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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM calls on PM, submits memorandum listing pending demands



NEW DELHI, 12 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister PS Tamang called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence in New Delhi, today. He thanked

the Prime Minister for his valuable time and placed the demands for tribal status to 12 left-out communities, Limboo-Tamang seat reservation in the

Sikkim Legislative Assembly along with the visit of the 17th Karmapa Gyen Trinley Dorje to Sikkim. The CM briefed the Prime Minister about the

historical significance of these demands and requested his intervention. Similarly, he stated that health and education are the priority sectors

of the state government and in this regard, he updated the Prime Minister about several projects which are in the pipeline including, 300-bed hospitals at Namchi and the Netaji Subash Chandra Bose University of Excellence to name a few.

The CM apprised the Prime Minister about the road network in the state and added that Sikkim being a mountainous region requires good road connectivity to develop the far-flung areas, which will also be beneficial in terms of National security.

He also informed about damages to roads throughout Sikkim due to the monsoon and requested his assistance. The Chief Minister also presented a detailed memorandum regarding all the concerns to the Prime Minister.

CM attends 1st IRB Silver Jubilee celebration, announces HRA and other hikes



NEW DELHI, 12 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang attended a function commemorating the Silver Jubilee Anniversary (25 years) of the 1st Indian Reserve Battalion, Sikkim Police at Wazirabad, New Delhi today.

In his brief address, he announced the increase of House rent allowance from the existing 16% to 24%, an increase of ration allowance from Rs2000 to 3000 per month, enhancement of children education fee from Rs2500 to 3000

and will be applicable immediately. The Chief Minister also announced the release of increased Dearness Allowance (DA) before Dussehra (Dasain) 2021.

The Chief Minister also visited the site designated for constructing a guesthouse and other facilities measuring 40,500 sqft, allocated by the Government of India. An additional land measuring 18,000 sqft is also on the pipeline for the approval of the Government of India. He urged the jawans to dispense

their duty with utmost dedication and urged them to contact the Chief Minister's Office in case of any issues. He also addressed the grievances of the officers and jawans during his visit.

Ministers, Kunga Nima Lepcha, BS Panth, Dr MK Sharma, along with MP (Lok Sabha), Indra Hang Subba, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling, DGP SD Negi, Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal and officials of 1st IRBn and Delhi Police were also present during the event.

Binoy and Bimal sit down for closed-door meet!

**SMRITA KHAWAS
DARJEELING, 11 AUG:**

Binoy Tamang told a press conference here today that in politics, there are no permanent enemies. As evidence, he confirmed that he met Bimal Gurung, the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha president he had overthrown and taken over the party until other developments came about and complicated matters further. Mr Tamang had pulled a surprise on 15 July when he resigned from the president's post of the GJM faction which took its name from him – GJM [Bimal faction]. And today, he was in a closed-door meeting with Bimal Gurung at Pattabong guest house here. Mr Tamang confirmed later that they sat down for a nearly hour-long meeting during which discussed problems of the Hills and possible solutions. He did not divulge any further details.

PM interacts with Sikkim SHGs under SRLM



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 AUG:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with women Self Help Group (SHG) members promoted under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) and participated in 'Atmanirbhar-Narishakti se Samvad' women via video conferencing today at 12:30pm, a press release informs.

In Sikkim the program was organised at State Level, Block and Village Level by the Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission. At State Level

Minister Rural Development, Sonam Lama, Chief Secretary, SC Gupta and Commissioner-RDD, Dr P Senthil Kumar attends the program along with women Self Help group, SHG Federation Members, officials and staff of the Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission.

DAY-NRLM aims to mobilize rural poor households into Self Help Groups (SHGs) in a phased manner and provide them long-term support to diversify their livelihoods and improve their incomes and quality of life. The Mission's

turn to pg02

100 new cases and one more Covid death in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 AUG:**

Sikkim recorded 100 fresh cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of the confirmed Covid cases to 28,275. Of the new cases, 44 were registered in East District, 34 in West District, 20 in South District and two in North District.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, the 100 new cases were detected from the testing of 892 samples on Wednesday giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 11%.

While 50 persons were found positive in RT-PCR testing of 374 samples, 48 more were detected in rapid antigen testing of 506 samples and two in TruNat testing of 12 samples.

Unfortunately, Covid also claimed the life of one more person, taking the Covid toll in Sikkim to 360. This death too was reported from STNM Hospital in the past 24 hours.

Also over the same period, 244 more formerly Covid-positive people made full recoveries and were discharged from home and facility isolation taking the number of recovered cases to 25,239 and taking the state's recovery rate to 90%, a record it achieved for the first time in a long while.

The number of active cases in Sikkim has come down to 2,398, of whom only 104 are in hospital, including the 12 who were admitted in the past 24 hours and the five in ICU.

Participative Planning – Create value by supporting every effort towards collective decision-making

KAILASH PRADHAN

By genuinely involving the community in the planning process, one builds a sense of ownership of "the commons," the infrastructure and resources which we share as a society (eg. Our public spaces, our roads, our forests, etc.) which in turn instills a sense of responsibility to own and solve one's own problems. The more one engages in such a process, the more one's capacity and confidence grows to tackle complex problems successfully. This is, in my view, true sustainability. Perhaps even more importantly however, a collaborative effort means listening to each other, which, when done sincerely, builds trust. This trust is the foundation on which strong and resilient communities are built and

what will enable us to face challenges together.

Participatory planning is an approach that emphasizes inviting and involving the entire community in the planning process. It prioritizes the integration of technical expertise with the preferences and knowledge of community members who must live with the plan. Key to this is an ability to create and implement collective decision making processes that allow all voices to be heard while also ensuring a transparent decision is finally made.

All over the free world, where democratic culture has taken root, there has been a reaction against top down decision making processes in favour of a more inclusive approach. In a top-down planning model, the planners are unfairly

burdened with the responsibility of interpreting the will of the people, of prioritizing the problems faced by a diverse society and are often pilloried for making the wrong decisions. The participatory planning process shifts this responsibility to the people.

Our past lessons in planning in Sikkim reveal that the main obstacle in implementing public related projects is the public itself, be it the people residing in and directly affected by particular projects or the increasing scrutiny of a growing educated mass with access to digital media questioning top-down planning approaches. This questioning will continue growing as long as we are a democracy and as long as we continue to prioritize educating our children.

turn to pg02

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13th - 22nd
AUGUST

Coordination meet on Jal Jiwan Mission held in West

GYALSHING, 12 AUG (IPR): A coordination meeting pertaining to the implementation of Jal Jiwan Mission under West District was held at the Conference Hall of District Administrative Centre, Rabdentse, today.

The meeting was chaired by the District Collector West, Karma R. Bonpo and was attended by ADCs (Development), Gyalshing & Soreng, Surat Kumar Gurung & Gayas Pega, Block Development Officers and other Departmental Officials.

At the outset, the District Collector informed about the Jal Jiwan Mission portal which is being maintained by National Informatics Centre and urged all BDOs to start uploading campaigns of JJM in coordination with NIC and stated that Block Level Plans should be reflected.

Further, he asked to geotag all the data and to submit it to the concerned departments. He stressed on rain water harvesting and asked to identify the development of infrastructure of rain water harvesting especially in dry areas and assured to provide necessary assistance for the projects.

He suggested rain water harvesting especially in schools & institutions and stated that it may not be drinking water quality but it can be used for any other purposes. He reiterated that dry areas should adopt rain water harvesting.

He further informed that the artificial pond is also admissible under Jal Jiwan Mission where it can use waste land for infrastructure. He directed all BDOs to start making block-level plans and asked for the execution as well.

Furthermore, he touched upon water recharge under West District and directed the Forest Department to look into the matter. He also asked to identify the lakes which need to be recharged and asked to do the needful at the earliest.

He further directed the Forest Department that afforestation activities are to be added in the Water Conservation Plan. He also directed to ensure involvement of panchayats & public for source development and water recharge.

During the course of the meeting, the DC also highlighted the Bamboo Mission and asked to utilize it by identifying sliding prone areas.

Later, the District Collector conducted a brief discussion with BDOs regarding the present scenario of Covid-19 and its related issues wherein Block wise details were presented by the BDOs.

Sikkimey Nagarik Samaj urges Govt to include Article 371F in school syllabi

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 AUG:

Sikkimey Nagarik Samaj [SNS] president, Bharat Basnet, today said that the organization will be requesting the State Government to include Article 371F and important incidents in the political history of Sikkim in the school curriculum.

SNS is a newly formed non-political organization that focuses on the issue of One Nation One Ration Card [ONORC] in the State. SNS convened a meeting of its executive committee here on Thursday which deliberated on various agendas and passed resolutions to carry forward activities of the organization.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Mr Basnet said that it is important for the people of Sikkim to understand the importance of Article 371F in order to protect the special status of the State.

He alleged that political parties and leaders have failed to properly explain Article 371F to the people of Sikkim. Therefore, he said, the organisation has decided to request the State government to include Article 371F, Old Laws of Sikkim, Tripartite Agree-



ment and other important historical and political incidents of Sikkim in the academic curriculum for students of class IX and above.

He added that the organisation has decided to place a memorandum to the Education Department on the same. He asserted that it is very important for the young generation of Sikkim to know about these issues and its significance for the people of Sikkim.

Mr Basnet mentioned that the meeting has decided to start online membership drive of the organization and interested persons can take membership of the organization free of cost. He informed that members of different political par-

ties and social organizations have shown interest in connecting with SNS so the organization has decided to launch an online membership drive in the state. He added that the organization will soon release its logo.

Mr Basnet mentioned that although SNS was born due to the issue of ONORC, the main objective of the organisation is to work toward bringing Sikkimese society together.

On ONORC, Mr Basnet said that the scheme does not offer any added benefits, as claimed by the government. He accused the government of deceiving the people on ONORC.

Further accusing the State Assembly of failing

to play its role on the implementation of the central programme in the State, Mr Basnet said that it was the responsibility of the State Assembly to discuss the central programme and its effects on Article 371F and old laws of Sikkim.

"But we have not seen the role of the State Assembly during the implementation of ONORC in the State. It is the duty of the people's representatives to explain the programme and its consequences in the State to the people," he said.

However, he alleged that some political parties and leaders are taking the discussion towards the wrong direction by giving it a communal colour.

"Every person has the fundamental right to protest but it is totally wrong to call someone communal just because you don't agree with their views. It is totally wrong to call Tseten Tashi communal for speaking on Article 371F, Old Laws and Sikkimese society. Such incidents will not allow the people of Sikkim to come together," he said.

Responding to media queries, Mr Basnet said that although ONORC has already been implemented in the State, the State government should hold a special session of the State Assembly to discuss the ONORC in order to explain the merits and demerits of ONORC to the people of Sikkim.

Bee keeping equipment distributed in West Sikkim

PRITAM LAMA

GYALSHING, 12 AUG:

Social Justice and Welfare Department distributed bee keeping equipments and live bees to the tribal community/beneficiaries at various villages in West Sikkim under the scheme 'Institutional Support for Development and Marketing to Tribal products/produce'. The initiative was sponsored by Tribal Affairs Ministry, Government of India.

Social Justice Department, Joint Director, Karma L Lepcha said that the aim of the programme is to facilitate and encourage local beneficiaries in the Bee Keeping sector, and to promote and support the development of tribal products in markets. He also assured for all possible support from the Department to the beneficiaries.

Skill development training will be provided to the beneficiaries in coming days, he added.

A total of 265 beneficiaries from the tribal community of West district have benefited from the initiative. Resource persons also enlightened the beneficiaries about bee keeping skills and techniques.

The distribution program covered Daramdin, Sombaria, Dentam, Yuksam in West district. Earlier, bee keeping

equipment was distributed in North district's villages. The distribution program was organised by adhering to all COVID-19 protocols.

