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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Former leader of insurgent group in Meghalaya killed during raid at home

GUWAHATI, 13 AUG [NDTV]: A former leader of the insurgent group Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council was killed during a raid at his home in Shillong, the Meghalaya Police said. Cheristerfield Thangkhiew was killed in defensive firing, the police added.

The police said they raided his house on Thursday night based on evidence that he was involved in a blast at Laitumkhrah. Thangkhiew had surrendered in October 2018. "When the police team tried to enter his (Thangkhiew's) house, he attacked the team with a knife in an attempt to escape. The police team exerting the right to defend fired a single round, which hit him," the police said in a statement.

"He was immediately rushed to the Civil Hospital, Shillong for medical assistance but unfortunately, he succumbed to his injuries," the police statement said.

"Incriminating evidence have been seized from the residence of the surrendered cadre including a firearm and a knife. Two more individuals have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the case," the statement said.

Two people were injured when a low-intensity blast went off at Laitumkhrah in Meghalaya's capital Shillong on Tuesday. According to Meghalaya Police, the improvised explosive device (IED) was planted near a tea shop at the parking lot of the busy market.

The insurgent group had claimed responsibility for the blast.

CM returns after 13-day Mumbai-Delhi tour

SHEKHAR KHAWAS

GANGTOK, 13 AUG:

Chief Minister PS Tamang returned to the state today after completing a 13-day tour of Mumbai and New Delhi.

He was accompanied on the tour by Ministers BS Panth, Dr MK Sharma, his Political Secretary Jacob Khaling, Chairperson Pabitra Bhandari and Prakash Chettri (Principal Chief Engineer, Tourism).

The CM was received at the Bagdogra airport by the Confidential Secretary to CM, Bikash Basnett, ADC Development East, Radha Pradhan, Officials of Home, Tourism and IPR Departments.

Addressing a press conference later today, the CM said that his tour of Mumbai and New Delhi was fruitful, especially his meeting with the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

During the meeting, which lasted for about 20 minutes, the CM informed that he apprised the Prime Minister of various long-standing central demands, including the res-



ervation of Assembly seats for Limboo-Tamang communities, recognition of the remaining 12 left-out communities as Scheduled Tribe and the arrival of 17th Karmapa Gyen Trinley Dorje in Sikkim. He also informed that he submitted a copy of the resolution passed by the State As-

sembly on the LT seat reservation to the PM.

The Chief Minister said that he has received a positive response from the Prime Minister regarding these demands. Speaking on the issue of Karmapa, he told reporters today that the state government was planning to send a

delegation led by Ecclesiastical Affairs Minister, Sonam Lama to visit Karmapa Gyen Trinley Dorje abroad.

During the meeting, Prime Minister Modi praised the Sikkim government, especially on its handling of Covid-19, he said.

During his visit to Delhi,

the Chief Minister also met Home Minister Amit Shah and other Ministers and placed various demands.

Stating that the visit to Mumbai was also fruitful, the CM said that the construction work of Sikkim House in Navi Mumbai will start soon. He said that the government

has decided to build a Sikkim House in Mumbai since a lot of Sikkimese cancer patients visit the city of treatment. For this, the Maharashtra government has provided an acre of land at a reasonable price of Rs 12 crore which has been paid and construction will soon begin, said the CM.

"During this 13-day visit, a lot has been done in the interest of Sikkim and Sikkimese, but the opposition is accusing the government of not doing anything," he said. He alleged that Sikkimese are being misled by the opposition who are making non-issues an issue.

On One Nation One Ration Card Scheme, the CM said that it is not a right but a scheme which would not affect Article 371F of the Constitution.

Those who feel that One Nation One Ration Card scheme is a threat to Article 371F should surrender their Indian passport, the CM said.

Asked about the demand of the newly formed Sikkimey Nagaarik Samaj that this controversial **turn to pg02**

CM meets Sikkimese patients in Delhi, provides financial aid



NEW DELHI, 13 AUG (IPR):

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang met patients from Sikkim who are currently undergoing medical treatment in New Delhi on 12 August.

He interacted with them and addressed their individual grievances and provided funds from the Chief Minister's Discretionary Grant

(CMDG) in addition to the advance given by the Health Department depending on case to case basis. He also provided some financial assistance on his personal behalf and assured of further assistance if required. He hoped and wished they recover soon and enjoy the best health for many years to come.

Sikkim records more recoveries than new Covid cases for eighth consecutive day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 AUG:

Sikkim again recorded more recoveries than new Covid cases today with 202 people making full recoveries while 150 others testing positive in the last 24 hours. Sikkim has recorded more recoveries than new cases since 05 August.

The Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim issued by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department informs that the number of recovered Covid cases in Sikkim has further improved to 25,441, keeping the State's recovery rate at above 90% [90.4%] for the second consecutive day for the first time in the second wave which has been around since 22 April.

As of today, Sikkim registered a seven-day average of daily cases at 107. A month back, on 13 July, the State had recorded a seven-day average of 174. Infections, the records suggests, have been coming down.

With these high numbers of re-

coveries, the count of active cases has slid to 2,345.

As per the report there was no new COVID death in the last 24 hours in the State and the Covid toll holds at 360.

Of the 150 new cases, 33 were registered in East District, 36 in West District and 81 in South District.

These 150 fresh cases were reported from the testing of 1,379 samples on Thursday giving the state a daily test positivity rate of 10.8%.

While 80 people were found positive for COVID-19 in RT-PCR testing of 744 samples, 70 more were detected in rapid antigen testing of 623 samples.

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 has now reached 28,425.

Eight new COVID patients were admitted to hospital in the past 24 hours, while seven COVID patients were under treatment in ICU facilities at STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

Agri Minister reaches Soreng-Chakung, attends token distribution prog



SORENG, 13 AUG [IPR]:

Agriculture Minister LN Sharma arrived at Soreng-Chakung constituency today as part of his constituency-wise after completing his tour of Daramdin this afternoon.

The Minister addressed an Awareness-cum-Token Distribution Programme in the special presence of the area MLA, Aditya Golay, at the Community Hall, Soreng.

The programme also had the presence of Press Advisor to HCM CP Sharma, Chairman Agriculture and Horticulture Board CK Rana, Chairman SAABCO JB Subba, Secretary Agriculture Rinzing C Bhutia, Secretary AH&VS Dr Sangey D Bhutia, Director Horticulture SK Tamang, Additional Political Secretary to HCM (West) Madhusudan **turn to pg02**

Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 to begin this weekend

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 13 AUG:

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Sikkim, has announced plans to organize Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 at the district and village levels as part of the "Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav-India@75" in Sikkim.

Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 is scheduled to be begin from South District on 14 and 15 August at Namchi, followed by West District on 21 August at Gyalshing and then for North District on 28 August at Mangan and finally for East District on 04 September at Gangtok.

The nationwide programme was launched by Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports, Anurag Thakur and Minister of State of Youth Affairs & Sports, Nisith Pramanik virtually today.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, NYKS, Sikkim Director, Sibashish Banerjee, informed that the Run at district-level will have 75 run-



ners or whatever number the district administration allows.

He added that clubs affiliated to NYKS will also organize runs at their respective villages simultaneously with the district-level or on the day of their convenience.

He informed that the run at the district-level will be around seven-kilometer long and added that if the run was not possible at the village-level, then the club can organize any alternate physical activity.

turn to pg02

NEAR KRISHI BHAWAN
ABOVE WESTSIDE,
TADONG

MEGA SALE

**13th - 22nd
AUGUST**

Airlines can operate maximum of 72.5% pre-Covid domestic flights: Centre

NEW DELHI, 13 AUG [PTI]: Airlines can now operate a maximum of 72.5 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights instead of the 65 per cent allowed till date, the Ministry of Civil Aviation stated on Thursday.

The carriers have been operating 65 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights since July 5 according to the ministry's order. Between June 1 and July 5, the cap was at 50 per cent.

The ministry issued a fresh order on Thursday, wherein it modified the July 5 order stating that "65 per cent capacity may be read as 72.5 per cent capacity". Thursday's order also noted that the 72.5 per cent cap will "remain in place until further order".

When the government had resumed the scheduled domestic flights on May 25 last year after a two-month break, the ministry had allowed the carriers to operate not more than 33 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic services.

The cap was gradually increased to 80 per cent by December. The 80 per cent cap remained in place till June 1.

The May 28 decision to bring down the cap from 80 to 50 per cent from June 1 onwards was taken "in view of the sudden surge in the number of active COVID-19 cases across the country, decrease in passenger traffic and the passenger load (occupancy rate) factor", the ministry had said.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

Agri Minister reaches...

Sharma, Senior Officials, District In-charge, field functionaries and others.

Over 80 farming families received various tokens including Power Tiller, HDPE Coil pipe, Spice Grinder, Power Spray, Chaff Cutter, Brush Cutter, Garden Tools, Knapsack sprayer, Vegetable Collection Centre, Turmeric Grinder, Green House, Seedlings for Strawberry Cultivation, Cymbidium Orchid, Tissue Culture for Banana/ grafted Avacado, Sheep, Gattery farming and Chaff Cutter, under Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Departments. Besides, the ten families also received token of Intensive Fish Culture for Carp farming and Trout Culture in Raceway tank schemes under Directorate of Fisheries.

The Minister Lok Nath Sharma, in his address, urged the beneficiaries to value the received agricultural tools/ machines and every token and to utilise adequately for necessary purpose and provide maintenance/servicing on time.

The Minister threw light

Women's Commission organizes webinar in response to surge in cases of domestic violence

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 AUG:

The Sikkim State Commission for Women organized a webinar on "Domestic Violence - violence against women with special reference to Counseling" here today.

SSCW chairperson, Chungkipu Lepcha, emphasised the importance of conducting such webinars on issues pertaining to domestic violence as there has been a surge in the number of cases of domestic violence being reported in the state.

Dr Dilip Pandey, Dean of Sikkim Govt. Law College; Cocola Pradhan, Additional Superintendent of Police, Chimi Bhutia, Centre Administrator, One Stop Centre, East Sikkim, Navtara Sharda, Advocate High Court of Sikkim and Dr Archana Chettri, Clinical Psychologist, STNM Hospital, addressed the webinar as resource persons.

The webinar was attended students from Govt. Degree Law College, employees of all four One Stop Centres and NGO representatives.

Various provisions of the domestic violence Act and intimate partner violence were also discussed at the webinar, a press release informs.

Aspects like mental health issues and its impact on families resulting in domestic violence were also highlighted.

Various relief measures under the domestic violence act were also shared including the support system put in place by the police and also other delivery structures. The importance of proper psycho-social intervention in support of the survivors were also emphasised.

The webinar ended with a Q&A session. Youasa Lachenpa, Member Secretary, moderated the program.



Agri Minister visits Ribdi Bhareng in West Sikkim



GYALSHING/ DARAMDIN,

13 Aug [IPR]: The second day of constituency-wise field visit of the Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Departments began from remote Ribdi Bhareng Gram Panchayat Unit under Daramdin Constituency, West Sikkim, today.

Minister, Agriculture, Horticulture Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma and the Minister-cum-MLA of Daramdin Constituency, MN Sherpa, jointly visited VLW Centre and Horticulture Potato Store at Ribdi, this morning.

The Ministers were accompanied by the Secretary, Agriculture, Rinzing C Bhutia, Secretary AH&VS, Dr Sangey D Bhutia, Directors, District In-charge, officials and

field functionaries.

Mr Sharma interacted with the staff and drew attention to work with renewed vigour and dedication for the welfare of farming community and necessary maintenance of existing infrastructures. He also enquired about the absentees and directed the concerned official to take necessary action after verification.

