



**JAILED RAPPER CASANOVA DISCIPLINED  
FOR VIDEO DANCE CHALLENGE**  
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**TOBACCO, THE IGNORED CHALLENGE**  
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**AMANDA GORMAN, IN A FIRST,  
BRINGS POETRY TO SUPER BOWL**  
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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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*No Covid Sunday  
and 639 more  
vaccinations  
on Monday  
in Sikkim*

## SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 08 FEB:

The recovery rate of COVID patients in Sikkim has now reached 95.10% with Sikkim also reassuringly posting more recoveries than infections on a daily basis.

The State recorded three more recoveries of COVID patients on Sunday taking the total number of recovered cases of COVID-19 in the State to 5,813.

Meanwhile, no new cases of novel coronavirus were reported here in the last 24 hours and the number of active cases has further reduced to 67. With no new cases, the state's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is held at 6,110 today.

The zero new infections statistic for Monday was also helped by the fact that the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital, the only facility where RTPCR tests for Covid can be conducted in Sikkim, remains closed on Sundays.

In his daily health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia informed that all sixteen samples tested on Sunday 0 10 by TrueNat and 06 through rapid antigen testing – returned negative for COVID-19.

He also mentioned that a total of 639 persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 on Monday - 120 at Central Referral Hospital, 77 at STNM hospital, 293 in West District and 149 in South District.

*Mindless rampage  
on Himalayas  
must stop: Chipko  
Movement leader*

**GOPESHWAR, 08 FEB [PTI]:** The glacial burst near Chamoli district's Raini village, the cradle of the Chipko movement, should serve as a wake-up call to stop the rampage on the Himalayan ecological system in the name of development, said Magsaysay awardee Chandi Prasad Bhatt on Monday.

According to the 87-year-old environmentalist, who was a Chipko movement leader, projects like the Rishi Ganga hydel project, which bore the brunt of Sunday's calamity, should not have been given environmental clearance.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt said that in 2010 he had written to the then environment minister warning against the adverse effects of the project.

"Had my advice been heeded, the loss of lives and largescale damage to property at the project site

...turn Pg2

## CM lays foundation stone of NSD Sikkim Centre campus at Assam Lingzey



### SHRAVAN CHETTRI GANGTOK, 08 FEB:

Chief Minister PS Tamang performed the bhoomi puja and laid the foundation stone of National School of Drama's Sikkim Centre here at Assam Lingzey this morning.

The campus will come up on a 4.5 acre spread donated by the State Government at Tamla, Assam Lingzey.

In his address, the CM expressed his willingness to assist NSD in any way possible like road construction and water supply in the campus.

He extended his best wishes to the NSD fraternity for the construction of the new campus in the state.

"Such institutions should be set up in rural areas so that it can help in the development of these areas," he stated. He also mentioned that art and culture should be preserved for the coming generations. While addressing the gathering, Bipin Kumar expressed his gratitude towards the state government for the aid provided. He added that theater in Sikkim has a different kind of support and

people adore theater.

"We are proud that many talented people have come out of this institution and with aid like this, we are pretty sure that we can enhance the talent in this state," said Mr Kumar.

Director, NSD Delhi, Prof. Suresh Sharma, thanked the villagers and the Sikkim Government for providing land for the campus. He informed that there are four such training centers in India, and Sikkim is one of them.

He also said that in near future it can be a tourist spot

which will showcase the unique traditions and cultures of the country and state.

During the program, an audio message was played from Bollywood star, Paresh Rawal who is Chairman NSD Delhi. Due to some unavoidable circumstances he could not visit Sikkim and attend the program.

The event was also attended by Health Minister, MK Sharma, Culture Minister, Samdup Lepcha, Director NSD Delhi, Suresh Kumar and Director NSD Sikkim, Bipin Kumar.

## Students being unreasonable: CM

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 08 FEB:

After SKM spokesperson and Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling, accused the protesting students of Gyalshing Government college of being "anti-national", Chief Minister, PS Tamang also said that it is possible that two of the protesting students were part of the violence that took place on 26 Jan in New Delhi.

While addressing a function in Assam Lingzey, the CM stated that investigation is on to determine if the two students were involved in the violence on 26 Jan in Delhi. If they were, then they have committed an anti-national act, he said.

He accused the two students, who are members of Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum [SPYF], of only being interested in opposing the government.

"We have come to know that one of the two students has a back paper. One of them is also studying via distance learning. This means that they are only in college for the uniform," the CM said further adding that a uniform does not allow students to do whatever they want.

The CM talked about the processes involved in the construction of the college and said that Rs 35 crore for the second phase of work has already been sanctioned.

He said that the students are being unreasonable and that construction was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdowns.

Meanwhile, SPYF has said that it can even take legal action against those labelling its members "anti-nationals".

In a press conference held today, the SPYF team reiterated that the "anti-national" allegation is a diversion tactic by SKM.

## COVID-19: Daily deaths again fall below 100 in February

**NEW DELHI, FEB 8 (PTI):** India's tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 1,08,38,194, with 11,831 new infections, while the daily deaths fell below 100 for the fourth time this month, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The death toll increased to 1,55,080 with 84 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,05,34,505 pushing the national COVID-19 recovery rate of 97.20 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.43 per cent. The total COVID-19 active cases remained below 2 lakh.

There are 1,48,609 active cases of coronavirus infections in the country which comprise 1.37 per cent of the total cases, 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 ICMR, 20,19, 00,614 samples have been tested up to February 7 with 5, 32,236 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 84 new fatalities include 30 from Maharashtra and 19 from Kerala, 6 from Chhattisgarh, 5 from West Bengal, 4 from Uttarakhand, 3 from Karnataka, 2 each from Delhi, Goa, Haryana and Punjab.

A total of 1,55,080 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 51,310 from Maharashtra followed by 12,383 from Tamil Nadu, 12,236 from Karnataka, 10,879 from Delhi, 10,207 from West Bengal, 8,687 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,159 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.



## Glacial calving, climate change: What led to the Uttarakhand disaster?

**NEW DELHI, 08 FEB [NDTV]:** What caused the devastating flash flood in Uttarakhand on Sunday, that has killed 18 people and left over 200 missing in the hill state? While experts say it is too early to point out what caused the disaster, different theories have emerged, from the incident being a "glacial lake outburst flood" to an avalanche, leading to debris falling in the river. Environmentalists have blamed the disaster on the rapid pace of development in the region and on climate change.

Geological Survey of India, the country's top body to study geoscientific activities, today said the deluge appears to be caused

by "glacial calving". "Post this devastation, we'll again constitute a committee as it's too early to predict regarding the cause of incident. Prima facie, it's glacial calving at the highest altitude in Rishiganga and Dhauliganga area and the upper reaches of that," said Dinesh Gupta, the chief of Geological Survey of India. On Sunday, authorities said initially that the cause was a chunk of glacier breaking off into a river, and later that the trigger may instead have been a phenomenon called a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF). This is when the boundaries of a glacial lake - formed when a glacier retreats - are breached,

releasing large amounts of water downstream.

An IIT professor said it is unlikely that it was a cloud burst. "It's a very rare incident for a glacial burst to happen. Satellite and Google Earth images do not show a glacial lake near the region, but there's a possibility that there may be a water pocket in the region. Water pockets are lakes inside the glaciers, which may have erupted leading to this event... It is unlikely that this was a cloud burst..." said Dr. Mohd Farooq Azam, Assistant Professor, Glaciology and Hydrology, IIT-Indore.

## Namchi's water source runs low, taps run dry



### BIKAS CHETTRI

#### NAMCHI, 08 FEB:

Discharge at the main source for water supply to Namchi - Bermelle - has shriveled to less than half its volume, and this is hurting the taps in town.

A team of PHE Department officials which visited the source at Bermelle khola today confirmed that water discharge here had reduced from 2.0 MLD to 0.8 MLD. Winter has been extremely dry in South Sikkim and water sources, even the perennial ones, tend to run close to dry towards the end of the season.

"There is a huge gap between the supply available and demand which is why we are supplying water on alternate days for 30 minutes. We have limited supply and are trying to ensure basic supply for each and every consumer," a PHED official informs.

This was the team's second visit to Bermelle. A third visit is planned to sort out the problem. Supply, officials inform, will be sorted out within the next 10 to 15 days.

## India records 11,831 new COVID-19 cases, 84 more die

### NEW DELHI, FEB 8 (PTI):

India's tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 1,08,38,194, with 11,831 new infections being reported in a day, while the daily death count fell below 100 for the fourth time this month, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

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The COVID-19 active caseload remained below 2

lakh.

There are 1,48,609 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 1.37 per cent of the infection count, 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 one crore on December 19.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 20,19,00,614 samples have been tested for COVID-19 up to February 7, with 5,32,236 of them being tested on Sunday.

# Badminton Association of Majhitar formed

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:** Badminton Association of Majhitar was formed in a meeting held at the Conference Hall of Sunder Hotel & Resort, Majhitar by badminton players of Majhitar under West Pendam Constituency, East Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The meeting was held in the presence of Chief Patron, KishorDungmaliRai, Patron, Yankee YonzonGurung, Advisors, Hem Kumar Gurung andSuresh K Lama.

The election for the new body was held with



Hem Kumar Gurung as the Returning Officer.

The newly elected committee members are SurajPradhan as

president followed by YogeshPradhanas the vice president, Amartya Raj Gurung as the general secretary, Rajesh Majhias the

joint secretary, Kodo Tasso as the treasurer, StefenSubbaas the assistant treasurer, EsmaelPradhanas the

(press & publicity), AshalChettrias the coordinator along with Executive Members namely: BhesrajSharma, Dhemanthapa, ShyamThapa, Deepak Gurung,Ganesh Karki, BenoyRai, PravinBhujel, ManojBiswakarma and AdarshGurung.

The newly elected president and general secretary spoke about the promotion of sports among the school students of the region and working with Badminton Association of Sikkim.

The memorandum of the club was also presented by the Advisor during the meeting.

# SLYA sets up new village branch at Pendam

**SUMMITREPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:** Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association established its 23rd branch in a meeting of the Central Executive Committee held with the members of the Lepcha community of Pendam village under West Pendam Constituency at Pendam Village on 07 Feb, 2021.

A press release informs that the meeting was convened with the objective to establish the new kyong (village) branch of Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association at Pendam Village where there are more than 59

Lepcha households. The meeting was attended by members of each Lepcha family of the village.

Briefing the new body on the historical background of the organisation, the general secretary of the organisation LobsangChopel Lepcha gave special emphasis to the aims and objectives of the organisation that is to be achieved and also stressed upon the rights and privileges of the new executive members besides their duties and responsibilities as a member of the social organisation.

