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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Defences up, Sikkim screens diligently for COVID-19 NO POSITIVE OR EVEN SUSPECTED CASES IN SIKKIM THUS FAR, GOVT ASSURES

GANGTOK, 08 MAR [IPR]: The State Government has been taking active preventive measures against the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19). So far, there have been no cases reported in the State.

The Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation has suspended Inner Line Permits until further notice so as to not put any lives at risk here. Domestic tourists can visit Tsomgo up to Baba Mandir but all permits to Nathula have been cancelled.

The Health & Family Welfare Department has been strenuously screening people entering the state at all border check posts, particularly people arriving from cities and states where the virus has already reached.

Teams stationed at these check



posts question passengers and anyone with even the slightest indi-

cation of cough, flu or headache is immediately inspected and thermal

scanned. So far, there have been no visitors who have been reported positive or even suspected of having the virus.

Foreign nationals who entered the state before 05 March have been scanned and quarantined in their hotel rooms as an extra safety measure. Doctors have been following up on them on a daily basis and submitting reports.

There have been no cases reported so far.

As per information received from the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Rangpo is a crucial and congested area, therefore, it has been decided that the number of teams stationed at Rangpo will be increased and the department will involve NGOs and volunteers for additional and efficient support.

CM greets Sikkim on Bhumchu and Holi

GANGTOK, 08 MAR [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Goday] has extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of Bhumchu.

Bhumchu, is immensely sacred to the people Sikkim and a ritual unique to the State. It is believed that this festival started sometime in 755-804 BC in Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Deutsen who is considered one of the three Dharma Kings who played a significant role in introducing Buddhism to the Himalayan region.

It is under his rule that Guru Padmasambhava performed holy rituals, meditated and consecrated the land with water from his sacred vase. The vase too was later consecrated and is treasured at Tashiding Monastery.

Bhumchu is celebrated for two days starting on the 14th day of the first month of the Tibetan Lunar Calendar, which falls on 09 March this year. On the first day, monks of Tashiding Monastery open the sacred vase at the break of dawn and determine the future of the state from the quantity and quality of the wa-

ter that pours out.

On the second day, the closure ceremony is held amidst prayers and chants. The pot is refilled with water from the Rathang Chu and is sealed again.

The sacred water is distributed to devotees.

It is also believed that in the 17th century, the vase was rediscovered by one of the reincarnations of Guru Padmasambhava and with it the festival was resumed in Sikkim.

In his message, the Chief Minister has prayed that the festival brings peace, prosperity and happiness in the lives of all the people in Sikkim.

Also today, the CM extended Holi greetings to the people.

In his message, the Chief Minister has wished that this festival of colours brings happiness and warmth to the Sikkimese society, strengthening the social fabric of the state.

"We should also spread the message of environment friendly Holi by avoiding chemical colours. This is the first step of risk avoidance to have a vibrant and safe Holi," he conveys.

The Chief Minister has also urged the people to avoid being in crowds during Holi because of the COVID-19 worry in the country.

Roshan Prasad wins International Literature medal on Philately

**SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 08 MAR:**

Sikkim's much-noted Philatelist, Roshan Prasad, has added another feather to his cap of international philatelic medals winning a bronze medal at the Stamp Exhibition EPAEX 2020 - Dubai held from 03 to 07 March at Dragon Mart 2, Dubai, UAE.

He won the medal for his book - The Stamp Collector's Dic-



tionary. Eight countries had participated in the exhibition organised by the Emirates Philatelic Association, a press release informs.

Earlier, he had won Vermeil at Saudi Arabia, two Silvers at Taipei and Dubai.

His earlier international medals were on his cricket philately while this year's bronze medal was won in the literature class.

In addition, he also won four medals at Na-

tional Philatelic Exhibitions. His book has also been selected for the 37th Asian International Philatelic Exhibition NZ2020 to be held at Auckland, New Zealand (March 19 -22, 2020).

Mr Prasad has thanked Javed Mohammad, Emirates Philatelic Association, for all the support he provided and Shital Pradhan, Secretary, Sikkim Philatelic and Numismatic Society, for being his mentor.

Sangkhola Line drivers rope in God to keep area clean

**YOGEN THATAL
SINGTAM, 08 MAR:**

Drivers and members of Sangkhola "line" have built a prayer spot in the heart of Singtam bazaar near the motor-stand.

The reason behind the initiative is to keep the area clean and discourage people from littering in the area. They have invoked God, actually installed him in their midst to ensure that the filth which overpowers the area otherwise is prayed away.

The drivers have installed a statue of Lord Biswakarma, a God who holds special signifi-



cance for drivers, shares Tinku Adhikari, President of the Singtam Motor Transport Workers Association (SMTWA). Rukesh Tamang, Ga-

nesh Lepcha and Kishor Tamang are the drivers who have taken the initiative and today invited the SMTWA president to inaugurate the temple.

Meanwhile, CK Dhakal, a social worker, donated a water filter while dustbins were sourced from the Singtam Nagar Panchayat.

SU roundtable discusses women's empowerment in Sikkim

GANGTOK, 08 MAR [PIB]: A round-table conference on 'Women's Empowerment: Issues and Perspectives,' was held today at Cauvery Hall of Sikkim University at 5th Mile, Tadong here on Sunday.

The programme, sponsored by Union Ministry of Women and Child Development and University Grants Commission, was organised by Sikkim University and was presided over by SU Registrar, TK Kaul, and began with a keynote address by Prof Sanchari Roy Mukherjee of North Bengal University.

In her keynote address, Prof Mukherjee spoke on the significance of this year's International Women's Day celebration on the theme - Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights.

She said the celebration this year was very crucial as several issues need to be discussed.



Citing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, she stressed on the need to evaluate the progress made so far in women's empowerment on all fronts.

Prof Mukherjee further pointed out that at least two-thirds of those under abject poverty are women adding that they are the most affected in the economy.

"Women and children are suffering the most in

armed conflicts. There are issues concerning on the work front and human rights as women are underpaid and their work had not been considered as an economic activity. Also it is important to tackle all forms of sexual harassment which violates the dignity of women," she said.

Calling for the need to challenge gender-norms and breaking stereotypes that restrict women, Prof. Mukherjee said women

must move forward to empower each other together. "Let us take small steps for a gender equal world," she stressed.

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion on the theme of the day. Dr Doma Bhutia, Additional Advocate General, Sikkim, in her opening statement, shared that her appointment to the post gave her a chance to break the ice and gave hope for other women.

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Women's Day at Namthang

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

The women's wing of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha organised a special observation of International Women's Day for Namthang-Ratepani constituency today at Namthang. Area MLA, Transport Minister Sanjeet Kharel, while addressing the event, detailed the various women-focussed policy interventions of the SKM Government. On the day, the party felicitated 40 elderly women of the constituency and women who went to jail during the SDF Government, targeted because of their political affiliations.



Gangtok Walkathon addresses menstruation and the specially-abled girl child

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 MAR:**

ESS India, in collaboration with Zemnya Foundation, organized a Walkathon at MG Marg here on the occasion of International Women's Day, a press release informs.

The theme for the event was, "Menstruation and the specially-abled girl child."

The focus of the event was to draw people's attention towards the aspect of menstrual hygiene and the girl child and also inviting people to support the cause of the specially abled.

Chairperson, Sikkim Information Commission, CP Dhakal, who is also the President, Spastic Society of Sikkim, was present as the

chief guest to flag-off the event.

In his address, he urged all to understand the issues of the specially-abled girl child and also to assist in whatever way possible, the release states.

He also urged the participants to break the taboo on discussions about menstruation and also focus on female health

and hygiene.

The event also had Anil Raj Rai, Special Secretary, Rural Development Department, as special guest for the event.

The Walkathon was participated in by 150-plus participants from schools and colleges across Gangtok, students from Spastic Society of Sikkim and Gangtokians supporting the cause.

Women's Day with artisans



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 MAR:

Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Handicrafts Service Centre, Gangtok, celebrated International Women's Day here at the Workshop Hall of Thanka Painting at Tathangchen, press release informs.

The day was observed on the theme, "I am Gen-

eration Equality: Realizing Women's Rights".

Pema Sangmo, Deputy Director, DHH, and Kumar Chhetri, State Coordinator, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, explained the activities of IIE in Sikkim while other speakers delved on schemes under the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).

Limpele resigns as Indian badminton doubles coach

AMIT KUMAR DAS

NEW DELHI, MAR 8 (PTI): With little over four months to go for the Tokyo Olympics, Indonesia's Flandy Limpele has stepped down as India's doubles coach, citing family reasons.

Limpele, who was hired by the Badminton Association of India to replace Malaysia's Tan Kim Her last March, has played a crucial role in the Indian men's pair Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankiredy's rise in the international circuit.

On Saturday, Limpele flew back home.

"I had spoken to Gopichand last Monday that I want to resign but I decided to stay back due to the All England and European tournaments but it turns out the players cancelled their trip for All England," Limpele told PTI.

"I feel doubles department is not as favourite as singles. It is unfortunate that it has less love than singles but having said that it is just one of the reasons. The main reason for my departure is personal.

"I wish all the best to the Indian team, they have good coaches."

Last December, Limpele had criticised the Indian players, saying their poor attitude of and lack of team work is affecting the growth of the doubles game in the country.

Asked if attitude of the players was one of the reasons behind his departure, Limpele said: "No, nothing to do with attitude, the reason is personal."

BAI too issued a statement, informing about his resignation.

"Owing to family reasons, Indian doubles coach, Flandy Limpele has decided to move on and has resigned from his current position as the doubles coach for the Indian badminton team," it said.

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Surat to host Mumbai Basibiyalo on 15 Mar

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 MAR:

The 23rd episode of Basibiyalo, Mumbai, coming up on 15 March will be hosted in Surat, Gujarat,

and litterateurs and literary groups from Sikkim are preparing to make the journey to make the event a truly memorable one, a press release in-

forms.

This will be the first time that the Nepali literary meet, held in pockets across the country, will be held in Gujarat.



Pema's Gym observes Women's Day with cleanliness and awareness drive
Gangtok, 08 Mar: On the occasion of International Women's Day, members of Pema's Gym & Health Club, Martam, carried out a cleanliness drive from St Joseph's School to Martam Government School in East Sikkim on Sunday. Members of the team led by international strength-lifter, Pema Dorjee Bhutia, also spoke about the importance of health and fitness and preventive measures for Coronavirus with the people in the area. [from SAGAR CHETTRI]

Govt to restructure SFIO; increase manpower to 350 at probe agency

NEW DELHI, MAR 8

(PTI): The government

is set to more than double the manpower at the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) to nearly 350 as it continues efforts to curb corporate wrongdoings.

Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas said the process was on to further professionalise and streamline the SFIO.

"Corporate frauds are very complex. The whole challenge is in getting quality people with domain expertise (for the SFIO).

"The strength also has to be increased significantly. There is a proposal to increase it from 133 to close to 350," Srinivas told PTI in an interview.

The SFIO, which comes under the corporate affairs ministry, investigates white-collar crimes and is currently probing

high profile cases like the IL&FS fiasco.

According to Srinivas, the ministry is in the process of restructuring the agency, especially considering the number of pending cases as well as likely new cases coming to the SFIO.

"The pendency with SFIO today is close to 90 and 20 to 30 cases get added each year," he said.