Thereafter, the visiting team inspected the Upper Okhrey VLW Centre. Later, he stopped at Seed Potato Store nearby Anden Monastery and afterwards visited a private Dairy farm of a Progressive Farmer, Phur Tenzing Sherpa at Anden.

This was followed by visit of Collection Centre cum Horticulture Office, Rumbuk wherein the Minister interacted with the staff and encouraged

everyone to work selflessly with utmost sincerity and dedication.

Afterwards, Minister Sharma along with the entourage thoroughly visited the Buriakhop Horticulture Farm and acknowledged the hardships of field labour and further encouraged them to develop the Buriakhop Horticulture Farm as one of the Model farms in the state.

He also interacted with the staff and enquired about the ongoing activities and also suggested to bring a paradigm shift in farming sector.

Afterwards, the visiting team inspected the land of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department located at Dodak and further headed towards Soreng Constituency.

3 arrested for assaulting Muslim man on camera in UP get bail in 24 Hours

LUCKNOW, 13 AUG [NDTV]:

Three people arrested for parading a 45-year-old Muslim man in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur town through a street, assaulting him and making him chant "Jai Shri Ram" slogans have been granted bail less than 24 hours after their arrest.

The bail was granted from the police station concerned. The sections of the law applied against the accused carry less than seven years of punishment. The police said due procedure was followed and that efforts are on to nab other accused.

Distressing footage of the incident shot by locals shows the man's little daughter clinging on to him and begging the attackers to spare him. The footage also shows the man being hit while in the custody of the police.

"We have made three arrests, they are the main accused in the case. We are also trying to make more arrests in the case. Adequate forces have been deployed in the area and we will take every legal step to punish these people," Asim Arun, Police Commissioner, Kanpur, said earlier today.

After the arrest, a

mob of Bajrang Dal workers held a protest outside the concerned police station in Kanpur and left only after what they called 'assurances' from the police about a fair investigation, saying they would return if those arrested were not released soon.

"The workers of the Bajrang Dal got together and we gheraoed the SP and told them we will not leave till our worker is released. We have spoken to senior police officials who have told us the worker would be released soon and a speedy investigation would take place," Krishna, a Bajrang Dal leader had told the media last night.

The incident took place 500 metres from an intersection where the right-wing group Bajrang Dal held a meeting, where they claimed Muslims in the area were trying to convert a Hindu girl in their locality. The assault reportedly took place just after the meeting.

In a statement, the Kanpur police said they have filed a case of rioting against a local who runs a marriage band, his son, and around 10 unknown people, based on a complaint by the assaulted man.

CM returns after

scheme should be discussed in a special session of the state assembly at least once, he said that a scheme that benefits Sikkim does not need to be discussed in the Assembly. He added that ONORC will not increase influx in the state, but will stop it.

The practice of making ration cards illegally will come to an end and Sikkimese living outside the state would also benefit from the scheme, said the CM. He added that apart from the One Nation One Ration Card, several central schemes have been implemented in Sikkim.

The CM vehemently denied claims by Hamro Sikkim Party working president and former Indian football captain Bhaichung Bhutia that the SKM government is about to hand over four ministerial posts to the Bharatiya Janata Party. He clarified today that there is no such pressure from the Bharatiya Janata Party on the SKM government or party.

It may be recalled that a few days ago, Bhaichung had issued a press statement saying that the SKM government is planning on giving four ministerial posts to the BJP and was going to Delhi for the same.

When questioned by reporters about this, the CM categorically denied it. He further stated that the SKM-BJP coalition government in Sikkim is running smoothly and there are no plans to give ministerial posts to BJP.

While on his way back to Sikkim, the CM stopped at Melli and handed over relief to 17 families affected by landslides recently. Those whose houses were completely damaged were provided Rs 2 lakh, partially damaged houses were provided Rs 1 lakh, toilet/kitchen damaged Rs 1 lakh and shops damaged Rs 50,000.

The CM said that relief was provided to both Sikkimese and non-Sikkimese residing in Melli. He also directed the concerned authorities to speed up the reconstruction of the roads damaged due to the landslide.

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Fit India Freedom...

There are 727 clubs affiliated to NYKS-Sikkim, of which 423 are actively working at present.

Mr Banerjee mentioned that the main objective of the initiative was to encourage people to engage in fitness activities in their daily lives and appealed that people, especially youngsters, join the campaign.

The Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 will conclude on 02 October later this year.

"Through this campaign, citizens will be given a call to resolve to include physical activity of atleast 30 minutes in their daily life 'Fitness Ki Dose Aadha Ghanta Roz'," he said.

He informed that Fit India Freedom Run will be held in 75 Districts and at 75 villages of each district of the country till 02 October and the initiative has targeted to cover more than 7.50 crores of people.

The press conference was also addressed by Press Information Bureau, Sikkim Director, Ajay Mahamia.

I hitherto known asPRITAM KARKI CHETTRI alias PRITAM KARKI alias PRITAM CHHETRI KARKI alias PRITAMCHHETRI (KARKI) alias PRITAM KARKI CHHETRI S/o KULDIP CHHETRI KARKI residing at TIMBUBONG, SUB-DIVISION SORENG, DISTRICT WEST SIKKIM, PIN 737121, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PRITAM CHHETRI.

**BEFORE THE OATH COMMISSIONER
OF SIKKIM AT GANGTOK**

AFFIDAVIT

I, Savyata Poudyali, daughter of Shri Madan Poudyali, aged about 26 years, resident of Losing Pacheykhani, P.O. & P.S Pakyong East Sikkim do hereby solemnly affirm on oath as follows:-

1. That "Kami" is our caste and "POUDYALI" is our sub-caste.
2. That my name has been recorded as "SAVYATA POUDYALI", in my date of Birth bearing Reg "No. 1995/3634 dated 26.06.1995 and my father's name has been recorded as "MADAN POUDYALI. s/o NARAD MANI POUDYALI" in his Voter Identity card bearing Identity No. BDR0092650 and also in our relevant documents.
3. that my grandfather's name has been recorded as "NARAD KAMI" in his Sikkim Subject bearing serial no.89, Vol No. IV under Block Dickling, East Sikkim issued by the Secretary, Land Revenue Department, Government of Sikkim.
4. That this affidavit is made bonafide to declare on oath that in all the names i.e. "SAVYATA POUDYALI", "MADAN POUDYALI" "NARAD MANI POUDYALI" our title has been mention as "POUDYALI" which is a sub-caste of Kami.
5. Further, it is to declare on oath that both the names i.e. NARD MANI POUDYALI & NARAD KAMI denoted to one and the same person i.e. my grandfather.
6. That this affidavit in made bonafide and to declare the above statements on path.

**SAVYATA POUDYALI
DEPONENT.**

REMEMBERING OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS Sikkim's Helen Lepcha who was introduced to Satyagrah as Sabitri Devi by Gandhiji

KHAGENDRAMANI
PRADHAN [PIB]

Among the millions inspired by the father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi, for a cause that was greater than one's self; the cause that ultimately lead to freedom from the colonial shackles was Helen Lepcha alias Sabitri Devi, who volunteered to dedicate her life in the service of nation.

Born as the third child of Achung Lepcha among seven in the year 1902, Helen Lepcha was perhaps the only woman freedom fighter born in the State of Sikkim, the erstwhile princely kingdom. Though born in Sangmoo near Assangthang, a village that lies 15 kms from district headquarter of Namchi under South Sikkim, her family had migrated to Kurseong in West Bengal in search of better avenues for education and employment.

Inspired by the Charkha Movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi, Helen Lepcha found her calling during the flood of Bihar in 1920, where her dedicated service in relief work was brought to the notice of Babu, who not only met and praised her, but also invited her to visit Sabarmati Ashram.

On her visit to Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhiji felt that her name did not suit the spirit of the movement and hence re-christened her Sabitri Devi, the name that resonated thereafter throughout the freedom movement in the Bengal and Bihar province. With a greater respon-

sibility assigned to work in the coalfield areas of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Helen alias Sabitri Devi soon rose to win the heart and acceptance of the mass that even the colonial rulers could

presence of eminent freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi, Chitranjan Das, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and many. This not only established her as the mass leader, but also brought closer



not ignore and started strictly monitoring her activities.

During the peak of Non Co-operation movement, Sabitri Devi led a huge rally comprising of thousands of laborers from Jharia coalfield in the year 1921 at the famous Mohammed Ali Park at Calcutta, which had the

to prominent leaders of freedom struggle and assigned with further responsibilities.

Even though Sabitri Devi had to return back home during the intervening period due to deteriorating health of her mother, she could not desist herself remaining aloof from the freedom

movement and the growing resistance to foreign goods under the call from Mahatma Gandhi. No sooner she started a door to door campaign against foreign goods with the help of few Gorkha volunteers in the adjoining areas of Siliguri of Bengal. Foreign goods were collected and huge bonfires lit in public places inviting the wrath of British administration.

Sabitri Devi's also was associated with Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. During his house arrest at Giddey Pahar near Kurseong in the year 1939-40, it was through the secret messages concealed in bread from Ishan Ahmed's bakery, whose owner happened to be Sabitri Devi's husband, that his escape plan to Europe was formulated. She had personally supervised to disguise him as a Pathan with beard and moustache and made his escape possible.

In appreciation of her dedication and immense contribution to the freedom movement, the Government of India in the year 1972 honored her with a citation, a "Tamra Patra". Among many of the unsung heroes of freedom movement, the contribution of Sabitri Devi will always remain revered and reserved in the epoch of struggle for independence in the Democratic Republic of India. Sabitri Devi remained true to her belief and conviction all her life religiously following the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. She left the mortal world on 18 Aug, 1980.

Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 begins in Gangtok



GANGTOK, 13 AUG (IPR): General Secretary, Sikkim Olympic Association, Arjuna Awardee, Jasraj Pradhan, flagged off the "Fit India Freedom Run 2.0" as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav here at White Memorial Hall complex, Gangtok, today.

The programme was organised by National Service Scheme (NSS), Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim.

'Fit India Freedom Run 2.0', a nationwide programme launched today to celebrate the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' will conclude on 02 Oct, 2021. The theme of the

campaign is "fitness ki dose aadha ghanta roz." 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is a series of events organised by the Government of India to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

On the occasion, students from various schools of Sikkim participated in the run to mark the beginning of the "Fit India Freedom Run 2.0" campaign in the State.

Through this campaign, the Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim, aims to encourage the public to make fitness a part of their lifestyle

and to commit at least thirty minutes of physical activities daily in their lives as envisioned by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi.

The programme was attended by Additional Director, NSS Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Pedenla Bhutia, State Nodal Officer, NSS, Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Lalita Chhetri, Deputy Director, NSS, Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Nim Dorjee Bhutia, officials from Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Fitness Instructors and students from various schools.

LOOKING INWARD:Meditating to survive in a changing world

With a world in the throes of a mental health crisis, with record number of people reporting depression, anxiety and chronic stress across the world, more people are looking for answers within. For a journey as abstract as towards one's inner self, one needs a reliable guide, one who has made the journey. Today there are about 500 million people who meditate daily. But the question is, how effective is the practice and can it be done better, to give better outcomes? To answer this question and every other possible question about meditation on one's mind, peppered with insightful anecdotes and wisdom, comes the book-Looking Inward: Meditating to Survive in A Changing World by Swami Purnachaitanya, a Dutch-Indian yogi and a very senior Art of Living faculty, who has been teaching the art of meditation to millions of people across the world for the last 15 years.

