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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Govt declares Katley as State Fish, opens reservoirs for fishing

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT:

The State Government has declared Copper Mahseer or Katley as the State Fish of Sikkim and also opened hydel project reservoirs for fishing activities.

While the Directorate of Fisheries made the announcement through a press release today, it may be mentioned that the notification allowing fishing in reservoirs was published on 19 Aug 2021 and another one declaring Katley as State Fish was published on 26 Aug 2021.

The reservoirs to be opened for fishing activities are located in Chungthang [Teesta III] in North Sikkim, Dikchu [Teesta V] in East Sikkim, Legship [Rangit III] in West Sikkim and Rorathang in East Sikkim.

The press release informs that this has been done with the intent to provide livelihood opportunities to fishermen and for nutritional security of the people of the state.

As per the notification, license will be issued by the Directorate of Fisheries to interested individual fishermen or cooperative societies/SHGs for fishing in the reservoirs as per the Sikkim Fisheries Rules, 1990.

The notification further lays out the provisions and rules related to fishing in reservoirs.

Meanwhile, the press release informs that Neolissochilus hexagonolepis commonly known as Chocolate or Copper Mahseer and locally called Katley is

found in varied altitudes covering the entire state predominantly confined in Teesta and Rangit rivers and their tributaries.

In the year 1992, ICAR-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBFGR), Lucknow

had categorized Katley fish as endangered species. Later on, in the year 2014 the fish was also categorized as endangered by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

"Therefore, by declaring Katley as state

fish this Directorate intends to highlight the importance of the fish in our state and giving emphasis to its conservation measures as this fish has high market value and highly preferred by the public," the release states.

FISHING IN RESERVOIRS

- License will be issued by the Directorate of Fisheries to interested individual fishermen or cooperative societies/SHGs for fishing in the reservoirs as per the Sikkim Fisheries Rules, 1990. Preference will be given to those displaced/affected by the hydel projects.
- Fishing will be allowed in the reservoirs only with permitted fishing gears under Sikkim Fisheries Rules, 1990.
- No fishing shall be allowed within 500 meters from the dam both upstream as well as downstream.
- Fishing operations in the reservoirs will be done in such a manner so as not to endanger the structure of the reservoir in any way.
- Landing centers near the reservoirs will be set up where a Fishery Officer will verify and record catch, and allow marketing by issuing permits.
- Directorate of Fisheries will levy 15% royalty fee on catch in accordance with market value.
- The Directorate will ensure regular stocking of fingerlings of economically important indigenous species of fish in the reservoirs. Exotic fish species of high value and similar habitat needs may also be introduced by the Directorate.

54.87% turn up for Arithang-II by-election



GANGTOK, 17 SEPT (IPR): By-election for Arithang-II Municipal Ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation was conducted on 17 Sept in three polling stations set up at CS Rai Government Secondary School, Arithang.

After receiving all polls, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and polling materials of all Polling Stations, the EVMs were stored in the Strong Room located at District Administrative

Centre, East. The Strong Room was sealed under the supervision of MRO East, Ragul K in presence of Election Observer, Tshewang Gyachho, ADC East, Tushar G Nikhare, ADC Headquarter Hemant Rai, Sector Magistrate Robin Sewa, candidates and election agents. The room is guarded by Sikkim Armed Police and is also under 24x7 CCTV surveillance. The sealing procedure

was also captured in a video recording.

As per the report received from MRO, East, the total percentage of votes cast for 10 Arithang-II, Municipal Ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation was 54.87% comprising of 54.06% male and 55.77% female voters.

Municipal Returning Officer East also informed that the polled EVMS will be taken out on 19 Sept, 2021 (counting day) for counting of votes.

SEED sammelan for Pakyong's rural entrepreneurs next Sunday

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT:

Sikkim Entrepreneurship & Economic Development [SEED] Society, in association with Pakyong-based Sikkim Educational Society [SES], has announced plans to organize a rural entrepreneurs' meet - 'Udyami Vikas Sammelan 2021' - on 26 September in Pakyong.

The main idea behind this meet, to be hosted at St Xavier's School auditorium, is to promote rural entrepreneurship in the State. More than 500 existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, mainly from areas around Pakyong, are expected to attend this daylong event.

Addressing a press conference here today, SEED chief coordinator, Raj Lama, said, "This event is an initiative of SEED Society in line with the Chief Minister's vision of 'One Family-One Entrepreneur' because unless youth from rural Sikkim come forward, this vision cannot be fulfilled."

Mr Lama added



that the Sammelan was the first step towards the promotion and development of entrepreneurship in rural areas and that SEED Society would reach out to entrepreneurs in other parts of the State as well with similar meets in the near future.

He informed that the CM has consented to be the chief guest of the meet.

SES president, Bishal Sharma, in turn, mentioned that the organization has been working to raise awareness about rural entrepreneurship at the grassroots level and has

conducted surveys in and around Pakyong and reached out to more than 622 rural entrepreneurs.

He added that around 400 existing and aspiring youth entrepreneurs from these areas were likely to attend the Sammelan.

He added that SES has already prepared a follow-up mechanism to build onwards from the Sammelan.

SEED state coordinator, Deepen Subba, further informed that nine areas of entrepreneurship have been shortlisted to be covered by experts at the

meet.

The resource persons will speak on agriculture, livestock, tourism & travel, hotels & lodges, food processing & MSME, start-up & tech-based businesses, restaurant & food tech ventures, digital marketing and retail business.

SEED Society state coordinator, Rewaj Chettri, mentioned that SEED society has been working on a database of entrepreneurs in the state to make entrepreneur cards for them.

He added that this process would

help the organization advise the government on development of entrepreneurship on the basis of this database. He added that the database of entrepreneurs would also help guide aspiring and upcoming entrepreneurs and create market linkages for them.

The SEED Society event-head, Bijay Subba, added that four banks have agreed to attend the event and host a Loan Mela which will be highlight of the meet. He also gave details on other programmes in the meet.

54 new cases and no Covid deaths in Sikkim in past 24 hours

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT:

Sikkim recorded 54 fresh cases of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the State's tally of confirmed cases to 30,893. These new cases were picked up from the testing of 686 samples giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 7.8%. On the other hand, the state's Covid death toll continued to hold at 379 today with no new Covid deaths reported for the third straight day.

As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, while 40 people tested positive in RT-PCR testing of 377 samples, 14 more cases were detected in rapid antigen testing of 303 samples.

Out of the 54 new cases, 28 were registered in East District, 06 in West District and 20 in South District.

In the meantime, the number of active Covid cases



in came down to 728 with 81 new recoveries. Sikkim's count of recovered cases has further improved to 29,480.

There are five COVID patients currently admitted in ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

STATE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION DAY Sikkim will have Climate Proofing projects to battle natural disasters, says Minister



GANGTOK, 18 SEPT (IPR):

Minister for Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Kunga Nima Lepcha, attended the programme of State Disaster Risk Reduction Day as the chief guest here at the conference hall of NIC, Tashiling Secretariat, Gangtok, today.

The programme which was organised by Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) had the theme "Making Sikkim Disaster and Climate Resilient by 2030". This day also marks the 10th year anniversary of the 2011 earthquake in Sikkim which caused devastation on a huge scale and also took several lives.

The main objective of the programme was to take various measures to get an early warning system and build resilient infrastructures in the face of natural disasters in Sikkim.

A short video of the topic was also presented which included activities of SSDMA. During the programme, handing over of rescue equipment to members of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was conducted. The programme also included announcement of the winners of school essay competition and video competition on the topic of climate change and natural disaster.

The Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha was accompanied by Relief Commissioner-cum-Secretary, LR & DMD, Sarala Rai, Vice Chairman, SSDMA, Professor Vinod Sharma, Inspector General of Police, Home Guard and

Civil Defence, Khilburna Gurung, HoDs from various line departments in the districts and officials of LR & DMD.

The Minister was joined in the meeting through virtual medium by Member, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Kamal Kishore, SEEDS India, Co-Founder, Dr Anshu Sharma, Director, Climate Action Network for South Asia (CANSAs), Sanjay Vashist, Professor, Kelo University, Japan, Dr Rajib Shaw and ITBP personnel.

The Minister in his address acknowledged the fact that Sikkim lies in one of the most complex topographical and geological settings which makes it vulnerable to natural hazards. With recent changes in the climatic condition, Sikkim is more vulnerable to natural disasters, he said.

The Minister talked about construction of houses under the Housing Schemes for urban and rural areas which will be engineered to have natural disaster resilient features. Disaster resilient villages in 16 Model GPUs will also be built in the coming days. Furthermore, to deal with natural disasters, Sikkim will have its own Integrated Control Rooms and projects on Climate Funding and Climate Proofing.

The Minister thanked NDMA for continuous support to SSDMA. He expressed hope the stakeholders will take full advantage of information provided by the experts today.

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Basic training on GARUDA App for BLOs in Soreng

SORENG, 17 SEPT (IPR): A brief training cum meeting on GARUDA short for Global Access to Resource Using Distributed Architecture App was conducted for all Booth Level Officers (BLO) under Soreng-Chakung constituency today at the conference hall of SDAC, Soreng, West Sikkim.

The training was jointly organized by the offices of Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and Sub-Division Magistrate (Soreng) and was chaired by the SDM (Soreng), Ranjan Rai.

In his address, the SDM said that the newly launched GARUDA app by the Election Commission of India will make the work of BLOs



faster, smarter and more convenient.

Since Panchayat elections are nearing, all concerned users must be made aware of the basic functioning of the app, he added. He urged everyone to clarify any doubts and queries regarding the app.

He also informed that a person's Aadhaar or Voter's Card cannot be submitted as a proof of his/her citizenship during verification.

Issues such as proper image uploading of the applicants must be done in an adequate way as blurred or distorted photos may cause a problem while verifying the documents, he instructed.

Mr Rai also inquired about the current status of the ongoing re-verification of those applicants having double entries in the electoral list. He appealed to everyone

present to actively participate and keep track of the day-to-day developments regarding the app especially for the upcoming panchayat elections.

The BLOs were then given a brief training by Data Entry Operator-BAC (Soreng), Prakash Gurung. He said that the main objective of this app is to allow users to have easy access and hassle free documentation. Entry of information in

the app is far simpler and faster, he added.

He urged the trainees to use the app and note all issues so that they can be resolved at the earliest. He said that problems such as incomplete documentation and verification due to the lack of proper coordination between the inline sections will be solved through this app.

He reiterated that proper verification of the documents should be of top priority and incomplete submission of an applicant's document must not be entertained. He adjourned the meeting saying that the next training has been scheduled for 28 Sept in Gyalshing.

BRO begins construction of new road from Toong



MANGAN, 17 SEPT (IPR):

The Border Roads Organisation held a Bhoomi Pujan to mark the construction of the new road from Toong in North Sikkim on 17 Sept. Minister for Roads and Bridges,

Samdup Lepcha and Brigadier CE (P) Swastik, SP Singh were present on the day. Prayers were also offered by monks and bongthings.