On the proposed restructuring and increasing the manpower, Srinivas said it would be done in a calibrated manner.

"There will be cadre posts at the entry level and will have some promotion posts but at the middle and senior levels, a lot of (people on) deputations have to come.

"People on deputations can stay for seven years and there is no

major issue of continuity," he noted.

The ministry has also set up a 12-member high-level panel to prepare an investigation manual for the SFIO.

Chaired by Srinivas, the committee has SFIO Director Amardeep Singh Bhatia, an official from the Enforcement Directorate and advocates, among others as members.

"The committee shall devise an all encompassing manual for carrying out effective investigations in tune with provisions of relevant Acts..." as per an order issued by the ministry on Friday.

Apart from preparing the manual to plug possible loopholes that may hamper SFIO's investigation, the committee would specify the applicability of the Code of Criminal Pro-

Bhumchu greetings from Governor

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 MAR:

On the holy occasion of Bhumchu, Governor Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim, a Raj Bhavan press release informs.

In his message, the

Governor has said, "The pious Bhumchu, the sacred water at Tashiding Monastery has brought with it peace, prosperity and harmony alongside good fortune for the people of Sikkim. May the auspicious occasion strengthen

and enrich the Sikkimese culture of revering Mother Nature and our harmonious way of living with the blessings of our guardian deities.

Let us all pray our guardian deities for the welfare of all sentient beings."

SU roundtable....

She spoke about the need for structural change to cater to the service of women and said the structural barriers should be done away with to ensure equal justice for both genders.

Anil Raj Rai, Special Secretary and Mission Director Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, Sikkim, who has been actively engaged in spreading awareness on menstrual hygiene, said it was time to speak more openly about the issue.

Mr Rai mentioned that some positive change has been coming among the people of Sikkim on the issue. He also appealed to the participants to practice zero waste and minimise use of plastics.

Pema Wangchuk Consulting Editor, SummitTimes, gave an overview on the status of women in Sikkim and opined that some issues need discussions as women's empowerment has been portrayed inaccurately in Sikkim. He spoke on identity, inheritance and political representation of women in Sikkim.

Usha Lachungpa, retired Principal Research Officer, Forest Department, said there was much power in being a woman hence the feeling of insecurity and inadequacy among women must end. She expressed that women are the primary decision-makers in most families and also shared her experience as a researchers having worked in the Sikkim Forest Department for several years.

Superintendent of Police (CID), Ongmu Bhutia, shared the various pro-women initiatives of the Government of Sikkim and stressed on the need to empower women to make decisions in society. She informed that the Government of Sikkim has ensured 33% reservation for women in government employment, 50% in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies among others.

Rhenock Government College Principal Dr Iyata Uprety shared her research experience in Sikkim and stated that we should come out of tokenism when it comes to women empowerment.

"A woman who can run a family can also run an institution. Women should do things with conviction," she said.

Sikkim University ICC Chairperson, Dr Swati Akshay Sachdeva, in her address, focused on certain narratives she encountered as a sociologist on the field in Sikkim.

"Things like female infanticide or dowry don't apply to Sikkim. We have one of the best gender indexes of the country with almost 40 percent female workforce participation. There is a growth in female literacy rate and girl enrolment has gone up. However, lots needs to be addressed in Sikkim thus the way people think should change."

Sikkim University Registrar, Mr Kaul, opined that the mindset should change along with structural changes and there should be political empowerment of women.

He stated that women in Sikkim are empowered.

The panel discussion was followed by an interactive session participated in by the university faculty members, research scholars and students present on the occasion. The Vote of the Thanks was proposed by Dr Dhriti Roy, Asstt Professor, Department of Chinese, Sikkim University.

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BJP will form govt in West Bengal in 2021: Ram Madhav

GUWAHATI, MAR 8 (PTI): BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav exuded confidence on Sunday that his party will defeat Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections and form government there.

He said Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior BJP leaders are spending considerable time in Bengal to consolidate the party's vote base.

"In West Bengal, we are trying to win the election due next year. The home minister himself is spending

a lot of time there and other senior leaders are also trying hard. Within a year, we will be in a position to win there," Madhav said at a press conference here.

"We will defeat Mamata Banerjee and will form a BJP government in West Bengal."

He also exuded confidence that the ruling BJP-led alliance in Assam will return to power again in the Assembly polls to be held together along with that in West Bengal next year.

"We believe that the NDA government

in Assam will return to power in next year's election. We have done lots of work and (Narendra) Modi ji has also done a huge amount of work. We are fully confident of winning in Assam," Madhav added.

Asked about the possible impact of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Assam, Madhav said the BJP has taken an elaborate programme to combat the "misinformation and rumours" surrounding the CAA in the state.

"We have organised a big rally in Dibrugarh recently. The

way people of Assam are reacting to us, we do not think there is any confusion in their minds regarding the CAA... The Congress is trying to do a false campaign in the country and abroad," the BJP leader said.

About the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls and the BJP's possibilities in Assam, Madhav said the NDA has the strength to win two out of the three vacant seats and the candidates will be announced in the next two to three days.

"We have certain commitments with

our alliance partners. Those commitments will be honoured," he said without elaborating on reports that one seat will be offered to BJP's ally BPF.

On the overall scenario regarding the Rajya Sabha polls, Madhav said there will be no major reduction in seats for BJP.

"Definitely we will get a few more seats in states like Uttar Pradesh. In Maharashtra, our numbers have come down by 25-30 and it will impact a little bit. But overall in the entire round of elections, we will not be losing many seats," he added.

About the ongoing violence in Meghalaya, Madhav said there are certain issues regarding general safety and security of non-tribals in Shillong.

"Those issues are in the notice of the state government, which has taken steps to ensure the security for each and every citizen, whether tribal or non-tribal, in Meghalaya.

"As far as I know, the chief minister has taken steps to ensure that the state remains peaceful and law and order is maintained," he added.

Police lathicharge teachers in Patiala

CHANDIGARH, MAR 8 (PTI): The Punjab Police lathicharged unemployed teachers on Sunday to foil their march towards Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's residence in Patiala, resulting in injuries to five of them.

One of the teachers jumped into the Bhakra canal. He was rescued immediately.

Police said some members of the force were also injured.

The protesters were

demanding jobs, saying they had cleared the elementary teacher training (ETT) and qualified the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), but they were still jobless. The protesters included women teachers.

The Opposition Shiromani Akali Dal has condemned the lathicharge.

"The SAD condemns the brutal lathicharge by police on unemployed teachers in Patiala," said party spokesperson and former state Education Minister Daljit Singh Cheema in a tweet.

Heritage walk held to save iconic Patna Collectorate

PATNA, MAR 8 (PTI): A special heritage walk was held in the campus of the historic Patna Collectorate on Sunday, seeking to highlight its historical and architectural value and promote preservation of the built legacy in the city.

The event 'Walk for Patna Collectorate' was attended by a group of students, professionals, photographers, lawyers and journalists.

The walking trail began from Christ Church, a Gothic-design church built in 1852, and traversed through Dutch-era and British-built buildings of the collectorate before culminating at DM Office Building.

The over two-hour-long event was organised by 'Save Historic Patna Collectorate', a people's movement to promote heritage preservation in Bihar, to mark the International Women's Day.

"We wanted to highlight the historic values of the Patna Collectorate, and raise awareness among the people, seeking their support for its preservation, as its future currently hangs in

the balance. At the same time, we wanted to highlight the plight of these buildings in urgent need of upkeep," said Patna-based lawyer Kumar Shanu, 26, a core member of the organising team.

The US-educated advocate said even in New York such people-led movement have brought an ethos of historic preservation.

The Bihar government had in 2016 proposed to demolish the old Patna Collectorate for a new high-rise complex, triggering public outcry and appeals from various quarters in India and abroad to spare the demolition and preserve it as a "signpost of Patna's history".

Subsequently, the Indian National Trust for Art and Culture (INTACH) had last year filed two petitions in the Patna High Court challenging the demolition proposal and seeking constitution of a Bihar heritage commission.

The Patna High Court on Thursday had fixed March 17 as the next date of hearing in the case of

demolition of the collectorate.

Situ Tiwari, a city-based journalist who works with a leading international media organisation, said, "My knowledge about Patna's modern history and Patna Collectorate's heritage increased manifold after the walk."

"I felt very ashamed, and it was at two levels. First, the state government has largely failed in preserving the heritage using it for tourism and employment generation," Tiwari rued.

"Secondly, we residents hardly know our own city. Crumbling old buildings, vintage road rollers dumped, and Burmese teak benches rotting in the open put us to shame that we have failed in preserving the historic fabric of the city," she said.

She was referring to the vintage seating benches dumped in the open in the premises of the Patna Collectorate. These benches were once kept in the iconic Meeting Hall of the Patna District Board building constructed in

1938.

The Patna Collectorate complex, parts of which are over 250 years old, is situated on the banks of the Ganga and is endowed with high ceilings, huge doors and hanging skylights.

The collectorate is one of the last surviving signatures of Dutch architecture in the Bihar capital, especially the Record Room and the old District Engineer's Office.

Neel Madhav, a Patna native who studies at Delhi University was also among those who took part in the walk.

"If we youth do not take the lead role in preserving our own heritage, who else will. The government had allowed this historic building to decay and then proposed the demolition. Heritage does not belong to a person or government, it is for the future generations, and we must come forward to save it," he said.

Anish Kumar Singh, 31, a photographer, who also attended the walk, said, the "event was an eye-opener".

"We Patna people

have become blind and insensitive towards our own heritage. These buildings should have been celebrated after restoring them as a cultural and recreational hub. A new collectorate building can be built elsewhere," he said.

Historians, urban planners, conservation architects and other heritage experts have been appealing to the Nitish Kumar government to not dismantle the collectorate, saying it will "set a very bad precedent" and "jeopardise" the fate of other colonial-era buildings.

After hearing the two PILs filed by INTACH, the Patna High Court had last September stayed the proposed demolition of the government complex while restraining the state authorities from "causing any harm to the collectorate building until further orders", bringing some relief to the heritage lovers.

Parts of Oscar-winning film 'Gandhi' were shot in the Dutch-era Record Room and British-era DM Office.

FPIs turn net sellers, pull out Rs 13,157 cr in March so far

NEW DELHI, MAR 8 (PTI): Snapping their six-month buying streak, FPIs pulled out a net Rs 13,157 crore from the Indian capital markets in the first five trading sessions of March as the coronavirus outbreak spooked investor sentiment.

According to depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew a net Rs 8,997.46 crore from equi-

ties and Rs 4,159.66 crore from the debt segment during March 2-6, taking the total net outflow to Rs 13,157.12 crore.

Prior to this, FPIs were net buyers in the Indian capital markets for six consecutive months since September 2019.

"The spread of coronavirus in the US is a major driving factor and India is witnessing a spillover effect of what is happening in the

global markets. There has been a consistent drain of money from Indian equities as well as the debt where FPIs are fleeing the Indian markets amidst fear of an extended slowdown," said Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO, Groww.

The US Fed brought in an emergency rate cut of 50 bps, which shows that the US government is expecting

a slowdown, he noted.

As per Jain, the current situation in India, seen along with the Yes Bank crisis, is not very encouraging.


"In the next 3-4 weeks, the coronavirus behaviour in the western world will dictate the investment behaviour by FPIs in India," Jain said.