SLA Deputy speaker, Sangay Lepcha, who is also the area MLA, attended the distribution program held at Lethang in Yuksam today. He handed over the bee keeping equipments to the Yuksam-Tashiding beneficiaries.

In his brief address, Mr Lepcha lauded the initiative of the Social Justice department. He said that the Sikkim Government is doing its best to bring development in the state. He also informed, people about various welfare measures and developmental initiatives of the Sikkim Government for the development of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency.

"Our constituency is facing lots of inconvenience due to bad road condition caused by monsoon rains. The State Government has planned various measures to restore and improve these," the MLA stated.

Departmental officials, SKM West District Coordinator, Nandu Gurung, CLC Coordinator, Keshar Kumar Khatiwada, SKM Sports Wing General Secretary, Sonam Chewang Bhutia and Local Panchayats were also present.

Agri Minister visits Jorethang STU and SPU



NAMCHI, 12 AUG (IPR): Minister of Agriculture and Horticulture Department, Lok Nath Sharma and the Area MLA of Zoom Salghari constituency-cum-Chairperson SIMFED, Sunita Gazmer visited the Seed Testing Unit [STU] and Seed Processing Units [SPU] at Jorethang today.

The visit was joined by Secretary Agriculture, Rinzing C Bhutia, MD SIM-

FED, Bhaskar Basnett and other concerned officials.

The Minister inspected the existing infrastructure wherein he directed concerned officials to make SPU functional. He also added that renovation needs to be taken up at the earliest and that infrastructure should be fitted with essential working equipment.

During the course of the visit it was decided

that the Unit will be jointly operated by Agriculture and SIMFED.

Moreover, Minister Sharma also directed SIMFED to establish a Central Warehouse for South and West Districts considering Jorethang being a major trading hub.

It may be informed that the Minister began his constituency-wise field visit today from Daramdin Constituency.

Governor Ganga Prasad takes additional charge as Manipur Governor



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 AUG:

Governor Ganga Prasad took oath as the Governor of Manipur as additional charge on 12 Aug, 2021, a press release from Raj Bhavan informs. The swearing-in ceremony for the same was held at Raj Bhavan, Imphal, Manipur.

Mr Prasad was administered the oath by Chief Justice, High Court of Manipur, PV Sanjay Kumar, at Darbar hall, Raj Bhavan, Imphal. During the ceremony, Manipur Chief Minister, N Biren Singh, Council of Ministers, CS, DGP and other senior officers of the Manipur government were present.

Later, the Governor received the guard of honour. After taking the oath, Governor Prasad mentioned to media that Manipur is a beautiful state and he considers himself fortunate to serve the people of Manipur.

He also mentioned that the entire globe is affected by the Covid pandemic and the Manipur government is doing a good job. He requested all citizens must contribute to fight against Covid-19.

He congratulated Saikhom Mirabai Chanu for winning silver medal in the Tokyo Olympics and other sportspersons from the state as well.

Starting Aug 16, Puri's Jagannatha Temple to reopen gradually for public

PURI, 12 AUG: Jagannatha Temple in Puri would be opened gradually for the general public from August 16 in adherence to the COVID-19 guidelines, COVID-19 appropriate behaviour, and physical distancing rules, said Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration on Wednesday.

All devotees will be allowed entry for the "Darshan of the Lords" from August 23, said the SJTA. However,

on August 12 and August 13, family members of the Sevaks will be allowed for the "Darshan of the Lords". "Darshan" timings will be from 7 am to 7 pm on all days when the temple is open.

The residents of the Puri Municipality area will be allowed entry for "Darshan" from August 16 to August 20.

The temple would remain closed on all weekends and major festivals, further added STJA.

PM interacts...

interventions are being implemented and scaled up by the SHG women themselves who are trained as community resource persons (CRPs) - KrishiSakhis, PashuSakhis, Bank Sakhis, BimaSakhis, Banking Correspondent Sakhis, etc.

Prime Minister also released a handbook on the universalisation of farm livelihoods during the event. Additionally, the event witnessed a compilation of success stories of women SHG members from all across the country.

In Sikkim there are 5184 Self Help Groups registered under Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission with the women SHG members of 48731 in all four Districts. Self Help Groups are formed with the basic objective to promote livelihood among poor people in order to provide a stable source of income and thus reduce poverty.

Members in self-help groups are required to follow five basic principles of Panchasutra such as Regular Meeting, Regular Saving, Regular Inter-lending, Regular Repayment and Good Book-keeping. As a member, one is required to contribute some amount as weekly savings to the group. The amount to be contributed is decided collectively and unanimously by all the members. In addition to the savings fund collected by them, financial assistance is also provided by mission in the form of Start-up fund and revolving fund.

Another source of fund which they can avail from their Ward Development Society is Community Investment Fund which mission provides as a grant to WDS. SHGs can utilise CIF as a loan from WDS at a very nominal interest rate.

Apart from afore mentioned funds, SHGs are also facilitated to procure funds from other sources like banks and other financial institutions. SHG are Facilitated to form into Producer Groups and the mission provide technical support to them.

Seventy-nine Producer Groups have been formed and funded with Seed Capital in East and North districts. There are 123 functioning producer Groups in South and West Sikkim under SRLM.

In the event, Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission released a total of Rs. 186.8 Lakhs consisting of Rs. 152.75 Lakhs as Community Investment funds, Rs. 32 Lakhs as Startup Fund to Block Level SHG federation, the Block Development Societies, Rs. 0.84 Lakhs as Start-up funds to SHGs and Rs. 1.20 Lakhs as Revolving funds to SHGs. This program was organised at block level and at village level in order to enable the SHG members to listen to the address of the prime minister.

In Sikkim more than 70% of the SHG members participated in the event at different locations. The program provided very strong motivation the members of SHG to pursue their livelihood and learnt various aspects of support available to them.

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Participative Planning...

However, a plan that the public feel ownership of because of participative planning efforts, will not face these same obstacles in its implementation. The people will have been part of a process and even though not all will get their first choice, all will have been heard. Moreover, strategic decisions to solve delicate matters, such as those concerning land, can be solicited from the community members such that they can be made part of the conflict resolutions in the locality. Of course all of this takes skill and patience to learn a new way of moving forward, together.

While it is true that for some a participative planning approach may appear intimidating, the value of decisions made collectively is that they are more stable and more difficult to manipulate for personal gain. It is a robust way to protect our "commons," so that all of us and our next generation may benefit from better basic utilities like water and sewage, from more green spaced in urban areas and even better roads and schools.

The wisdom behind recent public projects and buildings in Gangtok that are in the pipeline [Star Cinema, project at Hospital Dara, road widening at Gyan Mandir, shopping mall at old West Point, ropeway public transportation system and many others we are not aware of], raise serious questions about how our future is being decided. The lack of a sensible master plan for a growing city like Gangtok, the dearth of meaningful consultation on huge projects that will impact all of us, and the absence of an intelligent, transparent and inclusive decision making processes are indicators that we all have much work to do.

The good news is that there is hope. Smart City Gangtok has engaged in a small pilot project in participatory planning, empowering local young architects to lead a process to solicit views through a Public Online Consultation (POC) process that will culminate in a low-cost, temporary design implemented in MG marg with the aim to increase health, safety, and inclusivity. While this project is insignificant in cost and limited in scope, it offers hope to all of us who believe that it is essential to our future that young people like these young women (the architects leading the process) be encouraged and supported to create value for our society and that we will be stronger if we enable more people in Sikkim to have a voice in decisions that will impact us for generations.

[the writer is a Gangtok-based architect]

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National Librarian's Day observed at Sikkim University

GANGTOK, 12 AUG [PIB]: The Central Library, Sikkim University celebrated National Librarian's Day on 12 Aug, 2021. A virtual programme was organized on this occasion wherein Vice-Chancellor Professor Avinash Khare was present as the chief guest. He also launched the Subject and Research Support Services Portal on the occasion.

National Librarian's Day is celebrated each year on 12 August to commemorate the birth anniversary of Padmashri Dr SR Ranganathan (1892-1972), the Father of Library Science in India.

The Central Library Sikkim University has

designed and developed a 'Subject and Research Support Services' Portal with an objective to help students, research scholars and faculty members with ready to use information on a subject and research areas.

Librarian, Dr Shri Ram, Sikkim University demonstrated the benefits of the portal and entrusted the benefits of it to the faculty, students and research scholars. This subject and research support services portal includes information about key databases available on a subject, key journals suitable for a subject, video tutorials, encyclopedias, literature search, literature survey,

literature review, reference management, essential tools useful for research, article writing, plagiarism, remote access etc. with an objective that the student and scholars find their resources with a single click.

Through this portal the library will be actively involved at every step of the research to provide support services to a newly enrolled research scholar in the University. The portal intends to provide a platform for easy access to information, collect, connect and communicate the stakeholders, assist the students and scholars to find accurate information and

increase the discovery of the resources and ensure the utilization of the subscribed resources.

While addressing the gathering Professor Jyoti Prakash Tamang, Head of Department of Microbiology, highlighted the needs and benefits of research at university level and suggested that the library should work towards developing a digital archive of the traditional resources available within the Sikkim region which will benefit other people coming from different parts of the Country.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Avinash Khare highlighted the importance of a library since

Nalanda age and appreciated the efforts made by the Central Library of Sikkim University to take a lead in creating a platform for information resources which benefits the students of the university.

On the Occasion Registrar, Finance Officer, Controller of the Examination, Deans, Heads of Departments, faculty members, library staff and students of the university attended the online event. The virtual programme was co-ordinated by Assistant Librarian of the university, Dr Sarbada Pradhan. Deputy Librarian, Dr Sujit Kujur presented vote of thanks.

MangshilaTibukGPU organizes career counseling

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 AUG:**

Mangshila-Tibuk Gram Panchyat Unit organised a Career Counseling programme at Mangshila, North Sikkim, today. The programme was organised in collaboration with International Human Rights Council, Sikkim State Board.

Zilla member of Mangshila-Tibuk GPU, ZominLimboo chaired the programme as chief guest.

The main aim of the programme is to uplift students of rural areas, said Human Rights Council president, MB Limboo.

Vice President of Mangshila-Tibuk GPU, Dilli Ram Limboo informed that this is the first time that such counseling programme has been organised in the GPU. Around 80-90 students from class 10 and 12 participated in the programme.

Resource persons Zigmela Bhutia and Tara Man Giri from Education Department highlighted about various government scholarship schemes, government quotas and Technical Education to help the students in higher education.

Jang and Dikchu get Rural Marketing Centres



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 12 AUG:**

In a series of inaugurations in Rakdong Tintek, Panchayat President, Tika Maya Pandey along with panchayat members Chandra Lall Sharma, Hemlata Sharma and Purna Kumari Giri inaugurated the newly constructed Rural Marketing Centre (RMC) at Jang vil-

lage and the public toilet at Dikchu Bazaar today.

The RMC at Dikchu Senior Sec School was also inaugurated today in the presence of Principal, Santosh Kumar Chettri and SMC members.

The above infrastructure was constructed under Gram Panchayat Development Plan of Rakdong-Tintek Gram Panchayat Unit.

SU faculty felicitated by Indian Army

GANGTOK, 12 AUG [PIB]: Associate Professor and Head of Department of History, Dr Venu Pant, Sikkim University was felicitated by the Black Cat Division on behalf of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army. Dr Pant was one of the resource persons, who had conducted Tibetology Cadres for the officers of the Eastern Command at Gangtok in March and April, 2021.

Dr Pant received the GOC-in-C, Eastern Commandation Card and a Badge from Maj Gen Rohit Sawhney, GOC, Black Cat Division. He appreciated and thanked the efforts of Dr Venu Pant for her dedicated service in imparting knowledge and strengthening awareness of the young officers on the history, geography, religion, culture, language and governance of Tibet.