The newly formed village branch of Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association saw the nomination of its executive members with PassangTshering Lepcha as president, Gyaltsen Lepcha as vice president, Zigmee Lepcha as general secretary, NimaLhamu Lepcha as treasurer, and LachiDoma Lepcha as joint treasurer. Indup Lepcha, Lhamu Lepcha, Keeden Lepcha and Phumphy Lepcha were nominated Culture Secretaries, PemaTshering Lepcha as publicity secretary, while Dup Tshering Lepcha, Ramesh Lepcha, Dawa Lepcha were nominated

as Advisors.

In a brief interactive session, members of the Lepcha community of the village expressed happiness on the establishment of the SLYA branch in their village.

The meeting also saw the participation of SLYA PachakKyong Branch president, OngdenTshering Lepcha and general secretary,Pembu Lepcha who also shared their experiences of working as a member of SLYA kyongbranch.

The gathering was also addressed byKongchen Lepcha

(Joint Secretary, CEC), LhamuTshering Lepcha (Treasurer, CEC) and Meenamit Lepcha (Literary Secretary,CEC).

SLYA president, OngdenTshering Lepcha congratulated the nominated executive members of the newly formed body and encouraged them to work selflessly and diligently for the community.

In his note he also thanked the village elders and members of each family in supporting the aspirations of the village youth to be organised under the banner of Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association.

# SDF condemns SKM Govt’s handling of protest by Gyalshing College students

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:** Sikkim Democratic Front has accused the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Government of heaping injustice on students of Gyalshing Government Degree College.

The party has registered its condemnation on the arrest of students and demanded, apart from their unconditional release, an apology from the State

government to the students. An SDF press release issued by its general secretary, Krishna Kharel, argues that democracy provides its people the right to protest as a basic right.

In Sikkim, the Government, instead of addressing issues raised by the students and reassuring them, used the police to intimidate them, SDF has condemned.

The release further alleges that students tried to seek their rights in a peaceful manner but to treat them as terrorists instead of resolving the matter peacefully exposes the autocratic nature of the government.

SDF has also condemned statements issued by SKM spokesperson, Jacob Khaling, referring to the students as terrorists and anti-nationals.

# Man held for running illegal telephone exchange

**NEW DELHI, FEB 8 (PTI):** A 40-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly running an illegal telephone exchange in Old Delhi’s Chawri Bazar area, police said on Monday.

The telephone exchange converted international voice calls into local ones through various software illegally and caused losses to the government, police said.

Since they were not authorised to do so, the entire operation was illegal, a senior police said. The accused has been identified as Imran Khan, they said.

Khan had been running a tools shop for the last 13 years at Chawri Bazar but due to financial crisis, he had provided that space to his uncle -- Zulfikar Ali -- who was running the illegal telephone exchange,

officials said. The accused also provided high speed wifi connection for the set up run by Ali, who is the main accused and is absconding. Ali, a resident of Turkman gate in central Delhi, had taken proprietorship for the illegal setup under the title -- Adeeba Enterprises. He also owns an agency of soft drink and is known as Raja in the locality, police said. The matter came to light after police received a complaint from the Department of Telecom (DoT) which stated that it had received inputs that an illegal international telecom setup was being run by Ali at Chawri Bazar, police said.

The police said that calls from foreign countries including USA, UAE, Canada,

Nepal and Australia were being converted illegally into local ones.

Residents of the area informed the police that the premises, where the setup was being run, is owned by Ali and also occupied by his relative named Yusuf, he said.

One laptop found connected to internet on which apps for remote sharing were found installed and running at the spot, he said.

“The accused was bypassing the legal international gateways and causing financial loss to government exchequer, Internal Long Distance licensees, National Long Distance licensees and Access service licensees to the tune of around Rs 60,74,000 per day,” police said.

## LOST

Class X Compartmental Examination Admit Card of Lalit Mazhi bearing Roll No 3155198 . (Year 2019)Examination Centre- Government Girls Sr. Secondary School, Deorali Gangtok. If found please contact:9564442660

## AFFIDAVIT

I, SonamOngyal Sherpa, Son of NimTshering Sherpa, aged about 24 years, Buddhist by faith, resident of Rumbuk, Buriakhop, under P.O- Buriakhop& PS-Sombaria, West Sikkim, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as follows:

1. That I am Natural son of Mr. NimTshering Sherpa.
2. That my father’s name has been recorded as “NimTshernig Sherpa” in my Certificate of Identification bearing SI. No. 6193 DC (W), dated 11/08/2010.
3. That however, in all my academic certificates my father’s name has been recorded as “NimaTashi Sherpa”.
4. That his name has been recorded as “NimaTshering Sherpa” in my Certificate of Scheduled Tribe bearing Memo No. 220BDO/RM&DD/DARAMDIN, dated 22/04/2008.
5. That his name has been recorded as “NimaTshering” in my Employment Identity Card bearing Card No. 11/146/BAC/DMD, dated 3/4/2008.
6. That this affidavit is made to declare that the person by the name “NimTshering Sherpa”, “NimaTashi Sherpa”, “NimaTshering Sherpa” & “NimaTshering” refers and denotes to one and the same person i.e. my above named father.
7. That this affidavit is made bonafide.

DEPONENT

# Block 1,178 Handles, Says India. Protecting Free Speech, Twitter Responds

**NEW DELHI, 08 FEB [PTI]:** The Indian government has asked microblogging platform Twitter to remove over a thousand more accounts for allegedly spreading misinformation and provocative content in connection with the farmers’ protest. It has said that the 1,178 listed handles have Pakistani and Khalistani users, official sources have said. The social media site is yet to completely comply with the order, they said. The company has, however, said it was respecting local laws even while “protecting its foundational principle of free expression”.

Earlier, on January 31, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had sent a list of 257 handles and tweets to be blocked for similar reasons. Twitter blocked these accounts for few hours before unilaterally unblocking them shortly after.

On February 4, the ministry shared the fresh list flagged by security agencies as accounts of Khalistan sympathisers or backed by Pakistan and operating from foreign territories, threatening public order amid the farmers’ protest.

“Many of these accounts were also automated bots that were used for sharing and amplifying misinformation and provocative contents on farmers’ protests,” a source said.

A few days ago, Twitter global CEO Jack Dorsey had “liked” several tweets made by foreign-based celebrities in support of farmer protests, sources said. In view of this, the platform’s defiance of the government’s order to block the accounts raises several questions.

“The government also objects to Twitter CEO liking some tweets by celebrities as it raises questions on his neutrality,” the source said.

A Twitter spokesperson said the platform was guided by principles of transparency and empowering the public conversation. “If we receive a valid legal request about potentially illegal content on Twitter, we review it under both the Twitter rules and local law. If the content violates Twitter’s rules, the content will be removed from the service,” the spokesperson said.

“If it is determined to be illegal in a particular jurisdiction, but not in violation of the Twitter rules, we

may withhold access to the content in the location only. In all cases, we notify the account holder directly so they’re aware we’ve received a legal order pertaining to the account. Our goal is to respect local law while protecting our foundational principles of free expression,” the spokesperson said.

The Centre’s latest move comes amid the “toolkit” controversy surrounding the farmer protest. Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg had last week tweeted a “toolkit” which she later deleted. This document, according to the police, aimed to spread disaffection and ill-will against the government of India and sought to create disharmony among various social, religious, and cultural groups.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said there was a reason why his ministry reacted to the remarks of celebrities like Ms Thunberg.

“I think it (“toolkit”) has revealed a lot. We have to wait and see what comes out. You can see there was a reason why the foreign ministry reacted to the statements which some celebrities gave out on matters on which they obviously didn’t know very much,” Mr Jaishankar said.

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## RUCHI DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Behind telephone Exchange Near Old STNM Hospital. Gangtok  
PH: 03592-203333, 204876, 8509373970

### EXISTING FACILITIES:

- ULTRASOUND
  - DIGITAL X-RAY
  - ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY
  - COLOR DOPPLER
  - PATHOLOGY
  - MICROBIOLOGY
  - BIOCHEMISTRY
  - ENDOSCOPY
  - B M D
  - E C G
  - DENTAL O P G
  - GASTRO CLINIC
  - PAEDIATRIC CLINIC
  - MEDICAL CLINIC
  - ORTHO CLINIC
  - E N T CLINIC
  - GYNEA CLINIC
  - PHYSIOTHERAPY
  - SPECIALISED TESTS
- BLOOD COLLECTION CENTRES AT :**
- Sushruta Medical, Ranipool.
  - Arihant Medical, Opp. CRH gate, 5th Mile.

### COMPLETE E N T FACILITIES UNDER ONE ROOF

**ENT O P D Monday to Friday**  
10.00 am to 2.30 pm

1. ENT OPD CLINIC
2. ENT ENDOSCOPIES
3. MICROSCOPIC PROCEDURES
4. MINOR O T PROCEDURES
5. VERTIGO MANAGEMENT
6. AUDIOMETRY, TYMPANOMETRY AND HEARING AIDS.

### CONSULTANT ENT SURGEON

DR. ONGDEN GYATSO, MS (AIIMS)

### GASTRO CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am to 9.00 am

### MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D

9.30 am

### ORTHO AND GYNEA CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

### PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

### VACCINATION CLINIC

## Indus Towers scholarships awarded to seven in Sikkim



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:**

Indus Towers, in partnership with Shishu Sarothi, organized an awards ceremony and induction program in Gangtok in association with Sikkim Divyang Sahayata Samiti as part of the "Indus Towers Scholarship Program 2020-21" which is one of the key CSR initiatives of Indus Towers Ltd [formerly Bharti Infratel Ltd].

Of the 120 students selected from across the North-East, seven students with disability from Sikkim were felicitated during an event on 02 February at the Sikkim Divyang Sahayata Samiti's residential centre led by Padmashri Draupadi Ghimirey, who is also

the president of the organization, a press release informs.

An induction session was also conducted for the scholars to orient them to the methodology of claiming and mode of scholarship disbursement.

Joint Commissioner, Disability (Technical), Govt. of Sikkim, MB Chhetri, was the chief guest of the event.

The program was also attended by Hamro Sikkim Party president, Dr Bina Basnett, who is also the working president of Sikkim Divyang Sahayata Samiti. Baichung Bhutia was present as guest of honour for the function which was also attended by Kaushalendra Kumar, Asst. Professor -Special Educator, Composite

Regional Centre.

Indus Towers Scholarship Program implemented by Shishu Sarothi was launched in 2016 with the objective of encouraging and supporting students with disabilities and has since supported 196 students from across the North East pursuing higher education during the first phase of the program.

In the second phase which commenced in April 2020, the program will support 600 students over a period of five years (120 students each year).

Sikkim Divyang Sahayata Samiti is the state partner organization and a point of local contact for Indus Towers Scholarship Program for the state of Sikkim.

