



**LILY RABE COMES ABOARD
GEORGE CLOONEY DIRECTORIAL
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**UNFORTUNATELY, CHAUVINISM
IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY
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**33 INJURED, 14 ARRESTED
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Dochum boxer leaves on Khelo India scholarship

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:**

Class 10 student, Prabha Gazmer, resident of Dochum Village under Khamdong Singtam Constituency in East Sikkim, left for Rohtak, Haryana today to join a residential school where she will be trained in boxing and academics as well.

A press release informs that she was selected under the Centre's Khelo India Abhiyan. Prabha was studying at Sirwani School and training under Pritam Silal in boxing since childhood. She was successful in getting awards by participating in various state level and national level competitions.

Born to Mohan Kumar Gazmer and Bhima Maya Gazmer, Prabha was also recently felicitated by the Shantinagar Gaon



Sudhar Samiti Singtam.

Prabha said that this is a great platform to showcase her talents at the international level and she will train seriously to achieve success. She thanked her family, friends, coaches, school heads, teachers and well-wishers for their support and blessings.

0/194: Daily cases score a zero again in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:**

Hopefully, this is will soon become the new normal. In the last 24 hours, none of the 194 samples screened for Novel Coronavirus in Sikkim returned a positive result. Zero returned again against the table recording daily cases in the State on Wednesday and Sikkim held the line on confirmed Covid-19 cases at 6,121 for a second day in a row today.

What should also spread some cheer is the statistic which reveals that 5,835 of the Covid-positive people in Sikkim have beaten the virus and on Wednesday, one more person was released from home isolation after completing the prescribed quarantine

period. While there is still no medical explanation for it, the numbers suggest that an increasing number of new cases [which are already low compared to a month back] are asymptomatic since most are referred to home isolation.

At present for instance, there are only three Covid-positive patients admitted in the Covid-dedicated wing of STNM Hospital and no one in the ICU. Currently, there are only 54 active cases of Covid-19 in Sikkim.

On a more sobering note, 135 people have died in Sikkim with the virus but then again, most of them had co-morbid conditions which complicated their treatment. The last Covid fatality in Sikkim was on

01 February.

Sikkim's active cases of novel coronavirus have been declining gradually with less new cases of novel coronavirus and more recovery of COVID patients. There are only 54 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that yesterday, 156 samples were tested by RT-PCR, 19 by TrueNat and another 19 through rapid antigen testing.

The vaccination drive in the State meanwhile continues on a smart clip with 613 health and frontline workers receiving their CoviShield shots on Wednesday.

Among these 613

were 98 health workers, of whom four received their first dose while 94 received their second dose of the vaccine today.

A detailed break-up of the vaccinations carried out today are as follows: 115 front line workers at STNM Hospital, 51 frontline workers at Rhenock CHC and 122 frontline workers and 72 health workers [three received the first dose and 69 received their second dose of vaccine] at Urban PHC, Gangtok in East District.

Likewise, 100 frontline workers and 26 health workers [one received the first dose and 25 received their second dose] at Gyalshing District Hospital in West District and 127 frontline workers at Namchi District Hospital in South District.

Startup incubated at AIC-SMUTBI wins Rs 1.5 Cr grant



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:**

AATWRI Aerospace Pvt Ltd, a start-up incubated at AIC-SMU Technology Business Incubator (AIC-SMUTBI) has been declared as the winner of the Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC-4) which was organized by Ministry of Defence, Government of India, a press release informs.

The Defence India Startup Challenge launched under the aegis of Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence is aimed at fostering a Defence Innovation Ecosystem for Indian military to co-create technologically advanced solutions in a rapid manner by harnessing the power of Entrepreneurial Innovation and Venture Capital.

The fourth edition of the Defence India Startup Challenge was launched by Minister of Defence, Rajnath Singh on 29 Sept, 2020 inviting Indian Startups, MSMEs & Technology/Researcher professionals to Innovate for Indian Defence.

This is a unique competition in which innovative solutions are sought from the public to help in solving any of the challenges of India Defence ranging from equipment for Deep sea deployment for Indian Navy to target simulation for training in Airforce etc., as part of Innovation in Defence

Excellence (iDEX).

The AATWRI Aerospace Pvt Ltd team won a grant of Rs 1.5 Crore which was presented in an award ceremony during the AeroIndia Show held at Bangalore on 05 Feb, 2021 from the hands of Minister of Defence, Rajnath Singh. AATWRI received this award for developing "Computer Generated Target for Virtual Training".

The prototype will be built within a span of 1 year and will be considered for deployment after mandated testing and certification requirements. The AATWRI team, which has been mentored by CEO, Prof (Dr) Tej Chingtham, AIC-SMUTBI, has expressed its gratitude to AIC-SMUTBI for the support extended to them for making this journey possible.

"This is also one of the rare feat as startups working in the North East India has been able to achieve such recognition at National level," the release states.

AIC-SMUTBI is the first Atal Incubation Center of North East India and is hosted inside the campus of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT) under Sikkim Manipal University (SMU). It is fully supported by AIM, NITI AAYOG. It currently has 38 startups on its portfolio working in various domains.

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Model ICDS centre inaugurated in Pelling



**RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 17 FEB:**

A model Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centre and kindergarten section, constructed through NITI Aayog under the "aspirational district programme," was inaugurated on Wednesday here at Pelling under Yangthang constituency by the Chief Minister's wife, Sarda Tamang, accompanied by DC [West] Karma R. Bonpo, CDPO-West HB Shankhar and others.

The two-storeyed centre was constructed on a budget of Rs 20.77 lakh within the Pelling

Senior Secondry School campus.

The DC informed that the facility was initiated to create convergence between ICDS and pre-schooling facilities such as lower and upper kindergarten to help toddlers access quality education in a convenient setting.

He also expressed concern over Sikkim's falling fertility rate, something which could lead to many ICDS centres shutting down in the state.

"ICDS centres have been affected due to lack of enrolment either due to decreasing birth rate

in the state or people's preference for private institutions," he said.

That said, similar ICDS centres with kindergarten facilities will be established in other parts of rural West Sikkim he added, after proper discussions with the State government and Education Department once the mission becomes successful.

Mrs Tamang held up the inauguration of the new facility as a historic achievement in terms of development of the education sector in the state and maintained that the model ICDS established at Pelling

was a fulfilment of the dreams and vision of her husband, Chief Minister PS Tamang.

"I am hopeful that the constructive initiative taken by west district with regard to establishment of a model ICDS centre having kindergarten facilities will act as a stepping stone for other districts to undertake such productive efforts," she said.

Also today, contractor Narayan Khatiwada, who executed the ICDS centre's construction, and Ohm Bahadur Karki, an employee at the ICDS, were felicitated today.

Normal petrol's price crosses ₹ 100 a litre in Rajasthan's Sriganganagar

JAIPUR, 17 FEB [PTI]: After premium petrol, the price of normal petrol has also crossed ₹ 100 per litre in Rajasthan's Sriganganagar district.

The Rajasthan Petroleum Dealers' Association (RPDA) has decided to hold a "Sadbuddhi Yagya" as a protest against the state government for the highest value-added tax (VAT) on fuel price.

Petrol and diesel prices in Sriganganagar on Wednesday stood at ₹ 100.13 and ₹ 92.13, respectively.

RPDA President Suneet Bagai said, "We are soon going to hold Sadbuddhi Yagya in Hanumangarh as a protest against the state government, which levies the highest VAT on fuel price. Normal petrol prices crossed ₹ 100 per litre in Sriganganagar."

The rise in fuel price is despite the Rajasthan government last month

reduced VAT on petrol and diesel by 2 per cent.

Earlier, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had blamed the Centre for the rising fuel prices. Replying to the debate in the state Assembly on the Motion of Thanks to the governor's speech two days ago, the chief minister said the Centre is responsible for increase in fuel prices. He added that the government has reduced basic excise duty, in which states get share, but increased special excise duty in which the states do not have share.

Mr Bagai said the increased fuel price will affect the dealers, especially on state borders.

He added that petrol and diesel pumps located in the border areas of neighbouring districts are on the verge of shutdown due to high VAT as demand is continuously decreasing.

Cabinet nod to juvenile justice law amendments

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 (PTI): The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved amendments to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, increasing the role of district magistrates and additional district magistrates.

Addressing the media on the Cabinet decision, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said in every district, the district magistrate and the additional district magistrate will get the power to monitor functions of agencies responsible for the

implementation of the Act.

The district child protection unit will also function under the district magistrate, she said.

Irani said till now there was no specific direction to carry out a background check of people who are to become members of the child welfare committees (CWC).

According to the amendments cleared by the Cabinet, before becoming a member of the CWC, background and educational qualification checks will be included, she noted.

Irani said earlier

any organisation which wanted to run a child care institution would need to give its purpose to the state government.

In the proposed amendments, before registration of a CCI, the DM will conduct its capacity and background check and then submit the recommendations to the state government, she said.

The DM can independently evaluate a specialised CWC, juvenile police unit and registered institutions.

The scope of the Juvenile Justice Act has been expanded.

Child victims of

trafficking and drug abuse and those abandoned by their guardians will be included in the definition of "child in need of care" and protection, she said.

At present, the Act has three categories of petty, serious and heinous crimes

"One more category will be included that offences where the sentence is more than seven years but no minimum sentence is prescribed or a minimum sentence of less than seven years is provided shall be treated as serious offences under the Act," she said.

COVID-19: New cases fall below 10,000 for fourth time in February

NEW DELHI, FEB 16 (PTI): The daily new infections fell below 10,000 for the fourth time this month taking India's tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,09,25,710, while fresh fatalities remained below 100 for the tenth time this month, according to Union health ministry data updated on Tuesday

A total of 9,121 new cases were reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 1,55,813 with 81 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,06,33, 025 which

translates to a national COVID-19 recovery rate of 97.32 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.43 per cent. The COVID-19 active caseload remained below 1.5 lakh. There are 1,36,872 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprise 1.25 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed

80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, 20,73,32,298 samples were tested till February 15 with 6,15,664 samples being tested on Monday

The 81 new fatalities include 23 from Maharashtra, 13 from Kerala and 10 from Punjab

A total of 71,55,813 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 51,55,27 from Maharashtra followed

by 12,425 from Tamil Nadu, 12,267 from Karnataka, 710,893 from Delhi, 10,233 from West Bengal, 8,704 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,163 from Andhra Pradesh

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

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

Area MLA inspects road construction work in Yuksom

**PRITAM LAMA
GYALSHING, 17 FEB:**

Sikkim Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker and area MLA, Sangay Lepcha inspected the progress of under-construction roads in remote villages of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency today. He started his inspection with the road from Yuksam connecting remote villages of the constituency like Tsong village, Chumang, Nesha and Chongrang.

Dy Speaker, Sangay Lepcha interacted with the engineers on the site and representatives of



the construction agency during his visit.

He instructed the contractor and department concerned to speed up the construction works and asked them to maintain the highest quality standards in the

construction of the road. SKM West District coordinator, Nandu Gurung, SKM Sports Wing general secretary, Sonam Chewang Bhutia, Concerned Department Engineers, Contractors accompanied the Deputy Speaker during the

inspection.

"This road, once completed will provide better and quick access to the remote villages of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency, a big relief to the people of my constituency," said Mr Lepcha.

No data yet on efficacy of Covid vaccines against virus variants, say scientists: Report

NEW DELHI, 17 FEB [PTI]:

Preliminary research shows the two vaccines against COVID-19 approved in India are effective against the UK variant of the novel coronavirus but there is no data on their efficacy against the South African and Brazilian mutants detected in the country.

