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# SummitTIMES

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## State Level Bankers' Committee Meeting

# Agriculture lending increases from 6.87% to 30%

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 NOV:

The 69th State Level Bankers' Committee Meeting for the Sikkim State with the theme "Atmanirbhar Sikkim through Financial Inclusion" was held on 16 Nov at Hotel Mayfair Resorts & Spa, a press release informs.

The meeting was chaired by Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services and Information and Public Relations Department, LN Sharma.

It also saw the presence of the Chief Secretary, SC Gupta, Deputy Managing Director, SBI, S Salee from Corporate Centre Mumbai, Chief General Manager, Local head Office, Kolkata, Ruma Dey, GM-cum- OIC, RBI, Kishore Pariyar, GM-cum-OIC, NABARD, Dr. Diwakar Hegde, GM-III, SBI & SLBC Convenor, A K Mahakul.

The meeting was also attended by top functionaries from the Banks as well as the State Government Department.

The meeting was held to review the progress of Banks under Annual Credit Plan 2021-2022 for the quarter ended on 30 Sept, 2021.

CGM, SBI Ruma Dey, in her welcome address, informed about the Financial Inclusion activities of the Banks in the State and also briefed on the CD ratio and Priority Sector Lending in the State. She further added that The State Government under the able leadership of the Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) has been instrumental in the economic development of the State by providing full support and cooperation to the Banks. As a result of which every citizen of the State is being benefitted.

DMD, SBI, S Salee, in his address, informed about the network of bank

branches in the State and various work being done by the banks in the State.

He also said that under the guidance of the Chief Minister of the State and LN Sharma, Minister of Agriculture, Govt of Sikkim, the Agriculture Department launched a campaign on the theme "Development through Credit" as a result of which Agriculture lending has tremendously increased from 6.87% in the first Qtr to 30% in the 2nd Qtr.

Similarly, the Commerce and Industries Department, under the guidance of Minister, BS Panth has also launched an employment generation programme "Skilled Youth Startup Scheme", wherein 35% - 50% back-ended subsidy is being extended by the Government of Sikkim. He also spoke on the various MoUs being signed between the State Government and the Banks for the promotion of Agriculture, MSME as well as in the Social Security Sectors.

GM-cum-OIC NABARD, Dr Diwakar Hegde informed that the potential of WSHG credit linkage in the state. He said that almost 50% of the Women Self Help Groups had been credit linked so far and there was still potential to credit link the rest 50%.

Secretary Commerce and Industries Department, HK Sharma, said that the banks had been instrumental in the implementation of Skilled Youth Start Up Scheme in the State and appreciated the work being done by the Banks.

Chairman of the SLBC Steering Committee, Kishore Pariyar (GM OIC, RBI Gangtok) presented an insightful report on the performance of the banks in the State and also placed proposals before the forum for accelerating the pace of Financial Inclusion and effective credit delivery to the needy sectors for achievement of Atma Nirbhar Sikkim.



The proposals were, that the targets set for banks through the ACP should be more realistic and at least 10,000 new KCC should be issued by them before March 2022, creation of a database of MSMEs for Sikkim and Udhym registration of at least 10,000 of these MSMEs units.

Chief Secretary, SC Gupta, said that the State Government will look into all the requests put forward by the Banks and also said that there needs to be further improvement in the CD ratio by the banks to a minimum of 45%.

Chief guest for the meeting, Minister LN Sharma stated that the involvement of banks has remarkably improved during the past few years. He suggested that the banks be more considerate while considering credit proposals especially in the Agriculture & Allied Activities Sector. He particularly urged the private sector banks to improve their lending in

the priority sector like Agriculture & MSME.

He also suggested that the banks expand the network of banking outlets in the remotest parts of the State as well. He said that everyone should be covered with at least one banking facility in the State and awareness about various policies and Social Security Schemes of the Government like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Atal Pension Yojana should be made among the masses.

He appreciated the active involvement of State Bank of India in all the State Government Campaigns and also sought the same kind of cooperation from the other banks as well.

The meeting ended with the vote of thanks by GM-III, SBI & Convenor - State Level Bankers' Committee, AK Mahakul.

## Sikkimey Nagarik Samaj condemns govt's "repeated attempts" to weaken Old Laws

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 NOV:

Sikkimey Nagarik Samaj has condemned, what the organisation sees as, "repeated attempts of the SKM Government to weaken the old land laws of Sikkim by misusing illegal notification of 2018." The organisation's ire has been triggered by a Notification issued by the Home Department on 15 November appointing a committee to examine "the issue of registration of immovable property purchased by the Residential Certificate Holders within the jurisdiction of Municipality and Nagar Panchayats." This committee is to be chaired by Secretary, Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department, and will have Secretary, Law Department, and Secretary, Urban Development Department, as members.

This committee draws its validity and terms from the Home Department notification of 10 March, 2018 which SNS has rejected as illegal.

A press statement issued by the SNS chief patron, Tseten Tashi Bhutia, today conveys strong reservations against regular attempts to process land transfers ignoring Revenue Order No. 1 and proposals brought frequently to Cabinet meetings to "distort" Sikkim's Old Laws.

SNS sees these moves as serious offences and warns that the Sikkimese people will not remain silent forever.

The release adds that SNS has frequently requested the state govern-

ment to withdraw the notification of 2018 in question and rues that the government instead appears to be hell bent on destroying the rights of Sikkimese people misusing the same notification.

SNS has reiterated its demand that the Land Revenue Department "stop bringing anti Sikkimese proposals in Cabinet meetings and requests the state government to immediately withdraw illegal notification of 2018 in the interests of Sikkim and its people." SNS has also expressed surprise over the awarding of scholarships for higher studies to the Trade License holders who don't possess Sikkim Subject Certificates, Certificate of Identification or Residential Certificate.

The Education Department should be aware that the Sikkim Subject/ Certificate of Identification or Residential Certificate are the prerequisites for getting trade license, thus the trade license issued beyond these certificates are all illegal in Sikkim. Therefore, awarding scholarships on the basis of such Trade licenses is illegal and will have far reaching implications if not stopped today, the release states.

The release also appeals to all "right thinking Sikkimese people to wake up and raise their voice against such illegal practices of the government to safeguard their constitutional rights as enshrined under Article 371F of the constitution of India, before we become alien in our own land.

## Prepaid Energy Meters in all municipal towns by yearend

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 NOV:

Power Minister MN Sherpa today held up Prepaid Energy Meters being introduced in the State as devices which would not only help save energy but would also help ensure 24x7 supply.

He remains convinced that prepaid energy meters will help address major problems related to power supply and metering and informed today that the Department has been working to install these meters in major towns in the first phase and will then reach out to rural parts of the State.

It has to be recalled that prepaid energy

meters were officially launched by Chief Minister PS Tamang with its installation at the CM's official residence, Mintokgang, on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference today, the Power Minister informed that these meters will first be installed in the residences of the Minister and officials of the Power Department and then cover other government departments before reaching consumers.

The decision to install these devices in the residences of Power Minister and officials was to rectify any technical hiccups before the meters were rolled out for consumers.

Prepaid energy me-



ters will lead to more responsible consumption which will address the problem of wastage and thereby facilitate better supply.

Minister said that state government was fully prepared to extend coverage to the entire State.

PCE-cum-Secretary, Power Department, Karun K Pradhan, in turn informed that installation of the prepaid en-

ergy meters was a "win-win" situation for the people to save energy, time and money.

Nodal Officer Sunil Rai pointed out that Sikkim has also joined the nation in installing prepaid energy meters under the Integrated Power Development Scheme of the government of India.

He mentioned that consumers with these meters can get full in-

formation about the current, daily, weekly and monthly power consumption and also get recharge details in the prepaid energy meters.

Responding to media queries, the Nodal Officer informed that the department was looking to cover all government offices and officials by end-Nov and to expand to the eight municipal towns by the end of December.

## 89.03% of Sikkim's adult population fully vaccinated against Covid

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 NOV:

Stal of 1,296 doses of Covishield on Tuesday, and with 1,186 of these being taken by people completing their vaccine schedule, 89.03% of the State's adult population is now fully vaccinated against Covid.

A total of 9,84,013 doses of the vaccine have been

administered in Sikkim thus far, of whom 5,23,709 people have received at least the first dose and 4,60,304 of them have received the second dose as well. In category-wise vaccination, 11,775 health workers [of whom 10,674 have received second dose as well], 17,504 frontline workers [14,972 of whom have received second dose also], 1,65,786 people

in 45+ age-group and 3,28,644 people in the 18-44 age segment have received vaccination so far in Sikkim. As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department, 12 new cases, all in East Sikkim, were reported in the State in the last 24 hours. These 12 cases were detected in the

testing of 477 samples to give Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 2.5%. While eight cases were picked up in RTP-PCR screening of 335 samples, four tested positive rapid antigen testing of 140 samples. The tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim has now reached 32,120.

Reassuringly, no lives were lost to the virus in the past 24 hours and the Covid

toll here continues to hold at 401.

With 18 recoveries reported in the past 24 hours, the number of active cases of Covid in the State has slid down slightly to 111.

Of these 111 active cases, only 18 are in need of hospitalisation and of these, three are in ICU. Of the 18 Covid patients in hospital, two are under 18 years of age.

**Announcement of National Painting Competition on Energy Conservation 2021**  
Participate and Paint your vision of an Energy-Efficient World

**Last Date For Registration: 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2021**

Groups		
GROUP A (5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Standard)	GROUP B (8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> Standard)	
<b>Topics for State Level*</b>		
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav • Energy Efficient India • Cleaner Planet		

**2 Level Painting Competition- State & National**

State/Union Territory Level Awards		
Awards	Group 'A'	Group 'B'
First Prize (01 No.)	₹ 50,000/-	₹ 50,000/-
Second Prize (01 No.)	₹ 30,000/-	₹ 30,000/-
Third Prize (01 No.)	₹ 20,000/-	₹ 20,000/-
Consolation (10 No.s)	₹ 7,500/-	₹ 7,500/-

National Level Awards		
Awards	Group A	Group B
First Prize (01 No.)	01 no. of ₹ 1,00,000/-	01 no. of ₹ 1,00,000/-
Second Prize (01 No.)	01 no. of ₹ 50,000/-	01 no. of ₹ 50,000/-
Third Prize (01 No.)	01 no. of ₹ 30,000/-	01 no. of ₹ 30,000/-
Consolation (10 No.s)	01 no. of ₹ 15,000/- each	01 no. of ₹ 15,000/- each

\* For Registration & Complete details please visit [www.bee-studentsaward.in](http://www.bee-studentsaward.in).