NYK to organise Fit Freedom Run in West Sikkim



**SUMMIT REPORT
GYALSHING, 12 AUG:**

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports as part of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav celebration is organizing Fit Freedom Run 2.0 throughout the country. Taking inspiration from the inaugural speech of the Prime Minister, during the curtain raiser of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav on 12 March 2021, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has conceptualized the celebration under the pillar of Action and Resolves @75.

District Youth Officer, Nehru Yuva Kendra Gyalshing, West Sikkim, Dev Nepal informed that West Sikkim has identified 75 villages to conduct

75 Freedom Run and one District Level which is scheduled in 21 Aug 2021.

The run will start from Kyongsa Play Ground to Gyalshing Bazaar in which youth from nearby areas and various youth clubs will be participating.

The first edition of the campaign was organized from 15 Aug to 02 Oct, 2020.

This time Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 will commence on 13 Aug 2021 and conclude on 02 Oct 2021.

The aim is to encourage people to take up fitness activities such as running and sports in their daily lives and get freedom from obesity,

laziness, stress, anxiety, disease, etc.

Nationwide programmes will be virtually launched by Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur and Minister of State, Nisith Pramanik on 13 Aug.

Subsequently, programmes will be held in 75 districts and at 75 villages in each district till 02 Oct.

Thus, Fit India Freedom Runs will be organized in 744 Districts, 75 villages in each of 744 districts and 30,000 Educational Institutions across the country. Through this initiative, more the 7.50 crore youth and citizen will be reached to take part in the run.

CM calls on Union Education Minister, requests Samagra Shiksha support

NEW DELHI, 12 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang called on the Union Minister of Education, Dharmendra Pradhan at Shastri Bhawan in New Delhi, today.

He requested for the early consideration of the Union Minister for the release of preparatory grants under Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), which is not yet released, despite constant correspondence by the state government.

Also, the Chief Minister put forth a request for special assistance under Samagra Shiksha for Sikkim and other North-Eastern states to procure tabs and other android devices and to set up local servers in Primary and Junior High Schools.

In order to raise awareness regarding the North-eastern states, the Chief Minister proposed for the inclusion of the vibrant culture, heritage and history of North-Eastern states, including



content on its natural resource, handlooms and handicrafts in the books under the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and also requested for a District Institute for Education and Training (DIET) for North Sikkim.

In the course of the meeting, he informed the Union Minister about the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose University of Excellence (NSBUoE) at Chakung, West Sikkim, an institution par excellence of higher learning.

Brand Factory Rock Bottom Week - Upto 50% + 20% off



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 AUG:

Brand Factory's Rock Bottom Week is on, bringing you the best of fashion and deals so you can go on a shopping spree, worry-free in a safe and secure shopping environment!

Brand Factory Presents Upto 50% Off On All Brands, Additional 20% Off on Purchase of Rs. 3500, this is the perfect time to go apparel shopping for you and your loved ones.

That's not all... SBI Card gives you 5%

Instant Discount on minimum transaction of Rs. 3500! The offer is valid on purchase of All Apparel Brands, in Brand Factory Stores, till 15th August. So, get ready to wear your best look with some of the top fashion brands now available at great discount deals!

Grab your favorite brands and style trends with these exciting offers at Brand Factory's Rock Bottom Week. Choose from a wide range of t-shirts, shirts, trousers, chinos, denims, tops,

kurta-kurtis, skirts and other fashion wear from your much-loved brands such as Buffalo, The Privilege Club, Iktara, Bare Denim, Bare Leisure, SB-PRC, Lee Cooper, Umbro, John Miller, Knighthood, Jealous, Hey, Scullers, Indigo Nation, John Miller, Hangout, Indigo Nation Street

Levi's, Crocodile, Killer, Celio, Zara, Colors, Twills, Nayans, Zink, 612 league, Crimsoune Club, L Tokyo Talkies and many more. It just doesn't get better than this, so what are you waiting for?

Education Department Government of Sikkim NOTICE

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

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



(RUSA SIKKIM ADMISSION).

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

Important dates:

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

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

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

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The Greater Freedom

74 years on, it's time to want more

On the occasion of the 74th anniversary of our Independence, let's make an attempt at putting some perspective on our freedoms. Yes, yes, they are peddling that whole nectar of freedom spiel, but get real, the moment the celebrations are dictated and the moment bhakts fall in line to spell out step-by-step, hoarding-by-hoarding headlining of a leader instead of the moment, one should realise it is time to defend our freedoms more passionately.

Accept it, more than seventy years of self rule later, the only freedom we can guarantee ourselves is our political freedom, and even that is being increasingly straitjacketed. Political freedom is not complete in itself because equally necessary is economic, and more importantly, social and cultural independence. This is a pertinent issue in the country today where rapid development in various fields and the filtering in of air signals and capitulation of media have created serious fragmentation of society and given rise to touchy social issues which are multi-dimensional in nature. There is now a dispensation in office which sees the nation as one-dimensional and extends only conditional tolerance to diversity even as it pushes pointless disruptions which distract and confound. All the more reason then to take a pause and reflect on what promise the 15th of August 1947 held for citizens of a new country.

Meanwhile, people's wants and aspirations have become more intricate. Today, the world is no longer uni-polar in nature. Together with the development of human thought, all areas of human development have also become broader and more inclusive even if governments of late have become more closed and divisive. Hence, political freedom alone is not enough for the all round development of the individual or the society.

Today we are celebrating our freedom from an oppressive British colonial rule but should we just limit our definition of freedom only to political sovereignty? If anything, political freedom, while giving us the right to choose our representatives has also, indirectly, allowed caste and communalism to stifle our social, cultural and intellectual legroom. The practise of vote bank politics – a natural fallout of “democracy” - by our politicians has made each and every move, whether by a politician or the individual of the community he favours, suspect. A society existing in an environment of suspicion and mistrust is fooling itself if it considers itself free. Even the lynch mobs, which even though they might think they are free now to enforce their vileness, are, for instance, being played by agent provocateurs and lack even free will.

In the past few years the concept of freedom in India has experienced a regression especially due to the rise of certain politico-religious pressure groups and the moral police. Globalisation has taught us about open markets and open economy; about privatisation and cable TV. At a time when the government is attempting to relinquish the responsibility of economic activity and is withdrawing from the economic sphere, making the term ‘public sector’ almost inapplicable, the extension of various groups, owing allegiance to political parties, into the social domain and attempting to regulate our private lives is undesirable and confounding. Censorship in any form does not gel with the concept of a democratic polity and a free people. This is ironic because this control is arriving at a time when there are more and more platforms available for free expression.

India as a country and Indians as a people are awaiting the second phase of independence, the greater freedom. This greater freedom can only be delivered by us, citizens of India. It is a difficult task as there is no tangible body to overthrow and this is also probably the reason why most of us do not realise our subtle subjugation. We can begin by grasping the concept and then demolishing the devices and instincts which are trying to impose instead of governing, dictate instead of consulting and manipulate instead of convincing.

WRITE US:

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

IPCC climate report: Profound changes are underway in Earth's oceans and ice – a lead author explains what the warnings mean

ROBERT KOPP
theconversation.com

Humans are unequivocally warming the planet, and that's triggering rapid changes in the atmosphere, oceans and polar regions, and increasing extreme weather around the world, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns in a new report.

The IPCC released the first part of its much anticipated Sixth Assessment Report on Aug. 9, 2021. In it, 234 scientists from around the globe summarized the current climate research on how the Earth is changing as temperatures rise and what those changes will mean for the future.

WHAT ARE THE IPCC REPORT'S MOST IMPORTANT OVERALL MESSAGES

At the most basic level, the facts about climate change have been clear for a long time, with the evidence just continuing to grow.

As a result of human activities, the planet is changing at a rate unprecedented for at least thousands of years. These changes are affecting every area of the planet.

While some of the changes will be irreversible for millennia, some can be slowed and others reversed through strong, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

But time is running out to meet the ambitious goal laid out in the 2015 international Paris Agreement to limit warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels (2 C equals 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Doing so requires getting global carbon dioxide emissions on a downward course that reaches net zero around or before 2050.

WHAT ARE SCIENTISTS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT RIGHT NOW WHEN IT COMES TO THE OCEANS AND POLAR REGIONS?

Global sea level has been rising at an accelerating rate since about 1970, and over the last century, it has risen more than in any century in at least 3,000 years.

In the years since the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report in 2013 and the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate in 2018, the evidence for accelerating ice sheet loss has become clearer.

Over the last decade, global average sea level has risen at a rate of about 4 millimeters per year (1.5 inches per decade). This increase is due to two main factors: the melting of ice in mountain glaciers and at the poles, and the expansion of water in the ocean as it takes up heat.

Ice sheets in particular are primarily responsible for the increase in the rate of sea level rise since the 1990s. There is clear evidence tying the melting of glaciers and the Greenland Ice Sheet, as well as ocean warming, to human influence. Sea level rise is leading to substantial impacts on coastal communities, including a near-doubling in the frequency of coastal flooding since the 1960s in many sites around the world.

Since the previous reports, scientists have made substantial advances in modeling the behavior of ice sheets. At the same time, we've been learning more about ice sheet physics, including recognizing the potential ways ice sheets can become destabilized. We don't well understand the potential speed of these changes, but they have the potential

to lead to much more rapid ice sheet loss if greenhouse gas emissions grow unchecked.

These advances confirm that sea level is going to continue to rise for many centuries to come, creating an escalating threat for coastal communities.

Sea level change through 2050 is largely locked in: Regardless of how quickly nations are able to lower emissions, the world is likely looking at about 15 to 30 centimeters (6 to 12 inches) of global average sea level rise through the middle of the century.

But beyond 2050, sea level projections become increasingly sensitive to the world's emissions choices. If countries continue on their current paths, with greenhouse gas emissions likely to bring 3-4 C of warming (5.4-7.2 F) by 2100, the planet will be looking at a most likely sea level rise of about 0.7 meters (a bit over 2 feet). A 2 C (3.6 F) warmer world, consistent with the Paris Agreement, would see lower sea level rise, most likely about half a meter (about 1.6 feet) by 2100.

What's more, the more the world limits its greenhouse gas emissions, the lower the chance of triggering instabilities in the polar ice sheets that are challenging to model but could substantially increase sea level rise.

Under the most extreme emissions scenario we considered, we could not rule out rapid ice sheet loss leading to sea level rise approaching 2 meters (7 feet) by the end of this century.

Fortunately, if the world limits warming to well below 2 C, it should take many centuries for sea level rise to exceed 2 meters – a far more manageable situation.

ARE THE OCEANS OR ICE NEARING ANY TIPPING POINTS?

"Tipping point" is a vague term used in many different ways by different people. The IPCC defines tipping points as "critical thresholds beyond which a system reorganizes, in a way that is very fast or irreversible" – for example, a temperature rise beyond which climate dynamics commit an ice sheet to massive loss.

Because the term is so vague, the IPCC generally focuses on characteristics of changes in a system – for example, whether a system might change abruptly or irreversibly – rather than whether it fits the strict dynamic definition of a "tipping point."

One example of a system that might undergo abrupt changes is the large-scale pattern of ocean circulation known as the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, or AMOC, of which the Gulf Stream is part. Paleoclimate evidence tells us that AMOC has changed rapidly in the past, and we expect that AMOC will weaken over this century. If AMOC were to collapse, it would make Europe warm more slowly, increase sea level rise along the U.S. Atlantic coast, and shift storm tracks and monsoons. However, most evidence indicates that such a collapse will not happen in this century.

There is mixed evidence for abrupt changes in the polar ice sheets, but clear evidence that changes in the ice sheets can be locked in for centuries and millennia.