On Tuesday, the health ministry said four people were detected with the South Africa variant of SARS-CoV-2 and one tested positive for the Brazil variant, a first for India, prompting scientists to stress the need for more data and studies so the country's vaccine programme can be tailored to evolving exigencies.

The number of people who have tested positive for the UK variant in the country has climbed to 187, officials added.

The vaccines currently approved for emergency use in India are Covishield, from the Oxford-AstraZeneca stable manufactured by Pune's Serum Institute of India, and Covaxin, developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology (NIV).

Answering the question uppermost in many minds, researcher Deepak Sehgal said it is difficult to say how effective the two will be against the new emerging variants, particularly the South African and Brazilian ones, unless scientists have studied them properly.

Having said that, among the two vaccines currently in India, Covaxin may do better against the new mutants because it generates protection against the whole virus. The Covishield vaccine is targeted at only one protein of the virus, Mr Sehgal, head of the department of Life Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, Uttar Pradesh, told news agency Press Trust of India.

Covaxin, he explained, can produce antibodies against many epitopes, or many regions of the complete virus, while Covishield produces antibodies against only a specific region of the virus.

So even if there is a mutation in one region, there are antibodies being produced against other regions of the virus which will be effective in case of Covaxin, he added.

Covaxin is an "inactivated"

vaccine developed by chemically treating novel coronavirus samples to make them incapable of reproduction. This process leaves the viral proteins, including the spike protein of the coronavirus which it uses to enter the human cells, intact.

Covishield contains an engineered version of adenoviruses that infect chimpanzees to carry the gene responsible for the spike protein of the novel coronavirus.

Adenoviruses are common viruses that typically cause mild cold or flu-like illnesses.

Both the vaccines claim to have some efficacy against the UK variant.

According to a yet-to-be published study on 26 participants, Covaxin was found to be effective against the UK variant, Bharat Biotech said in late January.

Similarly, a study by Oxford University found that the ChAdOx1-nCoV19 vaccine, known as Covishield in India, was effective in tackling the UK variant.

Immunologist Vineeta Bal noted that the UK variant had only one mutation that mattered and hence these results were not surprising.

While Bharat Biotech results were on a small number of samples to check inhibition against UK virus in the present evolving situation, this can be taken as adequate preliminary data, Ms Bal, from Pune's Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), said.

However, both the South African and Brazilian variants have many more mutations and hence significant decrease in efficacy may be seen, she said.

We do not have an answer for the efficacy against the new variants yet. I am sure efforts are on to test sera (blood) from vaccinated individuals for their ability to block the growth of new variants in the tissue culture system, Ms Bal told news agency PTI.

For that the variant virus has to be available and also the testing facility. NIV, for example, has competence to do it and I am sure they are attempting to test, she said, adding that no results are available in the public domain yet.

Globally, 10 COVID-19 vaccines have been either approved by several countries or are under

limited emergency use.

New variants of coronavirus are emerging that are more infectious than the one that started the pandemic.

UK government scientific advisers say the COVID-19 variant now predominant in the country may be 30-70 per cent more "deadly" than previous variants, underscoring concerns about how mutations may change the characteristics of the disease.

A recent study suggests the vaccine co-developed by the American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and the German biotechnology company BioNTech can neutralise variants of the novel coronavirus that were first reported in the UK and South Africa.

The research, published in the journal Nature Medicine, noted that the vaccine is effective against coronavirus variants carrying the N501Y and E484K mutations.

In January, US biotechnology firm Moderna said lab studies showed its COVID-19 vaccine would remain protective against variants of the coronavirus first identified in the UK and South Africa.

However, out of caution, the company will test adding a second booster of its vaccine - to make three shots in total - and has begun preclinical studies on a booster specifically for the South African variant.

In the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, the messenger RNA -- or mRNA -- acts as a blueprint for the production of the coronavirus spike protein and is encapsulated by lipid molecules and delivered into human cells. mRNAs contain a blueprint for producing proteins in cells

Based on the reports rather than solid published data, it appears that rapid spread of these emerging variants would pose some risk to individuals who have recovered from earlier infection as well as those already vaccinated, Ms Bal said.

In India we do not know how effectively testing, screening and quarantine is implemented for contacts and cases.

Depending upon that, spread can be curtailed with varying efficiency and hopefully serious spread will not happen and another round of lockdown will not be needed, she added.

"cannot be protected

at the cost of right to dignity".

"The Indian constitution allows women to put forward her grievances before any forum and at any time," the judge said, taking cognizance of the lack of mechanisms to raise sexual harassment complaints.

Pointing out that "even a man of (high) social status (standing) can be a sexual harasser,"

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey said, "It can't be ignored that most times sexual harassment is committed behind closed doors".

"Most of the women who suffer abuse can't often speak up due to stigma and attack on their character," he added.

Ms Ramani told the media that she feels "vindicated" on behalf of the women

who spoke out against sexual harassment in the workplace.

"Sexual harassment has got the attention it deserves despite the fact that it is me, being the victim who had to stand up in court as the accused," she said. "I hope it will discourage powerful men from filing false cases against women who share their truths," she told NDTV.

Ms Ramani had accused the former editor

Borong Phamtam GPU organizes health camp



**BIKASH CHETTRI
RAVANGLA, 17 FEB:**

Health Camp and Awareness Programme was organised by Borong Phamtam GPU, under Ravangla BAC, South Sikkim, today.

Medical Officer Ravangla PHC, Dr. Pallavi Pariya attended the programme as resource person wherein she talked about the vaccination of COVID-19 and gave health tips regarding prevention of different diseases.

The programme was attended by Panchayat President, Rupa Gurung,

Vice President, T.B Pradhan along with other panchayat members and people of the locality.

During the programme Junior Village Administrative Assistant, Damber Singh Gurung explained the details of the programme.

After awareness programme, Dr. Pallavi Pariyar also conducted a check-up of the patients with the help of MPHWPolk PHSC, Sonam Yongda Bhutia and Phamtam PHSC, Jitlall Gurung.

On behalf of Borong Phamtam GPU a token of love was presented to Dr. Pallavi Pariyar.

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Indian Grand Prix: Dutee Chand among top athletes competing in first post-covid track and field meet

NEW DELHI, 17 FEB

[PTI]: Around 85 athletes, including the likes of 100m national record holder Dutee Chand, will be seen in action during the Indian Grand Prix I meet, the first track and field senior competition of the season, on Thursday. Some of the top stars like Hima Das are not taking part in the first multi-event athletics competition after the entire calendar was wiped out last year due to COVID-19 pandemic. The likes of star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will also not be there as his event is not included in the Indian Grand Prix-I to be held at the NIS complex.

The meet will offer some indication of the eagerness of the Indian athletes to bid for Olympic spots. The three Grands Prix meets at the same venue - the other two to be held on February 25 and March 5 - are more in the nature of warm-up events for the Federation Cup, slated from March 15.

Top athletes competing among men include Muhammad Anas Yahya and Amiya Kumar Mallick (100m), Arokia Rajiv and Noah Nirmal Tom (200m), Amoj Jacob (800m), Dharun Ayyasamy (400m hurdles) and Yugant Shekhar Singh (long jump).

In the women's

events, which will see 27 athletes in action, the spotlight will be on the likes of Dutee Chand (100m), Anjali Devi and Subha Venkatesan (200m), MR Poovamma and VK Salini (400m) and Chanda (800m).

"We are pleased that track and field competition for seniors is resuming after a long

Darjeeling police solves murder of businessman



**SMRITA KHAWAS
DARJEELING, 17 FEB:**

Darjeeling Police have nabbed the culprits behind the murder of a Siliguri businessman within 72 hours of the crime.

Addressing a press conference, Superintendent of Darjeeling Police, Dr Santosh Nimbalkar informed that Umesh Shah, a resident of Phansidewa, Siliguri, was murdered in Siliguri on 11 Feb, 2021.

He was a businessman by profession and his brother Rabindra Shah had filed a complaint in Phansidewa police station on 11 Feb. The police immediately started the investigation and within 24 hours police recovered the bike and beheaded body which was identified as Umesh Shah.

Of the four accused, two namely Mohammed Rasul [26] and

Mohammad Mamirul [38] were arrested on 16 Feb, whereas the other accused Mohammed Dimal and Mohammed Tamirul are on the run.

"During the police investigation, we got to know that Umesh Shah had many personal issues with numerous people and many disputes regarding land. Umesh Saha was allegedly in an illicit relationship with the sister of accused Mohammad Dimal," said the Superintendent.

During investigation it was revealed that the accused had wanted to meet Umesh Shah and talk but ended up killing him and throwing his body into a canal.

"We were able to crack this case within 72 hours with the help of our team. We are still searching for the two accused who are absconding. We will try our best to arrest them as soon as possible," the Superintendent said.

KUTSE SHEGU



The 49th days Kutse Shegu (Anthyesti Kriya) of our beloved father Lt Lerap Shandarpa (Sokay Kaila) of Rabongla Yangyang Road who left for his heavenly abode on 04 Jan, 2021 falls at our residence, Rabongla Yangyang Road near Foodgodown South Sikkim on 21 Feb, 2021. We would like to request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to present their prayers and offering to the departed soul.

Family members-
Dechen Doma Bhutia (Eldest daughter)
Karma Tseten Bhutia (Eldest son)
Laki Doma Bhutia (Daughter)
Ugen Bhutia (Son)
Sedenla Bhutia (Daughter)
Contact No: 74329001908, 9775476720.

Journalist Priya Ramani acquitted in defamation case filed by MJ Akbar

NEW DELHI, 17 FEB

[PTI]: Former Union Minister MJ Akbar's

defamation case against journalist Priya Ramani -- filed over her allegations of sexual misconduct against him -- could not be proved, a Delhi Court said today, acquitting her of all charges. "Women can't be punished for raising instances of sexual abuse," the court said, adding that "right of reputation" -- a reference to MJ Akbar's suit --

"cannot be protected at the cost of right to dignity".

"The Indian constitution allows women to put forward her grievances before any forum and at any time," the judge said, taking cognizance of the lack of mechanisms to raise sexual harassment complaints.

Pointing out that "even a man of (high) social status (standing) can be a sexual harasser,"

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey said, "It can't be ignored that most times sexual harassment is committed behind closed doors".

"Most of the women who suffer abuse can't often speak up due to stigma and attack on their character," he added.

Ms Ramani told the media that she feels "vindicated" on behalf of the women


who spoke out against sexual harassment in the workplace.

"Sexual harassment has got the attention it deserves despite the fact that it is me, being the victim who had to stand up in court as the accused," she said. "I hope it will discourage powerful men from filing false cases against women who share their truths," she told NDTV.

Ms Ramani had accused the former editor


of sexual misconduct amid the #MeToo movement of 2018. She had tweeted a newspaper article she wrote a year ago, where she accused a "former boss" of being a "sexual predator". Later in court, she said the incident took place around 20 years ago. Mr Akbar, who headed Asian Age at the time, had called her to his hotel bedroom for a job interview and behaved

inappropriately, she had told the court.



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	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever Difficulty in breathing Dry Cough Severe acute respiratory syndrome Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. No vaccinations available as of now. Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	
	
<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7029372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p>	
<p>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM</p>	

Special camp on Eat Right Challenge at MG Marg

SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:
A special camp under Eat Right Challenge, Gangtok, for food business operators to facilitate online Food Safety and Standards Authority of India [FSSAI] license and to educate them on other related issues was held here at New Market, MG Marg, on Wednesday.



