



**TAYLOR SWIFT SURPRISES FANS WITH ANOTHER ALBUM DUE TONIGHT**  
pg 08

**BUT LET'S ALL OF US ALSO PULL OUR WEIGHT AND ENGAGE**

pg 04

**'CARRY ON' AND 'EASTENDERS' STAR BARBARA WINDSOR DIES AT 83**  
pg 08



# SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 323 | Gangtok | Saturday | 12 December 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

## Primitive Tribe Welfare Board convenes AGBM



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

The Annual General Board Meeting of the Primitive Tribe Welfare Board was held here today under the chairmanship of Chewang Norbu Lepcha, a press release from Social Justice & Welfare Department informs.

While addressing the meeting, the PTWV chairperson informed that the State Government has been requested to bring a Bill in the Legislative Assembly to make a separate law for the Primitive Tribe Welfare Board and that a set of memorandums have also been submitted requesting that Lepcha language be recommended for inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution.

The chairperson also stressed the need

to introduce traditional attire in schools at least once a week, the release adds.

The press release from the Department adds that the State Government "has requested to declare certain Lepcha habitation in all the Districts as backward areas for the upliftment in Socio-economic spheres."

He also extended deep gratitude towards the Chief Minister for reconstitution of Board Members for the Welfare of Primitive Tribe in the State of Sikkim.

The meeting was also attended by Chairman Social Welfare Commission, Nim Tshering Lepcha, Secretary Social Justice & Welfare Department Tshewang Gyachcho Bhutia, and other officials and members of the board.

**turn to pg 02**

## Cabinet meets and approves funds for projects under 10 deptts

**GANGTOK, 11 DEC [IPR]:** In a Cabinet Meeting held on 09 December at 11AM at Tashiling Secretariat, the following were approved:

### LAND REVENUE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.40,00,000/- (Rupees forty lakhs only) for up-gradation of existing 315KVA Sub-Station to 500 KVA at District Administrative Centre, East including external and internal wiring and improvement of distribution system at Sichey, Gangtok in East Sikkim.

### FOREST AND ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Confirmation of approval and financial sanction of Rs.1,22, 83,236/-(Rupees one crore twenty two lakhs eighty three thousand two



hundred and thirty six only) to be released to Seedling Cost Account for payment of wages of various Nursery Workers and allied Activities.

### POWER DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of

Rs.57,56,500/- (Rupees fifty seven lakhs fifty six thousand and five hundred only) for construction of Chain Link Boundary Fencing and Jhora Training Catch Water Drain at 66/11 KV Sub-Station at Yangang,

South Sikkim.

### ROADS AND BRIDGES DEPARTMENT

Additional financial sanction of Rs.76,67,477/- (Rupees Seventy six lakhs sixty seven thousand, four hundred and seventy seven only) for

restoration work at landslide zone along Lal turning road under Pakyong Sub-Division in East Sikkim, already approved for Rs.1,68,59,270/-.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.56,13,725/- (Rupees fifty six lakhs thirteen thousand seven hundred twenty five only) as land compensation to be paid to 03 (three) land owners for construction of road to Eklavya Model Residential School at Thekabong in East Sikkim.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.2, 69, 00,000/- (Rupees two crores sixty nine lakhs only) for procurement of shoes and socks for school students for the academic session-2021. **turn to pg 03**

## Sikkim records 27 new COVID cases

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

Sikkim recorded 27 new cases of COVID-19 on Friday even as 31 persons were discharged from isolation facilities in the state. No new deaths were reported on Friday. The new cases were detected from 243 samples tested till 8 am Friday.

In the daily health bulletin, State IEC Officer, Health Department, Sonam G Bhutia informed that there are 363 active cases of COVID-19 in the state while the total caseload has reached 5290. With 31 persons discharged the number of persons discharged till now has reached 4716.

**turn to pg 03**

## Only officer who served in the Indian army, navy and air force turns 100

**NEW DELHI, 11 DEC**

**[NDTV]:** A retired officer who served in the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force celebrated his 100th birthday today.

Colonel Prithipal Singh Gill (retired) is the only officer who served all three units of India's defence services. He started his career in the pre-World War II era as a young pilot in the Royal Indian Air Force. Colonel Gill then sailed the high seas with Indian Navy and later was a Gunner Officer with the Indian Army. The veteran served during the World War II and the India-Pakistan war in 1965. Before retiring, Colonel Prithipal Singh Gill was a Sector Commander with the Assam Rifles in Manipur.

People on social

media have been wishing the veteran who gave a 'thumbs up' to the camera on his birthday. "Congratulate Col. Prithipal Singh Gill who turns 100 today. He bears the unique distinction of having served in all the three Armed Forces. Sir, wish you many more years of good health and may you continue to always inspire all of us," Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh Tweeted.

"Col Prithipal Singh Gill (without family consent) joined the Royal Indian Air Force and was commissioned as Pilot Officer stationed at Karachi, flying Howard aircrafts," Lieutenant General (retired) KJ Singh posted on Twitter, along with a recent photo of

Colonel Prithipal Singh Gill and another one as a young officer in the forces.

Lt. General KJ Singh shared Colonel Gill's impressive career on Twitter. Colonel Gill served on a mine sweeping ship and INS Teer. He was also part of a Navy escort team for cargo ships during the World War II.

Colonel Gill even trained at the School of Artillery in Devlali and was posted to Gwalior Mountain Battery. He "raised and Commanded 71 Med Regt in 1965 war", according to Lt General KJ Singh. After an exceptional career in the Air Force, Indian Navy and the Indian Army, Colonel Gill retired to farming at his native village in Faridkot.

## India's COVID-19 caseload rises to 97.96 lakh with 29,398 fresh infections

**NEW DELHI, DEC 11**

**(PTI):** India recorded less than 30,000 fresh COVID-19 infections on Friday, the second time this month, which pushed its caseload to 97.96 lakh, while the total number of recoveries surged to 92.90 lakh, according to the Union health ministry data.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 97,96,769 with 29,398 fresh infections, while the death toll rose to 1,42,186 with 414

new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

India had recorded a daily rise of 26,567 cases on December 8.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 92,90,834 on Friday, pushing the national recovery rate to 94.84 per cent. The COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The COVID-19 active caseload remained below 4 lakh for the fifth consecutive day.

There are 3,63,749 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprise 3.71 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5.

It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, 80 lakh on October 29, and 90 lakh on November 20.

The 414 new

fatalities include 70 from Maharashtra, 61 from Delhi, 49 from West Bengal, 27 from Punjab, 26 each from Haryana and Kerala, and 24 from Uttar Pradesh.

The total 1,42,186 deaths reported so far in the country include 47,972 from Maharashtra, 11,912 from Karnataka, 11,853 from Tamil Nadu, 9,874 from Delhi, 8,916 from West Bengal, 8,011 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,047 from Andhra

Pradesh and 5,007 from Punjab.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

## SPYF reiterates 2-point demand after MS interview



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum has reiterated its two-point demand for improving health care in Sikkim following an interview of former Medical Superintendent, Dr CS Sharma, that appeared in Summit Times.

In a press release, SPYF has said that the former MS, Dr Sharma revealed the true condition of the topmost hospital in the state. If the top hospital of the state is in such condition one can imagine what the condition of district and tertiary hospitals in the state must be like, the release states.

Accusing the state government of hiding the ground reality with propaganda, SPYF has said that the West district hospital in Gyalshing is not in a position to cure even routine sickness of the common people in the absence of sufficient doctors, diagnosis machines and medicines in the hospital.

"Despite of ultrasonography being installed in some of the district hospitals, the opportunity for the test comes only after 2-3 months, which any

private clinic or diagnosis center do in matter of a few hours, if not minutes. Even for an ordinary pathogenic test, a common patient must visit hospital at least twice," SPYF alleges.

People do not trust PHCs, CHCs and PHSCs to get them treated, the release states.

SPYF goes on to highlight the issue of expensive medicines and the lack of it in government pharmacies. The release raises the issue of salaries of health workers stating that many workers are not getting their salaries from months, an issue which the Medical Superintendent agreed in the interview.

For the past 3 years, SPYF has been demanding the standardization of public healthcare services in the state by adhering to the Indian Public Health Standards.

In the month of February, SPYF had submitted a two- point demand of fulfilment of IPHS criteria in all hospitals including PHCs and PHSCs in the state and free medicines and all other services for all with over 10,000 signatures to the Health Minister, Dr MK Sharma.

"Now, the statement of the MS has officially



exposed the miserable condition of health sector in the state. The solution of the problems lies in the fulfilment of IPHS guidelines in all hospitals, which

has a clear guidelines regarding the number of staff and all other requirements each category of hospital need," the release states.



## Education Officers discuss transcending stagnation and initiating reforms in school education

**GYALSHING, 10 DEC [IPR]:** A meeting of Education Officers of West Sikkim on "Transcending Stagnation and Initiating Reforms in School Education" was held at Zilla Panchayat Bhawan, Gyalshing, West Sikkim today.

The meeting had the presence of Advisor, Education Department MP Subba, accompanied by Director/ SCERT Dr Robin Chhetri, Addl Director/ West KC Gyat-

so, JD/ SCERT Dr Shanti Ram Adhikari, Principal DIET, Deputy Directors, ADs & AEOs from Sub-Divisions, Districts and Blocks.

Advisor Mr Subba appealed all officers to be updated, accountable, and motivated and leave behind impressive footprints in the post and places where they are posted now. He said that the changes and reforms desired in the education system depend on the

work culture, positivity and initiatives of the officers.

The interactive session was facilitated by Director/ SCERT Dr Robin Chhetri who addressed the house for setting the context and objective of the meeting. The following points were discussed at length regarding reformation in the school system:

1. Rigorous monitoring and inspection of schools.

2. Active participation of SMCs.

3. Orientation of teachers on new textbooks in line with NEP.

4. Integration of technology in bolstering learning outcomes.

5. Training of School Heads on leadership, training of teachers in Nepali, English & other languages.

6. Ensure accountability amongst teachers.

7. Creation of knowledge instead of rote

learning.

8. Empowering heads of schools.

9. Strengthening schools with timely posting of heads and manpower.

Earlier the welcome address was proposed Additional Director, KC Gyatso with vote of thanks by Deputy Director, PG Bhutia.

The long day meeting was arranged and coordinated by Deputy Director, Santosh Allay.

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## Workshop on Piggery Farming at Assam Lingzey

**GANGTOK, 10 DEC (IPR):** A workshop on Feasibility of Piggery Farming through Cooperatives for Cooperative Inspectors and Cooperative Auditors of Cooperation Department was held at Gram Prasashan Kendra, Assam Lingzey on 09 Dec, 2020. The programme was organized by Sikkim State Cooperative Union (SICUN) in collaboration with Cooperation Department.

Chairman, Excise Department, Gangza Bhutia attended the workshop as the Chief Guest and the Panchayat President, Assam Lingzey GPU, Ganesh Chhetri as the Guest of Honour. The workshop was also attended by RCS, Cooperation Department, Jabi Thapa and Addl RCS, Cooperation Department, Karma Ongmu as special guest. DRCS, Cooperation Department, Indra Mani Adhikari, ARCS, Cooperation Department,

Atish Rai and VO, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department, Dr Tshering Dolma were the Resource Persons.

The programme started with lighting of lamp by Chief Guest and Special Guests.

The Chairman, Excise Department, while addressing the gathering said that the idea of piggery farming is more productive for the farmers as in comparison to other livestock rearing. He also stressed that to uplift the economic condition of people at grassroot level, the Government Officials during their field visit or survey should try to identify the problems, grievances and take up to the State Government for inclusive solution.