State Nodal Officer's address for  
**PRAVESH KUMAR**  
Deputy General Manager (HR)  
NHPC Limited, Teesta Power Station, Buxar, P.O. Singpur, East Sikkim-737134  
(M) 9877485797, 9113102247, E-Mail: [10posabhinav@gmail.com](mailto:10posabhinav@gmail.com)



## Tenth Sustainable Mountain Development Summit gets underway in Darj today

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 17 NOV:**

The Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS), the annual flagship event of the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI), is scheduled to get underway in Darjeeling on 18 Nov, Thursday. The summit, which will continue till 20 Nov, is being hosted this year by the Darjeeling-Kalimpong Chapter of IMI, The Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative.

The theme for this year's Summit is, "One Health Making our Mountains Resilient," a press release informs.

The wellbeing of mountain people is inextricably linked to biodiversity, and the Covid pandemic has established that outbreaks and spread of diseases are not just a health risk, but regress human civilization by disrupting social life, economy, education, livelihoods, and rob people of basic dignity and wellbeing, the release

highlights.

The pandemic, IMI argues further, has also highlighted the existing social inequities and further deepened them with mountain communities are particularly vulnerable to climate change, which impacts vulnerable populations dependent on natural resources and services like water, energy, food and associated livelihoods.

It is against this backdrop that the concept of One Health, something that binds together the health of humans, animals, and the environment, has gained greater relevance and the Summit is an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to recognize the interconnectedness of the components, interactions and relationships, both tangible and intangible, within landscapes for optimal health and environmental outcomes.

IMI is a civil society led network platform

with the mission to mainstream concerns of the Indian Himalayan Region and its people in the development dialogue of India.

Key objectives for SMDS, which begins its tenth edition on Thursday, are advocating for resilient and sustainable policies and programmes in the IHR in averting future impacts of climate change, disasters and pandemics; share knowledge and inform policy and decision makers about the interconnectedness of the selected themes and the importance of One Health approaches in all aspects of development in the IHR.

A highlight of the Sustainable Mountain Summits is the Mountain Legislators' Meet that brings together elected representatives of the IHR states to discuss relevant issues.

The inaugural session of the Summit will commence at 2pm on 18 November. Those interest-

ed in listening in to the event can join in online at this event platform

<https://events.hubilo.com/sustainable-mountain-development-summit-smds---x/login>

The keynote address for the inaugural day will be delivered by Dr Soumya Swaminathan (Chief Scientist, WHO, Geneva) with a special address by BV Umadevi (Addl Secy, MoEFCC).

The inaugural session will also include a panel discussion to set the context for the theme of this summit. Dr. VB Mathur (Chairperson National Biodiversity Authority), Ravi Singh (CEO and Secretary General, WWF-India), Dr Vandana Shiva (Founder, Navdanya, Uttrakhand), and Dr. Sandeep Chaudhuri (Asst Prof Veterinary College Nagpur, One Health Mission, Maharashtra) will be in conversation.

## Futsal Gold Cup Tournament underway at Yuksam

Football icons Sanju Pradhan and Nirmal Chettri also participate



**PRITAM LAMA**  
**GYALSHING, 17 NOV:**

The first Futsal Gold Cup tournament organised in Yuksam, West Sikkim, entered its fourth day today with State Ecclesiastical department Advisor, RS Lama, as the chief guest.

The tournament, with 45 teams from across the state, is organised by Friends Forever Sporting Club of Yuksam and supported by Yuksam SDM office, Yuksam BAC and other local NGOs.

RS Lama, in his address, highlighted various developmental initiatives of the State Government including those in the Sports sector. He talked about the Bhaichung stadium for promotion and development of sports in the state.

He appreciated this initiative by Yuksam Sporting Club adding that the initiative will surely boost sports in the state.

Sikkim has a dedicat-

ed and committed Chief Minister and people need to come together for the holistic development of the state, he stated.

Four matches were played today along with several cultural performances by school students and local cultural troupes.

Main highlight of the day was the match played between Yuksam FC and SAI Sports hostel-X, a team led by Sanju Pradhan and Nirmal Chettri.

The match was won by the Sports hostel-X team with 4-0.

The national footballers played in the match along with other popular footballers.

Cultural programmes, meni mela, musical nights are also part of the 12-day district-level tournament which will conclude on 25 Nov with the final match. The final days will also have performances by well-known singers and bands.

## Farmer-Scientist interaction at Lum

**Gangtok, 17 Nov (PIB):**

ICAR RC for NEH Region Sikkim Center, Tadong, in collaboration with Department of Horticulture, Government of Sikkim, jointly organized a Farmer's Scientist's Interaction at Lum Ward of Lower Dzongu under Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).

Scientists from ICAR Sikkim Center visited the site for conducting PRA for programme implementation. From ICAR Scientist (Agronomy), Dr Amit Kumar and Scientist (Agril Physics)/Nodal Officer (TSP), Dr Saurav Saha, participated in the endeavor. The village units are mostly dominated by Lepcha tribes.

The farmers scientists interaction was organized in the respective villages for sensitizing the benefits of zero-till vegetable pea cultivation, vermicomposting/aerobic composting techniques (by Dr Amit Kumar), winter vegetable cultivation and rain water harvesting (jalkund by Dr Saurav Saha) in order to make the farming business profitable.



High yielding vegetable seeds of cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprout, radish, vegetable pea, coriander, palak and Kale were distributed among the participants. Field demonstration was organized on zero-till vegetable pea sowing in rice/maize fallow field.

About 40 farmers attended the programme. From the line department side, Pemkipu Lepcha (Field Assistant, Horticulture Department, Govt of Sikkim) and Sherap Gyaltsen Penchungpa (Field Assistant, Hor-

ticulture Department, Govt of Sikkim) sensitized the farmers to grow more organic vegetables for ensuring net farming profitability over the region. They urged the farmers to grab the opportunity to improve their livelihood.

The representative village maps were prepared by the farmers in participatory mode along with a field survey for assessing the existing farmers' problem in the village. Phurmit Lepcha, Panchayat President (23 GPU Lum-Gor-Sangtok) appraised the ICAR Sik-

kim Centre and Department of Horticulture for providing necessary inputs as well as scientific knowledge during the programme. She further assured the full institutional support for successful implementation of TSP programme in near future.

Finally, Phur Tshering Lepcha (Field Assistant, Horticulture Department, Govt of Sikkim) delivered a formal vote of thanks and wished success for all the participant's future endeavour towards farming based economic prosperity at Lum Ward of Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim.

## Supreme Court relief for journalist, lawyers charged by Tripura Police

**NEW DELHI, 17 NOV**

**[PTI]:** No coercive action must be taken until further orders against journalist Shyam Meera Singh and two lawyers who had sought a Tripura Police case against them under the controversial anti-terror law UAPA be cancelled, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday.

The top court issued notice to the Tripura government on the petition challenging the First Information Report or FIR registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for reports and posts during violence in the state last month including a tweet by Mr Singh that said, "Tripura is burning".

"The state cannot file FIRs like these against journalists. Today its me, tomorrow it will be someone else. Process is the punishment in such

cases. I have not been able to sleep or eat properly. Our fight is against UAPA as a law. UAPA is being misused to trample upon facts," Mr Singh told NDTV.

In addition to Shyam Meera Singh, the plea was also filed by Supreme Court lawyers Ansar Indori (from the National Confederation of Human Rights Organisation) and Mukesh (from the Peoples' Union of Civil Liberties). Both lawyers visited Tripura as part of an independent fact-finding team.

"FIR was filed against me for the fact-finding report we made on Tripura violence. We have been traumatised because of this FIR. Supreme Court's decision is a relief for now but we want FIR to be quashed. Our fact-finding

report was purely factual about incidents of violence against minorities, there was nothing objectionable. We hope to get justice from the Supreme Court," Mukesh said.

The plea also had sought a court-monitored probe, a declaration that some parts of the UAPA are unconstitutional, and argues that states being allowed to use UAPA to criminalise fact-finding will lead to a "chilling effect" on freedom of speech, and "only facts convenient to the government will come out".

The fact-finding team, the plea further said, "did not question the sovereignty or territorial integrity of India" and that Mr Singh's "Tripura is burning" tweet was "factual reporting".

The FIR had accused Mr Singh and the others of spreading "fake news"

and "distorted or objectionable" content about what the state government has dismissed as allegations of mosques being vandalised and local Muslim communities being attacked after communal violence in neighbouring Bangladesh.

The journalist and those named in the complaint, who include lawyers and activists, face charges ranging from criminal conspiracy and forgery to spreading "fake news", and have been booked under the UAPA.

The vaguely worded law - the constitutional validity of which has been challenged in the top court - allows authorities to detain people, without charge, for six months.

Last month retired Supreme Court Justice RF Nariman called UAPA a "draconian act".

**SAGAR CHETTRI**  
**GANGTOK, 17 Nov:**

Former presidents of Students Representative Council of government colleges have expressed their gratitude to the State government and the Chief Minister, PS Tamang for fulfilling their long pending demands. They said that the state has been witnessing development in the education sector and its required infrastructures under the present government.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, former SRC president of Government Vocational College Dentam, Teknath Sharma thanked the CM for taking up infrastructure development in all government colleges in the State. He further thanked the government for providing buses for students of government colleges in the State.

He also thanked Lok Sabha MP, Additional Political Secretary to the CM



[East] and students' wing of the ruling party for working in the interest of students.

Former SRC president of Burtuk Government College, Sonam Tshering Lepcha alleged that the previous SDF government ignored SRC demands and issues faced by the government colleges and students. However, the present government has taken positive steps and has been addressing issues

one by one, he stated. He also thanked the present government for carrying out complete repairs of Burtuk college and other required infrastructures.

Likewise, former SRC president of Government Science College Chakung expressed gratitude to the state government for taking an innovative initiative to establish the Centre of Excellence in Chakung which would not only be a big asset for the state but for the en-

tire Eastern Region.

Former SRC president of Government College Mangshila, Anit Chettri expressed gratitude to the government for providing a bus to Mangshila college, which, he added, would be very beneficial for students of in and around rural pockets to reach the college on time. He further thanked the CM for fulfilling long pending demands of the college students of Sikkim.