Echoing the views, Nirali Shah, senior research analyst at Samco Securities, said "The sell-off

is certainly the effect of uncertainty caused by rippling effect of coronavirus (COVID-19) in major economies."

Going forward, depending on how the US market reacts to coronavirus and slowdown fears, FPIs will react as the US economy will be the cue for these investors for either bringing in fresh investments or withdrawing from India, Shah added.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV


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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.



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SOUTH : 7407691463

New STNM

AMS : 9434711402

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**


**MANGAN NAGAR PANCHAYAT
MANGAN NORTH SIKKIM**
Email: mnpnorth@gmail.com

Sealed Tender are invited from individual having COI/SSC and registered organization for the award of Bazar Contract, Car Parking Contract, Car Wash Centre, Pay & Use Toilet Contract and Restaurant under Mangan Nagar Panchayat for the year 2002-21.


The details of the contract and the tender documents can be obtained from the office of the Municipal Executive Officer, Mangan Nagar Panchayat, Mangan, North Sikkim on Payment by depositing the amount at Canara Bank, Mangan on all working days between 11 A.M to 3 P.M.

DATES

1. First Date for issuance of Tender Documents : 16/03/2020
2. Last Date for issuance of Tender Documents: 19/03/2020
3. Last Date for Submission of Sealed Tender : 20/03/2020 (By 12.00 PM)
4. Date & Time of Opening of Tender : 20/03/2020 (1.00 PM onwards)
5. The rate quoted below the offset price will be out rightly rejected.
6. The details term and conditions can be seen in the Tender Documents.

**MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MANGAN NAGAR PANCHAYAT**

SITUATION VACANT


**SIKKIM STATE AIDS CONTROL SOCIETY
STNM HOSPITAL COMPLEX, GANGTOK**

NO: SSACS/PIII/507/2/2010-14 **Dated: 06/03/2020**

APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FROM ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES FOR FILLING UP OF THE FOLLOWING POSTS IN THE SOCIETY:-

1. **NURSE (Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST CENTRE))**
 - a. Name of post : Nurse (OST Center)
 - b. Qualification : BSc Nursing /GNM or ANM with minimum 1 yrs experience.
 - c. No. of posts : 1 (one)
 - d. Place of posting : Namchi District Hospital
 - e. Consolidated remuneration : B.Sc/ GNM Rs.13,000/- per month
ANM -Rs.9,000/- per month
 - f. Nature of appointment : Contractual till 31/03/2021. (Renewal of contract based on performance)

Typed applications giving details of qualifications and experience in Tabular Form alongwith attested copies of testimonials and certificates, C.V., Contact No. complete address for communication, two pass-port size photographs in a sealed cover addressed to the Project Director, Sikkim State AIDS Control Society should reach the office of the Society on or before 12/03/2020 . Preference will be given to the local candidates.

Sd/-
Project Director
SSACS

Whatever happened to Skiing at Phuni?

A ‘touristy’ activity of much potential appears to have fallen off the priority list

North Sikkim has received some heavy snowfall this year. Speaking to the residents of Lachen and Lachung would have one believe that the March Snow was the most consistent but not the heaviest in living memory, the snowline having stayed much lower. Human memory can play tricks and records might show otherwise, but what cannot be denied is that snowfall has sustained for longer than has been common in recent years and has been reasonably thick as well. This brings to mind an interesting experiment which had been attempted at Phuni in North Sikkim some years ago – skiing. The skiing festival, if memory serves, was organized for two consecutive years, the first time by the Tourism Department and the next year by private tourism stakeholders. It has kind of fallen off the map since. It did not help that the intervening years saw hardly any snowfall and then the earthquake of 2011 happened and the focus was perhaps lost.

Phuni is located ahead of Lachung a few kilometers short of Yumthang valley. It is also a place frequented by tourists not just because it is en route to Yumthang, but also because it now boasts of an azure blue glacial melt lake which formed there a few years back. And while the formation of this lake presents its own set of climate-change/ global warming worries, we speak of skiing here. Skiing is definitely an activity that will do well in Sikkim and remains one of the few touristy activities which has not been explored with any real consistency even though there are some options available. Phuni was especially well-suited for this because its gentle slopes provided just enough rush to satiate the awkwardness of beginners than the more imposing skiing options at Yumthang which would thrill the better skiers but are best not attempted by tourists on a sightseeing junket. The distance and the complications involved in reaching these locations proved a hindrance earlier, but nowadays, tourists make it to Lachen and Lachung in large enough numbers to sustain a seasonal skiing industry; even add a day to their itinerary for North Sikkim.

Skiing is in itself a tempting invite which few tourists will be able to refuse or bypass, and this needs to be revisited in earnest. And now that Sikkim has quite a few trained-in-adventure sports youth – look at how well paragliding in doing in Gangtok – it should be an initiative that is explored and promoted again.

Affection in the Time of Coronavirus

Brian Labu
theconversation.com

We are exposed to numerous viruses from our day-to-day interactions with other people all the time. However, our risk of being infected by a simple greeting usually isn't in the forefront of our minds.

The spread of COVID-19 has changed that. Conferences have banned handshakes, churches have changed their worship services, and even politicians have changed the way they greet each other. But what's the risk in a simple hug or a handshake?

If someone's hand is covered in virus because they coughed into it right before they shook your hand, it is no different than handling their dirty tissue. Your hand is now contaminated, and if you absentmindedly rub your eye or touch your mouth, you have potentially just infected yourself. You are relying on other people to wash their hands in order to protect you, but we know that people are terrible about hand-washing, even after using the bathroom.

The simple fact is that we put ourselves at some risk of infection every time we interact with other humans. So what should you do if a stranger extends their hand to greet you or a friend tries to hug you? Pulling your hand away from that potential big sale or recoiling in shock from your friend's embrace is probably not the best approach. It's about balancing the risk of infection with the negative consequences of breaching social etiquette.

Health experts around the world have been recommending that people reduce unnecessary physical contact with other people, such as shaking hands or kissing on the cheek. Even the French have recommended no cheek kissing.

You can still greet each other warmly and politely without touching them, by bumping elbows or fists, tapping feet (the “Wuhan shake” popular on social media), simply waving hi, or one of the many other creative suggestions that are popping up online. This isn't about making extreme changes to our social interactions; it's about taking simple steps to help reduce your risk of disease.

The other important step in protecting yourself is to frequently wash your hands or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available. This is a critical part of protecting yourself, as you can't introduce a virus into your mucous membranes if you have removed it from your hands.

As this outbreak progresses, maybe we will see the refusal to shake hands not as a snub, but as an expression of genuine concern for each others' health. If you are worried about offending someone by using hand sanitizer after shaking someone's hand, offer them some of your sanitizer as well. Change the conversation and help make having clean hands something that not only important to you, but socially desirable as well.

[the writer is Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of Nevada, Las Vegas]



There's a Complex History of Skin Lighteners in Africa and Beyond

LYNN M. THOMAS
THECONVERSATION.COM

Somali-American activists recently scored a victory against Amazon and against colourism, which is prejudice based on preference for people with lighter skin tones. Members of the non-profit The Beautywell Project teamed up with the Sierra Club to convince the online retail giant to stop selling skin lightening products that contain mercury.

After more than a year of protests, this coalition of antiracist, health, and environmental activists persuaded Amazon to remove some 15 products containing toxic levels of mercury. This puts a small but noteworthy dent in the global trade in skin lighteners, estimated to reach US\$31.2 billion by 2024.

What are the roots of this sizeable trade? And how might its most toxic elements be curtailed?

The online sale of skin lighteners is relatively new, but the in-person traffic is very old. My new book explores this layered history from the vantage point of South Africa.

As in other parts of the world colonised by European powers, the politics of skin colour in South Africa have been importantly shaped by the history of white supremacy and institutions of racial slavery, colonialism, and segregation. My book examines that history.

Yet, racism alone cannot explain skin lightening practices. My book also attends to intersecting dynamics of class and gender, changing beauty ideals and the expansion of consumer capitalism.

A DEEP HISTORY OF SKIN WHITENING AND LIGHTENING

For centuries and even millennia, elites used paints and powders to create smoother, paler appearances, unblemished by illness and the sun's darkening and roughening effects.

Cosmetic users in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome created dramatic appearances by

pairing skin whiteners containing lead or chalk with black eye makeup and red lip colourants. In China and Japan too, elite women and some men used white lead preparations and rice powder to achieve complexions resembling white jade or fresh lychee.

Skin lighteners generate a less painted look than skin whiteners by removing rather than concealing blemished or melanin-rich skin. Melanin is the biochemical compound that makes skin colourful.

Active ingredients in skin lighteners have ranged from acidic compounds like lemon juice and milk to harsher chemicals like sulfur, arsenic, and mercury. In parts of precolonial Southern Africa, some people used mineral and botanical preparations to brighten – rather than whiten or lighten – their skin and hair.

During the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, skin colour and associated physical difference were used to distinguish enslaved people from free, and to justify the former's oppression. Colonisers cast melanin-rich hues as the embodiment of ugliness and inferiority. Within this racist political order, some sought to whiten and lighten their complexions.

By the twentieth century, mass-produced skin lightening creams ranked among the world's most popular cosmetics. Consumers included white, black, and brown women.

In the 1920s and 1930s, many white consumers swapped skin lighteners for tanning lotions as time spent sunbathing and playing outdoors became a sign of a healthy and leisured lifestyle. Seasonal tanning embodied new forms of white privilege.

Skin lighteners became primarily associated with people of colour. For black and brown consumers, living in places like the United States and South Africa where racism and co-

lourism have flourished, even slight differences in skin colour could carry political and social consequences.

THE MERCURY EFFECT

Skin lighteners can be physically harmful. Mercury, one of their most common active ingredients, lightens skin in two ways. It inhibits the formation of melanin by rendering the enzyme tyrosinase inactive; and it exfoliates the tanned, outer layers of the skin through the production of hydrochloric acid.

By the early twentieth century, pharmaceutical and medical textbooks recommended mercury – usually in the form of ammoniated mercury – for treating skin infections and dark spots while often warning of its harmful effects. Cosmetic manufacturers marketed creams containing ammoniated mercury as “freckle removers” or “skin bleaches”.

When the US Congress passed the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act in 1938, such creams were among the first to be regulated.

After World War II, the negative environmental and health impact of mercury became more apparent. The devastating case of mercury poisoning caused by industrial wastewater in Minamata, Japan, prompted the Food and Drug Administration to take a closer look at mercury's toxicity, including in cosmetics. Here was a visceral instance of what environmentalist Rachel Carson meant about small, domestic choices making the world uninhabitable.

In 1973, the administration banned all but trace amounts of mercury from cosmetics. Other countries followed suit. South Africa banned mercurial cosmetics in 1975, the European Economic Union in 1976, and Nigeria in 1982. The trade in skin lighteners, nonetheless, continued as other active ingredients – most notably hydroquinone – replaced ammoniated mercury.

MEANWHILE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In apartheid South Africa, the

trade was especially robust. Skin lighteners ranked among the most commonly used personal products in black urban households. During the 1980s, activists inspired by Black Consciousness and the sentiment “Black is Beautiful” teamed up with concerned medical professionals to make opposition to skin lighteners part of the anti-apartheid movement.