The programme also had the presence of

Chairman Sikkim Welfare Commission, Nim Tshering Lepcha, DC(North), Tenzing T Kaleon, SP(North), Ongmu Bhutia, ADM(North), Sonam Lepcha, DFO(T) North and other officials from GREF.

Bio-Diversity Management Committee Branch opened at Melli Aching

SURAJ LIMBOO

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT: Bio-diversity Management Committee Branch office was inaugurated at Melli Aching GPU, West Sikkim, today. The committee is funded by Sikkim Biodiversity Board, Government of Sikkim.

The branch office was inaugurated by Zilla Panchayat of Rimbimelli Territorial, Tara Gurung accompanied by Panchayat members of GPU, BO (Forest), Jamuna Gurung, BMC members and representative of NGOs.

Panchayat member of Melli Aching, Gyatso Lepcha was nominated as chairman of the committee with five panchayats of GPU as members for a period of five years.

Addressing the programme, Gyatso Lepcha highlighted the importance of the BMC. The main aim of the committee is to protect bio-diversity of the area, said Mr Lepcha.

Now it is the responsibility of the committee to protect nature and bio diversity of the area, he added.

Zilla Panchayat, Tara Gurung said that the Biodiversity Management Committee may decide the terms under which they would permit access to biodiversity resources, levy charges by way of collection fees from any person for accessing or collecting any biological resource for commercial purpose in areas falling under the Committee's jurisdiction.

BO (Forest) Jamuna Gurung also assured to help make the BMC effective.

ICAR-NRCO organizes campaign on nutri-garden and tree plantation

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT (PIB):

ICAR-NRCO organized a campaign on nutri-garden and tree plantation (Poshan Vatika Maha Abhiyan & Tree Plantation) on 17 Sept, 2021. A total of 16 farmers were invited in ICAR-NRC for orchids from Pakyong, East Sikkim.

The program was inaugurated by Union Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar at 10.30am and the participants attended the program virtually.

Scientist, ICAR-NRC for Orchids, Dr Siddhartha Sankar Biswas delivered three lecture on the topics "Nutrition and medicinal benefits of millets", "Role of plantation on sustainable agriculture & rural livelihood" and "Biofortified crops: Bio weapons to fight against Malnutrition".

A total 40 people

participated in the program, including 20 women participants. Director, Dr Rampal, ICAR-NRCO distributed orchid plants and vegetable seeds to the farmers. A tree plantation program was also organised.

Scientist, Kalaivanan NS, ICAR-NRCO led the program of tree plantation in Pakyong Airport with 10 airport staffs. Scientist, Dr Siddhartha Sankar Biswas, ICAR-NRC for Orchids led the program of tree plantation inside ICAR-NRC for orchid campus with 20 ICAR-NRCO staffs.

Dr Siddhartha Sankar Biswas and Kalaivanan NS also visited Takchang village of East Sikkim where vegetable seeds were distributed with tree plantation program and discussed about nutrition and medicinal benefits of millets with 15 women farmers.

MNP hosts meeting with NGOs on Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT (IPR):

A meeting was held with various, NGOs, SHGs & individual entrepreneurs under Mangan Nagar Panchayat regarding week-long programme on "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" on 17 Sept, 2021 by Mangan Nagar Panchayat. The meeting was attended by around 10 NGOs, SHGs & individual entrepreneurs.

MEO, Mangan Nagar Panchayat highlighted the role of community participation in managing solid waste in order to make Mangan ULB a model ULB.

The house discussed the celebration of "Azadi

ka Amrit Mahotsav" and various issues were put forward by the NGOs, SHGs and individual entrepreneurs. On the same, an open discussion on the prevailing situation and the future course of action regarding solid waste management were discussed.

Various innovations, ideas such as adoption of areas by such groups were shared by the NGOs/SHGs.

The associations also assured to create awareness on solid waste management and expressed their support to Mangan Nagar Panchayat in dealing with solid waste and keeping Mangan clean.

Mangan Nagar Panchayat also requested NGOs, SHGs to participate in events like door-to-door awareness on waste segregation, Plogrun and waste-to-art exhibition to be held during the week long program.

Mangan Nagar Panchayat will also be organizing Field trip to waste processing plants on 30 Sept, 2021 for students, NGOs, SHGs and local residents.

The associations were also introduced to Swachhata app through which complaints regarding littering, garbage issues can be posted. The app can be downloaded from the Google Play Store.

Rangit Power Station organizes free Covid vaccination camp

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT: Rangit Power Station, NHPC Limited, South Sikkim, organized a free COVID-19 Vaccination Camp [2nd Dose] in association with Rabongla Primary Health Centre at Power Station, Rangit Nagar, in South Sikkim on Saturday.

A press release informs that the free vaccination camp was organized in line with the Union Government's commitment towards accelerating the pace and scope of COVID-19 vaccination throughout the country.

The release informs that the said vaccination camp was organized for persons in the

age group of 18 to 44 years at NHPC Project Dispensary.

It is added that 387 persons were vaccinated were COVID-19 and benefited the community residing under Legship GPU comprising of wards like Upper and Lower Dhargaon, Upper and Lower Legship, Nardang and other areas along with, NHPC employees, family members, NHPC Contract R&M Staff, DAV School Rangit Nagar.

The programme was inaugurated by General Manager [I/c], Ram Swaroop in the presence of CMO, Rangit Power Station and other senior officials and doctors and para medical staff of Rabongla PHC.

GANGTOK, 17 SEPT (IPR):

The Department of Commerce under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India is organizing Vanijya Saptah from 20 to 26 Sept, 2021 across the country to commemorate the monumental occasion of 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence by organizing various events to showcase the potential of our exporters and manufacturers during this week.

As part of the Department of Commerce and Industries, Vanijya Saptah, Government of Sikkim in association with DGFT and Spices Board is organizing Vanijya Utsav, Exporters Conclave at State level at Directorate

of Handicrafts and Handloom (DHH), Zero Point, Gangtok on 21 Sept, 2021 with the theme "Showcasing India as a Rising Economic Force focusing on Sikkim state".

An Exhibition having 20 stalls with participation of various sectors viz. Agri, Spices, Food Processing, Dairy, Handicrafts, Tourism, Pharma, etc. will be held at Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, Zero Point, Gangtok on 21 Sept, 2021 followed by interaction with various stakeholders.

Commerce and Industries Minister, Bedu Singh Panth, Govt of Sikkim will be the Chief Guest and inaugurate the Exhibition and distribute assistance under Large Cardamom Replanting

Scheme implemented by Spices Board in Sikkim to the farmers.

A panel discussion will be held at the Conference Hall of the Udyog Bhawan, Upper Tadong on 22 Sept, 2021 with participation of various State/Central Government Departments/Agencies, entrepreneurs, etc. The events aim to bring together all the relevant stakeholders under a single platform by highlighting the progress made in exports/manufacturing from the State, promoting products with export potential from the State, holding panel discussions to identify issues faced by exporters in the State and focus on strategies to improve export scenarios from the State.

National Campaign on Poshan Abhiyan in West Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT: Krishi Vigyan Kendra, West Sikkim, organized a National Campaign on Poshan Abhiyan and Tree Plantation event for International Year of Millets 2023 at the KVK premises in Gyalshing today, a press release informs.

The Campaign was attended by Panchayat, Sun Kr Limboo, Singpheng Panchayat, Kinzang P Lepcha, Sindrang, HDO, YB Gurung, Gyalshing, VO, Rinchen O Bhutia, Gyalshing along with 75 farmers.

The programme started with a virtual inaugural ceremony which was headed by Union

Minister for Agriculture & FW, Narendra S Tomar. After the virtual programme SMS, Bijay Biswakarma, Ag Met welcomed the dignitaries.

A lecture on nutri-cereals and their role in human health along with the role of plantation on sustainable agriculture and rural livelihood was given by SMS (Plant Protection), Rohini Silwal. Thereafter, 100 seed packets were distributed to the participants through the dignitaries followed by planting of local fruit trees by the participants at the KVK premises. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by SMS (Soil Science), Til K Limboo.

STATE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION DAY....

He assured the department that all assistance from the Government will be given to make Sikkim a disaster and climate resilient State.

Secretary, LR & DMD, Sarala Rai gave a brief history of SSDMA and how it came to being after the 2011 earthquake in Sikkim. A general report of activities and sensitization process by SSDMA was also given during her speech. She also thanked NDMA for continuously striving to make Sikkim a natural disaster resilient state.

Vice Chairman, SSDMA, Prof Vinod Sharma expressed his joy at seeing stakeholders at the meeting as this was an important subject in terms of the future of the region. He said that the recent climatic changes will lead to frequency of natural disasters in the State and the need of the hour is to build/modify infrastructures which are resilient to natural disasters.

Member, NDMA, Kamal Kishore in his speech emphasized on changing infrastructure of the state to cope with disasters by using nature-based solutions. He highlighted the importance of making the State resilient to disasters not just for a few years but for decades to come as the menace of climate change looms on the horizon. SEEDS, Co-Founder, Dr Anshu Sharma stressed on the fact that we need to inculcate nature centric thinking in schools and village communities. In his PowerPoint presentation, he delved at length on various issues such as managing complex disasters in Sikkim, understanding local natural challenges of the State, need of Local Weather Advisory and Artificial Intelligence Humanitarian Assistance in predicting disasters.

Director, Climate Action Network of South Asia, CANSA, Sanjay Vashist in his power point presentation gave a brief report on preparation of Code Red in Sikkim, IPC report verdict on climate change, recent climatic events which led to natural disasters throughout the globe, climate projections for 21st century and recommendations for reducing risk of natural disasters.

Professor, Kelo University, Japan, Dr Rajib Shaw, pointed out the fact that there was no sense of urgency towards climate change like the way it was for Covid-19 pandemic. He talked about having the same unity and urgency against climate change as we have against the Covid-19 pandemic as climate change is a greater threat against humanity. He further gave various recommendations to tackle challenges faced by Government and community at local level. Sikkim is on the right path by implementing measures which will successfully help the State in tackling natural disasters and climate change in the near future, he added.

International Year of Millets celebrated at CAEPHT

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT: On the occasion of International Year of Millets 2023, College of Agricultural Engineering and Post-Harvest Technology (CAEPHT), CAU (Imphal) Ranipool, Sikkim and College of Horticulture, Bermiok, Sikkim organized and attended the virtual programme on "Nutri-Cereals Multi-stakeholders Mega Convention 3.0" held on 17 Sept.

The programme was held jointly by Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad, Telangana, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare, (DAC & FW) Government of India, a press release informs.

The event was a curtain raiser for a series of events to be organized in the run-up to the "International Year of Millets (IYOM) 2023". The program was attended

by Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar as the chief guest.

Minister of Agriculture, Cooperation and Marketing, Government of Telangana, Singireddy Niranjan Reddy, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, Kailash Choudhary, and Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare were the guests of honor.

At the onset of the programme, D.D.G, Dr Tilak Raj Sharma, Crop Science, ICAR, welcomed the dignitaries, participants attending the programme and all the dignitaries of CAUS, SAUS, ICARS, KVKs who attended the program through virtual mode.

Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR, Dr Trilochan Mohapatra, stated that inauguration of nutri-cereals on the birth day of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a big step for Millet farmers in India. Secretary DAC&FW,

Agarwal highlighted the blueprint of series of activities planned as part of "International year of Millets - 2023". Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar and chief guest of the programme outlined the programmes planned for betterment of farmers and the workers allocated in allied sectors.

The book "Millet Recipe: A Healthy Alternative" and other commodities like millet were also launched during the programme. Awards to different organizations and individuals were presented for their contribution in promoting the millets.

Odisha was awarded as 'Best Millet Promoting State' under 'Poshak Anaj Awards'. The virtual mode programme was attended by the faculties, staff of both the colleges and 30 farmers including 10 girls at the college Old Auditorium following COVID 19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS).

BEFORE THE LEARNED SUB DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE RONGLI, EAST SIKKIM AFFIDAVIT

WHEREAS I, RAJENDRA PRADHAN son of Shri DAL BAHADUR PRADHAN, age about 40 years, by faith Hindu, by occupation Teacher under HRDD at Agrigaon PS, resident of Rhenock Bazaar, PO & PS Rhenock Bazar, East Sikkim do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on Oath as under:-

1. That my correct and full name is RAJENDRA PRADHAN as recorded in my Sikkim Subject Register Serial No. 568 vol.No. VI under Block Aritar issued by Secretary, Land Revenue Deptt., Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok, but I am also known as "RAJEN PRADHAN" as per CBSE, New Delhi AISSE, 1983 certificate issued by Secretary, CBSE, New Delhi dated 30.06.1983.

2. that both my name mentioned herein above i. Rajendra Pradhan and Rajen Pradhan pertain to one and the same person.

That I have signed this Affidavit at Rongli before the Sun-Division Magistrate Court, East Sikkim on this 19th day of September 2005.

Rajendra Pradhan. DEPENDENT.

Sikkim girl shares scene with Aamir in Laal Singh Chaddha



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 SEPT:

An aspiring actress and model from Burung, near Singtam, Sarita Pradhan, is back home after wrapping a shoot with Bollywood star Aamir Khan for the film Laal Singh Chaddha. She is appearing in a small cameo role in the film.

Sarita was the 1st runner up in the Face of Zylish 2020 organised by Zylish Academy held at Malbazaar, West Bengal.

Born to Govind Pradhan and Mamta Pradhan, she has two Nepali music videos to her credit and a soon to be released Nepali short film. Sarita is also a make-up artist and the owner of Magical Touch, a beauty parlour located in Singtam.

Sarita has thanked casting director Samir Chandra for giving her a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. She informed that she was in Kalimpong shooting for an episode of the Amazon Prime web-series The Girl when there was an announcement of the photo audition for a Hindi movie in Mumbai.

From the thousands that took part in the photo auditions, eight people were selected from Gorubathan, Jaigaon, Kalimpong and Sikkim. She feels delighted to be part of an Aamir Khan film. "Last one week was nothing more than a dream. I had never imagined sharing a screen with Aamir Khan so early in my career. No role is small or big, it's all about opportunity and how you give your best," she shared.

Governor's Badminton Tournament gets underway



GANGTOK, 18 SEPT (RAJ BHAVAN):

Governor Ganga Prasad inaugurated the Governor's Badminton Tournament today at Raj Bhavan Badminton hall. The tournament is being organized by Raj Bhavan Secretariat in association with Badminton Association of Sikkim.

The tournament includes men's doubles and mixed doubles where

more than 35 participants are being participated.

The inaugural function was attended by MP, Indra Hang Subba, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling, Chief Secretary and other sports enthusiasts.

In his inaugural address, the Governor commended the Raj Bhavan Secretariat for organizing the championship in the

true spirit and providing an opportunity to the players to show their skills.

"Sikkim has enormous potential for sports activities. Our youths must grab the opportunity to excel in sports," said the Governor.

The tournament will conclude on 19 Sept where the Chief Minister will attend the closing ceremony of the tourney.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT GANGTOK

NO.33/UDD/2021

Dated: 17.09.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL) is commencing carpeting work of feeder roads from the beginning of October 2021 under work "Improvement of Selected Feeder Roads in and around Gangtok," as per the list available on the website <http://smartsitygangtok.com>.

The household utility lines like power cables, water supply pipelines, sewerage pipelines etc. are to be laid prior to the commencement of the works so as to avoid damages to the roads, post carpeting and also to avoid inconvenience being caused to the general public after the completion of work. The Urban Development Department requests all concerned to approach GSCDL prior to the commencement of the work or at least within one month from the date of issue of this notice with request of permission for above works. They may submit their requests at the following email addresses or personally contact the office of the GSCDL within the stipulated time:-

1. gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com
2. ctosmartcity.gangtok@gmail.com
3. degscdl@gmail.com
4. se2smartcity@gmail.com

After the expiry of above mentioned notice period, the GSCDL will not be in a position to accept or allow any request for digging of roads for laying utility lines. The Department solicits cooperation from all concerned to prevent damages to the public infrastructure once carpeting work is fully done.

Sd/-

Secretary

Urban Development Department



STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD SIKKIM FOREST AND ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
DEORALI, GANGTOK – 737102

F.No. 351/SPCB/3181

Dated: 8.9.2021

NOTICE

As per the provisions of Section 25 of water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and Section 21 of Air (Prevention & Control of pollution) Act, 1981, no person/s can establish or operate any enterprise, industrial units without obtaining prior Consent to Establish or Operate which are liable for causing environment pollution. The units include any type of enterprises/establishments e.g. Health care Establishment (Hospital, Clinics, Clinical labs, blood bank etc), Pharmaceutical units, Fabrication units, factories, Vehicle cleaning facility (car spa), Automobile workshop/ Garages, Hydro-electric project and industrial units, Hotels, Resorts, restaurants, Hot mix plant, DG Sets, Mobile tower, petrol pumps, photo studios, Dairy, Bakery, Laundry and jewellery shops, poultry farms (5000 birds & above) etc.

Therefore, notice is hereby given to all units to apply for Consent to Establish/Operate online at www.skocmms.nic.in without fail. Failure to obtain Consent may result in legal action in exercise of power vested under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Section 33 A of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 & under section 31 A of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 by the State Pollution Control Board Sikkim for contravention of the relevant provisions of the Acts. For further enquiry please contact the office of the State Pollution Control Board, Sikkim Deorali Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Email: spcbssikkim@gmail.com

Member Secretary

State Pollution Control Board, Sikkim
Department of Forest & Environment,

Government of Sikkim
Deorali, East Sikkim.

R.O. No. 192/IPR/Pub/Class./21-22
Date: 10.9.2021



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT 5TH MILE TADWZONG, GANGTOK

Memo No: 135GOS/SJ&WD/EC/2021/146

Dated: 17.09.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Assistant Engineer, (East) Social Justice & Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim on behalf of Governor of Sikkim, invites sealed tenders in percentage Rate basis from the eligible contractors of appropriate class Vide Notification No. 584/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 08.10.2018 vide Notification No. 515/R&B/PWD/Secy. Dated 12.06.2018 Notification No. 104/R&B Dated 08.10.2020 for the work(s) listed under:-

SL.NO.	Name of Work	Value put to Tender (in Rs.)	Completion Time (in months)	Amount of Earnest Money @ 2.5% for issue of tender form (Rs.)	Amount of Bank receipt for cost of tender documents (Rs.)	Constituency GPU/ Ward
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction of 6 R/S/B at Chisopani Junior High School Khamdong, East Sikkim	53,23,505/-	12 months	1,33,088/-	5,000/-	Khamdong Singta, Constituency 43 Chisopani GPU, Sakyong, Upper Chisopani Ward.

Time Schedule is as follows:-

1. Date for submission of application: 24/09/2021 to 19/10/2021 (10.00 am to 4.30pm)
2. Last date for issue of tender form: 22/10/2021 (10:00 am to 4:30 pm).
3. Date and Time for submission of Tender : 25/10/2021 (10.00 am to 1.00 pm)
4. Date and Time of opening of Tender : 25/10/2021 at 2.00 pm

5. Place of tender : Gram Prasashan Kendra, 43 Chisopani GPU, Khamdong Singtam Constituency, East Sikkim.

Note: The details of tender documents including tender form can be obtained from the office of the Assistant Engineer-(East) SJ&WD on production of receipt of deposit made to respective GPU.

CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT

1. Tender is open only to the eligible Contractors/Firms of appropriate Class/Area.
2. The intending tenders/contractors should apply in writing for issue of tender documents. The application would invariably be signed by the contractor himself/herself. The tender documents will not be issued to any person other than the INTENDING TENDER.
3. The applicants should enclose attested copies of the (a) Latest Income Tax Clearance Certificate as per the Indian Income Tax Act and (b) Validated Contractor Enlistment Certificate, and Professional Tax Clearance Certificate along with the application. It is mandatory to produce the original validated/updated Enlistment Certificate during sale/issue of the Tender Document for verification (d) PAN card. The Selected bidder will have to produce valid GSTIN registration certificate before issue of work order.
4. The prescribed Non-Transferable Tender Documents (Excluding the Tender Form) can be obtained during the period specified as above from the office of the Assistant Engineer (East) of Social Justice & Welfare Department, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim, on production of receipt deposit to the revenue of the respective GPU for cost of tender documents.
5. Earnest Money Deposit @2.5% in the State Bank of Sikkim in the form of deposit receipt of schedules bank which includes in the form of temporary deposit receipts or fixed deposits receipts in favour of the Addl. Chief Engineer, Social Justice & Welfare Department, Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey, Tadong, East District, Sikkim. Tender Form shall be issued only on the production of the deposit receipt to the contractors who has obtained the tender documents, on production of deposit receipts of 2.5% earnest money.
6. The Tender document s including the Tender Form with quoted offer should be placed in a sealed cover with the name of the Tenderers and the name of the work superscripted on it. Supporting documents listed at SL 3(a), (b) and (c) above should b enclosed with the offer.
7. Sealed Tenders may be deposited in the Tender Box in the concerned GPK on the date and time indicated above.
8. Tenders will be opened by a Tender Opening Committee a prescribed by the Government in the presence of the tenderer on the date and time indicated above.
9. The Tender should sign on every page of the tender documents as Acceptance of the General Direction and Conditions of Contract and other laid down norms. The rate quoted should be both in figures and words and should be inclusive of GST and all other Taxes and Levies. Overwriting and correction should be avoided and if made should be authenticated. Incomplete/ Conditional tenders shall be rejected forthwith.
10. In case of any discrepancy in rate(s) printed in the Schedule of Rates and Quantities issued with the tender document, rates as per approved Schedule of Rates will be taken as correct. For items outside the SOR, the rates shall be as per the technically checked/estimate/analysis. Decision of the head of the department /Secretary/ Addl. Chief Engineer will be final in this regard.
11. The Work Value, scope and quantum of work are subject to change, the contractor shall execute the work as per the directives of the Department. No claim on this account shall be entertained whatsoever. If any extra claim is made, it shall be as per the agreement rates.
12. Avoidable damages due to negligence of the contractor shall be at his own risk and cost. The Department shall not be liable for payment of such damages (if any), including accidents to laborer at site.
13. The offer shall remain valid for a period of 90 days. The work should commence within 15 days from the date of issue of work order.
14. The department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
15. Subletting of contract work is against the norms and if it comes to the notice, the original contract shall be cancelled and appropriate action shall be initiated as per the rules
16. The Department also reserves the right to increase, decrease, alter or modify the item of works as indicated in the NIT without assigning any reason thereof.
17. The contractor will have to pay all taxes and duties as applicable and notified by the State/Central Government and no claim shall be entertained in this regard whatsoever.
18. The rate quoted shall be inclusive of prevailing taxes.
19. The department reserves the right to reject the incomplete tender without any reason there-off.
20. The Contactor has to submit the work program/ bar Chart may be submitted in the initial stage.

