demonstrations by “riotous protesters”, whom it accuses of attacking police and harming national security and stability.

Tha Peng’s is among the first cases reported by the media of police fleeing Myanmar after disobeying orders from the military’s security forces.

Daily protests against the coup are being staged across the country and security forces have cracked down. More than 60 protesters have been killed and nearly 2,000 detained, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an advocacy group, which has been tracking arrests since the coup.

Reuters has not been able to confirm the figures independently.



Among the detainees is Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the elected government.

Police officers carry a body during a rally against the military coup in Monywa last week [Reuters]

Dozens flee

About 100 people from Myanmar, mostly policemen and their families, have crossed a porous border into India since the protests began, according to a senior Indian official.

Several have taken shelter in Mizoram’s Champhai district bordering Myanmar, where Reuters interviewed three Myanmar nationals who said they had served with the police.

As well as his ID cards, Tha Peng showed an undated photograph of him wearing a Myanmar police uniform. He said he joined the force nine years ago.

Tha Peng said that, according

to police rules, protesters should either be stopped by rubber-coated bullets or shot below the knees. Reuters could not verify police policies.

But he was given orders by his superiors to “shoot till they are dead,” he added.

Ngun Hlei, who said he was posted as a police constable in the city of Mandalay, said he had also received orders to shoot. He did not give a date, nor specify whether the order was to shoot to kill. He did not give details of any casualties.

The 23-year-old also gave only a part of his full name and carried his national ID card.

Tha Peng and Ngun Hlei said they believed police were acting under orders from Myanmar’s military, known as the Tatmadaw. They did not provide evidence to back up their statement.

Military pressure The other four Myanmar po-

lice concurred with the statement, according to the classified police document.

“...the military pressured the police force who are mostly constables to confront the people,” they said.

Ngun Hlei said he was reprimanded for disobeying orders and transferred out. He sought help from pro-democracy activists online and travelled by road to Mizoram’s Vaphai village on March 6.

The journey to India cost him about 200,000 Myanmar kyat (\$143), Ngun Hlei said.

Although guarded by Indian paramilitary forces, the India-Myanmar border has a “free movement regime”, which allows people to venture a few miles into Indian territory without requiring travel permits.

‘Don’t want to go back’

Twenty-four-year-old Dal said she had worked as a constable with Myanmar police in the mountainside town of Falam in northwestern Myanmar. Reuters saw a photograph of her police ID and verified the name.

Her job was mostly administrative, including making lists of people detained by the police. But as protests swelled in the wake of the coup, she said she was instructed to try to detain female protesters – an order she refused.

Fearing imprisonment for siding with the protesters and their civil disobedience movement, she

said she decided to flee Myanmar.

All three said that there was substantial support for the protesters within Myanmar’s police force.

“Inside the police station, 90 percent support the protesters but there is no leader to unite them,” said Tha Peng, who left behind his wife and two young daughters, one six months old.

Following in the path of others who have crossed in recent days, the three are scattered around Champhai, supported by a network of local activists.

Saw Htun Win, deputy commissioner of Myanmar’s Falam district last week wrote to Champhai’s top government official, Deputy Commissioner Maria C T Zuali, asking for eight policemen who had entered India to be returned to them “in order to uphold friendly relations between the two neighbour countries.”

Zuali confirmed she had received the letter, a copy of which has been seen by Reuters.

Zoramthanga, Mizoram’s chief minister, told Reuters that his administration would provide temporary food and shelter to those fleeing Myanmar, but was waiting for India’s federal government to come to a decision on repatriations.

Tha Peng said that although he missed his family he feared returning to Myanmar.

“I don’t want to go back,” he said, sitting in a first-floor room overlooking rolling green hills that stretch into Myanmar.

Brazil registers record new daily COVID death toll

BRASILIA, 10 MAR [ALJAZEERA]: Brazil has registered record daily COVID-19 deaths as the coronavirus pandemic overwhelms hospitals and vaccinations progress slowly.

The health ministry reported on Tuesday a daily total of 1,972 new deaths in the country, which has the world’s second-highest overall toll, exceeded only by the United States.

It also reported 70,764 new cases of

COVID-19, meaning 11.1 million people have now caught the virus in the country, while at least 268,370 have died.