In the early 1990s, activists convinced the government to ban all cosmetic skin lighteners containing known pigmenting agents – and to prohibit cosmetic advertisements from making any claims to “bleach”, “lighten” or “whiten” skin. This prohibition was the first of its kind and the regulations immediately shuttered the in-country manufacture of skin lighteners.

South Africa's regulations testify to the broader antiracist political movement from which they emerged. Thirty years on, however, South Africa again possesses a robust – if now illicit – trade in skin lighteners. An especially disturbing element is the resurgence of mercurial products.

South African researchers have found that over 40% of skin lighteners sold in Durban and Cape Town contain mercury.

The activists' recent victory against Amazon suggests one way forward. They took out a full-page ad in a local newspaper denouncing Amazon's sale of mercurial skin lighteners as “dangerous, racist, and illegal.” A petition with 23,000 signatures was hand-delivered to the company's Minnesota office.

By combining antiracist, health, and environmentalist arguments, activists held one of the world's most powerful companies accountable. They also brought the toxic presence of mercurial skin lighteners to public awareness and made them more difficult to purchase.

[the writer is History Professor, University of Washington]

Coronavirus: Ten Reasons Why You Ought Not to Panic

IGNACIO LÓPEZ-GOÑI
THECONVERSATION.COM

Regardless of whether we classify the new coronavirus as a pandemic, it is a serious issue. In less than two months, it has spread over several continents. Pandemic means sustained and continuous transmission of the disease, simultaneously in more than three different geographical regions. Pandemic does not refer to the lethality of a virus but to its transmissibility and geographical extension.

We certainly have is a pandemic of fear. The entire planet's media is gripped by coronavirus. It is right that there is deep concern and mass planning for worst-case scenarios. And, of course, the repercussions move from the global health sphere into business and politics.

But it is also right that we must not panic. It would be wrong to say there is good news coming out of COVID-19, but there are causes for optimism; reasons to think there may be ways to contain and defeat the virus. And lessons to learn for the future.

1. WE KNOW WHAT IT IS

The first cases of AIDS were described in June 1981 and it took more than two years to identify the virus (HIV) causing the disease. With COVID-19, the first cases of severe pneumonia were reported in China on December 31, 2019 and by January 7 the virus had already been identified. The genome was available on day 10. We already know that it is a new coronavirus from group 2B, of the same family as the SARS, which we have called SARSCoV2. The disease is called COVID-19. It is thought to be related to coronavirus of bats. Genetic analyses have confirmed that it has a recent natural origin (between the end of November and the beginning of December) and that, although viruses live by mutating, its mutation rate may not be very high.

2. WE KNOW HOW TO DETECT THE VIRUS

Since January 13, a test to detect the virus has been available.

3. THE SITUATION IS IMPROVING IN CHINA

The strong control and isolation measures imposed by China are paying off. For several weeks now, the number of cases diagnosed every day is decreasing. A

very detailed epidemiological follow-up is being carried out in other countries; outbreaks are very specific to areas, which can allow them to be controlled more easily.

4. 80% OF CASES ARE MILD

The disease causes no symptoms or is mild in 81% of cases. Of course, in the remaining 14%, it can cause severe pneumonia and in 5% it can become critical or even fatal. It is still unclear what the death rate may be. Be it could be lower than some estimates so far.

5. PEOPLE HEAL

Much of the reported data relates to the increase in the number of confirmed cases and the number of deaths, but most infected people are cured. There are 13 times more cured cases than deaths, and that proportion is increasing.

6. SYMPTOMS APPEAR MILD IN CHILDREN

Only 3% of cases occur in people under 20, and mortality under 40 is only 0.2%. Symptoms are so mild in children that it can go unnoticed.

7. THE VIRUS CAN BE WIPED CLEAN

The virus can be effectively inactivated from surfaces with a solution of ethanol (62-71% alcohol), hydrogen peroxide (0.5% hydrogen peroxide) or sodium hypochlorite (0.1% bleach), in just one minute. Frequent handwashing with soap and water is the most effective way to avoid contagion.

8. SCIENCE IS ON IT, GLOBALLY

It is the age of international science cooperation. After just over a month, 164 articles could be accessed in PubMed on COVID19 or SARSCov2, as well as many others available in repositories of articles not yet reviewed. They are preliminary works on vaccines, treatments, epidemiology, genetics and phylogeny, diagnosis, clinical aspects, etc. These articles were elaborated by some 700 authors, distributed throughout the planet. It is co-operative science, shared and open. In 2003, with the SARS epidemic, it took more than a year to reach less than half that number of articles. In addition, most scientific journals have left their publications as open access on the subject of coronaviruses.

9. THERE ARE ALREADY VACCINE PROTOTYPES

Our ability to design new vaccines is spectacular.

There are already more than eight projects underway seeking a vaccine against the new coronavirus. There are groups that work on vaccination projects against similar viruses.

The vaccine group of the University of Queensland, in Australia, has announced that it is already working on a prototype using the technique called “molecular clamp”, a novel technology. This is just one example that could allow vaccine production in record time. Prototypes may soon be tested on humans.

10. ANTIVIRAL TRIALS ARE UNDERWAY

Vaccines are preventive. Right now, the treatment of people who are already sick is important. There are already more than 80 clinical trials analysing coronavirus treatments. These are antivirals that have been used for other infections, which are already approved and that we know are safe.

One of those that has already been tested in humans is remdesivir, a broad-spectrum antiviral still under study, which has been tested against Ebola and SARS/MERS.

Another candidate is chloroquine, an antimalarial that has also been seen to have potent antiviral activity. It is known that chloroquine blocks viral infection by increasing the pH of the endosome, which is needed for the fusion of the virus with the cell, thus inhibiting its entry. It has been demonstrated that this compound blocks the new coronavirus in vitro and it is already being used in patients with coronavirus pneumonia.

Other proposed trials are based on the use of oseltamivir (which is used against the influenza virus), interferon-1b (protein with antiviral function), antisera from people who recovered or monoclonal antibodies to neutralise the virus. New therapies have been proposed with inhibitory substances, such as baricitinibine, selected by artificial intelligence.

The 1918 flu pandemic caused more than 25 million deaths in less than 25 weeks. Could something similar happen now? Probably not; we have never been better prepared to fight a pandemic.

[the writer is Catedrático de Microbiología, Universidad de Navarra]

Five fresh coronavirus cases surface in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/PATHNAMTHITTA, MAR 8 (PTI): Five fresh coronavirus cases, including three who evaded screening on return from Italy, were reported in Kerala, prompting the government on Sunday to sound a renewed alert and warn action against those hiding travel history to affected nations.

All the five, who tested positive for the infection days after the country's first three coronavirus patients from the state recovered, are relatives and hail from Ranni in Pathnamthitta district, Health minister, K K Shailaja told reporters in Thiruvananthapuram.

The Left front government intensified efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by tracking persons with whom the three latest infected people came into contact since arrival and put the state on high alert, espe-

cially in Pathanamthitta district where all public programmes and religious gatherings have been called off.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan asked everyone to follow the guidelines issued by the health department in the wake of the fresh cases.

Those who have come from nations affected by the virus, should get in touch through telephone with district medical officers or government hospitals without fail.

People who come to know about such cases also should inform authorities, Vijayan said in a Facebook post.

The three overseas returnees -- a couple in their 50s and their 24-year-old son -- had taken two connecting flights from Venice in Italy and arrived in Kochi international airport on February 29, but did

not report their foreign travel to officials authorities and evaded screening, Shailaja said.

Two others affected are their close relatives staying at their home in Pathnamthitta.

Ranni MLA Raju Abraham said the affected persons had attended a wedding, gone for shopping, went to the office of a police official and it is assumed visited at least 300 friends and relatives near their home.

They went to a taluk hospital where they were first examined by medical personnel without using any masks or gloves, Abraham told PTI.

The medical superintendent later examined them after taking precautions and they were directed to get admitted to the isolation ward, which they refused at first.

Later they were forced to get admitted to the general hospital's isolation ward on March 6 and tests confirmed late Saturday that they had contracted the virus.

As a matter of abundant caution, the infected couple's parents, in their 90s, have also been hospitalised at Pathnamthitta.

The five fresh cases has been reported days after the southern state had successfully treated India's first three corona patients-- medical students from Wuhan who have been discharged from hospitals. Their home quarantine period is also over.

The health department said failure to inform authorities about travelled history and symptoms would be considered a crime, while the state police separately said it was "illegal and punishable"

if anyone hid such information.

"The Italy-returned family hid their travel details from the health authorities. Such practices have to seen as a crime. Those who come from countries like Iran, Italy, South Korea and China should report to the health department immediately," Shailaja said.

"What they have done is irresponsible. But our concern now is to save their lives. Those who have come from corona affected countries should inform the health department immediately," she said.

Those who come from abroad should be in house surveillance for 28 days, a government release said.

The government released the flight details of the three people who traveled from Venice-Doha-Kochi. They had taken the Ven-

ice-Doha Qatar Airlines QR 126 flight on February 29.

For one-and half-hours they were at the Doha airport and took another flight QR514 of Qatar Airlines to Kochi from where they reached their home in Pathnamthitta by a car.

All the passengers who travelled in the two flights should get in touch with health authorities, Shailaja said.

With the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala in Pathanamthitta district is all set to open for monthly pujas on March 13, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), which manages it, asked devotees not to visit the temple if they have any symptoms of the virus.

Shocked over the official report that the three infected people had evaded health screening, Ernakulam

district administration on Sunday took stock of the arrangements at the Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL).

After a high-level meeting held at the airport, Ernakulam Collector S Suhas requested all co-passengers of the three people to get in touch with authorities as early as possible.

Airport sources said there were 182 passengers on the Doha-Kochi flight, which the trio had taken.

An operation has been launched for tracing all passengers on the flight and their secondary contacts and the employees who attended to them on February 29, a CIAL statement said.

Also, a massive disinfection drive would be initiated from CIAL's side, it said.

The report of the five new cases came a day ahead of the all-women

"Attukal Pongal" festival in Kerala on Monday when thousands of women from various parts of the state and outside, including foreigners, are expected to participate.

Those having cold, sore throat or showing any other symptoms of the virus should offer pongala in front of their homes instead of in crowded places, the Health Minister said.

An advisory from devaswom board said any person with travel history to COVID 19 affected countries or person with contact with such a traveller, whether they have symptoms or not, must remain in home isolation and offer pongala prayers at their respective places of stay.

"Their self isolation is the real prayer for the good of the community, their family and themselves", a statement said.

Separate department for SHGs on cards: Naveen Patnaik

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 8 (PTI): Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the occasion of International Women's Day on Sunday said that a separate department would be formed for self-help groups (SHGs) for the development and empowerment of women.

Affirming his government's commitment to work for ensuring the rights and welfare of women, the chief minister said Odisha has already emerged as a frontrunner in the country in achieving women empowerment.

"I would like to announce that Odisha will be the first state to have an exclusive department for self-help groups," Patnaik said at a function organised here on the occasion.

"This will be called Department of Mission Shakti and will be dedicated to all the women of Odisha," he said.

Emphasizing that women are playing lead

roles in all spheres of development, he said, "The struggle, confidence and success stories of our mothers have mesmerized all of us."

Patnaik said the Mission Shakti programme for 70 lakh women, the Mamata scheme and 50 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) launched by the state government had ushered in a new era for the socio-economic empowerment of women.