## Workshop underlines high quality of North Sikkim's Angora and sheep wool fibre

### SUMMIT REPORT

**MANGAN, 08 FEB:**

A workshop on value-added products from Angora Rabbit and Sheep based produce towards doubling farmer-incomes was organized by ICAR-NINFET [National Institute of Natural Fibre Engineering Technology] in collaboration with KVK, South Sikkim and

Department of AH&VS, North District.

The main objective of the programme was to create awareness among Angora and Sheep breeders and farmers regarding the quality of the fibre established by NINFET to be of exceptionally high quality suitable for international markets.

Farmer and representatives from SHG groups attended the workshop along with a host of officials.

An MOU has been signed between NINFET and KVK, South Sikkim, for transfer of technology to farmers and development of the Angora, Sheep, Yak wool products over the next five years.

## RBI Gangtok kicks off Financial Literacy Week 2021

### GANGTOK, 08 FEB(PIB):

RBI Gangtok inaugurated the Financial Literacy Week 2021 for propagating financial education messages on the theme of "Credit Discipline and Credit from Formal Institutions" on 08 Feb, 2021. The Financial Literacy Week 2021 will be observed during 08-12 Feb, 2021. The inauguration programme held at RBI Gangtok Office was attended by representatives from NABARD, Lead Bank Office, MSME-DI, KVIC, DIC, Department of Commerce and Industries, Managing Director of SISCO Bank and branch heads of Axis Bank and HDFC Bank.

RBI has been conducting the Financial Literacy Week for sensitising and propagating Financial Education messages on various themes since the year 2016. The earlier emphasis of Financial

Literacy Weeks has been on Consumer Protection, Farmers, and MSMEs. This year, with the background of COVID-19 pandemic, RBI has decided to conduct the Financial Literacy Week for motivating people to access finance from commercial banks and registered NBFCs so that borrowers are not subjected to overcharging of interest rates, cheating, and falling prey to Ponzi schemes or misleading lucrative offers. This will create awareness about various loans and services that could be availed from banks. It will also help in educating the vulnerable common person from falling prey to unscrupulous and fraudulent finance schemes.

The Financial Literacy Week is also directed towards existing customers of the banks to make them smarter by utilizing credit required

for specific purposes, and responsible by making timely repayment. During this week, RBI along with bankers will conduct Financial Literacy Programmes for women and farmers in all the districts of Sikkim. The branches of various banks will also conduct such programmes and display awareness posters at their ATMs and branches.

RBI shall undertake centralized mass media campaign during the month to broadcast essential financial awareness messages on this theme for reaching out to a wider section of the population. The Financial Literacy Week will help in furthering the goals of financial inclusion like creating access to banks by way of opening accounts, availing loans and services and insurance products for crops and other purposes.

## "Farmer on Tractor" most sought-after symbol for Punjab civic body polls

### CHANDIGARH, 08 FEB

[PTI]: A "farmer riding a tractor" remained the most in-demand symbol among independent candidates for the February 14 civic body polls in Punjab, according to officials.

Some contestants opting for the symbol said it will help them get votes of those who expressed solidarity with the farmers camping at the Delhi borders against the Centre's

new farm laws.

According to former Mohali mayor Kulwant Singh, 26 of 43-member Azad Group led by him opted for the symbol. The rest are contesting on the "bucket" symbol.

## Wangchuk Chungyalpa earns PhD in Management from SMIT

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:**

Wangchuk Chungyalpa earned his Doctor of Philosophy in Management from Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT) on 19 Jan.

He completed his thesis, "Developing Business Models as a Strategic Tool using Ontological Approach: A Case Study of the Hotel Industry in Tier I Cities of India," under the guidance of Head, Department of Management Studies at SMIT, Dr Bedanta Bora, and Department of Computer Application,



Professor, Dr Samarjeet Borah.

Wangchuk Chungyalpa is an Assistant Professor at SRM University Sikkim.

The Doctor of Philosophy will be awarded to him during the next Convocation of Sikkim Manipal University (SMU).

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## Kisan Gosthi at Upper Nandok



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:**

Agricultural Technology Management Agency [ATMA], East, organised an FSI meet and Kisan Gosthi at Upper Nandok under Gangtok block today.

Around 50 participants attended the meet during which the participating SHGs also displayed their products.

Ward Panchayat of Upper Nandok, Uma Kant Sharma, was present as the chief guest.

## Schools in Nagaland reopen for students of Class 6 to 12

### KOHIMA, FEB 8 (PTI):

Schools in Nagaland which were closed since March last year due to COVID-19 pandemic reopened on Monday for students of Class 6 to 12, an official said.

Principal Director of School Education Shanavas C said both government and private schools have to follow the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the government to ensure the safety of teachers, students and employees.

Shanavas said in government schools COVID-19 kits have been provided to students.

The principal director of school education said that "people have welcomed the reopening of schools for students of class 6 and above."

As per the SOP school authorities have prepared alternate day routine for classes as per the enrolment in each class and the infrastructure facilities available.

Desk and benches for students have been arranged to maintain physical distancing besides

providing facilities for regular hand wash.

The principal director of school education said that the present arrangement would continue for about a month and only after being confident that the schools are ensuring all SOPs and also there are no COVID-19 cases detected in schools the department would take a call on resumption of classes for students of class 5 and below.

The Principal Secretary (Home) Department Abhijit Sinha had on February 1 issued the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for re-opening of schools for students of classes 6 to 12 in the state from February 8.

The SOP while stressing on the safety of the students, teachers and all others concerned maintained that the generic preventive measures, including simple public health actions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 need to be observed by all teachers, employees and students.

Meanwhile, schools are continuing with the online module of classes for students of class 5 and below.

## 7-yr-old comes 3rd in National Mental Arithmetic Competition



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 08 FEB:**

Seven-year-old, AarrushKar has bagged the 3rd prize in the 19th UCMAS India National Abacus & Mental Arithmetic Online Competition 2021 held from 23 to 26 Jan, 2021.

This competition was conducted by UCMAS India under the broad umbrella of UCMAS Malaysia. UCMAS is a child development program based on Mental Arithmetic and Abacus

that boosts brainpower in children aged 4-13 years.

Aarrush solved 200 mental arithmetic sums in 10 minutes. He received a trophy and a cash prize. He is the son of Department of Community Medicine, Professor, Dr SumitKar, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences (SMIMS) and AsimaKar. He is a Class II student of Mount Zion School, Tadong, East Sikkim.

### NOTICE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

Power Department, Government of Sikkim, deemed licensee engaged in distribution and retail sale, generation and transmission of electricity in the State of Sikkim has filed "Petition for Approval of Business Plan, Aggregate Revenue Requirement (ARR) Under Multi Year Tariff Regime for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 3-Year Control Period from F.Y.2021-22 to 2023-24 and Tariff for the F.Y.2021-22 before the Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission (Commission). The Petition has been registered as Case/Petition No. MYT/2021-22/P-01/PDS.

The Petition can be viewed and downloaded from the Commission's website ([www.sserc.in/Tariff/Tariff Petition](http://www.sserc.in/Tariff/Tariff%20Petition)) and also from the Official website of the Power Department ([www.powerdepartmentsikkim.com](http://www.powerdepartmentsikkim.com))

A Public Hearing on the Petition filed by the Power Department has been fixed by the Commission on the Date, time and venue mentioned below.

Date	Time	Venue for Public Hearing	Category of Consumers
23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021	10:30 AM to 02:30 PM	Court Room of SSERC. Near Commercial Tax Office Gangtok, East Sikkim	All Categories of Consumers

Interested parties/persons who intend to be heard in person may appear before the Hon'ble Commission for the purpose and would be heard as per the above schedule.

Sd/-

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Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission

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## Tobacco, the Ignored Challenge

*We speak of teenage smoking here*

A new academic session has begun, and the time right to initiate some discussion on issues concerning students. We speak of tobacco use in the present instance.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey [GYTS] conducted a survey among students in the 13 to 15 years age-group in Sikkim in the year 2001 covering students from grade VIII to X. Yes, the statistics are now two decades old, but it would be safe to venture that not much has changed on ground because let's also accept, Sikkim has not really done much to address the situation beyond pushing smoking away from public places. Further, the age-group we are speaking of here was not really smoking in public to begin with any way. The survey was a first of its kind for India and maybe it is time for another round of such a data collection exercise. But that would have required Sikkim to have done benefitted from the statistics collated back in 2001. Did it? The findings should have scared every parent, invoked institutions to address the situation and convinced policy-makers to get real about the task of arresting the trend. Nearly two decades since and a follow-up survey later, tobacco use among the barely teens in Sikkim does not even figure significantly in the social or health sector interventions here. The disinterest is inexcusable because the data is disturbing.

The GYTS survey of 2001 revealed that 55% of students in the 13 to 15 age-group consumed some form of tobacco; while 18% smoked cigarettes, 38% used other forms of tobacco like Gutka. A huge prospective bank of chemically dependent is being groomed, and worryingly, there is no concerted effort underway to wean the young away from tobacco and nothing effective on the field to prevent more to enter their teens with a taste for tobacco. Agreed, the sale of Gutka and even paan masalas is banned, but it's no secret that these can still be procured. There are laws against smoking in public places or selling tobacco products to minors, but save some select public spaces, the former is lightly monitored and no one has really bothered with the latter provision with any consistency. With this data, the worrying absence of social involvement and people's initiatives in Sikkim gets reinforced. Tobacco use among the young is not a challenge that governments can surmount, this, like most other aspects of social conduct, this needs the initiative and involvement of the people and people's groups.

Why are so many of the young turning to tobacco?

An obvious reason is because they are in an age when they experiment and are trying out tobacco because they can do so easily. Then there is peer pressure which converts still more and from there on it's a snowball effect. The GYTS data reveals that 70% of the tobacco users among the surveyed teens lived in homes where others smoked. It can thus be safely vouched that they also ran errands for the smokers in the family like fetching cigarettes from the neighbourhood doka. It was only a matter of time before they siphon away one stick for themselves. There are two things wrong in this picture- one, it suggests that smoking is okay since children can be sent to buy cigarettes, and two, despite a standing law against selling cigarettes to minors, parents and elders themselves compromise its implementation. National statistics reveal that 56.2% of the minors who bought cigarettes from a shop were not refused purchase because of their age. This number would be even higher in Sikkim where one has never seen a teen being turned away. What is also worrying is that one in four smokers in the 13 to 15 years age-band wants to quit, but doesn't know how and don't know where to access help. The national data reveals that 95% of the smokers never received help to quit smoking even though 67% of the teen smokers want to quit and 67% actually tried on their own! More than 70% of these young smokers know the harmful effects of smoking, and yet, as the data reveals, most remain hooked. We are messing up too much with very young minds with our indifference.