Sd/-

Assistant Engineer (East))

Social Justice & Welfare Department
Samaj Kalyan Bhawan, Lumsey,
5th Mile, East District, Sikkim.

R.O. NO. 210/IPR/Pub/Class./21-22
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Divided in Suspicion

Anyone can deal in whispers, it takes leaders to deliver clarity and trust

It is worrying how discussions on communalism continue to remain in circulation and of how often different sections and groups keep crying wolf, painting monsters only they see and hyperventilating over threats only they perceive. After all, into how many slivers can a population of barely seven lakh people be divided? Of course, with some sections, the divisions are a simple two-way process of “us” and “them”, and that is a disturbing condition to suffer because that reduces every disagreement into an attack, every counter argument into an attempt to deny or subvert.

To begin with, let us not deny that divisions exist within the Sikkimese society. That much is natural, but what has also been exceptionally reassuring about the State is that the privately held prejudices have not been allowed by the people to pour out in public displays of communal posturing; at least not a scale that causes any more damage than hurt feelings. The State, despite some close calls, has never suffered a communal clash. Its politics and several politicians have often succumbed to communalism, but the people have performed much better. The politics of social engineering, of stitching together winning vote-bank combinations have also been tried, and have, thankfully failed as well in Sikkim.

But, if people are resistant to communal confrontations, why is the bogey raised so often in Sikkim? Perhaps because it is an easy divide to hack away at and experience elsewhere has shown that the people's defenses eventually crumble in the face of persistent communal scare-mongering. Given that everyone belongs to some community or the other, it is an accepted fact that people are also inherently communal, at least in as much as having a soft corner, if not hate, is concerned. Also, because we are social animals, this inherent communal streak seldom develops into paranoia or gets directed against other communities because in a small place like Sikkim everyone needs everyone else. This conditioning of social grooming, however, gets stressed when the leader of a pack smells blood – the possibility of making an issue emotive and convincing a people that they are threatened. Few things move off the counter faster than a fabricated conspiracy theory. The more dramatic the fabrication, the more looming is the threat perception. Years of shepherding a disinterested public has honed the skills of these leaders and they are only aided by the blunted perspicacity of the people. People share the blame of allowing space for such voices which keep growing in belligerence because no one holds them to account.

One must realise that India has perhaps the best, most detailed Constitution at hand for the protection of its minorities. Ironically, the minorities still feel perpetually threatened in our country. It is unlikely that any minority was ever threatened as a state policy in the past; it was the majority they feared. As time passed, this suspicion fermented into animosity and now teeters on the brink of hatred. When one weighs in the current environment where hate crimes result often from the not so subtle nudging from the new powers in Delhi, one shudders to think what madness still awaits the country. In that light, one is almost relieved that the ultra-nationalist brigade has rediscovered an enemy in Pakistan because that just might keep their paws off the victims back home. But, like always, we digress here. One needs to ask who allowed such hate and such suspicions to get so normal? Surely not the people, because they are too preoccupied with aam-aadmi concerns. It's the leaders who failed us. This deduction holds as true for Sikkim as it does for the nation.

Those claiming to represent communities started becoming instigators instead of counselors. These leaders forget that democracy offers people the right to self-determination, the right to negotiate, the right to harmonise. Instead, they allowed their supporters only the options of complaint, bickering and suspicion. Someone who speaks for a community should bridge the communication gap between communities. Anyone can deal in whispers, but it takes a leader to represent a cause and mediate.



Facebook has known for a year and a half that Instagram is bad for teens

CHRISTIA SPEARS BROWN
THECONVERSATION.COM

Facebook officials had internal research in March 2020 showing that Instagram – the social media platform most used by adolescents – is harmful to teen girls' body image and well-being but swept those findings under the rug to continue conducting business as usual, according to a Sept. 14, 2021, Wall Street Journal report.

Facebook's policy of pursuing profits regardless of documented harm has sparked comparisons to Big Tobacco, which knew in the 1950s that its products were carcinogenic but publicly denied it into the 21st century. Those of us who study social media use in teens didn't need a suppressed internal research study to know that Instagram can harm teens. Plenty of peer-reviewed research papers show the same thing.

Understanding the impact of social media on teens is important because almost all teens go online daily. A Pew Research Center poll shows that 89% of teens report they are online “almost constantly” or “several times a day.”

Teens are more likely to log on to Instagram than any other social media site. It is a ubiquitous part of adolescent life. Yet studies consistently show that the more often teens use Instagram, the worse their overall well-being, self-esteem, life satisfaction, mood and body image. One study found that the more college students used Instagram on any given day, the worse their mood and life satisfaction was that day.

UNHEALTHY COMPARISONS

But Instagram isn't problematic simply because it is popular. There are two key features of Instagram that seem to make it particularly risky.

First, it allows users to follow both celebrities and peers, both of whom can present a manipulated, filtered picture of an unrealistic body along with a highly curated impression of a perfect life.

While all social media allows users to be selective in what they show the world, Instagram is notorious for its photo editing and filtering capabilities. Plus, that is the platform popular among celebrities, models and influencers. Facebook has been relegated to the uncool soccer moms and grandparents. For teens, this seamless integration of celebrities and retouched versions of real-life peers presents a ripe environment for upward social comparison, or comparing yourself to someone who is “better” in some respect.

Humans, as a general rule, look to others to know how to fit in and judge their own lives. Teens are especially vulnerable to these social comparisons. Just about everyone can remember worrying about fitting in in high school. Instagram exacerbates that worry. It is hard enough to compare yourself to a supermodel who looks fantastic (albeit filtered); it can be even worse when the filtered comparison is Natalie down the hall.

Negatively comparing themselves to others leads people to feel envious of others' seemingly better lives and bodies. Recently, researchers even tried to combat this effect by reminding Instagram users that the posts were unrealistic.

It didn't work. Negative comparisons, which were nearly impossible to stop, still led to envy and lowered self-esteem. Even in studies in which participants knew the photos they were shown on Instagram were retouched and reshaped, adolescent girls still felt worse about their bodies

after viewing them. For girls who tend to make a lot of social comparisons, these effects are even worse.

OBJECTIFICATION AND BODY IMAGE

Instagram is also risky for teens because its emphasis on pictures of the body leads users to focus on how their bodies look to others. Our research shows that for teen girls – and increasingly teen boys – thinking about their own bodies as the object of a photo increases worrying thoughts about how they look to others, and that leads to feeling shame about their bodies. Just taking a selfie to be posted later makes them feel worse about how they look to others.

Being an object for others to view doesn't help the “selfie generation” feel empowered and sure of themselves – it can do exactly the opposite. These are not insignificant health concerns, because body dissatisfaction during the teen years is a powerful and consistent predictor of later eating disorder symptoms.

Facebook has acknowledged internally what researchers have been documenting for years: Instagram can be harmful to teens. Parents can help by repeatedly talking to their teens about the difference between appearance and reality, by encouraging their teens to interact with peers face-to-face, and to use their bodies in active ways instead of focusing on the selfie.

The big question will be how Facebook handles these damaging results. History and the courts have been less than forgiving of the head-in-the-sand approach of Big Tobacco.

[the writer is Professor of Psychology, University of Kentucky]

Five of the best new crime novels to read this autumn (and one golden oldie)

ALEC CHARLES

As the nights draw in and we spend more time indoors, autumn can be a good time to get stuck into the literary world's latest murder mysteries. And the last few months have seen the publication of major new works by some of the genre's most respected authors.

So here are half a dozen recommendations that might help to keep you warm – or at least offer the homeliest of chills – on an evening in.

LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN by Christopher Fowler

Long trailed as the final outing for Christopher Fowler's duo of decrepit detectives, Arthur Bryant and John May, the 20th book in a saga that started in 2004 answers a lot of the series' unanswered (and unasked) questions.

Fowler has recently hinted that this might not be quite the end for these stalwarts of London's Peculiar Crimes Unit, whose adventures the series follows from the Blitz to the present day, through an extraordinarily erudite exploration of the mythic geography of the metropolis. Let's pray there's a little more life to be drawn out of these enthralling creations of Fowler's absurdly fertile imagination.

A LINE TO KILL by Anthony Horowitz

This third novel in Anthony Horowitz's chronicles of the adventures of private investigator, Daniel Hawthorne, again sees a fictionalised version of the author

himself play biographer to the enigmatic consulting detective. He is Watson to Hawthorne's Holmes, although he likes him rather less: while Hawthorne's self-assured brilliance enchants others, it constantly infuriates Horowitz himself.

Set on the island of Alderney, Horowitz's witty and crafty narrative is as evocative of the detachment and claustrophobia of rural isolation as last year's *Moonflower Murders*: “The road didn't seem to go anywhere. In the distance, a hillside rose steeply, blocking anything that might tell me which century I was actually in”. Unputdownable stuff.

1979 by Val McDermid

Late revisions to Val McDermid's previous novel, published last August, brought us extraordinarily up to date with a Scotland teetering on the verge of the pandemic. By contrast, her latest work harks back to four decades before COVID-19. Her tale of dodgy dealings in 1970s Glasgow, set against a backdrop of familiarly fervent independence controversies, introduces her latest heroine, the bright and determined young reporter Allie Burns.

Burns is a breath of fresh air, from her first appearance on a snowbound train returning to the city from a family Christmas, she is eminently sympathetic, engaging and likeable. And she doesn't yet bear the baggage of McDermid's long-running protagonists Carol Jordan and Karen Pirie (at least not to begin with).

McDermid invokes the shoddy, gloomy zeitgeist of the late seventies with her characteristic deftness of touch: “blizzards, strikes, unburied bodies, power cuts, terrorist threats and Showaddywaddy's Greatest Hits topping the album charts; 1979 was a cascade of catastrophe”.

THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE by Richard Osman

Richard Osman's debut novel, *The Thursday Murder Club*, was the publishing phenomenon of 2020. That book was both clever and funny, but more importantly it was reassuringly parochial: a conundrum worthy of the golden age of detective fiction, investigated by an emphatically charming group of residents of a retirement community.

Osman's writing is reminiscent, in its tone and textual economy, of Sophie Hannah's splendid reboot of Hercule Poirot (as ingenious as Christie but rather more nuanced and progressive). His sequel, a tale of stolen diamonds, involving the Mafia, MI5 and multiple murders, all kicked off by “an invitation from a dead man”, has just come out, and will likely send Penguin's printing presses into overdrive.

A CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCE by Susan Hill

October sees the publication of the 11th book in Susan Hill's series of Simon Serrailer novels. Hill's elegant provincial cop may be the most rounded of today's fictional detectives. As with P. D. James's Adam

Dagleish, it seems the author herself is a little enamoured of her dashing but troubled hero – romantically misguided and prone to a perhaps unnecessary degree of listlessness.

As she drags him onto another emotional rollercoaster, her readers surely cannot fail to share that bittersweet attachment. Approaching her 80th birthday in February next year, Hill's writing has lost none of its immediate relevance and urgency – this time focusing upon the impacts of county lines drug-running networks. Fans of the series will find the prospect of an update on the lives of its central characters absolutely irresistible.

BIRDMAN by Mo Hayder

In July, British fiction suffered the loss of one its most compelling and commanding voices. If there is to be any consolation from Mo Hayder's death, at the age of 59, then let it be that it might draw a new generation of readers to her work.

The best place to start is her stunning breakthrough novel, the justly celebrated *Birdman*, published at the turn of the millennium. The opening ordeal for her problematic protagonist, Detective Inspector Jack Caffery, offers readers a gripping ride – one that makes the darkest of Nordic noir look decidedly beige by comparison. Hayder's work will take you through autumn, to winter and beyond.

[the writer is Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Winchester]

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460 youth from J-K, Ladakh join elite JAKLI regiment

JAMMU, SEP 18 (PTI): A total of 460 well-trained recruits on Saturday joined the army here as young soldiers after a successful attestation parade at Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) centre, a defence spokesperson said. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremony was conducted without the parents of the recruits following all the norms and advisors.



The attestation parade of recruit course serial number 126, depicting graduation of a recruit and his transformation into a young soldier, was reviewed by Commandant Officers Training Academy, Chennai and Colonel of JAKLI regiment Lt Gen M K Das at recruitment

training camp Dansal, the spokesperson said. He said the dauntless young soldiers of the regiment hailing from all regions and religions of Jammu and Kashmir, marching in precise unison with a singular aim of devoting their lives in service of the nation, singing their regimental song 'Balidanam Veer

Lakshanam', inspired one and all as their voice echoed in the entire region.

Their salute to the tricolour with national anthem playing inspired patriotic fervour amongst all present during the parade, the spokesperson said.

Lt Gen Das congratulated the young soldiers for their

immaculate parade and impressed upon selfless service towards the nation.

He praised their contribution towards encouraging more and more youth from Jammu and Kashmir to come forward to join the security forces and also highlighted the vital role played by their parents in

motivating their wards to join this noble profession.

The young soldiers who excelled themselves in varied facets of training were also felicitated by Lt Gen Das.

Recruit Peer Sartaj Ahmed Wani was awarded the Sher-e-Kashmir Sword of Honour and Triveni Singh Medal for being adjudged 'Overall Best Recruit', while recruit Amandeep Singh Chib was awarded the Chewang Rinchen Medal for being 'Best in Firing'.

Recruit Parmeet Sharma was awarded the Maqbool Sherwani Medal for being 'Best in Physical Training' and Recruit Mohd Asad was awarded the Bana Singh Medal for being 'Best in Drill', the spokesperson said.

Pondy witnesses 128 coronavirus cases, one death



PUDUCHERRY, SEPT 18 (PTI): Puducherry on Saturday recorded 128 fresh COVID-19 cases that were identified at the end of examination of 5,004 samples.

The new cases were spread over Puducherry 88, Karaikal 32 and Mahe eight.

The overall case load was 1,25,384.

However, Yanam did not report any new case.

One more person aged 75 years and hailing from Puducherry succumbed

to the viral infection raising the cumulative fatalities to 1,829.

While 122 patients recovered and were discharged during the last twenty-four hours, the overall recoveries were 1,22,631.

Director of Health and Family Welfare Services G Sriramulu said 17.32 lakh samples were tested and out of them 14.69 lakh were found to be negative.

The test positivity rate was 2.56 percent while fatality and recovery rates were 1.46 percent and 97.80

percent, respectively.

Sriramulu said 38,213 health care workers and 23,006 front line workers have been vaccinated against pandemic so far. The Department of Health has vaccinated so far 5.96 lakh people coming under the category of either senior citizens or those above 45 years with co morbidities have been inoculated against the virus.

In all, 8.97 lakh people including those who received the second jab have been vaccinated in the Union Territory.

Babul Supriyo, till recently a Union Minister, joins Team Mamata

Babul Supriyo was asked to resign as junior minister in the Environment Ministry in July

Kolkata: Former Union Minister Babul Supriyo joined Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress today, two months after he was asked to resign as junior minister in the Environment Ministry and a month after saying he won't join any other party and would quit politics. Later, he amended his plans and said he would remain a Member of Parliament.

"If opportunity comes your way, you should decide, and I have decided to take this," Mr Supriyo told reporters today. He was listed as the BJP's star campaigner for the Bhabanipur bypoll, where the BJP's Priyanka Tibrewal will contest

against Ms Banerjee on September 30.

Mr Supriyo is the fifth BJP leader - the four others were BJP MLAs - to join Trinamool Congress after Ms Banerjee's party won the assembly election in May and retained power. Trinamool leader Kunal Ghosh today said more BJP leaders are in talks to join the party. "Many BJP leaders are in communication with Trinamool leadership. They are not satisfied with BJP. One (Mr Supriyo) joined today, another wants to join tomorrow. This process will go on. Wait and watch," Mr Ghosh said, news agency ANI reported.

Mr Supriyo was seen to be upset after he was made to quit as Union Minister in the government led by Prime Minister Narendra



Modi, who refreshed the cabinet by appointing 43 new names in July.

"I'm surely sad for myself," Mr Supriyo had tweeted on July 8, the day he resigned as Union Minister, and later deleted the post to replace with a new one that said he was "extremely happy" that he left the stint "without a spot of corruption on me".

In photos tweeted by the Trinamool today, Mr Supriyo, flanked by party leaders Abhishek Banerjee and Derek O'Brien, wearing a scarf adorned with the party's

election symbol is seen smiling and shaking hands with Mr Banerjee.

This camaraderie on social media is in stark contrast to turbulent times between Mr Supriyo and Ms Banerjee during campaigning for the assembly election and before that.

In June 2019, Mr Supriyo had taken a swipe at the Chief Minister after she objected to BJP supporters shouting "Jai Shri Ram" over what she claimed was the BJP trying to "create unrest in West Bengal by mixing religion with politics". "She is an experienced

politician but her behaviour is abnormal and bizarre," the former junior Environment Minister had said.

In February this year, three months before the assembly election in West Bengal, Mr Supriyo had taken a dig at Ms Banerjee over the Trinamool's election slogan, "Bengal wants its daughter". Mr Supriyo then tweeted, "Yes, we will send her off this time." Though Ms Banerjee lost the election from Nandigram, her party performed well and stopped the BJP's march in Bengal.

Over 7 lakh people vaccinated in Assam on PM's birthday

GUWAHATI, SEP 18 (PTI): A total of 7,09,524 people received the COVID-19 vaccine in Assam on Friday as the state government undertook a mega inoculation drive on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday, a bulletin said.

Over 2.16 crore people have been immunised, and 44.02 lakh of them got both doses of the vaccines, it said.

The special drive was conducted in 4,575 COVID Vaccination Centres (CVCs), of which 4,557 were government sites and 18 private ones.

The northeastern state, however,

reported nine more COVID deaths during the day, raising the toll to 5,788, and the coronavirus tally mounted to 5,97,344 with 270 fresh cases, the National Health Mission bulletin said.

G o l a g h a t reported three fresh fatalities, while two were registered in Kamrup Metro, and one each in Jorhat, Karimganj, Nagaon and Sonitpur.

The current death rate is 0.97 per cent, and 1,347 COVID-positive patients have died due to other ailments.

The number of new COVID cases was less than the previous day's 468 as the count of daily tests for the

infection declined on Friday.

The fresh cases were detected from 55,049 tests, lower than 59,020 conducted on the previous day.

Assam has so far conducted over 2.28 crore sample tests for COVID-19.

Kamrup Metro recorded the highest number of new cases at 90, followed by 25 from Jorhat, 16 from Darrang and 15 from Sonitpur.

The state now has 3,818 active cases, and 477 people were cured of the disease during the day, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,86,391.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state stands at 98.17.

Odisha flood situation grim, may worsen in weekend

BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 17 (PTI): With large stretches of the Mahanadi and Subarnarekha river basins gone underwater, people of Odisha are apprehensive that the flood situation in the state, especially at Mundali in Cuttack city and neighbouring areas, may worsen over the next 24-48 hours.

All seven major rivers in Odisha are in the spate, following a depression-induced heavy rainfall in the coastal state early this week that left at least nine people dead.

Highlighting that the state administration is on high alert, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) P K Jena said rescue teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), and Odisha Fire Service have been deployed at vulnerable pockets.

We are expecting the flow of about 8 lakh cusec of water at Mundali near Cuttack by Saturday in the Mahanadi river system while the water level in the Subarnarekha river is also rising. It is expected that water level

in the Subarnarekha River will be at its peak height of 11.5 metres near Rajghat by 10 pm to 12 midnight on Friday night, Jena said.

A report from Keonjhar district said that three persons were swept away while collecting wood from the floodwaters in the Baitarani river near Anandapur barrage.

One of them was rescued by fire personnel, an official at the district emergency room said.

Meanwhile, reports said that floodwater of the Mahanadi has already entered agricultural fields and some villages in Cuttack and Khurda districts while water from the Subarnarekha river inundated around 30 villages under Baliapal and Bhograi blocks. Some portions of Balasore Sadar block have also been affected by the flood, the reports said.

Following the release of floodwater from Hirakud Dam 30 hours ago, over 10 villages in three gram panchayats O r a b a r a s i n g h , Brajamoanpur, and

Narangarh- in Khurda district are now surrounded by water, officials in the water resources department said.

The SRC said though the volume of water entering into Hirakud reservoir has declined because of less rainfall in the upper catchment areas in Chhattisgarh, the downstream water level is on the rise due to the release of floodwater through 28 sluice gates of the dam.

However, the water flow has increased at Mundali near Cuttack as it increased to 6.55 lakh cusec per second at 6 pm from 6.49 lakh cusec water per second at noon. The volume of water flow is on the rise in all the three gauge stations at Khairmal, Barmul, and Mundali along the Mahanadi system, he said.

We are expecting a peak flow at Mundali by tomorrow. As per the projection, around 7.5 lakh cusecs of water will pass through Mundali. We hope to keep the flow below 8 lakh cusecs. As per our assessment, there will be no problem

in the tributaries of the Mahanadi, Jena said.

The engineer-in-chief of State Water Resource Department DK Samal said both men and machinery have been kept ready to tackle eventualities.

Speaking about the flood situation in Odisha, he said that five districts in the coastal region are likely to be affected by the flood as the water level in the Brahmani and Mahanadi rivers has risen due to incessant rainfall.