Describing as encouraging the success of women in all fields - from sports to entrepreneurship, the chief minister said the state government has all along been emphasizing on steps to empower women.

Noting that eminent women like sprint star Dutee Chand, writer Pratibha Ray and film personality Nandita Das have brought glory to Odisha, the chief minister said they have become symbols of em-

powerment and ideals for the women of the country.

Referring to the special nutrition budget introduced in the state this year, he said it will primarily focus on the nutrition of women and children.

The theme for International Women's Day 2020 is "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights".

The chief minister felicitated the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal and Gajapati districts on the occasion.

Patnaik and a host of dignitaries also took to their twitter handles to wish the women on the occasion.

"Be it financial independence or representing the people in Parliament, empowering women has been the cornerstone of our development initiatives. We will continue to work towards championing

them in every field and create spaces for their leadership towards progress," the chief minister tweeted.

"International Women's Day is yet another occasion to celebrate the steely resolve of women to excel, serve and inspire. Women today are creating new landmarks and will drive the next wave of growth in India," Union Petroleum and Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Twitter.

BJP national vice president Baijayant Panda also wished women on the occasion of International Women's Day.

A car and bike rally was organised in Bhubaneswar to mark the day.

A multi-hued celebration was organised at Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) to mark International Women's Day.

Dipak Chattaraj, CEO, Rourkela Steel Plant graced the occasion as the chief guest.

Night curfew lifted from Shillong

SHILLONG, MAR 8 (PTI): Night curfew which was in force in Meghalaya capital Shillong for more than a week has been withdrawn following improvement in the law and order situation, officials said on Sunday.

Night curfew was imposed in Shillong and nearby areas after violence erupted in East Khasi Hills district on February 28 following the death of a Khasi Students Union (KSU) member during an anti-CAA

rally at Ichamati that also demanded the implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP).

"Night curfew has been totally lifted in the whole of Shillong and its adjoining areas with effect from Sunday," Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIGP) Gabriel Ilangrai said in a statement here.

Not a single incident of violence has been reported from anywhere in the state and the situation has

become normal, the AIGP said.

However, night curfew imposed in Shella, Sohra and Ichamati under Sohra sub-division will remain in force, he said.

At least two persons have died in separate incidents at Iew Duh market in Shillong and Shella when unidentified miscreants attacked them following the death of a KSU member Lurshari Hynniewta on February 28 during an anti-CAA

rally at Ichamati.

Eight persons were arrested in the case and mobile internet was shut for seven days in six Khasi and Jaintia Hills district since the night of February 28.

The state police has transferred all violence-related cases to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for a thorough investigation and a magisterial inquiry has been initiated to probe the violence at Ichamati.

Tahira Kashyap announces new book

MUMBAI, MAR 8 (PTI): On Women's Day, writer-director Tahira Kashyap Khurrana announced her new book "The 12 Commandments Of Being A Woman".

Juggernaut Books will be publishing the book, which is touted be an anthem for every woman.

Written in her wit-

ty perceptive voice, the book, which is her fourth, will hit the shelves later this year.

"Books have always fuelled not just my imagination but also observation. And I am glad to be associated with Juggernaut Books who are gracious enough to entertain my idiosyncratic way of looking at things.

"This book is special as I pretty much go unfiltered in this one. It's a quirky take towards the experiences of being and becoming a woman, at least in my head," Tahira said in a statement.

Tahira, who is married to actor Ayushmann Khurrana, made her writing debut in 2011 with "I Promise",

her next novel was "Souled Out". In 2015, she also co-authored Ayushmann's biography "Cracking the Code: My Journey in Bollywood".

Chiki Sarkar, publisher and founder of Juggernaut Books said, "Tahira is the real thing, a writer with a voice that's wholly hers. We are very excited to be publishing her at Juggernaut.

Women of NE I-T dept help Rs 8,000cr revenue collection: Official

TINSUKIA (ASSAM), MAR 8 (PTI): An innovative approach by women employees of the income tax department in the north east region has helped garner Rs 8,000 crore revenue in the last fiscal, an official said on the International Women's Day on Sunday.

The department introduced outreach programmes, social media campaigns as well as street plays and quiz contests to promote tax compliance and awareness, principal director of income tax (investigation)

of the north east region, Sanjay Bahadur told PTI.

"This method is something that is not usually expected from an agency which is essentially meant for enforcement of law," Bahadur said, acknowledging the "silent contribution" of the women employees of the department.

This is an extremely challenging job that requires understanding of economics, finances, law and human psychology, he said.

The IRS officers of the

Speaking about women's presence in the income tax department in the region, he said it is headed by Indian Revenue Service officer Kavita Jha who is the principal chief commissioner of the region while the commissioner, headquarters is N Longva, a woman IRS officer.

There are four appellate commissioners in the region for dispute resolution and one of them is IRS officer Priyanka Sharma Bansal, he said.

The IRS officers of the

department are supported by scores of junior lady officers, inspectors and support staff who work in every sphere of direct taxes administration in the north east region, Bahadur said.

"The presence of all these lady IRS officers and officials has changed the way the tax administration functions in the region, making it more consultative, and inclusive.

This is evident from initiatives outside the core area of work of the department," said the I-T official.

LONDON, 08 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: A group of British MPs has called on the foreign secretary to intervene in the case of four young men facing a death sentence in Cairo for crimes they allegedly committed as children.

One of them is Ammar El Sudany, who was in the bath when Egyptian security forces raided his home.

Only given enough time to throw on shorts and a T-shirt, the then 17-year-old was blindfolded and frogmarched from the building in handcuffs.

Now, three years on, he faces being sentenced to death on Monday at a

mass trial of 304 people at the north Cairo military court, which has rumbled on for more than two years.

According to his family, he was arrested only because his father was a supporter of the deposed president, Mohamed Morsi, and has never attended a demonstration.

It is claimed that the four men were charged with two offences of being members of a terrorist cell, after being arrested without a warrant and forced to make confessions under torture.

Last month, a cross-party group of MPs and Lords wrote to Dominic Raab asking him to act.

"Your intervention could ensure these young men are not sentenced to death," the letter read.

In a separate letter, Labour's shadow minister for peace and disarmament, Fabian Hamilton, also urged Raab to intervene in the case.

On Friday, a group of UN human rights experts urged the Egyptian authorities to release the men.

When the security forces came for El Sudany he was preparing to go to the Berkat Sabaa secondary school in Monofiyah, 50 miles north of Cairo.

He had memorised the Qur'an and, an able mathematician, wanted

Arunachal man booked for posting misleading info about coronavirus on Facebook

ITANAGAR, MAR 8 (PTI): A man was booked in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang District for posting misleading information on social media regarding coronavirus, officials said on Sunday.

A case was lodged

against Subu Kena Tsering based on a complaint filed by district medical officer Kaling Dai on Friday at Pasighat police station, they said.

Tsering posted in a Facebook group that coronavirus has reached

Pasighat and two patients have been referred to Dibrugarh in Assam, officials said.

He is yet to be arrested, they said.

The virus that first emerged in China in December last year has

spread to 97 countries and has infected 102,180 people, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus tracker.

More than 3,500 people have been killed due to the virus so far.

Let's reaffirm pledge to ensure safety of women: WB gov

KOLKATA, MAR 8 (PTI): West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Sunday that any initiative to empower women will result in the welfare of humanity.

Extending greetings on the occasion of Inter-

national Women's Day, Dhankhar said "let's reaffirm the pledge to ensure safety and respect for women".

"Any investment for empowerment of women is investment for welfare of humanity and would

enhance societal values," the governor said.

The International Women's Day is observed every year on March 8 to celebrate the women's movement and struggle for equality.

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Our guys know how to get Pujara out, says Wriddhiman



BHARAT SHARMA

RAJKOT, MAR 8 (PTI):

Wriddhiman Saha is confident that Bengal's unheralded bunch of bowlers have seen enough of Cheteshwar Pujara on television to plot his dismissal when they take on Saurashtra in the Ranji Trophy final.

This is the first time in his 13-year-old first-class career that Saha will be playing a national final and Akash Deep, Mukesh Kumar and Ishan Porel will only benefit from his advice on how to dismiss Pujara on a track where he has played some of his marathon innings.

"Whoever fights till the end will win. They (Bengal teammates) all watch international matches. They know how to get Pujara out," Saha was reticent as usual but surely put across a point.

His dear friend Ashoke Dinda was dropped from the squad for disciplinary reasons but what Saha finds heartening is how the young trio of Ishan, Akash and Mukesh have more than fulfilled the veteran pacer's void.

"Earlier, the past teams reached the knock-outs on the basis of performance of a few players. For example, Ashok Dinda used to take (bulk of) wickets without much support from

the other end, the team was stuck in a way. Now everyone is contributing," Saha said.

"The bowlers are also contributing with the bat. Match-winning performances have come in the batting department. There is good camaraderie too which helps," the veteran of 102 first-class games said.

On a personal front, Saha is excited that he along with nine others will play their first final.

"First time, I am getting to play the final and it doesn't happen regularly. In our team, only Manoj (Tiwary) has had experience (2005-06 and 2006-07). Shami and I were tracking the team's performance from New Zealand.

"Other India players were also keen to know," said the man, who was benched for the two Tests, a subject he didn't touch during his interaction with media," said Saha.

A teamman to the core, Saha who recently became father for the second time didn't pay heed to his wife Romi's request of joining the team a day later.

"My wife said "go a day later to Rajkot but I said I have to go two days before as it is an important match. She did not say much now but I am sure she will have plenty to say later," he chuckled.

BERLIN, MAR 8 (AFP):

An inspired performance by Thorgan Hazard against his former club helped Borussia Dortmund claim a crucial three points in the title race with a 2-1 win away at Borussia Moenchengladbach on Saturday.

The match was tense throughout and featured a Bundesliga season-high 10 yellow cards, with players from both teams needing to be pulled away from each other by Dortmund coach Lucien Favre at full-time.

"It was a difficult game. Gladbach are efficient and our first half wasn't great," said Favre. "But after it was 1-1, we played well - and that was good, very good."

Dortmund took the lead inside 10 minutes when ex-Gladbach midfielder Hazard took a pass from Erling Braut Haaland and shrugged off three defenders to curl a floating shot into the top left-hand corner of the net.

Gladbach equalised in the 50th minute when Lars Stindl tapped in a shot from Alassane Plea



to score his fifth goal from his past four games.

The turning point for Dortmund came in the 66th minute when Jadon Sancho -- who started on the bench ahead of Dortmund's crucial trip to Paris Saint-Germain in midweek -- was introduced.

Sancho's assist, his 15th of the season, put Achraf Hakimi in acres of space on the right wing, with the Real Madrid loanee beating Yann Sommer through his legs.

The win saw Dortmund leapfrog Leipzig into second place, trailing leaders Bayern Mu-

nich by a point.

After the match, Hazard praised Haaland's efforts in letting other Dortmund players get on the scoresheet.

"I think he needs to give more assists, because he scores too much. I gave him one last time and now he's given me one - we're 1-1 - but next time it's my turn to give him an assist again," said Hazard.

Dortmund captain Mats Hummels said the recent additions of Haaland and Emre Can had helped them find the right balance.

"Right now we've got

the perfect mix between artists and workers - or folks that can do both," said Hummels.