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# Amanda Gorman's Poetry Shows Why Spoken Word Belongs in School

THECONVERSATION.COM

Not long after Amanda Gorman recited one of her poems at the inauguration of President Joe Biden on Jan. 20, three of her forthcoming books skyrocketed to three of the top four spots on Amazon. She was also selected to recite an original poem for Super Bowl LV. Here, three scholars of poetry explain why the writings of the 22-year-old Gorman – who became the country's national youth poet laureate at age 17 – and her rise to fame represent a prime opportunity for educators to use spoken word poetry as a lively way to engage students.

WENDY R. WILLIAMS, assistant professor of English at Arizona State University

During my research studying a diverse group of spoken word poets in Arizona, I learned that adolescents improved their writing skills, academic performance, confidence and social skills through writing and performing spoken word poetry. The poets used this medium to heal, advocate for change and imagine new futures.

I noticed that these brave young writers often delivered stunning lines, such as, “If I sit long enough in a dark room will I develop like film?” They used poetry to talk back to those who wronged them. And they used this medium to speak out about injustice. As one adolescent poet in the study wrote, “We live in a first-world country, yet inner-city kids still go hungry.”

Although spoken word poetry can benefit adolescents in many ways, K-12 education has been relatively slow to embrace this medium. This is unfortunate, because spoken word poetry and other creative forms of writing such as songs, short films, animated works and comics can help young people gain important skills necessary to do college-level writing.

Spoken word poetry has enormous potential in K-12 education. Teachers can use this medium to honor students' languages and cultures, encourage authentic writing and build community. Spoken word poetry also aligns to many of the writing, speaking and listening goals that are outlined in the Common Core State Standards, a set of learning goals for K-12 students. For example, writing and performing spoken word poetry aligns to the goal to “write... for a range of tasks, purposes and audiences.”

Bringing spoken word poetry into the classroom does not need to be difficult or time-consuming. Teachers could start by showing short videos of works by Amanda Gorman, Jamaica Osorio, Prince Ea and other ethnically diverse spoken word poets. After listening to and discussing some of these poems, students could write about their own concerns and hopes for the future. They might also have the option to perform in a small poetry slam.

At a slam, poets perform with attention to volume, rhythm and gestures while audience members respond with supportive snaps and comments. Many adolescents enjoy performing their poetry, as competitions such as Louder Than a Bomb and Brave New Voices demonstrate.

Young people have important ideas to express. They need to be taken seriously as writers and given the support, tools and platforms necessary to make their voices heard.

KATHLEEN M. ALLEY, associate professor of literacy at Mississippi State University

When I heard Amanda Gorman recite her poem, “The Hill We Climb,” at President Biden's inauguration, I instantly decided to throw my plans for the week out the window. I hope

teachers throughout the nation will similarly be willing to put their regular lesson plans aside in order to seize the opportunity to use the poetry of Gorman to engage with students who are not much younger in age.

I am a teacher-educator, which means I help prepare the teachers of the future. My students are on track to become elementary and middle school teachers in about a year.

The first thing I did with my students was to simply savor Gorman's words. I wanted my students to think about what those words meant to each of us personally, and to use them as a vehicle for conversation about writing instruction.

Her poem is an incredible example of spoken word poetry – a form of poetry that is rooted in oral traditions and performance. Spoken word encompasses elements of rap, hip-hop, storytelling, theater and more. It is characterized by rhyme, repetition, word play and improvisation. It often touches on issues of social justice, politics, race and community. It holds the promise of helping young people to connect with ideas as well as providing a means to deepen comprehension and develop understanding and empathy, which can then be applied to real-world situations. One of the most powerful things poetry can do is to refocus, if not transform, people's point of view.

In my class, after sharing a video of Gorman reciting her poem at the inauguration, I asked my students to consider how they'd discuss the poem with elementary and middle-grade students. How would they “teach” this poem?

We discussed how we could help students make connections between this moment in history, the poet's message and their own lives. We talked about how elementary

and middle school students might use Gorman's poem as inspiration to write their own poems of place and time.

MUKOMA WA NGUGI, associate professor of literatures in English at Cornell University

Jonathan Kozol in “Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools,” narrates how, as a newly minted teacher working in a poor, inner-city, mostly Black school in the 1960s, he taught Langston Hughes' poem “Harlem” and how one of the children “began to cry” when she first heard the line, “What happens to a dream deferred?”

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?

He writes, “The next day, I was fired because Hughes was regarded as ‘inflammatory.’” I often go back to that moment when I think of poetry in a classroom and the power of words. What is it that the young girl heard in the poem that moved her to tears?

As educators, sometimes we kill poetry as we tease out metaphors, symbols and line breaks. But at best, poetry in a classroom gives us a way to reflect and be in the world at the same time. It gives emotional backbone to the intellectual.

If a country were a classroom, even when a poem might not heal it, it can suture it. It can be balm, waiting to heal, if only we can listen. A good poem understands that is not going to happen today, it says – listen! And it regrets its necessity, that its hunger is both promise and regret. How does a poem hope, dream and speak to a country built on an original sin of slavery?

In Amanda Gorman's poem there were echoes of Maya Angelou's “Still I Rise” that itself became a song by Ben Harper, and Sam Cooke's “A Change Is Gonna Come.” Her poem is balm and promise.

# Trump Impeachment Trial: Decades of Research Show language can incite violence

KURT BRADDOCK

THECONVERSATION.COM

Senators, acting in the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump that begins on Feb. 9, will soon have to decide whether to convict the former president for inciting a deadly, violent insurrection at the Capitol building on Jan. 6.

A majority of House members, including 10 Republicans, took the first step in the two-step impeachment process in January. They voted to impeach Trump, for “incitement of insurrection.” Their resolution states that he “willfully made statements that, in context, encourage – and foreseeably resulted in – lawless action at the Capitol, such as: ‘if you don't fight like hell you're not going to have a country anymore.’”

Impeachment proceedings that consider incitement to insurrection are rare in American history. Yet dozens of legislators – including some Republicans – say that Trump's actions leading up to the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol contributed to an attempted insurrection against American democracy itself.

Such claims against Trump are complicated. Rather than wage direct war against sitting U.S. representatives, Trump is accused of using language to motivate others to do so. Some have countered that the connection between President Trump's words and the violence of Jan. 6 is too tenuous, too abstract, too indirect to be considered viable.

However, decades of research on social influence, persuasion and psychology show that the messages that people encounter heavily influence their decisions to engage in certain behaviors.

HOW IT WORKS

The research shows that the messages people consume affect their behaviors in three ways.

First, when a person encounters a message that advocates a behavior, that person is likely to believe that the behavior will have positive results. This is particularly true if the speaker of that message is liked or trusted by the target of the message.

Second, when these messages communicate positive beliefs or attitudes about a behavior – as when our friends told us that smoking was “cool” when we were teenagers – message targets come to believe that those they care about would



approve of their engaging in the behavior or would engage in the behavior themselves.

Finally, when those messages contain language that highlights the target's ability to perform a behavior, as when a president tells raucous supporters that they have the power to overturn an election, they develop the belief that they can actually carry out that behavior.

Consider something we have all encountered in a more lighthearted context – messages designed to motivate exercise. These messages often tell us one (or more) of three things. They tell us that exercise will lead to positive outcomes – “You will get physically fit!” They tell us that others exercise or would approve of our taking part in exercise – “Work out with a friend!” And they tell us that it is within our power to begin an exercise program – “Anybody can do it!”

In this context, these messages are likely to increase the message target's likelihood of exercising.

Unfortunately, as we saw on Jan. 6, these principles of persuasion apply to less benign behaviors as well.

HOW TRUMP DID IT

Now let us return to what happened in Washington on Jan. 6.

Even in the weeks before the election, Trump's rhetoric was belligerent. His campaign solicited supporters to “enlist” in the “Army for Trump” to help reellect him. Following the election and in

the lead-up to the attack on the Capitol, President Trump made repeated false claims of election fraud, arguing that something needed to be done to remedy the alleged fraud. His language often took an aggressive tone, suggesting that his supporters must “fight” to preserve the integrity of the election.

By inundating his supporters with these lies, Trump made two key beliefs acceptable to his followers. First, that aggression against those accused of trying to undermine his “victory” is an acceptable and useful means of political action. Second, that aggressive, possibly violent attitudes against Trump's political adversaries are common among all his supporters.

WORDS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

In the weeks following the election, allies of President Trump, including Rudy Giuliani, Republican U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, GOP Sens. Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley and others, only reinforced these beliefs among Trump supporters by perpetuating his lies.

With these beliefs and attitudes in place, Trump's Jan. 6 speech outside the White House served as a key accelerator to the attack by sparking the raucous crowd to action.

In his pre-attack speech, Trump said that he and his followers should “fight like hell” against “bad people.” He said that they would “walk down Pennsylvania Avenue” to give Republican legislators the boldness they need to “take back the country.” He said that “this is a time for strength” and that the crowd was beholden to “very different rules” than would normally be called for.

Less than two hours after these words were spoken, violent insurrectionists and domestic terrorists breached the Capitol.

In the case of Donald Trump, the relationship between words and actions never seems clear. But make no mistake, there is a scientifically valid case for incitement.

Decades of research have demonstrated that language affects our behaviors – words have consequences. And when those words champion aggression, make violence acceptable and embolden audiences to action, incidents like the insurrection at the Capitol are the result.

[the writer is Assistant Professor of Public Communication, American University School of Communication]

## Centre should withdraw farm laws: Naveen Patnaik's party spells out stand

**NEW DELHI, 08 FEB [NDTV]:** Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal today demanded that the Centre withdraw the contentious farm laws that have set off a storm among the farmers in the country. Referring to the ongoing protest by lakhs of farmers at the borders of Delhi for over two months, BJD's Pinaki Mishra told NDTV, "This crisis has arisen due to unilateral bulldozing on behalf of the government".

"Our demand is that the government withdraw all the three laws and bring new agricultural reform bills again and send them to the Standing Committee or a Select Committee so a fresh discussion can be held on them," BJD's Pinaki Mishra told NDTV today.

"This has always been our demand," added the MP from Puri. "If the three new laws had already been sent to the Select Committee or a Standing Committee, there would have been a discussion in detail. Then this movement would not have stood today," he added.

This is the first public statement opposing the laws from the party led by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, which has so far lent issue-based support to the Centre.

The BJD had initially supported the proposed farm bills in the Lok Sabha, but ahead of their passing in the Rajya Sabha, the party had opposed the bills, taking everyone by surprise.

The bills had made it through the upper house by voice vote amid unprecedented uproar and protests. The opposition claimed the government did not have the numbers and there was rampant violation of rules to help the BJP.