The water level in the Brahmani and the Mahanadi rivers may cross the danger marks in Jajpur, Cuttack, Puri, Kendrapara, and Jagatsinghpur districts, he said.

A report from Balasore district said that the water level in all the major rivers has become a matter of concern for residents living in low-lying areas.

Heavy rain for the last two days in the catchment areas of Subarnarekha, Budhabalang, Jalaka, and Kansabansa has led to an increase in the water level

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Achieved all I wanted, never overstay your welcome: Shastri gears up for end of India tenure

LONDON, SEP 18 (PTI): His tenure set to end after next month's T20 World Cup, India head coach Ravi Shastri conceded that there would be a bit of "sadness" but he has no doubts that he is going out at the right time, having "over-achieved" during his stint. Shastri's first stint as head coach began in 2017 before he was reappointed in 2019. The T20 World Cup starts on October 17 in the UAE. The 59-year-old is currently in quarantine here after testing positive for COVID-19. Speaking to 'The Guardian', Shastri said to win the T20 World Cup would be special but the team has already done special things in his time.

"I believe so because I've achieved all I wanted. Five years as No.1 (in Test cricket), to win in Australia twice, to win in England.

"I spoke to Michael Atherton earlier this summer and said: 'For me, this is the ultimate to beat Australia in

Australia and win in England in Covid times.' We lead England 2-1 and the way we played at Lord's and the Oval was special," said the former player.

India were leading 2-1 against England when the fifth and final Test in Manchester was called off after a COVID-19 outbreak in the touring camp.

During Shastri's tenure, India also recorded T20 series wins in South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and England.

"We've also beaten every country in the world in their own backyard in white-ball cricket. If we win the (T20) World Cup that will be the icing on the cake. There is nothing more.

"I believe one thing never overstay your welcome. And I would say that, in terms of what I wanted to get out of the side, I've over-achieved. To beat Australia away and to lead the series in England in a COVID year?



It is the most satisfying moment of my four decades in cricket."

The flamboyant coach would love to sign off with an ICC trophy, which the team has not lifted during the Shastri-Virat Kohli phase.

"We're going to give

it everything. Absolutely. We've got the team to win if we play to our potential. Above all we're going to enjoy it. Forget Test match pressure. T20 cricket is meant to be enjoyed. I plan on going out on a real high," he asserted.

"Yes there will be sadness it's ending because I've worked with so many great players and personalities. We've had some great times in the dressing room. But, above all, the quality of our cricket and the results we've achieved

has made it one heck of a journey," he said.

He also spoke on the emergence of Jasprit Bumrah as a lethal Test bowler in his tenure.

"No one believed Jasprit Bumrah could play Test cricket. He was a white-ball bowler. But when I took over as coach I asked myself: 'How do I take 20 wickets overseas?'

"I knew I needed four great fast bowlers because I had played so much Test cricket against the West Indies. It started in South Africa in 2018 and we lost that fantastic series 2-1. I wanted to unleash Bumrah in that first Test in Cape Town.

"I bounced the idea off Virat months before and told the selectors: 'Do not unleash him in India. I don't want the world to see him in Test cricket before Cape Town.'

"That was three years ago. Since then he's taken 101 wickets (in 24 Tests). It's remarkable.

AC Milan files complaint over racist chants from Lazio fans

MILAN, SEP 18 (AP): AC Milan filed a complaint with the Italian Soccer Federation's prosecutor's office over racist chants from Lazio fans during last weekend's win over the Roman club.

Ti mou Bakayoko said he and fellow Milan midfielder Franck Kessi, both of whom are Black, were the targets of derogatory chants from Lazio supporters.

To some Lazio fans and their racist cries towards to me and my brother (Kessie). We are strong and proud of our skin color. I have my all confidence in our club to identify them, Bakayoko wrote on Instagram after the game.

Lazio has been hit with numerous stadium bans and fines for fan racism.

It is our moral duty to report any form of discrimination involving our club, Milan CEO Ivan Gazidis said.

We want to once again confirm our commitment

to avoid such attitudes in the future, by collaborating with other clubs and institutions to achieve a common goal. Football must be united in protecting our players in a decisive and uncompromising way.

Intolerance is not a problem created by football, but it is undoubtedly reflected in football. For this reason, we will continue in our effort to bring about change through football and we are going to launch other initiatives in the coming days, Gazidis added.

Milan beat Lazio 2-0 on Sunday to extend its perfect start to Serie A.

Lazio coach Maurizio Sarri was shown a red card after the final whistle as several players, including Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Lucas Leiva, got into a shoving match.

Sarri was then suspended for two matches.

Mizoram U-19 head coach Murtaza Lodhgar dies of heart attack in Vizag

NEW DELHI, SEP 18 (PTI): Former Bengal left-arm spinner and Mizoram U-19 head coach Murtaza Lodhgar died of cardiac arrest on Friday night in Visakhapatnam, Cricket Association

Bengal president Avishek Dalmiya has confirmed.

Lodhgar, 45, was in the port city with the Mizoram colts, who were set to play the league phase of Vinoo Mankad Trophy (U-19 National One Dayers) as BCCI's domestic season is set to commence.

"The tragedy happened just after dinner," Dalmiya told PTI.

"Murtu bhai (as he was known in Bengal circles) along with team's physio went out for an after-dinner walk and suddenly felt enormous chest pain and fell on the road.

"The physio and other team members immediately took him to

the hospital where he was declared brought dead late on Friday.

"I still can't believe that Murtu bhai is no more. It is a personal loss for me as he was one of the pillars of first division club Rajasthan SC. He was one of the most loved cricketers in our fraternity and also worked with our women's team with distinction. It's an irreparable loss," Dalmiya said.

The Cricket Association of Bengal is trying to make arrangements so that his family can bring his mortal remains to the city for the burial. The deceased cricketer's family will be flying to Vizag on Saturday.

Lodhgar was a power-house performer in club cricket but due to presence of domestic giant Utpal Chatterjee, he played only nine Ranji Trophy games in which he had 34 wickets.

Germany, Portugal attack plans for 2-year soccer WCup cycle

FRANKFURT, SEP 18 (AP): The German and Portuguese soccer federations issued strong critiques of plans to hold the men's World Cup every two years, warning it means players risk more injuries and that women's competitions will be overshadowed.

FIFA claimed Thursday it has the support of fans for the World Cup to be held more often. European soccer body UEFA and South American counterpart CONMEBOL are against the idea and have said they could boycott extra tournaments.

The board of the German federation, known as the DFB, said FIFA had sidestepped its own ruling council by proposing the plans first to a group of former players, and that drastic changes cannot be made without the approval of European associations and European soccer.

Germany also expressed concern for women's events. The women's World Cup is currently held in odd-numbered years and avoids clashes with major men's tournaments. A two-year World Cup cycle could potentially force continental championships to clash with the women's World Cup.

If either a men's World Cup or European Championship takes place every summer, the women's and junior tournaments would be marginalized in the shadow of the men's competitions, the DFB said.

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Injuries are also a concern, the DFB argued, though FIFA has said it would seek to lighten the load on players by cutting back on non-tournament national team games.

Men's and women's players would face increased physical and mental strain and the new competition schedule would lead to a significantly increasing risk of injury," the DFB said.

The Portuguese federation expressed similar concerns in a statement released jointly with other soccer bodies, including the Portuguese league and the local players' union. They listed 10

reasons against the plans, including the impact on players' mental and physical health, the overlapping of men's and women's competitions, the impact on youth competitions and the clear saturation" of the television and commercial rights market.

For all these factors and many others, it is clear that we cannot be in favor of such a measure being implemented and even less as a result of a non-existent consultation process, in terms of clubs, leagues, federations, players' unions, coaches and referees' concerns, the statement said.



McNealy holes out for eagle on last, leads at Silverado

NAPA (US), SEP 18 (AP): Maverick McNealy overcame three consecutive bogeys and holed out from 74 yards for eagle on the last for an 8-under 64 and the second-round lead in the Fortinet Championship.

Winless in 66 career starts on the PGA Tour, McNealy had nine birdies one from a greenside bunker to offset his stumbles and get to 12 under at Silverado Resort and Spa.

Beau Hossler matched McNealy's 64 to get to 6 under with Mito Pereira (67). Three others, including tour rookie of the year Will Zalatoris (67), were 9 under.

First-round leader Chez Reavie barely made the cut after a round of 75 that included five bogeys and a double bogey left him eight strokes behind. Phil Mickelson (69) was seven back at 5 under.

McNealy, who missed the cut here a year ago, began the day three shots off the pace after an opening 68, but made that up quickly with birdies on three of his first four holes.

The 25-year-old Northern California native was 9 under at the turn before stumbling when his approach shot on No. 1 sailed into

a greenside bunker. McNealy had to scramble for bogey, dropped another shot on the next hole when a short putt missed long, then fell to 6 under after going into a greenside bunker again.

One of McNealy's bogeys came after his tee shot on No. 3 ricocheted backward off a tree and went 50 yards down a cart path.

Actually I think a golf cart ran over my ball so I had to take a drop, said McNealy, ranked 110th.

The front nine I played just about flawless golf. Made the turn and it's funny how things go. All of a sudden I made three bogeys in a row.

McNealy got back on track with a 10-foot birdie putt on No. 4. Two more birdies followed before he made a brilliant shot out of a bunker for another birdie on seven. After a par on eight, McNealy left his approach short on the, 571-yard, par-5 final hole, then used a sand wedge to hit a bump-and-run that rolled in for eagle.

I was actually a little nervous because it looked like it landed in a pitch mark and then shot forward and right, McNealy said. Turns out it was a great kick.

That put McNealy, winner of the 2015 Haskins Award at Stanford as the top male college golfer, in good shape heading into the weekend as he seeks his first tour victory.

I just keep telling myself every putt you make now is one less you have to make later, McNealy said.

It's great to be at the top of the leaderboard now but it means a heck of a lot more to be at the top at the end of 72 holes.

Hossler played bogey-free and moved into contention with eight birdies to get to 10 under. That helped him overcome an uneven first round that included a double bogey the only blemish on his scorecard so far.

I didn't try and force it in the hole but I made a lot of mid-range putts and that's where you can really pick up strokes, Hossler said. I know I can roll the ball well on the greens so I've just got to get as many chances as I can.

The 51-year-old Mickelson overcame a pair of bogeys and a cracked head on his fairway wood to stay in contention.

I'm putting well so I've got a chance to make a run at it, Mickelson said.

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey coursed by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this 'development' and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before.

Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

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After Afghanistan pullout, US seeks NATO basing, intel pacts



ATHENS, GREECE (AP): Against the backdrop of the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the top U.S. military officer is meeting in Greece with NATO counterparts this weekend, hoping to forge more basing, intelligence sharing and other agreements to prevent terrorist groups from regrouping and threatening America and the region.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the meeting of NATO defense chiefs will focus in part on the way ahead now that all alliance troops have pulled out of Afghanistan and the Taliban are in control.