Eat Right Challenge is an initiative of FSSAI in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and FSSAI Cell, Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim with the tagline 'Inspiring Trust, Assuring Safe & Nutritious Food'. During the special camp, Food Safety Officer, Health & Family Welfare Department, Pratima Ghimirey stated that the campaign seeks to reach

out to people mainly to improve public health. She also explained the online process for FSSAI license and regulations related to food sampling, inspection and other relevant issues. Nutritional Inspector-cum-Educator, Social Justice & Welfare Department, Yozana Rana covered issues related to nutrition. She urged the people to focus more on nutritional and balanced diet to help the

body fight diseases. State IEC Officer, Health & Family Welfare Department, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia spoke on the importance of healthy eating and lifestyle to fight anemia, hypertension, diabetes and other diseases. He also urged people to wear mask, maintain social distancing and to seriously follow all safety protocols of COVID-19. Likewise, Deputy

Director [sanitation], Health & Family Welfare Department, Rinzing Bhutia explained the Eat Right Challenge and its objectives to create mass awareness on safe and healthy food and hygienic food environments for the public. He also covered issues related to sanitation and hygiene. He informed that there will be a food sample checking camp on 23 February at Lal Bazaar.

Speaking to media persons, Joint Director, Food Safety and Standard Cell, Niraj Thapa mentioned the objective of this special camp under Eat Right Challenge to help food business operators understand online licensing and registration launched by FSSAI. He mentioned that the camp explained how to display license and maintain hygiene.

"There will also be a surveillance drive by Food Safety Officers and Inspectors to check the hygiene of the shop and they will also give rating of hygiene to every shop," Mr Thapa said. He further added that another objective of the initiative was to create awareness to prevent non-communicable diseases by adopting healthy lifestyle and habits.

Outreach program by SAATHI at Khayarbotay ward



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:
With a commitment to prevent substance use issues by promoting awareness on the causes, symptoms and measures that can be taken to create healthier communities, SAATHI organized an outreach program at Khayarbotay ward, South Sikkim, on 17 Feb.

The program was organized with the support of Titan Company Ltd and was

attended by 35 local residents. Psychologist cum Research Scholar, Roshni Chhetri was the resource person of the program. She explained the role of community in making a healthy environment for our children to live. She also highlighted that medical help is equally important and how the community can seek help. Like all the other diseases, addiction is a disease and can be treated with

proper medical help, love and compassion, she added. Panchayat of Khayarbotay ward, Bhim Dural emphasized on making a drug free GPU. He expressed gratitude for organizing the program and mentioned that there is no drug problem in his ward, but prevention is better than cure. He said that we all have to be vigilant and not sell alcohol and tobacco to minors.

How is India beating COVID-19? "Human Barricade", say experts

BENGALURU, 17 FEB [REUTERS]: With falling rates of COVID-19 infection in India and surveys suggesting nearly 300 million people may already have antibodies, some experts believe the worst of the disease has passed, despite a recent uptick in two hard-hit states. "There is a human barricade for the virus," said Bhramar Mukherjee, an epidemiologist at the University of Michigan, who with a team of researchers, has been modelling the trajectory of the outbreak in India. "By the end of March, we should see a very slow, steady decline (in cases)," she added. Cases that were rising by nearly 100,000 a day in September are now growing at just 10,000 a day. And India's official number of total infections, which was projected to surpass that of the United States in late 2020, now stands at

11 million, well behind the U.S. tally of about 28 million. Total deaths so far in India are just under 156,000, the world's fourth highest number of fatalities. "India suffered through a lot and because it suffered through a lot, it's reached the other shore now," said Ramanan Laxminarayan, an epidemiologist at the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy, a research firm based in Washington, D.C. and New Delhi. "I don't see the prospect of a second wave in India. If it does happen, it will likely be a modest one." A recent government serological survey indicated 21.5% of Indians were likely infected by COVID-19, giving them a degree of immunity, while antibody tests on more than 700,000 people by a diagnostic company showed that 55% of

Indians may have already been infected. To be sure, not all epidemiologists agree India is out of the woods. The country is currently battling a surge in cases in two states - Maharashtra and Kerala, which account for a combined 70% of nationwide active cases. Even those predicting further declines in cases, like Mukherjee, warn that India will need to continue COVID-19 containment measures and surveillance of new variants, besides aggressively vaccinating its people. More socializing, coupled with a recent restart of local trains in the financial hub of Mumbai, could be causing the spike in Maharashtra, say experts, while a restart of schools in Kerala is being blamed for the surge there. New clusters have also been identified in the tech hub of Bengaluru.

"Even though there are advisories against large gatherings, people have started to take it easy," said Pradeep Awate, a senior health official in Maharashtra. Still, Mukherjee notes the "percentage of cases that require hospitalizations in Kerala and Maharashtra has gone down." Vaccination The reason why millions of Indians are asymptomatic - as survey numbers suggest - has flummoxed experts. Theories range from India's early lockdown implementation to its youthful population and an intrinsic immunity among Indians. Some say an open-air lifestyle in villages could have prevented a surge in rural India, where two-thirds of India's 1.3 billion people live. But epidemiologists say finding the true reason will require research that could take

years. While experts agree many COVID-19 cases and deaths may be under-reported in India, available indicators like hospital-bed utilization rates point to a falling curve. Epidemiologists say a key factor would be how aggressively India moves on its vaccination drive. "If vaccines are given in large numbers right away, we're going to be in a very good position," said Mukherjee. "By the time infection-induced immunity wanes, people will get vaccine-induced immunity."

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 (PTI): The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) staged an agitation here on Wednesday against the arrest of environment activist Disha Ravi and alleged that the government is "flirting with fascist techniques" to quell democratic protests in the country. The members of the students' wing of the Congress raised slogans against the BJP-led Centre and the Delhi Police for the "authoritarian

crackdown on activists and supporters of the farmers' agitation". NSUI president Neeraj Kundan alleged that the Bengaluru-based climate activist was arrested and brought to Delhi without a transit warrant. "This government flirting with fascist techniques of quelling democratic protests is nothing new. By waging a war against the students and youth of India, (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi's authoritarian face has

once again come out. "Only four sedition cases out of the 191 filed after this government came to power have resulted in convictions. The government uses tough laws and misuses them to silence all dissenting voices," he said in a statement. Ravi was arrested from Bengaluru on Saturday by the Delhi Police for allegedly creating and sharing a toolkit in support of the farmers' agitation against the Centre's new agriculture laws.

Rose Leslie, Kit Harington welcome first child together

LOS ANGELES, FEB 17 (PTI): "Game of Thrones" stars Rose Leslie and Kit Harington have become parents to a baby boy. The couple, who announced their pregnancy in September, were photographed with their newborn in London on Tuesday.

Harington, 34, held tightly onto Leslie's hand as she cradled the infant in a carrier on her chest, while he carried a large bag. Harington's representative confirmed to Page Six that the couple welcomed a baby boy and are "very, very

happy!" It, however, could not be ascertained when Leslie gave birth. In September, Leslie, also 34, revealed her pregnancy in a photoshoot for UK's Make Magazine when she posed with her baby bump on the cover.

Harington and Leslie met while filming the HBO epic fantasy drama "Game of Thrones" in 2012, on which they played on-screen lovers Jon Snow and Ygritte. The couple engaged in 2017 and tied the knot next year in Scotland's Aberdeenshire.

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PART II—Section 3—Sub-section (ii)

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MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 4th February, 2021

S.O. 546(E).— In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building (widening/two lane with paved shoulder/four laning etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH 510 in the stretch of land from Km 75.000 to Km 90.210 (District Collectorate, West Sikkim) in the district of WEST DISTRICT in the state of SIKKIM, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.

Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section(1) of section 3C of the said Act.

Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, District Collector in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.

Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final.

The land plans and other details of the land to be acquired under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.

SCHEDULE

Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling NH 510 in the stretch of land from Km 75.000 to Km 90.210 of NH 510 (District Collectorate, West Sikkim) in the district of WEST DISTRICT in the State of SIKKIM

Rectification in "3(A)"-Gazette Notification Bearing S.O. No. 4389 (E) dated 4th Dec 2020.

In "3(a)" Notification Bearing S.O. No. 4179 (E) dated 23rd Nov 2020, the name of village "Sardung" is missed out which needs to be added in additional notification of "3(a)" as this village comes under the ROW of the said alignment.

Accordingly, due to missing village name in "3(A)" Notification Bearing S.O. No. 4389 (E) dated 4th Dec 2020, 8 No's of plot have been reflected in another village under which it does not fall. The following land details need to be corrected from "3(A)" Gazette Notification bearing S.O. No. 4389 (E) dated 4th Dec 2020 and may be treated as deleted as additional "3(A)" is to be done for the same.

Sl. No of "3(A)" Notification Bearing S.O. No. 4389 (E) dated 4th Dec 2020.	Plot No./Survey No.	Area to be Acquired.	Name of Village as per "3(A)" Notification Bearing S.O. No. 4389 (E) dated 4 th Dec 2020	Remarks
21	581	0.0703000	Lungzik	May be treated as deleted.
22	581	0.0322000	Lungzik	May be treated as deleted.
23	582	0.0684000	Lungzik	May be treated as deleted.
26	589	0.0583000	Lungzik	May be treated as deleted.
27	589	0.3037000	Lungzik	May be treated as deleted.
30	590	0.0019000	Lungzik	May be treated as deleted.
103	588	0.0519000	Lingchom	May be treated as deleted.
104	588	0.3046000	Lingchom	May be treated as deleted.

[F. No. NHIDCL/PMU-Gyalshing/NH-510/PKG-VI/2020-21/3A/Corr]
RAJESH GUPTA, Director

Language and Religion Don't an Indian Make

Unfortunately, chauvinism is becoming increasingly commonplace

Recently, an MLA belonging to a party which wears Hindutva on its sleeves remarked that those in India who do not say Bharat Mata Ki Jai are Pakistanis. He was not the first to draw such a conclusion and there have been many from his ilk who draw this parallel and air it with a shallow ignorance and dangerous conviction to rabid applause. And then the army chief exposed his inadequacies on the secular front when he praised the Indian-ness of Arunachalis because they spoke shudh Hindi. Wonder whether his rating of Arunachalis as Indians will scale down if he learnt that they also like beef apart from referring to schools as vidyalaya?

None of this – equating Hindu credentials to patriotism or Hindi to being Indian – are new stupidities and have been around ever since there have been individuals and groups cursed with a monochromatic view framed by how insularity has explained things to them. Earlier though, they navigated in the fringe, but now that they swim in the mainstream, the closet bigots have come crawling out and amplified the insularity. They now work hard to paint “secular” as a short-coming even as they lather themselves with superficial nationalism. And because the monster of intolerance for anything that does not kowtow to blanket majoritarianism has become so commonplace, it is a big worry.

Let's take the two instances cited above for instance. Patriotism is an instinctive and even personal emotion but the kind of nationalism that demands that we make public displays of it by lustily shouting Bharat Mata Ki Jai is an exhibitionist display that not all are comfortable with. Further, because the call has been rather provocatively appropriated by the Right, it has lost the pure passion with which the freedom fighters first raised it. If those who feel similarly do not join the chorus, they cannot be accused of being anti-nationals because they are instead taking a position as Indians. But wait, the MLA in question did not accuse them of being anti-nationals, he called such people Pakistanis. To begin with, no aspersions should be cast on the citizenship of Indian Muslims. If anything, their belonging is even more reiterated than that of Hindus or people of other faiths here because they did receive an option in 1947 to relocate to a Muslim country carved out for them. In fact, those who stayed back did so despite the communal rioting which birthed this nation. Agreed, there were many other factors at play in ensuring that India remains one of the countries with the largest Muslim population - its written-into-the-Constitution commitment to secularism for one - but since we are debating in jingoism, this argument has also been slipped in. Citizenship, as things stand, require no displays or evidence of nationalism or even patriotism, let that be made clear. What the BJP-RSS penchant to equate what they as antinational behavior with Pakistan is also dangerous because it is an overt, almost exclusive targeting of the Muslims as being anti-India. They drum up this sentiment and then follow the killings and rioting. We allow the horror to perpetuate because we do not call out the nightmarish regression which cannot accommodate diversity. For these parts, this is something that should not be allowed to go unchallenged because a step away from Muslims being Pakistanis is the equating of all Mongoloid looking folk who do not fall in line as Chinese. Think about it... both stereotypes play out from existing prejudices.