If the world succeeds in limiting warming to 1.5 C (2.7 F), we expect to see about 2-3 meters (7-10 feet) of sea level rise over the next 2,000 years; if

the planet continues to warm and reaches a 5 C (9 F) increase, we expect to see about 20 meters (70 feet) over the next 2,000 years.

Some people also discuss summer Arctic sea ice – which has undergone substantial declines over the last 40 years and is now smaller than at any time in the past millennium – as a system with a "tipping point." However, the science is pretty clear that there is no critical threshold in this system. Rather, summer Arctic sea ice area decreases roughly in proportion to the increase in global temperature, and if temperature were stabilized, we would expect sea ice area to stabilize also.

WHAT DO SCIENTISTS KNOW NOW ABOUT HURRICANES THAT THEY DIDN'T REALIZE WHEN THE LAST REPORT WAS WRITTEN?

Since the last IPCC assessment report in 2013, there has been increasing evidence that hurricanes have grown more intense, and intensified more rapidly, than they did 40 years ago. There's also evidence that hurricanes in the U.S. are moving more slowly, leading to increased rainfall.

However, it's not clear that this is due to the effects of greenhouse gases – reductions in particulate pollution have also had important effects.

The clearest effect of global warming is that a warmer atmosphere holds more water, leading to more extreme rainfall, like that seen during Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Looking forward, we expect to see hurricane winds and hurricane rains continue to increase. It's still unclear how the overall number of hurricanes will change.

The report involved 234 scientists, and then 195 governments had to agree on the summary for policymakers. Does that broad range of views affect the outcome?

When you're writing a report like this, a key goal for the scientists is to accurately capture points of both scientific agreement and scientific disagreement.

For example, with respect to ice sheet changes, there are certain processes on which there is broad agreement and other processes where the science is still emerging and there are strong, discordant views. Yet knowing about these processes may be crucially important for decision-makers trying to manage risk.

That's why, for example, we talk not only about most likely outcomes, but also about outcomes where the likelihood is low or as-yet unknown, but the potential impacts are large.

The IPCC uses a transparent process to produce its report – the authors have had to respond to over 50,000 review comments over the three years we've spent writing it. The governments also weigh in, having to approve every line of a concise Summary for Policy Makers that accurately reflects the underlying assessment – oftentimes making it clearer in the process.

I'm very pleased that, as with past reports, every participating government has signed off on a summary that accurately reports the current state of climate science.

[the writer is Professor, Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences, and Director, Rutgers Institute of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, Rutgers University]



What is the Islamic New Year? A scholar of religion explains

IQBAL AKHTAR
theconversation.com

Much of the world today follows the Gregorian solar calendar, which has its origins in medieval Western Christianity. Conversely, the Islamic calendar or hijrī, is a lunar calendar. There are 12 months in the hijrī calendar, with each month being 29 or 30 days long.

It would be over 32 to 33 years that the lunar calendar will completely cycle the solar calendar. That's why the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan can fall in October one year, and a few years later it would be in July. It also means that the Islamic New Year is never on the same date and would also depend on the sighting of the moon.

Year one of the hijrī calendar is based on the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina

in the year A.D. 622 to establish the first Muslim community. Despite Muhammad being from Mecca, his new faith and followers were persecuted for their beliefs. The Islamic calendar marks that beginning in Medina.

Additionally, the Islamic New Year is associated with the prophets of the Christian faith as well: This is the day when Noah's Ark is believed to have to have come to rest on land, the day on which God forgave Adam, the day of Joseph's release from prison, the day of the births of Jesus, Abraham, and Adam, throughout the ages. It is also believed to be the day of the Prophet Muhammad's conception in the year 570.

Currently, while much of the world sees this as 2021, it is the Islamic year 1443, starting on Aug. 10 A.H.. In Latin, A.H. means Anno Hegirae – the year of the hijra, or emigration.

Unlike many traditions that celebrate the new year as a joyous occasion, the Islamic New Year is typically a somber affair. The first Islamic month is Muharram, a sacred time for prayer and reflection for both Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

WHY THE ISLAMIC NEW YEAR MATTERS

The 10th day of Muharram, known as Ashura, is particularly significant to Shiite Muslims. In the year 680, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn was killed along with most of his family and supporters in the Battle of Karbala in present-day Iraq.

Yazid the caliph of the Ummayyad dynasty, which ruled an area spanning from Spain to Persia from 661 to 750, saw Husayn as a political threat and brutally suppressed him and his movement.

The battle was a turning point for

the Shiites, who saw indifference by the majority in the massacre of the rightful heirs of Muhammad as final proof of a fundamental irreconcilability with Sunni Islam. It solidified the Sunni-Shia schism in Islam.

For the Shiites, Husayn represents someone who stood against the forces of injustice and evil. They commemorate the battle during the first two Islamic months of Muharram and Safar.

In many countries like India and Iran, the Islamic New Year and Ashura are public holidays. Life events, such as birthdays and marriages, historically were not celebrated for the first 10 days of the month. Sunnis also observe Ashura. Many observe fasts as a way to atone for their sins and perform acts of charity.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Florida International University]

Mamata Banerjee tears into UPSC for "BJP question" on Bengal poll violence

Mamata Banerjee alleged the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is asking test questions "given by the BJP" and weakening its foundation as an impartial body

Kolkata: A question in a highly competitive exam for jobs in the central police forces has become another point of conflict between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the centre.

Ms Banerjee today alleged the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which conducts national exams for civil and armed police services, is asking test questions "given by the BJP" and weakening its foundation as an impartial body.

In one of the 200-word questions for entry to the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF),



candidates were asked to write a report on "poll violence in West Bengal".

"The UPSC is asking BJP's questions. UPSC used to be an impartial body but the BJP is giving it questions to ask. Even the question in a UPSC paper on the protest by farmers was politically motivated," Ms Banerjee

told reporters in Kolkata. "The BJP is destroying institutions like the UPSC," she said.

Her comments came while announcing easing of COVID-19 restrictions in Bengal.

The Trinamool Congress retained power in Bengal in the assembly election this year, though

Ms Banerjee herself lost the election in Nandigram. The BJP has alleged that the state has gone soft on curbing post-poll violence that especially targeted its supporters and leaders following their defeat in the election.

Ms Banerjee's party and the Bengal govern-

ment maintain the reports of post-election violence have been greatly exaggerated, with fake videos and images, and most of the incidents of violence that took place around counting day on May 2, when the state police were under the control of the Election Commission.

Last month, in an indictment of the Trinamool government, a committee formed by the National Human Rights Commission on the order of the Calcutta High Court had said the situation in the state was a manifestation of "law of ruler" instead of "rule of law".

Ms Banerjee then quickly pointed out a man in the committee was a "BJP man", and claimed that the post-poll violence narrative was concocted by the BJP, sour over the election loss.

Domestic help case: Uttarakhand Civil judge challenges dismissal in court

Civil Judge (senior division) of Haridwar, Deepali Sharma, filed the petition in the high court on Tuesday claiming that the investigation officer, who had conducted an inquiry into the matter, was biased against her.

Nainital: A civil judge dismissed last year for allegedly torturing a minor girl, who worked as a domestic help at her residence, has filed a petition in the Uttarakhand High Court challenging her dismissal.

Civil Judge (senior division) of Haridwar, Deepali Sharma, filed the

petition in the high court on Tuesday claiming that the investigation officer, who had conducted an inquiry into the matter, was biased against her.

She has prayed for reinstatement to the post, saying she had not been granted a fair opportunity to present her case.

The inquiry report had served as the basis for her dismissal in October last year. She had been accused of torturing a 13-year-old domestic help at her residence.

The matter is yet to be listed for hearing.

Bengal extends COVID-19 restrictions till August 30, night curbs relaxed

COVID-19 West Bengal: "The COVID-19 situation in Bengal is quite good but the danger of the third wave is still lurking. This is one of the reasons we have not allowed local trains," Mamata Banerjee said, addressing a press conference.

Kolkata: COVID-19 restrictions in West Bengal have been extended till August 30 with relaxations in the curbs during the night hours, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced today.

The restrictions, first imposed on May 16 amid the second wave of the pandemic and extended at regular intervals, were about to expire on August 15.

"The COVID-19 situation in Bengal is quite good but the danger of the third wave is still lurking. This is one of the reasons we have not allowed local trains," Ms

Banerjee said, addressing a press conference.

"So, we have decided to extend the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions for 15 more days till August 30," she added.

The Chief Minister announced that the night hours during which stringent restrictions are imposed will be reduced.

"We have decided a few relaxations - such as full lockdown during the night will now be from 11 pm to 5 am, instead of 9 pm to 5 am," she said.

Ms Banerjee said the state was not getting the required doses of vaccines. "If we get vaccines, we can at least ensure one dose of vaccine for the rural population and then we can allow local trains," she said.

To decongest the prisons, Ms Banerjee announced that her government will release 73 life convicts.

Rights group says Hamas rockets at Israel a clear war crime

JERUSALEM (AP): A prominent international human rights group on Thursday accused Hamas of committing war crimes during a recent 11-day conflict with Israel by indiscriminately firing thousands of rockets toward Israeli population centers.

In its report, Human Rights Watch also said it had concluded that a misfired rocket launched by Hamas killed seven Palestinians when it fell short in the Gaza Strip. In a separate development, a U.N. agency said it had uncovered militant tunnels near one of its facilities and that Hamas had taken over one of its schools, undermining the agency's neutrality.

The New York-based rights group has repeatedly come under fire by Israel and its supporters over reports accusing Israel of war crimes against the Palestinians as well as apartheid and persecution. But in this report it agreed with most legal experts — and Israel itself — that indiscriminate rocket fire from Palestinian population centers directed at Israeli civilian areas is a violation of international law.

"Palestinian armed groups during the May fighting flagrantly violated the laws-of-war prohibition on indiscriminate attacks by launching thousands of unguided rockets towards Israeli cities," Human Rights Watch acting Middle East and North Africa director Eric Goldstein said.

It based its conclusions on an investigation into Hamas rocket attacks that killed 12 civilians in Israel.

Last month the group issued a report that accused the Israeli military of carrying out attacks during the conflict that "apparently amount to war crimes" after investigating three Israeli airstrikes that it said killed 62 Palestinian civilians. The group said there were no clear military targets in the airstrikes and said Israel had not taken sufficient precautions to avoid civilian casualties.

The war erupted on May 10 after Hamas fired a barrage of rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel's heavy-handed policing at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families from their homes by Jewish settlers in a nearby neighborhood.

Israel has said it struck over 1,000 targets in the Gaza Strip during the fighting, while Hamas launched more than 4,300 rockets and mortar rounds at Israel, including barrages directed at major population centers around Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

In all, some 254 people were killed in Gaza, including at least 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants, while Israel has claimed the number is much higher. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

"The rockets and mortars that Palestinian armed groups fired lack guidance systems and are prone to misfire, making them extremely inaccurate and

thus inherently indiscriminate when directed toward areas with civilians," the report said. "Launching such rockets to attack civilian areas is a war crime."

Israel has claimed that around 20% of the rockets Palestinian militants launched fell inside the Gaza Strip, and said that most of the remaining rockets were intercepted by the military's Iron Dome aerial defense system, or fell in open areas. Human Rights Watch concluded that a Hamas rocket fired on May 10 killed seven people, including two children, in the Gaza Strip city of Jabaliya. It said the number of Palestinians killed by errant Hamas fire might be higher.

"Munitions apparently directed toward Israel that misfired and fell short killed and injured an undetermined number of Palestinians in Gaza," the report said, adding that Hamas has not "provided information about how many rockets misfired or how many people died as a result in Gaza and there are no precise independent estimates."