The previous daily death record was set on March 3 with just over 1,900 fatalities. The figure has been rising steadily over the past two weeks.

Brazil is facing a dire situation with intensive care units more than 80 percent occupied in 25 of Brazil’s 27 state capitals, according to a report released on Tuesday by

public health institute Fiocruz.

Last week, President Jair Bolsonaro, who flouts expert advice on fighting the coronavirus, urged Brazilians to “stop whining” about COVID-19 and renewed his attacks on stay-at-home measures.

Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has urged the country to take aggressive steps, warning that Brazil could affect its neighbours and beyond

if it did not take the coronavirus seriously.

Brazil’s vaccine campaign is progressing slowly. A total of 8.6 million people (4.1 percent of the population) have received a first dose of vaccine, and only 2.9 million have received a second dose.

The vaccines under use in Brazil are CoronaVac, which was developed by Chinese firm Sinovac, and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

China approves \$1.5 billion currency swap with Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, 10 MAR (REUTERS): China has approved a 10 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion) currency swap with Sri Lanka, a government spokesman in Colombo said on Wednesday, giving some respite from concerns about public finances.

The deal will allow the island to weather “present difficulties”, State Minister of Money & Capital Market and State Enterprise Reforms Ajith Nivard Cabraal said in an interview with the Daily Mirror earlier on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka’s government bonds surged after the announcement, with Sri Lanka’s dollar-de-

nominated bond due in July 2021 climbing 3.5 cents to 96.3 cents and its highest level since March 2020. The January 2022 issue jumped 4.8 cents, Tradeweb data showed.

Dwindling foreign reserves, a tumbling currency and rising debt levels have dogged Sri Lanka over the last year, leading to increasing fears of a default.

The government of Prime Minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa - which has drawn the country closer to China to the frustration of neighbour India - says this will not happen. It has called downgrades by credit rating agencies and negative comments

from investment banks in recent months politically motivated.

“(The swap deal) buys time given FX reserves are at multi-year lows and there are still significant FX payments into year end,” said Raza Agha, head of emerging markets credit strategy at Legal & General Investment Management.

“But the question remains - buy time for what? The need of the hour is an IMF program to anchor fiscal consolidation given government debt was projected at just shy 100% of GDP at the end of last year,” said Agha.

Sri Lanka had pre-

viously sought a fresh currency swap deal with India.

But that prospect diminished after India said any further extension of existing funding was contingent on Sri Lanka having a staff-level agreement for an IMF program, Patrick Curran, senior economist at Telimer, wrote in a recent report, noting the government’s position of “continuing to resist an IMF program.”

Sri Lanka’s central bank governor W.D. Lakshman said last month the country was in talks with foreign governments and multi-lateral partners regarding financing options.

Saudi court upholds activist al-Hathloul’s sentence at hearing

ROYADH, 10 MAR [ALJAZEERA]: A Saudi court has upheld the original sentence of women’s rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, who had championed women’s right to drive and for an end to Saudi Arabia’s male guardianship system.

Al-Hathloul was sentenced in December to nearly six years in prison under broad cybercrime and counterterrorism laws after a lengthy trial that drew widespread international condemnation, but she was released last month having served half of her custodial sentence.

Walking to the court on Wednesday morning

before the appeals hearing, al-Hathloul, 31, told reporters she hoped Riyadh’s Special Criminal Court would amend her sentence – her first public comments since her 2018 arrest. The court, however, ruled that it would stand.

Al-Hathloul was detained in May 2018 and sentenced in December to nearly six years in prison on charges that United Nations rights experts called spurious.

The court suspended two years and 10 months of her sentence, most of which had already been served. Al-Hathloul, whose release is conditional, remains under a five-year travel ban.

Al-Hathloul rose to prominence in 2013 when she began publicly campaigning for women’s right to drive in Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy.

Saudi law had previously banned women from driving but it was changed in June 2018, allowing them to do so.

She was arrested for the first time in 2014 while attempting to drive across the border from the United Arab Emirates – where she had a valid driver’s licence – to Saudi Arabia.

She spent 73 days in a women’s detention facility, an experience she later said helped shape

her campaigning against the conservative kingdom’s male guardianship system.