RCS Cooperation Department, Jabi Thapa highlighted that the main focus of the workshop was to tap the huge



potential of piggery farming in the North East region. Under RKVY 2019-20, the department submitted project for training and awareness programme for cooperative societies under piggery farming which was approved and sanctioned on March, 2020. Due to pandemic, the implementation got

delayed.

She stated that the entrepreneurship is the biggest problem in piggery sector, which is the reason that in spite of high demands for pork in our State, only small portion of it is being met through local production, the majority of it is being imported from outside the state. She added that the idea behind having

this training was to bring piggery farming under cooperative sector and make it into profitable venture and attract farmers to take up piggery farming.

On second half of the programme, VO, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department, Dr Tshering Dolma gave a brief outline on Pig Breeding and Management. DRCS, Cooperation Department, Indra Mani Adhikari discussed many issues with the field Officers regarding various schemes to be implemented by the Department.

Earlier, the Chief Executive Officer, SICUN, Karma Gelay Bhutia presented the welcome address. The programme was conducted by Phadung Bhutia, EO, SICUN.

After the workshop, the officials also visited Pig Breeding Farm at Assam Gaucharan.

## Bengal's top cop and babu to skip MHA summons over attack on Nadda convoy

**KOLKATA, 11 DEC [NDTV]:** The top two bureaucrats of West Bengal have asked to be excused from meeting the Union Home Secretary who summoned them to New Delhi on December 14 over the law and order situation in the state with special reference to the attack on BJP president JP Nadda's convoy on Friday.

The request "to be dispensed" from the Monday meeting is likely to turn into the latest flashpoint between the centre and the Bengal government.

The Chief Secretary and Director General of Police sought to be excused because the convoy attack was "already being examined", the state government said in a letter to Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla.

"While further reports are being obtained and compiled,

in the circumstances, I am directed to request you to kindly dispense with the presence of state officials in the meeting, considering the state government is already addressing this issue with utmost seriousness," Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said in the letter.

The meeting was called via a letter this morning to the chief secretary and DGP from a deputy secretary in MHA. The purpose: "to discuss the law and order situatio... including the recent attacks on Z-category protectees", said the home ministry letter summoning the officers. The centre's summons followed Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's report to Home Minister Amit Shah detailing "deteriorating law and order" in Bengal.

Mr Dhankhar,

governor in Bengal for just over a year, has been accusing Mamata Banerjee of plunging the state into lawlessness.

Mr Nadda's convoy was attacked with bricks, stones and sticks about 40 kilometres south of Kolkata on Thursday afternoon. Some leaders were injured and cars damaged in the incident, which the BJP said was the work of supporters of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.

The Governor alleged a severe security lapse by the state administration and accused what he called the "political police" of failing to protect Mr Nadda even though he is a z-category protectee. The state government has denied the charge, blaming the incident on "too many cars" in the convoy and allegedly provocative gestures of a BJP leader.

## ADC chairs meeting on upgradation of Pakyong into district



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

As per the direction of Chief Minister, PS Tamang, the first preliminary coordination meet on upgradation of Pakyong Sub division to a District was held at ADC Office Pakyong, East Sikkim, under the chairmanship of Area cum Chairman (STCS), Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara and OSD to CM, Bhanu Pradhan, a press release informs.

The main objective of the meeting is to discuss over all development of Pakyong as per the recent announcement of making Pakyong Sub-Division a District.

During the course of the meet, ADC (Dev),

Tenzing Denzongpa and SDM Pakyong, Milan Rai were presented an overview of the current situation and developmental process of Pakyong.

Similarly, in a short open discussion / interaction session several individuals from Pakyong placed their demands, views and suggestions for development, proper planning and implementation of projects for Pakyong District.

OSD to CM, Bhanu Pradhan conveyed the message of CM and highlighted several policies, projects and programmes of SKM government for making Pakyong Sub-Division a

District.

Finally, the chief guest of today's event, Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara extended heartfelt gratitude towards the CM for announcing that Pakyong Sub-Division will be made the 5th District of Sikkim. He urged everyone work together to make Pakyong District a model district of the state.

The programme was also attended by SKM Area In-charge (Gnathang-Machong constituency),

Tshering Bhutia, Advisors, Chairperson, Addl Political Secy to CM, HODs, BDOs, SKM party functionaries, employees, Panchayat Presidents, and representatives from civil society.

### West dist admn meets to discuss development at Chongrang



**GYALSHING, 10 DEC**

**[IPR]:** A meeting on implementation of central sector scheme for 'Development of Backward Block,' Chongrang, in West District, was held in the off of the DC-West at District Administration Centre, Rabdentse.

The meeting was chaired by the DC-West, Karma R Bonpo, along with officials from various departments.

The DC West highlighted the key beneficial aspects of the scheme and to adhere with the guidelines and make sure of the authentic implications. He informed that the main agenda of the scheme is to elevate the economically weaker section of the GPU through the lucrative approach in the field of poultry, dairy and bee-keeping.

He urged the concerned officers to separate the various beneficiaries into their respective clusters of dairy, poultry and bee-keeping in order to keep tracks on the production and also for the future reference in terms of developmental possibilities.

In regards to marketing, the District Collector

suggested to approach for various available Marketing Agents for proper execution of the schemes.

Subsequently, the attendees were directed to hold up Gram Sabha at the GPU level to inform and sensitise the local people regarding the scheme. He stated

that the officers has an opportunity to work for the District and to showcase their talents and efficiency.

During the course of the meeting an interactive session with the officials was also conducted wherein feedbacks and requirements were discussed in details.

### ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

#### LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft  
Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak

Price negotiable  
Contact : 6296366498,  
9641878315, 9593262407

#### LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

#### LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410

#### FOR RENT

Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Baazar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

#### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land sale at Lower Sichey, suitable for construction, good locality, near the road, Total size: 90x55ft, (30x55ft each plot ). genuine person may contact@9734122366.

#### BUILDING FOR SALE

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50×40 ft. at Upper Phong near Phong SS ,Namthang South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable ). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

### Primitive Tribe Welfare.....

The Social Welfare Commission chairperson expressed his desire to preserve and maintain the Lepcha Mun and Bongthing tradition while the Additional Chief Engineer of the Department placed the current status of ongoing construction of primitive hostels in all the districts.

All the official and non-official members of the Board placed their opinion and suggestions to strengthen the Board, the release concludes.

**HAVE A  
STORY TO  
SHARE?**

email us: [news@summittimes.com](mailto:news@summittimes.com)

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## Minister, official and stakeholders meet to discuss Pelling's Kanchenjunga Winter Tourism Festival

**GYALSHING, 11 DEC [IPR]:** Pelling is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Sikkim and is popular as it offers breathtaking vistas of Mt. Khangchendzonga and other Himalayan peaks. The town comes alive with the Annual Pelling Tourism Festival (also known as Kanchenjunga Winter Tourism Festival). It is usually held in the month of December. The festival offers a window into the rich and the varied cultural heritage of the state, combined with plenty of adventure

activities such as trekking, rockclimbing, paragliding, mountain biking, zipline etc.

To make the Festival successful, meeting was held today at Hotel Sonamchen, Pelling. The meeting was graced by the Minister for PHE & Water supply, Bhim Hang Limboo accompanied by DC West, Karma R.Bonpo, SP West, Tashi W. Bhutia, ADC(Dev)West, Surat Gurung HOD'S from various Departments, Panchayats, members of Pelling Tourism

Development Association and the local public of Pelling West Sikkim.

Addressing the gathering Minister PHE & Water Supply, Bhim Hang Limboo spoke about the importance of the Festival and its advantages that can be obtained by the local public of Pelling, West Sikkim. He ensured the gathering that he will provide all necessary help for making the Festival grand success. He also urged the Office of District

Administration and all the HOD'S to jointly coordinate to come up with good feedbacks.

Further, DC West, Karma R.Bonpo congratulated all the members of Pelling Tourism Development Association (PTDA) for comming up with innovative ideas. He requested PTDA to give the first priority to the rural youths and encourage them to take part in various event. He also requested all the HOD'S to work seriously

on the task distributed during the meeting.

During the course of the meeting an interactive session with the HOD'S and the members of PTDA was also conducted wherein feedbacks and requirements were discussed in details.

At the intentional of the meeting, Minister Limboo flagged off a fleet of garbage collection vehicle of West District Municipal Council, West Sikkim. The new vehicle comprising mobile transfer stations.

## Farmer Union Goes To Supreme Court, Wants "Arbitrary" Farm Laws Scrapped

**NEW DELHI, 11 DEC [NDTV]:** The Bhartiya Kisan Union has filed a petition in the Supreme Court asking it to scrap three agricultural laws passed by Parliament in September. Thousands of farmers have over the past few weeks been protesting against these laws, demanding that the government repeal them.

The Bhartiya Kisan Union's petition, filed by its president Bhanu Pratap Singh, claimed that the three laws will lead to commercialisation and will throw the farmers at the mercy of corporates. Citing the ongoing farmers' protest along the national capital's

borders, it said a "rail roko" agitation, too, would begin soon.

Calling the new laws "arbitrary", the petition alleges that they were passed without adequate discussion.

The Supreme Court has already issued notices to the Central government on a batch of petitions challenging the farm laws passed by Parliament in September. These laws were first introduced in June as ordinances by the Central government.

The three contentious laws are: Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement

of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

Over the past many weeks fierce protests have broken out across states such as Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, by farmers who view these laws as leading the way to their dis-empowerment, with their advantage moving to corporate bodies.

Thousands of them have sought to march towards Delhi in protest since early last month, in the process blocking the major roads leading to and away from the national capital.

## Cabinet meets and approves.....

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.7,30,21,000/- (Rupees seven crores thirty lakhs twenty one thousand only) for implementation of Mid Day Meal Scheme in Sikkim during 2020-2021.

### HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Confirmation of approval and sanction of Rs.2,43,57,00,000/- (Rupees two crores forty three lakhs fifty seven thousand only) and additional sanction of Rs.1,56,43,000/- (Rupees one crore fifty six lakhs forty three thousand only) for making payments of under Mukhya Mantri Jeewan Raksha Kosh (MMJRK).

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.12,17,32,00,000/- (Rupees one thousand two hundred seventeen crores thirty two lakhs only) for the implementation of various works under the department for the financial year 2020-21.

Revised administrative approval of Rs.5, 49, 67,495/- (Rupees five crore forty nine lakhs sixty seven thousand four hundred and ninety five only) with an additional financial sanction of Rs.48, 91,570.00 (Rupees forty eight lakhs ninety one thousand five hundred seventy only) for construction of Block Administrative Centre at Chumbong in West Sikkim.

### HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.5,00,00,000/- (Rupees five hundred lakhs only) for implementation of Production Incentive Scheme in the year 2020-21. Approval is also solicited to draw Rs.500.00 lakhs as advance to further transfer it to Districts

### POWER DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.3,99,00,00/- (Rupees three hundred ninety nine lakhs eleven thousand only) for renovation and strengthening of existing power network in the State for ensuring regular power supply during ensuing winter months.

### WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval of Rs.32,00,00,000/- (Rupees thirty two crores only) and financial sanction of Rs.15.00 crores (Rupees fifteen crores only) for the current financial year for implementation of various Mini Jhora Training works within all 32 constituencies of the State.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval of Rs.6,56,45,238/- (Rupees Six crores fifty six lakhs forty five thousand two hundred thirty eight only) towards the procurement of Textbooks, Exercise Books and School Uniforms for the Academic Session 2021.

### TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.4,98,25,775/- (Rupees four crores ninety eight lakhs twenty five thousands seven hundred and seventy five only) for procurement of five (05) LP1618/53 WB Buses, three (03) Ultra 1918 12 KL Tankers, Seven (07) Ultra 1918 Trucks and upgradation of three (03) Tankers to 9 KL from Tata Motors Ltd.

### ROADS AND BRIDGES DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.24,99,000/- lakhs (Rupees twenty four lakhs ninety nine thousand only) to carry out survey work for land acquisition and re-verification of site for alternative Highway from Melli to Singtam in South Sikkim.

### WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.5,00,00,000/- (Rupees five crores only) for construction of 83 nos. of Jhora training and immediate restoration of damaged protective works in all the four Districts.

### ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & VETERINARY SERVICES

Confirmation of revised administrative approval of Rs.1, 83,

44,000/- (Rupees one crore eighty three lakhs forty four thousand only) with additional financial sanction of Rs.49,54,000/- (Rupees forty nine lakhs fifty four thousand only) for construction of Sub-Divisional Veterinary Hospital cum staff quarters at Pachey, Pakyong in East-Sikkim.

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.1,15,00,311/- (Rupees one crore fifteen lakhs three hundred and eleven only) to be released to Land Revenue Department for making final payment of land compensation for land acquired for construction of Veterinary Dispensaries.

### POWER DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.48,50,000/- (Rupees forty eight lakhs fifty thousand only) for revamping of 11/11 KV switch-gears at Legship in West Sikkim.

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.38,50,000/- (Rupees thirty eight lakhs fifty thousand only) for revamping of 11/11 KV switch-gears at Rimbi in West Sikkim.

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.41,80,000/- (Rupees forty one lakhs eighty thousand only) for revamping of 11/11 KV switch-gears at Dentam in West Sikkim.

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.23,00,000/- (Rupees twenty three lakhs only) for providing T-Off in Spur Feeder across KKHEP feeder to improve stability of power supply to Dentam, Hee Bermiok and Uttarey in West Sikkim.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.5,65,91,000/- (Rupees five crores sixty five lakhs ninety one thousand only) for implementation of Anganwadi Services (ICDS) Scheme in the State of Sikkim during the financial year 2020-21.

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.4,19,14,000/- (Rupees four crores nineteen lakhs fourteen thousand only) for implementation schemes under Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Cast Sub-Plan (SCA TO SCSP) during 2019-20.

### CULTURE DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs. 98,87,419/- (Rupees ninety eight lakhs eighty seven thousand four hundred and nineteen only) for distribution of sound system to various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the State.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.10,09,70,00,000/- (Rupees One thousand nine hundred seventy lakhs only) for implementation of schemes under Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan (SCA to TSS) and Particularly Vulnerable Tribe Group (PVTG) for the year 2019-20.

### DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.59,00,000/- (Rupees fifty nine lakhs only) as grants-in-aid to 24 Sports Associations and 08 Sports Academics/Sports Clubs.

### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Administrative approval and financial sanction of Rs.1,42,81,380/- (Rupees one crore forty two lakhs eighty one thousand three hundred eighty only) towards procurement of NCERT/CBSE Textbooks for the Academic Session 2021.

Approval to restructure the Sikkim State Education Service (SSES) Cadre with provision for bipolar distribution of posts among officers from schools heads and from the AEOs at the ratio of 60:40. The 60 % quota reserved for the officers with entry level from school head is further bifurcated in the ratio of 50:50 for promotion and lateral entry from the qualified school heads. It is also proposed to increase 18% of Cadre strength i.e 30 additional posts at different level.

## Sikkim records 27 new COVID cases.....

Of the new cases, 17 are in East, 7 in South and 3 in West Sikkim. Out of 153 samples tested via RT-PCR, 19 tested positive for the virus while 08 samples out of 77 tested positive via Rapid Antigen Testing. All 13 samples tested via Trunat returned negative.

Among the cases recorded in East Sikkim are two from Arithang, near All India Radio quarters, one from Upper Shyari, near Royal Plaza, one from Rongyek, Dokan Dara, one from Swastik below India Bank, one from lower Arithang, below Arithang School, one from Bahai School Road, below Gurudwara, two from Development Area, near Sangram Hall, one from Tadong, below college gate, one from Pakyong, near farming school, one from Tadong, 6th mile and one from Tadong near Greendale school.

Three persons tested positive in West Sikkim; one from Tikjuk and two from Salamdang Sombaria.

One person from Gyalshing and one from Pelling Naya Basti in West Sikkim are listed in the names under East District which could be because they got tested in Gangtok.

Seven from South Sikkim tested positive for COVID-19; two from Namchi, one from Ranigaon, one from Nandugaon, one from Rinchonpong, one from Ravangla and one from Sisney, Namchi.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that a 20-year-old woman from Tadong, Gangtok and a 58-year-old woman from Mangan, North Sikkim have tested positive but they could not be contacted as their phones are unreachable. He has requested them to contact the Health Department as soon as possible.

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**Corrigendum to Notice Inviting Tender dated 09.12.2020**

**“Invitation of Bids for Auction of Coal Mines/ Blocks for Sale of Coal”**

Attention is invited to the Notice Inviting Tender initiating the second attempt of auction of Chendipada & Chendipada-II, Kuraloi (A) North and Seregarha Coal Mines 11<sup>th</sup> Tranche of Auction under CM(SP) Act and 1<sup>st</sup> Tranche of Auction under MMDR Act, issued by Office of Nominated Authority, Ministry of Coal, Government of India on 09.12.2020. In the said Notice Inviting Tender, **Last date for purchase of Tender Document shall be read as 09.01.2021 instead of 09.12.2020.**

Further, the prospective bidder for Seregarha Coal Mine may note that in pursuance of the order dated November 06, 2020 passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in WP(C) No. 585/ 2020 (State of Jharkhand vs. Union of India & Anr.) and Original Suit No. 04/ 2020 (State of Jharkhand vs. Union of India), the present action is provisional in the sense that it will be subject to the orders that may be passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Detailed Tender Document can be downloaded from the website of MSTC Limited (<https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/coalblock/index.jsp>). For any query/ clarification kindly contact the Nominated Authority at the contact details mentioned above in the advertisement.

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**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

**Symptoms of nCoV**

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

**Precautions to Prevent nCoV**

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

**Treatment**

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

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## Hold Us Accountable, Sure

*But let's all of us also pull our weight and engage*

Journalists live a charmed life. Those outside the clique have an inflated perception of our effectiveness and readers in general believe media persons to be much better informed than they actually are. This fiction, when it circulates too widely and for too long, can start convincing those who wield the pen [more like hammer keyboards nowadays] that they are indispensable, and with that comes the arrogance which, at least in our country, has also caused substantial damage to politics and administration. There is a fine line dividing standing up for something and becoming overbearing, but it is an important marker still, and over-stepping it can compromise the best of intentions. If the news-media is indeed seen as the fourth estate/ pillar in a democracy, then hollowing it out weakens the overall structure, so, as much as it needs to be supported and backed, it also needs to be held accountable. A free press, after all, is a necessity to ensure real progress.

It goes without saying that the right environment needs to be created for press to be free, and this is provided by institutional and civil-society support systems. It is also obvious that such an environment is always under constant pollutions by agencies which are threatened if journalists are allowed genuine freedoms. But new-media cannot be shackled only by a repressive systems, it can also be compromised by unethical practitioners. It is always a bad idea to pass the correctional cane into the hands of the powers-that-be, because they will definitely misuse it, so, it becomes important for every person with a stake in world affairs or national developments and also Sikkim to start reading newspapers [because more readers will mean more power, more independence for newspapers] and more importantly, start sending in more letters. At present, most letter writers are inspired by personal reasons to write. What is required for a more accountable media is to have a wider response base. Not eulogies, please write in hate mail, letters that point out errors, letters that demand clarifications, letters that complain of half-truths and incomplete reportage, letters that mention that readers notice the personal agendas of editors, publishers and reporters being packaged as news. The media needs feedback to stay on course, battle somnolence, remain relevant, and most importantly, remain accurate. The willingness to admit mistakes is an important part of being accurate. This has become even more significant in the age of online archives, although it has always been the case that mistakes in old newspaper cuttings could be repeated and result in an inaccurate report being circulated again years later. Accuracy, it needs no further stressing, is essential if journalism is to inform the public debate. And if public wishes to be served well with accurate information, significant perspectives and intelligent opinions, they need to engage, maintain a pressure which inspire excellence. Do that often enough, and even if newspapers do not publish them, the editors will be forced to read them and soon, the guilt will lead to more responsible, more accountable journalism.

This, in case you have forgotten how media peddled outright lies in how the Kanhaiya episode at JNU was reported, or how a news channel floated the UPSC Jihad conspiracy or suggested that protesting farmers had been infiltrated by Khalistanis, or the moronic disinterest with which the northeast continues to be reported, should convince any consumer of “news” of how the sector requires more professionalism. In Sikkim’s case, the news-media admittedly needs to evolve beyond the incident-based reportage and press release-driven political reporting that currently pack our pages, in colour. None of these will happen if the readers remain aloof consumers. All of this and much more will arrive, if readers became more engaged and started demanding better.

### WRITE US:

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

# What Next For Ethiopia and Its Neighbours: Somalia and Eritrea

NAMHLA MATSHANDA  
THECONVERSATION.COM

From a historical standpoint, the current conflict in Ethiopia fits within an established political pattern. There have been power struggles between the centre and the border regions since the modern Ethiopian state was established in the late 19th century.

The Ethiopian state was built on the back of conquest. Regions that existed on the margins were incorporated into the Ethiopian imperial state. These regions were occupied by groups with vastly different cultures from those of the centre. For example the capture of the Harar city state in 1887 paved the way for King Menelik II to expand his territorial conquest to the lowland regions that were occupied by Somali speaking people. This territorial expansion was almost complete by the end of the 19th century, when the imperial state began to consolidate its territorial limits.

This process coincided with the scramble for Africa, when European colonial powers shared out the continent among themselves. Across the continent groups of people who shared cultural and other affinities found themselves on opposite sides of international borders.

Despite being occupied by Italy between 1936 and 1941, Ethiopia was never colonised. Nevertheless, the creation of the imperial state led to tensions and sometimes armed struggles with people who occupied the border regions. One example is the Somali speaking people in eastern Ethiopia.

As a result, Ethiopian leaders have always been preoccupied with protecting its territorial integrity. This preoccupation has often involved neighbouring states with an interest in Ethiopian statehood, most notably Somalia and Eritrea.

Somalia has long-standing territorial claims on parts of eastern Ethiopia, which are predominantly occupied by Somali-speaking people. Eritrea on the other hand embarked on an armed struggle for independence from Ethiopia, which it attained in 1993. This was followed by a power struggle, which included a disputed border and competing ideas of national identity.

The current conflict in the coun-



try risks spilling over. This is because countries in the region have shown a proclivity for getting involved in each other's business to achieve political gains at home. The interference occurs through shared borders and borderland regions that straddle similar groups of people.

### SPILLOVER

Ethiopia is a key political and economic state in the Horn of Africa, which is also home to Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. It has been involved in two conflicts with its neighbours in the past 50 years – Somalia in the south-east and Eritrea in the north. In 1977 the Somali state, then ruled by Siad Barre, invaded Ethiopia in a bid to take back territory it claimed. The invasion was largely aided by Somalis in Ethiopia. Ethiopia emerged victorious with Cuban and Soviet assistance.