The Israeli military has claimed another incident on May 10, in which eight Palestinian civilians died in an explosion in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, was the result of a misfired Hamas rocket. Human Rights Watch said in its earlier report that the explosion appeared to have been caused by an Israeli missile.

The May conflict was the fourth war between Israel and Hamas since the Islamic militant group seized control of Gaza in 2007, a year after winning the Palestinian parliamentary elections. Founded in the 1980s, the group rejects Israel's existence, is responsible for scores of deadly attacks on Israeli civilians and is considered a terrorist group by the United States, European Union and Israel.

Human Rights Watch, other rights groups and U.N. officials have accused both sides of committing war crimes in all of the conflicts, and HRW said both parties have "a long track record of failing to investigate" alleged violations.

The International Criminal Court is investigating possible war crimes by Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Goldstein has urged the ICC to include Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli airstrikes during the most recent Gaza war in its ongoing investigation.

"The failure of both Hamas authorities and the Israeli government to provide accountability for alleged war crimes by their forces highlights the essential role of the International Criminal Court," Goldstein said.

Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and says it is capable of investigating any possible wrongdoing by its forces. It says the ICC probe is unfair and politically motivated. Israel blames Hamas for the high civilian casualty count in Gaza, accusing the group of using civilians as human shields by launching attacks and military activity from residential areas. This week, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said it had discovered "underground structures," including tunnels near U.N. facilities in Gaza.

4 More bodies recovered in Himachal, landslide death count now at 14

Kinnaur Landslide: Kinnaur Deputy Commissioner Abid Hussain Sadiq said four more bodies were recovered from the spot after the rescue operation resumed on Thursday.

Shimla: Four more bodies were recovered from the landslide site in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district where the search and rescue operation resumed early on Thursday, raising the death count to 14, officials said.

A Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus, which, along with other vehicles, was buried under the debris, has been found in a badly damaged condition, State Disaster Management Director Sudesh Kumar Mokhta said.

However, a Bolero car also feared buried under the rubble could not be traced, he said.

The HRTC bus was on its way from Reckong Poo to Haridwar via Shimla when it was hit by boulders after the landslide around Wednesday noon near Chaura village on national highway-5 in Nigulsari area of Nichar tehsil.

In a video clip that surfaced on social media, a rescuer working at the site near the mangled remains of the bus is heard saying that the vehicle was found by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) 17th Battalion personnel. Another rescuer says that gloves should be brought

for continuing the rescue operation.

Kinnaur Deputy Commissioner Abid Hussain Sadiq said four more bodies were recovered from the spot after the rescue operation resumed on Thursday.

The DC told PTI that 14 bodies have been recovered so far. Thirteen people were rescued with injuries on Wednesday, while several others were still feared buried under the debris. However the exact number was not known.

In a Facebook post, Lokendra Singh Vedic, a resident of Shimla, said his father's body has been found but rescuers are yet to find his head.

The rescue work, being carried out jointly by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the ITBP, the local police and home guards, resumed at 6 am, Mokhta said.

Meanwhile, a two-minute silence was observed in the state assembly to pay homage to those who died in the Kinnaur landslide.

Urban Development Minister Suresh Bhardwaj said Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, along with Industries and Transport Minister Birkram Singh, has gone to the spot to take stock of the rescue work.

Mr Bhardwaj said the landslide occurred at the place where people usually stop their vehicles to look at the scenic view and take photographs.

The state government had requisitioned four helicopters for rescue work on Wednesday itself but they could not reach at the site due to bad weather, he added.

Senior Congress leader Asha Kumari in the state assembly said Leader of the opposition Mukesh Agnihotri, Rampur MLA Nand Lal and Shimla Rural MLA Vikramaditya Singh have also gone to the spot.

Expressing his condolences, CPM MLA Rakesh Singh said the factors that cause such landslides should also be examined and rectified.

The authorities had suspended the operation at around 10 pm on Wednesday.

The Bhawanagar station house officer (SHO) had said around 25 to 30 people were trapped under the debris.

When the initial reports came, the chief minister had told the state assembly that 50-60 people were feared trapped under the debris but the exact number was not known.

The Kinnaur deputy commissioner had also told PTI that over 40 passengers were in the bus.

Eight of the dead were found trapped in a Tata Sumo taxi during the search and rescue operation on Wednesday.

A truck rolled down towards a riverside due to shooting stones and the driver's body was recovered, officials said.

Encounter underway in J&K as terrorists attack border security force convoy

There were no reports of any injuries in the attack but the terrorists have been trapped, a police spokesperson said.

Srinagar: An encounter broke out between terrorists and security personnel today in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district as terrorists opened fire at a Border Security Force (BSF) convoy, officials said.

The convoy was

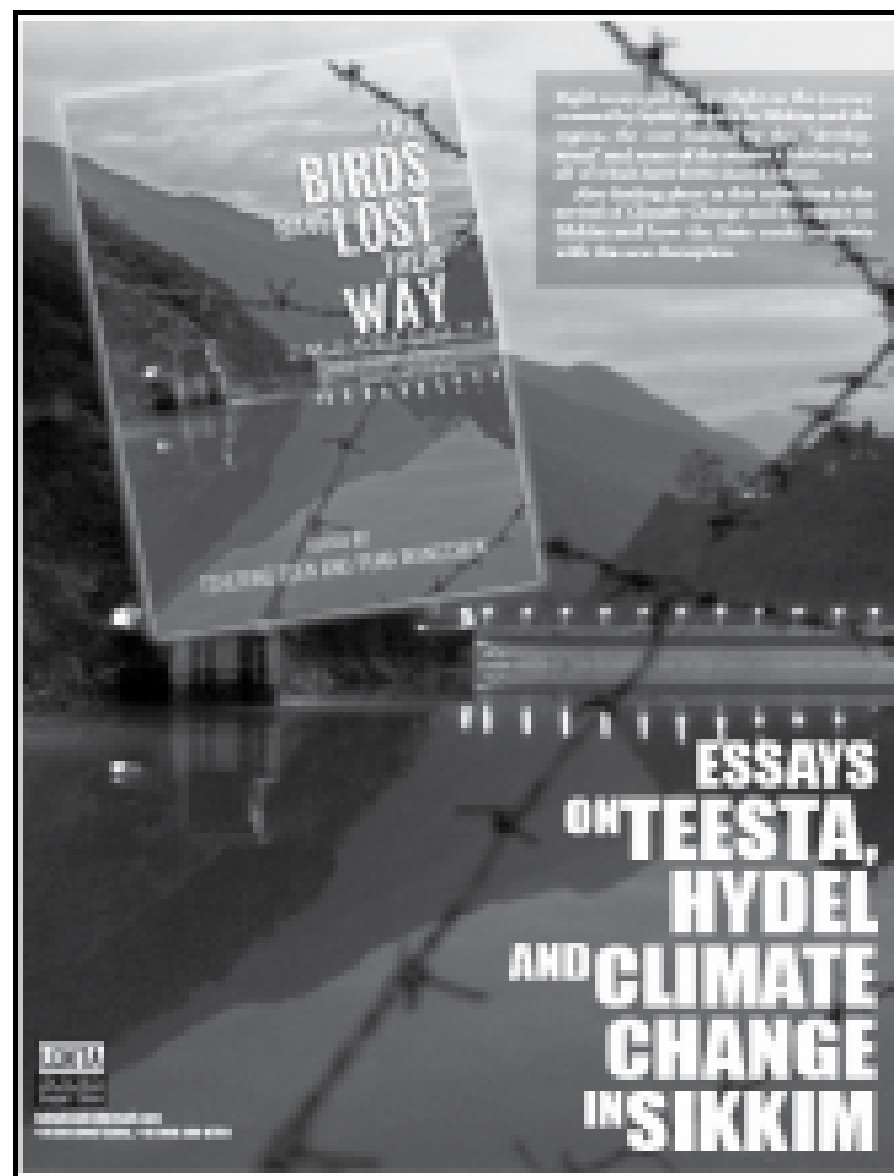
headed for Srinagar from Jammu when it was attacked, they said.

"Terrorists opened fire at a BSF convoy on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway at Malpora in the Qazigund area of Kulgam district," an official said.

There were no reports of any injuries in the attack but the terrorists have been trapped, a police spokesperson

said. "Terrorists fired upon BSF convey at NHW #Kulgam. No injury reported. However, terrorists trapped," the Kashmir zone police quoted Kashmir's Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar as saying.

Reinforcements went sent to the spot along with senior officers of the police, CRPF and the Army, the spokesperson said.



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Norwich signs Greece winger Christos Tzolis from PAOK

NORWICH, ENGLAND (AP): English Premier League club Norwich signed Greece winger Christos Tzolis to a five-year contract on Thursday.

The 19-year-old Tzolis arrives from Greek club PAOK for an undisclosed fee. He recorded 16 goals and 10 assists in 46 appearances last season for the Thessaloniki-based club.

"It was a very good season for me and I hope to continue like this here in the Premier League," Tzolis said in a team statement.

Canaries manager Daniel Farke said "some of the biggest teams in Europe" were also interested in signing Tzolis, who made his international debut last year.

"In his age group, Christos is probably one of the most exciting offensive players across European football," Farke said. "He's a young winger with lots of pace and potential."

On Monday, Norwich signed 21-year-old United States forward Josh Sargent from German team Werder Bremen. Newly promoted Norwich hosts Liverpool on Saturday in the season opener.

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Belarus sprinter feels safe, looks to future in Poland

WARSAW, POLAND (AP): After all the turmoil of the last week, Krystsina Tsimanouskaya finally feels safe.

The Belarusian Olympic sprinter who found refuge in Poland to avoid punishment at home after criticizing team officials at the Tokyo Games says she now hopes to focus on how to keep up a world-class running career.

Speaking in an interview Wednesday with The Associated Press at the Olympic Center in Warsaw, the 24-year-old runner said she has already asked Polish officials to help her resume training.

"Life changed in one day, and now we are starting it from scratch in a new country," she said, speaking with her husband, Arseni Zdanovich, by her side. "We are planning to stay in Poland and continue our careers here."

"We have turned to the Ministry of Sports, turned to the Polish athletics national team, with issues regarding a coach, a group and a place where I can train and many other issues regarding the continuation of my sports career here in Poland," she said.

She emphasized that she and her 25-year-old husband, an athletics trainer who also has been her coach, feel that it would be a waste to abandon an online training program they launched in Belarus.

"We had so many ideas, we planned it to a tiny detail," Tsimanouskaya said. "We have put a lot of time and effort in it and we would like to keep it going."

Tsimanouskaya said she and her husband feel secure in Poland, where they arrived separately last week on humanitarian visas.

"We are definitely safe



now because we are under protection," she said.

The runner recalled the harrowing, confusing moments when she sought Japanese police help at Tokyo's Narita International Airport, when she was being forced by Belarus officials to leave the Summer Games early and return home.

"They didn't understand first what happened to me," the runner said of the police. "They thought that I was unwell or lost something. And then I wrote that I was being forcibly taken out of the country and I don't want that to happen."

She used her phone to translate the desperate plea for help after her grandmother warned her not to return to Belarus.

The drama began after Tsimanouskaya criticized her

team officials, saying on Instagram that she was put in the 4x400 relay even though she had never run in the event. She was then barred from competing in the 200-meter race that she expected to run in and told to pack her bags.

At home, the standoff set off a massive backlash in state-run media, deepening Tsimanouskaya's fears that she would face reprisals if she returned. When she used Google apps to translate her plea to Japanese police, a suspicious Belarusian official asked what was going on. She told him she forgot something at the Olympic village and needed to return.

Tsimanouskaya described the feeling of safety she finally had after Japanese police took her away from team officials.

"I think I already felt secure at the airport when I was

with the police," she said. "I realized that I turned to the police, they are protecting me and my life isn't in danger. I was being constantly escorted, I felt nervous and sometimes my hands were trembling, but I wouldn't say that I felt unsafe. The only place which would be unsafe for me is Belarus."