In recent years, the kingdom has chipped away at the heavily criticised guardianship system, which assigned each woman a male relative – a father, brother, husband or son – whose approval is needed for various big decisions throughout a woman’s life.

US President Joe Biden’s administration, which has taken a tough stance over Saudi Arabia’s human rights record, has urged Riyadh to release political prisoners including women’s rights activists.

Black, Hispanic Americans lag in COVID-19 vaccination as outreach efforts struggle

NICK BROWN

NEW YORK, 10 MAR (REUTERS): It’s a life-threatening problem that’s been long predicted - but that few in the government or private sectors have yet done much to solve. Now the consequences are hitting some of America’s most vulnerable communities. America’s COVID-19 vaccine drive is failing to reach Black and Hispanic communities, despite pervasive warnings about their lack of healthcare access and heightened vaccine hesitancy, rooted in distrust of the government and historical episodes of medical exploitation.

The issue has been highlighted by polls and government focus groups since last summer. But there’s been no comprehensive national effort to address the problem from the federal government or major philanthropists, leaving a patchwork of underfunded local activists struggling to fill the void, according to Reuters interviews with fifteen nonprofits and philanthropic groups.

The results of inaction are stark: While U.S. communities of color are at higher risk for severe or fatal COVID-19 infections, white people have been vaccinated at twice the rate of Blacks and two-and-a-half times the rate of Hispanics, according to a March 1 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

“We need to get out there and start connecting with people before it’s too late,” said Betsy MacLean, who runs the urban planning nonprofit Hester Street.

Grassroots organizers in Black and Hispanic communities have struggled to secure private or public funding for outreach efforts to promote vaccination. Advocates

focused on the issue say philanthropists are juggling competing priorities and tend to view such crisis response as largely the government’s job. The federal government, under the new administration of Democratic President Joe Biden, is only now getting started on serious efforts to promote vaccination in minority communities.

What’s needed, the advocates say, is a nationally coordinated marketing campaign, combined with critical efforts at personal outreach by respected local influencers in communities of color. An effective effort, they said, could cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Some community groups are seeking to revive a nationwide network of nonprofits that helped boost response rates to the 2020 Census in

minority communities, saying a similar strategy could work to promote vaccination.

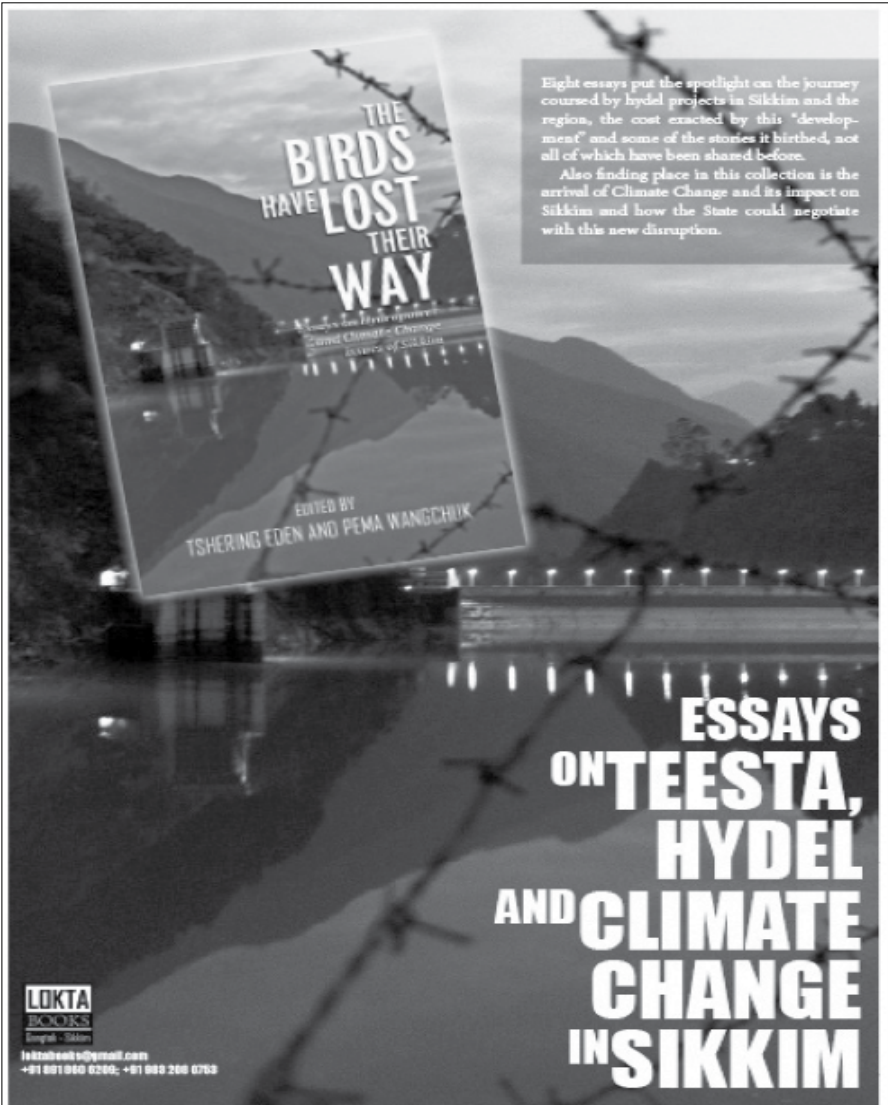
The Biden administration announced Monday that it would spend \$250 million to “encourage COVID-19 safety and vaccination among underserved populations,” which could include minority communities but also other vulnerable groups, such as rural residents. Localities will have to apply for that money; grants would finance 30 urban projects and 43 rural projects, according to an administration news release.