A similar shortsightedness was also displayed by the Army chief when he presented the Arunachali fluency in Hindi as evidence of their “amalgamation”. In one swoop, he presented supporting arguments for the Sankritisation of the entire region to make “amalgamation” possible. This is such an obsolete approach that even pseudo-academics can demolish this position. Unfortunately, not enough of them will and the argument will keep gaining strength and end up deepening resentments among local communities as they watch state-muscle bulldoze diversities and individuality to extend the “mainland” to the margins.

These are dangerous trends which are being increasingly normalized to dangerous levels.

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Indian Farmers Are a Powerful Force in Indian Politics, and Here's Why Their Protests Matter



SURUPA GUPTA

THECONVERSATION.COM

For over two months, farmers in India have been on a largely peaceful protest over three laws the Indian Parliament passed in September 2020 to liberalize how and to whom farmers can sell their produce.

Men and women, young and old, have been participating in these protests and show no signs of giving up. Tens of thousands of farmers from all over India came together on Feb. 6 to set up blockades across all main roads in the country, shutting down all traffic for nearly three hours.

As a scholar of the political economy of India's agricultural sector, I argue that farmers in India, though not organized, have nonetheless been a formidable political force in the country. In the past, they brought the nation's cities to a near standstill in disputes with the government, and they could do so again.

INDIA'S REGULATED FARM MARKETS

The government claims that the new laws are meant to raise farmers' incomes and transform Indian agriculture. According to the government, they will also end “excessive regulatory interference” and thereby encourage the private sector to invest in storage, transportation and other parts of the agriculture supply chain. The laws will, officials say, offer farmers the opportunity to market their produce to various groups of buyers – processors, retailers, exporters and

so on.

In the past, the Indian government has played a major role in providing farm infrastructure in India.

In response to persistent food insecurity in the 1960s, the government put in place a set of policies that would increase agricultural production through the use of inputs such as high-yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers and adequate water and electricity supply.

On the demand side, the government bought grain and other commodities from the farmers, guaranteeing floor prices, and then distributed the food to consumers throughout the country.

To maintain price stability and to protect farmers from being ripped off by middlemen, the government created regulated markets. These policies, which began within two decades of India's independence in 1947, were consistent with the socialist model of governance India had adopted.

However, according to experts, these regulated markets, created to protect farmers, emerged as obstacles to growth in the farm sector.

FARMERS' APPREHENSIONS

Under the Indian Constitution, regulation of agriculture happens at the state level. During the last two decades, several states have changed policies to make it easier for farmers to sell outside those regulated markets, but those policy changes were not enough to attract the private sector to invest in the agricultural

supply chain. The government claims that the new laws will create uniform legislation across the country.

Farmers, however, are afraid that the new laws will drive down prices and drive the farmers off their lands.

They are also concerned about the unbalanced negotiating power with a powerful corporate sector, which would own infrastructure such as warehouses and refrigerated transportation.

THE POWER OF FARMERS

While farmers may not have much power individually, they have been a force to contend with in Indian politics.

Most notably, in the 1980s, farmers protesting low crop prices and demanding free electricity supply brought New Delhi to a standstill. At the time, farmers' groups with diverse political ideologies from various parts of the country quickly unified behind their common demands.

At that time, in New Delhi, they held protest marches as a show of power; in rural India, they restricted entry of government officials into their own offices; and nationally, they blocked food transportation routes.

The federal government yielded to their pressure and raised the minimum support price of crops; many state governments offered free electricity to farmers.

Farmers also demonstrated their power on several occasions when the Indian government was engaged in negotiations to form the World Trade Organization. Pressure from farmers led India to demand high

tariff protection – ranging from 100% to 300% – as a way to lessen the competition from imports.

India's rural economy is still largely dependent on farming and related activities, and the farm sector accounts for nearly 50% of the workforce. Farmers also constitute an important voting bloc.

NATIONWIDE SUPPORT

The current protests are being led by farmers mainly from the northern states of Haryana and Punjab, states that are central to India's food supply. These are the states from which the Indian government buys a majority of the wheat and rice that is eventually distributed at subsidized prices to consumers in the rest of India. In the past, farmers from these states have enjoyed enormous political clout as well. To add to the power of these protests, farmers from other states have been joining the protests.

The current administration, thus far, has indicated that it will not roll back the laws. Prolonging the protest, in my view, makes the administration appear ineffective, a risk it can scarcely take with major state elections looming ahead. The protest is costly to farmers as well.

Although the protests have been largely peaceful so far, on Jan. 26, India's Republic Day, clashes took place between farmers and the police. If that happens again, it would be an alarming prospect for all concerned.

[the writer is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, University of Mary Washington]

Vaccinating children: Is COVID-19 herd immunity possible without them?

RODNEY E. ROHDE

THECONVERSATION.COM

It may be summer before children under 16 can be vaccinated against COVID-19 in the United States. That's a problem for reaching herd immunity quickly.

Children are a significant portion of the population – roughly 65 million are under the age of 16, making up 20% of people in the U.S. While children appear to face less danger of severe illness or death, they can still spread the virus, though how much young children contribute to transmission is still unclear.

Some simple math shows why America has an immunization numbers problem.

AMERICA'S IMMUNIZATION NUMBERS PROBLEM

Initially, it looked like herd immunity could be reached when 60-70% of the population was immune. Herd immunity means that enough of the population has either been vaccinated or gained immunity through natural infection to stifle the virus's spread.

However, research and expert opinions now tell us this number is likely much higher – in the 70-90% range due to highly transmissible virus variants that are emerging.

With children under 16 unable to get the vaccine, that leaves 80% of the U.S. population eligible to be immunized. A tiny percentage of those adults shouldn't be vaccinated due to severe allergies to ingredients in the vaccines or other serious health conditions.

But not all of the remaining adults plan to get the vaccine. A large percentage – 32% in one recent national poll – say they either probably or definitely won't get inoculated. In another poll, nearly half either said they won't get the vaccine unless required to or they want to “wait and see” and how it works for others.

Without broadly vaccinating children to reduce COVID-19 transmission, herd immunity simply will not happen.

WHAT ABOUT NATURAL IMMUNITY?

You may be asking: What about all the people who have already been infected?

So far, the U.S. has had about 28 million confirmed COVID-19 cases. Since a large number of infected people never show symptoms, the CDC estimates that 83 million people in the U.S. were actually infected last year – about a quarter of the population.



At this point, however, researchers don't know how long natural immunity lasts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people who had COVID-19 should still get vaccinated.

The vaccination effort will still have an impact on the pandemic, even if herd immunity takes longer. As former CDC Director Tom Frieden pointed out to me, “Even without children being vaccinated, vaccination of adults will decrease deaths substantially and could decrease spread.”

WHEN CAN KIDS GET VACCINATED?

One of the main questions among parents is when children can get the vaccine. The short answer: We don't yet know.

First, the national vaccination process is still

ramping up, starting with medical staff and the most vulnerable adults. About 1.5 million people are getting the vaccine each day, and each needs two doses.

Second, the two vaccines with federal emergency use authorization are only authorized for adults and older teens right now – Moderna's for ages 18 and older and Pfizer's for 16 and older.

Drug companies must run extensive tests on thousands of subjects to show their vaccines are safe and effective. While the FDA fast-tracked the COVID-19 vaccine trials for adults, the process for children will likely take longer due to factors like safety data. Depending on the vaccine technology, this data for children can take up to six months compared to two months for adults.

Moderna also had difficulty initially finding enough volunteers for its trials in adolescents. In mid-January, the company had only enrolled about a third of the 3,000 volunteers needed. Pfizer's clinical trial for adolescents completed recruitment but has not publicly released data.

For younger children, Moderna's CEO reported in January that the company would likely soon begin clinical trials for ages 1-11. Pfizer has not released details for that age range.

A third vaccine could also soon be in the mix. FDA advisers are expected to discuss Johnson & Johnson's application on Feb. 26.

Frieden said it's likely vaccines could be authorized for adolescents by summer. That would add children ages 12 to 15 to the vaccination eligibility list – another 5% of the U.S. population.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser on COVID-19 to the president, recently suggested a similar time frame. Vaccine trials in younger children will begin in the “next couple of months,” Fauci said, and “as we get to the late spring and summer, we will have children being able to be vaccinated.”

[the writer is Professor of Clinical Laboratory Science, Texas State University]

Bhutan detains senior-most Supreme Court Justice and Drangpon



THIMPU, 17 FEB [KUENSEL]: The Royal Bhutan Police yesterday detained the senior-most justice of the Supreme Court, Kuenlay Tshering, and the Pemagatshel dzongkhag drangpon Yeshey Dorji.

The two were reportedly arrested following the detention of former Royal Body Guard commandant, Brigadier Thinley Tobgye, in connection with a criminal

conspiracy against the Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army.

Criminal conspiracy and impersonation cases reportedly surfaced after a woman, who was arrested a few months ago, disclosed their conspiratorial relationship. Sources said that their motives were to allegedly become the RBA's Chief Operations

Officer, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Attorney General or Registrar General of Supreme Court.

As per the Penal Code of Bhutan, a defendant shall be guilty of the offence of criminal conspiracy to commit a crime, if the defendant agrees with another person or persons that they or one or more of them will engage in a conduct that constitutes a crime.

NESFAS wins Indigenous People's Award

TURA, 17 FEB [SHILLONGTIMES]: The North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS) was recently conferred with the 2021-IFAD Indigenous People's Award for its film 'Sacred Futures- The Nesfas Story'.

Executive Director of NESFAS, Pius Ranee represented the organisation in a virtual award ceremony which was commemorated by IFAD during the 5th Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD in Italy, Rome on the same day.

The Indigenous Peoples Awards, organized by IFAD's Indigenous Peoples

Team in partnership with the members of the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD and the Board of the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF), are given biennially to recognize the efforts and the achievements of development projects that successfully engage with indigenous peoples living in rural areas.

NESFAS' ongoing project which is funded by the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) Limited Foundation "No One Shall Be Left Behind Initiative: Biodiversity for Food, Nutrition and Energy Security

for 3000 households in Meghalaya and Nagaland" was selected as the winner of the 2021 IFAD Indigenous Peoples Award for the category "best performing non-IFAD-funded project". The project submission showcased a two-year activation by the organisation and its partners in 130 villages.

The NESFAS film "Sacred Futures-The NESFAS Story" was produced in partnership between its team, mentors, remote advice from film-maker Roger King from the United States and a local production team of The Hills people Collective in Shillong.

One new COVID-19 case in Mizoram

AIZAWL, FEB 17 (PTI): Mizoram on Wednesday reported one new COVID-19 case, pushing the state's tally to 4,396, an official said.

The state now has 18 active COVID-19 cases, while 4,368 people have recovered

from the virus so far, the official said.

The COVID-19 death toll in the state is 10.

Of the 18 active COVID-19 cases, Aizawl district has 11 cases followed by Lawngtlai (4), Lunglei (2) and Champhai (1).