In September last year, the BJD had formed a panel of its MPs, MLAs and farm leaders to study the provisions of three new farm sector legislations.

Addressing the party MLAs ahead of the monsoon session of the state assembly, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had said, "In both houses of Parliament, BJD raised its concerns regarding protection of farmers interest in the farmers' Bills and suggested deliberation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee".

The farm unions of the state, however, had not been happy with the government's failure to spell out its stand, calling its opposition to the bills "half-hearted".

Even before the beginning of the Budget session in parliament, the matter was not discussed in the BJD Parliamentary Party meeting.

The state government had earlier issued an ordinance and later introduced three bills in the state assembly in line with the central legislations. The bills are, however, yet to come up for discussion in the assembly.

## Sent 2.5 lakh names for Centre's farm scheme: Mamata Banerjee counters PM

**KOLKATA, 08 FEB [PTI]:** A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi slammed the Trinamool Government for not implementing central schemes in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday told the Assembly that her government has sent to the Centre names of 2.5 lakh farmers, who are eligible for benefits under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

She sought to know why the Union government has not disbursed any cash benefit to the beneficiaries as yet.

Ms Banerjee told the House that the state government had received a list of six lakh applicants from the Centre for verification, of which 2.5 lakh names have been sent to the Centre for financial assistance under the central welfare programme.

She also said that her government would float 19 industrial projects in the state, entailing



an investment of ₹ 72,200 crore, and create 3.29 lakh employment opportunities.

The CM was responding to questions raised by the members of the House during a debate on a vote-on-account that she had presented on February 5.

With state elections round the corner, Ms Banerjee had presented a vote-on-account for ₹ 2.99 lakh crore in the Assembly and made a slew of announcements, including a hike in the annual aid of farmers.

The Chief Minister

has increased the annual financial assistance, under the state government's "Krishak Bandhu" scheme, to ₹ 6,000 from ₹ 5,000, keeping in mind the interest of farmers.

She said that benefits of the central scheme should be made available to the sharecroppers, along with support provided by the state to all cultivators, irrespective of their landholdings.

Under the PM Kisan scheme, ₹ 6,000 per year in three equal instalments is provided

to small and marginal farmer families having a combined landholding of up to two hectares.

Addressing a rally in Haldia on Sunday, the prime minister had assailed the state government for not implementing central schemes like Ayushman Bharat and PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.

He asserted that once the BJP forms its government in the state, it will take steps to implement all such stalled programmes at the very first cabinet meeting.

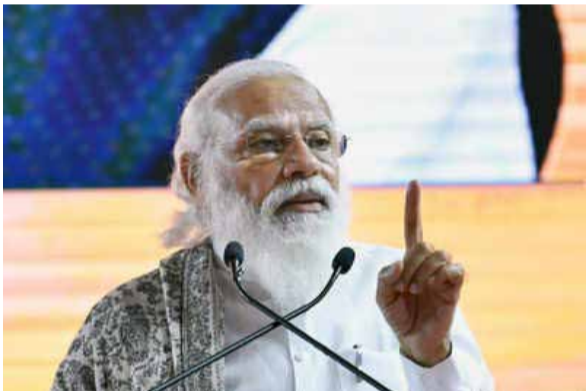
## Show "Mamta" towards farmers: Trinamool on Modi's barb

**KOLKATA, 08 FEB [PTI]:** The ruling TMC in West Bengal on Sunday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his hard-hitting comments against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and urged him to soften his stand on the ongoing stir against farm laws and show some "Mamta" (compassion) towards agitating farmers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the day made a scathing attack at the TMC government, saying it has "criminalised politics, institutionalised corruption and politicised the police" and said the people of the state expected "Mamta" from Mamata Banerjee but got "nirmamta" (cruelty) instead in the last ten years.

Reacting to PM Modi's barb, Senior TMC MP and spokesperson Saugata Roy said the people of Bengal would show the BJP "Red card during the elections".

"Instead of blaming



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Prime Minister should soften his stand on farmers issue and show some "Mamta" towards the agitating farmers, who are protesting for the last 70 days.

"So many farmers have died, but we could not see Modiji's "Mamta". When so many people died during demonetisation in 2016, we did not see any "Mamta" from him. The less he talks about "Mamta", the better it will be," Mr Roy said.

While speaking about PM Modi claiming that "people will show "Ram Card" as the

TMC government has committed several fouls", he said the people of Bengal would show "red card to the BJP in the assembly polls".

Referring to allegations that Ms Banerjee losses her cool after hearing "Bharat Mata ki Jai" slogans, he said these are baseless allegations.

"Mamata Banerjee has never lost her cool on hearing "Bharat Mata ki Jai" slogans. It was when political-religious slogans such as "Jai Shri Ram" are raised she gets angry. It is completely justified," he said.

Senior TMC leader and MP Sukhendu

Sekhar Roy said when Uttarakhand's people are battling calamity, PM Modi was busy doing politics in West Bengal.

The CPI(M) leadership denied the allegations of "match-fixing" between them and the TMC and said it is the Trinamool Congress that has helped the saffron party grow in Bengal.

"Why are both the TMC and the BJP bothered about the CPI (M)? Both have said that the Left has ceased to exist in Bengal.

"The Left has never compromised with the TMC in Bengal, it is the BJP which had an alliance with the Trinamool Congress till a few years back," CPI(M) Legislative party leader Sujan Chakraborty said.

## China expresses concern over evolving political situation in Nepal following House dissolution

**KATHMANDU, FEB 8 [MYREPUBLICA]:** China has expressed concern over the evolving political situation in Nepal following the dissolution of the House of Representatives.

In a recent telephone conversation between Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, the two ministers exchanged views on Nepal's domestic situation, according to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

Wang, who is also China's State Councilor, told Gyawali that his country adheres to the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and respects the development path chosen by the Nepali people, reads the press statement.

"As a friendly neighbor, China hopes that all parties and factions in Nepal will bear in mind the fundamental and long-term interests of the country and its people, seek common ground while shelving differences, and maintain unity and stability, so as to create favorable conditions and environment for its own development and prosperity," the Chinese Foreign Ministry says.

The two foreign ministers also discussed cooperation on the

COVID-19 pandemic between the two countries.

According to Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chinese FM Wang announced to provide 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal.

During the conversation, Wang Yi said that since the outbreak of COVID-19, China and Nepal have helped each other, strived to work together to defeat the virus, and carried out sound cooperation in the anti-virus fight.

"China has been earnestly fulfilling President Xi Jinping's commitment to making Chinese COVID-19 vaccines a global public good. China attaches great importance to Nepal's urgent need of COVID-19 vaccines and has decided to provide the first batch of vaccine aid for Nepal and to facilitate its purchase of vaccines," Wang has been quoted by the Chinese Foreign Ministry as saying during the conversation.

Wang also recalled Chinese President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Nepal in 2019 and said that the visit lifted the bilateral relations to a new level.

"At the end of last year, President Xi Jinping and President Bidya Devi Bhandari exchanged letters and jointly announced the

new height of Mount Qomolangma, sending a positive signal about the time-honored friendship and thriving relations between the two countries to the outside world. The two sides should continue to make every effort to implement the results of Xi's visit to Nepal and promote the continuous development of China-Nepal relations," reads the press statement.

During the conversation, FM Gyawali said that Nepal and China are all-weather friends. "Nepal appreciates China's support for it in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will continue to firmly adhere to the one-China principle and will never allow any forces to engage in anti-China activities in Nepal," the ministry quoted the minister as saying during the conversation.

On the occasion, Gyawali also praised China's timely and valuable vaccine aid to Nepal, and said Nepal stands ready to continue to deepen anti-pandemic cooperation with China. "Nepal is ready to work with China to well implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, deepen cooperation in various fields and push for further development of bilateral relations," Gyawali told Wang.

### Odisha reports 72 new COVID-19 cases, one more fatality

**BHUBANESWAR, FEB 8 (PTI):** Odisha's COVID-19 tally mounted to 3,35,692 on Monday as 72 more people tested positive for the infection, while one fresh fatality pushed the death toll to 1,910, a health department official said.

Of the new cases, 44 were reported from quarantine centres and 28 detected during contact tracing.

Sundargarh recorded the highest number of fresh cases at 11, followed by Puri (8) and Mayurbhanj (7).

Eleven other districts - Boudh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Kendrapara, keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nayagarh and Nabarangpur - did not register any new case in the last 24 hours.

"Kandhamal and

Malkangiri have become COVID free with no active cases in these districts," the official said.

Taking to Twitter, the Health and Family Welfare department said, "Regret to inform the demise of 74-year-old female COVID positive patient of Balasore district, who was also suffering from hypertension."

## Rs 50-crore racket run by Chinese busted, 3 Indians held



**HYDERABAD, FEB 8 (PTI):** An online racket involving two Chinese nationals was busted with the arrest of three Indians who allegedly duped around 20,000 people across the country to the tune of Rs 50 crores by offering huge returns on investments, police said on Monday.

The trio, along with the absconding Chinese, was accused of enticing the public by offering 4.5 times returns on deposits in 90 days, Cyberabad

Commissioner of Police V C Sajjanar said.

Acting on a complaint by a depositor, a case was registered and the Indians were arrested in Haryana and Delhi, the police said.

One of the Chinese nationals left India and did not return while the other had never come to India. They, along with the trio, launched an app and started cheating people, according to police.

Explaining the modus

operandi, police said the accused through different WhatsApp Admins across the country shared the information about the app inviting investments/deposits in their three schemes assuring 4.5 times returns on the deposits in 90 days.

The gullible depositors, having got attracted towards the schemes, shared their personal and bank details through a link received on their registered phone number, the police said. Subsequently, the app was shut down, they said.

Investigation revealed that the money/deposits paid by the depositors were credited to the bank accounts of fraudulent Indian companies registered with a payment gateway through various Chinese websites, they said.

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# Phil Foden bewitches Liverpool: this is the best young player in England

**BARNEY RONAY**  
**LONDON, 08 FEB**  
**[THEGUARDIAN]:** Let us take a moment to consider Phil Foden's surging run. Never mind for now the goal he would score 10 minutes later to kill this game. Park that exhilarating, high-craft goal. OK, stop looking at the goal for a moment.

Focus instead on the surging run to make the goal that broke this game open. It was a run that came at the end of passage of woeful Liverpool defending, but which was all the more thrillingly pure in its execution as a result, the game of football clearing its throat and letting out a perfect pitch C note.

Foden has always been an excellent dribbler. Dribbling is probably the wrong word. He glides and feints. When he beats his man it is an expression of greater balance and superior touch, a man who is simply better friends with the ball, the angles, gravity.

With 73 minutes gone and the score 1-1 at Anfield Foden took the ball from Alisson's shanked clearance on the left of the Liverpool area. There were two players in front of him: the captain of Liverpool and the best left-back in the league.