The standoff again drew global attention to the repressive environment in Belarus, where authorities have unleashed a relentless crackdown on dissent following President Alexander Lukashenko's being handed a sixth term after the Aug. 9, 2020 presidential vote that the opposition and the West saw as rigged.

Huge protests rocked Belarus, and authorities responded by arresting more than 35,000 people and beating thousands. They have

ramped up the clampdown in recent months, raiding hundreds of offices and homes of independent journalists, activists and all those deemed unloyal.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron fist for 27 years, has denounced his opponents as Western stooges. Asked about Tsimanouskaya at a marathon news conference Monday, he claimed that "she wouldn't have done it herself if she hadn't been manipulated."

Tsimanouskaya said she had been apolitical before the standoff at the Tokyo Games and deliberately refrained from signing petitions challenging the authorities, fearing that would bring harm to her husband and her parents.

She said she had problems with sports officials after posting a message against vi-

olence on Instagram and was told she would face dismissal from the country's national team if she did it again.

After the airport standoff, her husband said they decided to move to Poland after talking to their parents.

"After consulting with them, we decided that it's dangerous to return to Belarus at the moment," he said. "And we decided that I will follow my wife to support her in a new country and build a sports career in Poland. You know, I was more worried for my wife than myself. I believed that they could use me to hurt her somehow."

Tsimanouskaya and Zdanovich said they badly miss their parents but talk to them on Zoom and hope they could visit Poland someday. They had to leave their dog and cat at their apartment in the Belarusian capital of Minsk, since Zdanovich had to flee quickly, so they asked neighbors and friends to take care of them.

The runner also hopes to sort out a problem with eBay that annulled all bids when she tried to auction a silver medal she has from 2019 to raise money to help Belarusian athletes punished for their political views.

"I was deprived of a chance to take part in the Olympic Games in my event and (eBay) effectively denied me an opportunity to help athletes," Tsimanouskaya said, voicing hope that the company will correct its mistake and allow her to auction her medal.

And she hopes that Belarus will one day become a democracy. "I hope that a time will come soon when Belarus could be free and people will have freedom of speech," she said.

Canada's Auger-Aliassime, Shapovalov ousted in Toronto

TORONTO (AP): Wimbledon quarterfinalist Felix Auger-Aliassime and countryman Denis Shapovalov were ousted from the National Bank Open in their native Canada on Wednesday.

Auger-Aliassime lost his first match, falling 7-5, 6-4 to Dusan Lajovic. Shapovalov dropped a 6-1, 6-4 decision to American Frances Tiafoe.

Auger-Aliassime, who's from Montreal, was the ninth seed in the tournament and had a bye into the second round. He was coming off an opening-round loss at the Tokyo Olympics. "I just played a lot of tennis, even though I didn't win a lot of matches at the Olympics or the last week," Auger-Aliassime said. "There's a lot of traveling, a lot of practices, a lot of balls hit and maybe that's taken a bit of a toll on me, too. I don't know."

Shapovalov came into the tournament as the No. 5 seed with a bye through the first round.

"Obviously it's not an ideal performance, so I'm definitely not too happy," Shapovalov said after his second round loss.

"(Tiafoe) has a lot of matches under his belt under these conditions and he was the better player today. It was obvious," said Shapovalov, the world No. 10. "I just didn't feel comfortable ever in the match and you could



see he was comfortable.

... It's always tough to go up against guys like this."

Tiafoe will face France's Gael Monfils in the third round on Thursday after the tournament's No. 11 seed beat John Millman of Australia 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

No. 4 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia, seventh-seeded Hubert Hurkacz of Poland, No. 8 Diego Schwartzman of Argentina, 10th seed Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain and American John Isner also won their matches Wednesday to advance, as did Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia, who upset 12th-seeded Alex de Minaur of Australia. In the women's event in Montreal, Canadian wild card Rebecca Marino continued her run by beating Paula Badosa 1-6, 7-5, 6-4.

The 30-year-old Marino upset No. 16 seed Madison Keys in the first round. Marino had a career-high ranking of No. 39 in 2011, but stepped

away from the sport for nearly five years to battle depression. She's currently ranked 220th.

"Any time you can beat a girl who's in the top 100, top 50, it's something to feel good about, particularly as I'm building my ranking back up," Marino said of beating Badosa, who is ranked 31st.

Marino will face Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus in the round of 16 on Thursday. Sabalenka, the tournament's No. 1 seed, edged American wild card Sloane Stephens 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-4 on Wednesday. Canadian Bianca Andreescu will also be back in action Thursday, facing either No. 13 seed Ons Jabeur of Tunisia or Russia's Daria Kasatkina in the round of 16.

No. 4 Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic, No. 11 Maria Sakkari of Greece and Coco Gauff, the 15th-seeded American, all won to advance on Wednesday, while Britain's Johanna Konta ousted third-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina.

Sharife Cooper's late 3 lifts Hawks to 84-83 win over Pacers

LAS VEGAS (AP): Sharife Cooper made a go-ahead, 3-pointer just before the buzzer that lifted the Atlanta Hawks to an 84-83 win over the Indiana Pacers in the NBA Summer League on Tuesday night. Cooper scored 21 points — making 5-of-8 3-pointers — and had nine assists. Atlanta drafted the 6-foot-1, 180-pound guard with the No. 48 overall pick after he entered the draft following his freshman season at Auburn.

Jalen Johnson, drafted No. 20 overall from Duke, had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Hawks. Atlanta's Skylar Mays, a second-round pick last year, scored 16 points.

Chris Duarte, selected No. 13 out of Oregon, led Indiana with 21 points and seven rebounds. Second-year pro Cassius Stanley scored 14 points, third-year pro Oshae Brissett had 13 points and Isaiah Jackson, taken with the No. 22 pick, added 13 points.

Cooper's game-winning shot from the corner, in front of the Pacers' bench, was the eighth lead change in the fourth quarter.

CELTICS 107, NUGGETS 82

Aaron Nesmith scored 33 points and made 7-of-9 3-pointers while Payton Pritchard had 21 points, 12 assists

and eight rebounds to help the Boston Celtics rout the Denver Nuggets.

Nesmith, drafted No. 14 overall last year, had 11 points in the first quarter as the Celtics jumped out to a 31-25 lead. Pritchard, who is also in his second year, and third-year pro Carsen Edwards were in double figures in the first half to help Boston lead by 20 points at halftime after shooting 62%.

BolBol, son of former NBA player Manute Bol, led the Nuggets with 26 points and nine rebounds. He is trying to make the most of his opportunity in Las Vegas after playing sparingly in his first two NBA seasons.

Denver's Nah'Shon "Bones" Hyland, drafted No. 26 overall, scored 16 points and Davon Reed added 10 points in his hopes of making it back to the league. Reed was not in the NBA the previous two seasons after appearing in 31 games over two seasons with Phoenix and Indiana.

BULLS 92, SPURS 89
Patrick Williams, drafted fourth overall last year, scored 30 and second-round pick Marko Simonovic had 13 points to help the Chicago Bulls earn a comeback win over the San Antonio Spurs.

San Antonio out-

scored Chicago 26-14 in the first quarter and led by 15 points at halftime. The Bulls went on a run early in the fourth quarter to take the lead and held on for the victory.

Second-year pro Tre Jones had 23 points and rookie Joe Wiskamp scored 11 points for the Spurs. Jaylen Morris scored 20 and Malik Newman had 19 points for the Spurs, who are giving both players another chance to play in the NBA.

ROCKETS 111, PISTONS 91

In a featured showdown between the No. 1 and No. 2 picks, it was Jalen Green who received more offensive help from his teammates in Houston's win over Detroit.

Green, the second overall pick who bypassed college basketball to play in the G League, scored 25 points in 30 minutes — going 6 of 11 from the field and 10 of 11 on free throws. His third and final 3-pointer gave the Rockets an 18-point lead with two minutes left.

Josh Christopher, the No. 24 selection out of Arizona State, helped Green run the Houston offense with 15 points and seven assists. Turkey's Alperen Sengun, the No. 16 pick, controlled the paint for Houston with 21 points, eight re-

bounds and three blocks.

Cade Cunningham, the No. 1 pick after spending one season at Oklahoma State, was 8 of 18 from the field for 20 points to lead Detroit. Luka Garza, Iowa's high-scoring big man, added 15 points.

KINGS 89, WIZARDS 75

Louis King led six Sacramento players in double figures with 16 points and four 3-pointers.

Davion Mitchell, the No. 9 pick who was pivotal during Baylor's championship run, was 5 of 8 from the field to add 12 points for the Kings.

Sacramento made 14 3-pointers and Washington turned it over 21 times. Caleb Homesley led Washington with 17 points and Corey Kispert, the No. 15 pick from runner-up Gonzaga, was held to eight points in his debut.

NBA Finals MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo sat court-side with siblings Thanasis and Kostas to support their brother Alex, who entered late in the fourth quarter for Sacramento.

TRAIL BLAZERS 86, CLIPPERS 66

Kobi Simmons, from the 2017 draft, led Portland with 15 points and Emmanuel Mudiay, the No. 7 pick in 2015, added 14 in a blowout victory.

England wins toss, bowls 1st vs India in 2nd cricket test

LONDON (AP): England won the toss and chose to bowl first in the second test against India at Lord's on Thursday.

The start of play was delayed 30 minutes because of some morning rain. James Anderson, England's record wicket taker, was declared fit after pulling out of a net session on Wednesday because of a tight quadriceps muscle. He joins Mark Wood and Ollie Robinson in a pace attack missing Stuart Broad, who is out of the series because of a torn calf muscle.

In two changes higher up the order, Haseeb Hameed replaced Zak Crawley to bat at No. 3 for his first test appearance in five years and allrounder Moeen Ali came in for Dan Lawrence.

India's only change from the drawn first test saw seamer Ishant Sharma replace spinning allrounder Shardul Thakur, who is out with a hamstring injury.

— England: Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Haseeb Hameed, Joe Root (c), Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Moeen Ali, Sam Curran, Ollie Robinson, Mark Wood, James Anderson.

India: Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli (c), Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj.

Japan leader’s medical adviser urges tougher virus measures

TOKYO (AP): A key medical adviser to Japan’s prime minister said Thursday that surging infections in the Tokyo area are severely affecting medical systems, and urged the government to take stricter measures to drastically reduce people’s activity.

“If the infections continue to surge at the current pace, we won’t be able to save the lives that can be saved,” Dr. Shigeru Omi said at a news conference. “The situation is like a disaster.”

The Japanese capital has been reporting record numbers of new infections, with daily cases tripling during the Olympics that ended Sunday. It logged 4,989 new cases on Thursday, and hospital beds are rapidly filling up. Nearly 20,000 people with milder symptoms are now isolating at home to make room for those who are more seriously ill, officials said.

Japan has done better than many other countries without forcing a lockdown, but is now going through what experts say is its biggest crisis since the pandemic started. Nationwide new infections hit a high of 15,812 on Wednesday, exceeding the previous record



reported Saturday.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has faced criticism for going forward with the Olympics despite widespread public opposition, but has denied the Games caused Tokyo’s upsurge. Tokyo is to host the Paralympics starting Aug. 24, and experts say it should be held without fans like the Olympics.

Tokyo has been under what it calls a state of emergency for a month, its fourth since the pandemic began late last year, but the measures are mostly

unenforceable requests that are increasingly ignored as many people become fatigued by them.

Omi urged the government to restrict service hours or customer numbers at grocery and deli sections of department stores and press companies to have their employees work from home. He also said health officials should increase testing, while getting more medical institutions to help in the effort to establish community-wide systems that provide support for those isolating at

home. “Otherwise, we are going to see more tragic cases at home,” he said.