Written in a style that is simple yet riveting, the book takes the reader deeper into the source of what causes anxiety, stress and the solutions which lie within, step-by-step, giving one a clearer understanding of the mind and its nature. Set in the backdrop of the author's journey in finding inner peace through powerful meditation practices, every chapter includes interesting anecdotes, precious insights, and a ten-minute exercise that will take you one step closer to mastering your mind and building your own meditation practice.

About the author:

Swami Purnachaitanya is an author, speaker, and spiritual guide to many around the world. He is a sought-after teacher of yoga, meditation and mantras, and an enthralling storyteller with a warm and soulful presence. Swamiji was born in the Netherlands to a Dutch father and an Indian mother, who played a central role in kindling in him a keen interest in the spiritual practices, cultures and philosophies of the East. The defining moment in his life came at the age of sixteen, when he

met Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of the Art of Living, in whom he recognized his spiritual Master.

After completing his university studies in Indology with a specialization in Sanskrit, he left the Netherlands and moved to The Art of Living International Centre in Bengaluru, India to master the Vedic knowledge, rituals and recitation of mantras and Vedic hymns. He received his title (swami, monk) as an acknowledgement of his high state of consciousness and commitment to dedicating his life to serving others. Purnachaitanya is the name given to him by his Master, meaning he whose consciousness (chaitanya) has fully blossomed (purna).

What people have said about the book:

'Your emotional health has a direct impact on your physical health. Looking Inward allows you to identify the root cause of your stress, anxiety and other negative emotions and this book will enable you to address them with the help of meditation. Its beauty lies in its simplicity and clarity of thought. A must read for anyone looking to build meditation as a practice.' - Luke Coutinho, author and wellness guru.

'In Looking Inward, Swami Purnachaitanya brings to the reader a beautiful handbook on meditation that one can safely practice and learn in their home. Given the state of the world we are in, everyone must read this book full of ancient wisdom presented in an easy-to-follow format.' - Yash Birla, Indian industrialist.

'When the world around us is in turmoil, we need to look inward. Meditation is the tool that can give us the much-needed solace and inner strength.' - Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Do let us know if you have any questions, or would like to interact with Swami Purnachaitanya pertaining to the book, spirituality and his life journey? We would be happy to set up an interaction with him.

WB Employees Federation takes Trinamool-backed panchayats under its wings



SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 13 AUG:


The West Bengal Employees Federation formed a committee today to take up the cause of the Trinamool-backed Panchayat workers in the Mirik sector. Their demands range from stabilization of their jobs, promotions and the incongruity of no vacancies opening up until an employee dies in harness.

The committee was formed at a meeting convened at the Trinamool office in Mirik attended by senior party office-bearers of the

sub-division.

Trinamool's Mirik block chairperson, Anil Chhetri, stated that the party will spare no efforts to guide the committee formed today and was confident of working out a solution at the earliest.

Similarly, acting president of West Bengal Employees Federation, Darjeeling district, Kamal Lama, informed reporters after the meeting that proper representation of panchayat employees could be ensured by coordinating with the party.


Government of India
Ministry of Ayush

DEPUTATION OF PANCHAKARMA EXPERT TO CUBA

Applications are invited from qualified Ayurveda doctors with Post Graduate Degree in Kayachikitsa/ Panchakarma from a recognized University in India for deputation under Component 3 A (a) of Centre Sector Scheme for Promotion of International Co-operation in Ayush to Panchakarma Centre established in Havana, Cuba by Ministry of Health, Cuba.

- The period of deputation will be for one year from the date of assumption of charge as Panchakarma expert in the Centre.
- Format for Application and details of deputation is available at the Ministry's website <https://www.ayush.gov.in/>.
- The completed application along with detailed CV should reach Under Secretary, (International Cooperation) Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, through proper channel Within 30 days of the publication of the advertisement. Address: AYUSH Bhawan, B-Block, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi - 110023 (India). The application can also be submitted via mail to an email id- cuba-panchakarma@goi.in
- Only eligible candidates of Indian origin will be called for interview.

davp 17201/11/0015/2122


**Education Department
Government of Sikkim
NOTICE**

Online Registration of Students for Admission to under Graduate courses in Government Colleges of Sikkim 2021-22

Registration for online admission to under graduate courses in the following Government colleges of Sikkim for the academic year 2021-22 will start from 16th August 2021 to 27th August 2021. No application shall be entertained after the specified date. Last date for the payment of fees through Online mode is 27th August 2021 (In favor of E-collection Account HRDD Payable at Gangtok) no payment shall be entertained after the specified date. Students seeking admission may apply through the website: www.sicgregistration.com / www.rusasikkim.com or through Mobile App.



(RUSA SIKKIM ADMISSION).

Sl.No	Colleges
1	Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government College, Tadong
2	Sikkim Government College, Burtuk
3	Sikkim Government Law College, Burtuk
4	Government College, Rhenock, East Sikkim
5	Sikkim Government College, Gyalshing
6	Namchi Government College, Kamrang
7	Sikkim Government Science College, Chakung
8	Govt Arts College, Mangshila
9	Government Vocational College, Dentam
10	Sikkim Institute of Science & Technology Chisopani, South Sikkim

Important dates:

I. Submission of online registration:	Date
II. Last date of registration Fees:	16 th August to 27 th August 2021
III. 1 st Merit list generation:	27 th August 2021
IV. 1 st Merit list date of admission by student	3 rd September 2021 Evening
V. Confirmed by college admission committee	6 th September to 9 th September 2021
VI. 2 nd merit list generation	10 th September to 15 th September 2021
VII. 2 nd Merit list date of admission by student	23 rd September 2021 evening
VIII. Confirmed by college admission committee	25 th September to 28 th September 2021
IX. Counselling	29 th September to 4 th October 2021
	Announce shortly

HELPLINE NUMBER: +91 740 7112039/ +91 8597398512 (From 10 am to 7 pm) or visit www.rusasikkim.com.

Note: Admission for Sikkim Government B. ed College, Soreng will be announce later.

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74, and Still Insecure

*Celebrate independence, but
never forget the partition*

Our country is 74 years old, and while we have matured as a nation in material and socio-economic indices, we, in our herd mob mentality, remain dangerously delinquent. More than seven decades old and none the wiser; 74, but still displaying a bloodlust that should have calmed down by now, advanced in age, but still with none of the empathy that maturity brings; making up with chest-thumping nationalism, what we lack by way of informed pride or clear understanding of what the Union of India is all about. In many ways, we lost the plot at the very start when our leaders started behaving like village elders, treating citizens like children and “deciding” on their behalf instead of opening up information flow and trusting the people to be able to “handle” knowledge. We still have hate mobs roving wide expanses of our country and lynch gangs primed on hair-trigger and even a party in office which lets loose its undisguised hate in public space, all this not because we are inherently evil, but because we covered up the partition in the mistaken belief that the people should be protected from the ugliness of that dark episode of our history.

Just as 15 August 1947 made us free people, it also rang home a horrific lesson of what divisive politics and intolerance can wreck. The trauma of the violent Partition, however, appears to have erased itself from public memory because that is no longer the history taught in any detail at schools, and the literature it spawned has mostly been allowed to go out of print. As a result, politics is still allowed to divide people, ideologies still shriek in intolerance and even though a majority of the people might be privately secular and tolerant, our mobs become rabid placards of reprehensible intolerance on the slightest provocation. All our current divides draw nourishment from the ease with which hate-mongers managed to not only split a people who had struggled together for Independence, but also set them upon each other. India and Pakistan, until 14 August 1947, were one country, its people, one people who had fought the British together. The struggle for Independence was not about freedom for two countries, at least not in any serious sense, until the final months. The people struggled together for a common goal of Independence. A combination of intolerance, politics and irreconcilable leadership differences split Pakistan and India away - making enemies out of fellow citizens and former colleagues and inciting a feud which keeps people apart to this day.

We swept the real lessons of the cost Independence under the carpet in a bid to “protect” people from the ugly side of freedom. All that we really managed was to play a cruel con on the entire Partition/ Independent generation. That generation - a section of which was hurting over the Partition violence and struggling with the challenges of survival as refugees and the rest of whom were swept by jubilation of being free – forgot to remind their leaders and future generations of what it meant to be one people. As a result, the fiction of ingrained hate and instinctive paranoia took over and we continue to find justifications to kill fellow citizens, continue to sponsor leaders who peddle reprehensible hate and have otherwise sensible people become scary nationalists on the slightest provocation. That perhaps is the price one has to pay when politics is allowed to define identities and opportunists allowed to set priorities. As the I-Day jubiliations wind down, we should resolve to remember the horrors of Partition and every communal madness that took place since then. Then, the people should demand better from their leaders, and themselves.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Climate Repair: Three Things We Must Do Now to Stabilise the Planet

DAVID KING & JANE LICHTENSTEIN
theconversation.com

“Nowhere is safe.” As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned in a recent report that climate change and its consequences are here to stay, is there still an opportunity to mitigate some of the dangers and to get back to a place of relative safety for humanity?

The challenge of surviving the next 50 years is now seen as a planet-wide existential crisis; we need to work together urgently, just to secure a short-term future for human civilisation. Global weather patterns are violently disrupted: Greece burns; the south of England floods; Texas has had its coldest weather ever, while California and Australia suffer apocalyptic wild fires. All of these violent, record-breaking events are a direct result of rapid heating in the Arctic - occurring faster than in the rest of the world. A warm Arctic triggers new ocean and air currents that change the weather for everyone.

The only way to reverse some of these catastrophic patterns, and to regain a kind of stability in climate and weather systems, is “climate repair” – a strategy we call “reduce, remove, repair” – which demands that we make very rapid progress to net zero global emissions; that there is massive, active removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere; and, in the first instance, that we refreeze the Earth’s poles and glaciers to correct the wild weather patterns, slow down ice-melt, stabilise sea level, and break the feedback loops that relentlessly accelerate global warming. There are no either/or options.

REDUCING EMISSIONS

About 70% of world economies have net zero emissions commitments over varying timescales, but this has come too late to restore climate stability.

The IPCC has asked for accelerated progress on this trajectory, but whatever happens, current emission rates of atmospheric greenhouse gases imply global warming of 1.5°C by 2030 and well over 2°C above pre-industrial level by the end of the century – a devastating outcome. In particular, melting ice and thawing permafrost are considered inevitable even if rapid and deep CO2 emissions reductions are achieved, with sea-level rise to continue for centuries as a result. In every area of the world, climate events will become more severe and more frequent, whether flooding, heating, coastal erosion or fires.

There are definitely important steps that can still reduce the scale of this devastation, including faster and deeper emissions reductions. However, this is not enough on its own to avert the worst. Together there is real evidence that the massive removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and solutions such as repairing the Earth’s poles and glaciers could help humanity find a survivable way out of this crisis.

REMOVING GREENHOUSE GASES

Taking CO2 and equivalent greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere, with the aim of getting back to 350ppm (parts per million) by 2100, involves

creating new CO2 “sinks” – long-term stores from which CO2 cannot escape. Sinks operate at many scales, with forest planting, mangrove restoration, wetland and peat preservation all crucially important.

Very large projects, such as the restoration of the Loess Plateau in China demonstrate scalable CO2 removal, with multiple add-on benefits of food production, bio-diversity enhancement and weather stabilisation.

Habitat restoration can also make economic sense. In the Philippines, mangrove is the focus of a cost-benefit analysis. Mangrove captures four times more carbon than the same area of rainforest, provides numerous ecosystem services and protects against flooding, conferring socio-economic benefits and significantly reducing the cost of dealing with extreme weather events.