Then in 1998 Eritrea and Ethiopia went to war over the disputed border town of Badme. But the dispute was about more than a dusty border town. It was also about competing national identities. In 2000 the Algiers Agreement led to a ceasefire. But the standoff continued until the intervention of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018.

The current Somali state is in a decidedly weak position and poses no immediate threat to Ethiopia. The same cannot be said of Eritrea. It has not recovered from the outcome of the 1998-2000 war. Since the ceasefire in 2000 the threat of war has lingered between Ethiopia and Eritrea because neither country felt satisfied with the recommendations of the border commission that was appointed to settle the dispute.

### THE CASE OF SOMALIA

Territorial tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia date back to the early 1960s when Somalia became

independent. The new Somali government tabled significant claims on Kenyan, Ethiopian and French Somaliland territories at the newly established Organisation of African Unity. By the end of 1963 and early 1964, Ethiopia and Somalia were engaged in their first military confrontation, where Ethiopia asserted its dominance.

Somalia never gave up its claim on the eastern regions of Ethiopia. In 1977 the country decided to invade Ethiopia in a bid to regain the territory. Ethiopia was still reeling from a change of regime in which Marxist forces had overthrown the imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie.

Currently, Somalia has its own preoccupations which are likely to keep it inwardly focused. The country failed to hold scheduled parliamentary elections on 1 December. If the government and the different political parties do not agree on how to hold free and fair elections some groups might resort to violence.

Somalia's security could also come under threat in 2021. Foreign peacekeeping troops who have been stationed in the country since the early 1990s are set to leave in 2021. With this scenario Al Shabaab could regroup and take advantage of the security vacuum.

And the Ethiopian troops stationed in Somalia were withdrawn in November 2020 shortly after the war in Tigray began.

### ERITREA

Eritrea is the one player in the region with the potential to stoke the flames of war.

Despite the recent restoration of diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and Eritrea, there are still unresolved issues.

In particular, there are still lingering tensions between Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and the leader-

ship of the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

The animosity stretches back three decades and has multiple sources.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Tigrayans maintained an alliance with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in the Tigray struggle against the authoritarian Derg regime, a military junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 until it was overthrown in 1991.

But the two sides never imagined an alliance beyond their mutual struggle against the Derg.

Relations turned sour after the Tigray front came to power as a constituent party of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1991. Once they defeated their common enemy their longstanding political and ideological differences resurfaced. The Tigrayans sought a democratic and decentralised Ethiopian state, while the Eritrean People's Liberation Front envisaged an authoritarian unitary state for Eritrea.

These diametrically opposite views were bound to end in conflict. And so it was that the erstwhile allies become enemies.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front went to war with Eritrea in 1998.

The eventual secession and independence of Eritrea generated a great deal of resentment in Ethiopia. Many saw it as an affront on the territorial integrity of the Ethiopian state.

Involvement in the current Ethiopian conflict would be in Eritrea's interests. Defeating the Tigray People's Liberation Front would restore national pride lost during the 1998-2000 war.

But this would come at the expense of regional stability.

The Horn has had its fair share of disruption and violence resulting in millions of displaced people, as well as hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Tens of thousands of people have already fled Ethiopia for Sudan since the Tigray conflict began. A worsening refugee crisis would inevitably burden Sudan. It could also lead to interventions from the different countries in the region.

*[the writer is Senior Lecturer, Political Studies, University of the Western Cape]*

# Brand activism is moving up the supply chain — corporate accountability or commercial censorship?

JOYA KEMPER  
THECONVERSATION.COM

When New Zealand digital media giant Stuff stopped using Facebook as an advertising partner in July this year, it joined the ranks of other openly activist brands. But it also showed how brand activism is moving from speaking directly to consumers to companies policing their own supply chains.

The trial decision was in response to concerns over “fake news, hate speech and fraudulent advertising” on Facebook, which conflicted with Stuff's charter under its new local ownership.

As such, it is part of a broad trend towards companies applying their own checks and balances on commercial ethics and activity. But this evolving role for business-to-business (B2B) brands is not without controversy or risk of financial blowback.

When does the act of removing products from stock, or boycotting a major supplier, move beyond marketing strategy to moral act? And when does it become censorship?

These questions relate directly to the tangible impacts of B2B activism: removing products from shelves, terminating licensing contracts, removing content from online platforms and firing clients and supply-chain part-

ners who don't align with a corporate brand's avowed values and purpose.

### SUPPLY-CHAIN ACTIVISM IS GROWING

Such activism may happen behind the retail face of a brand, but is nevertheless often about the perceptions of the end consumer.

For example, when Australian celebrity chef Pete Evans tweeted a neo-Nazi meme in November, publisher Pan Macmillan and licensed cookware makers Baccarat and House ended their partnerships with him. Baccarat said in a statement:

In our view, the images and views expressed by Mr Evans are abhorrent, unacceptable and deeply offensive.

Retailers across Australasia followed suit, pulling cookbooks and kitchenware lines from their shelves. There's an important distinction here between retailers simply refusing to stock products because they are offensive or defective, and refusing to stock products because of something a supplier has said or done.

This has been likened to “cancel culture” by some supply-chain partners vetoed by activist brands, and is forcing businesses to ask where they draw the line on perceived moral and ethical issues.

### CONSUMERS DEMAND TRANSPARENCY

This is new territory



for manufacturing and client-facing corporate brands, which had been somewhat exempted from the first wave of authentic brand activism.

Because B2B companies are insulated from direct customer contact, managers or buyers tasked with justifying corporate decision-making have tended to put costs ahead of social or emotional considerations.

But the rapid acceleration of brands as arbiters of social causes has inevitably moved back up the supply chain. Shoppers are increasingly aware of, and driven by, transparency.

For example, consumer watchdog groups wary of greenwashing or deceptive claims about green product performance have led to the rise of green supply-chain monitoring.

### NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

But end-consumer expectations now extend to social causes. This means we are witnessing the rise of the “pro-social supply chain”, increasingly driven by social and political considerations

rather than the bottom line.

Locally, apparel maker Icebreaker followed Stuff and stopped advertising on Facebook. And online retailer Mighty Ape pulled books by an author who mocked New Zealand's new foreign minister's moko kauae (facial tattoo).

Overseas, the Facebook boycott movement #StopHateForProfit organised by civil rights groups saw more than 1,000 companies join and cut their advertising spends.

Elsewhere, American hotel brand Motel 6 and others fired its longstanding advertising agency due to the founder's reportedly racist comments. And law firms Jones Day and Porter Wright pulled back from representing outgoing president Donald Trump in post-election lawsuits.

### NO ACTIONS WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES

B2B brand activism in the supply chain is not without consequences, however. Suppliers can lose contracts, revenue and livelihoods when

they are “cancelled” by clients further down the supply chain.

Activist brands are also at financial risk themselves — as Stuff would have been by forgoing market share due to its Facebook decision. The ideal outcome is that positive brand awareness drives business to offset any losses.

But, as our work on brand activism shows, authenticity is paramount: B2B brands' marketing and communication must align with purpose and genuine action. Once a corporate brand takes a stand, it must continue to advocate for sustainable ethical supply-chain practices — or risk being accused of “woke washing”.

The next challenge is clear: B2B brand activism must also involve actively infiltrating the supply chain to prioritise workplace safety, workers' rights and sustainability to keep pace with consumer demand for social purpose.

*[the writer is Lecturer in Marketing, University of Auckland]*



# Anti-CAA protests begin in Assam



**GUWAHATI, DEC 11 (PTI):** Fresh agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was launched by 18 organisations in Assam on Friday demanding repeal of the legislation and release of jailed KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi who was taken into custody during the protests last year.

Protest rallies were taken out across the state by the organisations, including Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, All Assam Students Union (AASU), Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad, Lachit Sena, besides students, and youth organi-

sations of ethnic communities.

The agitation began from Sivasagar, where it was launched last year before it was halted due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Mentioning that the CAA was against the identity, language and cultural heritage of the indigenous people of the state, the protestors were demanding that the act be rolled back.

They were also seeking immediate release of KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi.

Addressing the rallies, leaders of the organisations said, the people will give a "fitting reply" to the BJP-led dispen-

sation in Assam in the Assembly elections for allegedly "betraying the people by imposing the CAA upon them despite protests, since its introduction in Parliament till its enactment".

The state Assembly polls are due in March-April next year.

The AASU, that had launched the six-year long anti-foreigners Assam Movement (1979-1985), has called for a 'Rono Hungkar' (clarion call for war against CAA) from Saturday on the first 'anniversary' of the anti-CAA agitation.

The AASU hoisted black flag at its head-

quarters here and displayed such flags in seven northeast states under aegis of the North East Students Organisation demanding roll back of the CAA, AASU chief advisor Samujjal Bhat-tacharya told reporters.

"The government has to repeal the anti-Assam law that has claimed the lives of five Assamese citizens, including innocent students. The families of the deceased people and the AASU will continue to seek justice," an AASU press release, issued jointly by its president Dipanka Kumar Nath and general secre-

tary Shankar Jyoti Baruah, said.

Five persons had lost their lives during the anti-CAA protests in Guwahati last year.

The objective of the CAA is to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities -- Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian -- from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

People from these communities who had come to India till December 31, 2014 due to religious persecution in these countries will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

## Seven held in Bengal for attack on Nadda's convoy



**KOLKATA, DEC 11 (PTI):** Seven persons were arrested in West Bengal on Friday for their alleged involvement in the attack on BJP national president JP Nadda's convoy a day ago, a senior police officer said.

Four persons were arrested from Falta, and three from Usthi police station area, both in South 24 Parganas dis-

trict, he told PTI.

All seven of them were booked under various sections of the IPC for rioting, obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions and other offences.

Nadda's convoy was pelted with stones on Thursday morning by alleged TMC workers at Sirakol in Diamond Harbour area of South 24

Parganas district, where he had gone to address a rally.

Several BJP leaders including its Bengal minder Kailash Vijayvargiya suffered injuries, sources in the saffron party claimed.

Two suo moto cases were subsequently lodged against unknown people for carrying out the attack.

## MHA summons West Bengal chief secy, DGP on Dec 14



**NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI):** A day after BJP president J P Nadda's convoy was attacked in West Bengal, the Union home ministry on Friday summoned the state's chief secretary and director general of police on December 14.

West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay and Director General of Police (DGP) Virendra have been called by the home ministry, an official said.

The chief secretary and DGP are expected to be asked to explain the law and order situation in West Bengal, the steps taken to prevent political violence and other crimes in the state, another official said.

The two top-most civil and police officers of West Bengal were called by the home ministry within hours of receiving a report from West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on the law and

order situation in the state.

Dhankhar was asked to submit a report after Nadda's convoy was attacked on Thursday when he was travelling to Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district to address a rally there.

The home ministry is yet to receive a report from the state government on the "serious security lapses" during Nadda's two-day visit to the state.

## TMC hits out against MHA for summoning chief sec, DGP



**KOLKATA, DEC 11 (PTI):** The ruling TMC in West Bengal Friday hit out at the union home ministry for summoning the state chief secretary and director general of police for the attack on BJP national president J P Nadda's convoy and accused the saffron party of trying to create a situation where the central government can interfere in matters related to the states.

Senior TMC MPs Saugata Roy and Kalyan Banerjee alleged that Nadda's convoy had "convicted criminals" and goons who carried weapons with the mala-fide intention to instigate violence.

"What is the central government is doing by sending a letter (seeking report) from the state government is unconstitutional. The MHA summoning the chief secretary and DGP is unacceptable. The BJP and the central government is trying to create a situation where they can interfere with the federal structure," Bandopadhyay said at a press conference here.