The administration also plans to use money from its proposed COVID-19 stimulus package to promote vaccination, in minority communities and others, but the specifics of that effort remain unclear. The White

House plans to partner with local officials and nonprofits to overcome government distrust, said Dr. Cameron Webb, the White House’s senior policy adviser for COVID-19 equity.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll in December showed Black people, in particular, were far more likely to fear vaccination than white people. Their skepticism stems in part from historical traumas such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, when government researchers left hundreds of Black men untreated for the disease to study its effects.

Many Hispanic communities are fearful of interacting with the government in an era of widespread anti-immigration sentiment. Both communities have less access to medical care than white populations.



Meghan Markle reportedly filed complaint to ITV over Piers Morgan comments

Meghan Markle filed a formal complaint to ITV regarding Piers Morgan's comments on her mental health discussion with Oprah Winfrey, multiple news organizations—including CNN and Variety—have reported.

In an article published March 10, correspondent Max Foster wrote, "CNN understands the complaint is about the impact Morgan's comments could have on others and how it could degrade the seriousness of mental health issues." He noted the Duchess of Sussex's complaint "did not relate to the personal nature of Morgan's attacks."

It's not completely clear how the alleged complaint was filed. While The Guardian reported a formal complaint was issued on Meghan's behalf, Variety stated Meghan wrote to ITV chief executive Carolyn McCall. E! News has reached out to ITV's and the Sussexes' team for comment.



Meghan wouldn't have been the only one to file a complaint. According to ITV, Ofcom—a communications regulator in the U.K.—launched an investigation after it received more than 41,000 com-

plaints about Piers' remarks.

During Meghan's tell-all interview, which aired March 7, the duchess shared there was a point where she "didn't want to be alive anymore."

Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan discuss compound interest

Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan's romantic-comedy *Badrinath Ki Dulhania* completes four years today. Alia and Varun celebrated their film's anniversary with its director Shashank Khaitan over a group video call.

How we know that?

Courtesy Alia's Instagram story where, she shared a screenshot of the group video call. On the Instagram story, she also hints about the third instalment of the franchise.

"Here we are 4 years later secretly discussing part 3! Love you guys! Happy 4 years to us," she wrote in her Instagram story. While *Badrinath Ki Dulhania* is the second instalment, *Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania* was the first instalment of the franchise.

In her previous Instagram stories, Alia can be seen engaging in friendly banter with Varun. The exchange of jokes had a reference to a famous dialogue from *Badrinath Ki Dulhania*. Alia can be seen testing Varun's mathematical skills through questions on simple interest and compound interest.

In response, Varun can be seen replying with an answer to the simple interest ques-



tion and stating that compound interest question is a little tough for him. In a popular scene from the movie, Alia had similarly questioned Varun on simple interest and compound interest. Varun had replied similarly in that scene of the movie.

Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan made their Bollywood debuts together with Karan Johar's *Student Of The Year* in 2012. Following this, they co-starred in *Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania*, *Badrinath Ki Dulhania* and *Kalank*. In terms of work, Alia is busy with the shoot of Ayan Mukerji's *Brahmastra*. Varun is in Arunachal Pradesh filming his upcoming horror-comedy *Bhediya*.

BAFTA 2021: The White Tiger star Adarsh Gourav calls best actor nomination "Surreal"

It is a "surreal" moment for Adarsh Gourav, who has landed the leading actor BAFTA nomination for his performance in *The White Tiger*, but he has his eyes set on the series of auditions due this month.

On Tuesday, the 26-year-old actor was announced as one of the nominees in the category alongside seasoned names like Riz Ahmed (*Sound Of Metal*), late Chadwick Boseman (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*), Mads Mikkelsen (*Another Round*), Anthony Hopkins (*The Father*) and Tahar Rahim (*The Mauritanian*). "This is unbelievable. It is surreal... I was at the gym. I just found out about the nomination," Adarsh Gourav, whose previous credits include *My Name Is Khan* and *Mom*, told news agency PTI.

Based on Aravind Adiga's Booker Prize winning novel of the same name,



The White Tiger chronicles the extraordinary journey of a driver named Balram (Adarsh Gourav). Directed by Ramin Bahrani, the film follows Balram's rise from a poor villager to a successful entrepreneur in India, showcasing how hunger and lack of opportunity can build and drive a human being's animal instinct of survival.

Adarsh Gourav said his phone hasn't stopped buzzing since the nominations

were announced. "I saw my phone and there were a lot of messages on *The White Tiger* WhatsApp group and Pooja Gupte, the DOP called me. This is so unexpected and overwhelming," he added.

The actor said he has had a "long day" and is currently focused on cracking important auditions. "There are two-three very important auditions this month and I need to prepare for that and I am focusing on it," Adarsh added.

Brandy Norwood to play pivotal role in ABC music drama pilot 'Queens'

Cinderella star Brandy Norwood has been roped in to play one of the lead roles in the ABC hip hop drama pilot "Queens".

Written by Zahir McGhee, "Queens" focuses on four estranged and out-of-touch women in their 40s who reunite for a chance to recapture their fame and regain the swagger they had in the 1990s as hip hop group the Nasty Bitches.