Big new carbon sinks must be created wherever safely possible, including in the oceans. Interventions that mimic natural processes, known to operate safely “in the wild”, are a workable starting point. Promotion of ocean pastures to restore ocean diversity and fish and whale stocks to the levels last seen 300 years ago is one such possibility – offering new sustainable food sources for humans, as well as contributing to climate ecosystem services and carbon sinks.

In nature, sprinklings of iron-rich dust blow from deserts or volcanic eruptions, onto the surface of deep oceans, generating – in a matter of months – rich ocean pastures, teeming fish stocks and an array of marine wildlife. Studies of ocean kelp regeneration show the full range of real-life impacts, from increased protein sources for human consumption, to restoration of pre-industrial levels of ocean biodiversity and productivity, and extensive carbon sequestration.

Extending the scale and number of ocean pastures could be achieved by systematically scattering iron-rich dust onto target areas in oceans around the world. The approach is intuitively scalable, and could sequester perhaps 30 billion tons per year of CO2 if 3% or so of the world’s deep oceans were to be treated annually.

Largescale carbon-sink creation of this kind is pivotal if the atmosphere is to return to pre-industrial CO2 levels. A billion tons per year of sequestration is the minimum threshold coordinated by the Centre for Climate Repair at Cambridge given the intensity of the climate crisis. While the scale of intervention is sometimes called “geoengineering”, the approach is closer to forest planting or mangrove restoration. The aim is to remove CO2 from the atmosphere using natural means, to return us to pre-industrial levels within a single generation.

REPAIRING THE PLANET

The immediate challenge is to stabilise the planet, achieving a manageable equilibrium that gives a last chance to shift to renewable energy and towards a circular global economy, with new norms in urban, rural and ocean management. “Repairing” systematically seeks to draw the Earth back from climate tipping points (which, by definition, cannot happen without direct effort), provid-

ing a supporting framework in which “reduce” and “restore” can happen. Political and societal will is needed.

The most urgent effort is to refreeze the Arctic, interrupting a bleak spiral of accelerating ice loss, sea-level rise - and the acceleration of climate change and violent global weather changes that they cause. Arctic temperatures have risen much faster (and increasingly so) than global average temperatures, when compared with pre-industrial levels. Figure 1 shows this clearly from 1850 to the present day.

Melting Arctic ice embodies a powerful feedback force in climate change. White ice reflects the Sun’s energy away from the Earth before it can heat the surface. This is known as the albedo effect. As ice melts, dark-blue seawater absorbs increasing amounts of the Sun’s energy, warming increases, and ever-larger areas of ice disappear each summer, expanding the acceleration. Arctic temperatures govern winds, ocean currents and weather systems across the globe.

A tipping point is passing; sea-ice loss is becoming permanent and accelerating; Greenland ice will follow and will eventually raise global sea-levels by over seven metres. Total loss may take centuries but, decade by decade, there will be relentless incremental impacts. By mid-century the melting will be irreversible, and sea-level rise alone will leave low-lying countries like Vietnam in desperate circumstances, with reductions to global rice production a certainty, many millions of climate refugees and no obvious pathway forward for such nations.

The rapid Arctic temperature increase is matched by the rapid and accelerating loss in minimum (summer) sea-ice volume (Figure 2), which further accelerates the temperature rise in a spiral of reinforcing feedback loops.

It is vital to pivot the world back from this ice-melt tipping point, and to repair the Arctic as rapidly as possible. Marine cloud brightening in which floating solar-powered pumps spray salt upwards to brighten clouds and create a reflective barrier between the Sun and the ocean, is known to cool ocean surfaces and is a promising way to promote Arctic summer cooling. It mimics nature, and can be scaled up or down in a flexible way. Studies of marine cloud brightening, its climate impacts and interactions with human systems, are underway.

As with promotion of ocean pastures, such solutions must be critically analysed, but there is no longer any doubt of their crucial importance.

What we do in the next five years determines the viability of humanity’s future. Even if we narrow our aspirations to “survival”, fixing on a timescale of 50 years or so, the challenges are daunting. Humanity deserves better. We know what to do to be able to imagine thousands of years of human civilisation ahead, as well as behind us.

[David King is Founder and Chair, Centre for Climate Repair at Cambridge, University of Cambridge; Jane Lichtenstein is Associate, Centre for Climate Repair at Cambridge, University of Cambridge]

Prince Andrew: The Monarchy Has a Long History of Dismissing Women’s Suffering

LAURA CLANCY
theconversation.com

Prince Andrew has repeatedly denied claims of sexual assault, stemming from his friendship with convicted sex offender and underage sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Now, he faces a civil lawsuit in New York by Epstein accuser Virginia Giuffre, who claims Andrew sexually assaulted her three times.

There are conflicting accounts of how much assistance Andrew has given to the investigation. In January 2020, then-New York attorney general Geoffrey Berman said the prince had given “zero cooperation”. The same month, the Metropolitan Police were criticised for rejecting freedom of information requests that could help establish Andrew’s whereabouts on the night that Giuffre accused him of assault.

Rather than giving formal evidence, Andrew was interviewed by BBC’s Newsnight in November 2019. The sit-down was staged within Buckingham Palace – very much within the royal fold. Despite the intention to “prove” his innocence, his assertions became increasingly far-fetched, including a spurious Pizza Express alibi and a medical condition that prevents perspiration, to undermine the allegation that he was “dripping with sweat” after dancing.

The interview was met with widespread derision, and he eventually resigned from public duties for the

“foreseeable future”. In July 2020, although he attended, he was not visible in photographs of his daughter Princess Beatrice’s wedding. This suggests deliberate impression management to remove the problematic individual from official royal representations.

The royal family’s behaviour and media coverage of the scandal, suggest that he is viewed as a “black sheep” in the monarchy. But, as Hannah Yelin, an expert in celebrity culture and women in the public eye, and I argued in recent research, Andrew is far from exceptional in the long history of the royal family’s treatment of women.

Andrew has been consistently dismissive and complacent about the claims made against him. In the Newsnight interview, he showed neither sympathy towards Epstein’s victims nor regret for his friendship with Epstein because “the people that I met and the opportunities that I was given ... were actually very useful”. His power and business deals appeared to take priority over concern for anyone Epstein may have hurt.

Likewise, the monarchy has been historically complacent about the patriarchal nature of the institution, and the suffering of women within it.

Consider Henry VIII. Representations of Henry VIII and his six wives are recounted in British history curricula, including the beheading of two when they failed to birth a male heir. This history is devoid of any

engagement with ideas of violence against women, patriarchy, misogyny or male entitlement. Rather, it is narrated as a quirk of historic custom; a fairy tale about the eccentric private lives of royalty.

Royal wives might not be beheaded today, but as I argue in my book *Running the Family Firm: How the Monarchy Manages its Image and Our Money*, there is still forensic interest in the contents of princesses’ wombs. Speculation about whether they are pregnant begins immediately after the wedding (for royal babies should not be born out of wedlock), and there is typically a media frenzy outside the hospital while journalists wait for the royal heir to be born.

And let’s also not forget the reports from Princess Diana and Meghan Markle about their struggles with mental health while in the monarchy. Diana said her bulimia was a sign she was “crying out for help”, but rather than dealing with her mental health she felt “the firm” merely dismissed it as her being “unstable”.

Markle told Oprah Winfrey earlier this year that she had felt suicidal, and was told by a senior official that it “wouldn’t be good for the institution” for her to seek help.

Just as the royal family prioritised the image management of hiding Andrew from official royal photographs over insisting on his co-operation with the investigation, it also seemingly put the appearance of the institution over Markle’s wellbeing. In both cases, it is

women who are suffering.

Moreover, Andrew is not the only contemporary prince consorting with notorious sexual abusers. Prince Charles had a 30-year friendship with Jimmy Savile, whose OBE for “charitable services” was not revoked even with Savile’s 214 confirmed sexual offences. Despite multiple public allegations before Savile died, Charles “led tributes” sending public condolences after his death.

CHANGING TIMES?

There have been recent shifts in the gendered history of the royal family.

The law of male-preference primogeniture, which prioritised male heirs to the throne, was altered in 2013. While is is a welcome change, it says a lot about an institution to prioritise male inheritance well into the 21st century.

Accounts positioning Andrew as a “black sheep”, giving an otherwise respectable family a bad name, erase the structural patriarchy that upholds monarchical power. Although this is best exemplified in the recent sexual abuse accusations, it is a history spanning centuries, etched into the stories that Britain tells about itself.

While Andrew should undoubtedly answer to Giuffre’s claims in court, perhaps it’s also time to ask bigger questions about the ideologies of the institution that seems to be protecting him.

[the writer is Lecturer in Media, Lancaster University]

Mamata Banerjee dismisses rumours about "Lakshmir Bhandar" scheme

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's comment came in the wake of allegations of cut money being demanded in the districts though she did not cite any specific instance.

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday dismissed rumours that all taxes need to be cleared for availing benefits of the "Lakshmir Bhandar" (Lakshmi store) scheme and said a complainant can dial her office for redressal of her grievances.

The chief minister's comment came in the wake of allegations of cut money being demanded in the districts though she did not cite any specific instance.

Addressing a press meet at the state secretariat, the chief minister said, for enrolling on the scheme the beneficiaries will only have to fill up the form at "Duare-Sarkar" (government at doorsteps) camps to be held for one month from August 16.

Around 1.6 crore people are expected to be a part of the West Bengal government scheme, which was a part of the Trinamool Congress' election manifesto, aimed at providing financial assistance to women heads of families in the



age group of 25-60 years.

Under the initiative, the state government will provide 1,000 per month to women heads of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families, and 500 to those belonging to the general category.

Asking people not to be swayed by any misinformation, Ms Banerjee said "the form for "Lakshmir Bhandar" will be free of cost and will be only available from "DuareSarkar" camps.

"There will be a unique ID given on the form which will be linked with AADHAAR. Only that form will be accept-

ed." If someone collects the form from outside, printed by any agency, that will not be accepted, the chief minister said.

Ms Banerjee said a rumour was being spread in parts of North 24 Parganas district that one has to clear taxes to avail the "Lakshmir Bhandar" scheme.

"But it is false," she said.

Women not employed in government services or permanent private-sector jobs, and not getting retirement benefits will be eligible for the scheme, she added.

"In case anyone has any complaint, she can

call the toll free number at the chief minister's office. Any grievance will be dealt with on the lines of "Didike Bolo" (tell Didi) helpline (launched two years back)," she added.

While "Lakshmir Bhandar" is a financial benefit scheme for women, the "DuareSarkar" camp was announced last year as an outreach programme.

Meanwhile, the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal assembly SuvenduAdhikari said the chief minister has broken her promise within three months of returning to power. Re-

ferring to the "Lakshmir Bhandar" scheme announced by Ms Banerjee, he said before the elections, the party had promised a minimum income for all women in West Bengal if it comes to power.

About five crore women are residing in West Bengal. but after coming to power, the number of women beneficiaries of the scheme has been reduced to 1.6 crore, he said.

MrAdhikari said the yearly outgo for the scheme will be 15,000 crore and will add to the state's debt burden to a great extent.

The chief minister further said, to reach essentials at the doorsteps of people, "Duare ration" will be launched from the day of "BhaiPhonta" (a festival when women pray for their brothers' long life and good health).

The "DuareSarkar" camp will be held till September 15 where people will get information about 18 schemes, including "SwasthaSathi", "KhadyaSathi", Caste certificate, "Sikshasree", and "Kanyashree".