Milley, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and American intelligence officials have warned that al-Qaida or the Islamic State group could regenerate in Afghanistan and pose a threat to the United States in one year to two years.

The U.S. military has said it can conduct counterterrorism surveillance and, if necessary, strikes in Afghanistan from "over the horizon" — meaning from assets based in other countries. But they have made it clear that surveillance flights from bases in the Persian Gulf are long and provide limited time in the air over Afghanistan. So they have talked about seeking basing agreements, overflight rights and increased intelligence-sharing with nations closer to Afghanistan, including some neighbors.

In recent months, however, U.S. officials have reported little progress in any negotiations on any basing agreements.

Milly said he will be talking to his military counterparts "to see what the possibilities are and then bring them back" to U.S. defense and diplomatic leaders for additional discussions. Then, he said, officials will see what they can turn into a reality.

"We are going to talk about over the horizon capabilities and where allies think appropriate that they can make a

contribution, we're certainly open to that," Milley told reporters traveling with him to Greece. "There are opportunities where alliance members may choose to work closely with us on these over the horizon capabilities."

He said allies are concerned about counterterrorism and how to ensure an effective defense against terrorists.

At the opening of the morning session Saturday, NATO military leaders made it clear that avoiding a resurgence of terrorism in Afghanistan is a key goal for the alliance.

Greece's defense minister, Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, told the group that allies must ensure the safety and security of at-risk Afghans who remain in the country and must prevent a humanitarian crisis.

More than 120,000 Americans, Afghans and others were flown out of Afghanistan during the chaotic and massive airlift operation in the days after Kabul, the capital, fell to the Taliban. But thousands more were left behind, with many fleeing to the borders and seeking help from aid agencies and ad hoc groups struggling to find ways out of the country.

Human rights and refugee groups are urging the European Union to step up its help for people trying to flee Afghanistan. The EU's asylum agency said that asylum applications by Afghans numbered 7,300 in July, before the government fell, and that was a 21% increase over June. Almost 1,200 were unaccompanied minors. More than half of asylum applications by Afghans in Europe are rejected.

"We are going through a period of significant challenges in Afghanistan," said Panagiotopoulos, adding that a key risk is the migration flow toward Europe. He said allies need to "provide support to those countries in the immediate neighborhood and must avoid a migration crisis at our borders."

Australia: France's recall of ambassador over subs regretful

CANBERRA, SEP 18 (AP): Australia said Saturday it was noting with regret France's recall of its ambassador over the surprise cancellation of a submarine contract in favour of a US deal.

France recalled its ambassadors to Australia and the United States on Friday in an unprecedented show of anger over a deal among the United States, Australia and Britain to provide Australia with a fleet of at least eight nuclear-power submarines.

The deal scraps a 90 billion Australian dollar (USD 66 billion) contract with French majority state-owned Naval Group, signed in 2016, to build 12 conventional diesel-electric submarines.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne's office said in a statement: We note with regret France's decision to recall its Ambassador to Australia for consultations following the decision on the Attack Class project.

Australia understands France's deep disappointment with our decision, which was taken in accordance with our clear and communicated national security interests, the statement said. It added



that Australia valued its relationship to France and looked forward to future engagements together.

Payne and Defence Minister Peter Dutton are currently in the United States for annual talks with their US counterparts and their first with President Joe Biden's administration.

French Ambassador to Australia Jean-Pierre Thebault said Australia never mentioned that the project could be scrapped.

Thebault told Australian Broadcasting Corp. in an interview recorded on Friday that he found out about the U.S. submarine deal: Like everybody, thanks to the Australian press.

We never were informed about any substantial changes, Thebault said. There were many opportunities and many channels. Never was such a change mentioned.

After the US deal was made public this week, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he told French President Emmanuel Macron in June that there were very real issues about whether a conventional submarine capability would address Australia's strategic security needs in the Indo-Pacific.

Morrison was in Paris on his way home from a Group of Seven nations summit in Britain where he had talks with soon-to-

be-alliance partners Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Thebault said he had also been at the meeting with Macron and Morrison.

Morrison mentioned there were changes in the regional situation, but gave no indication that Australia was considering changing to nuclear propulsion, Thebault said.

The relationship between France and Australia was built on trust, Thebault said.

So fundamentally, everything was built on trust. Everything was supposed to be done in full transparency between the two partners, he added.

Thebault said

difficulties the project had encountered were normal for its scale and large transfers of technologies.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in a statement on Friday that recalling the two ambassadors, on request from Macron, is justified by the exceptional seriousness of the announcements made by Australia and the United States.

Le Drian said Australia's decision to scrap the submarine purchase in favor of nuclear subs built with U.S. technology is unacceptable behavior between allies and partners.

Senior opposition lawmaker Mark Dreyfus called on the Australian government to fix its relationship with France.

The impact on our relationship with France is a concern, particularly as a country with important interests in our region, Dreyfus said.

The French were blindsided by this decision and Mr. Morrison should have done much more to protect the relationship. The ... government needs to explain what it is going to do to fix this important relationship, he added.

In Russian Far East city, discontent smolders amid election

KHABAROVSK, RUSSIA (AP): The handful of demonstrators gathering each evening in Khabarovsk are a shadow of the masses who took part in an unusually sustained wave of protests last year in the Russian Far Eastern city, but they are a chronic reminder of the political tensions that persist.

The demonstrators have been demanding the release of the region's popular former governor, Sergei Furgal, who was arrested last year on charges of being involved in killings.

Now, his Kremlin-appointed replacement, Mikhail Degtyaryov, is on the ballot for governor in the three days of regional voting that concludes Sunday. The regional election is taking place at the same time that Russians are voting for members of the State Duma, the national parliament.

The race for governor is being closely watched to gauge how much anger remains in the region, located seven time zones and 6,100 kilometers (3,800 miles) east of Moscow.

"The region really worries the Kremlin because they don't want a repeat of those incidents (last year's protests) of course. Khabarovsk is now under close supervision," said Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank.

Three other people are on the ballot for governor, but supporters of Furgal and others in the city of about 600,000 complain they are



insignificant candidates who were allowed to run to give the appearance of a democratic and competitive race.

"Whoever posed even the smallest threat was barred from running, and they left only spoiler candidates," said 64-year-old protester Zigmund Khudyakov.

Notably, United Russia — the country's dominant political party and loyal backer of President Vladimir Putin — is not fielding a candidate for governor in Khabarovsk. Nor is Russia's second-largest party, the Communists.

Degtyaryov, a member of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, is widely believed to be backed by the Kremlin with both advice and money.

The man who wanted to run on the Communist ticket was kept off the ballot because he was unable to get enough signatures from officials. That aspiring candidate, Pyotr Perevezentsev, told The Associated Press that municipal authorities in some districts had been told by their superiors whose nominating petitions to sign.

"People representing the presidential administration curated these elections," he said.

Separately, Furgal's son Anton says he was kept off the ballot for the national parliament. "There is an opinion that if my last name had been Ivanov, for example, I would likely be allowed to run," he said.

Degtyaryov rejects such claims.

"As head of the Khabarovsk regional government, I am obligated to ensure transparent, legal, free and fair elections, and we are following all of these provisions," he said on a recent televised question-and-answer session with residents.

The weeks of protests that arose after Sergei Furgal's arrest in July 2020 appeared to catch authorities by surprise. Unlike in Moscow, where police usually move quickly to disperse unsanctioned rallies, authorities didn't interfere with the unauthorized demonstrations in Khabarovsk, apparently expecting them to fizzle out.

A Liberal Democratic Party member, Furgal won the 2018 regional

gubernatorial election even though he had refrained from campaigning and publicly supported his Kremlin-backed rival.

His victory was a humiliating setback for United Russia, which also lost its control over the regional legislature.

While in office, Furgal earned a reputation as a "people's governor," cutting his own salary, ordering the sale of an expensive yacht bought by the previous administration, and offering new benefits to residents.

His arrest, which was shown on Russian TV stations, came after the Investigative Committee, the nation's top criminal investigation agency, said he was accused of involvement in the murders of several businessmen in the region and nearby territories in 2004 and 2005. During interrogation in Moscow, Furgal denied the charges, according to the Tass news agency.

Ultrationalist lawmaker Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a veteran politician with a reputation for outspoken comments and also a

member of the Liberal Democrats, once called Furgal "the best governor the region ever had."

Furgal's arrest brought hundreds, and then thousands, of people into the streets of Khabarovsk in a regular Saturday protest. A year later, the rallies — albeit much smaller — continue.

Local activists say that's because of sustained pressure from authorities interested in ensuring Degtyaryov wins the election.

Under new rules enforced by police who monitor and film the protests, the rallies are restricted to 10 people at most. Officers disperse anything larger.

The protesters say they are pressured at work and at university, with some adding that they lost their jobs after being seen at the demonstrations.

Many wear T-shirts with the face of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, while others carry signs depicting Furgal or denouncing the new governor.

"We constantly live in fear because any day we can be arrested," said Denis Pedish, a 47-year-old education worker who says he now comes to protests with a packed bag of essentials in case he is detained.

"It's difficult. But people have hope and faith and are actively fighting the lawlessness of the authorities and the lawlessness of the elections, which are a laughingstock for the world to see," Pedish said.

Taliban replace ministry for women with one restricting them

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP): Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers set up a ministry for the "propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice" in the building that once housed the Women's Affairs Ministry, escorting out World Bank staffers Saturday as part of the forced move.

It's the latest troubling sign that the Taliban are restricting women's rights as they settle into government, just a month since they overran the capital of Kabul. In their first period of rule in the 1990s, the Taliban had denied girls and women the right to education and barred them from public life.

Separately, three explosions targeted Taliban vehicles in the eastern provincial capital of Jalalabad on Saturday, killing three people and wounding 20, witnesses said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Islamic State militants, headquartered in the area, are enemies of the Taliban.

The Taliban are facing major economic and security problems as they attempt to govern, and a growing challenge by IS insurgents would further stretch their resources.

In Kabul, a new sign was up outside the women's affairs ministry, announcing it was now the "Ministry for Preaching and Guidance and the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice."

Staff of the World Bank's \$100 million Women's Economic Empowerment and Rural Development Program, which was run out of the Women's Affairs Ministry, were escorted off the grounds Saturday, said program member Sharif Akhtar, who was among those being removed.

Mabouba Suraj, who heads the Afghan Women's Network, said she was astounded by the flurry of orders released by the Taliban-run government restricting women and girls.

Meanwhile, the Taliban-run education ministry asked boys from grades 7-12 back to school Saturday along with their male teachers but there was no mention of girls in those grades returning to school. Previously, the Taliban's minister of higher education minister, had said girls would be given equal access to education, albeit in gender-segregated settings.

"It is becoming really, really troublesome. ... Is this the stage where the girls are going to be forgotten?" Suraj said. "I know they don't believe in giving explanations, but explanations are very important."

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Jane Powell, Hollywood golden-age musicals star, dies at 92

LOS ANGELES, SEP 18 (AP): Jane Powell, the bright-eyed, operatic-voiced star of Hollywood's golden age musicals who sang with Howard Keel in "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" and danced with Fred Astaire in "Royal Wedding" has died. She was 92.