## Ayurvedic health camp held at Chalamthang



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 17 Nov:**

Seva Bharati Sikkim and Kanchenjunga Seva Trust, Sikkim, organized an ayurvedic health camp jointly with Ministry of AYUSH, Sikkim division at Chalamthang under Chalamthang

Pacheykhani Gram Panchayat Unit in East District on the Tuesday.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's Akhil Bharatiya Sha Seva Pramukh, Rajkumar Matale was present as a special guest in the camp.

A press release mentions that the organisers distributed sanitizers, masks, sanitary pads and other health related materials to the people during the health camp. It adds that the people were provided

with medicines after checking their diabetes, blood pressure and haemoglobin level during the camp.

Rajkumar Matale spoke to the people on health, education, service and Ayurveda during the health camp.



## TNA alumni felicitate 3 Ex-Tenacians for their recent successes

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 17 NOV:**

Tashi Namgyal Academy Alumni Association [TNA] felicitated three ex-Tenacians today for their outstanding achievements. The association felicitated Karma Zimba, for being empaneled as Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; Tenzing Semkyi Ogen for cracking the UPSC examination and getting selected in the All India Service earlier this year; and Yogendra Sharma for taking charge as Secretary, Department of Information Technology, Govt. of Sikkim. The ex-Tenacians were feted with khadas and mementos at a special programme here.

Addressing the ceremony, TNA vice president,



Tashi Chopel, congratulated the guests for their achievements and commended the hard work which has brought them to such suc-

cess. He added that TNA and the state of Sikkim were proud of them.

The felicitated guests shared their experiences

and thanked TNA for hosting the programme. The programme concluded with vote of thanks by Treasurer, TNA.

## Day two of the Sikkim Build 2020-Expo

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 17 NOV:**

A four-day mega building and construction exhibition "Sikkim Build 2020-Expo" is being held in Gangtok from 16-19 Nov, 2021 with a view to showcase the latest and best in the construction business. The event was attended by Minister of Transport, Sanjeet Khar-el, today.

As per a press release, the exhibition being held at Old Sukhani house Complex, will be a

platform to bring about awareness on the latest in technology and in-fashion materials as well as designs and fittings used in the construction technology.

The expo will feature top players in the construction business from across India. Besides being a platform to showcase latest construction techniques, the personnel in the stalls will speak about the benefits of using modern and latest building materials

as well as engineering in construction of various properties.

The participants in the exhibition will be showcasing various and trendy products used in the construction business such as; tiles, bathroom fittings, interior and exterior decorations, furniture, tools, heavy and light equipment, pre-fabricated buildings, roofing as well as UPVC doors and windows, modular kitchens, electrical and electronics and

in the real estate industry as well.

The mega event of the year in the state is significant for end users as the companies from the construction business taking part in the expo will not only showcase their latest and in-trend products, but will also educate the end users about the benefits about the products.

This will be beneficial for engineers, contractor, architects, designers, project managers.

## Sanju Football Academy to host winter football coaching camp

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 17 NOV:**

Sanju Football Academy, Sombaria, in West District is gearing up to host a winter football coaching camp for boys and girls between 10 to 15 years from 24 Dec, 2021 to 16 Jan, 2022. The academy was founded by professional footballer from Sikkim, Sanju Pradhan in 2013 with the

support of like-minded youth to provide better and professional training to aspiring footballers mainly from Daramdin constituency. The management of Sanju FA plans to start a hostel next year by selecting promising footballers from this winter camp.

A press release mentions that the main objective of the upcoming

winter football coaching camp is to provide basic knowledge of football to young aspiring footballers. Sanju FA founder, Sanju Pradhan would personally share his experience of international and professional football with the youth participants in the camp. He is an All India Football Federation D Licensed coach. Sanju Pradhan

thanked the management of Sombaria SSS for providing a playground to conduct the camp. Food and accommodation would be provided to players in the camp. He urged aspiring and young footballers and their parents to take full advantage of this opportunity to get basic and technical training of football by enrolling for the camp.

## Seminar on role of Hindi in India's freedom movement at SU

**GANGTOK, 17 NOV (PIB):**

The department of Hindi, Sikkim University, organized a one-day National seminar on 'Swatantrata Andolan mein Hindi ki Bhumika' as part of the Azadika Amrit Mahotsav programme on 15 Nov.

Head of Department of Hindi, Dr Hardeep Singh welcomed the guests. Vice-Chancellor, Prof Avinash Khare inaugurated the virtual programme. In his address Prof Khare cited many instances to establish the fact that Hindi was used a common language to unite a multi-lingual country.

The chief-guest for the

programme, Vice-Chancellor, Prof Damodar Mishra, Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Howrah also cited examples from History to prove that Hindi language did

play a pivotal role in the freedom struggle. Director, Prof Sudha Jitendra, UGC HRDC, Vice-Chancellor, Prof RS Suraj, Hyderabad University also delivered

lectures at the Seminar.

The virtual programme was attended by the faculty members from different universities of the country.

## More than one lakh people fully vaccinated in South Sikkim thus far

**NAMCHI, 17 Nov [IPR]:**

A District Task Force Immunization Meeting was held at DAC which was attended by DC (South), M. Bharani Kumar, CMO (South), Dr. D. C. Sharma other officials, staff from health department and representatives from Dristi N.G.O.

Addressing the meeting, DRCHO (South), Dr. Junita Yonzon summarized the status of COVID 19 vaccination in detail under south district and informed that a total of 1,21,658 people have received the first dose and 1,06,973 have received the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine so far.

Additionally, she said that vaccination of pregnant women is also going on and currently 40% pregnant women have been vaccinated. Apart from vaccination counseling of non vaccinated pregnant women is also being undertaken. The officials have also collected data of individuals in the age group of 12-18 years for next phase of



covid vaccination.

Moreover, National Immunization Day for polio has been declared and will be observed on 23rd January 2022. Bivalent Oral Polio drop will be administered to Children between 0- 5 years.

Speaking about District Quality Assurance Committee Dr. Junita Yonzon gave an overview about District Quality Assurance Committee. She updated that Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India is committed to support and facilitate the Quality Assurance Programme, which meets needs of Public Health

System and is sustainable. Main focus of the Quality Assurance Programme is to enhance satisfaction level among users of the Government Health Facilities and reposing trust in the Public Health System.

The Organizational structure under the said programme is as National Level Central Quality Supervisory Committee (CQSC) followed by the State Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC). Likewise, at district level, there is District Quality Assurance Committee (DQAC) that is responsible for undertaking various activities that is responsible

for undertaking various activities.

Dr. Junita further informed about DQAC programmes in South District and at District Hospital Namchi namely that of Kayakalp, Mera Aspatal. It was also informed that basine assessment of DQAC of District Hospital Namchi will be conducted within first week of December.

The meeting also saw brief discussion other various topics such as District Advisory Committee under PC-PNDT Act, New Born Week, Vasectomy Fortnight and of other topics concerning the health department.



**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
DIRECTORATE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION  
TASHILING, GANGTOK**

**No. GOS/DTE/2021/1681**

**Date :15/11/2021**

### NOTICE

This is for information to all the students who have registered themselves for State quota seats or submitted offline applications in the Directorate of Technical Education for allotment of quota seat for the current academic year 2021. Now, it is hereby notified that the spot round counselling and allotment for vacant/surrendered/unutilised State quota seat is being conducted in the following date schedule. **The spot round counselling will be done on face to face mode and the physical presence of the candidate in the specified date and venue is mandatory.**

The allotment of seats will be done on the basis of the merit of the marks and the community wise vacancy. The preference would be given to the online registered candidates who were not able to secure seats during online allotment and thereafter offline candidates would be considered.

**(i) B.Tech/ Lateral Entry B.Tech**

**(ii) For BSc. Med. Biotech/ BMLT/BSc. Optometry**

For courses (i) and (ii) above the date and time proposed :19/11/2021 time 10: 00 a.m.  
Venue: Examination hall, Deorali Girls Sr. Sec. School, Gangtok.

**(iii) BBA LLB (Intg), BA LLB (Intg), LLB**

**(iv) MBA/MCA/MSc (PCM)/ MSc. (Botany/Zoology)/ MHA/ M.Tech/ MCom/ MA/MPH**

**(v) Diploma in Paramedical**

For courses (iii), (iv) and (v) above the date and time proposed : 22/11/2021 time 10: 00 a.m.  
Venue : Examination hall, Deorali Girls Sr. Sec. School, Gangtok.

**(vi) For BA/B.Com/BSc./BBA/BCA/Hospitality & Hotel Management/ BTTM/BHTM**  
**(vii) For MSc. Biotechnology, MSc. IT, Masters in Travel and Tourism, Masters in Hospitality and Tourism Management**

For courses (vi) and (vii) above the date and time proposed :23/11/2021 time 10: 00 a.m.  
Venue : Examination hall, Deorali Girls Sr. Sec. School, Gangtok.

**(viii) Medical Allied (Forestry/Horticulture/Agriculture/BSc. Fisheries/BSc. Community Science), B.Tech Agriculture/ B.Tech Food Technology**

For courses (viii) above the date and time proposed : 24/11/2021 time 10: 00 a.m. Venue : Examination hall, Deorali Girls Sr. Sec. School, Gangtok.

**Documents required :** All candidates are advised to bring the following documents for verification :-

1. Sikkim Subject Certificate or COI of father or of candidate.
2. Valid Community Certificate in the name of candidate.
3. Residential Certificate or Trade License in the name of father or Parent's employment certificate in case of applicants falling under the Others category.
4. Recent BPL certificate (issued by DESME), if any.
5. Date of Birth Certificate.
6. Class XII marksheet/ Degree certificate (whichever applicable).

**Online registration or offline application does not confer the applicant a right to quota seat. The allotment of seats will be purely on merit of the marks obtained in the qualifying examination vis a vis reservation and roster policy of the State Government.**

All candidates who have submitted their offline application for the above indicated courses are advised to be present in the spot round counselling. No separate counselling or allotment will be conducted hereafter.

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**No. GOS/DTE/2021/ 1683**

**Date : 17/11/2021**

### NOTICE

It is notified that the registered applicants for BSc. Nursing and B.Pharm State quota seats are required to fill-in their choices in State web portal [www.statequota.sikkim.gov.in](http://www.statequota.sikkim.gov.in) in view of the receipt of additional BSc. Nursing and B.Pharm seats from RIMS, Manipur and RIPANS, Aizawl. The date schedule for choice filling against the seats are indicated below :-

**(i) BSc. Nursing, RIMS, Manipur/BSc. Nursing, RIPANS Aizawl**

- (a) Choice filling opens : 19<sup>th</sup> November from 10:00 a.m.
- (b) Choice locking closes : 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 at 4:30 p.m.