The other districts of the state don't have any active COVID-19 case.

Of the total 4,396 COVID-19 cases, 3,216 are males and 1,180 are females.

Altogether, 2,22,475 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in the state so far, he added.

No new COVID-19 case in Arunachal Pradesh



ITANAGAR, FEB 17 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh did not report any new COVID-19 case in the last 24 hours, a senior health department official said on Wednesday.

The total caseload in the state remained at 16,833, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has three active COVID-19 cases, while 16,774 people

have recovered from the disease so far, he said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state has touched 99.64 per cent, while the positivity ratio stands at 0.01 per cent and the fatality rate at 0.33 per cent, the official said.

Fifty-six people have succumbed to the infection so far, the official said.

Altogether, 4,01,518 samples have been tested

for COVID-19, including 666 on Tuesday, the SSO said.

Meanwhile, State Immunization Officer (SIO) Dimong Padung said that 15,584 health and frontline workers have received vaccine shots so far in the state.

The health department has been carrying out the inoculation drive four days a week -- Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Nitish repeats need for sub-quotas for EBCs



PATNA, FEB 17 (PTI): Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday reiterated the need for a separate sub-quota for the extremely backward classes in reservation for OBCs at the central level.

The JD(U) leader pointed out that in Bihar, the provision had been in force since the times of Karpoori Thakur, his ideological guru who

headed the short-lived Janata Party government formed after the Emergency.

"In Bihar pichhda (backward classes) and ati pichhda (extremely backward) were acknowledged as distinct categories during Karpoori Thakurs time. This has continued.

"At the central level, all backward classes are treated as a single block.

I think there should be separate demarcation there too", he told reporters.

Thakur had introduced reservations for the backward classes by implementing recommendations of the Mungerilal Commission, which was strongly opposed by the upper castes notwithstanding a three per cent quota for

the economically weak among them.

Kumar, who owes his rise in politics to the Mandal era churning, was asked about "an ongoing debate" to restrict reservation benefits and exclude from its purview those who have already availed of the facility.

"I am not aware of any such debate. Reservations have been in place, both in the state and at the Centre, for quite long.

Of course, there have been new provisions, like 10 per cent quota for the economically backward who may not be among OBCs and SC/ST", replied Kumar at the JD(U) state headquarters where he had gone to interact with the party workers.

"If any studies are being conducted to bring about any changes in the existing reservation system, I have never heard of any proposals to deprive any section of the facility", he added.

Water shortage pushing Nepal's Arghakhanchi residents into hardships

BIRENDRA KC

KATHMANDU, 17 FEB [KATHMANDUPOST]: Bimala Baijali of Asurkot in Bhumikasthan Municipality-6, Arghakhanchi, has to struggle every dry season to manage drinking water for her family. This year, the scarcity of water has gotten worse with the decrease in the water level in the local springs.

"We have an acute shortage of drinking water in the dry season every year. It takes hours to collect even a jar of water. We can not even grow vegetables and rear animals due to the water scarcity," said Baulaji. According to her, the water sources in her village dry up from February until June. "We have to go from one stream to another to collect a jar of water and it takes us hours."

She and her husband had plans to start a self-sustaining agricultural venture by growing vegetables and rearing goats and cows in the village. But that plan has been put on hold for now.

"My husband decided to go abroad for employment. Two of my neighbouring families also migrated out of the village because the scarcity of water does not allow us to do anything," Baulaji said.

Several settlements in the district have a similar problem. The local residents are hugely affected by the shortage of drinking water that generally starts from November and lasts till mid-June.

Kamala Pariyar, 59, of Budhunamara in Bhumikasthan-5 walks for an hour every day to fetch a jar of water.

"Managing water for the family is a difficult job. The springs closer to our settlements have dried up so I have to walk for one hour every day to collect water for



household consumption and for domesticated animals," said Kamala. She said she sold two goats two months ago, as it was too laborious to manage water for the cattle.

The villagers, whose main profession is farming, are unable to produce vegetables and keep domesticated animals in the dry season because of the water scarcity.

"Spinach, cauliflower and radish wither away for a lack of water. We don't know how to support ourselves anymore," said Pariyar.

Chhatradev is another water crisis-hit local unit in Arghakhanchi. Bishnu Prasad Bhusal of Chhatradev-3 runs a vegetable farm on a few ropanies of land that he leased near a local stream.

"I have rented land near a stream to start an agriculture farm since my settlement is crippled by a water crisis," said Bhusal. According to him, rich families migrate to the towns and the Tarai region while the poor ones migrate towards the banks of streams due to the water crisis in the area.

In the dry season, the villagers are forced to sell their cattle and buy vegetables from the markets. According to Balam Ghimire, an agriculture officer at the Agriculture Knowledge

Centre in Arghakhanchi, around 80 percent of vegetables consumed in the district are imported from the Tarai during the dry season.

"Most settlements in the district face a shortage of water in the dry season. Vegetables cannot be grown, as the fields do not have irrigation facilities," said Ghimire. According to him, even winter crops like wheat cannot be produced well in the district in the absence of irrigation facilities.

"It is difficult just

to manage drinking water for our families, let alone grow green vegetables in our fields," said Bimala Shrestha of Wangla. She opines that rapid population growth is the main reason behind the water scarcity in the area. "Houses used to be scattered across settlements in the past. Now, the villages are dense because of rapid population growth. So the available sources must not be enough for the increasing population."

Yash Dasgupta, several Tolly actors join BJP



KOLKATA, FEB 17 (PTI): Bengali film actor Yash Dasgupta Wednesday joined BJP along with several other actors of the industry here.

Dasgupta was welcomed to the saffron camp by BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and party national vice-president Mukul Roy.

The BJP has always given opportunities to the youth.

All of us have to work for a change for the better, he said.

Dasgupta is considered to be a close friend of TMC MP and fellow actor Nusrat Jahan.

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Mbappé's brilliance shows Barcelona chose the wrong French wonderkid

JONATHAN WILSON
BARCELONA, 17 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Presnel Kimpembe slipped. Twenty-nine minutes had been played at the Camp Nou. Two minutes earlier Lionel Messi had put Barcelona ahead. Now, as the Paris Saint-Germain defence lurched open, he advanced a couple of steps and nudged the ball left to Ousmane Dembélé. He was 18 yards out with a clear shot in goal. The opportunity was on his stronger right foot. Destiny took a deep breath and considered its options.

Imagine if Dembélé had scored: Barcelona 2-0 up with Messi rampant. PSG, on the site of their bitterest trauma, in disarray. PSG, without Neymar – who remains, for better or worse, their leader. PSG, having suffered an unthinkable five defeats in Ligue 1 this season so they're not even top of the table. Perhaps they would still have come back, but 2-0 in those circumstances would have felt like more than double 1-0.

But Dembélé didn't score. He didn't come close to scoring. He pushed the ball tamely at Keylor Navas. Three minutes later, Layvin Kurzawa found himself mystifyingly untended on the PSG left. Marco Verratti flicked on his cross and Kylian Mbappé jinked past a leaden-footed Clément Lenglet before slamming a shot in high at the near post for the first of a brilliant hat-trick. Destiny breathed



out, nodded to itself, and set off decisively along the path it had chosen.

In those three minutes were bound up the psychodrama of two clubs whose stories seem never quite to have disentangled since the Remontada of March 2017, when Barcelona came from 4-0 down, beating PSG 6-1 in the second leg of their last-16 tie. Five months later, PSG smashed the world transfer record to sign Neymar, who had been instrumental in that win. It is a record that seems unlikely to be broken any time soon. The symbolism was obvious: money, in the end, will out.

But football is not – quite – so simple as that. In 2000, Barça had been stung by the loss of Luis Figo to Real Madrid into a wasteful spree that almost sunk the club. Were lessons learned? Of course they weren't. Almost half the €222m they got for Neymar was splurged on Dembélé. Three and a half seasons on, he has scored 14

league goals for the club. Whose fault that is can be debated, and he is still only 23, but the signing isn't close to having worked yet. (At least he is still at the club: the other half of the Neymar cash went on Philippe Coutinho, whose last act in a Barcelona Champions League game was to score twice against them for Bayern Munich in last season's 8-2 defeat).

The other consequence of losing Neymar was a renewed determination at Barcelona that they couldn't lose Messi, and so he was promptly signed to an extraordinary five-year deal. Perhaps he was in some way worth it, but when you're €1.2bn in debt, paying a 33-year-old €555m over four years seems an extravagance they could do without. Tuesday was a classic performance of Messi in a big game these days: there were flickers and glimmers, a couple of dangerous balls over the top as he wandered deep into midfield, one

of which brought the penalty, but weakened by time and fate he feels a peripheral genius.

He must look at Mbappé, initially signed by PSG six days after Barça got Dembélé, who is six months older, and think that Barça got the wrong French wonderkid. Twice Messi has played against Mbappé, in Kazan at the World Cup and on Tuesday, and on both occasions he has witnessed an exemplary display of the art of the centre-forward. The first goal was down to his quick feet and balance, the second to his poacher's instinct of where the ball may drop and the third to a run perfectly timed so he could decelerate and open his body for a curling shot just as Julian Draxler laid the ball off. Each finish was unerring, two hit with great power and one with great precision and finesse.

Perhaps there are a handful of others who can match his tactical sense and technical

ability, but none combine it with such pace and strength, such graceful inevitability. There had been some mumblings this season that his development had stalled; those can be pushed to one side now.

The shot of him powering forward with Gerard Piqué clutching his shirt and being dragged along behind, like tin cans on a string behind a bridal car, felt emblematic not just of his superiority but of PSG surging away from Barcelona. The 4-1 win was by far their best performance in a Champions League knockout game and, although Mbappé was at the heart of that, he was not the only factor.

PSG were disciplined and compact, the use of Verratti in an advanced midfield role giving their press an obvious focus and pushing Mbappé higher up the pitch. For that Mauricio Pochettino has to take great credit. He changed the mentality at Tottenham, and winning 4-1 in the stadium where they lost 6-1 must stiffen the belief of a club that has often lacked it in critical moments.

Everything circles back to the Remontada and its ramifications, perhaps even the one great doubt that remains for this PSG. Can they play at that level, can Mbappé be so inspirationally brilliant, can they have that level of cohesion and tactical intelligence when Neymar returns?

Liverpool rediscover sense of joy and magic in the home of the Magyars

JONATHAN LIEW
LONDON, 17 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: The main stadium in Budapest used to be the Nepstadion, or "People's Stadium": the vast marble-lined Communist-era monolith where the Magical Magyars beat England 7-1 in 1954 and Louis Armstrong played to 80,000 people in 1965.

A few years ago it was demolished and replaced by the Puskas Arena: a vast and costly monument to the vanity of Hungary's right-wing populist prime minister Viktor Orban, and which for one night only was the designated home ground of RB Leipzig, a club from 500 miles away established by a soft drink company to get round Bundesliga ownership rules. If you wanted a snapshot of European football in 2021, then this felt like a pretty good place to start.

But it wasn't just the setting that added a disorienting neoteric sheen to proceedings. As Liverpool skipped and manoeuvred their way past a beautiful but brittle Leipzig in a thrilling, highly-strung last-16 first leg, it was possible to glimpse a vision of the game's near future, or very possibly its present.

Daringly high full-backs, breathtaking switches in play, goalkeepers venturing halfway to the centre circle, a gripping 90-minute struggle for territory and momentum: perhaps this is just what football

looks like now, at least at its elite end.

Julian Nagelsmann may be the coming force in European coaching, a magnetic field of new ideas and repackaged old ones. But it will be of some comfort to Liverpool, and Jürgen Klopp, that they are still more than capable of raising their game to compete.