Powell died Thursday at her Wilton, Connecticut, home, longtime friend Susan Granger said. Granger said Powell died of natural causes.

"Jane was the most wonderful friend," Granger said. "She was candid, she was honest. You never asked Jane a question you didn't want an absolutely honest answer to."

Granger was a youngster when she met the then-teenaged Powell, who was making her film debut in 1944's "Song of the Open Road", directed by Granger's father, S. Sylvan Simon.

She performed virtually her whole life, starting about age 5 as a singing prodigy on radio in Portland, Oregon. On screen, she quickly graduated from teen roles to the lavish musical productions that were a 20th-century Hollywood staple.

Her 1950 casting in "Royal Wedding" came by default. June Allyson was first announced as Astaire's co-star but withdrew when she became pregnant. Judy Garland was cast, but was withdrawn because of personal problems. Jane Powell was next in line.

"They had to give it to me," she quipped at the time. "Everybody else is pregnant." Also among the expectant MGM stars: Lana Turner, Esther Williams, Cyd Charisse and Jean Hagen.

Powell had just turned 21 when she got the role; Astaire was 50. She was nervous because she lacked dancing experience, but she found him "very patient and understanding. We got along fine from the start."

"Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" proved to be a 1954 "sleeper" hit.

"The studio didn't think it was going to do anything," she recalled in 2000. "MGM thought that 'Brigadoon' was going to be the big moneymaker that year. It didn't turn out that way. We were the ones that went to the Radio City Music Hall, which was always such a coup."

The famed New York venue was a movie theater then.

Audiences were overwhelmed by the lusty singing of Keel and Powell and especially by the gymnastic choreography of Michael Kidd. "Seven Brides" achieved classic status and resulted in a TV series and a Broadway

musical.



"Blonde and small and pretty, Jane Powell had the required amount of grit and spunk that was needed to play the woman who could tame seven backwoods men," John Kobal wrote in his book "Gotta Sing Gotta Dance: A Pictorial History of Film Musicals."

After 13 years at MGM, though, Powell quit the studio, reasoning that she was going to be fired "because they weren't going to be doing musicals anymore."

"I thought I'd have a lot of studios to go to," she said in 2000, "but I didn't have any, because no one wanted to make musicals. It was very difficult, and quite a shock to me. There's nothing worse than not being wanted."

She found one musical at RKO, "The Girl Most Likely", a 1958 remake of "Tom, Dick and Harry". Aside from a couple of minor films, her movie career was over.

She was born Suzanne Lorraine Burce in Portland, Oregon, in 1928. She began singing on local radio as a small child, and as she grew, her voice developed into a clear, high-pitched soprano.

When the Burce family planned a trip to Los Angeles, the radio station asked if Suzanne would appear on a network talent show there. The tiny girl with a 2-octave voice drew thunderous applause with an aria from "Carmen" and was quickly put under contract to MGM.

Her first movie was a loanout to an independent producer for "Song of the Open Road", a 1944 mishmash with W.C. Fields (at the end of his career) and Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

The character's name in "Song of the Open Road" was Jane Powell, and MGM decided that that would be her movie name.

She played teens in such films as

"Holiday in Mexico", "Three Daring Daughters" and "A Date With Judy". But she pleaded with the studio bosses to be given grown-up roles and finally succeeded in "Royal Wedding."

Frothy romances and musicals continued to dominate her career, including "Young, Rich and Pretty", "Small Town Girl" and "Three Sailors and a Girl."

After her movie career ended, musical theater offered plenty of work for a star of her prominence and talent. She sang in supper clubs, toured in such shows as "The Unsinkable Molly Brown" and "I Do! I Do!" and replaced Debbie Reynolds in the Broadway run of "Irene." She frequently appeared on television, notably in the Judy Garland role in a new version of "Meet Me in St. Louis."

As she approached her 70s, Powell abandoned her singing career. "I can't hit the high notes, and I won't be second-rate," she explained in 2000. She switched to drama, appearing in New York theater in such plays as "Avow," portraying mother of an unmarried, pregnant daughter and a son who wanted to marry his male partner.

Powell's first four marriages ended in divorce: to Geary Steffen (son Geary, daughter Suzanne), Patrick Nerney (daughter Lindsay), James Fitzgerald and David Parlour.

Powell met fifth husband Dick Moore when he interviewed her for his book about child actors. As Dickie Moore, he had been a well-known child actor in the 1930s and '40s and gave Shirley Temple her first screen kiss in "Miss Annie Rooney" (1942). Moore, head of a New York public relations office, and Powell married in 1988. He died in 2015.

Jane Powell's survivors include her daughter, Lindsey Nerney, Granger said.



JUST LIKE US! Actress Olivia Culpo reminds us that "FOMO is Back" with an Absolut #MixResponsibly tank while grabbing coffee.

Show got it wrong: Priyanka Chopra apologises for 'The Activist'

MUMBAI, SEP 18 (PTI): Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Friday issued an apology over her participation in the competition series "The Activist" after widespread backlash and said the criticism against the show was "heard" and accepted by her.

Produced by CBS and Global Citizen, the series pitted activists against each other before a panel of celebrity judges. Their success would have been judged on the basis of their social media campaigns.

After the show was unveiled, there was an instant backlash on social media with many people labelling the series as insensitive and tone-deaf. Some called the show's concept a "dystopian" celebration of "Insta-activism".

Priyanka along with American singer-songwriter

Usher, and "Dancing with the Stars" star Julianne Hough were cast as judges on the reality show.

In a statement posted on Twitter, Priyanka said the show's aim was to bring spotlight on activists who tirelessly work for a cause they are passionate about but admitted that the format was "wrong".

"I have been moved by the power of your voices over the past week. At its core, activism is fuelled by cause and effect, and when people come together to raise their voice about something, there is always an effect. You were heard."

"The show got it wrong, and I'm sorry that my participation in it disappointed many of you. The intention was always to bring attention to the people behind the ideas and highlight the actions

and impact of the causes they support tirelessly," the statement read.

On Wednesday, American network CBS and producing partners Global Citizen and Live Nation said that they were changing the format of "The Activist" as a one-time documentary special instead of a five-episode competition series.

Priyanka said she is happy that in the new format, the stories of the activists "will be the highlight."

"I'm proud to collaborate with partners who have their ear to the ground and know when it's time to hit pause and re-evaluate."

The 39-year-old actor said there is a global community of activists who "fight the fight" every day - putting their blood, sweat and tears into creating change - but they are rarely acknowledged.

LOS ANGELES, SEP 18 (PTI): Actors Jaime King, Antonio Banderas and Tommy Flanagan are set to star in action film "Banshee".

The movie comes from filmmaker Jon Keeyes, known for directing and producing films such as "The Survivalist" and "Rogue Hostage", reported Variety.

The story follows a freelance assassin, codenamed Banshee (King), who is ambushed by Anthony Greene (Flanagan), a powerful



mercenary who killed her father, and who is now seeking to collect a bounty on Caleb (Banderas), her former black ops mentor.

Caleb went underground five years prior, triggering a race against time as Banshee must find and protect Caleb before Greene and his army of hired killers can find him and take him down.

Matthew Rogers has penned the script for the film, which will be produced by Jordan Yale Levine and Jordan Beckerman of Yale Productions, alongside Keeyes of Highland Myst.

ARIES:

If everything worked out seamlessly, we would have nothing to work towards, Aries. A life without challenges? Now, that's your idea of living hell. So, embrace the so-called obstacles as an opportunity to grow. Keep showing up consistently for who and what you love. The finish line may still be a few miles away, but that doesn't mean you're not on the right track.

TAURUS:

You're known to be a lover of luxury. You're known to splurge on things that make you feel like paradise is closer than we think. But, this phase of your life is all about dedicating yourself to the hustle and putting your coins away. That mysterious smile on your face tells us you have big plans for the future, and you are consistently working towards them in the now.

GEMINI:

If brute force could help us win our battles, then our lives would be a lot different, Gemini. So, keep your ego aside, if only for today. Practice active listening. Bring a little more

kindness and gentleness into the equation. You'll be surprised by how quickly matters turn in your favour when you shift your own vibration.

CANCER:

It's easy to externalise the problem. Challenging to look within and observe how you are reacting to the given situation. So, turn your gaze inwards, beautiful. Listen to what your higher self is telling you in each moment. The answers you seek are within you. They've been within you all along. Cancer.

LEO:

It's all or nothing, Leo. You know they're the one and you're willing to do what it takes so this relationship can grow. Remember, the road ahead isn't always going to be easy. You will be challenged in more ways than one. Learning to honour the differences as an opportunity to grow is what will keep you together in the long run.

VIRGO:

Maybe that "ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can't-live-without-each-other love" is not a fictional concept given to us by

Ms. Bradshaw. Maybe it's available to you right now and in this moment. It all comes down to how open you will be and whether or not you'll take a chance. This connection may not have been easy in the beginning. Something tells us, the gods of good juju are on your side, giving you the strength and courage you need to create a better reality for yourself.

LIBRA:

The Universe has an uncanny way of mirroring our beliefs back at us. When we believe we are taken care of no matter what, both our wants and needs are provided for. When we give into the lack, on the other hand, we begin to face challenges of all sorts. The real question is: what will *you* choose, beautiful? Something tells us a shift in your mindset will help create a quantum shift in your reality.

SCORPIO:

You've always been one for conventional romances. Yet, you may find yourself breaking your own rules. If you've been thinking about moving in with them before saying

'I do', jump right in. Remember, you won't know if there is potential here unless you give things a chance. Couples who've been together for a while now, may be thinking about a change of address. A slice of paradise away from the city where they can raise a family.

SAGITTARIUS:

Sagittarius, you've always lived life on your own terms. Why change things now? The upcoming full moon in Pisces is bringing with itself the reminder that you are a powerful being blessed with the ability to create your own reality. So, exercise your manifesting muscles. Dare to dream big as you take a step towards the reality you've always envisioned for yourself. What Spirit wants you to remember: you are supported at every step along the way.

CAPRICORN:

The trouble is, you've been taking things too seriously, Capricorn, which is in turn stifling your creativity. Word for the wise: shake things up a little bit. Reconnect with your inner wild child. Know that adopting the spirit

of play is your ultimate prayer to the divine forces. What's more, rekindling old connections is also going to be a big theme for you. So, spend time with those who remind you of your magic and uplift your spirit.

AQUARIUS:

The trouble is, you're too attached. You're too attached to the idea of how things should be and shouldn't be. As a result, you're not giving the Universe a chance to show you the way forward. What you want to do today is pay attention to the signs. The things that are falling apart are no longer meant to be in your life. Stop trying to hold on when you're being guided to let go. Remember, unless you cleanse and purge consciously, you will not be able to make space for the new.

PISCES:

The trouble is, you tend to think that you are the doer of things. But this is far from the truth, Pisces. You are the Universe in motion. The medium through which Spirit expresses itself on earth. So remember this Universal truth, and feel the support of your star family. Take the next step with the inner knowing that they're coming through for you and helping you cross the next big hurdle.