**(ii) B.Pharm, RIPANS, Aizawl**

- (a) Choice filling opens : 19<sup>th</sup> November from 10:00 a.m.
- (b) Choice locking closes : 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 at 4:30 p.m.

Please note that applicants who have not paid online registration fees of Rs. 150/- earlier are advised to pay the registration fees first and proceed for choice filling.

No extension of dates for choice filling/choice locking is permissible.

Online registration/choice filling does not confer applicant a right to quota seat. The allotment of seats will be purely on merit of the marks obtained in the qualifying examination vis a vis reservation and roster policy of the State Government.

Candidates are advised to regularly log on to Education Department web portal [www.sikkimhrdd.org](http://www.sikkimhrdd.org) where all information will be uploaded from time to time.

**Joint Secretary  
Technical Education  
Education Department  
Government of Sikkim**



## Finnish First

### Let's learn some things from Finland

Finland is today (as ranked by independent agencies on a range of international indices), the most stable, the safest and the best governed country in the world. With a population of 55 lakh, it is also ranked the third wealthiest, the third least corrupt, the second most socially progressive and the third most socially just. Its judicial system is recognized as the most independent and the highest levels of personal freedom is lavished on its citizens, and hence it should come as no surprise then that in these times of shrinking trust and ugly profiteering, Finland's police is the most trusted, its banks the most stable and companies the second most ethical. Sitting as it does, among a clutch of Scandinavian countries which ace these rankings, this is a major achievement for Finland because geography has been harsh to the land and history rather vicious to its people. The last ever famine in Europe was 150 years ago, and in Finland, then a backwater under the Russian empire, the famine wiped out 10% of the population. This must have been a staggering setback and the country has been independent only for a century or so, meaning, it could begin pulling itself out of its privations only a hundred years back, a time by when its neighbours had leaped ahead while Finland's human resource was at its lowest. And yet, the country has done so handsomely well for itself and its people.

Most people, Sikkim included, look at Finland and see its primary school education system and want to learn from it, which is good, but rather incomplete. When one looks at Finland, its experience and its indices, one realizes that excellence does not come in isolation or piecemeal. Once the right environment has been created to install the best primary education systems in place, it is not just schools that are touched but everything else benefits as well – from the environment to social justice to democracy. Yes, that last one as well. Finland, did we mention, is the third most gender-equal country in the world and has the second freest elections.

Researchers and other societies have been trying to get a handle on what makes Finland so excellent. Even accepting that the Finnish experience cannot be replicated, understanding it will at least tag the societal instincts necessary to deliver so well. One does realize that these things are not packaged and delivered top-down and are instead manifestations of how the larger community behaves and responds to situations. Tarja Halonen, Finland's president from 2000 to 2012, was quoted in a recent report as saying, "We live in a cold, harsh and remote place. Every person has to work hard for themselves. But that is not always enough. You have to help your neighbours." He was responding to a query on what contributed to the Finnish Miracle. But it is not just instinctive cooperation, but also perseverance and complete commitment to common pursuits. Their geography and challenges are not kind to fickleness and the Finns clearly know this well. They also have a name for the "dogged, courageous persistence regardless of consequence" that defines them – "sisu". A historic manifestation of "sisu" was in 1939-40, when 3.50 lakh Finnish soldiers twice fought off Soviet forces three times their number, and inflicted losses five times heavier than those they sustained. And this attitude has served them well in peaceful times as well. Their survival has traditionally depended on working together, collaborating, but interestingly, not by subsuming individuality, but by allowing equal expression and representation. The Finns have leveraged the absence of traditional hierarchies (within themselves) to ensure that while collaborations and community participation was quick and genuine, ideas can be freely shared and individuality safely expressed without running the risk of being judged or scoffed. This attitude celebrates excellence and allows ideas to germinate and merit an expected outcome. In such environments, while mediocrity is tolerated, it is not celebrated as is common in more feudal settings of even democratic societies; people believe in each other and are not second-guessing every gesture and don't allow their prejudices to rule their judgment. Such a people look ahead and not stare into the past. That is a nice place to be. And it is not as if everyone is happy and smiling all the time in Finland. Their free society means that free expression is genuinely on offer and criticism, even ridicule, is frequent and harsh. But there is also trust and faith.

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## Birmingham plans to become a supersized low-traffic neighbourhood – will it work?

JOANNE LEACH  
THECONVERSATION.COM

Birmingham was redesigned in the 1960s to make travelling by car as easy as possible. But the UK's second city has been falling out of love with cars ever since. The council's latest plan (Birmingham Transport Plan 2031) makes it clear: the days of private cars are numbered.

To reduce carbon emissions and the negative effect cars have on people, the council plans to reallocate road space to public transport, extending the metro, improving bus services and expanding the cycle-lane network.

To prioritise walking and cycling and the use of public transport, it will build a ring road around the city centre within which private vehicles cannot travel. The council will also impose a 20mph limit on all local roads and car-free zones around schools.

Lastly, it will reduce the number of parking spaces and increase fees for those that remain (including fining companies for providing parking for employees). But can this plan really work?

REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

For the city to reduce its carbon emissions, the proposed ring road is crucial, but, when it comes to ring roads, what works in one city won't necessarily work in another. However, research has shown that

ring roads can reduce traffic when supported by the promotion of environmentally friendly transport alternatives as well as changes to the layout of the city so where people live, work and play are within easy reach of each other. Without these add-ons, traffic is doomed to increase.

Crucial to Birmingham's success, then, is a prolonged commitment from the council to support public transport and land-use changes. This is because the reason we travel is to get to and from places, so where those places are located, and the options we have for getting to them, matter. The risk is that such commitment is costly and easily falls victim to funding cuts and changes in the political wind.

Birmingham's previous ring road, built between 1960 and 1971 and later dubbed the concrete collar, was a social and economic disaster. It destroyed heritage buildings and isolated the city centre from the surrounding communities, it made walking and cycling unsafe and it limited the growth of the city centre.

In the end, it was removed – mostly. The tunnel sections remain, as do some of the raised sections, now at ground level. The process took decades and cost millions of pounds. It was a high price to pay for poor design.

IMPROVING LIVES

Birmingham wants its city centre to become a super-sized low-traffic neighbourhood. This means no access for private vehicles and no more rat runs.

The evidence from existing low-traffic neighbourhood schemes suggests that traffic won't necessarily be displaced, causing problems in surrounding streets. The picture as to why isn't completely clear, but it could be that in some cases displaced traffic is finding different routes through the city.

Public opinion is deeply divided over the efficacy of low-traffic neighbourhoods. This is not surprising given that what constitutes a low-traffic neighbourhood varies from existing roads blocked by large potted plants to purpose-built neighbourhoods. Some designs will inevitably be more effective than others.

The problem here is that Birmingham is attempting to apply the concept not to a residential neighbourhood community but a city centre.

Neighbourhood-scale living is, of course, possible in cities. Local centres, those that already exist and new ones that develop, form a network of so-called urban villages within which both daily and essen-

tial services must be provided. In Birmingham, however, such services – the bus network, in particular – currently decrease with distance from the city centre.

Other cities have opted for the 15-minute city model, which promotes meeting people's needs within a quarter-hour walk or cycle from where they live. The problem with this is that when time, and by extension speed, is prioritised it compromises equitable access as the distance people can traverse in any given period of time isn't the same.

Birmingham Transport Plan 2031 moves Birmingham towards what urbanists call the polycentric city – that is, a city with many "centres". Such cities require transport solutions that focus on local trips within the context of the wider city. Compared to the traditional monocentric city – that has only one centre into and out of which traffic flows – polycentric cities should mean shorter journeys.

The plan's success will depend on the city council taking a truly holistic approach to the city and supporting fair access to services. This requires a shift in focus away from the city centre and towards local centres – something the city doesn't look entirely ready to do.

*[the writer is Research Fellow, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Birmingham]*

## Trauma and transformation – a psychologist on why difficult experiences can radically change us

STEVE TAYLOR  
THECONVERSATION.COM

It's human instinct to avoid suffering and try to make life as comfortable and easy as possible. But paradoxically, a great deal of research has shown that suffering and trauma can have positive long-term effects.

Many people who go through intense trauma, for example, become deeper and stronger than they were before. They may even undergo a sudden and radical transformation that makes life more meaningful and fulfilling.

Indeed, research shows that between half and one-third of all people experience significant personal development after traumatic events, such as bereavement, serious illness, accidents or divorce. Over time, they may feel a new sense of inner strength and confidence and gratitude for life and other people.

They may develop more intimate and authentic relationships and have a wider perspective, with a clear sense of what is important in life and what isn't. In psychology, this is referred to as "post-traumatic growth".

Over the past 15 years as a psychologist, I've been researching an especially dramatic form of post-traumatic growth that I call "transformation through turmoil". It sometimes happens to soldiers on a battlefield, to the inmates of prison camps who are on the verge of starvation, or to people who have been through periods of severe addiction, depression, bereavement or illness.

People report feeling as if they have taken on a new identity. They shift into a much more intense and expansive awareness, with a powerful sense of wellbeing. The world around them seems more real and beautiful. They feel more connected to other people, and to nature.

'WAKING UP'

In my new book *Extraordinary Awakenings*, I share some of these cases and explore what we can learn from these transformations and how we can apply this to our own personal development.

Take, for example, the story of Adrian, who underwent transformation while in prison in Africa. He was locked up in a tiny cell 23 hours a

day, with no idea of when he might be released. During the endless hours of incarceration, he began to reflect on his life and to let go of the past and any sense of failure or disappointment.

In the cell, he had a small statuette of the Buddha, which he had picked up on his travels around Asia. In a kind of spontaneous meditation practice, he began to focus his attention on the statuette for long periods. Over the next few weeks, Adrian began to feel more at peace, until he experienced a sudden shift:

"It was like the flick of a switch ... It was a complete feeling of release and acceptance, of everything and anything that was going to happen. It was a release of blame, of anxiety, of anger and ego. For three days I was in a state of what can best be described as grace. After that, the feeling eased, but it remained inside me."