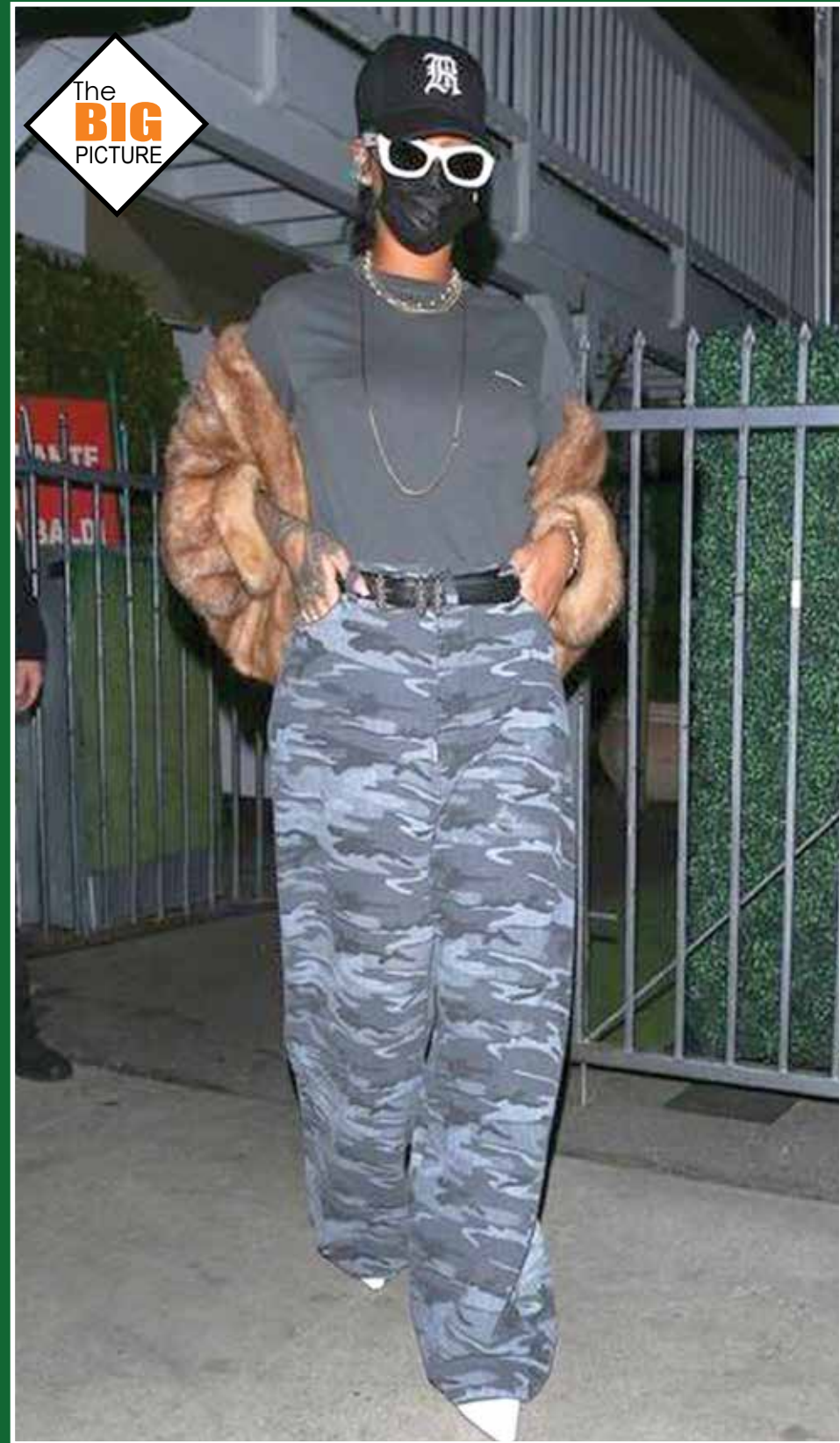
Brandy joins previously announced cast members Eve, Naturi Naughton, and Pepti Sonuga.

All the lead actors, including Brandy, will record and perform original songs for the show as their respective characters.

McGhee will executive produce the show with Sabrina Wind.

Tim Story will direct and executive produce the pilot, while ABC Signature will produce.

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Hi, Ri Ri! Songstress Rihanna reminds us how cool she is in camo pants and an R13 black baseball cap as she leaves dinner in Santa Monica.

Paris Jackson Claps Back at Speculation Over Emile Hirsch Relationship

New couple alert? Not so fast.

After Emile Hirsch and Paris Jackson raised eyebrows with a series of cuddly pics shared to social media, the model weighed in on the speculation. On Tuesday, March 9, the *Into the Wild* star posted a photo of himself with his chin resting on Paris' shoulder while seated at a table during an apparent night out. "Hiding out with you," he captioned it.

Expressing support was Kate Bosworth, who commented with a heart emoji. Kate has been shooting the upcoming film *The Immaculate Room* with Emile. However, another commenter had a different take on the pic of Paris and Emile, writing, "This relationship makes me uncomfortable."

In response, a separate social media user criticized the duo's age difference, commenting, "Yeah me too, she's only 22 and he's 35..."

After reading this, Paris decided to set the record straight. "he's actually one of the youngest homies of mine," she replied. "one of my best friends is in their 50s. you probably don't have friends older than you because elders may find you annoying or immature lol." "not to mention another close friend of



mine is 76," Paris continued. "age is a number, i enjoy the company of people all ages. i am the student and teach of people from 5 years younger than me to 50 years older than me. nothing wrong with that."

Paris also shared a meme to Instagram Story regarding the romance rumors. "Is that your new bf?" the meme, which shows someone being chased, reads. "P just taking a pic with a guy."

She captioned the post "*Imao.*"

Aries:

No relationship is rainbows and butterflies, especially not in the initial stages, given there's so much to figure out about each other. Instead of giving up at the first sign of defeat, be persistent. Show up for your love, and know that in doing so, you are working towards the harmonious connection you truly desire. PS: The mysterious forces are with you, Aries, helping you at every step along the way!