Already 17,107 camps have been short-listed but the figure will rise as many areas are still submerged, she said.

Court adjourns hearing on Mamata Banerjee's plea against Nandigrampoll result till November 15

Suvendu Adhikari's lawyers submitted before the court of Justice ShampaSarkar that the legislator has approached the Supreme Court seeking transfer of the case from West Bengal.

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court on Thursday adjourned hearing of a petition moved by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, challenging the assembly poll results in Nandigram, till November 15.

SuvenduAdhikari's lawyers submitted before the court of Justice ShampaSarkar that the legislator has approached the Supreme

Court seeking transfer of the case from West Bengal. In keeping with the respondent's prayer, Justice Sarkar directed that the matter will be taken up on November 15.

Counsels representing Ms Banerjee, who has challenged the election of BJP's SuvenduAdhikari from Nandigram, submitted before the court that 5 lakh fine imposed by Justice KaushikChanda while recusing himself from hearing the case has been deposited before the appropriate forum as directed.

The court directed Ms Banerjee's lawyers to submit a compliance report in the matter by

the next date of hearing. Justice Sarkar, admitting the election plea of Ms Banerjee, had on July 14 directed that a notice be served on MrAdhikari. The matter was reassigned to the bench of Justice Sarkar by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal after Justice Chanda recused himself from hearing the Trinamoolsupremo's election petition, while imposing a fine of 5 lakh for the manner in which the recusal was sought.

According to Election Commission results, MrAdhikari defeated Ms Banerjee by a margin of 1,956 votes in Nandigram.

Malaysian leader seeks opposition backing to stay in power

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA (AP):

Embattled Malaysian Prime Minister MuhyiddinYassin acknowledged Friday he may have lost majority support in Parliament but said he will seek the backing of opposition parties to keep his government from collapsing and promised to hold elections next year.

Muhyiddin has pledged to test support for his leadership when Parliament resumes next month, but has been under increasing pressure after some governing coalition lawmakers withdrew their backing.

Muhyiddin said he could take the easy way out and resign but that no other lawmaker currently has the necessary support of a majority to be appointed by the king as the new leader. In such a case, he said, there would be no government and this would throw the country into limbo during a worsening pandemic.

Muhyiddin said he will meet opposition leaders to obtain their support in exchange for a raft of benefits, including proposals to limit the prime minister's tenure, bolster checks and balances, and offer the opposition leader a senior minister role.

"The purpose of my proposal is to enable the government to continue to function amid this epidemic with bipartisan support in Parliament," he said in a televised speech.

"I do not intend to continue to cling onto power. In this situation, it is right that the mandate be returned to the people to elect a new government when the time is right. Depending on the pandemic situation, I give a commitment that the 15th general election will be held no later than the end of July next year," he said.

Muhyiddin's announcement marked a U-turn just a week after he told Ma-

laysians he believes he still has majority support and would call for a vote of confidence in Parliament in September.

At least eight lawmakers from the United Malays National Organization, the largest party in the ruling alliance, have signed declarations withdrawing their support for the government, which is enough to cause its collapse because of its razor-thin majority. Two UMNO ministers have resigned from the Cabinet.

Under Malaysia's Constitution, the prime minister must resign if he loses majority support and the king can appoint a new leader who he believes has the confidence of Parliament. But the opposition and UMNO are split and unable to agree on who should become leader.

Muhyiddin took power in March 2020 after initiating the collapse of the former reformist government that won 2018 elections. His party joined hands with UMNO and several others to form a new government that is unstable. UMNO has been unhappy with playing second fiddle to Muhyiddin's smaller party.

He had been ruling by ordinance without legislative approval since January after suspending Parliament under a state of emergency declared to battle the coronavirus. Critics say he used the emergency, which expired Aug. 1, to avoid a vote in Parliament that would show he had lost a majority of support.

Public anger with his government has mounted after a lockdown imposed in June failed to contain the virus, with daily cases soaring above 20,000 this month. Malaysia reported 21,468 new cases on Friday, bringing its confirmed total to 1.36 million. Deaths have soared to near 12,000.

India loses 4 wickets for 70 runs, reduced to 346-7 on Day 2



LONDON (AP): India was reduced to 346-7 by lunch on Day 2 of the second test against England after losing two wickets, including overnight century-maker KL Rahul, in the opening seven balls of the first session at Lord's on Friday.

It was England's morning at the home of cricket, taking four wickets for 70 runs after India resumed on 276-3.

Rahul was out off the second ball of the morning, for 129, when he drove a loose shot straight to cover off Ollie Robinson.

AjinkyaRahane failed to add to his overnight score of 1 and departed

to the first ball he faced, edging Jimmy Anderson to Joe Root at first slip.

That reduced India to 282-5 and after Rishabh Pant entertained the crowd with some typically flashy shots — off one of them, he ran down the track and flat-batted pacer Mark Wood through extra cover for four — he swatted at the same bowler and under-edged behind for 37 off 58 balls.

And Mohammed Shami went in the next over without scoring, picking out Rory Burns in the leg side off Moeen Ali.

RavindraJadeja was unbeaten on 31 and Ishant Sharma was alongside him on 0 not out.

Security tightened across Kashmir ahead of Independence Day celebrations

Random search of vehicles and checking and frisking of people is being carried out at several places across the valley, officials said.

Srinagar: Security has been tightened in Kashmir ahead of the Independence Day celebrations as the forces are resorting to "technical surveillance" including the use of drones to monitor the situation, officials said on Friday.

Police and paramilitary forces have been deployed in strength at many places in the city and elsewhere in the Valley to thwart any attempts to disrupt the celebrations, they said.

The officials said a random search of vehicles and checking and frisking of people is being carried out at several places across the valley, especially around the venues of the August 15 functions.

They said the main function will be held at Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium and Lieutenant Governor ManojSinha will preside over it.

Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay



Kumar said all security arrangements have been put in place across the valley and the forces are on alert. "There is checking, frisking, and drone surveillance on the people. We are using technical surveillance. We will ensure an incident-free function in every district, including Srinagar," Mr Kumar told reporters.

He said people should not feel any fear and participate in the functions.

"Pakistan is always instigating militants to stop people, by carrying out terror incidents. Do not be afraid, your force is ready and we will provide security," the IGP said.

Mr Kumar was speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium where a full-

dress rehearsal took place. The function was presided over by Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole. Pole hoisted the national flag and took salute at the March past, the officials said. He also inspected the parade on the occasion, they added.

The officials said the contingents of various security forces participated in the March past. Various senior civil administration and police officers were present on the occasion, they said.

As a precautionary measure, the security forces had sealed a road link -- from Sonwar Chowk to TRC Chowk -- around the venue and the traffic was diverted via other routes, the officials said.

Mathur inaugurates 10 water ATMs' in Leh

LEH, AUG 13 (PTI): Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur on Friday inaugurated 10 water ATMs' here in a bid to considerably reduce plastic waste, officials said.

The water ATMs have been stationed at different locations across the Leh town and peripheral areas, Commissioner Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department, Ajeet Kumar Sahu said.

The Lieutenant governor directed the department to develop both Leh and Kargil cities at par with the top cleanest cities in the country.

Sahu said the water ATMs are based on ultra-filtration technology and dispense both normal and warm water on payment of prescribed charges either

through coins or smart cards.

They will function throughout the year including in extreme winters and will reduce the usage of bottled water, he said.

Mathur stressed the need for coordinated sustained efforts by all stakeholders to materialise the vision of 2050-sustainable development in Ladakh.

He said the executing agencies need to take climate changes into consideration while designing infrastructure projects in the region

Advisor UmangNarula congratulated the department on the successful deployment of the water ATMs and said they will considerably reduce plastic waste in the town.

Lieutenant Governor condemns attack J&K BJP leader's house

A three-year-old child was killed and six members of BJP leader Jasbir Singh's family were injured in the grenade attack on his house.

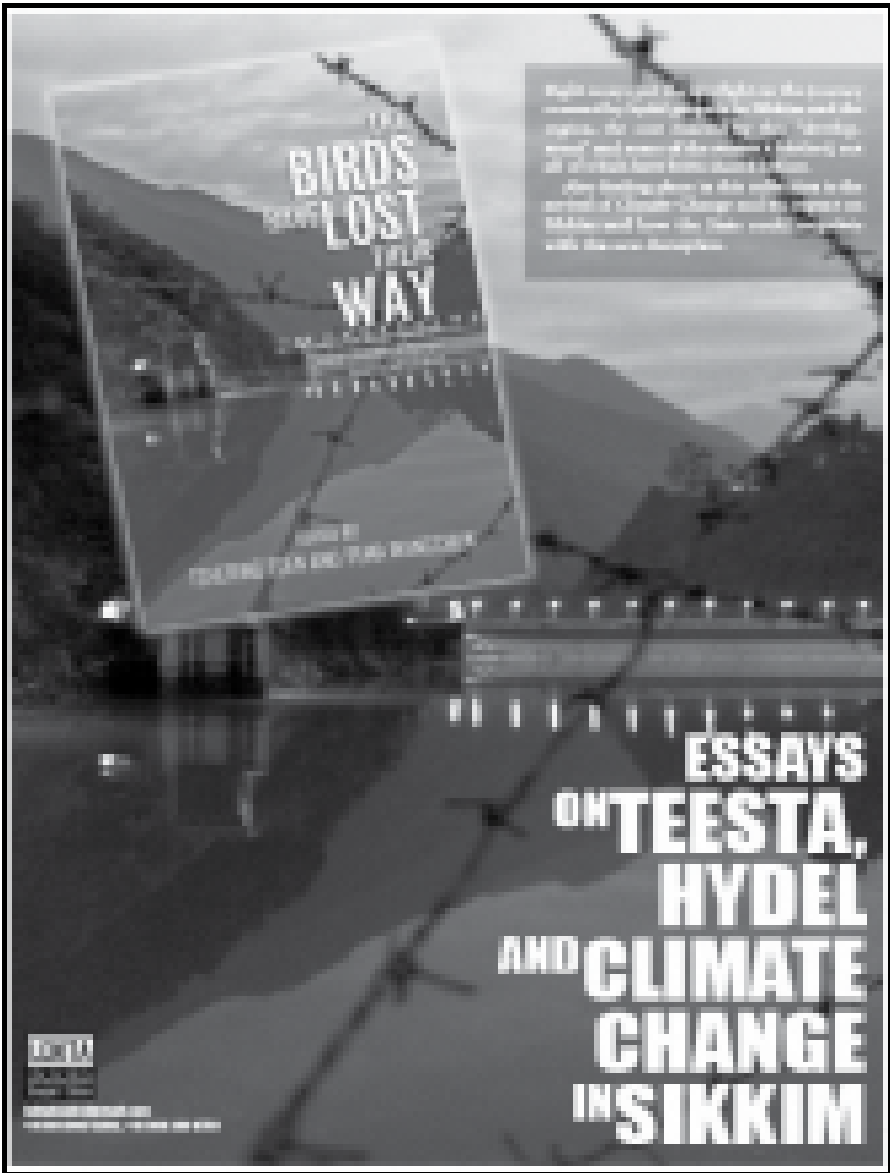
Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir ManojSinha on Friday condemned the attack on a BJP leader's house in Rajouri district, which left a three-year-old child dead, and said the perpetrators of the heinous act will be brought to justice soon.

"My deepest condolences to family & prayers for early recovery of injured. Perpetrators of

this heinous act will be brought to justice soon," the LG said on Twitter.