- LEIPZIG DRAW BLANK -

RB Leipzig dropped points for the second weekend running after labouring to a 0-0 draw at Wolfsburg.

Leipzig missed the goal threat of Timo Werner, who started the game on the bench after overcoming a muscular problem during the week.

Despite being subbed on in the 60th minute, Werner -- who has 21 goals in the Bundesli-

ga this season -- failed to make an impact in a dour encounter with few chances for either side, marking just the third time this season that Leipzig have failed to get on the scoresheet.

Leipzig manager Julian Nagelsmann said the performance did not bode well ahead of Tottenham's visit to Germany on Tuesday.

"A draw was the right result as we weren't good enough to win. We were laboured and slow in our build-up," he said.

"We didn't create any space. We need to become dangerous again in front of goal before the Tottenham game."

At the BayArena, Bayer Leverkusen dominated Eintracht Frankfurt 4-0 to jump up to fourth in the table.

German football's golden boy Kai Havertz opened the scoring in the fourth minute with his sixth of the season, tapping in a cross from Moussa Diaby. Karim Bellarabi scored the home side's second just 10 minutes later when chipping in from

close range.

Leverkusen's teenage Brazilian forward Paulinho added two more in a five-minute period midway through the second half.

Schalke and Hoffenheim fought out a 1-1 draw at the Veltins Arena. American midfielder Weston McKennie scored just his second goal from 67 Bundesliga appearances when his left-footed drive put his side 1-0 up in the 20th minute.

Hoffenheim levelled in the 69th minute through Christoph Baumgartner.

Elsewhere, relegation-threatened Werder Bremen held on for a 2-2 draw away at Hertha Berlin after blowing a two-goal lead.

Freiburg kept their hopes for European football alive with a dominant 3-1 home win over Union Berlin.

On Sunday, Bayern have a chance to restore their four-point lead at the top of the table when they welcome Bavarian neighbours Augsburg to the Allianz Arena.

United and City ensure Manchester derby is not just about the football



JONATHAN LIEW

MANCHESTER, 08 MAR

[THEGUARDIAN]: A couple of weeks ago, at 8am

New York time, Manchester United plc held its quarterly earnings call, in which senior board members talked through some of the club's recent successes. For instance, the last week of January saw the club's second-highest social media engagement ever, with more than 300,000 mentions of the new signing Bruno Fernandes on Twitter, and 38 million interactions in total. Odion Ighalo was the top trending topic worldwide, beating both Brexit and Donald Trump's impeachment trial. Meanwhile the Chinese New Year product line had performed well, and the megastore was experiencing what the managing director, Richard Arnold, described as "strong increases in average basket size".

The following night,

at the Bernabéu, Manchester City beat Real Madrid 2-1 in the Champions League, a competition in which United are not playing this season.

Perhaps this is a slightly tendentious juxtaposition to make on the eve of the 182nd Manchester derby. What it does encapsulate, however, is the increasing clarity with which these two rival clubs have come to define themselves against each other: each, in a way, craving what the other has.

Starved of competitive success since the Ferguson era, United's off-field plan has been geared towards building a business model more or less independent of it. Instead they have sought to leverage their enormous fanbase, boasting to potential investors about their "worldwide platform" of "1.1 billion fans and followers". It was two years ago, during a similar quarter-

ly conference call, that United's chief executive, Ed Woodward, admitted: "Playing performance doesn't really have a meaningful impact on what we can do on the commercial side."

This does not mean United are indifferent to results, not least because their turnover is forecast to plummet next season as a result of failing to qualify for the Champions League. But it is interesting that, when Arnold recently named the two key factors in keeping United's sponsors happy, trophies and winning were not mentioned at all. The first factor, Arnold said, was "fan engagement" -- growing their fanbase and turning them into consumers. This is why United are so fixated on social media numbers: they are a measurable gauge of the audience they can offer to advertisers. Winning trophies is a good way of driving engagement.

But then so is a video of Alexis Sánchez in front of a piano.

The second factor, according to United's managing director, was analytics and data -- not the sort of data that helps to identify potential signings or flag up players in need of a rest but the sort that can help a brand reach a captive audience without them even realising they are being shown an advert, the kind of thing that, until recent years, has largely been the preserve of big platforms like Facebook rather than sports teams. And United believe that, however far behind the elite they may have fallen on the pitch, this is one area in which they are undisputed market leaders.

To see how it works in practice, just download the official United app. From the moment it opens, you are exposed to what Arnold refers to as "enhanced personalisation" and the "gamification of content". The very first screen asks you who your favourite United player is. The next invites you to "sign for United" by creating your own personalised United shirt and entering some user details. At every turn you are confronted with quizzes, polls, tactile interactive features, all subtly branded and studded with reminders to visit the online shop or buy a hospitality package. And every time you

It's surreal, dream come true for Fed Cup team

AMANPREET SINGH

NEW DELHI, MAR 8

(PTI): The Indian women's tennis team was in a state of disbelief long after it had entered a territory never explored by its predecessors -- a place in the Fed Cup play-offs.

The Indian Fed Cup team created history on Saturday night by progressing to the playoffs for the first time ever with Ankit Raina leading the side to a 2-1 win over Indonesia in Dubai.

In the past, Raina would take most of the load, but with the rise of Karman Kaur Thandi, the team began to challenge tougher opponents. Rutuja, 23, too was ecstatic at playing her role as expected and is hoping that the Fed Cup experience will help her on the Tour also.

"It is such an honour to play for the country. And for me it really means so much because I am coming off an injury and have struggled with it so much last year which restricted me to play good tennis.

"It is a very good exposure for me as it will help me in the rest of the tour. Playing tough matches everyday just proves so much mettle."

The Pune girl thrice put India ahead and it had an impact, allowing Raina to play freely against the tougher opponents.

tap the screen, you are providing United with more data: data that can then be used to provide you with your very own personalised advertising experience.

City, naturally, yearn for just a fraction of this reach. They would love a data goldmine on United's scale and complexity. They would love to be able to recreate the grip United seems to hold on both social media and traditional, their ability to shape the conversation, their coterie of former players on television. And so, in the absence of United's histor-



from Dubai.

"It's just great to be a part of something so special that'll be recorded in history and it's an honour to have a chance to do with Sania, especially after her pregnancy."

Rutuja, 23, too was ecstatic at playing her role as expected and is hoping that the Fed Cup experience will help her on the Tour also.

"It is such an honour to play for the country. And for me it really means so much because I am coming off an injury and have struggled with it so much last year which restricted me to play good tennis.

"It is a very good exposure for me as it will help me in the rest of the tour. Playing tough matches everyday just proves so much mettle."

The Pune girl thrice put India ahead and it had an impact, allowing Raina to play freely against the tougher opponents.

ical footprint and global fanbase, they have instead tried to establish their dominance of the market in very different ways.

The City Football Group's umbrella of franchise clubs, from New York to Melbourne to Mumbai, is an attempt to recreate in composite what United are trying to achieve on their own: an organic presence in every key market. It is an idea that City's chief executive, Ferran Soriano, first developed at Barcelona, and the recent investment of the US private equity firm Silver Lake values the entire

"I think getting that 1-0 lead this year was important as it helped Ankit play I feel. It is better to go into the match with a lead I hope she feels that way too," she quipped.

And Raina acknowledged the good job done by her colleague.

"It's all a team effort and I do want to mention that Vishal sir did a phenomenal job, right from making sure we come together as a team to cheering for each other. Rutuja of course did a great job she was out for some weeks but she's fought hard and we saw it.

"Riya and Sowjanya have been very contributing. Our Physio Anand sir and coach Ankita Bhambri were everyday helping us with recovery, practice and keeping us positive.

"I would say it's a gift for all the Indian women from team india on Women's Day."

Raina also talked

group at £3.7bn.

Unlike the United model the City model demands competitive success as a prerequisite. Its entire brand is founded on the idea of exceptionalism: an exemplary standard of football, of coaching and player development, even of beauty. It thus needs titles and accolades and jaw-dropping feats in order to sustain itself. "Achieving a specific level of revenue or income is not an objective on its own," writes Soriano in his book Goal: The Ball Doesn't Go In By Chance. "A good football product is

about her match against world number 29 Qiang Wang whom she almost defeated but for dizziness she suffered during the match.

"I think continuous travelling and eating different food created acidity which troubled me this week a lot, but once I go back to pune will look into it."

Uppal too was delighted with the achievement of his side.

"It's a historic moment and to be a part of it. It feels surreal. I'm am very proud of each and every member of our team, the players, physio, coach, manager.

"We all came together and worked towards a common goal. Having achieved it feels amazing. I hope this will give a big boost to Women's tennis in India! "The key was to do the fundamentals well and keep it simple on court. As a team everyone stepped up one day or the other which is very important.

a team that wins."

These are two definitions of success, of dominance, even of size. If City could be forgiven for envying United's turnover and audience, United fans must long for the sort of targeted investment and long-term vision that has sustained City's decade of success on the pitch. When your stadium is falling to bits and your club has been laden with half a billion pounds in debt, it is hard to summon too much enthusiasm for another week of record social media engagement.

Syria road crash kills 32, including Iraqis: state media

Damascus, Mar 8 (AFP): At least 32 people died Saturday after a fuel tanker crashed into two buses and several other vehicles on a road connecting the Syrian capital to Homs province, state media reported.

A break failure caused the tanker to crash into 15 vehicles and two large buses carrying several Iraqi passengers, said Interior Minister Mohammad Khaled al-Rahmoun, while inspecting the site of the accident outside Damascus.

Another 77 people were injured in the accident, he added, in comments carried by SANA.

Footage aired on state media showed rescue teams deployed around the mangled remains of



two cars.

SANA released photos of a passenger bus with one end blown off.

Victims of the crash are believed to include Shiite Iraqi pilgrims visiting holy shrines near

the capital.

Holy sites in Syria continue to be popular among Shiite pilgrims

from across the region, despite an eight-year war that has displaced millions.

Nepal PM Oli to be discharged on Monday: report

KATHMANDU, MAR 8 (PTI): Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, who successfully underwent his second kidney transplant surgery here last week, is likely to be discharged from the hospital on Monday, according to a media report.

Oli, 68, underwent his second kidney transplant surgery on Wednesday at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) and is currently under medical supervision of a team of doctors, The Himalayan Times reported.

He is feeling better... and has started moving around the hospital bed. His health is better and his vital signs



are sound. If everything goes well, the PM will be discharged on Monday," Uttam Kumar Sharma, the head of the Urology department at TUTH,

was quoted as saying in the report. Oli, who is also the chairman of the ruling Nepal Communist Party, was hospitalised on March 2 and later un-

derwent dialysis to remove toxins ahead of the transplant.

This was Oli's second kidney transplant. The first was performed in

India in 2007, after both his kidneys failed.

He has been visiting hospitals abroad for health check-up ever since.

Paraguay reports first coronavirus case

ASUNCION (PARAGUAY), MAR 8 (AFP): A 32-year-old Paraguayan who arrived from Ecuador is the first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus in Paraguay, the country's health minister said Saturday.

The patient was in "very good" general health and authorities were monitoring people who had contact with

him since he arrived in Asuncion on March 3, Health Minister Julio Mazzoleni told reporters.

In Ecuador there are 14 confirmed cases of people infected with COVID-19 and 122 suspected cases, according to official figures.