The provocative speeches by BJP state president Dilip Ghosh are leading to a vicious situation, he said and claimed that Nadda was accompanied by "convicted criminal and armed men of BJP."

## Mizoram reports 14 new COVID-19 cases, one more death

**AIZAWL, DEC 11 (PTI):** Mizoram's COVID-19 tally rose to 4,008 as 14 more people including three BSF jawans tested positive for the infection, a health department official said on Friday.

The COVID-19 death toll climbed to seven as one more person succumbed to the infection, he said.

An 83-year-old man suffering from diabetes died at Zoram Medical College (ZMC) here on Friday, the official said.

Of the 14 fresh cases, 10 cases were

reported from Aizawl district, three from Lunglei and one from Lawngtlai district.

Six patients have developed symptoms of COVID-19, while the rest eight patients were asymptomatic.

The state now has 181 active COVID-19 cases, while 3,820 people have recovered from the disease, he said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state now is 95.31 per cent.

Mizoram has so far tested 1,62,246 samples for COVID-19 including 1,210 on Thursday, he added.

## Ladakh reports 26 new COVID-19 cases



**LEH, DEC 11 (PTI):** The Union Territory of Ladakh has reported 26 new cases during the last 24 hours pushing the infection tally to 9,071, an official bulletin said on Friday.

All the new cases were reported from Leh,

it said.

The number of people, who were successfully treated for the infection, has gone up to 8,172 after 70 more patients were discharged on Friday - 59 in Leh and 11 in Kargil, the officials said.

A total of 122 deaths were reported from Ladakh including 79 in Leh district and 43 in Kargil district, it said.

The number of active cases stands at 777 including 666 in Leh and 111 in Kargil, the bulletin said.

## Meghalaya CM tests positive for COVID-19



**SHILLONG, DEC 11 (PTI):** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Friday said he has tested positive for COVID-19, and asked people who came in touch with him recently to get themselves tested, if necessary.

Taking to Twitter, the chief minister said he was undergoing home

isolation.

"I have tested positive for #Covid\_19. I am under home isolation and experiencing mild symptoms. I request all those who came in contact with me in the past 5 days to kindly keep a watch on their health and if necessary get tested. Stay safe," he tweeted.

Two of Sangma's cab-

inet colleagues -- Health Minister AL Hek and Urban Affairs Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar -- were diagnosed with the infection in October.

Both of them have recovered.

Meghalaya has registered 12,586 COVID-19 patients so far, of which 123 have succumbed to the infection.

## 32 new COVID-19 cases in Nagaland; tally rises to 11,634

**KOHEMA, DEC 11 (PTI):** Nagaland's COVID-19 tally mounted to 11,634 with detection of 32 fresh cases, a health official said on Friday.

Sixty-six patients also recovered from COVID-19, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 10,812, he said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state is 92.93 per cent, said Dr Denis Hangsing in the daily COVID-19 bulletin.

"32 +ve cases of #COVID-19 have been detected today.

Kiphire- 18, Peren-11, Dimapur- 3. Also, 66 +ve patients have recovered. Kohima-48, Mon-14, Dimapur-3, Peren-1," Health Minister S Pangnyu Phom said in a tweet.

Nagaland now has 629 active COVID-19 cases, the official said.

Altogether 71



COVID-19 infected patients have died in the state, of which 61 are due to contagion, seven had comorbidities and death of 3 patients is under investigation, he said.

Altogether 122 patients have migrated to other states, he said.

The district wise distribution of COVID-19 cases - Dimapur (6,312), Kohima (3,576), Mon 600, Peren (492), Tuensang (238), Zunheboto (142), Mokokchung (123), Kiphire (50), Phek (44), Wokha (39) and Longleng (18).

Of the confirmed cases, 4,634 are traced

contacts, 4,629 armed forces or security personnel, 1,813 returnees from other states and 558 frontline workers, he said.

The district wise active cases are Kohima (355), Dimapur (185), Tuensang (42), Peren (19), Mon (10), Wokha (7), Kiphire (7), Mokokchung (2) and Zunheboto (2).

So far, a total of 1,16,359 COVID-19 samples have been tested in Nagaland, including 70,934 through RT-PCR, 36,248 on TrueNat and 9,177 on Rapid Antigen Test, said Dr Hangsing.

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## Hamilton, Doyle and Liverpool win SJA Awards

**LONDON, 11 DEC (REUTERS):** Seven-times Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton, female jockey Hollie Doyle and Premier League champions Liverpool were the main winners at Britain's Sports Journalists Association (SJA) awards on Thursday.

The ceremony was conducted virtually, instead of the usual gala event, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hamilton was named Sportsman of the Year after becoming the most successful Formula One driver of all time in a record-breaking season in which he equalled Ferrari great Michael Schumacher's seven titles.

The Mercedes driver, who also won the award in his debut 2007 season with McLaren, is competing in the year's final race in Abu Dhabi this weekend after recovering from the new coronavirus.

Doyle was Sports-woman of the Year after becoming the first female jockey to win five races on one card at Windsor in August.

"I've never felt like I have not been accepted in this industry at all to be honest, I think it is just the fact there aren't as many females wanting to be jockeys as there are males," she said.

"Doors are opening and things are changing, and they are going in the right direction so that's great."

Liverpool were Team of the Year.

"In many ways, it was a pretty exceptional season and an exceptional year, it's an award for my team and I think they really deserved it," said manager Jurgen Klopp.

## Rashford only has eyes for Man United

**LONDON, 11 DEC (REUTERS)** - Marcus Rashford is drawing interest from some of Europe's top clubs but the young Manchester United forward said he wants to be a one-club man. Rashford came out of United's academy and scored twice on his senior debut in the Europa League in 2016 at the age of 18. He now has 77 goals in 232 club appearances.

"For me, I never look beyond Manchester United," Rashford told the Sports Journalists' Association. "As a kid I've never looked beyond Manchester United in my mind, it wouldn't sit right for me to be pulling on another shirt." Rashford was speaking after being announced as one of the winners of the Sport for Social Change award. The 23-year-old has been recognised for his efforts to end child food poverty in Britain.

He said his bond with United ran deep.

"I am talking about the times when they put me into accommodation when my mum was struggling at home, when I was 11-years-old and I was there until 16 or 17, so it is a lot deeper than what people see sometimes," Rashford said.

"They have given me the opportunity to express myself and to find out that I have talent in football."

# Netball asked to finally ditch dresses after skirting issue for too long

**MEGAN MAURICE**  
**NEW YORK, 11 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** Walk into any netball association on a biting cold winter morning and you will notice one thing. While parents and spectators are wrapped up in heavy coats, nursing hot cups of coffee, the players do their best to fight off the cold while wearing sleeveless dresses.

Frostbitten arms and legs are one thing, but even more alarming is the fact that young girls and women are turning their backs on the sport because of the nature of the uniforms. According to Netball Australia's State of the Game report released on Thursday, this is an urgent issue to address.

The report canvassed opinions from across the netball community, from grassroots to elite players, and the issue of uniforms was one that echoed strongly through all levels of the game. As one stakeholder quote in the report puts it: "We need to be creative in how we include everyone in our sport. For some people, the uniform is the issue and allowing them to wear different clothes would be a simple fix."

Dresses and skirts have long been a staple of the game, from the box pleat tunics of the 1920s through to pleated netball skirts, lycra bodysuits and the lightweight A-line dresses that play-



ers now don each week. A move away from this style would be a radical change for a sport that is deeply rooted in tradition.

And yet, observe any training session from the local under-8s through to district representative teams, state teams and the elite level and you will see there is nary a skirt or dress to be found. When players choose what they want to wear, rather than being given a prescribed uniform, they are almost exclusively choosing shorts and tights.

Thankfully times have changed since I was a child playing in the 1990s and we were required to lift our skirts up to show the umpire that we were wearing bloomers underneath before starting each game. Although it was important that we participated in the performance of femininity by wearing skirts, it would have been unthinkable

to allow anyone to catch a glimpse of our underwear while doing so.

But the attitudes that shaped those kind of rules and rituals unfortunately have not evolved. Despite the frenzy around innovative rule changes such as the two-point super shot, netball has still not confronted the female/athlete paradox, where the traditionally 'masculine' traits of strength and aggression – which are required in sport – must be balanced by femininity in appearance. This is where the dresses come in. There is an idea that the audience can feel comfortable in seeing players clash in the air, fight for the ball and be taken from the court with blood streaming from their faces as long as they do so while dressed appropriately for their gender.

However, is this all really worth it when the pool to draw players from is ever-decreasing as young girls refuse to

participate in the sport at all? As the State of the Game report also addressed, netball still relies on a bottom-up funding model, meaning the fewer players stepping out on those cold winter mornings, the fewer dollars in the bank account for Suncorp Super Netball to pay its players and market its product.

One of the most difficult things to grasp about the fact that this change has taken so long to even be considered, let alone implemented, is that grassroots netball does not require uniforms at all. Players wear positional bibs and many social competitions have recognised this completely does away with a need for uniforms. When one team wears fluoro pink bibs and the other team wears yellow ones, it simply does not matter that some players choose to wear baggy T-shirts and tights, while others opt for

singlets and shorts.

This also makes it easier to account for the religious and cultural needs of some players, such as those from Muslim backgrounds. When inclusion is built into the fabric of the sport, rather than granted by special request, it allows everyone to find their place within it.

For as long as it has existed, netball has been a sport by women, for women. That comes with challenges, as it lacks a powerful and well-funded men's league to pave the way, but it also has plenty of benefits, such as the ability to be unashamedly female-centric. The time has now come to listen to the voices of girls and women across the country – not just those who fit the traditional mould of a netballer, but those who sit outside it as well – in order to grow the game and ensure it is a sport for all women.

Netball has the opportunity to become a safe place for girls to be more active, play with freedom from concerns about body image and claim their space. Currently the sport is building its own barriers out of lycra and nylon and needs to start tearing these down if they want to remain relevant in this new, more competitive sporting world for girls and women.

## Anthony Joshua taking Klitschko route to title defence against Pulev

**DONALD MCRAE**  
**LAS VEGAS, 11 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** The hours drag in the last, slow week of a world heavyweight title fight and Anthony Joshua has been sparring at night as a way of killing time while sharpening his final preparations.

The IBF, WBA and WBO belt holder faces Kubrat Pulev on Saturday and, usually, a heavyweight champion would have cut back on all forms of sparring by now, but Joshua said: "The body can get soft easy. You've got to stay switched on, shots coming at you, gauging distance, feeling different shots. I want someone in the ring imitating Pulev. I want to spar tonight."

Joshua shook his head when asked if being cooped up in a Covid bubble had left him restless and in need of a workout in the ring. "No, we've always sparred [in the week of the fight].

We'll be in a hotel somewhere and we will call one of the local gyms. It's important to have someone beside you who can push you. It's good for preparation.

"I have never had a problem with sparring with anyone getting stuck in. That's been the best way and what I've learned from [the former world champion] Wladimir Klitschko, which is the value of getting all the best talent into one space to challenge me as champion. Four rounds with one, four rounds with another one. I've been out for a year and they've got me tough. They've got me ready."

Eddie Hearn, his promoter, looked briefly alarmed when Joshua casually mentioned he had been in the ring without a headguard on Wednesday night. "We did eight rounds, six with the headguard and two without," Joshua said. "Rob McCracken [his trainer]



didn't like it. But I know what works for me and Rob manages it. We work together. I could hit the pads, but they don't hit back. The heavy bag doesn't move.