A woman called Eve had a similar experience. After 29 years of addiction, she felt physically and emotionally broken and attempted suicide. She survived, but this encounter with death brought about a shift and her urge to drink was gone. Eve felt so different that, as she told me: "I looked at myself in the mirror, and I had no idea who I was".

Despite initially being a little confused by her transformation, Eve felt liberated and had a heightened awareness and an increased sense of gratitude and connection. She has never felt the

urge to drink again and has now been sober for ten years.

THE BREAKDOWN OF IDENTITY

It's important to note that there is nothing religious about transformation through turmoil. Essentially, it's a psychological experience, related to a breakdown of identity.

In my view, it's caused by the dissolution of psychological attachments, such as hopes, dreams and ambitions, status, social roles, beliefs and possessions. These attachments sustain our normal sense of identity. So when they dissolve away, our identity collapses. This is usually a painful experience, but in some people, it seems to allow a new identity to emerge.

And my research indicates that such deep-rooted and consequential changes, usually remain indefinitely. This is one reason why I don't believe that the phenomenon can be explained away as self-delusion or dissociation – a mental process of disconnecting from one's thoughts, feelings, memories or sense of identity.

Transformation through turmoil also reveals the massive potential and deep resilience within human beings – that we are usually unaware of until we face challenges and crises. So in essence, in the process of breaking us down, turmoil and trauma may also wake us up.

*[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Leeds Beckett University]*





# Arunachal Pradesh logs 8 new COVID-19 cases

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17 (PTI):** Eight more persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh pushing the virus tally to 55,230, a senior health department official said here on Wednesday. The coronavirus death toll in the state remained unchanged at 280 as no fresh fatality was

registered in the last 24 hours, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said. The northeastern state now has 50 active COVID-19 cases, while 54,900 people have recovered from the disease so far, including three on Tuesday.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state now is 99.40 per cent.

West Kameng district has the highest number of active cases at 11, followed by Tawang (9), the Capital Complex region (7) and East Siang (6).

The state has thus far test-

ed 11,94,467 samples for COVID-19, including 794 on Tuesday, the SSO said, adding that the positivity rate stood at one per cent.

State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Padung said that over 13 lakh people have been inoculated so far.

## Former Odisha MLA Umesh Chandra Swain dies at 74

**BHUBANESWAR, Nov 17 (PTI):** Former Odisha MLA Umesh Chandra Swain died of cardiac arrest at his residence here on Wednesday, family sources said. He was 74.

The last rites of the

four-time legislator will be performed at his native Machhagaon village in Jagatsinghpur district, they said.

He was elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly from Balikuda constituency four times

in 1977 as a Janata Party candidate, in 1990 as a Janata Dal nominee, and in 2000 and 2004 on a Congress ticket.

A close aide of former chief minister Biju Patnaik, Swain was a household name in the area

due to his relief and restoration activities after floods and cyclones.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik condoled the demise of Swain.

“I am saddened to learn of the death of Umesh Chandra Swain, a former

MLA from Balikuda constituency. As a people's representative, he will always be remembered for his selfless service and public welfare work. I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family,” Patnaik tweeted in Odia.

## Jammu to impose Covid night curfew from Wednesday

**JAMMU, Nov 17 (PTI):** A night curfew will be imposed in Jammu winter capital city from Wednesday as COVID-19 positivity rate is on the rise in the region, a top district official said here.

Violation of the restrictions will invite strict action, District Magistrate Anshul Garg warned on Tuesday.

“In view of increasing positivity rate in Jammu,



DDMA imposes a tweet. He advised people living in the city to follow COVID-19 SOP and get fully vaccinated,” Garg said in

a tweet.

He advised people living in the city to follow COVID-19 SOP and get fully vaccinated.

All station house officers and tehsildars shall ensure that announcements are made on public address

systems to make people aware of the new development, an order issued by the district magistrate stated.

The DM said the district disaster management authority (DDMA) held a detailed review of the Covid situation in the city and decided that immediate measures are required as the positivity rate has increased by 0.2 per cent recently.

## 5 women held with 48 kg of marijuana: Agra GRP

**AGRA, Nov 17 (PTI):** Five women have been arrested at the Agra Cantt Railway Station after being found in possession of 48 kg of marijuana with a market value of over Rs 4 lakh, a Government Railway Police (GRP) official said on Wednesday.

The five women were nabbed by a team of GRP and Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel when they were spotted in the station premises in suspicious condition, waiting for someone, GRP police station in-charge Devendra Dwive-

di said.

Dwivedi identified the women as Nazma Khatun from Delhi and Rajanti Nayak, Sunamani, Mainakhora and Subhadhra, all from Odisha.

On interrogation, they told police that

they were waiting in the station premises for someone to call them up to take the delivery of the contraband from them but they all were arrested before getting the call, Dwivedi said.

“The women also revealed that they were

promised Rs 7,000 each after delivery of the marijuana parcels to the unknown contact at the Agra Cantt station, he added.

Dwivedi said further investigation is on and police are trying to reach their handlers.

## Mizoram reports 495 new COVID-19 cases, 4 fatalities

**AIZAWL, Nov 17 (PTI):** Mizoram on Wednesday reported 495 new COVID-19 cases, 152 less than the previous day, pushing the tally to 1,29,845, a health department official said.

The single-day positivity rate further dipped to 8.87 per cent from 11.30 per cent the previous day, he said.

The new cases were reported from across all 11 districts with Aizawl registering the highest at 174, followed by Lunglei (67) and Champhai (56), he said, adding that 133 children were among the newly infected people.

The COVID-19 death toll rose to 467 as four more people have succumbed to the infection



in the last 24 hours, he said.

The northeastern state now has 5,390 active COVID-19 patients, which is 4.15 per cent of the total cases.

A total of 1,23,988

people have recovered from the infection so far and the COVID-19 recovery rate now is 95.48 per cent.

According to data released by the state information and public

relations department on Wednesday, Aizawl district has so far reported the highest number of COVID-19 cases at 79,455, followed by Lunglei (10,995) and Kolasib (8,020).

Of the total 467 deaths, Aizawl district reported the highest at 325, followed by Kolasib and Lunglei, which reported 30 and 29 respectively, it said.

With 540 cases so far, Saitual district reported the least COVID-19 case, while Khawzawl district has not reported any COVID-19 death so far, the data said.

The state has so far tested more than 13.83 lakh samples for COVID-19 including 5,174 samples on Tuesday.

State Immunisation Officer Dr Lalzawmi said that over 7 lakh people have been inoculated with COVID-19 vaccine so far.

## Pondy reports 25 new COVID-19 cases



**PUDUCHERRY, Nov 17 (PTI):** Puducherry registered 25 fresh cases of coronavirus during last 24 hours, raising the overall caseload to 1,28,520.

The new cases identified at the end of examination of 2,425 samples were spread over Puducherry 15, Karaikal 7, Yanam one and Mahe two.

One more person succumbed to the infection in Puducherry taking the

toll to 1,867,

Director of Health Department, G Sriramulu said the active cases were 317 and they comprised 92 patients in hospitals and the remaining 225 in home isolation.

The department of Health has tested so far 19.55 lakh samples and it was found that 16.54 lakh out of them were negative.

Twenty-seven patients recovered and

were discharged during last twenty-four hours and the overall recoveries were 1,26,336.

The test positivity rate was 1.03 percent while the fatality and recovery rates were 1.45 percent and 98.30 percent, respectively.

The Department has administered so far 11,65,059 doses which comprised 7,34,895 first doses and remaining 4,30,164 were second doses.

## Police say Liverpool attacker bought bomb parts for 6 months



**LONDON (AP):** The suspect who was killed in a Liverpool taxi explosion spent at least six months buying components for a bomb and appears to have acted alone, British police said Wednesday.

Emad Al Swealmeen, 32, died when a blast ripped through the cab in which he was a passenger as it pulled up outside Liverpool Women's Hospital on Sunday morning. The taxi driver was injured.

Russ Jackson, the head of counterterrorism policing for northwest England, said Al Swealmeen had rented a property in the city in April and been making “relevant purchases” for a device at least since then.

Jackson said investigators so far had not

found any other people “of concern.”

Detectives are also piecing together details of Al Swealmeen's life and say a relative told them he was born in Iraq. He applied for asylum in Britain in 2014, but was rejected, authorities said. It's unclear what his legal status was at the time of the bombing.

Police have also confirmed that Al Swealmeen was treated in the past for mental illness.

Clergy at two Liverpool churches said Al Swealmeen had converted from Islam to Christianity and appeared to be sincere in his faith.

Joy Gambardella, a lay reader at the city's Emmanuel Church, said Al Swealmeen had been a “committed Christian.”

“He used to love baking and he did a baking course. He also did pizza-making,” Gambardella said. “He used to make cakes for the church and sell them.

“I would never, ever expect he could have done something like that, ever.”

Investigators are still trying to determine the motive for the attack, and whether the Liverpool Women's Hospital was the intended target.

The taxi driver, David Perry, escaped from the vehicle before it was engulfed in flames. He was treated in a hospital and released.

Britain's official threat level was raised from substantial to severe — meaning an attack is highly likely — following the blast.

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**GENEVA (AP):** Switzerland's executive body announced Wednesday that same-sex couples can get married starting on July 1 next year, making good on the resounding support Swiss voters expressed in a referendum.

The Federal Council officially said that starting Jan. 1, Switzerland would recognize the marriages of same-sex couples who wed in other countries instead of continuing to treat the unions as simple civil partnerships.

In setting a date for the “Marriage for All” law approved by voters



in September to take effect, the council said that civil partnerships would no longer be possible in Switzerland as of July 1.

Couples already in civil partnerships, which the country authorized in 2007, will be allowed to maintain them without

having to get married.

Switzerland is one of the few remaining countries in Western Europe where gay and lesbian

couples do not already have the right to wed.

The referendum approved by an overwhelming majority on Sept. 26 will put same-sex partners in the rich Alpine nation on equal legal footing with heterosexual couples, including by allowing them to adopt children together and to sponsor a spouse for citizenship.

Supporters of the referendum had acknowledged it would be months before same-sex marriages could begin, mostly for administrative and legislative procedures.



## Ganguly replaces Kumble as ICC Cricket's Committee chairman

**DUBAI, Nov 17 (PTI):** BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has been appointed as the Chairman of the ICC men's Cricket Committee, the game's governing body said on Wednesday.

Ganguly will replace fellow Indian Anil Kumble, who stepped down after serving a maximum of three, three-year terms.