The central laboratory of Paraguay's Ministry of Public

Health confirmed the COVID-19 case on Saturday afternoon, Mazzoleni tweeted earlier.

"Protocols already tested and approved by the WHO are being applied," he wrote, referring to the World Health Organization.

Health authorities were continuing to monitor 70 others who had arrived from abroad.

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MH17 families fear they still face a long road to justice as trial begins

LUKE HARDING

KUALA LUMPUR, 08 MAR

[THEGUARDIAN]: On Sunday Liz Mayne will make a familiar "pilgrimage" to the Netherlands. In 2015, she flew in to inspect the wreckage of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, shot down over eastern Ukraine the previous summer. "You could still smell the burning," she says. "It was an overwhelming experience."

Her son Richard, a second-year student at Leeds University, was one of 298 people on board. Ten were Britons. All perished. Richard was 20. His body was recovered intact from sunflower fields near the village of Hrabove. He was returned in the clothes he had set off in: sweatshirt and socks bearing the logo of his favourite rugby team, the Leicester Tigers.

Since that first grim trip to see the debris, Liz has returned each year. In 2018 she and her husband, Simon, were shown poignant CCTV images of Richard, taken at Schiphol airport. On 17 July 2014, she had driven him from their home in Leicester to Birmingham; he gave her a "cheeky" wave before

boarding a connecting flight to Amsterdam.

The footage shows him walking towards gate eight - on his way to Australia. He goes into a tunnel and then vanishes. Seeing him alive again was both sad and magical, Liz recalls. "He is on his way to this wonderful experience. I see that as something to celebrate. He's not thinking: 'I am walking to my death.' He's thinking: 'The world is my oyster.'"

The wheels of justice have turned slowly. For Liz and other relatives seeking to understand why their loved ones were killed, it has been a long and painful process, threaded with grief and frustration. Their agony not helped by the fact that Russia - the state investigators allege is most responsible for the disaster - continues to deny its guilt.

On Monday Liz will watch the start of a trial of four suspects whom Dutch authorities say were responsible for downing the Boeing 777 with a Russian anti-aircraft missile while it was on its way to Kuala Lumpur. The trial is to take place in a judicial complex in Schiphol.

Twenty next of kin chosen by ballot will sit in courtroom D; Mayne will watch on a video feed from a conference centre in Utrecht.

It will be an international affair - not surprising given that two-thirds of the passengers were Dutch, and the others came from Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the UK, Germany, Belgium, the Philippines, Canada and New Zealand. Four hundred journalists from around the world are expected to attend. Some of the British families may drop out because of fears over the coronavirus.

The first week is expected to deal with "housekeeping" issues rather than hearing evidence. It will include the crucial detail of whether the suspects - who are each charged with murdering all 298 passengers and crew, and with bringing a missile launcher into eastern Ukraine - will turn up. One is known to have appointed a lawyer but, since neither Russia nor Ukraine extradites its nationals, it is almost certain they will be tried in absentia.

Three are Russians - Igor Girkin, a former col-

onel of Russia's FSB spy service; Sergei Dubinsky, employed by Russia's GRU military intelligence agency; and Oleg Pulatov, a former soldier with the GRU's Spetsnaz special forces unit. A fourth is a Ukrainian citizen, Leonid Kharchenko. All were senior commanders in the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR). In summer 2014, the separatist militia, helped and armed by Moscow, was embroiled in a bloody war with Ukrainian forces. Russia boosted the DNR's efforts with undercover soldiers.

According to the prosecution, the defendants asked Russia's defence ministry for heavy weapons, and it agreed. A convoy was allegedly sent from the 53rd anti-aircraft missile brigade, based in the Russian city of Kursk. It included the Buk missile launcher used to bring down MH17.

A tragic mistake? Or a deliberate act? This is something relatives hope the public sessions will establish.

For more than five years the Kremlin has denied all involvement. In contrast to authorities in Iran, which in January said their military had

shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane in error, President Vladimir Putin has batted away accusations of responsibility. Russian state TV has broadcast conspiracy theories: the Ukrainians fired on the plane, mistaking it for Putin's jet; it was already full of dead bodies; the US was to blame.

Despite these counterclaims, the evidence against Moscow has piled up. The investigative website Bellingcat found photographs of Russian soldiers who travelled with the convoy. Locals filmed the Buk as it headed back to the Russian border, minus one missile. Girkin boasted that the rebels had shot down another "bird", before deleting his post.

Bellingcat's founder, Eliot Higgins, thinks prosecutors will reveal additional evidence. He believes the Dutch-led joint investigation team has obtained further videos and photographs, and may have an image of the missile being fired. There are likely to be recorded calls between the indicted DNR operatives and their Russian army handlers, plus a possible witness who travelled with the Buk on its deadly journey.

Biden and Sanders enter key phase in Democrats' race

ST. LOUIS, MAR 8 (AFP): Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders on Saturday began what amounts to a fresh campaign for the Democratic nomination for president, as the septuagenarians prepare to go head-to-head at the polls for the first time since the field narrowed to two credible candidates.

Biden, the 77-year-old former vice president, spoke to a large crowd of supporters in Missouri, one of six states that will hold Democratic primaries on Tuesday, one week after the "Super Tuesday" elections brought about a dramatic reversal of fortunes in his favor.

Standing on an outdoor stage on a sunny day in St Louis, at times wearing his signature aviator sunglasses, the politically moderate Biden savored his spectacular revival in the race for the White House.

"What a difference a day makes," he exulted. "This time last week I was in South Carolina and the press and the pundits had declared Biden's campaign dead." "But South Carolina had something to say about that, and then came Super Tuesday.

And today there are 11 victories behind us

and we're leading both in delegates and national votes." With the monumental Gateway Arch -- a symbolic entryway to the American West -- in the background, the former vice president mentioned Sanders only indirectly.

Biden, having gained key backing from erstwhile rivals Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar and Michael Bloomberg, said he was best positioned to "unite this party," promising not to turn "this primary into a campaign of negative attacks."

"That will only reelect Donald Trump if we go that route," he said.

Sanders, speaking to an equally enthusiastic crowd in Chicago, underlined his differences with Biden, without directly attacking him.

"Joe Biden is a friend," he said. "I have known him for many years. But we have records, we have a different vision. The American people will hear about it."

With the primary now "down to two people," the progressive Vermont senator said, "it is important for the American people to understand the differences between us -- in terms of our record, in terms of our vision for the future."

Sanders is a democratic socialist who wears his uncompromising positions -- government-run health care for all, higher taxes on the wealthy and free university tuition -- proudly on his sleeve.

Biden is a centrist who prides himself on his ability to work with Republicans. He is more middle-of-the-road on key issues like health care, where he favors expanding existing insurance programs, and less punitive additional taxes on the wealthy.

In addition to Missouri, Idaho, Michigan, Mississippi, North Dakota and Washington will hold Democratic primaries on Tuesday.

The state of Illinois, where Sanders was speaking, does not hold its primary until March 17.

That falls two days after the next Democratic debate, to be held in Phoenix, Arizona.

Hawaii congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard is still on Democratic ballots, but trails so badly that she has not qualified for the debate.

That would leave Sanders and Biden in their first head-to-head encounter of the long campaign season.

China reports 27 new virus deaths, lowest rise in cases since January

BEIJING, MAR 8 (AFP): China on Sunday reported its lowest number of new coronavirus infections since January, with nearly all the 44 new cases in the outbreak epicentre Wuhan.

There were 27 new deaths from the virus, all in Wuhan and the lowest in more than a month, bringing the nationwide toll to 3,097, according to the National Health Commission.

Only three cases, all imported from abroad, were reported outside of Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, in Beijing and the northwest province of Gansu.

New infections reported from Hubei have been on a downward trend for several weeks and multiple cities in the province have reported zero new cases in recent days.

A senior government official hinted on Friday that China may soon lift the lockdown on the province imposed in late January,

which has effectively restricted the movement of some 56 million people in Hubei. Nationwide new infections have also been on a downward trend, but confirmed imported cases have prompted fears in recent days that infections could swell as people get infected overseas.

The two cases reported in Beijing Sunday were arrivals from Italy and Spain, the capital's health commission said.

The number of coronavirus cases has risen worldwide to more than 100,000, with 3,500 dead across 95 nations and territories.

T20 WC final: Pawar hails Indian women team for grit

MUMBAI, MAR 8 (PTI): The Indian women's cricket team lost the T20 world cup final to Australia, but played exceptionally well to reach the finals. They have been performing to the best of their abilities and their future is very bright. Wishing them all the success!" Pawar tweeted.

Pawar, who has also been the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) chief between 2005 and 2008, said Indian side played best of their abilities and wished them success in future.

"Our @BCCIWomen cricket team lost the #IN-

DvAUS #T20WorldCup-Final but #TeamIndia played exceptionally well to reach the finals. They have been performing to the best of their abilities and their future is very bright. Wishing them all the success!" Pawar tweeted.

In another tweet, he congratulated the Australian cricket team for lifting the trophy and said they performed well when it mattered the most.

Australia defeated India by 85 runs in the summit clash held in Melbourne.

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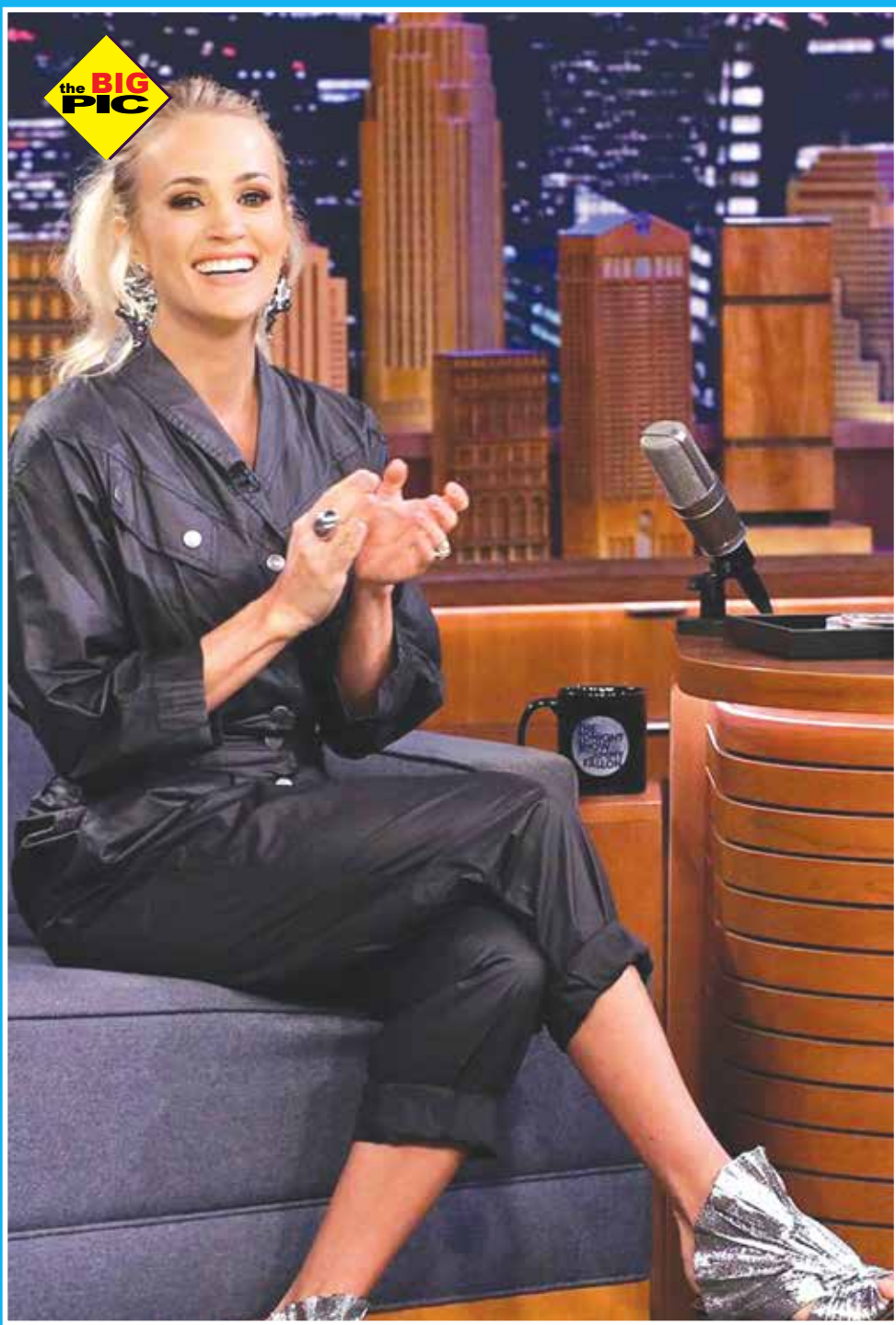
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VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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SHINY SHOES! Singer Carrie Underwood rocks some amazing silver heels during an appearance on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.