Foden surged, swayed and pressed the throttle. There was no sense of show or flamboyance. This was cold. It was merciless



opportunism, hidden in a lovely little miniature of fine-point skill.

Either way, he basically walked straight through those two red shirts, then nudged the perfect pass for Ilkay Gündogan to poach his second goal of the game and make the score 2-1.

At this point, and before we are allowed to consider Foden's goal 13 minutes later – stop looking at the wonderful, captivating goal – it is worth noting his previous surging run.

This came three minutes earlier. It was Fabinho again. This time Foden spun away from him on the left, prodded the ball past, then reached down into that newly honed acceleration, drawing Fabinho into a panicked grab of the shirt and a yellow card.

Fabinho looked a little

fried in that moment. Oh dear. It turns out this twirling little nightmare of technique and finesse can turn on the thrusters too – product, according to Jamie Carragher on Sky Sports, of training with a sprint coach.

Foden had been neat and quietly menacing until those final 20 minutes. From that Fabinho grab onwards he was irresistible, a 20-year-old who just looks ready now, whose emergence has been perfectly managed – a riposte to those who, as with Thomas Tuchel, have summoned up the tired old coming-over-here-neglecting-the-English-lads trope.

The game had been tight and even quite turgid in the first half. Anfield has been Pep Guardiola's cursed earth, a ground he calls “that place”, venue for more

defeats than any other in his managerial career. In recent years Guardiola has tended to blink here, to fiddle with his team. This time he went with the structure that has taken City a long way down what is now a 14-game winning streak: inverted full-backs, false nine, no space behind on the flanks.

The opening 20 minutes were tight, flat and contained. Foden touched the ball four times. Guardiola watched quietly, resplendent in ribbed beanie hat and fluffy gothic-glamour scarf, a look that said: ‘I am confident here. I feel calmly expressive. I possibly also have a cold neck.’

After half-time City shifted to a 4-4-2, with a little-man-little-man strike duo of Foden and Bernardo Silva.

Within three minutes they had scored. It came from Raheem Sterling, who had already earned City a first-half penalty (Gündogan missed it) by erasing Trent Alexander-Arnold with a waggle of his hips.

This was a reconstruction, Sterling swaying past Liverpool's right-back like a man avoiding a traffic cone on a busy pavement, then releasing the ball. Foden's shot was well saved by Alisson, the rebound tucked in by Gündogan.

And yes, OK we can talk about that Foden goal now. There were seven minutes to go, City were 3-1 up, Sterling having added a third. Gabriel Jesus floated a pass out to Foden on the right.

This time he feinted to go outside, jinked inside, then spanked a shot hard and flat past Alisson and into the net. There was joy even in the way Foden just kept on running as the ball left his foot, perfectly balanced in his celebratory sprint.

Some things were settled here. Liverpool need a minor sporting miracle to catch the league leaders now. Best of all, there was an outline at Anfield of the clean, clear, pressure-hardened talent of City's academy kid: the best young player in England, and currently playing a major hand in what would be an era-clinching league title.

## Harry Kane's return lifts Jose Mourinho as Tottenham end losing streak



**LONDON, 08 FEB**  
**[AFP]:** Harry Kane returned from injury to ease the pressure on Jose Mourinho as the Tottenham striker inspired a 2-0 win against West Bromwich Albion on Sunday. Mourinho's side had lost their previous three Premier League games to put their top four hopes in peril. Revitalised by Kane's earlier than expected return from an ankle problem suffered against Liverpool, Tottenham got back to winning ways just when the under-fire Mourinho needed it most. Kane had missed the last two games, but he made up for lost time by opening the scoring in the second half at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Kane's 20th goal in all competitions this season took him to 208 goals in 317 Tottenham appearances -- level in joint second place alongside Bobby Smith in the club's all-time scoring list. The England captain's milestone goal was followed by a Son Heung-min strike moments later that killed off West Brom.

Amid criticism of Mourinho's negative tactics and talk of rifts with several players, there is a long way to go before seventh-placed Tottenham are

completely back on track.

Only three wins from the last 12 league games before this weekend -- the same sequence that saw Mourinho's predecessor Mauricio Pochettino sacked -- had left the Portuguese coach in the spotlight.

But, in the midst of Mourinho's winter of discontent, this was a small step in the right direction as snow flurries swirled around frozen north London.

Thursday's defeat against Chelsea condemned Mourinho to consecutive home league defeats for the first time as a manager.

- Classy Kane - In the circumstances, second bottom West Brom were ideal opponents for Tottenham to end their dismal decline.

Kane showed the class that Tottenham miss in his absence when he spun away from his marker and delivered a pin-point pass that Son couldn't convert.

Inevitably at the heart of all Tottenham's best moments, Kane was inches away from opening the scoring, taking Serge Aurier's pass in stride and firing just wide.

There was a little sign of rustiness when Kane shot wide from Son's pass, but he was back

involved moments later when his blocked effort was nearly scrambled in by Lucas Moura.

Shifting Lucas's pass into his right, Kane looked more like his old self when he unleashed a fierce strike that Sam Johnstone pushed away.

Johnstone made an even better save to keep out Aurier's close-range diving header.

After being outplayed for the entire first half, West Brom's Mbaye Diagne threatened to give the visitors a shock lead when his header almost squirmed away from Tottenham keeper Hugo Lloris.

Kane's defence-splitting pass sent Son racing through on goal, but again Johnstone rescued Albion with a good stop.

Tottenham's incessant pressure finally paid off in the 54th minute as Kane beat the offside trap to collect Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's pass before guiding a low shot into the far corner.

Four minutes later, Son wrapped up the points after a rapier thrust from Mourinho's men.

Taking Kane's lay-off, Lucas ran from deep inside his own half to the Albion area and picked out Son, whose clinical finish took him to 17 goals in all competitions this term.

# Manchester City thrash Liverpool to end 18-year Anfield hoodoo

**LIVERPOOL, FEB 8**  
**(AP):** The fireworks being set off behind the Kop provided a flashback to last season's Premier League trophy celebrations. But little on the Anfield pitch suggested these were the champions in action.

Jürgen Klopp's side appears a faded force preparing to relinquish the title, highly possibly to Manchester City after being beaten 4-1 by the leaders on Sunday.

After going 68 games unbeaten on home soil, Liverpool has now lost three in a row for the first time in 58 years.

And it's City with a five-point lead. Not over Liverpool but Manchester United and with a game in hand. Liverpool has slipped 10 points off the pace in a league it dominated to win by 18 points last season and led last month, now just clinging onto the fourth Champions League place.

Leicester moved three points ahead of Liverpool in third after drawing 0-0 with Wolverhampton. Chelsea is within a point of Liverpool after maintaining the revival under Thomas Tuchel with a 2-1 victory at Sheffield United.

And Tottenham is only four points from fourth place after ending a three-game losing run by beating West Bromwich 2-0.



On a freezing day across England, Klopp could only figure that the icy conditions were to blame for a blundering performance by goalkeeper Alisson Becker that proved so costly.

“Maybe he had cold feet?” Klopp said.

“It sounds funny but it could be.”

Liverpool had been spared falling behind in the first half when Ilkay Gündogan struck a penalty into the empty Kop. Gündogan did find the net at the other end four minutes into the second half when Phil Foden's close-range shot was parried by Alisson into his path.

Liverpool needed energizing. Perhaps that's why the fans shut out of the stadium during the coronavirus pandemic lit up the skies with fireworks, seven months after they celebrated the end of a 30-year title drought with pyrotechnics here.

And Mohamed Salah gave a route back into the game by doing what Gündogan couldn't do by

scoring a penalty in front of the Kop after being brought down by Ruben Dias.

The team's top scorer played his part. But the usually reliable barrier in the goal did not.

Alisson cleared directly to Phil Foden, who set up Gündogan to score into an empty net for 2-1.

Another lapse followed. City midfielder Bernardo Silva intercepted a feeble clearance by Alisson and lifted the ball over the goalkeeper for Raheem Sterling to head over the line.

“These two goals were a killer,” Klopp said.

“Tonight it was decisive. That's OK as he (has) saved our lives I don't know how often. He is absolutely a world class goalie. Something went wrong but we have to take that.”

It was the power of Foden's shot that beat Alisson rather than any mistake that allowed City to complete its first victory at Anfield since 2003.

“Hopefully next time we can do a similar performance with

spectators because Anfield with people in and without is different,” Guardiola said.

“I could imagine at 1-1 how much they could influence the players.

“But especially when we missed the penalty and conceded a goal, how good we reacted. Everyone took a step forward. Ilkay and Sterling made an incredible game.”

It extended City's unbeaten run in all competitions to 14 matches to turn the season around. It was only 35 days earlier that a 3-1 win at Chelsea took City to fifth, four points behind then-leader Liverpool with a game in hand.

**CHELSEA RECOVERY** City's victory at Stamford Bridge contributed to Frank Lampard being fired two weeks ago. Since Tuchel took charge, the west London club has now won three, drawn once and is yet to concede from an opposition player.

It was only Antonio

## Underway at Australian Open: Serena Williams wins easily

**MELBOURNE, FEB 8**  
**(AP):** Serena Williams had a wobbly start at the Australian Open for one game.

After briefly falling behind, Williams swept 10 consecutive games and beat Laura Siegemund 6-1, 6-1 on the first day of the tournament Monday.

The victory marked the start of Williams' latest bid for a record-tying 24th major title, and as she left the court, she flexed her biceps.

“This was a good start vintage ‘Rena,’ she said. “It's definitely good. I'm pretty good at pacing myself at a Grand Slam.

Williams wore a colorful one-legged catsuit, and her game looked flashy, too. She lost only nine points on her serve and hit 16 winners.

Her sister, Venus, won a Grand Slam match for the first time since 2019. Playing in her 21st Australian Open, the elder Williams beat Kirsten Flipkens 7-5, 6-2.

At 40, Venus is the oldest woman in this year's draw and just the

sixth player in her 40s to compete at the Australian Open.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, who won the title in Melbourne two years ago, played the opening match in Rod Laver Arena and beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 6-2.

The first tournament of this year's Grand Slam season began after a three-week delay because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Physically I feel like everyone, their bodies are shocked, coming in and playing so suddenly after such a long break, Osaka said. I think we're all getting used to it and everyone is just happy to be here.

That includes the Williams sisters.

“Listen, this is amazing,” Serena said. “Last year was very scary for the world. To be able to do what I love and be able to come out and compete . . . it makes me appreciate the moment even more.

Canadian Rebecca Marino, a former top-40 player competing in a Grand Slam event for the

first time in eight years, beat wild-card entry Kimberly Birrell 6-0, 7-6 (9). Marino was sidelined by depression and a serious foot injury.