In a way, Leipzig's willingness to go toe-to-toe was probably the key to Liverpool's triumph. It was a similar story in Bergamo during the group phase, when Liverpool beat Atalanta 5-0: the novelty of fresh questions and a fresh challenge, a break from the twice-weekly Premier League treadmill, the realisation that football can be more than simply coming up against massed 10-man defences that let you walk the ball to the halfway line. Liverpool enjoy it when teams try to play against them, which is probably why so few bother.

And last year's semi-finalists certainly came to play. Nagelsmann set his Leipzig team out in a close cousin of the 3-1-4-2 he deployed at Anfield when he was Hoffenheim manager in 2017: the two wing-backs pushed well up the pitch, the back three seeking to provoke the opposition press before hitting the front two with accurate long balls.

"It's still not clear which system they will play," Klopp said on seeing the team sheet. "We can identify the offensive and defensive players, but how they set up, we will see."

Pretty soon it became clear that the battle on the flanks would be pivotal. For Leipzig, Angelino and Tyler-Adams looked to engage Trent Alexander-Arnold and Andy Robertson early on: pinning them back, forcing them into rushed clearances. Angelino had some early joy, squeezing past Alexander-Arnold and providing a cross to Dani Olmo, who hit the post. But there was a risk to this approach, too: if you can beat the press and get the ball forward quickly, you can often generate three-on-three situations at the other end.

This was what Alexander-Arnold managed on 15 minutes, sliding Mohamed Salah through on goal, from where he should have done better. From around 20 minutes in, Liverpool began to ease into the game. Jordan Henderson, staring at the bleak prospect of spending the rest of his career as a centre-half, treated us to a delightful selection of long balls and Hail Mary passes. Salah and Thiago Alcântara upped their defensive work rate. On the touchline, Klopp wildly swung his fists, contorted his grizzled features into an ugly grimace, sprayed the air with oaths. That's how you could tell he was enjoying himself.

Having earned the right to play, Liverpool made their supremacy count. Spooked by Liverpool's pinpoint counter-press, Leipzig's captain, Marcel Sabitzer, presented the ball straight to Salah, who opened the scoring early in the second half.

Chennaiyin FC eye win as they near tournament exit



BAMBOLIM, FEB 17 (PTI): Their play-off chances already over, Chennaiyin FC would look to end their season on a high when they take on NorthEast United FC in their Indian Super League match at the GMC Stadium, here on Thursday.

Last season's semi-finalists had major issues due to not scoring enough goals. They created 183 chances and attempted 234 shots (2nd most by any team) however, ended up scoring just 13 this season.

"We have two games to go and this is not just about playoffs but it is to take good results. In these two games, we will do everything in order to win," coach Csaba Laszlo said.

His side had the least goal conversion rate of 5.55, highlighting how wasteful they have been

in offense. Laszlo gave an honest roundup about his team's campaign.

"Every team has ups and downs and not every season is perfect. I think this season we had a lot of good things. But it wasn't so fantastic and no so positive especially in offence."

"It (North-East) will be a tough game. They have made good recruitment especially the foreigners. And in this game we see if we get the opportunity or not but our target is to win this game. Our attention is on playing successful football and scoring goals. We go into the game the way we went against Goa and this is our target," said Laszlo, whose side hasn't won in their last seven games.

Meanwhile, NorthEast United are unbeaten in the last six games under coach

Khalid Jamil and are eyeing the playoffs.

There have been a lot of positives for NorthEast ever since Khalid Jamil was handed the charge.

They have won four and drawn 2 taking them into the top four. But the goal hasn't been achieved yet as four teams are still vying for the last two play-offs spots.

The Highlanders assistant coach Alison Kharsyntiew urged his team to not take their opponents lightly.

"We just have to control them, dictate the play and not give them time with the ball and space to operate.

"We have to be calm, composed, and concentrate on our game. At the same time we have to show aggression we have to play with intensity and 100 percent effort to win the match," he said.

Gambhir reckons RCB will look for someone like Maxwell in IPL auction



MUMBAI, FEB 17 (PTI): Former India opener Gautam Gambhir reckons that Royal Challengers Bangalore will look for someone like Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell during Thursday's IPL auction to reduce pressure on Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers in the batting department.

Maxwell, known for his big hitting in T20 cricket, is among 292 players that are up for grabs at the IPL auction to be held on Thursday.

Probably, they (RCB) will look at someone like Glenn Maxwell because they need to take a lot of pressure out of Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers," Gambhir said on Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected - Auction Special'.

He said looking at the combination Kohli would look to open batting though it was upto the management and captain himself.

"...yes, he (Kohli) is more suited to open batting. And he will open with Devdutt Paddikal and then, you have AB de

Villiers.

You want someone like an X-factor, like Maxwell, and at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, where it's flat and small, so he can have that impact. So, probably, they (RCB) will look at someone like Maxwell, said Gambhir.

According to the 39-year-old Gambhir, RCB will also look for some quality players.

They would need some quality players because they have let go of some quality players Moeen Ali and Umesh Yadav for example. There are not many fast bowlers going around in the Indian circuit at the moment.

"You've got Navdeep Saini who is young, you've got someone like Mohammed Siraj, he can go hot and cold in T20 cricket, so probably releasing Umesh Yadav was the big surprise, added Gambhir.

Gambhir felt that Kings XI Punjab, who will be now called Punjab Kings, can go for the likes of Umesh Yadav, Kyle Jamieson and Chris

Morris. He said they will have to strengthen their Indian bowling.

they (Kings XI Punjab) might have to probably strengthen their Indian bowling because apart from Mohd Shami there is no one who could compliment him.

Probably Umesh Yadav will be a very good pick - Mohd Shami and Umesh Yadav bowling with a new ball; so, they can actually rotate their fast bowlers. If you have got two Indian bowlers bowling with the new ball, it can actually open one gap for you from an overseas point of view.

"They can have someone like Chris Morris who can bowl well in the death as well, and at the same time Kyle Jamieson so they can pick both of them, he added.

Former India speedster Ashish Nehra believes that Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan could be the most expensive player at the auction. Another former India player Aakash Chopra picked Maxwell to be the most expensive buy in this mini auction.

Kings XI Punjab renamed Punjab Kings ahead of season

NEW DELHI, 17 FEB [PTI]: Kings XI Punjab today announced the unveiling of a new brand identity – Punjab Kings – and a logo which communicates the spirit of Punjab, according to a press statement released by PTI. Speaking on the new brand identity Satish Menon, CEO, Punjab Kings said, "Punjab Kings is a more evolved brand name, and we understand it was a right time for us to move focus on the core brand itself. "The change in brand identity is not about changing our brand ethos but celebrating our one-ness as we stand in unit like a family. The new logo honors the liveliness and vibrancy of the brand and provides modern elements, while we stand out from rest of the teams."

The new brand name enhances the connection that the team has built over the years with its fan base around the world and helps it to stand out amongst competition.

The new brand identity is more contemporary and evolved, extends to accentuate the team's Punjabi provenance. Through the renewed identity, the spirit of Punjab is coming to light, infusing vigor and vibrancy while maintaining the long legacy through the motif, lion.

The brand name and monogram, lion, in the team's logo stand

for exuberance. It is symbolic to the dynamic and distinctive edge of the team, through its sharp forms.

While the color stands for vibrancy, the roaring lion monogram has been simplified to an iconic rendition which fits into a confined space while giving all the elements a very modern feel.

Commenting on the occasion the promoters philosophy of Punjab Kings said, "We are much more than a team, but a family which has come together and built a connect with our fans through our relentless hard work. The new brand logo and name are an extension to our undying spirit of fighting against all odds and celebrating the true spirit of Punjab."

Apart from the logo change, the branding elements, communication, and messaging have been given a more simplified and inclusive look.

One of the eight inaugural franchises of the Indian Premier League, Punjab Kings (previously Kings XI Punjab) is owned by a consortium of prominent industry figures Ness Wadia, Mohit Burman, Preity G Zinta and Karan Paul. Based in Chandigarh, Punjab Kings thrives on their fighting spirit, coupled with the wholeheartedness and positive outlook that represents Punjab.

South Africa readies to give J&J jabs to health care workers

JOHANNESBURG, FEB 17 (AP): South Africa is preparing to give its first COVID-19 vaccinations shots of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine still being tested to health care workers this week, the health minister said Tuesday.

The first batch of 80,000 doses of the J&J vaccine, which has not been authorised for general use in South Africa or anywhere else in the world, is expected to arrive in the country imminently and will be administered to health care professionals across the country, Zweli Mkhize told parliament.

The J&J vaccines will be given as an observational study, in which no placebo shots will be given and the health and future infections of all participants will be tracked, say health experts.

Tests so far suggest the J&J vaccine is safe and effective at preventing severe illness or death from COVID-019.

Another 500,000 J&J doses are expected to be flown to South Africa within four weeks for the vaccination campaign.

More than 380,000 health care workers have already registered for vaccination, Mkhize said. The first phase of South Africa's campaign is to vaccinate the country's 1.25 million health care workers.

We salute the health care workers who have chosen vaccination for their own protection and the protection of their colleagues, families and community members," Mkhize said, encouraging all front-line health workers to register on the government's internet site.

South Africa has set up 20 vaccination centers in its nine provinces to inoculate the 80,000 health workers over the next two weeks. This will be done by 164 vaccinators who will each give shots to approximately 48 people a day at the rate of six to seven clients an hour, Mkhize said.

As more doses arrive the service will be ramped up accordingly to ensure that we maintain a good rate of daily vaccines, said Mkhize.

South Africa intends to vaccinate 40 million people, representing about 67 per cent of its population, by the end of the year, according to Mkhize.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be the first to be used as it is shown by a large international clinical trial to be effective in offering protection from the variant that is now dominant in South Africa, he said. Early results from the trials shown the J&J vaccines has 57 per cent efficacy against moderate to severe cases of COVID-19 caused by the variant here.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration is due to consider the J&J trial on Feb. 26 and the European authority is also planning to assess it in mid-March.

Australia's second largest city comes out of 3rd lockdown

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA (AP):

Melbourne, Australia's second largest city, will relax its third lockdown on Wednesday and allow spectators to return to the Australian Open tennis tournament after a five-day absence.

Rod Laver Arena will be allowed 7,477 spectators — around 50% of its capacity — for the final four days of the first Grand Slam event for 2021, tournament organizers said.

Up to 30,000 tennis fans a day had been allowed into three zones in the tournament venue, Melbourne Park, before the statewide Victoria lockdown.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews earlier said health authorities would decide the tennis crowd numbers.

"We'll finish up with crowds at lots of different places," Andrews said. "We'll finish up with people being able to



move freely because this short and sharp circuit-breaker has worked."

The lockdown has been enforced across Victoria, with a population of 6.5 million people, to prevent the virus from spreading from the state capital.

Most restrictions will be lifted from 11:59 p.m. after no new infections were detected in the latest 24-hour period, Andrews said.

Schools and businesses will reopen.

But people will still be required to wear

masks and visitors to homes will be limited to five people until Feb. 26, when the last of the state's 25 active COVID-19 cases will no longer be infectious.

All cases have been traced to a Melbourne airport hotel where travelers are quarantined for 14 days on arrival from overseas.

Businesses complained that the lockdown, announced only hours before it

took effect last Friday, disrupted Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day

festivities.

All tennis spectators were ejected from Melbourne Park at 11:30 p.m. so that they had time to get home before the stay-home order took effect. Many booed as they left. The Australian Open has continued without spectators since.

Some business leaders described the latest lockdown as an overreaction.