A three-year-old child was killed and six members of BJP leader Jasbir Singh's family were injured in the grenade attack on his house in Khandli area of the district last night. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti also condemned the attack.

"Condemn the grenade attack in Rajouri in which a four year old child was killed & several others injured. My sympathies with their loved ones," she said.



Olympics now ended, Japan races to vaccinate as virus surges



TOKYO (AP): The Tokyo Olympics have ended, but it's still vacation season in Japan, and many people are ignoring government pleas to avoid travel and stay away from bars and restaurants even as the coronavirus spikes at record levels.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is pinning his hopes on vaccinations, which started slow but now are making good progress. How this race between shots and disease finishes may deter-

mine Suga's political future, not to mention the health of tens of thousands.

Suga seems optimistic vaccines will win, but with only about 36% of the population fully vaccinated, experts say the virus's highly infectious delta variant is pulling ahead. They are urging the government to put more teeth in its weak state of emergency. Japan has managed the COVID-19 pandemic better than many countries, without the kind of re-

strictive lockdown used in other nations, but some believe that may now be needed.

Japan's daily coronavirus cases have topped 10,000 for more than a week, and the total has doubled in the past four months to exceed 1 million. Tokyo's daily case loads tripled during the Games that ended Sunday. And as hospitals fill up, nearly 20,000 infected people are isolating at home, over 10 times more than a month ago.

On Friday, Tokyo re-

ported 5,773 new cases, surpassing the previous record of 5,042 set last week.

Suga has stressed the progress of the vaccine rollout despite its late and slow start.

More than 80% of Japan's elderly population of 36 million have completed their vaccinations since they started getting shots in mid-April. Suga says high inoculation rates among seniors have contributed to a significant decline in the number of

elderly patients, serious cases and deaths, relieving strain on the medical system.

"This clearly shows the vaccine efficacy," Suga said, pledging to accelerate vaccinations among younger people. "The most effective way to slow the infections and minimize serious symptoms would be to give everyone two shots as soon as possible."

Serious cases are now mostly among people in their 50s or younger, who are still largely unvaccinated. So far, 14 million — less than 20% of those aged 12 to 64 who are eligible for shots — have been fully vaccinated, according to Taro Kono, the minister in charge of vaccinations.

Suga said his goal of fully vaccinating all willing elderly people by the end of July has been mostly achieved. As he pushes to inoculate younger people, Suga aims to fully vaccinate 40% of all those 12 years and older by the end of August, and to complete shots for all those who wish to do so by October or November.

But vaccines alone might not be enough, experts and officials say.

England to play 2 T20s in Pakistan before Twenty20 World Cup

ISLAMABAD (AP): England will play a two-match Twenty20 cricket series in Pakistan before both teams leave for the T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates in October.

Both matches were initially scheduled to be played in Karachi, but the Pakistan Cricket Board on Friday said it was moving the series to Rawalpindi due to "operational and logistical reasons." Pindi Cricket Stadium will host the games on Oct. 13 and Oct. 14.

It will be England's first tour to Pakistan since 2005. The England squad will return for another limited-overs series and World Test Championship matches next year.

While the England's men team will be touring Pakistan after a 16-year break, England's women's squad, led by Heather Knight, will tour Pakistan alongside their men's team for the first

time. "We are delighted to welcome both the England men's team and the England women's team, who will be touring Pakistan for the first time," PCB chief executive Wasim Khan said.

The England squads will arrive Oct. 9.

Eoin Morgan's England men's squad will leave for the UAE on Oct. 15. Knight's women's team will stay in Rawalpindi for the three ODIs on Oct. 17, 19 and 21.

Saudi league aiming to replace China as Asia's top drawcard



SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP): When Shanghai Port paid almost \$100 million to sign Oscar from Chelsea in 2016, the London club's coach Antonio Conte expressed concern over the rise of the Chinese league.

Now Oscar is one of the few big names left in the Chinese Super League, with Saudi Arabia surpassing it as the Asian competition attracting the ire of soccer figures in Europe.

Al-Hilal of Riyadh beat European clubs earlier this month to sign Brazilian playmaker Matheus Pereira from West Bromwich Albion.

English football broadcaster Noel Whelan was not impressed, telling Football Insider. "From a football side of things, you're taking yourself out of the spotlight, but you're gaining financially ... you're certainly not showcasing yourself as you would do in Europe."

The social media reaction was similar to when players were leaving Europe for China five years ago, although the amounts paid by Saudi clubs have not matched the peaks hit by Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. China was the world's highest spending league in the 2017 winter transfer window, splashing out around \$457 million.

A combination of tougher government regulations, including a so-called transfer tax that aimed to reduce spending, and China's COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have changed the domestic football landscape. A number of Brazilians have had to quit Chinese clubs, with former Barcelona midfielder Paulinho and Talisca headed to Saudi Arabia.

"It was an honor to

play for a big club like Guangzhou in China but I'm very happy to be in Saudi Arabia," Talisca said after joining Al-Nassr. "There are a lot of great players coming here and the league has a lot of potential to grow. It's an exciting time to be here."

Saudi Arabia has long had ambitions to become Asia's leading league. In 2018, Turki Al-Asheikh, then chairman of the government-run General Sports Authority, said the target was for the Saudi league to become one of the top leagues in the world by 2020.

The global pandemic has impacted the goals but the country has some advantages over China in terms of attracting players.

"Saudi Arabian football is more established at the club level ... and also at international level," Simon Chadwick, Professor of Eurasian Sport at Emlyon Business School, told The Associated Press. "There is a passionate intensity for the sport which makes it a legitimate destination for players from around the world."

Saudi Arabia has five World Cup appearances and three Asian titles compared with China's one trip to the game's global showpiece.

Pereira replaces former Italian international Sebastian Giovinco at Al-Hilal, an Asian powerhouse with three continental championships. He joins former French international striker Bafetimbi Gomis, top scorer last season, Peruvian winger Andre Carrillo and new signing Moussa Marega from FC Porto.

Riyadh rival Al-Nassr signed Argentina's Pity Martinez in 2020 for \$18 million and ahead of the new season added Cam-

eroonian international Vincent Aoubakar from FC Porto and Argentina's Ramiro Funes Mori from Villarreal.

There's been a similar pattern with coaches. In recent years some of the best in the world headed to China, including former World Cup winners Marcello Lippi and Luiz Felipe Scolari as well as Fabio Capello, Felix Magath, Sven-Goran Eriksson and Manuel Pellegrini.

There's been a drift west in recent seasons. Leonardo Jardim, who led Monaco to the 2017 French title, and former Brazil manager Mano Menezes are working with Saudi clubs this season.

There are issues to resolve, though, with some clubs relying on wealthy donors and state support.

In 2018, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman intervened with \$340 million to cover debts owed by Saudi Professional League clubs. The real test, according to Chadwick, will be long-term sustainability.

"There have been several state bailouts but there is a desire to float the clubs and expose them to the pressures of the marketplace, to force them to become more financially disciplined and commercially oriented," Chadwick said. "There is an optimism and a buoyancy around Saudi Arabian football that is not without foundation."

Saudi Arabia is growing its off-field influence, too, developing close links with FIFA's leadership. There's been speculation about a potential World Cup bid in 2030, and the Saudi football federation made headlines recently when it called for a study into hosting the World Cup every two years.

Tre Jones lifts Spurs with go-ahead layup and steal

LAS VEGAS (AP): Tre Jones made a layup with less than a second remaining to give San Antonio the lead, then had a steal to prevent Charlotte from taking a final shot in the Spurs' 106-105 victory over the Hornets on Thursday night in the NBA Summer League.

Jones, a second-round pick in 2020, scored 34 points and had nine assists and eight rebounds.

James Bouknight, the No. 11 overall pick in the NBA draft, led Charlotte with 23 points and eight assists, while often matched against Jones.

"We had a lot of fun," Jones said. "That was our first time going at it. Hopefully, we'll keep going and better our games and go at it again somewhere down the line."

Jaylen Morris added 20 points for the Spurs.

J.T. Thor, a second-round pick, had 10 points and seven rebounds for Charlotte. Kai Jones, the No. 19 overall pick, had 10 points, including a powerful jam in the second period.

Jones, who made each of his nine free throws, said he has been asked to take a leadership role as a player more experienced than the rookies in the Summer League.

"The coaches told me try to be that vet for us in Summer League this year," Jones said. "I'm extremely blessed to be in the position I'm in, to go through a full season and to be able to come into the summer league with a little experience."

CELTICS 108, MAGIC 71

Sam Hauser scored 21 points while making six of nine 3-pointers as Boston enjoyed a hot shooting night from long range in its third consecutive win. The Celtics made 19 3s.

Jalen Suggs, the No. 5 overall draft pick by Orlando, had six points in 11 minutes before landing hard on a drive to the basket. The Magic announced Suggs had a sore left hand and would not return to the game.

Aaron Nesmith had 18 points and nine rebounds for Boston. Payton Pritchard had 17 points, nine assists and three steals while making four 3s.

Tahjere McCall led Orlando with 12 points.

RAPTORS 92, ROCKETS 76

Rookie forward Ish Wainwright scored 20 points to lead Toronto past Houston.

Jalen Green, No. 2 overall draft pick who bypassed college basketball to play in the G League, had 13 points in only 12 minutes for Houston before leaving the game with a sore hamstring. Josh Christopher led the Rockets with 14 points.

Toronto's David Johnson, a second-round pick, left the game with a shoulder sprain. Precious Achiuwa had 19 points for the Raptors. Scottie Barnes, the No. 4 overall pick, had eight points, five blocks and four rebounds.

NETS 84, WIZARDS 81, 20T

Rookie Cam Thomas beat the shot clock with a 3-pointer to lift Brooklyn past Washington in sudden-death double overtime.

Thomas scored 31 points and has led the Nets in each of the team's three summer league games.

Ons Jabeur rallies to beat Bianca Andreescu in Montreal



MONTREAL (AP): Bianca Andreescu tumbled out of the National Bank Open on Thursday night, hours after fellow Canadian Rebecca Marino's surprising run ended.

Ons Jabeur of Tunisia beat the second-seeded Andreescu 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-1 in a match interrupted by rain for about an hour in the middle of the second set.

"I told her she better win now," Andreescu said.

In June in Birmingham, England, the 26-year-old Jabeur won the Viking Classic to become the first Arab player to win a WTA Tour singles. She used the long break to look at stats with her team and find ways to improve her game.

"I wanted to see what I was doing wrong because I knew it was very close," Jabeur said, adding that focusing on her first serve made a big difference.

The 13th-seeded Jabeur will face Jessica Pegula in the quarterfinals.

Pegula squandered five match points before finally finishing off fellow American Danielle Collins 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 in a match that ended at 1:35 a.m. Collins won in Palermo, Italy, and San Jose, California, the last two weeks for her first tour titles. She had won 12 straight matches, ral-

lying to beat two-time champion Simona Halep of Romania in three sets Wednesday night.

The 21-year-old Andreescu won the 2019 tournament in Toronto to become the first Canadian winner in the event since 1969. She also won the 2019 U.S. Open.

"I'm super disappointed in how I played," Andreescu said. "But at the same time, Ons played super well. And I tried to play my best with what I had today. I know I could have won this tournament again."

Top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus beat Marino 6-1, 6-3 in the afternoon.

The 30-year-old Marino, a wild card ranked 220th, made it to the round of 16 by upsetting 16th-seeded Madison Keys and 31st-ranked Paula Badosa.

"It didn't matter who I was going to play. I just wanted to leave it all on the court and give it my best shot," Marino said. "In my heart, I feel like I belong with these players, I belong at this level. And I feel the results demonstrated that. ... I'm glad I got to show everyone how I play."