Japan’s vaccination campaign is making good progress despite a slow start and about 36% of the people are fully vaccinated. But Omi said that is not enough to slow the surge prompted by the more infectious delta variant.

Japan’s seven-day rolling average of new cases stands at 11.2 per 100,000 people, compared to 2.8 in India, 37 in the United States and 41 in Britain, according to Johns Hopkins

University.

Tokyo metropolitan government taskforce experts made similar warnings earlier Thursday.

“The infections are raging and becoming uncontrollable,” said Dr. Norio Ohmagari, director of the Disease Control and Prevention Center. “It’s almost a disaster, a situation where people have no choice but protect their lives on their own.”

Masatakalinokuchi, a Tokyo Medical Association vice president who is also on the Tokyo metropolitan pandemic taskforce, said emergency medicine and ordinary treatment have been disrupted and could further deteriorate if the infections further accelerate.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike said officials are coordinating with hospitals, community physicians and health centers to set up a system to monitor or visit home isolators when they need attention, including oxygen and medication. Tokyo is also securing about 6,200 hotel rooms staffed by medical workers and has set up a facility for patients to stand by for hospital beds.

Koike urged residents to take social and physical distancing more seriously.

Tourist helicopter crashes in Russian crater lake; 8 missing

MOSCOW (AP): A helicopter carrying tourists plunged into a deep volcanic crater lake on the Kamchatka Peninsula in far eastern Russia early Thursday. Eight people have survived the crash, while eight others were missing and feared dead.

The Mi-8 helicopter sank in Kurile Lake, which was formed in a volcano caldera and crater and is located in the Kronotsky nature reserve. The water temperature in the lake was 5-6 degrees Celsius (41-42.8 F), and the survivors had to swim about 9 meters (29.5 feet) up to the surface from the sinking helicopter, spokespeople for the reserve said.

Russia’s Emergencies Ministry said 13 tourists and three crew members were aboard the helicopter when it crashed, state news agency RIA Novosti reported. Two of the eight survivors were badly injured and have been taken to the intensive care unit at a local hospital, according to the Interfax news agency.

The rescue operation searching for the missing people continued until Thursday evening and was suspended until the morning when it became dark.

Rangers in the nature reserve reported hearing the helicopter approaching the lake and then the sound of it hitting the surface and said they immediately dispatched two boats to the crash site.

“The water was really cold. The fog was low,” one of the survivors, Viktor Strelkin, said in a video interview released by the government of Kamchatka. He said the rescue boats arrived just in time after he swam up to the lake surface.

“I couldn’t save myself further. My sneakers were dragging me down, I barely managed to take them off,” Strelkin said.

“I couldn’t swim on the stomach and realized that in these conditions I wouldn’t be able to hang in much longer. Luckily, within five minutes, two boats with people arrived.”

Russian news reports did not list the nationalities of the tourists aboard the helicopter, but said that most of them were from Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Regional prosecutors were investigating a possible violation of flight safety rules.

Russia’s Emergency Ministry said that the sunk helicopter was found lying at a depth of 137 meters (449 feet), about 700 meters (2,296 feet) away from the shore of the lake. Kurile Lake is up to 316 meters (1,037 feet) deep and covers an area of 77 square kilometers (30 square miles).

The helicopter, manufactured during the Soviet era 37 years ago, was operated by Vityaz-Aero, a local private carrier. Its director said it had recently undergone maintenance and was in good shape.

The Mi-8 is a two-engine helicopter designed in the 1960s. It has been used widely in Russia, ex-Soviet countries and many other nations.

The area where the crash occurred can only be reached by helicopters, and fog complicated rescue efforts, RIA Novosti reported. A total of 15 rescuers, including six divers, were involved in the rescue operation, according to Interfax.

Kamchatka, the pristine peninsula which is home to numerous volcanoes is known for its rugged beauty and rich wildlife. The Kronotsky reserve, which has Russia’s only geyser basin, is a major tourist attraction on Kamchatka and helicopters regularly carry tourists there.

Poland faces harmed ties with US, Israel over disputed bills

WARSAW, POLAND (AP): Poland is looking at a more difficult relationship with two allies, the United States and Israel, after lawmakers passed separate bills — one dealing with foreign ownership of media and the other affecting the property rights of the families of Holocaust survivors — which the Polish government had been warned to drop.

The European Union also slammed the media bill on Thursday as undermining media freedom, adding to pre-existing strains between Warsaw and Brussels from the EU’s perception of democratic backsliding in member nation Poland.

The bills passed the lower house of the Polish parliament on Wednesday, and still require Senate approval and the signature of the president, who supports the right-wing party that has governed the country since 2015.

The two proposals threaten to further isolate Poland, whose geographic position in Central Europe has often left it at the mercy of stronger neighbors, and whose membership in EU and NATO and relationship with the U.S. are considered key guarantees of the country’s future security.

One of the bills that passed is aimed at forcing Discovery Inc., the U.S. owner of Poland’s largest private television network, to sell its large and popular Polish network, TVN. The other would prevent former property owners, including Holocaust survivors and their descendants, from regaining property expropriated by the country’s communist regime.

U.S. Secretary of State



Antony Blinken issued a statement late Wednesday about what he called the “troubling legislation,” saying that the NATO alliance to which Poland belongs “is based on mutual commitments to shared democratic values and prosperity.”

“These pieces of legislation run counter to the principles and values for which modern, democratic nations stand,” Blinken said.

Plans for the media bill in Poland triggered nationwide protests by people who fear that their right to independent information is under attack. Among the crowds were older Poles who remember the censorship of the communist era.

The bill’s passage drew some angry protesters to the parliament building late Wednesday, including some who verbally assaulted and shoved an opposition lawmaker, Dobromir Sosnierz, while apparently mistaking him for a member of the ruling Law and Justice party.

By contrast, the law which would affect the former property owners — both Jewish and non-Jewish — got almost no media coverage in Poland. But it sparked a fast and angry response from Israel, with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid saying it

“damages both the memory of the Holocaust and the rights of its victims.”

The EU Commission, which polices EU law, said it will follow the media issue very closely while the EU’s top watchdog for democratic values, Vera Jourova, tweeted that the foreign ownership bill sends a negative signal.

“Media pluralism and diversity of opinions are what strong democracies welcome, not fight against,” Jourova wrote. “We need a #MediaFreedomAct in the whole EU to uphold media freedom and support the rule of law.”

European Parliament President David Sassoli also weighed in on the media vote, calling it “very worrying.”

“If the law comes into force, it will seriously threaten independent television in the country. There can be no freedom without a free media,” he said.

The development looked to many like a crucial move in a step-by-step dismantling of the democratic standards that Poland embraced when it threw off communism in 1989.

Hungary had already set the trail for such an illiberal political direction, and the EU has shown little ability so far to do much to ensure adher-

ence to its values either there or in Poland, both previously models of democratic transformation. After communism ended more than three decades ago, many foreign investors entered Poland’s media market. Poland’s ruling party, led by the country’s de facto leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, has long seen this as a problem and sought to “re-Polonize” the media. The party argues that keeping Polish entities in control of the media is a matter of national security and that such regulations are in line with Western European standards.

However, the party’s critics see the efforts to nationalize media as a pretext for silencing independent voices. The effort is well on its way. Soon after winning power in 2015, Law and Justice transformed tax-funded public media into a party mouthpiece. Last year the state oil company bought a large private media group that owned newspapers, magazines and internet portals, and has since moved to changing the editors.

Some fear the internet could be next after Kaczynski said in July that “the other side” has the advantage there and “we will still have to strive for this to change this situation.”

New Zealand plans to start reopening borders early next year

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP): New Zealand, which has completely stamped out the coronavirus, plans to cautiously reopen its borders to international travelers early next year, the government said Thursday.

Officials also said they would delay second shots of the Pfizer vaccine in order to speed up first shots to protect more people as the threat of the delta variant grows. New Zealand’s success in erasing the coronavirus has allowed life to return almost to normal. The South Pacific nation of 5 million people has reported just 26 deaths since the pandemic began.

That’s been achieved in part by closing borders to those who aren’t residents or citizens.

But many question whether its feasible for New Zealand to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to the virus once international travel resumes. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the government planned to follow the advice of experts and maintain the elimination strategy.

“While the pandemic continues to rage overseas, and the virus continues to change and mutate, the best thing we can do is lock in the gains achieved to date while keeping our options open,” she said.

Ardern said the borders would not reopen until after New Zealand’s vaccine rollout was completed at the end of the year. The rollout has been much slower than in most developed nations, although is beginning to accelerate. Ardern said

that from the first quarter of next year, the country would begin allowing travelers to arrive on a carefully managed basis.

Fully vaccinated travelers from low-risk countries would not be required to quarantine, she said. Those arriving from medium-risk countries would need to complete some form of quarantine. And those arriving from high-risk countries, or who were unvaccinated, would need to stay 14 days in a quarantine hotel run by the military, Ardern said.

The government did not provide a ranking of countries by risk, saying it could change quickly.

Ardern said a new trial would begin in October that would allow some business travelers to quarantine at home rather than in military-run hotels as a test of the new system it planned to introduce for medium-risk countries next year.

Ardern also announced it was increasing the standard time scheduled between Pfizer vaccine doses from three weeks to six weeks. She said the initial groups targeted for the vaccine — border workers and older people — had already been fully vaccinated. “From a population basis, it makes sense to get as many New Zealanders at least partially vaccinated quickly,” Ardern said.

The changes were generally welcomed by business owners, including those in the struggling tourism industry. Before the pandemic, more than 3 million overseas travelers visited New Zealand each year and tourism was among the country’s largest industries.

CORONAVIRUS

PRECAUTIONS & SAFETY TIPS

DON'T LOWER THE GUARD

LOCKDOWN HAS BEEN LIFTED, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THE THREAT OF COVID-19 HAS NOT YET SUBSIDED.

As we adapt to the new normal, here is a reminder of the precautions you must take-

WEAR A MASK

Always wear a mask to prevent droplets from going outside

GET A FLU VACCINATION

Get your flu shot to develop an immune response before flu season begins, particularly if you have comorbidities

WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash your hands often, for about 20 seconds each with soap & carry a sanitizer

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people

GET TESTED

Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Stay at home until you get the result.

COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WHILE SNEEZING, OR COUGHING

Before stepping outside, make sure to carry a handkerchief or a pocket of tissues.

FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS BEFORE STEPPING OUT

Carry your sanitizer, water bottle and, most importantly, avoid crowded areas.

CHECK YOUR TEMPERATURE

Monitor your temperature on regular basis



The
BIG
PICTURE

SHE'S ALL THAT! The TikTok superstar, Addison Rae rocks a skin-tight red dress for an appearance on Jimmy Kimmel Live in Los Angeles.

Justin Bieber leads nominees for 2021 MTV Video Music Awards



NEW YORK (AP): Justin Bieber leads this year's list of nominees at the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards, followed closely by Megan Thee Stallion, Billie Eilish, BTS, Doja Cat, Drake, Giveon, Lil Nas X and first-time nominee Olivia Rodrigo.

Bieber has seven nods, including video of the year and best direction for "POPSTAR," artist of the year, best cinematography for "Holy" and best pop song, best editing and best collaboration for "Peaches."

Megan Thee Stallion is right behind with six nominations, mostly from her hit song "WAP," triggering nods for video of the year, artist of the year, best collaboration and best hip-hop song. She also was nominated for a second time in the best hip-hop song category for her work on Lil Baby's "On Me (The Remix)."

Eilish, BTS, Doja Cat, Drake, Giveon, Lil Nas X and Rodrigo each have five nominations. Bieber and Megan Thee Stallion will compete with Ariana Grande, Doja Cat, Olivia Rodrigo and Taylor Swift for artist of the year.