"Having a live opponent in front of you, moving your legs, becomes second nature. The best thing I can do is to do what I need to replicate on Saturday. The ring here [in the hotel] is tiny so I'm going to get into the ring on Saturday and have loads of space to do my job. These things are important."

McCracken has trained Joshua since he was an amateur who

went on to win gold at London 2012. He made an important point when asked about Joshua taking his headguard off during sparring. "It's for the tippy-tappy stuff," he stressed. "When you do the open sparring the headguard's got to stay on."

McCracken is too considered a man to allow Joshua to take any unnecessary risks in the ring this close to a title fight and he said: "It's not sparring as you think, it's technical, touch stuff. Just to get his coordination and eye in."

Joshua learned some valuable lessons from Klitschko, who defeat-

ed Pulev in a world title defence in 2014 – when Joshua also sparred with Klitschko. "It's crazy how the universe works. I was in a camp with Wladimir and then I fought him [in 2017]. At the time I didn't really understand the implications of the way Wladimir was training [for Pulev], but I have actually implemented some of the stuff he did in my training for this camp."

Did he learn any specific lessons which will help him beat Pulev? "Definitely. Klitschko was like a heavyweight factory. He invited every heavyweight to his training camp."

Joshua has been an intriguing mix this week of quiet edginess and amiable good cheer. The waiting is almost over and it seems as if his relatively unconventional if gentle sparring in these last nights of preparation has helped him. But he knows that the dangerous and deeply serious work awaits on Saturday.

## An MLS title is in view for Columbus Crew, a club saved by fan power

**GRAHAM RUTHVEN**  
**LOS ANGELES, 11 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** Comebacks make for great sporting tales and in winning the Eastern Conference, and progressing to the 2020 MLS Cup final, the Columbus Crew completed a remarkable turnaround. But their comeback wasn't from a goal or two down. No, the Crew came back from the brink of extinction. Or relocation, at least.

Next season will see Austin FC join Major League Soccer as the competition's 27th franchise and Columbus fans know the new club's owner, Anthony Precourt, well. It was Precourt who, in his five years as Crew owner, proposed moving the Ohio club 1,200 miles south to Texas. He saw more commercial potential in Austin than in Columbus, where there has been a league club since 1995.

Crew fans like to boast that they support the first-ever MLS club, due to the fact that Columbus was the first city to sell 10,000 season tickets, a milestone set out as a precursor to launch. There is no doubting Columbus' place in American soccer folklore, with the city home to MLS's first ever soccer specific stadium. Columbus was one of the first places to truly embrace the league in its early days.

Fan protest and grassroots organisation kept the Columbus Crew in Columbus. 'Save The Crew' wasn't just a movement that resonated in Ohio. It gained support from across the American soccer community and drew a new ownership group that included the owners of the Cleveland Browns. On 28 December 2018, after various local court verdicts, the Edwards and Haslam families completed their takeover of the Crew and vowed to keep the franchise where it was.

Less than two years later, Caleb Porter's side are in the MLS Cup final and rather than being the end of something, as would have been the case had Precourt got his way, there is a sense of new beginnings around the Crew. Victory over the Seattle Sounders on Saturday would be the culmination of all that has happened over the last few years, but it would also point the Crew in the direction of a new, glorious age. A preview of further triumphs to come.

It feels fitting the game will be played at Mapfre Stadium given the role it has played in the Crew's history. It won't be the last time the Columbus Crew play there, with the move to a new downtown stadium not expected until next summer, but this will likely be the last time the venue plays host to a showcase match having become something of a spiritual home for the American game over the last two decades. 'Dos a Cero' will forever be a scoreline synonymous with this venue.

Mapfre Stadium, however, has been left behind by the modern era. Compare the stadi-

um to the likes of LAFC's Banc of California Stadium and Minnesota United's Allianz Field and its shortcomings are clear. It is a relic of a bygone age, MLS 1.0, with its bleachers and 'stadium in a parking lot' feel. The Crew's new downtown home, with its fan plazas and executive suites, will carry the club into the future. The move to the new stadium will set the tone for the next generation of soccer in Columbus and put the Precourt days firmly behind the franchise.

MLS Cup glory would also be emblematic of a club moving on. Porter has built a strong team since replacing Gregg Berhalter for the start of the 2019 season. The Crew are a well-constructed, well-coached outfit with the fingerprints of their meticulous head coach clearly visible. Porter's side haven't enthralled like Atlanta United and LAFC have in recent seasons, but they deserve to be in the MLS Cup final.

Porter has managed to fold a sense of destiny into his coaching of the Crew. "I look for a story when I take on a job," he explained after the Eastern Conference final win over the New England Revolution. "I picked this job because I liked the story of the Columbus Crew. The tradition of Columbus Crew being the first club, the tradition of success; and I like the idea of reviving it, reinvigorating it, and obviously bringing a trophy to their fans."

The role of the fans is so central to the Columbus Crew's story that it is a great pity only 1,500 of them will be in the stands for the final. Covid-19 has robbed so many fanbases of great moments in 2020 and this could be another such case. For all that Porter and his players will undoubtedly feel the support of the small number of fans at Mapfre Stadium on Sunday, the spectacle will be dulled. Any celebrations will be softened.

Nonetheless, victory over Seattle would be a reward for a group of supporters and a city that refused to accept the disintegration of its team. A soccer club is about much more than just the players on the pitch or the head coach in the dugout. At the core of every club is a community and this has been reinforced by the 'Save The Crew' movement and the subsequent recovery of one of America's most historic teams.

In the long-term, Precourt's plan to relocate the Crew to Texas could be one of the best things to ever happen to the club. Under his stewardship, this was a franchise lacking direction and purpose. Columbus have never managed to match the average attendance record they set in their expansion season. It took the threat of losing the team to re-engage and re-establish a community connection. Mapfre Stadium will be largely empty on Sunday, but the spirit of the Crew's fans will be with them for the match and for ever more.

## Sociedad and Young Boys scrape into Europa League last 32

**MARTYN HERMAN**  
**LONDON, 11 DEC (REUTERS):** Real Sociedad and Young Boys squeezed into the last 32 of the Europa League and were joined in the knockout phase by Napoli, Molde, Maccabi Tel-Aviv and Wolfsburg while Tottenham Hotspur secured top spot as group play concluded on Thursday.

Jose Mourinho's Spurs side had already guaranteed progress but second-half goals by Carlos Vinicius and Giovanni Lo Celso earned a 2-0 win over Royal Antwerp as they leapfrogged the Belgians who had also qualified from Group J.

While Tottenham cruised it was a frantic night across the continent as others left it late to stay alive.

Real Sociedad's Wilian Jose snatched a stoppage-time goal to secure a 1-1 draw at Napoli as the high-flying Liga side got through in second spot behind the Italians in Group F.

They were in danger of heading out as they trailed to Piotr Zielinski's 35th-minute effort for section leaders Napoli but breathed a sigh of relief with Wilian Jose's late leveller.

AZ Alkmaar would have finished above So-

ciedad with a win at bottom club Rijeka but lost 2-1 as Ivan Tomecak scored for the Croatian hosts in added time to secure their only group win.

For Swiss club Young Boys it was even tighter as they beat visiting Romanians Cluj 2-1 in a dramatic Group A clash.

Cluj, who needed a win to leapfrog Young Boys, went ahead in the 84th minute through Gabriel Debeljuh.

But in an astonishing climax Jean-Pierre Nsame's penalty levelled it in stoppage time after keeper Cristian Balgradean was red-carded

before Nsame was himself sent off in the 95th.

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I can't keep all my players happy, says Mourinho

A minute later Gianluca Gaudino slotted a Young Boys winner and Cluj ended with nine men as Damjan Dokovic was dismissed.

Young Boys finished runners-up behind already-qualified AS Roma who lost 3-1 at CSKA Sofia. **MOLDE ADVANCE**

Norwegians Molde progressed as they drew 2-2 at Rapid Vienna who could have overtaken them. Captain Wolff Eikrem scored twice for



# Cuba's president to its dual currency system January 1

**HAVANA, DEC 11 (AP):** Cuba will unify its monetary system on New Year's Day, President Miguel Díaz-Canel announced Thursday evening, closing the door on more than 25 years with two national currencies in circulation.

Díaz-Canel said in a national radio and television broadcast that the country will revert to using its peso, which has an official exchange rate of 24 for a US dollar.

It will drop the convertible peso, which is worth about USD 1.

Government officials for several years had conceded the difficulties of having the two currencies and different exchange rates, but they made no move to impose a reorganisation because of worries about the potential negative impact, including inflation.

Most Cubans have



been paid in the regular peso, which is worth about four cents. The stronger currency was introduced as a replacement for the dollars traded on the black market during the island's post-Soviet economic crisis in the 1990s.

Over time, the communist government used the two currencies to set extremely low prices for

goods and services considered basic rights and extremely high prices for others considered luxuries, creating distortions that hindered economic growth.

It also bred resentment at Cubans who worked in tourism and had access to the stronger currency.

Cuba is suffering a severe economic crisis arising from its unproductive economy and sanctions imposed by US President Donald Trump to pressure the government.

The monetary change will put the country in a better position to carry out the transformations needed for strengthening the economy, the president said, though he conceded the change will not be a magic solution to all the problems.

## Argentina's lower house approves draft legalizing abortion

**BUENOS AIRES (AP):** Lawmakers in Argentina's lower house on Friday passed a bill that would legalize abortion in most cases, responding to long-sought demands from women's rights activists.

The bill, which needs approval from the country's Senate in a debate expected before the end of the year, allows for abortions to be carried out up to the 14th week of pregnancy.

Backed by President Alberto Fernández, the bill was approved in a 131-117 vote with six abstentions after a debate that extended from Thursday into the early hours of Friday morning.

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## Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai charged under security law



**HONG KONG (AP):** Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and media tycoon Jimmy Lai has been charged under the city's national security law, amid a widening crackdown on dissent, according to local media reports.

Lai, who founded the Apple Daily tabloid, was charged on suspicion of colluding with foreign forces and endangering national security, local broadcaster TVB reported Friday. He is the most high-profile person out of more than two dozen charged under the law since it was implemented in June.

He is scheduled to appear in court on Dec. 12, and could face a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

Police said in a statement that they arrested a 73-year-old man under the national security law, but did not name him.

Lai was arrested under the national security law in August. He and

two executives of Next Digital, the company that operates the Apple Daily newspaper, were later charged with fraud over accusations that they violated lease terms on office space the company. He was denied bail earlier this month.

Beijing imposed the national security law in response to protests in Hong Kong that began in June 2019 over a proposed extradition law and expanded to include demands for greater democracy in the former British colony.

The legislation outlaws secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces to intervene in Hong Kong's internal affairs. In certain cases, those charged under the national security law could also face trial in mainland China, where the legal system is highly opaque.

The sweeping legislation prompted more public protests and led to

complaints that Beijing is violating the autonomy promised to Hong Kong when it was handed over to China from Britain in 1997. Critics have said the law is also damaging Hong Kong's status as a business center.

Apple Daily criticized the law on its front page on July 1, calling it the "final nail in the coffin" of the territory's autonomy.

Lai has advocated for other countries to take a harsher stance on China, and last year he traveled to the U.S. to meet with Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to discuss the proposed extradition bill.