In early men's play, No. 14-seeded Milos Raonic defeated Federico Coria 6-3, 6-3, 6-2. American Reilly Opelka hit 18 aces and beat Lu Yen-hsun 6-3, 7-6 (2), 6-3.

Serena Williams overpowered Siegemund, moved well and saved one of her best shots for the final game, racing forward to flip an off-balance backhand off her shoestrings for a cross-court winner.

For the past four years, Williams has been trying to equal Australian Margaret Court's record of 24 major titles. Williams' most recent Grand Slam championship came at Melbourne in 2017.

Osaka drew a potential tough opening opponent in Pavlyuchenkova, a Russian ranked 39th who reached the quarterfinals in Melbourne three of the past four years.

# Israeli PM pleads not guilty as corruption trial resumes

JERUSALEM (AP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pleaded not guilty on Monday as his trial on corruption charges resumed in a Jerusalem courtroom just weeks before national elections in which he hopes to extend his 12-year rule.

Netanyahu was indicted last year for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. In recent months, Israelis have held weekly protests calling on him to resign over the charges and criticizing his government's response to the coronavirus crisis. Protesters gathered outside the courthouse could be heard inside the room where the hearing was being held.

He stands accused of accepting lavish gifts from wealthy friends and offering to grant favors to powerful media moguls in exchange for favorable coverage of him and his family. The latest hearing was postponed last month due to lockdown restrictions on public gatherings.

Israel's longest serving leader is also the first sitting prime minister to go on trial for corruption. Israeli law requires Cabinet ministers to resign when charged with criminal offenses, but does not specifically address the case of a prime minister under indictment.

Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing and has dismissed

the charges against him as a "witch-hunt" orchestrated by biased law enforcement and media. He has refused to step down and has used his office as a bully pulpit against critics and the criminal justice system.

At Monday's hearing, Netanyahu's lawyers submitted a written response pleading not guilty. They then argued against the cases on procedural grounds, saying the attorney general had not properly approved the investigations in writing.

After around 20 minutes, Netanyahu left the courtroom without explanation and his motorcade departed.

The hearing continued in his absence, with his lawyers arguing for more than an hour that constitutional procedures had not been followed. The judges appeared skeptical and repeatedly called on the defense lawyers to wrap it up. The prosecution then rejected those arguments, saying the attorney general had approved the investigations in dozens of meetings.

Outside the courthouse, around 150 protesters chanted against Netanyahu. Many carried banners reading "Crime Minister."

"We want a new government, a clean government, no corruption" said Sharon Sagy, a protester. "We don't want Bibi



Netanyahu, we want him to go, he needs to go," she said, using his nickname.

At the start of his trial last May, Netanyahu was flanked by a cohort of Likud party allies as he railed against the media, police, judges and prosecutors. He said the trial aimed to "depose a strong, right-wing prime minister, and thus remove the nationalist camp from the leadership of the country for many years."

Netanyahu has served as Israel's prime minister since 2009, and in the past two years has managed to hang onto power through three tumultuous, deadlocked elections. His flimsy ruling coalition collapsed in December, and he now faces a major battle for reelection in March 23 parliamentary elections.

Netanyahu hopes to campaign on having

pulled the country out of the pandemic through one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns. He boasts of having personally secured millions of doses from major drug makers, allowing Israel to vaccinate more than a third of its population of 9.3 million. He hopes to vaccinate the entire adult population by late March.

But his government has faced heavy criticism for other aspects of its response to the crisis. The country is only now starting to emerge from its third nationwide lockdown, and the closures have sent unemployment skyrocketing.

An emergency government formed last May to combat the coronavirus outbreak has been mired in bickering. The country's leaders have struggled to enact

consistent policies and repeatedly accused each other of playing politics with the pandemic. Israel has meanwhile reported nearly 700,000 cases since the outbreak began, including 5,121 deaths.

One major controversy concerns Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, many of whom have openly flouted restrictions on public gatherings. Netanyahu will need the ultra-Orthodox parties to form a ruling coalition, and his critics accuse him of turning a blind eye to their violations.

Polls show Netanyahu's Likud winning the most seats but struggling to form a 61-seat majority coalition in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. The margin of victory could be extremely tight, potentially allowing a small, fringe party to decide who heads the next government.

## Mysterious monolith pops up near Turkish World Heritage site

ISTANBUL (AP): Turkish authorities are investigating the appearance of a mysterious monolith in southeastern Turkey.

The metal block was found by a farmer on Friday in Sanliurfa province with old Turkic script that reads "Look at the sky, see the moon."

The monolith, 3 meters high (about 10 feet), was discovered near the UNESCO World Heritage site named GobekliTepe, which has megalithic structures dating to the 10th millennium B.C., thousands of years before Stonehenge.

Turkish media reported Sunday that

gendarmes were looking through CCTV footage and investigating vehicles that may have transported the monolith.

Other mysterious monoliths have popped up and some have disappeared in numerous countries in recent months.

## Utah police: Avalanche killed 4 local backcountry skiers

SALT LAKE CITY (AP): Four backcountry skiers in their 20s died when one of the deadliest avalanches in Utah history hit a popular canyon, police said Sunday.

Four other people also were buried in the Saturday slide but managed to dig themselves out and didn't suffer serious injuries, according to Unified Police of Salt Lake County.

The skiers were from two separate groups, and all eight had prepared with the necessary avalanche safety gear, authorities said.

The four killed were all from the Salt Lake City area, not far the spot where they were swept up by the skier-triggered avalanche in Millcreek Canyon.

Intermountain Life Flight helicopter pilot Richard Dobson told the Salt Lake Tribune that one person was conducting CPR on another of the skiers when they arrived at the site of the avalanche.

"Our backcountry outdoor community is very connected so this type of loss touches many people and really is heartbreaking," Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson said. "These are people who love doing what they did and lived life to the fullest."

Three of the deceased were identified as Salt Lake City residents:

Louis Holian and Stephanie Hopkins, both 26, and Thomas Louis Steinbrecher, 23. The fourth, 29-year-old Sarah Moughamian was from the suburb of Sandy, Utah.

Jill Moughamian told the Deseret News that her daughter, a market researcher, loved the outdoors and grew up "playing in the mountains and climbing trees" as she kept up with her brothers.

She said her daughter found "the two loves of her life" in Utah — her soulmate, who dug her out of the snow but could not resuscitate her, and the outdoors.

"All of them were beautiful people who love the outdoors," Anthony Nocella, a friend of Holian, told the News. "People in the community are really missing them."

Holian "did whatever he wanted to do. He lived life to the fullest," Nocella said. "He's amazing. Everyone is going to miss him. Everyone is going to miss those four people."

They were experienced skiers who were well known in the community, Drew Hardesty with the Utah Avalanche Center told the Tribune.

The avalanche danger around Salt Lake was high on Saturday, the center said as it tweeted out a warning hours before the avalanche.

A faint distress call

alerted police to the slide shortly before noon on Saturday. The survivors found their four companions and dug them out, but they were already dead, police said.

The avalanche was "incredibly wide," Wilson said, and still-unstable snow conditions kept rescuers from immediately recovering the bodies Saturday. Recovery operations resumed Sunday morning.

Avalanches have also claimed other lives in recent days: the bodies of three hikers were found near Anchorage, Alaska, on Thursday. In Colorado, four backcountry skiers died in two separate slides in the last week.

Avalanche forecasters and search-and-rescue groups have been worried for weeks that more people would be venturing into the backcountry to avoid crowds and reservation systems at ski resorts during the coronavirus pandemic.

This winter is on track to be deadlier for avalanches than last year's. Numbers gathered by the Colorado Avalanche Information Center show 21 people have died so far this year in the U.S., 15 of them skiers. There are still more than two months left in the season.

A total of 23 people, including eight skiers, died the previous winter between December and April, the agency found.

# Week after military coup, protests swell rapidly in Myanmar



YANGON, FEB 8 (AP): A protest against Myanmar's one-week-old military government swelled rapidly on Monday morning as opposition to the coup grew increasingly bold.

The protesters at a major downtown Yangon intersection chanted slogans, raised a three-finger salute and carried placards saying Reject the military coup and Justice for Myanmar.

Starting with a few hundred people, the crowd exceeded a thousand by midmorning and cars passing by honked their horns in solidarity.

Some smaller groups broke off from the main protest and headed to the Sule Pagoda, a past rallying point for major protests against previous ruling juntas. Monday's action followed a protest Sunday involving tens of thousands of people demonstrating to

demand the release of deposed leader Aung San SuuKyi and other top figures from her National League for Democracy party.

The growing protests are a sharp reminder of the long and bloody struggle for democracy in a country that the military ruled directly for more than five decades before loosening its grip in 2012. SuuKyi's government, which won a landslide election in 2015, was the first led by civilians in decades, though its power was limited by a military-drafted constitution.

During Myanmar's years of isolation under military rule, the golden-domed Sule Pagoda served as a rallying point for political protests calling for democracy, most notably in during a massive 1988

uprising and again during a 2007 revolt led by Buddhist monks.

The military used deadly force to end both of those uprisings, with estimates of hundreds if not thousands killed in 1988. While riot police have watched the protests this past week, soldiers have been absent and there have been no reports of clashes.

Several videos posted online Sunday that were said to be from the town of Myawaddy, on Myanmar's eastern border with Thailand, showed police shooting into the air in an evident effort to disperse a crowd. There were no signs of panic and no reports of injuries.

Showing little fear, protest crowds have grown bigger and bolder in recent

days, while remaining nonviolent in support of a call by SuuKyi's party and its allies for civil disobedience.

An intermittent communication blockade in recent days was a stark reminder of the progress Myanmar is in danger of losing. During Myanmar's decades of military rule, the country was internationally isolated and communication with the outside world strictly controlled.

The elected lawmakers of SuuKyi's party met in an online meeting Friday to declare themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of the people and asked for international recognition as the country's government.

The military has accused SuuKyi's government of failing to act on its complaints that

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# Amanda Gorman, in a first, brings poetry to Super Bowl

**NEW YORK (AP):** Amanda Gorman, the 22-year-old poet who stirred America at the inauguration of President Joe Biden last month, again commanded the spotlight on one of the country's biggest stages, the Super Bowl. Gorman read an original poem Sunday during the pregame festivities in Tampa, Florida. The poem, titled "Chorus of the Captains," was a tribute to three people for their contributions during the pandemic: educator Trimaine Davis, nurse manager Suzie Dorner and Marine veteran James Martin.