Jojo Siwa and Miley Cyrus Dance Up a Storm at Show Rehearsal in Australia



After meeting Miley Cyrus for the first time earlier this week, it looks like Jojo Siwa is still hanging around her idol.

On Thursday, March 5, the 16-year-old star took to social media to share a picture of her and Miley looking like the best of friends after they ran into each other working at the same rehearsal studio.

“sometimes the worst days turn into the best days! i wasn’t having the best day today and then.... THIS. Miley is the reason why i’m doing what i’m doing today.

since DAY 1 i’ve loved her, she has been my inspiration since i was 2 years old,” Jojo wrote on Instagram. “today i met miley and had the best conversation of my life with her. this is a day that i never thought would happen. and now a day that i will never forget. @miley-cyrus you are a golden human and i’m so happy that i met you and you we’re so nice! Thank you for being you, you turned my life around today. i love you.”

This weekend, as Miley gears up to headline the upcoming World Tour

Bushfire Relief on Friday, March 13, Jojo is joining her during rehearsals and the two are dancing up a storm.

Other acts that will perform the charity show include Lil Nas X, the Veronicas and SJ Seb Fontaine.

“Look who came to rehearsal !?! @itsjojosiwa !!!!! @worldtour Bushfire benefit concert! March 13 in Melbourne!” wrote Miley on an Instagram video she posted where Jojo can be seen sitting down at rehearsals watching her idol and then joining in on the fun, dancing along with her.

ARIES: There’s a difference between inspiring people and doing the work for them. The latter will create a sense of dependency, which in turn is detrimental to your own being. Protect yourself from those who feed off your energy by creating firm boundaries. In extreme cases, you may even have to physically distance yourself from certain people. **TIP:** Be more assertive of your time and space. **TAURUS:** A drop in energy levels and the absence of joy is your body’s way of telling you that it has had enough. Dear Taurus, when you are putting so much effort into making the space around you spic and span, why are you ignoring the vessel you reside in? Skipping meals only to binge later is not only cumbersome for your system, it also deprives your body of important nutrients that are required for growth and regeneration. One word: detox. **TIP:** Respect your body.

GEMINI: Have you ever noticed a bud which is about to transform into a flower? The slight opening on the top gives you a hint of the colours which will soon come to

life. You may be impatient to see the flower in its full glory but you know that the process cannot be rushed. The process of growth and evolution is much the same. You are not where you want to be but you are on your way there.

TIP: Make space for growth and evolution. **CANCER:** But what about the wild and the unknown, Cancer? Mamma Nature wants to see more of you. So consider venturing out into the forest where the winds whisper sweet nothings into your ears and the trees dance to their own rhythm. Don’t have the option to run off? Let your local park offer respite. You are also becoming increasingly sensitive to what’s happening in the world around. **TIP:** Step outside and reconnect with nature.

LEO: To this date, psychologists have been having the free will vs destiny debate. Do we have any control over the way things pan out or is everything predetermined? If you side with the determinists, you will have a forever excuse for the things that are not going your way. Believing that the reins are in your hand will empower you like nothing else

ever will. Decide you’re in charge here, Leo, and the Universe will meet you halfway.

TIP: You are the creator of your destiny.

VIRGO: The thing about comfort zones is that they are ‘comfortable’. But comfort equals stagnation and that is never a good thing. The cards are asking you to take the power back, acknowledge your fear, but know that your reservoir of courage is far greater.

TIP: Be bold, be wild, be free.

LIBRA: The process of yin or non-doing is just as important as the yang aspects of creation. No great work of art can be created without retreating into ‘shunya’ or the womb space. Understand the importance of decluttering your schedule so divine inspiration can strike, Libra. This is the secret to taking your work to the next level. Creative blocks could be weighing some of you down at this moment. Acknowledge them. Be grateful for their presence.

TIP: Allow yourself to retreat into the space of nothingness.

SCORPIO: Often, asking for help is mistaken as a weakness. Dear Scorpio, you are

well aware of your abilities and potential, as well as that of others around you. This is the time to work smart rather than hard. Give the crew a chance to take on what they are good at, so that you can focus on your strengths. **TIP:** Let others take care of what they are good at.

SAGITTARIUS: “The aim of art,” according to Aristotle, “is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.” This is an extension of your journey, Sagittarius. An amalgam of the experiences that have brought you where you are. So narrate a tale that feels authentic to you. That tells the world about your struggles and your victories.

TIP: The expressive arts have your heart today. **CAPRICORN:** So this is not the life you envisioned for yourself! But does that make your journey any less of an adventure? You are exactly where you need to be, Capricorn. Take a moment to centre yourself. To be grateful for what Spirit is offering you right now: an opportunity to plant the seeds of a bright, fulfilling, and prosperous future.

TIP: Release the need to control this situation as you plant the seeds of a bright and fulfilling future.

AQUARIUS: The process transformation is both painful and confusing. Who are you if you are no longer the person you used to be? Let go of the need to cling onto a false sense of identity. Let go of the need to find all the answers. Know that Spirit is protecting you right now and in this moment, Aquarius. You will soon find a way to cross the troubled waters. Need an affirmation that you’re not losing your mind?

TIP: The future is going to be better than you imagine.

PISCES: “Exercises are like prose, whereas yoga is the poetry of movements. Once you understand the grammar of yoga; you can write your poetry of movements.” An Amit Ray quote to inspire you to get down and dirty with your may. There’s something about connecting with your body temple that awakens the god(dess) within. Not one for structure? Put on your favourite Cardi-B tracks and make some time for movement meditation.

TIP: Get in touch with that God(dess) within.

Danny Tidwell’s Husband Shares Touching Tribute After Dancer’s Tragic Death

The world is still mourning the loss of So You Think You Can Dance finalist, Danny Tidwell.

On Saturday, it was reported that the professional dancer passed away on Friday. According to the late star’s brother, Travis Wall, he was killed in a car accident.

He was only 35 years old.

While many celebrities have spoken out over the dancer’s unexpected death, including Allison Holker, Debbie Allen, Dance Moms’ Abby Lee Miller, Maddie Ziegler and more, it was Danny’s husband who made hearts break with his touching tribute.

News reporter David Benaym broke his silence over the tragedy and took to Instagram to share a moving message about his husband.

“I’m devastated that my Danny, the love of my life, my beloved friend, the artist, the talented angel, fierce mind, legendary dancer, my now late husband, Danny Tidwell died last night in a car crash while his friend was driving him home from work,” David’s caption began.

He thanked everyone and expressed his condolences to those who also loved and supported his late husband.

“We were so lucky to have him, life was so challenging for him,” David continued. “But he was a warrior, and he came back standing, always. We loved



each other so much, he was and always will be family. He made me the happiest for so many years, we were able to create so much together.”

David listed the many accomplishments they achieved together as a couple, including releasing a book, magazine, show and many more.

“He had such an impact on the dance world, life gave him so much to deal with

from a young age,” he shared. “I will write more about you Danny, tell your story, continue your legacy, make sure that you are not forgotten, that you are celebrated. An angel with no wings you said you were, you were flying all along, and you’ll be our guardian angel from now on.”

Closing his statement, he said, “I love you, I’ll forever miss you. You’re now

in peace, mon Danny, and I know you know how much you were loved.”

Tidwell was known for his time as a contestant on season three of So You Think You Can Dance in 2007. He was a runner up during the season, however, made a lasting impression in the dancing world.

At this time, it’s unclear when memorial services will be set up for Danny.

Céline Dion Breaks Fashion Rules

Some fashion rules were meant to be broken.

There’s only a handful of celebrities who love to play up their style with eccentric and over-the-top designs. On that short list is none other than Céline Dion.

The 51-year-old star pushed the fashion boundaries once again on Saturday afternoon, when she was spotted leaving her hotel in New York City in a fabulous flamingo pink outfit.

Aside from the in-your-face color of her ensemble, which she wore from head-to-toe, the legendary songstress paired her button-down shirt and matching oversized blazer with a pleated skirt and pants.

That’s right, Dion made the street her own personal runway with her daring ensemble and proved that more is more. Tying her lewk together, she accessorized with a slim silver belt and Kate Young for Tura sunglasses.

It’s safe to say she was looking dressed to kill, as she was headed to the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J.



Meghan Markle Champions Gender and Racial Equality

Meghan Markle continues to be a role model.

Ahead of International Women’s Day (which is on March 8), the Duchess of Sussex used her celebrity platform to spread a positive and empowering message about championing for gender and racial equality.

On Friday, Meghan visited the Robert Clack Upper School in east London, where she encouraged all of the students to uplift, support and celebrate women.

“It is such an honor for me to be here today,” she began her speech. “When we thought about what I wanted to do for International Women’s Day this year, for me, it was incredibly important to be with the women of our future. And that is all of you young women here, as well as you, the young men, who play a very large part in this.”

Marnie the Dog, the Beloved Instagram Shih Tzu, Dies at 18

Social media will never be the same.

On Saturday afternoon, news broke that the beloved Instagram star, Marnie the Dog, had passed away. The adorable Shih Tzu rescue, who quickly became an internet sensation with her famous “lolling” tongue and tilted pose, died on Thursday.

The iconic dog was 18 years old.

Shirley Braha, who adopted her fur baby from a Connecticut shelter in 2012, took to social media to share the heartbreak-

ing news.

“It is with much grief I share the news that Marnie passed away painlessly & peacefully in my home on Thursday afternoon at the age of 18,” the statement read on Marnie’s Instagram page, which amassed 1.8 million followers.

“Her comfort had been notably declining over the past few days with little hope for improvement and she let me know she had had enough,” the statement continued. “She enjoyed her chicken until the very end.”