"It is clear that testing and tracing were the keys to resolving this potential outbreak, and

Big protests across Myanmar as UN expert fears violence

YANGON, MYANMAR (AP):

Demonstrators in Myanmar gathered Wednesday in their largest numbers so far to protest the military's seizure of power, as a U.N. human rights expert warned that troops being brought to Yangon and elsewhere could signal the prospect for major violence.

U.N. rapporteur Tom Andrews said he was alarmed by reports of soldiers being transported into Yangon, the biggest city.

"In the past, such troop movements preceded killings, disappearances, and detentions on a mass scale," he said in a statement issued late Tuesday by the U.N. Human Rights office in Geneva. "I am terrified that given the confluence of these two developments - planned mass protests and troops converging - we could be on the precipice of the military committing even greater crimes against the people of Myanmar."

Fresh protests roiled Yangon, the second-largest city of Mandalay and the capital Naypyitaw, in defiance of an order banning gatherings of five or more people.

"Let's march en

masse. Let's show our force against the coup government that has destroyed the future of youth and our country," Kyi Toe, a spokesman for the National League for Democracy party of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, wrote on his Facebook page.

Wednesday's turnout in Yangon appeared to be one of the biggest so far in the city. Protesters have adopted a tactic of blocking off streets from security forces by parking vehicles in groups with their hoods up and the excuse of having engine trouble.

In Naypyitaw, thousands including private bank employees and engineers marched down its wide boulevards, chanting for the release of Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

Protesters also poured into the streets of Mandalay, where on Monday security forces pointed guns at a group of 1,000 demonstrators and attacked them with slingshots and sticks. Local media reported that police also fired rubber bullets into a crowd and that a few people were injured.

The marches have been organized as part of a civil disobedience movement, spearheaded

by medical workers and supported by many civil servants.

The Feb. 1 coup has brought an abrupt halt to Myanmar's fragile progress toward democracy, as Suu Kyi's party was about to begin a second five-year term after winning a landslide in November's election. The military justified its takeover with allegations of widespread voting irregularities, though the election commission found no evidence of significant fraud. The junta says it will hold power for a year before holding new elections.

Police filed a new charge against Suu Kyi, her lawyer said Tuesday, a move likely to keep her under house arrest and further fuel public anger.

Suu Kyi already faced a charge of illegally possessing walkie-talkies. The new charge concerns a law that has been used to prosecute people who have violated coronavirus restrictions, lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told reporters after meeting with a judge. It carries a maximum punishment of three years in prison.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a strong denunciation of the legal maneuver against Suu

Kyi.

"New charges against Aung San Suu Kyi fabricated by the Myanmar military are a clear violation of her human rights," he tweeted. "We stand with the people of Myanmar and will ensure those responsible for this coup are held to account."

U.N. spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the world body stood by its denunciation of the coup and has called for charges against Suu Kyi to be dropped and for her to be released.

For a third night in a row, the military ordered an internet blackout — almost entirely blocking online access from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. It has also prepared a draft law that would tighten surveillance of cyberspace and criminalize many online activities.

While the military did not say why the internet was blocked, there is widespread speculation that the government is installing a firewall system to allow it to monitor or block online activity. Social media users have speculated widely that neighboring China, with extensive experience in censoring the internet, was giving

Japan begins COVID-19 vaccination drive amid Olympic worries

TOKYO (AP): Months after other major economies, Japan began giving the first coronavirus vaccines to front-line health workers Wednesday. Many are wondering if the campaign will reach enough people, and in time, to save a Summer Olympics already delayed a year by the worst pandemic in a century.

Despite recent rising infections, Japan has largely dodged the kind of cataclysm that has battered other wealthy countries' economies, social networks and healthcare systems. But the fate of the Olympics, and the billions of dollars at stake should the Games fail, makes Japan's vaccine campaign crucial. Japanese officials are also well aware that China, which has had success eradicating the virus, will host next year's Winter Olympics, something that heightens the desire to make the Tokyo Games happen.

A big problem as the vaccines roll out — first to medical workers, then the elderly and then, possibly in late spring or early summer, to the rest of the population — are worries about shortages of the imported vaccines Japan relies on, and a long-time reluctance among many Japanese to take vaccines because of fears of relatively-rare side effects that have been played up by the media in the past.

The late rollout will make it impossible to reach so-called "herd immunity" against the virus before the Olympics begin in July, experts say.

The vaccination drive has the support of the government, but there's widespread wariness, even opposition, among citizens to having the Games at all. About 80% of those polled in recent media surveys support cancellation or further postponement of the Olympics because of the virus worries.

Attended by a room full of media, Dr. Kazuhiro Araki, president of Tokyo Medical Center, rolled up his shirtsleeves and got a jab Wednesday, becoming

one of the first Japanese to be vaccinated.

It didn't hurt at all, and I'm feeling very relieved," he told reporters while he was being monitored for any allergic reaction. "We now have better protection, and I hope we feel more at ease as we provide medical treatment."

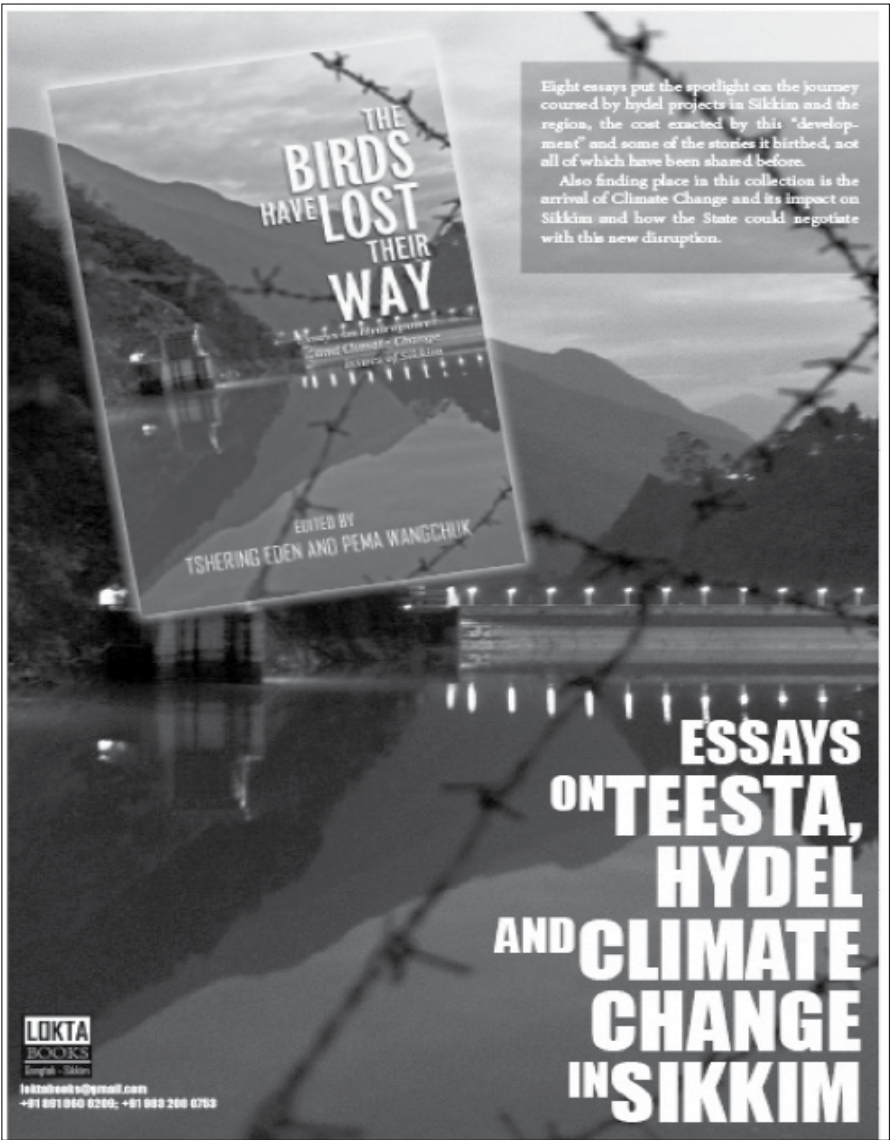
About 40,000 doctors and nurses considered vulnerable to the virus because they treat COVID-19 patients were in the group getting their first dose starting Wednesday and scheduled to receive their second dose beginning March 10.

Japan lags behind many other countries. The government only gave its first vaccine approval Sunday for the shots developed and supplied by Pfizer Inc.

Britain started inoculations on Dec. 8, while the United States began its campaign on Dec. 14, with about 15 million people vaccinated by mid-February. Vaccines were rolled out in Germany, France, Italy and many European countries in late December.

Japan fell behind their pace because it asked Pfizer to conduct clinical trials with Japanese people, in addition to trials already conducted in six other nations. Japanese officials said this was necessary to address worries in a country with low vaccine confidence.

"I think it is more important for the Japanese government to show the Japanese people that we have done everything possible to prove the efficacy and safety of the vaccine to encourage the Japanese people to take the vaccine," Japanese vaccine minister Taro Kono said. "So at the end of the day we might have started slower but we think it will be more effective. Japan's mistrust of vaccines is decades old. Many people have a vague unease about vaccines, partly because their side effects have often been played up by media here.



33 Injured, 14 arrested in protests over rapper's jailing

MADRID (AP): Police in Spain say 14 people were arrested in violent street protests in several cities following the arrest of Spanish rap artist Pablo Hasél, who had barricaded himself at a university with dozens of supporters to avoid prison and defend his fight for free speech.

Emergency services said Wednesday that 33 people were treated for injuries in the disturbances.

In the northeastern city of Barcelona, thousands of protesters set trash cans on fire and threw rocks at the police. Several stores and a bank were damaged amid chaotic scenes on one of the city's main streets. Spanish National Television cited city authorities as estimating the damages at 70,000 euros (\$84,000).

Smaller demonstrations took place in other Spanish cities. Further protests are planned Wednesday.

A 24-hour standoff between police and Hasél ended early Tuesday when anti-riot officers arrested him in northeastern Lleida University. He was taken to prison to serve a 9-month sentence for insulting the monarchy



and glorifying terrorism in a song about former King Juan Carlos I and in 64 tweets.

His case has drawn much attention, with many artists, celebrities and politicians showing their support and demanding a change in the country's so-called "gag law."

Spain's left-wing coalition government last week said it planned to change the country's criminal code to eliminate prison terms for offenses

involving freedom of expression.

The rapper has previously faced charges for assault, praising armed extremist groups, breaking into private premises or insulting the monarchy.

Amnesty International said Hasél's case was the latest in a string of trials of artists and social media personalities in Spain under its 2015 Public Security Law, which was put into effect by a conservative government.

Jay Chandrasekhar to direct 'Easter Sunday' for Amblin

LOS ANGELES, FEB 17 (PTI):

Indian-origin filmmaker Jay Chandrasekhar will tackle family comedy "Easter Sunday".

Chandrasekhar is best known for directing 2001 cult comedy "Super Troopers" and its 2018 sequel.

He will direct "Easter Sunday", which has been set up at Amblin Partners, from a script by Ken Cheng, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Popular American stand-



up comedian Jo Koy will play the lead role in the movie.