"I am delighted to welcome Sourav to the position of Chair of the ICC Men's Cricket Committee," ICC Chair Greg Barclay said in a release.

"His experience as one of the world's best players and latterly as an administrator will help us shape our cricketing decisions moving forward."

"I would also like to thank Anil for his outstanding leadership over the last nine years which has included improving the international game through more regular and consistent application of DRS and a robust process for addressing suspect bowling actions."

The Board also approved that first-class status and list A classification will be applied to women's cricket to align with the men's game and applied retrospectively.

Going forward the ICC Women's Committee will be known as the ICC Women's Cricket Committee and will assume all decision making responsibility for women's cricket reporting directly to the CEC.

Johnny Grave, CEO of Cricket West Indies has been appointed to the ICC Women's Cricket Committee.

*Hungary's COVID-19 deaths, cases hit new highs amid surge*

**BUDAPEST, HUNGARY (AP):** Hungary's number of daily COVID-19 deaths and new officially recorded cases on Wednesday climbed to highs not seen since a devastating pandemic surge last spring.

Government figures showed 178 daily deaths and 10,265 new cases in the country of fewer than 10 million. The latter figure approached record pandemic highs set in March, while daily deaths were the highest since May 1.

The numbers reflected a worsening pandemic situation in the Central European country, which in spring had the highest COVID-19 death rate per capita in the world.

An early leader in inoculations, Hungary has struggled to overcome vaccine hesitancy in recent months. Around 40% of its total population has still not received a jab. It lags nearly 9 percentage points behind the average vaccination rate in the rest of the 27-country European Union.

State-run hospitals have set aside 20% of the country's beds for patients with severe cases of COVID-19, in accordance with a decree from Hungary's Ministry of Human Resources which went into effect on Monday.

# Players to battle out in Mushtaq Ali quarters in 'hazardous' Delhi

**NEW DELHI, Nov 17 (PTI):** Eighty-eight premier domestic cricketers will battle out in hazardous Delhi air when the four quarterfinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali tournament kicks off at the national capital here on Thursday.

A toxic haze has enveloped Delhi ever since Diwali with authorities in the NCR region making desperate efforts to contain the spiralling air pollution levels.

Despite the toxic air, the pre-quarter finals of the coveted domestic T20 championship were held at the Arun Jaitley stadium and the Airforce ground in Palam without any fuss.

The quarterfinals are also scheduled in Delhi with the two venues hosting two games each, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

On cricketing front, an unbeaten and fancied Rajasthan will face its toughest opponent when they take on Vidarbha.

For Vidarbha, opener Atharva Taide and skipper Akshay Wadkar are among runs and the duo would like to take on a strong Rajasthan attack, comprising the likes of pacer Tanveer-ul-Haq and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi.

The role of middle-order batters Shubham Dubey and Jitesh Sharma, who played a cameo against Maharashtra, would be vital, if the side has to chase or set up a big total.

In the bowling department, left-arm or-



thodox bowler Akshay Karnewar and seasoned off-spinner Akshay Wakhare, would be key to their success and their eight overs could decide the match's fate.

Young right-arm pacer Yash Thakur's confidence would be bolstered by his three-wicket haul in the pre-quarters, but he would need support from Darshan Nalkande.

For Rajasthan, Deepak Hooda, who shifted from Baroda, has been their batting mainstay and has delivered on every occasion.

But he would need assistance from skipper Ashok Maneria, Mahipal Lomror and others. Their bowlers will also need to bowl in right areas to stop marauding Vidarbha batters.

In another clash, de-

fending champion Tamil Nadu face Kerala in a 'southern derby'.

The Vijay Shankar-led TN team, the Group A topper, appeared in good form save for a shock defeat to Goa, and will need to be at its best against Sanju Samson's team.

Though they will be without the services of B Aparajith, who has been picked for the India A squad, the TN batting has a lot of firepower.

Openers N Jagadeesan and Hari Nishaanth have looked in good touch, so has newcomer Sai Sudarshan and their contribution along with Shankar's will be vital.

Spinner R Sai Kishore has been his usual thrifty self, while leg-spinner M Ashwin has picked up wickets and the duo will be key if TN hopes to restrict

Kerala, which boasts of aggressive batters like Sanju Samson and Mohammed Azharuddeen.

Another exciting clash will be on the cards when Karnataka take on Bengal.

Karnataka would be keen to seek revenge against Bengal after losing their last Elite B group game to them in Guwahati.

Karnataka made the quarters after beating Saurashtra in the pre-quarters, while Bengal directly qualified.

Experienced campaigners, Manish Pandey and Karun Nair, who faltered in the pre-quarters, would hope to fire on all cylinders. Equally important would be the role of opener Rohan Kadam and middle-order batters Anirudha Joshi and Abhinav Manohar, who steered

the team to win in the pre-quarters.

Karnataka spinners J Suchith and leg-spinner KC Cariappa will have to bowl in tandem to stop the in-form Bengal line up, which will be bolstered by the inclusion of Shreevats Goswami.

In absence of seasoned pro Abhimanyu Easwaran, other Bengal batters need to come good.

In the last quarter-final, favorites Gujarat would have an edge over Hyderabad, but the southern side can spring a surprise.

**Matches:**

Rajasthan vs Vidarbha, AirForce ground Palam: 8.30 AM Tamil Nadu vs Kerala: Arun Jaitley stadium: 8.30 AM Bengal vs Karnataka: Arun Jaitley stadium: 1 PM Gujarat vs Hyderabad: AirForce ground, Palam: 1 PM.

## Gavaskar says Dravid will handle coaching like his safe and strong batting



**NEW DELHI, Nov 17 (PTI):** Batting great Sunil Gavaskar feels Rahul Dravid will handle his new responsibility as head coach of the Indian team in the same "safe and strong" manner as he went about his batting while playing for the country.

Dravid, one of the greatest cricketers to have played for India, was appointed as the chief coach of the Indian team following the end of Ravi Shastri's tenure, earlier this month.

"When he used to play, we used to think that till Rahul Dravid is at the crease, the Indian batting is safe and strong," Gavaskar said on the Star Sports show 'Follow the Blue.'

"This is the reason why I believe that the new responsibility of

head coach that falls upon him, he will be able to handle it in a similar way.

Highlighting the similarities between, Rohit Sharma, who took over as T20 skipper from Virat Kohli, and Dravid, Gavaskar said the two men will work well together easily.

"If you look at both of their temperaments, they are quite similar. Rohit is of a quiet nature just like Rahul Dravid."

"So I think their bond will be quite good because both of them will understand each other well," Gavaskar said.

The three-match T20 series against New Zealand, starting Wednesday in Jaipur, is the first assignment for Dravid and Sharma.

Virat Kohli has been rested for the series.

## Jamieson opts out of India T20 series to focus on Tests



**JAIPUR, Nov 17 (PTI):** New Zealand pacer Kyle Jamieson has decided to skip the three T20 Internationals against India to focus on the upcoming Test rubber, the first series of the new World Test championship cycle.

Jamieson will thus join his skipper Kane Williamson, who has also decided to miss the T20Is to prepare for the two-match Test series, starting on November 25.

"We decided through talking with Kane and Kyle that they won't play in this T20 series," coach Gary Stead was quoted as saying by stuff.co.nz.

"They're both going to get ready for the Test matches and I think you'll find there will be other guys involved in the Test matches that won't play

the entire series either.

"It's a bit of a balancing act at the moment and with three T20 games in five days plus travel to three different cities it's a very, very busy time."

New Zealand, who had lost the T20 World Cup final on Sunday, hardly got any time to regroup as it faces India in the opening T20I here on Wednesday.

It will be followed by the second and third T20Is on November 19 and November 21, before they kick off their World Test Championship defence with two games in Kanpur and Mumbai. The Black Caps had defeated India by eight wickets in the final of the inaugural edition of the World Test Championship in Southampton, England in July this year.

# IOC gives sports new advice on transgender athlete rules



**LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND), Nov 17 (AP):** Aiming to help sports write eligibility rules for transgender athletes, the IOC published advice shifting the focus from individual testosterone levels and calling for evidence to prove when a performance advantage existed.

No athlete should be excluded from competing based on an unverified, alleged or perceived unfair competitive advantage due to their sex variations, physical appearance and/or transgender status, the Inter-

national Olympic Committee said.

The six-page document follows years of consultation with medical and human rights experts and, since 2019, athletes directly affected to help draft guidelines promoting fairness and inclusion.

It is published after the Tokyo Olympics where the first openly transgender athlete, weightlifter Laurel Hubbard, competed at the games and defending 800-meter champion Caster Semenya was among track athletes

with intersex conditions and naturally high testosterone levels excluded from their events.

The new guidance updates a 2015 review that set a limit on athletes' permitted testosterone levels leading to treatments and procedures now described as medically unnecessary.

Eligibility criteria have sometimes resulted in severe harm, the IOC acknowledged in a briefing on the advice that also cautions to avoid invasive medical examinations.

Prevention of harm

is among 10 principles to guide future decision-making by sports officials. Other include non-discrimination, fairness, evidence-based decisions and protecting athlete privacy.

The IOC document is not legally binding yet clearly stated what it now expects from governing bodies responsible for regulating their own sports.

Ruling some athletes ineligible in some sports is still expected with safety noted as a specific issue for combat and contact sports.

Athletes should be allowed to compete but unfair advantage needs to be regulated, said the IOC, which will help fund research into elite performance by transgender and intersex athletes.

A target of next March, weeks after the Beijing Winter Games close, was set to launch a program of online workshops with sports bodies and athlete representatives. We have not found the solution to this big question, IOC spokesman Christian Klaue said.

Clearly this is a topic that will be with us for a long time.

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# China, US to ease restrictions on each other's journalists

**BEIJING (AP):** China and the U.S. have agreed to ease restrictions on each other's journalists amid a slight relaxation of tensions between the two sides.

The official China Daily newspaper on Wednesday said the agreement was reached ahead of Tuesday's virtual summit between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden.

The agreement represents a degree of progress on an issue that has long aggravated relations, but details remain to be ironed out. COVID-19 travel restrictions and long-standing obstacles faced by foreign media within China are also factors standing in the way of a major breakthrough in media relations.