Sabalenka, ranked No. 3, saved four break points to cruise to a 5-0 lead in the first set. Marino showed life in the second set with a pair

Fresh flooding in central China kills another 21 people

BEIJING (AP): Flooding in central China continued to cause havoc in both cities and rural areas, with authorities saying Friday that another 21 people had been killed and another four were missing.

Floodwaters rose to 3.5 meters (11.4 feet) in Hubei province's Liulintownship following heavy rains that began Wednesday.

The latest deaths add to the more than 300 people killed in flooding last month in Henan province just to the north. The vast majority of those victims were in Zhengzhou, Henan's provincial capital, where at least 292 died, including 14 who were trapped when the city's subway system was inundated.

The new Hubei floods have been relatively small in comparison, with just over 8,000 people affected, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

China regularly suffers seasonal flooding, but this year has been particularly severe with torrential rains reaching from the center of the country as far north as Beijing. The floods come on top of efforts to contain an outbreak of the delta variant of COVID-19 that has particularly affected Henan and the eastern province of Jiangsu.

Death toll from floods in northern Turkey reaches 27

ANKARA, TURKEY (AP): Search-and-rescue crews in northern Turkey recovered 10 more bodies overnight, raising the death toll from the severe floods and mudslides that struck the region to 27, officials said on Friday. Dozens more people were believed to be missing.

Torrential rains pounded the Black Sea coastal provinces of Bartın, Kastamonu, Sinop and Samsun on Wednesday, causing the flooding that demolished homes and bridges and swept away cars. Helicopters lifted dozens of people to safety from rooftops, others were rescued on boats. More than 1,700 people were evacuated across the region and many were being temporarily housed at student dormitories.

In worst-hit Kastamonu, a stream burst its banks inundating much of the town of Bozkurt, where most of the victims were found. One building was demolished and two others were severely damaged amid torrents of floodwaters.

The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, or AFAD, said Friday that crews are still searching for a woman who was reported missing in Bartın province. Private NTV television said however, that dozens of people remain un-



accounted for.

They include 12-year-old twin sisters and their grandparents who were trapped inside an eight-story building in Bozkurt, their mother told private DHA news agency.

Speaking in Bozkurt late Thursday, Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly described the scenes as "the most severe flood disaster I have seen." On Wednesday, he said, floodwaters reached three or four meters (10-13 feet) high in some areas.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who canceled celebrations marking his ruling party's 20th anniversary, was scheduled to travel to the area.

"The destruction is

huge," Kerem Kinik, head of the Turkish Red Crescent, told NTV. "I hope that the missing are safe and that the number of deaths doesn't increase."

Bozkurt resident Yilmaz Ersevenli told NTV that he left his house to move his car to a safe area as the waters began to rise, but soon got swept away by the gushing floods. He managed to save himself by holding on to a tree that had also washed away.

"I nearly lost my life trying to save my car," he said.

In Bartın province, at least 13 people were injured when a section of a bridge caved in.

In total, five bridges

collapsed in the floods while two others were damaged, AFAD said. Dozens of villages are still without power and several roads remain blocked.

Erdogan said Thursday that at least 4,500 personnel, 19 helicopters and 24 boats were involved in the search-and-rescue operation.

Turkey's Black Sea region is frequently struck by severe rains and flash flooding. At least six people were killed in floods that hit the eastern Black Sea coastal province of Rize last month.

The disaster struck as firefighters in southwest Turkey worked to extin-

guish a wildfire in Mugla province, an area popular with tourists that runs along the Aegean Sea. The blaze, which was brought under control on Thursday, was one of more than 200 wildfires in Turkey since July 28. At least eight people died and thousands of residents have had to flee.

Climate scientists say there is little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving more extreme events, such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and storms. Such calamities are expected to happen more frequently as the planet warms.

Malaysian leader seeks opposition backing to stay in power

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA (AP): Embattled Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin acknowledged Friday he may have lost majority support in Parliament but said he will seek the backing of opposition parties to keep his government from collapsing and promised to hold elections next year.

Muhyiddin has pledged to test support for his leadership when Parliament resumes next month, but has been under increasing pressure after some governing coalition lawmakers withdrew their backing.

Muhyiddin said he could take the easy way out and resign but that no other lawmaker currently has the necessary support of a majority to be appointed by the king as the new leader. In such a case, he said, there would be no government and this would throw the country into limbo during a worsening pandemic. Muhyiddin said he will meet opposition leaders to obtain their support in exchange for a raft of benefits, including proposals to limit the prime minister's tenure, bolster checks and balances, and offer the opposition leader a senior minister role.

"The purpose of my proposal is to enable the government to continue to function amid this epidemic with bipartisan support in Parliament," he said in a televised speech.

"I do not intend to continue to cling onto power. In this situation, it is right that the mandate be returned to the people to elect a new government when the time is right. Depending on the pandemic situation, I give a commit-

ment that the 15th general election will be held no later than the end of July next year," he said.

Muhyiddin's announcement marked a U-turn just a week after he told Malaysians he believes he still has majority support and would call for a vote of confidence in Parliament in September.

At least eight lawmakers from the United Malays National Organization, the largest party in the ruling alliance, have signed declarations withdrawing their support for the government, which is enough to cause its collapse because of its razor-thin majority. Two UMNO ministers have resigned from the Cabinet.

Under Malaysia's Constitution, the prime minister must resign if he loses majority support and the king can appoint a new leader who he believes has the confidence of Parliament. But the opposition and UMNO are split and unable to agree on who should become leader.

Muhyiddin took power in March 2020 after initiating the collapse of the former reformist government that won 2018 elections. His party joined hands with UMNO and several others to form a new government that is unstable. UMNO has been unhappy with playing second fiddle to Muhyiddin's smaller party.

He had been ruling by ordinance without legislative approval since January after suspending Parliament under a state of emergency declared to battle the coronavirus. Critics say he used the emergency, which expired Aug. 1, to avoid a vote in Parliament that would show he had lost a majority of support.

In Yemen's north, Houthis face virus with outright denial

CAIRO (AP): For three days last month, Nasser joined hundreds of others jammed into emergency rooms in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, searching for a hospital bed for his mother, who was struggling to breathe. By the time one became available, his mother was dead.

But her death certainly won't figure in the country's coronavirus numbers. Officially, there have been only four virus cases and one death in Yemen's north, according to the Houthi rebel authorities who control the capital and surrounding provinces.

It's not just a struggling health care system that's to blame for the unaccounted for deaths. In interviews with The Associated Press, more than a dozen doctors, aid workers, Sanaa residents and relatives of those believed to have died from the virus said the Houthi authorities are approaching the pandemic with such outright denial that it threatens to further endanger the already vulnerable population.

They say doctors are forced to falsify the cause of death on official papers, vaccines are seen with fear, and there are no limits or guidelines on public gatherings, much less funerals.

Nasser's mother, like many others, was buried without any precautions against the virus and the funeral was attended by hundreds. A few days later, an aunt, in her 40s, died, and two other relatives got sick and were hospitalized for over a week.

"Certainly, my aunt died from corona," said Nasser, who asked to be identified only by his first name for fear of reprisal by the Houthi authorities. "But no one tells us the truth."

The deaths came as Sanaa and other areas of northern Yemen have been experiencing a third deadly coronavirus surge, according to doctors and residents. But it's difficult to know how many have been sickened or died, beyond anecdotes from residents. The Houthi rebels have imposed an infor-

mation blackout on confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19. Testing remains sparse, or hushed.

Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, has already been devastated by six years of civil war. The fighting pits the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels against the internationally recognized government, which is aided by a Saudi-led coalition.

The war has killed more than 130,000 people, displaced millions and created the world's worst humanitarian disaster. Aerial bombings and intense ground fighting have destroyed the country's infrastructure, leaving half the country's health facilities dysfunctional. About 18% of Yemen's 333 districts have no doctors at all. Water and sanitation systems have collapsed. Many families can barely afford one meal a day.

Amid the fighting came the COVID-19 pandemic, adding to the war's deadly toll.

"There was a big wave of COVID-19 and they (the Houthis) knew that very well," said a U.N. health official in Yemen, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of undermining negotiations with the rebels on vaccinations and other issues. "Isolation centers were full; the numbers were doubled three or four times."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Houthis have not treated it with seriousness and action, said Afrah Nasser, Yemen researcher at Human Rights Watch. They even have hindered international efforts to help fight it in their areas, she said.

"Each party in Yemen has its own strategy, but the Houthi one is destructive," she said. "It's a recipe for disaster."

Dr. Adham Ismail, the World Health Organization representative in Yemen, said it was "a big achievement" to get any coronavirus vaccine at all into Houthi-controlled territories. Initially, authorities banned the

shots, and then agreed to allow in only 1,000 doses. They have not held any campaigns encouraging people to get vaccinated.

The Houthis' opposition to vaccines forced doctors and other residents to seek their shots in Yemeni government-held areas. Many, including aid workers working in Houthi-held areas, registered online and traveled secretly to cities like Aden, Lahj and Taiz for vaccination.

Yemen received its first 360,000-dose shipment of the AstraZeneca vaccine from the United Nations-backed COVAX initiative in March. The shipment was the first batch of 1.9 million doses that Yemen is to receive through the end of the year. A vaccination campaign was launched in government-held areas in April.

Yemen's internationally recognized government has reported around 7,200 confirmed cases, including 1,391 deaths in areas under its control. The actual numbers, however, are believed much higher mainly because of limited testing.

A spokesman for the rebels did not answer calls seeking comment. But last year, Youssef al-Hadhari, a spokesman for the Houthi health ministry, told the AP: "We don't publish the numbers to the society because such publicity has a heavy and terrifying toll on people's psychological health."

Meanwhile, the Houthis continue holding public events, including recruitment gatherings and funerals attended by thousands for senior military officials killed in battle, as virus cases spike. All are held with no precautionary measures against the virus.

Over a dozen doctors, aid workers and residents said cases in the north are rising rapidly, with more frequent funerals, apparently of virus victims, though doctors said they've been warned not to confirm

the causes of the deaths. All spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation from the rebels.

Doctors and other health care workers said the 24 isolation centers in the north have been full since mid-July. One health care worker in the Palestine hospital said dozens of patients have come every day with coronavirus-like symptoms, most in their 30s and 40s. He said many are being told to isolate at home for lack of other options.

In Sanaa cemeteries, grave diggers have found it difficult to find space for new burial plots. At one cemetery in Jarraf, one digger estimated that over 30 people were buried every day in the past two months, many of them women and elderly.

In the northern province of Ibb, two health care workers at the Jibla hospital said the facility receives nearly 50 people with Covid-19-like symptoms every day. The hospital lacks testing capacities, so doctors usually depend on other means to diagnose. When patients die at the Jibla hospital, doctors don't tell relatives they are suspected to have been infected by the virus, for fear of being targeted afterwards. The Houthis have appointed security supervisors at hospitals to control the flow of information between medical staff and patients' families, according to health care workers.

Earlier this year, two senior Houthi officials died, apparently among the country's most high-profile virus victims. Yahia al-Shami, spent over a month in an isolation center in Sanaa before he succumbed to the virus in April and Zakaria al-Shami, transportation minister in the Houthi-run government, also caught the coronavirus and died in March, according to doctors who treated them.

The Houthi rebel authorities announced both of their deaths — but there was no mention of the cause.