He was also arrested in February and April on charges of taking part in unauthorized protests. He also faces charges of joining an unauthorized vigil marking the anniversary of the June 4, 1989, crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

## UN backs Afghan peace talks in resolution, Russia votes 'no'

**UNITED NATIONS, DEC 11 (AP):** The UN General Assembly approved a resolution over Russian objections Thursday commending progress in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban while urging stepped-up efforts to tackle terrorist attacks by the Taliban, al-Qaida, the Islamic State extremist group and their affiliates.

The vote in the 193-member world body was 130 in favour, Russia against, and China, Pakistan and Belarus abstaining.

Fifty-nine countries did not vote.

The 15-page resolution titled The Situation in Afghanistan covers a wide range of issues including peace and reconciliation, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, counter-narcotics, social and economic development and regional cooperation.

While welcoming

progress in the intra-Afghan talks, including the December 2 agreement on rules of procedure for negotiations, the resolution condemns the high rate of continued violence.

It says this is contributing to an unacceptable number of casualties" and calls for an immediate cessation of violence and strongly encourages the Afghan government and the Taliban to pursue confidence-building measures and to reduce violence.

The resolution reiterates the General Assembly's serious concern" about the security situation in Afghanistan and stresses the need to continue to address the threat to the country's stability from violence committed by the Taliban, including the Haqqani Network, as well as al-Qaida, Islamic State, their affiliates and other terrorist and criminal groups.

Afghanistan's UN

ambassador, Adela Raz, expressed regret that despite her government's strong support for the resolution it wasn't adopted by consensus, saying the measure reflects developments that are taking place on the ground and particularly the progress in the peace process.

Raz said the goal of the government, Afghanistan's neighbours and the General Assembly is to incorporate the Taliban as a political party.

It is our utmost aim to see the Taliban as a constructive political party in the country, without the relationship with al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, working for prosperity and peace in Afghanistan, she said.

Noting that UN experts monitoring sanctions against the Taliban say it maintains ties to terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, Raz said the resolution is balanced regarding the

Taliban's willingness to take firm steps towards peace and reconciliation and its continuing attacks and terrorist ties.

German Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, whose country led negotiations on the resolution, said that out of all the 'special years' for Afghanistan declared in the past two decades, 2020 was indeed singular.

Most important was the start of Afghan peace negotiations in September, he said after detailing all the events leading to the talks, starting with the US-Taliban agreement in February.

Heusgen also pointed to pledges of more than USD 13 billion in foreign aid and stabilisation for Afghanistan at a donors conference in Geneva just over two weeks ago as evidence that the international community stands firmly behind the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its ongoing quest to

achieve self-reliance.

He said the resolution is constructive and forward-looking and the vote signals that the General Assembly "stands behind the Afghan people in a very difficult period of the country.

Russia's deputy UN ambassador, Anna Evstigneeva, sharply criticised Germany's role in the negotiations, saying there was blatant disregard for Moscow's concerns.

She also said it is an attempt to conceal the true scope of threats from the Islamic State extremist group and drug issues threatening the country's security.

She accused Germany of having a pre-established biased position favouring one group of states, which she didn't name, and said it should no longer facilitate negotiations on the Afghanistan resolution in the General Assembly.

## EU plans to hit Turkey with more sanctions over Med drilling

**BRUSSELS, DEC 11 (AP):** European Union leaders early Friday gave the green light for the expansion of sanctions against Turkey over its exploration of gas reserves in Mediterranean waters claimed by EU members Greece and Cyprus.

Regrettably, Turkey has engaged in unilateral actions and provocations and escalated its rhetoric against the EU, EU member states and European leaders, they said in a statement from their summit in Brussels.

At their last summit in October, the leaders offered a positive political EU-Turkey agenda to Ankara, including trade and customs benefits and the prospect of more funds to help Turkey manage Syrian refugees on its territory if it halts its illegal activities in the eastern Mediterranean.

The leaders said that offer remains on the table if Turkey is prepared to enter into a genuine partnership and begin a real dialogue with the EU, and if Ankara shows a willingness to resolve differences through dialogue and in accordance with international law.

But given the lack of a response so far, they in-



vited the 27-nation bloc's ministers to adopt additional listings for sanctions concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The leaders told EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell to draw up a report on the state of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations and to suggest how to proceed, including on widening sanctions, and submit it to the leaders by the time they hold their summit in March next year.

Pressure had been mounting for the EU to act, given its previous threats and Turkey's refusal to respond.

The stakes are very precise, very clear: the

credibility of the European Union, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said ahead of the meeting.

He recalled that the leaders said in October that there would be consequences if Turkey continued its delinquent behaviour.

So now, it will be seen whether, as Europe, we are really credible in what we ourselves have agreed to, Mitsotakis said.

The 27 EU countries are split over how best to handle Turkey.

France and Cyprus have pushed for tougher measures like economic sanctions, but other countries are concerned about further undermining the country's already ravaged economy and

destabilizing the region.

On Wednesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan brushed off the threat of sanctions and accused the EU, which Turkey is a candidate to join although its membership talks are blocked, of acting dishonestly and failing to keep its promises.

Any decision to impose sanctions against Turkey won't be of great concern to Turkey, Erdogan told reporters.

Just over a year ago, the EU set up a system for imposing travel bans and asset freezes on people, companies or organisations linked to drilling activities which have not been authorised by the Republic of Cyprus, within its territorial sea or in its exclu-

sive economic zone or on its continental shelf.

Two officials are currently on the list: the Vice-President of the Turkish Petroleum Corporation and the deputy director of its Exploration Department. The idea is to add more people or some organisations to the list.

It's unclear anyway whether more sanctions would slow Turkey down.

Steps were taken in the past the slashing of funds meant to prepare Turkey for EU membership and the virtual freezing of its accession talks yet Ankara has only become more vocal.

On top of that, Erdogan has shown his willingness to encourage migrants and refugees from Syria to cross the border into Greece and on into Europe, which remains deeply destabilised by the arrival of well over 1 million people in 2015, to ensure that his demands are well understood.

Turkey also plays a military role in Libya, a main jumping-off point in Africa for migrants hoping to reach Europe.



**MEXICO CITY, DEC 11 (AP):** The lower house of Mexico's congress has unanimously approved a law that would prohibit all forms of physical punishment of children by parents, caretakers, teachers or guardians.

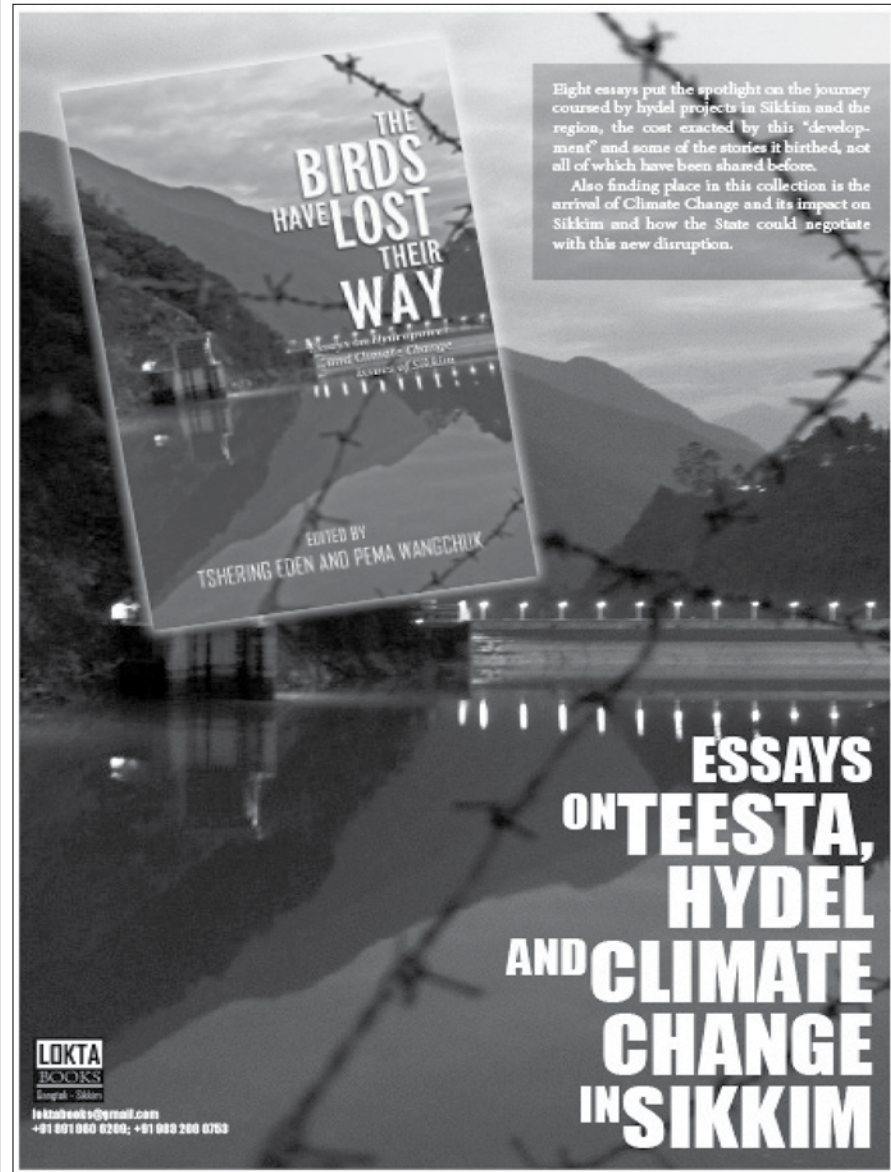
Spanking is out, as is a long list of corporal

punishments that speak to how deep-rooted the practice is in Mexico. Congress on Thursday said an estimated 63% of children between 1 and 14 had suffered physical punishment.

According to congress, shoving, pinching, biting, hair- or

ear-pulling, or forcing minors into uncomfortable positions, will all be outlawed.

The law, which now goes to the president for his approval, does not lay out specific punishments for each offence; violations appear to fall under domestic violence statutes in each state.





## Taylor Swift surprises fans with another album due tonight

Taylor Swift fans are getting a double reason to celebrate this year — the singer-songwriter is about to release her second album in 2020.

“To put it plainly, we just couldn’t stop writing songs,” Swift wrote in social media posts Thursday morning. “I’ve never done this before. In the past I’ve always treated albums as one-off eras and moved onto planning the next one after an album was released.”

Swift said the new album is called “Evermore,” which she described as a “sister” album to her latest release, “Folklore.” A video for a new song, “Willow,” will arrive along with the album, to be released at midnight ET Thursday.

Taylor revealed the track list for the 15-song new album and noted that some of the guests are Haim, The National and Bon Iver. She turns 31 on Sunday.

“Folklore,” released this summer, en-



joyed three separate visits to No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart and became the first album to sell a million copies in the U.S. in 2020.

On Instagram, Swift said working on “Folklore” was different than her previous albums and she just kept writing songs. “I felt less like I was departing and more like I was returning. I loved the escapism I found in these imaginary/not imaginary tales,” she wrote.

“I loved the ways you welcomed the dreamscapes and tragedies and epic tales of love lost and found into your lives. So I just kept writing them.”



**HOLIDAY SHOPPING!** The actress, Ana de Armas steps out in a casual white tee and yellow paisley printed pants while shopping on Promenade Street in Santa Monica.

## Tommy ‘Tiny’ Lister, who played Deebo in ‘Friday,’ dies

**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Tommy “Tiny” Lister, a former professional wrestler who was known for his bullying Deebo character in the “Friday” films, has died. He was 62.

Lister’s manager, Cindy Cowan, said he was found unconscious in his home in Marina Del Rey, California, on Thursday afternoon. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Cowan said Lister was diagnosed with COVID-19 earlier this year. She said the actor overcame the virus, but he became sick about a week ago and recently had trouble breathing.