Under the agreement, the U.S. will issue one-year multiple-entry visas to Chinese journalists and will immediately initiate a process to address "duration of status" issues, China Daily said. China will reciprocate by granting equal treatment to U.S. journalists once the U.S. policies take effect, and both sides will issue media visas for new applicants "based on relevant laws and regulations," the report said.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian gave no information on a timeline for implementation, but called the agreement a "hard-won achievement that is in the interest of both sides and should be cherished."

"We hope that the U.S. will keep its promise to put the relevant measures and policies in place as soon as possible and work with China to create favorable conditions for both (nations') media to continue to work and live in each other's countries," Zhao said at a daily briefing.

In a statement to The Associated Press late Tuesday, the State Department said China had committed to issuing visas for a group of U.S. reporters "provided they are eligi-



ble under all applicable laws and regulations."

"We will also continue issuing visas to (Chinese) journalists who are otherwise eligible for the visa under U.S. law," the statement said.

China also committed to increase the length for which U.S. journalist visas are valid from the current 90 days to one year. "On a reciprocal basis, we are committing to increase validity of U.S. visas issued to PRC journalists to one year as well," the State Department statement said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

Not mentioned in either statement were press conditions in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory of Hong Kong, where both local and international media have come under increasing pres-

sure. The Economist said last week that Hong Kong refused a visa renewal for its correspondent Sue-Lin Wong. Authorities have not explained the rejection. Limits on journalists have fueled tensions between the two countries for more than a year after the U.S. cut 20 visas issued to Chinese state media journalists and required those remaining to register as foreign agents, among other changes.

China responded by expelling journalists working for U.S. outlets and severely restricting conditions for those continuing to work in the country.

The new agreement "was the result of more than a year of difficult negotiations over the treatment of media outlets in both countries," China Daily said.

"It is hoped that more good news is ahead

for the two countries' media outlets through further China-U.S. cooperation," the newspaper added.

The State Department said it has "remained in close consultation with the affected outlets, as well as other outlets facing personnel shortages due to PRC government policy decisions, and we are gratified their correspondents will be able to return to the PRC to continue their important work. We welcome this progress but see it simply as initial steps."

The State Department also said it would continue to work toward expanded access and better conditions for U.S. and foreign media in China, where they face considerable obstacles ranging from questioning by police, harassment preventing them from doing their work, personal threats and lawsuits brought by people they inter-

view.

"We will continue to advocate for media freedom as a reflection of our democratic values," the State Department told the AP. Asked about Wong's case, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the issuing of visas is at the "autonomy and the discretion of any government." Lam added that the authorities do not comment on individual cases but will continue to facilitate the operation of overseas media based in Hong Kong "in a legitimate manner" according to the city's mini-constitution, known as the Basic Law.

The city's Foreign Correspondents' Club said it was "deeply concerned" over the denial of Wong's employment visa.

"We again call on the government to provide concrete assurances that applications for employment visas and visa extensions will be handled in a timely manner with clearly-stated requirements and procedures, and that the visa process for journalists will not be politicized or weaponized," the club said in a statement last week.

Wong is the latest in a string of journalists in Hong Kong to be denied visas.

In 2018, Hong Kong authorities refused to renew the work visa of Financial Times senior editor Victor Mallet after he chaired a lunchtime talk at the Foreign Correspondents' Club with the leader of a now-banned pro-Hong Kong independence party. Authorities did not say why Mallet's application was rejected.

In 2020, Hong Kong did not renew a work visa for Chris Buckley, a New York Times reporter who had been working in Hong Kong after being expelled from China, as well as for Irish journalist Aaron Mc Nicholas, who was then an incoming editor for the independent media outlet Hong Kong Free Press.

## Blinken, in Kenya, seeks to cool regional crises

**NAIROBI (AP):** U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken opened his first official visit to Africa in Kenya with an appeal Wednesday for the preservation of democracy and inclusion in politically and ethnically fractured societies. His message was delivered amid worsening crises in neighboring Ethiopia and Sudan.

With insecurity wracking both of those countries, Blinken began his Africa tour in a nation with its own turbulent history of democracy. Kenya will face another test of stability in presidential elections next year, yet has emerged as a player in attempting to ease the Ethiopia conflict.

Before meeting President Uhuru Kenyatta and other senior Kenyan officials, Blinken spoke with civic leaders about the importance of combatting what he termed "democratic recession" around the world, including challenges in the United States that show "just how fragile our democracy can be."

"This is an important time," he told a small group of human rights, labor and anti-corruption advocates at a Nairobi hotel. "Around the world we've seen we've seen over the last decade or so what some have called 'democratic recession.'"

"Even vibrant democracies like Kenya are experiencing these pressures, especially around election time," Blinken said, alluding to the presidential election set for August 2022. Combatting misinformation, political violence, voter intimidation and corruption is critical to halting the backsliding, he said.

Blinken is looking to boost thus-far unsuccessful U.S. diplomatic efforts to resolve the deep-

ening conflicts in Ethiopia and in Sudan and to counter growing insurgencies elsewhere, like Somalia. His visit to Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal follows months of Biden administration attempts to ease both situations that have yet to bear fruit despite frequent lower-level interventions.

Months of engagement by the administration, including an August visit to Ethiopia by U.S. Agency for International Development administrator Samantha Power and several trips to Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Khartoum by Biden's special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeff Feltman, have produced little progress.

Instead, conflict in Ethiopia has escalated between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government and leaders in the northern Tigray region who once dominated the government.

The tensions, which some fear could escalate into mass inter-ethnic killings in Africa's second-most populated country, exploded into war last year, with thousands killed, many thousands more detained and millions displaced.

The situation "could easily slip over into genocide," said Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, a confidante of President Joe Biden who traveled to Ethiopia earlier this year to meet with Abiy. In an online event Tuesday, Coons urged progress in talks "before this becomes another Yugoslavia."

North Carolina Republican Sen. Thom Tillis told the same event that Abiy has "obviously weaponized food and water," referring to Tigray, where more



than a month has now passed since any humanitarian aid has entered.

Rebel Tigray forces are advancing on Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, amid increasingly dire warnings from the U.S. and others for foreigners to leave.

"Leave now," a senior State Department official warned Americans still in Ethiopia on Tuesday, adding there should be no expectation that the U.S. will be able to organize an evacuation.

While holding out hope that a window of opportunity for a resolution still exists, the Biden administration has moved toward sanctions, announcing the expulsion of Ethiopia from a U.S.-Africa trade pact and hitting leaders and the military of neighboring Eritrea

with penalties for intervening in the conflict on Ethiopia's behalf. Sanctions against Ethiopian officials, including Abiy, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, are possible.

Ethiopia has condemned the sanctions and in Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the African Union, and elsewhere, there is skepticism and hostility to U.S. pressure despite America being the country's largest aid donor.

As Feltman has shuttled between capitals, he and the administration have also been confounded by developments in Sudan, where a military coup last month toppled a civilian-led government that was making significant strides in restoring long-strained ties with the U.S.

Coup leader Gen. Abdel-Fat-

tah Burhan tightened his grip on power last week, reappointing himself as the chairman of a new Sovereign Council. The U.S. and other Western governments criticized the move because it did away with a joint military-civilian council already in place. The Sudanese generals responded by saying they would appoint a civilian government in the coming days.

Burhan moved against civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok just hours after Feltman had left Sudan's capital, Khartoum, on a mission intended to resolve escalating tensions between them. The U.S. has retaliated for the coup by suspending \$700 million in direct financial assistance. Further moves, including a slowdown or reversal of a multiyear rapproche-

ment with the government, could also be in the works.

The top U.S. diplomat for Africa, Molly Phee, met Tuesday with Hamdok and Burhan. Burhan said the leaders of Sudan were willing to engage in dialogue with all political forces without conditions, according to a statement from the newly appointed Sovereign Council.

In addition to trying to cool tensions in the region, Blinken's trip is also aimed at raising Washington's profile as a player in regional and international initiatives to restore peace and promote democracy and human rights as it competes with China for influence in developing countries.

That push didn't get off to a great start in Africa. The coronavirus pandemic canceled a planned early summer visit by Blinken to the continent. The trip was rescheduled for August, only to be postponed again due to the turmoil in Afghanistan that preoccupied Washington.

Now, three months later, Blinken hopes to deliver the administration's "America is back" message to Africa. Despite its importance in the U.S.-China rivalry, Africa has often been overshadowed by more pressing issues in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and even Latin America despite massive U.S. contributions of money and vaccines to fight the pandemic and other infectious diseases.

All the while, China has pumped billions into African energy, infrastructure and other projects that Washington sees as rip-offs designed to take advantage of developing nations.

## Sudanese migrants in Israel fear deportation after coup

**JERUSALEM (AP):** For nearly 10 years, Monim Haroon has only known one home: Israel. Like thousands of Sudanese migrants, he lives and works without legal status, fearing that a return to his native land would be a death sentence.

Israel's normalization of ties with Sudan, announced last year, had raised fears among the migrants that they would lose their migrant status and be forced to return. Now, weeks after a military coup derailed Sudan's transition to democracy, they dread being forcibly returned to a country under the full control of generals blamed for past atrocities.

"I am not against normalization," said Haroon. "But the normalization should be through the civilian Sudanese government, not the military powers that now

control Sudan."

The asylum-seekers' plight points to one of the less savory aspects of the so-called Abraham Accords, a series of deals reached between Israel and four Arab countries last year. The U.S.-brokered agreements with Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco — widely hailed as a breakthrough in Mideast diplomacy — were struck with unelected Arab leaders with little tolerance for dissent who were richly rewarded by the Trump administration.

Sudan's military leaders, the driving force behind the agreement, secured the country's removal from the U.S. list of terrorism sponsors, unlocking vital international aid and commerce.

But then last month, Sudan's top military leader, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, disbanded the transitional government and ordered the arrest of civilian leaders, quashing hopes of a democratic transition after the 2019 overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

The coup, which has been condemned by the United States and other Western nations, has left Israel in a potentially awkward situation.

Israel has been silent on the coup and its aftermath, indicating it intends to maintain normalized ties. A report on the Israeli news site Walla that an Israeli delegation had secretly visited Sudan to meet with the coup leaders deepened migrant fears that

they could soon be deported. The Israeli Foreign Ministry and Sudanese officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Sudanese and Eritrean migrants began arriving in Israel in 2005, with many of the Sudanese fleeing persecution in the western Darfur region and the country's south. Seeking safety and opportunity in Israel, they made often dangerous journeys across Egypt's rugged Sinai Peninsula.