Britney Spears' dad will exit conservatorship, but not yet

LOS ANGELES (AP): Britney Spears' father said in a court filing Thursday that he is planning to step down from the conservatorship that has controlled her life and money for 13 years, but his departure is not imminent.

James Spears filed legal documents saying that while there are no grounds for his removal, he will step down after several lingering issues are resolved. The document gives no timetable for his resignation from his role helping oversee his daughter's finances.

"Mr. Spears continues to serve dutifully, and he should not be suspended or removed, and certainly not based on false allegations," the filing said. "Mr. Spears is willing to step down when the time is right, but the transition needs to be orderly and include a resolution of matters pending before the Court."

Those matters include the next judicial review of the pop singer's finances, which has been delayed by months of public and legal wrangling over James' Spears role and the legitimacy of the conservatorship by Britney Spears and, in recent weeks, her new attorney. The documents say that James Spears has been "the unrelenting target of unjustified attacks" but "he does not believe that a public battle with his daughter over his continuing service as her conservator would be in her best interests."

The filing says James Spears will fight

the petition to force him out, but will work with the court and Britney Spears' attorney Matthew Rosengart on the next phas-

James Spears oversaw his daughter's personal affairs and money. In 2019, he stepped down as the so-called conserva-

against her will and prevented from getting married, having another child or even riding in her boyfriend's car unsupervised. "This conservatorship is doing me way more harm than good," the 39-year-old Spears said at the time. "I deserve to have a life." James Spears, 69, was fighting to remain in control in court filings as recently as last week. He said the allegations in his daughter's testimony are "untested," need investigation, and involve issues that have long been out of his control.

He suggested that Jodi Montgomery, who took over for him as conservator of Britney Spears' personal affairs, deserved scrutiny if her allegations were accurate.

Rosengart said that while he welcomed the new move, he will not take the pressure of James Spears, who should not wait to step down.

"We look forward to continuing our vigorous investigation into the conduct of Mr. Spears, and others, over the past 13 years, while he reaped millions of dollars from his daughter's estate, and I look forward to taking Mr. Spears's sworn deposition in the near future," Rosengart's statement said. "In the interim, rather than making false accusations and taking cheap shots at his own daughter, Mr. Spears should remain silent and

step aside immediately." Even after James Spears' departure, the court will maintain the same control over Britney Spears that is has since the conservatorship was put in place in 2008. But he has been a lightning rod for the ire of fans in the #FreeBritney movement, whose voice have become increasingly prominent as they have been embraced by Britney Spears and Rosengart.

And Rosengart has marked James Spears' departure as a necessary first step before ending the arrangement entirely.

The new filing adamantly defends the work of James Spears and the conservatorship, and pushes back especially against allegations made by Britney Spears' mother Lynne Spears in a recent declaration.

"When this Conservatorship was initiated 13 years ago, Britney Jean Spears was in crisis, desperately in need of help. Not only was she suffering mentally and emotionally, she was also being manipulated by predators and in financial distress," the documents say. "Mr. Spears came to his daughter's rescue to protect her, and this Court made the determination that the protection provided by a conservatorship was necessary and in Ms. Spears' best interests." The documents say that Lynne Spears was wrong in criticizing the hiring of a psychiatrist that she said James Spears chose for their daughter, and in saying that medications he prescribed were inappropriate.



es. "We are pleased that Mr. Spears and his lawyer have today conceded in a filing that he must be removed," Rosengart said in a statement. "It is vindication for Britney."

Spears said he was working on a plan to give up his role from before his daughter hired Rosengart last month.

For most of the existence of the conservatorship, which was established in 2008,

tor of her person, and maintained control of her finances.

He was nevertheless the target of much of his daughter's ire in a pair of speeches before the court in June and July, in which she called the conservatorship "abusive." Spears in her June remarks said she had been required to use an intrauterine device for birth control, take medications

New Zealand loses its precious 'Rings' series to Britain

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP): New Zealand has long been associated with "The Lord of the Rings" but with the filming of a major new television series suddenly snatched away, the nation has become more like Mordor than the Shire for hundreds of workers.

In a major blow to the nation's small but vibrant screen industry, Amazon Studios announced Friday it would film the second season of its original series, inspired by the books of J.R.R. Tolkien, to Britain.

"The shift from New Zealand to the U.K. aligns with the studio's strategy of expanding its production footprint and investing in studio space across the U.K., with many of Amazon Studios' tentpole series and films already calling the U.K. home," the company said in a statement.

The move came as a blow to many in New Zealand. The production is one of the most expensive in history, with Amazon spending at least \$465 million on the first season, which just finished filming in New Zealand, according to government figures.

The series employed 1,200 people in New Zealand directly and another 700 indirectly, according to the figures.

"This is a shock to everyone," said Denise Roche, the director of Equity NZ, a union representing performers. "I really feel for all the small businesses, the tech people who invested in this for the future. Nobody had any inkling."

Roche said people feel let down by Amazon, although she added that the industry was resilient.

Amazon said the as-yet untitled series takes place on Middle-earth during the Second Age, thousands of years before the events depicted in Tolkien's "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the

Rings" books and the subsequent films directed by Peter Jackson.

Filming began last year but was delayed due to the coronavirus. Post-production on the first season will continue in New Zealand through June before the show premieres on Prime Video in September next year.

The move to Britain comes just four months after Amazon signed a deal with the New Zealand government to get an

ernment was withdrawing the offer of the extra 5%.

Amazon said it no longer intended to pursue collecting the extra money. But it will still walk away with at least \$92 million from New Zealand taxpayers.

"The international film sector is incredibly competitive and highly mobile. We have no regrets about giving this production our best shot with government support," Nash said. "However, we



extra 5% rebate on top of the 20% — or \$92 million — it was already claiming from New Zealand taxpayers under a screen production grant.

Many locations around the world compete for productions by offering similar, generous rebates.

At the time of the deal, New Zealand's Economic Development Minister Stuart Nash said the production would bring economic and tourism benefits to the country for years to come and create "an enduring legacy for our screen industry."

Nash said Friday the government had found out only a day earlier that Amazon was leaving and he was disappointed by the decision. He said the gov-

are disappointed for the local screen industry."

New Zealand became synonymous with Tolkien's world of orcs, elves and hobbits after Jackson directed six movies in the South Pacific nation. "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and "The Hobbit" trilogy combined grossed nearly \$6 billion at the box office.

When Amazon Studios first announced it would film in New Zealand, it said the pristine coasts, forests, and mountains made it the perfect place to bring to life the primordial beauty of early Middle-earth.

The large ensemble cast includes Cynthia Addai-Robinson, Morfydd Clark, Ismael Cruz Córdova, Sophia Nomvete



OFF THE ISLAND! FBOY Island's CJ Franco turned heads at Starbucks in Bel-Air.

Aries:

Once again, the cards are urging you to examine all that is toxic in your life. All the things that are keeping you from reaching your highest potential. This could be a relationship that has lived past its expiry date, a negative thought pattern, or an addiction that you cannot seem to rise above. Rams who are in a no-strings-attached kind of scenario are being asked to ponder upon the importance of emotional intimacy. It doesn't matter how you started off. You have evolved and so have your desires. Have the conversation you have been avoiding (with yourself first), beautiful one.

Tip: It's time to pluck the weeds out of your garden.

Taurus:

There's something fishy going on around here, and you don't need the cards to reaffirm this. Pay attention to who's stealing credit for your work and report the matter to the respective authorities. Standing up for yourself is important at a time like this. You want them to let the others know that you may be nice, but you are not a push-over and that they do not get to cross certain boundaries. Tip: Boundaries, wild one.

Gemini:

'Spontaneity' is the magic word in the Gemini HQ. Some of you may be feeling inspired to set off on an adventure, solo or in the company of those who match your frequen-

cy. Coupled Twins are being asked to welcome the energy of playfulness into their relationship. When was the last time you let your hair down together or engaged in an activity for no other reason than the fact that it brings you joy? PS: It's time to make new memories this weekend. Tip: Spontaneity is the magic word, beloved.

Cancer:

It's one of those days, Cancer. One of those days when there are a hundred meetings to attend to and a zillion calls to make. But you're doing it all with a song in your heart and a smile on your face. From where you are standing, the destination is closer than it has ever been, and you're confident about emerging victorious. The good thing is, you have the support of your team and soul tribe. So, take a moment to acknowledge all the ways in which they have shown up for you consistently. Tip: Sweet results are on their way.

Leo:

What if we stopped playing tug of war with the Universe? What if we allowed what is in our best interests to unfold as it is meant to? Friday sees you letting go of any and all resistance. The forces know what's best for you and they will deliver your share of blessings in the most unexpected of ways. So, stay in the energy of passion and keep showing up for what you love. Can you imagine where you will be a decade from now if you keep grow-

ing at this rate?

Tip: It's all taking place in divine time, beautiful!

Virgo:

If you've been manifesting a change on the career or money front, your prayers will be answered in the most unexpected of ways. So, pay attention to the doors that are opening for you as well as the signs that are leading you there. 'One step at a time' is a mantra that will serve you well at a time like this. Some of you may be recommitting to your fitness routine at this point. It's a good idea to set realistic goals for yourself so you can stay motivated in the long run.

Tip: Changes on the career front are on the cards.

Libra:

Libra, the cards are bringing your attention to a certain conversation you have been avoiding. The path of denial isn't going to serve you or the other person. So, face your inner demons as you remember that they only have as much power over you as you allow them to. On the upside, something that you've been working on is about to reach the final stage, bringing you the success and recognition you truly deserve. Tip: It's all uphill from here.

Scorpio:

Today, the cards are urging you to honour destruction as a necessary part of the creation process. So, be grate-

ful for the things that are falling apart as you remember the mantra. 'This too shall pass'. Your guides are working closely with you to ensure that you see the light in every situation. With the law of duality at play, you will notice that there are new beginnings taking place simultaneously. It's time to step into the unknown, Scorpio.

Tip: Destruction is a necessary part of the creation process.

Sagittarius:

We've all grown up with stories about who we should and shouldn't be, and these stories keep us from accessing our power and meeting our true and most authentic selves. Pay attention to how these stories have a grip on your psyche, Sagittarius. This will help you realise that what you're chasing is merely an illusion. So, come into that space of clarity within yourself. This is your chance to honour your truth and rewrite the rules that were handed down to you in ignorance. Tip: Come into a space of clarity.

Capricorn:

Friday finds you getting your groove on, hustling hard, and calling all the right opportunities into your yard. It's true that there have been some losses lately. It's also true that not everything is going according to the plan you had in mind. But adopting the mantra 'lemons to lemonade' is helping you power through. In the realm of love, the

cards are indicating the presence of an emotionally available lover. Somebody who is not afraid to let their vulnerable side show or hold space for you as you navigate the many trials and tribulations of the material world. Tip: It's time to hustle hard, beautiful.

Aquarius:

Not everything works out the way we want it to, and that's okay, Aquarius. That's okay. Instead of rejecting that feeling of rejection, sit down with it and offer it a cup of tea. This is the only way to transmute the pain, the sadness and the loneliness. Don't isolate yourself to a point of no return, though.

Tip: Sometimes, you just have to feel your way through your feelings.

Pisces:

Your emotions are not internet trolls, Pisces. Blocking or deleting them won't make them go away. So, sit down with the anger, the hatred, the sadness, and the loneliness. Feel your way through the murky realms. This is the only way to ultimately rise above them. The cards are also bringing your attention to the law of divine timing. There is a reason certain things are not working out for you at this moment. Trust that and keep showing up for who and what you love anyway. You never know when the wheel of fortune will turn around. Tip: Feel your way through the murky realms.