The video of the year category is filled by "WAP" by Cardi B featuring Megan Thee Stallion.

lion; "POPSTAR" by DJ Khaled featuring Drake and Bieber; "Kiss Me More" by Doja Cat featuring SZA; Ed Sheeran's "Bad Habits"; Lil Nas X's "MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)"; and The Weeknd's "Save Your Tears."

"WAP" is also up for song of the year, alongside "Mood" by 24kGoldn featuring iann Dior; "Leave The Door Open" by Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak and Silk Sonic; "Dynamite" by BTS; Dua Lipa's "Levitating" and Rodrigo's "drivers license."

The 2021 VMAs will return to New York City, airing from the Barclays Center in Brooklyn on Sept. 12. The show will simulcast across CMT, Comedy Central, Logo, MTV2, Nickelodeon, Paramount Network, Pop, TV Land, VH1 and The CW Network.

The best new artist nominees are: 24kGoldn, Giveon, The Kid LAROI, Olivia Rodrigo, Polo G and Saweetie. Best rock song nominees are Evanescence's "Use My Voice," Foo Fighters' "Shame Shame," John Mayer's "Last Train Home," The Killers' "My Own Soul's Warning," Kings Of Leon's "The Bandit" and Lenny Kravitz's "Raise Vibration."

'Jeopardy!' producer Richards named host; role for Bialik

LOS ANGELES (AP): After weeks of guest hosts on "Jeopardy!" that included celebrities from TV, sports and journalism, the daily syndicated quiz show chose its executive producer, Mike Richards, as the successor to beloved host Alex Trebek.

But after fan backlash to a selection process that recently turned messy, producer Sony split the pie by naming another guest host, actor Mayim Bialik, as emcee for "Jeopardy!" prime-time and spinoff series, including a new college championship.

In a nod to "Jeopardy!" devotees, longest winning-streak champion Ken Jennings will return as a consulting producer.

Richards will retain executive producing duties for "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune," Sony Pictures Television said in a statement Wednesday. The studio also appeared to deflect the idea that it was bowing to the dismay that some fans expressed when word leaked last week that Richards would be the pick.

"We knew early on that we wanted to divide the hosting responsibilities and it became very clear that Mike and Mayim were the undeniable choices. They were both at the top of our research and analysis," said Ravi Ahuja, Chairman of Global Television Studios for Sony Pictures. "We took this decision incredibly seriously."

As a guest host, Ahuja said Richards was "at ease behind the podium and a double threat as producer and host. Mayim has a wonderful energy, an innate sense of the game, and an authentic curiosity that naturally represents the 'Jeopardy!' brand."

Richards was the second of the temp hosts who filled the void left by Trebek's death, with "Jeopardy!" champs Jennings and Buzzy Cohen, actors Bialik and LeVar Burton, NFL player Aaron Rodgers and TV journalists among the others.

The studio didn't break the game-show mold by choosing Richards. White male hosts have long been the convention, with a few women (among them Meredith Vieira, Jane Lynch, Leslie Jones) and a larger contingent of Black men (Wayne Brady, Steve Harvey, Anthony Anderson) making inroads in recent years.

While Richards proved an excellent host, a "fantastic opportunity for radical change has been lost," said Deepak Sarma, a Case Western Reserve University professor and Netflix cultural consultant. For the marginalized, Sony's decision confirms suspicions that "penetrating some privileged worlds is impossible," Sarma said.

Richards has an extensive, Emmy Award-winning game show resume.

He was the executive producer of "The Price is Right" and "Let's Make a Deal" for more than a decade and produced the 2020 revival of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." His on-camera experience includes hosting "The Pyramid" and "Beauty and the Geek," a reality show.

He joined "Jeopardy!" as the replacement for retiring executive producer Harry Friedman starting with

website.

Richards will have to earn the respect already accorded to others who tried out, Saunders said. He'll still watch the show as the site's operator, but said, "I would certainly not begrudge any other viewer who would choose to tune out."

Filling the host's job was never easy. Affection for the Canadian-born Trebek made finding a replacement



the 2020-21 season, and was in the job for only a few months when Trebek, 80, died last November of pancreatic cancer. Trebek was host for 37 seasons.

"No matter who they picked some of the viewers were going to be unhappy, because it wasn't Alex Trebek," said media consultant Bill Carroll.

Jennings, who holds the record for most regular-game winnings with \$2.52 million and the longest winning-streak, 74 games, had been considered a frontrunner, along with Cohen and Bialik ("The Big Bang Theory"). Burton had his own chorus of supporters, including the petitioners whom he credits with getting him on the show last month.

Sony had been handling the transition gracefully: The show regularly saluted Trebek's legacy, made charitable donations in his memory and framed the succession of guest hosts as a chance for viewers to adapt to change and, just maybe, have a hand in the choice.

In interviews, Richards portrayed himself as a relative bystander in the process, one who had stepped in as guest host only when needed.

When Variety reported last week that he was close to signing a deal, fans and observers questioned whether the supposed audition and selection process was a stunt, with the conclusion foregone. They also expressed doubt that Richards was right for the job.

There were other candidates with the gravitas and resume that "Jeopardy!" and its viewers deserve, said Andy Saunders, a longtime viewer and administrator for The Jeopardy! Fan

both a gesture of regard for him as well as a business decision. Viewership shifted under the guest hosts, but "Jeopardy!" remains among the top-ranked syndicated programs.

When Richards spoke to The Associated Press in May, he asked that viewers give the new host a fair shot.

"My hope is that whoever is chosen will be given a chance to prove why they were chosen, without too much static," he said. "Ultimately, we are trying to put out the best product for our fans."

"Jeopardy!" returns for its 38th season on Sept. 13, with taping set to begin this month.

In a statement Wednesday, Richards said he was honored to be chosen for the job and promised to adhere to Trebek's belief that "the game itself and the contestants are the most important aspects of the show."

If Richards holds to that approach and "doesn't get in the way of the focus of the show," consultant Carroll said, viewership is likely to remain strong.

Bialik, who played a scientist on "The Big Bang Theory" sitcom and is one in real life, was among the fan favorites to succeed Trebek.

"What started out with my 15-year-old repeating a rumor from Instagram that I should guest host the show has turned into one of the most exciting and surreal opportunities of my life!" she said in a statement.

She'll be host of "Jeopardy! National College Championship," which Sony announced Wednesday. The prime-time ABC show will feature 15 colleges from across the country competing over two weeks.

In her name: Amanda Gorman Award honors high school poets

NEW YORK (AP): Amanda Gorman can still remember when she was just another young poet trying to find her voice.

Gorman and Penguin Random House have established the Amanda Gorman

Award for Poetry, a \$10,000 prize for public high school students who submit the best original work.

"As someone who found my love of writing at a young age, I want to continue to foster that same love in the

next generation of great poets," Gorman said in a statement Thursday. The 23-year-old Gorman became world famous in January after reading her poem "The Hill We Climb" at President Joe Biden's inauguration.

Current public high school seniors in the U.S. and all U.S. territories who plan to attend a 2- or 4-year college are eligible for the Gorman award. The application period runs from Oct. 1 to Feb. 1, 2022.

Aries: What are you addicted to, Aries? What are the consumption habits that are keeping you stuck to the lower planes of existence? Today, you're being asked to observe what you're putting on your plate and in your mouth as you remember that your body is but a sacred temple. As you do, pay attention to repetitive thoughts and patterns too. A certain degree of mind control will help you rise above the constant and continuous chatter.

Tip: It's time to reassess your consumption habits.

Taurus: "Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional." Today, you're being asked to reflect upon these beautiful words by Haruki Murakami as you remember that this too shall pass. The gift of your inner awareness will help transmute the dark clouds of sadness that you've been carrying with you for some time now. So, pause. Breathe. Be present to yourself. As you do, let go of the narrative that you need to be busy at all times in order to feel validated.

Tip: Pause, breathe, and be present to what's coming up in your inner landscape.

Gemini: Manifestation rituals are for them lesser mortals. You're the kind of person who believes in weaving magic as you go along. So, continue to follow the path of trust and surrender as you remember that the Universe is your co-

conspirator here. Overheard at the cosmic conference: you are stepping into a time of hope and healing. So, welcome this as an opportunity to look at all that transpired through the lens of love. Welcome this as an opportunity to make peace with the past. Something tells us you're about to call in a miracle, beautiful one!

Tip: Everything is as it should be and everything is perfect in this moment.

Cancer: You've been down this road many times before, and you've been disappointed every one of those times. That's what makes this victory so much sweeter, Cancer! So, take a moment. Take a moment to be grateful for it all. The highs, the lows, and everything in between that helped you get to this point in your existence. As you do, remember that your fate is in your hands, and that you have the power to call in the miracles you desire and deserve.

Tip: A big victory is on the cards.

Leo: The cards are bringing your attention to a certain conversation that you've been avoiding, Leo. What do you think is the reason behind your non-confrontational approach? Are you protecting the other person or yourself? It's time to press the pause button and ask yourself some rather important questions. Trust that you have the strength and

courage required to face your demons head-on, and that you will be taken care of no matter the outcome.

Tip: Press pause and ask yourself the important questions.

Virgo: This phase of your life is about the hustle. You're putting in your best efforts without being attached to a specific outcome, which in turn is propelling your career in the right direction. What's more, you're actively creating fruitful opportunities for yourself too, as you activate the portal of prosperity and abundance. So, stash those coins away for the future, beautiful, and know that you will look back at this chapter of your life with both gratitude and pride.

Tip: You're activating the portal of prosperity and abundance.

Libra: Here's the thing, Libra: you have been holding onto the idea of how things should be and how they shouldn't be, and your expectations are not serving you in the least. What you want to do today instead is honour your circumstances and what is being revealed to you through the unseen realms.

Tip: Be in the present moment. That's all!

Scorpio: 'Communication' is the magic word, Scorpio. So, if you're

feeling the urge to reach out to somebody, whether it's for personal or professional reasons, the time to do so is now. Some of you could be feeling weighed down by responsibilities at this point, most of which are unavoidable. While the call of duty needs to be answered, there is no reason you have to go through it alone. Reach out to your soul tribe, beloved. Ask them to hold space for you as you set out to achieve the impossible.

Tip: Communication, communication, communication!

Sagittarius: It's one of those phases, Sagittarius. One of those phases where everything that is sacred is being taken away from you all at once. This can be a massive blow to the ego, as you may have experienced over the past few months. But, the thing about the ego death is that it paves the way of inner reflection. So, welcome this as an opportunity to traverse within. You are so loved and you are so protected.

Tip: You may feel that everything that is sacred to you is being taken away all at once.

Capricorn: It may not be perfect, but it's beautiful, and that's all that matters, Capricorn. This week brings with it the realisation that you are in a wonderful place, and you are surrounded by the kind of people who remind you of what happiness feels like. So, celebrate every one of these

connections with the inner knowing that the seeds of goodness you plant will continue to multiply as you go along.

Tip: Beautiful is better than perfect, always!

Aquarius: Love or money? Money or love? Ah, the classic debate! One that is sure to put an idealist like yourself in a fix. What the cards are advising you to do: pay attention to the fruitful opportunities in front of you. Looks like you're about to hit the jackpot in the money department! Remember, you don't have to sell your soul to the devil in the process. Finding a middle ground between what you desire from the project and what is expected of you is the best way forward, Aquarius.

Tip: Make a practical decision as you stash those coins away for the future.

Pisces: Here's the thing about people that you've known forever. You can be your most authentic self in front of them. No masks required, Pisces. Today, you're finding a way to nurture these connections and let the people in your life know just how much you care. Pay attention to the advice that they're giving you as well. Could it be that they can see something in your reality that you have no perspective on? Only time will tell.

Tip: It's time to nurture your soul connections.