Israel initially did little to stop the influx, but as more migrants arrived, the authorities began detaining thousands in remote desert prisons. And in 2013, Israel completed construction of a fenced barrier along its border with Egypt that mostly halted the migration.

The migrants' presence has sparked a

backlash among many Israelis who associate them with the crime and poverty in south Tel Aviv, where most of them settled. Right-wing governments in recent years have made various attempts to expel them.

Ayelet Shaked, a prominent right-wing politician, has described Sudanese migrants as "infiltrators" and said they should be sent back since ties have been normalized. She is now the interior minister in Israel's new government, a position that oversees immigration policies.

"We are worried because she has always been against asylum-seekers," Haroon said.

The Interior Ministry said the status of Sudanese migrants has not changed following the coup but declined to answer further questions.



The Big Pic



**BEACH BABE!** The model, Bella Hadid looks fabulous in a tiny leopard bikini while taking a dip in Miami.

## Andie MacDowell to lead female ensemble movie 'My Happy Ending'



**LOS ANGELES, NOV 17 (PTI):** Actor Andie MacDowell will be featuring in the upcoming movie "My Happy Ending", based on the Israeli play "Sof Tov" by Anat Gov.

According to Deadline, Israeli filmmakers Sharon Maymon and Tal Granit will direct the film, which will also feature Miriam Margolyes, Sally Phillips, Rakhee Thakrar, Tamsin Greig, Tom Cullen, Michelle Greenidge

and David Walliams.

MacDowell, known for movies such as "Four Weddings And A Funeral", "Groundhog Day" and "Ready or Not", will play a Hollywood star who finds herself in a British hospital room with three other women who help her with the most difficult role she has ever played herself.

An Israeli/UK co-production, "My Happy Ending"

is produced by Talia Kleinhendler & Osnat Handelsman-Keren of Pie Films, Hannah Leader of BBM, and Daisy Allsop of Archface Films. It is financed by Media Finance Capital and United King Films.

MacDowell currently stars in Netflix's original series "Maid", inspired by Stephanie Land's New York Times bestselling memoir, alongside her daughter Margaret Qualley.

## 'Disco Dancer' filmmaker's family seeks financial aid for his ailing wife



**MUMBAI, NOV 17 (PTI):** Filmmaker and writer B Subhash, best known for the Mithun Chakraborty-starrer "Disco Dancer", is seeking financial help for the treatment of his wife, who has been battling lung and kidney ailments. The 77-year-old director said they were doing fine with his two daughters and son taking care of the company that he established in 1982 but things took a turn for worse with the COVID-19 pandemic. Their financial situation was complicated further by the severe health issues of his wife, Tilotimma.

Subhash said his 67-year-old wife is ailed by severe health issues for the past five years but more so since 2020 as she has been in-and-out of Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Andheri West, Mumbai's suburban locality.

Five years ago, both her kidneys failed and she was supposed to undergo a kidney transplant at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital upon the suggestion of a doctor. I had decided to give my kidney to her.

But the doctors conducted some tests and it came to light that she has lung issues too. She has ILD (Interstitial Lung Disease) and we couldn't do kidney transplant as it would have had serious repercussions on her health, Subhash told PTI.

Tilotimma's health deteriorated further and she was hospitalised for more than a month in September this year. She came home for a brief period, only to be hospitalised later, the director said.

She started bleeding and then again we took her to hospital. She came back home three days ago. It was during this time period that the bill amount incurred was Rs 30 lakh. We, as a family, were struggling to gather funds. Hence, we reached out to the industry people and also sought help from crowd-funding portal Ketto, he added.

Subhash said Bollywood superstar Salman Khan had taken care of his wife's hospitalisation five years ago.

"He immediately offered help for the treatment. It was so gracious of him. It was completely unbelievable, I am truly indebted to him, he added.

The filmmaker also informed a few people from the film industry, including the actors he collaborated with, helped him financially.

Since, we were all unable to pay this huge bill amount (referring to Rs 30 lakh), my daughter Shweta approached a few people from the industry like Juhi Chawla, Anil Kapoor, Dimple Kapadia, Bhushan Kumar, Ratan Jain, and they all came forward.

It is such a good gesture. Mithun Chakraborty also offered some help as he is the sole earning member. Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPPA) too has helped us, he said, adding, he is grateful to everyone who has stood by his side during such tough times.

Subhash is hopeful of receiving help from people from within the industry as well as from outside.

She is recovering but slowly. We want her (my wife) to be alright. My daughter Shweta approached Ketto for financial assistance two days ago hoping they can help us. And we are indeed getting positive responses. Industry people too are good and very helpful, a distributor came forward to offer help today. Hopefully, things will improve for her hereon, Subhash said.

Born in Delhi, the director whose real name is Babbar Subhash, came to Mumbai at the age of 20. He started working as an assistant director before making his debut feature in 1978 with Shashi Kapoor and Hema Malini's Apna Khoon.

His other movie credits include Taqdeer Ka Badshah, Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki, Adventures of Tarzan, Dance Dance, all starring Chakraborty in the '80s, among others. The filmmaker also worked with Aamir Khan and Juhi Chawla in the 1989 film Love Love Love.

## Rohit Shetty to back series about cops, says Sidharth Malhotra not finalised

**Mumbai, Nov 17 (PTI):** Filmmaker Rohit Shetty has dismissed reports that he has signed actor Sidharth Malhotra to headline his series about cops and said the project is still under development.

There was speculation that the "Shershaah" star was set to work on the Sushwanth Prakash-directorial, which would have Shetty as the showrunner.

In an interview with PTI, the filmmaker said the team had only written the show's first draft but had to put everything on hold as his much awaited action film "Sooryavanshi" was gearing up for a release.

"Not Sidharth Malhotra, the actor is not yet finalised. We are planning a web series, it is a cop-based show but nothing is finalised. We have written one draft. But in between everything changed - theatres started opening, we had to stop all our work and concentrate solely on 'Sooryavanshi,' Shetty said.

"Sooryavanshi", the cop-drama headlined by Akshay Kumar, hit the theatres during the Diwali weekend, almost



one-and-a-half years after its scheduled March 2020 release.

When things started looking up for the massive project, Shetty said everything, including the work on the series, took a back seat.

"Last three months have gone in just that, meetings, coordinating... It has been two weeks since 'Sooryavanshi' released but we are still pushing the film, seeing that it reached where we had thought of. So the series won't happen before next year. There is still a lot of

time for that," he added.

Post "Sooryavanshi", the director's next film release would be Ranveer Singh-starrer comedy "Cirkus".

The film is based on William Shakespeare's classic play "The Comedy of Errors", which revolves around two sets of identical twins who were accidentally separated at birth.

"Cirkus" also stars Pooja Hegde, Jacqueline Fernandez, Varun Sharma, Johnny Lever, Sanjay Mishra and Vrajesh Hirjee, among others.

### ARIES:

The winds of change are blowing in your direction, Aries. Yes, that means things are likely to fall in place all of a sudden, after a period of stagnation. Prepare yourself to roll with it. It's best to be alert, focused, and quick witted at this point. However, here are some words of caution by Gary Basey to keep in mind when you find yourself thinking about the easy way out, "If you take shortcuts, you get cut short." Acting from a place of integrity is the best way to ensure long-term returns.

### TAURUS:

Have you ever stopped to wonder about the origin of the traditions and beliefs that we follow today? While some of them might seem ridiculous to the modern mind, they hold within them pearls of ancient wisdom. Instead of going down the skeptic route today, dig deeper. Turn to experts on the subject and refer to sacred texts.

### GEMINI:

The best thing about being a Gemini is the dynamic personality you've been

blessed with. The disadvantage? Feeling a little lost about which face to show the world today. Allow yourself to take a deep breath and look within. There is no need to hide behind the masks and the cloaks. By bringing the gift of authenticity to the table, you will find your true freedom.

### CANCER:

It's time to turn your knowledge into wisdom, Cancer. It's time to truly come into your own. This is the only way you will be able to guide others on your path. If you're already treading the path of light, consider working closely with children. Overheard at this cosmic conference: this is a part of your sacred purpose.

### LEO:

Deceit and betrayal are showing up as prominent themes in your cards, Leo. The bitter truth is that it is the people closest to your heart that have turned their back on you. The important thing to remember is that things are happening for and not to you. The Universe is teaching you a life lesson which is important

for your ascension.

### VIRGO:

A new day. A new dawn. A brand new beginning. Welcome to the land of infinite possibilities, Virgo! It's time to trust that feeling of hope and optimism that's emerging from deep within you. It's time to sing out loud the song that's been stuck in your head: "Morning is here, sunshine is here". Remember, it is when things begin to look good that paranoia tends to rear its ugly head.

### LIBRA:

Two halves don't make a full, Libra. It's time to put that old narrative to rest. It's time to show up for yourself, to do the work, and to come into a space of wholeness within yourself. This is the only way to attract a healthy relationship, one that will hold space for you to fly. As such, this is also a time of making choices. There is no right or wrong way to go from here, beautiful.

### SCORPIO:

The world can be a cold and harsh place, Scorpio. But, that doesn't mean you have

to shut down. That doesn't mean you have to build walls around your space. Allow yourself to feel the softness. Allow yourself to feel the grace. Know that your vulnerability is your greatest strength, beautiful. On the upside, there's good news coming your way on the work and career front.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Today, you're being asked to channel your inner starlet, dream big dreams, and dance your own dance. You're unique and different, Sagittarius, and that's what makes you, you. So stop playing by the rules set by other people. Stop trying to please those who will never understand your truth. Some of you may also be drawn towards the performing arts at this point.

### CAPRICORN:

Egyptian Goddess Maat is known to represent cosmic order and today she is bringing with herself the reminder that the scales will soon balance themselves. That's right, Capricorn. Justice will prevail and you will find a way to triumph

over the circumstances that are currently bringing you down. So, act conscientiously and keep adding to those good karma points.

### AQUARIUS:

The cards are warning you against addictive behavioral patterns. What are \*you\* addicted to, Aquarius, and how is this helping you fill the growing void within? Consider taking your demons out for tea and having an open and honest conversation with them. Confronting your patterns is the only way to transcend what no longer serves you, beautiful. Some of you are being warned against toxic relationships as well.

### PISCES:

Three words, Pisces: research, research, research. While you're on the right track, the plan needs to be finetuned. Digging deeper into the subject matter will help you add the missing link \*and\* give you an edge over your competition. Don't get too hung up on the idea of making a breakthrough, though.