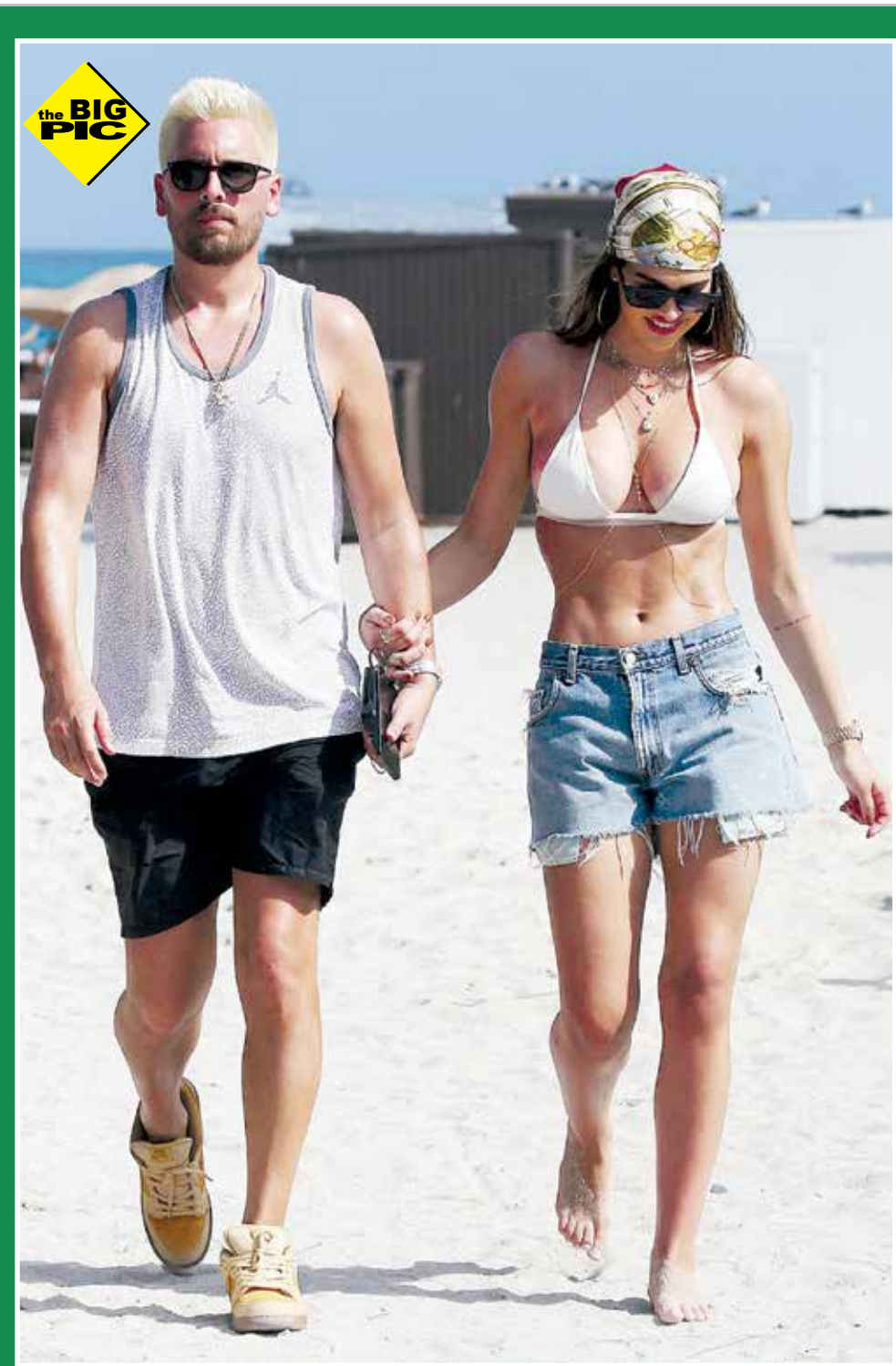
Plot details are scarce at

the moment but the project is said to be based on the life experiences and stand-up

comedy of Koy. It will be set around a family gathering to celebrate Easter Sunday.

Koy and Cheng will also serve as executive producers alongside Joe Meloché, Jessica Gao, Jimmy O Yang, Nick Reynolds and Seth William Meier.

Dan Lin and Jonathan Eirich, the producers behind Disney's "Aladdin" and Netflix movie "The Two Popes", are backing the project, which will start production later this year.



JUST BEACHY! A bleached blonde Scott Disick and Amelia Hamlin hit the beach in Miami.

Lily Rabe comes aboard George Clooney directorial 'The Tender Bar'



LOS ANGELES, FEB 17 (PTI): Actor Lily Rabe has been cast as female lead in George Clooney's upcoming Amazon movie "The Tender Bar".

Based on author J R Moehringer's memoir of the same name, the drama will also feature actors Ben Affleck and Tye Sheridan.

Published in 2005, the book is a coming-of-age story and centres on the author, who as a young boy is seeking a replacement for his father, a New York City disc jockey who had vanished before his

son spoke his first word.

When he can't find his father's voice on the radio anymore, the boy turns in desperation to the bar on the corner, where he finds friendship from his Uncle Charlie and other adults, who take him to the beach, to ballgames, and ultimately into their circle.

Sheridan will play Moehringer in the movie, while Affleck will feature as his Uncle Charlie.

Rabe will step into the role of Moehringer's mother,

who is the main female character in the memoir, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Clooney will direct the movie from a script by Oscar-winning scribe William Monahan. He will also produce the movie along with his producing partner Grant Heslov through their Smokehouse Pictures banner.

Rabe is best known for featuring in multiple seasons of popular show "American Horror Story".

Archie Panjabi to star in 'Snowpiercer' season 3

LOS ANGELES, FEB 17 (PTI): "The Good Wife" star Archie Panjabi has joined the third season of the popular dystopian thriller drama "Snowpiercer" as a series regular.

The actor, best known for her Emmy-winning turn as Kalinda Sharma in the acclaimed legal drama "The Good Wife", will play Asha on the new chapter of TNT network series.

According to Deadline, details of Panjabi's character are being kept under wraps.

Developed by Josh Friedman and Graeme Manson, the show is based on Bong Joon-ho's 2013 movie of the same name and the French graphic novel "Le Transperceneige" by Jacques Lob.

It is set seven years after the world has become a frozen wasteland and centres on the remnants of humanity, who inhabit a gigantic, perpetually-moving train that circles the



globe.

TNT renewed the series for a third season in January.

"Snowpiercer" also stars Jennifer Connelly, Daveed Diggs, Sean Bean, Rowan Blanchard, Alison Wright, Mickey Sumner, Iddo Goldberg, Katie McGuinness, Lena Hall, Annalise Basso, Sam Otto, Roberto Urbina, Sheila Vand and Steven Ogg.

The show is executive produced by Graeme Manson, Marty Adelstein, Becky Clements, Matthew O'Connor, Ben Rosenblatt and Scott Derrickson.

Tomorrow Studios produces it along with CJ Entertainment, which produced the film.

Panjabi recently appeared in NBC's "Blindspot" and the HBO miniseries "I Know This Much Is True", opposite Hollywood star Mark Ruffalo.

Rege-Jean Page joins 'Dungeons and Dragons' movie

LOS ANGELES, FEB 17 (PTI): "Bridgerton" breakout star Rege-Jean Page has been cast in a leading role in the feature adaptation of the popular fantasy role-playing game "Dungeons and Dragons".

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the actor joins the Paramount Pictures project, which already has Chris Pine, Michelle Rodriguez and Justice Smith on board.

"Dungeons and Dragons" is known for its war games, treasure hunts, campaigns, camaraderie and reversals of fortune. The game famously uses multisided dice in gameplay and is overseen by a host known as the Dungeon Master.

It is currently unknown whether the movie adaptation will be a straight-up fantasy film, set in the world of the game,

or incorporate the storytelling and game-playing aspects.

"Game Night" filmmakers Jonathan Goldstein and John Francis Daley are set to direct the film from a script they wrote based on a previous draft by Michael Gilio.

Paramount is co-producing and co-financing the movie with Hasbro and eOne.

The makers are planning a May 2022 release for the film.

The popular game was previously adapted for the big screen in 2000 by New Line.

Page, who shot to international fame as Simon, the debonair Duke of Hastings, on Netflix's latest hit series "Bridgerton", is also set to host "Saturday Night Live", the late-night sketch comedy series on NBC.

ARIES:

This is a beautiful time for single Aries. A new and exciting adventure is on the cards, one that promises to make you feel so, so alive. The old fears will come up time and again. Observe them without giving them any more power than they deserve. The secret to making space for this magical connection? Giving yourself the permission to let your guard down.

TAURUS:

Some of you could be struggling with your finances at the moment. There's a sense of not being remunerated in proportion to your efforts. You have two options at this point: to keep talking about how unfair the whole scenario is or to actively do something about. An open and honest conversation with your clients (or your boss) is a good way forward.

GEMINI:

Yes, it all seems topsy-turvy at the moment. Yes, it feels like you might never make it to the desired destination. But you're not looking at the bigger picture here, Gemini,

which is that you're *this* close to the final point. So replace the pessimism with some hope as you vow to go after your dreams with a newfound fervour. PS: The Universe has got your back!

CANCER:

There are periods of doing and periods of being and that's just how this life of ours works, Cancer. Where are you in your journey and what are you being called to pay attention to? Slow down and breathe. Listen to what your body and soul are telling you. Giving yourself the permission to refuel could be the best way to get your productivity game back on.

LEO:

Here's the thing, Leo. We all have an idea of how the people in our lives should and shouldn't behave. As a result, we end up weighing them down with the weight of our expectations. Expectations they may not be in a position to meet. What if you rethink your approach a little bit? What if you choose to bring a little more love and a little more acceptance into the equation? Something tells us

you're about to bring about a positive change in your closest relationships.

VIRGO:

This is a time of joy and celebration in the Virgo HQ. You or somebody close to you may be getting engaged soon, in which case bridesmaids duties may be on the cards. Alternatively, you could be planning a baby shower for somebody close to your heart. Remember, it's best to keep low-key at a time like this. This way, you'll end up spending quality time with the people you truly care about.

LIBRA:

There's no way out of this, Libra. This is your responsibility and yours alone—and you have committed to it for a reason. So, instead of pulling out one excuse after another, set some time aside to get the job done. Sure, it all seems intimidating from where you are standing. However, once you get into the flow of it, it won't seem like too much effort.

SCORPIO:

There will always be things to do and deadlines to meet. But how many of these things

are truly important, Scorpio? Be mindful of the distractions—of all the things that are disrupting your flow. Keeping things simple, for now, will sure as hell help you get more stuff done.

SAGITTARIUS:

Staying guarded is easy. It's what you know best. Letting somebody in, on the other hand, can be a terrifying thought. Challenge yourself to remain open nonetheless. Resist the urge to shut down at the first sign of intimacy and be your most authentic self in every moment. PS: Something tells us you're about to break past a barrier that's been holding you back.

CAPRICORN:

'Health and wellness' is a big theme in the Capricorn HQ—and you're in the mood to adopt slow living practices. Consider growing your own vegetables this season, or giving your kitchen garden an update. Nothing spells paradise like waking up to the scents of herbs or rustling up a salad with fresh produce. If you've been slacking off on your yoga practice, it's time to get back to

the mat too. Consider working with a coach online if you're looking for some inspiration.

AQUARIUS:

There's always two ways to get what you want. The first involves the usage of brute force. The other? A heady mix of compassion and willpower. You'll find your way around the maze either way. Choosing the path of least resistance, however, will make the passageway much simpler. So, look beyond the fluctuations. Fix your gaze on the given destination. Know that the mysterious forces are helping you achieve what you have set out to.

PISCES:

Healing is a beautiful and mysterious process. There are days you feel like you've left all the baggage behind, and then there are days when the demons appear unannounced once again. Accept the ebb like you would the flow, Pisces, and know that it's all a part of the letting go process. Despite what you are experiencing right now, there is hope. Trust what this highest self is showing you. You are being led to a better place.