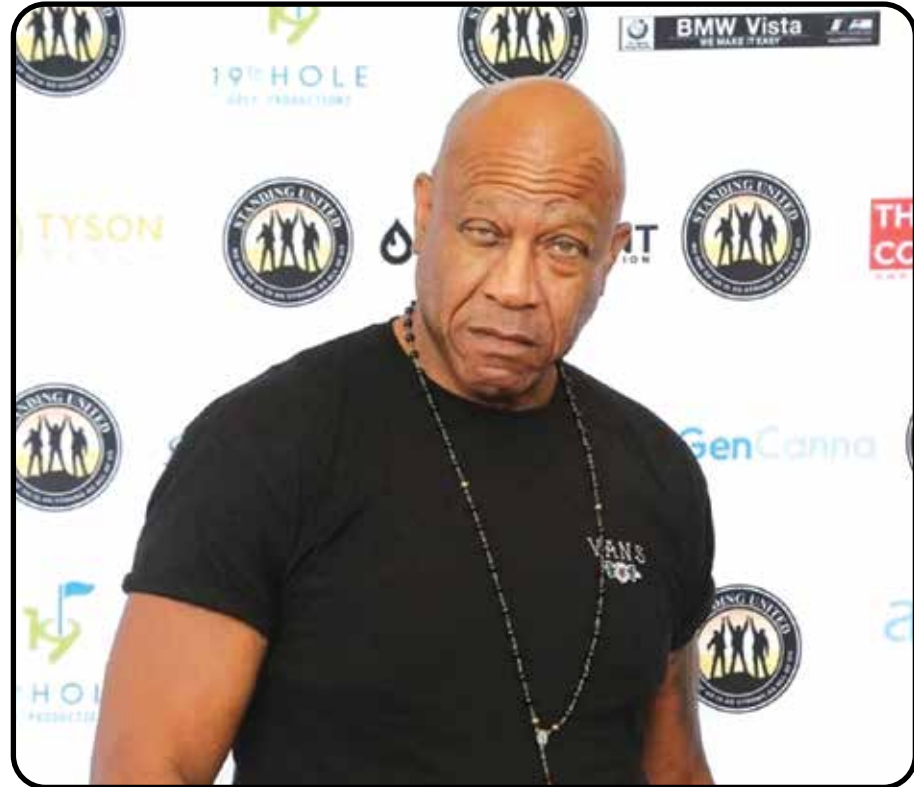
The cause of death has not been released, and the coroner’s office is investigating.

“He was a gentle giant,” Cowan said. “He had a smile as broad as you could imagine. He’s going to be missed by so many. We’re all devastated.”

Lister started his career as a pro wrestler, standing 6-foot-5 with broad shoulders at about 275 pounds. His early roles included HBO football series “1st & Ten” along with movie appearances in “Beverly Hills Cop II,” which starred Eddie Murphy, and “No Holds Barred,” the 1989 film where his character Zeus challenged Hulk Hogan in a wrestling match.

The actor, who was blind in his right eye since birth, wrestled Hogan in the World Wrestling Federation in an actual match after the “No Holds Barred” film release. He also had a short stint in the World Championship Wrestling under the name Z-Gangsta.

However, Lister’s most notable role came in the 1995 film “Friday” and its sequel five years later. He portrayed the



role of Deebo, a felon who was known as the neighborhood bully who terrorized his neighbors with intimidation and fear. His character was known for his infamous line “Get knocked out like your father used to.”

“RIP Tiny “Deebo” Lister,” Ice Cube said Thursday night on Instagram. “America’s favorite bully was a born entertainer who would pop into character at the drop of a hat terrifying people on and off camera. Followed by a big smile and laugh. Thank you for being a good dude at heart. I miss you already!”

Lister also appeared in “The Fifth Element,” “The Dark Knight” and “Austin Powers in Goldmember.”

## DeGeneres: Positive test for coronavirus but ‘feeling fine’

**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Ellen DeGeneres says she has tested positive for COVID-19 but is “feeling fine right now.”

Production on her daytime talk show has been paused until January, producer Telepictures said in a statement that followed DeGeneres’ Thursday announcement.

In an Instagram post, DeGeneres said anyone who was in close contact with her has been notified, adding that she’s following “all proper CDC guidelines,” a reference to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“I’ll see you all again after the holidays. Please stay healthy and safe,” DeGeneres said in her post.

Reruns of “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” were to air starting Thursday.

When the coronavirus outbreak hit in March, DeGeneres shifted to taping without a studio audience, as did other talk shows. When the series began its 18th season in September,



her show added fans virtually into the seats, then said it would allow a few dozen people into the studio.

## ‘Carry On’ and ‘EastEnders’ star Barbara Windsor dies at 83

**LONDON (AP):** British actress Barbara Windsor, whose seven-decade career ranged from cheeky film comedies to the soap opera “EastEnders,” has died, her husband said. She was 83.

Husband Scott Mitchell said Windsor died at a care home in London on Thursday from Alzheimer’s disease. She had been diagnosed with the form of dementia in 2014.

“Myself, her family and friends will remember Barbara with love, a smile and affection for the many years of her love, fun, friendship and brightness she brought to all our lives and the entertainment she gave to so many thousands of others during her career,” Mitchell said in a statement.

Windsor was born Barbara Ann Deeks in London’s East End in 1937 and changed her name to Windsor for her first film, “The Belles of St. Trinian’s,” in 1954. The name was inspired by the House of Windsor, family of the newly



crowned Queen Elizabeth II.

She began her career on the stage — gaining a Tony Award nomination in 1965 when the anti-war musical “Oh, What a Lovely War!” went to Broadway — before becoming a member of the ensemble cast of the “Carry On” films, a series of cheap and cheerful comedies specializing in slapstick and bawdy jokes. Windsor’s bubbly manner and wicked laugh were an essential part of the “Carry On” formula, and she ap-

peared in nine of the comedies between 1964 and 1974. The films, crude and dated in many ways, are still screened on television and fondly remembered by millions.

Windsor’s second defining role came as Cockney matriarch Peggy Mitchell in “EastEnders” between 1994 and 2016. The character ran the Queen Vic pub, heart of the fictional London district of Walford. Mitchell was kind-hearted but fearsome, worrying over her wayward sons and brining rowdy customers into line by bellowing “Get out of my pub!”

Windsor was made a dame, the female equivalent of a knight, by the queen in 2016 for services to entertainment and for her work raising awareness about dementia.

The Alzheimer’s Society said Windsor “was an amazingly true, much-loved national treasure, and in speaking out about her experiences shone like a beacon for others affected by dementia.”

### ARIES:

Just because you’ve been doing things a certain way, does not mean you have to continue to. The cards are pointing towards the infinite possibilities that lie before you—possibilities that are waiting to be embraced. Yes, there are things you will have to sacrifice in order to turn the landscape of your life around—the self-imposed limitations being one of them. So what is the story you are going to tell yourself today? PS: We do hope you find a way to reaffirm your power and potential.

### TAURUS:

Where we are right now energetically is best described as ‘the eclipse tunnel’ (there’s another one coming our way on December 14, remember?). In other words, things are getting wild and way out of control around here. Given your circumstances, it will be easy for you to convince yourself that everything is working against you, that the Universe is plotting and planning your doom. But the truth is, there is a major clean-up that is taking place right now. So affirm the story in which everything will work out alright in the end as you continue to fulfil your dharma. PS: The Universe could surprise you in more ways than one!

### GEMINI:

Your loved ones know exactly how much they mean to you, but it doesn’t hurt to let them know that they are loved, valued, and appreciated here. What is your love language, Gemini? Both words of affirmation and physical touch will work like a charm today. When it comes to your special someone, find new ways to slow down and connect with them on a deeper level. Sometimes that means keeping all of your gadgets away, and being fully present to each other.

### CANCER:

Cancer, you may feel like you’ve lived a hundred years over the past seven to eight months, and that you have had to grow up and become the person you are today overnight. What a masterclass in soul lessons this has been! The next chapter sees you letting go of what remains of the outmoded identity, coming into your true power, and holding space for those who are walking the same path as you. PS: You’re an inspiration to so many people.

### LEO:

You’re feeling all kinds of positive today, which in turn is inspiring you to follow your passion with a newfound fervour. If doing something “this” different makes you the black sheep of the crew, so be it. ‘Freedom’ has always been your middle name. Given that the path you have chosen is a less trodden one, it is likely to make those who are disconnected from the stream of creative consciousness uncomfortable. But, you are not here to please everybody or follow the script handed over to you by Society. Continue to follow your true north knowing that you are a source of inspiration.

### VIRGO:

You can debate endlessly over who did what, but does it really matter, Virgo? The cards are urging you to move past the could’ve-would’ve-should’ve narrative, to release the wounds from a time long gone. It’s true that what took place was rather unpleasant, but there’s nothing you can do to change or fix that. Letting go may just be the best way forward. A little something from the Plastic Ono Band to play sing-along with when the world threatens to bring you down: “Everybody’s talking about, Bagism, Shagism, Dragism, Madism, Ragism, Tagism, This-

ism, that-ism, is-m, is-m, is-m... All we are saying is give peace a chance.”

### LIBRA:

The trouble is, we always want to be in the driver’s seat. We always want to be in control of what’s happening in our lives. While we do possess the power to create our Destinies, there is a lot that is unknown around here—and the unknown is what you are being asked to honour. So, step back just a little bit. Release your false sense of control. Embracing the virtues of surrender will help you awaken to all the ways in which the Universe is looking out for you.

### SCORPIO:

Scorpio, the cards are pointing towards your problem-solving abilities, and that the given challenge is not as colossal as you imagine it to be. So put your thinking cap on. Marry your intellect with your intuition. You’re about to have some major revelations that will create a massive shift on a collective level. In the days to come, you will find that the people around you are looking at you with newfound respect too. Don’t hesitate to share your wisdom with those who are coming from a space of genuinity.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Service is coming up as a big theme for you right now, and it requires you to adopt a certain degree of selflessness. That does not mean you have to change the course of your life or give up on the dreams you have been chasing. It simply means that it’s time to expand your work in a way that includes and uplifts those around you, and the community you are a part of. On a personal level too, you’re being asked to practice what you preach. You can’t always get people to look at things from a higher

perspective. However, by embodying the virtues of kindness and compassion, you will inspire a change in the collective consciousness.

### CAPRICORN:

Pay attention to what’s tugging at your heart strings. The things that call out to us on a soul level are anything but random, even if they don’t always make sense logically. It’s time to dig deeper into the given subject matter—to dedicate more time to both research and study. Oh, the revelations you will have in the process, Capricorn! The cards are also pointing towards soulfulness and spirituality. Dedicate some time every day to your practice and know that your guides are holding space for your evolution.

### AQUARIUS:

We give way too much importance to money and the role it is playing in our lives. But, the truth is, obsessing over something only takes it further away from us. Just for today, consider changing your approach a little. Instead of worrying about what you will gain in return, focus on the task at hand. Focus on the process of creation and the joy you derive from syncing your forces with those you love and trust. Trust that your relationship with prosperity will transform drastically in the process.

### PISCES:

We give way too much importance to money and the role it is playing in our lives. But, the truth is, obsessing over something only takes it further away from us. Just for today, consider changing your approach a little. Instead of worrying about what you will gain in return, focus on the task at hand. Focus on the process of creation and the joy you derive from syncing your forces with those you love and trust. Trust that your relationship with prosperity will transform drastically in the process.