Gorman didn't perform on the field but appeared in a taped video message that combined Gorman's reading with images of Davis, Dorner and Martin. Recited Gorman:

**"Let us walk with these warriors, Charge on with these champions, And carry forth the call of our captains. We celebrate them by acting, With courage and compassion, By doing what is right and just. For while we honor them today, It is they who every day honor us."**

That Gorman brought poetry to the Super Bowl was an almost unthinkable collision of grace and glitz. But if the Super Bowl, an annual rite of excess, was an unlikely platform for a poet, it showed just how much Gorman has



seized the nation's spotlight since the inauguration.

Gorman, previously the country's first National Youth Poet Laureate, was the youngest person to ever recite a poem at the U.S. presidential inauguration. Her reading of "The Hill We Climb" at the Capitol immediately became a sensation. An illustrated book of her poem quickly zoomed to the top of bestseller lists. Shortly after the inauguration, she signed with IMG Models, an agency that represents supermodels, tennis star Naomi Osaka and playwright Jeremy O. Harris. This week, she covers Time Magazine, in an interview

conducted by Michelle Obama.

Gorman's Super Bowl appearance had been planned before the inauguration. She seemed to grasp the unlikeliness of her pre-game reading, the first in Super Bowl history. And with potentially 100 million viewers on the CBS telecast, it made for one very well-attended poetry recital.

"Poetry at the Super Bowl is a feat for art and our country, because it means we're thinking imaginatively about human connection even when we feel siloed," Gorman said Sunday on Twitter. "I'll honor three heroes who exemplify the best of this effort. Here's to them, to poetry and to a Super Bowl like no other."



**TEAM SPIRIT!** Celeb Olivia Culpo showed off her Super Bowl style as she wore a jersey and shorts while chilling on a hotel balcony in Tampa, Florida, ahead of the game.

## Jailed rapper Casanova disciplined for video dance challenge



**VALHALLA, N.Y. (AP):** Rapper Casanova, who is jailed in New York in a gang-related federal racketeering case, is facing disciplinary charges over a dance challenge video posted on social media.

The 34-year-old rapper, whose legal name is Caswell Senior, will be disciplined by officials at the Westchester County Jail after a woman recorded him accepting the so-called Junebug challenge during a video visit, the Journal News reported.

The challenge asks TikTok users to perform a set of moves in the strangest location they can think of. The woman recorded Casanova dancing in jail and posted it on Instagram, the newspaper reported.

Westchester County Correction Commissioner Joseph Spano said correction officials have revoked Casanova's video visitation privileges because recording videos and taking pictures during a virtual visit is prohibited.

"I'm happy to say we don't have a lot of issues with video visits because inmates know it's a privilege, not a right," Spano said.

Casanova faces another charge for not wearing a mask, authorities said.

Casanova's attorney, James Kousouros, noted that his client was not the one who posted the video and said he hopes the matter can be resolved without Casanova being cut off from video visits, the only way he can see his loved ones during the coronavirus pandemic. Kousouros said Casanova was just "trying to keep his spirits up and have a laugh."

Casanova was among 18 alleged members of the Untouchable Gorilla Stone Nation gang charged in a federal indictment in December with a host of crimes in New York City and elsewhere in New York state. Casanova has pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit racketeering, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances and firearms possession.

## Vikram Bhatt collaborates with Mahesh Bhatt for horror film 'Cold', says will reinvent genre

**MUMBAI, FEB 8 (PTI):** Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt on Monday announced his next horror film, "Cold", featuring actors Akshay Oberoi and Anisha Pahuja.

"Cold" is written by filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt and Suhrita Sen Gupta.

The film reunites Vikram Bhatt and Mahesh Bhatt, almost two decades after the latter wrote the hit horror film, "Raaz". According to the makers, "Cold" chronicles the story of a woman who emerges from a horrific time and throws light on how she survives alone in a big city, surrounded by the danger of losing her life.

Vikram Bhatt, known for directing horror films like "Raaz" and "1920", said his aim with "Cold" is to reinvent the genre.

"The world has gone through a harrowing time in the past one year and there is a need for a collective catharsis and 'Cold' is going to provide the viewers with that..."

"I am going to reinvent the horror genre with my mentor Mahesh Bhatt twenty years after 'Raaz', once again with 'Cold.' I promise the scariest ride in our cinema till date," he said in a statement.

The first shooting schedule of the film has commenced in Mumbai.

"Cold" is produced by Krishna Bhatt and Amar Thakkar via their banner Loneranger.

## Pak authorities, owners of ancestral houses of Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor urged to settle property rate

**PESHAWAR, FEB 8 (PTI):** Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the owners of the ancestral houses of legendary Bollywood actors Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor have been urged to reach a settlement over the rate fixed for the purchase of the two historic buildings for converting them into museums.

Faisal Farooqi, a Peshawar-based spokesman for Dilip Kumar, told reporters here on Sunday that Peshawar lives in the heart of the Indian legendary actor and that he always discusses his association and sweet memories with his birth place and the ancestral home in Mohallah Khudadad where he was born in 1922 before being shifted to India in 1935.

The family and the fans of the Indian film legends were very enthusiastic over the provincial government's decision to convert the two historic buildings into museums to honour the Bollywood legends and preserve their contribution to the Indian cinema, he said.

Farooqi said that preserving the ancestral houses of the legendary actors will not only promote importance of

Peshawar but also strengthen Pakistan's tourism industry.

The provincial government early this month approved the release of Rs 2.35 crore to purchase the ancestral houses of the two legendary actors located in the heart of this city.

The price of Dilip Kumar's four marla (101 square metre) house has been fixed at Rs 80.56 lakh (USD 50,517) while that of Raj Kapoor's six marla house (151.75 square metre) at Rs 1.50 crore (USD 94,061).

After the procurement, both the houses will be converted into museums by the archaeology department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

However, the owners of the ancestral houses have refused to sell the buildings at the rate fixed by the provincial government, saying the prime location property has been severely undervalued.

The owner of Dilip Kumar's ancestral house has demanded Rs 25 crore for the property.

The owner, Haji Lal Muhammad, said he had purchased the property in 2005 for Rs 51 lakh after completing all formalities required for the transfer

of the land and possesses all the documents of the house.

He said it is unjust on part of the government to fix the rate at Rs 80.56 lakh for the property after 16 years.

The owner of the ancestral house of Raj Kapoor demanded Rs 200 crore for the property in Peshawar. The government, however, has fixed the rate at Rs 1.50 crore.

Raj Kapoor's ancestral home, known as Kapoor Haveli, is situated in the fabled Qissa Khwani Bazar. It was built between 1918 and 1922 by the legendary actor's grandfather Dewan Basheswarnath Kapoor.

Raj Kapoor and his uncle Trilok Kapoor were born in the house. The building, which is in shambles, has been declared a national heritage by the provincial government.

The owners of the two buildings have made several attempts in the past to demolish them for constructing commercial plazas in view of their prime location but all such moves were stopped as the archaeology department wanted to preserve them, keeping in view their historic importance.

### ARIES:

The waning moon is oft synonymous with melancholy as it is known to bring our shadows to the fore. Pay attention to what's coming up for you, Aries. Chances are, you're dealing with a lot of anger right now—anger that you may have suppressed in the deep recesses of your subconscious. Without judging or attaching a story to these emotions, learn to watch the fluctuations with a strange sense of detachment. Letting go of the blame narrative will help you write a brand new story.

### TAURUS:

You can spend hours replaying what happened and wondering how you can fix it. But, the truth is nobody can go back to the past—not even you. What you have access to at this point is only a fraction of the big picture. So come back to the present, Taurus. Come back to yourself. This moment is the only one you have dominion over. Make it worth your while.

### GEMINI:

Remember the things that awakened your sense of joy and creativity as a child? Remember the things that gave you a reason to wake up with a spring in your step each morning? What made you part ways with them, Gemini? Has it improved the quality of your life like you imagined it would? If you answered in the negative, you know what you have to do, wild one. Today, you're being asked to make your way back to yourself. Following the

path of passion is the secret to finding true happiness.

### CANCER:

Remember the things that awakened your inherent creativity as a child and helped you traverse to wonderland? What if the things you love are anything but random? What if they are a part of your purpose, which is in turn helping you fulfil your sacred contract? Today, the cards are urging you to cancel your subscription to adulthood and dedicate yourself to things that awaken joy and playfulness. Overheard at the cosmic conference: laughter is known to be the best medicine.

### LEO:

This is a challenging time in the Leo HQ. You could be feeling a sense of stagnation despite your best efforts to move forward. What do you do at a time like this? Do you give up on your dreams or continue to soldier on? Something tells you you have the grit to stand up in the face of adversities, and the courage to defy your limitations. Remember to focus on the long term vision as you do. This will help you look beyond the current fluctuations in your reality.

### VIRGO:

Virgo, you're surrounded by people who are operating from a space of fear. Fear that isn't allowing them to move or recognise their true potential. So, beware of letting them guide you or influence your decisions. You know who you are. You know what you have come here to do. So, continue to let your inner compass guide you, even if the path ahead seems unclear every now and then.

### LIBRA:

Given that we're moving closer and closer to the dark moon, you could be coming face to face with your shadows. There is no denying that there is a lot of suppressed pain and trauma here, Libra. But holding on to it won't make your life any better. So, be fully present to what's coming up without judging it or attaching a story to the emotions. Work on forgiving your past with the energy of gratitude and love. Remember, when you shift your vibration, nothing in your outer reality can remain the same.

### SCORPIO:

No, it isn't all about you, Scorpio. There's more than one side to each story. So, instead of being so fixated on yours, listen to what the other person has to say with an open heart and mind. The energy of compassion will help you bring about a massive shift in your relationship.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Sometimes, everything seems right on paper. Yet, you're unable to forge a connection in the real world for reasons that are beyond your comprehension. Maybe this isn't the tragic take you're making it out to be, Sagittarius. Maybe the Universe is trying to tell you something you're not quite ready to hear. PS: Building a friendship with them—one that's free of the burden of

expectations—may not be such a bad idea.

### CAPRICORN:

You're caught up in your head, Capricorn, and it's beginning to show in everything you say and do. You always have two options: to let your monkey mind take you into a downward spiral, or to let the Universe intervene and set things right for you. PS: Learning to stay in the present will solve 99% percent of your problems.

### AQUARIUS:

This is a time of transitions, Aquarius. A time of moving from the troubled waters to calmer shores. You're leaving it all behind. The anger, the sadness, the resentment, and the melancholy too. Remember, there's nothing you can do to change the past. So, accept what your experiences are trying to teach you as you vow to stay in the present.

### PISCES:

You've spent way too many years playing the role of people-pleaser and following the rules that were set by other people. However, this didn't bring you anything more than momentary pleasure. What it did is make you lose that connection with your most authentic self. Today, the cards are urging you to take charge of your story. To ask yourself what brings you joy and what awakens your inherent creativity. Not everybody is going to understand the journey you're meant to take on in this lifetime, and that's okay. This is your chance to follow the path of happiness anyway.