Tip: Put in the work.

Taurus:

While they fully understand the depth of this connection, they may not be on the same page as you about working towards that 'together forever'. Perhaps there's another amount looming in the background. Perhaps their professional commitments are playing third party in this equation. Either way, you're being asked to recognise your own worth and redirect your energy towards yourself. Instead of forcing a connection, let the love you desire find its way into your existence.

Tip: Redirect your energy towards yourself.

Gemini:

While you're trying to keep things black and white here, your amour seems to have a thing for shades of grey. It will be easy for you to play this game that they're playing. To act like you don't want more from them than they're willing to give. But that's not your truth, Gemini. It never was. The cards are urging you to stop betraying yourself. PS: Given how much you have been suppressing, a full-on confrontation could be on the cards for you today.

Tip: Stop betraying yourself in order to please other people.

Cancer:

You know exactly what you want, Cancer. Then what's the point of playing games? It's time to adopt 'honesty' as your power word and tell the other person how you really feel about the given situation. Yes, this will require you to break down the walls you have built, and no, it won't be easy in any way. But, you've got to do what you've got to do, despite the risk that they may not be on the same page.

Tip: You've got to do what you've got to do!

Leo:

Some relationships are forever, Leo. Others come into your life for no more than a season. Irrespective of the duration of their stay, each of the persons we cross paths with influences us in a significant way. Today, you're looking back at both, the good and the bad memories that you have shared. It's time to let go of a certain relationship, and you want to do that with gratitude and grace.

Tip: It's time to let go, Leo.

Virgo:

There are times when everything seems perfect on paper. Yet, you can't seem to shake off the feeling that something is amiss here. Maybe you're not acting from a space of paranoia, Virgo. Maybe your higher self is drawing your attention to something greater. Today, you're being asked to silence your inner judge and listen to the inner guidance. You know exactly what you need

to do here—and you've known it for a while.

Tip: Listen to the voice of wisdom within.

Libra:

We all have an idea of what we want our ideal partner to be like, and the life we want to build with them. Sometimes, we're given exactly what we ask for. At other times, our cosmic package differs from the one we placed an order for. Either way, the Universe never fails to look out for us. So trust what the butterflies in your stomach are telling you as you give this love a chance!

Tip: At any given point, the Universe knows what's best for us.

Scorpio:

You're done running around in circles, Scorpio. You're done looking for reasons to say no. What you want to do today is trust what the Universe is offering you and honour the depth of this sacred bond. You have the potential to create a lifetime of happy memories, if only you give this love a chance.

Tip: A lifetime of togetherness may be on the cards.

Sagittarius:

The trouble is, we're perpetually hung up on 'the plan'. We want to know where things are going before we fully commit to them. But life doesn't come with guarantees, Sagittarius. More often than not, it's the risks that pay off magnificently. So, let go of the voice in your head that's asking you to play it safe, let your hair down, and flirt shamelessly with life itself. You won't regret a thing—we promise!

Tip: Say yes to life.

Capricorn:

The trouble is, we're always obsessing over 'the plan'. We want everything to work out as we have pictured it in our heads. But the Universe is under no obligation to keep you in your safety zone. So find comfort in the discomfort. Make love to the unknown. In doing so, you will discover a whole new aspect of your own being.

Tip: Embrace the magic in this moment.

Aquarius:

Here's the thing about deprivation: it can sometimes lead to extreme behaviour. For instance, the minute you say, "I'm going to quit smoking", you're going to spend hours after, wishing you'd had one more cigarette before laying down the rules. Ditto for sugar, caffeine or any of your other 'vices'. This weekend, try the 80/20 rule. Focus on upping the whole grains, fruits, nuts and veggies intake. And then, treat yourself to something you love—a slice of cake or a glass of wine. PS: It's called the fine art of balance!

Tip: Consider the 80/20 rule.

Pisces:

You can't heal or fix everybody, Pisces. You can't heal or fix everybody, even if you tried. Today, you're being asked to honour your boundaries and put yourself first. And no, that doesn't make you a terrible person. Nor will it lessen your love for those who matter the most. On the upside, if things have been stagnant, especially on the love and romance, trust that the winds of change are coming to get ya!

Tip: Honour your boundaries and put yourself first.